

**ỌṢUN**

**Òrìṣà of the River**

## **ỌṢUN: ÒRÌṢÀ OF THE RIVER**

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# Ọṣun

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Ọṣun is the Òrìṣà of the river (symbols of clarity and flowing motion), freshwater, luxury, prosperity, order, pleasure, receptivity, diplomacy, fertility, beauty and love in Ifá. She is connected to one's destiny and associated with divination. According to myth, she is the consort of Şàngó.

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*For instance, the fact that Oshun, a Nigerian riverine goddess, enjoys corn that was not brought into Africa until around 1500 AD supports the belief that she is the youngest of the Yoruba's spiritual pantheon. - Tiffany D. Pogue*

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*Oshun is one of the estimated more than 400 spiritual guardians and deities of what is called Ifá, the Yoruba religious tradition of the people of West Africa. Oshun is an orisha, meaning "spirit" or "spirits of divine origin," also referred to as a force of nature. Each orisha has its own followers who are responsible for erecting shrines, paying tribute, praying, and providing offerings. Oshun is considered one of the most powerful of all orisha, and like other gods, she possesses human attributes such as vanity, jealousy, and spite. The orisha handle all issues related to humanity and serve as enforcers of justice and retribution, each possessing its own unique powers. In most Yoruba stories, Oshun is generally depicted as the protector, savior, or nurturer of humanity. Oshun has also been described as the maintainer of spiritual balance or mother of sweet things. - Bayyinah S. Jeffries*

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*Ọṣun's name means source. It is related to the word orísùn, the source of a river, a people, or of children. The word Ọṣun can be glossed at that which runs, seeps, flows, moves as water does.*

*Ọṣun may also be understood as the source in other ways. As the hair plaiter with the beaded comb, she controls the outer head and the inner head, or destiny. - Joseph M. Murphy*

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The term for spiritual intuition or destiny in Yorùbá is Ori. In order to become aligned with your Ori (Divine Self), you have to achieve iwa-pele (balanced character).

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*Ori is symbolic represented by our head. Our head is also the reference of our physical personality. In the physical world, Ori is responsible for all personalities that we show outwards; for our good character, bad character; for our impatience, self-confidence, responsibility and lack of responsibility. Our Ori is the main reference for our spiritual and social identity; therefore it is of great importance to take good care of it. - Orisha Community*

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*With the African diaspora, Oshun was brought to the Americas, and adopted into the pantheons that branched out of the African traditions. In the Brazilian religion of Candomblé, which retains close ties with the Yorùbá religion, as well as in Cuban Santería, She is called Oxum. In Haitian Vodou She is an inspiration for Erzulie or Ezili, also a Deity of water and love. - Thalia Took*

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*Because many Yoruba and Fon men and women were taken to the Americas where they were enslaved, the veneration of Nana Buluku continued in the religious practice of Santería (Cuba), Oyotunji (United States), Candomblé (Brazil), Umbanda (Brazil), Batuque (Brazil), and Lukumí (Cuba). In Santería, Nana Buluku is an Orisha (god) and is known as the essence of the moon. Nana Buluku is also the mother of the river, whereas Oshun is known as the Queen of the river. - Garvey F. Lundy*

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*Several myths exist concerning Oshun and her significance as a Yoruba deity. In most Yoruba stories, Oshun is generally depicted as the protector, saviour, or nurturer of humanity. Oshun has also been described as the maintainer of spiritual balance or mother of sweet things. One myth highlights Oshun as the central figure in the creation of human beings. The Yoruba people believe that the orishas were sent by Olodumare, who is considered the Supreme God, to populate the Earth. Oshun, being one of the original 17 sent to Earth, was the only female deity. The other gods, all male, failed at their attempts to revive and populate the Earth. When they realized they were unable to complete the task given to them by Olodumare, they tried to persuade Oshun to help them. Oshun agreed and brought forth her sweet and powerful waters, bringing life back to Earth and humanity and other species into existence. As that Yoruba myth suggests, humanity would not exist if Oshun, the goddess of life and fertility, had not acted. - Bayyinah S. Jeffries*

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*According to the Ifa Literary Corpus in Ose Otura, Oṣun was the only female Irunmole (primordial spirit) sent to create the world by Olodumare. The other spirits that were sent began the work and ignored Oṣun. Oṣun gathered the women together and protested the blatant disrespect by forming Iyami Aje, a band of women endowed with special power. The male spirits failed miserably and when they inquired of Olodumare why they weren't succeeding, Olodumare informed them that nothing can be done without Oṣun. Anything they attempt to do without women will fail. The male Irunmole then hurried to beg Oṣun to join them. - Wikipedia*

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According to Wikipedia, "Iyami Aje is a Yoruba term of respect and endearment used to describe a woman of African ancestry who is considered to be an Aje, a woman who wields myriad arcane creative biological, spiritual, and cosmic powers." The following quote is taken from another source.

