

Ọdun-Ifa

(Ifa Festival)

Dr. Abosede Emanuel

Odun Ifa

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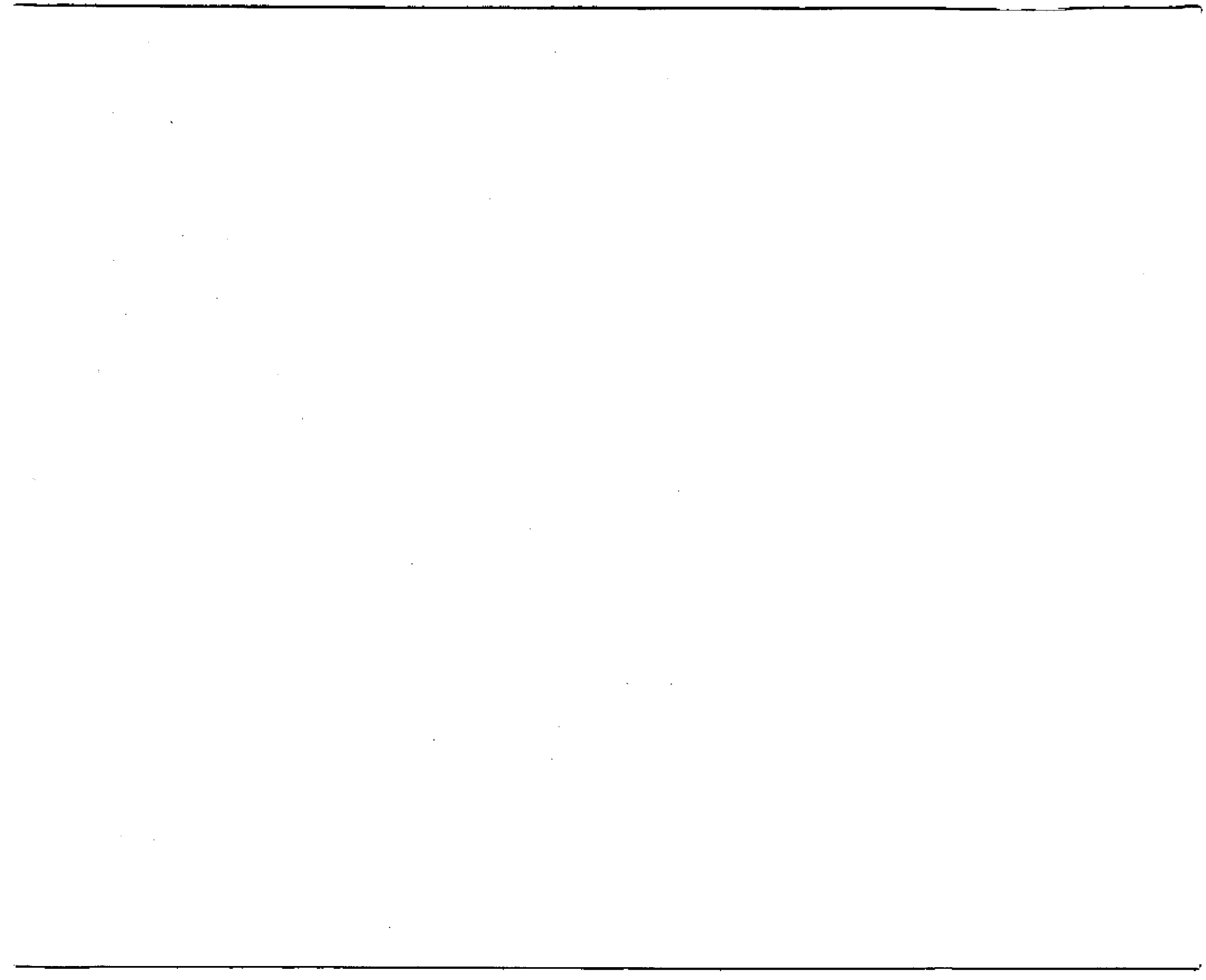
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Part I

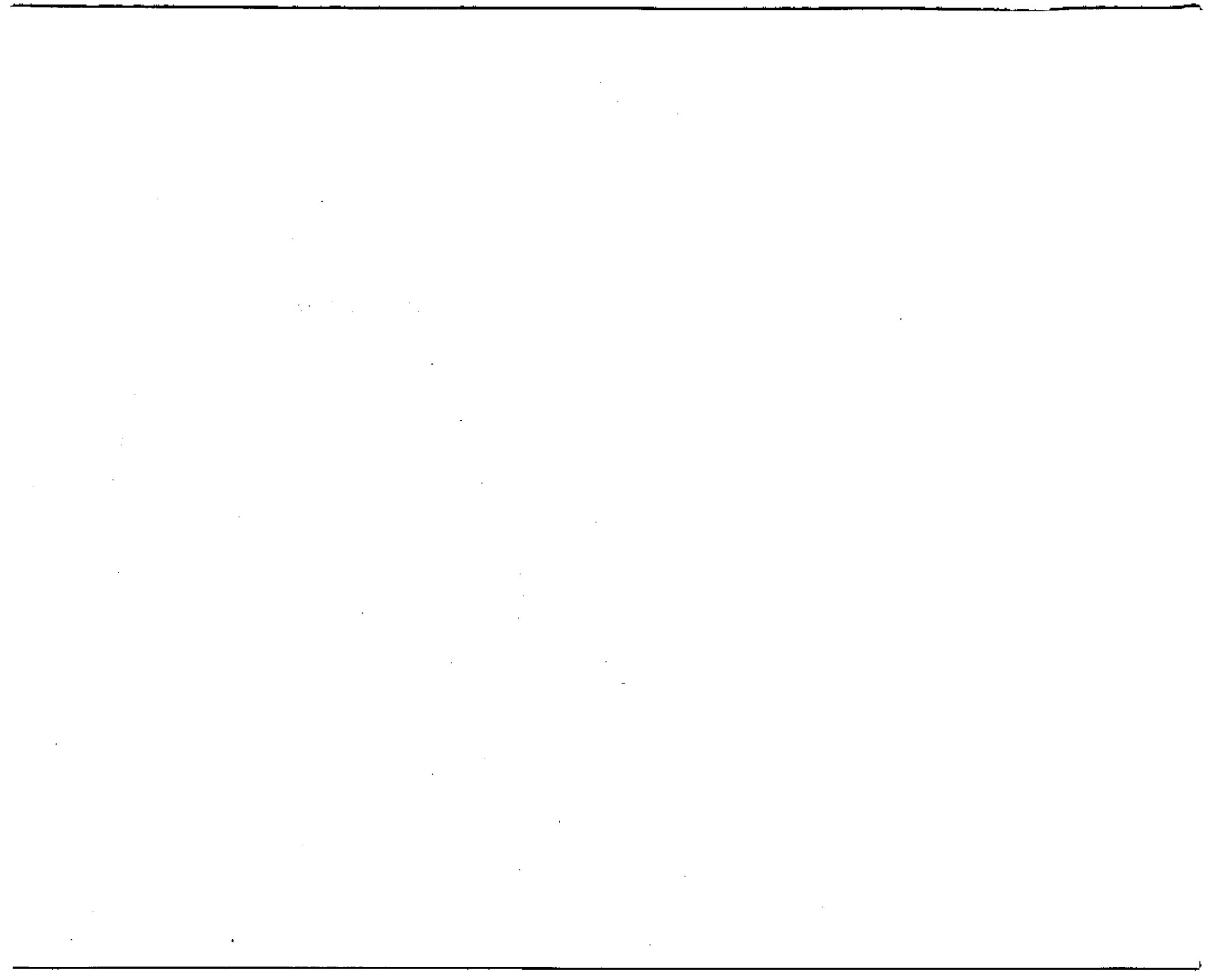
Preliminaries



Part I

Preliminaries

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Part IA

Permission

Axẹ

Ni ọjọ ikẹtala oxu ikonkọnla ọdun 1987, Oloogbe Oloye Akano Fasina Agboola, Araba anọ ti ilu Eko, fi axẹ si itẹjade iwe yi ki gbogbo aye, atawo-atogberi le mọ wipe eto Odun-Ifa wa ni gbangba-lai si ni ikọkọ. Bakonno, Oloye Fadairo Ajagbe Fadara (oun nan ti di Oloogbe niisiyi) wa ni ijoko, O si jẹri wipe Ifa fun araare fowọ si itẹjade iwe nan.

Ni Ilu Eko
Ni Oxu 'Kẹjọ Ọdun 1996.

Translation

Permission

On 13th November 1987 Chief Akano Fasina Agboola late Araba of Lagos, gave consent to the publication of this book so that the whole world, adepts as well as cowans, might know that the rites and ceremonies of Ifa Festival are not secret or hidden. Present also was Chief Fadairo Ajagbe Fadara (now himself deceased) who confirmed Ifa's support for the work's publication.

Lagos
August 1996

Part IB

Author's Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the invaluable managerial contribution of the undermentioned persons towards the successful publication of this book:

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and to:

Mrs. Sade Omo-Eboh, Chief Executive,
Mrs Nike Omo-Nubi her Editorial Assistant,
Mr. O. H. Mazi, Editorial manager

all, of the West African Book Publishers Limited.

My special thanks go to the Computer Simulations team, at *The Digital Press*, whose technical expertise and enviable devotion to detail transformed my manuscript into the published book.

Lagos,
October 1998.

Part IC

Preface

Rather than write a learned treatise on Ifa, I have elected to let the orthodox practitioners speak to the reader, directly as it were, without any apology for beliefs which some may condemn as pagan. My own contribution has been to edit and translate into English the Yoruba tape recordings of the rites and the ceremonies comprising the **Annual Ifa Festival** with as little personal intrusion as objectivity demanded.

I place before the reader the result of thirty years' work which afforded me greater satisfaction the longer it lasted but which, ironically, saddens me now that it is completed. Of course no final work can ever be written on Ifa precisely because of the encyclopedic compass of the subject, extending as it does, backward in time to two thousand years or more, forward to eternity and taking its roots from the lowest substratum of the human psyche. So in spite of the many excellent studies already done on Ifa I crave the readers indulgence to add yet another work — my excuse being that it differs from previous ones in that it deals with a less familiar aspect. I hope that when similar in-depth studies of the cults of other Yoruba Orixa like Ogun, Exu, Oxun and Obatala become available a composite picture of Yoruba religion will at last emerge.

I owe some apology to readers literate in Yoruba who may find the Yoruba orthography of my text unusual. Reference to Part IIA page 258 will clear the point.

It is said of Confucius that in his old age he expressed deep regret for the little time remaining for him to pursue further researches on the "I Ching," the

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ancient Chinese divination system equivalent to the Yoruba Ifa. My work here presented has enlightened me on the reason for this sentiment: It is that the intellectual delight afforded by the research far outweighs the labour involved.

Why should a western trained orthodox medical doctor of christian background, such as I am, undertake Ifa studies that engrossed him for thirty years? For answer the puzzled reader is invited to ponder very seriously the deeper message of these three quotes:

(1) From Herodotus, 5th cent. B.C.

"If anyone, no matter who, were given the opportunity of choosing, from among all the nations in the world the set of beliefs which he thought best, he would inevitably, after careful consideration of their relative merits, choose that of his own country. Everyone without exception believes his own native custom and the religion he was brought up in, to be the best, and that being so, it is unlikely anyone but a madman would mock at such things. There is abundant evidence that this is the universal feeling about the ancient custom of one's country."

(2) From C.G. Jung (1958).

"Religious rites and their stock of symbols must have developed in much the same way from beginnings now lost to us and not just in one place only but in many places at once and also in different periods. They have grown spontaneously out of the basic conditions of human nature which are never invented but are everywhere the same . . . no matter how crass the outward differences the similarity or equivalence of meaning should not be overlooked. . ."

(3) From Joseph Campbell (1962).

"Looking back today over the twelve delightful years that I spent on this richly rewarding enterprise, I find that its main result for me has been its confirmation of a thought I have long and faithfully entertained: of the unity of the race of man, not only in biology but also in its spiritual history which has everywhere unfolded in a manner of a single symphony . . . "

References.

1. Herodotus (5th cent. B.C) *The Histories* Book III page 190 translated by Aubrey De Selincourt.
2. C.G. Jung (1958) *Transformation Symbolism in the Mass. Collected Works Vol.II* pages 223, 246 translated by R.F.C Hill.
3. Joseph Campbell (1962) *The Masks of God* author's foreword.

Abosede Emanuel

Lagos

August 1996.

Part ID

Dedication.

I dedicate this book to the memory of two unique men: my late friend Chief Oladipo Olufunmi Jibowu and The Late Venerable Archdeacon Jonathan Olumide Lucas, pioneer scholar in Yoruba studies.

Chief Olufunmi Jibowu

Late Chief Olufunmi Jibowu — Funmi for short and affectionately called *Ologbo Ijeun* after his famous grandfather's cognomen - was born in Lagos on 21st January 1934 and died in the same city on 25th December 1987.

After secondary education at the Baptist Academy, the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) Grammar School and King's College, Lagos, he read Law at London University where he obtained the LL.B and LL.M degrees in impressive succession. He was called to the English Bar as a member of the Middle Temple in 1962 and returned the same year to work in the chambers of Chief R.A. Fani-Kayode (recently deceased) and Chief Sobo Sowemimo, Senior Advocates of Nigeria. Two Years later he established his own practice and very quickly acquired a reputation for brilliant advocacy. In the legal world of hard competition and fat cheques Funmi's consideration for his clients' plight over-rode any acquisitive drive for wealth in Nigeria's increasingly callous society.

His life style was simple and entirely free of conceit and although exhibiting some partiality for the pleasures of the bottle and the bed it was patently characterised by civilised charm.

A kind and provident father to his six children, a faithful friend to the few



Chief Oladipo Olufunmi Jibowu

men he trusted, a generous benefactor to many causes, Funmi lived happily and his death was regretted by all who knew him.

I first met Funmi in 1963 through our mutual friend Chief Sobo Sowemimo. Somehow I never got to meeting Funmi in London during the exciting left-wing political student days of the early fifties. I heard a lot about him though, for it was around this period that Sobo converted Funmi from political radicalism to marxism.

Incidentally Femi Okunnu (now S.A.N), Tayo Akpata and Dr Otegbeye were other distinguished converts. I believe that Chief G.O.K Ajayi, Dr Seni Sikuade, M.O.K Williams and Prof. Ade Elebute, in spite of their warm friendship for us, never fell into the network. So much for the reminiscent diversion.

My association with Funmi deepened into close friendship when, again under Sobo's inspiration, *The Committee of Ten* was formed late in 1965. The Committee took its name from the numerical composition of like-minded intellectuals that included Sobo Sowemimo, Chief Omotosho (now deceased) Ademola Thomas, Dr Soji Smith, Femi Okunnu, Alade Idris-Animasau, Tayo Apata, Funmi Jibowu, Dr Dayo Doherty and Dr Bose Emanuel.

I think it necessary to digress at this point to answer the charge, first made by my friend Alao Aka-Bashorun, at the very inception of our Committee, that we were military apologists. A month after the appearance of the maiden issue of our Committee's journal, "*The African Statesman*," the first Nigerian military coup, led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, exploded on the turbulent political scene on 16th January 1966. Our Committee considered the coup a welcome opportunity to influence the course of political events towards the creation of a free and democratic society as a necessary initial step to a socialist polity. That Tafawa Balewa's government was irretrievably corrupt and hopelessly inept and so deserved to go was not in serious dispute. However the selective pattern of the killings and the subsequent administrative and

political changes initiated by the military hierarchy within a few months of the coup revealed covert ethnic ambitions pointing to Ibo hegemony. Our Committee condemned the trend most forthrightly. Then came the July 1966 counter coup which brought General Yakubu Gowon into power. An objective and exhaustively debated appraisal of the emerging situation convinced our Committee that support for a federal government under General Gowon was politically preferable to Ojukwu's thinly veiled ethnic rebellion. Events that supervened about the end of the civil war indicated clearly to the Committee that latter day military rule had degenerated into corruption and adventurism portending serious threats to progress and democracy for the country. Our Committee took an uncompromising stand against continued military rule particularly as subsequent revolving coups unmistakably indicated a Hausa/Fulani hegemony no less reprehensible than Ojukwu's.

Throughout these events Funmi's role as our journal editor was principled: opposition to ethnic hegemony be it Ibo, Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba or what not; demand for accountability in office, eradication of corruption, economic progress, democracy and human rights. Somehow he never got detained as he would most certainly have been in today's Nigeria.

It may seem strange that a conservative and christian parentage did not preclude Funmi's conversion to radical marxism. Once challenged on this point by an Anglican priest Funmi firmly defended his convictions maintaining that Marx had been much misunderstood or perhaps deliberately misinterpreted on the score of his famous dictum:

"Religion is the opium of the people."

Funmi argued that, correctly understood, the dictum sought to expose the exploitation of religion for political and economic advantage by the ruling class. Marx respected, even if he did not share, the religious sentiments of the truly devout; what he condemned was exploitation disguised as piety. Another dictum, though one not often quoted, represents, better than any

other, Marx's philosophical attitude:

"Philosophers have so far interpreted the world in several ways;
the point however is to change it."

Funmi died before he could change Nigeria yet his Marxist faith abided till the end. Without doubt the dissipation of Lenin's legacy by Gorbachev, Yeltsin and the soviet free-market economists would have pained him bitterly. It would not have shaken his belief in the possibility of a better world through socialism.

Funmi's interest in Ifa is more difficult to rationalise. The interest began to develop soon after he accompanied me to the Ifa Festival of August 1966 on the invitation of Chief Adeyemi Adesilu, High priest of Ijo Orunmila Ato. The following week we attended a similar festival at Chief Akano Fasina Agboola's residence, 56 Odunfa Street Ebute Meta. These made a tremendous impact on us and determined us to make further researches. In the event our attendance at the yearly festivals became regular. We were given full cooperation by the Ifa priests to tape record the proceedings, our plan being to publish the transcribed Yoruba text alongside an English translation. However as the years went by Funmi's health declined; yet, his interest remained steadfast.

Why the interest?

Epega¹¹ classifies into three groups, those interested in Ifa:

- (1) Professionals (Ifa priests and diviners - Babalawo);
- (2) Ifa Devotees (Awon ti won nsin Ifa);
- (3) Philosophers (Awon ti won fe ko ogbon)

Footnote ¹¹: Epega, D.O (No date) : "Ifa Amona Awon Babalawo."

I believe that Chief Olufunmi Jibowu belonged to the class of philosophers. In all certainty the same philosophical quest into marxism led him also into Ifa. If readers of this book approach its contents with the exemplary quest for wisdom exhibited by Chief Jibowu, my labour in compiling it would not have been wasted.

The Ven. Rev. Dr Jonathan Olumide Lucas.

I first became interested in the origin and culture of the Yoruba on reading Dr Lucas's book, *The Religion of the Yorubas*, soon after its publication in 1948. I must admit that at that adolescent stage my faculties were hardly well equipped to cope with most of the linguistic and comparative ethnological data therein exhibited. On re-reading the book nearly ten years later I recognised its pioneering contribution to Yoruba studies. When I came to meet Dr Lucas personally through the good offices of my late friend, Chief Oladipo Olufunmi Jibowu, the subject of the first part of this dedicatory chapter, my admiration surpassed my expectation.

Prominent among some of these admired qualities of Dr Lucas's were his devotion to scholarship, his love of rare books and, perhaps above all, his readiness to discuss his favourite theory of the Ancient Egyptian origin of the Yoruba people, without dogmatism or intolerance of views contrary to his own.

A propos his reverence for books, here is an illustrative episode: I asked Dr Lucas one day if he had a copy of Bishop James Johnson's *"Yoruba Heathenism."* Smiling with polite refusal he replied: "Yes, I do have a copy. Unfortunately you cannot borrow it to read at home. I have lost so many rare

books to forgetful borrowers. Bishop Johnson's book is rare - very rare. I'm sure there cannot be more than ten of us old men with an extant copy today. No, You can't take my copy home with you, but I have a solution for you. Come over to my library and read the book for as long as you care each day, return another day and read on till you have got to the last page. Here, not anywhere else"

The Late Venerable Archdeacon Jonathan Olumide Lucas was born on 27th August 1897 in Lagos where he received his basic education at the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) Grammar School and King's College Lagos. Proceeding to Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone, he took, in 1920 the Bachelor of Arts Degree (Classics) of Durham University and obtained in the following year the Diploma in Theology and the Licentiate of the College of Preceptors.

Recalled home from his lecturer's post at Fourah Bay he took up appointment at his Alma Mater, C.M.S Grammar School, first as tutor then as Acting Principal for a total period of fourteen years during which he inspired his students with his own enthusiasm for the pursuit of knowledge. His concern for the educationally disadvantaged, particularly girls, moved him to promote the founding and running of six new schools in Lagos. His concern for the advancement and dignity of the teaching profession was no less ardent. In 1925 he founded the Lagos Union of Teachers. Not satisfied with this, in 1931, he and The Late Revd. Ransome-Kuti, another great Nigerian educationist, inaugurated the Nigerian Union of Teachers, which happily still flourishes till this day. For several years he served with distinction as President of old Grammarians and President of old Boys Association of King's College, Lagos.

Dr Lucas was ordained a priest of the Anglican Church in 1924 and apart from his strictly priestly duties in the Lagos Diocese he served at various times as secretary of the synod, Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Lagos, Chairman of the Board of Advisers to the Anglican Province of West Africa,



The Venerable Archdeacon Dr. Jonathan Olumide Lucas
B.D. (London), M.A., D.D. (Dunelm), D.Litt. (Ibadan) 1971 *Honoris Causa*.
Picture above taken in 1942 when he obtained the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the
University of Newcastle.

to mention a few of his ecclesiastical appointments. When he retired in 1962 after meritorious years as Vicar of St Paul's Breadfruit Church an appreciative hierarchy honoured him with the titles of Emeritus Archdeacon of Lagos and Diocesan Historian.

Powerful preacher, gifted church organist and choir-master, pioneer of indigenous African music for Christian use, Dr. Lucas still found enough time to devote to the study of Yoruba traditional religion. He himself told me how his field research on the subject, necessitating personal relations with traditional priests and Ifa diviners, raised many orthodox Anglican eyebrows but that this left him completely undeterred because his commitment to scientific methodology was no less firmly held than his Christian convictions.

In 1934 he had already obtained the Bachelor of Divinity diploma (with honours) from London University so that when his doctoral thesis was presented in 1942 its acclamation by the same university was instant. His thesis, "The Religion of the Yorubas," published as a book in 1948 was to occasion much controversy in academic circles much later mainly because of Dr Lucas's assertion on linguistic grounds etc that the Yoruba people originated from Ancient Egypt. Undaunted by adverse criticism, Dr Lucas pressed on with other publications (most of them at his own personal expense) such as:

- (1) History of St Paul's (Breadfruit) Church, Lagos (1949);
- (2) The Yoruba Language - Its Structure and Relationship to other Languages (1962);
- (3) The Anglican Church in Lagos;
- (4) Religions in West Africa and Ancient Egypt (1970);
- (5) Orisa (1976) - An "African Statesman" Essay published during the late Chief Jibowu's tenure as Editor.

In an age sadly characterised by selfish pursuits and tepid anticolonialism, Dr Lucas's engagement in social and political issues was remarkable. As National

Vice-President of the National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (N.C.N.C), Dr. Lucas though refraining from acerbic party politics nevertheless contributed very significantly to the struggle for independence from British rule. His progressive ideas embraced unity, non ethnicity and democracy - values now prostituted in the on-going political crisis in Nigeria.

After independence from British colonial rule, Dr Lucas's unstinted service on the Antiquities Commission and the Federal Government Labour Advisory Board won him the respect of his colleagues no less than the confidence of workers. His humanitarian commitment to the welfare of prisoners and the rehabilitation of ex-prisoners was well attested by his activities in the Nigerian Discharged Prisoners Association of which he was the president till his death in 1976.

Dr Lucas was predeceased by his wife Rebecca Ibronke (daughter of late Bishop Oluwole) and survived by three children, chips of a distinguished block and distinguished persons in their own callings: Mrs Omobola Obiogun, Prof. Adetokunbo Lucas, and Mrs Olugbo Hollist^[7].

Long before Dr. Lucas wrote, diverse theories about the origin of the Yoruba people of South-Western Nigeria had been propounded. For instance the German anthropologist, Leo Froebenius^[1], believed he had discovered Plato's lost *Atlantis* in Ancient Ife, cradle of Yoruba civilisation; Dr Samuel Johnson^[2], father of Yoruba history mentions — only to dismiss — the theory of Arabian (Meccan) origin and concludes that:

"It might probably then be shown that the ancestors of the Yorubas hailing from upper Egypt were either Coptic Christians or at any rate that they had some knowledge of Christianity."

Footnote *: Grateful acknowledgement is due to Mrs Olugbo Hollist for the kind provision of the material that formed the substance of this biographical note on her revered father.

Other writers had suggested Palestine or Mesopotamia as likely migratory centres.

Dr Lucas^[3] sets out his own views as follows:

"whilst it is doubtful whether the view of an Asiatic origin is correct there can be no doubt that the Yorubas were in Africa at a very early date. A chain of evidence leads to the conclusion that they must have settled for many years in that part of the continent known as Ancient Egypt. The facts leading to the conclusion may be grouped under the following headings:

- A. Similarity or identity of Language;
- B. Similarity or identity of Religious Beliefs;
- C. Similarity or identity of Religious Ideas and Practices;
- D. Survival of customs and of names of persons, places, objects etc."

By an irony of critical scholarship, Dr Lucas who rejected the theory of Mesopotamian origin of the Yoruba as "lacking in data supplied by scientific research" has been condemned for the same reason by other writers.

Dr Adetugbo^[4] writes disparagingly:

"... Lucas's work can at best be classified as folk etymology."

Shinnie's judgement^[5] is severe, even patronising:

"... The whole speculation is fanciful and shows an ignorance of linguistics."

Despite the graceless criticism, Dr Lucas's Ancient Egyptian Theory of Yoruba Origin dies hard. Revisiting the subject in his Luggard Lectures, Dr Saburi Biobaku, renowned Yoruba scholar and historian concluded that the Yoruba did in fact migrate from Ancient Egypt howbeit in waves beginning from 7th century A.D.^[6] Not surprisingly Shinnie rejects this view although this time with less condescension. More cautiously Prof. Aderibigbe, Yoruba academic historian suspends judgement as follows:

"the theory of Egyptian origin remains a hypothesis unproven in the light of our present knowledge and perhaps . . . unprovable because of the time-scale involved"^[8].

Did the Yoruba people migrate from elsewhere and, if so, from what provenance or have they always lived in their present home in south-west Nigeria? Yoruba traditional account as contained in the Ifa corpus dates the people's origin from the creation of Ifẹ by divine fiat. The gods descended from heaven, created earth out of watery chaos whereupon mankind proliferated to the four corners of the world. No mention of migration from anywhere at all. This myth, cognate with other world creation myths like the genesis account, has been objectively appraised by English historian R. C. Law^[9]

Strange as it may seem, the traditional Yoruba account seems to receive unexpected confirmation, at least in essentials if not in detail, from recent discoveries reported in the prestigious scientific journal, *Nature*^[9].

Commenting on the publication, "*Le Figaro*"^[10] wrote:

"It is practically certain now that humanity was born on the African continent. A mandible at least 3 million years old excavated in Chad by Michel Brunet, a researcher at the University of Poitiers contributes again a new important element to the geographical extension of the ancestors of modern man."

Elaborating, "*The New York Herald Tribune*" noted:

"Scientists now generally accept the theory that the earliest humanlike creatures evolved in Africa. But there has been less agreement about when their descendants began to migrate elsewhere.

"At least two recent findings suggest that the large-brained species known as *Homo Erectus* migrated out of Africa just under 2 million years ago . . . *Homo Erectus* immediately preceded today's humans - *Homo Sapiens* - on the evolutionary family tree. A jaw found in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia indicates that this ancestor left Africa 1.6 million to 1.8 million years ago . . .

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The discovery in *Longgupo* or "Dragon Bone Cave" suggests that primitive humans migrated from Africa to sub-tropical Asia at least 1.9 million years ago"

How does all this relate to Dr Lucas's theory of Yoruba migration from Ancient Egypt?

Looking at the theory differently it is plausible to argue that Dr Lucas's observed similarities between the Yoruba and Ancient Egyptians in fact indicated a common heritage of pre-historic Africans who evolved from early man (in the region of Chad as the journal *Nature* asserts or perhaps in Upper Egypt following Dr. Lucas). While the proto-Egyptian emigrants took this common heritage northwards as far as the Mediterranean, the future Yoruba nation migrating southwards brought the heritage to the Atlantic. On this point Shinnie writes^[12]:

"It must be made clear though that in many cases there is no certainty that in these common elements we may not be seeing Africa's legacy to Egypt as much as Egypt's legacy to Africa."

Willet stresses the same point^[13]:

"This tendency has caused many characteristics of African culture, especially the institution of divine kingship to be traced back to Ancient Egypt. However in our ignorance of dates of features of African culture it is not difficult to argue the opposite case that a great deal of Egyptian culture had its origin in Africa south of the Sahara."

Other authorities are not so hesitant in accepting the African heritage of Ancient Egypt.

The following quotes from *Les Guides Bleus*^[14], a French authoritative guide book on Egypt, merit attention.

"Relying as much on anthropological and ethnographic features as on linguistic peculiarities, it is nowadays admitted that the Egyptian people are essentially African"

in origin albeit modified and enriched by diverse additions principally Semitic" (page 46).

"... formerly, in pre-historic times, it seems that the same civilisation flourished along the whole course of the Nile. But already by the beginning of Egyptian unification (4th millennium B.C) differences became apparent between Egypt proper and the country south of the Sahara" (page 644).

"Archaeologists of the last century have discovered the origin and development of Ancient Egyptian civilisation in the Sudan" (page 685).

"The prevailing hypothesis now holds that the Ancient Egyptian language was formed from an African substratum to which immigrants added (long before the invention of writing) Semitic or Hamitic elements. In this view, it would seem that an entirely original language, benefiting from the most diverse accretions, developed rapidly and independently" (page 73)

If tenable, Dr Lucas's theory, as here revised, necessitates a reconsideration of the migration dates proposed by Dr Lucas and that proposed by Prof. Saburi Biobaku. Archaeological evidence has dated the earliest human skeleton found in Yoruba land (*Iwo-Eleru* near Akure) to between the 8th and 10th millennium B.C. It is thus tempting to antedate the first migratory wave of the Yoruba from Upper Egypt (or Chad) southward into present-day Nigeria much earlier than the 7th to 10th centuries A.D proposed by Prof. Saburi Biobaku — and to date the latest one (the "Oduduwa Era") to the span of years, 500 B.C. to 500 A.D. This hypothesis rests on two facts: first the rapid conquest of the land by the southward invasion has been credited to the possession of iron weaponry. Iron came into general use in Ancient Egypt by about 650 B.C. and had reached Meroe by 500 B.C from where it travelled further south between 500 B.C and 300 B.C. Secondly the foundation of "Oduduwa City," Ife, is given by Willet^[15] as between 560 A.D and 800 A.D. It is suggested that both dates are too late. Willet himself gives radio-carbon dates for *Orun Oba Ado*, the excavated burial site of the remains of Benin Kings, to A.D 560 ± 130 (ie between 430 A.D and 690 A.D). This means that Ife was probably founded by about 400 A.D. This also requires a revision of

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the usually assigned date of 14th - 15th century A.D for the establishment of the Benin dynasty by Oranyan, Oduduwa's grand son. It stands to reason that the remains of Benin Kings could hardly be inhumed at *Orun Oba Ado* prior to the dynasty's existence.

Who was Oduduwa?

I remember attending a public lecture on this subject by Dr Lucas sometime in 1949 or 1950 under the auspices of *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* (Party of Oduduwa's Descendants) founded by late Chief Obafemi Awolowo a year or two previously. In his erudite treatment, Dr Lucas portrayed Oduduwa as a historical person, a hero who, migrating with his people from Upper Egypt conquered southwest Nigeria and founded the city of Ife from where the Yoruba nation branched out into the principal tribes including Qyo, Ijesha, Egba, Ijebu, Qwo, Benin (Edo) etc.

However, considering the time-span of a millennium (500 B.C. to 500 A.D.) covering the exploits of Oduduwa as recounted in the Ifa myths and other legends it is more realistic to regard Oduduwa as a "Corporate Personality" rather than as one individual historical person.

Anderson^{15(a)}, writing of Abraham and the Hebrew Patriarchs defines *Corporate Personality* as a concept in which, "... the life of the community is conceived of and described in vividly individual terms, and on the other hand, a representative can embody the life of a community in what he is, does or experiences¹⁶."

Dr Kathleen Kenyon writes on the same theme¹⁷:

"It is certain that one cannot build up a chronology on the spans of years attributed to the [Hebrew] Patriarchs or regard it as factual that Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran and a hundred when Isaac was born or that

Isaac was 60 when Joseph was born and that Jacob was 130 when he went into Egypt for the evidence from the skeletons in the Jericho tombs shows that expectation of life at this period was short. Many individuals seem to have died before they were thirty-five and few seemed to have reached the age of fifty."

The debate on Yoruba origins will continue — thanks to Dr Lucas's pioneering role in raising it to academic levels and even though his work has earned him more negative criticism than due appreciation Dr Lucas, were he alive today, would welcome the controversy with his usual scholarly detachment. Until finer and more exact tools of research become available every new hypothesis will begin with an acknowledgement of Dr Lucas's work.

Already Modupe Oduyoye^[18], Dr Lucas's former student, in a balanced objective study, while criticising Dr Lucas for "not leaving Egyptian alone" in every proof advanced for his theory, nevertheless upholds the substance of the theory. Oduyoye even goes further by postulating a cognate relation between Yoruba language and Hebrew, Semitic and Mesopotamian languages in addition to Ancient Egyptian.

Williams^[19] acknowledges a Mediterranean influence as well in these words:

" . . . Orisa Sango whose thunder mythology and its associated iconography in the Janus-headed thunder-axe and in the Ram might well in turn be of Nilotic and Mediterranean antiquity"^[19].

Had I not read Dr Lucas at an impressionable age, and had I not ever met Dr Lucas personally, perhaps this work would never have been undertaken. Who knows? Good reason, I think, for this dedication.

A comparative examination of the pictures that now follow provides food for serious thought regarding the plausibility of the Yoruba/Ancient Egyptian cultural nexus.

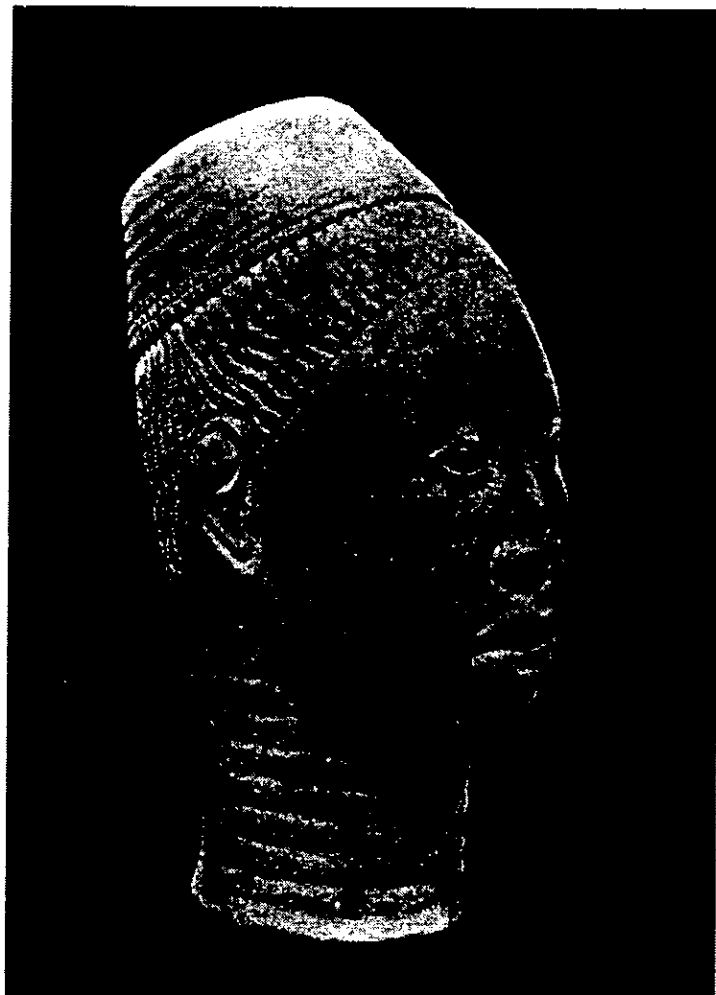


Plate 1A:
An Ife terra-cotta head of a royal personage

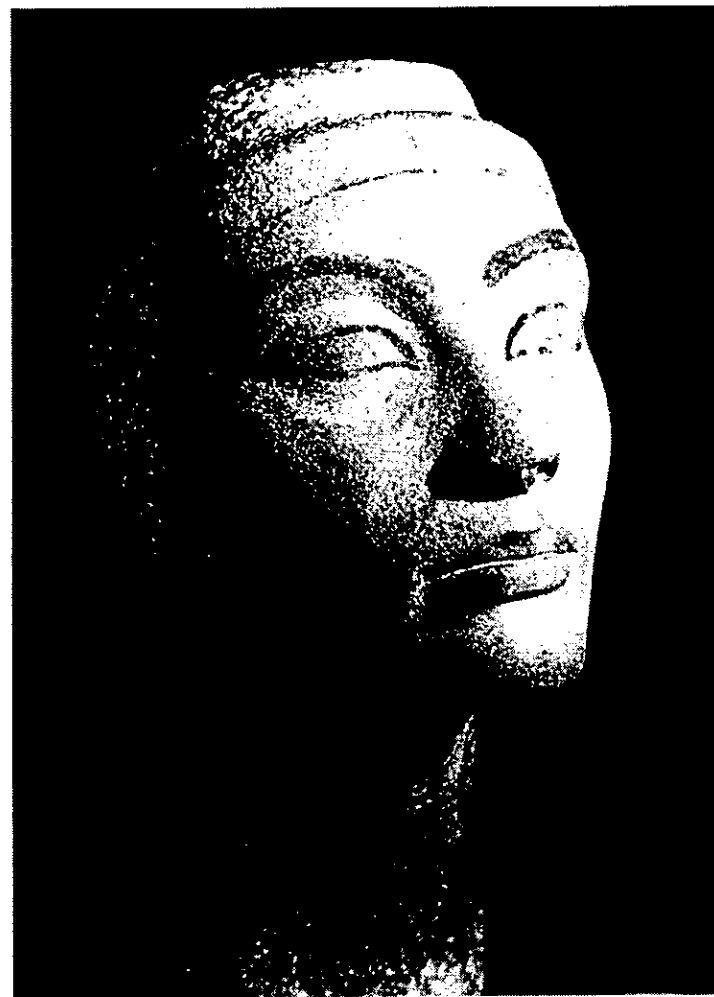


Plate 1B:
Nefertiti – Egyptian queen of Pharaoh Akhenaton

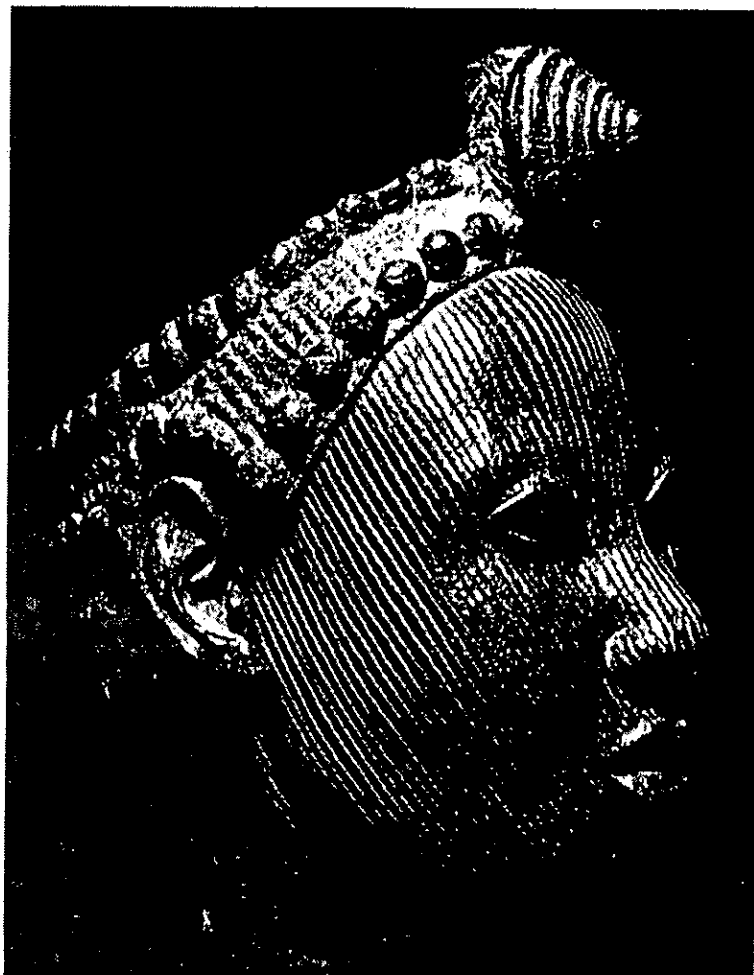


Plate 2A:

Terra-cotta head of an Ife King (Qṛni)

Plates II A&B: Note the Ureus – symbol of divine royalty common to both.



Plate 2B:
Head of an Egyptian Pharaoh – Thutmose III

Plates II A&B: Note the Ureus – symbol of divine royalty common to both.



Plate 3A:
Ifẹ royal pair.

Plates 3A& 3B: Note the motif of indivisible royalty common to both.



Plate 3B:
Ancient Egyptian royal pair
(Akhenaten and Nefertiti).



Plate 4:
Ancient Egyptian royal pair.
Note the upper nudity and black African features of the Pharaoh.

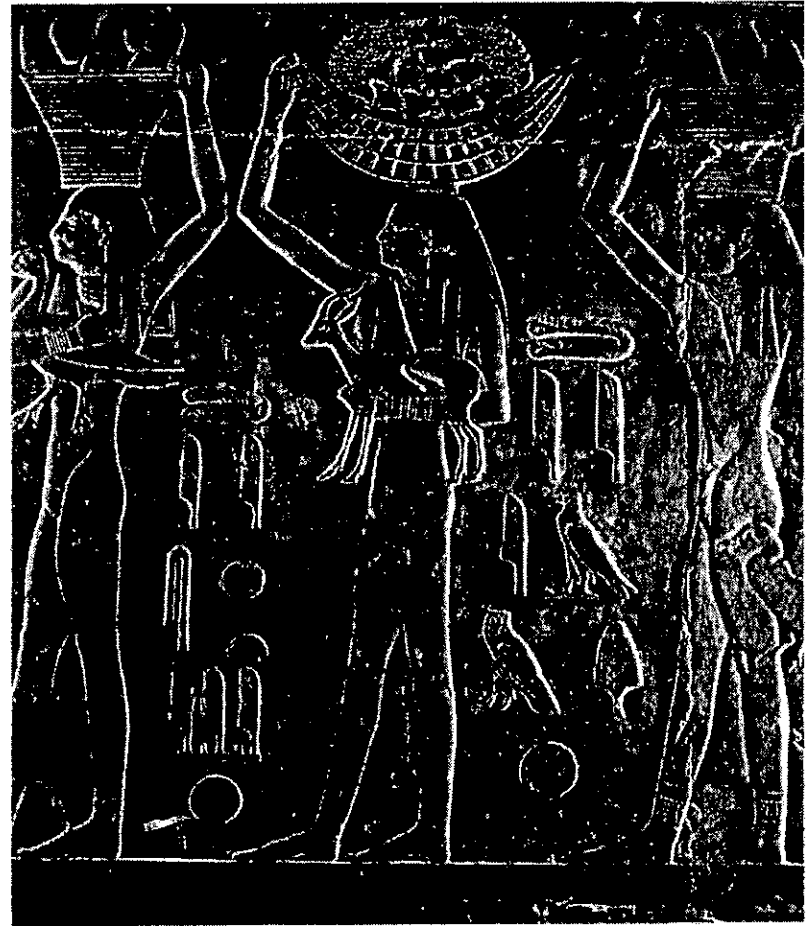


Plate 5A

Plates 5A & 5B: Ancient Egyptian Women returning from market.
Note the head-loads and the live animals in the hands - features still common
today in Yoruba society.



Plate 5B

lates 6A, 6B & 6C:

Ancient Egyptian domestic scenes. Note the crouched position for grinding corn on stone mortar the pounding implements wooden mortar and pestle and the waist-line beads – features still common in Yoruba society today.



Plate 6A



Plate 6B



Plate 6C

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Part IE

Note on: Ijo Orunmila Ato (The Liturgical Church of Orunmila)

Without a mention, however brief, of the important role played by the Ijo Orunmila Ato in the compilation of this book any dedication of it would be incomplete.

A chance encounter in July 1966 opened access for me to the high priest (*Oluwo*) of the church, Chief Adeyemi Adesilu. It so happened that the nursing sister in the hospital where I worked as an obstetrician, Mrs Ayodele, requested my professional attention for her niece Mrs Nike Campos, who was expecting a baby at the time. It turned out that Mrs Campos was the daughter of Chief Adesilu and he learning of my interest in Yoruba religion, readily invited me to that year's Ifa festival holden at his residence 27 Akinwunmi street, Yaba.

Accompanied by my late friend, Chief Olufunmi Jibowu, I promptly attended the festival. It was a novel and most exciting experience for us both but particularly rewarding as well in that we met at Chief Adesilu's house, two erudite Ifa priests, Chief Akano Fasina Agboola and Chief Fadairo Ajagbe Fadara, who were later to succeed, one after the other, Chief Adesilu as High priest after his demise. Thus began my long association with Ijo Orunmila Ato (Liturgical Church of Orunmila) and from that day was conceived the idea of writing this book.

Ijo Orunmila Ato was itself an offshoot of the first Yoruba Church of this

genre, Ijo Orunmila Adulawo (Black Church of Orunmila) which was founded way back in 1933 by Chief Olorunfunmi Osiga, to propagate indigenous Yoruba religion as expounded in Ifa. In spite of his partly moslem and partly Ifa parentage Chief Osiga became a christian during his school days at Poman Catholic Institutions. In mature age however, his inquisitive mind perceived the identity of diverse human aspirations towards God — the Numinosum, in Rudolf Otto's apt phrase — as sufficient validation of the Yoruba religion. He then set about creating an order of service based on Ifa teachings even though its liturgical structure with ordered prayers, hymns, homilies and readings from sacred texts owed something to christian practice. So began the history of **Ijo Orunmila Adulawo** a church whose concept and practice differ quite fundamentally from the syncretisms of christian dogma and Yoruba tradition then emerging in Nigeria or even those of the Yoruba diaspora of Brasil and Cuba. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that Chief Osiga's cultural revolt against religious colonialism ante-dated the political one by a clear decade.

Regrettably I must confess that I never met Chief Osiga whose photograph appears on page 644 in his full regalia as high priest. He died in 1943 leaving his son Chief L.M. Osiga to continue the missionary work initiated in 1933. I was privileged to enjoy good working relations with the latter from our first meeting in 1973 right up to his demise in 1992. Appendix A is the facsimile of a letter written to me by Chief Osiga (fils).

Appendix B is a copy of a research paper by Chief Osiga (père) on Yoruba orthography and numeration based on Ifa characters .

To return to Chief Adeyemi Adesilu, High Priest of **Ijo Orunmila Ato**. Born in 1905 he was brought up a Roman Catholic but under Chief Osiga's missionary influence he became a convert to Yoruba traditional religion. He worked with his mentor as a priest in the **Ijo Orunmila Adulawo** for some years until he founded his own sect in association with eleven other members

Otto, Rudolf (1926): *The Idea of the Holy* translated by John W. Harvey

of the parent organisation. This was in 1939. Howbeit Chief Adesilu's sect, **Ijo Orunmila Ato** (also known as **Indigenes' Faith of Africa**) never completely severed its connection with Chief Osiga.

Chief Adesilu was a sincere believer in traditional Yoruba religion and practiced it without bigotry or charlatanism. For all the years I knew him, right up to his death in 1971, he gave me invaluable assistance, advice and guidance in my researches towards the compilation of this book.

Chief Akano Fasina Agboola who succeeded Chief Adesilu as High Priest was born in Oxogbo on 1st October 1909. His Father was a highly respected Ifa Priest because of his encyclopedic knowledge of the craft and his exemplary character. His mother belonged to the equally famous Ifa family in Oxogbo-Fatoki family. Blessed with such antecedents it was little surprise that young Fasina Agboola made such outstanding progress in Ifa studies as to qualify him for an independent practice as a Babalawo at the age of 19 years. Yet he elected to remain in the household of his reputed teacher Chief Ogunjobi whom he accompanied to Lagos from Oxogbo in 1939. On Chief Ogunjobi's demise Chief Fasina Agboola became head of the Ifa household. His reputation for honest practice and professional competence very quickly earned him a large clientele and several chieftaincy titles. In fact by 1984 Chief Agboola was appointed the Araba of Lagos by H.R.H Oba Adeyinka Oyekan II thus achieving the apex of his professional honours. He died on 14th September 1991 at the ripe age of 82 years, just two years after the publication of his *opus magnus* titled *Ojulowo Oriki Ifa*. His photograph appears on page 283.

Throughout the twenty-five years or so during which I related closely with Chief Agboola I never once heard him speak an angry word or mention any person in a derogatory or unkind manner. His piety and scrupulously ethical conduct were demonstrated practically in his relations with people and his reactions to situations. His prodigious intellect was never advertised in display nor prostituted for mercenary ends. Without his encouragement and guidance

on many obscure Ifa technicalities I doubt whether I would have had the temerity to undertake this work and complete it. I am happy that his progeny includes Chief Awodiran Agboola a fully qualified Ifa Priest-Diviner who acted as his father's secretary for years and who seems destined to follow the great man's footsteps in character as well as in reputation.

In 1991, Chief Fadairo Ajagbe Fadara succeeded Chief Agboola as High Priest of **Ijo Orunmila Ato** and became in addition, head of his Ifa house-hold, but alas, he died two years later at the age of 75.

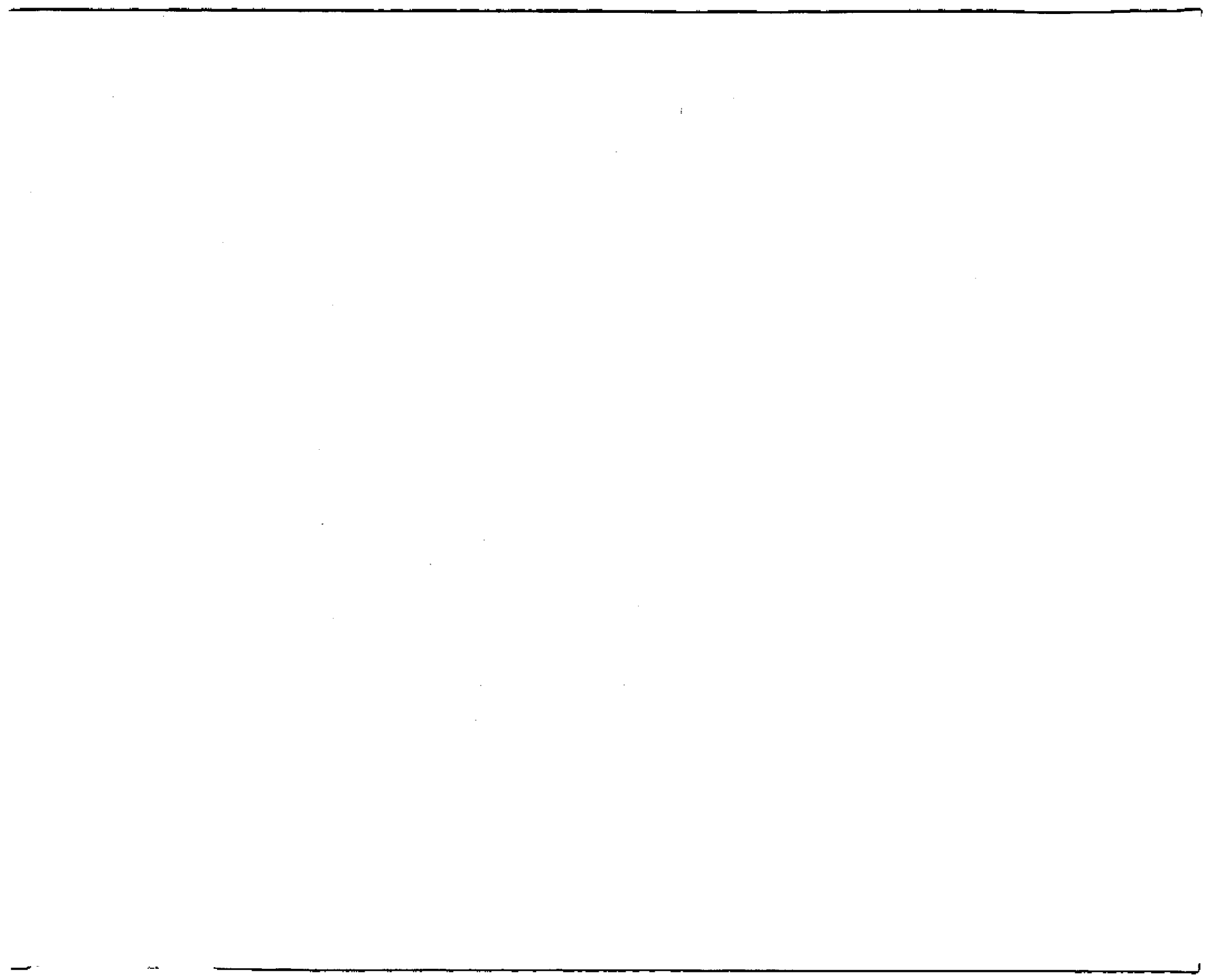
As is usually the custom in Ifa profession, Chief Fadara's training commenced at a very early age leading to the full practitioner-qualification in a short time. Strangely enough, Chief Fadara abandoned Ifa practice electing instead to pursue other callings such as farming, trading and cloth-weaving. Repeated failures finally convinced him of the futility of disregarding Ifa's prediction to his parents at his birth that his only certain road to success lay in Ifa practice. To divinatory practice then he returned and at last prosperity began to shine on him. Leaving his home-town, Ede, he came to Lagos where he attached himself as an Ifa priest to Chief Agboola's house-hold. There, he eventually became the Chief of Staff and worked with unstinted devotion right up to Chief Agboola's demise

He held the prestigious titles of Awixẹ of Èdẹ and Awixẹ of Lagos but his simplicity was such that he preferred the cognomen Baba Ede (Master from Ede) by which he was called by all and sundry

His death was a keenly felt personal loss to me as I had hoped to publish this book in his life-time having failed to do so in Chief Adesilu's and Chief Agboola's time. Be that as it may, the debt of gratitude owed these three great men is repaid, I believe by the completion of the work begun under their auspices thirty years ago.

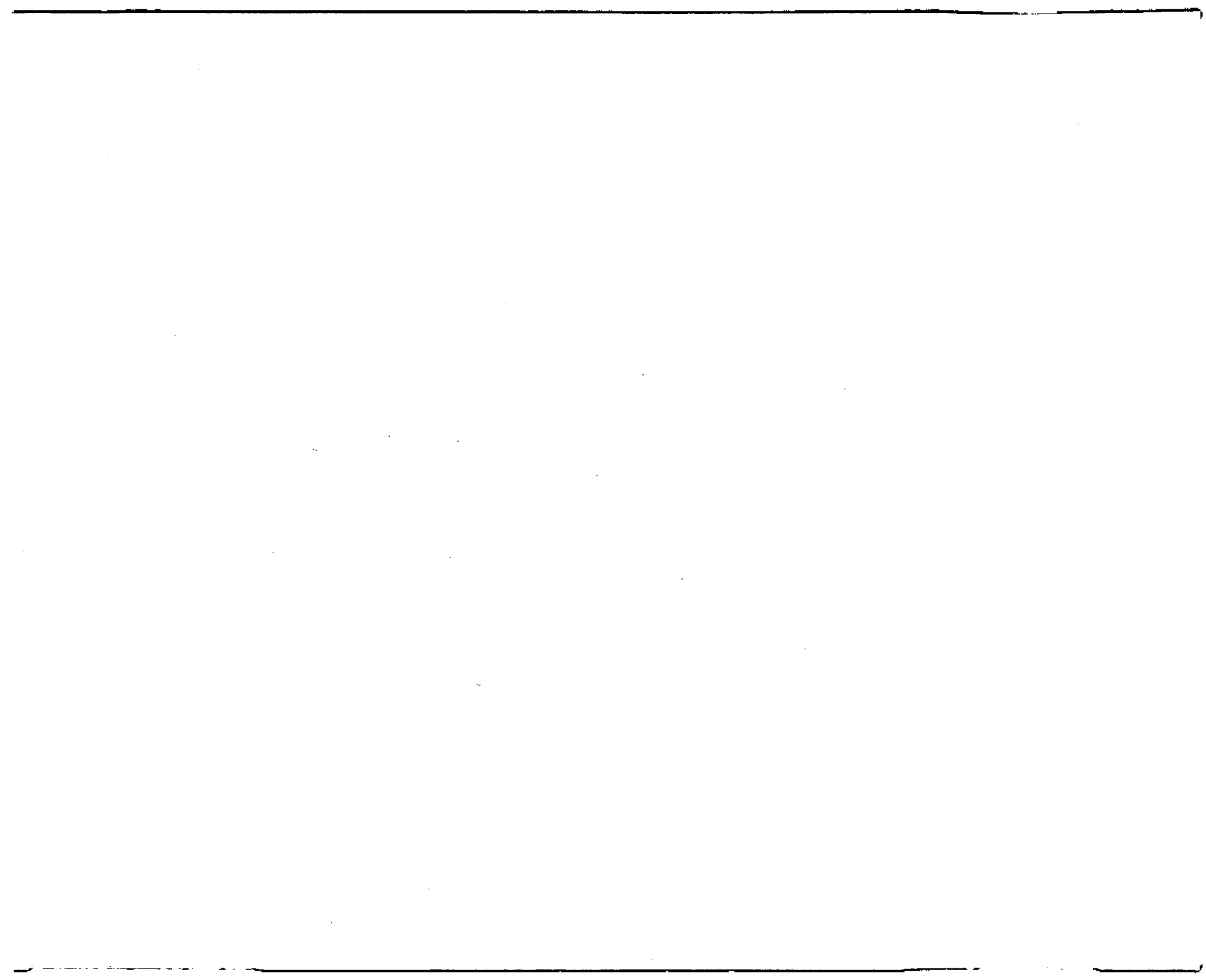
Chief Fadara's photograph appears on page 283.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to Mrs F.A Adewale-Abayomi (Now Mrs Adewale-Somade) for providing me with the material for the history of Ijo Orunmila Adulawo and Ijo Orunmila Ato.



Part II

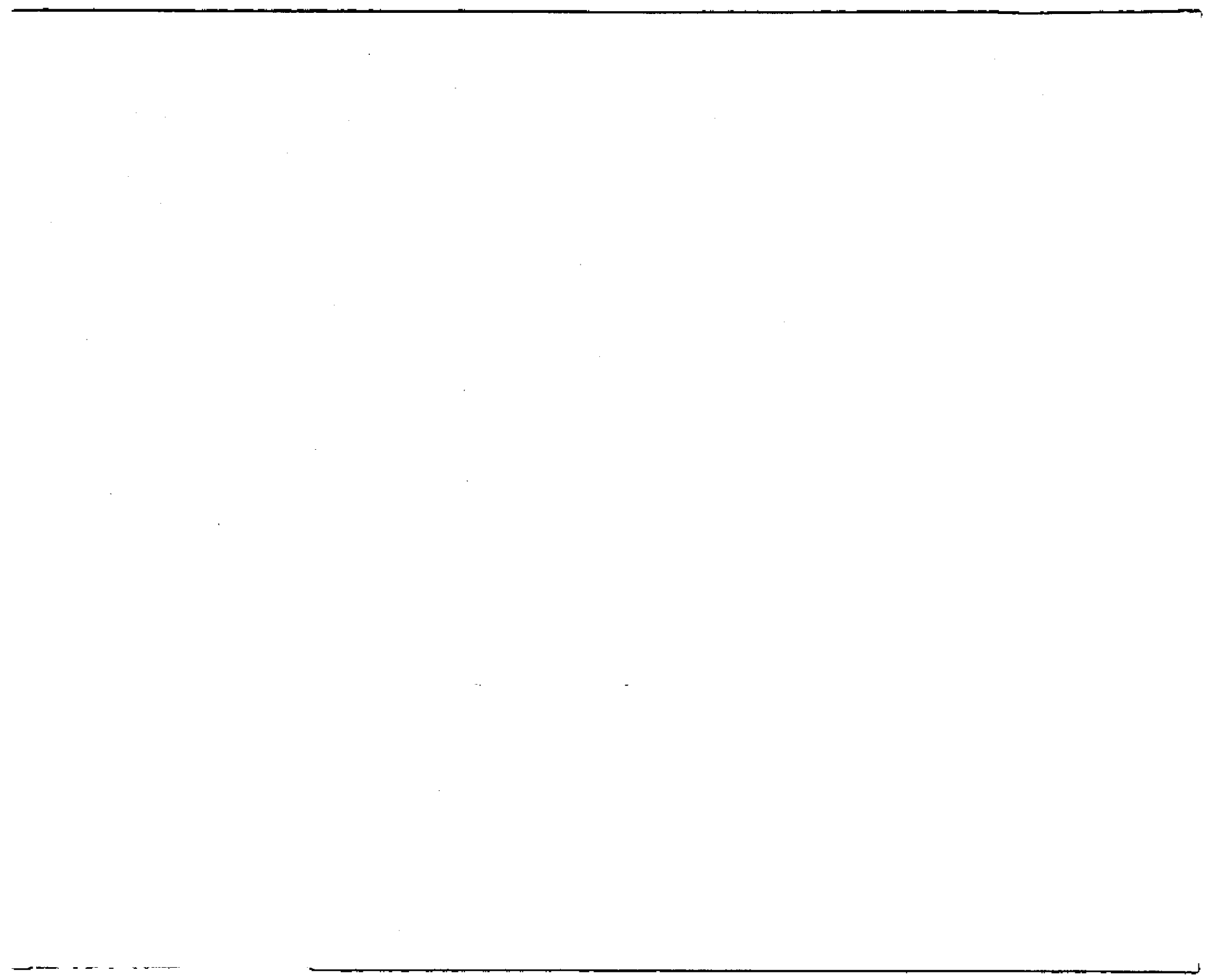
Introduction



Part II

Introduction

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B: The Language of Ifa	103
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D: Translation and Orthography	233



Part IIA

What is Ifa?

Influenced by Islam and Christianity, the present day Yoruba is inclined to be dismissive of Ifa as quackery or idolatry. In this he betrays an ignorance sharply contrasting with the scholarly attitude of The Rev. Samuel Johnson, The Rev. E. Lijadu, Bishop James Johnson, Dr. J.O. Lucas and Prof E. Bolaji Idowu who flourished a generation before ours. It is of interest to note that these pioneers of Yoruba Studies were ordained priests of the Anglican Communion who, yet, freed their minds of their christian prejudice sufficiently well to undertake an examination of the merits of their native culture.

Happily the good work initiated by them has generated commendable enthusiasm in distinguished Yoruba academicians such as Dr. Wande Abimbola, Prof. Ayo Bamgbose, Prof. Olabimtan, Afolabi Yemitan, Prof G. Afolabi Ojo and Dr. J.O. Awolalu. Yoruba culture has been researched with no less enthusiasm and scholarship by European and American sociologists and ethno-historians. Thanks to all these scholars, *Yoruba Studies* have attained academic recognition in Nigerian as well as foreign universities as a discipline of equal merit with Classical and Modern Studies.

My aim in this book is to supplement, in a humble way, the general studies done so far with an in-depth and analytical presentation of one aspect of Yoruba culture - *Ifa*. The late respected scholar of *Ifa*, the American anthropologist, Dr. William Bascom, wrote in his monumental work on the subject as follows:

"Ifa is a system of divination based on sixteen basic and 240 derivative figures (ODU)

Odun Ifa

obtained either by the manipulation of sixteen palm-nuts (**Ikin**) or by the toss of a chain (**Opele**) of eight half-seed shells."¹

Authoritative, objective and comprehensive, Dr. Bascom's work is probably the last word on Ifa as a divinatory system.

My book is an attempt to present the worship of Ifa which, in Dr Bascom's words,

"entails ceremonies, sacrifices, tabus, paraphernalia, drums, songs, praises, initiation and other ritual elements comparable to those of other Yoruba cults."

In doing this, it will be necessary to discuss the **origin** and **practice** of Ifa and to evaluate it as a total **philosophy**.

1. Origin

There are two main views to consider: *the traditional* and *the analytical*.

1 ~ 1: The Traditional View

Mixing myth, legend and popular etymology, the traditional view asserts categorically that *Ifa* is God's all-embracing message to mankind.

1 ~ 1.1 The Traditional View: Myth.

In the established myth, this all-embracing message was brought to mankind by the prophet Orunmila who, starting from ancient Ife City, spread God's word throughout "the world".

Chief S. O. Atanda, Ifa priest and Asiwaju Awo of Lagos was insistent on this divine mission of Ifa:

"Ifa ni qroq enu Olodumare" ²

TRANSLATION:

"Ifa is the word that proceeds from the mouth of the Omnipotent."

The Late Chief Fagbemi Ajanaku, Araba (Chief Ifa priest) of Lagos confirms this assertion:

"Ki ni wa nje Ifa papa? Ifa ni akojopq qroq Olqrun to fi ran Qrunmila si awon eda aye." ^[3]

TRANSLATION:

"And what is Ifa itself? Ifa is the totality of God's message to mankind on earth sent through Qrunmila."

Dr. Wande Abimbola, university don and Ifa researcher has summarised the traditional view most succinctly thus:

In Yoruba mythology Ifa is believed to be one of the major divinities who descended from Orun (Heaven) into the city of Ife by means of an iron chain. Another version of the story of the occupation of Ife by the divinities stated that they came overland under the leadership of Ogun who, with his cutlass, cut a path through which they made their way to Ife. . .

Each of the divinities who landed at Ife carried a specific assignment from Olodumare, the Yoruba high God. Ifa was charged with the duty of molding the young earth by use of his profound wisdom and understanding. Ogun the iron-divinity was charged with using his extraordinary physical power, bravery and prowess to tackle all problems of heroism and warfare. . . [Orunmila's] premier position among the divinities derived from his vast knowledge and wisdom. He is believed to have been present when the universe was created by Olodumare. This knowledge therefore transcended all time (whether past, present or future) and space. It is also believed by the Yoruba that Ifa was a witness to every man's choice of destiny. Therefore it is necessary to go to him always to find out the true path of one's destiny.

This traditional myth is recounted by C.O. Ibie in his interesting though controversial book, *Ifism* ^[3] and given in essentials by Chief Fagbemi Ajanaku

in his valuable contribution in the book *Iwe Asa Ibilẹ Yoruba* ^{16]} edited by O. Olajubu.

So much for the myth. Now for the legend.

1 ~ 1.2: The Traditional View: Legend

The legend recounts the life and works of Orunmila, Orunmila being considered as a human being. Thus, Orunmila was reputed to have lived in the city of Ife and later to have preached his message over the rest of Yorubaland and beyond.

"At this period of the sojourn of Ifa at Ife,"
writes Dr Abimbola,

"he lived at a place known as *Oke Igeti*. That is why one of his praise names is *Okunrin kukuru Oke Igeti* (the small man of *Igeti* Hill). After a long stay at Ife, Ifa moved to Ado. Ifa is believed to have spent a greater part of his life on earth at Ado."

Ifa priests (*Babalawo*) of today claim a direct Apostolic succession to Orunmila. Below is Dr Abimbola's version of the legend in support of the claim:

"Ifa had eight children and a number of disciples all of whom he taught the secrets of divination. They all grew up to be important people and they later dispersed to various parts of Yorubaland. Ifa finally returned to heaven in annoyance due to an insult given him by one of his children. Shortly after this the earth was thrown into great confusion. Famine and pestilence raged throughout the earth . . .

"After some time the people of the earth decided to seek remedy for the hardship by sending the eight children of Orunmila to heaven to go and beg their father to return to earth. The children went accordingly. When they reached heaven they found Ifa at the foot of the much-climbed palm-tree which branched this way and that until it had sixteen hut-like branches.

"They begged Ifa to come back to earth but he refused. Ifa however gave them sixteen palm-nuts and said

'All the good things you want to have on earth
That is the person you are to consult'.

"When the children of Ifa returned to earth they started to use the sixteen palmnuts for divination. The sixteen palmnuts were the symbol of the authority of Ifa to his children to continue making divination, in his name. The sixteen palmnuts, known as *Ikin*, have been used as an important part of the Ifa divination from that time till today. The absence of Ifa (ie *Orunmila*) from the earth no longer mattered since his children and disciples could communicate with him through *Ikin* and other instruments of divination." [7]

The accounts given above constitute the core of the traditional view of the origin of Ifa and can be found, with minor variations, in the works of

- E. M. Lijadu (1908): *Ifa, Orunmila*;
- D. O. Epega (undated): *Ifa Amqna awqon Baba wa*;
- D. O. Epega (1971): *Yoruba Religion*;
- P. O. Ogunbowale (1962): *Awqon Irunmale Ilẹ Yoruba*;
- C. O. Ibie (1986): *Ifism*.

What about the teacher of the system, the prophet of Ifa, *Orunmila*, who most certainly was a man of flesh and blood?

"Some traditions claim," writes Awolalu, "that *Orunmila* rather than being a primordial divinity was born a human being. His parentage was uncertain and hence the father's name is variously given as *Jakuta* or *OROKO* or *Agbonmiregun* and his mother's name as *Alajeru*. The traditional home of the parents according to this myth is *Ifẹ* from where he wandered all over 'the world' teaching men wisdom." [8]

I know of no authority in Ifa to validate Awolalu's assertion about *Orunmila*'s parentage. *Prima facie* the information given by the myth is incorrect: *Jakuta* is the ancient Yoruba **Thunder-Divinity** which is related to the **Xongq** cult and not *Ifa*. '*Agbonmiregun*', as will be pointed out later in this chapter, is an alternative name for *Orunmila* himself.

What emerges from these stories is that we can safely accept that Ifa verses narrating the missionary work of *Orunmila* on earth give us glimpses of the

man of flesh and blood — whereas verses which describe *Orunmila* as a primordial divinity that descended on earth belong to myth. But this division is never clear cut. Necessarily so, since any composite portrait of a hero-divinity must contain both elements as clearly illustrated in *Orunmila's Oriki* (praise names) given below:

Orunmila, Eleri-Ipin
Ibikeji Olodumare
Aje-ju-Oogun,
Oluwa mi a-to-bajaye
Qrq a-biku jigbo
Ogege a-gbaye-gun
Odudu ti ndu ori emere
A-tun-ori-ti-ko-sunwoq-se
A-mo-iku
Qlqwa-ayere
Agiri-ile-il'qgbq,
Oluwa mi a-mo-ti-mo-tan
A ko mq q tan, ko xe
A ba mq q tan, iba xe

TRANSLATION: (MODIFIED FROM EPEGA'S)

Orunmila, witness to man's choice of destiny
Vice-gerent of the Great Omnipotent!

