



# AFRICA-FRIDAY REFLECTIONS

## "AFROCENTRIC THOUGHT"



### SANKOFA! A CALL FOR THE RETURN TO OUR AFRIKAN FEMININE-CENTERED SPIRITUALITY

#### ITUMELENG MENYATSO.

*"The Restoration of Afrikan Civilization is not possible without a return to African Spirituality. We must approach Afrikan Spirituality as part of the Afrikan Liberation Movement. If Spirituality is not involved in the Liberation Movement, then it is no good. And if we are going to be liberated, then we must liberate our Spirituality."*

**Baba Jedi Shemsu Jehewty (Dr Jacob H. Carruthers).  
Intellectual Warfare.**

Dumelang, my beautiful Afrikan Queens and Kings!

The month of August is very important to us, Afrikans. On this month, we celebrate the Earthday of the esteemed Ankhcestor, the Honourable Marcus Moziah Garvey, who was born on the 17th of August 1887. On the same note, we also pay tribute to a staunch Garveyite, an Afrikan Ourstorian and Researcher, Dr Baba Runoko Rashidi, who recently transitioned to the Ancestral realm on the 2nd of August in Cairo,

Egypt (previously known as Ancient Kemet).

He was set to lead an educational tour together with Afrikans from the diaspora, to help them regain their Self-Knowledge and rediscover the evidence of our ancient cultural knowledge carved in stone at buildings such as the Great Temples of Thebes in Luxor, present day Egypt.

I sat down and contemplated that for this month, I would write an article in Honour and recognition of a great Afrikan giant, Mkhulu Marcus Moziah Garvey, whose legacy and writings influenced my thinking immensely.

However, after reading powerful, thought-provoking articles written by my co-Warriors and Afrika-Friday Reflections Writers, Sister Rebaone Tsatsinyane, who drew lessons from the fearless Afrikan Women and Mothers of August 1956, who marched to the Union buildings in South AfriKKKa to protest against the oppressive laws that our white enemies enforced on us. And Brother Afrika Thaba, who wrote a heart-warming message to our Afrikan Women, Mothers and Queens. I was so inspired that I felt spiritually charged, and even compelled to also follow suit. Besides, not enough is being said and written about Afrikan Women.

Even worse, very little is taught and known about the symbolism of Afrikan women as embodiments of Divine Feminine Energy, embedded in our rich Afrikan Spiritual Systems.

*"...Very little is taught and known about the symbolism of Afrikan women as embodiments of Divine Feminine Energy..."*

This article is a call for us to learn and practice the Akan tradition of SANKOFA, which is a word derived from our West Afrikan family.

The term calls us to return to the Source; to go back to our Cultural selves, so that we can go forward with strength and clarity. It reminds us to go back and fetch our indigenous knowledge and the history of our origins and Culture that our Race enemies continue to work so diligently to systematically erase from our collective consciousness.

In this article, I will attempt to highlight two important points: firstly, to engage the reader about our indigenous cosmological mythologies, which locate the presence and importance of Afrikan women within our Afrikan Spirituality; and secondly, to explain why as Afrikans, we need to return and reclaim our Afrikan Spiritual Systems, foregrounded on the understanding of Afrikan Women as the manifestation of the Divine Feminine Energy.

Over the centuries, European historians and anthropologists have continued to attempt to hide and distort the rich history of African people.

Fortunately for some of us, we now know that Africa is the birthplace of all humanity. It is where life first emerged, and it is the cradle of civilization. However, what still remains elusive to most of our people, is that our African Indigenous Knowledge is most ancient. And the spiritual concepts passed on to us by our ancestors, derived from our Indigenous Knowledge Systems, gave birth to Western religious thought and practices. What is unique about our African spiritual systems is that they are unlike the Euro-Western and Arab religions, which denigrate, stigmatize and inferiorize (ho nyefola) women through their religious texts.

*"For as long as women continue to fall prey to these self-esteem crushing stereotypes, we will continue to struggle as a society."*

Our African Indigenous cosmologies and spirituality teach us about different mythologies (stories) that consistently present African women as divine beings believed to be at the center of creation and the universe.

And we should be careful not to dismiss myths/mythology as unscientific, and therefore useless or superstitious. Mama Marimba Ani explained it so well, that for Africans, "Myths or a mythology is not a lie; rather it is the highest statement of truth. It is the truth that mobilises and unifies; a truth that states the ideals of a people. We must retrieve and recreate our own myths."

African indigenous researchers teach us that African ontology and epistemologies are relational. Meaning, the nature of how we think; our ways of knowing and our being are all interrelated and dependant on our connection to people, ideas, the environment, land and most importantly, the cosmos.

Cosmology plays an instrumental role in shaping how Africans conceptualize reality. Let me cite an example of a cosmological mythology found among the oldest African spiritual systems of the ancient people of the Nile Valley civilizations.

