



INITIATION • RITUALS • CEREMONIES  
ORISHAS • DIVINATION • PLANTS • SACRIFICES  
CLEANSINGS • SONGS

# THE OSHA

SECRETS OF THE  
YORUBA-LUCUMI-SANTERIA RELIGION  
IN THE UNITED STATES  
& THE AMERICAS

JULIO GARCIA CORTEZ  
(OBBA BI)

# THE OSHA

Secrets of the  
Yoruba-Lucumi-Santeria Religion  
in the  
United States and the Americas

**Initiation - Rituals - Ceremonies**  
**Orishas - Divination - Plants - Sacrifices**  
**Cleansings - Songs**

**Julio Garcia Cortez**  
(Obba bi)

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## Foreword

The majority of people believe that practices and relationships with the Supernatural is something of the past. If they exist in the present, are carried out by persons of limited intelligence.

By the same token, they are considered to be a minority group whom do not deserve to be acknowledged in this scientific era. Everything is supposed to have a logical explanation. What cannot be easily explained, is considered absurd.

In this book, we will examine a *Religion* (not a cult) practiced by tens of thousands of persons in different countries, principally: Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Trinidad-Tobago, Mexico, Puerto Rico and most recently the United States.

One can gain access to Babalawos and Santeros as easily as to a Doctor, Lawyer, or any other professional person.

The ceremonies of Vestment, or initiation within the Brotherhood of Osha, have all the characteristics of a social event, and are as common in the United States, as they are in Cuba, Brazil and the Caribbean.

## The Osha

Today, in Miami, New York, California and several other states, Osha-Santeria is widely practiced; not only by Cubans and other Latinos, but by English speaking people both Black and "Anglos".

It is said that in Miami alone, someone is vested almost everyday of the week, and in some way involved in the practice of Osha-Yoruba-Lucumi religion.

It is only fair to explain here the terms Santeria, Santero.

These words came from the Yoruba word Osha or Orisha which means god, gods, deities. We translated it badly into Spanish as "santo" (saint) and its practitioner as "santeros" (saint man).

Through the years the word Santero was used to identify what in Yorubaland is called a priest of their Religion. This may be why Santeria has been called a fetishism, a cult.

Many names have been given to it, by those who think they have the right to label it black magic, fetishism, witchcraft, a Devil's cult, and many more names always associated with "evil practices of the ignorant Blacks and Latinos".

Santeria to us who believe in it and practice it, is *a religion* inasmuch as anyone who believes in something, respects and has his faith deposited in it, makes it sacred and call it his religion.

In this book we will find the stories, the histories, the types and manner of divination, the procedures for vestment, the name of the deities, and everything which is part of the Yoruba-Santeria religion. I will give it to you as it was given to me by my ancestors, by my elders, by my Godfather and Godmother, who were my teachers, my counselors.

For me to pretend that these writings are original, what I am writing is of my own creation, would be completely false.

## Foreword

When I began to coordinate the material that I had, and to compile a book from it, my main objective was and still is to end forever all the lies and false concepts which have been written about the Yoruba-Lucumi-Santeria Religion.

I hope to help remove the religion from the darkness in which it has lain for so many years.

*This is not a study of "our Negro folklore".*

Santeria has been practiced in our countries practically since the arrival of the slaves, who gave us so much of their culture. It has been practiced by black and white people, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, men and women from all social spheres.

To fully understand a religion one must know its roots. One must get to know the people who created it, their way of life, their customs, their habits, and above all, their odyssey.

My book, is therefore an effort to make the Yoruba people and their religion-civilization known as it was practiced before slavery, during slavery, and as it's practiced today. Inasmuch as we lack a Bible, Koran, or any written Law, the Orisha-Santeria-Lucumi religion is based principally on its stories, fables and verses. Its interpretation can be at times difficult and controversial. But a knowledge of its myths, and old tales, will help clarify most of the rules and Laws of Osha.

Contrary to any other religion, we find within the Osha that the Yoruba-Lucumi gods are very human, in the sense that they are besieged by the same material desires and petty quarrels that beset humans. They are not free from jealousy, nor want, not love, nor sex desires, nor preferences; and at times, they even know fear. Having these human characteristics it is not difficult to find their followers laughing and crying with them. We treat our Orishas as loving parents, and at times parents who are too

## The Osha

severe. A priest or priestess of the many Orisha within the Santeria-Yoruba pantheon, will call herself-himself: "The daughter-son of Orisha . . . .".

I hope the reader will appreciate, as they sojourn through this book, how Santeria was brought to the Caribbean, and other areas where slavery was imposed on men and women who were brought from one or more nations where they enjoyed a civilized way of life, a central government administered by governors and governing bodies, in which there was a stratified society. People who lived in their own environments and in their own type of civilization. As an ethnic group, or as a nation (not a tribe), they had their own language, their own religion, and especially their own laws which they obeyed and by which they lived.

Above all, they lived in dignity with respect for one another, especially for their elders and their religion.

The *Negro*\* brought from Africa, like any other man on earth since the beginning of Mankind, turned to his Gods, to his God in times of sorrow, in times of despair (such as what gods were there with them) crying, hoping, giving them strength. The Orishas kept the race together. They would not perish, they would survive. They would be reborn to freedom, they would find a home. The Orishas would make new followers, the Orishas would see them regain a human status again.

I have been involved since early childhood in the Osha rituals. I am an ordained priest of Shango. I have travelled to Africa (Nigeria mainly) on several occasions. I too was looking very early for my roots (both from Spain and Africa). I found there is something new to be learned everyday about the Lucumi-Yoruba-Santeria religion. Therefore I want to make this contribution.

Let it be then, and let this work go out into the public light

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\* Negro remains untranslated from spanish meaning "black", i.e African, ed.

## Foreword

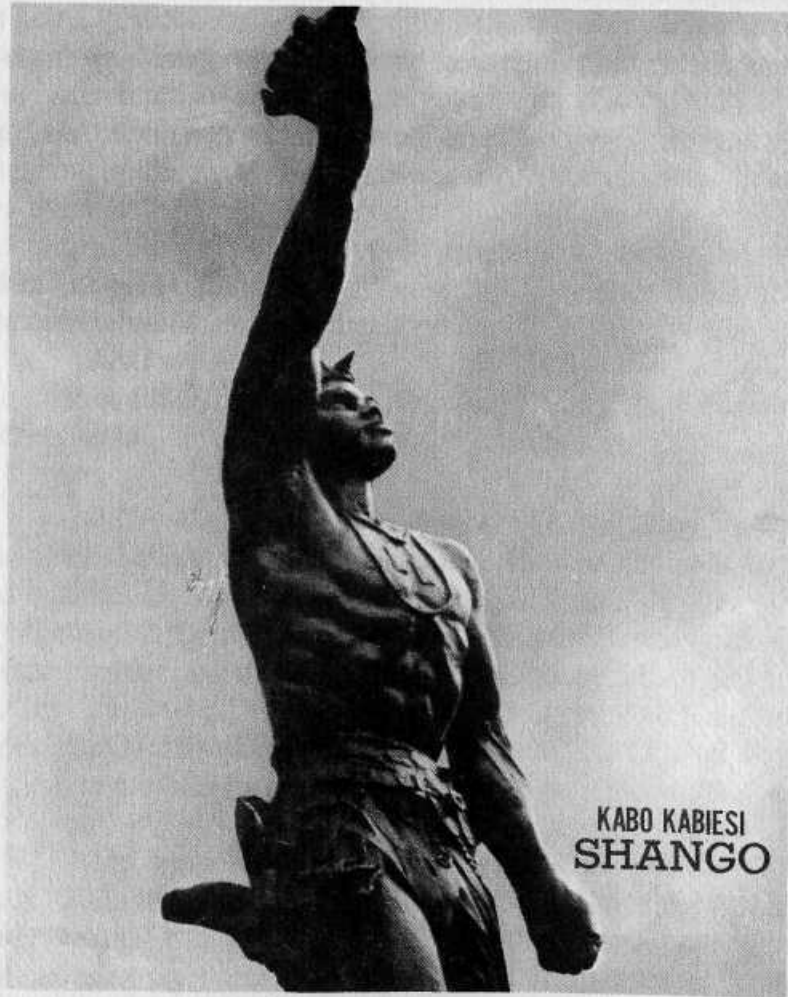
with my best wishes to those who have been vested as priest-priestess of the Orishas. But also to the neophytes who are seeking more knowledge.

This brings to mind an old Santeria saying that goes like this:

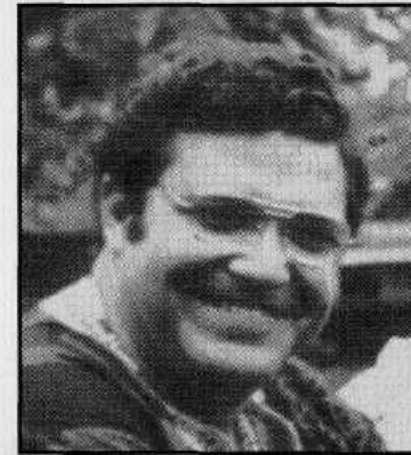
"He who does not know, dies; but He who knows . . . does not".

This is my purpose . . . This is the reason I have written the Osha.

Julio Garcia Cortez  
Miami, Florida,  
USA



## About the Author



Mr. Cortez is a graduate of both the schools of Journalism and Social Work in Havana, Cuba.

Mr. Cortez maintains his sixteen year position with the State of Florida/Family Services where he is currently a senior counselor with a masters degree in Social Work. An ordained priest of Shango for 28 years, Mr. Cortez has travelled extensively throughout Africa and South America.



**HISTORY OF THE  
YORUBA-SANTERIA RELIGION**



## Chapter

- 1 -

### Origin of the Traditions and the Laws of Osha

**T***o write about the history of the Yoruba-Santeria Religion we must necessarily return to its country of origin and to the way it was practiced centuries ago in Yorubaland.*

The African influence in the Americas, as well as in Europe is inestimable. The African culture has been considered and viewed from many angles primarily as a primitive culture with its religion as part of a basic form of civilization. Its religion was practically ignored purposely by the established religions of our times. The reason was simple, a man without religion is almost an animal, and as such he should be treated. As such he can be sold and bought. He had no soul. He was an animal. He had no religion. What he practiced was fetishism, a type of cult which was not worth bothering with.

Wrong!

In a continent almost unknown to the occidental world, the religion of its inhabitants was the main way of life. It gave them laws. It helped structure their civilization and thus their culture. Later on it sustained them through the hardships of slavery.

Books about Santeria-Yoruba rites are few and the majority of the authors have not been practitioners or members of any House of Osha (Brotherhood). One has to read them with an open mind. Many times it is difficult to separate the truth from the myth. It is said that there has never been a book written by an

actual member of an Osha House, by a Santeria priest, and if so, its has not encompassed the total religion, its country of origin, his inhabitants, and the secrets of the most important ceremonies in Osha.

The German author *Leo Frobenius* lived in Africa for many years during the past century and he wrote, perhaps, the first treatise about the African rituals without, however, uncovering its secrets or fully understanding their meaning. *Blaise Cendrars*, a Frenchman, dedicated many years to the study of the African literature, gathering most of his stories or what is called in Yorubaland, Patakies; but he never realized their true significance, their close association to their religion. Recently, an Englishman, *Arthur B. Spingern*, a Frenchman, *Alfred Metreux*, the Americans *Hill* and *Williams*, the Cubans *Fenando Ortiz* and *Lydia Cabrera*, were able to penetrate, perhaps, more than anyone else the secrets of the ceremonies within the rituals of Osha. None of these authors was a practitioner of Osha, nor were they ever admitted into the Negroes societies in our country.

### **The Slave Trade and Its Influence in the Americas**

The task of any writer is a difficult one because of the magnitude and richness of the different languages and dialects spoken in Africa. The slaves brought to the Caribbean spoke an immense variety of such languages and dialects. The most popular was Yoruba, followed by the Anago, Mandingo, Carabali, Fon, and few minority dialects. Their mixture in Cuba, gave birth to what was called by the Negroes "*Lokumi*", or "*do ku mi*". This variant of the Yoruba language is still spoken today in the rituals of Osha. One has to be well versed in the secrets of the religion to become fully acquainted with the meaning of a sentence or even a word, because the same phrase pronounced in different manners has different connotations.

In one of my journeys to Yorubaland, I brought some of the chants, prayers, and songs used in Santeria, and they could not

decipher their meaning. So much of the original Yoruba language had been altered!..... But the names of places and deities did not suffer major changes, nor the Oracular meanings of the cowry shells readings or the names of the Odu (signs).

The Negroes that lived in Cuba, Brazil, Haiti and most of the Caribbean were from what we call the Negro Nation. It was formed by the area of the African Congo, Nigeria, and a minority from Dahomey and other parts of the West Coast of Africa. They were healthy, of splendid physiques, intelligent, witty, industrious and religious. This was a plus when compared to our native Indians who either killed themselves or died of many illnesses due to the slavery imposed on them by the Spanish Conquistadors. The African had a tremendous capacity for adaptation and survival. They were brave in battle, skilled craftsmen, natural botanists who knew all the powers of herbs, roots and trees. They knew the ones that could kill as well as those that could heal.

The Phoenicians who settled in Africa maintained a close contact with the Egyptians who carried their conquest well beyond Senegal where they established one of the largest kingdoms in Africa. The Egyptians in turn were conquered by the ancient Romans, forcing them to seek refuge toward the desert creating in their path what is known today as Morocco, Tripoli, the Kingdoms of Ghana, Melle, Songhay, Hausa, Bornu, Angola, The Congo, Gabon and various others. These were rich and powerful kingdoms which could have at any time well over two hundred thousand warriors armed with spears and arrows.

Some of these kingdoms had a system of slavery. They would raid the neighboring villages and capture their inhabitants to be used as slaves. By doing so they forced the natives of those areas to emigrate toward the South, West and East to escape enslavement. The town (today a city) of Abeokuta in Nigeria was established by immigrants running away from the slave traders. Many towns and small villages were born as a result of people trying to escape their possible captures.

The Yorubas who established their towns near the sea were far from imagining that one day, because they had built their cities close to the sea, would know slavery again. This time imposed by the white man. Near the Yoruba towns were mighty nations, particularly the kingdom of Dahomey which for a goodly sum (paid mostly by the Portuguese) would go to war in order to imprison and sell the captives to the slave traders.

The natives of these regions were of medium build and on the whole a handsome people. Most of the men were athletically formed and the women had strong beautiful features. The racial mixture of the Portuguese in Brazil and the Spaniards in Cuba resulted in the Creole Mulattos. The beauty of these women is known throughout the world. The valor of these men were amply demonstrated in our Independence Wars.

The inhabitants of these countries had skin colors ranging from olive to dark black. The concept that the Negroes that came to our lands possessed an ovoid cranium with a narrow frontal region, very curly hair, exaggerated protuberance of the lips with a flat large nose is completely false. It is true that this type can be found in many places in Africa, but it is also true that there are many types of Africans (they may vary from region to region) possessing all the various facial features and physical structures found in their race.

#### **It was the Slave Trader who created a Classic Stereotyped Image of the Africans**

This savage individual could be easily compared to a monkey! Being almost an animal, he could be treated as such, sometimes even worse. By creating an animal image of the Negro the treatment inflicted upon them was justifiable.

The Negro . . . . *An Inferior Species*. . . As animals of work they could be bought, sold and killed. Whatever was associated with them was of no value. This trend persisted after slavery was

abolished (still exist today in many places).

#### **How Discrimination Really Began**

His cult was part of this inferiority, so it was of no value socially or morally. This thought has remained also in many of our countries, and now it can be seen in The United States. Yoruba-Santeria is of the Negroes, therefore it is not considered a religion. And yet it keeps growing here and it is beginning to spread to Europe. But let us get back to the topic at hand.

When the Colonialists saw many of their slaves with scars and markings on their faces, and parts of their bodies, they thought that their parents had branded them as a means of identification. The truth was that these scars were nothing more than mere adornments, tribal recognition, and many were proudly earned in battle.

As there existed hardly any communication between slave and master (save for the whip) these marks and any reference to their culture were totally ignored or misunderstood. It was extremely difficult for the Negro to make himself understood by the master; he could not speak Spanish or Portuguese. The master could not make any sense of their different languages or dialects. Communication was practically non-existent and what little existed was carried on by the foreman's assistant, a Negro who had managed to learn the basic language of the country they had been brought from. It was a poor rudimentary language enough to make himself understood and comprehend something of what was said to him.

As the slave trade increased, its evils and vices grew along with it and more of an infernal treatment was given to them. More and more it was convenient to brand them as savages. They worked the sugar plantation half naked, no tools were given them so they could not make their own clothing. Food was scarce and there was no medicine available for those who got sick. Their barracks were filthy, no bathing, no socializing, no rituals. Only work, work,

from sunset to sundown. After all they were nothing but savages!

But...were these savages really savages?

The African in general knew gold, silver, copper, iron, and how to work with them to create all kinds of adornments and utensils. On their 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, to mark the onset of puberty they adorned themselves with their best gold and silver, copper, or iron pieces in accordance with their parents' position within the society in which they lived. Any exposed part of the body was painted with a mixture of clay and different herbs which produced a multiple colored cream which not only served as a beauty mark, but also as an excellent mosquito repellent, healing balm for skin diseases and sun protector.

These people were use to being fully dressed with garments of brilliant colors woven out of fine cotton threads. Copper bracelets as well as necklace beads were used as adornment by both male and female. Certain types of beads were reserved only for the king and queen and others symbolized the different deities in their pantheon. Shoes, hat, hand bags and capes were made from the skin of hunted animals. Eating and drinking utensils were made of dried calabashes, pots and pans mostly of copper. Tools and spades were made of iron.

Women dressed vivid colors with copper earrings, and bracelets made of different metals. Usually they would have tied around their shoulders or heads a piece of cloth or large handkerchief. The men would do the same, wearing it, however, around their waist. The more elaborate the design, the more was the motive for pride of its wearer. This custom was adopted by the Cuban Creoles both male and female with the particularity that the different colors in their handkerchief was identified with a deity of the Society of Osha.

The priest were dressed for the most part with the colors symbolic of the god they represented, but in old Africa (I was told by my godfather) no matter which deity they served as priest they

would dress mostly in white. What would change would be the set of necklace beads worn around their necks.

Agriculture was the principal occupation of West Africa. The most common products were cotton, rice, cassava, beans, corn, potatoes, bananas, oranges, limes, lemons, papayas, green peas, coffee grains, and of course the palm and its nuts which were used to a great extent. The head of the family usually had a large farm, sometimes more than one which was attended by other members of the family, or by servants who worked for room and board and were considered by the head of the family as part of his clan and a follower of the clan's Orisha.

The harvest took place from the beginning of February to the end of March. At the end of the harvest, large festivals were held with offerings of animals and portions of the harvests to the protecting deity as a way of giving thanks. Those who had no servants cultivated the land themselves and made their offerings in accordance with their means; though all the land, generally, was the property of the village with the king being the person who parceled out the land. The partition of the parcels was made in accordance with the rank of each member. The rich, of course, received more than the poor, since they had more capital with which to employ more laborers and thus make the land produce more. The king was always advised (still is today in Yorubaland) by a council of elders which was composed of the priest of the main patron Orisha and other minor deities, the medicine man, and the wise old men of the village.

As long as a man, rich or poor, was able to cultivate the land assigned to him, it was considered his property and responsibility with his heirs exercising the right to claim it after the original owner passed away. Only when the land was not properly taken care of would the king and the council intervene and take away every right which could be claimed by its cultivator or his heirs. Normally when the head of the family died the land would go to the eldest son or to his nearest relative who had to work it in the same manner in which his predecessor had done.

Besides all the products that he cultivated, the Southwest African, and mainly the people from the Yoruba nation, would make intense use of the palm nut. It provided, perhaps, the most for his needs. Out of this tree a delicious wine is made. When it is fresh, it is sweet and pleasant to drink; but when aged, is very intoxicating. It is usually prepared in the mornings by one of the following methods: Cut through the tree until the cortex is reached. Make a very light cut into it, let the liquid within pour forth slowly into an empty calabash. The second way consists of climbing the tree and cutting throughout from the top right down the middle. Then, insert a tube and catch the juice as it comes out.

The heart of the palm tree is also edible and it was a popular food. It resembles a soft white meat (we learned to eat it when the Negroes came to our island). The palm tree produces a nut which we named Corozo or Corojo. This rather large nut has a seed inside and when it is dried makes a magnificently inflammable piece of charcoal like material. This nut was used by silversmiths, blacksmiths and anyone who needed plenty of fire. Out of the pulp of the palm nuts they made soap, candles, oil, and a yellowish-orange lard which was and still is used for cooking. This lard is also applied to the skin as a way to protect it. With the palm tree branches they would cover the roof of the homes making them cool and fresh. Although these branches permitted the air to go through, water would not be able to penetrate. From other parts of the palm, fans, floor mats and many utensils as well as adornments were made. The palm tree also produces a type of caterpillar or worm called Grugru which formed part of their diet.

In the Yoruba-Osha religion corozo or corojo lard is used to rub on the stones which symbolizes the Orishas to keep them fresh. But its main function is that of cooking lard and seasoning when meals are prepared for the Orishas. It is used in every ceremony and the Santeros today as his ancestors did in Yorubaland uses it constantly. This is why the palm tree was almost consid-

ered sacred. As all of nature was meaningful to the West African, they thought that God-Olorun must have been most generous to this particular tree. In most of the patakis (tales) of the Yoruba, one will find this tree mentioned more times than any other.

The inestimable ability of these people as craftsmen was unquestionable. Yet they were categorized as savages. Briefly, I will enumerate some of the products which they manufactured.

From iron: Knives, spears, spades, farming tools, arrow heads, pots, adornments.

From different materials: combs, hand fan, shoes, hats, bowls, plates. Trumpets were made of ivory or bulls horn.

Hand bags and other large bags were made out of animal skins and lavishly decorated with paintings of animals and other objects. Shoes, boots, belts, whips were made out of deer, pig and crocodile skin.

Weavers wove their cottons in weaving machines made out of bamboo where they would turn out rugs, hammocks, mats, carpets, in the most elaborate patterns and beautiful colors.

Great care was placed in the making of musical instruments, especially the drums, because they played such an important role in their lives and their relation to the Orishas. Drums were and are as sacred as they can be or non sacred depending on which use they were given and are given today in the rituals of Osha.

The Negro from Yorubaland began and ended his life with music. Drum music. This is the reason they played and do play such an important role in the rituals and ceremonies of Osha. The reader will find a more detailed description of the drums and their meaning in the following chapters.

For the reader who may not be too familiar with Latino

music, let me say this: our music, our beat, is without question influenced by the African beat. Many of the instruments used in Latin music came from Africa. For instance; a sheet of metal round and hollow in the middle called gangarria sets the rhythm, the maracas and the marimba or xylophone were introduced at the same time. The tumba or feast drum was played whenever they could gather and have a secret feast away from the barracks or the sugar fields. They were rudimentary, made of whatever material they could get, mainly the Royal Palm tree. Eventually the Creole mulattos, descendants of the original slaves, would create their own variants of the drums while keeping the old chants, beats, and way of making them sound in a very unique manner.

Now let us go back to old West Africa, mostly to Yorubaland.

### Life in Old Africa

They also had, perhaps, the oldest way of communication and maybe even the first wireless telegraph inasmuch as they could communicate (still do) for tremendous distances by beating a certain type of drum. I saw these drums during my visit to the town of Koso where they are still in use, regardless of telephone lines which I saw in the village. To my question as to why they had them still in use the answer was simple: tradition. These drums would range anywhere from seven to eight feet long, open in the middle by a cut of about 30 inches by 12 inches wide. They were placed on top of crossed pieces of wood and by using a secret code their message was transmitted for miles around. They also had, and have, the Oba drum, or talking drum which would serve as herald for important people who wished his presence be known when visiting a village. Again, at Koso, these drums were able to pronounce my name Julio which sounded like: UUULIO and it was done to notify the Obba of my visit to his house and the village in general.



Yoruba: Oba's drums and Royal Drummers at Kuso (Nigeria)

Most of the villages were situated in rich wooded areas where a multitude of animals abounded. The majority were leopards, lions, chimpanzees, deer, a wide variety of monkeys, elephants, buffaloes, hippopotamus and a cruel reptile, the boa constrictor. All kind of birds, pigeons and ducks were to be found always nearby.

Regional characteristics include huge lakes, long wide rivers, which held an abundant variety of fish, high mountains some of which were snow covered. They usually tried to concentrate the building of their towns on the high ground at the outskirts of the forest. The towns were divided in the following manner: small villages which the inhabitants called half towns were connected by small trails. The towns themselves were only made for living and enjoying the hours of tranquillity within the community with their families and friends. The half towns were where all the commercial and industrial activity took place. As the villages were built on high ground not too far from the forest, it was easy to

cultivate it. The Yam, and Plantain being their main crop, followed by calabashes (which most of the time grew wild), ginger, and many other different vegetables were also grown.

The houses were usually round clay structures, painted with different colors. The houses in the half towns were made of wood, simple and easy to repair. The ones used for living consisted (if there were more than one wife) of two rooms. Polygamy was practiced but it was up to the individual. Each wife would have her own room. If there were more than two, the man would try to provide each of them with their room. As not many were able to afford more than one wife, the houses were built according to his economic status the majority being of a single room. In the kitchen is where you would find the common utensils associated with that quarter, also the hammocks, sleeping mats, small chairs, and the fireplace which was always lit no matter how hot it was outside. There was also the water brought from the nearby lakes or rivers and kept fresh inside big dry calabashes. It was kept fresh in this manner: they would make a cabinet out of cedar or another type of wood large enough to contain two calabashes one on top of the other. The larger of the two, had a tiny hole (the one on top) which would allow the water to filter through it slowly, drop by drop, down to the one at the bottom which had a larger opening, it was from this one that they would get their drinking and cooking water.

The main village was the center of all religious and social activity. In each village existed a secret society whose purpose was to keep the strength of the people by unification and authority. Each town's secret society was completely independent from the other town's no matter how close it was, no matter that they were from the same Yoruba ancestry. Each was representative of the local clan and pride was taken not to divulge its secrets. The meetings were always conducted in places known only to the members. Membership came mostly with adulthood and being a member was considered a great honor. No one would divulge its secrets because to do so would meet a severe punishment. Only

men were admitted to the ruling secret society (it would be similar to a political party today). There was also a women's society, but not influential at all. Men had to be between the ages of 13 and 50 to be admitted and had to pass a series of test before final admission was granted. When the meetings were convened no outsider could visit the place where they were held. The purposes of such sessions were as follows:

To get them acquainted with their heritage. To get to know the skills each one possessed and how best apply it to the needs of the people.

To teach the young men. From craftsmen, blacksmith, musicians, farmers, hunters, to the warriors the use of the shield, spade, bow and arrow.

To train the future medicine man. This would be done by the villages' present medicine man; his trainee usually would be one of his descendants. He was also responsible for teaching the laws of the people and served as Egungun-Arokin (history teacher and story teller).

The longest teaching, which lasted about seven years, was for those who would go into the priesthood, one who would eventually preside over the secret society.

All the members of the society called themselves brothers. An offense made to one of them was considered an offense to the entire brotherhood. As every village had its own secret society, one independent from the other, the most common cause for war would be that members from different societies would have an argument and if they could not reconcile their differences all the men of each village would come out in defense of their brother. This lead to war between the towns (sometimes more than one was involved). The battles were short lived. It would be natural to assume there were wounded and dead, not many because no war lasted too long. When one of the groups retired from the battlefield the war was ended. If prisoners were taken, they would



have to work for their captors for a period of time decided by the council of elders of each village. No payments were made for his work and his enslavement could last from weeks to years. Something odd happened here, men did not fight to obtain land. They would not occupy an inch of land of the defeated. Upon termination of the war, each clan would return to his village.

In Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, and the Caribbean many of these societies were created mainly as a way to preserve the race and their culture. It was in Cuba where the Society of Osha became the largest and most powerful. Some of these societies have diffused to the United States and it is The Osha Society which is the largest of them. There is one which is small but has acquired notoriety (and unfortunately is mistaken with Santeria), it has its roots in rites practiced by the people of the Congolese tribes and it is called Palo Mayombe. Back in Africa they practiced human sacrifice and during colonialism its members practiced witchcraft where all kinds of sacrifices took place.

At the beginning of colonization these types of societies were kept together within the Osha society as a means to control them better and when necessary to use their members as avengers against the white man or any Negro who would not abide by the laws of the brotherhood. One of these societies was the Abakua group which at the beginning was beautiful in intent, but was changed by the Creoles into something disreputable so much so that eventually these two large organizations would go their separate ways. The Osha-Santeria remained much as it is today, but the Abakuas and the Mayomberos choose to remain loyal to their Calabar and Congolese roots. This has not changed as of today. The press contributes (still does because of its ignorance, or because it was looking for sensationalism to sell papers), with many tales where Negro secret societies were butchering animals, and occasionally kidnapped a child for witchcraft purposes. This misconception prevails mostly due to the secrecy which is such a part of the Osha-Santeria Brotherhood. Animal sacrifices are carried out in Santeria, but there is a reason for them and it is explained in this

book.

At the end of the day at the school secret-society there would be dancing and chanting intermingled with tales from the olden days of famous warriors, kings or queens of the past who somehow had achieved the rank of Orisha. A part of their meals was always offered to the patron Orishas, and to the ancestor spirits. Each individual was told the type of offering pleasing to his protecting deity. It was in this area of training that the students became familiar with the ceremonies involved in the sacrifice of animals. It was only the priest, or those trained for the priesthood who would conduct this ritual. Animals were sacrificed to eat and as a way to thank the Orisha for a good hunt or a good meal. Other parts of the animal were not eaten and instead offered to the patron deity.

Spirits, gods, deities and orishas were an intrinsic part of their lives. They believed that life did not end with death. It was their firm belief that when they died they go first to Olofin (the son of God Olodumare) to whom they would give an account of all the things they had done wrong on Earth, and also, all the things they considered they had done right. Olofin would hear them and take this spirit-person before Olorun himself. God in his infinite wisdom would understand everything and would send for the protecting Orisha of the individual so Orisha could testify how religious, or non religious this man-woman had been. How well he had kept and attended his duties toward his protecting deity, and how well he had treated his fellow man.

Olorun-Olodumare would reward him/her because he/she had been a good human being. They would be given eternal life in the following manner:

Olofin would transform them into rain. He would descend so transformed back to Earth where he would go into the rivers until he reached the bottom, whereupon he was turned into stone.

After some time had passed (about three months) the dead man's relatives would go to the nearest river or lake with great ceremony. One of the closest relatives, accompanied by a priest of his protecting Orisha would go into the river or lake. Once inside the water (everyone dressed in white) with his eyes closed, would reach the bottom of the river and find a stone in which he felt the spirit of his dead relative had come to rest and therefore still exist.

Once he had the stone in his hands, he would take it out and wrap it in a piece of cloth the color of the dead man's protecting deity. This stone was received with joy by all present at the ceremony. Then it was carried to his house where it was deposited in a bowl made of clay or dried calabash. This bowl symbolizes the body where the spirit, which is now the stone, lives.

These stones, according to how many ancestors there had been, were placed together in what could be considered a shrine. Every day a portion of their meals was brought to them and placed at the foot of this shrine (this custom was lost somewhat in the Caribbean as the old people died or did not have the space or time to keep the tradition). But in their homeland these stones were kept as a part of the family clan.

It so happened that every time something troubled them, they would go to the bowls where their ancestors spirits lived, there they would pray, ask for advice, help with their problems. When their prayers were answered they would feel a miracle had taken place. And as it is with any other religion, the more miracles that began to happen with certain stones containing the spirits of relatives or just people who had lived in the village, the more their lives and deeds were told. By this "miracle reasoning, power of the spirit," many would achieve the rank of either a lesser deity, clan Orisha or in the case of kings and queens: full Orisha.

### Orisha Cult

This custom remains today, the only difference is that the stones gathered at the rivers are placed inside the bowls of the traditional gods of the Yoruba pantheon: Oggun, Oshosi, Obatala, Shango, Oya, Yemaya, Oshun, Agayu. Only Eleggua-Eshu does not contain stones from rivers; it would be made of different materials, or stones from a crossroads.

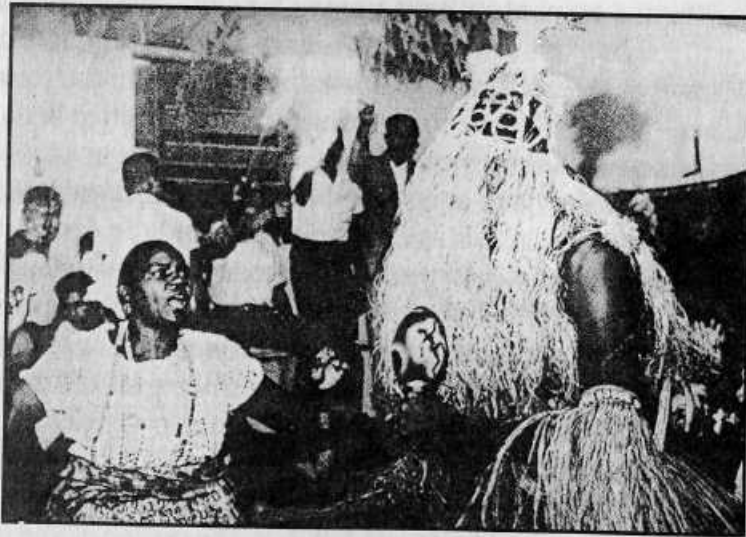
An example of homage being paid to an Orisha would be Shango, who as time passed became legendary. All the tales related to his life were transmitted from generation to generation. Each story became more exaggerated than the previous one, regardless of what his real life may have been. Right after his death his followers made him a powerful Orisha. He is such an extraordinary Orisha, that the thunderbolts as well as the river stones gathered to symbolize his spirit were and are considered sacred.

In Africa there existed and exist today many societies for men; there are and were different societies for women. At that time their primary function was to prepare women for marriage, keeping them virgins until that time. This type of organization was for the most part under the direction of a master teacher, a male known as the *Zo Knockba* whose main function was to train the women members of the society. Pupils were admitted between the ages of seven or eight years of age. Women were not too well respected unless they had been members of the society associated with their town, city, or village. If any young girl broke the vow of virginity while she belonged to the society, her punishment would consist of tying her in the middle of the village square, bound to a pole completely naked facing the man who violated her. Then, both were publicly whipped and she expelled from the society.

When the training was over the pupils were considered ready to enter into marriage. They were taken to the center of the town for the festivities of such a magnificent occasion. The main at-

traction was the master *Zo Knockba* dressed with a garment made of fiber which covered him from the head down, adorned with multi-colored feathers and beads representative of his authority. He wore a wooden mask painted in a way to scare people off. He would do a dance called the dance of temptations, or as we came to know it, the dance of the Devil. He would come to each young girl saying sweet words to her ears trying to conquer her with gifts and other offerings. Each girl would reject him, once they had done so, they would be considered as graduates of the school and be full members of the society for the rest of their lives.

There was another significant type of dance performed when a king or priest died. This dance was and is performed at night. The performer dresses as to symbolize the spirit of death. Every person surrounds the dancer and pretends to escape Death. This dance was always done by a woman, but now in the United States especially New York, Los Angeles, and Miami it is danced by men. The Devil's dance is not seen too often nowadays. What is common is to dance to the Orishas, and the playing of drums as an offering of music, chants and a special dance to an individual protecting deity.



Santeria: The Devil's Dance (Cuba-Brazil)

The training of women in Africa was not only limited to domestic labor, and preparation for marriage. It would also include painting, hardwood carving, the construction of the fishing nets, mats, utensils, working the harvest, and many manual arts. When a girl was ready for marriage, each young man from the village would try to obtain her father's favor by making offers of all kinds of gifts until they came to an agreement. Although polygamy was practiced there was a general tendency toward monogamy.

At the beginning of the colonies and the first societies of Osha in the Caribbean area, this tradition was kept. The practice ended with the Creoles who had only one wife. The change has remained and marriage is contracted through love. Marriage can be done with any one person whether a member of the religion or not.

### Witchcraft

Before we write about the priesthood-brotherhood and its practice today, I would like to dedicate a few paragraphs to what I consider of interest regarding the history of the Osha religion and its influence on the Cubans, Brazilians, Haitians and North Americans who now practice it.

In Africa witchcraft existed, to a degree it was also part of their lives. Being a religious man, the African was a firm believer in spirits, those who were good and protecting and those who were evil, or used for evil purposes, for witchcraft.

Every nation on Earth has believed and practiced witchcraft. In the olden days we could trace it back to the Arabs, Hebrews, Greeks, Romans. It still remains in the European countries and in the Americas. Writers, modern and old, have been influenced one way or another by this custom and many of the characters they created prove so. For instance, Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, begins the 4<sup>th</sup> act with a conversation among three witches who claim to possess supernatural powers. The Spanish

writer Zorrilla in Don Juan Tenorio in the act where the dinner takes place, a part of the scene is the appearance of the men he (Tenorio) had killed dueling. History will describe the witch hunts during the Middle Ages, the death of Joan of Arc by fire accused of being a witch. Without going too far back, the bloody trials of Salem, Massachusetts in the United States.... It is only natural then that we would find witchcraft among the Africans who without doubt were not only a religious people but extremely superstitious and therefore it was practiced to its fullest extent in the particular manner of the African very similar to many South American tribes. So, let's review the subject carefully.

The priests, the medicine men, and the witch doctors were three different entities. The priest and the medicine men would work together on many occasions. The witch doctor known in many places as the Kiam bu su or Kiambase (it became kimbiasero in Cuba) never lived in the villages. You would find him deep in the bush country, or far away from the village, town or city. They lived among the most primitive tribes usually by themselves in caves or rustic huts; they practiced cannibalism, and human sacrifices were known to have taken place as part of their rites. People came to them looking for solutions to the impossible or plain and simple revenge against an enemy.

Whoever went to see them did so in secrecy because the priests were always fighting against witchery and if they were to be caught going to any of these places would without hesitation be whipped in the middle of the village square and cast away from the town's secret society. One of the main roles of the village priest was to ward off witchery and evil spirits, so anyone involved in such acts was rejected by his fellow villagers. This led sometimes not only to physical punishment, but also to expulsion from the village altogether. When someone died suddenly and if they suspected that this death was due to witchcraft it was up to both the priest and the medicine man (who would bring certain herbs) to prove whether witchcraft was involved in this death or not. If the herb became dark on top of the body, it was

considered that foul play was the cause of this death and the identity of the culprit was sought. This of course, led to political maneuvers among the inhabitants of the village. Anyone could accuse anyone of witchery and thus eliminate him-her through public shame. And the business side would be found easily when a medicine man or priest would tell a person they have been bewitched and for a price would sell the counter spell or give them the proper herb to be cleansed.

Neither the priest, nor the medicine men, would *per se*, be involved in witchery. This is a misconception fostered by hundreds of cinema pictures and novelists who didn't know what they were writing about. The same goes for the Tarzan movies who always defeated the savage Negroes in the African jungles. The fact is that if there were savage deep in the bush country there were civilized people in their villages and cities. It may not have been our type of civilization, but a civilization nevertheless. The priest would prepare an amulet or talisman to fight off spells and evil spirits. The priest would cleanse a person and his hut dwelling and would invoke the Orisha for the person's protection and benefit. He would also serve as village counselor and that would be the extent of their influence. The every day government was up to the king who was also the village judge and as such imposed severe punishment on those guilty of witchery.

### The Priesthood

Today being vested as an Orisha priest lasts seven days. It is on the second day that he/she is actually vested when they go through the rites of vestment. The rest of the week is spent mostly resting; going through lesser ceremonies while secluded in the "Igbodu" (sacred room). The priesthood in Yorubaland was undertaken mainly by men and it took seven years to be ordained. Those years were considered as novice years and for apprenticeship. Only at the end of the seven years were they considered fully ordained priest and as such could practice in different villages. They also could be teachers in the secret societies.

When the Africans were brought to the Caribbean, especially Cuba, the laws applying to the priesthood were altered for the following reasons:

The living conditions were such that no new priest could be trained in the proper fashion and time needed.

There were members of different tribes lumped together in the same barracks who had different degrees of civilization and did not speak the same language or dialect.

Survival was the number one priority. First as an individual, and later it became an ethnic and group necessity. In order to achieve and maintain their survival, many differences had to be overlooked, and new laws had to be implemented or the old ones altered to fit the present conditions. Priority was given to the secret society.

Ordaining new priests became secondary and shortened to seven days, training being done while being a member of the secret society.

One of the requisites to become a priest was that the candidate had to prove he was a real human being or what we understood to be a real man.

Part of being a real human being (true man-real man), was to be a person of strong moral principles. He had (and has) to be a good father, husband, fellow Osha member. Loyal to the society and his African brothers. Maintain as much as possible these duties toward his family, his protecting Orisha, and always ready to help anyone who needed him. These were (and are) some of the imperatives demanded of him if he wanted to be a priest of Osha. It had to be like that because people came to him with all their problems seeking not so much the divination or reading with the cowry shell (which is part of being a priest), but the advice of the Orisha man, saint man (santero).

Back in their countries of origin they had a number of priests which would serve their own individual Orisha and people would come to them seeking the help-advice of his Orisha, and or the services connected to the Orisha's particular assignment by Olorun. It was not to be so in the Caribbean, a priest of any of the Orishas would serve any aleyo (outsider, a non member of the society) as well as an Osha brother with whatever they requested of him.

In Cuba, particularly, as time passed the priesthood and the brotherhood of Osha came to be one and the same. Each Iyawo (novice) was taught all the rituals, secrets, chants, prayers, tales, history, healing, divination methods, the power of the herb, spells, counter spells, how to sacrifice animals, what offerings were pleasing to the deities, the Èwò (taboo) of each Orisha, his own, meaning of the drums; how, when, and why to play them, many of the dialects among them the Du ku mi or Lucumi which became the official language of Orisha's secret society.

What was only the exclusive domain of the Priesthood, became the society members' knowledge. This knowledge was (still is) so fascinating that it began to attract all the Negroes who somehow had remained distant from the brotherhood. It would in time bring in to the society white people as well. The society grew out of its confines to the priesthood and became truly a brotherhood.

This is the reason why each member of the society began to call himself an Olo-Orisha. Translated to the Spanish it became Saint man, Santero. It was his duty to act as a priest. He possessed the same knowledge of a Yoruba priest, he had to go through years of apprenticeship under the tutelage of the Godfather or Senior member of the particular House of Osha to which he belonged. The same requisite of being a real human being, a real man was the first demand. The first year of being a new priest-novice Yawo was and is the toughest of them all. That first year he was constantly tested (still is but not as much as in the old days). His honor, his decency, his morals, his faith, his loyalty to

the House of Osha where he was initiated, his desire to learn, and his desire to serve others who would eventually be his disciples. To be a Godfather/Godmother, a true priest of Osha, was and is a very demanding task which most people find difficult to fulfill. That may be the reason why many chose just to be members of the society, and not to have godchildren for they have to dedicate most of their time to this duty.

### Houses of Osha

As freedom came to the Island of Cuba, so did freedom for the slaves. With freedom came independence from the main Society of Osha, and many members now priests, decided to have their own House of Osha, each society subject to the laws of a central Cabildo who convened once a year in the province of Havana to revise their regulations and add new laws to the existing ones. It was during this period that women and homosexuals were admitted to the different societies existing in the Island. It was considered that they had been discriminated against and the religion had no quarrel with gender or sexual preferences. Later on children were also admitted into the House of Osha and their training began the moment they became vested.

The tradition of the Cabildos has remained and it is maintained in the United States. It is carried out mainly by Babalawos who gather from different parts of the country in Miami. The Cabildos which have taken place in this country have been long ones because the laws of the United States are unlike those of other countries where Osha-Santeria is practiced. Among them was the legal restrictions concerning the sacrifice of animals. Since this book was originally printed in Spanish this particular law was overturned by the US Supreme Court and sacrifices are considered a part of the religion and therefore are permitted.

It was the Cabildo who had the final word in any changes within the religion. No single priest, or Babalawo (who is merely a priest of Orunmila), had or has the right to change any of the

basic laws without first consulting the Orishas, the members of his House of Osha, his Godfather and finally present the suggestion to the Cabildo for approval or rejection.

It was in the Caribbean as it was in Brazil where instead of years, the ceremony for vesting was changed to seven days. This was the reason:

### The Slave Shipments

At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Cuba became primarily a sugar producing country; as the native Indians were practically eliminated by the first Conquistadores. Field laborers were scarce, not enough sugar cane workers were available, and the new industry began to suffer. The only solution for the sugar mill owners was to bring black slaves from Africa. It is estimated that during the slavery years well over 25 million Africans were brought to various countries of the Americas via bondage.

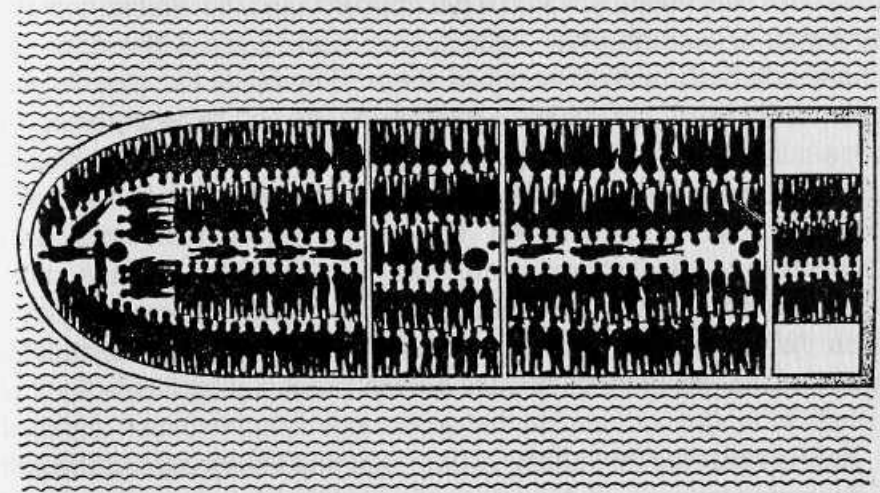


Diagram of "Placement of Slaves on Slave Ship" *Museum of Indies* (Madrid Spain)

In this vast forced migration of men and women were those who in their countries, especially Yorubaland had been craftsmen, kings, musicians, laborers, priests, medicine men, etc., above all, they had been free. Overnight they found themselves reduced to the most humiliating system that a human being can know, slavery. Separated from their wives-husbands, children, parents and friends, they found themselves in a foreign land where they were treated worse than animals after a journey of thousands of miles by sea, in which the percentage of them who died due to illness or were dumped overboard alive was quite high.

The reader has to realize that there was an overwhelming number who suffered break downs, this being reflected in the vast number of suicides committed not soon after they arrived. The suicide rate was so high that it was feared the race would perish in the new land. In these shipments there came priest of the different Orishas who got together and recognized the necessity to preserve their race, culture, religion, and traditions. They knew that faith was the only way to give them spiritual as well as moral strength. It was the only option they had to resist the drastic changes which had come upon them. Therefore the priest decided to unite all the Africans within one society; to create a society such as those they were accustomed to in their own countries. The task was not easy, given the different degrees of civilization and cultural background. The desire to survive, however, in the Negroes was stronger than it was in the native Indians and somehow they managed to overcome the barriers imposed by their differences. This society was called Osha and all men, no matter from which area of Africa they came, were so united.

Slowly at the beginning in the sugar and tobacco plantations these small groups of Negro secret societies began to flourish. Eventually they would grow to the extent where they exercised a great influence in the outcome of the war against Spain for independence. Many of Cuba's war heroes were of slave ancestry or had been slaves themselves and connected in one way or another to a secret society.

It was also a fact that in those slave shipments also came many primitive Africans who practiced witchery and did so more vehemently as a way to fight their enslavement. They too were admitted in the society. In the beginning of slavery all Africans were considered as brothers. He/she was a Negro and therefore a brother-sister. Their meetings, or councils, had to be held at night outside the barracks when their masters or field foreman were absent from the plantation, or were asleep, because whenever they learned of such a meeting, the slave was persecuted and punished. The master considered those meetings pagan rites and the whip was used without mercy. They were forced to exercise great secrecy every time they had a ceremony or a gathering to honor the Orishas. The secret society became even more secret. This led to tales of orgies and horrendous human sacrifices, of pagan rites carried out by these savage Negroes. Osha-Santeria was so persecuted during those years that around the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was abolished by the Governor of the Island of Cuba ( this decree is at the Museum of Indies in Madrid Spain) as: Pagan rites against the Holy Catholic Church of the Island of Cuba. Anyone caught practicing these acts will be stripped and whipped in public places. The Manifesto of Indies or Asiento was granted at the request of the so called savior of the Indians, Father Bartolome De Las Casas who had consorted with the governor to bring in more Africans as slaves and share in the profits of the business.

They thought they could prevent any type of uprising (as it had happened in the island of Haiti) by making the Osha-Santeria societies illegal. But the use and abuse of the whip and even hangings backfired and more Negroes became members of the societies in their plantation. It grew to such an extent that it was everywhere as it is in Cuba today, perhaps as a way to protest against the communist dictatorship of Fidel Castro.

Eventually the sugar plantation owner realized that it was cheaper to bring slaves from Africa than to bring Chinese laborers from the near east to the United States. The Chinese had to be

paid (a ridiculous amount, but had to be paid nonetheless). Still they had to be paid a pretty sum for the Negro slave. It was an investment and if they did not take good care of it, they would lose money. They found out that any slave would work better (produce more) if he was well fed, clothed, and given better living conditions. Even, sometimes allow them their pagan rites.

It is only fair to say this: not every Spaniard was bad, not every Spaniard was cruel and abusive. Many came from good Catholic families in Spain and had inherited the sugar plantation from relatives, or acquired them in Spain as a business enterprise. They came to the Island attracted by the easiness with which their money could be increased many times over. These people treated the slaves with kindness, gave them a lot of freedom within the confines of the plantation. Many would take a slave as a mistress, who in time bore him children. The same applied to the sugar field foreman. Of course, these girls were well treated, they didn't work the fields, they were well dressed and fed. Many took over control of their master's house and actually ran the plantation. Like any mistress throughout the history of the world, she could ask for special favors for a Negro friend, or relative.

With the intermixture of the races came the Mulatto, who being half black and half white, could play both sides of his fathers house and the slaves' barracks. The mother eventually became liberated but her roots were African and her religion was that of the Orishas, she made sure her children followed in her beliefs. These Creole mulattos kept the traditions brought from Africa by their ancestors and with time would bring in their white half brothers, and even their fathers. Also, many Negro women served as wet nurses for children born in Cuba of either Cuban or Spaniard parents. These children loved them as though they were their real mothers and easily assimilated her African culture.

### How the White Man Became an Orisha follower

Cuba was an agricultural country with a small white population and large plantations tended by slaves. One scenario that occurred quite frequently was something like this: as medical doctors were rare, when the child of the master became ill, it was very difficult to get any doctor (who usually lived far away in the cities) to go to the plantation, or even to take the child to him was not easy because of the poor transportation system. When one finally was able to arrive there, it was either too late, or they could not find a cure for the illness which was plaguing the child. In these instances, it would be the slave who seeing these people's anguish would tell them that he could try and heal the sick child. The parents or parent being in despair would agree to let the old Negro slave do anything he pleased. They had seen the black man's magic-medicine work on their own children and somehow trusted him to do his best with their sick child. The old Negro came with his herb, prayers, chants, potions and did "his thing". And where the white man's medicine or lack of it had failed, the Negro's worked. The child became healthy again. Often enough, and as part of the healing process, or maybe as a way to show gratitude to the Negro's protecting Orisha, the child was vested with the necklace beads pertaining to this particular deity; the parents agreed to let the child go through the ceremony of such vestment and even themselves participated in it, being careful that no one outside his domains would know about it. The parents began to participate in many feast of the Orishas at the beginning out of curiosity and eventually allowed them to have their ceremonies without restrictions.

It was not always due to an illness affecting someone. A master could be close to bankruptcy, about to lose the business. The slaves knew this white man to be a good man, who had treated them with kindness and feared a new owner might be more cruel. In these cases one of the slaves (usually the oldest) would approach him and tell him about this Orisha called Eleggua with



whom they could work to save his plantation and business. Like any man in despair the master would give his permission to do whatever had to be done. When they had finished working with Eleggua the business gained new impetus and began to prosper. The master had to believe there was something magical working for him and he willingly accepted to have an Eleggua in his house and do all the ceremonies and offerings due this deity on Mondays of each week. The difference was that he kept the set of Warriors -Eleggua hidden in a piece of furniture close to the main entrance of his home instead of outside in front of the house. That may be how such customs started. He, in turn, would tell a friend in need about these African deities and how they had helped him. Why not give it a try?

That is roughly how Santeria-Osha grew in Cuba, Brazil and the Caribbean islands and became both a white and a black man's practice!

A very peculiar thing began to take place between the Spaniards and African religions. The two began to mix. The African and his descendants saw two things: first, there was a great similarity between the Christian saints and the lives of their Orishas. Second, the Spaniards were for the most part devout Catholics who liked to keep their religious rites. When there was a baptism in the plantation, or any other Catholic feast, it meant a day off from work; the slaves would be given all they wanted to eat, they could wash and dress. It was a day to have fun and leisure. Any feast of the Catholic church was good for the Negro. Sometimes they were allowed to go to a nearby church or to services held in the plantation, where incense was burned and they could sing and have a good time.

Little by little they began to accept Catholicism and adopt some of their beliefs. After all, these saints were the masters and they received better treatment because of them. They had a rough life and if both his Orishas and the Spaniards saints could help him, why not pray to them too. A comparison began to take place

between the two religions.

The Negro found that the concept they had concerning the creation of the world was somehow similar to the creation story that the Catholic priest was telling them. The commandments were almost like the ones he had learned from his parents back in Africa. Jesus was the son of God. Just as Olofin was the son of God Olorun. He had been betrayed and killed by those He tried to help same as Obatala had been. Jesus and God were one and the same, Olofin-Olorun were almost identical. Saint Barbara dressed in red and was also a warrior. She reminded them of Shango whose cape color was red and a warrior; they thought perhaps his spirit had reincarnated in Santa Barbara, in Brazil it was Saint George to whom they established the similarity. The Holy Virgin of Charity (Cuba's patron saint) dressed in yellow and lived in the waters: Oshun dressed in Yellow and lived in the waters. It was easy for them to establish the comparison, it gave them a certain relief to see that they shared something in common with the white man. It had been their fear when they first arrived to the western hemisphere that they would be eaten by these white people. They began to place images of Catholic saints next to the Orishas shrines, offerings would be made to them as well as to the Orishas. This practice has remained. You can walk into a Santeria sacred room (Igbodu) and find images of any catholic saint or crosses next to the bowl containing the Orishas. Thus syncretism began and has been kept as part of the Orisha cult everywhere it is practiced in the Americas. I, myself, have pupils (godchildren) who range from Protestants, to Catholic, to Hebrews.

There seemed to be no antagonism here between established religions and Santeria. As long as you believe in God, respect your fellow human beings, you are welcome in the brotherhood without having to "give up" your church.

## THE YORUBAS



## Chapter

- 2 -

**T**he Yoruba people have lived for centuries in the forest and grasslands of what is now southwest Nigeria and the neighboring states of Dahomey and Togo.

Most of what we know about their way of life dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Europeans first explored their country, although the Yoruba themselves have historical traditions which reach back far beyond this time. Their history came to us with the slaves and through the village storytellers with their oral narratives and tales known as patakis. These tales will trace their origin to the very beginning of mankind and civilization as it was known to them. These stories and their history can be easily found in most of the reading-divination with cowry shells, or palm nuts of the Babalawos which are accompanied always by the sign to be read.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen many changes in Yorubaland. The traditional religion and the way of life which shape it, play a reduced, although continuing, part of modern Nigerian society. As we are not overly concerned with Nigeria and its people today, but rather the religion of the Yorubas as it came to us we will examine its roots and origins, which will give us a better understanding as to the reason it has remained so strong in spite of all its detractors and continues to grow more today in foreign lands. Perhaps more so than in Yorubaland itself!

The problems of origins is a fascinating one.... The origin of Man and of the Universe is in itself the subject of speculation, and is certainly of divine revelation in most religions.

Some writers (none a practitioner of the Orisha cult) linked

the Yoruba with the Jews and others identified them with one of the Lost Tribes. One theory follows another, each is based on the study of certain aspects of Yoruba life. I feel its real origins can be traced only after a thorough study of their traditions, after being deeply involved in their religion, after years of studying the meaning behind every cowry shell reading, every saying and story attached to them. Mainly after a careful analysis of their traditional old tales....it is there!. All you have to do is put it together, in order to do that, it has to be done from inside, as a member of their tribal societies, and not a student from the outside trying to filter the information that is given as such.

In the era of Christianity, with its advent and influence in the known world at that time, the only and obvious people with which to liken the Yorubas were the Jews. This theory is based on their skill at working with bronze, terra-cotta pottery, and iron works with great similarity to those found in Egypt and the Jewish influence in their culture. But of course, myth in the Yoruba tradition would have one of their many gods as the discoverer of iron, bronze, and all implements of either farm tools or weapons, in this particular case the god would be Oggun. Whether myth or reality, Oggun was the discoverer and introduced iron in Yorubaland.

The traditional Yoruba view of the world is that it was created, together with its peoples and their customs, by orishas (gods) who still continue to play their part in human life.

### **The Creation of the World**

In the beginning there was only sky and water and Olorun, the supreme god, ruled the sky as king of the gods. He told Orishanla, the eldest of them, to climb down and create land on the water below. However, on his way Orishanla joined some other gods who were having a party, and he later discovered that his younger brother Oddudua-Oddu-a da had created the world in his place. They quarreled and all the other gods took sides. Olo-

run eventually settled the dispute by giving Orishanla the power to create mankind, while Oddua-Oddudua was allowed to rule the land he created. He became the first Yoruba king, ruler of the ancient city of Ife at the place where he first climbed down from the sky. The Yoruba still think of Ife as the center of their civilization. From here Oddua's sixteen sons went off to found kingdoms of their own, and some of their sons did the same.

Yoruba tradition, in the extreme, regards Ile Ife as the spot where God created man, white and black, and from where mankind dispersed all over the world. According to Ife mythology Oddua (Odu to a da iwa, which means the great one who created existence) was sent from above by Aramfe-Ajalorun (God almighty) to create Earth. Accounts of how Oddua performed his task vary. One version (slightly different from the one above) is that he took with him from Heaven a magical bird and some earth in a container which was like snails in shape. Aramfe gave Oddua sixteen chiefs who were well versed in mysteries to accompany him to the world of mortals and helped him to create his kingdom. The whole surface of the world was then covered with water. One of Odduas followers dropped some particles of earth from above, let loose the magical bird which scattered these over the earth and dry land sprang into existence. With the aid of chains, Oddua and his retinue descended upon their creations.

This myth makes Ile Ife the cradle not only of Yoruba but mankind. It is still firmly believed by some people to whom it has become an article of faith. The following Patakis give you still another look at their concept of how the Earth came to be.

This is what I learned from my godfather, he from his, and he from his godfather, and so on from the very beginning of time. This is the origin of the ocha deities, the earth, and the commandments of the religion.

When everything began, there were no men, no beast's, no sky, and no Earth; there was only God, whose name was Olo-

mare Nzame, the three orishas of which he was also a part: Olodumare Nzame, Olofin Mbere, and Obaorisha Baba Mkwa.

Wanting to create something different from where he lived, he decided to create a new planet. First he formed a nebulous heat; this nebula would not stay in the open space that was the sky. So he spread it and converted it into water. The area where the heat had been the most intense got to be lower than the others. Here he formed the great rivers, oceans and lakes where one finds Yemoya, from Okute to Olokun. And Oshun from Indo to Kole. When the fire ended, all remained in darkness and Olodumare Nzame decided to give light to all that he had created. Then he created Agayu (the Sun). When Agayu tired from shining such a long time, God gave him a rest and created Nana-Buruku (the Moon). For a long time the Sun and Moon illuminated Earth. After several thousands years, Olodumare came to Earth and saw the great rocks had lost their fire, and some had become great masses of mud, some higher than others.

This was the true beginning of the planet. This was muddy earth. It is in this muddy earth where all epidemics are born and where the orisha Shoppono-Babalu Aye inhabits.

More time passed and as the planet grew older, the trees, plants, and all the herbs were born and given by the creator, to another orisha named Osain. The highest and majestic mountains remained as we see them today, He called them Ikole and they are the domain of Oke and other lesser orishas.

Now, my friends, it is true that the fire that remained buried searched for a way to surface. For this purpose he chose a mountain called Oke. When it came out a great explosion occurred and all the hot melted mud and all the fires coming out were named Oggun, and its center was Oroiyakin.

Olodumare Nzame created the skies, the sun, the stars, the moon, day and night, the rivers and the seas, the lakes, and all the

animals that inhabit the Earth, the plants, everything we see and many things we do not see are his mysteries.

When his work was finished, He called upon Olofin Mbere and Baba Mkwa, proudly showing them his work.

"Did I do a good job"?. He asked them.

"Yes", they answered him, " you did something good".

"Do you think there is anything left to be done"?.

"We see great lakes and beautiful animals; we see many plants, but we cannot see the master of all that you have created".

Olodumare agreed with them, so to make a chief that would establish order among so many things, from all the creatures which he had made, he chose the elephant because he was wise, the tiger for his strength, and the monkey because he was quick and smart.

But Olodumare was not satisfied, and wanting to better his work called on the council of the three again. They decided that with a little bit of everything that was the Earth, they could create a creature to their likeness. When they had done it, first, they gave this creature intelligence, second, skill, third, physical strength and beauty.

Then the three of the them, who were one, said to the creature:

Go and occupy Earth, from now on you shall be the master of everything that exists there. Just like us, you shall rule over all which grows and lives on Earth. Your life will be eternal. You will never die, and everyone must pay you homage.

Nzame, Mbere, and Mkwa returned to their place in heaven.

The new creature was called Omo oba aye (man, king of the world). He was left alone on Earth and all its inhabitants obeyed him. But among the animals the elephant remained first in rank, the tiger second, and the monkey third. Reason being God had created them first.

Filled with vanity because of his power, intelligence and beauty, and because he was superior to the elephant, tiger, and monkey, since he had conquered them all man began to feel as if he was God himself. He refused to revere Olodumare. He denied his existence and to those who asked about the creator in heavens he would answer:

"There might be a God in the sky, but here on Earth, I am God. Let each one have his own place. Let Him be happy so high and not meddle in my affairs".

But God heard these words coming from earth and asked very loud so he could be heard down there:

"Who speaks like this in the world"?.

"Find out for yourself. Omo replied with insolence"

"Who addresses me in such a manner"? Insisted Olodumare.

"Well.....it is I, so what"? Was man's reply.

God did not bother to answer him. Enraged, He called upon Nzalam (the lightning) and told him:

"Nzalam, come over here". Nzalam came, making much noise.

Broom, boom, broom.... " What is it you wish, Olodumare Nzame"?.

"Go down to Earth and let nothing which exists there remain"

Nzalam came from the skies in the form of fire, burning all in his path; the forest, the plants, the trees, the animals. Everything was the prey of fire. But, unfortunately, when God created the first man He told him you shall not die, and whatever God gives, He never takes away, so the first man did not perish. He caught on fire but he did not die. Running away, he went deep inside the earth with the fire chasing him (he still lives in this place). Seeing how God punished him, he changed his name to Olosi. He has been known by this name ever since. He comes out every once in a while to fight against Olodumare, always looking for followers.

Much, much time passed.

One day Olodumare looked at Earth and saw it all black, completely dead. He felt ashamed of what had happened. He decided to try and do better again.

Olodumare, Olofin and Baba held a new council. This is what they decided.

On the ground soil covered with ashes, they spread new earth. A tree was born on this new soil. The tree grew and grew, more and more, flourishing into a thing of beauty. It was indeed a beautiful tree!

Every time a seed fell, another tree would be born, and so on. Each tree would give life to a new one. This was a tall and thin tree with green branches. Its fruits were filled with water and inside was found a fresh and exquisite white meat good to the taste. Every time the branches hit the ground, they would become animals; an elephant, a rhino, a tiger, a monkey, a zebra, a lion.... All kind of birds, a turtle, a chameleon, and all the species of animals that had previously inhabited Earth. When the branches fell on the water they became fish, and everything which lives in the waters. The planet Earth was once again what it had been!.

If you doubt that what I am saying here is true, you shall find proof if you dig in the earth, and there you will find a dark stone, easy to break. Throw it in the fire, and it shall burn for a long time. These are the stones that remain from the ancestral fires.

Seeing that the planet was so populated, Olodumare, Olofin and Baba looked at each other aware of the need to establish order on all that grew and lived there. Someone had to reign in this place...But who?...

We should name a chief who would govern everything which has been created. Said Olodumare.

"Certainly"! Answered Olofin

"Yes," Baba intervened "Lets make another man like the first one, but this time he should know death. He should be aware of your power".

"Let it be," so spoke Olodumare, "Let him have the same body as the other one, but now, you Olofin, will inhabit him as his spirit; the body will die, but in your spirit he will find eternal life".

"How shall we call him"?. Was Olofin's question.

"His name shall be Olofin Sekume. He will not live alone. He will have a companion, a woman, a wife in which the spirit of Baba will live, and we shall name her Orishanla Mkwa".

When He conceived Sekume and Mkwa, Olodumare divided them into two parts: one part which was the outside, the body, was name Gnoul. The other part which goes between the body and the outside was named Egun Nsissim. It is Nsissim who keeps the life in Gnoul. But it is Nsissim who abandons the body when the person dies joining Baba and Olofin into one.

Do you know where Nsissim resides?. No?. Well; I will tell you....it is in the eyes!. It is there where she lives. It is that little light which we all have in the eyes.

Sekume and Mkwa lived happily on Earth, conceiving three children. The first, Nkoure (a little bit stupid and a little bit bad). Then, Bakale (who couldnt think and was kind of lazy). And the last, Maferefun (who was a good son and very intelligent).

They had children, but we dont know how many, who spread throughout the world, multiplying themselves and living in different villages.

Olosi would tempt them constantly. He would come out in the forest, scaring the people who saw him (ugly as he is). As soon as anyone called him, he would appear immediately (still does) promising things which he could not deliver. Many men were and are tempted by him and they pay for their stupidity. But we better speak little about this character, who might make his appearance without being invited.

As men did not know the laws by which to be governed, one day Olofin called them at the foot of Oke and said to the rich and the poor, to the big and the small, to men and women.

"From this day on, these are the laws you will know and obey".

"You shall not steal one from the other, although you might be from different villages"

"You will not kill he who would not harm you, nor the animals that are not to keep you alive".

" You will not eat flesh of your fellow humans".

"You will not want what is your neighbor's".

"You shall work the fields, make them prosper, and share with your village its fruits".

"You will respect, obey and love your mother and father".

"You will not ask for more than I can give you, and be content with your destiny on Earth".

"Go now to your villages and live in peace". The Lord of Heaven so ended his speech.

This is the reason why he who disobeys Gods commandments goes on Earth without finding peace. The good ones, we know after they die, return to Earth as rain, then they become stones and go back to the villages to live close to their dear ones bringing the miracles of God; healing the ill, alleviating the pains of those who suffer. And they themselves, receiving the feast, the music, the reverence and the love of all. They are the spirits who watch over childrens dreams, and when we sleep at night they warn us about impending danger. When these spirits end their task on Earth, they go back to the heavens, becoming shining stars to light our paths.

Ah!...I almost forgot, after Olodumare did all that I have described He went very, very deep in space and created other worlds. But everything that is of this planet is of the exclusive domain of Olofin, his personal delegate.

This is what I *Obba bi* learned from my godfather, who learned from his, and so on successively since the very beginning of all things.

Maferefun Olofin

Hail to Olofin.

This tale I am about to tell you, I know happened as I am telling you because I learned from the village elder who never lied.

He said that in the beginning, the world was all marshy and watery, there was nothing but mud and quick sand. No trees, no fish, no animals, no men, no nothing. In the sky lived Olorun, the Master of Heavens and the father to all the gods who lived with him. He shared the heavens throne with his wife and mother of all his children and Oshanla who always was dressed in fine clothes made from the white clouds.

The gods would come down to Earth once in a while to play in the mud. This made Oshanla very angry. Oshanla always complained to the Great God of this, particularly when the children came back with their clothing so full of mud that it was impossible to make them look clean again.

Tired of the nagging, Olorun decided to do something about it. He called his principal assistant Orisha Olofin and told him that He wanted the place known as Earth to be changed into a more beautiful and clean place.

Everything was delegated to him, all that had to do with the new creation of this planet would be his responsibility. Orisha Olofin took a snail shell and filled it with solid ground from the village of Olorun, a white pigeon, and a hen with five toes. He came down to the mud and threw the earth from the snail shell into a hole in the marsh. Then, he put the pigeon and the hen on the new earth, and they began to scratch and spread it all over. This gave way to solid ground, which spread rapidly.

It took four days to complete the new planet Earth. Each day was dedicated to a deity: the first to Orishanla, the second to Shoppono, the third to Orisha Baba, and the fourth to be shared equally by all the gods.

The place where all began was called Ile Ife. The first house was built there to honor Orisha Olofin and his master Olorun. This house was named Ile Orisha.



Much time passed and one day Orisha Olofin decided to pay a visit to his house on Earth he didn't like much what he saw and called one of his orishas named Osain who immediately began to breathe down on it. Every time he exhaled, all sorts of plants began to grow, until the Earth was full of vegetation and beautiful flowers. Then seeing so much splendor Orisha Olofin gave it all kinds of animals, and filled the waters with fish. But not being quite satisfied yet, he made a doll of clay who looked just like him. Man was just a clay doll! Orisha Olofin liked this doll so much that he gave it life.

