

APPENDIX 2: FIVE DIFFERENT ŞÀNGÓ

I: The Personal Identity of Şàngó

The most logical conclusion we should come to is that there are now five different Şàngó:

(a) **Òrìşà Şàngó:** The Òrìşà that practitioners like ourselves worship. This Òrìşà Şàngó should be classed into the *plus 1* category of Òrìşà that I often talk about. *Plus 1* is a philosophical tool. Basically, we need to distinguish between the Òrìşà that were in existence before the creation of the Ayé (the natural world), and those that were created after the creation of Ayé. The primordial Òrìşà (i.e. those in existence before the creation of Ayé) are 400 in number, and those created after the creation of Ayé I put into a set, which I call the *plus 1* set. This philosophical tool is useful in distinguishing between the denominations of Òrìşà religion. All the 400 primordial Òrìşà are accepted as genuine Òrìşà in all denominations; but not all of those in the plus 1 set are universally accepted/worshipped.

All oral histories, Ifá poems and other genre tell us that Şàngó was born on Ayé. Òrìşà Şàngó is the son of the Òrìşà called Òrànmiyàn, who is a primordial Òrìşà. Two of Şàngó's brothers were: Dada and Aganjú. Often times, when people write about the mythical Şàngó, this is the Òrìşà they are referring to. Let Òrìşà Şàngó be **Şàngó 1**.

(b) **Monarch(s) Şàngó:** Various Ifá poems tell us that Òrìşà Şàngó reigned as the Alààfin of Òyó. So, it was the Òrìşà Şàngó (the son of Òrìşà Òrànmiyàn), who founded the Old Òyó Empire and He reigned as the first (some say his father was the first Emperor, and Şàngó the second Emperor). However, there are some references in some oral histories (and in some writings) to a Şàngó who reigned as an Emperor of the Old Òyó Empire about 1000 or so years ago! For sure,

this recent Monarch Şàngó is not the Òrìşà Şàngó we worship! My own (as yet unverified) speculation is that there must have been a Monarch who reigned about a thousand years ago, who adopted the nickname “Şàngó!” Now, this would seem weird, right? Except that it is not! It is still done up till today! The original Òrìşà Şàngó (i.e.Şàngo 1) was a performer, a dancer, and a “magician.” He ate fire, stuck knives into his eyes and stomach, created food out of magical gourds, etc. Many Şàngó priests and priestesses adopt this performer/magician way of life. And some of these performers are simply just called: Şàngó! Let **Òrìşà Şàngó** during his reign as the first or second Emperor of Òyó be **Şàngó 2**. And, let the Monarch who reigned about 1000 years ago and who called himself "Şàngó" (i.e. the non-Òrìşà) be **Şàngó 3**.

(c) **Şàngó 1 is a Reincarnation of Jàkúta**. There is a primordial Òrìşà called Jàkúta. Jàkúta was originally the one who had the power of lightning and thunder. In fact, the name “Jàkúta” literally means “Fights with stones.” Because **Şàngó 1** is regarded as a reincarnation of Òrìşà Jàkúta, events and activities that were performed by Jàkúta are often attributed to Òrìşà Şàngó. Let Jàkúta be **Şàngó 4**.

We now have a number of mathematical equivalences.

- Şàngó 1 = Şàngó 2
- Şàngó 1 ≠ Şàngó 3
- Şàngó 1 ≠ Şàngó 4
- Şàngó 2 ≠ Şàngó 3
- Şàngó 3 ≠ Şàngó 4

Notwithstanding the fact that only $\text{Ẓàngó 1} = \text{Ẓàngó 2}$, in an oral tradition where there are no birth certificates, no precise historical dates, no DNA, it is not surprising that scholars who are not practitioners will run the histories and activities of all these four Ẓàngo together as if they were all the same person. They are not.

(d) **Fake Ẓàngó.** Alas, there is Fake Ẓàngó ! Fake Ẓàngó is the one created by Christian missionaries. He never existed. He is a fiction. The better way of conceiving of the hullabaloo around Ọbaa Kòso is to use an analogy that almost everyone will understand. The Official Residence of the President of the United States is the White House. The White House is located on Capitol Hill. So, now imagine that a tradition developed in which “the President of the United States” is also referred to as: “The President of (at, or from) Capitol Hill.” This is exactly the root cause of the confusion around **Ọbaa Kòsò**. This is because: (i) there was no official Yorùbá orthography until about 60 years ago. So people just wrote Yorùbá words whichever way they wanted; and (ii) up till today many people who claim to write in Yorùbá (including most Yorùbá people and Yorùbá people who are scholars and professors in fields other than Yorùbá) are illiterate or semi-illiterate in the Yorùbá language! Most Yorùba people, including scholars and professors who speak fluent Yorùbá are illiterate when it comes to writing the Yorùbá language. Over 90 percent of Yorùbá people who are scholars have little or no education in the Yorùbá language. Yet, they go around thinking they have some type of innate ability to read and write in Yorùbá! No doubt: “Ọba kò so” is deliberate intellectual fraud! But the one point I have never seen anyone write about is the simple typographical error in the phrase: “Ọba Kòso!” “Kòso” is the name of the neighborhood in Ọyó where the Shrine of Ẓàngó (and possibly his palace) was located. So, there should be two a's in Ọbaa Kòso -- where the second "a" will mean: at, of or

from. That is, “Oba Koso” (with one a) means something like “King Kòso;” whereas it should be: “Obaa Kòso” (Emperor who reigned from Kòso). But now that Fake Şàngó now lives in books and in the minds of some people, let's call **him Şàngó 5**. Which, will now also mean that:

Şàngó 1 ≠ Şàngó 5

Şàngó 2 ≠ Şàngó 5

Şàngó 3 ≠ Şàngó 5

Şàngó 4 ≠ Şàngó 5

II: Two Approaches to Yorùbá Scholarship

We, therefore, also need to distinguish between two approaches to Yorùbá scholarship. Not one single practitioner in Nigeria is confused about whether Fake Şàngó is Şàngó 1, Şàngó 2, Şàngó 3 or Şàngó 4! The only people who will be confused about this in Nigeria will be people who got their ideas of Şàngó from books, or who do not speak native Yorùbá. In native Yorùbá, Şàngó is always “Obaa ...” (i.e with two a's), and as such there is not confusion what so ever!

III: Yorùbá Identity

Unfortunately, many scholars have Yorùbá identity all wrong! “Yorùbá” is not identified by race, ethnicity, or language. It is identified by the worship of the Òrìşà, and this requires the identification of a number of core theological practical-beliefs. These include:

- (a) Ilé-Ifẹ̀ as the origin of existence;

- (b) Belief in Olódùmarè – and entity that exists only as “live” itself – not, male, not female, not humanoid, has no form – just is live and that which keep things that are alive alive;
- (c) The centrality of Ifá and Sixteen Cowries divination;
- (d) The distinction between Òrìṣà (“Gods”) and Ajogun (Anti-Gods)
- (e) The worship of character, etc.

In short, Yorùbá identity is a “religious” one.

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