



BENIN

## Twins are forever

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A MAN FROM COTONOU WHO CAME TO QUIDAH  
FOR THE TWINS CELEBRATION CARRYING  
THE STATUETTE OF HIS DEAD TWIN



IN THE PART OF AFRICA BETWEEN NIGERIA AND BENIN, ESPECIALLY AMONG FON, EWE AND YORUBA POPULATION, THERE IS THE HIGHEST NATURAL TWIN BIRTHRATE IN THE WORLD. IN OTHER AFRICAN AREAS, A MOTHER WHO BIRTHED TWO TWINS WAS ACCUSED TO HAVE HAD INTERCOURSES WITH SPIRITS AND THEN KILLED WITH HER BABIES. BUT IN THE REGION FACING THE GULF OF GUINEA, TWIN BIRTHS ARE CONSIDERED LUCKY, POSITIVE EVENTS, AND A SYNCRETISTIC CULT OF TWINS, WITH ALTARS AND OFFERS TO BE MADE, HAS BEEN BUILT. IF ONE OF THE TWINS DIE, THE MOTHER CARVES A STATUETTE IN HIS/HER MEMORY. NOBODY WILL CONSIDER THAT TWIN DEAD, HE JUST 'LEFT FOR THE FOREST'. DEAD TWINS ARE OFTEN IDENTIFIED WITH THE MONKEYS LIVING IN THE FOREST SACRED TO THE VOODOO DIVINITIES, WHILE THEIR MOTHERS KEEP THE STATUES AS REAL CHILDREN, TAKING CARE OF THEM AS THEY WERE STILL PRESENT IN THE FAMILY.

THE PROCESSION TO THE TWINS ALTAR  
AT THE OUIDAH MARKET DURING THE  
CELEBRATION OF THE DEAD TWINS,  
HELD ON TWINS SAINTS COSMAS AND DAMIAN'S DAY



GERALDINE ADJOVI BREASTFEEDING HER  
THREE 14 MONTHS OLD TWINS: JEAN  
CLAUDE, JEAN LUC AND JEAN JACQUES



A COUPLE OF 'REVENNANTS' TWINS IN A PORTO NOVO STREET. THE REVENNANTS (LITERALLY: THOSE WHO COME BACK) ARE THE INCARNATION OF THE DEAD COMING BACK TO EARTH DURING SPECIFIC CEREMONIES. THEIR CULT HAS YORUBA ORIGIN - THE ORIGINAL NAME IS EGUNGUN - BUT IT COVERS BENIN'S TERRITORIES WHERE THE FON ETHNIC GROUP LIVE





CELINA LATÈ HAD HER TWINS LIONNE AND CHRISTELLE A WEEK EARLIER. IN THE PICTURE, SHE'S POSING WITH THEM AND HER OTHER 8 YEARS OLD TWINS

A PREGNANT WOMAN EXPECTING TWO TWINS.  
SHE CARRIES THE STATUETTES OF SOME  
DEAD TWINS OF HER FAMILY TOO



THE CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL OF OUIDAH. AT THE MASS OF THE DEAD TWINS CELEBRATION DAY, MANY WOMEN FOLLOW THE SERVICE CARRYING THEIR TWINS' STATUETTES, EMPHASISING THE SYNCRETISM OF THE CULT





AT THE MASS OF THE DEAD TWINS CELEBRATION DAY MANY WOMEN FOLLOW THE SERVICE CARRYING THEIR TWINS' STATUETTES, EMPHASISING THE SYNCRETISM OF THE CULT



RITUAL OFFERINGS AT THE TWINS ALTAR IN THE MARKET OF QUIDAH: IT'S THE DAY CELEBRATING THE DEAD TWINS, DEDICATED TO THE TWINS SAINTS COSMAS AND DAMIAN

THE CELEBRATION TO HONOUR NEWBORN TWINS LIONNE AND CHRISTELLE AT THE EVANGELIC CHURCH OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES. HERE WE SEE THE OLDER TWIN BROTHERS OF THE TWO WHILE THEIR MOTHER, CELINE LATÉ, WASN'T ALLOWED IN THE CHURCH AS SHE IS ON HER PERIOD AND THEREFORE CONSIDERED IMPURE



THE OFFERING FOR THE CEREMONY TO HONOUR  
THE TWINS LIONNE AND CHRISTELLE AT THE  
EVANGELIC CHURCH OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES



AN ELDERLY WOMAN AT THE TWINS  
CELEBRATION WITH THE TWINS STATUETTES  
OF HER FAMILY SHE IS IN CHARGE OF



ALPHONSE MAKOU IS A SCULPTOR  
BASED IN OUIDAH. MANY FAMILIES  
ASK HIM TO CARVE THE STATUETTES  
PICTURING THEIR DEAD TWINS



A YOUNG GIRL WITH A STATUETTE  
REPRESENTING HER DEAD TWIN  
SISTER DURING THE TWINS  
CELEBRATION DAY IN OUIDAH





A STATUE OF A LEGBA IN THE SACRED FOREST OF KPASSE IN OUIDAH. LEGBA IS THE VODOO DIVINITY MEDIATING BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND THE WORLD. IT'S EASILY RECOGNISABLE FROM HIS GREAT PHALLUS AND IT'S USUALLY LOCATED AT THE CROSSINGS AND AT THE ENTRANCE OF HOUSES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS. ACCORDING TO THE TWINS CULT, DEAD TWINS ARE BELIEVED TO BECOME MONKEYS AND THEN LIVE IN SACRED FOREST LIKE THESE ONES



YVES AGASSOU IS AN IMPORTANT PRIEST OF COVÉ. HIS RITUAL NAME IS HOUNON GAN WODÉ. MANY DIVINITIES ARE PRESENT IN HIS TEMPLE, AND THERE'S ALSO AN ALTAR DEDICATED TO TWINS. THERE IS ALSO A COUPLE OF TWINS AMONG HIS FOLLOWERS (IN THE LOW PART OF THE PICTURE)

SHIACAPEO PAPASSI IS A  
VOODOO PRIESTESS LIVING  
IN THE VILLAGE OF PAHOU.  
IN HER HOUSE SHE KEEPS AN  
ALTAR DEDICATED TO ALL THE  
TWINS BORN AND DEAD IN HER  
FAMILY. MANY PEOPLE HAS A  
SIMILAR ALTAR AND USE IT  
TO ASK FOR GRACES



SOLANGE CHIBOZO BATHING THE STATUETTES  
OF ELEVEN DEAD TWINS OF HER FAMILY.  
SHE TAKES CARE OF ALL OF THEM,  
AND SHE EVEN CELEBRATED A WEDDING  
BETWEEN TWO COUPLES OF STATUETTES



GISELE ASSOGBA BATHING THE STATUETTES  
OF THE DEAD TWINS SHE TAKES CARE OF:  
COSMA, DAMIEN, FELICIEN E FELIOK





THE SIGN OF THE CLINIC 'LES BEAUX BEBES' IN OUIDAH, SPECIALIZED ON BIRTHS



THE BIRTH OF A TWIN  
IN THE OUIDAH HOSPITAL



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