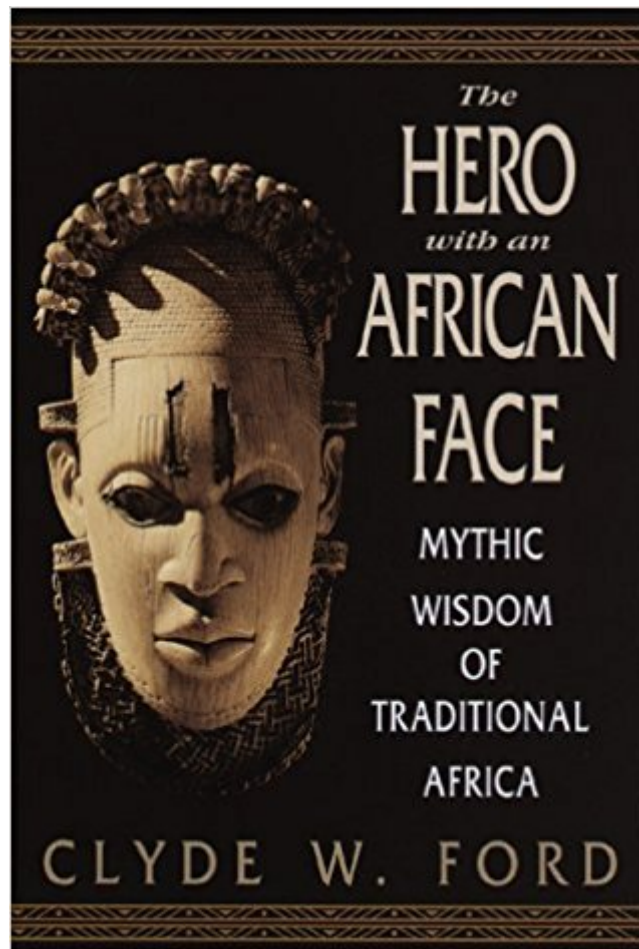




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The Hero With An African Face: Mythic Wisdom Of Traditional Africa



Synopsis

"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.

Book Information

Hardcover: 256 pages

Publisher: Bantam; 1st US - 1st Printing edition (January 19, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0553105442

ISBN-13: 978-0553105445

Product Dimensions: 1 x 6.5 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #731,920 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #182 in Books > History >

World > Religious > New Age, Mythology & Occult #257 in Books > History > World >

Religious > Ethnic & Tribal #383 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Mythology & Folk Tales >

Folklore

Customer Reviews

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 Somfâ©,

author of Of Water and the Spirit

This is an excellent book to connect to your ancestors and to learn your history. The stories and mythology is amazing. I am so glad I bought this book. I recommend it to anyone who wants to wake-up and understand our connection to the universe, to the past, present and the future. To fully understand who the hero is. A book that is a 10 plus for me. Dua and Namaste

Should be required reading in our schools. Mr. Ford has written an enlightening book that answers the many questions pondered by Americans of African origin. So many things explained prompted me to write "The Aha!" in the margin. Superb work. Thank you.

Well written and approachable text.

a great book

I'd recommend this book to any one seeking the understanding of African myths and their relationship to today's issues and tomorrow future.

The last paragraph of the book is in my day timer as a reminder of who I am, where I came from and why and how I will always be. Ford's view of the African American story as an epic journey is liberating. He contrasts the intimacy between African deity and the common person with the separation between the western God or Goddess and their subjects. As someone who is struggling to understand the deepening division of black and white in US culture, I find this book very helpful in clarifying our root cultural differences. This also is a wonderful book to give a young person who is away from home or struggling with the questions of identity. As someone who has worked with children in multiracial families (particularly adopted children) who are struggling with a sense of place, I wish I'd had this book a long time ago.

Clyde W. Ford helps us to connect to African mythology on so many levels. It is encouraging and illuminating to finally see African mythology treated in the manner that it deserves: as vital as those of any other culture. He demonstrates the importance of myth for centering our lives and providing focus for living. His discussion of the meaning and role of myth in the preface is worth the price of the book alone.

This is an excellent book. I'd give it 100 stars if I could. Like another reader wrote, I wish I had found this book sooner. Every African and African-American should read this book. Thank you so much, Mr. Ford. I'll keep my review simple because I could go on forever. This book puts African myths in their rightful place: as legitimate, awesome, powerful stories that explain the human condition and our connection to the creator. All myths sprang from the African ones and Ford does a masterful job in explaining why myths are important to our lives today.

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