The Birth of Eleggua

Who knows when? .... I was told it happened when the gods lived on Earth.

In an African village there was a couple named Okubere and Ananaki, this man Okubere, was rich and powerful, but luck was not with him. He had not been blessed with an heir. He was a king without children. As the years passed, and since his wife could not give him a son, she said to him one day, You are a rich and powerful king, but as you can see, I have not been able to bear you any children. I shall go to the home of my parents, this will allow you to bring in a new wife who will give you an heir to the throne.

Okubere told her there was no need to do that, because he loved her very much and did not want to have more than one wife. He continued saying to her to stay in the palace, and if it was the will of Olorun that they did not have children, he would accept it. Ananaki did not reply. She decided that night to go far away, so far that her husband could not find her. So, when the Moon was at its highest, she gathered her belongings and walked slowly out of the palace. She kept her back towards Nana buruku (the Moon) so she could not see where she was going.

She walked and walked until she was really tired. She arrived at a crossroads in a place she had never been before. There was a beautiful coconut palm tree, she sat under it to rest for a while… this was such a peaceful place... she could recover her strength and go on walking. She sat and rubbed her back against the tree. At that moment, a coconut fell to her feet; it was a big coconut, larger than usual which shone with a strange light. As she was thirsty, she opened it and drank abundantly from its fresh water. After a while, Ananaki fell asleep.

Ananaki, Ananaki, she heard a voice calling her. She looked around and saw it was the coconut tree who was calling her. Listen well, you have drunk the water from my fruit Obi. His water will make you bear children, more than one; but the first child you will consecrate to me. He will be beautiful and intelligent. If after three days of his birth you don't make an offering to me, I shall take him away from you.

Ananaki woke up. The dream had impressed her extremely; but she arose and decided to continue her journey. She couldn’t walk for long, the memory of her husband, the village people and the vivid dream gave her a strong urge to return to her village.

Okubere was sitting on a mat, crying. 10 days had passed since he lost his wife and no one had seen her or heard from her. 'They searched and searched in vain, Ananaki had disappeared. The king was in great sorrow and would not move from the mat where he was sitting, then he heard a great noise outside the house, he lifted his head, and saw his wife coming through the door. She had a strange glow in her eyes, they seemed to be brighter than ever. They embraced with tears of JOY coming down their cheeks. That night, there was a great rejoicing in the village because of the happy return of Ananaki, when the feast was over, both man and wife retired, Ananaki told her dream to Okubere, who agreed that if they had a child, they would bring an offering to the coconut tree.

Time passed, and to Okubere and Ananaki a child was born, they called him Eleggua. They were filled with so much happiness by this birth that neither one remembered the dream Ananaki bad, or the promise they had made. Eleggua grew handsome and playful. When he was old enough he was given a servant,\_ who ~oul? follow him everywhere. One day Eleggua went huntmg with his servant when suddenly they found themselves at a crossroads where they had never been. Eleggua stopped, and his servant saw him kneeling three times. The last time he kneeled, he picked something from the ground. An object had caught his attention. The servant was amazed that Eleggua would bend and pick up anything from the ground. He was so amazed because this was a proud and spoiled child who would not kneel for even the king, his father. This child would not do anything for himself least of all pick up anything from the floor. The servant got closer and could see this was a rather large coconut. The moment Eleggua took it in his hands, a strange light came out of it. The servant was surprised again, this time because the prince was showing fear, which was something he had never shown either before in his life. How could a coconut inspire respect in this spoiled young child?

Eleggua took the strange coconut to his house, against the servants advice who told the king and all the people in the village what had taken place at the crossroads. No one believed him, including Eleggua's parents who had completely forgotten Ananaki's dream. Eleggua played with the coconut for a while, and tiring of it threw it behind the palace door and left it there.

One day there was a feast at the royal palace to celebrate a good harvest and the admission of the prince Eleggua to the village secret society. Suddenly, the coconut that was behind the door began to fire rays of light in every direction. Everyone was horrified and ran out the palace. Three days later, Eleggua became ill and died.

During all the lime the vigil lasted, the coconut remained shining without anyone daring to get close to it. The coconut was feared, and at the same time inspired respect.

After the prince's death the people went through much hardship: there were no fish in the river, no fruit on the trees, nothing planted would grow, women would have children no more. It did not rain, the goats were thin and dying, there was no milk for the children and hardly any water to drink. The people were desperate, so they decided to consult the village oracle who told them they were being punished because they had abandoned the coconut left by Eleggua and the forgotten promise made by the king to the coconut tree. They went to where the coconut was and found it to be empty, eaten by small animals and insects. They consulted the oracle again who told them to replace the coconut with a river stone which would be Eleggua's spirit They gathered by the river and found a large stone which Ananaki and Okubere felt was inhabited by Eleggua. It was washed with twenty one different herbs and offerings of chickens and small goat was made, after, it was placed inside a day pot by the palace door. The oracle was consulted and it was in agreement that the proper sacrifices had been made and Eleggua was now inside the stone. They were told to use the coconut as an ally to Eleggua and to bring offerings every once in a while to the coconut tree where they could also find Eleggua 's spirit.

Once they complied with all that was requested of the Orisha, the village began to prosper again and many children were born to Ananaki as well as to the rest of the village women.

And this is what we still do today. This is why we say: iku tevi Osha Eleggua which means: the ghost of Eleggua gave birth to the Orisha. Without his spirit there is no Orisha. This is why Eleggua always should be made out of stone, and the coconut used for asking questions to Orisha.

This is the true story of how Eleggua was born. This is the first story to be learned when it is time to be vested with Orisha