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OGUN: DIFFUSION ACROSS BOUNDARIES AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTIONS

Olatunde Bayo Lawuyi

This essay examines the roles that Ogun, Yoruba god of iron and war, plays in communication and in the construction of boundaries in the systems in which he is worshipped in an attempt to gain some additional understanding about the nature of Yoruba religion.

The idea of Ogun, both in symbolic and practical expressions, is indigeneous to the Yoruba, most of whom live in the southwestern part of Nigeria. In the New World as well as Benin (Dahomey) where Ogun is also worshipped, the practice is associated with people of Yoruba descent. The god has taken, within syncretic formations, a new name in the Americas (Herskovits, 1971; Lewis, 1978; Gordon, 1979). It is St. George in Rio de Janeiro and St. Anthony in Bahia, Brazil. For those in Trinidad it is St. Michael. The Yoruba themselves have seven variants of the god (Idowu, 1962; Ibigbami, 1977). The elevation of one variant above others raises the issue of religious identity: whereas Ogun is not immune from the variety of conflicting traditions in the Old and New Worlds, it is clear that, even in the New World, Ogun's affiliation to any community is expressed in action—in the common performance of the prescribed practice and the adoption of a way of life. World writers have emphasized the syncretic adaptations of the African indigeneous cultural forms in line with Catholic dogmas and symbols the African slaves met or interacted with in their new settings (Herskovits, 1937, 1971; Mischel, 1967; Hamilton, 1970; Gordon, 1979). Their theoretical orientation is informed by a search for African retentions or survivals. They also acknowledge that the original ideas which informed the establishment of Black religion have undergone reinterpretation in the light of contemporary consciousness of sociopolitical and economic disadvantages (Levine, 1979). The reinterpretations could also have resulted from contacts with Africans visiting the Caribbean or being visited (cf. Gordon, 1979). No matter how the interpretations take place, the search for African survivals is more a comparative posture that serves didactically to stimulate the imagination which is essentially moral rather than epistemological. At issue is what the gods mean to the people themselves—their social thoughts on the religion.

Thoughts that are significant for survival often acquire a systematic form. Ironically, although the Yoruba of Nigeria initiated the idea of Ogun, their writers have yet to ex-

press a clear theoretical posture. Taking Ogun as an embodiment of the religion of Yoruba masses *par excellence*, Soyinka (1976) describes it as an essential god for the protection of the orphans and a symbol of the transcendental, humane, but rigidly restorative justice. However, by focusing on the name and the functions of Ogun within the Yoruba social structure, Lucas (1948) argues that it is a borrowed god from Egypt. Soyinka (1976), in contrast, likens it to Dionysius, the Greek god of war. Yet, on the same function and name, those who take the native ascription as truth (cf. Idowu, 1962) would argue that, although of lesser significance than *Oludumare*, the supreme God, Ogun is a leader, a path finder: he has two matchets, one which prepares the farm, the other which clears the road. Without Ogun there is no way to the divinity. There is, in addition, no way to wealth. And, of course, the path to civilization is paved with dangers.

Obviously, the varied conceptions of Ogun attempt to deal with an underlying reality that reflects and is constrained by social context. Not only does the idea of Ogun differ across the continents, its myth of origin also differs from one context to another in its old world home (Abimbola, 1985). In fact, the dogma and rituals are closely related to local experiences (Olupona, 1983). Finding a common framework to explain the diversity of Yoruba religion is difficult (Buckley, 1985). Nevertheless, within this diversity there are regularities that permit discussion of perspectives.

On one hand, the lower class Negroes have been associated with the worship of Afro-American cults (Henry, 1965). Through the cults are projected unfulfilled aspirations caused by the failure of Christianity to provide Africans with a satisfactory religious life and a society to fashion better economic expectations (Bastien, 1971). The French colonists often expressed a lack of interest in religiosity. But the Spanish were successful in applying missionary methods to the conversion of Africans. Thus, in the Spanish areas, the syncretized Afro-religions of the New World simultaneously practiced both Vodoun and Catholicism with surprising ease at times. However, whereas some communities retained the African ideas of their gods, others have reinterpreted or abandoned the institutions (Richards, 1976). There are varying degrees of identification with African values that both demonstrate the strength of the continuities and their relative lack of modification or of discontinuities and of the necessity for new creative arts to be related to contextual developments (Trotman, 1976). In this way, of utmost concern to the Black in diaspora is their nationality. They seek identity with Ethiopia, with Egypt, Israel, or the Black Sudan. The Rastafari movement is only one expression of the need for an African nationality to sustain a dynamic sense of identity (Lanternari, 1971).

