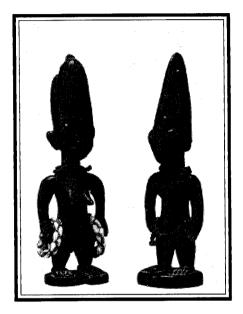
The IBEYI



The Children of Miraculous Birth

STUART MYERS

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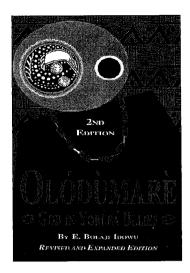
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2ND EDITION

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OLODUMARE GOD IN YORUBA BELIEF by E. Bolaji Idowu

This classic text is referenced in the bibliography of just about every book written on the Yoruba religion. Late Professor Idowu, a Yoruba scholar and a minister of the Methodist Church in Nigeria, sees the history and ritual of the religion of the Yoruba from a theological, rather than an anthropological, viewpoint. One of the author's chief aims is to interpret the Yoruba concept of the supreme God and to explore the relationship between Olodumare and subordinate deities.

Apart from the special merit of having been written by one who knows the ground thoroughly, the book also provides a fresh approach to the study of religion in West Africa. This second edition contains a considerable amount of new material - songs and verses quoted with English translations - which has never before been recorded.

There are few books on this subject available and none written from a Yoruba viewpoint. Professor Idowu's work should provoke a good deal of controversy and valuable discussion.

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the late 1980's and continuing through the early 90's, a spiritual war was begun in the concrete jungle known as Miami, a war fought not with guns and knives, but a war of the spirit, a fierce struggle between the physical and spiritual descendants of the Yoruba and the community of Hialeah, Florida. It was a battle fought for spiritual/religious rights in a country founded on religious freedom, a melee brought by those oppressed for no other reason than adherence to a culture uprooted centuries ago and brought to a new world they did not want, nor desired to claim. Oba Ernesto Picardo and his soon to be created Church, the Church of the Lucumí of Babaluaiye, fought a court battle that spanned almost a decade and ended in a Supreme Court ruling on June 1 1, 1993, a decision that finally made the practice of animal sacrifice legal and opened the door to global understanding of the religion Santería. Those who adored the Orishas, proud people who made expensive personal sacrifices to worship and propitiate the deities of the ancient Yoruba were finally free to practice their religion openly, unafraid of legal or ethical ramifications from civil authorities. Many likened it to the abolition of slavery, the final chains that brandished Orisha worshippers in silent prisons were broken, and they were fettered no more.

Since that time, a proliferation of books has flooded the media revealing many of the faith's inner workings, known to those on the inside as Las Reglas de Ocha (the Rites of the Orishas), many still refer to this faith by its common nickname "Santería" and still believe the inherent lies, the falsehoods propagated by those of more mainstream faiths. To say that this is a religion of evil, wickedness, and bloodshed would be the most vile of misconceptions: to say that this is a faith of goodness, evolution, and love for a sacred, pagan past is to begin a path of understanding. It is a religion born on the fertile banks of the Niger river in Nigeria, Africa, a religion conceived when blacks began to propitiate and venerate the deities of earth, wind, sky, and water. Over the centuries, primitive animism became a primal faith with delineated rituals, taboos, and detailed metaphysics about the spiritual beings known as geishas. In their own lands, the Yoruba built their lives around these Spirits, and in time built a culture that many still view, spiritually and physically, as the holy land and the cradle of human civilization. They were warriors, hunters, agriculturists, philosophers in their own right - yet they were deeply religious and fiercely devoted to their deities. Their faith built an empire.

When the Christian heresy of racial inferiority/superiority gained fervor and the wickedness of slave trading was begun, blacks were enslaved in hordes, stolen from their homelands, the New World of promise for Caucasians and Hispanics became a prison for Africans. Faithful to their deities. those who could took the Orishas into their bodies and made the arduous Middle Passage in fear. For while the Orishas were Spirits that could walk throughout heaven or earth at will, each priest or priestess received what they believed to be the secret of their gods in three components: Diloggun (cut cowrie shells), implements (hand-crafted tools). and otanes (sacred stones). While all three of these are needed for the Orisha to have strength, the most important of these was, and still is, the cut cowries that make up the Orisha's "soul". These were swallowed, and swallowed again and again as they made their eventual, inevitable passage through the body. Those who survived the Middle Passage were able to worship the Orishas in secret, especially among the tropical climate of the Caribbean (Cuba being the most hospitable). Against inhumane, harsh treatment, the African gods sustained their people through hardships .

It has been more than four-hundred years since the first blacks were kidnapped and brought to the New World, and even now the Orishas are actively worshipped in Cuba. An inhumane, yet profitable trading brought a continual flow of new priests and priestesses to the island, and these replenished and renewed the religious faith as it evolved and amalgamated with Catholic beliefs. Amalgamation does not mark a wholesome eclecticism, nor is it part of the true evolution had by the faith. rather, it provided a means for the Yoruba to hide the worship of their Orishas behind the veneration of the Saints . Those ignorant of the African's spiritual practices nicknamed these Sanfería, worship of the Saints. Cuban immigration in the early 1900's brought Orisha priests and priestesses to the mainland US; however, it was not until the arrival of Pancho Mora (a Babalawo) from that island that the Orishas were firmly seated here as they were there. Since that time the religion has become a flourishing faith growing to encompass not only those of Afro-Cuban descent, but also those of Hispanic/Latino, Caucasian, and African origins. The Orishas have moved beyond their original people to embrace those of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and this worship continues to evolve and grow at an almost daily pace.

It is for this reason that I have begun this series of pamphlets with Original Publications, a continuation and deepening of the work done by their author Awo Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi in his series of writings on the Orishas and how they are worshipped/propitiated through the rites still practiced in Ode Remo, Nigeria. In the New World, Orisha worship adheres to the beliefs and practices of old Ovó, the empire uprooted and spread throughout the African Diaspora, and while there are many similarities between our rituals and the ways of our Nigerian counterparts, there are just as many differences that can be appreciated. Some come from syncretization and amalgamation, others are due to the adherence of an older, more ancient system rooted in our ancestors. Many of our differences come not from unplanned changes, but rather from the necessity to survive and evolve in a foreign land under slavery and new climates. Yet the Orishas are alive and well here as they are there; and the descendants of the Yoruba now known as the Lucumi are a spiritual race in their own right. These writings will explore the Orishas of the New World: their symbols, shrines, patakis, prayers, Moses, and rituals. While no one booklet can express the whole mystery of any one Spirit, each will help the aspirant understand and appreciate the mystery behind each Orisba.

In his series of pamphlets, Awo Fá Lokun Fatunmbi has defined the word Orisha by its origins and etymologies. He writes, "The word Orisha means 'Select Head'. In a cultural context, Orisha is a reference to the various Forces in Nature that guide consciousness. According to Ifá, everything in Nature has some form of consciousness called 'Ori'. The Ori of all animals, plants, and humans is believed to be guided by a specific Force in Nature (Orisha) which defines the quality of a particular form of consciousness. There are a large number of Orisha and each Orisha has its own awo [a word that he earlier describes as secret or mystery]."³ This booklet will explore not one Orisha, but two Orishas known collectively as the Ibeyi, the children of miraculous birth⁴. In reality, there are seven of these forces, or select heads, although only four have survived in the New World Orisha faiths and are currently alive and well with those priests and priestesses who have received them. All of them are considered "adimú" Orishas, those that can not go to an initiate's head in the ritual of Kariocha, yet are necessary at times to flesh out the aché of the believer and certain Spirits. This pamphlet will explore in depth the divinities known as Taewó and Kaindé (the twins); they were born of the union between Shangó and Oshún, yet were raised by Yemayá. The divine twins share in all their powers.

