

Maarit Laitinen

MARCHING TO ZION

CREOLISATION IN SPIRITUAL BAPTIST RITUALS AND
COSMOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

This is a study of religious knowledge and ritual practices among the Spiritual Baptists¹ in Tobago. It explores the Spiritual Baptist belief system and religious practitioners' politics of self-definition and demarcation, and contrasts these to the ways religion and culture have been conceptualised in studies of Afro-Caribbean religious syncretism. Creolisation is shown to spring from the cultural resourcefulness of Spiritual Baptists rather than simply from a synthesis of two or more "original" cultures. The inventiveness and indigenouslyness² of the religion do not render it rootless, fragmented or teleologically constructed, however. An ethnographic analysis of the Spiritual Baptist cosmology and rituals demonstrates that the religion has a cohesive, if not bounded, structure, and that the cosmology is thoroughly rooted in the local world and materialised in bodily experiences and performances. The dynamic of structure and creativity, inherent to the religion, engenders the basic questions of the study.

CREOLISATION AND THE POLITICS OF ESSENTIALISM

On the first day we met in September 1996, Mother Cleorita gave me a tour of the St. Philomen Spiritual Baptist Church in the village of Black Rock, and explained that it was named after the saint who ruled the ocean. She told me of the importance of the Bible and about how items like the brass bell and the colourful flags in the church yard are used. At the *centrepole*³ she took up a calabash and then a *lota*, a small brass pot, and stated that they stood for the "African and Indian parts of the church." There were no Indo-Creoles in the congregation, however, and from the little I could understand, the *thanksgiving* service I attended on the following Sunday did not look anything like a combination of, for example, Yoruba and Hindu practices. Later on I was to learn in much more detail about the fascinating cosmology of the religion, of the journeys to different *Spiritual nations*, towns, and landscapes that comprise the *Spiritual world*, the dimension in which the Holy Spirit can be encountered. The cosmopolitan plurality in the rituals of Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches, and the exegeses that people offered in ritual and informal speech, were far too complex to fit into the models of "syncretic Afro-Caribbean religions" offered by many scholars and lay commentators.⁴ A juxtaposition of bounded and static African and Christian belief systems and their combination into syncretic mixes in the slave religions of New World plantations did not seem to explain the religion of Tobagonian sisters who danced with St. Francis in *Spiritual India*.

*I know these islands from Monos to Nassau,
 a rusty head sailor with sea-green eyes
 that they nickname Shabine, the patois for
 any red nigger, and I, Shabine, saw
 when these slums of empire was paradise.
 I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,
 I had a sound colonial education,
 I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,
 and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation.*

From *The Schooner 'Flight'* by Derek Walcott⁵

The diversity of people, ethnicities⁶ and traditions, and the multifaceted cultures of Caribbean societies have inspired and challenged authors and poets, social scientists, politicians and religious authorities alike. Where is culture in societies constructed for the purposes of a colonial plantation economy of different, hierarchically situated, diasporic people? How does one make sense of the connections between ports and harbours in the Old and New Worlds, the routes of ships, the diasporas now multiplied through emigration and tourism? Although the dilemma of addressing differences within a particular society and culture is by no means unique to the Caribbean, it has been particularly prevalent in Caribbean politics, literature, and academic research.

Many political standpoints and anthropological analyses of the Caribbean have rested upon a concept of culture as a static and bounded whole. Such a concept is fundamental to the ideal of pure and authentic cultural origins that has been quite popular in the Caribbean; a variety of voices at different times and from different socio-economic positions have presented the societies of the region as conglomerates of distinct groups of people, whose cultures are exclusive and can be traced back to the Old World, to Africa, Europe or Asia. Another well-known narrative has produced models of unified New World cultures, of social and cultural syntheses – creoleness. In the political arena the creolisation thesis has been utilised as an anti-colonial and nation-building ideology. Reflecting the dynamics of the political discourse, both students and practitioners of religion have added to these coexisting narratives. Syncretism, especially between African and European cultures, has long been a major topic in the anthropology of religion in the Caribbean. But although such studies have taken the mixing of cultures as their subject, cultural boundaries and the notion of distinguishable Old World origins of religious beliefs and practices have been central to this endeavour.

In this study I argue that creolisation is a process of invention and creativity rather than a jigsaw puzzle of cultural influences, and that the creoleness of the

Spiritual Baptist religion lies in the indigenouslyness, uniqueness and richness of its cosmology and ritual practice, not in a mixture of African and Christian features. The creativity comes about in liminal spaces within rituals, dreams and visions. Within these spaces, the ritual practice of the religion facilitates the acquisition of novel religious knowledge. And yet, despite this creativity and the significance of individual experiences in rituals, despite the global cosmology, the transitions, journeys, and inclusions inherent to it, the Spiritual Baptist religion is a system of beliefs and practices, the structure of which has historical depth and integrates churches and practitioners from Tobago to Toronto. The structure is formed of conventionalised beliefs and practices and maintained through negotiated norms of correct practice and knowledge as well as normative assessments of various co-existing religions in the Caribbean societies. A dynamic between a structured system on the one hand, and individual experiences and exegeses on the other, is inherent to the religion and brings about continuous transformation.

TOBAGO'S COLONIAL PAST

Situated 11 degrees north from the equator and northeast from Trinidad at the end of the chain of Windward Islands in the eastern Caribbean, Tobago covers 302 km². There is a cluster of ridges and hills in the central part of the island, whereas the southwestern end is flat lowlands. A forest reserve, crossed by valley streams, marks the eastern part of the island, and on the southwestern side the shore is bounded by a coral lagoon, the famous Buccoo Reef. White sandy beaches contour the shores. The flora and fauna of Tobago include various species from the South American mainland, since the island was connected to the continent during the last ice age. The tropical beauty of Tobago enthralls locals and visitors alike.

Tobago was inhabited by approximately 1200 Caribs, who dwelled in the western part of the island, and about three hundred Arawaks in the east at the time of the first European contact in 1498. After Columbus reached Tobago on his third voyage to the New World in 1498, Spain claimed both Trinidad and Tobago⁷ as its colonies. But whereas Spanish settlements in Trinidad were established soon after conquest, Tobago remained uninhabited by Europeans until the first Dutch settlers arrived in 1628, soon to be followed by the British. Subsequent invaders in the 17th century included the party of the Prince of Courland from present-day Latvia who stayed in Tobago from 1639 until 1690. The island is reputed to have been claimed by the largest number of different colonisers in the Caribbean, and the early period of expeditions and colonialism was marked by battles and forts. Eric Williams describes the first centuries of

colonialism in Tobago as a "never-ending free-for-all" and notes that "Tobago changed flags almost as regularly as it changed seasons" (1964, 51). In 1684 Tobago was declared no-man's-land by the French and the British and it remained neutral until 1763, when the British finally claimed and settled Tobago permanently and established its plantation society. In 1781 the French captured Tobago, and the island changed hands thrice between the two European powers until it was permanently declared a British colony in 1815. The indigenous hunter-gatherers and horticulturalists became virtually extinct soon after permanent European settlement, recalled today only in a few place names. In present-day Tobago, also the variety of European conquerors shows in nomenclature; for example, travelling from Plymouth to Crown Point, one passes places like Courland, Auchenskeoch and Bon Accord. The villages and former estates carry the power struggles of the colonial history in their names.

Compared to fully developed slave societies like Barbados or Cuba, the period of slavery was quite short in Tobago as well as in neighbouring Trinidad. It is possible that slaves were imported to the island during the alternating periods of Dutch, British, French and Courlander colonialism in the 17th century, but historians of Tobago have not been able to locate any records of forced immigration at that time. In any case, the settlements in Tobago prior to 1763 were not large. It was not until 1770 that the British completed auctions of land in Tobago and manpower was needed to clear the land for sugar plantations. Large numbers of slaves were brought to the island along with the new plantation owners, both British and French, and others were purchased from Grenada and Barbados. Whereas in 1770 there were 3093 slaves on the island, by 1775 the number had grown to 8643 (Archibald 1995). This number increased to 15 020 by 1791, during French rule.⁸ They worked in 48 estates, cultivating sugar, some cotton and indigo, and producing rum and molasses (Williams 1964, 58). The largest number of slaves, 15 470, was seen in Tobago in 1819, but after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 the slave population slowly declined, like in other British colonies; in 1834, as slaves were "emancipated" into apprenticeship, their number was 11 621 (Higman 1984, 415). After emancipation, two shiploads of free Africans were brought to Tobago in 1851 and in 1862. They were released from slave ships caught in the Atlantic by the Royal Navy and distributed to the West Indies as indentured labourers (Niddrie 1980, 99).

The Euro-Tobagonian population was never large. In 1770, there were 238 whites and 3093 slaves (Archibald 1987), and in 1811 the ratio was 591 to 15 084 (Laurence 1995, 30). The continued instability and warfare on the island before the final establishment of a British regime discouraged Europeans from settling in Tobago, and since slavery was abolished soon after peace was secured, the lack of free labour further lessened the motivation to move to the island.

The colonial government attempted to encourage European immigration by imposing quotas of white indentured labourers (Laurence 1995, 15-17, 225).

ORIGINS OF THE SLAVES

Higman notes that only a few West Indian colonies kept records on the origins of the slaves (1984, 21), and no such information concerning slaves brought to Tobago is available.⁹ Various sources indicate that slaves who were brought to Tobago, as well as to other West Indian colonies, rarely came straight from Africa but were shipped to a number of ports before their final destination. As noted above, many Tobagonian slaves came from Grenada or Barbados, which makes it even more difficult to trace their origins in Africa. It should also be remembered that many of the "ethnic" labels and tribal identities allotted to Africans by Europeans were colonial constructions, not actual autonyms of peoples; for example, Cormantee, Coromantee or Kromanty was a slave port on the coast of West Africa, but served as a marker of slaves' origins in colonial record-keeping. Laurence (1995, 40) notes that slaves in the Southern Caribbean were most often Mandingo, Igbo, Congo or Moco (Bantu) people, and it is likely that the slave population of Tobago consisted of these "ethnicities" as well. *Daylight*, a newspaper published in the Crown Colony of Tobago, mentioned "the Eboes, the Mandingoes, the Cormantees, and the Congoes" as ancestors of the "Negro" population of Tobago (31 January 1885). Archibald (1995, 3) recounts a revolt of Coromantee slaves on the Grafton Estate in 1770.

Local scholars have attempted to reveal the tribal pasts of Tobagonians by interviewing old people who remember their parents' or grandparents' accounts of their origins, and by studying names and place names as well as music and dance styles as indicators of a particular African ethnicity. The project was headed by Dr. J.D. Elder, who has written numerous papers on African cultural continuities in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as elsewhere in the Eastern Caribbean. In *African Survivals in Trinidad and Tobago* (1988, 16, 19) Elder suggests that there were people who identified themselves as Congo in Tobago in 1954, namely in Culloden Moor, Charlotteville, Pembroke and Belle Garden.¹⁰ In a later study (1994, i) Elder claims that the descendants of Africans in Tobago come from the Akan nation, the Aja and the Oyos, and that there are some people of Ashanti origin as well. One of Herskovits' informants in Toco in 1939, a woman from Tobago, said that "People in Tobago say the big people in slavery time brought plenty Congo slaves to work the estates." She had relatives who were Kromanti and Ibo" (1947, 27). Maureen Warner-Lewis mentions a Muslim Hausa man called Auta, later called John Joseph, who arrived in Tobago probably as a slave

in the 19th century, and was subsequently transferred to an estate in Trinidad (1991, 69). Elder argues that Yoruba people were fully absent from Tobago (1988, 21). This is noteworthy, since according to many scholars, the Yoruba belief system has influenced the Orisha religion¹² as well as the Spiritual Baptist religion. Today it would be difficult to find anyone who would remember or be aware of the ethnicity of her African ancestors, whether it be colonially constructed or self-identified. Labels such as Coromantee or Congo are hardly used except in drama and dance productions.

THE PLANTATION SOCIETY

Trinidad, colonised by the Spanish since 1592, was developed into a plantation colony only in the late 18th century as Spain welcomed Catholic planters, mainly French and some Irish, from the French Antilles and from the islands ceded by the British to settle in the largely uncultivated island. The British conquered Trinidad from Spain in 1797, but the planter class remained predominantly French (Brereton 1981, 13, 33). After emancipation, in 1834, Trinidad transformed into a more cosmopolitan island as the planters lost their slave work force. Between 1838 and 1917, 145 000 Indians immigrated to Trinidad as indentured labourers, along with workers from Portugal and particularly Madeira, France, Germany, and liberated Africans from Sierra Leone (Williams 1964, 97, 99-100). Venezuelan labourers, *peons*, arrived throughout the 19th century (Brereton 1993, 35). Some 2500 Chinese indentured labourers sailed to Trinidadian plantations between 1853-1866, but instead of remaining agricultural workers, many of them became shopkeepers and retailers (Anthony 1975, 145-147). The Portuguese, too, were shopkeepers, traders and merchants, specialising in groceries, dry-goods stores and rum shops (Ferreira 1994, 33, 37). A third group of merchants and traders, known mainly as cloth and clothes retailers, was formed of Syrian and Lebanese immigrants from the 1890s onwards (Brereton 1993, 35). Thus the Trinidadian population became markedly heterogeneous with ethnic niches that blurred any clear-cut racial boundaries between black and white, since the late 18th century.

In Tobago, on the other hand, large-scale immigration was not possible because of the small number and low income level of plantation owners or farmers, who could not afford to bring in indentured labourers or pay competitive wages. Tobagonian society relied upon the work force of emancipated slaves within the *métayage* or *métayer* system. In this share-cropping arrangement labourers worked on the sugar plantations without wages but received half of the crop as compensation, and the proprietors provided the land and the equipment,

getting a fixed amount of the sugar and molasses every season (Williams 1984, 344-345). But sugar was no longer king, like in the 18th century; the plantations became increasingly unprofitable after the 1820s, and by the 1880s exports of European beet sugar caused the prices in the world market to collapse, which led to the devastation of Tobagonian sugar production. In want of capital and immigrant labour, the economy of the island was ruined. Cocoa, coconut and copra replaced sugar on the plantations, and Tobagonians became a society of peasants with garden plots, the wages of the plantations alone being too low for subsistence (Brereton 1981, 154-156, 178). The Government's *Tobago Development Plan 1998-2013* shows that agriculture was never sufficiently promoted by the colonial government, because bad road and sea communications hindered the exports of Tobagonian products; also, the work force flowed towards industrialising Trinidad throughout the 20th century.¹³ In 1963, hurricane Flora destroyed most of the cultivation, and the economy of the island has since rested increasingly on the public sector and the tourism and hospitality industry. Sugar and cocoa estates have been turned into resorts, golf courses and fenced garden villas, and agriculture has become marginal.

FROM "SLUMS OF EMPIRE" TO "ISLAND IN THE SUN"

In 1898 the impoverished sugar colony of Tobago was annexed to Trinidad as a ward (Brereton 1981, 156). Rural, ethnically homogeneous¹⁴ and culturally British- and Protestant-influenced, Tobago's society and culture have been and still are different from the diverse, Latin and Catholic-dominated, urbanised, industrialised, and economically more viable Trinidad. The creole English in the two islands differs to such an extent that Trinidadians can somewhat snobbishly claim not to understand Tobagonian parlance. In Tobagonian self-definitions, Trinidad is often presented as a point of comparison rather than as part of a unified national culture.¹⁵

The major question in Tobagonian politics has been the neglect shown to the smaller island by the central government in Trinidad, which has continued from the annexation until the present. The two islands have related to each other as a centre and periphery. After independence in 1962, the Prime Minister Eric Williams founded a Ministry of Tobago Affairs to enhance Tobago's position. Frustrated with the uneven development and distribution of revenues between the two islands, Tobagonian politicians started to voice secessionist ideas in the 1970s and to call for internal self-government (Ragoonath 1997, 53). The Tobago House of Assembly (THA), a governmental organ with twelve elected representatives, was formed in 1980. Ever since its birth, the THA has negotiated

with the central government for more autonomy and power over issues that concern Tobagonians. It has, nevertheless, remained in a clearly subordinate position in regard to the government; for example, its status has not been added to the constitution of the republic, and all its policies must be reviewed by the central government (Premdas 1998, 108, 114, 118).¹⁶

Issues causing discontent in Tobago against the central government include the uneven distribution of revenues and in consequence the deplorable state of the island's infrastructure (roads and the health care system are frequently mentioned examples), unemployment, and the lack of legislative power. For example, the parliament, in which Tobago is represented by two seats against thirty-four Trinidadian seats, makes all the significant decisions concerning the tourism industry which is the most important source of revenue and employment in Tobago, but which has also proven to be a source of conflicts and social problems ranging from the alarmingly high incidence of HIV to confrontations between resorts and local fishermen.¹⁷ The *Tobago Development Plan* (106) states that the government's emphasis on the tourism industry is "a return to the monoculture with renewed vigour and energy but much less concern for its effects on Tobago."¹⁸ Also, it has been a systematic policy of the central government to release substantially smaller amounts of money to Tobago than what has been appropriated in the budget (Ragoonath 1997, 63).¹⁹

Today, Tobago is relatively scarcely populated with 51 390 inhabitants in 1998.²⁰ Whereas the southwestern side hosts the capital, Scarborough, the airport, most of the villages, agricultural lands and tourist resorts, the northeast is hilly and largely covered by a forest reserve. This division into "town side" and "countryside" is commonly recognised in Tobago. The village populations in the north and east are declining, as most employment opportunities are in the Scarborough-Crown Point area. According to official statistics and categorisations, 92 % of Tobago's population is of African, 5% of mixed,²¹ 2% of Indian and 1% of other, namely Syrian, Lebanese, Chinese and European descent (*Population and Housing Census 1990*). The Spiritual Baptist congregations consist almost without exception of people who would describe themselves as black or mixed; there are very few Indo-Tobagonian members, and the other minorities are not represented in Spiritual Baptist churches, except occasionally as visitors to thanksgivings, weddings and funerals. Here Tobago differs from Trinidad, where Indo-, Chinese- and Euro-Trinidadian Spiritual Baptists can more often be seen amidst the predominantly Afro-Trinidadian worshippers.²²

The class structure of the plantation society with a small European or Euro-Creole planter-merchant class and a large Afro-Tobagonian peasantry has disappeared, and the public sector provides most employment. According to the government's *Tobago Development Plan*, approximately 58% of the labour force in

1998 were employed by the government, 30% in private enterprise – mainly in the tourism and hospitality industry – and 10% in "small own-account activity" (9).²³ The official unemployment rate was 16% in 1993 (*ibid.*, 92), but actual figures of unemployment and underemployment are claimed to be much higher, the estimates in the media ranging from 25% up to even 60%. The percentage of Tobagonians who lived under the poverty line in 1992 was 17,5% (*ibid.*, 34). The class structure is founded on a large lower strata of un- or underemployed and low-waged workers, topped by a smaller but substantial middle class of clerical and service workers, technicians and professionals. The small upper class consists of local high-level professionals, managers and entrepreneurs. In addition to this, a new, growing elite is composed of foreign and Trinidadian managers and investors in the tourism and finance sectors.²⁴ European, mainly German, and North American land-owners – no longer planters, but entrepreneurs in the tourism industry and dwellers of luxury villas – stand out from the rest of the society not only because of their phenotype, cultural background and language, but also due to the exclusive, fenced residence areas that have been springing up in areas like Pleasant Prospect. The fact that much of the land is owned by wealthy foreigners, and that the tourism industry perpetuates the old hierarchy of foreign proprietors and an Afro-Tobagonian labour force, causes growing dissatisfaction.

Most Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists belong to the lower stratum of the society, for whom steady income or tertiary or even secondary education are not taken for granted. The colloquial term "poor people," used to refer to social stratification, connotes not only a low income level, but also scanty opportunities to educate oneself or to participate in political decision-making. But, although the bulk of Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists are self-employed, unemployed, temporarily employed in blue-collar occupations, or hold "government jobs" in areas like street maintenance, there are a few middle-class members as well: schoolteachers, clerks, secretaries, insurance agents, fire officers, nurses, supervisors or foremen in the public sector and so on. Differences between generations are obvious, and younger members tend to be better educated and to hold more permanent and better paid jobs than their parents. However, not all younger Spiritual Baptists, not even those under twenty years of age, have received secondary education, and there are many who have no hope for permanent employment.

The majority of Spiritual Baptist elders are neither highly educated nor steadily employed, although many are self-employed. The reason for this is the fact that in Tobago, many of the Spiritual Baptist elders are literally old, as compared to their colleagues in North America or to the clergy of other churches. Very few senior Tobagonians have completed secondary education,

and university graduates in the age group of over sixty years were less than twenty in 1990 (*Population and Housing Census 1990*). In Tobago, Spiritual Baptists place more value on the Spiritual skills and wisdom of a cleric than on her profane education, and well-educated young sisters and brothers respect and submit themselves to the authority of less educated, even illiterate, but highly experienced and Spiritually wise elders. The occupations of *Leaders* (male head of a congregation) during my fieldwork included a fisherman, a retired senior fire officer who took up taxi driving, another fire officer, a retired foreman in the public sector, and an old-age pensioner who used to run a supermarket. Several Leaders were or had been self-employed in agriculture, fishing, and animal husbandry. *Mothers* (female head of a congregation), on the other hand, had worked at home, but many had also been self-employed in agriculture, animal husbandry, and also in trade, selling fish, vegetables, fruits, or food products, such as *souse* (pieces of cow skin, pig foot or chicken foot served in a well-seasoned broth). Some worked at home as seamstresses. Matron Stewart, one of the pioneers of the religion in Tobago, had worked as a midwife, a matron, in addition to founding and leading several churches.

Although the income level of many Spiritual Baptists (and Tobagonians in general) is fairly low, most of the church's elders and their families have their own piece of land and a house. Also a few church buildings are on a Leader's or Mother's property. Those members who do not live on their "family land" may be staying with a relative, a common law spouse, or renting or leasing a room or a piece of property. Living arrangements are fairly fluid; members of the Spiritual Baptist church are no exception to the tendency of Caribbean lower class people to live in households of extended families and to move with relative ease to live with relatives, common law spouses or friends. Marriage is the preferred form of conjugal union, at least in the elders' discourse and in sermons, but common law and visiting unions are quite common among Spiritual Baptists – even some of the elders are not legally married to their spouse.

The harsh economic conditions, unemployment and lack of opportunities for tertiary education push Tobagonians to emigrate, either to Trinidad or abroad. The USA is by far the most popular destination for Tobagonians,²⁵ and Brooklyn remains the major centre for them as well as for other West Indians (Crowder and Tedrow 2001, 108). Canada, the United Kingdom and Caribbean countries follow far behind in the volume of Tobagonian immigrants. The resulting network of people, letters, phone calls and resources moving across borders has become an integral part of Tobagonian society, and of Caribbean societies in general (see Olwig 1993, Richardson 1998). This transnationalism is obvious in the Spiritual Baptists' lives as well, as discussed below.

RELIGIONS IN TOBAGO

Tobagonians are religious people. I have never met an atheist in Tobago – even those whose lifestyles are a far cry from Christian norms and who never go to church still may be staunch believers in God. Religion and God are normal topics in conversations, and many public and private occasions begin with common prayers. The *Population and Housing Census* (1990, 128) divides the population of the twin island state between religious denominations as follows:

DENOMINATION	TOBAGO	TRINIDAD
Total population (1990)	45 050	1 125 128
Anglican	10 641	122 787
Baptist (Orthodox)	1 823	33 689
Hinduism (Sanatanist)	12	109 873
Hinduism (Other)	314	157 167
Jehovah Witness	444	14 713
Methodist	3931	13 448
Islam (A.S.J.A.)	3	24 003
Islam (Other)	160	41 729
Pentecostal	4 189	84 066
Presbyterian/Congregational	111	38 740
Roman Catholic	3 867	330 655
Seventh Day Adventist	6 361	41 631
None	1 579	13 691
Others	10 584	88 203
Not stated	1 031	10733

Table I: Denominations in Trinidad and Tobago

The Anglican church dominates in Tobago with over 4000 members more than the second largest denomination, the Seventh Day Adventist church, followed by another American-originated group, Pentecostalism. Whereas Methodists are the fourth largest group, the Roman Catholic church, clearly largest in the country as the whole, is only fifth in Tobago. The Protestant predominance in Tobago – over 90% of the total census population – contrasted to the Catholicism of Trinidad follows directly from the different colonial histories of the islands; the Spanish and French influence in Tobago has been minuscule in comparison to Trinidad. In the country as a whole and in Tobago, the five

leading religious affiliations form the following percentages of the total population (*Census 1990*: xv):

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO	TOBAGO
Roman Catholic (29,4%)	Anglican (23,6%)
Hinduism (23,7%)	Seventh Day Adventist (14,1%)
Anglican (10,9%)	Pentecostal (9,3%)
Pentecostal (7,5%)	Methodist (8,7%)
Islam (5,8%)	Roman Catholic (8,6%)

Table II: The largest denominations in Tobago and in the country

Spiritual Baptists, Orisha, Rastafarians, Ethiopian Orthodox, or any other African-oriented religions were not included in the census of 1990. The categories 'None', 'Other' and 'Not stated' therefore include the members of these religions. The amount of "Orthodox" Baptists, apparently referring to the so-called London and Independent Baptists in Trinidad, is too high in Tobago, given that there are no Baptist churches on the island other than Spiritual Baptist.²⁶ It seems that some Spiritual Baptists have classified themselves as "Orthodox" Baptists in the census questionnaire – being orthodox is from their point of view, of course, quite obvious. In 2002, there were twenty-two Anglican churches, eleven Pentecostal,²⁷ several Adventist, a few Methodist and Moravian, and five Catholic churches (with only one resident priest) in Tobago. St. Joseph Convent,²⁸ which maintains a secondary school, was an important part of the Roman Catholic community. Also Seventh Day Adventists kept a secondary school, Harmon's. Spiritual Baptists lead the count of churches by far with the total of forty-three.

The number of Spiritual Baptists in Tobago can only be estimated. First of all, the number of initiated members is a great deal larger than that of actively practicing Spiritual Baptists; not all those who become baptised continue to attend church. Based on head-counts in over a hundred rituals between 1996-2001, my estimate of the number of actively practicing Spiritual Baptists in Tobago is about 1500-2000. Elders like Bishop Daniel and Leader Gerald find this number too small, and give estimates of 3000-8000 members.²⁹ They, too, acknowledge the fact that many initiated Spiritual Baptists do not attend church. Secondly, most of Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists have attended some other church prior to their initiation to this religion, some also after it, and many have been baptised in other churches.

Within Tobagonian society, Spiritual Baptists have long stood apart from other Christian denominations and have suffered from stigmatisation and

prejudices. This has continued the colonial tradition of denigrating African-influenced beliefs and practices. Between 1917-1951 the religion was illegal in Trinidad and Tobago, and even today the majority of Tobagonians and Trinidadians are largely ignorant of the beliefs and practices of Spiritual Baptists and associate the religion with backwardness, *obeah* (magic) and superstition. The fact that this locally developed religion has not been included in the statistics of the government is telling. In recent years the official attitude towards Spiritual Baptists and also the Orisha religion have become less judgmental, and the UNC government of 1996-2001 allotted the Spiritual Baptists a public holiday and a piece of land in Maloney, Trinidad, to be used for religious purposes (e.g. Henry, forthcoming). But it is a long way from these gestures to a state of affairs in which Spiritual Baptists receive equal respect and acceptance in the society alongside the European- and North-American-derived Christian churches.

ON "FIELD" AND "FIELDWORK"

In 1996, while working on my Masters' thesis on the values and ideals of young Tobagonian women, I saw a Spiritual Baptist mission at the Scarborough Market – perhaps twenty men and women, all dressed in white, preaching and singing. It moved me in an inexplicable way. I told two ladies standing next to me that I was interested in finding out more about this religion, and they advised me to go and meet Mother Cleorita of the St. Philomen church in Black Rock. On a Monday morning I travelled to Black Rock, found the church after asking a few villagers for directions, and climbed up the hill towards a blue building overlooking Grafton beach. The neighbours' dogs lazed in the yard, chickens stepped about. There were flags of different colours on tall bamboo poles in front of the church and a text "Welcome to St. Philomen Spiritual Baptist Church" painted over the entrance. Mother Cleorita was taking a rest on one of the wooden benches as I entered, hesitantly in my long dress with a scarf over my hair. She inspected me with a stern look on her face as I explained why I had come, standing in awe of her almost unwelcoming seriousness and yet sensing a strange feeling of security which she inspired. Like the innumerable people, locals and strangers, who seek out Mother Cleorita's help and advice, I allowed her to find out what I wanted with a few questions and the penetrating look, although I was not exactly sure myself why I had come. Talking about our first encounter much later, Mother Cleorita said that God had lead me to her that particular day. Some less elevated speculations of the white girl's visits to the Mother were also heard; for example, a driver who once gave me a lift to the

church had informed the other passengers after dropping me off that I was an American lady who paid Mother Cleorita "big money" to help to get my treacherous husband back.

Mother Cleorita invited me to the church thanksgiving on the following Sunday, and I started to go to the church every week. I soon got to know her husband, Leader Gerald Robinson, and their family, as well as the Spiritual family of the church. In December the Mother asked me to stay over at their house for their thanksgiving, and soon after invited me to move in permanently. I lived in Mother Cleorita's, or *Granny's*, as we call her, room in the upstairs of the two-storey building, with the rest of the family: Leader Gerald or *Daddy*, their two daughters and five grandchildren and a son of their Spiritual daughter. During my visits, first for seven months in 1996-1997, for a year in 1998-1999 and for three months in 2001, the household has changed somewhat as members have been born, moved, or passed away. In addition to these, family members and Spiritual sons and daughters who live elsewhere, either in Tobago, Trinidad, or New York, envelop the household in a network of kinship relations, visits, letters and phone calls, and transfers of money and gifts.

As the Robinsons' house became my home, I settled in the family as if one of the granddaughters, often childish, ill-behaved and in need of scolding but always feeling loved and protected. The initial feelings of admiration and respect towards Mother Cleorita and Leader Gerald only deepened once I got to know them better and to properly appreciate their spirituality, wisdom and sense of humour. Their children have been dear friends, and the grandchildren – perhaps Penny in particular, with whom I am close to the same age – likewise. The Spiritual Baptist religion was an integral aspect of family life; talking about rituals and religious experiences and interpreting dreams and visions was an everyday habit. Moreover, Mother Cleorita, who is a well-known healer and Spiritual worker, took care of people with different ailments and problems at the house and at the church.

In the church I experienced the same sense of belonging. Although I was initially drawn by the beauty of the representations – the colours, scents, flowers, dances, and music – and the inherent mystique of the belief system, as I learned more it was the depth of the Spiritual Baptist way of celebrating spirituality that really touched me; embodied religious experiences and sophisticated religious knowledge intertwined in a balanced way in their rituals. My religiosity broadened and deepened. In January 1997 I became baptised at St. Philomen church and went to *mourn*³⁰ a few weeks later. The decision to study the Spiritual Baptist religion as the topic of my Ph.D. dissertation came afterwards, and thus my position in the faith, for myself and those close to me, has always been that of a practicing member rather than a temporarily participating and observing

ethnographer. For example, Mother Cleorita and Leader Gerald always introduce me as their Spiritual daughter rather than as an anthropologist or a student.

Delineating one's role as an anthropologist in a prolonged setting of non-stop social interaction – living, working, talking, worshipping, laughing, and arguing with people – is necessarily arbitrary. The situations I have chosen to mention here as "fieldwork" do not form a neat period with a beginning and an end; neither do they exhaust my life in Tobago and other places where research material may have been gathered. My role as a researcher was by no means always (or even most times) the foremost aspect of my identity in Tobago, nor is it so anywhere else. People who have become part of my personal life are not easily turned into "informants," and it is difficult to carve close relationships or profound religious experiences into ethnographic data. In the practice of fieldwork, however, the choice to do research was at times quite consciously formulated, as I kept on taking notes, for example, or operating my tape recorder and camera instead of allowing myself to join in the *rejoicing* as fully as I would have liked to. At times the feeling of isolation that the task of participant observation created even in the midst of the congregation disheartened me to the verge of tears, when pursuing personal experiences of the Spirit and what could be called *communitas* seemed much more tempting and important than the note-taking. The sacrifice was unavoidable, however, since Spiritual Baptist rituals last for several hours, and without immediate documentation it would be impossible to remember the details of the proceedings. Also, when rejoicing and *entertaining the Spirit*, or *catching power*, as the term goes, one is unable to observe or to recall afterwards what has taken place. Eventually I managed to balance the work and the participation in an at least somewhat satisfactory way. My own experiences within the religion, however important to me, are not the topic of this dissertation; neither do I claim to know what others experience or to project my exegeses on anyone else, wary of James Clifford's reminder (1988, 37) of the subjectivity of experience and its insufficiency for ethnographic authority. But the experiences gained in participation have allowed me a better understanding of others' explanations and representations of their experiences. Instead of subjectivity, Michael Jackson writes persuasively, fieldwork "brings home to us the ontological priority of social existence," intersubjectivity (1996, 4). The limitations of individual experience are transcended by understanding, interpretations, and hermeneutics (Dilthey, cit. Bruner 1986, 5).

The Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists have always been quite supportive of my research. It was always clear to the people with whom I talked and participated in rituals that I was writing a dissertation, and in the churches I visited less often I was mainly known as a university student rather than a member of St.

Philomen's church. Nobody ever wondered about the relevance of such work: on the contrary, it was perfectly understandable and even laudable that someone wanted to write about the Spiritual Baptist religion. Some have regarded my work as an opportunity to correct misrepresentations and erroneous ideas of the religion and thus to improve its public image. Furthermore, given the significance that Spiritual Baptists lay on religious knowledge and the fact that by writing a book I was turning Spiritual knowledge into textual, publicly available knowledge, the elders I worked with wanted to make sure that I received "right" information and "correct" exegeses. I was allowed to participate in all phases of all rituals, probably partly because of the conceived importance of the documentation, but mainly because I was an initiated member and close to Mother Cleorita and Leader Gerald. The practicalities of documentation, the notebook and pen, were never a problem; rather than covering up what was taking place, I was often steered to a place with a better view of the proceedings. Some Spiritual Baptists also take notes of the sermons and the Biblical lessons of the services, which further normalised my on-the-spot documentation. However, I was hesitant to use the camera and the video camera in other churches than those I was most familiar with, although I was never told not to take pictures. Even in my own church, photographing in the midst of rituals felt awkward and disturbing and I did not find it worthwhile in the majority of the services I attended.

As a fairly junior sister in the congregation I can easily adopt a relatively passive role in the ritual proceedings along with the majority of the crowd, taking part mainly by singing, clapping and dancing. Sometimes I join the women's prayers or the *surveyors* who ritually invite the Spirit to the service, and in some churches I am asked to lead the prayers, to read a lesson, give a testimony or to preach. I have also assisted ritual specialists in many initiation rituals as a *nurse* or *labourer*. Preparing the rituals and cleaning up afterwards is a time-consuming task that often falls mainly on the sisters and Mothers of Spiritual Baptist churches, and I have helped in the kitchens, thanksgiving houses and churches along with others. In 1998-2001, I took part in about 180 rituals and their preparations in twenty-two Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches, in a few rituals at a Tobagonian Orisha shrine, and in different services in four Trinidadian and one Grenadian Spiritual Baptist church. I also visited two Spiritual Baptist churches' services in Toronto and one in New York. These rituals are documented in field notes, some also on cassettes and videotapes as well as photographs. Long discussions with elders of these churches were recorded. I also documented services of other Tobagonian churches, including Roman Catholic, Anglican, Pentecostal, Moravian and Seventh Day Adventist. The daily life at home in Black Rock as well as life in Tobago more generally

formed a large part of the fieldwork, although not always directly related to the Spiritual Baptist religion. The knowledge of Tobagonian society I have gained by participating in everyday routines and chores, shopping in the market or helping with children's homework, going to festivals and parties, weddings, wakes and funerals, or rehearsals of dance and musical productions, hairdressers and seamstresses' shops, and just *liming*³¹ with friends at their homes, has allowed me to situate the ritual environments and experiences that I have chosen to write about into a larger context. Finally, I have consulted archival materials at the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches in Scarborough and at the library of the House of Parliament in Port of Spain to complement the scarce secondary sources of the history of Tobago and of the Spiritual Baptists.

Mother Cleorita and Leader Gerald have undoubtedly been my most important teachers and collaborators in the research. I have participated in the services of St. Philomen more than any other church and spent long hours talking, asking questions and listening to stories, dreams and visions, sitting in the porch at home in Black Rock or at the church. But although their voices tend to rise above others in the ethnography, just as they do in our church, I have not presented their or anyone else's views and exegeses as general truths of the Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist religion. Elders of our church, Teacher Audrey, Reverend Charles, Captain Turner, Mother Theda and others, as well as Bishop Daniel and Teacher Claudette of Mt. Paran Perseverance Spiritual Baptist Church in the village of Bethel and Leader Brothers of St. Rita's Spiritual Baptist Church in Plymouth have also taught me a great deal, and the Leaders, Mothers, Teachers, and other members in all the other churches I have attended have been extremely helpful. Through participation in different churches' services and discussions with various practitioners, the religious knowledge and ritual practice of the Spiritual Baptists began to take form as a system; at the same time, it became obvious that much variation existed between different practitioners and churches. The richness of the religious knowledge and the constant shifting of its boundaries was further enhanced in the complicated but close relationship between Spiritual Baptist and Orisha religions. But along with the diversity in ritual practice and exegeses, what also came out was the undeniable importance of the elders' ongoing negotiations over orthodoxy and orthopraxy. As noted, different elders were genuinely concerned that I get "the right" information about the religion, even though the contents of this varied according to each ritual specialist and church. The Spiritual Baptists' efforts to demarcate boundaries around a fluid, constantly developing system of beliefs and practices – and a system it clearly is, although not bounded or static – was one of the most important of my research problems from early on in the "field."

Clifford (1997, 58) notes that "the geography of distance and difference [of the 'field'] alters in postcolonial/neocolonial situations, as power relations of research are reconfigured, as new technologies of transport are deployed, and as "natives" are recognized for their specific worldly experiences and histories of dwelling and traveling." Attempts to delineate Tobago as a "field" produce at best fluctuating boundaries far away from the Caribbean shores. It is obvious that neither the Tobagonian society nor the Spiritual Baptist religion are confined within the contours of the island. First of all, Trinidad, where the capital, government, and most job opportunities of the twin island state are located, is an inevitable part of the Tobagonian world, and many visit the larger island several times a year. Also family relations and the national media reproduce connections between Tobago and Trinidad. The transnational reality in which most Tobagonians live, practically everyone having family members, friends or neighbours living in North America or Great Britain, spreads the field of anthropological endeavours to a global scale. "Going back and forth" the way I do is quite normal in Tobago, as Tobagonians themselves travel to New York, Toronto and London to work or to visit family members, and as tourists from North America, Great Britain, Germany and Italy return to the beach resorts of Tobago year after year. Families receive dollars in envelopes and clothes and shoes in barrels from America, and many even travel from New York and Toronto to attend rituals back home in Tobago. There are "American" thanksgivings, for example, when Spiritual Baptist immigrants return home to arrange one of the main rituals of the religion. Many members of the Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist community travel and emigrate; Mother Cleorita travels to New York almost every year, and all the Spiritual Baptist elders I knew had been at least in Trinidad and other Caribbean countries, if not in the USA or Canada.

An illustrative example of transnationalism in the Spiritual Baptist religion was a rededication ceremony of Mt. Paran church in Grand Anse, Grenada, to which Mother Cleorita received an invitation from a Grenadian Bishop residing in New York. She, I, and two other sisters from our church flew to Grenada, where we stayed at the home of a Grenadian Mother who spends much of her time in New York. Airline tickets, money, e-mails, letters and phone calls criss-crossed the hemisphere prior to the event. In the ceremony itself, over two hundred visitors from New York, Trinidad, Tobago, and other Grenadian churches celebrated together. And if transnationalism spread the "field" while in Tobago, it has been no less evident from the outside. It is easy to keep in touch by phone and letters, even between Finland and Tobago; also, reading the Internet versions of the newspapers of Trinidad and Tobago has been a daily routine of mine for some years now, as it is for thousands of nationals of Trinidad and Tobago. Visiting homes of Tobagonians in Canada and the USA, eating

curry goat or *pelau*, listening to the newest calypsos vacuumed from the Internet and talking in the dialect about recent events "back home" exemplifies the blurring of the "familiar lines between 'here' and 'there'" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 10); visits by Tobagonian friends to my home have now extended the rhizomes of the field all the way to Finland.

All things considered, conceptualising fieldwork and the field as bounded units in space or time is impossible. The arbitrariness of my delineations of these follows from my refusal to conceptualise culture as an island which I could enter and leave at will. If fieldwork is fundamentally about social interaction, as I understand it to be, I cannot tell in any definite way where the line between it and other facets of that interaction, "free time" or friendship, lies. Therefore the juxtaposition of the researcher and the Other, or the question of insiders and outsiders is problematic – as if the distance between a subject and her Other would remain unaltered regardless of their interrelationship, shared lives and experiences, each forever locked inside a separate, bounded culture. The themes of intersubjectivity and the making of cultural boundaries, relevant to the analysis of the fieldwork, also form the basis for the main questions of this study of the Spiritual Baptist religion.

¹ By *Spiritual Baptist* I refer to all self-acclaimed Spiritual or Shouter Baptists – in Tobago, unlike in some Trinidadian churches, the latter term is not used as an autonym. *Baptist*, although often used by Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists as an autonym, here refers to those Baptist denominations who are not self-acclaimed Spiritual Baptists, i.e. European-originated churches, including Black Baptist churches in the Caribbean and in North America.

² Indigenusness means that the Spiritual Baptist religion, although most certainly drawing upon already-existing belief systems and religious traditions from Europe and Africa, developed into a distinct religion with its own structure, belief system, cosmology and rituals, in the colonial Caribbean.

³ Terms that have specific meanings in Tobagonian English or in the Spiritual Baptist parlance are italicised when introduced. A glossary and an index are provided at the end of the book. I capitalise Spiritual when it connotes the Holy Spirit.

⁴ The "transnational" globality of the Spiritual Baptist cosmology, although unique in its composition, is not exceptional in its inclusiveness. After all, *cosmos* and thence *cosmology* in general refer to the entire universe, the totality of all existence.

⁵ Walcott, Derek 1992: *Collected Poems 1948-1984*.

⁶ I use the terms ethnic and ethnicity to refer to social groups whose "categories of ascription and identification" are defined "by the actors themselves, and thus have the characteristic of organising interaction between people" (Barth 1969, 10). In the Anglophone Caribbean, such groups include *black, Indian, Chinese, white, Portuguese, mixed, Dougla, Spanish*, and so forth. Taking heed of Richard Handler's warning of confusing analytical and "native" categories of ethnicity, I note that these categorisations are subjective and do not correspond with the actual social organisation of the region, in which no neatly bounded "ethnicities," let alone "races" can be found.

⁷ The island of Tobago was called Tabaco by the Caribs; Columbus initially named the island Assumption, but already in 1511 it was referred to as Cabaco in a Cedula by the king of Spain (Archibald 1987, 7). Later the name Tabaco was used (*ibid.*, 10).

⁸ No free coloureds were listed in the census of 1771, but by 1790, 303 free coloureds were identified (Williams 1964, 58).

⁹ In Trinidad over 500 different labels were recorded, referring either to tribes or to shipping points and regions. Only 20 such "ethnic" groups consisted of more than a hundred individuals; in other words, the majority of slaves in Trinidad came from a few "ethnic" groups, but in addition to these main populations there were many individual slaves from a vast range of tribes and groups (Higman 1984, 22, 448-451). In 1813, the majority of African-born slaves in Trinidad came from the Bight of Biafra, 5520 in all; the main groups were Igbo and Northwestern Bantu (Moco, or Moko), and Ibibio. Kongos from Central Africa comprised another major group, 2450 in all, and Mandingos from Senegambia, 1421 individuals, were also predominant. Other groups of over 300 people were Kwakwa and Kormantyn or Coromantee. The total amount of African-born slaves registered in Trinidad in 1813 was 13 984, but 11 633 slaves from other colonies were added to these, so that the total number was 25 696 (Higman 1984, 448-453).

¹⁰ Elder quotes Alvin Allen of Culloden, who in 1954 recalled *Congomen* and their drums from his childhood (1988, 19). Elder himself also remembers hearing Congo music on the hills of Charlotteville in 1940 as women played Congo drums, *tambo-bamboo* and danced *quelbe*, "reputed to be a very wild erotic dance for females only" (*ibid.*, 19-20).

¹¹ There is a street named Ebo Gully in the village of Les Coteaux in Tobago.

¹² The Orisha religion is another Afro-Caribbean creole religion, developed in Trinidad in the 19th century. Its linkages to West African, and particularly Yoruba, religions are clearer than in the Spiritual Baptist religion; for example, Yoruba names are used for many of the orishas or powers, and Yoruba chants form a major part of the ritual language.

¹³ A Social Survey of the Poverty Situation in Tobago. Caribbean Conference of Churches. 1988.

¹⁴ Again, it should be noted that the term ethnicity here refers to local categories, not to actually distinguishable social groups or to the precolonial African identities of Tobagonians.

¹⁵ See for example Premdas 1992, 118-119; Walker 1987.

¹⁶ In 1996-2001, with the NARite Hochoy Charles as the Chief Secretary and UNC's Basdeo Panday as the Prime Minister, the relationship between the House of Assembly and the government

deteriorated rapidly. Charles demanded more autonomy and funds for Tobago, which the UNC government declined. As the dialogue reached a dead end, Tobagonians preferred the PNM in the THA elections in 2001, and the negotiations have since proceeded more smoothly.

¹⁷ A much publicised example of such confrontations is the continued argument between the company that owns the surroundings of the most popular tourist beach in Tobago, Pigeon Point, and local fishermen, whose free access to the area has been denied.

¹⁸ In 1988, *A Social Survey of the Poverty Situation in Tobago* by the Caribbean Conference of Churches noted that "the most striking feature of the 1988 survey was the overwhelmingly positive welcome accorded to tourists [---]. No one seemed to address [---] the foreign domination and control over the local tourist market. But as revealed in studies of the international tourist trade, the lowpaying, semi-skilled jobs at the hotels are much sought after by a largely unemployed people."

¹⁹ The topic has been regularly discussed in the *Tobago News*.

²⁰ Annual Statistical Digest 1997.

²¹ The category "mixed" creates an illusion that the other categories would somehow represent "pure" ethnicities, when the census data in fact only reflects respondents' own definitions of their ethnicities.

²² As a rule, I employ the terms Afro-, Chinese-, Euro-, and Indo-Tobagonian or -Trinidadian when referring to the claimed ethnicities of the nation's population. The native terms (e.g. black, Indian, mixed, Dougl'a and so forth) would facilitate more specific references to local definitions of ethnicity than the terms I have opted to use; also, the latter connote equally static and bounded categories as the indigenous ones. However, for the sake of clarity I follow the local media and academy in applying terms like 'Afro-Trinidadian' or 'Indo-Tobagonian'.

²³ The sphere of Tobagonians' employment and economic activities stretches overseas to the metropolises of North America and Europe; in this sense the statistical view offered here is distorted.

²⁴ Population and Housing Census 1990; Tobago Development Plan 1998-2013.

²⁵ Tobago Development Plan 1998-2013.

²⁶ Plummer notes that first Baptist missionaries were sent to Tobago in 1988 (1998, 51).

²⁷ Tobago is one of the island districts of PAWI (Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies, formed under the auspices of PAC, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada) (Walker 1987, 98).

²⁸ Three of the Sisters of St. Joseph arrived in Tobago in 1942 from Trinidad to found a primary school, and in 1967 the St. Joseph Convent, a private secondary school, was established. Sister Agatha has been working in the Convent continuously since 1942, whereas most other sisters spend shorter periods on the island. Charity work is, along with education, a major objective of the Convent.

²⁹ Houk (1995, 77) gives a rough estimate of 11 000 Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad as the multiple of the assumed number of churches and the assumed number of their affiliated members. The editor of the *Spiritual Baptist News* said that the paper aimed at full circulation among the nation's 120 000 Baptists. Bishop Rodney Thomas found this figure "a bit low," estimating the total amount not far from 200 000. Archbishop Barbara Gray-Burke said that her diocese alone numbered 200 000 strong. The Bishops' estimates would thus total 400 000 Spiritual Baptists – nearly one-third of the total population (*Sunday Express*, January 28 1996).

³⁰ A central rite of passage that consists of seclusion, sensory deprivation, fasting and praying.

³¹ "To pass the time in idle pleasure" (Baptiste 1994, 102).

PART I

CREOLISATION

In Chapter One I map out the religions and denominations in the Tobagonian history, showing that neither Christianity nor African religions have been unitary entities in the social world of the Spiritual Baptists, but rather diverse and contested continuums of beliefs and practices. By giving insights into the spectrum of different religions and their hierarchical relationships in Tobago, I provide background for later analyses of Spiritual Baptists' religious resourcefulness and demarcations. The second half of the chapter outlines the development of the Spiritual Baptist religion amidst the negotiated power relations of Euro- and Afro-Creole cultures in the Trinidad and Tobagonian society. Chapter Two continues with the thematic of the cultural construction of "Christianity" and "African religion" in Caribbean political discourses, in the anthropology of syncretism, and in the Spiritual Baptist belief system, concluding with a theory of creolisation as a process of cultural creativity.

1. CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICAN RELIGIONS

The history of the Spiritual Baptist religion arises from the movements of people and merging of cultures emblematic of the Caribbean region. Numerous European and American Christian denominations along with Kabbalah practitioners and Masonic fraternities, the African religions of the slaves and varieties of Islam and Hinduism have coexisted in dialectical relationships in the post-Columbian Caribbean. The interrelationships of these religions have reflected the hierarchical power relations of the colonial plantation societies, which have been most notable in the subjugation of African beliefs and practices, but also obvious in the contestations between Christian denominations, like the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches in Trinidad. Indigenous to the Caribbean, religions like the Spiritual Baptist have developed in societies in which the religious topography has been hierarchical but also very diverse and fluid.

RELIGIONS IN TOBAGO

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The Anglican church and the Bishop of London had a foothold, although quite a shaky one, in Tobago since the first period of British reign, 1763 – 1781. The first Anglican minister, Reverend Walter Carew, arrived in Tobago in 1781 (Ottley 1950, 85). Only one rector was responsible for running all the seven parishes into which Tobago was divided in that era, and the position of this clergyman was often vacant during the turbulent years around the turn of the 19th century. In addition to stable clergy, Tobago was also lacking a church building (Caldecott 1970, 47), and services were held at the Scarborough courthouse. The first Anglican church was built in Scarborough only in 1819 (Laurence 1995, 182-184). The Anglican church has been the largest and most influential denomination in Tobago throughout its colonial history, except during the short French regimes.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The first parishes of the Roman Catholic church were founded in Scarborough and Delaford in 1892 (J. Harris 1998, 183), but given the French presence in Tobago since the 17th century, Catholicism influenced the society long before that. Nardin (1969, 87) describes a mass held at an inauguration ceremony for the portrait of the King of France, sent from Paris to Tabago (sic) in 1787, during which *Te Deum* and *Domine Salvum fac Regem* were sung at the portrait. Woodcock (1971, 182) supposes that the Anglican church "faded before the Roman Catholic" in 1781-1793, and hence the lack of church buildings and clergy. An interesting reference in the General Record book at the office of the Catholic church in Scarborough concerns a group of Catholic sisters called *Religieuses de la charité*, working in Tobago in 1790.¹ Some of the *négrites* or *négresses* baptised by Catholic priests were living with this group, and in other cases the godmother was a resident. The Capuchins have also had a base in Tobago in the 1790s; according to the Archives of Martinique, they were functioning in the parish of Saint-Laurent du Lamentin and had missions on the islands of Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Bart, Deisirade, St. Lucia and Tobago, under the Prefect Father Paulin.

In the second half of the 19th century the Roman Catholic church started to enhance its position in Tobago. A census from 1871 (*The Tobago Gazette* 22 July 1871) lists 36 Roman Catholics within the total population of 17 054. Although no actual church building existed, Catholicism was practiced in Tobago at least from the 1860s onwards.² Maynard (1968, 113) states that after Tobago was annexed to Trinidad as a ward in 1889, the Roman Catholic church on the larger island started to send a large number of priests to Tobago, and that along with churches, Catholic schools were founded.

The coexistence of Anglican and Catholic churches was not unproblematic. The first Catholic parish of St. Joseph was founded in Trinidad already in 1592 (J. Harris 1998, 185), but Protestant influence reached the island comparatively late, after the British conquest in 1798, and the Anglican church of Trinidad was established only in 1844, whereas it had been introduced to colonies like Jamaica in the 1620s (Titus 1998, 225) and in Tobago in the 1770s. Later on in the 19th century the Anglican church challenged the Roman Catholic as the major Christian denomination of Trinidad. Antagonism between Anglo-Saxon and Latin colonials and their churches was prevalent in Trinidad throughout the 19th century, as the British confronted a long-established Catholicism upheld by the powerful elite of French Creoles. In Tobago, there was a fervent discussion in *The News*, as Anglicans of various pseudonyms – "Anglican," "Protestant,"

"Review" – argued for the Church of England to be the established church of Tobago and against "the Romish church."³

MORAVIANS⁴

Moravian missionaries were the first to bring the Christian gospel to Tobagonian slaves and to baptise them (Athill-Horsford 1998, 158). In 1787, when the island was under French rule, Reverend John Montgomery was invited to found a mission in Tobago by a local British estate owner, John Hamilton, who wanted to convert his slaves to Christianity to offer them the possibility of salvation (Maynard 1968, 63). *Comte* Dillon, the French Governor of Tobago, offered Montgomery and the mission his support (Archibald 1995, 88). In 1827, after the mission had been temporarily discontinued due to a turbulent political situation, with France and England taking turns as colonial powers, the Hamilton family invited new missionaries to Tobago (Douglin 1986, 170). The first Moravian church was founded in Montgomery in 1828. By 1834 slaves were "crowding to the church" and hundreds of children attended Sunday school. The ministers also visited plantations and taught the apprenticed labourers the principles of Christianity (Douglin 1986, 175, quoting Report from Lt. Governor, June 25 1835).

PRESBYTERIANS

Another Protestant organisation, The London Missionary Society, also aimed its work at the slave population. The Society consisted of nonconformist sects in England but was dominated by Congregationalists or Presbyterians, also known as the Church of Scotland. A plantation owner (presumably Scottish) asked the LMS to send a missionary for the slaves in Tobago in 1807, and the congregations of the Presbyterian mission consisted mainly of Afro-Tobagonians. The LMS built *kirks* in Scarborough in 1813, in Goldsborough and Plymouth, and Presbyterian clergymen also preached at Betsy's Hope.⁵ However, the denomination did not take root in Tobago, and by 1871 the Presbyterian church received no allowances from the state, its "interests being entirely cancelled" (*The Tobago Gazette* 11 August 1871). That year there were only 37 members of the Church of Scotland in Tobago (*The Tobago Gazette* 22 July 1871).

WESLEYANS (METHODISTS)

Bernard (1980, 25; see also *The Tobago Gazette* 2 February 1872) dates the arrival of Methodists in Tobago at 1818. A prominent gentleman of Scarborough, Mr. Cunningham, invited and financed the visit of a Methodist minister to Tobago in

1817, and in 1824 the first Methodist church was founded. *The Methodist Church Tobago Circuit* (1986, 11) notes that most members of the church in those days were planters, and that missionaries found the slaves uninterested and "with a low level of intelligence." Douglin (1986, 167) contradicts this by stating that in 1820 the Methodist mission had a membership of four whites, forty-six slaves and two missionaries. Methodists also founded schools for "Negro" children in Tobago (Bernard 1980, 25). By the time of the emancipation the Wesleyans had churches in Scarborough as well as in the parish of St. George, and the membership amounted to 1250 people (*Report on Churches 1835*, cit. Douglin 1986, 175).

SECULARISATION AND PROSELYTISING: EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN TOBAGO

The planter class of the island attempted to emulate European lifestyles, maintaining European identity and superiority regardless of their position as a small minority against a huge slave population. Although Christianity was part of this European identity, Patterson (1982, 72) argues that Anglican planters in the Caribbean in general abandoned religion or made mockery of it. Most Europeans arrived with fixed contracts and with the purpose of making a fortune, and religion was hardly relevant in these circumstances (Glazier 1998, 107). Douglin (1986, 172) claims that the Anglican clergymen "lacked a true sense of vocation for religious duties," and quoting Lt. Governor Robinson's address to the Legislature on March 14, 1822, illuminates the devotion of the laymen:

The conduct of the shopkeeper (with the exception of one or two laudable examples), and that of lower orders, is unexampled for idleness and dissipation, disgraceful to a Christian country. Every description of tradesman carries on his work (even during the hours of Divine Service) in the same open manner as on weekdays. The grog shops are filled with customers, and the streets with noise and clamour at that period of the day when all true Christians endeavour to draw nearer to their maker and preserver.

In Tobago, secularisation was inevitable as proper churches were not available for long periods of time. The population was too large for a single Anglican rector to cover, and Marshall (1980, 5), quoting William Doyle's *An Account of the British Dominions Beyond the Seas* (London 1770), notes that children of Tobagonian whites died unbaptised, and that many were buried without funerals, which was a "scandal and great infamy of the Church of England."

The introduction of Christianity to slaves and free coloureds began in the late 18th century. The policy of the Catholic church in most Spanish, Portuguese

and French colonies was to Christianise slaves *en masse*, without specific concerns for their actual religious conversion, but in Tobago the pace was fairly slow. The Moravian missionary John Montgomery mentioned in 1790, during French rule, that many "town negroes" had been baptised by Roman Catholic priests (Woodcock 1971, 184). An aged hand-written record copied in a General Record book at the office of the Catholic church in Scarborough mentions fourteen such baptisms in 1790, along with two baptisms of children of the planter class. Similarly, the pace with which the Moravian and other Protestant missionaries saved souls was fairly slow, and the majority of the slaves remained unconverted in the early 19th century. Laurence (1995, 194) estimates that at best only 25% of the estate populations attended missionary services, and that very few slaves were actually baptised; Bernard (1980, 11) calculates there were about fifty baptised slaves by the time the Moravian Brethren left Tobago in 1802. Reasons for the tardiness include the policy of both Moravians and LMS missionaries to avoid mass baptisms and to only baptise true believers (Bernard 1980, 14), which was typical of Protestant conversion techniques in general.⁶ It was also difficult in practice to arrange meetings when slaves had to toil from 5 am until 7 or 8 in the evening. The general indifference or even hostility of plantation owners towards the conversion of their slaves, as well as the shortage of funds, which led to the abolishment of the Moravian mission in 1802 and the LMS in 1813, complicated the process further. Also, many slaves hoped to improve their material living conditions by accepting the new doctrine of Christianity, only to find out that the atrocities of slavery continued regardless of their religious conviction, and thus the initial enthusiasm with Christianity did not last (Laurence 1995, 187-189, 194-195.) Maynard (1968, 100) claims that plantation owners had to force their slaves to the gospel meetings, because the slaves suspected the new doctrine would keep them subservient to their masters and also because the language of the missionaries was difficult for many slaves to understand. All in all, a small proportion of the African population in southwestern plantations was converted into Christianity at the beginning of the 19th century, and the eastern half of Tobago remained untouched by Christian influence in 1813.

The Anglican church "generally tended to ignore the coloureds" in the West Indies (Laurence 1995, 184), and its rector was mainly catering for the religious needs of the white population. Nevertheless, church registers indicate that some free coloured and black babies were baptised as early as 1781 (Archibald 1995, 147-148). *The Register of Baptisms in the Island of Tobago* at the office of the Anglican church in Scarborough lists baptisms from 1816 till 1830. Until 1827 the number of baptisms remained low, between 20 and 50 a year. Among these,

most of the baptised were described as black, and Rector W.I. Wilson also marked the status of the parents as free *blackwoman* or *-man*, coloured, or slave.⁷ In 1827, as emancipation was drawing closer, the policy of the Anglican church changed, and mass baptisms on the plantations began. Over 1400 slaves were baptised that year, and the strategy was to baptise the slaves of one estate on the same day: for example, on June 13, 1827, 118 slaves of the heirs of A. Napier, on the estates of Mancheston, King's Bay, Benlomen, and Lucy Vale, were baptised by A. Goddard.⁸

Many plantation owners were disinterested or reluctant to introduce Christianity to their slaves (Ottley 1950, 84, also Laurence 1995, 184), because "it would render them [the slaves] worse servants by inspiring them with higher notions than it was prudent to entertain and consequently with a spirit of independence" (Coke 1808, cit. Marshall 1980, 6). But whereas some planters were afraid that Christianising the slaves might bring about subversion, conversion was seen as an instrument of further submission by others, while yet others were probably being paternalistically benevolent. The clerics and missionaries of the Anglican, Catholic, Moravian, Presbyterian and Methodist churches refrained from destabilising the status quo or trying to improve the slaves' conditions (Murrell 2000, 15). Douglin (1986, 169, 170) notes that Methodist missionaries in Tobago were instructed by the General Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society not to teach the slaves without the permission of the planters and not to cause them any inconvenience; they were also forbidden to interfere in the social conditions of the slave population. Moravian missionaries preached to the slaves about virtues of fidelity, industry, submission and respect for authority and refrained from teaching the slaves about principles of equality, thus supporting the prevailing social structure and securing their own position in planter society as well as their financial support. Holder (2000, 121) quotes the Anglican bishop in Barbados, William Hart Coleridge, who urged his congregation in 1827 to be "just and equal as masters, obedient as servants; if bond, with good will doing service, if free, not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as servants of the Lord."⁹ The message of passive submission was appreciated by planters, because it "is not only benefit to the slaves but enhances the masters' profits as well," as articulated by a Suriname plantation-owner (Price 1990, 418). Douglin points out that the missionaries' work helped to stabilise the hierarchy between slaves and planters in the time before emancipation when humanitarian voices had started to challenge the institution of slavery and call for social reforms; "The missionaries were able to inculcate a sense of moral obligation, which to a certain extent lessened the need for force to maintain his racial and social subordination in the society" (1986, 171).

After emancipation the need to preserve the social order by Christianising the former slaves was acute, and planters gave their full support to the work of the Church of England and other Protestant missionaries in converting the ex-slave population (Douglas 1986, 174). The former slaves themselves reacted to the efforts in the expected manner, and the few churches of the island were full on Emancipation Day of 1838: "Nothing could be more admirable or more gratifying than the silence and decorum which was maintained throughout the service."¹⁰ Lt. Governor Darling praised the clergy of the Church of England as well as the Moravian and Wesleyan missionaries for the "advancement made by the labouring population in their progress towards a more perfect state of civilization."¹¹ More than half of the Tobagonian population of 13 208 attended Christian worship in 1845.¹² There were seven Anglican churches and eight Moravian and Methodist churches on the island. Moreover, the Anglican church had four ministers, after decades of shortage in the clergy. The total amount of schools held by the churches was eighteen in 1845.¹³

Dayfoot (1999, 202) declares that the evangelisation of the Anglophone Caribbean was "more or less completed" by the later decades of the 19th century, except of the East Indian Hindu and Muslim populations. In the second half of the 19th century the three main denominations in Tobago, Anglican, Moravian and Wesleyan, were firmly established. Each had several churches and schools on the island.¹⁴ In the newspapers these three groups were mentioned almost weekly, and special coverage was given to the Anglican and Wesleyan services and functions.¹⁵

All in all, early Christianity in Tobago, although represented by several denominations with partly conflicting exegeses and practices, promoted the "God of the plantation" (Hamid 1973, 126); interpretations of the Scripture supported the submission of the slaves and the stratification of the plantation society, a creolised version of Christianity in itself. The dissident, pro-abolition Baptist missionaries, influential in Jamaica and Trinidad,¹⁶ never arrived in Tobago, and distinctly Black churches, like the Jamaican Baptist churches with Black leaders and preachers (see for example Erskine 1998) were absent from the Tobagonian society. But although none of the historical sources discusses the experiences and interpretations of Christianity by Afro-Tobagonians, there is no reason to expect that they would necessarily have echoed the official, oppressive version of the Europeans; research shows that Christianity became a powerful source for identity formation and resistance in slaves' exegeses in the USA (Raboteau 1978) and in Jamaica (Erskine 1998, 71, 75, 81). Also, Christian cosmology, amalgamated with features of African religions, offered a basis for novel belief systems with strongly subversive potential.

OTHER EUROPEAN BELIEF SYSTEMS

Along with the various Protestant and Catholic denominations, also other representatives of European belief systems were active in the colonial Tobago. Masonic lodges¹⁷ have long been part of Tobagonian society. Usually referred to as (the) *lodge*, these fraternities are invisible in daily social life, but a notable number of Tobagonians belong to them. The first masons in Trinidad and Tobago were probably British. First mentions of lodges in Tobago that I have found were in *News* issues from 1881-1883: Good Templars and Freemasons were functioning on the island and short news about their activities, like processions, were published in the newspaper. Excelsior Lodge and Odd Fellows Lodge¹⁸ were among those mentioned. The earliest research on lodges in Trinidad and Tobago is provided in the Herskovitses' *Trinidad Village* (1947).¹⁹

Kabbalah, a Jewish tradition of mysticism and magic, enthralled many European intellectuals in the Middle Ages (Long 2001, 12-13). Houk (1995, 91) assumes that Judeo-Christian mysticism became part of the Trinidadian religious complex in early colonial times, noting that it was practiced in Spain and France since the 12th and in England at least since the 17th century. Trinidadian practitioners trace the route of the Kabbalah from Babylon to Ethiopia, then to Egypt and Europe, where it took its contemporary form in the practices of the Catholic church as well as Rosicrucian, Masonic, and other secret societies, and thence to Trinidad (Lum 2000, 176). Kabbalistic practice, in a creolised form, has become part of many Trinidadian Orisha devotees' and Spiritual Baptists' religion in the 20th century, and more publicly since the 1970s (Houk 1995, 91). Links between Kabbalah and Masonic mythology and practice are notable; Lum's Trinidadian collaborator, a Kabbalah practitioner and a Mason, suggested that Kabbalah banquets in Trinidad were based on Masonic initiation rituals, and pointed out similarities between the two (2000, 180-181). European magical literature has also influenced Kabbalah practice in Trinidad, in particular the *Keys of Solomon* and the *Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses* (ibid., 176, 179).

Folk versions of Christianity and magic dominated many European belief systems during the centuries of Caribbean colonialism. The demarcation between religion and magic in seventeenth-century Protestantism and in the Enlightenment rationalism of the 18th century, and the further separation of science from these, was not necessarily embraced by the uneducated masses (Tambiah 1990, 31), and as observed in the Introduction, Europeans from different regions and walks of life, ranging from indentured labourers from Madeira or Germany and slaves from Ireland to French clergy and London- or Amsterdam-based plantation owners, arrived in the sugar colonies for varying

periods of time. Evil spirits, witchcraft, folk healing and magic remained part of European cosmologies after the medieval period, and in many ways resembled the African worldviews of the slaves (Long 2001, 9-12, 15). Books on the occult have long circulated in the Caribbean and have been used by *obeah* specialists, Kabbalists, Orisha practitioners, as well as some Spiritual Baptists who do Spiritual work. *The Seven Keys to Power: The Masters book of profound esoteric law* by Lewis de Claremont (1967) provides instructions to counter black magic, and is, along with Anna Riva's more recent publications such as *Powers of the Psalms* or *Magic with Incense and Powders*, seen on some Spiritual workers' shelves in Tobago; some also know of, or own, the two *Keys of Solomon* and the "lost books of the Bible," the *Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses* by de Lawrence Publishing Company.²⁰

AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

Whereas European denominations reigned in the first centuries of Tobagonian colonial history, the 20th century marked the arrival of evangelical Christianity from the USA. The Seventh Day Adventists, who originated in the United States in the 1830s, were active in the British crown colonies by the turn of the century; the first Adventist minister in Tobago was Elder W.G. Kneeland in 1903 (Murray 1982, 26). Other American groups drawing on John Wesley's legacy like The Wesleyan Holiness, the Church of God, Pilgrim Holiness, and the Church of the Nazarine, sent missionaries to the Caribbean in the 20th century (Dayfoot 1999, 205-206). Dayfoot also notes the significance of mass evangelistic campaigns in the late 19th century, where the American evangelists Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey spread not only gospel but also popular hymns and songs in the Caribbean (*ibid.*, 206); *sankeys* are still sung by Spiritual Baptists. Another aspect of these American movements worth noting in regard to the Spiritual Baptist religion is that many of them promote features typical of Spiritual Baptist practice, like adult baptism, active participation in services by the congregation, faith healing, in some cases glossolalia, and evangelistic preaching (*ibid.*, 207).

Walker (1987, 94-95) dates the arrival of Pentecostalism in Tobago to 1957. The Pentecostal church, affiliated with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, was already established in Trinidad at the time, and a Canadian missionary residing in Trinidad held a crusade in Shaw Park, Scarborough. Brother Seymour Jones was saved during this crusade, and he started the Pentecostal work in Tobago with six other pioneers. The other North American evangelical churches that were established in Tobago before the arrival of Pentecostalism cooperated with the Pentecostals in evangelising the island. The small congregation held

services in rented buildings, and its first church was built in 1975 in Scarborough with 150 members (*ibid.*, 98). The American evangelical churches have spread rapidly in Tobago at the expense of the European-originated ones, and today Adventists and Pentecostals are second only to the Anglican church in membership.

Along with evangelism, another 20th-century phenomenon that has made Christianity more diverse and has given it a specific creole form are its usages in anti-colonial, decolonising and anti-racist political discourses in the Caribbean. Marcus Garvey's powerful oratories on Pan-African liberation and labour progression (Martin 1983) influenced the labour movement in Trinidad and Tobago and presented Jesus as a liberator of the oppressed (Erskine 1998, 159). Uriah "Buzz" Butler, the famous labour leader in Trinidad, was a Baptist preacher and founded his own Butlerite Moravian Baptist Church; he also participated in Spiritual Baptist services. Holder (2000, 127-128) examines how Butler interpreted the teachings of Jesus and applied them in his politics; for example, in launching his party he invited the "dispossessed to rally around the banner of Jesus to attack the bastions of the blue-eyed devils."²¹ Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, also drew on the Scripture in his nation-building speeches (James 2000, 154-155). All things considered, Christianity in Tobago has been practiced in multiple forms throughout the colonial history of the Caribbean, and its theologies took creole forms in the hierarchically structured plantation society.

AFRICAN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN TOBAGO

Given the relatively small proportion of slaves familiarised with Christianity and the hindrances to missionary work, African religious traditions prevailed in Tobago in the late 18th and early 19th century. Little information is available about the slave society and culture of Tobago; historical accounts of the religious ideas and practices of the slaves are few and written from the point of view of the planter or the missionary. Missionaries' and colonial officials' reports of the slaves' religions often tell more about the writers' attitudes than about the rituals and practices themselves. What can be deduced from the scarce records, however, is that the African-derived religions were never transferred to the Caribbean unaltered, because the social organisation of the New World colonies was completely different from the West African ones and because the planter class and the colonial governments condemned and prohibited many important practices. Mintz and Price (1992, 47, 51) have shown how the mixing of ethnic groups in the slave plantations lead the slaves to accept foreign cultural practices and to remodel their traditions, thus producing novel cultures on the basis of

diverse continuities.²² African religions in the Caribbean have therefore always been creolised.

RELIGION AND SUBVERSION

In the Caribbean in general, African-derived beliefs and practices have had an important role in slave resistance and insurrections. The 1791-1803 revolution that led to the end of slavery and the independence of Haiti drew largely on Vodou; slaves combined Vodou rituals and political meetings, in which the rebellion was planned. Boukman, a leader of the rebellion, was a *babalawo*, a Vodou priest (James 1994, see also Bell 2000).²³ The heroes of the rebellion and the early Republic, including Jean-Jacques Dessalines, were later included in the Vodou pantheon as *lwa*, spirits or deities (Dayan 1995, 82-84). In Jamaica, the slave rebellion of 1760 was "aided by the mysterious terrors of obeah" (Gardner 1873, 132, ref. Alleyne 1992, 4). In the 1760s, *Myalism*, a religious movement developed on the foundation of different African and later on Christian, mainly Baptist, beliefs and practices, emerged among the Jamaican slaves. The myal rituals and ritual specialists initially aimed at protecting slaves from illnesses and suffering caused by *obeah*, witchcraft, but the religion also played a vital part in slave rebellions in 1831-1832, and emerged again in spite of repression in the post-emancipation plantation society in the 1840s and 1860s as a form of socio-political protest (Schuler 1979, 72-75). Obeah was another method of resistance. Obeahmen and -women induced slave revolts and marronage, like the legendary Nanny, a Jamaican obeahwoman who was among the leaders of the Windward Maroons in the 1730s. Poisoning, a common technique of resistance (but also used among the slaves themselves) was associated with obeah (Bush 1990, 69-75). Obeah or obi, claims Joseph (1838, cit. Simpson 1980, 2), had cost "hundreds or thousands of lives in the West Indies." The subversive function of obeah made it noteworthy not only to colonial administrators but also to the English public, and at the end of the 18th century the practice was popularised in England by poets, playwrights and authors (Richardson 1997).

In Tobagonian society planters were always a tiny minority compared to the slaves, and the threat of uprisings was always present – for good reason, since there were four deadly insurrections in 1770-1774.²⁴ Given the obvious subversive power inherent in them, African-derived religious practices were considered dangerous to the social order of Tobagonian slave society, but also to colonial plantation society after emancipation. The colonial government prohibited practices such as congregating, beating of drums or healing.²⁵ For example, Clause 19 of the First Slave Act of Tobago in 1768 reads: "That because of the danger inherent in slaves from different plantations banding together, any

owner letting a slave or slaves beat any drum, empty casks or boxes, great gourds or blow horns, shells, or other loud instruments or allowing slaves belonging elsewhere to mix with their own, shall forfeit 10 pounds."

OBEAH²⁶

After emancipation, practices with African undertones were still strongly condemned by the planter class, and in newspapers and old records from this period funerals, wakes, drumming and healing were described as superstitious, pagan, heathen, and uncivilised. Prohibitions on religious practices continued as well. The Vagrant Act of Tobago made obeah punishable, and whippings and imprisonment with hard labour were the punishments for its practitioners in the 19th century (*The News*, 26 February 1881). Churches in the Caribbean assumed after emancipation that "African superstitions had been rooted out" (Erskine 1998, 110), wishful thinking that can also be deduced from Tobagonian comments. Stipendiary Magistrate Kaye Dowland's Report of September 1843 (ref. Douglin 1986, 190) declares that the practice of obeah was less popular in Tobago after emancipation than during slavery, but that it was still done in secret. Objects used in obeah, such as horns of dead cattle, bones, feathers, and bottles, that used to be common on labourers' pieces of land were scarce by 1843. However, later reports prove otherwise. In 1883 assembling for drumming or singing was made illegal in the Crown Colony of Trinidad – and consequently in Tobago, after the islands were joined into one colony – between 10 pm and 6 am, which made Carnival, bongo dances at funerary rites, and Orisha worship in Trinidad punishable (Trotman 1976, 15).

A wide range of beliefs and religious practices was lumped under the term obeah in the West Indies. Brandon (1997, 96; see also Tambiah 1990) points out that the European planter class perceived African religions through their own ideas of magic and witchcraft as separate from religion. Thus the religious practices of the slaves, as well as of emancipated Africans and creoles, were perceived by planters as an undifferentiated mass of pagan superstitions and witchcraft, covered by the term obeah. Alleyne (1992, 5) suggests that the oppression of slavery may have caused the prominence of witchcraft over other religious practices. The forms of social organisation within which magic was practiced in Africa, lineages and clans, were absent in the New World, and obeah was modified to suit the new, racially stratified societies (Bastide 1978, 400). Therefore obeah, like most religious practices in the Caribbean, has been creolised ever since the Middle Passage (Bolland 1992, 69).

Maynard (1968) describes "superstition" and obeah in Tobago during the 19th century as encountered by Moravian missionaries. These "pagan" forms of belief

and worship "abounded" among the slaves, and "obeahism continued to raise its ugly head" also after emancipation. Jumbi (sic) dances were held in the house of a deceased person, in which people "stripped nearly naked and half drunk [---] would sing and dance wildly." Maynard also mentions obeahmen, who healed ailments like "sore foot" for large sums of money. People tended to suspect each other of obeah, which caused quarrels. Both *Daylight* and *News* from the 1880s report several cases of obeah in the police courts of Tobago as both practitioners and clients or patients were arrested. The *News* (26 February 1881) stated that the time of the Leeward Police Courts was largely taken up by obeah cases. The punishment was whipping with "the Cat" and twelve months imprisonment with hard labour for men, and solitary confinement for women. One such case involved a Brown William Bailey of Les Coteaux, who was caught practicing obeah in Edward Matthews' shop in Black Rock, so the police seized his tools – a piece of chalk, some seeds, and a smooth stone (*The News*, 21 October 1882). Mr. Bailey was "working on" Mr. Edwards in order to harm his business, but when the latter confronted him, promised to "fix it back." Another case of malevolent magic emerged in Parlatuvier, where two men and a woman worked obeah on a fisherman. They placed a little parcel wrapped in flannel into the boat, and inside the parcel were a man-like image made of Indian rubber, a piece of the fisherman's seine, some hair and a piece of shawl that belonged to the fisherman's wife. On another occasion the threesome sneaked to the boat at night, carrying a large calabash and a bottle of rum, sprinkled the boat with the contents of the bottle and struck the boat twice with the calabash (*Daylight* 10 January 1885).

These examples of sympathetic, malevolent magic only represent one realm of the practices that were – and are – known as obeah. Healing practices were equally illegal. A letter to the Editor of the *News* (1 September 1888) described the practices of Dr. Bob Quashie of Culloden, who attracted patients from as far as Charlotteville "to be cured, exorcised of the jumbies which they believe caused their sickness." The writer was particularly offended by the substantial material payments that Dr. Bob Quashie received from his clients in the form of money and foodstuffs. His methods and cures were described as dangerous, and the writer called him an "archdeceiver."

In present-day Tobago, the colonial demonisation of obeah is still traceable, and in general discourse the practice is either ridiculed or presented as evil and fearsome. Few would argue, however, that obeah is not part of the social reality; it is frequently talked about, and even well-educated middle-class people who claim to know nothing about such practices, much less to believe in their potentialities, may take measures against suspected obeah.²⁷ An example is the case of two university-educated women, former colleagues, whose relationship

deteriorated. After an argument one of the ladies left a pen in the other's office, and the latter found herself unable to move and function normally. She eventually invited the Catholic priest to cleanse the room. Her interpretation of the case was that the colleague was "working on her," practicing obeah, and that the pen had served as an instrument of the endeavour. A white American restaurant-owner complained that in his experience "Tobago has the most obeah in the whole Caribbean," fortifying his claim by placing even Haiti second to Tobago in the volume of malevolent magic. As far as Spiritual Baptists are concerned, they have long suffered from the association of their religion and rituals with obeah by outsiders. Their category of *Spiritual work*, which refers to a variety of techniques including clairvoyance, healing, benevolent magic, blessing of people, spaces and objects, preparing bodies for burials and so forth, is part of the religion and is understood as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Elders who do Spiritual work can help victims of obeah. Another perspective on the use of the term comes from an Afrocentric line of thought, which promotes obeah as an African retention and seeks to preserve it as a valuable part of Tobagonian culture; such views are mostly held by some highly educated, culturally active members of society.

RITES OF PASSAGE

African-influenced religious practices abounded in rites of passage, particularly funerary rites such as wakes, *bongo*, funerals and *nine nights*.²⁸ A Methodist missionary wrote in his journal, published in 1822, about celebrations of the first anniversary after a funeral, when the family of the deceased organised a feast to feed friends as well as the deceased member of the family. A black or white fowl was selected, ritually prepared and "with a good deal of ceremony," thrown out of the hut along with rum and water for the dead to eat and drink. The feast continued into the night with eating, drinking, and "performing their wild barbarous dances to the savage din of the African tom tom" (cit. Marshall 1980, 405). The Lt. Governor's Report of December 1843, rephrased by Douglin (1986, 191), describes how coffin-bearers in funerals would "run the coffin against the house or door of any person whom they might consider either in debt or inimical to the deceased when living. The bearers declared the corpse led them wherever he willed against their inclination, despite their attempts to keep the proper paths. Moreover, the bearers also delivered language as coming from the dead body – such as ordering to whom the debt should be paid."²⁹

Bongo is part of the funerary ritual complex. In Tobago, it consisted of several (usually seven) nights of "music, dance, story-telling and feasting" (Elder 1994, 52). The family of the deceased sponsored the feasting. The last night of

the seven-day session was the actual Bongo night. The folk tales and songs all emphasised the moral codes of the society, and *Bongo kings*, reputed song-leaders and dancers, could also improvise in order to address new themes (39-52).³⁰ The Lt. Governor tried to convince the government in 1843 that African-influenced funerary practices were becoming less common in Tobago as the missionary influence took root among the former slaves (ref. Douglin 1986, 191); however, wakes are still very common in Tobago. Although the present-day wakes in Tobago have lost some of the Bongo traditions and only last for one night, the drumming, singing of hymns, drinking coffee and rum, eating sandwiches, playing cards and dancing – although not necessarily traditional Bongo dances – are still typical and last until the wee hours of the night prior to the funeral.

CALENDRIAL RITES

In Christmas celebrations African and Christian traditions merged in a way that raised strong reactions among the planter class. After emancipation and apprenticeship, when a great number of Tobagonians had already been baptised, an editorial in the *Tobago Gazette and Chronicle* on 2 January 1840 described the "barbarous dances" of the past years "accompanied by sounds, which to European ears, conveyed the impression of the Witches scene in Macbeth," and congratulated the "Negroes" for "throwing off the superiority of African amusements for the regulated pleasures of civilized life" in the 1840 celebrations. Forty-two years later, however, *The News* still reported of the "very unwelcome" rolling of the drums on Christmas night, incessant until daylight (30 December 1882). The statements and predictions of eradication of African practices, common in the Euro-Tobagonian discourse after emancipation, hardly reflected actual changes; the repeated verbalisations of advancing Christianisation and "civilising" of the emancipated slaves may have indicated a deliberate strategy of the planter class, who desperately wanted these objectives to materialise.

Rituals that have been studied as African cultural continuities, including *saraka*, wake and bongo, have received less scholarly attention in Tobago than in Trinidad. Warner-Lewis describes *saraka* in Trinidad as a Hausa ritual, an annual feast to sacrifice an animal to the ancestors to guarantee good fortune, and writes that *saraka* "are also given as thanksgiving ceremonies after recovery from illness and after job promotion." Prayers, the killing of a fowl or a goat, and then distributing food to the participants were the main stages of *saraka*. Warner-Lewis also mentions the pouring of libations, common in Orisha and Spiritual Baptist rituals: in a procession, the participants circled the house where the *saraka* was held and sprinkled water, sweetwater and rum on the ground. The head of the family sprinkled the liquids, while others followed him, carrying

their plates of unsalted food, pipes and tobacco, all of which were then arranged on a table for the Ancestors. The distribution of food closing the ritual included the family, neighbours and children (1991, 115-116).

African-originated religious practices became creolised not only because the social structure of the New World was very different from the African societies where the slaves came from, but also because the belief systems of the slaves and later on, Afro-Creoles, fused with Christian beliefs. Maynard (1968) laments that the people "saw nothing wrong in going to church and professing Christianity while at the same time clinging to the old superstitions."³¹ Missionaries had to discipline several members of the Moravian missions because of participating in the "jumbie dances" and other forms of worship that were regarded as questionable. Maynard's explanation for the coexistence of old and new religious beliefs and practices was that "still feeling the effects of slavery, the people [---] sought meaningful expression for their understanding of life in their old animistic religious practices." The general attitude of the missionaries, as well as planters, towards African cultures was negative; the cultural forms of the slaves were "almost as much the enemy as Satan." Still, one Presbyterian missionary disapproved of segregated seating in church buildings and rejected the prevalent idea of correlation between pigment, mental capacities and heathenism. He also held singing sessions, where "the singing tended to be rowdy and to develop African-derived features like rhythm and even dancing" (Laurence 1995, 189-196). Official Christian positions varied towards Afro-Tobagonian religious practices. Clearly African-influenced forms of worship were legitimate in at least some meetings.

The hierarchical situation between the heterogeneous African and the equally diverse and internally contested European-derived belief systems provided the ground upon which the Spiritual Baptist religion developed in the 19th century. The rest of this Chapter inspects the history of this creole religion, with particular emphasis on Tobagonian events and experiences.

SPIRITUAL BAPTIST AS A CREOLE RELIGION

Studies of the history of the Spiritual Baptist religion have attempted to point out particular sources, syncretic components, out of which the religion has developed. The European-originated Baptist denomination, spread first to the North American colonies and then to the West Indies in the 18th and 19th centuries, has been named by many scholars as the foundation of Spiritual

Baptists. Another origin story locates the birth of the religion within 19th-century Methodism in St. Vincent. Both approaches replicate the tradition of anthropological studies of syncretism to excavate separable components of creole religions, which renders the latter as more or less mechanical mixtures of something original. My argument is that the Spiritual Baptist religion is indigenous to the Caribbean, but rather than descending from specific components, it has developed in a highly diverse field of religions that have changed in different political and historical circumstances, which have also affected their mutual relationships. It is also apparent that the contours of the Spiritual Baptist religion have always been fluid and under negotiation – there has never been consensus about the criteria of the category "Spiritual Baptists." This follows from a contradiction inherent to the religion: charismatic orientation and individual experiences of the Spirit are engendered within a highly structured and stratified social organisation. The pulling and tugging between individual exegeses and collectively accepted interpretations marks the history of the Spiritual Baptist religion.

MERIKIN AND BRITISH BAPTISTS

Calvinistic Baptists founded the Baptist Missionary Society in England in 1792, which marked the beginning of notable missionary work in the British Empire, including Trinidad, Jamaica and other West Indian colonies (Stanley 1992, 2), but not Tobago.³² However, the Baptist faith initially reached Trinidad with former slaves from America. These Virginia slaves were converted into Baptist faith in the Great Awakening revival movement in the 1780s. The first group to move to Trinidad had been recruited by the British army in the War of American Independence, and as a reward the slaves received their freedom as well as land in the crown colony of Trinidad.³³ The donation of land to former African-American slaves was part of the colonial policy to increase the proportion of the English-speaking and Protestant population in Trinidad, where the British government had to face the strong French elite and Latin-Catholic culture of the island (Jacobs 1996, 46). These early settlers arrived in Trinidad in 1803, when slavery and the slave trade were still in full swing, and established themselves mainly in the Naparima area in southern Trinidad. In a similar manner, slaves who served in British Corps of Colonial Marines in the War of 1812-1814 against the United States received freedom and land allocations within the empire. After the war, in May 1815, the released slaves, 781 men, women and children settled in southern Trinidad and founded villages according to their former military units. These villages were called Company villages – First Company at Hindustan Road, Third in Indian Walk, Fourth in Hardbargain, Fifth in Moruga

Road and the Sixth in Sixth Company Village. The Second Company is assumed to have got lost on the way and ended up in Jamaica (Stapleton 1983, 12-14).³⁴ At the time of the Americans' arrival, Trinidadian slaves were either Catholic or non-Christian (*ibid.*, 18).

The *Merikins*, as these African-American immigrants were called, continued to worship in the Baptist manner in Trinidad, and thus the Baptist denomination was rooted on the island before the missionary activities of the London-based Baptist Missionary Society. Preachers organised tent meetings and other services and founded churches (Stanley 1992, 94-95). The pattern of worship embraced various traits of African religious conduct – probably retained to some extent by the *Merikins* themselves and enforced by the Trinidadian slave population. By the time the first British Baptist missionaries reached Trinidad in the 1840s and 1850s, the indigenous churches in the Company villages as well as in northern Trinidad had become fairly different from their European equivalents. E.B. Underhill, the secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, visited Trinidad in 1859 and witnessed "most unseemly conduct [---] the congregation rising up, dancing and jumping" (*cit.* Stanley 1992, 95). Jacobs (1996, 14) quotes Underhill's description of such a church service: "some symptoms of excitement betrayed the emotional character of the people, and I rather hastily concluded (the service). One woman swayed her body from side to side, and was scarcely held on her seat by her neighbours." Archbishop Stapleton (1983, 13-14), whose source is an anonymous "local historian," describes the religious practices of *Merikin* Baptists as "tenting," nightly religious gatherings in tents, and "intense evangelism, baptism by total immersion in running water, spirit possession, the spiritual interpretation of dreams, and a firm belief that repentance and spiritual regeneration were totally an individual responsibility. [---] There was revivalist singing, rhythmic groups shouting, hand-clapping and spiritual seizures." Huggins (1978, 34-35) mentions the *Merikins'* way of "shouting" or "catching the power" as well as bush medicine and obeah practices.³⁵

Already in the 1860s the Baptist Union of Trinidad distanced itself from churches with African features of worship. These were declared independent of – or banned from – the Baptist Missionary Society in 1907, and thus formed the Union of Independent Baptist Churches (Huggins 1978, 42; the separation is also described in Stanley 1992, 252, and Jacobs 1996, 20). The labels "London Baptists" and "Independent Baptists" have since become the colloquial names of the two Baptist groupings in Trinidad; the latter group was first referred to as "Disobedient Baptists" by the BMS because of its reluctance to conform to the British norms of the Society. Regardless of the differences of these groups, the Baptist church, both as represented by the *Merikins* and the British missionaries,

represented the evangelical movement that challenged the Anglican Church in England in the late 18th century, and was therefore regarded as somewhat rebellious by the Anglicans in the West Indies (Russell 2000, 97).

Drawing on the archival records of the Baptist Missionary Society, Stanley (1992) argues that the Spiritual Baptist religion started to develop in Trinidad as the African-American Baptist practice and local African-oriented patterns of worship were synthesised in the first half of the 19th century during slavery. The parallel history of the Baptist and the Spiritual Baptist faiths is also acknowledged by many local Spiritual Baptists, most notably by Archbishop Asram L. Stapleton, whose *The Birth and Growth of the Baptist Church in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean* (1983) delineates the arrival of the Merikin Baptists to southern Trinidad and the development of the local Spiritual Baptist religion in the 19th century. In addition to London and Independent Baptists, a third group developed, even more African-oriented than the Independent Baptists. These were called "Bush-Baptists," "Shouters," "Candle-," "Wayward-" or "Wayside" Baptists (Hackshaw 1992, 77, Stapleton 1983, 22.)³⁶ These and other sources locate the development of the religion in the 19th century. Jacobs (1996, 21-22) quotes various sources to argue that the Spiritual Baptist religion was established in Trinidad, separate from the Independent or London Baptists, in the last decades of the 19th century, Bridget Brereton mentions Shouters in Princes Town and Port of Spain in 1894 in her *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870-1900*, and an article in the *Trinidad Guardian* of 9 January 1918, introduces Teacher Bailey, whose parents were "in the faith" in the 1890s. Stanley (1992, 253) observes that the African-oriented, "native" Baptist churches were more successful and numerous in Trinidad than the Baptist churches associated with the BMS. Due to the withdrawal of the BMS from Trinidad in 1892 and the subsequent financial decline of local Baptist churches, the denomination was fairly weak on the island, whereas "Bush-Baptists" or "Shouters" were flourishing at the beginning of the 20th century.³⁷

The history of the relationship between Merikin, British and Spiritual Baptists exemplifies the efforts of boundary-making between different practices in the colonial Trinidad, where religions and ethnic groups were highly stratified, yet continuously creolised. This is echoed today in statements by local Baptists that Spiritual Baptists did not branch out from the Baptist denomination. Reverend John S.C. Bramble, the vice president of the Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago, declares that "real Baptists sometimes feel a little ashamed of calling themselves Baptists, because they do not wish to be identified with some of the cultic practices in which some of the so-called Baptist groups indulge." The Reverend is quite explicit in denying connections to the Spiritual Baptist religion,

stating that "we do not share a common heritage neither a common origin with the Shouter Baptists, although there are movements of membership between the two bodies, on a limited scale" (1998, 41). According to Bramble, the Merikin Baptists of the Company villages were thus a preliminary stage of the Baptist denomination in Trinidad, not an early form of the Spiritual Baptist religion.

THE CONVERTED OF ST. VINCENT

Another significant influence on the Spiritual Baptist religion in Trinidad was the immigration of members of a religious group whose autonym was the Converted, but who were known by the derogatory label Shakers, from the smaller British colony of St. Vincent. This was a fundamentalist Protestant movement with strong African features in ritual practice, very similar to the Trinidadian Spiritual Baptist. Methodism, founded by John Wesley, took root in St. Vincent in the 1790s, and is considered to be the basis of the Converted/Spiritual Baptist religion (Henney 1974), which was established in St. Vincent in the 1850s. The Converted were prohibited from practicing their religion from 1912 to 1965, and due to the persecutions, many Vincentian Converted emigrated to Trinidad (Zane 1999a, 126). Poverty in post-emancipation St. Vincent also pushed Vincentians towards Trinidad, where wages were higher and industrialisation underway, and where re-enforcements to the Anglo-Protestant population were welcomed. Certain scholars, like Henney (1971), argue that the Spiritual Baptist religion originates in St. Vincent and that it only spread to Trinidad through the migration after the Shaker Prohibition Ordinance of 1912. As shown above, however, other sources indicate that people called Shouter, Wayward, or Bush Baptists were practicing their religion in Trinidad prior to the Vincentian influence, and that the roots of this religion had been established during the first half of the 19th century, along with the arrival of the Merikins.³⁸

The Vincentian and Trinidadian versions of the Spiritual Baptist religion were undoubtedly quite similar, but all efforts at comparison are based on research done decades after the main wave of Vincentian immigration to Trinidad.³⁹ Stephens (1999, 63) draws attention to the rituals of *mourning* and baptism, and quotes the Vincentian Archbishop Pompey who explains that the Converted did practice mourning, but not baptism, during the early stages of the religion. Since no descriptions of Spiritual Baptist ritual practice at that time are available, other than superficial accounts of shaking and shouting, it is difficult to trace the evolution of singular rituals and to place their origins in a particular place. What is clear, however, is that the Converted Vincentians became part of the Trinidadian Spiritual Baptist faith in the early 20th century. The Shouters Prohibition Ordinance, passed in Trinidad and Tobago in 1917, mentions

Vincentian Shakers as "such an unmitigated nuisance that they had to be legislated out of existence. They then came to Trinidad and continual complaints have been received by the Government for some time past as to their practices."⁴⁰

Zane (1999, 139) laments the tendency of Trinidadian Spiritual Baptists to denounce the Vincentian origin of the religion, and argues that Vincentians should be acknowledged and "rightly proud" of their country as the "birthplace of one of the important religions in the Caribbean." He also argues that *mourning* originates in St. Vincent. Viola Gopaul-Whittington (1984, 10) gives the opposite view and suggests that Spiritual Baptists originated in post-emancipation Trinidad, but that converted Spiritual Baptists faced antagonism from other Africans, mainly Yarouba (sic), who persecuted the believers. To escape the persecutions, Trinidadian Spiritual Baptists had to flee to St. Vincent, where "a strong foundation was laid" for the religion. After the Prohibition Order of 1912, the believers had to emigrate again, this time to Grenada. The discovery of oil in Trinidad and subsequent economic growth encouraged the Spiritual Baptists to move back to Trinidad, and thus the faith finally took root on the island.