Now, it so happened that this man was so perfect that he became ill with false pride. He thought that he was almighty and powerful because he could kill all the animals around him. Orisha Olofin learned about this and decided to teach man a lesson.

And what did He do?

Well, since then, not every man that comes to Earth comes with beauty.... No man stays alive forever!.

This is a true story, as true as there is a master of all which is on Earth and Heaven.

Another variant told by the traditional historians who are the hereditary royal bards has to do with their conception of how and where life began, the reason for animal sacrifices, and why people live in different villages.

### **The Reason For Animal Sacrifice**

Many thousands of years ago, there were few men on Earth. In all fairness there were not that many.

All the tribal families lived in the same village. The Creator made man and the animals which inhabited the planet. They lived in a very large town and peace reigned among men and beast.

Baba Olofin was in charge of everything. When a discrepancy occurred, either among men or among animals, each would go before him, where he would judge them fairly, befitting his age and wisdom.

Sometimes, the Creator himself would come to the village and He would be treated courteously and respectfully by all. They talked to Him, and He talked to Baba Olofin, who kept him informed on earthly affairs. Harmony existed in the village and Olofin was very pleased.

However it wasn't very long before the peace was broken.

The trouble began in the following manner. There were many women in the village; some old, and others who were young. When the eldest arrived in the fields they would work little, overburdening the youngest with excessive labor. Alleging they were old and tired, they refrained from doing their share of the work. When the young girls complained to their husbands, they would say that the eldest were right. Baba Olofin was of the same opinion.

Early in the morning, when the cocks began to sing on top of the roofs, all the women, with great empty calabashes on their heads, went to the nearest brook for fresh water. This small river was at the foot of the mountain where Baba had built his house. He built it on the highest part so the Sun could warm his old bones. All the women, without exception, had to go to the brook for water. The oldest walked slowly, while the quick stepping youngest arrived first. After filling their calabashes they would bathe in the brook.

Naturally, when the slower women arrived, the river was muddy and dirty. They had to fill their calabashes with dirty water. When their husbands drank, they found only mud in their cups. They would start arguments with their wives because they had been given dirty water to drink. Sometimes they scolded the

young girls because of their practice of bathing in the small river. The young ones made no attempt to stop. Revenge was sweet, it was the only way to get even with the old ones who took advantage of them in the fields.

A deep division occurred between the young and the old and among their husbands. With the young women's husbands, naturally siding with their wives.

One day (I couldn't tell you which day it was) when the young women were playing in the water, an angry old woman threw a clay pot at the girls and hit one of them in the head. They all began throwing things at one another. In this fight, the old ones were badly beaten by the young, who forced them to retire from the river crying in pain.

That night, the young women mocked the old, who had lost the fight. This situation was repeated for several days, with only insults and fist fights ensuing. The men of the village also began to fight among themselves. Baba Olofin intervened telling them to discontinue the fighting. The village warriors were in agreement with Baba. The situation was intolerable, particularly among the women, since they lost too much time making new clay pots to replace those they broke in the fights. Both men and women were angry.

The old chief of the tribe sent for his herald and said to him: "Take your bull's horn trumpet and go through the village calling for council". The herald did so.

All gathered inside the great chief's house, sitting on palm fiber mats on the floor. The women also came, but they were not allowed to enter. They remained outside looking and listening through the bamboo windows. The meeting was long. Each one took the side of his relative, but at the end, they came to this agreement. The young and the old would go first to the river on alternate days, beginning the following day with the oldest.

They were all happy with this wise decision.... Theory is a beautiful thing. Practice is something else!

When morning came, the young ones waited patiently with their calabashes and pots on top of their heads. Here, a new problem arose. No woman wanted to admit that she was old. Therefore, no one wanted to be first to go and gather water. So, what happened next?

When a woman invited another to go to the river first, this was considered a great insult and another fight began!

Baba couldn't take it any more, he could do nothing else to remedy the situation. He decided to take the matter to the Creator himself. The old man climbed the mountains till he reached the big clouds where Olorun resided. He called Him several times by all his titles: God Almighty, Creator, Master of all, and so on until he ran out of names. He had to do so because you have to realize sometimes He pretends not to hear well.

Finally He responded: "Chief of the village of men what brings you here"?

"I come to you because peace no longer exists among my people. The women no longer obey me, and the men will not listen. Tell me, what should I do"?

"What is the reason the women will not obey and men will not listen"?

"Master of all, Creator of life and the village, you made me chief of all men and I do not complain. That was good. You created men, that was good; but you also created women, and that was not so good. With men, one can always come to an agreement; but with women, no one can understand them, no one can come to agreements. You created all, therefore it is your duty to give us back the peace".

And Baba told Olorun what was taking place at the village.

When he finished his story, Olodumare said to him: "I will give you back peace. The people will listen".

Next day they returned to the village. They arrived late at night when all were sleep.

Olorun asked Baba Olofin not to awaken anyone, or to say that He was in the village. He wanted to see what happened every morning.

At dawn, the women gathered ready to go for water, and as usual, the fight started. From the top of a hill, Olorun was watching everything with Baba by his side. This was a mean fight, women don't know how to fight clean. It was a mess, they were bleeding and screaming all over the place. When they finally stopped He told the herald to gather everyone in the village square.

He appeared with thunder, lightning, rain, fire, and a huge gray cloud descended among men and women. At that moment they felt a great chill in their hearts, a chill of death.

Olodumare-Olorun spoke with the voice of thunder: It is I who command all living things.

Yes...yes, they answered.

"You are too many to remain living together... You have disobeyed my commandments. I told you to live in peace and share everything, but you did not do so".

The men interrupted Him saying: "It was the women who started the fighting"

Olorun silenced them with a severe look and continued: "Man is man, and woman is woman, this cannot be changed. It is my

decision, therefore, that some of you will go forward, others will go back, others will go to the right and others will go to the left. Each group shall live far from the other. Each man with his family and animals".

The men did not understand Him, and asked: "The animals live with us, they belong to all. Who will take them"?

"Take one of each species, male and female. The rest I will send to live in the bush country by themselves".

And a funny thing happened...In front of the very eyes of Olorun, men began to fight.

Everyone wanted the best animals!

Olorun was enraged and told them: "Stop immediately... You are greedy, and worst than women. Because you are never satisfied with what I give you, I shall take the spirits that lives in you and you all will die now".

"No, no, please forgive us Master of the Universe", men and women cried, throwing themselves at His feet. Baba interceded: "Forgive them Lord, they are your children, they are only humans".

Olodumare felt pity and said: "Very well, I forgive you, but on one condition. Sacrifice the animals that you desire so much. Give them to me, their spirits in exchange for yours. Show lack of selfishness. Sacrifice the animals and you shall be rewarded accordingly. Take your knives and kill all the animals".

The men drew their swords and sacrificed goats, lambs, bulls, deer, roosters, hens. Every kind of animal was killed. This butchery formed a huge lake of blood. When they finished, they went back to Olorun and asked:

"How shall we eat?. How will our bodies be protected against the cold, the rain and the Sun rays?. How are we going to be able to provide fresh milk for our children?. How are we to live without all the things we obtain from the animals"?.

God Almighty responded: "Take your empty calabashes, fill them with the blood which has been spilled by the beasts. Take them with you to the places where you will make your new villages. Look at this blood well, think it could have been yours; it would have been wasted in battle. There is no worse sight than the blood of a human lost because of man's stupidity. Once you arrive to your new land, go to the forest and spill the blood on its soil. Then, wait for the reward from this sacrifice".

And Olorun left the Earth as He had come. He was never to return again.

Each group went his separate way. When they arrived at their destination, they did what they were told. Some believing that something wondrous would happen, and some not believing at all.

Three days passed without anything extraordinary happening; but on the morning of the fourth day they heard the sound of a bird, and the singing of a rooster. They ran to where they heard the sound and arriving there, found the bush country filled with all the animals which had been sacrificed.

A miracle had taken place ! Olorun had returned all which they needed to sustain their lives on Earth.

Since then, sacrifices are made to the gods. Not every part is eaten, no part of an animal is wasted. Their blood is offered to Baba Orisha so man can preserve his spirit. Certain parts are not eaten and presented to Orisha to show unselfishness and as a way of saying we are grateful for what we have received.

Also...For as long as men remain fighting among themselves, Olorun will not come back to Earth, unleash his fury, and end everything once and for all !

### Yoruba Migrations

The same royal bards, pataki tellers, drummers, cymbalist know the difference between myth and history.

Their accounts vary in important particulars, but they have carefully preserved their versions by handing them down verbally from one generation to another. They also make a connection between the Moslem religion and Yoruba ancestry. They say the Yoruba sprang from a man named Lamurudu, who was one of the kings of Mecca. His offspring were: Oduduwa the great ancestor of the Yoruba, and the kings of Gogobiri and Kutawa, two tribes in the Hausa country. Although the date of the period when the Yoruba were in Mecca or Araba is never given because is it unknown. The traditional account of their emigration puts it at a time well beyond the advent of Islam.

One such tale says....

Oduduwa: the heir to the throne of Mecca, had relapsed into idolatry during Lamurudu's reign and his heresy was spreading fast. He was determined to make paganism once more the state religion and to this end his priest and idol-maker Asara studded the great mosque with idols. This sacrilege was too much for the faithful Moslems who included Asara's son, Braima, a young fanatic. When according to royal mandate all the men were absent from Mecca on a three day hunting expedition preparatory to celebrating th festivals of the idols, Braima struck. He cut to pieces the wooden gods. The men returned to discover his handiwork and when they questioned him about the destruction of the idols, he taunted them with worshipping things which could not speak for themselves. Attempts to retaliate and make Braima pay with his life for his impiety was the signal for a civil war in which

the Moslem party was victorious over the apostates.

Lamurudu the king was slain; his children and those who sympathized with them were expelled from Mecca. The two princes who became rulers of the Gogobori and the Kukawa went westwards: Oduduwa ventured eastwards. He traveled ninety days from Mecca and after wandering about finally settled down with his followers at Ile Ife.

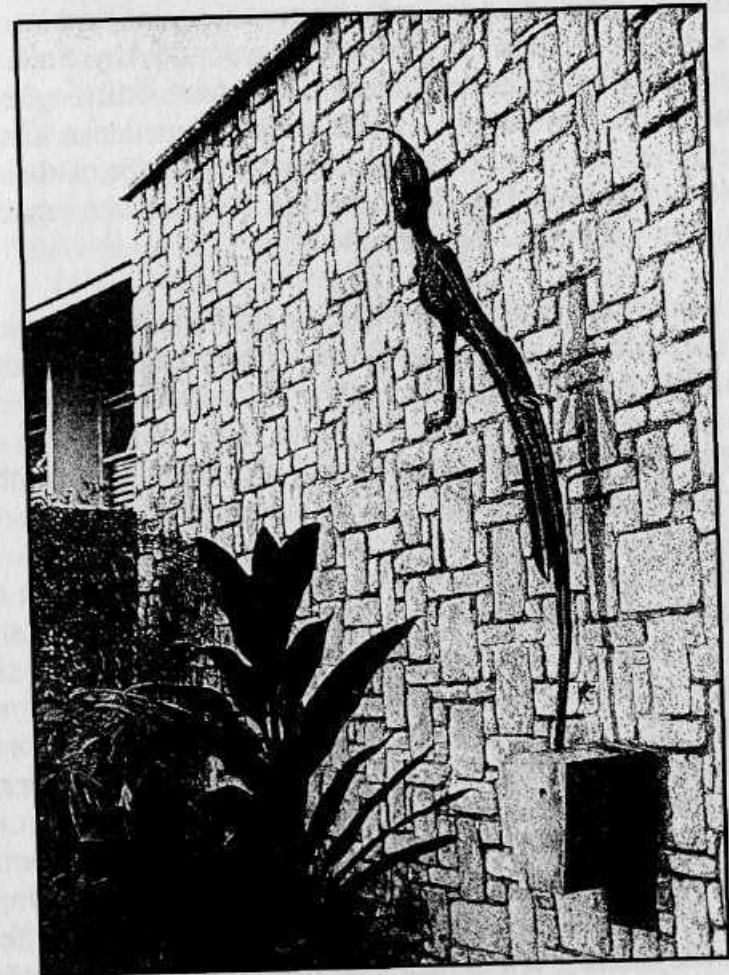
Oduduwa, was, however, pursued to Ile Ife; But Sahibu and his army were defeated and a sacred relic (an ancient ceremony wood mortar) taken among the booty. A well known legend also records that the Yoruba were molested by other people during their early days at Ile Ife. Igbos, disguised to look like terrible demi-gods, raided the new settlement repeatedly for several years. The people were perplexed and called upon the gods but all in vain. Then a woman of great beauty and virtue, Moremi determined that she would do whatever she could do to free her country from the constant Igbo menace.

She vowed to the deity of the Esinmirin stream that she would offer to the god the highest sacrifice she could afford if he assisted her to carry out her plan successfully. Her plan was to allow the raiders to catch her during the next raid so she could learn their magic while living among them. Accordingly, she was caught during the next raid and taken to the Igbo country where she was allocated to their leader among his booty and he made her one of his wives.

She quickly gained his confidence and soon extracted from him the secret of the weird appearance of the Igbo raiders. She learned that those who were objects of great terror to her people were mere men, who covered themselves from head to foot with grass and bamboo fibers in order to make themselves appear superhuman. She learned also that they could never withstand men who rushed amongst them with lighted torches. She escaped from the Igbo country, having completed her mission, and needless to

say the next Igbo raid was their last.

Moremi delighted with her success went to the Esinmirin stream to honor her vow to the god. She offered a goat, a ram, even a bullock, but the god would not accept. Then she found out from the priests that the only sacrifice the god would accept was her only son, Oluorogbo, and the heroine she was, gave her son to the deity. The Ife people suffered with her, the loss of her only child; they acclaimed and honored her during her life time and deified her after her death. Today in front of the library of Lagos there is a small statue of Moremi.



Statue of Moremi outside Library of Lagos

There was, however, a sequel to Oluorogbo's fate; he was not really dead. He revived after being left for dead and climbed up a rope to heaven. He is expected to this day to return to this world again and reap the fruits of his good deeds.

Still, another theory puts the origin of the Yoruba in a province called Yarba (i.e. Yoruba) which is supposed to have originated from the remnants of the children of Canaan who were of the tribe of Nimrod.

The cause of their establishment in West Africa was in consequence of their being driven by Ya-rooba, son of Kathan, out of Arabia, to the western coast between Egypt and Abyssinia. From that spot they advanced into the interior of Africa, till they reached Yarba (Yoruba) where they established their residence. On their way they left in every place they stopped at, a tribe of their own people. It is supposed that all the tribes of Sudan who inhabit the mountains are originated from them.

So it is fair to say that traditional accounts of Yoruba vary from the mythological idea of Ile Ife as the cradle of mankind to the tales of descendants of one of the "Lost Tribes".

The history of non-literate people is essentially remembered history.

These accounts are preserved in the memories of the story tellers in the "patakis" (short tales). One must collect oral evidence. In my case I remember many tales told to me by my elders in the Osha society, by my godfather and my grandfather on my mother's side who was a descendant from slaves. In my journeys to Africa, especially Nigeria and Yorubaland I was able to gather more patakis (so many that I published a book in Spanish called Pataki) and verify others. Some were not known to them, others had changed from the original. At Ile Ife, I had to explain the reason of my wearing the necklace beads, symbols of the different gods as they were given to me by my ancestors, and although the

deities were the same, their symbolic beads changed considerably. I came to the conclusion that the difference was due to the fact that many African tribes had been gathered in the Caribbean, but the majority was of the Yorubas who exercised their great influence on the first slaves and subsequently on their descendants.

Oral historians, the palace drummers, and ballad singers (the Arokin and Onirara) flatter the great and exhort them to do good by recounting the illustrious deeds and the greatness of their ancestors. For humble folk, the history of lineage, of the tribe is involved in everyday life; when a man acquits himself he is praised as a worthy son of a great ancestor; in a moment of failure a man is adjudged to be unworthy of his forebears. In cases touching land and succession of titles, knowledge of the past is often the deciding factor. In order to make good one's claims, one must recall age-old bequest or recite a long list of chiefs and establish one's link with them.

Something odd happens with oral history. It is sharpened by constant use. History is nevertheless imperfect. It selects and in so doing it usually ignores unpleasant events. One finds that it is necessary to check one man's memory against that of another. The history has to be collected from all the sides, so the best course for the writer is to find out the most knowledgeable person in the area of his subject and interview them in an informal atmosphere. With a few guiding questions, the witness may give valuable evidence, and if one is lucky he may burst into an illuminating topic of the past.

Ile Ife is probably one of the best places to collect such stories and patakis. As one would expect in such a historic city there were witnesses who lied glibly and to my joy there were others who were not ashamed to say they did not know the answers to some of my questions but I found a great number of oral tellers who seemed to have many of the answers that I was searching for. I spent hours especially among the priest chiefs who had as

many questions for me as I had for them, but the prevailing consensus among them fostered and encouraged by all the priests, is that Ife is the center of creation; whilst the descendants of the leaders who brought the people to Ife are constantly reminded of the migration in the manner in which the Obajio addresses the new Oni at the link of the Ijioo road thus:-

"This is the route by which your father Odua entered Ile Ife and my father Orajiove was his trusted servant. It was your father who placed my father here and therefore all the women and children of this quarter are yours and should be protected by you".

In this simple ceremony of affirming allegiance in return for protection, the fact of a historical event is enshrined. There is also present the most important aspect of remembered history. A past event of great significance is re-enacted during the course of a contemporary event. The present is linked with the past and in so doing the memory of the past is re-furbished. Here lies the key on the innate conservatism of the Yoruba (and the African in general and their "secret societies"), the present mirrors the past, so the traditional religion with emphasis on ancestor worship, and the chieftainship, all subject to the historical tradition. This has not changed an iota in the rituals of Osha. Everything is done according to tradition, one cannot deviate from it, doing so would be considered a sacrilege. Even writing about the society secrets and rituals is considered such. I was "rejected", banned by many houses of Osha in Miami and New York when this book *The Osha* was first published in Spanish. I don't know how this one is going to be received, but it is time to end centuries of misunderstandings. We do not live in Africa, or during the slavery years, but rather in an open society, in the United States where secrecy is not looked upon too keenly.

In Ketu a Yoruba town, when the Alaketu dies all fires are extinguished and are later rekindled from a branch which has been fetched from the original (which the Yoruba had borrowed fire from the earlier) inhabitants on their arrival in that vicinity.

During the installation of the new Alaketu, he ritualistically experiences all the vicissitudes which had beset the founder (Alaketu in his migration from Ife to Ketu). Even more, is the role which Baba Elegun plays during the ceremony. The Baba Elegun title is hereditary in the Oyede family (Baba Elegun is the traditional story teller and many times royal bard). He has to commit to memory the list of all the Alaketu from the leader of the migration down to the present ruler with names of their immediate parents and compressed accounts of the most significant events of their reign. It is his duty to teach the list to his son and successor. The Baba Elegun must recite this list during the installation ceremony, knowing full well that if he makes a single mistake the people of Ketu will regard it as an evil omen and may result in his death. So far, no Baba Elegun has made a mistake in reciting the list and thus they are assured that an authentic dynastic list is being handed down from generation to generation in Ketu.

Nowadays, also of importance are the objects that have been excavated by archeologists of relics from the past, and the many visual sources that already exists such as the obelisk at Ile Ife, Opa Oranyan (Oranmiyan's staff). But for now, we have to rely heavily on the pataki tellers.

The final analysis from all the evidence points to the Yoruba migration from a region under Egyptian influence. It is also appropriate here for the reader to consider two important aspects of these migrations. The first one is the question of the aborigines; the people the Yoruba met, it is clear from all the evidence that the Yoruba were of the latest Sudanic migration. They were preceded by peoples who were thinly spread over the area. It has been established that the Yoruba must have migrated to their present lands and their original grounds from a region where they came under ancient Egyptian, Etruscan and Jewish influences.

If this is a fact... How, then, were these "savage" people "savages"?



Oranmiyan's Staff (Near Ife, Nigeria)

### Secret Societies and Political Power

It is also clear that the original home must have been in the Near-East and that the all Black Kingdom of Meroe in the Sudan must have played an important role in the transmission of the Egyptian influences on the Yoruba. The modern Yoruba themselves usually confuse the Near East with Arabia and owing to the prestige of Islam locate their origin in Mecca. The most probable place is Upper Egypt rather than the Yemen.

What is extremely difficult to ascertain is the time of the Yoruba migrations. The evidence which placed the events before the Christian era was based on various dating of archeological and artistic finds and cannot be regarded as conclusive. On the other hand, the evidence which places the Yoruba migration after the Christian era is very strong. Apart from the Arab menace there is collaborating evidence of the dynastic lists and probable date of foundations of towns such as Ketu among the Yoruba and Kano among the kindred peoples. It is almost certain therefore, that the Yoruba migrations from the Near East occurred between 600 and 1000 AD

The immigrants brought with them all the characteristic Yoruba institutions. The band of colonists usually led by bold hunters soon established towns, their political centers, their towns and half towns with the farming areas nearby. Each town had an Oba or sacred chief as its head and he was assisted by several secret societies in the exercise of rudimentary political powers. Many secret societies became part of small but independent political units who exercised a great influence in the villages every day life. These same small societies flourished in the Ekiti country and elsewhere.

The second major wave of Yoruba (the one that exerted the most influence in the Caribbean's secret society) was the one which we may call the Oduduwa-Odua migration.



The Oduduwa migration is the best known in tradition. It is certain that it took place toward the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. The people who resisted the all conquering Islam found a great leader in Odua ( he was later deified in Yoruba myths) who left their homes in search of a place where they could practice their traditional religion. This would be the same religion that came to us, and which suffered minor alterations due to syncretism. This religion has a kind of polytheism tinged with Judaism and Cristianity as well.

The Yoruba leaders that came to Cuba and Brazil undoubtedly came from a bolder stock and brought with them their religion, political experience and ideas.

Let us, then assume, that the Oduduwa migration entered Nigeria in the neighborhood of Nupe. After crossing the Niger they went south-westwards and eventually found a site for a settlement at Ile Ife. They overwhelmed the earlier inhabitants by their relative huge numbers and readily absorbed them. The new comers, virile and united under one leadership, soon developed a stronghold at Ife which they made into a cultural and artistic center.

### **Ife the Holy City**

The Yoruba established their traditional religion and their secret society at Ife which became a Holy City which gradually was idealized into the center of creation. When they had consolidated their powers, the leaders in minor migrations penetrated the neighborhood in fan-like directions. This penetration into territories mainly in the tropical forest area took place in two phases. The first phase was relatively peaceful and resulted in the foundation of large and small chiefdoms in the far west. Oyo in the savannas and Benin in the East. This phase occurred chiefly in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The second phase was that of penetration through conquest. Two powerful kingdoms had emerged: Oyo to the West, extended Yoruba influence over the Fon of Dahomey and prob-

ably over the Ga of the Gold Coast.

They migrated in successive waves, they brought in all the characteristics which are now regarded as Yoruba: the polytheistic religion, the secret societies, the artistic culture, the urbanized farmers and political institutions in which small chiefdoms and kingdoms alike practiced a kind of monarchical democracy. The Yoruba that were brought to our shores via the slave trade had come from the Near-East where they had been exposed to a higher civilization. They had established their cultural and political center at Ile Ife and then diffused their culture as far as possible around them. During the first years of slavery Ile Ife was the home to return to some day. It was the place to go back as a spirit when you die. Ile Ife became almost a holy place to which to return one way or another. In Cuba and Brazil they organized the rest of the Negroes following the pattern they had used back in Yorubaland.

### **Lineage-way of Life**

Back in Africa the Yoruba had build towns, some of them very large and fortified against attack. Today most people live in houses of European style, but I could see in the country many of these inlets which have remained the same for centuries. The traditional buildings were and are made of mud, thatched roof, nowadays usually with corrugated tin roof. They were built as large compounds where a number of families lived, in blocks of single story apartments looking out the rectangular courtyards, but only blank walls faced the narrow streets between the compounds.

In most parts of Yorubaland all the men living in one of these compounds were (and still are) supposed to be related to one another, even if the relationship was very distant, they formed the type of family group known as lineage, the idea being that they all descended from the same distant ancestor through their fathers and father's fathers. A man could marry several wives who came to live in this compound.

As the couples were unrelated the wives came from other lineage. The same tradition was maintained at the beginning of the Osha society in Cuba. A man would marry several women (without the master's knowledge or consent) but she had to be from a different lineage or tribe. An interesting point to make here would be that like the Muslims, who were dissipated by war, this custom also led to the preservation of the race as men were dissipated by the overwork and mistreatment inflicted upon them in the sugar fields. Any orphan child was adopted by the society if the woman did not remarry and both mother and child were assured of their clannish belonging.

Back in their homelands history tellers told how the ancestor of each lineage first came to town and how the king at the time gave him the place to build a compound in the town and land to farm outside it, which members of the lineage inherited. Most townsmen lived by farming the land of their lineage, which surrounded the towns up to fifteen or twenty miles away. They lived near their fields for part of the year in what was called the half towns (where most of the slave raids were made). The Yoruba grew crops for their own use, among them a seed now called cocoa which they use in a beverage hot or fresh mixed with goat's milk (cocoa is today one of Nigeria's largest exports).

The lineage, not its individual members owned the land. Its members formed a group which ran its own affairs and bound together against outsiders. Their leader was the oldest man. They joined in celebrating family occasions such as marriages, the naming of a new child, and funerals. Some lineages were so large that their members lived in several compounds, but still acted as one group for certain purposes. When the descendants of certain lineage came to town they were said to have been made chiefs by the king of the time, and these lineages also inherited the right to have one of their members made a chief up to the present day. Some minor chiefs are also selected by the king or by the other chiefs. The procedure varies in different towns. Each chief has a particular job. Some govern the different wards or section of the

town and act together as part of the governing council. Before being permitted to enter the holy terrain where the Oni of Ife has his residence I had to appear before such a council which questioned me for a long time. They act as a sort of traditional court which actually has no legal backing by the courts of law in Nigeria, but when they make a recommendation in a litigation between two parties, their advice would be followed. Others still work for the king in his palace as advisors, or as priest of the many different gods in the Yoruba pantheon.

### The King

The chiefs select the man to be king from the royal lineage he had to have been a descendant from the towns first king. At Ife, the Oni was and is a direct heir to the first king who was himself a son or grandson of Odua, the deified Orisha and founder of the sacred city. The king owned the whole kingdom, which his ancestors divided among the ancestors of the lineage. Once crowned in elaborate sacred rituals the new king became sacred, the actual representative of his sacred ancestor. A symbol of his rank was the beaded crown which only the king was allowed to wear. This was a type of hat covered with embroidered glass beads in various colors and patterns, with a beaded veil to hide his face because he was too sacred to be seen by his people.

The lineage paid taxes to the king and chiefs to support the palace government. The king's powers were not unlimited as he had to obey the customs of his kingdom and acknowledge the authority of the chiefs. The chiefs whose lineage appointed the people would influence the government and even the king himself. Nowadays, the king and chiefs have less power than in the old days, but are still important in local government affairs.



Julio Garcia Cortez (author) at Ile Ife, Nigeria with three senior members of the Oni's Council of Elders.

In the old days, a king was set apart from his subjects and lived a secluded life with only his many wives and palace officials around him. His palace, in the center of town was built of mud like other compounds, but was huge, with many courtyards and buildings. Rich carvings decorated the massive wooden doors and the pillars which held up the roofs. The palace contained shrines to various gods. According to traditional Yoruba ideas, these gods played a vital part in human society and the king had to observe many rituals in their honor.



Plaque at the Oni's Home (Ile Ife, Nigeria)

## RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES



## Chapter

- 3 -

**A**lthough everyone involved in Osha-Santeria may have dealings with any Orisha, especially *Eshu, Ifa, Osain, Shango*, these and all the other gods each have their own special group of worshippers.

### Basis for the Osha Society

In Yorubaland as well as in the beginning of the Osha society each person paid special attention to one or more gods by joining the society or cult group which organized worship to the gods in villages back in Africa or on the plantations in Cuba. The god's priest who headed the society and lead its rituals could have been appointed from a particular lineage, as chiefs were, and like the diviners, who were for the most part priests of *Ifa*, had special tasks to perform for the general populace. Most people worshipped the same god as their father, and in some cases all the members of the lineage, men and women would share the cult. Others would serve the god who was the patron of their trade or occupation. Sometimes an Orisha would single a person out by fighting with him as it was called, causing afflictions, mental illness or other misfortunes. *Ifa* had to be consulted to find out the exact cause of the trouble and the necessary remedy, which in many cases would be for the sufferer to join the worship of the god. The Orishas were considered capable of causing evil or good for mankind, and they were worshipped and given offerings and sacrifices to obtain their goodwill for the community, and special favor to the worshipper.

These are some of the more important secret-religious soci-

eties known then. They are the ones which gave birth to the Secret Society of Osha in Cuba and similar ones in Brazil, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago.

### The Gelede Society

In western Yorubaland a group known as the *Gelede Society* was (and still is nowadays) one of the most important of all the secret-religious societies. The main purpose being that of dancing to appease the witches that threaten people's lives. The idea was to keep them in good humor so they would not harm the community. The dancers were men, but some dressed and danced to mimic women. They would wear a carved wooden mask on top of their head. Some masks had carved objects or scenes, or portrayed local characters with a comic effect.

The Yoruba had (still do) hundreds of gods, some were worshipped only in certain towns, others had different names in different parts of the country, others suffered alteration and misinterpretation as they came to the Caribbean. Some played a small part in the religion or the secret society. Between them, they controlled everything of importance in Yorubaland and subsequently in the slaves lives. The *Gelede Society* although it had a great impact in certain towns in Yorubaland, it was not of great significance at the beginning of the slave trade. There were a few members in our country, but they could not perform their main task which was that of a dancer, and eventually they became part of the Osha society. The *Gelede* specialized in dancing for your patron god, and at harvest times, this specialization had no room in the slave barracks.

Besides the traditional gods, there were also gods of hunting, farming, of hills and features of landscape, of smallpox, and many other things. Each society of worshippers had a definite part to play in bringing the favor of their god in behalf of the town. The harvest was a big occasion, and was devoted to the town's most important god as part of the annual ritual. As the

leaders of groups of worshippers whose task was to influence the gods, the priest were the most important men in the well being of the whole community. The same role was adjudicated to the priest as they arrived to our shores.

### The Ogboni Society

Some members of this very important society arrived via slavery to our shores. The priest, chiefs, and other men of rank and relevance who came as members of the *Ogboni* were part of a group whose members worshipped the Earth mainly. Because the Earth spirit is said to be as old as *Olorun*, and not one of his subjects, the supernatural powers of the *Ogboni* society were independent from all the other gods, it was very strong and feared. They played a great role in the creation of the Osha society as well as that of the *Abakwas*, who used fear as one of their tools to gain influence among the slaves. Their ritual were so secret and potent that anyone who revealed them, or disobeyed their rules could expect to be killed by magic. Although the Yoruba and the great majority of the Osha society believed that the right hand should be used for clean, good actions, in the *Ogboni* and the *Abakwas* rituals their members used the left, the unclean hand instead. They dressed to emphasize the left side of the body wearing a piece of cloth over the right shoulder so it would not see what the left side was doing.

In the old days the *Ogboni* society acted as one of the highest courts of law, judging in secret, appeals from the chiefs. They also dealt with cases of wounds and homicide, because spilling blood on earth offended the Earth goddess. But it was different if the wound was inflicted by a slave to an abusive sugar field foreman, or a cruel master, then they would do their utmost to protect the perpetrator. It happened that even the white man after trying unsuccessfully to destroy the secret societies, especially the *Ogboni-Abakua*, began to fear it and respect it because of the power of their magic and the control it exercised among the Negroes. The priest of the Osha society allowed free reign of the *Abakua* for

many years as the only means for their own protection and survival. The priest of the *Ogboni-Abakua* united a good number of the slave community under their independent leadership. They had to obey their decision for fear of death from the magical power of the Earth spirits.

### Oro Society

Besides their gods, the Yoruba ancestors also had an important influence in their lives. Much of every person's life was affected by inheritance from his ancestors because of land, housing or the right to become chief etc., people traced their ancestry very carefully, especially in the fathers line, and through the lineage. Offerings were placed on the graves of ancestors to gain their good will, and the ancestors who founded the lineage were given special attention in this way. Now, being that they were so limited by slavery and the amalgam of tribes with similar but different backgrounds, the custom remained but suffered alterations, in the way that the offerings were reduced to what little food was left over after the days work at the sugar fields. Today in the rituals of Osha, a good part of the food besides the offerings of fruit, money and other articles, is a reminder of the old days, and a continuity of the tradition of offerings to the ancestor's spirits. Back then, many slaves were concerned primarily with their survival, but it was also of concern for the morals of their descendants, the keeping of Tradition, as well as whatever right to heritage the very few free slaves may have had.

There was still another secret group of worshippers whose only duty was to perform special rituals for the ancestors. Worshippers of the god Oro, formed a society rather like the *Ogboni*, paying attention to the spirit of the dead men in the village back in Africa, and with the advent of slavery of those who died in the plantations. The ceremonies took place only at night. During these secret rituals, the high priest and his assistants whirled a piece of thin wood (a bullroarer) tied to a string which made an eerie humming sound. At the sound of the bullroarer all women would

have to shut themselves indoors and see nothing of the dance and rituals. In the old days the society carried off and executed people guilty of witchcraft, infidelity, robbery, and secret betrayals. In Cuba, if a Negro member of this society had a relation with a white woman he would be executed also. The Oro society was the executioner, the armed branch of the *Abakua-Ogboni*. Years later at the beginning of the Republic, their descendants created a small aggressive society which was extremely radical and murdered a few mulatto women who were involved in love affairs with white Spaniards residing in Cuba.

As the years passed in the new republic, and the laws became more severe for this type of crime, the *Oro* society ceased to have the influence that it once had.

### Egungun Society

There was also the *Egungun* society of which a small part of their rituals came to us. It too went through changes and variations from the original. Their traditional dance to punish witches and witchery was misinterpreted. Being that it was a bit scary, the Creoles called it the Demons dance. It was so nicknamed because their dancers would cover their bodies and faces with a dress and mask made of palm fiber which was quite frightening in appearance. The dress was adorned with small bells and cock feathers, which made a weird sound when they danced to the sound of very loud drums. They would dance in the streets to celebrate their freedom right after the war of Independence and chase away the evil spirits the Spaniards had left in Cuba. This dance was done at least once a year particularly in a small village of Cuba called Guanabacoa. I remember that as a child I saw one of these dances and it really scared the heck out of me. The old women would scare children by telling them that if they did not go to bed earlier "the demon dancer will come and take you away"... I believed it and made sure I was in bed by the time I was told. Eventually the government banned the *Egungun* society and made their dances illegal.

### Osha Society

Of all the secret societies that emerged during the slavery years, only one grew stronger above all others and it has reached our days, not only as a black man's society but religion. It has suffered many changes, but the basic rituals remain the same. It may now be considered more of "a profession, a business" than a religion. Or perhaps the religion has become a business for some people. Much of the original concept of brotherhood, respect for your elders, tradition, secrecy and faith has been lost. Too much indolence is enjoyed by the houses of Osha. Money is the great corrupter, and there is too much money nowadays involved in Santeria. One feels that one is buying an Orisha instead of receiving it with all the blessings it should carry. The readings have been so misinterpreted that whoever comes to a reading with any of the divination methods in Santeria feels it is the remedy and the solution to their problems. The reality of the readings is: readings-consulting the oracle of Ifa or your protecting god is only to hear their advice to the particular situation you are confronted with....The final decision is yours.

Those of us who still believe in Osha-Santeria, who still see it as religion-way of life might not be that many, but we sure are making the biggest efforts to keep within the Tradition. (perhaps this book is one of those efforts)...And yet, in spite of all the criticism, of all the misconceptions, all the misuse, all the bad press, all the exploitation, of all the money makers who consider the religion as a way to make an easy living exploiting human faith, misery, despair, hope...despite all that, somehow the religion grows more each day, not anymore a religion of the ignorant Negro or the exiled uneducated islanders.... Now it speaks "American"! Now it is for African Americans, Latinos and Anglos alike! Now in some mysterious ways (maybe the gods had something to do with it) has penetrated the American way of life. It is here. So you may as well know as much about it as you can.....I will give you as much as I know, and maybe you Americans with your high respect for religion will bring it back to what it once was, back to its roots, to its origins.

## THE ORISHAS



## Chapter

- 4 -

### The Main Gods Vested in Osha

*Olorun: The Supreme God:* Not vested.

**O**lorun, God who reigns in the heavens, is often thought of as a king, whose chiefs and officials are his children or creations, the lesser gods (the Orisha). Like earthly chiefs these gods had their particular responsibilities in running the world. No one worships *Olorun* directly. He is a rather distant God who makes his wishes known and accepts offerings only through lesser gods in the same way a king acts and must be approached through his chiefs and officials.

*Olorun* himself gives every person his destiny, from which there is no escape. Before birth the persons spirit kneels before *Olorun* and chooses his destiny with *Olorun's* approval. To bring himself good fortune a person would make offerings of food and wine to his own head, and as a way to remember what they asked of *Olorun* before coming to Earth. This offering was a reaffirmation of his personal destiny. In the houses of Osha in the United States and most of the Caribbean, this old tradition has been discontinued. What is called a cleansing or offering to the head spirit of the newly initiated is what takes place during the ceremony of vestment.

*Olorun* has no followers. No one is considered a priest of this Almighty and faraway Orisha.



***Eshu-Eleggua: The Messenger:***

***Eleggua, the messenger god.*** *Olorun's* wishes are carried out on Earth by *Eshu-Legba*, who rewards or punishes people, depending on whether they please or displease the gods, himself included.

Everyone prays and makes offerings to him, for unless he is treated well he may cause trouble between them and the Orishas. Usually there is a simple altar, or small wood cabinet build behind the Osha followers house door. Very few people keep it outside, by the front of the house inside a small shrine, or they may have it both ways: one outside, one inside.

There are twenty-one different paths to go to *Eshu-Eleggua*. Twenty one known to us, although it is said that his paths may be as many as one hundred and one, and no priest of Osha can know them all, including those vested with *Eleggua*. Each has its own name and way to prepare it. In Cuba, and the Caribbean islands you would find its representation in many crossroads, or street corners where accidents had taken place. People would make offerings there in order to appease him. Any child who was hyperactive (whether involved in the religion or not) was called a son of *Eleggua*. In the old days the child was really a spoiled brat allowed to do whatever he pleased. That is how much respect *Eleggua* commanded.

Of all the Osha deities, *Eleggua-Eshu* is special among the practitioners of the religion. He is the number one god, the one everybody has to go to before any other Orisha. In every tale, in every story told in Santeria, *Eleggua* would be found closely associated to any of the different Orishas. He has many names, and he is known to appear in an immense variety of disguises, but his most common names are: *Eleggua* and *Eshu*. Under these names he is one and the same, to add to the confusion (typical of him) there are twenty one more, each with a name and a different way to be approached.

People who had dealt with the religion have considered him to be the equivalent of the Devil, the fact being that he is considered a devilish creature, a trickster. He has always been represented as a spoiled prince, a child capable of playing all sorts of pranks, and as one Orisha who has his good and bad sides.

It is traditional that *Eleggua* is the first to be chanted, the first for whom the drums play, the first offerings are given to him. He is the beginning and the end of everything which is done in Santeria. Without *Eleggua* no rite can commence, no rite can be ended. He is the door opener for the Orishas, you must go to him, before going to your protecting god or any other god. This deity who often times has been compared to the Devil is not and has nothing to do with the Devil, the simple reason being that such a concept did not exist among the slaves, or within their societies when they came to our country. *Eshu* serves as an explanation to the unexpected. Whenever a plan is spoiled, whenever too many things go wrong in your life, "*Eleggua* is playing tricks on you, so you better appease him". The closest the religion would come to the concept of the Devil would be found in an old tale related to a minor character named *Olosi*, who has no cult or followers and is very little known in the Osha society.

The most common names by which *Eleggua-Eshu* is known are the following:

<b>Ananaki</b>	<b>Eshe-rike</b>
<b>Okobere</b>	<b>Marimaye</b>
<b>Laguana</b>	<b>Mako-bike</b>
<b>Laroye</b>	<b>Bracken</b>
<b>Batieyo</b>	<b>Ko-lo-oya</b>
<b>Odemassa</b>	<b>Ausuayu</b>
<b>Lakiyi</b>	<b>Bati-eyo</b>
<b>Belenke-Ibori</b>	<b>Lele</b>
<b>Eshubbi</b>	<b>Bara-Iye</b>
<b>Akokorobiya</b>	<b>Aba-Nuke</b>
<b>Olon-ki</b>	

**Oguanileble**  
**Elua-Sama**  
**Ewe-Eggue**  
**Ayeru**



Left: Eshu wood carving with typical hairdo (Nigeria)

**Kikeno**  
**Laroye-ako**  
**Meri-le-leye**



Right: Eshu-Layiki wood carving

### **Ananaki**

The only time it is represented as a female, and as such is the mother who gives birth to the main seven *Eshu*

### **Okobere**

This is the one who controls life and death (more so than *Oya*). Nothing is born or dies without his permission.

### **Laguana**

The one which is full of pep, he is everywhere, always laughing and playing pranks. Loves sweets, candy, fruits, honey, pop corn with honey on top.

### **Laroye**

This one is a warrior and a dancer. He is more of an adult, a youngster, a child who loves loud music and things with bright colors. He likes to masquerade as a mouse and scare women as such. He can start a fight in a second, anyplace, any time.

### **Batieyo**

Can make all kinds of weird noises to distract you. He can create confusion any place he likes. It is said "he is the end to all things'.

### **Odemassa**

Extremely fickle: he can be your friend today and your enemy tomorrow. He can be very indifferent to your offerings, or shower you with gifts and money. He could bring love to your life, or take it away. People who fall out of grace with their lovers, put the blame on him.

**Lakiyi**

Very sexual. He is represented as a child with a large penis. Your sex life will go either good or bad according to the way you treat him.

These are the seven principal *Eleggua*; they have twenty one more minor paths. The offerings to them varies, but the most common are: a young rooster, bush rats (agguti-jutia), baby goat, young bullock. His taboos are: hens and pigeons. Always keep candies, smoked fish, a pot with honey, and rum next to the stone which symbolizes him. The following are the ones I know.

**Belenke-Ibori**

He cannot be placed where there are children, he gets jealous of them. In this path he is represented with the body of a child and an old man's face. He likes cigars, and palm wine. Loves a mixture of rum and brown sugar. His offerings of food have to be cooked with lots of corozo lard. You'll find him living in the garbage sites, because he eats everything you throw away. Bush rats are his preferred meal. He is a healer and one legend has him healing his father (*Baba Olofin*) with a potion made of twenty one different herbs, young roosters, blood and honey. He would not eat, so his father could have his rooster and be cured from whatever ailed him. When Baba recovered he ordered that only young roosters were to be given to *Belenke* as his meal before any other Orisha was to eat chicken or young rooster.

**Eshubbi**

He lives in the crossroads, in the street corners of any city where he can cause accidents when he is upset. So it is considered a good thing to drop a few candies or pennies on the busiest street corners of your town to keep him happy. He is extremely devilish and closely related to *Laguana*. He is in charge of picking up the spirit of the newly dead, and take it to the master of the

land of the dead. When he wishes to protect someone, he is the best ally you may have. He walks with the sacred twins *Ibeyi*.

**Akokorobiya**

The youngest of all *Eshu* who loves to be spoiled by people. It is said that he is so playful that he forgets to go to work for you. Likes to play with children and will appear to them disguised as a small monkey or a dog.

**Olon-ki**

Much like *Akokorobiya*, with the difference that this one can be nasty and extremely spoiled. He is blamed for all the bad things an adult or a child could do. He may be appeased with an offering of drum music.

**Oguanileble**

Blame him for everything that goes wrong at work, fights in market places, fights at home, on the streets. He loves a fight especially when people have too much to drink. That is why he is close to *Oggun*. No one knows exactly how to appease him, but we do know that he likes to drink all kinds of alcoholic beverages.

**Elua-Sama**

You cannot look at him. He is a warlock, he can bewitch anyone he so wishes. He could cause all kinds of maladies to you if you look at the place he inhabits. Only the few people who posses this *Eshu* is allowed every once in a while to look into his shrine, they make offerings to him walking backwards, and cover his shrine with palm fibers, or red and black pieces of cloth embroidered with red and black beads. It is not kept inside the house.

**Ewe-Eggue**

Lives in the flat lands, not too far from the bush country. On the road from Ife to Oshogbo in Nigeria, I could see carvings the size of a person symbolizing this type of *Eleggua*. In Cuba, when I was a child I remember seeing small wood or stone statues of a child dressed in red and black, on the roads that conduced from the sugar fields to what was years back the slaves barracks. They were kept in pretty good condition by the sugar cane growers, due to respect to both new and old traditions and to *Eleggua* itself. Nowadays the best way to please him is with an offering of bush rat.

**Ayeru**

In every pataki that I was told when I was a novice, this particular *Eshu* seemed to be closely associated to *Orunmila*. He is represented as the best friend Ifa may have. In the old houses of Osha in Cuba, every priest of Ifa made sure he had one of these. He is usually placed next to the *Ozain* staff which every Babalawo posses. It is kept inside a small dried calabash and it may be the only one to whom pigeons are offered.

**Eshe-rike**

Made out of dried herbs and mud. Associated to the god *Osain*.

**Marimaye**

He is considered the oldest of them all, and therefore the wisest. Lives by the house door, either inside or outside. People make offerings to him at the cemetery's entrance. The old Santeros said he is very, very bad, very, very old and not that wise. He is difficult to please. The truth is that he is old, deaf, and bad tempered. Not many people like to deal with him.

**Mako-bike**

His spirit lives inside the dry coconuts. Likes to steal from the Orishas. Always gets what he wants no matter what it takes. Offer him pieces of coconuts with honey.

**Bracken**

Lives in the bushes where he jumps at people disguised as a rat just to scare you, especially women. That is the reason no women should have one of these in her house. In Cuba, and here, people go to the bushes where they offer him a bush rat (aguti).

**Ko-lo-oya**

Shares the market place with the goddess Oya. Shop owners keep a small stone with two faces and four ears made of cowry shells so they can see and hear everything that is happening. Every morning they make him an offering of different sweets so the business goes well. This particular *Eshu* is not kept in the houses of Osha, but rather only by merchants at their place of business.

**Ausuayu**

He who go marching forward *su yu* (go forward). It is placed in front of the house rooted tightly by the door, so no one can move him. Chicken offerings are made to him on the third day of every month. He is there to chase away evil spirits and unwanted visitors.

**Bati-eyo**

One of the better known of *Eshu* paths. He is a warrior and a great defender of children, he is considered to be always on the look out, a sentinel of the homes. We were told by our elders: *Batieyo* can destroy your enemies in a flash. You will find bullets, guns, arrows, and large sharp pieces of metal placed next to him

by those who have one of these *Eshu*.

### **Lele**

He masquerades as a dog. He is closely associated to *Babalawo*. Offerings are made to him at the hospitals because it is said that he is a healer of unknown skin diseases. In the old leprosy hospital known as El Rincon outside of Havana, you could see the offerings made to both Saint Lazarus, and to *Eshu-Lele*. His offerings are simple: roasted dry corn, wine or rum, a candle and a clay pot filled with honey and mustard. Every once in a while he will accept a chicken as offering.

### **Bara-Iye**

"A good ally of *Shango*". They go to war together, they dance together, they enjoy the same zest for life, same fondness for a good meal and a good fight. Any priest of *Shango* can prepare one of these *Eshu* and place it in the house of his followers for good luck and protection. His offerings are: sweets made out of corn flour, biscuits with honey, sweet apples, and a young rooster.

### **Aba-Nuke**

He is *Orunmila's* secretary and therefore a good diviner. He is represented by a small stone sculpture with four faces, mainly found at the entrance of small towns outside the province of Cardenas, Cuba. Nowadays you will see it in some *Babalawo*'s houses as a rather small wood carving with the same four faces each symbolizing the main four Orishas: *Orunmila-Orula*, *Obatala*, *Eleggua* and *Shango*. Before going to *Orunmila* you have to offer *Aba Nuke* a small chicken.

### **Male**

Another one of the so called *Babalawo's* *Eshu*. Legend

it that he was chosen by *Olorun* to give *Orula* the sixteen kola nuts as part of his divination tools. *Olorun* told him to show *Orula* where to find the kola nuts and to use them with the *Ifa* tablets. Only the *Babalawos* know its secrets and how to prepare them. Only the *Babalawo* can place one of these *Eshu* at your home.

### **Kikeno**

Very mysterious, always hiding in secret places, so he is hard to find. The way to find him is with an offering of a young goat, and lots of *Ashere* (small marraca) rattling. The old women said he was used mostly for witchcraft.

### **Laroye-ako**

Same *Eshu Laroye*. It is the most used of all *Eleggua*. He is symbolized by a small stone whose face is made of cowry shells, and on the top of it has one African parrot tail feather, and a sharp tiny blade. Offerings are made to him every Monday and they vary from sweets, to coffee, to rum, to chickens.

### **Meri-le-leye**

Has four ears, four eyes, four mouths. Rules the four cardinal points of Earth. Inhabits the winds, especially those which causes storm, hurricanes, tornadoes. All natural disasters are blamed on him. You will find this *Eshu* among sugar cane and tobacco growers who make sure he is given an offering before planting and harvesting. He is offered three chickens, one goat, palm oil, smoked aguti, or bush rat. He is made on a sea stone, to which the ears, mouth and eyes are added by making them out of sea shells. It is placed by the roadside at the entrance of the fields.

### **The Birth of Eleggua**

Who knows when?.... I was told it happened when the gods lived on Earth.

In an African village there was a couple named *Okubere* and *Ananaki*, this man *Okubere*, was rich and powerful, but luck was not with him. He had not been blessed with an heir. He was a king without children. As the years passed, and since his wife could not give him a son, she said to him one day, You are a rich and powerful king, but as you can see, I have not been able to bear you any children. I shall go to the home of my parents, this will allow you to bring in a new wife who will give you an heir to the throne.

*Okubere* told her there was no need to do that, because he loved her very much and did not want to have more than one wife. He continued saying to her to stay in the palace, and if it was the will of *Olorun* that they did not have children, he would accept it. *Ananaki* did not reply. She decided that night to go far away, so far that her husband could not find her. So, when the Moon was at its highest, she gathered her belongings and walked slowly out of the palace. She kept her back towards *Nana buruku* (the Moon) so she could not see where she was going.

She walked and walked until she was really tired. She arrived at a crossroads in a place she had never been before. There was a beautiful coconut palm tree, she sat under it to rest for awhile...this was such a peaceful place...she could recover her strength and go on walking. She sat and rubbed her back against the tree. At that moment, a coconut fell to her feet; it was a big coconut, larger than usual which shone with a strange light. As she was thirsty, she opened it and drank abundantly from its fresh water. After a while, *Ananaki* fell asleep.

*Ananaki, Ananaki*, she heard a voice calling her. She looked around and saw it was the coconut tree who was calling her. Listen well, you have drunk the water from my fruit *Obi*. His water will make you bear children, more than one; but the first child you will consecrate to me. He will be beautiful and intelligent. If after three days of his birth you don't make an offering to me, I shall take him away from you.

*Ananaki* woke up. The dream had impressed her extremely but she arose and decided to continue her journey. She couldn't walk for long, the memory of her husband, the village people and the vivid dream gave her a strong urge to return to her village.

*Okubere* was sitting on a mat, crying. Two days had passed since he lost his wife and no one had seen her or heard from her. They searched and searched in vain, *Ananaki* had disappeared. The king was in great sorrow and would not move from the mat where he was sitting, then he heard a great noise outside the house, he lifted his head, and saw his wife coming through the door. She had a strange glow in her eyes, they seemed to be brighter than ever. They embraced with tears of joy coming down their cheeks. That night, there was a great rejoicing in the village because of the happy return of *Ananaki*, when the feast was over, both man and wife retired, *Ananaki* told her dream to *Okubere*, who agreed that if they had a child, they would bring an offering to the coconut tree.

Time passed, and to *Okubere* and *Ananaki* a child was born, they called him *Eleggua*. They were filled with so much happiness by this birth that neither one remembered the dream *Ananaki* had, or the promise they had made. *Eleggua* grew handsome and playful. When he was old enough he was given a servant, who would follow him everywhere. One day *Eleggua* went hunting with his servant when suddenly they found themselves at a crossroads where they had never been. *Eleggua* stopped, and his servant saw him kneeling three times. The last time he kneeled, he picked something from the ground. An object had caught his attention. The servant was amazed that *Eleggua* would bend and pick up anything from the ground. He was so amazed because this was a proud and spoiled child who would not kneel for even the king, his father. This child would not do anything for himself least of all pick up anything from the floor. The servant got closer and could see this was a rather large coconut. The moment *Eleggua* took it in his hands, a strange light came out of it. The servant was surprised again, this time because the prince was showing

fear, which was something he had never shown either before in his life. How could a coconut inspire respect in this spoiled young child?

*Eleggua* took the strange coconut to his house, against the servants advice who told the king and all the people in the village what had taken place at the crossroads. No one believed him, including *Eleggua's* parents who had completely forgotten Ananaki's dream. *Eleggua* played with the coconut for a while, and tiring of it threw it behind the palace door and left it there.

One day there was a feast at the royal palace to celebrate a good harvest and the admission of the prince *Eleggua* to the village secret society. Suddenly, the coconut that was behind the door began to fire rays of light in every direction. Everyone was horrified and ran out the palace. Three days later, *Eleggua* became ill and died.

During all the time the vigil lasted, the coconut remained shining without anyone daring to get close to it. The coconut was feared, and at the same time inspired respect.

After the prince's death the people went through much hardship: there were no fish in the river, no fruit on the trees, nothing planted would grow, women would have children no more. It did not rain, the goats were thin and dying, there was no milk for the children and hardly any water to drink. The people were desperate, so they decided to consult the village oracle who told them they were being punished because they had abandoned the coconut left by *Eleggua* and the forgotten promise made by the king to the coconut tree. They went to where the coconut was and found it to be empty, eaten by small animals and insects. They consulted the oracle again who told them to replace the coconut with a river stone which would be *Eleggua's* spirit. They gathered by the river and found a large stone which Ananaki and Okubere felt was inhabited by *Eleggua*. It was washed with twenty one different herbs and offerings of chickens and small goat was made,

after, it was placed inside a clay pot by the palace door. The oracle was consulted and it was in agreement that the proper sacrifices had been made and *Eleggua* was now inside the stone. They were told to use the coconut as an ally to *Eleggua* and to bring offerings every once in a while to the coconut tree where they could also find *Eleggua's* spirit.

Once they complied with all that was requested of the Orisha, the village began to prosper again and many children were born to Ananaki as well as to the rest of the village women.

And this is what we still do today. This is why we say: iku levi Osha *Eleggua*. which means: the ghost of *Eleggua* gave birth to the Orisha. Without his spirit there is no Orisha. This is why *Eleggua* always should be made out of stone, and the coconut used for asking questions to Orisha.

This is the true story of how *Eleggua* was born. This is the first story to be learned when it is time to be vested with Orisha.

### Eshu and the Old Witch

There was once an old witch, who had seven young daughters; all very beautiful girls.

It was said that anyone who spent a night with any one of them would be eaten by the witch. The reason being, as you well know, that it is the nasty habit of all witches to eat human meat and to make soup with your blood and your bones.

In the country where this old witch lived, there were also eight brothers, of whom the smallest was named *Eshu*. This youngster was famous all over the place because he was always playing nasty pranks on people.

One day, *Eshu* told his brothers to go and spend the night with the witch's daughters. They answered him by laughing and

telling him that he was crazy. *Eshu*, don't you know that everyone who has been a lover of these girls has never been seen again? Asked one of the brothers.

Do as I tell you... do not be afraid... it is time to get rid of the old witch.

Following *Eshu* reluctantly, the brothers went to the old witch's house, who gave them a great welcome and prepared an exquisite meal for all. After the banquet she said, go now, and each of you choose any one of my daughters. You will find in them a pleasant companion for the night.

The seven oldest brothers went.

*Eshu*, who had not been offered anything asked. What is the matter with me grandmother, where will I sleep?... shall I sleep with you?

Yes, was the old woman's answer.

The boys went to the girls' cabin. The witch and *Eshu* remained in the house. They went to bed together staying close to each other.... About midnight, the old woman coughed a little bit to see if *Eshu* was sleep. He didn't speak, he didn't move. Then the witch got up and when she did, *Eshu* said, What is the matter grandmother, where are you going?

Oh, but you are awake little one!

Yes, I never fall asleep until my mother gets a basket full of water and throws it at my head.

The old woman took a basket and went to the well to fill it with water; but when she was coming back to the house, the basket emptied. She went back again to the well and filled the basket with water, with the same result, the basket emptied before she

got to the house. All night long she tried to fill the basket with water... Morning came with the witch going back and forth to the well.

Early the following night, the brothers went to sleep with the girls, and *Eshu* with the old woman who, being so tired from the night before, fell deeply asleep. When *Eshu* heard her snoring, he touched her, kicked her a little bit in the butt, pulled her hair and coughed out loud. The woman did not move one inch from her side of the bed. He arose and went to each of the cabins whispering to his brothers. Take the witch's daughters' place, where they are sleeping now, you sleep, but first, cover the girl with your blanket.

*Eshu* went back to the house and got in bed next to the woman. Some time, late during the night the witch awoke. She coughed, walked around the house and made all sorts of noises, but *Eshu* wouldn't move an eyelash. Being convinced he was sound asleep, she took a knife and went from cabin to cabin, cutting the throat of all those which were covered with a blanket. She came back to the house satisfied and began to prepare a sauce made of blood. When she was about to eat what she had prepared, *Eshu* pretended to wake up and said: Mother, I want to taste what you are cooking, it smells so good it has awakened me.

Are you sure you want to taste this?

Yes, I do.

Come and look, it is made out of human blood.

Pretending not to be impressed he said: I like human blood... it is so delicious!

After they finished the meal, they went to bed again. Happy and satisfied, the witch began to snore real soon. *Eshu* went back to his brothers and told them: "Run fast away from here. The



moment the witch finds out what she has done, she will kill all of you for sure". Saying this, he went back to the house and laid next to the old woman.

Early in the morning they both woke up and the witch said: Go see if your brothers have awakened already, so they can have breakfast.

*Eshu* came back and told her: "No, they are still sleep".

A little time passed, and the woman asked: "What are your brothers doing now?"

"Oh, I believe they left a long time ago... But your daughters are sleeping for ever."

Saying the last words, *Eshu* ran out of the house so fast that the old witch could not see his feet touching the ground.

Suspecting that something had gone wrong, the witch went to her daughters' cabins. To her horror, she learned of the trick *Eshu* had played on her. Full of anger, she swore revenge.

This witch of all witches had the ability to transform herself into whatever she wanted. She went to *Eshu's* village and began to watch it from not too far a distance. After awhile she saw that the village had no Eucalyptus tree, the people had to go far to gather the leaves with which to season their meals. At night she transformed herself into a huge Eucalyptus tree. When morning came, all the villagers rejoiced with this miracle. They would not have to walk long distances to be able to cook their dinners properly. Immediately, some of the village children began to climb the tree and play on it. *Eshu* was among those who were in the field, but he went to play with other children saying: "What is this? ... Since when does a tree grow overnight, like a mushroom?"

"We most certainly do!" answered the tree. "If you want to

play on my branches, you are welcome". And one of the branches extended itself to him.

"Oh, oh, he said. A Eucalyptus tree that speaks and bends itself, makes me think there is something strange going on here".

He walked fast away from it and said to the children, "If you want to climb and play on it, it is fine with me; but as far as I am concerned, I am getting out of here. I'll go join other children".

The tree shook in anger and disappeared, taking with it all the children who had climbed on it.

The witch thought that the children's parents would send *Eshu* to the rescue. She was rejoicing thinking about the revenge she had prepared for him... But he never came.

One morning, behind the village, the few children left, saw a donkey which was loose and wandering around the yam fields. As they had nothing better to do, they decided to ride him and invited *Eshu* to climb on the donkey's back. When he was about to do so, and because the donkey's back was already full of children, the donkey graciously expanded its back so he could climb on it.

"No, no" said *Eshu*, this donkey must belong to the same family as the Eucalyptus tree". He left without getting close to the animal.

The donkey disappeared, taking the rest of the children with him. Now the mothers were really upset. They were in pain and suffering and of course blaming *Eshu*. They told him, you who are so smart, you who always play tricks on people, it is your fault the witch took our children. You bring our children back, or we will twist your neck.

*Eshu* put his hands on his neck, swallowed and promised he would bring them back.

Next morning he left carrying with him three things; lots of dried beef, smoked fish and a leather bag full of candies.

It was a fact little known that the witch had one remaining daughter; a small girl about the same age and height of *Eshu*. She also had a cow which was about to calf. As she was beginning to fear *Eshu*, she said to the cow, Cow, (that was her name) "cow, if you have a red calf, it will mean *Eshu* is hiding inside of it, so cow, be a good cow and keep him away from you."

The calf was born all white, and the witch had no doubt this was a legitimate son of the cow. But, *Eshu* was smarter than what the old woman believed, he was already hidden inside the cows' belly when the witch talked to her, and he came out as an all white calf.

Like the rest of the calves, it was soon loose and running in the fields. One day the white calf passed the place where the children were kept prisoners and approaching them said, when the old witch takes food to the rest of the cattle, you all grab me by the ears and by the tail, climb on me and hold tight because I am going to take you home.

The first chance he had, he took the children with him back to the village. He left them at a crossroads right by the town's entrance. Then he went to the middle of the road and assumed his normal appearance. He saw the witch coming and did not move from where he was. The witch jumped and captured him cursing in language which cannot be reproduced here. We do not know whether he was captured, or he allowed himself to be captured. The thing is that she put him inside a goatskin bag which she made sure was tightly closed, and then, she put it inside another goatskin bag making it more tight. She repeated this process three times.

The old witch took the bag to her house, and told her daughter to watch the bag carefully while she went to the back yard to

dig a deep hole to bury it. While the witch was outside, the little girl heard a voice coming out the bundle which sounded like someone chewing on something which smelled very good. Filled with curiosity she asked: "Whos in there?... What are you eating...?"

"I have here, with me, the sweetest candy in the world, the best dried meat and the most delicious smoked fish anyone has ever tasted".

"Please, give me some". cried the girl.

"How can I give you anything?... I am inside this bag all tied up; but if you let me loose a little bit, maybe I could give you something which would be very, very tasty".

The foolish girl opened the bag, *Eshu* grabbed her, undressed her, and put her in his place. He put on the girls clothing and left, on his way out, he passed close by the witch without being recognized.

The old women filled the hole with dry wood and set it on fire. When the fire was at its peak, she went to the bag and picked it up. At that moment she heard a weak voice say, "Mother be careful, *Eshu* tricked me. It is your daughter inside this bag".

"Yes, yes," said the witch. I heard that song before. I know you pretty well. You say you are my daughter, but no one is going to save you from being roasted.

She took the bag and dumped it into the fire.

The old woman sat by the fire and laughed with satisfaction. She had triumphed! She was able to conquer *Eshu*... Joy is something old witches cannot afford when dealing with *Eshu*. Over her laughter and the crackling of the flames came a distinctive voice. "Hey, now what, you old witch?... You have killed the last of your daughters... Witchery has ended in this village".

The witch fell to the ground screaming in despair.

She sat in the middle of the road, she sat for such a long time thinking how to avenge herself again that she turned into a large dark stone.

It is said that she is still there thinking, thinking, thinking...

### Eshu-Legba

The *Fon* people from Dahomey who are related to the Yorubas, borrowed the divination system from their neighbors, as well as the cult of *Eshu-Eleggua*. *Ifa* was changed to *Fa*, and *Eshu* became *Legba*. This reality is proven by the following tale.

At the very beginning of everything *Legba* lived on Earth with God, and would act on his behalf. Sometimes God would ask him to do something mischievous to the people that inhabited the planet. It got to the point that he was blamed for everything evil that happened to their lives, but for the good deed which he did, only God was given thanks. *Legba* was tired of this situation and asked God why he was always blamed for the evil that fell upon the people and never for the good things when he *Legba*, was only carrying out his commands. God replied that a King should always be thanked for the good deeds, and his servants for the bad ones.

God owned a yam farm which gave the biggest yams of the region. *Legba* told God that thieves were plotting to rob him of all his yams. Taking his servant words seriously, God called on all men and issued a warning that whoever was caught stealing from his farm, would be severely dealt with. During the night *Legba* went into God's house, took his sandals, put them on, and went to the yam farm where he stole them all.

Being that it had rained recently, the prints were left clearly on the clay that surrounded the farm.

Early the next morning, *Legba* reported the robbery, saying that it should be easy to find the thief, all they had to do was to follow the prints left on the clay. The men were called but no sandal would fit the prints left by the thief, so no one was accused of robbery. The prints were too big. No one had such big feet. Only God may have such large sandals, *Legba* suggested that maybe God had taken the yams while He was asleep. God denied that such an outrage was possible and accused *Legba* of playing one of his usual tricks. People did not accept this explanation and asked Him to try his sandals against the prints, He agreed to do so and when He placed them in their place, they fit perfectly.

The people shouted, God has stolen from his own farm.

God responded, It is a trick from *Legba*.

The story teller continued saying that day God suffered a great humiliation and decided to go far away in the sky. He moved to the Heavens, away from Earth, accepting that *Legba* was so smart that he had outwitted Him, told *Legba* to stay on this planet and report to Him every night what had transpired on earth. God told the people they should talk first to *Legba* who in turn would talk to Him....And that is why everybody goes to *Legba's* shrine.

### How to Prepare an Eleggua

Most people are initiated into the Osha religion-society when after a reading of the cowry shells, they are told they have to receive (be given) *Eleggua* for their protection, and or to propitiate changes in their lives which could be from business to love. Most of the times the reasons are economic, but the emotional and well being of the individual is not overlooked.

There are several ways to prepare an *Eleggua*. The simplest can be made in the following fashion, using any of these items:

A stone taken from the sea, about three to four pounds.

A large sea shell, between three and twelve inches in height.

A stone taken from a crossroads, four to five pounds, but it can be bigger and heavier.

A branch from a poplar tree about five feet long, between five and six inches thick. It has to be allowed to dry under the sun for about two weeks before being used.

The most common one is made out of a mixture of crossroads earth, mud, cement and cowry shells. The cowry shells are placed in a way which would resemble a face. This type of sea shell is the same one used for readings.

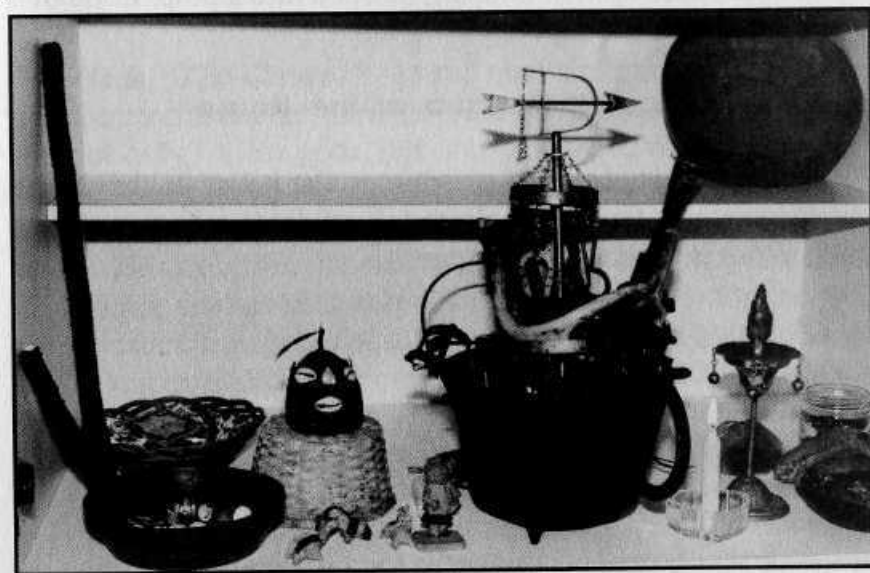
Once you know which *Eleggua's* path you will be working with (it is done by "asking" Orisha with the coconut shells. See coconut readings), you proceed to "load the secret", and wash it with "Omiero" (see Omieros). At the end, you will have to roll the coconut shells again and ask Orisha if everything is satisfactory. If the answer is yes, do the ritual offerings (see *Eleggua* offering). If not, keep asking and adding a bit more of everything until you have the "yes" answer.

The normal load of any *Eleggua* are placed inside the bottom part of it. You do it by drilling a small hole no more than two inches wide by four inches deep. Then, filled it with a bit of earth from a market place, a graveyard, a bank, and a crossroads deep in the forest, or inside a farm. It needs *Ashe* which can be bought in any botanica in any major city in the US. Botanicas are "religious" stores that specialize in Afro-Caribbean articles related to Santeria. *Ashe* consist of seeds and nuts brought from Nigeria. Add: three small black grains of "guinea" pepper, three pieces of smoked fish, dry smoked bush rat, seven dry herb (any seven of the herbs attributed to him would do) mashed and mixed with honey and corozo lard to make a small ball. If you wish you may add three pieces of gold, or silver. Place everything inside the hole and seal it with cement. On the top of what would be this

new *Eleggua*, insert a small sharp blade (usually made out an iron nail) about two inches and slightly bend towards the back, tie a small African parrot tail feather to it with red cotton thread. Make sure the "crown" stays firmly in place by sealing it with cement. The next step is to wash it again with Omiero, this time together with the warriors *Oggun, Osun, Oshosi*.

