

# The Wisdom of Our Foremothers: Reconstructing African Spirituality

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## Abstract

In this article, based on a 2004 paper, Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose analyzes qualitative data from interviews conducted in northern New Jersey from 1987-1995 with more than 100 African American women aged 65 and above. The women were asked questions about their mothers, such as: “What values did your mother give you?” and “What sayings/proverbs did she use?” Some mothers were born from 1861 to 1898, suggesting Black cultural influences from the 19<sup>th</sup> century upon the 20<sup>th</sup> century daughters interviewed in the study. Qualitative data analysis led to the identification of 15 values and 39 proverbs, while permitting reconstruction of an African spirituality bestowed upon daughters while growing up with their mothers. The emergent values, proverbs, and spirituality are highlighted as representing the heart/core of the Black community and Black culture. Emphasis is placed upon the *Egyptian/Kemetic concept of Maat/spirituality* as the greatest strength of the Black community and Black culture. It was Maat/spirituality that was at work in ancient Kemet, Maat kept our Ancestors alive so that we might be born, and Maat is at work in contemporary Black culture—as revealed in the interviews. Rodgers-Rose selects 10 values from the interviews and juxtaposes them with 10 values from ancient Kemetic culture codified in the forty-two affirmations of Maat; these affirmations date back at least 5000 years, as presented in *The Book of Coming Forth by Day*. This juxtaposition provides convincing evidence that core values and African spirituality from ancient Kemetic culture remain in Black culture up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rodgers-Rose asserts that contemporary descendants in the Black community cannot separate spirituality from their daily lives, as “spirituality is what we do.” The caution is offered that when our behaviors go against the basic principles of Maat (truth, justice, and righteousness), then we lose our spirituality and our reason for living; that is, life becomes empty. Rodgers-Rose recommends that we get back to our spirituality and related values to save the Black community and the whole of humankind. Further, it is not too late for the ancient Kemetic spirituality of Maat and related values and beliefs to be taught to our children/grandchildren, as well as used to train the educators of our children. Through this article, the voice of Rodgers-Rose from a 2004 paper is captured in print and online so that her brilliant analysis as a pioneering leader in establishing the validity of a core Black culture will remain accessible for years to come. Thus, the rich legacy and name of Dr. La Francis Rodgers-Rose will live on, and she will be kept in the *sasa* time. Meanwhile, the article captures her nearly 30 years of research on ancient Egypt/Kemet and the principles of Maat and their relationship to present day life and culture.

Keywords: Maat, African spirituality, Egypt, Kemet, culture, values, proverbs

## Introduction

The question of reconstructing the knowledge/ wisdom of our foremothers in the Black community, of hearing the Ancestors speak, is pivotal. The essence of the question is what is the Black community, who represents that community, who speaks for it, and what has been its historical strengths; that is, what has been its values, its beliefs, its spirituality, and can we still see them in the Black community? What are we to do individually and collectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to reconstruct those voices to save not only ourselves but ultimately humankind. My discussion focuses on the continuing need to reconstruct our culture, our values, our beliefs, our spirituality, which has been the strength of the Black community; it is the need to get back to our voice—our Medu Netcher (Divine Speech) and therefore, the way to come back to ourselves.

What we have done before, we can do again. We need only remember our history and remember our Ancestors. At the same time, we need to remember and call out those who stole and continue to steal our history, our artifacts, and yes, in many cases our values—our culture. The sacred wisdom of ancient Kemet (Egypt) more than 5,000 years ago said, “Behold now, how greatly the people have

changed. One who once did not sleep even on a box now owns a bed. Those who once owned robes now are in rags, and those who once did not weave for themselves now own fine linen. And those who knew nothing of God now makes offering to Him with the incense of others” (Karenga, 1984, *Husia*).

We, the first people created—i.e., the first man and woman; the first to speak; the first to give birth; the first to establish the family; the first to create a just society; the first to create the seven cardinal virtues of truth, justice, propriety, harmony, balance, order and reciprocity; the first to create philosophy, ethics, economics, mathematics, geometry, poetry, religion—find ourselves following and being controlled by our children. These are children who had not come out of their caves when Amenomope advised “Beware of robbing the poor and of oppressing the weak and helpless. Raise not your hand against the aged nor

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address an elder with improper speech” (Karenga, 1984, *Husia*, 58); or when he said, “Let us steer a righteous course so that we may carry the wicked across without becoming like them. Raise them up, give them your hand, and then leave them in the hands of God” (Karenga, 1984, *Husia*, 59).