SPIRITUAL BAPTISTS IN 20TH CENTURY TOBAGO

None of the scholars of the Spiritual Baptist religion offer any information on Tobago. It is most probable that the religion spread to Tobago from Trinidad, although Spiritual Baptist immigrants from Grenada and St. Vincent have also contributed to its growth. Tobagonians started to travel to Trinidad and back to purchase consumer goods directly after emancipation (Williams 1964, 147). Emigration to the larger and more prosperous island attracted many Tobagonians: a journal titled *A Voyage to the West Indies*, published in the *Tobago Gazette and Chronicle* 2 April 1840, mentions Tobagonians' "desire to emigrate to Trinidad, where the temptation of high wages has been held out." Maynard (1968, 110) notes that in the 1850s many Tobagonians were driven to the sister island because of economic hardships caused by hurricanes and difficulties in the sugar industry. A favourite destination was Toco, a secluded fishing village on the northern coast of Trinidad (Williams 1964, 148). A letter to the Editor of the *News*, 20 March 1886, noted that the population of Toco had increased considerably due to the constant immigration from Tobago, as work in Toco was "more readily procured, and wages are higher than in Tobago [---]." The writer complained that "the recent arrivals [---] belong to the lowest and most disorderly class of Scarborough." Although the unifying of the colony of Trinidad and Tobago in 1899 facilitated movement between the islands, available communications remained scarce and lacking, so that travel was very time-

consuming; Williams points out that Tobagonians did not even take part in the meetings of the legislative council for the first 25 years of the joint crown colony because of poor transportation facilities (1964, 194).

Since no records exist of early Spiritual Baptist activity in Tobago, the history of the religion is based on oral sources – those elderly Tobagonians, who remember Spiritual Baptists from their childhood or have heard their elders talk about them. At the time of my fieldwork in 1996-2001, very few Tobagonians were able to recount incidents from decades prior to the 1920s, more than eighty years ago. However, these few accounts suggest that self-acclaimed Spiritual Baptists appeared in Tobago around the turn of the century, if not earlier.

PIONEERING LEADERS AND MOTHERS IN TOBAGO

Mr. George Leacock, the founder of the Tobago Heritage Parlour, remembered Spiritual Baptists from his childhood. Since he came to Tobago as a little boy in 1908, his recollections may date from a time prior to the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance in 1917. Born in 1919, Archdeacon Woods recalled Spiritual Baptists preaching in the streets of Plymouth when he was a little boy, not more than eight years old. According to him, Baptist preachers came to Tobago from Trinidad to hold services on street corners and *four roads*, junctions. He mentioned one Locklyn, whose garment used to be a cocos bag and whom Tobagonians used to call the Bag Man, and Spylo, who was preaching around Mason Hall. Tobagonian-born pioneers included Didymus Edwards, the baker, Malco Duncan from Pembroke, Brothers Holmes, Winchester and Nelson; there were also women.⁴¹

Spiritual Baptist churches were few in Tobago before the repeal of the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance in 1951, and services were held in homes, camps or at road sides. Older Spiritual Baptists recalled, however, certain pioneers who built churches despite the law and kept the religion alive. In those days Spiritual Baptist churches were built of *tapia*, a mixture of mud and straw; branches, too, could be used for walls. Dirt floors were common. Archdeacon Woods and Leader Gerald mentioned Didymus Edwards's church in uptown Scarborough as one of the first Spiritual Baptist churches on the island. According to Leader Gerald, St. Rita's church in Plymouth is quite old as well; it was founded by Mother Phillip and Leader Rupert Joseph as a *tapia* structure. Leader Cuffy, a Trinidadian, put up a church in Black Rock even before Matron Stewart, claimed Leader Gerald. Reverend Courtnell of Mt. Arrarat church in Bon Accord noted that Mother Justine Blake was the original founder of that church, and that she had it before the Reverend was born. Teacher Cyril from Guyaguayare, Trinidad, came to Tobago and developed the church after Mother Justine.⁴² The old

Mother had shown herself to the present Leader in a vision and told him to take good care of the church. Leader Gerald recalled that Malco Duncan was told in a vision to build the Prompt Mill church in Scarborough. Leader Thom, who lead the church for decades, came from Trinidad. Leader Ramsay was baptised by Leader Thom, and he used to have a tapia church in Bethel before the repeal of the Ordinance, until Hurricane Flora tore it apart in 1963. He and Teacher Cyril worked together at first, but later on the Teacher took over the Mt. Arrarat church.

The ritual practices of the "old days" were largely similar to today's. The calabash, the lota and the bell were used, and the notions of Africa, India and China were part of the cosmology, the elders confirmed. Given the secrecy in which Spiritual Baptists were forced to conduct their services before 1951, no loud instruments such as drums, *shac shacs* (maracas) or timbrels were used. Flags were not always planted, either. The main rituals of baptism and mourning were common even during the period of the Ordinance, but had to be performed in secrecy.

PROHIBITION ORDINANCE

Most people who have knowledge of the history of the religion in Tobago remember episodes of its most dramatic phase, the period of the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance, which made practicing the Spiritual Baptist religion illegal in the Crown Colony of Trinidad and Tobago from 1917 until 1951. This makes the history of the Spiritual Baptists in Tobago largely a history of persecutions and prejudice. My purpose here is to discuss the Ordinance in connection to Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists, not to give an exhaustive account of the legislation and its consequences in Trinidad, as this has already been accomplished in Patricia Stevens's (1999) and C.M. Jacobs's (1996) commendable works. I also look into the ways the notions of Christianity and Africanness were constructed in the debates around the enactment and the repealing of the Ordinance.

The Shouters Prohibition Ordinance, prescribed on the 28th of November 1917, made it illegal to hold or attend "Shouters' meetings," to erect or maintain a "Shouters' house," room or building, or to "shut up any person in any Shouter's house for the purpose of initiating such person to the ceremonies of the Shouters." It was also an offence to commit "any act of indecency" in the "vicinity of any Shouters' meeting." The Ordinance entitled the police to enter without a warrant "any time of the day or night any house, estate, land, or place" in which a Shouters' meeting or initiation ceremony was suspected of taking place. Persons

found guilty under the Ordinance were liable to a fine of two hundred and forty dollars.⁴³

The text of the Ordinance confirms that at the beginning of the 20th century the Spiritual Baptist religion was well developed in Trinidad; Clause 2 (1) defines the object of the Ordinance as "the body known as Shouters." The Shouters Prohibition Ordinance was thus directed at an established religion, not a new cult, which has been emphasised by Stevens (1999, 45) and Jacobs (1996, 22). Secondly, the orders for the police to recognise Shouters' rituals list the following practices: binding the head with white cloth, holding lighted candles in the hands, ringing a bell, violent shaking of the body and limbs, shouting and grunting, flowers held in the hands, and white chalk marks on the floor.⁴⁴ This indicates that many important and specifically Spiritual Baptist ritual practices had already become conventional in 1917. Clauses 2 (2), 4, and 7 (1) of the Ordinance mention "initiation into the ceremonies of the Shouters" with special reference to keeping a person in a room or a house for such purposes; the mourning ritual had thus also been established.⁴⁵ Except for the list of ritual practices, the law did not define the group "Shouters" or their practices in any comprehensive way, and left it to individual Magistrates to decide whether particular accused actually represented such a group or exercised illegal acts (Trinidad and Tobago Revised Ordinances, 1940, Chapter 4 No. 19). It would be worth researching the position of Orisha practitioners, healers, obeahmen and -women, and Independent Baptists and other such groups that were not self-acclaimed "Shouters," but whose practices might have been taken for theirs.⁴⁶ The first arrest under the Ordinance took place in Chaguanas, Trinidad, on 17 December 1917, and when the case was heard in the following January, fourteen suspects were charged. Numerous arrests, beatings and court hearings of Spiritual Baptists under the Ordinance were to follow (see Jacobs 1996, 151; Thomas 1987, 24-25; also Lovelace 1982).

Spiritual Baptists were arrested, beaten and charged in Tobago as well as in Trinidad. According to the Magistrates' court in Scarborough and in Port of Spain no documents of such cases are available, because they burned when a fire destroyed the Magistrate's Court in Scarborough. Elderly Spiritual Baptists, however, did recall several instances of such law enforcement in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Rev. Philip Isaac of the Plymouth Anglican church also located a document at the Tobago Heritage Parlour indicating the arrest of twenty Spiritual Baptists in 1930, while they were worshipping in a house in the village of Lambeau. Mrs. Gladys McKenzie, born in 1912, recalled the event and confirmed that Leader Jackman Prescott and nineteen members of his congregation were arrested. The police found out about the meeting from a rural

constable, Mr. Conliffe McKenzie, whose mother and aunts were members of the congregation (Isaac 1997; also personal communication). First-hand experiences of the enforcement of the Ordinance are very rare in present-day Tobago. Matron Ethencer Stewart, born in 1909, had her own Spiritual Baptist church in Tobago at the time of the persecutions, and remembered how she and her Spiritual family had to practice their religion in secrecy in branch and *tapia* churches in the foothills of Black Rock. Archdeacon Woods was baptised in Tobago in 1942, during the Prohibition Ordinance. He gave vivid descriptions of clandestine services and rituals: "You couldn't mourn in the village, people see you and they go report you, they come and they take you. We use to go in the bush and mourn." Drumming and loud singing were not practiced, because the noise would have caused people to report the "Shouters" to the police. The enforcement of the Prohibition Ordinance depended largely on informers who gave the police hints of upcoming Spiritual Baptist rituals, like baptisms, or reported roadside preachers to the constables. The legislation could therefore be used as retribution for personal disputes or prejudices against the Spiritual Baptists – "people who don't like you they go and report you and let the police come for you," noted Archdeacon Woods.

Several elders, including Archdeacon Woods and Dean Gerald Robinson, recalled arrests and beatings of a leader called Didymus Edwards, a baker at the Old Market in Scarborough, who had a church uptown and who used to preach on the roadside. Archdeacon Woods and Didymus went to court together after a *mission*, road-side preaching, in Black Rock *four roads*. The Archdeacon described how many of the women and men escaped into the dark bush, but he, Didymus, Brother Holmes and a few others did not move as the police came and arrested them. Leader Gerald remembered a similar incident that occurred one night in his boyhood in the 1940s, when Didymus and other Spiritual Baptists were holding a roadside service in Black Rock. Didymus, a gifted seer, had foreseen that the police would come to arrest them that night, and was prepared. The roadside was full of guava bush in those days, and the only light came from a hurricane lamp the Spiritual Baptists had with them. People who passed the preachers gave them money, as is still the custom in roadside missions, and Didymus shared out pieces of bread to the bystanders. As the police burst in on the illegal preachers, they escaped into the guava and only one of them was held. Leader Gerald and other little boys ran for the remains of the bread. The money, however, was taken by the police; it was considered to be obeah money and thus illegal.⁴⁷

In these recollections and stories about the persecutions Spiritual Baptists are presented as innocent victims of unfair legislation, but acts of resistance and

notions of perseverance are also emphasised. Spiritual Baptists' special gifts gain an almost legend-like form in such narratives. Teacher Claudette, who had heard the story from her elders, described how Didymus' bell intimidated the police: Didymus and members of his congregation went to conduct baptism one night, carrying *flambeaux*, torches made of bamboo and a piece of cloth dipped in kerosene. The police were tipped and sneaked in on the unwary Spiritual Baptists, who ran and hid in the dark bushes but left their bell on the beach in the rush. The police took the bell, carried it to the station and reasoned that a Spiritual Baptist man must come back for his bell and give himself in by doing so. But Didymus did not appear at the police station, and the police found themselves in trouble with the bell: it started to ring by itself at 6 am, 12 and 6 pm every day.⁴⁸ Finally the police saw it best to return the bell to Didymus without attempting to arrest him. Another demonstration of Spiritual power over the police involved Leader Ramsay, the founding father of Mt. Paran church in Bethel. The police were sitting under a lime tree near Leader Ramsay's small *tapia* church, keeping guard as they had received a tip that the Leader would be conducting baptism that night. But Leader Ramsay made the police fall asleep under the tree, and yard fowls came and soiled the poor constables' clothes. The Leader then took his flock safely to the river.

The Shouter Prohibition Ordinance was repealed on March 30, 1951, after a heated debate in the Legislative Council in Port-of-Spain. The members of the Council were quite unanimous about the necessity to repeal the Ordinance (Hansard 30, March 1951). It was obvious that the legislation had proven useless, because during the 34-year-long ban the Spiritual Baptist religion had not disappeared; on the contrary, there were estimated to be about 30 000 practitioners in the Colony in 1949 (Hansard 1949-1950, Vol 1). The post-second world war atmosphere, with the founding of the United Nations and the universal declaration of human rights, was not compatible with religious persecutions in a British colony. Another influential factor was the Herskovitses' study of 1947, *Trinidad Village*, which discussed "Shouters" in Toco and questioned the motives for the religion's illegitimacy. The anthropologists' arguments were quoted even in a debate of the Legislative Council, October 28 1949, by the honourable Albert Gomes (Hansard 1949-1950, Vol 1). A further motive for the liberation of the Spiritual Baptists was the fact that universal adult suffrage had been established in the colony in 1946, which meant that Spiritual Baptists now had votes and formed quite a large constituency (Brereton 1982, 194). Forceful efforts by distinguished Spiritual Baptist leaders triggered the debates that led to the repealing of the Ordinance. The most notable of such lobbyists was Archbishop Elton Griffith, a Grenadian immigrant to whom the

liberation is largely attributed. Jacobs (1996) provides a comprehensive account of the liberation of the Spiritual Baptists in his book *Joy Comes in the Morning*, and mentions that the liberation of Spiritual Baptists was also petitioned in Tobago.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE SHOUTERS PROHIBITION ORDINANCE

The Shouters Prohibition Ordinance reveals how discourse about Christianity and Africanness has been socially constructed in various politico-historical circumstances. In a simplified form, the class structure of the colony in 1917 was comprised of a small oligarchy of British and French Creoles, the planter-merchant-class; a coloured middle class; and a large lower class of Afro- and Indo-Creoles. The status quo of this hierarchical structure became threatened during and after the first world war, as labour organisations and political protests started to emerge (Brereton 1981, 157). Spiritual Baptists came from the lower classes; they were poor Afro-Trinidadians and Tobagonians of little education (Stapleton 1983, 32; Stephens 1999, 44). Given the labour unrest and prevalent expressions of discontent, it can be suggested that congregation and exceptional religious activity outside the control of the dominant European churches, such as the practices of the Spiritual Baptists, were perceived as menacing by the power elite of the colony. Needless to say, the Legislative Council of 1917 represented the planter-merchant class of British and French Creoles. Brereton states flatly that in the British crown colony government, "the poor had no access to the policy-makers, while the propertied interests could lobby effectively" (1981, 139). Also, Jacobs (1996, 120-122) draws attention to the fact that not only the major churches in Trinidad, Roman Catholic and the Anglican, but also smaller Protestant denominations like the Presbyterian church supported the proscription of the Spiritual Baptists. It was probable that Spiritual Baptist churches drew members from these other denominations, favoured by the middle class and the elite, and therefore posed a threat to them; this, nevertheless, is hardly a sufficient explanation for passing proscriptive legislation. The Shouters Prohibition Ordinance should be analysed in the larger context of British colonial legislation concerning the practice of African religions.

As discussed above, African-derived religious practices were considered dangerous to the social order of slave society, but also to plantation society after emancipation. The legislation of Tobago and later on Trinidad and Tobago was quite systematic in condemning religious practices that arose from African traditions, and the same pattern of prejudice and even fear towards non-European religion was evident in the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance. In the midst of the first world war, as millions of people were dying in battles all over the

world, the upper classes of Trinidad were so threatened by a small group of religious devotees that new legislation was necessary. Those who argued for the prohibition in the media and in the Council's debate were employing concepts like "nuisance" and "disturbance," stating that "Shouters" rituals were so noisy that they disturbed other members of the society. The term "indecent" is mentioned in the sixth clause of the Ordinance in reference to the Inspector-General of Constabulary's claim that "at the meeting they take their clothing off and commit all sorts of indecent acts when they get shaking" (Hansard, 16 November 1917). This technique of Othering echoes the 19th century missionaries' Victorian horror of the rituals they witnessed in Trinidad and Tobago – only the rhetoric had slightly changed. The "Shouters" were juxtaposed to appropriate Christian practices, and it was unacceptable to regard "Shouters" as a version of Christianity. On the other hand, the accused who appeared in courtrooms carried Bibles and quoted the Scriptures, and even the Inspector General of the Constabulary explained to members of the Council that "There has been writing in the Scriptures in support of their practices" (Hansard, 16 November 1917). Whereas the defence of the religion drew largely on Christianity, the notion of Africanness did not arise in the pro-"Shouters" argumentation.

In 1951, the Spiritual Baptist cause was supported in different quarters, since it had become to represent the counter-hegemonic resistance prevalent in many areas of colonial society. The labour movement, growing in the 1930s in Trinidad, was one such area. An important supporter of the Spiritual Baptist emancipation was Tubal Uriah "Buzz" Butler, the famous labour leader and politician who emerged as a working class organiser in the oil workers' strikes of 1935 (Brereton 1982, 180). A Grenadian by birth, Butler was a religious politician whose speeches reached sermon-like heights – Brereton calls the style "Messianic oratory" (1982, 180) – exemplified in the speech he gave in the Legislative Council when the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance was being repealed. In addition to the labour movement, a more clearly Marxist organisation, the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association (NWCSA), shared certain common goals with the Spiritual Baptists, although their cause was clearly secular. Led by Elma Francois, a Vincentian immigrant, the NWCSA sought to arouse class solidarity within the "oppressed Negro" masses in the colony, partly by emphasising African ethnicity; the organisation collaborated with Spiritual Baptists on certain issues (Jacobs 1996, 250-256). In these leftist anti-colonial movements, both Christianity as an empowering religion and Africanness as ethnically based solidarity of the oppressed Negroes had gained clearly different meanings from those employed in 1917.⁴⁹ Christianity as defined

by the Anglican and Catholic churches, already challenged by their mutual antagonisms in the 19th century, by other Protestant denominations and American evangelical groups, and by interpretations such as Butler's, had further disintegrated when non-conformist religious groups such as the Mormons and the Salvation Army took root in Trinidad in the 1920s (Jacobs 1996, 278). An insurmountable hindrance to the hegemony of European Christianity was the fact that a substantial proportion of the Colonial population was of East Indian origin. This was another issue discussed in connection to the repeal of the Ordinance in the Legislative Council: Honourable Ashford S. Sinanan, an Indo-Trinidadian representative, mentioned the need to reform the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Ordinance while commending the repeal of the present ban on Spiritual Baptists (Hansard, March 30, 1951). Sinanan's brother Mitra, an attorney like Ashford, counselled Elton Griffith in legal matters in his efforts to liberate Spiritual Baptists (Jacobs 1996, 280). And finally, credos of modernisation and nationalism added to the negotiations over religious authority. In an address to the Council by the Minister of Education and Social Services, Hon. R.A. Joseph, the "Shouters" religion was interestingly contrasted to processes of modernisation and industrialisation, and perhaps also to nation-building in Trinidad. "With respect to the third point ["that these practices are in themselves so gross, degrading, or immoral as to deserve permanent and unqualified suppression"], it was admitted that certain members who professed to be Shouters did behave themselves in a way *not befitting the citizens of a progressive country like this*, but that these very often were not the real followers of this form of worship" (Shouters Prohibition (Repeal) Ordinance, 30 March 1951; my italics).

NATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Structure and agency, the hierarchical church organisation and individual experiences, have been juxtaposed since the early phases of the Spiritual Baptist religion. The records and accounts quoted above indicate an established ritual practice and belief system, although the religion was practiced clandestinely by individual congregations and was not structured by any organisation. Individual Leaders, Mothers, Teachers and preachers either built their small churches or preached on the roadsides and junctions, hiding from law enforcement. People visited other churches or prayer meetings, but no official affiliations were formed. Towards the end of that period, as the Spiritual Baptist community was growing larger and larger, and as the general atmosphere became more tolerant towards the religion, the first efforts were made to institutionalise the church. The early groupings reflected the internal diversity of the Spiritual Baptist religion; it has

never had any definite dogma that has been universally shared. The Herskovitses write that "each congregation is autonomous, and no supervisory body sees to it that in organization – or dogma – the separate churches maintain any degree or unity" (1947, 193). They note, however, that central beliefs and rituals unite these autonomous churches to a surprising extent, given the lack of general organisational structure: "Baptism, proving, mournin', the phenomenon of possession by the "Spirit," the physical manifestations of such possession in the shaking, the dancing, the speaking in tongues, the bringing back of spiritual gifts are all at the core of the Shouters worship everywhere" (ibid., 193).

Jacobs (1996, 326) explains that differences of opinion about the proper mode of worship – that is, individual exegeses and interpretations – caused the first Spiritual Baptist corporation to take form. *The West Indian United Baptist Sacred Order*, later *West Indian United Spiritual Baptist Sacred Order*, WIUSBSO, was founded in June 1942 and legally incorporated in November 1949, while the Prohibition Ordinance was still being enforced (*Constitution and Government of the West Indian United Spiritual Baptist Sacred Order*, 1972). The founders of the WIUSBSO wanted to distinguish themselves on the basis of their ritual practice. The rules of the Order start with aspirations towards orthodoxy: the WIUSBSO seeks to "abolish and remove all unhealthy scenes or practices that may have been carried on at one time or another by individuals" and "to foster, teach and carry on all the true Doctrines, Faith or Religious Principles of the Spiritual Baptist Faith or Religion" (ibid., 1). Unfortunately the constitution does not define either "true" or "unhealthy" scenes or practices. Jacobs (1996, 327) suggests that the founders of the WIUSBSO had definite disagreements with the *West Indian Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith* (later known as *The National Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith Archdiocese*, NESBFA), the body founded by Elton Griffith in 1945, and therefore wanted to identify as Spiritual Baptists, not Shouters, whereas Griffith's organisation was supposed to represent "Shouters," in spite of its name. Didymus Edwards, the legendary Tobagonian leader, was a founding member of the *West Indian Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith* (Jacobs 1996, 268). He was also made leader of the Tobago branch of the organisation.

Making any claims for objectively distinct identities among the Spiritual Baptists in the 1940s based on the choice of name for the official corporation is unjustified. First of all, the name "Shouters" was initially not an autonym; it was given to Spiritual Baptists by outsiders. In a similar manner the Vincentian Converted were labelled "Shakers," a name they had never chosen for themselves. In the Herskovitses' *Trinidad Village* the people in Toco always refer to "Baptists" or "Spiritual Baptists," not to "Shouters," and the reason why the Herskovitses themselves have chosen to use the latter term remains unclear. The

text of the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance of 1917 finalised the denigrating nomenclature. It is noteworthy that none of the Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists, not even the oldest pioneers, use the term "Shouter" in reference to their religion. In contemporary Trinidad, however, two dioceses use the term Shouter as an autonym. Tobagonian churches that belong to one of these dioceses call themselves Spiritual Baptist. Secondly, there is no evidence of any major differences in either beliefs or ritual practices between WIUSBSO and Griffith's West Indian Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith. It seems likely that the name and the constitution of WIUSBSO were designed to facilitate the existence of a Spiritual Baptist organisation in such a way that the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance would not be violated – in other words, to function within the existing law. It must be remembered that the text of the Ordinance does not define "Shouters" characteristics or ritual practices in any way.⁵⁰ Jacobs (1996, 330-331) states that the two Spiritual Baptist organisations differed in that whereas Griffith's *West Indian Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith* represented "Shouters" and aimed at repealing the Prohibition Ordinance, the WIUSBSO represented Spiritual Baptists and functioned within the existing law. The main difference in ritual practice is that the latter group refrained from conducting the mourning ritual, which the Prohibition Ordinance proscribed as illegal. It is not known, however, whether such a dramatic modification of ritual practice ever actually took place; at least in Tobago it did not. Even Elton Griffith and Granville Williams of the West Indian Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith said that "despite their legally incorporated status, leaders of the WIUSBSO were operating, in the religious sphere of things, very much like that of the mainstream Shouter Baptist community" (Jacobs 1996, 359). The paraphrasing that Jacobs uses, distinguishing a "mainstream Shouter Baptist Community" from the WIUSBSO, is misleading, since no difference existed between the two on the level of beliefs and practices.

It would seem that personal schisms between leaders of the two early Spiritual Baptist organisations had more to do with the division between the corporations than anything in their ritual practices. Bishop Quashie (Tobagonian by birth) of the West Indian Evangelical Spiritual Baptist faith told Jacobs (1996, 266) that Elton Griffith was not given the opportunity to speak at the first meeting of the West Indian United Baptist Sacred Order (WIUSBSO) in June 1942. (In 1942, Griffith, a Grenadian, had been in Trinidad for only one year, ran a Pentecostal chapel and had not been baptised or mourned in the Spiritual Baptist faith as yet, as Jacobs shows elsewhere, p. 245.) This may be one motive for the establishment of two separate organisations. Further rifts arose in 1950, when a Select Committee of the Legislative Council was meeting to discuss

the petition of West Indian Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith concerning the repealing of the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance. Harvey Glaud, a WIUSBSO leader, objected to the repeal of the Ordinance because of possible indecencies during the mourning ritual. Elton Griffith responded to Glaud's objection by claiming that at that very moment Glaud had initiates on the *mourning ground* in his church, which left Glaud speechless (Jacobs 1996, 352). One can only speculate on the motives for such a seemingly irrational objection – why did a Spiritual Baptist Leader not support the legalisation of his own religion? Was it because WIUSBSO had achieved sufficient legal protection when incorporated in 1949 and illegal ritual practices, like mourning, could be conducted in secrecy? Or was it an effort to keep practices of Orisha worship illegal, as Gibbs de Peza (quoted in Jacobs 1996, 328) suggests? This seems hardly convincing, since the mourning ritual is more common in Spiritual Baptist than Orisha practice, and the latter would have included more obvious offences, such as drumming or animal sacrifice. The power struggles between the leadership of WIUSBSO and Elton Griffith could also have affected Glaud's position.

The formation of these two organisations in 1942 and 1945 commenced the process of Spiritual Baptists' self-definition on a national level. Such processes had undoubtedly been going on within and between individual churches all along, but with the NESBFA and WIUSBSO such a search for identity and orthodoxy took an organised form. Even recent debates and confrontations between different dioceses in Trinidad and Tobago have drawn upon these early groupings in quite a misleading manner, attempting to create divisions where none exist.

Gibbs de Peza (1999, 52-53) lists twelve Spiritual Baptist dioceses in Trinidad and Tobago, in addition to which there were at least two others in 2001.⁵¹ In 2001, nine of these had joined into a *National Congress of Incorporated Baptist Organisations of Trinidad and Tobago*, a conglomerate with a contested relationship to the NESBFA. A fair amount, if not most, of Spiritual Baptist churches in Trinidad and Tobago are affiliated to a (arch)diocese. Affiliation gives the church a status recognised by the Government and licence to perform standardised life-cycle rituals, like dedication of an infant (christening), solemnisation of marriage, and burial of the dead. Many of the Spiritual Baptist churches in other Caribbean countries, in the USA, Canada and the UK are also affiliated with dioceses, some of which are linked to those in Trinidad and Tobago.

Twenty-two of the forty-three Spiritual Baptist churches in Tobago were affiliated to a diocese in 2001. These are outlined in Appendix 1. In ritual practice, no differences were found between the churches along the

organisational groupings. For the majority of members, dioceses are fairly irrelevant, and not all are aware of the affiliation of their church.

The cosmological and religious diversity found in Caribbean societies means that Christianity and African religions have never formed a simple opposition. The Spiritual Baptist religion is situated on a continuum of different cosmologies and practices, which cannot be objectively demarcated. The multiple belief systems have been part of the hierarchical social organisation of the Caribbean, and formation of religious identities has reflected power struggles as well as changes in prevailing values in society. This has marked the development of the Spiritual Baptist religion. In addition to the social context, individual agendas and inspirations have engendered changes and contestations. On the other hand, the belief system and practices of the religion have remained fairly unitary, regardless of the state persecutions and lack of central administration. From the beginning, the Spiritual Baptist religion has been based on a dynamic of creativity and structure.

¹ None of my other sources mentions *Les religieuses de la charité*, and the Record Book gives no other information on the group and its functions in Tobago. The Sisters of St. Joseph, who came to Tobago in 1942, are not aware of any Catholic community preceding them in the island.

² *The First Book of Baptisms, Deaths, Marriage, 1st Communion, and Confg, and Miscellaneous* at the Catholic priest's office in Scarborough lists 413 baptisms between 1870-1893; first communion was given since 1880, and confirmation services conducted since 1891. Also, names of the deceased are listed from 1884 onwards, and marriages from 1886. The *News* of the 15th of July 1882 announced that Reverend O'Haulan had arrived in Tobago from Trinidad and had held divine service at the new premises of the Catholic church in a Scarborough house. A note added to the *First book of baptisms* on October 2 1940, mentions that "Fr. Hyacinth started to sign entries in 1889, before that they were signed by Fr. Andre Violette." Father O'Haulan, of whose predecessors I have no information, was thus succeeded by Fathers Violette and Hyacinth (sic).

³ A letter to the Editor using the pseudonym *Review* asked provocatively "where was the Romish church fifty years ago? Why did she leave Tobago to become old in Protestantism?" A pseudonym called "Catholic" replied to the various accusations in a letter to the Editor of *The News* (30 September 1882), and the debate continued in further numbers.

⁴ The Moravian church emerged in Bohemia (Czechoslovakia) in 1457 and was initially lead by Jan Hus (John Huss).

⁵ Douglin 1986, 187-189; Report from Lt. Governor, August 1837, quoted in Douglas 1986, 176. *The Tobago Gazette* of 6 July 1839 mentions a Reverend Duncan Lennis as the Presbyterian minister on the island, and in another issue people were reminded to pay their pew rents in the Presbyterian church in Plymouth (27 June 1839).

⁶ Patterson (1982, 72-73) points out that for Protestants, the converted had to indicate personal choice to become saved, which was not equally true for Catholicism. Also, the notion of Jesus' liberating sacrifice on the cross and the freedom bestowed for His followers, central in Protestantism, suited poorly the slave-owners' agenda. Douglin (1986, 183-184), quoting the Lt. Governor's report of the Peasantry of 1842, concludes that Moravians in Tobago baptised considerably fewer candidates than the Church of England during the apprenticeship period, and that they emphasised the true conversion of the candidate by prolonged periods of teaching and praying both before and after the actual baptism. It could therefore take at least a year before a candidate was ready for baptism. This policy was very different from the mass baptisms of the Church of England.

⁷ From 1818 onwards, several children of free *blackmen* and *women*, as well as children of planters and free *blackwomen* were baptised in the Anglican church, and the majority of baptisms involved a free black or coloured parent. In a few cases the mother was a free *blackwoman* and the father a slave. Also, some parents were both classified as slaves. Given the small number of European people on the island, it is not surprising that very few babies of the planter class were baptised. The majority of the children were born in illegal unions.

⁸ Most slaves had Christian names, but a few African names, like Mimba, were recorded. In the majority of cases the slave's mother's name was not marked in the register. Fathers were never mentioned.

⁹ Coleridge, William 1835: *Charges Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Barbados and the Leeward Islands*. London: J.G. & F. Rivington.

¹⁰ Lt. Governor's address to Apprenticed Labourers, August 7 1838; cit. Douglin 1986, 174.

¹¹ Lt. Governor's address to Assembly, July 10, 1841, cit. Douglin 1986, 178.

¹² Lt. Governor's Report to Governor General, September 13 1845, cit. Douglin 1986, 197.

¹³ Lt. Governor's Report on Schools, September 1844, and Report on Methodist Churches, December 16 1845, cit. Douglin 1986, 218, 223.

¹⁴ *The Tobago Gazette* of 2 February 1872 lists ten Anglican, seven Moravian and seven Wesleyan schools in Tobago.

¹⁵ Census of 1871, showing the religious affiliations of the Tobagonian population (*The Tobago Gazette* 22 July 1871, compiled by J.S. Fraser):

Total population	17054
Church of England	9116
Moravians	3666
Wesleyans	3267
Church of Scotland, incl. Presbyterians	37
Roman Catholic	36
Baptists	2
Mahometans	2
Separatists	1
Freethinkers	5
Unspecified	920

¹⁶ See for example Stanley 1992, Russell 2000.

¹⁷ Stevenson (1988, 5-7) argues that freemasonry started in the Medieval trade guilds of masons, in which elaborate mythologies of the history and ancient secrets of the trade as well as concepts of morality and religion were developed in England in the 15th century. By the 18th century, Grand Lodges, nation-wide organisations, were established in England (1717), Ireland and Scotland, and consequently the principles and organisation of freemasonry spread across Europe in the mid-18th century. The first Black mason in the global organisation was Prince Hall, a free Black from Barbados, who lived in Boston in the 18th century and was a prominent figure in the anti-slavery discourse in his community. He and fourteen other Blacks petitioned for admittance to a lodge within the British forces based in Boston, and in 1775 these fifteen Blacks were initiated into Freemasonry by Lodge No. 44. African Lodge No. 459 was soon issued by the grand master of the Grand Lodge of England, and freemasonry spread slowly but surely among African-Americans. There are Prince Hall grand lodges in the West Indies at the present moment (Williams 1980, 12-18, 42, 44, 126).

¹⁸ In the USA, a compartment for Blacks called Philomathean No. 646 was added to the Odd Fellows lodge in 1840s (Williams 1980, 80.)

¹⁹ *Lodge United Brothers No. 251, Philanthropic Lodge No. 585, Lodge Eastern Star No. 368, Royal Phoenix Lodge No. 1213/911, and Lodge Rosslyn No. 596* – existed in Trinidad in 1876, when *Lodge Rosslyn* petitioned the Grand Lodge of Scotland for recognition (www.rosslyn596.com, 18.5. 2001). *Lodge Kilwinning*, currently functioning in Tobago, has its roots in 17th-century Scotland, where its first minute books date back to 1642 (Stevenson 1988, 8).

The Herskovitses (1947, 257-264) mention "non-secret mutual aid groups" and "orders, or secret societies" as two existing types of lodges present in Toco in 1939. Whereas lodges like the *Rose of Sharon* and the *Toco Benefit Society* represented the first category, *Star of Bethlehem*, the *Northern Star*, the *Mechanics*, the *Foresters*, and the *Freemasons* were secret orders. The open lodges functioned mainly as insurance companies, offering sick benefits, doctors' fees and death benefits to cover the expenses of a proper funeral in return to weekly membership fees. Both men and women could join the *Rose of Sharon* and the *Toco Benefit Society*. Secret orders, of which the masonic lodges held greatest prestige, demanded a larger financial input from members, and were thus inaccessible for many Tocoans. "Big people belong, not poor, because they always have big upkeeping and upstairs," to quote one of the Herskovitses' informants. Only the *Star of Bethlehem* accepted female members, whereas the other lodges were fraternities. In addition to the eclectic nature of these lodges, the Herskovitses' informants talked about the secrecy of the proceedings, the death rituals, and the assistance to widows and orphans of members of the Masonic order. Another interesting comment by the Herskovitses' informants concerns these lodges' connections abroad. The secret password allotted to an initiand was sent to Trinidad from America (263); thus the Grand Lodge must have been located in the United States. It could be suggested that connections to American lodges instead of English or Scottish ones opened up as the American presence in Trinidad became stable during the second world war with the establishment of US naval and air bases in Chaguaramas and Wallerfield in 1941 (see Brereton 1982, 191).

²⁰ Erskine (1998, 143) mentions books of magic, and particularly the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*, as used by Jamaican Revivalist leaders. See Long (2001) for the uses of occult literature in Afro-American religions.

²¹ Sitahal, Harold 1977: Rethinking Missions for the Caribbean. In Idris Hamid (ed.) *Out of the Depths*. San Fernando: St. Andrew's Press. Quoted in Holder 2000, 128.

²² Mintz and Price (1976, 49) draw attention to the rapidity with which the Saramaka Maroons developed "a complex, integrated, and unique African-American religious system" in Suriname as an example of the inevitable creolisation of religion in the Caribbean.

²³ C.L.R. James (1994, 18) quotes a Vodou song in San Domingo:

Eh! Eh! Bomba! Heu! Heu!

Canga, bafio té!

Canga, mouné de lé!

Canga, do ki la!

Canga, li!

"We swear to destroy the whites and all that they possess; let us die rather than fail to keep this vow."

²⁴ In November 1770 a number of Coromantee slaves at Grafton Estate killed their owner, attacked the military outpost at Courland Point and killed two soldiers there. They then dispersed into the forest and were eventually hunted down, but their leader, Sandy, disappeared to Trinidad (Archibald 1995, 3). Thirty-eight slaves at Bloody Bay revolted in June 1771 and fled into the mountains. The uprising lasted for four months. In March 1774, 48 slaves from Betsy's Hope revolted, but were killed or executed soon after; and finally, in 1801, slaves from Bacolet and Calder Hall were arrested for planning a rebellion. One of their ringleaders was hanged thirty times to lead the slaves to believe that all the rebels were punished; in fact the valuable commodities were returned to their owners (D.I. Phillips' posters in the Scarborough Museum).

²⁵ Alleyne (1992, 4) notes that in Jamaica, too, the assembling of slaves on Sundays and holidays was banned very early in the history of slavery. But whereas in English colonies all slave meetings were prohibited, in Cuba "diversions and recreations" on holy days were allowed (Lopez Pujol 1992, 12-13).

²⁶ Alleyne (1993, 5) traces the etymology of the word obeah into Obayifo, the name of an Asante sorcerer; Cassidy's *Jamaica Talk* (1961) cites Obaifo as a Twi term. The word *obi* has been used prior to obeah, according to Bilby and Handler (2001).

²⁷ The expression *to work on someone* is used in colloquial parlance in reference to the practice of obeah; *voodoo* is sometimes used synonymously with obeah as well. See Barrett (1976) on obeah in postcolonial Jamaica.

²⁸ Simpson (1980, 14) quotes Charles W. Day's *Five Years' Residence in the West Indies*, 1852, for a description of Trinidadian wakes as "exceedingly annoying to their neighbours [---] the maudlin drunken psalmody is offensively ludicrous to their sober listeners [---]."

²⁹ Mintz and Price (1992/1976, 55) note that divination with the coffin, in which the spirit of the deceased seeks to reveal the cause of death by controlling the movements of the bearers, was a common funeral rite in West and Central Africa, and that the practice has been found in widely separated parts of the Caribbean. See for example Price (1990, 88-89, 312-313) for Moravian missionaries' descriptions of coffin-bearing among the Saramaka maroons of Surinam.

³⁰ The singing of hymns and card playing were an integral part of the Bongo in Toco, Trinidad, according to Herskovits, and coffee, rum, bread and biscuits were served at intervals. Libations of rum were poured around the house and in front of the coffin (1947, 137).

³¹ The Africans liberated from illegal slave ships, brought to Tobago in 1851 and 1862, imported their religious practices to the creolised and Christianised Tobago. The second ship contained mainly children, and the Governor of Tobago wrote to the Chief Governor that "they will no doubt from their youth be more easily instructed and readily impressed with the truths of Christianity from their comparative ignorance of the heathen superstitions of their native country" (Ottley 1950, 77-78). Niddrie (1980, 99-100) quotes an old market vendor who recounted what his grandparents had told him about the arrival of the liberated Africans. "On their first free day, a Sunday, [they] hollowed out

the trunk of a silk cotton tree, stretched a hide over it, and proceeded to beat out a wild dance rhythm in front of the Methodist church. While within three years those selfsame 'Africans' had taken English or Scottish surnames, and were going to church as avowed Christians, they undoubtedly reinforced African customs which were falling into disuse."

³² The 1871 census of Tobago (*The Tobago Gazette* 22 July 1871) counts only two Baptists.

³³ Land was allocated to slaves who bought their freedom by joining the British troops also in the Civil War.

³⁴ A.B. Huggins (1978, 33) gives vivid descriptions of the life in these secluded villages. See also Stanley 1992, 94, Jacobs 1996, 12-13, Bramble 1998, 42-43, and Hackshaw 1992, 1-2 on the Companies.

³⁵ Such famous personalities as Papa Neza (Pa Neezer), Ebenezer Elliott, are also featured in Huggins' *The Saga of the Companies* (1978, 62); baptised in a Baptist church in Third Company, Papa Neza was also a well-known Orisha leader, "Shango king," and a drummer (see Henry, forthcoming). He is also known for his special gift for healing and casting off evil spirits – *Spiritual work* – and has been referred to as an obeahman.

³⁶ A.B. Huggins, in *The Saga of the Companies* (1978, 32), clearly separates the London Baptists, Independent Baptists and Spiritual Baptists as distinct groups, the Independent being "a very close relation" to the London Baptists. He also mentions the Fundamental Baptists, founded in Trinidad in the late 1930s by Reverend James Quamina.

³⁷ Baptists have divided into several groups since their arrival in the beginning of the 19th century. The Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago continues the work of the Baptist Missionary Society of England, and are colloquially referred to as London Baptists (Plummer 1998, 50). The following three groups form "Independent Baptists:" The Independent Baptist Mission of Trinidad and Tobago; The Independent Baptist Missionary Union of Trinidad and Tobago; and The Independent International Baptist Church of Trinidad and Tobago. Then there are: The Fundamental Baptist Mission of Trinidad and Tobago, The Missionary Baptists, The Trinidad and Tobago Baptist Association, The Mt. Beulah Evangelical Baptist Church, and some unaffiliated Baptist churches (51-52).

³⁸ Stephens (1999, 61) quotes Archbishop Baisden and states that a Spiritual Baptist elder, Teacher Clearer, emigrated to Trinidad from St. Vincent as early as 1881, and founded a church in Carapichima; other Vincentian Converted leaders among these early immigrants were Teacher Bonnie Andrews and Pointer Olivierre.

³⁹ For example Henney 1971, comparing her material on Vincentian Spiritual Baptists to Herskovits's description of Trinidadian Spiritual Baptists in 1947; see also Zane 1999a and 1999b

⁴⁰ Hansard Records, debates of the Legislative Council of Trinidad and Tobago, January-December, 1917.

⁴¹ J.D. Elder recalls Didymus Edwards and Malco Duncan from the 1930s, when he worked in Tobago (oral communication, 1999, 2001).

⁴² Some claim that Teacher Cyril was originally from St. Vincent.

⁴³ The *Shakerism Prohibition Ordinance* in St. Vincent in 1912 depicts the Spiritual Baptist religious practice as having a "pernicious" and "demoralizing" effect on Vincentians and prohibits the religion "in the best interests of the said Colony of St. Vincent and its inhabitants" (Zane 1999, 161).

Stephens (1999, 63) argues that although the Vincentian prohibition ordinance was enforced longer than the equivalent in Trinidad, from 1912 until 1965, the Converted did not have to face similar ridicule and social ostracism as Trinidadian Spiritual Baptists.

⁴⁴ *Trinidad Constabulary Manual*. Quoted in Herskovits (1947, 345).

⁴⁵ The Inspector General of the Constabulary, who investigated the ritual practices of "the Shouters" for the Legislative Council, explained to the members of the Council that "There is a building in connection with this ceremony which is called 'Mourner's House.' In this those being initiated are placed and not allowed to come out for a considerable period of time. [---] There is a tremendous crowd there, and they shout and holler while they are 'getting possessed by the Spirit' as they call it.

There has been writing in the Scriptures in support of their practices" (Hansard Records, November 16 1917).

⁴⁶ Simpson (1980, 107) notes that no editorials condemning Orisha rituals were found in the *Trinidad Guardian* between 1917-1960.

⁴⁷ In addition to actual arrests, narratives of the period of persecutions mention people's ridicule, contempt and prejudice against Spiritual Baptists. Many point out that Spiritual Baptists were generally considered as obeahmen and -women.

⁴⁸ These times are important in Spiritual Baptist practice. Mourner room services, discussed in Chapter Four, are scheduled according to them.

⁴⁹ The then Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, Albert Gomes, who was a Trinidadian of Portuguese descent, was another major supporter of the Spiritual Baptist emancipation. Gomes was a leading intellectual figure in Trinidadian society of the time – a politician, writer, and journalist, as well as a representative of the Euro-Creoles of the colony (although of a lower caste as a "Potagee," Portuguese.) As early as 1931 he declared his disagreement with the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance in his journal, *The Beacon* (Jacobs 1996, 277-278). In 1949 Gomes presented Elton Griffith's and the West Indian Evangelical Spiritual Baptist faith's petition to repeal the Shouters Prohibition to the Legislative Council Ordinance, and a select committee was nominated in the following meeting (Hansard November 4, 1949). Although the debate of March 30, 1951 of the Legislative Council got very heated between himself and his political opponent, the eloquent labour leader Tubal Uriah Butler, both of these influential figures agreed whole-heartedly on the necessity to repeal the Shouter Prohibition Ordinance (Hansard, March 30 1951).

⁵⁰ Jacobs (1996, 359) rightly notes that the emergence of the WIUSBSO was foreseen by the Attorney General in 1917, when the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance was debated in the Legislative Council. The Attorney General observed that while the Ordinance prohibited the practices of a body called "Shouters," a similar body might evade the law by calling itself "Shriekers."

⁵¹ Gibbs de Peza's list includes: The West Indian United Spiritual Baptist Sacred Order Inc; The National Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith Archdiocese; The National Ecclesiastical Council of Spiritual Baptist Churches of Trinidad and Tobago; The Triune Shouters Baptist Inc; The International Spiritual Baptist Ministerial Council of Trinidad and Tobago; The Free Baptist Mission of Trinidad and Tobago; The Mount Pisgah Spiritual Baptist Archdiocese International of Trinidad and Tobago; The Mount Garazin Shouter and Baptist Church Limited; The Mount Hope Independent Spiritual Baptist Archdiocese of Trinidad and Tobago; The Mount Zion Independent Spiritual Baptist Church Inc. of Trinidad and Tobago; The Little Shrine Spiritual Baptist Church Ltd.; and The Ezekiel Spiritual Gospel Assembly Ltd. In addition to these, there is The United Churches of Spiritual Baptists, and a Tobago-headed diocese, Mt. Bethel Spiritual Baptist Assembly Inc. of Trinidad and Tobago.

2. CREOLISATION AND PURITY

The apparently antithetical themes of cultural origins, purity, and syntheses are integral to Caribbean discussions of ethnicity, identity and nationhood. In the anthropology of the region, these themes have emerged in analyses of creolisation, syncretism, and retentions. Two approaches have marked this anthropological discourse: the plural society thesis and the creolisation theory. Whereas the plural society thesis presents Caribbean societies as layered with separate, hierarchically positioned cultures, theorists of creolisation attempt models of an indigenous creole culture that unites all the ethnic groups and social classes of the diverse New World societies. Both students and practitioners of religion have added to these coexisting narratives. Syncretism, especially between African and European cultures, has long been a major topic in the anthropology of religion in the Caribbean, and the themes of cultural mixing but also of boundaries and distinct origins have been central to this endeavour. In dialogue with the more general discussions of culture, ethnicity and identity in the political arena, religious practitioners have voiced identity claims, some of which are in synchrony with the creolisation thesis and others that stress essentialised notions of ancestral origins and cultural purity. My primary interest in this chapter that compares different lines of discourse lies in the politics of demarcation of religions and cultures. I continue the discussion initiated in Chapter One on the ways in which African and European cultures and religions have been delineated in Tobago and Trinidad, and how their mutual presence in the Caribbean has been accounted for, particularly in relation to religion. Having pointed out the prevalence of a reified and static concept of religion and culture in much of the political discourse but also in studies of syncretism, I sketch an approach to creole culture and religion that does not downplay the agency of the people living in creole societies, but presents them as active, creative participants in the reproduction and change of culture and religion within particular socio-historical circumstances. With this emphasis on cultural construction and creativity I wish to bridge the conceptual gap, often hierarchically valued, between creole cultures and "cultures of origin."

AFRICANNESS, PURITY AND PLURALITY

If the colonial discourse strove to demarcate African and European cultures and religions, the notion of Africanness as an autonomous cultural unit has since been reproduced in political and also scholarly discussions and is quite recurrent in today's Caribbean. The image of Caribbean societies as amalgamates of mutually exclusive groups of people who profess distinctive value systems and whose cultures can be traced along different trajectories all the way to their ancestral origins in the Old World has been challenged in the social sciences, but still prevails in much political discourse in the region and is echoed in politico-religious statements as well. In such a narrative of cultural distinctiveness, the ethnic categories of African, European and Indian are reified and valued according to ancestral histories, the Old World origins of the cultures. Little merit is assigned to creole culture, which connotes colonial oppression and impurity. In the same vein, African and Christian religions are conceptualised as mutually exclusive categories, analytically separable even in the practices of Afro-Caribbean religions like Spiritual Baptists and the Orisha. Although focussing on this particular thematic, it is not my purpose to lump very different voices and theses into a neatly bounded discourse or narrative; the writers and social commentators discussed here have not had identical political agendas, theoretical backgrounds or social statuses, and neither do they represent any one social or cultural group.

M. G. Smith's plural society thesis was an influential opening for social studies of the Caribbean that approached the local societies as cultural mosaics. According to the thesis, "a plural society is one in which sharp differences of culture, status, social organization, and often race also, characterize the different population categories which compose it. An important feature of this societal type is the subordination of the majority to a dominant minority which is also culturally distinct" (Smith 1965a, 234). The colonial populations in the Caribbean consisted of distinct and hierarchical sections, initially whites, free coloureds and slaves, later a white land-owning elite, a coloured middle class, and lower classes of Indo- and Afro-Creoles. These sections of the plural society "practiced different cultures" (Smith 1965b, 112) and had different institutions, such as marriage and family. Similar ideas of connections between a value system or a "culture" and a particular category of people within Caribbean societies have emerged in many later studies, although a level of commonly shared culture is also acknowledged.¹ Related to the theme of cultural origins is the idea of Old World cultures as being more real and authentic than creolised variants. To give an example, Jayawardena (1980, 433-434) claims that Indo-Fijian culture is more

realistically Indian than its Indo-Guyanese counterpart, with an allusion to a "real" Indian culture found on the subcontinent rather than in the diaspora; whereas Indo-Fijians maintain close contacts with the ancestral homeland, for the Indo-Guyanese India exists on a mythical level and is thus less real than the India of Indians and Fijians. Few writers have been as explicit about the inauthenticity of creole culture in comparison to Old World "origins" than Carbonell (1993, 202-203), describing Cuban culture. Also the static character of the culture concept, typical of the present discourse, is apparent in his account:

We started off with cultures borrowed from Spain and Africa, which were not originally of our making, and this was to our great disadvantage. [---] And since we did not live through a long process of authentic cultural creation, like the Arab, Chinese, Indian, African and European cultures, in which each people created its own language, its own music, its own painting and sculpture, each different in its conception, each with its own unity of style, that in the last analysis is what characterizes an authentic culture, we, in our cultural weakness, were more susceptible to cultural penetration than the cultures of other countries.

The theme of plural value systems and separate cultures within a single society has not been embraced by anthropologists alone. Around questions of ethnicity and identity in the national media as well as in everyday discussions, the idea of the "continuation of ancestral diversities" (Munasinghe 2001, 6) has become loudly voiced during the past decades in Trinidad and Tobago. Afro- and Indocentric academics, religious specialists, journalists, calypsonians, politicians, and other public figures have ample space in the media to express their views on ethnicity, identity, and politics. In this discourse, ethnic groups are presented as clear-cut entities and referred to by terms like *African* and *Indian*, with connotations of homogenous categories of people eternally identified by their conceived origins. Of specific interest here are those voices that have emphasised Africanness as a cultural denominator, and particularly when this Africanness has been differentiated from Christianity in the realm of Afro-Caribbean religions.

PAN-AFRICANISM AND AFROCENTRISM

Developed in the colonial and postcolonial African diaspora, the idea of shared ethnicity as the common core of identity has inspired various ideological and political, and particularly anti-colonial and labour, movements in the Caribbean region. Pan-Africanism since the end of the 19th century, Négritude since the 1950s, and more recently Afrocentrism² have all portrayed an exclusive category of people, Africans (or Negroes in the earlier rhetoric).

In Trinidad and Tobago, claims of Africanness have marked political movements from the turn of the 20th century. The first instance of political organisation with explicitly African underpinnings was the Pan-African Association founded by a Trinidadian lawyer, Henry Sylvester Williams, in London in 1897. His visit to Trinidad in 1901 encouraged middle-class Afro-Trinidadians to establish several branches of the Association in Trinidad, but these soon withered away. Race consciousness and pride, however, settled in the local discourses to resurface later on (Brereton 1981, 149). Labour unrest, strikes and demonstrations after the first world war in both Tobago and Trinidad were the first major uprising of the vast working class, and also in Tobago the black and coloured estate workers demonstrated and rioted against the white plantocracy (in Trinidad the labour force consisted of indentured Indians and other Trinidadians of Asian descent in addition to blacks and coloured) (ibid., 152, 162). The labour movement of the following decades was deeply influenced by Marcus Garvey's Pan-Africanism, and many leaders of Trinidadian trade unions were members of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) (Reddock 1994, 106). Several Spiritual Baptists, among others, celebrated the ideas of ethnic pride and African identity in connection to trade unionism (Jacobs 1996, 81). Warner-Lewis (1991, 126) suggests that the success of the Garvey movement in Trinidad led certain of the Yoruba descendants she studied to assert African cultural and religious primacy, as in the claim of African religions pre-dating those of the Jews. In Garvey's persuasive rhetoric the category of Negroes was defined by the common political agendas of anti-colonialism and anti-racism (Marcus Garvey 1986).³

The Trinidadian-born C.L.R. James, an internationally renowned Marxist intellectual, understood Pan-Africanism as part of Marxism, and race as subordinate to class. For him, the catholicism of Africanness did not derive from common ancestry or origin, but from the historically moulded position and subjectivity of the "Negro" in relation to whiteness, colonialism, and slavery (Henry 2000, 55).⁴ James was cooperating with Eric Williams in drafting the PNM (People's National Movement) programme and the constitution of Trinidad and Tobago in 1956 (Williams 1969, 143, cit. Martin 1983, 168 fn. 18), and edited the PNM's journal in 1958-1960 (Brereton 1981, 241). Due to James's socialism, his influence on the politics of Trinidad and Tobago has not been as notable as his intellectual reputation might lead one to suspect (Worcester 1992, 116).

In addition to oppression and shared political goals, other unifying factors for theses of Pan-Africanism have included a shared African ontology, aesthetics and metaphysics (Léopold Senghor 1994).⁵ The notion of Pan-African metaphysical

unity has appeared in discourses of Afro-Caribbean religions, and at its core lies the idea of a traditional and idealised Africa.⁶

The Black Power movement of the early 1970s received support in Tobago, not least because the white elite owned most of the land on the island (Premdas 1998, 108). Disseminating to the Caribbean from the United States,⁷ the Black Power ideology was significant in regard to Afro-Caribbean religions in that their practice became socially more acceptable and even fashionable after a long history of condemnation, scorn, and illegality. The Orisha religion has experienced a revival since the early 1970s, with the membership and the number of shrines growing significantly (Scher 1997, 325; Warner-Lewis 1991, 121). In Tobago, many of the presently prominent Spiritual Baptist churches were founded in the early 1970s, and the amount of churches has since increased remarkably. The Rastafarian presence in Tobago has also become more visible since this period.

In present-day Trinidad and Tobago, the most audible of Afrocentric voices belongs perhaps to Dr. Selwyn Cudjoe, President of the National Association for the Empowerment of African People (NAEAP), whose books, columns in national newspapers, addresses in meetings and conferences, and interviews on the local radio and television contribute to the discourse on ethnicity prevalent in the country. On the Internet, several Trinidad-born academics or journalists based in the USA, such as Cudjoe, Amon Heru Hotep or Kwame Nantambu, distribute Afrocentric articles and addresses on sites like trinicenter.com and triniview.com; also, articles by African-American writers, like Naiwu Osahon or Molefi Kete Asante, one of the leading figures of the Afrocentrist movement, are published on these sites. Surpassing the focus on colonialism and European dominance in earlier Pan-African theses, Indo-Trinidadian culture has now become another major category against which the current Afrocentric discourse is formulated. Indians have become the Other alongside whites during decolonisation. Munasinghe (2001, 15-16) points out that whereas *race* was the point of reference in the former phase of the local discourse on purity and plurality, *culture* has become the factor that demarcates the categories of Afro- and Indo-Creole. Along with Afrocentrism, Indocentric organisations and commentators have become quite vocal in the 1990s, particularly the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, lead by Sat Maharaj. The Afro- and Indo-centric discourses in Trinidad and Tobago are founded on similar premises of cultural purity and superiority.

In response to racist denigrations of African people and history in the New World, "counter-mythographies of Ancient African Glory" (Howe 1998, 50) have been produced by Afrocentric thinkers. Religion is a central topic in the Afrocentric narrative of ethnic exclusivity, and particularly the religion and

mythology of ancient Egypt are drawn upon in arguments for the centrality of Africa in the development of religions and cultures (32). To sum up the main thesis, "African religion (is) the base upon which Judeo-Christianity and Islam is built" (Cudjoe 2000).⁸ The emphasis on African origins and influence on world religions and African contributions to cultures in general is celebrated as a foundation for self-esteem and ethnic pride. This comes forth in the calls for a rejection of anything other than "Traditional African Religion" or "popular traditional African Religion everywhere, Ptare" (Asante 1998); for example, Molefi Kete Asante states that "to accept the Jews' god or the Arabs' god or the Hindu's god (sic) and so forth is to valorize those histories above your own" (1998). In other words, African ethnicity and the cultures of the African continent are portrayed as inseparable, and diversions from African religion connote the denial of one's proper Africanness.

In Tobago, an organisation called the Tobago African Union has become visible in the local media. From the point of view of Spiritual Baptists, perhaps the most vocal self-acclaimed Afrocentrist is Dr. Winston Murray, the founder and head of the Tobago Community College.⁹ At the moment, Afrocentrism has risen above Tobagonian autonomy as a major theme in Dr. Murray's teaching at his college, public statements in the local radio and in addresses at various events, including Spiritual Baptist services.¹⁰ In Dr. Murray's view, the Spiritual Baptist religion represents the type of African cultural continuum and ethnic self-pride that he would like to see more widely in Tobagonian society, and he has volunteered to participate and speak in Spiritual Baptist functions in order to educate the practitioners more about the correct (that is, African) sources of their religion. For example, when discussing the Spiritual Baptist religion with me, Dr. Murray expressed a wish, perhaps half jokingly, that they replace Virgin Mary with an ancient Egyptian mother goddess.¹¹

ETHNICITY AND POLITICS

With independence and the postcolonial era of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago the ethnic juxtaposition of white and black made way to a heightened polarisation of the African and Indian-descended populations of Trinidad, which has also affected, to a lesser extent, the politics and ideas about ethnicity in Tobago as part of the Republic. In 1956, the People's National Movement (PNM), a newly formed party lead by the accomplished academic Dr. Eric Williams, won the majority of the seats of the legislative council, which by now numbered twenty-four. The membership of the PNM consisted mainly of urban Afro-Trinidadians, and ethnically divided voting between African- and Indian-descended populations started to take shape as the People's Democratic Party,

PDP, attracted the rural Hindu electorate (Brereton 1981, 235- 236). In the next general election in 1961 the PNM, with A.N.R. Robinson as one of the candidates, won the two Tobago seats in the Parliament. This election was even more clearly ethnic than the previous one, the Indian (Hindu) party now under the name Democratic Labour Party (DLP), and the campaigning was racist and even violent (245- 246). PNM's victory made the party, its largely Afro-Trinidadian middle class membership and Eric Williams, the leaders of the independent Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in 1962. PNM's victory was to be repeated in national elections for thirty years until 1986. The Indian-based DLP fragmented, and the PNM ruled the country without significant unified opposition. The ethnic division between Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians was not smoothed by PNM politics: while Williams promoted multi-ethnicity of the American "melting pot" type, his politics and the imagery of national culture were largely Afro-biased (Munasinghe 2001). Indo-Trinidadians were given token posts in the government, but Hindus were excluded from the cabinet as well as from senior positions in the public service and state corporations throughout the 30-year period of PNM rule (Premdas 1993a, 141, 142). Although political power was in Afro-Trinidadian hands, multinational companies and local whites held the economic power, and this was a major motive behind the 1970s Black Power insurgency and revolution (Yelvington 1993, 13).

Citizens of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and, for the great majority, representatives of the African-descended portion of the population, Tobagonians have nevertheless always prioritised their island identity over ethnicity in their political practices and goals. The juxtaposition between African and European or Afro- and Indo-Creoles is no more significant than that between Tobagonian and Trinidadian. Self-definitions are indeed more often achieved by mirroring Tobago to Trinidad, rather than African to Indian. The Afrocentric discourse does not penetrate the Spiritual Baptist ritual or informal discourse to any great extent. In discussions concerning politics, at homes or when relaxing after rituals, ethnicity and Africanness are seldom heard as the basis of self-definitions; the "we" that is implied is normally "we the Tobagonians." In ritual speech, sermons and teachings in which political issues can be addressed, Afrocentric phraseology or argumentation is very rare.¹²

ANTHROPOLOGY OF SYNCRETISM

The concept of culture as a bounded, essentialised category, typical of the plural society narrative, is not uncommon in theses of cultural contact and fusion: the idea of syncretism as a blending of cultures which can be objectively recognised as distinct components of the finished product, a creole culture or religion, has been

widely applied in anthropological studies of Caribbean religions. The term syncretism¹³ has been used in anthropology in reference to the fusing of two or more previously separate cultures and social systems. Insofar as African-Caribbean religions have been studied as syncretic, Spiritual Baptists being no exception, the two main components of the fusion have been identified as African and Christian religious traditions. Gordon Lewis (1983, 199) encapsulates the basic idea that many scholars have detected in syncretism: "mixing, so to speak, African spirit with European form."

The discourse on religious syncretism began in the 1930s in Melville Herskovits's inspiring project against the prevalent, racist idea, "the myth of the Negro past," that African-Americans did not have a culture or a history of their own, because their African cultural background did not survive the violent uprootings of the Middle Passage and slavery. Participating in the anthropological debate on acculturation, Herskovits sought to reveal "Africanisms," important and valuable survivals of African cultures retained in the Americas and the Caribbean, and to trace the roots, the historical origins of the "New World Negro" cultures (Herskovits 1972; see also Shaw and Stewart 1994, 5). Although Herskovits distanced his work on integrative syncretism from the notion of a cultural mosaic, given the theoretical – and also political – importance of identifying African cultural survivals in this project, African and Christian religious beliefs and practices were inevitably conceptualised as exclusive, distinct categories, although components of the same New World culture or religion.¹⁴

Herskovits (1972, 222-223) mentions a number of Africanisms in the ritual practice of Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad and describes the "process of injecting legally tabooed Africanisms into approved Christian procedure." Among such African retentions in "Shouters'" worship were the position of a spiritually advanced Leader as the cult-head, like the Yoruba *babalorisha* or *vodunon*; spiritual possession and the glossolalia and bodily movements performed during it; the singing and rhythms "fully in the African pattern;" spiritual gifts received during initiation; and various positions in the church hierarchy, for which African counterparts could be found. Also, the centrepole of the church, the chalk drawings on the floor, and the flags had equivalents among West African religious symbols. Visions, the initiation ritual of baptism by immersion, and the mourning ritual with its period of seclusion and symbolism of rebirth resembled African ritual practices. All in all, in Herskovits' view the Shouters had combined features of African and Protestant Christian religions in such a way that the retentions were quite detectable; the original African form of worship existed under Protestant cover (1947, 305-313). As a syncretic "sect" with such a large number of African retentions "injected," "[the Shouters] represent a point

of transition between African religion, represented in Trinidad by the Shango cult [the Orisha religion], and *undiluted* European forms of worship, as found in the Church of England, among the Moravians, and, to a lesser extent, the Seventh Day Adventists and the Baptists" (305, my italics).

Similar premises about distinguishable African and Christian religious elements have marked many of Herskovits's followers' works. A notable example are Roger Bastide's studies on the syncretism of "Negro" religions, especially in Brazil and Haiti (1972/1967, 1978/1960).¹⁵ For Bastide, the phenomenon is best described by the term "mosaic syncretism," which implies an entity composed of unambiguously separate parts. Such unions of separate belief systems were strategically formed by the slaves who needed to "conceal their pagan ceremonies from European eyes," and therefore "danced in front of a Catholic altar," addressing their worship to African gods instead of the saints portrayed in statues and lithographs (1972, 156). Syncretism, therefore, resulted from political and religious persecutions in the colonial period, and African divinities were masked as Catholic saints as a pragmatic strategy of adaptation (on the masking theory, see also Murphy 1988, 123, Desmangles 1992, 11, Karade 1994, 5-6). Bastide presents Trinidadian "Shouters" as an example of African-Protestant syncretism (1972, 165), which takes place on two levels: firstly, the place of worship is a blend of Christian and African elements, the most important of the latter being the centrepole. Secondly, the ecclesiastical organisation of the "sect" is built on Christian and African concepts of priesthood, including preachers of Christian type as well as African-derived "doctors," "seers" and "nurses." Also, Bastide lists African practices parallel to the initiation ritual of baptism: it is arranged in a secluded place, "in the bush," as initiation rituals in Africa, and the "powers" or gifts that the initiates receive are marked by specific liturgical emblems, just like in African Orisha worship (*ibid.*, 166). More explicitly than many other anthropologists, Bastide has promoted the idea of an authentic and pure African religion and even expressed regret for its syncretic "degeneration" in the New World (1958).

The themes of acculturation, syncretism, and religious essentialism resonate also in other accounts of Trinidadian religiosity. George Eaton Simpson (1978, 61), an important early scholar of the "Shango" and "Shouters" in Trinidad, describes acculturation in the context of African-Caribbean religions:

Acculturation operates by means of three analytically distinctive but interrelated processes: retention, syncretization, and reinterpretation. Through these processes, a sizable number of African cultural elements have been incorporated into the belief systems and rituals of religious cults of the Caribbean and South America.¹⁶ These traits include the names and characteristics of African deities, "soul" concepts, ritual objects, drum rhythms, song styles, dance steps, spirit

possession, the ritual use of herbs, stones, and water, seclusion and "mourning," animal sacrifices, belief in the immediacy of intervention of supernatural beings in human affairs, utilization of spirits of the dead, and ritual words. These traits have been blended with Christian elements – including the names of Catholic saints, Catholic and Protestant theological concepts, hymns, prayers, Bible verses, the cross and crucifixes, and with spiritual doctrine.

Simpson, by laying more emphasis on retentions and syncretisation than reinterpretation, supports the model of syncretism as a jigsaw puzzle or a mosaic. Joseph Murphy (1988, 122, 124), writing about the relationship of Yoruba religion and Christianity in Santería, argues that practitioners of syncretic religions always differentiate between the features of the two systems, being thus "bireligious." Here Murphy, too, aligns with Bastide's model of mosaic syncretism. In the same vein, Raboteau (1978, 25) states that "the notion of syncretism must not be pushed too far. While African gods have been identified with Catholic saints, it is Ogun, for example, who possesses, not St. Michael."

All in all, syncretism in Afro-Caribbean religions has often been presented as a teleological process in which features of two religions have been joined but have retained their separate meanings. A similar thesis is proposed in studies of syncretism between Spiritual Baptist and Orisha religions, as discussed in Chapter Eight. Although the dualism of these analyses does not necessarily simply invoke African retentions, it threatens to reduce creole religions into a static juxtaposition of African and Christian components, because sufficient attention is not paid to the transformations of for example Roman Catholic symbols and practices in religions like Vodou and Santería. The fact that Vodouisants separate Catholic and Vodou practices in the rituals, as Desmangles (1992) suggests, does not mean that these were not creolised. The Herskovitses' idea of "undiluted European forms of worship," advocated in theses of bireligiosity, needs to be reconsidered. Relating to the theme, Brandon (1997, 171) makes important observations about Cuban *santeros'* and *santeras'* views of their religion and syncretism: some of the devotees distinguish between Catholicism and Santería, but do so on the basis of dissimilar criteria, drawing the line in different places. Moreover, the practitioners do not regard their own religion, however delineated, as syncretic or consisting of different religions.

Along with anthropologists, African retentions have intrigued cultural analysts in Trinidad and Tobago as well. The Trinidadian historian and Prime Minister Eric Williams, a major promoter of the creolisation thesis in the nation-building project of Trinidad and Tobago, declares that "the shouters" and "the shango" (sic) "have come to Trinidad straight from Africa" (1964, 39). Similar approaches are offered by other local scholars, practising Spiritual Baptists or Orisha themselves. Rawle Gibbons (1996, 27) states that Spiritual Baptists as

well as Orisha devotees are spiritually African, and that the formers' rituals and beliefs have kept alive African beliefs, like the idea of an immanent, present God, who is a manifesting power that can make himself visible. They have also retained African practices like the mourning ritual, salt taboos, colour symbolism, receiving gifts in initiation rituals, the equal status of women in the church hierarchy, the organisation of space according to the four cardinal points, and the significance of the earth in rituals. It has to be noted, however, that Gibbons challenges the juxtaposition of African and Christian in the first place by reminding the reader that Africa is the cradle of civilisation and monotheistic religion. The idea of African practices as valuable retentions came out again when Dr. J.D. Elder, the Tobago-born anthropologist and folklorist, talked about the importance of original and authentic African drumming styles in Spiritual Baptist and Orisha rituals, frowning at the ignorance of the local drummers about proper Yoruba beats and condemning their use of local beats like the *calypso* or *bélé* in rituals. On another occasion he admonished Tobagonian Orisha practitioners for their bad pronunciation of the Yoruba language (personal communication, 1999 and 2001). Several studies of syncretism in the Spiritual Baptist and Orisha religions have focussed specifically on the Yoruba religion as the source of retentions.¹⁷

AFRICANISATION AND AFRO-CARIBBEAN RELIGIONS

The idea of African religions and Christianity as separate and juxtaposed entities, supported by many anthropological studies of syncretism, is prevalent in the recent trend of Africanisation of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American religions. The Afrocentric line of argumentation and the interpretation of syncretism as a mere adaptive strategy have gained support among some Orisha practitioners in Trinidad, who seek to purge their religion of "syncretic," Christian, characteristics. This transformation has been of interest lately to Houk (1993, 1995), Scher (1997) and Henry (forthcoming and 1999).¹⁸ By Africanisation these writers refer to attempts to "cleanse" the Orisha religion of all syncretic elements and to return to a pure and authentic African form of worship, so to speak. As Scher (1997, 324) puts it, "(t)he desire to control the destiny of the Orisha, as well as its past, and to make solid connections to African 'tradition' as a form of legitimation is the primary goal of the 'Africanization' process." Under this anti-syncretic course of action lies the popular idea of syncretic cultural forms as impure or inauthentic. Accusations of inferiority against indigenously developed creole religions thus come not only from commentators who support European and North American originated denominations, but also from Afrocentric critics.

Anthropologists have played a significant role in the Africanisation discourse. One rationale behind the Africanising project is the theory of syncretism as camouflage, proposing that slaves were forced to combine features of Roman Catholic Christianity to their African, or more specifically, Yoruba religion, as a calculated adaptive strategy. "The ability to keep [the Yoruba] deities alive in the world-reality of the Yoruba led to *the conscious masking* of them behind Christian saints and social-ritual performances. Catholicism, with its numerous patron-saints, made the masking easy. And, since the Portuguese and Spanish were Catholic and also major enslavers of Yoruba elite prisoners, *the tradition survived virtually intact*" (Karade 1994, 5; my italics). Because of the purely technical nature of syncretism proposed in this theory, today's Africanisation appears as a method of decolonisation. Henry (1999, 80, 82) argues that the growing popularity of the Orisha religion in the modern or postmodern society of contemporary Trinidad results from "the need to establish an identity apart from that which was imposed during the colonial era," and that there is a notable orientation among younger members towards "purely African" worship, cleansed of the Christian influence. These members adhere to the theory, propagated by anthropologists, that syncretism with Christianity was only a strategy and thus inauthentic (Henry, forthcoming). In a similar vein, Houk (1995, 187) has suggested that the rising trend of Africanisation in the Orisha religion is "an aggressive and volitional reaction to the vestiges of colonialism." According to the logic of Africanisation, if Orisha practitioners "were to eliminate Catholic, Spiritual Baptist, Hindu, and Kabbalistic elements from the Orisha religious system, the remaining beliefs and practices would be purely African." Houk agrees with this line of thought because of the prevalence of Yoruba language and West African religious elements in the religion (ibid., 188). The idea of African origins and authenticity has been subscribed to by anthropologists: Roger Bastide and other scholars of Afro-Brazilian religions, argues Motta (1998, 49), have initiated the claims for African and particularly Yoruba purity in present-day Candomblé by promoting the notion of authenticity in traditional African values and ideas, and lamented the corruption of pure religion in their theories of syncretism. Thus, the discourse of Africanisation in Orisha religion makes use of concepts like *purification*, in the sense of cleansing an authentic or original African religion of syncretic influences, and *liberation*, as in postcolonial resistance.

Not unlike the Afrocentric Orisha practitioners who reject Christianity and syncretism as vehicles of colonial oppression, the voices that denigrate African religious traditions as "superstitious" or even as "devil-worshipping" have added to the pluralistic view of the spectrum of Caribbean religions. Whereas the proponents of Africanisation echo the Afrocentric ideologies that have emerged

in anti-colonial and anti-racist political discourse, those who denounce "African" features in Spiritual Baptist worship seem to align with the persistent anti-creole and anti-African argumentation that once culminated in the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance, and is still alive in the general prejudices against the religion. Efforts to define Christianity and African religions as mutually exclusive categories emerge even within the Spiritual Baptist religion, for example in the writings of Teacher Hazel Ann Gibbs de Peza, according to whom Spiritual Baptists have, by definition, "relinquished African forms of worship" (1999). Gibbs de Peza (1999, 18-19) points out that some of the African slaves who were brought to Trinidad were already Christians when they arrived, and that the Spiritual Baptist faith developed when many of the Africans chose to follow Christianity. Other Africans declined Christianity and upheld their traditional religion, and thus the Orisha religion, "the local interpretation of Yoruba beliefs," was formed. Teacher de Peza's organisation, Spiritual Baptist Christians, attempts to Christianise the Spiritual Baptist religion by delineating a pure form of Christian worship; the premises are much like those of the Africanisation movement. Concerned of the public image of the religion, Bishop Earl Nichols stated in an interview in the *Trinidad Guardian Extra* (20 March 1998) that,

the younger people coming into the religion are being prepared to carry it from the 'backward stage' it is in at present. [---] The religion was made up of many illiterate people, and because of this they were scorned. [---] We have to educate the people, discipline them, make them realize that people are watching and that they have to control their behaviour. [---] *They have to look at the liturgy and revamp its style. No one says that you cannot catch the power, but you have to have some control and don't allow yourself to fall on the ground and so on.* (My italics)

Although otherwise opposite, both positions conceptualise religion as an essentialised and static system, rendering African religions and Christianity as monoliths whose coexistence in the Caribbean has not produced anything comparable to the "pure" and "authentic," "original" religions of the Old World; the possibility of valid cultural forms developed in the New World is not explored in this narrative of ancestral continuities. As a result, transformations in Christianity, African religions, and in religions indigenous to the Caribbean are not sufficiently addressed. Furthermore, practitioners of creole religions are denied the agency of creating the symbolic content of their belief systems, as the essentialised "origins" of their religions are valued over the creolised forms.

CREOLISATION AND CREATIVITY

The anti-racist and anti-colonial motives of early theorists of syncretism, particularly in the ground-breaking works of the Herskovitses, are still laudable. While I emphasise the indigenoussness of creole religions, I do not deny the African basis of the Spiritual Baptist belief system or belittle the importance of decolonisation in the present-day Caribbean. I intend only to develop the discussion to show that creolisation is a process that produces something novel, irreducible to separate components. Culture in this view is ever-changing, not stagnant or bounded.

The theses outlined above assume that the religious knowledge and practices of the Spiritual Baptist religion can be unveiled as blends of objectively distinguishable components. The component religions, like Yoruba or Roman Catholic, appear to be non-syncretic, pure, stable and ahistorical. These studies of syncretism and the ideology of Africanisation therefore imply a rupture between the cultures of origin, stable and bounded, and creole cultures, acculturated and inclusive. In the same vein, *hybridity*, another commonly used concept in analyses of interculturalisation between previously separate groups particularly in colonial and postcolonial settings (e.g. Bhabha 1994, Young 1995), is loaded with biological implications of a cross-breeding of pure species. As Stoddard and Cornwell (1999, 237) observe, "the word 'hybrid' depends for its meaning on a metaphysics of purity, of pure types, species, breeds, races." However, as the way in which culture is conceptualised has changed in anthropology in recent decades,¹⁹ theorists of creolisation have pointed out that nowhere in the world, Old or New, have cultures ever been "non-creolised," or in other terms, non-syncretic or non-hybridised. For example Hannerz (1996, 67) assures his reader that the formerly separate cultural elements that blend in creole societies and cultures have never been pure or homogeneous, which is an obvious improvement to the early connotations of syncretism.²⁰ Brandon (1997, 180-181) concludes that "there is nothing distinctive about so-called syncretic religions" and that cultural change is pervasive, "ubiquitous and fundamental" to the modern and postmodern world. Assessing certain cultures as less authentic, pure and valuable than others on the basis of their creoleness is therefore unsustainable. For this and other reasons, the very term 'syncretism' has been unpopular in anthropology for quite some time.²¹

In the light of the multifaceted and dynamic presence of Christian and African-oriented religions in Tobagonian history and of Spiritual Baptist notions of Africa and Africanness, the simple dualism of the assumed syncretic

components becomes questionable, and they are shown to be culturally constructed rather than static elements unaltered by social practices.

CONSTRUCTING "AFRICAN RELIGION" AND "CHRISTIANITY"

Presuming a unitary religion called "Christianity" as one of the syncretic components in creole religions, and in this case the Spiritual Baptist, proves problematic; as shown in Chapter One, Christianity has always been represented in Tobago by several missions and denominations, whose interrelationships have been hierarchical and contested. The religious knowledge and practices of Roman Catholic nuns and priests, Moravian missionaries, Anglican rectors, Methodist preachers, Seventh Day Adventists, Pentecostals, Spiritual Baptists, American TV-evangelists and numerous other individuals and groups have compiled "Christianity" in local peoples' experiences. Whereas ecumenical activities between churches are few, the denominations are far from exclusive: most Tobagonians have visited several different churches, and being christened in the Anglican but baptised in the Adventist church, for example, is quite common. One contemporary instance of breaches between denominations was a Seventh Day Adventist crusade where a well-advertised American evangelist preached in a large tent and condemned Sunday worshipping as a sin against God. This instigated defensive responses not only by Spiritual Baptist Mothers but also by the Catholic priest and other clerics of local churches. Delineating orthodoxy and orthopraxy²² within Christianity in general, in the sense that proponents of religious purity imply, is untenable.

If Christianity in the Caribbean is multifaceted and changing and its interpretations culturally constructed, Africanness and the concept of "African religion" are no less so. The research tradition on syncretism has drawn on historical ethnographic evidence about West African religions, citing writers like Frobenius, Talbot, Parrinder and Bascom and comparing contemporary Caribbean religions to their descriptions of Yoruba religion (e.g. Lum 2000, Simpson 1980, Herskovits 1947). The Africanness thus outlined does not account for change. Henry (forthcoming, 103) notes that the proponents of Africanisation of the Orisha religion justify the process by assuming that "authentic" African religion, as they (and the anthropologists theorising syncretism) define it, is still being practiced in Nigeria, frozen in an idealised form. This sort of essentialism, although understandable as a political stance, has no basis in reality. Apter (1992, ref. Greenfield 2001, 117-119) shows how in the Yoruba religion cults of different *òrìsà* have been part of a dynamic socio-political system of competing quarters of *ilus*, urban centres surrounded by farmland, and Greenfield observes that no matter how zealously New World practitioners

Africanised their creole religions, the "original" could never be replicated because the social system itself is completely different. Religious beliefs and practices in the areas where slaves were captured in the 16th-19th centuries have, of course, changed since then (see for example Blackley, Van Beek, and Thomson, 1994). Henry (forthcoming, 105) makes this clear by observing that the *òrìsà* religion in Nigeria "has changed even more dramatically than in the diasporic survivals," and that most Yoruba today are Christians and Muslims. Far from homogeneous entities, syncretism has marked African religions, just like any other religious system. Also, various authors have brought to our attention the fact that movement between Africa and the New World has by no means been unilateral; visits and immigration from the Americas and the Caribbean to West Africa have produced a flow of cultural influences crossing the Atlantic in both directions.²³ As a case in point, Glazier points out that African religious leaders have taken to travelling to the Caribbean and to Brazil to find a more genuine, pure and authentic religion (1998, 106, 109; see also Henry, forthcoming).

AFRICA IN SPIRITUAL BAPTIST ORIGIN STORIES

The Spiritual Baptist category of *Africa* is not identical to that articulated by Afrocentric commentators, theories of syncretism or ethnographers of West African peoples. The juxtaposition between Africanness and Christianity is bridged in Spiritual Baptists' auto-histories. A central argument in these concerns the African roots of Christianity in general, and some elders have reminded their congregations of Africa as the birthplace of all civilisation and religion; here the discourse draws upon the old tradition of Pan-Africanist and Afrocentrist thought.²⁴ Occasionally, in sermons and informal discussions, notions of African origins of the Spiritual Baptist religion arise. These, however, differ from the lists of African retentions compiled by anthropologists. Africa is discussed as part of ancient history more generally, along with the Biblical history of the Middle East, and instead of West African cultures, Egypt features as the cradle of certain basic religious principles. Allusions to Egypt, to old fraternities and secret orders, as well as to Biblical characters and episodes merge in such histories.²⁵ Given the emphasis on mystery inherent in the religious knowledge of Spiritual Baptists, obscure traditions are compatible with the general belief system. Moreover, the open-ended nature of the system facilitates the inclusion of similar conventions and histories. Claims of origins in ancient Egypt, Palestine, or Africa also give an aura of durability and transcendence to the religion, and may thus partly be a counter-reaction to those contemptuous voices that have dismissed the Spiritual Baptist religion as a cult.²⁶ And finally, the tendency to locate specific sites as the concretised origins of the Spiritual Baptist

religion – or "African religion" – is typical of other religions as well. Maurice Halbwachs (1992) shows how particular locations in the Holy Land have been selected as the basis of the collective Christian memory of the origins of the faith, and how this sacred topography has later on been constructed to suit shared recollections of evangelical "facts." "As a result, the general organization of holy places is strongly marked by contemporary Christian beliefs" (233); collective memory of origins, central to religious identity, relies largely upon culturally constructed locations and maps.

Viola Gopaul-Whittington (1984), whose great aunt Julie Payne was said to have founded the third Spiritual Baptist "praise house" in Trinidad and whose knowledge was passed to Gopaul-Whittington, has presented a theory of the origins of the Spiritual Baptist religion that draws on Egyptian and West African histories. In her version, two Yoruba slaves serving British archaeologists, who had worked in Egypt for years unveiling the "spirit art" of the ancient Egyptians, arrived in Antigua with their masters. After invocation ceremonies "two Pharaoh entities floated on the Yarouba (sic) mediums," and revealed to them many secret ceremonies, the meanings of hieroglyphs, and gave them instructions. On the following morning these Yoruba slaves were dipped in a river, as instructed by the Pharaohs, and this was the first baptism in the West Indies. After that the Yoruba slaves "shouted under the new force of Power, [---] healed the sick, cast out demons, spoke in tongues, had the gift of revelations and utterances; they fasted, mourned, signed numerous hieroglyphics on the bands of pilgrims and around them" (ibid., 5-6). Gopaul-Whittington also discusses the Essenes²⁷ of Egypt, and states that both Jesus and John the Baptist are thought to have been Essenes. She presents similarities between ancient Egyptian and Spiritual Baptist practices – white dresses and headties resemble Egyptian attires, and the unknown tongues spoken include "the lost language of Egypt" (ibid., 7).

Gopaul-Whittington's claim for the Egyptian roots of the Spiritual Baptist religion is not unknown in Tobagonian discourse. The Essenes have come up at times, although not frequently; for example, Bishop Daniel lectured at the Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day ceremony of 1999 in Shaw Park about the Essenes of the River Nile as the origins of the faith. More allusions to Egypt are drawn from *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*,²⁸ a New Age best-seller read and studied by some elders in Tobago. *The Aquarian Gospel* covers the years of Jesus's life that the New Testament omits, namely from 12 to 30 years of age. According to the *Aquarian Gospel*, Jesus travelled extensively during those years, visiting India, Nepal, Tibet, Persia, Assyria, Greece and Egypt, and learnt of different religions, including "Brahmic religion" in India, Buddhism in Nepal and the "magian" philosophy in Persia, where three sages taught Him (ibid., 40-61). Jesus also taught Apollo, a sage, in Greece (ibid., 69). In Egypt He joined the

"temple of the sacred brotherhood" in Heliopolis, and received seven degrees in it, finally becoming Christ (ibid., 73-83). According to the *Aquarian Gospel* (32), Matheno, an Egyptian hermit and priest, taught John the Baptist in a temple in Egypt for eighteen years. Matheno has occasionally emerged in the Tobagonian discourse as the originator of adult baptism and consequently a forefather of the Spiritual Baptist religion. John the Baptist is regularly acknowledged as the first Baptist, and his adult baptisms are considered to be the model for Spiritual Baptist practice both by Spiritual Baptist authors, like Gibbs de Peza (1999, 24), and in the general Spiritual Baptist discourse in Tobago.

The influence of other great traditions on Christianity as described by the *Aquarian Gospel* is in accordance with the Spiritual Baptist cosmology, where many of the nations mentioned in the *Gospel* – Africa, India, Assyria – are present. Additionally, the idea of all religions being different ways of worshipping the same God, as well as the secret fraternities mentioned in the *Aquarian Gospel* provide a link between Spiritual Baptist auto-histories and Freemasonry.

Some of the male elders in the Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist community belong to secret fraternities. This affects the cosmology and religious knowledge of the religion via the teachings of these elders, as the dogma of the societies or lodges can be regarded as part of their religious knowledge. For example, the notion of the Sacred Order of Melchisedec and the idea of a continuum of priesthood is part of Masonic legends; Melchisedec, "king of Salem, priest of the most high God," "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life," initiated the eternal order and changeless priesthood of Christ (Hebrews 7: 1-3).²⁹ A Tobagonian Bishop who belongs to a lodge has taught the ministers of his diocese as well as members of his congregation that the Spiritual Baptist religion is "better known as the Grand and Sacred Order of Melchisedec." (Such teaching, like most teachings of the doctrine, usually takes place in more secluded services than the normal Sunday worship.) In a similar vein, the Trinidadian Archbishop Granville Williams has argued that Spiritual Baptists, as keepers of ancient traditions, are the true Order of Melchisedec (Jacobs 1996, 286).

Masonic legends of the origin of Freemasonry also mention the Essenes (Waite 1970, 264-265). In both Freemasonry and the Spiritual Baptist belief system, great symbolic value is attached to the sign of the chart and the compass, as well as to the four cardinal points (Waite 1970, 100). Myths of Egyptian origins, as Howe (1998, 66) points out, are integral to Masonic lore. Furthermore, Kabbalistic traditions have intertwined with Freemasonry (ibid. 416-421), and influenced Orisha and Spiritual Baptist religions in Trinidad and Tobago (Houk 1995, 90-96). *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* and Masonic legends share certain notions that have been combined with the Spiritual Baptist

discourse by certain members of the faith.³⁰ Egyptian fraternities or secret orders have been acknowledged in the Masonic mythologies of different orders,³¹ just like in *The Aquarian Gospel* (73-83), and even the myth of the years that Jesus spent in Egypt, omitted in the New Testament, is discussed in both (*The Aquarian Gospel* 73-8; Waite 1970, 108). Because both the *Aquarian Gospel* and Masonic mythology promote the notion of one God shared by all religions, and refrain from representing Christianity as a strictly European tradition but bring up connections between it and other religious orders, such as Hinduism and Buddhism in *The Aquarian Gospel*, they bear structural resemblances to the Spiritual Baptist cosmology. In other words, one can easily see how the Spiritual Baptist notions of India, Africa, China, Egypt, Syria, and other Spiritual nations as essential parts of their Christian belief system could be supported by *The Aquarian Gospel* as well as by certain aspects of Masonic mythology.

Fascinating as such cosmological intertwining is, these links between Masonic mythology, *The Aquarian Gospel* and Spiritual Baptists' conceptions of the origins of their religion are fairly insignificant as far as the bulk of the members are concerned. The majority do not belong to lodges, and Masonic knowledge is not easily distributed to non-Masons. Although some have *The Aquarian Gospel* on their bookshelves, it is never used in ritual practice like the Bible – no sermon is based on it, no phrases of it are quoted in services, and it does not serve as a ritual object like the Bible, for example in rituals like cutting the Bible or pressing an initiate. Instead of generally acknowledged sources of religious knowledge, the Masonic mythology and *The Aquarian Gospel* (as well as the *Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses*, sometimes mentioned) supplement certain practitioners' knowledge of the religion's mysteries. Also, lodges are seldom, if ever, discussed in ritual environments. A male elder once asked participants of an educational meeting at his church whether anyone belonged to any secret society or lodge. Two sisters affirmed and specified that they had reached the third degree. The elder then explained that there are seven degrees in all, and that women cannot reach all of them, unlike men. This was the only time I have heard lodges mentioned in a Spiritual Baptist ritual in Tobago, and the ritual in question was not a normal one, but a teaching session for members of one church. In informal conversations talk about lodges is more common. Elders who are not members of lodges have described the fantastic spiritual skills of lodge people: for example, it has been said that lodge men who were about to face charges for a criminal offence were sent overseas in a secret lodge ritual, in which the man was put in a tub full of water and consequently transmitted to a safe shore away from Tobago. Lodge men's magical skills, as they appear in discussions, create an aura of awe around the mysterious fraternities. In such

legends and informal discussions between non-members, no clear-cut boundaries emerge between obeah and lodge magic.

All in all, the Spiritual Baptist discourse does not concede a juxtaposition between Africa and a 'syncretic' or 'creolised' belief system, and the claims of a timeless authenticity of West African practices, often heard from proponents of Africanisation, are absent from it. Africa, as a cultural construct, is part and parcel of the cosmology of the religion and cannot therefore function as point of comparison or an ideal in the Spiritual Baptist exegeses.

CREATIVITY

The Spanish word *criollo* means "native to the locality" (OED 1989), and the term creole, as well as the French *créole*, have been used in reference to someone or something born in the Caribbean (as well as in elsewhere in Spanish and French New World colonies) but with origins or ancestry elsewhere – in the case of the Caribbean, in the Old World. Creolisation means cultural change in the colonial and postcolonial Caribbean, as the indigenous Caribs and Arawaks, migrations from different European countries, the African slave trade, the Indian, Javanese, and Chinese indentureship, and the global networks of relations that followed these dislocations, have combined in social and cultural processes of plantation societies. Change and creativity have been part and parcel of these processes. Although I agree with Hannerz and others who have pointed out that creolisation, in the sense of change following cultural contact, is a universal phenomenon, I appreciate the specifically Caribbean connotations the term has, most importantly the idea of multiple migrations and the power relations of the colonial plantation society, and I am therefore reluctant to replace the term with the more general "cultural change" or "process."³²

Discussions of creolisation in Caribbean linguistics, cultural research and literature have offered analyses in which creole cultures and religions are allowed creativity as well as cohesion, novelty and change as well as structure. The concept of creolisation, although not necessarily the term, has circulated widely in Trinidad and Tobago since the decolonisation and independence struggles of the 1950s and 60s, during which time it became burdened with the notion of homogeneity. Nation-building ideologies in the Anglophone Caribbean were pointedly anti-colonial: *Massa day done* was Eric Williams' slogan that encapsulated the dogma of the newly independent republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Leaders in the region propagated a national creole culture as a necessary unifying principle for their new nation states, whose population consisted of various groups of people imported and immigrated to the Caribbean during the colonial era. The phrase *All ah we is one* and metaphors such as *Callaloo country*

or *Rainbow country* in Trinidad and *Out of many people, one nation* in Jamaica reflected the conviction of a single, homogenised culture amalgamating Afro-, Indo- Euro-, Sino-, Luso- and other Creoles.

There can be no Mother India for those whose ancestors came from India [---]. There can be no Mother Africa for those of African origin [---]. There can be no Mother England [---] no Mother China, [---] no Mother Syria or no Mother Lebanon. A nation, like an individual, can only have one mother. The only mother we recognise is Mother Trinidad and Tobago, and Mother cannot discriminate between her children. All must be equal in her eyes,

preached Dr. Williams in one of his best-known speeches to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago (Williams 1964). Influential to this ideology were the acculturation theory prevalent in the contemporary USA and the image of the melting pot. However, the objective of forging an indigenous, creole cultural identity not directly traceable to any Old World culture never materialised in a way that was equally satisfactory to all the ethnic groups in the country. Munasinghe (2001, 220, 224) shows how in the nation-building process of Trinidad and Tobago the concept creole was taken to signify Afro-Trinidadian cultural forms as an antithesis to the European colonising cultures. The Trinidadian middle class located such creoleness in lower-class Afro-Trinidadian culture, which was seen as being more Caribbean and anti-European than the middle class or Indo-Trinidadian cultural forms. Carnival, calypso and steelband were thus regarded simultaneously as symbols of Afro-Creole culture and of the new nation. Indo-Trinidadians were largely left outside the melting pot, their version of creolisation not accepted in the national narrative unless they adapted to Afro-Trinidadian culture (*ibid.*, 181). This shortcoming in the national ideology is still quite acute, as political parties and voting patterns in Trinidad persistently align by ethnic categories.³³

Students of Caribbean cultural identities have discussed a creole society theory since the late 1960s, based on the idea of a society that consists of groups with different ancestries whose culture is, nevertheless, indigenous (in this case) to the Caribbean and distinct from any Old World cultures. Nigel Bolland (1992, 58-59) quotes Edward Brathwaite's 1968 review of Orlando Patterson's *The Sociology of Slavery* as a summary of the creole society theory: Brathwaite, a Barbadian poet and author, pointed out that although the Leeward slave societies consisted of separate groups of people, marked by legal status, political rights, economic opportunity, race, and culture, they nevertheless were communities for which the principles of inequality and subordination based on race and status provided a unifying social structure. Brathwaite further theorised creole culture

by drawing attention to European cultural forms with African-influenced content.

Anthropological inputs to the creolisation theory have emphasised diversity and dialectics within creole societies. Lee Drummond (1980, 352-353) applies the linguistic concept of creole continuum to cultural analysis, and suggests that Guyanese culture forms an intersystem, a continuum, of diverse groups and social classes, in which the differences "take their significance from a pool of shared myth and experience." Differences between individuals and groups, then, do not negate the possibility of a common culture. People are aware of the varying modes of behaviour and beliefs on the continuum, and engage in code-switching according to the situation (ibid., 353, 356). From a Marxist point of view, Nigel Bolland (1992, 72-73) draws attention to the dialectical, contested character of the creolisation process – instead of the homogenisation visualised by the nation-building politicians, class differences mould the ways in which creolisation is constructed and experienced. Jayawardena (1980, 449), also from a Marxist position, suggests that systems of economic and political domination, such as that of the Guyanese plantation society, produce a creole language and culture which unifies different ethnic groups. Finally, Munasinghe (2001) looks into the interplay of ethnicity, nationalism and creolisation, particularly from the point of view of Indo-Trinidadian culture. She analyses Indo-Trinidadian creolisation for example by looking into changes in family structure and religion, and shows that for Indo-Creoles, being a Trinidadian and "creolised" does not imply adjustment to the Afro-Creole model propagated in the national ideology. Creolisation, as sketched in anthropological discussions, thus leaves space for cultural and social diversity without falling back on the plural society thesis or on the homogenising ideologies of nationalism.³⁴

Perhaps wary of the baggage that the concepts 'syncretism' and 'creolisation' carry, Desmangles (1992) writes of cultural *symbiosis* in his perceptive study of the interrelationship of Catholicism and Vodou in Haiti. By symbiosis Desmangles refers to "diverse religious traditions from two continents, which coexist without fusing with one another" (1992, 8). He shows how Haitian religiosity is symbiotic rather than syncretic by describing the separate roles of the *prêt savann*, who officiates Catholic rites in Vodou ceremonies, and the *oungan*, who is responsible for the Vodou rites. The spatial differentiation between the church and the *ounfo*, in which the Vodou rituals are centred, and the separation of respective ritual paraphernalia are further indicators of the distinctiveness of the two traditions. Taylor (2001, 3) advocates the metaphor of symbiosis, over 'syncretism' or 'creolisation', in analyses of Caribbean religions. I suggest, however, that the term 'creolisation' has outgrown the initial connotations of the melting pot, and that the politically lucrative but naive idea of homogenisation,

which reeks of outdated theories of acculturation, has been rejected in discussions that allow for difference and even contradiction simultaneously with a level of cultural unity. What is more, the idea of change and development is inherent in the term 'creolisation', but lacking in 'symbiosis', which implies a state rather than process. A similar immobility troubles *creolité* or 'creoleness', and Glissant (1997, 89) departs from the concept exactly because of its connotations of Being, essence, and contents, instead of process.

