

Ritual music and dances OF YORUBA

Ritual music and dances OF YORUBA Ritual music and dances are also a defining aspect of this religion. Much of the ritual revolves around the belief in the orishas. In some ways, these resemble the angels of our Judeo-Christian-Islamic culture, but they can also be called lesser gods who form a bridge between the human and the divine. Through specific dances and songs, devotees believe they can call upon the orishas to take possession of their bodies, thereby enabling the human to experience the divine. These ritualistic dances and music can also be considered to be a form of prayer.

The Yorubas have identified many orishas, but there are eight who predominate, almost equally divided between male and female deities. A devotee usually identifies predominantly with one of these eight entities, so that all their lives they are considered a "daughter" or "son" of that deity. Each deity has distinguishing characteristics. For example, Oshún is described as the goddess of unconditional love. She is associated with the rivers as a symbol of clarity and flowing motion, but has many manifestations ranging from short-tempered to calm and fluid. She is also the divinity of fertility, and women appeal to her for child-bearing and alleviation of female disorders. Brass, gold, and shining gems are often used in the rituals of her worship.

Divination is at the heart of the ritual ceremonies to the orishas and also of a devotee's character development. Divination in essence is an attempt to understand the mindset of the gods. It is performed by male and female priests and has three specific objectives: to understand and control the forces in one's life, to inquire what offerings are expected by the orisha, and to enquire if the offerings have been accepted by the orisha. The priests and priestesses use different implements to aid their divination process, including cowrie shells, kola nuts et al.