

## A Bwiti Iboga Initiation Ritual

First off let me start by saying that my belief system is closest to that of the Buddhist and in fact I adhere somewhat to a Tibetan Buddhist way of perceiving things. Thus my experience in the jungles is coloured by this perspective and to try and describe things without referring to Buddhist conceptual models would be tying my own hands.

Profound experiences of insight have happened to me on a couple of occasions, experiences that left me with a harmonious and centred being, and the effects stayed with me for up to a year. These experiences were understandings of the essential emptiness that is our fundamental reality, the 'skylike' nature of mind. Some came through psilocybin and others through trichocereus cactus, but all were all conducted with the aid of a loving and benevolent teacher, without whom I would never have approached these states of being. Essentially these states allowed me to perceive that the fabric of our reality is our imagination, and thus with that understanding, anything, absolutely anything is possible in the universe (however, it is important that we realise that it is all a product of our imagination). This is the fundamental nature of exoreality - and endoreality. The intellectual, however, can never come close to the experiential as much as we try. Using words and concepts to describe the subtlety of the experience can be compared to using a ten pound hammer to forge butterfly wings - the wrong tools, clumsy and blunt.

Iboga functions in a subtly different way from these other plants. In small amounts it seems to somehow slow the metabolism down, more so the more you take. Your entire being becomes still and, through the stillness, you begin to see. You begin to be aware of what is going on around you, as your intellectual mind is stilled and the mechanisms that cloud your mind with random thought are all put on slow, or pause. Other senses start coming alive, as the five senses mix synergistically. This is the case up until you take the barely sublethal doses they give you in an initiation. Then you really start to see! Somehow the iboga manages to change your vibration, slow you down to such an extent that you become super-aware on the physical plane (exoreal) of events occurring at other dimensional vibrations (endorealities). Your body cools down, you seem no longer to even breathe and it would look to an outsider as if you were comatose. In fact, although your motor coordination is not functioning properly, your consciousness is now coming into its own.

Early on in the experience you are extremely ill, unpleasantly so. This is understood by them as the 'dying'. Once dead you experience the profundity of the plant. One experiences pretty much what death is like but on a smaller scale. This is a pretty difficult phase to talk about because no words come even close to describing the intensity. It is the essence of the Iboga experience. The Bwiti say that on this side the plant is called Iboga, but on the other side, "there", it is called 'conscience' (French), or 'awareness' in English. Iboga epitomises the concept of awareness. Through the stillness that Iboga allows you to enter, you find yourself understanding the concepts of equanimity. And through this majestic gift that is available to each and everyone of us, you realize that no matter how incredible the visions are, no matter how sacred and profound are the feelings we have in the company of such awesomely compassionate and loving beings as abound in the universe, we realize that there is only emptiness, and that nothing exists, and that EVERYTHING we are seeing and feeling are just products of the imagination, manufactured in the oneness of the universal mind. And again I come round to the idea of possibilities: with this understanding absolutely ANYTHING is possible and ABSOLUTE nothingness is possible too. The fundamental understanding of Rigpa, the nature of mind, allows us to understand that we don't exist. Once those poor souls caught in the paradigm of scientific thought realize how they have limited themselves by invoking scientific rules to try and understand phenomena that goes beyond

the parameters, of science they will have tools that will explain the nature of this new reality in terms that they are familiar with.

I highly recommend the initiation as there is no other way to experience the fullness of iboga but in that situation. These people have evolved in parallel with the plant, as has their ritual. The ritual manages to stimulate, through the music and chanting, all those aspects of the plants' effect on the mind that synergistically turbo-boost the mind into total awareness. It needs a specifically designed music and ritual to have that effect, and aspects of the iboga are potentised, catalysed and actualised by the music, aspects which would not emerge if the iboga was taken out of that context. That is not to say Iboga wouldn't work, just that it isn't quite the same.

A direct experiential comparison of Iboga and Ayahuasca is impossible: they are both teachers of the highest order. Only the rituals can be compared. A Bwiti ceremony is a week long procedure, and that is when rushed for Europeans. Two days cleansing (internal/external), imbibing and then one to two days other side, then three to more days needed for rest and recuperation. The process is understood as being first day dying, second day death, third day onwards rebirth. This is a SERIOUS plant. With ayahuasca there are often people in Peru, and other places, who conduct less than sacred rituals - I know I experienced that once. You would never find that here, the people regard this as the ultimate sacrament, when discussing it, it is never 'Iboga' it is always 'l'iboga sacre' (sacred iboga) or 'l'boue sacre' (sacred drink) . The ritual is not conducted by a single shaman. The entire village takes part, each individual having a specific role to play, instrument to play, part to sing, and they know the ceremony intimately. Having an entire village dedicate two solid days or more to helping you clearly see through the fabric of this reality in the most profound manner by singing, chanting, dancing is an incomparable experience that even now moves me deeply. There is such love emanating from these people. And it isn't your normal African percussive trance inducing music ceremony - the chief instrument is the eight string harp of David, the drums are brought out for only a couple minutes in the whole ceremony, there are so many instruments played, all of them having spiritual significance. I think the drums are used as a last resort, used for those who have 'blockages' as they referred to them. For those who need a real atom-smasher. The music is of a light and angelic nature as opposed to a heavy trancelike beat. Trying to use words to describe the effect of the music is impossible. It was too beautiful for thoughts, let alone words. The fact that it is a combined effort by the whole village, and that you are the centre of focus, you are the 'Banzie', the neophyte, initiate, makes this a very powerful experience indeed. I won't go into detail on the actual experience - it is the method that the experience is served to you that is so impressive, profound and overwhelming.

To contact the author please email [ethnobotany@iafrica.com](mailto:ethnobotany@iafrica.com)

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