



One of Ten Thousand: Goddess Lore & Ritual

by Diana Paxson
Artwork by Linda Ware Iles

Yemaya

Our Ocean Mother

The Sun has gone to rest

behind the mountains, and night draws a veil of shadow across the sky. The lights of Rio sparkle on the hillsides like Carnival jewels. Below, pale sand curves in a long crescent around the bay, edged by a lacework of foam. Tonight the sea is calm, its shadowed expanses merging into the deepening blues of the sky. The sounds of the city fade as you near the water, until all you can hear is the incessant, regular whisper of wavelets as they kiss the shore.

Tonight this stretch of beach is deserted – but at the edge of the high tide mark some fragments of candle wax show where a previous worshipper has made her offering. You set down your basket. Inside are seven new white candles, white roses tied with blue ribbon, and a plate with pieces of roast duck, yams, fish, watermelon, and sweets. You set out the plate with the roses beside it, fill a cup with champagne and stick it into the sand, and arrange the candles around it. When you light them, the flames burn tall and steady in the still air.

“Oh my mother Yemaya, queen of the salt sea –” you whisper, “descend and comfort me . . .”

Then you sit back, gazing past the glowing candle flames to the shadowed sea. The waves whisper softly as they reach out to the shore, in and out, up and back again. “Africa . . .” they whisper. “From the river Ogun in Africa we have crossed the sea . . .”

The blue depths draw your gaze eastward across the ocean. The sky is growing luminous. A line of silver edges the water, and suddenly the moon rolls up over the horizon, laying a path of silver light across the waves.

Along that bright pathway a figure comes walking. When you first glimpse her, she is a woman of Africa with a patterned indigo cloth around her hips and another twisted around her head. Necklaces of cowries hang over generous breasts. Her teeth are very white in her dark face as she smiles.

But as she grows closer she seems to change. The headwrap becomes abundant dark hair, curling like the waves of the sea. It sparkles with pearls; now her bracelets are seaweed, her necklaces shell and starfish, and the waistcloth shimmers and flows into the sea in a mermaid’s tail.

As she nears the shore, once more she alters. She grows tall and majestic, and her hair flows in dark waves down her back and across her shoulders; but now her skin is pale, and she is clad in a long blue gown with flowing sleeves, sewn with crystals and pearls.

“Yemaya . . .” the waves salute her, “Ashé Yemaya.”

The goddess is carried to land by a great wave that froths like the petticoats beneath her gown. Swiftly it rolls across the sand; in moments it swirls over your offerings, dark waters glittering in the tiny flames. Then the waters engulf you – you gasp, then laugh, for they are warm, and sweet as the clasp of a mother’s arms.

As you float in her embrace, you hear her words.

“*Daughter of the sea, my love is with you. I have come to you, daughter of the waves and the foam . . . I am your ocean mother, Yemaya . . .*”

Yemaya, lemanjá, Yemoja . . . however her name is rendered, she is our Ocean Mother, *Mãe d’Agua*, the *Diosa del Mar*.

In Africa she rules the river Ogun, the largest river





in the Yoruba lands. Her city is Abeokuta, where they make the beautiful resist-dyed indigo cloths. For the Yoruba, she is a goddess of the depths that flow into the sea and a wife of ancient kings. She waves a fan as round as a drop of water to cool violent emotions and restore peace. But she can also carry a slim but deadly sword. She is a powerful protector.

When the slave ships carried their human cargoes to the New World, Mother Yemaya came with them. On that terrible voyage, it was only by her grace that any survived. The orisha who had brought them safely across the sea became the goddess of the sea. Those who had lost their tribes and families claimed her as their mother, and she became the loving mother of all the mixed and displaced peoples of the New World.

In Brazil, she is the greatest of the female deities, pre-eminent as Guadalupe is in Mexico. She is the great mother, a powerful protector who is especially concerned with women and all they do. In Cuba she is one of the Seven African Powers, and blue candles with her image are burned as offerings.

She is identified with the Virgin Mary, especially as the Sacred Heart of Mary, Our Lady of Seafarers, Our Lady of the Conception, and Mary Star of the Sea. As Mistress of the Sea, she is the great purifier of passions. In Santeria, she appears as the Virgin of Regla, whose image, clad in blue and white and standing on a crescent moon, was originally carved by St. Augustine, and who became the patroness of sailors. There is a famous chapel to her at Havana Bay.

