

Forms of Worship

*How Orisa Worship Became
Religion in Nigeria and Brazil*

AYODEJI OGUNNAIKE



Forms of Worship



BUY

THE RELIGIOUS CULTURES OF AFRICAN AND AFRICAN DIASPORA PEOPLE

Series editors:

Jacob K. Olupona, Harvard University

Dianne M. Stewart, Emory University

and

Terrence L. Johnson, Harvard University

The book series examines the religious, cultural, and political expressions of African, African American, and African Caribbean traditions. Through transnational, cross-cultural, and multidisciplinary approaches to the study of religion, the series investigates the epistemic boundaries of continental and diasporic religious practices and thought and explores the diverse and distinct ways African-derived religions inform culture and politics. The series aims to establish a forum for imagining the centrality of Black religions in the formation of the “New World.”

DUKE

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Forms of Worship

*How Oriṣa Worship Became
Religion in Nigeria and Brazil*

AYODEJI OGUNNAIKE

DUKE

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Duke University Press *Durham and London* 2026

© 2026 DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Project Editor: Livia Tenzer
Designed by Courtney Leigh Richardson
Typeset in Garamond Premier Pro by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ogunnaïke, Ayodeji, [date] author

Title: Forms of worship : how Oriṣa worship became religion in Nigeria and Brazil / Ayodeji Ogunnaïke.

Other titles: Religious cultures of African and African diaspora people (bcp47)

Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2026. | Series: Religious cultures of African and African diaspora people | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2025049586 (print)

LCCN 2025049587 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478039020 paperback

ISBN 9781478033448 hardcover

ISBN 9781478062653 ebook

Subjects: LCSH: Yoruba (African people)—Nigeria—Religion | Orisha religion—Nigeria—History | Orisha religion—Brazil—History | Religions—African influences | Cults—Nigeria—History | Afro-Brazilian religions—History | African diaspora—Religion | Nigeria—Religion | Brazil—Religion—African influences

Classification: LCC BL2480.Y6 O38 2026 (print) | LCC BL2480.Y6 (ebook) | DDC 299.6/8333—dc23/eng/20260401

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2025049586>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2025049587>

Cover art: (*Top*) Yoruba adire eleko fabric; (*bottom, left*) Ipedi procession, Èdè, Nigeria, 2016. Both courtesy of the author. (*Bottom, right*) A Baiana celebrating the Lavagem of Nosso Senhor do Bonfim, Basilica of Nosso Senhor do Bonfim, Salvador, Brazil, 2011. Photograph by Jaques Wagner Governador. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

DUKE

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

To our father, Babatunde Ayodeji Ogunnaike, who taught us to worship in spirit and in truth

DUKE

**UNIVERSITY
PRESS**

Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	1
1. From Myth to Modernity: A Religious History of Èdè	17
2. Forms of Worship, Not Religion	47
3. How Worship Became Religion: Diaspora, Homeland, and the Lagosian Renaissance	81
4. How Religion Becomes International	121
5. Masking Tradition(s): Indigenous Perspectives on Syncretism	137
6. How Religion Is Changing the Religious	169
7. The Timi: Sacred Kingship, Managing Modernity, and New Religious Pluralism	215
Conclusion	259
Notes	283
Bibliography	325
Index	341

DUKE

**UNIVERSITY
PRESS**

Acknowledgments

At each and every stage, this book has received an inordinate amount of support, and I consequently must recognize many who have made significant contributions intellectually and personally. First and foremost, I am forever grateful to my advisor and mentor, Professor Jacob K. Olupona, for first introducing me to the field of Yoruba religion as an undergraduate, suggesting Èdẹ as a site for research, and guiding my academic development in every way imaginable. Next, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to His Royal Highness Ọba Munirudeen Adeşola Lawal Laminisa I, the Timi of Èdẹland, for warmly receiving me, taking an active and enthusiastic interest in my work, and embodying many of the best qualities of Yoruba kingship. I also thank Prince Al-Hajji Rasheed Ọlaolu, the Baba Kekere of Èdẹland, the right hand of the Timi, for connecting me with all the right resources in Èdẹ and ensuring the successful completion of my research. None of this work would have been possible without their generosity and support.

I am also indebted to Professors Kimberley Patton, Ousmane Kane, and Olufemi Vaughan for their ongoing advice, comments, and attention from the inception of these ideas to the finished product. Also ever present, albeit primarily implicitly, is the incredible investment my second father, Chief Ifarinwale Ogundiran, the Araba of Modakẹkẹ, has made in me over the years. I owe practically all my knowledge of Ifa to him, and most of my own theories on the nature of Yoruba religion have emerged from observations, work, and discussions with him. It has been one of the greatest honors of my life to have collaborated so deeply with such a knowledgeable and godly priest and intellectual.

I was also incredibly fortunate to have benefited from the friendship and assistance of a number of Èdẹ's truly impressive clergy, priests, and priestesses. First and foremost, Iya Ọşun Oluwatoyin Salaudeen, Jagun Şango Şangoniyi Şangosogo, Oluođẹ Ileadi Ogundigi and Akọda Awo Ifaniran Ojo were essential

D

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

to my research through the numerous interviews they granted me, connections they made for me, and rituals and festivals they allowed me to attend and observe. Their expertise, personal experiences, and stories are central to this work. Similarly, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Reverend Nathaniel Oyewole and the Venerable Julius Ojomo for welcoming me into their churches and offering assistance with my research on the history of Christianity in Ede. Similarly, I am indebted to Al-Hajji Mas'ud Ajakewole, Chief Imam of Ede, and Al-Hajji Abdul-Rahman Eleshin, chairman of the Ede Muslim Council, for welcoming me, offering to conduct interviews, making research recommendations and provisions for my observations, and more.

It is impossible to imagine how I could have carried out my research without the help of Professor Olumide Ekanade, Doctor Bernard Fyanka, and Professor Oluwakemi Adesina. Their assistance in securing an affiliation with the Department of History and International Studies at Redeemer's University and with many of the logistics of my time in Ede, and their input about my research ideas was nothing short of critical. I am also deeply grateful to these scholars for the personal interest they have taken in me, in addition to supporting my work. Professor M. O. Opeyoye was also instrumental in arranging critical parts of my ethnographic research, and I am deeply grateful to him for his selfless assistance. I also owe thanks to my research assistant, Wale Bamigboye, for his friendship and assistance in navigating his maternal hometown of Ede, for his personal and familial connections with many people on the ground, for discussion of my theories, and for many laughs in between. His help was particularly essential in launching my research. I am also very grateful to Bayo Ayantunde for his friendship and assistance with researching the many rich Egungun traditions in Ede.