Thou art far more efficacious than magic,
Thou art the immensity that averts the day of death.

My Lord, saviour most powerful,
Mysterious power that challenged and defeated death,
To Thee salutation is due first thing each morning.
Thou art the Equilibrium that adjusts Evil in favour of Good.

Compassionate Lord that changes man's fortune from bad to good,
 To know thee is to become immortal.
 Lord whose Kingdom has no end,
 Perfection of wisdom,
 Infinity of knowledge.

Imperfect devotion to Thee leads to futility,
 Lord, if only we could know Thee aright,
 How smooth our life would run!

Readers who have good Yoruba will find Lijadu's masterly commentaries on Orunmila's *oriki* a most rewarding exercise.

Chief Fagbemi Ajanaku's Yoruba text from which I make the translation below is also very much to the point.

And who was Orunmila himself?

Orunmila was one of God's prophets, probably his most beloved. He was God's special emissary to all creatures on earth not to mankind only because Orunmila understood the language of beasts, birds, fish and man.

Orunmila was unique among the prophets whom the Omnipotent endowed with words of power. And it is as a result of Orunmila's teachings that the Orixa the divinities we worship today become gods whom all mankind hold in evergreen reverence.

All the divinities were once human beings on earth but because they followed the ways of God they became special people endowed with the patronage of the Omnipotent. That is why men ask the Omnipotent for favours in their names as intercessors.

There is an Ifa verse ^[9] from *Eji Ogbe*

°	°
°	°
°	°
°	°

 which proves unmistakably that

the Orixa, the divinities are really deified human beings. Here it is:

Ọrunmila says: It is human beings we deify as **Orixá**

I reply: True indeed it is my Lord, Agbọnmiregun, **Orixá** are deified human beings.

Ọrunmila says: **Orixá-Ala**, you must know, was once a human being himself.

When he brought blessings to the world men began to worship him as god.

Even to this day men revere his memory and supplicate the Omnipotent in his name.

Ogun was once a human being.
Xogo was once a human being.

And so those who attain wisdom on earth,
They are those indeed whom we worship as gods.

The Orixá are deified human beings.

1 ~ 1.3: The Traditional View: Popular Etymology

The Traditional view is the theological view but it also promotes a popular interpretation of the meaning of *Ifa* derived from analysis of words. It is pertinent here to note the alternative names for *Ifa* such as **Ọrunmila**, **Ẹla**, **Agbọnmiregun**, **Edu**, **Bara-Petu**, **Ọbarixá**, **Ara Ado**, **Ara Ọwọ**, **Ara Ibini**, **Baba-L'ẹxin-Ọye**, **Opitan Olufe**. Lucas' inclusion of *Olodumare* as an alternative name for *Ifa* is patently incorrect.^[10] No Bābalawo (*Ifa* priest) would call *Ifa* by **The Omnipotent's** name, *Olodumare*.

Idowu would have the name *Ẹla* signify another divinity distinct from **Ọrunmila**.^[11] As against Idowu's view several *Ifa* verses assert that *Ifa*, *Ọrunmila* and *Ẹla* are interchangeable names.

Of the names for *Ifa* listed above some are easily explained and require no convoluted etymology: *Ela* means 'Saviour' or 'Redeemer'; *Edu* means 'The Black one' in reference to *Ifa*'s symbol, the **black palm-nuts**; *Bara-Petu* means 'Lord of Ipetu', a city reputed to have been founded by *Ifa*. *Obarixa* is 'King among divinities'. *Ara Ado*, *Ara-Owo*, *Ara-Ibini* refer to *Orunmila*'s sojourn in cities of these names; *Baba-L'exin-oye* means Grand-knight of the city of *Oye* (in Ekiti-land) a term of royalty; *Opitan Olufe* means 'Historian of, or from, Ife City'.

It remains to explain the names *Ifa*, *Orunmila* and *Agbonmiregun*. This is where *in lieu* of certain knowledge on this matter, popular etymology has been over-worked.

We should note of course that *Ifa* is used as the name of the system or of the divinity while *Orunmila* is used uniquely as the name of the divinity, never for the system.

Lijadu derives the name *Ifa* from this sentence:

"Eniti o ba fani l'aye ti o si fani l'orun ki a maa pe e ni Ifa";

"He who saves man on earth and saves him in heaven too should be called *Ifa*."

The meaning is forced out of the sentence by a clever though unconvincing word-play on the Yoruba verb "*fa*" meaning "*to draw out*." Interpreted as "*to draw out of danger*," "*Ifa*" is then taken as "*to save*"; hence *Ifa* means "*saviour*". Otunba Awopeju, going to the *Old Testament*, derives "*Ifa*" from the Hebrew "*Ephod*," "*Epha*," the divining paraphernalia of the Hebrew High Priest. Skinner, in a well researched but tendentious book asserts that:

In fact, dust, in Arabic *Afar*, is probably the origin of the name of the God *Ifa*.

The argument against this mistaken view is presented later in this chapter.

Some authors analyse the name *Orunmila* as "*Orun lo mo atila*" (only Heaven knows who will be saved). This is a rather contrived analysis that explains

nothing. Equally fanciful is Chief Fagbemi Ajanaku's derivation "Agbonmiregun" from the sentence: "Agbon yi ma ni iregun o!" (How this palmtree enjoys longevity). He justifies this by quoting a myth about the flood wherein only the **palm-tree** survived destruction, the **palm-tree** being Ifa's symbol. None of these etymological guesses really amount to much and the prudent attitude to adopt is summed up by Wande Abimbola in these words.

"It is not possible to trace the etymology of such ancient names as *Ifa*, *Orunmila* especially since the structure of the words does not permit a straightforward analysis."

1 ~ 2: The Analytical View

Without questioning its possible divine provenance, the analytical view examines Ifa as a human institution — and employs evidential criteria similar to those employed in the examination of other *revealed religions* such as Buddhism, Islam or Christianity.

In this regard two questions are pertinent:

1. What are the historical and geographic parameters of Ifa?
2. Who was Orunmila?

Let us consider the answers to the first question as given by some authorities on Ifa Studies.

Johnson's account is contradictory in parts. First he states:

"Ifa — this is the great consulting oracle in the Yoruba Country and was introduced at a late period by King Onigbogi who was said to have been dethroned for doing so."

Now, Onigbogi is placed 9th in Johnson's king-list of the Yoruba, after Oduduwa. This would place his reign in the 14th century A.D. Further on, Johnson writes:

Another tradition says it was introduced into the Yoruba country by one Setilu, native of the Nupe Country, who was born blind. This was about the period of the Mohamedan invasion.

This would place the date in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, A.D.; Johnson then complicates matters by stating that

Ifa was really met in the Country by the Yoruba for Oduduwa met Setilu at Ile-Ife."

That would be 500 B.C. - 500 A.D.; D. O. Epega gives a date of 5000 - 3000 B.C. for the origin of Ifa. He declares:

"These symbols [of Ifa] are very old. They originated from Orunmila in Ile-Ife. Similar signs are said to be in use in Egypt (as far back as 3000 BC)."

And again:

Ifa is the ancient wisdom of the Yoruba that applies further both to the present and the future hence some of the ways of expression of 430, 080 in Ifa or Odu are of quite recent date and some are of hoary antiquity far older than the pharaohs."

— That is at least from 5000 B.C.

J. O. Lucas' derivation of Ifa from Ancient Egypt using comparative linguistic arguments rather lacks conviction:

"The origin of the Ifa system,"

notes Lucas

"must be traced to Ancient Egypt. Its basis lies in the Osirian faith in general and in the doctrine of the Aats in particular."

In an essay surprisingly lacking in objective scholarship Ade Obayemi derives Ifa from Nupe-Land. Obayemi's comparative table of the names for Odu-Ifa in Nupe, Ijumu and central Yoruba are given below.

Obayemi's Comparative Table

	Nupe	Meaning	Ijumu	Central Yoruba
1.	Rusu	Soko (God)	Orohun	Irosun
2.	Ega		Oga	
3.	Efun	Emi (house)(home)	Ofun	Ofun
4.	Arikin		Okin	Ose
5.	Eyako	Ezi	Oyeku	Oyeku
6.	Shikan	Settlement, Egg	Osika	Ogbe
7.	Eji	Emi sediku	Oji	Odi
8.	Gori	(Sediku's House)	Ogori	Iwori
9.	Rakpan	Kata Bagi	Otaru	Oturanpon
10.	Yikan	Nyiza House	Oyinkon	Ika
11.	Guta	Kata Bagi	Ogunta	Ogunde
12.	Esa	Mans House	oha	Osa
13.	Turia	Yeko	Otura	Otura
14.	Etia	Road or path	Erete	Irete
15.	Bara	Wun da mi dzoguno	Obara	Obara
16.	Kona	He reaches hero's house	Okono	Okonron

The following points should be noted:

1. Obayemi does not indicate the ranking status of the Odu in the Nupe and Ijumu systems to allow valid comparison with the Yoruba ranking order.

-
2. He does not mark the configurations, thus making comparison between the names of the Odu difficult to evaluate.
 3. His table does not explain why the Yoruba system is derived from the Nupe and not *vice versa*.

Even those unfamiliar with details of the Ifa system can see at a glance that all that this table shows is phonetic correspondence of some (not all) names of Odu — nothing more. This is the sort of untidy linguistic argument condemned by Obayemi in the work of J.O. Lucas. Obayemi writes, commenting on the comparative table,

"This in itself does not mean much on the face of it . . ."

and ends with a categorical *non-sequitur*:

"It shows that even Ifa was taken to the Yoruba homelands from Nupeland at least two corridors are recognizable to date. Thus, though a strong member of the central Yoruba pantheon, Ifa derives from the north of Yorubaland."

Stephen Skinner, Australian researcher in magic and the occult sciences, following the Englishman Burton and French writer Bernard Maupoil, before his time, has forcefully argued in a recent very controversial book* that Ifa was introduced into Yoruba-land between the 8th and 11th centuries A.D. from Arabic North Africa. What is Skinner's evidence for this assertion?

It is based on:

1. **Etymological correspondence** between Arabic "*Afar*" and Yoruba "*Ifa*".

Footnote * Stephen Skinner (1980) * *Terrestrial Astrology* * Routledge & Kegan Paul London.

2. **External similarities** between Arabic "AL RAML" and Yoruba "Ifa".

3. **Similarity in the technique** of Arabic and Yoruba divination systems.

1 ~ 2.1 Etymological Correspondence

and The Historical and Geographic Parameters of Ifa.

"In fact," wrote Skinner**, "dust, Arabic *afar*, is probably the origin of the name of the god Ifa."

Skinner should have gone further to derive the name of Ifa's tutelary god 'Orunmila' from Arabic '*Al Raml*' (the science of divination by sand cutting).

The simple criticism of this argument is that phonetic correspondence between one or two Arabic words and Yoruba equivalents is not sufficient proof of the derivation of the latter from the former. To prove direct filiation of *Ifa* to Arabic *Al Raml* the two systems must be submitted to point by point analytical comparison.

1 ~ 2.2: External Similarities

in The Historical and Geographic Parameters of Ifa

If the argument from etymology is unconvincing that of external similarities between Ifa and AL RAML is sufficiently powerful to justify thorough examination. The external similarities between Arabic *AL RAML* and Yoruba *Ifa* include

- (i) The mode of **imprinting** the configurations;

Footnote ** *Opus cit* page 69

- (ii) The **reading** of the configurations from above downwards and from right to left.

1 ~ 2.2(i): **Imprinting.**

The Comparative Table I below brings out the main points, taking the first eight configurations:

Comparative Table I

Ifa	Configuration	Al Raml	Sikidy	European
Ogbe	o o o o	Tariq (Way)	Taraiky	Via (Way)
Oyeku	oo oo oo	Jama'a (People)	Jama	Populus (People)
Iwori	ou o u oo	Ijitima (Conjunction)	Aditsima	Conjunction
Odi	o oo oo o	Uqla (Prison)	Alkola	Carcer (Prison)
Irosun	o o oo oo	Elnusra El kharga (Exterior)	Asolacahy	Fortuna minor (Lesser Fortune)
Oworin	oo oo u o	El nusra-el-dakil (Interior)	Asoravany	Fortuna Major (Great Fortune)
Obara	o oo oo oo	El Dakila (Joy)	Alahizany	Laetitia (Joy)
Okonron	oo oo oo o	Rakiza (Fall)	Alikisy	Tristisia (Sorrow)

A careful study of the eight configurations in Comparative Table I above reveals some interesting facts:

Odun Ifa

1. Similarity of the imprinting of the configurations in Ifa, Al Raml, Sikidy and European Geomancy;
2. Similarities of the names of the configurations in AL Raml and Sikidy as to indicate the derivation of the latter from the former with due allowance made for linguistic peculiarities of Arabic and Malagasy;
3. Similarity of the meanings of the configurations in Al-Raml, Sikidy and European geomancy as to indicate the derivation of the two latter systems from the first;
4. Complete divergence of the names and meanings of the configurations in Yoruba Ifa from Arabic Al-Raml, Malagasy Sikidy and European geomancy.

The inescapable conclusion from these facts is that Yoruba Ifa though superficially similar to Al-Raml, Sikidy and European geomancy because of the mode of imprinting has nothing in common, content-wise, with the latter three.

Comparative Table II below also reveals some interesting facts.

1. Similarity of imprinting the configurations in Yoruba Ifa, and the Bini, Igala, Idoma, W.lbo, Ewe and Fon divinatory systems.
2. Correspondence between the imprinting and the names of the configurations in Yoruba Ifa *vis a vis* the other systems.

The inescapable conclusion is that Table II includes divinatory systems of the same family. Proof of filiation of the other systems to Yoruba Ifa is attested by the tradition of such derivation by Fon, Ewe and Benin authorities on the matter.

Comparative Table II:
The 16 Configurations of Divination

Position of the diviner is to the left of the page.
o denotes open, concave pod position or single odu mark.
x denotes closed, convex pod position, or double odu mark.

	Yoruba	Benin	Igala	Idoma	W.Ibo	Ewe	Fon	Sikidy of Madagascar ‡ Mauritania †	
oooo	ogbe	ogbi	ebi	ebi	ogbi	gbe	gbe	cavaiky	
xxxx	oyeku	ako	aku	akwu	akwu	yeku	yeku	asembola	
xoox	iwori	oghoi	ogoli	ogoli	woli	oli	yeku	alatsimay	zamer bedna
oxxo	odi	odi	oji	odi	odi	di	di	alikota	
oxxx	iresun	oruhu	oloru	olo	ulushu	loso	looso	soralahy	
xxoo	owara	oghae	egali	egali	ogai	noli	nwele	adabaray	
	oworin			ogali					
oxxx	obara	ovba	obata	obla	obai	abla	abala	alahijana	
xxxo	okonron	oka	okara	okla	okai	akla	akana	alikusy	
oxxx	ogunda	eghita	ejita	ejita	ejita	guda	guda	karija	
					ogbute				
xooo	osa	oha	ora	ola	osha	sa	sa	alakaosy	
xoox	ika	eka	eka	eka	eka	ka	ka	alohomora	
xxox	oturupon	erhoxwa	atunukpa	etrukpa	atokpa	trukpe	trukpe	alabiavo	
oxoo	otuwa	eture	otula	otre	etile	tula	tula	alakavabo	
				otle					
oxxx	irete	ete	ete	ete	ete	lete	ete	betsivongo	
oxox	ose	ose	oce	oce	ose	tse	che	adalo	
xoxo	ofun	ohu	ofu	ofu	ofu	fu	fu	alihosty	

Source: *Linguistic and Ethnographic Data in Idoma and Yoruba History* 139
*Data compiled from Stephen Skinner "Terrestrial Geomancy".

Skinner himself admits that:

"... We can do no better than accept the traditions of the Fon and the Ewe tribes who acknowledge the Yoruba City of Ife as the centre from which the practice of Ifa divination has spread."

1 ~ 2.2(ii): Reading of the Configurations

In Yoruba *Ifa* and Arabic *Al-Raml* the configurations are marked and read from above downwards and from right to left. However this is not sufficient reason to conclude that *Ifa* is derived from *Al-Raml*.

Since 85% of humans are right handed, the natural way to write would be from right to left. Most ancient civilizations including the Arabs followed this method with the latter day ancient Greeks and Romans writing from left to right, a practice now current in countries of western influence. So the fact that the configurations of Yoruba *Ifa* are imprinted and read from above downwards and from right to left merely underscores a natural phenomenon and owes nothing to transmission.

1 ~ 2.3: Similarity of Technique

Skinner writes:

In its simplest form, *Raml*, was called sand cutting which consisted in making a random number of marks in the sand or dust, cancelling them off two by two until only one or two marks are left and from this drawing a single or double line. Repeated four times this procedure yields one of the basic sixteen geomantic figures of *raml*.

Sand cutting was and is a widespread form of geomancy practised by many Islamic groups in both west and North Africa: its similarity to the Dahomean divinatory system of *Ifa* and the Yoruba *Ifa* were first noted by Fischer in 1929.

He writes further:

Further suggestive evidence of the direct connection between RAML and the divinatory systems of the Yoruba comes from the presence among the Yoruba of a form of sand-cutting called by them *Iyanrin-Tite* which is practised by Muslim diviners known, as *alufa*, who often referred to the technique as *Hati raiml* (or *Atimi* for short).

There certainly is some confusion here. *Iyanrin-Tite* or *Hontu* as it is sometimes called is derived from the Arabic *Raml* by the evidence of its technique and from the names of the geomantic figures. However there is no direct connection between *Iyanrin-Tite* and *Ifa*: one is practised by muslim priests, the other by traditionalist Babalawo and, as will be shown later in this chapter, they also differ in technique. In fact it is difficult to see how Skinner could conclude that

"the local parallel between" it (ie *Iyanrin Tite*) and *Ifa* help to confirm the muslim origin of the latter"

when he had noted earlier that

"the names of the sixteen basic figures clearly differ from those of *Ifa* . . ."

Skinner concludes:

"A final piece of evidence is produced by Ellis (1894) who says of the divination board used by the *Ifa* diviners that 'it is exactly similar to those used by children in muslim schools in lieu of slates about two feet long and eight or nine inches broad' thus reinforcing the evidence for the Islamic origin of *Ifa*."

The conclusion in this statement is as misleading as the evidence adduced for it. Reference to the comparative pictures below show the unmistakable difference between the muslim slate and the divining board of *Ifa*. A muslim slate is always rectangular with a handle at the middle of the side on its long axis. An *Ifa* divining tray may be rectangular or circular but always has the

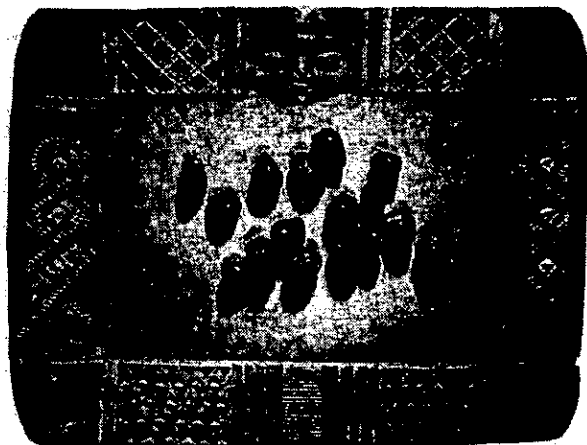


Plate 7A: Ifa Divining (Rectangular) Tray

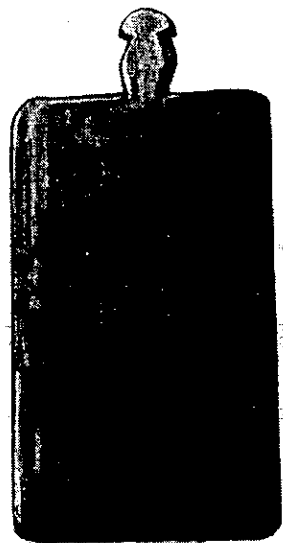


Plate 7B: Muslim Slate

all-seeing Eye of Exu engraved on one side for orientation. It never has a handle and when it is rectangular this divining tray has its long axis from right to left of the diviner.

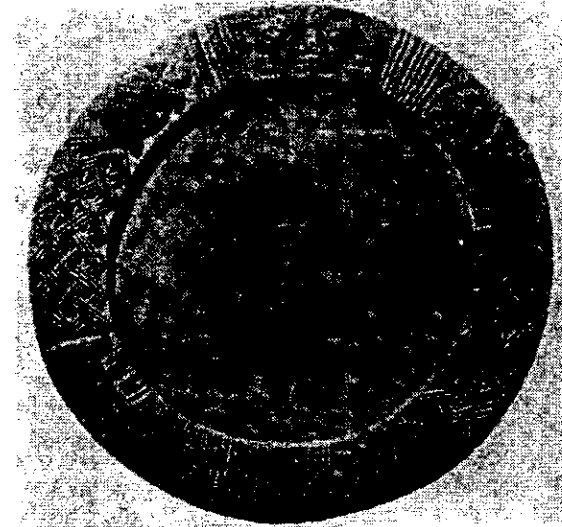


Plate 7C: Ifa Divining (Circular) Tray

1~2.3(i): Raml Technique:

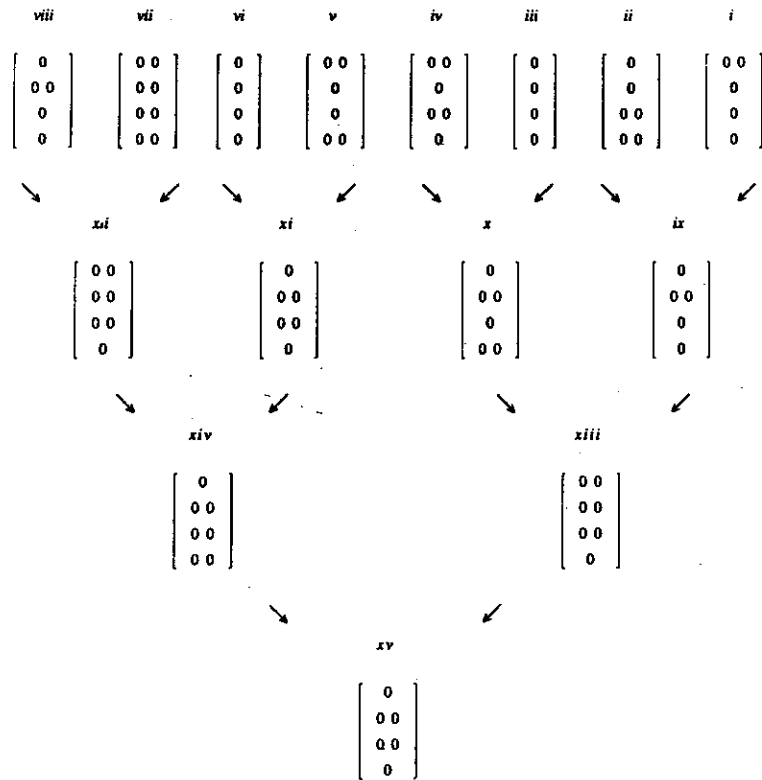
The technique to be described is stated by Skinner to be

"representative of Raml as it is practised today in Village communities . . ."

"A smooth patch of sand is prepared by the practitioner or *khattat* at a specific hour of the day, according to the nature of the question. The querent places the tip of the middle finger of his right hand on the sand whilst at the same time concentrating on his question, which he usually does not tell the *khattat*. At the same time the *khattat* makes in the sand four lines or jabs of random length with his fingers. These are then marked off, a pair at a time, until either one or two are left over. This process is repeated four times generating a geomantic figures which are made up of four levels containing either one or two marks in the sand. A further three figures are made in the same way. These four figures are the mother's figures and, placed in order from right to left, they breed the rest of *kbatt* or geomantic spread.

Odun Ifa

The technique of deriving the remaining eleven figures is shown diagrammatically below:



To continue with Skinner's account:

"The fifteenth (xvth) figure is the judge and final determinant of the entire khatt. These fifteen figures found by the above process are now interpreted according to the position in which they fall."

1 ~ 2.3(ii): Technique in Ifa:

In Ifa divination, the operative configuration is generated either by the use of a divining chain (*Opele*) or by the casting of special palm-nuts called *Ikin*.

1 ~ 2.3(ia) Ifa Technique ~ by *Ikin* (Palm Nuts)

Chief Adeboye Oyesanya, Chief priest of Ijọ Orunmila Ato, has observed that *Ikin* cannot be used alone; rather, he writes:

"it is always used in conjunction with *Opon* (Divining Tray) *Iyerusun* (Divining Powder) and *Ajere* (Container for the Palm-nuts).

"Some *Iyerusun* is sprinkled on the *Opon* and spread over the whole area of the *Opon*. Sixteen of the *Ikin* (selective) are usually used for the purpose of consultation. The 16 *Ikin* are placed in the palm of the left hand of the caster. The caster (ie diviner) tries to collect all the palm-nuts for the right hand at the same time. If two IKIN remain in the palm of the left hand one mark is imprinted on the *Iyerusun* on the OPON and the first imprinting is done on the top of the right column A as in the diagram below. The casting process is repeated and the result imprinted on the top of the left column marked B. Casting is repeated and marked alternately to a total of eight casts until the final configuration is obtained."

SCHEMA of CASTING TECHNIQUE
in Ifa (by *Ikin*)

~ An Example

B		A	B	A
2	↑	1	(2) 00	0 (1)
4	↑	3	(4) 00	0 (3)
6	↑	5	(6) 00	0 (5)
8	↑	7	(8) 00	0 (7)
			Oyeku	Ogbe

The imprinting and reading are done from above downwards and from right to left. In this example the resulting configuration is called *Ogbe-Yeku*.

1 ~ 2.3(iib) Ifa Technique — by *Opele (Divining chain)*

Bascom remarks that:

"The divining chain is said to 'talk more' than the palm-nuts but it is regarded as an inferior instrument, less reliable than palm-nuts for deciding important questions. It is also spoken of as Ifa's servant. Nevertheless it is more commonly used in divination and a number of Ife diviners employ only the chain because they dislike using the palm-nuts. The reason for this is that the divining chain arrives at the same interpretation through the same set of figures and verse more rapidly. . .

"The divining chain, which is about three to four feet long, usually consists of eight halves of seed shells or pods joined together by short sections of chain by which it is held is somewhat longer. The other sections are of equal length so that when the chain is held in the middle the four shells on the right and the four on the left hang down side by side. The chain is thrown with the right hand which is said to be used consistently in Ifa even by left-handed individuals. It is tossed away from the diviner in such a way that the two open ends fall nearest to him and the two sides fall parallel. If the shells or pods do not fall side by side in straight lines so that the figures can be easily read the chain may be adjusted by drawing the two ends toward the diviner with care taken not to overturn any of the pods. Each half seed shell can fall with either the concave inner surface facing up. It is essential that the two surfaces of the shells, or of other materials used in place of them can be distinguished.

"Various objects - including beads, cowries, shells, ions buttons, rings, small bells and bits of metal-are attached to the bottom of the pods at other end of the chain. Their purpose is to enable the diviner to distinguish the right and left half the same side, and so that the figure will not be mis-read for example by mistaking Ogbe-Oyeku for Oyeku Ogbe. Often an odd number of cowries (one or three) marks the right hand an even number (two or four) marks the left."

On the imprinting and reading of the operative configuration, Chief Oyesanya informs us thus:

"If the concave face of any 'seed' is upward, one mark is made [0] or [1], for example.

If all 'seeds' are cast concave side upward then the Odu revealed is Eji-Ogbe: $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$; and

if all eight are cast concave side downward Oyeku-Meji: $\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$ is revealed, and so on".

The same is true for convex surfaces upward or downward.



Plate 8: Casting the Divining Chain

From the comparative description of the technique of generating the operative configuration, it is quite clear that *Ifa* as a divinatory system radically differs from *Al Raml* and so could not have been an Arabic heritage.

Bascom** provides further criticism of the alleged Arabic origin of *Ifa* in these authoritative words:

"Burton, Maupoil and others have concluded that *Ifa* and *Sikidy* are derived from Islamic geomancy or earlier non-African methods of divination. The purpose here is neither to deny a historic relation between many modes of divination employing sixteen basic figures nor to attempt to determine the ultimate origin of *Ifa*. These questions require far more data than are presently available. However, as other authors have stressed the similarities between the two methods including the fact that the figures are read from right to left, some of the points of difference may be mentioned."

1 ~ 2.3(iii) Differences of Technique between *Raml* and *Ifa*

1. Among the Yoruba and the Nupe of Nigeria, the Sara of Chad, the Teda of Tibetsi and the Fulani of Macina, when canceling the random marks, in Sand Cutting, a single mark is made if one mark remains and a double line if two remain; this is the opposite of *Ifa*.
2. *Ifa* is not associated with astrology . . .
3. . . . but rather with a series of memorised verses and stories upon which their interpretation depends. Islamic geomancy has no verses - at least as practised by the ALUFA among the Yoruba;
4. [Islamic geomancy] has no sacrifices, (*Ebo*), which are of such importance in *Ifa*;
5. The method of *sand-cutting* differs from tossing a chain or manipulating palm-nuts but it does involve the question of odd and even numbers . . . *sand-cutting* is a distinct system of divination and in all probability a very recent introduction.

1 ~ 2.4: Internal Evidence

I might add to Bascom's argument that the internal evidence from the verses of the *Ifa corpus* reveals no trace of external, Arabic borrowing:

- a) the fauna and flora mentioned in the *Ifa corpus* are indigenous to Yoruba-land;
- b) the cities named as venues of *Ifa* divinatory practice are within the geographical and cultural environment of the Yoruba and their immediate neighbours in Nigeria;
- c) *Ifa*'s opposition to the incursion of Arabic influence and religion was most un-compromising from the start. On this point Wande Abimbola writes:

"For historical purposes the most relevant in this tradition of conflict are the poems contained in *Otua-Meji* dealing with the inevitable conflict between Yoruba traditional religion and Islam. They must have occurred at the time of the latter's propagation in Yoruba-land."

Below is an *Ifa* verse in point from *Ogbe-Tutu*.

Translation:

"Muslims practice untruth and deceit. They preach that none should fast for their dead mother or dead father. They say that those who weep for the dead merely invite hell-fire on the dead and those who fast for the dead deny them peaceful sleep in heaven.

But lo and behold the season of *Ramadan* comes and the deceitful are exposed. Muslims turn around and fast and torture their bodies with hunger.

Why these austerities so suddenly?
They reply that they fast for God.
So Muslims believe in fasting after all.

*From E.M. Lijadu (Yoruba Text) *Imale Şeke, Imale Şodalẹ ...*

Oḍun Ifa

Why for God?
Has anyone ever heard that God dies?
Muslims believe in fasting for God who never dies!
The Omnipotent never succumbs to illness.

Muslims condemn Ifa priests who deal in herbs because they are physicians, yes the greatest physicians. Muslims say it is wrong to offer sacrifice to the ORIXA and pay tithes to EXU but when their own festival comes they kill a ram offering it to their own God."

Lijadu comments on this verse as follows:

" . . . Those knowledgeable among the pagans (ie Ifa priests) have no high regard for Islam. Their argument is that alms and sacrifices being some of the leading tenets of Islam, Muslim priests who in addition practice divination by sand-cutting, who fast during Ramadan and sacrifice a Ram to Allah as atonement every festival indulge in the same practices which they condemn in Ifa."

In spite of my criticism of Skinner's theory of the derivation of *Yoruba Ifa* from *Arabic Raml*, I think we must recognise the importance of the issues raised by his theory.

We may conclude that the case is not proven but we must not under-value the need for greater research to elucidate the true relationship between Ifa and Raml.

Note should be taken of the diametrically opposite conclusion drawn by other writers on this matter using the same data as Skinner. *Oṭunba Awopeju states quite categorically that Ifa originated among the Yoruba and spread to other parts of the world.

"The sixteen Oḍu Ifa (Geomantic symbols)," writes Awopeju,

"are given different names in different parts of the world. Among the Nations which operate Ifa Geomancy are the Hebrews and the Arabs from whom mankind got the Bible and the Holy Quoran respectively. All the moral doctrines given to the Hebrews

and the Arabs as reflected in the Holy Bible and Holy Quoran were derived from the doctrines revealed to Orunmila through the medium Of the Ifa corpus. In this regard therefore Ifa can be seen as the first Bible of mankind. Different names are given to the sixteen *Odu Ifa* in different countries in Europe, Asia, America and Africa."

Speculative or conjectural? Not more so or less than Skinner's theory. The lesson is to maintain cautious objectivity pending the availability of reliable facts.

After reviewing the opinions of these authors we may safely conclude that Ifa as a divinatory system and a religion was created by the Yoruba themselves and later disseminated to their neighbours in West Africa. Along with the slaves it was then exported to Cuba and Brazil.

Most probably Ife was the city of origin although a possible case could be made for the Ekiti area of Yoruba land in that three ancient kings of Ekiti feature so frequently and so prominently in Ifa corpus as to advert our minds to their importance in earlier times. These kings are the *Alara*, the *Ajero* and the *Owa-Orangun-Aga*. The first has the combination *Odu Ogbe-Otura*, or

Ogbe-Alara $\begin{pmatrix} o & o \\ oo & o \\ o & o \\ o & o \end{pmatrix}$ named after him and the last one has *Ofun-Meji* (*Orangun-*

Meji) as his eponymous *odu* $\begin{pmatrix} oo & oo \\ o & o \\ oo & oo \\ o & o \end{pmatrix}$

Indeed some writers affirm that present day Ekiti people were the aborigines met at and driven out of Ife by Oduduwa and his generals.

On the other hand it must be noted that some Ifa verses specifically deny the Ekiti origin and instead assert Ife's primacy. Bascom raises this point without coming down firmly on one side or the other. Certainly the internal evidence from the Ifa corpus reveals that the system we have now was not bequeathed complete and unchanged from earliest times but rather that it has developed through stages and from various parts of Yorubaland.

For schematic convenience we may recognise three stages thus:

- a) Pre-history;
- b) 500 B.C. to 500 A.D. (The Oduduwa Age);
- c) 500 A.D. to 1300 A.D. (Period of the Yoruba Kingdoms).

1 ~ 2.4(i) Pre-History

From earliest times man has always faced the necessity of choosing between two courses of action: should he go out today or not? should he buy this article or that? would this marriage lead to happiness or misfortune? Therefore a simple method that unequivocally assists his choice was devised. Generally the individual employed this simple method himself without recourse to an expert. The commonest example is the tossing of a coin that gives a straight forward *yes* or *no* outcome. A historical example that comes to mind is that employed by Saul^[1], Israelite king (*circa* 1,200 B.C.), to identify the culprit who broke a serious taboo.

As human society developed it became obvious that a *yes* answer did not always lead to the desired result or conversely that a *no* answer might not coincide with the inner wish of the querent. Consequently doubt emerged as to the reliability of the simple method or as to the competence of the inquirer. This led to the rise of a class of professional diviners claiming possession of the right method and competence.

No doubt the Yoruba practised this simple method in their prehistory before the advent of Ifa in the "Oduduwa Age".

We may note the vestige of this simple method as incorporated in the complex Ifa system and known as IBO, the technique of "specific alternatives" which requires not more than two casts for an answer.

Chief Adeboye Oyesanya describes the method thus:

"Now let us imagine that we wish to know whether or not to follow some people out. We may use either *Opele* or *Ikin* to cast Ifa Oracle. Before casting we place a cowrie (*Yes-Determinant*) on the right hand side of the Opele or Ikin . . . and a piece of broken plate (*No-Determinant*) on the left.

If *Eji-Ogbe* $\begin{bmatrix} u & u \\ n & n \\ o & o \\ n & n \end{bmatrix}$ or *Ofun-Meji* $\begin{bmatrix} oo & oo \\ nn & nn \\ oo & oo \\ nn & nn \end{bmatrix}$ is revealed that automatically indicates the determinant on the right and the answer is *yes* . . . these two *odu* are only cast once and when either is revealed the right hand determinant (meaning *Yes*) is picked.

On the other hand if, for example, *Oturunpon-Meji* $\begin{bmatrix} oo & oo \\ nn & nn \\ u & n \\ oo & oo \end{bmatrix}$ appears we are to cast again

and if say *Osa-Meji* $\begin{bmatrix} oo & oo \\ n & n \\ u & u \\ n & n \end{bmatrix}$ is revealed at second cast we then consider which of the two *Odu* comes first in their ranking significance. *Oturunpon-Meji* is ranked 12th whereas *Osa-Meji* is 10th. Therefore the left hand determinant is indicated and the answer is *No*."

1 ~ 2.4(ii) Second Stage: 500 B.C. - 500 A.D.

The thousand years spanning these two dates constitute a water-shed in Yoruba History. Known as the "*Oduduwa Age*" the period saw the introduction of iron metallurgy with the attendant political and socio-economic developments. Consequent on these there emerged a leisure class of poets, philosophers and professional diviners who created the theology of the New Age and the system of Ifa-divination as we receive it today.

The technique of casting Ifa quoted earlier from Chief Adebayo Oyesanya must have been employed from the very early years of this period but with a very important difference. Where one palm-nut remained in the left palm one mark would be imprinted thus [1] or [0] and for two nuts remaining two marks would be imprinted thus [11] or [00]. So four casts would be sufficient to obtain the operative *Odu* or *configuration*, for example:

$$Ogbe \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \text{ or } Oyeku \begin{bmatrix} 00 \\ 00 \\ 00 \\ 00 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Oḍun Ifa

This means that only sixteen configurations were the recognised *Oḍu* at this early period. It can be seen that this system is akin to *Al Raml* but it should be stressed that no filiation of *Ifa* to *Al Raml* is to be inferred, the similarity being due to the nature of binary arithmetic common to both systems as explained later in this chapter.

Close consideration shows that this method of casting, simple and natural though it be, makes it open to abuse by an unscrupulous practitioner since it is relatively easy to manipulate the outcome in favour of the *Oḍu* of his choice.

1 ~ 2.4(iii) Second Stage: 500 B.C. - 500 A.D.; The role of Ḷrunmila.

This brings us to the question raised earlier: who was Ḷrunmila? The abuses of the simple system of 16 configurations mentioned above must have become so rampant as to inspire a teacher, intent on rescuing the reputation of *Ifa*, to refine the technique in such manner as to nullify manipulation by unscrupulous diviners.

The changes introduced were radical enough to remain essentially unchanged till present times. These changes included:

1. Doubling the signature of each of the 16 existing *Oḍu* so that for example instead of *Ogbe* or *Oyeku* we now have *Eji-Ogbe* and *Oyeku-Meji*;

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} 00 \\ 00 \\ 00 \\ 00 \end{bmatrix} \quad \rightarrow \quad \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$$

OGBE

OYEKU

EJI-OGBE

OYEKU-MEJI

The resulting total will still remain 16 but now eight casts instead of four would be required to register an *Oḍu* or configuration.

2. By doubling the signature and by having to cast eight times instead of four two categories of *Oḍu* were created *viz*:

- 1). Principal configurations, 16 in number where the (Oju-Odu) pair consists of mirror-image parts *viz*:

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline o | o \\ \hline o | n \\ \hline o | o \\ \hline o | n \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Eji-Ogbe

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline oo | oo \\ \hline oo | oo \\ \hline oo | oo \\ \hline oo | oo \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Oyeku-Meji

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline o | o \\ \hline o | n \\ \hline oo | oo \\ \hline oo | oo \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Irosun-Meji

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline o | o \\ \hline n | o \\ \hline o | o \\ \hline oo | oo \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Ogunda-Meji

- 2). Combinations, 240 in number where each *Odu (Odu Amulu)* consists of different right and left parts eg:

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline oo | n \\ \hline oo | n \\ \hline oo | n \\ \hline oo | n \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Ogbe-Yeku

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline o | o \\ \hline o | n \\ \hline oo | oo \\ \hline oo | oo \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Ogbe-Rosun

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline o | oo \\ \hline n | oo \\ \hline o | oo \\ \hline oo | oo \\ \hline \end{array}$$

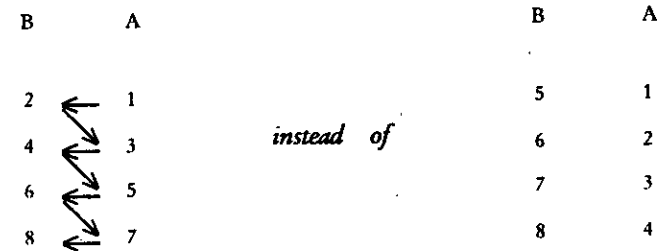
Oyeku-Ogunda

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline oo | oo \\ \hline oo | n \\ \hline oo | n \\ \hline oo | o \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Osa'-Yeku

The resultant total was now 256 instead of 16 configurations.

- 3). The imprinting of each cast was arranged as shown schematically below:



- 4). Reversing the mode of marking odd and even casts so that when two palm-nuts remain in the left palm one mark is made and when one nut remains two marks are made.
- 5). The retention of the technique of *Ibo* (specific alternatives)

to determine the Yes/No Good/Bad signification of each request to Ifa.

The result of all these changes would be to remove as much, as possible, the subjective determination of the divinatory outcome from the control of the practitioner and contrariwise to reinforce the role of chance or probability in the process. The querent, thus assured of the objective impartiality of the practitioner would retain confidence in the oracular diagnosis of a school of diviners seen to be different and honest.

It is my view that the reformer responsible for these changes was Orunmila. This would place the life and work of Orunmila in the "Oduduwa Age" and since the Age spans a millennium it is tempting to conclude that the name Orunmila, at first belonging to the radical reformer of *Ifa*, came to signify a "corporate personality".

Internal evidence from the *Ifa* corpus certainly indicates that what has been said about Orunmila and his reformatory work is not mere conjecture. Many Ifa verses allude to Orunmila's work and travels in Yoruba kingdoms and spanning centuries exceeding the life expectation of one single individual. Other Ifa verses reveal that some schools of divination employing a different mode of reading and imprinting the configurations existed, apart from Orunmila's.

Here is one example from Ofun-meji, $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$, given by Chief Fagbemi

Ajanaku^[9]

"Orunmila ni: Oṛo hu
Ifa mo ni: Oṛo hu, Baba mi Agbọnmiregun.

O ni: Bi oṛo ba hu, oju ta lo xe

Oṃo-Eku fo sibe, o ni oju oun lo xe.

O ni: b'orọ ba hu nkọ?

O ni bo ba hu ikan wọn a tẹ'kan
O ni to ba hu meji wọn a tẹ meji

Awọn agbo aagba ni irọ lo pa, eke loxe
Wọnpa a, wọn dari rẹ sapo amininja Ekun

Omọ-Eja nan fo sibe, oni oju oun loxe
Wọn fo sibe, ti wọn ni ojuu wọn lo xe

Wọn ni r'orọ ba hu nkọ?

Wọn ni bo ba hu meji wọn ni wọn a te eji
Wọn ni bo ba hu kan wọn ni wọn a te kan

Wọn ni iro ni wọn pa, wọn dari wọn si apo amininja-Ekun

Omo-Erin wafo sibe, o ni oju oun lo xe

Wọn ni bi oro nan ba hu nko?

Oni bi o ba hu'kan oun a te eji
O ni b'o ba hu meji o ni oun te kan

Orunmila ni: o xeun, xeun,xeun!

Orunmila ni: Eyin o gbọn, Eyin o mọ!

Translation

Orunmila said:

The imprinting of the message is important

Ifa's Disciples replied:

The imprinting is indeed important Lord Agbọnmiregun

Orunmila asked: Which one of you can read the message correctly?

The school of Rat upped and replied:
We know the correct reading of the message:
When the message indicates by one nut we mark one
When it indicates by two nuts we mark two

The sages among the disciples cried out:
This is wrong, this is misleading.
So the school of Rat was wiped out.

The school of Fish thereupon upped and said:
We know the correct reading of the message.
So said the school of Bird and the school of Beast.
They upped and said:
We can read the message correctly.

Right then, how do you read the message?

When it shows by two nuts we mark two
When it shows by one we mark one;

These schools were also wiped out.

At last the school of Elephants rose and announced:
We can read the message correctly.

When the message appears how do you read it?

When the message indicates by one nut we mark two
When it shows by two nuts we mark one.

Extremely delighted, Orunmila exclaimed:
Well done, well said, excellently put indeed!
Those other schools are ignorant and know nothing!

Chief Agboḡla^[9] gives a more elaborate variant of the verse thus:

Odi-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Ọkunrin jo joojo loke majo
 Ọkunrin ganranmu-ganranmu l'ori egun osusu
 Awọn ni wọn p'ẹkun dudu Igbo Iwanran
 Wọn ho awọ 'ẹ toju-timu
 Wọn e d'apo amminijekunẹ
 Wọn da tala hanhanjihhan.

Awọn ta a wiyi nii,
 Iko t'ọrun ni Eledumare wa yan wọn .
 O ni ki wọn bẹ ile wo,
 B'oun ti n gbọ iro si,
 Aye ko toro . . .

Translation

Two giants, one nicknamed 'MOUNTAIN', the other 'COTTON TREE' went hunting in the mysterious forest in heaven. They killed A black Tiger. From its hide they made two big bags.

These two giants were in reality KNIGHTS OF DOOM whom the Omnipotent regularly sent to earth to punish evil doers and those who act contrary to divine precepts.

On this particular occasion having received from the Omnipotent the mission for a visitation to Earth, the two giants assumed human form and descended from heaven.

Their first encounter was with a diviner called "SKILLED IN THE CRAFT," Personal Diviner to the King of Ara City.

They greeted him with courtesy and straightway demanded to know his technique of *Ifa Divination*.

When two nuts remain I mark two. When one nut remains I mark one.

"Show us this technique" requested the Knights of Doom.

The diviner manipulated the palm-nuts. If the nuts remaining in his left palm number more than two, he marks it; if one palm-nut falls to ground he marks it; if two nuts remain in his left palm he marks two; if one nut remains he marks one.

The knights angrily remarked: Is this how you really practise *Ifa Divination*? Your likes are they who upset divine will on earth.

So they killed the diviner, cut off his head, throwing it into one of their tiger-skin bags.

After this they came upon a diviner Nick-named "Inexperience" native of *Ijero* hills and asked him: What is your own divination technique?

He replied: When two palm-nuts remain I mark two, when one remains I mark one; when more than one or two remain or if one falls to ground I do not begin the casting again I-just mark as usual.

The knights exclaimed: So that is your own method too!

Thereupon they killed him, cut off his head and threw it into the other bag. The same happened to 'GRADUATE DIVINER', 'ONE

DIVINER IS WORTH TWENTY' ~ Master from the *Iresi* hills, 'ONE LESS THAN FOUR HUNDRED' ~ Master from the city of *Ipaturumote*.

And so the knights went from city to city seeking out and killing false diviners all over the world — at which dread and panic gripped all mankind.

Then it was that three diviners of a different school, fearing the imminent visit of the Knights of Doom to their city, consulted a venerable Ifa priest, asking: Will these knights whose visit is imminent kill us too? Will they destroy our city?

These three diviners, nicknamed 'DISCRETION' 'CIRCUMSPECTION' and 'CONSULTATION' were advised by the venerable priest to make sacrifice.

"More important for their survival," said the venerable priest, "was the pursuit of truth and correct professional conduct as was their wont.:

No sooner had they completed the prescribed sacrifice than the heavenly Knights of Doom arrived and called out the three diviners who promptly emerged to welcome the knights.

Preliminary to anything else, the heavenly knights demonstrated their magical prowess thus:

They sneezed out 200 birds from their right nostril and sneezed out 200 sacrificial offerings from the left nostril. The 200 birds promptly swallowed the 200 sacrificial offerings, whereupon the birds themselves expired one after the other.

The heavenly knights then asked: What is your technique of Ifa divination?

The diviners replied: When two palm-nuts remain we mark one and when one remains we make two marks; if more than two remain we disregard that cast if one or more nuts fall to ground we pick them up and cast the nuts all over again. That is our technique.

Show us this technique, said the knights.

And since the diviners cast the nuts exactly as they had said the knights were satisfied and they congratulated the three diviners, saying:

"You are the only diviners left in the whole world who follow the true path, the path that leads to whatever is good in life . . . You should continue in this true tradition of the craft for, by so doing you will live long, you will live well, you will live to a ripe old age.

"Whatever diviner acts contrary to your teaching, be informed that you three are henceforth empowered to mete to them every due punishment.:

We may thus accept that the current practice among the Yoruba derives from Orunmila's school which has superseded contending rival schools of earlier times.

With all this refinement in technique and the innovatory corrections that distinguished the Orunmila school the question surely remained as to how a predicted favourable outcome could actually be realised or, to put it another way, how an inauspicious prediction could be averted. The solution found was by way of provision of sacrifices. Attached to each oracular pronouncement was the prescription of particular sacrifices to ensure the good graces of the divinities for auspicious conformity or contrariwise to avert evil consequences. Hence arose the central importance of sacrifice in Ifa divination as against the practice in, for example, Raml where no such requirements are necessary.

 1 ~ 2.4(iv) Third Stage: 500 A.D. to 1400 A.D.

The affixion of verses (*Ẹsẹ-Ifa*) to each of the 256 Odu was the last stage in the evolution of Ifa divinary system of the Orunmila school and served to distinguish it from other schools. This development began in the later years of the 'Oduduwa Age' and increased in complexity and literary refinement for the next thousand years or so. This was the system that was disseminated to the rest of Yoruba land when the pioneering 'sons' (really generals) succeeding Oduduwa spread out from Ife to found the newer Yoruba kingdoms including Benin.

It is obvious that even after 1400 A.D. when all the major Yoruba kingdoms had been established Ifa continued to evolve whilst no doubt retaining its essential canons unchanged. For example, examination of the verses indicates that some are certainly older than others: verses referring to Ibadan, or Abeokuta could not have been composed earlier than 1830 when these cities were founded. Verses stipulating payment of sacrificial offering in cowries must clearly be much later than those requiring settlement in kind.

The reasonable conclusion should be that the complex Ifa system of today though created by Orunmila about 2000 years ago has developed over centuries and has been enriched by several generations of Orunmila's disciples, the **Babalawo**.

Of interest in this regard is the evolution of the Chinese divinary system known as *I Ching* (or 'Book of Changes' in English).

*Lama Anagorita Govinda wrote:

"The *I Ching* is not the work of a single author but the accumulated wisdom of many generations.:

**Da Liu gives important details on the development of I CHING in these words:

"The *I Ching* originated as 8 Trigrams (three line markings) and were invented by FU

Oḍun Ifa

Hsi the legendary king of China (circa 3,000 B.C.).

From his observation of the world Fuhsi designated an unbroken line (—) and a broken line (- -) as basic symbols for the universe. The unbroken line represented YANG or clarity strength and light. The broken line represented YIN or Darkness, Receptivity, Obscurity. Thus Yang and Yin become the two principles of the universe just as the two Trigrams Chien $\begin{bmatrix} - \\ - \\ - \end{bmatrix}$ and K'Un $\begin{bmatrix} -- \\ -- \\ -- \end{bmatrix}$ became the basis of the 8

Trigrams.:

***Da Liu writes further

"It is not known when the 8 Trigrams were combined to form the 64 hexagrams. However by 1100 B.C. the hexagrams were in use as categories of prediction.

... it was king Wen who translated the symbols of the 8 trigrams into words. During the seven years he was held under house arrest by the Emperor SHIN CHOW he named the 64 hexagrams, arranged them in sequence and wrote the text known as the judgements as well as the text of the individual lines of the hexagrams. Thus the 8 trigrams and the sixty-four hexagrams became a book — the *I CHING* or 'BOOK OF CHANGES' ... Lao-Tse and Confucius distilled the symbolic meanings of the *I CHING* into philosophical concepts.:

Note the striking similarities between I Ching and Ifa:

1. The basic alphabet

[—] [- -] [|] [| |];
(I Ching) (Ifa)

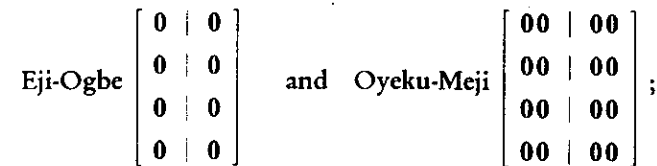
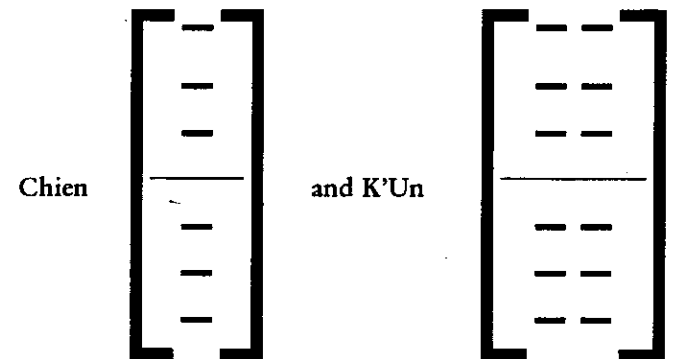
2. The single configurations

$\begin{bmatrix} - \\ - \\ - \end{bmatrix}$ $\begin{bmatrix} -- \\ -- \\ -- \end{bmatrix}$ $\begin{bmatrix} I \\ I \\ I \\ I \end{bmatrix}$ $\begin{bmatrix} II \\ II \\ II \\ II \end{bmatrix}$

Chien K'un

Ogbe Oyeku;

3. The double configurations



4. The affixion of interpretative verses or texts to the configurations;
5. The predictive value of the oracular declaration;

John Blofeld writes:

"Instead of rigid prophecies, it (ie. I CHING) makes suggestions based on an analysis of the interplay of universal forces, not about what will happen but what should be done to accord with or to avoid a given happening. It makes us the architect of our own future while helping us to avoid or minimise disasters and to derive some benefit from every possible situation.:

This is exactly true of Ifa.

Bascom writes:

"The objective of Ifa divination is to determine the correct sacrifice necessary to secure a favourable resolution of the problem confronting the client . . . sacrifices are necessary to ensure that predictions of good fortune will come true as well as to avert the misfortunes which have been foretold.:

The main difference between the two systems is that in *I Ching* six casts are made and the markings are arranged horizontally from below upwards whereas in *Ifa* eight casts are made and the markings are arranged vertically from above downwards.

In spite of the close parallels noted above between *I Ching* and *Ifa* no writer has yet concluded that the latter is derived from the former.

The truth of the matter is that in any divinatory system based on the principle of the odd or even outcome of a cast be it *I ching*, *AL RAML* or *IFA* we are dealing with binary arithmetic.

As noted by Joseph Needham:

"Binary arithmetic, stumbled upon by Shao Yung in his arrangements of the 64 hexagrams of the *I CHING* brought to consciousness by Leibnitz might be said in a real sense to have been built into the mammalian nervous system long before it was found convenient for the great computing machines of modern man.:

Mathematically put, the total number of possible configurations in a system where two dissimilar terms are arranged in definite order so that any particular group contains N of the terms is given by the formula: $S=2^n$.

Thus *I Ching* with trigrams where three casts are made the possible number is 8 ($S=2^3$) and with hexagrams the number is 64 ($S = 2^6$): in *Al Raml* where four casts are made and in *Ifa* where there are eight the numbers are 16 ($S = 2^4$) and 256 ($S = 2^8$) respectively.

1~3 Concluding Remarks

Ifa is a divinatory system created by the Yoruba about two thousand years ago. In its current form Ifa derives from the school of Orunmila who flourished in the Oduduwa Age. Ifa belongs to the class of divinatory systems based on the principle of binary arithmetic relying on the odd or even outcome of a random manoeuvre. Consequently the *raison d'être* of Ifa and similar systems is the recognition of chance or probability as a significant reality rather than a meaningless occurrence. Herein lies, in my view, the deeper meaning of Shakespeare's line in *Hamlet*:

"There is a special significance in the sparrow's fall" .

In Ifa, casting of the palm-nuts indicates a message which, like the sparrow's fall is significant if properly read and interpreted. Ifa then is a profession that trains the interpreter, the Babalawo that is, in the correct reading of the message. Ifa is not a secret cult but a profession with a code of conduct and trade secrets. All and sundry are welcome at Ifa festivals. Although restricted to males, Ifa is open to those with enough intelligence and industry to pursue the very demanding conditions of the training programme. Unlike other types of divination such as water-gazing, crystal-gazing, palmistry spatulomancy etc., Ifa is free from subjective interpretation or manipulation of the result.

The subject-matters treated under Ifa include mythology, magic, cosmogony, religion, theology, nature, medicine, sociology, ethics, psychology and philosophy. Politics are mentioned merely in passing and, most surprising, the great upheavals of Yoruba society in the past receive scant and imprecise notice. The sociological features of Yoruba society detailed by *A. N. Fadipe are corroborated by many Ifa verses viz: hereditary monarchy, matriarchy, patriarchy, polygamy, peonage (*Iwofa System*), slavery, agnate and cognate kinship, gerontocracy etc.

Ethics, religion, psychology and philosophy receive preponderant attention. These aspects are fully discussed by me under Part IIC: "Religious and Philosophical Ideas in Ifa.: However the interested reader will be well

rewarded in consulting the works of C. O. Ibie and ***Otunba Awopeju wherein these matters are presented with relevant quotations which illustrate Ifa's teaching on truth, inner-righteousness, beneficence, altruism, moderation, patience, piety and filial duty.

Apart from all these considerations, the impressive aspect, in my own perception of Ifa, is the maturity and plain realism of the practitioners of the craft, the Babalawo *vis-a-vis* their profession. Whilst affirming the sacred nature of their calling the Babalawo are human enough to admit the relevance of common sense and humour in the practice of Ifa. They are sometimes irreverent and sceptical but at no time impious. Let me illustrate with a few examples.

1~3.1 Common Sense

Orunmila ni:

Eni ti o nwa iwa-kuwa, ni i ri iri-kuri

Adiafun Apon,

T'o f'alai lobirin, wa toro omo lowo orixa.

TRANSLATION:

Orunmila says:

A stupid request deserves a stupid advice

Thus declared the Oracle to Bachelor who requested the gift of a child from Orixanla.

The advice to the bachelor was for him to look for a wife, the matter did not require divination. And that is what the saying emphasises:

Imqran la a kqq da ki a to da'fa.

TRANSLATION:

Common sense precedes divination.

1 ~ 3.2 Limits of Applicability

The verse below, translated from the Yoruba text of *Abimbola, states that irrational or impossible requests cannot be met by offering sacrifice.

Translation from *Oxe-Meji* $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$

"Birds with spindle-legs should not strut like ostriches, if they insist so to do they break their legs. Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Olongo, Wax-Bill, tiny bird, that longed to company with Ostrich on journeys.

Whenever Wax-Bill saw Ostrich he would become unhappy that he was not made big and strong like Ostrich. Thinking maybe his stature would improve if he kept company with Ostrich, Wax-Bill added two cowries to three and took the required five cowries to the diviners for consultation.

Ifa Oracle told Wax-Bill that his request was completely impossible to meet as no sacrifice could avail to make him big and strong like Ostrich.

Wax-Bill then asked if there was any remedy to endow him with prestige and honour among birds since he could not attain the stature of Ostrich.

"As for honour and prestige," replied Ifa-Oracle, "Yes, sacrifice certainly avails.:

1~3.3 Irreverence

The verse translated below from Lijadu's Yoruba text illustrates the irreverence of the Babalawo that is rather akin to the Ancient Greek attitude to their Gods.

Translation from *Odi-Meji* $\left| \begin{array}{cc} 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{array} \right|$

We know that this temple we build for Orixanla is rather small considering his dignity but we implore him to accept it so.

But if Orixanla should think it
beneath his dignity to accept the temple so,
Let him himself, cutlass in hand, at height of noon
Go to the hostile forest;

Let him cut wood for rafters,
Let him make rope for binders,
Let him, bare-headed, carry them home.

Then indeed he would appreciate
The hardships and difficulties his devotees endure
To render him due worship.

1~3.4 Scepticism

The next verse, also translated from Lijadu, illustrates the Babalawo's rejection of religious bigotry.

From *Ogunda' Kete* $\left(\begin{array}{l} 0 \ 0 \\ 0 \ 0 \\ 00 \ 0 \\ 0 \ 00 \end{array} \right)$

"Men fish in seas and oceans
Yet do not know how seas and oceans are formed.:

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Exu, the great magician when he demanded propitiation for every sacrifice offered by man on earth so their requests may be carried heaven-ward.

Orunmila, wondering, asked whether the sacrifice would really get to heaven.

Exu replied: "Those who offer sacrifice ought to know themselves the truth of the matter because their prayer over the sacrifice always is: 'may my sacrifice reach across the seas to the oceans'. So whoever says: 'may my sacrifice reach across the seas to the oceans' he indeed has his sacrifice accepted. But he who says: 'may my sacrifice get to heaven' he indeed has himself to blame for the outcome.:

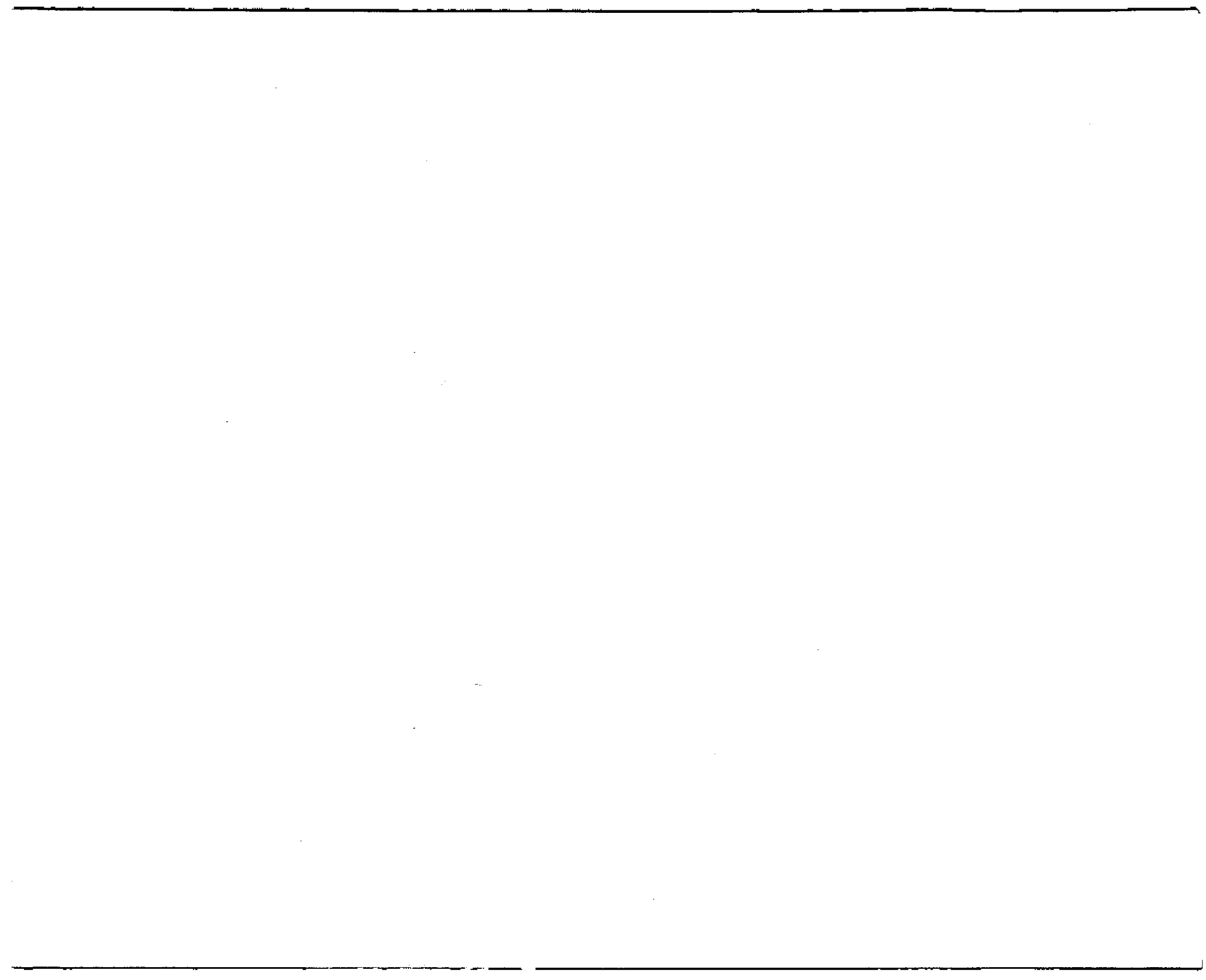
The analytical view regards Ifa as a human institution founded by the Yoruba prophet Orunmila, a man who lived and taught sometime in the "Oduduwa Age" and whose system is practised by present day Babalawo.

The traditionalist view accepts Orunmila as both a human prophet and a god and that Ifa is the word proceeding from the mouth of the Omnipotent. Both views are correct, the traditionalist view seeks to lift the message of Ifa above man's self-centred existence unto the perception of a higher and purer state of life. That being so the traditionalist view is truer.

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Part IIB

The Language of Ifa

Essential to the aesthetic appreciation of Ifa as literature is the prior consideration of the forms of its expression such as poetry, prose, chant litany and song and its *genres* such as proverb, story, myth and incantation.

Needless to emphasise, a knowledge of Yoruba is *a sine qua non* since translations seldom succeed in conveying the nuances and euphony of the original text. In this connection, C.O. Ibie^[1] deserves high commendation for his studies in Ifa on which he has published, to date, five delightful volumes. Considering his self-confessed innocence of Yoruba language his translations of Ifa verses into English reveal a thorough grasp of the message — a testimony, if any were needed, to the good teaching imbibed from this guru through the medium of Edo language.

With the late Dr. William Bascom we are on a different terrain. American by birth, English by tongue, Dr Bascom demonstrated in his major work on Ifa^[2] a complete mastery of Yoruba in its classical, idiomatic and demotic modalities. So, for linguists of his class, no apology is necessary for some of the rather technical treatment of the language of Ifa in this chapter. To the ordinary reader a plea of indulgence is offered for any failure of communication.

Footnote: (1) Ibie, C.O. (1989) (1993) *Ifism The complete works vol V of Orunmila.:

Footnote: (2) Bascom, W (1969) *IFA - communication between Gods and Men.:

The example below* from Eji-Ogbe $\begin{bmatrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{bmatrix}$ illustrates the literary devices of Ifa.

A { Ifa pe oun pe ire aiku fun eni ti o da Eji-Ogbe. Ifa pe ko
rubo emi re oni eleeyi yoo dagba-dagba yoo si d'arugbo,
ko ni-i ku l'emere. Ifa pe ko ni egbaa owo mokoṅla,
ko fi rubo, ka xe koko ewe-Ifa fun un. Ibi ti Ifa nan
gbe 'e bee:

B { Omi lo xu kiti,
Omi lo b'ona l'ori;
Qna lo xu kiti
Qna lo be omi l'ori,
Ipade ona oun omi;
Won pin'ra won si merin.

C { A difa fun Oyigiyigi Ota-inu-omi Oyigiyigi lo
da'fa pe oun o le ku l'emere? k'oun dagbalagba,
k'oun o si d'arugbo?

Won ni ko ni agbalagba obuko, ko ni Oke-
Owo Mokoṅla, won ni ko ni koko ewe-Ifa.

Oyigiyigi rubo.

Won si xe etutu nan fun un, won si sin-ewe Ifa
naa fun un, o si dagbalagba, O d'arugbo, ko ku
l'emere.

TRANSLATION:

A { Ifa says that the appearance of the configuration Eji-Ogbe assures this client the blessing of longevity but he should offer a sacrifice to secure this blessing. Ifa says this client **will live well and grow old**. He **will not die prematurely**. Ifa says the client **should** offer as sacrifice: one stout Billy-Goat and eleven bags of cowries. The priest should anoint the client **with** a magical potion made from certain leaves of Ifa.

B { Here is the Ifa verse supporting this opinion:
 "It's a struggle to death," boasted the waters
 "It's a fight to finish" replied the Highway.
 On the dreadful day of duel
 The highway was split into four
 Forming the Cross-Roads.

C { Thus declared Ifa-oracle to Rock Everlasting
 That lay unperturbed in river-bed.
 Rock, before He became everlasting consulted Ifa-oracle asking how he might avoid premature death and live till old age. Ifa prescribed as sacrificial offerings, one stout Billy-Goat and eleven bags of cowries.
 Rock brought the offerings. The priest performed the sacrifice and anointed Rock with the potion made from specified leaves of Ifa. Thereafter Rock lived till old age and became Everlasting. Everlasting Rock now praised his diviners saying:

D {
O wa nyin awon Babalawo,
O ni beḡ l'awon Babalawo n x'enu rere k'Ifa.
Omi lo xu kiti
Omi b'ona l'ore,
Ona lo xu kiti
Ona be omi l'ori,
Ipade ọna oun omi
Won pin'ra won si merin.

Adifa fun Oyigiyigi Ota-inu-omi
O wa njo, O wa nyo;
O la'nu koto
Orin Ifa ba bo si i l'enu
O nxe:

E {
Orin: Oyigiyigi ọta-omi o,
Oyigiyigi ọta-omi;

Egbe Awa di oyigiyigi
A o ku mo o
Oyigiyigi ota-omi.

F {
Ni ojo nan ni njo, ni o nyo.
Ifa pe oun pe ire-aiku fun eleeni.

TRANSLATION:

- D { The prognostications of righteous diviners are
ever vindicated.
- "It's a struggle to death" boasted the Waters.
- "It's a fight to finish," replied the Highway.
- On the day of duel
The Highway was split into four
Forming the Cross-Roads.
- Thus declared Ifa-oracle to me
When I lay uncertain in river bed;
- But I sacrificed
And thereafter
Became Everlasting.
- E { Opening his mouth he sang this Ifa song:
- Song The uncertain Rock at river-bed
Is now the Everlasting Rock of Ages.
- Refrain We are become Everlasting Rock
We shall not die,
We shall live forever.
- F { That day began for Rock
A life of joy and happiness.
- Ifa predicts long life for this client.

Odun Ifa

The parts of the text are explained as follows.

Part A [which is delivered in prose] offers a diagnosis of, and the remedy for, the client's problem that necessitated the consultation.

Part B [in poetry] quotes a mythical precedent for the client's problem.

Part C resumes the narrative [in prose] with a mythical story that seeks to validate the opinion expressed in part A.

Part D [now again in poetry] while restating the client's problem assures a positive resolution of the problem.

Part E is a song of celebration.

Part F [again in prose] assures the client of a positive resolution of his problem.

Known technically in Yoruba as *Ese-Ifa* (literarily a "foot of Ifa," idiomatically -"a stanza of Ifa") the text exemplifies the constant elements of Ifa declaration, *viz:* prose, poetry, myth, story and song.

In general the poetic parts of the stanza are fixed and invariable and should be committed to memory by Ifa priests and delivered verbatim whereas the other parts allow for personal variation in delivery provided the essential points are made in orthodox fashion.

What distinguishes prose from poetry in the language of Ifa?

"The distinction between Yoruba prose and poetry,"

writes Olatunji in a general discussion of Yoruba literature,

"is not absolute but relative.:

Without rejecting this opinion outright, I think that the perceptive ear of even a non-Yoruba can distinguish clearly in the above quoted text from Eji-Ogbe, the prose parts from the poetic by the cadence and repetition present in the latter but absent in the former. In other words *cadence* and *repetition* not metre or rhyme constitute the **basic rhythm** that distinguishes poetry from prose in the language of Ifa.

The Structure of *Ese-Ifa* (Ifa stanza)

Before analysing the structure of Ifa stanza a brief examination of the nature of Yoruba poetry in general is pertinent.