The etymology of 'creole' can be traced via Spanish to the Latin *creare*, to create (OED 1989). This linkage underpins the process of creolisation as I understand it. Rather than a technique of eclectically borrowing and compiling bits and pieces, I see creolisation as a creative process which "endlessly reworks and transforms the cultural patterns of varied social and historical experiences and identities" (Balutansky and Sourieau 1998, 3). Thus a theory of creolisation allows for models of creole religions as indigenous to the Caribbean – as cultural systems no less original and authentic than their Old World counterparts. Mintz and Price (1976, 84) conclude that the New World is indeed *new* because "those who became its peoples remade it, and in the process, they remade themselves." The idea of being culturally distinct from Old World societies is at the heart of the concepts of creole and creolisation (see Bolland 1992, 50). Wilson Harris, the Guyanese author, illustrates this condition with the concepts of a *gateway* and *threshold* "of a new world," in reference to *sea-changes*, even *renascence* in Caribbean imagination, myth and culture (1995, 19). Taking Haitian Vodun as one of his examples, Harris proposes that the religion shows "an absorption of new elements which breaks the tribal monolith of the past" and that it, along with other Caribbean cultural symbols like *limbo* and folkloric tricksters, belongs to "the gateway complex between cultures [which] implies a new catholic unpredictable threshold," a threshold for which imagination is of profound importance (27, 28). In a more recent essay, Harris locates "within the gulfs that divide cultures [---] a storage of creative possibility that, once tapped, may energize the unfinished genesis of the imagination" (1998, 25-26).

The cultural creativity inherent in creolisation, in this case in the agency of religious practitioners and ritual specialists, transforms and possibly subverts existing structures in the society and culture. The term *marronage* means escaping from slave plantations and forming secluded communities of fugitive Africans and Afro-Creoles from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds; as a metaphor of creolisation, it implies subversion, novel social and cultural formations, and internal heterogeneity in these. The Martinican poet Aimé Césaire (1955, ref. Clifford 1988, 179), in his "poetics of cultural invention" (*ibid.* 176), introduced the verb *marronner*, which Clifford perceptively reads not only as escaping, but also as "reflexive possibility and poesis" (*ibid.*, 181). Glissant

echoes his countryman's metaphoric usage of the term and talks about "creative marronage" in for example literature (1997, 71).³⁵ In Spiritual Baptist ritual practice, liminal realms emerge in which Spiritual contacts are possible and which engender religious knowledge and practices that exceed the constraints of "the historically and socially situated conditions of its production" (Bourdieu 1990, 55), the representations of Christianity and Africanness maintained in the society. For Spiritual Baptists, creative marronage does not mean premeditated rebellion against for example dominant forms of Christianity: subversion is not necessarily teleological. Exegeses of Spiritual experiences may produce new norms that challenge previous ones. For example, the concept of the Holy Spirit as promoted by the Anglican church is countered in the Spiritual Baptist religion with an embodied, active Holy Spirit, manifest in different forms and performances.

COHESION AND STRUCTURE

The role of actors or agents as transformers of social and symbolic structures in religious syncretism has recently been advocated by Droogers and Greenfield (2001, 32-33), who see praxis theories as a viable way to overcome the idea of syncretism as mere mixing and to identify hierarchical power relations. But how free are these actors to produce new knowledge and practices? Glissant (1997, 34) sees creolisation as "a limitless *métissage* [the meeting and synthesis of two differences], its elements diffracted and its consequences unforeseeable," and the Spiritual Baptist ethnography indeed supports the notions of creativity and unforeseeability. But although "without limits," creolisation is not void of structure or cohesion, and the study of the Spiritual Baptist religion as fragmentary and fluid would not match the social reality of Tobagonian practitioners. While stressing the creativity and agency of Spiritual Baptists, I do not intend to present their religion as rootless or invented, in the sense of inauthentic or "spurious" (see Glazier 1998, Sapir 1985). The open-ended inventiveness is structured by already-existing traditions, values, and norms, which provide outlines for appropriate and inappropriate exegeses and practice. Lévi-Strauss names as the "characteristic feature of mythical thought" the fact that it "builds up structured sets" by using "fossilized evidence of the history of an individual or a society" (1966, 21-22). Not any and everything can be embraced as part of the belief system, regardless of the leeway given to the agents by creolisation as creative marronage. This is apparent in the fact that the Spiritual Baptist practice and belief system show notable cohesion both synchronically and diachronically. Practitioners themselves also discuss their religion as an integrated, cohesive system, as shown in Chapter Seven.

The notion of creole religions as degenerate results from colonial oppression is prevalent in the ideology of Africanisation and in some theories of syncretism, but loses credibility when inspected against the Spiritual Baptist religion as a structured and coherent system. In the line of thought re-evaluated here, syncretism itself has been assigned agency, not the religious practitioners, as if two or more original religions would mechanically mix in a process of acculturation, leaving the people, the practitioners, in a passive role; or then, the mixing is analysed as teleological and calculated, a survival strategy under colonial oppression and slavery.³⁶ Either way, sufficient emphasis is not placed on the meanings that the practitioners themselves have given to the "syncretic" elements, to symbols, beliefs and practices. For this reason, religions like the Spiritual Baptist appear to be mosaics rather than coherent belief systems. The agenda to purify the Spiritual Baptist or Orisha religion of other than "African" beliefs and practices not only ignores the value of the practitioners' notion of what Africa and Africanness are; it also disregards the meaningfulness of the religion's belief system and rituals to its practitioners. Christianity has been spiritually significant to Spiritual Baptists and Orisha devotees since the 19th century. Henry (1999, 80, 82) notes that many older members of the Orisha religion tend to resent the recent trend of Africanisation, since for them the Christian prayers and hymns are an essentially important part of the religion they have practiced for their lifetime.

Philip Scher (1997, 320-325) makes a convincing argument for the depth and meaningfulness of the integration of African and Christian features in Afro-Caribbean religions, and shows that belief systems thus formed cannot be reduced to their components. Scher states that the popular camouflage model of explanation for the synthesis of African and Roman Catholic religions in 19th-century Trinidad is not sufficient. Although African religious practices were most certainly suppressed by persecutions during colonialism, concealing them in Catholic disguise was not the only motive for syncretism. The religious synthesis that took place in the 1830s was not haphazard, because many orishas were combined with saints who resembled them; for example, Ogun, the orisha of iron and war, was paired with St. Michael, who was portrayed in Catholic pictures and statues with a sword in his hand. Such similarities were not necessary, if the mere purpose of including saints into the worship was to camouflage the orishas. Scher argues persuasively: "The matching of specific saints with specific orisha who shared similar qualities was not directed to the outside world of the Europeans but was done for the sake of the practitioners themselves, who would have been able to fully appreciate the spiritual metaphor" (1997, 320-321).

Scher also presents historical and comparative evidence to show that explaining syncretism as a masking technique without spiritual significance is

questionable. First of all, the Yoruba religion was established in Trinidad in the 1830s and the early 1840s, after emancipation, when Africans liberated from slave ships emigrated to Trinidad (see also Warner-Lewis 1991, 14). The first law to prohibit African religious practice was the Obeah Ordinance of 1868, but the Catholic elements had already been included in Orisha practice before this, without official persecution to trigger the camouflage. Secondly, drumming and dancing, central to Orisha practice, could not have been concealed by Catholic disguises, and yet they have been preserved throughout persecutions. Thirdly, there are orishas without Catholic counterparts, like Mama Lata, which would have been a serious threat to the pragmatic camouflage system, since by exposing these orishas as non-Catholic, the disguise of the entire pantheon would have been risked. And finally, in the 19th century the Anglican church and other Protestant denominations became dominant as religions of the power-holding elite in Trinidad at the expense of Catholicism. Disguising a persecuted religion in the cloak of Catholicism would therefore have made little sense. All things considered, Scher suggests that the Yoruba and other Africans in Trinidad were imaginative and perceptive agents who saw the similarities between the Roman Catholic religion and theirs, and in a sophisticated way embraced both to enforce the richness and power of their belief system. Instead of reactive victims of persecution, Scher shows that the people were spiritually creative subjects, who were in charge of the development of their religion.³⁷

Supporting Scher's line of argumentation for the spiritual creativity and sophistication of Africans in the Caribbean, Mintz and Price (1992, 57) draw attention to the Rada or Dahomean community in Belmont, Trinidad; Mr. Sedley Antoine's interview in *Trinidad Express* (12 May 1996) sheds more light on the case. Aboyevi Zahvenu, who re-named himself Robert Antoine (and was known as Papa Nanee), was a Dahomean diviner and healer, who arrived in Trinidad as a free man in the 1850s. He founded a compound for other migrant Dahomeans, who included Padonu, a trained *hubono* or "high priest" and two male initiands of the Voudun, or Rada, religion. The compound has been practicing Rada rituals under the supervision of a continuous male line of *hubonos*, of whom Sedley Antoine, Papa Nanee's grandson, is the last. When Andrew Carr (1953, 35-54) studied the Rada community, he found that many of the powers carried saints' names. The compound members told Carr that the powers had "always" had saints' names, and that Christian missionary activities in Africa were not behind the nomenclature. In other words, although the Voudun religion was imported to Belmont in the 1850s and 60s by free Africans, including three religious specialists, the fusion of Voudun powers and Catholic saints had become such an integral part of it that the practitioners denied the very process

of syncretism in the first place and claimed that the Christian dimension was inherent to the powers.

The exegeses of Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists (and Orisha) practitioners indicate similar indivisibility between what might appear as "African" and "Christian" in their religious knowledge and practices. Viewed from the inside, the belief systems do not consist of separate traditions, like Murphy suggests for Santería and Desmangles for Vodou. Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists always define themselves first and foremost as Christians, regardless of how far their religious knowledge and practices may divert from those of other Christian denominations. They discuss their religion as a contested but yet coherent system of beliefs and practices, not as a *mélange* of different components. For members of the Mt. Paran or St. Philomen churches, dancing in the Spirit in the Indian way with St. Francis to the rhythm of *djembe* drums is a perfectly coherent religious experience, behind which is a system of beliefs, not bits and pieces or mixtures of different traditions. The African retentions listed by theorists of syncretism are immersed in the system of religious knowledge and practice in a meaningful way, not as "African" but as Spiritual Baptist, their meanings transformed into specifically Spiritual Baptist religious knowledge. All things considered, creole religions do not surrender to analyses that dissect their African and Christian roots. They appear to be *rhizomic* rather than rooted, to borrow Édouard Glissant's metaphor. Glissant proposes that Caribbean identities are based on *Relation* rather than roots, on *errantry*, uprooting and voyaging (1997, 18-19). Such imagery grasps the character of creole religion, the intercultural basis of its creativity, much more accurately than models that merely reveal ancestral continuities. The rhizomes of the Spiritual Baptists' religious identity wriggle through the cultural and ethnic diversity of the Caribbean.

¹ Peter Wilson (1972) presented two value complexes, reputation and respectability, of which the first was associated with men and lower classes, the latter with women and the upper class. See Besson (1993) and Olwig (1993) for critiques of Wilson's thesis. Roger Abrahams' functionalist analysis of rural St. Vincent draws partly on this basic division of female and male values (1983). Daniel Miller (1994) introduced the values of transcendence and transience, and although carefully avoiding clear-cut associations with exclusive categories, he nevertheless linked women, upper classes and Indo-Trinidadians with transcendence and men, lower classes and Afro-Trinidadians with transience.

² Henry (1999, 148) explains that whereas the Afrocentric tradition assumes shared symbols common to all diasporic Africans, Africana thought takes agendas, norms and practices as the unifying principles. This difference is seen in the works of, say, Molefi Asante and Lucius Outlaw. In the Trinidad & Tobagonian media, however, the term 'Afrocentric' is used in both meanings, and I have opted to follow this usage for clarity's sake.

³ Franz Fanon (1967a, 1967b) is another influential Caribbean thinker, in whose work anti-colonialism and anti-racism are discussed in relation to identity formation and social organisation.

⁴ On C.L.R. James's concept of Africanness, see also Cambridge 1992; Worcester 1992. A somewhat similar approach to class, anti-colonialism and ethnicity was presented by Walter Rodney (1972).

⁵ Ménéil (1981, ref. Clifford 1988, 178) differentiates between Senghor's and Aimé Césaire's conceptualisations of negritude, arguing that whereas Senghor promotes "backward-looking idealism," Césaire's negritude is anti-essential and defined through notions of irony and derision. For a critique of "nativist" or essentialist positions in regard to "African" identity and culture, see for example Appiah 1992.

⁶ Related to Pan-African and Afrocentric thought is the long-prevailing notion of exile and repatriation to Africa – the idea of Africa as home. Monica Schuler (1980, ref. Chevannes 1993) suggests that since the 18th century a belief was held by Jamaican slaves that eating salt would prevent them from flying back to Africa, and that repatriation and freedom would only become accessible by refusing to eat the slave food consisting of salted fish and meat. Similar traditions regarding salt and repatriation are known to have existed in Cuba (Schuler 1980, ref. Chevannes 1994, 35) and Trinidad (Warner-Lewis 1990, 1991, Lovelace 1996). Furthermore, the lyrics of slave songs and old spirituals repeatedly indicate desire to return to Africa, and secret societies, mutinies and insurrections in Haiti, Trinidad, Jamaica, Guyana and other Caribbean colonies often aimed at repatriation (Brereton 1981, 48-51, Martin 1983, 4-7). Marcus Garvey's influential Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) held as one of its principal objectives "that the Negro people of the world should concentrate upon [---] building up for themselves a great nation in Africa" (Garvey 1986), and a shipping company transporting American and Caribbean "Negroes" to West Africa, *Black Star Line*, was a very concrete effort towards massive repatriation (Martin 1983). Such ideals are currently at their most evident in Rastafarian religious ideology, prominent in Jamaica but also in other Caribbean islands including Trinidad and Tobago. *Steppin outa Babylon*, cultural revitalization promoting African heritage and repatriation to Ethiopia either physically or culturally is the main aspiration of the religion's doctrine and praxis (Chevannes 1994, Edmonds 1998, 31). As in the movements and ideologies mentioned above, in Rastafari doctrine disparity between Africa and Babylon, life in freedom (in Africa) and in *captivity* (in the New World) is accentuated.

⁷ Franklin (1992, 179) points out that starting from the Haitian revolution and until the Black Power movement, the flux of intellectual influences on Afro-American cultural ideologies came from the Anglophone Caribbean to the United States. It was only in the late 1960s when this flow turned its course, and the ideology of Black Power, developed in the civil rights movement in the United States, spread to the Caribbean. Howe (1998, 73) lists Marcus Garvey, J.A. Rogers, George G.M. James, Yosef Ben-Jochannen, and Louis Farrakhan as examples of West Indian "glorifiers of the African past who achieved United States prominence [---]."

⁸ Osahon (2001) also argues that Ethiopians, "known now in India as the Dravidians" were the founders of Hinduism in India, and that Siddharta Gautama and Confucius were "black" or African.

⁹ Dr. Murray became known in Tobagonian politics in the late 1970s, when he, along with A.N.R. Robinson, and later on through his own party, the Fargo House Movement, sought self-determination for Tobago and even complete secession from Trinidad (Premdas 1998, 111-112).

¹⁰ In March 2001, on the week prior to the Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day, Dr. Murray delivered an address at the Market Square in Scarborough, where the Tobago United Liberated Spiritual Baptists (TULSB) arranged an evening service, and in the Liberation Day celebrations at Shaw Park he was a guest speaker.

¹¹ In fact, Virgin Mary has a marginal position in the Spiritual Baptist cosmology.

¹² Rawle Gibbons (1996, 29) suspects that Spiritual Baptists are ashamed of their African background because of the prejudices and lack of understanding of the religion by other Christians.

¹³ From the Ancient Greek *syn* (with) and *krasis* (mixture) (Shaw and Stewart 1994, 3).

¹⁴ See Greenfield (1998, 2, 12) for a discussion of the social agenda in Boasian anthropology and Herskovits's theory of syncretism in particular toward a single, unified American society of equal, assimilated citizens, regardless of race or national origin.

¹⁵ African-Protestant syncretism, according to Bastide, differs from the amalgamation of African and Catholic practices, because in Protestant colonies, slaves were required to undergo more thorough religious instructions before gaining membership in the churches, which lead to the "eradication of Africanisms" (1972, 153). In Catholic regions, on the other hand, spiritual conversion to Christianity was not expected of the slaves before baptism, and "Africanisms" prevailed.

¹⁶ Simpson (1978, 55) points out that in Brazil, Trinidad, and Grenada, continuing contacts with Africa furthered the retention of Africanisms. The Herskovitses noted in Bahía, Brazil, that such contacts were continuous until the outbreak of the second world war: "To the Afro-Bahians, Africa is no vague, mythical land. It is a living reality, whence many objects they use in their rituals are imported, where people they know have visited and where other acquaintances live, where their fathers and grandfathers came from" (M. and F. Herskovits, "The Negroes of Brazil," *Yale Review* 32, 1942: 256).

¹⁷ Herskovits (1947, 22) and Mischel (1957, 45-59) assert that the "Shango cult" of Trinidad derives from Yoruba religion. Michael Anthony depicts "Shouter Baptists" in his *Historical Dictionary of Trinidad and Tobago* (1997, 526) as having developed among Yoruba and other African slaves, whose myths, rituals and medicine were preferred to Christianity. Anthony argues that along with Yoruba religion, Roman Catholicism has been another major influence on the "Shouters." Elder (1988), Warner-Lewis (1991, 1997) and Houk (1995) have also pointed out the Yoruba origins of the Orisha religion. Kenneth Lum's main argument in his study of Trinidadian Orisha and Spiritual Baptist religions (2000) is that both the Spiritual Baptist and Orisha religions share West African, mainly Yoruba-derived population, ontology, and manifestations, although the manifesting spirits and performances differ.

Reverend Eudora Thomas (1987) consistently writes of the Spiritual or Shouter Baptist religion as a combination of African, and more specifically, Yoruba religion, and Christianity: "(T)he faith evolved from ancient African beliefs" and is "directly attributed to the Yoruba slaves and their form of worship" (15). Reverend Thomas refers to the believers as Africans, and uses Yoruba terms like *Ile-Ife* (47) along with Christian phraseology in her descriptions of the belief system. The syncretism of African and Christian religions in Spiritual Baptist beliefs and practice is further exemplified in the practice of healing; Thomas points out the analogue between Yoruba healing – anointing, herbs, and the laying of hands – and Jesus's healing of the sick, as described in Matthew 4 (*ibid.*, 53).

¹⁸ See Greenfield (2001), Clarke (1998) and Motta (1998) for discussions of this trend in Brazilian Candomblé.

¹⁹ Since Roy Wagner's theory of the invention of culture (1981), writers like James Clifford (1988) and Marcus and Fischer (1999) have contributed to the idea of culture as a changing system that cannot be conceptualised as a bounded, autonomous unit.

²⁰ In Hannerz's definition of creolisation, the constituting cultures are distinguishable. Hannerz writes: "the contributing historical sources are differently visible and active, and interact in a continuum of meanings and forms [---]." This cultural continuum unites the culture of a centre and of a periphery, which in the Spiritual Baptist case would probably be Protestant Christianity as the centre and West African religions imported by the slaves as the periphery (1996, 67).

²¹ Greenfield (1998) clarifies the use of the term, first during the Boasian era, of which Herskovits is a case in point, and then during the recasting of the term in the 1990s.

²² The term orthodoxy refers to correct knowledge, orthopraxy to correct practice – in this case, contested definitions of acceptable and accurate religious knowledge and practice.

²³ Gilroy (1993, 199) shows that "there has been (at least) a two-way traffic between African cultural forms and the political cultures of diaspora blacks over a long period," and that this movement "explodes the dualistic structure which puts Africa, authenticity, purity, and origin in crude opposition to the Americas, hybridity, creolisation, and rootlessness." Sarracino (1993, 75) observes that the descendants of free and emancipated slaves, who immigrated to Nigeria from Cuba in the 19th century, still uphold links to Cuba, although they may never have visited their parents' or grandparent's native land. Savishinsky (1998) analyses the spread of the Rastafarian movement from Jamaica to West Africa. See also Campbell 1993 on the return of Maroons to Africa.

²⁴ Howe (1998, 35) indicates that since the 1830s, numerous proponents of racial equality have published texts that glorify ancient Africa, particularly Egypt.

²⁵ Here the links to Afrocentrism are notable: myths of Egyptian origins intertwine in Afrocentrism with Masonic lore (Howe 1998, 66).

²⁶ Oral histories of West African peoples like Yoruba and Hausa include stories of migrations from the east, thus linking West Africa all the way to Arabia; Bascom (1969, 9) mentions for example an account based on Hausa verbal tradition claiming that "the Yoruba 'originated from the remnants of the children of Canaan, who were of the tribe of Nimrod', but who were driven out of Arabia by a prince, Yaa-rooba, and migrated to their present territory leaving some of their people behind wherever they stopped on their way." Warner-Lewis (1991, 126-127) suggests that such oral histories of the Yoruba ancestors may have caused Trinidadian Yoruba descendants to believe that their culture originates in the Nile region. Bascom (1969, 8-9), however, points out that such histories have not been recorded among the Yoruba themselves, that according to the Yoruba creation myth the earth and the first humans were created in Ife, their own city, and that linguistic evidence suggests that if the Yoruba have migrated from anywhere, it has not been much further east than the river Niger, and their movement has also been from west to east. A linguistic argument for tracing the origins of the Yoruba religion to ancient Egypt was formulated by Archdeacon J. Olumide Lucas (1948 and 1964, ref. Oduyoye 1996), and although the linguist Modupe Oduyoye (1996, 59-75) contradicts many of Lucas' suggestions for cognates between Egyptian and Yoruba words, he supports the study of Yoruba history outside the contemporary borders of Yorubaland and underscores the role of Egyptian religion in the formation of what is now called "African Traditional Religion." For example Hebrew and Arabic words and concepts are shown to have cognates in Yoruba.

²⁷ Gopaul-Whittington notes that "one writer" has claimed the Essenes to be an Egyptian lodge, whereas in the Tobagonian discourse they are understood as a people.

²⁸ *The Aquarian Gospel* is a New Age best-seller, written by Levi A. Dowling, a U.S. Army chaplain of Ohio. The book is an example of so-called automatic writing. Levi received the Gospel in revelations and transcribed it "between the early morning hours of two and six" (1), to be published in 1907. Some Spiritual Baptists in Tobago have the book, and its contents are sometimes discussed, but not applied in the service. As shown above, only Biblical scriptures are used as sources for sermons, for example. It should also be noted that Afrocentric writers apply *The Aquarian Gospel* in their arguments for African and Egyptian origins of esoteric wisdom and religion (Howe 1998, 66-67).

²⁹ The Sacred Order of Melchisedec is a central metaphor of not only the Freemasonic fraternity, but also of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), whose theology was largely influenced by Freemasonry from the 1840s onwards (Williams 1980, 65-66).

³⁰ Viola Gopaul-Whittington mentions secret orders of India, Africa, China, and Egypt at the time of Christ (1984, 8). She is the only scholar of the Spiritual Baptist religion who includes Egypt, the Essenes and secret orders in the history of the religion.

³¹ For example, C. F. Köppen founded an order called "African Builders" in Berlin in the 18th century. This Masonic order emphasised ancient Egyptian mysteries in the Masonic tradition (Waite 1970, 9).

³² Today the term creole is frequently heard in Trinidad and Tobago, its meaning in everyday usage being synonymous to Afro-Creole, Afro-Trinidadian or Afro-Caribbean. "Creole food" refers to dishes favoured by Afro-Trinidadians and Tobagonians, rather than East Indians; "a Creole man" implicates a black man, and "Creoles" sometimes appears as an ethnic label in opposition to "Indians." It can also

be used with attributes like "French Creole," a person of French ancestry born in the Caribbean. The usage of the term varies within the Anglophone Caribbean.

³³ Khan (2001) notes that the Afro-Creole and Christian bias is typical of literary attempts at definitions of "Caribbean identity" in general, in a regional sense. Since the various religions in the Caribbean, most notably Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam, produce different notions of personhood and identity, claiming a common regional selfhood from an Afro-Christian point of view is quite problematic.

³⁴ These studies reflect R.T. Smith's work on class as the major criterion for stratification in Caribbean societies (for example 1988).

³⁵ Glissant's poetics of creolisation is, for all its merits of anti-essentialism, agency and creativity, is somewhat biased towards Afro-Caribbean experiences. For example, slavery, instead of indentureship, features as a formative factor in his definitions of the creolisation process (e.g. 1989, 231). This reflects his position as a Martinican, rather than, for example, a Guyanese: the population of his country is less diverse than those of Trinidad, Guyana, even Jamaica, and so forth.

³⁶ Stoddard and Cornwell (1999, 237) note the same for 'hybridity': "The creation of a hybrid is always a subversion of the pure type, but not through the agency of the parent forms or of the hybrid offspring."

³⁷ Scher also observes that the Orisha has been an inclusive religion with potential to change and develop from the beginning, not a static system (Scher 1997, 320-323; See also Deren 1953, and Apter 1992).

PART II

RITUAL PRACTICE AND COSMOLOGY

In these chapters I investigate the relationship between religious knowledge and ritual practice. The structure of Part II reflects the reciprocal relationship between knowledge and practice in the Spiritual Baptist religion: the known becomes accessible and concrete in the practice, but practice also transforms and redefines the boundaries of the known. In the following chapters, the system of religious knowledge unfolds along with analyses of major rituals. Knowledge and practice are not presented as finite systems, but rather as processes engaged in by a heterogeneous group of knowing and practicing subjects. Chapter Three introduces the ritual complex of the religion, the basic structure of the *service*, and the roles and statuses of the practitioners. In Chapter Four the main rites of passage, baptism and mourning, are analysed as generating liminal spaces, in which connections to the Spirit and access to Spiritual knowledge become available. The creativity of creolisation becomes apparent in the these rituals. The cosmology of the religion, as unveiled in the liminal spaces, is outlined in Chapter Five. Finally, Chapter Six illustrates the interconnectedness of the cosmology, the ritual, and the mundane world, and illustrates how the cosmology of the religion is rooted in the local environment and social reality. The transitions and journeys, so integral to the Spiritual world, do not separate the creole religion from concrete, embodied experiences and physical settings.

3. RITUALS AND PRACTITIONERS

Religion and ideas concerning spirituality structure much of the daily practices and interactions of Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists. Activities that could be defined as ritual are quite frequent in the lives of dedicated elders, and they take place also outside typically ritual environments such as the church. In order to analyse the multiple ritual activities of the religion, however, I use the word ritual here to refer mainly to what Spiritual Baptists call the *service* – a particular event of collectively performed, symbolic undertakings that relate to the Spiritual world. Terms like *worship*, both as a noun and a verb, *church* ("what time de church starting?") and *Spiritual* are oftentimes used in reference to activities which I categorise as ritual. By ritual practice I mean activities within such events, because as Kapferer (1986, 191) reminds us, ritual performance is composed of many forms of representation, including music, narrative and drama. Ritual practice also entails performances outside the collective and the church, such as tying one's head with a band every night, praying at home, or healing.

RITUAL CYCLE

Within the rich variety of religious practices in Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches, homes, mourner rooms and other ritual environments, numerous ritual types can be identified. More than one of these are often embedded in one *service*, as rituals with an officiator and a congregation are called; for example, a Sunday service can include a *dedication of an infant*, *healing*, and *pointing of mourners*, and these may overlap, shorter rites being performed during intervals in longer ones. Regardless of their possible simultaneity in practice, in the Spiritual Baptist discourse each ritual is identified and named independently according to its purpose.

To introduce the ways in which Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists practice their religion, I outline a ritual year in St. Philomen Spiritual Baptist Church¹ as it was during my fieldwork. Through this example I bring in those ritual types that are recognised, if not regularly arranged and attended to, in all Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches.²

A service is held at St. Philomen Church every Sunday of the year, except when the congregation attends a thanksgiving or a pilgrimage somewhere else.

Most rituals are arranged as part or in lieu of the Sunday service, except for those that last for more than a day. The universally celebrated Christian commemorations of Christmas and Easter, as well as other generally recognised annual festivities, such as Mothers' Day or New Year, give structure to the annual cycle; the Spiritual Baptist (Shouter) Liberation Day on the 30th of March is also acknowledged by some Tobagonian churches. The St. Philomen Church *harvest*, a fund-raising cantata, is always arranged on the last Sunday of May, and the annual church *thanksgiving*, a festive service that culminates in distribution of food, takes place on the first Sunday of October. Mother Cleorita and Leader Gerald keep their own thanksgiving at their home on the second weekend in December; Mother Irene's thanksgiving is on the second Sunday of January, and three other Mothers and a Brother arrange biannual thanksgivings on set dates. Church thanksgivings and harvests in a few other Spiritual Baptist churches, like the Mt. Paran harvest on the third Sunday of March, are also regularly visited by the leaders and many of the congregation of St. Philomen. In addition to these fixed annual or biannual rituals, there are a few intermittent thanksgivings in members' homes each year. Some Tobagonian churches also arrange annual *church anniversaries* to mark the founding of the church and *memorial services* in honour of a deceased Mother or Leader.

Initiates to the religion are baptised approximately four or five times a year. *Baptisms* are usually arranged when there is more than one *candidate* to initiate, but sometimes the ritual is held for a single aspiring member. *Mourning*, a week-long or longer rite of passage that aims at increasing the initiate's, or *pilgrim's*, Spiritual knowledge, can also be arranged a few times each year, whenever one or more pilgrims indicate their desire to undergo the ritual. Mourning is preceded by the *pointing* ritual, embedded in the Sunday service. *Dedications of infants*, shorter rites of passage in which babies are christened and blessed, take place several times a year. Weddings and funerals, on the other hand, are not as frequent, and a year may pass without any. To mention other, rarer rites of passage, a person's newly acquired Spiritual status is formalised in *robing*, as she is ritually clothed in a garb that indicates the achieved rank. The *dedication of a church* is obviously only arranged once, as a new church is ritually opened and blessed.

St. Philomen organises *pilgrimages*, ritual journeys to another church or village, every few years, but the members also travel along on other churches' pilgrimages. *Missions*, or road-side preaching, are much more frequent. *Evenings of song*, including performances by the church choir, as well as *gospel crusades* and *revival services* with visiting preachers are only held on special occasions. Finally, the *healing* of a physically ill or spiritually suffering person is habitually performed within a Sunday service, although elders who do Spiritual work see to their

"patients" throughout the week, not only at church. Elders, like Mother Cleorita at St. Philomen church, also *ble*ss items ranging from rings to cars as well as newly built or acquired houses.

This chart of the church year at St. Philomen only portrays the regular annual rituals. In addition to these, biannual thanksgivings, other churches' thanksgivings and harvests, irregularly arranged rituals and the weekly Sunday services complete the cycle.

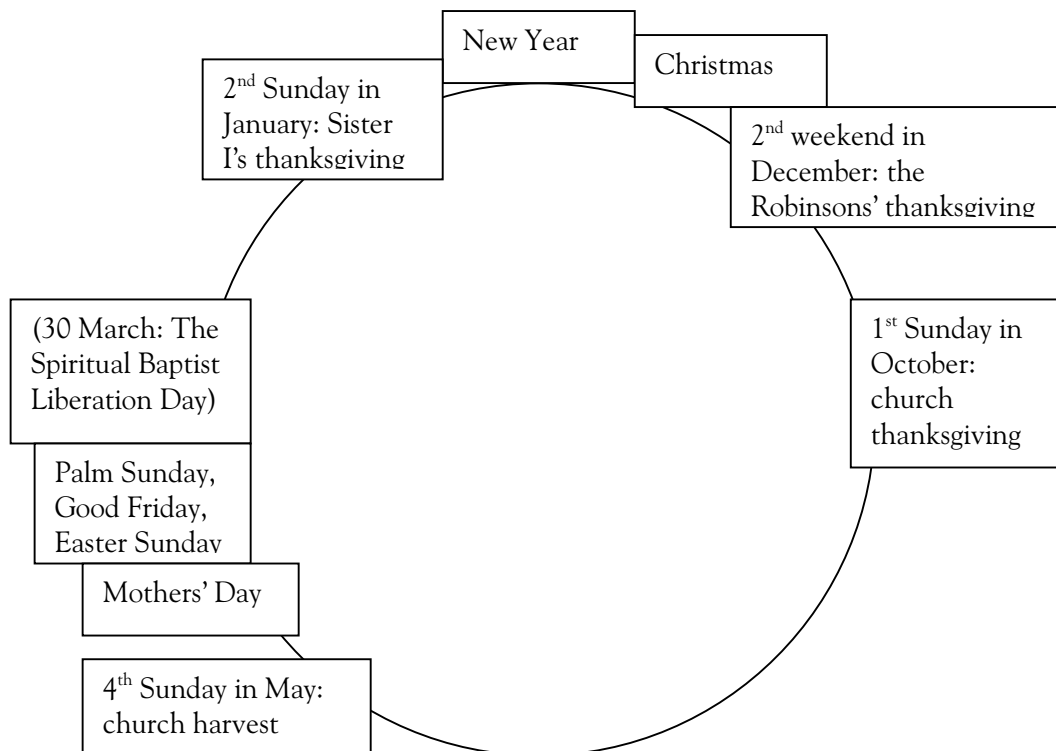


Chart III: The ritual year at St. Philomen Spiritual Baptist Church

Given the length, frequency, and labour-intensive character of many of the Spiritual Baptist rituals, active members may be involved in preparations or performances of rituals every day of the week. Some elders are engaged in ritual work almost full-time. On Sunday the 4th of March 2001, Teacher Lorna kept her thanksgiving on Grafton Beach, and the *flock*, the congregation, of St. Philomen was present. The same congregation went *on mission road* on Monday after Captain Turner's vision that instructed them to do so, and kept services in four different villages until Thursday. On Saturday, several of the same people visited a thanksgiving in Bon Accord, and on Sunday they went to the service at their own church. The mission continued on Monday again, lasting until

Thursday, and on Sunday, March 18, the members visited the Mt. Paran church for their annual harvest. On Monday, they had pointing of pilgrims at the church, and the consequent mourning ritual lasted until the following Sunday. The same core members of the church were *labouring* with the pilgrims and keeping evening services every day of the week, sleeping at the church, until the church service on the following Sunday, March 25. A whole three weeks of different rituals, including the around-the-clock work for the mourning ritual, had thus passed. Very few of the ritual specialists in this church are employed, most being retired or working at home. Some dedicated practitioners take leave from their work to be able to participate in the rituals, their preparations, and the subsequent cleaning and washing of clothes, sheets, towels, and church textiles. The religion has, all things considered, a very central role in the lives of many Spiritual Baptists, who are willing to sacrifice much of their time, resources and efforts to ritual practice.

THE SERVICE

RITUAL SITES

Spiritual Baptist rituals usually take place in the church, although locations such as yards, beaches, rivers, and crossroads are used as ritual space for thanksgivings, pilgrimages and missions. Most Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches are separate buildings with concrete walls, galvanised roofs and a stone floor. There are some with *tapia* walls, thatched of straw and mud, or small structures of sheets of *galvanise* and board; then there are several house churches, rooms of a Leader's or Mother's house decorated and used as a church. The Leader and/or the Mother of the church, or their family, usually own the land and the property in each case. Most churches have an additional ritual space in the compound, a *mourner room*, in which the mourning ritual is conducted. This is usually a small room with a separate entrance. Larger churches also have kitchens, halls, and bathrooms.



Picture 1: Sisters and Mothers walking to Mt. Manasseh Spiritual Baptist Church in Moriah

The church consists of an altar area on the opposite side of the main entrance, normally occupied by male ministers, and a space for the rest of the congregation. Altars do not usually take more than one fifth of the total space, often less, and they can be constructed as low stages, or separated from the rest of the space with railings and cloths. An altar table with ritual paraphernalia is situated in the middle; in some smaller churches a table serves as the altar by itself. A podium is often seen on the altar as well. In front of the altar, wooden benches are arranged into two rows in such a way as to leave a free passageway in the middle, allowing movement of people as well as the Spirit from the main entrance to the altar. In smaller churches the seats may be situated along the walls. Many larger churches lay the foremost benches vertically along the walls, to be occupied by female and male elders, thus making space for ritual practice immediately in front of the altar.

With only a couple of exceptions, Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches have a *centrepole*. This is either a wooden pole or a concrete structure; it may

reach all the way to the ceiling, or resemble a fountain, less than one meter tall. The centrepole stands either in the exact centre of the space, or closer to the altar side. It is always situated on the free passageway that reaches from the entrance to the altar. Along with the altar and the four corners of the church, the centrepole is the most sacred and ritually important location in the church.



Picture 2: The interior of St. Mary's Spiritual Baptist Church;
Leader Woods on the altar

CONGREGATION

The participants of Spiritual Baptist rituals are usually initiated members of the particular church and in the case of larger rituals, like thanksgivings, pilgrimages or harvests as well as mourner room services, visitors from other Spiritual Baptist churches, who may have been invited by letters (except to the mourner room services). Friends and family members of initiates, who may or may not be members themselves, visit initiation rituals and, naturally, weddings and funerals. In other words, in addition to the core membership of each church, there is often present a more fluid group of visiting participants. The size of the congregation varies in different churches as well as in different rituals, so that in larger churches such as Mt. Paran the normal attendance was 50-70, but thanksgivings

and harvests attracted crowds as large as two hundred or more. On the other hand, small churches like St. Philomena usually had ten or fifteen participants in their services. In all services, the majority of participants were women, and although each church has members who are in their teens or twenties, most active practitioners are middle-aged or older. Spiritual Baptist women always tie their head for rituals and their preparations and wear long dresses or skirts, meticulously covering the body. Men's garb is less markedly Spiritual Baptist, and many attend services in neat pants and a shirt. Elders, however, usually wear gowns or dashiki-style shirts. The ritual wear is referred to as church clothes or Spiritual clothes.

RITUAL STRUCTURE

The structure of the Spiritual Baptist Church's *service*,³ the regular Sunday worship, is very similar in all Tobagonian churches. The order of the service is, in fact, one of the most established and universally acknowledged features of the religion, so that variation between churches and their Leaders' and Mothers' Spiritual instructions concerning the general sequence of proceedings is negligible. This applies even elsewhere in the Caribbean and in North America and England. Almost all Spiritual Baptist rituals are built upon this basic structure, using the same components in approximately the same order while adding special features relevant to each particular service. The ritual content, however, of the different phases of the service can vary considerably among churches. The proceedings basically repeat the old Methodist Order of Worship, in which the core elements are "singing, prayer, the reading of a chapter out of the Old Testament, and another out of the New, and preaching" (*The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Evangelical Church South*, 1856, 104). In spite of the structural resemblance of Methodist and Spiritual Baptist services, the substance is very different; for example, the improvised prayers sung by Spiritual Baptist sisters on their knees by the centrepole carry few resemblances to the prayers of Methodist services. The succession of hymns, prayers, Scripture reading and preaching has been typical of Spiritual Baptist services at least since the 1930s: Herskovits (1947, 215) delineates the structure of the Shouters' service in Toco, 1939, as starting with invocation, followed by hymns, prayers, Gloria, scripture reading, Credo, sermon, Benediction, and collection. He also describes a procedure equivalent to *surveying* (*ibid.*, 217). Simpson (1978, 117-118), based on his field material from the 1960s, lists hymn-singing, praying, Bible reading and reciting, preaching and collection as the main phases of a Shouters' service, accompanied by chalking symbolic marks on the floor and the walls, bell-

ringing, and manifestation by the Holy Spirit. These early accounts show that the order of proceedings has not altered at least for the past sixty years.

Based on my participation in the services of twenty-two churches in 1996-2001, the typical order of service in Tobago is:

1. Sanctifying the church and inviting the Spirit
 - Marking the beginning of the service by ringing the bell
 - Song service – 1-4 hymns
 - Apostles' Creed and Benediction
 - Surveying⁴
2. Prayers
 - men's prayers
 - women's prayers
3. Lessons (Scripture Reading)
4. Announcements, collection (optional)
5. Preaching the Word
6. Ending words, closing prayer

The Spiritual Baptist service starts later than other Tobagonian churches. Whereas Anglicans, Moravians and Catholics usually open their worship early, at seven, eight or nine a.m. on Sunday mornings, and Adventists on Saturdays, most Spiritual Baptist churches ring their bells at nine, if they are very early, and normally between eleven am and two pm. The service, on the other hand, is substantially longer than a Catholic mass or even a Pentecostal service, lasting usually for at least four and sometimes even up to seven or eight hours. Bishop Daniel once criticised the extended duration of Spiritual Baptist services and claimed that members of the congregation could not keep up a sufficient level of concentration for eight hours; in the same breath he admitted, however, that when the Spirit is with the congregation and the service is *sweet*, nobody wants to stop *rejoicing*.

PREPARATIONS

The church has to be prepared for each service. In addition to sweeping the floor and putting the benches in order, the sacred vessels, lotas, glasses, vases and calabashes, need to be filled with water and fresh flowers, new grains put on *tarias* (brass plates), and candles set on the altar, in the four corners, at the main entrance, by the centrepole and in other Spiritually significant places according to each church's tradition. Sisters living close to the church often carry out these preparations. At St. Philomen Church, Sister Penny, the Mother's

granddaughter, received the responsibility during her first mourning ritual to be a "workman" at the church and thus to clean and decorate the church building for services. On Saturday nights she, her cousin Danielle and sister Sherry Ann, who lived at the church, used to tie their heads, change into long skirts and go to pick flowers and leaves from the yards of friends in the village on their way to prepare the church. Sometimes other sisters assist in the work and bring along flowers as they come to the service. The textiles of the church, the altar cloth, shelf cloths and the possible cloth on the centrepole, are only changed for special services such as the annual church thanksgiving or harvest, and for funerals and weddings. The washing and upkeep of these textiles is usually also taken care of by the sisters who prepare the church, but in some churches cleaning and polishing the numerous brass emblems are the Captain's responsibility. In preparations for special services – thanksgivings, harvests, anniversaries and so forth – larger numbers of sisters and brothers collaborate under the instructions of the Leader or Mother.



Picture 3: Calabash, candles and a seal at the church entrance (St. Philomen)

In most churches it is customary to draw sacred signs, *seals*, on the church floor with chalk. Seals are symbols capturing central aspects of the doctrine and are acquired during the mourning ritual. Only elders can draw seals, because younger sisters or brothers have not yet achieved enough knowledge to receive

such powerful secrets. At St. Philomen Church it was Captain Turner, Leader Gerald or some other Minister or Mother who drew the seals on the floor. A seal often seen at the main entrance of this church is the wheel – a helm of a ship with eight symmetrical spokes. The sectors between the spokes are filled with tiny signs, and there is a larger seal at the outer end of each sector. On top of the wheel is placed a calabash with red ixora chrysanthemum flowers in it, and eight candles of various colours are erected around the seal. Palm leaves surround the circle. Similar wheel signs were used to guard entrances also in other churches, like St. Theresa's Healing School or Mt. Arrarat Spiritual Baptist Church. Other common symbols drawn on church floors are the cross, the moon, the star, the snake, the chart and the compass, as well as various seals with no visual resemblance to concrete items.⁵

STATUSES AND ROLES

The Spiritual Baptist Church as an institution of national and transnational scale has no administrative centre. The Church consists of hundreds of individual churches in the Caribbean, North America and England, some of which are affiliated with dioceses. These churches, however, have in common a hierarchy of positions with only little variance in the statuses and titles. Also, the basis for this hierarchy, accumulation of Spiritual knowledge, is a universally embraced principle. The structure of the church is therefore solid and well-established, and also rare among Afro-Caribbean creole religions: the elaborate hierarchy of statuses and relevant titles is absent from Orisha, Santería, or Vodou, and also alien to the Pentecostal churches prevalent in the region.⁶ Denominations like the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Moravian, and Methodist, established in the Caribbean since slavery, have not provided direct models for the structure and stratification of the Spiritual Baptist Church, either.⁷

The uniform hierarchy provides common ground even between churches whose ritual practice differs significantly. Thus a Tobagonian sister visiting a church in Arima, Trinidad, which lacks many of the symbols she is accustomed to seeing in her own church, including the centrepole, colours, flags, and the calabash, and in which the Spiritual manifestations are shorter and much less elaborate, is nevertheless immediately able to situate herself in the space according to her status, to identify the ritual practitioners and their mutual relationships, and to address the elders in an acceptable order and manner with proper titles. Along with the ritual structure, the organisation of the church as a

hierarchical order of statuses creates cohesion and separates the Spiritual Baptist church from other denominations. Moreover, the structural integration of the church contributes to the integration of the religion as a system of religious knowledge and ritual practices: receiving knowledge through connections to the Spirit and the Spiritual world is the foundation of the hierarchical statuses.

Knowledge received during the mourning ritual is the most important criterion for Spiritual positions. Sometimes elevation in the Spiritual hierarchy can take place on the basis of a Leader's or a Mother's vision or dream. In such a case the person may not have had specific Spiritual instructions herself, or may not have been able to interpret such instructions correctly. Active participation in ritual practice as well as a proper life-style are normally required before this sort of elevation in the hierarchy is possible. All in all, Leaders and Mothers base their decisions to assign members into higher positions both on Spiritual instructions and on their own judgement of the person's character and capability. It is common for more than one elder to have similar visions and instructions concerning a particular member's Spiritual rank before any official changes are made. Elevating a member is about recognising her Spiritually intended position, not about bestowing high-sounding titles to favoured sisters and brothers.

In St. Philomen Church a few sisters and brothers were given new Spiritual ranks as well as new spatial positions in the church on *Old Years' Night*, the 31st of December, 2000. Mother Cleorita had received a Spiritual message that the "ship was not balance," and "to balance the ship" (the church) she assigned Teacher Audrey, the second Mother of the church, a seat with a back rest in front of the altar, so that both she and Teacher Audrey were now seated in similar chairs facing the congregation. Teacher Audrey had been sitting on the Mothers' bench next to the altar up to this point. Other dedicated and senior female members were brought up to sit on the Mothers' bench, which was a public recognition of their status as Mothers. A sister was given the position of a Captain, and those sisters who were Warriors in Spirit were seated next to the entrances of the church, to defend the ritual space and the congregation from uninvited spirits. Leader Gerald took three Shepherds on the altar – they had been occupying the male elders' bench opposite the Mothers' – and trained them to keep services. The brothers' positions as Shepherds was thus made public as well.

To give an example of the range of Spiritual and administrative positions and titles within one church, I list those of the St. Philomen Church.

Title	Spiritual Position	Position in the archdiocese (WIUSBSO)

Leader Gerald	Leader, Baptiser	Dean; Minister
Reverend Charles	Baptiser	Reverend (Canon); Minister
Captain Turner	Captain, Baptiser	Minister
Brother Errol Shepherd Brian Brother Leath Brother Solomon	Shepherds	
Brother Douglas	Watchman	
other Brothers	some of whom are Warriors and Shepherds	
Mother Cleorita	Mother Superior, Pointer, Teacher (Healer)	Reverend Mother; Minister
Teacher Audrey	Second Mother, Teacher, Pointer	
Mother Theda	Third Mother	
Mother Geneva	Mother, Pointer	
Teacher Yvonne	Teacher	
Mother Becca	Mother, Anointer	
Mother Pauline	Mother Nurse	
Tante Lorna Tante Thelma Sister Tiny Sister Gertrude Sister Claudia	Teacher Mother Nurse Teacher Warrior	
Captain Selda	Captain	
other Sisters	some of whom are Warriors, Shepherdesses and Nurses	

Table IV: Spiritual and administrative titles

The Spiritual ranks do not indicate gender-based dominance in the church organisation. Ranks and positions that can be acquired by both men and women include for example *Shepherd/Shepherdess*, *Warrior*, *Captain*, *Teacher*, *Pointer*, and *Inspector*. There are also gender-specific positions, such as the male *Baptiser* and *Leader* and the female *Mother* and *Mother Superior*. Within the churches' internal hierarchies, Leader-Baptisers, Mothers, Teachers and Pointers are the topmost ranks; they are collectively referred to as *elders*. The leadership of the church is ideally shared between a male Leader and a female Mother, whose roles as Spiritual heads of the church are very similar. Churches are founded by a Mother or a Leader, or by both. Worship in services can be conducted by any male or

female elder, although men are more commonly seen in this role. Prominent Mothers may control a male elder's performance, and Mothers often take over the lead during the most intense, most Spiritual part of services. The Mothers' authority in the church can take even aggressive forms: it is often the Mother who scolds the congregation for unruly behaviour, lack of participation in the ongoing service or other such things. Mother Superior and Mother Queen are titles for Mothers whose Spiritual daughters have become Mothers, or for Mothers over other Mothers, thus implying the highest position in the female segment of the hierarchy.

The titles *Baptiser* and *Pointer* refer to ritual specialists. Baptisers initiate people into the faith by baptising them, whereas Pointers are responsible for the lengthy and demanding mourning ritual. Only men are supposed to perform Baptism. Nevertheless, women who have mourned several times and thus acquired substantive Spiritual knowledge, like Mothers, can also obtain the information necessary for the ritual. Pointers, on the other hand, can be either men or women. The role of a Pointer is crucially important, as she or he has access to the most secret and sacred knowledge of the religion in manoeuvring the mourning ritual. *Nurses* or *labourers*, ritual assistants to the Pointer, are almost unexceptionally women, which further enhances the female presence in this significant ritual. *Healers*, on the other hand, are men or women who have received the gift of Spiritual and physical healing during the mourning ritual, or innately. *Teacher* is another senior position in the hierarchy. It connotes an ability to educate other members, to share religious knowledge; Teachers are also able to interpret dreams and visions, and work frequently in mourner rooms. *Matron*, a rarer title in Tobago, is given to senior Mothers with central roles in initiation rituals. The title thus supports the metaphor of birth emblematic of baptism and mourning. A *Captain* has regular duties in ritual practice, as he or she is responsible for "steering the ship from the harbour and bringing it back again;" that is, Captains ritually prepare the space before services by ringing the bell or sprinkling water, for example, to make sure that the ritual begins properly. The role of the Captain as a Spiritual navigator is clearest when she or he conducts the service. Also, the Captain may have the responsibility for the upkeep of the church and preparations for rituals. *Shepherd* and *Shepherdess* represent more preliminary Spiritual ranks, which is not to say they are not respected. Preaching in services or leading the surveying and prayers can be tasks performed by a Shepherd(ess). The connotation of a leader of a flock comes through when assisting in the conduct of services. *Warriors*, too, are usually more junior members of the flock, although some have been in the faith for decades. They fight evil spirits and may therefore be seated close to the entrances of the church in order to guard the ritual space. Spiritual manifestations in Warriors

often resemble martial arts performances, and steadfast perseverance is characteristic of them. For example, Warrior Claudia once carried five baptismal candidates, adult men and women, to the sea on her back. The *Watchman* has a similar role, as he or she keeps guard at the church entrance against evil spirits and fights them if they try to enter.⁸

Some of the positions in the hierarchy are not used as titles. I have not heard anyone being consistently referred to as "Nurse Margaret" or "Healer David," for example. Watchman, too, is seldom, if ever, used as a title. Given that the title of Leader connotes the status of a male leader of a church, and Mother refers to either a female leader or a Spiritually advanced female elder, persons with such titles often have other titles as well. For example, Teacher Audrey of St. Philomen Church is a Pointer and the Second Mother of her church, but she is customarily called Teacher Audrey. Also Teacher Cyril, Matron, or Bishop Daniel, to mention some, are called by specific titles although they are Leaders and Mothers of their churches. Lower ranks, like Shepherd, are seldom used as titles when a higher one is acquired. Positions like *Diver*, *Star gazer*, *Pastor* and *Midwife* (Stephens 1999, 4-6) or *Pumper*, *Prophet*, *Apostle*, *Fortune-teller* and *Judge* (Herskovits 1947, 195-196), which can be found in Trinidadian churches, seldom come up in Tobagonian discourse. They are not used as titles, either. The practices that these positions entail, however – having visions and premonitions, prophesying, helping mourners when they are in the Spiritual world, etc. – are quite common, although performed under different titles.

The Spiritual Baptist church is structured not only by the hierarchy of Spiritual statuses, but also by the allegory of family. Perhaps the most commonly used metaphor of the church is the "Spiritual family" consisting of a *Spiritual Mother*, *Father*, and *Spiritual daughters* and *sons*. In greetings the metaphor is a norm: "I want to say a pleasant good evening to my Spiritual family in de Lord" are the opening words of many sermons, lesson readings and testimonies. Also, when Mothers and Leaders refer to members of the congregation whom they have baptised, they use the terms son and daughter, whereas the latter identify the Mother and Baptiser who have initiated them into the faith as "my Spiritual Mother and Father." The terms *sister* and *brother*, used as titles for the majority of the lower-ranking members, fortify the family allegory even further. The idea of a church as a family is accentuated when a visitor's presence is acknowledged in the officiating elder's address; those who have been baptised elsewhere but attend the ritual are thus publicly identified as outsiders to the family. On the other hand, in large rituals organised by a diocese or an inter-diocese organisation, the congregation can be addressed as a "Spiritual family" although coming from dozens of different churches. The family metaphor smooths over the stratified

order of statuses, differentiating between Spiritual parents, children, and siblings only. Both systems of identification and group demarcation, the hierarchy and the family metaphor, bring along integration and cohesion.

In addition to the Spiritual ranks, another, intersecting hierarchy stratifies the Spiritual Baptist church on the national and transnational level and within a particular church. Twenty-two of the forty-three Tobagonian churches belonged to a diocese in 2001. The ministerial positions of Deacon and Deaconess, Reverend, Canon, Archdeacon, Dean, Bishop, and Archbishop are granted by the archdiocese, and official licences for rituals can be assigned to ministers only.⁹ If a church chooses not to affiliate with any of the dioceses, it can be incorporated by a Private Bill in the Parliament, and thus have its own ministerial hierarchy, even an Archbishop. Affiliation to a diocese is therefore not necessary in order to obtain the licences needed for christening, marriage and burial.

Dioceses and privately incorporated churches vary in their conventions of gendering the ministerial positions. Generally speaking, Tobagonian female Spiritual Baptists are ordained into high ministerial positions far less frequently than their Trinidadian sisters. In Trinidad, the NESBFA is headed by Archbishop Barbara Burke, Arkrikreus Kyria Bishop Gertrude Mundy leads the *Ezekiel Spiritual Baptist Gospel Assembly*, Archbishop Monica Randoo has been visible in the media, and female Bishops are numerous in many dioceses; in Tobago, the highest ministerial position reached by a woman in the WIUSBSO is that of a Reverend Mother. *Mt. Pisgah Spiritual Baptist Archdiocese* has ordained Mother Agatha Anthony of St. Peter's Church as an Arch-abbess, a position provided by this diocese alone, and Matron Ethencer Stewart of Mt. Monasseh Church was ordained as a Bishop in her archdiocese in Trinidad. The unwillingness of the dioceses to grant Tobagonian female ministers licences for solemnisation of marriage is a particular cause of frustration and disappointment for local Reverend Mothers. However, in actual ritual practice and exegetic interpretations of the cosmology, women have at least as important a role as men.

The roles of ritual specialists, or *clerics*, as Morton Klass (1995, 66) prefers to call "religious officiants" in order to avoid ethnocentric labels such as "priest" or "clergy," are essential when examining the integration and institutionalisation of the Spiritual Baptist religion. According to Klass, clerics in different religions can be classified into two main categories, full-time and part-time religious practitioners (1995, 68). Full-time clerics, like rabbis or priests, belong to "an overarching institution with structured procedures and complex techniques." They enjoy access to an institutionalised body of priestly knowledge of history, dogma, and rituals, and are involved in regular, constant practice. Part-time clerics like shamans are more independent practitioners without the hierarchical structure of an institutionalised religion. Formal training is rare, as they learn

their skills intermittently from elders, which leads to variation between different cleric's ritual practice and interpretations. Due to the lack of hierarchy in religious positions, part-time clerics pursue direct communication with gods or God, spirits, and so forth.

It is emblematic of the Spiritual Baptist religion that its practitioners and clerics do not succumb to classification into either of the categories. While ritual specialists, or clerics, are not paid for their work and are therefore employed or get their livelihood from other sources, their position in the church is often given priority over their job, when *nurses*, for example, take leave from their jobs in order to labour in a mourning ritual, or when retired or unemployed practitioners spend days and weeks on end working in rituals. Although situated in an elaborate hierarchy of positions and roles, their ritual practice is largely based on personal Spiritual gifts, communication with the Holy Spirit, and charismatic performances. Also, not only ritual specialists but all members seek direct communication with the Spirit, travel in the Spiritual world and receive Spiritual knowledge. Jukka Siikala (forthcoming), writing about revitalisation movements in the Pacific, shows how individually originated, charismatic "invention" of culture – in Roy Wagner's sense (1981, 59) – that appears in revitalisation movements can very quickly become conventionalised. Such conventionalisation is not typical of the Spiritual Baptist religion, in which Spiritual experiences, dreams and visions continue to produce new knowledge, although the structure of the church is elaborate and firm. The combination – even contradiction – of the hierarchically structured social organisation of the church and the individually accomplished interactions with the Spirit in a manner resembling shamanism gives the Spiritual Baptist religion its special character.

¹ Instead of official names like "St. Philomen Spiritual Baptist Church" or "Mt. Paran Perseverance Spiritual Baptist Church" I use the shorter forms "St. Philomen Church" or "Mt. Paran Church."

² Descriptions of the rituals are provided in Appendix 2.

³ Service is the term used by Spiritual Baptists when referring to the various rituals of the religion.

⁴ Surveying means cleansing the ritual space and inviting the Holy Spirit by pouring specific substances and liquids in ritually significant spots. In some churches, the Apostles' Creed comes after surveying.

⁵ *Vevers* or *vèvè* of Vodou, skilfully drawn on the floor with corn meal or ashes, resemble seals. Each *lwa* has his or her signs, and the drawing of the *vèvè* invokes the particular spirit but also sanctifies the ritual area (Deren 1970, 204; more recently McAlister 2002, 93, 97). In Orisha shrines these signs are drawn by pouring corn meal on the *palais* floor, in front of the entrance and by the centrepole in the shape of different symbols. Few Spiritual Baptist churches use corn meal for this purpose.

⁶ Some other creole religions of the Anglophone Caribbean, however, portray similarly complex hierarchies of titles. Simpson (1980, 195-6) outlines the multiple offices and ranks of Jamaican Revival "bands." There are Orisha shrines in Trinidad and one in Tobago in which titles similar to those of Spiritual Baptists are used.

⁷ Professor Jukka Siikala suggested that the army ranks of the Merikin Baptists may have inspired the intricate hierarchy of the church.

⁸ Instead of a human Watchman, eggs and coconuts are sometimes used to keep guard at entrances.

⁹ These positions are standardised in the *West Indian United Spiritual Baptist Sacred Order*; other dioceses, like *Mt. Pisgah Spiritual Baptist Archdiocese*, may hold other titles, such as Archpriest or Arch-abbess.

4. INITIATION AND KNOWLEDGE

The ascending hierarchy of knowledge-based statuses indicates the value of religious knowledge and the centrality of transitions towards fuller wisdom in the Spiritual Baptist religion. In different ways the two major initiation rituals, baptism and mourning, facilitate transition from one status to another and provide the initiate with an opportunity to increase her knowledge. Transitions mark these rites of passage on other levels as well. They produce liminal spaces, in which connections to the Spirit and Spiritual knowledge are possible, and in which the initiate but also other participants operate on a Spiritual realm instead of a profane one.¹ Novel knowledge and practices can be added to the religious corpus through experiences in the Spirit. It is in such liminality where the creativity of creolisation is at its clearest; it provides an arena in which the practitioners are able not only to reproduce the interplay of dialectically positioned religions in their society and history, but also to *marronner*, to produce novel knowledge and practices that are irreducible to mere mixtures of Christianity and African religions.

TRANSITION IN BAPTISM AND POINTING

Baptism in the Spiritual Baptist religion is the primary requirement for meaningful connections and communication with the Holy Spirit, and as such it is the basic initiation into the religion. Through this initiation the candidate receives the publicly acknowledged status of a Spiritual Baptist and becomes a member of a Spiritual family, a church. She is then entitled to gradually accumulate knowledge of the religion by participating in ritual practice, becoming involved in the discourse about the belief system, and by undergoing the mourning ritual. Further channels towards religious knowledge open as the initiated member becomes accessible to Spiritual manifestations and learns to interpret visions, dreams, and other Spiritual messages within the framework of the belief system. The knowledge accrued leads eventually to advancement in the hierarchy of the church. The transition into the status of a Spiritual Baptist is ritualised in baptism with special emphasis on liminality. Pointing is structurally identical with baptism, but whereas the latter aims at initiation into the status of a Spiritual Baptist and culminates in baptism by immersion, pointing prepares an already initiated neophyte for the mourning ritual with the purpose

of acquiring further Spiritual knowledge. Both baptism and pointing are usually performed during Sunday services. Due to their structural similarity, the preparatory phase of the baptism ritual is at times referred to as *pointing of candidates*.

BECOMING A SPIRITUAL BAPTIST

All Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches regard baptism as the entry to the religion and its mysteries and apply a fairly similar ritual structure in their baptismal services. There are several small churches with no resident ritual specialist, a *Baptiser*, but Baptisers from more prominent churches are invited to perform the ritual when necessary so that all churches can initiate new members and function as Spiritual families.

Baptism is most often organised on Sundays as part of the regular service, starting around 10 or 11 in the morning and finishing in the evening before sunset. Elders say that baptism used to last for days – the candidates would come to the church on Wednesday or Thursday, and the Baptiser would *point* them, ritually put them down to fast and meditate in the *mourner room* until Sunday. It was also customary to go to the sea in the night, at four or five in the morning, when it was still dark. The baptismal service would thus start on a Saturday night and culminate in the immersion in the wee hours on Sunday morning. Elders like Mother Cleorita and Leader Gerald emphasise the enhanced Spirituality of night-time services. Few, if any, churches arrange such lengthy rituals for baptism these days. A Mother pointed out that as most Spiritual Baptist elders in Tobago start to get (literally) old, they have trouble bearing the strenuous night-time ritualising. Moreover, nurses and other members of the congregation used to be more dedicated to their cause in the old days, so that now it is hard to find people to work from dusk to dawn. Mother Cleorita complained that people did not want to stay at the church too late and that it was very hard to find volunteers to wade into the waves at four o'clock in the morning. But many Baptisers still receive Spiritual instructions for the overnight ritual, starting on Saturday night and going to the sea on Sunday morning.

Larger churches, like Mt. Paran, St. Francis, Mt. Arrarat, St. Rita's and St. Philomen have several baptisms each year. From July 1998 to July 1999 there were five such ceremonies at St. Philomen, the amount of candidates in each varying from one to eleven. In 1987 there were about one hundred baptismal candidates in this church, but after that the annual amount has been fewer than forty. During his career as a Leader, starting from 1970, Leader Gerald of St. Philomen Church claims to have baptised approximately 500 Spiritual sons and

daughters. There is no limit to the number of initiates, and in the annual Palm Sunday baptismal ceremony at Mt. Paran Church there are always several candidates. This large church has an average of twenty candidates every year, according to Bishop Daniel. On the other hand, smaller churches organise baptisms less frequently, usually with one or two candidates each year.

The Spiritual Baptist religion is not systematically evangelical. The only clearly proselytising efforts in the faith are the sporadically arranged missions and to a lesser extent pilgrimages. Missions are aimed at by-passers and people *liming* on the block, and by preaching the Word the missionaries may attract listeners to eventually join the Spiritual Baptist church. These evangelical endeavours are not systematic or regularly performed, however, and the main purpose is to allow people to hear God's word rather than to recruit new church members. Although not directly converting people, Baptists do discuss their faith with friends and family members, and some also persuade these to become members of the church by accepting baptism. Sister Penny in St. Philomen Church was quite effective in recruiting candidates, particularly young people she associated with, and Mother Cleorita acknowledged her zeal in a baptism ceremony of five young candidates, including three teen-aged boys, whom she and her cousins had persuaded to accept baptism. Instead of evangelical efforts, visions and dreams commonly cause a person to seek baptism. Leader Brothers explained how he fasted and prayed for nine entire months and then received orders in a vision to go and get baptised:

I met him in a lonely and strange place. He say "You know me?" I say "No Sir." He say "How? you doesn't know me?" I say "I recognise the voice but I doesn't know." He say "Who does you pray to?" Cause I use to pray to St. Francis but now I pray direct to Christ. He say "Well I am St. Francis, and your prayer was heard, your plea was accepted, and I was sent by God to show you the way." He say that "You have to baptise." I say "I don't really... [chuckles] I doesn't ready..." And he say "Watch. You see the wide ocean there? You have to swim, in that ocean." I say "Sir I cyan swim, I cyan swim." He say "You mus' not say you cyan, say 'I'm going to try in the name of the Lord'. Cyan is a coward word," jus' so he tell me. And I kneel down and I ask him for pardon. He say "you have to swim." And, the land start to cut, the sea coming in, and he jump down in the water. I afraid, [but] had no choice but to fall in the water. When I fall in the water, the water was clear, and I saw him swimming, songs and hymns, *When shall I reach the rockly shore*. Swish swash, swish swash, and then I see him climb up a ladder. And he say "Kneel down and let me bless you." He say "You never say you cyan." And I did as he say, and he send me to a man I use to provoke. He use to sell perfume, and I use to call him names, when he smell sweet, understand, so. He said "Go to that man, and he, they having baptism Carnival Sunday 1954. And go to him, and receive your baptism."

This account of St. Francis' instructions to go and get baptised is a beautifully narrated example of divinely triggered motivation for initiation. It also illustrates the potentiality to transition inherent in baptism as a rite of passage by describing the transformation of Leader Brothers' capacities as a subject in the Spiritual world, plunging into the sea and surfacing as a swimmer.

Quite a few candidates seek baptism in order to find a cure for an illness or to solve other troubles in their lives. Such causes are sometimes questioned by elders who would prefer Spiritual children with less instrumental motives, such as willingness to dedicate their lives to Jesus rather than just to get well. Many initiated members do not attend church regularly, if at all. So, even though Tobagonian Leaders have baptised hundreds of neophytes, the average congregation size remains fairly small. On the other hand, many candidates consider initiation for several years, willing to make a change in their lives but insecure about their ability to handle the transition that baptism brings about. Because baptismal candidates must be able to make the decision to become baptised by themselves, they are teenagers or adults. The youngest candidate baptised in the ceremonies I have attended was an eight-year-old girl, whose mother was not a Spiritual Baptist but whose older sister was an active member of the church. Most candidates are girls and women under 30 years. Boys and men are also baptised fairly frequently, but their subsequent attendance at services is less common than their female counterparts'.

The ritual specialists in baptism are Baptisers, who are assisted by other elders and *nurses*. In Tobagonian churches Baptisers are usually male elders with high positions in the church, such as Captains or Leaders.² Nurses, usually female, are essential for the proceedings in baptism rituals, because they take care of the physical well-being of the candidates throughout the long and demanding service. To become a regular nurse requires no specific Spiritual qualifications, so that all who have been baptised can serve as nurses. Many sisters also *come out of the mourning ground* as nurses, having received special knowledge and clothes to take care of baptismal candidates or pilgrims in the mourning ritual.

POINTING PILGRIMS ON THE ROAD

Mourners are normally pointed on Sundays and come out on Sundays as well, so that the opening and conclusion of the week-long (or longer) mourning ritual can be embedded in normal Sunday services. The ritual is organised every time a brother or a sister informs the Pointer of the wish to go and mourn, and there are no obstacles for arranging it even for a single pilgrim, although it is preferred to point more than one at a time, given the labour-intensiveness of the ritual.

The larger Tobagonian churches have several mourning rituals each year. Quite sporadic by nature, the ritual can be organised even twice a month, whereas on the other hand several months may pass without any aspiring pilgrims. Mother Cleorita compared the contemporary "slackness" of Tobagonian practitioners to the "old days," when the St. Philomen Church could have four or five mourners every two weeks, the record being eight pilgrims at the same time. Nowadays the St. Philomen Church has approximately five mourning rituals per year, the participants ranging from one to five pilgrims. Such pace is, of course, easier to handle as far as the officiators are concerned; finding volunteers available to work with the pilgrims is not easy. Leader Brothers, who founded St. Rita's Church in Plymouth in 1971, has pointed over 2900 pilgrims during his long career in the religion and has, moreover, kept records of each pilgrim's *tracks*, narrations of their Spiritual journeys, in notebooks.

In the pointing and mourning rituals I have attended the vast majority of neophytes has been female. The youngest pilgrim that I know of was twelve years old on her first *Throne of Grace* (a metonym of the ritual), but most were adults. The only requirement for becoming a pilgrim is initiation into the faith. Most pilgrims get a Spiritual calling to go and mourn. This may be a dream, a revelation during praying and meditating, or a vision in church. Many want to perform the ritual when they are sick, be it diabetes, heart disease, cancer or another difficult illness. Occasionally it is the Pointer who receives Spiritual commandments to *put down*, to point, a particular member of the Spiritual family. For example, Mother Cleorita told her granddaughter, Sister Penny, to go to mourn immediately after her Baptism. On another occasion, in May 1999, St. Philomen Church was having a ceremony of Indian prayers when the Spirit showed Mother Cleorita that a newly baptised young sister had to be put down to mourn immediately. In what was called an *emergency pointing* Mother Cleorita laid bands on the sister, who was then taken to the mourner room to fast and pray for seven days. The sister had no time to make arrangements with her job, family or plans to travel, but nobody questioned the priority of the ritual, since the instructions came from the Holy Spirit through a very reliable interpreter.

Pointing and the subsequent mourning ritual are officiated by a *Pointer*, assisted by *nurses* or *labourers*. The gift to point mourners, to lay bands on them, give them the secret key word, and administrate the prolonged ritual is received after numerous *Thrones of Grace*. Only elders like Leaders, Teachers and Mothers are advanced high enough to acquire such a demanding responsibility. The Pointer, then, is the ritual specialist of pointing and mourning, although some other Minister may run the church service during which pointing is performed. The Pointer points pilgrims on their journey, shows them the way, and guides them as they travel in the Spiritual world. In most of the larger, well-

established churches there are more than one Pointer. Some Pointers have more esteem than other, less experienced ones; many aspiring pilgrims come as far as from Trinidad, Toronto or New York to certain Tobagonian churches whose Pointers have the reputation of being exceptionally skilful. Pointers' clothes are black, long dresses for women and gowns for men, but in accordance with specific Spiritual directions, other colours may be worn as well. Headties, sashes and belts of various colours can be added to the attire, mainly to indicate a Spiritual connection to a saint or a Spiritual nation. Most nurses or labourers, ritual assistants, are women, but occasionally a brother may take up the task. When Brother Errol announced his intention to serve as a male nurse during a whole week's mourning ritual, the congregation of St. Philomen reacted with cheers and support. It is practical for the nurses to wear simple cotton dresses and headties because they have to march with the candidates for hours in the hot church, and many of them have to accompany the candidates into the sea or the river. Aprons protect the nurses' dresses, but also mark their uniform. Some Mothers make a specific point of wearing aprons as an orthodox, old-time custom essential to the proper continuation of the faith, and allow no sisters in their mourner rooms without aprons.

Mother Thelma and Mother Pauline of St. Philomen Church work as a nurses at almost every baptism and pointing ceremony; although grandmothers with countless duties and chores at home and work, they leave their family to move to the church every time a major ritual is conducted. Unlike in the relatively short baptismal services, nurses who work in the mourner room have to make remarkable personal sacrifices as they leave their work, home and family behind for at least seven days, abstaining from worldly activities like eating and drinking what they want, meeting friends, having marital relations, listening to the radio or watching TV, or going shopping. They spend the entire duration of the ritual at the church compound wearing Spiritual clothes and engaging in prayers and services. Most importantly, they take care of the practicalities: cooking for all the participants, washing clothes, and seeing to the needs of the initiates are among the prosaic chores that fall on the nurses.

Since Spiritual Baptist churches are completely dependent on their congregations' small donations in collections and on the income from occasional ticket sales for pilgrimages, they have no funds reserved for rituals like mourning. The aspiring pilgrims are therefore expected to pay for their own paraphernalia. The Pointer may give a list of necessary items to the aspiring pilgrim, or the latter may give a lump sum of money to the Pointer, who takes care of the shopping. The paraphernalia required may include numerous packs of candles – white as well as other colours, bottles of oil, honey, Kananga Water, Florida Water, other scented waters or perfumes, talcum powder, polyester cotton of various colours to

make the bands; in some churches the pilgrim buys his or her own pail used as a toilet during the ritual. It is also customary for pilgrims to bring their own mugs, towels and underwear. Women equip themselves with a pack of sanitary pads. Furthermore, since several people have to labour with the pilgrims throughout the ritual, food and drink must be provided although the pilgrim herself fasts. Altogether the costs amount to hundreds of dollars,³ ranging from three to six hundred in Tobagonian churches. This is a considerable amount of money, the monthly income of many Spiritual Baptists being as low as 800-1500 dollars.

Charging people who want to go to mourn is a controversial matter for elders. Given the low income level of the majority of Spiritual Baptists, spending several hundreds on a religious ritual is difficult and may hinder or even prevent some brothers and sisters from going to mourn. The Spiritual family may try and collect money to help an underprivileged member to raise the sum needed, but since the largest churches may have dozens of pilgrims every year, the financial burden becomes too heavy for the congregation, should they try to pay for each pilgrim. The money question is not irrelevant, though, as it is considered highly reprehensible to "make money" by doing Spiritual work. Gifts received from God are not to be taken advantage of, and gossip is heard of elders who have misused their gifts and charged people, ending up losing their gifts altogether. It is thus not merely an issue of benevolence or generosity but touches the very basis of the ritual itself, the Pointer's Spiritual integrity. Elders seldom discuss their fees for mourning in public, although no official secrecy is sworn upon them, to protect their churches from other churches' accusations of over-charging. Nevertheless, although money and fees related to Spiritual work are under close scrutiny within the Spiritual Baptist community, no Tobagonian church has ever been accused of cashing in under the cover of religion. "Money-making" is generally associated with North American TV-evangelists whom Tobagonians see on their cable channels on Sundays, and abhorred as alien to the Spiritual Baptist religion.

TRANSITION INTO THE LIMINAL

Victor Turner's theory of liminality and anti-structure (1967, 1969, 1974) helps to assess the transformations in Spiritual Baptist knowledge and practice. These transformations come about through liminal spaces, either in rituals or, less evidently, in visions and dreams. As rites of passage, baptism and mourning adhere to the tri-partite structure of separation, margin and reaggregation analytically dissected by van Gennep and further elaborated by Turner (1967, 5; 1969, 94). Within the margin, a liminal space is produced through the ritual manipulation of statuses and the body, whereby the neophytes become liminal

personae instead of their former selves (Turner 1967, 6-7). The liminal is "an interstructural phase in social dynamics," in which the structure and norms of the everyday world dissolve, and emblematic to this threshold is change, the production of something novel. "Undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns" (ibid., 8-9). The initial transition from a normal social status into a liminal persona is followed by a transition from carnal to Spiritual reality, which brings along an accumulation of and alterations in knowledge, and these again may lead to changes in status, role, hierarchy, or ritual practice after reaggregation, return into the society.

PREPARATIONS

The preparations for baptism and pointing services illustrate how the liminality necessary for a transition is produced. In order to distance themselves from the society and the carnal world, to become a *tabula rasa* on which new knowledge can be inscribed (Turner 1969, 103), a period of self-denial precedes the ritual both for the pilgrims and for the Pointer. Pointers may refrain from going out except on necessary errands, avoid alcohol and try to dedicate as much of their time as possible to praying and meditation. The Pointer's Spiritual integrity and preparedness is crucial to the ritual's success. The Pointer needs to have an undisturbed connection to God, since the central symbols and procedures of the ritual are presented to her or him in visions. For example, the colour, amount and order of the mourning bands, the sacred seals drawn on them, the password whispered in the pilgrim's ear, and possible directions regarding the pilgrim's route in the Spiritual dimension are delivered to the Pointer by the Holy Spirit. The neophytes, then, are not the sole receivers of new knowledge.

Similar restrictions apply to the labourers who assist the Pointer in the ritual throughout its duration. Abstinence, praying and meditation prepare labourers for their demanding duties in the mourner room and cleanse them so that they can enter the most sacred space of the faith, the *Inner Chamber*. Female labourers have an additional requirement in some churches, like St. Rita's: they are not allowed inside the mourner room when menstruating. This ban and the perception of women's bodily cleanliness behind it was criticised by other Pointers, such as Mother Cleorita, in whose opinion periods are a healthy aspect of being a woman, "if yuh doan see dem yuh go to hospital!" She claimed that the "old patriarchs" don't approve of women labouring while having their period, and recounted a baptismal service where Leader Ramsay had Sister Ella sit on the back bench because she "was unclean," menstruating. The Holy Spirit possessed

Sister Ella, however, and she lead the entire congregation from the church to the beach, clearing the way herself. After the candidates had been baptised, Sister Ella was still with the Spirit and cleansed the whole church with sea water. Later on Leader Ramsay asked Mother Cleorita what spirit had really taken the unclean sister. "De Holy Spirit," answered Mother Cleorita, who understood that menstruating does not make women improper for the Spirit. Since then she has not even inquired of her labourers in the mourner room whether they are menstruating or not.

The aspiring pilgrim, too, has to prepare herself for the upcoming ritual. Wearing proper covering clothes, abstaining from eating heavy foods or fasting altogether and avoiding alcohol and cigarettes, liming, sexual relations and leaving home unless necessary, helps the pilgrim to concentrate on the demanding ritual ahead, to start praying and meditating and to leave the carnal world behind. Elders often emphasise the importance of taking the ritual seriously, which means a willingness to leave out worldly pleasures and a dedication to Spiritual advancement. However, since many mourners come from outside the Pointer's own congregation, even from Trinidad or New York, it may often be impossible for the Pointer or other elders to advice, chastise or warn their pilgrims of improper behaviour prior to the ritual itself. All in all, the behaviour of the labourers and pilgrims prior to, during and after the ritual can affect the reputation of the Pointer, so that many Pointers try to ensure the proper conduct of all participants in the ritual.

I describe preparations for baptism with an example of a ceremony at St. Francis Church, a well-established, popular church founded by Mother Miriam Yorke, on top of a hill in Goodwood on the windward, Atlantic shore of Tobago. The beach below the hill is deserted and rough and the numerous flags in the church yard are beaten by the constant wind blowing from the sea. It was five o'clock on a Saturday afternoon in January 1999 when I arrived in Goodwood and walked to the church, empty except for little Catherine and Reginald playing inside. The church had already been decorated; the vessels on the altar, by the centrepole and in the four corners were filled with fresh flowers. Church decorations seldom mark baptism or pointing in any particular way, and the cloths on the altar, shelves and the centrepole, the candles and flowers were the same as for regular services. The only significant addition to the paraphernalia was the candidates' or pilgrims' bench, sometimes called the *mercy seat* or the *seat of repentance*, a long wooden bench on which the neophytes sit in front of the altar. The Baptiser, Pointer, or other gifted elder draws seals on it with chalk and often also sprinkles libations like talcum powder, Kananga water or water from a *lota*, flower glass or calabash over the seals. Additional ways of consecrating the seat are lighting a candle on top of it and ringing the bell. In the house next to

the church there were four women cooking and chatting: Mother Miriam, Matron, and two other sisters who prepared the church earlier on. They were dressed in cotton print dresses and headties, Matron in her customary large headwrap.

Soon Mother Miriam and Sister Cynthia came into the church and sat down in the first row with pieces of cloth and scissors in their hands. They started to cut polyester cotton into triangular bands for the three candidates they were expecting. The first bands were pink, then white. The neophytes' bands in baptism and pointing are crafted by the ritual specialist, who buys pieces of polyester cotton and cuts them into triangular shape. The pieces are then folded into long, rectangular bands, and the specialist draws the personally received, sacred seals on them with chalk of different colours, white, blue, yellow and pink being the most common. The sealing is finished with drops of candle wax. The shape and material of mourning bands is identical to baptismal bands, although the seals and colours vary. Pointers use different amounts of bands, ranging from five to fourteen in my sample of mourning rituals. The amount reflects the specific Spiritual instructions given to the Pointer as well as the status of the pilgrim. Some Pointers lay fewer bands on green mourners than on pilgrims on their second, third or fourth Throne of Grace. The colours of the bands are also of Spiritual origin. Pointers are shown the exact shades of colours, the order and amount of seals drawn on the bands and the precise order in which the bands are to be laid on the pilgrim.

The seals drawn on the bands, on the bench, on the mourner room floor and perhaps also on walls or a black board, are vital to a Pointer or a Baptiser, and she receives them gradually on her Spiritual journeys. There are seals that are recognisable to all, like the star and the half moon, the five-pointed star, the snake, the cross, the wheel, the scale, the chart and the compass and the tree of life, but also various other, less figurative symbols. Regardless of the rate of recurrence or material resemblance of a particular seal, each has a specific meaning for the person who has received it. One cannot therefore make exclusive claims that, for example, the wheel always signifies navigating in the faith and in life according to God's commandments, since the symbols unfold differently in personal interpretations. On the other hand, elders can teach their interpretations of certain sacred symbols to initiates in the mourner room, or even to baptismal candidates, so that knowledge of ritual symbols, like seals, can be shared, made public (within the circle of the Spiritual family, at least), and thus such knowledge becomes added to the belief system of the religion.

A little after six two young girls arrived with bags on their shoulders; the candidates. They have been told to arrive at the church early so that Mothers can bathe them before the service starts. Baptismal candidates are usually

expected to attend church for a certain period of time to learn the basics of the faith. Sometimes, however, a person may have a vision to get baptised, and in such cases many Baptisers agree to initiate her without delay. *The Spiritual Baptist Minister's Manual* (1993, 73) also recommends flexibility in accepting candidates.

The candidates or pilgrims are "betwixt and between" statuses (Turner 1969, 95), either on their way to become a Spiritual Baptist (baptism) or advancing from a position in the spiritual hierarchy to a higher one (mourning). This is marked by undressing the neophytes and removing any insignia that refers to their previous status, resulting in "ambiguous and indeterminate" liminal entities with neither status outside the ritual, nor material possessions (ibid.) Mother Miriam and Matron started to prepare the girls, and Matron took them out to the yard to bathe. She rang the bell to sanctify the bath in a small board bathroom where the candidates were cleaned by a *bush bath*. As all Spiritual Baptist churches have bathrooms in the compound, the bathing of neophytes is carried out in a sanctified environment. The initiates bring along their own clean underwear, which for women includes tights and a slip in addition to the normal panty and bra, as well as towels. Bush-bath, a cleansing, sanctifying bath that is also used in healing rituals, is an essential preparation for a transforming ritual such as baptism or mourning. The bath is composed of water and leaves or flower petals, and some also use various sacred oils, scented waters and perfumes, such as Kananga water, Florida water or Rose water. Each Pointer or healer receives the required formula Spiritually, and different plants are used on different occasions. The mixture is not thick, a handful of leaves mixed with a bucketful of water. The bath is contained in a bucket or a basin and poured over the candidate with a calabash, either by the Pointer or a nurse, sometimes also by the candidate herself.⁴ To complete the cleansing, all jewellery, make-up, hair extensions and nail polish have to be removed.⁵

After the bath the Mothers assisted the candidates to dress in simple blue dresses and a white and a blue headtie. It was already pitch black outside in the yard, the sea was invisible and only the rush of the waves reminded of its presence. The candidates, now properly cleansed, went to sit in the front bench on the left hand side of the church. Ritual garments, blue dresses and headties, tights, and slips for female, and preferably blue or fair, neat pants and shirts for male candidates and pilgrims clearly indicate the initiates among the other participants, and their colour symbolism and specifically Spiritual Baptist design connect the initiates to the Spiritual world. As uniforms, they also add to the egalitarian *communitas* of the liminal stage.⁶ At this point it is also customary to give each neophyte her number. The initiates' own names are never uttered during baptism or pointing and mourning; instead, they are called Number One,

Number Two and so on, all the way up to Number Eleven or Twelve in large baptisms. All the rites are performed for the candidates in this numbered order, starting with Number One. The anonymity is yet another attribute of the liminality of the initiates and their upcoming transformation; markers of former identity like a name or personalised clothing are abandoned. The congregation relates to the candidates as nameless beings whose personal backgrounds have little to do with the ritual, or the faith in general. It is only in the preaching where some individual guidance may be delivered, but not necessarily even then. Turner's concept of *communitas* (1969, 96), in the sense of a "relatively undifferentiated" community of "equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of ritual elders," perfectly describes the condition of Spiritual Baptist initiates. The uniform appearance, number codes substituted for names, and the synchronised activities in the ritual – everyone kneels to pray, drinks water, or receives teaching at the same time – mould the neophytes into a homogeneous, minimally differentiated group, in which individual characteristics such as age, previous status in the spiritual hierarchy, education, or economic status are insignificant. Although more experienced mourners may become helpers for the first-timers, they receive no special privileges. Nevertheless, since communication between the neophytes is almost absent, the development of *comeraderie* within the liminal group, one of the attributes of *communitas*, is not possible to any great extent during the ritual. Afterwards the special bond between fellow neophytes is often verbalised and cherished, and people who have mourned together and perhaps even travelled together in the Spiritual world may reminisce and talk about their experience years afterwards. Some continue to share a spiritual linkage, catching power at the same time in services.

The Leader, Archdeacon Cowie who works at the Fire Brigade, parked his car in the church yard at 6:30, and soon after members of the congregation in nice church clothes started to arrive. Some were from Goodwood, but many came from as far as Patience Hill or Lambeau, packed into cars and trucks or route taxis. A Teacher and another sister, a nurse, were talking to the candidates, advising them on the procedure to follow and on general aspects of Christian life, until the service was due to begin.

BAPTISM AND POINTING SERVICES

In the baptism and pointing services, as in all Spiritual Baptist rituals, each church and ritual specialist has specific Spiritually acquired routines that cause variation particularly in the most symbolically laden phases of the ritual, such as washing, anointing and the laying of bands.⁷

The general order of pointing and baptism services as found in Tobagonian churches is as follows:

1. Cleansing and sanctifying the church
 - Marking the beginning of the service by ringing the bell
 - Song service – 1-4 hymns
 - Apostles' Creed and Benediction
 - Surveying
2. Bringing in the neophyte(s)
3. Prayers
 - men's prayers
 - women's prayers
4. Lessons
5. Possible collection and announcements
6. Washing and anointing baptismal candidates; anointing pilgrims

After this point the order of proceedings varies to such an extent that presenting a rigid outline is useless. The following phases are performed in the order preferred by the officiating Baptist or Pointer, and due to instant Spiritual inspiration, the same ritual specialist may deliver the final rites in a different succession in another service.

- Sealing the candidates or pilgrims (optional)
- Special Spiritual work on the candidates or pilgrims (optional)
- Preaching the Word
- Delivering the password
- Laying bands on the candidates or pilgrims
- Testing the candidates or pilgrims (optional)
- Rejoicing, putting the pilgrims on the road

After this particularly *hot*, Spiritually intense part of the service, the candidates are taken to *Jordan* – to the sea or a river – for baptism, or, if pilgrims, to the mourner room.

Around seven pm the service started as Matron rang the bell powerfully from the centrepole to the door and back, all the way to the bench in front of the altar. There were twenty-two sisters and three brothers present, most of the ladies wearing aprons on top of their dresses. Leader Cowie greeted us from the altar, standing by the podium, and spoke to the candidates now known as Numbers 1 to 3, stressing the seriousness of the occasion. "You still have the opportunity to aks yourselves, deep dong inside – am I ready? Is it really what I want?" he reminded them, speaking about the profound significance of the baptism they were about to accept. Finally he announced *Gentle Jesus Meek and Mild*, and we got up to sing. The shac shacs and tambourines picked up immediately, and the

candidates began *begging*, marching with their palms open in front of them, to the rhythm of the hymn. By *marking time*, also done while sitting on the bench, the neophytes ask the Lord to bless them, to forgive their sins and to accept them in baptism. Pilgrims, too, march and beg throughout the pointing ceremony, and continue the movement in the subsequent mourner room services. This marching is emblematic also of those churches who do not mark the beginning of the journey with the ritualised entrance procession.

Matron surveyed again, now with the bell and a glass with water and a pink flower. The nurse gently closed the candidates' eyes, gave them towels and showed them how to march properly. Leader Cowie announced the hymn *I Am Dying Oh Lord*, and the same rhythm rolled on. Throughout the song service, finished with *Blessed Assurance*, the candidates marched and we stood up and sang, some improvising in multiple voices. We then continued with the Apostles' Creed, singing it with a monotonous note, our right hands up, and Leader Cowie recited the Benediction. *Lord In This Thy Mercy Day*, the surveying hymn, started immediately after, and Matron lead two other sisters to survey the church. She lead with the bell and the lota, the sisters followed sprinkling grains and water, and Leader Cowie surveyed on the altar with water and the bell. The surveyors proceeded to cleanse the mourner room as well.

To start the prayers Leader Cowie began *I Heard The Voice of Jesus Say*. The nurse helped the three candidates on their knees, in which position they continued begging with their palms open while first the Leader and then Matron and the other surveyors prayed for them. The prayers sung or orated in these services concern the candidates or pilgrims in a direct way, as elders, sisters and brothers ask God to bless the initiates, help them on their journey, ease their suffering, and allow His Spirit to descend on them. As the prayers finished, Leader Cowie started *His Footsteps Follow Me* and everybody got up to sing and clap, the candidates marching in front of their bench. Three Mothers were marching in front of them, *mouth drumming*⁸ to the rhythm. Leader Cowie took the tall wooden shepherd's rod, its hook towering way up over his head, from the altar corner and gathered the candidates into a line, marching and begging in a procession. Matron went to lead the procession, bending down in the Spirit with her bell and the lota, then Leader Cowie with his rod, then Numbers One to Three followed by four nurses. They marched to the main entrance, then back to the centrepole, which they circled three times counterclockwise. The purpose of such processions in both baptism and pointing rituals is to introduce the neophytes to the church and its congregation as well as to the Spiritual presence in it. Members of the congregation can feel the Spirit during this ritual entrance and go to ring a bell at the centrepole or sprinkle water over the candidates or pilgrims from a flower-glass or some other vessel. After circling the ritually

significant spots of the church the candidates were lead to their bench again.⁹ The nurses helped them to raise their hands up in the air, and Leader Cowie turned them to face the four cardinal points one by one, then spun them around and around with their arms crossed over their chests. A Mother gave each candidate a white candle to hold, to give them light on their journey, regardless of the hot candle wax dropping on their hands, always begging, moving to the rhythm. In the other hand they held a green palm leaf.

Mother Miriam, sitting on her chair next to the main entrance and directing the service with various orders to the nurses and other sisters, started a hymn to begin the evening lessons.¹⁰ The candidates were allowed to sit down, but Teacher Mayda and another Mother kept on rejoicing, ringing the bell, speaking in tongues, and pouring water around the centrepole. Two sisters greeted and read Psalms 1 and 5 while we were sitting down and humming the hymn in the background. Leader Cowie announced as the foundation lesson Acts 9:1-19, about Saul hearing the Lord calling him on Damascus road and finally accepting Baptism. The candidates were marching on their road, eyes closed, listening to the Word. Some *catch power*,¹¹ and Mother Miriam surveyed the church with the lota and the calabash while a sister followed her with a bell. The lessons in baptism and pointing services, and especially the lesson for edification, are chosen to suit the occasion. John 3:1-17 is customarily read in baptism ceremonies:

*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again (Verses 5-7).¹²*

For pointing services, lessons from the 9th and 10th books of Daniel are very common:

*In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.
I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled (Daniel 10:2-3).*

And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes (Daniel 9:3).

After this Daniel explains how he prayed to God while he fasted, confessing and regretting his own sins and those of his people, of Israel (4-19), and continues by describing a vision he receives while praying:

And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God;

Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou are greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision (20-23).

After the scripture reading it was time to edify, wash and anoint the candidates. Between hymns Leader Cowie shouted his sermon in front of Numbers One to Three, now sitting down on their bench, begging all along. *Tell Me Where You Find Jesus*, we sang to the rhythm of mouth drums and the young brother's djembe drum, and the candidates got up once again. Nurses spun them around in preparation to wash them. Leader Cowie hushed the music and we gathered around the candidates' bench. The nurses took their candles and started to loosen their white, blue and pink headties, leaving them gathered on top of their mixed-up hair. We began a new hymn and Brother Lennox rang the bell as two sisters carried in enamel tubs filled with water and flower petals. A Teacher was holding the tub while Leader Cowie dipped his hand in the water and pressed drops of water on the candidates' faces, arms and hands before washing them thoroughly. Matron and Teacher Mayda washed their feet and then dried them with their towels. Some sisters bent down in the Spirit and called Jesus in high voices. Leader Cowie then cleaned the candidates' mouths by giving them three sips of water from a glass with a white flower; they spat the water into the enamel tubs.

The cleansed candidates were then anointed. Leader Cowie, preaching, collected a cow horn from the altar and filled it with olive oil. We were chanting *Do Not Pass Me By* as he pressed a drop of oil on his chest, preaching on, and went to the candidates, poured oil from the horn over their heads for the nurses to rub it into their hair with the white candles. He, Teacher Mayda and Matron each anointed one candidate, first drawing quick seals on them with a finger dipped in oil, and then rubbing the oil on their faces, arms, hands and feet. They bent the candidates' arms three times from the elbow and thumped their feet thrice on the ground after anointing them. Leader Cowie finished by making the candidates drink the oil from the horn; they also received three sips of water. Singing *Marching to Zion* around the candidates, Matron marked all our chests with oil. Leader Cowie drew seals on Number One's forehead, hair, arms, hands

and feet with chalk while Matron and another Mother drew seals on Numbers Two and Three, not forgetting their legs, ankles, soles of their feet and their backs. Baptismal candidates are washed in the service, pilgrims only receive anointing. Some elders have special Spiritual directions about the washing, so that they may draw seals with the water on the candidate's skin, or beat or bend her limbs while washing them, or give three sips of water from a sacred vessel to the candidates to drink and wash their mouth. In most churches water is sprinkled over the candidates from a flower-glass or a calabash. Leader Brothers, whose baptismal service runs according to clear and detailed Spiritual orders, has the congregation wash their hands in a separate tub before the washing of the candidates; and, being a skilled herbalist, he also uses a bunch of leaves as a sponge when washing. Specific scriptures can also be read for the ritual: in St. Philomen and St. Rita's Churches it is John 13, about Jesus washing the disciples' feet after the last supper.

The oil used in anointing is always olive oil, a basic ritual item in Spiritual Baptist services. For anointing, the oil is usually poured into a vessel, a cow horn in some, a calabash in others. Some churches have a special elder who always does the anointing, like Mother Becca in St. Philomen. She is always in the Spirit while anointing, dancing, bending and spinning around with the cow horn in her hand, and anoints the candidates gently but strongly, stroking them with olive oil in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The powerful Spiritual presence in her catches on to the candidates or pilgrims, who may start to shiver and shake or even start to *rejoice* in a more enduring manner. In addition to the external anointment, olive oil is also given to candidates or pilgrims to drink, by measure as in all ritual usage of sacred substances. Some anointers draw seals with oil on the candidates' hair or skin; Leader Brothers uses a burning white candle, drawing seals with its bottom end on the head, forehead, cheeks, ears, arms, elbows, palms, toes, soles and heels of feet. Seals can also be drawn with chalk, like Leader Bertram does in the Solomon Court Mystical Healing School. Again, in most churches specific scriptures are attached to this phase of the initiation: for example 1 Samuel 16:10-13, where Samuel anoints David with "a horn of oil," or John 12:1-8, about Mary anointing Jesus' feet with "very costly ointment," wiping it on with her hair.

