

Teaching Religious Traditions through Place: A Case for Place-Based Associative Pedagogy in Orisha Traditions

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ABSTRACT

Associative place-based pedagogy uniquely provides strategies inclusive of a wide range of traditions beyond those of traditional Western classrooms and provides a foundation for educators to build upon in ways that are practical for teaching traditions courses in Religious Studies. In order to create richer repositories of information for students and minimize comparative approaches in teaching Religious Studies, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of place in its rich and varied expressions and explicitly associate pertinent religious phenomena to ideas of place. Using associative place-based pedagogy helps students form deeper connections with information and create affective links resulting in an overall stronger ability to recall that information. Building on associative learning theories and methods of indigenous discourse, I propose this pedagogical model using the orisha, the deities in Yoruba-derived African heritage traditions like Cuban Santeria. However, my overarching goal is that educators leverage this pedagogical model to offer students a new and radically needed approach to teaching and learning in Religious Studies.

What are some of the challenges when teaching African heritage religions to undergraduate students who have had little to no exposure to them? How can we teach students the cosmologies of these religions while minimizing a comparative approach (for example comparing the African orisha to Greek/Roman gods or Hindu gods), which sometimes uses a reductive or essentialist perspective to compare seemingly related aspects of religious traditions? Place-based education, traditionally defined as “an approach to curriculum development and instruction that directs students’ attention to local culture, phenomena, and issues as the basis for at least some of the learning they encounter in school,” serves as a point of departure for a place-based approach to teaching Religious Studies. As such, this essay argues for

the value of a place-based associative pedagogy for traditions courses in Religious Studies programs by using the Afro-Cuban religion, La Regla de Osha, popularly known as Santería, as a case study. I focus specifically on the orisha, the deities in the Santería pantheon, to demonstrate the use of this pedagogical model. I define place-based associative teaching and learning as a pedagogical approach that emphasizes place elements, like natural and built environments as well as physical locality, in order to reinforce and enrich students' recall of information. In other words, utilizing place-based pedagogies helps students form deeper connections with information and create affective links resulting in an overall stronger ability to recall that information. Building on associative learning theories and methods of indigenous discourse, I propose a place-based associative pedagogy as a pragmatic model for traditions courses within Religious Studies.

Embodiment, for example, and its connection to place through material or consciousness of/with placement enables associations that increase the breadth of recollection of religious concepts across a broader range and grasp of various phenomena. By paying close attention to bodies in places and as places, and the interactions of bodies within the places and spaces they inhabit, we begin to widen pedagogical borders and perceptions. The process of emphasizing place elements and associating them with other key concepts in Religious Studies develops students' awareness to place in other disciplines. As such, place-based associative pedagogy can strengthen connections to other bodies of knowledge, as evident in much of the scholarship on indigenous epistemologies. Additionally, a materialist approach such as place-based associative teaching and learning encourages experiential pedagogical practices that leverage embodied experiences and arts-based methods—visual arts, music, photography, narrative arts, etc.—to create and shape enduring understanding for students. In this case study, place-based associative pedagogy focuses on concrete conceptions of place and utilizes arts-based research methods to engage with the orisha.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL RATIONALE

I developed this pedagogical model for a course I designed as a part of a Place and Space graduate seminar during the spring of 2018. The goal of the assignment was to create an educational unit for undergraduate students that made use of some aspect of place and space. Focusing on Cuba, I designed a course to introduce undergraduates to Caribbean religions and divided it into four modules. The four modules move from a history of the Caribbean to an in-depth analysis of the most well-known orisha in Santería. The course concludes by paying attention to how Afro-Cuban religiosity is articulated through various mediums in popular culture such as music, film, literature, and art. The flow of inquiry commences with a historical overview beginning with the European encounter with the Caribbean and the Americas and culminates with slavery in the Caribbean. The course then examines the development of culture on the island through important Cuban writers from the twentieth century like Fernando Ortiz, Nicolás Guillén, and Lydia Cabrera, as well as artists like Wifredo Lam working during the Vanguardia period of the 1920's through the 1950's. Following the section on culture, the course delves into Afro-Cuban religions, looking specifically at *Regla de Ocha* (Santería), *Reglas de Palo*, *Abakuá*, and *Espiritismo*. Place-based associative pedagogy arises from the final section of the course that focuses on the orisha in Africa and Cuba.