### Opening of the Mouth: Our Foremothers Speak

Our concern is unearthing the culture and beliefs of a people who were snatched from their existential basis, enslaved, and placed in a hostile, dehumanizing and anti-African environment. Can we discern any ways of knowing from these people, our Ancestors? How did/do they view the world and make sense out of their lives? How have they been able to create something from out of nothing? That is, can older Black women give us any ideas on how we should behave in the world today? We know that historically these older women were able to make a way out of no way, hold on to their integrity, and in many instances Africanized the new space they occupied. That is to say, much of what we define as American culture really must be traced back to Africans living in the United States.

John Blassingame (1982) in his book, *The Slave Community*, tells us that Africans living in the South during the enslavement Africanized the South—i.e., the southern socialization of children, southern hospitality, southern food, southern rhythms, and southern religion. This paper seeks to understand Black culture from the perspective of our not too distant foremothers. How did they make sense of the world; what was their way of knowing (their epistemology); how did they pass that knowledge on to their children; what values did they give their children to live by; and by what values did they evaluate themselves? We want to hear from these ordinary Black women who through their lives, their examples of right behavior, truth and justice have given us the message (a lesson in knowing) for what we must do. They constantly told us to remember our Ancestors, to remember the bridges that bought us over. They told us to return and fetch that which we left behind—Sankofa. These ordinary Black women knew the importance of raising children in the ways of their Ancestors. These women made sure that their children were fed and clothed before they were; they knew through their mothers and their mothers’ mothers that women were/are the center of African life. They knew that Africans are a people who can only become righteous if they are raised by righteous women; women who knew what it meant to be the moral standard of the community; who were the final source of “correctness” in the community; who were the embodiment of the highest principle of Kemetic morality—the principle of Maat—truth, justice, and righteousness. How interesting that the very essence of Kemetic life is in the image of a woman, and on the final day of judgment

one’s heart must weigh no heavier than the feather of Maat.

Cheikh Anta Diop (1978) in the *Cultural Unity of Black Africa* tells us that no other people have given women the centrality in culture as Africa has. After all, Africa is called the motherland not the fatherland. Africans say, “Women make it sweet.” When all else fails and men cannot decide what is valid, what is true, the men say bring the women. “Women make it sweet! He also told us that Europeans would do everything they possibly could to destroy that centrality, which can be seen in Kemet’s Goddess Nut, who is so awesome that she swallows the sun (RA) in the evening and gives birth to him in the morning. It was Ast who repairs the dismembered body of her husband Ausur. It is she who resurrected Ausur/God. It was her tears that cause the mighty Nile River to flood every year and fertilize the land. The centrality of women is further seen in the Goddess Hathor—the nurturing Goddess. The Pharaoh is seen nursing from the breast (wisdom) of Hathor. She is the cosmic source of life.

Theophile Obenga (1992) in *Ancient Egypt and Black Africa* tells us “before the universe came into being, the original source of all life was already both male and female.” He further maintains that “the need to identify the female principle in divine action was vital to the people of Kemet. The divine world was based on complementarity of the sexes, which was forever becoming, evolving; the process of becoming and returning to the source.”

### The Condition: A Search for Core Black Culture

Can we still find a core Black culture at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? In seeking to understand the character/personality of Blacks in America, social scientists, scholars, and leaders have tended to pay more attention to the devastating outcome of living in a society that denies Blacks their humanity, often missing that which explains Black people’s ability to thrive and survive in these hostile conditions. We often forget that individuals, Black people, have the ability to think, the ability to discern, the ability to reflect and create their own realities, their own way of knowing. Not only do we live in a material world that often has negative impacts on Black lives, but as a people we have often been able to create an alternate material world, develop our own businesses, our own schools, religious institutions, and most importantly our own families. We have also created our own relationships and developed alternative bases of knowledge.