On the other hand, for the Yoruba writers Ogun is a nationalist symbol. It is placed in the forefront of a desire for a new social order. The best exponent of this perspective is Soyinka, the 1986 Nobel Prize winner in literature. A Yoruba and a political activist, Soyinka's analysis of the language of and the cultural background to Ogun could be understood as, simultaneously, an indication of religious insight and the expression of a cultural doubt about the supposed backwardness of Africans. Also, along this line of thought is the *Alada* movement. For members Ogun is a representation of Yoruba nationalism. The Yoruba culture is the *fons et origo* of Ogun and it was from here that its practice diffused to other areas of the world.

Whichever way one looks at the literature on Ogun, the fact that emerges is that its

importance lies in the particularity of its impact upon social systems which render general assessment of its value in either moral or functional terms difficult. As a nationalist concept, Ogun is a part of a mood, of a general disposition which characterizes a people responding to social constraints of their social structure, of slavery, or of colonialism. The degree to which its symbols are articulated into a code varies with the intensity of the nationalists' movements and the level in which such movements are appreciated. In Nigeria, the *Alada* movement is, for instance, part of an ethnic reassertion.¹ It is well-known that the same cultural awakening to a revered past has led to the decision (in 1972) of the Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to name its main research journal *Ikenga* and to adopt the symbol (a palm) as its logo (Afigbo, 1986). Nigerians recognize that nationalism among heterogeneous people has to be fostered, but they regard nationalism within the composite groups of the nation as a viable idea of political significance. Central to this is the issue of authority. This arises in the allocation and control of resources, most obviously in the management of property, but more importantly in the direction of people's activities and expressions.

OGUN AND COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

By now it is an established fact that the Blacks in diaspora carried with them not just the *Ikenga* or Ogun but numerous and diverse beliefs, customs, institutions, and practices of their home bases in Africa. Their culture was in no way monolithic, for even among the Yoruba the socio-cultural landscape was (and still is) characterized by diversity in language, values, and religion. It is difficult to speak of a national symbol when there are many different kinds of Yoruba, at least by class, region, and language. It is in fact easy to document regional or class differences, for example, in ritual behaviors (Buckley, 1985). Preoccupation with the differences has led to information which is often unsystematic and brief. Some of the works, like those of Lucas (1948) and Idowu (1962), are full of contradictions. They could be useful as a beginning in any attempt to determine the range and distribution of Ogun, to attempt a typology, and to plot a trait map. Yet, even if we are to ignore the contradictions and accept Ogun as one that has a message relevant to modern identity constructions, its message for the traditional structure must be a guard to its modern unfolding. In which case, Ogun's uniqueness as a symbol of war lies in the internal strife and tensions not uncommon among the constitutive subethnic Yoruba.

In short, those who strive to raise Ogun to a Yoruba national symbol must contend with the variations in Yoruba social structure and the conflicting perspectives to its religion. Ogun, within this context, rightly embodies the spirit of war. First, it could, like war, lead to resolution of feelings and emotions—though it may also generate new ones among the subethnic groups (Olupona, 1983). Second, it could, like war, create a path to a new authority structure or the imposition of a new order. For, war is a factor in interstate or community relations; it brings states together in an attempt to use force to resolve conflicts or achieve political and economic goals. What one learns about the essential value of life from war will have rather diverse effects on social and psychological functioning. It could lead to various identifications of the type noted for Ogun (Idowu,

1962:89):

There are seven Ogun who belong to me:
 Ogun of Alara it is who takes dog;
 Ogun of Onire habitually takes ram;
 Ogun of surgery habitually takes snail;
 That of Elemona it is who takes roasted yam.
 Ogun of Akirin habitually takes ram's horn;
 Ogun of the artisans, it is the flesh of tortoise that he eats.
 Ogun of Makinde, which is Ogun outside the city wall -
 He either takes a Tapa, or takes an Aboki,
 or takes an Uku-uku, or takes a Kemberi.