The general word for poetry in Yoruba is *Ewi*, or *Arofo* while the particular words in Ifa are *Ese-ifa* and *Iyere* (Chant).

Classifying Yoruba poetry into two groups, Olatunji writes:

"Those poetic forms which are recognised by the way they are chanted I have called *chanted modes* . . . those Yoruba poetic forms which are not recognised by the mode of chanting but by certain characteristics within their internal structure I have called *feature types*. The division is schematised thus:

Chanting Modes	Feature Types
Rara	Ofo
Ijala	Oriki
Esa	Owe
Etan	Ese-Ifa
Ege	Alo-Apamo
Odare	
Iyere-Ifa	

Ọdun Ifa

Olatunji's exposition of this subject* is instructive and should be consulted by the interested reader; the important point to note in the classification above is that, as far as Ifa prosody is concerned, *Iyere-ifa* is a **chanted mode** whereas *Ese-ifa* is **formal poetry**.

The Structure of Eṣẹ-Ifa

Dr Bolaji Idowu** divides Ifa stanza structurally into three:

"Each has its own name and character and falls into three distinct sections. First there is a pithy saying which is conveyed in verse. This verse should be clearly linked and related to the two sections which follow it while those sections should be its amplification. This is often the case but it is not always so . . . The second section which follows the verse is a story and it is the kernel of the recital from the point of view of divination the story tells of a mythological character or characters to whom the oracle had spoken before under circumstances similar to those of the present enquirer . . . it leads immediately to the third section which is its practical application its purpose being analogical.:

Dr Bascom's division of Ifa stanza into three parts is more or less identical with Dr Idowu's.

Bascom writes:

"Most verses may be considered to consist of three parts:

- 1) the statement of the mythological case which serves as a precedent,
- 2) the resolution or outcome of this case and 3) its application to the client"

Dr. Abimbola divides the stanza into 8 parts thus:

"Each Ifa poem has a maximum of eight and a minimum of four structural parts:

1. A presentation of the names of Ifa priests who are believed to have performed in the past the divination which forms the subject matter of the poem;

* Olatunji, O (1989) *Classification of Yoruba Oral Poetry*.
** Idowu E.B (1962) *Olodumare*

-
2. The names of the clients ;
 3. The reason or occasion for the past divination in question;
 4. The prescription to the client in the past including sacrifices taboos;
 5. The result of the compliance or non-compliance of the client to the injunctions;
 6. The result of the past divination;
 7. The reaction of the Babalawo to the correctness or otherwise of the predictions;
 8. The conclusion - song or chant.:

The table below shows the correspondence among the classifications of Dr Idowu, Dr Bascom and Dr Abimbola and draws a comparison between their classifications and my classification as illustrated with the verse from Eji Ogbe quoted earlier in this chapter.

Table III: Structure of an Ifa Verse ~ Alternative Definitions

Dr Idowu	Dr Bascom	Dr Abimbola	Present Author
Part I	Part I	Part 1	Part B
Part II	Part II	Parts 2, 3 & 4	Part C
Part III	Part III	Parts 5, 6, 7 & 8	Parts E, D & F
Absent	Absent	Absent	Part A

Odun Ifa

It is obvious that all four classifications agree in essentials; the only difference between my classification and those of the other three authors is the presence of Part A (a summary of the diagnosis and remedy offered to the client) in my schema and its absence in theirs.

The difference is explained by the fact that my example is quoted from the full text of an Ifa consultation by a client as against the shortened form given to Dr Idowu and the other two by informants. This is hardly surprising since Ifa texts vary with the purpose for which they are quoted. In this connection note should be taken of the stanzas recorded by me and published in this book which exhibit even more abridged variants than the standard texts.

To illustrate, here is the "festival variant" of the full stanza from Eji Ogbe already quoted above:

	Omi lo xu kiti omi b'ona lori Ona xu kiti ona be omi lori.
Ese	Ipade ona oun onji won pinra won merin A diafun oyigiyigi qta inu-omi Oyigiyigi qta omi o.
Orin	Oyigiyigi qta omi, Awa d'oyigiyigi a o ku mo.
Egbe	Oyigiyigi qta omi, Qrunmila ma je Agboqla o ku.
Awure	Maje O run, Ifa
Egbe	Axe.

TRANSLATION:

It's a struggle to death, boasted the waters
It's a fight to finish, replied the Highway.

Verse On the dreadful day of duel
The Highway was split into four forming the cross-Roads.

Thus declared Ifa-oracle to Everlasting Rock
That lay unperturbed in river-bed.

Song: The uncertain Rock at river-bed
Is now the Everlasting Rock of ages.

Refrain: We are become Everlasting Rock
We shall not die.

Prayer: Grant Agboḡla a long life, Ḣrunmila
Grant him health of body, Ifa.

The "festival text" is abridged by omitting parts A,C,D and F of the full text but adding a concluding prayer. Thus, as opposed to a "divination text," the "festival text" consists of:

- Part I Mythological precedent
- Part II Celebration song
- Part III Prayer.

What is a Line in Ifa Poetry?

Since Yoruba prosody has no rhyme and no metre in the European acceptation of these terms the question naturally arises as to what constitutes a line of poetry in Ifa?

Ese-Ifa

Prof Babalola puts the matter succinctly thus:

"In writing down the words of *Ijala* chants therefore one finds that there are regular utterance-units demarcated by breath-pauses and that the obviously correct procedure is to transcribe each of these units as one line of *Ijala* verse.:

Traditional Yoruba poetry being recitative, the audience has no great difficulty in marking off the lines according to the breath-pauses of the performer.

The problem only arises in transcription of oral poetry but fortunately Prof Babalola's rule is simple to apply. Take for example the text below given by Epega in continuous prose:

1. Ogbe Yeku - (Epega) $\left(\begin{array}{l} 00\ 0 \\ 00\ 0 \\ 00\ 0 \\ 00\ 0 \end{array} \right) *$

"Ka mafi kanju-kanju jaiye, ka mafi wara-wara mo'kun oia; Ohun a ba fi x'agba ka mafi xe ikanju. Ba a ba de ibi to tutu, ka simi, ka wo iwaju ojo titi ka tun bo wa ro ehin oru wo, nitori a ti sun ara eni.:

The Yoruba ear can identify:

- a) Certain natural stops in the flow of recitation (that is Prof. Babalola's breath-pauses);
- b) Certain repetitive units arranged in cadence (that is the rhythm of the verse).

Footnote: * Epega (no date) "Ifa Amona Awon Baba wa.:

On this basis the text can be re-written in lines of poetry as Prof. Idowu rightly does in his own version:

2. Eji-Ogbe $\left[\begin{array}{cc} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{array} \right]$ (Idowu)**

"Ka ma fi kanju-kanju j'aye,
 Ka ma fi wara-wara mokun oro,
 Ohun a bafi x'agba,
 Ka mafi xe ikanju;
 Ba a ba de ibi to tutu,
 Ka simi,
 "Ka wo iwaju ojq lo titi
 Ka tun bq wa ro qhin qrq wo
 Nitori a ti sun ara qni."

TRANSLATION:

"Let us not pursue worldly power in haste
 Let us not grasp at wealth with impatience;
 What should be handled with maturity,
 Ought not be treated with rashness.
 Better it were to seek out a shady grove
 There, to rest and reflect
 Weighing the present with the past
 And learn to prepare for our last days on earth."

Another point to note is that the "line" as defined by the "breath-pause" necessarily varies with each performance so that the same verse may be transcribed correctly with different line mark-offs. Here is an example where the same verse is recited by the same performer on two different occasions.

Footnote: ** Idowu, E. Bolaji (1962) "Olodumare" page 183

Odun Ifa

Oyeku-Meji $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{pmatrix}$

(6 Lines)

Epirin bale,
O ro pin;
Poroporo bale
Ro po.
Ewe Egungun bale
O ro gbami kọkọ.

Given by Chief A.F. Agboḡla
in "Ojulowo Oriki Ifa".

(3 Lines)

Epirin bale ro pin,
Poroporo bale ropo;
Ewe Egungun bale orogbamikọkọ.

Given by Chief A.F. Agboḡla
at Ifa Festival.

In the verse quoted below the second line is, in my view, incorrectly transcribed because the breath-pause is marked at an unnatural point in the recitation.

... A dia fun Orunmila.	... A dia fun Orunmila.
Eyiti akapo o re	Eyi ti akapo o re ope lejo
O Pe lejo loḡo Olodumare.	Loḡo Olodumare.

(Incorrect versification)

(Correct versification).

Structure of Ifa Verse (Eṣe-Ifa): Syllabic Variation

Apart from the "Breath-pause" the other determinant of the poetic line in Ifa is the **syllable**. In Yoruba a syllable is either a single verb or a consonant/verb phoneme. Short lines may be defined as lines of 3 to 5 syllables. Medium lines contain 6 to 9 syllables and long lines have more than 10 syllables. Here are some examples:

1. Short Lines

Ogunda-Meji $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$

"Okiki,

Ariwo"

Adia fun Ogun.

(lines of 3 to 5 syllables)

TRANSLATION:

"Fame and Jubilation"

Thus declared Ifa oracle to Ogun.

2. Medium Lines

Osa-Meji $\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$

Akitipa l'awo ile

Boboyakata l'awo ode

Adia fun Ooxa Oxereegbo

Yoo xofin kan orankan-orankan.

TRANSLATION:

(lines of 7 to 9 syllables)

Akitipa the household diviner

and *Boboyakata*, the visiting diviner

Consulted Ifa oracle

for venerable *Ooxala*

When He issued a decree.

3. Long Lines

Ogunda-fun-Olókònròn

$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 0 \\ 00 & 0 \\ 00 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$

Irula ni i xawo wòn ni xaki,
Morepe-ide, awo oke-ikase,
Ogungun moga nii xawo fun wòn n'ilu Agua
Jọọ'kọ o mi, ja'ale o gbọrọndun
Ọbun obirin ni i sinto gborogboro s'ọkọ l'ara
Ti ọkọ fi i binu lo nle,
Awọn mẹfẹfa ni ixẹ ọmọ-kọfa
Ọrunmila. *(lines of 11 to 17 syllables)*

TRANSLATION:

Irula diviner from *Xaki* city
Morepe-ide master from *Itase* hills
Ogungunmoga master from *Agua* City
And three other diviners
nicknamed *Shrew, Jealousy and Sloth*
were six students of Ifa
under Ọrunmila.

Since short lines are monotonous and long lines induce lethargy Ifa prosody relies on syllabic variation of short, medium and long lines to produce the suppleness and musicality so characteristic of the stanza.

Here is an example from Irete-Meji, with the syllabic score in brackets:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

"Okọ rẹ, (3)
 Aya rẹ" (3)
 Adifa fun Okerengbengbe (9)
 Yoo fẹ'birin iku tan, (8)
 Yoo f'obi męfa san. (7)

TRANSLATION:

"Husband virile,
 Wife fertile"
 Thus declared Ifa oracle
 Okerengbengbe
 You will abduct death's wife
 but remember to propitiate
 him with six kola-nuts.

Another type of syllabic variation has three lines in a verse where the first two lines are equal in length while the concluding line is syllabically twice as long.

Orule gaji, (5)
 Orule taji, (5)
 Orule ta-taa-ta-tuuru-ta. (10)

TRANSLATION:

Solid as the roof
 Secure as the roof
 Sound and thoroughly secure as the roof.

In this verse the English translation nearly almost reflects the syllabic pattern but this is not always achievable.

Tonal Variation

By appropriate variation of the three basic tones (high, low, and middle) in Yoruba language, Ifa prosody avoids the monotony of a rigid structure thereby producing memorable stanzas of exquisite beauty.

Below is an example (Oyeku-Meji)

$\left[\begin{array}{cc} 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{array} \right]$

1. Ologoxe l'eyẹ afikun,
/
2. Arẹrẹ l'eyẹ amẹmu,
v
3. Tin-in-tin ni m'eruwa jingin,
→
4. To mero mẹpa,
/
5. Titi lo d e'gbo maro.
→

The tonal trend in the first line is high (/),
in the second line, low (v),
in the third line, middle (-),
in the fourth line, high (/),
and in the fifth, middle (-).

If we mark the tonal pattern of the verse schematically we see at a glance that no regularity indicative of tonal metre can be recognised. This is common with most Ifa stanzas so the few examples of "tonal rhyme" in some cases do not justify the conclusion of Lasebikan that "in Yoruba poetry tone pattern takes the place of metre".

Schema of Tonal Pattern in Oyeku-Meji Quoted Above

1	↗
2	↘
3	→
4	↗
5	→

Combined Syllabic and Tonal Variation

Although syllabic and tonal variation have been separately analysed above it should be stressed that Ifa prosody relies on a combination of the two as its standard techniques as this example from *Ika-Meji* shows:

$$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$$

Baba gbẹḍẹ ila
 Baba gbẹḍẹ ikan
 Agbado tinu iya e xomọ tuntun wa'le-aye
 Adia fun Fẹunwe
 Omọ wara feme feefa . . .

Odun Ifa

The tonal pattern is

∧
∨
∧
∨
∧
∨
∧
∨

The syllabic lengths (6) (6) (16) (7) (10).

Parallelism

Along with syllabic and tonal variation, **parallelism** characterises the outer form of Ifa prosody.

Kidner* defines parallelism as "a way of matching or echoing one thought with another."

Ayo Bamgbose** recognises the importance of parallelism in Yoruba poetry though he uses the expressions "lexical contrast" and "lexical matching" for it. Here are some examples of parallelism in Ifa prosody based on Kidner's classification:

1. Synonymous Parallelism:

In a couplet the second line reinforces the first by echoing the thought of the first line in different synonyms or it may be the second stanza of the verse echoing the first:

a) **Line Parallelism: Example from Obara-Meji** $\left(\begin{array}{cc} 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{array} \right)$

Ixẹ o xe ohun a a mu x'ere,
Oxi òxe ohun a a mu x'awada.

Footnote: *Kidner, D. Revd (1973) *Introductory Essay to Psalms*.

Footnote: **Bamgbose Ayo (1982) "Lexical Matching in Yoruba Poetry" in *Yoruba Language and Literature* pp 82 - 93.

TRANSLATION:

poverty is no matter for derision
neither is destitution cause for raillery.

b) Stanza Parallelism: Example from Ogunda-Meji

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \end{pmatrix}$$

Gunnugun x'o ore
Ori i Gunnugun pa
Akalamagbo x'oore
Ma-yo-gẹgẹ yọ gẹgẹ l'ọrun.

Jọqmi, Jọqmi ke ni mama x'oore mọ

Ọrọ x'oore,
Ọrọ Ol'ewe

Afomo xo ore
Ko l'egbo.

TRANSLATION:

- | | | |
|----|---|--------|
| X: | The vulture became bald
Through sympathy for others;
The Hornbill became goitrous
As reward for kindness;
These examples teach
That sympathy and kindness breed ingratitude. | A
B |
| Y: | The cactus became leafless
Through sympathy for others;
The mistletoe lost its roots,
Through kindness to others. | C
D |

In this example there is verse to verse (X to Y) as well as line to line parallelism (A to B; C to D).

Climactic Parallelism

Here, the second line or second verse, "like a second wave mounts higher than the first — perhaps to be outstripped in turn by a third".

Example from Obara-Meji $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{pmatrix}$

Onikẹkẹ l'ogun
Alabaja l'ogbọn
Onikolo wẹ wẹ wẹ l'aadọta.

TRANSLATION:

If keke facial marks are worth twenty talents
And Abaja marks are worth thirty
Graceful kolo marks must fetch fifty.

Antithetic Parallelism

Here the second line or second verse repeats a thought contrary to that in the first line or first verse.

The example quoted from Ps. 37: 21 finds an echo in the Ifa verse, quoted after it.

Ps. 37 : 21

The wicked borrows and cannot pay back,
But the righteous is generous and gives.

Ifa verse

Olootọ ti mbẹ l'aye o p'ogun
 Xika-xika ibẹ wọn o mọ niwọn ẹgbẹfa.

TRANSLATION:

Virtuous men as this world goes
 Are fewer than a score;
 Evil-doers however exceed
 Six times two hundred.

Elements of Inner Form:

If syllabic variation, tonal variation and parallelism characterise the outer form of Ifa prosody the elements of inner form include:

1. Onomatopoeia, Assonance and Alliteration;
2. Word-play and word-magic;
3. Symbolism and Imagery;
4. Suspense and Anticlimax.

Onomatopoeia, Assonance, Alliteration

These three are related in that they simulate an act a sound or an idea by the use of words but while Onomatopoeia and Assonance depend on vowels for effect Alliteration relies on consonants.

Here are some examples from **Oyeku-Meji**

00	00
00	00
00	00
00	00

(Onomatopoeia and Assonance)

Epirin bale ro pin,
 Poro-poro bale ro po
 Ewe Egungun bale
 O ro gbamikọkọ-gbamikọkọ.

Odun Ifa

The words "pin" and "po" are used in assonance with the words "Epinrin" and "Poroporo" to simulate the sound of leaves falling "lightly" and "heavily" respectively. "Gbami koko-gbami koko" is an onomatopoeic sound-simulant indicating the "reverberating fall of leaves".

On this basis the verse is here translated into English thus:

Light leaves fall gently to earth,
Thick leaves fall heavily;
Giant leaves when they fall,
Reverberate thunderlike.

From Eji-Ogbe

00
00
00
00

Otọtọtọ
Orọrọrọ
Otọtọ la aj'Epa
Otọtọ la aj'Imumu
Otọtọ ni wọn ọn folu-Esunsun se'inu
Ohun'tori-tori, ohun toore-toore
Ohun tori-tori ni wọn on fun oba makinlode-Iranje
Ko le ba a fohun tori-tore ta'ni lọrẹ.

The poetic effect depends here primarily on the vowels in assonance ọ, o, e (or, oh, eh in English) and the onomatopoeic sound-simulants "otọtọtọ" and "orọrọrọ" rather than meaning.

Hence this English translation:

Sacrifice what is whole and complete
Not merely part of what is prescribed;

Groundnuts, Tigernuts, delicate Mushrooms
Are eaten whole for the full taste thereof.

So, offer what is whole and complete
 To *Obatala*, lord of the city of Iranje
 And he will bless you with wholesome children.

The reader literate in Yoruba and English will agree that the translation has meaning but little poetry compared with the original.

Alliteration

Alliteration is less commonly employed in Ifa poetry than Onomatopoeia or Assonance. In the example below the consonantal sound "K" is heard throughout the Yoruba text although, unfortunately, this effect cannot be retained in the English translation.

From *Ika-Meji* $\left[\begin{array}{l} 00\ 00 \\ 0\ 0 \\ 00\ 00 \\ 00\ 00 \end{array} \right]$

Èlẹmọ ni'ka
 Okoḱo mo ka
 Ara-ofa ei ma'ka
 Alakaa gba'ka wa
 O ti xe pe mi
 O, nika nnu
 Kawọ ọ mi, emi oxe'ka ri
 Ka'se e ml
 Ọkawu ni para eekan biri-biri
 Iya I'akaagbon, Baba I'akaagba
 Ọlọtan wọn I'akara-kara eyin agbasa . . .

TRANSLATION:

The lord of Ika is called Èlẹmọ.
 Into this City of Ika once came a diviner
 To consult Ifa for the citizen's fortunes;

But he soon discovered Ika is not Ofa.

"Citizens" cried the divine, "you invited me here
With evil in your hearts;
Learn that innocence is my armour.
So let me be and leave me out
Of your schemes and plots
I am not a stupid one that shuttles from peg to peg
Like a crazy weaver's apprentice".

In this giant city mothers are called *Akaagbon*
Fathers are called *Akaagba*
And every family in the city
Bears a name with "ka" in it.

Word-play and Word-Magic

The tonal nature of Yoruba invites punning since the same word, by adroit variation of tone, can acquire a different or even an opposite meaning. Ifa poetry takes good advantage of this device to enrich the nuance and suppleness of its language. The interested reader cannot do better than consult *Ayo Bamgbose's masterly exposition of wordplay in Yoruba generally.

Here are some examples from Ifa:

1. From (Odi-Meji)

. . . A difa fun wọn n'Idi-kunrin
A ba fun wọn n'Idi-birin
Igba Idi di meji
N'ire omọ de.

There are several levels of word-play in this short verse. Note first that the configuration is called Odi-meji (sometimes called Edi-meji) and (idi is punned against Idi. Idi itself is interpreted in four different ways to signify:

-
1. *Idikunrin* (in the city of men)
 Idibirin (in the city of women);
 2. *Idikunrin* (To men on the one hand
 and
 To women on the other hand) *Idibirin*;
 3. *Idikunrin* (The sexual end of men)
 Idibirin (The sexual end of women);
 4. *Igba Idi di meji* Sexual congress between man and woman.

Hence this Translation:

... So declared Ifa-oracle
To dwellers in the city of men
And dwellers in the city of women:

Men have their ends
Just as women have their ends
But when the two ends meet
Conception results.

Word-play (from *Ọkọnrọn Meji*) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 00 \ 00 \\ 00 \ 00 \\ 00 \ 00 \\ 0 \ 0 \end{array} \right.$

Ọkanjua agbe ni i gbin'wu abata
O xe bi o so, koso
O xe bi o hu, ko hu
A difa fun Olukoso.

Here the word-play may escape the reader unfamiliar with ancient Yoruba history. The word "ko so," means "it did not bear fruit" but written as one

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word "koso" it changes in meaning to become "He did not hang" The "He" refers to Xongo, mythical king of ancient Oyo. Rejected by the Oyo nobles Xongo left the city and committed suicide by hanging from a tree. As a face saver his devotees changed the derisive appellation "Oba so" (the king hanged himself) to the more flattering epithet "Oba ko so" (the king did not hang).

Hence my translation:

Greed was the undoing of the farmer
That planted cotton in marsh land
Expecting a bumper harvest,
He reaped nothing
Because nothing flowered,
Expecting white fields of cotton
He gathered nothing
Because nothing sprouted.

Thus declared Ifa-oracle to the mighty Lord of Thunder whom some said had hanged but others said did not hang.

In passing, note should be taken of the effective use of word-play in English literature preeminently by Shakespeare and the Irish writers G.B. Shaw, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett.

Word-Magic

Word-play merges into word-magic when the spoken word is treated as factual reality and in this regard some Ifa poetry is word-magic *par excellence* in the form of proverb (Owe) mantra (Ofọ) incantation (Ogede) or malediction (Epe).

Here is an example from Bascom: Eji-Ogbe $\left(\begin{array}{l} 0 \ 0 \\ 0 \ 0 \\ 0 \ 0 \\ 0 \ 0 \end{array} \right)$

Orunmila ni: o di hin
Moni: odi imi sin sin,
Oni : eniti o ba fi Omi rubo ise ni i simi;
Orunmila ni : o di hin

Mo ni: o di imi sinsin
 Oni : Eniti o ba fi Ila rubo ise ni i ni Ola
 Orunmila ni : o di hin
 Mo ni : o di imi sinsin
 O ni : Eniti o ba fi iyọ rubo, ise ni qoro re i dun.*

Bascom's Translation

Orunmila says we should sigh "hin"
 I say we should take a breath and rest.

He says that the one who sacrifices water
 Will have a breathing spell.

Orunmila says we should sigh "hin "
 I says we should take a breath and rest,

He says that the one who sacrifices Ochra
 will have honour.

Orunmila says we should sigh "hin "
 I say we should take a breath and rest;

He says that the one who sacrifices salt
 will find satisfaction in his life.

Without Bascom's explanatory foot-notes, which I quote hereunder, the translation of the Yoruba text would seem completely obscure.

Bascom's Footnotes

1. "hin" represents the sound of exhaling air in sighing (ie an onomatopoeia).
2. Note the word-magic in this verse.
 Water (omi) is sacrificed so as to get a chance to breath (imi)
 OCHRA (ILA) is sacrificed to gain honour (OLA).

* Bascom, 10 (1969), *Ifa Divination* pp 152-153.

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The play on word with reference to salt is once removed. Salt is added to food to season it properly, to make it sweet (dun) and is sacrificed here so that one's affairs will go well, so they will be sweet (dun). The reader will find examples of word-play and word magic in the Ifa stanzas collected in this book.*

I should note in passing that word-magic in Ifa is akin to mantra in Tantric, Hinduism and Buddhism. It also features very prominently in texts of the Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead.

Symbolism and Imagery

(a) Symbolism

As noted by J. C. Cooper**,

"symbolism reveals aspects of reality which escape other modes of expression. The symbol is a key to a realm greater than itself and greater than the man who employs it . . . The symbol makes possible the perception of fundamental relationships between seemingly diverse forms of appearances."

According to this definition we can understand why the language of Ifa is symbolist through and through; for, Ifa as divination and as religion seeks to teach higher spiritual truths.

Whereas the ancient Hindus, from their observation of the world and their reflection thereon deduce the one in the many and conclude that man, the individual being, is identical with Brahman, the universal being, as the Upanishads tell us; the Hebrews for their part see the universe as the manifestation of the majesty and omnipotence of God as many of the psalms proclaim. Modern Europeans reduce the phenomena of nature and human life to the sciences of physics, chemistry, biology and so on. But the Yoruba view the world primarily as a book of symbols the correct deciphering of which should provide man with pragmatic rules on how to live well on earth and die happily in old age. This spirit is akin to the sentiments so succinctly expressed in Baudelaire's poem, "Correspondences":

** J.C. Cooper (1978) *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional symbols*.

"*La nature est un temple ou de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles.
L'homme y passe a travers des forets de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiars.*"

"Nature is a temple whose living pillars sometimes whisper words of uncertain meaning. As man passes by them, these forests of symbols turn their kindred gaze on him."
(My translation)

So it is hardly surprising that in Ifa every thing is done symbolically. The palm-Tree is Ifa's unique symbol and its fruit, the palm-nut is Ifa's emblem black being the colour of the divinatory nuts. Two vertebrae united or two cowries bound together symbolise bad omen or good omen respectively. The Giant Snail symbolises the gentleness and purity of Obatala the god of whiteness since the snail is slow to everything and is bloodless through and through.

Imagery

In many ways imagery partakes of the nature of symbolism in that both employ substitutional language but while symbolism deepens the perception of difficult or unfamiliar ideas imagery is colourful and pictorial in execution.

Here are a few examples of the use of imagery in the language of Ifa:

1. From Eji-Ogbe (Epega) $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$

Otitọ ni omi fi tẹlẹ isa.

TRANSLATION:

"A jar of water is lined with Truth."

This is good imagery for:

Truth is crystal clear.

2. From Iwori-Meji (Agboqla) $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \end{pmatrix}$

"Alabaun lo kqle tan
Lo yq Odqde si'bara idi."¹

TRANSLATION:

The Miser built a mansion
And spoilt it with a verandah at the back.

"The Miser" is Tortoise, equivalent of the Fox in European tales of the same genre as Yoruba tales of cunning and artifice. "The verandah at the back" is Tortoise's short tail. Traditional Yoruba houses have the verandah in front and not at the back. So this is good imagery for "A little mistake spoils a good job"

3. From (Agboqla)¹

Mqriwo-qpe ki-i qju wo ibiomi
Bi ko qe oju Olodumare.

TRANSLATION:

Palm-fronds turn their timid gaze
Nowhere else than heaven ward
Imploring the Omnipotent's favour.

The imagery here needs no gloss.

Footnote 1. "Irete-Meji" from: A. F. Agboqla, *Ojulowo Oriki Ifa* (1989) pp.221-222.

Suspense and Anticlimax

One device employed with dramatic effect in the language of Ifa is suspense and anticlimax. Here is an example in point:

From Ogbe-Alara (or Ogbe-Tura) $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$

Mo b'Erinja	I fought the Elephant
Mo d'Erin;	I threw him down
Mo b'Efɔn ja	I fought the Buffalo
Mo d'Efɔn	I threw him down;
Mo b'Olɔrun ja . . .	I fought with God . . .

The repetition of the same act in lines 1 to 4 creates suspense which is heightened by the daring statement of the fifth line.

"I fought with God . . . "

The suspense is relieved in anticlimax by an ingenious word-play on the verb "da" as follows:

. . . Mo b'Olɔrun ja	I fought with God
Olɔrun lo da mi s'ile-Aye	God threw me into the world
Eni Olɔrun da	whomsoever God throws
Ko xe-e da l'oro	Cannot be harmed by men
A dia fun Eɔa ti i	Thus declared Ifa-oracle to Creature
X'Omo Olodumare.	The Omnipotent's offspring.

Those familiar with the poetry of T. S. Eliot will discern the element of

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suspense and anticlimax mentioned above in his concluding verse from "The Hollow men":

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

Part IIC

Religious and Philosophical Ideas in Ifa

The stanzas of Ifa published in this book introduce the reader into a world of gods, goddesses and categories of thought with which he may not be familiar. Furthermore the ritual practices described are premised on certain philosophical ideas that belong to traditional Yoruba society.

If the reader be a Yoruba of modern times he would most probably have a passing acquaintance with these ideas as names without understanding their inner message simply because these ideas appear irrelevant to the present age of science and technology. If the reader belong to a different culture the empathy gap must necessarily be wider. For these reasons the religious and philosophical context of the stanzas should be clarified so as to allow full appreciation of the allusions and nuances therein.

The excellent works on the subject by the pioneering scholars such as Bishop James Johnson (*Yoruba Heathenism*) Dr. Samuel Johnson (*History of the Yorubas*) Dr. J. O. Lucas (*Religion of the Yorubas*) Prof. E. Bolaji Idowu (*Olodumare*) and, Dr. William Bascom (*Ifa Divination*) are authoritative and, despite minor faults, comprehensive.

My aim is to analyse the developmental stages of the religious and philosophical ideas behind the practice of Ifa as a religion as well as a divinatory system. These ideas have evolved over centuries, parallel with the

development of Yoruba society from stone-age beginnings through the agricultural age on to the Pre-European Urban Period - (The Iron Age).*

Stone-Age Society (Heaven and Earth)

The earliest Yoruba who lived in the South-Western forests of present day Nigeria were food gatherers and hunters. Their implements and tools were made from stone. The neolithic stage of this culture can be dated between 10,000 B.C and 500 B.C. at which date metals began to be used by these early Yoruba people. Their ideas about the world around them were as simple as their socio-economic life. Two entities were recognised by them: *Aye*, the physical world, which they personalised as *Ajalaye* (the power on *earth*) and *Orun*, personalised as *Ajalorun* (the invisible power above). *Ajalorun* was responsible for fertility, procreation, peace and good order on earth, provided *Ajalaye* paid regular and due obeisance to the former.

A glimpse at this culture is afforded us by the myth recounted by Dr.

Abimbola and taken from the Odu *Osa-Meji*: $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ as follows:

"Oke şe-ribiti-ş'ori-şonşo"
A dia fun fun Qba Ajalaye;
"Oke şe-ribiti-ş'ori-şonşo"

Footnote:*) See *The African Iron Age*(1971) edited by P. H.Shinn, in particular, the chapter on Nigeria by Frank Willet pp 7 - 9. R. S. Smith writes: "Thurstan Shaw's discovery of a stone-Age habitation near Akure has yielded ... radiocarbon dates showing occupation between the 10th and 2nd millennia B. C.; R. S. Smith *Kingdoms of the Yoruba* 1969, Page 5.

A dia fun Oba Ajalorun
Awon mejeji njija agba re'le Olodumare . . .*

TRANSLATION:

"Just as Hills rise from a broad base
Ending as a peak,
So things will get worse then come to crisis"

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the King on Earth
The same was predicted for the king in Heaven
Both took a quarrel over seniority to the Omnipotent . . .

The Story

The quarrel arose in this way: as friends they agreed to go hunting together. They kept a special part of the forest under preservation until the appointed time for the hunt was due then they set fire to the forest. The fire burned a long time without any animal running out of the forest as they expected.

Even when the fire died out no game was caught. In the end they entered the parched grounds and began destroying the hideout to force the game out. After much effort all they got was a small Bush-Rat. The quarrel ensued when Ajalaye, claiming seniority over Ajalorun, requested the Bush-Rat for himself. Ajalorun contested Ajalaye's claim stating contrariwise that the Bush-Rat belonged to him as the senior of the two.

When the quarrel became bitter with no compromise achieved, Ajalorun betook himself in anger to the world above affirming that before too long the whole earth would realise who was senior between the two erstwhile friends.

* From Abimbola, Wande (1977) page 17, *Iwori Meji Awon Oju Odu Merindilogun*.

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The result was that nature came to a stand-still; not a drop of rain or a droplet of dew fell on earth; Yams grew small tubers that quickly withered; ears of corn failed to ripen and soon dried up on the stalks; beans flowered but bore no fruits.

Life became topsy-turvy; there were pregnancies but no deliveries; barrenness became the order of the day. Semen dried up in men's organs and menses stopped to flow in women; the sick remained infirm. Finally rivers became little streams covered with fallen leaves. As the famine intensified storage barns were quickly emptied by hungry desperate men. Fowls pecked the dry earth in vain for the mere taste of water, animals would eat anything even stones.

When all the world no longer had peace the wise took counsel among themselves, added two cowries to three and went to consult the diviners.

Ifa Oracle declared to the querents:

"Things will still get worse
And come to a crisis
Unless you offer as sacrifice:
Two sleek rats and two fresh fish
Two well-fed hens and two fat-laden goats
Two big cows adorned with mighty horns
And add to these the controversial Bush-Rat.
That started the quarrel between two friends."

The offerings were brought and the sacrifice made. Thereafter, the diviners ordered that the sacrifice be taken to the world above as propitiation to Ajalorun otherwise the people of earth would never have peace.

Dr. Abimbola's comment on this myth is pertinent:

"The Yoruba conceive of the universe as consisting of two physical planes of existence: Aye (Earth) and Orun (Heaven). Originally these two planes were not completely separated from each other according to some Yoruba myths. In other words they both probably belonged to the same planet. At that a visitor from one plane of existence to the other had to do at the time was to pass through a border gate manned by a gate-keeper"

Footnote: 1 Wande Abimbola: *Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa* (1975) pp 261 - 307.

Dr. Abimbola omits to stress that the myth is a conflation of cultural practices from various stages of Yoruba history. For example the institution of monarchy, the concept of Olodumare and the Ifa divinatory system were unknown in the Neolithic Age. Furthermore, as with myths in general, contradictions are evident. For example the whole earth was barren and unproductive yet the querents were able to provide the offerings requested by the Ifa-Oracle!

That said, I think we can safely identify the core of the myth as very old, belonging in fact to the Neolithic period of Yoruba Culture. Hunting was by forest preservation and bush-burning' to chase out the game which was subsequently clubbed to death with stone weapons. There is no mention of metals of any kind. The god of Agriculture, Orixá-Okó and the god of metallurgy, Ogun are conspicuously absent.

The purpose of the myth was to explain the separation of the cosmos into two: one below, the world of men; one above, the invisible world that conditions the former. Thus considered the myth is cognate with similar myths of Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt which recount the separation of Heaven and Earth at the beginning of existence.

The Agricultural Age (Non-Ferrous Metallurgy: Concept of Orixá)

The discovery of Agriculture among the Yoruba has been dated around 500 B.C., when the late Stone Age gradually merged into the age of metallic tools.

The early metals available to the Yoruba were lead (*Oje*) Copper (*Baba*) and Brass or Bronze (*Ide*). We can safely accept that these three metals came into general use among the Yoruba between 500 B.C. and 300 B.C. — not forgetting that stone-Age implements and tools were not completely discarded. In fact, even till this day, stone-grinders and mortars are used for domestic and other purposes by the Yoruba. Iron metallurgy among the Yoruba became central to Yoruba culture over the period 300 B.C to 500 A.D.

Awolalu^[1] gives an account of the myth about the discovery of Agriculture among the Yoruba as follows:

"Orisa-Oko is the patron divinity of the Yoruba farmers. The real name of the person who is apotheosised and associated with successful farm work and the fertility of the land has been lost. But a Yoruba legend says that he once lived as a Chief in the town of IRAWO. He was sent away from the town and the community because he suddenly became leprosy. His kind wife decided to go with him.

While they were in this predicament both of them struggled to keep body and soul together by engaging in hunting and in fruit collecting respectively. Suddenly, by accident the wife discovered that some fruits eaten and thrown away in the past grew and yielded the same kind of fruits. She therefore started raising crops and getting food to provide for herself and her husband. As a result of eating the plant products and the flesh of the animals and birds he hunted in addition to using the medicinal powers in the surrounding herbs, the man was cured of his leprosy.

Both of them returned to *Irawo* and were quickly welcomed back by the people. Because of their noble mindedness they did not keep their newly acquired agricultural science to themselves but taught it to other. Very many people came to learn from them... (the people) associate with them the fertility of the land and successful farm work. And that was how the chief and his wife who once lived in the town of Irawo came to be deified"

Myth is history embellished with fancy as we can note from this account. The accidental discovery of agriculture is well attested in various cultures of man, the best known example of which was enshrined in the myth of the discovery of corn by the goddess Ceres of Greek and Roman antiquity. We do not have a similar myth recounting the origin of non-ferrous metallurgy among the Yoruba. We do know however that the availability of these metals allowed hunting for big game to become a skilled occupation. With fishing and animal husbandry as regular economic pursuits food supply became more constant and reliable. The end result was that the Yoruba settled in large urban communities under leaders chosen for their prowess in the hunt and in

Footnote 1. J. O. Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* (1979).

war although at this time there was no hereditary monarchy. The impact of these socioeconomic changes on the religious and philosophical ideas of the age could not have been otherwise but radical.

Ọlọrun and The Orixá

In neolithic times the Yoruba characterised the invisible world whose influence was perceptible in their physical environment as the abode of *Ajalọrun* (he who acts from the other world). In the agricultural age this nebulous idea was concretised into the expression *Ọlọrun* (God). The etymology of this word is usually explained by taking the prefixes *OL-* or *ONI-* ('Owner of' or 'Lord of') and adding it to *Ọrun* ('Heaven'). Thus Samuel Johnson^[1] gives "Lord of Heaven" for "Ọlọrun" whilst William Bascom^[2] gives "The sky God" for the same word, by translating "Ọrun" as "Sky," a mistaken reading as has been convincingly shown by Prof. Bolaji Idowu^[3] and Modupe Oduyoye^[4].

The word "*Ọrun*" occurs frequently in Ifa stanzas. What does it mean? The description of the "Ọrun ceremony" given by Samuel Johnson clearly reveals that "*Ọrun*" connotes "the mysteries of life and death pertaining to the other world". We should then interpret *Ọlọrun* as "Lord of the mysteries of Life and Death who reigns in the other world".

"The Yorubas,"

wrote Samuel Johnson^[5],

"however believe in the existence of an Almighty God, him they term Ọlọrun i.e. Lord of Heaven. They acknowledge him maker of Heaven and earth but too exalted to concern himself directly with men and their affairs . . . "

Footnote 1. Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas* (1926) p.26.

Footnote 2. William Bascom, *Ifa Divination* (1959) p.103.

Footnote 3. E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba belief* (1962).

Footnote 4. Modupe Oduyoye, *The Vocabulary of Yoruba Religious Discourse* (1971).

Footnote 5. Samuel Johnson *opus cit.* p.48.

This concept of *Olqrun* as a "*deus remotus*" though more sophisticated than that of *Ajalqrun* — the jealous divinity who demanded propitiation from creatures on earth — failed to satisfy the craving of ordinary men for a God with whom to relate. Consequently, as will be shown later, "*Olqrun*" himself was superseded by "*Olodumare*" in the Oduduwa Age (300 B.C. to 500 A.D.).

Prof. Bolaji Idowu^[1] argues persuasively against the idea of *Olqrun* as a "*deus remotus*" but he should have gone further in distinguishing clearly between *Olqrun* (the divinity of the Agricultural Age) and *Olodumare* (the Omnipotent God of the Oduduwa age). Rather the attributes of *Olqrun* were simply transferred to *Olodumare* and so the concept of him as a *deus remotus* died hard among the Yoruba particularly in the Brazilian and Cuban diaspora.

Serge Branly^[2] quotes a voodoo priest in Brazil thus:

"*Olqrun* is at the origin of things but he is a very old god . . . He is so important that he doesn't even bother with us. He's too far a way, no one ever calls him . . . He wouldn't even hear us. He's above human affairs."

It should therefore hardly surprise us that the Agricultural Age which allowed God no role in man's earthy affairs had to introduce the *Orixá* as the bridge that connects man to the divine sphere.

Who are the *Orixá*? The etymology offered by most authorities has generated more confusion than clarity on the subject. All that can be asserted with certainty is that the word *Orixá* is cognately related to the word *Ori* (Physical Head). By a progression of ideas the physical head is taken symbolically for "leader", "pre-eminent personality" and, in the last analysis, "supernatural power".

Footnote 1. Prof. E. Bolaji Idowu (1962) "*Olodumare*" pp. 140-143.

Footnote 2. Serge Branly (1975) "*Magumba*" Page 96.

Thus, as emphasised by Afolabi Ojo^[1], Orisa are either personified forces of nature such as rivers, hills, trees, wind, lightning and thunder or deified ancestors like *Orixa-Oko*.

Fagbemi Ajanaku^[2] in fact quotes a verse of *Ifa* from *Eji Ogbe* to show that Orisa are deified ancestors. The Yoruba slaves in Brazil and Cuba were quick to identify the similarity between their *Orixa* and the Roman Catholic Saints whom they were forced to venerate and so *Ogun* became St. George and *Oxun* became St. Catharine and so on.

In the Agricultural Age *Ilẹ* as the personified principle of fertility and Orixa'ko the deified discoverer of farming stand out prominently but we must not minimise the importance of Ogun at this early period.

Ilẹ

Ilẹ (Earth) with its appurtenances (rivers, lakes, seas, hills, mountains) was personified as the mother-goddess of fertility to whom regular worship was made and into whose bowels man finally returns at the end of his life.

This *Ifa* verse from Irete-Meji $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ summarizes the apotheosis of Earth thus:

Iyan bẹmu-bẹmu ni i kun inu igba,
 Orọ bẹmu-bẹmu ko kun ikun agbalagba
 A dia fun Ilẹ
 To ni oun l'oun o kere gbogbo aye je
 koi pe, koi jina,
 kawa ba ni ni jebutu ire . . .

Footnote 1. Afolabi Ojo (1966) "Yoruba Culture" Page 159.

Footnote 2. Chief Fagbemi Ajanaku (1978) "Iwe Asa Ibile Yoruba" pp. 3-4.

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Translation:

"Food may fill a dish till it can take no more
Words, no matter how secret, will ever remain safe
In the repository of an Ogboni's breast"
So declared Ifa-Oracle to Earth
Who craved universal worship.

See how prosperity quickly follows sacrifice!

Story:

Earth consulted Ifa-Oracle asking: 'Would she profit from men's endeavours in life?' Earth was told to offer for sacrifice sixteen squirrels, sixteen Home Pigeons and sixteen bags of cowries.

Earth readily complied. what happened thereafter? all the endeavours of men and women in life are returned to Earth with profit.

On Earth we build, on Earth we do all that matters and when we grow old and die we are swallowed by earth.

Man's profit in life and his end in death belong to Earth.

Note should be taken in this verse of the word "Agbalagba" another name for Ogboni in the context of Earth worship and propitiation.

Partly a political Organisation, partly a religious body the **Ogboni Secret Society** took its earliest form in the Agricultural Age as the cult of Mother-Earth.

"It was a cult,"

writes Ulli Beier,

"which appears to go very far back into Yoruba history, probably much further back than forms of anthropomorphic worship like Sango or Ogun."

Ile - (Ogboni)

Beier continues in the same article and describes the annual festival of the Ogboni cult called *Ekuru-Ole* which

"... takes place just before the planting season. The name Ekuru-Ole refers to certain bean-cakes which are prepared by the worshippers on this occasion ...

The Ogboni started as a worship of mother earth. This still forms the central part of all the ceremonies of the society. It is obvious that the proper time for propitiating the earth and ensuring its fertility is after the burning of the bush, just before the planting season."

Beier's account¹ clearly indicates that the earliest **Ogboni Cult** originated in the Agricultural Age (circa 500 B.C.) long before the intrusion of the "Oduduwa group" into Yorubaland. We may therefore question Prof. Bolaji Idowu's assertion² that the **Ogboni** secret society developed as a reaction of the original land-owners (**Onile**) against the "Oduduwa Group". The cult object of the **Ogboni** is known as "Onile" (He for whom the shrine is built, the Lord of the temple) not "Onile" (The Landlord). Secondly, far from indicating any opposition to Oduduwa, the Ogboni rituals actually eulogise and venerate him to this day; a concrete evidence that the **Ogboni Society** was peacefully adopted by the conquering **Oduduwa** polity.

We may thus view the cult of Mother Earth among the **Yoruba Ogboni** as cognate with similar Earth fertility rites of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria and Palestine.

Footnote 1. Ulli Beier, *A year of Sacred Festivals in one Yoruba Town* A special Nigeria Magazine Publication (1959) p.8.

Footnote 2. E. Bolaji Idowu writes in *Olodumare* (1962): "The cult object of the Ogboni is called "Onile" (The Landlord) in contradistinction from the "Interloper" who was *Oduduwa* the cult object of the new people" page 24.

In contrast, the myth of the origin of *Ogboni* recounted by Ibie¹¹ must be of very recent date and is patently designed to explain the name and practice of the cult with rather contrived etymology.

Here is the quotation in parts:

"During his journey back to heaven he (*Ofun-Meji*) met the limbless woman *Ofun-meji* invited her to return with him to earth so he could make the sacrifice for her there, thereafter he carried her on his back soon afterwards they came to the three-road junction (*Orita-Meta*). Before they got to the three road junction the woman told him that in the light of her condition she was not only forbidden to live in the town but also not to travel by daylight except by night. At that point they met a man who was a controller of the three road junction called *Ashipa*. With the assistance of *Ashipa* they cut a path into the bush and built a hut there. At the instance of the woman the hut had no door and the only way of knowing the entrance to the hut was the point at which the tree of life (*Akoko*) was planted as well as the point at which a palm-frond was tied to the hut the hut was called *Ile-Odi* popularly known today as *Iledi*."

"Before resuming his journey to heaven, *Ofun-meji* visited his close confidant called *Akpena* (*Apena*) who had been looking for a wife. Before the woman agreed to become *Akpena's* wife she brought out a mysterious wand on which he was made to swear an oath never to reveal her condition. She also said that if anyone else was coming to the hut to see her for any reason, he should be blind-folded to prevent him from seeing her condition. The only exceptions were *Ofun-Meji* and all other *Ifa* Priests after him.

"Before anyone else saw her the same oath had to be administered to him or her not to reveal her condition . . . The marriage of the crippled woman to *Akpena* flourished immensely . . . the two eldest children were called *Ogbo* nicknamed *Yaya* and *Oni* nicknamed *Yoyo*.

"The name *Ogboni* is a derivation from the names of its two founders *Ogbo* and *Oni*. It is reputed to be the first secret society on earth — according to *Orunmila*."

Readers knowledgeable in *Ogboni* rituals of initiation will, I am sure, readily decipher the import of the points mentioned in the text above.

Footnote 1. C. O. Ibie "Ifism" (1986) pp.248-250 Ile (earth) *Ogboni*.

In Ifa verses reference is frequently made to "*Awon Agba*" "*Agbalagba*" "*Osugbo*", "*Ogboni*"; the point to note is that these are interchangeable expressions for the cult of Earth as the Mother-goddess.

Orixa-Oko

The myth recounting the deification of the discoverer of agriculture in early Yoruba society has been quoted earlier in this chapter. There is another myth that portrays the god of Agriculture, *Orisa-Oko* as the guardian of domestic morality and marital fidelity.

"The Elders of yore believed that *Orisa-Oko* was the arbiter of disputes between women. If one woman accused the other of witchcraft and the latter denied the charge and contention ensued the matter would be referred to *Orisa Oko*. The accuser and the defendant would each provide a small calabash marked individually for each party. After verifying the spotless condition of the two calabashes the Chief Priestess of *Orisa-Oko* cult would perform certain rites over them and deposit them in the god's sanctuary for three days at the end of which the calabashes would be brought out for examination. Whichever of the two women provided the calabash which became black-stained would be declared the witch. The woman falsely accused would purchase a wooden club inset with iron with which, in the olden days at least, the malicious accuser was clubbed to death by the power of the *Orisa*"^[1]

If as has been argued earlier the Agricultural Age did not dispense of iron metallurgy the above myth must be seen as a corrupt text of the original account yet the mention of the iron-studded wooden clubs testifies to the incipient usurpation of the role of *Orisa-Oko* by *Ogun* the metal-divinity.

The new-yam festival was originally performed to offer the first fruits of the earth to *Orisa-Oko* and *Orisa-Oko* alone as stated in this translated text from Ogunbowale^[2]:

Footnote 1. Myth, translated from the Yoruba text of P. O. Ogunbowale *Awon Irumole ile Yoruba* (1962) p.44.

Footnote 2. P. O. Ogunbowale *Awon Irumole ile Yoruba* (1962) p.441.

Odun Ifa

"Farmers always supplicate Orisa-Oko to ensure the fertility of the earth so their crops might thrive and their harvest be bounteous. For this reason any farmer who succeeds in reaping a good harvest would present some of the products to Orisa-Oko. All farmers always do this before partaking of the fruits of the soil themselves."

Afolabi Ojo, P. O. Ogunbowale and J. O. Awolalu^[1] state that *Orisa-Oko's* worship is still prevalent in Ibadan, Abeokuta and Osun areas but little doubt exists as to the decline of the deity's status all over Yoruba land. In fact from the earliest years of the Agricultural Age Orisa-Oko's sole patronage of agriculture was beginning to be shared and later on usurped by Ogun. Here is a verse of *Ijala (Hunters' chant)* illustrative of this usurpation^[2];

Ni'jọ ti Ogun mbọ sile-aye
Işu lo mu lọwọ
Ooşa-Oko lo şikeji re
Wọn ni Iwo Orişa-Oko ki lo wa i şe?
O ni oun yio mu inu didun şe t'oun
wọn ni iyawo tani iwọ i şe
Oni Iyawo Ogun ni
O ni bi Ogun ko si ti-ije isu
Oun Orisa-Oko ko ni ti-ije Isu
Ogun dahun pe bi oun ko ba ti-ije isu
Orisa-Oko ko gbọdọ je isu.

Translation

"The day Ogun came on earth he brought a yam-tuber in one hand and hooked Orisa-Oko with the other. When Orisa-Oko was asked what all meant she replied that the arrangement suited her happily.

"Whose wife are you then?"

Footnote 1. Afolabi Ojo *Yoruba Culture* (1966) pp.168-169.
P.O. Ogunbowale *Awọn Irumole Ile Yoruba* (1962) pp.43-47
J.O. Awololu (1979) *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* pp.38-41.
Footnote 2. From *Ijala, Are Ode* (Ijala Hunters' Saga) by Oladipo Yemitan (1968) p.8

"Ogun's wife," she replied; "for if Ogun has not tasted the New yam, I, Orisa-Oko, cannot partake thereof."

"Yes," confirmed Ogun. "If I have not tasted the New-Yam Orisa-Oko dare not partake thereof."

By demoting Orisa-Oko a male divinity and erstwhile sole patron of agriculture into the subordinate role of Ogun's wife the devotees of Ogun succeeded in securing pre-eminence for their own god. Finally *Orisa-Oko* was reduced to marginal divinity as a rustic uncivilised god exemplified in this

verse from **Iwori-Meji** $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \end{pmatrix}$.

Ogun ja bi iji wolu'
 Orisa-Oko lo rin ihoho woja
 A dia fun Yewande
 yio logun olosa 'nnu.
 Yewande iwq lo-o seni
 Yewande iwq lo-o se'ni
 Yewande iwq lo-o s'eniyan
 Iwq lo wa loyun lo b'ole l'omq.

TRANSLATION:

"Beware of Ogun the violent one that burst into town like Tornado.
 Beware of Orisa-Oko the rustic one that walks naked unto the
 market place.
 Thus declared the oracle to Yewande.
 Beware of the ravishment that ends in Pregnancy
 Beware of the pregnancy that ends in shame
 Yewande heeded not the warning
 Yewande conceived and brought forth a brigand."

Agricultural Age — Orixá Ogun

Ogun who displaced *Orisa-Oko* as the patron-god of agriculture was in the beginning the Arch-deity of the Yoruba at their transition from the late Stone Age to the pre-ferrous metallic age. During this transition the Yoruba were breaking new frontiers and penetrating territories whose indigenes forcefully resisted the invaders. To protect the urban communities which were developing in hostile area the Yoruba chose leaders bold in warfare and ruthless in victory, so that we should regard Ogun as the deified "composite hero" of the age rather than a single personality. The possession of metallic weapons by the Yoruba invaders facilitated their penetration of the country. Metallurgy presupposes the taming of fire for community and domestic use and fire had been in use millennia before metals.

On this basis it is easy to understand the multiple patronages bestowed upon Ogun: god of warfare and the hunt, discoverer of fire and metallurgy. Finally, with the discovery of iron metallurgy much later in the Oduduwa Age, Ogun became patron of blacksmiths and all who work with metals. The uniting element in this concept of Ogun was that he was, to borrow Modupe Oduyoye's characterisation of Cain, "the divinisation of violence"^[1] and he was portrayed as such in the songs and praise-names composed by his devotees as well as in several verses of Ifa. A few examples are given below.

Ogun as the Arch-Divinity

Ogun O!
Ogun Onire
Okenla ki lẹhin Ire
Qsin Imole
Onile Kangun-Kangun Qrun
Ogun onile owo, Qlona qla.

Footnote 1. Modupe Oduyoye "Origin of the Ogun myth" in *Yoruba Religion Discourses* (1971) pp. 73 - 92; a very interesting essay.

TRANSLATION:

Hail Ogun
 Hail to you Lord of the city of *Ire*
 The immutable Hill that supports *Ire*
 Chief of divinities
 Lord of Innumerable mansions in heaven
 Hail to you, Ogun, who hold the key to wealth and prosperity.

Ogun as the Discover of Fire

Ni Ijo Ogun nto'roke bo
 Axo ina ni Ogun fi bora
 Ewu eje l'Ogun gbewo.

TRANSLATION:

The day Ogun descended from the Hills
 He was clothed in fire and blood.

Okiki,
 Ariwo
 A difa f'Ogun
 Yoo bi 'mo kan nan yoo husi kaye . . .

TRANSLATION:

"Fame, acclamation."
 Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Ogun
 Predicting for him a unique progeny.

Ogun consulted Ifa-Oracle asking: would he be blessed at last with his heart's desire - a child? 'sacrifice', Ogun was advised. 'You will beget a prodigy the fame of which will be world-wide. Attempts to kill this child will always fail'. Ogun sacrificed as advised.

When Ogun begat, he begat Fire. Soon after his birth in heaven Fire came on earth and wherever he settled there would be no peace or quiet. He might, for instance, leap unto a thatched roof and whilst all cried 'help, help save us from fire, Ogun's progeny', Fire would immediately strike at another roof. In this way fame and acclamation trailed Fire's path everywhere without abatement."

Odun Ifa

Ifa tradition emphasises the violent and bloody disposition of Ogun at the expense of his benevolent attitude.

This verse from *Oyeku-Eguntan* or *Oyeku-Ogunda* $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$ is pertinent:

Omi igbo ni i foju j'aro
Agbara ona nii foju jo iro wo ogodo ehinkule a foju rise-rise
A daa fun Ogun omo Olijan oole nlo sogun Igbo-Akara
Aja kan ati egbeje l'ebọ
Ogun gbo, O ru.
Od'ohun tan, o m'oko se pipa, O mu aya se mimu
O ko omọ wẹwẹ S'ayo bọ.

TRANSLATION:^[1]

The fight will prove bitter
Like indigo-dyed forest pond;
Blood will flow
Like torrents clogged with mud.
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Ogun patron of brigands
As he set out for the battle of Igbo-Akara.
In the outcome Ogun killed the men, captured their wives and
brought home the children as free booty.

In assessing this characterisation of Ogun by Ifa priests we must remember that the current Yoruba pantheon took shape in the Oduduwa Age (the Iron

Footnote 1. Translation modified from J. O. Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* (1979) pp.100-101.

Age) whose theologians were the Ifa Priests of the Orunmila School. So whereas Ogun's devotees still address their patron as:

Ogun Onire, Oko mi
Oxin Imole¹.

TRANSLATION:

Ogun, my revered Lord of the city of Ire
First among the divinities.

The Oduduwa Age had actually demoted Ogun the Arch-Divinity in favour of Obatala. Grudging recognition of Ogun's erstwhile primacy is conceded in this myth recorded by Ibie:

"Ogun the Iron divinity and the most Senior of the divinities created by God was also physically the strongest of all the 200 divinities He is often referred to as the path-finder because he led the second reconnaissance mission from heaven to earth. We are told by Ogunda-meji that it was on account of the physical attributes of Ogun that God appointed him to blaze the trail of the second habitation of the earth. He is known to be self-centred and conceited and scarcely ever consults anyone else for advice."²

As could be expected from this biased account, Ogun failed in the mission and, as expected also, Orunmila (some accounts say Obatala) accomplished all objectives illustrating the superiority of tact and wisdom over brute physical strength.

Ogun's benevolence towards his devotees is illustrated in the quotations below:³

Footnote 1. From A. F. Agboola, *Ojulowo Oriki Ifa* pp.128-129.

Footnote 2. From E. M. Lijadu (1908) *Ifa Verse* 70, Page 52.

Footnote 3. Oladipo Yemitan (1963) *iyala, Are Ode* p.3.

Ogun as Protector

Ogun nan ni o wole d'ọdẹ
Ogun nan ni o wole d'ọdẹ
Eni ran ni lajo nii wole deni
Ogun nan ni o wole d'ọdẹ.

TRANSLATION:

Ogun will protect the hunter's household;
For when the hunter is out on Ogun's Mission
Who else but Ogun should protect his household?

Ogun as a Demanding God

Eni ba ko yan ko yara ko t'Ogun sile
Eni ba ro'ka ko yara ko t'Ogun sile
Ogun Onire, ọkọ mi, a gbolu irin
Ajangbodo erigi, koriko odo ti iru mini-mini.
Awọn asiwere eniyan l'o ni b'Ogun ba lo s'odo
Awọn yio má a lọ s'oko igi
Wọn o-o mo p'orisa ti i gba'le gb'odo
To le gba oko igi l'ọwọ wọn ni
Èbẹ l'emi n bẹ erigi l'ogbun
Pe ko ma gbale-gbodo
Ko ma gb'oko-igi l'ọwọ wa.
Ogun ni gbau bi igi da
Ogun ni elewele Okunrin
Iku tii forija ti i fi iru ja.^[1]

TRANSLATION:

Those who serve food had better first start with Ogun, my revered
Lord of Ire, Chief Artificer in iron, Lord that strikes equally on

Footnote 1. C. O. Ibie *Ifa*(1986) p.166

o	o
o	o
o	o
oo	oo

Ogunda-Meji.

land as by sea yet is gentle like reeds on riverbank.

Foolish indeed are they who choose to go farming when Ogun is intent on fishing. Do they not know that Ogun is the divinity that deprives men of home, catch and crop when his is crossed?

As for me I supplicate the dread Lord that he preserve for us homestead, catch and crop for he strikes suddenly, when least expected and he is the implacable warrior armed, like Death, with missiles from head to tail."

Unlike the deprecation of Ogun's violence in Ifa verses, the devotee's tribute is filled with awe and reverence.

Ogun as Patron of Fertility in Marriage

Ogun's devotees believe in the power of their patron god to grant them the blessing of children:

Onile ori oke tenre
Ogun je m r'omo pe ran n'see^[1].

TRANSLATION:

You that dwell on yonder hill-top,
Ogun, give me children to adorn my home.

Querents consulting Ifa-Oracle for childlessness may be advised to sacrifice to Ogun. When their supplications are heard such children are named Ogunbunmi (*Ogun's gift*) Ogunlana (*Ogun overcomes barrenness*) and so forth. Incidentally on this matter of eponymous names Ogun could be adjudged the god with the widest geographical spread among the Yoruba.

Footnote 1. From Oladipo Yemitau *Ijala, Are Ode* (1963) Page 6.

Ogun as Custodian of Justice

Ogun is reputed as a strict upholder of sacred covenants in Yoruba Society. In times past, covenant breakers, false witnesses or mischievous litigants were obligated on Ogun's popular symbol — a piece of crude Iron. This practice was retained under British colonial rule in courts of its jurisdiction for non Muslims or non-Christians who declared themselves traditional religionists and even today after independence from Britain, Nigeria still observes the protocol.

This statement from an Ifa-stanza emphasises Ogun's reputation for summary justice and may explain the dread of litigants for false swearing:

" . . . Wọ̀n ni ki wọ̀n fi arawọ̀n si aye to toni. Ni wọ̀n ba mu Ogun
wọ̀n fi joye abenilorì. Enikeni t'ò ba ti se, Ogun ni O maa be lori .
" [1]

TRANSLATION:

"Each divinity was to be appointed a befitting function. Ogun was appointed to supervise capital punishment and whoever was found guilty was handed over to Ogun who straightaway would arrange his execution by decapitation."

All these attributes' of Ogun are mentioned in Ifa verses although an over-emphasis of the god's violent nature and his demotion from first position among the Orixas stand out more prominently than any other.

The Iron Age (Oduduwa Age)

"The phase of transition from a stone-using to an iron-using economy,"

wrote Frank Willet,^[2]

"is one of the most interesting periods in Nigerian pre-history."

Footnote 1. From A. F. Agboṣa *Ojuloṣo Oriki Ifa* (1989).

Footnote 2. See Frank Willet in *The African Iron Age Nigeria* p.26: "An outstanding characteristic of the Yoruba is their Urbanism which Bascom has shown to be of great antiquity."

This phase has been dated between 500 B.C. and 500 A.D. As far as the Yoruba are concerned we may safely accept the following dates:

Late Stone Age	10,000 B.C to 500 B.C.
Non-ferrous Metallic Age	500 B.C. to 300 B.C.
Iron Age	300 B.C. to 500 A.D.

If these dates are valid then the Yoruba Iron Age compares favourably with that of other peoples:

Ancient Egypt	600 B.C to 500 B.C.
India and China	500 B.C (circa).
Britain (Celts)	450 B.C.

The ancient people of Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine hold pride of place with the Hittites of Anatolia for having discovered the use of Iron between 1,600 B.C and 1,500 B.C. Ancient Greece and Persia are credited with the same discovery around 1,200 B.C.

Of the metals known to the ancient Yoruba, Lead, Copper, Brass or Bronze preceded Iron by about two centuries. What is the evidence? The case of the precedence of lead is not in serious dispute.

"Lead, the easiest of all metals to extract from its ore,"

wrote Dennis Williams⁽¹⁾,

"might have been known in Africa since early antiquity and was probably, like Tin, worked from very remote times."

Footnote 1. Dennis Williams in *Sources of Yoruba History* (1973) in the Chapter "Art in Metals" pp.140-144 Williams gives slightly different dates from the above.

Indirect evidence is present in some Ifa verses. For example

- i) Verse from Ofun-Meji $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ in my collection in this book gives the metals Brass (Bronze) Lead, Copper without any mention of Iron.

Tutu-tutu-tutu laa rọ Idẹ
Tutu-tutu-tutu laa rọ oje
Tutu-tutu-tutu laa rọ Baba.

Brass (Bronze) is first heated then cast cold
Lead is cast-cold after heating,
Copper is heated then cast-cold.

- ii) Bascom^[1] in a verse from Iwori-Meji $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \end{pmatrix}$ gives Iron as the youngest of three brothers: Brass, Lead, Iron.

"HORSE AWAKENS IN THE MORNING, IT TAKES THE BIT IN ITS MOUTH,"
"SUN ENTERS THE HOUSE THROUGH CHINKS IN THE WALL,"
"SKY-GOD TURNS THE MOON HIGH UP ABOVE" **and**
"RAINBOW THE FOOLISH ONE STAYS IN THE HEAVENS SHINNING VERY BRIGHTLY"
were the ones who cast Ifa for Brass, beat palm-nuts for Lead and shared it with Iron the last born of these three children.

Ifa says "These are three children of the same mother . . .

Another indirect evidence placing Iron as the last of the four metals to be worked by the Yoruba can be deduced from Oduyoye's linguistic analysis of the word "*Agbede*" Oduyoye^[2] analyses "*Agbede*" (*Blacksmith*) as derived

Footnote 1. From Wm. Bascom, *Ifa Divination* (1969) page 97.

Footnote 2. Modupe Oduyoye, *The Vocabulary of Yoruba Religious Discourse* (1971).

from *a-gbẹ-ide* (a carver of bronze or brass = bronze or brass-smith). On this basis the first smiths among the Yoruba worked in bronze or brass. With the later discovery of iron the same word *Agbẹde* was applied to a blacksmith instead of *Agberin* which would have been etymologically more correct.

Dennis Williams' contention that Bronze (Brass) and Copper were first worked by the Yoruba during the Iron Age is highly debatable.

The main point in emphasising the later discovery of Iron after Lead, Bronze and Copper by the Yoruba is that the conquest of Yorubaland by the Oduduwa invaders is predicated on their possession of iron weaponry which conferred on them military superiority over the indigenes in the area. This hypothesis has been argued earlier in this book in the dedicatory Chapter on Dr. J. Olumide Lucas.

Suffice it to repeat the conclusion from that argument that the Oduduwa Age should be dated towards the end of the first millennium B.C. and the beginning of the first century A.D. The characteristics of this Age were: advanced urbanisation, diversification and specialization of the economy, hereditary monarchy and the emergence of a leisure class of philosophers theologians and priests. Ultimately the resultant effect on the religious practices and philosophical ideas of the times was the ascendancy of *Ifa* of the *Qrunmila School*. The *Ifa* priests and philosophers became the custodians of orthodox religious dogma and wasted no time in subordinating the cults of other *orixa* to their own particular reading of the new theology. For a start the demands of *Ifa* as a profession facilitated this role. The apprenticeship was long and demanding. This was followed by an itinerary which took the fledgling *Ifa* priest to distant parts of Yorubland for specialization under older and more experienced practitioners. In turn, a cosmopolitan culture developed which strove to identify universal principles and unite all strands of belief. This is what I call *The New Theology of the Oduduwa Age*.

The New Theology

What was new about the theology of the Oduduwa Age?

First the Ifa priests of the Orunmila School created a grand myth out of the disparate legends about the deified heroes (the Orixa) and the divinised forces of nature which they inherited from the Agricultural Age. Now in the Iron Age the Orixa were conceived as pre-existent beings in heaven who descended on earth to create favourable conditions for human life to flourish. The city of Ife was their initial focus of activity before their eventual dispersal "over the world".

Second, the concept of God as a "*deus remotus*" (*Olorun*) was replaced by that of an omnipotent creator who participated actively in human affairs howbeit through the agency of the *Orixa*. This Omnipotent Being was called *Odumare*, *Edumare* or *Olodumare*. He was the King in heaven and the *Orisa* were his ministers in much the same way as *Oduduwa* was king on earth assisted by his generals, chiefs, ambassadors — his "Sons". It should be noted in passing that the attributes of this Supreme Being detailed in Prof. Idowu's excellent book were elaborated by the new theologians of the Oduduwa Age and did not exist during the early stages of the evolutionary process.

This quotation from Wande Abimbola^[1] illustrates Olodumare's role as King and Ruler above, despatching the *Orixa* to earth on ministerial errands:

"Each of the divinities who landed at Ife carried a specific assignment from Olodumare, the Yoruba High God. Ifa was charged with the duty of moulding the young earth by the use of his profound wisdom and understanding. Ogun, the iron divinity was charged with using his extra ordinary physical power, bravery and prowess to tackle all problems of heroism and warfare.

"*Oriṣa-Nla* the creation divinity was charged with the duty of moulding human beings in the shape in which we now find ourselves. *Eṣu* the trickster god was responsible for keeping aṣe the divine and potent power with which the divinities performed supernatural wonders."

Footnote 1. Wande Abimbola *Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa* (1975) p.3.

This Ifa verse^[1] portrays Olodumare as an impartial judge:

Ọwọ ewe o to pepe,
Ti agbalagba o wọ keregbe,

Isẹ ewe ba bẹ agba
ki o ma se kọ mọ;

Gbogbo wa la nisẹ a jọ mbẹ araa wa,

A dia fun Ọrunmila

Eyiti akapoo 're
O pe l'ẹjọ lọdọ Olodumare.

Olodumare wa ranse si Ọrunmila
Pe ki o wa sọ idi naa
Ti ko fi gbe akapoo re.

Nigbati Ọrunmila de iwaju Olodumare
O ni oun sa gbogbo agbara oun fun akapo
O ni ipin akapo ni' o gbọ.

Nigbana ni ọrọ nan
Too wa ye Olodumare yeke-yeke
Inuu rẹ si dun
Pe oun ko da ẹjọ ẹkọkun kan.

My Translation

No one is self-sufficient:
A child's hand may not reach to a high shelf
But neither can an adult's pass through the narrow neck of a gourd.

Footnote 1. E. Bolaji Idowu *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (1967)

If a favour be asked by the child
Let not the adult refuse to oblige
Asking and receiving are reciprocal,

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila
Whom his devotee accused before Olodumare;

Olodumare summoned Orunmila
to explain his failure to advance his devotee's cause.
Arguing his case before Olodumare.

Orunmila explained that far from neglecting his devotee's interests
he had in fact done his best for him in every circumstance.
unfortunately his devotee's wishes always ran counter to his destiny.

Then it was that the matter became clear and Olodumare was
pleased that he had not hastily decided before hearing the other side."

The legal principle of "*audi alterem partem*" could not be more clearly
enunciated.

Thirdly the creative role of Olodumare was shared with the Orixá Obatala
and the heavenly potter Ajala. Olodumare uttered the *fiat* that man should
be, and provided him with Breath (*Emi*) that sustained life. Obatala was
deputised by Olodumare to mould man's physical form and Ajala constructed
the physical head wherein resided man's inner self (*Ori*) or Guardian Angel,
(to borrow a Christian terminology), or Destiny. This done, it devolved on
man to choose his own "*Ori*" which thereby determined his course on earth.

Lastly the Orixá themselves were arranged in a new hierarchical order. Ogun
the erstwhile arch-divinity of the Agricultural Age was down-graded in favour
of Obatala. The other orisa were accorded positions subordinate to the
Trinity of Exu-Orunmila-Obatala. This trinity was placed one step in status
below Olodumare who was the unique and omnipotent being ruling the

destiny of all, from the Orisa all the way, down to man. Below the trinity the other Orisa such as **Ogun, Xongo, Osun** etc. enjoyed varying degrees of importance. Let us consider some of these Orixas in their new status.

Obatala

The Yoruba pride themselves as an urbane, mature, gentle-natured people who believe in fair-play and who respect the opinions and attitudes of others. However, as with peoples the world over these virtues are more honoured in words than in action. To the Yoruba so long as a man upholds these ideals he is a gentleman.

It is my view that this attitude to life which the stereotype Yoruba gentleman considers peculiar and primordial to his race in fact originally derived from the life and work of a moral teacher, an itinerant sage of the Oduduwa Age. That man was later deified as Obatala much the same way as the Indians of the 6th Century B.C. consecrated Gautama as the Buddha. Indeed Obatala's insistence on purity of thought and uprightness in action are reminiscent of some aspects of Buddhism.

The legends and myths that grew around his life indicate unmistakably that Obatala must have flourished in the peaceful years of the oduduwa polity.

