

# AKAN ORIGIN OF THE TERM HOODOO



There are a number of misleading etymologies put forward for the origin of the term **Hoodoo**. The tradition of Hoodoo is recognized to be an Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) spiritual tradition born of and borne by Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans) in North America who were brought to America as prisoners of war during the **Mmusuo Kese** (Great Perversity/enslavement era) and forced into enslavement.

As with anything related to Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) culture, the **akyiwadefo** [ah'-chee-wah'-dey-foh *spirits of disorder/the whites and their offspring*] have attempted to corrupt the origin and nature of the tradition. They falsely claim that Hoodoo is a combination of 'native'-American traditions, European 'magic and mysticism', Hindu 'mysticism' and Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) traditions. Some have falsely claimed that the term hoodoo comes from 'judio' as in the aspect of **Palo Mayombe** practice called 'judio'. Palo Mayombe is the corruption of the **Bakongo** religion as practiced by some in the Western Hemisphere who are descendants of Central Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans) who were enslaved. While some practice the pure Bakongo religion, the corrupted version has become popularized – particularly by the akyiwadefo. Two major aspects of the corrupted tradition are called Palo Cristiano and Palo Judio. These terms are translated as 'Christian Palo' and 'Jewish Palo'. They simply reflect the degree to which the traditional Ancestral Religion of the Bakongo and other related Central Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans) had been infected by the perverse symbolism of Christianity and the pseudo-history of Judaism.

Others have falsely claimed that hoodoo is derived from an Irish term meaning 'dark, phantom; evil entity or spiky ghost'. They further point to the term being used by the Irish in Canada and the North and Western United States referencing certain rock formations that are associated with 'dark' spirits.

**The akyiwadefo know that these claims are lies. However, they deliberately perpetuate them in order to pervert the knowledge of our culture and trust as much as possible.** Many Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans) repeat this foolishness because they have studied the pseudo-scholarship of the akyiwadefo.

There is also an etymology propounded by many that the term hoodoo comes from the **Hausa** people of West and Central Africa/Afuraitkait (Africa). They use the term **hu'du'ba** meaning *to rouse resentment in one person against another*. This is not a Hausa term, but actually an **Akan** term. While over 45% of the population

of Ghana, West Afuraka/Afuraitkait (Africa) is Akan, there also exists a Hausa population which comprises approximately 1%. The Hausa settled in today's Northern Ghana a few centuries ago - centuries after the Akan had already settled in today's Ghana. Most Hausa however live in the southeastern Niger and northern Nigeria region of Afuraka/Afuraitkait (Africa). Trade has occurred between the Akan and Hausa communities in Ghana at different times over the centuries.

The Akan term **huru** means *to boil or bubble; to foam; to be violently agitated; to excite or agitate*. The term **hurubo** means *to stir up (huru) the breast/chest (bo)*, which is a term meaning *to provoke or arouse anger or passion or to incense someone*. There are many related words and phrases in Akan rooted in the term **huru**. When spoken with a rolling 'r' the term **huru** sounds like **hoodoo**. This is how **hurubo**, an Akan term, became **huruba** or **huduba** in Hausa – through cultural exchange.

**However, the etymological origin of the term hoodoo is not huru.** The true etymological origin of the term hoodoo is the Akan term for *medicines* which are typically derived from *plants, stems and roots: nduru* or *ndu* [oohn-doooh'-rooh/oohn-doooh'-doooh or oohn-doooh?].

The Akan term **edua** means *tree, plant, shrub* in Akan. It also means *stem, stalk, stick*. The verb **dua** means *to plant*. The plural of **edua** is **ndua**. It is from the **ndua** (plants) that we derive our *medicine*.

The term for *medicine, powder* is **duru** or **eduru**. This term is often shortened to **du**. The plural of **eduru** (also written **aduru**) is **nduru** or **nnuru**. This plural is shortened by some speakers to **ndu** (oohn-doooh'). The term **nduru** or **ndu** (oohn-doooh) is the origin of the common pronunciation by Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans) in America - **hoodoo**.

