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 Afurakanu/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 Afurakanu/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 Afurakanu/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 trustory 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 Afuraka/Afuraitka (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-dooh’-rooh/oohn-dooh’-dooh or oohn-dooh’].

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-dooh’). The term nduru or ndu (oohn-dooh’) 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 oduryefo 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 asussum (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 oduryefo. The oduru aspect of the name means medicine. The term ye means to make, to do. Thus the oduryefo is one of the group of people (fo) who makes (ye) oduru (medicine). This is a traditional healer, similar to the odunsinfo. The name oduryefo 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 (bo) 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-dooh-rooh or oohn-dooh 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-dooh), hoodoo-making person.

The Akan term ndu (oohn-dooh) 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 oduruyeye 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 nkoom (spirit communication): clairvoyance, clairsentience, clairaudience, clairequilibrance, clairtimiance etc. The spiritual aspect of the medicine (oduru) making (ye) is why the oduruyeye 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)  
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 Afrakani/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans) were taken and transported to English-speaking colonies during the Mmusuo Kese (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 mistomered 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 odufo or the odu (ndu/oonh-doo) man, the hoodoo man or hoodoo woman, the one who practiced hoodoo (ndur, 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 Afrakani/Afuraitkaitnut (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 Afrakani/Afuraitkaitnut (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 Afrakani/Afuraitkaitnut (Africans) in America who were descendents 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 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 Afrakani/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 Nanason (Akan Religion). Because it was used as a weapon of warfare by our Nsamanfo (Ancestresses and Ancestors) here in America during the Mmusuo Kese (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 hispansics, 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-Afuraitkaitnit (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 spirit-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-Afuraitkaitnit (non-Africans) cannot enter our spirit-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-Afurakanu/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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