



Òrìsà Devotion as World Religion: The Globalization of Yorùbá Religious Culture

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As the twenty-first century begins, tens of millions of people participate in devotions to the spirits called Òrìsà. This book explores the emergence of Òrìsà devotion as a world religion, one of the most remarkable and compelling developments in the history of the human religious quest. Originating among the Yorùbá people of West Africa, the varied traditions that comprise Òrìsà devotion are today found in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Australia.

The African spirit proved remarkably resilient in the face of the transatlantic slave trade, inspiring the perseverance of African religion wherever its adherents settled in the New World. Among the most significant manifestations of this spirit, Yorùbá religious culture persisted, adapted, and even flourished in the Americas, especially in Brazil and Cuba, where it thrives as Candomblé and Lukumi/Santería, respectively. After the end of slavery in the Americas, the free migrations of Latin American and African practitioners has further spread the religion to places like New York City and Miami. Thousands of African Americans have turned to the religion of their ancestors, as have many other spiritual seekers who are not themselves of African descent.

Ifá divination in Nigeria, Candomblé funerary chants in Brazil, the role of music in Yorùbá revivalism in the United States, gender and representational authority in Yorùbá religious culture—these are among the many subjects discussed here by experts from around the world. Approaching Òrìsà devotion from diverse vantage points, their collective effort makes this one of the most authoritative texts on Yorùbá religion and a groundbreaking book that heralds this rich, complex, and variegated tradition as one of the world's great religions.

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