We must raise questions that begin to explain how an oppressed people can raise in its midst people like: David Walker, Anna Julia Cooper, Henry Highland Garnet, Nana Burroughs, Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Denmark Vessey, Nat Turner, Mary Church Terrell, Martin Delaney, W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune, Paul Robeson, Fannie Lou Hamer, Martin Luther

King, Dorothy Heights, Bayard Rustin, Septima Poinsette Clark, Howard Thurman, Fannie Lou Hamer, Malcolm X, Diane Nash, John Lewis, and the list goes on. These people are no accident or exceptions. They grew up and out of an African core culture, out of a way of seeing and walking in the world. These people were endowed with character/personality by parents, relatives and friends living in devastating conditions. Yet, a core African culture has given the world individuals who were profound philosophical thinkers with impeccable behavior—despite those devastating conditions.

What is in the Black core culture that produces these great people? John Henrik Clarke tells us that the relationship of history to the people is the same as the relationship of a mother to her child. He further says that the woman Goddess is found throughout Egyptian history from the very beginning. I suggest that much of the answer lies in the early socialization process of Black children: i.e., how they are raised; what their mothers say to them; what their mothers did with them; how she fed them; and what stories she told them.

We must turn to these ordinary women and gather the knowledge they left behind. We must reconstruct the relationships, the values taught, the stories told, the foods they cooked, the songs they sang. Will we still see any of these values in Black behaviors today? If not, what must we do to re-establish those values in the lives of children today? What modalities/paradigms have grown out of the value system of Africans living in the Diaspora?

### **Black Core Culture: Kemetic Values**

Let us take a short journey into Black core culture—the values, ideas and beliefs, and behaviors of our great grandmothers, grandmothers, and mothers, in order to see what they tell us about how they socialized their children. What do these women tell us that we must do? What values did they teach? Can we look at the ways that Black women raised their children and see what we must do for our children today? If our children are not socialized in the ways of our foremothers, we will no longer leave descendants who will honor our memories and keep us alive. When we no longer call the Ancestors, the culture dies. We must remember, lest our children never know.

### **Interviews of Black Women About Their Mothers**

The research in this paper was gathered from 1987-1995 in northern New Jersey. More than one hundred women over the age of 65 were interviewed about their mothers. We asked them: “Tell me about your mother. How would you characterize her? What values did your mother give you? What sayings/ proverbs did she use? What songs did she sing? What food did she cook? What home remedies did

she use when you were sick? What did you tell your children when you raised them?”

The question of character gets at the core of the personality and behavior of these older Black women. The question of values is pivotal in any discussion of culture. It is central to the culture, suggesting that which propels a people to action; determines how they treat others; and how they see themselves in the world.

Also, the proverbs we learn are the daughters of experience. The proverbs focus on putting the values and ideals of a culture into practice. We are what we eat. In Africa, food is central in life. It is not just something that you do. Your body is your temple. There is great concern about what you put in your temple. The home remedies suggest the folkway/ root way of life of the people. Africans were the herbalists. Music is the life force of African people. When all else fails, music connects them to the great universal force, the divine force of becoming. In the interviews, we wanted to find out how these various aspects of culture were seen in the lives of older Black women as they raised their children.

The average age of the women who were interviewed was 72 years and their mother’s age would be 100 if they were living today. Many of these women were the youngest in their families and the only living children of their parents. These women described their mothers as: very smart; the most beautiful mother in the world; she was a fine woman; she was a lovely, sweet, good mother; she was reserved, never raised her voice; she was a sweet ole lady; she was a good woman; she devoted her life to her children; she was sacrificing; she took care of her children; she always had time for us; she prepared us for life. At another level these women said: “We never went to bed hungry.” One said, “although we were poor, I never remember going hungry.” Another said, “although we were poor, I never remember going without something we really needed.”

It was interesting to note that many of these women gave their mother’s maiden name along with their married name, and year of birth. For example, Roberta Dean Hollis, 1885; Ines Bathing Jackson, 1898; Beatrice Johnson Spruill, 1890; Cynthia Hill Smith, 1882; and Polly Williams Hill, 1861. This information connected the women not only to their husbands, but also to their family of origin—an important factor in all African families.

### **Values**

The women were asked the question, “What values did your mother teach you?” Their responses follow, highlighting *the emergent value*, along with sample quotes:

- 1-*Be kind to others*—Treat people right.
- 2-*Work hard*—Be a tireless worker.
- 3-*Education is important*—Get something in your head;

no one can take it away from you.

4-*Be truthful*—Don't lie, cheat or steal.