The terms *Tapa*, *Uku-uku*, and *Kemberi* are designations for non-Yoruba. Although, as Idowu (1962) asserts, these people are offered as sacrifices to Ogun, yet their choices make sense only in the context of having an "Ogun outside the city wall." That is, these ethnic groups are strangers to the Yoruba—indeed they were enemies in the historic past. Their presence outside the city wall is dangerous to the stability and peace of Yoruba society which itself comprises many divisions such as the *Alara*, the *Onire*, and the *Elemona*. These divisions have their own Ogun. They do not offer them their own citizens. After all, "*a ki fi omo re bo re*" (you do not sacrifice to the gods people who share same identity with you). Hence, given the competitive relations among the different Yoruba groups (Falola, 1985a, 1985b; Danmole and Falola, 1985), the seven Oguns are part of a recurring mood and a persisting set of motivations. Each of the seven variants is a pragmatic factor in the structuring of social relations. The polemical argument about the relevances of one could only arise in the relation of context to the structure of religious performance.

However, if as we have argued the intra-ethnic rivalry and conflict gave way to seven Oguns, the possibility of such seven manifesting in the New World is remote—unless the migrants simply reproduced learned beliefs without critical assessment of the epistemological background and of the suitability of old ideas in a new context. More so because the wars in the New World were not fought between blacks or different Yoruba groups but between the Europeans. The slaves, except in cases where they staged their own revolts, were not architects of the wars; indeed, as a result of their being dragged into the imperialists' wars they could not always define their own positions in the conflicts (Nash, 1982). Consequently, they served the adversaries' interests and less of their own. And at the end, they had different masters, different cultures, and hence different identities. The persistence of any African beliefs and institutions is due to cultural hegemony of the communities investigated (Elder, 1970; Warner., 1972; Trotman, 1976), to the recency of migration and the presence (in Trinidad) or nearness (in Cuba) of freedom (Mintz and Price, 1977). A rather natural order follows with the predominating cult in any area reflecting the composition of the native population and the pantheon of the dominant group (Vergier, 1976). Ogun has not emerged in this process as a dominant god. A brief survey of the literature shows that Shango enjoys the greatest attention among the New World scholars (cf. Simpson, 1962, 1965; Mischel, 1967; Trotman, 1976). This situation can be attributed to the linkage of Ogun and Shango within the same pantheon, Shango being

dominant (Trotman, 1976). The linkage gives Shango a greater prominence than its subordinated partner, Ogun.

Furthermore, the dominance of Shango implies that a subethnic Yoruba group is dominant in the area and that, by virtue of the dominance, its pantheon is most important. In the Old World Yoruba setting such an "assimilation" and dominance is often resisted as various communities elevate their own gods to project their differences. Take the case of the Ijesas. Ogun is a popular diety but Shango is not. Shango is associated with Oyo-Yoruba, the Ijesas' enemy in the nineteenth century Yoruba wars (Akintoye, 1971). The wars ended in a stalemate and left the different groups with ideas of their own supremacy. Of course, even before the nineteenth century wars the various Yoruba kingdoms operated as independent and autonomous states. The competition between them was so fierce that they had no common label. The name Yoruba was coined only recently to give the different groups a pan-identity (Peel, 1983). And even then, a close inspection of the religion and social life of the communities would reveal to any observer that many widely used communal labels cover multiple layers of self-consciousness: the historical dimension of such consciousness is sometimes quite distinct from that veiled by the symbolism intelligently created by the people. The individual or group can selectively use any of an historical or symbolic consciousness to define identity or to adapt to changing situations (Ajayi, 1986). Subethnic awareness is invariably a statement of knowledge of one's origin and interests.

On the symbolic front, the Ijesa national god is Ogun (Ilesanmi, 1982). For the Oyo, it is Shango who once ruled the kingdom. Shango is linked with Oyo-Yoruba imperialism and its spread coincides with areas where the Oyos had powerful influence.² In Ijesaland, there is hardly any reference to Shango (Ilesanmi, 1982). The entire Ijesaland comprises three local government councils: the Ilesa, Atakumosa, and Obokun. The list of deities in the different districts, as collected by Ilesanmi (1982), is displayed in Table 1. It is, however, not exhaustive. Nevertheless, it reveals the presence or absence of Ogun in the different communities. It is also indicative of the local rating of the gods.

There is nothing peculiar to the Ijesa in the distribution of the dieties as shown in Table 1. When the distribution was compared with that of other local government councils, it was seen that the trend appears universal throughout Yorubaland. It was discovered that while certain designations were found in all lists, there were extreme divergences as well. Some deities were present in all of them, and this represented important deities worshipped all over the local government councils. However, differences within and between the different councils reveal that certain gods were of local importance because they represented the ethos and values of the specific communities.

