

Making Ifa Work For You

Note:

The Ifa Foundation of North America feels quite strongly that the time for growing beyond the superstition, paternalism, and simplistic unthinking practice of the Ifa/Orisa philosophy is long overdue. For those that would like to cling to the intellectually unsupported lifeboat of "sacrifice a chicken and all will be well," or "Esu, Sango etc. will guard and protect me," this article will be both disturbing and perhaps infuriating. For those unable to make the transition to the clear, consistent and logical universe that Oludumare constructed, there are hundreds of practitioners, ifes and communities they can associate with. For those who wish to maximize their life and their relationships - with family, community and the universe we are part of - in a logical, consistent and thoughtful manner, we offer the following:

In this culture we have all grown up exposed, either directly or indirectly, to virtually hundreds of destructive religious concepts we have accepted as correct and inherently good. Because of this, the overwhelming amount of Westerners who find themselves attracted to Ifa and Orisa, bring so much baggage with them, the possibility of their experiencing the total benefits the philosophy offers are negligible.

This baggage is probably not what you think. It is not your personal character, behavior or desires. It is the unexamined preconceptions about spirituality you bring with you. It is the cancerous accumulation of Christian/Judea influence, New Age spirituality, Cartesian methodology and Hollywood characterizations of what **Spirituality** is **supposed** to be that will blind you from the logical purity and magical possibilities that Ifa offers! Worst of all, because you have accepted these premises as **correct**, or **good**, you will spend the rest of your life trying to fit the square pegs of Western theology into the round holes of Ifa/Orisa.

The first, and most dangerous concept is: *religion requires faith rather than reason.* In every Western religion, you are instructed to have absolute faith in what you are told. You are NOT to use your mind, logic and intellect to question, examine, or analyze the wisdom, logic and morality of what you are told to accept. Always these kinds of decisions are left to the **more able, more educated, more spiritual.** This translates to those running the show.

This view was supported not only by the major religions, but by the Cartesians, who stated: **you could be logical or you could be spiritual.**

You could not be both. Therefore, the implication was quite clear: reason and religion were opposites.

To the Yoruba wise men and women who formulated Ifa and Orisa worship, the exact opposite was true! Indeed, it was their crystal clear, and logical observations of how the universe functioned, what energies comprised its makeup, and the methodologies necessary for accessing them, that created what we know as Ifa.

They began with the premise that the universe that Oludumare created was both logical and benevolent. The fact that it contained negative as well as positive energies was not proof that a Devil existed, but rather proof that the very perfection of the universe requires balance. Indeed, the entire thrust and purpose of Ifa methodology can simply be described as a search for personal balance within ourselves in order to be healthy emotionally and physically, and a balance with the community, family and world we are part of.

The energies that they identified were as logical and clear-cut philosophically as the precise scientific analysis of; for example, your blood work might be when sent to a laboratory. In a similar way, when a doctor finds an infection in your blood, he attempts to add the energy (medicine) that will eliminate the imbalance and restore your health to balance. The brilliant wise men and women of the Yoruba identified energies in Nature that could be used to achieve the same balancing results in all aspects of our lives. The reality that they gave names to these energies did not make them human like. Esu, Osun, Obatala, Oya etc. are NOT anthropomorphic Disney figures, they are pure and potent energies that form the matrix of our universe.

So, why is it so easy, and so destructive, to impart human characteristics to these energies? In so doing, we not only diminish the potent power and potential of the actual energy, we accept some of the premises that ultimately prevent us from using it! Let me give you some simple examples:

Note:

Words have precise meanings. Without precise meanings there can be no communication or mutual understanding

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is a mainstay of Western religion. We are taught, and grow up to feel, that sacrifice is a noble act that will somehow reward us in this, or another life.

Let us examine the exact meaning of **sacrifice**. It is, by definition, the "giving of a higher value for a lower one." The key here is "value". We are not speaking necessarily of the monetary worth of something, but rather the genuine worth we place on something in our lives. Our lives, as the wise men and women of the ancient Yoruba culture saw clearly, would be benefited most by never sacrificing our higher values for our lower ones. In a culture based on Iwa Pele (good character) the higher values would always be credible. So, if helping a needy member of the community was a higher value than the money or clothing or food that you gave, you would not be making a sacrifice you would be making a good trade.

Yet, we are taught, from childhood that giving up our higher values for lower ones (sacrifice) is a desirable goal. The child that keeps the secret of molestation in order to protect the family, the employee that allows someone to take credit for his or her work in order to protect their job, the individual who does not speak out against a clear injustice because they fear making others angry, all are part of this unexamined concept. For, somewhere in their psyche is the concept that by sacrificing, they are being noble! The majority of unhappily married men and women, of disgruntled employees, of those enslaved in any way, is usually a result of sacrifice being involved, or invoked. Indeed, based upon the precise meaning of the word, it is inappropriate to **sacrifice** to the orisa. It would be totally logical to present an offering or ebbo to the energy that we are contacting in order to successfully achieve the value we are seeking. That is a good trade. It is certainly not giving a higher value for a lower one.

Paternalism

The inherent desire to have a parent take care of us is easy to understand. Indeed, children must depend upon the protection and guidance of their elders to successfully grow up. It is "grow up" that is the key. We are supposed to have that care as children not as adults. As adults we are supposed to impart our wisdom, protection and care to the next generation of children. Ifa understood this, and correctly saw Oludumare as the ultimate father and creator, who provided His/Her children with all the tools necessary to navigate through His/Her creation. "But God is supposed to take care of us," will be the response of many. And, you are right.

But God, viewed as a **good parent**, would provide us with the ability and path to grow and solve our own problems as adults. More important, God is not to be viewed as a parent. This force, which, by definition must be omnipotent (all powerful) and omniscient (all knowing), would certainly have been capable of having us believe or act in any manner It chose. The fact that His/Her/Its

choice was to give us reason and logic as part of our makeup as opposed to blind obedience, logically concludes we are supposed to use those attributes for our well being.

Whenever we are asked to disregard those traits we find oppression. It will always be: "all animals are created equal, but some animals are more equal than others." Don't buy it! Cast it out! On a lesser level, we have taken this paternalism and carried it over to the energies of the Universe, the Orisa. If I had a penny for everyone over the years that have made statements like: "Esu is confusing me;" "Yemonja is protecting me; "Sango wants my head" etc., I would be a multi-millionaire. And, if you say, "**it can't hurt, and may help, to visualize these energies in human form**", you are wrong! And the reason is that when you do, you remove the responsibility and personal empowerment from yourself, and transfer it to a third party. In so doing you achieve what almost every organized religion, with the exception of Ifa, set out to do: make you dependent! They depend on your dependency. They depend upon it for control, power and funding!

Ifa is about independence, personal growth and knowledge. It is not about these things because they represent some kind of moral good but because they are logical and they work.

When you offer a rooster in order to access a particular energy to accomplish something, it is NOT the blood of the rooster, or the energy itself, which achieves the change. It is you that achieves it! And that change is possible because the balance or energy you were lacking has been restored. Ultimately you are responsible because you have followed the logical and consistent workings of the universe.

While it might be more comfortable in the short term to depend upon someone, or something else, be it Padrino, Priest, Babalawo or Orisa, in the long term it prevents your growth. For when you are dependent, you are enslaved.

In the long term, to acquire the knowledge, skills and logical application of these ancient Truths as they function in the 21st century, will ALWAYS give you the path to solving your problems and issues. The universe is always home, it is always available and it is always of good character. You can deal with it safely, consistently and powerfully. That is what we teach at the Ifa Foundation.

Blessings,

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