

The Ori

Ori plays an important role for Ifa devotees. The word itself, in Yoruba, has many meanings. It means head, or the apex or highest pinnacle of achievement. In a spiritual sense, the head, as the highest point of the human body, represents Ori. The head of a company or organization is known as Olori, or Ori for short. The supreme being, our single God, is known as Oludumare, another form of the word.

In the human body, Ori has two roles: the physical and the spiritual. The physical functions of Ori will be familiar to us: our brains think, our eyes see, our noses smell, and our ears hear. Our mouths speak and eat and breathe. Our faces are different from all others and provide our physical identities. Our spiritual Ori are themselves subdivided into two elements: Apari-inu and Ori Apere. Apari-inu represents character; Ori Apere represents destiny.

An individual may come to Earth with a wonderful destiny, but if he or she comes with bad character, the likelihood of fulfilling that destiny is severely compromised. Character is essentially unchangeable. Destiny is more complex. In Ifa we believe that we choose our own destinies. And we do this through the auspices of the Orisa Ajala Mopin, or the god of Ori. Ajala is responsible for molding the human head, and it is believed that the Ori we choose determines our fortunes or tribulations in life. Ajala's domain is close to Oludumare's, and it is he who sanctions the choices we make. These choices are documented by what we call Aludundun deities. All of us received our destinies at this place. An Ifa verse helps explain:

**E lee mo bi olori gbe yanri O
E ba lee yan teyin
ibi kannaa la gbe yanri O
Kadara a papo ne...**

**You said had it been
you knew where Afuape
got his Ori
You could have gone there for yours.
We all got our Ori at Ajala's domain.
Only our destinies differ.**

Destiny itself can actually be divided into three parts: **Akunleyan**, **Akunlegba**, and **Ayanmo**. **Akunleyan** is the request you make at Ajala's domain - what you would like in specific during your lifetime on Earth: the number of years you wish to spend on Earth, the kinds of success you hope to achieve, the

kinds of relationships you desire. **Akunlegba** are those things given to an individual to help achieve these desires. For example, a child who wishes to die in infancy may be born during an epidemic to assure his or her departure. Both **Akunleyan** and **Akunlegba** can be altered or modified either for good or for bad, depending on circumstance. Sacrifice and ritual can help to improve unfavorable conditions that may have resulted from unforeseen evil machinations such as witchcraft, sorcery, or magic. **Ayanmo** is that part of our destiny that cannot be changed: our gender or the family we are born into, for example.

In many respects, Ori may be the most important deity in the influence of one's life. Although it would seem that everyone would choose wealth and success for their destiny, such is not the case. The reason can be found in the fact that in Ifa, material success and accomplishment, though pleasant and encouraged, are not the yardsticks of existence. That yardstick is Ori-inu, or character, and the ways of showing strong character are often not by traveling the easy path. Also, if an individual's character is bad, his or her choice of destiny may not be fulfilled. In the sacred Odu Ogbeogunda, Ifa says,

**Ise meta ni omori odo nse
Ka fi ori re gun iyan
ka fi idi re gun elu
ka fi agbede-meji re ti ilekun dain-dan-in dan in
Awon ni won difa fun
Oriseku omo Ogun
Won ki fun Ori liemere Omo Ija
Won difa fun Afuwape
Omo bibi Inu agbonmiregun
Nijo ti won nlo ile Ajala-mopin
Lo ree yan Ori
Won ni ki won rubo
Afuwape nikan lo mbe leyin to mebe
Ori Afuwape wa sun won ja
Won ni awon ko mo ibi olori gbe yan Ori o
Awon ko ba lo yan ti awon
Afuwape da won lohun wipe:
Ibikan naa la ti gbe yan Ori o
Kadara ko papo ni.**

**A pestle performs three functions:
It pounds yam
It pounds indigo**

**It is used as a bar lock behind the door.
Cast divination for Oriseku, Ori-ilemere, and Afuwape
When they were going to choose their destinies in Ajala Mopin's domain.
They were asked to perform rituals.
Only Afuwape performed the rituals.
He therefore became very successful.
The others lamented that had they known where Afuwape chose his own Ori, they would have gone there for their own too.
Afuwape responded that even though their Ori were chosen in the same place, their destinies differed.**

The point here is that only Afuwape displayed good character. By respecting his faith and performing his sacrifices and rituals, he brought the potential blessings of his destiny to fruition. His friends, Oriseku and Ori-ilemere, failed to display good character by refusing to perform their rituals, and their lives suffered accordingly.