The analysis of Table 1 shows that Ogun is prominent in the Ilesa local government council, which is Ilesa town itself. In other local governments in the district, Ogun enjoys a second or a third best status. There are areas where it is not worshipped at all, e.g. Ilare and Ifewara. Of course, some of the Ijesa communities want to think they are independent of others (Ilesanmi, 1982). They specifically do not recognize the superior status of Ilesa which only recently, upon the advent of colonialism, became the major city. It is for the people of Ilesa that Ogun is the most popular diety drawing all and sundry together in a festive mood. This is rightly so because, as Ilesanmi (1982) noted, the god dramatiz-

TABLE 1

Deities of Ijesaland

Obokun Local Government Council

- A. *Ipetujesa*
- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Obalufon | 11. Ija |
| 2. Ogun | 12. Ologboorodo |
| 3. Olokun | 13. Olimona |
| 4. Awejoye | 14. Orisa Oba Odo |
| 5. Okun | 15. Orisa Ologotun |
| 6. Ita | 16. Osun |
| 7. Yeye-Ogunna | 17. Owari |
| 8. Erisile | 18. Olisaalu |
| 9. Ologun-ede | 19. Orisa Oliyinta |
| 10. Okuro | |
- B. *Esa-Oke*
- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| 1. Olofin | 6. Oba-itu |
| 2. Obalufon | 7. Aramofe |
| 3. Ogun | 8. Aganju |
| 4. Oran | 9. Oroo |
| 5. Elefon | 10. Eegun |
- C. *Ibokun*
1. Obokun
 2. Ogun
 3. Ita
 4. Loogun-ede
 5. Orisa Alaye
- D. *Ilare*
1. Erin (Ere)
 2. Osun-Oja
- E. *Ijebu-jesa*
1. Agada
 2. Osun
 3. Ogun
 4. Okun

Atakumosa Local Government Council

- A. *Osu*
- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Orisa Osu (Atakumosa) | 6. Obalufon |
| 2. Orisa Uloo | 7. Ogun |
| 3. Osun | 8. Obokun |
| 4. Owaluse | 9. Owari |
| 5. Baba Ogudu | 10. Uyi-Arere |
- B. *Ifewara*
1. Edi
 2. Orungbe
 3. Olojo
 4. Ode Omo Ooni
- C. *Ipole*
1. Owari
 2. Obokun
 3. Ogun
- D. *Iwara*
- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Owaluse | 5. Abeere-Ogun |
| 2. Osun | 6. Ore |
| 3. Obalogun | 7. Ogun |
| 4. Atakumosa | |
- E. *Igangan*
- | | |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1. Babarake | 5. Ogun |
| 2. Olokun | 6. Olugbo (Olua) |
| 3. Olojo | 7. Ita |
| 4. Lejugbe | |

Ilesa Local Government Council

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. Ogun | 8. Atakumosa |
| 2. Odun Owena | 9. Biladu |
| 3. Orisa | 10. Bilagbayo |
| 4. Obalogun | 11. Iyiarere |
| 5. Obokun | 12. Olode |
| 6. Owaluse | 13. Oludu |
| 7. Oluodo | 14. Odun Wayero |

es the war interest of the people. Every fabric of the society is involved in the rituals for a national hero who also "constantly reminded them that their nation was based on military exploits" (Ilesanmi, 1982: 3-4).

Thus, on one hand, Ogun is a national character defining disposition, mood, and motivations. On the other hand, it is a god marking social boundaries. It happens that our review shows that where Ogun is a national deity—like Ilesá and Ondo—the boundaries between these communities and their neighbors are ritualized (cf. Olupona, 1983) and heavily militarized. Such rituals are not directly connected with Ogun's worship. Rather, the boundary rituals, apart from depicting the outer limits of the communities' territories, also underscore the hypothesis that Ogun is indirectly concerned with boundary creation and maintenance (Olupona, 1983).

The value attached to Ogun can best be described as one in which the awareness of the worshippers is merged in a field of forces whose parameters are the self-interest of the devotees. In fact, as Ogun was gaining in popularity in Ilesá, Esu was losing its own because it had no relevance to the people's interest. Ilesanmi (1982) observed that about a century ago, more than a dozen shrines of Esu could be found at the entrance to important compounds in Ilesá town. At the time the diety was accorded respectable worship, but as the devotion to him faded away, the genre associated with him probably suffered the same fate. Ilesanmi gave no explanation for this situation which, from our previous argument, crystallized from the evolved patterns of social integration among the opposed groups. Esu, Shango, and Ogun are representations of different realities. The Yoruba who know what they represent would not obscure their ideological distinctions by fusing them in the same pantheon.