This pamphlet is not comprehensive; an entire book would be needed to explore all the customs, rituals, eboses, prayers, and sacred lore surrounding these powerful Yoruba Spirits. This work will serve as a focal point for study, a guide to the spiritual nature of these entities. Many of the faith (those who are not priests or priestesses) consider their reception minor, an answer to one of life's many problems or difficulties. They are seen by some as little children, unimportant, though at times demanding of worship and reverence. Yet it is through the Ibevi that the promises of Oshún are fulfilled: a life filled with beauty, sweetness and love, it is also through them that the beautiful Orisha seems more human, more fragile, and yet immensely more powerful. They are the pride, and in many ways, the source of Shango's power and strength, and through them one also learns of Yemava's heartfelt duty to be Mother to all as she is Mother to the world and most of the Orishas. They are integral to the system of Orisha worship - without them the aché of neither the alevo nor Santero can be complete. Enjoy this pamphlet -- for all of you who read this work and continue your studies among the Orisha tradition, my prayer is this: that Elegguá opens the roads to knowledge, and Obatalá helps you use that knowledge in your quest for wisdom and Iwa Pele - good character. Achél Tol

Stuart Myers Winter Park, Florida.

Endnotes to Introduction:

1. Under Protestant slavery, Orisha worship could not survive beyond the first or second generation, if it survived at all. Protestants treated blacks as animals, breaking up and destroying the family social unit. Those who settled under Catholic slave lords, however, were allowed to keep most of their family and social units intact. Believers were enabled to pass along their Orishas and sacred rituals to the ensuing generations.

2. So important were the Catholic Saints to the survival of Orisha worship that the lyawó (bride/initiate of our faith) must go into a Catholic church at the end of the week-long initiation to pay homage to those icons. Some houses dictate that the lyawó be baptized a Catholic before the ritual of Kariocha may be done, others even go so far as to emphasize the practice of Catholicism. Not all houses, however, keep the amalgamation to this degree, but most will follow the custom of having the lyawó pay homage to the Saints at the closure of making Ocha.

3. Fatunmbi, Awo Fá'Lokun. <u>Shango: Ifá and the Spirit of Lightning.</u> (New York: OriginalPublications, 1993). Page3. Used by permission.

4. One misconception about these forces is this: the Ibeyi are the two children of Oshún and Shangó who were raised by Yemayá. This is true only of Oshún's first two children who were twins, Taewo (the first to taste) and Kainde (the final to arrive). There are a total of seven Ibeyi, and of these four may be received by a New World Orisha worshipper.

Section One

The Ibeyi Children of Miraculous Birth

Ibeji re, omo edun ibeji re, omo edun kere-kere-yan.

"Behold twins, children of the monkey. They do not die."

from an ancient Yoruba chant to the Ibeyi.

Imagine a world without doctors, without medicine, an era in which life and death walk hand in hand closely, taking the lives of the young mercilessly and without care. Disease and famine sweep clear whole villages of the weak, the infirm, the young, and the elderly. Imagine a time when to give birth was to risk one's own life for the sake of that newly emerging, and this risk was always a gamble, for even if the mother survived there was no guarantee that the infant would. Such was the world of the ancient Yoruba. Infant mortality was a given: infant survival was rare and risky. Lacking medicine, elaborate rituals and systems of propitiation were designed to bring down the watchful eves of the Orishas on both Mother and newborn. Oracles were consulted, priests and priestesses employed in their frantic attempt to not only survive and build an empire, but also to preserve their own blood, their own lineage through that of their offspring. Wealth was not counted in one's material possessions or economic status. Good fortune meant being fertile, having a strong wife that could bear many children, and eventually having many children that would grow up to bear more. There was no greater poverty for a woman that that of barrenness, and a man without offspring was impoverished even if he could afford the finest goods. Life was harsh, and survival was the goal.

In spite of the Yoruba desire for large families, this group was wary of one phenomenon that happened to them again and again: that of multiple births. Among those descended from these people, twinning (and sometimes greater numbers of children) occurs at a high rate - forty-five out of every one-thousand births results in at least twins. Compared to the rate of multiple births in the United States or Europe, twinning occurs at a rate four times greater among this ethnic group. In the days before old Oyó became the dominant Yoruba empire, most giving birth to multiple children died, and their infants, being poorly developed, died as well. These deaths were seen as a blessing since twinning was common of animals, not humans. It was believed that the mother had done something sinister, making pacts or deals with the ayé (the witches) or evil spirits. In the rare instance that all three survived, they were quickly put to death so the wrath of the ancestors would not be incurred. At times the Mother and only one child would survive the dangerous delivery of twins, and while the Mother in these instances would sometimes be allowed her life, the child was exposed, his or her soul set free to rejoin its sibling in the other world. Surely, the Yoruba believed, to have one living twin would bring the wrath of the deceased upon their people.

Yet these practices quickly came to an end in the eleventh century of ancient Oyó. It was about this time that Shangó lived among the Yoruba as a man, he was an accomplished king, the fourth of the city, and it was under his reign that peace and greatness were brought to the Yoruba nation.¹ Shango's skills as an *Oba* (King) and warrior were great, blessed by the Yoruba gods with beauty, strength, and political genius, his words came to be regarded as the words of an Orisha even before his legendary ascension. As a human, he had three wives, and it came to pass that his favorite wife gave birth to healthy twins. Shangó had been away at war fighting for his nation when they were born, and the wife was forced to keep one of the two children hidden lest those in the compound accuse her of sorcery and put her to death. All three, the mother and two children (one male and one female) survived. Being the leader of a growing nation and father to many children by his other wives, Shangó consulted Ifá and declared that the birth of twins was a herald of prosperity and blessings - a testament to the virility of both parents. The ancient empire ceased the slaughter of innocent children and their mothers, paying homage to the virile nature of the family from which twins emerged.

While ended within the state of old Oyó, evidence remains that the practice continued for some time among the smaller, divided Yoruba villages. While those who were wealthy in both money and offspring were allowed to keep their children and their lives, those who were poor or had no other children were still put to death. Another legend born after

Shango's ascension tells us that for many months, strange illnesses and diseases began to claim the lives of the wealthier families' children, but not those of the poor. The legend states that the parents of these children tried in vain to save their youthful lives, yet it was all to no avail. Finally, the wealthy villagers went to the Babalawo and consulted with Ifá, and there with Orúnmila it was decided that the barbaric practice of exposing twin infants after birth was angering Shangó who himself fathered twins as both human and Orisha. Eboses were marked to placate him, yet before the reading could end the Orisha demanded that twins be worshipped, not destroyed. It was also decreed that that the mother of twins would go into the streets once every five days, dancing to honor the lbeyi - the divine Spirit of Twins fathered by the mighty Shangó. No one who saw the mothers dance would deny them alms, and the lbeyi would make the family prosperous beyond their wildest dreams. Thus was their cult born, and their power for redistributing wealth became well known.

To understand the full implications of twinning among the ancient Yoruba, or the significance of twins and the Ibeyi in this religion's modern culture, one must study the metaphysics of this ethnic group. Old Ovó divided their world between two concepts: nature (also symbolic of the unseen world) and civilization (symbolic of all things that are seen). While civilization consisted only of the village and the cultivated land for farming around each village, the raw, natural world occupied a limitless, eternal realm. It was the home of wild animals and spirits (ancestral, natural, and malicious spirits were all said to reside in the forest). While wild animals (and spirits, so they believed) were able to emerge from the depths and into the village at will, people could not venture into the depths without risking loss of life. Yet twins were primeval, almost magical in nature. Like an animal mother, the human mother had given birth to more than one child - thus, the nature of their birth brought some of the other-world's power into their own lives. Twins are often self-absorbed in the early stages of life, they develop their own language and share a unique "wildness" between themselves. No matter the type of twin born, identical or fraternal, their aura was one of closeness and mystery.