He was a pacific unambitious sage who preferred the dignity of age to the pomp and circumstance of royalty as shown by this Ifa verse^[1].

Awon tolotolo ti kekere fu irungbon se wiri.

Adia fun Obatala Osere-Igbo
Ti won ni ki o wa jo ye ni ile-Ifon

Footnote 1. From Ogbe-'Di in E. M. Lijadu's *Ifa* (1908) Verse 10 page 17.

Ọdun Ifa

Ọbatala ko; o ni oun ko jẹ
Ki wọn sa fi oun jẹ Baba-Arugbo
Njẹ Obatala Ọsẹ-Ọgbo Arugbo Iṣe-Ifon . . .

TRANSLATION

Turkeys sprout goatee-beards from youth.

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle
To Obatala the Ancient of Days
When he was offered
The crown of the city of IFON.

Obatala refused, Obatala declined and said
'It is enough if I be called the Ancient of Days'.

Well then, hail to thee, Elderly sage of Ifon.

Obatala's gentleness and longevity are stressed time without number in Ifa verses.

This verse^[1] from **Ika-Meji** $\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$ is a case in point:

Ebiti pa Ago wixin o dobale gbọọrọ,
O pa gbogbo Nla-Eku o dọbale gbọọrọ
O wa wo sori Igbin ko lee paa
O di ọjọ metadilogun ti ebiti ti npa igbin ti ko le-e paa
Kokooko ni ara Igbin le labe re,
A da fun Obatala Ọsẹ-Ọgbo
Ti iwa rẹ yio ro, pẹ-ẹ-ẹ
Ti yio fi gbe aye ju gbogbo Irunmole lo,

Footnote 1. From E. M. Lijadu's *Ifa* (1908) p.15.

Wọn ni Ee ti ri?
Oni ẹyin ko mope Osunsun ki-i ro iro Atori
Ko fi'je beḗ, je?
Nje ẹso-eso ma ni ti Obatala o
Eso-eso ni elepo nrin bi ile ba nyo
Eso-eso.

TRANSLATION:

Small-Rat falls into snare
And straight-way falls dead,
Giant-Rat falls into snare
And falls flat-dead.
At turn of Giant-Snail
Snare tried and tried
Giant-Snail did not die.

Sixteen days passed
Giant-Snail far from dying
Waxed stronger within snare

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to **Obatala**,
The Ancient of Days.

His life was gentle and
Destiny bestowed on him
Longer life than any divinity on earth,

Ifa was asked: Why was it so?

Ifa replied: Do you not know that
The **Osunsun** plant, strong though it be
Cannot bend half the way as **Atori** ere it snaps?

Strength is weaker than gentleness
Obatala is very gentleness
He falls gently, he moves gently

As one must do
Who carries oil on slippery ground.

E. M. Lijadu^[1] from whose book the verse is taken adds a commentary as follows:

Iku li a pe ni ebiri nibin, gbogbo obun ti iku i pa li a si npe li eku pelu; nje a fi ese yi wi pe iku ko ni agbara lori Obatala.

Pataki iwa ti awon baba wa imaa be mo Obatala ni iwa pese-pese; nitorina ni won se yan Igbin ti ko ni egungun rara bi aayo eran re.

TRANSLATION:

"Snare is a symbol for Death in this verse just as all victims of Death are called rats; in effect the verse states that death has no dominion over Obatala.

"The leading attribute of Obatala emphasised by our ancestors is his gentleness; for this reason the Giant Snail is considered Obatala's favourite sacrificial offering because it is boneless."

Obatala's moral rectitude stood out clearly against the questionable lifestyle of other Yoruba divinities. Unlike the violent god *Ogun* who dressed in palm-fronds the gentle *Obatala* wore clothes of pure white. His tender appellation: 'The White-Clothed One who won universal worship' (*Alaso funfun ti nraye apesin*) contrasts strongly with the dread and panic evoked by the mere mention of *Xoggo's* name. Unlike *Orunmila*, *Ogun* and other male divinities in the pantheon *Obatala* practised strict monogamy and abstained from adultery, fornication and infidelity. His only wife *Yemowo* testified to this virtue of *Obatala* in the following words:

A ko lee gbe aarin oji enia k'eni ma si wi orisa-nla ri omigba a ya 'nle ko to fo wo mu Yemowo nikan'A ko lee gbe a ye Olufe k'orun ka ya pupo je kogun.

TRANSLATION:

It is impossible to live among forty wives and avoid slips of the tongue. *Orisa'nla* sees the possibility of marrying two hundred wives

Footnote 1. E. M. Lijadu (1908) *Ifa* p.15.

and yet cleaves to *Yemowo* alone. One who carries the responsibility of rulership over the civic life of *Ife* cannot expect to succeed if at the same time he has to cope with a multiplicity of wives.

Obatala's only fall from this moral pedestal is recorded in an Ifa verse Otura-

Tutu $\begin{pmatrix} oo & o \\ oo & oo \\ o & o \\ oo & o \end{pmatrix}$.

Epo kete, Ala kete
 Lo di fa f'Obatala Osere-Igbo
 Bi a ba ko aṣọ rere sile a ko gbodo fon 'na sii
 Nti **Ode-Iranje** lọ gunwa l'ode-Aiye
 O faṣọ funfun bora, O mọmu yo tan
 Epo fo sii I'ṣọ.

TRANSLATION:

Palm-Oil should be kept well away from white as those clothed in purity should eschew vice. Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Obatala, the Ancient of Days when he left the **City of Iranje** to win sceptre and crown on earth. He got drunk on palm wine and bespoiled his white dress with palm-Oil.

This drunken episode became a stigma and so a taboo was imposed on the use of palm-oil and alcohol for Obatala's devotees. Some legends basing their argument on this episode claim that Obatala lost the privilege of creating the earth, to Oduduwa, as a result of his drunken misadventure.

On this matter of Yoruba cosmogony there is no agreement among writers as to the ascription of agency though, sure enough, the content of the different legends is identical in essentials.

Johnson states^[1]:

"Oduduwa was sent by Olodumare from heaven to create the earth."

Footnote 1. Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas* (1926) p.143.

Odun Ifa

One version from Idowu^[1] gives the myth *in extenso* but names Obatala (Orixa-Nla) as the creator.

"What moved Olodumare to think of creating the solid earth no one knows. He conceived the idea and at once carried it into effect. He summoned Orisa-nla, the Arch-divinity to his presence and charged him with the duty: for material He gave him a leaf packet of loose earth (some say the loose earth was in a snail's shell) and for tools a five-toed hen and a pigeon.

"When Orisa-nla arrived, he threw the loose earth on a suitable spot on the watery waste. Then he let loose the hen and the pigeon and these immediately began the work of scattering and spreading the loose earth. This they did until a great portion of the waste was covered. When enough of it had been covered Orisa-nla went back and reported to Olodumare that the work had been accomplished."

Incidentally we should see Wole Soyinka's rather cryptic sentence quoted below as an indirect reference to the creation of earth by Obatala as given by Idowu.

"And of these floods of the beginning, of the fevered fogs of the beginning, of the first messenger, the thimble of earth, a fowl and an ear of corn, seeking the spot where a scratch would become a peopled Island . . ."

Idowu's second version of the creation of earth reads^[2]:

"To the myth of the creation of earth there is a variant which we cannot ignore. We have related above that Orisa-nla was the agent of Olodumare in the accomplishment of the work. This variant however makes another agent whose name was Oduduwa the one who actually carried out the instruction which Olodumare gave to Orisa-nla and that happened in this way. When Orisa-nla had got his instructions he left the presence of Olodumare in order to go and do as he was told. On his way he became very thirsty and drank his fill of a tempting supply of palm-wine which happened to

Footnote 1. E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (1962) p.19.

Footnote 2. *ibid* p.22.

be around. In consequence of that he became drunk and fell into a deep slumber . . .

"Oduduwa came down [from heaven] descending by a chain and found Orisa-nla helpless. He did not wake him up or pity his sorry plight he simply collected quietly the material and tools handed to him by Olodumare and went to perform the task . . .

"Our first story that Orisa-nla was commissioned by Olodumare and that he created the solid earth with . . . the material and tools supplied by Him represents the earlier belief of the Yoruba about the foundation. The variant came into being in consequence of the incursion of a foreign people which became masters of the land and therefore sought to displace the indigenous cult with their own"^[1].

On the contrary, Obatala's role in the creation of man is uncontested. Man's physical form in its perfect and imperfect modalities was the exclusive preserve of Obatala, gentle divinity, charged by Olodumare to this end. His devotees never cease to praise him thus:

Èni ọju ẹ mu
Orisa ni maa sin;
A-da 'ni bo ti ri
Orisa ni maa sin;
Èni ran mi wa
Orisa ni maa sin.

Translation

Artificer of eyes and nose
Creator of man in various forms
Divinity, source of life on earth
Thee shall I ever worship.

This is Fabunmi's authoritative version of Obatala's creative role^[2]:

"Tradition says that Olodumare created man as a rough solid figure leaving Obatala to put the finishing touches by giving him a shape, a face, a mouth nose, eyes, ears, limbs and so on. This is why all physical defects are considered either as Obatala's mistakes or his intentional acts to punish some wicked soul or persons.

"All having physical abnormalities or defects are considered dedicated to Obatala and they are regarded as people who should not be man-handled and who are sacred to him

Footnote 1. E. Bolaji Idowu, *opus cit* p.28.

Footnote 2. Chief M. A. Fabunmi (1968) *Ife Shrines* p.6.

Odun Ifa

— people like albinos, lame people, dwarfs, hunch backs and others with deformities.
They are usually referred to as '*Eni Orisa*', meaning persons belonging to the great Orisa and who are specially made by him:

The same sentiment informs this Ifa verse from Eji-Ogbe⁽¹⁾ $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$:

Gbogbo Ori Afin ewu
Abuke lo ru eru Orisa ma so . . .

TRANSLATION:

Respect the Albino
Respect the Hunchback

The Albino's hair is grey with age
The Hunchback carries a divine burden . . .

And this from Irete-Gbe⁽²⁾ $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$:

Kurukuru boju opopo
Ijokun t'ala bole

A difa fun Qba-nla Ogiri ba jigbo.
won be Qbatala titi
odun kọkanlelogun li a ri Afin
won ni i Ee ti ri?

O ni itanna oun ni eyi
Nje eyin ko mo pe Afin ni itana Orisa?

TRANSLATION:

"The furthest end of the road
Is hid by misty weather
Ijokun, climbing plant,
Hides the forest's beauty."

Footnote 1. Wande Abimbola, *Ijule Ohun Enu Ifa* (1968) p.21.

Footnote 2. E. M. Lijadu, *Ifa* (1908) Verse 22 page 27.

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle
To the Great Divinity
At that time when
The whole world, amazed, asked:

"Does it require
Twenty-one years
To create one Albino?"

Orixá-Nlá replied:

"But this is
The flower of my creation!
Do you not understand
That the Albino is *Orixá's* flower?"

Wole Soyinka^[3] gives an accurate account, howbeit in obscurantist language, of Obatala's attributes in these words:

"... of the lover of purity the unblemished one whose large compassion embraced the cripple and the dumb, the dwarf, the epileptic - and why not indeed for they were creations of his drunken hand ..."

It is hardly surprising therefore, that endowed with such excellent attributes, Obatala was exalted above all other Orisa and displaced Ogun to become the Arch-Divinity of the New Theology. **Orisa-nlá** or simply **Orisa** came to signify for the Yoruba of the Oduduwa Age "Divinity *par excellence*" because it was an Age whose ethos and mores no longer required the glorification of violence represented by Ogun. It was the Golden Age of Yoruba history and was not to be equalled until the peaceful times of Alaafin Abiodun of Oyo nearly two thousand years later.

The Iron Age - (Exu)

Before the Iron Age the Yoruba worshipped *Exu* as the protector god of town and home. For this reason *Exu's* image was usually placed at the town gates, in front of homes or at any cross-roads. The picture below illustrates the main features delineated on Exu's image carved in wood.

Footnote 3. Wole Soyinka *The Interpreters* (1965) p.224.



Plate 9: A Drawing of *Exu* ~ from P. O. Ogunbowale: *Awon Irunmole Ile Yoruba* (1963).

Note the hook-like excrescence pointing backward from the occiput. Called *Ogo-Exu*. In Yoruba it symbolised Exu's ability to see behind himself with the same acuity as with his eyes in front. Thus, like the Roman god Janus, Exu was credited with foresight and hindsight so that his image assured protection by foreseeing danger emanating from any direction and diverting it elsewhere. Note the necklace with pendants of cowries symbolising Exu's dispensation of wealth. Note also the object held in the left hand. That is *Axe*, Exu's potent repository of words and acts of magical wonders. Finally note the characteristic facial marks of *Ketu* a city mythically reputed to have been founded in ancient times by Exu. Exu devotees bear names such as *Esugbami* (Exu protects me) *Esulana* (Exu opens the way e.g. to prosperity

or progeny). Exu himself is known as **Elegbara** (The mighty one of wonders).

Exu was also worshipped in the form of a piece of laterite or rock stuck to earth — a sure evidence of Exu's stone Age origins — and propitiated with daily unctions of palm oil. Incidentally too this cultus is akin to the patriarch Jacob's Bethel episode.

Exu as a stone-Age divinity and Exu as protector of community and family are concepts still very much extant today among the ordinary devotees of the god. However the philosophical concept of Exu as the principle of chance or probability took its origin in the Oduduwa Age and is part of Ifa's special teaching. It is not difficult to understand how Exu acquired this role under the **New Theology**. Exu's home is the cross-roads: Ika-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$$

Igbori nile Eegun,
Iranje nile Oosa,
Ita gbanbgba nile Elegbara.

TRANSLATION:

The departed ancestors were first revered in the city of **Igbori**,
Orisa-nla was first venerated in the city of **Iranje**;
The mighty one of wonders has his shrine
In any public place where three or more roads cross.

In actual and symbolic terms the cross-roads represent the moment of choice between good fortune and ill-fortune. Most accidents occur at physical cross roads. Doubt, hesitation, indecision occur at mental cross-roads. Exu therefore symbolises that *MOMENT OF CHOICE*, that *PROBABILITY FOR GOOD OR ILL FORTUNE*, resulting from *CHOICE*. As a further extension of this logical analysis Exu becomes the neutral locus between Good and Evil as moral categories.

Zoroastrianism regarded Good and Evil as antinominal Absolutes. It postulated a scheme where *Abura Mazda* (Absolute Good) incessantly combated *Angra Mainya* (Absolute Evil).

The Yoruba new-theologians sought to build a bridge between Good and Evil by positing a neutral principle personified as Exu which was neither good nor evil in essence but which could act in either capacity.

We have already shown in the chapter "What is Ifa?" how Exu, as the principle of probability, became closely related to Ifa divinatory-system.

Ifa priests believe that, through the institution of sacrifice, they have a solution to the problem of Evil. As the artificer of good fortune, Exu, if propitiated, would ensure the querent's desires; neglected, Exu would foment trouble even where there was none because, he was, also, the artificer of ill-fortune.

The Yoruba proverb *Eni rubo ni Exu igbe* (Exu aids those who sacrifice) thus reduces the moral issue of Good and Evil to that of ritual observance and propitiation.

Exu odara (the magician), Elegbara or Elegba (the mighty one of wonders) Exu Laalu Omokunrin Ode (the noble man who dwells at cross-roads) is a completely different character from the *Satan*^[1] of the Christian Bible. The confusion of identity arose from the mistranslation of *Satan* or *Devil* into Yoruba by the word 'Eṣu' instead of the more appropriate *Awon Aye* (Evil Powers), *Awon Iya ami* (Our Ladies of nightly rites) *Ajogun Orun*^[2] (Punitive knights from Heaven namely *Iku* (Death) *Arun* (Disease) *Ofo* (Loss) *Eṣe* (Destruction) and *Ejo* (Lawsuit) as the case may be.

Footnote 1. See Genesis Chapter 28 verses 10-19.

Footnote 2. See verse 5 under Ika-meji on page 429 in this book.

Here are some Ifa verses that give portraits of Exu from different perspectives.

- 1). From Oyeku b'Eka $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{pmatrix}$

Aderomokun, awo Ode-Ijesa,
 Adbori, awo Ode-Egba
 Ko-ko 'fa-ko-gbo'yere-o-nba-won-pin'ru-iogboogba
 Orun nii ti-iwa
 Ti a i pe Esu odara.

Itan Ifa nan:

'Oyeku pelu Eka (ika) awon mejeeji nan li o jijo s'awo fun owa ti o fi aarun lu opo ile re . . .

Translation

Oyeku, Master from the city of the Ijesa,
 Was nicknamed 'Winner of Royal Beads';
 Eka, Master from the city of the Egba,
 Was nicknamed 'Diviner of Success'.

The Story

These two diviners always put their trust in Exu the wonder-worker who dwells in heaven. Exu is neither a diviner himself nor even an Ifa devotee yet he enjoys equal share in sacrifices.

Oyeku and Eka (Ika) were two diviners consulted by the King of Ilesa (Owa) concerning the future of his lineage. The diviners not only failed to identify the King's problem but, what was worse, they prescribed the wrong sacrifice. So the King had them executed on Exu's Shrine at the cross-roads.

On seeing this Exu descended onto the Cross-roads, rubbed the diviners with special magic herbs over their eyes and crowns at the same time reciting this incantation:

Arise, Resurrect!
Both of you arise
By the power of these herbs
I conjure you, Arise immediately!

Thereupon the dead diviners arose and were led by Exu before the King's presence. This time the diviners correctly diagnosed the King's problem and predicted that his lineage would prosper and flourish provided he quickly offered the prescribed sacrifice — failing which, the king himself would die before night-fall. Naturally the King complied. From their perquisites the diviners apportioned an equal share to Exu.

Therewith Exu exclaimed in amazement: "Is this how diviners suffer on earth for their profession? Henceforth though I remain in heaven I will always take good care to ensure your welfare on earth. In return you must first set aside my own share of every offering received from your clients."

Song

The diviners sang in jubilation:

Hail to you royal one form above
Hail to you receiver of sacrifice
Hail to you, Exu, great benefactor⁽¹⁾.

Lesson

The good service rendered by Exu to the two diviners in times long ago is why, till present times, Ifa priests show their gratitude to him in kind at each sacrifice.

The verse is concerned to rationalise Exu's important role in sacrifice and his patronage of Ifa diviners. It is to be noted however that the

Footnote 1. From D. O. Epega (No date) *Ifa Amqna Awqna Babu wa* Verse 63 - 2 p.118.

verse explicitly states that Exu is not a diviner or teacher of Ifa divination as some writers assert⁽¹⁾.

The reader, if he turns to Part IIIA of this book, will see that Exu is first propitiated before the main sacrifice is offered. This rite confirms the legend described in the verse above.

- 2). This story⁽²⁾ from **Oturunpon-Meji**

00	00
00	00
0	0
00	00

 highlights *Exu's* role as the rectifier of bad fortune.

"At one time Orunmila was beset with bad fortune wherever he turned, so he consulted Ifa-Oracle asking: would his fortune change for the better? would he be blessed with money to help support the cares of life? The Oracle advised Orunmila to approach Esu for assistance but he should offer sacrifice as follows: One Home-Pigeon, one Cock, one Billy-Goat and a bottle of Palm Oil. He should present the offerings to Esu and thereafter Esu would open the path to prosperity for him. Orunmila complied and said to Esu:

'Esu, I am advised to seek your good graces because prosperity has so far eluded me. I want a change in fortune'.

"That very day Esu answered Orunmila saying:

'You may go. Henceforth everything will turn out well in your life'.

So Esu opened the path to prosperity for Orunmila. Wherever Orunmila went Esu would walk behind him and all would go well. In return Orunmila Sang in praise of Esu saying:

'Esu, wherever I go I will remember you'.

From that time Orunmila used to send a portion of whatever he ate to Esu."

Footnote 1. For example J. O. Lucas, *Religion of the Yorubas* (1948) p.73 quotes Col. Ellis and Dr Farrow to support the erroneous view that Exu taught Ifa to Orunmila.

Footnote 2. From A. F. Agboola, *Ojulowo Oriki Ifa* (1989) p.176.

Odun Ifa

In every babalawo's house there is an image of Exu before which the first portion of any sacrifice is offered before the main sacrifice is performed . . . There again *Exu* is portrayed as a protector and not a mentor in *Ifa divination*.

- 3). This story from *Okaran-meji* $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ portrays Exu as a client who suffers disagreeable consequences for neglecting to sacrifice — a penalty which Exu himself imposes on non-compliant querents.

"There was this client Laalu who consulted Ifa Oracle asking: As his name was noised about everywhere did it portend premature death for him? or would he live to a ripe old age?

Good question — since Laalu was a contrary troublesome, difficult character about whom few had anything good to say.

Laalu was advised to offer as sacrifice: One stout Billy-Goat, Six bags of cowries and certain efficacious herbs. If the sacrifice was performed in the manner prescribed by Ifa, Laalu was assured, premature death would not be his lot. In addition Laalu was told to offer another sacrifice for conserving his resources so that his efforts at savings might not fail.

Laalu treated the matter lightly: he was not concerned about savings he said, all he wanted was long life. So he offered sacrifice for longevity and not for savings.

Laalu lived long. Even in wartime Laalu usually came out the only survivor. He lived to a ripe old age but the more wealth he acquired the less savings he had because spendthrifts and women of passage frittered away his resources. That was when Laalu remembered Ifa-Oracle's pronouncement.

If Okonran is cast on the right
And Okonron is cast on the left
The resulting configuration presages hardship

So declared Ifa-Oracle to Laalu,

Gentleman of the city that resides on the Cross Roads.

Laalu is another name for Exu and so the saying made the rounds:

"Exu desires riches but he is frustrated by those who loot his shrine."

4). These two verses give us a picture of Exu as the divine Trickster:

a) Oxe-'Tura $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$.

Peri-pokun,
Pokun-peri
Exu bambi
A dia f' Akon omọ oluwara oje...^[1,2]

TRANSLATION:

Pursue him here,
He is over there,
Follow him there
He is back here
So revels Exu the Trickster
In confusing detour
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Crab
Who hides from hole to hole in marshes.

b) Eji-Ogbe $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$

... Exu odara ni i s'edi nii gbe'ledi ...

TRANSLATION:

Exu, wonder-working Lord of tricks
Thrives on contraries deals in magic
Prompts the executioner consoles the victim.

1. From A. F. Agboola *Ojulowo Oriki Ifa* (1989) p.110.

2. *Oxe-Tura* see Verse 2 in Part VIA "Combination Odu" in this book.

The Iron-Age (Orunmila)

The legends and myths concerning *Orunmila*, founder of *Ifa* divination system as we know it today, have been fully discussed under the chapter "What is Ifa?"; here, we are to examine the ascendancy of *Ifa* over other Yoruba cults. To emphasise this ascendancy, one approach endowed Orunmila with superlative attributes only slightly less in degree to those of Olodumare. The other device portrayed the other Orisa including Orixá-Nlá himself as clients of *Ifa*.

Here is this stanza from Okonron-Eguntan $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 00 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ (Okonron Ogunda).

Èwọ̀n bale ro wọ̀rọ̀jọ
A difa fun Orunmila
A bu fun gbogbo Irunmọ̀lẹ̀
Olodumare d'ẹ̀rukale
O ranṣẹ pe gbogbo wọ̀n
Ki wọ̀n wa i gbee lọ sinu Aye.

Itan Ifa Nan

Ikọ̀ Olodumare de ọ̀dọ̀ gbogbo Irunmọ̀lẹ̀...^[1]

Translation

Just as an iron chain crashes on earth
Reverberating with ominous sound,
So you will discover the importance of this matter
When it ends not when it begins.

Footnote 1. E. M. Lijadu, *Orunmila* (1908) Page 15.

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila and the other divinities when Olodumare summoned them before him to deliver certain parcels on Earth.

The Story

The Omnipotent's ambassador charged with this order called on the divinities one by one. All treated him without civility until he arrived at Orunmila's home. Orunmila received him most hospitably and fed him with choice delicacies. In appreciation God's ambassador revealed to Orunmila the real secret of the summons.

"When you appear before the Omnipotent," said the ambassador, "do not be over-hasty in choosing a parcel. There is a conch-shell placed inconspicuously near the Omnipotent's seat. Observe it carefully and at appropriate time go for that conch-shell only, nothing else. It contains the implements of creation."

The divinities reported as summoned and made straight for the parcels prominently displayed before the Omnipotent not caring to look elsewhere.

During the scramble God's ambassador played soft music on a flute with notes of coded advice for Orunmila — counselling him to be patient and pick to make for the inconspicuous conch in due time.

Thus did Orunmila quietly watch as one divinity went for money and another for apparels until the scramble was over. He then got up took the conch and set out for Earth, long after the other divinities had left heaven.

At the border between Heaven and Earth Orunmila met the divinities standing there unable to proceed further.

"What holds you back?" asked Orunmila.

"The face of the Earth is completely covered with water," answered the divinities, "and there is no solid ground fit for landing."

Thereupon Orunmila brought out a net from within the conch and threw it upon the waters; next he gathered a handful of sand from the conch and sprinkled it over the net. The third time he produced a five-toed hen and threw it over the net. The hen immediately began spreading the sand about and as she did so the water gradually receded until solid ground appeared. The ground extended in all directions to form the Earth.

As Creator of the Earth Orunmila naturally was the first to step on it.

That done, Orunmila refused landing rights to the other divinities unless they first delivered to him the parcels brought from Heaven.

Thereafter, Orunmila handed back to each divinity whatever in his judgement he considered to be their just portion and all the divinities without exception bowed in obeisance before Orunmila" ^[1].

A recapitulation of the earth creation myth given earlier in this chapter reveals that the Ifa theologians have simply substituted their tutelary god Orunmila for Obatala or Oduduwa in order to substantiate Ifa's claim to primacy *vis-a-vis* other cults.

What all this amounts to is that the creation myth has been handled by adherents of various Orixas from age to age in a manner that exalts the leading role of their tutelary deity. It is important to stress that Ifa verses contain these variants in different confluences so that the reader should exercise historical discretion in their interpretation.

Still on this matter of Ifa's ascendancy over other Yoruba cults, some examples are now examined from Ifa verses that portray the patron-gods of these cults in subordinate roles *vis-a-vis* Orunmila.

Footnote 1. Ibe also gives a version complimentary to Orunmila as against other Orisa.

Oxun and River Goddesses

"The recognition of water,"

wrote John Starkey,

"as the first principle and source of all life to those who move overland, dependent on its bounty for food and sustenance is reflected in the dedication of the main river sources of Western Europe as sanctuaries to the Celtic fertility goddess."

A similar attitude of mind is evident in the Yoruba deification of their main rivers as patron-goddesses. The River Niger is called **Odo-OQya** according to the myth recounting the transformation of **OQya**, **Xogo's** faithful wife into the River of that name. The river **Oba** is the materialisation of the goddess of that name. **Yemoja** (Mother of Fishes) has no particular riverine domicile; rather she represents the collective concept of aquatic life although in Abeokuta she is worshipped as the spirit of the river **Ogun**.

Over and above these river-goddesses stands Oxun whose patronage includes not only the primordial principle of water but in addition fertility in women, safe child birth, marital peace and stability, wealth and success in new ventures. As a result of the summation of all these attributes Oxun is venerated as the great Magician (**Oxun Xengexe**) the peaceful aspect of feminism, the universal mother (**yeye**) and source of mysteries (**Oşun Oşoro Efon**).

Devotees sing her praises thus:

Oşun, Yeye Ogugu, Yeye Ogugu
O-wale-wale-kaje-si
O-pa'de-mowo-pa'de-mose
O fide sọla
O-ni-omo-weęęę-l'agbala
Osun, Yeye Oriki
Yeye, Ota o, Omi o.

Odun Ifa

TRANSLATION:

Osun, great mother, great lady
Inexhaustible mine, filled with wealth
Bedecked with gold, hands and feet
Dispenser of precious jewels
Source of procreation, Bestower of little children
We venerate you as mother.
As the everlasting stone in river-bed
As water, the first principle in life.

This endearing eulogy of Oṣun contrasts sharply with the awe inspired by Oya the wrathful aspect of femininity:

Oya, Oriṣi
Alengege Obirin
Eṣufuleṣe ti nja ribi-ribi
Ogboju Obirin ti nsiwaju Oko
Oko ndu ramu-ramu
Aya nfe ribi-ribi
Oya o
Dowo fun wa
Ma ba wa ja
Sugbon ya ire site fun wa^[1].

TRANSLATION:

Oya, visible Terror
Lady tall and elegant
Gentle breeze now, storm next moment,
Bold warrior that leads her husband to battle:
Husband breathes thunder and lightning,
Wife responds with storm and hurricane,
Oya we beseech you
Grant us peace
Spare us wrath
Give us manifold blessings.

Footnote 1. From "Ifa its worship and Prayers" (1971) Pages 8 & 10 by Chief Fagbemo Beyioku.

Oya and Oxun also stand in geographical polarity: Oya is worshipped principally in Northern Yoruba country along the course of the River Niger and names such as Oyadiran (Oya extends the lineage) are commoner there than in the South where Oxun seems to be more popular. Even till this day the City of Oxogbo, said to have been founded under Oxun's auspices is the most important centre of Oxun worship.

In the old mythology Oxun was Ogun's wife later, seduced by Xongo. After downgrading Ogun and Xongo it was only to be expected that Oxun would be appropriated in the New Theology as Orunmila's wife. So close became the association of Orunmila and Oxun that a corner is always dedicated to Oxun in Ifa's shrine and the annual festivals of husband and wife, at least in the Agboola School are celebrated in the same month. Chief Agboola tells us in his petition to Ifa:

"The festival of Oxun is usually celebrated in August from time immemorial. Orunmila Agboniregun Ifa, today the city of Oxogbo, our king the Ataoja, the Chiefs, nobles, and merchants begin the celebration of Oxun's festival. On this same day I come before you, Ifa. . ."

Another of Osun's attributes conferred on her by the New Theology is her universal motherhood. The veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Roman Catholics or — to further back in cultural history — the adulation of Isis in Ancient Egypt, comes to mind as comparisons.

These are the words of Isis^[1]:

"I am nature the universal mother, mistress of all the elements primordial child of Time, sovereign of all things spiritual, queen of the dead, queen also of the immortals, the single manifestation of gods and goddesses that are. My mood governs the shining heights of Heaven, the wholesome sea breezes, the lamentable silences of the world below. Though I am worshipped in many aspects, known by countless names and propitiated with all manner of different rites yet the whole earth venerates me . . ."

Footnote 1. From *The Golden Ass* 2nd cent AD by Apuleius, translated by Robert Graves Page 271.

Some know me as Juno, some as Bellona of the Battles, Others as Hecate, others again as Rhamnubia; but both races of Aethiopians whose lands the morning sun first shines upon and the Egyptians who excel in ancient learning and worship me with ceremonies proper to my godhead, call me by my true name, "*Queen Isis*".

Isis might well have added "And the Yoruba call me Qxun."

Qxun is venerated in rituals of Ifa as the protectress goddess of sacrifice and new ventures. The stanza from Qxe-Tura on page 503 of this book describes the initial failure of the settlement in Ife by the divinities because they omitted to pay due obeisance to Qxun and to propitiate her. One of the master-diviners in the Agboqla entourage informed me that recitation from verses Qxe-Tura are mandatory to ensure successful sacrificial ritual. As evidenced from the concluding prayers to the stanza of Qxe-Tura which I quote below, the role of Qxun in this respect is paramount.

Song:

Not neglecting you, Qxun, but respectful we come to ask good auspices for this sacrifice.

Refrain:

Qxun, gentle lady of mysteries whom the city of Efon venerates grant good auspices to this sacrifice.

Prayer:

Let this sacrifice be acceptable, Ifa
Let not the anger of women frustrate our rites
Vouchsafe Qxun's support for Ijo-Qrunmila Ato
Let them enjoy her good graces,
Save them from the wrath of Qxun,
Our Lady of streams, lakes and rivers.

By appropriating Qxun as Qrunmila's wife the, Ifa priests subordinated the Great mother to their tutelary deity.

The Iron Age (Olokun; Oloṣa)

Olokun (Ocean Divinity) and Oloṣa (Lagoon Divinity) are frequently coupled in Ifa verses as antithetical expressions for the divinisation of aquatic energy. Here are some examples:

- 1). Olokun mo pe o,
Oloṣa mo pe o^[1].

TRANSLATION:

Ocean Divinity, I Invoke you
Lagoon Divinity, I invoke you.

- 2). Gbogbo oḷa omi ti mbe ni Ile-Aye ko lee to t'Okun
Gbogbo odo ti o ṣe loke, iyi wọn ko to t'osa^[2].

TRANSLATION:

No waters can rival the Ocean in majesty
No mountain springs can equal the Lagoon in greatness.

Oceans and Lagoons, representing as they do the outer limits of visible landscape, are employed in Ifa verses as symbols of immeasurable distance: Beyond lies the fairyland of fabulous riches:

- 3). To ba too sanni sisan ni i san ni;
To ba too yeṅi yiye ni i yeṅi;
Ewo ni keṅi sowo sowo
Keni ma rona ko o dele.

Adia fun Orunmila
Ifa nsawo lo apa-okun-elakeji-Osa
Niwanran ola nibi ojumo ti mo wa
Yoo gba 'gun okun
Yoo gba gun ide
Yoo gba 'gun ologinniginni aso irada
Orunmila yoo kokun oṣo wa'nwu-ile^[3].

1. From invocation on vigil night of Ifa festival: See Page 290 of this book.

2. From E. M. Lijadu (1906) *Ifa* Verse 3 Eji-Ogbe Page 10.

3. From *Ose Meji* Verse 2 in this book Page 458.

TRANSLATION:

There should be time enough
There should be time;
Time to succeed, time to prosper.

Hard would it be, forever to bear
A life of struggle without success;
A life of commerce without profit.

Thus declared Ifa Oracle to Orunmila.
On setting forth to traverse Oceans, Seas and lagoons
To practise divination in that prosperous land
Whence into the world cometh Dawn.

Ifa will receive in that land gifts of beads and pure gold
Gifts of choice cloth exquisite in weave.
Orunmila will return bearing the secret of wealth.

"It is generally believed,"
writes Awolalu,
"that wealth and prosperity come from the sea."

Apart from sea foods of various types, articles of adornment such as corals and pearls obtained from Lagoons, Seas and Oceans naturally endow the indwelling spirits of water with divine status in the mind of Yoruba as in that of other people. To the ancient Yoruba the big conch-shell AJE was the symbol of wealth. More importantly cowries, which were used as money, come from the sea and further confirmed the Yoruba in their belief in the wealth potential of the sea.

Incidentally the view that cowries came into use among the Yoruba from the 16th century A.D. following their importation from the East Indian coast via Arabia is highly debatable. It is more likely that from very early times, certainly before the Arab trade contact, the Yoruba employed some type of cowries as money. A distinction was made between good quality cowrie (*Owo gidi*) and ordinary cowrie (*Owo mini, owo ero*).

Here is an interesting Ifa verse on this point:

Owonrin-Meji

00	00
00	00
0	0
0	0

Qwɔn owo
 Nn ni wɔn i nawo mini,
 Qwɔn omi
 Nn la a b'esun ...*

TRANSLATION:

When good money is scarce, we resort to lesser specie just as when water is scarce we search for new springs.

A people of riverine culture would hardly require Arab traders to teach them the use of cowries as specie. Most probably the Arabs found the Yoruba already using cowries of some sort but later introduced specie of better quality and value.

But what was Olokun? Some traditions regard Olokun as a male divinity:

"Olokun nii gbogbo awɔn Obirin rɛ lo yagan, ni wɔn o loyun, un lo da'fa pe awɔn obirin wɔnyi le bimo foun?"**

TRANSLATION:

"There was this client Olokun with a problem: his wives were infertile, so Olokun consulted the diviners asking: would his wives become fruitful and bear him children?"

Other traditions acclaim Olokun as a female divinity.

* From A. F. Agboola (1989) *Ojulowo Oriki Ifa* page 88; the editor of the book adds the following note (my translation) *Owo mini* is a type of cowrie which is smaller in size and value than the standard cowrie (*owo gidi*), *Owo mini* is also called *owo ɛrɛ* meaning money of convenience or substitute money.

** From A. F. Agboola *Ojulowo Oriki Ifa* (1889) *Irete-meji* p.201.

"When Odua was king of Ife, Olokun the sea Goddess was his wife..."***

"... Olokun a favourite wife of Oodua was the wealthiest woman of her time the yard where she used to carry on her business of making beads and other costly articles is still the vast area of land now called Igbo Olokun stretching deep inside along the Ife-Ilexa Bypass until it touches the fringe of Esimirin stream."**** *

Frank Willett gives convincing archaeological confirmation of this Ife legend:

... It was Frobenius who first drew attention to the outstanding historical and archaeological importance of Ife and to the important naturalistic sculpture found there although his interpretation of its origin is no longer acceptable. Most of Frobenius's archaeological effort appears to have been expended in the Olokun grove; this is site of the great industry which spread the blue glass Segi beads across West Africa but the most famous find which Frobenius made in Ife was the brass head known as Olokun which he tells us was dug up in the Olokun Grove during the second half of the nineteenth century.*** **

Frank Willett continues the interesting archaeological account thus:

"Excavations were also carried out in the Grove of Olokun Walode. This appears to be a subsidiary grove for Olokun, goddess of wealth, worshiped by the Walode family a fragment of a glass-making crucible was found with them and suggests the possibility that they had been originally found in the Olokun Grove itself.

"Further work was done at the Olokun Grove itself during the 1953 season. The grove covers a very extensive area to the north of Ife and has been greatly disturbed apparently in the search for beads."

On balance the identification of Olokun as a female divinity would seem to predominate over his male status. When considering Ifa verses care should be exercised in accepting either of the two views as exclusive or orthodox. Ifa verses choose from either tradition in expounding a view-point. The important determining factor being the message for the client. Where this requires a story with Olokun taking a male or a female role the adjustment is made accordingly. Divinity of wealth, symbol of immensity, principle of primeval waters, Olokun nevertheless enjoys a subordinate role to Ifa.

*** From Wm. Bascom, *Ifa Divination* (1969) page 97.

**** From M. A. Fabunmi *Ifa Shrines* (1968) pp.4-5.

***** Frank Willett, *Sources of Yoruba History* (1973) - Chapter on Archaeology.

Xongo

According to Johnson, Xongo was a man of flesh and blood who was later deified by his devotees as the god of thunder and lightning. The main points of the legend are as follows^(*):

"Sango, son of Oranyan and brother of Ajaka was the fourth king of Yoruba. He was of a very wild disposition, fiery temper and skilful in sleight of hands tricks the had a habit of emitting fire and smoke out of his mouth by which he greatly increased the dread his subjects had of him . . .

". . . Sango reigned for seven years the whole of which period was marked by his restlessness. He fought many battles and was fond of making charms. He was said to have the knowledge of some preparation by which he could attract lightning. The palace at Oyo was built at the foot of a hill called Oke Ajaka (Ajaka's Hill). One day the king ascended this hill accompanied by his courtiers . . .

". . . and some of his slaves among whom were two favourites Biri and Omiran; some of his cousins went with him but none of his children. He was minded to try the preparation he had in hand, thinking it might have been damp and useless he first made the experiment on his own house. But it took effect. A storm was immediately raised and the lightning had struck the palace before they came down the hill and the buildings were on fire. Many of Sango's wives and his children perished in this catastrophe."

For this and other unroyal misdemeanours Xongo had to abdicate the throne and eventually he committed suicide by hanging himself from a Shea-Butter Tree.

Here is the continuation of the Xogo legend taken from Idowu's account.

"His opponents then taunted his followers that their king had hanged himself. This led his followers to seek the means of saving their faces; they went to Ibariba and procured some preparation by which lightning could be attracted. They set to work with the result that lightning became frequent in and around Oyo; the compounds and houses were often in conflagration and there were losses of life and property. People became panic-stricken and so were prepared for the next move by the followers of Sango who then came out with the story that Sango did not hang himself, he only ascended to heaven, the lightning and the resulting calamities were the vengeance which Sango sent upon those who slandered him by saying he had hanged himself. Let all from now confess that Sango did not hang himself and worship him; the article of faith to be repeated henceforth was Obakoso the King did not hang himself. This began the worship of Sango in Oyo . . . from there his cult spread all over Yoruba land . . .

Footnote: * From Samuel Johnson (1921) history of the Yorubas" pp. 149 - 152.

"... there has been an earlier Yoruba solar divinity to whom lightning and thunder have been attributed. This name is Jakuta which means 'One who fights with stones' or 'One who hurls stones' and it was by a clever stroke that the identification between Jakuta and Sango was registered in such a way that Sango practically usurped the place of Jakuta in the pantheon.

"... We still must go a little further and consider, in this connection *Oramfe* of Ile-Ife. He is the accepted solar divinity among the Ife.

"... If it is thought that Jakuta and Oramfe are distinct one from another but undoubtedly they represent one and the same conception - 'The wrath'***.

If the various pieces of this legend are brought together a reconstructed picture emerges as follows:

Jakuta (Lord of thunderbolts) represented the wrathful aspect of nature in its male manifestation among the Yoruba of the neolithic age. "The imperialist theologians of Oduduwa"⁽¹⁾ to use Idowu's expression, converted Jakuta into the protector-god personal to Ife and renamed him **Oramfe** (Saviour of Ife). The theologians of the **Oranyan** lineage in Oyo on the other hand endowed their deified king **Xogo** with the attributes of Jakuta. This is the familiar trend peculiar to state religions namely that dogmas and cultic allegiance follow the vagaries of political ascendancy.

The Ifa verse quoted *in extenso* below carries the story a stage further and illustrates how the Ifa theologians in turn have appropriated the essential elements of the conflated legend to build a new image of Xogo as a divinity of lower status in the hierarchy of the revised pantheon.

Okanran-Meji $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$

Okanjua agbe nii gbinwu abata
O xe bi o so, ko so
O xe bi o wu, ko wu.

Footnote: *** From E. Bolaji Idowu (1962) *Olodumare* pp. 90 - 94.

Adia fun Olukoso-Lalu
 Arabambi omo a-rigba-ota-xegun
 Nijo ti nbe laarin oxiri
 Ti nbe laarin ota
 Ki l'Aira e x'etẹ?
 Igba ota
 'Inn l'Ai ra e xẹ'tẹ
 Igba ota
 Itan Olukoso-nii, laarin Ota l'o wa . . . [*]

TRANSLATION:

Greed was the undoing of the farmer who planted cotton in the marsh. He thought it would bloom and yield manifold harvests. The cotton tree never bloomed. It didn't even take root.

Thus declared Ifa Oracle to Olukoso, the Lord, that hanged but didn't in fact hang, the warrior with a thousand thunderbolts, at that time when plots and conspiracies surrounded him on all sides.

Song: And how did the Lord of Thunder defeat his enemies? with thunderbolts, Yea, with a thousand thunderbolts.

The Story

This querent Olukoso found himself surrounded by enemies who regarded him as worthless and spineless. He commanded no respect from anyone and his life was miserable. So Olukoso consulted Ifa - Oracle asking: would he win respect and honour among men? Would he triumph over his enemies or would they be victorious over him? The diviners advised him to provide sacrificial offerings, *to wit*: 200 stones, 200 cocks, and 200 times 20,000 cowries. Olukoso complied and the sacrifice was performed. In conclusion some of the divining powder was marked with the configuration of **Okanran-Meji** and

Footnote *: From A. F. Agboola: *Ojuloowo Oriki Ifa* (1989) p.115.

sprinkled on the sacrificial stones brought by **Olukoso**. Handing these stones back to Olukoso the diviners instructed him to throw them in the midst of people who dared to show him disrespect or enmity and await results.

At the first opportunity Olukoso did just that. The stones which he threw were converted by Exu half-way in their trajectory into flaming thunderbolts and immediately spread fire and destruction amidst his enemies. Some of them fled, asking: Who threw these missiles."

"It is Olukoso," came the reply.

As others cried out in distress Olukoso let loose another deadly shower of thunderbolts. And so the barrage continued until all Olukoso's enemies were scattered in disarray.

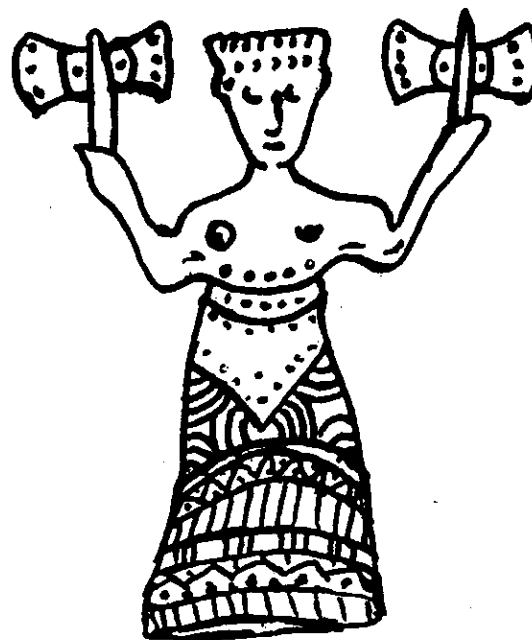
From that day Olukoso's enemies no longer held him in contempt; rather they trembled with fright before him and stopped their conspiracies against him.

Henceforth, whenever Olukoso wreaked havoc on people or their property or even when he killed them outright he was declared justified. That was how Olukoso won respect and honour among men."

Olukoso (The Lord who did not hang) is an alternative name for Xogo the deified hero whose legend was reconstructed from Johnson and Idowu earlier in this chapter. A comparison of the legend with the Ifa stanza just quoted reveals the subtlety with which the new theologians portrayed Xongo as a god whose mighty works were effected through Orunmila and Exu's patronage. In this way Xongo was demoted to a lower status in the hierarchy of the divinities . . .

In passing we must note some other aspects of Xongo's, namely the use of the **Bifid Axe (Ose Xongo)** and the **cult of the Ram**, which may not be prominent in his portrait in Ifa verses but which take prominence in the worship rendered him by his devotees.

There is no doubt about the "northern factor" in the myth of Xongo. The mother of the historical Xongo was from Nupeland. The cult colour is purple or red (*Osun*), typical of Tapa chromatic preference as against the elective blue of the southern Yoruba. Finally the frequent reference to Nupe, Borgu and Bariba connections sufficiently confirm the "northern factor"^[1] in the Xongo equation.



But the Bifid Axe and the Ram cultus immediately suggest a "mediterranean factor" as well. In Ancient Egypt, the double-axe was a solar symbol; so it was in Ancient Greece. On the left is a drawing of The Minoan Great Mother Goddess *Ancentgere* holding a double axe in each hand.

Plate IX: Minoan ~ The Mother-Goddess

Reproduced from J. C. Cooper: *Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols* page 17. Compare this with *Ose Xogo* below.

Footnote: * Phrase first used by Ivor Wilks (1961) 'The Northern factor in Ashanti History and later elaborated by Robin Law (1976) *The Northern factor in Yoruba History*'.



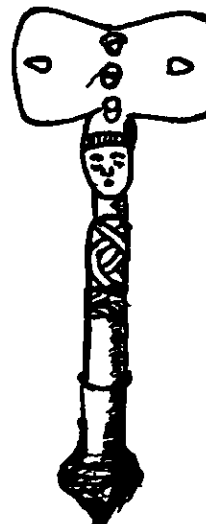
Ose Xongo

Reproduced from

Abraham: *Modern Dictionary of Yoruba* page 771.

In Greece, Zeus Labrayndeus wielded a double axe as god of thunder and lightning. In Ancient Egypt, the Ram was sacred to the sun-god *Ra*. Below is a reproduction of the god Khnemu whose ram-head symbolises his fusion with the sun-god *Ra*.

Ancient Greece the Ram was sacred to Dionysos or Roman Bacchus. Now, it is interesting that the Xongqo cult includes some rites suggestive of bacchanalian orgies. Below for example is a Bifid Axe with a priapic motif. Xongqo festivals are noted for their lewd songs and sexual innuendos; for example this one:



Bifid Axe (Xongqo Cult)

Oxe bi mo sun lo
O gboko nla wo le.

TRANSLATION:

Thinking I was fast asleep
He crept unto me wielding
a big stout prick.

Denis Williams offers food for serious rethinking by those who would champion a "northern factor"^[1] but are only too ready to deny Ancient Egyptian and Mediterranean factors their formative role in Yoruba culture.

"The iconography of the double-headed axe in the Sango cult-sculpture of the Yoruba,"

writes Denis Williams,

"suggests cultural context of Nilotic and mediterranean antiquity."^[2]

Footnote * "Northern factor" Influence of Northern neighbours such as Nupe, Bariba and Igbira on Yoruba culture. For the exposition of this view see Ade Obayemi "sources of Yoruba history" pp 72 - 84.

Footnote ** Denis Williams (1973) Chapter on Archaeology in "Sources of Yoruba History" p.1420.

Ọsọnyin and Xọpọnọ

In the New Theology, Ọsọnyin and Xọpọnọ were apportioned the patronage of health: the former, known as the god of medicine, representing the positive healing aspect; the latter known as the Lord of Epidemics, representing the negative.

Ọsọnyin

Ọsọnyin, herbalist and physician, is lame in one leg. As a result he was unfit for any labour other than sedentary work. Being a ventriloquist he enjoyed the reputation of a god who reads the innermost secrets of the human heart and pronounces them through the mouth of his devotees practising a form of divination different from Ifa. However the portrait of Ọsọnyin that emerges from Ifa verses is not usually flattering to him.

Here is a verse from Okonron-Turupon

00	00
00	00
0	00
00	0

 recounting the story of Ọsọnyin's lameness^{***}.

Ifa kiko ni i mu ni mo'fa,
Ona xixi ni i mu ni mona,
Ona ti a ko ba rin ri ni i xeni xiba-xibo
A da a fun ọsọnyin
Nijoti Olodumare de igba
Npe Ọrunmila ki o wa ki'fa si i
Ti Ọsọnyin ni oun ka xai ba a lo
Ti a ni ko joko
Oran wa lorun un re
Xugbon ti kogbo . . .

Itan

Itan yi wi siwaju pe . . .

Footnote ***

From E. M. Lijadu (1908) "IFA" page 33.

TRANSLATION:

Proficiency in Ifa divination comes from long apprenticeship just as a route becomes familiar through previous exploration. Unfamiliar engagements lead to confusion and disgrace."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Qsoyin at that time when Orunmila was summoned by the Omnipotent to test his skill in Ifa and Qsoyin insisted on accompanying Orunmila.

"Do not go with Orunmila," Qsoyin was warned, "for if you do disgrace and misfortune await you there"

Qsoyin disregarded the warning.

The Story

Orunmila acquitted himself excellently and easily unravelled the mystery posed to him as a test by the omnipotent as a result Orunmila received one dog and one goat as sacrificial offerings.

As soon as Qsoyin set his greedy eyes on these animals he became extremely agitated and insisted on slaughtering the dog for food there and then. Orunmila cautioned patience but Qsoyin would take no refusal for an answer and started struggling with the dog to master and slay it. In the scuffle Qsoyin accidentally dropped the knife. The knife struck him on one leg dealing him a serious wound. Qsoyin fell and could not get himself up unaided.

Then it was that Orunmila ordered Qsoyin to be carried home pending his arrival there.

At last Qsoyin's fever of impatience abated. Orunmila cared for him until the wound had healed but alas Qsoyin became lame in that leg with the sad result that he became unfit for physical work.

Consequently Orunmila took pity on Osqyin and taught him the medicinal use of herbs, for all herbs belong to Ifa. In this way Osqyin was able to make a living as a physician.

This next verse^[1], taken from Ogunda-meji $\left[\begin{array}{c} 0 \ 0 \\ 0 \ 0 \\ 0 \ 0 \\ 00 \ 00 \end{array} \right]$ recounts another story of Osqyin as herbalist in a less derogatory context than in the former verse.

Gbirinbiti,
A difa fun Orunmila
N lo ra Osqyin l'eru.

Itan

Orunmila lo ri Osqyin ni won ni won o ta a fun ...

TRANSLATION:

"Eventually it will turn out well"
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila
About to buy Osqyin as slave.

The Story

Orunmila finding Osqyin for sale as a slave agreed to buy him but wondered if Osqyin would be of any service to him or whether the purchase would yield good dividends. "What a question," came the reply, "of course Osqyin is intelligent and resourceful. You will not regret the purchase." So Orunmila offered the prescribed sacrifice, clinched the deal and brought Osqyin with him to his house-hold.

Footnote 1. From A. F. Agboola (1989) 'OJULOWO ORIKI Ifa' PP 121 - 122.

"What work can you do?" asked Orunmila

"I am not used to any hard work at all" replied Osoyin. Orunmila wondering what profit could possibly be got from a slave who was not prepared to do any work threw Osoyin into the home-stead fields to get busy clearing the bush and ploughing the soil.

For his part Osoyin did no such thing. Discovering a herb he would exclaim "What! pull this one off, no I won't." When he found another herb he would tend it also, rather than uproot it. And so he did with one herb after another.

After some time Orunmila decided to go see what Osoyin was up to in the fields. To his astonishment Orunmila found Osoyin doing sweet nothing.

"So this is how lazy you are," exclaimed Orunmila.

"No, no no," countered Osoyin, "there is no bush here to be cleared at all. Look, this herb here for instance is the plant of prosperity, this one promotes longevity this one confers the blessing of wives; this one cures abdominal disorders, this one is good for headache."

"Very well then," said Orunmila, "I will certainly put your words to the test".

As Orunmila began to try out the herbs he found that the plant of prosperity actually brought him wealth, other herbs increased his life-span, or brought the blessing of wives or cured abdominal disorders and headache just as Osoyin had predicted.

In this way Osoyin became valuable to Orunmila to be sent on professional duty as herbalist and physician.

Xoṣoṣo

In contrast to the deified herbalist, **Osoyin**, **Xoṣoṣo** was the divinised aspect of communal disease-Epidemics. Obviously the concept of **Xoṣoṣo** developed among the Yoruba when they began to live in close communities within large cities. That period is identifiable as The Oduduwa Age and the cities affected were initially, probably, in the northern areas of the **Oyo Kingdom**.

The name Xoṣoṣo itself indicates a Nupe origin and means, at least in Yoruba, Smallpox. The Yoruba considered any feverish attack manifesting alongside a skin rash as small pox. Since chicken pox and rubella have similar presentations the name **Soṣoṣo** is not specific for small pox. Epidemics of fever and skin rash were dreaded in traditional Yoruba society as divine visitation. Consequently terms like **Ile-Gbigbona** (Hot Earth), **Olode** (the scourge in town) were substituted for the word **Xoṣoṣo**.

The tutelary deity of the **Xoṣoṣo** cult was called **Obaluaye**: (Universal King) no doubt because of the rapid dissemination of the contagion and the resultant mortality and morbidity. In other words the epidemic was regarded as evidence of displeasure. This is reminiscent of the ancient Israelite attitude to Leprosy.

This verse from **Ogbe-Gunda** $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ given by Bascom⁽¹⁾ illustrates the

"northern" (Nupe) connection of Xoṣoṣo and the need to give substitute names as a measure of divine propitiation:

Kukunduku, petenleki, Igbado egberin
Egberin agbado
A da fun olu ogoḍo, omo Ẹkunl'Empe
A-lelu-woṣu-OQya

Footnote 1. Wm. Bascom *Ifa Divination* (1969) pp.218-219

Omo a-f'odi-omo tele morangannigamori
 Wọn ni ko rubọ wọn ni ara rẹ ko ya
 Wọn ni ọdun yi ni ara rẹ yio ya.

Bascom adds this clarifying footnote to his translation:

"The informant could not explain or identify Oluogodo or Ekunlempé. However later work with worshipers of Boromu and Sopono made it clear that Olugbodo means 'Lord of Yaws' and refers to Boromu the Goddess of Yaws. Ekunlempé meaning Leopard at Empe refers to Sopono the God of small pox whose town is said to be Empe."

On this basis I offer the creative translation below.

Sweet potatoes, small yam tubers and 800 cowries worth of corn are the required sacrificial offerings.

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the lord of Yaws Kinsman to small pox whom we call Leopard of the city of Empe in Nupeland, city where foreigners are chased into the River Niger by the inhospitable natives, barbarians really who use the wrong end of the spear as walking stick.

The small pox rash is spreading but will heal if the victim offer sacrifice. Yes he will be cured this very year, said Ifa.

Here is another verse on the same theme:

Oturunpon-Fun $\left[\begin{array}{cc} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 00 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \end{array} \right]$

Oturunpon-fun Ojule
 Baguala,
 Eleyin ike,
 Mafun nini

Ma fun nini
Dia fun Oluogodo

Ko tun ma a pon waarara . . .

TRANSLATION:

We mark the sign of *Oturunpon-Fun*
On the house-hold shrine
As protection against pestilence,

For oturunpon-fun is clothed in white
His teeth are ivory white and
He is very whiteness itself.

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle
To the Lord of yaws
Denizen of the city of Ipako.

"All your children,"
Said the Oracle,
"will follow in crops.
Soon as some appear and ripen
New ones are born,
Each crop following the other
In quick destructive succession."

The Iron Age

The Trinity of Obatala, Exu and Orunmila

The trinity consisting of **Obatala**, **Exu** and **Orunmila** exemplifies on the philosophical plane the Yoruba adage that a tripod ensures stability (*Adiro meta ki-i da oḃe nu*). In striving for this philosophical stability man is taught by Ifa to observe the ethical rectitude of **Obatala**, to allow for the unpredictable element in life represented by **Exu** and to approach problems with the wisdom of **Orunmila**. This is the abstract message behind the myths and legends of the role of the trinity as recounted by Ifa verses.

In the beginning there were the **Orixa** each with a special assignment on earth by command of **Olodumare** the **Omnipotent**. As with men, so with the **Orixa**, competition soon ensued regarding seniority in rank.

This verse from **Eji-Ogbe** $\left[\begin{array}{cc} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{array} \right]$ recounts the recognition of Obatala's supreme status and the unobtrusive inception of the trinity of **Obatala-Exu-Orunmila**.

Gbogbo Ola omi ti mbe ni ile-Aye
 Ko le-e to tokun,
 Gbogbo odo ti o se l'oke
 Iyi wọn ko to tosa
 A daa fun Obatala Oseregbo
 Nijoti yio je Alaba-l'ase
 Ti gbogbo Irunmọḃe ni wọn yio gba okan ninu oriki re
 Ti Orunmila yehun
 To Elegbara tele e.^[1]

Footnote *: From E. M. Lijadu "IFA" (1908) pp.10-11.

Ọdun Ifa

Ninu ẹṣẹ yi a'ri pe Obatala li oje oriki yi "Alaba-l'ase" ati pe nigbati gbogbo Irunmọlẹ nijjadu lati gba okan ninu Oriki nan, wọn fi lo Ọrunmila, Ọrunmila yehun, wọn fi lo Exu, oyehun pelu. Lati Igbana ni apa gbogbo Irunmọlẹ ti ro ti wọn ko lẹ-ẹjẹ. Alaba-l'ase, wọn sijowo oriki nan patapata fun Obatala.

TRANSLATION:

"No waters can rival the Ocean in majesty
No mountain springs can equal the Lagoon in greatness."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Ọbatala, the Ancient of Days, on the day he was endowed with creative power. Other divinities demanded a share of this power, excepting Ọrunmila and Exu who both declined.

Note (By E. M. Lijadu)

"In this verse we see Obatala conferred with Creative power and we see the bitter rivalry of other divinities who wanted a share in the power Ọrunmila was invited into their plot but he declined. Exu was asked, he too declined. From that time the divinities lost the fight for equal status with Obatala and forthwith conceded pre-eminence to him for ever."

The next stanza taken from *Irete-meji* $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$ ^[1] reveals that the refusal of

Ọrunmila and Exu to join in the conspiracy against Ọbatala was not without calculated benefit. By dissociating themselves from the other divinities Ọrunmila and Exu promoted themselves to co-equality with Obatala in a Trinity.

Footnote 1. A. F. Agboola, *Ojulowo Oriki Ifa* (1989) pp.217-221.

Ojiṣẹ Aye,

Igangan Ife
Orunmila wo suu, o ko won.

Itan

E e rii, awon Ojise-Aye, awon Igangan Ife, awon ni Orunmila maa n
rannse si **Eledumare** . . .

TRANSLATION

Envoy from Earth,
Town-Crier of Ife
Were suddenly seized and killed by Orunmila.

The Story

You see, these two characters "EMISSARY FROM EARTH" and "TOWN-CRIER OF IFE" were Orunmila's regular messengers to **Eledumare**, the **Omnipotent**.

The message to the Omnipotent might be "such being the state of things in Ife today what sacrifice should I appoint as remedy?"

The reply would come: "Offer a Bush-Rat."

Acting on this recommendation Orunmila would receive good auspices for the city and all would turn out well. But as time went on things changed. When the Omnipotent indicated the sacrifice of a goat these messengers reported to Orunmila that a lamb should be offered. The sacrifice would result in failure. What could be responsible for this turn of events? wondered Orunmila not being privy to the perfidy of his messengers. Eventually the truth came out but Orunmila said nothing. He merely stopped the messengers from bearing further requests to the Omnipotent.

One day, without notice, in the normal course of a divinatory

consultation Orunmila suddenly seized the messengers and killed them both.

When the citizens of Ife discovered Orunmila's action they were shocked beyond belief. How could Orunmila have killed his messengers whose errands to the Omnipotent had always brought Ife good fortune? When would Orunmila succeed in replacing the messengers with others of better or even equal service?

Orunmila replied that the matter was far from simple, that the truth had eluded the citizens.

The angry citizens became adamant and in the end besieged Orunmila's house. Orunmila, spying them from afar, hid himself.

The irate invaders set on Orunmila's Ifa Student called **Imulegbe** (THE SUPPORTER) and beat him up severely.

They found there another guest **Akale** (PROTECTOR OF THE HOME) and slapped him several times, then returned to Amulegbe to tear his clothes to shreds.

At this, Orunmila came out to challenge the aggressors: So there is no respect or reverence for me in this city? Have you citizens of Ife not prospered under my guidance? Is it right that my guests be so maltreated by you?"

In great anger, Orunmila forthwith left the city, followed promptly by Imulegbe and Akaye. However, before leaving Ife, Orunmila charged all diviners there, including those employing three, four, eight or sixteen cowries to decline consultation by Ife citizens henceforth. Ife citizens would then learn how easy it was to manage their own affairs without guidance from diviners.

Having left Ife, Orunmila and his two friends travelled deep into the forest until they got to "THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE" and there they built three huts thatched with palm-fronds: one for Akale (Exu's cognomen) the second for Imulegbe the other name for Oxala or Obatala, the last for Orunmila.

Soon after Orunmila's departure, Ife became engulfed with problems; Victuals became scarce, pregnant women laboured but failed to be delivered; newly married ones could not achieve pregnancy; men became impotent; in short confusion and disorder reigned supreme. The citizens consulted the diviners employing 3, 4, 8 or 16 cowries to see how disaster could be averted but the diviners, one and all, replied that their requests could not be met since the cowries they used for divination had been completely spent on daily needs. What were they to do? Wherein lay the solution ?

The King of Ife himself was perplexed and helpless as conditions in the city worsened each day.

Rain did not fall and everything came to a stand still, so the citizens took matters more seriously and travelled out of Ife to solicit assistance wherever possible.

First they met a diviner nick-named "CRAB THAT CRAWLS IN HOLES IN THE MARSH AWAY FROM OTHER WATER HABITANTS." He decline to consult the Oracle on their behalf pleading the injunction imposed on him by Orunmila his master ere he left Ife. "But we do not know your master's whereabouts," replied the citizens, "So what shall we do to get out of this desperate situation?"

Taking pity on their plight the diviner advised them to go and hunt for an antelope and bring it to him after which he would introduce them to another diviner The citizens complied very readily. So they, were despatched to this other diviner nicknamed "GOLDEN-HUED LIKE FRESH PALM OIL" who was expected to take them to

Orunmila's hideout. After listening to their predicament the diviner exclaimed.

"Is that really so? well go hunt for an antelope and bring it to me."

The citizens set to and after a while found a spritely antelope which they pursued up-hill down dale this way and that. Deeper and deeper into the forest the chase continued until the citizens found themselves in "THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE" when suddenly the antelope disappeared. Searching for the lost antelope the citizens instead came upon three huts thatched with palm-fronts.

Utterly amazed they said to themselves: "What a place in the wilderness to choose as habitation? What could anyone live on here when, at Ife, we are starving?"

One of them picked up a stone and threw it at a hut. Out came Akale (Exu) asking with irritation. "Who threw the stone at my hut?"

"We did" replied the citizens.

"What is the matter" demanded Exu, "what mission have you here? Do you forbid us to live here too?"

"Ha," exclaimed the citizens, "these characters at last!" They invited Exu and narrated to him the abject conditions of life in Ife.

"Indeed," said Exu, "Now you will return to Ife and bring with you the following reparations for stoning my hut: 2 Bush-Rats, 2 Dried-Fish and all other things in twos."

They returned to Ife intent on providing the necessary reparations. In the process they reported to the King that a ray of hope was in the offing judging by their experience in THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE."

A certain person who spoke to them had demanded reparations from them. The king replied that he suspected *Orunmila* might also be in the company of their interlocutor. The citizens should return to the forest with the required reparations and report developments. Meanwhile, before the citizens' return, *Akale (Exu)* had gone to *Orunmila*.

"There is an interesting development," he said. "One of the citizens from Ife who came here stoned my hut. I came out, heard their tale of woe and before promising anything I demanded reparations for their trespass. What are we to do if they return with the reparations?"

Thereupon, *Orunmila* took *Exu* with him to report the situation to *Obatala* who is called *Elegbe (The Supporter)*.

This time *Orunmila* spoke:

"Ooxa, may it please you to listen. *Exu* has just told me that Ife Citizens came here and their story is grim, very grim. Disaster is imminent unless we do something to help."

Ooxala replied "Really! But you know very well *Orunmila* that since our exile here I have shut the sluice-gates of rain. No single drop will fall on earth till the whole world perishes. I will not listen to any plea."

Despite several attempts by *Exu* and *Orunmila*, Oosala refused to change his mind.

Then it was that *Orunmila* spoke these weighty words.

Ooxala you must return to your work:

The black smith moulds iron over and over again

Until it is straight and perfect.
The barber has not finished his work
Until back and sides are well trimmed.

You must return to your unfinished work.

Generations of kings have reigned on earth
Yet have I not seen one to rival this one
To rival Obatala King of all Orisa
Royal Artificer of perfection
Who came from above but placed his earthly home in the
city of Iranje.

He alone has power to lock the rain-gates
He alone created the white dome of the sky
He created the species of Rat to last for ever
He created the species of fish to last for ever
He created the species of Bird to last for ever
He created the species of Beast to last forever
And ordained that the species of man be never destroyed.

Nonplussed at this subtle flattery, Oosala replied:

"Verily, Orunmila, verily you recount there a lot of history.
Nothing else remains but to accept your pleas."

Consequently when the Ife citizens returned with the reparations,
Orunmila forgave them, Ooxala forgave them, Exu forgave them.
With the reparations a sacrifice of atonement was performed.

Thereupon the three divinities and the citizens returned to Ife
dancing and rejoicing that the city had been saved from disaster.

From that time the city of Ife spread in all directions until it encompassed the whole world.

Interested readers fluent in Yoruba will discover in the original text from which this translation is made a veritable and unsurpassed exhibition of oral literature. (See A. F Agboḡla: "*Ojulowo Oriki Ifa*" pp 217 - 221). They will be delighted at the many excellent turns of phrase, the complex figures of speech and penetrating symbolism that stamp the stanza as a master piece, note being taken as well that the text was delivered with faultless memory and they will excuse my inadequate attempt at translation.

To get back to the legend in the text. Of the members in the Trinity, Exu appears quite clearly as the most junior. His role is to receive and forward sacrificial offerings; he is morally neutral; he represents *chance*, the unpredictable component of life.

As between **Orunmila** and **Obatala**, it would appear on cursory reading that Obatala is senior, following Yoruba social etiquette that requires the junior to approach the senior not the other way round.

And indeed just as the Ife citizens approached Exu, Exu appealed to Orunmila and not to Obatala directly. Orunmila accompanied by Exu in the last stage of the ranking protocol went to plead the Ife case with Obatala who should have the final say.

A more careful consideration of the story as it unfolded reveals that **Orunmila** was really the *primus inter pares* within the Trinity. By a judicious mixture of tact and persuasive flattery Orunmila, the consummate diplomat, convinced Obatala to move from his initially adamant position and agree to give Ife citizens another chance. The moral argument to which Orunmila knew Obatala was partial, won the day, to wit:

The creator should not destroy his handiwork.

Obatala responded with maturity but in real terms he was manipulated.

Odun Ifa

The text concluded with these apparently innocuous but highly significant words: "Orunmila forgave them, Obatala forgave them, Exu forgave them."

Does that not indicate the descending order of seniority within the Trinity? If it does, the new Theologians once again succeeded in emphasizing Ifa's supremacy.

Finally, as if to leave no aspect of nature or human life unrepresented in their pantheon, the Ifa theologians created an amorphous category of gods variously referred to as the 200 divinities of the Right and the two hundred divinities of the Left (*Igba Irunmole Ojukotun Igba Irunmole Ojukosi*); the 401 and one divinities (*Okanle nirinwo Irunmole*).

Philosophical Ideas

Let us now take make a quick survey of some philosophical ideas not specifically expounded as such but axiomatically employed in Ifa practice and belief.

1. The Elements: Earth (*Ilẹ*) and Water (*Omi*)

During the preliminary prayers on the vigil of Ifa festival as recorded in this book *Ilẹ* is the first to be invoked before the cardinal points and the divinities. In this ritual the Earth is not worshipped as the universal mother in the manner of the Ogboni cult. Rather *Ilẹ* stands for Element, which according to Aristotle, "is the original source of all existing things, that from which a thing first comes into being and into which it is finally destroyed."

Likewise at the beginning of the sacrificial ritual water is sprinkled on earth emphasising its role as an element in the same philosophical idiom as Earth. Thus, **Water** and **Earth** constitute, for the traditional Yoruba of the Agricultural and subsequent ages, (500 B.C onwards) the only recognised

Elements. It is interesting to note that the ancient Greek philosopher Xenophanes⁽¹⁾ (5th cent. B.C.) held a similar view:

"All things"
wrote Xenophanes,

"that come to be and grow are Earth and water."

Much earlier, in Greek Philosophy, Thales (6th cent. B.C.) had postulated water as the only Element while Anaximenes a century later said it was Air. Empedocles (450.B.C) is generally credited with the authorship of the theory of the Four Elements viz:

"There never was," he [Empedocles] replied.
"an original unity — there rather were four eternally distinct substances: Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus, Nestis [Fire, Air, Earth and Water] . . . All things consist of these Elements or irreducible forms of matter in various proportions."

About the same period, the Ancient Hindus formulated a similar theory of Four Elements. With the Chinese the Elements were five including: Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water. The Buddhists added Ether to the Four Elements of the Greeks to make their own five. In Western Europe this theory of four Elements held centre stage until the formulation of the Atomic Theory by Dalton in the 18th century.

The Yoruba were therefore in the mainstream of the philosophy of the ancients of the 6th to 5th Centuries B.C. as regards Elements.

As a philosophical symbol, Earth, to the Yoruba, represents life, death and the communion between living men and their dead ancestors while water represents peace, tranquility and amity.