The logical question would be: what are the warriors?

The warriors *Oggun, Osun, Oshosi* are symbolized, the first by a set of nine to twenty one small farming tools made of iron, and three black stones placed inside an iron pot. *Osun* is an object made of tin which looks like an inverted cup sustained by a rod and a round base. It is hollow inside and closed by a plate with a rooster on top which serves as the lid cover. Inside of the top, the *Ashe*, or charge, or secret is placed. *Oshosi* is an iron bow with an arrow which is set inside *Oggun's* iron pot. This, together with *Eleggua* constitute a set of warriors.



Santeria: "Warriors Set" Eleggua, Oggun's pot with Oshosi on top and Osun (right)

*Osun's* load, (secrets) are the following:  
Ashe of *Orunmila*. It is a powder made mostly of dry yams and a few herbs made by the Babalawo.

Eight small balls made out of cotton. This has to be from the cotton plant.

A small amount of dry roasted corn.

Ashe: Eru, Obi, Kola, Ossu.

Few hairs from the top of the head of the person receiving it.

A bit of corozo lard, and a bit of honey.

Eight pieces cocoa butter.

Seven herbs used in Omiero, mashed into a pulp. Enough is made to fill the cup.

### Placing Elegua at the House

Bring the whole set of warriors to the house of the person about to receive them, and do the ritual ceremony close to the door. What is needed that day are:

A young rooster.

One pigeon.

One candle.

Corozo lard and honey.

Rum.

Corn flour.

One set of dry coconut shells for a reading (see reading with coconut shells).

Candies.

First: sacrifice the rooster to *Elegua*.

Second: sacrifice the pigeon to Oshosi being careful that no blood from the pigeon spills over to *Elegua*.

Make three balls of corn flour by mixing it with honey until you have a paste thick enough to make the balls. Place them in a plate with the candies next to *Elegua*. Fill your mouth with rum and blow it on top of *Elegua*, pour corozo lard and honey on it, pull feathers from the rooster and place them all over him; the feathers from the pigeon go on top of *Osun*. Light a candle next to them and proceed to do the reading of the coconut shells. If everything is satisfactory, leave everything by their side until the candle dies out. Clean them with plain water (no detergent please). Place it behind the door and every Monday make an offering of sweets and light a candle next to it.

### Obatala

*He is "The Creator"*. In the rituals of pure Cuban Sante-ria, *Obatala* created life, gave life to all the Orishas. He symbolizes life, not only for the gods, but mankind also. When *Olodumare* created Earth and gave life to everything which is alive in this planet, the first thing He did was to make *Obatala* in His semblance. He was given the task to watch over all living creatures. He is King, and as such responsible before *Olorun* for the well being, justice, and peace of all His subjects. Darkness and Light are his responsibilities. He created the albinos which eventually became the white man. He mediates (more than *Orunmila*) among the Orishas when they quarrel, actually He refers them to *Orunmila*, for judgment but the final reward or punishment is up to Him.

He built the first castle which contained sixteen windows, sixteen windows for the main sixteen Orishas. He presides over every household and does His utmost to get a decent, clean house

for you to live in. That is the reason why people in need of housing, health, justice and peace will go to Him. He is all purity, cleanliness and spirituality. His garments are immaculate white and has very little tolerance for rudeness, untidiness, and disobedience. Takes special care of lamed, disabled, old people. It is said that sometimes He disguises himself as either one of those people to see how the rest of the people treats them, accordingly, will give reward.

One *pataki* says that when *Olokun* tried to submerge Earth in water (perhaps a reference to the Deluge) because the people were dumping all their garbage at sea, *Obatala* bound her with silver chains to the bottom of the sea until she placated her ire.

*Obatala* is the only Orisha who speaks in all sixteen signs of the *Dillogun* oracle.

No matter which Orisha the priest-priestess of Osha may be vested with, they have to really lean, rely on *Obatala* for wisdom and as a peacemaker with his particular Orisha. *Eleggua*, who is always the first to be chanted and to be given offerings, will not hesitate to pay homage to Him.

As *Obatala* is the Orisha who is constantly passing judgment on us while here on Earth, a priest of Osha should exercise extreme care not to make fun of people who are handicapped, not to do harm to others, or break the laws of Osha, nor to use witchcraft for any reason whatsoever, to keep the family together, not to have any vices, and be faithful to his-her spouse. His punishment will be severe, and his rewards will be abundant if these simple rules are followed.

He watches over people in hospitals, prisons, and together with *Oshosi*, the courts of law. He is patron Orisha to doctors, lawyers, engineers, and to anyone who has to use his head a lot to earn a living. His-her priest-priestess are stubborn, extremely meticulous who demand perfection of almost everything and ev-

eryone they get involved with. Many times they have been accused of being cold because they love cold food and they act as if they are indifferent to sex and love expressions. The truth is that they are benevolent and go out of their way to help others. They are forgiving and positive people who would give you the shirt off their backs. They can certainly expect to be rewarded with unkindness, for as the history of *Obatala's* life goes, so theirs. In most of his *pataki*s He is always done wrong by the same people He had helped.

*Obatala's* adornments or "tools" are kept inside a ceramic or silver bowl. They are all made of silver and consists of the following:

Eight small white stones, and a large one which represents Oke a minor deity and a famous rock- mountain in Yorubaland.

One small silver cane (about three inches) with a closed fist hand at the end of it.

A small silver bell (about two inches) kept inside the bowl and a larger one kept outside used to "call Orisha".

Two silver bracelets: one inside the bowl, the other one to be worn on the left wrist by the Olorisha-Iyalorisha.

One half silver Moon with a woman's face.

One silver Sun with a man's face.

A silver snake set in the attack position.

A medium size ring symbolizing the Earth.

Two ceramic or marble eggs.

All this resting on white cotton inside the bowl.

His preferred food offering is made out of mashed boiled yam, or yam boiled with cocoa butter and "cascarilla" (eggshells powder) from which eight white balls are made. This also can be made to look like a tower and placed next to his bowl. His preferred sweet is rice pudding with lots of milk, sugar and no cinnamon. A glass of goat milk would be to his liking too.

His paths, or names are:

**Asho.**

**Ayai-guna.**

**Aiya-lo ua.**

**Ele-fo-uro.**

**Iye-kuo- Yeku o**

**Aguee-ma o**

**Osha ge ri yan**

**Obba Moro**

**Oro Lou.**

**Yem-bo (female and supposedly Eleggua's mother in a pataki).**

*Osha o la, Oshanla* (another female representation which is not vested, rather *Obatala* is vested, and *Oshanla* received). *Oke-Iro ko*. (it means "the sweet poplar tree on top of the mountain"). I was able to climb the *Oke* mountain, and sure thing, there is a very old sweet poplar tree on the very top of it

*Ogga-gan.*

*Yelu o.*

*Obba lo fun.* (legend tells us this was the first albino king, or the first white person on Earth).

*O lo yu-Okugni.*

In closing this brief reference to *Obatala*, let me say this: I am a priest of *Shango* (have been for many years), but although he is my patron Orisha, I have always called *Obatala* "my stepfather", for in the many occasions that I have called Him, He has been there for me, more so than *Shango* has!

### Oshun

***Oshun resides in all the rivers and lakes of the world.***

*Oshun's* other names (paths) are:

*Mamayeiyeye.*

*Kari.*

*Pahan-ra-gan.*

*Yalodde.*

*Maru.*

*Kole.*

*Aku-aro.*

*Alo-loddi.* ("apetebi *Orunmila*". His wife, and as him a great diviner).

*Ibu-Yemmu.*

*Ai-aya. Aina.*

As the myth goes, she is *Yemaya's* younger sister and lover's rival. They are often times mistaken to be one and the same, but they are completely different: *Oshun* resides in all the rivers and lakes of the world, while *Yemaya* would be found only at sea. Her last home was at *Oshogbo* in Yorubaland where the cave which served as her residence and the wall surrounding it are still intact. The entrance to this cave is of a yellowish-terra-cotta like color and it resembles a huge human face (looks like a Picasso painting). The whole area is surrounded by thick bushes and here and there you will find small stones statues of *Eshu*. A few years back you could gain access to this area only with the help of a guide, but lately the place has been opened for tourists and is a short ride from the city of *Oshogbo*. The first time I was there, it was a big taboo to take pictures inside the cave, but I understand this has changed recently. I was told that *Oshun* founded that village after her lover, and brother, *Shango* was ejected from his kingdom in *Oyo* and *Kuso*. She reigned wisely and for a long time until *Olorun* asked her to join Him by submerging herself in the rivers water. During the years she was the peoples ruler, she had many lovers, but always only one at a time. This gave foot to her legendary fame as a lover not easy to satisfy.

Her legend came to our island as the goddess of beauty, sex, music, laughter, and carnal love. She soon became patron Orisha to most of the island prostitutes. She is also the goddess who loves

gold, all sorts of jewelry, good perfume, good food, and everything which may be of excellence and in good taste. Cakes and honey are her preferred offerings and most people choose to call upon her by the rivers or lakes with an offering of such sweets.

She "owns" the lower part of women's abdomen, and in men, their entire stomach. She is considered extremely clean, therefore it is said she would scold any of her followers if they are not neat and well dressed. *Oshun* will not come to a feast offered to her, unless everyone is nicely dressed and perfumed. Her favorite color is yellow, ranging from canary yellow to bright orange. She loves fine jewelry, especially the ones made of gold. Her adornments consists of a brass crown from which five rods looking like roars, or lighting are attached. This crown could be also very elaborate containing instead the same twenty one or more tools found in *Ogguns's* pot. Next to her bowl five brass or gold bracelets and two oars are placed. Usually the brass bracelets are placed by the bowl, and the gold ones are worn by their priestess, the final object placed is a brass bell which her followers use to call her when they make any kind of offerings. She is considered a patron Orisha to all birds specially the peacock and you will see her shrine adorned with fans made out of peacock feathers.



Bronze head of a princess found near Oshogbo may be that of the Legendary Oshun (Yorubaland)

According to myth, *Oshun* was a beautiful young woman extremely aware of her beauty which she used to get all her wishes. Men submitted easily to her charms. She is extremely sensual and her dances reflect so in every movement made by the dancer. She has a contagious laughter and likes to make everyone in the Orisha's feast happy. The priestesses of *Oshun* are known to be good lovers, but a bit on the lazy side when it comes to work. They would rather rely on *Yemaya* to do most of their chores, including raising their children. She has a special bond with *Shango* and would do her utmost to please his priest, she was his lover in real life, the second wife after *Oya* and part of his tragic life until the end.

To salute her, one lays on the floor, leaning first on the right side with the right arm on the right hip, and turning to the left side in the same posture, then lay flat on your belly, arms along side the body and ring her bell gently calling upon her.

*Oshun* is the female deity, whom with *Osain*, would fight most against witchery. All her Olouo Orisha-Iyalorisha would be the ones most concerned about black magic. Although it has been said they would not hesitate to use some sort of magic to get their wishes, it would be far from being witchcraft. Her cures of illness concerning womens diseases or barrenness have always been amazing. She is the one Orisha called upon to help in cases where it is suspected that a home has been broken due to witchcraft. In these cases the works of *Oshun* are truly magnificent for no matter how involved, or how far away the spouse might have gone, *Oshun* will bring them home, especially if it is a man who had abandoned his wife and children.

*Oshun*, is considered without doubts one of the most popular Orishas (second maybe to *Shango*) in the Osha religion anywhere in the Caribbean and the US, perhaps a bit more so among the Cubans because she is compared to The Virgin of Charity (Caridad del Cobre), who is the patron saint of the Island of Cuba.



Like most Orishas, *Oshun* is also known by different path-names, each having a distinct personality in most cases, totally opposed to each other. The following ones are the most commonly known in the houses of Osha:

### ***Oshun Kole***

She is a witch in the good sense of the word, she uses her charms and beauty to conquer men. She mixes them to get whatever she wants out of most people. Under this path she is mistaken for a witch because an old tale says that once she disguised herself as a witch to free one of her lovers, who later claimed she had bewitched him. She is extremely spoiled being that under this path she is actually a teenage queen who is accustomed to do her will. She gets easily upset. Any little thing will annoy her and will cause her to act indifferently to everything and everyone which surrounds her. This particular *Oshun* can be a real pain in the rear. When she is in a good mood you get anything you want out of her, but when she is acting up, she will not pay attention to your request, no matter how many offerings you may give her. She loves being the center of attention and is the best dancer of them all. Her priestesses are notably famous for the sensual dances they perform at the playing of the drums. She can be very caring, or an extremely indifferent deity; that is why it is also said that she is either deaf or pretends to be. She does not attend much to her male children, rather she lets *Yemaya* look after them.

*Oshun Kole* flies: she does so disguised as a turkey buzzard, or flies together with them. As she is associated with this type of bird, you will find in every house of Osha where this particular *Oshun* presides, an *Iku-le* or *Ikole* which is an evil spirits repellent made out of a big cork adorned with four *Kole* (turkey buzzard) feathers and a secret load consisting of a few *Kole* bones (five), earth from a graveyard and where two rivers meet, and an African parrot red tail feather. All this is attached to a long string hanging from the ceiling at the center of the house, or by the doors entrance. It is situated in such a manner as to resemble a

ceiling fan which will move with the breeze.

Under this path her preferred color is orange-pale yellow and her priestess will dress in an off yellow color type of dress. But when they really want to confuse people, will dress in white. Even their *Oluorisha-Iyalaorisha* show respect for this *Oshun*, who like all *Oshun* loves music and dancing, but who at the same time is a stern patron goddess who will not hesitate to punish those who disrespect her or her children.

### ***Ossorong***

If *Kole* is a witch-charmer, *Ossorong* is even worse. This one would really put a number on you if you cross her. She flies on a typical witch's broom. She mixes with them to get what she needs to save a lover or a daughter. She can scare the daylights out of any one who messes with her priest-priestess. One *pataki* says that she made a pact with *Iku* (death) to use him against her enemies. She can be a true enchantress who uses all of the eroticism known to *Oshun* to her advantage. I have never seen a priestess of *Ossorong* who was not extremely beautiful and with a body to match the face. It is too easy to fall in love with this *Ossorong*, who in spite of her beauty, very seldom is happy in love. She is the one most sought after when it comes to matters of the heart. Make her the right offering and she will not disappoint you. A basket full of oranges with honey placed by a riverside will do the trick.

### ***Yemmu-Oloddi***

Old and wise, resides in the deepest part of lakes and rivers. She was a great dancer who enchanted everyone who saw her dance, but she retired after a heart break and went to live at the bottom of a lake named after her and from where she seldom comes out. Like *Kole*, she is a bit deaf (or pretends to be), so her followers use a big bronze bell to call her. When she was younger (some say she still does) she would assume the image of a young

beautiful siren to lure men to her side. She weaves magic fishermen's nets whom she gives to help with their catch. Fishermen would bring her an offering of a pumpkin filled with honey before going fishing. She is confused at times with *Yemaya*, not only because she inhabits the waters, but will combine her yellow dress with a blue cape, and at times she has been seen sitting at the bottom of the sea disguised as a mermaid. One of her favorite offerings consists of an omelet called *Oshinshin* cooked with lots of eggs, small dry shrimp, purslane and a bit of honey. This offering can be placed in front of her shrine or taken to a river or lake.

### **Kai-Odde**

My godfather use to tell me this was perhaps the most beautiful *Oshun* who ever lived on Earth. She had many lovers, but somehow never was able to keep them long enough. It seemed that men came to her attracted by her beauty only, without looking at her kind heart, the result was (and still is for her priestess) that she was a victim of love. Her laughter is a bitter laughter for she is afraid to love and be hurt. After being alone for a long time, she finally met a powerful king (*Shango*) who took her as his lover making her rich and pampering her in every way he could. She would share this wealth with the poor and would feed all who called her. This is the reason the priestess of this *Oshun*, always give so much of themselves and of whatever they may have. In the houses of Osha, she is known as "the giver". Her preferred offering is chicken soup, with purslane, onions, and cinnamon sticks.

### **Ibbu-Aku Ara**

She is either extremely irresponsible, or half crazy according to her followers. One never knows what to expect from her. She is described as a very kind goddess who would shower you with gifts, or a stingy deity who demands gifts of gold before she grants petition. She is a tall good looking women who would rather go dancing than tend to her children. She loves corn fritters and

black-eyed pea soup. *Aku Ara* presides over all the feast given to the Orishas, and like *Shango* loves a good time, good music and food. She likes to be called with a gold bell. Her adornments are made of gold rather than bronze.

### **Funke, Alo-Loddi**

She is a teacher of the art of love making. Her priestesses are very passionate women who fall in love easily. She likes to drink apple cider, palm wine, beer and champagne. She is a good diviner who at one time was romantically involved with *Orunmila* from whom she stole many secrets. Next to her bowl you will place an *Opele* which is the divination chain used by *Orunmila's* priests. Her preferred offering is black-eyed pea fritters made without salt and topped with honey.

### **Niwe**

She is found mainly in the forest and bush country. She has a vast knowledge of all the herbs from the ones that heal to the ones that kill. She shares such knowledge with *Shango* and *Osain*. Very similar to *Orisha oko* she presides over harvest festival and whatever is born of the earth. When a woman wants to have children she will go to a nearby forest and bring five pumpkins filled with honey, five different type of perfumes, five yards of yellow cloth, while ringing her bell and will call her with five or more chants. Most of the time, the wish is granted. She is considered a noble and kind deity who also is a great healer of illnesses related to the stomach. A basketfull of fruits, especially grape fruits and oranges will be of her pleasing. She loves to be called with this chant:

*Niwe o la Oshun Niwe  
mori yeye o  
aladde ko yu omi male  
eni ti eko ofidere  
Niwe, ma o mi to efun*

*eni wa Niwe o la Oshun  
Maferefun Yalodde.....Maferefun Niwe.*

### **The Legend of Oshun** (Her Birth)

And it so happened that one clear day, *Olofin* came down to Earth sitting in a canoe which without any oars, was sailing peacefully on a deep, calm, beautiful river.

And it so happened that this canoe was taken by itself far, far, far away until it came to the shores of a big village deep in the bush country.

*Olofin* got out and walked to the village, there, He greeted the people at the place where they celebrated their council and spoke to them. The people were happy because Baba *Olofin* had visited them. When He finished speaking, He got thirsty and asked for fresh water. The elder of the tribe asked a young girl to bring water to Him. When *Olofin* saw her, he fell in love with her right away. Not only was she pretty, she was very clean, her head was adorned with flowers, and she seemed very much concerned with doing her tasks correctly and tried to please Him in every way she could.

That same day, *Olofin* took her as his wife, and carried her with Him.

*Mboya Kai* (this was the girls name) never came back to the land of her birth.

And it so happened that one day, *Mboya Kai* gave birth to a girl whom they called *Oshun Omi Pashangara* in honor of the rivers village where they had met. *Oshun* grew more beautiful every day; full of laughter and contagious happiness. *Mboya Kai* loved her more than anything else in the world.

*Oshun* had very long, jet black hair. It was always adorned with yellow flowers; her wrists, hands and ankles with bracelets made of gold, the same as the crown she always kept on her head, which was made especially for her, by her mother.

*Oshun* grew, and grew each day more radiant and beautiful. *Mboya* loved her more than anything else in the whole wide world.

All the creatures of the waters, the air, and earth loved *Oshun*.

And it so happened that *Olofin* got jealous; very, very jealous... All of his wives attentions, all of the animals attentions, all of the peoples attentions, were for *Oshun*. He couldnt move his canoe in the water, because the river would not move unless *Oshun* was in the canoe. He couldn't fish because the fish would not bite unless *Oshun* asked them to do so. No bird would sing, unless she was there to hear their singing.

*Baba* was so filled with jealousy that He lost his mind completely.

One dark day so blinded and enraged, He took *Oshun* to the peak of a high mountain and threw her to the abyss.

*Oshun* fell, and fell and fell...

But do no fear.

At the foot of the cliff, there was a big river which lead to a lake so immense that its shores couldnt be seen. When *Oshun* fell, all the waters parted, all the fishes made a soft net with their bodies so she wouldnt be hurt. They took her to the deepest part of the river to a cave where an old siren named *Otoyama Olokun* resided. *Otoyama* gave her refuge and told her, you may stay here for as long as you need to be. *Olofin* will never find you here, My kingdom is your kingdom.

*Oshun* thanked her and soon was asleep. She was tired, she had suffered a great scare. All the noises from the living creatures of the waters ceased so she could have a restful and peaceful sleep. Peace reigned in all the waters. *Oshun* was safe, she had found a home!

*Olofin* had hardly finished throwing *Oshun* off the cliff when *Mboya* asked in anguish what he had done with her daughter. *Olofin* did not answer; He was like an idiot, he couldn't talk or remember what had happened. Like a mad person, *Mboya* ran to the forest in search of her daughter, calling loudly *Oshun mi... Oshun mi*.

Have you ever heard the noise the winds makes in the trees deep in the forest?

Have you ever heard the noise inside a sea shell when you place it to your ear?

Have you ever heard the noise that a river makes when it comes to the villages?

Yes!...Well, it is the voice of *Mboya* still searching for her daughter.

No mother can ever stop searching for a lost child!. No mother can ever rest until she finds her child!

And it so happened that one day *Olofin* recovered his memory, He remembered what He had done. Overtaken with remorse, he wished with all his heart that *Oshun* was alive, that he had not listened to Jealousy. He wanted to find her. He wanted her forgiveness.

He asked the Sea, "Sea, Sea, have you seen my daughter *Oshun*?"

He asked the Earth, "earth, earth, have you seen my daughter *Oshun*?"

And to the Sea, the rivers, the lakes, the trees, and all the birds and animals, to everyone he asked, all responded, "No, no, we have not seen her".

Giving up hope of ever seeing her again, *Olofin* locked himself inside a cloud and cried. He cried so much, that all of the Earth was covered with his tears. There was so much water coming from Heaven that very few survived.

Knowing of *Oshun's* noble birth, *Otoyama Olokun* had kept her well hidden where no one could see her, where no one could harm her. She trusted only a chameleon and a parrot. They should keep a lookout in case *Olofin* decided to go to the bottom of her river.

And it so happened that one day the waters from Heaven ceased to come down. *Olofin* had stopped crying. *Aggayu Sola* came out and shone upon the Earth. *Osain* came to Earth and filled it with new plants, trees, flowers and everything which is of his domain. Everything was like it was before.... But *Olofin* did not cease looking for his daughter. He kept hoping that somehow *Oshun* had survived, that she was alive.... But no one knew in all fairness and truth where *Oshun* could be.

*Olofin* decided to stay longer on Earth and it so happened that one day He met a Chameleon and asked him, "Chameleon, have you seen my daughter?"

Not wanting to meddle in what was not his affair, chameleon said to Him, "Most certainly it seems to me that in a river, or lake, I think I have seen a beautiful girl, but I couldn't tell you which river, or which lake, or the girl's name".

"Try to remember and I will reward you handsomely".

"Well, the thing is that I walk and walk all over the Earth, and I have a bad memory. I can't even remember what color my skin is... It was before so much water came down. I believe it was a river at the foot of a large mountain nearby".

*Olofin* left, full of enthusiasm. He remembered the mountain and the river at the bottom of the cliff. The Chameleon repented from being so afraid of *Olofin* that he had betrayed *Otoyama*, so he called the parrot and told him, "fly to the river and warn *Oshun* her father is looking for her".

The parrot flew to the river, but *Olofin* got there first. He knelt by the river shore and began to call, *Oshun...Oshun*, please come to me".

It was not long before she came out to the river's shore inquiring, "What is it you want from me good man?....Why have you called me with such insistence?".

*Olofin* looked at her, and for a while couldn't speak. The words wouldn't come out of His mouth.

*Oshun* insisted, "Tell me, what it is you want?"

*Olofin* embraced and hugged her very gently while saying with tears in His eyes: "I am your father.... I have come to beg your forgiveness".

"I forgave you long ago" answered *Oshun*, "In my heart there is nothing but love and understanding for you. Search no more. I am happy here. Any time you want to visit me, come to the river's water. This is my home".

And so it happened that day, the daughter and father spoke for a long while. They laughed a little bit, they cried a little bit and at the end of the day, *Olofin* thanked *Otoyama Olokun* for taking such good care of *Oshun* and told her to keep all the se-

crets, mysteries and treasures of the Seas. *Oshun* was given the same gifts and the domain over the rivers and lakes of the world.

And it also happened that day that *Olofin* went back to his place in the sky from where he had come many, many years before.

### Yemaya

*Yemaya is the eldest of the Orishas, after Obatala.* Many times she has been compared to *Oshun*, and many times they have been mistaken for one another. The fact is they are both entirely different.

Actually in the Santeria mythology she is the "mother," of all Orishas. There are several tales where she is given such attribute. In Yorubaland the river which carries her name is born at the foot of the Oke mountain in Abeokuta. It is said in Oyo that she reigned there and gave birth to children who would become Obbas (kings) in different regions throughout the land. The tales have her being as beautiful as *Oshun*, but less conspicuous. She is more a motherlike figure who spoils her children and will defend them with the fierceness of a warrior. She inhabits the seven seas and all her offerings are taken to the sea shores.

In the oracle of *Diloggun* (cowry shells readings), all the signs are "born" out of the *Odu* called *Oddi* which is number seven and it is the sign where *Yemaya* speaks primarily.

It has been said that although there is a river which bears her name, she has always lived at the bottom of the sea. Her followers will bring offerings to the sea shores, especially in Brazil where they are counted by the millions. She is something of a patron Orisha to the country and her festivities are long and of great reverence to *Yemoja* as she is called there.

When offerings are made to her, she is called by rattling her

"ashere" or maracas either in front of the bowls which contains her stones or by the sea, where most of the time you will bring a watermelon full of dry roasted corn topped with sugar molasses.

Her priestesses salute her by lying on the floor, face down, with both hands at their waist. Her priest will do it by having their face down with the left arm stretched alongside the body toward the back and the right hand making a closed fist placed under the chin. Some Oluorisha-Iyalorisha would do the same salute as if saluting Oshun, but that is not the correct way to do it. Her preferred adornment is a fan made out of duck feathers.

After Obatala she is senior in the Santeria pantheon. She is the first female born to Obatala after Agayu (who is the eldest of his children). She was the first human Queen to achieve the rank of Orisha whether in real life or mythology. One pataki says that she married her brother Agayu, they had a son named Orangun, who committed incest with his mother. In shame she ran away from him, but he reached her and when he was about to rape her for the second time, she began to swell so much that her breast exploded forming the river that is born at the foot of Oke. Today this river is known as the Niger river.

In Cuba Yemaya is patron Orisha of the fishing village of Regla (now a small city). This town lays across Havana's harbor, and it used to be one of two places where the Cabildos or counsel of elders met every year. Each September 7<sup>th</sup>, was Yemaya's or Virgen de Regla day. La Virgen de Regla was the town's patron saint and there was no differentiation between one or the other. The Virgen de Regla was black and had a famous little church close to the sea. People came from all over Cuba on this day to watch the procession to the Virgen, which came out of her church. At the same time, the Santeros from the different houses of Osha would join the march to the harbor, amidst the smell of incense and the beating of Santeria drums. People brought flowers to the Catholic church for the black virgin and watermelons with molasses for Yemaya to go to the seashore.

Her paths are these.

**Oku-te.**

**O-lokun.**

**Ashagba.**

**Meye le o.**

**Ata ma wao.**

**Ilorde o.**

**Afrekete.**

**Asestu.**

**O kere.**

**Agga na o.**

**Yemaya oro lo.**

**Akua arc.**

**Nigba.**



Yoruba wood carvings: Shango and Yemaya with tribal markings.

## Shango

*He is "the smooth talker", "defending attorney for the rest of the Orishas".*

Owner of the sacred Bata drums (Ilu-bata). and every musical instrument used in playing for the Orishas. He is the indisputable god of music, dance, beauty, thunder, lightning, fire, banquets; of all the pleasures of life. Always in love with love from romantic to sexual, nostalgic, irate, bad tempered, good humored, a poet, and a fierce warrior. He encompasses all phases of the human character. Loud when angry, gentle and never holding grudges, always giving and forgiving, very seldom receiving the reward for his kindness; or a violent furious revenge seeker, envious and jealous and always betrayed by those He trusted most. He will go easily from depression to euphoria, from tears to laughter. Heart breaker and broken hearted; victimizer and a victim of love, would lose everything for a women, would leave everything to go dancing. Poor, rich, good, bad, noble, cruel dictator, selfish, unselfish. But always, always, facing defeat and conquering it one way or another... even in death!

A book can be easily written about this Orisha; his followers, his cult. I am a priest of Shango, and as such, was privileged to enter his shrine in Kuso. I was received by the Alafin at Ile Ife, and the Alakate of Abeokuta. I believe that most of my questions were answered by them, especially by Sir Abekunle Aromarilan Prince of Ilesha, who opened the doors of Yorubaland for me. In this reference, I will try to deal with both the real man, and the mythological Orisha, hoping that by doing so, I can convey a sense of his importance in the rituals of Osha outside Yorubaland today, as well as it was during the slavery years in our countries.

Three women ruled his life, shared his life notably: Oya his faithful companion until the last tragic days of his life; Obba-Obbanene (daughter of the rich and powerful Obba Tila) and

finally, Oshun lover and some people say either sister or daughter.

There is no other Orisha more revered and popular throughout Yorubaland and the America's houses of Osha than Shango. He is also known by the common name of Jakuta (the stone thrower). As the myth goes, he now resides in reddish clouds in the sky, where He owns a great herd of horses that He uses against those who offend him or his followers.

There is no doubt of his existence as a historic character. His identity has been clearly established in the Yoruba books. His life and history is taught in the fourth grade reading book called *Iwe Kika Ekerin*; it tells that many many centuries ago, in the old kingdom of Oyo (known in the old days as Eyo or Katunga), situated close to the banks of the Niger river and to the North, there once lived a king named Shango (Sango), wise and powerful, who possessed a vast knowledge of all herbs. Those which killed and those which healed. He claimed to have the power to do away with his enemies by spitting fire from his mouth.



Entrance to Shango shrine near Oyo.  
The Sign says: "Sango the god of thunder is the overall leader of progress to their people."

As king (depending on which version you listen to), he was a cruel tyrant, strong and severe ruler who had no mercy for his enemies or his people. Or he was a just, strong king given to parties and never satisfied with any one woman, a bit irresponsible when it came to government, but who would share everything he had with anyone who asked him.

He had two ministers as part of his government of whom he was jealous. He did not hesitate to send them to fight each other, hoping they both would perish in battle. But one came out victorious and tried to assassinate Shango. This warrior deposed him from his throne. Shango was able to escape into exile accompanied by three of his wives, Oya, Oshun, Oba, and a few of his followers.

He was forced to wander through the bush country, gradually abandoned by his men, Oshun and Oba. Only Oya stayed by his side. In despair, and emotionally depressed, he committed suicide by hanging himself from a tree called Ayan. Oya was able to evade their pursuers, and went to the north where she founded a kingdom and eventually became the "Queen of the Niger river".

Travelers who saw Shango hanging from the tree, went to the villages and towns saying: "Sango Oba so" (the king hanged himself). The news traveled fast to every region of Yorubaland reaching some friends of Shango. They decided to avenge his death and to such purpose, they joined together into a kind of roving band. They collected as many empty dry calabashes as they could and filled them with fire producing roots and herb. These explosive bombs were covered with palm fibers that ignited easily. They waited for a dark cloudy day, and began to throw these incendiary bombs in the village into houses of those who had said "Sango Oba so".

So many explosions and fires were set throughout the land that it filled the people with great fear. They ran out of the towns wanting to know why these fires were coming out of the clouds.

Shango's friends seized the opportunity and told them: " You people shouted Oba so!.... Well Sango Oba ko so! (the king did not hang himself). He is angry at you all. He has gone to the Heavens and has sent thunder and lightning and fire to punish you. You should sacrifice to him bulls, roosters, lambs, lots of corozo lard and the Oba drums to play for him and maybe you will appease him, maybe he will forgive you".

Thus the cult to Sango began in all the towns and villages where he had reigned once. Since then, "Oba so, and Oba ko so" are proverbial sayings by those who want to annoy Shango's followers who would answer back in anger: " Oba ko so".

The small town of Kuso, not too far from Oyo, is sacred to Shango's priest. His main shrine is located there a little bit to the left of the town square. Most of the town's inhabitants are either his descendants, or members of his cult. The priest are called Oni Sango or Odusuhu Sango. The high priest, or eldest of the priest is called Magba Sango, Magba emi a gba, the shrine attendants are called Sango Osu mare (the thunder or thunder after the storm). Inside the shrine are the inverted mortar and cedar bowls full of thunder stones, ram's horns, leather bags, and brooms on which he was supposed to have flown.

There are many wood carvings which symbolize him. The most common one is that of a man riding a horse with a large pony tail and an ax with the Yoruba tribal marks on each side. The most impressive statue of Shango is that of a half naked man, made of bronze, who is holding in his raised right hand an ax, and all around his waist there are all sorts of tools and weapons. The statue rest on a pedestal which resembles a thunder stone facing Lagos's bay with its back to the building which houses the Electric Power Company of Nigeria.





Shango statue, (Lagos Nigeria)

His birth is not easy to trace because there is so much mixture between truth and myth. One such legend has him as the son of Ibba ibo and Yemmu (Obatala and Yemoya-Yemaya). Another, has him as the grandson of Osha on la (Oshanla-Obatala founder of the sacred city of Ife) and Yemoya Konla as his mother. Maybe the closest one to the truth would have him as the son of Akuani, Ojua kua ni, who in real history was Oba (king) of Kuso, Oyo and Ondo, but who never reached the rank of Orisha. As being a direct descendant of Oshanla-Obatala and by reason of lineage, Shango claimed the throne of Ife, becoming the Oni, or king of kings. Today the Alakate of Abeokuta and Alafin of Oyo claim to

be direct descendants of Shango and therefore are in line of succession to the throne at Ile Ife, thus becoming Oni of Ife, or Majesty above the kings and princes of the region.

In the Osha rituals, Shango "owns" the sacred mortar used for all vestments and which is also used in many ceremonies from birth to death. The mortar not only symbolizes the power of king, but it goes back in time to the old tradition when the newly born were placed inside the face up mortar to be bathed for the first time and then placed in the same inverted mortar upon death, the head shaven - not letting it fall to either side for it would mean that whoever was shaving the corpse would be next to die. Bathed with the same herbs as when he was born, wrapped in white clothes, placed in a huge terra-cotta pot (if the deceased was royalty) or buried with the mortar that had been his or hers all their lives.



Santeria: Shango's cedar mortar and bowl with two different Agayu bowls.

He is attributed the paternity of the sacred twins Ibely-Igbe-yi, with Oshun as the mother. They later became kings themselves. Their names was Ainde and Kainde. These twins have a special cult within the Society of Osha, and no offering is made to Shango without making one to the sacred Ibeyi.



Wood Carving of the Ibaji (Sacred Twins) part of a Yoruba Shrine.

He is also known by other paths or names. These are some them.

**Obba Dimeyi**  
**Addima**  
**Alafin-Alafi**  
**Kake**  
**Jakuta**

**Obba Ana Obbaina**  
**Obba Yoko-Obanyoko**  
**Oluo fina-Olufina**  
**Obbara, Obba o Ara**

### **Obba Dimeyi**

Under this name he is recognized as the first Orisha to rule twice over the same cities of Ile Ife and Oyo. He is also given the paternity of the sacred twins who are supposed to have changed his bad luck and helped him regain the thrones he had lost because of dancing while someone else took over as ruler of the people. All offerings made to *Obba Dimeyi* are made in pairs. In Yorubaland twins are considered almost sacred and bearers of good luck. The store keepers will not charge a woman who goes to the marketplace and brings her twin children.

### **Addima**

*Sango* from Dima (*Sango-Addima*) is considered mainly as a warlock who flew on brooms and whose power as a sorcerer was immensely feared. Dima is a small town northwest of Ife, where it is said all witches came from. He is feared because it is said he possesses great supernatural powers and rules over the occult world of the spirits. He is represented as a very tall man, muscular and physically attractive. He resides inside a huge iron pot (that is why sometimes he is mistaken for *Oggun*) filled with all sort of roots, stones, herbs and brooms made out of palm fiber that he uses to fly and appear at the most distant places. His name cannot be mentioned, unless it is to say good things about him. The color of his cape and of his adornments is a bright strong blinding red. His presence is imposing and a bit scary, this *Sango Addima* is a true warrior not to be taken lightly. In the houses of Osha not many Olouo-Orisha, or Iya-Losha will call upon him, unless it is to seek revenge against their enemies. His offerings often times will consist of a Lamb or a Bullock.

### **Alafin-Alafi**

Under this path, he is more like an emperor (something of a Napoleon). Obba above all Obbas. Only the Oni is superior to him in rank, but recognises him as his legitimate heir. In Cuba,

*Alafin-Shango* was considered to be King above all other kings who would kneel only before Olofin. He was (still is) represented as a very gallant and proud Orisha. Even today in Yorubaland *The Alafin of Oyo* has to be a son of the *Oni of Ife* to be able to claim this title. His main function is that of Governor of Oyo and the direct heir to the throne at Ife. The myth has him as an authoritarian Orisha, who demands absolute loyalty. When he makes his presence known by possessing one of his priest or priestesses, everyone present will give him way by saying: "Alafin, Alafi Kiseiko kawo kabiesi Sango". He wears a crown and shield made of a metal polished so bright as to almost blind. His face is covered by braided red and white beads which prevents people from seeing it. In the houses of Osha where this *Shango* path is the one which reigns, his shrine is covered with braided beads red and white and a crown and shield made of polished steel.

### **Kake**

Kake is considered a re-incarnation of *Shango* who did not live long enough to make his mark on Earth. The myth tells us this was a child-king who died or was killed as a child. After his death several brothers warred among themselves. Who came out victorious is unknown. As he is a child king, he lives together with *Eleggua* and in a few old houses of *Osha* it was said they were one and the same. All offerings to *Kake* have to be made through *Eleggua*, who in turn will take them to him. His preferred fruit is the pomegranate or gradanide and lots of sweets.

### **Jakuta**

Not too well known in the houses of Osha in the Caribbean and Brazil. However, he is famous in Yorubaland as a warrior, who rides on a white horse and never tires of battle. His preferred weapon is stones which he can throw with uncanny accuracy, he lights them as they come from the heavens. He is moody and can change from ire to good humor in seconds. He enjoys abundance of food and good music as well as a fight. *Jakuta* is respected and

loved by his followers throughout Yorubaland and is beginning to develop a cult in the Americas.

### **Obba Ana Obbaina**

He is the indisputable god of thunder, violent storms and lighting. Every sort of Nature's noise which may inspire fear is attributed to him. He resides inside the ritual drums, to play the sacred drums, one has to pay homage to *Obbaina* first: Offerings of roosters and fruits has to be given to him before the drummers take their drums out of their houses to be played in the festivities of Osha. No member of the Osha society is permitted to dance when the sacred drums are played unless she-he has been "presented" before the *Obbana* drums.

### **Obba Yoko-Obanyoko**

This *Shango* is the only one known to be old, wise and even tempered. Myth has him as a retired warrior and medicine man. His kingdom in Heaven is something of an Osha Camelot. His preferred offering is a soup made of corn flour, "calalu" (one of his herbs) and okra.

### **Oluo fina-Olufina**

*Oggun* and *Shango* are close allies under this path. They share the same banner. One pataki has *Oggun* dressed in red, disguised as *Shango* to go into battle. It was the only time *Oggun* used *Shango's* color and clothing. They share the sacred tree Iroko as a refuge. Many of their followers go to the Sweet Poplar tree and make offerings of fruits and food to both gods there.

### **Eye le o-Eyeo**

A true warlock who flies on "mariwo" brooms to set his enemies houses on fire. He has different faces and may masquerade as a woman wearing a "mariwo" skirt (mariwo is made of palm

leaves fiber which are submerged in water to make it soft). He changes so often that few people are able to recognize him. He is a glutton who loves okra cooked with corn flour, and corozo lard. This soup is poured inside his bowl, on top of his stones. This is an offering specially made when his followers want either to appease, or request something of him. People who claim to have seen him, say he is fat, with a big smile and would grant you almost anything in exchange for lots of food.

### **Obba aye-Obaille**

You will find him living on top of the Royal Palm tree. All the offerings to him are made there, especially bunches of bananas tied with a red ribbon. This is the only Shango who was forced to travel, or rather wander from town to town trying to regain his throne. He was a "homeless king" who lost his kingdom for being an irresponsible monarch. He was rich one day, and the next a beggar. Legend says that one day he was cooking a bush rat and some travelers came and he offered to share with them what little food he had. The travelers turned out to be spirits, who as a reward for his unselfishness called on an army of spirits and gave him back his throne.

### **Zarabanda**

This *Shango* I believe to be more of a Cuban creation who has a great number of followers both in the Island of Cuba and now the Americas. I asked about him in many parts of Yorubaland, and no one could give me an account of who he may have been. Yet the tales about *Zarabanda* abound among the Cuban Creoles. The closest I could come to fit his description and match the Cuban patakis was a particular Sango known in Dahomey as "*Owamerilla-Obba meriya*. Since my early childhood I had heard a great deal about him. He lived in a big iron pot and would use witchcraft to get his wishes. He would appear in the middle of the forest to the farmers and travelers dressed in a "mariwo" skirt and a large red cape demanding offerings of maize soup, okra, lambs

and roosters in exchange for whatever you wished. Zarabanda was the protecting deity (still is) of the "mayomberos-paleros." These are the people who originally belonged to the "Abakua" group which were expelled from the Osha society at the beginning of the century. They formed their own organization following primarily the cults that came from Congo/Bantou. This cult included the offering of their own blood to the iron pot where this entity is supposed to reside. I just don't know how they identified *Shango* with their cult, which in Cuba got to be of such ill reputation that it was said that only criminals and outlaws would belong to it and they would not hesitate to sacrifice children in order to appease whatever inhabited their iron pots.

### **Obbara, Obba o Ara**

Here again, under this path, he is a dethroned king who had to lie, cheat, play tricks on people, work as a diviner, musician, cook and do all kinds of odd jobs to survive. It got to be so bad that at one time he lived on pumpkins found in the fields. Feeling sorry for the poor king, *Olofin* called him one day and asked him to deliver a bunch of calabashes to the Babalawo's house, who were supposed to pay him. *Olofin* told him not to look at what was inside the calabashes. They felt kind of heavy, but anyway he took them to the Babalawos' house. When they saw him at their door dressed in such poor garments, looking in such bad shape, they refused to accept the calabashes as sent by *Olofin* with such an unworthy messenger and chased him away. Not knowing what to do with them, and although he was hungry, he decided to take them back to *Olofin*. When *Olofin* heard of the Babalawos' refusal, and seeing that *Shango* had not opened or eaten any of them, *Olofin* told him to keep them all and their contents.

Shango went to a poplar tree, and under its shade opened them... To his amazement he found they were filled with gold and fine jewelry.

This is why it is said in the Diloggun Oracle that under this

sign (6, Obara), the person for whom the sign comes out, "today you are poor, but tomorrow you may be rich".

In the Osha rituals, *Obara* is considered to be the most exact re-incarnation of *Shango*, and a very good omen when it comes out in a vestment as the sign which will rule your life as an Osha priest

Shango is also known by these names: *Vumi, Oluoso, Yimi, Yobera, Lari, Ladde, Obabi, Izu, Sabeyi, Azakuta, Teddum, Feyu, Omogoddo, Madgala, Obbagayu, Alabaloke, Alua o mi, Ebbo era da, Kasiero, Okannani, Obbatola, and Asa beyi.*

### Oggun

***Following in importance and rank as an Orisha within the Osha rites, and as a deity in Yorubaland, is without question Oggun the god of iron, tools, labor, a great warrior and hunter.***

All throughout the Yoruba kingdom, in every shop whether it be a tool maker, carpenter, blacksmith or a photo shop, you will see Oggun's name on the front door, or a small shrine someplace inside.



Oggun shop near Abeokuta

He is considered a tireless warrior and laborer whose blessing is sought everytime someone has to commence a large or difficult task. Oggun developed a great following during the slavery years among the Negroes forced to work the sugar fields. Oggun would give them strength!...Oggun would look after them! Oggun would see that one day they would be reunited with their loved ones!. He has the same meaning today among the members of Osha houses in the Americas. Oggun will fight their fights, Oggun and Yemaya will bring the "balseros" (raft people) safely across the sea to freedom....

It is said that in reality he was one of the seven children Yemaya had, and not a deified king. He was only a prince who never got to be king, but who contributed to his mother's kingdom in more than one way due to his skills as a warrior, laborer, and at one time a medicine man. It is him and not Oshosi (who is merely the deity that inhabits the wind during the hunt) who taught man the art of hunting with spears and arrows, and of farming with iron tools.

He dwells within sacred trees: *Peregun, Akoko* and *Atori* where he will receive your offerings. At one of his shrines near Ife, there is one Akoko tree surrounded by four big tusks belonging to a beast said to have been hunted by *Oggun*. They sit on top of four poles which *Oggun* himself directed to be planted at the side of the tree. There is a similar one at the entrance of the town of Abeokuta, on the right side of the road coming from Lagos. Inside Ile Ife there is a huge sweet poplar tree dedicated to *Oggun*. One priest inside the compound took me to it and told me that once a year, during *Oggun's* festival, a black dog is sacrificed at its foot. This is why, perhaps, his followers throughout Yorubaland keep the skeleton of a dog's head inside the iron pot where his attributes are kept. Many houses of Osha maintained the tradition of a dog's sacrifice to *Oggun*, but instead of doing it on any specific tree, they rather would do it on a railroad track.

*Oggun's* significance as a mythological-historical character is

of unquestionable relevance as the discoverer of iron. He showed the people how to work it, what to do with it, and how to apply the tools made out of it to the fields and the hunt. Our civilization has the concept that iron appeared gradually among us without being heralded in any special manner. Maybe it was so, but among the Yorubas it acquired a mystical and magic-marvelous achievement status which elevated the man to the category of the gods and thus earned him a place among the Orishas.

The following pataki tells us that before Oggun introduced iron to his people, they only knew a "soft" metal which could have been copper or any other alloy. What is certain is that most tools were made of wood, including the ones used for farming. The plot in the story has all the human characteristics of a Greek drama. A man makes a great discovery, gives it to the people and is repaid with ingratitude. Once his secret is known, there is no longer need for him.

### **Oggun And Iron Discovery**

It was a time, long, long ago, when Orishas and men lived together on Earth. They have to share all the work to be done in order to be able to sustain themselves. Olofin had told them to live in peace, to stay in harmony with all things living and they obeyed him. They chant the songs at night, they worked during the day clearing the fields to be planted. They shared in the crops as well as in the animals hunted. They praised The Creator for all his kindness. All this was done with tools made of wood or with a kind of metal so soft that they would brake constantly. All heavy work required a large number of men, and had to be done slowly. It took a long time to clear a field; it took great care and patience to be able to get a large animal in the hunt. As the village Ile Ife grew, they had to build more houses, more fields had to be cleared and planted. More animals were needed to feed the people.

Faced with this situation, man and Orisha decided to hold a council and assign different task to themselves, especially clear-

ing the badly needed land. They tried to recruit volunteers for the job, but no one came forward. They appointed *Olokun* who declined saying that her duty was to provide fish for the community and could no longer labor with her hands, not with the tools they had anyway.

*Osain* volunteered and went to work the forest. What happened was that after a while, and very little done, he had to return to the village complaining that his knife was not big enough and would break constantly. *Oshosi* tried, but his machete was no match for the trees and roots. Being that it was made out of wood, it broke in so many parts that it was no good ever again. He complained: "I need a better tool".

He was followed by *Orisha Oko* who gathered as many tools as he could and began to work early in the morning. By midday all his tools had broken and he was totally exhausted. He returned to the village and told the council. "I have tried to do the work, but cannot do it with the tools I have; let someone else try".

One by one many tried. Men and Orishas alike were defeated by the thickness of the bushes and roughness of the earth.... The council of elders was in despair.

Only *Oggun* had not been called. Only he had not volunteered. This was due to the fact that he had acquired a certain reputation as a lazy prince who was more inclined to drink palm wine and sleep rather than do any work at all. Finally the council decided to give him a chance to redeem himself and do something of merit. To the surprise of the elders, he accepted promptly.

He went to the deepest thicket, roughest part of the forest, and pulling out the largest knife anybody had ever seen worked tirelessly until the sunset. At the end of the day, he had cleared a huge amount of land and had prepared it to be seeded.

When the Orishas and Men saw what he had achieved, they

repented from calling him a lazy drunkard and gave him the title of "great prince, hardest worker of the village". But they were not satisfied with the work he had done. They wanted more, they wanted to know how he was able to accomplish such a marvelous task. They asked;

"What kind of metal is that of which your knife is made?...What is this great tool that will not brake and keeps its sharpness?"

He answered humbly, " It is a recent discovery I made.... I like to called it iron...This is the first time I have tried it".



Oggun's Iron Pot as kept by Yoruba Osain-man

Then the elders said to him: "If we, if the people had the secret, nothing would stop us from conquering the forest. You would be hailed as immortal. Your name will be chanted and praised by drummers and cymbal players all the way from Abeokuta to Ile Ife".

*Oggun* took them to his backyard and showed them the furnace he had built with bricks made out of mud and clay. He called the hunters, the warriors, the laborers, and showed them how to make their tools out of iron. The fist weapon he made was a fine spear which he presented to the king. It had fine edges and was balanced to perfection. The king was very pleased and named him, "official blacksmith of the whole world" and as such commanded him to train all the people who so wished, in the art of iron making.

It was not long before Orishas and Men alike possessed weapons and working tools in abundance, which were all made of iron. Many men became blacksmiths and charged warriors and peasants for their work. People payed them cheaply to get what they needed. Not many, if any, went back to *Oggun* to get the fine iron tools that he made.

Filled with sadness, *Oggun* went to a nearby river (later named after him) and bathed for a long time. It is said that there he cried in anger and disappointment. He removed the furs that clothed him and made himself new garments made only of royal palm fibers. He then went to the forest where he felt truly free, where he was truly happy. He spent a lot of time in the bush country hunting and dressing with the furs of the animals he had hunted. One day he decided to go back to Ile Ife and to visit the Orishas and men he had helped.

On the road to the city he was met by a group of Orishas who when they saw this creature with long hair and long beard, dressed with bad smelling furs, thought of him more as an animal than of a man. He identified himself, by showing them the

first knife made of iron. But they made a gesture of repulsion and refused to admit him to the city. They told him that his services were no longer needed and that he'd better change his appearance and the way he was dressed before trying to come back to the village. To them he was nothing but a bad smelling hunter.

*Oggun* left the road where he had met them, and went back to the forest. There he found a tree called *Akoko*. This tree was not too far from a small village named *Ire*. He made the tree his place of residence and very seldom would leave the forest. He lived surrounded by beasts who had befriended him and would protect him from the insults of men and Orishas.

Much time passed and one day *Olofin* called him to sit by his side in his palace in the skies.

More time passed and it came to be that if the Orishas and some men were ungrateful, by paying *Oggun* with unkindness, other men were different: they never forgot his great contribution to their welfare. Now, all practitioners of the art of blacksmithing make a pilgrimage every year to the town of *Ire* to participate in *Oggun's* festivities and pay him his due homage. At that place he is called "*Oggun Oni Ire*". They bring sashes made of dry palm branches, palm wine, and furs of beasts hunted in the forest.

And that is why, although he was never a king. Now, in all the towns, big and small, he is also known as "*Orisha Oggun Onile*". He earned the rank of Orisha. He is second to no one.

Maferefun *Oggun*.... Hail to *Oggun*!

### **Babalú aye, Osowano, Shopogno**

*He is revered in all the Osha houses where he is known as a great healer, especially leprosy and or any disease that will affect the skin, bones, and lungs.*

This Orisha is not vested; rather it is "received" in a special ceremony.

He is known by several paths or names, among them are the following:

*Ali pre te o*  
*Aso o yei*  
*ayya noa awo*  
*Afre ke tere*  
*Kan ke*  
*Aou-aluoa*  
*Sokuta*  
*Usun nike*  
*Nanu*  
*Assudo*  
***Daka-Kuniambo.***

One of the Orishas born to *Yemaya*. He is the only Orisha that when any of his followers, be it a feast, playing of the drums, or any of his ceremonies becomes estranged, his "presence" will be taken with the utmost respect. He comes to "heal" or to give warning about impending illness.

His trances are the most dramatic of all trances given by any Orisha. It is characterized by a tightening of the muscles, foaming at the mouth, twisting his hands and legs, while the face becomes very tense. He-she will contort for a long time eventually falling to the ground in what could easily be mistaken for an epileptic fit.

The only way to appease this trance is to wash his hands and feet with fresh water.

In Cuba there is a church called "El Rincon". There thousands of people make a pilgrimage every year on September 17<sup>th</sup> to "pay" a promise made to Saint Lazarus. The procession to the old church starts the night before with people walking on their



knees, on crutches, wheel chairs (not many), being carried by friends or relatives. They may go simply to pray to "El Viejo" (the old man), or to leave by the altar a pair of crutches, old bandages, small silver or gold objects called "milagros" (miracles). And recently as a gesture of rebellion against the dictatorship which governs the island of Cuba. The people have traditionally come to this church to pay homage not only to the Catholic saint, but unquestionably also to Babalu aye. It was said that this church was Babalu's house and the priest in charge of the church made no effort to discourage their belief. Now in Miami there is a church in Hialeah which has followed the same tradition as the one in Cuba.

### **Osowano (Necklace Beads)**

- Ali pre teo: Starts with 17 blue, 3 black, 1 jet-black (azabache), 17 blue with white stripes. The length should be to the middle of the chest. Same rule applies to the rest of the necklace beads.
- Aso o yei: 17 brown, 3 black, 1 jet-black (azabache), 3 black followed by 17 brown. Repeat the procedure until the desired length is achieved
- Ayyamo awo: 17 blue with white stripes, 7 red. Starts again with same order of beads.
- Afre ke tere: 7 black, 1 jet black, 7 brown, 1 jet black (azabache). Repeat.
- Kan ke: 17 black with white stripes, 1 jet black, 17 black, 1 jet black (azabache). Repeat.
- Aou-Aloua: 17 black, 1 jet-black (azabache). Repeat to desired length.

- Sokuta: 17 blue, 7 red with white stripes. Repeat to desired length.
- Usun nike: 17 red with white stripes, 1 jet black (azabache). Repeat.
- Nanu: 17 black, 1 jet black (azabache). Repeat.
- Assudo: 17 black, 7 brown. Repeat to desired length.
- Dakka ku: 17 black with white stripes, 3 blue with white stripes, 1 jetblack, 3 blue with white stripes, 1 jet black. Repeat to desired length.

Babalu aye necklace beads are vested according the person's needs to wear them. Most of the time they are vested after a reading with the cowry shells and certain signs: 7, 3, 9, 13 may come out constantly. Then the oracle reader should ask if the Saint Lazarus (Osowano) necklace should be received by the person being read.

The vestment ceremony is the same as the rest of the necklace beads, except that these may be the only necklace beads received (always one of the above). They are "washed" in an Omiero which will be made only with those herbs assigned to Babalu aye, and fresh coconut water. This is the only instance where coconut water will be used. See Omieros and how to prepare them.

### **Babalu's Ja and Casha**

The "Ja and Casha" are two objects that are part of the ceremonies of "receiving" *Saint Lazarus-Babalu aye*. They are used as a means of protection and to "clean" oneself with them.

Casha is a bracelet worn on the left wrist and the Ja is like a small cane, or rather small broom made out of coconut tree branches. It is placed in front of the clay pot where *Osowano* secrets are kept.

To prepare a Ja you have to start by making a "makuto" which is a small bag made with red cloth where the "load-secret" is placed. The items needed are:

- At least 17 herbs of Baba lu-Asowano.
- A good bunch of coconut tree fibers.
- Small piece of tiger's skin.
- 7 black guinea peppers.
- A red rooster's spur.
- 32 cowry shells.
- About 3 yards of red cloth.
- About 3 yards of "Jute" sisal cloth.

The herbs, coconut tree fibers and guinea peppers are mashed together until you have a pulp like substance. It is wrapped in about 4 inches of red cloth with the tiger's skin inside of it (it would look like a cigar). This small bag is placed inside a coconut tree branch which has been previously cut to resemble both a cane at the top and a broom at the bottom. The rooster spur is placed at the bottom of the branch, then the whole branch is wrapped in red cloth. Over the red cloth, the final wrapping will be done with Jute cloth. It has to be sewed very tight starting from the bottom and finishing at the top. Two sets of 16 cowry shells are used: the first set is sewn at the bottom and the other 16 on the top. Once the Ja is finished, the next step would be to find out the path or name of this Saint *Lazarus-Asowano* and sew a set of necklace beads according to the path on top of the Ja.

The Casha is prepared by using a piece of goat's skin about two inches wide to which you sew 7 cowry shells and beads according to the Orisha's path. A "base" is made by sewing the "loaded" goat's skin to a piece of red cloth and a piece of Jute cloth both the same length as the goat's skin, but allowing a bit of red cloth to show on the edges. Always measure the person's wrist before making the Ja, the reason is that they have to be custom made to fit exactly the person who is about to receive Babalu aye-Saint Lazarus.

### ***A Personal Experience with Saint Lazarus***

I must have been nine or ten years old when I developed a type of ulcer on my feet which expanded all the way to my ankles. My mother told me the doctors did not know what was wrong with me. They had never seen anything like this and could not come out with the right treatment to make it heal as fast as they would have liked. I was unable to walk and remember how painful it was to have even the lightest touch on my feet. My mother would carry me on her shoulders to take the street car (we were a poor family) which would take us to the Children's Hospital of Havana.

How long I suffered this disease I cannot remember. At that age one forgets many things, but there are others you never forget. For instance, I remember as if it were today, one day I overheard one doctor tell my mother that it would be possible that I could lose my right foot and the left did not look any better.... I remember my mother crying all day, and also the reaction of futility and impotence of my father because there was nothing he could do. It seems there was nothing anybody could do....

Of all this, what really bothered me, on the whole picture, wasn't so much losing my foot since I was not too aware (if aware at all) of what that meant. What really bothered me was the thought that I would not be able to play baseball with only one foot, and that perhaps I would be called names by the other boys. Otherwise it didn't mean that much to me. I also remember the healing that took place at the hospital. I do really mean that I remember. After they removed the gauze in which my feet were wrapped, they poured a green oily liquid which burned me immensely (I should say like hell!). It felt as though they were peeling and burning my skin. It was as if hot charcoal was being applied to the wounds. I cried, begged, prayed and screamed, but it was of no use. It seemed to me that no one cared. that no one gave a hoot about my pain. I know that I passed out a few times.

To tell me I was going to the hospital meant a violent trauma. I wanted to run away and hide where no one could find me, but this was impossible!

My father had a friend who was a taxi driver. His name was Tito Munoz. He was a tall, middle age mulatto, who seemed to have a perpetual smile on his face and always wore a branch of sweet basil around his left ear. He brought me candies and had a smile for me. He would pick me up gently and take me for a ride around the park in his taxi. I liked him. He was a good man.

On this particular day he came to me together with my parents, lifted me up and said: "Julito we are going to take a long ride today... you are going to walk again". My father picked me up and took me to the car. At that moment I felt a great fear. I thought they were taking me to the hospital to cut off my foot. He must have seen my face and placing his big hands on my shoulders told me: "Your father and I are taking you to a man who will heal you". That didn't help any, I thought for sure they were going to cut my foot off.

Where they took me, I do not remember. I do remember this. The man was a black man and his hair was completely white. He lived far away because the trip took a long while. He lived in a brick house in the country which was a rarity in those days. Most country houses were made of wood with a tin or palm branch roof. This was a rather large house with a big room at the main entrance. When we got there this room was full of people, but as soon as we arrived, the old black man, dressed in a pair of trousers made of sisal and a guayabera of the same material came directly to us and took us right away to a small room on the side of the "waiting" room we were in.

As soon as I saw him, the fear that I had felt all the time during the journey disappeared. He took me in his arms, sat me on a chair facing an altar where the first thing I saw was an image of *Saint Lazarus*. He put his hands on my forehead and I fell asleep.

When I woke up, I saw him kneeling in front of me. He had removed the bandages that were wrapped around my feet. He was taking water out of a jicara (dried calabash) and gently washing my feet with this water. It was the first time I felt no pain when anyone touched my feet!. There was a radio playing nearby. It was broadcasting a baseball game between two of the most popular teams in Cuba. I relaxed and listened to the announcer doing the play by play. I forgot completely where I was and what was being done to me....The pain, the burning and itching were gone.

How long I was in that room I do not recall, all I know is that my father asked how much he owed him. The old man answered: "You don't owe me a thing... but to Babalu aye, you do; you owe him, not me. Whenever you can, offer him a piece of bread, or peanuts. Take the child to El Rincon and when he walks again, leave his crutches there".

That same day they took me to *Saint Lazarus* church at El Rincon (I would go back many times as an adult, specially on *his day*). They sat me in front of the altar while my parents prayed. From that day on I was never again taken to the hospital. Shortly after, I began to heal. One day I was completely healed.

But this is not the end of the story.

As I had been unable to walk for such a long time, and maybe by the trauma of the pain, although I had healed totally, I wouldn't dare put my feet on the ground, much less shoes on.... One morning I awoke and saw next to my bed a pair of knickers pants made of Jute similar to those worn by the old man, and a pair of crutches with a purple (*Babalu's color*) ribbon tied to them. I put on the knickers, grabbed the crutches and walked out of the room. It was not long after that we went back to "El Rincon" to deposit the crutches by the altar .

**Shopponno and Olosi**  
*Babalu aye and the Devil*

This is the story told most often in the Houses of Osha.

It is a well known fact that one day *Olosi* went to see *Olofin* and told Him that there was no man on Earth whom He had not tempted, who has not fallen to his temptation. *Olofin* told him that he was wrong, there was one man left on Earth who would never listen to his lies. This person would never betray *Olofin's* trust.

*Olosi* looked at Him in doubt and asked who this unique person was. Without hesitation *Olofin* responded, *Babalu aye*.

*Olosi* said that he could be tempted like any other human being. That no one was beyond temptation, that every man had a weakness and He could get to it.

They bet, *Olosi* saying yes, He could. *Olofin* saying no, he could not. *Olosi* told *Olofin* he would put Shopponno through a test. *Olofin* responded, "test all you want"

*Olosi* went searching for *Babalu aye* and when He found him, he filled his body with infected sores, bleeding skin ulcers which later were called leprosy.

After a while, when *Shopponno's* body was full of these infectious diseases, *Olosi* came calling at his door and told him, "Denounce *Olofin*, deny your loyalty to Him. He allowed me to fill you with these ugly sores. He let me make you ugly and filthy smelling".

*Babalu aye* looked the Devil straight in the eyes and told him: "No matter how sick and ugly you will make me, I will never reject my father. You can go to hell! After all, that's your rightful place".

*Olosi* decided to try one more trick on *Shopponno* before conceding defeat. He made sure that wherever *Babalu aye* went, people would feel repugnance. They threw calabashes with dirty water at him, spit on him and ran away from his presence. Rejected and feeding only on peanuts and old bread crumbs, he went into the forest and found refuge in a wild dog's cave who shared it with him and licked his wounds trying to heal them. They became inseparable. *Olosi* waited in the forest until one day when the dog was alone, and had a bunch of wolves kill him.

He went back to *Shopponno* and told him: " I will heal you and bring the dog back to life, I will even throw in a basket full of gold and jewels. All you have to do is denounce *Olofin*".

"Never! responded *Babalu aye*, Never will I resign the love for my father. It is He who is testing me, not you. I shall endure this test and prove to be a worthy son. You can go back to hell".

The story tells us that *Olosi* tried many other tricks and temptations, but could not bend *Babalu aye's* will, nor could he alter his faith. *Babalu aye* remained alone, poor and sick, living without his dog in the same cave for many years. Passersby would throw pieces of bread and peanuts inside the cave, and sometimes they would leave fresh water and dried fruits. This was his only means of support. He would not venture out in fear of what the people might do to him. He dressed in poor garments and had to lean on crutches to sustain himself... But no way would he give in to *Olosi*.

Finally *Olosi* gave up on him, he had lost the bet. And what was the bet? They had bet that if *Olosi* had conquered *Shopponno* and made him his ally, he *Olosi*, would come back to Heaven and sit next to *Olofin* and share his kingdom. If he lost (which he did), *Olofin* would send him deeper into hell and would never, never forgive him or let him talk to Him (it is said that He even added more fire).

Soon after *Olosi* abandoned Earth, *Olofin* went to *Shopponno's*

cave bringing with him the dog who had been his friend. He restored him back to health. Made him king of the forest and of all the villages around it. He also built a great palace for *Babalu aye* and gave him the power to heal all those who suffered leprosy and many other maladies.

This has not changed. That is why *Babalu aye* is so loved by those he has helped and healed.

### To Receive Saint Lazarus-Asowono Ceremony-Procedure

Whether a person has been vested or not with Orisha is of no relevance. Any person who so desires can "receive" *Babalu aye*. The difference is that when the person is *Oluo Orisha* or *Iyalorisha*, he-she has to be dressed the day of the ceremony with a shirt or blouse made of Jute on the outside and the inside will be cloth the color of the person's patron Orisha. If not, only Jute will be used in the garment.

#### Adornments-Tools Needed:

One medium size (about 14 inches in diameter) clay pot where *Afra* will be placed. This is one path of *Eleggua* which is associated with *Asowono*.

One clay pot a bit larger (about 18 inches in diameter) than the one used for *Afra*. This one will be used to place *Nanu* (*Asowono's* mother) and it will have a clay lid with small holes around it.

One clay pot larger than the one used above which is made specially to place *Saint Lazarus-Asowono*. It will have a lid covered with cowry shells.

Two sets of necklace beads: one is *Nanu*, the other one will be made following *Asowono's* path.

One *Casha*.

2 small wood crutches.

One *Ja*.

2 small dogs made of iron.

The ceremony starts by making an offering to the person's protecting spirits by placing on the floor:

3 glasses with water.

1 glass with firewater or white rum.

1 glass of water mixed with brown sugar.

1 vase with flowers (different colors).

1 large candle.

One plate with nine pieces of coconut spread with corozo lard and one guinea pepper grain on top of each one.

One red rooster (to be sacrificed on top of the plate with the nine pieces of coconut).

Nine different herbs use only in *Asowono-Saint Lazarus*.

One fiber palm mat.

3 basins, Same ones used to wash Orisha stones.

*Osain* is done the same way as for any Orisha; except that the chants are all done to *Asowono* and the four principal herbs used by the Oriate have to be in the same bunch with the ones used for *Saint Lazarus*.

In the first basin *Afra* is washed; the second is for *Nanu* and the third is for *Asowono*.

*Afra* is made out of a medium size sea stone (small reef stone), 21 cowry shells, one black small stone and a shell about three inches long. Everything is placed inside the clay pot.

*Nanu* clay pot will contain 7 small sea stones (reef stones), and 18 cowry shells.

*Asowono* will have 18 cowry shells inside.

Afra is washed with Omiero (see Omieros) made with plain water and brown odorless soap.

*Asowono* and Nanu are washed in Omiero to which dry cooking wine and coconut water are added. White odorless soap is used in washing the cowry shells and the stones.

The Oriate will do Osain in the same manner that all Osain washings and chants are done. The difference will be that in the Afra basin he will pour Holy water, smoked bush rat and fish, honey, corozo lard, cocoa butter, roasted dry corn, three grains of guinea pepper and firewater.

On Nanu and *Lazarus* basins he will pour the blood from a white pigeon, 7 grains of guinea pepper, Holy water, roasted dry corn, smoked fish and bush rat, honey, cocoa butter, gin, egg shells powder (cascarilla), perfumed water (agua de rosas), almond oil, castor oil and resin oil.

The washing and reading of the cowry shells is the same as in any Orisha vestment.

### **Asowono's Awan**

A large basket is used which is covered inside with Jute sisal cloth. It is placed in the middle of the room with seven loaves of bread, seven pennies, seven guinea pepper grains, smoked fish and bush rat, lots of cocoa butter, cascarilla, and the white pigeon used in the *Lazarus* washing. Two large candles are placed on each side of the basket along with either 21 or 77 plates filled with uncooked meats, rice, beans, coffee, sugar, etc.. At the end of the ceremonies (and before disposing of the basket with the rest of the offerings), the participants will clean themselves with what is on each plate and will pour it inside the basket.

To end the ceremony, a goat is offered on top of Afra and

*Asowono*.

The person receiving *Asowono* will clean herself-himself with the rest of the Omiero and will replace the clothes he-she was wearing at the beginning and that were taken off when she-he was bathed (same as in a regular vestment). She-he will dress with a new set of clothing. The blouse or shirt made specially for this occasion will be used.

When all the ceremonies are finally finished, the person will take the set composing *Asowono* to the house, place it in a corner and "hide" it from view by placing a curtain made of Jute cloth in front of it.

This ritual is usually more elaborate than what I have described here, but this is the basic procedure to receive *Saint Lazarus-Asowono*.

The ceremony of vesting Orisha *Asowono* is about the same as "receiving" it. Very few, if any Houses of Osha will do a complete vestment of *Lazarus*. To do it, the person has to go through being vested with Oshun and then the special procedure to receive *Lazarus* takes place.