Ejire, the sharers of one soul - this was the mystery of human twins. The lore soon came to say that the spirit indwelling one child was so vast, so strong, that two minds and bodies had to be created so it could properly

incarnate.² Although both grew up to develop separate personalities, tastes, and dislikes, this was not because they had parted spiritually as they had physically, it was because the one soul, being infinite, wanted to experience life on a finite level. Even identical twins, who were believed to have the strongest connections, grew up into two totally different individuals. Yet they were expected to live and remain close throughout both life and death. When one twin died, the child's mother would go to If a for consultation, usually, an ebo was marked -the creation of a shrine for the deceased sibling. Unless that one was honored and propitiated, experience taught them that the remaining twin would die, the deceased would pull its sibling close in death as it had been in life. So powerful, so charged was the remaining child with magic that even though one was gone, the remaining could still bring blessings and fertility to both family and community. As time passed and the lore of twins increased, the cult of the Ibevi grew, and it was believed that the reception and propitiation of these powerful Orishas would miraculously change the lives of those that honored them.³

With the historical shift on the perspective of twins and the birth of sacred lore surrounding the divine children of Shangó and Oshún, the cult of the Ibevi was born. They were given names: Taewó and Kaindé.⁴ Taewó is Oshún's first-born, and his name means the "first to taste life". Because this lbevi is seen as male, once he is a year old the doll is dressed in red and white gingham and put under the protection of Shangó, his father. Note that in Orisha worship, when human twins are conceived the first to come out is automatically marked as a child of Shangó, it is favored by him. The name of Oshún's second twin, Kaindé, means "the final to be born". Because this child is conceived as female, and because Yemayá is the adopted mother of the divine twins, after a year this Ibeyi is dressed in blue and white gingham and put under her protection. Note that among human births, the second child born of twins is automatically marked as a child of Yemayá, it is this awesome Orisha, the Great Mother to all, that will protect and guide him or her throughout life. Oshún, the forlorn mother who gave them both up when she realized she was too wild, too frivolous herself to care for the children stands behind Yemavá and Shangó as their protector - she bestows her blessings upon these two children so that they might grow in power and stature. From these three Orishas, the Ibeyi receive most of their power.⁵

Yet there is a fourth Orisha that bestows great wisdom and strength upon these two Spirits: Obatalá. In the body of sacred lore known as Odu, it is said that these two innocents inadvertently saved his life, and in return for their actions Obatalá rewarded them with limitless power as long as the two Orishas worked together in tandem. One male and one female, each represented the dualistic force of nature - the two opposites that had to work together as one to create, dual natures that come together for one goal. Their home in Odu became that known as Eii Oko, and they came to rule all that was doubled or twinned. The eyes, the ears, the brain (with its right and left halves), the arms, the legs, the kidneys -- all these are ruled by the two powerful Spirits. Our physical senses, being dualistic (even the sense of touch requires a sensation and a response) are also under their ruler-ship. Together, the Ibevi master perception. One can watch: one can listen. The two can sit back to back and see in all directions at once. Because of Obatala's decree, there is nothing that can get past them, and if properly propitiated, the one who adores and worships the Ibeyi can never come to harm which is outside their personal destiny. No evil magic, no malicious witchcraft, no traps or wicked machinations escape their ever watchful eyes.

It is for these reasons that over the centuries, those who find peace and evolution among our rituals have come to love and honor the Ibeyi as the most powerful, most darling of all the Orishas. Their talents are many, and it is by "playing" with these two supernatural forces that one can come to enjoy all the blessings that they have to give. Just as Oshún owns all things gold and Yemayá hides the wealth of the ocean beneath her mantle, the Ibeyi have access to these, they are the harbingers/givers of wealth and economic evolution. By honoring them, one draws, slowly, the opulence and resources of the world. To watch as a Mother gestates, carries, and gives birth to two children from one womb is nothing short of a miracle, and it is this miraculous power that they bring to life with them: separate, they are as nothing, yet together, they can work miracles, yielding the fiery strength of their father Shangó and the limitless power and wisdom of their protector, Obatalá. Their spiritual teaching is harmony, and it is through their harmonious forces that one can take a single brick and build a city. This is the power of the Ibeyi, their spiritual strength, and it is for this reason that those involved in this faith should receive and propitiate these awesome deities. Maferefun los Ibeyi!

Endnotes to Section One:

1 For more information on this Spirit and tales of his ascension from human to Orisha, see the pamphlet by Awo Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi titled *Shango: Ifá and the Spirit of Lightning.* (New York: Original Publications, 1993).

2 Special note: in Nigeria, the Yoruba give a mother who bears two children a title - Iya Ibeyi. This means the "Mother of Twins". After giving birth to twins, she is expected to have at least one more child known as Ideu (this name is shared with Oshún's third child, born just after Taewó and Kaindé). The third child born to Iya Ibeyi, while the youngest of the three, is said to be the eldest spiritually. Ideu contains the soul of both twins in one body, and cools the fire and volatile energy brought to the home when twins are born.

3 Those in our faith who have twins as part of their ancestral heritage usually place two dolls with their opá ikú, these dolls are the same sex as the deceased twins, and are given offerings so their spirits may still bless the living family members.

4 While Taewó is born first to prepare the way for Kaindé's arrival, spiritually, the first twin born is said to be the youngest of the two. Kaindé is physically younger, but spiritually will always be the eldest.

5 Although Odu is consulted through either Ifá or Diloggun, a woman born as second of twins is considered a "child of two waters" and must spend her life not only loving, propitiating, and adoring Yemayá but also Oshún - whatever this believer does for one of the two Orishas must always be done for the other. Such a person is considered to be doubly blessed in this faith. Section Two

Patakis of the Ibeyi

New World Orisha worship is an oral, linear tradition, unlike other modern faiths that employ a holy book and standard retelling of myth, Santería is a faith whose sacred stories grow and expand as they are told and retold over the generations. Within the sixteen holy Odu of the Diloggun, there are many patakis detailing the actions and interactions of the Orishas with each other in heaven and on earth, and in their relationships with humans, there are also stories about those that lived and died in service to the Orishas. No one booklet such as this can detail all the myths that focus on the two Spirits Taewó and Kaindé, so I had to be selective in the ones that I presented. Following are four stories centering about their birth, life, and the reception of their powers - they illustrate the circumstances under which they were born, and how they came to be adored by all the Orishas in heaven and on earth. As both Santero and aleyo alike are initiated into the mysteries of the Ibeyi, the godparents giving the Orishas will most often tell these four stories to help the worshipper understand the forces with which they work. These patakis are integral to one's understanding of the Ibevi.

The Birth of the Ibeyi: the Pact of Oshún and Yemayá:

Shangó was a married Orisha, having taken Oba for his wife, she was a proper spouse, attentive to her husband's needs and always predictable. Shangó, being a man of war and virility soon grew bored, and Oshún, the embodiment of love and eroticism, soon caught his eye. Each wanted the other desperately, and each thought to seduce the other secretly. It came to pass that the two Orishas were lovers, and spent many passionate nights in each other's arms. Yet not only did Shangó have a wife at home, he also had a kingdom to defend, and in time his duties called him away from both women and into far away lands. Alone, Oshún pined for her lover. Days turned to weeks, and weeks became months - the Orisha noticed changes within herself while her lover was away. Her lithe figure grew slowly at first, and then enormously, there was no denying to herself that she was pregnant with Shangó's child. Not wanting the otter Orishas to know of their affair, she hid herself away for nine months to bear her child alone. Yet when the pains began and the child was born (a son) she reeled in disbelief as it was quickly followed by a second, a beautiful girl. The joy of birth became dulled by fear and doubt, "I am so young and unwise, too irresponsible to raise a single child. Whatever am I to do with two?" Frightened at the thought of rearing two children, Oshún took her twins secretly, at night, to the house of her sister, Yemayá.