It is written in the pyramid texts that the foundation upon which Amen-Ra (the Creator) created the heavens, and the Earth is firmly anchored upon an African woman and deity known as Ma'at. The word, Ma'at, derives from the Setswana word Ma (or Mama/Mma), which means Mother.

The role of Ma'at, beyond many other reasons, is to ensure that everything in Creation and Existence is in alignment and in Order, Balance, and Harmony. Ma'at, symbolized as an Afrikan Woman with her arms as wings stretching out and wearing a feather on her head, is believed to help regulate the natural flow of different cycles and seasons of the earth. Ma'at is the Mother who maintains the reciprocal relationship between the Sun, the Moon and Stars. Without Ma'at, there would be chaos and destruction.

Reverend Ishakamusa Barashango in his book, *Afrikan Woman, the Original Guardian Angel*, teaches us that *“for our Ancestors, the Afrikan Woman was Mother Sky, Mother Earth, Mother of Everything and she had the Power to, through her Spiritual essence, move freely throughout”*. This central fact is depicted in one of the Temples of Het-Heru at Dendera in Egypt (Kemet).

There is a cosmological illustration carved on the walls, showing the Goddess of the Sky and Heavenly bodies as an Afrikan Woman and deity called Nut. She is depicted in the sky, and is protectively arching her entire body above and across the earth. The Goddess Nut is also depicted to be giving birth to the Sun (known as Ra)

in the morning through her vagina, and receiving back by swallowing the Sun through her mouth in the evening.

As Dr Yosef Ben often said, according to our Indigenous Spirituality, *“Heaven is between the legs of an Afrikan Woman”*. This statement should not be misunderstood as intended to objectify Afrikan Women as sex objects or to stigmatize the private part of the Black woman, but rather serves to highlight the sacredness of the Womb in Afrikan Cosmology and Philosophy.

*"As Dr Yosef Ben often said, according to our Indigenous Spirituality, 'Heaven is between the legs of an Afrikan Woman'."*

According to our cosmological understanding, it is between the legs of an Afrikan Woman called the Goddess Nut, where the Sun is believed to emerge and rise from each morning. Take a minute and reflect about the sagacity of Afrikan deep thought reflected behind this.

We know that without the Sun, the world would basically cease to exist as we know it. Humans, animals and plants are all dependent on the Sun. In other words, our Ancestors understood as reflected in our Indigenous mythologies and cosmology, the importance of Afrikan Women as the Mother who gives birth to the Sun each morning, and subsequently knew that the absence of Afrikan Women would be catastrophic.

The world would fall into an abyss of total darkness, and completely devoid of Life - because it is the presence of the Sun birthed by an Afrikan Woman, which enables it to bring forth light, life and nourishment to earth.

Looking at Southern Afrika to the Bantu Cosmology/Spiritual Systems, we see the cultural unity between the people of Ancient Kemet and the Batswana people, which relates the Womb of the Afrikan Woman as sacred, and represents the primordial Source of Life. In order for us to begin to understand our Afrikan Cosmologies and Spiritual Systems at a much deeper and philosophical level, we need to learn and understand our Indigenous languages.

No one said it better than Mkhulu Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in his book, *Decolonising the Mind*, that "*language is a carrier of culture*".

Long before our tongues were colonized by our oppressors, our Ancestors asked themselves philosophical questions such as: "Who am I? And who or what is the Creator that exists everywhere and within us?" And our Ancestors could answer these empirical questions.

They wielded the Power to even name and define the Higher Being using our own languages to express their ontological underpinnings.

By using our Indigenous language, allow me to bring to your attention the parallel connection that draws attention to the sacredness of the Womb, between the Afrikans in northern Afrika (Egypt) and amongst us in the southern part of Afrika. Recently, in a virtual conversation between Ikhambi Natural Healing group and Ngaka Mme Mmatshilo Motsei, I learnt that in Setswana, the Womb is known as Popelo; and it comes from the verb, ho bopa, which means to create. Among the Batswana people, another Setswana name for God or the Creator is called, Mmopi; meaning the One who Creates. So there is a connection and thread between the Womb which is called Popelo - the place where the Creation of Life takes place; and the Most High (The Creator), who is known as Mmopi - the One who Creates.

*"...Language is a carrier of culture". ""*

For our Ancestors, the Creator is like an artistic potter who uses clay to creatively mould and pattern creation and everything into existence. Our Ancestors understood the Afrikan Woman as Mmopi, the Creator on earth, who moulds and creates life inside her precious Womb (Popelo).

Like the Ancient Afrikans of ancient Egypt, who symbolized the birth of the Sun as coming from the Womb of the Mother Sky and Goddess Nut. In our indigenous worldview, Badimo Barona also understood the Womb of an Afrikan Woman as Divine and representing the sacred space that Mmopi (the Creator) created and nurtured Life and Existence.

Afrikan Thought and Philosophy is so profound! This made me think and wonder, just how different would our Black communities be and our relationship with Afrikan Women and children as Black Men, if we returned to our Feminine Spiritual Systems and began to socialise and re-educate ourselves and our children from our own Indigenous philosophies?