## **Oya**

*"The female Orisha warrior", who would fight next to Shango in all his major battles.*

She was living with *Oggun* when *Shango* took her away from him. This was the beginning of several wars between *Shango* and *Oggun*. *Shango* always came out victorious. Some say because he used witchcraft, or simply because *Oya* was by his side. Whether myth or truth, history has her as the last woman to stay with *Shango* after he was dethroned. They fought many battles together and she was known to be a brave warrior as any man could be.

She killed so many men in battle that she was associated with death. In many houses of Osha she is known as the "Queen of Death". It is said that *Babalu aye* brings the spirit of the dead from the graveyard's door to her. She would receive them and determine where to send them. There are several patakis placing her in the markets selling yams and fruits. This is why she is known as both "the reigning goddess of graveyards and market places". Her followers will salute her at the entrance of cemeteries and public markets. Her adornments (those placed around her bowl) are more or less the same used by *Oggun*.

She is also well known as *Yansa*. As such, she is a young maiden full of witchery who rides the wind on palm fiber brooms.

She lives inside the rainbow and uses its colors to disguise herself. It is said that she has at least nine different faces and uses so many colors in her dress that it is almost impossible to recognize her. When an Oya vestment takes place, her throne is very elaborate and has in it as many different colors (at least nine) as possible. Her ceremony is one of the most costly as she is considered at par with *Eleggua*, *Oggun* and *Oshosi*. The ritual is a long and complicated one.

Many tales abound about Oya....

### The Story of Shango, Oya, and Fire

Ikan Ina

*Shango* had grown without forgetting that because of *Oggun*, he had grown up almost like an orphan. He remembered all the things that had happened to his brothers until *Olofin* regained his memory.

He never spoke to his brother *Oggun*, who was aware of *Shango's* resentment towards him, He avoided him every time they were in the house or close by working in the fields.

*Shango* was a proud prince who knew that he was good looking. He was tall, with a well proportioned body, big expressive deep set eyes and bushy eyebrows; a well formed nose, long hair and red lips that split into a friendly contagious smile. He was a good dancer and a brave warrior.

He was always crossing *Oggun*. He managed somehow to spoil whatever *Oggun* was doing or planning to do. No matter how carefully *Oggun* planned, *Shango* managed to spoil it. He seemed to know in advance every move that *Oggun* made and would beat him to whatever he was trying to do.

*Oggun* suspected that *Shango* had some kind of power, some type of magic which gave him this special advantage. But no matter how much he tried to find out what it was that *Shango* had, he could not find out what his secret was.

At that time, *Shango* did not speak to his mother, as a matter of fact, he refused to recognize her as his mother. He rather saw *Dada* as his mother who had raised him. To avoid having to explain to him a difficult situation at home, she had told him that she was his older sister (true) and that his mother was *Ikan Ina-Odemaso* (the mother of all fires).

One day *Shango* was riding on a trail coming back from a hunt, when he saw *Oggun* coming in the opposite direction with his wife *Oya* walking beside him. Well, the thing is.... what happened is this! *Shango* looked at *Oya*, she looked back at him....He ran towards her, lifted her, and before *Oggun* could utter a word, ran away with her riding on the back of his horse. *Oggun* began to chase them both getting closer and closer and began to fire arrows at them. *Shango* realized that his horse was carrying two people and it was only a matter of minutes before *Oggun* would catch up with them. He was not comfortable with the idea of being decapitated by *Oggun's* sword nor with giving up *Oya* (who was tightly holding him) to fight his brother. He remembered *Dada* telling him he was the son of *Ikan Ina-Odemaso*, and began to call

her: "Odemaso, Ikanina.... Oggun wants to kill me. Please, bring the fire...mother of mine, bring the fire". Immediately, behind *Shango*, a huge fire started which forced *Oggun* to retreat.

Knowing that *Oggun* was a good tracker, *Shango* decided to cover his tracks before arriving to his hide-out. He climbed the top of a poplar tree and called upon his godfather *Osain* so he would cover his tracks. When he climbed down, all the tree branches began to fall to the ground and soon there was no trace of the path that led to *Shango's* house which was behind a big royal palm tree. *Oggun* was furious... he could not find *Shango*. Worst of all he feared he had lost *Oya* for ever. He went everywhere shouting, "*Shango* stole my wife. There shall never be peace between us. I'll fight him wherever I shall meet him.

The first thing *Shango* did as he entered his house was tell *Oya* that she should never touch or look inside the dry calabash that he had hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the room. She saw him go to war against *Oggun*, every morning but before he went out, he would put his hand inside the calabash, remove it full of a strange grease and anoint his tongue, eyes and the rest of his face with it. This act intrigued *Oya*, who was burning with desire to know what was inside the calabash; because the fact was that, while *Oggun* had more men and resources than *Shango*, he could never win in battle against him. This was magic and she had to know. The next time *Shango* left early to fight *Oggun*, she climbed to where the *Osain* (this was the name of the mysterious calabash) was and looked inside. It was full of grease and some stuff she could not tell what it was. She introduced her hands, filled them, and put them to her mouth. A burning taste filled her mouth, when she opened it in fear, fire began to come out. She ran frightened while the fire was coming out of control. She ran all the way to the royal palm tree, where she buried herself deeply inside of it.

As soon as *Shango* arrived, he called *Oya*, but she did not respond. When he looked at his *Osain* and saw that it was not in

the same position he had left it, he realized *Oya* had touched it. He went outside and seeing the recently removed earth went inside the royal palm tree where he found *Oya* hiding and took her back to the house reminding her not to touch his magic calabash again.

On this particular day, *Oggun* had prepared better than ever for battle. *Shango* believed he had lost the magic of his *Osain*, and went to the battle field without using it. During the fight *Oggun* got the upper hand and was very close to claiming victory over *Shango* and his warriors. *Oya* had been watching from a nearby hill, and seeing *Shango* losing, began to scream. But instead of words, great flames of fire came out of her mouth. She ran to *Shango's* side and began to fight next to him, spitting fire on his enemies. This new weapon sent *Oggun* and his army into complete defeat. From that day on, *Shango* and *Oya* fought together in all his battles.

It is in this story that we are told how *Odemaso* (the fire), the poplar tree, *Osain*, and *Oya*, saved *Shango's* life. So, therefore every "son of *Shango*" has to have a calabash or dry coconut with *Osain* secrets inside.

### Argayu-Aggayu Sola

*Argayu* symbolizes Earth (the whole planet) and more so the deepest part of earth where volcanoes are born (He may share some of its fire with *Oggun*). Although he is not vested directly, he plays an important role in the ceremonies of Osha. The reason *Argayu* is not "fully" vested is the claim by old santeros that the full ceremony of vestment was lost at the beginning of slavery in Cuba. *Shango* is vested with a special ceremony being done at the same time to receive *Aggayu* (see Orisha vestment). All we know about him is through the myths and old patakis told to us by our elders. In Yorubaland I found the same situation when it came to *Argayu*. Only tales in which he was associated to every Orisha in one way or the other. The most consistent version I heard was that *Argayu* and *Shango*



were one and the same.

As a reminder of this a volcano stone (lava stone) has to be placed inside the bowl which will contain his cowry shells and three black stones. He is fire, but also water, fresh water (He reigns with *Oshun* on top of all river's water). He is the mountain top. He is the brazen Sun. He is the rain which fertilizes the forest.

He is either brother, father, or mentor to *Shango*, they are so closely associated that it is difficult to tell them apart. Many people believe he is Shango reincarnated. I believe he was a king of the old Hausa tribe who migrated to Yorubaland and for a brief time reigned in Abeokuta. It seems that he was able to bring fresh water from the lakes to the arid fields by constructing what must have been some type of water canals, and therefore achieving the rank of Orisha

His followers are of a mellow character and usually wise and good counselors and advisers. He is more of a life symbol in the form of the Sun's energy. He is also closely associated to Oya and was at one time linked to her as one of her lovers. They share the rainbow and the Sun rays. His most common image is as an old wise man with long white hair and beard. He walks with a long cane, which is more a staff symbol of his royalty.

As the years have passed, fewer people are becoming vested with *Argayu*. He has not as many followers as he used to have. But in New York, Miami and California, his cult still draws people and the vestment of *Shango* takes place in order to receive *Aggayu-Sola*.

There are no other paths or names by which he may be known. Farmers will pray and make offering to him in times of drought so he will bring rain and good harvest. Barren women will ask of him to make them pregnant. So that their request be granted, they will bury yams spread with almond oil, cocoa butter and sweets all wrapped in baby's diapers in a corn field. Many

women claim this simple offering has worked for them, and shortly after they have become pregnant.

### The Story of Kunapongo Aggayu and Senkepen Oya

There was a king who had a daughter called *Senkepen Oya*, and a servant named *Mapapo Eshu*.

It so happened at that time, that *Olodumare* sent a drought. We are talking big drought, so big it covered the face of the Earth. It never rained in any place, no place at all!... All wells, streams, rivers, lakes (big and small) everything went dry. Not a drop of water could be found anywhere.

The people of the village where princess *Oya* lived found themselves in a desperate situation. So desperate that they almost killed all their beast to gather the little bit of water that might have been inside their stomachs. They prayed, chanted, and made offering to the gods, but to no avail, there was no water coming from the sky.

One day, the king who was the father of *Senkepen Oya* who's name was *Resenkepen*, called upon *Mapapo Eshu* and told him: "Go and find water, even if it means that you must travel all over the world. Do not return until you have fulfilled this command".

The expedition was prepared with the servants of *Resenkepen* loading several oxen with provisions for the journey. They gathered all the empty calabashes they could find in the event they would find water.

Mapapo Eshu and the rest of the men traveled for a long time without finding water. They barely survived by drinking the morning moisture they would extract from the trees and the blood of whichever bird crossed their paths. They walked and walked for days without end and were about to give up their search when

one morning Mapapo decided to climb the highest tree he could find on top of the highest mountain he could find. He found the mountain and the tree and without hesitation climbed it.... And behold, he saw at the foot of a valley not too far away, something which shone brilliantly. It looked like a great body of water. A lake or river shone intensively under the sun!

*Mapapo Eshu* came down faster than lightning. They ran straight to the water. He was first to arrive to an immense lake with deep clean, fresh water. He was about to drink, but the moment he took the water to his lips, the lord of the waters *Kunapongo Aggayu*, slapped him so hard that he fell on his back. Not realizing what had happened, he tried to gather water with his hands and take it to his thirsty mouth. Again, he was hit hard! A little bit dizzy by the two punches he received, he got up from the dirt and asked, "Who the hell is hitting me with such fury that prevents me from drinking a little bit of water".

"It is I," an invisible voice replied. "It is I, the Lord of the waters I am *Kunapongo Aggayu!*".

"Why have you done so?"

"I shall let you drink all you want if you persuade *Resenkepen* to give me his daughter, *Senkepen Oya* in marriage. If he refuses, his people will perish of thirst".

*Eshu* answered him, "I will deliver your message to the king, but in the meantime, will you please let me gather some water?"

He granted permission, and *Mapapo Eshu* drank and drank so much, that he almost exploded. After he had satisfied his thirst and that of his companions, he filled all the calabashes he could and went back to the village. When he arrived, he said to the king "Chief, I bring you water, but the Master of the Waters told me he wants your daughter *Oya* in marriage. If you deny him this request, all the village will perish....nothing will remain".

*Resenkepen* did not answer him, he remained silent. Thinking for a long time, about the responsibility brought upon him by *Aggayu's* demand. By nightfall he asked *Eshu* to bring his daughter *Senkepen* before his presence.

When she was in front of him, he told her: "*Oya, Kunapongo* wants you as his wife. If you refuse, he threatens all to a death by thirst."

"No father, because of me, the people shall not perish. Take me to *Kunapongo*. I shall be his wife!"

At dawn, with the first daylight, *Resenkepen* gathered the people and told them of *Oya's* decision. All applauded her, and celebrated a feast in her honor. They prepared sweets from cornflower, and grated coconut with molasses, gave her several hens, a female goat from the few that were left and somehow managed to gather gifts for a dowry. Several women were chosen to accompany her to the place where *Kunapongo* was supposed to be. *Eshu* was the herald and cymbal player to indicate the place where the groom would be and to announce the arrival of the princess.

When they arrived at the lake shore where the request had been made, no one was there to meet them. There were only the waters, the jungle and a number of untold animals drinking the lake's water. *Oya* and her maids of honor remained there for a long time without seeing a single person. By night, they were tired of waiting. One maid told her, "It is about time we should leave, we have to go back to our homes".

*Oya* answered, "You all can go, I am not afraid to remain alone".

When her companions had left, *Oya* asked out loud, "I am cold and it is late. Where shall I sleep?"

"Here", a voice answered.

"Here?.... Where?"

Every time she asked, she received the same answer, until she began to feel too sleepy and curled herself up the best way she could next to a large flamboyant tree. Finally she fell completely asleep.

Suddenly, she was awakened by a strong rainfall; at last, it was raining. She was soaking wet and hid as best she could inside the tree until she went to sleep again.

And behold, when she awoke, she found herself inside a large cabin. She had blankets, food, fire, everything that she needed. Nothing seemed to be missing. All that she could want for comfort was there. Oya got up and went to the door, but she could not open it. Although there were no locks on it, she could not open it. It was as if a force prevented her from moving it one inch from its place.

She lived a long time alone in the cabin.

When she was asleep, she felt many times as if someone was making love to her. She would open her eyes trying to see who was in the room. No one was there. She realized that these were only dreams. No one was near her. But it so happened that one day she knew she was with child.... Oya was pregnant even though she had never seen a man close to her!

This very day, the door opened by itself. She was free to move out of the cabin to wherever she wanted.

The moment she was about to deliver, her mother came and helped her give birth to a child. It was a beautiful baby boy. She had a son. When the boy was a little older, her mother went back to the village, leaving her alone with her son.

Oya said one day, "I would like to go to my village and visit

my family".

"You can go", the same invisible voice answered.

As soon as she arrived, the entire village came to welcome her. They greeted her by saying: "*Senkepen Oya* has returned. It is really her, and she has her child with her". They embraced, touched the child, and gave her many gifts making it a happy homecoming. She spent several days with her parents, and she felt contented there; but something strange began to happen to her. After a while, she felt the need to go back to the cabin. When she was about to depart, her younger sister *Senkenpeyana*, said to her, "I want to go with you".

"Very well, we will go together... in reality, I find myself very much alone there".

The two sisters left, taking with them Oya's child. A few hours after they had arrived, Oya told her sister to look after the baby while she went to the river to get water. While Oya was away, the child began to cry. *Senkenpeyana* took him in her arms shouting to him to shut up, but the boy cried more. Then, she hit him, saying, "Be quiet, you little bastard, son of a father no one knows".

Four times, when Oya was not present, and the child cried, *Senkenpeyana* would hit him saying, "Be quiet son of I don't know who your father might be".

The fifth time, at the moment she was about to hit the child, *Senkenpeyana* saw standing by the door a tall man, who told her, "Leave my son in peace... let him be. I am his father!".

The man was looking severely at her and anger was in his voice. The woman couldn't utter a word, and in fear ran out of the cabin. She passed Oya who was coming from the river with calabashes full of water. Seeing her sister leaving in such a hurry, she rushed to the cabin fearing something bad had happened.

When she entered, she found this man with her child in his arms. He told her, "Don't be afraid; I am your husband, the father of your son. Your sister was abusing him calling him a bastard. I am *Kunapongo Aggayu*. Your son will no longer be called a child without a father".

This was the day that *Oya* saw her husband for the first time. And in all fairness, let it be said that he was a handsome man, dressed in fine clothing and beautiful gold rings adorned his fingers, nose and ears. From that day, *Kunapongo* remained by her side, never leaving her alone again. Also that same day a great village appeared by the lake, filled with people, cabins, cattle and everything which gives life to a town. *Oya* realized she was the wife of a great chief, and she reigned over a great number of people and things.

### **Osain: His Secrets**

***For all purposes, he is practically the god of Nature. All the herbs, seeds, leaves, plants and roots are his property.***

*Osain* like *Osun* is a lesser deity in the Osha societies. He primarily inhabits the forests. The myth described him as a one-eyed, one-armed, one-legged man, who very seldom comes out of the bush country. A very special safeguard for the houses is prepared using *Osain* attributes. As the tales would have it, *Osain* had never been given any deity as a mother or a father. He is not an Orisha per se, but rather a special deity born to serve the gods by order of *Olodumare*.

Though he may be a lesser deity in some aspects, his role is one of the most important in the rites of Osha. He is present in every ceremony; no ritual can be properly done without the use of *Osain*.

Life begins and ends with *Osain*.

You are washed with herbs when you are born, you are washed with herbs when you die. When a feast is to be given, or meals are offered, or a vestment takes place, or beads are to be worn, or stones, or cowry shells are to be washed, it has to be with *Osain*.

To receive the necklace beads (elekes), seven chants are to be done to him and at least seven of his herbs should be in the *Omiero* to wash them. When it is a vestment, no less than twenty one herbs-leaves-plants are to be used, and sixteen chants to be sung.

Very few people (if any today) are vested with *Osain*. *Osainistas* (*Osain* people as they are called) may be of both sexes, but women will not officiate as such until they are 45 years of age, or over, or until the change of life has taken place. Women under this age may have a safeguard made with *Osain*, which consists of a small almond nut wrapped with a string of beads with different colors and closed by a yellow cowry shell. Women who menstruate are not permitted to prepare it for any one except for themselves.

He or She who is called *Osainista*, may or may not have been through the ceremony of vestment of any deity. They may or may not be members of any house of Osha. They may or may not know the secrets of the religion, or any rites that take place within the brotherhood.

What is demanded of an *Osainista* is that they should have a vast knowledge of all the herbs, roots, seeds, flowers, trees and plants which grow everywhere, especially those used in the Santeria rites. Most *Osain* people are vested with *Shango* and their knowledge is tested constantly. *Osain* people are medicine people. They have to know which plant kills and which heals; which ones go in which *omiero* and which ones are taboo to the Orisha

### How to Prepare an Osain

It has to be prepared by an Omo-Shango (Orisha Shango). It can only be made and given by men... *real men*.

You need an empty dry calabash, or pumpkin, or coconut, or round clay pot. The receptacle has to be washed with Omiero made with 16 different herbs to which a few drops of turtle blood are added. While washing the *Osain* "house" sixteen of his chants are done. At the end you take it to the foot of a sweet cotton tree, offer a red rooster to Shango, and bury the pot, (the container) there for nine days.

After the nine days pass; take it to a crossroads in the country. There, roll the coconut shells and ask Elegua's blessing and approval. Once you get his blessing, offer him a small white chicken, sweets, dry corn kernels, honey, smoked bush rat and fish. Bury everything with the pot in this location for six more days. When you take it out, ask *Osain* if what has been done meets his approval (roll the coconut shells same as before). Once you have his blessings you need the following.

2 small deer horns.

7 fresh herbs gathered in the forest.

7 different pieces of wood (dry wood sticks gathered in the forest).

7 different dry roots.

One bag dry roasted corn.

The legs, tail and head of the turtle offered at the time of preparing the Omiero.

16 small cowry shells that must have been blessed by an Osain

man.

16 small black river stones which were previously placed inside the bowls of either Shango, Oshun, or Elegua.

One eye and the tongue of a black rooster which had to be sacrificed to Elegua.

7 feathers from the tail of an African parrot.

Place all these items inside the receptacle to be used as *Osain* "house". Wrap it in red cloth. Package it inside a wooden box, or large clay pot, or large crystal bowl. This outside wrapping is to prevent the *Osain* container from being rotted by humidity because you have to take the whole thing back to the same sweet cotton tree where it was first buried. There, you dig a hole big enough to cover it. Once in place, pour at least one bottle of fire-water, honey, corozo lard, grains of guinea pepper. Offer a turtle,



Yoruba Osain shrine and attributes

bury and cover it. Let twenty one days pass; go back, offer a red rooster, light a candle, roll the coconut shells, get the approval. Dig it out, take it to the house where it is to be placed.

*Osain* can be placed on the floor in a corner of a chosen room, or hidden behind wood sticks as to resemble a curtain. But, most of the time it is hung from the ceiling, not too far from the houses main entrance. Care is taken to place it high enough so people can walk under it without hitting their heads..

It is always tied with a piece of rope. Nylon or wire are not permitted because the rope has to be well smeared with corozo lard and a black rooster's blood.

Women are not permitted to walk under it. Reason: it is a big no! not bad luck, bad, bad omen....

After all the ceremonies and offerings have taken place and *Osain* is finally placed, it is said that all the beasts and fowl, birds, insects, reptiles which inhabit the rivers, mountains, the forests, and the valleys live there. Sometimes, it makes a very strange noise, although it may be locked in a room without windows, or without wind going through it. An *Osainista* will interpret the sounds and make predictions with amazing accuracy. They claim that *Osain* "speaks" to them with that weird noise.

The first time I heard "the noise-language" of an *Osain*, was in a small town across the bay from Havana and it really scared the living day lights out of me. After that first scare, I have heard it a few times, and although I cannot understand the noise, or discover how it is done, or how it could be done where there is no ventilation, or for that matter no one close enough to make the noise, the truth of the matter is that any *Osainista* who interprets the noise, will tell you with uncanny exactitude what is to happen in the future.

### Oshosi

***He is the protecting god of those who seek justice.***

He is properly the god of the chase. Another of *Yemaya's* children, is considered a lesser deity, but as a part of the Orishas warriors in the Santeria rites, is vested in an expensive and elaborate ceremony. He developed a great number of followers during the slavery years, he was called upon for protection by the runaway slaves to cover their tracks. He protects the animals being hunted by changing the wind and making the hunters loose their track.

As the slaves thought their cause to be just, they invoked *Oshosi* constantly to help them gain their freedom. As time passed and slavery ended, anyone who had dealings with the law, would call upon *Oshosi* to help them with their particular situation. So, *Oshosi* became the Orisha of Justice, especially among the Sante-ria practitioners who still call him and make offerings to him to mediate whenever they have to deal with the courts of law.

### Osun

***He too is a lesser deity, and serves mainly as a "lookout" for Eleggua.***

It is a must when a person receives "the warriors set" (*Eleggua, Oggun, Oshosi*) that *Osun* be received too. It has a secret or load inside which is mainly given by the Babalawos, Once said secret is placed inside of it, it is never to be opened again. He should never be put on the floor, except when offerings are made to the warriors, at such time, extreme care is taken that it does not fall for it is considered a very bad omen, usually a warning of death.

*Osun* is symbolized by a tall metal cup with a long base, on top of which stands a rooster, and four jingle bells hanging from the sides. Usually it is about seven inches tall, but you could find

another type of *Osun* made to fit the person's height. It contains the same load as a normal one.

Being a part of the warriors set, It is placed nearby where the warriors are kept. But he will be kept on a high place above the person's head. Again, taking care it will be secure so it will not fall to the floor. Nowadays many Santeros will place it high, on the same shrine where the Orishas are kept, and close to *Obatala's* bowl and attributes.

## READING WITH THE COCONUT SHELLS



## Chapter

- 5 -

**T**his is the most used reading, paraphernalia in the rituals of Osha. It is based on a simple Yes or No answer.

You need a dry coconut which has to be opened in half. From these two halves (after removing the hard outside shell), cut five pieces, no smaller than 2x2 inches, making them as round as possible. Do not remove the brown peel, only the outside shell. Place them in a white plate with a dry calabash (jicara) or small glass of water in the middle of the plate. Using your right hand, drop a few drops of water on the floor while saying:

*Omi tutu, ana tutu  
tutu Leggua, tutu Laroye  
tutu egun, tutu ile, tutu Osha  
bogbo tutu. Ariku babawa.*

Then proceed to do the *Mayubba* and *Kinkamashe* chants. First to God *Olorun* and all dead santeros you may have known, then to the spirits of all your ancestors. When the reading is for somebody else, then, first it would be the person's ancestor spirits and then to yours. During the *Mayubba* you have to name as many santeros as you can remember. After you have finished naming them, you have to name the person's dead relatives, guides, protecting spirits etc., you will continue by naming your guides, protecting spirits, etc.

After the *Mayubba* prayer is over, start with the *Kinkamashe*. This is asking the permission or blessing of all santeros present or not at the reading, or ceremony. You begin with the person's god-mother or godfather, followed by yours.



This is the procedure:

Hold four pieces of coconuts in your right hand, raise it above your head and say.

*Mayubba Olodumare*  
*Mayubba lo owo ke timbelese*  
*iba baye tonu*

(here you start naming deceased santeros. Example).

*Mayubba Juana Montefu ibae baye tonu.*  
*Calazan ke ibae baye tonu.*  
*Omi Tola ke ibae baye tonu.*  
*Secundino Crucet ke ibai baye tonu.*  
*Bamboyen ke ibae baye tonu.*

(and so on, until you run out of names of dead santeros).

Then start with the person's (or your) dead ancestors: *Mayubba Franciso ke ibae baye tonu. Mayubba John Smith ke ibae baye tonu.* Continue naming dead relatives, protecting guides etc. until you have named as many as possible.

Now do the *Kinkamashe*

*Kinskamashe* (here start naming santeros in the room, starting with the person's godfather or godmother and Yubbonas). If there are no santeros present, name the person's godfather or godmother only, and then proceed to name your own godfather or godmother. If you are reading for yourself, name only your godfather or godmother.

Return the four pieces of coconut to the plate. Pour a little more of the water on the floor while saying.

*Alaro fusile Orisha badaro, fumi sabo nitosi*  
*soro ati ibere na Obbi ate dilogun ni na aruko bogbo*  
*na Orisha tikue notosi kan iyewo mdokue obi Eleggua.*

Take the same four pieces of coconut in your left hand, and with your right hand using your finger nails, start cutting little pieces from the four corners of each piece of coconut while saying.

*Obinu iku, obino ano, obino ofo, obino araye*  
*ariku babawa.*

After you have gone through the last piece of coconut, drop all the little pieces that you have kept in your right hand, on the floor in front of the Orisha with which the reading is being done. Keep the four pieces of coconut in you left hand and while touching the floor say.

*Ile mokue, Eleggua mokue (three times).*  
(if the reading is to a different, or with a different deity, name it instead of *Eleggua*). Continue.

*Orisha mokue (name the orisha), Eleggua mokue*  
*Ariku babawa.*

At this time, whoever is present will respond: *Akueye.*

You.... *Obbi to* (name orisha).

Choir.... *Akuaiya.*

You...(holding the four pieces of coconut with both hands):  
*Akueye owo, akueye oma, aiko babawa.*

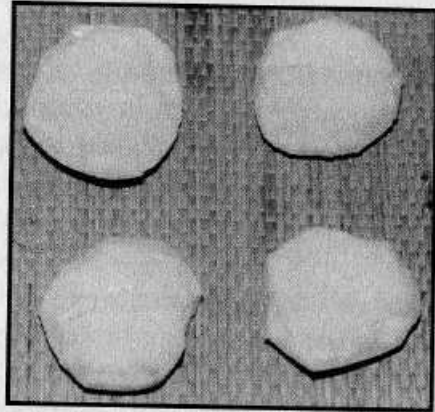
Choir.... *Asonia.*

Now roll the coconuts gently on the floor and read the signs which are as follows.

### Meaning of The Coconut Positions as They Fall

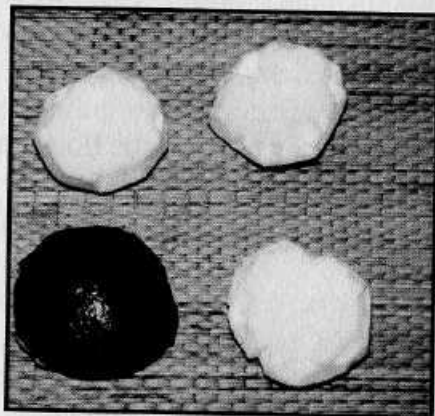
**Alafia.** *Four white pieces face up.*

Yes; with all the blessings of Orisha.  
Very good omen.



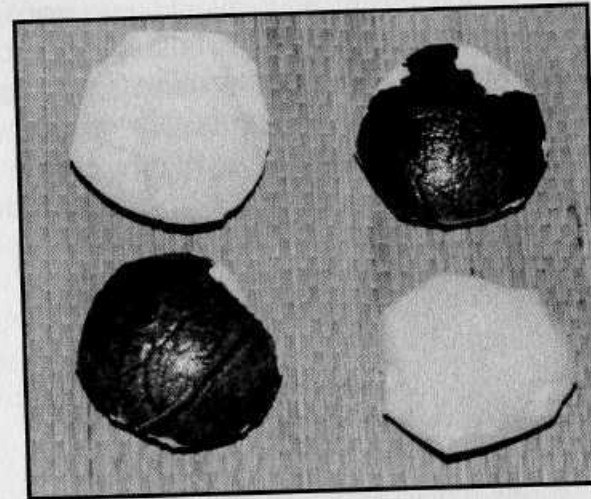
**Otawa.** *Three white, one black.*

Not a very strong answer. Have to repeat the roll.  
If the same position comes out again, the answer is considered a yes. (To me, it means something is missing. I do not accept it as a complete yes. I will ask what else is needed, and then roll the coconuts for a final answer).



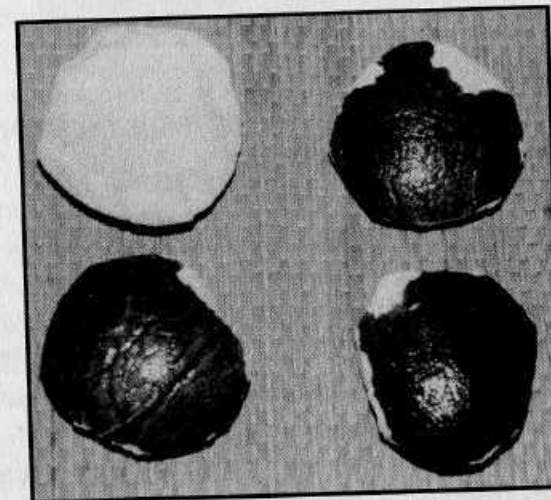
**Eyeife.** *Two black, two white.*

The answer is yes.  
Continue to the next question. If that was the last, end the reading.



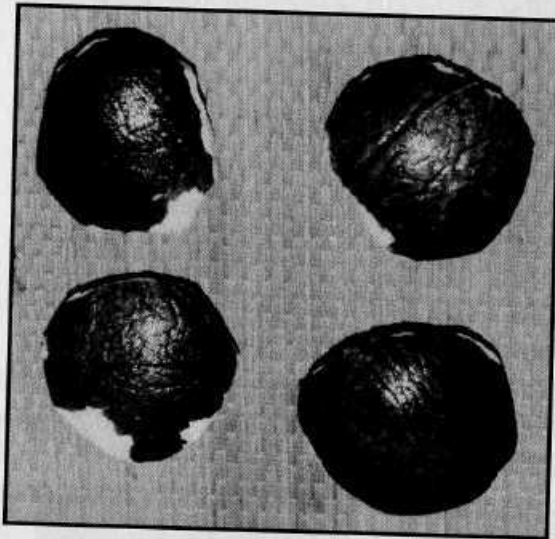
**Oyekanna.** *One white, three black.*

The answer is No.  
(Take it for what it is...it is No).



**Okassoddi (Okana) Four black.**

It is a NON answer to the question. Do not take it as a simple No. It is assumed to be a sign, a bad omen. In reality, it means that there is a spirit that wants something, or to say something. The normal procedure would be to stop the reading, and ask what kind of spirit is talking eg: good, bad, known, unknown; or if there is a warning from a dead relative. Once you have the answer, continue with the normal reading.



These readings are done constantly in the rituals of Osha. It is limited to Yes, No, Maybe, Warning.

**The Story of Obi**

One day, *Olofin* came down to Earth to visit for a while. On the first day He met a man called *Obi*. *Olofin* was highly impressed by this man. He found him to be a just and unpretentious person.

*Olofin* decided that such a man should live in a high place. He found a palm tree and dressed *Obi* all white inside and out-

side and told him this would be his house. This palm was to be known as *Obi's* house (we know it as the coconut tree). He made *Obi's* soul immortal and introduced him to *Eleggua* and a good friendship developed between the two of them. They called their friends their mutual friends. The poor and the rich, the clean and the unclean, the sick and the healthy were all friends of *Eleggua*.

But... it happened that *Obi* saw himself so white and living so high that he became filled with false pride. He only wanted to talk to people who lived as high as he did (there were very few). He would no longer call *Eleggua's* friends his friends unless they were rich, healthy and beautiful.

It was *Obi's* birthday and he asked *Eleggua* to invite his best friends; but *Eleggua* had seen how much *Obi* had changed, and to annoy him, invited all the poor people and vagabonds he could find.

When *Obi* went to his house and saw it full of beggars, he got angry and said to them "Who invited you to my house?". Everybody answered, "Eleggua". *Obi* threw them all out of the house saying that he did not associate with vagabonds. *Eleggua* arrived

at that moment, and told *Obi* their friendship was ended.

*Obi* realized that perhaps he had made a mistake when he offended *Eleggua*, but did nothing to mend his error.

Some time passed and one day *Olofin* asked *Eleggua* to deliver a message to *Obi*. But he declined, explaining to Him, how much *Obi* had changed by refusing to admit the poor to his house. *Olofin* listened in silence, and when *Eleggua* finished, told him, "I shall teach *Obi* a lesson".

*Olofin* masqueraded as a beggar and knocked at *Obi's* door. When *Obi* opened the door, all he saw was a dirty, ragged old man and did not recognize who it was. He said to *Olofin*, "Go

away you filthy smelling old man. I do not give anything to dirty people". Olofin stood back, and very loudly said to him "Obi; take a good look, see who I am". Obi was completely taken by surprise and could not utter a word. Then, Olofin continued." I thought that you were a modest and honest man without false pride. That is why I made you white inside and outside with an immortal spirit, but it seems that because you live so high, your head has been filled with clouds. I shall leave you at the top of the palm tree, but now you will fall to the ground so that you learn that no matter how high you may be, you can fall. As long as this planet exists, you will dress, now, green on the outside, and white on the inside. When you get old and dry; you will become brown but remain white inside. You will serve everyone who may be in need of your services. All the Orisha and non Orisha. You will help them to find answers to their questions.... and while you are green and with water inside, all the people rich and poor, healthy or sick, clean and unclean who wish to drink from your water will do so and they may eat from your flesh. From now on you are to serve the people.

And this is how the coconut began to fall to the ground. And this is why it is used to appease our hunger, quench our thirst, and seek answers to our problems.

## HEAD CLEANSING



## Chapter

- 6 -

### Offering to the Head Spirit

**Y**ou will need:

<i>Obimeyi</i>	Two coconuts (dry).
<i>Atanameyi</i>	Two candles.
<i>Asho funfun</i>	One white cap, or white piece of cloth to cover the head.
<i>Eu</i>	Cotton.
<i>Ori</i>	Cocoa butter.
<i>Efun</i>	Egg shell powder (cascarilla).
<i>Omi Olofin</i>	Holy water.

One set of four pieces of coconuts for a reading.

Two white plates.

One plate will contain the coconuts and the jicara with water for the reading.

On the other plate, you will place shredded coconuts. It is considered "more traditional" if you chew the pieces of coconut.

Chew pieces of cocoa butter and place it on top of the shredded coconut.

Pour egg shell powder on it (cascarilla).

Pour a few drops of Holy water.

Mix it all to make a pulp. Put it on one half of the plate.

On the other half place the two white candles, the piece of cotton large enough to cover the head, the white cap or piece of cloth.

Seat the person on a low stool, or chair. Place both plates at the feet of the person, on a fiber mat. You and the person should be without shoes while on the mat. If a man, roll the pants knee high, if a woman the skirt should be also rolled to expose the knees. Roll the sleeves of the blouse, or shirt, to expose the elbows. Stand in front of the person with both plates in your hands, and say what is on each plate. In your right hand the plate with the coconuts for the reading.

*Obbi to leri, cosi ano, cosi ofo  
araye, emi kobo leri, cosi eyo  
Ariku babawa*

In your left hand, the plate with the grated or chewed coconut, the candles, the cap and cocoa butter.

*Atanameyi, asho funfun, Asho obi,  
asho ori, asho efun, omi olofin.*

Raise your hands to the head level while still holding both plates and say (asking God for his blessing).

*Ashe Olorun Olodumare*

*tuto leri de mi koboeri.*

Place the plates on the mat, by the person's feet. Take water from the jicara or glass and spill a few drops saying.

*Tappa ano, tappa aiya, araye, ofo  
iku. Omi tutu, tutu ile, tutu orisha  
tutu egun ariku babawo.*

Now, proceed and put a little bit of Holy water on top of the head, back of the neck, the forearm, knee caps and on each foot. With cascarilla draw two lines if the orisha is female, and three if male, on the cheeks, and both legs.

Take small amounts of the white pulp you made before and place it on the places where you had smeared the Holy water: feet, knee caps, forearms, back of the neck; the largest portion will go on top of the head.

Starting at the head and working your way down, cover each spot with cotton. The piece of cotton which goes on the head should cover as much of it as possible.

Take the cap, or hat, or white piece of cloth in your right hand and while passing it gently from the back of the head to the front say.

*Appande ano, appande iku  
appande ofo, appande areye  
apande aro, ariku babawa.*

Leave the cap resting on the head (do not cover the head yet) and proceed to read the coconuts. First, in front of the person, just like any regular reading, except that you will be reading to, or asking the blessings of the spirit which resides on the person's head, so when it comes to naming the orisha, you say instead:  
*Obbi to leri.*

If the person has been vested with Osha, then you have to name the Orisha: *Obbi to Yemaya*.

Roll the coconut shells.

All you want to know is if everything is fine and you can proceed with the head cleansing. Once you get your Yes answer, go to the back.

At the back, you are asking for the person's ancestors blessing whether the person is vested with Osha or not. You have to do the complete reading but no orisha is named. What you say when it comes to chant Obbi is: *Aggo Eggun, Obbi to Eggun*.

Roll the coconut shells. Once you have a Yes answer, cover the head completely with the white cap without removing the cascarilla pulp with the cotton. Only remove the ones you have placed on the neck, forearm, knee caps and finish at the feet. Put all that you have taken from the person's body, on the plate where they were before. Give the person the two candles and have them hold one in each hand. Light them, and let them burn for a while (leave the room for a few minutes). Come back and lift the person from the chair while they are holding the lighted candles. Tell him-her that as you are lifting them so are the Orishas. They are receiving the Orishas blessings.

Your last phase of the ceremony will be, while covering the plate, is that you have to say:

*Obbi mi reo, obbi mi reo*

Choir (or you): *Awa wa to, awa wa to*

Have the person sleep that night with the plates on the floor, next to his/her head wearing the white cap with everything that was placed on top on the head. The candles should be burning until they expire. Next morning the person should wash his/her head with odorless soap and dispose of the remaining of the cleansing at the place where they were told at the end of the ceremony.

When the Head Cleansing is for a vestment of Orisha, the night before the ceremony, the offering to the head spirits does not take place. Instead it is to the Orisha to be vested and it should be done with the fowl required for such an event. This procedure is described in the chapter dedicated to vestment ceremony.

## VESTMENT





## Chapter

- 7 -

**A**fter a reading with the cowry shells by a priest of Osha, or by three of Orula's priests (with the chain and Ikin), if you are told that you have to be vested, and if you wish, you will start the procedure by acquiring the items required to go through the ceremony. They are as follows:

### What You Need

Male: Seven (7) white shirts.

Seven (7) white trousers.

Seven (7) white "T" shirts.

Seven (7) white shorts (underwear).

Seven (7) white caps made of cotton cloth.

Seven (7) pairs white socks.

One (1) pair white sandals.

One (1) white hat.

One (1) white suit or white jacket.

Four (4) white towels.

Four (4) white bed sheets (full).

One bag (about 5 pounds) of cowry shells.

One razor (barber's razor).

One white comb.

One pair of brand new barber's scissors.

The lunch set: one white porcelain plate, one white coffee cup, one silver spoon.

One set of "warriors". This set is composed of *Oggun, Osun, Oshosi, Eleggua*. They could have been received previously, or received the same day the vestment takes place. It is the same for both male and female novices.

The set of ceramic and wood bowls where the Orisha's stones and adornments will be placed. They will be,

*Obatala*: 1 white ceramic, or silver bowl.

*Shango*: His set consists of one mortar and one wood bowl. The wood should be either cedar or sweet poplar wood.

*Oshun*: One yellow ceramic bowl or mixed colors with heavy accent on yellow or orange color.

*Yemaya*: Same as *Oshun's*, but either all blue, or accent on the blue color.

*Argayu*: One ceramic or wood (cedar) bowl painted with seven different colors.

*Oya*: If *Oya* is to be received (not with *Shango* and *Yemaya*), only with *Obatala* and *Oshun*, the bowl will have many colors intermixed or it will be only pink.

It is usually accepted that the Orisha which is being vested will have the prettiest of all the bowls.

For every Orisha there will be a different set of adornments and a different number of Orisha stones.

The necklace beads, like the set of warriors could have been previously received. If not, they will be placed on their particular bowl, to be "washed" and vested the same day. Usually a new set of necklace beads is received that day.

Yawo (novice) has to pay for two different sets of clothing, which she-he will not see until after the vestment ceremony has been completed. One is a simple garment called "the lunch garment"; the other, will be very elaborate, really fancy and it is to be worn on the "middle day", or visitation day, which is the day after the vestment has taken place.

Female: Seven (7) white skirts.

Seven (7) white blouses.

Seven (7) "T" shirts.

Seven (7) sets of white underwear.

Seven (7) white, head handkerchiefs.

One white dress.

One white hat.

One white shawl.

One pair white shoes.

One pair white sandals.

Seven pairs of stockings.

One white handbag.

The rest of the items are the same for Yawo either male or female.

### **What is needed at the Igbodu Sacred Room**

You have to set up the "working table", which is where all that will be used during the ceremony has to be placed.

Start by covering the table with one of the white sheets brought by Yawo; then, place on it the following.

Two bottles of firewater.

One box of candles.

Holy water.

Water brought from the river by Yawo.

One large jar of honey.

Sugar cane molasses.

Salt.

Corozo lard.

Guinea peppers (small grounds).

Smoked fish.

Smoked Agutti-Jutia (this is a substitute for the bush rat

used in Yorubaland).

Roasted corn kernels.

Ashe: *Obi, Eru, Ossu, Kola*. These four items come from Nigeria and can be bought in every major Santeria-Botanica shop in Miami, Los Angeles, New York and other cities in the US. This set of four different roots and nuts form a basic part of the ingredients needed - in every ritual of Santeria. Their names have remained without translation into either Spanish or English. They are still called Ashe.

Cocoa butter. (About four sticks).

Cascarilla. (it is a powder made from white egg's shell. Most of the times it is made into small round odorless balls).

One small apron the color of the deity being vested.

One white plate where four small "jicaras" or clay pots are placed. They contain the paints use to paint the Yawo's head. The colors are: red, blue, yellow and white. They are prepared by adding firewater to coloring powder until a paste like paint is made. The white color is made by mixing firewater and cascarilla powder. Next to the plate there will be four small paint brushes, the same type children use in coloring books. Each brush will be used for the four different colors, taking care not to mix them when painting Yawo's head.

One white plate containing the scissors, comb and razor.

One plastic pitcher where the Omiero to be drunk every morning by the novice will be kept for seven days.

Two soap bars: one yellow, one white. Both odorless, they will be cut in small pieces, enough to bathe the novice, to

wash the cowry shells and Orisha's stones.

One plate with the Ashe-Pulp (Machuquillo).

This Ashe-Pulp is the one to be placed on top of the head of Yawo after he/she has been shaved and painted, and where all of the godmother's or godfather's bowls containing their Orishas will be rested during the vestment ceremony.

### **Machuquillo Ashe Pulp**

#### **How to prepare it**

The night before the vestment, the Yubona or second godmother gathers herbs from the bunch of twenty one (21), or more different herbs already in the room which will be used to bathe the Yawo and prepare the sacred Omiero to be drank in the mornings and wash the stones, cowry shells and necklace beads. From this gathering she takes the largest portion of the herb belonging to the deity being vested. She will sit on the floor, under the throne, removes the stem, leaving only the soft leaves and taking a large stone (Oke) from inside Yawo's Obatala bowl, and begin to mash them against the floor.

Assuming *Obatala* is being vested the herbs will be those belonging to *Obatala*. If *Yemaya*, then it will be *Yemaya's* and so on for each Orisha. The only difference from the other Ashe-Pulp, will be that for *Obatala* eight white snails will be mashed when doing the Machuquillo.

The herbs mashed are: For *Obatala* 8, *Eleggua* 21, *Oya* 9, *Argayu* 9, *Shango* 6, *Oshun* 5, *Yemaya* 7, *Oggun* 9, *Oshosi* 7.

Once the herbs have been mashed you add.

A little bit of coloring powder. The color is that of the Orisha

being vested.

Pieces of: *Obi*, *Eru*, *Kola*, *Ossu*. (Ashe).

Guinea pepper grounds: 8 for *Obatala*, 3 for *Eleggua*, 6 for *Shango*, 7 for *Yemaya*, 5 for *Oshun*, 9 for *Oggun*, 7 for *Argayu*, 9 for *Oya*, 7 for *Oshosi*.

Small pieces of smoked fish.

Holy water (a few drops).

Water from the river brought by Yawo.

Firewater.

In *Obatala* 8 pieces of cocoa butter; the rest, will have corozo lard.

Honey.

Cascarilla.

Grated white coconut.

Smoked Jutia (Aguti).

This mashed mixture has to be squeezed out of the excess liquids until a moist soft pulp is left and placed in a white plate on top of the working table.

After Yubona has finished making the Ashe, she has to tie all the herbs that will go into the final Omiero into separate bundles with a piece of cloth the color of each particular Orisha. They are.

*Eleggua*: Red.

*Oggun*: Red.

<i>Oshosi:</i>	Blue.
<i>Obatala:</i>	White.
<i>Oya:</i>	Red. Pink. Light Brown.
<i>Shango:</i>	Red and White together.
<i>Yemaya:</i>	Blue.
<i>Oshun:</i>	Yellow.
<i>Inle:</i>	Blue.
<i>Shoppono:</i>	Red and Purple together.
<i>Orisha-Oko:</i>	Terra-cotta-red.

### The Sacred Room Igboodu What is needed

Yubona has to make sure that everything in the Igboodu is in order and that all procedures, as well as everything which is supposed to be there, is there... they are.

The Throne: This is where Yawo will live for the next seven days. It is built in a corner of the Igboodu and it consists of a canopy or a tent made to look like a throne. It is made with different pieces of cloth showing mostly the color of the Orisha being vested. Very seldom would it be bigger than 4x6 feet. The floor under it will be covered with two palm fiber mats, on top of them Shango's inverted mortar is placed. This is the same mortar where Yawo sits while the "crowning" takes place. After the vesting ceremony is over, Yawo will place his towel, plate, sandals and cup behind the mortar and will sit once in a while on it. He/She will have their meals sitting on the floor under this canopy, and sleep on the floor on top of the palm fiber mats.

The bathing basin: It is a big tin basin about 2 feet deep and 3 feet wide where Yawo will be bathed the first day by all the Oluo-Orishas and Iyalorishas, and everyday after the initial ceremony for the next seven days by Yubona or godmother-godfather. This same basin was placed the night before in the middle of the Igboodu with all the tied herbs to be used during vestment.

**A check list:** Yubona makes sure the "working table" has everything that is needed before the ceremony starts, including a large white basin full of pieces of coconuts, plus 2 unopened coconuts placed on the floor, in front of the table.

Two palm fiber mats.

Windows and doors leading to the sacred room have to be covered with white sheets, as well as all mirrors in the bathroom. Yawo cannot see his face while in the process of being vested.

Yawo's ceramic bowls containing Orisha's adornments, stones, cowry shells, necklace beads, pieces of white odorless soap (castille soap). They are placed on the right side of the Throne, while the godmother's/godfather's will be on the left side containing only the Orisha's stones.

The *Ide*: A bracelet to be worn during the novice year made of beads the color of the Orisha being vested which has to be on its corresponding bowl.

The clothes basket. It is a large, woven palm fiber basket where all the clothing to be worn by Yawo during the week is placed.

The "Lunch and Crowning Day" garments hung by the wall close to the Throne.

All the items listed here are a must in the Igboodu. If any of them is missing it will not only delay the vestment ceremony, but

in many houses of Osha it is considered a bad omen, so therefore, every Yubona takes extra care in checking the Igbody.

### What Constitutes an Orisha Set

A set of adornments or "working tools"

For Obatala: Eight flat white stones (from a river). In some houses of Osha, only four large stones about two inches by three are placed inside Obatala's bowl.

One larger stone about four or five inches (Oke) which is placed outside, next to Obatala.

Eighteen (opened) cowry shells. They will be used for readings only with Obatala. These are Orisha's cowry shells, and very seldom will be used for reading.

Eight small round pieces of cocoa butter.

One Ide made with white beads only.

Two silver bracelets.

Cascarilla (powdered to cover the bowl's bottom).

Two marble or ceramic eggs.

The adornments: 1 silver half Moon, 1 silver Sun, 1 silver cane with a closed fist on top. All are no larger than 5 to 6 inches. One silver bell placed in front of the bowl.

For Shango: The adornments: all made of cedar wood

totaling six. one single edged ax, one double edged ax, one spear, one machete, one dagger, one arrow. They are about six inches in length and are placed inside the bowl.

Six thunderbolt stones.

Six black stones from a river.

Eighteen (opened) cowry shells.

Two ram's horns, one maraca (ashere). Both the maracas and the horns will be placed next to Shango's cedar bowl

For Oshun: Five yellow or white small stones.

Eighteen (opened) cowry shells.

Two sea shells about three inches long.

One brass crown which can be simple with five spears or thunder lightening rods hanging from the sides of it, or very elaborate with adornments like those of Oggun's coming from the top and all around the crown.

If Oshun is the Orisha to be vested, the crown could be made out of gold.

Five brass, or gold bracelets.

The stone brought from the river by Yawo when the bathing took place.

Oshun's bowl will be filled half way with fresh water.

For Yemaya: Seven black small stones from a river.

Eighteen (opened) cowry shells).

Seven iron bracelets (to be placed on top of the bowl and to be worn by Yawo during the novice year).

The adornments: a small half moon, a full moon with a woman's face, a sun with a man's face, a ship's wheel, two oars. One small women's statue the shape of a siren standing with open arms and a lightening rod hanging from each of them. They are all made of lead and are no bigger than six or seven inches. Yemaya's bowl is kept full of water.

For Oya: Nine black stones (from a river).  
Eighteen (opened) cowry shells.

Nine bronze bracelets. (to be worn by Oya's Yawo during the novice year).

One crown on top of the bowl with nine of Oggun's working tools hanging from the sides.

For Arggayu: Three black stones, or one large stone (from a river).

One lava or volcanic stone.

Adornments: an arrow, a double edged ax, a cane; all made of iron.

Eighteen (opened ) cowry shells.

One small jicara filled with honey and corozo lard.

*Note:* If Eleggua is not the Orisha to be vested no special adornments or different set is needed. It should be in the Igboodu as a part of the warriors with Oggun and Osun. What needs to be done is add twenty-one (opened ) cowry shells, one small stone (preferably from Yorubaland), two bones tied into a cross taken from the head of the first goat sacrificed to him together with a knuckle bone from the right front leg of the same goat, and one (unopened) sea shell about three inches long.

### Ceremony of Orisha's Stones

Before the Orisha's stones are placed inside their corresponding bowls, and a few days before the vestment takes place, the Yubbona, or Iyara (second godmother) has to "ask" the gods if they inhabit each and everyone of the stones which will be used as symbols of their spirits.

On a palm fiber mat, the Yubbona will place a large number of stones of different colors, a basin full of cut pieces of coconut used for readings, a small calabash or jicara with fresh water. She will sit on the mat, will proceed to "ask" Orisha, by rolling the coconuts on the mat. The "asking" is done exactly the same way a coconut shell reading is done. (see coconut shell reading), except that in this case, she will limit the question to Yes or No answers.

After the Mayuba or Moyugba procedure takes place, and placing one stone at a time in front of her, she will ask out loud: "are you the stone which contains the spirit of...(names the Orisha)". Traditionally she will start with Obatala and work down the Odu or hierarchy. When she gets the Yes answer, then she will have to ask if this Orisha is the one which will be used in the vestment of (names the person to be initiated in Osha), if the answer is Yes again, she will continue to the next stone, until she

has a complete set for each deity. Every time she starts a new set for each Orisha, she has to do the Mayuba ritual. If the answer is No, she will put the stone aside, assign it to the Orisha which corresponded and use it on a different vestment, only asking this time for the person's name. Once the ceremony is finished and she has all the completed sets, she will place them inside the Orisha's bowl. She will end the ceremony by asking Olofin if everything is satisfactory or if anything (usually small offering to the Orisha being vested) is needed. If the answer is Yes, the ceremony ends. If the answer is No, then the offering is done and the "asking" of the Orisha's stones is terminated.

### Opening Orisha's Cowry Shells

This procedure is usually done the same day the "asking of the stones" takes place. This particular work does not need a ceremony. All Yubona has to do is to make sets of eighteen opened cowry shells for each Orisha, except Eleggua which will be twenty-one. It is done by using a sharp pointed instrument such as the tip of a pair of scissors. The cowry shell is placed face up (the open mouth or slit facing you), on a hard surface, usually a wooden table, she introduces the tip of the scissors until she reaches the other side of the shell and applying a little pressure breaks the smooth part open. Every set is placed inside the corresponding Orisha bowl. After the vestment ceremony is completed and Ita is done, extreme care is taken so they will not be mixed or mistakenly placed in the wrong bowl.

### The Throne

Known as "Iyawo-Orisha house", is a tent-like canopy built in a corner of the sacred room (Igbodu). It is made of cloth having the color of the Orisha being vested as its main theme. In the past, the throne was built by the godparents, or the Yubona, but being that they have grown to be very elaborate and demand a lot of work, it is nowadays a matter of routine that Yawo will pay people who specialize in making the throne. Two or three days

before the ceremony takes place, they go and build it. Each throne has its own characteristics and it is only fair that I give them to you starting with Eleggua.

Before the throne is build, another *Eleggua* called "The Head, or Principal *Eleggua*", has to be made. This will be placed next to the typical set of warriors, where you will find the "smaller" *Eleggua*.

This Main *Eleggua* has a different load or secret. It needs to be prepared in what is called a *makuto* (secret loaded bag), said *makuto* is a piece of red cloth that will contain inside (before being sewed) these items.

### Eleggua's Makuto

A little bit of earth taken from both the back and the front of the Godmother/Godfather's house.

Ashe: Obi, Eru, Kola, Ossu.

Seven different herbs belonging to *Eleggua*.

Three or twenty one small black stones.

Three small pieces of gold, or silver.

Seven guinea pepper grains.

A small piece from a turtle's shell.

A bit of earth from a crossroads.

A bit of sea sand and earth from the sea bottom.

Few grains of roasted dry corn.



Smoked fish.

A bit of earth from the bottom of a river.

A bit of earth taken from a forest at high noon.

A big chunk of Mashuquillo-Ashe pulp to be used in Elegua's vestment.

A bit of hair from the novice's head.

A small piece of jewelry worn by the novice.

Six large (about four inches) opened cowry shells.

All these items are placed inside the open piece of red cloth. Before closing it the Godmother has to roll the coconuts shells and ask if everything is in order, or if anything else is needed. Assuming the answer is satisfactory, she will close it and sew on it the six cowry shells resembling the eyes, ear, nose and mouth of a person. On the top of what would be considered the head, she will attach permanently (with glue) twenty-one needles, or nine blades, one red, African parrot feather, the spur and one tail feather taken from a rooster sacrificed to *Shango*. Now; the makuto is ready to be taken to a royal palm tree, where it will remain buried for three days, then it is taken to a crossroads and buried for another three days. Finally, it will be taken to the Igbodu, covered with a white sheet and unveiled the day of the vestment.

### Eleggua's Throne

Two thrones are required for the "crowning-vestment": one, is built inside the Igbodu, and another outside the house, in the backyard. The one inside the house will be very elaborate, made mostly of palm branches resembling a hut, or a cave. It will be covered inside and outside by *Eleggua's* herbs. Inside it will be filled with hanging bottles of rum and other alcoholic beverages,

toys, candies, pieces of Agutti, or bush rat (jutia), three small smoked chickens. Three small dried calabashes (jicaras) containing pennies, dry roasted corn kernels, and smoked fish and jutia.

Like in a *Shango's* throne, one *mariwo* (peels from royal palm tree branches) curtain will be placed on top and the back (inside) the hut. The entrance will be covered with white sheets not to be removed until Yawo is brought from the backyard. In the backyard a simple throne is built made mostly of palm tree branches with few, if any adornments. Inside of it the inverted mortar will be placed and Yawo will be seated there facing the house and the actual ceremony of vestment will be done there: After, Yawo will be brought inside by the Yubona where he/she will be asked to open his/her eyes, and for the first time will be able to see the throne. It was inside the Igbodu where the Omiero and the washing of the stones was previously done, and now the sacrifices will take place.

### Eleggua's Bush Ceremony

The same night Yawo is bathed at the river, he has to be taken out of the house again, this time accompanied by the Godmother/Godfather, Yubona, five Iyalorisha *Oshun*, and at least three Oluorisha *Eleggua*. They will go to a nearby forest, or a farm with heavy bushes and another special ceremony takes place. Yawo will bring the Ebbo (cleansing) done before he-she entered the house where the vestment will take place, as well as any offerings *Eleggua* has requested to be left at the place where this procedure will be done.

Yawo has to bring the following: "the main *Eleggua*" which is part of the set of warriors, and the makuto.

Three gray chickens.

One live jutia (agutti-bush rat).

Omiero, firewater, three cigars, honey, roasted corn kernels, smoked fish, corozo lard.

Several whips (thin) made of poplar tree branches.

Five white plates with a pumpkin on each.

At the chosen location, and after being washed with the Omiero, the jutia and the three chickens will be sacrificed. In that spot, the corn kernels, the firewater, a little bit of honey, smoked fish and corozo lard will be spread. The cigars will be lit and lots of smoke puffed. At the same time, chants to *Eleggua* will be chanted by the Oluorishas. Once the offerings are completed, three tail feathers will be plucked from the chickens and placed inside the clay pot with the smaller *Eleggua*.

Next, Yubona will tie the end of a piece of rope to Yawo's waist and the other end to the main *Eleggua*. Lots of honey is poured over the pumpkins and one given to each Iyalorisha Oshun, who will precede the Yawo coming out of the bush while they chant.

*Eleggua.....abognbo solo ayu baba*  
*Eleggua....solo ayu, baba solo ayu.*

The chant is repeated until they are out of the bush. In the meantime, Godfather/Godmother have remained behind at the same spot where the sacrifice took place and proceed to smoke the jutia and the three chickens. They are placed inside a brown paper bag and carried by them to be placed inside the throne.

Before entering the house, all the bush ceremony participants will wait outside by the house door. Before entering Yawo will be whipped with the poplar tree branches. They will exercise care not to do it too hard, because Yawo body cannot be marked before the painting with the Orisha's colors is done. Once inside the house, the final head cleansing is done and Yawo is put to

sleep on the floor by the door outside the Igboodu.

### Oggun's Throne

It is much like that of *Eleggua*: two thrones are made, one in the backyard (very simple) and another one in the Igboodu. Both are made of the same materials as *Eleggua's*. Inside of it there will hang seven small bottles of rum or firewater, seven jicaras painted with *Oggun's* colors (black and white). These jicaras are filled with smoked fish, smoked jutia, candies, seven guinea pepper grains, seven pennies, seven small pieces of iron, copper, brass, etc. The jicara is hung from the throne's ceiling just about the height of the *mariwo* curtain on the top and the back, and finally it will be covered by white sheets. Nowadays some *Oggun* thrones are made out of wood or cardboard shaped and painted to resemble a grotto.

### Oggun's Vestment Stone

Besides the normal set of warriors of which *Oggun's* iron pot is a part. Yawo will need a different set and a much bigger iron pot and stone. The stone has to be brought from a forest, the pot has to be made specially for this occasion and has to be solid iron. Sometimes the stone is brought from the sea according to *Oggun's* path. Inside the iron pot, there will no less than nine working tools (normal size) there would be: a machete, an ax, a shovel, a push rod, a hammer, a pickax, a rifle, a piece of railroad rail, an anvil, etc. These tools, the iron pot, and the rather large stone will be washed with Omiero while seven chants to *Oggun* are chanted. A single rooster is sacrificed to the stone before washing it with Omiero and lots of corozo lard as well as honey is poured over it. Then, it is washed again with Omiero and taken to the backyard where Yawo will sit for the vestment ceremony. It is brought back to the Igboodu when Yawo comes in and placed inside the throne for Yawo to sit on instead of *Shango's* inverted mortar .

### Oggun's Load (Secret)

Besides the tools placed inside the iron pot, there will be a large iron chain (about four feet long) three worn horse shoes, a pair of handcuffs, one bow and arrow, and a special *Oshosi* about three feet long from which twenty-one smaller tools hang. This *Oshosi* had to be washed with twenty-one different herbs and twenty-one gray pigeons sacrificed to it. It is placed in the middle of the iron pot, and never taken out of there. You will find in many *Oggun* iron pots the skull of a black dog.

### Oggun's Forest Ceremony

When vesting *Oggun*, and before going to the river to be bathed, Yawo has to be taken to a forest accompanied by the Godfather/Godmother, five Iyalorisha *Oshun* and at least three Oluorisha *Oggun*. Yawo has to bring with him the *ebbo* done before entering the house where the vestment will take place, the large iron pot with all the tools that will go inside, two roosters, one live jutia, one black dog (some Houses of Osha do, and some others do not require it) firewater, rum, several cigars, honey, smoked fish, and one pumpkin. Also what is needed to be taken to the river for his/her bath.

At the forest, the bush rat (jutia) will be washed with Omiero and together with the red rooster, sacrificed at the foot of a tall tree. The soil where the sacrifice took place is spread with corozo lard, honey, roasted corn, smoked fish and rum. Lots of cigar smoke is puffed. The jutia and rooster will be placed inside the iron pot with feathers from the rooster, honey and corozo lard. The sacrifice over, Yawo will be taken out of the forest by the Yubona carrying his iron pot. The five Iyalorishas *Oshun* will remain behind a bit longer while they put pumpkins on the plates, or jicaras, and the Godfather will smoke the Jutia. They will walk out singing to *Oggun*.

*Eni abombo solo yo o emi baba Oggun*

*Baba Oggun solo ayugba baba Oggun  
solo o ya.*

Sometimes the Jutia and the rooster are brought to the house and smoked there, allowing the smoke to permeate the house. The smoked jutia and the rooster will be hung from the throne's ceiling.

Before taking Yawo to be bathed at the river, he-she will be taken to a railroad track where a black dog and another red rooster will be sacrificed. To the reader this may sound cruel (in my opinion it is) and that is why perhaps more and more Houses of Osha nowadays will offer two red roosters at the railroad track instead of a black dog. Only in cases where the person being vested is extremely ill will they sacrifice the dog.

### Oshosi's Throne

Being *Oshosi's* a warrior like *Oggun* and *Eleggua*, two thrones are needed: one outside, in the backyard, and another in the Igboodu. The Igboodu throne will be made of wood covered with almond leaves. Inside, there will be a Deer's head, a Leopard and Deer skin and a bow and arrow. On the outside, large cloth handkerchiefs with the colors of *Obatala*, *Shango*, *Oshun*, *Oya* and *Yemaya* will be hung. The entrance will be covered with two white sheets until Yawo comes into the room. One large stone is brought from the forest, one red rooster and seven gray pigeons are offered to *Oshosi*, then corozo lard, anisette and honey are poured generously on top of it, it will be washed with Omiero and used outside for the vestment.

Once the vestment is over. Yawo (with his/her eyes closed) will carry it into the Igboodu and place it inside the throne where it will remain for the seven days Yawo will be in the Igboodu. At the end of the seven days, Yawo will take it home and place it next to his warriors set. Most houses of Osha will use a mortar instead of the stone to vest Yawo. This one is not *Shango's* but

rather a large freshly cut trunk from an almond tree which will be given the sacrifice and painted with *Oshosi's* colors. It will also be placed inside the throne with three iron rods shaped like spears, one larger than the others, one trident and two deer horns.

### Oshosi's Load (Secret)

Oshosi's load is placed inside the deer horns by drilling one hole in them.

It contains.

Ashe: Obi, Eru, Ossu, Kola.

Four pieces of dry wood from a tree called "Yaya".

Smoked jutia and fish.

Gun powder.

A piece of tiger's skin.

A handful of peony.

A little bit of Ashe-Mashuquillo taken from an Elegua's vestment.

A small piece of deer's skin.

A bunch of grass blades ("hierba fina").

Fresh almond leaves

Roasted dry corn.

Rum, corozo lard, anisette.

A Few large sweet corn leaves

All of these items are wrapped in at least two different pieces of cloth fitted to go inside the deer's horn. The sweet corn leaves are placed on top of the cloths, one has to be blue and the other yellow. Once everything is packaged it is placed inside, and sealed with cement mixed with earth from a forest.

### Oya's Throne

Again, you will find that you need two thrones. In *Oya's* case the main one will be built in the Igboodu, and a second somewhere in the house. The one in the Igboodu will be made mostly of cloth, and draperies with dark red as the main theme. The inside walls will be adorned with large cloth handkerchiefs (about nine) all of different colors. The ceiling should be made with purple red cloth. At the front and by the entrance, like Shango's a Mariwo skirt is hung from side to side.

The second throne is dedicated to *Egun* (the dead, the spirit of the dead). Although it is not as large as the one in the Ibodgu, it is perhaps fancier. It will be made with cloths of different colors where the red color will prevail. The day before the vestment and before Yawo is taken to the river to be bathed a great meal called "the food or banquet for the dead" takes place. This banquet consists of the following dishes.

#### *Ajiaco*

This is a soup made with yams, potatoes, calabashes, sweet potatoes, vegetables, lots of corn, pork, beef, lamb, tasajo (dry salted horse beef). Once it is cooked, a roasted pig's head is placed in the middle of it and like the rest of the cooked dishes, set on the floor inside the throne.

#### *Olele*

It is a meal which looks like a "tamal" made with black eye peas cooked with saffron, heavy seasoning and wrapped in large plantain leaves. Nine are placed on a multicol-

ored plate.

*Ekú-Aro*

It is cooked the same as the Olele, but no salt or seasoning is added. Nine are placed on a plate, which could be either pink or dark red.

*Eko*

It looks much like a Mexican taco. It is a tortilla made of yellow corn flour filled with a mixture of milk, cocoa butter, cascarilla and honey.

*Oguidi*

They are sweets made with fermented corn flour mixed with brown sugar and sugar cane molasses.

Add to it these dishes:

Yellow rice and fish cooked in olive oil and well seasoned.

"Arroz moro": black beans and rice cooked together seasoned with ham and bacon.

"Congri": Red beans and rice cooked together and seasoned with bacon chunks, ham, pork sausages and olive oil.

"Arroz con ajonjolí": Rice and sesame seeds cooked together.

Chocolate pudding: nine small plates.

"Torrejas": Nine French toasts, they are covered with sugar molasses.

Nine small plates each containing nine black

eye pea beans fritters.

Nine vases with flowers.

Nine candles.

Nine cups filled with firewater.

Three large glasses filled with plain water.

Three large glasses filled with water and brown sugar.

One jar of honey, and one jar of sugar molasses.

A little bit of everything Yawo had for breakfast the morning before the vestment.

Nine cigars placed alongside nine pieces of coconuts shells, the white part covered with corozo lard and one guinea pepper grain on each of them.

No Oluorisha-Iyalorisha *Shango*, or *Yemaya*, is allowed to participate in this particular vestment. Exception being made to those who had received Oya in a special ceremony.

### Obatala's Throne

It will be all white. The draperies, hand fans, all silk or large cloth handkerchiefs (about eight) will be white. Whatever other adornments are placed inside the tent-canopy throne (not too many) will be white. Very seldom are any other colors used in Obatala's throne.

### Shango's Throne

His throne will consist of six red and six white large pieces of cloth intermixed, running from the ceiling to the floor. A Mariwo skirt is hung from side to side by the entrance together with a large bunch of green bananas tied with red ribbons.

### Oshun's Throne

Yellow pieces of cloth and draperies tied with yellow ribbons will be predominant in her throne with peacock feathers and yellow hand fans surrounded by silk handkerchiefs placed outside as well as inside. Besides Shango's mortar and next to it, inside the throne, a sofa like chair will be dressed in yellow cloth to be used by Yawo during the week. A large hand fan made out of peacock feathers will be given to the novice to use as they would like.

### Yemaya's Throne

It will have different shades of blue, with fishing nets, sea shells, and sea adornments hanging from the outside. A rocking chair is placed next to the inverted mortar, and it is covered with a blue polka dot cloth spread. A fancy hand fan is given to the female Yawo.

These are basically how the thrones should look and how they should be made, but as they have gone through considerable changes they are getting fancier and fancier. What has not suffered any deviation from the original is that they have to stay within the designated colors of each Orisha, and which adornments goes with each Orisha.

### Orisha's Different Paths

#### Names

*Obatala, Oshun, Shango and Yemaya*, are also known by other

### Vestment

"names or paths". The old Oluorishas will tell us that Obatala has at least 16 different paths or surnames by which He is known. Each with its particular characteristics and individuality but being the same deity anyway. But the method used to approach them, the chants, the necklace beads, their colors (although predominantly their assigned one) will have certain variations; their taboo, their offerings and mannerisms, even their patakis (stories) change considerably, including, in some cases their sex.