I will never forget the moment in 2014 when I reintroduced myself to Doté Amilton Costa at Casa Branca, and more so than anyone else in Brazil, I will always hold a great deal of affection and appreciation to him for immediately welcoming me into his terreiro, hosting me whenever I am in Salvador, and teaching me more about Candomblé than I could have ever hoped. My brothers and sisters, Bugalu, Apokan, and Lis, from VodunZo have not only made me feel at home there but offered excellent feedback on my ideas, and I hope one day to offer them as much information about orisha traditions in Nigeria as they have offered to me about Candomblé. My list of Brazilian benefactors would not be complete without mentioning Rosana Allatta for driving me all around Bahia, helping me with Portuguese translation when necessary, and offering her thoughts and experiences with some of the finer points of Afro-Brazilian religion and Catholicism.

Sadly, I would also like to pay homage to the memory of several people who have passed on since I began this project. As Amadou Hampaté Bâ said, "In Africa, every

old [person] who dies is a library that burns,” and their loss feels like the Great Library of Alexandria has burned down several times over. I will count myself forever fortunate to have met Mãe Stella and had the opportunity to interview her in her home in Opô Afonjá. Her passing is an immense loss for the entire country of Brazil and those interested or invested in African and Afro-diasporic traditions. The late Araba of Eḍeland, Şangodokun Onifade, was an incredible babalawo with a vast wealth of knowledge about Ifa orature and Eḍe’s history and traditions. Shaykh Salahuddin Olayiwola, the founder of the Islamic Institute, was one of the most prominent and towering figures in Eḍe’s already celebrated Muslim community, and his contributions to Islamic education and Eḍe as a whole cannot be overstated. I hope the impressive legacies left by all three of these holy figures will continue for generations and that recording a small part of their stories can help in this regard.

The research that produced this book was only made possible by the financial support of several grants and institutions. My travel and comparative research in Brazil was supported by the American Academy of Religion through the Selva J. Raj Endowed International Research Fellowship, and I am immensely grateful to the American Philosophical Society for providing a year of funding for my writing with the John Hope Franklin Dissertation Fellowship. A Ford Foundation Fellowship provided the time to revise and submit the manuscript, and additional funding for this work came from the Canada Research Chairs Program. I am grateful to both Sandra Korn and Miriam Angress at Duke University Press for guiding the manuscript to publication. I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful input on improving the text and Professors Dianne Stewart and Terrence Johnson for soliciting the manuscript. I also remain grateful to Professors Brian Purnell, Judith Casselberry, and Tess Chakkalal for their support at Bowdoin College, and to Professors Robert Vinson and Garth Green for their great assistance in ensuring I had the necessary time to write.

Last, but certainly not least, I thank my family and friends who have helped in completing this work academically and otherwise. I would like to say a big thank you to my fellow graduate students from the African and African American Studies Department, particularly Iya Doctor Funlayo Wood, Professor Kyrh Daniels, Professor Ernie Mitchell, and Professor Chambi Chachage, for their many years of friendship and discussion of ideas. Perhaps more so than with anyone else, I have refined my ideas with my senior brother Oludamini, whose advice and perspectives during and post-fieldwork have been incredibly helpful. I also owe most of my appreciation for, knowledge of, and interest in Yoruba traditions to our father, Babatunde, and must thank him, our mother Anna, and our junior brother Olumakinde for their kindness and support throughout my work. Finally, I thank my wife, Stacy, for her patience, generosity, and constant living reminder that *iwa lẹsin*.

Introduction

No one knows how many people identify with or engage in one of the world's most popular religions. The growing number is likely in the hundreds of millions, and most of them live outside the religion's homeland in countries on practically every continent. In fact, the religion did not exist until about one hundred years ago. What is perhaps *most* remarkable about this highly successful religion is that many involved in it do not consider it to be a religion at all—at least not in the modern sense of the word. Because of its high global profile and privileged place in the African diaspora, traditional Yoruba religion (sometimes called “Orisha,” “Ifa-orisha,” or simply “Yoruba”) is arguably the most prominent, iconic indigenous African religious tradition and makes a convincing claim to the title of “world religion.” Despite people from Australia to Atlanta converting to, engaging with, and/or practicing traditional Yoruba religion, in historical perspective it might not be considered traditional, Yoruba, or even a religion (much as Voltaire observed the Holy Roman Empire was not holy, Roman, or a true empire).¹ If the preeminent traditional African religion was not and in some cases still is not a “religion,” then what was it, and how did it come to be one of the most popular religions in world? This book traces the evolution of the religious traditions of the contemporary Yoruba people from premodern forms of worship to a successful, modern religion.²

Forms of Worship

In tracing the religious evolution of Yoruba society, the book articulates the indigenous Yoruba orientation toward religious traditions and how they operate, identifying how these forms of worship differ greatly from modern assumptions about the nature of religion. The Yoruba word *ẹsin* is usually translated

D

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

as “religion,” but a literal translation could render it as “form/way of worship.” I argue the indigenous category of *ḡsin* as “form of worship” demonstrates an orientation to religious practice distinct from that of the modern world in that it implies the acceptance of a plurality of valid, complementary traditions with a common purpose; an inclusive and dynamic, rather than exclusive and fixed, cosmology; the possibility of engaging in more than one form of worship; and a greater emphasis on the relational aspect of the tradition over doctrines or beliefs. It also presupposes a cosmically ordained ritual practice for each person independent of private or individual preferences or beliefs. Furthermore, without the modern, Western separation between the sacred/secular, private/public, and individual/collective, forms of worship are integrated into all aspects of life from ancestry to politics to professional activities and the arts. While *ḡsin* as forms of worship may refer to phenomena that could fall under the modern category of religion (and many that may not), it articulates a fundamentally different understanding of how people interact with these phenomena and offers insight into traditional Yoruba cosmology and society.