Yemayá was worried when Oshún showed up at her home, the two Orishas were close, and not even she had heard from the sweet Oshún during her months of hiding. At first she went to embrace her sister, and then drew back as she saw the two bundles that she was holding. "Oshún," whispered Yemayá, noticing that the bundles were moving, "what have you there?" The young Orisha stepped closer, into the house and the light. Yemayá saw that she held two young infants, recently born. "Children!" she exclaimed. "They're not human - they're one of us! Sister, are they yours?" A single tear fell down Oshún's cheek, and a strange, frightened smile crept over her face. Without a word, the little one's eyes gave Yemayá the answer she sought.

Oshún sat down with her sister and told her about the birth - how she had an affair with an unnamed man, and then in shame and secrecy hid herself away to have the baby alone. Her intentions had been noble: to give birth to the child and raise it, without a father. Yet the birth of twins frightened her. "What will the other Orishas think?" asked Oshún. "I am too young for one child, I have no husband, and the father belongs to another woman in marriage. Already I am a bad Mother, more concerned with myself than their welfare, how can I raise them alone? I cannot even take care of myself!"

While Oshún had been telling her sister her troubles, Yemayá had held each child in turn, now she sat there with one embraced in each arm, holding them tightly against her breasts. She felt part of her coursing in each of them. Oshún was her sister, yes, yet the blood of the children felt closer than that of a sister's child - it felt like that descended from her own womb. She looked in Kaindé's eyes and saw her sisters eyes, which were the same as her own, yet when she looked in Taewó's eyes, the resemblance was unmistakable. "My son, Shangó, is the father- is he not?" No word fell from Oshún's lips, she just stared at her sister and nodded her head.

"Then there is nothing more that needs to be said. We are sisters, you and I, and I will help you raise your children. I will be as a Mother to Taewó and Kaindé, not just their aunt and grandmother as is our true relation, and you, Oshún, will be as their aunt since you are my sister. Yet together we will always know who the true Mother is, and as they grow the Ibeyi will know that they have two women who love them dearly, both as a Mother loves her children. They will be blessed, for they will have the two of us to guide them and care for them throughout their lives."

Oshún looked at her sister in thanks; unable to find the words, she began to stammer, "But . . . Shangó . . . the other Orishas . . ."

Yemayá, being wise and knowing that her sister came her out of guilt and shame, continued, "My sister, no one but you or I ever needs to know that you are their true Mother. Your relationship with them will be because of me, because you are my sister, and none need ever question why or how you become so close to them. Just as one of my mortal children on earth is often a child of yours and vice versa, so will it be with these children. Claim to be their Mother: claim to be their aunt. It matters not. And your secret is always safe with me. Shangó will know that he is their father, as will all the world, when they see the boy Taewó. Yet none will ever know, especially not Shangó, that you are their biological Mother until you are ready to divulge that secret yourself. Thus is our pact made and sealed!"

Oshún kissed her two beautiful children goodbye and goodnight, her tears fell freely over them both. Embracing her sister tightly, she then left the house without a word. Knowing that she had made the right decision did little to soothe her heart - a piece of it went out to each, a part of her own immortal Spirit that she would never reclaim. For days, she kept to herself in darkness and secret, filled with sorrow until she heard that her lover, Shangó, had returned from his wars.

The Birth of the Ibeyi: Shango's Story:

For months, Shango had been away from his kingdom, Ovo, fighting those that would dare overrun its boundaries. The days were long and filled with battle: the nights were longer and filled with loneliness - he found his mind wandering and longing for his wife. Oba, and his lover. Oshún. When the wars were over and the Orisha's armies emerged victorious, he hurried home without celebration of his victory. In his palace, he found Oba waiting for him, forlorn, she told him, "My husband, there are rumors. While you were away a mysterious woman gave birth to twins. They are not human, they are Orisha and immortal like us. They stay with Yemayá and call her Mother, yet we all know that she is not the true Mother. She is their grandmother, and you are the father. Some sav that they were born of Oshún's womb, one whom we all know is beautiful beyond comparison, she has caught your eye many times. Others believe that they came from Oyá, for only a woman such as her could give birth to children like an animal. Yet Oshún is there by their side almost every day - and while she calls herself their aunt, we all think that their bond goes deeper than that. What thinks you, my husband?"

Shangó said not a word, but stood there in disbelief. Before going to war he had been with Oshún again and again, not Oyá. "Oba, I think," he began, "that I need to go see my mother, Yemayá." With that he wasted no time going to her house to see these remarkable children for himself. "Twins," he thought, "could Oshún have really given birth to twins?" Once before his Mother, he paid her foribale, as she helped him to rise from the floor the two children came running out together, and stopped when they saw Shangó for the first time. In unison, they clutched Yemaya's billowing skirt and asked, "Mother, is this the man whom we are to call father?" She looked at Shangó, and then smiled at the Ibeyi. "Yes, children. This is your father, who has just come home from his war." The mighty Orisha got down on his knees and looked first into the boy's eves. They were as his own, filled with fire and lightning. Then he gazed at the girl, her eyes were vast, watery, filled with depth and mystery. They were the eyes of Yemavá, his mother, or the eves of Oshún, her sister and his lover. He could not tell which.

There was no denying his father-hood, there was no denying that these two children were Orisha, immortal. Their beauty was haunting, they were of the "otherworld", the invisible realm from which all the Spirits descended, and yet their beauty was even more other-worldly than that of an Orisha. Individual, unique, separate - a boy and a girl - and yet there was a greater power, an overwhelming presence that was one and yet two. It was as if a single soul greater than their own had come down into two bodies by necessity and not by choice. Bonding was immediate, and Shangó could not help but feel love for the two children he had met only seconds ago. Sweeping them up in his powerful arms, Shangó told his Mother, "The rumors are true - I can see and feel myself in both of them. Give them both to me, Mother, and let me raise them in my own home."

Yemayá put her foot down sternly, possessively, and reached for the lbeyi. "Shangó, my beloved yet irresponsible son, the Mother of these gave birth alone and afraid because you are not only married to another, but because you were away at war. You leave unexpectedly and come home months later; you are always out somewhere and no one knows how to find you. I am your Mother: I am their Grandmother by blood and Mother by right. They will be raised here under my roof and by my rules. They know that you are their Father, Shangó; and Father to them you will always be. But know now that while you may visit them at any time, you will never take them away from me. Until you settle your ways, you are not fit to raise even one of them!"

These words stung the Orisha's ego, yet he knew that his Mother was right. He could not raise a child alone, and having children by a woman other than Oba would make life all the more difficult. As a step-mother, he did not know if she could be trusted alone with his children, how would she treat them? Being away for months at a time, fighting wars for his city and his people, he would never have the freedom to be a fulltime parent. He hung his head in guilt and shame (the same reasons that brought Oshún to Yemayá) and agreed: she would be as their Mother, yet he would visit frequently, letting the children know that they were loved not only by Yemayá and Oshún, but also by Shangó. Yet before he left, he exercised his right of parenthood. "Mother, the children are both dressed in white as is fitting young children, but they are no longer infants - they are quickly growing older." Yemayá nodded her head in agreement as she looked at both children hugging their father still. "Let it be thus," he continued, "that since I am their father and you are to be their mother that they be dressed in clothing suitable for our children. The boy, Taewó, who takes after me will always be dressed in red and white like his father, to honor me. And the girl, who takes so much after you shall be dressed in your colors, blue and white." To this Yemayá agreed, and since that day the Ibeyi have been dressed in clothing to show their parentage and heritage as children of the mightiest Orishas.

