



# The Psychology of Sankofa

Raising Ancestral Consciousness to Heal Trauma

By Rachel D. Bryant, MA, MFTi



## **PSYCHOLOGY:**

The study of the human soul, spirit or mind (consciousness)

+

## **SANKOFA:**

Go back and fetch it so you understand today (ancestral)

=

## **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SANKOFA:**

Raising ancestral consciousness to heal trauma

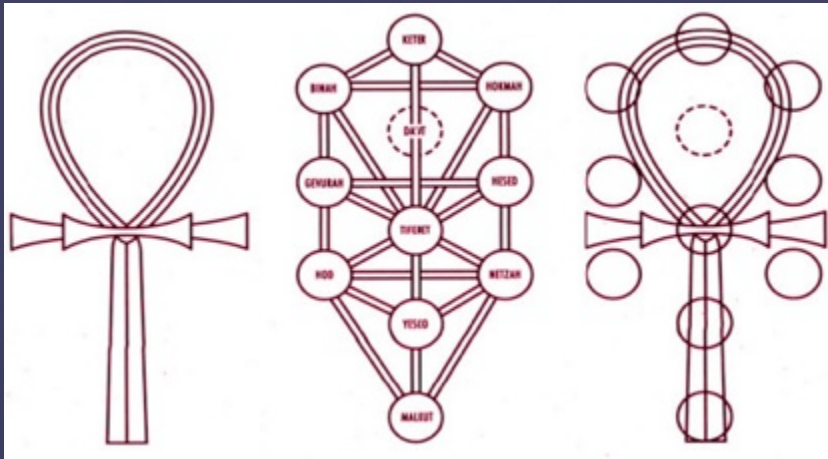


**“We know when we understand: Mighty God is a living man.”**

*- Bob Marley*

**“If we were made in his (her) image then call us by our name.”**

*- Erykah Badu*



1 1	11 11	11 11	1 1
1 1	11 11	1 1	11 11
1 1	11 11	1 1	11 11
1 1	11 11	11 11	1 1
Eji-Ogbe	Oyeku Meji	Iwori Meji	Odi Meji
1 1	11 11	1 1	11 11
1 1	11 11	11 11	11 11
11 11	1 1	11 11	11 11
11 11	1 1	11 11	1 1
Irosun Meji	Owosun Meji	Obara Meji	Okunran Meji
1 1	11 11	11 11	11 11
1 1	1 1	1 1	11 11
1 1	1 1	11 11	1 1
11 11	1 1	11 11	11 11
Ogunda Meji	Osa Meji	Iba Meji	Oturapen Meji
1 1	1 1	1 1	11 11
11 11	1 1	11 11	1 1
1 1	11 11	1 1	11 11
1 1	1 1	11 11	1 1
Otura Meji	Irete Meji	Ose Meji	Ofun Meji

- ⌘ A cosmology is a body or system of thought arising out of a people's history and culture that addresses issues of reality and creation, truth and value, and that people's place within creation\*
- ⌘ **The Tree of Life (Kemet) and the Ifa Divination System (Yoruba)** describe the origin, nature and evolution of the universe as a totality of phenomena in space and time, from earth to heaven, from humans to gods, and beyond
- ⌘ The gods of Egypt were having copious relationships with the people of West Africa. The gods of Yoruba, Benin and Igbo mythologies are the same gods\*\*

\* Akoto, K., & Akoto, A. (2005). African cosmology. In M. Asante, & A. Mazama (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of black studies*. (pp. 35-37). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications

\*\*Thoth (Hermes Trismegistus) - The student of the God-Men of West Africa, Dir. Prof. Catherine Acholonu-Olumba, Nigeria

# African Cosmology



Isis and Horus

Black Madonna  
and Child

White Madonna  
and Child



Oshun/Our  
Lady of Charity



Shango/ Santa  
Barbara



Obatala/ Our Lady  
of Mercy

What's Old is New



- ⌘ Know Thyself (Thoth/ Hermes Trismegistus/The Kybalion by The Three Initiates)
- ⌘ As above, so below... As within, so without
- ⌘ Deep Respect for Elders, Teachers and Ancestors
- ⌘ We inherited ceremonies/rituals to unite with the natural order
- ⌘ We inherited a deep legacy of healing with word, spirit, and sound, as well as with healing herbs, food, and body treatments

# Ancestral Wisdom



**“You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree.”**

-Micheal Crichton

- ⌘ Our Ancestral memories, stories, traditions, and teachings shape our sense of identity, belonging, and purpose
- ⌘ Africa and her children are demonized, ridiculed, feared, robbed, tortured, oppressed, bamboozled, hoodwinked, hated, envied, incarcerated, miseducated, disrespected...
- ⌘ Massive Generational **TRAUMA** and Extraordinary **RESILIENCY**

# Broken Branches



"The oppressor consciousness tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of its domination.

The earth, property, production, the creations of men, men themselves, time -everything.

Humanity is a *thing*, and they possess it as an exclusive right."