Through analyzing the historical and contemporary religious behavior of Yoruba people and their descendants in diaspora; the Yoruba language; and indigenous social, religious, and political structures, I offer a description of what Yoruba *ḡsin* traditionally has been and how it has structured the lives of Yoruba people. The central feature is the remarkably high level of religious harmony that used to be the hallmark of Yoruba society but is rapidly eroding. Rather than focusing on the emergence of religious movements such as Pentecostalism or Salafism as a cause of increasing conflict (although they may be implicated in this change), my contention is that with the advent of modernity, it is the subtle, silent shift in understandings of what “religion” is and should be that is behind the recent rise in religious tension. Because this shift is still ongoing, its effects are apparent and far-reaching. The main historical and contemporary analysis of the book is of the Yoruba town of *Ẹḡḡ* because of its unique ability to navigate the issues inherent in the modern notion of religion.

As analyzed in chapter 3, the use of the term *Yoruba* to refer to the current ethnic group has its origins in nineteenth-century missionary activity, making its use for people in the area of southwestern Nigeria, Benin, and Togo before that period a bit of an anachronism. While not bearing a unified pan-ethnic name and identity, these people did still share similar linguistic, political, economic, familial, religious, and artistic traditions and practices. As such, most scholars retrospectively treat the people as a loosely unified whole under the term *Yoruba*, particularly with respect to how these common features have influenced contemporary shared dynamics. When necessary, I use terms such as *proto-Yoruba*,

but I will refrain from constantly referring to the ancestors of the contemporary Yoruba as “the people who became Yoruba” for ease of reading but without intending to gloss over their internal diversity.

At the heart of this book is a shared orientation to the religious that I refer to as *traditional*, but only in the sense that it differs from a more recently introduced, oppositional orientation that conceptualizes and polices religion very differently. As Rowland Abiodun has demonstrated, Yoruba artistic traditions and concepts have deep roots and remarkable durability precisely because “tradition” for the Yoruba/proto-Yoruba has never reflected the notion of a rigid, unreflective repetition of some timeless ancestral practice but instead constitutes a continued dynamic enlistment of core values, frameworks, and practices, which are rearticulated in light of contemporary needs and landscapes.³ Consequently, my use of expressions such as “Yoruba tradition of religious pluralism” does not refer to a monolithic and fixed religious institution but to a shared regional process or system of conceptualizing issues such as religious diversity and its perpetual rearticulation in particular ways unique to each specific setting. The two sites of Eḍe, Nigeria, and Salvador, Brazil, demonstrate how Yoruba religious traditions and dynamics have always possessed fluid, constantly evolving cosmologies, with two different orientations toward understanding “religion” or “forms of worship” offering a useful framework for understanding the choices and practices of practitioners of all religious traditions.

A-Historic Religion

A great deal of scholarship has emerged over the past few decades on the problematic nature of the category of *religion*, particularly with respect to the modern, Western origin of the term. Famously, in tracing the development of the term through unique circumstances in the modern West, Jonathan Z. Smith explained that “‘religion’ is not a native category. . . . It is a category imposed from the outside on some aspect of native culture.”⁴ This does not mean that phenomena and institutions that might be categorized as “religion” or “religious” did not exist, but rather that not all people at all times have organized their lives through this specific category with its implied assumptions. Until the category of religion was imposed from outside, people would have thought about and engaged with “religious” aspects of their lives and societies in very different terms. Consequently, religious studies scholars, following Talal Asad, stress that it is necessary to provide the historical and cultural context of the tradition in question so as not to distort it.⁵ Wilfred Cantwell Smith actually called for the term *religion* to be dropped altogether because of the specific and unique nature of its modern connotations, and he is not alone in his perspective.⁶

The growing consensus is that scholars should be careful about applying the idea of religion to many traditions and historical contexts, because even the words often translated as “religion” have carried drastically different meanings.⁷ Many others have analyzed what societies and traditions around the world were like before the advent of the modern concept of religion.⁸ Such work also complicates our understanding of religion itself, and of the nature of traditions such as Hinduism, Shintoism, or Buddhism, by shedding light on how contact with the West initiated a process that reconfigured them into their current forms. Such studies provide a glimpse into historical worlds and orientations that could be described as pre-religious. I engage in a similar process of framing the Yoruba category of *ḩsin* through ethnography, but I also document and analyze the lived experiences and perspectives of many in Nigeria and Brazil who currently do not operate within the modern framework of religion. Understanding how these contemporary people conceptualize and interact with the institutions and traditions in their lives can help us understand how many others across the globe may also have done so and to make sense of issues that are otherwise difficult to theorize and understand despite being central to Yoruba society.

Some of these issues include the notorious difficulty in acquiring accurate demographics on religious identity; some Africans’ ease in crossing religious boundaries in discourse, practice, or affiliation; and the impressive readiness and enthusiasm with which many have embraced Islam and Christianity. Again, one of the most notable—and curious from a Western perspective—features of Yoruba society was its high level of religious harmony, despite boasting approximately equal numbers of Muslims and Christians. This dynamic challenges the common, modern notion that religion is dangerous and potentially violent when combined with politics, resulting in the necessity of a secular/religious divide. This idea, also a product of the Enlightenment and of the modern West, must be understood within the context of nation-states’ rise to power and the subjugation of non-Western societies with different configurations of politics and religion. Contrary to popular belief, the advent of secularism largely did *not* coincide with a progression from violence to peace, and nation-states and ideologies such as Marxism or capitalism have engendered as much—if not more—conflict as religious traditions have.⁹ Traditional Yoruba society offers a strong challenge to the myth of religious violence, and the events documented in this book similarly link the creation of religion as a separate sphere of life to processes of nationalism and colonization.

David Laitin, perhaps the first theorist to examine how religion did not function as a divisive force in Yoruba politics, argued that it was the notion of communal identity tied to the ancestral city-state (*ilu*) and its elevated importance under colonialism that could explain the apparent non-politicization

of religious affiliation in Yorubaland.¹⁰ From a more cultural perspective, I. A. Akinjogbin argued for the concept of *ẹbi*, or primary identification with and responsibility to one's family and lineage, as the root of how Yoruba communities imagined themselves.¹¹ A related argument commonly repeated by scholars and Yoruba people themselves is that many Yoruba families have both Muslim and Christian members, and so conflict along religious lines risks antagonizing one's relatives. Furthermore, the Yoruba have a tradition of attending each other's festivals regardless of religious identity, and this common spirit in celebration may help to counteract conflict.¹² From an indigenous point of view, Yoruba religious harmony is quite natural rather than a novelty requiring explanation, while it is religious *conflict* that is novel and requires explanation. While what might be called "religion" has always been critically important to the Yoruba, how they understood its nature and practice made conflict along religious lines almost unthinkable and provided the logic for why family members might have differing religious affiliations and still participate in communal rituals from varied religious traditions.