A place-based associative approach is not only useful for teaching about traditions; it is also useful

to teach theories of religions to students. I draw from Thomas Tweed's theory of religions in *Crossing and Dwelling* to show how the *patakis*, mythological stories of the orisha, elucidate a type of fluid place-based religious orthopraxy through their confluences and flows. Santería, while not a land-based religion in the same way as Judaism, is however a religion where place matters; therefore, I suggest it is a place-based religion. Although the orisha are part of a place-based religious structure, they are not geographically confined and can (and do) move with their devotees. The orisha and their implements are portable, but they do not move arbitrarily. A significant part of the ritual knowledge that practitioners must learn deals with place—the placement of the orisha inside their homes, the places in their bodies and in natural and built environments over which specific orisha have dominion, and the places where practitioners must conduct rituals and discard of ritual remains. Knowledge and awareness of place are fundamental to the religious formation that practitioners receive from their godparents, the ones who initiate them into the religion. Religious knowledge, including knowledge that underscores the importance of place, is transmitted by godparents and elders in the religion through the use of narrative and storytelling.

Attesting to the power of narrative, Richard Zaner states, “We care for one another with the stories we place in each other's memory; they are our food for thought, and life.” Correspondingly, Charles Taylor maintains that humans understand our lives “in a narrative” meaning that we are placed through our stories. Stories orient us, telling us not only where we came from but also showing us multiple possibilities of where we can go. This understanding of stories as maps that guide human movement through places is a fundamental aspect that I privilege when teaching Religious Studies classes. Accordingly, I utilize arts-based research methods, primarily narrative inquiry, to show how, through their stories, the orisha are place-based deities. For example, when I teach students about the orisha in the Santería pantheon, I emphasize the natural and/or built environments over which each orisha has dominion and stress that the orisha have dominion over a particular place *and* are the particular place, as in the case of Oshún who is both the orisha with dominion over the river and the actual river itself. In return, the students often use the place elements related to an orisha to elucidate and elaborate points in arguments in their written assignments. Writing her term paper on Eshu/Elegba and other associated deities like Papa Legba in Vodou, a student in an African Religious Cultures class that I lectured in during Fall 2018, used a place-base understanding of the trickster orisha as the basis for her analysis. She explained, “Eshu/Elegba's and Papa Legba's identity as a trickster connects to his role both at and as the crossroads. His identity has been conflated with but is not that of the devil, and this distinction is important. Eshu/Elegba and Papa Legba are tricksters because they are the crossroads.” While I focus on narrative inquiry through the *patakis*, this method can be exchanged with music, visual arts, or other arts-based methods and still achieve similar results.

My pedagogical and research agendas ideally privilege indigenous epistemologies and methodologies—ways of knowing that rely on and are inseparable from spatial orientation as well as narratives revealing space and place. For African heritage and indigenous religious traditions, place and space are both spiritually and physically embodied ways of knowing. These ways of understanding and relating to the world can be seen in the rich oral histories of these communities. Coupling a placed-based pedagogy with arts-based methods is fitting because artistic expressions—song, dance, narratives, poetry, visual arts—are central to the ways in which African heritage and indigenous traditions transmit knowledge.

The importance of place cannot be understated. Place plays an intrinsic role in how events unfold, and conditions the way in which knowledge is produced, organized, and disseminated.

To create richer repositories of information for students, we must emphasize the importance of place in its rich and varied expressions and explicitly associate pertinent religious phenomena to place. The model I propose in this paper is specific to the orisha, but my overarching goal is that this pedagogical model offers a new and radically needed approach to teaching and learning in Religious Studies. It uniquely provides strategies inclusive of a wide range of traditions beyond those of traditional Western classrooms and provides a foundation for educators to build upon in ways that are practical for teaching traditions courses in Religious Studies.

THE ORISHA IN PLACE AND PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY

There are multiple ways to present the orisha to students as place-based deities—through their places in the natural world, their places in built environments, and their ritual placement. Focusing on the place elements present in the orisha's *patakis* and on the various ways in which the orisha are ritually placed strengthens associative learning pathways for students, giving them rich references with which to recall information about the orisha as well as other relevant information relating to Santería and the socio-historical environment in which it developed. By understanding the orisha as placed-based deities, students obtain a greater understanding of the catastrophic displacement caused by the trans-Atlantic slave trade, by immigration, and by exile. Moreover, the ways enslaved and displaced Africans were able to reinterpret the orisha in their new place(s) creatively speaks to the resilience and malleability of these traditions that allowed them to survive and flourish in the diaspora.