It is the washing and anointing, along with the following *laying of bands*, that most clearly marks initiation services like baptism or pointing. Up to this point the candidates or pilgrims have had quite a passive role in the proceedings, merely marching and marking time on their feet, on their knees or sitting down. This part of the ceremony, however, is aimed specifically at them, and it is also one of the most Spiritually laden, *hottest*, moments of the ritual. It is marked by direct bodily contact between the initiates and the elders, including painful and

tiresome ordeals like pressing with the Bible, the bell and the lota. The officiating elders are often in the Spirit at this point, and the powerful presence cannot be ignored by the candidates or pilgrims either. Furthermore, as the congregation gathers around the initiates to sing, dance, march, mouth drum and make music with shac shacs, tambourines and drums, the atmosphere gets denser and denser, and it is common for several sisters and brothers to rejoice in the Spirit. This joint effort, the *communitas* of a "generalized social bond" (Turner 1969, 96) in collective ecstasy is crucial to the ritual. Without the shared participation, movement, music, dedication and feeling it is impossible to invoke a strong enough Spiritual presence for a proper transformation of baptismal candidates, or to prepare pilgrims for the challenging mourning ritual. The congregation, by invoking and entertaining the Spirit, makes the rituals of washing, anointing and laying of hands Spiritually deep and significant. For this reason Mothers sometimes have to scold their flock for being too lazy, half-hearted or lacking in dedication: Mother Cleorita of St. Philomen and Mother Miriam of St. Francis Church, for example, have been very explicit in their commands to the sisters and brothers to become more active and do their part in the ritual.

During this intense phase of the service, elders, sisters or brothers may receive Spiritual inspiration to bless a particular candidate or pilgrim or all of them with water sprinkled from a sacred vessel, or with perfume, talcum powder, oil or grains. Taking the candidate to the four corners of the church in order to introduce her to the Spirit, the saints and to the community is common at this stage. In a baptismal service at St. Philomen a sister, deeply in the Spirit, grabbed Number One, a middle-aged man, by his shoulders and danced him slowly to the corners in the fixed ritual order also used when surveying, pushing the neophyte in front of her. Other sisters marched and danced around them, ringing the bell and sprinkling water. The neophytes may indicate their Spiritual inclination during this general rejoicing, like when a young woman was being baptised at St. Philomen, and it became obvious to Mother Cleorita and other elders that her dance style and movements were those of a Warrior. The Mother gave her a sword, the emblem of a Warrior, to hold and dance with, and she carried the wooden weapon throughout the rest of the service, even on the beach.

This phase of the service is also used for healing or other Spiritual work: sometimes a candidate or a pilgrim may need special attention from the pointer or baptiser. Mother Cleorita has to work on a pilgrim almost every time she points mourners or baptismal candidates. This Spiritual work, like healing work in general, is conducted while entertaining the Spirit. The pilgrim or candidate often lies on her back on the church floor, sometimes separated from the crowd by a sheet held up by two sisters, or she may be taken into the mourner room for

the operation. At St. Philomen a woman in her thirties was being baptised, and after washing and anointing she was taken to the mourner room for Spiritual healing. Mother Cleorita, Captain Turner, Teacher Audrey and seven other Mothers dance to the mourner room with the candidate, carrying the calabash, bell, talcum powder and a flower-glass with them. Mother Cleorita demanded that the congregation sing in the church while they operated in the mourner room, saying that she could not do anything if people stopped singing. The mourner room door was closed and a coal pot was smoking in front of it, spreading its sanctifying smoke around and dismissing dangerous spirits. The Mothers chanted an Indian chant inside the room, dancing in a circle around Number One, and Mother Cleorita and Mother Theda called in Indian tongues. Clapping and mouth drums carried on a powerful rhythm. *Haaa ti la ma ka pa ta*, they shouted in Indian tongues, most of the elders deeply in the Spirit. Mother Cleorita operated over the candidate, who was lying on the floor, with her wooden sword; she moved it in highly controlled movements, almost like a stylised and slow Oriental dance, over the candidate's body. She sliced the air above the candidate in deliberate cuts. The African Spirit arrived, too, and African tongues broke out. Mother Cleorita kept on working on Number One. The Mothers had sprinkled flower petals, water, talcum powder and perfumed waters over her. Finally they *raised*, started to sing, *Africa Land* and walked out of the room in a procession, Teacher Yvonne supporting Number One, Tante Lorna ringing the bell. They stepped over the smoking coal pot three times, swinging their long hems, slips and aprons over the flaming coconut shells. The congregation had picked up *Africa Land*, and the seventy-odd people were dancing, making music and clapping their hands as the procession slowly danced towards the altar. Mother Cleorita was dancing a vigorous African dance, shaking her upper body and bending forwards in front of Number One, the sword still in her hand, slicing the air as if a mimic. Mouth drums raised a fervent rhythm behind the song, everybody felt the Spirit. Mother Cleorita, bowing down, gave the sword to Captain Turner and continued her pantomime-like dance, her hands swimming in the air, drawing something. After almost an hour she stopped the music and we returned to our seats. She started a slow, almost dragging hymn, made Number One sit down on her bench and gave her sips of milk and wine. She then washed the candidate's face with them. The Mothers then proceeded to lay bands on her.

In another baptismal ceremony Mother Cleorita, again entertaining the Spirit, placed Number Two, a man in his thirties, on his back on the floor in front of the Mercy Seat. She danced to the main entrance and back with a bunch of leaves in her hand, and uncovering Number Two's belly, wiped it and his arms with the herbs. She and other elders around were mouth drumming in loud

voices, shouting in tongues, sprinkling oil and talcum powder over the candidate's bare skin. Mother Cleorita bent down on her knees over him and operated in the air above him, cutting and slicing it as if dividing his body into two. Finally they raised the man up to his feet and swirled him around and around. In such procedures candidates or pilgrims, who are ill or who have Spiritual problems – perhaps obeah-related – are treated and healed prior to the initiation rituals.

After anointing the candidates or pilgrims, the order of the proceedings varies according to each Baptist's or Pointer's Spiritual inspiration on that particular occasion. The remaining part of a pointing ritual can be conducted alternatively in the mourner room or in the church; baptismal candidates, however, are kept in the church.

After the candidates or pilgrims have been washed and anointed, some Ministers make them cut the Bible in order to prove their dedication to accept baptism and the Christian life or to prove their Spiritual sincerity and dedication for the mourning ritual. By opening the Bible in a ritual manner the candidates submit themselves to a public test through which the Spirit indicates whether or not they are acceptable for baptism or mourning. This test is used on other occasions too, like when recounting one's mourning tracks to the congregation, to prove the speaker's sincerity.

In the baptismal service in Goodwood, Leader Cowie handed out thick Bibles to each candidate and advised them to hold the Bible vertically on their chest with their two thumbs together at the open end of the book. He explained about the nature of the test – by cutting the Bible, opening it at random and thus revealing a particular scripture, a message from the Holy Spirit is delivered to the elders and to the congregation about the sincerity of the candidate. "We are about to find out the faith and condition of your heart... We're about to take a proof from de Bible," he stated. The candidates had to hold the Bible over their heads as they knelt down, then bow to the ground three times, then hold the Bible to their chest and cut it. Sisters rang bells and we hummed a hymn, the drums rolling. After the bows the candidates opened their Bibles and handed them to the elders to inspect. Number One's cutting did not succeed, and she had to repeat the kneeling and bowing to cut again, only to fail to get a clean cut for a second time. Leader Cowie then drew a sacred seal on her Bible, and on the third time the test succeeded. Her scripture was Joshua 9, while Number Two cut Isaiah 3 and Number Three Psalm 119. Leader Cowie and a sister read the scriptures to the congregation, the candidates sitting back on their bench and raising their feet as if marching on, with their palms begging. We sealed the session by repeating Gloria together, our right hands raised.

For the laying of bands, Leader Cowie asked the candidates to kneel down. Nurses lifted the bench backwards, out of the way, as it was no longer needed. They loosened the candidates' headties again and held their white candles, while they continued marching and begging on their knees, facing the altar as usual. There are normally two or three baptismal bands, the colours of which are white, blue and pink; pale yellow bands have been used also at least in St. Philomen Church. Leader Brothers used to lay two, most others three bands. The order of the colours changes even within one church's rituals, so that sometimes the blue, other times the pink band may be the first; nevertheless, the second band tied below the chin is normally white. Leader Cowie spread a white band on the candidates' open arms and laid two pink ones on their shoulders. We were still gathered around the candidates, singing and making music. As the culmination of the evening service was coming near, many rejoiced in the Spirit, ringing the bell, sprinkling water by the centrepole or speaking in tongues. Leader Cowie, Teacher Mayda and another Mother laid the bands: they tied one pink band over the candidate's eyes, the white one around her head under the chin, and the other pink band again over the eyes so that the blue seals on the bands were against the candidate's skin. The nurses then tied the headties on top of the bands in such a way that the upper half of the head, eyes and ears included, became covered.

The bands block the carnal vision of the initiates, transfer the Spiritual blessing and wisdom delivered by the Pointer or Baptiser from the Holy Spirit to them, and protect them from distractions during the ritual. Blindfolded, the candidate or pilgrim is secluded in her own space, detached from the surroundings and thus more prone to Spiritual connection. She is also less conscious of the people around her, less hesitant to surrender to the new feelings and experiences of the initiation.

Laying bands on pilgrims is somewhat different from the baptismal version. First of all, the order and colours of mourning bands is of critical importance since they affect the pilgrim's upcoming journey. Pointers receive the instructions regarding each pilgrim's bands through Spiritual communication. The original order and amount of bands laid in the pointing service is changed later on, as the mourning ritual proceeds. Furthermore, pilgrims need more bands than baptismal candidates – different colours representing the various areas they will travel to, and different seals to protect and guide them on their journey. The amount varies according to the Pointer's Spiritual instructions, so that each laying of bands is unique. The amount of mourning bands varies widely, from five to fourteen in the services I have participated in. The colours include white, pink, yellow, brown, green, blue, navy blue, purple, lilac, black, and grey, and occasionally multi-coloured bands are used to symbolise the

multitude of nations and saints the pilgrim is seeking on her journey. The bands may be tied over the pilgrim's eyes, one on top of another, or a white band may be tied under the pilgrim's chin, while all others are laid horizontally over the eyes. Or, as Mother Cleorita does, two bands can be crossed on top of the pilgrim's head, a third band then tied over their ends, which are hanging down, after which the four ends are lifted on top of the head and more bands laid horizontally over the pilgrim's eyes again. This way the top of the head is covered, too. Female pilgrims receive a further headtie over the bands, while men mourn with the bands alone.

Certain additional symbolic measures are often taken while laying mourning bands. For example, three knots may be tied on a white band before laying it on, signifying the Holy Trinity. Pointers may wipe the pilgrim's eyes with cotton wool dipped in olive oil before laying the first band. This is for assistance, as the pilgrim's Spiritual eyes are expected to see visions during the forthcoming ritual. Furthermore, before completely covering the pilgrim's head, seals may be drawn on it with chalk or oil, scented waters, wine, or talcum powder sprinkled or, on rare occasions, symbolic objects can be tied inside the bands. Leader Bertram, laying bands on a green mourner, once placed green leaves and a small candle-cube on top of the pilgrim's head, under her green headtie.

In some churches it is customary to read a certain scripture for the laying of bands. In St. Rita's it is Ezekiel 4, where the Lord commands Ezekiel to symbolically bear the punishments to the houses of Israel and Judah – "And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege" (4:8). A more common practice is to sing particular hymns to accompany the procedure, and chanting *They Lay Bands on Me* to a simple melody is the norm in many churches. In Solomon Court Mystical Healing School, when Leader Bertram pointed a green mourner, a different, symbolically related hymn or chorus was sung for each band: *Joshua Blood Stain Me* for the red, *There's a Home for Little Children* for the blue, *Blessed Are the Pure in Heart* for the white, *There Is a Green Hill* for the green, *Africa Land* for the brown, *I See the Lighthouse* for the yellow, and *Do Not Pass Me By* for the pink and grey bands.

Having laid the bands on the candidates, Leader Cowie pressed them with a large Bible on the one side and his hand on the other, pushing hard on their chests, backs, shoulders and hands. Such physical ordeals precede both mourning and baptism, as initiates are pressed with sacred emblems while kneeling on the concrete floor. This trial can be quite exhausting and even painful, given that by this time the initiates have been either treading their feet on the floor or kneeling on it for several hours. As the initiate kneels down, two elders take a heavy Bible, bell or lota pot – or all three – and press her shoulders,

head, chest, back and arms by squeezing them between two or more emblems. They force the initiate to rock back and forth or side to side by pushing her with the emblems. The bell is also rung above the head, next to the ears. It is not uncommon for candidates or pilgrims to fall or faint at this point.

The lack of autonomy, obedience to ritual authorities and physical ordeals that are common to liminal situations (Turner 1969, 104) mark both baptism and pointing rituals. The physical demands are notable. Because the initiates have been eating only lightly or fasting prior to the service, their stomachs are empty and they feel generally weak. It is therefore quite difficult for some candidates to bear the continuous marching and dancing required in the ritual. Also, drinking the olive oil offered after anointing can cause feelings of nausea. Wearing Spiritual clothes while marching for hours in the tropical heat adds to the burden, and candidates sweat all through their journey. They are not offered water to drink except in ritual portions, three sips from a sacred vessel at particular points of the ceremony. Furthermore, as the entire ritual journey is conducted on foot, the candidates march either on their feet, on their knees or when sitting down for hours on end. This endless treading on the stone floor wears out most candidates. The prolonged periods of kneeling on the floor are painful for unaccustomed bodies, especially with the marching motion, and many practitioners mention the soreness of the knees when looking back on their initiation. The continuous treading may also cause women to start to menstruate, as pointed out by a Spiritual Baptist Teacher in a seminar at the UWI. This, she suggests, is one of the reasons for Mothers to require female candidates to wear sanitary pads in their panties. Still adding to the discomfort and pain is the white candle held by the candidates in their right hand: as they march and consequently swing their arms back and forth, the candle drops hot wax on the hand for hours. Nurses often try to wipe the dried wax off the skin with their towels, but this can cause even more distraction than the burning itself. Finally, the practice of pressing the candidate with heavy objects like the bell, a large Bible or a lota, pushing her back and forth and side to side while she is kneeling down, can be quite agonizing. It is not uncommon for candidates, particularly young women, to faint or fall down.

In addition to the physical ordeals, the initiates have to submit themselves to total control by the conducting elders. Their movements are strictly defined, so that should a candidate cease to march, march lazily or, say, *wine* her waist too much, the nurses are quick to put her back into order. Personal needs, like thirst, hunger, or the need to use the toilet cannot be fulfilled during the ritual. The candidates or pilgrims must not talk, except when taking part in the prayers. They are usually told to close their eyes at the beginning of the service, normally as they are first brought to the Mercy Seat, and from then on they will have to

rely on the nurses to guide them wherever they have to go. The blindness, of course, becomes inevitable when the bands are tied over the eyes. The blind baptismal candidates may feel insecure when marching to the beach and then the wading into the waves. Moreover, because many have only attended church a few times before getting baptised, the proceedings can appear uncanny without vision to recognise the people and emblems around oneself. For pilgrims, who have already been initiated into the faith, such insecurities are less relevant. However, the difficult and long ritual of mourning ahead of them may cause anxiety and lack of confidence, particularly for green mourners but also for the more experienced pilgrims who already know the challenges that lay ahead. All in all, the candidates and pilgrims are hot, tired and submitted to different aches. The repetitious spinning around at various points of the ritual deepens their disorientation. However, the rituals are not unbearable, because the initiates are supposed to have prepared themselves well and are strictly dedicated to their cause, and also because of the unique atmosphere created in the church and on the beach by the continuous music and drumming, the rhythm helping the candidates and pilgrims to march and march on their road, the tangible presence of the Spirit in different manifestations around them, and most importantly, the possible experiences of the Spirit touching the initiates themselves. Numerous candidates and pilgrims cry copiously during the ritual, but afterwards they claim that the crying was not because of pain or fear, but immense joy. They sense themselves transforming, becoming part of something mysterious and sacred that is going to be for the better. Virtually all baptismal candidates feel overjoyed and peaceful after the ritual, when they wear their new white garments and people congratulate them as members of the church.

After pressing and bending the candidates, Leader Cowie spread their towels over their heads and knelt down beside each one to give them their baptismal *key*, a secret password, which is a source of Spiritual assistance in difficult situations. The password, also referred to as the key or the word, is a secret, personally applicable prayer or meditational aid, not unlike a mantra, that helps the initiated Spiritual Baptist to connect with God in difficult or dangerous situations, in insecure moments, when praying and meditating, even when going to sleep. It also helps to reveal and fight malevolent spiritual entities to which an initiated practitioner is particularly vulnerable. The key is given by the Pointer, the elder who laid the bands or is conducting the ritual. Elders, on the other hand, receive the keys Spiritually in prayer and meditation: they deliver a personal password for each candidate they baptise, and although the candidate herself may forget the key later on, her Spiritual Mother or Father will not. Thus one may approach the elder in question to be reminded of the word, and he or she can give it back in any service. The baptismal key is the first password one

receives; the second one is given in the water by the Baptiser, and later ones in possible mourning ceremonies. Thus a *green mourner*, first-timer, obtains her third password in the pointing ceremony. Elders who have mourned several times may have more than ten passwords as their Spiritual assistance. Pilgrims' passwords are special aids for the difficult journey on the mourning ground and they are used to test and prove different visions seen while travelling.

Leader Cowie then helped the candidates to their feet from the ground and spun them around, while the sisters nearby *catch power*. We were marching, clapping, singing and dancing with the candidates, as if accompanying them on their road. Mothers held their hands. Some shouted in the Spirit; a sister was dancing wildly by the centrepole, jumping so that she ended up slashing her own headtie off and raising her hems up. Teacher Mayda had to hold her still to bring her back. The rejoicing continued for a lengthy while. At this point it was 9:45 pm and the service had been going on for two hours and forty-five minutes with thirty-two sisters and eight brothers present. Finally the music died down and the candidates sat down on their bench, the nurses trying to cool their skin by fanning them with small rags and towels; we returned to our seats. To conclude the service, three preachers addressed the candidates.

Until this concluding session of preaching, laying of bands and rejoicing with the Spirit the baptism and pointing services share the same basic structure as candidates and pilgrims are being prepared for their respective rites of passage. From this point on, however, the two rituals follow different paths, the baptismal initiation culminating in the immersion and the pointing ritual continuing for at least the following week as mourning. I will first focus on baptism.

JORDAN WE ARE GOING DOWN

In one-day baptismal ceremonies, after laying of bands and bringing the Word it is time to walk the candidates down to *Jordan* for the immersion. In two-day services, on the other hand, the candidates sleep in the mourner room from Saturday night until Sunday morning, when the service is continued like a normal Sunday service. The candidates are then taken to be baptised after the regular hymns, surveying, prayers, lessons, and sermons are over. Other rituals, like dedication of an infant, may be included in the same service.

As the final sermon was heard, the candidates got up on their feet, the nurses spun them around once more and eventually lead them to the mourner room. Elders followed, but most people stayed in the church hall singing hymns. Sisters who prepared the church had spread three sacks on the mourner room floor, and Leader Cowie helped the weary candidates lie down, their heads

resting on tile stones towards the altar wall.¹³ There were bells, a calabash and white and yellow candles burning on the floor. Leader Cowie explained that the bells were to call the nurses, and showed the candidates how to reach for one and ring it, should they need anything. The candidates were still clutching their candles and palm leaves. He advised them on the journey they are taking: "It is very important for you to understand that the key to the vineyard is prayer. All right? The adversary is very busy and very tricky, but you could conquer him. There's only one way you could conquer him, by putting your mind on Jesus, and pray, use the Word. If you forget the word, say some prayer, whether is de Our Father, say some Psalm, just keep on repeating it and counting your step. If you dream, try and remember what it was. All right?... I want you to go on, reach out, Christ is waiting onto you."

Soon after the service was over, at 10:30 pm, the candidates were left to rest in the Room of Seclusion and people went home. Some remained at the church, singing and chatting for a while before going to find transport. While Mother Miriam, Teacher Mayda and the sisters living next to the church retired to the house, Sister Edith, another elderly sister and I stayed with the candidates and slept on thin sponges on the mourner room floor, all wearing dresses, aprons and headties.

In the morning we lit new candles in the room at 5:30. Number One asked Sister Edith permission to get something to cover her legs, as she was feeling very cold on the stone floor. Such comforts were not allowed the candidates. We started working in the house and in the church: cooking, shelling peas, washing wares, cleaning the church, filling in vessels with flowers growing in the yard, sweeping the floor, scraping candle wax off the floor. A mother drew new seals on the church floor with white chalk: one at the main entrance, others in front of the altar. The candidates had to be taken care of; we emptied and washed the pail in the room, washed the candidates' mouths with Lysterine, served them tea and bread with butter. Sister Edith blessed the breakfast with the bell. She asked the candidates whether they had dreamt anything, and Number Three recounted a short dream. I collected the empty plates and cups, dried the candidates' faces and passed the bell over them as they thanked God for the meal. They then lay down again.

We nurses had breakfast in the house, washed wares and then bathed and changed. Around ten o'clock sisters started to arrive at the church – the service with baptism, infant dedication and pointing of mourners was supposed to start at eleven. Most were wearing blue dresses with white headties and aprons to mark the occasion. Mother Miriam had chosen the colours of St. Francis, yellow and brown. Leader Cowie drove in and changed into a long white gown. Everybody knew that this was an important service and that plenty of people would attend.

At eleven o'clock Matron rang the bell for the first time and we started to sing hymns, waiting for people to arrive. Final preparations, lighting candles and organising the altar, were completed. Leader Cowie greeted us from the podium at half past eleven and announced *Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross*. We got up and sang as three boys beat drums. A Mother prepared the bench for the candidates – she drew new white chalk seals on it, including the moon and the star, chart and compass, snake, rod and other commonly used symbols. She then sprinkled water over it from a glass with a yellow flower, and finished with a shower of flower petals. A sister surveyed the church with the bell and a flower-glass.

After two more hymns the Shepherd of the church, a tall man wearing a white gown with a red sash and yellow headband, *catch power*, grabbed the tall rod on the altar and stormed outside. It was he who would later on lead the candidates down to the beach. We repeated the Apostles' Creed and started the surveying hymn, and three sisters surveyed the church. Others *catch power* too, and the Shepherd rushed back inside to circle the centrepole three times, counterclockwise. He froze there, standing motionless with his rod, until he finally strode to the altar, only to freeze into his pose again. He pounded the floor with the rod at the four corners of the altar, and Mothers rang bells and surveyed with the calabash. Leader Cowie then lead the men's prayer, followed by the women's prayer, during which the Spirit again took the Shepherd, a Mother and a sister. They rejoiced for a long time, the Mother beat the four corners of the church with a broom, then swept around the centrepole, cleansing the area. The Shepherd was dancing with his arms bent at the elbow sawing violently back and forth. The drums carried on, people were dancing and rejoicing; the church was almost full with over eighty people in the congregation. The session culminated in a dedication ceremony for an infant. The candidates were lying on the mourner room floor all the while.

After the lessons were read and the baby dedicated, it was time to bring in the candidates. We got up and sang *I Must Have the Saviour with Me* to the clapping of hands and the drums. A procession lead by the Shepherd with his rod, Matron with her lota and bell, and the three candidates clutching their candles, followed by four Mothers, entered the church hall from the mourner room. The bell rang incessantly as they slowly circled the centrepole three times and marched in front of the bench. Three nurses with towels on their shoulders gathered behind the blind-folded candidates, who were then spun around and around by a Mother and Leader Cowie. He told them to sit down and mark time, as elders were about to bring the Word to them. A Minister then greeted us all and started a chorus, shouting his sermon to the candidates. Some rejoiced, and a Mother was dancing around the centrepole. Another Mother took a calabash and the bell and went to shout-preach to the candidates, speaking in tongues in

between. A sister then jumped up to run to the Number One corner and bang the wall there, then rushed to the candidates with open arms and returned to the corner. The bell was rung, the preaching Mother was spinning around with her calabash, and overall rejoicing continued for a long time. The candidates got up to march, and nurses and Mothers spun them around and marched and danced with them. People *catch power* all about, screaming, dancing and bending up and down. Leader Cowie, who had changed into a long black gown and tied his waist with a brown sash, gave a green flag from the altar to a Mother to wave on top of the candidates. *Tell Me What More Can Jesus Do*, we sang until the hymn turned into chanting and the rhythm surpassed the lyrics.

Finally the beat slowed down and *Amazing Grace* began. The candidates sat down, still marking time, and nurses wiped sweat from their faces. Minister Nelsico, almost blind, then addressed them, starting *Jesus Look Where You Take Me from*. He combined biblical phrases in his sermon, starting hymns in between. The Spirit soon manifests again, and Mothers surveyed the corners with a calabash, rang the bell over the candidates and sprinkled red petals around the centrepole. One of them pressed the calabash on the candidates' heads and palms. Mother Miriam, "a serious servant of God" as characterised by Dean Robinson, commanded her flock "Allyou get allyou act togedder! Come on man!" – strong Spiritual concentration was needed now that the candidates were in their final training. The next preacher was a visiting brother in a green dashiki. He addressed each candidate personally by Number, his voice eventually harsh from the shouting. The preaching and rejoicing lasted for an hour, until 2:30 in the afternoon, when we started *See Me Through, Sweet Jesus*. Leader Cowie took the tall, white cross and the Shepherd's rod from the altar, and nurses began to spin the candidates, guiding them towards the main entrance while swirling around.

The baptism and pointing services may finish with preaching of the Word to the candidates or pilgrims, or the sermons may be delivered earlier on, even before the laying of bands.¹⁴ By now prepared to march to the beach or river bank and receive baptism, the candidates have to be taught about Christian life, their new status as Spiritual Baptists, the profound importance of the initiation they have almost passed, as well as about worldly temptations and sins that lure them from the right path. The preaching is spontaneous, as always in Spiritual Baptist rituals, and the floor is free to any member of the congregation who wants to advise the candidates, share her own experiences with them, warn them of the evil or welcome them to the Spiritual family. Sermons addressed to pilgrims support them, congratulate them on their dedication and zeal, but also warn them about taking the sacred mourning ritual too lightly or not putting enough effort into prayer and meditation.

The tone of these spontaneous sermons is often fairly serious and even pessimistic. Apocalyptic themes, references to various sins such as Carnival, homosexuality, drug abuse or common law unions, and complaints about the tendency to prefer worldly occupations to church are frequent. Some preachers address their sermon to a particular candidate or pilgrim, calling her by the number, or to each, one after another. If the preacher knows a candidate or pilgrim well, she formulates the message in a personal way, perhaps talking about the candidate's life, problems, weaknesses or strengths; the anonymity and faceless liminality of the neophyte is temporarily removed. While the preaching goes on, the candidates or pilgrims keep on marking time on their bench, holding their candles, small wooden crosses or palm leaves. This preaching, which is continued on the beach in baptisms and in the mourner room during the mourning ritual, is educationally important and serves as a major channel to distribute religious knowledge from the elders to all the participants of the ritual, especially the neophytes.

If concluding the service, the preaching session usually ends in catching power and rejoicing; the same goes for the laying of bands, should that be the final session of the indoor service. In baptismal services this intense manifestation of the Spirit – several sisters, brothers and sometimes also candidates entertaining the Spirit together – is necessary to make the upcoming immersion Spiritually meaningful. As far as pilgrims are concerned, such rejoicing puts them *on the road*, helps them start travelling on the mourning ground. Like for washing, anointing and laying of bands, Mothers often command their congregations to do their best to invoke and entertain the Spirit, and thus to support the candidates' proper initiation into the faith. Also more generally, the transition from profane to Spiritual that the neophytes undergo is supported by the ritual specialists' and assistants', in fact the entire congregation's interaction with the Spirit during the ritual. In the St. Francis baptism service Spiritual inspiration to ring the bell or to sprinkle water from a calabash was frequently accomplished by numerous participants. Lengthier manifestations took place throughout the service, starting with the prayers on Saturday night, and the common rejoicing of the congregation, entertaining the Spirit around the neophytes, was vital for the most symbolic and significant phases of the ritual, namely washing, anointing and laying of bands.

After the long service of five or six hours inside the church is over, the candidates are taken to the beach or river bank to receive baptism. This takes place around five o'clock in the afternoon in one-day ceremonies, before the sunset at six, and around midday, between approximately eleven am and three pm, in ceremonies that have started on the previous evening. The transition is normally preceded by a session of intense rejoicing, the presence of the Spirit

clearly manifest. Ideally this intensity continues from the church to the beach, like in the baptismal service with five candidates at St. Philomen, when Sister Claudia *catch power*, dancing and bending down in the Spiritually *Indian* manner for a long time, even as the congregation went down to the beach. When it was time to take the candidates to the sea, she danced up to Number One, lifted her on her back and carried her through the waves to the Ministers in the sea; dancing back, she did the same for Number Two, and continued until all five candidates, men and women, were carried to the sea. There was no trace of weariness in her steps or demeanour until the Spirit finally left her at the end of the service. Sisters teased her afterwards, begging her to carry them up the hill back to the church.

As the preaching was over at the Goodwood baptism, we formed a long procession: the Shepherd lead with his rod and bell, then a Minister with the white cross, then Matron with lota and bell, followed by the blindfolded candidates, their nurses, Leader Cowie and most of the congregation. Some stayed behind, like Teacher Mayda and Mother Miriam, making preparations for the pointing ceremony later on. We sang *Jordan We Are Going Down* and other hymns all the way from the church down the hill towards the windy beach, marching barefoot over rocks, coconuts and branches fallen from palm trees towards a white flag flying in the air in the spot where Goodwood River meets the Atlantic. Many Tobagonian churches, however, are not situated close to a beach or a river. In that case, the candidates and the congregation are transported to the waterfront by those members of the church who have cars. As few actually do own vehicles, special arrangements have to be made: elders agree with certain members or members' spouses to come to the church at a fixed time and drive from the church to a beach and back until everybody has been transported. Leader Glasgow of St. Peter's Church in Mason Hall, an inland village, has solved the problem by building a pool in the yard in front of the church. Baptism can thus be carried out in the church yard without complicated arrangements.

The ceremony, now heightened to its culmination, continues on the beach. Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists do not have many choices in local rivers, since they are smaller today than in the old days, but there are numerous beaches where the ceremony can be properly conducted. Even busy tourist beaches like Mt. Irvine or Grafton are regularly used for baptism. Spots like Turtle Beach where the Plymouth River runs into the Caribbean Sea are particularly appreciated since the mixture of sweet and salt water has a powerful Spiritual potential. At St. Francis Church, the baptism took place in a river pond about 30 metres from the sea. We gathered by the sandy beach and the drummers looked for a tree trunk to sit on and play. Bells, drums and singing never ceased.¹⁵ As we reached the area, it had to be sanctified and the Shepherd waded into the pond with his rod,

sticking it at the place where the immersion was to be conducted. Matron and another Mother surveyed by the pond shore; a Minister drew seals on the sand with his tall cross and arranged an altar on them, setting the bell, taria, lota, calabash, oil, Kananga water and the tall white cross on the sanctified spot.

Final preaching to the candidates follows the sanctification of the ritual area, spontaneous as always. Normally only one, two or three preachers come forth at this point and the sermons are quite short. The candidates were marching in a row, nurses as always treading behind them, still *on the road* – in the liminal stage of travelling towards baptism and a new status. Their blue dresses were covered in candle wax, especially around the right thigh, where they had kept the candle while sitting and marking time. Leader Cowie addressed them for the final time, warning them of earthly temptations like Carnival or "shacking up" with a man without getting married. We repeated the Apostles' Creed with our right hands up once again and three women prepared to survey the beach between the pond and the sea shore. We sang *When I Survey Thy Wondrous Cross* and the boys beat their drums. The candidates then knelt down on the hot sand along with ten elders and the nurses. Leader Cowie prayed under our hymn, *Have You Any Room for Jesus*, and a Mother got inspiration to go behind the candidates and cover their heads with her apron. Several sisters and brothers were rejoicing, and the candidates kept on begging, their rhythmic marching incessant even on their knees. The prayer ended with Psalm 121, and the Ministers prepared to go to the water.

Leader Cowie, another Minister, two brothers and a Mother followed the Shepherd to the water, and holding hands in a small circle they dipped three times: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Matron seconded with her bell on the sand. We raised *Glory Glory Hallelujah*, and the nurses spun Number One around as Shepherd came to guide her to the ring of elders in the water. They waded in, she blind and weary, her hands on the Shepherd's shoulders. Leader Cowie placed her hands on the horizontal bar of the cross and washed her banded head with the river water. The elders stretched their hands over her in blessing, keeping also a calabash and a bell over her head. Leader Cowie spoke to her and whispered her new key in her ear. After delivering the password he held her from the back of her headtie, told her to take a deep breath and dipped her backwards in the water three times, In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The other Minister rang the bell each time, and Matron echoed with her bell on the shore. Leader Cowie then released Number One's headtie and bands, uncovering her head, and washed her hair. Teacher Cynthia, also in the water, tied the wet pink headtie over Number One's dripping hair, and after Leader Cowie turned her around a full circle, her arms

stretched wide open, and drew a seal on her forehead, the Shepherd guided her back to the beach.



Picture 4: Baptismal candidates kneeling on a beach. Ministers in front, nurses in the back.

Sisters had spread sheets to make a shelter in the shade of trees about 100 meters from us, and nurses lead the drenched candidates there to dry their skin and put on a white dress and headtie. Bareheaded, they walked back to the congregation with the accompanying nurses, and Matron and a Mother rubbed their heads with oil before tying white headties on them to mark the new status. As Shepherd walked Number Two into the pond, Number One was being taken into the shelter, and by four o'clock each candidate had gone through the same procedure. After the baptism had been completed the congregation, sweating in their church outfits in the steaming sun, and the elders in their soaked gowns and dresses walked slowly back to the church. Sister Edith, Teacher Mayda and other sisters had prepared lunch for those living at the church, and we ate macaroni pie, steamed vegetables and peas cooked in coconut milk with fruit punch. The pointing ceremony scheduled for the afternoon was still ahead.

After the immersion, wearing new, white clothes, the newly baptised return to the church, while the congregation is already leaving to go home. The initiates are usually lightly anointed with olive oil at this point, either on the beach or in the church. They sit back on their bench, no longer marching as they have reached the destination. Elders now teach them some basic components of Spiritual Baptist symbolism: the ritual handshake, in which right hands are held first in a normal handshake position, then with thumbs on top, and third by holding on the fingers alone. Applying these three grips, the hands are thrust downwards in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; then, still holding on to each other, the hands are placed on "my heart, your heart, ascending to Heaven," on each others' chests and then raised up in the air, finally releasing the grip. This handshake is used after prayers in services but can also be applied on other occasions. It is sometimes called "the hand of fellowship."

The initiates in Tobagonian churches are taught the use of the candle in private and public prayers and its symbolism as the eternal light of Jesus. Some elders also use this opportunity to familiarise the initiates with surveying, the proper order of the four corners and other central points of the church area. After this, a few lessons on the faith are offered to members: they are expected to learn the mysteries of the faith through Spiritual guidance, prayer, meditation and mourning, as well as from elders' sermons and through participation in the ritual practice. Some elders, like Bishop Daniel, found these means of edification insufficient and organised additional meetings with educational functions for their congregations.

The reaggregation or return to society after the liminal period is not a clear-cut step from liminality to the profane society and its structure. The neophytes, although already in their new statuses, retain liminal attributes for a prescribed period of time. Baptismal candidates are usually confined in ritual seclusion for seven days after their initiation. Again, many churches have their own policies as to how strict or long this seclusion is to be, and presenting any normative definition of this policy is impossible. Candidates baptised in St. Philomen Church wear one of their bands until the following Sunday and abstain from having sex, drinking alcohol or going to parties. The bands are then ritually removed after seven days during the service, when Mother Cleorita unties them and presses them three times on the candidates' head and shoulders, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Leader Gerald has noted that these bans used to be much stricter in the "old-time" Spiritual Baptist faith, and that nurses even personally took the newly baptised initiates home after the ritual.

When the candidates have acquired full status as Spiritual Baptists, they are expected to show that in their life style by avoiding habits that Tobagonian

Christians in general consider as vices, such as excessive drinking, smoking, too revealing outfits, or *jumping up* in Carnival (dancing in Carnival processions and bands). The status is also shown in church: as members of the Spiritual family the newly baptised are expected to wear proper Spiritual clothes, take part in services – including surveying, praying, giving testimonies, collection, and working as a nurse – as well as to assist in and contribute to annual rituals like harvest or church thanksgiving. The change in status is recognised in less concrete ways, too. By accepting baptism a person becomes Spiritually receptive; the Holy Spirit, in the form of saints according to some exegeses, can now manifest through her. But it is not only the good entities that use baptised people as their passageway to the tangible world; malevolent entities, spirits of delusion, jumbies and other evil beings can also access a baptised person. For this reason it is important to have a password, because in situations where one does not recognise a spirit of delusion from the Holy Spirit the key can be repeated as a test. If the entity vanishes, or, if visible, shirks from eye contact, it reveals itself as an evil spirit or the Devil. Only the Holy Spirit, the original source of the password, can face its strength. Further aids for the Spiritual Baptist to defend herself against evil are the newly acquired bands, which can be used as protective devices under the headtie or a Spiritual shirt in church, on the head when sleeping, and in situations that require Spiritual fortification, like when travelling by airplane or boat.

The spiritual receptiveness of an initiated Spiritual Baptist is noteworthy not only when it comes to manifestations, but also in relation to religious knowledge. Along with manifestations, visions and dreams provide the initiated with a slowly accumulating reservoir of Spiritual knowledge. More is learnt when participating in ritual practice and observing others. The knowledge of initiated Spiritual Baptists is a montage of bits and pieces, only some of which is taught to her by elders, like in the session immediately after baptism. Therefore newly initiated Spiritual Baptists have only a vague idea of the cosmology of their religion, little information on ritual symbols, and often mere assumptions as to what particular ritual practices, like ringing the bell or pouring water on the floor, mean. Asking questions from elders does not guarantee enlightenment, because although the elders may share their knowledge when asked, it is based on their own experiences of the Spirit, and only dim reflections of it can be verbalised, which leaves the questioning sister or brother no wiser than she or he was before. Nevertheless, unlike uninitiated persons, the initiated are allowed to learn more by undergoing the mourning ritual, which is the most respected source of knowledge in the religion. It is only through repeated participation in this and other rituals and through relentless praying and meditation that one gradually

learns more and more and becomes able to make the necessary connections between isolated chunks of knowledge.

GOIN' TO UNIVERSITY: THE MOURNING RITUAL¹⁶

The transition from profane to Spiritual dimension achieved in the pointing ritual leads the neophyte into a prolonged connection with the Spirit during mourning, which in spite of its name is not a funerary rite and does not imply actual physical death. Death symbolism, however, is emblematic to the liminal space that the ritual produces. As voluntary intensification of one's initiation to the Spiritual Baptist religion, mourning is a ritual of self-denial and sensory deprivation during which a *pilgrim* (initiate) travels in the Spiritual world, seeking *wisdom, knowledge and understanding* through prayers and meditation. Mourning, and the Spiritual journeys conducted within it, links the Spiritual Baptist religion strongly to shamanistic traditions found in various different cultures (see Zane 1999, 122-138). The ritual starts with the pointing ceremony that resembles baptism in many ways; but instead of the beach, the pilgrims are taken into a small room in the church compound, the mourner room, where they lay on their back for usually at least seven, but seldom more than twenty-one days. During this time they are blindfolded, not allowed to speak, bathe, eat or drink, save restricted amounts of liquids. They lay on the stony floor with a stone as their pillow. After their journey is complete, their return to the world is embedded in a Sunday service, where they finally recount their *tracks*, important parts of their journey, to the rest of the Spiritual family. Mourning is essential in unfolding the mysteries of the faith, learning about the various symbols, the Spirit, good and evil. The cosmology of the religion becomes more familiar to the neophyte, and following the guidelines of their basic knowledge of the Spiritual world, each pilgrim can formulate exegetic interpretations of their experiences during the ritual, some of which may add to the existing body of cosmological knowledge and even transform it. Pilgrims also receive personal advice during the ritual, such as medication for illnesses or directions for problematic situations in life. The gift of healing and doing Spiritual work is donated or fortified in mourning. Moreover, advancement in the hierarchy of the faith comes about through mourning as pilgrims come out with new titles.

A common metaphor for mourning in the Spiritual Baptist rhetoric is (*to take*) *a throne of grace*, and people talk about their second or third *throne of grace*, referring to the second or third time they went to mourn. Other expressions are

to go on mourning ground, or to go underground; to go to jail or prison; to take a closer walk with God, or to go on a pilgrim journey; go to university, and go to school. Whereas the first two metaphors connote the physical setting of the ritual, lying on the floor of a closed room – as will be discussed below, the grave is a powerful symbol in the ritual – and prison signifies the closed environment and the physical deprivation that the initiates are subjected to, the images of journey and school used in the last four metaphors relate to the purpose of the ritual, acquiring Spiritual knowledge. A journey in the Spiritual world is accomplished in a successful mourning ritual, and knowledge from the Holy Spirit, through different personifications, is received on that journey.

Biblical authority for the ritual is drawn from the Book of Daniel, Chapters 9 and 10, where Daniel describes how he fasted and prayed, abstained from carnal pleasures, and received visions and divine wisdom. The verb *to mourn* is used by Daniel in the King James translation of the Bible. Genesis 28:10- describes how Jacob slept with stones as his pillows and dreamt a powerful vision:

*And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.
And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.
And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it [---] (10-12).*

Although different excerpts of the Scriptures may be brought up in support of the ritual, elders like Bishop Daniel have also pointed out that not all knowledge has been written down – wisdom acquired directly from the Holy Spirit has provided the blueprint for the mourning ritual of the religion, and no explicit directions for its procedures can be found in the Bible or in any other text. The Spiritual instructions that the ritual specialist, Pointer, has personally received from the Holy Spirit, are crucial for a successful deliverance of the ritual. Consequently there is variation between churches regarding the details of the procedures, yet certain commonly shared, constant guidelines for the ritual are quite uniform throughout Tobago, and even in the international Spiritual Baptist community.

THE RITUAL SPACE

The mourner room is referred to by several expressions: *The Inner Chamber, the Room of Seclusion, the Consecrated Room, Mourning Ground, Prison, or University.* Tobagonian mourner rooms are usually built in the immediate proximity of the church. In some churches, like St. Rita's or Solomon Court Mystical Healing

School there is a door connecting the church directly to the mourner room; in most other churches, however, the mourner rooms have separate entrances beside the church. The rooms are generally small (about 12-15 m²) with few or no windows, a concrete floor and no furniture. Some have a small altar structure, but in most the altar is built on the floor. St. Rita's Church has two mourner rooms separated by a partition, so that if male and female pilgrims are pointed at the same time, they can be put in separate rooms. Other Tobagonian churches do not segregate their pilgrims according to gender, but it is fairly rare to have both male and female pilgrims at the same time. Close to the mourner room in the church compound there is a bathroom, where the pilgrims can be bathed at the beginning of the ceremony.

The Inner Chamber of St. Philomen Church displays many of the symbols typical of Tobagonian mourner rooms. The concrete floor has small potholes in it. The walls, also concrete, are divided into eight vertical blocks painted in different Spiritually symbolic colours, brown, pink, red, blue, grey black and dark brown. Seals are drawn on them with white chalk, and there is a large square drawn on the sea-side wall of the chamber filled with small seals, and a circle with similar contents on the wall opposite the entrance, above the altar. The Pointer is responsible for preparing the mourner room, which is done either just before the pointing service or during it. The space may be cleansed mechanically by sweeping the floor and spraying insecticide in the corners, and spiritually by burning a fire in a pot inside the room and lighting incense sticks in the sacred vessels. Sanctifying measures, like ringing the bell and sprinkling water, oil, perfumes, scented waters, talcum powder, milk or wine dedicate the room for the sacred ritual. The Pointer also draws seals on the floor and often also on the walls of the room. Special prayers are connected to the sanctification, but these belong to each Pointer's personal Spiritual knowledge. Paraphernalia in Tobagonian mourner rooms includes all the central emblems of the faith – the lota, the calabash, taria, bell, shell, glasses of water, candles, a wooden cross and a shepherd's rod. All mourner rooms are unique as far as the detailed paraphernalia goes, because each Pointer's individual Spiritual knowledge is the basis for the material environment of the ritual. A commonly seen device in mourner rooms is a black board, on which numbers and alphabets, often also seals, are drawn with white chalk. This symbolises the educational character of the ritual and is used occasionally when a mourner *walks the Teacher road*, as well as in situations when a Pointer wants to educate the pilgrim.

To return to the Inner Chamber in St. Philomen Church, prepared for a mourning ritual; on a small altar table Mother Cleorita had a tablecloth with a black and red flower pattern and a candlestick with a red candle. Olive oil, talcum powder, Kananga Water and a glass of water with a white rose floating in

it were accompanied by a brass cobra, a shining snake in a standing position about ten inches tall. On the wall above the altar hung a white wooden anchor and a chain of shells, both representing St. Philomen, the Mother of the Sea. On the floor in front of the altar there were bottles of honey, olive oil and scented waters, as well as a lota, calabash, bell, shell, and a glass vase with green leaves. A wooden sword was standing against the wall. There was also a small bucket with flags of different colours in it, representing the multiplicity of different nations and Spiritual entities. Against the wall opposite the door leaned a mirror and a wooden cross, and candles of different colours burned in the four corners throughout the long ritual. The only picture in the room was a print of Jesus framed under glass. The interior of St. Philomen mourner room reflects and reproduces the entire Spiritual world. The various colours on the walls, flags, candles and the tablecloth do not signify any one saint or Spiritual nation alone; they embrace the complex cosmology of the religion. African and Indian emblems are portrayed together along with the various colours of other nations. In the mourner room of St. Francis Church there are five prints of Hindu gods and goddesses framed on the walls along with clearly African objects, like calabashes, a wooden sword and a yellow banner portraying the Lion of Judah, and four prints of Jesus. The walls are painted in pink and yellow, colours of St. Francis and St. Philomen, Indian and African saints. Similar multi-national symbolism is typical of all Tobagonian mourner rooms, although Hindu chromolithographs are rare.

In addition to the paraphernalia, another central feature that mourner rooms have in common are the *graves* drawn on the concrete floor. Green mourners, pilgrims who perform the ritual for the first time, are put in a grave for three days. The graves are usually shaped like coffins or rectangular "holes." Most Pointers draw them with chalk, but Leader Brothers at St. Rita's Church has the grave permanently painted on the concrete. A rare variant was used in a mourning ritual at the Solomon Court Mystical Healing School, where a green sheet spread on the floor served as the grave. Seals drawn with chalk usually fill the coffin or grave, and many Pointers draw seals around the coffin too. Leaves and flower petals, scented waters and talcum powder are often sprinkled over the grave, so that the coffin- or grave-shaped contours are filled with seals and different substances. Candles may be erected at the head end of the grave or inside it.

RITUAL STRUCTURE

The mourning ritual lasts at least until the Sunday following the pointing. Occasionally the minimum period of seven days is not enough, though, and

pilgrims then come out whenever the Pointer, the ritual specialist, sees that they are ready. Once a young sister had to stay in the room of seclusion until Tuesday, whereas her *co-workers in the vineyard* – the other pilgrims – were released on Sunday. Her journey was not completed by that time, and the Pointer did not soften with the girl's pleas, because coming out of the room before one's journey is finished is regarded as extremely dangerous, possibly causing madness and definitely defying the Holy Spirit. In Mt. Paran Church three pilgrims mourned for fourteen days in April 1999. Some Pointers take certain well-advanced pilgrims out even before seven days have passed, and in such cases no public service is organised to mark the end of the ritual.

The pilgrim can be put *on the road* either in church at the end of the pointing service or inside the Inner Chamber. This means that the ritual specialist and other participants lift the pilgrim to a Spiritual level through common rejoicing, just like in the baptism service. For example, a pilgrim at St. Philomen, a woman in her early thirties, was put on the road in the following way: wearing a wrinkled but clean blue dress and headtie, she had been marching throughout the six-hour pointing service – either on her feet or while sitting down on her consecrated and sealed bench. Candle wax covered her right hand and the hem of her dress, and the dress was soaked in sweat. Olive oil shone on her face, arms and feet. She kept on marching, surrounded by mothers, sister and brothers, all marching, singing, clapping their hands and mouth drumming, and the drums carried her further down the road. The pilgrim looked weary, she seemed willing to stop marching and sit down, but the mothers were serious; "Go through, Number One, doan go half way!" She marched on and on, the rhythm around her swelling until she *fly off*, shouted, and her marching turned into a jerking and pulling dance as the Spirit took her. From the way the pilgrim danced and moved the elders could see that she was heading for Africa. Finally the pilgrim swirled around and around until she collapsed onto the Mothers' and Fathers' arms and was carried inside the room of seclusion, where her journey was to begin.

Pilgrims are taken into the Inner Chamber either by walking in the ritual procession familiar from the beginning of the ritual, or they are carried there. In St. Philomen the pilgrims are swirled around and around after the heated ending of the service, marked by manifestations, and lifted up by several brothers, who then carry them outside and lay them down on the mourner room floor. Leader Bertram in Solomon Court Mystical Healing School had his pilgrim whirling around from the church to the mourner room right next to it. Leader Brothers at St. Rita's lead his pilgrims into the Room of Seclusion in a procession, himself marching first with the tall shepherd's rod, Mother Priscilla following with taria and lota, then Shepherd Garth and the pilgrims behind him, followed by nurses in their labouring clothes. The pilgrims kept on marching in the small room, and

Leader Brothers tested them there, pressing them with candles and a large Bible. They were then put on the road, the room hot and crammed with people marching, mouth drumming, singing and speaking in tongues, the pilgrims marching in their middle. The transition to the Spiritual realm, set up in the pointing ritual, is completed in the physical transition to the sacred, secluded space of the mourner room.

If the pilgrim is *green*, a first-timer, she is descended into a grave after being sent on the road. Mother Cleorita explained to a young man mourning for the first time that he was going to be in the grave for three days and three nights before rising, like Jonah was captured in the whale's stomach. Nurses help the pilgrim to lay in the grave, or if she is carried inside from the church, she is "lowered" there by those carrying her. Depending on unexpected Spiritual inspiration during the ritual or permanent guidelines acquired by the Pointer, additional procedures are often included in the entombment. The Pointer may sprinkle talcum powder, flower petals, water or perfumes over the "buried" body, say specific ritual phrases like scripture quotes or a prayer, or ring the bell over the bodies. Other participants, elders, sisters and brothers, often catch power during the burial, and it is desirable for the pilgrim to be in the Spirit as well, *travelling on the road*. The pilgrim stays in the grave for three days. After this, on the Tuesday after the pointing, she is raised from the grave, bathed for the first time since Sunday morning and dressed in clean clothes. The order and amount of her bands is changed at this point. A special mourner room service is held for the occasion, which attracts visitors so that there may be even twenty participants packed in the room. Most churches start this service in the evening, but Leader Brothers has special instructions to start his at two pm. The pilgrims can be raised after the regular hymns, surveying and prayers are over. It is common for participants to rejoice in the Spirit at this point, and it is desirable for the pilgrims, too, to catch power as they come out of their graves, although many green mourners fail to do so. The actual raising can be performed in various manners, depending on the Pointer's Spiritual inspiration.

Leader Brothers had his labourers read Psalms 1 and 22 as well as verses from Daniel 9, after which he knocked on the mourner room floor with his fist at both ends of the grave, repeating sentences in an unknown tongue and commanding the pilgrim to "arise!" The pilgrim got on her feet and started marching, Leader Brothers gave her two white candles and we sang *Out from the Grave She Arose*. After two other hymns Leader Brothers explained to Number One that she would have to be very careful now that she was on the surface, vulnerable to all kinds of spirits. He then left her alone to meditate until she was ready for her bath. After half an hour we heard Number One ringing a small bell in the Inner Chamber, and Sister Lana went in, covered the pilgrim's head with a towel and

walked her into the bathroom. The pilgrim was carrying her candle, the nurse a calabash and a bell. Sister Lana, who had passed the ritual four times herself, undressed the pilgrim and gave her a specially prepared bath. She then anointed the pilgrim with olive oil and sprinkled talcum powder on her, after which she could be dressed in clean clothes and taken back to the mourner room with her head covered with a towel again. Leader Brothers then cleaned the rectangular space that used to be Number One's grave with a bunch of wet leaves, sprinkling Kananga Water and ringing the bell over it. He drew new seals on it with white chalk. When the floor was prepared, Leader Brothers helped Number One kneel down in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He kept on talking to her, explaining how she had to try to travel from North to South, bear various ailments and use her key at every junction in the road, while he started to release her bands. He took off all seven of them, describing the difference between Chinese and African incense in the meanwhile. Number One kept her eyes tightly closed even when the bands were off, and the Leader wiped them with a piece of cloth dipped in olive oil, wrapped up the cloth and told Number One to carry it home after the ritual. Sister Lana was holding Number One's blue headtie over her all the time so that the pilgrim's head was never exposed. Leader Brothers concluded the resurrection by tying the bands on the pilgrim's head in a new order. He explained the symbolism of the bands' colours to the pilgrim, who was then allowed to choose the order in which they were tied herself; this is not customary in all mourner rooms. She wanted the red band, standing for blood, to be tied over her eyes, and we started to sing *There is Power in the Blood*; then blue for truth, and yellow for sun, green for healing and purity, and finally white. Of the original seven, purple and brown bands were left out. Sister Lana tied the blue headtie on top. The Leader sprinkled Kananga Water over the pilgrim and swept her body with a bunch of moist green leaves, beating her with them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He then started to teach her in a ritualised way.

At St. Philomen the pilgrims are taken out from the grave in a more spontaneous manner, the Pointer and other elders present entertaining the Spirit and lifting the pilgrims up in the midst of rejoicing. Once a male pilgrim slid out from his grave on his back, exactly how Tante Thelma had seen him doing in a vision on the previous night. On another occasion a young sister could not get out from her grave, no matter how hard she tried, and Mother Cleorita and Teacher Audrey had to finally dig her out themselves.

It is notable how the death symbolism of the mourning ritual accentuates its liminal character (Turner 1967, 6); the neophytes' seclusion from the society and the abandoning of their former statuses is likened to physical death. Turner observes that in rites of passage, the initiates may be "treated as a corpse,"

symbolically buried and "forced to lie motionless in the posture and direction of customary burial [---]." Neophytes are also "allowed to go filthy and identified with the earth [---]." Putting pilgrims into the grave for three days, not washing them and not allowing them to get up, and then ritually marking their ascension on the third day are fairly unambiguous symbols of death and rebirth with obvious analogies to Jesus' crucifixion, entombment and resurrection. Also pseudonyms of the ritual, like *going underground*, draw on death symbolism.¹⁷ After the "resurrection" some Pointers allow the labourers to wash female pilgrims once or twice before the end of the ritual, whereas male pilgrims are hardly ever washed. The labourers, too, refrain from bathing during the first three days. Washing pilgrims taken out from the grave usually takes place in the church bathroom, and nurses cover the pilgrim's head with a towel as they steer her outside. They or the Pointer then give the pilgrim a cleansing bush bath, pouring water mixed with scented waters, leaves, petals and oils over the pilgrim with a calabash, dry her skin and dress her in clean underwear. The consequent cleansings, however, are performed inside the mourner room by wiping the pilgrim's skin with a damp cloth. There are Pointers who avoid washing their pilgrims except to mark their resurrection on the third day.

In addition to the raising from the grave, mourner room services are organised in the evenings at least on the first few nights of the ritual, but preferably throughout the mourning.¹⁸ Other routines structuring the ritual for the pilgrims have to do with hygiene and physical needs. Pilgrims' mouths are washed every morning, after which they are given either a small cup of aloe mixture or hot bush tea to drink. They receive water or bush tea to drink also at lunch-time and in the evening. These are only served by measure, so that nurses allow the pilgrims to take exactly three sips of water at each of the three occasions. Some Pointers let their pilgrims eat small portions of food, like thin slices of paw paw, half an orange, or two biscuits served with the nightly cup of bush tea. Finally, the travelling is interrupted when the Pointer has discussions with the pilgrims who are not allowed to talk otherwise. The ritual specialist gives the pilgrims advice, instructions and support on an almost daily basis.

Total or almost total deprivation of food, scarcely served liquid, loss of vision, silence, highly restricted movements, pain caused by the stony floor with a stone as a pillow, heat during the days and possible coldness during the nights in December, January and February, as well as the complete lack of autonomy, differentiate the liminal state of the mourning from the *carimal*, profane world. *Drilling*, making the pilgrim march on and on, prolonged kneeling on the floor, the sternness of the Pointer and even physical discipline add to the ordeal and emphasise the loss of the pilgrim's normal status in the community. Ordeals and even torture-like suffering inflicted on neophytes as preludes for learning is

typical of liminal stages in other cultures as well; Turner (1967, 10) draws attention to the Omaha Vision Quests, in which young men fasted and prayed in solitude in the desert, tested themselves by physical ordeals, and received sacred knowledge in dreams. As phrased by Clastres (1987, 180), who writes of the submission and even torture of the body in initiation rituals, "the body mediates the acquisition of a knowledge; that knowledge is inscribed on the body." Not only do ordeals test the neophytes' courage; through physical suffering the body becomes memory (ibid. 184), the secret and sacred knowledge acquired in the initiation becomes permanently memorised. This is why the apparent affliction is regarded as necessary by ritual specialists. "Dem have it easy now," commented Mother Cleorita as she recounted her own experiences in the mourner room of her Spiritual father, Leader Ramsay. In the sixties, pilgrims had to kneel on the floor with each and every person who came to pray for them, through ten or more prayers that could last for hours. Mother Cleorita preferred to stay on her knees, because getting up and kneeling down again would have been unbearably painful. She and other elderly Mothers, like Mother Thom from Mt. Bethel or Teacher Audrey from St. Philomen still have marks on their knees from the stony floors of mourner rooms. Moreover, the bands were tied so tight that pilgrims' ears used to have sores. Mother Cleorita remembered especially clearly how her brother, Leader David Callender, once pointed her and tied the bands so tightly that she cried because they were "stinging like fire." The old time Pointers did not hesitate to beat their pilgrims, either, using belts or Shepherd's rods to straighten out indolent neophytes. Such measures are not banned in the contemporary Tobagonian mourner rooms, although they are infrequent.

These are the routines structuring the otherwise incessant silence and immobility of the ritual for the pilgrim. Most of the time on the mourning ground the pilgrim has to concentrate on praying and meditating, lifting her spirit away from the carnal level so that *travelling* becomes possible. The first few days of the ritual are usually difficult, as the physical conditions, heat, hunger, thirst and pain dishearten the pilgrim. Many travel the first days in total darkness, without any visions, which is a further source of discouragement and self-accusation. The pilgrim's sins and failures can occupy her mind at this point, and thus crying and feelings of despair mark the beginning of the ritual even for experienced mourners. The sense of time can be weakened or lost, and drawing a line between dreaming and being awake can become impossible. The period in the grave was very trying for me during my first mourning, as I was dragged through merciless self-inspection to the verge of total desperation. Another pilgrim once confessed that she grew so accustomed "to the dark place" in which she found herself that she could not find her way out, and the Mothers had to dig her out of

the grave. Later on in the ritual the pilgrim usually manages to start to travel, have visions and rejoice with the Spirit.

The sensory deprivation aimed for in the mourning ritual is often hindered by noise from outside the Room of Seclusion. Passing cars, construction sites, people's voices, crowing cocks and barking dogs, and music that flows constantly from people's yards, can form obstacles for the meditation required for travelling. Pointers try to keep the level of noise in the church low, and labourers talk quietly; external sounds, however, are impossible to block out. However, Mother Cleorita was of the opinion that no external distraction should bother a pilgrim if she is dedicated enough. When she herself was mourning in Leader Ramsay's church in the sixties, the village's steelband was practicing every day in their panyard¹⁹ close to the church in Bethel. On Tuesday morning she complained to the Pointer that she could not concentrate at all because the pan was too loud and bright, the calypsos pierced her meditation however hard she tried. Leader Ramsay told her to take her password or a hymn and start singing it in her mind over and over again. "De panman an' dem mus' do dem job an' yuh mus' do yuh own!" So, Mother Cleorita started to hum a hymn in her mind, and although the calypsos from the panyard started to blast, Mother Cleorita drifted away, hearing the pan no more. She travelled until the end of the ritual. On another occasion Mother Cleorita herself had pointed a pilgrim who complained about the sound of the sea next to the St. Philomen mourner room – the incessant rolling of the waves kept her from concentrating. Mother Cleorita advised the pilgrim to take her key and hum it in her mind, focusing on the sea, because she could walk on it or take a boat and travel wherever she was supposed to go. The pilgrim took the advice, and on the following Sunday when she was taken out she was not even aware of the fact that she could not be bathed in the sea, as is customary, because the waves were too rough; no waves were audible to her, although the sea was roaring next to the church.

Although general outlines can be sketched of the mourners' experiences, the ritual is a unique experience for each pilgrim, and many aspects of it are never shared with others. To get a more general view, the ritual is best described from the standpoint of the other participants, the Pointer and the labourers, who toil with the pilgrim from the beginning to the end.

TOILING IN THE MOURNER ROOM

After the lengthy and physically demanding pointing service it is usually late, at least six o'clock in the evening, and the labourers and ritual specialists are exhausted just like the pilgrims themselves. The mourners are left to lie down in

their graves or on the floor, and a slow hymn like *Steal Away* may be sung as the others leave the Inner Chamber. The pilgrims are on the road, unaware of their surroundings or of time, and the labourers and elders who stay at the church can finally sit down and relax. Eating and chatting in the hall, they sum up the events of the service, discuss upcoming services and functions or chat about various matters concerning different churches and members of the faith. The labourers remain at the church when other members of the congregation leave for their homes. They spread *sponges*, foam mattresses, either inside the mourner room to sleep with the pilgrims, which seems to be the more common practice, or in the church, yet within easy reach to the mourners. Leader Brothers at St. Rita's does not allow labourers to sleep in the Inner Chamber; on the other hand, Mother Cleorita always sleeps inside the room because her Spiritual assistance is frequently needed by the pilgrims even in the middle of the night.

Prepared to live at the church for at least one week, the labourers bring cotton dresses and headties, aprons, slips and other necessary clothes, sheets, towels, and toothbrushes along with their Bibles and hymnals as they come to toil with the pilgrims. They cook food, wash clothes and sheets, take care of the sacred paraphernalia, and help the pilgrims wash their mouths in the mornings and have their daily cups of bush tea or aloes. They also assist the Pointer in keeping mourner room services, praying with the pilgrims, and in washing them after they have been taken out from the grave. Experienced Pointers like Mother Cleorita and Leader Brothers often have to do Spiritual work while labouring with pilgrims, as people come to the church to seek their help with illness, twisted ankles, new cars to be blessed, divination, or suspected obeah or jumbies.

During a mourning ritual, there were seven of us sleeping in the small Room of Seclusion of St. Philomen Church: Mother Cleorita and three other senior Mothers from the church, a visiting Mother, myself, and the pilgrim, Number One. At 5:45 on Wednesday morning Mother Cleorita called "Prayer time!" and woke up the pilgrim. Tante Thelma helped the weary Number One, an elderly man mourning for the third time, to rise on his knees. He tried to remain on the floor, sitting with his back bent down, but the nurse was persistent: "Yuh hear what yuh Mudder say." We collected our sheets and mattresses from the mourner room floor quietly as Number One was praying on his knees, silent. Soon Tante Thelma brought in an enamel tub, a glass of water and a bottle of mouth wash, Lysterine, for the pilgrim to gargle. Fasting for days with hardly sufficient liquid to drink, the pilgrim's mouth starts to taste disturbingly unpleasant and the mouth wash has become a routine in many churches. After the gurgling was completed, Tante Thelma gave the pilgrim a cup of hot bush tea. Outside in the hall Mother Cleorita and the other Mothers were discussing different healing techniques, Sister Penny was frying fish in the kitchen for us to eat for breakfast

and Sister Sherry Ann, also living at the church compound, was dressing up to go to work in a Play Whe²⁰ booth in town. Mother Theda went down to the beach with a basket to see if the fishermen had caught any fish in their seine. The pilgrim was left to continue his journey after he had finished his tea, and we carried on with our chores, washing wares and doing laundry outside by the pipe in the church yard.

When labouring at St. Rita's Church, the day begins with a morning service. On a Wednesday morning we woke up before six o'clock, the church was feeling cold although everybody was fully dressed in Spiritual clothes. Leader Brothers, Deacon Garth, two senior Mothers, a sister and I had slept on the wooden church benches. Deacon Garth went to kneel by the centrepole and prayed aloud. Leader Brothers lit candles, we repeated the 24th Psalm and lined up at the bathroom while the prayers, Psalms and hymns went on. All took turns praying by the centrepole or reading Psalms or portions of Daniel 9, where Daniel goes to mourn. After an hour the service was over. The pilgrim, a woman in her thirties, could hear the proceedings in the mourner room unless she was travelling.

We then helped the pilgrim to wash her mouth and took the pail for her to use and rinsed it afterwards. Leader Brothers, who does not allow anybody else to prepare food or drinks during mourning rituals although he is in his eighties, prepared bush tea for her. We took it in. There was water in the pipe this morning so that we could bathe, and as the pilgrim was drinking her tea, we took turns in the bathroom. Leader Brothers cooked breakfast for us, his daughter washed the pilgrim's clothes outside by the pipe and we ate toast with cheese, slices of sweetbread and drank bush tea. It was soon time for the nine o'clock service; Leader Brothers has been Spiritually instructed to keep service in the church every three hours, starting from six in the morning until six in the evening. Prayers and Psalms, sometimes read by only two labourers, suffice. The Leader himself is quite busy in the kitchen or assisting the pilgrim to travel in the mourner room.

Most labouring days are not too hectic, as cooking, washing and cleaning and decorating the church are the main practical chores that labourers have to do in addition to taking care of the pilgrim's physical needs. Otherwise there is time to take naps when the heat is at its worst, to socialise and to take part in the mourner room services. At St. Philomen Sister Penny, living at the church compound but not labouring with the pilgrim, cooked lunch: fried fish and gravy with *provisions* (root vegetables like yam or cassava) and rice, served with slices of *zaboca* (avocado). Mother Cleorita sent me to fetch ice from the village and we put it in a cooler where it remained usable for hours. The fridge in the church kitchen had been broken for months, and we wanted cold water to drink. After

lunch we slept on the wooden benches in the hall, trying to survive the heat in our labouring clothes. The children from next door came to visit, we tried to hush their bright voices so as not to disturb the pilgrim. Leader Gerald dropped by in the afternoon on his way to see about his pigs in the nearby pen. We talked about America, thunderstorms and members of the congregation who won't go to mourn even though they have visions telling them to do so. Mother Cleorita's grandchildren came after school, arguing about the quality of wrestling shows on the local TV channels. One of us peeped into the Room of Seclusion every now and then to check on the pilgrim or to make sure that all the candles in the four corners were burning. At 5:30 Mother Cleorita went in to discuss possible visions with Number One. We served Leader Gerald his dinner. Number One then knocked on the floor with his small wooden cross, indicating that he needed to use the pail, and Tante Thelma brought it in and rinsed it in the yard after the pilgrim had relieved himself.

After six o'clock in the evening Captain Turner appeared and talked with us for some time about roadside preaching, missions, and then went to clean and polish the numerous brass vessels in the church and to scrape off the candle wax from the floor. It took him two hours to finish the work. In the meanwhile Leader Gerald had changed into a yellow Spiritual shirt and went to see the pilgrim. He sat there quietly for half an hour, praying and meditating. Around eight pm Mother Theda and Mother Cleorita's daughter, Sister Claudia and her husband Mr. Douglas joined us, and we chatted about Adventists and Pentecostals as well as appropriate church attire. There was no service that night except the Leader's prayers. We drank a glass of Guinness mixed with milk and ice and ate *bake* (a round, flat bread made of wheat flour and coconut, baked in the oven) with fried fish. Around nine pm the visitors left and we prepared to go to sleep. Tante Thelma gave Number One a sip of orange peel tea as we spread our sponge mattresses and sheets on the mourner room floor.

Working in the mourner room is the most significant part of labouring: Spiritual assistance is needed by the pilgrim throughout the ritual, and the Pointer spends time with her privately as well as accompanied by labourers, praying, preaching, teaching or rejoicing in the Spirit. The Pointer often needs the labourers' assistance in generating the *communitas* needed to put the pilgrim on the road, to direct her journey, and at critical points of the travelling, such as taking the pilgrim out from the grave or teaching her to dance and speak according to Spiritual instructions. The daily mourner room services are a case in point. Not only the resident labourers, but also other members of the congregation as well as sisters and brothers from other churches can come and take part in the service after work or their daily chores, and rejoice together to invoke and entertain the Spirit. Many like to visit mourner rooms where a friend

or a close member of one's Spiritual family is mourning, and excursions to other villages and strange churches where new, different practices may be found bring diversion to Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists' religious life. These visits, along with visits to thanksgivings, pilgrimages and harvests, are among the most significant contacts between local churches and as such also the basis for comparisons and criticism of different practices, paraphernalia or doctrines.

The evening services in mourner rooms usually last for an hour or two. People tend to come to the services on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights more than towards the end of the ritual week, so that the Thursday, Friday and Saturday night services are often either held by the labourers alone or cancelled altogether. The order of the service is a simplified and shortened version of the basic structure of Spiritual Baptist rituals, starting with hymns followed by surveying, prayers, lessons and ending with preaching. If only few participants hold the service, simple prayers, Psalms and words of consolation will do. One such service started after six pm at St. Philomen mourner room heated by the afternoon sun, the concrete walls too hot to lean on. In addition to Mother Cleorita and three labourers, sixteen people had arrived to keep service for the pilgrim, a beloved Mother of the church, and were all crammed inside the Room of Seclusion, around Number One. The service started with Captain Turner ringing the bell, after which we sang three hymns, repeated the Apostles' Creed and three women surveyed the corners of the room with the *lota*, calabash, perfume and olive oil. We prayed in three sessions, first the men, then two sets of sisters knelt down with the pilgrim and sang their prayers. The Spirit soon arrived and people *catch power* during the prayers, Number One and her nurse included, singing and dancing in the African way. Mouth drums and different rhythmically chanted syllables drove the pilgrim and others deeper into Spiritual Africa. Number One shouted in African tongues, and Mother Cleorita, Leader Gerald and Tante Lorna, who were also rejoicing, replied to her. After a couple of hours Leader Gerald and Brother Errol preached to the pilgrim, giving her advice and support on her journey that seemed to be proceeding well. Another brother read a Psalm, and around nine o'clock we left the exhausted pilgrim to lie down and continue her travelling. The main purpose of these services is to have elders, sisters and brothers pray together with the pilgrims, reading from the Bible and speaking to them in a supportive and encouraging way in order to help them overcome the plight of their demanding journey and concentrate even more on praying and meditating. The presence of Spiritually sensitive people also supports the pilgrim in rejoicing in the Spirit. When a pilgrim *flies off* during a mourner room service after reaching India, China or Africa, and starts to rejoice in the manner respective to the nation in question, other participants inclined to a similar style of manifestation entertain the Spirit with her. Thus a nation like

India can be manifested through several believers, all singing, dancing, mouth drumming, marching or speaking in tongues together. Such collective travelling enhances the pilgrim's experiences of her journey. The inclination bonding participants of the mourner room service does not have to be towards a nation: in a service in St. Philomen mourner room a young female pilgrim, whom Mother Cleorita recognised to be a Warrior when she was baptised, started to rejoice in Warrior style as if fighting and using an invisible sword. Immediately all the other Warriors present were taken by the Spirit and shared in Number One's rejoicing, all engaged in similar stylised combat movements with Number One, who was operating with her wooden sword.

Since praying, reading the Bible and preaching is very important for the pilgrims' success, and given that the majority of Spiritual Baptists need such support when they themselves go to mourn, many sisters and brothers travel long distances to take part in mourner room services. To go and pray for a beloved sister mourning at St. Francis Church in Goodwood, people came from as far as Bethel and Black Rock, even though transport back from the eastern village could be impossible to arrange late at night. The social aspect of these services is another attraction. Gathering and relaxing at the church in the evening after a short but intense service, the day's work behind and the heat easing up, mourner room services provide an opportunity for members of the congregation to sit down together in a relatively informal setting, stretching the limits of their ritual roles. Moving freely, eating and drinking, talking with one another without the ritualised forms of language used in services makes these gatherings casual and unceremonious. Nevertheless, the surroundings are still clearly religious with consequential norms for the dress code, discussion topics and general behaviour. People wear Spiritual clothes, avoid lewd or otherwise improper jokes and gossiping about matters not concerning the church or the faith. As these are among the few occasions where Spiritual Baptists have a chance to discuss their religion in relatively informal surroundings with elders present, it is quite common to bring up topics like orthodox and unorthodox practices, differences between the Spiritual Baptist and the Orisha religions, the history and development of the faith as well as its future, and reminisce about previous mourning rituals or talk about pilgrims' tracks and other visions and dreams. At St. Philomen these nightfall gatherings were forums for in-depth analyses of the particularities of the Spiritual Baptist religion, its doctrine and rituals, and the ways it differs from other religions and denominations, both good and bad.

Socialising in the spirit of the ritual can continue even on the way home from the church, like after a mourner room service in Goodwood. Members of the congregation were liming on the church steps and on the porch of the house next to the church, drinking *mauby*, a home-made juice, and discussing Mother

Mabel's passing away. Driving along the dark road of the windward coast towards Scarborough, five of us sisters sitting in the back of Brother Lennox's open van, the topic was the role of drumming in mourner room services and different Pointer's opinions on that. Others explained to a youthful and innocent sister what Spiritual *licks*²¹ were about, referring to another sister who came to the evening's service wearing a denim skirt and a baseball cap and who kept on bending up and down, howling as if in pain throughout the praying session, because the Spirit was beating her up for dressing in such a disrespectful manner.

JOINT EXPERIENCES OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

Along with the services, Pointers work with their pilgrims in more concealed circumstances too. When they listen to the pilgrims' accounts of their journeys, steer the travellers in the right direction, or give them instructions on where to go and whom to seek, the Pointers are usually alone with the pilgrim, or accompanied by close elders only. The Pointer can direct a pilgrim's way by giving her instructions. As a Spiritually gifted ritual specialist, the Pointer sees the Spiritual world where the pilgrim travels in visions and dreams, and is thus able to predict events and encounters, to warn the pilgrim of dangers and to give advice as to where to proceed. Some Pointers, like Leader Brothers, are quite elaborate in their descriptions of the landscapes and the entities that the pilgrim in question should encounter on her journey. He assured his pilgrims that he would know and remember each and every track they had. After raising a pilgrim from the grave, the old Leader sat down on the concrete floor next to her and recounted a lengthy description of her upcoming journey. The pilgrim was to reach a junction on her way, and there she was to march as she had been taught to and use her key to choose the right way. Soon the road would lead her into a forest, where she would meet a scorpion. She should ask questions from the scorpion. As she would arrive in Africa and meet Africans, she should ask questions again, they were going to teach her a lot. Mother of the River lived there too, and was to be another source of wisdom. On her way from Africa to India she would cross a wide river, where fishermen were fishing. They could be of assistance. Hearing sounds of all kinds of birds, she would finally reach India, where she should meet an Indian man. Leader Brothers' description continued for a long while and provided quite specific instructions to ask questions from certain entities and to travel along particular routes, landmarks which the old Leader knew in great detail. I did not encounter such, almost predetermined, steering of the pilgrim's journey in other churches. Leader Brothers' directions, however, did not repeat the same routes to all the pilgrims; he saw each one's

journey in visions prior to or during the ritual. Novel Spiritual knowledge and previously unknown encounters and experiences were typical of his pilgrims' journeys, just like any other Spiritual Baptist's.

During the ritual, usually in the morning when there are no additional people present, the Pointer asks the pilgrims where they have been and what they have seen so far. This takes place towards the end of the ritual period, because few pilgrims have many visions during the first days in the Room of Seclusion. The situation is not formal, and the pilgrims can tell the Pointer about their journeys without ritual phrasings or performances, just sitting down on the mourner room floor. If there is more than one pilgrim, they hear each others' accounts; otherwise the room is closed and the situation quite intimate. The Pointer can assist her pilgrims on their way: as they explain what they have seen and received in the Spiritual world, the Pointer can give them advice on where to go next, perhaps to return to a certain location and bring unfinished transactions to a conclusion. Green mourners tend to be insecure in many situations and fail to give proper answers to different Spiritual entities or do what they are told to do on their journey. The Pointer can also suggest that the pilgrims meet certain Spiritual entities, like particular Healers and Doctors, if they seek a remedy and have trouble finding it. Occasionally Pointers have to admonish their pilgrims for improper behaviour, like when a sister on her second throne of grace gave quite impolite answers to the Spiritual entities she encountered.

Experiences in the Spiritual world, even the journeys, can be shared by two or more persons. The fact that Spiritual Baptists do not regard or experience the Spiritual journey of the mourning ritual as an exclusively subjective phenomenon, but allow for sharing and even testing and contesting the visions, as if the Spiritual reality was objectively approachable, differentiates them from many other religions in which spirit journeys are conducted.²² When there is more than one mourner undergoing the ritual, and most times there are, it is common for them to meet one another on their journeys or even travel together. This means that two or more pilgrims find themselves in the same location, perhaps communicating with the same saint or other Spiritual entity, and also with one another. When giving their tracks to the Pointer, their accounts are similar. Mourning at the same time at St. Philomen Church, Number One, a mature lady, and Number Four, a woman in her late twenties, reached one another in India. They both gave similar accounts of the landscape, the large tree under which they met, the clothes they were wearing, what they were talking about and so on. Number One had encountered St. Francis, dressed in a brown gown, a yellow headband and a pink sash, and he told her to "Eat my food, wear my clothes and commune with me." St. Francis accused Number One of having avoided him for thirty years; he also told her that he is St. Philomen's brother.

He gave Number One a golden ring, and Number One was a bit baffled, thinking that the Saint was proposing to her; she wanted to ask her Spiritual parents for advice, but St. Francis assured her that he was not asking her to marry him, just to take the ring. Number Four had seen Number One in a brown gown, yellow headtie and a pink sash on her neck; Number One had taught her how to dance the Indian dance, but Number Four was impatient and said "Me ain't like dem dance." Finally she agreed to try it, and the two pilgrims danced together, the older teaching the younger. The mutual relations between the pilgrims are significant on these joint journeys. The senior pilgrims, those who have previous experience of the Spiritual world and who know how to communicate with the Spirit, have to take the role of a guardian for the *green* mourners. In another mourning in St. Philomen Church, five pilgrims were pointed on, and whereas Number One was a man who had mourned at least once before, three of the others were first-timers. "Poor Number One," sighed a young labourer in the church yard, "he have it real hard, he come like the Big Daddy for all of them." This meant that Number One had to look after the other pilgrims in the Spiritual world, to guide them and to protect them from evil spirits, which naturally made his own journey very demanding. In the previous example, the older of the two women, Number One, had a similar role as the "Mummy" for the other pilgrims.

Elders, especially Pointers, but also other participants in the mourning ritual, meet pilgrims in the Spiritual world. In the mourner room services, pilgrims and elders can entertain the Spirit in the same location, be it India, Africa or China. Such joint journeys are at their most intense when the service bursts into common rejoicing, and the pilgrims, nurses, elders and visitors catch power in the small, hot mourner rooms and dance in Africa or India until exhaustion. These sessions have an educational aspect, too, as pilgrims who are young in the faith are drawn into the rhythms and the movements of the Spiritual nations. Such *tracking* of the pilgrims can also take place while dreaming or praying. The Pointer and the labourers frequently see visions and dreams of the same places and incidents that the travellers themselves are encountering, as if travelling in the same landscape. A Pointer can see, say, Number One marching along a forest path and reaching a river; afterwards she tells the pilgrim where she has seen him, and this always matches with the traveller's own experiences. Number One can see the Pointer, too, and communicate with him or her. Because distinguished Pointers are able to see their pilgrims as they travel, they can easily detect if a mourner is leaving something unmentioned or is lying about a particular event on the road. Other people may track mourners as well: elders or other Spiritually perceptive members of the church can see pilgrim travellers in their dreams while sleeping at home. It has happened that a person who has not participated in a particular mourning ritual, and thus has not heard any of the

pilgrims' tracks has yet been able to give identical descriptions of a location or an incident on a pilgrim's journey. Sharing Spiritual journeys is not typical of Tobago alone: Zane (1999, 91) mentions that when Vincentian Converted mourn, they may occasionally meet their Pointer, as well as their fellow travellers, in the Spiritual world. The Trinidadian Mother Marjorie Creighton, interviewed by Stephens (1999, 250), states that her husband, who is not a member of the Spiritual Baptist Church, nevertheless always tracks her when she goes to mourn (meaning that in his dreams, sleeping at home, he sees where she is travelling in the Spiritual world.)

TROUBLES ON THE WAY

The pilgrims, ritually prepared to travel in the Spiritual world and to encounter Spiritual entities, are very vulnerable to all kinds of spiritual forces, good and evil, and therefore need protection during the ritual. Such vulnerability is typical of liminality, due to the inherent ambiguity in the absence of normal, profane structure (Turner 1974, 273). Pointers only allow entry to the room for people who have been initiated to the faith, and sometimes even sisters and brothers from other Spiritual Baptist churches are turned away. Leader Brothers prohibited sleeping in the Inner Chamber, and services, too, were kept outside the room in the church, lest evil spirits or the Devil hear the prayers. As pointed out, people entering the room must always be properly clad in Spiritual clothes, women with their heads tied and their dresses covered with aprons. Being unclean, however differently the Pointers define it, is an obstacle for entering the Room of Seclusion. Washing hands with Kananga Water before going in the room is a cleansing technique used at St. Rita's church. Matters such as menstruation or slackness in the behaviour and abstinence required may cause Pointers to deny admission to the room. If a person had gone out to *lime* on the previous night, for example, she would not be clean enough to come close to the susceptible pilgrims. Pointers and other elders can be quite strict when protecting pilgrims. Leader Gerald once interrupted a mourner room service and sent all the visitors home, since they were singing, mouth drumming and dancing in the African way, although the pilgrim was trying to find her way to India. The Spiritual insensitivity and ignorance of the participants was threatening the pilgrim's journey, and Leader Gerald had to "stop dat chupidness one time."

Deliberate attacks against pilgrims are not unheard of, either. These are caused either by malevolent people who have it in their interest to hurt a pilgrim or the entire church, or by the Devil with no particular human intermediary.

Matters like this are mostly discussed during the aforementioned moments of relaxation at the church compound while labouring in a mourning ritual.

A Mother Pointer told to me that some Leaders and Mothers don't appreciate their Spiritual children going to mourn in other churches, even when they have had a vision to do so. She stated that nothing was wrong with such crossing over, because the Pointer of one's own church does not necessarily have the right key to give to the particular pilgrim. She had once had a mourner from another Tobagonian church and received Spiritual instructions to point her on Saturday night instead of Sunday. So it happened, but on the following day three elders from the pilgrim's church, unaware that the ritual was already underway, came for the service, and sitting down waiting for the proceedings to begin they became more and more embittered. By the time the bells were rung, the Pointer said, "the church was full of jumbie, and who have eyes to see, see: every spirit from de graveyard was there." She meant that the visiting elders who felt left out or even cheated had invoked dangerous spirits to come and spoil the ritual. Luckily there were three Warriors in that congregation, fresh from the mourning ground themselves, and the Spirit posted one of them at the entrance, another at the centrepole, and the third one at the altar to protect the church and fight the evil spirits. The Pointer had to spread a black cloak over a baptismal candidate they were about to point to shelter her from the enemies, but she knew that they were really after the pilgrim. The latter, travelling in the Spiritual world, had a vision of the jumbies making her a cripple; she told this to the pointer after the journey was completed. The Mother Pointer concluded that her vision to point the mourner on Saturday had saved her, since she was already in the room of seclusion when the spirits attacked.

Another malicious attempt against mourners took place as Mother Cleorita, Leader Gerald, Teacher Audrey and Brother Doyle were toiling at the church with pilgrims, and quite unlike normal labouring nights, they did not feel sleepy at all, but stayed up and limed until it was past midnight. When they finally retired, the Mothers went to lie down with the pilgrims in the Mourner Room. Mother Cleorita still could not sleep, and lying on the floor, she heard a voice like Brother Keith's, one of her Spiritual children, calling her name outside. She did not answer. Next she heard the playful voice of Brother Doyle, still calling her name, but she remained silent. Suddenly a woman wearing a brown gown was standing at the mourner room door, chanting a lovely African song: *Mama Je oh, Mama Je oh...* But as Mother Cleorita listened to the beautiful chant flowing on and on, she detected a tiny mistake in the melody and realised that something was wrong. She let out a high Indian call, tapping her hand over her mouth, and several cobra snakes arrived immediately and killed the *soulless*, the spiritual enemies who had come to lure the pilgrim travellers off the right road. After the

evil spirits were destroyed, Mother Cleorita heard how Brother Doyle had got up to brighten the fire outside the mourner room door; fire keeps uninvited spirits away. Reflecting on the attack, Mother Cleorita concluded that the reason none of the elders wanted to sleep was that they sensed that enemies were about to intrude on the sacred ritual.

Another such attack took the form of a living snake. During another mourning ritual Mother Cleorita was lying on the mourner room floor, just falling asleep, feeling the sweet drowsiness surrounding her. A voice told her to get up and check on her pilgrims. She just turned over, but the voice was insistent: "Get up and take a look at your mourners!" Tired, Mother Cleorita rose in a sitting position, looked around and lied down again, only to feel somebody tapping on her thigh, demanding her to get up and watch her pilgrims. She forced herself on her feet, just in time to see a real snake crawling towards the pilgrims from the mourner room door. She jumped to block the snake's way and called for Leader Gerald to come and kill it. Leader Gerald burned the snake in the fire outside.

Occasionally pilgrims have difficulties in travelling. They may not see anything, have trouble in concentrating or have chosen a wrong time to come and mourn, having neglected God's orders and postponed the ritual. This causes extra work for the Pointer and the ritual assistants. Given the time and effort invested in the ritual, it is as important to them as to the pilgrim that the journey succeed. One of the pilgrims at St. Rita's had been fasting, praying and meditating for days, but had not yet reached the destination the elders expected from her. Mothers, labourers and visiting sisters and brothers crammed the small room and made the air even thicker and hotter than before. We were singing and clapping, all marching to the rhythm of the chorus *We Are Walking in The Light*, and the blindfolded and weary pilgrim was marching too, her hands open as if begging, carrying a palm leaf, a little cross and a white candle. "One, two, one, two," Leader Brothers counted, keeping the pilgrim on the beat. The breathing of the marching and singing people soon turned into mouth drumming. Bare feet tramped the ground, hard. Sisters' long dresses, slips and aprons swung to the rhythm, arms swaying, upper bodies bending and rocking. It was hot. Clothes stuck to the backs, faces were wet, the air was warm to breathe. The pilgrim's dress was soaked with sweat. Everybody was just marching on and on, until the Spirit took Sister Marilyn and her tramping turned into a dance. Soon the pilgrim was ready to fly off too, she called Jesus in a high-pitched scream, bending, and finally started to dance the same dance with Sister Marilyn. They both lifted the hems of their dresses, taking small steps one foot behind the other, swaying their arms gracefully in the air, their waists rolling softly and sensually. The others had stopped the mouth drumming and marching as the *junction* was reached, and started to chant an Indian melody. The women had arrived in

India. All the tiredness and pain had vanished, legs that used to be limping and aching were now rising smoothly and taking delicate steps. The dance died down as the Indian Spirit started to talk, and the Mothers and the pilgrim conversed in the same *unknown* tongue.

At times even severe drilling, such as the above, is not enough, like at the time when Mother Cleorita was not satisfied with a male pilgrim's travelling. The traveller was not getting anywhere, not having visions, lost. She decided to rearrange the bands on his head in case their order or amount was not correct. Mother Cleorita and Tante Thelma went into the Inner Chamber, took off some of the bands and tied the rest back in a different order. In the meanwhile Mother Maud, visiting from another church, was bathing and changing her dress to go in and work with the unsuccessful pilgrim. She and Tante Thelma remained in the room, singing and marching with Number One, trying to put him on the right road. Mother Maud, in the Spirit, was ringing bells and mouth drumming. After half an hour of intense work, Mother Maud left the pilgrim to lie back down in the room and came out, hissing, moaning and bending, the Spirit still in her. "All dem saint are right here at this moment," she repeated, "right here!" She complained that regardless of the presence of the saints, no matter how hard she tried to pray and sing with Number One, he was not opening up, "he too *harden* (stubborn)." She could not do anything more for him, the Mother lamented, "he tink he can walk to Jerusalem jus like dat! No, he must pray, open up." Mother Cleorita set coconut shells on fire in the fire pot and carried it to the room, which soon was filled with smoke. Smoke chases away evil spirits and helps the pilgrim travel better. Finally the Mothers gave up and returned to their seats in the hall, regretting that the church did not have any young, strong Shepherds to really lift up the pilgrim and shake him up. They then started to discuss similar, difficult cases in the past.

In the evening of the same day, on our routine check-ups, I and Tante Thelma caught the pilgrim with his bands off and his eyes open. He tried to explain that the bands just dropped from his head, and that he tried to tie them back himself. Our horror caused a reaction of suffocated laughter, and we called Mother Cleorita who was very disappointed. She left the pilgrim unattended until it was time to retire, explaining to us and the visiting members of the congregation that Number One was not putting enough effort into the ritual, and if he did not bother to try harder, it made no sense to keep him inside the room for more than the required minimum of seven days. Pilgrims who really try to pray and meditate and still have problems in getting on the road are kept in the mourner room until they finally start to have visions, but those who are not serious to begin with are merely wasting their own, the Pointer's and the labourers' time and are taken out on the first Sunday. We gave the hapless

pilgrim his evening tea, after which Mother Cleorita showed him some of the stern authority connected with Pointers. She gave the pilgrim a good scolding, shouting at the man and forcing him to stay on his knees throughout the admonishment. "Number One, yuh not a chile but a big man, so why yuh actin' like a chile? Yuh skylarkin' with God, yuh not serious!" The pilgrim tried to defend himself and explain that he was very serious and the bands had just dropped off, but Mother Cleorita quieted him immediately, "Doh answer me back, yuh hear!" She went on explaining how she had beaten up big men in mourner rooms before and how such a treatment would serve Number One right. After the reproaching finally stopped, Mother Cleorita put back the pilgrim's bands and ordered him to lie on his belly. As he weakly protested the position, complaining that his back was aching, Mother Cleorita bluntly told him to ask God to take him to the Zion hospital. Such severity is common in mourner rooms. However unsympathetic these practices may appear, it is exactly the stern and severe Pointers whom pilgrims respect most and who attract mourners from other congregations and even from abroad. Strict measures applied by the Pointer ensure a successful journey for pilgrims with poor self-discipline. Ailments of the body further accentuate the need to leave the carnal world behind and to concentrate on the Spiritual level.

TAKING OUT MOURNERS

After at least seven days have passed, it is time for the mourners to return to the normal, carnal world. On Sunday morning, after four other female pilgrims and I had mourned for a week at St. Philomen Church, we were finally ready to be taken out of the Room of Seclusion. After the mouth wash, tea and prayers, Mother Cleorita entered the room and untied each pilgrim's fourteen bands, uncovering our eyes and ears that had been tied for a week. Tante Thelma gave us pieces of cotton wool dipped in olive oil for cleaning the eyes; discharge from the eyes had dried over our eyelashes and glued the eyes shut. We wiped our eyes, squinting even in the dim light of the mourner room. Mother Cleorita tied our heads with a single band. Dizzy and weak, we got up on wobbly feet and staggered outside to the church hall, where we sat down on wooden benches and the nurses served us breakfast: a piece of bread and a small fried fish and cups of chocolate tea. Number Five, rebellious, dug out a brown paper bag that had been smuggled to her and shared hops bread with cheese with the others, but Nurse Thelma noticed what was going on and pointed out that no extra food was supposed to be consumed as yet. We asked for water, but still received that in measures, too – just three sips from a glass, in the Name of the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Spirit. After the long-awaited breakfast we were taken down to the beach by Brother Errol and Tante Thelma. We were still wearing our mourning clothes, Mother Cleorita having warned us against removing anything before going to the sea. We descended slowly down the steep path from the church to Grafton Beach, where tourists living in the beach resorts and luxury villas enjoyed the sun. Brother Errol gave us red ixora chrysanthemums and we sent them floating on the waves, as a sign of gratitude to St. Philomen, taking our time in wading in. Brother Errol followed us, keeping us from going too deep, since the sea was a bit rough and we were so weak.

After the cleansing and sanctifying sea bath we returned to the church, dried our skin and hair and changed into simple but clean cotton dresses. Mother Cleorita tied the bands on our heads over again and steered us to the church hall to have a wonderful, although small, Sunday lunch with *stew chicken*, *callaloo*, *stew peas* and rice. Around one o'clock in the afternoon the congregation started to arrive for the service, and we were taken back into the mourner room. We knelt down to pray, and Mother Cleorita dressed us in our newly sewn white dresses and headties. It was very hot, we were blindfolded once again and held candles in our hands. The opening hymns, surveying, prayers and lessons could be heard from the church. When it was finally time to bring in the pilgrims, nurses lead us from the mourner room to the front section of the church, where a wooden bench had been prepared for us. We were told to march in front of the congregation, and soon the Spirit started to manifest. Mother Cleorita and other elders danced with us, and the green mourners talked in tongues for the first time, surrounded by the drumming and the singing of the congregation.

The pilgrims are expected to share the main points of their journeys with their Spiritual family, or the congregation of the church they have mourned in, should it be other than their own. The mourners recount their *tracks*, visions on their journey, in a ritualised manner during the Sunday service. These declarations are, to use Glazier's expression (1983, 55), edited and condensed versions of the actual journey. The pilgrims form their presentations in ritual phraseology and leave out all those personal messages they have received with instructions to keep them secret. These may concern personal life, family or love life, but also Spiritual skills and knowledge; for example, a pilgrim walking the Pointer road receives seals, sacred symbols, whose meaning is only for her to know. Before Number One, an experienced mourner and a respected elder in the church, reported her tracks to the Spiritual family, she bowed three times towards the altar and to the congregation. A nurse gave her three candles that had been stuck together with melted candle wax, a pink one towering in the middle and white ones on its sides. Marching all the time, she held the burning candles and explained the main events of her journey to the sisters and brothers.

She started her declaration by expressing gratitude to the ritual specialists and continued by describing her encounter in the Spiritual world with St. Francis, who had given her specific instructions on clothes, food, and Spiritual advancement. She was taken by the Spirit during her report, and her marching turned into an Indian dance. When she was done, nurses steered her back to the wooden bench, Mother Cleorita tied her head again, this time leaving the eyes uncovered, and gave her three sips of water from a calabash. We all described our journeys in the same fashion and phraseology.

The rebirth symbolism of reaggregation is strong at the end of the mourning ritual, when the pilgrims are taken out from the mourner room, washed, dressed in white clothes, brought in front of the congregation, and relieved of the blindfolds. New knowledge and consequently a new status connote birth after the period of "entombment" in the *room of seclusion*. Similar symbols – white clothes, removal of the bands – mark the new knowledge and status as a Spiritual Baptist gained in the initiation ritual of baptism. However, the liminality of the ritual continues after the service, just like in baptism. The period of confinement, or *ban*, is longer for mourners and lasts for nine days at St. Philomen Church. Occasional exceptions are made if the pilgrims in question are working or have to travel, which is sometimes the case when visitors from the USA or Canada come to Tobago to mourn. Normally a pilgrim is supposed to wear her band or bands for seven days, after which Mother Cleorita removes them. Sexual abstinence, proper attire and refraining from drinking and liming are obvious imperatives; additional restrictions include not looking into a mirror for nine days after coming out, and not leaving her home after sunset. Given the prolonged and total abandonment of the carnal world in the mourning ritual, there cannot be any clear-cut return from the Spiritual journey, and pilgrims remain Spiritually receptive and also vulnerable even after coming out from the Room of Seclusion. Visions may be seen frequently, and Spiritual revelations occur in dreams. Looking into a mirror would have a harmful effect on this sharpened perception – "yuh lose your vision," as Mother Cleorita explained. On the other hand, the defenceless newly mourned should not leave home after dark, when all kinds of spiritual entities are abundant. The ban is thus a protective measure.

