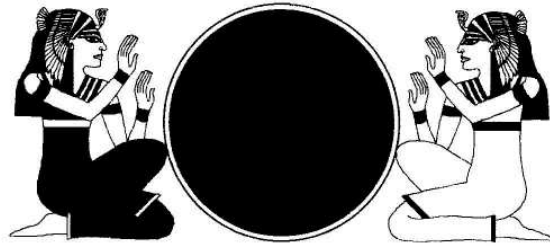


# Temple of the Dark Moon



## Yemaya: African Goddess of the Ocean

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*O Mother of Waters!  
Great is your power, your strength, and your light...  
Let your greatness be the greatest wealth you dispense to me...  
surrounded by sweet melodies springing from your own self...*

"Prayer to Yemanja" (Zolrak)

One of the most powerful Goddesses found in the many African-Caribbean traditions is Yemaya, or Ymoja as she was known to the Yoruban people of West Africa. She is the Mother of the Ogun River and was also referred to as the "Mother of the Waters". This is because she is said to give birth to the world's waters - that new springs would appear whenever she turned over in her sleep, and that springs would also gush forth and turn into rivers wherever she walked. Together with Oshun and Oya (the guardians of the River Niger), Yemaya was said to be "supreme in the arts of mystic retribution", and protected her people "against all evil".

Yemaya is a merciful Goddess who women called upon for aid during childbirth, and the Goddess to whom her people prayed to for fertility, especially by women who have trouble conceiving. According to legend, she birthed 14 of the Yoruban Gods and Goddesses

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<sup>1</sup> "Dejavu" only existed for four publications

("orishas"). This came about through her being raped by her own son. After this ordeal, Yemaya lay a curse upon him, causing him to die. However, when this happened, the Goddess chose to die as well, and went upon a mountain peak. As she died, the bursting of her uterine waters caused a great flood, which in turn, created the oceans, and from her womb, the 14 orishas were born.

When the Yoruban people were enslaved, their Goddess went with them, sustaining them with life even in the face of the darkest times, in the new world. When her people were brought to the Americas, Ymoja became known as Yemaya, the "Mother of the Ocean", for this was the first time that her people had come into contact with the ocean. As the Yoruban people were not allowed to practice their beliefs in this new world, they merged their deities with images of Catholic saints, and subsequently created a number of new religions - Santeria in Cuba, Voudoun in Haiti, Macumba in Brazil, and Candomble in Bahia. Within all these differing religions, Yemaya is still revered as a powerful deity.

To the Brazilian Macumba, she is known as Imanje, the Ocean Goddess of the Crescent Moon. In Cuba, there are many variants to her name - while Yemaya Ataramagwa was the wealth Queen of the Sea, she was also the stern Yemaya Achabba, the violent Yemaya Oqqutte (violent aspect), and the overpowering Yemaya Olokun, who could only be seen in dreams. To the people of Haiti, the Goddess is known as Agwe, and as La Balianne to the people of New Orleans.

Being a Goddess of the Sea, Yemaya is often depicted as a beautiful mermaid, or wearing seven skirts of blue and white. The cowrie shell is sacred to her and her places of worship are the seashores, or large rivers that flow into the sea. In Brazil, where she is referred to as "Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception", crowds still gather today on the beach of Bahia to celebrate Candalaria, a ceremony in which offerings of soap, perfume, and jewellery are thrown into the sea in honour of Yemaya. Letters of requests to the Goddess are thrown also. The people wait to see if their offerings are accepted by the Goddess, or returned to them upon the waves. It is believed that the Goddess would wash away the troubles of her followers with her waters, the waters of the womb of creation and dreams.

Colours attributed to Yemaya are blue, silver and white. Symbols are the six-pointed star, an open shell, the Moon, and bodies of water. Stones are turquoise (and other light blue crystals), pearl, mother-of-pearl and coral. The trout lily and sea lavender are her flowers,

while sandalwood, tea rose, lilac and frangipani are her fragrances. She is also said to be fond of melons.

### **Honouring Yemaya**

A simple shrine dedicated to Yemaya should consist of gifts from the ocean, such as driftwood, shells (in particular cowrie shells), even dried seaweed. Images of marine life such as dolphins, shells and starfish, can also be include. Blue and white flowers can be added, as well as crystals, stones and strings of beads of similar colours.

You may wish to leave offerings to Yemaya the next time you are at the seaside. Requests can be written on small pieces of paper, which are then placed within seashells (turret shaped shells are particular good for this). Leave these seashells, and/or other offerings such as melon, at low tide, below the high water mark. This is so that upon the high tide, they will be taken out to sea.

You may also like to use the following invocation, or something similar:

*Ymoja of the Great River, Yemaya of the Great Sea  
My beautiful lady of the waters, hear my wish address to thee  
Yemaya, make my life fruitful, Yemaya, bring my desires to me  
Lady of the Magnificent Oceans, hear my wish addressed to thee*

#### **About the Author:**

Frances first connected with the Divine Feminine in the late 1980s. This connection was strengthened in 1993 when during a Wiccan rite known as "Drawing Down the Moon" the great Egyptian Goddess Isis made her presence felt.

Since that time Frances has continued to strengthen her personal relationship with the Divine Feminine - the Ancient Matriarch - the Goddess. Now Frances is drawn to share her knowledge and experience with others in order to assist them to re-connect with this ancient, yet powerful force.

Since 2002 Frances has been regularly writing for Australia's No.1 spiritual lifestyle magazine, "Insight", and her articles have appeared in over 10 separate publications around the world, including "SageWoman" and the 2008 Llewellyn "Witches" calendar. She has also appeared in the "Sunday Mail", the "Messenger" and the "Melbourne Age".

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