As Olufemi Vaughan argued in the case of the Nigerian state, religion need not always be divisive; instead, it can and often has been employed to form broader but still diverse identities, institutions, and sociopolitical structures.¹³ The pluralistic and conciliatory Yoruba approach toward religion has proven essential for the stability of the Nigerian state. In previous religiously charged moments, such as the 1970s debate over the federal Shari'ah Courts or Nigeria's admittance into the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in 1986, Yoruba politicians (both Muslim and Christian) played a key role in bridging the religious divide and fostering political reconciliation, understanding, and compromise that kept the country together.¹⁴ However, while religious harmony and pluralism have traditionally been hallmarks of Yoruba societies, this has begun to change right when economic, political, and social tensions with strong religious overtones have plagued Nigeria, including the conflict between farmers and herdsman in the Middle Belt and the rise of Boko Haram in the northeast. Pressing questions raised in this book are, What was the traditional Yoruba orientation to the religious that produced this tolerant perspective? What has caused it to change? And what does this change mean for the future of Yorubaland and perhaps Nigeria at large?

At the heart of any response to these questions is the meaning and implications of the term *ẹsin*, and as Abiodun has argued, greater understanding and use of indigenous terms and concepts in African languages is essential to increase the level of cultural respect and quality of work in African studies, just as the use of Italian terms is essential with respect to Western art.¹⁵ I will generally use the Yoruba term *ẹsin* or the translation "form of worship," instead of "religion," when referring to Yoruba or Yoruba-inspired traditions in historical perspective. However, because

the concept of religion *has* gained salience in Yoruba society in the modern era, I will still employ the term *ẹsin* in that context when necessary and will specify the sense in which I use it if left untranslated.¹⁶ The importance of developing and working with indigenous Yoruba terms extends far beyond factual accuracy, however. The choice to work with indigenous African terms, categories, and theories demonstrates that African societies have always interpreted themselves effectively and offers African studies scholars and others the opportunity to avoid becoming “complicit in the elimination of epistemological models” that developed outside of the Western academy, a situation that is sadly all too common.¹⁷ Consequently, I articulate how Yoruba people and their descendants have known, justified, and deployed the Yoruba model of *ẹsin* as forms of worship at all levels of society.

Following Wilfred Cantwell Smith, this work will not primarily define and explain what Yoruba religion *is* in a universal or transhistorical sense, but rather will describe how people historically have related to a pluralistic set of Yoruba forms of worship and/or traditions of the *oriṣa*, Yoruba deities.¹⁸ The fact that Yoruba societies already practiced a diverse array of forms of worship before Islam and Christianity took root offers insight into the creative ways both traditions were integrated into Yoruba religious life and also offers an alternative to Ali Mazrui’s famous triple heritage model which postulates that African societies draw from Islamic, Christian/Western, and a more unified, traditional African source in forming their identities.¹⁹

Ẹḍẹ and Salvador as Sites

To understand the nature of Yoruba forms of worship in historical and contemporary perspective, I lived in Ẹḍẹ in Osun State, Nigeria, for ten months from June 2016 to April 2017, excepting a five-week period of research in Salvador, Brazil, in January and February 2017, while also drawing on five years of previous regular research trips to both areas. In both locations I divided my time between attending and observing religious festivals (“traditional,” Muslim, and Christian), interviewing religious specialists and laypeople, and living among the various religious communities. The cities of Ẹḍẹ and Salvador effectively demonstrate the most important dynamics of the changing nature of Yoruba conceptions of religion and the resulting religious tensions. Ẹḍẹ specifically is well known for its tradition of religious tolerance and pluralism even within the broader regional trend toward religious exclusivism and tension.²⁰ This makes it an ideal location for studying how and why the Yoruba have traditionally not interpreted religious difference as reasonable grounds for conflict. Ẹḍẹ also beautifully demonstrates several seeming contradictions, managing to hold on to multiple values in a productive tension.

First, Èdẹ is well known for many aspects of traditional Yoruba life but has also embraced much of modernity. For example, several lineages in Èdẹ are celebrated for their expertise in traditional Yoruba drumming and dancing, and its orisha traditions, such as Şango Timi and its Egungun masquerades, enjoy a strong reputation as well. Second, among Èdẹ’s large Muslim population, there was an initial hesitance to embrace Western, secular, and Christian education, but many leading Muslim families have sent their children to such educational institutions, and several of them became well-accomplished secular scholars. Third, approximately 80 percent of Èdẹ’s population is Muslim; it boasts the first Muslim ọba (king) in Yorubaland, Timi Habib Lagunju, and has a privileged place in the history of Islam in Yorubaland, but there is little conflict with the reasonably sized Christian minority. In fact, Èdẹ’s first and only Christian ọba, Timi John Laoye, was widely respected, loved, and likely chosen because of his ability to straddle the traditional and modern Yoruba worlds. Fourth, Èdẹ was founded as a military outpost, and despite its warlike past and proud military tradition, the town is internally peaceful. While some claim Èdẹ is so peaceful because it is modestly sized and fairly isolated, it has from its inception played an important role in international trading and religious networks, embracing both the local and the global.²¹ Finally, and most centrally, whereas a common Western assumption is that the more attached people are to a religious tradition and worldview, the more likely they are to come into conflict with those of differing backgrounds, the people in Èdẹ—based on lived experience—assume the more people understand their own religious traditions, the more perfectly and harmoniously they will relate to others.

Èdẹ is also an ideal case study because its history of sacred kingship highlights the complex and changing religious nature of the office perhaps better than any other Yoruba town. The ọba in Èdẹ, called the *Timi*, has successfully managed to switch religious affiliations between orisha traditions, then to Islam, to Christianity, and back to Islam with little conflict. Even the limited conflict present in these transitions is quite telling in terms of the nature of and expectations associated with Yoruba sacred kingship. Èdẹ’s Timi have been particularly inventive and adept at navigating the rapidly shifting religious landscape in Yoruba modernity. The current Timi, His Royal Highness (HRH) Ọba Munirudeen Adeşola Lawal, the first of the Laminisa royal house, is an excellent embodiment of Èdẹ’s historical and contemporary values, identities, and tensions, demonstrating the continued if not heightened importance of the tradition of sacred kingship in contemporary Yoruba society.

