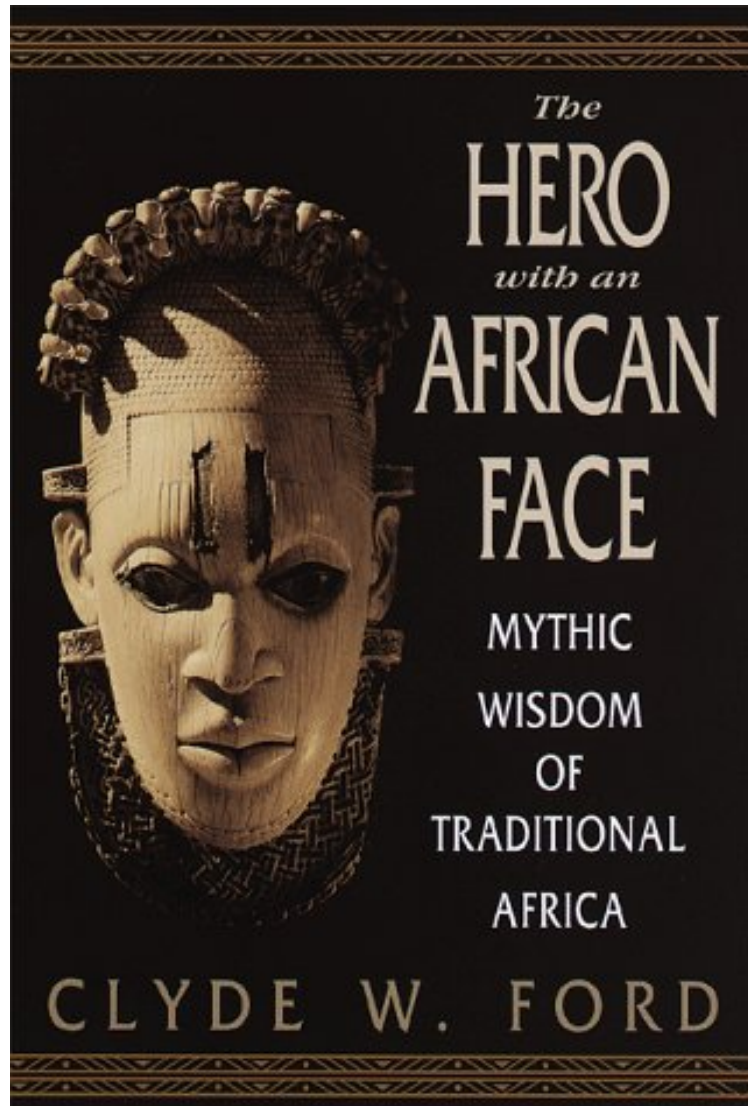


The Hero with an African Face: Mythic Wisdom of Traditional Africa

Clyde W. Ford

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"Discovering a deeply meaningful African myth is like finding an old snapshot of myself in a place long forgotten.... These myths are more than just folk tales or fables.... Here are epics as grand as Gilgamesh, heroes as hardy as Hercules, heroines as vexing as Venus." And yet, as Clyde Ford discovered, the great myths of Africa were left out of the key works of modern mythology, missing from the sacred stories of world culture. Taking it as his mission to reclaim this lost treasure, he has written a fascinating and important book--one that both brings to life the ancient tales and shows why they matter so much to us today. African myths convey the perennial wisdom of humanity: the creation of the world, the hero's journey, our relationship with nature, death, and resurrection. From the Ashanti comes the moving account of the grief-stricken Kwasi Benefo's journey to the underworld to seek his beloved wives. From Uganda we learn of the legendary Kintu, who won the love of a goddess and created a nation from a handful of isolated clans. The Congo's epic hero Mwindo is the sacred warrior who shows us the path each person must travel to discover his true destiny. Many myths reveal the intimacy of human and animal spirits, and Ford also explores the archetypal forces of the orishas--the West African deities that were carried to the Americas in the African diaspora. Ultimately, as Clyde Ford points out, these great myths enable us to see the history of African Americans in a new light--as a hero's journey, a courageous passage to a hard-won victory. The Hero with an African Face enriches us all by restoring this vital tradition to the world.

From Publishers Weekly Extending the sensibility of Joseph Campbell, Ford exposes readers to African myths and folk tales, finding that they harbor both culturally specific and universal motifs. Ford (Where Healing Waters Meet) has a diverse background in business, chiropractic, psychotherapy and African-American history. He recounts many traditional African stories, exploring their metaphors, symbols and archetypal figures, their answers to the timeless questions of how to live, how life began and how it will end. While these tales have been notoriously absent from world literature, they are strikingly similar to Eastern, Western and Middle-Eastern mythology in many ways. As Ford splices the myths with his engaging analyses of them, he illuminates universal themes and values, symbols and characters. Applying the hero's journey to the African diaspora ("the massive forceful displacement of millions of Africans"), he ruminates: "there is every reason to believe that African slaves... understood their capture and travails in just such mythic terms." Likely to find its way into college classrooms, Ford's comprehensive work supplies a missing piece of world mythology. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. Advance Praise for The Hero with an African Face: "This fascinating exploration of African stories and myths informs and inspires us. And most importantly it tells us who we are as human beings--all of us."--Cornel West, author of Race Matters "The Hero with an African Face is a breakthrough book on the mythic imagination of Africa. Clyde Ford picks up where Joseph Campbell left off and takes us into the wonder and mystery of the African traditions. A master storyteller, he skillfully evokes the mythic vision, weaving personal reflections on the seeker's journey with interpretations of enchanting stories from the many voices south of the Sahara."--Jonathan Young, Ph.D., founding curator, Joseph Campbell Archives and Library "The Hero with an African Face presents the compelling wisdom of African traditions, which is relevant to everyone living in the modern world. Through this book the deep well of sacred mythic knowledge left to us by these 'first peoples' can assume its nature and rightful place in the pantheon of world mythologies. Clyde Ford has given us an extraordinary gift."--Michael Toms, co-founder of New Dimensions Radio, author of An Open Life: Joseph Campbell in Conversations with Michael Toms, and co-author of True Work: The Sacred Dimension of Earning a Living "Though the contribution of Africa to world mythology is monumental, African mythology has yet to gain the honor and admiration given to other mythologies in the West. Clyde Ford is destined to change this. The Hero with an African Face resurrects the sacred wisdom of traditional Africa. This book should be read with reverence and respect."--Malidoma Som, author of Of Water and the Spirit From the Inside Flap "Discovering a deeply meaningful African myth is like finding an old snapshot of myself in a place long forgotten.... These myths are more than just folk tales or fables.... Here are epics as grand as Gilgamesh, heroes as hardy as Hercules, heroines as vexing as Venus." And yet, as Clyde Ford discovered, the great myths of Africa were left out of the key works of modern mythology, missing from the sacred stories of world culture. Taking it as his mission to reclaim this lost treasure, he has written a fascinating and important book--one that both brings to life the ancient tales and shows why they matter so much to us today. African myths convey the perennial wisdom of humanity: the creation of the world, the hero's journey, our relationship with nature, death, and resurrection. From the Ashanti comes the moving account of the grief-stricken Kwasi Benefo's journey to the underworld to seek his beloved wives. From Uganda we learn of the legendary Kintu, who won the love

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