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ifeas

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Matriz Africana: Material Culture as Conduits for Diaspora Consciousness

When does a diasporic community cease being a diaspora? In the specific context of Brazilian Candomblé, this talk explores the varied notions of Diaspora and proposes the understanding of Diasporic Consciousness as layers of remembrances expressed in multiple ways, including through material culture. Accordingly, it reveals the material ways in which diasporic consciousness has been produced as anything but static.

While objects did travel between West Africa and Brazil, the sense of diasporic objects here is based on two interrelated points. First, they conform to the Yorùbá aesthetic, retaining form and function in the face of fluctuating broader societal norms and secularism. Second, they are produced by populations identifying as diasporic groups, intransigent towards reproducing ancestral iconographies. A few examples illustrate transformations of artefacts through spatial and temporal dimensions, as well as the optical consistency of some features that allow for the permanence of form over five centuries.

Zainabu Jallo is Post-Doctoral Fellow, lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Basel and Research Fellow at the Center for Global Studies, University of Bern. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts England, and UNESCO Coalition of Artists for the General History of Africa. Her scholarly interests include Diaspora studies, Iconic criticism, and Material Culture. Zainabu is one of the Principal Investigators of the "Sacral Architecture Africa" Project. Her current research project on material religion and criminal Anthropology draws from aspects of her previous research on Afro-Brazilian religions and extends to Cuba and Haiti.

Weitere Informationen: www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de

Oxé Xangô, the
main symbol of
Xangô,
the deity for
thunder,
lightning, fire,
justice and the
controller of
wisdom.

Made by artisans
at Flora Xangô,
São Paulo.

Photo: Zainabu
Jallo, 2020.