Her jewelry is often of silver, pearl or mother-of-pearl, and her necklaces are of clear crystal (in Africa) or transparent blue beads. She is very fond of ornaments of silver or lead (the only metal not corroded by the sea) representing anchors, boats, parts of boats, seahorses, shells and other sea creatures.

As a mother goddess, Yemaya has strong affinities with Isis and Frigga, with the Greek Hera as a Queen, and with the Greek Amphitrite, the Haitian loas, La Baleine and La Sirene, and the West African Mammy Wata as a goddess of the sea. In Santeria, she is addressed as *Iyá Moaé*, the Mother of the World, origin of the earth and all it bears. One legend says she came into being when Obatala confined the primal water deity Olokun in the depths. She is therefore the ruler of the upper, light-filled levels of the sea.¹

Like most goddesses, Yemaya has been linked with several male deities. In Brazil she may be called the wife of Oxala (Obatala), or sometimes junior wife with Nana as senior. However various African myths make her the wife of Omolu, Orunmila, Orisha Oko, Ogun (who left her when he found she could do more work than he), or Aganju (to whom she bore Chango). Clearly, each cult wished to link its god with the most powerful goddess. She loves where she pleases, and if she is not well-treated, moves on.

Various stories are told regarding her relations with the other goddesses. In Umbanda, she is a mother to Oshun and indulges her and gets along well with Oya, whereas in Santeria they are sisters and may fight over lovers, and she does not get along with Oya at all. She is the foster-mother of the Ibeji, the Divine Twins, and she protects them and all children.

To know her, you must know the sea in all its aspects. She is as generous and life-giving as the waters, but those who cannot read her moods and adjust to them should beware, for she can rouse to



sudden storms. She adorns herself with jewelry that sparkles like light on the waves, and in clothing that swirls like the waters. Hers is a strength that is both immense and totally feminine, the strength of a mother defending her children.

Though Yemaya is a loving mother to all, to those who are dedicated to her as their primary deity she can be demanding, and though she (and her children) may forgive an offense, they do not forget it. In Brazil it is said that she gets angry if her daughters cut their hair. Her "children" of either gender must be very careful to keep whatever promises they have made to her. (Actually, this is true of all deities.)

Once, in Brazil, a woman promised that if she had a daughter, she would be consecrated to Iemanjá, but when the baby was born, the mother forgot her vow. One day the family went to the sea for a boat race. When the girl saw the water she began to fuss, talking about the beautiful lady who was calling her. Then she jumped into the sea. A powerful priest was called, who sang the sacred songs and finally offered the goddess a golden tray. Only then did the *mãe d'agua* return the child, who was then consecrated as a priestess of Iemanjá.²

To those who serve her faithfully, she is fiercely loyal. She is the most powerful of protectors, and no evil magic can touch those she loves. Her children feel a powerful, and occasionally dangerous, attraction to the sea, and should be watched during ceremonies at the shore.

When we face Yemaya, we must confront our own ambivalence regarding mothers and motherhood.

The popular picture of a mother is uniformly positive, as calm and smiling as the summer sea. But the sea in a storm can be terrifying, and the emotions stirred up when we consider our relationships to our mothers can disturb us even when we feel most confident and mature. We want Mommy to be utterly dependable, both understanding and wise, supporting us when we need it, and knowing when to let go. But our mothers are human beings, struggling, like us, to cope in a difficult world. Inevitably, they sometimes fail us. In the Goddess we seek a mother by whom we will not be betrayed.

The sea, also, is moved by deep currents that we cannot see. To give ourselves to those heaving waters takes a great deal of trust. Love and trust are at the heart of the mother/daughter relationship. The swimmer who flails desperately and fights the waves is likely to exhaust herself and drown. Swimming requires you to trust the water to uphold you. Sometimes, the only way to survive is to cease resisting and go with the flow, to trust that the Goddess will give us, if not what we want, what we need.

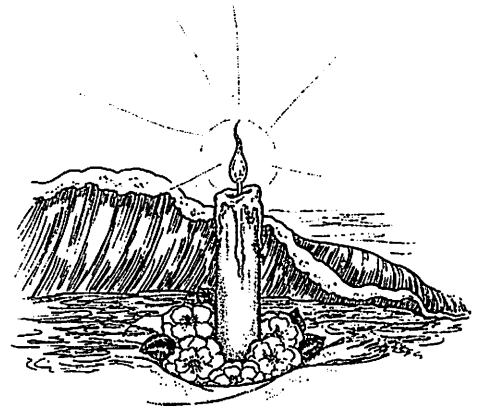
Our human mothers are fallible, as we are. But the Goddess will always come through for us if we keep faith with her. Yet she cannot help us if we fight her or refuse to hear. We must open our hearts and allow her healing power to flow into our depths, to cleanse and nourish those parts of us that we ourselves cannot see. She cools us when we are angry, and comforts us in our grief.

