

JuJu Beliefs

JuJu beliefs

How JuJu is used

JuJu is a European term adopted to describe the collective traditional ancestral religious beliefs of the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria. Juju or Ju-Ju is a word of French origin from the word JOUJOU, meaning toy or plaything. It refers to the small objects that many individuals wear or keep in their possession. These items believe to contain energy that brings luck and protection. It is common to find such fetishes under a person's pillow to protect them while they sleep. The early Europeans mistakenly mistook these objects to be focus of worship. Hence the name juju.



The people of Yoruba worship a series of Gods and Goddesses. They are;

Olorun

The 'Supreme Being' divine creator. He/she is the highest of all gods, living in the highest heaven.

Olodumare

The daughter of Olorun. She has seven children, who are collectively known as Orisha. These demi-gods are given responsibilities of life on earth and are the gods that man makes their requests to in order to protect or destroy. Each of these demi-gods have positive and negative powers.

The Seven children are;

Obatala – simplicity

Orunmila – harmony and stability

Oshun – beauty and sensuality, the water goddess. Oshun is the main goddess used in the exploitation and the binding of victims into human trafficking. Victims of the Esan tribe swear an oath of obedience to her during ceremonies on the river bank.

Oya – storms and hurricanes

Shango – flamboyance

Yemoya – material love

Eshu – Test – disrupts, the trickster never to be trusted. If during your travels you come to a cross roads and unsure which way to go. If you ask Eshu for guidance he, for his own fun will send you the wrong way. One that can be easily exploited. It is this demi-god that is usually used in the binding of victims to the modern slave trade in Edo State.

The Spirits

It is believed that before a person is born, their destiny is written. Their path in life is foretold. Once this has been done then Olorun breathes life into them. She gives them emi, meaning spirit or life force. This spirit can never be destroyed. It exists forever. So when the person dies their emi or spirit continues to exist.

It is the spirits of the deceased that aid communication between the gods above and man on the surface of earth.

There are two types of emi or spirit; the 'living-dead' and the 'dead-dead'.

The living-dead spirits/emi

These are the spirits of those human beings who once lived and have died in recent times. Such that there are people living today who can remember those individuals when they walked the earth as human beings, before they died; a relative, an aunt, a grandparent, a parent or sibling.

These are seen as good spirits. They may be a guardian spirits or angel. In order to keep the spirits happy and do you or anybody harm gifts are offered believing that by looking after the spirits, they will look after you.

The dead-dead spirits /emi

These are the spirits of the deceased where not one person living today can remember that person when they walked the earth.

This makes these spirits dangerous. They are the ones who will carry out bad acts and cause bad luck. These are the spirits that will punish breaches of any contract or oath that has been made or sworn to a demi-god / goddess.

The spirits are traditionally known to move and make contact with humans during the hours of darkness at night. They come during the night while all are sleeping. People are defenceless and the spirits enter the body and take control of the mind and soul. The placing of the juju item under the pillow is to protect the sleeper.

The person knows when a spirits has visited them. The spirit will appear in their dreams. If a person has upset the gods or the spirits, they will be visited during sleep and punished. The emi will bring nightmares, madness and death. So if a person dies at night as they slept, it is seen as a sure sign that the spirits played a part in that death.

The human traffickers of Edo and Delta States of Nigeria have hijacked the cultural beliefs in juju to blackmail their victims. The traffickers pay the traditional priests to put a victim through a ceremony. The strong belief in the spirits makes this a powerful weapon for modern day slave traders.