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*I want people to understand that lyami is layered. It's not one group as believed. While all connected, each has its own part. There are human lyami Aje. Those are divided into those who are Aje by virtue of being a woman born with a womb, those who carry Aje "powers" naturally and may not know it, and those who are conscious and inducted as Aje through ceremonies. lyami is a Yoruba word for these feminine powers but the concept of lyami is not limited to Yoruba or West African culture. They are world wide..even cosmic in scope. To that end, the women's secret societies that honor these primordial mothers are widespread under different names and traditions. Igbo, for instance call them Iyambo Ekpe. Among the Mende, they were Sande and Bundo. They are the Matrikas in Tibet and India. In Mexican, Nagul traditions, they are Lechuzza. In Europe, they were Black Doves and later Witches.*

*To that end, it is also important to know that while all women are born with some level of Aje, not all women have the discipline or moral aptitude to walk the path. There are many who are corrupt and ego driven and even void of conscience. It's no different from any other tradition that has humans. Humans are subject to flaws. And many women who have a misunderstanding of lyami as well. They want it for power, greed, control or to pay back men. So Primordial lyami examine you before you are conferred with power or knowledge. Iwa is not just a concept. She is an lyami and guides character and development. To that end, those they initiate will likely be older women and elder mothers, though menstruating women who have discipline and are balance can be initiated too. How do you know you were accepted? There are things you are given in the spiritual plane that you are likely to experience in dream or astral form. There is information you are provided that can let the inductor know it is done. These can then be further validated through divination. - Ayele Kumari*

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Ọṣun was the first woman given the title Iyalode (high-ranking female chieftain).

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*Referred to in Yoruba mythology as Oba Obirin or "King of the Women", an Iyalode's views are normally considered in the decision-making process by the council of high chiefs. - Wikipedia*

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*Iyalode is a chieftancy title commonly bestowed on women in Yorubaland. Traditionally, the Iyalode signifies the "queens of ladies" and is given to the most prominent and distinguished lady in or from the town. Like many other notable chieftancy titles given by the Oba, the Iyalode has assisting lieutenants such as the Otun Iyalode, Osi, and Ekerin. In many traditional Yoruba cities and towns some Iyalodes used to command the respect of a group of warriors and she is also the major representative of women in the traditional council where the voice of women are heard.*

*In ancient Oyo, the Iyalode was the most senior female in the hierarchy of chiefs, however, in Ondo, it is the Lobun and in Ilesa, the Arise. In Oyo and Ife during the eighteenth century, women in the palace came to play a more powerful role in their polities. Following the collapse of the Oyo empire and subsequent civil wars, a new breed of women leaders who were both astute and enterprising in Abeokuta and Ibadan became Iyalodes re-defining their roles and competing with male chiefs in goods and slaves. - Nigerian Wiki*

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*In yet another Yoruba story, Oshun is depicted as the goddess who not only gives life but also takes it. When angered, Oshun may flood the Earth or destroy crops by withholding her waters, thereby causing massive droughts. In one myth, Oshun is incensed by her devotees and sends down rain, nearly flooding the world. Yet once she is appeased, Oshun saves the Earth from destruction by calling back the waters. - Bayyinah S. Jeffries*

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The above quote is a good example of balance. You can't have order without chaos. You can't have life without death. You can't have night without day or darkness without light. As important as it is to recognize her life-giving capabilities, it's equally important to remember her destructive nature as well.

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*Oshun has also been described as the goddess of wealth and art and the leader of women. Again, even in this depiction, Oshun's existence is central to the creation and safeguarding of all humanity (i.e., balance and harmony, which are central to the African conception of cosmology). Oshun is extremely important to the Yoruba culture and throughout the African diaspora not only because of her continuity after the transatlantic slave trade, but also because of her continued symbolic importance to Africa and the life-giving and healing qualities she embodies. -*

Bayyinah S. Jeffries

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<b>Ewe (Herbs)</b>	<b>Offerings</b>	<b>Objects</b>	<b>Colors</b>
Anis	Beer	Brass	Gold/Dark Yellow (Diaspora)
Buchu	Cakes	Cowrie Shells	Green, White, Yellow (Nigeria)
Burdock	Candies	Fans	Yellow (Santería)
Chamomile	Coconuts	Fine Jewelry	Pink (Trinidad)
Cinnamon	Corn	Gold	
Damiana	Fowl	Mirrors	
Echinacea	Gin	Peacock Feathers	
Lotus	Honey		
Myrrh	Kola Nuts		
Raspberry	Orange		
Uva-Ursi	Perfume		
Yarrow	Pumpkins		
Yellow	Red Palm Oil		
Dock	Rum		

- Sacred River: Oşun River (Nigeria)
- Principal Sanctuary: Oşun-Oxogbo
- Festival: Oşun-Oşogbo Festival
- Number: 5 (Santería)
- Metal: Bronze, Gold
- Sacred Animals: Peacock, Vulture
- Chakra: 3rd (Manipura - Navel Region)

## Prayers

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This prayer is taken from “The Handbook of Yoruba Religious Concepts”.

Ọṣun, who is full of understanding  
Most gracious mother, Ọṣun,  
Most gracious Ọriṣa.  
One who has large robust breasts,  
One who appeases children  
With brass ornaments.  
Onikii who knows the secrets of cults,  
But does not disclose them.  
One who has a cool, fresh throne.  
One who buries money in the sand.  
The gracious mother, The Queen of the River  
Water which moves sleeplessly.  
One who gives healing water free of charge.  
One who gives good effective treatment to children.  
One who has neither bone nor blood.  
Ayila save me!  
One expects salvation from one’s deity.  
I do not know how to save myself.  
I give homage to Ọṣun, Aṣẹ.

The following is taken from Prayer For Oshun, with some minor tweaking.

Oṣun who is full of understanding,  
Who digs sand and buries money there.  
The woman who seizes the road and causes men to run away.  
Oṣun the river which the king cannot exhaust...  
One who does things without being questioned.  
One who has large robust breasts.  
One who has fresh palm leaves, who is never tired of wearing brass.  
The huge, powerful woman who cannot be attacked.  
Most gracious mother.  
Onikii, who knows the secret of cults but does not disclose them.  
The gracious mother, the queen of the river.  
One who has a cool, fresh throne.  
The mother who has neither bone nor blood.  
Legends abound about this female force, but she is to be respected on all levels.  
A reminder of love that should exist in the universe. Aṣẹ.

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