Yemaya, who watched over the men and women carried into slavery in the Americas, and who wept for those she could not save, still cares for those who are betrayed and abandoned. She loves beautiful things, but the most welcome offering is that which comes from the heart. She is like a mother to whom the child's clumsy drawing is as valuable as a Van Gogh.

To her, we can entrust our own children, and the child self who still exists within us all.

*You set out the plate with
the roses beside it, fill a
cup with champagne and
stick it into the sand, and
arrange the candles around
it. When you light them,
the flames burn tall and
steady in the still air.*

*"Oh my mother Yemaya,
queen of the salt sea" —
you whisper, "descend and
comfort me . . ."*



Working with Yemaya

The Sea

The most simple and direct way to encounter our Ocean Mother is by going to the sea. Obviously this is easiest if you live near one of the coasts. Go to the seashore, swim if the place is suitable (but not alone). You will also find great comfort in walking on the sand or sitting to watch the waves come in. When you are near the sea, try to still the internal monologue that continually distracts us and open your ears and your heart to the timeless rhythms of the waves. Listen to the song of the sea.

Although Yemaya is most closely associated with the ocean, any water will connect you to her – in Africa she was originally a river goddess, and even the waters of a lake or river originally come from and return to the sea. The point is to find in the external image or experience something that will open the doors to the goddess within. Thus, any water, even the bubbling of an aquarium, can set you on your way. Another approach is by watching a videotape of the ocean or listening to one of the environmental audiotapes that abound.

Many composers have attempted to convey the sounds of the sea in music. Some of my favorites include: *La Mer*, by Claude Debussy, and "Sirenes," from *Images for Orchestra*, *Un Barque sur L'Ocean*, by Ravel, the "Sea Interludes," from *Peter Grimes*, by Benjamin Britten, and Sibelius' *Les Aeolides*.

The New Age composers have also often turned to the sea. Paul Horn often incorporates wolf or whalesong into his music, as in "Haida," from *Inside the Powers of Nature* (Inside Music, Inc., 1984). Paul Winter uses whale sounds in "Ocean Dream," in his album, *Common Ground* (A&M Records, Inc., 1978). The same album includes a piece called "The Promise of a Fisherman," which features the chant to Iemanja included in the ritual that follows. Fifteen minutes in any good music store should turn up a number of more recent discs which will be equally inspiring.

What matters is not so much what stimulus you use, but what you do with it. The sound of water is soothing. As you listen, let your body relax and your awareness float away. Safe in the arms of the ocean, you are renewed. You do not have to think, only to be . . .

If you meditate on the importance of the ocean, there are a number of points worth considering. The sea is our Mother in many ways. Water cradles us; we emerged from the salty waters of the womb as all life emerged from the sea. Water nourishes us; a baby's first food is the milk from its mother's breast, and if there is water, we can survive for a time without solid food. The living oceans play a vital part in replenishing not only the water but the air that enables us to survive.

The Ritual Bath

Like all water goddesses, Yemaya can be experienced through a ritual bath. The bath described for Oshun in an earlier article was sensuous and beautifying. Yemaya's bath, on the other hand, brings healing and renewal.

The bathroom must become your temple. Light it with candles in shades of blue and purple and green. If there is room, put up posters of the sea, hang blue cloths around the bathtub, arrange shells and sand in a box to make a shrine. Bring in a tape recorder to play ocean music. Burn jasmine or verbena incense. This kind of bath ritual is best done before bed or at some time during the day when you can be sure you will not be disturbed. Put a warning sign on the door and turn off the telephone!

The bath itself can include dissolved sea-salt (if your purpose is purifica-

The sea is moved by deep currents that we cannot see. To give ourselves to those heaving waters takes a great deal of trust. Love and trust are at the heart of the mother/daughter relationship.

The swimmer who flails desperately and fights the waves is likely to exhaust herself and drown.

