



ILE ISE EJIIOGBE IFA TEMPLE

NEWSLETTER

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December 2001

The place where Yoruba culture and spirituality is practiced

Olokun Brings the Spirit of Endurance to African People



African men and women uplifting and being uplifted by the spirit of Olokun

The Enduring Spirit of Olokun thrives by the water's edge

The celebration honoring Olokun started on Saturday, October 27, 2001, at the Ile Ise Ejiogbe Ifa Temple in Washington DC. To ensure its members were pure of heart, the Ifa Temple held a prayer session to invoke the spirit of the Egungun, our most Honorable African Ancestors. Members of the Temple *dobale* and *kunle* to show reverence to the Egungun spirit. The Temple was blessed and a way was cleared for Olokun's spirit to descend on Earth.

Awo Olufemi Adekun began the Orin (song) to Olokun:

"Olokun maje nri ija reo"

All guests joined in:

"Ra ra ra sanu aye o, Oba omi, Olokun maje nri ija reo"



The shrine to Olokun flowing like the sea.

"Olokun, don't let us see your anger, let us see your blessing. The king of water because whoever sees your anger, they don't have water at all. So please don't let us see your anger."

The Ile Ise Ejiogbe Ifa Temple held its 2nd annual Olokun Festival on Sunday, October 28, 2001, at the Gallery of Events in downtown Baltimore near the Inner Harbor. It was truly fitting that the Ifa Temple hosted the Olokun Festival so close to the sea, for just like the sea, Olokun, the Yoruba female deity of prosperity, is rich in both majesty and mystery. She holds the secrets of attaining wealth, and when she walked the earth, she was the richest woman in Ile Ife, Nigeria. Many come to Olokun, and pray for blessings of prosperity, but Olokun reveals her secrets only to those who have proven themselves worthy.

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On Sunday afternoon, guests arrived at the festival dressed in various hues of sea blue and beautiful tie-dyed cloth to honor Olokun. The tempo flowed like a celebratory stream starting with the pouring of libations by Mama Wande. As each drop of water hit the floor we paid homage to the Great Creator, Olodumare, the Orisa, our most Honorable African Ancestors and to our teachers. The stage was now set, and Awo Femi began the calling of Orisa. Each in his own way and in his own time was touched. Men gathered in strength and numbers to uplift Ogun. Women danced in harmony with the drums honoring and receiving blessings from Osun. The children joined their parents eagerly anticipating the arrival of Olokun.

“Olokun maje nri ija reo” The chant grew louder and louder and was repeated again and again in unison. Men, women and children danced while the drummers, led by Master drummer Mustapha Ogunbayo, beat rhythmically in celebration as the spirit of Olokun descended with the force of a tidal wave and blessed all in attendance with the spirit of endurance. Voices rang out across the sea of people in songs of praise as attendees placed gifts of cowries, owo (money) and schnapps at Olokun’s shrine to thank her for her many blessings and to ask for her continued blessings.

Olokun’s spirit appeared swirling and dancing majestically as she cast cowries of blessings into the audience. The audience immediately called out Olokun’s name asking for her blessings. She asked her attendants to bring water as she cleansed those with heavy hearts. She then took her seat and watched the festival continue.

Olokun was very clear with her messages – with blessings come responsibility. Chief If’Alade Babaegbe Omoawo Ajampo, chief priest of Ile Ise Ejiogbe Ifa Temple, asked Mama Wande to read the readings of the month for October and November. Chief If’Alade discussed the significance of honoring one’s Ancestors and the need to focus on balancing spiritual and mental health during these months. He encouraged all to follow the good instructions that come from the Orisa to receive their blessings.

After Chief If’Alade’s words of wisdom, more prayers and offerings were made to Olokun to close out her festival.

