“How Legba Became Chief of the Gods”

Source: The tale is from the Dahomey people in Africa. Their country was formerly called Dahomey but is now known as Benin. The map below shows where Benin is located.

The Dahomey also called themselves the Fon. In Benin and Nigeria, Legba is viewed as young and virile, is often horned and phallic, and his shrine is usually located at the gate of the village in the countryside. (From “Papa Legba,” Wikipedia).

The figure of Legba was brought by slaves to the Americas and became one of the chief gods of vodun, popularly called voodoo.


1. Does the tale explain how Legba becomes chief of the gods? What steps does he take to become chief god?

2. The first part of the story involves a competition. Do you know any folktales or myths that feature a competition?

3. What is “knowledge” in this tale? What does knowledge consist of?

4. Legba seems like a tricky character. What kinds of tricks does he play? On whom?

5. How consistent are the details in the story? Is Mawu male or female?

6. What distinction is reinforced when the tale says Legba is forever a vodun but Awè is a man?

7. Why does the tale switch from Legba to Awè?

8. How is Death introduced into the world?

9. Why do you think the tale takes a twist to explain the origin of death?