

<http://www.headlinemuse.com/Politics/ogun.htm>

The oba's crown is the principal symbol of royalty. [. . .] Henry Drewal has noted that “bird imagery in many Yoruba art forms refers directly to the vital force possessed by females (living, ancestral, deified), collectively known as `our mothers.” He suggests, [. . .] that the “birds surrounding the top of the crown signify that the king rules only with the protection of the mothers” (Drewal 1977:4). Thus, with reference to the great bird on the crowns [. . .] it “represents the oba's ase (king's power).” (Pemberton 123).

http://www.awostudycenter.com/Articles/art_oduhist3.htm

A Yoruba proverb says we become who we are by standing on the shoulders of those who come before us. From the perspective of traditional Yoruba culture, remembering those who come before us is a sacred obligation. Each generation takes responsibility for passing forward the wisdom of the past. In most earth-centered cultures, meaning those cultures that make an effort to live in harmony with nature, dissemination of ancestral wisdom is the foundation of the methodology used to guide children along the path leading to maturity and self-understanding. In psychological terms, modeling heroic behavior initiates the journey towards self-discovery and individualization. The effective completion of this journey carries the possibility of making each one of us a revered ancestor in the collective memory of our descendants. This potential is reflected in the bond of between grandparents and grandchildren. In Yoruba this bond is called ife, which is commonly translated to mean love. I suspect the word has a broader connotation related to the word ifa. If ifa means the wisdom inherent in Nature, the word ife suggests the expression of that wisdom in everyday life. Ifa teaches that everyone is born a good and blessed person (omo rere). As elders we make sure our dependants internalize this message so it continues to inform future generations.

.....In ancient religious texts a bird symbolizes radiant energy coming from the sun and either a snake or a dragon symbolizes radiant energy absorbed by the earth. Anyone who has spent time in the rain forest will know that lights looking like a camera flash bulb can be seen periodically lighting up the trees. These flashing lights are natural manifestations of an inter-dimensional transference of radiant energy and they are universally identified by inhabitants of the rain forest as "spirit birds". Serpent power from the earth occasionally becomes visible in the form of ball lightning that periodically appears along fault lines following an earthquake. When serpent power becomes visible inside a cave it looks like a long undulating red snake. The phenomenon that occurs can best be described as the manifestation of pure unformed consciousness.

.....It was the task of the early shamans of the bird and the serpent to insure only those with good character and good intentions had access to the radiant energy manifesting as unformed consciousness. To this day the society of Obatala initiates are considered to be guardians of moral and ethical behavior. They enforce this mandate through the traditional Yoruba judicial process called Ogboni. In Ogboni meetings the Obatala elders are the senior priests and priestess. The male Obatala initiates worship the radiant energy of the earth (serpents), which is considered feminine, and the female Obatala initiates worship the radiant energy of the sky (birds), which is considered masculine. Between them the world is born.