The Ibeyi's First Party:

The years passed and the twins grew in beauty and strength, all the Orishas marveled at them from a distance - their radiance outshope even the sun, yet Yemavá, the jealous Mother, would let no one close to them. So determined was she to raise them alone that none save Shangó and Oshún were allowed an audience with them. Their Father, a mighty warrior, grew jealous of his children as time wore on. Yemayá, his own Mother, spent less time with him and more spoiling the beautiful children while his lover, Oshún, visited daily as well, avoiding the virile Shango's passionate advances. His wife, Oba, grew leery of him. While she performed her duties without flaw, they were cold and uncaring, perfect in a mechanical way, she had never fully forgiven his adultery, and grew bitter that he would not share the secret of who the true Mother was. Shango spoiled the Ibeyi as best he could when he was alone with them, a hard feat considering most of their waking time was spent with the sisters Yemayá and Oshún. In spite of his love for his own children, the jealousy grew almost daily.

After six years of growth, it became apparent to Yemayá that her beautiful twins had grown as old as they would ever be, the years passed, yet they remained ever young and fresh, immortal children whose minds burned together as one - an immortal, adult intelligence locked in the bodies of two youths. Realizing that their aché would keep them forever young, the woman of all fresh waters decided that it was time to throw them a huge party and formally introduce them to the rest of the Orishas. Invitations were sent out, and all responded that they would be there with the newest of all the Spirits. The night of the party came, and the opulent palace of Yemayá was filled with guests, Orishas whom none had seen for decades came to be with the mysterious twins. Oshún was there with her sister, sharing secret whispers and possessive glances towards the Ibeyi, and Shangó, who as always felt left out from their family circle spent much of the night drinking and playing the sacred Batá drums in honor of his children. Gifts were piled upon them, and with each gift given the two Ibeyi demanded foribale, laying their blessings upon those that brought them presents. "May you never want for anything," they would say as the Orisha was lifted.

Finally, Elegguá came to the party last, in his arms were two large bunches of bananas and plantains. The Orisha himself came in his own guise as a child, bestowing his gifts upon the lbeyi and then setting off to play with them. Shangó had been drinking quite freely throughout the night, muttering to himself as he beat his rhythms upon the drums. Hazily, he saw the ripe bananas sitting on the table with the rest of his children's gifts - they were one of his favorite foods, and hungrily he made his way over to them. With the cessation of drumming, all eyes were on Shangó as he swept up all the bananas and began to eat them greedily, Yemayá and Oshún saw what he was doing with the lbeyi's gifts, and quickly Yemayá made her way over to him. "My son," she said gently, "those are for the lbeyi. They are their gifts. If you are hungry, we have food in the next room." She held her hands out to Shangó, gently demanding the bananas back.

Yet Shangó, in his haze, saw only the doting Mother who spent no time with him demanding yet another gift for her two amazing, spoiled children. Clutching the plantains to his chest, he said, "Mother, all that you do and all that you have is for the twins. Well, I am your child too, something that you seem to have forgotten. Taewó and Kaindé have tons of gifts and even more candies and fruits. It will not hurt to let me have my bananas in peace!" The guests in the room grew silent, and Yemayá, seeing that all eyes were upon her as Shangó gave disrespect, grew angry.

"Shangó, now is not the time for such things. Give me the fruits and go eat something else. Those are for the lbeyi!" Once again, Shango clutched the bananas to his chest and began to peel another. The vast sea within Yemayá began to churn as her anger rose to a pitch, "My son!" she boomed, "Those are not yours. Give them to me now!" The Orisha rose to his feet, Oshún had quickly come to her sister's side, trying to calm her, but Yemayá would have none ofthat as Shango once again said, "No!" A vast, watery cry left Yemayá's lips as she began to fan her voluminous skirts. No longer was she in her human form, the mighty Mother arose into a vast column of water, one that began to flood and overflow the entire room. The Orishas ran for cover, and Shangó, who was all things made of fire, began to cower in her presence. "My son, you have disrespected your Mother and stolen your own children's gifts in front of all these guests - a crime for which there can be no forgiveness. Never again are you to come before my sight, and never again will you lay eyes on your own beautiful children. You are wild, irresponsible, and from this moment on you are never to set forth in my house!" With that, the powerful Yemayá banished Shango from her home, ending the party and gathering the children Taewó and Kaindé close to her breast once more.

Months passed, and the once mighty Shangó grew weary. Invaders came from all directions, pillaging the city he had worked so hard to protect. His lands were spoiled, his riches slipped away, and even his desire for his own wife and the beautiful Oshún was no more. He wandered in the woods, alone, thinking about his ill fortune when he chanced upon the capricious Elegguá. "Shangó, brother," said the mischievous Orisha, "what ails you?" To Elegguá he told his troubles, the mighty Eshu lifted his head when the story was done and said, "It all comes from your actions at the party. The Ibeyi are the workers of miracles, being miraculously born themselves, and you stole from them - your own children. Add to this your drunken disrespect to your own mother, and it is not surprising that your own fortunes have failed you. Yet I am fate, and fate has a plan for you!" With that, Elegguá began to whisper in his ear, and the mighty Shangó began to smile for the first time since that ill-fated party.

Quickly, he put his brother's plan into action. Next to a place where the river met the sea, Shangó found his two children playing among the foam and waves. When Taewó and Kaindé saw their father approaching (nothing escaped them now) they were overjoyed. He brought with him twice the number of plantains that he had eaten at their party, and told them how much he was sorry and how he loved and missed them. The Ibeyi hugged and kissed their father, overjoyed that he had finally come to see them. When it was over, Shangó said, "My children, I cannot see you everyday like this, Yemayá has not forgiven me for my actions at your party. You must help me get her forgiveness so we can be a family again." He looked at Kaindé. "You are her favorite - she sees herself in you, my daughter. You will come with me. Taewó, you are much like me, your father. Go to her and deliver this message . . ." and Shangó whispered the secret message into his ear. To his two children he said, "Once we are together as a family, my beautiful Ibeyi, I will never, ever let us be apart again. Now, we must work quickly!"

Shangó took Kaindé secretly to a forest outside Yemayá's palace and waited while his son delivered the message, "Mother, Shangó has come to steal us away - he is with my sister in a place where the river meets the seal" Angry and frightened that her son would do such a thing, the mighty one rushed to the one place where she knew the Ibeyi liked to play. In her anger, she left Taewó at her palace, thinking that he would be safe there. Seeing that his Mother had left the child alone, Shangó quickly went to gather his son and stole the two Ibeyi away to her inner chambers in secret. There, the three of them would await Yemavá's return. Elegguá was there at the children's secret hide away, and when she arrived, Elegguá told her, "You are too late, Yemayá; Shango has already taken Kaindé with him. Even I do not know where they have gone." All the anger inside Yemayá seethed to a raging boil until Eshu said, "Mother, you should have forgiven him, your son. He meant no harm - it was jealousy and sadness that drove him to disrespect. The Ibeyi are your children, but they are his by right of birth. He loves them, as he loves you. In spite of what he did, the Ibeyi love him as well. Children need their Father." And with those words, Eshu turned and went away into the forest.