Swimming requires you to trust the water to uphold you. Sometimes, the only way to survive is to cease resisting and go with the flow, to trust that the

Goddess will give us, if not

what we want, what we need.



tion) or fragrant herbs (for healing). Many appropriate bath-salts are also available. A traditional herbal mixture (the "Seven Bush Ritual Bath") includes rose buds, lavender flowers, eucalyptus leaves, spearmint, sage, rosemary, and lemon verbena. Get them at an herb store (or your local nursery!) and mix equal portions of each in a net bag. The herbs can be steeped in boiling water to make a tea which is then added to the bathwater, or the bag can be put in the water when you run the bath.

Consecrate the bathroom by blessing it in the name of Yemaya, turn out the lights and light the candles and incense, and turn on the tape. As you take off your clothes, consciously let go of your anxieties and the concerns of the day. When the bath is ready, immerse yourself in the soothing water as in a mother's arms. Focus your attention on each part of your body in turn, from your toes to your scalp. If necessary, intentionally tighten each muscle group to identify it, and then release so that the limb floats in the water without strain. You may want to use an air pillow or rolled up towel to support your head so you won't become so relaxed you go under!

As you listen to the ocean music, feel yourself floating (of course these meditations can also be performed while lying comfortably on dry land!). Meditate on the goddess. Here are some scenarios -

You are a child in the womb. From a single point of consciousness, you become aware of each limb, until you feel yourself complete and whole. . . .

You are swimming in the sea. The blue waters become floating draperies, and the white foam becomes the body of the goddess, who smiles and takes you into her arms. . . .

You are in a silver boat that rocks gently on the waves. The current carries you across the water to a floating island. Floating seaweeds edge it, and salt grass and other beach plants hold it together. In the center women are dancing, arms moving gracefully as waterweed, hair floating on the breeze. You leave the boat and dance with them. . . .

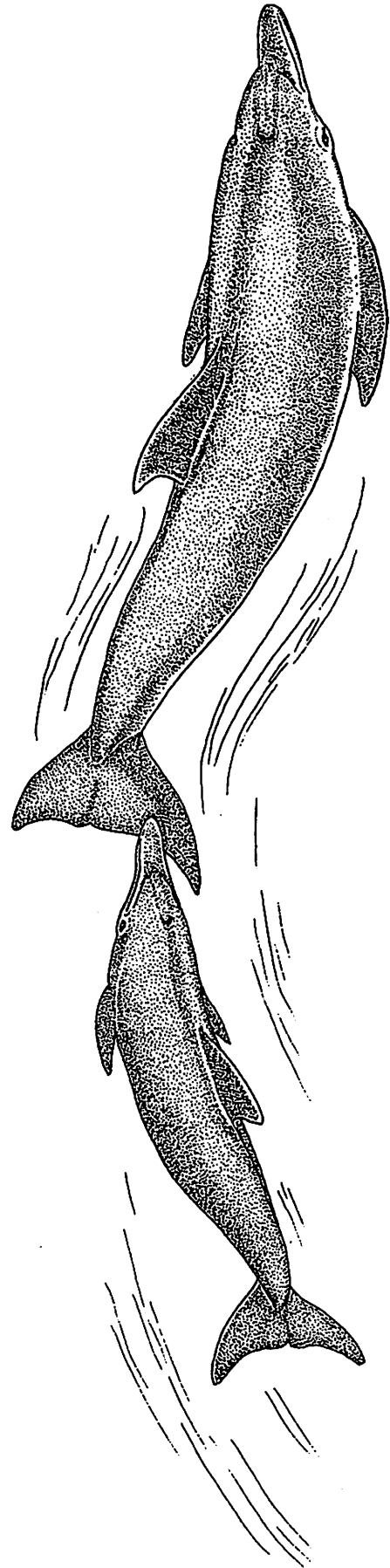
Do not force yourself to visualize a specific scenario. Let the images merge and flow. As time passes, you will discover that new images form and the goddess begins to speak to you. If you are meditating in the bathtub, eventually the water will become uncomfortably cool. That is your signal to return to ordinary consciousness, reclaiming awareness of each limb. Give thanks to the goddess, and get out of the tub. Dry yourself gently, using a clean towel, preferably white or some shade of blue. Use a bath powder or body lotion in a scent that harmonizes with your bath.

When you are finished, release the bathroom for ordinary use and blow out the candles. Go to bed, or at least rest for a time before resuming activity.