REALITY AT THE SOCIAL STRUCTURAL LEVEL

As already noted, the worship of Shango, Esu, and Ogun are associated with the lower class and with racial distinctions in the New World. The opposite appears to be true of the Yoruba in the Old World. Ogun is associated with the powerful, the elites, such as the warriors, the hunters (who are also medicinemen), and the Chieftaincy (Fadipe, 1970). The Yoruba myths reinforce this upper class connection.

In Yoruba myths, Ogun is a human being with royal blood (Idowu, 1962) acquired through his connection, as son, to Oduduwa, the autochthonous founder of the Yoruba race. The descent confers authority. Had Ogun wanted, he could have become a king over one of the Yoruba sub-kingdoms that traced its origin to Oduduwa. Instead he served as the Commander-in-Chief of Oduduwa's army. In one myth (Berger, 1968) he returned to Ire, a town in Yoruba land, after one of his military exploits and saw the people drinking and merry-making. Nobody would give him any attention. No drink or food was offered to him. In anger, he drew his sword to kill the people. The son, however, emerged in time with wine, food, dogs, snails, palm oil to cool his temper. This myth resembles many others in plot and character. It establishes the status of Ogun as a leader; it also gives insight into his character. It thus persuades feelings in a certain direction which gradually crystallizes in other myths.

In one such myth about Ogun (Gleason, 1971: 53), he was returning home as Odudu-

wa's Commander-in-Chief when he met a beautiful lady who emerged from the forest. Ogun became interested in her and requested her hand in marriage. She agreed and followed him to Ile-Ife. In Ile-Ife, Oduduwa also developed an interest in the lady. He asked if Ogun had slept with her. Ogun lied and thus paved the way for Oduduwa's engagement to the lady. Later, when she had a son that was a half-cast, it was discovered, through consultation with the gods, that Ogun had slept with her. The marriage broke up and Ogun married the lady. The child was named Oranmiyan. He became the founder of Oyo kingdom.

Ogun's wife also had another son for him named Ogundaunsi. He was an excellent cook. Whenever the father returned from war, he cooked for him a delicacy of dog, oil, snail, mice, fish, and other meats. Ogun was so pleased with this delicate dish that he decided to set up a kingdom for him. He went into the forest and searched and searched without finding a suitable kingdom. He decided to go back to Ife and rest. Upon arrival, he discovered that his people were no longer there. He went back to the forest and continued to search for a kingdom for Ogundaunsi. While still searching, however, he saw a small party of people sitting and drinking. He was hungry and thirsty but nobody would give him any drink or food. In anger he took out his sword and killed all of them. To his chagrin those killed were his people. He committed suicide.

Many aspects of the Yoruba social organization are revealed in the above myths which set the relationship between Ogun and Oduduwa as one of inequality, of father and son. They are both leaders in their own rights, though Ogun has no political base. Without such a base he lacked the social status for recognizing his potential as a leader. Consequently, he gets angry when his status is not acknowledged and respected. The understanding of this anger lies in the distinction between home and forest, a polar opposition that marks all Ogun's myths (cf Gleason, 1971: 44-56). The variant on this distinction contrasts rest (home) and performance (forest), or insider (home) and outsider (forest). In the forest, proper customs either do not exist or exist in an inverted form. For Ogun, performance occurs where social beings enter the morally problematical space of the forest. Thus, as the home contrasts with the forest, Ogun is a hero or a deviant. In discerning relations between the polar oppositions, there are profound difficulties involving leadership and deceit as well as varying degrees of exclusivity and inclusivity: Ogun is a leader in the forest, a follower of Oduduwa at home; he can sleep with his superior's wife in the forest and lie about it at home. He can kill in the forest but not in the home. Usually, as he moves between the polar oppositions, his personality appears unstable, and it is unstable just as the domains themselves are in relation to each other. After all, the Yoruba live in the forest-savannah range. Within this geographical setting, which itself constitutes a home, there is a persistent struggle with the forces of nature. Communities shift to find new homes. Old homes become forest. Such struggles and movements also manifest between the representatives of the political hierarchy—the king as leader—who assert the legitimacy of social differentiation, and the representative of the followership—the Ogun, who could put forward the conception of a non-differentiated society. The dialectics in this struggle is such that people come to appeal (*i.e.*, the drinking parties) to more inclusive conceptions. And the only man who can ensure the reality of their expectations is none other than one who embodies the contradiction of the society—the

Ogun. He can sustain leadership (*i.e.*, act as commander-in-chief) but he can also destroy it. Hence, on the ritual level, the local cult of Ogun and its communal rites give concrete expression to the continuity and exclusiveness that a particular, highly militarized and ritualized community may have: that is, the Ogun cults are stable in any area precisely because the people strive for order and disorder, prefer authority and yet continually work outside the hierarchical structure of authority.