The anger cooled as quickly as it had begun, and all that was left inside Yemayá was fear and sadness: fear, for she felt she would never see her beloved Kaindé again, and sadness, for she had not seen, nor would ever see, her son Shangó as well. Silently and with tears in her eyes, Yemayá made her way slowly back to her palace. Her face was wracked with misery, yet when she called out Taewó's name and he did not come, the tears flowed freely, drenching the floor of her palace in sadness. "Shangó," she cried aloud and to herself, "I am sorry, so sorry. My children ..." and her words were cut off by her sobs. It was then that the two twins bounded out of her inner chamber together, "Mother, we love you," they cried as they embraced her. Yemayá knelt down to pick up the twins, yet stopped when Shangó came out of her chamber as well. "Mother," he said, his head hung low in shame, "I am so sorry for what I have done." He lay on the floor before her in foribale, promising to never disrespect the one woman he loved above all others again, and swearing on himself that he would work to be a better father to his children. The Ibeyi, as one, whispered into Yemayá's ear, "We love you, and we love him." The Orisha had no choice - her heart was broken at the thought of forever losing her precious twins, and it died when she thought Shangó had forsaken her. She forgave them all, and the family was reunited in peace.

How the Ibeyi Saved Obatalá:

It came to pass that Obatalá, Father to all the Orishas, wanted to give a party in his own palace, inviting all the Orishas and all the lesser spirits that dwelled in heaven and on earth. While being all things that were white and pure, many of those that were destined to attend were vile, evil, and malicious of heart. The day of the party came, the Ibeyi were playing together outdoors before the dinner, and overheard two wicked spirits plotting to kill Obatalá. Their plan was simple: they would poison his water so that when he drank, he would fall ill and die. Alarmed, the two children continued playing, pretending that they had heard nothing so the wicked spirits would not become suspicious. When it was time to eat, the lbeyi were granted a place of honor beside the mighty Obatalá, all the Orishas loved them and plied them with gifts and special treats -and the mighty King of the White Cloth loved them both dearly. When the meal was served and Obatalá was about to raise his glass to his mouth, Taewó and Kaindé both warned, together, "Father, do not drink, your water has been poisoned!" The sound of two voices speaking as one chilled the entire room, and they continued. "Those two wicked spirits at the table have done this. They wish to kill you. We heard them while playing outside."

Obatalá stood up, enraged yet darkly calm and demanded, "Let the words of these children be tested - let the poison be revealed!" Immediately, the water in his glass turned a foul, putrid black as did the hands of the two who had placed it there. They were banished from the room by all the Orishas, and punished severely for their treason. The mighty Orisha turned to the children, a gleam in his eyes as he spoke, "My little ones, you are very wise, very mysterious, and very intelligent. It is because of your revelations that I am not ill and dying right now. Beginning with this day, you two will be known as the miraculous twins, the children who know and see all things. Great will be your powers when you work together, yet when you are apart you will be as nothing. Giving birth to twins will be known as the highest blessing of all the Orisha, and you, as the Orishas of all twins, will be honored until the end of time." Obatalá put his own elekes around the necklaces of both children to seal his pact, and the Orishas Oshún, Shangó, and Yemayá (who, each in their own way, were parents to the children) gave them theirs as well, bestowing the full of their powers upon their heads. It was then that the cult of the Ibeyi became strong, and mortals all over Ilé Ifé began to give them due worship.

Section Three

Creating a Shrine for the Ibeyi

In the religion, the Ibeyi are given as adimú Orishas, those that are received outside the initiation ritual known as Kariocha. They cannot go to the head of an initiate, but certain circumstances dictate their reception for Santero and aleyo alike. Anyone who is a twin, the survivor of twins, or the descendant/relative of twins must receive the Ibevi when the quest for initiation is begun. If and Diloggun, the oracles of our faith, are filled with references to such people, their aché and spiritual development was not complete until these two powerful Spirits were received and brought into their own homes. Coming to the shells in three consecutive Meij (twin) signs, the believer is then marked for the eventual reception of the Ibeyi¹, their dual nature is at work in his or her life, and evolution will not begin until they are worshipped and propitiated. Initiates and children of Shangó, Yemayá, and Oshún might want these two Spirits to help flesh out their aché, and the aché of the Orishas already received. Finally, anvone whose reading opens in the Odu known as Eji Oko or Irosun (and their composites) should consider taking the initiation of these two adimu Orishas, Eji Oko is their true home, and they speak through the sign Irosun as well. Trusted elders who are priests and priestesses in this faith should be sought out so that the Orishas may be washed.

There are also those in various faiths who have no access to Orisha elders yet desire to worship and propitiate the Ibeyi, lacking known priest/ esses, shrines to honor Taewó and Kaindé may still be created for personal worship and meditation. While not the same as having the Orishas washed and born from an elder's Ibeyis, the shrine thus created will still draw and attract the aché of these Spirits, and the worshipper's own life will be enriched with this contact. Eventually, working with this personal altar will help draw others of like mind, and the Ibeyi themselves will lead the candidate to those who can further evolution on the path to the Orishas. Several items will be needed to create this personal shrine: a large grass mat, two identical dolls dressed in white, two small tureens to hide the secrets the of the Ibeyi, two wooden chairs, a large number of red, white, black, yellow, green, blue, and coral beads, four small black stones from either the ocean, river, or the foot of a royal palm, and sixteen open-cut cowrie shells.

A clean, secluded area of one's home should be selected in which to create the shrine. It is traditional to keep the Ibeyi on the floor, and the grass mat should be folded so that it fits into the area selected to be their "home". Each tureen (they must be small, the size of sugar bowls is best, and they must be exactly alike) should be sat on the mat. Wash the four stones with holy water (the waters of the ocean, the river, the rain, and a lake may be used for this) and separate them into two sets of two. Put each set into one of the tureens. They lbeyi never speak through the Diloggun, and yet the two of them share one soul, so the sixteen shells should be equally divided into two groups of eight, washed in the waters, and each set put into one of the tureens with the stones. The dolls, the chairs, and the white clothing should be washed and purified as well, all this should be set together in the shrine with one chair and doll situated over each tureen. The beads are used to string four necklaces for each of the lbevi, once made, they should be washed and cleansed in the water. The color patterns to be used are as follows:

For Yemayá: one coral bead, one clear green bead, seven white beads, seven blue beads, and one clear green bead. This pattern is to be repeated until the necklace is long enough for the doll used.

For Obatalá: one red bead, one milky white bead, twenty-four white beads, and one milky white bead. This pattern is to be repeated until the necklace is long enough for the doll.

For Shangó: one red bead and one white bead. Repeat this pattern until the necklace is long enough for the doll.

For Oshún: one black bead, one coral bead, one clear red bead, fifteen clear honey beads, one clear red bead, one coral bead. Repeat this pattern until the necklace is long enough for the doll.

Having strung and washed the necklaces, they should be hung around the doll's necks. The shrine of the lbeyi is complete, and the creator is ready to light two white candles (one for each Spirit) and say his first prayer. It is necessary that a jicaraor glass of fresh, clear water be provided for pouring a small libation for Elegguá (the messenger of the Orishas), Taewó, and Kaindé, it would also be wise to have some sort of adimú (a food offering) such as fruit, bread, or candy to give the lbeyi once they have been invoked. Remember: whatever one does for one of the twins must be done for the other, so before the votive offering is given it should be equally divided into two portions. Having prepared all these things, the worshipper should begin by sprinkling three dashes of water on the ground before the altar, saying the following phrase as he does so:

Omi tutu. Ona tutu. Tutu ile. Tutu Laroye. Tutu los Ibeyi, Taewó y Kaindé. Tutu arikú babawa.

(Fresh water, freshen the road, freshen my home. Freshen Eshu Laroye, the Elegguá who is the messenger of all the Orishas. Freshen the Ibeyi, Taewó and Kaindé. Give freshness that has no end.)

