

Iwa Pele - character not obedience!

At the core of successful, and meaningful, orisa worship, is the concept of **Iwa Pele**, or "**good character**." In a certain sense, everything else is secondary. For example, what good is divination, or the ability to work with orisa energy to manifest observable, pragmatic changes, if those understanding and changes are not processed within the overall, and overriding, context of good character?

Too often, blinded by the power inherent in the philosophy, or confused that the universe's energy is their own, individuals will manifest changes that stem, not from good character, but from self-interest, arrogance or anger. These changes will always, in the long run, fail to benefit any involved.

Just as the magic and power of the Orisa is often misused, so also is the very concept of Iwa Pele! Pompous and arrogant priests and priestesses will often use the concept of Iwa Pele to imply obedience rather than character. I can remember, early in my days of initiation, a large celebration was being held for a newly crowned woman. The celebration was being held in a small home in the Western suburbs of Chicago. The home was overflowing with people. Tables for lunch had been set up everywhere...from the basement to the second floor, and food was being served. A couple of young, recently initiated Babalawo, including myself, sat down at the table in the basement along with a dozen or so guests to have lunch. A short time later, the Babalawo who had initiated us appeared at our table. He was furious. We had eaten before him! The fact that we hadn't the slightest idea that there was an "order for eating" or where in the house he was, and that we presumed he was eating at the more visible tables upstairs, did nothing to diminish his ranting and raving. From his point of view we had shown disrespect to him. We were guilty of bad character.

Today, decades later, I understand that the flaw in character was his, not ours. That his own issues of power and control motivated him to corrupt the important concept of good character into his personal desire for unthinking obedience! As the years have passed I have seen this twisting rear its head in many ways. Often, an individual's desire for knowledge is met with a doorway of secrecy, the lock of which is guarded by those who would control your knowledge, not because you were not yet prepared for it, but because it retained their power and control. If you question their decisions, their response is you are not showing respect or good character. I have seen priests and priestesses exhibit the worst possible behavior, yet defy their godchildren to question or challenge this behavior because of the absolute

concept of respect and character. I am appalled as certain groups within ethnic boundaries shun or punish any of like color or ethnicity who have dared seek knowledge or understanding outside that group! And, they do it from the same twisted and corrupt position of their manipulated and control oriented concepts of respect and character!

Iwa Pele is about a good heart and soul. It is about making individual decisions within the context and understanding of the world we live in. It is about doing what is universally correct, not simply arbitrarily correct to some individual or group. You cannot nourish your own character by accepting or ignoring the bad character of others...even if they were initiated before you. Iwa Pele is a tool for growth, knowledge and enlightenment, not for control, power or personal indulgence. Ultimately, it is the only way to make use of the power and energy of the orisa. Ultimately, it is the only roadmap for someday fulfilling your destiny and taking your place in Counsel with the other Elders.

Blessings,

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