Before exploring the place-based elements of this case study, it is important to understand the cast of characters involved. To employ place-based associative pedagogy, I divide the orisha into three broad and sometimes overlapping categories. The first group contains nature-oriented orisha. The orisha in this group are those who have a direct affiliation, dominion, or stewardship over a specific place or type of place in nature. Examples include Olókun, the depth of the ocean floor; Yemayá, the sea; Oshún, Obá, and Oyá, rivers; and Agayú, volcanoes. To illustrate how these nature-oriented orisha are placed, I focus on a *pataki* of Olókun.

Olókun is the bottom of the ocean, the unknown depth, and unknowable world beneath the salt waters of the known world. As a place-based deity, Olókun represents the place where all that is lost in oceanic voyages ends up, including lives lost at sea. The *pataki* about Olókun states that Obatalá, the orisha of knowledge, peace, and the white cloth, keeps the androgynous orisha chained to the bottom of the ocean to contain his/her incredible power from destroying the world. From an associative learning perspective, understanding Olókun as the orisha of the bottom of the ocean creates a connection to the horrors of the Middle Passage thereby affectively linking the movement of bodies from Africa into the Caribbean and the Americas with the slaving voyages. Speaking to the unknowability of Olókun mysteries, Lydia Cabrera states that Olókun never allows his/her face to be seen, and practitioners who perform Olókun's dance must wear a mask that completely covers their face. Olókun's face, according to Cabrera's informants, is only visible in

dreams. Understanding Olókun as the ocean floor invites students to envision the unknowable depths of the ocean, similar to viewing Jason deCaires Taylor's underwater sculpture, *Vicissitudes*. Associating Olókun with the mysteries of the ocean's depth through an image like deCaires Taylor's *Vicissitudes* creates affective ties to the catastrophe of slavery, the intercontinental flow of bodies, and the uncountable deaths known only to the orisha of the ocean floor. Comparing Olókun to Neptune or Poseidon fails to convey the level of information that relating Olókun to a place can do. These place-based associations provide a richer and much more nuanced understanding of both Olókun's place within the orisha pantheon and the conditions under which orisha traditions came to the Caribbean.

Oshún is an apt orisha with which to bridge nature-oriented orisha to orisha with connections to built environments. Within Santería, practitioners often associate Oshún with the *La Virgen de la Caridad Del Cobre*, Our Lady of Charity, a Marian figure who is the patron saint of Cuba. Partly due to her affiliation with brass in Africa, Oshún is related to *La Caridad* whose effigy was discovered floating in the sea by enslaved workers of a copper mine located in a Cuban town known as El Cobre. The workers brought the effigy back to the mines where Spanish officials installed her in an altar. The faithful attributed miracles that occurred after the effigy's arrival to *La Caridad* and stories claim that whenever clergy members relocated the statue out of her altar to more formal setting she would mysteriously disappear and return to the mines. A distinctly Cuban *pataki* about Oshún tells of her arrival on the island and provides additional context to the affiliation between the orisha and the Catholic Saint. Oshún was watching as her devotees, her children, were taken away on slave ships and sought out her sister Yemayá to inquire about what was going on. Yemayá explained to Oshún that their children were being taken to a new place that was similar to Africa in many ways but different in that white people lived there too. Worried about her children, Oshún tells Yemayá that she will accompany them on their voyage to this new place but first would like Yemayá to lighten her skin and straighten her hair a bit so that all the inhabitants of this new place might better receive her.

Contained within this *pataki* and the story of *La Caridad* are several place-based elements. First, the Marian effigy is found floating in the sea by enslaved workers from a copper mine, echoing the fluvial orisha who approaches the orisha of the sea for help traveling from Africa to Cuba. Second, Oshún's association with brass in Africa changes to copper in Cuba, and the statue of *La Caridad* is installed in the copper mines in a town named El Cobre, literally copper. Lastly, because Oshún crossed from the African continent into the Caribbean with the help of Yemayá, it reasons that she is the only fluvial orisha in Cuba. Embodying Tweed's definition of religions, Oshún converges into Yemayá and flows through the Atlantic Ocean to accompany her devotees for whom she "intensif[ies] joy" and helps "confront suffering" in order to "make [a] home" in Cuba. The significance of place in the stories of Oshún and *La Caridad* cannot be overemphasized and stressing the place elements in their stories is crucial for student learning. These stories show how a nature-oriented orisha changes from a single river in Africa to all rivers in Cuba, and how a nature-oriented orisha becomes associated with a human-constructed place like the copper mines in Cuba. As evidenced by the previous example from a student paper, for students, place in these stories has a meaning-making functionality. Place is not an arbitrary part of these stories but rather an integral element that helps students recall important parts of these religious narratives. Students' engagement with place as a concrete conception rather than an abstraction helps them analyze and even theorize the orisha and their

respective attributes. The Cuban *pataki* about Oshún and the myth about *La Caridad* show how using a place-based associative pedagogy emphasizes connections and therefore associations between phenomena and the environment. This pedagogical approach strengthens learning by establishing connections to material place elements upon which students can draw from combining the power of narrative and storytelling with a sense of embodied placement to which they can relate.

