

òrìṣà

The spirits sent by the Creator, Olodumare, to assist humanity and to teach them to be successful on *Ayé* (Earth). Rooted in the native religion of the Yoruba people, most òrìṣà are said to have previously existed in òrún - the spirit world- and then became Irúnmọ̀lẹ̀ - spirits or divine beings incarnated as human on Earth. Irunmole took upon a human identity and lived as ordinary humans in the physical world, but because they had their origin in the divine, they had great wisdom.

Yoruba tradition often says that there are 400 + 1 orisha, which is associated with a sacred number. Ifá is the divination system, which makes use of an extensive corpus of texts and mathematical formulas, is practiced among Yoruba communities of southwestern Nigeria and West Africa, and by the African diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean. The exact origin of Ifa divination is unknown, but it appears to pre-date Christianity and Islam in West Africa.

The word Ifa refers to the mystical figure Ifa or Orunmila, regarded by the Yoruba as the deity of wisdom and intellectual development. Ifa divination does not rely on a person having oracular powers but rather on a system of signs that are interpreted by a diviner, the Ifa priest or babalawo, literally “the priest’s father”. The role of a *babalawo* is to help an individual or community to see what is in store for them in their day-to-day lives. In November 2005, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) proclaimed Ifá as one of the 86 traditions of the world to be regarded as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Àse. Àse. Àse.

Different traditions honor and work with the òrìṣà. Ifá comes from Yorubaland, but is now practiced in Nigeria, Cuba , US, and other places. Vodun (originates from Yoruba people of Dahomey and West Africa, is still practiced there, in the Caribbean and the US. Voodoo is the syncretism of Vodun and other. Santería (La Regla de Ocha, La Religión de Lucumí is the syncretism of Yoruba based religion, Spiritism with Christianity It originates and is practiced in Cuba. Palo (Las Reglas de Congo, is the syncretism of Congo based religion, Spiritism and Christianity. It has different branches: Mayombe, Monte, Briyumba, and Kimbisa, originates and is practiced in Cuba). Candomblé is the syncretism of Yoruba, Bantu, Fon and Christianity, originates and is practiced in Brasil.

Ase or ashe (from Yoruba *àṣẹ*) is a Yoruba philosophical concept through which the Yoruba conceive the power to make things happen and produce change. It is given by Olodumare to everything, gods, ancestors, spirits, humans, animals, plants, rocks, rivers, and voiced words such as songs, prayers, praises, curses, or even everyday conversation. Existence, according to Yoruba thought, is dependent upon it. Ase has important social ramifications, reflected in its translation as "power, authority, command." A person who, through training, experience, and initiation, learns how to use the essential life force of things to willfully effect change is called an *alaase*. Rituals to invoke divine forces reflect this same concern for the autonomous *ase* of particular entities. The recognition of the uniqueness and autonomy of the *ase* of persons and gods is what structures society and its relationship with the other-world.

Resources:

- <https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/predictionx/ifa> (Harvard University)
- [Ifa Divination System- Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) (from UNESCO)
- [Ifa Divination App](#) (for iPhone)