How different would our material conditions be, if we foregrounded our understanding of the Afrikan Women as synonymous to Mmopi (the Creator)? Would we still have the prevalent social and political pathologies plaguing our communities today; such as women abuse, gender-based violence and femicide?

Would it even be conceivable to have Afrikan men forcing themselves sexually onto women and children and thereby in a way desecrating the very same Womb, which we under-

stand to be the Source and Center of Life? And if it did happen, would we, the so called “good Afrikan Men” allow other men to continue to do that to Afrikan Women and children, and even allow them to continue to breathe the same air as us, and to walk around the streets of our communities as predators preying for more sexual victims? Would we, as Afrikan Men, continue to willingly perpetuate the patriarchal system that unfairly negates women as appendages of men? These are serious considerations to think about.

The call for the return to our Afrikan Feminine Spirituality, is not a mere feel-good exercise to help over-inflate the egos of Afrikan Women, or to trap them into the illusion of being superior to men.

On the contrary, it is an urgent plea for our Afrikan Women to remember who they are, and the Power they possess. One of the tactics used by our oppressors and enemies to rule and undermine the position of our women, is to make them ignorant and doubtful of their own Power. And thereby rendering them unable to wield it effectively towards our Liberation as Afrikans.

Once our Afrikan Women remember the great Power bestowed upon them, I think that they will then begin to understand the even greater responsibility and accountability that comes with that Power.

The urgent plea for the return to our Indigenous Spirituality, is key to helping our Queens to remobilize themselves and begin to think about assuming the central role that Afrikan Women ought to play in our communities and the global Afrikan World. My fellow Afrikan Women and Sisters, your precious Womb enables you to possess the Power to mould and create Human Life. You carry with you, the Power to create and mould societies, communities and nations.

Through the process of SANKOFA, we would be laying down the foundation for the restoration of Ma'at - that is truth, justice, order, balance, reciprocity, harmony and righteous thinking and behaviour amongst Afrikan people in our communities and the global world.

*"You carry with you, the Power to create and mould societies, communities and nations."*

My concluding remarks is that, we should heed the challenge by Mkhulu Jedi Shemsu Jehewty (Dr Jacob H. Carruthers), to *"break the chain that links Afrikan minds to european ideas, and begin to listen to the voices of our Ancestors without eurocentric interpretation"*.

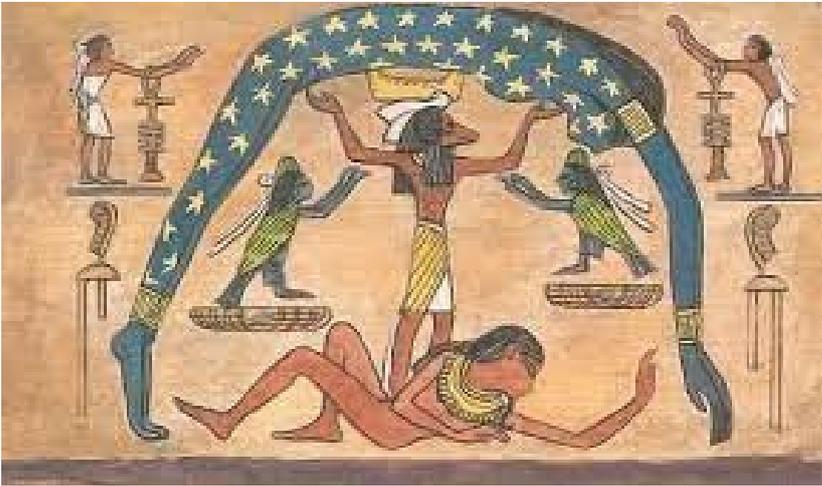
This is an extremely difficult challenge for us to undertake as Afrikan Champions, considering how we have grown so accustomed and even addicted to centering our thoughts and behaviour on european ideologies, theories and belief systems. It has become nearly impossible for our Ancestors to even communicate messages to us, because the only language we know and can hear is that of the european voice, whispering in our ears and beclouding our minds.

Yet however difficult it may be, this is a task we must undertake as it will help us gather the necessary strength and courage to undergo the painful, yet necessary process of SANKOFA - that is the return to our past history, in order to reclaim our Afrikan Feminine-centered Spirituality. And the day we uncompromisingly decide to do that, it is only then that we will begin to assert our quest to gain our total freedom and liberation from mental slavery and spiritual captivity.

I give thanks and praises ma'Afrika a matle, in the sacred names of the Divine Afrikan Mothers, Ma'at; Nomkhubulwane; Nina Vanhu Ma, and my first and foremost, Afrikan Goddess and Life-Giver-Mme Keamogetse Thetele, moradi omong fela, wa Nkgonne Botsetsa; Mmina tshipi e Ntsho!, who selflessly carried and nourished me for 9 months in her fertile and precious Womb. I love and Honour you Mama.



**Itumeleng Menyato**



**Nut**



**Ma'at**