MOURNING AND KNOWLEDGE

"The wisdom (mana) that is imparted in sacred liminality is not just an aggregation of words and sentences; it has ontological value, it refashions the very being of the neophyte." Turner's statement (1969, 103) illustrates how

knowledge and transformation intertwine in liminality. The religious knowledge that becomes accessible to the neophyte in mourning always brings along change and transitions, and not only in the neophyte's personal knowledge and status, but also in the belief system and practices of the church and the religion in general.

Mourning is the most mysterious, secret and sacred of the Spiritual Baptist rituals.²³ Many of the common prejudices towards the faith are based on misinformed rumours and hearsay about this ceremony, through lack of proper information; this was apparent already in the Inspector-General of Constabulary's report to the Parliament in 1917, leading to the Shouters Prohibition ordinance. Mystification adds, of course, to the power of the ritual, both in the eyes of the practitioners and outsiders. The secrecy and mystification of the ritual does not aim at hiding some particular knowledge. It results from the fact that the mysteries encountered and unfolded on the Spiritual journey are linked to each pilgrim's personal life, past and future, and to the knowledge she already possesses, and it is therefore not to be publicised or generalised upon, although some travellers are sent to deliver public messages from the Spirit. In other words, it is neither desirable nor possible to verbalise and share all the knowledge one receives during the ritual. This can be made explicit by the Spirit by specifically ordering the pilgrim to keep a particular piece of knowledge to herself, lest she lose the power that the knowledge conveys. Another rationale for the secrecy of the ritual has to do with the different capacities of people to receive, understand and apply Spiritual knowledge. God only gives knowledge according to the recipient's capacity, which means that different people learn at a different pace. Searching for knowledge in an immature way does not pay in the long run; on the contrary, it can even prove dangerous.

Services in the mourner room, especially the ritual of taking the pilgrims out of their graves on their first Throne of Grace, are irreplaceable occasions for educating members of the religion. The setting is thoroughly private, only initiated Spiritual Baptists are present, and the careful preparations, abstinence, cleansing rituals and continuous praying – the production of liminality and *communitas* – secure the dedication and readiness of the pilgrim and other participants to receive and comprehend Spiritual wisdom. It is in the mourner room where Spiritual Baptists receive the skills of speaking in tongues, of dancing in the African or in the Indian way, mouth drumming or other such form of manifestation of the Holy Spirit. While rejoicing in the midst of experienced elders the pilgrim learns how to entertain the Spirit. The mourning ritual is not called *university*, *school* or *college* without reason, since in addition to these physical skills of rejoicing, pilgrims also receive wisdom and understanding of the doctrine of their faith and of the cosmology behind its rituals.

Education in the mourning ritual can be delivered in a highly ritualised way, like when the Pointer uses a small black board, chalk and a stick to teach the numbers and the alphabets to the mourner. These seemingly simple lessons entail movement and rhythm and often lead to unknown tongues. "B, B, B, B...", a pilgrim repeated after the Pointer in St. Rita's mourner room, and the monotonous rhythm soon turned into mouth drumming and then into an Indian tongue. On such occasions it is common to sing children's school songs, like *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, *Jesus Loves Me Yes I Know*, or *The Alphabet Song*. Leader Brothers also taught his pilgrims some of the symbolism inherent in the alphabet and numbers, beating his stick against the black board and having all the participants repeat after him:

A for amen, Almighty, Abraham
 B for Benediction, beautiful, Bethany
 C for cross, coming again, crucified, Calvary, calling
 D for deliver, defence, death, Devil, destruction, divine
 E for ears, eyes, everlasting, ever, evil, eternity, earth
 F for five, fishermen, fish, faith, friend in Jesus
 G for gun – shoot Satan with Gospel gun; good
 H for high, Heaven, hail, happiness, height, holy, health
 I for I am an Israelite, Isaiah
 J for Jesus, justice, Jerusalem, joy, Jehova, John
 K for kingdom, kindness, king, knowledge
 L for life, love
 M for man, mercy, merciful, mighty, mystery
 N for nothing, nationality, no one, Nation, Nazareth
 O for oil, ointment, over
 P for priest, prophet, peaceful, pleasure, praise
 Q for quality, quiver, question
 R for run, rest, resurrection, righteousness, redeemer
 S for sin, Satan, soul, society, secrecy, salvation, Saviour
 T for truth, trial, tribulation, Thou shalt not
 U for unity, universal, understanding
 V for victory, violence, very good
 W for wisdom, woman, wife
 X for example, exodus, excel
 Y for young, you, yonder
 Z for Zion, zebra, Zebekiah, selah

1 – he
 2 – give
 3 – his
 4 – life
 5 – for
 6 – me

- 7 – that
- 8 – I
- 9 – will
- 10 – be saved

Along with the alphabet and the numbers, Leader Brothers' black board contained small seals, which he also explained to the pilgrim and the members of the congregation present. Some of the tiny seals stood for the ten commandments, a diamond-shaped one for Jesus' perfection, and a wing-sign for Jesus' promise to come back. The Leader unfolded the meanings of each sign without hesitation. The lesson entailed features of the general Christian belief system as well as identifiably Spiritual Baptist notions, like *nation* and *nationality* as well as *yonder* or *universal* referring to the Spiritual world; *ears*, *eyes*, *secrecy*, and *mystery*, related to the mourning ritual and the Spiritual senses needed in it instead of the carnal; *question*, *knowledge*, *wisdom* and *understanding* connoting the purpose of the ritual, seeking Spiritual wisdom. The more general concepts, too, acquire specific Spiritual Baptist meanings: for example, Biblical places and characters like *Bethany*, *Zion*, *Abraham* and *Isaiah* belong to the Spiritual world. The selection also includes terms like *trial*, *tribulation*, *violence*, *defence*, *destruction*, *gun – shoot Satan with Gospel gun*, *evil*, *Devil*, *sin*, *Satan*, and *victory*, which hint at the notions of fighting evil, overcoming challenges and obstacles. Sin and the Devil have a central role in the Spiritual Baptist doctrine as the indispensable counterparts of proper Christian living and God, and they are often brought up in prayers and sermons. Another noteworthy concept is *earth*. Sacred power associated with earth comes up in certain comments and rituals practiced by Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists, but few are very explicit about the symbolism and significance embedded in it. Notions like fertility and procreation have been connected to the earth by some mothers, and in harvest ceremonies fruits, provisions, pumpkins and other food are piled on the ground. The libations are always poured on the ground in surveying and other ritual performances with the sacred vessels and bottles. Marching and tramping on the ground, often barefoot, is a central part of initiation rituals as well as manifestations, and kneeling on the ground or the floor is pivotal when praying. Mother Cleorita once told her grandchildren that they must not only pray when lying in their beds, but to kneel, to "touch the Mother Earth to talk to Jesus." She quoted the 24th Psalm for support – "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." All Pointers agree that earth provides a potent ground for being born again in the mourning ritual.²⁴

A lesson on the various symbolically laden emblems used in the rituals was given in St. Francis mourner room, when Mother Miriam commanded one of the Mothers to explain the meanings of the paraphernalia in the room to two male

pilgrims, who had not received their bands as yet and who were allowed to open their eyes to see and learn. The Mother lifted one emblem after another from the floor, showed them to the pilgrims and shouted her interpretations while twenty-three sisters and elders sang, clapped hands and danced and a young brother played his drum. The teaching consisted mainly of quick allusions to scriptural events and locations presented in Biblical phraseology and hymn lyrics. The Mother showed the pilgrims the Bible, the bell, the sword, the broom, the stone used as a pillow, the broom, the lota, the calabash, a band still awaiting to be laid over one of the pilgrims' eyes, a burning candle, a bottle of Kananga Water, and a glass with white roses in it:

Mother G: "Number One an' two,
 the cross, dat Jesus carry.
 He carry it for yuh an' for me.
 He bear an' carry the cross for us,
 dat we may be free.
 Number Two an' Number One,
 One and Two..."
 Mother Miriam: (interrupting) "Yuh 'ave to start from One!
 One is One!"
 Mother G: "Number One and Two,
 I put before us is yuh Bible.
 Is our chart an' compass.
 I saw the bell,
 the bell dat Isaiah
 once was carrying in the wilderness,
 preparing the way of the Lord
 an' make yuh path straight.
 I saw the sword before us,
 the sword of the Spirit
 dat make they get Satan and sinners under.
 The sword dat Jacob fight a good fight
 wid all yuh might.
 But Jesus is yuh light today,
 Christian bredren.
 I saw before us a stone.
 I remember when Jacob was
 in a certain place,
 and behold,
 he saw a stone before him,
 and earth yuh bed
 and stone yuh pillow.
 I saw a broom before us,
 the broom dat will sweep sinnerman heart today.
 The broom dat is to bind us

wid one cord of love.
 I saw the lota before us,
 dat stand for the blessed heart of Jesus.
 I saw the calabash,
 I remember the ship.
 Christian friends and bredren,
 I behold a band before us.
 I behold a band before us
 dat should bind up one side to anodder until...
 I saw the light,
 the light of the world is Jesus.
 And in dat light is the light
 which is the light of men.
 I could remember dat sweet smelling Saviour.
 Dis is the perfume...
 The flowers,
 the garden of Getsemane
 and the garden of Solomon."

These stylised representations of education add to the thoroughly influential lessons learned during the Spiritual journey itself, the most significant source of education in the mourning ritual.

The pilgrim journey is a success only when Spiritual growth, accumulation of *wisdom, knowledge and understanding* is acquired. Elders constantly underline the extreme importance of asking questions while travelling – no matter how insignificant an object or creature is that comes across the pilgrim on the road, she must ask questions. Personifications of the Spirit are especially important sources of Spiritual wisdom. The pilgrim's inquiries can concern the journey itself, different mysteries of the faith, like meanings of symbols and ritual acts, or the roles and characteristics of the saint(s) or other people encountered, including their relationship to the pilgrim. Questions about the pilgrim's own life, ethical choices, future events and practical dilemmas concerning family, love life or work may also be answered during the journey. Spiritual knowledge about the pilgrim's state of health, sicknesses plaguing her and proper cures for them is frequently sought. Sickness is one of the major motives to mourn, and cures that include specific diets, baths, anointments, medicines and guidelines for a proper life style are worth the trouble. Many mourners come out with a specific medication and instructions on how to use it. Sister Paula, suffering from diabetes, received lots of advice concerning her diet and certain bush medication when she went to mourn for the second time; some are told not to eat certain fish, or to become vegetarians, and so forth. The Spirit also instructs mourners to live along certain standards -excessive drinking and smoking, wearing too revealing clothes, sexual promiscuity, failure to attend church regularly, overt

gossiping or *commess* and lack of respect are among those shortcomings that pilgrims may be advised to look into and change.

In addition to personal knowledge, the Spirit delivers messages through individual pilgrims to the whole congregation. These messages are declared in the service where pilgrims are taken out from the mourner room. A brother got a message for the St. Philomen Church on his third throne of grace: "Spiritual people, stay on your level!" This was interpreted as referring to the tendency of many Spiritual Baptists to assume higher roles and duties in the church than their spiritual capacity allows, for example founding one's own church without really having acquired the skills and knowledge of a leader or a ritual specialist. Another example of a collectively targeted message was Sister Dora's revelation, in which St. Philomen introduced herself at a time when the church of St. Raphael had fallen apart and a new church was being founded on the "ruins." The elders were waiting for a message to know to whom the church was supposed to be dedicated. Sister Dora's vision set the infant church in the intended direction, and it was named St. Philomen Spiritual Baptist Church. Finally, messages can be addressed to even larger audiences than the congregation: many get instructions to go on a mission in different villages, to preach the Word to Tobagonians in general or even overseas. Sister Erica, while mourning in St. Francis Church, was told to go and preach in the Spiritual Baptist churches of Tobago on the dangers of promiscuity and lewd manners, so prevalent even among believers. She went around as instructed, preaching to people about looming destruction and the vices of immorality. Leader Brothers once travelled to Grenada to warn the people of a hurricane to come. On May 24, 2002, the Tobago News reported the prediction of an upcoming, lethal hurricane by "Moon Man," a Spiritual Baptist evangelist from Black Rock. "Later in the year, Tobago will be hit by a fierce storm. It will cause mass destruction and lives will be lost; approximately 11 people will perish! [---] A prophet appeared to me in a vision and gave me the message twice," Moon Man told the reporter, and said that he had been "taking the message" throughout Tobago.²⁵

Disconnected from profane society, the pilgrims learn about the Spiritual world and their own position in it. As the pilgrims travel to one or several Spiritual nations, their specific inclination becomes clear. Depending on where they travel and which saints they meet, either Africa, India or China stands out as their personal Spiritual "nationality." Should a pilgrim travel to India, converse with an Indian personification of the Spirit, and receive Indian clothes, emblems, colours, and the skill to dance and speak unknown tongues in the Indian way, she is prone to rejoice with the Indian Spirit later on in the various services she attends. Experienced mourners have travelled all about the Spiritual world and

communicated with many different people there, and are thus able to entertain the Spirit in all its different forms.

There were nineteen of us keeping service for five pilgrims in the small mourner room of St. Philomen on a Wednesday night. Leader Gerald and Brother Miller were still working on the altar wall which they had been building the whole day. Two sisters prayed, in the Spirit, and we sang *I would have the Saviour with me, for I dare not walk alone...*, clapping hands, shaking a *timbrel* and a *shac shac*, and marching. Mother Cleorita pulled the pilgrims up on their feet and made them march to the rhythm, and the nurses marched protectively behind them. The hymn changed into *They carry me through over yonder*, and mouth drumming soon took over. *Bi bam bi bam bam! Bi bam bi bam bi!* Everybody answered the Mother in the African tongue,²⁶ making a rhythm out of it. Teacher Audrey was teaching the pilgrims in this language, she in the Spirit too, her index finger pointing at an invisible board. Number Four, a young woman, was holding her Warrior's sword and dancing with Mother Cleorita; she fell on her back on the floor, twitching and shaking, and the Mothers danced and mouth drummed around her, until she sprang up to dance again. Mother Theda, Teacher Audrey, and Mother Cleorita then concentrated on Number Two, a woman in her thirties, still calling in African language and dancing with her.

After rejoicing with these pilgrims in Africa, Mother Cleorita and Teacher Audrey met Number Five in China. The other pilgrims sat down, but Number Five, a young rasta boy, took tentative steps with the Mothers. *Ying a ya, ding dang, zing za!* they conversed in Chinese and danced with the boy. Finally Mother Cleorita burst into an Indian chant and pulled up Number Three, a young girl. Tante Thelma kept a *lota* over her head, and the Mothers, all three still in the Spirit, made her kneel down. Teacher Audrey and Mother Theda arranged the *taria* over her head, and on that the *lota*, the bell, and the brass cobra. Eight sisters who were Indian in Spirit surrounded Number Three and kept their hands over the *taria*. They lifted it and the other emblems over the girl's shoulders, too. Many of them *catch power* as Mother Cleorita's chant grew. After all these nations had been visited and the pilgrims travelling in them encountered, the women's prayers continued. The pilgrims had now been exposed to the languages, dances, and paraphernalia of the Spiritual nations that are relevant to their personal spirituality, which is an integral part of their education as Spiritual Baptists.

Finally, the *wisdom, knowledge and understanding* that pilgrims are prepared to sacrifice so much for, can be received by walking a special road – the Leader-Baptiser road, for example, or the Healer Road. These journeys entail visions and Spiritual gifts, through which knowledge required by Leaders, Baptisers, Healers, or other ranks is delivered. As phrased by some Baptisers and Pointers, walking

the Baptiser road means travelling in the Spiritual world and meeting saints or other Spiritual entities who present the pilgrim with a blue and white robe, the Baptiser's robe, as well as advice and knowledge about the mysteries of the ritual. One usually sees water and sheep, noted Mother Cleorita. An important gift for the pilgrim is the *key*, the secret password to use in the ritual. The pilgrim is also instructed on the measurement of water, the *fathom*, how deep in the waves to go. The brothers walking this road can also receive the black robe of a Leader with the relevant knowledge, so that they come out with the new status of Leader-Baptiser. When Leader Brothers received his gift of healing, Papa Bois took him to the forest, showed him all the plants and taught him their respective numbers, locations and uses. Healers also get special healing words.

Transitions from a preceding status to liminality, into the Spiritual realm, and eventually to a new status marked by new knowledge, are powerfully portrayed in Mother Cleorita's story of one of her Spiritual journeys a long time ago. During this journey she received knowledge that gave her the status of a healer. Although many subsequent journeys, visions and dreams have since complemented her knowledge of the human body, suffering and healing, this one captures the actual transition from a lay person to a skilled healer.

As a young woman, Mother Cleorita was lying on the mourning ground at what is now the Mt. Paran Church. She was craving bake and saltfish to eat. In the Spirit, she got a piece of bake with saltfish *buljol*, and as she took the first bite of the bake, drums started beating. *Du dum, du dum, du dum*. She then tasted some of the fish, and on the drums went again, sending Mother Cleorita shaking and mouth drumming out loud. Finally she put some of the fish on the bake, put it in her mouth, and that bite sent her off on her journey.

In the Spiritual world, Mother Cleorita found herself walking down a road. Soon she saw two cobra snakes dancing in front of her. At that time she was afraid of snakes, and she waved her arms and screamed "Oh God! Help!" The elders in the mourner room saw that she was very scared, they told her that afterwards. But the snakes showed her to follow them, and she managed to overcome her fear and forced herself to follow the cobras. They lead her down, down a long set of stairs into a cave, where she reached a man. The man told her that he had been trying to call her for a long, long time. Mother Cleorita replied "You welcome to call me any time, just don' send no more cobra snake!" She then followed the man into a room, and there was a skeleton lying on a table. It was disjointing itself, pulling off its bones joint by joint, finger by finger, all the way from one hand to the other, until it was completely shattered. Then it put the bones back to their places, deliberately, one by one. Once complete again, the skeleton greeted Mother Cleorita and said that now it was her turn to do it! She had no choice but to try and disjoint the skeleton. She was horrified and her

hands were shaking, but with great effort she managed to pull out the first finger, then the next one and so on, going all the way through. When the skeleton was but a pile of bones, she brought it back together, assembling the bones in the correct order. She was then lead to another place where a woman was about to give birth, and she was to be the midwife. Putting her mind to the task, she was able to help deliver the baby. After these lessons she found her way to the huge Zion Hospital, where she met the famous Chinese doctor, Dr. Lee. Dr. Lee told Mother Cleorita that she was qualified to be a doctor herself, and gave her a name tag and a chart. Mother Cleorita thus became the Chinese doctor Su Ling, which name was also on the name tag. She was exhausted. They gave her a lilac dress.

With the help of Roy Wagner's method of obviation,²⁷ this dramatic journey can be seen as a very Turnerian transition in which knowledge and fear, but also principles of masculinity and femininity as well as life and death play central roles. As such, it reflects the symbolic structure of the mourning ritual. Mother Cleorita's narrative of her experience begins with the necessary transition from the carnal to the Spiritual world, as the bake and saltfish buljol set the drums beating and send her off on her journey. At first she travels alone, still innocent and fearless, until she encounters the guides, the dancing cobra snakes, and becomes scared. These lethal guides lead her underground, into a tomb-like cave, where a dead man, a skeleton, adds to her fear. In this realm of death and fear (also masculinity) she, nevertheless, overcomes her fright and learns a new skill by mimicking the skeleton, and so instead of fear and innocence she now has knowledge and courage. These are further enhanced by learning the skills of midwifery and the secrets of birth, and through this shift from the tomb to the realm of birth (and femininity) she herself becomes transformed into a new persona. Her new status as a knowledgeable healer is indicated by the fact that she no longer needs guides to travel, and finds her way to Zion Hospital by herself. As markers of the new status, she receives a new name and paraphernalia, and is acknowledged to be the Chinese doctor Su Ling.²⁸

DREAMS AND VISIONS

Contacts to the Spirit and the Spiritual world are not confined to the mourning ritual alone. Spiritual knowledge is also acquired in visions and dreams, which occur in various circumstances. Messages from the Spirit in visions and dreams, just like on the pilgrim journey of the mourning ritual, provide guidance,

instructions, advice and prohibitions varying from dress code and medication to a proper name for the church and the accurate conducting of rituals. Receiving Spiritual messages at home, during sleep or when praying and meditating, is common. Dreams are constantly talked about and interpreted, and their meanings have very concrete consequences in the daily lives of Spiritual Baptists; they include ritually applicable messages but also quite mundane information, like numbers for Play Whe, Pick Two and Lotto. In our household, Mother Cleorita continuously helped us sort out the meanings and messages our dreams conveyed.

Spiritual messages are almost unexceptionally the motive for organising a special type of service. The Spirit tells a person to organise, for example, a thanksgiving, and gives instructions as to the nation-theme of the service, what to lay on the table, what colour clothes to wear, what colour flags to plant in the yard, what kind of food to serve and so on. One is not supposed to introduce any new features to her thanksgiving unless given them Spiritually. Missions and pilgrimages are always Spiritually initiated, like when the St. Philomen Church went on mission road in 2001 due to Captain Turner's vision. Not only the message that was to be delivered, but also the mission colour, green, which was represented in the altar cloth, and the order and amount of mission stations in different villages were given to the "missionaries" Spiritually. The mission group received the message of where to go and preach on the following night during each night's service – when holding a service at a crossroads in Black Rock, the Mother of the church was told by the Spirit to go to Egypt the next day, and so forth.

Praying and meditating at home or at the church give elders and ritual specialists access to necessary information, such as the secret keys given to neophytes, the proper order and colours of mourners' bands, or the proper order of the proceedings of a pilgrimage. Healers consult the Spirit by praying and meditating before they can find the right cure for the illness or problem in question. Most also get specific orders on how to mark their commitment to the religion within their everyday life: Leader Gerald was instructed to fast and meditate every Tuesday from six in the morning to six in the evening, Mother Cleorita must never take off her headtie except when washing her hair, Teacher Audrey must always wear her silver anklet, Sister Dora must not eat red fish, and so forth. Connections to the Spirit are also common in secluded places, like in the forest, where some elders like to go to pray. Popular healers and practitioners of Spiritual work have spent time in the forest and received knowledge of different plants, roots, and leaves and their usage in healing work. A few other elders go to secluded places to pray and meditate, too, in order to increase their Spiritual knowledge.

There are also people who "have the eyes to see," who can encounter Spiritual beings and communicate with them in mundane circumstances, outside ritual, without praying or meditating. These elders see "people" – spirits of deceased – in the streets, in yards, buildings, or in bamboo patches and forests. They can see saints walking by and talking to them; characters like Papa Bois have shown themselves to such people. A young, Spiritually perceptive woman saw her dead grandfather by the porch of her mother's house. She thought he was a crazy vagrant who lived nearby, and told him to go away. The man persisted, and no one else saw him, although she pointed him out. It took a while for the woman to realise to whom she was talking, but finally the grandfather talked to her and delivered a message. This being the first time she saw a spirit while awake, the woman was fairly scared and shocked. Her Spiritual Mother, experienced in such contacts, soothed and assured the woman and explained to her that there was nothing to worry about. Dead people cannot harm you, it is the living that you must be wary of, the Mother instructed.

Visions or revelations often materialise during ritual practice. Many Spiritual Baptists, although not actually in the Spirit themselves, are able to see and hear Spiritual things in services. Some claim to hear the bell ring as an order to the person to go and ring the bell at the centrepole, for example; others see unwelcome spirits entering the church and try to prevent them in a Spiritual sword-fight; gifted elders can also share the Spiritual experiences of another person. They are able to see where a person is travelling in the Spiritual world, what kind of entity is manifesting through her, or detect possible sicknesses and worries that another person has, even if she herself is unaware of them. Drummers, on the other hand, have claimed to have visions while drumming in rituals, travelling in the Spiritual world and receiving directions as how and when to play and what kinds of beats to use. Therefore perceptive drummers are able to go along with different manifestations of the Spirit, beating Indian and African rhythms in the presence of the respective manifestations of the Spirit. Another example of Spiritual communication during ritual practice was the warning sent by St. Philomen to Mother Cleorita, who was doing Spiritual work with two other elders on a beach. After the work had been accomplished, Mother Cleorita decided to take a dip in the lovely, calm sea. She took off her Spiritual clothes and bathed in her underwear. Suddenly a current formed around her and she fell in the water, unable to swim. She had to call out for help and the others came to rescue her. The following night St. Philomen told her in a dream never to come "naked" to the sea again because that was not appropriate for someone of her rank in the Spirit, and especially offending just after finishing Spiritual work. Since then Mother Cleorita bathes in the sea fully clothed in a skirt, jersey and headtie.

The Spiritual world can be perceived during Spiritual manifestations, when in the Spirit. Sister Danielle saw Africans dancing around a big fire when she was rejoicing in her grandmother's African thanksgiving. She heard drums all about, and was dancing in the circle with the Africans. In our eyes she was dancing in front of the three goat-skin drums in the thanksgiving yard, beating the air with her hands. Most times, however, people remember little of what they saw or experienced during manifestations. Warnings about improper conduct are often delivered in manifestations; the Spirit can *share licks*, rough up the misbehaving person, who ends up screaming, twisting her face like in pain, beating her body and so on. A sister who, wearing a colour she had never actually received Spiritually, ended up tearing her dress as she *catch power* right in front of the congregation, was a good example of the occasional harshness of Spiritual edification. The Spirit can also give quite specific orders and warnings to people during manifestations, and even utter revealing truths about those present. Once again in the mourner room of St. Philomen Church, when a service for the mourners was over and Mother Cleorita had gone outside to rest, Teacher Audrey was still in the Spirit. The pilgrims were lying down, and a few sisters and brothers kept on humming a song for the Teacher. She paced around the room, deliberate and with a contemplative expression. "Hands!" she commanded in a voice that was not hers, coming to us, and stretching her hand. A sister gave the Teacher her hand. And so the Spirit started to *read*: Teacher Audrey held the sisters' and brothers' hands, one by one, between her palms, and told each one what they should change in their lives, or what was laudable in them, giving also very practical advice, like "you mus' drink more milk."

BY CONCLUSION

In rites of passage, but also in Spiritual Baptist ritual practice in general, even in regular Sunday services, liminal spaces are generated in which profane statuses, roles, rights and obligations, the structure of Tobagonian society, is left behind.²⁹ Following Turner's criteria (1969, 106-107), markers of liminality typical of all Spiritual Baptist rituals, at least to a certain degree, are absence of property and distinctions of wealth; sexual continence; total obedience of Spiritual authority; continuous reference to mystical powers; acceptance of pain and suffering; at least partial heteronomy instead of autonomy; and sacredness and sacred instruction instead of secularity and technical knowledge. Although the lack of normal social structure is substituted in ritual practice with the Spiritual and administrative structures of the church, firm hierarchies instead of egalitarian *communitas*, the unity inherent in Turner's concept is reached in the rejoicing, in

the joint efforts to invoke and entertain the Spirit in music, rhythm, dance, tongues and other bodily performances. This is not to say that the Spiritual world *per se* is anti-structural or non-hierarchical; as shown in the following Chapter, when entering the Spiritual world in ritual, dream or vision, one enters a structured universe of institutions (like the relationship between Spiritual entities and nations) and hierarchical statuses. Although Spiritual entities of very high standing, such as saints and prophets – and even Jesus – can be encountered and communicated with, which might seem to suggest egalitarianism between the mortal human and divine beings, the pilgrim traveller or visionary subject must always be respectful, polite, and downright humble, even when talking to the smallest leaf or stone, and there is no mistaking the subordination of the pilgrim in relation to any spiritual entity. Pointers can get quite severe with pilgrims who "don't know their place" while travelling in the Spiritual world. All in all, the liminal space of Spiritual Baptist rituals is never void of structure. Moreover, given the range of situations and ways in which Spiritual Baptists have dreams and visions and communicate with Spiritual beings, there are many instances of receiving Spiritual knowledge to which the liminal as an anti-structural state between statuses and institutions in the ritual process does not apply. Seeing spirits while walking the dog or having a discussion with a saint during a nap on one's couch are connections to the Spiritual world immersed in the profane, not separate from the society and its structure.

Nevertheless, the notion of *transition*, so central to liminality, characterises all instances of Spiritual communication. The connection to the Spiritual world in rituals, dreams or visions always entails shifts and changes: first, the transition of the knowing subject from the profane to the ritual and liminal, then to the Spiritual, then back to the profane and eventually into a new state of knowing. Travelling and working in a spirit world in order to increase one's knowledge is a universal feature of shamanism, and as such the Spiritual Baptist mourning, dreams and visions are far from a unique phenomenon.³⁰ However, in this religion shamanistic journeys and visions available for all practitioners, not ritual specialists alone. Changes in statuses and thence in the social structure of the church may follow Spiritual experiences; and not less importantly, the body of religious knowledge held by Spiritual Baptists, both individually and collectively, is in a constant state of transformation due to the unveiling of mysteries in liminality. New knowledge is received on the basis of the existing belief system and added to the corpus, reproducing it but also bringing along elaborations and changes.

¹ I use the term profane in reference to things, places, and acts "concerned with everyday life rather than religion and spiritual things" (Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary). I do not intend to equal the concepts of Spiritual and profane to the Durkheimian division between sacred and profane (Durkheim 1995, 34), although the two polarities have much in common.

² Although Baptisers in Tobago are men, there are many female elders who have received the knowledge, the *key* and the clothes required. Mother Cleorita claims to have the Spiritual knowledge to do whatever men can do in the church, including conducting all services. When a young brother mourned in her church, she, gifted to travel in the same Spiritual landscape with the pilgrim, saw that the brother was walking the Leader-Baptiser -road. After he had finished his mourning, Mother Cleorita "launch him out" as a Baptiser, to use her own words. She took him to Grafton beach and taught him about Baptism, showed him how to perform it, explained to him what the different symbols and phases of the ritual mean. Moreover, Matron Ethencer Stewart, who has had her church since the 1940s, has baptised candidates herself since her church had no Leader at the time and she did not want to turn the candidates away, given that she had all the Spiritual qualifications necessary for conducting the ritual. Mother Cleorita said that "it is meek and right to give (the man) preference," because "the man is the head of the home and the head of the organization."

³ One \$TT is roughly 1/6 of \$US.

⁴ The bath may be preceded by sanctifying the bathroom and the equipment, as in Leader Brothers' church: Before washing the candidates, Leader Brothers lights a candle in the bathroom, kneels down for a long prayer, then repeats the Apostles' Creed and Psalms 121 and 23 with the candidates and nurses, pours perfumed oil into the buckets of bush bath and asks the Lord to bless the water, and finally sprinkles this Holy Water over the candidates with a bunch of leaves. He then instructs the candidates to bathe and repeat the Our Father prayer as they finish, leaving them alone in the bathroom.

⁵ Mothers advise aspiring neophytes not to braid or weave their hair before the ceremony, since the hairdo will have to be taken out. Leader Brothers keeps a bottle of nail polish remover in his drawer in St. Rita's Church, so that female candidates and pilgrims can be immaculate for their initiation.

⁶ As in the faith in general, colours have specific meanings in the baptism ceremony. Blue is the colour that the candidates normally wear. It is the colour of St. Anne, Mother of the River, as the ritual is associated with water and particularly the River Jordan. (This symbolic reference to the saint is not supported by all Tobagonian churches, though.) Larger churches, where baptism and mourning are performed frequently, usually have blue or blue and white cotton dresses in their wardrobe for female neophytes to wear. Some candidates have already attended church in proper Spiritual clothes before accepting baptism, and thus wear dresses of their own. Mourners who go for their second, third or fourth *Throne of Grace* can wear their own Spiritual colours received on the first mourning. For male candidates the dress code is less normative, and many boys and men are initiated in their own neat jerseys and jeans. They also mourn in their own Spiritual shirts and pants, the colours of which do not have to be blue. Neophytes are not obligated to purchase new garments for the occasion, and as long as the clothes are clean, neat and decent, they are appropriate. Since many Spiritual Baptists are financially strained and "money-making religions" generally despised, costs of initiation rituals are kept as low as possible.

⁷ The Spiritual Baptist Minister's Manual (1993) provides a formula for baptism, like for all the central rituals, but all the Tobagonian Baptism ceremonies I have attended, even those churches that belong to the diocese that published the Manual (WIUSBSO), deviate from this blueprint. Leader Brothers in St. Rita's Church conducts the ceremony in a particularly personal way, according to detailed Spiritual orders.

⁸ Mouth drumming is a technique creating rhythm by groaning, grunting, humming and hard breathing, using the mouth and the throat as drums. *Pulling doption* is another term for this, particularly used in Trinidad. The practice is common in some West and Central African societies as well as in other Afro-Caribbean religions. The mouth drums beat in all kinds of rituals, including the mourner room, as sisters and brothers entertain the Spirit and hear Spiritual drums playing. Mouth drumming calls back the goat-skin drums after a quiet moment, most often after speaking in tongues, and the rejoicing continues.

⁹ In many churches the candidates or pilgrims enter the church in a ritual procession after the opening hymns. This is also the norm recommended by the *Spiritual Baptist Minister's Manual* (1993, 73-74). In St. Philomen Church the candidates or pilgrims sit in the back row of the church after they have been bathed and dressed, in the numbered order replacing their names in the ritual: Number One first, then Number Two, Three and so on. As the last hymn is being sung, they are gathered into a procession to properly enter the church.

¹⁰ Most Tobagonian churches have their lessons before the washing and anointing of candidates and anointing of pilgrims, although the reverse order is provided in *the Spiritual Baptist Minister's Manual* (1993, 73).

¹¹ *To catch power* means to be taken by the Spirit. To entertain the Spirit connotes the performances during manifestations, but also the common effort of singing, making music and rhythms, and dancing, which accompany and support Spiritual manifestations. I use these Spiritual Baptist expression as well as "manifestation" in reference to experiences and performances in which the Spirit has taken over the personality of a practitioner. I have avoided the term "possession" due to its connotations of evil spirits, or entities other than the Holy Spirit; my policy has been supported by Spiritual Baptists.

In the text, I italicise the term when it is not in accordance with the tense of the written standard English.

¹² All the Bible quotes are from the King James translation, which is the version most often used in Spiritual Baptist rituals.

¹³ Although this resembles the mourning ritual, baptismal candidates do not sleep in graves like green mourners and they are allowed to eat in the morning.

¹⁴ In St. Rita's Church members of the congregation preach to the candidates or pilgrims before they receive their bands and passwords, right after reading the lessons; others tend to leave the sermons after washing and anointing.

¹⁵ *The Spiritual Baptist Minister's Manual* (1993, 78) recommends that the service re-open on the beach with a hymn, then repeat the Apostles' Creed and sing a surveying hymn. This sequence is quite commonly adhered to in Tobago, except that the singing of hymns is constant and there are no clear breaks between the service in the church, the procession to the beach and the service at the beach.

¹⁶ The present analysis is based on participant observation in seventeen mourning rituals in six churches (St. Philomen, Mt. Paran, St. Peter's, St. Rita's, St. Francis, Solomon Court Mystical Healing School). During these long rituals I have participated in pointing ceremonies, mourner room services and in services where the pilgrims are taken out. I have also laboured in mourner rooms in three churches, sleeping over with the pilgrims and other labourers; in St. Philomen Church I have laboured throughout the entire ritual as a mourner room nurse. The most important knowledge of the ritual was acquired during my own mourning in February 1997. I underwent the ritual as well as baptism prior to it before planning to do anthropological research on the religion, and not for scholarly purposes. Although I choose to elaborate on others' rather than my own experiences here, my participation in all phases of the ritual as an initiated member provides the necessary background against which the procedures observed on other occasions have become comprehensible.

¹⁷ The symbolic burial of pilgrims does not imitate Spiritual Baptist funerary rites, however, except in the practice of sprinkling spiritually significant substances (such as talcum powder and Kananga water) over the "coffin," which can also be done in actual funerals before shovelling soil over the coffin.

¹⁸ In some churches services are held at 6 am, 12 and 6 pm; at St. Rita's, service is held every three hours, starting from 6 am until 9 pm.

¹⁹ A yard, building or tent where a steelband practices and stores the instruments.

²⁰ Play Whe is a popular lottery game, in which a number is drawn every morning and evening. Each number symbolises something: 13 stands for crapaud (frog), 15 for sick woman, 36 for jackass, and so forth. The game is one example of Chinese influence on the local culture.

²¹ To lick = to hit, cuff, lash, strike.

²² Zane (1999, 122-138) discusses Vincentian Converted spiritual travelling as shamanism, but does not acknowledge the particular aspect of joint travelling and shared experiences in the Spiritual world.

²³ As the *Spiritual Baptist Minister's Manual* (1993, 78) puts it, "For the Spiritual Baptist, Mourning is regarded as a unique phenomenon of the Faith in a society where several other Christian Religious Bodies choose a more relaxed form of worship – one without this rigidity of discipline."

²⁴ In the Orisha religion "Mother Earth" is more clearly portrayed and even personified as the locally developed orisha, Mama Lata (Maman de la Terre).

²⁵ Spiritual Baptists' visions rarely attract media publicity, so that although the tone of this Tobago News' article may have been half-serious, it can nevertheless be read as an acknowledgment of the religion.

²⁶ The tongues of different Spiritual nations, as discussed in Chapter Six, are examples of glossolalia and not actual African, Indian, or Chinese languages.

²⁷ By obviating a myth one "renders it obvious," in Roy Wagner's words (University of Virginia, course ANTH 529, spring 2002). The method is based on six central substitutions in the story line. These substitutions, replacing a character, event, theme, or other element of the story by another, in a way resembling Hegelian dialectics, can be arranged with the help of obviation triangles. For examples of obviation, see Wagner (1978), Weiner (1988).

²⁸ It is worth noticing that the narrative of the journey entails symbols related to different locations in the Spiritual world: the saltfish and bake are African foods, and the beat of the drum sounds African; but cobra snakes belong to Spiritual India, and doctors Lee and Su Ling are, obviously, Chinese. Moreover, their hospital is located in Zion. The fluctuating geography of the Spiritual world is at its clearest in a journey like this: the cosmology is not a fixed, static chart, and neither are the regions, nations, and cities exclusive, but they can function simultaneously through symbols, Spiritual encounters and activities.

²⁹ Even though statuses and roles in the Spiritual family at times override *carol* relationships – for example, when a Pointer treats her granddaughter in the mourner room as severely as any other pilgrim – family ties, friendships, enmities, and relationships based on age or gender status, education, economical status and so forth, are never totally absent from the ritual environment, regardless of the sister- and brotherhood of the Spiritual family. A Mother and a Leader who are also related to one another as wife and husband can address, give orders to or joke with one another in a more intimate and nonchalant manner in ritual circumstances than occupants of similar positions without the matrimonial tie; or a young sister is more prone to challenge the limits of the dress code or rules of proper behaviour in a church lead by her grandfather than in one in the neighbouring village.

³⁰ Zane (1999, 130), quoting Eliade (1964), Noll (1985), and Walsh (1990), lists the following characteristics of shamanism as related to Vincentian Converted practice: "ascending travels, descending travels, travels to different countries, quests for visions, bones and skeletons, animal spirit helpers, human-like spirit helpers, small people [---], deceitful spirits, androgynous behaviour, spiritual battles, different grades of shamans, blindfolds, seclusion for initiation[---]."

5. THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

The dimension in which experiences of the Spirit are lived has a specific topography in the Spiritual Baptist religion. The vertical cosmology of Christianity – notions of heaven, earth, and hell – is complemented by a horizontal landscape of Spiritual sites. Creolisation of religious knowledge, the unprecedented, innovative and yet structured character of the cosmology, become apparent in the intricate atlas of the Spiritual World, which includes nations and landscapes but also Spiritual entities that cannot simply be traced back to Catholic, Protestant or West African "origins."

The terms *Spirit*, *spirit*, and *Spiritual* are frequent in Spiritual Baptist discourse. The Spirit, which I capitalise, refers to the Holy Spirit. Although "Holy Spirit" and "Holy Ghost" are used in ritual language, the most common way of referring to this aspect of the Trinity is to talk about the Spirit. *Spiritual*, also capitalised, thus indicates qualities or states associated with the Spirit, such as Spiritual people, Spiritual nations, or Spiritual clothes. *Spirit*, spelled in low case, in some exegetic interpretations, signifies a person's spirit, an aspect of the self that is transcendent, a subject in the Spiritual dimension. For example, Leader Gerald explained that the spirit leaves the person and travels when she mourns, and Bishop Daniel distinguished spirit from soul and body, teaching that whereas a person's spirit is nourished by praying and fasting, emotions that belong to the soul and senses connected to the body may overcome an unnourished spirit and lead to sin. In another sense spirit can refer to a personification of the Holy Spirit; here the word is used synonymously with saint. It is in this sense that the young Sister Pat, smiling and rocking her body happily from side to side, exclaimed that she really liked her spirit, "she so nice and sweet." In plural form the word gains yet another meaning: spirits are entities that exist in the Spiritual dimension and are capable of crossing over to the carnal side, like *jumbies*, invoked spirits of the dead. Such spirits are not personifications of the Holy Spirit, but lesser beings, often understood as evil.

In Spiritual Baptist rhetoric, the term *carnal* is the opposite of *Spiritual*. Expressions used in ritual speech and informal discussions such as "you must learn both carnally and Spiritually," "carnal eyes" and "Spiritual eyes," "carnal person" and "Spiritual person," or the popular trumpet *You can't go to Heaven with a carnal mind*, situate qualities, capabilities, and people into exclusive categories of the mundane, sinful and physical (carnal) and the religious, virtuous, and transcendent (Spiritual). This discursive juxtaposition does not imply any simple division between body and spirit, though, or embodied and Spiritual experiences.

Neither can space be permanently divided into separate realms of carnal and Spiritual, as ritual environments can include homes, yards, roads, beaches and other sites in addition to churches.

The term *cosmology* has been used in reference to the knowledge or theories that people hold in regard to the world or the universe. For example, the Mountain Ok cosmology is a "secret and compelling *world view* characterizable as a mystery cult of fertility, growth, and ancestral blessing" (Barth 1987, 2, my italics).¹ In accordance with such usages, cosmology is a more accurate analytic category in reference to the Spiritual world of the Spiritual Baptist religion than *mythology*, if *myth* is understood as a sacred narrative explaining the origins of social order and phenomena.² However, the idea of a theory about the nature of the universe renders cosmology a delineated system of knowledge that can be held and learnt in the same form by different representatives of a social group or category. The Spiritual Baptist cosmology, and religious knowledge in general, is neither a limited system, nor identically embraced by any two members of the religion. Barth's characterisation of the Mountain Ok cosmology as "a living tradition of knowledge – not a set of abstract ideas enshrined in collective representations" (1987, 84) can be well applied to the Spiritual world. In fact, the term "Spiritual world" is not very frequently used by Spiritual Baptists. Expressions such as "In the Spirit," "Spiritual" or "travelling" are used to talk about experiences in the dimension that this chapter attempts to delineate. "While I was on my journey, I saw this man with three flags in his hand," described a pilgrim about her experiences in the Spiritual world, using typical phraseology. Many times visions and dreams are talked about without any reference to a cosmological level other than the phenomenal world. For example, Leader Gerald came home one night from walking his dog on a dark road in the hills in Black Rock, and told us that he had seen four spirits walking in front of him and that he could not reach them, no matter how fast he walked. He did not situate his experience into any other level or environment except the dark dirt road in the hills.

The lack of standard terminology to embrace the entire cosmology follows the fact that Spiritual Baptists hardly discuss their cosmology as a total, finite system. Unlike the neat maps of many ethnographic accounts, this cosmology appears to different individuals in different proportions and from different angles, and therefore two Spiritual Baptists cannot share identical knowledge of it. Furthermore, the cosmology can never be known in its totality by any one person; as Mother Cleorita puts it, "you never done learn in dis religion." It is not that Spiritual Baptists cannot conceptualise the cosmology as a coherent system with clear-cut categories of locations and entities – they most certainly can. But they also realise that Spiritual knowledge is given to people according to their

ability to understand it, and whereas some is shared with others, some is kept secret, and some is never learnt by all. Therefore expressions like "when I was in de Spirit" or "the pilgrim was travelling in India" are sufficient referential tools in Spiritual Baptist discourse.

I have opted to use the term "Spiritual world", picked up from conversations between elders, to draw a synthesis of the narratives, comments, and practices that relate to cosmology. Such a synthesis does not exist anywhere in textual form, nor can it be rendered orally; I have compiled it from bits and pieces of what people say and do, giving a fairly polyphonic collage of sometimes even contradictory experiences and beliefs. In this way the heterogeneity but also the commonly shared structure of the Spiritual Baptist belief system become apparent. Instead of raising any one voice above others, essentialising one person's experience of the cosmology as "the correct" one, I attempt to show how individual experiences constitute shared religious knowledge, and how this knowledge is enacted and transformed in ritual practice.

GEOGRAPHY

At St. Peter's Church five mourners thanked their Pointer, Leader Alan, Mother Eulah and the labourers before narrating their tracks to the congregation. Dressed in white and marching with a Bible, a white candle and a palm leaf in her hand, Number One, a green mourner in her thirties, told us of her journey. She concluded each episode by saying "Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit" and making the sign of the cross. The congregation responded to her tracks by singing hymns related to them. On her journey she had gone to India, where she was teaching and received the Spiritual garment of a Teacher, she said. The nurses immediately sang *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, a children's song often sung in mourning rituals when a pilgrim becomes a Teacher. "B, B, B," Number One repeated as if in front of a class, and the alphabets soon turned into a mouth drumming rhythm, we picked it up and Number One started to whirl around, singing an Indian chant. The Spirit did not leave her, and as she explained how she continued her journey to Africa and met a serpent, she crawled and hissed; then roared and scraped with the front paws, describing her encounter with a lion. *Coming All the Way from Africa Land*, she burst out singing, still in the Spirit. In addition to India and Africa, she had also travelled in Tobago, visiting the Scarborough market, and ended up in Jerusalem.

Number Two, another young sister, had travelled in Scarborough and in the neighbouring village of Black Rock, where she had met Teacher Claudia, after which she had gone to Africa. There she had received a calabash and an African outfit and gone to church with the twelve tribes of Jesus' twelve disciples. She had also been to a hospital, where she was put to lay in the Number Two bed. Mama Lata³ had given her milk and told her to drink more of it. As she started to tell us about sailing in a boat, Leader Alan and Mother Eulah interrupted her, because this was a secret, private track.

Tracks like the above, travelling in different landscapes, encountering people and Spiritual entities and receiving gifts, new skills and cures, are typical of most accounts of the pilgrim journey. Accounts of Spiritual travellers and descriptions of visions and dreams provide information about the cosmology of the religion, as people verbalise their experiences and sensations. On the basis of such accounts and discussions, the Spiritual world consists of various *nations*, namely India, Africa, China and Syria, of Biblical locations such as Jerusalem, Egypt, Canaan, River Jordan, and Zion, and of local Tobagonian sites like the Scarborough market or beaches and rivers. While travelling in the Spiritual world, pilgrims normally know where they are situated, connecting certain landscapes, entities and experiences to certain nations or cities. The journey with its various visions is structured along these locations: most mourners' tracks start with statements like "Then I went to China" or "When I was in Africa." It is not unusual, however, for pilgrims to be lost, unaware of their whereabouts, or to spend considerable time on their way from one known location to another.

NATIONS

The term nation is common in Afro-Caribbean cosmologies. It usually refers to West African peoples, "nations" like the Yoruba, the Congo, or the Igbo; in religions like the Big Drum ritual in Carriacou, Vodou in Haiti or Santería in Cuba such nations (*nacion*, *nanchon*) are regarded as the ancestral origins of the contemporary Afro-Caribbeans and as sources of their religious traditions. Similar connotations are attached to the word nation by Spiritual Baptists as well, as the discourse draws close to the Rastafarian terminology of "tribes:" the twelve tribes of Israel (Acts 26:7, James 1:1) have been equalled to African tribes, in the Rasta case Ethiopians (Barrett 1977, 111) – there is a global Rastafari organisation called the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Chevannes 1998, 66) – but in the Spiritual Baptist discourse, to unspecified African nations. Thus the number twelve is often symbolically connected to the twelve tribes of Israel (or Africa), and some churches have, for example, twelve different flags around their centrepole

representing the tribes or nations. However, the term nation is more often used in Tobago when discussing regions or countries in the Spiritual world, namely Africa, India, China, and Syria. I use the term nation in this sense as the Tobagonian elders have taught me.⁴ The Spiritual Baptist cosmology reflects the global network of migrations, voluntary and involuntary, which developed during colonialism and was initiated by the demand for labour on Caribbean plantations. As such it is irrefutably creolised. The nations and other places, as will become obvious, are linked with different Spiritual beings, but also with actions: communication, learning, speaking, dancing, sailing, and so forth. Herskovits' informants in 1939 also associated Spiritual places with actions and learning: "Spirit send some to Africa, learn to talk language, African language. Some to India, learn to talk like an Indian. Some to China, learn to talk Chinese" (1947, 205).⁵

No definite distinctions between Spiritual regions or nations can be drawn on the basis of the scenery. Pilgrims describe how they had to wander through thick and vast forests where they often encountered different animals. Rivers, ponds and seas are frequently mentioned. Occasionally the landscape can be very severe and demanding, with hills, big stones and gullies, or endless desert roads with no shade in sight. Many travellers have to march or walk very far, often in demanding circumstances and discouraged by the heat of the sun, thirst, hunger, getting lost, desperation and attacks by evil spirits. They may climb high mountains and descend into tunnels and subterranean caves. Indian experiences portray fewer forests than African, whereas cane fields are sometimes explored in India, but never in Africa.⁶ All in all, the actual landscape as such shows little variety in pilgrims' accounts of the nations: it is the encounters with Spiritual beings that really give the location its specific character. One recurring scene in Spiritual Africa, mentioned by many pilgrims, is a clearing deep in a forest where Africans dance around a fire. Drums are everywhere, the rhythm carrying the pilgrim, drawing her to the dance. Indian people, on the other hand, are sometimes encountered in towns, in cane fields, in the forest, or on the beach.

The nations are not exclusive or isolated areas. Popular destinations on Spiritual journeys, Biblical locations like Zion, Jerusalem, Canaan, River Jordan, Egypt and Israel, are not necessarily separate from the main Spiritual nations of Africa, India and China, as Mother Cleorita's apprenticeship in Zion Hospital with the Chinese doctor Lee clearly shows. Cities and regions familiar from the Old and New Testaments are seldom described in detail, as the travellers' accounts mostly concentrate on the people encountered and things learnt and received. Zane (1999, 85-86) writes about Vincentian Converted experiences of such places in the Spiritual world and depicts cities like Jericho and Canaan more systematically than Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists' accounts. The overlapping of

Biblical topography and the larger Spiritual Baptist cosmology is also clear in those experiences in the Spiritual world in which Biblical characters, like prophets or angels, are encountered in Spiritual Africa, India or China.

The distances between two places in the Spiritual world vary, and they can be reached by different routes; sometimes they are just across the border, but sometimes the journey seems endless, as one has to climb mountains, find her way in a thick forest or sail across an ocean. Elders have said that there is a border between Africa and India, easy to cross by merely stepping over to the other side. The transition is marked by the different people dwelling in the nations. As Teacher Audrey explained, "When I went to Africa and India, the border, Africa and India have a border. I was in Africa, and travelling, and it was just to cross over, you realise when you see Indian people on the pavement and in the street." Although close to one another and intersected by Biblical locales, these Spiritual nations nevertheless are usually easily distinguished from one another, both on the level of dreams and visions (travelling in the Spiritual world) and in ritual practice, in which India, Africa, and China become part of the tangible world.

Whereas some Pointers state that pilgrims always travel to Africa first, and then possibly to other nations, other elders like Teacher Audrey note that the primary destination depends on the inclination of the pilgrim. She herself started her first pilgrim journey in China, then travelled to Africa, and only found her way to India during her fifth mourning. Spiritually she prefers Africa, and most times entertains the African spirit in rituals. Some pilgrims may head for India first and like it there so much that they only cross over to Africa late in their Spiritual careers. The inclination towards one nation rather than another is significant not only in Spiritual experiences, but also in ritual practice: people who travel mainly in Africa also entertain the African Spirit, speaking the African language, dancing in the African way, wearing African colours, and organising African rituals, like thanksgivings with predominantly African symbols. Most Spiritual Baptists are divided between Indian and African according to spiritual preference and divine dispensation: "I go to India, yes, but I ent stay because I ent really like it." The fact that most travellers "walk two path," go to more than one nation on their journeys, reflects the ideal of multi-nationality.

Although the nations give the basic structure to the Spiritual world, many experiences are situated in more immediate environments, part of a larger landscape. The most frequently mentioned locales in the Spiritual world are the road, the forest, the desert, and the sea. Other recurrent landmarks are rivers, clearings in the forest, mountains, and beaches. Also, schools, hospitals and

churches are commonly visited by Tobagonian mourners. These landscapes and places are found in all the main nations.

The road provides the basic setting for the pilgrim journey. Whether walking or riding a horse or even driving a car, pilgrim travellers often pass along roads – endless deserts roads with no shade in sight, winding roads in the forest, or steep, uninviting mountain roads. The basic marching rhythm that is repeated throughout the pointing service and again in mourner room services, with the pilgrim marching and begging in an even "one, two, one, two" -tempo, helps to pace the marching on the Spiritual road. Roads are the main setting for transitions from one locale to another, although some pilgrims also travel by sea and air. Crossroads, junctions on the road are especially important. They are perceptible for labourers and visitors marching with the pilgrim in mourner room services: when the pilgrim stops marching and starts to speak in tongues, to scream or howl, to sing or move in an exceptional way, like bending up and down, she has reached a junction on the road. The Pointer may call "Junction!" at such a point, so that others, too, stop marching and avoid passing the significant spot. Encounters with Spiritual entities often take place at such places: the pilgrim traveller may see a figure standing at a crossroads or reach passengers coming from the opposite direction there, and proceed to communicate with them. These entities can be good or evil. On other occasions no spiritual entities are encountered, but the pilgrim has to pick from two choices – which way to continue. She must choose the right road, using her secret passwords, lest she be lost or her journey hindered. Leader Brothers used to advise pilgrims to march "left, right, left, right..." in junctions, asking questions and holding on to her key, and wait for "an arrow or a sign" to point the right road to her.

Travelling by boat is fairly common. Passages between nations in the Spiritual world can be by sea, although many travellers only walk or ride along solid roads. Sometimes storms threaten the seafarer. Along with sailing and navigating, travellers may find themselves swimming, or then entirely immersed under the waves. During one of her several mournings, Mother Cleorita was under the sea and came upon St. Philomen, a beautiful lady sitting on a chair and surrounded by dolphins and all kinds of fish. One of the fish had a golden ring with a chart and compass-sign around its tail, and it dropped the ring at Mother Cleorita's feet. The lady then took her to a submarine cave, full of gold, and said to Mother Cleorita: "Come, my child, it is yours, take!" Since that experience Mother Cleorita has made sure that there is a bit of gold in all her church clothes. She also had a golden chart and compass-ring made for herself, and never takes it off. Other elders, too, described a complex nautical society of Spiritual entities and their mutual relations in the sea, telling stories of a submarine world with towns and caves, where drowned people end up and where

mermaids, sea horses, and other Spiritual beings and animals dwell. Leader Gerald depicted a wonderful, strange world beneath the water, like those shown in television documentaries of marine life – mountains, volcanoes and trees, big snakes, electric eels and other extraordinary creatures. Mermaids and fairy maids are part of this marine realm of the Spiritual world. Characterised as beautiful women with a fish tail, they are seen sitting on stones in the sea or in rivers, combing their long hair.

Water contains Spiritual power, and in Spiritual battles during the mourning ritual, Mother Cleorita once killed a gang of *enemies* by throwing a bucketful of water over them. Water in rivers, waterfalls, seas and ponds also provides the setting for Spiritual encounters and events on the pilgrim journey. On another of Mother Cleorita's journeys she was travelling in Tobago, driving her van down Lambeau road, and there was a river running next to the sea. She saw Leader Cartland in the river, struggling with the waves, almost drowning. Now, in the worldly life Leader Cartland was a good swimmer, and Mother Cleorita could not swim, but in the Spirit she "could swim like a fish" – just like Leader Brothers in his vision of St. Francis, described in Chapter Four. She realised that she had to save the Leader, and into the waves she dived, swam to him and pulled him towards the shore. But all of a sudden she saw three men standing on the river bank, looking very threatening, and understood that it was not Leader Cartland they wanted, it was her. Suddenly the water went wild, there were great streams rushing towards her, water everywhere. Mother Cleorita could not climb out to the shore, because the men stopped her. So she let out an Indian call, a high-pitched howl parted into short sequences by tapping her mouth with her palm. Immediately a cobra snake appeared on the shore. It pushed the three men into the waves, one by one – they were too slow to fight the swiftly moving cobra. The men disappeared into the river and the waves died down, the water became smooth and very still. Mother Cleorita and Leader Cartland just climbed onto the bank, saved by the Indian cobra snake.⁷

Finally, the forest or the *jungle* as it is sometimes referred to (see also Zane 1999, 84) is another environment in which Spiritual encounters are frequent, both in visions and dreams and in the actual Tobagonian bush. As explained earlier, the forest and clearings in the forest are common when travelling in Africa. Also, learning about plants, roots and seeds, and their employment in healing practices, usually takes place in a forest.

ENCOUNTERS WITH SPIRITUAL BEINGS

In Tobago, members of different Spiritual Baptist churches identify the beings they encounter in the Spiritual world in different ways. Whereas some are quite unambiguous in naming the characters they have encountered as saints, others define the Spiritual nationality and gender of the entity as "an Indian man" or "an African woman," for example. The same traveller may also meet specifically named saints and less specific Indian, Chinese, Syrian, or African men and women. The characters who are identified as specific persons are Biblical, like Abraham or Ezekiel. There are also other Spiritual beings, for example Chinese spirits, who can be understood as forms of the Holy Spirit. Anonymous anthropomorphic entities, men, women and children, can be either good or evil. Alongside the diverse Holy Spirit, there are other entities dwelling in the Spiritual World: orisha powers (whom some Spiritual Baptists equal with saints, and others do not), ancestral spirits, jumbies, spirits of delusion or evil spirits and demons. Some have encountered figures of the local lore, such as Papa Bois (the Father of the Forest), monsters, unnatural animals, fairy maids and mermaids. In addition to these, animals, insects and even plants can have meaningful roles on the journey; they may assist the pilgrim, for example by carrying her on their back, or they may talk, give advice or answer the pilgrim's questions. Even inanimate objects may engage in Spiritual communication with the pilgrim: Leader Gerald often advised his Spiritual children to ask questions every time they encounter or see anything on their journey, since even the smallest leaf can have valuable information.

SAINTS

Saints are an integral part of the Spiritual world for many Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists. I introduce them as embedded in the Spiritual landscape, through spiritual travellers' experiences of them, and later on through their various representations and manifestations in rituals. There are some churches in Tobago in which saints are rarely encountered, and a few Spiritual Baptists reject the idea of saints being intermediaries in Spiritual manifestations. In many local churches, however, St. Anthony, St. Francis, St. Jerome, St. John, St. Jonah, St. Michael, St. Peter, St. Raphael, St. Anna, St. Anne, St. Catherine, St. Mary or Virgin Mary, St. Philomen, St. Rita and St. Theresa are part of the discourse and ritual practice. Gabriel, Michael, Raphael and Uriel,⁸ the (arch)angels, are also often mentioned as equals to the saints and called together with them in prayers and chants.⁹ Biblical characters, such as apostles, prophets, and disciples, can be

referred to as saints, like St. Luke. Nine saints have at least one Spiritual Baptist church in Tobago named after them – there are four for St. Philomen, two for St. Peter and St. Michael, whereas St. Anthony, St. Catherine, St. Francis, St. Mary, St. Rita and St. Theresa each have one. These are also among the saints most often referred to in discussions, invited to services and rituals, entertained in Spirit and encountered on Spiritual journeys.

Saints in the Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist discourse are not as explicitly defined or worshipped as the deities are in many other Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American creole religions like Santería, Candomblé, Vodou and Orisha. Whereas the orisha powers, often referred to by their Catholic names in Tobago, have quite unmistakable features and characteristics, so that St. Catherine or Oya is always associated with a certain colour, certain Yoruba chants, certain foods and drinks, a certain day of the week, and certain sacrificial animals, the Spiritual Baptist experiences of the saints are less personalised. They do connote Spiritual nations, which are represented by colours, emblems, dances and music both in the Spiritual world and in rituals, and some of them even have personal tools, such as St. Michael's sword, but generally most of the saints are relatively ambiguous. The tools or emblems they use reflect their Spiritual nation more than their personality. There are, however, manifestations in several Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches very similar to those of the orisha, and some churches and individuals have very specified experiences of saints.

Leader Brothers used to know all the saints and angels by heart, thirty-six in all, but he has forgotten some. He described their division of labour as resembling the government of Trinidad and Tobago: St. Michael is the head of the army of God and rules the sun; Uriel is the Grand Secretary, St. John is the Minister of Religion. St. Peter is the Minister of the Marine and St. Jonah his assistant, St. Jerome is the one ruling the sea shore, St. Philomen is the Mother of the Sea, St. Anne the Mother of the River, St. Anthony the Father of the River. The Minister of Health is St. Luke, whereas St. Anna is in charge of all the caves. St. Catherine rules the air and the trees, and St. Theresa the flower gardens. Virgin Mary rules the moon. The Prime Minister of this Spiritual government is Christ, and the supreme President above all these is God. In the same vein, Leader Gerald explained that mermaids and fairy maids work for St. Philomen, who is "the boss of the sea, like Prime Minister," ruling the ocean and its fish and animals. Such vocabulary indicates connotations of a modern nation state, as does the idea of the Spiritual world as a compilation of nations. The state-analogy exemplifies how the cosmology develops and embraces new features; Yoruba deities and Catholic saints, recognised as the origins of creole pantheons by anthropologists, have not been conceptualised as modern governments. The

Spiritual Baptist cosmology is embedded in the local social world and as such, it reflects the reality in which the practitioners live.

The majority of the saints come either from Africa or from India, which is shown in the colours associated with the saints, so that African saints wear colours like red, pink and green, whereas Indian saints are mainly seen in deep yellow. These colours are perhaps the most explicit feature defining particular saints, along with other representations, like emblems, dance styles and tongues.

There is slight variation between different individuals' descriptions of the saints they have met, including the colours they wear. For example, St. Anne, the Mother of the River, usually wears dark navy blue, but has also been seen in a brown dress by two senior mothers. Teacher Audrey explained that the same saint can come as old and young, in different forms, wearing different colours.

The following connections between saints and colours, emblems, Spiritual nations, and the realms where they dwell and work are compiled on the basis of Tobagonian discourse and ritual practice. This chart draws on different people's accounts of the saints, and it is not a comprehensive list of all Tobagonian knowledge of saints or any particular person's personal information.

NAME	COLOUR	EMBLEMS	NATION	REALM
St. Anne	dark blue brown		Africa	river
St. Catherine	green pink, dark navy blue, black		Africa	air
St. Francis (and his brothers)	yellow white, brown, green and yellow	lota	India	forest
St. John	red and white		Africa	
St. Jonah	black and red		Africa	sea
St. Michael	red	sword (wooden, or a steel cutlass) ¹⁰	Africa	
St. Peter	black and red blue, brown		Africa	sea
St. Philomen	pink white, blue	calabash, shell	Africa	sea
St. Raphael	brown		Africa	
St. Theresa	green		Africa	

Table V: Saints and their characteristics

The most central relationship between Spiritual Baptists and saints is the guardian saint institution. Saints are guardians, advisors, spiritual forces who do not take one to Heaven as such, as Mother Cleorita pointed out, but who can show the right way. God alone can deliver a believer, but the saints help and guide her in her carnal life. Spiritual Baptists never pray to saints alone, always to

God, but the saints can function as intermediaries, advisors, deliverers of messages and instructions, and sometimes also disciplinarians. In the Spiritual Baptist religion there are no such bonds between an orisha and her or his *horse* as in the Orisha religion, an *orisha* and a *santero* or *santera* in Santería (Murphy 1994, 86), or the *mèt tèt* and a *voduisant* in Vodou (Brown 2001, 113); practitioners are not initiated to a particular saint, no altars are built for one saint alone, and most are able to entertain more than one saint – or more than one nationality of the Spirit – during their lives.

In those churches where saints are a recognised part of the Spiritual world and ritual practice, most members who have mourned have their own guardian saints. The connection is confirmed during the ritual of mourning, when the travelling pilgrim meets her guardian saint in India, Africa or sometimes in other places, like in Jerusalem or Tobago. The saint introduces himself or herself, often gives the pilgrim clothes, objects or advice, and gives her instructions and information on various matters.¹¹ The African saints are usually encountered in Africa, St. Francis in India, but saints can also show themselves in other spiritual environments, like in various Tobagonian locations or in Biblical places like Jerusalem or Zion. Sister Paula met St. Francis in India on her second Throne of Grace, and he gave her yellow and brown clothes and a lota pot, and taught her to speak Indian tongues. Therefore Paula became Indian in Spirit and was able to entertain the Indian Spirit as well as African. Paula's church colours are now brown and yellow. Sister Margaret saw her guardian saint on her first Throne of Grace as she travelled to Africa. In the middle of a thick, lush forest there was a river running lazily between the greenness. An unnaturally tall woman was sitting on a river stone, her long hair covering her. She was extremely beautiful, and there was something magnificent about her. The sister used her key to test whether the lady was one of God's people, and she just stayed on her stone, smiling. They then had a long conversation, during which the saint told Sister Margaret to wear something blue every time she goes to church, and then presented her with a golden ring with two seals. After Sister Margaret had completed her journey and returned to the carnal world, she had the ring made just as instructed. She has also always worn her blue band to all services and rituals, as it was assigned as her church colour. Such colours are not used exclusively, though: to suit a markedly Indian occasion, a sister with red as her church colour might want to put on a white, yellow or a printed dress instead of her own African colours, and vice versa. In the same way church uniforms, or garb indicating one's Spiritual rank, are preferred to one's own church colours on many occasions. The church uniforms bear similar colour symbolism as the personal attire, so that St. Philomen Church's white dresses with pink headties and aprons reflect Africa, whereas St. Francis's brown and yellow dresses, sashes

and headties point to India. However, the churches as such do not incline towards either nation in any definite manner, so that St. Francis Church, for example, would only produce Indian rituals; in both, the Holy Spirit is entertained in all forms.

Not only the national inclination, but also personal characteristics can affect the bonding between a saint and a believer. A particular saint may find certain types of people suitable for manifestation. There is a certain congruence between a steadfast and determinate character and St. Michael, for example, but this is less explicit in the Spiritual Baptist faith than in many other Afro-Caribbean religions, since the saints' personalities are seldom elaborated on. Gender, however, is a significant criterion for the relationship. Whereas male saints can manifest in women, it is not appropriate for men to entertain female saints. Should a man tell his Spiritual Mother that his guardian saint is St. Philomen, she would most certainly admonish him and accuse him of homosexual tendencies.¹² As one Mother put it, "I say he gone to de odder side, dat he like man;" another promised to "kick out" any such brother from her church. This reflects the fairly absolute condemnation of homosexuality both within the religion and Tobagonian society as a whole, due to which non-heterosexual identities and practices are seldom publicly displayed.¹³ Women may embrace masculine features and yet not have their sexual identity called under question,¹⁴ but for men a female Spiritual principle would signify unacceptable deviation from the prevalent ideal of masculinity. Negative opinions about non-heterosexual tendencies are often brought up in sermons and informal conversations.

The fact that for women it is natural to be able to entertain saints of both genders without an implication of sexual orientation leads to the interesting bias between women's and men's capacity to entertain saints: whereas distinguished Mothers are able to welcome any of the saints, no male elder is supposed to entertain any of the female saints. Women, therefore, have in this sense a stronger foothold in the Spiritual world. The same bias is evident in that the vast majority of manifestations in Spiritual Baptist services and rituals are experienced by women. In Tante Thelma's thanksgiving women *catch power* thirty-two times, men four times; in Brother Errol's thanksgiving, where male manifestations were remarkably prominent, brothers *catch power* fourteen times to sisters' thirty-three. In normal services the disparity is normally as clear as in thanksgivings, so that in Mt. Arrarat Church a regular Sunday service included thirteen female and five male manifestations. That women outnumber men in all Spiritual Baptist services does not fully explain the bias, because although there are fewer men than women present, many of the men act in central roles as Leaders, Ministers, Pointers, Baptisers or Captains, and there are numerous settings within a service for men to perform in front of the congregation, such as praying, preaching and

reading lessons. Nevertheless, without exception it is women who catch power and shift into the Spiritual realm more often.

Manifestation, then, does not connote a sexual union between the power and the believer; if it did, then the heterosexual norm of the society would require women to entertain only masculine, and men, feminine saints. The fact that female saints make men effeminate shows how the saints and thus the Holy Spirit are understood as integral parts of the believers, affecting and reflecting their identities to a profound extent. The manifesting power is not external to the believer's subjectivity and identity: via connections to the Spiritual world in the initiation rituals of the religion, it becomes part of her.

Saints can reveal themselves to "those who have eyes to see" also outside the mourner room, in dreams and visions. St. Anne appeared to Mother Cleorita when she was labouring at her church, tending to pilgrims. She had had a vision to point the pilgrims at three o'clock in the afternoon, but for some reason the ritual was delayed. As a result of her failure to obey Spiritual instructions, Mother Cleorita only got one half of a key to give to one of the pilgrims; the rest of the key just disappeared from her. Since the pilgrim did not get the whole key, he was unable to travel and had to wander in darkness for the first four days. On Thursday Mother Cleorita and Mother Eulah were sitting in the church kitchen, shelling peas, and Mother Cleorita saw a lady in a brown dress pass the kitchen door. "Mother Eulah look look, a who dat?" But Mother Eulah did not see anything. The lady passed another time; Mother Eulah still couldn't see a thing. The third time the lady took her time, passing quite slowly by the kitchen door, and Mother Cleorita called "Mother Eulah look now!", but the latter still could not see her. Mother Cleorita realised that she had to go to the mourner room. Inside the room she kneeled next to Number One, the pilgrim with the incomplete key, and a hand came down from above and wrote something on the floor with chalk. It was the key. Mother Cleorita whispered the key to Number One, who jumped up and started to travel immediately. The lady in brown was St. Anne, who normally wears blue.

OTHER SPIRITUAL BEINGS

In addition to saints, various other beings inhabit the Spiritual world. Biblical characters like Father Abraham, Archangel Michael or other angels, Ezekiel, or even Jesus or the Devil, are often encountered on Spiritual journeys. In the Spiritual Baptist discourse, many of these Biblical figures are, at times, referred to as *saints*, but most distinguish *angels* and *prophets* from saints. Also, the terms

cherubim and *seraphim* (see for example Genesis 3:24, Isaiah 3:2) are used in prayers, sermons and other discourse in reference to angels.

Mother Cleorita met both Satan and Abraham during one of her pilgrim journeys. She was walking down a long, long road with no destination in sight, and the night was about to fall. Mother Cleorita just marched on and on, without knowing where she was going, until she reached a crossroads. At the crossroads she heard a horse galloping from behind. *Takapakatakapaka...* Maybe somebody was finally coming to help her, to give her a little ride, she was so weary. The rider reached her and said: "Come, my child, I will show you everything!" But Mother Cleorita, exhausted as she was, nevertheless made sure to test the man before saying anything. She repeated her key over and over, and look! Fire started to flame from the rider's eyes, nostrils and mouth! It was "Mr. Satan Devil himself," realised Mother Cleorita. At the same moment the rider slapped his thigh, and all of a sudden Mother Cleorita was surrounded by riders on horseback, about to attack her. She reached her arms towards the sky, calling for help, and a shepherd's rod descended. She grabbed it and started to hit the riders, and they fell down as she touched them. Only one escaped.

After this ordeal she was even more tired than before, and started to tread along, dragging her feet, leaning on the rod. She then saw a very old man, his long, white beard hanging down, shepherd's rod in his hand, walking slowly towards her. "Father Abraham, Father Abraham," she called, "I just fought a battle with Satan!" The old man answered that he knew that, he was standing right there when it happened, right there next to her. Abraham took Mother Cleorita to a river, there were palm trees and it was cool and lovely, she could finally drink and bathe; she was beating her skin in the water. And there was a new garment laid on a stone for her to wear. Then Abraham took her to an aeroplane, and they flew over the area, and he showed her a place with fire, fire everywhere, and people shovelling more fire into ovens; but the heat was so intense that the plane could not go too close. Father Abraham told Mother Cleorita that this was hell, and here she would have ended up, had she gone with the rider.

In a vision, Leader Gerald saw Jesus come down to Earth. Jesus went to the Plymouth Anglican Church, where he divided people into sheep and goats, to those who follow him and those who don't. Many people were crying and bawling, like a woman who always went to church on Sundays and still was not saved, whereas her husband who never went to church, was. This was an important message about churchgoers' hypocrisy. Leader Brothers met Jesus on the night preceding his baptism, as he was pointed and sleeping at the church. Travelling in the Spiritual world, he reached a huge building and was invited to come inside. There were Jesus and his disciples, sitting around a round table.

Jesus made a sign for Leader Brothers to approach, but he was shining so bright that the latter could not face him. Jesus told the neophyte that his sins were forgiven and promised him to guide him on his way as a Christian man.

Alongside the familiar figures of the Old and New Testaments, various other entities can communicate with Spiritual travellers. Again, these can also be encountered outside the mourning ground, in visions and dreams, and in the case of some elders, seen with carnal eyes too. In many narratives, Africans and Indians met by the pilgrim traveller are not described as saints, but rather as people. Leader Gerald once followed the sound of drums he heard on his way, and came upon "a set of African, naked skin, just little piece of clothing, with marks on dey face and spear in de 'and." He knew that that was not for him to join, and turned his back on them and went his way. He soon heard new drums and found a group of Africans wearing beautiful African clothes, and the drummers were in three groups, sending messages to one another, one group answering to another's beats. These were the Africans he was supposed to meet. Indian people encountered in the Spiritual world can resemble Caribbean people of East Indian descent, but also Native Americans – more commonly North American Indians than Caribbean, Apaches instead of Arawaks. Some travellers mention feathers and painted faces, or use the term "Wild Indians" as distinct from (East) Indians. Many travellers merely refer to "an Indian man" without particular attributes. Also certain animals belong to these main nations: whereas cobras and other snakes recur in India, lions are met in Africa. The Chinese Spirit is given personal characteristics less often than African and Indian, and the Assyrian Spirit is hardly ever described. There are no Chinese saints with Catholic names. Nevertheless, saint-like benevolent Spiritual entities associated with China are sometimes mentioned.

Many of the non-Biblical characters dwelling in the Spiritual world, like jumbies and other figures of the local lore, are commonly known and kept alive in traditional narratives, folk-tales, songs, and anecdotes, some also in Carnival portrayals. In other words, they are not part of the Spiritual Baptist cosmology alone, nor do they originate from the Spiritual Baptist belief system. Many Tobagonians who go to western-originated churches, like the Methodist, Adventist, Anglican, or Pentecostal, believe that such entities exist, and there are numerous Spiritual Baptists who do not, but in general it is easier to adjoin them to the Spiritual Baptist cosmology than to, for example, the Moravian. Because the Spiritual world with its saints and Biblical characters is so central to Spiritual Baptists, and personal experiences of these, gained in very real encounters, are part of the everyday life, there is nothing unnatural, incredible or heretical in acknowledging lesser spiritual entities as well. It is fundamentally important to underline that Spiritual Baptists do not worship any such entities;

the point is that their Spiritual world, their religious cosmology, is large enough to include the good and the evil, the high and the low.

Ancestral spirits, or more precisely, the spirits of deceased family members, friends and relatives are widely recognised as part of the daily reality of Tobagonians. The level on which the dead continue their existence varies, however, so that whereas many Spiritual Baptists would merely remember their loved ones who have passed away, some see their spirits in dreams and visions and even communicate with them. In this latter case, the good dead linger around the house, they see and hear what is going on in their families, and often choose to intervene in the lives of their surviving relatives. Pearl was a beautiful, good-humoured Spiritual Baptist woman who died in her early thirties, leaving behind a grieving family, two young daughters and lots of friends. Since her death she has continued to exist in the community: she shows herself to certain family members and close friends and sometimes brings messages. In the dreams and visions of her nieces and daughters, of her mother, her brother and a close family friend, Pearl looks the way she used to look, vibrant and lively. Before the wedding of her sister, Pearl used to appear quite often. She told her friend that she would be attending the bachelors' night, and that she wanted to have a good time, to hear drums. The family called the drummers of their church on the night before the wedding, and people from the village gathered in the yard to sing, dance and lime together. The drummers were beating all night, and as the beating and singing reached its height, Pearl's daughter and another young girl suddenly jumped in Spirit. Everybody agreed that Pearl had dropped by.

The messages Pearl brought to her family in dreams concerned mainly their behaviour. For example, she told her daughters to obey their grandmother now that she was gone, and not to be rude to her. On another occasion she promised to help her sister in locating a new home for her family when they were in desperate need of one. Soon after Pearl died, her niece Paula started to catch power just like her late aunt. In most thanksgivings the Spirit took her in a powerful way, sending her body twisting and bending until she settled down and started a jolting African dance. The dance culminated as she took a calabash, threw water over the others around her, and finally turned the whole vessel upside down, showering herself with water. Sometimes she threw the calabash to the ceiling, sometimes over the congregation. In exactly the same way Pearl used to soak us in church. After one such performance in a thanksgiving, Paula's uncle remarked in his sermon to the thanksgiver that the ceremony was truly blessed now that his sister Pearl had paid them a visit. In a similar manner others who knew Pearl always pointed out how she continued to rejoice in the Lord through Paula.

Brother William communicated with "his people" almost daily. He used to see his deceased family members and relatives in dreams and while praying and meditating. They – his mother, his father, grandparents and other close relatives – gave him advice on various aspects of his life, telling him whom to trust, how to plan his future, and the advice could be quite specific at times. He felt the presence of "his people," or the good dead, quite concretely, so that in actual physical fights they assisted him and protected him from getting hurt.

A memorial service at Patience Hill Church provides an exceptionally forthright example of the commonly acknowledged connection between the dead and the living. Mother Almira Callender, who died some years ago and whose daughter Laura now leads the church, was the protagonist of the service. The congregation consisted of members of different churches, most of them specially invited. Several relatives, friends and colleagues of the deceased Mother got up and spoke about her, and in between we sang hymns. At the end of the otherwise ordinary service Teacher Laura asked thirteen elders to join her in front of the altar. They, ten women and four men, joined hands and formed a circle. Teacher Laura took a piece of chalk and drew a sign on the dark stone floor. Leader Gerald, highest in rank among those present (and a brother-in-law to the deceased), then took the chalk and started to draw elaborate signs in the form of a coffin. Others were chanting a hymn, clapping and mouth drumming in a circle around him. As the coffin was ready, Teacher Laura placed six white candles around it, rested a water-pitcher and a taria at its narrow end and a bell and a glass of water and flowers at the opposite end. She threw grains over the coffin, then oil, spinning herself, calling out in the Spirit. Other elders rang the bell over the coffin, sprinkling sweetwater, perfume and powder, covering the signs. Teacher Laura beat the coffin with each elder in the circle, banging the pattern on the floor. Then she and Leader Gerald joined hands over the coffin, standing on opposite sides, and pulled their arms back and forth, as if rowing. Leader Gerald started the slow Anglican hymn, *Lord in This Thy Mercy Day*, and we sang solemnly. Laura wiped the elders' faces with a white cloth, one by one. They clapped their hands five times, two fast and three slow, and we sang *Blessed Assurance*. Before leaving Leader Gerald declared to us all that he was not invoking the dead, as many of us would probably gossip tomorrow; the ritual was a symbolic reminder to all of us, because we all will have to die some day. He also pointed out that Mother Almira had been present all the time, Spiritually, hearing and seeing everything we had done in the service. These spirits of the dead are saints, he taught us; all spirits who deliver messages are saints. Then the service was completed, and we crowded outside where sisters served roast bake and fried fish. The Leader's concern with possible misinterpretations of the ritual were not unfounded, since invoking the dead, jumbies, is a well-known practice

in Tobagonian obeah, and many outsiders mistakenly associate Spiritual Baptist practices and beliefs with that.¹⁵

The good dead are not the only ancestral spirits dwelling in the Spiritual world. There are evil spirits, too. Jumbies are invoked by people with the intention to use the spirit for their own ends, usually to cause harm and damage to rivals and enemies.¹⁶ They are known as a category by all Tobagonians, and are not specific to the Spiritual Baptist cosmology. To call a spirit, one has to have knowledge about the techniques required, some of which can be obtained from books. Spiritual Baptists condemn jumbies and their invocation quite univocally, but it is also commonly acknowledged that members of the religion have the expertise to conduct such operations. Nobody would confess to being involved in any clandestine activities at cemeteries, but rumours about others doing it, whether or not Spiritual Baptists, run rampant. People have been seen in cemeteries in the middle of the night, like the man in Plymouth cemetery, completely naked, knocking on his late wife's grave stone and repeating an invocation. One Spiritual Baptist elder gave her young relatives advice on how to call a deceased female relative to help them, if things should turn really bad. She made sure to point out, however, that the spirit they would call back would not be the same person they miss so much, but a completely different being. She also emphasised that the dead could be used to do both good and bad things, depending on the intentions of the person invoking them. The dead, as such, are not evil or benevolent, and as many Spiritual Baptists say, there is no need to be afraid of the dead, it is the living that one must worry about.

Jumbies are often seen in Tobago. Lonely roads, like the Les Coteaux road or the road from Plymouth to Black Rock, are notorious places for jumbies. One anecdote of an eerie nocturnal encounter with a jumbie portrayed a man walking from Plymouth to Black Rock, late in the evening when it was already dark. There was another man walking ahead of him, skilfully playing the guitar as he went. The Plymouth man caught up to him and complimented on the music: "Yuh could real play, man!" "When ah was alive," replied the other. It was only then that the man noticed the cow feet of the guitar player, and took off as fast as he could. Leader Gerald has also seen jumbies on the same road, as well as on the dirt road leading from Black Rock to Patience Hill; both he and Mother Cleorita agreed that there used to be many more of them in the old days, when there were no street lights and very few cars. In their youth, when they had to walk long distances on lonely, dark roads, encountering jumbies was more common, but one can still find them now and then.

Bamboo patches and guava patches are especially dangerous as dwelling places of jumbies and other spirits. Leader Gerald, who had to cut a lot of bamboo every year to built the thanksgiving tent in his yard, once told his wife

that the bamboo patch in Mason Hall was "full of people," meaning spirits. These places are lonely and off the road, and should anything happen there, nobody would hear the calls for help. Mother Cleorita recounted what happened to a little boy from their village: he and his *pardners* were playing ball, and the boy kicked the ball into a guava patch by accident. He went to get the ball from the bush. After nine days he died of fever. The parents were "big folk" and did not care about people's warnings; they were told to go to the same guava patch and beg the jumbie to forgive the boy, to explain that it was only an accident and the boy did not mean to hit the jumbie with the ball. This kind of begging had saved another little boy's life. He too had hit a jumbie with a ball in a bamboo patch, and could not move his head after that, his neck stiff, but his parents had gone to the same place to beg and explain that "the chile nah know better, was jus' a game, please doan damage he!"

Jumbies can also be harnessed to further one's own interests. Unbeatable gamblers, merciless fighters, outstandingly skilled drummers or musicians, prosperous businessmen and other successful individuals may be accused of *walking with a jumbie* and thus using reproachable but feared assistance to beat their rivals. Jumbies can also mount objects, so that for example a stickfighter's stick, *bois*, could carry one.¹⁷

Most often jumbies appear as men, but there are also jumbie animals. These stand out by their size or colour. In another anecdote, a Spiritual Baptist lady was walking from Plymouth to Black Rock after a candle light meeting, and a big dog started to follow her, walking quite next to her. She was really scared, but did not say or do anything, just walked on and prayed. As she passed the bay by Turtle Beach, a small dog came running from the beach, straight to her. Suddenly the big dog just vanished, disappeared from sight. The lady was no longer afraid because she realised that the small dog had chased the jumbie away and protected her on her way. In another example, Leader Gerald and his *pardners* used to ride their bikes to Scarborough when they were young, to go to the cinema. They were passing the Whim road, when an unnaturally large hog crossed the road. It was followed by at least fifty little piggies. The boys got frightened. From then on they always carried a lime and a pin in their pockets, and pushed the pin through the lime when ready to ride home. Jumbie animals did not bother them again. Goats, birds, crabs, *crapauds* (frogs) and cats can also be jumbie animals.

Various kinds of protections can be used to avoid damage caused by jumbies. Mothers pin tiny bags on their babies' clothes to protect them, like small blue bundles pinned inside the top. Such bundles can be filled with a garlic glove, three cloves and a new lime bud, "to keep the bad away." Pins stuck through limes, as used by Leader Gerald and his friends, have already been mentioned. In

addition to these kinds of temporary shields, many Spiritual Baptists wear protecting items as accessories. Rings, chains and even anklets, made according to the directions received on Spiritual journeys, guard their bearer from evil. Baptismal and mourning bands, of course, provide protection, and the most efficient weapon in potentially dangerous encounters is the key, the secret password received in baptism and pointing.

In the rich folklore of Trinidad and Tobago, jumbies are accompanied by various other traditional figures. Papa Bois is the Master or Father of the Forest, an old but very strong man with cloven hoofs and a hairy body. His descriptions in folk-tales suggest kinship to Pan.¹⁸ He is the guardian of animals and trees, and protects them from destruction or wanton hunting. Leader Brothers met Papa Bois after long periods of fasting, meditating, and sun-gazing following his second throne of grace. Papa Bois, as described by Leader Brothers,

is a real man and not a spirit, quite hairy and stout. He speaks like anybody, and when you go deep deep in the forest, you will meet him there. He is in charge of the forest, and if any animal get damage, he would see to them. He heals gunshot wounds and things like that, like a doctor for the animals. You can go to him to ask for information about plants, he will direct you.¹⁹

Evil beings of the local lore, such as *la Diabliesse*, *duennes*, *soucouyants* and *monsters*,²⁰ populate the Spiritual world along with the benevolent and protecting creatures. Many Spiritual Baptists believe in the existence of these, and some claim to have seen them. One Leader said that *la Diabliesse* had killed his father. She is a beautiful mulatto woman who talks with a refined accent. She might ask a lonely man passing a quiet road "May I accompany you this evening?" and then lead the poor soul astray, causing him to get lost in the forest and even killing him. *La Diabliesse* is dressed in a long skirt and a large hat, the hem covering her cow foot. Monsters, on the other hand, were once described as creatures with long, long legs, so high that they can cover the whole road by standing one foot on the left, one on the right side. Similar figures are *Moko Jumbies*, who are also portrayed in Carnival bands by groups of proficient masqueraders, completely balanced on very high stilts covered by long pants.

As has been shown, the cast of spiritual entities and the exegeses of manifestations of the Holy Spirit combine into a pantheon much richer than a mere combination of Biblical figures or saints and West African deities. It would be fairly difficult to explain away neophytes' encounters with the Indian Saint Francis or Father Abraham by the popular arguments of the camouflage theory, stating that creole religions were syncretised out of necessity and that their pantheons consist of African deities strategically disguised as Catholic saints. The

population of the Spiritual world illustrates the creative basis of creolisation rather than any dual combinations of bounded traditions or teleological manoeuvring of cosmological knowledge.

COSMOLOGIES COMPARED

The Spiritual Baptist cosmology in Tobago has parallels in the Caribbean region and diaspora. When participating in Spiritual Baptist rituals in Trinidad, Grenada, Toronto, and New York, as well as in rituals where visitors from New York have been present, I have learnt that the basic elements of the cosmology – the Spiritual world of different nations and cities, most importantly Africa, India, and China – are found in each. A comparative perspective is quite limited, however, since few scholars have discussed the Spiritual Baptist cosmology: ethnographies of the religion merely mention the main nations, Africa, India, and China, noting that mourners claim to travel to these locations.²¹ Only Wallace Zane (1999), writing about Spiritual Baptists of St. Vincent, has studied the cosmology in further detail. As Zane vividly describes, the Vincentian Spiritual Baptists, who refer to themselves as the Converted, travel in a Spiritual world when they mourn, and among their destinations are Africa, India, China, Syria, and cities like Jerusalem and Jericho. Thomas (1993, 202-209) illustrates a man's journey to Spiritual Africa in a mourning ritual on the fictitious Isabella island, which resembles St. Vincent. On his journey to Africa, Jerome, the protagonist, encounters Africans, eats, drinks, and talks with them, learns about himself and his people, and is finally able to come to terms with his identity. This, too, is very similar to Tobagonian experiences. Nevertheless, various places that are not mentioned in the Tobagonian discourse exist in the Vincentian Spiritual Baptist cosmos: for example, *the Valley of Dry Bones* is unknown in Tobago, whereas the Converted frequent it quite regularly on their Spiritual journeys.

The position of the Holy Spirit is also unchallengeable in all the Spiritual Baptist communities I personally know. The Spirit is always regarded as the supreme force and the basis of the cosmology. As far as different personifications and manifestations are concerned, however, there is notable variety. Whereas some Spiritual Baptist churches in Trinidad reject the idea of anthropomorphic personifications of the Holy Spirit, not to mention manifestations of such beings, there are Spiritual Baptist churches in at least Trinidad, New York and Toronto, where not only saints and prophets but also Kabbalistic entities and Hindu gods and goddesses are entertained. Again, the lack of ethnographic evidence about

Spiritual Baptist cosmologies prevents systematic comparison, except between Tobago and St. Vincent. Saints are recognised by Vincentians, and Zane describes them as "spirit helper(s), pointing the way or departing knowledge in the spiritual realm" (1999, 89). The understanding of the saints' relationship to people is very similar to the Tobagonian exegeses; saints do not manifest in believers as such, it is the Holy Spirit that does. The saints named by Zane's informants (St. Michael, Ezekiel, St. Anthony, John the Baptist, St. Catherine, St. Philomene, and Virgin Mary) are recognised by Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists as well. Nevertheless, the Vincentian Converted are even less specific or consistent about the saints' personal characteristics than Tobagonians. The colours and other attributes they associate with the saints vary so much that agreement is reached only over the following: Ezekiel works in the Valley and wears black, Michael belongs to Africa and has red as his colour, and St. Catherine and St. Philomene are water saints (*ibid.*, 90). In this regard those Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists who have knowledge of saints are much more detailed and unanimous in their descriptions. And, as pointed out above, there are prominent Spiritual Baptist churches in Tobago where the Holy Spirit is understood to manifest in the form of saints, whereas in St. Vincent this is regarded as part of the Trinidadian Orisha religion, not Spiritual Baptist (Zane 1999, 89).

The Vincentian Converted also acknowledge spiritual beings that are, at least under these names, unknown in Tobago, such as *Nurse Dinah*, *Brother Cutter*, and *Bramble Picker*. Entities that belong to the Tobagonian discourse, like Jonah, St. Anne, Abraham, or Papa Bois – not to mention the Chinese doctors – are absent from the Vincentian belief system. On the other hand, similarities abound in regard to other inhabitants of the Spiritual world, as the Vincentian Converted encounter anonymous members of different tribes, jumbies, evil spirits, animals, rocks, and vegetation on their journeys, just like Tobagonians (*ibid.*, 90-91).

The Spiritual Baptist cosmology is an intricate system of landscapes and entities which arises from the diversity and transformations inherent to the colonial and postcolonial Caribbean rather than from a static, dual paradigm of syncretistic components. Along with the specific characteristics of the nations and Spiritual entities, the recurrent underscoring of the importance of diversity shows how the Spiritual Baptist cosmology has outgrown the models and norms of both Biblical and West African cosmologies. A case in point is the multinationality of the cosmology, which is one of a kind among Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American religions. Even though India²² is represented in the pantheon of the Surinamese Winti religion (Breinburg 2001, 31),²³ in the Orisha religion, and China in the saint Sanfancón in Santería (Scherer 2001, 164), the systematic

and consistent reproduction of a cosmopolitan Spiritual topography is unique to the Spiritual Baptists. Only Guyanese Obeah portrays a similarly heterogeneous cosmology: Aboriginal, African, Indian, Dutch and other European, Jewish, Christian and Muslim spirits can manifest in its practice (Case 2001, 43). This reflects the fact that Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana stand out among the Caribbean countries with the most diverse populations, descended from the captured and recruited labour used on British plantations.

¹ *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines cosmology as "the science or theory of the universe as an ordered whole, and of the general laws which govern it. Also, a particular account or system of the universe and its laws" (1989). The term *cosmogony* refers more specifically to the creation of the universe.

² There is no corpus of stories about the Spiritual world to be told and repeated, no myths in the sense of "sacred tales" (Kluckhohn 1942, ref. in Segal 1998, 315)." Morton Klass (1995, 124) aptly notes that myth, as used by scholars of anthropology and religion, is largely understood to be "something other people take seriously that we know to be false or, at minimum, erroneous." Sir James Frazer's definition is a case in point: "By myths I understand mistaken explanations of phenomena, whether of human life or of external nature" (1921, xxvii, ref. in Segal 1998, 379). Also dictionaries define myth as "fictitious." Klass's criticism of the ethnocentrism of western scholarly traditions in using the term *myth* was echoed by two Spiritual Baptists, who, having read or heard a paper of mine in which I used the term *mythology* to refer to the religious knowledge of Spiritual Baptists, pointed out that because the colloquial use of *myth* connotes something untrue or unreal, the term is not suitable for analysing the religion, no matter how it is defined. I agree fully with Bishop Daniel, according to whom "these things are real, they are really happening," and it has indeed been a central aim of this study to show the thorough interrelatedness of the physical and the Spiritual levels of reality in Spiritual Baptists' lives. But if myth is to be understood in the sense that Klass (1995, 125) defines it, the discourse that Spiritual Baptists have about the Spiritual world could be regarded as mythology. Myth, according to Klass, is "(a)ny account, offered in and reflective of a specific cultural system, that expresses cultural ideals, deep and commonly held emotions and values, or fundamental assumptions and perceptions about the nature of the universe and of society."

³ Mama Lata is a Spiritual being equivalent to the Saints. She is the Mother of the Earth (Maman de la terre), and part of the Trinidadian and Tobagonian Orisha pantheon. In the Spiritual Baptist faith she is seldom referred to, but comes up every now and then in different churches' rituals.

⁴ Lum (2000, 76) uses the term "school" when referring to Africa, India, China, and Syria as Spiritual destinations. Zane (1999, 84-86) reports that the Vincentian Converted talk about nations only in the sense of "all nations," and use multi-coloured flags and clothes to symbolise this. He, however, does not mention whether the term can be used in singular, meaning Africa, China, Syria or India, as is the case in Tobago.

⁵ Glazier, writing about Trinidadian Spiritual Baptists (1983, 56), and Zane on Vincetian (1999, 92-93), also mention actions and performances that take place in various Spiritual locations.

⁶ Most cane workers in the Trinidadian sugar cane industry are Indo-Trinidadians, and this connection between cane fields and people of Indian descent is reflected in some travellers' experiences of India in the Spiritual world.

⁷ It is noteworthy that cobra snakes, called to help by the Indian war-cry, have defended Mother Cleorita and others in many of her visions against evil entities. Snakes are not necessarily good in all Spiritual Baptist exegeses.

⁸ The angel or archangel Uriel is only mentioned in the Apocrypha, in 2 Esdras 4:1, 4:36, 5:20 and 10:28.

⁹ Stephens (1999, 37) stresses the significance of the archangels in Trinidadian Spiritual Baptist practice.

¹⁰ The sword used by Spiritual Baptists is made of wood; the cutlass is classified as an Orisha emblem, dangerous and connected with sacrificing animals – thus inappropriate to Spiritual Baptist practice. Although the sword is mainly used by St. Michael, I have seen a Chinese doctor Spirit operating with it a couple of times.