Those in Akan culture who use **ndua** (trees, plants, sticks - roots) to make **ndu** (**nduru** - medicines) have two important titles: **odunsinfo** and **oduruyefo** also called **oduyefo**.

The term **du-nsin** means *tree (du) stump, roots (nsin)*. In the Akan language, the suffix **fo** denotes plurality when speaking of a group of people. Thus, **Akanfo** means the *group of people (fo)* who are **Akan** - Akan people. An **okomfo** is one of the *group of people (fo)* who practices **akom** (spirit possession/communication) - a priest or priestess. An **okofo** is one of the *group of people (fo)* who engages in battle (**oko**) - a warrior/fighter.

An **odunsinfo** is one of the *group of people (fo)* who uses the *stump/roots (nsin)* of trees/plants (**du/dua**) to make medicines (**ndu** or **nduru**). The **odunsinfo** is an herbalist, a spiritualist who communicates with the **asunsum** (spirits) of the plants in Nature in order to procure medicine from them for healing purposes. Some however, communicate with the discarnate, earthbound, wayward, uncultivated spirits that reside *around* plants, in the forest, etc. to utilize them when making 'medicines' (poisons) to harm people. This is why the **odunsinfo** is sometimes referred to as a *sorcerer, wizard, charmer, etc.* In reality, a true **odunsinfo** is a medicine-man or medicine-woman - a *physician*. He or she is a tree (du) root (nsin) man/woman or a medicine (du) root (nsin) man/woman.

The same is true of the **oduruyefo**. The **oduru** aspect of the name means *medicine*. The term *ye* means *to make, to do*. Thus the **oduruyefo** is one of the *group of people (fo)* who *makes (ye) oduru (medicine)*. This is a *traditional healer*, similar to the **odunsinfo**. The name **oduruyefo** is often shortened to **oduyefo**. He or she is the one who makes **ndu** or **nduru**.

The term **duru** also means *heavy, weighty*. This signifies *strength*. One with a *heavy chest (akokoduru)* means one *has heart* or is *courageous*. The term for *health, strength* in Akan is **ahooden** meaning the *self, body (ho)* is *hard (den)*. A *heavy or hard body* signifies *strength* and health in Akan culture. This is also true of the **sunsum** or *spirit* of a person. A person with a *heavy spirit (sunsum ye duru)* is one who is strong-spirited. This is why the term **duru** or **oduru** and **eduru** (plural **nduru, ndu**) are used both for *heaviness, weight, solidity, and medicine*. When you have *weight, substance* you have *immunity – defensive power*. In Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African)

culture in america we have retained the same ideological concept. When we say something is *heavy* it means that it is *deep* or *powerful* or *clarifying*. The Akan also use the term **oduru** for *gravity* (deep, powerful, grounding).

The related term **aduto** means *bad (to) medicine (du) or poison*. One who uses bad medicine is thus called **odutofo**. We also have **odudo** which is *a medicine consisting of the juice of a plant or bark and water, kept for weeks to dress wounds with*. Moreover, we have **adubone** which is a contraction of **aduru/adu** (medicine) and **bone** (evil). The **adubone** is another term for *poison* (bad/evil medicine).

**edua** - tree, plant, stalk, stem

**dua** - to plant

**eduru** - medicine

**nduru (ndu)** - medicines

**odunsinfo** - medicine person

**oduyefo** - medicine person

**odudo** - medicine

**oduro** - gravity

**aduto** - bad medicine

**adubone** - bad medicine; poison

The notion of the **nduru** person or **ndu** person (oohn-doo-rooh or oohn-doo person) being the *medicine person* who works with **dua** (sticks, roots) to make **ndu** (medicines) is the origin of the **oduyefo** (medicine-making person) or the **odu/ndu** (oohn-doo), **hoodoo**-making person.

The Akan term **ndu** (oohn-doo) is the origin of the term **hoodoo**, the medicine making, *rootworking* practice. The term **odunsinfo** literally translates in 'African-American' parlance as *rootdoctor*. The term **oduyefo** literally translates into '*hoodoo person*' - *one of the group of people (fo) who makes (ye) hoodoo (odu/ndu)* - the *rootworker*.