5-*Live a clean life*—Do the right thing; there were some things that you just could not do.

6-*Faith in God*—Went to church all day on Sunday; mother was very spiritual; weekly family prayer; thank you Lord; said Bible verses at dinner table; mother never complained about life.

7-*Strict discipline of children*—Don't talk back to adults; children are seen and not heard; children don't ask a lot of questions; mother did not take any foolishness; my mother would scold you for the longest time; do something wrong and she would talk about it for days; she might pinch you or use the switch.

8-*Work not accept mediocrity*—You can do better; don't do anything halfway; do your best.

9-*Cleanliness is next to godliness*—If the clothes you washed were not clean, she would take them off the line and make you wash them over; be clean with your body; keep yourself clean; keep your house clean; one woman said my mother would sweep the dirt in the yard.

10-*You are your brother's and sister's keeper*—The older was responsible for the younger; if the young did something wrong, then the older would be punished; you must share what you have with your brothers and sisters.

11-*Respect yourself*—Hold your head up high; be proud of yourself; be proud of what you have; be true to yourself; be strong.

12-*Respect others*—It was most important to respect the elders; one woman said, "My mother would slap me down if I called an adult by their first name;" and "we had to say yes ma'am and no sir."

13-*Depend on yourself*—Know how to take care of yourself; be thrifty.

14-*Know how to act in public*—Don't embarrass me in public; one woman said, "Mother believed in taking us with her."

15-*Be proud of being Black.*

## Proverbs

The values that were mentioned by the women in the interviews were often backed up by proverbs, revealing the mother wit of these women. An African proverb tells us that "proverbs are the daughters of experience." Consider the proverbs shared, below:

1-One woman's mother born in 1877 said, "*To thine own self be true, then thou cannot be false to any person.*"

2-*You are known by the company you keep.*

3-*Do unto others as you would have them to do unto you.*

4-*Any frog is a fool if he/she does not praise his own pond* (mother born in 1886).

5-*If you don't get up and do something, you won't have a pot to pee in or a window to throw it out of* (mother born in 1885).

6-*When you eat someone else's food, you are putting their hands in your stomach.*

7-*Fear is the beginning of wisdom.*

8-*Keep your hands in your pocket when you are doing something for someone.*

9-*The bad road is wide and the good is narrow.*

10-*Honesty is the best policy.*

11-*When rumor has walked a mile, truth has just put on her shoes.*

12-*Prayer goes a long way.*

13-*Be somebody—if you are somebody, everybody will respect you.*

14-*Every dog has his day even if it's a rainy day.*

15-*You reap what you sow.*

16-*Don't shame me.*

17-*You can treat a dog right.*

18-*Anything not worth asking for is not worth having.*

19-*No matter what you have, you are no better than the next person.*

20-*Everything is good for something.*

21-*A stitch in time saves nine.*

22-*Always speak because it doesn't cost you anything.*

23-*Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.*

24-*Don't be a fool, never skip out of school.*

25-*A bird in your pocket is worth ten in someone else's.*

26-*Children should be seen and not heard.*

27-*Twelve months in a year: you have six months to mind your own business, and the other six months to leave other people's business alone, and then the year is up.*

28-*Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.*

29-*Think before you leap.*

30-*Everybody's business is nobody's business.*

31-*Watch as well as pray.*

32-*The wise man carries an umbrella when the sun shines; any old fool will carry an umbrella when it rains.*

33-*Birds of a feather flock together.*

34-*You never know who is going to give you your last drink of water.*

35-*An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*

36-*Don't let your shirt tail be like an umbrella, fly up every time they push the right button.*

37-*Now that you think you are grown you smell your own pee.*

38-*No matter what you do, somebody is watching.*

39-*A day has but one eye, a night one thousand.*

## Implications of the Values, Proverbs, Beliefs

These above cited values and proverbs represent the heart/core of the Black community. Many of us were raised by women like these. We have heard our mothers say:

be truthful, live a clean life, treat people right. Can this core culture be reconstructed today as Maat/ spirituality in the Black community? Spirituality has always been our greatest strength. What are we to do individually and collectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to restore our spirituality and save ourselves and ultimately save humankind? We need to get back to the ways of Maat, our communal culture. Consider other values and beliefs: children belong to the community; we must practice the equality between men and women; honor good speech; believe in knowledge for knowledge’s sake; value the nonmaterial aspects of life more than the material; and affirm that everything belongs to nature.

