

Awo Training VII

Over the past twenty years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Americans who travel to Nigeria for initiation into the mysteries of *Ifa*. Every trend in any spiritual tradition brings positive and negative influences to the tradition. By improving our access to traditional elders in Yoruba land we are able to reclaim many aspects of *Ifa Orisa* that did not survive the middle crossing.

There is an ongoing debate on whether or not our elders in Nigeria have things to teach us or if in fact aspects of the tradition have been preserved in the Diaspora that have been lost in Africa. There may never be a definitive answer to this question. Based on having been blessed to travel to Nigeria five times, I can say that every *Orisa* I have seen in the Diaspora I have seen in Nigeria. Not every *Orisa* is found in every village because not every *Orisa* is needed in every village.

I think students from the Diaspora often visit a particular village in Nigeria do not see all the *Orisa* they have seen in the Diaspora and assume those *Orisa* do not exist any more in Africa. I believe this is an inaccurate assumption. I have been fortunate to travel to a number of regions of Yoruba land and I have observed the landscape of *Orisa* in a given village shift as you move from region to region. For example villages along the *Osun* River worship *Osun* as the River Goddess. Villages along the *Oba* River worship *Oba* as the River Goddess. *Osoosi* is worshiped in the northern region of Yoruba land while the *ase* of *Osoosi* is referred to as *Laqua* in the southern region of Yoruba land. If you did not know that *Laqua* and *Osoosi* had the same communal

spiritual function you might make the mistaken assumption that *Osoosi* did not exist in a particular region.

I say all of this to make the suggestion that those of who have been blessed to receive initiation in Nigeria have the problem of finding teachers in this country who are familiar with the older methods of spiritual practice found in traditional Yoruba culture. In my experience there are a number of good teachers living in the Diaspora who were born in Nigeria and who were trained by the *Egbe* elders. In my experience those elders who are the best trained are also reluctant to take on students who they do not consider serious. In an effort to show our Yoruba elders we are serious students of *Ifa* I think it is important to show some effort to implement traditional Yoruba protocol in our spiritual practice. In this light I am presenting a traditional Yoruba *oriki* used to greet the shrine of an elder.

ADURA ORUNMILA OLUWA MI AJIKI

(Praising the Shrine of my Elders)

(Clap three times in front of the *Ifa* shrine)

Ila ji Orunmila,

Ila ji Orunmila,

Ila ji Orunmila.

I wake up with the blessing of the Spirit of Destiny.

Mo ji mo ki atola.

I ask you for forgiveness.

Mo ki asula.

I ask you for success.

Mo ki asuruenene.

I ask you for happiness.

Ina ku ku ku l'ahere.

I pray in house filled with happiness.

Enia ku ku ku l'aba.

I pray without fear of my enemies.

Adifa fun ogogo l'imo ogbojo.

You are the only one who can see the future.

O ni 'ti awo yo ogbojo.

You are the only who can see future generations.

Ti awo yo ogbojo.

You are the only Spirit who can forgive.

Nje Oluwa mi ma jeki tire yo o.

You are the only Spirit I will worship for the rest of my life,

Protect me from my enemies.

(Prostrate in front of the shrine and rub your hands together)

Awo ajiki l'awo ajiki.

It is the Spirit of Mystery I praise first.

Awo ajiki l'awo ajiki.

It is the Spirit of Mystery I praise first.

Awo ajiki l'a ipe awo aja ale gbun.

It is the Spirit of Mystery who receives my offering.

A da a awon meteta nlo bo ori elu.

I pay homage to you Spirit who guides my destiny.

Ori elu ko gb'ebo lowo won.

I will always make the necessary offerings.

Awo ajiki l'awo ajiki.

It is the Spirit of Mystery I praise first.

Awo ajiki l'awo ajiki.

It is the Spirit of Mystery I praise first.

Awo ajiki l'a ipe awo aja ale gbun.

It is the Spirit of Mystery who receives my offering.

A da fun iki t'o on yio bo ori elu.

The Spirit who controls the universe.

Yio gba ibo lowo on.

The Spirit who is supreme.

Iki ji o wewo fini o wewe fini.

I pay homage to your divine nature.

O wa imu obi o na a si ori elu.

The Spirit of Power and Creation.

Ori elu gba lowo re.

The Spirit who has no comparison.

O ni lowo iki eleyinju ege l'a to mi ibo.

The Spirit who becomes manifest in a beautiful way.

Igbana ni iki m'ekun s'ekun igba.

The Spirit who appears with many different faces.

O m'ohun s'ohun yere nkorin wipe.

I pay homage to you by singing.

Gb'obi pa o.

The only one that has millions of ears.

Awo aye.

The Spirit of the World.

Gb'obi pa o.

The only one that has millions of ears.

Awo aye.

The Spirit of the World.

Ase.

May it be so.

Many people have wondered why the elders in Yoruba land have chosen to be open with me and to take me seriously as a student of *Ifa*. I believe the answer to this question is simply because I have made some effort to follow the protocol of traditional *Ifa* culture and this in turn has given me a certain amount of credibility. Two things I have learned in the process speak the truth and always keep your word.

When saying *oriki* to Orunmila it is important to sing the *oriki*. There is no one single way to sing any given *oriki*. The *oriki* in *Ifa* are sung from the heart as a Jewish cantor sings the Torah or an Islamic cantor sings the Koran. The human spirit speaks to the Creator through song. This is the foundation of a very important mystery. When the Spirit of *Ela* ascends on to an *awo*, *Ela* always comes singing.

An experienced elder will recognize the divine presence of *Ela* in an *awo* when the *awo*'s personal song is replaced by the voice of *Ela*.. If *Ela* is not present in the *awo* a traditional elder will not teach. *Ifa* says *awo* is born not taught. When as *awo* we increase our understanding of *Ifa* we do not learn something new, we remember something we once knew a long time ago.

Ire

Awo Falokun