There is no explanation as to why they were given to us by our elders. I found in one of my journeys to Yorubaland, *that there is only one deity, one main Orisha, one original Orisha, but.... the reincarnation of said Orisha (who will have its own name and own history) to whom the name of the original deity was added created the confusion in the Caribbean, thus the Creoles thought of them as the same Orisha with different paths or surnames.*

For instance when I visited the Oni of Ife his name was *Akenzua II Oni of Ofi, Shango reincarnated*, and thus He could claim the throne to Yorubaland as being the direct descendant of the original *Shango*. His heir would be the *Alakate of Abeokuta* another descendant of *Shango*. The Oni of Ife *is Shango* on Earth reincarnated. *Shango* lives in the Oni and perhaps one day in the future, years after *Mr. Akenzua II's* death, and according to his deeds while being "*Shango on Earth*", there will be a *Shango* known as, *Shango Akenzua*. In other words, the different paths, or surnames, are nothing but the name of the king or queen who was the "representative" of such past deity.

Here are then, the different paths, surnames, and names by which each one the Orisha are known to us in the Osha Society.

### Obatala

*Odduwa*

*Oddu-oa*

*Yeko-Yioko-Ona*

*Nana Buluku*  
*A Wemo*  
*Obbamoro*  
*Obba-Igbo, Igbaibo*  
*Ayaguna-Ayagruna*  
*Orisha n'la-Oshanla, Obanla*  
*Yewa-Shewa*  
*Osha ki ri yan-Sagrina*  
*Owa Olofun-Obalufon*  
*Babamore*  
*Fururu-Baba kue uru*  
*Oba Mawo-Obbaunle*  
*Asho*

### Shango

*Shakuta-Jakuta*  
*Obba dimeyi*  
*Adima*  
*Alafin, Alafin Obba*  
*Obba aya obana*  
*Obba yoko*  
*Oloufina*  
*Eyeleo-Meyileo*  
*Obba Aye*  
*Obbara*  
*Zarabanda*  
*Owa-Meriya*  
*Acunna.*

### Yemaya

*Awayo*  
*Konle*  
*Ashagba*  
*Akuare*  
*Asesu*

*Okute*  
*Zenda*  
*Mayalewo*  
*Aggana-Ayagba*  
*Lo-Kun*  
*Sama*  
*Nigba*  
*Atara*  
*Afekete.*

### Olokun

*Olok-kun* is a completely different deity wrongly identified as one *Yemaya*. In reality, *Olo Kun* was a king in Yorubaland who died at a young age. In the Ife museum there is a carving of a young man symbolizing him. The misunderstanding could have started because at the entrance of the lagoon which forms the bay of Lagos, there is a sand bar where many boats have perished. A deity called *Olokun su*, or *Elusu* inhabits this lagoon bay. She is an albino woman covered with fish scales up to her neck to whom fisherman from the region would bring offerings.



Bronze Carving of King Olokun,  
(Ile Ife, Nigeria)



Mythological statue of Olokun,  
(Ile Ife, Nigeria)

This may be why at the beginning of the society of Osha its members mistook her for a different path of Yemaya and refer to her as "the white *Yemaya*", one who resides at the bottom of the sea. *Olokun* is not vested, she is considered a minor deity and therefore she is "received" in a simple ceremony which takes place at both the godparent's home and at the seashores. Her adornments and stones are kept in a rather large ceramic vase, and after the initial ceremony where sacrifices and offerings are made, no other offerings or sacrifices will be made to *Olokun*.

### **Oshun**

*Kole*

*Yemmu*

*Oloddi*

*Kai-Odde*

*Ibbuakuara*

*Ossorongga*

*Funke*

*Niwe*

*Yeyemoro*

*Ibbuana.*

### **Vestment: Ceremony and Procedure**

There are two ways to go about finding out which deity you are to be vested with.

One: Go to a "kabildo" or counsel of Babalawos which will be held by three Babalawos or more. At least three will sit on a palm fiber mat and will roll the Ifa palm nuts, the sacred chain "ekuele" and cut Orunmila's sand on their divination tablet. To such an event you must go accompanied by both your godmother and your spouse. If you are single, it will be your mother who should be there with you. One of the Babalawos (usually the eldest) will put

a chicken under his right leg and will proceed "to cut sand" until he gets a certain combination of numbers which will tell them who is your "protecting Orisha" and therefore, the one to be vested. It is a complicated ceremony that could last several hours before they come up with the right combination of numbers in Orula's divination tablet.

Two:

Your future godmother/godfather will call an elder member of the Osha Society well versed in all its secrets (he is called an Oriate), he will proceed by rolling - in a special reading called Ita- the godparent's main Orisha cowry shells. This Ita is also a ceremony which could be rather lengthy, but in which no "reading" per se is done. A combination of signs and numbers in this oracle is pursued, until the proper number is achieved and thus the Orisha to be vested is determined. Being that such a ceremony is always conducted at the godfather/godmother's house, the neophyte can bring to the Ita as many members of his-her immediate family as he-she wishes. This reading is conducted in exactly the same manner as the one done after the person has been vested, except that the fiber mat is not covered with a white sheet, no "divination" is done and only one deity "speaks" throughout.

### **The Spiritual "Investigation-Seance"**

Two or three weeks before the vestment takes place, there is a gathering at the godmother's house, where "spiritual finding" will be held. They vary in format, the setting could be with the novice at the center of a circle formed by different types of "spiritual psychic-mediums" or the novice facing a table covered with a white table cloth, several vases with flowers and a large cup filled with "clear spiritual water". No matter which setting may be used, the sole purpose of this gathering is to "take a good look"



at the spirits that surround you, and to determine which are good and which are bad, which are to be removed and which are to be left around you. It is more than a regular seance, it is heavy with trances, visions, and advice as to how to rid the novice of evil spirits and how to enlighten those spirits who could be protectors and guides. No vestment is considered completed if the "spiritual investigation" had not been done.

### **The Ebbo-Cleansing Before Being Vested**

A few days before entering your godmother-godfather's house, she-he will take you to the Babalawo's or the Oriate's home; there, a cleansing called "ebbo de entrada" (cleansing before entering the Igboodu) will be done. It consists of consulting with the Oracle Diloggun. It is a simple reading with the Oriate's reading cowry shells, or the Babalawo's Ifa palm nuts and the Ekuele (Orula's reading chain). Its only purpose is to find out what will be used in the cleansing. It is almost a routine, and very seldom the items used change, they are used according to the Odu or signs. Most of the time it will consist of a number of rooster's feathers, pigeon's feathers, ground coffee, sugar, rice, pieces of beef, ham, pieces of bread, corozo lard, and different articles such as needle and thread, a paper doll, a razor, roasted corn, dirt from the novice's shoes, etc. Once everything that will go into the ebbo is determined, the Yubona will cleanse you with each and every one of these items and will end the cleansing by putting everything inside a large brown paper bag. The Oriate, or Babalawo determines where to dispose of it and will declare that you are "officially ready" to enter the Igboodu.

### **Entering The House of Osha**

It is always done before noon. The preferred day is a Friday, because most of the Oluorishas and Iyalorishas officiating in the vestment ceremony work during the week and they have Friday night off as well as Saturday and Sunday when all the "heavy work" of the ceremony will be done. It is the second day after

entering the House of Osha that the actual "crowning with Orisha" will take place, this is a long ceremony that starts with the first Sun rays and ends well into the night. Sunday is left to the "middle day" or visitation and celebration day when all Oluorishas-Iyalorishas who worked the day before in your vestment, your relatives and friends will come visit you and enjoy the food and beverages being served in honor of Iyawo.

The day you are entering the House of Osha, you are required to bring an extra set of old clothes, including underwear and shoes. The one you are wearing will be torn at the river and you will have to return with the old set of clothes (which will be torn also when you enter the Igboodu). The very moment you enter the Godfather's/Godmother's house, you will be asked to kneel on a palm fiber mat and at this time, you will be "apprehended" by Orisha: a big ceremonial necklace, (set of beads) "collar, the mazo" all white symbolic of Obatala's ownership of all Oluorisha's heads (regardless of which deity you are being vested with), is placed around your neck (it will be removed the moment you enter the Igboodu). From that moment on, you are a "prisoner of Orisha"; no matter what, you cannot leave the house, you must be vested with the Orisha that chose you. For the first time, you will lay on the floor flat on your belly, both hands alongside your body, and ask for your godparents blessings and permission to get up. He-she will touch you gently on the shoulders while saying.

*Awa wa to* (they will name their protecting Orisha, followed by naming the one you are to be vested with)

*Abbe o didde.*

At this time you will be told to sit somewhere in the house, outside the Igboodu and remain the rest of the day in silence. You will not be allowed to make or receive phone calls, talk to any relative, take any medicines, or go anywhere without asking permission. Every once in a while the Yubona will approach you to see if there is anything you need. You will remain at the same spot until it is time to go to the river.

**Preparing to go to the River with Yawo**

To the ceremony at the river, Yawo will go accompanied by the Godmother-Godfather, the Yubbona, and three or four members of the same House of Osha. Yubbona has to bring.

The second set of clothes brought by Yawo.

One large bucket.

One set coconut shells for a reading

Two pieces of soap: one Castille (white with no perfume), another Castille (brown, no perfume) This type of soap only has detergents but no perfume and it can be acquired in any Spanish market.

One large jicara (empty calabash).

One bottle of rum.

Honey.

A brass bell.

One clay pot jar. This clay pot is used to carry water from the river and the stone Yawo will pick up from the bottom of the river and carry back with him. It is covered with a piece of cloth the color of the Orisha being vested.

A sponge: The sponge has to be made from a piece of rope (the old type, no nylon). It has to be entwined until it becomes a web like sponge.

Oshinshin: It is scrambled eggs cooked in a certain fashion which is supposed to be of particular liking to *Oshun*. It has the following ingredients.

Chopped onion, mashed garlic, dry shrimps, olive oil, cooking red wine, no salt, acelga-raddish, water crest. Once cooked it is placed on a jicara and (I don't know why) a quarter (twenty five cents American coin) is added to it. Now you are ready to go, to take Yawo to the river.

**At the River**

The river ceremony always takes place at sunset or at night. When you arrive at the pre-chosen place, the first thing the Yubbona will do is to roll the coconuts shells asking both *Aggayu* and *Oshun* for permission to bathe Yawo in the river. If the answer is Yes, then they will proceed with the ceremony, if permission is denied, the Yubbona will give the Oshinshin to the river, fill the bucket with water, and return to the house where Yawo will be bathed. If the bathing is at the river (most of the time that is where it is done), Yawo will be asked to close his-her eyes, and introduced into the water about knee high, the clothes will be torn, but not totally undressed. The Yubbona takes water from the river in the jicara and washes Yawo's head with the brown soap, after she rinses it with lots of water, the Godmother/Godfather will finish removing the clothes and bathe Yawo with the sponge and white soap.

Before taking the novice out of the river, he-she will be asked (still with the eyes closed) to pick a stone from the bottom of the river, at the same spot where the bath took place. This stone will be placed inside the clay jar and filled with water, the lid is closed and covered with a piece of cloth the Orisha's color. Then Yawo is taken out of the water, dried with a brand new white towel (the same he-she will use all week during the vestment ceremony), and dressed with the second set of clothes brought to the river. Yawo will be asked to kneel, open his-her eyes and the big (mazo) necklace beads placed around the neck. A second reading with coconut shells takes place now, but this time Yubbona has to touch Yawo's forehead before rolling the coconut shells. Yubbona has to do a full Mayugba, not to *Oshun*, but to the deity being vested, asking if everything has met Orisha's approval. To the Yes answer, the Oshinshin is given to the river, the coconut shells left in the position they have fallen, and the removed torn clothes left to float out in the river. Now they are ready to go back to the house.

### Coming From The River Entering The House

Before entering the house and by the entrance door, Yawo has to lie on the floor, and ask permission to enter. Yubbona pours water brought from the river three times, waits a few ritual minutes until permission is granted by the Godfather/Godmother. Yawo enters the house carrying the clay jar and at that moment the godparents start sounding Obatala's bells while chanting.

*Oro Mayuko, Oro Mayuko Orisha (deity being vested is named)*  
*Yawo Eki Mawo.*

The chant is repeated three times and then Yawo is left alone to meditate.

That night, and shortly before dinner, the cleansing of the head, or offering to the head's spirits takes place. This is a regular head cleansing or offering, except that to it you have to add the fowl corresponding with the Orisha being vested. That night Yawo will sleep on the floor, near the entrance to the Igboodu with the two plates containing the offerings by the side of his-her head.

The fowl offered according to which deity is being vested are as follows:

Eleggua:	One young red chicken.
Oggun:	One brown or black pigeon.
Oshosi:	One black pigeon.
Obatala:	One white pigeon.
Shango:	It should be done with shredded coconut and a bit of water only, but some Osha houses will sacrifice two quails and pour the blood on top of Yawo's head which they will cover with cotton and cocoa butter. When quails are not used the night before, they will be used the next morning during the vestment.
Aggayu:	Same as <i>Shango</i> .

<i>Oshun:</i>	One pigeon.
<i>Yemaya:</i>	One pigeon.
<i>Oya.</i>	Like Shango and Aggayu-Argayu, no sacrifices should be made, but some houses will offer a pigeon.

### Second Day: Vesting Yawo

Wake up Yawo very early in the morning. Sit him-her on a chair facing a wall. This is called "the penance". Yawo is not supposed to be given any food or drink (somebody usually breaks the rule, and gives Yawo a cup of hot coffee, while the Godmother/Godfather pretends to ignore what is going on). No one will talk to Yawo while on penance. Usually a novice going through his-her first year, will sit next to Yawo and will do penance with him-her in total silence.

Before anything happens inside the Igboodu, the offerings to the "dead" or the "ancestors spirits" has to be in place. Some Houses of Osha will place this offering in the bathroom; I find this old custom pretty absurd, so what I would do is to prepare a corner somewhere in the house, draw a circle with cascarilla and make the offering inside the circle. It consists of a little bit of everything that the Oluorishas-Iyalorishas had for breakfast that morning, a vase with flowers, nine candles, nine small pieces of coconut shells with the white face up spread with corozo lard and one small guinea pepper grain on top of them, nine cigars on top of nine glasses with firewater, one large cup with water, a variety of sweets, and to close the offering, nine lines will be drawn on the cascarilla circle. Outside the circle a large cane, or wood stick will be placed together with what is needed to do a coconut shells reading.

When the Oriate (you could call him "the ceremony manager") is ready, all the members of the House of Osha participating in the vestment will go to where the offering for the ancestors spirits has been placed, and following the Oriate chants, will ask

for their permission, by naming as many dead Oluorishas-Iyalorishas as he possibly can remember.

The permission from the ancestors, is nothing but a reading of the coconut shells. This reading is a bit more solemn. It starts by the participants being marked with cascarilla on their foreheads (one straight line), in some cases the mark will be done in the left arm, this is done when the Oluorisha-Iyalorisha was initiated under the sign of Ofun (10). While the Oriate does the Moyugba chants, his assistant will be tapping on the floor with the cane or stick in a special way to "call the dead" to the reading. This part over, all the participants (except Yawo) will move into the Igboodu where the ceremony of Osain will begin.

In the center of the room, and facing the door (with the throne behind them), there will be seven basins containing the stones, cowry shells, necklace beads, the Ide, Orisha's adornments, and two pieces of soap: one white, one brown. Next to the basins, two white plates; on the fiber mat the 21 or more different herbs which will be used in the Omiero, three buckets of water, and the small benches where the Oriate and the rest of the Santeros-Santeras will sit. On the side of the mat, a small bunch of herbs with: Peonia, Peregun, Atimpola, Siempre Viva, will be setup for the Oriate to pour last into the basins after all the Santeros have finished pouring different herbs in the basins. "The pouring and breaking of the herb" begins when the Iyara or youngest Iyalorisha, kneels in front of the mat and starts handing a bunch of herbs to each individual, one at a time, calling last the Yubona and Godparents. Once everyone has done their "pouring and ripping of herb", the Oriate will do his part and at the end, the mat will be picked up from the floor, care being taken that no leaves, or herbs fall to the ground, but rather in the bag with the herbs left over. He will sit in front of a semi-circle facing the basins and where there will be one Santero-Santera behind each one of them and surrounded by two young Iyalorishas (who will pour water in the basins) will start the chants to Osain in the Omiero preparation.

The Oluorishas-Iyalorishas, sitting now behind the basins where the herbs were deposited, will start to remove from them as much stems as they possibly can. Once this is done, Osain will start. Osain is an important part of the ceremony because it will be with this Omiero that Yawo will be bathed, the cowry shells, stones, adornments will be washed and Yawo will be given to drink every morning during his stay at the Igboodu. This Omiero is done by rubbing and mashing the herbs and leaves with their hands, in a movement which may look as if they were being washed by pressing and rubbing them together until a pulp like substance is made and placed inside the basin while water is being poured into them.

Osain starts with the chants by the Oriate. The mashing takes place while the chants are done, and each chant is counted. In the "breaks" to change chants to each deity, water is poured in the basins till the chants end, and that is when the "seasoning" of the Omiero by the Oriate will be done.

### Osain

#### Osain Chants for Omiero in Osha Vestment

The chants are started by the Oriate, and repeated by the choir of Santeros-Santeras working on the Omiero.

(1)

*Kama aiya Iya iya, kama emi emi  
Kama aibo ibo ibo  
Asa mo Osain  
Sain ewe ewe.*

*Ibara bo ago mayubba  
si omode kori kosi ba rabo  
aggo mayugba Eleggua Eshu lona  
Ishon shon abbe ishon shon abe  
Asa mo Osain  
Sain we we.*

End of the first chant. The choir will answer while water is being poured: Akueye.

(2)

*Kiru kiru be ke maribo sain  
sai bone maribo. Asa mo sa  
asa moso, ewe ewe aye.*

Choir repeats same

(3)

*Be ne be ni to bene, benito be  
Aka ma o ma be le yebi ni tobe  
Asa mo Osain, sain ewe ye.*

Choir repeats

(4)

*Mo mura mo fi ye mura Babalo  
Boke mo mura mo fin  
ye mura Babaloke laroke  
Asa mo Osain  
Sain ewe ye.*

Choir repeats

(5)

*Ku ku ru ku ruru, ti wi oro mi  
Yera tiwi witiwi  
Asa mo Osain  
Sain ewe ye.*

Choir repeats

(6)

*Abera bera mai, abera bera mai  
Baba lubo mi Ozain abera bera mi*

*Yeye Baba fo mole Baba fo mo le  
Baba lufo fo mole ayenye  
Asa mo Osain  
Sain ewe eye.*

Choir repeats

(7)

*Oyiki yiki otala mio Oiyiki niki  
niki ota lo mio  
Oyiki niki okuma otalo mio  
Asa mo Osain  
Sain ewe eye.*

Choir repeats

(8)

*Eshe wowo, eshe wowo ade funfun  
eshe wowo, ewa adefun, fun eshe wowo  
Ewa wo ade fun fun  
Asa mo Osain  
Sain ewe eye.*

Choir repeats.

(9)

*Ita eyo omi awona yo omi ashinshin  
Iyo mi ke kum ba ye, wo lo ro ba  
Asamo Osain  
Sain ewe eye.*

Choir repeats.

(10)

*Ewe masi boru yu  
ewe masi boru ro  
ban ke oke, yo masi boru yu*

*Asamo Osain*  
*Sain ewe eye.*

Choir repeats.

(11)

*Ewe oku ma lawa ewe okuma*  
*oku ma okuma, lawa ewe okuma lawa*  
*ewe o kuma*  
*Asamo Osain*  
*Sain ewe aye.*

Choir repeats.

(12)

*Atinponla Ifa buro*  
*Atipola ifa buro*  
*Ifa omo ire, omo atiponla ifa buro*  
*Asamo Osain*  
*Sain ewe aye.*

Choir repeats.

(13)

*Adara dara ma de o adarada mada o*  
*ni bo oda ma bo daradara*  
*mada o, mada o*  
*Asamo Osain*  
*Sain ewe aye.*

Choir repeats.

(14)

*Ile, ile, ile o ile Osain be lodo*  
*oma, oma, oma Osain be lodo*  
*Asamo Osain*  
*Ewe eye.*

Choir repeats.

(15)

*Ba se mi uro, uro omo uguigui*  
*Awa ba ro ko uguigui awa lora ba*  
*Asamo Ozain*  
*Ewe eye.*

Choir repeats.

(16)

*Titiri ba wa titiri ba wa obola meyi*  
*te bi yo tiri ba wa*  
*titiribi wa tibiyo*  
*Asamo Osain*  
*Ewe eye.*

Choir repeats.

These chants are closed by the choir singing:

*Kukuru kukuru tiwi tiwi oro mi*  
*Ye ra tiwi ti wi*  
*Asamo Osain*  
*Ewe eye.*

Most Oriates will do these chants:

(1)

*Kamaya iya iya*  
*kamaya iya ibo*  
*kamaya enu enu*  
*kamaya epo epo....*  
*Ibarabaooo ago moyu bara, ibara bo ago moyubara*  
*Omode keniko, ibarabo ago moyubara*  
*Eleggua Eshu o lona*

*Ishon shon abe, odara olori eru baba semi*

*Laroye Inkio.....abukenke abukenke*

*Bara yo unkere inyere*

*Eshu o eleguara ahe, eleguara moforibale eleugara ahe*

*Aggo Eleggua bukenke aggo Eleggua bukenke*

*Asokere kere me ye a Laroye kilabonshe*

*Osain.... Osain.*

*The choir will repeat this chant and all subsequent chants done by the Oriate.*

- (2) *Kuru kuru bembe, mariwo osain mariwo rere mariwo.*
- (3) *Morura mofiyee.....morura babaloro ke.*
- (4) *Oyiki yigui otolonio....oyiki yigui otoloni*  
*Oyiki yigui iya okuma...oyigui yigui otolonio.*
- (5) *Abera bere ma,bera bera ma Baba dima Oluosain Baba fomolewe.*
- (6) *Bobo titilawa tareko bobo titilawa tareko*  
*epo lowo epo polense*  
*bobo titilawa tareko.*
- (7) *Seku boro dewao*  
*seku boro ewe dundun.*
- (8) *Atippola Ifa auro....atipola ifauro*  
*Ifa owo oma*  
*Atippola ifauro.*
- (9) *Baise ise mi eyeuro uro mi*  
*ewi wi ewe yaroko*  
*ewe we ewe tinibu.*
- (10) *Osain un bodo boba meyi sokuta.*

- (11) *Peregun ewe botutu, peregun ewe bututu*  
*peregun ewe bomire*  
*peregun ewe botutu.*
- (12) *Omi o kan poroyo, poroyo ome yen ye*  
*Omi o kan poroyo, poroyo ome yen ye.*
- (13) *Titilato titilato ke*  
*ayauma ima titilato ke*  
*Olo motiwa ayuma ima etc.*
- (14) *Ewe re were nito bleo, ewere nito bleo*  
*aka akuma felewe.....ewere were ni to bleo.*
- (15) *Titiribamba tiri tiri bamba*  
*ewe mame yo fe reyo.*
- (16) *Kukuru kukuru*  
*tiwi tiwi abo mi lena*  
*tiwi tiwi.*
- (17) *Moya ewe mosara o moya ewe mosara*  
*ekelobini ekoloyani*  
*moya ewe mosara o.*
- (18) *Eya tutu ferabo...eya tutu ferabo*  
*Mo bo ozain elebo*  
*eya tutu ferabo.*
- (19) *Ewe ma siboroyu ewe masibo ru yu*  
*banti o ke masiboro yu masiboro yu.*
- (20) *Ewe o kuma la wa*  
*o ewe o kuma*  
*Okuma okuma la wa.*

At the end of *Osain* (once all the chants have been done), the

*Oriate* will give each Santero a white porcelain plate where they will place as much of the mashed herb as they possible can from the basin where they were doing the Omiero.

The next step will be the "seasoning" of the Omiero. This procedure is done by the *Oriate* who will pour into each individual basin the following ingredients:

For *Eleggua*, *Shango*, *Yemaya*, *Oshun*, *Oya*, *Aggayu* and *Obatala* small grains of guinea pepper.... 3 for *Eleggua*, 6 for *Shango*, 7 for *Yemaya*, 5 for *Oshun*, 9 for *Oya*, 7 for *Aggayu*, and 8 for *Obatala*.

In all of them, he will add: Honey, rum, holy water, "*ashe of Orunmila*" (it is a powder made by the Babalawos), or cascarilla, corozo lard (except for *Obatala*. He will add 8 pieces of cocoa butter), water from the river brought by *Yawo*, smoked fish, agouti, and only in *Eleggua's* basin roasted corn.

After the Omieros had been seasoned, all of the different Omieros will be mixed together into one final Omiero. A cup will be filled from the final Omiero, taken outside where *Yawo* sits and given to him-her to drink. At this time, the godfather's stones will be washed and placed aside, so the washing of the new stones and shells which will go inside *Yawo's* bowls can begin. The "final" Omiero is the one which will be used to bathe *Yawo*, a portion will be kept in a jar and given to the *Yawo* to drink every morning while *Yawo* is in the *Igbodu*.

Now, *Oro* to the Orishas will begin....

### Oro (chants) to the Orishas

These are the *Oro* done during the washing of the stones, adornments, cowry shells, necklace beads, and the *Ide*. All these items are placed inside the same individuals basins.

The washing is done with white odorless soap and herbs from

the Omiero, after *Osain* had taken place. The soap is removed before the *Oro* to *Obatala* commences. Only water is used for the rest of the washing. The last chant is for the Orisha being vested. The chant before the last, is for *Orunmila*, who "separates" the one being vested from the rest.

The hierarchy to be followed is like this:

1 <sup>st</sup>	<i>Eleggua</i> .
2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>Oggun</i> .
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>Oshosi</i> .
4 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Orishaoko</i> .
5 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Inle</i> .
6 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Baba lu aye-Shoppono</i> .
7 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Oke and Oggue</i> .
8 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Dada</i> .
9 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Aggayu</i> .
10 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Beyi-Melli</i> .
11 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Shango</i> .
12 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Obatala</i> .
13 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Yewa</i> .
14 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Obbanani</i> .
15 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Oya</i> .
16 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Yemaya</i> .
17 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Oshun</i> .
18 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Orunmila</i> .

### (1) *Eleggua*

*Oriate*: Ibarawo awo moyurbara  
omo madecire oni barawo  
omo moshubba, *Eleggua* shulona.

Choir: (repeats).

*Oriate*: Ishonsho abe....Ishonsho abe  
oddara moreri lelleo.

Choir: (same).



Oriate: Eshu ko....Eshu oddarareee....Eleggua  
moforibale  
Elegguara ago.  
Eshu Laroye ya cokua un loguo  
Abukenke....abukenke....un yoro.

Choir: Bara un yoro unwele....bara yooooo.

Oriate: Ashe kere ke la bonshe....ashe kere ke  
la boshe.

Choir: (same).

**(2) Ogun**

Oriate: Ogundeeee are re o  
Ire bombo lo owo Ogunla wanile  
Ogun walona, ire bonwo....Ogun awo.

Choir: (same).

Oriate: Ogun de arereo are reooooo  
Ire bombo lowo Oggunda, Ogun wanile  
Ogun walona, ire bonbo lo owo aggo.

Choir: (same).

**(3) Oshosi**

Oriate: Ibara o defa....odemata odemata

Choir: Ibara ode mata.

Oriate: Aui lo oyuo

Choir: Ibara odefa, aki lo yu ibara odefa

Oriate: Odde de....fabor kunfora.  
Choir: (same).

**(4) Orishaoko**

Oriate: Orisha oko oggun fere ye we we  
Mogui....mowi oguini awo.

Choir: (same).

Oriate: Modeio

Choir: Ala aio....

Oriate: Modde yamala...via la....ako mededio  
vione Shango mode yakoude  
viala akome deio....ala aioooo.

Choir: (same).

**(5) Inle**

Oriate: Oinle kere agolona  
Agorona Inle modeo.

Choir: Oinle kere aggo lona.

Oriate: Oinle inleo inleo....oinle...inleoooo

Choir: (same).

Oriate: Koko faraya....koko faraya, faraya  
....faraya.

Choir: (same).

**(6) Babaluaye-Shoppono**

Oriate: Ibba ibba oggedema

Choir: Molei yanza....moleya, muya, muya,  
muya molei yanza moleya.

Oriate: Oka oka oka, molei yanza mo leya  
kuo ta niye kuo ta niye....ta niye.

Choir: Oni ya kota....oni ya kota.

Oriate: Owe guya Owe guya

Choir: Oni ya kota....Oni ya kota.

**(7) Oke-Oggue**

Oriate: Kori ko oni lodde....Orisha ewemi lo do  
kori

Choir: Angori eleko.

Oriate: Tita la toke....titi la toke  
Awa lu mai....titi la toke  
awa lu mai....mai, mai.

Choir: Oke lo tiwa.

Oriate: Awa lu mai, titi la toke  
Awa lu mai mai, titi la toke la toke  
Korikoto ni lodo....Orisha ewe ni lodo

Choir: Kori kori awo.

Oriate: Ebba me ke ewe...mi ke wewe

Choir: Kori wewe ewe.

Oriate: Awu aro koto

Choir: Kori awo.

Oriate: Olouo yure ni re o...oluo ure ni koko.

Choir: Oluo yure, yure ni koko.

Oriate: Nishe re reo.

Choir: Oggue shere re feo farawa.

**(8) Dada**

Oriate: Dada ommo lo woni....Dada lo weyo0000.

Choir: (same).

Oriate: Eru a dashe, kue lona kafu mi lowo  
kanzori Oni Dada.

Choir: Mo zu kuma.

**(9) Aggayu**

Oriate: Aggayu zolaaaa tanileeee  
Niyo youn.

Choir: Oya....Oya o taku oya....oya.

Oriate: Aggayu omo orisha, lo risha omo mi yaore

Choir: Ogueeee....ogue, Agaaayu lo ma o orisha.

**(10) Beyi-Melli**

Oriate: Omo Beyi....omo beyi bery rere.

Choir: kere kere ya.

Oriate: Ala waya....ala waya waya rere.

Choir: kere kere ya.

Oriate: Iddou....Beyi aina beyi rere  
Beyi aina, aina rere.

Choir: Kere kere yaaaaaa.

**(11) Shango**

Oriate: Ewe mi lere lubbe mayo  
elewe mio mayo  
Shango awa yeo mayo.

Choir: (same).

Oriate: Emi soo Obbalube aladoso...more je  
remiye

Choir: (same).

Oriate: Abe de wuiro.

Choir: More jere niye.

Oriate: Talo keuri Obba.

Choir: Obba tooo talo kue obba tooo.

**(12) Obatala**

Oriate: Baba fururu lereleo o cayeye o cayeye le  
yivo  
ele rifa basi ba wo  
eye ribo rere basi awo....enu aye yawo  
eya woloro....lesekan.

Choir: (same).

Oriate: Lesekan Baba....moko mauyu.

Choir: Ewe loro wo loro lesekan.

Oriate: Inu aye....mimo sheko, inu aye mimo oba  
Obatala baguini....sekure bobo lo inle  
serere.

Choir: (same).

Oriate: Laroke Ayegguna laroke lobaoooo.

Choir: Baba laroke....oka tioke laroke baba  
laroke.

**(13) Yewa**

Oriate: O lomo Yewa o Yewa o, o Yewa o

Choir: (same).

Oriate: Keye kanko, keye kanke, Olomo Yewao.

Choir: Keye keye kanko.

- (14) Obba Nani**
- Oriate: Iya Obba lomo oba  
asabba Obba lo moba.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Aya Osain eleko, iya lobba moba  
Ewe iayo, ewe asi azaba ewe  
ewese la ofi, iya obae re mawo.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Fere kunfere.
- Choir: Eru la finla farawa.
- Oriate: Eni ebbo muya aiya.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Enu ebbo ebbosi.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Eni ebbo la finla.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Eni ebbo barawo.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Fere kun fere.
- Choir: Eru la finla farawa.
- Oriate: Iya Obba kun mewuo.

- Choir: Kore lee eleko.
- (15) Oya**
- Oriate: Ayi lodda iya okuo  
tobbe mode ke yoo ayuba.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Oya de arigbo...Oyanza loro loro ke.  
O loro loro ke.
- Choir: (same).
- Choir: Oyanza ewa mio , ayi lodda obiniza la ori  
Oya oyanza yanza mio lodda biniza la ori.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Bowa yareo Oyana alono bowu yareo  
Oyan oloya.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Bogbo ya wadao mofo yadeo, obiniza la  
ori.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Aka raza ba eri, (oriate will touch the top  
of his head)  
Aka raza ba leri raza ba eri.
- Choir: (same).
- (16) Yemaya**

- Oriate: Zokutanio awa sesi, ewi masero oro mile.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Bara aggo Yemaya, bara aggo, aggo o loni.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Odda zesu, aki Yemaya, Odda zesu aki Yemaya, Agutan kele gun awa o sie kere kere awa sore.
- Choir: (same).
- (17) Oshun**
- Oriate: Talade yeye....talade moro.
- Choir: Yeye talade, Iyami too kimbi Oshun too oro obini.
- Oriate: Owino....oguino were were owinoooo odda le coyu Oshun.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Fomo lo wo owini, owini guere were oguino Okute fomo lo wuo.
- Choir: Fomo lo Yenye....owino were owino okute fomo lo wo.
- (18) Orunmila**
- Oriate: Ofe lewede, lovi serawo, eniki lawose ofe lewede, lovi serawo, eniki lawose mi

- awo.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Meshe le kunfere eniki...mashele kunfelewe eniki.
- Choir: (same).
- Oriate: Okuo Orula laka laka lawose ounko Orula laka, laka lavose awo yokomi yowobi, aya rawo yokoni, yowobi aya rawo Orunmila lawose awo.
- Choir: (same).

#### **Removing the Soap During Oro**

When the Oro to Obatala begins, all pieces of soap are removed, and the Santeros pouring the water will rise. The ones doing the washing remain seated. Take the soap and the mashed herbs out of the "jicaras" (dry calabashes), leaving only the cowry shells inside and rinse them with Omiero. The stones and adornments are placed inside the ceramic bowls. All necklace beads and the *Ide* are placed on the "working table" inside a white plate to be worn by Yawo at the end of the vestment ceremony.

Once *Oro* is finished, (the total rinse has taken place), the Oriate will chant only to the deity being vested. Fresh Omiero is gathered in the jicara containing the Orisha's cowry shells and another rinse takes place but this time the water is not changed. Whoever is washing these shells will stir them with her-his fingers as if they were being washed again. At the end of the Oriate's chants, he will say: *Aro dide...Aro dide* (stand up). All the Santeros will rise and the Oriate will pour fresh water in everyone of the basins where the different Omiero were prepared. Then a portion

will be poured into each of the bowls with the "new" stones while the Oriate pours fresh water and firewater on them chanting:

Oriate: *Eleggua foti wooo.*  
 Choir: *Bogbo Orisha fo ti wooo.*  
 Oriate: *Obatala fo ti woo.*  
 Choir: *Bogbo Orisha fo ti wo.*

Oriate: *Oshun fo ti woo*  
 Choir: *Bogbo Orisha fo ti wo.*

Oriate: *Shango fo ti woo.*  
 Choir: *Bogbo Orisha fo ti wo.*  
 Oriate: *Yemaya fo ti woo.*  
 Choir: *Bogbo Orisha fo ti wo.*

Oriate: (pouring fresh water only)  
*Ozuborio modubule*  
*durungangan la boze awo*  
*la boze awo.*  
 Choir: *Ozuburio mudubule durungangan*  
*la boze awo.*

At the end of these chants all the individual Omieros prepared in the different basins will be poured together into a larger basin (enough to be used every day to bathe Yawo while in the Igbody), and a small portion set aside in a jar. Every morning Yawo will be given a cup full of it to drink before having breakfast or being bathed. Yawo will be given at the same time a little piece of coconut with a number of small guinea peppers to chew indicative of the Orisha which was vested.

### Before Entering the Igbody

Before having the novice coming into the room, each Santero will roll the cowry shells which will go inside the bowls, on the floor. This is considered the first time they "will speak". This roll-

ing of the cowry shells, is carefully analyzed by the Oriate and the older Santeros. The Odu (signs-numbers) that come out will be written in Yawo's book of readings and will be part of his initiation Ita. They are rolled following the Orisha's hierarchy. Only the ones face up are counted.

*Eleggua:* If it is Obara, the name of the Odu and the number six will be written; if it is Iroso, the name and the number four will be written. The procedure is the same for every Odu, and no "reading" is done by the Oriate, although a kind of "unofficial" omen is predicted by the Santeros in the room.

*Obatala:* Same procedure.  
*Oshun:* Same procedure.  
*Shango:* Same procedure.  
*Yemaya:* Same procedure.  
*Aggayu:* Same procedure.  
*Oya:* Same procedure.

Now, the cowry shells are placed inside the bowls, the floor is cleaned, and a large tin basin is placed in the center of the room. By its side there will be one bucket with fresh water, another bucket with Omiero, a plate with pieces of white and yellow soap, the ones left from the washing of the cowry shells.

Outside, Yawo is sitting quietly facing a wall. At this time the "prendimiento" ("apprehending", or "capturing") Yawo to be taken to the Igbody, takes place.

One of the oldest Santeros will come to Yawo and start a conversation, a distraction, so Yawo cannot see the Yubona approaching carrying a white sheet. Making sure Yawo is not aware of her presence, Yubona will throw the white sheet over Yawo's head, covering him-her totally; then, takes Yawo by the hand, leads him-her to the Igbody's door.

### Inside the Igbody

Inside the Igbody, all the Santeros are waiting for the entrance of the Yawo. The Godmother-Godfather and the Oriate, are standing by the door. The Oriate will have a pigeon ready to be offered. Yawo will be brought to the outside of the door, (closed and covered with a white sheet) Yubona will take Yawo's right hand and ask him-her to knock on the door three times. Once Yawo does it, the Oriate will ask:

Oriate: "Who is outside knocking"?  
 Yawo: "It is I".  
 Oriate: "Who is I"?  
 Yawo: "Yawo".  
 Oriate: "What do you want"?  
 Yawo: "Orisha (Santo)".  
 Oriate: "Which Orisha (Santo)"?  
 Yawo: "Eleggua".

In this manner, Yawo will answer the Oriate's questions. The answers being whispered to him-her by the Yubona. They are asked and answered following the Ordun.

- 1) Eleggua
- 2) Oggun
- 3) Oshosi
- 4) Osun
- 5) Obatala
- 6) Oshun
- 7) Shango
- 8) Yemaya

Once they have finished naming the Orishas, the Oriate will ask:

Oriate: "At whose house are you coming to receive Orisha"?.  
 Yawo: Yawo will respond by saying the God-

mother/Godfather's name. It will be the name given them as Oluorisha-Iyalorisha. ("at the house of...Obba Segun and Omi Yale").

The Oriate will open the door to let Yawo in, but before going in, she-he is reminded several times to keep the eyes closed. If Yawo is to open them before the ceremonies are over, they will have to start all over again. Yawo walks barefooted into the room, he-she is stopped at the first step inside and the pigeon is sacrificed at Yawo's feet by the Oriate while he chants.

Oriate: *Eyele kun fetun...eyele kun fetun. Eyele eye tun...  
 Eyele kun fetun...eyele eye tun.  
 Ariku babawa.*

Choir: (same).

Yawo is taken by the Oriate to the Godmother-Godfather and they embrace while he-she asks for their blessing.

The Yubona will take Yawo by the hand, to the large basin in the center of the room. Yawo is asked to kneel in front of the basin with his-her head inside, to start the ceremony "washing of the Oluorisha-Iyalorisha-Yawo's head". The Oriate will commence it by taking yellow soap from the plate containing Eleggua's herb and do the first washing while the youngest Santera will pour water on it. As the Oriate puts the soap down, the rest of the Santeras-Santeros will follow as he chants.

Oriate: *Eshu iba ara ididi oda oddara Oku lona.*  
 Choir: (same)

Once the Santeros have finished, the Godmother/Godfather will gather all the pieces of soap used and will do the last washing of the head while chanting.

*Leri ebboda leri awo  
leri Olofin leri awo  
leri Osha leri o wa.*

Choir. (same).

The head will be dried with the white sheet brought into the room by Yawo, and then, she-he is introduced inside the basin. If Yawo is male, the Oriate will ask all the females Santeras to leave the room (in some cases, especially when the Godmother is an old lady, she will not leave the room). If it is a female Yawo, then, all male Santeros will have to leave the room. As he-she steps inside, the clothes will be torn letting them fall in the basin. Yawo will be given a hand full of herb and yellow soap and told to "wash his-her private parts", while the Santeros wash the rest of the body. Yubona makes sure fresh water is constantly poured because these herbs can be very itchy.

The bath over, Yawo will be dried and covered with the same white sheet he-she had brought into the room. Two Oluorishas would hold him-her by the arms and ask Yawo to "jump out of the basin". The Oriate will take a baby chick in his right hand and touch the neck, shoulders and the middle of the back of Yawo before he-she jumps out and will sacrifice the baby chicken by hitting the head against the basin's edge allowing it to fall inside where the clothes are. Few coins are dropped at the same time, and the basin is removed by two novices who will take it outside the house and empty it in the backyard.

All the pieces of soap used will be placed on the working table for Yawo to be bathed during his seven days at the Igbody.

At this time, Yawo is dressed with his-her first set of white clothing, while a white towel is placed around Yawo's shoulders.

Now, the actual ceremony of vestment (Crowning of Orisha) is about to take place. *All are exactly the same, with the exceptions of Eleggua, Oggun, Oshosi and Oya.* I will use as an example the proce-

sure to vest *Yemaya*. The only change will be for *Ossu* which are the colors painted on Yawo's head and on the floor where the Odu (inverted mortar) will be placed.

By now, all the bowls with Yawo's, the Godfather-Godmother stones and cowry shells have been placed in their proper order on the floor, alongside the throne; Yawo's on the right, Godfather/Godmother's on the left. On the working table, everything which is needed should be ready, but most handy will be a plate containing the four different colors to be painted, the covered plate with *Ashé* (the herbs made into a pulp the night before), the plate with the scissors, comb and barber's blade; a plate with a small apron made of blue cloth. An entwined bracelet of the same color and material as the apron which will be placed on top of Yawo's head to hold the *Ashé* in place. In *Yemaya*'s vestments a large yam leaf is needed. It is placed on the table alongside the necklace beads and the Orisha's bracelets to be worn by Yawo during her novice year. A male Yawo will wear only the *Ide*, while the female Yawo will wear *Yemaya, Oshun and Oya's* bracelets. Finally, a white plate with only cocoa butter, chewed pieces of coconut and fresh water will be used after the head has been shaven.

### ***Osha-Ossu: Orisha's "Signature"***

While Yawo stands, accompanied by one elder (and with eyes closed), the Oriate will go to the center of the Igbody and draw the "signature". They are the color patterns by which each particular Orisha is identified and the ones which in the majority of cases will be painted on Yawo's head after it has been shaved. They are as follows.

#### *Eleggua:*

All paintings are done in a circle, it starts from the center which is left unpainted, and works out from there. The first circle is white, followed by red, blue and yellow. It will continue with one white, and one red until 21 red and white circles are done.



The Oriate will add his "own signature" which is done by painting small dots of paint right outside the circles: they will be four white (in back, front and sides), and four red next to the white ones. In *Eleggua's* vestments all the "signatures" will be done outside the house where the ceremony of vestment will take place. All other Orishas will be done in the Igbodu. When painting Yawo's head with *Ossu*, the colors are the same, except that only eleven red and white circles are painted. It starts with white, followed by red, blue, yellow, two red. It closes the blank circle by painting it all red.

*Oggun:*

Like in *Eleggua's*, *Osha-Ossu* is done outside the house (in the backyard). The drawings are the same as they will be on the head: White circle, red, blue, yellow, white, red, red. It will be closed by the Godfather/Godmother with red.

*Oshosi:*

*Osha-Ossu* is done outside; starts with white, red, blue, yellow, blue, blue. It is closed by the Godfather-Godmother with blue. In *Oshosi's* vestment a white circle made with chalk or cascarrilla is painted next to *Ossu* and gunpowder will be burned inside of it before Yawo is seated to be painted.

*Obatala:*

White circle, red, blue, yellow; followed by four more circles of white and closes the center with white.

*Yemaya:*

On the floor: white circle, red, blue, yellow, white, red, blue. On the head: white, red, blue, yellow, close the circle with blue.

*Oshun:*

On the floor: White circle, red, yellow, blue and yellow. On the head: white, red, blue, blue, yellow. Close on the top with yellow.

*Shango:*

When doing *Shango's* signature, the Oriate must also draw *Argayu's*. Both paintings are done side by side on the floor. The paintings *Oddun* will be placed on top of *Shango's* with *Argayu-Aggayu* by its side. *Shango's* starts with a white circle, followed by red, blue, yellow and one white and one red to complete twelve circles. Closes on top of the head with red, painted by the Godfather/Godmother.

*Argayu-Aggayu:*

It starts with white, red, blue, yellow, white, red, white, red, red. Only his signature is drawn on the floor. When painting the head, it will be *Shango's Ossu* which is the one to be done. On the working table there will be a small clay pot containing nine strips of cotton twisted to resemble a fuse anointed with corozo lard, a bunch of peeled fresh okra, and a jicara with water. The clay pot will be placed on top of *Aggayu's* signature with both the Godfather and Yawo's *Argayu* bowls facing it. The Oriate will ask for a bottle of cooking wine (dry Spanish wine without salt), four pieces of coconut, one Ashere (maraca). He will tell the Oluorishas who had not "received" *Aggayu* to leave the room, he then, will proceed to light up the "candles" (cotton fuses) and the remaining Santeros will bow while the Oriate begins to chant to *Aggayu* rattling the Ashere. When the fuses begin to die out, he will finish putting the fire out by pouring pieces of okra and fresh water inside the clay pot. The pot will be covered immediately with a piece of red cloth. The Oriate will roll the coconuts as it is done in a regular coconut reading, but instead of water to do the "Omi tutu" he will use the cooking wine. Once the reading is done and Orisha's permission is granted to continue with the vestment ceremony, the clay pot will be taken outside the house and without

removing the red cloth, will be placed on the roof top by the back of the house where it will remain for the next seven days. Inside the Igboodu, *Aggayu's* signature is erased using cotton and firewater.

Only *Shango's Ossu* will be drawn on Yawo's head this day and every day in the mornings while Yawo is in the sacred room

The *Ossu* will be: white, red, blue, yellow, white and red. It is closed with red.

On the floor: White circle, red, blue, yellow, white, red, blue, yellow and red.

On the head: White, red, blue, yellow, white, red, blue, yellow, red. Closes with red.

#### ***Ashe to Oddun***

On the floor, in the center of the painted circles, left blank, the Oriate will place a small amount of Ashe and money (usually about twenty one dollars), all wrapped in yam leaves (malanga), and a piece of cloth the color the Orisha being vested. The palm fiber mat used to place the herbs that went into the Omiero, will be folded in two to cover the floor's *Ossu*. The *Oddun* (inverted mortar) will go on top of it. When vesting *Oggun*, or *Eleggua*, a large stone will be used instead of *Shango's* mortar.

Finally, Yawo will be seated on the inverted mortar facing the room's door (still with his-her eyes closed). He-she is now ready to be shaven, painted, and vested.

#### ***Shaving Yawo's Head***

It starts by the Yubona pulling a small amount of hair from the top and tying a braid (made with ribbons) the color of the Orisha. The apron will be given to an older Iyalorisha who will make sure that when the hair is cut, as well as when the head is

shaven, all the hairs will be collected into that apron and saved together with the scissors, blade and comb used. The Godmother/ Godfather, will take the scissors and the blade and will place it on top of Yawo's head while asking for *Olorun's* (God's) permission followed by his-her ancestors, elders, and everyone present in the room. After all present answer, she-he will proceed to cut the first portion of hair. The Oriate will follow and the rest of the Santeros will cut small pieces beginning with the eldest and finishing with the youngest. Each will cut a little piece of hair, the Oriate will cut the rest of the hair and will start shaving the head.

With soap used to bathe Yawo (brown soap), mixed with Omiero, the Yubona will prepare a cream like shampoo which the Oriate will spread on the head. He will lay the blade on top of the head and will ask for everyone's permission and all the ancestor's permission. He starts shaving Yawo's head from the back working to the front while chanting:

Awani isoro ipo leri  
Leri sheka ni pola

Here he has to mention all the Orishas, starting with *Eleggua*.

*Eleggua Olofon ala beo*  
*Awa sheka ni pola.*

The chant will continue while he is shaving the head. The choir will repeat the same. He will continue in a litany mentioning the Orishas in the following order.

*Awani isoro ipo leri*  
*leri sheka ni pola olofon ala beo*  
*Awa sheka ni pola*

- 2) *Oggun.*
- 3) *Oshosi.*
- 4) *Inle.*

- 5) *Orishao ko.*
- 6) *Asowano.*
- 7) *Dada.*
- 8) *Ogge.*
- 9) *Oke.*
- 10) *Meyi-Beyi*
- 11) *Aggayu.*
- 12) *Shango.*
- 13) *Obba.*
- 14) *Obatala.*
- 15) *Oshun.*
- 16) *Yemaya.*
- 17) *Oya-Shonhai.*
- 18) *Orunmila.*
- 19) *again..... Eleggua-Eshu.*

The chant to *Eleggua* is repeated because the Oriate has to end the shaving while chanting to *Eleggua*, finishing on the very top part which was saved for last. Finally, he will pour firewater on the head and rub it with his hands. The Santeros will blow air from their mouths in order to give Ashe to the newly shaven head, and to alleviate the burning sensation on Yawo's head. A little bit of cocoa butter is anointed and a simple cleansing (offering to the head's spirit) is done with shredded coconut and fresh water.

Once the offering to the spirits head is finished, the *Ide* and *Obatala's* silver bracelet are placed on Yawo's left wrist. Next procedure will be to paint *Osun-Ossu* on Yawo's head.

#### **Osun-Ossu to Yawo's Head**

It starts with the Oriate chanting while he paints the head slowly.

Oriate: *Ossu efu le owao  
su la uro  
Ewao oban le yeo.*

Choir: *Ossu efu le owao su la uro.*

The chants will go on until the head is completely painted. The Oriate makes sure the center of the first circle is left unpainted, because it has to be "closed" with the color of the Orisha being vested by the Godmother-Godfather. The Oriate ends the painting by "signing", painting the front, back and sides, like he did on the floor, as he chants:

*Fifi okan wini kine ko  
(names Orisha.)*

*Yemaya de kun lo yio.*

Choir: (repeats).

The chant will continue while the rest of the Santeros will paint their "mark" on the Ossun. It starts with the eldest who will take the brush with his Orisha color and paints a number of dots, or brush strokes. The Oriate will indicate to them on top of which color the Oluorishas will place their mark. They are in the following order.

Eleggua-Eshu:	3, color: red.
Oggun:	7, color: red.
Oshosi:	7, color: blue.
Shoppono:	7, color: red.
Inle:	7, color: red.
Orishaoko:	7, color: red.
Shango:	6, color: red.
Aggayu:	9, color: red.
Obatala:	8, color: white.
Oya-Yansa:	9, color: red.
Yemaya:	7, color: blue.
Obba:	8, color: blue.
Oshun:	5, color: yellow.

Once all the Santeros-Santeras have finished, the Oriate will give the plate with all the colors to the Yubona who will paint with each different one his-her mark outside the circles. The Godfather-Godmother will do the same and will close the "signing"

of the Oluorishas by covering the top circle with the color of the Orisha being vested.

#### **Putting Ashe on Yawo's Head**

The Oriate will hand the plate with the Ashe to the youngest Santero. He will be the first to place a little bit of it on top of Yawo's head, and will be followed by everyone in the Igboodu, who at the time of placing the Ashe of the head, will speak to Yawo, telling him-her how good the Orishas had been to them (it is more like a testimony and a small sermon). Last, it will be the Godmother/Godfather who usually take a little longer in their testimony. To prevent the herb-pulp Ashe from falling, another cloth braid is placed around it to hold it in place.

#### **Placing Orisha on Top of the Head**

Four pieces of cloth: white, red, blue and yellow which looks like a canopy-canvas (*Ashe-Asho*), about four by four each, will go on top of the Ashe, covering the head, but not the face of Yawo. It will be held by the Oluorishas who's job is to make sure it rests on top of the head, and that it does not touch the rest of the body.

Once the head has been covered, the Oriate will begin to "present" to Yawo the Orishas that he-she is about to "receive". They are placed on top of the head, right where the Ashe is, without lifting the Ashe-Asho canvas. The Godfather/Godmother go first, followed by Yawo's. *Eleggua* is placed on top of the head first and the Oriate will tell Yawo the meaning of receiving *Eleggua-Eshu*. At this time, the Oriate will hand the next Orisha to the Yubona and will sit on a small bench in front of Yawo, while the rest of the Orishas are handed to the Yubona so she/he can present it to Yawo. The Orisha being vested will be last. It has to be presented and held for the longest time by the Godmother-Godfather.

The moment the Orishas are presented to Yawo, the Oriate

begins to invoke the spirits of all dead Santeros-Santeras, this will be followed by chants to the Orisha being vested. He will do as many chants as he knows, saving the most chants for the last Orisha. He uses a maraca (ashere), two different bells (*Oshun and Obatala's*), as aids in his invocation; the idea is to propitiate the "coming", or possession of Yawo, or for that matter, of any Oluorisha with Orisha. These are the chants in hierarchy and the instruments used.

<i>Eleggua:</i>	Ashere (maraca).
<i>Oggun:</i>	Ashere.
<i>Oshosi:</i>	Ashere.
<i>Inle:</i>	Ashere.
<i>Orishaoko:</i>	Ashere.
<i>Osowano:</i>	Ashere.
<i>Dada:</i>	Ashere.
<i>Oggue/Owe:</i>	Obatala's bell.
<i>Oke:</i>	Obatala's bell.
<i>Ibeyi/Meyi:</i>	Ashere.
<i>Argayu:</i>	Ashere.
<i>Shango:</i>	Ashere.
<i>Obatala:</i>	Obatala's bell.
<i>Yewa:</i>	Ashere.
<i>Oba:</i>	Obatala's bell.
<i>Oya:</i>	Ashere.
<i>Oshun:</i>	Oshun's bell.
<i>Orunmila:</i>	Obatala's bell.
<i>Yemaya:</i>	Yemaya's Ashere.

#### **Chants to Call Orishas The Most Commonly Used**

*Eleggua:*

Oriate: *Eleggua ele, moforibale  
moforibale e....*

- Choir: *Eshu e Eleggua...erun banmi, moforibale Eleggua eee...*
- Oriate: *Didde, didde Orisha kamawa aro.*
- Choir: *Erun banmi moforibale Orisha erun banmi, Orisha moforibale mayugba o mayugba o lo Orisha mayugba o ashe lo Orisha.*
- Oriate: *Ibara aggo moyurbara ibara aggo moyurbara Omo de ko nishi barta agooo moyurbara Elegua sulona ae.*
- Choir: Repeats the same chant, followed by this one:  
*Ishonsho abbe, ishonsho abbe Oddara koroli leyo babba semi....laroye ishonso abe.*
- Oriate: *Oddara ko lo ro liyeo.*
- Choir: *Ishonsho abe, ishonsho oddara koro liyo....ishonsho abeo*
- Oriate: *Oke....owe demasantio.*
- Choir: *Abu ken ken...abu ken ken.*
- Oriate: *Un yi oro.*
- Choir: *Bara unyouro...unkule bara unyouro....unkele.*
- Oriate: *Asoke kere meye meyio Alagguana ki la boshe*

- Alagguana ki la boshe.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Bara su ayo a Laroye mamakenya Mamakenya ira awo e Bara su ayo a Laroye mamakenya ira a wao ae.*
- Choir: *Obara wuayio, obara wuaio Eshe legbara ae e legbara e.*
- Oriate: *Obara layiki awo obara awo, lakyiky awo Ebbo Eshu ero asho wewe wewe....Aketebombo aketebombo Lo Orisha leio leio ashowewe.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Bombo alaye kiiniba leyo kiniba keyo.*
- Choir: same twice.
- Oriate: *Ki rina ki rina aggo Eleggua shulona (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Elegggua Laroye agooo, Eleggua ago A laroye ke masanko Eleggua a nana (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Eleggua omo Orisha ima yawa*

*Laroye yio koda  
a Laroye yo koda, yo koda  
Laroye kio yo koda.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Elegggua ku lo ona ke Laguana  
o kulona ke laguana aggo.*

Choir: *Ako rile Eshu oddara a kulona (repeats).*

Oriate: *Akudero bara koina  
akudero bara o koina (repeats)*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Bara bara kute  
no sea otambo, no sea otambo  
vie, vie barakute  
no sea otambo.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Elegguara ae....Eshu adasho  
mamakenya awooo (repeats).*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Arigbo arigbo ago meta meta  
lesekan meta  
Iya madde deo o Orisha o bara  
kute Eleggua ke ke timo  
laganga Obba mio yara*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Eshu oooooo elegbara ahe*

*Eleggua la moforibale  
Eleggua ahe, Eshu Laguana ahe.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Aggo legua ahe, Elegua abunkenken,  
abunkenken  
Eshu Larolle enchio, aggo leggua*

Choir: *Eshu Larolle enchio, Aggo legua.*

Oriate: *Owini, owini ni yaen lado nishe  
Nishe alaado nishe.*

Choir: *Eh Laguana ha Larolle nishe.*

#### Song to Eleggua

*Ibarokou moyugba Eleggua ibako moyugba  
Ibako moyumba omote koniku ibakoo omote ako  
Moyumba Eleggua kulona, ibarakou moyugba  
Omole ibarakou moyumba omole ko  
Ibarakou moyugba omole ka ako ashe.....arongo  
Akonko aggo Larolle koma komio ashe akonko laro akonko  
Larolle Eleggua koma mo mio ashe akonko laro  
Akonko laro ako ashe iba la guana Eleggua  
Larolle akonko e Larolle akonko  
Akonko Larolle akonko Larolle akonko la  
Laguana la Laguana e Larolle.*

#### Ogun

Oriate: *Oggu de arere ire bombo lowuo  
Ogun wanile, Ogun kualona  
ire bombo lowuo aye.  
(repeats chant).*

- Choir: same.
- Oriate: Ashe ashe ase ougunda ashe ase.
- Choir: Oggun niyeo mariwo more  
Oggun, Oggun afombole  
oile oile Aggun dere are arebamba.
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: Sea o yeo ariboyanya Oggun  
Arere Aggun are oe mariboyeye. Choir:  
same.
- Oriate: Mari bo yenye, maribo Osha maribo  
mariboyeye Oggun alawade moni moni  
O oggun alawade.
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: Aribo modanza soro soro ke  
ke modanza a soroso (repeats chant).
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: Oggun a lawede Orisha  
hey jewa eyi eyi, kueye roro  
Oggun laddo lo Orisha.
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: Aibo modanze soro modanze  
kekete soro soro Oggun aibo.
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: Ewe mimo ewe mimo

- ewe, ewe, mimo ewe.
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: Oinle oinle Oggun mariwo so Oggun  
bamba.  
(repeats chant).
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: Oggun el bo siao osi Onile  
Oyan sile sireo Oggun lokuao ai o.
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: Oggun mio mayo Oggun arere  
awa beriko (repeats chant).
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: Oggun boku boku feye sile  
Oggun owanile bankan Oggun  
Oggun arereo feyesile owanible  
Oggun shiviriki owanile.
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: Oggun moiye moiye oggunda  
Ogguna alagde Oggun moiye  
(repeats chant).
- Choir: same.

### **Song to Oggun**

*Awaniyeo Oggun aribo awaniyeo Oggun  
aribo Oggun eko mare ho morile egun ekomare ho*

*morire arere awere aribo omo rire owende bamba  
awanile Oggun aribo wanileyeo Oggun  
aribo egun eko mare ho morire arere reo  
Egun ekomo mare ho morire  
arere he aribo yanya Oggun arereo areo  
arereo he aribo yanya awanileo  
arere are reo awaniyeo aashe oguya  
arere hoe hoe arigonyanya  
ashe oguya arere  
o arigonyanya ashe arere hoe arigoyanya Oggunda.*

**Oshosi**

- Oriate: *Omo omo Oshosi oma Oshosi  
Oshosi ayi lodda alawade  
Oshosi ayi lodda alawade  
he omo de ko Oshosi ayilodda  
ala maladde, Oshosi wara wara  
Oke oke Oshosi movi wara wara  
oke, oke.....sire sire odemata  
ode ode sire sire*
- Choir: *Oshosi ayilodda oye oye odemata oke  
oke.*
- Oriate: *Sirere sire.*
- Choir: *Odemata odde odde.*
- Oriate: *Sire sire.*
- Choir: *Odemata ode ode.*
- Oriate: *Yambele ke iworo odemata  
kulona ahe odemata  
kulona ahe.*

- Choir: *Kulona awoa oke oke.*
- Oriate: *Iya ode sukareo omo lede  
ya sukareo iyadde iyadde  
(repeats chant)*
- Choir: *same.*
- Oriate: *Emi ode mi ke tubamba edenle keo  
(repeats chant)*
- Choir: *same.*
- Oriate: *Eriki ereiki mama o kuloa okuana.*
- Choir: *same.*
- Oriate: *Komo koro koro demoro  
laye laye demoye Oshosi (repeats)  
Oshosi aparolo Oshosi  
Obatala tanioko omo lereshio  
lereshio teke teke moreshio coo demofa.*
- Choir: *same twice.*
- Oriate: *Odemasa odemasa, odemata odemata.*
- Choir: *same.*
- Oriate: *Odemata.*
- Choir: *Iwara odefa.*
- Oriate: *Iwara odesha, iwara odefa.*
- Choir: *same.*



- Oriate: *He Oshosi le wan wantio  
Oshosi lawardio.*
- Choir: *Iwaro odefa, Oshosi lawardio.*
- Oshosi: *Oshosi toni toni leke.*
- Choir: *Iwaro odefa ode mata  
odemata ode ode.*
- Oriate: *Odedde walei awalade  
awalere kunfora  
(repeats chant).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *O mio odedere akonfo  
aunlo enfora adede.*
- Choir: *Awa dele kunfora.*

### Song to Oshosi

*Oshosi a lawi ilosha a la malafe Oshosi awi lo da  
a la malafe....he Oshosi awi loda  
a la malafe he toma lo Oshosi  
awuilota mata ala malafe lo Oshosi  
samere ke iworu sambereke irolo  
Odemata ode ode  
Odemta kulona ahe  
sire sire odemata ole sire  
Sire odemata ole ole Oshosi a la wui o  
Ilosha a la malafe  
Oshosi a la wui o lo la ala malafe  
Sambereke ke irolo odemata kulona ahe  
Odemata kulona ahe  
Odemata....odemata ole ole.*

### Obatala

- Oriate: *Baba fururu ore oreo baba kankenye  
eleribo, eleri ba sibawo  
ari borere ba sibawo, basi wayo  
enuye yawuao loro lese kan  
(repeats chant).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Iwarere re iyeo awarere ibbo mio Obatala  
eshubagba mio lo Orisha  
ibaria ibaria yeye Obataloisha Obatala casho  
meme e eniki lawase lorun Olofin  
Olofin oba araye.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Aya Ayaguna leke o lekesan o lekesan  
bamba o lo rio aya Ayaguna mario Asho  
bamban o Ayaguna  
(repeats chant).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Obatala baba mi larami  
he ewao.....he ewao (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *O akata oba semille Asho baba  
yokota yokota....  
Obalense baba se mi.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Oba oba aremu salako obalosense*

*obaloense aremi baba  
Salako bo loense.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Waye waye lo mio, waye para mefa  
waye para me fao  
arenu waye para mefao  
waye para metao.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Oru kankan Obatala oru kankan  
Baba lo orisha eru kankan.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Wai yonke way yonke eran popo  
pomio wayon ke orin wayorima  
o wayon keo.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Obo kunle akama ka mao  
bon kunle akama ka mao  
oloddo oloddo lewe nana Buruku  
bon ku lalae akama ka mao  
oinle oyele oela oela run mayao  
akama kao akamaka kao akama akama.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Nibbe nibbe ewaiyo  
keke ki wewe  
(repeats chant).*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Obatala ta kini ta kini  
eture komo laina fere fere  
(repeats chant).*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Baba Orunmila lereibo iwaro  
obo baba leribo Orunmila  
baba loa shilara o baba loroke baba solo o.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Obatala ofe diadeu Olomi baba sheo  
baba bole bamba  
bolembo Obatala shinambo, Ayagguna oka  
lambo  
Eshi la o lara o baba sola bao  
Obatala abunkenke okuaro oba  
Baba oba oba seye baba ara yeo  
Baba ara yeo.*

Choir: *Baba arayeo.....baba arayeo.*

### Song fo Obatala

*Waye waye lo mio, waye waye lo mio, waye waye lo mio  
waye para meta, waye para meta o are waye waye lo mio  
waye waye lo mio.....waye para meta o, waye para meta o  
waye para meta lo areku baba baba ara baba ara are yeo  
baba ara yeo are ye baba kuoro opiyo la yeyeo oku yi bandaleo  
oku bandi le yeo baba areo  
kue uro omi leiyo baba kue uro omo le yo okumi.*

### Oya

Oriate: *Aiuyiu loda ya okuo  
mode kekiiio mode de ayaba  
o Yanza laroke.*

- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Oyadde mariwo Oyanza loro loro yokode.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Oya mama teke kumbele  
Oya teo aina tekubemle*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Jekua o jekua hey  
Oyan sile kinfo Oya  
aladdo kuero, kuero maibo  
Oyanza oyadde.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Oya o Yanza mate mare mo  
materere rere materema (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Oya o Yanza ore obini  
mi ore bini ore mi  
bini bini omi.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Okaraza oka baleri baleri lounwo la Oya  
kosiniko ko awanare  
longo lawanare obini obini mi.*
- Choir: *O lele o leleo.*
- Oriate: *Eta efa mamu efa mamu.*

- Choir: *O lele o leleo.*
- Oriate: *Manu manu*
- Choir: *Olele olele.*
- Oriate: *Kakala iboshenshe  
kakal omi kala oleleo*
- Choir: same twice.
- Oriate: *Oyan si leo Oya tutu  
kunyo Oya Oya hae (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Oyankara Orisha leiyo  
aki manyoro eke ora.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Oyadde iba iba shekete  
akorile Oyadde Oayeddeero  
eyade eyade.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Oya wima wima  
Oya wima wima Yanza wima  
yo koto bembe yo koto  
bembe a la wedio Oya.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Oya o Yanza inle o oro  
inle o kala o kala  
Oya inle o oro inleo  
Oya kala kala inelo Yanza*

*yewao Oyanza o.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Oya obini Oyao de oro inleo  
ara ara kala Oya kala.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Ala aunko aunko bo leya.*

Choir: *Obini oro inleo kala  
Oyanza loro ke.*

Oriate: *Oya Oya tawode ambe reo  
Oya omo oreo  
Oya we eunko omerese osinkreta  
kunfoya la mefa Oya  
mi lodeo aira aira ariwao.*

Choir: *Oyanza de nireo Oya de nireo  
Ayabba de nireo.*

Oriate: *Oya Oya ambero Oya amore  
rere akama Eshu Laroye  
weye weye miol lo Orisha  
o lorisa Oya lo risa  
Ozain sin kreto awalere kunfoya  
o la mefa Oya mi led.*

Choir: *Oya ni reo Oyabba ni reo.*

Oriate: *Ayabba ayabba aunlo kekerel  
oke ffitun aidanale loye loye  
yabba ala wa waouna  
kesele ya kesekele so Ozun  
so Asoggano ibuke*

*ake ake ke Oya  
mio loreo ke Oyankara Orisha  
Weye wey obinisa ibe ke ashe Oya mi  
woro.*

Choir: *Oyankara oyankara Orisha leeyo weui  
manyoro ake Ashe ko.*

### Song to Oya

*Aki lo lota owo aki lota lo owo o Yanza laronke  
Oyate oyate aki lota la awuo Oya lo la awuo  
Oyadde mariwo o Yanza Yanza kekete  
Yanza ahe yokoto Yanza ahe yokoto  
Ahi lota loko wuo o Yanza laronke  
O yekua hei Yanza hei Oya Oya otawe Oya  
Oy Yansa lo oy chanza apere Yansa  
Oyadde o Yansa Yansa lo kot  
Oyadde mariwo o Yansa Yansa lороke  
Oyadde Oyadde o Yansa Yansa lo kote.*

### Oshun

Oriate: *Iya mi ile oro  
Iya mi ile oro, bogbo ashe ashe  
Isara mawo ahe ahe.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Eki falafa la souo Yale  
wale wale yale  
Eki fa la la souo sireo  
dale coyu obini oro aye  
Oddun aye la ibo  
aye la ibo tolon kun omi Yeye  
ele bushibo kobarо emi  
onile Iya mi ile orum.*

- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Ilewere ita osuo  
ilewere ita Iya lodde (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Osha kiniba ita Oshun  
sheke sheke  
Ita Oshun iya ita.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Yeye mama Pashangara  
bio sou taknima  
kua ri boreo arubba tite yuyeo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Tanima kuari boreo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Tanima kuari boreo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Arubba titi yeo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Kama ashe titi loddo  
koshimi loddo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Ala aumba komashe  
komashe ala aumba.*

- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Ashe koshi mi laddo.*
- Choir: *Alauma ka mashe  
Alauma ka mashe yeye.*
- Oriate: *Oddara Oshun kawo Oshun oddara kawo  
omi dadara omi dadara o mio dadara.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Bara Yeye bara iddo  
ibara o mio Oshun Yeye  
O mio Oshun yeye ibara o mio.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Yeye yewa o mio o yewa  
o yewa o mama yeye wao  
Oshun o mio Yalodde o yewa mao.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Oro mi o mio Yeye oi yakuta  
yokodda o mio (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Eni o bombo Baba solo  
bombo babba solo bombo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Ashe ewe komo titi  
lewao yeye moro  
o Yeye moro, komo titi lewao*

*Yeye moro.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Tani kinshe leri iwaro  
Asho iwama Yeye*

*ewe komo ti lewa o kamina, o kamina.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Oshin shin oshe iwamao kiminao  
kaminao oshin shin oshe alambe bembe.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Alam bembe Oshun bembe (repeats).*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Oshun Yeye Ikole mobagna akuaro  
kole kole mobagna aloe.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Kole Oshun mobagna kole bale o  
kole bale o ibbu senda akuara  
kole bale o.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Akoro unsono akuare labira lao  
via o yenye okere labira lao akuare  
okere iyao Obba o mio lawama  
bombo lokun akua Obba mio lawama  
Obba mi o Obba mi o  
Okere iyao okere iyao  
o mio lawama  
Okere Yeye leri  
iworo Obba mio lawama*

*Okere Yeye leri  
iworo Obba mio lawana.*

Choir: same.

