

Ogun

Ogun is a complex Orixá and embodies many personal aspects. He is at once: aggressive, sentimental, bold and athletic.

In Africa the tradition of Orixás continues, and people dress up in masquerade rituals as the Orixás.

Typically the Ogun masquerade character emerges from the forest with body costumes made of palm fronds. As the Ogun masquerade character emerges from the forest, they stamp their feet very hard. This is to signal the entry of Ogun to the people in the village or town where a masquerade ritual takes place.

The Ogun character moves and dances in the masquerade in a distinctive way. He moves forward, slapping his feet down, with bended knees, sometimes knocking together, as if he is crouched as a hunter on the prowl.

Ogun is associated with iron because of its strength and also its significance in war. Ogun's ritual colour is red, although sometimes this can vary and he might also be represented with blue costume.

When Europeans first went to West Africa unfortunately they took with them small pox which was unknown on the Coast of Africa and caused much illness and deaths amongst West Africans. Sometimes Ogun's mask is shown with marks which look like those caused by small pox.

Amongst the slaves of Africa and the Caribbean Ogun became a strong symbol of revolution, and their fight for freedom. The Orixá Ogun embodied the slaves anger, strength, endurance, pain and courage.