¹¹ Spiritual companions, guides and assistants or spirit-helpers who are encountered on journeys to the spirit world and who teach and help the traveller are common in shamanistic cosmologies around the world, as shown for example by Anna-Leena Siikala in the case of Siberian shamans (1987, 184).

¹² The same goes for the Orisha religion – female orishas cannot be entertained by male horses in the Orisha shrine in Tobago, since this connotes homosexual orientation.

¹³ Sexual orientation has merited little research in the Caribbean. David A.B. Murray (2000, 261-270) describes the double lives of self-identified Martinican gay ("gai") men and the society's severe condemnation of what is considered abnormal sexual tendencies. My unpublished Master's thesis (Laitinen 1997) briefly discusses Tobagonian girls' and women's attitudes towards homosexuality, and the general opinion is quite reprimanding. Of fiction writers, for example Nigel Thomas (1993) describes normative heterosexuality and the consequent plight of homosexuals on "Isabella Island"

that could be St. Vincent. McAlister (2002, 75-77) observes that regardless of the marked homophobia and machismo of Haiti's public discourse, Afro-Haitian religion is "sympathetic to gay men and women," which is apparent for example in gay Rara bands. All in all, a negative approach to homosexuality is therefore not a specifically Spiritual Baptist position, but seems to be characteristic of many Caribbean societies.

¹⁴ Visions with lesbian imagery are sometimes seen, and even described in mourners' tracks, but I have never heard a man recount a vision or a journey with gay connotations. I remember one elderly female mourner who had a lesbian vision during her journey. She described the vision to the fellow mourners and to the Mother Pointer first, and then to the entire congregation after the ritual was over. Walking on the road in the Spiritual world, she had come across a beautiful young woman, who told her in a soft voice that she wanted to have sex with her. The woman was looking extremely sweet. "Get thee hence, Satan!" the pilgrim shouted at her, her voice raising high as she recounted the event. The congregation reacted with a slight stir, but no comments arose. Later on some younger Sisters made fun of the vision, imitating the conversation and laughing. Nobody, however, seemed to seriously doubt the sister's sexual tendencies, given that she was a grandmother and a dedicated member of the church. Zane (1999, 118) also reports a lesbian track, and quotes an old Converted who said that lesbianism took place "deep in [Spiritual] Africa."

¹⁵ Evaluations of the status of ancestral spirits in the cosmology vary. Leader Woods explained the relationship between ancestors and saints by saying that the spirits of righteous people are saints. Leader Gerald's analysis is in accordance with this. On the other hand, Mother Cleorita said that in Spiritual Africa travellers meet "tribes of ancestors," but some of them are saints, some orisha, and it is up to the pilgrim to choose which tribe to follow.

¹⁶ Similar entities in Jamaica are called duppies (Barrett 1976, 43-44); the Haitian zombie or *zonbi*, "bodies without souls" who once "were dead, and after that [---] were called back to life again" (Hurston 1990, 179) differ from these in that one category of them occupy actual physical bodies. McAlister (2002, 102-111) describes *zonbis* also as spirit entities that, like the embodied *zonbis*, can be forced to work for their proprietor like slaves.

¹⁷ Earl Lovelace (1996) writes of a champion stickfighter in Trinidad, Bango Durity, whose stick was feared and known to be mounted by a spirit. One of his lovers was an Orisha woman.

¹⁸ See *Folklore and Legends of Trinidad & Tobago*, and Maxwell, 1996.

¹⁹ Papa Bois also taught the Leader the necessary knowledge to become a healer.

²⁰ See *Folklore and Legends of Trinidad and Tobago* for descriptions of these.

²¹ Herskovits 1947, 205; Simpson 1978, 119, mentions Japan but not China; Glazier 1983, 57; Houk 1995, 79; and Lum 2000, 76; see also Gopaul-Whittington 1984, 8.

²² Links between India, Hinduism, Christianity and creole religions are numerous in Trinidad and Tobago. The inclusion of Hindu paraphernalia in Spiritual Baptist practice, as well as the significance of India in Spiritual Baptist cosmology has already been described. Hindu deities, such as Hanuman, Lakshmi, Rama, Mahabir or Ganesa, belong to the cosmologies of many Orisha devotees (for example Houk 1995, 88-89); the medieval Catholic festival of La Divina Pastora, held annually in the town of Siparia in southern Trinidad, has attracted a large Hindu and Muslim following since the 19th century (Boodoo 1997); and the Hindu sect of Kali-Mai shares similar beliefs and practices with the Orisha religion (Houk 1995, 89-90). Also, a solidarity has recently developed between major Hindu and Orisha organisations as representatives of "non-Christian" religions. Sat Maharaj, the general secretary of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha – the most vocal Hindu authority in the country – announced in *Trinidad Guardian* (31 August 2000) that "we [the Hindus and the Orishas] have been the target of condemnation and derision from the Christian groups," and threatened to withdraw the Maha Sabha from the Inter-Religious Organisation, lest the Orisha religion was admitted membership (*Trinidad Guardian*, 4 September 2000).

²³ Indian spirits in Winti, not unlike the Indian Spirit in Spiritual Baptist manifestations, include both Indian and aboriginal American entities and features (Breinburg 2001, 37). Amerindians are also represented in the cosmologies of Brazilian Candomblé and Umbanda (Ferretti 2001, 102).

6. THE SPIRITUAL WORLD IN RITUAL PRACTICE

The Spiritual Baptist cosmology is as a system of religious and ontological knowledge about the universe and its inhabitants. Although a system of knowledge, it is not separate from sensible and embodied social interaction. The Spiritual penetrates the daily lives of Spiritual Baptists, and the intertwining of Spiritual knowledge and physical experience blurs the boundaries between social and cosmological. In this way the Spiritual Baptist religion differs from the European tradition as delineated by de Coppet and Iteanu (1995, 1), which distinguishes between society as the realm of humans and human relations and cosmos as a universal order dominating the society.¹ The Spiritual Baptist cosmology becomes concrete and perceptible in ritual practice. To quote Geertz (1973, 112), "In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world [---]." In this chapter, concluding the themes of Part II, I unpack the interconnectedness of the "world as lived and the world as imagined" in Spiritual Baptist rituals by showing how the cosmology is performed, perceived and experienced in rituals and in everyday life, and how it joins the local physical environment into the Spiritual topography.

THE KNOWING SUBJECT

I start to walk, and I walk down the road and I saw a likl cave. And I went in the cave, and then I start looking around, cause I was still kind of confuse, and I saw a skeleton hanging upside down. And from when I went and see the skeleton, I heard Number One [a fellow neophyte] start shouting. And some tings I heard start tinkling. And then I start turning. I saw flashes, there were so much, and the Leader and the Brother was there. I start screaming and bawling and kicking and tinging and all kind of ting, and then I come out.

This is how a young woman described the beginning of her Spiritual journey during the mourning ritual, as she found herself in a grave (here depicted as a little cave) and finally forced her way out, so that the actual travelling could begin. Narratives of Spiritual Baptists' experiences of the Spirit always take place in the first person. When recounting Spiritual journeys, visions and dreams, they never dissect their subjectivity into aspects of self such as "my soul", "my mind" or "my spirit"; the subject is always a sensing, embodied *I*, a seeing and hearing, "screaming and bawling and kicking" self. Descriptions of Spiritual journeys are saturated with sensual experiences like seeing saints, smelling sweetness, drinking chocolate tea in Africa, eating curried mango in India, or hearing a specific beat played by drummers; Spiritual travellers feel changes in temperature, tiredness, pain, or relief, for example as they swim in a cool river after a long and tedious march. It is the traveller's own, physical body that senses and experiences the Spiritual world. And yet, while travelling, one can find previously unexplored or impossible capacities in one's own body, like Leader Brothers and Mother Cleorita who were skilful swimmers in their visions but kept their feet carefully on the bottom of the sea in the *carnal*, physical world. Dancing, speaking in tongues, and performing tasks that require superhuman strength are other bodily skills that the corporeal subject finds herself manifesting while in the Spiritual world or when rejoicing in the Spirit. Nevertheless, the identity of the acting subject is never questioned – the traveller knows that she herself is experiencing and performing even the most miraculous tasks.

Glazier (1983, 29) argues that "Baptist ethnopsychology recognizes three distinct aspects of personhood: mind, body, and spirit," and that mind is associated with visions and dreams, i.e. the Spiritual dimension. Such ethnopsychology, among other analyses of the knowing and experiencing subject, may be articulated by individual practitioners, but when the various exegetic accounts as well as observable ritual practices are investigated more generally, one cannot sum up any simple unanimity about separate aspects of subjectivity. Leader Gerald once compared travelling to dreaming in the sense that while you are sleeping, your spirit does all kinds of things

in different places, and your body feels the effects: if you run in your dreams, your body feels tired after you wake up. The spirit brings the tiredness to you. This spirit is not an ethereal, passive ghost or an impersonal, observing eye; it is an embodied subject whose experiences are always sensual. It is in this sense that the body and the spirit are inseparable for Spiritual Baptists. And not only does the spirit-subject, the self that travels in the Spiritual world, take an embodied form; Spiritual experiences also involve the actual, concrete body of the experiencing subject. For example, when a pilgrim is travelling in Spiritual Africa, her body on the mourner room floor may signal this by its movements, sounds and rhythms.

Embodiment, then, is the key to experiences of the Spiritual even in visions and dreams, during which the actual bodily subject is relatively passive – either sleeping, meditating or praying. The tangible embodiment of the Spiritual is at its clearest in ritual practice like Spiritual manifestations, catching power, when movements, sounds, facial expressions, unknown tongues, dance styles, shouting, the use of ritual emblems, and other bodily expressions give concrete form to the intelligible level of the Spiritual. Not only the sisters or brothers entertaining the Spirit, but the whole congregation can observe and experience the presence of the Spiritual world.

The body, as a medium for Spiritual manifestations, can be manipulated to enhance its receptiveness to the Spirit. Elders never get tired of pointing out that cleanliness, in one's appearance as well as in one's ways, is mandatory in order to receive the Spirit's or saints' acceptance. Therefore one cannot expect to be able to entertain the Spirit on Sundays while sleeping around or getting drunk in rum shops for the rest of the week. However, moral norms such as abstinence from premarital sex are ideals rather than absolute prerequisites, and from what I have seen in Tobagonian churches, the Spirit does not discriminate against those who live in common law unions or have children out of wedlock. Proper clothing and behaviour at services further encourages the Spirit to arrive. Elders discipline those who chat, chew gum, or sit passively without participating in the service, both publicly when preaching and in private talks after rituals. Physical cleanliness is achieved by always bathing before church, wearing clean and proper Spiritual clothes, and can be augmented by using perfumes. *Kananga water*, Florida Water and Rose Water, different scented oils as well as perfume brands brought from America are lavishly used. These same scents may belong to the surveying routine; they invite saints both personally, on the skins and clothes of practitioners, and communally, at the entrances and the four corners of the ritual space. "Jesus is a sweet-smelling Saviour," Mothers say.

Subjectivity as delineated by Maurice Merleau-Ponty guides the way to understanding Spiritual Baptist perception and knowledge. Rejecting a hierarchy or causality between consciousness and the body, Merleau-Ponty argues for a "unity of the senses and the object," and describes the body as "the general instrument" of comprehension (1994, 235). The knowing subject is always

embodied: the visions and dreams of the Spiritual world as well as perceptions and experiences of ritual practice require an active, bodily agent. The Spiritual world can only be known from within the sensible world, and described through embodied experiences – swimming with St. Francis, hearing drums in the forest, sailing a calabash in a local river. The Spiritual and the perceptible seem to unite into a cosmology that cannot be dissected into tangible and intangible realms without violating its basic premises. Like the Warlpiri Dreamtime described by Jackson (1995),² the Spiritual world of Spiritual Baptists escapes abstraction. It is not identical to or necessarily simultaneous with the sensible world, but it cannot be conceptualised independent of it either. Merleau-Ponty (1994, 124, 351) maintains that in bodily enactments, consciousness and physiology ought not be separated, and that consciousness, rather than an autonomous being, should be conceived as "perceptual consciousness." Because it is constructed and experienced by perceptual, not pure consciousness, there are aspects of the Spiritual world whose meaning cannot be objectified in words.³ I do not deny the fact that for Spiritual Baptists, the Holy Spirit and the Spiritual world exist regardless of people's knowledge or experiences of them; the point is that any awareness of the Spirit always takes place within the field of perception of a subject-in-the-world. Attempts to discuss the cosmology as detached from the practice of bodily subjects are therefore fruitless.

NATIONS

The nations of Africa, India, and China are reproduced and materialised in symbols and performances that are immediately recognisable to the audience. The concretisation of the cosmology in ritual practice is based on two features emblematic to the religion: the embodied, social subjectivity of the practitioners, and the interconnectedness of the cosmology and the local environment and society.

COLOURS

The colours most often seen in African thanksgivings and other rituals with African connections are red, blue, pink, purple, gold, green, white, and combinations of these, as well as red, black and yellow together, whereas India is shown mainly in different shades of yellow, often in a deep saffron, but also in combinations of yellow and brown, yellow and white or yellow and green. The

colour red can also connote China.⁴ Women's church dresses and headties, dashikis and skirts, and men's spiritual shirts and pants are African when made of the colours mentioned above. Imported African cotton prints are markedly African as dress material and make the most popular and extravagant outfits for festive occasions. The style of traditional spiritual clothes, women's Victorian church dresses and men's shirts and pants, is neutral as far as Spiritual nations are concerned, but in addition to these both women and men can wear dashikis and African hats, and women African-style dresses and *duets*⁵ in African-oriented rituals. The design of clothes is less frequently part of the nation-representation in Indian rituals, so that saris or dhotis are rarely, if ever, worn as spiritual clothes. I have once seen a Chinese silk dress worn by a Trinidadian Mother, but none in Tobago. Accessories and especially jewellery bear similar connections to Spiritual nationalities: whereas gold is often worn with African clothes, silver decorates the yellow, brown and white Indian outfits.

Wearing Spiritual clothes of a certain colour signals accessibility to a particular form of the Spirit – for example, Mother Theda who stood out in the pink and white mass in her yellow and brown outfit at St. Philomen Church's pilgrimage, was the only one to entertain the Indian Spirit on that occasion. Others rejoiced in the African way, several women in their pink attire entertaining St. Philomen. The colours of Spiritual clothes are so powerful as links to the Spiritual world that they can even be dangerous. When I was getting ready to attend Mother Joycelyn's feast at St. Catherine Mystery Shrine for the first night in 1998, which was the first time I attended an Orisha service, I put on my white church dress as I knew the others would do, given that it was Flag Night. The dress came off as soon as Mother Cleorita saw me ready to go: she forbid me to wear white, a colour that attracts spirits as well as the Spirit, especially as I was going without her. She went to her own wardrobe and gave me a beautiful suit made of purple African print with one of her large headties. This way she made sure that no unwanted power would take me, and also extended her own presence through her clothes to the Shrine as a kind of protection. I was never allowed to wear the white dress to an Orisha service, nor did Mother Cleorita allow me to wear it after dark on any other occasion because different spiritual entities become more active after sunset and white draws them like no other colour.

Colours with nation symbolism do not appear in clothes alone. Flags, or *signals*, in the church yard and the smaller ones inside the building also represent the different saints and the nations, although other connections are drawn in addition to these. The *Master Flag* is the one with the church's or the home's guardian saint's colour. It is tied onto the tallest bamboo, so that it towers on top of all the rest. Because the most significant saint for Mt. Paran Church is St.

John, a red flag flies on the highest bamboo in the church yard; a pink one towers over the others at St. Philomen church and in the yard of its Leader and Mother, whereas a yellow flag is on the tallest pole outside St. Francis Church. There are usually at least ten, often more than twenty flags in Spiritual Baptist home and church yards. These always include the basic Spiritual colours of red, yellow, pink, blue, white, brown, green, grey and black, as well as a multi-colour *nation flag*. There can also be combinations of these, prints with an African set of red, yellow and black, or Indian yellow and brown, and so on. The flags are replaced with new ones every year in the annual or biannual thanksgivings. There can be strips of the same polyester cotton tied around the bamboo pole as used for the flag. In addition to the tall flags in the yard, there are smaller ones inside the churches, sometimes standing in a bucket, sometimes stuck on top of the centrepole or above the altar. Flags can be used to highlight the presence of a particular saint or a nation-theme, for example by waving a yellow and green flag over an Indian thanksgiving table while entertaining the Indian Spirit, or by sweeping the small flags stuck to the centrepole with a broom in reference to all the saints, tribes or nations. In addition to clothes and flags, the church interiors as well as thanksgiving decorations are loaded with the colours of the nations. The colours of altar cloths, shelf cloths, and cloths covering the centrepole, those of tablecloths on thanksgiving tables or on working tables,⁶ and the colours of the walls, candles, cake icing, flowers, leaves, bands and even foodstuffs⁷ accumulate into the larger representation of the Spiritual world and its different nations.

EMBLEMS

The nation symbolism extends to most emblems used in the church. The calabash, first of all, signifies the African presence in Spiritual Baptist rituals. With a couple of exceptions, it is found in all Tobagonian churches.⁸ A bowl made of the fruit of the calabash tree, varying in size from small half-balls of 5-inch diameter to large oval-shaped bowls 20 inches wide, the church calabash seldom has decorations carved on it – the vessel is usually plain and of natural colour, and the beauty of it comes from the flower and leaf arrangements and the candles it holds. The calabash is a container, a carrying vessel, and sometimes also a plate. Bishop Daniel referred to the way the "African ancestors" used the calabash for carrying things on their heads as a connection between the vessel and Africa. Elderly Tobagonian women sometimes carry parcels and bags on their heads; it is not uncommon to see a lady walking from the market with a heavy bag of provisions on her head. The calabash, though, has been replaced by plastic

containers and bags as a vessel for carrying and storing things outside the realm of rituals.

In church the calabash is most often filled with water, flowers, candles and incense sticks. The sisters, or sometimes brothers, who prepare the church for services or the thanksgiving house for the celebrations, first pour water into the calabash. Occasionally the water used may be spring or river water, but often people are glad to get enough tank water for the vessels, given the chronic water shortage in the island. Flowers are chosen in African colours, red and pink. Bright red *ixora chrysanthemums* grow in many Tobagonian yards, and the tiny



Picture 5: Mothers filling a calabash with flowers (St. Philomen)

flowers form a round, ball-shaped blossom on a thin branch, easy to pick. *Ixora* blossoms fill the calabash with thick, red cushions, between which candles and incense sticks hold firm. The *ixora* leaves are small and green, and some use them in the calabash too; also other, larger green leaves, like those of the mango tree or croton, can be stuck between the blossoms. Other flowers, most often pink lilies and other pink blossoms from trees and shrubs, are also used in calabashes. If

available, tall red blossoms make the vessel quite spectacular. Other types of flowers used, when available, are orange and pink ixoras, white and pink roses, other white flowers, and orchids. A plain leaf-calabash can accompany the colourful flower vessels. Candles used in calabashes are usually of African colours.

In a church calabashes can be placed at the main entrance or at the centrepole, sometimes also on the altar; in thanksgiving yards they are found on and under the thanksgiving table and by the entrance to the yard by the roadside, where the Spirit enters. There is often more than one calabash in a church or a thanksgiving: one used for surveying, one by the doorway, one containing sweetwater, river water, sugar or other things, like the *nation calabash* with different colour miniature flags.

The calabash leads the surveying procession in African thanksgivings and often in church services too. The main surveyor, the one to lead the women's prayer, takes the calabash and leads the group of surveying women from the door to the corners, the centrepole and in front of the altar, pouring water from her vessel on all these critical spots, and inviting the African Spirit to the occasion. The calabash is also used in the praying session, so that the sisters and brothers leading prayers hold the vessel in their hands, in front of their chest, as they kneel down and pray. Mothers and sisters tend to take the vessel quite often during the service and pour water from it around the centrepole, throw water over the congregation, or give someone a drink from the vessel, as inspired by the Spirit. When the Spirit takes someone in the African way, the calabash is the vessel used in the dance. Some Mothers dance with the calabash steadily on their heads, even though the movements are swift and powerful. The saint most often associated with the calabash is St. Philomen, the Mother of the Sea. When St. Philomen dances with the calabash, she usually sprinkles a lot of water over people around her and herself, and on several occasions the sisters entertaining St. Philomen have poured water from the vessel over themselves or even placed it upside down on the head.

One of the most spectacular rituals is the sailing of a calabash, a ritual performed at rivers and sea shores for different purposes, such as thanksgiving, returning of thanks, tribute to St. Philomen, or as part of Spiritual work and healing. The Mt. Paran Church keeps a thanksgiving every Palm Sunday at Mount Irvine Beach, and sailing a calabash for St. Philomen was the climax of the event when I attended the ceremony. The congregation, dressed in their thanksgiving fineries, was standing on the sandy beach. The midday sun was scorching, and there were few shady places, except under the tarpaulin tent where the thanksgiving table was laid. A lengthy baptism ritual had preceded the thanksgiving, but no one seemed to be tired as yet. As he was preparing to start the sailing ritual, Bishop Daniel started a chant for various saints. During the last

verse several people *catch power*, including a minister, two senior Mothers and sisters. They danced in the Spirit, one of the Mothers threw grains from a taria over others, the minister danced to the shore with small graceful steps, spinning around and bowing. *Coming All the Way from Africa Land*, we were singing fervently to the clapping of hands and the beat of the boys' drums. Dancing, one of the Mothers threw rice, corn, black-eyed peas and cloves from a taria over us, and the brother danced to the sea shore with small graceful steps, spinning around and bowing down. Mother Claudette was dancing around the table with a calabash balanced on top of her headtie, when all of a sudden an elderly sister fell flat on her face on the sand and started to swim. She got up, swirling around and bending up and down, swimming incessantly, all the way to the sea, swaying her arms in the air. St. Philomen had arrived. It was time for Bishop Daniel to sail the calabash for the sea saint who had taken the sister. He took the calabash filled with water, red ixora chrysanthemums, incense sticks and a white candle, waded in the sea and swam far from the shore, sending the vessel to float. Tourists in their bikinis stared from a distance. *Africa Land*, drums and clapping kept the rhythm going on the beach while the calabash sailed further and further. People were dancing, speaking in African tongues, groaning and mouth drumming; many danced to the shore to bow down, salt water dripping from their hems and headties. The sister taken by St. Philomen was dancing in the middle, waving a palm leaf, sprinkling sweet-smelling Kananga water and milk around the table and over the people. Sisters danced to the shore with honey, olive oil and perfumes and poured them on the waves. As the elders blessed the thanksgiving table, rain started to fall – "St. Philomen always want she rain." The calabash could hardly be seen any more.

The lota, a round brass pot with a narrow round mouth, is the most important Indian emblem. It is used in all Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches.⁹ It also belongs to Hindu ritual paraphernalia, and is available in religious stores in Trinidad, where such items are a bit cheaper, and in one store in Scarborough. Mother Cleorita and other elders also bring lotas, among other ritual emblems, from their trips to New York. The lota is a vessel like the calabash, filled with water, leaves and flowers, but the colours reflect the Indian sphere, so that most times the leaves are yellowish or green, croton being the most popular bush, and the flowers yellow marigolds. In between the leaves and marigolds stands a yellow or white candle; also incense sticks may be stuck in the bouquet. In Indian rituals the lota goes in front in the surveying, and the persons leading the prayers hold it while kneeling and praying. There are always several lotas in a church, often five or seven on the altar alone, sometimes in the four corners, by the doors, at the centrepole and on the small shelves. In thanksgivings there are also several lotas, some on the table, one by the roadside

entrance and so forth. When the Indian Spirit manifests, women use the lota in their dance. They usually hold it against their chest or on their shoulder; quite often water is sprinkled from the lota at strategic spots, like on the four corners of the thanksgiving table or at the centrepole.

The taria is another Indian emblem that belongs to all Spiritual Baptist churches and rituals. The taria, like lota, is used in Hindu rituals and can be bought in a specific store in Scarborough or in Trinidad. It is a flat brass plate filled with grains, that is rice, corn, black-eyed peas, cloves, sometimes sugar, flour, a whole lime, gloves of garlic and other seasonings, or flower petals; the simplest tarias contain only rice. The grains symbolise prosperity and are sprinkled over the congregation and at symbolic places to bring affluence.¹⁰ The taria is always used in surveying, often in Indian manifestations, and it is a standard emblem on a thanksgiving table as well as at centrepoles.



Picture 6: Indian paraphernalia on a thanksgiving table: a glass with a yellow flower, a brass cobra, taria, and lota. The bell and the glass of milk at the left have no specific nation symbolism.

The glass of water always needed in rituals and services is filled with flowers, and whereas in Indian rituals these flowers tend to be yellow, most often a white rose is used. More rare, markedly Indian emblems are a brass statue of a standing cobra snake, always on Mother Cleorita's thanksgiving table on the Indian night, or small bowls with Indian delicacies like *dhal*. Colours of candles and flowers

used in decoration as well as the ritual candles on the thanksgiving table are selected according to the nation symbolism. Certain emblems associated with particular saints, such as St. Michael's sword or St. Philomen's shell, are latently African because of the Spiritual nationality of their owner. Even the elaborately decorated cakes on thanksgiving tables reflect the nations in their colours. The icing made of sugar and egg-white is dyed to match the general theme, so that in Indian thanksgivings the cakes are yellow with white ornamentation, whereas the African counterparts are covered with pink, white, blue, red, and sometimes green embellishments. Other central emblems, such as the bell and the various liquids used for surveying are applicable to all nations, and are always present in the church and in all thanksgivings.

The food served at the end of the service is in line with the ritual nation-symbolism. In African thanksgivings, dishes like cassava *coocoo* and *callaloo*, stew chicken, macaroni pie, rice and peas, saltfish or corn fish *buljol*, and salads are common. These are foods of the Afro-Creole population of the country, and therefore carry an African connotation. Indian services, on the other hand, feature Indian delicacies, very popular in Trinidad and Tobago – dhal, curried potato, mango, *channa* (chick peas), pumpkin, *melongene* (eggplant) and sometimes also chicken and goat, served with rice or *buss-up-shut* (shredded *roti* bread).

The full *diversity of gifts*, the complexity of Spiritual knowledge and abilities, as Paul's phrase (1 Cor 12:4) is interpreted by elders, cannot be obtained by going to one nation alone; one has to embrace the entire Spiritual world, the four corners, the full circle, to receive true Spiritual wisdom. So-called *nation people*, Spiritual elders with experiences of all nations, have travelled all over the Spiritual world increasing their wisdom, knowledge and understanding. These elders can entertain any of the saints, with the exception of female saints for men. Multi-coloured dresses, which show the colours of all the nations at once, are a straightforward representation of this high status. Mothers may also sew aprons of the various bands received while mourning and combine them into vibrantly colourful garments. Similar symbolism is portrayed in flags, and in each church yard one can find at least one multi-coloured flag, either sewn from bright pieces of polyester cotton or made from a flower print. Smaller colourful flags can also be stuck in a calabash, compressing the diversity of the Spiritual world into one vessel.

BODILY PERFORMANCES

Dance is Spiritual rejoicing at its most intense. Spiritual Baptists dance in services as the music and the rhythm get *sweet*: they sway, shuffle their feet and clap their hands, sometimes waving; sometimes dancing turns into marching. Even when the congregation is sitting down, there is always movement accompanying the singing of hymns, *sankeys*, and *trumpets*,¹¹ be it slow swaying from side to side, nodding of the head, or measured patting of the hand against a Bible or the bench. When the Spirit comes the dance becomes recognisably different. Drewal (1998, 260) observes that dance is the main medium for "supernatural forces" in Yoruba rituals, and Àjàyí (1998, 91) describes "the strong communicating links" between òrìsàs and practitioners produced through Yoruba dance. In Spiritual Baptist rituals, distinguishable entities such as saints do not manifest in dance very frequently, although in certain churches it is ritually legitimate to entertain for example St. Philomen or St. John by dancing. Much more commonly the dancers' movements reflect the nation of the Spirit; African dance differs from Indian and Chinese. Both men and women can dance in each of the nation styles. Dancing in the Spirit is most times accompanied by other performances like talking in tongues or using a sacred emblem. It is thus the topography of the Spiritual world rather than particular entities that becomes phenomenal in ritual dance.

The African dances are powerful and rhythmically emphatic. Elbows move back and forth, the hips roll following the tramping of the feet. According to the Spiritual experience of the person, the dance varies from very controlled, stylistic movements to wild swinging and jerking of the limbs. The hands are seldom raised up. As the Spirit carries the dancer, her face turns into a kind of mask, expressionless, calm, the eyes closed. In some manifestations the dancer may look as if she is in pain, twisting her face, gasping for air, although the experience may not be uncomfortable at all. Mothers and other senior women in the church, sometimes also younger sisters, very often use the calabash as part of the dance: the vessel is placed on top of the headtie, sometimes on one shoulder held by the other hand, and sometimes it is just held in the hands, especially when the Spirit tells the person to sprinkle water. Other emblems used in the African dance are the sword, the weapon of Warriors and of St. Michael, glasses with water and flowers, and the fire pot. In a spectacular African dance senior Mothers step over a flaming fire pot or, outdoors, over burning coconut shells, their long skirts and aprons unharmed.

African dances also portray a variety of traditional Tobagonian dance styles. Belé and Congo belé, dances in which French and African styles are combined and the dancer's wide skirt is opened by raising the hems with both hands,

stretched on the sides, are seen in Tobagonian churches during African manifestations. Jig, another local folk dance with traces of Scottish styles, can also be performed in the African Spirit. Steps of the piqué, a French-influenced folk dance, are not uncommon either. These dances are widely known in Tobago, and although not found in dance parties where calypso, soca, and reggae reign, many Tobagonians still know how to dance them, for example in weddings or at harvest celebrations. Folk dances are performed by numerous dance groups in shows and competitions, and there are several such performances in the hotels and restaurants of Tobago each week.¹²



Picture 7: Dancers in the African Spirit at St. Philomen church thanksgiving

The Indian dance is refined, graceful, and less energetic than the powerful thrusting of the African variety. The steps are small, one foot kept behind the other; one hand is up in the air, swinging delicately, while the other hand may gather up the skirt's hem. The face is expressionless, a mask, like in other lengthy manifestations. As if a temple dancer, the person entertaining the Indian Spirit moves unhurriedly and in an elegant and deliberate manner. The lota is often held in the Indian dance, usually against the chest or shoulder. The taria can also be used in a similar way, and sometimes the dancers may sprinkle water from the lota or grains from the taria. All in all, Indian dances are clearly reminiscent of Asian dance styles, but sometimes features associated with Native American

movements and dances can be included. Antics resembling "Indian" war dances familiar from Hollywood imagery, complete with the high-pitched war cry with one hand tapping on the mouth, have been seen in thanksgivings and in mourner rooms in Spiritual India. The term "Wild Indian" is sometimes used to refer to such Spirit. A few people catch power in the Chinese way in services and rituals, but the Chinese Spirit dances less frequently than the others. Most often the person in *Chinee* Spirit sits on the bench, bending up and down, puffing with her cheeks full of air, hands on the lap. Sometimes, though, the Chinese move around in small, light steps, with slight movements of the head from side to side. Palms are joined in front of the chest, and the neck bends in polite bows.

The African dances of Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists partly resemble Zane's description of those of the Vincentian Converted (1999, 61), but the "seductive interaction," "sidelong glances, inviting smiles, and pulling on the cords or sashes around the waists of those dancing with them or those merely watching" are alien to Tobagonian practice. Nor do Tobagonians lift the hems of their skirts "to quite revealing heights," like Zane reports the Converted doing; in the Indian dance the hem is held up, but if raised up high, a Mother or sister immediately pulls the cloth back down. In fact, manifestations in which the dancer seeks to raise her clothes and reveal her body are often understood as manifestations of delusion spirits, not the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Baptist services in Tobago are saturated with music. The majority of churches use drums in their ritual practice. These are *djembes* made in the West African style by Tobagonian drum-makers; some churches also have base drums that are used along with *djembes* to keep the base rhythm, while other drummers take care of the *cutting* (solo parts) and *rolling* (continuous basic rhythm). Along with local hardwoods, PVC pipes are used to make drums, and in both cases goat skins are stretched over the hollow. Most drummers are men, boys or girls who are members of the church, but in large rituals, like thanksgivings, it is customary to invite professional drummers to play. They are generally sympathetic towards the Spiritual Baptist faith. Drums accompany all the singing in some churches, starting from the slow Anglican hymns to spirituals and swinging trumpets, choruses. Debates over the proper context for drumming take place, and some elders reject drumming during prayers, for example, although the congregation may be singing a trumpet or humming loudly while prayers go on. A skilful Spiritual drummer knows when it is appropriate to beat the drum, and such drummers, quite rare, are invited to thanksgivings more often than they can manage. They are able to reflect the manifestations of the African or Indian Spirit by playing a strong African beat when a person is dancing in the African way, thus carrying her further and further; in thanksgivings where a good drummer accompanies the manifestations, they can last for more than an hour

and involve numerous people, and the general atmosphere becomes quite extraordinary. Spiritually sensitive master drummers are able to trigger manifestations, change and time the beat in such a way as to *send off* a particular sister or brother. Local rhythms developed around genres such as the calypso, belé, piqué, or bongo, as well as combinations of beats learnt from Indian tassa drummers in Trinidad or West African musicians, are used according to the type of manifestation; however, the beats of the Spiritual nations do not directly correspond with the drumming styles found in West Africa or southern India.

In addition to singing hymns, sankeys and trumpets, the practitioners hum while prayers and sermons are going on. Prayers are often sung to a repetitive melody. Shac shacs, tambourines, timbrels, sometimes triangles, and in a couple of churches, electric organs, are used to accompany the singing and dancing. Drums are quite common, and even in those churches where the goat-skin drums are banned, like St. Rita's, rhythms are produced by mouth drumming, clapping of hands and the tramping of feet. As well as drum beats, also songs, hymns and chants can function as catalysts for manifestations. They also give extra fuel to the manifestations, or reflect them as a kind of commentary. Songs like *Coming All the Way from Africa Land*, *Cover Me Under Your Blood*, *Lord* or *I Saw Them Coming*, to mention a few, have been used to invite – and to entertain – the African Spirit. Indian chants, usually in minor key, consisting of syllables like *na na na na na*, guarantee the arrival of the Indian Spirit. Otherwise the nation symbolism is attached to the songs according to the situation. Mother Cleorita and Leader Gerald were once discussing the confusion caused by changing songs too soon. In a thanksgiving on the previous night the congregation was singing *Cover Me Lord*, and suddenly changed into *My God Is a Good God*. By singing the first song the congregation was calling the Spirit from Africa, and as the Spirit was about to arrive, the song was changed to another, an invitation to an Indian Spirit. So, the Spirit or the saints in question were bound to get confused and turn back, not knowing which nation the call was aimed for.

Songs also help to construct the Biblical zone of the Spiritual landscape. *Zion Oh*, *Jerusalem Jerusalem*, *Jordan We Are Going Down*, *Children of Jericho Let Your Light So Shine*, *Marching to Zion*, *Jordan River (Joy Comes in the Morning)*, *Jordan River So Chilly and Cold*, and many other trumpets, sankeys and spirituals draw on Biblical geography and imagery. Unlike the Anglican hymns, these songs are faster and more rhythmic, and thus preferred in the *hot* parts of services, whether the theme be African or Indian. In St. Vincent, the Converted have songs that are associated with China as well; Zane (1999, 64) mentions the tune of *Auld Lang Syne* sung in ritual "Chinese language," "*Chong chong chong chong chong chong chong... Saw, saw, saw, saw, saw...*" In Tobago, the *unknown languages* or

glossolalia is seldom used for singing, but chants with "Indian" words are heard. They are always sung in a venerable manner, slowly and solemnly.

Glossolalia in Spiritual Baptist rituals reflects the nation of the Spirit. The tongues vary from repeated syllables and rhythms to specific, strange words, patois, and to a kind of broken English, where extra syllables and suffixes are added to understandable words. Those who entertain the Indian Spirit simultaneously can converse in the Indian tongues, which are incomprehensible to all others except advanced elders. The same goes for the African tongues. Spiritual advancement through mourning and dedication brings along the gift of glossolalia to many believers.

One example of a lengthy exchange in tongues was found in the small and hot mourner room at St. Rita's Church, where Number One, a sister in her thirties, was snoring so loudly that we could hear her in the church. It was six in the evening, and the nurses and Shepherd Garth were getting ready for the informal evening service. Suddenly the pilgrim started to cry and howl, and we rushed to the mourner room, washing our hands quickly with Kananga water at the door. *Gog gog go gog gog!* cried Number One in a high-pitched falsetto, then roaring like a lion, barking like a dog, howling, then spewing out syllables again. *Kok kok kok kok kok kok kok* Shepherd Garth sat on the floor with his legs crossed, his eyes closed, shouting and talking with Number One in the same tongue incessantly for over forty minutes. The volume and the tone oscillated between harsh screaming and weary chattering. Later on the syllables turned into words and sentences, an Indian tongue, and Shepherd Garth started to hum an Indian chant in minor key. *Usch ya ga ga, tu, tu, tubi yungu yaga ga!*

Tongues often follow an intense Spiritual dance. As the music and the drums die down, those in the Spirit burst into unknown tongues: on the Indian night of Mother Cleorita's thanksgiving, after a long dance, the hostess and other Mothers who had been entertaining the Indian Spirit started to speak. *Ta ka pai! Ha! Haa ti ka pa ta ma ti ka pa ti ka ma. Oh Lord. Ka ma ka ta pa ta pa ta ta. Haa ti la ma ka pa ta ta!* The Indian language spoken in the above example has also been heard in other churches' rituals, like in Mr. Moses' thanksgiving in 1999, where Mother Cleorita, Leader Moses of Mt. Olive Church and Mother Iona from St. Mary's, after an impressive dance, called *usch ku lu bas bisch ti basch taa* and other similar sentences to one another, all in the Spirit. Travelling to Grenada with Mother Cleorita, I heard her converse with a Grenadian-born Bishop who leads a Spiritual Baptist church in New York in the same Indian language that Tobagonian practitioners speak: *haa di ka pi, lei naarnu ku... muschna ha...* The same unknown tongues have also been spoken in the Spiritual Baptist churches I have visited in Toronto and New York. A commonly spoken African tongue, heard in similar situations in African rituals, goes *she le que que que! She le que*

qwe qwe, sha la qwa qwa qwa. Other sentences consisting of short, monosyllabic words are also heard in African languages. Some of these are so repetitive that they sound almost like animal noises, monkeys or dogs. This has indeed been joked about in mourner rooms, "listen to dem two monkey!" as two sisters conversed in heightened voices, *ga ga ga ga ga!* The Indian tongues tend to be morphologically more complex, as the words can be fairly long and sentences consist of numerous distinct words. African tongues, on the other hand, are more often based on a few central morphemes. Chinese is spoken in monosyllables like *ching chang chao, chang chong,* or *siang saa, sap siang djaa, sang sang...* Quite often tongues bring about rhythm and turn into mouth drumming.

SAINTS

Some, but not most, Spiritual Baptist churches in Tobago arrange rituals in which tribute is paid to a specific saint, and these are fine examples of the concreteness of the Spiritual world in embodied ritual practice. A pilgrimage of the St. Philomen Church to Castara beach in honour of St. Philomen was one example of such services. Another ritual, in which a particular saint took perceptible form, was a thanksgiving at Mt. Paran.

Friday, the first night of the three-day thanksgiving at Mt. Paran Church, was Flag Night when tall bamboo poles with polyester cotton flags of different colours were planted in the church yard. This was also a night dedicated to St. John, an African saint.¹³ St. John's colours are red and white, and the altar cloth, shelf cloths and the dresses, headties, aprons and shirts of the attending congregation repeated the combination. Bishop Daniel, dressed in red, white and gold, poured oil in front of the altar while sisters were surveying the corners. Oil is another emblematic marker of St. John. He then proceeded to deliver the sole lesson of the night, from 1 Epistle of John, Chapter 3. Hymns and drumming had been going on throughout the opening of the service. After the lesson Bishop Daniel lead other elders and then the whole congregation outside to the church yard. The drummers tied their drums around their necks and waists and followed us. There was a small table next to a hole in the ground, where most of the flags were to be planted. On the table there were bottles of wine, olive oil and milk, a calabash, a lota and a bell. A big bottle of *puncheon rum* (strong, locally made rum) lay under the table. We gathered around the flag hole, singing and dancing to the rhythm. It was almost midnight.

There was a brown he-goat tied to a tree. While others concentrated on the flags, slipping them on their poles and sanctifying the hole, singing and dancing with their backs turned to the animal, two men took a cutlass and anointed it with puncheon rum and oil, St. John's favourites. The cutlass was shining, although the night was pitch black. Soon the headless carcass of the goat was hanging by its back feet in the tree, blood draining on the ground. It was time to plant the master flag, the red and white one for St. John. After an hour all twenty-four flags had been planted, one by the road, three facing the sea and twenty next to the church. The congregation had been rejoicing, dancing and singing all the time. As we were returning inside, a procession suddenly took form: Teacher Claudette was entertaining St. John. She was leading a line of Mothers, one carrying the shepherd's rod, one with the bell and the lota, followed by Bishop Daniel blowing into a big white shell. Drummers kept on beating, and people were mouth drumming, clapping, beating triangles. Everybody followed them down the dirt road, half running, half marching until we reached a crossroads. Seven people were in the Spirit now, talking in an unknown African tongue in high voices. Their eyes were open, which is unusual in Spiritual Baptist manifestations. The Mother with the rod spun it like a stick-fighter, chasing us with the swinging rod. Soon she and Teacher Claudette ran us back to the church. The manifestations continued inside and more people *catch power*, until about twenty were dancing in front of the altar. The seven women were still entertaining St. John, their faces like masks, their actions very determinate and authoritarian. Teacher Claudette was dancing with a man who had been sick. She, Bishop Daniel and Captain Barton then spun the man around three times, vertically, lifting him up in the air and turning his feet to the ceiling and over. Then Teacher Claudette and another of the women served us sweetwater from small calabashes, speaking in tongues all the while. New people jumped in the Spirit. After a lengthy period of rejoicing the service ended with a couple of common prayers, and Bishop Daniel anointed Teacher Claudette's feet with olive oil.

The entire night portrayed St. John from different angles. The red and white colours, oil, puncheon rum, the male goat, the shepherd's rod, the powerful manifestations with their atmosphere of unquestionable authority, the African tongues and drum beats, even the Scripture chosen for the night's lesson – all those together formed an elaborate network of symbols, performances and ritual language that brought the saint to a sensible level, allowing participants to see, hear, and feel his presence.

THANKSGIVING

The ritual of thanksgiving provides a great opportunity to discuss the synthesis of knowledge and practice in the Spiritual Baptist religion and to investigate the intertwining realms of the Spiritual and the profane in the preparations and financing of the ritual. Thanksgivings stand out as the most popular services of the Spiritual Baptist ritual cycle in Tobago, engendering excitement and anticipation. Because thanksgivings draw the largest crowds of all Spiritual Baptist services, the materialisation of the cosmology in them is publicly observable and tangible for many more people than in the closed mourner room services or other rituals of smaller scale. Culminating in a generous distribution of food, thanksgivings are also the most expensive and arduous rituals.¹⁴ Yet they are arranged more frequently than any other type of service. Combining the annual church thanksgivings and those held at members' homes, there are thanksgivings in Tobago at least twice a month, sometimes two or more on the same Sunday.

Elders usually arrange thanksgivings more often than younger sisters and brothers, since their financial status tends to be more stable, but also because frequent and regular thanksgivings are considered to be an indication of Spiritual authority. Elders who fail to give thanks regularly may be criticised behind their backs and their gratitude to God questioned. Quite often the *thanksgiver* has received a Spiritual message, either in a dream or vision or while mourning, that he or she should give thanks. One such track was heard from a young female pilgrim:

While I was on my journey, I saw this man. He had three flags in his hand. He gave me a yellow and green and pink flag, and I aks him and say 'What I doing with these?', and he say to plant it next to an orange tree at my home. Then he told me to feed them with olive oil, milk and honey. And then he turn me around, and I saw a table that was laid in front of me. And I saw everybody wearing the colours of the flags, and also my dress was the colours of the flags.

Some are obligated to organise the ritual on a permanent basis, like Mother Cleorita and Leader Gerald to whom the Spirit has given the duty to "keep" a three-day thanksgiving every year on the second weekend of December. Some other Tobagonian Leaders and Mothers have a similar annual or biannual commitment. Church thanksgivings, which the prominent churches arrange annually, are held on dates that the Spirit has shown to the Leader, Mother, or another member. Reasons to give thanks are announced by the thanksgiver at an early stage of the service; in church thanksgivings the declaration is made by an

elder. Such reasons range from "giving the Lord praise and thanks" for "spared life and tender mercies," to expressing gratitude for a specific incident, like overcoming an illness, the enrolment in a university by a daughter or son, or birth of a child. The dreams and visions in which the instructions to arrange the ritual were given are described in this declaration.

Thanksgivings are often held on Sundays, in which case they replace the normal Sunday service of the thanksgiver's church, but they can also be arranged on Saturdays, and far less frequently on week days. Mother Cleorita's and Leader Gerald's thanksgiving as well as the church thanksgivings of Mt. Paran and St. Peter's start on Friday and last until Sunday. The service normally starts each day around noon and two pm and lasts until six or seven in the evening, or then it starts around seven in the evening and lasts until the morning hours.

Thanksgivings replicate the Spiritual Baptist service with a few special additions. The ritual is arranged in the yard of a private home, or if the house is large, inside. A tarpaulin tent is spread over a bamboo frame in the yard. The ritual space is delineated just like in church – the four corners and the entrance are marked by symbolic emblems and consecrated by rituals like surveying. In the midst of the space is a large table, laid with ritual paraphernalia, fruits, foodstuffs, and candles. Benches or chairs surround this table. It is the ritual centre, and all the significant stages of the ritual – for example, the lighting of candles, praying, reading of lessons, preaching, and manifestations – take place at the table or around it. Elders, including the officiating minister, sit closest to it, and male ministers often have chairs at the table. The entrance to the thanksgiving yard, just like the church entrance, is another important ritual location. Participants usually come from more than one church, and in large church thanksgivings more than ten different churches can be represented. Church secretaries send invitation letters to other churches prior to their church thanksgiving (invitation letters are also common for harvests and pilgrimages), and friends who go to other churches are invited by private thanksgivers. The bulk of participants comes, nevertheless, from the thanksgiver's church. A private thanksgiver can ask any Minister, not necessarily one from her own church, to come and officiate the service. In church thanksgivings the officiator is one of the church's ministers, or the Bishop of the same diocese. Since thanksgivings are special occasions, people wear festive Spiritual clothes, ladies sometimes even stockings and high heels.

In the morning or the evening before the actual service, or for three-day thanksgivings, during the first night, flags are planted in the yard of the thanksgiver's house or in the church yard. The elders of the church prepare the flags, cutting rectangular pieces of polyester cotton and other colourful cotton materials, sewing them so that they can be slipped over a bamboo pole, and often

also drawing seals on them with white or coloured chalks. Candle wax may be used, as in the bands for baptism and mourning. Private yards may have a few flags, sometimes several, but churches normally plant at least twelve different flags in their yards; some churches have more than twenty. Members of the church who assist in the preparations wash and anoint the bamboo poles before tying the flags onto them. The tallest pole carries the *master flag*, the colour of the guardian saint of the church or the thanksgiver; in some exegeses the colour symbolises a Spiritual nation rather than a saint.¹⁵ The hole into which the poles are planted is dug in the yard and consecrated with special care by a group of elders. To consecrate the hole, ritual paraphernalia, such as candles, the bell, the lota, the calabash and taria, sometimes also the shell, and olive oil, milk, wine, sweetwater, Kananga water, perfumes, and talcum powder are carried to the spot, and a Mother or a male elder sprinkles ritual substances from these into the hole. Ashes, sugar and salt, spices, and flower petals may also be used. The elders ring the bell over the hole, some clap hands. A flaming coal-pot or candle-cubes are sometimes lowered inside. The thanksgiver or an elder may also pray at the hole. Whenever flags are planted, at least one of the participants is in the Spirit, and the directions to consecrate the spot and to plant the flags properly come from the Spirit.



Picture 8: Mothers putting flags on bamboo poles in the St. Philomen Church yard

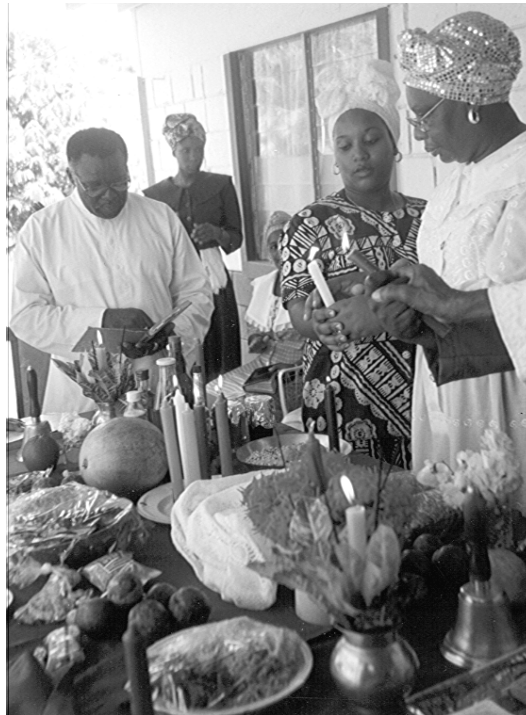
The thanksgiving table is, ideally, constructed according to Spiritual instructions. Mother Cleorita said that she "only cooks what she sees," that everything she serves and displays in her thanksgiving has to be shown to her in a vision. In 1998 she was shown that she should make a bake for Sunday, and that was therefore added to the menu. Many years back an Indian man started appearing to Leader Gerald, giving him advice on a quarrel that was going on in the church, and there has been dhal on the thanksgiving table for him ever since. A thanksgiving table in Tobago always includes the central ritual paraphernalia, like the lota, the taria, the bell, a glass of water, olive oil, and with only few exceptions, the calabash, Kananga water and Florida water, and perfume and talcum powder; there are always also candles, fruits, and flowers. Bread, fried fish, sweetbread and cakes are very common, and many thanksgivers arrange sweets, snacks, or corn cobs on the table as well. Milk, sweetwater, and wine are often used. The fruits include expensive imported varieties like apples, pears and grapes, which are consumed particularly during Christmas holidays and thus associated with celebrations (see Miller 1994, 103) in addition to the domestic watermelons, pineapples, mangos, oranges, paw paws and figs. The flowers and leaves, on the other hand, are always locally grown. In Mr. Moses' thanksgiving in his yard, the table was laid in a beautiful Indian style: a white and yellow table cloth, a lota with bright yellow flowers and croton leaves and a yellow candle in the middle; a calabash with yellow flowers stuck in between red ixoras, a red candle in the middle; four white candles in the corners of the table; two bells, Kananga water and Florida water, milk, sweetwater in a small calabash, and a glass of water with a white rose. Fruits spread around the table included a watermelon, a pineapple, bananas, oranges, apples, and mandarins. A loaf of bread, cakes, fried fish on a plate, snacks, chocolate bars, and bottles of *Chubby* (a locally manufactured soda), *Smalta* (a malted beverage), and home-made ginger beer were the ritual foods selected for this table. There was also a bottle of wine, meant for sharing the bread, fish, and wine in communion after the service. A tall vase with purple flowers and green leaves towered in the middle of the table, and a pile of fruits was stacked underneath, since there was no space left on top.

The thanksgiving service starts with hymn-singing and bell-ringing, as usual. The thanksgiver's declaration is given before the Apostolic Creed and surveying, sometimes even before the actual opening hymns. Archdeacon Cowie once stated in a thanksgiving in St. Francis Church that the service would not be started lest the declaration be satisfactory. After the thanksgiver announces the reasons for arranging the service, she or he lights the candles on the thanksgiving table together with family members, elders of the church, and with as many visitors as possible. Trumpets like *Light Your Light* or *Praise God I Saw the Fire* are

sung while the candles are being lit. Along with song lyrics, also Scriptural quotations echo the procedure: Psalm 18 is commonly read at this point, and the verses 25-28 can be repeated by the congregation:

With the merciful thy wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thy wilt shew thyself upright; With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thy wilt shew thyself froward. For Thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks. For Thou wilt light my candle; for Thou wilt light my candle; for Thou wilt light my candle; the lord my God will enlighten my darkness. (The last verse is repeated several times.)

Genesis 1:3 – *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light* – is another verse that can be quoted at this point.



Picture 9: Thankgivers lighting candles at the table

After the declaration and hymns, the space is surveyed as in other services. In addition to the four corners of the yard or room and the entrance, the thanksgiving table is circled by the surveyors and libations are poured at its corners. Ritual foods and liquids laid on the table can be used for surveying along with the standard emblems and bottles. When the Spirit has been invited and the space consecrated, the service continues with men's prayers, then women's. Those praying kneel at the table, and the thanksgiver(s) ideally kneels along with

each group of suppliants. The Spirit normally arrives during the prayers, and lengthy and elaborate manifestations are typical of thanksgiving services. The prayers are followed by the reading of lessons, after which the visiting elders as well as those of the thanksgiver's own church deliver sermons. The prayers and the preaching last longer than in normal Sunday services, so that thanksgivings may continue for several hours, often seven or eight. Because the preachers are so numerous, they are often encouraged to "keep it short and sweet" or given blunt time limits of ten minutes by the officiating Minister.

The service culminates in the blessing of the table after the sermons. The Minister and other elders gather around the table, lift it and the different emblems, bottles, and foodstuffs on it into the air three times or more, and bless the table by praying. Psalm 118:25 – *Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity* – can be repeated as part of the blessing. The elders also ring the bell and sprinkle water, Kananga water and other perfumes, and grains from the taria over the table. A home-baked loaf of bread is then broken by the thanksgiver and shared with the elders and other participants, sometimes along with wine. Family members or friends share the fruits, snacks, cakes, fish, sweetbread, and whatever foods have been laid on the thanksgiving table with the participants. After the service is over, a special meal is served to all.

THE SPIRITUAL NATIONS IN THANKSGIVINGS

Most, if not all, Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches arrange thanksgivings with a specific national orientation, either African or Indian. In addition to these, there are many thanksgivings without a specific theme, and also so-called *nation thanksgivings*, where saints of all nationalities are entertained. A glimpse at Brother Errol's thanksgiving in the village of Les Coteaux shows what Africa is like in ritual practice:

Africa was constructed even in the preparations for the thanksgiving. We went to the thanksgiving house to sleep over on the previous evening with Mother Cleorita and her grandchildren, and other sisters from our church joined us in the morning. The Mothers prepared the flags with Brother Errol, drawing seals on the polyester cotton, and Penny and I washed and anointed the flag poles and tied the flags on them. The master flag was green, and African colours, like red, blue, and red and black, prevailed. The Spirit arrived as the Mothers and several other helpers gathered to consecrate the flag hole and to put up the flags, and finally a blue candle burned at the foot of the poles, the green flag flying over the rest. In the meanwhile, men were cooking in the back yard with large iron

pots on firesides. Cassava cocoo, different meats, callaloo and salads were being prepared for dozens of eaters. The thanksgiving table was laid and red, green, and brown cloths spread over it. The iced cake was pink and blue. Most candles were of African colours, both on the table and in the four corners of the yard, but there were yellow ones included as well. As members started to arrive, Tante Thelma brought along a bunch of red ixora flowers for the calabashes, because Mother Cleorita had called her and declared that the thanksgiving could not be kept without them; the calabash with its red flowers is a central symbol of Africa. Most people wore African colours.

The service started, and the calabash lead the surveying procession. During the men's prayers the Spirit came and Mother Cleorita *steered the ship* to Africa – helped the congregation to become accessible to the Spirit. Wearing a purple dress and a gold headtie, she took some of the red flowers from a calabash on the table and sprinkled the petals over us, showing the drummers to beat louder. Those who were African in Spirit, Brother Errol, Mother Theda, Mother Thelma, Mother Becca, Teacher Audrey and many others, *catch power* and started to rejoice in the Spirit. We sang *Some Glad Day I'm Going Away*, clapping and dancing, the drummers beating their djembes and base drums and carrying the crowd further and further. The chorus turned into a chant as it was hard to keep up with the words. Leader Gerald and Brother Errol, in the Spirit, went dancing towards the fire by the roadside, hugging each other, jumping, then came dancing back to the table. Brother Errol had tied his red sash over his forehead. Mother Cleorita started a new hymn-chant, the crowd picked it up and new people catch power. The rhythm of the drums, hands, shac shacs and tambourines carried the dancers. Mother Cleorita took the calabash from the table and placed it on top of her majestic-looking headtie, danced with the vessel on her head around the table, then to the fire by the roadside; Mother Theda, also in Spirit, followed her. They continued to dance in front of the main drummer, beating the air in front of his big djembe with their hands. Everybody was up and dancing by now, the back yard ablaze with Spirit. Mouth drumming carried on the rhythm of the drums and the tramping feet, clapping hands, rolling waists and hips. Mother Cleorita waved the drums to be quiet for a while, and African tongues filled the air as the Mothers and Brother Errol talked, shouting in between: She le qwe qwe qwe! *Coming All the Way From Africa Land*, Mother Cleorita started in a powerful voice, and the younger sisters screamed as the Spirit took them. She danced around the table with the large calabash placed soundly on her head, her poise royal, her face like a mask, eyes always closed, sweating, magnificent. Her elbows pushed back to the beat, she bent forward and up again, her feet tramping on the ground as if her twice-operated on knee or her infected heel never caused her any pain at all. The whole thanksgiving crowd was there with her, carrying the

rhythm, those in the Spirit dancing close to the table and the drums, the rest singing and clapping and dancing around them. The ship had reached Africa.

The Indian night of the three-day thanksgiving in St. Peter's Church in Bethel depicts many of the typically Indian representations. The church was decorated with yellow and white altar, table and shelf cloths, yellow candles, silvery lotas with yellow marigolds in them, tarias filled with grains and yellow petals. After the hymns and surveying were over, Leader Alan told the congregation to kneel down on the floor and pray. The crowd in their yellow, brown and white attire and headties went down, the elders kneeled down by a small table in front of the altar. Mother Abbess Eulah was dressed in yellow lace from head to toe, her daughter Teacher Elsa in white, yellow and silver. The singing-praying of the elders was accompanied with the mumbling of the congregation as everybody was praying. Three sisters catch power as the Spirit touched them, an Indian chant arose, the drums started to beat. Mother Abbess was sitting on the floor, her legs crossed, with the Indian Spirit on her; she was holding a lota to her chest and a taria on her lap, swaying, composed. The sisters danced a graceful Indian dance with small steps, one hand on the hem of their dress, the other drawing refined ornaments in the air, their wrists swinging and swaying like cobra snakes. They called in high voices, spoke in Indian tongues, always elegant and graceful. People were standing, chanting to the rhythms of the drums, as the sisters and the Mother rejoiced. A brother, in the Spirit, sprinkled water from a lota over the crowd, and the Spirit took another sister who called in a high voice, her arms stretched to the sides. After a while the Spirit left, the chant died, and the service continued with the reading of the lessons.¹⁶

Particularly in these kinds of thanksgivings the Spiritual world is at its most immanent and tangible. The participants can see Africa or India in the colours of the clothes, tablecloths and shelf-cloths, in the candles, flowers, and iced cakes, in the paraphernalia used; the nations are there in the manifestations, the rhythms and the music, in the unknown tongues and dances, in the food served after the service – everyone present, not just the ones who entertain the Spirit, but also the observers, can see, hear, feel, smell, and taste Spiritual Africa and India, sometimes also China, although there are no rituals with a predominantly Chinese theme.

Very few Spiritual Baptist rituals, if indeed any, are arranged around one single nation theme. In African thanksgivings there are always one or two lota pots and a taria among the multitude of African symbols, and vice versa, a calabash on an otherwise Indian table. These are used in surveying, too, so that the Spirit is always invited by both African and Indian emblems. At St. Peter's Church thanksgiving, Friday night was the Indian night, and among all the shining silvery lotas and their yellow marigold flowers there was one calabash,

stuffed with red ixoras, on the floor right in front of the altar. In a similar way, on the St. Philomen Church pilgrimage to Castara beach, with all the predominant African symbols, there was a lota, a taria and a glass with yellow flowers on the beach altar.

This multi-national presence becomes more obvious in services with no specific nation theme. For example, in a Sunday service at St. Philomene Church in Bon Accord there were three lotas and three calabashes arranged around the centrepole along with flower-glasses, a taria, a bell, and bottles of sweetness (perfumes and perfumed waters) and olive oil. These are the regular emblems found in almost all Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches. On thanksgiving tables with no specific nation symbolism, like on Sister Stewart's of St. Rita's Church, there was a lota and a calabash, a taria, milk, wine, honey, oil, sweetness, fruits and white candles on a white tablecloth. There was no clear inclination towards one or the other of the main nations. Thanksgivings that are explicitly celebrating all the nations, like the Sunday services of major three-day events, make a point of displaying all emblems equally as well as offering food in excess. At Mt. Paran Church thanksgiving on Sunday the table was at its fullest, with two lotas and a calabash, taria, candles of different colours – both Indian yellow and African red, blue and green – as well as seven iced cakes and sponge cakes, piles of fruits and palm leaves. Mother Cleorita's and Leader Gerald's Sunday table in their private annual thanksgiving overflowed with three plates of candles, both Indian and African colours, six tall bottle candles, two bells, two lotas, two calabashes, a white rose glass, a yellow flower glass, a taria, a nation calabash with fourteen little flags, two bottles of red wine, a big bottle of sweetwater, olive oil, two perfumes from New York, honey, Kananga and Florida water, and a wooden sword. The remaining space was stuffed with snacks, four sweetbreads, five iced cakes in African and Indian colours, four big bottles of *Peardrax* soft drink, corn cobs, coconut bake and bread, a calabash filled with five fried red fish and a mountain of fruits towering at the end of the table. On tables like this all the colours and emblems are chosen to represent all possible nations.

The unambiguous explanation given by knowledgeable elders about the ideal that all the nations are to be simultaneously embraced is that one must always be prepared to entertain all the saints, the Spirit in all possible forms, should they choose to join in. An Indian ritual with no calabash or no African colours would be an insult to the African Spirit, a sign that African saints are not welcome. Regardless of the Spiritual orientation of the thanksgiver, the congregation always consists of people with both African and Indian preferences who would entertain the Spirit in their own way in spite of the theme of the occasion – one cannot choose, after all, whether to catch power or not. So, by exhibiting all emblems and colours, Spiritual Baptists get ready for all possible Spiritual

encounters and acknowledge the equal importance of the entire cosmology. The nations cannot be totally separated, they are intertwined in the complex of locations and entities that comprise the Spiritual world.

The extent to which an anomalous nation, like Africa in an Indian thanksgiving, can be portrayed, is under continuous negotiation. For example, in an Indian thanksgiving a Mother proceeded to pray with a calabash in her hand. This was considered inappropriate and Spiritually disingenuous by some sisters, who talked about it on their way home and concluded that one should pray with the lota in an Indian ceremony. On the other hand, in Tante Thelma's African thanksgiving the Indian Spirit took a sister, and she danced and talked in Indian language for a long while, although others were entertaining the Spirit in the African way. Leader Gerald made jokes about how "the Indian want to come and see what is taking place," and nobody saw anything controversial in the simultaneity of Africa and India. However, failing to display a nation theme that one has received in a vision is considered as disregarding Spiritual instructions. Disapproving comments met a young sister who had received a Spiritual message to organise Indian prayers, but who ended up keeping a normal thanksgiving with no clear Indian symbolism. She did not really know how to make the occasion unambiguously Indian; her table portrayed blue and red candles as well as yellow, no specifically Indian emblems or colours except one lota pot, and by the roadside entrance she had arranged a beautiful calabash filled with ixoras, mango leaves and a red candle. The service was clearly mixed as far as nations were concerned. The elders who were present were not satisfied, and preached to the thanksgiver in a serious but caring tone about how important it was to ask questions from the Mother or the Leader when one receives Spiritual instructions and is not quite sure of how to follow them. This instance shows that the Spiritual Baptist cosmology and symbolism form a generally acknowledged system that is being reproduced, regardless of the creativity inherent in the liminal spaces of Spiritual contact.

RITUAL SPACE

The physical lived-in environment of Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists is part of the Spiritual world. The binary opposition of 'mental' and 'physical' is not synonymous with the Spiritual and the *carnal*, as the latter term can mean both physical and profane, and as experiences of the Spiritual are usually very physical.¹⁷ First of all, Spiritual journeys and visions often include Tobagonian

places and people, as several examples have shown. Secondly, different spiritual beings – saints, but also jumbies, fairy maids or unnatural animals – are encountered in the Tobagonian environment, in the same streets, beaches, and forests where people spend their daily lives. Thirdly, locations of the Spiritual world can be entered at actual Tobagonian places; gates to Spiritual Africa are found right in Tobago. This linkage between the journeys and transitions of the global cosmology and the local *lifeworld*, the quotidian social life in the Tobagonian environment (see Jackson 1998, 35, 189), underlines the indigeneness of creolisation. It demonstrates the importance of places and sites, locality, even in a creole society that has been depicted as the point of arrivals and departures of various diasporas.¹⁸ The rooting of the Spiritual Baptist cosmology in the local world gives further support to the proposal that creolisation is more than the mixing of ancestral continuities deriving from other continents. It also shows that such a cosmology, tempting as it is to regard it as a postmodern construction, is not free-floating and inconsistent, but part of a structured system of knowledge that springs from embodied experiences in the local social reality.

THE BODY AND RITUAL SPACE

A Tobagonian site, such as a beach or a river mouth, is recognised and celebrated as a Spiritual place through the symbolic devices such as paraphernalia, performances, and rhetoric. Through these the participating believers get access to the Spiritual world via the particular location. Thus the physical site like Grafton Beach, where European and North American tourists tan themselves in bikinis and paddle around in pedal boats with bottles of Carib beer in their hands, can be recognised as sacred and symbolically significant. The sacredness of the place is also reflected in codes of conduct, dress, and speech, so that the beach becomes like a church, or a yard otherwise roamed in by dogs and the neighbour's chickens, becomes a sacred site of a thanksgiving service. The Spirit can enter because the area is consecrated, cleansed, separated from the rest of the environment.

In the Spiritual Baptist belief system and rituals, space is structured primarily by the four cardinal points. The four corners of churches, which are also ritually marked on thanksgiving yards or baptismal beaches, are the clearest spatial arrangement manifesting this structure. The four corners bear various meanings. In referring to the four cardinal points of the compass, they jointly signify the entire universe, including the Spiritual world. As Teacher Audrey explained, the surveyors go from North to South and from East to West, covering the whole

world, the entire church building, thanksgiving yard or beach. Not only the cardinal points, but also the four elements, fire, wind, earth, and water, are sometimes brought up in Spiritual Baptist discourse.¹⁹ The corners can also connote the four apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, or they can be connected to different saints. Whether the corners of a church actually correspond to the cardinal points is not really questioned, and many churches have been built within the limitations set by neighbouring buildings, not in accordance with longitude and latitude. The same is true, of course, with thanksgiving yards, beaches, rivers and crossroads – the four corners as cardinal points are symbolic rather than actual.

As the essential invocation ritual to begin each service, surveying is the clearest way to structure the space into four. The four corners of the church or the thanksgiving yard are sanctified by the surveyors in a certain order by pouring libations of sacred substances and praying. In most churches the surveyors start at the main door, the entrance through which the Spirit passes, and proceed to the right altar corner, referred to as Number One corner. Then to the right corner at the opposite side, the door-side, of the church; then the left altar corner, then the left door-side corner. Thus the surveyors make a cross across the floor. In many churches the surveyors then go to pour libations at the centrepole, the possible side doors and the area in front of the altar. As in most churches women cannot enter the altar area, a male minister surveys there, or the altar is left outside the cleansing ritual. In thanksgivings the table has to be surveyed, too, and the procession circles it, sprinkling and pouring liquids, powders and grains at its four sides. A similar order is applied in places with no clear boundaries, like baptismal beaches or crossroads where missions are held. On these occasions the surveyors demarcate the sacred space themselves, not having a ready-made structure to mark. In many churches the surveyors invite the saints by saying a little prayer at each corner, for example asking St. Michael to arrive when in the Number One corner, then St. Raphael, St. Philomen and St. Francis. The particular saints invited can be freely chosen by the surveyor, because the corners are not fixed as belonging to any specific saint; it is the surveyors who produce the connection.

During the service libations are poured at the four corners, the entrance and the centrepole by sisters and at times also brothers in the Spirit, although the actual initial surveying has already been performed. They may dance or march to the corners with the calabash or the lota, take the talcum powder and sprinkle it at the four sides of the thanksgiving table, or pour milk at the four corners of the thanksgiving yard; the bell is also frequently rung to the four directions. The division into four is thus repeated throughout the service. Since the Spirit guides practitioners to mark the holiness of the place through the four corners, be it

those of the table, of the room or of the area, the sacred nature of the four-partite division is further marked and reinforced.



Picture 10: Surveyors' procession in a thanksgiving tent

The body is also linked to the structuring of space. In a congregation service, educating his Spiritual children, Bishop Daniel compared the four-partite holiness to the (female) body, comparing the altar to the head, the centrepole to the womb and the four corners to the four limbs. The church must be consecrated like the body, so that just as the church is cleansed and sanctified before service, the body must be clean and pure. The Bishop reminded us that women have to make sure to protect their naval area well, using long tops and belts, not short tops that leave the belly-button bare. The centre, just like the head, is the most sensitive part of the body, and so are the centrepole and the altar the most Spiritual spots of the church. The arms, stretched to the sides as they are during rites of passage, also resemble the cross, which again is represented in the four corners. Brown (2001, 343) points out that by slowly turning to the four directions and saluting them, the Vodounist shapes not only the cross but also the crossroads, and thus simultaneously embodies central symbols of Christianity and West African religions. The ritual significance of crossroads for the Spiritual Baptists is obvious, as all road-side preaching –

missions – are arranged at a *four roads*, and many Spiritual encounters take place at crossroads.

In various rituals the four corners are actually embodied by one or several participants. It is quite common for baptismal candidates and pilgrims to be walked from Number One corner to the other three, in the order repeated in surveying. An elder in the Spirit, like the Pointer, the Mother who washes the candidates or anoints them, or other sisters and brothers involved in the preparation of initiates, may take hold of a candidate, hugging her from behind or carrying her on her back, and dance to the corners with her. By physically bringing the person to the sacred corners the manifesting Spirit introduces her to the church, to the congregation, and acknowledges her as a potential visitor to the Spiritual world. An elder may also introduce the candidate or other neophyte to the saints by taking her to the corners. For example, a Tobagonian woman residing in New York kept a thanksgiving in Mt. Paran Church, and after her declaration in the beginning of the service, Bishop Daniel spun her around and march-danced with her three times around the table and the centrepole, clockwise; they continued to the altar, and the Bishop spun the thanksgiver in front of it. He then danced with her to the four corners. After the service was over and we were eating, a Teacher came to talk to me and wanted to make sure that I understood what went on after the declaration. Because the thanksgiver was "not born and bred in dis church," the Bishop had to take her to the corners, introduce her to the saints and allow her to greet them, she explained. Another regular ritual of embodying the four corners is performed by turning a person, a candidate, pilgrim, or somebody to be healed or blessed, slowly to face the four corners. An elder takes hold of the candidate and opens her arms wide, like a cross. She then turns her to face a corner, or one of the four directions, and slowly closes her arms over her chest. Turning her 90 degrees clockwise, to face another direction or corner, she opens her arms again, to be closed over the chest and opened anew as the candidate faces the third corner. This way the candidate turns a whole circle, opening and closing her arms at four points. Sometimes the turning speeds up so that the person ends up spinning like a wheel, like at the end of the pointing ceremony when the pilgrims are about to be carried to the mourner room. The implications are the same as in walking the candidate to the corners: the connection between the person and the Spiritual world, via the symbol of the cross, is embodied and publicly marked in front of the congregation.

In addition to the four corners, the centrepole, the altar, and the entrance are ritually significant parts of the church. In thanksgiving yards the table replaces the centrepole and the altar as a ritual centre, but the entrance to the yard from the road is still important and specifically marked. In the church, these

spots are surveyed in the beginning of each service, and often during subsequent manifestations too. The symbolic significance of the centrepole is explained in different ways. One elder points out that the pole connects the Spiritual world to the physical world of the church; another states that the centrepole is the centre of the church, and serves to chart out the proper dimensions of the rest of the space – the four corners, the altar, and so forth.²⁰ When the Spirit tells someone to ring the bell, this is usually done near the centrepole. Different rituals, like women's and sometimes also men's prayers or the dedication of infants, take place at the centrepole. Furthermore, the area between the centrepole and the altar is employed in prayers, the reading of lessons, and preaching. In rites of passage, the pointing of baptismal candidates and mourners is performed in this space.

The altar, on the other hand, is for male ministers' use only, except in those few churches where female ministers have access to that space as well. Although most ritual practice takes place in front of it, altars are used for preaching, and for blessing infants, collection money, and communion bread and wine. In outdoor services, however, the entire ritual space is accessible to both men and women. The entrance, as the third major ritual centre in the church, has the important function of a passageway for the Spirit, or saints, into the church and the ritual. The entrance is surveyed and thus prepared for this purpose; it is marked by chalk seals, sometimes also by paraphernalia like a glass with leaves or a rose, the *lota*, or the calabash arranged in the middle of the seals. A watchman, either a member of the congregation who has received that responsibility and title, or a symbolic watchman like an egg can be placed at the entrance to guard the space from uninvited, evil spirits. Fire in a coal pot at the church doors or a fireside at the entrance to a thanksgiving yard keeps away evil spirits and may help to invite the Holy Spirit. The passage from the entrance to the centrepole and the altar must always be clear, so that the Spirit has direct access to the ritual space. The seats in churches and in thanksgiving yards are arranged so as to leave a clear passage from the door or the road to the ritual centre. Also, when the congregation gathers between the centrepole and the altar, like during pointing rituals or healing, they never block the passage in the middle of the church, of the angry yell of an elder will be heard: "Keep de passage clear, man!"

TOBAGO AS A SPIRITUAL AND RITUAL SPACE

A great deal of Spiritual Baptist rituals are arranged outside the church: baptism takes place on a beach or by a river, thanksgiving is usually organised in a yard or inside a private home, in pilgrimages a congregation often travels to a beach in another village, if not to another church, and missions are held at village

crossroads. Some of these outdoors ritual areas are understood as holy *a priori*, Spiritual with or without ritual consecration. Therefore rituals do not necessarily create or construct holiness in the Tobagonian environment, but mark it, make it perceptible. The Spirituality of physical places, beaches, rivers, roads, and junctions, is shown by the fact that they are common sites for Spiritual experiences in dreams, visions, and during the pilgrim journey.

Local places, like a river mouth in Goodwood or a beach in Castara, are marked as sacred sites where the Spirit can be properly entertained. A connection between the physical world and the Spiritual, between the sand, the river and the sea, and the Spirit and the saints, as well as lesser spiritual entities, like evil delusion spirits, is created through symbolic emblems, performances and rhetoric. As described in Chapter Four, the baptismal immersions for St. Francis Church take place on the beach where Goodwood River forms a wide pond before finally running into the ocean. Ritual emblems play a central role in marking the holiness of the river mouth. There is a white flag with seals on it always standing by the river mouth despite the sporadic winds and rains, signalling the place until it is replaced by a new one in the annual church thanksgiving. Flags are seen on beaches regularly used for baptism and other rituals, like at the eastern end of Grafton Beach, where St. Philomen Church has planted pink, yellow and brown flags after Tante Lorna's thanksgiving services. In their pilgrimage to Castara beach, the St. Philomen Captains planted a pink and blue and a yellow and green flag into the sand. In a similar way flags in private yards mark Spiritual Baptist homes and yards as Spiritual areas, where services like thanksgivings can be organised and where the Holy Spirit can be entertained. Flags are called *signals* because of their informative function of indicating ritual places as well as the saints and nations recognised in those places.

The shepherd's rod and the tall wooden cross are other frequently used emblems in services outside the church. Like in the Goodwood baptism, they are used to lead the procession from the church to the beach, and stuck into the sand in the particular spot in the water where the immersion takes place. On missions and pilgrimages, too, these are carried along and planted into the ground or, if the road is paved like at the Mt. Thomas Church mission at Scarborough Port, a separate stand can be brought along for erecting the cross and the rod.

Altars are built for all outside services. In the Goodwood baptism, the Baptistiser drew three circles on the sand, inside one another, and filled them with sacred seals. The elders then arranged an altar over the signs, with the vessels, bell, Kananga water, olive oil and the white cross stuck on the sand. These objects, both in the river pond and on the shore, mapped the consecrated area quite visibly. The altar in the St. Philomen pilgrimage to Castara beach was arranged by Captains and Mothers, who spread a pink and blue cloth on the sand

and placed all the central emblems on it: the bells, the Bible, calabashes, lotas, taria, bottles of oil, wine, Kananga water, talcum powder, boxes of milk, candles, and a big fruit basket. Similar altars are built on the roadside during missions. Such altars resemble more a thanksgiving table than the male-dominated altar area in the church building. Women have unlimited access to the altars on beaches and roadsides, and indeed use the emblems much more frequently than the brothers.

Fire consecrates and cleanses a thanksgiving yard, church yard or a beach. During the St. Philomen pilgrimage Captain Klein built a large fire of dried coconut shells and pieces of wood on the hot white sand between the altar and the sea. "Dem give Jesus gold, frankincense and myrrh when he born," said a Mother, making a Biblical linkage to the sweet-smelling incenses and corn meal sprinkled in the coal pots and fires. In Indian thanksgivings one can often see a lota pot with green and yellow leaves and flowers at the road-side entrance of the yard, honouring the Indian Spirit invited to the service, whereas in African thanksgivings it would be the calabash. Like fire, these emblems have protective functions when placed at the entrance.

Different performances maintain and confirm the sacredness of a site and create connections to the Spirit. In the baptism in Goodwood most of the congregation, about fifty sisters and brothers, moved from the church to the beach in a procession. The service was never discontinued, it was carried on in hymns all the way to the river mouth and the entire ambience of the function was conveyed from the church to the beach. Hymns, prayers and sermons continued as if inside, the same drumming, the ritual performances, gestures and norms of conduct prevailed. The Matron and another Mother surveyed on the shore with the lota and the calabash, Kananga water, the taria and the bell. The Shepherd filled his brass bell with fresh river water and poured it over the candidates' heads, refilled it and soaked the Baptiser and other elders present. Later on the Baptiser and the Shepherd finalised the sanctification of the site in the river, where the ritual was about to reach its climax: they tore off petals from the red and pink flowers in the calabash and sprinkled them over the river, wading in. Suddenly a big silvery fish jumped, drawing a glittering arch in the air before disappearing below the surface again. An air of elation swept the crowd, the fish was a clear sign from the Spirit – the ritual had truly been blessed! A mother rang her bell on the shore where the singing and drumming went on, and the Shepherd bent back and forth in the Spirit. The colourful petals floated on the smooth surface of the river. The Shepherd started to spin his rod like a stick-fighter in his *gayelle*, wild and fast, and beat the water with it, splashing frantically, cleansing the site until it was finally prepared for the candidates.

SACRED WATERS

Spiritual Baptists dream and have visions of local Tobagonian waters as sites for Spiritual events and encounters. The actual sea and the beaches, rivers, their delta areas, waterfalls and ponds in Tobago are Spiritual in the sense that one can connect with the Spirit and the Spiritual world in them. Various rituals are conducted at such spots, and they are believed to be the dwelling places of different spiritual beings, for example saints like St. Philomen, St. Anne, mermaids, fairy maids and spirit fish. Sea horses have been seen galloping on Grafton Beach, but they have become rare since the big hotels were built and tourists took over the area. Quite a few Spiritual Baptists and also other Tobagonians claim to have seen a fairy maid or a mermaid, like the man who spotted a lovely woman calling him to come and join her in the waves and took off immediately, running to escape the creature. On a fishing trip Brother William saw a mermaid, complete with the tail, but when he tried to point her out to the other fishermen in the boat, none of them could see the creature. Communication with the saints is uncomplicated at shores and waters, and manifestations abound in rituals conducted in such spots. Sisters who know that "their Spirit likes water" prepare for this by carrying an extra change of clothes with them, because it is very probable that they catch power and dance into the sea. This proximity of the Spirit is also evident in the common practice of carrying out healing rituals on beaches and by rivers.

Physical contact with water, and often immersion, are central elements in processes of sanctification. The entire pilgrimage service of the St. Philomen Church on Castara beach, from ten in the morning until four in the afternoon, was punctuated by different visits to St. Philomen's realm, the sea. The whole service began with several elders walking slowly, in the pace of the Anglican hymn *Lead Us Heavenly Father*, to the sea front, Leader Gerald with his big Bible, Captain Turner carrying the shepherd's rod, Tante Thelma with a large calabash, others with different surveying vessels and bottles. Standing in the water, the elders greeted St. Philomen. Leader Gerald read verses from his Bible, Brother Errol threw three handfuls of water over the waves, the women sprinkled water and other liquids from their vessels and bottles. Many of them shook in the Spirit during the respectful salutation. Sister Penny and Mother Cleorita paid their personal respects to the Lady by carrying flower-calabashes to the sea, and before the actual surveying, numerous members of the church danced to the sea in the Spirit, including six male ministers who waded knee-deep into the waves and surveyed with wine, milk and sweetness.²¹ Contact with the sea was repeated thirty-six times throughout the pilgrimage by different sisters and brothers who were in the Spirit, and the service ended as fourteen elders waded deep into the

waves in a circle, holding hands. Many of them immersed themselves totally. At this time the entire congregation was dancing on the wet sand of the waterfront. Moreover, several sisters and brothers, while dancing in the Spirit on the sand, moved their arms in the air as if swimming.

Even in indoor services, the Spirit may now and then take a sister to the sea. A fascinating example of this is the story of Mother Iona calming down a rough sea. St. Philomen Church was having baptism, and the service was still going on inside as Mother Iona, visiting the church as she often does, suddenly jumped up with the Spirit. The weather was rough outside, a storm was stirring up the sea and the waves on Grafton Beach were too high for anybody to wade in. Mother Iona danced down to the beach alone, carrying a calabash, and kneeled on the foamy waterfront. A huge wave hit her straight in the face, but she held her ground, kneeling and praying in the Spirit. Another wave sent her bending backwards, but she still managed to stay where the Spirit had led her. When the third wave came, Mother Iona was thrown back, rolling on the sand. And then, miraculously, the sea calmed down: Mother Iona had smoothed it for the service to continue. The Captain led the candidates, followed by the congregation, down to the beach and they were baptised, one by one. As the ritual finished, the sea turned violent again. Such dancing to the sea in the middle of a church service is not unheard of in other churches, either. A sister from St. Francis Church once told me, laughing, that she tries to control herself when catching power in order not to run to the sea like some others.

The powerful spiritual connection initially experienced in baptism becomes repeated and reinforced in later rituals as sisters and brothers dance into the waves in the Spirit. Joint immersions, where several people go into the water together, are quite common as the final culmination of rituals on beaches or river banks. These collective cleansings, during which many catch power, usually take place after all candidates have been baptised, or at pilgrimages and other such excursions when the service is about to close. The elders of the church, accompanied by those who are willing and have spare clothes, set out to the water, wading in chest-deep. They form a circle, holding hands and praying, and dip three times – in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, just like in baptism. At the end of a baptism ritual at St. Philomen Church, twelve members of the congregation, including the elders, formed a circle close to the baptismal site, marked by the cross and the shepherd's rod still standing in the sea. Mother Cleorita poured milk, wine, sweetness and oil over our heads and told us to wash our faces with them. That was a returning of thanks after the church thanksgiving, which had taken place the previous week. Collective contact with water is also achieved by throwing water from the calabash over the

congregation, and without exception one or two of the people soaked jump as the Spirit touches them, catching power.

The significance of rivers in Biblical terms is obvious. Most notably, John the Baptist baptised early believers in the River Jordan, and therefore rivers are unsurpassed locales as far as the initiation ritual is concerned. But for many Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists, there is more to rivers than the Biblical connection. The sweet waters, rivers, ponds and lakes, are the realm of St. Anne, or the Mother of the River, the beauty with long hair, sitting on stones in her rivers. The sea, on the other hand, is ruled by St. Philomen, the Mother of the Sea. The relationship between these two female saints is close; elders say they were sisters.²² They have mermaids and fairy maids working under them, mermaids in the sea and fairy maids in sweet waters, according to another elder's exegesis. The river mouth, the ever-fluctuating boundary between these realms, combines the power of both St. Philomen and St. Anne as the fresh water flows into the salt water and the sea rises to the river in tidal waves. A flag made of pink and blue pieces of polyester cotton is often used in churches, and one was stuck into the sand of Castara beach on the St. Philomen Church pilgrimage, saluting not only St. Philomen in the pink but also St. Anne in the blue colour at the same time. Furthermore, on the same pilgrimage the congregation was wearing mostly pink and white, but there were also several blue outfits, including the Mother's dress.

Looking closer into the intermingling waters, Spiritual Africa becomes sharper in form. Both water saints are African, and they are marked and entertained in African ways. Not only do the pink and blue colours, dances and music reflect their nationality; the most powerful African symbol, the calabash, crystallises the link between Tobagonian rivers and seas and Spiritual Africa. Outdoors, on the beach or by the riverside, the calabash is actually joined to the waters. Sisters quite often carry the vessel to the shore, so that they can touch the sea or the river with it. This is part of normal surveying procedures in baptismal services, but also in other functions. Before the pilgrimage that the St. Philomen Church prepared to Castara Beach, Sister Penny had one of her visions. She saw herself in Castara, going to the sea, and St. Philomen was annoyed: "How dare you come to me empty-handed? You must bring me something." The vision ended with Penny flying through the air all the way back from Castara to Black Rock to look for something for "the lady." Penny's and Mother Cleorita's interpretation of the message was that she had to give St. Philomen a private calabash with pink flowers. She was in trouble; where to find pink flowers in May? The trees had already dropped their lovely blossoms. Nevertheless, she managed to arrange a spectacular calabash with large pink and white flowers. At the beginning of the service she walked into the sea, ankle-

deep, to deliver her gift, and the Spirit took her abruptly. She threw the calabash into the waves, sending the pink and white flowers and the vessel floating, her body bending violently up and down, as if bowing down to the sand towards the sea. Her hands were sawing back and forth, she was shaking, jumping and bending spasmodically. Another sister had to run into the water to save Penny's slippers from floating away. Everybody considered the power with which the Spirit took Penny to be a true blessing from St. Philomen.

As described above, the entire pilgrimage was based on continuous contact with the sea. Of the fifty instances of dancing into the sea in the Spirit during this service, including the joint immersion at the end, the calabash was carried along on fifteen occasions, and on the beach it was used eight times, far more often than any other emblem. At the end of the service, as the elders formed a circle deep in the sea, they sent two calabashes floating on the waves, one with food, including apples and other fruits, and one with flowers and a candle. This was the final ritual of the service, replicating Sister Penny's sailing of her pink calabash at the very beginning. Furthermore, the first three surveyors were each carrying a calabash, and the main female prayer was holding one during her song-prayer. All the *hot* parts of the service, sessions with strong Spiritual presence and several simultaneous manifestations, were accompanied by the use of a calabash. The vessel was by far the most central object and symbol in the pilgrimage.

Not only as expressions of gratitude or salutation, calabashes can be sailed in healing rituals or spiritual work. Mother Cleorita had a vision one Saturday as she and other elders were putting down mourners at St. Raphael Church. She met a beautiful lady at a river, and the lady bathed her in the cool water and gave her a calabash. She sent the vessel floating down the stream, but could not see where it ended up. As Mother Cleorita told her husband about the vision, Leader Gerald went into deep meditation in order to find out where the calabash had floated. He managed to see the exact spot, and so he, Mother Cleorita, Mother Eulah and Leader Alan took off and drove to a local river. Mother Cleorita and Leader Alan sent two calabashes floating in the river, and one went up, the other down the stream, in opposite directions. Then they stopped, started to draw together little by little, floating against one another until they finally kissed! At that moment Mother Cleorita blacked out, falling on her back, and the others had to carry her to the mourner room, where she travelled until the following day.

This instance shows how the local environment intermingles with the Spiritual, how Tobagonian rivers flow into Spiritual streams. The calabash, given Spiritually by the Lady of the River, led Mother Cleorita to a local site, which again was shown to Leader Gerald in a vision, where a ritual performed with two concrete calabashes sent the Mother into the Spiritual world again. There she received crucial instructions on the mourning ritual which was underway. The

division between the Spiritual and the physical world appears to be shifting, even irrelevant, flowing like a calabash in a river. When Sister Penny threw her pink flower calabash into the waves at Castara beach and was immediately taken by St. Philomen, she dived into Africa in Castara, Tobago. Dancing on the hot sand with a huge calabash on her head, majestically all the way to the sea, Mother Cleorita danced in Africa. When she threw sea water from another calabash over the congregation dancing on the sand, soaking us, then washing us with water, she brought about the African Spirit and many of us *catch power*. It was as if the members of St. Philomen Church had travelled to the Spiritual Africa to meet St. Philomen as easily as riding maxi-taxis over the hills to Castara beach.

A similar merging of the Spiritual and concrete, Africa and Tobago, followed another of Mother Cleorita's visions: she had to return thanks forty days after her thanksgiving. The date became Wednesday, the 20th of January 1999. Only the family and the closest elders of the St. Philomen Church took part in the ritual, which made it especially intimate in its informality, but also quite intense. Tante Thelma and Tante Lorna arrived in good time, wearing skirts, jerseys and headties and carrying their dresses in bags. They limed with Mother Cleorita in the kitchen, waiting for Leader Gerald to come back from the pig pen, and enjoyed a sip of whiskey with soda to "keep them warm in the river," as they laughed and teased me. When the Leader came home, they changed into long dresses and headties. The women of the house still wore green and yellow, as they were instructed before the thanksgiving: the same saint that had blessed the December ritual so open-handedly was acknowledged in the returning of thanks. The men, Leader Gerald and Captain Turner, wore green shirts.

With towels, candles and ritual emblems in our bags we mounted Leader Gerald's pick-up truck, six of us crouching in the back. We parked by the Turtle Beach Hotel, Mother Cleorita picked red ixoras and yellow flowers from the hotel's garden, and we walked on the beach the rest of the way to the Plymouth River. The beach was quiet. Fishermen had gone home and tourists had retired to the hotel for the evening. At the river mouth we prepared the ritual: Mother Cleorita and Penny filled in two calabashes, one with water and flowers, the other with food, rice, peas and saltfish. The girls lit white and pink candles and stuck them into the sand, making an altar: the calabashes, two candles, a bottle of Matador wine, oil, milk, grains in a bag and a bottle of Kananga water were laid on the sandy river bank. We stood in a row on the bank, and Mother Cleorita lead us in the benediction, Apostolic Creed and prayer. She took off her glasses and waded into the river, and we followed her, the long dresses floating in the stream, waist deep. Everybody was praying, mumbling quietly, as Mother Cleorita orated a thankful prayer to God, expressing her gratefulness for His mercies and asking for continuous blessings for the family and the church. She thanked "St.

Philomen, Lady Catherine, St. Francis, Uriel, Michael, Gabriel" and others for their protection and grace. After she stopped her oration, Mother Cleorita washed her face with the river water and told us to do the same and to thank Jesus. She then gave the offerings: the red and yellow flowers, wine, milk, oil, sweetness and grains. Lorna and Thelma were humming a hymn as Mother Cleorita poured milk into the river, *milk for sincerity*; then grains, for prosperity, and so on. We all poured milk, oil, and wine into the streaming water around us, the Mothers humming. We washed our faces with milk, oil, wine and sweetness, cleansing and dedicating ourselves, returning thanks. Mother Cleorita was praying all the time, giving us instructions in between, thanking. She gave us food to eat from the smaller calabash, but we left some in the vessel, and Captain Turner waded to the other shore to place the remaining food in the calabash with two candles on a stone in the river.

The sun was going down, and we did the same offerings on the cooling sand. Mother Cleorita was still thanking Jesus and St. Philomen. Then we walked back to the hotel, our soaked dresses clinging to our legs, the evening still warm. Our faces shone with oil and milk, our clothes smelled of Kananga water. At home, after bathing and changing, we ate, feeling comfortable, and limed together for the rest of the evening.

These various encounters with water indicate that the element has feminine connotations. St. Philomen and St. Anne, ruling the sea and the rivers, are female; so are mermaids and river maids or fairy maids. Even spirit fish have been referred to as daughters of St. Philomen. Men's association with water is enhanced by the male saints Peter, Jonah and Anthony, all connected with the sea (but far less prominent in the cosmology than St. Philomen), and by the norm that men act as Baptisers, wading into the water and conducting the initiation ritual.

ROAD AND JUNCTIONS

Along with the local waters, crossroads are considered Spiritual *per se*. Crossroads, junctions, or four roads, as they are called in Tobago, are intersections of the physical and Spiritual worlds, and thence ritually significant. A good phrasing of the symbol was given by Leader Brothers of St. Rita's Church, when he showed me the secret use of the bell: "to put a person on the crossroad, is neither there or here." In this sense a junction resembles the centrepole of the church; it is a place that unites the Spiritual and the physical. Crossroads are a gateway between the Spiritual and the physical in other creole religions, too. In Vodou, "the world of men and the world of divinity meet" at crossroads (Deren

1970, 145). Papa Legba, a *lwa* of the Rada rituals in Vodou and an *oricha* of Santería, also recognised in the Orisha religion, is an old man who guards crossroads, doors and gates, including the gate to the world of the spirits, and guides people there (Brown 2001, 54); the *lwa* Carrefour or Kalfou is the Master of the Crossroads in the Petwo ritual complex in Vodou (McAlister 2002, 92).



Picture 11: A service at a crossroads in Pembroke (St. Anthony Church)

In Tobago, the road in general, and not merely the crossroads, provides space for spiritual encounters. Most of these tend to involve evil spirits and forces, but good spirits can also present themselves to travellers. The road, as a physical road in Tobago, is also an important ritual medium in the religion.²³ Missions and pilgrimages, the only remotely proselytising forums for Spiritual Baptists, are concrete journeys on Tobagonian roads. Road-side preaching, missions, are perhaps the best-known feature of the Spiritual Baptist religion in the eyes of other Tobagonians. As the congregation, or part of it, physically moves to a Spiritually indicated location – a village crossroads in missions, and a beach, a public square, community centre or another church in pilgrimages – the travelling is quite concrete, the physical transition being made by foot, maxi-taxis or, in case of pilgrimages to Trinidad or abroad, by the daily ferry between the islands or occasionally even by plane. Such travelling differs from profane trips because the participants are prepared for a service. They wear their Spiritual

clothes, colours, bands and jewellery and carry along sacred paraphernalia like the lota, the calabash, taria, bells, candles, olive oil, perfume, talcum powder, Kananga and Florida water and a tall Shepherd's rod and a wooden cross. Prayers of blessing and Psalms may precede the excursions. The journey is often spent singing, and in maxi-taxis drummers can beat along with the shaking of shac shacs and tambourines. Catching power is not unheard of during such rides or marches. This way the physical voyage becomes part of the service conducted in the destination and acquires Spiritual significance.

The road is a tremendously important cultural space in Trinidad and Tobago in general. Apart from Spiritual Baptist rituals and experiences, religious festivals such as the *Hosay* in Trinidad flow in ritual processions in the streets of Port of Spain, where the participating Shi'ite Muslim families push along elaborately decorated sarcophagi from St. James to Queen's Park Savannah, accompanied by bands of drummers. The high point of the Trinidadian and, on a smaller scale, also Tobagonian year is the Carnival, in which revellers, masqueraders, pan men and -women, DJs, vendors and spectators crowd the streets of the major towns, particularly Port of Spain, from Sunday night until Tuesday. Independence Day is marked by various parades in the streets, and Christmas is the season for Parang bands to walk in the villages and towns, visiting homes of friends and relatives. Cricket, basketball and even football are played in quiet streets. Roads, junctions, bridges and pavements provide space for liming, which is an important pastime especially for men (see for example Eriksen 1990).