Altar Work

Traditional places for a Yemaya altar include the bathroom and the bedroom. In our house, the shower room is tiled in shades of blue and grey, so it was obvious to whom it belonged. I painted the upper walls the pale blue of the sky and the lower part the deep blue of the sea, with wavy swirls. A space was left in the tile in which I cemented shells to surround a plaque of Yemaya, below which is a shelf on which I have aged shells (one large enough to hold a cone of incense), a shell-ed votive holder, etc. Strings of clear beads in crystal and blues hang from a piece of driftwood before the window.

I was fortunate in having a bathroom which could be decorated in





this way, but a shelf or the top of a cabinet can hold an altar for Yemaya. You can start with a piece of cloth in an ocean pattern or mixed blues, or cover a box top with aluminum foil and fill it with sand. Add postcards of ocean scenes, a statuette of a mermaid, a tall votive candle printed with a picture of Yemaya/Mary Star of the Sea, or the like. Arrange shells, strings of pearls, water smoothed stones. Include an earthenware vessel or clear glass chalice which you keep filled with fresh water. Decorate a round fan of woven palm leaves, or make a fan from cardboard covered with foil, silver lace, etc. (a white or blue folded fan will also serve). You can include a vase which you fill with white flowers, especially carnations, orchids, roses, or gladiolas. Items may be arranged in multiples of seven, her sacred number.

If you have children, you may want to place their pictures on Yemaya's altar and invoke her protection for them. When my first grandchild was born I made him a quilt from ocean colored fabric and applied her image on it.

If you want to keep your devotions a bit more private, you can contain your *sacra* for Yemaya in a large bowl (such as a soup tureen) with a lid, glazed in white and blue. The vessel can be filled with sea water or fresh water mixed with sea salt, in which crystals, stones, jewelry, etc. are immersed. The bowl or altar can be covered with a piece of cloth or a silk scarf when not in use.

To work with the altar, uncover it, light a candle, and sit in a comfortable position where you can gaze at the images you have placed there. Imagine yourself floating upon the sea, and let your tensions go. When you are calm, articulate your need or concern and let it go floating away on the waves or sink into the depths. Yemaya will receive it and help you. Yemaya is particularly helpful with any problems involving family or children, love in a family context, or the emotions in general. If you are upset, take her fan and "cool" the situation by waving it. She also has power over illnesses involving liquid, such as pneumonia, and problems with the kidneys or urinary tract.

If you have a special need, explain it to the goddess and ask her help. If appropriate, you may visualize her solving the problem. For instance, if you are working for someone who needs more energy, you might "see" Yemaya embracing her, and then visualize her color improving, her eyes growing brighter, etc. If you are working for harmony in a family, "see" the goddess drawing them into a circle, sending her energy from one to another until they are all smiling. Or you might simply visualize the individual for whom you are working and the goddess together and wait to see what other images appear.

You can seek Yemaya's help in your dreams by meditating at her altar before you go to bed, and as you

fall asleep, articulating your need and visualizing yourself floating away on her blue sea. This is especially effective during the nights when the moon is waxing to full.

Candle Magic

One of the traditional ways of honoring Yemaya is by burning a votive candle. These days, most larger cities have "candle shops" (candelarias) or botanicals where you can buy tall blue votive candles in glasses already printed with the image of Yemaya. Sometimes the candle also has a prayer to La Diosa del Mar. The candles carried by two magical stores of my acquaintance are made by the Valley Candle Co., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11211. Candle stores also carry replacement candles so that the glass can be re-used.

If you buy the candle at a candle shop, they will ask you if you want it "dressed," which involves anointing it with an appropriate herbal oil. The oil varies with the store and the tradition. I prefer to "dress" my own candles. For Yemaya, I use lemon verbena oil, but you could also choose mint, lily, or violet, or scents from the Seven Bush Bath, including rose, lavender, or rosemary. If there is a perfume that your mother always used, that makes you remember her love, you could use that as well. Pour a little oil on the candle and smear it around the top. As you do so, strongly visualize the goddess and pour out your love to her.

Of course a commercially made votive candle is not necessary. Any candle in an appropriate color, such as white or some shade of blue, will work just as well. A pillar candle can be carved or incised with Yemaya's name and the name of the person you are praying for. You can also decorate a candle with designs dripped on from a candle of another color, bits of glitter, and the like. One advantage of a candle that is not in a glass is that you can anoint it all over, not just on top.