The second group of place-based orisha are those connected to built environments. Orisha in this group relate to places imbued with function and meaning through human invention or intervention and include places like crossroads, cemeteries, and agricultural sites. The category of built environments also extends into places like railroad tracks, prisons, courthouses, and women's shelters. Included in this group of orisha are Eleguá, Oyá, Yewá, Obá, Orisha Oko, Ochosí, and Ogún. To explore an example of built environment associations with the orisha, I examine the *pataki* of Yewá, the orisha that presides over human cadavers and their decomposition.

Among the orisha, Yewá was the last remaining virgin and thus the favored child of Olofi. She lived inside Olofi's palace and tended his flower gardens. One day while fraternizing with Eleguá, the trickster orisha of the crossroads, Changó, the orisha of thunder equated with male virility, was bragging about all of his female conquests, bolstering that he had seduced every woman in the land. Laughing at Changó's lack of awareness, Eleguá told him that one virgin remained who lived in Olofi's palace. Determined to win over the last virgin, Changó went to the palace and made himself known to Yewá. Falling prey to Changó's temptation, Yewá looked at the orisha of thunder and instantly became smitten. Changó and Yewá ran off together and consummated their passion for one another. Months later, Yewá felt a growth inside her womb and knew that she was pregnant. Ashamed of her indiscretion with Changó and afraid that Olofi would find out, she reached into her womb, removed her unborn child, and buried it amongst the flowers in the garden. After some time had passed, Olofi called Yewá to the garden to inquire about some of the flowers. Yewá told Olofi about the new flowers in the garden and recounted how she had removed the ones that had died to give way for fresh blossoms. Catching Yewá by surprise Olofi then asked her what she did with the flower that was growing inside her womb. Grief-stricken and mortified by her actions, Yewá confessed, asking Olofi to send her away to a place where she would never see another man again. Olofi obliged and sent Yewá to the cemetery.

In the cemetery, Yewá became responsible for overseeing the decomposition of human bodies. She dwells within coffins and watches over corpses while maggots consume them and return them to the earth. Placing Yewá in the cemetery, and specifically inside buried coffins, recalls her role as caretaker of Olofi's garden and her burial of her unborn child in the garden creating multiple place associations for this orisha. First, her transformation from her status as a virgin gardener is an emotional story that locates Yewá's dominion inside cemeteries, and within the cemetery, inside coffins and caskets. Second, it accounts for Yewá's placement inside the graveyard along with Obá and Oyá. As an aside, it should be noted that Changó is very afraid of death (Iku) and ghosts and therefore Yewá's placement within cemeteries assures her that she will never have to look upon Changó again. Finally, this story rationalizes the ritual praxis of Yewá's cult, namely the observation that all her devotees must adhere to in placing the basket holding her tureen (containing her stones implements) far away from Changó's *batea*, a covered bowl made of wood

used to store his sacred stones and tools. The place-based associations in Yewá's *patakis* contain significant data about Yewá and Santería such as information about her origins and instructions for ritual praxis in the orisha's cult. The accessibility of this information for students is facilitated and enhanced by the emphasis put on the place elements of the story.

Yewá's *pataki* leads us into the third group of place-based orisha, the ways the orisha are ritually placed. Because the orisha are dynamic entities, many of them can be categorized in more than one place group, but all of them have their own distinct rules for ritual placement. Therefore, all of the orisha fall into the third group as place-based through ritual placement. Ritual placement includes the placement of the orisha within their *soperas*, soup tureens in which practitioners house their sacred stones and implements, as well as how practitioners situate those vessels within their homes, and how the orisha are placed on and in the bodies of practitioners. As with the stories of Yewá and Changó, the orisha pantheon and Santería's overall cosmology is revealed through the *patakis* and is reenacted through the placement of the orisha vessels inside practitioners' home altars. For example, due to Yewá's interactions with Changó, practitioners cannot keep her *sopera* and his *batea* inside the same room. In fact, a ritual convention for Yewá maintains that when consecrating Yewá as a part of an initiation, practitioners must prepare two separate rooms, one for Yewá alone and the other for all the other orisha since it is said that Yewá cannot stand the smell of men.