### Song to Oshun

*Iya mi ile oro, iya mi ile oro, vira ye yeye oyo  
ya mala ye iku oshe oshe oye owa ita lukum  
Osha dewayo ooro mama kenya yama aki iku Oshun  
iloko odde ila ika toloye ioyalardde apetesi oloro oloro oloro  
tu oloro opao oyena ande ha la molo rifal imbe.....imbe ma yeye  
imbe imbe lodde....imbe ma yeye inmbe loddo  
Via ye oyo ya male iku oshe oshe owao  
ita lokum ocha dewayio  
a ma orifa imbe imbe loro.*

### Soppono-Osowano

Oriate: *Abarikutu awa lerizo, Abarikuto awa lerizo Aye Baba  
aba aye awa lerizo ashe baba... babae baba sorozo aba  
sire sire, sire sire moba baba sire.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Baba lu aye awa lerizo ashe baba, baba e  
baba sorozo aino komo de baba sire.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *To we to we ama rusina towe  
towe amarusina towe.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Ayyagna yagna ni reo iya maikuto  
paso paso melodia Sojano melodie  
Sojano melodie.*

- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Ee, ee, iya mai kueti iya iya, mai kueto  
Asojano mai kueto masokuto masokuto  
ma kuela iya mai ku toe  
wawima le rawo wi wimiama le rawo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Wawima so iri rere lerawo waima so iri re  
Ashe akuto farara akuto, farara waima  
sosirere wawima larawo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: U ye mawo uye mawo uye mawe (repeats)
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Ahe kudaso ahe kudaso abo rika rika  
nito were Asojano cudaso.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Ile la tiye ile shehora ile altiya sojano shebora suna wele  
su ona wele wele mosifo mosifo suna wele wele.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Shebora mia mai shebora  
Baba Asojano mai shebora (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Afi maye lokue afimaye lokue unando ea  
aee Afreketete lokue unaldo (repeats).*
- Choir: same.

- Oriate: *Bombo bombo ero asojano  
ila no lo dimbo  
akomodo kamake akomodo anu mia  
yo woalo yia komodo lokue yu soso sasa.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Dawi maino dawo ayano yo dawo ayano.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Baba oda ai dawo dawo mano ayano  
no dawo dawo obara ofun fun mai dedewe  
(repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Bee ewano ero fotule ero fotule niero bewano  
ayano yo dawo fun kolele kue elanu ero  
ero futule ni ero bewano ni kaka we tolele keu  
elenu ero ero futule mi lowo ayano misa enwa  
mmi lowo ayano.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Ero ma inle Ile wa awa iya toma toma marere  
(repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Abombo kule kule miyure bombo mi bombo  
adae bonkule bonkule si miyure nombo nombo  
ni yure adae.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Asojono kara suna weja suna weja (repeats).*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Esoyina minambo soyina nimambo a la fomiye  
le fofole tele ina ina minabbo  
ahe anmbe anbre alambale wana wan sokuo.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Sonji aunlo bala mi kosa awe  
nawe aunlo bala mi kosa awe  
nanu aunlo bala bala ni kosa  
ujun ruru nawe, nawe nawe  
akla so jura nun nun Asowano  
Asowano yono omi leya teya  
ujnun rururu nawe ahe ewe nawe.*

Choir: same.

### Song to Shopono-Babaluaye

*Abarikuto awareriso abarikuto awareriso ori baba  
Babaluaye awaleriso ori baba  
Babaluaye awaleriso ori baba babae baba soroso  
babae baba soroso babalu aye ayiampio  
omole baba baba sire sire babba baba soroso  
babae baba baba luaye iyampio omole baba sire  
togue togue amarikuyina wawe amarusina mawe (repeats three times).*

### Yemaya

Oriate: *Yemaya ahe loddo aboyo Yemaya  
Ahe aboyo Yemaya (repeats).*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Lari oke lari oke.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *O keo Asesu Yemaya.*  
Choir: same.

Oriate: *Onawe onawe ashetona  
okute she koko ahe.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Bogda Asesu Yemaya bogbo  
Yemaya aki Yemaya bogbo ake ahe.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Asese beleko boba beleko were  
were Asho were ashe iyami mi o Yemaya.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Bogbo Asesu Yemaya iyami Yemaya aki  
Yemaya.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Bombo mosi awoa lodde  
o lodde mosi awoa.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Oshen she Yemaya kuolona o we  
oshense ladora baro mi o Yemaya.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *O bara o mio Yemaya o bara o mio ladoro  
waro Yenye waro alado aora baro yeo.*

Choir: same.



- Oriate: *Yemaya kue ya mi boako oshonsho iyami  
kueye mi oshonsho Obba lowo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Iborere ibo rereo a kuolano mi lawoa.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Yemaya ori bini la yeo Yemaya wa kuolona  
ahe awa ocha kota elese se ozun.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Awa sesima awa sesima sen sieri ma awa.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Omo lete omo led o mi titi aleyeo ladde  
omo lete omo led o mi aleyeo yo eleyo  
eruba shikini eruba  
shikini eruba o Yalodde.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Eran wipi po mi yenyao Iya mofunle  
a la shikini Iya mofunle o la bon masere.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Osi ni ba ahe o Inle toko lowo omi Yeye  
Yemaya apatevi o mio mama iyawa o mio  
eko yale damo wao  
Obba ru lowo Iya omio akata ke yewe yale  
o lo shosi lo shi nibae lo koko  
titi ri bamba titi ri bamba eko yale ya lumao  
iyawo o lo mio Yemaya.*

- Choir: *Eyo yale la yumao omi yale yumao.*
- Oriate: *Pokula o pokula oni powoa omi yale wao mio  
(repeats)*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Yama la yalarode ashute iyawao mio akute akute  
kuere kuere kuere yo emu fiye iya mi waro  
eku ya la mae yale omiyale omio.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Yemaya lo o moddio omo owo yenna oni oni  
omo seinse seinse.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *So oimo lo oyaseo moduo peko a ka bafanfa  
ikuari akuaro kuakua  
ito ito tio ile alubbe ile alubbe.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Anna ware anna wereo, o wereo anna.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Yamma yalorde ashto mawaye a la bushansa  
Yemaya obini umbi abaya era mio.*
- Choir: *Ero eru mama lodde.*
- Oriate: *Ara nito Yemaya awa kulona ahe  
Iya mi bara laka ona si nito walordea.*
- Choir: *Ero malodde.*

Oriate: *Ara nito Yemaya awa kulona la koana aboyo aboyo  
Yemaya okute Ashagba apendere mi o Yemaya Okua o  
yaka ocha madima oro madima Yemaya o mio osi  
Yemaya sawadde Olodumare.*

Choir: *Ero malodde Yemaya o mio malodde.*

Oriate: *Yemaya a lawa lawa lawas Yemaya Osha  
fakunde o nito Orisha nito waldo un wayo nito  
ocha Iya mio Yemaya.*

Choir: *Eko yale yalumao.*

Oriate: *Yemaya al kouro a la kouro akonko bona o bona akonko  
iya mio mariwo ekelese oddun Yemaya lo rodo ona ona  
Yemaya ni toiba Yemaya ni toiba Yanle mi o Yemaya  
Ibario ofun aferere osho madima aro madima Yemaya  
yanle omo yanle Ashagba iya mio.*

Choir: *Eko Yale ya lu mao.*

### Song to Yemaya

*Sosi ri ba oe iyale yamumbao yale omi latte aya ba o mio  
Eko iyale yamubao yale omiate ayaba o mio  
Awarere awa kuelona ahe Yemaya awakuelona he  
awarere estafio astara fio Olokun dale koyumila ha mi pa omio  
Yemaya Olokun Yemaya tirazun tirasecum tira le kum tira lekum abo  
Yemaya lodde aboko ahe he Yalodde Yalodde he Yemaya lodde  
aboko ahe aboko lari ote lario lario lari ote otre lario ote.*

### Aggayu

Oriate: *Omo batele omo o batele o (repeats) Emi laddo oni Shango  
omo batele sokoto Omo batele o.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Soro elewe mmi soro lo Aggayu.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Tanio la Osha baba mi o tani la ocha bamio.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Alakate Abeokuta, Abeokuta Alakate kolo  
yumba o.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Mai mai so roso, Aggayu so roso.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Omo batele mo batele emi laddo oni  
Shango omo batelese soroso.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Aggayu sola mi o Aggayu sola nio bomboAlake ika kue  
layeo (repeats).*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Aggayu lo ma orisha lirisha omio goldo la moyare oke  
oke Aggayu lo ma orisha emio goldo lo mayore oke  
oke....Eleko e leko Aggayu kue laye laye e Aggayu.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Ashola shola akala oni Oyo baba alowaye Ashola awo  
waye Shola oni orisha Oni Oyo baba sonaldo sosi ri bano.*

Choir: *Eko shola koniabo onishao akla shola onishao.*

- Oriate: *Mala mala amala lo kuayo shola oni shao alo uinye ashe.*
- Choir: *Eko sholo noi shao a lo aunye.*
- Oriate: *Eko sholo oni shao alumbam yamu ba o ya omio soso oir baano.*
- Choir: *Sholo onio risha o aloya mumya mi o.*
- Oriate: *Aggayu sola shnola onio shao uru masha uru ru yoyo.*
- Choir: *Oya Oya otawa Oya Oya otakua.*
- Oriate: *Aggayu onio yo buruku taba uru mashasha uru yoyo.*
- Choir: *Oya Oya otakua Oya Oya.*
- Oriate: *Alayu Aggayu uru masha masha uru yoyo Aggayu sola ki ni bao uro youo ki niba o.*
- Choir: *Oya Oya otawa Oya, Oya.*

### Song to Aggayu

*Oshe Oshe Aggayu lo ma orisha  
Oshe oshe Aggayu oshe Aggayu  
Aggayu lo ma orisha, lo ma orisha Aggayu  
Oke oke lo orisha Aggayu lo orisha  
Oke oke lo ma orisha  
ashe a olo orisha, ashe ashe  
waye waye lo mio Aggayu arere  
lare ashe lare ashe  
waye aseh arere obba orisha Oka lo ma orisha.*

### Ibeji-Melli

- Oriate: *Ee mo beyi omo le deo kare re kerekere kerenyanya.*

- Choir: *Keren keren keranya.*
- Oriate: *Alawana alo deo karere (repeats).*
- Choir: *Keren keren ya.*
- Oriate: *Meyi lao ome de tun, meyi la o lo ro omo oddun Beji bejila obe o karere.*
- Choir: *same.*
- Oriate: *Meyi la o ese aremu abila sese.*
- Choir: *same.*
- Oriate: *A le melli a le beji ore orisha a la Beji.*
- Choir: *same.*
- Oriate: *Meyi lao omo etun ese eremu abe yi loro ese Melli lao omo etun.*
- Choir: *same.*

### Shango

- Oriate: *Elewe mio mayo Shango ko wa yeo mayo we milere luddo mayo Shango ko wayeo mayo.*
- Choir: *same.*
- Oriate: *Emi soo obalubbe aladdoso moniwere niye*
- Choir: *same.*
- Oriate: *Ure ure moniyere niye.*

- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Amala amala moniwere niye Amala, moniwere niye.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Yama shelo Shango o mio bogbo arayeo unkuele iyama shelo mio o Shango (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Kue eyere kue kue mio ayo (repeats) mofori wao ladde mokenke wawao Erufina dewao.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Emi a o lara bamba oke bamba Erufina lara ibamba oke oke bamba o.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Keye keye keye yo bamba Erufina lara yo bamba oke yambao.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Bo ruo kumabeo ombae adashe elewe mio kumanbeo ambo lokera (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Oluo okan luluo, okan luluo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Kirina aina kirina aina aina omo bakele.*

- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Shango obba odima ke leye Shango odima kue laye (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Okan wala okan wala.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Samuke, samuke obba dima samuke obba dima.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Shango odima kue laye Shango odima kue laye.*
- Choir: *Okan wala okan wala.*
- Oriate: *Elubbe lubbe Shano ahe, lubbe Shango amala lubbe akiko lube kawo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Elubbe lubbe yambala Shango elubbe yambala.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Kawo ore kawo ore kabio o sile o.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Amala ni tombo amala la yure kabio sile Shango bali aina yodde vele o aina.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Bembe Shango bembe Oya bembe.*

- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Bembe ata o ata oooo bembe Shango bembe Oya bembe.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Ala io ala io yore labio Baba okete okete inle kawo baba okete inle kawo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Ahe ako ako moforibale musha Shango olo mio musha o musha Shango mio Ala shola ki la shola a la umba oshiore durum ganga moyi bamba lo lo urukaja, jeri o jeri o ocuna lowo beinle Olodumare aya mi o bi o yo bi o Shango biniya Shango tu eledda ayobbo Shango Oyo Shango bini lado Shango okuni jokoji alya ke eyila shebora obara lubbe ala lobbara ashere adeshe awa le tegbe lebeo o okute lagba lagba ishu mi awala kashosho lo lo owo anini Osha ewe ewe mi Shango ero male ero male ekuantalao Oluo maye o kabio sile Shango kabio.*
- Choir: *Ibba ibo siba ibbo si areo abaibo si areo ereo ero a la amala ibbo obba oso ashere obba so.*
- Oriate: *Obba ibo si are areo o baibbo si areo areo alamala obba oso ashe ere.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Obba kiniyo kiniyo womo de areo ademu konfeso dewa o.*
- Choir: *Obba ibo si areo ero alamala lao ibbo obba oso ashere ere.*
- Oriate: *Yere yere kokoro koti lowo lawa fumi lo yere yere yaen.*

- Choir: *Obba ibo si areo amala ibo era obaso ashe are.*
- Oriate: *Washi woua kuo yo emi bamba koko ro yoti.*
- Choir: *Obba ibo si are.*
- Oriate: *Obara la mafa o iba la mafa o lakere lakere kadeye sire baba oba oso ala manla.*
- Choir: *Obba ibo si areo.*
- Oriate: *Bara bara awo emi o wodo bara (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Awalona Shango moforibale lubbe ke awalona moforibale lubbe ke walon (repeats).*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Laye Shango imo banti riri titi laye Shango bantiriri ure embiole eri bogdo.*
- Choir: same.
- Oriate: *Obakutu kua rio taledde Shango le kueri (repeats).*
- Choir: same.

### Song to Shango

*Shango mani kote, Shango mani kote oye masa Shango mani kote oye masa Shango ara mani kote, Shango ara bari kote odde mata ikote alma soikote ye adda amnikote adda manikote arn masa Shango aramba soni Shango are barikote arabarikote ara sori he he lele awo we we wera akokote aro ewe aro mayo wera oye mata ala bao Shango arabarikote oye mata barikote*

*odemata odemata ode ode ademata ode ode mara  
arabarikote sori sori ode mata ode mata sori ashe barikote  
sori ashe Shango.*

### **Orunmila**

(This is the last chant done before chanting the Orisha being vested).

Oriate: *Oro oro we aro we Orula yo lokua o oro oro we aro we  
Orula yo lukua o.*

Choir: same

Oriate: *Ofeye ke tolo mi serawa o eniki la wase.*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Ifa aunko Orula laka laka labosse awo  
(repeats).*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Orunmila taladde baba la moforibale  
(repeats)*

Choir: same.

At the end of the chants, the four pieces of cloth are removed from Yawo's head. The Ashe which was on the top of the head is also removed, placing it in the center of the last cloth; it will be saved together with the scissors, comb, blade, and the first piece of hair cut by the Yubona.

Now, Yawo will be lifted from the Oddun, turned towards the "throne" and asked to open his-her eyes for the first time since she-he came into the room. Normally they are in a sort of daze, if

they, by any chance have been taken or possessed by the deity (ashe Orisha), it will take them a little longer to recover their senses. They will be told to "look at their new home" (they are pointed to the throne), and will be seated inside of it. Before the sacrifices to the Orishas start, Yawo will be given a plate of hot soup made with the pigeon offered when they came into the Igboodu. Once Yawo finishes his first meal under the throne, the offerings of animals to be eaten the next day will commence.

### **Offerings of Fowls and Animals Sacrifice Ritual**

#### **Things to know and Say During the Sacrifices-Offerings of Fowl and Four Legged Animals**

##### Roosters – Hens – Chickens

*Akuko mokua ara eye:* (I kill you to eat your meat and offer your blood).

*Akua otun:* (Feathers from the right side).

*Akua osi:* (Feathers from the left side).

*Ibare o:* (Feathers from the legs).

*Aya eni:* (Feathers from the chest).

*Idi yoko re:* (Feathers from the tail).

*Ori reko:* (Feathers from the head).

When turning the dead fowl (with right hand) say:

*Oni ti kuanla ofo ku orum.*

Lift them from the floor three times and say:

*Emi lo kuso Osin Oggun lokua o:* I did not kill you, Oggun did it.

*Four legged animals:*

The skin: *Abore o Obore o kominiku.*

Chant: *Kumanke ni nio, ma she mio ni o lewa abe.*

The collar next to the skin: *Ayawala.*

The four legs: *Itelese apua meyi.*

The two front legs: *Apua meyi.*

The two back legs: *Ere no meyi.*

The ribs: *Igan nika, igan nike nike te oboni. Nigate obuno.*

The flank meat (right side): *Otun.*

All four pieces of flank: *Itebe ese awa meyi.*

The neck: *Monoku gunuwashe oroguna lese. Ipako.*

Heart, Liver, Tripe's: *Addofi, Adokan, Okokan.*

Animal's tits: *Mamu, emu gaga.*

Testicles: *Obbe o roko.*

The chest: *Ike ofu ayu aya.*

The bones: *Egungu.*  
The tail: *wenwere uloni.*

As the Oriate "presents" these parts of the sacrificed animal to the different Orishas, the Santeros will answer, after he names them:

*'Ka ma fe nife lebe abe, Kamafe nimio elebbe abe. O mashe ni o nio* (here, they name the Orisha being offered the animal's part), *Yemaya (etc) abeo.*

The fowl is always sacrificed after the four legged animals.

When all the feathers are gathered together they are called: *Apa iye juju.*

They are poured over the open bowls, except those of ducks.

While pouring the feathers this chant is done:  
*Un toro molo kui.*

The chant is repeated constantly until the last feather has been laid on top of the bowls. There is another chant, but it is not done too often:

*Etie eku edeku, etie eye adeye to lo ma likoui,  
ela popo ini eye.*

Before the sacrifices start, Yawo will be given small pieces of coconut which will contain for each different Orisha, a number of small Guinea pepper grains according their hierarchy number within the Odu: Eleggua three, Shango six, Obatala eight, etc., Yawo will only chew it and spit some into the animal's ears, eyes, and forehead. The first Orishas to be offered the sacrifices will be: *Eleggua, Oggun, Osun* and *Oshosi*, followed by the *Ordun*.

All sacrifices start with *Eleggua*. A young goat is the first of-

fering, a piece of coconut is put inside his mouth, and tied with a rope. Two assistants will hold him while the Oriate peels a bit of hair from the goat's neck and starts chanting:

Oriate: *Yakina ya kina lorun....bara ya wese lorun.*  
 Choir: *Bara ya wese ya wese lorun.*  
 Oriate: *Bara ya wese ya wese lorun....Oggun shoro shoro.*

While chanting these phrases will introduce the knife through the side of the goat's neck:

Oriate: *Eleggua dekun.*  
 Choir: *Eran de ko mu ye.*

The chant are the same for all the sacrifices, whether fowl or four legged animals. The only change will be that he will start by naming the Orisha to whom the offering is made. For instance in an offering to Yemaya, it will be: "*Yemaya dekun*" and the choir will answer: *Eran de ko mu ye.*

With the knife still inside the animal's neck, the Oriate will continue to do the next chant:

Oriate: *Ibiama eye si moyure...ebiama eye si moyure ebiama.*  
 Choir: same.  
 Oriate: *Eye eyi loro eye.*  
 Choir: same.  
 Oriate: *Eleggua dekun* (names Orisha).  
 Choir: *Eran den komun ye.*

These chants will be repeated until the goat is left without blood. The Oriate makes sure that the blood goes mainly on top of *Eleggua* and *Oggun*; first, Yawo's and second the Godfather/ Godmother's, and that as little as possible blood is spilled on the floor. Once the sacrifice is completed, the goat is placed on the

floor and the Oriate will finish the offering by cutting the goat's head while saying:

Oriate: *Okke ke nire leri Oggode....Nireo owe owe leri abbo awe.*  
 Choir: *Leri abbowe oke ke ni reo.*  
 Oriate: (turning the knife, passing the dull part over the neck): *Akura kuta, kumambe etio.*  
 Choir: *Akura kuta....kumambe etio akura kuta.*

Once the head has been cut off, water will be poured (just a little bit) over it and over the bowls. The goat's body will be taken out of the room with a coconut between the legs. The head will be "seasoned" with corozo lard, salt and honey. The seasoned head is to be offered to Yawo, who will lick it. The meaning is that Yawo is receiving the Ashe or blessing of the Orisha by "tasting" part of His offering.

When adding the salt Oriate will chant:

Oriate: *Iyo malero, iyo malero, abala iyo malero.*  
 Choir: *Iyo malero, iyo malero.*  
 Oriate: *Epo malero, epo malero* (while pouring corozo lard).  
 Choir: same.  
 Oriate: *Barai lo wi tonio, oddu ,mama barai lo wi tonio* (pouring honey).  
 Choir: same.

The head will be placed in front of the corresponding Orisha to whom the sacrifice was made, and the offering of the fowl begins with the roosters first. Oriate has to say:

Oriate: *Akuko mo kua ara aye....* Then, the routine: *Eleggua dekun, eran den komuye.*

The rest of the fowl: hens, pigeons, guinea hens, are offered



by pulling the head off their bodies while saying:

Oriate: *Ko si ku eti eyeotoko ebbo.*  
Or this one:  
*Ko iku eye iku otokoto afo.*  
Choir: *Ko si kueti eye oko.*

When all the sacrifices are over, only corozo lard and honey are poured over the bowls. They will be followed by gathering as much feathers as possible and placing them, as to cover the bowls. Oriate will chant:

Oriate: *Overozo unto lu molokui, to lu molokui.*  
Choir: *un...tolo molokui...un tolo molokui.*  
Oriate: *Eran popo po mi...eran popo po mi*  
*aye....Popo ariku popo po mi aye.*  
Choir: *Popo po mi, popo po mi aye.*  
Oriate: *Iro ko suwo oggun osono* (this chant is done while pouring fresh water).  
Choir: *Ero ero koisu, eru ariku babawa.*

### Presenting and Dancing the Head

Once the sacrifice's rituals are over, the Oriate and or any Santero who has gone through the ceremony of "receiving the knife", can present and dance the four legged animal's head in front of the Orishas.

Holding the head with both hands chant:

*Ato reo ato reo afori mawa ori o.*  
*Oba to ba ofori mawa.*  
*Adedere mo ni o dedere, monio fa ra ori lori elewa ode rere monio*  
*oderere re.*

Choir: *Ten ten leri oba fo wao, tenten leri oba fo wao.*

Place the head on the floor in front of the corresponding Orisha.

Chant: *Tenten leri fu mi bafu wao, ten ten leri.*  
Choir: same (twice).

Eleggua: *Tenten leri fu mi bafu wao, tenten leri*  
*Eleggua fumi aunko.*

Choir: same (twice).

Obatala: *Tenten leri fu mi bafu wao*  
*Obatala fumi eleri ure.*

Choir: same (twice).

Oya: *Tenten leri fu mi bafu wao*  
*Oya fumi eleri ure.*

Choir: same (twice).

Oshun: *Tenten leri fu mi bafu wao*  
*Oshun fumi eleri aunko oddon.*

Choir: same (twice).

Shango: *Tenten leri fu mi bafu wao*  
*Shango fumi eleri abo.*

Choir: same (twice).

Yemaya: *Tenten leri fu mi bafu wao*  
*Yemaya fumi eleri abo.*

Choir: same (twice).

### Animals Needed In a Vestment

#### Eleggua

(One set of warriors Eleggua, Ogun, Osun and Oshosi).

Eleggua: 1 small (baby) goat, 1 rooster, 2 pigeons.  
Obatala: 1 white female goat, 2 white hens, 2 white

	pigeons, 1 white guinea hen.
Oya:	1 female goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.
Oshun:	1 castrated goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.
Yemaya:	1 male lamb, 1 duck, 2 roosters, 1 guinea hen.
Eleggua:	When it is the Orisha being vested: 1 goat, 1 bush rat (jutia), 3 young roosters.

Besides these animals, you will always need the animals to be used the night before, at the time of the cleansing of the head, plus one small baby chick (jio-jio) to sacrifice after Yawo's bath, the pigeon to use entering the Igboodu, and one last guinea hen to clean the house and the ceremony's participants after the sacrifices are over.

### Oggun

Eleggua, Osun (only):	1 goat, 1 rooster, 2 pigeons.
Obatala:	1 female white goat, 2 white hens, 2 white pigeons, 1 white guinea hen.
Oya:	1 female goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.
Oshun:	1 castrated goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.
Yemaya:	1 male lamb, 1 duck, 2 roosters, 1 guinea hen.
Shango:	1 male lamb, 1 turtle, 2 roosters, 2 quails, 1 guinea hen.
Oggun:	1 goat, 1 bush rat (jutia), 2 red roosters, 1 turtle, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.

### Oshosi

Eleggua, Oggun, Osun:	1 baby goat, 2 roosters, 2 pigeons.
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Obatala:	1 white goat, 2 white hens, 2 white pigeons, 1 white guinea hen.
Oya:	1 female goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.
Oshun:	1 castrated goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.
Yemaya:	1 male lamb, 1 duck, 2 roosters, 1 guinea hen.
Shango:	1 male lamb, 1 turtle, 2 roosters, 2 quails, 1 guinea hen.
Oshosi:	1 goat, 1 male deer, 2 roosters, 2 birds (finches, or parakeets etc., trapped by Yawo), 1 guinea hen.

### Shango

Eleggua:	1 male baby goat, 1 rooster, 2 pigeons.
Obatala:	1 white goat, 2 white hens, 2 white pigeons, 1 white guinea hen.
Oshun:	1 castrated goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.
Yemaya:	1 male lamb, 1 duck, 2 roosters, 1 guinea hen.
Aggayu:	1 goat, 2 pigeons, 2 quails, 1 guinea hen.
Shango:	1 male lamb, 1 turtle, 2 roosters, 2 quails, 1 guinea hen.

At the time of the sacrifices for Shango and Yemaya, both are placed together on the floor. That is: both the bowls containing Shango and Yemaya stones and the cowry shells, because they "eat" together. They share each others offerings, except Shango will not be given the blood from Yemaya's duck, and Yemaya will not receive Shango's quail and turtle.

**Aggayu**

- Eleggua, Oggun, Oshosi, Osun: 1 goat, 1 rooster, 2 pigeons.  
 Obatala: 1 white goat, 2 white hens, 2 white pigeons, 1 white guinea hen.  
 Yemaya: 1 male lamb, 1 duck, 2 roosters, 1 guinea hen.  
 Oshun: 1 castrated goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.  
 Shango: 1 male lamb, 2 roosters, 1 turtle, 2 quails, 1 guinea hen.  
 Aggayu: 1 castrated goat, 2 pigeons, 2 guinea hens, 2 quails.

**Obatala**

- Eleggua, Oggun, Osun, Oshosi: 1 goat, 1 rooster, 2 pigeons.  
 Oya: 1 female goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.  
 Oshun: 1 castrated goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.  
 Yemaya: 1 lamb, 1 duck, 1 rooster, 1 guinea hen.  
 Shango: 1 lamb, 2 roosters, 1 turtle, 1 guinea hen, 2 quails.  
 Obatala: 1 female white goat, 2 white hens, 2 white pigeons, 1 white guinea hen.

**Oya**

When Oya is the Orisha being vested, no priest of Shango or Yemaya is allowed to participate in the ceremony, unless they have "received" Oya.

- Eleggua, Oggun, Oshosi, Ozun: 1 goat, 1 rooster, 2 pigeons.  
 Obatala: 1 white goat, 2 white hens, 2 white pigeons, 1 white guinea hen.

- Oshun: 1 castrated goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.  
 Yemaya: 1 lamb, 1 duck, 2 roosters, 1 guinea hen.  
 Shango: 1 lamb, 2 roosters, 1 turtle, 2 quails, 1 guinea hen.  
 Oya: 1 female goat, 2 black hens, 2 black pigeons, 1 guinea hen.

**Yemaya**

- Eleggua, Oggun, Oshosi, Osun: 1 goat, 1 rooster, 2 pigeons.  
 Obatala: 1 white goat, 2 white hens, 2 white pigeons, 1 white guinea hen.  
 Oshun: 1 castrated goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.  
 Shango: 1 lamb, 2 roosters, 1 turtle, 2 quails, 1 guinea hen.  
 Yemaya: 1 lamb, 1 duck, 2 red roosters, 1 guinea hen.

**Oshun**

- Eleggua, Oggun, Osun, Oshosi: 1 goat, 1 rooster, 2 pigeons.  
 Obatala: 1 white goat, 2 white hens, 2 white pigeons, 1 white guinea hen.  
 Oya: 1 female goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.  
 Yemaya: 1 lamb, 1 duck, 2 roosters, 1 guinea hen.  
 Shango: 1 lamb, 1 turtle, 2 roosters, 2 quails, 1 guinea hen.  
 Oshun: 1 castrated goat, 2 yellow-red hen, 2 brown pigeons, 1 guinea hen.

**Shoponno-Osowano**

Eleggua, Oggun, Osun, Oshosi:	1 goat, 1 rooster, 2 pigeons.
Obatala:	1 white goat, 2 white hens, 2 white pigeons, 1 white guinea hen.
Oya:	1 female goat, 2 black hens, 2 black pigeons, 1 guinea hen.
Oshun:	1 castrated goat, 2 hens, 2 pigeons, 1 guinea hen.
Yemaya:	1 lamb, 1 duck, 2 roosters, 1 guinea hen.
Shango:	1 lamb, 2 roosters, 1 turtle, 2 quails, 1 guinea hen.
Osowano-Shoponno:	1 old goat, 2 grey roosters, 4 guinea hens, 2 quails.

**Ita****What it Means**

This is perhaps the most important day in the life of the newly initiated.

This is the day when for the first time, all the deities which he-she has received will "speak" to Yawo. It is an old belief, firmly established, that everything said this day, will come to pass (good or bad). Extreme care is taken to write down all that is said to Yawo by the Oriate, and some of the elders present at the Ita reading, who will interpret the Diloggun Oracle. Each Orisha has a set of cowry shells, and they will be used in this very special reading. This day, Yawo will be given a new name, will be told his-her "ewes" (taboo). Who else, besides their patron Orisha, will be the one called "Mother or Father", because if the deity they are vested with is a male, there will be a female counterpart, and vice-versa. They will learn the "path" or other names by which the Orishas received are also known. It is a must if you are married to bring your spouse, and if you are single, your parents should

**Vestment**

be present.

Ita day starts early, around six in the morning. The Yubona, or the Godmother wakes Yawo and gives him-her a small piece of coconut spread with corozo lard and the number of small Guinea pepper grains corresponding to the Orisha vested. This will be followed by a cup of the Omiero, put aside the day of the vestment to be drunk each morning before the bath and breakfast. Yawo will not be allowed to talk until she-he has eaten the piece of coconut and drunk the Omiero.

The same basin where he-she was bathed the first day will be used everyday while Yawo is at the Igboodu (seven days). Yawo will be asked to disrobe, kneel with the his/her head inside the basin while the Yubona removes the paint from the head by washing it with white odorless soap. After the washing of the head, Yawo will be introduced inside the basin and bathed with Omiero and fresh water. This ceremony will last for six mornings, Yawo will be dried with the same white sheet used on day one; he-she will be given a new set of white clothing, sat on the inverted mortar inside the throne and painted with the Orisha's colors; finally, a piece of cotton will cover the paint, and a new cap placed on top of Yawo's head.

Meantime, while Yawo was bathed and painted, a special breakfast is prepared to welcome the Oriate and all the Oluo-Iyalorishas that will be present at the Ita ceremony. The dining room table will be "dressed" with a fine linen cloth and china plates. There you will find a variety of cheese, pastries, bread, fruits, ham, coffee, milk, and eggs to your liking. The Oriate will preside the Ita breakfast, but before anyone starts eating, Yawo will be served first with everything that is on the table.

In a corner of the house, on the floor, the Godmother prepares the offerings to the ancestors, and all the spirits which will be invited to the Ita ceremony. There will be flowers, food, rum, candles, and cigars.



Egun cane and drum, part of a Yoruba shrine.

### Nangareo

After breakfast, Yubona will prepare what is needed for the Nangareo ceremony. In a large jicara she will pour milk, a little bit of fresh water, honey, and corn flour. Inside, there will be a small jicara which will serve as a drinking cup. The large jicara is taken to the backyard and placed on top of a small mound of earth and covered with a white basin. Next to it, a white plate containing five pieces of coconut and a glass with fresh water, will be used for a coconut reading. All the Santeros will follow the Oriate, except Yawo who will remain inside the house standing under the throne. The women will cover their head with a white triangular handkerchief, and the men will cover it with white caps. The Oriate starts the ceremony by pouring fresh water into the four different cardinal points while saying:

*Omi tuto, ana tuto  
tuto Olodumare  
tuto ile, turo Orisha  
tuto Nangareo  
tuo Ari ku baba wao.*

Oriate will continue by asking for the blessings of Olodumare, Olofin, Orishas, all deceased Oluorishas and Iyalorishas, and all present at the ceremony. Then, he rolls the coconut shells doing these chants while holding them in his left hand.

*Nangareo mo kou  
nangareo mo kou  
nangareo mo kou*

Oriate changes the shells to the right hand.  
*Mo ku ye omo* (three times).

Then, takes the pieces of coconut shells in both hands and says: *Obi Nangareo.*

Choir will respond: *Akua aye, nangareo Akua aye.*

The next step will be to roll the coconut shells as in a regular reading, but limited to ask permission from God *Almighty* to proceed with the ceremony.

Once permission is granted, the Oriate will take the small jicara from inside the *Nangareo*, stir it a little bit with his left hand and taking some of it raises his left hand towards the sky and asks the blessings of *Olodumare*, his ancestors, his godparents, and all the Santeros participating in the ceremony. They will respond by saying *Ashe*; he will drink some of it and will pour what is left around the mount which holds the large jicara with the *Nangareo*.

After the Oriate has finished, he will be followed by all the people gathered there, starting with the oldest member of Osha, and ending with the Yubona and Godparents.

While the Santeros are going through this part of the ceremony, the Oriate will be chanting.

Oriate: *Nangareo.....nangareo.*  
Choir: *Nangareo.*

Oriate: *Nangareo.....nangareo.*  
 Choir: *Nangareo.*  
 Oriate: *Ina tutu kue laye*  
*Nangareo ina tutu kueyelaye*  
*Olofin tutu kati male.*  
 Choir: *Olofin nangareo.*  
 Oriate: *Olodumare Olofin tutu kati male.*  
 Choir: *Nangareo.*

These chants are accompanied by keeping the beat by clapping with both hands. The Yubona and Godmother will cover whatever is left of the Nangareo with the white basin after taking some to the Igbodgu where Ita will take place. Oriate will end by placing the coconut shells around the mound, and the party will proceed to the house for the next ceremony, which is the "dressing" of the palm fiber mat and placing the plates with the cowry shells received by Yawo the day of the vestment.

A new white sheet is used to dress the mat. This is done in front of Yawo by two female priestesses while the Oriate watches. Once it is done, it will be placed on the floor, outside the throne against a side wall. A pillow covered with a new white pillow case will be placed against the wall so the Oriate can rest his back on it. White covered plates, each marked on top with the number corresponding to the Orisha, containing the cowry shells will be placed alongside the mat, together with another plate with coconuts shells for a simple reading before the start of the main reading with the cowry shells. Yawo will be seated on a low bench facing the Oriate. On his right side, sitting on a chair, will be the person responsible to write down everything that is said during Ita. It is the same book that was opened the day of vestment and where all through his-her life, Yawo will keep a record of everything that is done, said, given, received, foretold, and forbidden to him-her.

Yubona will sit on the left and the Godmother/Godfather on the right of Yawo. The immediate family members are wel-

come to Ita, as well as any member of this House of Osha who would like to be present, or any Oluorisha who placed Ashe on Yawo's head the vestment day.

This day, Yawo will be told his past, present, and future life.

Although this reading is supposed to follow the Oracle of the Dillogun, which according to each sign has an interpretation, a parable, a tale, a cleansing, and a taboo, most often, if not always, the Oriate will deviate from the reading he will interpret what the Orishas are saying through the Odu signs, but out of his own experiences sometimes, or who knows from where, he says things that are not written anywhere. They are true in every way, each word he says, is either true at this moment, or will become true. It is so uncanny that no one in the room dares question what he is saying. It not only includes divination about the person's past and present, but it will be extremely accurate about the future. This is the reason Ita is so important....It is not a simple reading....it is your life!

What the Oriate will say during Ita, you can rest assured, will come to pass!

That is the reason why the elders insist to Yawo to read his-her Ita book constantly. It is the best way (if not the only way), they will know what to do and what not to do during their lives in difficult situations or when doubts, or even despair, comes their way. Each situation which may affect Yawo, is written that day. It is based on a simple rule follow what's in your Ita, and your life will be different. What is said at Ita, whether you like it or not, whether written or not in the Dillogun Oracle will happen, the good, as well as the bad. Ita is mostly advice, advice as to how to prevent certain situations, what to do in others. It is an old saying among the elders that the Orishas cannot change your destiny or take away your freedom of choice, but if you pay attention, and follow their advice, the stones on your path will be less and the bright days will be many.

This is why *Santeria, Osha, Orisha Cult, Yoruba Religion*, whichever name you choose to call it has grown. Especially now in this country. It is more than a cult, it is more than a religion...it is a way of life, where divination is only a small part of it. Again it has been said that the Orishas cannot control your destiny, they can only tell you how to make it better, the final decision is always yours.

### Ita Procedure

The Oriate starts the Ita reading with the *Eleggua* cowries which will be on the first plate; there will be twenty one (21), but he will read with only sixteen, placing the remaining five on the side of the mat. From the same plate, he will take a ball of "cascarrilla", a small cross made from the bones of the first goat offered to *Eleggua* on vestment day, a small pebble, a cowry shell a little larger than the ones used for the readings, and the money placed under the plate (about twenty dollars per plate). This group of items is called *Eleggua's Ibbo*.

Once the cowry shells and the *Ibbo* are on the mat, he will take four pieces of coconut shells in his left hand and from each corner will cut three small pieces with either his thumb finger nails or small bites of it. While doing so, will ask permission from *Olodumare, Olofin, Eleggua, Oggun, Oshosi, Obatala, Yemaya, Oya, Oshun, Shango, etc.* This procedure is called *Moyugba* or *Moyube (Moyurbar)* When he is finished, he will place the small pieces of coconuts on top of the cowry shells and touching them with his right hand will say three times.

*Eleggua mo ku o.*

Oriate will roll the coconuts shells and say: *Obbi to Eleggua.*  
Choir will answer: *Akua aye.*

Each time the Oriate starts a reading with the remaining sets

of Orisha's cowry shells, he has to do the same procedure. He has to *Moyugba* with coconuts shells before the actual reading takes place.

By now, Yawo's book of Ita has been opened with the date, name of the person for whom Ita is being done, the name of the Godmother/Godfather, the name of the Oriate doing the Ita, and the name of all Oluorishas-Iyalorishas present. No interpretation for the rolling of coconut shells is given, only the position in which they have fallen is written .

After this has been done, and for every plate, before the Oriate starts the Oracle of Dilogun, Yawo will kneel facing him. The Godmother/Godfather will give Yawo the set of sixteen cowry shells, explaining to him-her the meaning of this ceremony, what each Orisha represents, how they themselves have benefit from this particular deity, and what is expected of Yawo towards his House of Osha. Once Yawo has the cowry shells in his-her hands, he will proceed to touch them to his forehead, his-her chest, and shoulders. Yawo will ask the blessing of the Oriate, all Santeros-Santeras present, his family (mother-father), his-her Yubona and Godparents. When they received the blessings, will turn towards the Oriate and lowering his hands to the mat will say.

Yawo: *Osha re o*  
Choir: *Odda she.*

The first roll of every Orisha's cowry shells is done the same way. The remaining rolls (to complete the signs) is done by the Oriate. He reads the signs (*Odus*) and determines if the reading comes with *Ire* (blessings) or *Osogbo* (warnings). The omens, good or bad will remain for ever written in the Ita book accompanied by the corresponding (*Ebbo*) cleansing-offerings, as well as the remaining Orishas to be received in the future.

Yawo's book will be something like this:

Vestment day.

Washing of stones and cowry shells:

<i>Eleggua</i> .....	10	Ofun.
<i>Obatala</i> .....	8	Eyi Unle.
<i>Oya</i> .....	10	Ofun.
<i>Oshun</i> .....	6	Obara.
<i>Shango</i> .....	4	Iroso.
<i>Yemaya</i> .....	7	Oddi.

(These numbers will vary, this is only an example).

On the next page:

### *Ita Day*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Child name \_\_\_\_\_

(this will be the given name at birth for males and maiden name for females).

Coconut shells sign for Eleggua	Alafia.
Cowry shell sign for Eleggua	8-7 Ire elese Eggun yale.
Coconut shell sign for Obatala	Itawa.
Cowry shell sign for Obatala	8-8 Ire ariku coto yale.
Coconut shell sign for Aggayu	Okanasogde.
Cowry shell sign for Aggayu	9-6 Ire elese Osha yale.
Coconut shell sign for Oshun	Eyeife.
Cowry shell sign for Oshun	5-7 Osogbo elese Osha.
Coconut shell sign for Yemaya	Alafia.
Cowry shell sign for Yemaya	3-5 Osogbo elese iku.
Coconut shell sign for Shango	Itawa.
Cowry shells sign for Shango	6-6 Ire elese Eggun yale.

### *Ebbo to Yawo*

To know what kind of Ebbo is needed to cleanse Yawo, the Oriate will use Eleggua's cowry shells. The Ebbo may include, but not necessarily the following.

Feathers from a rooster's tail.

Seven plates with different types of beans.

One plate with coffee, sugar, and little pieces of bread.

One plate with corozo lard and honey.

Three small male figurines cut from cardboard.

Small amount of dirt gathered from the front of the house.

Earth from the backyard.

Eight hard boiled eggs.

The Oriate will keep on asking until all the ingredients that are needed in the Ebbo are completed. Yawo will be cleansed by the Yubona with each and everyone of these items, by passing them over his-her head, shoulders, back and back of their hands. Everything will be deposited in a large brown paper bag and Yawo will place it behind the front door where the Yubona will pick it up and disposed of it at the place signaled by Eleggua after the cleansing had been completed.

Yawo will return to the small bench facing the Oriate, who at this time, will roll Eleggua's cowry shells again to find the Orishas different paths; who will be Yawo's Orisha mother or father (depending on the Orisha being vested), and finally, Yawo's new Yoruba name.

After all this is done, the Yubona will go and dispose of the Ebbo. When she returns, Yawo will be standing in the middle of the Igboodu, next to the Oriate, who will be holding in one hand the mat and in the other Obatala's bell. A circle of people will be formed around Yawo, and he-she will be told to start circling to his right, while the Santeros will do the same around him. The Oriate will chant as he tolls Obatala's bell.

Oriate: *Oro mayoko ekime bo eyawo ekime bo yawo*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Ewima fe fifa bare Yawo oe Yawo ekimeo*

Choir: same.

Oriate: *Ewima fifa bore Eleggua, Aggayu, Oshun, ekimeo.*



- Choir: same.  
 Oriate: *Ewima fifa bore Obatala, Yemaya, ekimeo.*  
 Choir: *Ewima fifa bore Shango, fifa bore Shango ekimeo.*  
 Choir: same.

The chanting ended, the Oriate will roll the fiber mat on the floor and Yawo will lay face down, his arms alongside his body, at the foot of the Oriate and ask for his blessings. He-she has to do the same at the foot of every Oluorisha-Iyalorisha in the room starting with his Godparents and Yubona. It ends with all persons present in the room doing the same to the Oriate.

Finally, Yawo will be taken inside the throne by the Yubona where he-she stands facing the gathering of Santeros. The Oriate will take in one hand the Ashere (maraca) and the bell and in the other the fiber mat, raising both hands toward the ceiling (the Santeros have to do the same but with their hands empty) will do these chants to end Ita.

- Oriate: *Awaana awaana wana niboro* (repeats twice).  
*kashe Ita kashe Osha*  
*awaana awaana niboro.*  
 Choir: same.  
 Oriate: *Awaana, awaana niboro* (twice)  
*cashe Ita, cashe ano, tuto*  
*cashe Ita, cashe Olofin*  
*awaana awaana niboro.*  
 Choir: same.

After the last chant, Yawo will sit on the floor mat inside the throne and lunch will be brought to him. Outside the Igbodu, the dining room table has been set in the same fashion as it was at breakfast and a succulent dinner is served.

### The Seventh Day Last Ceremony

After Ita, the fifth and sixth days are quiet days. Except for

the morning bath and the painting of the head, Yawo is very much left to himself so he-she can rest and meditate on what has transpired. The last days are to enjoy the peace and calm they bring. On the six day, at evening, Yawo is allowed to step out from under the throne and walk and sit in the Igbodu. That same day he-she will be given a "head cleansing" or last "Orisha head offering" before going home. It is a simple offering of shredded coconuts and clear water. Yawo will be asked to go to sleep no later than seven o'clock at night.

The seventh day; early, Yawo will be asked to step out of the throne, go to the bathroom and bathe by himself-herself. No paint is put on this day, only a little bit of cocoa butter, a piece of white cotton and the head covered with a new white hat. The bath is not a shower, for Yawo is not allowed to have water pouring all over his-her head, therefore a couple of buckets of water will be given to Yawo to bathe with. Some houses of Osha will have Yawo do this for a full year, others, only three months. The same law for the ritual of eating on the floor on the fiber mat is observed. During the time of bathing with buckets of water, the head should be washed everyday with odorless soap, covered with a piece of cotton and a white cap. After the three months are over, Yawo will go through the ceremony of "removing the white hat".

On this seventh day, after the bath, Yawo will dress with the white suit, or dress brought for that occasion. Yawo will be taken to a market place (not a supermarket), to a church, to his Yubona house, and perhaps a couple of the oldest Santeros-Santeras that were at his-her vestment to ask for their blessings. At the market place Yawo will ask for Oya's blessings, at the church it will be *Olofin* blessings. Yawo will carry four small paper bags containing roasted dry corn kernels, smoked jutia, smoked fish, three pennies in each, candies, and three grains of Guinea peppers. The bags are dropped at each of the market four street corners. He-she will also carry a large straw basket were the Yubona will deposit the fruits and sweets bought there. Yawo will be told to "take" (steal) something from the market without the merchant

seeing it and hide it someplace until they get back to his new House of Osha. At the market, all vendors are aware of this part of the ceremony and pretend not to see what Yawo is taking.

After the shopping is finished, Yubona will take the four pieces of coconut shells, and in one of the street corners, will roll them to see if *Oya*, *Eshu* and the rest of the Orishas are pleased with the way the market ceremony took place. From there, they will go to a church where Yawo will kneel in front of the main altar and ask for *Olofin* blessings. The Yubona will light a candle and saying Yawo's new name out loud will pray that *Olofin* helps the new priest of Osha to be a better person, a good religious person, to respect his elders, to be a good father-mother, son, brother, etc. From church they will go to a bakery, buy several loaves of bread, and some pastry; leaving the bakery most of the time they will visit one or two Osha members who will receive Yawo at their front door, ask him-her to come in and while Yawo kneels in front of the patron Orisha shrine, will give Yawo a plate with two coconuts, one dollar and five cents and tell her/him how pleased the Orishas are that they began their novice year by visiting one elder in the religion. Yawo will return to the house where the vestment took place. The Godmother/Godfather will receive Yawo by the door holding in his/her right hand a large jicara with fresh water, he-she will pour water three times on the floor while saying.

*Omi tutu, ile tuto,  
Yawo tuto, Orisha tutu  
Eggun tutu, Yawo tutu  
ari ku babawa o.*

They will enter the house, and place the fruits brought from the market in the Igboju where, by now, the throne has been removed, and only the bowls containing Yawo Orishas have been placed on the floor alongside the wall where the throne was. Yawo will place a plate full of fruits, bread and pastries in front of each Orisha; a candle will be lighted in front of them and Yawo will

kneel next to his-her Yubona who will roll the coconut shells only to ask if they are pleased with this final offering before Yawo goes home. After all the Orishas have been consulted and their blessings granted, Yawo will ask one more time for the blessings of his Godmother/Godfather, Yubona and every Oluorisha-Iyalorisha present.

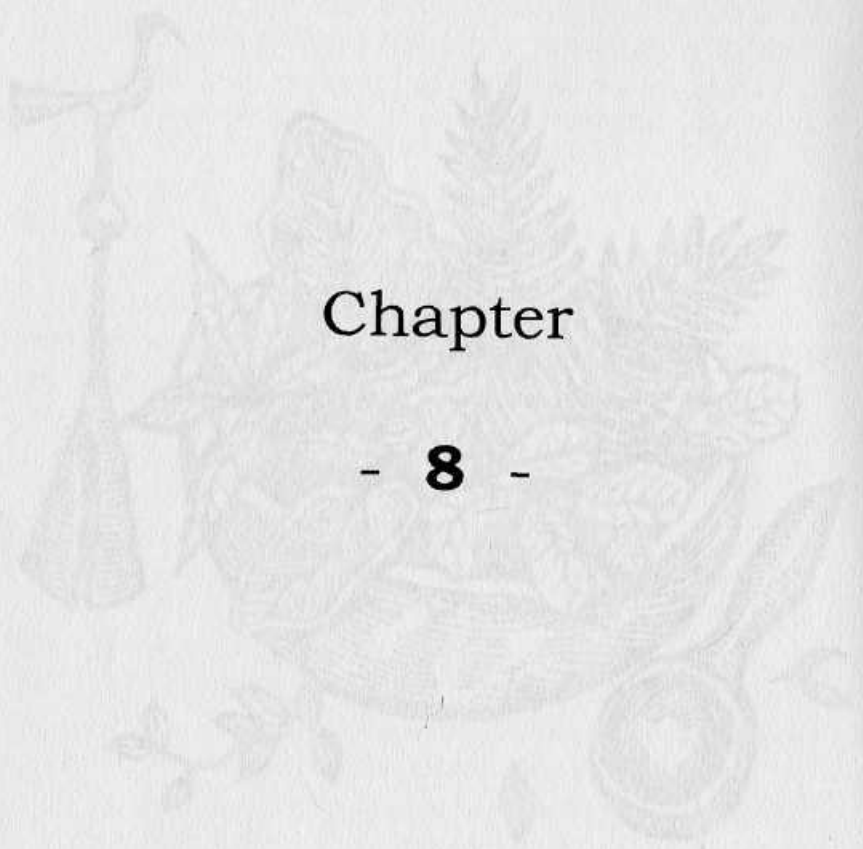
For the first time Yawo will eat outside the throne. He-she will be served first then the rest of the people in the house (all during his novice year, he-she will be served first wherever they eat), Yawo will be accompanied (eating on the mat) by the Yubona and Godparents. After lunch Yawo will be taken to his-her house by the Yubona who will place the Orisha's bowls on a fiber mat (the same where Yawo slept for seven days) on the floor of a room chosen previously by Yawo, they will remain there for the next three months. This is the last part of the seven days ceremony to be vested as a new priest of Osha. At the end of the three months a simple ceremony takes place consisting mainly of fowl and fruits offerings to the Orishas. That same day, Yawo will have removed (by the Yubona) the white hat that he-she has been wearing for the past three months.

The rest of the year, Yawo will dress in white and strictly observe the Ewes (taboo) given him-her on the Ita day. The year will end with a feast, playing of the drums, and Yawo fully ordained as a priest will have the right to participate in all the secret ceremonies in any House of Osha.

The novice year is over!

**PLANTS - LEAVES - HERBS  
USED IN OSHA RITUALS**





## Chapter

- 8 -

**A**lthough *Osain* is the reigning god of the botanical aspect of Osha, they are broken into certain groups each belonging to a particular Orisha. But, nevertheless, they can be mixed with others to prepare an Omiero, or for any other uses which the priest of Osha may deem necessary.

The tool most used within the Osha Society is that of the plants, leaves and herbs. Very often people bathe with leaves and herbs (made into an Omiero). The Oluorishas-Iyalorisha prescribe them as cleansing baths with the assigned herb-plant to the corresponding patron Orisha, or according to the Oracle-Odu signs. Each deity has a variety of herb-plants assigned to them and very seldom will they share them with any other Orisha.

Here you will find the name of the herb-plant, the Orisha to whom it belongs and with some, their healing properties.

I will give you the most common herb-plants used particularly when making a vestment Omiero. Not all are used, but they are gathered bearing in mind the Orisha to be vested. You will find them at the end of this chapter in their original Spanish name as they were handed down to us by our elders in all Cuban Houses of Osha. They can be easily acquired in any botanica shop throughout the US, especially Miami, New York, New Orleans, and California; or they can be gathered by an Osainista (Osain-person) in any of the above mentioned States the day before the Omiero is to be prepared.

**Obatala**

- White Lily: The leaves will go into the vestment Omiero; the flowers and leaves are used only for cleansing and have no other use.
- Amaranth: This plant produces a flower that when dried, and mashed into a fine powder can be mixed with olive oil and applied to any bleeding from open wounds. When mixed with lukewarm water and drunk it will stop bleeding from the nose or the gums. It is a good blood coagulant.
- Lupolo Hops: Is an excellent recipe used as a nerve soother by the old Santeros. It is boiled and drunk as tea. It is an excellent tranquilizer that will help you enjoy a good night's sleep.
- Sage: This is a wonder herb that has many uses. It cleanses the eyes. Helps with glandular problems. It has been said in Santeria that sage, in Spanish "salvia" (savior), could cure almost any kind of illness. It can be mashed and applied to the skin, to heal wounds, burns, ulcers, face pimples, sunburns, etc. It makes a good salad. Boiled and drunk as a tea will help your digestion, and when mashed and mixed with cabbage juice will heal ulcers in the stomach.
- Cotton (tree): Used for cleansing and in Omieros only. The flower (cotton) is used as an offering with fruits to *Obatala* and head cleansing. The oil extracted from the boiled leaves is a good hair tonic. It helps hair to grow back, and gives the ladies' hair a nice luster

- House Leek: (Small variety). There are many types of House Leek, but the small ones, which belongs to *Obatala* has a cooling effect, and is very useful in all types of inflammation. It can be applied by mashing the leaves or the roots to any part of the body which may need healing or comforting.
- Alexander: It was used constantly by the slaves, and by the Cuban women as a type of purgative after giving birth. It was (and sometimes still is) drunk as a brewed tea to "help her clean her insides". It helps with kidney problems drank in a mixture of honey and white wine. Applied to the skin it serves as a mosquito repellent and would render snake, and insect bites harmless.
- Purslane: It helps heal liver disorders. People who drink too much use it to soothe their stomach. The brewed tea mixed with vinegar will induce vomiting. Applied to the forehead relieves headaches.
- Almond: The sweets made out of this tree's nuts are of special liking to *Obatala*. The almond nut produces a type of oil which applied to the hair, makes it stronger and thus prevents baldness. The same oil is a good laxative.
- Solanum: Only used as a cleansing bath. This is a very strong poisonous herb, and should never be used for any other purpose than cleansing.
- Solanum Berry: Unlike the other type, this one is not poisonous. It's roots are used as balsam to relieve testicular pain. The roots are mashed

and applied directly on the testicles. It also can be applied in smaller quantities to alleviate arthritis pain on the elbows, and knee joints.

- Bell Flower:** No other purpose in Osha except bathing as a cleansing aid with *Obatala*. It is not recommended for any healing purposes.
- Mistletoe:** It is a blood thinner. This herb mixed with camomile as a brewed tea will alleviate chest and menstrual pains. It serves as a good remedy for persons with a heart condition.
- Spurge:** This herb produces a type of corn which can be made into a pulp and applied to pimples which will make them go away. It also reduces warts.
- Penny Royal:** Boiled and drank in great quantities it serves as a cleansing agent after a woman has suffered a miscarriage. The boiled leaves with vinegar left to cool for at least 12 hours can be applied successfully to remove skin bruises and old scars.
- Peony:** To stop dizziness boil the root in distilled water and drink it adding a bit of sugar and lemon juice. If you drink it as brewed tea at night, it will induce a sound sleep without any ill effects in the morning.
- Mandrake:** The boiled root is used as a cathartic, it is also used as treatment for warts. Helpful in some types of superficial tumors (skin). Mandrake is a good analgesic, a good pain killer. Boiled and mixed with a little wine will do away with most pains. Let the

- root dry and make it into a fine powder and in certain cases will serve as a narcotic. Care should be taken when using the herb and the root for it can be an hallucinogenic. It is said, that one time *Olofin* put *Obatala* to sleep with a potion made out of Mandrake roots. It has a Spanish nickname: "Dormilona" (sleeper). It was used by the old Creoles to cure people who suffered from insomnia.
- Orchis:** Used to kill worms in children. It is said that if drank abundantly before having sex, will help a woman become pregnant.
- Basil:** Perhaps the most used herb in Santeria for cleansing purposes, specially among the Cubans and Brazilians. People like to grow it in their garden just for good luck. As a spice it can be added to any food (especially pastas). A fresh bunch is usually kept in a vase with water inside the house to chase away evil spirits.
- Mint:** It can be drank as brewed tea to help the digestion, or simply as a refreshing drink. It is said that it is an excellent aphrodisiac.
- Lemon Leaves:** Brewed with lemon juice to which a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda is added will stop diarrhea.
- Marjoram:** A good herb to add to any food because it is excellent to make the digestion easy. It can be used effectively against ulcers. It has to be boiled and kept in jar at least 24 hours and then a full glass of this cool tea drank every day. The fresh leaves applied to the

back of the head relieves tension. Marjoram (Mejorana "to get better"), was used constantly by the poor people in Cuba against all types of maladies, especially when there was high fever.

### **Eleggua**

- Irish Moss:** Used only for cleansing baths, and in certain counter spells where this herb is very effective.
- Lady's Smock:** Good herb to heal people who suffered from scurvy. Drank as tea for a few days will break kidney stones. Same tea will help relieve the miseries of a common cold. It can also restore a lost appetite.
- Fox Tail:** Used mostly to cleanse the house, specifically the house door, and to bathe with it on the third day of the month. When dry and mashed into a fine powder will relieve dogs of ticks, but it can produce an uncomfortable itching if applied to the skin. Many youngsters would bring it to school and use it as a prank against other students, or even a disliked teacher.
- Fazerel:** Mashed into a pulp and mixed with corozo lard, or cocoa butter would heal cases of sciatica. After this pulp is removed, the part where it was applied should be washed with hot water and olive oil.
- Primrose:** It soothes the nerves, it is a good nerve relaxer, specially the dry roots. Recommended in cases of extreme tension and fatigue.

- Rocket Cress:** All cress, either dwarf or the garden type, can be used as a remedy for any obstruction of the urinary passages. It can be drank daily in small quantities every morning and will help all kidney functions.
- Yucca:** This is a popular food among Cubans, and one of *Eleggua's* favorite dishes. The leaves are used for cleansing baths, but its roots, the yucca, is made into a bread named casava which can be eaten in many ways, especially with sugar cane syrup it is highly nutritional and has a good taste. Yucca is the root of the plant which can be poisonous; it was used vastly by the Cuban Indians as poison on the tip of their arrows. The yucca root boiled until tender is eaten mixed with Olive oil and garlic.
- Saxifrage:** Raw makes a tasty salad. Boiled with distilled water and drank hot will reduce fever from a cold. The dry roots would stop purging.
- Fir Tree:** The leaves brewed as tea will stop internal bleedings. Mashed and applied to open wounds will heal them. It is a good herb to use against infections.
- Wintergarden:** Another bleeding stopper, especially internal bleedings. Good against ulcers and kidney or bladder infections.
- Squill:** The root is bitter, but when mashed and mixed with maple or cane syrup will stop coughing. It can be used as a laxative also.

- Marshmallow:** A mixture of marshmallow root and sage can be used to remedy inflammation of the mucus membranes. It is used to heal bronchitis and severe chest pains. The powdered root applied to an aching tooth will relieve the pain immediately.
- Speedwell:** It can be used to relieve cold discomfort and body aches.
- Succory (wild):** This herb grows almost everywhere and it is used to mitigate liver problems, help bowel movement and heal people who suffer from jaundice.
- Woodruffe:** The sweet type is used as a nourishing herb. It helps people recuperate their strength after a long illness. It helps men who may suffer from impotence.
- Yarrow:** Known as "the sneeze herb" because the dried and powdered leaves will make people sneeze. It can be eaten as a salad. The brewed tea will serve as a laxative, and will be an aid to regulate menstruation.
- Chistlestar:** The seed powdered and mixed with red wine provokes urine and will break kidney stones. It was used as a household remedy against kidney pain, or problems when urinating.
- Camphor:** Its leaves boiled, and the vapor, inhaled will clear nasal passages. It helps people who suffers from sinuses. A herb to use for cleansing baths. Smoked dry leaves will chase evil spirits from the home besides giving it a nice clean smell.

- Guava:** Its fruit is made into paste and is eaten as a dessert. The fruit juice mixed with a little wine is a great astringent and will stop diarrhea.
- Cives:** The leaves, if eaten raw, can be hallucinatory. It was used by the slaves to get even when a sugar mill foreman was abusive, they would manage to get it to him in his coffee or any other drink; it is said many lost their mind after they drank this infusion.
- Sugarcane:** Sugarcane, especially in Cuba and many Caribbean countries, was and still is considered a blessing. Many products can be manufactured out of sugarcane: alcohol, rum, syrup, etc., the sugarcane, after it has been used, the mashed cane can be used to make building materials, such as bricks, roof tops, floor tiles, combustibles, and many more uses. The sugarcane juice is a pleasant drink which is highly nutritional and rich in vitamins. Pieces of sugarcane are always found next to *Eleggua*.

### **Oshun**

- Cock's Head:** Eaten raw will give women breast milk.
- Senna Leaves:** A muscle relaxer. The brewed tea will help you get a good night's sleep. Added to the meals will help the digestion and add flavor to it.
- Female Fern:** Boiled in distilled water will relieve you of heartburn and colic pain.
- Dandelion:** Good to fight diabetes. Drank as a tea heals



- ovarian cysts. Applied to the skin makes it smoother and relieves itching.
- Calendula:** Mashed and mixed with almond oil is used to rid the person of dandruff.
- Orange:** All oranges are of special liking to *Oshun*; no Omiero to be used in an Oshun vestment is prepared without orange leaves.
- Celandine:** The juice extracted from this herb can be applied to the eyes to reduce inflammation, soreness and itching.
- Papaya:** Oshun shares it with Shango: the fruit belongs to Shango, but the tree and its leaves are the property of Oshun. The leaves are used only for cleansings. The fruit is high in iodine and good for the stomach .
- Amber:** It is kept next to Oshun's shrine as both a house cleanser and offering. It was prepared into a mixture of coconut water and Olive oil and used by midwives when a women had difficult delivery.
- Anise:** Its brewed tea is recommended for stomach indigestion, gas pain, and heartburn.
- Chamomile:** A commonly used herb as brewed tea. It has many remedial uses, but when mashed and applied to rashes (specially between the legs) will heal them.
- Nightshade:** It can be used effectively to alleviate sore throats. The juice from this herb (only a few drops) will ease ear aches.

- Marigold:** Drank as a lukewarm tea will reduce fever, and will help cure children from smallpox and measles.
- Mullein:** This herb is mashed and applied as cool poultice, will ease the pain by reducing hemorrhoids.
- Daffodills:** As a brewed tea can be used as a mild laxative.
- Vervain:** It is a refreshing tea drunk with ice. Good for the stomach, and in some cases, mixed with cinnamon sticks, will help women with their menstrual period.

### **Shango**

- Sweet Cotton Tree:** This may be the most sacred tree in Sante-ria. We call it Iroko. It is one of two trees; the other, the Royal Palm where *Shango* inhabits. It would not be cut by any Oluo-Shango, or for that matter, no member of an Osha house would cut it either. Its leaves are used in every Omiero prepared for *Shango's* vestment. Medicinal purpose not known in Osha.
- Savory:** Drunk as a hot beverage, it will clear the lungs and alleviate chest pain. Made into a pulp and applied to the face will cleanse it.
- Solomon's Seal:** The juice extracted from it roots will help heal broken bones. Used as pulp will heal external wounds.
- Itamorrial:** Chewing its leaves will do away with tooth

- aches. It also strengthens the gums.
- Orach:** The brewed seed is used against headaches and rheumatism. Taken daily for a few days will help against bowel disorders.
- Lupine:** Mashed and applied to the scalp rids the person of dandruff and gives strength to the hair. It prevents hair from falling out.
- Knapweed:** The leaves chewed will stop nose and mouth bleeding. Relieves throat pains.
- Yerbasanta:** The brewed tea is a good remedy against bronchitis. The dry and burned leaves in a room will help asthma sufferers to breath better.
- Mugwort:** Prepared with alcohol and left for a few days inside a bottle, will be good for rubbings.
- Jessemine:** Mixed with Chamomile it is used by women to ease menstrual pains and it is said will do away with any uterus infections or maladies.
- Horsetail:** Mashed and applied to the skin will heal sunburns. Powdered, alleviates itching and irritations under the arms and between the legs.
- Garlic Leaves:** The boiled leaves will cure ulcers. It is also an anti poison which may have been caused by food. The mashed leaves were used to disinfect dog's bites. The garlic itself is known for its many uses.

- Santa Barbara:** Considered sacred in Santeria, it is used mainly for cleansing, but when chewed will help digestion. It can give the person a mild sensation of euphoria.
- Lantille:** Boiled and drunk lukewarm is a good laxative.
- Bananas-Plantain:** All bananas and the banana tree belong to Shango. Many of his food offerings are wrapped in banana leaves. A bunch of bananas will always be found hanging by his shrine. Bananas constitute a part of the diet of the Caribbean and Central American peoples.
- Gentian:** It is used by people who have suffered a stroke. It is a good herb to prevent heart attacks. Drunk, mixed with sugar cane juice will cure anemia.
- Royal Palm:** It is considered sacred. One of the places where people will bring offerings to Shango.
- Siguaraya:** This particular herb grows only in certain regions in Cuba. This herb has the rare quality that whoever touches it will suffer from an immediate rash all over the body. No medicinal purposes known.
- Oggun**
- Teasel:** Applied to the skin will relieve itching.
- Sarsaparilla:** Traditionally used as a refreshment and digestion helper.

- Tamarisk:** The mashed leaves will stop bleedings. It will cure hemorrhoids.
- Hyssop:** Drunk as a brewed tea, will alleviate rheumatism pain.
- Black Poppy:** A good analgesic against tooth and gum pain. The mashed herb applied to the breast will give them more milk and alleviate pain.
- Navew:** Used as an antidote against poison. Drunk hot will heal measles and smallpox.
- Groundsil:** The juice from its seeds will regulate any glandular problems.
- Enchusa:** A strong brewed tea will rid children of parasites. It can be used to stop muscle cramps.
- Birch Tree:** The juice extracted from its leaves will break kidney stones.
- Snakeweed:** The mashed leaves can be used effectively against most reptile bites.
- Celandine:** Used to heal baby's rashes.
- Oak Tree:** Its leaves mixed with Gladwing herb will make a woman end her pregnancy.

### **Yemaya**

- Indigo Plant.** Placed in a basin with hot water will reduce swelling of the feet.
- Germander:** Was used against the gout, rheumatism, and

- the dropsy.
- Kelp:** Rich in vitamins, it can be eaten as a salad or drunk as tea to reduce a swollen thyroid. It is said that it can help to lose weight.
- Seaweed:** Some types of seaweed can be eaten as salad. You have to know which ones are the edible ones. Seaweed is used mainly for cleansing purposes in Osha.
- Rhubarb:** A strong laxative which can induce vomiting, but it also can heal stomach ulcers if eaten as a salad. The mashed herb will serve as an antidote to snake bites.
- Mulberry Tree:** This herb that grows almost everywhere is an excellent mosquito repellent. The chewed leaves will alleviate gum pains.
- Archangel:** Drunk as tea will give an energy lift.
- Rush:** The mashed herb will be used against arthritis pain.
- Feverfew:** Drunk as strong brewed tea will heal stomach ulcers. It stops most bleedings associated with menstruation.
- Rush:** Use mainly to cleanse a women after she has given birth.
- Poley:** It was used in cases of leprosy; its leaves mashed and applied against the infected part would either heal it, or ease the pain.
- Valerian:** An excellent herb to drink as a brewed tea

to relieve stress. Will help you get a good night sleep.