We should also note that the term **duru** also means: *to descend, dismount, alight, come or go down; to feel a presentiment, foreboding*. This references the *spiritual aspect* of the medicine. The *spirits* who work with the **oduruyefo** or **oduyefo** *descend, alight, come down upon* the plants, the healer and sometimes the client. This is also related to the spiritual notion of **duru** (*heaviness*) with regard to *spirit possession*. The notion of feeling a *presentiment* or *foreboding* has to do with **nkomo** (spirit communication): *clairvoyance, clairsentience, clairaudience, clairequilibrium, clairtimiance etc.* The spiritual aspect of the *medicine* (oduru) *making* (ye) is why the oduruyefo or oduyefo (hoodoo-making person) is called in 'African-American' parlance a **conjurer** and the tradition often referred to as **conjure**.

### Cultural Continuity



Left: Hoodoo Healing Symbol found in a diary in america dated before the end of the enslavement era ([www.omogun.webs.com](http://www.omogun.webs.com))

Right: Akan Adinkra symbol – **Tabono**: *Oars* – Represents *strength through balance, perseverance and unity of purpose*

There are over 20,000,000 Akan people in Ghana and Ivory Coast. The Akan, as one of the largest groups in West Afuraka/Afuraitkait (Africa), were the largest group from whom Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans) were taken and transported to *english-speaking* colonies during the **Mmusuo Kесе** (Great Perversity/enslavement). Many were shipped to South America, the Caribbean as well as North America. The trustory of Jamaica and the maroons documents the Akan people being the major *cultural influence* in the region. Some maroons were forced to migrate to Canada (Nova Scotia) after the wars with the whites in 12796 (1796). **This accounts for the term nduru/ndu (hoodoo) being used in Canada as referenced above.**

The Akan term **obayifo** (mistranslated as *witch, sorcerer*) means one of the group of people (fo) who have and exercise **obayi** - often misnomered *witchcraft*. This term became the term **obeah** in Jamaica - translated variously as *sorcery, magic*, etc. The **obayifo** was thus eventually called the **obeah-man**, *the one who practiced obeah (obayi)*. In the same fashion, the **oduyefo** became known as the **odu-fo** or the **odu (ndu/oohn-doo) man**, the hoodoo man or hoodoo woman, *the one who practiced hoodoo (nduru, ndu, medicine/rootwork)*.

Just as the **Fon** people of Dahomey were *culturally dominant* in Haiti so were the Akan in Jamaica. The Fon term **Vodoun** thus became a term utilized by many Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) ethnic groups to refer to Ancestral Religion generally. The same happened with the term **Obeah**. It became a general term for Ancestral Religion used by different Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) ethnic groups in Jamaica simply because the Akan were dominant culturally. The same occurred with these two groups in North America.

The Fon term **Vodou**, corrupted into **Voodoo**, became popular in New Orleans and across the country by Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans) in America who were descendent of that ethnic group. Because this group as well as the **Ewe** were very populous amongst those enslaved in North America, the term **Voodoo** became a standard term for Ancestral Religion amongst many Black people. It was also demonized by the whites and used as a catch-all term for Ancestral Religion.

The Akan were/are also a dominant cultural group in North America and thus the Akan term **nduru** or **ndu** corrupted into **hoodoo**, became a standard term for Ancestral Religion, rootwork, conjuring, etc. amongst many Black people. It was also demonized by the whites and used as a catch-all term for Ancestral Religion.



**Akofo** (Warriors) killing the akyiwadefo.

This is how we as Afurakanu/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans) liberated ourselves and ended enslavement in the western hemisphere.