Traditional Yoruba social etiquette requires that a visitor be offered water as a sign of peaceful welcome and a Kola-nut, a fruit of the Earth, as a bond of friendship underscoring the belief in the importance of the two Elements.

Although the Two Elements are often conjoined, primacy belongs to water.
(Omi Legbon: *Water is the First Principle*).

"To the Yoruba worshipper,"

writes Fagbenro Beyioku^{***},

"Water takes a very prominent place in worship"

and he quotes this verse from Eji-Ogbe $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ in support:

Alukinrin te'ra mo Ifa da,
A da Orisa te ara mo ogun sisa,
Akere lo tedi mo odo,
Ti nse oju omi lenie-lenje
Awon lo da fun Omi
Nigbati ejerindinlogun Irunmole n baa xota
Won ni ki Omi ru
Omi gbq, omi ru.
Nwa nse: Eji-Ogbe gb'omi mu
T'omi l'agba t'omi lasq—
A ki-i b'omi S'ota,
Aki-i b'omi Yande.
Omi ni a ma bu mu
Omi ni a ma bu we.

TRANSLATION:

"To each is given a specific assignment:
Ifa priests should stick to divination,
Just as physicians should keep to medicine,
Frogs thrive better near streams and rivulets."

Footnote *: References to the Ancient Greek philosophers quoted about are in "the Presocratic Philosophers" by G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven (1966) Xenophane Page 176 Thales Page 87 Anaximenes Page 144 Eupedocies Page 324.

Footnote **: Fagbenro Beyioku (1971) "Ifa — Its Worship and Prayers" Page 43.

Thus declared Ifa Oracle to Water
When the Sixteen Divinities conspired against its sovereignty.

Water was told to offer sacrifice.
Water complied and triumphed
Then Water broke into song:

"Take and drink of me Eji-Ogbe"¹
For water is the first Element
And water has the creative force
How could plots or stratagems destroy Water
When all men drink of me
When all men bathe with me?"

Philosophical Ideas - Ori

Ori is a person's anatomical head which contains the brain (*Opofo*). However Ifa teaches that inside this physical head and apart from the brain there resides another entity, a psychic impalpable force, that determines the individual's fortune in life.

Ori is cognate with the European concept of destiny except that with *Ori* there is a factor of personal responsibility influencing the net effect. *Ipin* (a person's lot) *Iponri* (Individual choice) *Ayanmo* (Allotment) *Eleda* (Creative Influence) are alternative names for *Ori*, describing various facets of this intriguing concept. For this reason it is not surprising that the English equivalents offered by writers on the subject also vary in emphasis or nuance.

Lucas calls *Ori* "*The Owner or Lord of the Head,*" "*The Spirit which brings Good Fortune.*"² Fagbenro Beyioku calls it "*The Real Ego*"³. Idowu prefers "*The*

Footnote *: The 16 Divinities in this context, are the 16 paired principal Odu of Ifa. *Eji-Ogbe* is the first and most powerful of them and many verses under this Odu contain references to water as an Element.

Footnote **: J. O. Lucas (1948) "Religion of the Yorubas" Page 248.

Footnote ***: F.Beyioku (Undated) "Ifa, its worship and Prayers" Page 13.

Essence of Personality, "The Ego", "The Inner Person"*. Bascom calls it "The Ancestral Guardian Soul"**.

Borrowing from Christian terminology, Ibie*** refers to *Ori* as "Our Guardian Angel" but his other phrase "the principal architect of our fortune both in heaven and on earth" more accurately reflects the concept as expounded in Ifa. Ifa's version is that using clay as material, *Ajala* the heavenly potter moulds the anatomical head and fires it to produce different sizes and finish. *Orixa-nla* provides each finished head with a particular blessing the quality of which is not commensurate with the size or finish of the head.

Each individual makes his own choice of *Ori* in heaven before coming to earth. Now, if greed inclines a creature to choose a big highly finished head he may, in fact, possess very little by way of blessings compared with a humble man who chooses a small roughly finished head.

Here is an Ifa stanza from *Otura-Meji* $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ in support of the above:

" . . . every being sent by the Omnipotent to earth must go before Orisa-nla to choose the blessing he desires with this condition that he cannot choose more than one blessing. Whatever a man's preference — be it wealth, wives, progeny or property — the choice is free and is unlimited except by the protocol of *one kind of blessing to one man, no more.*

"That is why, on earth, one who is wealthy may not have children; he who has children may lack money; he who lives long may not receive honours and so on and so forth."

Footnote *: E. Bolaji Idowu (1969) "Ifa Divination" Page 114.

Footnote **: Bascom, Wm. *Op. cit.*

Footnote ***: C. O. Ibie (1989) "Ifa" Page 27.

What a man becomes on earth is said to be the direct result of his choice of Ori in heaven:

A-kunleyan ni a-d'aye ba:
A kunle, a yan Ipin,
A de'le-Aye oju npon ni.

TRANSLATION:

Our heavenly choice
Determines our earthly life,
A wrong choice above
Results in suffering below.

This Ifa Stanza from *Iwori-Meji* $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \end{pmatrix}$ stresses the same point.

" . . . Before Ori left heaven for earth he consulted diviners to know if success would always attend his services to men on earth. Ori was told that if he offered sacrifice he would discover on earth that whatever good men desired would be achieved through him. Ori offered sacrifice. When Ori arrived on earth the prediction came true. If any man became rich people would say "he has a good Ori." the same applied to a happily married man or a man of property."*

By the same logic whoever failed to achieve success received the verdict: "he chose that kind of Ori."

Readers with a classical education will note of course the striking similarity of this myth with Plato's description, in the 10th book of *The Republic*, of the choice of a new life on earth by dead souls in heaven.

I give the relevant parts thus^{**}:

This is the beginning of another period of men of mortal race. The dæmon shall not receive you as his lot but you shall choose the

Footnote *: From A. F. Agboola (1989) "Ojuloowo Oriki Ifa" Page 184.

Footnote **: Ibid Page 35.

dæmon : he who draws first let him first make the choice of a life to which he must of necessity adhere: virtue is independent which everyone shall partake of, more or less according as he honours or dishonours her; the cause is in himself who makes the choice and God is blameless.

... after all the souls had chosen their lives according as they drew their lots they went, all in order, to *Lachesis* and that she gave to every one the **dæmon** he chose and sent him along to be the guardian of his life and the accomplisher of what he had chosen."

For "dæmon" in Plato's text we should read "Ori", in Yoruba text. Plato's dæmon is ineluctable Fate or Destiny which directs the individual's life from the moment of choice till death whereas *Ori* allows an alternative modality from the iron grip of predestination by the remedial influence of sacrifice and the cultivation of *Iwa* (Moral Rectitude).

According to Ifa's teaching the participation by Orunmila as God's Vice-gerent (**Ibikéji Olodumare**) or **Eleri Ipin** (Witness to Man's Choice of Ori at the beginning of an individual's existence) endows Orunmila with the knowledge of that individual's Ori. Now, man is held to have forgotten his true choice of Ori (the **lethe** episode in Plato's text) and may behave on earth contrary to that Ori. As a result his life becomes a failure. If on the other hand he acts in consonance with that choice every endeavour on earth is crowned with success.

Sacrifice then, is believed to propitiate "a bad Ori" or alternatively to help the individual attune himself to his true Ori. This is the underlying idea behind the many recommendations by Ifa to querents to offer sacrifice to their Ori (*kiwọ̀n bọ̀ Ori*). So deeply rooted is the concept of Ori in the Yoruba psyche that every aspect of life is seen as the theatre of Ori's operation.

Footnote: * See Appendix in this book.

Footnote: ** C. O. Ibie (1989) "IFISM" pp 4-11.

Footnote: ** D. O. Epegi (1971) "Yoruba Religion" Page 11.

A man who has had a lucky escape would say:

Ori mi lo yomi (Thanks to my Ori);

one preparing for a difficult undertaking would pray:

Ori mi gbe mi o!" (May my Ori assist me and see me through)

"Eṣe-Ntaye" or "Ikose-jaiye" is performed for a new-born babe on the third day to ascertain "the Ori" he brings from heaven. The Ifa-Oracle is asked:

What is the true Ori of this child?

What pursuits in life will be consonant with this Ori? — Farming? business? law? medicine? divination?

What sacrifices should be performed or what taboos observed, to ensure the correspondence of the child with this Ori?

Ese-ntaye means literally (First step in the world) and was of great importance in traditional Yoruba society. Unfortunately, nowadays the practice has fallen into abeyance due to the cultural erosion of Islam and Christianity.

Ifa verses recount stories of querents who suffer misfortune in life because of stubborn pursuit of objectives contrary to their Ori. As soon as sacrifice is offered and taboos observed a change for the better is said to ensue. In this regard the biography of the late Chief Fadairo, *Awixe* of Lagos in this book is interesting. *Awixe's* life only became prosperous when he took up divination as a profession — a prediction already made at the *Ese-Ntaye* consultation on his behalf several years before. *Ibie* tells a similar story about his own life.

Apart from sacrifice, *Iwa* (moral rectitude) is the other corrective influence on "bad *Ori*"; hence the saying:

Ori kan ki-i buru l'otu
Iwa nikan lo xoro.

TRANSLATION:

No destiny is so bad
That moral rectitude cannot correct it.

Epega[***] sums it up very aptly in these words:

" . . . The Yoruba believe that fate can be controlled to a large extent through the performance of certain propitiatory sacrifices and magic prescribed by the *babalawo* (hence Ifa is consulted at every juncture in life) also that good behaviour will prevent misfortune."

In effect, while offering an explanation of the inequalities of life the Yoruba concept of *Ori* at the same time provides a remedial option for the unfortunate. In this way, it instills hope and optimism without minimising the role of contingent necessity.

Philosophical Ideas: Four Cardinal Points

(Igun Merin Aye)

The idea that space is divided into four quarters by the intersection of two grand lines, one running due East and West and the other due North and South was held by many ancient peoples primarily for ritualistic rather than geographical reasons. This is not surprising because the universe inspired awe in man's mind before stimulating curiosity that led to geographical exploration. So we find that the sun as the biggest luminary in the firmament became the symbol of Divinity. Taking the site of the rising sun, the East that is, as reference point and source of life it was natural that man should regard the site of the setting sun, the west as death.

North and South represented the Nadir and the Zenith of the Sun's daily course. In addition, East, West, North and South, *The Four Cardinal Points* were believed to house presiding spiritual forces — mandatory to be invoked or appeased for the success of rituals.

Here are two examples:

- 1). "Every departed spirit for whom these divine figures have been painted upon his coffin shall make his way through these four entrances into heaven.

That of the North wind belongeth to Osiris, that of the South wind to Ra that of the West Wind to Isis and that of the East wind to Nephthys.

Each of these winds shall breath into his nostrils as he entereth in his daily course."

- 2). "There should follow the sacrifice to the Vatukas. The wise worshipper should draw on his left an ordinary rectangular figure and after worshipping it place therein food with wine, meat and other things.

With the vijas of vak, maya, kamola and with the mantra, Vang, Solution to Vatuka, he Worshipped in the East of the rectangle and then sacrifice should be offered to him.

. . . Sacrifice should be made to the *Yoginis* in the South and then to kshetrapala on the West of the rectangle.

. . . Sacrifice should be made to *Ganapat* in the North . . ."¹

Like the Ancient Egyptian and the Hindu ritual described above, Yoruba rituals take due cognisance of the four Cardinal Points.

Footnote: * From "The Egyptian Book of the Dead" Wallis Budge (1899, 1974).

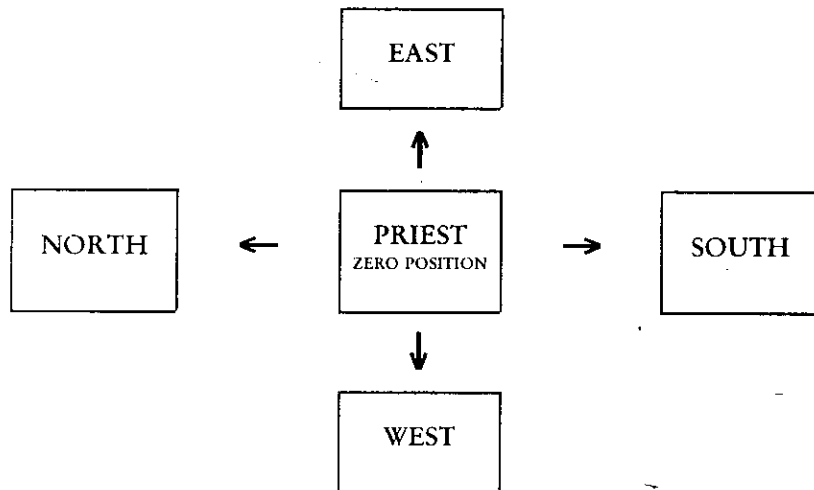
Footnote: ** From "Mahanirvana Tantra-Tantra of the Great Liberatin".

The Four Cardinal Points

On the vigil of the annual Ifa Festival the officiating priest invokes the divinities thus:

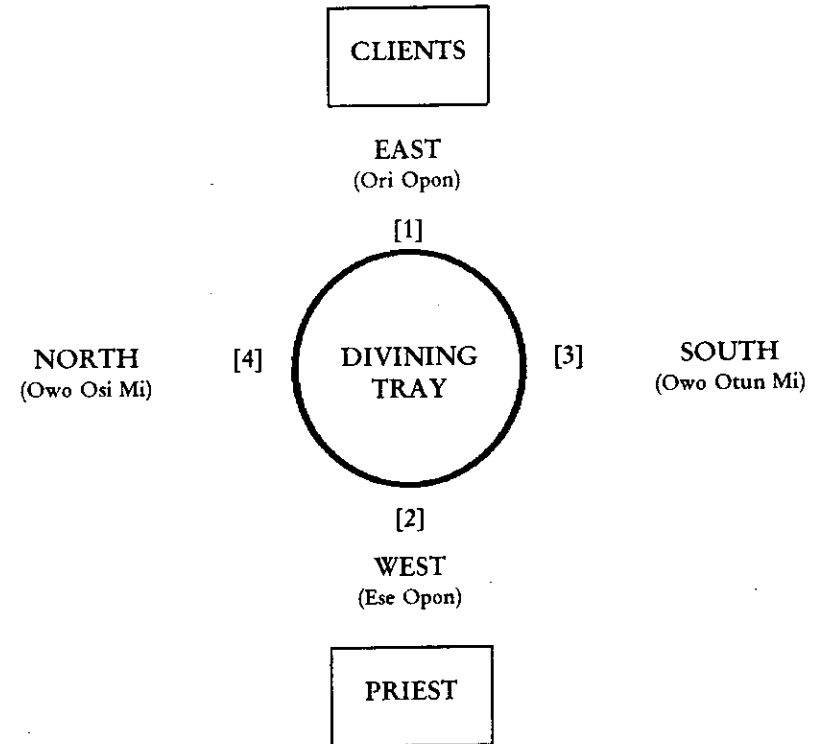
- I Atiwaye Ọjọ mo pe ọ! (Invoke the East);
- II Ati wo-Oorun mo pe ọ! (Invoke the West);
- III To the South, and;
- IV To the North.

He invokes the divinities Ile, Olokun, Ọlọsa, Ọxun, Ogun, Ọrunmila etc.



The Zero-Position of the officiating priest represents the neutral centre of the cosmos about which the four Cardinal Points with their presiding divinities are disposed.

We may also note the interesting procedure at an Ifa consultation:



The Divining Tray is placed between Client and Priest and oriented so that Exu's All-seeing Eye is due East. The priest identifies the four cardinal points as follows:

1. Pointing the divining chain at Exu's Eye he says "ori-qpṛn" (East);
2. Pointing the chain at the opposite edge he says "eṣe-qpṛn" (West);

3. Pointing the chain to his right he says "oṣo otun mi" (South);
4. Pointing the chain leftwards he says "oṣo osi mi" (North).

This preliminary identification is important since Ifa configurations are read from above downwards (ie., from East to West) and from Right to Left (ie., South to North).

Life, Death and After-Life

The ideas that men hold about the after-life are contingent on their evaluation of the meaning of life here on earth and its termination by death.

If we consider the *"Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead"* as a first example, we find that life on earth is regarded as a long careful preparation for the After-Life. Consequently the After-Life is treated as the real life.

As a second example the Tibetan Book of the Dead gives us a totally different picture. In this tantric buddhist view, life on earth is the unique theatre for the acquisition of good Karma. If this is achieved the individual attains complete union with the Buddha-Soul in the After-Life. If not achieved, rebirth into the world results, to allow residual evil karma to be worked out. In other words, Buddhahood is the real life and life here on earth is mere illusion.

Following the Egyptian model, but with different emphasis, Christianity and Islam in essence accept life here on earth as a preparation for perpetual bliss or perpetual damnation in the After-Life. There is no return to life on earth although Roman Catholicism allows for a probationary period in purgatory for the sinful soul - Ifa's teaching seems to have inverted the Ancient Egyptian concept of the After-Life by stressing that Life here on earth is the real life, the After-Life being only a staging station for a return to earth. Happiness belongs in the world below and not the Here-After.

Thus, happiness consists in the pursuit of the five kinds of good fortune: wealth, marriage, progeny, victory over enemies and longevity; and the avoidance of the five kinds of bad fortune: poverty, loss, illness, litigation and premature death (See Wm Bascom 1959 "*Ifa Divination*" page 57).

Ifa teaches further that regrettable death is premature death, death in poverty or disgrace, or death following a protracted debilitating illness. The torments of hell do not have a place in Yoruba eschatology. Rather the dread of death arises from a sense of unfulfilled life. Death in old respected age is ideal.

The belief in the reality of the communion of the dead with the living is corollary to the evaluation of the After-Life as a halting station for a return to life on earth. Hence ancestor veneration and worship — particularly exemplified in the Egugun Cult — evokes special devotion from the traditional Yoruba. Reincarnation of course, but not metempsychosis represents another aspect of the belief that some ancestors do return to earth to be born in the same family to ensure lineage continuity. That explains why Yoruba children are named Babatunde (Father returns) Iyabọ (Mother returns) Okusanya (Ancestor is replaced) etc. Mention should be made in this connection of the Yoruba concept of Abiku. Abiku are children who are born, die at birth or early in infancy and are believed to be reborn to the same parents over and over again in the same cycle of birth-death-rebirth. When the chain is believed to be broken such children that survive receive names like Malomọ (Never say die) Kosọkọ (No burial again) Igbekọyi (Rejected by the grave) etc. There are over a hundred names like these for abiku: a testimony to the high incidence of neonatal and infant mortality in Yoruba Society of yore.

There is an Ifa verse which sums up these points very aptly. It is taken from Oyeku'xe and goes thus:

Ka ma tete ku
A wo ele alayọ;
Aitete ku ixẹ,
Awoibanuje;
Biku ba de ka yin Oluwa logo

Awo olootọ.
Awọn agbaagba meta lo difa iku wo lọdọ Ọrunmila wọn ni:
Ee se ti iku fi i pani?
Ọrunmila ni: Ire ni Amuniwaye fi iku xe
Omi ti ko xan siwa, ti ko xan sehin
A a di omi ọgọdọ
Ọgọdọ omi ibajẹ, Omi ẹgbin
Omi ngbe wọn lọ rere,
Omi ngbe wọn bọ, rere
Olokunrun ka a re'le lo gbawo tuntun bọ wa'ye.

TRANSLATION:

"If we die after a long happy life we achieve glory; but if we live too long and die in poverty, neglect and disgrace we achieve nothing but sorrow. We should accept death when it comes and give thanks to God for life well lived."

Pondering these sayings three sages consulted Ọrunmila and asked why man should suffer death at all.

Ọrunmila replied:

The creator has bestowed death to man as a blessing.
Life is a stream that flows out and flows back.
When it flows out men call it Death,
When it flows back they call it Rebirth.
If the stream does not flow out and flow back
It becomes a cesspool stagnant with shameful impurities.
Without Death there can be no Rebirth.
And Rebirth is the invalid that travels out only to return home with newfound health.

Conclusion

I have tried in these pages to analyse the evolutionary process by which the religious and philosophical ideas of the Yoruba attained their final form as we know them today. These ideas were founded on the beliefs of the earliest Yoruba and became systematised during the Oduduwa Era (500 B.C. to 500 A. D.) In the course of that millennium, the leading role in formulating the New Theology belonged to the Ifa priests who handed the tradition down from generation to generation of disciples.

It may be objected that my analysis is unduly biased in favour of the Ifa Cult. My answer is that I have given the facts as presented by Ifa priests, who are, possibly, the best organised and professional religious body among the Yoruba. My aim is to emphasise firstly the evolutionary nature of what other writers present as Yoruba Religion unchanged from the beginning of time. Dr. Bolaji Idowu* adumbrated this evolutionary aspect but omitted, in my view, to stress the temporal sequence through which some ideas were discarded or conflated to produce the composite picture that finally emerged.

Secondly I attempted to unravel the convoluted process through which the Ifa Cult assumed supremacy over other Yoruba Cults. My thesis can be challenged by a detailed Cult by Cult analytical description of the practices and concepts pertaining to the devotees of other Yoruba Orixa. When this is done we shall then indeed possess a balanced account of Yoruba religious and philosophical ideas.

In the meantime what emerges from my own account may be summarised thus: Yoruba religion is monotheism with hagiolatry.

That notwithstanding, Olodumare is the unique, Omnipotent Omniscient creator. Directly ranking under him is the Trinity of Orunmila-Obatala-Exu. Below this trinity are the other Orixa representing natural forces or spiritual ideas. Some are wrathful like Ogun, Xongo, Xoponq, Awon Iyami (witches),

Footnote *: E. Bolaji Idowu (1962) *"Olodumare"* pp 68 -70.

Odun Ifa

Oya, Ajogun Orun (Heavenly Knights of punishment) and so on; some are peaceful like Ile (Mother Earth) Oxun (Feminine Principle) Egungun (Departed Ancestors); others, such as Ori, personify philosophical ideas.

The reader of Ifa verses should bear in mind these central ideas without however discounting the eclectic nature of the myths and legends contained therein. Contradictions between one version of a myth and another version of the same myth arise from the love of Ifa priests for shifting the roles of their divinities around quite a bit much as the Ancient Egyptians and Ancient Greeks did with their own gods.

Translation and Orthography

In many respects a translation is just as much a creative input as the original work itself. Needless to say, a good translation should communicate to the reader the true message and inner feeling of the original while at the same time avoiding any awkward rendering.

There are those who argue that a literal translation which keeps very closely to the original text best guarantees a faithful rendering. Footnotes and explanatory parentheses may be necessary, so continues this argument, but any attempt at reinterpretation of the text should be viewed with censure.

All translators face this difficult choice between textual concordance and meaningful interpretation. My opinion is that respect for objectivity and scholarship though perfectly valid where scientific or historical works are concerned usually fails to render justice in translating religious or esoteric literature.

My good friend, Prof. J. P. Clark in his magnificent translation into English of the "*Ozidi Saga*" from the Ijò oral text champions the literal approach in these words:

"Our English translation follows the sequence and order of the original, not word for word, but phrase by phrase clause by clause and sentence by sentence"¹.

Unfortunately, at least in my view, the result though highly commendable, does not seem entirely successful. In fact J.P.Clark himself admits that his literal approach is partly responsible for "some of the awkward stretches in our English translation."

Footnote ¹: Clark J.P. (1977) "The OZIDI SAGA" Ibadan University Press Introductory Essay.

At the other end of the spectrum there is the classic example of Fitzgerald whose English translation of "*The Rubayyat of Omar Khayyam*" from the Persian Arabic original is so free as to render its parentage almost unrecognisable.

Between the extremes of strictly literal translation and totally free translation it seems to me that a middle ground must be found which satisfies the criteria of acceptable reproduction. In this quest a study of the opinions of authoritative translation of difficult religious or esoteric literature is helpful.

John Blofeld compares Richard Wilhelm's translation of the Chinese divinatory text, the *I Ching*, with his own translation in these words:

"My translation makes some kind of sense whereas many passages in William's make none . . . There is the more important matter of the terseness of the Chinese original. Its exceedingly terse style in many places justifies a number of widely varying translations, nor is it unlikely that in some passages several simultaneous meanings were deliberately implied. Moreover the Chinese text includes hardly any pronouns at all so that my arbitrary inclusion of them for the sake of reasonably good English puts a quite artificial limitation on the meaning."

The translator of Ifa stanza is confronted with problems similar to those identified by Blofeld. The language of Ifa is poor in abstract nouns; it mixes root-words, loan-words and onomatopoeic words in bewildering confusion, its prosody lacks metre and rhyme but revels in word-play, word-magic, lexical contrast, symbolism, unfamiliar imagery and telescoping of many ideas into one.

Writing about his work in translating and editing the "*Tibetan Book of the Dead*" from Tibetan into English, Dr Evans Wentz stated:

"The aim of both the translator and editor has been to keep closely to the sense of the text as the idiomatic structures of the Tibetan and English tongues permit. Sometimes the translator preferring to render into English the real meaning which a lama would derive from certain more or less technically worded phrases has departed from a strictly literal translation."

"The Tibetan of tantric texts such as ours is especially difficult to turn into good English and owing to the terseness of many passages it has been necessary to interpolate words and phrases which are bracketed . . . A strictly literal rendering of a work so abstruse in its real meanings as this, and written in symbolical language as well, if attempted by Europeans — who finding it difficult to get out of their western mentality too often are Christians first and scholars second when working with non-Christian sacred texts — would perhaps be as misleading as some of their renderings of the ancient Sanskrit Vedas"^[*].

In the foreword to the same book, *Lama*, Anagarika Govinda writes:

"The Bardo Thodol (The Tibetan Book of the Dead) is a treatise which needs more than philological knowledge for its translation and interpretation namely a thorough knowledge of its traditional background and of the religious experience of one who either has grown up in the tradition or who has imbibed its tradition from a competent living guru."

And quoting Ananda K. Coomaraswami, Lama Govinda continues:

"In times of old it was not considered that the mere knowledge of a language sufficed to make a man a translator in any serious sense of the word. No one could have undertaken to translate a text who had not studied it for long years at the feet of a traditional and authoritative exponent of its teaching and much less would anyone have thought himself qualified to translate a book in the teachings of which he did not believe." [^{**}]

My "long years" of study began in 1966 and extended to 1992 when the several recordings at Ifa festivals were finally collected into a comprehensive text. I owe late Araba Agboola and his school of wise and experienced Babalawo an irremediable debt for everything published in this book. They received and satisfied my requests for clarification and information in the true tradition of teachers of wisdom.

O'Flaherty, in the introductory chapter of her translation into English of the Indian classic "*The Rig Veda*" wrote:

Footnote *: Evans-Wentz, W.Y. (1960) *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* p. 78.

Footnote **: Lama Govinda Anagarika *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

"... I have tried to construct a translation that is sound but readable; by using the available scholarship I have tried to make the best educated guess on the many problematic points ..."

In summary we should note that while these above-quoted opinions uphold the cardinal point of textual fidelity they also emphasize the greater importance of an intelligible and interpretative translation. This is relevant to the consideration of the translation of Ifa texts as exemplified in the works of two major authors: Dr Wande Abimbola and Dr William Bascom.

Dr Abimbola

Ever since the publication of his major books on Ifa*, Dr Wande Abimbola Nigerian University 'don now turned politician has been acclaimed an authority on the subject. As a translator of Ifa stanzas from Yoruba into English, Prof. Abimbola belongs to the literal school.

Below is an Ifa stanza from Oyeku-Meji $\left. \begin{array}{l} 00 \ 00 \\ 00 \ 00 \\ 00 \ 00 \\ 00 \ 00 \end{array} \right\}$ given by Dr Abimbola^{***},
and his English translation thereof.

Ori ti o d'ade
Ninu agoro-idę ni ti i yo o wa;
Orun to o l'ejigbaa-'leke
Ninu agoro ide ni ti i yo o wa,
Bebe idi ti o lo mqsaji
Axo oba to kona yanran-yanran
Ninu agoro ide ni ti i yo o wa.

Footnote *: Dr Abimbola's major works: "Ijinle obun enu Ifa" *Apa I ati Apa II* (1968/69) *Awon oju odu merindilogun* (Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa) (1975) Unesco.

Footnote **: Dr Abimbola, W (1977) "Ifa: An exposition of Ifa literary corpus" (1976) *Nigeria Magazine: Festaç Edition* Nos. 122-123.

A dia fun Ikuxanu
 Ti i x'aremọ Alapa
 Iku xaanu O,
 A o pe o ma pa'ni;
 Arun xaanu o,
 Ao pe o ma pa'ni.
 Gbogbo Ajogun e xaanu o
 Ao pe e ma pa'ni.
 E ba xaanu, ke e re'le'mi.

English Translation by Dr Abimbola

The head who will wear a crown
 Is chosen before birth by the divinities;
 The neck who will wear costly beads
 Is chosen before birth by the divinities;
 The hips who will wear *mosaji*
 Garment of kings which is very warm
 Is chosen before birth by the divinities.
 Ifa divination was performed for Ikuxanu
 Who was the first born son of the king of Alapa.
 Death have mercy on us,
 We are not saying you must not attack people;
 But please have mercy on us
 And go to another land.

The main object of this literal translation appears to be the word-for-word and phrase-for-phrase rendering of the Yoruba text into English without due allowance for the peculiarities of idiom of the respective tongues. Yoruba words such as *mosaji*, *Ikuxanu*, *Alapa* and *ajogun* are not given English equivalents so that the reader unfamiliar with Yoruba culture misses the nuances intended by the choice of these words. Most importantly the meaning of the verse as a whole fails to be successfully conveyed to the English reader.

Creative Translation

My approach which I call '*Creative Translation*' is different. First, taking the verse as a whole I try to understand its purport, remembering that stanzas generally employ a fixed protocol of stating the diagnosis of — and prescription to remedy — the problem presented by the querent. The oracular pronouncement does therefore convey a message which must mean something. So I attempt to unravel this message. My next step is to identify the key words that link together to encode the message and I find English equivalents for these key words with due regard to idiomatic differences between Yoruba and English.

Lastly I attempt a connected intelligible translation which an English reader would appreciate not hesitating to interpolate words or ideas considered helpful in this objective.

Let us re-examine Dr Abimbola's Yoruba text with these points in mind.

1. What is the purport of the verse?
It seems to me that the purport of the verse is to emphasize the role of "ORI" in determining man's fortunes on earth. "ORI" is a complex Yoruba philosophical concept which I analysed in the chapter: "Religious and Philosophical ideas in Ifa." Briefly this concept postulates that what men achieve on earth results from the choice made by them before birth. Consequently the verse argues that men who become kings or chiefs or women who attain fame and beauty on earth were so pre-ordained before birth. Arriving on earth, men forget their prenatal choice and can only attune their life to their destiny through consultation with the Ifa-oracle for correct advice.
2. The key words in the text are: **Ikuxanu, Mosaji, Alapa Agoro-Ide, AJOROGUN.**

The name **Ikuxanu** literally means: "*Death has spared this person*"

Its significance here is that the querent — obviously one who consulted Ifa because of fear of premature death — received Ifa's assurance of longevity since he has so chosen before birth. Destiny is on his side.

Mosaji is a royal cloth of exquisite weave.

Alapa is the king of the ancient Yoruba kingdom, **Apa** frequently mentioned in Ifa verses. The querent **Ikuxanu** is the heir to the throne. **Agoro-Ide** is symbolism for Ifa-divination.

Ajogun means "*ministers of punishment*" despatched on earth by the Omnipotent. C.C. Ibie's phrase is more apt: "*Heavenly Knights of Doom.*" They include: **Ofo** (*loss*); **Exe** (*Disaster*) **Ejo** (*Troubles*) **Arun** (*illness*) and **Iku** (*Death*).

3. The connected story:

[All things are predetermined in heaven but are only revealed to forgetful men on earth at Ifa consultation].

He who will be crowned king or wear chiefly regalia has been chosen before birth but is only informed on earth at divination.

Feminine elegance and beauty are bestowed before birth but confirmed on earth at divination.

Thus declared Ifa oracle to the heir of the kingdom Apa. Your name is Ikuxanu, added the oracle, which means Death has spared you for greatness even before birth.

Song:

As death spared the heir of Apa
 We pray that death spare us too.
 We know that death must come sometime,
 Illness too and the other heavenly trials,

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Song:

As death spared the heir of Apa
 We pray that death spare us too.
 We know that death must come sometime,
 Illness too and the other heavenly trials,

But we pray that these ministers of doom
Have mercy on us and depart our household.

I have put the opening lines of the translation in square brackets since they do not feature directly in the Yoruba text but nevertheless constitute the theme of the verse.

Dr William Bascom

Endowed with immense scholarship allied with a humanist approach to a culture radically different from his own the late American sociologist Dr. William Bascom played a decisive role for African studies in the pioneering encounter between dispassionate scientific enquiry and racist bigotry current in early twentieth century western Europe.

Like Dr Wande Abimbola, Dr Bascom as translator of Ifa verses into English, belongs to the literal school but unlike Dr. Abimbola, Dr. Bascom's approach is interpretative. This approach begins with a word for word transliteration of the Yoruba text into English followed by a continuous version in readable form and this in turn is explained by copious foot notes on difficult Yoruba words or ideas and social customs.

Here is an example from **Ika-Meji**:

$$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$$

1. Translation:

Iba-re-re
To pay homage from afar

nwọn ni ibi-k(u) bi
They say any place

je o na fun
eat raid for (him)

fun nwọn ni ki o ru
for him. They say should he offer

egbetalogbon ati epo pupo
6600 (cowries) and palm-oil much.

awo ina a da fun ina
secret (of) fire who cast for fire

ti ina ba fi ori le ni
that fire should take head appear will

Nwọn ori re yio la ona
they say head his will open road

akuko adie meta
cock chicken three

Ina ru-(e) bo
fire offer sacrifice

Ifa ni eni kan nfe de se ohun kan ki
Ifa say person one wanting do thing one should

Olu ware ru-(e)bo ki ona ba le la fun
person in question offer sacrifice that road should be open for (him)

nitori ti bi oluware ba ru(e)bu ohun-k(u)-ohun
because that is person in question should offer sacrifice thing any thing

ti o nfe iba-se ise ni tabi bi o ba
that he wanting should make work he(it) or if he should

fe se ohun pataki ohunna yio se ise.
want do thing important thing the will do to be done.

Continuous Translation (Interpretative)

"To pay homage from afar", the diviner of fire, was the one who cast Ifa for Fire. They said wherever fire should turn, there would be a way for him, they said his head would open the way for him^[2]. They said he should sacrifice three cocks, one shilling seven pence eight *oninis* and plenty of palm-oil^[3] Fire made the sacrifice.

"Ifa says someone wants to do something. He should make sacrifice, so that the way will be clear for him because if he should sacrifice he will be able to do whatever he wants - whether it is work or any important thing that he wants to do." [**]

Footnotes by Bascom

1. The imagery here compares the way one rubs his hands to warm them before the fire with the way in which one "rubs his hands" in paying homage to a ruler . . .
2. The meaning is that fire will burn its own path wherever it goes.
3. *cf.* verse 245 - 1 where it is specifically stated that the palm-oil is poured on Fire to keep him alive.

Note that Bascom's footnotes deepen our appreciation of the verse making the literal translation interpretative.

Footnote **: Bascom W (1969) *Ifa Divination* pp. 206 - 207.

My *creative translation* combines three levels of Bascom's English text into readable version thus:

"Even from afar
Men will rub their hands before you
As in obeisance to a king."

Thus declared Ifa oracle to Fire, adding that upon what enterprise so ever Fire might set his mind destiny would ensure his success. However, Fire should offer sacrifice with three cocks, 6,600 cowries and plenty of Palm-oil. Fire offered the sacrifice.

Ifa says that this consultation is made on behalf of a client who wishes to decide on an enterprise. If the client desires success he should offer sacrifice. If he does so, whatever the enterprise, be it business or any important affair success will attend him (just as success attends fire's enterprise when fed with palm-oil).

After these general remarks on the broad principles that should inform the translation of a sacred text from an autochthonous to a foreign language let us now examine what an Ifa stanza really means.

Under the chapter "What is Ifa?" the structure of Ifa stanza was examined in detail. It was shown that the first part of the stanza consisting of a pithy saying or a proverb is connected to the rest of the stanza by the expression: "O *dafun*", "A *diafun*", "A *difa fun*" or "A *won lo dafun*". What does this expression mean?

Dr Wande Abimbola and Dr William Bascom considering that the first part of Ifa stanza is the name or are the names of the past diviners, mythical or historical, who cast Ifa for a client translate the bridging expression "O *da fun*," etc., as:

"was the one (were the ones) who cast Ifa for."

Dr Idowu for his part, regarding the first part of Ifa stanza as the oracular pronouncement, elects to translate the bridging expression as ". . . *thus declared the oracle to . . .*" or ". . . *this was the oracles's response to . . .*"

An example will make the point clearer.

(a) Dr Bascom: **Ofun-Meji** $\left[\begin{array}{l} 00\ 00 \\ 0\ 0 \\ 00\ 00 \\ 0\ 0 \end{array} \right]$

Text	Bascom's Translation
Afinkin ni p'eru Iledida ni p'ore	Afinkin is what kills slaves, Broken oaths are what kill friends
Epe ni P, ole Ajọbi ni pa iyekan Ada fun Irunmale Ti Olodumare nrase ikupe wọn igboji Ti o nranse iku pe wọn ni igbo ta.	Curses are what kills And ancestors are what kill relatives were the ones who cast Ifafor the four hundred deities when the sky-God was sending Death to call them forty times when he was sending death to call them sixty times.

Bascom appends the following explanatory footnotes:

1. Afinkin: something comparable to an oath or a curse.
2. To take an oath is called to "drink ground" (*mulẹ, mu ilẹ*) and to break an oath to "break ground" (*da ilẹ*).
3. . . .
4. those born together" (*ajọ bi*) refers to the ancestor and "those of one mother (*iyekan*) are used loosely here to mean those related by their father or mother. A person who is accused of making bad medicine against such a relative or of having sexual relations with a relatives wife is made to take an

oath of his innocence. He must eat kola in the main chamber of the compound and repeat "may the ancestors kill me" (if I am guilty) (*ki ajobi pa mi*). This type of an oath, taken only when there is a dispute within the family is considered extremely dangerous.

(b) Idowu: Eji-Ogbe $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$

Text

Afinti ni p' eru,
Epe ni p'ole,
Ile, dida ni p'ore
Alajobi ni pa'yekan
O da fun
oƙanlenirinwo
Irunmale

Idowu's Translation

It is tale bearing that kills the slave
It is curses that kill the thief
It is covenant breaking that kills the friend
It is consanguinity that kills the maternal relative.
This is the Oracle's Response,
To the one thousand seven hundred divinities
On the day they were going to Olodumare
In consequence of a quarrel.

Dr Bascom and Dr Idowu offer literal translations of two variants of the same Ifa stanza but even though Dr Bascom's footnotes unravel some of the obscure references in the text, Dr Idowu's version brings out the meaning of the verse more clearly by treating the bridging expression: "O da fun . . ." as the introduction of the oracle's declaration. Nevertheless both translations fail to reveal the inner meaning of the verse.

The creative translation given below offers another insight into this inner meaning.

[Evil acts oft rebound on the doer: such is the moral law of action]

Death is ultimately the wages of the slave that bears tales, the thief that swears falsely, the friend that breaks covenants or the blood-brother that abuses family ties. So declared Ifa Oracle to the divinities preparing to take a quarrel before the Omnipotent.

Footnote *: Idowu, E.B. (1962) "Olodumare" Page 52

Oḍun Ifa

The inner meaning of the verse, Ifa's message, is that evil acts done even in secret do not go unpunished. Ifa verses often leave the conclusion of an argument or the summary of a case unstated. Where European logic demands an explicit conclusion or summary Ifa's method is to give concrete examples as proofs of the unstated conclusion.

The creative translation above interpolates the unstated summary of the verse in square brackets in the opening lines. The reader will note this in some of the verses translated in this book but sometimes the square brackets are omitted.

The question as to whether the bridging expression "*O da fun . . .*" etc., should be translated as "*was the one who cast Ifa for . . .*" according to Dr Bascom or as "*thus declared the oracle to . . .*" according to Dr Idowu may appear tedious and scholastic but if any sense is to emerge from the translation of an Ifa stanza the choice between the two interpretations assumes relevance. Ifa priests are themselves not over-concerned about these fine distinctions. What they insist on is the unity of the various parts of the stanza as a meaningful aid to the solution of the querent's problem.

There is little doubt that the Ifa stanza began as a simple divinatory formula appended to the configuration cast for the client. This simple formula would merely state the circumstances of the consultation the prescribed sacrifice and the expected outcome. Here is an example.

The configuration cast is **Ogunda' Wori** $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \end{pmatrix}$.

The Simple Formula (from Epega)

Ogunda nre ajo,
A pe babalawo Ifa di'fa.
Ki o wa'xe, bọ

Aja, ojola meji ati egberin din logun owo
Nwọn ni Ojola ni i m'eru gun.

TRANSLATION:

When Ogunda planned a journey, a diviner was summoned to consult Ifa-oracle.

The oracle declared: Ogunda will journey forth and arrive at destination safely.

But he must offer, as sacrifice: One dog, two cobras, and 780 cowries
Just as a cobra coils and uncoils itself again so Ogunda will go safely and return safely.

The next example is a specific divinatory formula where, as against the simple formula, the name or names of the diviners are stated.

Specific Divinatory Formula (from Bascom) *Ogbe'Rosun* $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 0 \\ 00 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$

Adepeju ni awo Alaran, Okoromu ni awo Esa, Ita moje awo Itamopo.

A da fun agba gọlọtọ ti o nfo-ori-nfori
L'odo ni ai-ni-gba, o ni iya ai-ni enia ni o nje oun.

Ifa ni oun ri ire enia ati ire ayafun eniti o da oun yi.
Ayebo-Adie meji, obi mewa ati egberindinlogun ni e bo
A o fi ewe oko di obi nan, a o mafi bo orire nikan-kan l'ojojumo.

Translation by Bascom

Adepeju the diviner of "The one who owns velvet", *Okoromu*, the diviner of town of *Esa* and *Itamoje*, the diviner of *Itamopo* were the

ones who cast Ifa for "strong but stupid Elder" who was so poor that he ground cornstarch porridge at the river without calabash. They said. "Why are you grinding cornstarch porridge at the river without calabash?"

He said he was suffering because he had no body. Ifa says he sees the blessing of people and the blessing of wives for the person who cast this figure. Two hens, ten kola nuts and nine pence six oninis is the sacrifice. We will wrap the kola-nuts in "hoe" leaves, we will sacrifice one each day at dawn to his head.

In these two examples just quoted it makes sense to translate the bridging expression: "*o da fun*" as indicated.

The Babalawo's Name is Really an Attribute

In course of time the purported name(s) of the diviner(s) becomes an attribute employed as symbolism for an idea or a lesson to the client. The structure of the verse conforms with the prototype as given in I above but care should be exercised in translating the stanza.

Here is an example from **Oturunpoon-Meji**

Onipon-pon awo Aaya
ho difa fun Aaya;

Onipon-pon awo Amere
Lo difa fun Amere;

B'Aaya ba non tire
Amiere naa a si pon tire

Literal Translation *a'la* Bascom

"Lord of pick-aback" diviner of monkey,
Cast Ifa for monkey.

"Lord of pickaback" diviner of baboon
Cast Ifa for Baboon.

Soon as monkey backed her children,
Baboon also backed hers.

This cryptic translation becomes meaningful if the story appended to the verse is examined.

The Story

Monkey and baboon sorrowing because of childlessness consulted Ifa-oracle. They were advised by the same diviner to offer sacrifice following which they would conceive at the same time and bear children simultaneously. The sacrifice consisted of a Hen, Dried Fish and twenty-two bags of cowries for each client. Both offered the sacrifice. Monkey became pregnant, Baboon became pregnant too. Monkey had children over and over again; so did Baboon — as the oracle had predicted.

Alternate Translation of the Verse

The meaning of the verse hinges on a word-play on the Yoruba verb "pọ̀n" literally meaning "to back a child" but idiomatically "to bear a child". When duplicated as "pọ̀n-pọ̀n" the verb changes in meaning to "to have children repeatedly."

Hence this alternate translation:

The diviner who cast Ifa for Monkey
was nick-named "Dispenser of children" ,

Ọdun Ifa

The diviner who cast Ifa for Baboon
was that same "Dispenser of children"

In the outcome,
soon as monkey became pregnant
Baboon became pregnant too.

As often as monkey had babies
Baboon had her own babies too.

From this example it seems better to translate the purported name of the diviner as a cognomen rather than a proper name.

In the next example the purported names of diviners are symbols, personifying the properties of plants:

Okonron-Meji $\left(\begin{array}{l} 00 \ 00 \\ 00 \ 00 \\ 00 \ 00 \\ 0 \ 0 \end{array} \right)$

Literal Translation *a'la* Bascom

Eesun awo igbo,	Creeper, diviner of the forest
Eruwa awo odan	Giant-grass diviner of the plain
Ti tilo le e fawo b'eso.	were the ones who cast Ifa for Jigbini
Jigbini bun, o ya a	when his life was full of failure.
Oni bawo ni oun	He asked how he might
le rire bayi?	begin to prosper

Wọn ni lbo ni o waru.	He was advised to sacrifice
Ọ si ru.	He sacrificed
Igba to rubo tan	After he had sacrificed
ba here si iri	He began to get manifold blessing.
opolopo ire.	

I think the literal translation taking the purported names of the diviners as proper names instead of symbols misses the inner message of the verse which is, as pointed out elsewhere, that success in life depends on atonement to destiny according to Yoruba philosophy. The creative translation below is offered for comparison:

[Life should conform with destiny, else it ends in failure]

Observe the creeping plant
How it only thrives in the forest
Whereas the Giant-grass does better in the plain."

Thus declared Ifa-oracle to Jigbini, the shrub
When it consulted Ifa asking
How it might change failure in life into prosperity .

"Offer sacrifice," the oracle replied.
(And attune to your destiny)

Jigbini offered sacrifice as told and received manifold blessings.

The examples about to be quoted in this third group show that it is impossible to translate the bridging expression "*O da fun . . .*" etc., as "**was the diviner who cast Ifa for . . .**" without doing violence to the meaning of the text.

Example 1: From *Ofun-'Gbe*. $\left[\begin{array}{l} 0 \ 00 \\ 0 \ 0 \\ 0 \ 00 \\ 0 \ 0 \end{array} \right]$

Verse:

E ra ni dede
Lo di'fa kolgun
Ti o nlo si ilu Igbodęde

Odun Ifa

WỌn ni aare ko ni-i m'ta a
WỌn ni ko ni-i idagiri ojojo
WỌn ni akoko ti ebi ba maa pa a
Ni Olodumare yio maa gbe onje ti yoo jẹ ko o
K'Igun ru: isamodi axọ idi rẹ
oru epo kan, obukọ kan
Igun rubọ
Bi o ba da ki ebi pa igun, idagiri yio de ni ilu ...

Bascom's Translation

"Fly-Low" was the one who cast Ifa for Vulture when he was going to the town of Low-Igbo. They said that he would not become tired. They said he would not meet with the misfortune of sickness. They said that when he becomes hungry the Sky God would bring him food to eat. Vulture sacrificed the sash from his waist, a small pot of palm oil and one he-goat. Vulture made the sacrifice. "If it happens that Vulture is hungry a catastrophe will occur in the town . . .

This explains why any disaster in town benefits vulture who feeds on the bodies of dead animals and on the sacrifices to bring the disaster to an end.

Alternative Translation

"Fly low and reconnoitre." Thus declared Ifa oracle to Vulture on his way to hunt for food in the City of Igbo. "You will not tire," added the oracle. "You will not be suddenly taken by serious illness. Whenever hunger strikes at you the Omnipotent will provide for you." He was told to sacrifice. Vulture sacrificed: his loin-cloth, a vat of palm-oil and a billy-goat.

From that time, whenever hunger struck at Vulture, disaster would strike in the city, providing corpses and sacrifices to assuage vulture's hunger.

Example 2:

Bi ojumo ba nmo a ko ni y'ogberi bi ojo ano, li o da fun Koimo ti o nronu bi oun ti ma xe kini yi si lana. O ronu titi, o sun. Nigbati ojumo mo ti oye la, Koimo wa mo eyiti oun maa xe dandan.

Nje ki aje ki ojo bori ojo; bi ko ba to, ki oxu bori oxu; bope titi o mo eyiti a maa xe.^[1]

Literal Translation:

"When day is breaking we shall not be as ignorant as yesterday" was the diviner who cast Ifa for "Don't-yet-know" who was thinking, yesterday, what to do about a certain matter. He thought, and thought it over, then he slept. At dawn, the next day, enlightenment came and "DON'T-YET-KNOW" knew what he ought to do properly.

So, let us allow day to succeed day; if this is not enough let month succeed month; in the long run we shall know what is proper to do.

Creative Translation:

"When a new dawn breaks we become wiser than the day before."

Thus declared Ifa-oracle to Novice who pondered over a problem and found no solution to it till he went to bed that night.

Next dawn, Novice awoke with a clearer perception about the most proper course of action.

Footnote *: From Epega D.O. *Ifa Among Awon Babu Verse 77-1* Page 126.

"In like manner," continued the oracle, "whatever the problems in life let us not decide hastily, rather let us allow time to pass, day succeeding day or even month succeeding month, while we still reflect. In good time we shall arrive at the wise decision."

Example 3: Ofun-Meji $\begin{pmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$

Mba se odan
Lateṛeṛe ni mba jẹ;
Ma gba rere
Bi odan Ilala,
Ma tu ni lara
Bi odan Eesinkin
A dia fun Alasọ funfun
Ti nraye apesin.
Ta la o maa sin lodun?

Oosa igbo iwo la o maa sin lodun
Alaba lasẹ
Iwo la o maa sin lodun.

Literal Translation:

"IF I WERE A FIELD I WOULD EXTEND THIS WAY AND THAT LIKE THE FIELDS OF ILALA; I WOULD BE RESTFUL LIKE THE FIELDS OF EESIKIN" was the diviner who cast Ifa for the white-clothed one who was going to earth to be worshipped by all.

Whom shall we worship yearly Ooxa-igbo, it is you we shall worship yearly — you who wills and does, it is you we shall worship yearly.

Alternate Translation:

"If I had to be a field, I would choose to be broad and infinite like the fields of Ilala;

"If I had to be a plain, I would choose to be peaceful to the soul like the plains of *Eesikin*.

Thus declared Ifa-oracle to the God of whiteness whom men call Ooxala on setting forth to receive universal worship on earth.

["Be like the fields of Ilala," said the oracle, "be like the plains of Eesikin, choose that which is infinite and peaceful." Ever since that time men say:]

Whom shall we worship every year but you, O, Ancient of days?
Whom shall we worship but you who have the words of power that make all things possible?

If this analysis proves anything at all, it shows that translators of Ifa stanzas should be flexible. My own work in this regard has been guided by the principles summarised below:

1. No matter how superficially unrelated one part of an Ifa stanza may appear to be to the rest, I make a careful attempt to see the whole stanza from the diviner's view point that the stanza is a connected and meaningful story.
2. I place myself in the position of a reader ignorant of Ifa beliefs and practice or of one who is not literate in Yoruba.

For these reasons I treat each stanza on its own and try to render a creative translation which is intelligible but not too dissociated from the Yoruba text.

With particular reference to the bridging expression "*O dafun . . .*" I have found it convenient to interpret it sometimes as "*was the diviner who cast Ifa*

for" sometimes as "thus declared Ifa-Oracle to . . . " depending on the inner message of the stanza as a whole.

My approach is thus open to the valid criticism that I read my own preferred meaning into the Yoruba original instead of allowing the reader freedom to interpret. I can only counter by saying that the bilingual reader has the advantage of comparing my translation with the original Yoruba text published alongside it.

A Note on Orthography

The orthography of the Yoruba text in this book is based on Ayo Bamgbose's work^[1] and for the benefit of readers not conversant with this work Ayo Bamgbose's recommendations are given below. I also indicate my points of variance as necessary:

1. The spelling of *ai*, *si* before *y* or *io* after *y* to represent a single vowel to be discontinued in favour of the spelling *a e* and *o* respectively eg., *aiya* "chest" to be spelt *aya*; *eye* "bird" to be spelt *eye*.
2. The nasalised *o* sound which is spelt *a* after *n* to be spelt *o*. eg., *ona* "road" to be spelt *on $\text{\textcircled{a}}$* .
3. The spelling *an* for the nasalised vowel to be replaced by *on* eg., *okan* "heart" to be spelt *ok-on*.
4. The spelling *qn* to be used instead of *q* for the third person singular pronoun object following verbs ending in *qn*. eg., *o pqn q* she backed the child to be spelt *o pqn qn*.

Footnote *: Bamgbose, Ayo (1965) Yoruba Orthography Page 31-32.

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5. The tilde to be replaced by double vowels eg *orun* "sun" to be spelt *Oorun*.
 6. The syllabic nasal to be spelt in all cases eg *o mbo* "he is coming" to be spelt *o nbo*; *ng o mo* "I dont know" to be spelt *n o mɔ*.
In the case of *ng* or *n* I write *m* because this is the abbreviated first person pronoun subject (*E)m(i)* = "I"; thus for *n o mɔ* I write *m o mɔ*.
 7. The spelling *nw, ny* to be replaced by *w* and *y*; eg., *nwɔn* "they" to be spelt *wɔn*; *nyin* "your" to be spelt *yin*.
 8. Double letters to indicate a consonant and the spelling *sh* to be discontinued, eg *iddo* to be spelt *Ido*, *Oshogbo* to be spelt *Osogbo*. In the case of *sh* or *s* I write *x* borrowing from Brazilian orthography: thus I write *oxogbo, oxitn, oxumare, xongo*, etc.

Logically a single consonant like *z* should be substituted for *gb* but this may confuse the Yoruba reader.
 9. Tones to be indicated in all cases. I have been sparing in the use of tones particularly since the English translation is a help to the bilingual reader in deciding on the correct tone.
 10. A few words usually combined in writing to be separated eg *ibiti* "place where" to be written *ibi ti*; *wipe* "say that" to be written *wi pe*; *baje* "be spoilt" to be written *ba je*.

I have not observed this rule every time since the combined and separated forms are equally clear in meaning.
 11. The use of an apostrophe to indicate a contraction to be discontinued eg *fɔ'ʒɔ* "wash clothes" to be written *fɔʒɔ* *gba'ʒɔ* "take clothes" to be written *gbaʒɔ*.
-

I prefer to use the apostrophe as this indicates clearly the formation of the particular verb. This is important in translation of Ifa stanzas where neologism abounds.

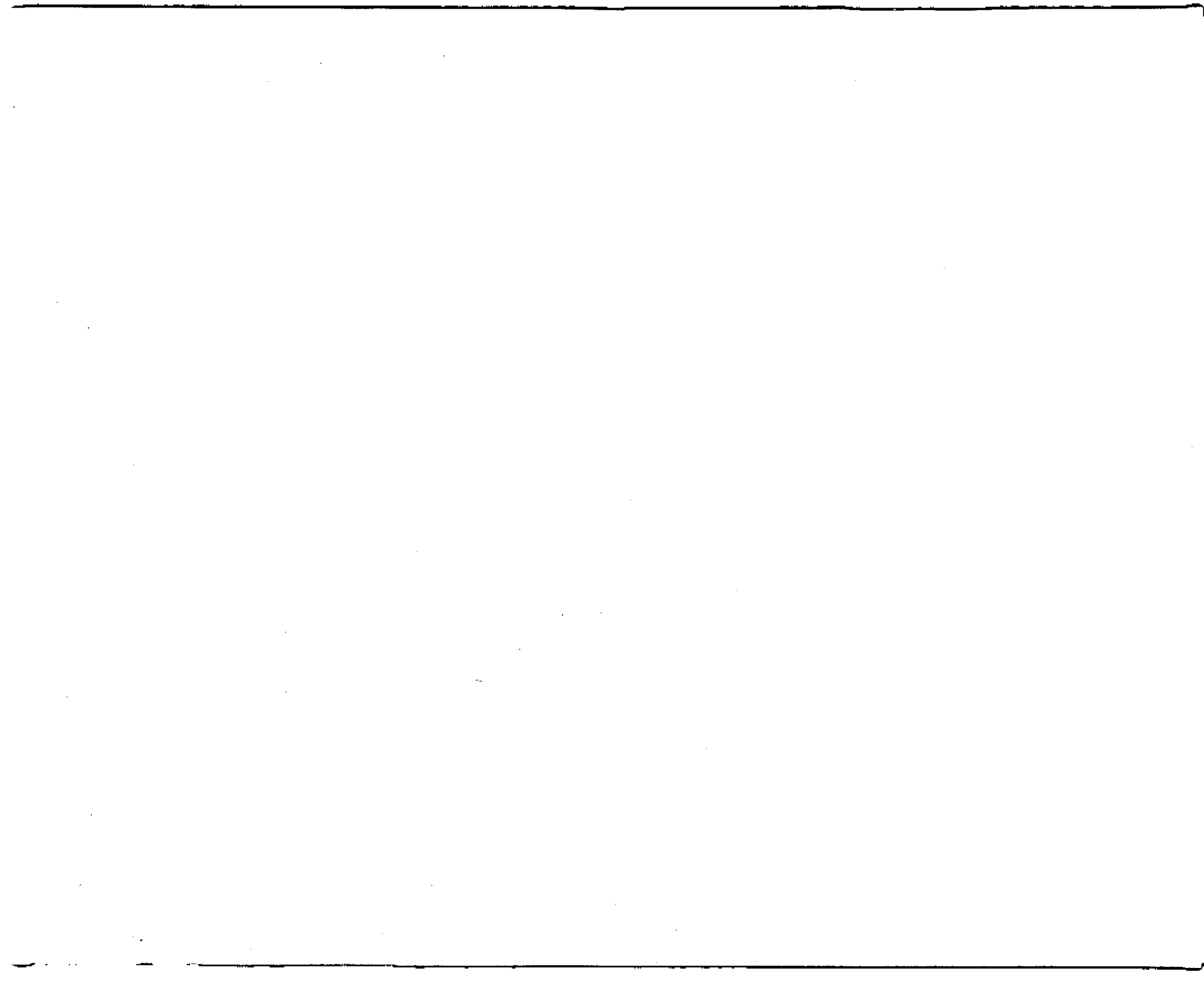
12. Derived words to be linked with a hyphen where it is inconvenient to write them as single words *eg. ailowo lowo* "being without money" to be spelt *ailowo-lowo*; *pelebe pelebe* "very flat" to be spelt *pelebe-pelebe*.

Note: for obvious reasons, these changes should not necessarily apply to the spelling of personal names.

The reader should note the orthography indicating a negative act which I write thus *ki-i* or *ko-i* meaning "it is not" or "it is not yet". This owes nothing to Ayọ Bamgbose's work but satisfies the criterion of *clarity* in orthography.

Part III

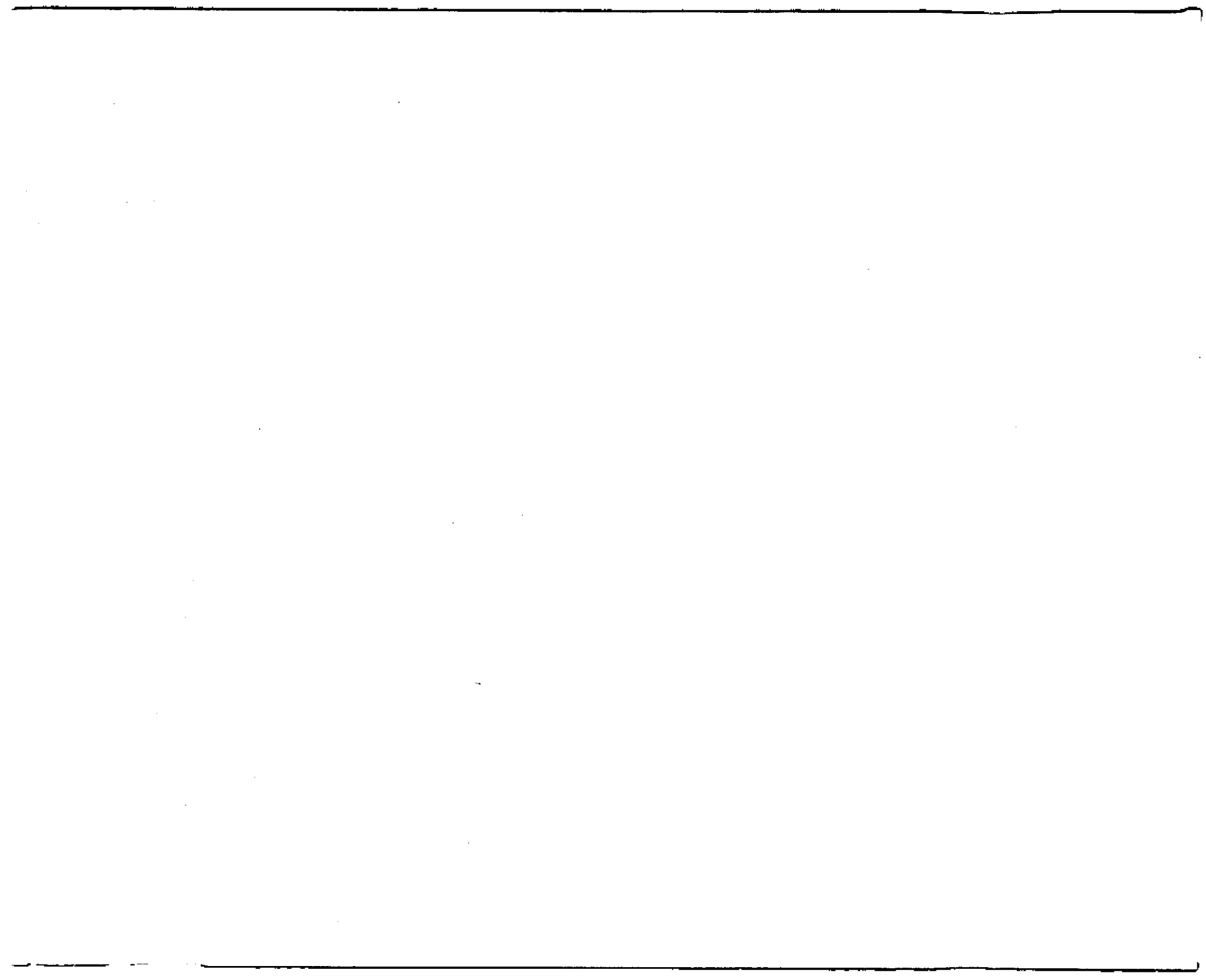
Stages of the Rites



Part III

Stages of The Rites

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Part IIIA

Rites of The Annual Festival

Ifa is worshipped by its devotees daily, weekly and yearly. Apart from these ritualistic occasions babalawo may meet for professional or administrative business as necessary.

Ajiki - Daily Worship

First thing in the morning the babalawo performs a simple ceremony at the Ifa Shrine in his house. He pours a libation of fresh water on the earth as obeisance to his ancestors and past teachers in the craft. This libation also represents a peace offering to Orunmila for the day. The Babalawo invokes Orunmila under his various cognomens and implores his blessing for the day's business. Finally he splits and casts Kola-nuts in order to obtain a favourable response from Ifa for the welfare of his family and for his professional advancement. This is the significance of the Yoruba proverb: "Ojumọ ki-i mọ, ki awo ma sọ obi wo." (*Every morning the diviner begins his work by casting Kola-nuts for good auspices*).

Ọsẹ-Ifa (Weekly Worship)

Unlike the daily worship by the individual babalawo, the weekly worship is a congregational meeting of the babalawo and Ifa devotees in the entourage of the **Oluwo** who is the cult leader.

The weekly worship has been aptly described by Prof. Wande Abimbola in these words:

" . . . the first day of the Yoruba four-day week is devoted by the Ifa priests to the worship of Ifa. The day is known as Ọjọ-Awo (the day of Ifa divination). On this day, Ifa priests assemble at the house of the Chief Priest. There they eat, drink and

Qdun Ifa

make sacrifice to Ifa. Chanting of excerpts from the Ifa literary corpus is not unusual at such congregations. As they chant, some of them produce special dance music on the traditional Ifa drum and to this they dance merrily around the house."

This weekly worship (Qse-Ifa) illustrates the meaning of the proverb quoted by Epega: "Qrqrun (ojo marun-marun) li a nda Ifa" (*"Ifa divination is obligatory every fifth day"*).

Yoruba counting being inclusive like the ancient Greek or modern French counting, the five day week really consists of 4 days as shown below in a comparative list from three authors.

William Bascom: "Ifa Divination" p.102 footnote 4.

Ife Tradition

1st day	Oja Ife (Ifa)
2nd day	Iremọ
3rd day	Aiyegbeju
4th day	Itakogun

Oyo Tradition

1st day	Ojo Ogun
2nd day	Ojo Ogun
3rd day	Jakuta (Xongo)
4th day	Oxala (Obatala).

Ede Tradition

(from Ulli Beier:
A year of Sacred Festivals p.7)

1st day	Jakuta (Xongo)
2nd day	Obatala
3rd day	Ose Ifa
4th day	Ose Ogun

Ondo Tradition

(From E. M. Lijadu:
Ifa 1898, 1972)

1st day	Orix-Nla (Obatala)
2nd day	Orunmila (Ifa)
3rd day	Ogun
4th day	Xongo.

As can be seen from these lists the observance of the Agboola School agrees with the Oyo tradition quoted by Dr Abimbola.

Apart from this 4-day hieratic week the Yoruba observe a 7-day week for lay or commercial purpose.

Below is given the names of the seven days with their English equivalents:

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|---|-----------|
| 1. | Qjọ Aje
(Day of Wealth) | - | Monday |
| 2. | Qjọ Isegun
(Day of Victory) | - | Tuesday |
| 3. | Qjọ-ru
(Day of Confusion) | - | Wednesday |
| 4. | Qjọ-bọ
(Day of Fulfillment) | - | Thursday |
| | or | | |
| | Ojo-Aṣeṣe-D'aye
(Day of Creation) | - | Thursday |
| 5. | Qjọ-Ẹti
(Day of Troubles) | - | Friday |
| 6. | Qjọ-Abameta
(Day of Decision) | - | Saturday |
| 7. | Qjọ-Aiku
(Day of Longevity) | - | Sunday. |

This seven-day week is also employed in deciding on auspicious days for certain enterprises and days to be avoided.

Annual Worship

The Annual Worship is the great event in the Ifa Calendar. It is a time when thanks are offered for blessings received in the past, supplication made for the ensuing year. It marks the end of one year and the beginning of another.

The question as to which month is regarded by the Yoruba as marking the beginning of a New Year was discussed by Ulli Beier* thus:

"It is difficult to say which particular event marks the beginning of the New Year. Some people consider that it starts with the eating of the New Yam. Others declare that the New Year begins with first rains and the beginning of the planting season. In Ede this would correspond either to the *Ogun* Festival in July or the *Ekuru-Ole* Ceremony early March."

The practice in *Èdẹ* is not universal in Yoruba Land. In the Agboḡla School which follows Oyo tradition the harvesting of the New Yam in August is taken as the determinant event and the date of the Annual Ifa Festival is chosen so as to coincide with the Festival of *Oxun* (Orunmila's mythical wife) as celebrated in *Oxogbo* but always in August.

The *Asiwaju-Awo* of Lagos, Chief Atanda, who belongs to the Agboḡla School states categorically in a recorded statement** obtained by me in 1989 that the harvesting of the New Yams in August marks the end of the old year and the beginning of the New Year for Ifa devotees. How did Yoruba people count their months and how many months make a year? Ulli Beier gives us valuable information on these questions^[1]:

"This much is clear; their (i.e. Yoruba) year consists of thirteen Lunar-months. It is the priests of Orisa Oko (the Farm God) who are responsible for keeping the calendar and the fixing of festival dates. This is usually done in consultation with them. The Priests of Orisa Oko keep count of the months by sacrificing a pigeon at every new

moon and keeping the heads of the pigeons in a special calabash. There is a vague feeling that all the thirteen months originally had names but these names are not now remembered."

There are two interesting points made by Beier. First the enumeration of thirteen lunar months as one year. To arrive at this figure the priests of *Orixá-Okó* must have related their lunar observations to another fixed parameter. That parameter is the agricultural cycle.

The priests must have arrived at the figure thirteen by noting that the agricultural year began again from the thirteenth lunar month. Since Yoruba counting is inclusive we should really speak of 12 lunar months with extra days carried over into another year. To bring the lunar calculation in line with the solar year a whole lunar month was intercalated every thirty years. This is how Chief Agboqla^[9] explains the practice.

"Hail to you Orunmila!

"Every succeeding year the festival date diminishes by one day over the last one. In the last thirty years the festival date has receded by thirty days. To bring our calendar for this year up to traditional date we added these thirty lost days. This adjustment allows the celebration of our festival to fall in the eighth month of the Christian year (i.e. August) as tradition demands instead of the receded July date."

In recent years the Agboqla School has fixed the second Wednesday in August to observe the vigil of Ifa Festival.

The second point raised by Ulli Beier concerns the loss of the Yoruba names for the 13 (12 English) lunar months. We should really speak of disuse rather than loss of these names. I give the names together with their English equivalents hereunder.

Odun Ifa

Yoruba		English
Oxu Xere	-	January
Oxu Erele	-	February
Oxu Erena	-	March
Oxu Igbe	-	April
Oxu Ebibi	-	May
Oxu Okudu	-	June
Oxu Agemo	-	July
Oxu Ogun	-	August
Oxu Owewe	-	September
Oxu Owara	-	October
Oxu Belu	-	November
Oxu Ope	-	December.

The annual festival of Ifa combines the celebration of the New Yam Harvest which is a thanksgiving rite with the sacrifice to Ifa which is a petitionary rite. Why is this so? To answer this question it is necessary first to discuss the role of the New Yam Harvest in Yoruba culture.

New Yam Festival

This festival is observed generally among the people of West Africa belonging to the *Kwa* Language family i.e. *Akan, Ewe, Edo, Igbo* and *Yoruba*. Chinua Achebe's apt description of the *raison d'etre* of the New Yam Festival among the Ibo is valid for the Yoruba as well.

"The Feast of the New Yam,"

writes Achebe,

"was held every year before the harvest began to honour the Earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan. New Yams could not be eaten until some had first been

offered to these powers. Men and women young and old looked forward to the New Yam Festival because it began the season of plenty, the New Year."

William Bascom described three different New Yam Festivals observed in Ile-Ife, viz: *Egbodo Qqni*, *Egbodo Erio*, *Egbodo Ife*.

Dr. J. O. Awolalu gives full descriptions of the New Year festival among the Yoruba of *Ijebu-Manuwa*, *Ile-Oluji* near Ondo, and *Ilara* near *Akure*. All these descriptions agree in essentials and corroborate Achebe's explanation of the rite. Agricultural Festivals based on a staple product of the earth are common to all races of the world even though some nations of Europe and America may not observe them today in their original form.

Sir James George Frazer in his epoch-making book, *The Golden Bough*, gave several examples of this universal practice and concludes:

"European people, ancient and modern, have not been singular in personifying the corn as a mother-goddess. The same simple idea has suggested itself to other agricultural races in distant parts of the world and has been applied by them to other indigenous cereals than barley and wheat. If Europe has its wheat-mother and its Barley-Mother America has its maize-mother and the East Indies their Rice-Mother."