If a person's **Akunleyan** and **Akunlegba** are very bad, it can be detected on the third day after his or her birth through what we call **Ikosedaya**. This is a special ritual divination ceremony performed on a newborn infant by a babalawo in order to determine his or her Ori and what must be done to appease or enhance it. In the case of a bad destiny, there are only two possibilities for altering it: ritual/sacrifice and the presence of good character. Through good character individuals may be led to successful, knowledgeable people who will be prepared to guide and help them. Ritual and sacrifice can provide the same results. Using these two avenues may not make individuals with difficult destinies rich or successful, but it will certainly make their lives more comfortable.

In the sacred Odu **Owonrin-Meji**, Ifa says,

Agbon mi jia-jia ma jaa [name of an Ifa babalawo] cast a divination oracle for Bayewo when she was told to perform rituals. After the rituals, she was asked to use the chameleon to rub her entire body. She complied. Shortly after, she gave birth to a baby boy. A child born after rubbing the body with chameleon is named Oga-n-rara.

Oga-n-rara was coming from Heaven to Earth. He chose no single favorable destiny. When he was on Earth, life became unbearable difficult. Consequently, he approached ten different babalawos for divination. Oga-n-rara performed the rituals he was advised to perform and was able to have his needs met from Oludumare.

If our situation is honestly bad, and it is not a matter of our character or behavior, then our Ori Apere must be appeased. Prescribed sacrifices or rituals must be performed to bring ourselves back into healthy alignment. These rituals are best performed at night, and once they have been performed one is advised to stay in the house until morning. If this is impossible, then the ritual or sacrifice must be performed precisely at dawn before any other acts of the day are embarked upon.

Before performing the ritual it is essential to be freshly bathed and dressed in clean clothing. White would be the preferable color, but if dressing all in white is not possible, use the lightest color available. Black is not acceptable. In the ritual to Ori Apere, you must wear a cap or covering for your head.

Having prepared yourself for the offering you chant three times:

**Ela ro
Ela ro
Ela ro
Ori mo pe o
Ori mo pe o
Ori mo pe o!**

**Orunmila, please descend
Orunmila, please descend
Orunmila, please descend
Ori, I call on you
Ori, I call on you
Ori, I call on you!**

Then you present your problem, ask for a solution, and give your offering as payment and thanks.

There are several Ifa verses that offer general prayers to your Ori Apere. Among them are these:

**Iwonran Olukun
Abara le kokooko bi ori ota**

Difa fun Ore Apere
Omo atakara sola
Nje ibi ori gbe ni owo
Akara
Ori je won o ka mi mo won
Akara
Nibi ori gbe nni ire gbogbo
Akara
Ori je won o ka mi mo won
Akara.

Iwonran Olukun [Ifa babalawo]
cast divination oracle for Ori-Apere
It is certain that Apere is the quintessence
of well-being.
Wherever Ori is wealthy, let mine be included.
Wherever Ori has many children, let mine be included.
Wherever Ori has all good things of life, let mine be included.

Ori wo ibi ire
ki o gbe mi de
Ese wo ibi ire
ki o sin mi re
Ibi ope agunka ngbe mii re
Emi ko mo ibe
Difa fun Sasore
Eyi to ji ni Kutukutu owuro
Nje ti o ba tun ku ibi to dara ju eyi lo
Ori mi ma sai gbe mi de ibe.

Ori, place me in good condition.
My feet, carry me to where condition is favorable.
Where Ifa is taking me to, I never know.
Cast divination oracle for Sasore
In the prime of his life
If there is any condition better than the one I am in.
at present
May my Ori not fail to place me there.

Ori mi gbe mi
Ori mi la mi
Gbemi atete niran

**Gbemi atete gbeni ku foosa
Ori nii gbe ni
Ajawo, kii se oosa.**

**Support me, my Ori.
Make me prosperous, my Ori.
Ori is humankind's supporter before deities.**

If things are going badly in your life, before pointing an accusing finger at witches, sorcerers, or your enemies, you would do well to examine your character. If you are in the habit of bullying people or not being considerate of their feelings, do not look for any real happiness in your life no matter how materially successful you may be. If, on the other hand, you help others and bring happiness to them, your life will be full not only of riches but of joy and happiness as well. But remember, it is far easier to alter your destiny than it is your character.

Blessings,

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