The point made is that Ogun's role within the Yoruba social structure is ambiguously defined. And as an extension of this thesis, it is suggested that Ogun is ideologically a midway in the characteristics of Esu (*i.e.*, Legba) and Shango. For instance, Shango's symbol is the axe and thunderstone. This thunderstone is also associated with Ogun (Lucas, 1948) but not with Esu. Ogun's insignia is the cutlass, an iron object which shares the same metaphysical frame with Shango's axe. The thunderstone is a hard structure with a smooth surface and has no particular geometric design. As noted elsewhere (Lawuyi, 1986) the thunderstone has metamessages of (a) tough to crack; (b) a rigid frame not easily disintegrated by reality; (c) highly adaptable; (d) and sanctity/morality/truth, or re-affirmed action of the social order. The non-stone-like axe and cutlass have messages which include (a) easy to crack; (b) a weak frame; (c) less adaptable; (d) and metamessages of doubt/morality/falsity of the social order.

In essence, Shango and Ogun are capable of metamessages of stone and non-stone. Unlike Esu, they are not linked in Yoruba beliefs with the intersection and as such are not liminal figures "neither here nor there; betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner, 1969: 95). Instead, Ogun may be linked with the outside of the society and we would like to think it is dangerous like Esu who is also linked with the outside (*i.e.*, of Yoruba society). The placement of Esu and Ogun outside the home seems to be based on the same idea. When the Yoruba act and place them outside they have removed potentially active elements to a place where they can be controlled. In order to control Esu they use palm oil. But in order to control Ogun, they kill their enemies. Of course, the enemies constitute the greatest danger to the social structure especially if, as the Yoruba say *Won Fi Oju Jo Ore*, (they behave like friends). The Ogun is like a friend and an enemy, a representation of order and of chaos. The Yoruba represent this character in the dog, Ogun's sacrificial object.

The dog has an intrinsic quality which directly affects persons (Gottlieb, 1984). It is devoted to its master; it is beneficial and dangerous. The Ogun worshippers in Ondo maintain different attitudes toward it. The priests can eat it but not the citizens because they regard it as having dignity and integrity of psyche which makes the shedding of its blood dangerous (Akinrisola, 1965). What may seem like an inconsistency in the way the Ondo treat the dog is very much related to the ambiguous role that the dog plays in leadership-followership relations. And of course like the dog, like Ogun. So that when laid out, the conceptual correspondences and differences between Esu, Ogun, and Shango appear as:

Ogun	Esu	Shango
1. sexless figure	sexless figure	sex figure (cf. Lawuyi, 1986)
2. metamessages of stone and non-stone	metamessages of stone	metamessages of stone and non-stone
3. associated with warrior and chieftancy	associated with warrior and political leadership, not necessarily the chieftancy	less associated with warrior or chieftancy class
4. neither a clear leader nor a follower	a clear leader	not a clear leader

Given the correspondences, a community can either choose Esu or Shango. Those who want the character of both would prefer Ogun. These are the warriors and the chieftancy for whom status mobility is problematical.

CONCLUSION

In sum, we have examined the distribution and the symbols of Ogun across continents and within societies. It is clear that although our knowledge about its function within the social structure and about its place in the cosmological ideas and systems of the devotees leads us to certain conclusions as to its linkage with social stratification and status mobility, much more needs to be learned about this god. Particularly crucial is the need to explicate the relationship of the folk system of thought to the devised pattern of classification and to make clear the level of analysis, while in pursuit of theory. The paucity of ethnographic description of Ogun's worship in the New World will limit application and comparison by other anthropologists. Moreover, Ogun needs to transcend many boundaries--ethnic, language, regional, class--to become the unchallenged symbol of a Black and not Yoruba or even Nigerian nationalism.

NOTES

1. The group is responsible for the publication of the *Journal of Culture and Ideas*. Its present base is the ancient city of Ile-Ife, the cradle of Yoruba civilization.
2. Dr. Toyin Falola, personal communication, 1987. Falola has written extensively on the imperialist struggles among the Yoruba.

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