Yam being our own staple food it is no wonder that we also have our yam-mother or yam-god to whom we sacrifice annually. Sir James Frazer^[7] writes further:

"In some of the festivals which we have examined the sacrament of first fruits is combined with a sacrifice of presentation of them to gods or spirits and in course of time the sacrifice of first fruits tends to throw the sacrament into the shade if not to supercede it. The mere fact of offering the first-fruits to the gods or spirits comes now to be thought a sufficient preparation for eating the new corn; the higher powers having received their share man is free to enjoy the rest. This mode of viewing the new fruits implies that they are no longer regarded as themselves instinct with divine life but merely as a gift bestowed by the gods upon man who is bound to express his gratitude and homage to his divine benefactors by returning them a portion of their bounty."

This is apt description of the role of the New Yam rite, in the celebration of Ifa Festival. The celebrant brings the New Yam to Ifa as an offering to the god for the new year, the first fruits to the god.

But why present the first fruits to Ifa or Orunmila who is not an agricultural deity? The answer is to be found in the evolution of Yoruba religious practice over the years as discussed fully in the chapter: "Religious and philosophical Ideas".

Briefly it can be summarised thus:

Among the early Yoruba the discovery of agriculture was credited to *Orixo-Oko* (The Farm Deity). Consequently when new yams were harvested each year a festival commemorating this discovery was celebrated as a thanksgiving rite in honour of Orixo-Oko. In the course of evolution of the society other Orixo such as *Ogun*, *Orixo-Nla*, *Osogun* and *Orunmila* assumed ascendancy in the Yoruba pantheon. The devotees of these other Orixo thereafter transferred the New Yam Festival previously celebrated in honour of Orixo-Oko to their own particular deity and combined it with the annual worship of the god. Gradually Orixo-Oko's patronage of agriculture was ended and, in fact, by the seventh century B.C., most of it was already usurped by Ogun.

The result was that, whereas the harvesting of the New Yam still marked the end of the old and the beginning of the new year there was no longer any uniformity in the choice of the month in which the New Year was celebrated. This now depended on the traditional month for the annual worship of the tutelary god of the community or town.

Chief Atanda's statement previously referred to¹ is very clear on this point.

Another aspect of the New Yam Festival worthy of note is highlighted by the words of Chief Agboola at the Festival of 1966.

"At the time when New Yams are harvested it is customary to perform these rites to ensure that life is peaceful and that man, woman, child, friend, relation and servant be not poisoned by eating the Yams."

It could well be that in the early days of agricultural life among the ancient Yoruba, edible tubers were not easily distinguishable from poisonous ones. The identification and ritual presentation of the former to the Orisa would have been considered essential preliminaries to dietary safety.

The Jewish Feast of In-Gathering later called the Feast of Tabernacles was observed by the ancient Israelites as a festival of first fruits and offers an interesting parallel to the Yoruba New Yam Festival.

G.W Anderson^(*) comments on the Jewish Feast thus:

"... The agricultural context of the Feast of Tabernacles is plain. . . It has been argued that in the pre-exile period this was a New Year Festival the aim of which was the annual renewal of the natural and social order."

The ancient Israelites themselves borrowed the festival from the Canaanites whom they met in Palestine.

In turn modern Christians have continued the harvest observances but may have forgotten their pagan origin.

The annual Ifa Festival may be broadly grouped into three stages as hereunder:

1. The preliminaries consisting of lustration of the sacred Palm Nuts (*lkin*), invocation of the divinities and petitions take place on the vigil of the festival.
2. The sacrificial ritual proper consisting of the recitation of canonical verses from the *Ifa corpus*, casting of the Kola-Nuts and sacrifice to **Exu**, **Ifa** and other deities also take place on the vigil of the festival.

3. The Ifa divination for the ensuing year and the accompanying sacrifices take place on the 3rd, 5th, 7th, or 10th day of the festival according to the tradition of the celebrant.

What follows below is an edited account of the ceremonies of the Agboḡla school covering the period 1966 to 1995. I was present at all the ceremonies and I made tape recordings which were transcribed by me. During this period of nearly thirty years there was almost complete uniformity in the performances due allowance being made of course for the personal idiosyncracies of the particular officiating priests.

Iweḡfa - Lustration of Palm-Nuts

As Awolalu rightly notes^[1]:

"Sacrifice requires preparation. Great Festival occasions, for example the annual festival in respect of a divinity, require a great deal of preparation."

The Chief officiating priest (*Abḡre*) at the annual Ifa Festival must observe hygienic, dietary and ritualistic protocols including sexual abstinence which are reputed to put him in a state of mental and spiritual equilibrium before and during the various ceremonies.

The house-hold shrine of Ifa is cleaned. New white cloth and fresh palm fronds adorn the altar and the entrance to the shrine.

However the most-important preparatory rite is that of (*Iweḡfa*) - lustration of the sacred palm-nuts, the visible symbol of Ifa which will be employed for the divination for the ensuing year. The lustral solution is the aqueous extract from sixteen leaves sacred to Ifa (*Iweḡfa*) specially chosen for their reputed magical and ritual potency.

I give below the list of the sixteen leaves used by the Agboḡla School, side by side with the list recorded by Bascom.

Chief Agboḡla's School: List of 16 Ifa Leaves	WM. Bascom's List of 16 Ifa Leaves.
(OYO TRADITION)	(IFE TRADITION)
1. Ewe Qḡdunḡ	1. Ewe Moriwo
2. Ewe Tḡḡḡ	2. Ewe Tḡḡḡ
3. Ewe Saje	3. Ewe Jḡnjoko
4. Ewe Rinrin	4. Ewe ganabana
5. Ewe Gbḡḡi	5. Ewe Alukerese
6. Ewe Wḡḡḡḡḡ	6. Ewe Ita
7. Ewe Ojusaju	7. Ewe Okika
8. Ewe Aje	8. Ewe Omu
9. Ewe Ire	9. Ewe Ade (? Aje)
10. Ewe Sawerepepe	10. Ewe Alugbirin
11. Ewe Akisan	11. Ewe lbaigbo
12. Ewe Omini	12. Ewe Renen (? Rinrin)
13. Ewe Oḡḡ	13. Ewe Orijin
14. Ewe Areḡhinkosun	14. Ewe Apese
15. Ewe Etipḡḡ-ḡla	15. Ewe Olojongbolu
16. Ewe Ayunḡḡ	16. Ewe Eti Ologbo.

Odun Ifa

A comparison of the two lists shows more divergence than correspondence. A senior Babalawo in Chief Agboola's entourage informs me that this does not matter as there is no hard and fast rule about the particular leaves employed. All leaves are Ifa leaves.

Lustral Rite (*Iwefa*)

This rite is usually performed by junior priests in the presence of masters of the craft and is open to any lay person who wishes to participate. The following description pertains to the rite that took place in August 1991 on behalf of Ijọ Orunmila Ato the celebrants of the Ifa festival for that year.

1. The officiating priests arrange the leaves on the floor in 16 bundles by name.
2. Two Kola-nuts, each with 4 valves, are placed on the floor next to the leaves.
3. One priest picks up the Kola-Nuts and touches them to the fore-head of the high priest of Ijọ Orunmila Ato who represents the Church.
4. After prayers over the Kola-nuts the priest splits them to obtain 8 valves. He casts the valves repeatedly on the floor until a favourable combination is obtained.
5. Another priest removes the little stalks from the Kola valves. He puts some Alligator Pepper seeds in his mouth, chews them and spews them over the bundles of leaves in turn. Some fresh water and then some spirit are similarly spewed on the bundles of leaves.
6. A basin of clean water is brought in. A priest picks up one bundle of leaves from the 16 on the floor. He holds on to one end of the bundle and offers the other end to the High Priest of Ijọ Ato. The priest and High Priest pull at the bundle between them until it snaps.

The part held by the officiating priest is laid on the floor, that held by the High Priest is immersed with the remaining 15 bundles of leaves. Some Shea-Butter and salt are added to the basin of water to form the lustral solution.

7. An officiating priest recites the legend of Orunmila's hygienic etiquette. The Lord, says the legend, was once invited to a meeting of the divinities. Rather than set out immediately the Lord spent a considerable time taking a thorough bath first. That episode is now being re-enacted.
8. The priest gathers the 16 Palm-nuts (*Kin*) in his left palm, puts a cake of black soap over them and covers the left palm with his right.

Another priest takes a fistful of leaves from the basin of lustral solution and squeezes the water out of the leaves and over the palm-nuts held by the first priest who takes care to wash the nuts very thoroughly between his palms.

9. A verse is recited from Eji-Ogbe, the first of the 16 principal paired Odu. At the end of the recitation the following chant and refrain are sung:

Orin: Alade ma nwẹ o

Egbe: Sunsun, O,
Alade ma nwẹ
Sunsun, O.

Orin: Oke rere nilee rẹ o

Egbe: Aladee ma nwẹ
Sunsun o.

Orin: Bo ba de'ibẹ o gbe mi o

Egbe: Sunsun o,
Alade ma nwẹ o
Sunsun o.

Orin: Ko gbe akapo, ko gbe eriwo

Egbe: Sunsun o,
Alade ma nwe
Sunsun o.

Translation:

Song: The Royal one takes a bath

Refrain: Wash him well, wash the Royal one clean

Song: In preparation to travel far

Refrain: Wash him well wash the Royal one clean

Song: Lord be my support where-ever you may be

Refrain: Wash him well wash the Royal one clean

Song: Be a support to your devotees

Refrain: Wash him well, wash the Royal one clean

Song: Be a support to your diviners

Refrain: Wash him well, wash the Royal one clean.

10. Next, a verse is recited from the second principal paired Odu, *Oyeku-Meji*. Lustration of the palm-nuts follows then the chant and refrain are sung as above. Verses are recited from the third principal paired Odu and seriatim down to the 16th Odu, *Ofun-Meji*.

Lastly a verse is recited from *Otura-Rera (Otura-Ogunda)*, the **Inaugural Odu** of the **Ijọ Qrunmila Ato**, $\left[\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \circ \\ \circ \\ \circ \end{array} \right]$ followed by the chant and refrain as above.

11. Four Kola valves are cut into smaller pieces and distributed among the audience. The remaining four valves are placed in a cup of clean water. This water is poured on the Palm-nuts still held in the officiating priest's hands.
12. The washed Palm-nuts are deposited in clean water in another bowl while an Ifa verse is recited describing Qrunmila's journey to the deep abode of the Lord of Waters (*Oluweri*) from where Qrunmila returned safely.
13. The Palm-Nuts are gathered from the water and placed in a clean dish which is kept covered. The audience is sprinkled with the water as a special shower of blessing from Qrunmila.
14. The half portions of leaves left on the floor, earlier on, are now made into a wreath over which the covered dish containing the washed Palm-Nuts is placed pending the commencement of the Sacrificial Ritual proper.

Comment

It seems to me that the underlying idea of this lustral rite is the preparation of the god Qrunmila in his emblematic form as the sacred Palm-Nuts (*Ikin*) for the celebration of his birthday.

An interesting comparison can be made with the Hindu practice recorded by

Arthur Avalon⁽⁹⁾ thus:

"The Deva should be placed with his face to the North, and in the manner to be described he should be bathed with the things prescribed.

I now am speaking of their order; do thou listen."

Details of the rite include bathing the god with milk curds, honey, ghee, sugar-water, juice of sugar-cane.

The description ends with these words:

"Be thou well bathed in water scented with camphor, fragrant aloe, saffron, musk and sandal;

"Be thou pleased to grant me enjoyment and salvation.

"After bathing the Lord of the world in this manner with eight jar fulls (of water etc) He should be brought inside the room and placed on his seat."

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5. Atanda, Chief (See Appendix "C").

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6. Beier, Ulli *ibidem*.
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 11. J.O. Awolalu (1979) "Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rite,," Longman pp. 144 - 149.
 12. Sir J. G. Frazer (1963) "The Golden Bough" Macmillan & Co. Ltd. London Abridged Version p. 547.
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Part IIIB

Invocation and Petitions

After the lustration of the sacred Palm-nuts the next stage of the sacrificial rite consists of:

- a) Invocation of the divinities, particularly Ọrunmila;
- b) Petitions for the ensuing year.

This is a composite account of the ceremony of invocation and petitions as edited by me from the transcribed recordings I made between the years 1966 and 1991. From 1966 to 1988 the Chief officiating priest at this ceremony was Chief Akano Fasina Agboḡla now deceased. From 1989 to 1991 this duty was taken over by his devoted colleague Chief Fadairo Ajagbe alas, deceased also in 1993. The celebrants were the members of Ijọ Ọrunmila Ato represented by their High Priest, Chief Adesilu and later, after his demise, by succeeding High Priests of the Church.

The Chief Officiating Priest is in a crouched position facing the dish of sacred Palm-nuts (Ikin). Assistant Priests sit to the left and right of him.

The sacrificial offerings, viz: dried fish, dried bush-rat, kola nuts, bitter kola, alligator pepper, new yam tubers, fresh water in a bowl, gin and money are

arranged on the floor in rows around the dish.

The chief officiating priest knocks thrice on the cover of the dish containing the sacred palm-nuts. He removes the cover and leaves the dish uncovered throughout the rest of the ceremony.

The sacrificial animal is brought in. The rope round its neck is touched to the dish. This symbolises the presentation of the animal to Ifa.

The divinities are invoked. The powers presiding over the four cardinal points are invoked. The divine presence of Orunmila is summoned to preside



Chief Akano Fasina Agboola



Chief Fadairo Ajagbe Fadara

Ọdun Ifa

over the proceedings and guide them to a propitious conclusion.

Next the High Priest of Ijọ Ọrunmila Ato is invited to state the petitions of his Church for the ensuing year.

After this the Chief Officiating Priest offers concluding prayers during which he elaborates on the various articles of the petitions made to Ifa by the High Priest of Ijọ Ato Ọrunmila.

Alẹ-Aisun Ọdun Ifa

Awọn ti wọn nbọ Ifa Ijọ Ọrunmila Ato
Abọrẹ: Oloye Akano Fasino Agboṣa (Babalawo Ijọ)
Oluwo Ijọ (1966): Oloye Adesilu

Iba Ati Ipe Latenu Oloye Agboṣa

Oloye Agboṣa:	Egbe:
Eni a makinra,	Hẹn
Ola a makinra,	Hẹn
Erigi-alo maxai xiju kinra simi,	Hẹn
Ọrunmila xiju o rodi ẹ,	Lesi nb'Opitan yan odi?
Ẹla xiju o rodi ẹ,	Lesi nb'Opitan yan odi?
Ifa xiju o rodi ẹ,	Lesi nb'Opitan yan odi?
Ẹla xiju o rodi ẹ,	Lesi nb'Opitan yan odi?
Eriwo ya!	Han-an-Hin
Eriwo ya!	Han-an-Hin
Eriwo ya!	Han-an-Hin
Eriwo Xoko	Han-an-Hin.

TRANSLATION:

Vigil of Ifa Festival

Celebrants: Ijọ Ọrunmila Ato
 Chief Officiating Priest: Chief Akano Fasina Agboḡla
 (High Priest of the Church)

Chief Priest of the Church (1966): Chief Adesilu

Obeisance and Invocation

Chief Agboḡla	Response
We supplicate your favour today,	We do
As we do everyday,	Yes
Most powerful Grand-Master, deign to look favourably on my supplications	Yes
Ọrunmila look upon us favourably	for there are none among us but your loyal devotes
Saviour of mankind look favourably upon us	for there are . . .
Ifa look favourably upon us	for there are . . .
Attention adepts and all for the ceremony is about to commence	You have our attention
Attention adepts and all	You have our attention
Attention adepts and all	You have our attention
Adepts be pleased to listen with attention.	We are all attentive.

**Awon ti won nbo Ifa Abore:
Ijo Orunmila Ato**

Oloye Akano Fasina Agboola (*Babalawo Ijo*)

Agboola:	Egbe:
Eji teremi-teremi	Hen
Eji teremi-teremi	Hen
Eji tori Ogunbere,	Hen
Tori Agba lu kokooko,	Hen
Omọ Eriwo-Ife lo de,	Hen
Ela takun wa gbure.	Hen.

Egbe: Ariwo nta sa,
Ela takun wa gbure,
ariwo nta sa,

Agboola: To ba gbohun Eku

Egbe: Ariwo nta sa.
Ela takun wa gbure,
Ariwo nta sa.

Agboola: To ba gbohun Eja,

Egbe: Ariwo nta sa
Ela takun wa gbure,
Ariwo nta sa.

Chief Agboqla	Response
Important events are about to commence	Yes
Involving matters of grave moment	Yes
Worthy of announcement from treetops	Yes
Reverberating with the sound of Agba	Yes
Sacred drum of the oxugbo, I, who invoke you, speak with the authority of an initiate from Ife.	Yes Yes.

Chief Agboqla

Èla, Saviour of mankind, I invoke you to descend and receive our pleas with favour.

Response

Hear our cry beseeching you to descend and accept our prayers.

Chief Agboqla

You who listen to the voice of the Bush-Rat.

Response

Hear our cry beseeching you to descend and accept our prayers.

Chief Agboqla

You who listen to the voice of the Fish.

Response

Hear our cry beseeching you to descend and accept our prayers.

Odun Ifa

Agboola:

Ki lole gbohun Eye?

Ki lole gbohun Eran?

Ko xai gbohun omọ eni?

B'oorun bala,
Afenu mugi
Ela ma ro
Ela ma balẹ si be yi!

Iku ki-i b'Ekun wole

Iku ki-i b'Ekun wole

Eriwo x oko!
Edun l'omọ Ogun,
Aaya l'omọ Irunmole
Aasan l'omọ Barapetu
Eetiri ti mi i pe A asan
Eni l'Oro,
Eni l'Oro,
Eni l'odun,
Apeje ma ni o.

Egbe:

Ariwo nta sa,
Ela takun wa gbure,
Ariwo nta sa.

Ariwo nta sa,
Ela . . .

Ariwo nta sa,
Ela . . .

Geege .
Geegegege
Roqoro
Roqoroqoro
Wara-Wara xe
Wara-Wara xe
Wara.

Wara-Wara xe
Wara-Wara xe
Wara.

Wara-Wara xe
Wara-Wara xe
Wara.

Han-an hin
Hen
Hen
Hen
Hen
Hen
Hen
Hen
Aasan Olupe,
Upe ire o,
Aasan Olupe.

Chief Agboqla	Response
You who listen to the voice of Birds,	Hear our cry Beseeching YOU to descend And accept our prayers;
You who listen to the voice of Beasts,	Hear our cry Beseeching YOU to descend And accept our prayers;
You cannot but hearken to the plaints of Man.	Hear our cry Beseeching YOU to descend And accept our prayers.
As the first rays of the rising sun gently caress tree-tops,	So may your blessings descend upon us.
Behold, the Saviour descends on earth, The Saviour descends among us	To bring us peace and joy. Soon as we call, So soon he descends.
Those who sacrifice the Bush-Rat	So indeed it is, do not taste death.
Those who sacrifice Dried fish	So indeed it is, do no taste death.
Your attention, adepts!	We are attentive.
Ogun delights in mighty deeds	Yes.
Other divinities work wonders	Yes.
Orunmila, Lord of the city of Ipetu wields Words of Power	Yes.
Why do I claim Orunmila's privilege?	Why?
Because we perform sacred rites tonight	Yes.
Because we celebrate Ifa's festival tonight	Yes.
And Whatever words I speak should be acceptable to Ifa	May The words of Power From your mouth Be acceptable to the Lord.

Agboṣṣa

Ilẹ Mo pe ọ

Ati waye-Ọjọ Mo pe ọ,
Ati wọ-mo pe ọ,
Olokun mo pe ọ
Ọlọsa mo pe ọ
Ọxun xẹngẹ xẹ mo pe ọ,
Ọrunmila mo pe yin o,
Ifa mo pe ọ,

Ape-jẹ pe ni oro o
lio (Eriwo) Xoko
Iree mi awure,
Iree mi a x'ure,
Iree mi afoore,
Lori alalade,
Eyi ta a wi fun ila, o s'ogun
Eyi taa wi fun Ikan, Os'ogbọn
Eyi ta a wi fun ata o s'aadota
A ma ma wi o!

Awure, a xure

Ama ma wi o!

Egbe

Aasan olupe,
upe ire o,
Aasan olope.

Aasan olupe . . .
Aasan olupe . . .
Aasan olupe . . .
Aasan olupe . . .
Aasan olupe . . .
Aasan olupe . . .
Aasan olupe . . .

Han-an hin

Hẹn

Hẹn

Hẹn

Hẹn

Hẹn

Hẹn

Hẹn

Hẹn

Kọlọbọ tẹnu

awo gbire

Kọlọbọ.

Kọlọbọ tẹnu awogbire
kọlọbọ.

Kọlọbọ tẹnu
awo gbire, Kọlọbọ.

Chief Agboḡla	Response
Spirit of Earth I invoke you	May The words of Power from your mouth be acceptable to the Lord.
Mother Earth I invoke you	May The words of Power . . .
Spirit of Earth I invoke you	May The words of Power . . .
East I invoke you,	May The words of Power . . .
West I invoke you	May The words of Power . . .
I invoke the Ocean-Divinity	May The words of Power . . .
I invoke the Lagoon Divinity	May The words of Power . . .
Orunmila, I invoke you,	May The words of Power . . .
Ifa, I invoke you,	May The words of Power . . .
May all you divinities hearken	May The words of Power . . .
Be attentive, adepts all	We are
May my invocation be auspicious	Yes
This I ask in the name of the Powerful Lord, Orunmila	Yes
In his name Ochra was blessed twenty fold	Yes
In his name Garden-Egg was blessed thirty fold	Yes
In his name Alligator Pepper was blessed fifty fold	Yes
When I pronounce the words of power may they bring manifold blessings	May The great lord grant your requests
I will say the words of power	And they will come true.

Awure

Oluwo Adesilu:

Orunmila Ap'ojò-Iku-da!

A dide gegèbi orilẹ-ede, ohun axa ilẹẹ wa a pada si i. L'òdòdun la ma i xe e. Ki a to jẹ ixu odun, ti ixu ba gbo, a a i xe eto odun. Eto nan ni a nxe leni yi. Jọọ ma jẹ ki o jẹ axemọ fun wa, ka le xe oṣọ ẹ bayi.

Egbe: Axẹ!

Oluwo Adesilu

Omọ ki-i r'ipele iya ko xi axọ ro: Ipada-sile ohun ibilẹ, majẹ ki o wu ni bayi, Gegèbi orilẹ-ede kaakiri agbaye ti ni orukọ ti wọn ninu ẹsin, jẹ ki awa naan, iran wa, ka l'orukọ bayi.

Egbe Axẹ!

Oluwo Adesilu

Jẹ ka sin o gbo, ka sin o tọ

Olodumare ti a nsin, ko ma dojuti wa

Ilẹ ti o jẹ pe wọn da wa si ti oje pe
l'ori e nan laa nmu, la njẹ, ti a nxe eto

Lati gba-ogo ilẹ nani ga,
Eledumare majẹ ki a tẹ o

Otura-Rera ma jẹ ki a tẹ o

Ninu Ijọ ti a nxe nan Orunmila
Majẹ ki orukọ wa nan o parun

Agan ti o wa ninu Ijọ yi,
jẹ ki o ti owo ala bọ osun

Aboyun-ile ko bi ti bi-tire

Okunrun-ibulẹ, ko dide

Ki ire gbogbo bayi ko to wa l'owo

Egbe

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ.

Petitions
High Priest (Chief Adesilu):

Orunmila, hail to you who hold the span of human life in your hands! We, members of Ijo Orunmila Ato reaffirm our national identity as black people by returning to our ancestral rites which we are about to perform tonight. Every year at the time of the harvesting of new yams it is our tradition to perform these rites before eating the yams. And so we come before you tonight for the same purpose.

May it please you to spare our life through many more festivals.
May this year's festival not be our last.

Response: So may it be.

Chief Adesilu:

Our elders say:

"Like mother like daughter: a daughter who observes her mother's wardrobe cannot but dress with taste".

In like manner our return to these ancestral rites is a return to the source of our culture. May we never be disgraced thereby: diverse nations have their diverse religious beliefs and practices; may we be glorified in our own beliefs and practices.

Response: So may it be.

Chief Adesilu:

May we serve you, Orunmila for ever
May the Omnipotent whom we worship
never disgrace us
May we by the Omnipotent's grace make
progress in our cultural goals

Response
So may it be

We pray

So may it be

Ifa, under your aspect as Otura-Rera
continue to protect and bless us
Make our women-folk ever fruitful
Grant safe delivery to those in labour
Vouchsafe speedy recovery to our sick members
And grant us manifold blessings.


So may it be

So may it be

So may it be

So may it be

So may it be.

*Otura-Rera  (Otura-Ogunda) is Ijo Orunmila Ato's Inaugural Odu.

Awure fun Ọrẹ wa Pataki

Oluwo Adesilu:

Ọrunmila! Ọgbẹni kan, arakunri ọrẹ wa kan ti o jẹ pe wọn bi ni ilẹ wa yi nan xugbọn ti ko mọ nipa isin in wa tẹlẹ o wa ni bi l'eni. O wa nitori o fẹ xe iwadi nipa nkan-ibileḡ wa.

Ọrunmila jọọ ma xai jẹ ki o mọ asiko yi si rere.

Egbe:

Axẹ!

Oluwo Adesilu

Egbe

"Iwaju ni ọla Erin nlo
Oke l'Erin i fọ hun"

Ọlọrun jẹ ki Ọla ọrẹ ẹ wa nan
ma lọ soke bayi

Axẹ

Ixẹ ti onxe wayi, kori owo ninu ẹ
Ko fi xe ohun rere, kofi ran awọn ọmọ
tiẹ nan lo si ilu-Oyinbo bi baba oun
papa ti ran oun nan lọ;
ki awọn ọmọ ti ẹ nan le ni orukọ
bii ti ẹ. Bi o ti nfi nkan-ibileḡ wa sọkan
pe ko ma lee parun, majẹ ki orukọ ti
oun nan parun laye

Axẹ

"Ipa-omi ki-i parẹ ni ile-aye," majẹ
ki ipa arakunrin wa nan parẹ

Axẹ

majẹ ki ipa ti wa nan o parẹ o

Axẹ.

High Priest Adesilu: Prayer for a Special Friend:

Orunmila, be pleased to receive our prayer for an important visitor, a friend, present among us tonight. He was born into our culture but given a foreign education. As a result he is unfamiliar with our indigenous mode of worship. He comes tonight to learn.

Orunmila! bless him from this moment on that he may never regret his association with us.

Response: So may it be.

Chief Adesilu:

Our elders say: " The Elephant is destined for honour among animals". We pray you, God, to grant unto our Friend honour and prosperity in his profession.

Response: So may it be.

Chief Adesilu:

May he be blessed with children of sound education like him. Just as our friend values our culture may his name also be venerated in our country.

Response: So may it be.

Chief Adesilu:

Our elders say, "The waters of the sea flow on for ever."
May the renown enjoyed by our friend in society never be tarnished.
May we all be blessed in similar manner.

Response: So may it be.

Awure fun Ilu-Eko ati Naijiria

Oluwo Adesilu:

Iluu wa ti o de jepe rogbodyan lo nja yi, Olodumare Iwo l'oba ero, ma xai ba wa perọ sii ki Ilu-Eko kotu-koba fun gbogbo wa. Gbogbo awon ti won ni emi lile ma xai so o di okan ero bayi. Ona ti won ma gba xe eto nan ti ko ni fi ni mekunnu lara Olodumare ma xai fi si won l'okan o!

Kaxe odun odunyi, ka le xe te mi o.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Awure fun Ijo Orunmila Atọ

Oluwo Adesilu:

Orunmila!
Ile ti awa Ijo Orunmila ni a fe ko, joo ma xai so ile nan di tiwa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Oluwo Adesilu:

Gegebi Orile-Ede, a gbarajo laati fe ko ile-mimo ile-ijosin tiwa. A wa owo, a ra ile xugbon a ko ti ni owo lati ko ile nan.

Joo ma xai je ki a ko ile nan o.

Egbe: Axẹ!

Prayer for Nigeria

High Priest Adesilu:

Our Country is at present in deep political crises. Omnipotent God, you are the dispenser of peace. Grant us peace in our country, and security for the city of Lagos. Quieten every malignant passion in the hearts of the contestants for power so they can put the people's welfare above other selfish considerations.

Grant us happiness this festival and for ever.

Response: So may it be.

Prayer for Ijọ Orunmila Ato

High Priest Adesilu:

Orunmila!

Be mindful of our plans to build our house of worship.

Response: So may it be.

We contributed some money and bought a piece of land but we lack funds to build this house of indigenous worship.

Mercifully assist us in this venture.

Response: So may it be!

Odun Ifa

Oluwo Adesilu	Egbe
"A ki-i ri kekere akan lai nile"	Axẹ
Jẹ ki awa nan le ni ile tiwa o	Axẹ
Ki o ran wa lẹwọ ki a le kọ ile nan	Axẹ
Gbogbo awọn ọmọ awo	
ki wọn ma xi awo xẹ	Axẹ
Ki wọn ma xi awo xẹ	Axẹ
Ki wọn ma xi ilẹ tẹ,	Axẹ
Ire ni ki wọn maa ri o,	Axẹ
Gbogbo eyiti wọn ba nro, ki o ma bọ si rere	Axẹ
Lamọdun ki oju wa ki o pe bayi o!	Axẹ.

Awure fun Oloye Agboṣa (Babalawo Ijọ)

Oluwo Adesilu:

Babalawo wa, Oloye Akano Fasina Agboṣa ti o nba wa xẹ eto yi
lọdọdun, Orunmila Agbọnmiregun Ifa, ki iku ma pa a bayi.

Egbe Axẹ

Oluwo Adesilu:

Ki arun ma gbe e de, ki alafia ara o too ki o maa wa xẹ eto nan
lọdọdun o!

Egbe Axẹ

Chief Adesilu	Response
"Even the tiniest crab owns its private hole in the marsh"	So it is
In like manner help us in our plan to become masters of our own house of worship.	So may it be So may it be
Guide those among us who are diviners that they may remain in the straight and narrow path of virtue	So may it be
Keep them away from evil communications.	So may it be
May they prosper in their practice	So may it be
May their aspirations lead to good ends.	So may it be
May we all live to celebrate next festival together happily.	So may it be.

Prayer for Chief Agboḡla (Master Diviner of the fold)

High Priest Adesilu:

Orunmila Agbḡnmiregun Ifa! We pray for our master diviner, Chief Akano Fasina Agboḡla who performs this ceremony for us every year that you save him from untimely death.

Response: So may it be!

High Priest Adesilu:

We pray that you keep him away from serious illness that you grant him full health of mind and body so he may continue to attend to us for many more years.

Response: So may it be!

Ipari Awure latenu Oloye Agboqla

Oloye Agboqla:

Orunmila!

O gbọ gbogbo ohun ti Adesilu, Oluwo Ijọ Orunmila Atọ, gbogbo ohun ti o ba ọ sọ.

Orunmila Agbọnmiregun, o ni:

"Odun dun,
Iri sẹ
Akapo-Ogun n bọ Ogun,
Akapo-Ooxa nbọ ooxa,
Ewe ori-igi o ko isin,
O lọ ree ba Ilẹ
Agbara gbiiri, o ko isin,
O lọ ree ba Olokun."

O ni o pẹ ti awọn tii xe axa ibini-bi ilẹ baba wa yi ti ọdun ba de bayi ti ixu titun yọ t'awọn baba-nla baba wa i maaxe. Eto tii fii-tu tii fii-ba fun wọn; ti ixu nan kii run wọn ninu, ti obirin, ọmọ ẹbi, ara, ọsin, ti wọn si jẹ ixu nan ti wọn ki-i fi ku. O ni eto nan awọn maa ixe lọdọdun.

Awọn ni exi awọn-o-ku, awọn-o-run. O si tun di asiko yi, l'ọdun yi, ixu titun nan tun yọ awọn tun wa ba iwọ Ifa pe:

- ixu titun nan ti o ti yọ yi bi awọn ti jẹ l'exi ti awọn o ku, ti awọn o run ti nkan o xe obirin ti nkan o xe ọmọ, ti lј awọn nan ti ko bajẹ,
- awọn dupe texi awọn tun wa tọrọ ọdun ti nbọ.

Egbe:

Dabọ baba!

Concluding Prayers by Chief Agboqla

Chief Agoqla:

Orunmila, Hail to you!
You have listened to all the supplications of Adesilu, High priest of Ijẹ Orunmila Ato. Orunmila, Agbonmiregun, Hail!

Adesilu says, in the words of the ancients:

"Time has come full circle,
And another festival is here;
Each devotee approaches his patron-deity
In the annual act of worship.
Devotees of Ogun, approach Ogun;*
Devotees of Ooxa-Nla;* approach Ooxa-Nla
Withered leaves fall to the ground,
Paying obeisance to Mother-Earth;*
Waters flow in torrents
Bearing due worship to Olokun*
Our Lady of Oceans."

Adesilu says that the rites which we perform tonight are of long-standing observance. When new yams are harvested it is customary to perform these rites so as to ensure that life is peaceful and that man, woman, child, friend, relation and servant be not poisoned by eating the yams; and these rites are performed annually.

Adesilu says that last year's festival was successful and every one in the Fold received blessings of prosperity and good health. He says further that he has come before you, Orunmila at this year's harvesting of the new yams:

- to implore you once again for the blessing of health, longevity and prosperity for all members of the fold;
- to express gratitude for past years and seek new favours for the ensuing year.

Response:

Very well said, Master!

The role of these Yoruba divinities is fully discussed in the chapter: "Religious and philosophical ideas in Ifa".

Odun Ifa

Oloye Agboqla	Egbe
Wọn xe ọdun ọdun yi jẹ ki wọn xe tẹmi	Axẹ
Ifa! wọn xe ọdun ọdun yi, jẹ ki wọn xe tẹ mi	Axẹ
Wọn xe ọdun ọdun yi, jẹ ki wọn xe ti amọdun	Axẹ
Majẹ ki Iku o pa wọn, Ifa, Majẹ ki arun o gbe wọn de.	Axẹ
Majẹ ki wọn o x'ofu Majẹ ki wọn x'ixe,	Axẹ
Majẹ ki wọn lugbadi, Majẹ ki wọn tẹ ninu egbe, Majẹ ki wọn o buku l'ogba	Axẹ
Jẹ ki axiri wọn o bo Jẹ ki wọn o rire Jẹ ki ire o ri wọn	Axẹ
Majẹ ki nkan o xe obirin Ijọ nan, Majẹ ki nkan o xe Ọkunrin Ijọ nan. Majẹ ki nkan o xe ọmọde	Axẹ
Eniti o nxe ixẹ-ọba Ki ọkọ ọba ma xa lẹsẹ	Axẹ
Eniti o nxo'wo Jẹ ki o jere	Axẹ
Eniti o nxixẹ ọwọ Jẹ ki o maa rixe	Axẹ
Eniti o nxa'wo Majẹ ki awo o wo mọ ọ lọwọ	Axẹ
Eniti o nta Jẹ ki o ri gbata k'ori gbara ki wọn ma fi owo buruku raja lọwọ wọn. Majẹ ki wọn fi owo sinu ajadi-apo	Axẹ.

Chief Priest Agboola	Response
Those who celebrate this year's festival Grant that they may celebrate many more	So may it be
Ifa! They who have celebrated this festival Grant them the grace to celebrate many more	So may it be
These have celebrated this year's festival Grant them a joyful celebration of next year's.	So may it be
Save them from untimely death, Ifa, Render them not captive to illness.	So may it be
Keep misfortune away from them, Direct their path aright.	So may it be
Protect them from the tribulations of life, Save them from disgrace in society, Let not their honour be tarnished among peers.	So may it be
Keep their secrets safe Grant them every favour, Shower them with all blessings.	So may it be
Protect all menfolk in the fold, Protect all womenfolk in the fold, Protect all children in the fold.	So may it be
Those that are civil servants Protect from unjust sanctions	So may it be
To those who trade or who are in business Grant profit and prosperity	So may it be
To professionals, craftsmen and the self-employed Grant profit, patronage and lucrative practice	So may it be
To those of us who are diviners Let not our divination bring us damnation	So may it be
To our merchants and men of commerce Grant unlimited access to profitable wares Secure profitable outlets for all their wares; Protect them from fraudulent customers Save them from inexplicable reversals of fortune.	So may it be.

Odun Ifa

Oloye Agboḡla

Egbe

Ẹniti nkẹkọ ninu awọn ọmọ wọn
jẹ ki wọn kọ ẹkọ nan ki wọn ni imọ
ki wọn yege
ki wọn si fixe ohun re're laye.

Axẹ

Orunmila, Agbọnniregun!
Wọn ni ọrọ ile ndun awọn: awọn
tira ile, awọn si fẹ kọ ile sori ẹ
awọn wa fii si iwaju iwọ Ifa.

Daabo, Baba!

Awọn ko-i tilẹ kọ ile nan xugbọn iwọ Ifa
fun araa-re ni ki o ran oluranlọwọ si awọn.

Daabo, Baba!

Jẹ ki wọn le kọ ile nan.

Axẹ

T'omode-t'agba ninu Ijọ nan
jẹ ki wọn ri owo nan,
Jẹ ki wọn ri alaanu,
Jẹ ki axiri wọn o bo,
Ma jẹ ki Ijọ yi p'ẹ din,
Ki wọn p'ele ni Ifa.

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Ẹẹn! Wọn ni ibi gbogbo ti wọn gbe i pe orukọ iwọ,
Ifa ti wọn i xe eto ibilẹ yi ma jẹ ko wu ẹnikaan kan,
okunrin ni, obirin, omode ni.

Axẹ

Jẹ ki o da fun gbogbo Ijọ
Jẹ ki ile wọn roju
Ki ọna wọn ko raye

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ.

Chief Priest Agboḷa

Response

May all the children in the fold
do well in their studies and become
successful people in life

So may it be.

Chief Priest Agboḷa

Orunmila, Agbḡnmiregun!
The members of the fold wish to build their own house of
worship; they have bought a piece of land; they lack the
funds to build the house. Orunmila, through your mercy
may benefactors arise to provide these funds.

Response

So may it be! Exactly!
Well said, Master!

Chief Priest Agboḷa

Response

Grant them the grace to build this house
Increase the pocket of the fold both young and old
Send benefactors to aid them,
Satisfy their inner most desires
And let them grow from strength to strength.

So may it be
So may it be
So may it be
So may it be
So may it be.

Our elders say that whenever people
gather in your name to invoke your help
or to worship you according to our an central rites
there no evil shall befall, be it on man, woman
or child. Grant the fold this blessing.

So may it be.

Grant manifold blessings to them
Protect their homes
Bless their undertakings,

So may it be
So may it be
So may it be.

Awure fun Oṛẹ wa Pataki

Oloye Agboṣṣa

En! wọn ni oṛẹ wa ti o si wa siwaju iwọ Ifa loni ti o wipe oun ti wọn i xe ni nkan axa-ibile o wun oun lẹmi, pe ooun fe wadi bi wọn ti i xee xeee, ti ko si korira, Een jẹ ki ile ẹ o roju ki ọna ẹ raye!

Egbe

Axẹ

Agboṣṣa

Egbe

Jẹ ki o ma ri xe
Jẹ ẹ o l'owo l'owọ,
Jẹ ẹ to eeyan,

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Jẹ ẹ t'elẹ gbo,
Jẹ ẹ o telẹ pẹ
Ki iwọ Ifa o xe elegbe l'ẹhin rẹ,

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Jẹ ẹ o nilari
Majẹ ki nkan o xe obirin fun un,
Ma jẹ ki nkan o xe ọmọ fun un,

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Ki ọmọ ti ẹ nan, ko nilari
Ko l'orukọ, ko l'ẹkọ, ko ni imọ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Orunmila
majẹ o r'ija oxo
Ko maa ri ja babalawo
Ko ma ri'ja alaafa

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ

Awure fun Awọn Oṛẹ Iyoku

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Orunmila!
En, Gbogbo awọn oṛẹ, ara ati ọgba iyoku ti wọn wa ba wa xe ọdun yi wọn tun wa l'amọdun ki wọn pesi ni ki wọn ma pẹdin.

Egbe

Axẹ!

Prayer for Our Special Friend*

Chief Priest Agboqla:

They also pray for a good friend of ours who comes before you tonight, Ifa, wishing to learn our ancestral mode of worship and showing no contempt for us. Grant our friend peace in his home and success in his profession.

Response: So may it be

Chief Priest Agboqla

Response

Bless his undertakings,
Grant him wealth,
Make him a person of renown,

So may it be
So may it be
So may it be

Let him live to a ripe old age,
Let the blessing of his lineage be upon him
Let your special protection, be ever upon him

So may it be
So may it be
So may it be

Grant him good fortune
Save his wife from all evil
Protect his children from all harm

So may it be

Grant his children success in their studies
So they may achieve fame in their own right

So may it be

Orunmila,
Protect him from the anger of wizards and witches
Save him from the warfare of sorcerers,
Guard him from the spells of magicians and false prophets.

So may it be
So may it be

Prayer for Other Friends

Chief Priest Agboqla:

Orunmila,
I pray you, grant that all our other friends and well-wishers who came to this year's festival may return in even larger numbers to next year's festival.

Response: So may it be.

This is a reference to the author of this book.

Awure fun Awon Babalawo

Oloye Agboḡla

Orunmila, Agbḡnniregun, Ifa!

Wḡn ni awḡn babalawo ti wḡn wa ba wḡn xe ọdun yi lati okere: lati Ikirun ni o, Ilḡrin ni o, Ibadan ni o, Ijḡbu ni o, kaakirii bḡḡ ati awa ti a wa l'Eko yi wḡn ni awḡn wure fun wa.

Oloye Agboḡla

Majḡ ki nkan xe gbogbo wa,
Awa nan ni ki a tun wa ba wḡn
xee ni amḡdun
jḡ ki ile wa roju, k'ḡna wa raye
Ma jḡ ki a ri ija axawo-pawo,
Ma jḡ ki awo wo mo wa l'ḡwḡ.

Egbe

Axḡ.

Oloye Agboḡla

Egbe

Ma jḡ a x'awo oxi
Ma jḡ a x'awo iya
Awo onile ni ka xe,
Awo ḡḡna ni ka xe,
Ka x'awo ka n'ile l'ori,
Eḡn, Ifa!

Axḡ
Axḡ
Axḡ
Axḡ
Axḡ
Axḡ

Koo ma binu si wa,
Koo ma ba wa ja,
Koo ma dḡhin kḡ wa,

Axḡ
Axḡ
Axḡ

Oju ḡgbḡ ḡ ni ko o kḡ si wa, Ifa
Gbogbo, bi a ba si ti nnawḡ si Iwḡ Ifa,
Jḡḡ o tu awḡn Ijḡ nan l'ara.
Orunmila, ki o ma kḡ ohun si wa l'ḡnu.

Axḡ
Axḡ
Axḡ
Axḡ.

Prayer for Master-Diviners

Chief Priest Agboḡla:

Hail to you, Ḡrunmila, Agbḡnmiregun, Ifa!

Adesilu prays for the master-diviners celebrating the rites tonight on behalf of their church. Some have travelled from far-away cities like Ikirun, Ilḡrin, Ibadan and Ijebu to come here to Lagos so that, together with those of us resident in Lagos, we may worship you, Ifa.

Chief Agboḡla**Response**

Protect us master-diviners from harm

So may it be

Keep us safe till next festival

So may it be

Protect our homes, safe-guard our craft

So may it be

Give us success in our prognostications.

So may it be.

Keep us from poverty

So may it be

Save us from misery

So may it be

Guard us against penury;

So may it be;

Make us house-owning diviners

So may it be

Make us wealthy diviners.

So may it be.

I pray you, Ifa

Be not sore-vexed with us

We pray

Look not with disfavour upon us

We pray

Take not your support away from us.

We pray.

Look with favour on our undertakings

So may it be

Let our intercession on behalf of Iḡḡ Ato

be ever favourably received by you

So may it be

And hearken always to our invocation.

So may it be.

Awure fun Oloye Adesilu

Oloye Agboḡla

Ile Oluwo Adesilu nan ti a wa yi ma jẹ ki ile nan o bajẹ.

Egbe

Axẹ.

Oloye Agboḡla

Egbe

Oluwo nan, jẹ ki o gbo, ki o tọ
Jẹ ki ara, o ya a,
Ki alafia-ara o to o,
Jẹ ki ajinde-ara o jẹ fun un,
Ma jẹ ki nkan xe obirin rẹ
Ma jẹ ki nkan xe omọ rẹ
Ki aboyun-ile bi tibi-tire,
Ki agan t'owọ ala b'osun.

Axẹ
Axẹ
Axẹ
Axẹ
Axẹ
Axẹ
Axẹ
Axẹ.

Awure fun Gbogbo Ijọ Atọ

Oloye Agboḡla

Orunmila, Agbõnniregun, Ifa!
Gbogbo Ijọ nan pata-pata latoke de'lẹ
Ma jẹ ki nkan xe wõn.
Gbogbo nkan ti onikaluku wõn i ri
ti inu wõn dun, ma jẹ ki o d'ibajẹ mọ wõn lọwọ. Ti o ba di amọdun ki inu
wõn o dun ju bayi lọ.

Egbe:

Axẹ.

Prayer for Chief Adesilu

Chief Agboḳla:

Ọrunmila, we gather together in the house of Chief Adesilu, High Priest of Iḳọ Ọrunmila Ato. Protect this household, Ifa.

Response:

So may it be

Chief Agboḳla:

Response

Grant Chief Adesilu a long life
 Let him live to a ripe old age
 Let him enjoy good health
 Give him strength of body
 Let his days be full of vigour
 Protect his wives and children
 Make the women in his household ever fruitful
 Grant safe delivery to those with child.

So may it be
 So may it be
 So may it be
 So may it be
 So may it be
 So may it be
 So may it be
 So may it be.

Prayer for Members of Iḳọ Ato

Chief Agboḳla

Hail to you Ọrunmila, Agbọnmiregun, Ifa
 Protect every member of the fold
 From the highest in rank to the lowest
 Continually replenish their source of happiness
 Vouchsafe them greater happiness next year and every year.

Response

So may it be.

Awure fun Naijiria

Oloye Agboḡla:

Orunmila!

Ko o fi ye de 'nu,
Ko o fi ye de kun,
Ko o fi ye de gbogbo ara
Ko o xeti weere Agbḡnniregun, Ifa!

Egbe:

Axẹ.

Wḡn ni, Ilu, rogbodyan wa ni bẹ, Ifa
Jẹ ki ilu yi o toro,
Orunmila jẹ ki ilu yi o toro,
Ko o ba wa p'ẹtu si ilu yi,
Ma jẹ ka ri ogun ni bẹ,
Ma jẹ ka ri ogun akḡlukḡba,

Orunmila!

Ko o ba wa p'ẹtu si awḡn ti nbinu l'ḡkan.

Egbe:

Axẹ.

Ikase Awure Latenu Oloye Agboḡla

Orunmila, Agbḡnniregun!

Ko o fiyede'nu,
Ko o fiye de kun,
Ko o fi yede gbogbo ara,
Ifa koo j'ẹbo nan o fin,
Koo j'ẹru nan o da
Koo jẹ a x'aye e re,
Ko o jẹ ki ire yi do'de-ḡrun dandan-dan, Ifa.

Egbe:

Axẹ!

Prayer for Nigeria

Chief Priest Agboḳla:

Response:

Orunmila!
Accept our supplications with patience,
Hearken to our prayers with mercy,
Listen to our petitions with compassion
And give attentive ear to our requests Agbḳnmiregun Ifa!

So may it be.

Adesilu says further that the country is threatened with civil strife*.
Grant us peace, Orunmila, grant peace unto our country,
Grant us a lasting peace in our country,
Save us from the ravages of war,
Save us from the upheavals of civil strife

Orunmila!

Assuage the malignant passions of the contending factions. So may it be.

Concluding Prayers by Chief Priest Agboḳla

Orunmila, Agbḳnmiregun!
Patiently accept our supplications,
Mercifully hearken to our prayers,
And listen with compassion to our petitions.
May this sacrifice tonight be auspicious,
May the tithes we offer be auspicious,
May we find happiness in life,
And may these requests ascend to highest heaven.

Response:

So may it be!

* A reference to the threatened Nigerian civil war in the wake of the military coups of January 1966 and July 1966.

Ọdun Ifa

Ikasẹ Awure l'atenu Oloye Agboጋla

Eጣ Ifa

"O pẹ titi ti mo ti i x'ẹbo
Ọdun yi dandan l'ẹbo ọ mi o xẹxẹ da."

A dia fun Lamuregun,
Ti i xe ọmọ ọ wọn l'Otu-Ife ni lai-lai ọjọ.

Orin Ifa

Oloye Agboጋla

Ire t'ẹhin wa ba mi,

Egbe

Omi titun,
A t'ẹhin wa b'ẹja lodo,
Omi titun.

Oloye Agboጋla

Ọrunmila, Agbọnniregun, Ifa!
Jẹ k'ẹbo wọn o fin,

Wọn x'ọdun ọdun yi jẹwọn
xe tẹmi.

Ọrunmila!

Jẹ ọọju o tun'ra ri o,
K'ọju o tun'ra ri o,
K,ọju o tun'ra ri o,
Dabọ o ! Ọrunmila, Ifa!

Ka ma fi ọdun yi xe axemọ
Ka roju, ka r'aye o,
Ka ma f'ọdun yi xa xe mọ o,
Dabọ o, Ifa o!

Egbe

Axẹ

Axẹ

Axẹ.

Axẹ.

Concluding Prayers by Chief Priest Agboḡla

Ifa Verse

Chief Priest Agboḡla: As this verse from Ifa says so be it for the Fold:

"Year after year your sacrifice availed not;

This year, this very year, good auspices await your quest"

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Lamuregun — He who seeks a change in fortune,
A true scion of the ancient city of Ife, in bygone days of yore.

Ifa Song

Chief Priest Agboḡla:

Fortune smiles on me at last,

Response:

And gladdens me,

Like fresh waters,

Revive tired fish.

Chief Priest Agboḡla

Ḡrunmila, Agbḡnmiregun, Ifa!

Grant good auspices to our sacrifice,

Grant the members of the Fold the grace
to celebrate next festival as happily as this one.

Ḡrunmila!

Grant that we may all meet again,

May we all meet again,

May we all meet again,

May it please you Ḡrunmila,

Let not this festival be our last together

Grant us peace in all our ways.

Let not this festival be our last together

May it so please you, 'Ifa.

Response

So may it be

So may it be.

So may it be.

General Comments

A few points deserve mention in the interesting rituals described above.

First it is clear that the invocation of the divinities, the petitions to Ifa and the presentation of sacrificial offerings to Ifa are regarded by the priests as introductory steps necessary to ensure a propitious outcome of the festival.

Secondly the naming of the sacrificial offerings seriatim seems to be common to rituals of diverse cultures as this quotation from Hindu practice illustrates.

"Complete merit is earned when the thing about to be given is first sanctified, worshipped and mentioned by name and the name of him to whom it is given is pronounced."

Thirdly inadvertent omissions or mistakes in procedure during the rituals are rectified by a special formula.

Chief Agboqla Says:

'Everything else that I ought to have said but omit is known to you Orunmila, Ifa. May all these unspoken requests be acceptable also to you'.

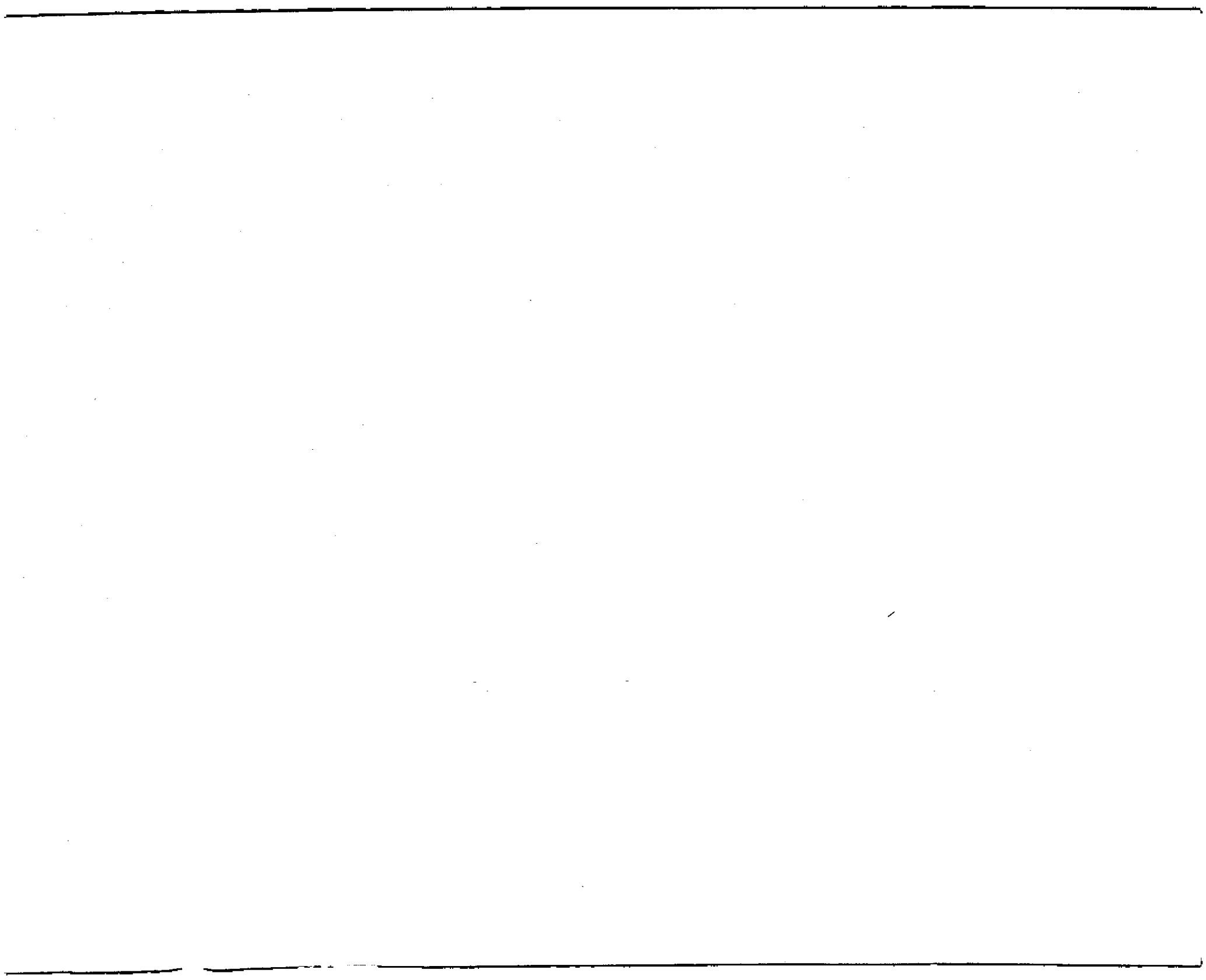
This seems to be important in magico-religious rituals as illustrated by the two examples given below:

"O husband of Uma, if there has been any irregularities, omission or want of devotion in this worship may they all by thy grace be rectified . . .

*"Hail!
What in this rite I overdid
Or what I have here scant made
Let Agni the wise, the prosperer,
Make fit and good our sacrifice Hail!"*

From "Mahamirvana Tantra of the Great Liberation" translated by Arthur Avalon (19) pp. 309 and 345.
From "13 Principal Upanishads" translated by R. E. Rume (19) p. 173.

Part IV
Recitations
from
The 16 Principal Paired Odu of Ifa



Part IV

Recitations from

The 16 Principal Paired Odu of Ifa

In the annual worship of Ifa, the culminating point of the sacrificial rites is the casting of the kola-nuts because this indicates whether the auspices are good or bad. Awolalu's statement that "Immolation is the Climax of the whole rite of sacrifice" is perhaps true of other cults but certainly not of Ifa.

For this reason every ritual step is taken by the officiating priest to ensure a favourable omen on the first cast. If this is unfavourable, repeated casts have to be made until a good response is obtained.

Each repeated cast is prefaced with a series of questions to Ifa aimed at eliciting the cause of the initial failure. This may entail additional sacrifices probably more expensive than the original sacrifice intended for the year.

An important preparatory ritual to the casting of the kola-nuts is the recitation of verses from the Odu of Ifa. It seems mandatory to recite those from the sixteen paired principal Odu i.e., from *Eji-Ogbe* through to *Ofun-Meji* before proceeding to other special Odu.

I present here, in this 'Part IV', the verses from the 16 paired Principal Odu as I have myself transcribed and edited them over the 24-year span running from 1966 to 1990. Finishing with the principal Odu in Part IV, I present the Special Odu in Parts V and VI.

Recitation of Ifa Verses

$$\textit{from Eji-Ogbe} \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \textit{to} \begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \textit{Ofun-Meji.}$$

The Officiating Priest selects two Kola-Nuts (each must have four valves) and deposits them on a clean plate. He performs libation on earth with clean water. Then he sprinkles some water on the two Kola-Nuts. He picks up the Kola-Nuts, touches them to the forehead of the celebrant, touches them to the dish containing the sacred palm-Nuts (*lkin*) and returns the Kola-Nuts on to the plate. He recites a verse from the first paired odu, *Eji-Ogbe*. Before proceeding to the next verse he performs the same ritual with Kola-Nuts as before. He repeats this ritual every time a new verse is begun.

The formula for reciting the verses is as follows:

- i. Supplication to Oḗrunmila which may be given in full or abbreviated;
- ii. The verse proper;
- iii. Song (with refrain) related to the verse;
- iv. Prayers for the celebrant on the theme of the verse.

Verse 1 from *Eji-Ogbe* given on page 325 illustrates the points.

In reciting the *verses* the Officiating Priest may not indicate by name the *Odu* from which he is quoting, the reason being that the audience consists of other Ifa Priests, Ifa students and devotees who are thoroughly familiar with the *Odu Ifa*.

Where the *Odu* of quotation is indicated by name it is usual for the Officiating Priest to proceed thus:

"*Eji-Ogbe ko o ba wa xe e*"

"Eji Ogbe we supplicate your aid"

After reciting all the *verses* he wishes under *Eji-Ogbe*, the priest proceeds to the next *Odu* thus:

"*Oyeku-Meji ko o ba wa xe e*"

"Oyeku-Meji we supplicate your aid"

He continues this till all the *Odu* have been mentioned. In some cases the verses themselves contain lines which give a clue as to the *Odu* of quotation. Some examples in this collection are:

- (1): Verse 1 from *Iwori-Meji* given on page 362 where the *Odu* is called *Eji-Kunkun-Iwori*.
- (2): Verse 2 from *Odi-Meji* given on page 372 where the *Odu* is mentioned thus:

*A di n di odi,
A di n di odi.*

The Sequence
of
The 16 Paired Odu

The order in which verses are recited from the 16 paired Odu (*Eji-Ogbe* to *Ofun-meji*) in the Agboḡla school is given below and contrasted with that noted by other authors, Abimbola*, Bascom**.

Agboḡla (Oxogbo)	*Abimbola (Oyo)	**Bascom (S.W. Yoruba)	(Ife)
1 Eji-ogbe	1 Eji-ogbe	1 Eji-ogbe	1 Eji-Ogbe
2 Oyeku-meji	2 Oyeku-meji	2 Oyeku-meji	2 Oyeku-meji
3 Iwori-meji	3 Iwori-meji	3 Iwori-meji	3 Iwori-meji
4 Odi-meji	4 Odi-meji	4 Odi-meji	4 Edi-meji
5 Irosun-meji	5 Irosun-meji	5 Irosun-meji	5 Obara-meji
6 Qwḡrin-meji	6 Qwḡrin-meji	6 Qwḡrin-meji	6 Okḡnrḡn-meji
7 Qbara-meji	7 Qbara-meji	7 Qbara-meji	7 Irosun-meji
8 Okḡnrḡn-meji	8 Okḡnrḡn-meji	8 Okḡnrḡn-meji	8 Qwḡrin-meji
9 Ogunda-meji	9 Ogunda-meji	9 Ogunda-meji	9 Ogunda-meji
10 Osa-meji	10 Osa-meji	10 Osa-meji	10 Osa-meji
11 Ika-meji	11 Ika-meji	11 Ika-meji	11 Irḡḡ-meji
12 Otunrunḡḡn-Meji	12 Otunrunḡḡn-meji	12 Otunrunḡḡn-meji	12 Otura-meji
13 Otura-meji	13 Otura-meji	13 Otura-meji	13 Otunrunḡḡn-meji
14 Irḡḡ-meji	14 Irḡḡ-meji	14 Irḡḡ-meji	14 Ika-meji
15 Oxe-meji	15 Oxe-meji	15 Oxe-meji	15 Oxe-meji
16 Ofun-meji.	16 Ofun-meji.	16 Ofun-meji.	16 Ofun-meji.

It is hardly surprising that Chief Agboḡla's sequence agrees with Dr Abimbola's and Dr Bascom's S. W. Yoruba sequence. All three derive from the same geographico-cultural area of Yoruba-land.

However the two lists given by Ibie do not agree with those of Agboḡla, Abimbola and Bascom.

* Abimbola-Wande (1968) *Ijule Obun Enu Ifa, Apa Ikinni* Page 15.

** Bascom. W (1969) *Ifa Divination* Page 48.

	Ibie* (Ife)	Ibie* (Oyo, Ondo, Benin)	
1.	Eji-Ogbe	Eji-Ogbe	1
2.	Oyeku-Meji	Oyeku-Meji	2
3.	Iwori-Meji	Iwori-Meji	3
4.	Idi-Meji	Edi-Meji	4
5.	Qbara-Meji	Qbara-Meji	5
6.	Qkqnrqñ-Meji	Qkqnrqñ-Meji	6
7.	Irosun-Meji	Irosun-Meji	7
8.	Owanrin-Meji	Owanrin-Meji	8
9.	Ogunda-Meji	Ogunda-Meji	9
10.	Osa-Meji	Osa-Meji	10
11.	Etura-Meji	Etura-Meji	11
12.	Irete-Meji	Irete-Meji	12
13.	Eka-Meji	Ejurukpon-Meji	13
14.	Etrukpon-Meji	Oxe-Meji	14
15.	Oxe-Meji	Ofun-Meji	15
16.	Qfun-Meji	Ika-Meji	16.

These differences affect the sequence but not the marking of the Odu. No matter the provenance, the Odu is always marked the same way for each configuration.

On this point Ibie writes:

Each school of thought has very cogent reasons for its own order of seniority.**

The difference between them is only a matter of tradition . . . They are nonetheless agreed on the name and number of Odus in the Ifa family tree.

Bascom remarks:

"An examination of 86 list of the 16 basic figures of Ifa based on 61 sources established that these names are standard throughout Yoruba country and, with modifications in pronunciations and spelling among the Fon of Dahomey, the Ewe of Togo and Ghana and in Cuba and Brazil as well. It was also shown that one order for the 16 paired figures is predominant . . . ***"

Chief Agboqla's school would seem to follow this predominant order.

* Ibie, C. Osamaro (1986) "Ifism" page 65.

** Ibid page 65.

*** Bascom W. (1969) Ifa Divination" Page 4.7

Eji-Ogbe

0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

Eṣe 1:

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Orunmila ko o fi yedenu,
Ko o fiye de kun
Ko o fiyede-gbogbo-ara.
Ifa koo x'eti were,
Orunmila ko o rọ w'ale-aye,
Ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin,
Ko o j'ẹru o da,
Ifa jẹ ẹ a x'aye re
K'ire yi o d'ode-orun dan-danan-dan, Ifa.

Edudu o wu iledu,
Okunkun wọn o wu ilẹkun
Jalagba I'awo agbara
A dia fun Aṣenilara awo-okun,
Edudu o wu ilẹdu,
Okukun wọn o wu ilekun
Jalagba I'awo agbara,
Dia fun Aṣenilara awo-ṣa
Edudu o wu ilẹdu,
Okukun wọn o wu ilẹkun
Jalagba I'awo agbara
Dia fun Aṣenilara awo ọla-omi
Aṣenilara awo Okun,
L'oruko ti a i pe Aje.
Aṣenilara Awo-Ṣa,
L'oruko ti a i pe obirin.
Aṣenilara Awo-Ọta-Ọmi,
L'oruko ti a i pe ọmọ.

Eji-Ogbe

$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$

Verse 1 (Supplication*):

Chief Agboqla: Orunmila! patiently hear our supplications,
Mercifully accept our prayers,
Compassionately receive our petitions.
Give attentive ear to our requests.

Orunmila, we beseech you to descend on earth
Make our sacrifice auspicious,
Accept our tithes,

Grant us happiness in life,
And let these prayers ascend to highest heaven.

Earth is black and always black,
Soil is dark and always dark,
Torrents are tempestuous and always so"

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Wealth,
Which is uncertain like the ocean;

The same was declared to Woman,
Who is fickle like the sea;

The same was declared to off-springs
Steadfast in support like stones in river-bed.

Wealth may come and go,
And so may women,
But offsprings continue the lineage for aye.

Footnote * The supplication to Ifa is quoted here in extensio. Shorter versions preface subsequent verses.

Orin

Agboqla: Ori mi a pere
Aya mi a-f'obi-kan.

Egbe: Orixal-Igbo
Mama je k'Atenilara
O temi.

Awure

Agboqla: Orixal-Igbo
Maje ki won te Ifa.

Egbe: Axę.

Ese 2:

Agboqla: Ifa koo je bo nan o fin etc
"Ohun t'enu ba ri lenu i je."
Adia fun Igbin ti o "jele t'i o ni ku.

Orin:

Agboqla: Igbin jele, omọ awo,

Egbe: Igbin jele e si ku mo
Igbin jele omọ-awo.

Awure:

Agboqla: Jęę won gbo,

Egbe: Ki won to'Ifa.

Song

Agboḡla:

I touch my head for good fortune
I cross my heart for good omens.**

Refrain:

Venerable Deity
Let not uncertain and fickle friends
Bring disgrace upon me.

Prayer

Agboḡla:

Venerable Orunmila, we pray you, hear our prayer
Save the members of the Fold from disgrace, Ifa.

Response:

So may it be.

Verse 2

Chief Agboḡla:

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc*
"The mouth eats what it finds,"
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Giant-Snail
"Anything you eat, even earth," added the oracle.
"Shall make you live long"

Song:

Devotees of Ifa are Giant-Snails,

Refrain:

That eat poison and live long.

Prayer:

Bless the Fold with a ripe old age, Ifa

Response:

So may it be.

Footnote ** The head and heart centres are regarded by the Yoruba as powerful psychic nodes comparable to Hindu or Tantric Buddhist Chakras.

Eji-Ogbe
Ese 3:

Agboqla:	Ifa kò o j'ebò nan o fin' etc.	
Egbe:		Axẹ
Agboqla:	"Ọdundun'a-b'ẹwẹ xeke-xeke A dia fun Igbo Igbo nsunkun p'ọrọ oun o l'eti, Wọn ni ko kaalẹ ebọ ni o xe, (Ọrunmila! jẹ ki wọn maa f eti gbọ ire, Ifa).	
Egbe:		Axẹ
Agboqla:	Tẹtẹ-ogun a-birin-ese gborigi-gbogi Adia fun oke O nsunkun p'ọrọ oun o l'ese Wọn ni ko kaalẹ ebọ ni o xe Ọrunmila! (Jẹki ọrọ-wọn o l'ese Ifa Ma jẹ ki wọn fi ese ibi rin, Ifa).	
Egbe:		Axẹ
Agboqla:	Agbadanla, A-boju gbengele A dia fun Odo ' O nsunkun P'ọrọ oun o l'ọju Wọn ni ko rubọ oun nan (Jẹ ki ọrọ wọn o l'ọju, Ifa Ọju ti o fi nọ wọn, mama fi i sun).	
Egbe:		Axẹ

Verse 3

Chief Agboqla

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*
"Kalachoe grows erect and confident,
Sprouting leaves of distinct green."
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Forest
Who bemoaned its lonely plight.
"Be that Kolanchoe-Shrub,"
Said the oracle
"Quit moaning, offer sacrifice
Your prayers will be heard"

Prayer: Give them good tidings always, Orunmila.

Response:

"Spinach plants its feet on earth
Spreading this way and that"
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Hill
When as yet he lacked stability.
"Sacrifice,"
said the oracle
"Your feet will stand secure on earth."

So may it be

Prayer: Orunmila, be unto the Fold a lasting support
As they traverse the dangers of life.

Response:

"Cauldron is deep and wide;
You will be deeper you will be wider"
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle
To Water-Drop.
"Sacrifice," said the oracle.
"Fortune will smile on you
Till you become a stream"

So may it be

Prayer: Let good fortune smile on the Fold, Ifa;
Let not your watchful eye on them ever fall asleep

Response: So may it be.

Eṣe 4:

Agboṣṣa: Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin etc.
"Eji-eji ni mo gbe,
Mi-o gbe enikan ọmọ."
A dia fun aboyun apa ọtun;
Eji-eji ni mo gbe
Mi-o gbe enikan ọmọ
A dia fun agan ti mbẹ l'apa osi;
Eji-eji ni mo gbe
Mi-o gbe enikan ọmọ
A dia fun ko-difa-ko-xẹbọ
Ti mbẹ ni kaa k'ẹrindilogun
Ti nyi gbiri-gbiri ni le Ọlọfin.

Orin: Aboyun ile bi mbi o bi?

Egbe: Ewe ọmọ ni wọrọ-wọrọ.

Orin: Agan a tọwọ ala b'osun nigbayi

Egbe: Mi-o ni ku ki mto xe bi'mọ

Igba iye

L'ewe R'ere nya'mọ

Igba iye.

Orin: Okunrun ibule dide

Egbe: Dain-dain ni mo d'oke,

Oke nan a de gbọin-gbọin.

Orin: Okiti męta idena

Difa fun yeye eti ọmọ ni i rẹ

Ọmọ mi dee mi, l'oru ana.

Egbe: Ẹ ki mi ewu,

Eji-eji ni mo gbe,

Ẹki mi ewu.

Awure: Jẹ ẹ wọn le ewu sa, Ifa.

Egbe:

Axẹ

Eji-Ogbe ~ Verse 4

Chief Agboola:

Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc.
"I grant you two and not one child."
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the pregnant querent.
"I grant you two and not one child."
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the not yet pregnant.
"I grant you two and not one child."
So declared Ifa-Oracle to the one in labour
Lying in the sixteenth royal chamber
Striving to bring forth come rain, come shine.

Song: Has she brought forth at last?

Refrain: The labour is long and difficult
There is a medicinal herb known as Woro-Woro
Which, applied, leads to safe delivery.

Song: Will they that long for child be fulfilled?

Refrain: Aye, indeed
Another herb, *Rere* by name
Has evergreen leaves which, applied,
Ensure safety for mother, safety for child.

Song: What if she be overcome with fatigue?

Refrain: No, never.
Rather, like the Everlasting Hill,
She will be solid in strength.

Song: Can she survive the three stages of labour?

Refrain: Aye, indeed.

Song: "And she will shout with joy," declared Ifa:
"My child has arrived, At last, my baby is born."

Refrain: And we reply: Congratulations, congratulations indeed.
The long night of fear, of anxiety is over
Ifa has granted her two and not one child.

Prayer: Ifa, keep the members of the Fold safe from harm.

Response: So may it be.