Across the Atlantic, Salvador, Brazil, is sometimes called the “Black Mecca” because of its central role in Black Atlantic religiosity, but I include it in this work for other reasons. Adopting J. Lorand Matory’s methodology of understanding

and analyzing African and Afro-diasporic traditions *together* as mutually influential rather than existing in a purely linear relationship, this book considers the place of Salvador *alongside* Yorubaland in the historical development of a transnational, traditional Yoruba religion.²² The experience of Yoruba-speaking peoples in Brazil—primarily in Salvador—as a result of the transatlantic slave trade and the subsequent return of many to Lagos around the turn of the twentieth century played a critical role in developing a Yoruba ethnic identity and religion, called *ẹsin ibile* (traditional religion) or *Iṣeṣe* in Yorubaland, and the preeminent ritual “nation” of Candomblé in Brazil. The involvement of ethnically Yoruba Brazilians in the production and dissemination of ideas, practices, and materials related to traditional Yoruba religion and forms of worship put the worship of the *oriṣa* (or *orixás* in Portuguese) on a similar trajectory through a perpetual transatlantic dialogue. There have been other important locations in this broader dialogue—namely, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, and other regions in Brazil—but Salvador looms the largest.

Applying the perspective of Yoruba forms of worship rather than religion comparatively to *Ẹḍẹ* and Salvador yields fascinating and productive results. *Ẹḍẹ* and Candomblé communities in Salvador are both currently undergoing a generational shift from elderly people who understand their religious institutions as forms of worship to a younger generation more comfortable with a framework of multiple, exclusive modern religions. These traditions in Nigeria and Brazil share similar internal and external factors and challenges in the modern era, which in conjunction with their mutual dialogue, caused them to respond in remarkably similar ways and to draw on each other in navigating the process. Finally, interpreting Candomblé’s history through the lens of forms of worship provides more culturally appropriate and useful tools for analyzing the notoriously thorny and contentious issue of Afro-Catholic syncretism in Brazil and beyond. I chose *Ẹḍẹ* and Salvador not because this is a history of the people of *Ẹḍẹ* and the central role they played in creating a Yoruba religion at home and in diaspora but because these centers best highlight the dynamics and trajectory of shifting perspectives of Yoruba religious traditions in historical and contemporary settings. This work is more about the history of an idea within the settings of *Ẹḍẹ* and Salvador rather than exclusively a history of the people in whose lives these ideas are interwoven.

How Worship Becomes Religion

As Talal Asad argued, any treatment of a religious tradition must be historically and culturally situated, and this is what I set out to do in chapter 1 with regard to the religious history of *Ẹḍẹ*. Rather than simply presenting a brief description of

a timeless, ancestral religious landscape before Islam and Christianity arrived, I document the individual history of each form of worship separately, starting with various individual oriṣa traditions and subsequently turning to Islam and Christianity. Beginning with archaeological and mythological sources, this chapter follows the establishment and development of Èdè in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Ogun, the oriṣa of war and iron, was the most prominent and the royal oriṣa of Èdè until the early nineteenth century, when Şango, royal oriṣa of thunder and lightning, became the official oriṣa tradition of the state.

Around the same time, some of Èdè's citizens embraced Islam as a result of a traveling cleric saving the town from an invading army. Shortly thereafter, Èdè crowned the first Muslim oḃa in Yorubaland—Timi Habib Lagunju—who is primarily responsible for Èdè's strong Islamic tradition and identity. At the turn of the twentieth century, a returning citizen of Èdè established the first church, laying the foundation of Èdè's minority Christian population. Several other oriṣa traditions, such as the Ogboni society, Oḃatala, and Oṣun, were introduced in Èdè at some point as well, creating a pluralistic and diverse religious atmosphere. For a period in the 1970s and 1980s, religious tension rose with various groups of oriṣa worshippers, Muslims, and Christians coming into conflict with one another as the practice of and identification with Èdè's religious traditions became increasingly separated and religious boundaries became more fixed. Èdè's Timi managed to restore a strong sense of harmony and maintain it remarkably well to this day. Èdè's citizens have also developed theologies from their respective traditions to support and explain their conciliatory approach toward other religious groups. Because, from a historical perspective, the category of religion is largely not salient in this case, this brief history deals with Èdè's past from related perspectives in economics, politics, mythology and literature, and even sociology in addition to religion.

Drawing on the history of Èdè's multiple religious traditions, chapter 2 explains precisely what the nature of Yoruba ḗsin, or forms of worship, is and how it differs from modern conceptions of religion. This chapter employs Jacob Olu-pona's theory of indigenous hermeneutics by drawing theory out of indigenous traditions and practices themselves rather than imposing it from without, much as Abiodun has previously done in an interdisciplinary manner with respect to emic analyses of Yoruba art and aesthetics.²³ The chapter enlists Yoruba linguistics, historical accounts of debates and religious encounters, songs and myths, and some rituals to develop and articulate the indigenous theory of forms of worship as a primarily lineage-based cosmic reality one must accept but need not practice or engage in to the exclusion of others. In this way Yoruba forms of worship admit not multiple, competing theologies but rather one broad theological framework that constantly adjusts to account for the emergence and integration

of new traditions. Rather than possessing one unified “traditional religion,” Yoruba society has *always* contained a high degree of religious pluralism with many diverse forms of worship that functioned analogously to language in that one always has a mother tongue but may learn to speak many new languages to express the same ideas in different terms.

