

Ahriana's Musings

Sea Goddess

February 28th, 2013

I was 17 when I first met Yemaya in the darkness of night on a deserted beach in Bahia, Brazil. Amazing ebony-skinned "Aunt Jemima" women, spinning in the amber light of a crackling fire, chanted foreign words into the wind and I was mesmerized by their flowing layers of turquoise, sea foam, and blue. Twirling and stomping, their heads, wrapped in cloth, spun to focus on the sea. They called to something...some one...singing in surging harmonies that rose and fell with the breeze. My body wanted to move with them, yet I stood motionless, watching them....watching the ocean ... expectant and sublime.

After an amount of time whose length I cannot guess, my teenage friends - other exchange students from around the world - tugged at my elbow until I was forced to step away in order to continue our journey to the discothèque. 33 years later, I can still feel the pull to join in the dance.

She remained nameless for more than a decade, until the Goddess culture brought me my first teacher, for whom She was the face of the Divine. Though my teacher spoke of Her often, it was many years before our practice together revealed a picture of yet another group of blue-skirted twirling women - and then I came to know Her by name - Yemaya, Mother Ocean.

Now, I am not an ocean girl. I find the sea big and fierce and frightening - and rarely enter any deeper than my knees. Still, to sit on the shore and rest into the wind brings me a deep and healing sense of peace. It is as though I were sitting at Her feet, rustling blue skirts ebbing and flowing around me, listening to the honey-thick moistness of Her whisper. "Its all gonna be fine, Sweetheart," She seems to say - and to the core of my being, I know it will be.

A feminine face of the Great Mystery, Yemaya is an Orisha of the Yoruba religion. Africans brought Her with them when they were carried to the shores of the Americas as captives. She is the ocean, the essence of motherhood, a protector of children and, as Goddesses go, Yemaya is powerful.

She is the life-giving portion of the ocean, mostly found near the coasts and in many stories, Yemaya gave birth to everything. Often depicted as a double tailed mermaid, She is kind and giving, and takes a long time to anger - but when She does, be warned, you have a hurricane on your hands.

Having come to understand that there are many, many faces we can place on the Divine in our desire to know Spirit more deeply, I experience this particular expression of the sacred as an ancestral force and I am humbled by Her loving presence.

Ahriana's Musings

While here at the beach, I have sat with Her, sharing my prayers, for myself, and for dear ones with special needs - a heart healing for one, new employment for another, and comfort for one who has recently seen a parent begin the journey beyond the veil - and She has listened and given me wisdom, and touched me in the way a mother does when she soothes an overwhelmed child. I have revisited our first night over and over again, recalling the flickering fire's glow dancing on the waves as Her presence enveloped me in mystery. I am filled with gratitude. And so, in following Her traditions, I make an offering...an energy exchange - in return for Her gentle embrace - this writing - that the Spirit of Yemaya might be known and remembered...no matter the miles between thee and the sea...

Ahriana Platten