The Tobagonian environment and culture in general are central sources of Spiritual Baptist symbolism, and the daily social reality of Tobago often becomes sacred and symbolically loaded. Local plants, like croton, mango, and palm leaves, ixoras, marigolds and white roses, are powerful symbols used in all rituals. The calabash, too, is locally grown. Water from rivers or the sea, or pipe water, is always present in ritual practice, in ritual vessels and in the fountains at centrepoles, washtubs, and brass bowls used to christen babies. Milk, wine, sweetwater, perfumes, talcum powder, and the grains on taria plates are everyday consumption products used by Tobagonians. Fruits displayed on thanksgiving tables are locally grown, or if imported, like apples and pears, still normal consumption goods bought by most Tobagonians. Also the food served in rituals like thanksgivings is local festive food, not typical of Spiritual Baptist rituals alone, and the cloth used to make flags, bands, altar cloths, and church clothes, is bought in the same stacks of polyester cotton, African cotton prints or other materials in fabric stores which Tobagonians use to make their children's school uniforms and other clothes. The cutlass, used in some churches, is the most common tool in Tobago. The goat-skin drums are made by local drum-makers and used in wakes, dances, shows, and competitions, not only in Spiritual Baptist

rituals. Very few ritual items are used only in ritual practice – even Kananga water can be used externally for headaches, and some use olive oil in cooking. Only lotas and tarias have no profane functions.

The thanksgiving tables are normally compiled of locally grown or purchased products. Imported goods are an appreciated addition to the standard paraphernalia, however. When a Tobagonian lady who lives in New York organised a thanksgiving in Mt. Paran Church, the girls in our family were eager to participate because of earlier experiences of the variety and quality of snacks in "American thanksgivings." The only actual difference in the thanksgiving table, as compared to those of local thanksgivingers, was a lavish flower arrangement of real red roses, daisies and carnations, a flower-shop style that did not display the local ixoras, marigolds, lilies or orchids normally seen in Spiritual Baptist rituals. In places like New York and Toronto, by comparison, ritual paraphernalia from the Caribbean is highly appreciated. Calabashes, for example, are brought along by visitors and immigrants. A Vincentian Mother in Brooklyn noted that it was difficult to find proper shades of candles in supermarkets; one had to go to special religious stores. "But of course we prefer our West Indian candles," she concluded. All in all, the local environment, plants, and goods consumed in Tobagonian society form the basis and supply of ritual symbols in the Spiritual Baptist religion.

A CREOLISED AFRICA

Murphy (1994, 186) argues that religions of the African diaspora employ ritual means to "align [the community] with its African ancestors," and that ritual space represents Africa, like the Vodou *poto mitan* (centrepole), which connects *Ginen* to Haiti. The Spiritual Baptist cosmology, however, immerses Africa in the creolised Spiritual world of various nations and localities. The cosmology portrays Africa as a dynamic realm of religious knowledge and practices, Spiritual Africa. Spiritual Africa is always conceptualised in relation to other Spiritual regions and representations, embedded in a larger, multi-national cosmology, and the entire Spiritual world is linked to the local environment. Africanness, then, does not stand opposed to Christianity, as represented in many anthropological studies of syncretism. Journeys in the Spiritual world usually cover more than one nation or region; the borders are easily traversed. The simultaneity of the entire Spiritual world is further enhanced in ritual practice in surveying procession of both lotas and calabashes, in the Indian, Chinese and African manifestations that can be seen during the same service, in the multi-coloured nation flags, aprons, and

calabashes, and in the structure of three-day thanksgivings with the Indian night, the African night, and the nation night.

The notion of Africa as a more or less mystical homeland has been proposed by many scholars of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Brazilian cosmologies. For Haitian Vodouisants, according to McAlister (2002, 87), *L'Afrik Ginen* is "the originary Africa across the waters, from whence the slaves were taken and to which the Vodouisant will return after death," "a mythical place" and "an ethos." In Candomblé, maintains Murphy, Africa is still remembered rather than mystified and mythologised (1994, 186; however, see Clarke 1998 and Motta 1998). The Rastafarian Africa, symbolically but also quite concretely represented by Ethiopia, is a spiritual homeland, and actual repatriation has been realised since the 1950s (Barrett 1977, 90).²⁴ In comparison, the Spiritual Baptists' Africa, its language, emblems, colours, songs and dances, is not an attempt to recover lost origins; it is rather, to quote Stuart Hall, "what Africa has become in the New World, what we have made of 'Africa'" (1994, 399).²⁵ The Spiritual Baptist Africa is not an ethereal, mythical concept, but is very concretely experienced and represented in ritual practice. In addition to the sensible, bodily experiences of this Africa, it is further concretised in the local, Tobagonian environment. It can be accessed at the river mouths and beaches, crossroads and forests, and represented through calabashes, flowers, water, flags, perfumes and so forth. Instead of a theory of creolisation in which part of a creolised culture is by definition somewhere else, outside the society, out of reach, or *deferred*, as Hall puts it (*ibid.*, 398), the Spiritual Baptist experiences inspire analyses that give value to the local, lived-in environment and society, to concrete practices and experiences rather than their alleged roots.

RITUAL LANGUAGE

The Spiritual and physical worlds are bridged in the ritual language of the Spiritual Baptists. This language is heard in hymns and other songs, improvised and standard prayers, sermons, testimonies and greetings. There are also specific terms, ways of addressing ritual practitioners, and lines repeated during certain phases of rituals, like "I baptise thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" when immersing a candidate in the water, or repeating a verse of a Psalm while lighting candles on a thanksgiving table. The African, Indian, and Chinese tongues spoken during manifestations are a unique addition to the corpus. Ritual speech makes the cosmology perceptible.

Thomas J. Csordas (1997, 180) divides Catholic Charismatic ritual language into two categories according to whether the ritual utterance involves two human participants, like a teacher teaching a congregation, or whether the other participant is God, for example as the addressee of a prayer. Within these types, the genres of intimacy/dialogue and authority/monologue can be separated. An example of God-human dialogue is prayer, and of monologue, prophesy. In Spiritual Baptist ritual language it is difficult to draw a line between God-human and human-human exchange. For example, mourners' declarations of their tracks are not the direct word of God, like Catholic Charismatic prophecies, but they are nevertheless mourners' descriptions of Spiritual events they have experienced, and consequently the Spirit, God, is behind such ritual speech. The same goes for testimonies and the discourse on visions and dreams. Also, Spiritual Baptist sermons are ritual speech from a human preacher to a human congregation, but occasionally the Spirit takes the preacher and helps her or him deliver the oration without prior preparations, in the customary shouting mode. The different genres of Spiritual Baptist ritual language are therefore significant channels for the intermingling of the Spiritual and the physical.

The Spiritual world and its nations are sometimes referred to in sermons and prayers.²⁶ Tante Lorna, on her knees by a thanksgiving table with nine other sisters, sing-prayed

*My God and Our Father
remember us in Africa Land
remember us in China land
remember us by India shore*

Captain Turner prayed to God to "look at Africa, India, and China today," as he and other elders of the St. Philomen Church consecrated the flag hole in the church yard prior to their thanksgiving, and in his opening words for another service, he declared "we will reach various port tonight!" On another occasion, Mother Cleorita, preaching for Sister Tiny in her thanksgiving, explained to the congregation that Tante Tiny rejoiced and went to "a Spiritual place call Africa" as she danced in the Spirit in the beginning of the service, and thus carried the entire thanksgiving there. Now she, Mother Cleorita, had to carry us back. She told us to keep the passageway from the road to the yard open, so that "they," the saints, could come in freely, and started a chant which we picked up; the drums started to roll, our chant melted into the rhythm, mouth drumming, clapping and dancing, and suddenly several people *catch power*, rejoicing in the African way.

Biblical locations recur in the rhetoric of greetings, sermons, prayers and mourners' declarations. "People of Israel," the preacher may address the

congregation, or "People of Jerusalem!" Baptismal candidates are taken down to *River Jordan*; *New Jerusalem* is awaiting across it; God is appealed to carry one to *Zion*. Brother Errol, praying for a sister in her sick-bed, sang

*My God and my Redeemer
oh King of Israel
look at Your daughter, Blessed Lamb
take her to the Zion hospital*

Another domain where the Biblical world is prominently portrayed are church names. Of forty-three Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches in 2001, fifteen carried saints' names and sixteen were named after Biblical mountains: Happy Mount Zion, Mt. Arrarat, two Mt. Beulah, Mt. Carmel, Mt. Hermon, Mt. Horeb, Mt. Monasa, Mt. Nebo, Mt. Olive I and II, Mt. Paran Perseverance, and three Mt. Zion Spiritual Baptist Churches and Mt. Bethel Spiritual Baptist Cathedral. Six churches, Church of the New Nazarene, Long Life in Jesus, Lowly Nazarene, Solomon Court Mystical Healing School, Solomon School of Wisdom and Temple Isaiah were named after Biblical characters, whereas the rest carried the name of the village.²⁷ These names have all been received Spiritually by the founding Leaders and Mothers.

God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are addressed and mentioned in the standard prayers, creeds, benedictions and in the ritual formulas that are found in the *Anglican Book of Common Prayers* and applied in Spiritual Baptist rituals. The Trinity is also frequently named in improvised prayers, sermons, and greetings: "I must say a pleasant good afternoon to my Spiritual family in the Lord," a preacher may greet the congregation, or urge a pilgrim to "Hold on to Jesus, Number One, hold on to Jesus!" God and Jesus have been addressed in Tobagonian prayers in the following ways: *Oh God and Our Father, Oh King and Our Father, Oh King of Israel, My God and Our Father, Almighty and most everlasting God, Almighty and most merciful Father, Blessed Father, Everlasting Father, My God and My Redeemer, Master God, Tender Lamb, Jesus Blessed Jesus, Prince of Peace, My Master and my strength, and Dear Master*. Other Spiritual entities, like saints, prophets and angels, come up in ritual speech less often. Prayers and prayer-chants can mention these, like the slow chant that calls different saints and angels to pray for the singer. On a Palm Sunday Bishop Daniel lead a slow prayer-chant at Mt. Irvine beach, as Mt Paran Church was keeping its annual thanksgiving:

*Oh St. Francis, oh St. Francis, oh St. Francis, pray for me
Oh St. Michael, oh St. Michael, oh St. Michael, pray for me*

He repeated the same, lingering and monotonous call for Angel Gabriel, St. Uriel, St. Raphael and finally for St. Philomen, who shortly arrived at the service. The same chant has been heard in several other churches, although the names of the saints called can vary. One week after Tante Lorna's thanksgiving, she and other elders of the St. Philomen Church left the Sunday service during the sermons and went down to the beach to return thanks particularly to St. Francis, Tante Lorna's guardian saint. Many were wearing brown gowns in his honour. Rain started to fall heavily, and we waited in the hall. Sister Gertrude, who was holding a calabash, started to shake and shout, her eyes closed: it was time to go to the sea. "St. Philomen always want she rain," Mother Cleorita commented. We descended the few yards to the Grafton beach and carried bottles of wine and olive oil, Kananga water, sweetwater and perfume, boxes of milk, talcum powder, and the lota, calabash and taria. Tante Lorna had cooked saltfish with rice and peas, and we carried that on fig leaves. Standing in the water up to our ankles, Mother Cleorita lead the chant for St. Francis, holding the lota in her hands, and poured water from it over Tante Lorna. She prayed, shouting at the wind and the rough waves, and then we threw the food and the wine, milk, sweetwater, oil, and perfumes to the sea. Powder and petals of flowers followed when all the bottles and boxes were empty. We then climbed back to the church, where others were finishing with the service, and Tante Lorna served us all food on fig leaves. In normal Sunday services, however, verbalised invocations for specific saints like the above are not very frequent. They belong more to rituals like sailing a calabash, returning thanks, or mourning, in which the presence of saints is pointedly clear.

The guardian saint of the church, like St. Philomen for St. Philomen Church, is frequently mentioned by the members of the church, for example in greetings while addressing the Spiritual family – "Children of St. Philomen" – or another church's congregation, "I bring you greetings from the courts of St. Philomen." In sermons saints are rarely brought up, except in testimonies, in which people describe a vision or a dream to the congregation. For example, if someone has seen St. Francis in a dream and got a message from him, this encounter is explained in the testimony, and the message is delivered to the congregation. In many cases, however, the saint's name is not uttered, and the testifier speaks about an Indian man who was wearing a brown robe instead of St. Francis. Occasionally elders may preach about saints in order to educate their Spiritual family, like when Bishop Daniel talked about St. John on the flag night of his church's thanksgiving.

The Spiritual world is given poetic and musical form in Spiritual Baptist singing. Singing together is the most important way to entertain the Spirit in services, and it produces liminality, communitas and transition in ritual practice.

In addition to the act of singing together, the words of hymns, sankeys and trumpets create connections to the Spiritual world. The lyrics of hymns and other songs are used to emphasise the Spiritual significance of specific parts of rituals, like when baptismal candidates are led to the beach: *Roll Jordan Roll, Jordan, we are going down*, or

*Jordan River so chilly and cold
it chills my body but not my soul...* (Popular Hymns and Choruses, 163).

When pointing pilgrims and candidates, *They Lay Bands on Me* is commonly heard. And when a mourner is taken out from the grave on the third day of the ritual, the small crowd in the mourner room sings

*Up from the grave he arose
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes...* (Popular Hymns and Choruses, 43).

Often sang in pointing services or in the mourner room, hymns such as *Steal away* or *Carry Me Away When I Die To The Burial Ground* add to the death symbolism of the rituals.

JOURNEY AS A FIGURE OF SPEECH

Journey is a metaphor frequently used by elders and members of the congregations alike when referring to rituals and connections with the Spiritual world. Various references to journeys are used in different services, but most often in thanksgivings and rites of passage. They can be applied in sermons, prayers or in non-ritualised speeches, like welcoming words in a thanksgiving.

Most often such metaphors imply travelling by foot. *Being on the road* and *travelling* are metonyms for mourning as well as for fasting and praying, during which Spiritual revelations are received. The context in which specific Spiritual titles are received during the mourning ritual can be referred to as *Baptiser road*, *Pointer road*, *Healer road* and so on: *I saw him walking de Leader-Baptiser road*, explained Mother Cleorita about a young Shepherd's pilgrim journey in her church. Another common image is the boat. After a long period of rejoicing, mouth drumming and dancing finally quieted down in Mother Yvonne's thanksgiving at Starlite Spiritual Baptist Church, Brother Ben who was conducting the service, announced that "all passengers have come ashore" and that "this is a deep water harbour." He meant that those who were in the Spirit, rejoicing in the Indian way, had returned from Spiritual India back to the harbour, the church. Mother Norma, visiting from Trinidad, then concluded the

service in similar metaphors, stating that "the ship left and headed into some deep waters, but now the tide has changed so I won't preach – some other time." After the service was over some sisters talked about the Leader who had blessed the table, saying that he *rocked the boat* by going back and forth between prayers, hymns, and preaching. *We are lifting the anchor, we are in the open seas, we will reach various ports tonight, hold on to the balance wheel, chart and compass, reaching Africa shore or going to India land* are phrases heard in thanksgiving services. Once Leader Gerald warned us of "skylarking" in the thanksgiving service, lest *the ship sink*. He meant that if participants kept on talking instead of taking part in the ritual proceedings in the proper manner, the Spirit would not arrive and the service would not succeed – the boat would go down. And finally, the very title *Captain* connotes travelling by sea, and Mother Cleorita and Captain Turner describe the Captain's duties as *steering the boat off the harbour* at the beginning of the service, meaning that the Captain helps to start the service in such a way that the congregation becomes detached from their *carnal* preoccupations and Spiritual connections become possible. In addition to maritime metaphors, aviation can also serve as a suitable allegory. "We are about to take off – fasten your seatbelts, sit back and relax," Mother Cleorita addressed her Spiritual family at the beginning of the church thanksgiving. Mother Carol of the New Jerusalem Church in Malabar, Trinidad, used similar rhetoric when opening a service of evening prayers: "switch off all ungodly things," "Jesus is the pilot tonight," "observe the non-smoking signs."

Journey metaphors also emerge in several popular hymns and choruses. Given the flexibility of the Spiritual Baptist service, anybody can "raise" a hymn during the prayers or the preaching. Therefore the hymns sung in baptism and mourning ceremonies do not reflect the choices of the conducting Minister alone, but are initiated by various members of the congregation and thus portray general associations that Spiritual Baptists have in connection to these rituals as journeys. In a sample of twelve baptism, pointing and mourner room ceremonies in four Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist Churches (St. Francis, St. Philomen, St. Rita's and Solomon Court Mystical Praying School) numerous different hymns with journey metaphors were sung. *We Are Walking in the Light, Marching to Zion, We Are Climbing up Mt. Zion Hill, Two Roads Before You, Jordan We Are Going down, Lead Us Heavenly Father, Steal Away to Jesus, Carry Me through over yonder, I Am on My Way, Where He Leads Me I Will Follow*, and *I'm Building a Bridge* are among favourite songs sung in these rituals. Hymn 574 in *Sacred Songs and Solos* is also among the most favoured:

*Thou my everlasting Portion,
More than friend or life to me,*

*All along my pilgrim journey,
Saviour, let me walk with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee,
close to Thee, close to Thee
All along my pilgrim journey
Saviour, let me walk with Thee.*

And hymn 578 –

*I would have the Saviour with me,
for I dare not walk alone;
I would feel His presence near me,
And His arm around me thrown.
Then my soul shall fear no ill,
While He leads me where He will
I will go without a murmur,
And His footsteps follow me.*

The lyrics of these hymns help to construct the rituals' journey associations by referring to walking, marching, going, being on one's way and following the Lord. Some hymns refer to a destination rather than the journey itself; *Marching to Zion, Jerusalem Jerusalem, We Are Climbing up Mt. Zion Hill, or Coming All the Way from Africa Land*. Sea-related hymns with different sea and boat metaphors and references are common, too: *Hold on to the Balance Wheel, In the Sea by and by, I See the Lighthouse, or Michael Row the Boat Ashore* correspond to the importance of the watery element in the rituals and the cosmology of the faith. There are also songs like *Roll Jordan Roll, Jordan River So Chilly and Cold* and *Lay Your Burden down by the Riverside* that can be linked to the Spiritual world as well as to the physical locations of Spiritual Baptist rituals.

THE SPIRITUAL AND THE PROFANE

The Spiritual Baptist religion does not form an isolated sphere of life that is only relevant in ritual surroundings, but influences the believers' daily routine and secular social interaction. An average day for Mother Cleorita started on a Thursday before six, when she got up, prayed and went to sit in the gallery to study her Bible. She then made tea and cooked fried fish and gravy with rice for our lunch, also boiling some rice for the dogs. After breakfast she bathed and changed into a two-piece outfit made of a red and white African print with a matching headtie. She and I went to the roadside to *catch a car* and travel to

Scarborough, where she told the driver to drop us at Sister I's house. We met Sister I washing clothes in her back yard, and she described a dream she had about a market woman who worked obeh on another seller. Mother Cleorita listened carefully and lamented the wickedness of people. They also chatted about the prayer meeting they went to the night before. We then headed towards a wholesale store, where Mother Cleorita bought styrofoam containers, spoons, milk powder and a bag of frozen pigfoot, which she needed to make ice cream and souse to sell, and chicken to cook at home. We left the bags at the store and walked to the market, where she chose provisions, fruits for the grandchildren, pig tail and pepper sauce. Before going home, we went to a fabric store to admire their new African prints, and then to a tailor shop where one of Mother Cleorita's spiritual sons had a dress ready for her. Around eleven we reached home with the bags and parcels, and Mother Cleorita started to cook *pelau* (a dish of rice, peas and meat) for the following day and to mix pistachio ice cream. She sells ice cream, boil corn (corn boiled with coconut and seasonings) and souse (pig foot, chicken foot, and cow skin cooked and then mixed in a sauce with lime, peppers, onion, salt and other seasonings) in front of the Black Rock supermarket every Friday and Saturday night, and villagers, shoppers, and drivers on their way to Plymouth, stop and buy the delicacies at her little stall. After the day's cooking and preparations for the following day's selling were done, Mother Cleorita put on the fan in her room and took a little rest, reading the day's papers and a religious book.

In the evening we were all sitting at the gallery as a car pulled into the yard and a woman limped upstairs, asking Mother Cleorita to see about her knee. She collected oil and water from her room and kneeled in front of the woman, painfully because her own knee had been operated on. She rubbed the lady's knee with olive oil and made her stand against the wall, then held her leg, bent it up skilfully until a click was heard. She spread mineral ice on the area, and the lady said it felt much better. As the lady left, she put a ten-dollar bill under the tablecloth. Spiritual healers are not supposed to charge people, since healing is a gift from the Holy Spirit; nevertheless, people usually leave money to cover the expenses of the substances and items used, such as oil, candles, bands, perfumed oils and waters and so forth. Healers receive patients such as this lady with physical ailments, but also people for whom they *read*, make divinations, and others who have problems at the workplace or in relationships. They use various techniques to heal and assist their patients, ranging from specific bush baths and anointments to the use of ritual paraphernalia, such as candles, parchment paper, water, honey, rum, and other symbolic devices. They bless babies and children but also objects, like newly acquired cars. Spiritual work is done at home, in the

midst of mundane routines, family members and visitors, and at the church, depending on the necessary techniques.

In Mother Cleorita's daily life, then, her religion and the Spiritual realm of her world intertwine with profane activities, and her Spiritual work enforces the dominance of the ritual sphere also outside the church and its services. The Spiritual is present in the profane lives of less advanced practitioners, too, for example in the sphere of work.²⁸ Some Spiritual Baptists sing church songs or listen to tapes they have recorded of thanksgivings while cooking, washing wares, sweeping the yard or washing clothes. Singing is not uncommon at workplaces outside the household, either. Discussing religion and religions is normal in Tobagonian workplaces, and people do not hesitate to declare their personal convictions or to preach the doctrine of their denomination to their colleagues. Spiritual Baptists are involved in such exchanges along with representatives of European and North American originated churches, like Adventists, Pentecostals or Methodists. Spiritual Baptist Mothers wear headties when outside their homes, and some, like Mother Cleorita, only uncover their heads to wash the hair. Many Mothers thus wear headties in workplaces, should they work outside the house. Some younger Spiritual Baptist women also tie their heads in their workplaces, in offices, schools, or restaurants, for example. Men, on the other hand, have no specific marker for their religion, except for the commonly worn rings and chains made after Spiritual instructions.

The cosmology and beliefs of the religion are not shelved while working. Visions can be seen and spiritual beings encountered: a fisherman may see a mermaid, or hear a fish speak; a jumbie can appear to a man while digging the family provision ground; or a pilgrim traveller can have Spiritual instructions concerning her work, or prospective job. The secret passwords can be used in difficult situations at work. The spiritual work of gifted elders is often sought to solve problems at work: a market seller can ask for Spiritual assistance to protect herself from the obeh of her competitors, or a taxi driver may bring his vehicle to be blessed by a Mother. Spiritual workers can help a hotel employee improve her position in the boss' eyes, to disclose the wrongdoings of a office co-worker, or to further the chances of an applicant to become chosen for the job.

On the other hand, ritual practice takes its toll of Spiritual Baptists' incomes. Substantial portions of wages, salaries, and money earned by self-employed believers can be used in organising costly rituals like thanksgivings, or to pay for the expenses of the mourning ritual. Even regular attendance at Sunday services requires money: fabric stores and seamstresses have to be paid for the church clothes needed for different ritual purposes, and as most Spiritual Baptists travel to churches further than a normal walking distance, transportation in route taxis or buses may cost a fair proportion of the daily income. Thus a Mother may sell

mail-order cosmetic products and save the money to buy food for her thanksgiving, or a sister provides day-care for the neighbourhood children and puts aside the earnings to buy cloth for a silvery Indian church outfit. Money is collected, saved, and sent from abroad to make ends meet. Sometimes ritual practice surpasses working in the use of time: mourners who have jobs take the week off, sacrificing either their vacation or salary, and also the labourers who assist the Pointer may stay away from their work places for the entire week to be engaged in payless work at the church. Not only are the Spiritual Baptist rituals fairly lengthy *per se*, preparations for them are time-consuming and labour-intensive endeavours. Thanksgiving preparations are a fine example of how labour and resources relate to ritual practice and Spiritual experiences.

THANKSGIVING AS RITUAL EXCHANGE

To conclude this chapter, I discuss thanksgiving as a ritual of exchange in which production and distribution of resources facilitates the merging of the Spiritual and the phenomenal. Whereas a pilgrim enters a reciprocal relationship with the Spirit by abandoning the profane world and receives knowledge and status in return, a thanksgiver upholds this reciprocity by sacrificing profane resources – money, labour, products and commodities – in order to express gratitude to God, and also to secure further blessings.

Labour for a thanksgiving may start a year in advance. Leader Gerald planted cassava in January and reaped the harvest for the family's annual thanksgiving in December. He also raised pigs, one of which was meant for the thanksgiving, and had to feed them and clean the pen every morning and evening. The bulk of the work starts about a week before the ritual, though, and since a lot of the chores have to do with preparing food, it must be done on the day of the thanksgiving or the preceding day. There is always a rush, and the organisers are quite tired after everything is over.

Weeks before Mother Cleorita's and Leader Gerald's thanksgiving in 1998, we all had bought cloth to make new dresses and headties. On the Friday one week before the ceremony, Sheldon, a young man living in the house, washed the windows. Leader Gerald got help from Captain Turner to collect bamboo from Mason Hall, and he had also collected firewood at Turtle Beach. Auntie Claudia had ordered new cupboard doors and changed the main door of the house. The construction of an extra room downstairs had been accelerated, and the walls were complete before the thanksgiving.

On Monday Mother Cleorita and Leader Gerald drove to town to buy a vinyl mat for the floor upstairs, among other things. They had killed and cleaned some

of Leader Gerald's fowls, and Sister Irene from the church had donated a few chickens as well. Mother Cleorita cut them in the backyard with a cutlass. Danielle, their granddaughter, was cutting dasheen leaves for the callaloo. Penny was becoming increasingly impatient and excited about the upcoming thanksgiving. She had dreams and visions about it every night, and talked about it constantly, making us laugh by pretending to catch power and talk in tongues. Leader Gerald lit a fire at the entrance to the yard, at the road side, and it was kept burning for the whole week until the thanksgiving was over. On Tuesday morning Mother Cleorita and I woke up when Penny rushed into our room to tell us about her dream. She had dreamt about a dead brother from the church, a good friend of the family, who had given her a green dress, a yellow headtie, and a yellow sash. The brother had danced in the Indian style, doing the Cobra dance, Penny laughed, "and de man can't dance!" In the dream the brother had also passed some of the sisters from the church straight, without saying hello, thus showing his disapproval of their actions. Mother Cleorita picked up the message instantly, and told Penny that green and yellow would have to be the colours they wear for the thanksgiving. "Dem bright bright colour?" Penny moaned with disbelief. She had planned for a dark green dress embellished with silver, to match high-heel silver slippers. Later in the same morning Mother Cleorita went to town again to buy more candles, rice and other foodstuffs, plates, cups, toilet paper, a new toilet seat, and bottles of olive oil, *Matador* and *Ruby Red* wine, Kananga water, Florida water, honey, and talcum powder for surveying. She also bought the cloths needed for the flags. Work in the house and at Leader Gerald's pig pen went on as usual, Penny saw to her several day-care children upstairs, Claudia and her husband went to work every day, and people came to Mother Cleorita for Spiritual readings and healing.

On Wednesday Mother Cleorita stitched the flags and decorated the main ones with lace. I went shopping with Penny who bought the desired silver shoes, and at the wholesale store we purchased huge boxes of snacks, candies, biscuits and chocolates for the children's bags. Mother Cleorita travelled to Scarborough, to buy cardboard boxes. We folded them in the evening, sitting in the gallery upstairs, and filled two large garbage bags with them. Leader Gerald drove for more bamboo. On Thursday, Mother Cleorita headed for Scarborough twice. She bought fruits, ochros, saltfish, milk, wine, and still more food, and in the afternoon she and Leader Gerald drove to town to get some *Kiss cakes*, small muffins, only to find out that they had to come back the following day. Miss Nella and other ladies selling in the market, whom Mother Cleorita knows well from the days she herself used to sell there, had delivered boxes of mandarins and apples from Trinidad without charging her for the transportation. They were meant for the children's bags. Uncle Heston was cutting and seasoning bonitoes

in the back yard while his nieces Danielle and Karine were cutting more celery, chive, and onion for the seasoning mixture for the meat. Penny was washing and ironing clothes while her day-care babies were taking a nap. When Mother Cleorita arrived home, she started to mix ice cream with coconut flavour for the children's thanksgiving; Sheldon helped her to turn and mix it. Mother Cleorita also had to sew her headtie and sash for the new linen dress she intended to wear on Sunday. In the evening Reverend Charles, Captain Turner, and Brother Leath arrived to help Leader Gerald build the bamboo frame for the tarpaulin tent. Mother Becca washed and anointed the flag poles with Penny and Danielle. Around nine o'clock the tent was ready and we sat under it, relaxing and drinking a glass of wine in celebration of Leader Gerald's and my birthday.

On Friday morning we got up before five. It was cool and dark. Leader Gerald went to walk his dog and to see about his pigs, Penny started to bake sweetbread, and Mother Cleorita and I took the first bus in the morning to Scarborough and went to the market. She bought plums, red apples, oranges, grapefruits, five bunches of bhaji bush, celery, chive, tomatoes, and ten pounds of pork. Mother Iona, who sells fish in the market, donated a big slice of kingfish, some red fish and other smaller fish. Miss Nella, Miss Wilma and other friends of Mother Cleorita's gave her bananas, tomatoes, *paw paw*, lemons, *zabocas*, sweet peppers and other gifts; she was jubilant, calling "Praise God!" and joking with the ladies. I bought fruits for the thanksgiving table: green and red apples, pineapples, paw paws, bananas, sorrel pears, grapefruits, and grapes. We then ate *fry bakes* with egg and cheese and drank chocolate tea at one of the stalls, and bought breakfast for a vagrant. Around nine o'clock, loaded with bags and parcels, we paid a driver for all the four seats and travelled back to Black Rock, where the girls were baking hops. We all had on long skirts and headties. Leader Gerald had gone to get the Kiss cakes from town and to collect the lotas, calabashes, and drums from the church. I started to cut up the bhaji, Mother Cleorita peeled and boiled the cassava on a fireside in the yard, and Penny continued baking sponge cakes. Mr. Douglas, a chef at the fanciest of the local hotels, finished his work early and came home to dig the flag hole in the shape of a horse shoe. Tante Amy travelled from Les Coteaux and started helping me with the bhaji, and then cut the pork with a cutlass in the back yard. Brother Errol dropped by to bring some grapefruits and lime juice. Teacher Freddy from St. Catherine Mystery Shrine brought yellow and green candles, the colours matching with Penny's dream and thus supporting the trueness of the vision. Everybody commented on that, agreeing with Mother Cleorita's view that Penny's was "a true vision, yes."

The yard was hot and smoky and we were getting tired. Nobody had time to cook so we ate bread. Tapes of past thanksgivings were played all day long. The

Spiritually protective fire by the road side was kept burning all the while, and in the four corners of the tent incense sticks were burning. The flag poles were leaning against the house. Mother Cleorita had not drawn any seals on them this year because the Spirit did not give her specific instructions; she never uses symbols or ritual paraphernalia, even food on the thanksgiving table, unless the Spirit has shown her where, when, and why to use them. Leader Gerald, Reverend Charles, and Captain Turner fought to pull the tarpaulin tent over the bamboo frame and tied it firmly to the garage shed. After having baked all the cakes, Penny and I cleaned the boiled salt fish and corn fish, and Tante Amy cut up the tomatoes, onions and peppers for the *buljol*. Sheldon and Leader Gerald drove to the new Black Rock Multi-Purpose Complex to fetch chairs. We seasoned the pork, cut up pumpkin for the curry, and started to fry fish both inside the kitchen and outside by the fireside. We cleaned the toilet and swept the yard. Sister Sherry Ann from Mt. Paran Church came to help and cut the cassava; Tantes Lorna and Thelma arrived with suitcases, prepared to stay in the house until Monday, and gave a hand in the frying of the fish. Penny and I went to collect croton leaves and flowers for the vessels, and I filled two lotas with leaves, marigold flowers and yellow candles, and six calabashes with red ixora chrysanthemums. Mother Cleorita, Tante Lorna and Thelma fixed the tarias, setting black-eyed peas, rice, corn, and split peas into neat sectors and putting carnations, a lime, two hot peppers, three gloves of garlic, and yellow petals over the grains.

The tent was finally ready, the old men had been working very hard. Leader Gerald hung small flags of different colours from the ceiling, sticking them between the bamboo and the tent, and Mother Cleorita, Lorna and Thelma prepared the table under it. Over a white tablecloth they spread green and yellow cloths, and arranged on it five lotas, one calabash, two bells, a glass with a white rose and another one with marigolds, two tarias, a plate on which seven yellow and green candles were stuck, a nation calabash, a brass cobra raising its head in an upright position, a wooden sword, bottles of olive oil, Matador wine, Kananga water, perfumes; glasses of milk, sweetwater and wine; a large star-shaped cake iced with yellow frosting, corn cobs, bowls of dhal and bhaji, a calabash with five fried fish and two hops bread in it, and a large Bible. Captain Turner lit white candles in the four corners of the tent. Around six o'clock we all lined up to bathe and to change into our Indian-coloured outfits. People started to arrive around seven, and the ceremony began after eight, lasting until half past midnight. The women of the house served hops bread, corn fish and salt fish to the crowd. Six extra people slept in the house.

As we got up around five on Saturday morning, Mother Cleorita gave me money and sent me to the market to buy six pounds of saltfish, ten pounds of

cornmeal, two balls of chocolate, and green and yellow cloth. She packed food that was left over from last night into styrofoam boxes for me to deliver to the ladies in the market. The girls gave me money for new buttons for their dresses and for some extra pears. When I returned, Mother Cleorita had washed the clothes we used on the previous night, as is customary, and she and the other women and girls were peeling and grating cassava in the yard. The girls and I started to fill in the children's paper bags. We sat on the floor upstairs and argued how to organise the project, and finally managed to share tasks so that each bag got an apple, a mandarin, a Kiss cake, a bag of cheese sticks or corn curls, some *kumar* (a ginger-flavoured Indian delicacy), a piece of *sugar cake* (made of coconut and sugar), a pack of biscuits, a Bongo chocolate bar, some Cheers candies, nuts, a lollipop, toffee, chocolate candies, and a mint. We were listening to the cassettes I had recorded on the previous night, singing along and making jokes. Mother Cleorita cleaned saltfish, Auntie Claudia cut meat, Tante Thelma and Tante Lorna re-arranged the table for the children's thanksgiving starting at three o'clock. About sixty children, many with their parents, took part in the service, and we served them saltfish, bhaji and rice in small boxes, followed by coconut ice cream and the paper bags full of sweets. In the meanwhile, food was being prepared for the adults' thanksgiving. Around six o'clock the children left, and at seven the thanksgiving continued with the African night.

On Sunday we woke up early again. Eleven sisters and Mothers and a brother had slept over, and everybody started to work: a breakfast of fried fish and chocolate tea had to be prepared and served, pots scrubbed, food prepared for the day's thanksgiving, lotas and tarias polished with ashes and lime and re-filled again, and the table set anew. Eight more people, men and women from the church, arrived to help. Extra hands were really needed because the Sunday meal consisted of several courses, and over a hundred participants were expected again. People arrived around one p.m., wearing extravagant Spiritual clothes, and the service lasted until six. We then served the crowd a meal of cocoo, callaloo, rice and peas, curried *pommecytheres*, channa and potato, and goat, pork, and chicken. Fruit punch, *mauby*, and ginger beer were also shared, and Mother Cleorita handed out pieces of the five iced cakes and fruits from the table. That evening we all went to bed early, exhausted. On Monday morning, work still continued as the tarpaulin tent had to be taken down, the chairs driven back to the Complex, clothes washed, the house swept and mopped, the paraphernalia emptied and cleansed. Candles were still burning at the flag-holes. Chickens were picking the grains in the yard that had been thrown around on the previous nights by surveyors and the manifesting Spirit; "Eating prosperity," Danielle laughed.

The intensive input required for a successful thanksgiving ceremony is achieved through a network of family and friends. Church members are expected to assist their Spiritual parents, sisters and brothers in their thanksgivings, if not by donating money or other gifts, by taking part in the preparations. In the majority of churches the elders, who are expected to arrange annual or biannual thanksgivings, have smaller incomes than many of the younger, better educated members, and the pooling of resources is very important.

When the members keep thanksgivings, on the other hand, the elders help with the preparations. On the night before her Spiritual children's thanksgivings, Mother Cleorita would go to the thanksgiving house to supervise the preparations, to give advice, and also to consecrate the space. The thanksgivers were happy for her presence, since it made them feel more confident that everything was done "right." Along with the Mother, friends, relatives and neighbours are expected to come and help.²⁹ Sister Tiny organised her thanksgiving in August 1998. Her husband came to pick up Mother Cleorita and myself on the previous night, Saturday, at 7:30, when Mother Cleorita had almost finished selling souse and ice-cream in front of the supermarket. We fetched our bags and went. The house was large, with several bedrooms, and it housed the families of Sister Tiny's and Brother Solomon's children as well. There were already about twenty people in the house by the time we arrived. Sister Tiny's brother had just died, and the house was simultaneously in mourning and in fervent preparations for the thanksgiving. A few men of the family were keeping a sort of a wake, drinking whisky and rum with a couple of friends. They had already built a shelter of wood and sheets of *galvanise* (galvanised aluminium sheets) in the yard, and the thanksgiving table was placed under it. Children were eating pork and dumplings in the kitchen, a sister was washing wares, Tiny's granddaughter Shelly Ann was ironing tablecloths and clothes, and I joined two sisters in the yard who were folding plastic forks and spoons into paper napkins. We eventually filled a large plastic bag with such bundles. Several other women were filling in brown paper bags for the children at the end of the service: sweets, fruits, preserved fruits, biscuits, pieces of cake and sugar cake went into the bags. Mother Cleorita told Sister Pinky to light four candles in the corners of the shelter in the yard; she herself was in the kitchen, eating a bit of ham and bread and talking with Sister Tiny and other women. More people were coming and going, and some continued working when we went to our beds at ten.

In the morning we woke up before six when prayers and hymn-singing was heard from Sister Tiny's and Shelly Ann's room. Candles had been burning in the bedrooms and outside in the shelter all night; there had also been a glass filled with water and a white rose on the living room table. Some of the women had slept over, and we soon started to prepare breakfast, while others lit fires in the

back yard and started to cook the thanksgiving food: mutton, pork, chicken. Mother Cleorita cut black cake, sponge cake, sweetbread, fruit cake, coconut drops and coconut tart, and put the pieces into brown paper bags to be given to the elders. She gave orders and instructions to the workers and went to the thanksgiving table to prepare it and to sanctify the area. She started to fill in the lotas and calabashes and called for water and flowers, which Shelly Ann swiftly delivered. She also wanted some lime to polish the bells. When the emblems were ready, Mother Cleorita stuck candles on an enamel plate. She then sent for a coal pot, and sprinkled incense powder over the hot coals, closed the lid, and placed the pot under the table to smoke. She arranged different grains on a taria: split peas, peas, four cloves of garlic, rice and spices. Then she went to the roadside, to the entrance of the yard, and built a fire of coconut shells and pieces of wood. She kept telling people to keep a passageway open from the entrance to the table, not to arrange any of the chairs in the way. Inspecting the table, she wanted to change the plates under the cakes because one must be able to lift them properly when in the Spirit. In the meanwhile men were building the tarpaulin tent, mowing the lawn, and carrying chairs to the tent from the Community Centre. Women were cooking in the back yard or making ginger beer and fruit punch, some still filling in paper bags, some carrying fruits and snacks to the thanksgiving table. Soon it was time to go and bathe, change, and start the service.



Picture 12: Mother Cleorita sealing a green flag for her Spiritual son's thanksgiving

Collaboration between family, neighbours and friends is typical of the Tobagonian society in general, and the laborious Spiritual Baptist rituals are only one example of numerous similar efforts. Rites of passage like christening parties, weddings, wakes, and funerals are all quite labour-intensive, and it is customary for friends, relatives and neighbours to assist the organising family to prepare the food, to put up the tarpaulins in the yard, and so on. What makes the Spiritual Baptists stand out in this culture, in which collective labour in ritual preparations is the norm, is the frequency of their various rituals: active members work in mourner rooms, baptisms, thanksgivings, and weekly Sunday services sometimes several days a week.

The sacrifice of the thanksgiver is not limited to her labour in the production of the ritual; resources, money and commodities are vital to its success. Arranging a thanksgiving service is not cheap. Total costs can amount to several thousand dollars, which is a considerable proportion of an average family's annual income. Three-day thanksgivings take at least four or five thousand dollars, and smaller one-day ceremonies, although less costly, can still burden the organiser's family to a great extent, given that many practitioners are unemployed, self-employed or underemployed. The bulk of the expenditure is used for foodstuffs, and smaller costs include clothes, tablecloths, and ritual paraphernalia. Many also invest in the appearance of the ritual environment by painting the house, buying new curtains and furniture, renovating and embellishing. Families who give thanks annually must save money for the ritual throughout the year. Money is put aside from even the most meagre of incomes and pensions. Many Spiritual Baptists who work in New York or Toronto, legally or illegally, save money to hold thanksgivings back home.

The network of financial contributions for a ceremony consists of members of the church, family, and friends. The Robinsons, just like most Tobagonian families and Caribbean people in general, have children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and other family members living in New York and New Jersey. These send contributions in the desired US dollars every year during thanksgiving either through Western Union or Moneygram, or then wrapped inside letters in air-mail envelopes.³⁰ Also local people give donations. The iced cakes in the Robinson's thanksgiving were prepared and donated by three sisters from the church, the expensive linen for Mother Cleorita's Sunday outfit was given by three Spiritual daughters, a few chickens came from another sister, the goat from a granddaughter's father, candles from a brother from another church, money donations ranging from 20 to 100 dollars from a few members of the church, and fruits from a brother. We, the adult members of the household, also divided the expenses amongst ourselves, so that while Penny purchased the children's snacks,

I bought the fruits, and Mother Cleorita, Leader Gerald and Auntie Claudia paid for the food.

The sacrifice of the thanksgiver is addressed to God in order to maintain the Spiritual relationship that has been developed in the initiation rituals of baptism and mourning. However, the products of the thanksgiver's labour, materialised in the table laden with food, the elaborate meal and the paper bags full of delicacies, are not merely symbolically offered to the Spirit; everything is distributed and consumed within the large congregation. This quite mundane aspect of thanksgivings sometimes gains too much significance at the expense of the Spiritual: a standard complaint heard after most ceremonies is that some people only came for the food, sat down throughout the service and stared at those who *catch power*, but when the food was served, gladly accepted and asked for an extra box to carry some home. Sitting down and relaxing after a thanksgiving was over, elders of the St. Philomen Church once noted that unlike the previous years, this time the people had behaved orderly and had not crowded at the kitchen door begging for food. One children's thanksgiving ended up in total chaos when the youthful participants were allowed to open their paper bags before the thanksgiving was over, and they immediately started to eat the sweets but also to blow the whistles the unsuspecting thanksgiver had added to the bags. Such excesses are disapproved of only half-heartedly; the distribution of food, "feeding the children," completes the sacrifice, since without people to eat the efforts would be wasted.

In return for the sacrifice, the Spirit blesses the ritual through manifestations. The more the participants rejoice, the better; thanksgivings with scarce manifestations are generally regarded as unsatisfactory, and reasons for the "failure" are analysed afterwards. As shown earlier in this chapter, the Spiritual world becomes phenomenal in successful thanksgivings. Experiences of the Spirit and the materialisation of the cosmology are produced through the sacrifice of labour and resources. Furthermore, dedication to God and to the church is believed to be reflected in one's success in the secular life. By working hard, sacrificing and saving money to provide a lavish thanksgiving table and to "feed the children," a thanksgiver "gives God praise and thanks" for secular things like health, prosperity, and the gift of life in general. Spiritual gifts, such as a new rank or skill, are not mentioned in thanksgivers' declarations; they are more properly reciprocated by putting them into practice, whether in ritual or profane interaction. The sacrifice of the thanksgiver may also give her reason to expect further support in the future. In the words of a Mother who keeps a thanksgiving every year, "the table never go dong [down]." The food and other ritual paraphernalia become more bountiful year by year as the result of the Mother's dedication, hard work and subsequent blessings; "the more you give, the more

you does get." An improvement in living conditions, such as building one's own house, buying a car, getting married, or acquiring a new job, can be regarded as consequences of a proper Christian life, God's blessing of a dedicated believer.³¹ To some extent this notion of reciprocity resembles other Afro-Caribbean creole religions, in which more or less immediate rewards are expected from the spirits served, orishas or *lwa* (see for example Brown 2001). And yet, as Godelier argues (1999, 30, 186), humans can have no claim over God or spirits, since they are already indebted to them for their existence and are not automatically entitled to compensation for their gifts. Thanksgivers recognise that God is not obliged to reciprocate, but may do so because of His mercifulness and goodness. The divine Spirit is not bound by norms of reciprocity identical to the social ones which cause Spiritual Baptists and Tobagonians in general to assist one another in religious rituals and profane ceremonies alike.

The display of extravagance also indicates to others that God has helped the thanksgiver succeed and prosper, which proves that she has led her life according to God's will. Elders who manage to arrange thanksgivings every year or every other year gain respect in the eyes of the community. This enhances their status as Mothers and Leaders, and adds to their credibility as ritual specialists and authorities in Spiritual knowledge. The hierarchical structure of the church is thus reinforced and reproduced. On the other hand, there are venerable elders who are quite impoverished, and have proved their dedication through relentless work in rituals and healing rather than sumptuous thanksgiving tables. The presentation and distribution of wealth can also backlash: gossipers may claim that the money invested in a thanksgiving by a Leader or a Mother has been earned by working obeah.

As a ritual of exchange, thanksgiving connects the Spiritual and the phenomenal, but also the ritual and the profane. It provides an arena for liminality and the transmission of Spiritual knowledge, and the cosmology of the religion finds expression and becomes reproduced in thanksgiving more than in any other ritual, except mourning. Because of its connections to the profane, the importance of thanksgiving as a basis for religious experiences becomes accentuated. The Spiritual world, materialised in the ritual, becomes linked to the everyday lives of the practitioners in addition to the liminal spaces of ritual practice. The intertwining of the sensible, local world and religious symbols and meanings roots the Spiritual Baptist belief system to the lived-in social reality of Tobago.

¹ The hierarchical demarcation between society and cosmos in Christianity has been analysed by Dumont (1986, 31), who points out the relationship between "this world and beyond" implied in Christ's teachings to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but to God the things that are God's." Dumont notes that the worldly order (the things that are Caesar's) is subordinate to absolute values (the things that are God's) because "it is for the sake of God that we must comply with the legitimate claims of Caesar." The cosmos, or the realm of absolute values, is thus like an all-embracing sphere encircling the inferior sphere of the society.

² Jackson (1995, 58) elucidates the relationship between the Dreaming or Dreamtime and Lifetime of the Warlpiri of Central Australia by describing the Dreaming as "ordinarily out of reach," and yet "eternally present, with the potential of being made visible again;" an "inner reality" that can be given form to in rituals, song and dance. The Dreaming can, moreover, become perceptible without teleological human agency, as in dreams, or in congenital marks, deformities or other such signs that have been marked on people primordially, according to the Dreaming site of their conception. Through such connections "Lifetime and Dreamtime are coalesced. Biography and myth are fused" (1995, 58).

³ See Jackson (1996, 32), and Merleau-Ponty (1994, 140-141). In Edith Turner's work the impossibility to verbalise some religious experiences is perceptively analysed (e.g. 1992).

⁴ Zane (1999, 84-85) reports that in St. Vincent, flags of the colours red, red and black, and red, yellow, and green are associated with Africa, and the mourning band that points the pilgrim to Africa is red. India, on the other hand, is symbolised by the colour yellow, and particularly a deep saffron. Those Converted who are Spiritually Indian wear yellow church uniforms. The Chinese flag and clothes are blue and white, or red and white. The same connections between colours and Spiritual Africa and India are found in Tobago, as well as in those Trinidadian churches that I have visited. Nevertheless, since the Tobagonian cosmology allows for associations between Spiritual nations and saints, and because these correlations are seen in colours as well, so that the pink of St. Philomen, an African saint, is an African colour, the variety of colours that belong to the Spiritual Nations is much larger. The colours that Vincentian Converted associate with China, red, blue, and white, do not correlate as systematically in Tobago, however.

⁵ An outfit with a matching blouse and skirt.

⁶ A working table is a small table with different spiritual emblems, used by elders doing spiritual work. They have one at the church and one in their own room.

⁷ In Teacher Audrey's African thanksgiving the colour red was so dominant that even the rice had a red shade.

⁸ The calabash is connected to Spiritual Africa in St. Vincent as well (Zane 1999, 47), and used in many Spiritual Baptist churches in Trinidad, Grenada, New York, and Toronto in the same context.

⁹ Like the calabash and Spiritual Africa, the lota belongs to Spiritual India in the St. Vincent Converted cosmology (Zane 1999, 47), and is used in all the churches of the Spiritual Baptist diaspora that I have knowledge of with this same connotation.

¹⁰ In Hindu practice, similar connotations of prosperity are found in the use of taria and grains. On Old Years' Night, some Tobagonians cook peas and rice to bring about prosperity for the new year. Analogous symbolism can be found in other New World creole cultures as well.

¹¹ Whereas sankey refers to religious songs found in the hymnal compiled by Ira D. Sankey, *Sacred Songs and Solos*, trumpets are short choruses that are repeated multiple times, often to a swift tempo and a lively melody. An example of a trumpet or a chorus is "I see the lighthouse, amen; I see the lighthouse, amen; I see the lighthouse shining in glory; I see the lighthouse, amen!"

¹² My knowledge of Tobagonian folk dances is based on participant observation in six dance groups and cultural theatres in Tobago in 1996-1997, during which time I attended numerous shows and competitions with these groups. Dancers, dance tutors and cultural activists like Rawle Titus, Miriam Scott, and especially Debora Alleyne-Degazon, have shared some of their knowledge of Tobagonian folk dances and their background with me.

¹³ St. John is the equivalent of Shango in the Orisha religion. The parallels and similarities between this thanksgiving night and Orisha rituals were numerous. For example, the symbolic representations, colours, emblems, oil, puncheon rum, the sacrificial animal, the collective manifestations etc. were

very similar to Orisha practices. Spiritual Baptist and Orisha religions form a continuum of beliefs and practices, and although the two cannot be objectively demarcated, practitioners offer varying definitions of what differentiates the two religions.

¹⁴ Similarities between Spiritual Baptist thanksgivings and *saraka* rituals (see Warner-Lewis 1991, 115-116) as well as ceremonies of feeding the ancestors in contemporary Tobago and Trinidad are obvious.

¹⁵ In Vodou, flags (*drapo Vodou*) have a similarly central role. They are sewn of satin by specific flagmakers, and ornamented with sequins and beads. They portray *vèvès*, symbols of the *lwa*, and are "unfurled and danced about" in rituals (Wexler 1997, 59, 69). Although some Spiritual Baptist flags do portray seals that connote particular saints, like the wheel of St. Philomen or the sword of St. Michael in the flags of Brother Errol's thanksgiving, it is more common to use the flags during manifestations to signal a Spiritual nation than a saint.

¹⁶ In addition to Indian thanksgivings, a specifically Indian ritual is the sit-in prayers, a rare type of service, where the participants sit on the church floor and pray, surrounded by the Indian colours and paraphernalia.

¹⁷ Attempting to give an in-depth analysis of the Spiritual dimension and its relation to the subject, the society and the environment, I juggle with the concepts of physical, phenomenal, everyday, and profane as its counterparts.

¹⁸ Wilson Harris (1995, 39, 40) draws attention to the embeddedness of the Caribbean imaginary to landscape, outlining metaphorically an "architecture of consciousness within which the opaque mound or wall of earth possesses fugitive not absolute boundaries;" the interconnections between local landscapes and imaginations, argues Harris, is best portrayed in the literary genre of magical realism.

¹⁹ The elements are personified in the characteristics of orishas, but also in some experiences and descriptions of the Spiritual Baptist saints. Water, for example, is the element always connected with St. Philomen, St. Anne, St. Peter, St. Jonah – the water saints, or the water people, as they have been referred to by many Tobagonian Baptists. Leader Brothers' elaborate list of saints and their areas of expertise introduces St. Catherine as the ruler of the air and the trees. Both fire and earth are powerful symbols in Spiritual Baptist ritual practice, too, for example in the use of fire and smoke as cleansing devices, or the symbolic immersion to the earth in the mourning ritual.

²⁰ Centrepoles are not unique to the Spiritual Baptist religion: the *poteau-mitan* of Vodoun *hounfords* serves as a passageway for the loas to enter the space and the heads of the believers, either interpreted as descending from heaven or ascending from the sea, and to return to their dwelling-places after the manifestations (Dayan 1997, 17). Bastide (1972, 165) points out the African origin of the centrepole in the Spiritual Baptist religion.

²¹ Whereas manifestations of St. Philomen in male practitioners are frowned upon, brothers can freely participate in other ritual practice that connotes this and any other female saint.

²² The orishas Oshun and Yemanjá, who resemble (and in some exegeses, are equal with) the Spiritual Baptist water saints, are related in other creole cosmologies, although the connotations may vary so that Yemayá rules the ocean and Ochún the sweet waters in Santería. Lydia Cabrera (1996, 55) notes that Ochún is Yemayá's little sister, and that these water powers are presented as complementary and connected in Cuban discourse.

²³ McAlister (2002, 92) notes that in the Rara rituals in Haiti, the road provides the route to the crossroads and finally to the cemetery, the source of ritual healing and magic.

²⁴ Rastafarian Africa is thoroughly Christian, immersed in Biblical mythology in the religion's cosmology and discourse. See for example Murrell and Williams 1998.

²⁵ Because Spiritual Africa is a tangible part of lived experiences and directly relevant to the everyday lives of Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists, I would question Hall's statement that as the *Presence Africaine* in the Caribbean, Africa "remains the unspoken unspeakable 'presence' in Caribbean culture," and that Africa as a spiritual metaphor is necessarily "deferred," its meaning always escaping (1994, 398).

²⁶ In addition to prayers and the rhetoric of the clerics, declarations of mourners' tracks are an important genre of ritual language in which the nations and other locations of the Spiritual world are mentioned and described.

²⁷ The Starlite Spiritual Baptist Church in Signal Hill stands out among the churches with its non-Biblical, non-Catholic name.

²⁸ Morality and ethics are another realm in which religious norms penetrate the profane life of Spiritual Baptists. On the one hand, moral questions are often the topic of ritual speech, most commonly sermons (see also Appendix 2): various evils ranging from promiscuity to irresponsible parenting are dwelled upon by Spiritual Baptist preachers, and also discussed in non-ritual circumstances. On the other hand, religion can be used as a resource and inspiration for personal development: for example, some of the male elders in Tobagonian churches have stopped gambling, womanising and drinking after becoming baptised. Prayer and the personal password are irreplaceable help in fighting temptations in the practitioners' daily lives.

²⁹ Labour and resources are joined also in church thanksgivings, which are ideally funded and arranged by the entire congregation; however, in each church it tends to be a certain group of active members who end up doing most of the work and covering most of the expenses.

³⁰ The occupations of the Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists whom I know to be working in the USA include children's daycare, construction work, housekeeping and cleaning, although some who have lived there for a longer time have better paid white collar jobs in banks and offices. Many have more than one job and struggle to make a living. Yet both the immigrants and their families at home consider it their responsibility to send money, clothes, shoes, and other resources back home. This is characteristic of Caribbean immigration more generally (see for example Richardson 1998).

³¹ In a similar vein Mother Joycelyn observed that she has been able to add something new to her house every year since she started organising the annual Orisha feast: "Jesus answer my sacrifice."

PART III

SELF-DEFINITIONS

AND DEMARCATATIONS

In Part III the main themes are the reproduction and change of the religion as a system of knowledge and practice, and secondly, the politics of self-definition and demarcation of Spiritual Baptists' collective identity. By looking into the interrelatedness of visions and dreams, ritual practice, and the general framework of religious knowledge, I show in what ways the Spiritual Baptist religion and churches, as a social category and as groups, are being defined, integrated, and contested. The ingenuity that marks the liminal spaces of rituals and other passageways to the Spiritual world does not render the Spiritual Baptist religion unstructured or incoherent, even though it facilitates ongoing transformations and redefinitions. The practitioners themselves seek to demarcate their religion by assessing beliefs and practices and contrasting them to those of other religions.

7. RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE AND CHANGE

THE SYSTEM OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

Religious knowledge, as used here, refers to those ideas, beliefs, norms and moral codes held by Spiritual Baptists which concern God, Spirit and spirituality, and themselves as subjects in the world in relation to these. Because religion is an all-encompassing way of life to actively practicing Spiritual Baptists, and has a powerful influence on the world-view of the less active ones, it follows that religious knowledge is not confined to ritual circumstances alone, but structures the everyday life as well.

TEXTUAL AND SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

Spiritual Baptist religious knowledge flows from two sources. It is a secret order of meanings and relationships that is partly revealed in the Bible; further knowledge of it is received gradually through experiences of the Holy Spirit and the Spiritual world, through discourse, and through ritual practice. The system *per se* is conceptualised as absolute truth and absolute knowledge, but it is not available in its entirety to any one person, not in the texts of the Bible or through visions. Brian K. Smith (ref. Saler 1993, 44) proposes that a fixed canon, oral or literal, is a definitional criterion for religion, along with exegetic discourse on its interpretation. For Spiritual Baptists, however, the canon of sacred knowledge can never be fixed or complete; learning, unveiling the unknown, is integral to the belief system.

Michael Lambek (1993, 50, 306-307) divides religious knowledge on Mayotte Island into three distinct trajectories, of which Islam and the Qur'an are one, cosmology another and spirit manifestation the third. These categories represent objectified and embodied types of knowledge in different proportions. Whereas the Qur'an as a text represents neutral and public knowledge, knowledge that pre-exists knowing and can thus be objectified, spirit manifestation entails embodied, private knowledge. In the Spiritual Baptist context, religious knowledge can likewise be categorised into textual and Spiritual. While these are interrelated, the first is publicly available in the Bible and religious books, and the latter is acquired in visions, dreams, and on Spiritual journeys as well as in ritual practice, including manifestations.

The Bible is the principal resource of textual knowledge and provides a foundation for the Spiritual Baptist belief system, which has been noted by all

scholars of the religion.¹ Active practitioners study their Bibles regularly, and elders possess a thorough knowledge of the "Word." The importance of studying the Bible is often brought up in sermons as well as in non-ritual conversations, particularly when the young are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the Word of God. A value for Biblical knowledge is typical of Tobagonian Christians in general, regardless of denomination. The Bible is used in all Spiritual Baptist rituals in preaching, in the reading of lessons, or in specific functions like proving the authenticity of a vision or the truthfulness of a person by *cutting the Bible*. The King James version is also frequently quoted in ritual speech.

Discussions and debates over the Scriptures are common both at home and in ritual settings. Topics ranging from morality and proper conduct to gender roles or the problem of suffering are addressed in exegetic undertakings between family members or elders, sisters and brothers. The Bible is quoted and interpretations of it contested when a granddaughter and grandmother argue about the aesthetics of naval piercing, or when male and female elders of a church discuss Paul's guidelines concerning gender and leadership, or when friends walking down the street comment upon the death penalty policy of the country. So, the Bible's authority as such is never challenged (see also Lum 2000, 54), but interpreting the Scriptures is not monopolised by any one group. Because of multiple parallel interpretations, the Biblical knowledge of Spiritual Baptists is not frozen into a set of beliefs and norms, but reflects the different subjects and their varying positions in the society. Regardless of these individual interpretations, there are apparent common inclinations in Spiritual Baptists' readings of the Bible, such as the emphasis laid on Revelation and Jesus' second coming or the shared agreement about Paul's directive on covering women's heads in church (1 Cor 11:5-6). Such common grounds are reached in public interpretations of the Bible, like in sermons that analyse a particular lesson, or in weekly Bible classes organised by many Tobagonian churches.

The textual knowledge of the Bible is also available to those practitioners who cannot read. Although not common, illiteracy is found among adult Tobagonians, and some Spiritual Baptists are unable to read the Bible by themselves.² Nevertheless, illiterate elders are capable of memorising large portions of the Scriptures, when someone reads them first, and of delivering sermons based on particular chapters of the Bible. They can also interpret and explain Scriptures that appear incomprehensible to literate members of the congregation.

Although there are other books that Spiritual Baptists read as sources of religious knowledge, such as *The Apocrypha*, *The Aquarian Gospel*, or the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*, the Bible stands alone as Word of God and thus

unchallengeable.³ It is a lasting and publicly available source of religious knowledge that can be accessed at any time and by anyone. The textual, objectified knowledge of the Bible does not exhaust the religious knowledge of Spiritual Baptists, though. It is part of a larger paradigm of knowledge that also includes non-textual sources; the complex cosmology that takes the form of a Spiritual world exists alongside the Scriptures in the Spiritual Baptist belief system. In the Spiritual world, Biblical knowledge intertwines with the non-textual realm of religious knowledge, compiling into a system of beliefs, experiences and practices in which no hierarchy exists between Biblical and other knowledge. On the other hand, the textual and Spiritual categories of knowledge can also be separated in Spiritual Baptist discourse. In regard to Spiritual wisdom, knowledge received in dreams, visions, during manifestations of the Spirit and especially during the mourning ritual, is valued higher than knowledge in books. While books represent a public category of knowledge, available for everybody, Spiritual knowledge has prerequisites: one has to be gifted to see Spiritual things, or to distance oneself from the carnal world by praying, meditating, fasting, and participating in organised ritual practice, like mourning, in order to become receptive to such wisdom. Becoming baptised and living in accordance with the church's moral standards are basic requirements for accessing Spiritual knowledge. Because this sort of wisdom cannot be obtained at will, but calls for sacrifices of personal comfort and time, and years, even decades, of patient dedication to the religion, it is priceless and always deserved by the recipient. Anyone can buy a book on magic, but knowledge of Spiritual matters is given to people who have proven themselves capable of understanding it and using it right.⁴ Spiritually received knowledge can also be used as a key to the Scriptures. Many elders advice their Spiritual children to pray and meditate, or to use their personal password, before reading the Bible; this way the Spirit will help the reader to understand the enigmatic Scriptures of the Holy Book. Illiterate members receive Spiritual assistance in memorising and interpreting Scriptures. In these ways non-textual sources of knowledge supplement the Bible. On the other hand, the knowledge printed in the Bible is an integral part of the Spiritual world, as places and characters of the two Testaments feature in the cosmology of the religion, and people can visit and encounter them on their Spiritual journeys.

The utter respect that Spiritual Baptists give to Spiritual knowledge resembles the epistemology of the Baktaman of New Guinea, studied by Fredrik Barth (1975). For the Baktaman, knowledge acquired in several grades of initiation rituals is secret. Barth (1975, 221) writes in his analysis of this secret knowledge that secrecy "dramatizes and inculcates a deep emotional experience of the partial nature of our understanding compared to the uncharted fullness of

reality." The "uncharted fullness" of the Spiritual world and its implications for the carnal universe is recognised by Spiritual Baptists to be unknowable, beyond an individual's comprehensive capacity, in its totality. The secrecy assigned to the bits and pieces of knowledge that individual practitioners obtain mystifies the full corpus of Spiritual knowledge, makes it divine, so to speak, rendering it in the realm of God. The consequent value given to the mystified, Godly knowledge gives ultimate authority to this veiled corpus of knowledge, and also elevates *those who know* in the hierarchy of Spiritual positions.

Some of the Spiritually received knowledge is made public in ritual practice and in discourse, whereas some is secret. The tendency of many elders to let their Spiritual children learn about the symbolism of the religion through ritual practice, prayers and meditation, instead of teaching them verbally what objects like the calabash and lota signify, or what takes place when the church is surveyed, generates dual responses. Whereas some defend this by claiming that Spiritual knowledge has to be obtained personally, others complain that young, uneducated members "do stupidity" or "ent know what dem doing," and should thus be taught better. Such criticism is heard when ritual practice contradicts cosmological knowledge, like when the Indian thanksgiving lacked Indian symbols or when Indian prayers were sung by holding a calabash. Also, since any baptised member of the church can take part in the surveying, knowledge of the meaning of the ritual varies widely and many elders have expressed their concern about sisters who pour libations without actually knowing why. Such concerns are quite common in relation to other rituals as well, but given the significance of surveying, ignorance of the symbolism is particularly dangerous. Mother Cleorita explained that since the Holy Spirit and the saints are invited to the service by surveying the area, one has to know what substances to use, where and when. One cannot merely pour perfume or water in the corners, or go to the main entrance with a glass of milk. The immediate danger in incompetent surveying lies in the possibility of inviting unwelcome spirits, evil entities. Therefore Mothers have to be stern in controlling the proceedings. For example, when a sister ran to the main entrance of a thanksgiving yard to survey with a glass of wine after the actual surveying procession had finished their rounds, Mother Cleorita gently pulled her back, took a lota pot and started to sing the hymn *Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin*; she had to dismiss the *delusion spirits* invited by the ignorant surveyor. Not only elders, but also the younger members themselves have expressed frustration over the secrecy of much religious knowledge. A male student who had grown up in a Spiritual Baptist home explained after my presentation about the Spiritual Baptist cosmology at the Tobago Community College⁵ how he had not received answers to his questions

when he was younger and argued that young people were driven away from the Spiritual Baptist churches due to this lack of education.⁶

My work, writing down Spiritually acquired knowledge and making it publicly available, requires careful inspection of the categories of knowledge. My position as a practicing member of the church has been anomalous: I have only mourned once, so my Spiritual knowledge situates me at a very junior level in the church hierarchy, but on the other hand, I have spent more time discussing the particularities of the belief system with the elders than other members. These elders have shared much of their secret Spiritual knowledge with me, fully aware of my position as an anthropologist writing a dissertation, which stresses the importance of such knowledge. It was significant to Leader Gerald and Leader Brothers, among other knowledgeable elders, that I, as a recorder of their knowledge in written form, had as comprehensive a view of it as possible. Many were concerned that I should learn "the right thing." Leader Brothers once gave me a detailed description of the proper use of the bell, explaining the significance of sixteen different combinations of ringing it, none of which consisted of more than twelve individual rings. After singing and clarifying this important ritual information for me, he stated that the lesson was meant for me and not "for the people of Tobago." Knowledge like this is very hard to acquire, the only way to it is through prolonged fasting and praying, and it must not be shared with everybody in a nonchalant way. Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists must prove themselves Spiritually capable of receiving such knowledge, otherwise it is not meant for them in the first place.

In a similar vein Leader Gerald, one evening at home in Black Rock, told me about his personal *key*, a sign that he uses to protect his congregation as its Leader, and concluded that he could only pass it on to his follower on his death bed. Another secret piece of vital Spiritual knowledge that he shared with me that evening concerned the procedures a Baptiser should perform on the beach before taking the candidates to the sea: how to call the saint of the sea, St. Philomen, with a proper sign and word. Again, Leader Gerald would not give this information to prospective Baptisers, because in order to become one, to receive the Spiritual authorisation required for this position of a ritual specialist, one has to acquire his own knowledge through ritualised channels of learning.

After attending a talk I gave at the Tobago Community College in 2001 and observing me answering questions about the Spiritual Baptist religion as best I could, Daddy had me sit down in the gallery at home in Black Rock with my notebook, in order to fill in possible gaps in my knowledge of the belief system. He realised that I would have to answer similar questions on other occasions, too, and wanted to make sure that I had "correct" information on issues ranging from the symbolic significance of colours to advancement in the church hierarchy.

Given that I have received much of my Spiritual knowledge from others' narratives and interpretations, and that some elders were quite generous in sharing their knowledge with me, I have to be attentive not to write about things that are not meant to be public knowledge. Bishop Daniel, reviewing a chapter of the thesis, reminded me of Jesus' advice "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay" (Matthew 5:37). In other words, let me be careful with the knowledge I am distributing. In the textual form of a book, Spiritual knowledge is available to all, not only to those who have ritually received it. And although the effort has been made to emphasise the coexistence of different exegeses and synchronic variation in ritual practice, a book like this cannot help but freeze the continuously evolving and contested cosmology and practice of the Spiritual Baptists into static descriptions and analyses.

THE SOCIAL BASE OF THE SYSTEM OF KNOWLEDGE

The phenomenological subjectivity that narratives and representations of the Spiritual world entail does not contradict the social base of all experience; the experiencing subjects are not autonomous or teleological. Its divine source recognised, Spiritual knowledge is always received and interpreted within a particular system of symbols and meanings, the accumulated and shared knowledge and practices of the religion. Jackson (1996, 26-29) delineates the corporeal subjectivity discussed in the previous chapter as *intersubjectivity*, giving priority to the social instead of the individual, and basing all experience on a *lifeworld*, a domain of changing and contested social relations. This echoes Merleau-Ponty's argument that subjects are always *beings-in-the-world*, interrelated to other beings perceptive subjects (1962, 352-353), and that such sociality is as primordial to subjectivity as is its embodiment, observes Jackson (1996, 32). Being is always being-in-the-world, "inter-existence" and "intercorporeity that lies *between* people" (Jackson 1998, 3). The Spiritual world, like the mundane, is perceived and interpreted by being-in-the-world. The existing system of knowledge provides the context in which subjects, embodied and perceiving, situate themselves in relation to the Spiritual world, obtain new knowledge, interpret it and give it concrete form in practice. It is because of this shared context that experiences make sense in the first place, and that instead of countless cults springing up from unrelated subjective experiences there exists something that people identify as "their religion." This context, manifest in the structure of knowledge, ritual practice and church organisation, enables Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists to participate in the services of any local or foreign

Spiritual Baptist church in a meaningful way and to identify the proceedings as "their religion," regardless of possible disapproval of some beliefs and practices.

The system is reproduced in social interaction, in which individual dreams, visions and experiences become collectivised and "the line between immediate and interpreted experience [---] disappears" (Jackson 1998, 140). First of all, participation in rituals is a source of knowledge of the Spiritual world, even to the most passive of spectators merely observing the goings-on of a thanksgiving or a mission. It is noteworthy that participation in ritual practice is not restricted by church affiliations. People visit church services and specific rituals, especially thanksgivings, arranged by churches other than their own quite frequently, and there are some practitioners, even clerics, who do not align themselves to any particular "home" church, but prefer to visit many in an almost nomadic fashion. Visitors from Trinidad, other Caribbean countries and even from North America are not uncommon, and Tobagonians also visit churches and rituals in Trinidad and abroad. In general, though, each church's congregation can be roughly demarcated – the flux of visitors is not all that overwhelming – and the point remains that Spiritual knowledge, distributed by participation in and observation of rituals, is constantly being transferred across congregational boundaries and thus spread throughout a wide network of local and foreign practitioners.

Secondly, Spiritual knowledge is distributed verbally, when devotees talk about their experiences of the Spiritual world and deliver messages they have received. Declarations of mourners' tracks, sermons, testimonies, mission messages, warnings, prayers, teachings in the mourner room, and other ritual speech serve to educate the listeners, to distribute knowledge that an individual has obtained from the Spirit. Verbal distribution, as Houk has noted (1993, 171-172), takes place both vertically and horizontally. Elders share some, but not all, of their accumulated knowledge with the Spiritual family. When preparing rituals, elders give advice and orders to the sisters and brothers about the smallest detail of decorating the church, laying a thanksgiving table, arranging an altar on a mission or filling in the calabashes, lotas and tarias. Also within ritual practice itself, Mothers, Leaders, and other ritual specialists often tell the participants what to do, when, and how; for example, mourner room labourers would never give the pilgrims anything else to drink or eat than what the Pointer has instructed, and a sister responsible for filling in the vessels would not introduce new kinds of flowers and leaves without consulting her elders first. Besides distributing knowledge, these authoritarian commands and lectures reproduce the church hierarchy.

Between equals knowledge is distributed horizontally, like when a mourner recounts her tracks to the congregation. Ritual declarations are often spontaneous; if someone has a vision or a dream she or he considers worthy of

sharing with the Spiritual family, it can be described in front of the congregation as part of a sermon or as a testimony. For example, in an intensive baptismal service in St. Philomen Church, Mother Cleorita raised her voice after a long session of dancing and rejoicing and told us that she had just had a powerful vision. She saw the ceiling of the church opening and a large vessel descending from heaven, spilling over with milk. This was a great blessing to the church, she said. Later on in the service, after all the candidates had been baptised, many of the elders and other members waded into the sea and offered milk, wine and oil. Mother Cleorita showed us how to wash our faces with the liquids and to pour them over our heads and into the water. The offering was sealed with three dips into the waves, *in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*. This way Mother Cleorita's knowledge of milk as a symbol of blessing was shared with the congregation and also put into practice in the ritual bath in the sea.

Informal conversations about the Spiritual world, like when labourers and visitors sit and lime at the church after an evening service in the mourner room and chat about their visions or previous rituals, or give exegetic analyses of dreams and tracks, are as significant as ritual speech for the distribution of knowledge. The setting in which Spiritual matters are talked about does not have to be the church or other ritual environment. We discussed visions and dreams, mourning experiences, or catching power with other members of the religion almost anywhere – at home, at work, when visiting friends, at birthday parties, harvests, when calling friends or family on the phone, in letters, and so forth. Since the realms of the Spiritual and the mundane are not exclusive, discourse about Spiritual matters pervades quite carnal environments.

The following structure of religious knowledge emerges from the ritual practices and the way they were talked about in various Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches at the time of my fieldwork: (1) It is based on a combination of textual and Spiritual knowledge; (2) the ways of acquiring Spiritual knowledge are shared by all Spiritual Baptists; and (3) the cosmologies always portray the following basic elements: the Holy Trinity; the Spirit as an active force that can take anthropomorphic form, the existence of spiritual forces other than the Holy Spirit, the capacity of ritual specialists to operate with the assistance of the Spirit, the Spiritual world and its nations, and the capacity of practitioners to situate themselves in this Spiritual world in the mourning ritual.

Bridging the level of knowledge to that of ritual practice, (4) the central symbols are fairly uniform throughout the religion, although details of ritual practice vary from church to church; (5) ritual space is similarly structured and marked in all churches, and (6) the ritual complex is acknowledged by all Spiritual Baptists. With slight variations, (7) the ritual structure of the service is universal, and finally, (8) the statuses and roles of ritual practitioners and their

hierarchy is a universally shared principle that can be recognised by all Spiritual Baptists. On the basis of other ethnographies (Zane 1999, Glazier 1983) and my visits to churches in Grenada, Trinidad, New York and Toronto, these basic premises unite Spiritual Baptist churches around the Caribbean and its diaspora. They have proven quite durable; the Herskovitses' (1947) and Simpson's (1980) accounts of Spiritual Baptist (or Shouter) practices and beliefs in Trinidad during the 1930s and 1960s support the above outline.

This structure, compiled of the accumulated practices of Spiritual Baptists, provides the framework for experiences and interpretations, and as such brings about "common dispositions, and the shared doxa they establish," to quote Pierre Bourdieu (1998, 121). It structures and limits the ways in which Spiritual Baptists produce knowledge and gives a foundation and perimeters to the innovativeness of creolisation. Bourdieu's characterisation of habitus as the capacity to generate products (such as interpretations of Spiritual experiences) within the conditioned background of particular historical and social frames helps to conceptualise the intersubjective sociality that engenders particular beliefs and practices (1990, 55-56). Habitus, "a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of [the] world," structures perceptions of and actions in that world (1998, 81). The immanent structures cause the Spirit to manifest in a similar Chinese manner in Tobago and in Brooklyn.

But although a structure of the religious knowledge and practices can be outlined, it is not to be understood as a static and bounded framework that consistently subjugates experiences and actions. Spiritual Baptists modify and change, as well as reproduce, their system of knowledge and practices. Transition and transformation are integral to the process of creolisation, and the possibility to acquire and produce novel knowledge – Glissant's creative *marronage* – dwells in every ritual. Michael Jackson (1996, 20, 22; also Lindsay 1996) has criticised Bourdieu's and also Foucault's models of structured subjectivity for their overt emphasis on structures of domination at the expense of the subject, which has led to the eradication of "those moments in social life when the customary, given, habitual, and normal is disrupted, flouted, suspended, and negated." Bourdieu, on the other hand, has distanced himself from phenomenology's focus on the perceiving subject apparently detached from historical and cultural conditions (1990, 25-26). Jackson admits that the emphasis in the phenomenological *epoché* is on consequences instead of causes (1996, 11), but defends radical empiricist and phenomenological approaches to anthropology by pointing out that cultural and historical preconditions to human experiences do not deprive the subject of an active relationship with the sedimented past and the design of the future. In culture, he writes, "givenness [is] transformed into design," as the subject constitutes the future. Forces that determine the agency

of the subject can only find expression in human consciousness and action, and in that *lifeworld* culture, discourse can transform from "apparently fixed and finished set of rules into a repertoire of possibilities" (1996, 11, 22). Within the liminal spaces engendered in Spiritual Baptist practice, the traditions of Christianity and African religions, the power relations linked to them in the colonial and postcolonial Caribbean, as well as other cultural influences, can be modified and transformed into something novel. The moments that Jackson emphasises as disrupting and negating the customary (1996, 22), those intervals that generate possibilities that are not mere replicas of preceding models, are found on pilgrim journeys, in visions and manifestations. This is the creative aspect that I hold so central to creolisation. Structure and hierarchy, indisputable as they are in the Spiritual Baptist Church and religion, are always challenged by the value given to charismatic experiences, interpretations and performances of the individual. This contradiction, as noted earlier, is inherent in the religion. Cosmology and religious knowledge, then, cannot be detached from ritual practice and conceptualised as a separate entity; if one tried to write down a comprehensive account of the belief system, the cosmology and the dogma of Spiritual Baptists, as if a model or a set of rules, the result would only be a flat and frozen portrayal of a living system in which change is inherent. The relationship between ritual and religious knowledge is always complementary, even intertwining.⁷

AUTHENTICITY AND COHERENCE

W.C. Smith (1963, 12, 153) argues that religion as an entity is not a valid subject of research; instead, one should study religious persons, because only then can the essentialist illusion of religion as a uniform order be countered. Smith is ready to reject the term *religion* altogether as a research tool, since different sub-traditions and local variants are neglected and personal experiences forgotten when religion is reified as a homogeneous entity. Tylor (1986, 131), from a postmodern stance, declares that the fragmentary lives and worlds of anthropology's subjects do not align to neat categories like "religion," going so far as to claim that "the natives seem to lack communicable visions of a shared, integrated whole." "Amorphous" and "fissiparous" are attributes used to describe the Rastafarian movement, which resembles Spiritual Baptists in its lack of formal, unitary organisation, central leadership, and established creed (Edmonds 1998, 349). Spiritual Baptists, however, use the word *religion* quite often, without problematising it.⁸ *Religion* and *faith*, sometimes also *church*, are fairly synonymous

when Spiritual Baptists discuss themselves as a category. Listening to practitioners talk about their religion, it soon becomes clear that they understand it as a system of beliefs and practices that has to be differentiated from other such systems, a unique order of orthodox knowledge and orthopraxic rituals. As an indigenous term, then, *religion* is not a western category imposed upon a complex of meanings and practices that are not conceptualised as a distinct system in the local discourse. Regardless of the practitioners' terminology, however, the Spiritual Baptist religion does not consist of absolute, unanimously shared doctrine or ritual complex, and in relation to other religions, like Orisha or Pentecostal, it seems to form a continuum of beliefs and practices rather than a distinct system. Brandon (1997, 166-173) applies Drummond's concept of the creole cultural continuum to Santería, and argues persuasively that through contacts between groups and individuals, boundaries are erected and definitions formulated in order to separate interconnected religions, such as Catholicism, Santería, Palo and Espiritismo in Cuba. The definitions of different practitioners, however, are not identical, and classifications of religions vary according to the classifier. Similarly, for Spiritual Baptists themselves it is important to draw lines and erect boundaries between their own and other religions, and to seek orthodoxy and uniformity in doctrine and ritual practice. Religion as a structured system of beliefs and practices is a central theme in Spiritual Baptist discourse. It is a metaphor for cultural cohesion to the practitioners, not unlike the way in which the concept of "longhouse" is for the Upriver people of Borneo. Peter Metcalf (2001, 179-180) shows that although longhouse communities in internal Borneo "were never static or neatly bounded," they nevertheless "provided the essential point of reference for everything to do with Upriver life." Spiritual Baptists view their religion as an integrated system, not as fragmented or amorphous, as postmodern theories have suggested of culture and religion in general.

NEGOTIATING AUTHENTICITY

Innovations in creolisation are not necessarily teleological, and the practitioners themselves view acceptable transformations in their belief system as divinely inspired. This, however, does not mean that change would take place unnoticed. George Brandon notes for the development of Santería that "at some point people consciously accepted, resisted, negotiated, accommodated, or promoted the changed feature" (1997, 159). In Tobagonian practice change, modifications and additions are fully legitimate and normal, as long as they are based on an existing system of knowledge and practices. Preparing the younger man to

continue his work as the Leader, Bishop Daniel's predecessor at Mt. Paran Church told him to "keep the tradition;" the new Leader could "add, but not change [the existing tradition]."

Spiritual knowledge, although novel to the particular subject, is usually already embraced by at least some of the elders. Sometimes previously unfamiliar knowledge is revealed in visions or on Spiritual journeys, but even then the knowledge can be situated in relation to the existing cosmology and belief system in general in a meaningful way. Cases in which a vision leads to discarding the Spiritual Baptist religion are very few; the cult of the Earth people in Trinidad in the late seventies and early eighties, as analysed by Littlewood (2001, 29), is a rare example of such.⁹ Normally visions and dreams do not challenge the system of knowledge and practice, but on the surface level transformations in, and additions to, the cosmology, ritual practice, and to the meanings of symbols are frequent. While Spiritual knowledge is initially received directly from the Holy Spirit and understood to form an order of authentic, absolute truth, this knowledge can never be accessed in its entirety by any one person. Therefore, on the level of social interaction, the system is not a static or bounded whole but is in constant flux as new knowledge is being unveiled and distributed.

Mother Cleorita's experience of disjuncting the skeleton, delivering the baby, and becoming Dr. Su Ling is a fine example of Spiritually received knowledge that adds to the already-existing belief system and brings about transformation. The new knowledge and, hence, the status as a healer and as Dr. Su Ling (these are not identical, for she can heal people without being Dr. Su Ling) changed Mother Cleorita's everyday life permanently. Soon after the vision, a lady called Mother Cleorita and asked her to come and help deliver her baby. Mother Cleorita has put her gift into practice ever since, healing people on an almost daily basis for over forty years. She is one of the most popular and respected healers in Tobago, and basing her knowledge on this and several subsequent visions and journeys, she treats ailments ranging from dislocated knees or skin disorders to migraine or childlessness.

In addition to Mother Cleorita's everyday life and that of her patients, the journey has caused transformations on the level of cosmology and also in ritual practice. Doctors Lee and Su Ling, formerly unknown, can now be encountered in the Spiritual world; in mourner room services pilgrims can be advised to seek Zion Hospital and look for the Chinese doctors. Novel Spiritual knowledge initially received by Mother Cleorita has thus been adjoined to the Spiritual world, where subsequent travellers can receive further knowledge on the basis of the initial encounter. Dr. Su Ling may also occasionally appear in the rituals of St. Philomen Church for all participants to see and hear. The fact that this Doctor can be classified to the category 'Chinee Spirit' and that he can be

understood as a personification of the Holy Spirit, not unlike a saint, facilitates his inclusion in the system. Instead of threatening the coherence of the cosmology, the Chinese doctors enhance it. This, along with Mother Cleorita's unchallenged status in the religious community and her perceived reliability, has persuaded others to acknowledge and approve of the addition to, and modification of, the cosmology and practice. Should someone claim to have travelled to Spain, or introduce animal entities with specific manifestations, the transformation implied would mould the structure of the Spiritual world to such an extent that notable suspicions and criticisms would arise.

The openness of the system of knowledge and practices, the inherent creativity in the religion, is not self-destructive. Spiritual Baptists do not readily embrace just any novel knowledge or practices, in the end disintegrating the religion into innumerable individual cults with insurmountably contradictory ideas of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. On the contrary, there exists a constant discourse assessing Spiritual knowledge among the members.¹⁰ In the Spiritual Baptist process of evaluation some knowledge becomes accepted as part of the system, whereas some is called under question. Without a central exegetic authority or universally approved, written dogma, the criteria for assessment of knowledge vary, and the system of knowledge and practice can never be identical for two persons. Therefore public negotiations over authentic knowledge and approved practice are an integral part of the Spiritual Baptists' efforts toward self-definition.

While the religious knowledge *per se* is never questioned by Spiritual Baptists, people's experiences and interpretations of it are the target of much investigation and often denunciation. The Spiritual Baptist discourse about different beliefs and practices within their religion refers to what Benson Saler (1993, 33) calls synchronic variability: "(P)ersons who seemingly pertain to the same religious community may nevertheless entertain significantly different understandings, attitudes, and aspirations." It is admittedly difficult to challenge Spiritually acquired information: "de Spirit tell me so" may sound like an undeniable justification for adopting a new practice or exegetic theory, even when the consequent transformations to the system seem too radical to others. However, in addition to extra-ritual discourse, there are several ways of controlling and evaluating exegeses within ritual practice. For example, because of their ability to travel with the mourners, Pointers and other experienced and Spiritually advanced elders cannot be cheated by pilgrims who falsely claim to have received a certain gift or position. They are able to prove whether other people's visions, dreams, and experiences in Spirit are real; in fact, the verb *to prove* is frequently used in Spiritual Baptist discourse. There is even the position of *a prover*, which is usually occupied by an elder or elders with other titles as

well. Some Ministers make baptismal candidates or pilgrims *cut the Bible*. By opening the Bible in a ritual manner, kneeling down and holding the book on one's chest, opening it and revealing a particular scripture in a seemingly haphazard way, the candidates submit themselves to a public test through which the Spirit indicates whether or not they are acceptable for baptism or mourning. This test is used on other occasions too, like when recounting one's mourning tracks to the congregation, to prove a sister's or brother's sincerity.

In a pointing ceremony at Solomon Court Mystical Healing School cutting the Bible became an important indicator of the authenticity of the ritual. Leader Bertram, the Pointer, had invited visitors from Trinidad, and Orisha-type manifestations, including a man entertaining Ogun and dancing with a cutlass in his hand in the tiny church room, had caused several people to leave the service, confused. The pilgrim, a young woman, cut the Bible soon after the manifestations were over. She knelt down, and Mother Norris drew pink seals on the covers of my Bible, which she then handed to the pilgrim. The young woman bowed down low three times and opened the book at random while we sang a hymn. Mother Norris then greeted us ceremonially and read the proofs: Ps 25:15-16, "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net. Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted," and the answer from Ps 30: 1, "I will extol Thee, o Lord; for Thou has lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me." These proofs, shouted Mother Norris, were wonderful; the people who were laughing and bad-talking others in the church yard should have been there to hear such proofs, verifying the innocence and dedication of the pilgrim. Mother Norris implied that such encouraging parts of the Scripture would not have been given to Number One if the service was not properly conducted, and thus rejected the criticism of those who had left the church. The opening of the Bible, then, conveys a Spiritual message which can be interpreted as an indicator of authenticity. Once in Leader Brothers' church a baptismal candidate, who had come to partake in the initiation without proper preparation and meditation and was fidgeting in his seat throughout the ceremony, received such unfavourable proofs when cutting the Bible that the entire congregation realised that his baptism had to be postponed.

There are many instances where Spiritual Baptists question the authenticity of Spiritual communication. Negative assessments of symbols, practices and exegeses on the "surface level" of the religion are mainly voiced in informal conversations in church halls and kitchens, or outside ritual environments. For example, the choice by certain churches to use veils that resemble Catholic nuns' headpieces instead of headties is sometimes sneered at by members of other churches, denounced as mere striving for originality instead of following

Spiritually received instructions. Individual claims for having Spiritual authorisation to wear a certain colour in church, or a certain style of garment, are often doubted as well. Elders in different churches emphasise the importance of questioning the Spirit, asking for more information – wisdom, knowledge and understanding – and not merely accepting everything shown or given by the Spirit. One must never accept, for example, a ring or a dress without testing the giver and the gift with the key, the secret password. But while features like the absence of a centrepole in a couple of Tobagonian churches may bring about half-hearted disapproval, harsher verbal condemnations and even boycotting the other church's services can take place when exegeses of the cosmology are clearly different.

CONTESTING THE COSMOLOGY

There are two main areas in which the basic structures of the religion can become threatened, and around which most contestations and demarcations are verbalised. First, the principle of direct contact between the subject and the Holy Spirit generates different exegeses. Many Spiritual Baptists in Tobago see this principle as threatened in churches where Spiritual intermediaries, like saints or other anthropomorphic entities, become very prominent. Such prominence is evident in symbolism and manifestations: very rich symbolism connotes personalised Spiritual entities. The sword used by warriors or by St. Michael, for example, can be strongly disapproved of by members of churches where symbolism is plainer. Long, controlled and elaborate manifestations also suggest the presence of Spiritual intermediaries, or even entities that are not of the Holy Spirit, instead of an impersonal Holy Spirit. It must be underlined that in all the Spiritual Baptist churches in Tobago legitimate Spiritual manifestations and other contacts are always interpreted as the Holy Spirit, and possible intermediaries are understood as Its personifications. So, although disagreements about *other* churches' practices exist, every practitioner interprets her own experiences as of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, certain individuals' and churches' disapproval of saints and other entities as an active part of ritual practice has caused them to draw a boundary between themselves and those churches where these intermediaries are embraced. Most often this demarcation is made by claiming oneself to be Spiritual Baptist and labelling the Other as Orisha. This position shows a clear alignment with Protestant Christianity instead of Roman Catholicism, and at the same time also creates a distance from those Caribbean religions that have developed in contact with the Roman Catholic church, like Orisha, Santería, and Vodou.

Kenneth Lum (2000, 88) divides Spiritual Baptist manifestations of the Holy Spirit into two main classes: feeling the Spirit as a quiver or a tremble is regarded as the proper manifestation by some of his Trinidadian informants, whereas others include more "exuberant" features, like shouting, jumping up and falling down, in their experience of the Holy Spirit. Lum also mentions speaking tongues (sic), ringing the bell, throwing water and spinning the chariot wheel as manifestations of the Spirit, and describes Sisters "pulling 'doption'" and marching vigorously (86-87). These manifestations, and others that Lum does not mention, are all prevalent in Tobagonian churches as well, but do not form exclusive or differently valued categories. Different conceptualisations of the Spirit form a continuum. On the one end are those churches where the Spirit is understood as an impersonal force that communicates with people via unidentifiable intermediaries in the mourning ritual, and on the other end are those where the Spirit can take the form of saints, ancestors, or other personified and anthropomorphic – but also non-anthropomorphic – entities.

Manifestations vary respectively. At Its most impersonal, the Holy Spirit may manifest through slight quivers and sighs, or by making the person blow hard or squeeze her mouth and eyes shut. In such manifestations the person can also be said to "get Spiritual inspiration" to ring the bell, for instance. Mother Cleorita and others described how they sometimes heard the bell ringing in their ears and were thus inspired by the Spirit to go to the centrepole or to the thanksgiving table to ring the bell. A similar passing inspiration may cause a person to take the taria and throw grains over the congregation, or to go to the centrepole and blow into the shell. A short use of the central paraphernalia is typical of these kinds of manifestations. Spiritual inspiration is a feeling inside, an indefinable experience of the Spirit touching one's soul and body. In a similar manner, people often describe how cold shivers run through their body and how they start to feel very light, as if raising in the air, as the Spirit touches them and causes them to tremble.

These performances, as well as uncontrollable shaking and jerking up and down, marching, mouth drumming, speaking in tongues and shouting are perfectly legitimate forms of manifestation in all Tobagonian churches. At the other end of the continuum, not universally approved but still quite common in Tobago, are anthropomorphic manifestations that include lengthy periods of controlled movements, dance, glossolalia and specific use of paraphernalia. These long, elaborate and controlled performances can sometimes be associated with a particular saint or other Spiritual entity, like a warrior or a doctor. Many elders do not interpret such manifestations primarily as saints, but define them along the three- (or four-) partite typology of African, Indian, Chinese (and Syrian) Spirit. Thus the dance style, the unknown tongue and the paraphernalia

used represent a certain Spiritual nation rather than a particular saint. This division between the main types of manifestations as African, Indian and Chinese is easy for even the least experienced members to perceive, and as a result, the particularities of the Spiritual nations are far better known than the characteristics of the different saints, if they are acknowledged at all. One notable feature that marks anthropomorphic manifestations is that social relationships between the Spirit and ritual participants can emerge. The Spirit can communicate with the participants, for example by demanding to have certain paraphernalia, and the participants must interpret such orders from signs and expressions. The Spirit can also perform meaningful acts, like healing.¹¹

Tobagonian churches and exegeses cannot be polarised as neatly as Lum suggests for Trinidad. There are numerous churches on the island in which the entire continuum of different manifestations is found and accepted, including the elaborate and controlled dances that connote a Spiritual nationality or entity that Lum does not mention. Furthermore, the same person may sometimes entertain the Spirit in a very *cool* manner, just trembling, sighing and perhaps ringing the bell, whereas on other occasions she can dance with the calabash for half an hour or swim on the beach, taken by St. Philomen. In some churches these latter, elaborate types of manifestations are normally absent from regular Sunday services, but accepted, and sometimes joined, when performed by visitors. In a few churches such manifestations are regarded as non-orthodox and unacceptable.

It should also be mentioned that age and experience produce differences in manifestations. Erratic, uncontrollable manifestations signify a lack of experience and are typical of young or recently initiated members. Inexperienced sisters and, less frequently, brothers, may often catch power in a very violent and wild manner. Screaming, jerking back and forth, swinging one's arms in the air, bending down to the ground and even falling down are not uncommon with young girls and women; sometimes fellow members sitting close by get hit or bounced by uncontrollable devotees. Usually other sisters or brothers hold back wildly moving youngsters (sometimes adults), and once a particularly fierce young girl was tied down to her chair with her own sash, where she continued to dance and swing her arms. Most times this rough start turns into a dance, as the Spirit "settles down" on the person, but even the dances and other performances of young and inexperienced devotees are less controlled and refined than older members' performances. It takes a Spiritually perceptive elder to tell the difference between such juvenile performances and the entry of an uninvited, evil spirit, a spirit of delusion. These latter also bring forth uncontrollable movements, erratic cries and generally improper behaviour, and have to be banished. Nevertheless, young sisters can also entertain the Spirit for long

periods of time, use specific paraphernalia, dance in the African or the Indian way and even speak in tongues, especially if they have mourned prior to the manifestation. It is the experienced sisters, brothers and elders, though, who are most often involved in the lengthiest, most elaborate and consistent manifestations of the Holy Spirit.¹²

This variety is addressed in discourse on two levels. Members of a congregation may talk about, classify, and even jokingly imitate particular members' ways of catching power. People's tendencies to merely remain seated and shiver, to *speak the unknown* in a certain way, to entertain the Indian or the African Spirit, or to always use an emblem like the calabash during manifestations, are common knowledge, and changes are immediately noticed and commented upon by sisters and brothers. The more inclusive the scale of manifestations is in a church, the more tolerant and genial the members' attitudes are towards each others' ways of rejoicing in the Spirit. On another level, comparisons and evaluations are made about churches instead of people. These discursive typologies are based on generalisations about the manifestations found in a congregation, and often connote disapproval and demarcations between "us" and "them." The most radical way of constructing boundaries between what are considered as legitimate and illegitimate practices is to claim that the latter is not part of the same religion.