**Ginger:** Good tonic. It is placed inside a bottle filled with distilled water and left for a few days until it becomes fermented; it is drunk daily.

**Pillia:** The brewed tea will soothe the nerves, and serves as a good relaxer after a hard day at work.

**Heart Ease:** It was used against VD, but now its use is limited to reduce high fever.

**Flaxweed:** Will stop most bleedings from the stomach and heals ulcers.

### Oya

**Hyacinth:** It destroys kidney stones.

**Camphor:** Its leaves mixed with alcohol is used for body rubbings. It relieves arthritis pain. The smoked leaves will clear sinus congestion.

**Belladonna:** The brewed teas is a powerful analgesic. It alleviates colitis and cramps.

**Anemone:** The mashed leaves applied to any part of the body will cure skin ulcers, rashes, sores, etc.

### Aggayu

**Wall Pepper:** Used as a remedy against scurvy.

**Orbine:** Applied gently to the rectum will cure hemorrhoids.

**Moonwort:** Chewed or drunk as a brewed tea stops vomiting.

**Clove:** Use as seasoning when preparing any meal, specially soups.

**Wajany:** It is a root which grows mainly by the seashores in Cuba. It was used prepared as a heavy syrup and drunk to cure lung diseases, including tuberculosis.

**Celery:** Boiled or mashed it can be drunk to alleviate lumbago and arthritis.

**Saint Christopher:** The tree is considered sacred, but the leaves are said to be rich in vitamins C and E and can be drunk as a tea in cases of anemia.

**Embeleso:** It grows mostly in tropical climates. It is used to cure insomnia.

These are the plants-herb in their original names and the corresponding Orisha as they were handed down to us by our elders. Some are in their Yoruba name.

**Obatala:** *Lirio Blanco, Bleo Blanco, Peregun, Ewe Tete Algodon, Flor de Agua, Bleo Rizado, Verdolaga Almendra, Canutillo Blanco, Campana, Ewe Eggun Mata de Pincho, Prodigiosa, Sauco Blanco, San Diego Blanco Peonia, Albahaca, Corazon de Paloma, Anon, Guanabana Toronjil, Hierba Buena, Mejprana.*

**Eleggua:** *Salgazo, Aguinaldo, Rabo de Zorra, Hortiguilla Pinga Hermosa, Salta Perico, Pata de Gallina Pata de Vaca, Lengua de Vaca, Pinon Blanco Guacalote, Bleo, Pendejera, Oriye, Ateje*

*Alacranzillo, Hierba Hedionda, Gandul, Hojas de Frijoles Wuaro, Varia, Almacigo de Cuatro Caminos, Hojas de Alcanfor Aji wu awo, Hojas de Maiz, Hojas de Aguacate, Raiz de Aguacate Tallo de Coco, Hojas de Corajo, Hojas de Guayaba, Croto Hojas de Cafeto, Pica Pica, Travesura, Mastuerzo Bariguilla, Vente Conmigo, Arrasa Con Todo, Maloja Menta, Hierba Mentirosa, Hierba Fina, Hojas de Canistel.*

Oshun: *Orazun, Helecho Hembra, Helecho Macho, Boton de Oro Hojas de Naranja, Frescura, Lechosa, Ambar, Anis en Flor Cucaracha, Mastuerzo, Hierba Nina, Maravilla, Cerraja Arabito, Lino de Rio, Lino de Mar, Canutillo Blanco Yanten, Achivata, Verbena, Mazorquilla, Filigrana Uva Morada, Culantrillo, Paraguaita Morada, Romerillo Diez del Dia, Hierba Fina, Lechuguilla.*

Shango: *Ceiba, Alamo, Jobo, Arabo Rojo, Itamorrial, Don Shayo Cordoban, Maranon, Jocuma, Artemisa, Salvadera Vacabuey, Trepadera, Huevo de Toro, Tuatua, Ajo Vegetal Santa Barbara, Pitaya, Platano, Ajo de Goma, Canutillo Rojo Grama de Costa, Palma Real, Pino, Guayacan, Amansa Guapo Palo Bobo, Pinon de Botija, Manzano, Siguaraya, Papaya Granada.*

Oggun: *Campana Morada, Zarzaparilla, Rompezaraguey, Caldo Santo Rabo de Piedra, Una de Gato, Bibijagua, Guao, Guanabina, Jiqui Guamao, Palo Bomba, Hojas de Pimienta, Hierba Hedionda Almasigo, Escandon, Higuereta, Hojas de Roble, Picha de Gato*

Yemaya: *Anil, Hierba Florida, Anamu, Algas Marinas Albahaca Morada, Hojas de Aji, Flor del Mar Chayote, Chinzoza, Grama de Playa, Esponja Coraliyo, Majagua, Junco de Mar.*

Babalu aye: *Cundiamor, Zargaso, Hojas de Frijoles,*

(Asowano) *Mani Guagusi, Gandul, Henequen, Alacranzillo Escoba Amarga, Apazote, Jayabico, Ateje Salvia, Pinon de Botija, Caisimon, Yaya Hierba Vieja, Hierba Nina, Tengue, Bejuco Obi Pica Pica, Retamo, Rosa de Jerico, Sabicu Yamagua, Olivo, Ajonjoli, Tuna, Campana Morada Mariposa, Angariya.*

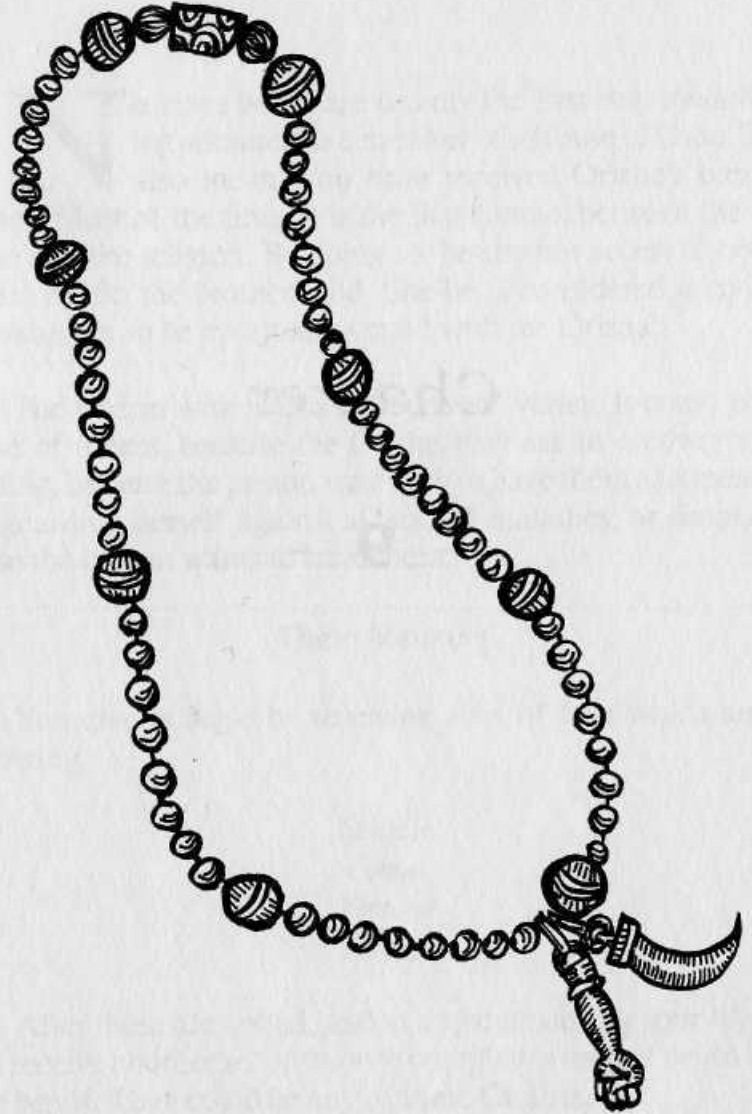
Orunmila: *Baston de Orula, Malambe, Pendejera, Gengibre Guanima, Guasimito, Don Carlos, Uvancillo Para Mi, Chinchita, Mirto, Hojas de Maiz, Hojas de Name Hojas de Malanga, Madreselva, Galan de Noche Hojas de Canandonga, Copey.*

Oya: *Flor de Cementerio, Espanta Muerto, Cambia Voz Yanten, Vergonzosa, Artemisa, Bonita, Varia Alcanfor, Palo Rayo, Cabo de Hacha, Quiebracha Cipres, Revienta Caballo, Flamboyen.*

Aggayu: *San Cristobal, Abrojo del Camino, Rompe Hueso Verdolaga, Sabanilla, Clavo, Cana Fistula, Azafran de Monte Cebolla, Cresta de Gallo, Guajani, Embeleso.*

Oshosi: *Espinilla, Carcelera, Espartilla, Fulminante Incienso Guineo, Jia Blanca, Chinchita, Tabaco Parral, Higuereta, Albahaquita.*

## NECKLACE BEADS



## Chapter

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**N**ecklace beads are usually the first step towards being admitted as a member of a House of Osha. They also mean, you have received Orisha's blessing (Ashe). Most of the time it is the first contact between the neophyte and the religion. By doing so, he-she has access to certain rituals within the brotherhood. She-he is considered a godson-goddaughter to be eventually vested with the Orisha.

The reason why they are "received" varies. It could be because of illness, because the Orisha may ask in a cowry shells reading, because the person may wish to have them as a means of safeguarding herself against all sort of maladies; or simply, because the person wants to have them.

### Their Meaning

You always begin by receiving a set of four which are the following.

*Obatala*

*Oshun*

*Yemaya*

*Shango*

After these are vested, and at any time during your life, you will receive another set of three to complete a total of seven necklace beads. They could be any of these Orishas.

*Ogun, Oya, Elegua, Asowano*

*Aggayu, Orula, Oshosi.*

If you are vested as a new priest-priestess of Osha, the set will be a complete seven in accordance with the Orisha being vested.

**Orisha's Necklace Beads**

The necklace beads (Elekes), are made in accordance with the path or surname of the Orisha, and for this reason the way they are set may vary. These are the simplest and most common used.

- Obatala:** All white. White with one red at the end. Sixteen white and four purple, and then sixteen and four purple to finish the desired length. Twenty four white, one red, and so on until it is finished.
- Yemaya:** Crystal clear and blue. They are strung together in the following manner: 7 Crystal clear followed by 7 blue; then, 1 crystal, 1 blue intermixing them to make 14 together. Then, start again to reach the desired length. Seven is Yemaya's number.
- Oshun:** It can be all yellow or amber beads. Oshun has several paths and making her necklace beads can get to be a complicated procedure, but these are the simplest and most used: start with 5 amber, followed by 5 red; then, 1 amber and one red intermixed to have a set of 10 beads. Start again with 5 amber and 5 red and repeat the same procedure of 10 mixed beads. Another type consists of 1 green, 1 red, 1 amber or yellow; then, 1 green 5 amber or yellow. Repeat the last procedure until the desired length is reached. 5

- is Oshun's number.
- Shango:** His necklace beads can be done by having one red and one white intermixed, or by having 6 red followed by 6 white and then intermix 1 white and 1 red until you have 12, repeat the procedure to get the desired length. 6 is Shango's number.
- Babaluaye:** It is made of a set of blue beads with white stripes. When the path is Asowano, or any other path, it has to start with a jet black bead, and the number of beads and their color varies. They are given only when a person "receives" Asowano. 13 and 17 are Babalu's numbers.
- Eleggua:** They can be 1 red and 1 black intermixed; or, 3 red, 3 black, and then three of each to make six. Start again and repeat the procedure. 3 is Eleggua's number.
- Oggun:** Light brown and black beads: 7 brown, 7 black; then, one of each to make 14 and continue with 7 and 7; then, 14. 7 is Oggun's number.
- Oya:** All brown with black stripes beads. Or: 9 black, 9 white, 9 black and 9 white intermixed to make 18. Start again until desired length. 9 is Oya's number.
- Orula:** 1 green, 1 yellow. One of each to reach desired length. 16 is Orunmila's number.
- Aggayu:** Starts with a big white, followed by 9 red, 8 yellow; then, another big white to start the



count of 9 and 8. The white large bead divides the red from the yellow. Aggayu's numbers are always odd numbers.

**Warriors:** This necklace is used across the chest. It is made like this: One large crystal clear, 1 blue, 1 yellow, 1 red, 1 green 1 brown, 1 white. Each bead is separated by small tools made of tin. They are the same tools used for Oya's and Oggun's sets.

### How To Prepare Each Set For Different Orisha

The old way to make them, is the way I am describing here, but no one does it anymore. What most Oluorishas would do is to "wash" a few set of necklace beads whenever there is a full Orisha vestment.

Use cotton thread, nylon is no good because it is a repellent and will not soak in the Orisha's Omiero, therefore there will be no blessings (Ashe) in what is being done. When only a set of four is being vested, start with Obatala's necklace beads; if it is a set of seven or a full Orisha vestment, you have to start with Eleggua. Wash them in fresh Omiero As you go with needle and thread through the beads you should do these chants, asking for each Orisha blessings.

**Obatala:** *Ashe Obatala (name the person to receive the necklace beads) Obatalaisa, Obatala la Orisha ashe eleke ashe eleke babami leri katiogue okuni, Obatala eleke Ayubba Obatala.*

**Eleggua:** *Ashe Babami Eleggua (name person) Aggo Eleggua ako pasho leri ashe ele egun eleri eleke babami kari Eleggua.*

**Yemaya:** *Ashe Yemaya (name person) Ashe eleke ashe*

*ashere, illa milatao Yamaya ashe egun ashe leri ashe Osha o mio Yemaya ashe eleke ayubba Yemaya.*

**Oshun:** *Ashe Oshun (name person) Ashe yalodde eleke leri egun ashe illami oni egale kuasi ayuba Oshun omi yeye ayubba Oshun, ashe ashe Oshun.*

**Shango:** *Ashe Shango (name person) Leri eleke eggun oluoso Shango Obalubbe ashe leri eleke egun sherere kabio Shango.*

**Aggayu:** *Ashe Aggayu (name person) Ashe leri eleke sola ki ni bao ashe egun, ashe Orisha eleke leri aggo Aggayu.*

In this manner, and every time you make any other type of necklace beads, you have to do the chants to the Orisha and ask for their blessings. For that matter, I don't think it has to be done necessarily in the old Lucumi dialect. Prayers are prayers, no matter which language, so say them in English. Just ask for the Orisha's blessings and that should suffice.

### Vesting the Necklace Beads

Once you have the set of necklace beads you are going to use, your next step will be to wash them in Omiero. If you have Omiero left from an *Obatala* vestment, you can use it. I prefer to make a fresh Omiero with at least twenty one different herbs. It does not have to be a large amount, just enough to fill a basin. Do the Osain chants while preparing the Omiero. After they have been washed, place them on a palm fiber mat on the floor in front of the Orisha's shrine.

On the appointed day, the person who is to receive them should be in your house early in the morning. They have to wear an old set of clothing to be discarded, and bring one set of new

white clothes.

When she-he arrives, they are taken immediately to the bathroom to be bathed. The males by a male Yubona and the females by a female Yubona. Once the clothes have been torn and thrown away, you have to wash the person's head with odorless soap, Omiero, and fresh water. Follow by washing the rest of the body with another white odorless soap, Omiero, and fresh water. The washing of the head and the bathing take place in the same type of large tin basin used to bathe Yawo.

Have the person dress in the white clothes, and take him-her to the Igbody. There, a simple Head Cleansing with shredded coconut, cocoa butter, cotton and cascarilla is done. No animal sacrifices, or offerings of any kind are done that day. Once the Head Cleansing (simple offerings to the head's spirit) is finished, roll the coconut shells and ask permission to vest the person with the necklace beads.

Ask the person to kneel in front of you on the fiber mat where the necklace beads are. You pick them from the mat one by one starting with *Obatala*, followed by *Yemaya*, *Oshun* and *Shango*. Now, you will "present" them to the person by gently touching her-his top of the head, and both shoulders. For each Orisha presented, you will have to ask for their blessings while mentioning the person's name and why she-he is about to receive the beads. You will also give the person a brief explanation what each of them means and the person's responsibility to his new House of Osha.

Return the four necklace beads to the mat, and ask the person to pick up all four (or seven) three times, each time letting them fall gently to the mat. After they have done it, you will take them in your right hand and place them around the person's neck.

This ceremony ends with the person lying flat on their belly, arms along side their body asking for yours and Yubona bless-

ings. The moment they are "lifted" from the floor, he-she may consider herself-himself as part of the family in your House of Osha.

The ceremony over, or as a part of the ceremony still, a meal is served to be eaten on the mat by the person accompanied by the Godfather-Yubona.

This person may, or may not, become eventually a fully vested Oluorisha-Iyalorisha, but he-she is considered equal with the rest of the members of this particular House of Osha, except they are not allowed to participate in the secret rituals inside the Igbody during a full vestment, but they do help with all the chores outside the sacred room.

They now have a Godfather-Godmother and belong to a House of Osha.

## HOW TO READ WITH THE DOMINOS



HOW TO READ  
WITH THE DOMINOS

## Chapter

- 10 -

### From Double Blank to Double Six

**W**hen the Chinese came to Cuba, they brought their game of Domino, and somehow it so happened that this game eventually was not only played by the Chinese, but the Cuban Creoles and the Negro slaves, so much so, that today it is a national pastime. But back at the end of last century and the beginning of this century they were also used as a means of divination. The signs and method of this particular Oracle (as I am offering it to you here), are not too commonly used now and rarely will you find it used any more as a method of divination among the priest-priestess of Osha. They primarily depend upon the reading with the coconut shells and the Oracle of the Sixteen Diloggun (cowry shells).

### Their Interpretations

As the years passed, this type of divination was less and less practiced and today very few members of the Osha Society know how to read the Dominos. I was lucky enough to inherit it from my father's Santeria book. The procedure is a simple one and it is as follows.

Only use up to the double six. They are placed face down and well mixed before they are to be picked. They shouldn't be read to the same individual more than once a month, otherwise the reading would have no meaning, or sometimes the meaning would be completely lost. Two Dominos are the limit per person, but if for instance you draw two Dominos or signs with entirely different meanings then, you allow one extra drawing. The third

one will be to determine the exact reading, for it should be paired with the one which is more similar to it, not by the number, but by what the sign says.

Each time one Domino is read, it is returned to the group and mixed again. If the same number comes out twice, it is a strong confirmation of what was drawn before. I don't know why, but I was told it is not advisable to read them on Mondays or Fridays.

#### Double Blank

This is a bad sign, perhaps the worst. It always announces deceit and disappointments. It says: he who achieves something based on deceit or on lies, will keep what he has, but the price will be many tears and illness. It means loss of business, money; there will be sorrow. Whoever picks this number should be weary of accidents. An offering should be given to the Orishas as soon as possible

#### Double One

Happiness and good omens are prevailing upon your house. Orisha is watching and will help bring love and business to your door. There are indications that peace will reign in your home. For the bachelor, marriage in the near future. Sign of success and esteem.

#### One Blank

This sign says Death has been watching over you lately. Orisha Oya will intercede in your behalf. Be careful of accidents, and dark places. A warning of sadness and illness. A good cleansing with 21 different herbs is recommended.

#### Two Blank

Orisha says beware of lies and deceit. Sign says an early

marriage may turn out to be tempestuous. Do not rush into the unknown. It is suggested that some kind of safeguard be used against evil eyes. Be careful how you use your money. Stay away from dark places.

#### Two One

For the single woman there may be a marriage that will bring her a good social position, but also an early loss of her husband. Orisha should be consulted by both parties to find which will be the best path to follow and prevent this bad part of the reading from happening. The married man should take good care of his wife. Keep an eye on sudden illnesses. Do not drink dark beverages, stay away from intoxicating liquor.

#### Double Two

Success in business and happiness will accompany you for awhile. There are in the near future, agreeable and happy surprises. In this sign, the sacred *Ibeyi* are speaking to you. You will make a trip far away from town, but an older person will try to prevent it. Use your beads, safeguard, or whatever will help you repel the evil eye. A reading with the Oracle of *Orula* should be done. Make an offering to the *Ibeyi* or to *Shango*. Success on this trip depends on the Sacred Twins. Visit a market place and give alms to the poor.

#### Three Blank

The sign says beware of fights in the house. Wife nags too much, the husband has a bad temper. This may result in a marriage breakup. Man and woman should stay away from gossip. Love has to be reborn. The next few days should be observed cautiously and avoid temper flare ups. Children should be watched and protected. *Eshu* says offering of sweets will be appreciated.

**Three One**

Trouble with the law. Do not run, do not try to get there sooner than possible. Someone may come your way with bad news, but you will overcome them. If this sign is preceded by Three Blank, it confirms instability in the home. If followed by Three Five, all bad omens will turn into good ones. *Eshu* may be playing tricks. Stay away from crossroads.

**Three Two**

Good sign for lovers, good month to make a commitment. All the gods are behind people in love, and those in need of money. Try changes that will bring prosperity to your house. A broken relation with children should be amended. It is time for reconciliation with those who are far away.

**Double Three**

Considered this a very good sign. Old friends will visit, illnesses will go away, good health should reign in your house. An unexpected amount of money will be received, and good letters will be at your door. There may be the joy of a new birth. Burn incense and perfume your house.

**Four Blank**

A storm may be brewing near you. A love affair may end suddenly and no attempt should be made to resume it. What is gone, should stay gone. Open your doors to new comers. There is a warning about dark spirits hovering over your house. A cleansing with herbs, perfume, tobacco leaves and rum should be done. Orisha says clean your house.

**Four One**

There may be a marriage, a union between two people in

your family. This may also apply to a new partnership which will bear good dividends. Singing and dancing should be heard in the house. Drums should be offered to *Orisha Shango*. Laughter should be used to face adversity.

**Four Two**

Changes, changes, changes are coming your way. Someone will try and dethrone you. Your best friend-your worst enemy. Do not trust people that come to you with sweet words. Stay alert and watch for changes around you. Do not be a public defender, you may end up paying for other people's mistakes. Orisha *Obatala* says use your head, and watch your health.

**Four Three**

Children at your door bearing good omen. Orisha says keep what is yours and do not seek in a strange bed what you have at home. This sign is a warning about adventures that will end bad and could cost dearly. Take good care of the old people in your life. Orisha says go to a farm and buy fruits, and offer them to Orisha.

**Double Four**

New relations will be made this month, they will be of help to you in the future. No long journeys should be contemplated, stay close to home. Studies left inconclusive should be completed and the fruits of the effort reaped. Orisha *Obatala* says to stay away from hospitals and graveyards.

**Five White**

A warning to the married person not to get involved in amorous affairs, only shame will result from this behavior. Single women take care of pregnancy and men with false pretenses. Be extra careful with your money. Do not sign confusing papers.

Orisha Oshun says not to be fickle. There are plenty of fish in the water, but not all can be caught. Orisha says an offering of oranges and honey should be made.

#### Five One

Watch what you eat, your stomach may be upset and it is because you are indulging in too many things that are no good for you. This is a good sign to try new investments in friends and money. Children should be allowed to come to this world, they will bring lots of joy. Orisha *Aggayu* says not to ignore your children. Let all plants in your garden grow to their fullest capacity. Orisha wants lots of flowers in your house.

#### Five Two

Not a good month to take on new responsibilities. No drastic changes in your life should be carried on. Do not ask for loans of any type, do not lend what is yours because you may not get it back. Orisha says take care of your nerves, try and get a good night's rest. A journey to the country is advised. This should be a month of rest and meditation.

#### Five Three

Orisha Yemaya and Orisha Obatala are in your place of residence this month. Orisha will bring peace and a prosperous business transaction. To keep this good omen, be careful who you invite home. Jealousy could visit you. Take good care of your parents.

#### Five Four

This sign says there will be a loss of valuable things. Keep your doors locked and watch where you walk. Use your words carefully they might offend those who are close to you. Place a garlic branch on your house door. Orisha says the prudent per-

son gets to keep what is his.

#### Five Five

A very good sign for people in love. All efforts to achieve success will be rewarded handsomely. Tenacity and perseverance will bring in good fruits. It is time to plant, to seed, to move forward. Orisha *Oshun* says children will come to visit.

#### Six Blank

An old partnership will be dissolved if care is not given to the person who shares many things with you. If fire breaks out, do not extinguish it with drops of water. Orisha says to consult with them.

#### Six One

Arguments among relatives should be avoided, a tea spoon of sugar carries more weight than a cup of vinegar. Look for good news from far away. Orisha says read carefully everything that you sign.

#### Six Two

Good month to go into business, make changes, invest money, move out, change house.

#### Six Three

Victory is at hand so be cautious, plan your every move. Orisha *Shango* and Orisha *Eleggua* will bring in good fortunes. Avoid all arguments. Make an offering of bananas and sugar candies to Orisha.

#### Six Four

Beware of sudden illness, do not postpone visiting a medi-

ciné man. There is trouble coming your way, so watch all your surroundings and particularly the places you visit. You should consult with Orisha and follow their advise.

#### Six Five

This sign is saying to finish what you have started and do not take short cuts. A broken relationship should be renewed. Watch your temper. Orisha says you have a good destiny but sometimes you deviate from your path.

#### Double Six

This is the major Domino and it indicates to those who draw it twice that they should be vested with Orisha, but first they have to consult with them. He who draws it once, should go for a reading with *Orula*. Many spirits are behind you but they need to be put in their proper place. You may be a healer and diviner.

## THE ORACLE OF DILOGGUN





## Chapter

- 11 -

**O**f all the divination methods that exist within the Religion of Osha, the Oracle of Diloggun is perhaps the most difficult and complicated to learn. All the Orishas have a set of sixteen cowry shells which are used for reading purposes. Although the one set used constantly is that of Eleggua, when there is need, or when any Orisha would request it, or when Orunmila deems it necessary; any particular Orisha's set of sixteen will be used for a special reading. On those occasions it is the patron deity who will speak through her-his cowry shells.

### Reading With Sixteen Cowry Shells

Their full knowledge and interpretation is only achieved after years of constant practice and studies. As there could be several ways to interpret a sign (Odu), only a priest of Osha who has been a practitioner of the Religion for many years would have the capability, knowledge and experience to train an Oluorisha in the Odu secrets. This person will become an Oriate, with not only the skills to do a proper reading, but with a vast knowledge of all the procedures related to the secret ceremonies within the Religion.

Sixteen Cowries is considered "a lesser" form of divination by the Babalawos, because it may be a simpler interpretation of the Oracle of Ifa, but in the Americas, and particularly in the Caribbean, it is more widely known and used than that of the complicated and often difficult Oracle of Ifa.

This simple method is called Diloggun-Merindiloggun Six-

teen. Each sign has a name, a proverb, a verse, a story, several interpretations, and with each Odu more than one offering or cleansing can be chosen to complete the reading. The Oluorisha is permitted to read only to number 12. When the sign Metanla (13) comes out, he has to stop the reading and ask the person to bring her-his cowries and an offering to the House of Orunmila, there, the priest of Orula will consult Ifa and continue with the reading.

*Remember: you are consulting an Oracle rather than having your fortune told.* It is a fact of everyday readings with the Diloggun, that the Orishas will advise and tell you which is the best path to follow, but always; always, the last decision is yours. The Oracle will or will not give you instructions as to what to do next, nor will it predict future events. What it will do is to let you know in advance what will happen and what will not happen in your life (especially during Ita). If the Oracle's advice is not followed to the letter. It will bring out the fears and your motivations, will tell you the taboos, and the proper offerings that will help you shape your future by letting you feel the Orisha's presence at each moment of your life. The Oracle will not absolve you of the responsibility for selecting your present and your future, but surely will tell you the most important factors for living your life to its fullest potential.

### Odu Their Numbers and Names

1-----	Okana.
2-----	Eyioso.
3-----	Oggunda.
4-----	Oyorozon-Iroso.
5-----	Oshe.

6-----	Obbara.
7-----	Oddi.
8-----	Eyeunle.
9-----	Osa.
10-----	Ofun-Mafun.
11-----	Ojuani-Shober.
12-----	Eyila-Shebora.
13-----	Metanla.
14-----	Merinla.
15-----	Marula.
16-----	Mediloggun.

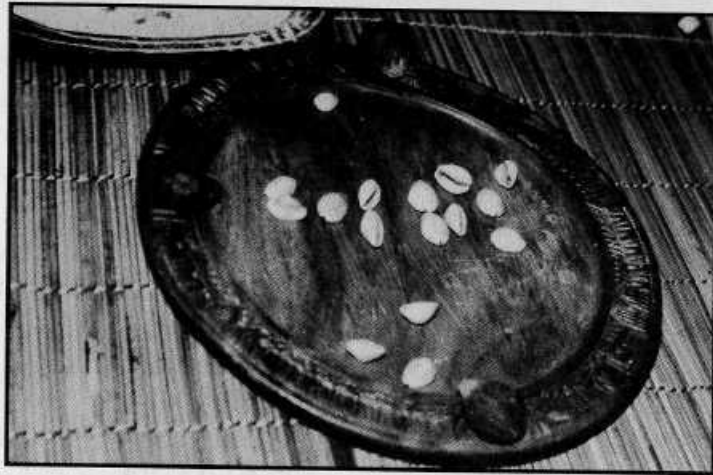
The Major Odus are: 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

The Minor Odus are: 5, 6, 7, 9, 11.

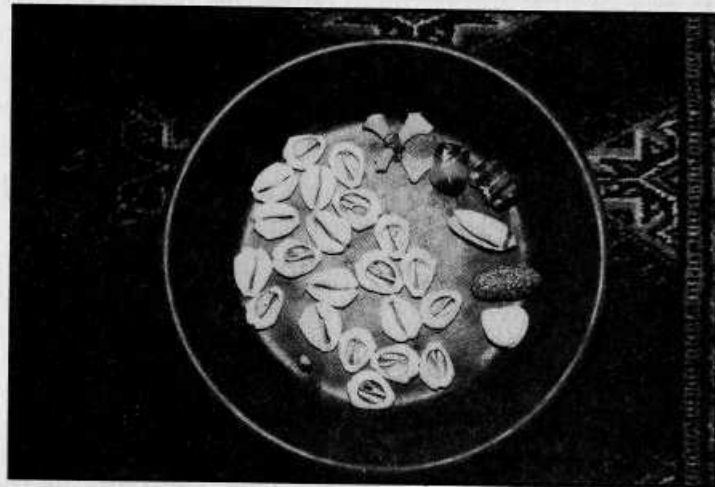
The Minor among the Minors is: 5... The Major among the Minors is: 11.

The Minor among the Majors is: 1... The Major among the Majors is: 16.

To get the first two signs the *Ibbo* is not used.



Yoruba Osain Man's tray with 16 cowry shells



Santeria, twenty-one Elegua cowry shells with Ibbo.

*Ibbo* is what is placed in the hands of the person being read. It is the same used when doing Ita or any other type of cowry shells readings.

With the Major Odu you ask for the left hand. According to what the person is holding will determine whether it is *Ire*, or *Osogbo*... If the "casarilla" comes out, then the reading is *Ire* (good

omen, blessings, etc.).... If the small pebble is the one that comes out, then it is *Osogbo* (bad omen, warnings, etc.).

With the Minor Odu you ask for the right hand, and the same procedure applies for the *Ire*, and the *Osogbo*.

If the same number repeats itself it is called *Meyi* (twins, double), and regardless of the hierarchy (Major or Minor), the left hand is the one asked.

The first two rolls-toss, first two signs to come out are the ones who determines the proverb, the tale, and the saying. They also compromise the main body of the reading. The remaining numbers are used as secondary reading because their function is mainly to determine the *Ire*, or the *Osogbo*.

The Majors signs are tossed once, and the Minors are rolled twice before asking for the *Ibbo*.

### The Ire

<i>Elese Osha</i>	blessing from Orisha.
<i>Otonowa</i>	blessing from Heavens.
<i>Elese Eggun</i>	blessing from the Spirit-Ancestors.
<i>Elese Iyami</i>	blessing from your Mother.
<i>Elese Babami</i>	blessing from your Father.
<i>Elese Ariku</i>	blessing from Dead Relatives-Guardian Angel.
<i>Elese Leri</i>	good omen-blessings by using your Head.
<i>Elese Abure</i>	blessing from a Friend-Brother.
<i>Elese Arouno</i>	blessing from the Heavens-Stars.
<i>Elese Aje</i>	blessing from Money.
<i>Elese Omo</i>	blessing from Children-Daughter-Son.
<i>Elese Obirin</i>	blessing from Wife.
<i>Elese Isono</i>	blessing from Husband-Lover.

**The Osogbo**

<i>Iku</i>	bad omen from Death, or the Dead).
<i>Aro, Ari, Ane</i>	bad omen from Illness, sickness, malaise.
<i>Ano</i>	bad omen from something unexpected.
<i>Araye</i>	bad omen because of fighting, accidents, tragedy.
<i>Ile-aiye</i>	bad omen in other town, because of moving, in the streets.
<i>Ofo</i>	bad omen by being cursed, by cursing.
<i>Ota-wo</i>	a warning from Heavens not to have vices.
<i>Eke</i>	bad omen because of envy; yours, or on you.
<i>Ofashe</i>	bad omen because of witchery.
<i>Ara-ieye</i>	bad omen because of the evil eye.

When the sign is *Osogbo*, the cascarilla is removed and the one inch cowry shell is used to determine Yes, or No when asking what kind of *Osogbo* it is. Once you know, you have to find which cleansing, or offering is recommended with the reading. Again, the cascarilla is used for Yes, or No.

**Proverbs Used In Diloggun Sixteen**

1:	<i>Okashonsho</i>	The World began with one. There are no bad ones.
2:	<i>Ofa Abure</i>	Arrows among brothers. Today your brother is your enemy.
3:	<i>Wiula Akuin</i>	Argument ends in tragedy. Temper brings bad omens.

4:	<i>Oku-ote</i>	No one knows what is at the bottom of the sea.
5:	<i>Eiyevale-Eye</i>	Blood runs through the veins. There is life in your life.
6:	<i>Oba Ikoru</i>	A King should not lie.
7:	<i>Oddi-lokun</i>	To get a big fish you need a bit of luck and good bait.
8:	<i>Leri-eri</i>	The Head is carried by the Body. Use your Head.
9:	<i>Osakanengue Eri ate</i>	Only one King can govern at the time. One King is enough in the house.
10:	<i>Ana anaki</i>	He who curses, shall be cursed. Where Curse is born, Evil is grown.
11:	<i>Omiwuani</i>	Why take water in a basket?
12:	<i>Orekuami Obatakumi</i>	No best friend, no friends, no enemies. Your best friend, your worst enemy.
13:	<i>Meta-leri ofetelo</i>	He who seeks too much advice, may end up crazy.
1-2:	<i>Okashonsho abure</i>	Be careful how you fire your arrows, they may return and hurt you.
1-3:	<i>Okashonsho Okana</i>	The Dead are not so dead. Dead enemy good enemy. The Dead are watching you.

- 1-4: *Eye Eru-elleiru* The revolution will bring bleeding. The Head is above the Nose and the Mouth.
- 1-5: *Osheiku-rono* Jealousy is the mother of mistrust and tragedy.
- 1-6: *Leri iku* If you don't lose your Head, it will not lose you. Ghosts are coming from the past.
- 1-7: *Oddidbuele* Beware of Death and Sea dreams.
- 1-8: *Eri-olee* A closed door keeps people away. Your Head will prevent robberies.
- 1-9: *Enro feo eke* Fights between husband and wife ends in tragedy.
- 1-10: *Aseyu afefa* He who loves gold too much, never has enough.
- 1-11: *Oshosi-ogure* A warrior never fights unless he has to. Bones in prison.
- 1-12: *Ikan omi* A fire is not put out with a mouth full of water.
- 1-13: *Obba okua* King who does not protect its throne, will lose it. People from outside trying to get in.
- 2-1: (Same as 1-2)
- 2-2: *Ironi* Woman who lies, loses her man. Man who lies loses his woman.

- 2-3: *Tiye Eggun* Evil spirits cause arguments, argument bring unhappiness.
- 2-4: *Otashenshen* Road of stones destroys sandals. Make a clean path.
- 2-5: *Owo areye* Money cannot buy happiness. Too much desire for money can bring tragedy.
- 2-6: *Oshakuaribo* Changes because of revolution. Orisha brings sudden changes.
- 2-7: *Yile yeon ane* Want of much food will make you ill.
- 2-8: *Abure oba* A King will be removed by arrows. A friend wants to be King.
- 2-9: *Gataobini* A crazy women makes a man crazy. He who pretends to be crazy ends up being crazy.
- 2-10: *Akoko owou* Get up early to have money in your pockets.
- 2-11: *Owuni shosi  
Onsoro Omo* Bird that cannot fly will die in cage. A father and a son should always talk.
- 2-12: *Ebbo ocha owou* He who does not make the right offerings, will not succeed in his enterprises.
- 2-13: *Otoku* Dead King, new King. Old town left behind, new town ahead.
- 3-1: (Same as 1-3).

- 3-2: (Same as 2-3).
- 3-3: *Okumajana Eshu* The drunk thinks one way, his family thinks another way.
- 3-4: *Okuni iyu* One man can save the whole country.
- 3-5: *Ikun shere* That which you have thrown away, do not take back.
- 3-6: *Owou elli beyi* Money for the reading has to be returned. Twins will stay together no matter what. Do not try to separate what is united.
- 3-7: *Eko oyuo* What is known, is known. What you know, you know.
- 3-8: *Tere ile* A mouse in the house should be allowed to live. Do not kill what's in your house.
- 3-9: *Enu gbolohun* No words are better than stupid words.
- 3-10: *Ano foriji* He who forgives, is forgiven.
- 3-11: *Otaniyu* One man throws a stone, many men are blamed. Other people's troubles are their troubles.
- 3-12: *Okan pe* Heartbeats are life. One heartbeat at a time. Do the right thing, and life will turn your way.
- 3-13: *Ade omi emu* In a clean calabash you will drink clean water.

- 4-1: (Same as 1-4).
- 4-2: (Same as 2-4).
- 4-3: *Olorun goke* To go to Heaven, you need a clean soul.
- 4-4: *Eso Igui* No tree will give fruits without care.
- 4-5: *Iku onje* Death will eat what she can eat.
- 4-6: *Ologbo shenshen* A cat may walk a twisted path; a man should not.
- 4-7: *Eleda igbe* If your Head does not betray you, no one can.
- 4-8: *Leri iruke* Born to be at the head, but were left at the tail.
- 4-9: *Ofemi emi* Look back, look to sides. Look where you step.
- 4-10: *Afuyalero iron* No one would listen to a braggart.
- 4-11: *Funfun terevi* White clothes are pretty. Orisha likes to dress in white.
- 4-12: *Eni kokoso omemi ardie* The Hen was born to give us eggs, women to have children.
- 4-13: *Ayawua Allagua* The Turtle walks slow, but gets there.
- 5-1: (Same as 1-5).
- 5-2: (Same as 2-5).
- 5-3: (Same as 3-5).

- 5-4: *Nigbamiran naju* Sometimes you rest, sometimes you work, but you cannot rest all the time.
- 5-5: *Emu sore* Too much talk tires the mouth.
- 5-6: *Ayalai* A bell will sound better in its own tower.
- 5-7: *Ire lewe* He who abuses his good fortunes, may lose all his luck.
- 5-8: *Ile areye* House of paper. House built on lies.
- 5-9: *Asha eshu meunle* No one knows what is gone until it is there no more.
- 5-10: *Ku kara* If you pretend to be dead, you will not like the funeral.
- 5-11: *Aiye ile odbara* If you don't know the laws by which to live in this world, you will learn them in the other.
- 5-12: *Omo ashe Olorun* A good son has the blessing of all Orishas and God Almighty.
- 5-13: *Sere ikan ina* He who plays with fire, ends up being burned.
- 6-1: *Gbo obo* An old monkey cannot learn new tricks.
- 6-2: *Koshe simi ina* Do not kiss Fire on the face. Keep your face away from fire.
- 6-3: *Ikoko ila* Big iron pot, little food.

- 6-4: *Eya ena ire* A good heart, a just reward.
- 6-5: *Oloubata* Play a drum, sing a song.
- 6-6: *Ku leri olourisha* He who does not know dies; but he who knows, does not.
- 6-7: *Aya ibe* A dog has four legs, but walks only one road.
- 6-8: *Afuyalara* What is cheap, will cost more in the long run. Where cheap things are born, nothing else will grow.
- 6-9: *Siwere* He who pretends to be crazy, may end up being crazy.
- 6-10: *Abeagutan omi* Two rams will not drink out of the same water hole.
- 6-11: *Awada eke* Envy makes slaves easy.
- 6-12: *Pele aileko* By not being educated; by being stubborn you will go from failure to failure.
- 6-13: *Arube shenshe* He who does not listen to advice, may not grow to be old.
- 7-1: *Soro araye joro* Gossip and Lies got together to dig a grave.
- 7-2: *Ebuke un alle* No house, no kingdom, no friendship, no family can be built in one day. Do a little at the time.
- 7-3: *Uworo emiro* If you don't say it, nobody will know

- it.
- 7-4: *Unyeun* No matter how hungry, be careful what you eat.
- 7-5: *Toto iban Eshu* He who walks with Eshu, will find a good road.
- 7-6: *Akumi oddara* If you salute the morning, it will give you a good day.
- 7-7: *Odigaga odigogo* He who tries to do the right thing, will get the right result. He who digs a hole, may be buried in it.
- 7-8: *Aza gata* Impatience; Restlessness, can be bad friends.
- 7-9: *Lowe cofawa owo* Stretch your hands only as far as they will go.
- 7-10: *To subu* If you piss to Heaven, it will return and hit you in the face.
- 7-11: *Kuakua ofemi* If you are afraid to look in the mirror, you will never know what color your eyes are.
- 7-12: *Leri leti* The Head is larger than the Ear and it will not pass through it. The Ear cannot pass over the Head.
- 7-13: *Eta elede* After the pig has been cooked, lets see how much lard is left.
- 8-1: *Adara mada* To pass a test, you have to take the test.

- 8-2: *Adde ade* A warrior spirit will make a King.
- 8-3: *Akisa oyumi* A hole in your pants will show your rear end.
- 8-4: *Ashe bo Orisha* Orisha likes a feast. Blessing from Orisha and good omen.
- 8-5: *Omo ashu she* Lots of work, hard work, not enough money. Save your money.
- 8-6: *Abo mi omi asho* All that is began well, will end well. Wash the clothes.
- 8-7: *Omo abboddun eleke eri* Orisha is looking for a Head. A King is looking for a prince. A necklace is looking for a neck
- 8-8: *Ora gata erulla* When close friends argue, war cannot be prevented.
- 8-9: *Shango je agbo* Shango ate lamb once, and got himself into a big mess. Orishas says don't make the same mistake twice.
- 8-10: *Isesore onia* The needle carries the thread.
- 8-11: *Je kokoaya dawada* Too much corn sweets will make you sick.
- 8-12: *Wan mele losi* A bee has a strong sting, but the pain doesn't last forever.
- 8-13: *Onoru Olorun* Pray to the Almighty on your knees.
- 9-1: *Ko koda* Hold on to what you can, what you cannot, let go.



- 9-2: *Joko ji* Sit down, rest a while, but stay alert.
- 9-3: *Kokoro ire inike* Only one key will open the door.
- 9-4: *Erin eta* Four will start, only three will finish. Lose one.
- 9-5: *Ebun oguo* Give money, receive money.
- 9-6: *Elegbe ise* Good friends work together.
- 9-7: (Same as 7-9)
- 9-8: *Pa de ile Iku* Lock the house, close the windows. Death wants to come in.
- 9-9: *Edesu tiya siguere* Only the crazy will walk in a storm. Too many crazy people together will find Tragedy.
- 9-10: *Sukuru sun* Don't fall asleep in school. Ghosts will visit.
- 9-11: *Tiya tillu akua* A big shame. Where a hole was dug for the first time. Whatever is buried let it remain buried.
- 9-12: *Oyasaranda ile* He who likes trouble finds that the graveyard is not far from his house.
- 9-13: *Otako emi iwi* One piece of wood will start the fire. The enemy is under the bed.
- 10-1: *Omi oyauro Olofin* Rain water is God's water.
- 10-2: *Owo so* Sweep the garbage.
- 10-3: *Eni omo* Stranger sleeps in your bed. A child

- in the bed.
- 10-4: *Aburo okute* Fish with a friend. Good catch from the sea.
- 10-5: *Agbowo de* Money wants to buy someone.
- 10-6: *Dana iwi ebi* No wood, no fire, no fire, no food. Light a fire.
- 10-7: *Dupe ebi foriji* Thanks for family. Forgiveness in family.
- 10-8: *Gbagbe ojo jumo* The past is past. Today is today. One day is one day.
- 10-9: *Otutu osu ikan* Today cold; tomorrow, fire.
- 10-10: *Sirere ile ogwe* He who gambles loses the house and the family.
- 10-11: *Kayun ile Oshosi* Your feet will take you to jail. Your head will take you out.
- 10-12: *Okuyama enu leri* A drunk cannot control his tongue.
- 10-13: *Metanla shober* Final justice rest with Orisha. Your enemy will no longer be.
- 11-1: *Abien iworo* The Dead will live again.
- 11-2: *Abo to* Good deeds get rewarded. Bad deeds are not forgiven.
- 11-3: *Aggun ada* A sharp knife will cut almost everything. Be careful of knives.

- 11-4: *Ashelenu* A word can save. A word can destroy.
- 11-5: *Okplo omi* The frog lives in the water, and jumps only so high.
- 11-6: *Ise aseyu owo* Too much, too little. Never enough.
- 11-7: *Atana egun* The Dead are looking for candles. Light a light.
- 11-8: *Osan kua bata* Too late to dance.
- 11-9: *Bi omolo* Suffering for what is lost, will not bring it back. Rest the Head.
- 11-10: (Same 10-11).
- 11-11: *Iwiozain esum* He who sits under a large tree will get a good shadow.
- 11-12: *Awere agadogodo* A united family is a strong family.
- 11-13: *Akisa asho* New clothes, new broom. All is clean when new.
- 12-1: *Ewe sarayeyeo* Cleansing with herbs brings good fortune.
- 12-2: *Sata owo* A little sale doesn't make a man rich.
- 12-3: *Orisha sin su-uru* Orisha wants respect, patience.
- 12-4: *Ai sanwo aye* Pay your debts while on Earth.
- 12-5: *Aro ye ebi* Too much lamenting brings sorrow.
- 12-6: *Obba ago ile* A King don't ask permission to come into his house.

- 12-7: *Omoyu lepe* A good son sees, and keeps his mouth shut.
- 12-8: *Ailara omo ibusun* An orphan child has no bed.
- 12-9: *Isinmi oorun* Rest only when the Sun sets down.
- 12-10: *Obba iku so* A dead King, a new King.
- 12-11: *Dake Orisha* Appease Orisha. A revolution because of Orisha.
- 12-12: *Osha lo Orisha* Orisha wants to make you King.

### The Reading

Sign Interpretations from 1 to 12

#### Sign Number 1 Okana-Okanasode.

The Orishas speaking are: *Shango, Aggayu, Obatala, The Ancestors Spirits.*

Orisha says that the person who is being read, should open their ears and pay good attention, because not only Orisha is talking, but his dead ancestors also

Orisha says Illness will visit your house. It will probably visit an old person, who will be or is seriously ill and should be taken to a medicine man. What may seem a simple illness could turn into something worse. Medical care should prevent Death from taking this person.

Orisha says you think all people are bad. If you treat your children bad, they will behave bad. Do not curse so much and stop complaining about your luck. Now; if you are not the one constantly nagging, there is some one close to you who is doing it, and this really brings bad luck.

Orisha says you have emotional and financial troubles. A trip will develop where you will have to travel far from home. Before traveling ask Orisha whether you should do it or not? The reason is that you may suffer an accident on the road or may be robbed. Do not leave your house alone, protect what is yours. You are being warned about a loss, but it can be prevented by following Orisha's advice.

Orisha Aggayu says you owe him something, and that you do not keep your promises to him or anybody else. He wants you to offer him a bunch of green bananas. Orisha will help solve your problem but the starting point to change things around has to begin with yourself. That is your willingness to change, to take actions in the right direction. You will be able to establish communication with the Almighty and He in turn will intercede with Orisha. There will be period of separation and retreat, some bonding will be lost, but a new Spirit will guide you. Once you have taken on a new road, do not deviate from it.

The secret to this sign relies on the desire to make great strides to achieve spiritual knowledge and absolute faith in the powers hidden within you.

Orisha says don't go digging holes in the sand. Rather build castles on solid ground. Look for the cleansing and the proper offering, you will find Orisha is always on your side.

### **Sign Number 2      Eyioso-Eyio ko.**

The Orishas speaking are: *Sacred Twins (Ibeyji), Oshosi, Eleggua, Obatala and Shango.*

When this sign comes out, you have to get up and sit down again (This is a form of salutation to the deities).

Orisha says you are in need of money. You are in too much debt. Orisha says go out of your town and work on a farm or in another town where you will be able to earn money to come back

and pay your debts. An offering to Orisha should be marked right now, before continuing this reading so the omen would be a good omen.

Orisha says that either you have twins, are part of twins, or will have twins. In any case, you should pay special homage to the Twins Ibeji for they will clear the way for you to make money. You were meant to live in the country and should have been born on a farm. Nature and all things related to the forest are beneficial to you.

Orisha says that if you feel that you are blocked, this sign urges you to begin by being clear with yourself, facing up, admitting, releasing whatever it takes to rid you of this bad habit of borrowing and spending beyond your limits. Do not turn to others so much, especially now, but look at your strengths. Use your abilities to the fullest. No matter what area of your life seems to be blocked or thwarted, stop and reconsider: you will recognize the outer "enemy" as a reflection of your past mistakes.

Orisha says this is not a time for trying to get "credit" for accomplishments, or unfinished tasks, but rather seek to fulfill this time span, content to do whatever task, job, is necessary to lift you out of your present entrapment.

Orisha says keep feeding the hungry and not to be concerned how you are repaid. Your reward will be brought to your door by Orisha Eleggua.

Orisha is issuing a strong warning about a fight among brothers and reminds you that nothing is more valuable than the love between people of the same blood. A business partner will try to leave you out of gains and occupy your place. Be on the alert, but don't be vindictive. Let things rest in the hands of the Orisha. Reconsider your position and validity as a partner.

Orisha Shango says that at times you feel too much heat

coming to your head and that a correct analysis of every situation will prevent you from suffering disappointments and headaches. Your Guardian Spirit is trying to calm you, so start by seeking inner peace. Look for a place where you can communicate with Him and let your frustration and anxieties out by communicating with this form of your Higher Self.

There are spirits of ancestors who need to be lighted, remembered and offered prayers and chants. There are enemies keeping a watch on you. Do not allow them to get the upper hand. You should not walk a narrow path which will lead you to a dead end.

This sign is a sign where the establishment of a correct relationship between Orisha Ibeyi and yourself is the primary goal, for from it flows all possible relations: fortune, health, success and finally the Divine. Remain modest—that is the Oracle's counsel. Regardless of how great your needs may be, yielding and assuming moderation and devotion in your actions is what is implicitly asked of you here.

Orisha Obatala is saying that you may be suffering from headaches (it may be referring to actual migraine headaches, or bad times you are going through). He wants you to have a cleansing with shredded coconuts, cocoa butter, holy water and whatever else your Godfather feels is needed. Orisha says to dress in white on the fourth day of the week.

Orisha says you will be visited by a woman who is mentally ill, and not too well spiritually. You should not allow her to stay too long in your house. Because she may create a chaos in your life. If this lady happens to be your mother treat her with kindness, but put her in her proper place. Orisha says respect your elders, but do not let them disrupt your harmony.

This is a time of major growth and rectification and as a rule rectification must come before progress. The moment of past habits

which lead you to the present situation must be completely abandoned, that's the challenge facing you.

Orisha says that drawing this sign is an indication that union, uniting in partnership, when two (Beyi) get together in total harmony, will close the door to the past and open the door to the future.

In all levels: in love relationships, in business matters, in partnering of every kind, this counsel applies particularly when you enter in partnership with Orisha, by doing so you will reap a just reward.

### Sign Number 3

### Oggunda

The Orishas speaking are: *Oggun, Oshosi, Eshu.*

Orisha says sometimes you feel like hitting somebody with a hammer, stick, or pipe. Orisha says you are forbidden from carrying any type of weapons. Your ire will land you in jail. You may be a true son of Orisha Oggun and He does not want you to be like He was.

These days be very cautious in your dealings with the law. The Warriors are to be received and if you have them already, they should be given an offering according to your means. Orisha likes to remind you that all your quarrels should be left to them to handle. Orisha says you are good at building things with your hands, but you allow your feet to destroy them. Your reactions to situations is not being judged properly because you are reacting rather than acting. It seems like your right hand is unaware of what your left hand is doing. There has to be harmony of thought and action. One part of the body cannot act without the other's consent.

Orisha says stay away from dark places, places where there is too much noise, too many people and intoxicating beverages.

Orisha says you do not know how to handle alcohol, and therefore Orisha Oggun says He does not want you to drink at all, or for that matter to have vices of any kind.

This sign is a bad omen for married people who are constantly arguing. Orishas says this habit will end in a tragedy. Where there once was love, now there is rancor and mistrust and all this is probably due more to jealousy, and stubbornness than to envy or witchcraft. Orisha counsel is to stay focused in your relationship. Close your ears to gossip, especially coming from both sides of the family. Respect each other's feelings, the right to privacy and to manifest their own opinion, including that of children. No witchcraft or curse is stronger than the power of love and understanding. But Orisha says a good cleansing marked with this sign will come in handy, it will help spiritually.

Orisha says be aware of pains in the lower part of your body, to see a medicine person, but to be careful before they use a knife to cut you open as part of the healing process.

Do not enter in partnership where three people are involved. You will be betrayed and lose all your investments. Do not ride any vehicle where you are the third passenger. Do not sit at a dinner table where you are the third person.

Orisha says that you have lost many things of value, sometimes because of bad luck, sometimes by not using your head properly, sometimes because of envy. You have cried too much lately. But Orisha says this time of sorrow is over. All you have to do is listen to Orisha's counsel, do the proper offerings, and things will improve to the point where you will find peace of mind, stability and recover what you thought was lost.

This sign is the third and one of the twelve which makes the Cycle of Self Redemption-Transformation, of shedding vices and bad temper, by achieving this level you will be able to receive: messages, signals, gifts. Even a warning may be seen as a gift.

When *Oggunda* brings this message, it also brings knowledge; and thus, you are truly blessed.

Orishas says that a new life may be unfolding at your house. Do not fear for lack of food, clothing and support for this new born. Orishas will provide for him and the rest of your household.

Orisha's counsel is: take pain to be aware of all changes, to keep in good health, to make an extra effort and close the bonds between man and women. Not to be overly concerned for what appears to be lack of communication, lack of clarity and awareness of each individual's need. But rather work in a positive way to receive Orisha's messages and to remember they are the messengers between Man and the Almighty.

Orishas says: Consider the uses of adversity, work from past experiences to your advantage.

#### Sign Number 4

#### Iroso-Oyorozun

The Orishas speaking are: *Yemaya, Olokun, Yewa and Oya*.

When this sign comes out, gather four pieces of coconut, take them close to your chest and say this Lucumi chant:

*Baba mi o Oshosi, Olokun, Yewa, Yemaya, Meyi ashe oluo risha ashe mi inle, mi okan, mileri, tuto ashe mowoleti Orisha.*

Orisha says open your eyes, look around, look back, to the side, forward. You may miss the Good and be hit by the Bad.

Orisha says take good care of your eyes. Not to look into what is none of your business. Stop crying without any reason. You have too many eyes on you. Beware of the evil eye.

Lately you have developed a lot of plans, but never carry them out. It seem that you have been seeding on the wrong

grounds and the wrong seed. Orisha Yemaya would like an offering of a watermelon by the sea and chants to her when you bring this offering. You will receive a visit from across the sea, this person will bring gifts and joy. Orishas says guard with care what you have at home. Some other person may be trying to steal what is yours. This is a sign where brothers will conspire to dethrone you. Envy is a bad omen on this sign, and due to envy your life may be in danger.

Orisha says one day you have money, and the next day it is gone. This is because you do not know how to administer it properly. Sometimes you over indulge and have a tendency to spoil your children or the person with whom you share your life. Orisha Oya says you should open a small shop in the market to try your luck as a business person, but be careful how you invest in this enterprise.

Orisha says this sign: Iroso, is a good sign which brings good omen. This is the sign where whatever was lost, will be recovered again, but you have to be careful where you write your name and sign your name.

Orisha says the sea is like balsam to you and that you should go more often and pray by the seashore. There are good spirits behind you; one was a seaman, this spirit is full of light and will bring clarity to your thoughts. Orisha says not to fight with your brothers, but keep an eye on the person with whom you have a special bond, and a brother.

Orisha Olokun will like to reside in your house, if she is already there, give her an offering of boiled cabbage and molasses, and keep her by your bed side. The light will come.

Orisha's counsel is that by applying your insight, your gut instinct, your ability for clairvoyance, will bring in wisdom and the proper action at the proper time. You may find yourself in a pressure situation, confronted with matters that demand action

now, and the truth is: you don't have enough information. There is no time now to light candles, meditate, chant, or make offerings. All that is required is to follow this counsel, act instinctively, trust your Inner Self.

Iroso is to be trusted completely for it will correct the wrong, and will avenge the injustice.

Orisha says: Here you are confronted with a true reflection of the powers which may be hidden in yourself. And must be exposed and examined before successful action can be undertaken. The sign's strength lies in the ability to wait. Deep transformational forces are at work in this sign. This transformation will be acknowledged by the inner spirits and will bring in the light to your thoughts. Remember: a correct conduct is based on right attitude. If, indeed, you are undergoing difficulties, remember that *the quality of your passage is up to you. To be certain that you are not suffering over your suffering.* Once again, consider the uses of adversity and do not attempt to go beyond where you haven't been.

Orisha says: open your eyes, open the inner eyes, let the Divine illuminate your experiences so that its meaning shines through its light form. Keep still and collect Yourself.

Enforced contemplation, trust, faith will make Orisha's path to your house brighter and rewarding.

### Sign Number 5 Oshe

The Orishas speaking are: *Oshun, Orula, Elegguá.*

Maferfun (Hail) Orisha Oshun who says: There is life, life will begin again for you.

Orisha says you have been a very lucky person all your life, but lately luck has run away from you. You have searched plenty and have played with the occult and mystic powers without real-

izing that you may have been calling on the wrong forces. There are too many spirits, too many strange souls, too many unknown factors in your inner self, and the outer energy is not being channeled properly. Therefore your field of action is in total disarray. So you have come to the conclusion that somehow you have been cheated of the opportunities due you. Wrong!.... Orisha says change the course of your actions, seek the right forces and everything will fall in place.

Orishas says to take care of your health, especially your blood. Be careful not to get infected by sharp objects. Beware of certain sexual likes which could cause illness and death. This sign issues a severe warning against blood diseases. Orisha says do not eat old fish, eggs, meat. Whatever you eat, make sure it is fresh and either cooked by yourself or by someone you trust, because you may be given a strange beverage or food. Be careful where you eat and drink.

Orisha says that if you have been feeling dizziness and constantly falling sleep, to go see a medicine person, to eat properly and abstain from palm wine or alcoholic beverages.

You will move three times, there will be three important changes in your life. But only the last one will be favorable. There is a voyage in the making to a far away place, before undertaking this journey, Orisha should be consulted and the proper offering made so it would be a rewarding experience.

Orisha Oshun says that which you are expecting will come and it will bring joy to your house. Orisha will like to have music played for her. Orisha says that if you have not found a partner in life, do not despair, the right person has not entered your life cycle yet, but it will not be long before this happens.

Orisha Orula says you have a gift for prophecy. You should be a diviner and use the tools you may deem necessary for such an art, but whatever you choose to do, it cannot be done with

Oracle of Cowry Shells. This sign is ruled by Master Spirits who are telling you to use the inner spiritual divinity within you to heal, comfort and assist those who need it.

Orisha Oshun says that those working women who take care of lonely men, should have a yellow pillow adorned with peacock feathers placed by their bedside. Orisha says that what you do is your private business and no one should make your life impossible or criticize it. Orisha says you will eventually leave this line of work and will find comfort and happiness with a person who will come from another village. Under this sign Oshe, women are accused of being prostitutes and they should ignore such slander.

Orisha Oshun says you are her true daughter and will always be her preferred child. She (Oshun) will deliver you from evil and twisted tongues. Orisha counsel is: laughter will confuse the enemy, make the pain minimal, the anger disappear, the rancor destroyed, the misfortune into good fortune. Play loud music, be gay, be strong, do not show your tears. Go to Orisha and tell her your fears, sorrows, hopes, dreams. Orisha is your friend. Orisha will fight your battles.

Hail to Oshun who is bringing you good omens. Orisha says not to worry about children, *Eleggua* is looking after them, they will overcome what ails them. Children will come and visit, a child will come and stay.

Orisha would like to remind you to be faithful to your partner in life. It is easy to listen to mermaids songs, they may lure you into disaster. The counsel is to be faithful to one another and not to let boredom set in your bedroom.

Oshe is a sign of the fruit bearing branch. The barren will give fruits. The term of travail is ended and you have "come to a right time, the right cycle, to yourself". The shift that was due has occurred and now you can freely receive Orisha's blessings,

whether they be in material gain, in your emotional life or in a heightened sense of your own well being. This is an alchemical moment in which understanding is transmuted from knowledge. Now you can rejoice, having crossed the sea of experience and misfortunes.

Orisha says joyousness of the body and the spirit, carries new energy, energy that was blocked before now. This inner energy will pierce the dark clouds, will touch Orisha Oshun's waters and something lively and lovely will emerge from its depths.

### Sign Number 6            Obbara

The Orishas speaking are: *Shango, Aggayu, Oshun and Oshosi.*

Orisha says that Shango is your father, but you have forgotten it. You should not trust people so much, you should not mistrust people so much. You have to find a middle ground for your trust and mistrust.

Orisha says you have a tendency to fantasize and not to see what is real, and what is unreal. Your lies may be catching up with you. Be careful about what you say, good or bad because your lies may become true.

Orisha says not to be a public defender. Those who you help the most, those whom you defend the most, will end accusing you. You fall in love easy. Love is your great weakness. Love will rule your life. Learn how to control your emotions, be extra careful before giving so much of yourself. Orisha says that under this sign: *Obbara*, today you are rich, tomorrow you are poor. Today you are loved, tomorrow you are despised. Today you laugh, tomorrow you cry. Today you are King, tomorrow you are a pauper. Your life is in constant upheaval. You have to do the proper offerings and sacrifices to Orisha Shango. You have to sit under a poplar tree and contemplate your life. Find out what it is you have been doing wrong, what it is you can do right.

Orisha says you will marry a daughter of Oshun, Orisha says you will marry a son of Shango and this should be a good marriage. Do not dress in red clothes it will bring bad omens.

Be careful of fires. Do not play with fire.

Orisha says you do not give value to money, still you would do almost anything to have money. But once you have it, you give it away. You are a good salesperson and should be in business by yourself. If you are not your own employer, learn how to take orders from your superiors. You have a quick temper, although you talk loud and in a threatening manner, you never hold a grudge too long. You are highly emotional and anyone can use this against you. Orisha says try and put a hold on your emotions and start being more analytical.

Orisha says you will be involved in a business matter where you may make lots of money, but be careful it is within the Law, for you may end up at Oshosi's house.

This is a sign ruled strongly by Orisha Shango. It is a sign of fulfillment: ambition satisfied, rewards received, love fulfilled. Where unselfishness, even under the worst poverty conditions, is rewarded by ancient, wise old kind spirits. Orisha says to read the story of *Obbara-Shango* and take example. It promises nourishment, from the most worldly to the sacred and Divine. This is a sign that calls for a deep probing of the meaning of profit and gain in your business deals as well as in your life.

Look with care to know whether it is wealth and possessions you require for your well being, or rather Orisha's blessings and counsel for finding control, administration, confidence, self-rule and the growth of a will to close the gap between what is truth and what is a lie.

Orisha's counsel is to conserve what has already been obtained, already been gained. It urges vigilance and continued



mindfulness, especially in times of good fortune, for it is then you are likely to collapse into the success on the one hand, or to behave recklessly on the other. Enjoy the good fortune coming to you and remember to share it. The mark of a well nourished self is the ability to nourish others without depleting your supply source.

Orisha says there is a time for dancing, a time for harvesting. But harvesting comes before dancing. There is a time for passion, and a time for calmness. But calmness comes from finding true love. Passion and Love are two different entities, for what is of the flesh, should not be confused with what is of the Soul.

Orisha says even if there is occasion for joy, do not be seduced into mindless joyousness. It reminds you that doubtful situations are abundant and come in many forms and disguises. You may be put in touch with the shadow side of possessions....beware of the path you follow to obtain your gains. But in dealing with the shadow side, you will have the opportunity to recognize where the truth lies.

You have prepared the ground and planted the seed. Now you must cultivate with care. To you who have labored a long season, it offers encouragement and success. There is no way to push a river, equally you cannot hasten the harvest. Be mindful that patience, wisdom and faith in Orisha and your self, in the recognition of your own process, will lead to a season of harvest plenty.

Remember the calabash rejected by the Babalawos, made Orisha Shango a wealthy King.

### **Sign Number 7      Oddi**

The Orishas speaking are: *Yemaya, Oggun, Obba, Babaluaye, Oshun.*

Orisha says Envy follows you everywhere, including your relatives. Evil eye makes you a constant target. Too many people have their eyes on you. Lately you have been the center of too much gossip. You have been the target of envious persons who wish to have what you have, no matter how little it may be. Orisha says do not involve yourself in gossip. Let the river flow, let the water run, let others' envy be their drowning waters.

Orisha says there is a strong warning not to put your name on papers which may be turned against you in a court of law.

Orisha says victory is yours. You will see your enemies begging for mercy. Your enemies will bow their heads to you. You are or will be in a big battle and when you think everything was lost, Orisha will use a shining armor to protect you and make you victorious. This is a sign where children may be involved in a dispute, or where children may bring gossip, tales, lies, trouble to your home. Orisha's counsel is to keep an open mind to whatever you hear, do not rush to premature judgment. Do not poke your nose into what is none of your business.

Orisha says protect your legs, beware of cuts, infections, pain. Give Babaluaye an offering and consult a medical person.

*Oddi* is a sign where the person being read may be looking somewhere else for what they already have at home. They may be involved or will be involved with another person besides their spouse. This relationship will end in tragedy. Under this sign Orisha's counsel is to stay faithful, do not betray a friendship.

Orisha says protect your children at all cost. You may lose a child. Do not end pregnancy.

Orisha says many spirits are around you and you should have the gift of prophecy and clairvoyance. You have to develop this gift. You should heal many people, help many lost souls.

Sometimes you get bad headaches, this is due to an overflow of spiritual energy. Sit, relax, call your Guides and let them alleviate what ails you.

Orisha says: get to know the "magic" properties of your subconscious. Knowing your spiritual strength places you amongst a very special group of people who have this gift and use it abundantly to find their inner peace and not to be wandering looking for what is forbidden. You will have to establish a better contact with this force, and by the same token open a constant line of communication with your partner in life.

*Oddi* talks about Death, it can portend a death. But that death could be symbolic, and may relate to any part of your life as you are living it now. Here Orisha informs you that it is in motion in your life, there is more life in your life than you are willing to acknowledge.

Being in a constant state of pessimism will only attract the dark side of the spirit world. A laugh, a song, a good time spent by the sea, a deep search in the inner parts of your soul, will bring freedom from boredom, from haste, from emptiness. You will be able to conquer the hidden fears: Will I fail? Will I be abandoned? Will it all be taken away? And yet, within that blankness is held your highest good, the true possibilities and all your fertile dreams.

If doubt, emptiness, good fortune, faith, despair, love, hate, kindness, tears and laughter are the sum total of what you have done, the limits of what you are and will become, then it may be useful to see this sign as the turning point in your life.

Orisha's counsel is from their perspective, even the very debts of old, and past lives shift and evolve as you shift and evolve. So therefore, nothing is predestined. There is nothing that cannot be avoided. And if, indeed, there are matters hidden by the Orishas, you need only to remember: what beckons is the creative power of the unknown.... Know that the word is self transformation,

hope, faith, light, self change. What was lost will be recovered. Do not walk the path of the past, rather look at the road ahead.

Orisha reminds you: the sea hold many treasures.... only the daring will be able to harvest it.

Hail to *Orisha Yemaya*, *Orisha Oshun*. They both claim you as a favorite child.

### Sign Number 8                      Unle-Eyioḡbe-Eyeunle

The Orishas speaking are: *Obatala*, *Orula*, *Oke*, *Eshu*.

Orisha says you are a true child of Orisha Obatala.

*Eyioḡbe* is a sign almost sacred in the religion, it is where people are told they were born to be healers, scientists, magicians, inventors, chemists, medical doctors. They distinguish themselves above other people, and therefore they are resented. But they continue to be what they are, do what they do; help and give as much of themselves as they can, and at the end, most of the time are repaid with unkindness. This sign reflects in all its rudeness the life of Orisha Obatala. It is told here to the person being read to learn about Obatala, and learn from his mistakes.