The Story of Olokun and Orunmila

When Olokun left Oduduwa, she left Ile Ife humiliated and embarrassed by Oduduwa’s second wife. She took all that she could carry and left in the darkness. This left Olokun very sad and unhappy with her life, so she asked the sea god to transform her into water. Thus Olokun became the water which

flowed into the sea. In this way, she again became rich and powerful, but she still longed for the beauty and strength of Ile Ife. So, she sent a messenger to ask Orunmila to come and keep her company. When Orunmila heard of Olokun’s request, he agreed to go. When Orunmila went to Olokun, he was met with great wealth and comfort. He became so comfortable and wealthy by being in the home of Olokun that he forgot his responsibilities and did not return to Ile Ife for twenty years.

Through the many years of hospitality Olokun provided to Orunmila, Orunmila and Olokun developed a special relationship. They work together as man and woman bestowing blessings of prosperity to those who show purity of heart and humility of spirit. Orunmila divined for Olokun, which enabled her to administrate over her great wealth and responsibility to human beings. It is said among diviners that Olokun rarely appears on the divining board of Ifa. It is because of her secretive and mysterious nature that Olokun does not readily reveal herself to human beings. She will not share her secrets of prosperity until Ifa confirms the seeker is worthy. But when she does, it marks a person as having the opportunity for great wealth, but great wealth with the responsibility of helping human beings fulfill their destiny.

The Egungun come to cleanse our lives of sickness

“ARABARA, ARABARA, ARABARA, EGUNGUN, ARABARA YE O”.

As the assembled guests sang, the Ifa Temple called upon the good spirit of our most Honorable African Ancestors to come and bless the lives of those present.

The Egungun Festival 2001 was held in Baltimore, MD. at the beautiful **Gallery of Events**, near the historic Inner Harbor where many enslaved African Ancestors were transported and sold into slavery. This location was especially significant as we praised and uplifted the spirits of the Ancestors.



Celebrating the blessings of the Egungun.



The Spirit of the Egungun

The building became filled with emotion and excitement as the spirit of the Ancestors touched those present.

The drum call began with bata drummer, Ogunbayo Aloyinlapa's and Baba Joseph's calling the audience together. With the spirit of the Ancestors awakened, the libation poured by Awo Kola gave the audience a sense of the importance of the Ancestors' presence. As the Mistress of Ceremony, Mama Tunde's voice invited the spirit of hospitality and warmth into the ceremony.

As Awo Femi led the calling of Orisa, it became clear that the Ancestors were present. Many in the audience seemed taken by the strong spirits. The ceremony floor was filled with many people dancing and singing. The audience began shouting with pleasure as the drumming ignited the participants. Chief Priest If'Alade captured the communal feeling of appreciation for our Ancestors by speaking of his own grandparents' role in his connection to spirit.

The audience joined in Chief If'Alade's reflection and responded with "Ase" as he spoke of "that old time religion"--the one his grandparents practiced. He exclaimed, "the Ancestors are real and if you don't know..." And in the tradition of call and response, Mama Wande replied, "You better go ask somebody."

As the festival continued and more guests arrive, Babalawo Egunsanye entered and greeted the audience. As Babalawo and Egungun Priest, he was invited by Chief If'Alade to address the audience. He provided a spirited lesson on the Ancestors and their traditional and contemporary role. The audience was inspired by Baba Egunsanye's personal accounts of his Ancestors and by his command of the Yoruba language. He concluded by emphasizing the need to

celebrate our African American Ancestors as well.

With the calling of Orisa in high spiritual gear, the Egungun Masquerade made its way to the ceremony floor. The audience was overwhelmed with excitement as they watched the Egungun Masquerade twirl to the beat of the drum. Immediately, the children started running to play with the Egungun Masquerade. Chief If'Alade and Babalawo Egunsanye escorted the Egungun throughout the crowd. The Egungun waived its hands bestowing blessings to all that approached.

As the dancing and singing subsided, the audience was invited to make their offering and prayers to Egungun. Many gave freely to the Egungun shrine and received words of wisdom from the Egungun. The festival came to a close with a unity circle and Awo Kola making closing prayers. The community then enjoyed a traditional feast.