Ogunda-Fun-Ọlọkọnrọn

00	0
00	0
00	0
0	00

Ero

Oloye Agboola:

Ifa ko o j'ẹ bọ nan o tin *etc*

Irula ni i x'awo o wọn ni Xaaki,
Morepe-Idẹ awo o Oke-Itasẹ,
Ogungunmọga ni i x'awo fun wọn n'ilu Agua,
J'ọkọ o wi,
Jẹ ale o gbọrandun,
Ọbun-Obirin-ni-i sintọ-s'ọkọ lara-ti-ọkọ-fi-i-binu-lọ-nle;
Awọn mẹfẹfa ni i xe Ọmọkọfa-Ọrunmila.

Ọ kọ wọn l'ontẹ alẹ,
Ifa ko wọn ni dida-ọwọ, wọn mọ ọ
Ọ kọ wọ l'ontẹ atẹ, wọn mọ ọ tẹ
Ọ kọ wọn ni ika ha ra-ẹbọ jale koro-koro, wọn mọ ọ ha;

Ifa kọ wọn L'ogẹdẹ, o kọ wọn L'aasan,
Ọ wa x'oxuka ribiti,
Ọ gb'ọpọn Ọlufẹ le wọn l'ori,
Ọ ni ki wọn ma a ba ire lọ.

Nijọ nan ni wọn wa xeke-xẹda,
Ni wọn ni awọn o ba Ifa xe mọ.

L'Ọrunmila wa kọju odi si wọn.
Nn ni wọn wa ko wọn lọ s'ode-ọrun.

Ogunda-Fun-Ọlọkọnrọn



This is a Combination Odu formed from one half of Ogunda-Meji (right column) and one half of Ọlọkọnrọn-Meji (left column).

The verse from this Odu, quoted below, was recited by the Babalawo, interposed between verses from Eji-Ogbe, as a special plea to Orunmila on behalf of the celebrants, Ijọ Orunmila Ato.

The Babalawo asks for good auspices to be granted for the sacrifice about to be offered stressing adherence to the orthodox school of Orunmila and dissociating himself from renegade diviners such as portrayed in the recited verse.

Plea to Ifa for Compassion

Chief Agboṣa:

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc

Irula, master-diviner from the city of Xaki,
Morepe-Ide, master from the Itase Hills in Ife
Ogunmoga, master from the city of Agua,
The master-diviner whose nickname is *Sbrew*,
The master-diviner whose nickname is *Jealousy* and
The master-diviner whose nickname is *Sloth*,
Were six students of Ifa under Orunmila.

Ifa taught them the casting of palm-nuts and in this they excelled;
He taught configurations and markings and in this they excelled
He taught them the complexities of sacrifice and in these they excelled.

Ifa then revealed the secret powers of invocation and incantation.
Then he blessed them,
Gave them the ancient divining boards of Ife,
And sent them forth to do good in the world.

But these masters turned faith, broke covenant
And renounced Ifa as their teacher.

So Orunmila withdrew his favour from them
And hurled them to the outer gates of Heaven.

Wọn nlọ wọn pade "Ọlọmọ-ni i-nanwo-Iku" ti a npe Ogun;
Wọn pade "Ayoṣun-tete-wa a-gba" ti a n pe ni Xọpọnọ
Wọn pade "Ọkunrin-gangan-gangan-ti i-pa-ni f'Ọoxa paju" ti a pe Exu
Ọdara.

Wọn ni ki wọn ba awọn bẹ Ọrunmila.

"Ẹ bu iya a yin ni ndan?"
Wọn l'awọn bu u;
"Ẹbu baba a yin ni ndan?"
Wọn l'awọn bu u.

Ni awọn mọta wọnyi wa ni "Ha!"

Ọrunmila mo fi iya rẹ bẹ ọ,
Ọrunmila mo fi baba rẹ bẹ ọ.

Awure:

Oloye Agboṣa:

Ekanna ọwọ ki-i k'ẹhin s'ọwọ,
Ifa ko-o ma k'ẹhin Si wa,

Ekanna-ẹsẹ ki-i k'ẹhin s'ẹ sẹ,
Ifa ko-o ma k'ẹhin Si Ijọ Atọ

Abobo-ọpẹ ki-i k'ẹhin s'ọpẹ,
Ifa ko-o ma k'ẹhin Si Ijọ Atọ

Abobo okun ki-i s'okun l'odi,
Ifa ko-o ma yan wa l'odi.

K'Ọlọrun ma yan wa l'odi,
K'Ọlọrun xiju ẹgbẹ wo wa,
Ko o xiju ẹgbẹ wo wa, Ifa.

Orin:

Agboṣa: Ebure ma de,
 Awo olujẹbẹ,

Egbe: T'aa ba r'awo rere
 Ixe laa jẹbẹ.

Whereat they met: Ogun who is "HE WHO DEALS IN DEATH",
Xoponq, Lord of Epidemics, who is "HE WHO FEEDS ON
INTESTINES"

And Exu the wonder-worker who is "THE MONSTROUS HANGMAN OF
ORIXA-NLA"

And implored them to intercede with Orunmila.

"Did you honour your mother?"

They answered: "No"

"Did you renounce your father?"

They answered: "Yes."

"What! do you realise the gravity?"

Then did the fact dawn on the six renegade masters:

Orunmila is their mother,

Orunmila is their father.

And, out of pity for them,

The three destroying gods cried out:

Orunmila, in your mother's name, we implore forgiveness,
Orunmila, in your father's name, we implore forgiveness.

Prayer:

Chief Agboqla:

In like manner, Orunmila

We implore you on behalf of Ijo-Ato.

Our elders say that nail and finger live in amity,

Just as toe and nail are one in life;

The bark is, with the trunk, together one tree

The nail does not turn its back on the finger or the toe,

We beseech you Ifa do not turn away from us.

Response:

So may it be.

Chief Agboqla (Prayer):

The bark does not turn inside out on the trunk

We beseech you Ifa, do not turn your favour away from Ijo Orunmila Ato.

Look favourably on all of us, Ifa;

We beseech you, God, to protect us;

We beseech you Ifa to protect us.

Response: So may it be.

Song: Ifa is the compassionate Lord.

Refrain: He grants good auspices
To diviners whose hearts are pure.

Èṣẹ 5:
(Eji-Ogbe)

$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$

Oloye Agboṣa:

Ifa, ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc.

A-r'apa-ṣa-ma xan,
A-ṣeṣe-akaba-ma gun,
Olotue'-sia-sia ni i x'awo fun wọn l'ode isalu-ṣrun
Lo x'ẹfa fun Ọrunmila
Nijọ ti iku nmu alawo,
Tiku nmu ọgbẹri laarin ilu
Ifa ni to ba xe ti Ijọ Atọ, akapo ọmọ oun ni,
Ijọ ikuu ba nmu alawo,
Tiku nmu Ọgbẹri I'arin ilu,
O ni idande ni oun ma fi talu gbogbo Ijọ Atọ
O ni: "eewo orixa, igbin ki tẹ wori."

Awure:

Oloye Agboṣa:

Ma j'ẹṣe, a mọ iku Nijọ Atọ
Majẹ ki Ijọ Atọ wa ku iku ajọku
Bẹṣe ni ko ri fun wọn dandan-dan
Wọn xe ọdun ọdun yi, bẹṣe ni ki wọn xe tẹmi.

Egbe

Axẹ
Axẹ
Axẹ
Axẹ.

Verse 5

Eji-Ogbe

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Chief Agboḡla:

Make our sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*

Three master-diviners,
 One nicknamed: "I renounce glory"
 The second called: "I eschew ambition and power"
 And the third master *Olotue-sia-sia*,
 Diviner in the inner-most court of heaven,
 Were consulted by Orunmila,
 In those days when death played havoc
 With adepts and cowans in city after city.

Ifa Oracle said to Orunmila then
 And says to you members of Iḡ-Ato, today:
 "On what day so-ever death decides to play havoc in your city
 I myself will protect your Fold from danger.
 Just as the giant-snail by the grace of Orixā-Nlā
 Lives safe and secure within its shell
 So sure will be my protection over you."

Prayer (Chief Agboḡla:)

Do not let the members of Iḡ-Ato be ever visited by death
 Protect the fold from dying in quick succession
 May this prayer be acceptable to you, *Ifa*
 May next festival be as happy as this.

Response:

So may it be
 So may it be
 So may it be
 So may it be.

Eji-Ogbe Eṣe 6:

Oloye Agboḳla:

Ifa, ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, *etc.*

Ọlaxi palore,
Iwami lẹhin,
Baba n'Imokun,
Abẹmole-eekan-A-boju-regun,-regun
Dia fun Ọrunmila
Nijọ t'o l'oun o faladun s'aye lo.

Orin

Awure:

Agboḳla: Ti ko ba si t'Ọlaxipalore,
Ti-o si t'lwamilehin,
Ti-o ba si ti Baba-N'imokun.

Egbe: Erigi-Alo,
Ifa o ba faladun s'aye lo
Erigi-Alo.

Awure:

Agboḳla: Ma jẹki Ijọ Atọ fi adun s'aye lọ, Ifa
Jẹẹ wọn jẹ ogbo,
Jẹ ẹ wọn jẹ atọ, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Eji-Ogbe
Verse 6

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

Olaxi palore,
Iwa mi lehin,
And master from *Imokun*,
Three diviners consulted by *Orunmila*
At that time when it seemed
The grand-master would quit earth
Leaving a prosperous future behind him
Declared this parable, to wit:

"A living tree cut down to a peg
Has a point sharp enough to pierce.
Be like that tree, fight on."

Song (Chief Agboqla): Were it not for *Olaxi palore*
Were it not for *Iwa mi lehin*
If it had not been for master from *Imokun*.

Refrain: The grand-master would have quit earth
Leaving a great future behind him.^[1]

Prayer: Grant prosperity to *Ijọ Orunmila Ato*, Ifa
Give their members length of years,
Endow them with ripeness of age.

Response: So may it be.

Footnote *This translated line is prompted by James Joyce's delightful, Irishism in *Ulysses*:
"He died leaving a great future behind him".

Eji-Ogbe Eṣe 7:

Oloye Agboṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc .

Orule gaji,
Orule taji,
Orule tataata-tuuru-ta,
Afin onilare.

Awoo ile Orunmila,
Dia fun Orunmila.

O nti i kole-orun bọ wa ikole-aye
O ni oun lọ ree l'owo
Oun lọ ree k'ọle,
Oun lọ re e l'obirin,
Oun lọ ree bi mọ,
Oun lọ ree j'oye ọba a tun aye xe.

Wọn ni ko w'ọju-ona
Awọn ti ki-i jẹ ki ẹni o xe nkan nile-aye.

Ifa ni to ba xe bii t'oun ni,
O l'oun o l'owo-l'owọ,
O ni oun o kọle-kọle,
O ni oun o l'aya-l'aya
O ni oun o b'imọ-b'imọ
Oni oun o j'oye ọba-ataye-xe.

Wọn ni o daa, nijọ wo ni o de?

O l'ọjọ ọta-inu-omi baa p'ewe
O lo di'jọ apadi-igbale baa x'ẹjẹ
O di'jọ ti wọn ba-digbara ka t'ete,
O di'jọ ti wọn ba digbara ka wewe,
Ifa ni o di'jọ a-tian-tian-rere.

Eji-Ogbe
Verse 7

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Solid as the roof
Safe as the roof,

The future is certain and secure as the roof."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila through his diviner, nicknamed *Albino*.
At that time when Orunmila set out from heaven earth-ward bound.

"I go to earth" said Orunmila,
"To acquire wealth and own houses
To have many wives and several offsprings
To crown all this by bringing
A new order into the world."

"How do you think you can succeed?"
Asked those in heaven.

"The world abounds with evil powers
Who ensure that nothing good triumphs on earth.
And look how these powers stand blocking your path with malice afore-
thought."

Ifa replied: "As for me, I see no obstacle.
For I know the way to succeed
In money and marriage,
In property and progeny.
And I have the will
To bring a new order into the world."

"Very well then, and your return to heaven, when shall that be?"

Ifa replied in these cryptic words:

"I will return when the stones at river-bed blossom,
When potsherds lining the streets ooze out blood
When what has to be done, has been done
When what has to succeed has succeeded
When time approaches but never arrives."

Eji-Ogbe Verse 7 (Concluded)

Wọn ni:

Ijọ, wo ni ọta-inu-omi a to p'ewe
Ijọ wo ni apadi-igbale a to x'ẹjẹ
Ijọ wo ni wọn a to digbara ka tete
Ijọ wo ni wọn a to digba raka wewe
Ijọ emi ni ijọ atian-tian rere?

Ifa ni:

To ba jẹ pe bẹẹ ni
O l'oun o pada s'ode-ọrun mọ l'oun wi.

Orin:

Awure:

Agboṣa: Njẹ Sawerepe.
Egbe: Sawere pepe,
Ifa ma ma je m ku da're oja yi nu.

Awure:

Agboṣa: Ifa ma jẹẹ Ijọ Atọ ku dare oja yi nu
Jẹ ẹ wọn gbo, jẹẹ wọn tọ, Ifa
Ki wọn d'agba lagba,
Ki wọn d'arugbo.

Egbe: Axẹ.

. Eji-Ogbe Verse 7 (Concluded)

Chief Agboqla: Then Orunmila was asked:

"When will the stones in river-bed blossom?
When will potsherds in the streets ooze out blood?
When will what has to be done be done?
When will what has to succeed succeed?
On what day will time approach but never arrive?"

Ifa replied:

"If you are so ignorant of parables,
This, in plain language, is what I mean:
I will not any more return to heaven."

Song:

Chief Agboqla: I implore you Ifa,
By the power of *Sawerepe*.

Refrain: By *Sawerepe*, leaves sacred to you, Ifa,
I implore you
Let me not die before my time.

Prayer: Let not the members of Ijq-Ato die before their time, Ifa.
Grant them a long life,
Lead them to a ripe old age, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Eji-Ogbe Ẹṣẹ 8:

Oloye Agboṣila:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

Ẹbiti ja f'aya lule,
A dia funfun Yeye-Alẹ-tile
To fẹ hinti ti n fẹkun xerahun ire gbogbo,
Wọn ni ko kaalẹ ẹ bọ ni xixe.
O gbẹbọ, o rubọ.

Orin: Njẹ, alẹ, owo ki-i le awo.

Egbe: Ẹhin iwa,
k'ẹni ma ro Edu pin,
ẹhin iwa.

Orin: Alẹ, aya, ale ọmọ ki-i le awo.

Egbe: Ẹhin iwa k'ẹni ma ro Edu pin Ẹhin iwa.

Orin: Alẹ aya, ale ọmọ ki-i le awo.

Egbe: Ẹhin iwa k'ẹni ma ro edu pin ẹhin iwa.

Orin: Alẹ ire gbogbo ki-i le awo.

Egbe: Ẹhin iwa, K'ẹni ma ro edu pin, ẹhin iwa.

Awure: Ma jẹ ẹ alẹ ire gbogbo o lẹ Ijọ Atọ, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Eji-Ogbe
Verse 8

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"When the spring breaks,
The snare falls out of use."

Thus declared Ifa-oracle to the client
Who shed tears of despair
Because the evening of her life seemed hopeless.

"Quit moaning," she was told; "offer sacrifice
The spring of misfortune will break
Blessings will fill your life."

She offered sacrifice as told.

Song: Ifa devotees never die poor

Refrain: To the end,
Ifa devotees put their trust in the Black Lord,
To the very end.

Song Ifa devotees are ever blessed with wives and children

Refrain To the end,
Ifa devotees put their trust in the Black Lord,
To the very end.

Song Ifa devotees receive every blessing

Refrain To the end,
Ifa devotees put their trust in the Black-Lord
To the very end.

Prayer: Grant all members of Ijò-Ato every blessing

Response: To the very end of their life, Ifa so may it be.

Footnote: *The Black Lord: Palm Nuts as symbols of Ifa.

Eji-Ogbe Eṣe 9:

Oloye Agboḡla:

koo j'ẹbọ nan o fin etc
O pẹ titi ti mo ti nṣẹbọ
Odun yi lẹbọ o mi O xẹxẹ da.

A dia fun Lamuregun
Ti i xe ọmọ wọn L'otu ile ni lai-lai ọjọ.

Orin: Ire t'ẹhin waa na mi.

Egbe: Omi titun,
A tẹhin waa b'ẹja lodo,
Omi titun.

Awure: Ọrunmila!

K'omi titun wa ba ljo Atọ
K omi titun wa ba wọn ninu ọdun yi.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Eṣe 10:

Oloye Fadairo:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin etc.
Omi lo xi kiti, Omi b'ona l'ori
Ona xi kiti, ọna b'Omi lori
Ipade Ọna oun Omi wọn pin ra a wọn mẹrin
A dia fun oyigiyigi Ọta Inu-Omi.

Orin: Oyigiyigi Ọta-Omi
Oyigiyigi Ọta-Omi
Awa d'oyigiyigi a o ku mọ
Oyigiyigi ọta.

Awure: Ọrunmila!

Egbe: Ma jẹẹ Agboḡla o ku
Ma jẹẹ Agboḡla o ku
Ma jẹẹ o run, Ifa
Axẹ.

Eji-Ogbe

Verse 9

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Year after year

Your sacrifice availed nothing.

This very year I will reward your patience with good auspices."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to *Lamuregun*, the querrent after prosperity,
a scion of ancient Ife in the days of yore.

Song: May prosperity be mine

Refrain: Prosperity requites patience

Like fresh waters revive tired fish.

Prayer: Bless Ijò-Ato always, Ifa;

Gladden them with more blessings in the new year.

Response: So may it be.

Verse 10

Chief Fadairo Ajagbe (Master from Ede):

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"It's a struggle to death!" boasted the Waters.

"It's a fight to finish!" riposted the Highway.

"On the dread day of duel It was the Highway, that was
split in four forming the Cross-Roads."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle To *Everlasting Rock* that lay
undisturbed and eternal in the sea.

Song: Everlasting Rock lives forever

Refrain: Come struggle, come fight,

We shall live long

Like Everlasting Rock of the sea.

Prayer: Save Agboqla from untimely death, *Orunmila*,

Grant him health of body and soundness of mind, Ifa

Response: So may it be.

Eji-Ogbe Ẹṣẹ 11:

Oloye Fadairo:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

"Ọdun I'awo esegi,
Iro I'awo afakọn,
Axeyi-x'amọdun ni i xe awo araosiko."

A dia fun Ọrunmila
Baba x'ọdun ọdun yi
Wọn ni ko ni-i xe tẹmi.

Ọ ni irọ ni wọn npa,
Ọ l'eke ni wọn nxe,
Ọ ni Agboṣa x'ọdun ọdun yi
Ọ ni yi o xe tẹmi
Ọ ni Ọdọdun la a r'orogbo,

Ọdọdun la a ro'obi,
Ọdọdun la a r'ata
Ọdọdun n'iyere i so
Ọdọdun la a ri yemọti l'ori owu
Akalamagbo-oko ki-i p'ọdun jẹ aimahu.

Awure: Jẹ ẹ Agboṣa xe ọdun yi
Jẹ ẹ o xe tẹ mi, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Eji-Ogbe

Verse 11

Chief Fadairo Ajagbe (Master from Ede):

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Call no festival happy till the next"

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila at that time when his enemies swore he would not live to celebrate another festival and Ifa replied that their prognostications were false and the truth was not in them.

In like manner, Ifa says to you Agboḡla:

"You will live to celebrate next festival as happily as you do this year. Observe the unfailing regularity whereby the Omnipotent ensures that all things recur in due season.

Kola-nuts, Bitter-kola, Alligator Pepper appear at appointed intervals, Berries of black pepper ripen when due, The cotton-tree blossoms every year, *And Vulture is ever present at sacrifices.

So shall the Omnipotent spare your life from festival to festival.

Prayer: Let Agboḡla live long, Ifa

Let him celebrate your festival every year with greater happiness.

Response: So may it be.

Footnote: *According to Ifa tradition the vulture carries the sacrifice to heaven.

Oyeku-Meji

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00 00
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Eṣe 1

Oloye Agboṣa:

Ifa ko jẹbọ nan o fin etc.

*"Epirin bale o ro pirin,
Poroporo bale ro poro,
Ewe ogungun bale o ro gbanikọkọ-gbanikọkọ."*

A dia fun Baba-yeku-Oke-Apa
Ti wọn npe ni Oyeku-xan panna.

Orin:

Emi ni o ye'ku nu l'ori awo?

Egbe:

Eji-oye
Ifa, ni o ye'ku nu l'ori awo,
Eji-oye.

Awure:

Orunmila ko o ye'ku nu l'ori Ijọ-Ato

Egbe:

Ax ẹ.

Oyeku-Meji

00 00
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Verse 1

Chief Agboṣa: Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa.

"Epirin leaves fall to earth softly,
Poro-poro leaves fall with a thud,
Ogunḡun leaves, when they fall, reverberate thunder-like.

So it is with men.
Everyone dies as he has lived
Everyone succeeds as he performs!"

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the master-diviner from the hills of Apa city. All who consulted him received blessings from Ifa through his skill at divination. Because his clients all lived to old age he himself became known as "*He who knows the way to avert Death*".

Song: Against the danger of sudden death in whom do adepts trust?

Refrain: In Ifa, under his appearance as Eji-Qye.⁽¹⁾

Prayer: Save Iḡo Ato from untimely or sudden death, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Footnote: *Eji-Oye Oyeku-Meji.

Oyeku-Meji Eṣe 2:

Oloye Agboṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan ofin, *etc.*

Ọpa gbongbon ni i xiwaju a-gbonnini
Atelẹṣe mejeeji ni i jijadu ọna gbọroṣan-gbọroṣan
Apasa a-b'enu bọbọ
A dia fun'ẹrunlọjọ-Axọ
A bu fun kẹlẹ
Olowoo wọn n x'ọgbọgbọ arun
Nnara kaka ati r'ọrun.

Wọn ni ki wọn rubọ wọn o rubọ
Kele nikan to mbẹ l'ẹhin lo m'ẹbọ.

Orin: Kele lo ru,
Kele lo tu,

Egbe: Axọ pupa ki-i yun orun,
To ba tan oku j'ẹ tan,
A padaa ẹhin.
Kẹlẹ purọ tan oku jẹ

Awure: Ifa majẹ ki Ijọ Atọ ku iku a-j'oku.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Oyeku-Meji
Verse 2

Chief Agboṣṣa: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"A short staff leads the unsteady gait
Keeping both feet safely in balance
As they swing this way and that
Like the shuttle of women's looms."
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to 165 kinds of cloth.
The same was declared to Kele whom we call Red-Cloth.
Their master was taken with serious illness.

Which shuttled his life this way and that
Threatening death any moment.

The 165 kinds of cloth were told to sacrifice,
Lest death should accompany them with their master.
The 165 kinds of cloth were told to sacrifice.
Red-cloth who was least regarded by all
Sacrificed and paid the tithes as told.

Song: Of all kinds of cloth,
Kele sacrificed,
Kele offered tithes as told.

Refrain: Red-cloth never accompanies the dead.^[1]
With the sacrifice it offered as bait,
Red cloth deceived the lord of Death.
And henceforth Red became taboo to Death.

Prayer: Save the members of Ijọ-Ato from communal death Ifa!

Response: So may it be.

Footnote: "Bascom, W (1969) "Ifa Divination" verse 18-4 pp 238-239 gives a variant of this verse quoting it under Oyeku-meji also but he translates "Kele" as "Calico" instead of "Red Cloth". However Daramola and Jeje (19??) "Awon Asa ati orisa Ijile yoruba" p.200 give "Kele" correctly as "Red Cloth" in these words "Kele ojo nan la npe ni axo pupa" (Are of those days is now called Red Cloth). This verse explains why traditional Yoruba funeral protocol forbids the use of red colour.

Oyeku-Meji

Ese 3

Awure:

Oloye Agboqla:

Ifa, ko o j'ebq nan o fin, *etc.*

Ologoxe l'eye afikun,
Arere l'eye amemu,
Tintin m meruwa jingin,
To mero, to mepa,
Titi lo de'gbo 'mero.
Ifa pelẹ omọ elixin godogbon t'oya
Orunmila ni k'a fija degbera,
A fija degbera,
O ki mi naki,
Mo je o naki,
Ifa pelẹ Baba-naki-anare.
Orunmila ni Baba-papala, Ifa ni Baba m'aro.
Orunmila sata l'ewa,
O tada bodi,
Lofeerefe,
Ni janginnija,
Ni laganangande t'Eegun njo,
B'eeyan o daju-danu, ko le-e k'ifa.
Ifa pelẹ Baba-O-ta'hun-dudu-ra'hun-dudu,
Ifa pelẹ Baba-O-ta'hun-pupa-ra'hun-pupa,
Ifa ta sa o r'elu.

Ifa pelẹ omọ ogun omidan,
Omọji oyan
Ifa pelẹ irinwo Fulani
Omọ egberin bata
Ifa pelẹ omọ irinwo efon
Omọ egberin iwo.

Oyeku-Meji Verse 3

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"*Ologoxe*, the pin-tailed Whydah bird
Is knock-kneed;
Arere the bird of redness
Is spindly-legged.
Yet, walking higgledy-piggledy
Hopping, stopping and hopping
Ologoxe and *Arere* travel very far."

Ifa taught Orunmila this lesson
That he might not weary in perseverance.

Obeisance to you Orunmila, Royal Knight,
Who taught us that respect begets respect
Just as contempt breeds contempt.

Ifa you are coloured black like indigo
Or the blackness of the blacksmith
Which renders your looks next to ugly.
But when we would address you
We avoid offense and say, "you are not exactly handsome."
Ifa, no priest of yours can say the words of power
Unless his memory be faultless and his delivery perfect.

Obeisance to you Ifa,
You who trade in black and bargain in red;
Who sell what is good in return for what is better;
Who sell a weak slave to receive a stronger;

Obeisance to you Ifa!
*Lord of twenty choice maidens
Possessor of forty bossoms;
Master of four hundred Fulani slaves
Dispenser of eight hundred shoes;
Owner of four hundred buffaloes
Surveyor of eight hundred horns.

Footnote: *These parallelisms describe Ifa's all embracing lordship and patronage in poetic symbolism.

(continuation of Eṣe 3)

Oloye Agboṣṣa: . . .

Baba Aburuyanbu lo bi Aburuyanbu
Baba Aburuyanbu lo bi Aburuyanbu
Baba Aburuyanbu lo bi baba eṣewa-pasan
Baba eṣewa-pasan lo ni oun ko mọ ibi .ogun pa surukuna si,
O l'oun o ba mọ ibi ogun pa surukuna si,
Oun o ba bu jẹ,
Oun o ba bu mu,
Oun o ba bu lọ fun ọrẹ oun ninu ile.
Nibe l'awọn a aja gbe njori,
Awọn egun wọn si ma j'ogede
Axa ko gbọdọ la aba l'Aja,
Awodi o pa sa g'aja,
Ko gb'ẹran l'ọbẹ obirin.
Iyi tẹ ẹ yi'do,
Kẹẹ mama yi koko.
Tẹ ẹ ba yi koko bẹẹ,
Inu alamọ a bajẹ,
Inu olodo a maa dẹfun,
Nitori odo ni igi,
Ikoko ni amọ.
Ọkan perepere Nn l'obirin dun mọ l'ọwọ ọkọ.
To ba di meji a d'aroye
To ba di meṣa a d'ọpa-alaye-pọnrọn-pọnrọn
To ba di meṣin a d'eeyan-k'eeyan
To ba di marun a d'ajẹ
To ba di meṣa a ni: kini Ifa ọkọ awọn kan fọ'ọrẹ xe?
To ba di meje a ni: Iyaa mi lo gbe mi x'eyi"
Ọpapa-n-lagi-parapa
Dia fun Ọrumnila
Ifa nlọ ree t'aye Olufẹ sọ bi igba.

Oyeku-Meji
(Continuation of Verse 3)

Chief Agboṣṣa . . .

An evil father breeds evil sons
A righteous father rears good children,
For virtue is untainted with vanity.

Were it otherwise
It would show in speech,
It would show in act,
It would be seen in the choice of friends.

Pompously to proclaim that dogs love bones
Or Egun-people adore bananas is trite and not particularly
profound.

Where danger looms the Hawk abandons pursuit;
The Eagle avoids raiding the kitchen of the determined
house-wife.

Common sense and discretion apply to everything:
Pounding is safe for mortar, risky for pot.
The difference lies in essence.
Mortar is wood, pot is clay.

What applies in the kitchen is true also of marriage:
Monogamy is the road to marital peace
Whereas nagging, jealousy and distemper
Witch-craft regret and misfortune
Are the sorry fruits of polygamy"

So declared Ifa-Oracle to Ṣunmila
As he set out to restore the shattered fortunes of the king of
Ife and his subjects.

Oyeku-Meji
(Conclusion of Eṣe 3)

Oloye Agboṣṣa . . .

Orin: Nje, Ifa ba ni tun ilẹ yi xe.

Egbe: Eṣa opitan
Bani tun ilẹ iy xe,
Eṣa opitan.

Orin: Oko, to ba da
Alagbẹdẹ ni i tun xe.

Egbe: Eṣa opkitan ba ni tun ilẹ yi xe.

Orin: B'Ada ba a da, Alagbẹdẹ ni i tunun xe.

Egbe: Eṣa opitan ba ni tun ilẹ yi xe, eṣa opitan.

Awure: Ko o tun aye Ijọ-Ato xe, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

(Conclusion of Verse 3)

Chief Agboola:

Song: Restore our country's shattered fortunes.

Refrain: Ifa, saviour and Lord of history.
Deign to restore our country's fortunes.

Song: When the hoe breaks in two
The smith restores it to service.

Refrain: Saviour, Lord of history
Deign to restore our fortunes.

Song: When the matchet breaks in two
The smith restores it to service.

Refrain: Saviour, Lord of history
Deign to restore our country's fortunes.

Prayer: Ifa !
You are the saviour of mankind
We implore you to bless Ijọ Ato ever more.

Response: So may it be.

Footnote: * A reference to the political and economic upheaval in Nigeria in the aftermath of the military coups of January and July 1966 followed by the civil war of 1967 to 1970.
The ceremony where the verse above was recited took place in August 1967.

Oyeku-Meji Ese 4

Baba Ede (Oloye Fadairo): Ifa, ko o jẹ bọ nan o fin etc.

A tẹ'fa bẹẹrẹrẹ a o r'onda,
Agbe lo pajuba bẹẹrẹrẹ
Bẹẹ la o r'onko
A dia fun Labaale ọmọ Ewi nile Ado.

Orin: K'ifa a sọ'le d'ọja f'awo.

Egbe: Xexe ega,
Ifa o sọ'le d'ọja fawo
xexe ega.

Awure: Ọrunmila! Ilee Agboọla majẹ otuka

Egbe: Axẹ.

Ese 5

Baba Ede (Oloye Fadairo): Ifa! Ko o j'e bo nan ofin etc.

A tata-tain-tain
Adia fun ọlọmọ-iyanyan-gidigbi nkọ?
Gbogbo ajogun ndoyi yi i kaa
Ti wọn fẹ ẹ pa a
Wọn ni ko rubo, o si rubo.

Orin: Iku to l'oun o pa ọlọwọ-iyanyan-gidigbi nkọ?

Iku nan ki-i j'elubọ
To baj'elubọ ku
Enu-u wọn a ku
Enu-u wọn a ku gbuu
Arun to l'oun o pa ọlọmọ-iyanyan-gidigbi nkọ?
Arun nan ki-i j'elubọ
To ba j'elubo nko
Enuu wọn a ku,
Enu-u wọn a ku gbuu.

Awure: Atiku-at'arun

Ki wọn ma ya lọdọ Agboọla, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Oyèku-Meji

Master from Ede (Chief Fadairo):

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc.

"Diviners many, clients none,
fields ploughed, sowers none."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Labaale
Citizen of Ado-Ekiti, kingdom of the Ewi
Presaging a prosperous future for him
Present difficulties notwithstanding.

Song: Let prosperity shine on diviners, Ifa.

Refrain: The weaver-bird steps slowly but surely;
slowly but surely Ifa blesses his diviners.

Prayer: Let not prosperity desert Agboḡla's household, Ifa

Response: So may it be.

Verse 5

Master from Ede (Chief Fadairo):

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa.

"Ominous is the future!"

Declared Ifa-Oracle to Oḡmḡ, the client

Tall, strong confident of life

Unmindful of the closing net which

The **Heavenly Knights of Doom** spread round him

Threatening imminent death.

"Sacrifice," said the oracle, "You will live."

Oḡmḡ sacrificed and lived.

Song: How did Oḡmḡ avert the danger of death?

Refrain: By sacrifice of yam-pudding that locked Death's jaws.

Song: How did Oḡmḡ survive the threat of illness?

Refrain: By sacrifice of yam-pudding that locked Death's jaws.

Prayer: Let not death or illness visit Agboḡla, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Ajogun or *Ajogun ḡrun* are the heavenly messengers of punishment or retribution sent to errant people on earth. Symbolically they are: Death, Illness, Loss, Injury and Suffering.
C. O. Ibie's phrase for this is apt: "Heavenly Knights of Doom".

Iwori-Meji

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0	0
00	00

Eṣẹ 1:

Oloye Agboṣṣa: Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, *etc.*

"Eni a ba wa'de la a ba re'le,
Eni Aja ba wa l'Aja i ba lọ."

Dia fun Eji-kunkun-Iwori
Tio tẹ'ju mọ akapoo rẹ giri-giri.

Orin: Ifa tẹ'ju nọ mi ko o wo mi i re

Egbe: Eji-kunkun-Iwori,
Ifa-tẹ'ju mọ mi ko o wo mi ire,
Eji-kun-kun-Iwori.

Orin: To o ba tẹ'ju mọ ni laa ma a l'owo

Egbe: Eji-kun-kun-Iwori
Ifa tẹ'ju mọ mi ko o wo mi i re
Eji-kun-kun-Iwori.

Orin: To o ba tẹ'ju mọ ni laa maal'aya,

Egbe: Eji-kunkun-Iwori
Ifa tẹ'ju mọ mi ko o wo mi i re
Eji-kunkun-lori.

Orin: To o ba tẹ'ju mọ ni laa maa bi'mọ

Egbe: Eji-kunkun-Iwori
Ifa tẹ'ju mọ mi koo wo mi ire
Eji-kunkun-Iwori.

Orin: To o ba tẹ'ju mọ ni laa ma n'ire gbogbo

Egbe: Eji-kunkun-Iwori,
Ifa tẹ'ju mọ mi ko o wo mi ire,
Eji-kunkun-Iwori.

Awure (Agboṣṣa):

Orunmila

Oju ti o fi i xo ljo-Atọ ko o mama fi sun

Egbe: Axẹ.

Iwori-Meji

Verse 1

Chief Agboola: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa, *etc.*

"As faithful as the dog to his master,
Going out or coming home,
So should friends be in all things."

Thus declared Ifa-oracle to master-diviners
Promising, under the powerful sign of Eji-Iwori^(*)
He would bless his devotees in all ways.

Song: Bless all my undertakings, Ifa!

Refrain: I pray you Ifa
Under your powerful appearance as Eji-Iwori
Bless my undertakings;

Song: Your patronage assures wealth.

Refrain: I pray you Ifa
Bless my undertakings;

Song: Your patronage assures success in marriage.

Refrain: I pray you Ifa,
Under your powerful appearance as Eji-Iwori
Bless my undertakings;

Song: Your patronage assures happy progeny.

Refrain: I pray you, Ifa
Under your powerful appearance as Eji-Iwori
Bless my undertakings;

Song: Your patronage confers every blessing.

Refrain: I pray you, Ifa
Under your powerful appearance as Eji-Iwori
Bless my undertakings.

Prayer: Orunmila!

Let not your watchful eyes on Ijọ-Ato ever fall asleep.

Response: So may it be.

Footnote: ^{*}Eji-Iwori is an alternate name for Iwori-Meji.

Oḍun Ifa

Ẹṣẹ 2:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa, ko o j'ẹbḡ nan o fin, etc.

Xekete la a pilẹ aro,
To ba d'oke, A gbodo,
A gb'ọlḡ
A gb'oduru-ikoko baba izaasun
A dia fun Akẹsan Baalẹ-Qja.

Orin: Akẹsan nd'ade,
Aya-a re n daja
Ẹ wa wo olori ire to ndaja.

Awure (Agboḡla):

Orumnila!
Qja to o da Ijḡ Atḡ ma jẹ o tu
Majẹ ki Ijḡ nan o tuka, Ifa.

Egbe Axẹ.

Ẹṣẹ 3:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbḡ nan ofin, etc.

"Ogodo-owu lo gb'oke odo,
Nn lo pa'yin kekeke s'ọlḡkḡ."
A dia fun Alantakun
Ti o ma xe ohun gbogbo bi-idan-bi-idan.

Orin Bi-idan-bi-idan ni mḡxe ti mḡ fi n I'aje.
Egbe Awo l'ogodo-owu gb'oke-odo
Payin-kekeke s'ọlḡkḡ.

Awure:

Agboḡla:

Orumnila!
Majẹ ki axiri Ijḡ Atḡ o tu, Ifa.

Egbe Axẹ.

Iwori-Meji Verse 2

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*
"Tripod, raised from delicate clay
Fully-formed, properly fired,
Can support weights greater than itself
Like mortars, grinders or cauldrons,
So, great events have humble beginnings"
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to *Akesan* that, soon after, became first
among markets.
Song: *Akesan* is Prince of markets
Refrain: His wife is first lady of trade
What a fortunate couple.
Prayer Bless Iḡ-Ato, Orunmila
Let not their prosperity founder.
Response: So may it be.

Verse 3

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*
"See how cotton blossoms on yonder bank
Smile with magical whiteness
Thrilling the farmer's heart."
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Spider.
"Like cotton blossoms" continued the oracle
"Your life will unfold in wondrous magic."^[*]
Song: Everything I do
Succeeds like magic.
Refrain: Cotton blossoms on yonder bank
Smile with magical whiteness
Thrilling the farmer's heart.
Prayer: Never let Iḡ-Ato fall from grace, Ifa
Response: So may it be.

Footnote: * Wande Abimbola (1976) "An Exposition of Ifa literary corpus" page 218 Comments on a variant of the above verse in these words " *In Eḡ-Ifa the spider is always referred to as a master craftsman who weaves threads with great expertise. . . a thing of wonder and amazement.* "

Eṣe 4:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa, ko o j'ebḡ nan o fin *etc.*
Bo le x'eti xeexe,
Ko x'eti xeexe;
Bo le x'agbḡn jḡḡḡ,
Ko x'agbḡn jḡḡḡ
To ba xagbḡntan ko di kaandi l'eḡḡe.
Kaago kogo'
Manikin owu
Erin peḡe ḡmḡ-oye ti i igbado,
Eruwa peḡe ḡmḡ-oye ti i gbaruku ḡsanyin.
Imummu ni i f'arajḡ koro ixin,
Axexexeso Egbesi
Ni i f'arajo iruku ḡsanyin
Olojongbadarigi Ḳkunrin
Nn la a da agogo idḡ rḡ'mi fun.'
Dia fun ḡrunmila,
Yio lalaala,
Yio tan ina ḡla beḡereḡe.

Orin Ifa wa a tan ina ḡla n'le awo.

Egbe Ode gbanxaxa,
Ifa wa a tan ina ḡla n'le awo,
O de gbanxaxa.

Awure:

Agboḡla:

Ḳrunmila!
Ko o tan'na ḡla sinu Iḡ Atḡ.

Egbe Axḡ.

Iwori-Meji

Verse 4

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"If it will break
Let it break;
If it must end
Let it end.

When it has ended when it has broken
Life remains to live
So what is the bother,
What is the worry.

Hail to you powerful physician,
Hail to you Osanyin.

One fruit stone is another fruit-stone in disguise,
All blossoms are Osanyin's fly-whisk on a tree.

Appearances may deceive common folk,
Not you bold courageous hero
Worthy to be served with golden flagons."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila.

"You will shower prosperity on mankind."

Concluded Ifa.

Song	Shower prosperity on the diviner's house-hold, Ifa
Refrain	Prosperity brighter than the noon-day sun.
Prayer	Light the flame of prosperity for Iḡ-Ato, Orunmila.
Response	So may it be.

Iwori-Meji

Ese 5

Baba Ede

(Oloye Fadairo)

Ifa ko o j'ebọ nan ofin *etc.*
Awojọbi pẹlẹ
Arewa to fadin s'ọju
Ilebe ni mo ko n'le Ixerimole
Axẹxẹ-gun-oke,
Ni i xọmọ n'idi biri-pe-kun-yin
A dia f'Ekun
To gbaxọ rẹ f'alagbare
Igba dudu ni mbẹ n'be.

Orin

A r'axọ Ekun,
A r'axọ Ekun.

Egbe

Oomirin,
A r'axọ Ekun.

Awure

Ma jẹ ẹ Agboọla ọtẹ, Ifa.

Egbe

Axẹ.

Iwori-Meji

Verse 5

Chief Agboḡla: Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

" Plain and ordinary was Awojobi when first she came from *Ixerimole* town;

"Ludicrous too were her manners and steps as when unsteady infants first strive to climb stairs;

Now, by the grace of Ifa, art has revealed her beauty."

Thus declared Ifa-oracle to Leopard whose erstwhile ordinary looks inspired nothing but ridicule.

"Respect and honour will be yours,"

Added Ifa.

"When you sacrifice and acquire a new look Portending terror and dread."

Song Leopard has a new look

Response Leopard is clothed in velvet, terror and dread.

Prayer Let not Agboḡla lose respect in society.

Response So may it be Ifa.

Footnote: *The translation here is based on the full version of the Yoruba text as it appears on page 45 of Chief A. F. Agboḡla's book: *Ojuloḡo Oriki Ifa* (1989).

Odi-Meji

o	u
oo	oo
o	o

Èṣẹ 1:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbḡ nan o fin *etc.*

"Ojo nla ta'di xaxa."

A difa fun wḡn ni'di kunrin,
A bu fun wḡn ni'di'birin,
Nijḡ ti wḡn nmẹkun oju xe'rahun t'ḡmḡ.

Orin Idi ni a apa axa
Igba idi di meji.

Egbe Nn la a bi'mḡ.

Awure (Agboḡla): Orunmila ! Agbḡnniregun Ifa
Ma jẹ ki Ijḡ Atḡ yagan Ifa.

Egbe Axẹ.

Odi-Meji

o o
oo oo
oo oo
o o

Verse 1

Agboṣṣa

Make our sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*

"Success depends on perseverance. See how rain-drops, in time, wear out granite."

Thus declared *Ifa*-oracle to the husband.

The same was declared to the wife, when they sorrowed daily for lack of children.

Song

Commence your efforts
From bottom upwards.

Refrain

For when two ends meet
A child is born.

Prayer

Orunmila, Agbonmiregun, Ifa,
Save the women folk in *Ijọ-Ato* from barrenness.

Response

So may it be.

Ẹṣẹ 2:

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, *etc.*
A di n di odi,
A di n di odi,
A difa fun Eji-Odi
Wọn ma a gb'ọrun di i,
Yio ma gbele-aye tu u.

Wọn ni

"Ee xe ti wọn fi i gb'ọrun de o
T'o i fi ngbele-aye tu-u?"

Oni

Iyan esuru ki-i wọ'dọ
Aya enina ki-i wọ'lọ
Epo ta a din'kara si ki-i wọ akara'nnu
Ẹbọ ta a ru sidi Iroko,
Ara l'oluwere fi i san.

Orin Ki la o f'ose xe?

Egbe Pataki ni t'ose
 Ki la a f'ose xe.

Orin Ose o xe gbe'do.

Egbe Pataki ni t'ose
 Ki laa f'ose xe
 Pataki ni t'ose.

Awure:

Agboṣṣa: Atọ Ifa.
Egbe Axẹ.

Verse 2

Chief Agboola: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Odi will not die,
Odi will live long."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Eji-Odi.^[1]
"Cosmic powers plan your death."
You will frustrate them,
You will live long."

When Odi was asked:

"By what means will you frustrate these cosmic powers?
By what power will you live long?"

Odi replied:

"The power and the means arise
from my very nature.

"I am *Esuru*, tuber that looks like yam-tuber but cannot be
pounded for food;
I am *Emina*, vegetable that looks like
But cannot be made into stew like Okra
I am the bean-cake,
Deep-fried without, pure-white within;
I am the sacrifice to the Iroko-Tree
That is not offered
I am the victim that is cursed
But waxes strong."

Song: How shall we destroy the Baobab?

Refrain: Never, never,
Baobab is a scared tree.

Prayer: Protect Ijọ-Ato from their enemies.

Response: So may it be.

Footnote: *Eji-Odi - Odi-Meji - Orunmila.

Odi-Meji

Ese 3

Oloye Agboqla Ifa ko o gobi ofin etc.

"O di mu-dumb-Awo-inu-igbo
A dia fun Olofin"¹
Odu-o-yi-gbiri-j'anq.

Orin Aye mi a r'oke nigbaya o.

Egbe B'ipori Ina ba gb'epoje
Iwa a re a si ro oke.

Awure Oke, oke ni ki iwa Ijo-Ato maa lo, Ifa.

Egbe Axe.

Footnote: ¹Olofin = Oduduwa According to E. Bolaji Idowu (1962) "Olodumare" p.?? Oduduwa means the "self-existent Chief".

Verse 3

Chief Agboḡla Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

Odi, venerable master of the groves was the diviner who consulted Ifa-oracle for Oduduwa, the hoary immensity that rolls from infinity to infinity within his own existence.

"Royalty unsurpassed,
Glory and renown
Are your inheritance
Forever and ever"

Said the oracle.

Song My life begins anew,

Refrain When dying fire is
Fed with fresh oil
It's life begins anew.

Prayer May *Ijḡ-Ato* grow
From strength to strength, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Irosun-Meji

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Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbḡ nan o fin
Ada nkḡ?
Ada nkḡ?
Ada nkḡ?
Ada lḡ odo.
Adia fun Ẹlḡḡ-Idere
Eyiti o lḡḡ k'aleḡe o to lḡ.

Orin Ẹlḡḡ idere
Xe bo lo o la?

Egbe Or'ḡḡḡ dudu, O gbaja funfun
O fapoti tidi o lekenka
Ẹlḡḡ-Idere, xe bo lo o j'ere.

Awure

Agboḡla:

Ọrunmila, ma jḡ ki ọla Ijḡ Atḡ parun.

Egbe Axḡ.

Verse 1

Chief Agboqla:

Make our Sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

If farming brings no profit
And fishing yields no success
Take up commerce,
Make sacrifice.
Before long, very soon
Profit will come,
And success follow.

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the petty trader
from the city of Idere.

Song Petty trader of Idere
 You complained that business was bad.

Refrain After sacrifice, now you are rich
 You dress in cleanest white
 And contrast it with royal black
 But yet you still pretend
 That business is bad.

Prayer Let not the prosperity of Ijq Atq ever fail, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Irosun-Meji

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n n
oo oo
nn nn

Ese 2

Oloye Agboqla: Ifa ko o j'ebo nan o fin *etc.*

"Adana ya Okete,
Afa kalẹ Gbọrọ,
Bi Tẹtẹ-Ogun o ba we l'odo
Titiri ni itiri s'Oloṃi."

Adia fun Ekikan
Alawọ mininjọ
Tio gbayi l'ọwọ gbogbo eranko.

Orin Adagbiyi eranko,

Egbe Orixal-Igbo,
Lo fiyi f Ekikan,^[1]
Adagbiyi eranko.

Awure Ma jẹ ẹ wọn tẹ nile-aye, Ifa.

Egbe Axẹ.

Footnote * Ekikan - Ekun - Lion.

Irosun-Meji

Verse 2

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc.

*"Squirrel is fleet of foot,
Pumpkin creeps lazily over earth,
Spinach spreading leisurely to the pond
Gently caresses the water-sprites,
Thus each bears its destiny from above."*

So declared Ifa-Oracle to Lion,
He of the velvet coat.

"Your destiny places you above all animals"

concluded the Oracle.

Song:

Lion is destined
For honour and prestige
Among animals.

Refrain:

Thanks to Orixala, venerable creator.

Prayer

Save Ijọ from disgrace, Ifa.

Response

So may it be.

Odun Ifa

Irosun-Meji

Ese 3

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa, Ko o j'ebḡ nan o fin *etc.*
Itaruku L'awo Itaruku,
Itaruku L'awo Itaruku,
Itaruku Tataata
Dia fun Igba,
Ti nx'awo r'ode-Qyḡ.

Orin Igba ru'la
Igba ru'kan.

Egbe Baa waye eni,
Laa n'igba.

Awure

Agboḡla:

Jḡḡ Ijḡ Atḡ n'igba ire l'aye, Ifa.

Egbe Axḡ.

Irosun-Meji
Verse 3

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

Itaruku the master-diviner,
Itaruku the seasoned-diviner,
Itaruku the venerable-diviner

Was consulted by "*Time*"
on his way to Oyo City
To practise Ifa-divination.

SONG: Time offered Okra as sacrifice
Time offered Garden-Egg
Time received good auspices
From Ifa.

Refrain: When we sacrifice as told
We receive happiness in return.

Prayer Grant happy times to Ijò-Ato, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Ese 4:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa, ko o j'ebḡ nan o fin, etc.

Gunnugun ni i j'ebḡ t'ebḡ fii fin,

Akalamagbo ni i j'ebḡ fi i da,
Ahere-Oko a-biduro gangan-roro-ganga-roro.

Adia fun Tḡhin-ni wa-Qran,
Ti i xe omḡ bibi Inu Agbḡnniregun.

Orin Be ḡ r'Ifa ḡla ḡ kḡ mi,
Owo ti m o xe la n'Ifa,
Beḡ r'Ifa ḡla ke kḡ mi.

Awure (Agboḡla):

Asinla ni ki Ijḡ Atḡ o sin ḡ, Ifa.

Egbe Axḡ.

Verse 4

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Men sacrifice to the gods,
But the sacrifice is not accepted
By the Omnipotent,
Unless first eaten by Vulture
Or consumed by Hornbill.

Diviners perform sacrificial rites
But without Ḣrunmila's blessing
They come to nought;

For, as the farm-shack watches
In loneliness
Over the deserted fields,
So Ḣrunmila presides
Over the diviner's practice."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle
To the diviner nick-named
"Late to succeed"
who was schooled in the craft
by *Agboḡmiregun* (Ḣrunmila) himself.

SONG Teach me the craft
 Teach me the way
 To success.

Refrain I choose Ifa as a profession
 And no other.

Prayer: Grant diviners abundant blessings, Ifa.
Response So may it be.

Irosun-Meji

Èṣẹ 5:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Itakun pọ ọ lọ
Difa fun Oduduwa a-tẹ-wọn-rọ n'Ifẹ
Eyi t'Olodumare yio k'okun aaje l'owọ.

Orin Ope ni ix'ẹru Ẹdu,
Arubi ni ix'ẹru Ọlọfin.

Egbe Eje bale,
Ibi a d'ẹrọ.

Orin Ajalu xoro-xoro.

Egbe Eje b'ale,
Ibi a d'ẹrọ.

Awure

Agboḡla:

Jẹ ki ibi o d'ẹrọ fun Ijọ Atọ, Ifa.

Egbe Axẹ.

Irosun-Meji

Verse 5

Chief Agboola: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc.

*"From branches above
Aerial roots grow earthward."*

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Oduduwa the day he descended from heaven unto ancient Ife to inherit universal sceptre and crown from the Omnipotent.

Song: Ifa deals
In plain and simple faith;
State craft deals
In stratagems.

Refrain: Blood-sacrifice
Redeems
The evils
Of state craft.

Song: Let
Sacrificial blood
Flow

Refrain: To turn
Evil acts
To blessed rewards.

Prayer May, Ijo-Ato receive blessings
In spite of evil doers.

Response So may it be

Footnote: *The full text of this verse is given by A.F. Agboola in his book "Oju Lowo ORIKI Ifa" (1989) pages 69-70 and clarifies the cryptic allusions above.
In summary Ifa's way (Honesty) OPE is Contrasted favourably against (Stratagems) ARUBI the way of rulers i.e. Oduduwa in this context.

Qwɔnrin-Meji

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Èsẹ 1

Olooye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbḡ nan o fin *etc.*

Qwɔn owo,
n ni wɔn i nawo mini
Qwɔn omi,
Nn la a b'esun
Qpḡ ebi,
Nn laa pe n'iyān
Dia fun Eyi-Qwɔn
Qmḡ-ba l'Eyo-Ajori
Ajomi gbara
Aj'ẹrẹsẹ yḡkun nisalẹ.

Orin È sare wa, ẹ wa raja-Qmḡ-Qba
 At'ewe-at'a"gba
 È wa r'aja Eyi-Owɔn
 È sare wa, ẹ wa raja Qmḡ-Qba.

Awure:

Agboḡla: Qrunmila!
 Majẹ Ijḡ-Atḡ o tuka.

Egbe Axẹ.

Qwɔnrin-Meji

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00	00
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Verse 1

Chief Agboḡla: Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa.

"When money is scarce
Resort to parsimony,^[1]
When water is scarce
Search for new springs,
When food is scarce
Prepare against famine."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Eyi-Qwɔn, Prince of Ancient Oyo,
where, for want of Palm-Oil, cooks made do with shea-butter.

"Present hardship notwithstanding," added the Oracle
"You will enjoy health and prosperity."

Song: Come one, come all,
Come buy from Eyi-Owɔn
Our right royal merchant-prince.

Refrain Come old, come young
Come sample the princely ware.

Prayer: Let the enterprise of Ijɔ-Ato thrive, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Footnote: ^[1]Fuller versions of this verse are given by:

Fagbenro-Beyioku: "Ifa: Its Worship and Prayers" p.ii.

Wande Abimbola (1979): "Ifa an Exposition" p.75.

A. F. Agboḡla (1989): "Oṣulowo Oriki Ifa" pp 87-88.

The Yoruba text displays a delightful word play on the name of the Odu *Owɔrin*. The initial syllable "Owon" means "Scarcity" whilst the client's name "Eyi-Owɔn" means "He who lacks prosperity".

Ọwọnrin-Meji

Ese 2

Oloye Agboola:

Ifa, ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin etc.
Onikekẹ l'ogun,
Alabaja l'ogbọn,
Onikolo wẹwẹwẹ l'aadota
Adia fun Odunmbaku
Ọmọ agbira n'Ifẹ
Wọn ni o rubọ nitori Iku
Wọn ni o f'adiẹ-irana kan rubọ
Oxe e, iku o pa a
O wa nkọrin, o ni:

Orin: Ọdun m ba ti ku a t'exi
K'Ejie to gb'Adiẹ-iranaa mi lọ
Adiẹ-irana emi fi ile,
Ejie gbee lọ.

Egbe Iku ti o p'awo
A lo okere a lo ree xesi
Ode la a b'ewe Ajilekege
Ode la a f ewe Aji le kege si i lọ.

Awure:

Agboola: Maje ẹ Ijọ Atọ ku, Ifa.

Egbe Axẹ.

Owqnrin-Meji
Verse 2

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc.

"If rough *Kekę* marks"¹
Be valued at twenty talents,
And fine horizontal *Abaja*
Be valued at thirty,
Then delicate *Kolo* marks
Should fetch fifty talents"¹!

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to *Odunmbaku*, Prince of Ancient *Ife*.

"Propitiate death with a cock," added the Oracle.
"As substitute for your life."

*Odunmbaku** sacrificed as told and lived.
Happy at this fortunate outcome,
He sang:

Song: I would have died last year
I would have died for sure.
I offered a cock to save my life
Death took the cock and let me live
I would have died last year.

Refrain: Death sojourns in distant lands
While adepts live secure at home
Like evergreen leaves of *Ajilekege*
Shrub that thrives from year to year.

Prayer Spare Ijọ-Ato from untimely death, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Footnote: ¹The theme of this verse is the familiar Ifa teaching that sacrifice averts death. The higher the sacrifice the greater the benefit.

Footnote: ****keke* * * *Abaja* and *Kolo* are facial marks of the Yoruba.

Footnote: ***There is a word-play here: *Odunmbaku* means literally "The year I would have died".

Oworin-Meji

Ese 3

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa, ko o j'ẹbḡ nan o fin, etc.

"Idakisi ọna ni ir'Ejo lehin."

Adia f'Ẹxin

Abu f'Agbo,

Ni jḡ ti wḡn nxawo re'le Ọḡni Alanakan-Esuru

At'Ẹxin at'Agbo

Awo ile Ọḡni Alanankan-esuru

Dia fun Ọḡni Alanan-kan-esuru

Nijḡ ti o riba ilee baba rẹ mḡ.

Orin

Iba Baba,

Iba Yeye,

Iba Oluwo,

Iba Ojugbona,

Iba Akḡda

Iba Axḡda.

Iba pan-pa-xigidi-adaxḡ-mamero.

Egbe

Afi eyiti mo ba da xe,

K'Oro ma X'aigba.

Olowo lo mḡ xixe,

L'ẹṣẹ Ọba Orixá

Afi eyi ti mo ba da xe,

K'oro ma xaigba.

Awure:

Agboḡla:

Ọrunmila!

Ko o ba Ijḡ Atḡ xe e, Ifa.

Egbe:

Axḡ.

Oworin-Meji
Verse 3

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc.

"Little omissions spoil great enterprises. See how an ordinary groove in the bush breaks the back of the unwary snake that dashes across without circumspection."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to two diviners nicknamed '*Horse*' and '*Ram*' the day they set out to consult Ifa for the King of Ife called '*Treasure Trove*'.

"Ifa's message," said the diviners to the King "is that your affairs will only change for the better when you offer due sacrifice and return to the observance of ancestral rites long neglected by you."

Song: Obeisance to whom Obeisance is due:
Obeisance to fathers and mothers
Obeisance to the Chief Priest of our craft
Obeisance to Ojugbḡḡ his principal officer
To Akḡda the first Apostle of Orunmila
To Axḡda the teacher of wisdom
To the Palm-Tree, Ifa's symbol on earth.

Refrain: I pay obeisance to whom obeisance is due
That the gods may accept my Sacrifice.
Money buys offerings,
Obeisance makes them acceptable to the gods.
I pay obeisance to whom obeisance is due.

Prayer: Orunmila!
Assist Ijḡ-Ato in all their endeavours.

Response: So may it be

Obara-Meji

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••	••
••	••

 Eṣe

Oloye Agboḡla: Ifa ko o j'ebḡ nan o fin *etc.*

Egun gogoro,
Abijo logba-logba
Adia fun Orunmila
Ifa yio f'uju ḡta han l'eti-Oḡon.

Orin Oka ḡmḡ-elerin-atan.
Egbe Eyin axeni,
Mo mḡ yin e dabḡ
Eyin axeni.

Orin Ere, ḡmḡ wḡn ilabata.
Egbe Eyin axeni'
Mo mḡ yin e dabḡ,
Eyin axeni.

Orin Yaya-xugudu ḡmḡ Olu-Igbo.
Egbe Eyin axeni,
Mo mḡ yin e dabḡ
Eyin axeni.

Orin Ogan-peteki ḡmḡ Olu-ḡdan.
Egbe Eyin axeni . . .

Orin Iroko-Igbo ḡmḡ abeta-yḡḡ-nu.
Egbe Eyin axeni . . .

Orin Araba pataki ni i x'ḡmḡ wḡn i'lepo.
Egbe Eyin axeni,
Mo mḡ yin e dabḡ
Eyin axeni
Okere fefe ni mo ti mḡ yin l'axeni.

Awure (Agboḡla):
Ma je ki axeni o xe wḡn ninu Iḡo yi, Ifa
Ma je ki Aye o xe wḡn Ifa.

Egbe: Axḡ.

Obara-Meji

o	o
oo	oo
oo	oo
oo	oo

 Verse 1

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"The graceful dance of the Tall Masquerade
Whom the Tapa call *Igunnuko*
Conceals mortal danger."
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila.
"I will reveal to you on the divining board," said Ifa.
"Your concealed enemies who masquerade as friends."

Song: First is "Cobra-in-the-fields."
Refrain I know him, I know his enmity now
And will propitiate him.

Song Next is "Python-of-Marshland."
Refrain I know him, I know his enmity now
And will propitiate him.

Song Next is "Tall one of the forest" whose real name is Wickedness.
Refrain: I know him, I know his enmity now
And will propitiate him.

Song Next is "Short-one-of the plains" whose real name is Jealousy.
Refrain I know him now
And will propitiate him.

Song Next is "Ancient Oak" whose real name is Envy.
Refrain I know him now
And will propitiate him.

Song Next is "Silk Cotton Tree" your arch-enemy from the city of *Ipo*.
Refrain I know him now
And will propitiate him.
I know them all now
And even from afar I feel their enmity
And so I will propitiate them all.

Prayer Protect Iḡo-Ato from enemies, within and without, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Obara-Meji
Eṣẹ 2:

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

O xẹ pẹlẹnge-pẹlẹnge ọwọ mi ọtun
Orọ mininjọ-mininjọ ọwọ mi osi,
Ewe-Koko meji balẹ wọn lu'ra wọn
Pẹlẹnge-pẹlẹnge-pẹlẹnge
Abẹbẹ-Oje lo m'ọju ọlọja tutu niniini
Dia fun Ọba Ado t'ojoluwa ilẹkẹ
Omọ a-d'akẹtẹ-penpe-pari-akun
Nijo ti n lọ re e ba wọn mu'lẹẹ budo.

To ba wọn mu'lẹẹ budo

Ko o mu t'owo
Ko o mu t'aya,
Ko o mu t'omọ
Ko o si wa mu t'aiku-pari-wa.

Orin Ki lo wa s'Olu-'Do d'ọba?
 Eji-Ọbara
 Ifa lo s'Olu-'Do d'ọba,
 Eji Ọbara.

Awure:

Agboṣṣa: Ko o x'elegbe l'ẹhin Ijọ Atọ, Ifa.

Egbe Axẹ.

Obara-Meji
Verse 2

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Gently one swings right
Softly the other bends left;
Two leaves meet,
Part and meet again
Like jewelled fans
In rhythmic dance."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the Royal Client^[1]
As he journeyed forth to found a new Kingdom.

"I will make you King of Benin!" said Ifa-Oracle.
"I will enrich you with beads of exquisite choice
And crown you with corals of rare beauty.
Your reign will be peaceful and serene
Like jewelled fans in rhythmic dance.
When you choose blessings:
Choose wealth,
Choose progeny,
Above all choose longevity, the greatest gift of all."

Song How did the royal one become King of Benin?
Refrain By Ifa's grace
 Under the sign of Eji-Obara^[**].

Hail to you Eji-Obara.

Prayer Accord Ijo-Ato your unfailing patronage, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Footnote: *Royal Client = Oranyan (grandson of Oduduwa or last son according to other authorities).
Ifa tradition quotes this Odu as the foundation Odu for the Oranyan dynasty in Benin.

Footnote: **Eji-Obara is an alternate name for Obara-meji Wande Abimbola (1968) gives a variant of this verse on p. 81 of
"Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa" quoting it as Obara-meji but in his other book "Awon Oju Odu Merindilogun" (19) he
quotes the same verse as Owonrin-meji (page 44).

Qbara-Meji

Oloye Agboqla: Ifa ko o j'ebq nan o fin, etc.

Gunningun ni o tori abe rari,
Ere I'awo abata,
Dia fun Eji-Qbara
N lo ree pa'bi f'Eriwo je.

Orin: O ba duro o m'obi fun Eriwo.

Egbe Eji-Qbara
Duro o m'obi fun Eriwo,
Eji-Qbara.

Awure (Agboqla): Ko o fun Ijq Atq ni ire gbogbo, Ifa.
Egbe Axę.

Ese 4

Oloye Agboqla Ifa ko o j'ebq na o fin etc.

Ikangun-Ile oun lo ti kekere yo'ke
Ojo lo p'Alabawun t'oun t'ewu ileke lqrun
Adia fun A-gun-lenu-bi-agogo
Eyi ti o x'ofin kan qrankan-qrankan
Ti gbogbo aye ko gbqdq yi pada lai-lai.

Orin Ifa ni m o lowo,
Mo lowo.

Egbe Ifa mo je o ni ho hoo Ho-hoo ni ije Qrunmila.

Orin Ifa ni mo I'aya, mo laya.

Egbe Ifa mo je o ni ho-hoo,
Hohoo ni ije Qrunmila.

Orin Ifa ni mo bi'mq mo bimq
Ifa mo je o ni ho-hoo
Ho-hoo ni ije Qrunmila.

Awure (Agboqla): Ma je ki nkan xe Obirin Ijq yi Ifa
Ma je ki nkan xe Qmode ibe.

Egbe Axę.

Obara-Meji

Verse 3

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

BALD VULTURE is the name of one diviner.
PYTHON OF MARSHLAND is the name of the other.
Both consulted Ifa-Oracle for Eji-Obara as he set out for
the congregation of Masters.

Song Be careful, be correct
To perform sacrificial rites.

Refrain Be circumspect Eji-Obara,
Observe due protocol
In the congregation of Master-Diviners.

Prayer: Grant Iḡo-Ato every blessing, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Verse 4

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"The corner was laid out square
From foundation upwards;
Tortoise has worn a rain-soaked garment of beads^{*1} from
beginning of time;
Destiny precedes all."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the proud king loud-mouthed like the
town-crier's gong who believed decrees over-ride Destiny.

Song Ifa said I would be rich
It came to pass.

Refrain Whatever Ifa declares
Always comes to pass.

Song Ifa promised me wives and children
It came to pass.

Refrain Whatever Ifa declares
Always comes to pass
Obeisance to you, *Orunmila*.

Prayer Protect the women-folk in Iḡo-Ato, Ifa
Protect their children too.

Response So may it be.

Footnote: ^{*}Rain-soaked garment of beads - Tortoise shell.

Okonron-Meji

oo	oo
oo	oo
oo	oo
o	o

 Eṣe 1

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o j'ebḡ nan o fin,
Sakoto mo jalawa
Adia fun akukḡ Ogogoro
Nijḡ ti n lḡ re e x'arḡji fun wḡn n'lfḡ-Oodaye.

Orin Ojo p'Akukḡ,
Are idi e d'odi,

Egbe Axubi awo,
O d'axure.

Awure:

Agboḡla:

Jḡ ki axubi d'axure fun Ijḡ Atḡ, Ifa.

Egbe Axḡ.

Eṣe 2:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o j'ebḡ nan o fin, etc.
Okonron kan nihin,
Okonron kan I'ohun;
Okonron mejeji pekun kalḡ Oju-wḡn kpḡn
kanrin-kanrin Dia fun Laalu
Tii x'omḡ 'kunrin ode
Orukḡ ti a i pe Exu.

Awure:

Agboḡla:

Jḡ wḡn o gbo, jḡ ḡ wḡn o tḡ, Ifa.

Egbe Axḡ.

Okonron-Meji

oo	oo
oo	oo
oo	oo
o	o

 Verse 1

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Your mission will succeed."

Thus declare Ifa-Oracle to 'Tall Cock', the diviner
As he set out for ancient Ife
To make rain for the drought-struck city.

Song When 'Tall Cock' succeeded
 It rained and rained
 Till he was soaked
 Wings and tail

Refrain Soaked and confused
 Wishing to bless
 Instead he cursed.

Prayer May evil intents turn to good deeds for Iḡo-Ato, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Verse 2 ^[1]

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"If *Okororun* is cast on the right,
And *Okororun* is cast on the left,
The configuration resulting,
Okonron-meji,
Is fraught with grave consequences."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to *Laalu*, mighty Lord of the cross-roads
whom we call Exu.

Prayer May the members of *Iḡo* live long, Ifa

 May they live to a ripe old age.

Refrain So may it be.

Footnote: *Wande Abimbola (1968) gives two different variants of this verse quoting them also as Okonron-Meji on page 90 and page 92 of his book *"Iḡinle Obun Enu Ifa"*.

Èṣẹ 3:

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc.

Oyẹ mu Oyẹ o san ara,
Kurukuru ota mọna-mọna;
Akọ Aparo,
Abo Aparo,
Wọn o gbe aarin aja,
Ki wọn o l'agbe l'ori san-sanna-san,
A dia fun Olofin, Olofin n run'te,
Anasin a yaa re nrun arun igbo,
Okan-m-ba-bi Omọọ ẹ nr'arun Oregede Orunmila ni oun O mo pe
owo-arun le nxe n'ile yi
O tan molọ.

Orin Ifa ni bo ba xe beẹ ni
O ni k'oni-dudu o gba dudu.

Egbe Baraa-'Petu
Mama b'awa l'aun lo o,
Baba-'Petu.

Orin k'oni-fun o gba funfun.
Egbe Baraa-'Petu
Mama b'awa l'aun lo o,
Baba-'Petu.

Orin k'oni-pupa o gba pupa.
Egbe Baraa-'Petu
Mama b'awa l'aun lo o,
Baba-'Petu.

Orin K'alayirin o gba yinrin.
Egbe Bara-'Petu
Mama ba wa l'a run lo o,
Baba-'Petu.

Awure (Agboṣṣa):

Ko o daa bo bo wọn, Ifa
Ma je ki iku o pa wọn n'ljo Atọ
Ma je ki arun oxe wọn.

Egbe Axẹ.

Okonron-Meji

Verse 3

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc.

"We do not expect thunder in harmattan,
We do not expect lightning in mist,
We do not expect coxcombs
On partridges, male or female,
Though reared among cocks."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to *Qlqfin*, first king of Ife who already smelt of the tomb, whose wife lay at death's door and whose only son appeared doomed.

Orunmila said:

"I do not understand this commerce in sickness
Nevertheless, You will not die"^[*].

Song: Ifa said:

"Mark this sign with charcoal
To propitiate Black Powers."

Refrain

Lord of *Ipetu*^[**]
Do take away this pestilence
Do, take away this pestilence.

Song: Mark this sign with chalk
To propitiate 'White powers'.

Refrain

Lord of *Ipetu*
Do take away this pestilence.

Song: Mark another sign with camwood
To propitiate 'Red Powers'.

Refrain:

Lord of *Ipetu*
Do take away this pestilence.

Song Mark the fourth sign with indigo
To propitiate 'Blue Powers'.

Refrain

Lord of *Ipetu*
Do take away this pestilence.

Prayer: Protect Ijo-Ato from pestilence and untimely death, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Footnote: *Bascom, W. (1969) "Ifa Divination" has a variant of this verse on page 340-341.

Footnote: **Lord of *Ipetu* = Orunmila.

Ogunda-Meji $\begin{vmatrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{vmatrix}$ Eṣe 1:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

A m'oni,

A m'ḡla,

B'ḡtunla ḡmọ yeye ẹ, bi osun wọṅ, bi o sunwọṅ la o mọ

A dia fun'Ḡrunmila

Ifa yio raga b'ḡmọ ẹ bi Igun Igemọ.

Orin Ifa ko o raga bo wọṅ,
Ewe ori ni i raga Ori.

Egbe Ifa raga bo wọṅ,

Orin Etipọṅ-Ḡla ni raga bo'le.

Egbe Ifa raga bo wọṅ.

Orin B'adiẹ ba pa'mọ a raga b'ḡmọ ẹ.

Egbe Ifa raga bo wọṅ o.

Orin B'Adiẹ ba pa'mọ a raga b'ḡmọ ẹ.

Egbe Ifa, raga bo wọṅ, o!

Orin B'omi nla ti i raga bo iyanrin l'odo.

Egbe Ifa raga bo wọṅ.

Awure (Agboḡla):

Ḡrunmila!

Ko o daabo bo wọṅ, Ifa.

Egbe Axẹ.

Ogunda-Meji

o	o
n	o
n	o
nn	nn

 Verse 1

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"We may think we know Today
We may hope to know Tomorrow
But we cannot know whether
The third day presages good or bad."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila promising that Ifa would protect its devotees like the vulture of Igemq protects its brood.