When my children were younger I used to keep a Yemaya candle on hand to light whenever one of them was having problems. Now I keep it available for my grandchildren. Lighting a Yemaya candle when a friend goes into labor is also appropriate. Hopefully she will give birth before the candle burns out, and Yemaya's power can then be invoked to protect the new mother and child.

You can light the candle and leave it to burn out (which will take several days), or light it for a little while each day while you are praying, or only when there is a special need. If you do leave the candle burning, put it in a safe place, such as the bathtub, the sink, inside the fireplace or (my favorite) inside a heavy iron cauldron, where it cannot be knocked over by children, animals, or earthquakes. For Yemaya, leaving the candle in a basin or sink half full of water would be especially fitting. You could even float flowers or herbs on the surface as an offering. For a regular devotion, burn the



candle for a time at sunset on her holy day, Saturday, or when the moon is full.

The principle behind candle burning is to impress your intention or need on the candle and let it burn as an offering which continues to send out your prayer along with its light. The act of preparing and lighting the candle focuses your attention and will. The candle flame makes an excellent focus for meditation. Stare into the flame until your vision is dazzled, then close your eyes and transform the light into an image of the goddess. Hold it in your imagination, praise and honor her, and tell her what you need.

Making offerings

Appropriate offerings for Yemaya include candies or crackers shaped like fish or shells, fish and waterfowl, fruit, especially watermelon, and yams, sparkling water and champagne. Set them on Yemaya's altar on Saturday, or when you have a special request, but remove them after a day or two or when they become stale.

In Brazil, Yemaya's major festival is on December 31st. On that night, the beach blazes with candles as the people come to sing her praises and dance in her honor and bless themselves with holy waters. Brazilians also make offerings to Yemaya by filling a little silver painted ship with miniature offerings, including perfumes, soap, and the like, and setting it where the tide can sweep it away. This is very similar to the ritual for Isis described by Apuleius [see the article "Isis of the Ships" in the Spring, 1995 issue of *SageWoman*]. In Bahia she is also honored on February 2nd, when offerings for her are given to sailors to take out to sea. In the northern hemisphere, similar ceremonies might be more comfortably performed in the summertime! In Africa she is honored in a yearly processional in which her priestesses walk in silence through the city, carrying vessels of her sacred waters.



A Ritual For Yemaya

A simple ceremony by which Yemaya may be honored by one woman or several is as follows.

Ideally, do the ritual near water – by a lake or at the seashore, under the full moon. If you are outdoors, you may delineate your sacred space by making a circle of seven stones. However if this is not possible, decorate your sacred space and altar following the suggestions for sacred bath and altar work given above. For the ritual, you will need a vessel (a clear, white or silvery bowl or cup) for each woman, a source of water such as

a bucket, bowl or even a plastic jug of spring water. You will also need food and drink to share. Each woman who attends should be asked to bring a clean jar with a watertight lid.

Carry a bowl of water clockwise around your sacred space, sprinkling it and saying something like:

In the name of Yemaya, may this place be purified, may it be consecrated to the Mother of All . . .

Light your candles and incense, and sit where you can contemplate them. If there is a specific purpose for the ritual (as, for instance, to seek help or healing), state it clearly.

Begin to chant or sing –

Yemaya asesu, asesu Yemaya,

Yemaya Olodo, Olodo Yemaya . . . [Brazilian chant]

As you do so, close your eyes and visualize the goddess coming to you across the waves. If you have a drummer, you may dance for Yemaya, stepping forward and back, and swirling your skirts like the waves.

Honor her with a prayer such as this one –

Womb of all life, we praise thee –

Blessed be the beauty of sun

and moonlight on thy waves

and the mysteries of thy depths and thy bounty,
ever renewed.

Great Mother, cleanse us, restore us,

and let thy high tide bear us, reborn, to live anew.

Sit for a time in silent contemplation.

When you feel the power of the goddess rising within you, bring it into the world by standing and lifting the bowl of water. If you are working in a group, fill each woman's jar, which is now symbolically an awota, Yemaya's sacred earthenware water vessel, from the bowl or pail. With a few drops, bless yourself/ yourselves. Then, still in silence, hold the water high and carry it clockwise around the altar. If you are working at home, you may carry it through every room of the house. But though you speak no word, visualize the cool, life-giving power of the water flowing outward, filling the world. When you have finished, place the vessel or vessels of water in front of or around the altar and sit down again.

Bless your food and drink in Yemaya's name and share them. Good choices would be sparkling water, lemonade, or champagne for the drink, and fish or shell-shaped sweets, or seafood.