Although we have been separated from Africa for (over) four hundred years, we did not lose all our connections to Africa. One can still see Kemetic values in Black culture where there is a great sense of wanting to be remembered, of living one’s life so that your name is never forgotten; and, where your deeds (behavior) live long after you are dead. In fact, Mbiti (1969) in *African Philosophy* tells us that Africans have two time periods, **sasa** (*known by someone alive*) and **zamani** (*not known by anyone alive*). **Sasa** time is now time where one lives as long as someone remembers you and calls your name. The person, although an Ancestor, can live forever in the now (**sasa**) time as long as she/he is remembered. One lives so that “my name does not pass away.” This is very similar to the Kemetic belief that we build for eternity to live for eternity.

The values and beliefs of the women interviewed in this research affirm that we can still find core Black culture at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I have taken some of the core values of our not so distant foremothers and juxtaposed them to some of the forty-two affirmations of Maat, which date back at least 5000 years which appear in *The Book of Coming Forth by Day*.

See Table 1.

As shown above in Table 1, the core is still there. We just need to recognize it and go back and fetch it. We need only remember our history, remember the love in our community between and among ourselves. In the sacred writings of *The Husia*, translated by Maulana Karenga (1984), the Ancestors said in the book of Ptah-Hotep verse 18, “Be generous as long as you live. What goes into the storehouse should come out.” Verse 19 says “Know those who are faithful to you and do not mistreat those who are your friends. They are well-watered fields to you and more valuable than great riches. For what belongs to one friend belongs to another. The character of a righteous person is an honor to him or her and a thing of value which is long remembered” (p. 47).

We cannot separate our spirituality from our daily lives. Our spirituality is what we do. When our behaviors go against the basic principles of Maat (truth, justice, and righteousness), we lose our spirituality and our reason for living; that is, life becomes empty.

**Table 1: A Juxtaposition of Values from 21<sup>st</sup> Century Black Culture and Values of Maat from Ancient Culture in Egypt**

<b>Values in Black Culture</b>	<b>Values in Kemet Culture</b>
1. Be truthful—don’t lie, cheat or steal	I have not knowingly spoken that which is not true
2. Live a clean life—do the right thing	I have not done anything with a false heart
3. Treat people right	I have not done evil against people
4. You are your brother’s and sister’s keeper	I have not mistreated my family and associates
5. You are the company you keep	I have not associated with evil
6. The bad road is wide and the good is narrow	I have not done evil things
7. Keep your hands in your pocket when you do something for someone	I have not caused anyone to be hungry
8. You must share what you have	I have not been greedy
9. Honesty is the best policy	I have not committed fraud
10. When rumor has walked a mile truth has just put on her shoes	I have not gossiped

### Getting Back to Our Spirituality

Obenga (1995) says that the process of reconstructing African culture and history is the process of placing all of humanity itself into a real and proper perspective, for the roots of humanity are to be found in Africa (p.81) Rkhty Amen (1990) tells us that in ancient Egypt “spirituality is above religion, above science, above social creeds (holy books). Spirituality is about Amen, the infinite unknown, and the Atum, the infinite known.” Spirituality is about love of and understanding of the entire universe, and understanding that life is more than just what is here on earth, but includes the entire universe and the infinite dimension thereof (p. 115).

Karenga (1990) says that there is no serious alternative to the Medu Netcher (Divine Speech) word Maat as the true and proper name for Kemetic spirituality. Hardiman (1995) says that self and divine actualization is facilitated by speaking the evocative word. Sounds make magic. “Maat is for eternity and goes to the grave with those who do it.” Maat is the order established by Ra and we are called upon by the *Husia* to preserve it, restore and enrich it.

In ancient Egypt everybody was governed by Maat—from the highest to the lowest. Maat is lived reality. It is what we do, and on the day of judgement your heart is placed on the scale of justice. It is said that your heart can weigh no heavier than the feather of Maat—the Netcher is in the image of a woman. You learn Maat from birth—taught by your mother and father. Virtue is learned behavior. In society, Maat is seen in the social institutions; the poor are provided for; wealth is communal; and there are no health disparities.