The **odunsinfo** and **oduyefo** in Akan culture are *functionaries* within the total society. Thus, **nduru (ndu - hoodoo)** is not a religion unto itself. It is a *component* of **Akanfo Nanasom** (Akan Religion). Because it was used as a weapon of warfare by our **Nsamanfo** (Ancestresses and Ancestors) here in America during the **Mmusuo Kесе** (enslavement era), the term became a general term for the religion. **Ndu** (hoodoo) as

a *healing* and a *spiritual, chemical and biological warfare* component, as well as the **obayi** component, were the most powerful *expressions* of the religion for obvious reasons at this time in our trustory. It is what we relied upon to protect ourselves, heal ourselves and kill the akyiwadefo (*through plant medicine/poisoning, spiritual medicine, as well as emboldening us to wage a contracted physical war*), thereby opening the way for liberation from the plantations.

These practices struck such fear in the akyiwadefo that they decided they had to find a way to neutralize it. When they realized they *could not* neutralize it, they began to indoctrinate our people with christianity and also feign magnanimity through emancipation. *This was (is) their strategy for a new form of mental enslavement.*

**In reality, it was the war that the Akofo (Warriors/Warrioresses) waged against the akyiwadefo which forced them into accepting the reality of emancipation.**

**As with all aspects of Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) Ancestral Religion - none of the whites and their offspring (Europeans, Americans, Asians, White Hispanics, White Arabs, White Hindus, White Pseudo-‘Native’ Americans, etc.), past, present and future, have been, are, nor ever will be involved in its authentic practice. Any non-Afurakani/non-Afuraitkait (non-African~non-Black) purporting to practice hoodoo or any aspect of our Ancestral Religions are 100% fraudulent - without exception.**

The **Abosom** (Spirits of Creation) and the **Nananom Nsamanfo** (Honored Ancestresses and Ancestors of Afuraka/Afuraitkait) **have never and will never work with non-Afurakanu/non-Afuraitkaitnut** (non-Africans). It is through the **Abosom** and **Nsamanfo** (**Orisha** and **Egungun, Vodou** and **Kuvito**, etc.) that the practice of the **true** odunsinfo or oduyefo is legitimated. The **tumi** (Divine power) wielded by the odunsinfo and oduyefo is transmitted *spiri-genetically* from one Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) generation to the next – unbroken – wherever we find ourselves in the world. This has been true for thousands of years and will always be the case. This **tumi** originates with **Nyamewaa-Nyame** (the Mother and Father Supreme Being) and was dispensed to Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) clans/families from the beginning of our existence upon **Asaase Afua** (Earth Mother) in Afuraka/Afuraitkait (Africa). It is replenished in every generation. We have transmitted this **tumi** via **kra ne mogya** (soul and blood) to our posterity ever since.

**The spirits of non-Afurakanu/non-Afuraitkaitnut (non-Africans) cannot enter our spiri-genetic blood-circle – even via miscegenation.** The incarnation of a akyiwadefo spirit into the womb as a result of inter-racial coupling is **repulsive** to the Abosom and Nsamanfo and thus the **tumi** (Divine power) necessary to work with the Abosom and Nsamanfo is not transmitted to such an akyiwadefo spirit although outwardly, this akyiwadefo spirit may have the features, phenotype, etc. of a ‘bi-racial’ or ‘Black’ individual.

**The Abosom (Deities) are the Embodiments of Divine Order in Creation. They therefore repulse disorder, including spirits of disorder perpetually. This is an immutable law.**

*Only an Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) spirit with an Okra/Okraa (Soul/Divine Consciousness; Ori Inu), who unfortunately incarnates through miscegenation, can carry **tumi** and still function as a normal Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) individual in the world although phenotypically ‘bi-racial’. It is the provenance of the incarnating spirit that is the primary and determining factor regarding identity. Akyiwadefo spirits are not Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) – no matter what womb they reincarnate through.*

**Ndu** is the **Akan** origin of the term **Hoodoo**. Authentic **ndu** or **hoodoo** does not incorporate any non-Afurakani/non-Afuraitkaitnit (non-African) pseudo-philosophies or practices including any references to the bible, the **fictional characters** Jesus, Moses, Yahweh, Allah, Muhammad, Buddha, Vishnu, etc.

All Afurakani/Afuraitkaitnit (African) Ancestral Religions contain this authentic ritual healing component which goes by different names according to their specific Ancestral language and culture.

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