Offering this simple libation removes spiritual heat and negativity from our lives, these are things that could hinder the process of divine communication. One of Elegguá's many paths, Eshu Laroye, is also freshened in this prayer/libation. He is the messenger of the Orishas, the companion of Oshún, and is definitely one of Eleggua's most mischievous paths. To honor him, however briefly, is to ensure that the roads between our world and the divine remains open during the consultation. He can either help or hinder the process. Finally, a libation is offered to the divine twins themselves, one must have coolness and freshness pervading sacred space before the Orishas come down. Most of them are given to coolness, and Taewó and Kaindé are not Spirits that one would want to have heated. Having done this, we begin the sacred prayer known as mojuba, a rendering of praise and homage to the divine that lives in all things.

Mojuba Olófin. Mojuba Olorún. Mojuba Olódumare. Mojuba Olójoni, Oni Odun Mocuedun.

(I pay homage to Olófin, the part of God which is closest to earth and all the humans who dwell on the earth. (pay homage and give respect to the God who dwells in the heavens, the bountiful sun which is eternal. I pay homage to the owner of the womb and Odu from which all things come. Today, it is today that I greet you.)

Olódumare Oba aterere kaje.

(Olódumare is the one who spreads eternally and infinitely across the universe.)

Olorún Alaye. Olorún Elemi.

(Olorún, the one who lives forever and owns all that lives on the earth. Olorún, it is he that owns all spirits that once had life and now rest in death.)

Mojuba gbogbowan Olodo Araorún: Oluwo, Iyalosha, Babalosha, omo-kolaba Egunimbelese Olódumare.

(I pay homage and give my respects to all those initiates who have gone to the river, the realm of Oshún, they are now in heaven. They are with Olódumare. I give my respects and I pay homage to all the Oluwos, Iyaloshas, Babaloshas, and Babalawos who have received Olófin, the dead who bow eternally at the feet of God.)

Mojuba gbogbowan Olodó Araorún: Oluwo, Iyalosha, Babalosha, omo-kolaba Egun omo-Ibeyi lagha-lagha imbelese, timbelese Olódumare.

(I pay homage and give my respects to all those initiates who have gone to the river, the realm of Oshún, they are now in heaven. They are with Olódumare. I give my respects and I pay homage to all the Oluwos, Iyaloshas, Babaloshas, and Babalawos who have received Olófin, the dead who bow eternally at the feet of God. I also pay homage to the souls of deceased twins, the children of the Ibeyi, who now rest with Olódumare.)

This brief prayer opens by honoring the forces of creation, it then continues to honor the dead elders and dead priest/esses of the Orishas being invoked, the Ibeyi. It is important to begin by honoring the powers of creation, and end by honoring the ancestors - we stand on the shoulders of those that have come before, and even though it is an Orisha that we are about to call, we would not be calling this spiritual force had not our ancestors and God given birth to us physically and spiritually. The next part of our litany calls upon the elders that are still living - for although they are in the flesh, we still stand on their shoulders in our pursuit of spiritual truths. For those that are working with Taewó and Kaindé spiritually, this next section may be omitted until Orisha priest/esses with whom one may study can be found.

Kinkamaché iya/baba tobi mi (here name your godmother or godfather).

Kinkamaché Ojigbona mi (here name your Ojigbona).

Kinkamaché (here name your godfather in Ifá).

(Kinkamaché is a phrase that asks for protection, blessings, and the good things in life. Note that in these prayers, the African name given in the rites of Kariocha should be used, if known.)

Having offered these prayers to the creative forces (Olódumare, Olorún, and Olófin) plus the living and deceased ancestors in Ocha, the worshipper should now pray to banish all the negative forces that might stand in the way of communication with the Ibeyi, destroying personal evolution: Kosi ikú. Kosi ofo. Kosi eyo. Kosi arún. Kosi fitibo. Kosi akopa. Kosi tiya-tiya. Kosi arayé. Kosi inya. Kosi gbogbowan osogbo unlo.

(May death be banished. May loss be banished. May tragedy be banished. May disease be banished. May those things that are overwhelming be banished. May disrespect be banished. May arguments be banished. May the tragedies of the world be banished. May wars be banished. May all misfortunes be banished.)

Finishing this, the Orisha worshipper should begin to address the Orishas Taewó and Kaindé, offering praises and prayers to them so that their Spirits might be drawn to the shrine, bringing freshness and evolution:

> Béji béji iré. Ibae omo iré, los Ibeyi Taewó y Kaindé. Omo Shangó y omo Oshún, los omos de Yemayá. Taewó y Kaindé mokno, akweye. Akweye Ibeyi owó. Akweye Ibeyi omo. Akweye Ibeyi arikú babawa.

> (Giving birth to twins brings good fortune. I give homage and praise to the children of good fortune, the Ibeyi named Taewó and Kaindé. Children of Shangó and Oshún; the children of Yemayá. Taewó and Kaindé are abundant. I invite all to worship the Orishas. I invite all to worship the Ibeyi to have abundance, prosperity, and economic evolution. I invite all to worship the Ibeyi to have children, both spiritual and physical. I invite all to worship the Ibeyi so that death does not come early, so that no one dies before their time.)

Having praised the divine twins, the worshipper continues to pray to them for all the blessings that life has to offer, all the wonderful things that are within their power to give:

> Ibeyi, Taewó y Kaindé: fun mi ni ire. Fun mi ni owó. Fun mi ni ogbón. Fun mi ni aláfia. Fun mi ni aghára. Fun mi ni ilera. Fun mi ni Ifá Kosí gbogbowan osogbo unle, y fun mi ni gbogbo ire. Pa ke so didé: ire owó,

ire omá. Ire elese gbogbo Orisha. Ire arikú babawa.

(Ibeyi, Taewó and Kaindé: bring me blessings and luck. Bring me prosperity. Bring me wisdom. Bring me peace. Bring me the knowledge of how to pray. Bring me a stable and calm home. Bring me wisdom. Banish all the misfortunes of the world, and help me attain all the goodness that it has to bring. So that it may come: goodness of abundance, goodness of offspring. Bring goodness and blessings at the feet of all the Orishas. Goodness that has no end - may I not see an untimely death!

Achél Tol

(It is done; so mote it be!)

Having completed this prayer, the Orisha worshipper should now present the offering that he has brought to give the lbeyi on their first night in his home. Whatever the offering used, it should be divided equally into two portions, and one portion put in front of each lbeyi while telling them what it is being given. It should be left with them overnight, longer if the candle used is the seven day variety. When the next day comes, or when the candle's flame is finally extinguished, the offering should be removed and exposed in a natural setting outdoors.

Making Ebo to the Ibeyi:

The concept of ebo is integral to the religion Santeria; it is through the many eboses that are found in our traditional lore, the patakis, and the divination system known as Diloggun that one not only propitiates the deities known as Orishas, but also begins the spiritual path of evolution and growth. While the act of ebo can be simple, by performing one of these many offerings a supplicant sets in motion vast reservoirs of spiritual energy that spiral and increase themselves until they become the form of energy desired by the Orisha worshipper, the manifestation sought in the physical world. In our faith it is believed that each Orisha is not only a macrocosmic force in nature, it is also a Spirit, a personification that has likes, dislikes, talents, and abilities much as each human living has these qualities. Having received an Orisha and created a shrine for that Spirit, one begins a personal relationship with that force; and when need arises, one may go before that deity offering substances that are accepted and loved by the Orisha. Combining these offerings with sacred prayers, songs, and rituals, one may set the whole of the Orisha into motion, working to attain the worshipper's goals. The physical substance of an ebo becomes spiritual energy, and feeding upon that energy the Orisha works for its human.