-Paulo Freire

- ∞ Psychology and Social Justice are inseparable
- ∞ Domination destroys the oppressed and the oppressor
- ∞ A communal process for healing is needed

Adopted from Toward Psychologies of Liberation by Mary Watkins and Helene Shulman

# The Oppressor Consciousness





- ⌘ It is impossible to know one's higher Self, identity and purpose under the oppressor consciousness
- ⌘ Oppressed people have a cellular memory of unmourned collective trauma (African slavery, Native genocide)
- ⌘ Oppressed people oppress people (e.g. Willie Lynch paper)

# Psychology of Sankofa

# TRAUMA



# GRACE

- ⌘ **Trauma:** An emotional wound or shock that creates substantial, lasting damage to a person's psychological development
- ⌘ **ISOLATION:** Disconnected from Self, Community, and Ancestral Wisdom
- ⌘ Psycho-spiritual hunger, confusion, and death
- ⌘ Living in FEAR and RAGE

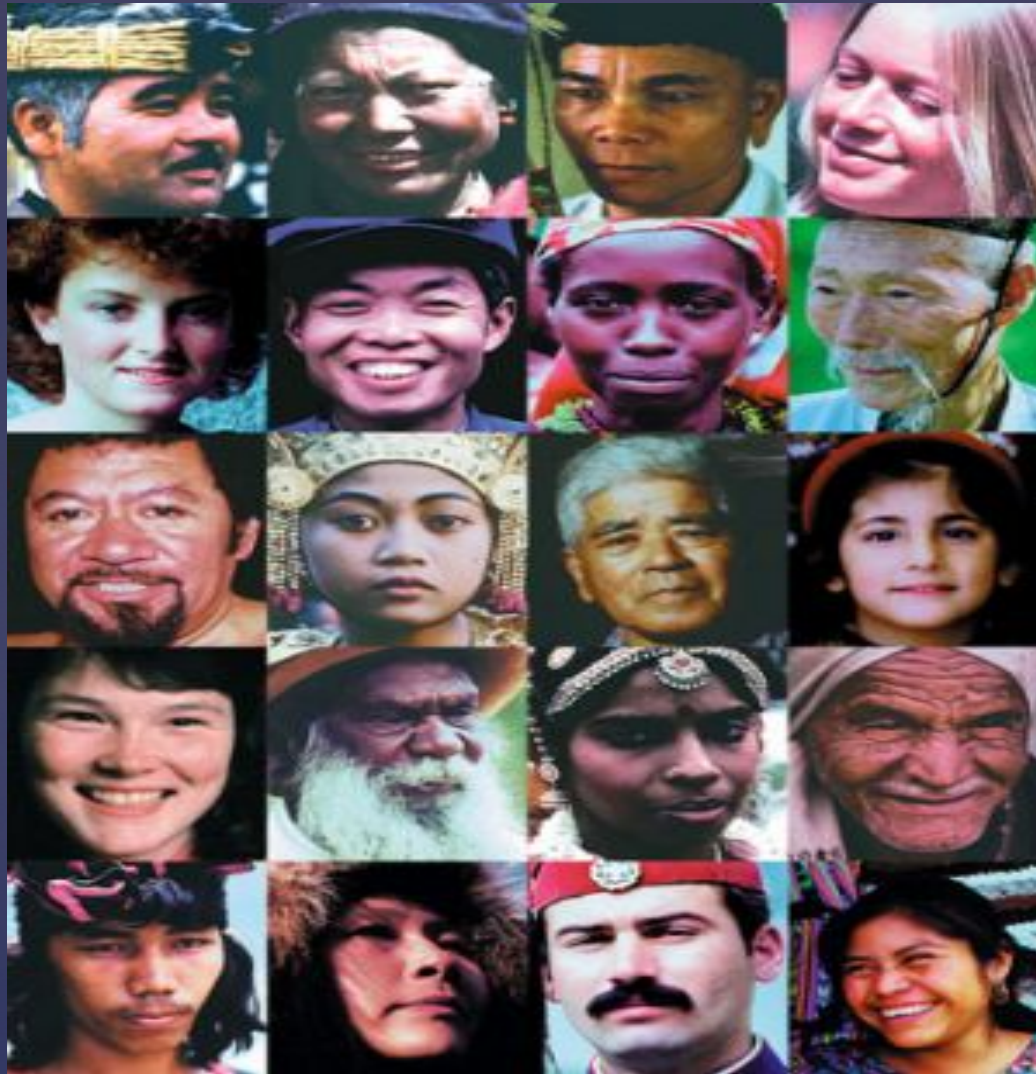
- ⌘ **Grace:** Seemingly effortless beauty, charm of movement, form, or proportion- Natural
- ⌘ **INCLUSION:** Connected to Self, Community, and Ancestral Wisdom
- ⌘ Psycho-spiritual fulfilment, clarity, and rebirth
- ⌘ Living in LOVE and HOPE

# The Psychology of Sankofa



- ⌘ The very process of remembering one's Ancestral Wisdom breeds love and respect for self and others
- ⌘ Respect Divine Feminine/ Ancient Mothers/ Iyami Osaronga
  - ⌘ All life on Mother Earth is birthed by the woman  
(with the exception of a few special creatures)
  - ⌘ The feminine forces balance compassion and tough love
  - ⌘ Our collective relationship with women is out of balance

# The Psychology of Sankofa



# One Love, One Mother

*The Human Family Tree* - National Geographic documentary on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)