Orisha says you are a noble person born to govern and direct things around you. But sometimes this natural leadership is mistaken by being too domineering. You have to learn to use both sides of the coin, to have a strong hand but keep it inside a silk glove.

You will suffer from constant headaches, and at times dizzy spells. You have to protect your head, the spirit in your head, by staying away from too much sunshine, heat, hot water....especially outbursts of bad temper. You may be so upset, that you may end up suffering brain damage. You should cover your head with a white cap as much as you can.

Orisha Elegua is always by your side, so do not kill mice. Do not punish children too severely. You will have many children, you will raise other people's children. You take other people's baggage on your shoulders and that sometimes becomes a burden to you and the people around you.

Orisha says take good care of your parents, do not argue with them. You have to respect your elders. Do not pretend to know more than they do. Remember: the truly intelligent person does not throw his intelligence around those less fortunate, or those who have lived longer than you have.

Orisha says when you put your head to work, you can lead many people, you can govern for a long time, you can be a Queen, a King.

Orisha counsel is: let your Head guide you, do not allow the body's desires to control the Head.

Orisha says you have to finish what you have started. Do not leave things halfway done. Go to school. Finish school. Never get tired of learning, because your learning may save lives, may bring peace and joy to your loved ones, as well as those who would come to you seeking wisdom and healing.

This is a difficult sign to read clearly because it carries the necessity of relating to severe constraints as its counsel and lesson. Its positive aspects represent the limitations you direct to yourself; its negative side attracts limitation from people around you. Both are equally difficult to handle. People under this sign *Eyiogbe-Unle* are difficult to handle, they themselves, you especially have a hard time understanding yourself and emotions. You fly your temper, you allow your mouth to say things your Heart would deny and your Head would ignore... Restrain... Restrain... this is the magic word. The role of Orisha is to help you identify your shadow areas, and the places where growth was stunted, resulting in weakness you project negatively onto others.

Orisha counsel is: Try not to take this world personally, the sign is saying, work with the shadow, examine what inside you magnetizes, sometimes brings misfortune into your life. Once you have total recognition of negative factors within you, you will be able to handle all sort of troubles, denials and setbacks. Remember within your Head reside the spirits, guides, teachers that will help you develop the total sum of your potentials.

The need for constant learning, restraint, wisdom, are unquestionable here. Orisha puts in notice that there will be hold-ups, not every plan will come to perfection, not every person will be up to your expectations, this is an extra added reason for you to consider your plans carefully, and to grant other people the right to be what they are, and how they are. But again, being fair, most times your dissatisfactions are not unreasonable, because there is always work to be done on yourself primarily. So take on good will and show perseverance.

This is a time to pay old debts, to restore, if not harmony, at least balance. So mend, restore, redress. When fishermen can't go to the sea, they repair nets. Let the constraints of time serve you in righting your relationship with Orisha and your Self. Be mindful that rectification come from wisdom. Saying "I am sorry" is not difficult if it brings fulfillment and rectifies what was wrongly said or done. Usually a cleansing is required with this reading. But this cleansing could be both physical as well as spiritual.

As part of the Cycle of Self-Transformation, Self Learning, *Orisha Unle-Obatala* is the great teacher disguised as the bringer of pain and limitation. Its counsel is to remember that the point of greatness is achieved only after you have overcome the Darkness and become aware of the Light within you.

You are the fountain...let the thirsty drink from it, but do not allow it to be drained of its water, its Light. Be a teacher, be a pupil... You are the Head... use it wisely...

**Sign Number 9****Osa**

The Orishas speaking are: Oya, Oggun, Obatala, Yanza.

Orisha says keep a lookout for the tornado, the whirlwind, the rain, the storm, the tempest, the unpredictable.

The Orishas are saying to beware of a fight, a war, an argument which will come totally unexpected. There is going to be a loss. What was gained through hard labor might be lost if care, intelligence, patience, discipline and good sense are not used.

Orisha says show patience and understanding at home. Forgiveness has a sweeter taste than revenge. The sign speaks of a marriage that is about to end, or a marriage that people are trying to prevent and to this end, witchery, gossip, and envy will be used against you. Do the proper cleansing, do the proper establishment of boundaries between family and "friends".

Orisha says to use the tools of your trade, to plant early and reap good harvest. No enterprise should be carried out without the proper planing. Orisha says you act more on impulse than on a cool judgment and this leads to disaster in all aspects of your life.

Orisha Oya says there will be a loss in the family.

There will be a journey far away. This journey might involve an illegal act. Be extremely careful of what you think is the easy way to make money, and what it really takes to make a decent living. The journey could become a nightmare, or of much benefits if all angles are analyzed and there is nothing wrong with this business transaction. Ask Orisha for her approval. Orisha's counsel is: do not make any type of decisions on rainy days. Do not make decisions without consulting with your companion in life, or with your mother if no companion exists.

Orisha says expect a darkening of the light in some situation or relationship. A friendship may be dying, a partnership, a marriage, some aspect of yourself, an old way of being that is no longer appropriate or valid. Receiving this sign *Osa*, puts you on notice that failure to face up to a death using all your resources and consciously battling it will constitute a loss. It is an opportunity to prove yourself in battle. Orisha points to this death as perhaps also a way of life, invalidated by lack of courage. In relationships, there can be a mutual opening up. You may serve as the trigger, the time keeper, through your awareness that the light of understanding is once again available to you both.

Essentially, although this sign *Osa* is many times misread and interpreted as a sign full of bad omens, this is not so. *Osa* is a sign of beneficial outcomes (specially if it is *Ire*). Orisha Oya rules it together with Orisha Oggun and both work in harmony to make it a sign of beneficial outcome. It applies to hard work, in any activity or endeavor to which you are committed. Rolling this sign encourages you to use all your forces, all your inner strength to keep your spirits up, to hold on tightly to what is rightfully yours, to not allow a foreign king to enter your kingdom.

Orisha's counsel is: You cannot ignore the span of time. Time is an unavoidable factor, thus haste would be your worst enemy. Hence the key words "one year", symbolizes a full cycle of time before the reaping, the harvest of abundance, the harvest of joy.

Remember the warnings: Things will be slow, death may visit, war may come. But tenacity and courage will overcome all obstacles. The process of birth is long and arduous, and fears arise for the safety of the "child" within. A crisis, a difficult passage, even if brief is at hand. Consideration and deliberation are called for because light and shadow are still intermixed and doubts and scruples might interfere with joyousness if not understood as timely to your growth.

Orisha's counsel is: Stop your anxiety and ask yourself

whether you possess the virtues of seriousness, sincerity and emptiness. To possess them is to have the tranquillity that is ground for clarity, patience and perseverance. Remember: seen in its true light, everything is a test. This is your time for testing. And so be focused in the present, sincerity towards others and trusting in your courage, inner forces, Orisha Oya and Orisha Oggun. Trusting this is merely a process and you will "know" that you can and will not fail. You will live up to the task. You will survive... You will conquer, you will be King of your own domain.

### Sign Number 10      Ofun Mafun-Larobi

The Orisha speaking are: *Oddua, Obatala, All Ancestors Spirits, Your Spiritual Guide.*

When this sign comes out, the Oriate has to touch his belly and blow hard to the four cardinal points. This is done to chase away any evil spirit which may be present at the reading. A small offering is made to Baba-Orisha Oddua this night consisting mostly of candles and white items such as pieces of cloth, balls of cotton, cocoa butter, that the person being read to has be cleansed with and thrown outside the house while saying this chant: "Batie sodie".

This sign is saying like *Osa*, that by trying to make an easy living, you will get involved in illegal activities and Ile Oshosi will open its doors for you. Under this sign people like to live on the very edge of the law.

*Ofun* is ruled by many spirits: some good, some not so good, some lost, some wise, some dumb and the funny thing is that they all come to you seeking help, or trying to enlighten you. But you ignore their presence and this really creates chaos in your life. Orisha says it is time for you to develop this psychic force to its fullest, and benefit from the use of this immense knowledge-power at your disposal, which up to now has been obstructing your road to prosperity, peace of mind and a harmonious rela-

tionship with the person that shares your life.

Orisha says to expect visitors from the other side, especially at night. Do not fear their presence, but rather try and see clearly who they are and what they want.

Orisha says do not drink or eat at a stranger's house. You may be given a potion or food which contains strange powders which will make you very ill. There is a warning to stay away from dark, or semi dark places where they serve liquors.

Orisha says you have been haunted by a ghost from the past, someone who was in love with you and still thinks it own's you. This will be reflected in many nightmares, dreams where you will feel you are being touched or caressed, or being chased, or falling, or bleeding, or awakening with a feeling that you are being strangled or choking. There is an obsessed spirit looking for revenge. This entity makes its presence felt by other members of your immediate family. If you do not see it, or feel this weird sensation, ask any of your children. A meeting should be held by people who are sensitive to lost souls and they should rid you of this ominous presence. By the same token, there are good spirits who want to help you with this spiritual situation.

When this sign comes out for a person who is very sick, the **Ofun Mewa** bath should be given to recover their health and chase away Death. See **Mewa Bath** at the end of this reading.

Orisha's counsel is: This is a turning moment in both your physical as well as your spiritual life. Orisha speaks of being re-born, of conquering illness and death, of not yielding to dark entities but rather working with the enlightened spirits who serve you as guides and teachers. Be assured they do exist, they are there for you. But it is you who has to learn how to deal with the dark ones and how to use the light of the guides. This is a moment of a great initiation that leads to a new wholeness, to a finding of all your potentials; this process will occur at an inner

level, a superior level, where nothing external matters. In order to be cleansed, in order for the Ebbo of Ofun to achieve its intended purpose, a process of rectification has to be achieved. Old ways have to be discarded. No easy way out, no easy way to try to make a living, no lies, no cheating, no drugs, alcohol, no vices, no over indulgences of any kind. This is the path to follow to conquer the dark side of you, to penetrate the ancient secrets, to move forward in all relations in this world and in the other.

Growth is the goal to be obtained. The flow of things into new forms will create the necessary conditions for an integration which will be the hallmark of this great second stage Initiation. You have to understand and be totally aware that once this potent force of psychic energy within you comes to its full term, the Breakthrough will happen automatically and you will conquer everything that has been blocking you from the day you became a new living creature in this world.

You have come to the Tenth Sign of the Oracle. Your life will enter a new dimension, your sorrows should be used as the stepping stone to your growth. You shall not curse the past, or the present, but rather hail the future. You are put on notice that you can expect hold ups and setbacks until you rectify the imbalances in your nature.

#### **Mewa Bath**

To take the Mewa Bath this is what is done. But in order to give it, the Oriate and his assistant have to had received it. You need.

- Ten yards of white linen cloth.
- Ten cascarilla balls.
- One small baby goat.
- Two white pigeons.
- Ten bars of cocoa butter.
- One large tin basin (same used for bathing Yawo).

- Ten bars coconut soap or odorless soap.
- Charcoal ashes.
- Perfume.
- Two white porcelain plates.
- One white plastic basin.
- One large bunch of Purslane, one of Amaranth.
- A handful of earth from the Godfather-Godmother's backyard.
- Small bench (same used for head cleansing).
- Two large buckets filled with fresh water.
- Ten white candles.
- One set of new white clothes.
- All the items needed in a regular head cleansing.
- Goat's milk.

The ceremony starts by one of the Oriate assistants mashing the Purslane and the Amaranth into a pulp and as much juice as possible is extracted from them.

Once the herb has been mashed, take the soap bars and grate them, mix them with Purslane and Amaranth adding a little bit of the ashes, earth from the backyard, grated cascarilla and the ten bars of cocoa butter. Mix them well until you have a paste-like substance. With this mixture make ten soap bars. Place the new soap bars in a white plate.

In one bucket pour water, goat's milk, juice extracted from the Purslane and the Amaranth. Another bucket should be filled with fresh water, perfume and flowers.

The large white cloth is used to wrap the person with it. He/she is wrapped to look like a mummy. They have to be covered completely from head to toe. The person is seated on the small bench inside the large tin basin.

Once the person is seated, the Oriate will sacrifice the goat on top the person's head doing the same chants as in a regular

sacrifice-offering. He has to chant to Obatala, and invoke as many dead Oluorishas-Iyalorishas as he has known. After the invocation and chants are over, he starts praying for this person's health. He asks all the Orishas (especially Orisha Obatala-Oddua) to restore her-his health and that Iku (death) be cast aside.

The dead goat is placed on the floor, next to the person. The sacrifice over, she-he will start taking the white cloth off the body, as they take the cloth off, it is wrapped around the goat in the same manner the person was wrapped. When the goat is fully covered, it is lifted from the floor and taken out of the room.

The person is given the ten soap bars, the bucket with the goat's milk and the herb juice and has to start bathing from the head down. They are not allowed to go back, or side ways. They start from the top of the head and have to work their way down. Once they finish, the Oriate assistants will use the remaining of the bucket ingredients to remove whatever soap or blood may be on the person's body. Lastly, the bucket with fresh water, flowers and perfume will be used to rinse the person. It ends with the person dressing with the new set of white clothes. Then, the candles are lit as an offering to the spirits that came to the ceremony.

As the last part of the ceremony, the head cleansing is done using the two white pigeons. What is left of the head cleansing as well as the dead goat is taken to a graveyard with a small offering to Orisha Oya.

### Sign Number 11

### Ojuani Shoher-Owane.

The Orishas speaking are: *Oshosi, Babaluaye, Eleggua, Osain, Nana Buruku.*

Orisha says that from being the hunter, you have now become the hunted.

It seems that every business, every new relationship, every single step to better yourself, every enterprise you have intended to carry out, ends in a futile effort.... Look behind you, consult with the oldest person in your family. You will find there is an entity which has haunted your family from generations and has made life miserable for all the first, or last born. But the good thing is that all the Orishas are saying is that it is time to rid yourself and your children of this annoyance.

Beware of accidents, specially at crossroads. Avoid all arguments, fights, quarrels, outburst of bad temper. Like *Ofun*, this sign gives warning about troubles with the law. An offering should be made to Orisha Oshosi, and a reading with your main Orisha cowries should be done as soon as possible, if you are not vested with Orisha, you may consider doing so.

A crisis may arise and the best way to handle it would be to analyze, to consider what it is you are holding on to that keeps this condition in an active mode. Finding the causes, will eliminate the effect.

Orisha says that now you will find yourself in the middle of a controversy. You might be at the crossroads of your life, and for any type of change, either small, or great, you will have to refer to all the inner forces within yourself. But not only that, this change, this decision which you have to make will affect several peoples' lives. You might even be asked to be a Judge and the decision will not come easy. Orisha's counsel is that to begin with, *do not judge yourself or others close to you, too severely.* Wisdom is the word, patience is the virtue.

Orisha says: Matters of the heart should be put aside, and matters of every day real life should take priority.

This sign *Owane* has a reverse side where all the bad omens will become good omens if the cleansing, (ebbo) are followed to the letter. It says that developing a rewarding interaction with

your protecting Orisha, has been for many people, an exciting adventure in self-discovery. Learning how to tap the "magic" properties of this sign, how to best apply the prescribed cleansing, will lead you to establish a much better control of your destiny.

This sign Owane, is a sign full of mysteries and secrets, it speaks of Man, the Human Race, how the world is saved by one man. It is where you are reminded constantly of being an honest and virtuous person. To be fair in all your dealings with people, especially your children. There is need for sacrifices, not only to the Orishas, but those sacrifices that go beyond what might be required of you on an every day basis.

Orisha says that when this sign comes out, to wash your cowry shells in fresh water, and then throw the water out into the street while asking that whatever bad omen might come with this sign be cast away.

Orisha says you should have a dog and dedicate it to Orisha Babaluaye. If you meet a wandering dog, feed him and don't mistreat him.

Orisha's counsel is to remind you that this sign is one of the signs where all warriors spirits are talking to you, so bear this in mind: You may be in the middle of a war right now, to which you do not see the outcome. But what you are experiencing is not necessarily the result of your actions, your habits, your mental attitude, your lack of motivations or excess of care, but the conditions of this time, of this here and now against which you can do nothing, except be patient and give it Time. Its own Time. What has been full must be empty; what has increased must decrease. This is the way it has been since the very beginning, it is the way of Heaven and Earth, it is the way of God Almighty, it is the test of the wise, who by enduring and using Father Time wisely shows the mark of the True Warrior, the True Conqueror.

**Sign Number 12****Ejila Shebora**

The Orishas speaking are: *Shango, Oya, Yewa, Oke.*

Listen carefully you have come to the 12<sup>th</sup> Odu.

Orisha says:

" A blessing of children "

" A blessing of money "

" A blessing of long life "

" Hail to Shango (kabio sile) "

Orishas Shango and Oya have been looking after you from the day you were born. Orisha saved you from Iku (Death), you were not supposed to be born, you were supposed to die a long time ago. Orisha is saying bless you and your children for you will enjoy a long and fruitful life. Do not fear death, do not fear illness, do not fear lack of money. Orisha is here with you.

Orisha Shango asked once: "what can I do to have my life in order?". And he was told by Ejila Shebora: Do the sacrifices, do not play with other people's emotions, be respectful of your elders, be faithful to your wives, share everything that you have, do not go to battle unless you must, and when you do, be kind with the defeated. Take your defeats with grace and learn from your mistakes. Do not expect good fortune to come from Heaven, but rather work hard for it. No matter how rough the seas, no matter how much lightning the storm may send your way, no matter what luck you may be having now, you will always be a preferred son of Baba Olofin.

All children being read with this sign have to be reminded that their life is like that of Orisha Shango.

Orisha says a separation is about to happen. This separation will be both physical and material. What is lost will remain lost, so therefore, do not look to the past, but rather to the present.



Because you may be called to undertake a radical departure from old ways, total honesty is required. Otherwise, through negligence or refusal to see clearly, you may cause pain to others, damage to yourself. Not rigidity, but flow is the proper attitude at this time. Yet, it is proper to wait for the nature of things to take their course. The counsel is to do without doing, and everything will get done, because this is not the time for you to be mechanical in your actions, to use excess authority, to prevent what might be for the best. Be prudent and patient. Changes will occur, at the end all of the people involved will benefit. Whether it is your attachment to a roof, to your position in society, to the work you do or even to your beliefs about your own nature, the separation called for now will free you to become more truly who you are.

Orisha's counsel is: this is not a time to be bound by old conditioning, old authority. Ask Orisha, ask yourself, what feels right for you and act accordingly.

This sign *Ejila-Sheborá* is a sign of *termination and new beginnings*. Drawing it indicates that the life you have been living has outgrown its form, which must die so that life's energy can be released in a new birth, a new form. This is the sign of passage and, as such, part of the Cycle of New Beginning, of being born-reborn one more time.

Orisha says respect has to be shown to Orisha Oya, to remember that Iku has been chasing you for a long time, so do not take unnecessary risk, do not waste a life (including yours). It is better to stay away from a fight which may end in a tragedy than to feel victorious and cause a great tragedy. This is where Orisha says be aware that you may take a life. Be aware a life could be lost if prudence is not exercised. Jealousy and ungovernable temper do not make good allies.

Prepare then, for opportunity disguised as a loss. It could involve the loss of someone, or something to which there is an

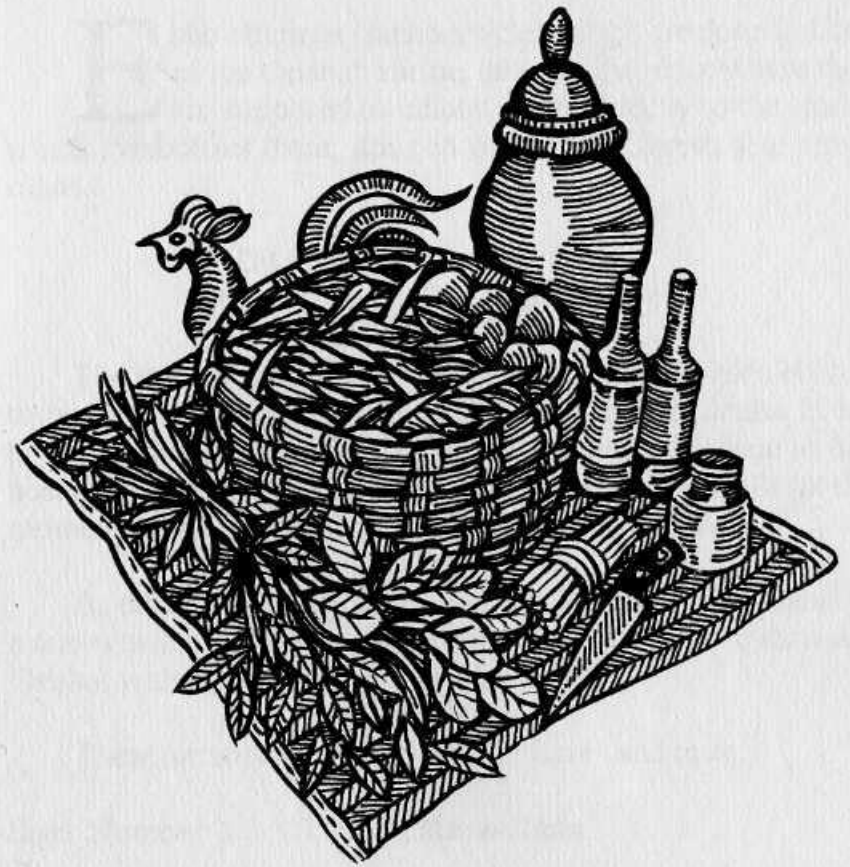
intense emotional bond, and through which you are living a part of your life. A part that must now be retrieved so you can live it out for yourself. Now, in some way, that bond is being severed, a relationship radically changed, a death experienced. Seek among ashes and discover a new perspective and a new birth.

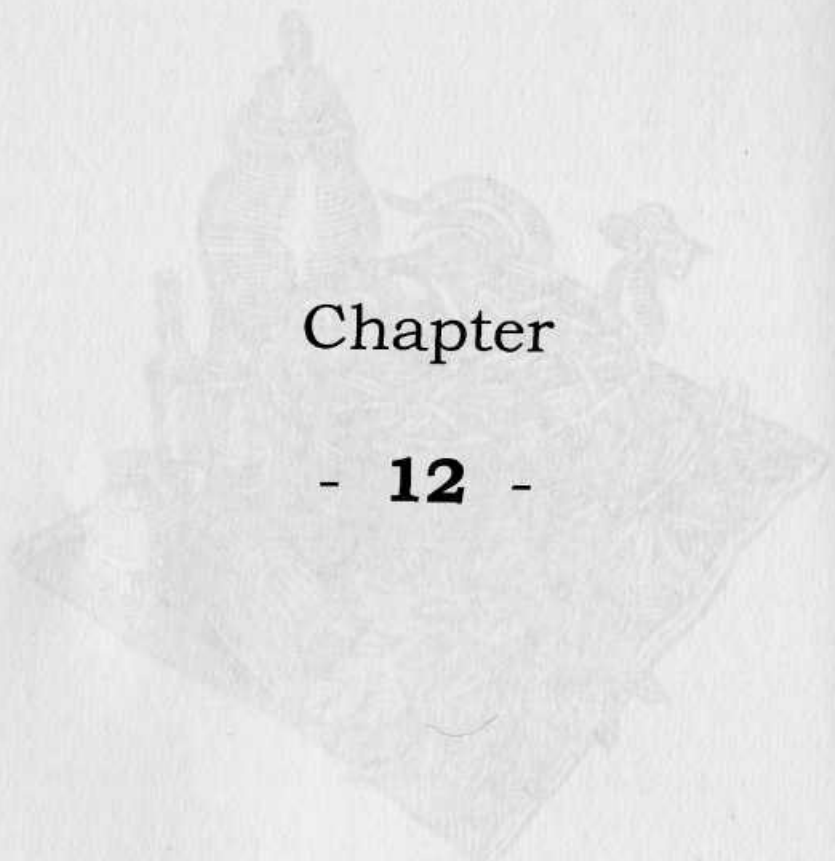
Orisha's counsel is a reminder: the original meaning of this sign is that of a wild bull, a lost warrior. When both the wild bull is domesticated and the wild warrior appeased a nearly impossible task, it could mean that all past habits can be conquered and that by adapting to the demands of the moment a creative time can be obtained. You must learn to adapt, to learn how to best serve yourself. Without ears to hear and eyes to see, you may fail to take advantage of the moment.

But take heart. Remember the constant cycling. The constant changes make all births on Earth a fact everyday. Nothing remains the same. Everything is a constant motion, a new beginning. Do not fall into your typical depression. Understand the message in this sign. Abide by the Ebbo prescribed at the end of the reading. Follow Orisha's counsel. The negative attitude could bring only bad omens. There is inexorable death and rebirth. The endless going and return. Everything you experience has a beginning, a middle, and end, and is followed by a new beginning. Orisha says: when in deep water, become a diver, do not go against the natural flow.

Orisha says that you may feel at this moment exhausted and overwhelmed from meeting obstruction upon obstruction in your path. Yet you will have a choice, you will be born again.

## EBBO BY ODU





## Chapter

- 12 -

**E**bbos offerings (sacrifices-cleansing), are done in front of the Orisha's shrine, taken to the place where they are supposed to inhabit, given directly to the stones which symbolizes them, done in rivers, hills, forest, sea, cross-roads.

### Different Offerings (ebbo) According To The Sign Number

The secret to this procedure, once you know which ebbo is to be done, ask where to do it, if directly to the Orisha in his bowls, or somewhere else. Once the ebbo is done, where to dispose of it. This is done by either tossing the cowry shells (at the moment of the readings), or with the coconut shells.

As different Orishas speak in every Ordun, it is advisable to ask to which deity the offering is to be made. Or if more than one Orisha, which are the ones, and who is first.

These are some of the ones that I have used most.

Sign Number 1

***Okana-Okan***

- 1) Eleven snails, one white hen, one white pigeon, eleven kola nuts, a large chunk of cartilage meat cooked without salt or seasoning.
- 2) One rooster, two pigeons, one guinea hen, one coconut, one jar of honey, roasted corn kernels, one smoked fish, one bottle of firewater.

- 3) One rooster, eleven snails, the clothes you are wearing.
- 4) One chicken, a large piece of white cloth, a large wood stick or a walking cane, one large white snail.
- 5) The shoes and clothes you are wearing, one rooster, one pigeon, one bush rat, one bottle palm oil. This particular ebbo is taken to a bridge without asking Orisha's where to do it. At the bridge you ask for Orisha blessing and to "help" you cross all your bridges, to open a clear path for you.

**Then, do this chant:**

*Ola gbo mi ebbo*

*Atukan eru, nbo wahora dgbale w' sawo*

*eru to si lo nbo a le*

*tetiponola ngo a ahora gbale wa sawo.*

- 6) Two different bunches of his herbs tied with red ribbon (Odundun and Peregun) One red rooster, one black pigeon, one kola nut, one white snail. After asking Orisha and receiving its blessing, take all this to a tall tree and cleanse yourself with the offering. Offer the rooster and the pigeon in the same place, dig a hole in the ground and bury it. Next you have to go to the grave of a dead relative and plant a Peregun tree next to it. The ebbo is done to chase away Iku.
- 7) One crown made with African parrot red tail fathers, one small dry calabash full of necklace beads, one whole papaya.
- 8) One large piece of bread, one large cocoa butter bar, one basket full of cotton balls. Ask permission to leave everything at the foot of a large poplar tree.

- Do not return by the same place in a long time.
- 9) Cook one plate of red beans, one plate of black beans, one plate lima beans, one green peas, one plate with different kind of meats, all without salt and using palm oil, or corozo lard. Place the offering to Orisha for one full day, afterward take it to a graveyard.
  - 10) One large Mamey seed (Mamey is a tropical fruit found in any latino market), one egg plant, one rooster, one pigeon.
  - 11) A large chunk of raw meat anointed with corozo lard, one large piece of red cloth, cleanse yourself in front of Orisha and let it rot for one day, after, take it to a forest, dig a hole and bury it. Return to Orisha shrine and offer a red rooster.
  - 12) One large bucket full of fresh water from a well, one large bucket full of water from a river, one clay pot full of peanuts.
  - 13) Twenty-one different cooked meals, one plate with raw meat. After placing it to Orisha, take it to a graveyard, leave a small offering for Oya.
  - 14) One white hen, one white rooster, one white pigeon, one black hen, one black rooster, one black pigeon, lots of kola nuts.
  - 15) One bush rat, one plate full of candies, one plate full of beans.
  - 16) One black chicken, one basket full of cowry shells, the clothes you are wearing.

## Sign Number 2

*Eyioso-Oyerosun*

- 1) Two pigeons captured by you, two coconuts, two raw eggs anointed with corozo lard, two coins, two cowry shells.
- 2) Two roosters, two eko (it is a type of tamale which most botanicas will carry). A head cleansing in front of Orisha with two pigeons done in a white chair. The chair has to be placed for seven days behind the house door. At the end of the seven days, take it to a far away field and plant a tree of any kind.
- 3) Two calabashes (large jicaras) filled with coins, and cowry shells placed in front of Orisha for two weeks. After give the coins as alms to the poor in front of any house of prayer.
- 4) Two large baskets full of fresh fruits, two pieces of cloth, two bowls with sugar. After two days leave them by some poor people's door.
- 5) Twelve kola nuts, one rooster, two river stones, one large cloth bag, one finch. Only the rooster is sacrificed to Orisha, place the stones inside the bag and leave it in front of Orisha for two days, then, take the bag, the dead rooster, and the finch (to be freed) to a field and bury the bag with everything that's inside of it.
- 6) Two women's dresses (used), two men's suits (used), two pigeons, two chickens, two cooked meals, two bottles of palm wine or firewater. After the ebbo has been placed in front of Orisha shrine, take it to where you will see two trees very close together.

- 7) Two consecutive head cleansings, one done in the morning, the other at sunset.
- 8) Two *ashere* (maracas) adorned with Orisha's beads to be placed permanently at Orisha's shrine. Rattle the *ashere* every morning for 21 days and call Orisha to help you with whatever situation you may require help.
- 9) One basket full of dry pears, one basket full of red grapes, lots of cowry shells.
- 10) One red rooster's tongue, one pig's tongue, they are roasted on charcoal and placed for two days in front of Orisha. After, have a second reading and find out whether or not another offering is needed. If so, then place lots of fresh fruits in front of Orisha.
- 11) Two red roosters, two black pigeons, two bow with strings, two arrows, two bow strings, two coconuts painted the color of the Orisha receiving the ebbo.
- 12) To receive *Orishaoko*. If you have it, take it to a yam field and offer one rooster, two pigeons, one bush rat (jutia).
- 13) One large plate full of mashed yams, fresh fruits, two arrow heads', two red chickens.
- 14) Place two large empty calabashes (jicaras) filled with coins in front of Orisha for two weeks, after, take them to the country and when you see a man laboring the fields, give them to him.
- 15) Two duck eggs (to be cleansed with in front of Orisha), two large yams, two white roosters cooked with cocoa butter and placed in front of Orisha for

two days.

- 16) Two white pigeons, two baskets full of different fruits, two baskets with straw. Two white flags in front of your house for two weeks.

Sign Number 3

***Oggunda***

- 1) One rooster, one pigeon, lots of maize, boiled corn mashed into a puree.

**Chant to Orisha:**

*O ni b oriyan a jo  
Orisha b'o ragbo ayo  
orisha ba ayo.*

- 2) Three yards of red cloth, three buckets filled with fresh water, thirteen snails, three palm tree worms, three roosters. Do a head cleansing in front of Orisha shrine with the worms, leave everything by a railroad track.
- 3) Three boat oars, one small canoe (toy), three red pigeons, three chickens. Take it to a bayan tree. Do this chant:  
*M'a ma j'oko oda  
walami, ma ma si j'oka o'da  
walomi.*
- 4) Three red chickens, three pigeons, three different colored pieces of cloth, three different meals made with three different meats, to be presented to Orisha in three red painted jicaras.
- 5) Three freshly fished fish, three *Olele* (it is a food made with black eye peas wrapped in banana leaves). One bush rat or smoked jutia (Agouti), three roosters tongues.

- 6) Three plates full of black eye pea fritters, three roosters, three pigeons, three plates full of boiled maize.
- 7) One machete, three sharp knives, three pigeons, (two are to be sacrificed, one to be released in a forest). One fully cooked chipmunk. A large basket full of fruits and sweets.
- 8) A large used rope to be tied around a tree deep in a forest, after three days, place it in front of Orisha and offer one red rooster, one black rooster, one white rooster, three knives. After three days take everything back to the forest and leave it at the foot of the same tree where the rope was tied.
- 9) Three plates of maize cooked with sugar molasses and raisins, three Odundun leaves, three sea shells, three jicaras filled with corozo lard and palm oil. Three unlit candles.
- 10) Three baskets filled with different color beads covered with yam leaves, three baskets with different fruits, three large yams, three plates with different beans, one rooster.
- 11) Three jicaras with kola nuts, cocoa butter, and yam leaves. Light candles for three days.
- 12) Alligator skin (cut three pieces), three pieces of smoked bush rat (jutia), lots of corn, the clothes you are wearing, three iron nails with corozo lard.
- 13) Three pieces of a railroad track, three pigeons, three iron bracelets, a plate with three pieces of meat.
- 14) One baby lamb, the clothes you are wearing, three chickens, three baskets full of uncooked beans.

- 15) Three baskets with fruits, three plates with coins, three plates with corn and molasses. Give the coins to the poor.
- 16) One iron musket, one pair handcuffs, one piece of chain link. One rooster offered at a railroad track.

## Sign Number 4

***Iroso-Irosun***

- 1) Four silver keys: one placed inside Orisha's bowl, one you carry all the time, one you leave at a house of prayer, one you leave at a hospital or a prison.
- 2) One plate full of coconut sweets, one rooster, one duck.
- 3) Four baskets filled with oranges and okra, one woodpecker to be released after four days, one shirt made of Mariwo (royal palm tree fibers), one bandana tinted blue to be worn for as long as you want.
- 4) One round large empty straw basket, four pigeons, four roosters, four yards of cloth (blue). The offering is made by the sea at sunset.
- 5) Four ducks: two are offered to Orisha, the other two are released at sea with blue and white ribbons hanging from their legs.
- 6) Place a large bucket full of water in front of Orisha to which you add: sugar, molasses, flowers, perfume, orange juice. After four days, take it to a beach and bathe with all this, rinse with sea water. Before leaving make a small offering to Yemaya Olokun. Place a basket full of fruits before Orisha's shrine, after four days take it to the beach where you bathed.

- 7) One rooster, one mariwo skirt, one bush rat (jutia), lots of cotton cloth, one fishing net.

**Say this chant:***Iwo ajeje godogbo**Oduro o ba wa tunle**yi se iwo ajuje godogbo.*

- 8) One pigeon, lots of mariwo placed in a basket, four bunches of bananas, four large sea stones, four jicaras filled with fresh water.
- 9) One piece of Tiger's skin placed under Orisha bowl. Four fish cooked in cocoa butter.
- 10) One red rooster, one white pigeon, four plates with yam puree, four plates with cooked maize in cocoa butter, four bottles filled with palm oil, four silver coins.
- 11) One pigeon, one duck, one basket full of oranges, one watermelon, left by the sea.
- 12) One crown made of cowry shells, one basket with white beads, four yards blue cloth, one piece tiger's skin, four African parrot feathers.
- 13) One red rooster, a plate with everything you had for breakfast.
- 14) Keep a monkey in the house as a pet. Offer Orisha the clothes you are wearing, one rooster, one pigeon, a basket with different fruits.
- 15) One silver ladder to be placed inside Orisha's bowl, four bottles of palm oil, four duck eggs.

- 16) Four plates with peanuts, four plates with candies, four small chickens, one rooster. Keep an African parrot in the house.

Sign Number 5

***Oshe***

- 1) Five pigeons, one hen, one small sword, one small (toy) canoe, five kola nuts.
- 2) One rooster, one hen, one basket full of fresh chard, five piece of copper about five inches long.

**Do this chant to Orisha:**

*Oni a ki ueyeo  
awe de mi wo  
Ore yeye o awe  
de we mi mo  
Osa niki nyin.*

- 3) Five yards of used rope to which a horse was tied, one small wood horse, five calabashes filled with honey.
- 4) One red rooster, five different herbs tied in bunches with yellow ribbons, five snails, one frog fished from a lake, 5 pigeons. There is no sacrifice made in this ebbo, you have to present everything to your head in front of Orisha, and leave everything at the entrance of a small town.
- 5) One red hen, five fresh fish (if fished by you it is better), five small pumpkins, five African parrot red feathers, five peanuts.
- 6) One bronze step ladder with five steps, one wood ladder with five steps painted yellow. Present it to Orisha and after five days lean it against the house

front wall for five days. Take the ebbo to a river with a bag full of oranges, five bottles of honey and call Orisha with a copper bell.

- 7) One rooster, one yellow hen, five white snails, five kola nuts, five yards yellow cloth.
- 8) Five pigeons, one rooster, one large pumpkin wrapped in yellow sewing thread.

**Do this chant:**

*Sewele, sewel ire  
L' Oshun wa se  
Oshun o mo ya  
Sewele sewele  
Oshun o mi yeye.*

- 9) Five jicaras filled with custard, five coins, five plates filled with cooked black eye peas, five oranges.
- 10) One hen, 5 jars honey, one pigeon.
- 11) One small chair adorned with peacock feathers, one fan made of peacock feathers, 25 oranges, one plate with scrambled eggs topped with cinnamon sticks, one yellow hen.
- 12) One small bronze cage, one small lead cage, one small wood cage, one small wire cage, one small straw cage, five baskets full of corn. Maize sweets. Take all after five days to a river and:

**Do this chant:**

*Olaye nse toko Orisa o  
wele sewele.  
Omo nse tako Orisha bo  
wele sewele*



*Ire gbogbo ni nsde  
toko Orisa bo.*

- 13) One basket filled with twenty five coins, five roosters, five hens, twenty five kola nuts, twenty five cowry shells. All to be given to the poor by the entrance to a small town.
- 14) One finch, one pigeon, one hen, one rooster's tongue.
- 15) Five baskets filled with fresh fruits, sweets made out of maize with honey and eggs yolk, five pound cakes, five cinnamon sticks. Call on Orisha with a bronze bell for five days, after, offer one hen and lots of cooked black eye peas.
- 16) Music to Orisha, five bottles of palm wine, invite people to a feast, give alms to the poor in a small town.

Number 6

***Obara.***

- 1) Six red roosters, one pigeon, six bottles of firewater, one burned sheet.
- 2) Six chickens, six pigeons, six yards red cloth, six yards black cloth, six sweet potatoes, six yams, six calabashes filled with roasted kernels of corn, six jicaras with roasted beans. After six days at Orisha's shrine, leave all in the country.
- 3) One black chicken, six yards black cloth, six Odan leaves, six banana plant tree leaves.
- 4) One large clay pot filled with hot amala (it is maize cooked with corozo lard and okra), one ox tail, one

pigeon, six chickens, one white guinea hen, six bottles of palm wine.

- 5) The clothes you are wearing, one black chicken, one black pigeon, two hundred leaves from different trees gathered by you.
- 6) One small hoe, one black chicken, one baby goat for the Warriors, one clay pot placed upside down, one clay pot filled with okra.
- 7) One white pigeon painted red with Osu (the paint used to paint Yawo), one bush rat (jutia).
- 8) One rooster, one dry scorpion, one small Maja (Maja is a non poisonous reptile), one bush rat or smoked jutia, one iron rod about six inches long anointed with corozo lard, six pieces of wood cut in a forest by you.
- 9) Six pumpkins filled with cowry shells, one crown adorned with cowry shells and African parrot feathers.
- 10) Six yards of red cloth, six yards white cloth, six different mariwo skirts, twelve kola nuts, one basket full of ginger roots.
- 11) Six red apples, six jicaras filled with hot yellow corn maize, one red rooster, one small red flag. After six days take everything to a forest. Return to Orisha and offer a bag full of cowry shells, the clothes you are wearing, one large piece of mariwo, after six days take all of it to a forest with an offering of fruits.
- 12) One red rooster, twelve yards red cloth, six sticks

cut from poplar tree branches, lots of charcoal, three pound of flank meat, eucalyptus leaves, the clothes you are wearing, one machete, one whip, one large clay pot. Take Orisha Shango with you to a forest as far as possible from any town. Offer the rooster to Orisha, then place everything else inside the clay pot. Change into a new set of clothes. Light up a fire, cover it with the red cloth. Make sure you make a lot of smoke while passing the machete over your body, after, crack the whip and place the machete and the whip with the burning clothes and meat. Do not return to the same place.

- 13) Same ingredients as above, but add a bush rat (jutia), lots of corozo lard, take your clothes off and cleanse yourself with a cow's tongue anointed with corozo lard. Start the fire and crack the whip twelve times.
- 14) One lamb, six large snails, two roosters, six kola nuts.
- 15) One large bunch of green bananas, one large bunch of yellow bananas tied with red strips of cloth, six African parrot feathers.
- 16) Play the drums for Orisha, invite people and offer lots of food, but no wine or alcoholic beverages. Do not eat of the same food you prepared for your guests, only boiled yam, leave some in the plate and offer it to Orisha together with the clothes you are wearing that day.

Sign Number 7

***Ordi-Oddi***

- 1) Seven cymbals, one rooster. Head cleansing with one hen, one cymbal. The rest is offered to Orisha

with the clothes you are wearing.

- 2) One chicken, seven snails, seven kola nuts, seven yards blue cloth, one basket full of beads and cowry shells.
- 3) Seven rabbit feet, seven pigeons, seven kola nuts, seven snails, one hundred empty calabashes (jicara) with boiled and mashed yam, seven jicaras with maize, seven jicaras with water melon seeds. One large bowl with water melon soup.

**Do this chant:**

*Awo siki kokan  
awo amala kokan lara  
odidi dajo.*

After the chant is done, go to a forest with a jicara filled with boiled corn, pour some to your left, pour some to your right and:  
Do this chant.

*Oggun wa le o  
Ogguna wa le o.*

- 4) One small weight scale filled with corn grains, one piece of rope seven inches long, one piece of wire seven inches long, seven yards blue thread, one small anchor, one pigeon.
- 5) One rooster, one pigeon, one large black stone, seven sea stones.
- 6) One hoe, one machete, one bronze bell, one basket full of water melon seeds, one broken straw basket, one basket full of kola nuts, offer one rooster in a newly planted field.

- 7) One cactus tree to be planted in front of your house after it has been at the foot of Orisha for seven days, one pigeon, lots of kola nuts. Take seven kola nuts out and take one to a different tree for seven days.
- 8) One large piece of cloth painted red, one painted black, one painted blue, one black and white, one knife, one large pumpkin, one pigeon.
- 9) One deer skin, seven baskets full of cowry shells, seven kola nuts, one pigeon, one small drum, one walking cane or wood stick.
- 10) One "loaded" water melon with corozo lard, sugar molasses, smoked fish and smoked jutia, corn, fried plantains. One white rooster, one pigeon. After one day at Orisha's shrine, take it to the sea shore.
- 11) One white female goat, seven pigeons, one rooster, one duck. One basket full of fresh fruits to be given to the poor.
- 12) One goat whose skin is to be hung by your house front door.
- 13) One hundred and forty snails, seven white handkerchiefs, seven white chickens, seven small fish hooks.
- 14) One lead cane as large as you are tall, seven plates with seven different meals all cooked without salt, one white rooster.
- 15) Seven pig tongues (uncooked), seven small clay pots filled with sugar cane molasses, seven small sea stones, seven cowry shells, seven kola nuts.

- 16) Seven watermelons, seven cantaloupe melons, seven pears, seven silver coins, seven bottles of sugar cane molasses, seven yards blue cloth, seven snails, the clothes you are wearing.

## Sign Number 8

*Eyioḡbe*

- 1) One white goat, one white chicken, one white pigeon, two white roosters, two white guinea hens. Cook the goat's tongue, let it dry, mashed to a powder and mix it with cascarilla and hard rock candy, present it to Orisha for eight days. Dress in white for eight days.
- 2) Eight white snails, eight cotton balls, one necklace made of jasper, one white rooster.
- 3) One bat, one white pigeon, sixteen baby chickens, eight yards white cloth. After eight days leave everything at a mud pool.
- 4) Make an eight inch tower with yam puree, cover it with powdered sugar and cascarilla, place a small white flag on top of it. Offer lots of fried green plantains and boiled yam.
- 5) Paint your body with eight black stripes (the paint is prepared with black powder mixed with firewater), eight white stripes made with cascarilla. Offer two white chickens, two white pigeons, the clothes you were wearing before being painted, eight small bunches of dry wood tied in white ribbons, one large uncooked yam.

**Do this chant:**

*O ni iku wa si Onibuje mo  
sininino, sinino, sinino*

*Arunm wa si Oni buye mo*  
*Sinino, sinino, sinino.*

- 6) One white lamb (yes...one white lamb), one white hen, eight white snails. Leave everything by a yam field.
- 7) One white hen, one white pigeon, eight jicaras full of silver coins to be given to the poor.
- 8) Two pigeons, two roosters. For eight days throw a bucket full of water to the street and place the empty bucket face down by Orisha's shrine, after, fill it with fresh fruits and take it to a house of prayer.

**Do this chant:**

*O yagba o yagba a*  
*yira oba ko so a yira*  
*O jagba o jagba.*

- 9) One uncooked bull's heart anointed with corozo lard and cocoa butter, one basket full of cotton balls, one plate with cooked mashed yam.
- 10) Lots of yam puree, one white pigeon, fill a basket with silver coins, visit a hospital and give the coins to the poor. Dress in white for eight days.
- 11) Eight coconuts painted white with cascarilla, one white rooster, the clothes you are wearing, eight bars cocoa butter.
- 12) One basket full of white pears, one basket full of white apples, one silver bell, 16 cowry shells, eight white snails. Present it to Orisha for few days, after, take everything to a house of prayer and leave it by the front door.

- 13) One goat, one pigeon, one hen, fresh fruits.
- 14) One large yam, eight eggs, one silver key, four yards white cloth, one white rod with your measurement.
- 15) Two white hens, two white shoes, two yards white cloth, two baskets with kola nuts. Wear white clothes for at least sixteen days, and stay home at night.
- 16) One basket full of different fruits, one white rooster, one white hen. Give alms to the poor by a house of prayer.

Sign Number 9

***Osa***

- 1) One large ostrich feather fan, nine uncooked yams, nine jicaras with pop corn.
- 2) Nine pieces of cooked lamb meat without salt, nine small pieces of different color cloth, one red rooster, one red hen.
- 3) Nine paper masks placed behind the house door, nine calabashes, one red rooster.
- 4) One bush rat (jutia), nine small baskets with one fruit in each.
- 5) One windmill in front of the house, one chicken, smoked jutia and fish.
- 6) Nine eggplants uncooked, nine pineapples, one rooster, nine African parrot feathers, the clothes you are wearing.
- 7) Nine colored pieces of cloth, nine white pieces of cloth, one bush rat. Take everything to a river and

chant.

*Oni a ki mi ewu  
ewu na ki pawodi  
ofala o ku ewu.*

- 8) One lamb, one rooster, nine baskets full of okra, nine kola nuts.
- 9) One small door made of iron, one made of lead, one made of wood, one made of tin, one made of paper, one made of bronze. Place them together at Orisha's foot with nine fishing nets, after nine days take the offering to a market place.
- 10) One black rooster, one piece of smoked jutia, nine bottles filled with palm oil, nine Yagruma leaves (to be placed behind the door), nine baby chicks. After nine days, go to a market place and give alms to the poor.
- 11) Nine plates filled with different kinds of beans, nine plates with different cooked meals, nine jicaras filled with cooked maize, nine jicaras with okra, nine small baskets filled with cowry shells, nine small baskets filled with kola nuts.
- 12) Three roosters, nine small pigs' tongue cooked in corozo lard. Let the tongues dry, make them into a fine powder, then, go to a marketplace and blow it.
- 13) One rooster, one guinea hen, one chicken, one pigeon. Take everything to a graveyard.
- 14) One whirlwind placed on each corner outside the house, nine smaller whirlwinds placed all over the house roof, nine chickens to Orisha, nine colored

handkerchiefs.

- 15) Nine small fans made of palm fibers, nine small fans made of different fowl feathers, nine plates full of cowry shells, nine plates with okra and pieces of uncooked yam.
- 16) Nine flamboyant tree branches, one red rooster, one lamb, one rooster's tongue, one calf's tongue, nine coconuts painted with Osu (vestment colors for Orisha Oya).

Sign Number 10

*Ofun*

- 1) Ten eggs, ten duck eggs, one rooster, one pigeon.
- 2) One mariwo skirt, one rooster, ten candles, ten jicaras filled with fresh water from a river close to your home.
- 3) One ashere (maraca), one cymbal, one rattler, one large wood stick, one wood cane, one rooster. Do this chant while hitting the ground with both canes.  
  
*A mmi morugbio koko  
ara ni mi koko  
Mo rigbio koko  
ara nimi koko  
O ni agogo nwi wun  
mo ru ega gbade  
Ara de mi gbade.*
- 4) One sharp razor, ten pieces of different color cloth, ten oil lamps, ten roosters, one egg, one basket with okra, one basket with pop corn, lots of corn.

- 5) Ten jicaras filled with charcoal ashes, earth from the streets, the clothes you are wearing, one white hen.
- 6) Ten different small masks made of wood, ten glasses with water, one large candle, one whip, one pigeon.
- 7) Earth taken from a jail or a court house placed inside a basket with charcoal ashes, one guinea hen, one pigeon, ten small candles, one finch to be free at a court house.
- 8) One dead black spider, one bunch of fresh bananas, one white hen, leaves from a poplar tree, smoked jutia.

**Do this chant:**

*Oni bi idan gbogbo ehun  
 ti mo nse I idan  
 alantakun Orisha  
 Orisha ni mo da  
 bi idan alatakun  
 nise alatakun Orisha.*

- 9) Pieces of wood from a wrecked boat, pieces of wood from a burned house, ten oil lamps, ten hens, one spider's web.
- 10) One crown made of African parrot feathers, ten baskets full of okra, ten dry coconuts, one black guinea hen.
- 11) Ten small wooden oars, ten pieces of charcoal, ten candles, earth from the front door of your house, one bird to be freed after ten days.
- 12) One goat, one pigeon, one chicken, one black hen.

- Lots of fruits taken to a hospital.
- 13) Ten large sea shells filled with honey and smoked jutia, one plate full of yam puree and boiled maize, one black rooster.
  - 14) One large calabash full of cooked okra, one padlock (open) one pair of handcuffs (open), ten different keys, one sail from an old boat.
  - 15) Twenty one fish, fished by you and cooked with okra and tomatoes, one basket full of sweets, one basket with okra, one basket with cowry shells.
  - 16) One red rooster, one black rooster, one white rooster, one red hen, one black hen, one white hen, one black pigeon, one white pigeon, one red pigeon, ten buckets with fresh water.... Ask Orisha if the Ofun bath is needed.

## Sign Number 11

***Ojuani-Owane Shober***

- 1) One old frying pan, one basket with black eye peas, one plate with black eye pea fritters, eleven apples.
- 2) One large clay pot with boiled corn, one black rooster, one black pigeon, one basket with fruits.
- 3) Two hundred cinnamon sticks, twenty one loaves of bread, one bag of corn flour, two jars of sugar cane molasses, one black pigeon.
- 4) One fishing net, one fishing spear, one tin shield, eleven knives, one rooster.
- 5) One hundred and one kola nuts, eleven coconuts, one basket with bread, one small step ladder, one

- pigeon.
- 6) One old small iron gate (or pieces of it), a key chain with one hundred keys, one basket full of okra.
  - 7) One goat, one lamb, eleven birds for three days in a cage and then to be released in front of a jail door.
  - 8) One large iron chain, one black goat, one black rooster, one black pigeon.
  - 9) One calabash filled with gunpowder, eleven buckets with fresh water from a river, one black rooster, one basket with fruits.
  - 10) Eleven bottles with firewater, eleven bottles with palm wine, eleven bottles with palm oil, eleven baby chicks.
  - 11) Two hundred cotton balls, one bucket full of brown sugar, eleven slabs from an old iron chain.
  - 12) One female goat, one male goat, two roosters, two pigeons, two hens, eleven bunches of dry wood sticks bounded together with red ribbons.
  - 13) Eleven buckets filled with fruits, eleven jicaras with silver coins, eleven plates with cooked deer meat, one duck, one chicken, one pigeon.
  - 14) One goat's skin hanging from the front of your house door (outside), one large corn bread, eleven pineapples, eleven oranges, eleven pears, one basket with okra.
  - 15) Go to a prison and bring food and money to eleven prisoners. Offer one black rooster, one black hen.

- 16) One turtle, one rooster, one hen, one chicken, one pigeon.

Sign Number 12

***Ejila-Eyila Shebora.***

- 1) Twelve coconuts painted red and white, twelve kola nuts, twelve Orisha stones.
- 2) Twelve jicaras filled with jam puree, one large calabash filled with "amala" and okra, two red chickens.
- 3) Two roosters, two pigeons, twelve kola nuts, twelve black eye pea fritters, one bottle palm beer, twelve thunderbolt stones. Do this chant:

*Sango toba burri ma  
yapon  
leyin re Iwo gidididi  
gban ni bi soe ose  
Bogsa buru ma ya  
pon levyin re  
iwo gidigidi bi ose.*

After the chant offer: One rooster, twelve quails.

- 4) One clay pot filled with okra, one rooster, one pigeon. Take all to a hill.
- 5) Four roosters, four palm oil candles, one bush rat, twelve snails.
- 6) One crocodile skin, twelve pieces of tiger's skin, one rooster, one large red piece of cloth, one large piece of white cloth.
- 7) Offer a feast with lots of different meals. Serve Or-

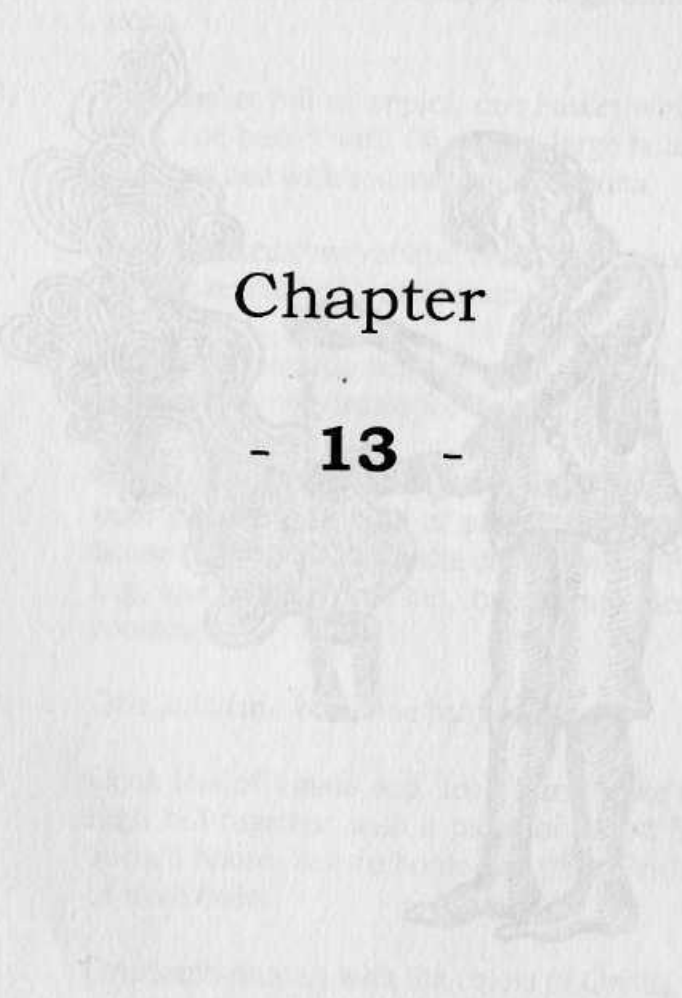
isha first a large plate with "amala" and okra, cook a calf tongue and serve it with the meals. When the guests are gone offer a red rooster.

- 8) One lamb, one rooster, lots of fresh fruits.
- 9) Twelve leather bags full of cowry shells and silver coins, twelve Orisha stones, one large thunderbolt stone.
- 10) One basket full of apples, one basket with coconuts, one basket with Okra, two large bunches of bananas tied with red and white ribbons.
- 11) Two hundred cowry shells, two hundred coconuts, two baskets full of green bananas.
- 12) One lamb, one rooster, one quail, one turtle, one pigeon. Play the drums for Orisha.
- 13) One basket full of silver coins to be given to the poor people at a house of prayer. Return to your house and offer Orisha the clothes you are wearing, one pair of crutches, one guinea hen, one rooster.
- 14) One jutia (smoked), one baby lamb.
- 15) Cook lots of amala and let it burn. Take it to a high hill together with a piece of wood from a burned house. Return home and offer Orisha lots of fresh fruits.
- 16) One lamb dressed with the colors of Orisha.

## DIFFERENT CLEANSINGS







## Chapter

- 13 -

### Inura Ebbo, Ebbo Shure

**T**he most common way for a member of a House of Osha, or for an "*Aleyo*" (not an active member of the Osha Societies), when an offering or sacrifice to Orisha is not required, is to make Ebbo Shure which most of the times consists of a cleansing with herbs and a different variety of items.

The consideration that a particular herb, which may belong to this or that Orisha, is not applied. The cleansings are prescribed as the Oluorisha reads the signs of the 16 Diloggun with Eleggua's cowry shells.

I will give the reader some of the cleansing (spells and counter spells) which I have used through the years as a priest of Osha, and some that my elders taught me and I found to be of help to the people that needed them.

This last section of the book may seem or sound like something that only ignorant people would do. It may not be "nice or civilized, or learned" to believe in witchcraft, evil eye, good or bad luck. That a friend or neighbor might be using black magic against you, or that someone at work or within the family could cast spells against you, or give you "the evil eye". But the first thing one learns as a priest of Osha is that there are forces in the Universe that can be either good or bad. By the same token these forces can be used either against you or for your benefit.

To put these forces to work on your behalf is one of the as-

pects of the rituals in Osha.

It is an acknowledged fact that leaves, herbs, stones (either precious or simple), metals, trees, roots, and even chants can carry all types of energy. By being able to mix them and work with them properly, this energy can be effectively used for your benefit and that of your loved ones.

### Cleansing Baths

1) Gather 17 different herbs as follow: Amaranth, Elderleaves, Lentil, Nugwort, Chamomile, Irish Moss, Senna Leaves, Darmel, Yerba Santa, Doggrass, Seaweed, Gladwind, Holm, Rush, Mistletoe, Hydrangea. Take seven small cascarilla balls, one red pepper, seven yolks of duck eggs, a piece of a root from an old tree found at the crossroads and cologne. Place everything inside a large container and seal the top. Leave it at a spot where the moon will shine upon it for seven days. At the end of seven days, take a bath with this mixture for seven different consecutive days. Have another reading to see how you are spiritually, or if anything else is needed.

2) Choose 21 different herbs at random, mash them into a pulp, add melted cocoa butter, coconut oil, liniment oil. Put all these items inside a bucket with fresh water and bathe with it. What is left, you can wrap in a white piece of cloth and keep under your pillow for about three days. Throw it as far away from home as possible.

3) Gather water from a river, rainwater, holy water (blessed water), rose water, Florida (Murray cologne) water, three pieces of wood cut from an old tree, goat's milk, three plantain leaves, a bunch of sweet cotton tree leaves. Prepare enough to last you for three days and bathe with this mixture.

4) Use two large sunflowers, half dozen yellow roses or gladiolas, half dozen white roses, half dozen red roses, cologne,

perfume (the one you use most), mint leaves, coconut oil. Keep in a bucket for 24 hours, then bathe once without using soap.

5) Take a bunch of Sage, Alexander, Peony leaves, Rosemary and Celery; add: five pumpkin seeds, small amount of red pepper, five small stones from a river, five cinnamon sticks, a table spoon of honey, a bottle of your preferred perfume. Bathe at sunset and at sunrise the next day.

6) Seven one gallon bottles should be filled with: sea water, watermelon seeds and these herbs: Marjoram, Camphor leaves, Marshmallow seeds, Calendula, Chives, Clary and Verbain. Take the bottles to the sea and submerge them there for about 24 hours. Start taking the first bath on a Saturday and continue the next day until the contents of the seven bottles have been used.

7) One bottle (small) olive oil, rattle snake oil, coconut oil, cinnamon oil, all mixed with basil leaves, holy water from seven different churches, powdered almonds, ginger roots, tobacco leaves, a little bit of firewater, and perfume. Prepare enough to last you for three baths.

8) This is a good cleansing bath to help you in matters of love and money: Put inside a small bottle, a few green tobacco leaves, a bit of honey, mint oil, white roses. Use as a perfume. You can prepare a larger container with the same ingredients and bathe a few times with it. After a few days make an offering to Orisha Oshun of a plain cake with honey, cinnamon sticks, five egg yolks and light a candle next to it for five days.

9) Gather as many wild yellow flowers as you can, five yellow rose petals, five gardenias, small amount of honeydew or cantaloupe melon, a glass of cherry wine, cinnamon powder, a bunch of basil, small amount of pumpkin peels. Bathe three consecutive days with it. Let three days pass and bathe one more time.

10) One glass cow's milk, one glass goat's milk, holy water, jasmine, a bit of sugar, cocoa butter, a small amount of firewater. Bathe one day before the sunrise.

11) Go to a river, get in with the clothes you are wearing. Take them off inside the river and bathe with lots of perfume. Rub your hands with honey and basil leaves. Once you finish get out and get dressed with a new set of clothing. Do not swim in the river or make too much of a splash. Remember you are there to cleanse yourself not to have fun. This cleansing can be done also at the sea, but change the honey for sugar cane molasses. Leave a few silver coins by the river's edge or the sea shore.

12) Get a large bunch of gladiolas, lots of cologne, a few fresh cut herbs, coconut soap. Make enough to last you three days. Bathe early in the morning.

13) Rose petals, mint leaves, rosemary leaves, sunflowers, white lilies, a bit of pure alcohol, and waters from a river, the sea, and if possible, a lake. Bathe as often as you feel you need to.

14) Rain water mixed with three different colognes, white flowers, the white of three eggs. One bath.

15) One bottle goat's milk, water from boiled sweet potatoes, a bit of brown sugar, a bit of white sugar, one cup of firewater.

16) A bunch of fresh basil, eucalyptus leaves, firewater, cocoa butter. Use non perfumed soap. Prepare enough to bathe three consecutive days. After the baths each day, light a candle to your Guardian Angel.

### **Ebbo to Fight Witchcraft**

To rid the house of evil spirits, bad influences, witchery, etc., you should gather six large plantain leaves, six pieces of wood cut

from a sweet cotton tree, six elder tree branches, six dead black snails; all of these items should be anointed with corozo lard, placed inside the bananas leaves and bound with sisal hemp. Cover the package with eucalyptus leaves. Let it dry for about one day, after burn it inside the house making sure to go through every room with this type of incense. Once you finish, take the remainder of the burned package and leave it by a forest. Make sure all the fires are out.

To rid yourself of an enemy (dead or alive), who may be using witchery against you, do the following: get five pieces of chalk, white, red, blue, yellow and black draw a circle as big as you can, taking care that you are never inside of it. Start with the red, followed by the blue and yellow, finish with the black. Light a candle on each of the cardinal points and call upon the Orishas Warriors. Once the candles are out, burn a tiny bit of gunpowder inside the circle while asking the enemy to be out of your life. Next day burn regular incense and spray cologne all over the house.

Against witchery left by your door, use on the same spot lots of tap water and wash it clean. After, pour in the place alcohol mixed with white vinegar, camphor leaves and a bit of black pepper, light a candle next to it and while it burns, ask that whatever evil is wished to you be returned to where it came from. That night cook a meal consisting of three different kinds of meat, no salt added, one calf's left leg bone and the insides of a chicken. Offer it to the spirit to use in this witchcraft and ask him to return to wherever it came from.

The burning of gunpowder, sulfur, pepper, and camphor is considered a two way street in the rituals of Osha. They should not be burned in your house or for that matter where the Orisha Shrine is. It is true that by burning those items in any fashion: circle, square, triangle or cross and mixed with other items, they can chase away evil spirits. But it is also true the Orishas have a certain respect and rejection to them, especially sulfur and gun

powder. So the best way to use them is outside the house if you have been vested with Orisha, if not, you are free to use them as you see fit. An alternative is to burn lots of garlic leaves mixed with different dry roots gathered in the forest. The smoke they produce is enough to rid your house of any intruder from the dark side.

A bunch of green bananas bound with red ribbon and hung from the ceiling of your house until they rot could be an effective weapon against witchery-evil eye. After they are completely spoiled and begin to fall, wrapped them in red cloth and leave it by a palm tree.

A good safeguard (protection) to be carried with you at all times is made of a root called "espanta muerto" (chase away evil). It is anointed with pork's lard and kept inside a small red bag.

Any "Osain man" would prepare an "Osain talisman-safeguard" for you. They are made out of almond roots and different colored beads, or it could be a sisal bag with different herbs and roots. They are to be carried in your pockets or purse.

### Against Evil Eye

To fight evil eyes which may be set upon you consciously or unconsciously by other people, you can gather twenty-four whole garlic, bind them with red ribbons and place them somewhere close to the main entrance to your house. It has to be a place where everyone can see it.

If a child is suspected of being constantly ill due to evil eyes, a wet bunch of fresh cut basil kept in a vase should be placed by his bedside for a while. A prayer should be said each night while a branch of basil is passed over the child's body, after, wrap it in a white piece of cloth and thrown as far away from the house as possible.

To protect you and your house from the evil eye, a peeled wood stick of guava about five feet tall should be kept behind the house door. It is anointed with corozo lard and tied with seven ribbons of different colors.

A jet black stone can be worn around the neck hanging from a gold chain. It can be even from a piece of string. Other stones used are: a jade stone, or a coral stone, or a mother of pearl, which should be washed with water from seven churches with male saint names. If you are not Catholic, then, water from three different rivers should be used.

### Against Constant Illness

Too many illnesses in the house lately?...Get a sisal bag big enough to hold 24 pieces of camphor and place it behind the door tied with a red ribbon. A small bag with one piece of camphor can be used around the neck for a while (specially attached to children). At least once bathe with coconut water, alcohol, mint leaves and basil.

In times of epidemic (during the cold season), besides going to the family doctor first, a smoke omiero made of eucalyptus and mint leaves should be burned as often as possible in the house. Add the sisal bag with camphor.

If you are vested with Orisha, the best way to find out how best to rid your home of this *Osogbo ano* is to have a reading with Obatala's cowry shells. If not a member of Osha, you should get lots of cotton tree leaves, poplar leaves, firewater, pure alcohol, cascarilla and keep all these items in a white basin full of tap water. The water is to be changed everyday. Burn lots of incense made with dry orange peels and charcoal.

If someone close to you is going from one illness to another too often, place a cross made of cedar wood tied with white ribbons and cleanse it at a church's fountain of blessed water. Have

someone not related to you read the prayer "The Just Judge".

This is an old Ebbo used often in the rituals of Osha when a "stomach cleansing" is needed: You need five small pumpkins, one fresh fish, a bottle of cinnamon oil, one yellow piece of cloth large enough to cover the belly, one bar cocoa butter, five small pieces of coconut. You begin by passing everything (one by one) on top of the person's belly. Giving each time five chants to Orisha Oshun. Wrap everything inside the yellow cloth and take it to a river where a cleansing with a hen takes place. This hen is anointed with corozo lard and cocoa butter. Start the cleansing from the head and work your way down the body until the stomach where the cleansing should end. Then a large pumpkin is used in the same fashion. Leave everything by the river with an offering of fruits and honey to Orisha Oshun.

### For Good Luck

Ginger roots tied with African cowry shells and one African parrot red feather, place inside a bag made of goat's skin and worn around the neck or in your pockets makes a good, good luck talisman.

Get a dry coconut and paint it red and white with Orishas paints (ossu). Place it inside a small clay pot and cover it with shredded coconut. Keep it in the house kitchen, replace it once a month.

Go to a royal palm tree with an offering to Orisha Shango of six red apples, one ripe bunch of bananas. Take a quail and pass it over your head several times, then let him fly free.

Cleanse the house and yourself by first passing a dry coconut painted red and white over your head, and then kicking it all over the house, until you reach the door, then, kick it hard to the outside. Immediately, cleanse yourself with a guinea hen by passing it over your body and letting her loose outside your house

door.

Take a large iron pot and fill it with orange juice, palm wine, firewater, and seven balls of coconuts sweets. Place it behind the house door for three days, after, leave it by a railroad track.

Grind one small diamond until it becomes a fine dust, mixed with brown sugar, powdered cinnamon, dry orange peels and spread it all over your house. Do not clean the house for at least forty-eight hours.

After, burn lots of brown sugar. Every once in awhile, throw pennies and candies on your house street corners. This is done to please Orisha Eshu. You can add smoked fish and bush rat.

Get a piece of flank steak about three pounds, anoint it with corozo lard and place it inside a red cloth bag. Pass the bag all over your naked body and leave it by a crossroads.

This is a very simple cleansing done with Orisha Eleggua when you need a change of luck: Take three small paper bags, corozo lard, three small pieces of smoked fish, corn, cinnamon sticks, three small pieces of coconut, three small pieces of smoked bush rat, three cigars, honey, nine pennies. Divide all these items, and place them inside the three bags. Once the bags have been filled, pass them one by one over your head and let them drop gently by your feet. After you have finished, throw them away in the following manner: one should go to a marketplace, another to a street where four corners meet, and the last, one block away before arriving home. The next day go by the same places and spill lots of firewater and drop a few pennies.