Describing orisha altars, David Brown states, "Thrones of the orishas—special altars . . . are often huge, stunning installations. Composed of colorful cloth, porcelain vessels, and beadwork objects, they rise above bountiful spreads of fresh fruit, flowers, and plates of prepared foods. Wherever important ritual events take place . . . thrones preside as commanding presences in practitioners' homes." The use of the word 'thrones' by Brown and others (including practitioners) is fitting for many reasons dealing with socio-political intricacies represented by orisha altars that fall outside the immediate scope of this project. However, amongst those reasons, and relevant to this study, is the notion that orisha altars present the orisha "in state," alluding to their kingly or queenly statuses. According to Yoruba myth, Changó, the orisha of thunder, was a king of Oyo who was deified after his death. Although Changó is not place-based in the same way that Olókun and the other orisha we have analyzed thus far are, his ritual placement is particular to his kingly status and the details from his *patakis*. Due to his constant warring with Ogún, the orisha of iron, Changó's tools, and his *batea* must be made of wood. As a reminder of his kingly status, Changó's *batea* sits on top of a *pilon*, a wooden mortar associated with Yoruba royalty.

The orisha of thunder is among the five orisha that most practitioners of Santería receive upon initiation. However, his placement in a practitioner's home altar is distinct in that he is typically not placed within the same hierarchical arrangement as the other four. Instead, practitioners usually place Changó's *batea* to the side, on top of his *pilon* placing him perpetually in state. As we have seen, the *patakis* in which Changó is featured contain many important details that dictate how this seemingly placeless orisha is placed. While thunder is not geographically fixed to any particular natural or built environment, Changó's status as king of Oyo, his rivalry with Ogún, and his seduction of Yewá all form part of this orisha's placement. Changó's stories, like all of the other orisha, include place-based particulars which dictate ritual practice.

CONCLUSION

Although the focus of this case study is to advocate for the use of associative place-based pedagogy in the Religious Studies classroom, it is important to acknowledge, however briefly, how educators can assess the efficacy of this approach in the classroom. Ideal assessment types are grounded in an arts-based practice and should be congruent with indigenous epistemologies. Building on recent uses of virtual reality environments in the classroom, example assessments can include having students create 360-degree videos that virtually recreate their understanding of place-based orisha. Alternatively, students can utilize digital story as well. Other visual arts mediums such as photography, drawing, painting, and collage in addition to poetry and story writing can also be utilized to assess if students have adequately understood the centrality of place in the tradition they are learning. As illustrated by the aforementioned student example, educators can also use more traditional assessments like term papers to effectively assess student learning. Ultimately, the goal is not to assess a student's artistic capabilities but rather their efficacy and ability to retell orisha myths and Religious Studies concepts through a creative use of place.

When I introduce the orisha to students through place-based associative pedagogy, I am also introducing them to the orisha's relationships with the people and places from which they emerged. Through this indigenous epistemological approach, students become acquainted with ways of knowing that highlight the complexities of reciprocity that are intrinsic to this religious tradition. This case study for place-based associative pedagogy aimed to show how religious traditions, in this case, Santería, can be used to teach students without deferring to a comparative approach, especially with Western traditions. By emphasizing the place elements in the orisha's *patakis*, place becomes the stimuli, the association, which triggers responsive learning in students. Calling attention to place elements increases students sensitivity to place and encourages them to focus on the ways place plays a significant role in religious practices. Using narrative inquiry as part of the arts-based methods paradigm shows that stories contain information about the environment that relate to religious meanings. Stories demonstrate that "wisdom sits in places." Encouraging students to be attentive listeners to indigenous discourses emboldens them to make associations by creating their individual pathways to knowledge. Indigenous discourse also shows students ways of successfully organizing their ideas in a non-linear fashion, privileging indigenous methodologies and epistemologies. In the case of Santería, place-based associative pedagogy highlights the relationships between the orisha and places and creates a language that enables students to understand the relationships between the orisha, practitioners, and rituals. Without using a comparative approach, teaching and learning religious traditions is like teaching and learning another language. Place acts as a widely understood vocabulary through which the words in a story are given functional, instructive, and multidimensional meanings.

NOTES

¹ Gregory A. Smith, "Place-Based Education." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, 2017, <http://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-95>.