Egungun and two Egungun Priests

The Egungun, Our Most Honorable African Ancestors Returning

Egungun means "the Ancestors are returning". The physical representation of the Egungun Ancestral Spirits is a multi-colored masquerade reflecting the Ancestors coming from Heaven to Earth. In this physical representation, the Egungun Spirits come to pray for and uplift those who have remained on Earth. In this light, the Egungun are not merely the dead, but the most exalted African Ancestral Spirits within one's family lineage. The Egungun come to ensure the well being of society, to uplift the moral character of the community, and to protect the health of the family.

The responsibility of maintaining this connection with the Ancestral Spirits lies with the Egungun Society. The Egungun Society is a community of priests who work on behalf of the Ancestral Spirits to see that a family's relationship with its lineage remains intact. The Egungun Society also works to restore order within the African family.

Reading of the Month for December

In response to the needs of the Ifa community, the Ile Ise Ejiogbe Ifa Temple will be publishing its reading of the month in its newsletter. In this way, the Ifa Temple will be providing spiritual and cultural information to help people overcome personal struggles and be successful during these challenging times. Chief Priest If'Alade with other priests of the Ifa Temple will be conducting the monthly readings.

December, 2001

Under the holy Odu **Obara Owonrin** confirmed by **Otura Owonrin** for Ire (good luck), and with good fortune supported by **Iwori Otura** for victory over enemies, Ifa says look for success and achievement in overcoming dangers. In the month of December, one should keep a clear mind to achieve success at the close of the old year and to open the way for the New Year. Ifa prescribes:

- 1) One should focus on spiritual matters because spiritual energy will be filling one's life.
- 2) One should take the opportunity to reflect on oneself and one's relationship with others. Especially, one should examine their relationship with family.

Money will come to those who put spirit first. Spirit will give great insight on where financial success can be found. At work, one should be more outgoing and take a clear position about important matters. Directness and clarity are the proper postures of the month.

One should not delay on working with spirit in order to avoid harmful or dangerous situations around health. In other words, one should stay mindful of personal health and take care of oneself.

Those who are Orisa practitioners should seek to celebrate the Orisa with others and should beware of isolation. Ifa says guard against the spirit of depression by uplifting one's spirit through communing with others. One should work hard to overcome depression and keep the good spirits of Orisa in one's heart.

Orisa practitioners should make sure that the Orisa are fed well.

(Continued next column)

Ile Ise Ejiogbe Ifa Temple Upcoming Events

OYA Festival	January 20, 2002 Gallery of Events 429. N. Eutaw St. Baltimore, MD
OGUN Festival	February 24, 2002 Gallery of Events Baltimore, MD
OSUN Festival Week	May 26 - June 2, 2002
o Women's Healing Ritual	May 26, 2002 Location TBD
o Seminar on OSUN	May 30, 2002 Blue Nile Bookstore Washington, DC
o Community Prayer at the river to OSUN	June 1, 2002 Baltimore, MD
o OSUN Festival	June 2, 2002 Morgan State University Baltimore, MD
SANGO Festival	July 13, 2002 Rock Creek Park Washington, DC

** All Event Times are TBD*

Do all necessary prayers and offerings to your guardian Orisa. Do cleansing rituals and spiritual baths to keep one's heart and mind open for blessings.

As the month closes, the spirit of giving will be great. One should give as much as one can, but not more than one can afford. Avoid greediness because over indulgence will bring negative energy. Such behavior will lead to laziness and a lack of production. Ifa says be modest and good things will continue to happen.

Ase! Ase! Ase!

Your continued contributions towards the mission of the Ile Ise Ejiogbe Ifa Temple in helping us build our spiritual and cultural community are greatly appreciated. All donations will go to our building fund and to sponsoring our festivals and community events.

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	\$50 _____
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PO Box 90188

Washington, DC 20090

202-526-3007