Before approaching the Ibeyi for any request, several things must be kept in mind. As when working with other Orishas, the supplicant must be clean and pure. Abstain from sexual relations before working with these Spirits, menstruating women should let their menses pass before doing this type of spiritual work. The restriction is not because these things are vile and evil, rather, they are forces that create and sustain life - as such, they are spiritually hot and volatile. One should only approach the Orishas when the body and mind are cool, pure. Once these situations have passed, the body should be bathed or showered completely, and there are many in the religion who would also recommend dressing totally in white to ensure spiritual purity and cleanliness. Finally, remember that the collective forces of the Ibeyi deal mostly with concerns of children, completion of the impossible; they touch all things that come in doubles or twos. A grain of sand becomes a sheet of crystal glass: a single board becomes an entire platform under their influence. With the Ibeyi and one cheap, glass bead, an entire necklace of amber, jet, and coral may be strung. One approaches these divine children hoping to build only a single house, and instead an entire town is built. Their powers are awesome, and their employment in any task will always bring the supplicant more than is bargained or hoped for.

Eboses for Protection and Cleansing:

Because Shangó is seen as the master of Witchcraft (he knows the secrets of all ewe and prepares his trabajos and bilongos in a mortar and pestle), and because Oshún is the mistress of all magic (using calabezas - especially pumpkins - to work her will) the Ibeyi are seen as Master Witches as well. They are one mind divided among two bodies: they are one soul too strong to be included in one unit of flesh. Their power is great, and their magic is all-enveloping. Whenever the Orisha worshipper finds himself under the influence of bad magic or malicious attacks from others, their employment for cleansing and protection is always successful.

First, whenever one finds himself under the effects of gossip or attack, two white candles should be procured (the seven day type) and the client should sit before the Ibeyi and pray for peace and protection. The names of those attacking should be told to them (if this information is know) or the Ibeyi should be told that the names of them that bring evil are unknown, asking the two Orishas to seek them out and keep them from causing harm. The two white candles are lit and allowed to burn out completely - thus will those that bring evil fall to its own effects. Since the Ibeyi are the masters of gossip and secret information, do not be surprised that if before the candles are burnt out, one discovers the names of those that have gossiped and tried to bring harm.

To cleanse the body, mind, and soul from negative influences, there is yet another ebo that may be done by one who honors the Ibeyi. Two names should be taken before them on two white plates, each of these roots is then covered completely with efun until they are both white. Pray to the Ibeyi for peace, protection, cleansing, and healing. Light two white candles, one for each Orisha (they may be small like votive candles) and take one white name in each hand. Present this to the forehead, the abdomen, the right and then left shoulders (creating a cross that honors the four cardinal points of the body). The two roots should then be rubbed lightly and briskly over the entire body, and then circled gently before, around, and behind the body in the area that is known as the "aura" to most (this cleans the body, mind, and spirit). Once this is done, the roots are placed on the two white plates and left with the Orishas indefinitely. Vines may begin to grow from these, if so, let them grow as long as the client is tall but no more. They should be cut back a bit periodically. If the roots go bad, remove them and repeat the ritual with two more. The Orishas will use them to keep the client clean and free of negative energy.

If the name is not available, coconuts may be substituted. One must be careful, however, that rancid fruit is not allowed to sit before the Orishas. Every day the coconuts must be shaken, if no milk is heard sloshing inside, they must be removed and the ritual repeated with two fresh coconuts.

Eboses for General Requests:

When supplicating the Orishas Taewó and Kaindé for general help in any problem, it may be necessary to make deals with the two spirits. In situations such as these, something small should be offered when asking for their help with the promise of something bigger once the request is granted. One must think carefully before approaching the two Orishas in this manner, as if the problem being faced is small and the offering made is great, when the time comes to ask for help with something great the offering demanded and accepted by them may be outrageous or involved. Keep in mind, also, that the lbeyi may be powerful and wise, but they are also children and should be approached as intelligent children. One cannot easily fool them into working for free, but with proper planning and devotion, can ply them into working miracles.

For example, there was a time when I had to move 1,500 miles across country unexpectedly, this move was done with little planning and no preparation. Knowing that what I was about to do was impossible, I lit two white candles (one for each Ibeyi) explaining my dilemma to them. I made the situation guite clear: I was moving, and they were moving with me. If I did not have a home when I got to my planned destination, they, unfortunately, would be living on the street with me. I also promised them that when I got settled in my new home, I would buy them each a new toy (a coloring book). Once the candles were burned out, I packed my bags and my Orishas and made my way to my new destination. Upon my arrival, I had a temporary living situation which lasted quite well for six months. To show my thanks, I bought them the new toy that I promised. Being a temporary solution, the time came for me to move out and into a new apartment, not having any idea where to go and find a new home, I opened the coloring books to the same page in each one, a page that had a picture of a cartoon character with a sign that said "Home Sweet Home". Using some old crayons to color that picture on each page (exactly the same colors in each one) I told the Ibevi once more my dilemma and promised them crayons to go with the books. Two days later, I had my new apartment.

The offering of coloring books and crayons has worked quite well for me, it is an ebo that works again and again. The first set of crayons that I bought them were not complete - I gave them only the preschool colors

of white, red, blue, and yellow. Using these basic colors, I have since played with the Ibeyi and the books, coloring pages that represented my needs and promising additional colors for them to use and enjoy once the requests were granted. It is not an ebo that I overuse - I turn to it only when there is great need and few resources. It is an example of the type of work and plying that may be done with these spirits.

To Bring Music, Love, and Laughter:

The Ibeyi are children, and like most youths they love music, toys, and parties. When the supplicant is faced with impossible situations, the easiest way to overcome these things with the Orishas' help is to throw them a party. Invite as many children as is economically possible - the larger the difficulties faced, the more grand the party should be. Before the guests arrive, give Obi to the two Orishas to make sure that they are happy with the preparations, if the two Orishas are not satisfied, the client must then work with the oracle to determine what is lacking. During the party, make sure that the Ibeyi are served first, and then the children (who are all to be treated as guests of honor), and then the adults. Any food, candy, or party favors served must first be offered to the Ibeyi. Provide plenty of noisemakers and party favors, for these are things that the Ibevi love. Let the children play as they will under direction from the host or hostess, it is important to let the children be children. Do not yell, reprimand, or punish any of them if they become too wild, the Ibeyi themselves are wild. Simply redirect their energies to more suitable outlets and activities.

When giving a party for the Ibeyi, it is important to throw handfuls of money to the children that are attending, letting them run and grab it as they will (by doing this, the Ibeyi will shower the supplicant with money). Throw random handfuls of candy to them as well, so that the Ibeyi will randomly throw sweetness into one's own life. Finally, the highlight of the party should be centered around a piñata. Although this is not of Cuban or even African origin, the piñata has come to be one of the Ibeyi's favorite games, and as the unknown, unseen surprises rain down on happy, screaming children, so will unknown and unseen blessings fall down on the supplicant who has thrown the party 2 . **For music and laughter:** when the client's life has become dull and boring, provide the Ibeyi with small, toy musical instruments. They will use these to bring music and happiness back into the supplicant's life.

For sweetness: give the Ibeyi twin dishes of hard candy; as they are provided with sweetness, so will the supplicant's life be filled with sweetness.

For comfort: the lbeyi are also great comforters in our faith, when life becomes harsh and dull, give them twin stuffed animals to play with. The more comfort given to the lbeyi, the more comfort they will give in return.

For amusement and blessings: the lbeyi like to play with other children, buy them each toys that are exactly alike, and then one just like it for another child. Let this child play with the toys in front of their shrine. As the lbeyi are amused and entertained, so shall the supplicant's life become.

Endnotes for Section Three:

1 The client is also marked for the reception of the Orishas known as Ideu and Ainá, the next two children born to Oshún after Taewó and Kaindé. These Spirits will be explored in a future work.

2 When using the piñata at the end of a party, make sure that there is an extra-special prize for the child that manages to break it. Keep extra candy and favors on hands as well - no child must be allowed to leave this game empty handed.

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Stuart Myers

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