Chapter 3 is an intellectual history, delving into the modern historical and cultural process by which a diverse plurality of Yoruba *ẹsin*, as multiple forms of worship, were separated from Islam and Christianity and bound together into what could be identified as a singular *ẹsin* in the sense of a modern religion. It was in fact this reorientation toward religious traditions rather than the introduction of Islam or Christianity *per se* that constituted a radical shift in the Yoruba religious sphere, and the Yoruba were simply one group among many who went through such a process after prolonged contact with the modern West.²⁴ A critical first step in this process was the new conception of a unified Yoruba ethnicity emerging from the experience in diaspora as a result of the Atlantic slave trade and the linked missionary projects of translating the Bible, the creation of a pan-ethnic language, the introduction of Western education, conversion, and the advent of modernity (*ọlaju* in Yoruba). Responding to the inherent racism of British colonialism, the Western-educated leaders of emergent Yoruba nationalism in turn-of-the-century Lagos began revalorizing their civilization and conducted research and published material on indigenous traditions, adopting not only the modern Western idea of ethnic nationalism but also Protestant Christian universal frameworks such as religion, paganism, or heathenism. Because of the internal diversity and plurality of *oriṣa* forms of worship, it was difficult to systematize and categorize them as one religion, not to mention identifying and formulating a universal doctrine, so missionaries and nationalists turned to the tradition of Ifa—the preeminent Yoruba divination system and repository of oral wisdom—to help them articulate a vision of a unified religion. They found Ifa to be the ideal source of information on “Yoruba religion” because not only did it contain an overarching perspective on all traditions with which it had contact, it also had the highest number of features that modern Protestant authors, researchers, and clergymen could recognize. Ifa became the bedrock of subsequent publications on Yoruba religion and has enjoyed this position in the global tradition ever since.

Foreign Roots of an Indigenous Religion

Salvador, Brazil, and its importance in the creation and global development of traditional Yoruba religion constitute the subject of chapter 4, which adopts Matory’s view of the relationship between homeland and diaspora as one of

dialogue and mutual exchange. Beginning with the social and intellectual history outlined in chapter 3, this chapter examines how the experiences of Yoruba-speaking people in Brazil unified them in a new ethnic configuration. This new social grouping found interesting parallels in the religious sphere as well, providing a proto-pantheon of *oriṣa/orixá* that was then brought back to Lagos by thousands of returnees in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These returnees played an important role in forging the new traditional Yoruba religion in Lagos and brought back ideas, material culture, and literature from Lagos to Salvador, helping to create a class of religious elite and serving as informants for anthropologists conducting research on African/African-derived religion in Brazil. Much as prejudice against Yoruba people in West Africa drove an interest in and articulation of a traditional Yoruba religion *as* religion, religious persecution and discrimination led to a long fight for Afro-Brazilians to have their traditions recognized and protected as religion. As a result of the systematic marginalization of Candomblé and its practitioners by the broader Catholic Brazilian society alongside contact with a new wave of traveling Nigerian Ifa priests, several prominent leading priestesses of Candomblé made a statement supporting the end of Afro-Catholic syncretism and the full separation of the two traditions.

Chapter 5 analyzes the significance of this watershed moment in the Brazilian transition from Yoruba forms of worship to a traditional religion and offers a critique of the common notion of syncretism as a mask, which was primarily conceptualized by Roger Bastide.²⁵ Employing indigenous Yoruba perspectives of forms of worship and conceptions of masking, and putting perspectives from contemporary *oriṣa* specialists in Èdè in conversation with *orixá* devotees in Salvador, it offers an alternative to the vibrant discussion on religious authenticity and purity in Candomblé today. The chapter articulates how, because of their unique orientation toward the religious, Africans in Brazil—and many of their descendants today—did not conceptualize the veneration of Catholic saints as *only* a disguise for the true worship of the *orixás*. Rather, they were not concerned with boundaries between “religions,” understanding saints and *orixás* as a unified spiritual and ontological reality that could be worshipped in multiple forms, often simultaneously.

Current State of Affairs

Jumping back across the Atlantic, chapter 6 connects the modern transitions occurring in Salvador to the contemporary situation in Èdè. There is a noticeable generational shift in which the oldest generation operates within a framework of forms of worship, the youngest generation operates within a framework of

mutually exclusive and competitive religions, and a middle generation finds itself somewhere in between. This shift across generations and the temporal shift in conceptions of religion in Èdẹ and Salvador are direct results of contact with and reaction against forces in the modern world. A common experience of religious boundaries having been drawn *around* oriṣa/orixá communities, if not *by* them, enhanced the saliency of the concept of religion and consequently generated a rise in conflict along the lines created by this framework. This chapter also delves into the messy business of how people in Èdẹ categorize their diverse traditions and practices as culture, work, tradition, or religion; how the same tradition might be understood as religion by one person but as something else by another; and how individuals make different choices about what they can and should do based on their categorizations. The silent, largely implicit transition to understanding ẹsin as religion rather than forms of worship has resulted in several new social tensions tracked in this chapter, including growing religious homogeneity in lineages, increased pressure on women and children regarding their religious affiliation, controversy over burial rites, and a decline in the practice of attending festivals of other religious traditions. The chapter demonstrates how the new understanding of ẹsin in light of ọlaju (modernity) gave rise to the period of religious tension in Èdẹ in the 1970s and 1980s.

Èdẹ's various religious leaders developed robust, orthodox, and productive theologies of religious pluralism, but the most important figure in restoring the Yoruba tradition of religious harmony in the modern age was the Timi, the subject of chapter 7. Drawing on Èdẹ's history, Yoruba ontology, academic theory on Yoruba kingship and identity, and a close analysis of the Timi's role in Èdẹ's most prominent festivals, it addresses what a Yoruba ọba is, how Yoruba sacred kingship intersects with forms of worship or religion, and how this intersection dictates the religious culture of Yoruba towns. In addition, developing further the work of scholars such as Karin Barber and Andrew Apter, I argue for an understanding of the ọba as a microcosm or literal embodiment of his entire kingdom, making it incumbent on him to be involved with all major religious traditions within his realm. I argue that the Timi constitutes a form of Peter Berger's "sacred canopy" who can externalize and concretize his own personal cosmology for the community and whose festival forms the basis of a civil religion that allows all citizens to participate fully within the same community and identity, reinforcing their unity without negating religious differences.²⁶ The current Timi of Èdẹ, Timi Lawal, is an excellent exemplar of Yoruba sacred kingship because he embodies many of the apparent tensions in Èdẹ's society and has found effective—if not always easy—ways of navigating the transition from forms of worship to religion while preserving Èdẹ's remarkable religious

harmony in the process. The chapter analyzes how his deft leadership in articulating Yoruba tradition in new, modern contexts is not without challenges but illustrates an effective method of reconciling commonly held binaries such as modern/traditional or religious/secular.