² Gabrielle Weidemann and Gavan McNally, *Neuroscience of Associative Learning*, November 29, 2011, accessed May

5, 2018, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199828340/obo-9780199828340-0080.xml>.

According to the authors, “In the narrowest definition of associative learning, it is restricted to the learning that occurs during classical conditioning and instrumental conditioning. However, associative learning can also be used more broadly to encompass all memory for the relationship between events and as such includes other forms of short-term and long-term memory.”

³ Barbara Alice Mann, *Spirits of Blood, Spirits of Breath: The Twinned Cosmos of Indigenous America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1–2. Mann describes indigenous discourse as a style that challenges “the Western demand for Categorically Demarcated Linearity with Conclusions” and argues that Indians do not “feel the necessity to provide elaborate apparatuses shepherding the reader to a conclusion.”

⁴ See Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999); and Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2008).

⁵ Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 54.

⁶ Arthur P. Bochner and Nicholas A. Riggs, “Practicing Narrative Inquiry” in *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Patricia Leavy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 195.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. I use narrative inquiry as my method of analysis for the *patakis* according to the principles put forward by Bochner and Riggs, which state, “Narrative inquiry seeks to humanize the human sciences, placing people, meaning and personal identity at the center, inviting the development of reflexive, relational, and interpretive methodologies and drawing attention not only on the actual but also to the possible and the good.”

⁹ Eshu/Elegba is a name variant for the Santería orisha known as Eshu or Eleguá.

¹⁰ Arianna Murray, “The Limping Trickster: Analyzing Eshu/Elegba,” (essay, Emory University, 2018), 1.

¹¹ John Mason, *Orin Orisa: Songs for Selected Heads* (Brooklyn: Yoruba Theological Archministry, 1992) 4. According to Mason, the Yoruba conceive of art as “the propagation and investigation of wisdom.”

¹² Unless otherwise cited, the *patakis* in this paper come from memory as multiple practitioners throughout my years of research in Santería communities have taught them to me.

¹³ The place-based associations for these orisha are broadly based on their Cuban and Nigerian understandings. In Cuba, Obá and Oyá lose their affiliations as fluvial deities with Obá becoming the orisha of marriage and domesticity while Oyá becomes the wind. In Nigeria, Yemayá is a fluvial orisha that resides in the Ogún river while Agayú is associated with the desert and wilderness.

¹⁴ Lydia Cabrera, *El Monte* (Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1986), 37.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Jason deCaires Taylor, *Jason deCaires Taylor*, n.d., accessed May 5, 2018, <https://www.underwatersculpture.com/works/colonised/>.

¹⁷ Davide Carozza, "Jason de Caires Taylor, *Vicissitudes*," *Deep*, The Black Atlantic, Duke University, April 19, 2014, <http://sites.duke.edu/blackatlantic>. Photographs depicting deCaires Taylor's *Vicissitudes* gained viral attention across the internet when the images were interpreted as a memorial of the Middle Passage. However, according to Carozza, the artist did not create the underwater statue with those specific intentions but rather that the image became representative of the ways that viewers interpreted the piece.

¹⁸ Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Afro-Cuban Theology: Religion, Race, Culture, and Identity*. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), 80.

¹⁹ Raul Canizares, *Oshun: Santería and the Orisha of Love, Rivers, and Sensuality* (Old Bethpage: Original Publications, 2001), 8–9. This Cuban *pataki* also appears in the work of Cuban-American scholars Mercedes Cros Sandoval's *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santería* and in Michelle A. Gonzalez's *Afro-Cuban Theology*.

²⁰ Tweed, 54.

²¹ These three orisha are all associated with some aspect of cemeteries and burial grounds. Among practitioners of Santería, Yewá, Obá, and Oyá are known collectively as *las muerteras*, which roughly translates to the death women.

²² David H. Brown, "Thrones of the Orichas: Afro-Cuban Altars in New Jersey, New York, and Havana." *African Arts* 26, no. 4 (October 1993): 44–59 85–87.

²³ Joseph M. Murphy, *Santería: African Spirits in America*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 59. David H. Brown also refers to the orisha as being "in state" in his work.

²⁴ David H. Brown, *Santería Enthroned: Art, Ritual, and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, 270.

²⁵ Upon initiation, most practitioners of Santería receive Obatalá, Yemayá, Ochún, Oyá, and Changó. These five orisha are considered fundamental for any initiate in Cuban Santería.

²⁶ Basso, 121.

²⁷ Mann, 2.

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