When you are finished, sing –

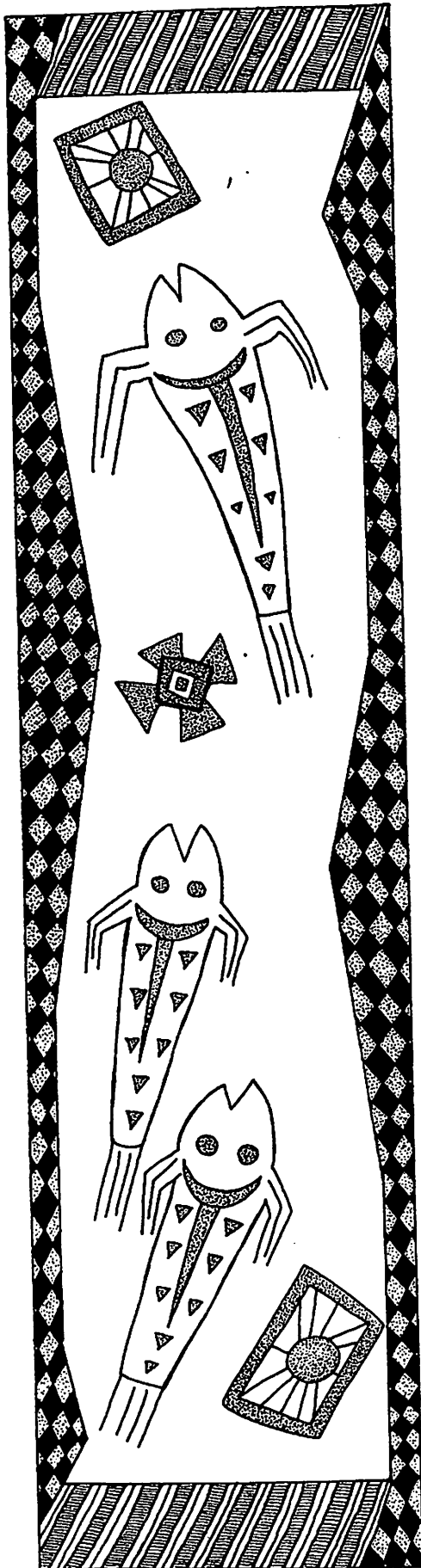
We all come from the Goddess,

and to Her we shall return,

Like a drop of rain,

Flowing to the ocean . . . [Z.Budapest]

Blow out the candles and declare your working space open. Each woman should then seal her jar so that she can take the water home to place on her altar or bless her home.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bastide, Roger. *The African Religions of Brazil*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Bramly, Serge. *Macumba*. Avon Books, 1979.
- Gonzalez-Wippler, Migene. *Powers of the Orishas*. Original Publications, N.Y., 1992.
- Gonzalez-Wippler, Migene. *Santeria*. Prentice-Hall, 1973.
- Landes, Ruth. *City of Women*. New York: MacMillan, 1947.
- Murphy, Joseph M. *Working the Spirit*. Boston: Beacon, 1994.
- Teish, Luisah. *Jambalaya*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985.
- Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit*. New York: Vintage Books, 1983.

Special thanks to my Mother, Mama Renée, for sharing her many years of research and giving me the opportunity to learn more about Yemaya.

ENDNOTES

¹ Migene Gonzalez-Wippler, *Powers of the Orishas* (Original Publications, NY, 1992), p. 100.

² Ruth Landes, *City of Women* (New York: MacMillan, 1947), pp. 95-96.

ARTIST'S NOTES

The African version of Yemaya is dressed in textile designs of indigo cloth produced in the Yoruba region of Nigeria. Her necklaces and peacock feather fan are based on descriptions of the goddess as recited by a priestess of the Orisha tradition named Aduni Olorisa.

The Caribbean version of Yemaya is a composite of several ceremonial costumes and jewelry of priestesses of the Candomblé religion in Brazil, from recent photographs.

The textile panel is based on altar cloths made by Aduni Olorisa in the traditional methods employed by artisans of her people.

— Diana Paxson is a writer and Priestess of the Goddess. Her works of fiction include *The White Raven* and *The Serpent's Tooth*.

She is a member of the Fellowship of the Spiral Path and lives in Berkeley, California.

— Lisa Ware Iles is an artist, artisan, and graphic designer. She lives in San Diego, California.