Second, different and conflicting interpretations focus at the cosmology of Spiritual nations. There are a couple of Tobagonian churches where symbolism is quite simple and emblems are relatively few. If used at all, symbolic paraphernalia, like flags or the calabash, are not connected to the Spiritual nations as clearly as in other churches, nor are they understood to connote particular saints. Manifestations of the Spirit have little or no reference to the Spiritual nations or any Spiritual entities. These churches have been targets of criticism. Underpinning this discourse is the specific cosmology of the religion, as perceived by the critics. The cosmology is considered crucial to religious identity, and thus the lack of symbols representing Africa, India and China, or Spiritual entities, threatens the critics' definition of their religion. Services of the aforementioned churches have been criticised as "lame," "boring" or "dead" by visitors who are familiar with richer symbolism and more powerful manifestations, although such criticisms are seldom addressed directly to the members of the church in question. In other words, direct confrontations and verbal disputes are very rare. A far more common technique of demarcation is avoidance. The critics, and particularly young sisters and brothers, are even reluctant to visit churches where the Spirit only manifests in more subtle and simple ways. The criticism, like that of Spiritual intermediaries, has culminated in the rejection of such practice, demarcating it as non-Spiritual Baptist: the churches and

practitioners in question are distanced from the critics' own Spiritual Baptist religion as "Pentecostal,"¹³ "Anglican" or "Catholic." At the heart of the critique there seems to be the threat that the moderate use of symbols, relative plainness of ritual practice and the scarcity of Spiritual intermediaries in the cosmology draw the religion too close to mainstream Protestant denominations. Thus the accusation of a church being Catholic rather than proper Spiritual Baptist refers to the perceived lack of Spiritual manifestations and cosmologically relevant symbolism, rather than an association with Catholic, not Protestant, Christianity.

In the same vein, but from the opposite point of view, the Trinidadian Teacher Hazel Ann Gibbs de Peza (1999) defines the Spiritual Baptist religion as only including those churches and practitioners that have "relinquished African forms of worship." De Peza's position was criticised in a male elder's sermon in Tobago: the Leader preached of "certain university-educated Baptist" who seek to "take away the lota and the calabash," to denounce the symbolic richness of the ritual practice in many Spiritual Baptist churches.¹⁴ In another telling comment, Teacher Audrey asked "If yuh tek away de lota and de bell and de calabash, what we does have? We come like Pentecostal." This line of reasoning suggests that relinquishing symbolic richness and the concept of the Spirit that reflects the multinational cosmology deprives the Spiritual Baptist religion from its identity, thus assimilating it to more mainstream Christianity.

On the other hand, some members of the churches which allow scarce paraphernalia and only nonanthropomorphic manifestations wish to distance themselves from the symbolically richer churches, where the Spirit can manifest in elaborate ways. Visitors have left services and thanksgivings in the middle of proceedings after observing manifestations they find unacceptable. Also paraphernalia like wooden or metal swords and cutlasses, lithographs of Hindu gods, bottles of perfume, or specific mourner room emblems that are unfamiliar to the symbolically plainer churches, can be strongly condemned. Of the Tobagonian mourner rooms I have seen, a small and relatively recently founded church has the most detailed paraphernalia, whereas the interiors of the Inner Chambers of the more prominent churches resemble one another. Emblems such as a black umbrella, a glass of rum or a plate with knife and fork are seldom found in the larger churches. Exceptional paraphernalia like this was controversial, because elders stressed the importance of Spiritual authority behind each and every feature of the rituals and their material surroundings. It is not condemnable to use special emblems as long as the Holy Spirit has given them to the Pointer with careful instructions about their meaning and usage; nevertheless, if a Pointer borrows ideas from her or his colleagues and applies objects because of their appeal, without receiving them personally from the Holy

Spirit, her or his authority as a Spiritual worker is brought into question in the larger community.

Mt. Horeb Spiritual Baptist Church, whose level of symbolic inclusiveness is quite low in the Tobagonian scale, was having visitors from two Trinidadian churches, Mt. Zion and St. Theresa, for their thanksgiving in 1999. Climbing up the steep hill toward the church, one of the visiting sisters raised her head and saw the flags planted in the church yard. She shook her head and told me that there were so many things in Tobagonian Baptist churches that she did not like. They had too many items, too many different colour flags, pictures on the walls, sometimes even prints of Hindu gods. "I know it more modest, more simple," she said. Drums or loud music, she continued, did not belong to church and she did not like them. During the opening hymns and surveying Leader Thom, the Leader of Mt. Horeb Church, encouraged us to dance – "but remember that not all dance is Christian dance, we must dance as Christian!" This example shows how orthopraxy is contested; even the church with the least paraphernalia in Tobago – there are no drums, calabashes, substances like Kananga water, wine or talcum powder, shells, or pictures of Hindu deities in Mt. Horeb – can be subject to criticism of too rich symbolism, in this case because of the flags in the church yard. Churches that are disapproved of on these grounds may also be avoided because of suspicions that spirits, and not the Holy Spirit, are being entertained in them. The arguments used to evaluate such manifestations include those that judge them as evil spirits or spirits of delusion, and those that classify them as Orisha. This latter argument denounces the church's membership in the Spiritual Baptist religion.

Differences between churches and the assessment of the cosmology portrayed in them became accentuated when a young Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist woman, Paula, and I visited three churches in Trinidad one Sunday. We started our tour in a small house church, where a communion service was held in the morning. The church was richly decorated, and all the central paraphernalia that Paula was familiar with in her home church in Tobago were used: the calabash with red ixoras, lotas, tarias, bells, glasses with water and flowers, and candles of different colours were arranged around the centrepole and on the altar. However, no flags were planted in the yard, and everybody was wearing white church clothes. A young man was beating a PVC drum. The atmosphere was warm and intimate, and we, first-time visitors, were made to feel very welcome. The Spirit manifested a few times, including two Mothers dancing and rejoicing and an elderly Shepherd shouting *in the unknown*. Paula participated by singing, clapping, and giving a testimony. After the service was over, Paula and I thanked the Mother of the church and told her how much we enjoyed the

service. Paula said that she had felt at home from the minute she entered the church.

After having lunch we then travelled to a much larger and older church in the same area. The building was spacious and the interior fairly impressive with a tile floor, tile altar, and solid benches. Instead of a centrepole, a lota and a bell were placed in the central aisle. Lotas with white flowers, bells, and a glass of water were the only emblems on the altar. Here, too, the entire congregation was wearing white. No musical instruments were used. Again, we were warmly welcomed, as the minister conducting the service knew us from Tobago. Paula, who had visited this church before and had friends there, spent most of the service outside the church, chatting with her friends in the kitchen. From her previous experiences she had learnt that the church was very different from what she was accustomed to in Tobago, and she prepared me by pointing out that no dancing and lively rejoicing was allowed, and that catching power had to be very discreet and quiet. As a Teacher prayed, two sisters and a brother shouted and pushed their elbows back and forth, the man also jumping up and down. These manifestations were fairly short. In Paula's opinion the service was boring, and I promised that we could leave after communion. I was asked to give a testimony, after which another sister preached. She stated that her home church was *mix*, both Spiritual Baptist and Orisha, and that they used drums and slymbals which she liked very much. But the cleanliness of this church impressed her, and now she preferred "dis narrow road." Paula, on the other hand, was not convinced by "the narrow road" and longed for a livelier service, so we headed to an evening service in a third church.

This was a medium sized church with all the standard paraphernalia Paula and I were familiar with in Tobago, including special emblems like the shell, brooms and mirrors in addition to the practically standard calabashes, lotas, tarias, bells, perfumes, water glasses, candles and flags. A drummer was playing a djembe. The Mother of the church, originally from Tobago, conducted the evening service in a very energetic and intensive manner. There were numerous manifestations, which included surveying the corners with different emblems, talking in tongues, pulling doption and also simple shaking. During prayers the African Spirit arrived; the Mother and a few sisters surveyed the door, the altar, centrepole and corners with the calabash, Kananga water and perfume. The Mother spinned with a calabash in her hands, blew to the shell and spoke African language, and the presence of the Spirit was touchable. As she started singing *Coming All the Way from Africa Land*, Paula, who had been trying to resist the Spirit, shy about becoming the centre of attention, *kicked off* and ran outside to hide. She soon returned, sat down, jumped back up on her feet and rushed to the centrepole. She grabbed a handful of ixoras from the calabash, handed them

cordially to the Mother and then burst into a long, vigorous African dance, throwing her head up and down so that her headtie fell off. The Mother tied her head anew with a red band. She and the Mother danced for a long time, went to the corners and talked in African language, the drummer beating and the rest of us chanting *Africa Land*.

People in the congregation were intrigued by such a powerful manifestation and talked about it afterwards; some asked me if she always *catch power* like this, if such manifestations were common in her church, and why. There were some disapproving comments as well, from people who felt that Paula had carried on in a manner inappropriate to a Spiritual Baptist church. Later on a sister in the congregation told one of our friends that Paula's church was obviously Orisha. She had based this classification on Paula's way of catching power and the fact that the thanksgivings in Paula's home church lasted for three days, thus being feasts rather than thanksgivings; proper Spiritual Baptist thanksgivings were supposed to last only for one day. Paula, on the other hand, was quite satisfied with her experience, and continued to visit the church when in Trinidad.

These three visits to churches with different levels of symbolism and varying definitions of legitimate manifestations exemplify the variety that prevails within the community of self-acclaimed Spiritual Baptists, and also show that appropriate practice is being delineated mainly on the basis of symbols and manifestations.

Although boundary-making is a central feature of the Spiritual Baptist discourse of self-definitions, objective delineations of orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and the religion in general are impossible to make. Attempts towards the definitive categorisation of Spiritual Baptists are, however, found in the anthropological literature. For example, Houk (1995, 84-85) has suggested that Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad can be dissected into two branches, "orthodox" and "nonorthodox." Whereas orthodox Spiritual Baptists are anti-African in their ritual practice and distance themselves from the Orisha religion, nonorthodox practitioners "are heavily involved with the Orisha religion and its more Africanized style of worship," and a few of them "recognize possession by certain saints and Old Testament prophets." They also portray richer symbolism than the orthodox ones; Houk has identified Catholic, Orisha, Hindu, and Kabbalistic paraphernalia in some nonorthodox churches. Basing on the ethnographic examples portrayed above, however, I argue that such rigid classifications simply replicate the arguments for cultural purity and plurality rather than analysing the richness and transformations of the beliefs and practices of creole religions.

SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY AND DEMARCATIONS

This time I am a child in this same penitential island, in this town where every street corner is a rumshop where we have five churches, a Hindu temple, a mosque, two cricket teams and a single steelband that we make from oil drums – that is the part of the oil that we get: the steel – drums that have no use again except for rubbish, bins that we take and fire and shape and beat to make music to coax into the daylight present those rhythms that issue from the goatskin drums and the chanting voices in the Shango palais where they kill unspotted ramgoats and wring the neck of white and red cockerels and drink their blood and cook their flesh and eat it without salt and dance till morning to gods that drag them down into a deep deep darkness where they froth and suffocate and perspire and groan and spin until their senses leave them; my mother thankful to her God that we not living next door to them, not by those drums that would giddy your head and full you up with power African and useless that point you back to a backward people that can hardly help theyselves, far more help you, can only make you shame, can only drag you deeper into the dark. (From Salt by Earl Lovelace.¹⁵)

The Orisha religion has proven to be a frequent point of reference in Spiritual Baptist negotiations over common identity and its boundaries. The importance of demarcating between their own and the Orisha religion derives partly from the Spiritual Baptists' agenda to become more socially acceptable as a religion. The vast majority of people in Trinidad and Tobago are not aware of the fact that there are self-acclaimed religions called Spiritual Baptist and Orisha, instead of a vague group referred to as "Baptist," "Shango" or "Shango Baptist." The sometimes quite subtle differentiations that Orisha and Spiritual Baptist practitioners make between their practices and knowledge are completely ignored by the general public. The society at large tends to perceive both groups as strange and backward, and many regard their practices frightening and even repulsive. The majority of people who heard that I was working with Spiritual Baptists either warned me or asked me questions about the obeah that they instantly associated with the religion. "They concentrate more on evil than good," said a middle-aged businesswoman who belonged to the Wesleyan Holiness Church; "they are very superstitious."¹⁶ Given the negative image of African-derived religious practices, the process of demarcation that separates Spiritual Baptist from Orisha is an attempt to promote the self-image of a socially acceptable, Christian church, in which animals are not sacrificed or spirits other than the Holy Spirit entertained. On the other hand, the process of Africanisation, particularly in the Orisha religion, reflects the positive connotations of Africanness promoted in Afrocentric discourse in Trinidad and Tobago and abroad. Therefore an alignment with either Africanness or

mainstream Christianity no longer automatically generates social acceptance or rejection.

Whereas comparisons to the Orisha religion in the Spiritual Baptist discourse are usually based on negative assessments of the Other, some Spiritual Baptists' self-reflections against European or North American originated denominations, like Pentecostals, Adventists or Anglicans, may position the Spiritual Baptists themselves in an inferior status. Such comparisons are heard from elders who are unsatisfied with their Spiritual families. Poor attendance in services is a standard cause for complaints: "Dem Adventist and Pentecostal know de meaning of worship! Baptis' people want to have fun on Sunday, stay home and make *commess* on de phone," fumed Mother Cleorita to us after church one Sunday. Another common topic of critical comparisons is punctuality. "Baptis' people don' know time" is a well-known joke, but a fact that sometimes causes frustration to organisers of events and rituals. The general conduct of members of Spiritual Baptist churches was also the target of negative assessment; the neatness of appearance, code of behaviour and other aspects affecting the public image of Spiritual Baptists were brought into focus by comparing them to images of other groups. To give an example of this, labourers in a mourning ritual at St. Philomen Church complained about the way certain members of their religion conducted themselves. "Very rare you find Adventis' or Pentecostal in de street in rags and tatters. But Baptis' people, yes, yuh see dem diggin garbage bin and drinkin' in rum shop!" And finally, the fact that other denominations seem to have larger resources to fund their activities and to build and furnish their places of worship than the self-sustained Spiritual Baptist congregations causes elders to reprimand their *flocks*. Mothers and Leaders may complain that members of the congregation are not giving enough money to buy the necessary ritual paraphernalia, or that in church thanksgivings only a handful of loyal members contribute by bringing foodstuffs for the meal and for the table. (These accusations are by no means unfounded.) Pentecostals, Adventists, and other members of European or North American originated denominations are then claimed to be much more "open-handed" and generous with their churches, for which they are rewarded with further material prosperity.

On the one hand, denominations like Pentecostals and Seventh Day Adventists are positively evaluated on the basis of punctuality, dedication, the members' sacrifices towards the good of the church, and their appearance and conduct in public. On the other hand, Spiritual Baptists seek to differentiate their ritual practice from that of other Christian denominations, mainly by emphasising the importance of the active presence of the Spirit and the uniqueness of their cosmology, which are lacking in these *Other* religions. Competition for members is a significant factor in these comparisons. North

American evangelical denominations pose a threat, not only to indigenous creole religions, but also to the established European originated churches: for example, the large and hugely popular Seventh Day Adventist crusades with American preachers were criticised by Spiritual Mothers and Catholic clergy alike. Pentecostalism, with its notable media coverage and alluring North American connotations, is another rival. In his sermon at the Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day ceremony at Shaw Park, Bishop Maitland once reminded the elders present that unless Spiritual Baptists make an effort to attract members and to provide meaningful worship, "Pentecostals take up what we put down," that is, members who turn away from the Spiritual Baptist are welcomed by Pentecostal churches.

In comparison to Spiritual Baptist efforts toward demarcation, it is illustrative to take another point of view and look into self-definitions of Tobagonian Pentecostals as constructed against a Spiritual Baptist *Other*. Walker (1987, 144-146) argues that Pentecostals in Tobago held the Spiritual Baptist religion as a symbol "that most represented for them both what should not be tolerated and what no longer retained significance," namely African traditions and the influence of European churches. Whereas the former connoted devil worship and obeah, the latter referred to the hierarchy of religious posts of the Spiritual Baptists, which resembled the bureaucracy of clergy in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches. Because of the disapproval of Spiritual ranks, Pentecostals also denounced the mourning ritual, in which these are achieved. Spiritual Baptists were regarded as having "crossed over the boundary into the devil's camp [---] by [---] symbolically keeping Africa and the European churches alive" (ibid., 147). Brother Granger, one of Walker's informants, stated that some obeah practitioners have positions in the Spiritual Baptist church (ibid., 148). Another brother argued that several cases of "demon possession" in Plymouth were caused by Spiritual Baptists. "No one claims that all obeah workers are Baptists, but the perception that many of them are provides both a tighter connection to the level of community rejection and a closer association with the African heritage preserved by the Baptists" (157). Pentecostals also differentiated the "possession" of the Spiritual Baptist religion as being a completely different phenomenon from "being baptised in the Holy Spirit" (150).

Walker's Pentecostal informants in the 1980s differentiated between themselves and the Spiritual Baptist religion with criteria familiar from Spiritual Baptist self-definitions. The concept of the Spirit was central in the demarcation. Spiritual Baptists were accused of keeping up "African" beliefs that amounted to devil worship, demons and obeah, which were juxtaposed to the Holy Spirit as part of the Pentecostal belief system. Delineation between the Holy Spirit and other spiritual entities is, as has been shown, an important aspect of Spiritual Baptists' assessments of orthodoxy and identity. Of course, in their

argumentation the Holy Spirit is embraced as an essential part of the Spiritual Baptist religion, and lesser or evil spirits associated with other churches or religions. Secondly, the Pentecostals denounced Spiritual Baptist ritual practice, particularly the mourning ritual and "possessions," as non-Christian and different from Pentecostal practice. Again, Spiritual Baptists' definitions of orthopraxy often concern manifestations and the cosmology that is reflected in them. On the other hand, the Pentecostals' rejection of the hierarchy in established European churches was projected to the condemnation of the Spiritual Baptists' ranks.

Although not traditionally embraced by the upper classes, Pentecostalism holds more prestige in Tobagonian society than the indigenous religions. Associations of Africanness, backwardness, superstitions and obeah, commonly linked to Spiritual Baptists and Orisha, are not part of the public image of Pentecostals. Pentecostal crusades gather large crowds, and visiting evangelists from the United States have drawn a lot of attention. Pentecostalism is linked to North America by its origin, by the frequent visiting evangelists, and by the media coverage of Pentecostal services in American churches. A recently built Pentecostal church in Canaan is quite large and impressive, and perhaps the most modern church building in Tobago. Also the dress code in Pentecostal services, where men wear suits and women are dressed in jacket suits or neat dresses, often with elaborate hairdos, hats, stockings and high heels, connotes prosperity and modernity – America. Spiritual Baptist churches have lost many members to Pentecostalism, and although I have not researched these conversions, I suggest that Pentecostalism offers a more socially acceptable form of worship in which such familiar elements as personal connections to the Holy Spirit, manifestations, and the centrality of music, rhythm and movement in ritual practice are retained.¹⁷

The assessments and demarcations of orthodoxy and orthopraxy discussed above are connected to power relations in the colonial and postcolonial histories of the societies in which Spiritual Baptists practice their religion. As described in Chapter One, the Protestant Christianity of the missionaries, the Catholicism of the Spanish and French settlers and the African religions of the slaves coexisted and merged in dialectical interrelationships in the highly stratified plantation societies of Trinidad and Tobago. The Spiritual Baptist religion has developed in a world in which these as well as the Hinduism and Islam of indentured labourers and North American evangelical Christianity have provided sources but also points of contestation of religious knowledge. When Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists negotiate acceptable beliefs and practices, the intertwinings and contradictions of these religious traditions feature differently in the practitioners' experiences and interpretations of the Spirit and the Spiritual world. Religious

knowledge and practices align on a continuum, and negotiations over them draw on creolised concepts of Africanness and Christianity rather than objectively definable cultural sources and counterparts. Brandon (1997, 172) argues for a similar case in Cuban Santería: "The actual origins are not seen as that important and in many cases are not known anyway. The customs are honored not in their absence but only after they have been redefined and reconstituted as 'Catholic' and 'African'." The plurality of delineations of acceptable knowledge and practice results from the capacity of the subjects to embody Spiritual knowledge in liminal spaces and to interpret it in novel ways. Because the religion is not a mechanical reproduction of assembled features of Christianity and African religions, the Spiritual Baptist discourse does not refer to these as exclusive or monolithic blocs. Instead of assessing orthodoxy and orthopraxy through comparisons with Roman Catholic or Yoruba religions, Christianity and Africanness are being defined anew by liminal, embodied subjects.

FRAGMENTATION

An emblematic feature of the Spiritual Baptist religion is the community's fragmentation to numerous small churches. This is a direct result of the accessibility of novel knowledge and interpretations. Exegetic differences encourage members to branch out from their home churches and found new ones, or then members simply receive Spiritual instructions to become an independent Mother or Leader. In the absence of a central organisation and administration, fragmentation could be unlimited; however, the hierarchical structure of churches and the ongoing discourse about orthodoxy and orthopraxy within the religion controls alterations to the beliefs and practices and sets boundaries to individual aspirations. The following analysis exemplifies the dynamics of structure and inventiveness in the Spiritual Baptist religion.

In Tobago, all the larger and more prominent churches are lead by Leaders and Mothers who have been in the faith for decades. Even in smaller churches, the Leaders and Mothers are usually well into their fifties and sixties, and younger men or women in leadership positions or as ritual specialists are quite few. The old Mother Thom, preaching in the annual thanksgiving of Mt. Thomas Church, pointed out that all the ministers on the altar had white hair, and that the people who were "keeping up the Baptist faith" were seniors; she herself would gladly pass on her position as the Mother of the church to someone younger, although one cannot retire from the faith. I have heard similar concerns voiced by numerous other elders. At the same time, advancement in

the Spiritual hierarchy is subject to surveillance and criticism. A person's knowledge and Spiritual abilities are evaluated in respect to the title that she or he claims to hold. Many Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists are troubled by inexperienced members of the church who claim to be Mothers or Leaders and branch out to found new churches. Such prospective Leaders and Mothers may insist on having received Spiritual instructions to do so, having walked the required road in the Spiritual world. Elders often criticise such claims as motivated by personal yearning for power and prestige rather than by divine communication. Spiritual wisdom is acquired gradually, and a swift movement up the Spiritual ladder, like claiming to have been given a black robe and a staff, insignia of a Leader, with no proper understanding of the subsequent responsibilities, draws a lot of unfavourable attention.

Such fragmentation, leaving one's Spiritual family and building a new church, is a prevalent phenomenon throughout the Spiritual Baptist communities in the Caribbean and elsewhere. In Tobago there were forty-three Spiritual Baptist churches in 2001, many of which were quite small in membership. To give an example of how a lineage of churches springs out of one, I chart out the fragmentation of Mt. Paran Perseverance Spiritual Baptist Church in Bethel into at least ten offspring,¹⁸ churches founded by people who have been baptised in Mt. Paran and its daughter churches.

According to the discourse among members of these churches, considerable differences exist between them. The clearest example is St. Catherine Mystery Shrine, a self-acclaimed Orisha shrine, whereas the other churches call themselves Spiritual Baptist. The level of symbolic inclusiveness in certain churches, like Solomon Court Mystical Healing School, has generated demarcations as well. Members of some of these churches even refuse to visit the services of certain other churches in the same "lineage." The churches are, furthermore, affiliated to three different archdioceses, and many are independent of any administrative structure. On the other hand, reciprocal exchange of visits to each others' thanksgivings, harvests, gospel crusades, pilgrimages, mourner rooms and other services is quite common between many of these churches. It should also be noted that in this church lineage, close kinship relations connect several of the Leaders and Mothers.

Mt. Paran Perseverance SBC (Originally Mt. Bethel SBC) (1960-)

Leader Ramsay

Leader David Callender (Mother Cleorita's brother)

Teacher Margaret Callender (Mother Cleorita's sister)

Bishop Daniel, Teacher Claudette (Teacher Margaret's daughter, Mother Cleorita's niece)

St. Raphael SBC (1970-1987)

Leader Alan and Mother Agatha Anthony

Leader Gerald and Mother Cleorita Robinson

Leader Cartland

St. Philomen SBC (1987-)Leader Gerald and
Mother Cleorita Robinson**St. Peter's SBC (1987-)**Bishop Alan and
Archabbess Agatha Anthony**Solomon's Court Mystical Healing School (1998-)**

Leader Bertram Sandy

St. Francis SBC (1972)

Mother Miriam Yorke (Mother Cleorita's cousin)

Leader Claude Cowie

St. Catherine Mystery Shrine (1994-)

Mother Joycelyn James

Teacher Freddy

Patience Hill SBC

Mother Almira Callender †

(Mother Cleorita's and Teacher Margaret's sister)

Leader David Callender †

Teacher Laura Callender (Mother Cleorita's niece,
Teacher Margaret's niece, Teacher Claudette's cousin)**Mt. Olive SBC II**

Mother Irma

St. Theresa Healing School

Mother Duncan †

Sister Patt Duncan

Long Life in JesusKing Shepherd Callender (Laura Callender's brother, Mother Cleorita's and
Teacher Margaret's nephew, Teacher Claudette's cousin; he was not
baptised in Mt. Paran, but in New York. He grew up in Mt. Paran, though.)

Chart VI: Mt. Bethel and its daughter churches

There are two main reasons, often simultaneous, for leaving one's church: theological or power-related disputes between elders, and Spiritual instructions to start a church. Theological disputes concern the Spiritual world, and particularly the Spirit and its possible personifications and manifestations. An elderly Leader left his home church because he did not like "the spirits" that were being entertained there. He claimed that the people in that church could not distinguish between delusion spirits and the Holy Spirit – "spirit and de Holy Spirit does be like salt and granulated sugar, is hard to tell who is who" – and entertained the wrong ones, "strange gods, is different to what I know," as he put it. Exegetic differences in interpretations of saints and orishas have also caused people to leave their churches and to join other ones, where manifestations and beliefs better correlate with one's own experiences. Sometimes new churches are founded on the same grounds. Disputes over positions in the church's internal hierarchy have caused disintegration. A case in point was a church founded in the early 1970s, when two married couples left their home church and built a new one in another village. The couples held more or less equal statuses in the Spiritual hierarchy, and as years passed, the equally advanced Leaders and Mothers in the same church started to have difficulties working together. The end result was that the church split into two new churches, both with new names, and the membership of the original church divided between these. Some members who did not like the atmosphere of the final rift started going to other churches. Nowadays the elders of these two churches are on better terms with one another and pay mutual visits to each others' thanksgivings and harvests.

The most common reason for disintegration is the claim of Spiritual authorisation to become a Leader or a Mother of one's own church. This is where the discourse about the authenticity of Spiritual knowledge is most heated. After a meeting of the TULSB (Tobago United Liberated Spiritual Baptists) at the Long Life in Jesus Church, a group of elders complained how "Baptist people don like to humble, they want it them own way. If tings not pleasin' them, they go and start their own church." The task of building a new church has permanent effects on the entire Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist community, and many elders therefore require solid proof for such visions. Leader Gerald emphasised that when someone "get a church to build, others must see it too." He criticised those "quack Leaders" who "put you up too fast," who elevate people into Spiritual positions in which they have no ability to function and whose meanings they cannot properly comprehend. He himself had a vision of founding his own church before he had even been baptised. In the vision he saw a man standing at the door of a church, dressed in a white gown and a black belt. The man called him by his name. At first he did not reply, since he did not know the man, but

finally went to him. The man was holding a huge Bible, as thick as Leader Gerald's arm from his palm to his elbow. He threw the massive book at Leader Gerald and told him to go and teach it to his people. The book was so heavy that Leader Gerald bent down to the ground three times under its weight. After this vision, he also received other similar messages in which the Spirit showed him his task as a Spiritual Baptist Leader. He went to become baptised in the then Mt. Bethel Church. When he mourned there in the late 1960s, Leader Ramsay, the Pointer, started calling him Leader Four, instead of Number Four. The Pointer had seen him on his pilgrim journey, and understood that he, Leader Gerald, had to build his own church. When giving the tracks in the church service after the ritual, Leader Ramsay told Number Four to tell the congregation about his task to become a Leader, although such a track had not been mentioned before that. The fact that Leader Ramsay shared Leader Gerald's vision provided unchallengeable proof for the authenticity of the latter's leadership position; it was certain that he did not make it up. Leader Gerald asserts that unless Spiritually gifted elders, like Pointers, see that someone is supposed to found her own church, there is no reason to believe that the aspirations of such a person are legitimate.

On another occasion, an elderly Leader told me of visions and dreams he had received concerning an aspiring Leader-Baptiser in his church. In one vision the brother in question was sitting in a tall tree, and the Leader was standing in the street below the tree. He had a parcel in his hand to give to the brother, but as he called him to come down from the tree to get the parcel, the brother replied in an arrogant tone, "You come and bring it to me!" The old Leader walked away with the parcel. He told me that inside was a black gown and a baptismal Word, the secret keyword needed for conducting the baptism ritual. The Leader interpreted this vision by saying that the brother was too self-important, too certain of his Spiritual abilities, to humble himself and to really become a qualified Leader and Baptiser. In another vision an elderly sister saw a young, aspiring Shepherd walk away from the Leader of their church, even though the latter was calling him. This vision was interpreted in a similar way, by saying that the Shepherd "don' know his place" and was not modest and dedicated enough to receive a higher position in the church.

The concern about unqualified leadership is not unfounded. First of all, the top-heavy hierarchy of the Spiritual Baptist religion causes inflation in the value of the positions of Mother and Leader. People grumble about how "everybody want to be a Leader," and most agree that it takes years of dedicated service in the church before one can reach the position of elder, like Captain, Teacher, Mother, or Leader. Most Mothers and Leaders in Tobago are well past their forties, and the majority of the most respected elders are over sixty years of age.

The tendency in the Spiritual Baptist diaspora in metropolises like New York and Toronto to assign both Spiritual and administrative positions to people who would not qualify for these in Tobago is generally abhorred. "Everybody in America is Bishop!" scorned a sister in her 50s, who has a Green Card and works in New York for several months each year, but participates actively in her church in Tobago when home. Leader Gerald told us disapprovingly that he had been offered a Bishopric by a church in New York for the price of \$300 US, which he had kindly declined. According to him, buying one's rank is common in America. Leader Brothers disapproves the Americans' thirst for titles as well, and recounted how he, a respected Spiritual worker and Leader with over forty years of experience in the faith, turned down different impressive-sounding titles when visiting New York, and insisted on people calling him Brothers. It is my own impression, too, that the Spiritual elders based in New York or Toronto tend to be younger and with fewer years experience in the religion than people with equivalent ranks in Tobago. Nevertheless, domestic titles are sometimes also assessed negatively. For example, an experienced and respected Mother said she did not like titles like Mother Queen and Mother Superior, since these did not mean anything; in her opinion, the title 'Mother' ought to suffice.

Secondly, new churches, branching out from the Leader's or Mother's home church, do not form their congregations by initiating new members; they start with members from already-established churches, mainly from the home church of the new Leader or Mother. It is very common to hear members of a particular church criticise a Leader or a Mother and his or her followers, often just a handful, who have left their church and founded another one, often in the same village, competing for the same members. As shown in Chapter Three, the rate of initiating new members is quite moderate even in the largest churches, and given the pull of Seventh Day Adventist and Pentecostal crusades on the island, additional competition from churches of the same religion is not appreciated.

Finally, the tasks of a Leader or a Mother as ritual specialist, like baptising candidates or pointing mourners, or recognising and dismissing uninvited spirits from services, cannot be properly conducted unless one has adequate Spiritual knowledge and experience. Mother Cleorita and Leader Gerald, chatting in their gallery one evening, observed that most Leaders and Mothers who build their own churches in Tobago also become Pointers at the same time, although they may not have acquired the necessary knowledge. Mother Cleorita said that she only got five seals when she received the rank of Pointer many years ago, and when Leader Ramsay told her to point mourners, she complained that her five seals could not fill a band. The Leader asked her if she wanted something that God had not given her as yet, and told her to put a cross after the five seals, then repeat them until the band was covered. Mother Cleorita used those five seals

successfully in bands, flags, benches and mourner room decorations for many years, until she received more. Whenever she was shown a seal by the Spirit, she asked what that meant, and the saints would tell her; by now she has numerous seals. She emphasised the importance of Spiritual origin in these symbols, and pointed out that some Pointers copy seals they see in other churches to apply them in their rituals without knowing the meaning of the signs. The amount of seals is one indicator of a Pointer's Spiritual advancement, and by copying other elders' symbols an aspiring Pointer pretends to be "higher" in the faith than she really is. An inability to properly fulfil the duties of a ritual specialist can put the participants of the ritual in a dangerous position. Thus the discourse on fragmentation does not just reflect personal quarrels over hierarchy and access to leadership positions, although such an interpretation might seem lucrative, based on the "crab antics" thesis of Peter Wilson (1972). People do not criticise a young leader who branches off from his home church only because he refuses to remain subordinate to his own Spiritual Mother and Father, and thus twists the hierarchy based on Spiritual experience; they also challenge him because he simply has not convinced them of his gifts as a ritual specialist.

THE POLITICS OF SELF-DEFINITION

To conclude, differences, contestations and finally disagreements over religious knowledge and practices, orthodoxy and orthopraxy, are particularly acute when legitimate definitions of the cosmology, the Spirit and manifestations are being crafted. Boundaries are constructed around the Spiritual Baptist religion against very different Others, namely mainstream Christianity, Pentecostalism and the Orisha religion, and the arguments behind these demarcations are equally varied. The discourse on knowledge, inclusiveness and change does not divide Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists into two camps, however, as has been suggested by Houk (1995, 89) and Lum (2000, 87-88). There exists a continuum of self-acclaimed Spiritual Baptist churches that share the same basic structures, and although people may avoid visiting churches that do not correspond to their Spiritual knowledge and consequent self-definitions as Spiritual Baptist, they can still recognise the familiar structures of the belief system, ritual practice and church organisation.

The discourse on doxa and deviations or the tendency towards fragmentation do not create a mosaic of disconnected churches. As described, visiting other churches' services is a common feature of Spiritual Baptist practice. At Mother Yvonne's thanksgiving at Starlite Spiritual Baptist Church, seven Tobagonian and two Trinidadian churches were represented in addition to the

regular congregation. Among the visitors there were Mothers and Leaders who have voiced quite different interpretations of the proper level of symbolism or the role of orishas in the Spiritual Baptist cosmology, some of whom have not always been on speaking terms. The exegetic differences, even quarrels, between the visitors were not evident in the ritual. The consensus and cooperation in ritual practice among individuals with differing experiences and interpretations of religious knowledge shows that the differences are usually surmountable once the basic structure of knowledge and practice is shared. Edmonds (1998, 349), who rejects analyses of the Rastafarian movement as "fissiparous" or "amorphous," suggests that the term "reticulate," web-like, would better describe the cohesion and structure of the religion. The same term applies fairly well to the Spiritual Baptist religion as a church.

And yet, many Spiritual Baptists long for further standardisation of doctrine and practice. Bishop Daniel stated that "lack of understanding of the Spirit world, and selfishness, and greed for power" cause fragmentation in the Spiritual Baptist Church. He has repeatedly spoken of organising a symposium for all Spiritual Baptist elders in Tobago in order to negotiate uniform policies and doctrines that would be applied in all local churches. But even if a Leader or a Mother were to teach their Spiritual family about the cosmology by organising a class, like Bishop Daniel's *congregation services* at Mt. Paran church – and this is the only example of such education I am aware of – it would still be impossible to synchronise the participants' knowledge of their religion. Each and every one would still have their personal experiences, dreams, visions, and pilgrim journeys, as well as everything they have observed and heard when interacting with other Spiritual Baptists in Tobago and elsewhere, as the framework on which to situate new pieces of information. Also, such education would only address one congregation, and should similar classes be held in all the forty-odd churches on the island, each Teacher would be providing at least slightly different models to the congregations. On the national level, some archdioceses have published manuals for Ministers aiming at uniformity at least in ritual practice. But because ritual practice is inseparable from experiences of the Spirit and consequent knowledge, these attempts have not succeeded so far. In the introduction to the *Minister's Manual* of the WIUSBSO (1993, vii) the authors duly acknowledge that they are

aware that 'different people get their work in different ways' i.e. 'different administration but the self-same Spirit.' If any of the given orders/forms differs from that which the Minister may have received spiritually, it is the duty of the Minister to follow the instruction of the Holy Spirit. If there is no conflict, the orders/forms presented here should be practised in the interest of unity and

continuity, for these too have been born of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and have stood the test of time.

The benefits of unity are frequently raised by practitioners who would like to see the Spiritual Baptist religion as a nationally recognised church equal to the European and North American originated Christian churches and Hindu and Muslim denominations. Not only would an institutionalised church with centralised leadership and organisational structure bring about long-awaited respect and acknowledgement from the general society; according to many elders, it would also allow ministers to receive salaries, which would be a great improvement. An affiliation with dioceses and the further conglomeration of ten of the dioceses into the National Congress aims at this. Other objectives have included building a Spiritual Baptist cathedral, denominational schools and hospitals. The government has responded to these attempts towards institutionalisation by establishing a national holiday in commemoration of the repeal of the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance in 1996. The Spiritual Baptist (Shouter) Liberation Day, the 30th of March, has been celebrated by the dioceses ever since, but never together; NESBFA and the National Congress organise separate ceremonies. However, since a fair number of churches are not affiliated with any diocese, the day passes ignored by many Spiritual Baptists. In Tobago, the Tobago United Liberated Spiritual Baptists (TULSB) was founded in 1996 with the purpose of celebrating the newly acquired holiday in Tobago. In 1999 an estate of 25 acres in Maloney, Trinidad, was allocated to be shared between NESBFA, the National Congress and two Orisha organisations. In the presentation ceremony Prime Minister Basdeo Panday noted that "there was a 'decided diversity' among the Baptist sects and he challenged them to forge a lasting unity among themselves" (*Trinidad Guardian*, 1 April 1999). In Tobago, the Chief Secretary of the House of Assembly, Orville London, addressed local Spiritual Baptists at the Liberation day festivities in 2002 by noting that "there is also need for unity. Are the Spiritual Baptists in Tobago and in Trinidad and Tobago sufficiently united to take up the challenge [of contributing to the development of the nation]?" The Chief Secretary mentioned establishing schools as a possible goal for the Spiritual Baptist community, but preconditioned the Assembly's assistance to any such venture by the requirement of unity: "If the Spiritual Baptists *as one organisation* has an idea *together* to develop the island, they could get assistance from the THA" (*Tobago News*, 5 April 2002; my italics).

The Spiritual Baptist belief system, then, is fluid and changing, its boundaries always blurred and under negotiation. It has a structure, nevertheless, which is reproduced in discourse and ritual practice. The relationship between the practicing subject and the structured and structuring religion is reciprocal;

although the existing belief system creates the setting for religious experiences and provides the framework for meaningful interpretations, there are liminal interstices in ritual practice within which inventiveness, novel knowledge and interpretations become possible. This dynamic provides fertile ground for a vivid and elaborate cosmology and rituals without the danger of ungraspable fluidity, fragmentation and incoherence. The practitioners themselves seek to define their religion as a bounded system, and are therefore constantly assessing Spiritual knowledge. In the negotiations over orthodoxy and orthopraxy, the notions of Africa and Christianity are not simply juxtaposed, but redefined and given specifically Spiritual Baptist meanings.

¹ See for example Lum 2000, Stephens 1999, Gibbs de Peza 1999.

² On illiteracy among practitioners, see Lum 2000, 54, and Glazier 1983, 27.

³ Other religious books, mainly published in the United States, are frequently read by many devotees, and elders sometimes use such sources when preparing sermons, but they are not quoted in ritual practice, nor are they regarded as holy texts.

⁴ I have often heard Spiritual Baptists condemn individuals, both members and non-members, for "using books" for spiritual work. Books in this sense, as instructions of obeah techniques, connote danger. A man told me that after the death of his father, who had inherited books from his grandfather, a known obeahman, he had buried the books in the ground and let them decompose. Nobody else in the family wanted to touch them.

⁵ April 19, 2001.

⁶ Archbishop Dr. Deloris Seivereight of Faith International Centre of Canada, Toronto, saw the question of education as different in the diaspora than in the Caribbean churches. She said that her congregation in Toronto consisted of highly educated, professional people, whose inquiries could not be satisfied by telling them to go and mourn.

⁷ The relationship between ritual and myth has inspired a century-long discourse in anthropology and religious studies. The myth-ritualist discourse of the relationship and order of succession between myth and ritual started with Robertson Smith's *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (1889, ref. Segal 1998, 1), developed since the end of the 19th century among anthropologists and classicists studying ancient religions, and has been applied to theories of contemporary religions as well. In this debate, myth and ritual have generally been seen as separate realms of religion: myth on the conceptual level of meaning, ritual on the level of practice, giving form to the myth's meaning. Lévi-Strauss (1963, 62 ref. Segal 1998, 348) crystallises the problematic of the discourse: "(S)ociologists and anthropologists who were interested in the interrelations between myth and ritual have considered them as mutually redundant. Some of these thinkers see in each myth the ideological projection of a rite, the purpose of the myth being to provide a foundation for the rite. Others reverse the relationship and regard ritual as a kind of dramatized illustration of the myth. Regardless of whether the myth or the ritual is the original, they replicate each other; the myth exists on the conceptual level and the ritual on the level of action." William Bascom, who has studied Yoruba religion in Nigeria and in America (1969, 1972, 1980), contributes directly to the myth-ritualist discourse in his article *The Myth-Ritual Theory* (1957, in Segal 1998), but Afro-American religions are not among the ethnographic examples he

mentions. Bascom's main argument is against the theory that folklore and myth are derived from ritual. In his view the ritualists have not managed to prove that myth could not arise out of actual historical events or imagination. In other words, myths, legends, and folktales are not necessarily connected to rituals.

⁸ The first recorded instance of Spiritual Baptist use of the term religion is found in the *Trinidad Guardian*, 9 January 1918, in which Teacher Bailey, arrested under the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance, is quoted as explaining to the Magistrate that "I know that I born and meet me mother and me father, me mother 58 and me father 49. I met them in this religion."

⁹ A Spiritual Baptist woman, Jeanette Baptiste, had a series of revelations after giving birth to twins, and these revelations lead her to turn away from Christianity in general and to found the Earth People, centred around Mother Nature (Littlewood 2001, 28-40).

¹⁰ In a similar way, the people of P. I. Ibirama in Brazil (Urban 1996, 253-254) discuss dream experiences of spirits as sensible experiences of the real, external world. Their circulating discourse of dream narratives transforms experiences of the noumenal, dreams, into phenomenal, myths (ibid., 245).

¹¹ The terms *cool* and *hot* are sometimes used to refer to the different manifestations: a service is cool when the Spirit does not manifest or when people only engage in short and simple manifestations, and hot when the rejoicing lasts a long time and the music and dancing are wholehearted. Such typologies are normally applied by people who are accustomed to hot services. Also the term *action* can connote lively services, so that churches where manifestations are of the cooler type can be dismissed by stating that "dem have no action."

¹² Brown (1991, 136), among others, describes how advanced practitioners, such as the Vodou *manbo* Mama Lola, only go through a short struggle *pro forma* at the onset of trance.

¹³ These churches also display certain features common in Pentecostal practice, like waving hands in the air and calling "Hallelujah" or "Praise the Lord," or accompanying hymns and songs with an electric organ.

¹⁴ De Peza has founded an organisation named 'Spiritual Baptist Christian' within the National Congress of Incorporated Baptist Organisations of Trinidad and Tobago. She defines "Spiritual Baptists" as different from "Shouter Baptists" and "Shango Baptists," based on the former relinquishing the African forms of worship from their practice. Such a definition, common to all her publications and public comments, is a narrow one – de Peza transforms her ideals of the what the religion should be like into general criteria for the entire religion, thus leaving out thousands of people who identify themselves as Spiritual Baptists.

¹⁵ Lovelace 1996, 44.

¹⁶ Orisha elders have even had to correct a misconception that their practice involves human sacrifice: a Trinidadian couple, who were suspected of killing their four children and an 18-year-old girl, were claimed to be members of a cult involving a mixture of Orisha and Kali worship. Mother Melvina Rodney, the *iyalorisha* and head of the Orisha Movement of Trinidad and Tobago, was interviewed by the *Trinidad Express* (4 December 1997): "Orisha does not do human sacrifice. We sacrifice two-feet birds such as fowls, ducks, turkeys or four-legged animals such as sheep and goats and, in a leap year, we sacrifice a bull. [---] There are many people doing evil and calling it Orisha and giving us a bad name,' she charged, swearing that they would have to pay."

¹⁷ It remains to be seen whether the few instances of Spiritual Baptist immigrants who attend Pentecostal churches in North America indicate a tendency in this direction.

¹⁸ The list may not be exhaustive, since even more churches may have been founded by former members of Mt. Paran's daughter churches, and not only in Tobago but also in Trinidad and abroad.

CONCLUSION

Continuity cannot be seized or structured by any group and thus it should empower arts of complex originality that may approach and scan and weigh the numinosities, and specificities, and contrasting proportions that give rhythm and echo to the building blocks of a civilization. (Wilson Harris 1995, 50).

Various political authorities and academic discussions addressing the cultural diversity of the Caribbean, including anthropological studies of Afro-Caribbean religions, have sought to "seize or structure" continuity between local culture and its roots in Africa, Europe, or India. Caribbean culture is thus presented as an assortment of separable elements, the origins of which can be traced back along the routes of colonial migrations. In this line of thought, religions such as the Spiritual Baptist are analysed as consisting of African and Christian features imported to the region from overseas. Also, more often than not, culture – including religion – is assessed according to its assumed purity and authenticity, a process in which locally developed cultural forms and fusions are deemed spurious rather than genuine. Hence some cultural commentators and religious authorities pressure practitioners of the Spiritual Baptist religion to align either with North American or European originated Christianity, or more recently with "Africanised" forms of worship, in order to be granted a socially acceptable position.

Rejecting the essentialism of the aforementioned discourses, writers such as Wilson Harris have offered analyses of Caribbean cultures and religions as creolised, by definition different from the cultures of the Old World ancestors of the Caribbean people. Instead of mechanical mixtures of cultural loans, creole cultures are seen as indigenous and creative. With my ethnography of the rituals and cosmology of Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists I have participated in this latter discourse and drawn attention to the inherent capacity for transformation and novelty in this creole religion. Guided by Victor Turner's analyses of liminality in rites of passage, I have demonstrated how the rituals, visions and dreams of Spiritual Baptists open gateways to a Spiritual world, and how religious knowledge from the Holy Spirit is received in such liminal interstices. The cosmology that opens through these gateways is a complex system of different nations, landscapes, and entities, unique to the Spiritual Baptist religion. Through experiences in this Spiritual world, and also through performances that

reproduce it in ritual practice, novel knowledge is received and exegeses of the cosmology transformed. The interpretations of such experiences are irreducible to any cultural origins outside the local social world, and support, but also change, the existing system of knowledge and practice. Thus creolisation is an ongoing process of knowledge production.

The Spiritual Baptist history, cosmology and rituals do not surrender to analyses that rely on a rigid juxtaposition of Christian and African religions, such as presented in anthropological studies of syncretism. European and African belief systems in the colonial Tobago were never homogenous blocs, but formed a diverse continuum of cosmological and ritual knowledge. This plurality, fortified by the cultural inputs of Indian and Chinese indentured labourers, is reflected in the Spiritual Baptist discourse and cosmology. The concepts of Africanness and Christianity become defined in ways that differ from the usages of anthropological or local political discourses; for example, Africa in the Spiritual Baptist cosmology is one among many Spiritual nations, not the mythical homeland of Afrocentric thinkers or the precolonial West Africa that anthropologists have referred to in studies of religious syncretism. As a creole religion, the Spiritual Baptist has a system of beliefs and practices much larger and more diverse than what could be expected of a mechanical combination of African and Christian traits. Because of its inherent innovativeness, it evades essentialist notions of religion and culture as pure, bounded, and static.

The inventiveness of creolisation is not unstructured or all-embracing. First of all, its foundation is the lived-in environment of the Spiritual Baptists. By analysing the subjectivity of the practitioners and the construction of ritual space, I have illustrated how the cosmology intertwines with the physical reality in embodied experiences and performances but also in the local, Tobagonian environment and lifeworld. The global Spiritual world includes various local places. Also, Tobagonian sites, such as crossroads or river mouths, function as ritual areas and offer access to the Spiritual world. A phenomenological approach to the subject as a bodily, experiencing and perceiving agent has proven helpful in analysing the interrelatedness of the Spiritual, ritual, physical, and profane.

Secondly, the Spiritual Baptist church, religious knowledge and ritual practice are all clearly structured. The basic structure of the religion was well established at the time of its first ethnographic description in the 1930s, and today it unites practitioners and churches not only in the Caribbean region but

within the religion's diaspora in North America and Great Britain. I have analysed this structure on the levels of religious knowledge, cosmology, and ritual practice.

What adds to the sense of coherence and structure from the point of view of an individual practitioner is that Spiritual Baptists are constantly demarcating their religion. They negotiate upon varying criteria of orthodoxy and orthopraxy and construct boundaries between their and other religions. These demarcations are not to be mistaken for objectively definable social categories or groups, but they indicate that for the practitioners, it is significant to conceptualise their religion as autonomous and coherent. This discourse on orthodoxy, orthopraxy and boundaries is largely motivated by an ideal of social acceptability shared by most Spiritual Baptists; that their religion could reach a respected position among the European and North American originated denominations in the Caribbean societies.

So, although the religion is not static or bounded, it fits poorly into the models of vague, disjointed sets of experiences that have been given precedence over coherent culture in postmodern anthropology. Instead, it is marked by inherent contradictions between inventiveness and structure, charisma and hierarchy, and personal experiences and collective doctrinal control. These oppositions produce a dynamic that gives the Spiritual Baptist religion its specific character. Perhaps it is this dynamic that inspires the members to devote as much time and effort to ritual practice as they do. Each practitioner's experiences and ritual performances can contribute to the general corpus of religious knowledge without turning it into an incoherent mass of individual exegeses, or producing countless, ever-fragmenting cults. The religion allows for meaningful personal experiences and creativity within an organised Church and within a framework of shared norms and collective representations. The rewards of such a combination are remarkable – the religion has become more and more popular regardless of systematic persecutions and prejudice. Like their forefathers in the 19th century, Spiritual Baptists continue *marching to Zion* in Tobagonian churches and mourner rooms today, and follow the guidance of Spiritual *wisdom, knowledge, and understanding* also in their daily lives.

APPENDIX 1 CHURCH AFFILIATIONS

WEST INDIAN UNITED SPIRITUAL BAPTIST SACRED ORDER

OFFICIALS

Archbishop Ivan Lancaster in Trinidad
 Bishop Peter Daniel, Mt. Paran Perseverance SBC
 Dean Gerald Robinson, St. Philomen SBC
 Archdeacon Claude Cowie, St. Francis SBC

MEMBER CHURCHES

Mt. Paran (Bethel, Bishop Peter Daniel, Teacher Claudette Daniel)
St. Philomen (Black Rock, Leader Gerald Robinson, Mother Cleorita Robinson)
St. Francis (Goodwood, Rev. Claude Cowie and Mother Miriam Yorke)
Mt. Zion (Ten Chain, Leader Selassie Armstrong, Mother Milita Fraser)
Mt. Carmel (Roxborough, Leader Ferdinand or Fednand Morris)
St. Philomena (Glamorgan)
Temple Isaiah (Bon Accord, Mother Eunicy Des Vignes)
St. Philomene (Bon Accord)

NATIONAL EVANGELICAL SPIRITUAL BAPTIST ARCHDIOCESE

OFFICIALS

Archbishop Barbara Burke in Trinidad
 Bishop Maitland, Mt. Zion SBC
 Bishop Brown
 Archdeacon Woods, St. Mary's SBC

MEMBER CHURCHES

Mt. Arrarat (Bon Accord, Rev. Courtnell Barton)
Mt. Olivet (Bon Accord, Rev. Moses, Mother Eileen Cox)
Mt. Zion (Mt. St. George, Bishop Maitland, Mother Pearl Wright)
St. Mary's (Pembroke, Archdeacon Woods, Mother Iona)
St. Anthony (Pembroke, Leader Morrison, Mother Morrison)
Mt. Nebo (Bon Accord, Mother Annalese Clarke)
St. Michael (Bon Accord, Mother Meta Joseph)

MT. BETHEL SPIRITUAL BAPTIST ASSEMBLY INC. OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

OFFICIALS

Bishop Williams, Mt. Bethel SBC

Archdeacon Ronald Thom, Mt. Horeb SBC

Archdeacon Percival, Mt. Bethel SBC

MEMBER CHURCHES

Mt. Bethel SB Cathedral	(Prompt Mill, Bishop Williams and Mother Thom)
Mt. Horeb	(Mt. Thomas, Leader Thom)
St. Rita's	(Plymouth, Leader Brothers)
Mt. Zion	(Speyside, Leader and Mother Domingo)
Holy Tabernacle of God	(Louis D'Or)

MT. PISGAH SPIRITUAL BAPTIST ARCHDIOCESE

OFFICIALS

Archbishop Raymond Oba Douglas in Trinidad

Bishop Alan Anthony, St. Peter's SBC

Arch-abbess Agatha Anthony

Arch-priest Anthony

MEMBER CHURCHES

St. Peter's	(Bethel, Bishop Alan Anthony and Archabbess Agatha Anthony)
Church of the New Nazarine	(Castara, Leader Inness and Mother Inness)

APPENDIX 2 RITUAL TYPES

I present the Spiritual Baptist rituals here according to their purpose, in which Catherine Bell's mode of classifying ritual genres into six basic categories has proven helpful: Bell (1997, 94-135) distinguishes rites of passage, calendrical rites, rites of exchange and communion, rites of affliction, rites of feasting, fasting, and festivals, and political rituals.

Rites of passage mark a transition from a social status to another (van Gennep 1909, Turner 1967, 1969). Such rites dramatise central occasions in the life-cycle, such as birth, name-giving, coming of age, marriage, and death; they also accompany initiation into social groups not necessarily related to life-stages. Although Spiritual Baptists ritualise name-giving, marriage and death, rites of passage of the latter type, initiation, are more frequent and more emblematic to this religion.

Infant dedication is a name-giving ritual in which a baby is blessed, sometimes healed, and acknowledged as a member of the society; the term *baptism* is reserved to the initiation ritual of adult baptism. This is one of the most common rites of passage in the religion, and the larger churches in Tobago may officiate infant dedication even twice a month. Babies are dedicated in Sunday services, usually between the reading of lessons and preaching. Both female and male ministers can officiate. The baby's family may or may not be Spiritual Baptists. The baby, its parent(s) and godparents or *sponsors* gather in front of the altar, where elders lift the infant towards the four cardinal points in front of the altar, or raise it thrice "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Scripture reading and hymns, as well as addresses to the parents and to the congregation by the officiator, precede the actual dedication. This takes place either by the centrepole or in front of the altar. The baby can be given salt, sugar, honey, or oil, or combinations of these, and water is sprinkled over it from a bowl or basin, often by using a flower. The name is announced at this point. Some officiators then anoint the baby with oil, and further Spiritually protective measures, like *sealing* the infant's foot soles and hands with a candle or with oil, can be taken. Spiritual manifestations are rare during this ritual. An official certificate of the baby's name is given to the parent(s) after the service.

Weddings in Spiritual Baptist churches are relatively rare; even the most prominent churches seldom celebrate more than one or two weddings a year. Licence to officiate the ritual is granted by the state. The service follows the formula of the Solemnization of Marriage of the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Anglican church, and is thus of a fairly universal Christian type. The only specifically Spiritual Baptist feature in the ritual is the surveying of the space before the actual wedding ceremony. Spiritual manifestations seldom occur in weddings.

Spiritual Baptist elders who do Spiritual work can bathe and dress the body of a dead person prior to the wake and the funeral. A wake is kept on the night before the funeral at the home of the deceased, and it is open for all villagers, relatives and friends. It begins in the evening with hymns and prayers around a large table, and continues until morning hours with less formal singing, drumming, playing of different instruments like the guitar, flute, steel pan and drums, playing cards, different games and telling stories. Rum, coffee, cake, biscuits and sandwiches are served all night long by the family of the deceased. The more formal praying and singing of the main table is lead by an officiator, not necessarily a religious specialist or a Spiritual Baptist. Baptist women usually cover their heads in wakes, but other ritual clothing or paraphernalia are not used.

The funeral service, like solemnisation of marriage, follows the Anglican formula of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Surveying around the coffin and the grave and extemporaneous praying are typically Spiritual Baptist features in funerals. Some churches bring their drummers to the grave side to play as hymns are sung and soil is shovelled over the coffin. The service, then, consists mainly of universally applied Anglican liturgy, first in the church and continuing by the graveside. Both male and female ministers can officiate in funerals.

The initiation rites of baptism and mourning are the most important rituals in the Spiritual Baptist religion. One becomes a Spiritual Baptist by receiving adult baptism, and mourning, on the other hand, is the avenue to Spiritual knowledge and elevation in the church's hierarchy of positions. They have been described at length in Chapter Four.

Other rites of passage in the Spiritual Baptist religion are robing, in which a person's new Spiritually acquired status in the church is ritually confirmed by dressing the person in a ritual attire associated with the new status, and dedication of a church, where a newly built or renovated church building is ritually consecrated to be used as a church. Robing takes place within a Sunday service, after prayers, whereas dedication ceremonies take the form of an entire service. Both rituals can be officiated by both male and female ministers. Spiritual manifestations are common in robings and dedications.

Calendrical rites form the second category of Spiritual Baptist rituals. Bell (1997, 102) identifies these rites as "(giving) socially meaningful definitions to the passage of time, creating an ever-renewing cycle of days, months, and years." The annual calendrical rites shared by all Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists include the basic Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter, as well as the international holidays of New Year and Mothers' Day. The Spiritual Baptist (Shouter) Liberation Day has been celebrated on the 30th of March since 1996, but not all Spiritual Baptist churches recognise the holiday by keeping a service or by taking part in the common festivities of the dioceses. The Tobago United Liberated Spiritual Baptists (TULSB) organises a large thanksgiving service on each Liberation Day at the Shaw Park recreational complex. Hundreds of Tobagonian Spiritual Baptists participate in this annual celebration, although the majority has neglected the event so far.

Individual churches have several different rituals that are arranged at the same time every year. These include church thanksgiving, Leaders' and Mothers' private thanksgivings, church harvest, anniversaries and memorial services; whereas an anniversary marks the founding of the church, memorial services can be arranged for deceased Mothers and Leaders. Both are arranged in the church, and the officiator does not have to be a ritual specialist.

Rites of exchange and communion dramatise transactions between humans and a divinity or divinities, according to Bell (1997, 108), and offerings are a typical form of such exchange. Spiritual Baptist thanksgivings fall into this category of rituals, although some of the major ones have become calendrical rites as well. Thanksgivings have been described in Chapter Six. Some thanksgivers arrange a smaller ritual, returning of thanks, after a certain time (often 7 or 40 days) has passed since their thanksgiving. These may take place by a river or a beach.

A pilgrimage service does not differ from the standard service as such, but it is arranged in a location other than the church, and the transition to the destination of the pilgrimage is part of the ritual. A pilgrimage can head to a fellow Spiritual Baptist church in another village of Tobago, in Trinidad, or even abroad, like in Grenada; or the destination may be a community centre, a square, or quite popularly, a beach. Hired maxi-taxis provide the transportation in Tobago, whereas pilgrimages to Trinidad make use of the inter-island boat. A fairly regular service is kept in the destination. A pilgrimage may have a proselytising function, if the service is aimed at, say, villagers passing the market square. When the destination is a ritually

significant location, like a beach, the pilgrimage is more loyal to the traditional meaning of the word, in the sense that Turner (1978, 4, 6) describes Christian pilgrimages to sacred sites, holy shrines, and to churches containing relics associated with Christ. Turner also emphasises the journey itself, in addition to the destination, in the experience of pilgrimage; "the point of it all is to get out, go forth, to a far holy place approved by all" (1978, 7). The journey is an integral part of the pilgrimage ritual for Spiritual Baptists, and the hours spent in maxi-taxis on the road to Charlotteville, Castara, Speyside or any other popular destination, are spent by singing, perhaps also drumming, and the codes for dressing and general conduct are similar to church itself.

Pilgrimages are also fund-raisers. Visitors from other Spiritual Baptist churches are invited, and tickets normally cost \$40, if the pilgrimage is made in Tobago, and have to be paid in advance, so that the organisers can pay for the maxi-taxis. The remainder of the money is used for the upkeep of the church - for example, painting the walls or fixing the ceiling. The funds can also be given to charity; the Tobago United Liberated Spiritual Baptists' pilgrimage to Charlotteville in 1999 was arranged to raise funds for a Leader hospitalised in the USA.

Missions are the only clearly proselytising ritual type in the Spiritual Baptist religion. They are services kept in village crossroads or squares in order to deliver a Spiritually received message to passers-by, or to generally preach the Word of God to the people of the village. An individual practitioner may receive Spiritual orders in a vision to deliver a message, like Sister Erica, who was ordered to go around the island to warn people of the sin of fornication, or Leader Brothers, who travelled to Grenada to warn people of the upcoming hurricane. A church can also arrange missions as a collective, in which case several people, sometimes even twenty, go *on the mission road* together. The mission may be an individual service kept by a crossroads, or it can be part of a series of similar services in different villages. The St. Philomen church went on mission road in February 2001, and covered Black Rock, Egypt (Bethel), Buccoo, Canaan, Les Coteaux, Whim, Plymouth, and Scarborough within two weeks. People travelled with route taxis or bus. In the "old days" Spiritual Baptists used to walk much more on the mission road. Mother Cleorita once walked from Buccoo to Bethel, then to Plymouth, Les Coteaux, Moriah, Castara, and quite to Roxborough. She slept at sisters' homes at each mission station, and preached the word in the villages on her way. The destination and route for missions, just like for pilgrimages, is received Spiritually in a vision.

Rites of affliction, writes Bell following Victor Turner, "seek to mitigate the influence of spirits thought to be afflicting human beings with misfortune" (1997, 115). Major rites of affliction for Spiritual Baptists are healing and blessing. Healing is a gift obtained from God, either from birth or during the mourning ritual, and healers help members of the church as well as non-Spiritual Baptist patients with problems ranging from physical suffering to misfortunes and thorny relationships. Exorcising evil spirits is part of a healer's duties. Healing can take place within a church service; for example, a healer can see to an infant as it is being dedicated, or to a sick person who has come to the service. Most times people come to seek help at the home of the healer, though. Healers can be both male and female, and they normally are Pointers or Baptisers as well.

Healers, but also other elders, may bless houses, work places, and various objects, cars, rings, drums, etc., when asked. Objects may be blessed during a church service, but blessing of houses and rooms is arranged at any time convenient to the officiator and the "client." In the latter case, only the officiating elder and the people occupying the property in question are normally present. When a particular space or an object are blessed, they are Spiritually purified and protected against possible invasions by evil spirits (like jumbies).

The final of Bell's categories relevant to Spiritual Baptists is what she calls "feasting, fasting, and festivals" and describes as "publicly expressing the commitment and adherence to basic religious values of the community" (1997, 120). The term "rites of intensification," referring to rituals that enhance the integration of the religious community, is also suitable to indicate this quite heterogeneous category. Rituals such as thanksgiving could easily fit in this category as well.

Harvest is an annual ritual organised by several of the larger Spiritual Baptist churches in Tobago. Most of these have a fixed date - for example, whereas St. Philomen church always keeps harvest on the fourth Sunday of May, Mt. Paran church celebrates its harvest on the third Sunday of March, and so forth. Harvest is exceptional among Spiritual Baptist rituals in that the standard structure of the service is not applied. The ritual consists of different performances - songs by choirs and soloists, recitals, instrumental solos and dramatic pieces. The performers come from the promoting church as well as from other Spiritual Baptist and non-Baptist churches, and even profane organisations, such as the T&Tec choir (T&Tec is the national electricity company). The general atmosphere is religious, but not particularly Spiritual Baptist; even the dress code of the participants differs from other rituals. Instead of church clothes, women, although covering their heads, wear festive jacket suits or dresses with matching hats, whereas many of the men have on three-piece suits; and instead of a ritual specialist or minister, a master of ceremonies conducts the harvest. Harvest cantatas and concerts of Anglican churches do not differ from the Spiritual Baptist variant to any remarkable degree. Fruits, vegetables and ground provisions, as well as bread and cakes, are piled around the centrepole of the church, and the space is decorated with palm leaves and flowers. Members of the church arrange a bazaar in the church yard, so that visitors may buy delicacies and handicrafts to support the church. As such, harvest is one of the few fund-raising events that Spiritual Baptists have in their ritual complex. Some churches promote evenings of song, which are musical concerts of a less grand scale than harvests.

Revival services and gospel crusades are normal church services arranged in evening time on weekdays. The purpose is to revive the Spiritual life of the church and to inspire its members to commit themselves to the religion and the particular church. Revival services comply to the standard structure of the Spiritual Baptist service, but the number of preachers is exceptionally high. Preachers are invited from other churches to deliver the Word to the congregation. Finally, among rituals that enhance the integrity of the religious group, different prayer group meetings, Bible classes and "congregation services," in which members of the church are taught principles of the religion, are arranged in the larger Spiritual Baptist churches quite regularly.

APPENDIX 3 THE SERVICE

THE SERVICE BEGINS

The first part of the service consists of cleansing and sanctifying the church and uplifting the congregation into Spiritual mood. This is performed by means of music, bell-ringing and surveying.

The bell always announces that a Spiritual Baptist service is about to start. The loud brass bell or bells are rung at least in one spot, like on the altar, but most often an elder, Captain, Shepherd, Mother or Leader, walks with one or two bells from the main door to the centrepole, ringing all the while, and in many cases the entire church, its sides or side doors and the altar, is covered by ringing the bell. In many churches this audible cleansing and calling for the Spirit is accompanied by sprinkling water, like in Mt. Hermon church in Plymouth, where the Captain and a Mother walked from the main door to the centrepole and to the altar, the Captain sprinkling water from a glass with a white rose floating in it, the Mother ringing two bells. Other vessels for the sprinkling can be a glass with a green leaf in it, a calabash, or a lota. The bell-ringing and the possible *surveying* with water may also precede the actual official start of the service, sometimes even by half an hour, after which the procedures are repeated. Bell-ringing used to inform people in the village that the service was about to start.

Hymns and sacred songs are often hummed or sung while waiting for the service to begin. Spiritual Baptist worship seldom gets going right on time, and instead of just chatting and waiting around, the sisters and brothers who have come on time usually sing. Drums, shac shacs and tambourines can be used to carry to accompany the singing.

After the bells are rung, the Minister greets the congregation, often in standard rhetoric. "Good evening to the people of Israel," "A pleasant good evening to my family in Christ," "A pleasant good morning to brethren and sisters in the Court of St. Philomen," and so on. Some use the occasion to welcome the congregation, to recognise visitors, to make further remarks on the practicalities of the proceedings, or to give a short opening speech with a Biblical or moral theme.

THE SONG SERVICE

The Minister then starts the music, leading at least one but most often three hymns in a slow tempo. The hymns are usually selected from *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, an Anglican hymnal. The entire congregation, except the pregnant, old and crippled, stand throughout these hymns. Many churches start their services with Hymn 165 in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*:

*Oh God, our help in ages past
our hope for years to come
our shelter from the stormy blast
and our eternal home*

During the six unhurried verses people seldom clap, and if drums or other rhythmic instruments, like tambourines, shac shacs or triangles are used, they roll quietly in the background. Among the favourite hymns for the beginning of the service are *Lead Us Heavenly Father* (281), *Jesu, Lover of My Soul* (193), *How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sound* (176), or

Through All the Changing Scenes of Life (290 in the *Ancient and Modern*). Dozens of different Anglican hymns are sung in Spiritual Baptist services.

Other popular hymnals and song books are *Popular Hymns and Choruses*, published by the West Indian United Spiritual Baptist Sacred Order; the Methodist hymnal *Sacred Songs and Solos* compiled by Ira Sankey, and *The Spiritual Baptist Hymnal*. The lyrics receive more attention in this preliminary singing than later on in the service: whereas the first Anglican hymns are sung according to the hymnals, songs in the *hot*, Spiritually intense parts of the service tend to turn into humming and chanting, or repeating one well-known verse. The rhythm, too, accelerates as the opening song session is over. Nevertheless, opening hymns are intense, loud and devoutly performed, and they are often sung in more than one parts, allowing the more skilful singers to improvise. Dancing is rare at this stage due to the slow rhythm of the hymns, but people tend to sway and move to the music. Quite often at least one of the opening hymns turns into faster, rhythmic singing and clapping, and the instruments, drums, shac shacs and tambourines immediately catch the beat and carry it further, sending people to dance. The conducting Minister or elder commonly leads the singing by starting the hymns, sometimes singing each verse before the congregation in a responsorial-style. Some Ministers, like Captain Turner or Leader Gerald, like to recite the first verse of each hymn after announcing them, so that people with different hymnals surely find the right song. "Brethren, we continue by singing number 184 in the *Ancient and Modern*! *Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water and the blood from Thy riven side which flow'd, be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power.*"

Pitts (1993) argues that Afro-Baptist church services in the Southern USA consist of two ritual frames, one with Standard English expressions, slow music and no trance, the other marked by Black vernacular English, rhythmic music as well as trance. Pitts extends the dichotomous pattern to other religions of the "African Western Hemisphere," including Spiritual Baptist and Orisha religions in Trinidad and Tobago. In the Spiritual Baptist services in Tobago, however, it is quite common for Ministers as well as members of the congregation to catch power during the opening hymns and especially during surveying, and dancing, clapping hands, ringing the bell and making music is not restricted to any particular section of the service. Particularly in thanksgivings people rejoice from the beginning all the way through the service.

APOSTLES' CREED AND BENEDICTION

After the opening hymns are sung, the conducting Minister or elder initiates the Apostles' Creed which the entire congregation recites in unison, still standing up. All Spiritual Baptists keep their right hand up in the air during creeds in a manner resembling court house oaths. In several churches it is customary to curtsy and make the sign of the cross during the third verse, *and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord*. The creed is recited with a melody.

Immediately after the Apostles' Creed follows Benediction, as if in the same tone. The congregation remains standing, their right hands up. The Benediction is recited, or sung, in the same two tones used in the Apostles' Creed; the third interval is repeated twice in a verse.

Minister:	<i>Lord have mercy upon us</i>
Congregation:	<i>Christ have mercy upon us</i>
Minister:	<i>The Lord be with you</i>
Congregation:	<i>And with Thy spirit</i>
Minister:	<i>Let us pray.</i>

SURVEYING

After the Benediction, the same tone usually continues without rupture as the Minister leads the congregation into the surveying hymn immediately from the last verse of the Benediction. The vast majority of churches abide to this order - hymns, Creed, Benediction, surveying - but in Mt. Horeb church, in the village of Mt. Thomas, it is customary to survey before the Creed and the Benediction during the last of the opening hymns, the ever-popular number 165 in *The Ancient and Modern*. Two Anglican hymns, both in *The Ancient and Modern*, alternate in most Tobagonian churches as surveying hymns: The deliberately unhurried number 94

*Lord, in this Thy mercy's day,
ere it pass for aye away
on our knees we fall and pray*

and the swifter, more rhythmic 108:

*When I survey the wondrous Cross
on which the Prince of Glory died
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.*

Surveying is done by pouring and sprinkling different substances at strategic places in the ritual area. It is usually sisters who survey. As the surveying hymn starts, at least three sisters go to the centrepole, in front of the altar or to a working table in the church to collect surveying vessels and bottles. Some elders, like Reverend Andrews who held services in St. Rita's church, chose what to use for surveying and in which order and gave the vessels and bottles to the surveyors. In notable rituals such as big thanksgivings there are usually several surveyors, most often four or five but sometimes all up to thirteen, like in Mt. Paran church thanksgiving. The Mother of the church seldom surveys; it is the sisters or assistant Mothers who consecrate the place. No specific duty to survey is assigned to any one sister, although the procession normally consists of more or less the same girls and women. Most times one would see these same women taking care of the practical chores at the church, decorating and cleaning the space, giving others a hand with thanksgiving arrangements, labouring with mourners, working as nurses in baptism services and so on.

The main surveyor leading the procession has a special role in consecrating the space. She is the one to lead the women's prayers later on. Therefore the main surveyor tends to be someone well advanced in faith who would not hesitate to pray in front of the congregation. The obligation of the surveyors to take part in the praying is usually respected, and elders admonish those who shirk from the duty.

The vessel carried by the main surveyor is usually either a lota or a calabash, most often a lota, accompanied with the bell which the surveyor rings while proceeding. Along with the lota and the calabash, which are part of almost all surveying processions in Spiritual Baptist services, the sisters may carry the taria with its grains, bottles of olive oil, different scented waters like Kananga Water, Florida Water or Rose Water, perfumes and talcum powder; especially in thanksgivings it is also customary to use red wine, sweetwater and milk, occasionally even rum. Petals of different flowers used in the vessels, like the red ixora

chrysanthemums or pink roses, are also frequently sprinkled while surveying, particularly when in the Spirit. The combinations vary between different churches according to the Spiritual instructions given to the elders. Punccheon rum is quite rarely applied for surveying purposes, but used in some churches in special rituals such as surveying the flag-hole in the church yard in the church thanksgiving. Punccheon rum is rather used in Spiritual work than regular church proceedings.

The surveyors aim at covering the entire area by walking a standard route, one after another following the main surveyor. Again, these routes vary slightly between different churches, but the strategic spots remain the same although the order may be different. At these symbolically laden spots the surveyors stop, curtsy or bow, say a silent prayer, and sprinkle or pour whatever liquid or substance they carry. The spots surveyed are the main door, the centrepole and the four corners of the church. These are covered by surveyors in all Tobagonian churches. Many also include possible side doors and the space in front of the altar. In several churches a Minister surveys on the altar while sisters consecrate the rest of the space.

In a typical surveying procession at St. Peter's Church the surveyors gathered in front of the altar. They raised their vessels and bottles three times, curtsying slightly. The main surveyor carried the calabash and the bell; the taria followed; then a sister with glasses of sweetwater and milk; a fourth one with the lota; and the last surveyor carried olive oil. Oil is said to *seal* the surveying and is thus often used as the last substance in the consecration. The main surveyor rang her bell as she walked to the left hand side corner of the wall opposite to the altar, where the main door was. Others followed her as she proceeded to the left hand side corner of the altar wall; then to the right hand side corner of the opposite wall, and finally to the right hand side corner of the altar wall. The four corners were thus surveyed by crossing the floor. Each church has numbered the corners, so that the congregation is aware of which one is the Number One Corner, Number Two Corner and so on. These names are frequently used when referring to the space; "Go fix the candle in Number Three Corner!" After each surveyor had completed the route, they gathered in front of the altar, lifted the vessels and bottles three times, curtsying, and put them back around the centrepole, on the working table or on the altar.

Surveying is a Spiritually intense, *hot*, part of the service, and quite often at least one of the surveyors catch power. Certain sisters rejoice every time they survey, bending, swirling around and waving their arms in the air while they go to the four corners. Music and rhythm carry the surveyors as the congregation stands up, singing and clapping, and the drums, tambourines and shac shacs keep up the beat. Along with the main surveyor others may ring the bell, too, and in many churches Captains or other elders like to blow the shell during surveying, producing a horn-like sound. People in the congregation can catch power at this point, too. Sometimes a sister or brother gets Spiritual inspiration while rejoicing to join the surveying procession, and sprinkles or pours a particular substance to invite a particular saint to the service.

In later phases of the service sisters and brothers often get inspiration to use the bell, to go and take the calabash to the door and the centrepole, to pick up the glass of wine and survey with it around the thanksgiving table, or to take the bottle of Kananga water and throw it over the congregation to make the members smell sweet. In addition to these frequent but quite unpredictable uses, there are several more ritualised ways of applying the substances. Sanctifying a flag-hole in thanksgivings is an obvious example, just like sanctifying a grave in a mourner room or in a memorial service. Not only space but also people are sanctified and

cleansed with the same substances, so that initiates' faces can be washed with milk, wine, Kananga water or oil. Occasionally a sister or brother touches the entire congregation on the forehead or the neck with a finger dipped in oil or Kananga water, blessing each one and marking the presence of a particular saint or Spirit. These substances are also used in healing.

PRAYERS

After the surveying is completed it is time for prayers. The elder conducting the service may announce prayers, but most likely a few male elders and brothers just go to kneel down in front of the altar, by the centrepole or next to the thanksgiving table. Prayer-singers usually volunteer, but occasionally the elder invites a special visiting Leader or Reverend to come and lead the men's prayers. In Mother Yvonne's thanksgiving in Starlite Church, Leader Beard invited prayer-singers in a customary way by handing the lota to the person in question; giving the lota, calabash or candle to somebody is a frequently used invitation to come and pray. Normally the prayer-singers start a hymn or a chorus as they walk to the front and the congregation sing, still up on their feet, to mark the beginning of the prayers.

There are at least two men or women on their knees for each praying session, but at times the number may grow up to twelve, particularly in large thanksgivings. In Mt. Paran church thanksgiving there were more than twenty sisters and mothers kneeling around the table. The main prayer-singer leads the praying, his voice above the others'. He may sing the prayer by improvising verses to a simple, standard melody. This melody, always in major, runs in a scale of five notes and is repeated in Spiritual Baptist churches around Tobago. There are set verses used in prayers, and most prayer-singers use them when they choose the singing style, although improvising and applying different combinations is common. Thanking the Lord and asking for His blessings is also often expressed through certain phrases:

*Lord, this evening, Master
Thank You for the morning rising sun
thank You for the midday shade*

*Look at Your man-servant, God
Thy servant coming to Thee
hear my supplication, dear Lord*

or

*Bless Your woman-servant, dear master
look at the woman, Blessed Lamb*

Phrases from hymns are often used and mixed in the singing prayers, which is less demanding than improvising and thus preferred by young, inexperienced sisters and brothers:

*Even me, even me, dear Lord
Oh God, our help in ages past
Rock of ages, cleft for me or
Jesus, keep me near the cross*

The congregation takes part in the prayer-singing by echoing the last words of each phrase. Given that the standard phrases are repeated over and over again, it is relatively easy for the congregation to follow the prayer-singer, even when she combines them in a unique way. This is how Sister Julie started her prayer in St. Rita's Church in a mourner room service:

*My God and Everlasting Father
I come before you this evening, blessed Jesus
I thank you for the morning rising sun
I thank you for the midday shade
at this time and hour
I come this evening and this time Blessed Jesus
on behalf of Number One
especially for Number One
My God, look at the woman servant, dear Master*

The prayer-singing often turns into oration with a simple melody of two alternating notes, or into shouting. These styles give the prayer more space to bring in her personal expressions of gratitude, her pleas for forgiveness and her requests to God to bless and help different people, because the form of the prayer is not as restricted as in prayer-singing. In these styles of prayer Spiritual Baptists often bring their own, their families' and church's problems before God and the congregation. Sister Gloria, praying on her knees in a mourner room service, asked God to help her rebellious teen-age daughter, *spin her seven times seven, dear Lord!*; to make her sister realise that her boyfriend had a bad influence on her; and to allow her brother overcome his addiction to cocaine. In services with large audiences, like thanksgivings, personal matters are seldom mentioned in prayers. Those who pray may, however, draw attention to family or church members with health problems and ask God to help them to get better. If a thanksgiver has specific problems with her health, it is mentioned in the prayers. Some elders, like Leader Brothers, include the larger society into the prayers and ask for blessings for the government, the president and other notable figures, sometimes even foreign heads of states.

A praying session may last for a long while, depending on the Spiritual intensity of those praying. There may be several sets of men and then women with only a few kneeling at a time, or just one, larger set of men and another of women. In thanksgivings, prayers can last for an hour and a half, or even longer. A single prayer, sung, orated or shouted, does not usually take more than twenty minutes, unless the Spirit arrives and people, including the prayer-singer, start to rejoice.

The congregation is sitting during the prayers, but in case the Spirit arrives and the intensity of the service heightens, many get up and dance while the prayers go on in the background. The congregation is never a passive audience. At times the singing and clapping covers the prayers entirely.

The Spirit is seldom as clearly present in services as during the prayers. The most intense and prolonged sessions of rejoicing usually take place immediately before, during, or after praying, particularly in thanksgivings. Mother Yvonne's thanksgiving in Starlight Church was a good example of the intensifying atmosphere: Mother Joan and another Mother prepared to pray, and Mother Joan rang the bell and started *Jesus Lover of My Soul*. They went to kneel in front of the table with lotas in their hands. The Mother prayed in oration-style and the congregation was echoing her phrases. She continued praying with a clear melody, and after a while her voice was covered by the congregation humming a hymn. Mother Joan was swaying

on her knees, calling in a high-pitched voice, in the Spirit. Mother Yvonne threw Kananga water over us; there were more than a hundred people present altogether, crammed in the church in the upstairs of the Mother's house and on the staircase outside. Mother Joan, still rejoicing on her knees, started a hymn and the drummers picked it up. We sang and clapped our hands. A sister *catch power*, went to the table and threw handfuls of grains over us from the taria, calling in a high voice. Leader Inness, visiting from another village, rang the bell all the way from the door to the table. Mother Joan then started to sing her prayer, and we echoed her phrases. After she finished, we repeated Psalm 24 and the Lord's Prayer together and started to sing *Tell Me Where You Find Jesus*, lead by Mother Joan. Some got up to dance as the drums rolled. Mother Joan, still in the Spirit, danced in the Indian way with Mother Yvonne for a long while, mouth drumming to the rhythm of the drums. The other Mother was dancing too, bending up and down, hissing and speaking in an Indian tongue. When the music finally stopped, the Mother continued speaking in her unknown tongue and many answered her; several sisters were rejoicing. By mouth drumming, the Mother initiated a new rhythm and the drummers picked it up. She danced with Mother Cleorita, spinning around, her steps and movements in the Indian style. After forty minutes had passed, Leader Beard who conducted the service started a new hymn and went to give the lota to another Mother, whose turn it was then to kneel down and pray with the sisters of the Starlight Church. All in all, the prayers lasted for two hours, and the Spirit never left the crowd until it was time to start the lessons, so that sisters and brothers *catch power*, danced, mouth drummed and spoke in tongues throughout the session.

The prayers end with a common prayer or Psalm. Our Father -prayer or Psalms 1, 23, 24, 27, 121 or 142 are commonly repeated together to mark the end of each praying session. The prayer-singers then get up and greet each others. This greeting can be performed in three different ways: ritual handshakes, ritual hugs or greetings with the vessel used in praying, a lota or calabash, sometimes also a candle. The ritual handshake varies in its elaboration, so that some settle for a simple shake, whereas others use the tri-partite Spiritual Baptist shake. Certain elders, like Leader Gerald, deliver quite complicated variants of this handshake, joining their hands with those of the partner's and pulling them back and forth, like sawing, then bringing them to each others' chests. The ritual hug is normally performed by holding one another three times with the right cheeks touching at first, then left, then right again. Some hold hands while hugging in this way, stretching the joined arms to the sides and pressing their chests together, first the right side, then left, then right. Using the praying vessel in these greetings can be quite simple, both partners holding the lota or the calabash and swinging it from side to side three times, right, left, right. Many like to perform this in a more elaborate manner and touch the vessel to each others' chests after swinging it three times, then lifting it up; still others may go through the ritual hugs while holding the vessel together, arms stretched in the air. After the prayer-singers have greeted one another they proceed to greet the elders, usually starting with men. Having done this they sometimes go through the entire congregation. In large services these greetings can be substituted by waving to the congregation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements are sometimes read after praying, sometimes in between sermons or before them. Most of the more prominent Spiritual Baptist churches in Tobago have secretaries who take care of the church's correspondence with other churches and affiliations. In St. Rita's church Sister Valerie, the secretary, would write all the invitations to the church

thanksgivings, harvest services and other larger functions, and send them to the Leaders and Mothers of other Tobagonian Spiritual Baptist churches. She would also read the letters received at St. Rita's for the congregation, giving information about other churches' services. Announcements can include details of the church's own schedule, reminders about preparations for the church thanksgiving or harvest, invitations to a Christmas dinner, or time-tables of the prayer group or the choir. The reading of announcements is informal and Spiritual interventions rarely take place at this point.

COLLECTION

Spiritual Baptist churches have their collection before or after lessons. In several churches it is a child or two who take the collection bag, taria or plate as the elders start a hymn. The congregation is normally sitting during the collection. The collectors go round between the benches, handing the bag or plate to people most of whom give a dollar or two, some giving five, fewer still handing out a ten- or twenty-dollar bill. elders often scold their Spiritual children for not giving enough money for the church's upkeep, for buying candles, olive oil, Kananga and Florida Water, perfumes, powder and other necessary items. St. Philomen church has several hotels and guest houses nearby, and it is not uncommon to spot a tourist or two in the church every now and then. These foreign visitors tend to be quite open-handed, giving forty, sixty or even a hundred dollars for collection.

After the collectors have completed their rounds, they return to the front where a Minister takes the bag, taria or plate of money and blesses it on the altar with a short prayer.

LESSONS

Lessons, or scripture reading, come after praying. Three excerpts are normally read by three different members of the congregation, both elders and younger sisters or brothers. Some Ministers like to choose the lessons as well as the readers. In Mother Yvonne's thanksgiving in Starlite church Leader Beard announced all three Scriptures and invited Deacon Lewis to read the first lesson, Psalm 47, then Sister Eileen to read the second one, Psalm 66. He read the third lesson, Lesson for Edification, himself; 1 Timothy 2:1-9. It is more common, however, to allow people to volunteer and read excerpts of their choice. The ritualised way to acknowledge one's intention to go and read a lesson is to start a hymn, get up and walk to the front. It is customary to give way to a sister or brother who is more advanced in the Spiritual hierarchy, so that if a Mother and a sister start hymns at the same time, the sister is expected to sit down and let the Mother read the lesson. Normally only one or two verses are sung.

The reading is conducted in a ritualised manner, starting with a greeting like *A Blessed Good Evening to the Leader, to the Ministers on the altar, to the Mother, and to my Spiritual family in Christ*. The reader then announces the excerpt, *The second evening lesson is taken from the 103rd Psalm*. The congregation is given time to find the Scripture. *If all found, here beginneth*, the reader then declares in typical King James rhetoric. When the scripture is read, the reader usually says *Here endeth the lesson containing nine verses*.

The congregation is normally sitting during the lessons, except in St. Philomen Church, where it is customary to stand. The congregation follows the scripture in their own Bibles, some read along. At the end of each lesson everybody gets up, raises the right hand and repeats *Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen*. This verse is found in the *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in its order for evening prayer, to be pronounced after the Lord's Prayer and other prayers and

Psalms (53-55). The congregation also participates in the hymn-singing preceding each lesson, and someone always gets Spiritual inspiration to ring the bell or to survey with a certain vessel or bottle. Nevertheless, the lessons are one of the most passive parts of the service as far as the congregation's participation is concerned. People seldom catch power during lessons.

Most times the first two lessons are Psalms and the Lesson for Edification, or Foundation Lesson, from the New Testament. The Psalms chosen for lessons vary quite widely, so that in a sample of thirty services only two Psalms, 1 and 95, were read four times, Psalm 47 appears three times, and 27, 100, 127 and 128 twice. The rest of the lessons consist of different Psalms and occasionally other Old Testament scriptures, like Haggai 1, Isaiah 12 and Exodus 13.

The lesson for edification can be an entire chapter but normally consists of 10 to 20 verses. These are chosen from the four Gospels and from different Letters. In thirty services, two New Testament chapters were chosen twice for the Lesson for Edification, namely 1 Corinthians 13 and John 3. The Lesson for Edification is meant to provide the Scriptural basis for following sermons, so that preachers could interpret the message to the Spiritual family. Profound analyses and teachings of a particular scripture are heard only when a preacher has had the opportunity to prepare herself; *ex tempore* preachers, who have to compile their sermons without time to analyse the lesson, seldom base their messages on the Scripture.

THE WORD

Scripture-reading leads into the Gospel. Spiritual Baptist preaching, its spontaneity, shouting and intensity, is emblematic of the faith. Preachers never write down their sermons, because a good preacher gets the Word instantaneously from the Holy Spirit. Elders who conduct the service can prepare themselves, however, by studying their Bibles and reading religious books when planning the service.

In Sister Tiny's thanksgiving the preachers referred to several different scriptures: Leader Weekes mentioned 1 Corinthians 13, Brother Errol talked about 2 Corinthians, by his favourite apostle Paul; Reverend Charles based his sermon on Colossians; Teacher Yvonne on 2 Corinthians; Leader Gerald on different parables on sowing seeds (Matthew 13, 2 Corinthians 9); and Mother Cleorita compared these parables to Psalm 7, about how you reap what you sow. The Biblical texts are always connected to everyday life in Spiritual Baptist sermons to make them understandable to the entire Spiritual family.

Morality provides another popular theme for sermons. Reluctance to come to church; failing to assist in church activities; improper dress code; promiscuity; homosexuality; frequenting rum shops, parties and Carnival celebrations; gossiping about others; failing to dedicate one's life to God; and misbehaviour in church are among the most common issues discussed in Spiritual Baptist sermons. In thanksgivings, baptismal and pointing services the preachers have a specific audience, namely the candidates, pilgrims or thanksgivers. Therefore sermons on these occasions entail advice, praise or admonition targeted to the sisters and brothers in question.

The language of Spiritual Baptist sermons occasionally draws on archaic, King James idioms and verb forms. Expressions and words such as *Brethren*, *dearly beloved brethren*, *trials and tribulations*, *bread basket and water pitcher*, *turmoil*, *workers in the vineyard*, *beginneth*, *endeth*, *thy*, *thine*, or *making a joyful noise to the God* make the sermons sound venerable and convincing. On the other hand, quite colloquial idioms and words are also used, and in thanksgivings people who preach to their friends or family members can even make jokes.

The sermons also provide a unique opportunity for Spiritual Baptists to publicly analyse and comment on their religion. Comparisons to Pentecostals, Adventists, Anglicans and

Catholics are commonly made by preachers, with the intention to either scold the Spiritual family, or to define the difference between Spiritual Baptists and others.

Although anybody can go and speak to the congregation, most sermons are delivered by the same people, elders or other prominent church members. Younger sisters and brothers may find spontaneous speeches in front of a crowd somewhat intimidating. Many elders try to train their Spiritual children to preach and pray by calling them forth in small-scale, cosy services. On the other hand, there are certain preachers who can be expected to come out and speak in most services and who are also often invited to preach by the conducting elder. In a sample of twelve services in St. Philomen Church, there are sixty-four sermons in all, and forty of these are given by eight elders, namely Mother Cleorita, Leader Gerald, Reverend Charles, Sister Claudia, Brother Leath, Captain Turner, Mother Theda and Brother Errol.

In large-scale services like thanksgivings it is customary to invite visiting sisters and brothers to preach. The elder conducting the service will recognise visiting elders, perhaps invite one or two to read lessons, and then call them to preach, if they do not volunteer themselves. In St. Philomen Church Ministers allowed visitors to come and preach first, after which the church's own preachers continued. In regular services the average amount of preachers is three, whereas in thanksgivings, pilgrimages and other special rituals there can be more than ten preachers. Given the length of Spiritual Baptist services, many elders set time limits for preachers. Mother Cleorita, Leader Gerald and other St. Philomen elders allotted ten minutes to each speaker in thanksgivings. In some services the congregation may (jokingly) control the time, calling out *yuh ten minutes out, Mister!* when a sermon goes on for too long.

Preachers are often touched by the Spirit; the sermon turns into fervent shouting interrupted by high-pitched calls, the preacher spins around or bends up and down, jumps in the air, speaks in tongues, surveys or dances. The Spiritual family is not passive during sermons. People make comments and support the preacher by calling *Yes, man! Preach, man, preach!, Amen!*, or *Oh yes, Lord!* Powerful preachers often invite the Spirit so that people catch power. Some sing short hymns in between their sermons. There are, of course, also speakers who fail to interest the crowd, and occasionally sisters and brothers chat in lowered voices, read their Bibles or rest while a sermon is going on. Singing a hymn is a polite way to silence a tedious preacher. In thanksgivings the younger participants often leave the tent when the sermons start and go help the cooks, or to lime inside the house.

ENDING THE SERVICE

Spiritual Baptist services normally end with a common prayer or hymn after the sermons are over. The congregation can hold hands in a circle during the final prayer. The ending is less formal than the beginning, and Spiritual routines, like ringing the bell or surveying, are rare, although not inappropriate. Sometimes a Mother or another elder merely makes an announcement of a future service. In a normal Sunday service it is not customary to serve food or drinks, but occasionally a sister may bring along fruit punch or mauby, sweetbread or cake to sell or to share with the others. Food or not, a few sisters and brothers always linger in the church, talking and socialising.

GLOSSARY

belé	A flirtatious folk dance of Trinidad and Tobago, with African and French influences.
bois	A long piece of wood, stick, used in stickfighting.
bongo	Complex of funerary rites in Trinidad and Tobago.
buljol	A breakfast dish made with salted fish, tomato, onions, peppers and oil.
buss-up-shut	Shredded roti skins (see roti).
callaloo	A green sauce made with dasheen, ochros, coconut milk and crab.
calypso	Famous Trinidadian music and dance style. Since the turn of the 20 th century, calypsos have offered social and political commentary as well as entertainment.
carnal	In Spiritual Baptist parlance, profane or physical as opposite to spiritual.
channa	Chick peas. A standard filling for roti and buss-up-shut is curried channa and potatoes.
commess	Also spelled comesse. Confusion and misunderstanding caused by gossiping.
congo belé	A local folk dance with traces of African and French influence.
coocoo	A pudding made with corn meal, seasonings and butter.
corn fish	Dried cod fish.
djembe	A drum carved out of a tree trunk and covered with a goat skin.
Florida water	A scented water that can be bought in local pharmacies, used in Spiritual Baptist rituals.
fry bake	Breakfast bakes deep fried in oil.
gayelle	Stickfighting ring.
hot	In Spiritual Baptist parlance, a service or performance that is spiritually intense and whole-hearted.
jig	A Scottish-influenced folk dance in Trinidad and Tobago.
Kananga water	A scented water that can be bought in local pharmacies, used in Spiritual Baptist rituals.
kumar	An Indian delicacy seasoned with ginger.
to lime	To spend time idly, chatting and having fun with friends.
lota	A brass pot used in Hindu and Spiritual Baptist rituals.
mauby	A non-alcoholic, brown drink made of tree bark.
maxi-taxi	A route taxi with space for eight or more passengers.
pan	Also steel pan. The national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago, developed in Trinidad in the early 20 th century. First pans were made of oil drums. The round metal pan is tuned by professional pan-makers and played with sticks.
panyard	A yard, tent, or building in which a steelband practices and stores the pans.
paw paw	Papaya.
piqué	A French-influenced folk dance in Trinidad and Tobago.
Play Whe	A Chinese-influenced, very popular lottery game.

pommecythere	<i>Golden apple</i> , a yellow fruit.
provision	Root vegetables, like yam, cassava, dasheen, or sweet potato.
puncheon rum	Strong, locally distilled rum.
roti	Originally an Indo-Trinidadian dish, now a very popular "fast food," also used as a festive dish. Thin bread fried on a pan, filled with curry and folded.
saltfish	Salted cod fish.
sankey	In Spiritual Baptist parlance, a hymn or religious song compiled by Ira D. Sankey in his <i>Sacred Songs and Solos</i> , a Methodist hymnal.
seal	In Spiritual Baptist parlance, a sacred sign that can be drawn on ritual paraphernalia, walls and floors, or on the body.
shac shac	Maracas, filled with rattling seeds.
soca	Trinidadian music style that combines calypso and soul rhythms.
steelband	An orchestra of steel pans.
stew chicken	A chicken dish, stewed in a pot.
stew peas	Peas stewed in coconut milk.
stickfight	Also <i>kalinda</i> . A martial art accompanied with drumming and chanting, in which the fighters use long wooden sticks (<i>bois</i>).
sweetness	In Spiritual Baptist ritual language, scented water or perfume.
sweetwater	A drink made by mixing brown sugar and water, used in Spiritual Baptist rituals.
tapia	A mixture of mud and straw, used as a building material by Amerindians and later, other Tobagonians.
taria	A brass plate used in Hindu and Spiritual Baptist rituals.
tassa	An Indo-Trinidadian drumming form.
zaboca	Avocado.

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