Central Themes

While the main historical subject of this book is the development of a traditional and international Yoruba religion from a previous system of forms of worship, it is also a historical reflection on religion in Yorubaland in general. It illustrates and explicates a religious orientation that has and still does cut across religious traditions. In this sense it also informs how many Yoruba have—and some still do—interpreted and practiced both Islam and Christianity. The book can be read in a way that complicates the broad teleological narratives commonly employed with respect to the issue of conversion in Yorubaland and West Africa in general. Without necessarily negating the intellectualist approach put forward by Robin Horton and J. D. Y. Peel, which suggests that as West Africans were brought into a global sphere of activity, their cosmos naturally expanded from limited microcosms of local divinities to the “cult of the Supreme Being,” the model of forms of worship offers a different perspective.²⁷ Perhaps Yoruba people embraced both Islam and Christianity in such large numbers not because their previous religious systems were not sufficiently equipped to deal with the new global setting but because adopting new traditions when useful (often alongside preexisting traditions) was in fact already an integral part of the indigenous worldview itself. When viewed from a global perspective, it is suggestive that those forcibly brought to Brazil and enmeshed in complex transatlantic economies and transnational spheres of operation intentionally leveraged orixá/orixá traditions rather than abandoning them in favor of a “cult of the Supreme Being,” whom they considered the ultimate recipient of their worship anyway.

Humphrey Fisher also articulated a useful model for the spread of Islam in Africa, which has a similar telos of large-scale conversion from traditional religion to Islam at the end of a three-stage process of quarantine, mixing, and reform.²⁸ Fisher refers to Islam in this context as a “juggernaut,” almost implying that it steamrolls other traditions in its path. The history of Èdè demonstrates that without the idea of separate, competing religions, rather than Islam steamrolling or even mixing with other worship practices, it was possible to develop fully Islamic and traditional understandings of both religions informed by engagement with each other. Oludamini Ogunnaike has produced an in-depth study of how both Ifa and Tijani Sufism have been engaged in such a process for centuries, and

the phenomenon is certainly not unique to West Africa or a deviation from Islamic orthodoxy.²⁹ The adoption and orthodox interpretation of a new tradition in light of preexisting institutions and traditions is very similar to what William Chittick described in his impressive study of Confucian values and categories that were translated to and supplemented by an Islamic framework rather than one annihilating the other, and also to Shankar Nair's equally impressive analysis of the translation of sacred Hindu texts into the Persian language and Islamic contexts.³⁰ The distinction to be made here is that parallel to the story of the formation of a traditional religion in Yoruba society is the emergence of both Islam and Christianity as separate *religions* rather than additional *forms of worship*, as they were initially received. Particularly because the forms of Christianity coming from Iberia and Britain defined themselves in contradistinction to Islam and "paganism," these three categories as separate entities came into being at roughly the same time, even if the adoption of these frameworks has occurred to varying degrees across and within generations.

The historical practice of Ifa and Ifa oral narratives form a critical part of this work because they demonstrate that the central issue is not in fact conversion from one tradition to another, but rather people's understanding of what those traditions are and how they are used. In Èdẹ, Ifa has historically mediated changes in primary religious affiliation and involvement with new traditions without conflict, and Ifa narratives absorb content and characters from the Bible and Qur'an as if they were part of the same, shared theological background. However, even this process has begun changing, fascinatingly demonstrating the continuous evolution of Yoruba cosmology and theology, particularly with respect to Ifa divination predicting or announcing the religious identity of the Timi.

Tracking the changes in the religious identity and orientation of the Timi through chapters 1 and 7 is enlightening, as their shifting identities have had very little effect on the nature of religious life in Èdẹ. However, the religious *orientation* rather than religious *affiliation* of the Timi does have a strong effect. More so than anyone else, the Timi (and by extension Yoruba *ọba* at large) are primarily responsible for how religious life in Èdẹ has transitioned from forms of worship to religions, particularly as religion has become an increasingly salient factor in people's lives. Invoking Aristide Zolberg's notion of "moments of madness" in which society suspends previously normal routines and draws on utopian projects that put forward new symbols and terms to "create new societal goals, new agendas, and new social networks," David Laitin claimed in the 1980s that there had as of that time been no "moments of madness" in Yorubaland.³¹ In his view, Christian and Islamic utopian ideas "remain[ed] backstage, as it were, waiting for their cues," but I argue in this book that these cues were embedded

within Yoruba modernity, and we are in fact reaching the end of a long, but silent, “moment of madness.” This moment of madness is characterized by terms and categories wrestled from a utopian Christian enterprise of conversion, education, “enlightenment,” and modernity that have formed the contours of contemporary Yoruba society and religion in Nigeria and diaspora whether those affected adhere to that specific utopian vision or not.

Precisely because younger and older people in Yorubaland and Brazil often attribute different meanings and connotations to terms such as *religion*, *Candomblé*, *ḗsin ibile*, or even *ḗsin* itself, this religious upheaval can be difficult to identify. Consequently, one of the purposes of this book is to document and analyze a worldview or orientation to the religious that may well fade away within the next few decades. Rather than view predominantly elderly people whose religious dispositions and practice do not fit neatly into dominant modern religious categories as undereducated, heterodox, or possessing a lack of faith or commitment to their religion, I articulate the alternative ways their cosmologies operate. I attempt to complicate the dominant discourse about Afro-Catholic syncretism in Candomblé before this perspective rooted in the modern concept of religion can fully eclipse another, perhaps more historically consistent perspective rooted in a system of forms of worship.³² Engaging with such views in Yorubaland before the generation that primarily lives by them is gone is timely and essential for gaining a more complete and robust understanding of oríṣa traditions and sacred history. This has significance beyond the alternative perspective that it offers on what “religion” actually is or can be. My grandfather—himself a fiercely proud Yoruba man—was fond of saying “a person who does not know where (s)he has been can never know where (s)he is headed,” and coming to grips with this indigenous orientation toward religion can shed light on the Yoruba religious past and present situations as well as help us understand and properly prepare for the future.