It was the establishment of Maat that accounts for the thousands of years of peace that gave our ancient Kemetic Ancestors the luxury to develop philosophy, ethics, poetry, and science. Each individual wanted to answer in the affirmative that on the day of vindication, the Day of Judgment, “my soul lifts itself up before my heart and is found to have been righteous on earth.” As in *The Book of Coming Forth by Day* (Karenga, 1990), one wanted to be able to say: “I have not knowingly spoken that which is not true, nor have I done anything with a false heart; I have not done evil against people; I have not mistreated my family and associates; I have not told lies in the court of law, the seat of truth. I have not associated with evil or worthless persons. I have not begun a day by demanding more than I was due. I have not cursed God. I have not taken milk from the mouth of children. I have not robbed. I have not been greedy. I have not gossiped. I have not been loud voiced. From the research data presented in this paper, one can see that the older Black women in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century had many of the values and beliefs found in *The Book of Coming Forth by Day*. Parents taught their children right behavior. Many of us were raised by these kinds of women today. It

is not too late for us to teach our grandchildren, and to train our educators on our belief system so they can train our children.

### What Our Ancestors Believed

Our Kemetic Ancestors also believed in the following:

1-Woman’s/man’s transformability—through learning directed toward attainment of wisdom—can be achieved so moral wisdom is drawn upon, such as when one is in the service of others. It is important to respect the human personality as an image of God and to see fellow human beings as equals. The perfectibility of human nature is an assumption that follows from the shared nature with God.

2-Human nature is divine and essentially good, as a result of the assumption of a shared nature with God. We can become like God (Ra), since we are from God.

3-Our soul comes from the creator and is symbolized as the vital breath of life. Therefore, human consciousness exists in some form after the body’s dissolution.

4-Resurrection of the Soul—We never know who is reappearing in the universe. Thus, there is a reverence of the past, reverence of Ancestors. We are ever evolving, ever becoming.

5-Man/Woman is not limited to one’s circumstance—i.e., environment, culture, race, gender, inheritance, and accidental events. Man/woman is continually created anew; and could overcome unfavorable conditions and fulfill one’s purpose or mission in life (Amen, 122). Life is an ever-evolving process toward Maat. We must strive to be better every day.

6-The universe is a unified spiritual totality. The spiritual cannot be separated from the material. We are body, mind and spirit. Africans believe in the natural sequence of cause and effect. Watch what you pray for, you may get it. Treat people the way you want to be treated. What goes around comes around.

7-The most important thing in life is to have self-knowledge, which leads to perfectibility. Human nature is good rather than evil. All things have the quality of being both positive and negative. Life is a struggle between good and evil. As one understands his/her culture, he/she understands self. We come prepared to be “uplifted.” We are unique and must work towards recognizing that unique gift that has been given to us by the Creator. When we know ourselves, we know the universe.

8-Time is composed of the seen and unseen. Time is fixed by events.

### Conclusion

Obenga (1995) tells us that Maat is the only medicine that will work to restore the modern African mind. To be neutral



about Maat is to be suicidal. It is to deny our Ancestors and their sacrifices for us. It was spirituality that kept them alive so that we might be born. It is because of them that we will live forever. W.E.B. Du Bois (1904) said we Black people have a spiritual joyousness. Further, Du Bois said, “Blacks are seldom unjust and have a greater abhorrence of injustice than any other people. They show no mercy to those guilty of the least act of injustice.” Diop (1978), in *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa*, tells us that “Black Africa is one of the lands of the world where man is poorest, but it is the only country in the world where destitution does not exist in spite of this poverty, thanks to the existence of a rightful solidarity.” Maat was at work. It is right behavior put in practice. In order words, we believed in Maat and practiced Maat. Our Ancestors revered God. They wanted to reunite with God and be judged righteous on earth. They had faith.

Without spirit, we are nothing. Spiritual truths contain the essence of all things. We call the Spirit to us—through ritual, through song, through the drum. Rituals help us receive, transmit and move energy (Spirit). Part of that energy is the energy of our Ancestors who connect us to the past and propel us towards the future—towards the yet to be born. They are “recycled souls.” Sobonfu Some (1997) says we must welcome home the Spirit. We practice ritual to open up our hearts and minds to other aspects of life and other realities (Richards, 1980). Rhkty Amen (1990) says ritual brings the Netcher (Divine Spoken Word) into unison with the individual and the community.

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