Hidden in Plain Sight

When I arrived in Murtala Muhammed Airport in Lagos to begin my fieldwork, I was met by a thoroughly puzzled customs agent who suspected I was up to something. When I explained that my purpose for returning to Nigeria was to conduct research for my dissertation, he responded, “You want me to believe that you made it all the way to Harvard in America, but you are coming back *here* to study something about religion?” I even had to show him my student ID before he believed me. I understood his incredulity, however, because many other Yoruba people and Nigerians often have trouble imagining what our country or society has to offer that Harvard and the United States cannot provide more fully or

effectively. It is difficult to deny the many problems currently faced by the Yoruba, Nigeria, or even the African continent at large, but one goal of this book is to demonstrate that many of our greatest treasures often go unrecognized, hidden in plain sight. Much more than oil, diamonds, rubber, or many of the other treasures that have drawn and still draw foreign powers to Africa like magnets but have done little to improve our own societies, many of our indigenous traditions and ways of life have more to offer us and the world now than ever before.

While the United States has recently become deeply divided and conflicted about issues of diversity, pluralism, religion, identity, and politics, the people of Èdẹ in Osun State often take the effective resolution of such issues to be a given, if they would perceive them as issues at all. While some religious conflicts in places such as Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, or Palestine currently seem intractable, the occasional conflicts between Christians, Muslims, and orisha worshippers in Èdẹ have been resolved with relative ease and with a marked lack of violence. Furthermore, as countries as different as France, India, Turkey, and China struggle with how their political structures can and should interact with religious institutions, religious pluralism, and articulations of secularism, the Timi of Èdẹ demonstrate now and historically how political and religious power can potentially be reconciled and mutually supportive. Similarly, such traditional kingship or chieftaincy structures may have a great deal to offer when many people around the world are losing faith in democratic processes that serve to deepen sectarian divides rather than draw people together. I certainly am not suggesting that all people need to adopt a Yoruba “forms of worship” approach to religion or adopt Yoruba sacred kingship. However, at a critical moment in global affairs and Yoruba society, such indigenous perspectives can offer positive and powerful critiques to our implicit assumptions about the nature of issues such as religion, governance, conflict, or diversity, particularly when the models in use seem inadequate. Like it or not, the concept and institutions of religion as well as religious difference are indeed part and parcel of our world, and the history of how orisha forms of worship became a successful international religion and how one particular community navigated this transition very effectively could help us all come to grips with what religion actually is and what role it can play in our lives and societies.

DUKE

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Peel, *Christianity, Islam, and Oriṣa Religion*, 216–17.
2. Here I do not mean *premodern* in a pejorative sense, nor do I suggest that it naturally must lead to modernity. It refers to the fact that these traditions and the religious order associated with them immediately predate the modern era even if some people maintain them, not fully integrating modern conceptions of religion into their lives.
3. Abiodun, *Yoruba Art and Language*.
4. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” 269.
5. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*.
6. Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*, 50.
7. Nongbri, *Before Religion*.
8. Prominent examples include Josephson, *Invention of Religion in Japan*; Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*; Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*; Almond, *British Discovery of Buddhism*; Peterson and Walhof, *Invention of Religion*.
9. William Cavanaugh also provided cogent critiques of how some traditions and systems are categorized as religious while others are not and of the motivations for such distinctions when it is so difficult to even define what counts as religion. Cavanaugh, *Myth of Religious Violence*, 4–12.
10. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture*, 109–35.
11. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and Its Neighbours*, 15–17.
12. Peel, *Islam and Christianity*, 4.
13. Vaughan, *Religion and the Making of Nigeria*, 1.
14. Kukah, *Religion, Politics, and Power*, 9–11.
15. Abiodun, *Yoruba Art and Language*.
16. I use English translations to specify the meaning of *ḗsin* in each context because the term is inherently polysemic, and its meaning is dependent on the context and speakers, who frequently have fundamental differences in the way they understand its connotations.

D

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

17. Abiodun, *Yoruba Art and Language*, 307.
18. Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*, 196.
19. Mazrui's argument is still remarkably helpful in understanding contemporary African cultures in general, even beyond the field of religion. Mazrui, *Africans*.
20. Nolte and Ogen, "Beyond Religious Tolerance," 3–6.
21. Èdẹ's citizens are fond of saying "òmọ iya kan naa ni wa" (we are children of the same mother) or "Èdẹ, yara kan naa ni" (Èdẹ is just one room).
22. Matory, "English Professors of Brazil" and *Black Atlantic Religion*.
23. Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*, 3; Abiodun, *Yoruba Art and Language*.
24. Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*, 60–62.
25. Bastide, *African Civilisations in the New World*; Capone, "Transatlantic Dialogue."
26. Olupona was the first to articulate this way of interpreting Yoruba sacred kingship through the concepts of the sacred canopy and Robert Bellah's civil religion. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America"; Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*, 261–62, 282; Olupona, *Kingship, Religion, and Rituals*, 81–82. Berger, *Sacred Canopy*.
27. Horton and Peel, "Conversion and Confusion," 481–98.
28. Fisher, "Juggernaut's Apologia," 153–73.
29. Ogunnaike, *Deep Knowledge*.
30. Chittick, *In Search of the Lost*, 313–25; Nair, *Translating Wisdom*.
31. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture*, 91; Zolberg, "Moments of Madness," 205–6.
32. I do not mean to imply a teleology in which modern, exclusive conceptions of religion must necessarily steamroll a previous Yoruba-inspired orientation to religion, as even some young practitioners operate within a forms of worship paradigm and will likely continue to do so. However, this population is shrinking, and their worldview is becoming less visible and more marginalized in the traditions themselves and in the scholarly discourse published on them.

CHAPTER I. FROM MYTH TO MODERNITY:
A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ÈDẸ

1. Specifically, see Olunlade, *Èdẹ*.
2. This perception of Èdẹ as particularly religiously pluralistic was echoed both by Èdẹ's citizens of all religious backgrounds and by my friends and interlocutors from outside Èdẹ. See Nolte et al., *Beyond Religious Tolerance*.
3. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture*, esp. chap. 8.
4. This argument assumes a certain level of religious diversity within a lineage or family, which is what produces the necessity for positive relations across religious traditions. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and Its Neighbours*, 15–17.
5. Quotations from Laitin, "Conversion and Political Change," 181, and *Hegemony and Culture*, 159, respectively.
6. Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations," 392.
7. Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*, 284.
8. Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*, 287.
9. Ogungbile and Awoniye, "Indigenous Tradition in Transition," 82, 88.

D