Song	Take Ijq-Ato under your wings, Ifa Protect them As wrappings protect their contents.
Refrain	Take them under your wings, Ifa.
Song	As Etipon-Qla, The creeping plant, Protects earth.
Refrain	Protect them, Ifa.
Song	As Mother-Hen Protects Her new-hatched brood
Refrain	Take them under your wings, Ifa.
Song	As the waters Protect Sands in the deep,
Refrain	Protect them, Ifa.
Prayer	Be steadfast In their protection, Ifa.
Response	So may it be.

Ogunda-Meji

o	o
o	o
o	o
no	oo

Ese 2:

Oloye Agboqla:

Ifa ko o j'ebo nan o fin, *etc.*
Abemọlẹ eekan,
Aboju-regun-regun
A dia fun Ooyi-Igbegi
Eyii ti nsunkun Ọmọ r'ode-Ipo.

Orin Ooyi r'ogun, o b'ogun.

Egbe Ooyi r'ogbọn, o b'ọ gbọn
Eyin o mo p'ogun Ọmọ o to Ooyi.

Awure:

Agboqla:

Ma jẹ ki Ọmọ ku l'ọju wọn, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Ogunda-Meji $\left. \begin{array}{c} \circ \circ \\ \circ \circ \\ \circ \circ \\ \circ \circ \end{array} \right\} \text{Verse 2}$

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Sharp-pointed, as a spike,
Must their confidence be,
Who put their trust in me."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle
To Ooyi,
Childless lady
Of Igbegi-City
Who sorrowed
All the way to Ipo-City
To consult Ifa.

Song Ooyi made twenty offerings
 And had twenty children.

Refrain Ooyi made thirty offerings
 And had thirty children.

The more the offerings,
The more the children.

What a woman!

Prayer May the members of Iḡo Ato
 Never mourn their children.

Response So may it be.

Ogunda-Meji

Èṣẹ 3:

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*
Günnungün xoore
Ori Gunnungun pa:
Akalamagbo xoore
Ma-yo-gege-yo-gege l'orun
Jọṣomi, jọṣomi
K'eni mama xoore mọ.
Qorọ xoore,
Qorọ o l'ewe;
Afomọ xoore,
Ko l'egbo..
Difa fun Okete nlọ re e t'Qka n'fa.

Orin Qka bo o gbawo mi, ibi lo xe
Qka bo o ba p'ewusa ba a ku,
Qka bo o gbawo mi, ibi lo xe.

Awure:

Majẹ ki wọn fi ibi san ore fun Ijọ Atọ, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Verse 3

Chief Agboḡla: Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Vulture became bald
Through sympathy for others;
Hornbill developed goitre
As reward for kindness.
Let these lessons be enough for you:
Sympathy and kindness breed ingratitude
Cactus turned leafless through sympathy for others
Mistletoe lost its roots through kindness."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Bush-Rat, fat, stupid and full of human kindness as he set forth to initiate into Ifa Cobra, hungry, vicious and heartless.

Song Watch it Cobra, watch it
 It is wrong, it is evil to swallow one's teacher.

Refrain It isn't done,
 It's never done, Cobra
 Its never done to swallow one's own teacher.

Prayer: May Iḡ-Ato never receive evil for good, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Osa-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Ese 1:

Oloye Agboola:

Ifa, ko o jẹbọ nan o fin, *etc.*
Osa-meji I'a ko'ja
O ko yankan-yankan l'eti oṣoṣo
Dia fun Xongo Olukoso-laalu
Arabambi Omọ a-rigba-ota-xe'gun
Nijọ ti mbe laarin oxiri,
Ti mbe laarin ota.

Orin: Nje ki l'Aira fi xe'te?

Egbe: Igba ota,

L'Aira fi xe'te,
Igba ota

Awure: Ko o ba won xe'gun ota a won, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Osa-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Verse 1

Chief Agboḡla:

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc.

*"The sign of Osa-Meji appears on the divining board
Presaging conflict and strife."*

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Xḡḡo the mighty lord that hanged but did not hang, The royal warrior with a thousand thunder-bolts at that time when plots and conspiracies harried him every where.

Song How did the Lord of Thunder
Scatter his foes?

Refrain With thunder bolts,
A thousand thunder-bolts.

Prayer Grant Iḡḡ-Ato victory over their enemies, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

*Exiled by his long-suffering nobles, Xḡḡo, legendary fourth King of ancient Oyo hanged himself but his devotees deified him as the God of Thunder and put it about that he did not hang.

See Samuel Johnson (1929) pp 151-152 for the traditional account.

Osa-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Eṣẹ 2:

Oloye Agboṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

Pọpọ o nidi, O fi'ha joko.

A dia fun Baba-Onigbana.

Orin: Yio gba, yio gba o.

Egbe: Ofeere

Bi a gba ọmọ rẹ yeye.

Awure:

Ifa ko o maa gba wọn la.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Osa-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Verse 2

Chief Agboṣṣa

Make our sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*

"Round-bottomed and narrow-necked
Not shaped to sit upright,
Beauty-flask lies flat-side on."

Thus declared *Ifa*-Oracle to the gentle master who stays put whilst
others come to him heavy-laden and yet he saves them all.

Song *Ifa* saves all,
 Ifa rescues all.

Refrain *Ifa* saves all,
 Who come heavy-laden.

Prayer Be their constant refuge, *Ifa*.

Response: So may it be.

Osa-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Ese 3

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o j'ebḡ nan o fin, etc.

Ẹlawere, awo abe Owu

Dia fun Owu

Nbe la'robuje eye-oko

Won ni ko kaale

Ebo ni o xe

Akitipa l'awo ile,

Boboyakata l'awo ode,

Dia fun Oxala Oxere-Igbo

Yi o x'ofin kan qron-kon-qron-Kon

Yoo pe k'eye-keye o ma tun j'Owu mo lai-lai,

Danpara o m'Agborin,

Ayun o yun'ese maalu

Dia fun Qrunmila

Won l'ogun eleye de.

Orin: Ada xekete qwo mi

Ada Orixanii xe.

Egbe: Owu we,

Owu la,

Ixoju gbogbo eye-oko l'Owu xe i la.

Awure: Ko o gba Ijo Atọ l'owo eleye, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Osa-Meji

oo	oo
o	o
o	o
o	o

 Verse 3

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, **Ifa** etc.

"You will flourish and bloom forever."

So declared **Ifa-Oracle** to **Cotton-Tree** that grows in open fields a tempting feast to **The Birds of Night**, our ladies in feathered guise.

Cotton-Tree offered sacrifice to **Oxala** for protection whereupon the Venerable Deity decreed that no bird should evermore feed on **Cotton-Tree**.

At this "*The Birds*" arraigned in fierce cohorts intent on vengeance besieged **Oxala**. The venerable Lord fled for refuge to one divinity after another but to little avail.

At last **Oxala** came to **Ḣrunmila**.

Ḣrunmila consulted **Ifa-Oracle** who declared:

*"Some beasts suffer from foot-and mouth but not Deer;
Some cattle groan with foot-sore, but not Antelope;
Some gods tremble at sight of 'Birds' but not
Ḣrunmila."*

Thus fortified by this sure report **Ḣrunmila** upped, scattered the pursuing cohorts of "*Birds*" and saved **Oxala**.

Song: My sword is short but sharp
It cuts with blade divine.

Refrain: Full in the helpless gaze of "*Birds of Night*"
Flourishes and blooms the **Cotton-Tree**.

Prayer: Save **Iḡo-Ato** from the clutch of witches, **Ifa**.

Response: So may it be.

*Osa-Meji is the Odu-Ifa dealing extensively with the evil acts of witches. Yoruba demonology equates witches with nocturnal birds. This verse narrates the victory of **Ḣrunmila** and **Oxala** (**Obatala**) over witches. For variants of this verse see (1) **Wande Abimbola** (1968) "Ijinle ohun Eḡu Ifa" p. 112 (2) **C.O. Ibie** (1986) "Ifism" pp 197 - 200.

Ika-Meji

00	00
0	0
00	00
00	00

Èsẹ 1:

Oloye Agboọla:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, *etc.*
Akaaka, ojuu kangara o xe gbamu
Ọkanjua a b'okele gbongbo
Awo ale-Ifẹ,
Ejo ni o k'ọmọ ẹ l'ẹyin yoyọyọ
Lọ ree ka'nu oko,
Adia fun Kerennasi
Yio gbogboogbo,
Yio X'ẹgbẹẹ dogun ọdun I'aye.

Orin: Mama jẹ o ku'ku Ọrọwọ.

Egbe: Xaxara
Ko ni ku'ku Ọrọwọ
Xaxara.

Awure:
Ọrunmila!
Jẹẹ Ijọ Atọ o gbo Ifa
Jẹ ẹ wọn tọ;
Ki wọn d'agbalagba,
Ki wọn d'arugbo.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Ika-Meji

[00 00]
[0 0]
[00 00]
[00 00]

Verse 1

Chief Agboqla:

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"A sword is never grasped by its blade,
A glutton cannot contain his greed,
The careful snake guides its brood through hidden danger."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Kerennasi meaning by that to say that
If Kerennasi be cautious, if he eschew greed, if he be circumspect he
would live long, he would live a thousand thousand years.

Song: Let us not die unsung, Ifa.

Refrain: Like a common house-hold broom.

Prayer: Grant ripeness of age to Ijọ Atọ, Ifa.

Response: Grant them happiness
And let their span of life reach full circle.

Ika-Meji

00	00
0	0
00	00
00	00

Ese 2

Oloye Agboqla:

Ifa ko o j'ebọ nan o fin *etc.*
Baba gbẹdẹ Ila,
Baba gbẹdẹ Ikan,
Agbado tinu iya e x'omọ titun wa'nu aye
Adia fun Fẹkunwẹ
Omọ warẹ warẹ Ife mefẹfa
Ni jọ ti nsunkun airibi,
Ti ngbawẹ airipon.
O n fowo Osun nu'giri gbigbẹ
O r'omọ l'ẹhin Adie, o bu puru s'ẹkun.

Orin: Otun-un Ifẹ ẹ-ẹ xeni,

Egbe: Osi-Ifẹ ẹ-ẹ x"eniyan
Ẹyin i xee tete ba Fẹkunwẹ x'ebọ omọ.

Awure:

Jẹẹ awon ljo Atọ j'ere omọ,Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Ika-Meji

[00 00]
[0 0]
[00 00]
[00 00]

Verse 2

Chief Agboḡla:

Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

Do not be green like Okra
Do not be childish like Garden-Egg
Do not be foolish and innocent like new-sprout Corn.

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Fẹkunwe* noble daughter of Ancient Ife, she who shed tears in bath-fulls inconsolate because the ban yard hen has a brood and she not even a child.

Song: Ifẹ chieftains, you are unkind,

Refrain: Ifẹ nobles you have no heart
Or how could you have delayed sacrifice
To help Fẹkunwe become a mother?

Prayer: Bless Ijọ Atọ with children, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

*Wande Abimbola (1968) *Ijinle Obun Enu Ifa* p. 125 gives a variant nearly identical with the above.

*Fekunwe means literally "She who bathes in her own tears".

Ika-Meji
Eṣe 3:

Oloye Agboṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

Ẹlẹmọ ni Ika,
Okoko mọ'ka
Ara Ofa e i m'ọka
Alakaa gbaka wa.
Oti xe pe'mi?
Onika n'nu
Emi o xe'ka ri.
Ka'wọ ọ mi,
Ka'se ẹ mi
Okawu ni i para eekan biri-biri.
Iya l'akaagbọn,
Baba l'akaagba.
Olotan wọn l'akara kara ẹyin agbasa
Orunmila ni: 'E e xe yin
"Tẹ ẹ nfi njookọ kaani-kaani-kaani
L'ode-Ika
Wọn ni bẹẹ l'awọn ti i jẹ
K'Ifa 0 to o de ,
Ifa ni: "Abajọ t'aye e yin xe ri kakaaka
Bi ẹni n k'axọ,"
Oni ki wọn lọ ree ko wọn fun Onikamogun
Omọ-a-k'awoko-inu-yemetu
Wọn de kaa kini
Wọn o b'onikamogun,
Wọn de kaa keji
Wọn o b'onikamogun
Ni kaa kita
Ni kaa kẹrin
Ni kaa karun
Ni kaa kẹfa
Ni kaa keje,
Ni kaa kẹjọ
Ni kaa kẹsan,
Ni kaa kẹwa.

Ika-Meji

Verse 3

Chief Agboqlal: Make this sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*

Once into the City of Ika, whose ruler is titled "*Èlẹmọ*" came a diviner to consult *Ifa*-Oracle for the citizens.

He soon discovered however that **Ika** is not **Ofa**. "Citizens," cried the exasperate diviner, "it is clear now that you invited me here with evil designs in your hearts but innocence is my armour, so leave me out of your plots and schemes. I am not a stupid one to shuttle from peg to peg like a weaver's apprentice."

In this quaint city mothers are called "*Akaagbon*" while fathers are called "*Akaagba*" and every family in the City bears a name with "*Ka*" in it.

"Why do you all," asked the diviner, "bear these outlandish names with "*Ka*" in them?"

"So has been our custom," replied the citizens "before the advent of *Ifa*." "No wonder then," riposted the diviner, "that your fortunes are topsy-turvy and higgledy-piggledy as your names."

"Please announce my presence to your King, mighty hunter of duikers, devotee of *Ogun*, patron of hunters."

So the citizens went.

But getting to the first chamber they did not find their King, *Onikamogun*, neither did they find him in the second chamber nor in the third, nor in the fourth nor in the fifth, nor in the sixth nor in the seventh nor in the eighth; not in the ninth, the tenth,

Ika-Meji
Ese 3 (Continued)

Ni kaa kɔnkɔnla
Ni kaa kejila
Ni kaa kɛtala
Ni kaa kɛrinla,
Ni kaa kɛdogun,
Ni kaa kɛrindilogun,
Igbati wɔn de kaa kɛtadinlogun
Ni wɔn ba Onikamogun
Qmɔ-a'kawɔkɔ-'nnu-yemɛtu.
O joko ni kaa,
O faxɔ aka bora,
O nfori ɔka difa.
Paaka joko ti i ni kaa O ka'aka,
o fi nbo'ri
Wɔn ni ki Lakaa lɔ ree poko-f'ɛxin
Ni kaa nidi aka
Ibaka ta Lakaa l'ejika,
Lakaa xubu lulɛ Ika wa ngbelee, rɛ
Qka nsukun rɛ.

Ika-Meji
Verse 3 (Continued)

not in the eleventh; not in the twelfth, thirteenth or fourteenth,
nor in the fifteenth or sixteenth.

But, getting to the seventeenth Chamber —
They found the Lord of Ika
Mighty hunter of duikers
Seated on a high throne,
Regaled in robes of ancient weave,
Sacrificing a cobra's head to Ifa.

A noble, called, as you might expect, Paaka
Sat next to the Lord in the chamber
Making sacrifice to Ifa with a hedge-hog.

An orderly, called as expected, Lakaa
Was ordered to go feed hay to the horse
Tied up in the stable next to the farm-hut.

Not the horse, but a donkey,
Kicked Lakaa on the shoulder.
That sent him flat on his stupid face.

Whilst Wickedness dug Lakaa's grave
Venom wept in mock sorrow.

Confused, confounded disgusted
The diviner fled the city of Ika.

Ika-Meji
Eṣe 3 (Continued)

Agboḡla: Igbin kakaaka.

Egbe: Daabḡ, Ifa.

Agboḡla: Èbiti kakaaka.

Egbe Nlẹ, Ifa.

Agboḡla Èbiti ti koba gboju kole pa'gbin lai-lai
Patako Èfon, Kakaaka ni i ta Aja lẹnu
Dia fun Oni kamogun
Ọmḡ-aka woroko-n'nu-yemḡtu
N'ijḡ ti wḡn xowo-xowo
Ti wḡn l'awḡn o l'owo l'ḡwḡ
Aki ke-so'gi-sa,
Awo-ile Ọrunmila
Lo ki fa fun Ọrunmila
Ifa nxawo re'le Onikamogun
Ọmḡ-a-kaworoko-n'nu-yemḡtu.

Orin: Ifa ni wḡn o o l'owo
Wḡn n l'owo.

Egbe: Akike-so'gi-sa
Ènu awo,
Uun niba oun axḡ wa
Ènu awo.

Ika-Meji
Verse 3 (Continued)

Agboṣṣa: "Tough as Giant-Snails...
Response: Obeisance to you, **Ifa**.

Chief Agboṣṣa "...Relentless as Mouse-trap."
Response Obeisance **Ifa**...

Chief Agboṣṣa "Fearless in attack like Buffaloes"
Were the nick-names of the second diviner
Who consulted **Ifa** for the Lord of **Ika**, mighty hunter of
duikers at that time when his subjects traded in loss and
lived in penury.

He failed as well to find solution to their plight. At last
Orunmila was summoned who in turn first consulted his
house-hold diviner, a seasoned master nicknamed "Axe,
accurate and sharp."

This master counselled **Orunmila** how best to proceed in the
delicate affair.

Thus empowered **Orunmila** triumphed.

Song: **Ifa** predicted prosperity for the citizens
And they became prosperous.

Refrain: Adept diviners say the word
And straightway it comes true,
Like the sharp axe that cuts straight home.

Ika-Meji
Eṣe 3 (Concluded)

Orin	Ifa ni wọn o l'aya.
	Wọn l'aya.
Egbe	Akike-sọgi-sa
	Ẹnu awo,
	Uun niba oun axẹ wa
	Ẹnu awo.
Orin	Ifa ni wọn o bi'mọ,
Egbe	Akike-sọgi-sa
	Enu awo,
	Uun niba oun axẹ wa
	Ẹnu awo.
Orin	Ifa ni wọn o ni're gbogbo,
	Wọn nnire gbogbo,
Egbe	Wọn nbimọ,
Awure	Jẹ ki Ijọ Atọ ni're gbogbo; Ifa.
Egbe	Axẹ.

Foot notes to Verse 3.

The translation offered here is based on the full text of the verse given by A.F. Agboola in his book: "Ojulowo Oriki Ifa" (1989) pp 162-167. Some of the ideas telescoped but not overtly stated in the shortened Yoruba text have been interpolated into my translation. The main story is clear; The city of Ika, lacking prosperity called two diviners into consultation without benefit. Orunmila, their last resort was able to bring prosperity to the city through orthodox Ifa procedure wanting in the two previous diviners. Lesson: Orunmila's school of Ifa is the only efficacious one.

Ika-Meji
Verse 3 (Concluded)

Song: **Ifa** promised them wives,
They found good wives.
Refrain: Adept diviners say the word
And straightway it comes true,
Like the sharp axe that cuts straight home.
Song: **Ifa** promised them children,
They had several children.
Refrain: Adept diviners say the word
And straightway it comes true,
Like the sharp axe that cuts straight home.
Song: **Ifa** promised them manifold blessings
And it came true.
Refrain: Adept diviners say the word
And straightway it comes true,
Like the sharp axe that cuts straight home.
Prayer: Grant Ijọ-Ato manifold blessings, **Ifa**.
Response So may it be.

The Yoruba text makes great play on the syllable "Ka derived from the chapter-title or Odu "Ika". An interesting comparison is afforded by the hymn entitled "Adya Kali Svarupa" where, as the translator remarks: "all the names of the Devi commence with K. Kali is that which has Ka in the beginning."

In the Indian example the repetition of "ka" is esoterically significant; in the Yoruba text the object is purely literary viz. word-play.

Translator: Arthur Avalon (1972) "Mahanirvana Tantra.
Tantra of the Great Liberation" pp 139 - 146.

Ika-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 00 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$$

Ese 4

Oloye Agboḡla: Ifa ko o j'ẹbḡ nan o fin *etc.*

Iba rere, awo ina,
L'o difa fun Ina
Wḡn ni ko rubḡ ko ba a le e l'axẹ.

Awure: Majẹ lḡ Atḡ ku,ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ
Jenkelewi.

Agboḡla: Di fa fun Ojigḡḡ
Ti nlḡ o d'ena d'Ajẹ.

Orin Ajẹ ki-i pa ḡmḡ-Ese jẹ.

Egbe Ifa ḡḡḡ n mo xe yun,
Ifa ḡḡḡ n mo xe bḡ.

Agboḡla: Fife ire ni i foju jḡ ina
Dia fun Olokun-Eseri
Inaki x'ẹkun dalẹ.

Egbe Ifa giyan ni mo xe yun,
Ifa giyan ni mo xe bḡ.

Awure Ki ajinde ara ma jẹ fun wḡn, Ifa.

Egbe Axẹ.

Ika-Meji ~ Verse 4

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, **Ifa** etc.

"Men will pay obeisance to you
Even from afar."
Thus declared **Ifa**-Oracle to Fire;
"But you must offer sacrifice," added the oracle.
"So your sovereignty be everlasting."

Prayer: Let not the members of Iḡo-Ato die before their time, **Ifa**.
Response: So may it be.

Agboḡla:
"Gently does it,"
So declared **Ifa**-Oracle to "Stealthy One", another name for **cat**, on
setting forth to ambush witches.

Song: Witches do not devour cats
For like is to like
As witches are to cats.

Refrain: Gently I went,
Safely I returned
Just as you foretold, **Ifa**.

Chief Agboḡla: "Some flowers flourish and bloom
Like wondrous flames of fire"
And so will you."

Thus declared **Ifa**-Oracle to Olokun
Worshipped in the City of Esiri
As our Lady of Oceans.

Song: "Monkeys too are cleverer by far
Than Leopards and Tigers" added the Oracle.

Refrain: Softly to go
Safely to return.

Prayer: Grant Iḡo-Ato good health, **Ifa**.
Response: So may it be.

*Win Bascom (1969) p.454 "Ifa Divination" gives near variants of this verse quoting them under IKA-MEJI as above.
C.O. Ibie (1979) "Ifism" p.224 combines the three verses quoted above into one continuous story with CAT as the only character.

Ika-Meji

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00	00

Ese 5

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa, ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

Igbori nile Eẹgun,
Iranje n'ile Ooxa"
Ita gbangba n'ile Eḡẹgbara"
Adia fun Orunmila
Ifa nx'ogbogbo arun
Ifa n'natata alailen'de
Ifa ni bo ba xe pe beẹ ni
O ni "Ibi ara ya laa b'Ekun
B'Inoki baji
Araa re a fa yii
Aki-i gb'oku Aparo n'nu igbo
Qwọ b'ewe Olugbogbo lo tiki.

Orin: Ifa ma je ki won ki wa: "ku ikunkun"
Ela ma ma je e, won ki wa: "ku ojojo."

Awure:

Ma jeẹ won ki Ijo Atọ ku ikunkun, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Ika-Meji
Verse 5

Chief Agboqla: Make this sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa* etc.

"The Ancestral Spirits were first revered
In the city of Igbori,
Orixa-nla was first venerated
In the City of Iranje;

But Exu, mighty Lord of wonders,
Has his shrine
In any public place
Where three or four roads meet."

Thus declared *Ifa*-Oracle to *Orunmila* when the Lord took seriously ill and stood at death's door. *Orunmila* replied.

"Whatever the cost I will not hesitate to offer sacrifice to the three deities^[7] for I know by so doing I will regain my health."

Good health is second nature to Tiger;
Red Monkey: awakes each morning stronger than before,
The Bush-Fowl never dies.

I am Tiger-and Red-Monkey,
I am the Bush-Fowl too,
I will not die.

Quickly fetch the magic herbs
That cure and restore to health."

Song: When we receive friends
 Let it not be on our sick bed, *Ifa*
 Let it not be on the point of death, *Orunmila*

Prayer: Protect *Ijo-Ato* from all illness, *Ifa*.

Response: So may it be.

Three deities = *Egun*, *Orixa-nla* and *Exu* mentioned in the verse earlier.

Oturupon-Meji
(Ologbon-Meji)

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00	00
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00	00

Ese 1.

Oloye Agboola:

Ifa ko o j'ebọ nan o fin, etc.
Igangan I'awo Igangan,
Ijimji I'awo Ijakan,
Otubu, Otaba
Ni i x awo Ajaa teremi
Oke-le-genge-maye
Ni i x'awo Ojoo ateye
Awon mefeefa, won ntikole-orun bo wa, ikole-Aye
Won ni ki won rubo, won-o rubo
A difa fun Ori
Ori ntike-Orun bo wa Ikole-Aye
Won ni ko rubo, Ori nikan lo rubo.

Orin Ori pele o.

Awure

Orunmila, ko o dari Ijo Atọ si rere.

Egbe: Axe.

Oturupon-Meji
(Ologbon-Meji)

Verse 1

Chief Agboqla:

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

Six diviners*: Igangan from Igan-City, Ijimji from Otubu and Otaba both from Ajaateeremi and master from Ojoo-at-eye, nicknamed "*Delicate hill seeming to fall but standing firm*" consulted Ifa Oracle when setting out from Heaven, Earthward bound. They were appointed sacrifice but failed to comply. Ori^{**}, Earthward bound also, was told to sacrifice and he did; his mission succeeded.

Song: Congratulations, Ori

With you as guide, men achieve success.

Prayer: Direct the destiny of Ijṣ-Ato to success, Ṣrunmila .

Response: So may it be.

Footnotes:

* Only Five diviners are enumerated no doubt due to textual corruption.

** Ori:
Bascom calls it 'Ancestral guardian Soul',
Lucas calls it 'The spirit which brings good fortune'
Idowu calls it 'Destiny, Guardian Angel'
Ibie translates it as 'Head, Guardian Angel'.

Oturupon-Meji
(Ologbon-Meji)

00	00
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0	0
00	00

Eṣe 2:

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc.

Oya kun-kunun-kun

Oya f'okọ Oya ya.

Okun o mi lẹngbẹ-lẹngbẹ sihin,

Okun o mi lẹngbẹ-lẹngbẹ sọhun,

Obirin ki-i ni ina n'le

Ki t'orogun rẹ o ma jo o

Adia fun Orunmila niṣe ree tọrọ Iwa

Lọwọ Olabupe

Orin Emi ni i x'owo a nna lode?

Egbe Exu Odara, ni i x'owo a nna l'ode

Exu Odara.

Awure

K'Exu o l'ana ire ko Ijọ Atọ

K'Exu ma xe wọn, Ifa

K'Exu ma ti eeyan lu wọn

K'Exu ma dina ire mọ wọn l'owọ, Ifa.

Egbe Axẹ.

Oturupon-Meji
(Ologbon-Meji)

00	00
00	00
0	0
00	00

Verse 2

Chief Agboḡla:

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa.

"The River Niger, swollen with jealousy, madly bursts its gentle banks, the great Ocean mightier by far contains its billows in the deep. So, jealous wives seek without those faults that within themselves do lie."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Oḡrunmila the day he set forth to seek favours from the Great Dispenser of fortunes.

"Jealousy," added the oracle, "Oft leads to misery"

Song Who gives wealth, who grants fortunes?

Refrain: Exu wonder-working god
Is he that gives wealth and grants fortunes.

Prayer: May Exu open a prosperous road for Iḡo-Ato
May Exu never tempt their members evil-wise
May Exu never incite the wicked against them
May Exu never obstruct their path to prosperity.

Response: So may it be.

Oturunpon-Meji (Olqobon-Meji)

Ese 3:

Oloye Agboqla:

Ifa ko o j'ebq nan o fin, etc.

Ere wa d'ere aanu,
Iyere d'iyere aro,
oju xe meji a wo'ran
Ese xe meji, a rina giri-giri,
Bebe idi xe meji, a joko l'ori eni.
Qwo kan o ro xeke-xeke-xeke
Ese kan o xe giri-giri-giri l'ona.

Egbe: Daabq Baba.

Agboqla:

Otooto l'eniyan
La a xee pe ni ta ifi i je
Won ni m kunle m p'ara iwaju,
Mo kunle mo p'ara iwaju,
Won ni m kunle m p'ero ehin,
Mo kunle mo p'ero ehin
Ta l'ara iwaju ile mi?
Awon ewo l'ero ti mbe lehin?
Eegun ile-Baba eni,
Nn ni x'ara iwaju eni,
Ooxa ile-Baba eni,
Oun l'ero ti mbe lehin
Alapandede
Nn lo kole-kole tan,
Ko f'agbegbe re kan orun,
Ko fi ile re kan ilele
O duro ni gbegeberegbe
O nwo Olodumare l'aju-l'aju
O nwo omq-araye l'enu-lenu
Aatan gegerege
Adia fun Odusola,
Omq oye to yatq niye.

Oturunpon-Meji (Ologbon-Meji) Verse 3

Chief Agboola: Make our sacrifice auspicious Ifa, etc.

Let us now entertain kind thoughts,
Let us pause to compose elegaic poems.

Good sight requires two eyes
Just as safe walk demands two feet,
And two buttocks rest comfortably
Beneath recumbent hips.

But can you hear the clapping of one hand¹
Or the sound of one foot marching?

(Aside: excellent language)

Because one man differs from the next
Is good reason to confer personal names.

I was told to kneel and conjure "*The Beings Before*"
I knelt and conjured "*The Beings Before*".

I was told to kneel and invoke "*The powers Behind*"
I kneeled and invoked "*The powers Behind*".

Who are these "*Beings Before*"? and "*Powers Behind*"?

Departed Ancestors are "*The Beings Before*"
House-hold Divinities are "*The Powers Behind*".

Be not like the sparrow, proud with self-conceit,
That built its nest suspended twixt heaven and earth
And stood in the middle thereof haughty as dust heap
Full of defiance for the Omnipotent
Filled with contempt for mankind."

So declared Ifa-Oracle to Odusola, the Neophyte.

Footnote * "The clapping of one hand": this phrase is borrowed from the Zen Koan recorded by Paul Reps as follows:
"You can hear the sound of two hands when they clap" said Mokurai, "now show me the sound of one
hand".
Paul Reps (1957) "Zen flesh, Zen Bones" Page 34, Penguin Books.

Èṣẹ 3 (Continued)

Orin: Iya rẹ fi i lẹ o ku n'kekere
Baba rẹ rẹ fi i lẹ
o ku ni lenje-lenje
Lai mọ dida ọwọ
Lai mọ ontẹ-alẹ
Lai mọ ikarara-ẹbọ ni hiha.
O digba ekini,
Wọn ko nkan oro sile,
O bu puru s'ẹkun.

Orin: B'omi la a kọ'ọ taalẹ m o mọ,
Egbe: Ixoro ọrun,
Sare wa, e wa gboro yi xe
Ixoro ọrun.

Orin: B'Epo laa kọọ taalẹ m o mọ
Egbe: Ixoro ọrun *etc.*

Orin: B'Ekú laa kọọ fiilẹ m o mọ
Egbe: Ixoro Ọrun *etc.*

Orin: B'Eja laa kọọ fiilẹ m o mọ
Egbe: Ixoro ọrun *etc.*

Orin: B'obi laa kọọ fi ile m o mọ
Egbe: Ixoro ọrun *etc.*

Orin: B'ata laa koo fi ile m o mọ
Egbe: Ixoro ọrun *etc.*

Orin: B'Ixu laa koo fi ile m o mọ
Egbe: Ixoro ọrun *etc.*

Orin: B'ọti laa koo taale m o mọ
Egbe: Ixoro ọrun *etc.*

Awure: Ọrunmila ki awọn alaxeku wa ba ma tun ọrọ nan xe
Egbe: Axẹ.

Verse 3 (Continued)

- Chief Agboqla: His mother had died and his father too,
When he was but an innocent little boy, Leaving him
untutored in the casting of Ifa unschooled in the markings
of configurations uninitiated into the intricacies of sacrifice.
- At the beginning of the rites.
Not knowing what to do with the offerings Oduola burst
into tears asking:
- Song: What is the first care
Is it water libation?
- Refrain: O heavenly Priests
Hasten to direct the rituals.
- Song: Is it libation with oil?
- Refrain: O heavenly Priests
Hasten to direct the rituals.
- Song: Am I first to present the Bush-Rat
Or perhaps the Dried-Fish?
- Refrain: O heavenly Priests
Hasten to direct the rituals.
- Song: Should I present the Kola-nuts
Before I present the Alligator-Pepper?
- Refrain: O heavenly Priests
Hasten to direct the rituals.
- Song: Should I now present the Yams
Or first pour Libation with Wine?
- Refrain: O heavenly Priests,
Hasten to direct the rituals.
- Prayer: Orunmila!
Grant that the Celestial Powers skilled in rituals direct this
sacrifice and make good what in them is deficient.
- Response: So may it be.
-

Otura-Meji (Otua-Meji)

o	o
oo	oo
o	o
o	o

 Eṣe 1.

Oloye Agboṣa: Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

Oxiki, awo imoran
Adia fun olori-abọrẹ Ife
Wọn ni o rubọ nitori ire gbogbo
O rubo, o si n'ire gbogbo.

Orin: Oxiki mama de
Awo imoran.

Egbe: Enikan ki-i fẹ olori-abọrẹ ku.

Awure: Ma jẹ ki Ijọ-Ato ku, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Eṣe 2:

Oloye Agboṣa:
Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, *etc.*

Gberentele,
Difa fun Otu
Tio r'Awun meji
To la yẹbẹ-yẹbẹ bi Oba-ẹrẹkẹ.

Orin: Otu lo ru,
Otu lo tu.

Egbe: O tu lo r'Awun meji
To la yẹbẹ-yẹbẹ bi Oba-ẹrẹkẹ.

Awure: Jẹ ki Ijọ-Ato o la, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Otura-Meji (Otua-Meji)

o	o
oo	oo
o	o
o	o

 Verse 1.

Chief Agboṣa: Make our sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*

Oxiki the venerable diviner
 Consulted *Ifa* for the Chief Priest of *Ife*.
 "Sacrifice," said the Oracle, "and blessings will descend"
 He hearkened to the Oracle's voice and sacrificed
 Blessings manifold became his lot.

Song: Oxiki's word was true,
Ifa's word is always true.

Refrain: May the Chief Priest of *Ife*,
 Be ever blest.

Prayer: Grant *Iṣo-Ato* the blessing of Life, *Ifa*.
 Response So may it be

Verse 2

Chief Agboṣa: Make our sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa*.

"Prosperity galore"
 Thus declared *Ifa*-Oracle to Otu,
 He who sacrificed two tortoises
 And became prosperous as Dawn.

Song: Because Otu sacrificed as told
 Because he paid the tithes
 Because Otu sacrificed two tortoises.

Refrain: Otu became prosperous as Dawn.

Prayer: Grant prosperity to *Iṣo-Ato*, *Ifa*.
 Response So may it be.

*Wande Abimbola (1968) "Ijinde ohun Enu Ifa" gives a similar verse on page 135 under Otura-meji.
 **There is a word play on the title-chapter (Odu) of this verse which is more obvious in the Yoruba text.
 Otura = Oturu Awun Meji = Oturawun Otura.
 (Otu sacrificed two tortoises).

Otura-Meji (Otua-Meji) Eṣe 3:

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc.

Katalanga ka fi lali

Ka la maliri banda

Ax'eye-oko bawon-gbo'male

Aworoko-jobi

Axegeyeni kankaiye

Ka di-rigidi

Ka di bonbagidi

Ọlọlẹ lenke

Ọlọlẹ ki la a hu

Ka bu t'oke fun oke

Ka bu to'do fun odo

K'iku o bo,

K'arun o bo,

Kaye e wa d'alafia lau

A dia fun Baba Ajakurukurubete.

Orin: Ifa ni m o lowo,

Mo lowo.

Egbe: Ajakurukurubete,
Ifa ni t'emi o sunwon
Ajakuru kurubete.

Orin: Ifa ni m o laya, m o bimọ, m o kọ'le

Mo P'aya, mo bi'mọ mo k'ọle.

Egbe: Ajakurukurubete,
Ifa ni t'emi o sunwon
Ajakuru kurubete.

Orin: Ifa ni m o n'ire gbogbo

Mo n'ire gbogbo.

Egbe: Ajakurukurubete,
Ifa ni t'emi o sunwon
Ajakuru kurubete.

Awure: Orunmila gbogbo ire ti o xe fun Ijọ-Ato,
ma jẹ o bajẹ.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Otura-Meji ~ Verse 3

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc.

"Katalanga ka fi lali

Ka lamadiri banda"

"I am the forest-bird *Aworjobi*,"

declared Ifa-Oracle

I understand Arabic,

I understand every language

"Axege yeni kankaye

Kadirigidi

Ka di bonba gidi

Ololoki lenki"

"Do you comprehend,"

asked Ifa-Oracle of *Little Mighty Father*,

another name for Orunmila.

"What is to the hill, give to the hill!"⁴

What is to the valley concede to the valley.

That done,

Death will depart, illness will depart

Life will turn peaceful, will turn happy.

Do you now comprehend?"

Song: Ifa predicted wealth
It came true.

Refrain: Hail to you, *little mighty Father*
Ifa's promise is sure,
Ifa's word is ever right.

Song: Ifa promised us wives, children, property
It came true.

Refrain: Hail to you, *little mighty Father*
Ifa's promise is sure,
Ifa's word is ever right.

Song: Hail to you, *little mighty Father*
Ifa's promise is sure,
Ifa's word is ever right.

Ifa promised us every blessing, it came true.

Refrain: Hail to you, *little mighty Father*
Ifa's promise is sure,
Ifa's word is ever right.

Prayer Increase our prosperity, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

⁴Poetic language recommending due sacrifice to the divinities in appropriate manner.

Otua-Meji ~ Eṣe 4:

Oloye Agboṣa: Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc.

Ajenje n'iregun,
Egbọṣo onide
Dia fun Orunmila
Nti'kọle-ṣrun bọwa'kọle-aye.

Orin Mm l'owo l'owọ ki m'to wa
Egbọṣo n'ide
Ajenje ni regun,
Egbọṣo n'ide.
Mo l'aya, ki m to wa
Egbọṣo n'ide.

Egbe: Ajakurukurubete,
Ifa ni t'emi o sunwọn
Ajakuru kurubete.

Orin: M o nire gbogbo ki m to wa
Egbọṣo n'ide.

Egbe: Ajakurukurubete,
Ifa ni t'emi o sunwọn
Ajakuru kurubete.

Awure:
Orunmila!
Je ẹ wọn gbo, je ẹ wọn tọ, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Otura-Meji (Otua-Meji)

Verse 4

Chief Agboola: Make our sacrifice auspicious, **Ifa** etc .

"You will receive manifold blessings
From the Great Dispenser of gifts"^(*).
Thus declared **Ifa**-Oracle to **Orunmila**
As he set out from Heaven Earthward-bound.

Song: I will not return to heaven,
Till I become rich on earth.

Refrain: You have the blessing,
Of the Great Dispenser.

Song: I will not return to heaven,
Till I marry many wives on earth.

Refrain: You have the blessing,
Of the Great Dispenser.

Song: I will not return to heaven,
Till I father several children on earth.

Refrain: You have the blessing,
Of the Great Dispenser.

Song: I will not return to heaven,
Before I become hoary with age.

Refrain: You have the blessing,
Of the Great Dispenser.
Orunmila!

Prayer: Grant the members of **Ijo-Ato** length of days and ripeness of years,
Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Footnote * "The Great Dispenser of Gifts" in this context is the creation god, **Obatala** (**Orixa-nla**). Yoruba mythology accords to **Obatala**, the prerogative to apportion talents to each individual coming into the World. Of the various talents: longevity (**aiku**) prosperity (**ire**) progeny (**aya, omo**) civic honour (**Ola-oye**) etc achievable in life each creature can only have one - no more than one. **Orunmila** in this verse claims the unique right to all blessings not just one.

Ọdun Ifa

Otura-Meji (Otua-Meji) Ẹsẹ 5:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, *etc.*

Awawa wowo l'ẹmẹxọ itakun
A dia fun Ọrunmila'
Ifa o wi ohun meji bi o xowo.

Orin: A l'owo xa.

Egbe: Ire gbogbo, Alafia.

Awure

Oloye Agboḡla:

Je ki Ijọ-Ato l'owo, ki wọn l'alafia
Jẹ ki gbogbo wa l'owo ka'l'alafia
Ka l'ẹmi gigun, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Otura-Meji
Verse 5:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Success depends on patience
Patience and perseverance.
Observe how climbing plants
Spread and thrive
Yet lacking sure foot on earth."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Oṛunmila, adding

"Ifa predicts nothing for you but wealth"

Song: We pray for wealth.

Refrain: And other blessings.
 But above all,
 We pray for health.

Prayer: Grant the members of Iḡḡ-Ato, prosperity, good health, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Irete-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Èsẹ 1:

Oloye Agboqla: Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc.

Okọ o rẹ,
Aya a rẹ,

A dia fun Okẹrẹ gbẹngbẹn
Yi o fẹbinrin-Iku tan,
Yi o f obi mefa san.

Orin: Kee pẹ ke-e ji'nan.

Egbe: È wa ba'ni l'aiku kangiri
Aiku kangiri la a ba'ni l'èsẹ Ope.

Awure
Ma jẹ ẹ Ijọ-Ato ku, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Irete-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Verse 1:

Oloye Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa.

"Husband virile,
Wife fertile."

So declared Ifa-Oracle to Okerebgengben when he stole a wife from
Death's very harem.

"Propitiate Death with six Kola-nuts," said Ifa.
"So you may enjoy the stolen pleasure."

Song: You will see
Before too long,
You will see.

Refrain: How Ifa's devotees
Enjoy good health
And live eternally.

Prayer: Protect the members of Ijq-Ato from untimely death, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Irete-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Eṣe 2:

Oloye Agboṣa: Ifa ko o j'ebṣ naa o fin etc.

Pa-Gunnunp-un-bṣ'Fa, awo Ile-Alara,
P'Akala-b'Ose-awo Oke-Ijero,
P'Atioro-b'Ogun, alaya bi ṣṣ Eembo
Fa-a-nan-nan-tu-u-pṣṣ
Qṣ, agbonmi-ni i-wo'le-ṣja
Ajuba-ni i-wo'le-Aparo
Olugbongbo-tinla,
Nn ni wṣn fi i xṣ'gun Ogulutu
Ako-Ṙxin-ni i-sare birain-birain
Difa fun Laaku-Qṣṣṣ
Wṣn mo'le e taan I'aye,
Wṣn wa npilṣ t'ṣrun, wṣn ni kowa.

Orin: Ifa ni to ba xe pe bṣṣ ni
O ni ṣ wole Qrun
Kee wa tun t'aye mṣ.

Egbe Iwarṣ wa Qrun
Abewe-ori-tanko.

Orin Ile awo ma nwo l'ṣrun.

Irete-Meji

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Verse 2

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*

"Sacrifice a vulture to *Ifa*,"
Declared the diviner of King Alara.
"Sacrifice a Hornbill to the Baobab Tree
Declared the diviner from Ijero Hills,
Sacrifice one Allied-Hornbill to Ogun
Declared the third diviner, nicknamed
'Sharp as European knives'."

These diviners gave the verdict to *Orunmila*, *Laaku Ogege*, at that time when envious men on earth conspired to send him post-haste heaven-ward.

"Their machinations will fail," said *Ifa-Oracle*.
"But you must offer sacrifice with utmost despatch.
You know that to catch big fish we use strong nets,
To scatter pestilent birds we destroy their nests
To demolish stubborn walls we use heavy mauls
So, act quickly like horses mad with rage" .

Song "If that is what it takes," replied *Orunmila*.
"I will sacrifice as told,
That their house of Evil yonder may crash
That my house of plenty on earth may thrive."

Odun Ifa

Egbe Ogerere,
Ile "awo ma nwo lorun
Ogerere.

Orin Ko ni ku alaigbo
Arundu
Ko ni-i ku alaigbo, oo
Arundu.

Awure:
Gbogbo awon ti npinle ile ki won le koq
Awon ti won o ti-i ko je won le ko o. Orunmila koo wo'le orun nu
fun won,
Awon ti won nko t'aye l'owo ki won le koq yori.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Notes to verse 2

Wande Abimbola gives a close variant of this verse on page 139 of *"Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa"* (1968) ascribing it to *Irete-Meji*.

E. M Lijadu gives a slightly different version on page 59 of *"Orunmila"* (1908,1972).

Laaku Ogege is Orunmila and literarily means " *The Immortal one that climbed the Ege-Tree*" as explained in Lijadu's verse on page 26, "Orunmila" thus:

Ege n'igi Ife
Arugbo-rugbo ni i gun un,
Gbogbo Irunmole lo gun un ti.
Aja idi-Ege ki-i je k'eni g'Ege,
Agbo-momo idi-Ege,ki-i je k'eni g'Ege
Ejo-were-were idi Ege ki-i je k'eni g'Ege
Ege m'ori s'owo o mehin sakun
O mu agbedemeji so kiki ide
Orunmila, nikan to m'ebọ ri ru, to m'eru tu'tu
Lo ma g'Ege o!

Refrain: You heavenly powers
Hasten to our assistance.

Song: Behold their evil house crashes already.

Refrain: And the noise thereof reverberates on earth.

Song: Adepts do not die before their time.

Refrain: But live full circle.

Prayer: May success attend our building projects,
May the house of evil crash yonder and
May Ijọ-Ato's enterprise prosper on earth.

Response: So may it be.

Translation

There was a tree in Ancient Ifẹ named ÈGÈ which none but venerable sages know the secret of climbing.

The 400 Divinities tried but failed to climb it because its approach was guarded by a vicious dog, a wild ram and a hidden snake.

Ègè is the tree of prosperity:
Its branches are topped with money,
Its roots are buried in jewels,
Its trunk is made of solid gold.

Only Ọrunmila, adept in sacrificial rites, climbed triumphant to its very top.

C.O. Ibie (1979) "Ifism" pages 212-213 calls Ègè "The Tree of prosperity" and recounts a similar story as above.

Irete-Meji Eṣe 3:

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Ifa, ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc.

Jonjo I'awo Epena,
Aranibadi I'awo Aranipesa,
Akọnabi ni i x'awo Inanamure
Baba Iṣẹrẹgbo ni i x'oluwo Ilode.
Ti ko ba si ti Baba I'ṣẹrẹ gbo
Gbogbo eriwo Ifẹ ati kura
Axa lo gb'Adiẹ irana mi Iṣ esin,
Ita la a ba Ewe-Ajile keḡe,
Ita laa fi Ewe-Aji kekege si Iṣ
K'Alara o sayi,
K'Qdara o sayi,
Ka burin-burin.
Ka b'awọn ko saale-saale'
Eṣe-ile lo gori orule aṣọn
O poyi ribi-ribi-ribi
Dia fun agbayigbo-Ifẹ kiribiti
Nijọ ti wọn n tori ewu pa ara wọn.

Orin: Awa dari ewu ji

A o ku mọ,

Egbe Gbogbo Iwarẹwa Ifẹ,

A dari ewu ji r'awa.

Awure Ma jẹ Iṣ Ato o ku, Ifa.

Egbe Axẹ.

Irete-Meji Verse 3

Chief Agboqla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc.

Tiny of stature was he
The diviner from Epena;

Stunted in size was he
The diviner from Araripesa;

Quick to pronounce was he
The diviner from Inanamure.

They came, they divined, they failed.

Then came, the venerable sage from Ilode, who by his skill at divination saved the generality of Ife from annihilation in those days when, from dread of old age, rulers grey with years were regularly sent to death before their time.

"Life should not be taken," declared the sage, "just because youth declines, for youth cannot be, like the *Ajilekege* shrub, everlastingly green but must turn full circle, return to old age like the home-pigeon that flies out only to come back hovering round the home-stead roof."

Song: Henceforth we revoke
Penalty of death for men grey with age.

Refrain: Hear ye nobles of Ife each and all we forever revoke this
penalty of death.

Prayer Save Ijọ-Ato from premature death of members, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Obligatory regicide, the theme of the verse above, has been, eruditely commented by Frazer as "a wide spread institution of which the most numerous and most similar cases have thus far been found in Africa."

After citing examples of ritual regicide among the Khazars of Southern Russia, the ancient Babylonians and the priestly kings of Aricia in Italy, Frazer concludes: "How far these facts point to an early influence of Africa on Italy or even to the existence of an African population in southern Europe I do not presume to say."

Frazer, J. G. (1922) "The Golden Bough" Abridged edition (Macmillan & Co, 1963) Preface p. vii.

Irete-Meji Eṣe 4:

Oloye Agboṣṣa: Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

Ẹṣun yan f'odo kete-kete-kete
A dia fun Atọka ti nxe'lari Olodumare.

Orin: Mo dilari Ikin mi-o r'oko,

Egbe Atọka d'ilari Olodumare,
Mo di'lari Ikin mi o r'oko.

Awure: Jẹ ki ọwọ o maa jẹ fun Ijọ Ato, Ifa.
Egbe: Axẹ.

Eṣe 5:

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, *etc.*

Iyanrin peṣe-peṣe,
Abata kọxọ-kọxọ
A dia fun Olubiyo,
A dia fun Olubiire.

Orin: Ọmọ yọyọyọ o ni t'Odo,

Egbe: Ọmọ pọ ruwaju
Ọmọ pọ lehin,
Ọmọ yọyọyọ ni t'Odo.

Awure:

Jẹẹ Ijo Ato o bi s'omọ
Jẹẹ wọn o jere ti le
Ma jẹẹ omọ wọn o ku, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Irete-Meji Verse 4

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, **Ifa etc.**
"Harmattan is the cruel season"
That dries up streams and rivulets
Presaging hard times for beasts and birds."
Thus declared **Ifa-Oracle** to **Atoka**,
Tiny bird called Eagle Owl who survives harmattan
As God's diplomat in the fields.

Song: I gave up farming
And turned diviner.

Refrain: Just as Eagle-Owl takes to diplomacy
When harmattan comes
And survives in the dry fields
So I gave up farming
When times were bad
And took to divining
With great success.

Prayer: Grant success to Ijḡ-Ato in their undertakings, **Ifa.**
Response: So may it be.

Verse 5

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, **Ifa etc.**
"Everything in due season"
Thus declared **Ifa-Oracle**
To the childless Suppliant.
"After the regrets of life dry as deserts
After the sorrows of nights wet as bogs
Will come the blessing of children
To rejoice your heart."

Song: Behold the happy farm-yard pig
Revelling amidst its numberless litter
Children in front,

Refrain: Children behind,
Children, children everywhere.

Prayer: Bless Ijḡ-Ato with children, **Ifa**
Bless them with good children
Spare them the sudden death of any child, **Ifa.**
Response: So may it be.

Oxe-Meji

o	o
oo	oo
u	o
oo	oo

 Eṣe 1:

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc.
Xẹxẹ Olongo,
Piiri Aparo,
A dia fun Ọrunmila,
Yio ma a xowo ija-kadi keale-aye.

Orin: Alara da mi o san Ogun.

Egbe: Xexe Olongo,
Edu o le ja,
Xẹxẹ Olongo.

Orin: Ajero da mi o san Ọgbọn.

Egbe: Xẹxẹ Olongo,
Edu o le ja,
Xẹxẹ Olongo.

Orin: Orangun da mi o san aadọta.

Egbe: Xẹxẹ Olongo,
Edu o le ja,
Xẹxẹ Olongo.

Awure: Ki o da Ijọ-Ato s'owo, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Notes to Verse 1, Oxe-Meji

The complex word-play on the root *da* may escape the perception of even a reader literate in Yoruba. Interchangeably used, "da" means "to challenge", "to consult a diviner", "to throw down at wrestling", "to cast divination for a client". In this verse, throwing Ọrunmila down, i.e. Ọrunmila's purposeful fall, signifies casting, opele, the divining chain.

Ibide sheds light on the hidden allusions thus:

"This incident (i.e. Ọrunmila's fall) marked the beginning of paying money for divination because throwing the Okpele (Opele) divination instrument on the ground.

Oxe-Meji $\begin{pmatrix} o & o \\ oo & oo \\ o & o \\ oo & oo \end{pmatrix}$ Verse 1.

Chief Agboḷa: Make this sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*
 "Olongo the Waxbill
 Is timid but crafty;
 Aparo the Bush-Fowl
 Is small and circumspect;
 Be crafty like the Waxbill
 Be circumspect like the Bush-Fowl."
 Thus declared *Ifa*-Oracle
 To Orunmila
 Setting out to see the World
 Like a wrestler
 Full of fight and fury
 Seeking challengers in royal courts.

Song: The Lord of Ara challenged me
 I threw myself, I fell,
 He paid twenty talents.
 Refrain: Crafty as the Waxbill,
 The Black one fell on purpose.
 Song: The Lord of Ijero challenged me
 I threw myself, I fell
 He paid thirty talents.
 Refrain: Crafty as the Waxbill
 The Black one fell on purpose.
 Song: Orangun, Lord of Illa, challenged me
 I threw myself, I fell
 He paid fifty talents.
 Refrain: The Black one crafty as Waxbill
 Fell on purpose.
 Prayer: Throw the members of Iḷo-Ato into prosperity, *Ifa*.
 Response: So may it be.

signifies the fall that OXE-MEJI had in the hands of the Kings for which they paid atonement."

Variants of this verse are given by E.M. Lijadu (1908, 1972) "Orunmila" ch 2. V. 10 pp 14-15;
 C.O. Ibe (1986) *Ifaw* pp 237-240; A.F. Agboḷa (1989) "Ojulowo Oriki Ifa" pp 233-234

Oxe-Meji Ẹṣẹ 2:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o jebo nan o fin, *etc.*

"Xonxo ori omu Obinrin o gun ni l'ọju,
Akakaya Obinrin o gbeleji ni si sun,"

A dia fun Ọxẹ ti o x'egun meji loojo.

Orin: Igba Ọxẹ x'egun meji.

Egbe: Nn l'ara ro ni.

Awure:

Ọrunmila ko o ba Ijo-Ato xe'gun ota.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Ẹṣẹ 3:

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbo nan o fin *etc.*

To ba to san'ni sisan ni i san ni
To ba to ye ni,
Yiyẹ ni i ye ni.

Ewo ni k'eni xowo-xowo,
K'eni ma r'ona ko o de'le.

Oxe-Meji ~ Verse 2.

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*

"Sharp-pointed though it look a woman's nipple cannot pierce the eye;
Vast though it appear, her chest cannot welcome two at once."

Thus declared *Ifa*-Oracle to Oxe.

"Be not frightened by appearance," said *Ifa*.

"Fight hard! You will gain double victory in one day."

Song: With Oxe's double victory

Refrain: Came peace to all and sundry.

Prayer: Grant *Iḡo*-Ato victory over their enemies, *Ifa*.

Response: So may it be.

Ofun-Meji Verse 3

Chief Agboḡla:

Make our sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*

"There should be time enough
There should be time,
Time to succeed, time to prosper;

Hard would it be forever to bear
A life of struggle without success
A life of commerce without profit."

Odun Ifa

A dia fun Orunmila
Ifa nxawo r'apa-okun ilameji t'qsa
N'Iwqnrnra ọla ni bi ojumo tii mo w'aye
Yio gba'gun"okun,
Yio gbagun idẹ
Yio gbagun Ologini-gini axo irada
Orunmila yio k'okun qro wa nnu'le.

Orin: Ewe kan mbe l'odo.

Egbe: Ire,
Ire ni i je o,
Ire.

Orin: To ba gun'ni lowo.

Egbe: Ire,
Ire ni i je o,
Ire.

Orin: To ba gun ni l'ese.

Egbe: Ire,
Ire ni i je o,
Ire.

Orin: To ba gun ni n'ikun.

Egbe: Qmo,
O mo ni ije o
Omo.

Awure: Ko o fun won ni're jalẹ, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Thus declared *Ifa*-Oracle to *Ọrunmila* on setting forth to traverse oceans, seas and lagoons to practise divination in that prosperous land whence Dawn comes into the World.

Ifa will, receive, in that land, gifts of coral beads and pure gold and cloths of exquisite weave.

Ifa will return bearing the secret of wealth.

Song A thorny herb grows by a stream.

Refrain: It is the herb of manifold blessings.

Song When it pricks the foot or when it pricks the hand.

Refrain: It assures blessings.

Song: When it pricks the body.

Refrain: It confers maternity.

Prayer: Grant manifold blessings to *Ijọ-Ato*, *Ifa*.

Response: So may it be.

Orangun-Meji

oo	oo
n	n
oo	oo
p	p

 Ẹṣẹ 1.

Awixẹ: Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

Heepa!
Heepa!! Baba!!!
K'ẹfun o ka a ki ko laje,
Koolọ o ka a ki ko lagbe ni yaba
Arijo-jo-ti-o-baa jo
Ko m'ẹṣẹ rẹ ko le dain-dain.
A dia fun Wawa
Ti ntikọle-ọrun bo wa'kọle-aye.

Orin: Ọwọ la b'Eji,
Egbe: Eji o nikan rin.

Awure: Ko o fun wọn n'ire ọmọ, Ifa.
Egbe: Axẹ.

Ẹṣẹ 2:

Oloye Awixẹ:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*
Tutu-tutu-tuta nn la a rọ'dẹ,
Tutu-tutu-tutu nn la a r'ọje,
Tutu-tutu-tutu nn laa rọ baba
Omi to ba t'enu Eja wa,
Ni i tutu ni-nii-ni."
Adia fun Ọrunmila.
Baba wa l'aye to tutu to yinyin.

Orin: Aye Ifa tutu j'omi lọ.

Egbe: Aye ọpele tutu to yinyin,
Aye Ifa tutu j'omi lọ.

Awure: Jẹẹ aye wọn tutu fun wọn, Ifa.
Egbe: Axẹ.

Ofun-Meji (Orangun-Meji)

oo	oo
o	o
oo	oo
o	o

 Verse 1

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*

Hail,
Hail to thee,
Hail to thee, mighty configuration!

Ofun is the whiteness of chalk
Signifying success and prosperity.

"Delicate missions require circumspection
Just as elegant dance demands sure steps"

Thus declared *Ifa*-Oracle
to Wawa, the primordial hunter,
Earthward bound from heaven.

Song: Learn from Rain,
Go not alone.

Refrain: Rain comes from heaven
Not singly but in showers.

Prayer: Bless Iḡ-Ato with many children, *Ifa*.

Response: So may it be.

Verse 2

Chief Fadairo (Master from Ede): *Make this sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*

"After strife comes peace
To cast brass we first heat it then we cool it
To cast copper we heat and then cool it
And so we do with lead too.

When the ancients say that water from the fish's snout brings peace
They mean by that to teach that after strife comes peace."

So declared *Ifa*-Oracle to Orunmila, adding
"Your stormy life will end with peaceful snow."

Song: *Ifa* devotees enjoy happiness.

Response: Beyond the peace of calm waters
Beyond the peace of snow.

Prayer: Grant Iḡ-Ato happiness in life, *Ifa*.

Response: So may it be.

Notes to Verse 2: Ofun-Meji

Fagbenro-Beyioku gives a variant of this verse on page 53 of his monograph: "*Ifa: Its Worship and Prayers*" but he ascribes the verse to *Oyeku-Meji* instead of *Ofun-meji*.

The quotation below clarifies the meaning of this apparently obscure line.

Wawa l'Qdẹ aye
Olugbuele l'qde qrun
Awon lo kọkọ da qde silẹ nijoun
Ijọ ti won dalẹ si araa won
Ni won p'ẹja l'odo . . . ịja wa de
Olugbuele qde qrun ni oun ko gba
Igba ti orọ da bayi
Won ni ki Orunmila pari ẹ,

Orunmila mu igba-ori, Eja
O fi bomi si won l'enu
O bomi si Wawa l'enu, O bu si Olugbuele l'enu
Wawa mu mi tan, inu ẹ rọ,
Olugbuele mu' mi tan, inu ẹ rọ
Eyi lo si di owe l'ode oni pe
"Omi to tẹnu Eja wa ni i tutu."

From "*Ifala Are Ode*" O.U.P. (1963) by Oladipo Yemitan page 5-6.

Translation

Wawa, the hunter on earth and Olugbuele the hunter in heaven brought hunting into the world in the days of yore . . .

A dispute about fishing rights caused one to break covenant with the other and the dispute led to enmity. Olugbuele the hunter from heaven refused peaceful settlement so Orunmila was appointed Arbiter.

Orunmila filled the head-bone of a fish with water and gave each party some of it to drink. After drinking Wawa was pacified and Olugbuele was appeased and both became friends again.

Hence arose the proverb, current till today:

"Water from the fish's mouth brings peace."

Ofun-Meji
(Orangun-Meji)

Ese 3:

Oloye Agboqla:

Ifa ko o j'ebo nan o fin, *etc.*

Kiku o tuka,
Karun o tuka,
K ofo o tuka
Koran o tuka,
Kete o tuka
Ke'da o tuka
Kohun buburuku-buburuku o pada l'ehin omọ-awo
T'Agbqnrin ba gbogboogbo
Wq̄n a kuro n'Mogun,
Omọ-odę kere-kere-kere,
Wq̄n o le e ri i pa
A dia fun Baṅso
Elewuu banjiini
To fi gbogbo ara l'oju ka
Ta npe Qrunmila,
Heepa!

Awure:

Ifa ma-a binu si wq̄n, ma-a ba wq̄n ja.

Egbe: Axę.

Verse 3 Ofun-Meji (Orangun-Meji)

Chief Agboola: Make our sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa* etc.

May it please you *Ifa*,
Under your powerful appearance
As the configuration, Ofun-Meji,
To grant us dispensation, that
Death,
Illness,
Loss,
Calamity
Wickedness,
Bad faith,
And evils of every kind,
May, henceforth and forthwith, depart
No longer to beset practitioners of your craft.

In ancient times, *Ifa*
You declared to Bansa,
Whose real name is Orunmila
He who is blessed with the All-seeing eye
You declared that as the antelope never dies
But merely fades into glory
Beyond the deadly reach of petty hunters
So your devotees will live forever.
And so we hail you, we worship you.

Prayer: May the members of Ijq-Ato
 never incur your wrath
 And may you
 never be sore-vexed with them, *Ifa*.

Response: So may it be.

Ofun-Meji
(Orangun-Meji)

Èṣẹ 4:

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*
Ode nd'aro,
Ọṣẹ ni rọkun,
Ọṣẹ ti wọn gbe i rọkun
Ni wọn ti i rẹ axọ.

A dia fun Olori-ire
Ti wọn nfi ẹjọ rẹ wi ibi.

Orin: Ẹni ti nfi ẹjọ awa wibi,

Egbe: Atori-Ifa,
Ni oto t'awa si ire
Atori.

Awure:
Ko o maa to ti Ijọ-Ato si ire, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Ofun-Meji (Orangun Meji) Verse 4

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa* etc.

"To everything its proper place!

Indigo is prepared in the yard
And not in the bedroom;

Thread is spun in the verandah
And not in the closet.

To every human act
its due response.

Yet kindness that demands gratitude
Instead provokes malice."

Thus declared *Ifa*-Oracle
To Everyman
Who does good to all and sundry
But is everywhere maligned.

Song: If men speak evil of us

Refrain: *Ifa* will avenge us
Ifa will rectify evil with good
Ifa will vindicate us.

Prayer: Rectify evil with good for Iḡo-Ato, *Ifa*.

Response: So may it be.

Eṣe 5:

Oloye Agboṣila:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

"Pandorọ lo so l'oke,
Ọta i-i tan,
O ba kan'lẹ,
Ọta i ba ju iṣu lọ"
'Dia fun Ọrunmila
O nlọ re e gb'Odu niyawo.

Orin: Ẹ duro ẹ wa wo ọmọ Odu bẹrẹrẹ.

Egbe: At'ewe at'agba,
Ifa nlọ gb'Odu niyawo,
Ẹ duro ẹ wa wo ọmọ Odu bẹrẹrẹ

Awure:

Maa jẹ, ki nkan xe ọmọ wọn,
Ifa K'Odu o gbe wọn,
K'Odu o la wọn

Egbe: Axẹ.

Verse 5

Chief Agboola:

Make our sacrifice auspicious Ifa,

"The Pandorq-fruit
That grows on Sausage-Tree
Would out-size yam-tuber
Could it but sprout under earth"
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila as he set out
to wed Odu,
The great mystery whom none but initiates may
view.

Song Come one, come all
 Come see their crowd of kids,

Refrain: Come young, come old
 Come see Ifa and Odu
 Amidst their happy kids.

Prayer: Protect the children of Ijq-Ato from danger, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Notes to Verse 5 (Ofun-Meji)

Verse 5 employs marital symbolism to portray the *Babalawo's* elevation to the rank of an *Olodu*. The children resulting from the symbolic marriage of a *Babalawo* to *Odu* are the junior priests in the *Olodu's* entourage. Therefore the more numerous the junior priests training under him the higher his prestige and renown.

What is *Odu*?

In the context of verse 5, writes Bascom,^[*]

"Odu is interpreted as meaning something large or bulky and its composition again is a carefully guarded secret."

Abimbola enumerates four stages of initiation into the Ifa profession, that is the *Babalawo's* ranking status.

He writes concerning the *Olodu* grade thus:

"The third stage is known as *Fifoju Kan Odu* (initiation into the secrets of *Odu*).

"During the ceremony the would-be Priest feasts many Ifa Priests from far and near, after which the secret pot believed to be the abode of *Odu*, the mythical wife of *Ifa* is ceremoniously opened for him to see.

"In turns, the Ifa priests present look inside the sacred pot. The actual contents of this pot are not revealed to the un-initiated, information about them is treated as a major secret of the Ifa cult."

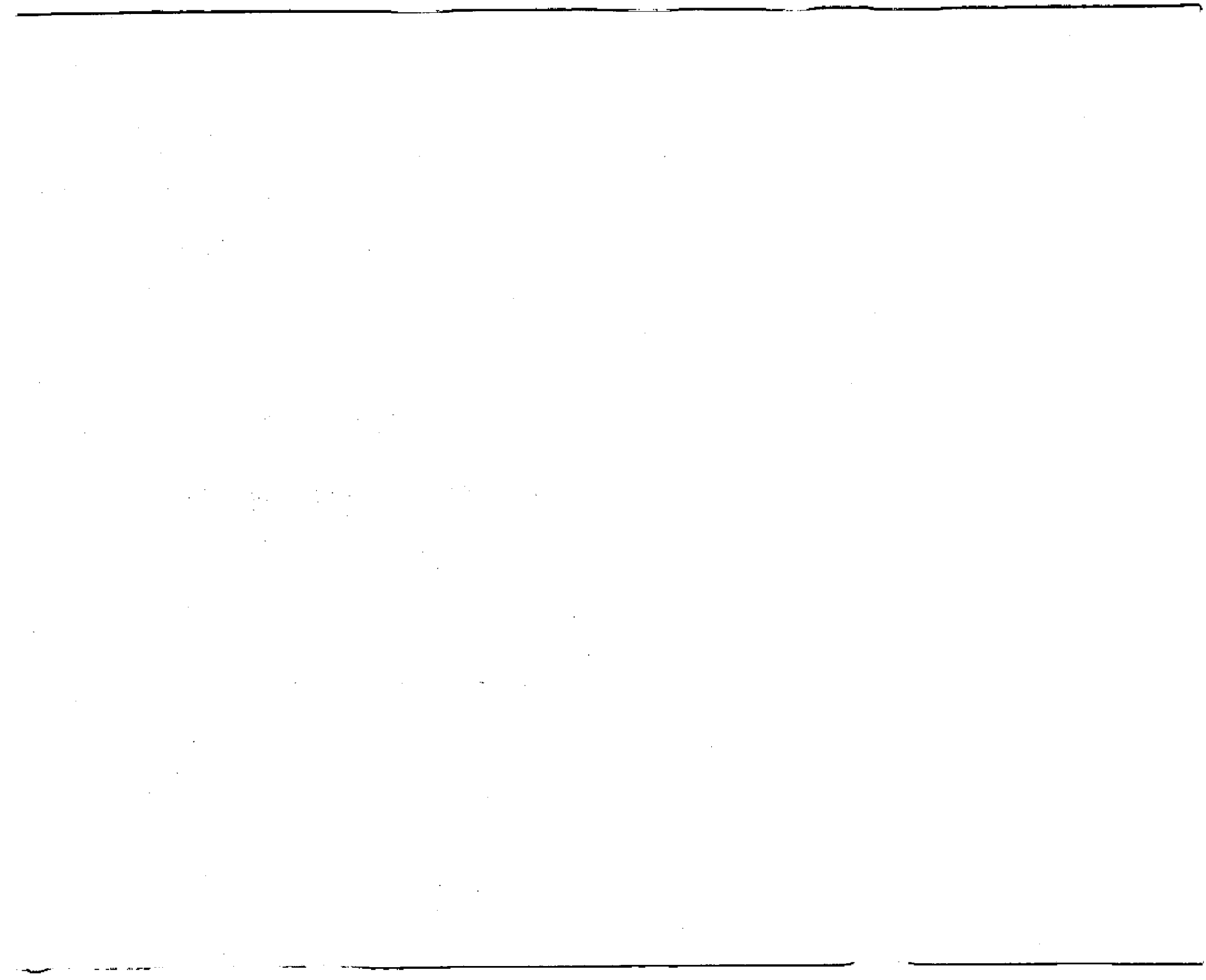
The late Chief Agboḷa and late Chief Ajagbe were *Olodu*.

* Bascom Wm. (1969) "Ifa Divination" page 82 .

** Abimbola, Wande (1976) "Ifa: An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus" page 32.

Part V

Inaugural and Personal Odu



Inaugural and Personal Odu

After reciting verses from the 16 principal paired Odu the Babalawo proceeds to the inaugural and personal Odu.

Inaugural Odu

An Inaugural Odu is the Ifa configuration cast at divination for a corporate client such as a city, a social club, a church or dynasty.

Verses from **Otura-Rera** $\begin{vmatrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{vmatrix}$ (**Otura-Oguda**) presented further on in this chapter come from the configuration cast for the Church, Ijo Orunmila Ato* at its inauguration in 1933 which configuration is highly revered by the members as their signature of enduring existence and progress.

Personal Odu

This is, generally speaking, the configuration cast for an individual at an epochal stage in his life such as birth, professional undertaking, chieftaincy, initiation into a cult and so on and is invariably regarded as a talisman or guide to success.

Oxę-mosa $\begin{vmatrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{vmatrix}$ is the personal Odu of the first High Priest of Ijo-Orunmila late Chief Adeyemi Adesilu.

Ogbe-Alara (Ogbe-Otura) $\begin{vmatrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{vmatrix}$ is the Personal Odu of the Chief Ifa Priest of Ijo Orunmila Ato, the late Araba of Lagos, Chief A.F. Agboola.

The recitation of verses from Inaugural and Personal Odu is usually preceded by the formula:

Onile ki-ifi ile ę re'le.
(The Celebrant does not neglect his own requests to Ifa whilst praying for others).

*A church founded on Ifa Teaching. See page 44 above for an introductory note on the Church.

Inaugural Odu: Otura-Rera or Otura-Ogunda

0	0
0	00
0	0
00	0

Eṣẹ 1:

Oloye Agboṣṣa: Ifa ko o jẹbọ nan o fin etc.

Onile ki-i fi ile rẹ'le
Otura-Rera o d ọwọ ẹ o!
Otura-Rera e-e d'era
A boko r'ajo e-e t'ajo-bọ
Ootọ-nu l'ajeku, O ju'rọ lọ
A dia'fun Molara
Molẹni,
Emi o-niyekan-a-gbọrandun
Alagbọrandun bi Ifa o si.

Orin: Olowo lo m'ẹbọ,

Egbe: Ikin l'alagbọrandun.

Awure:

Orunmila!
Ko o gbọran Ijọ-Ato dun
Ko o gbo'nran wọn dun Ifa
Gbogbo ohun ti wọn nfẹ, ko o xe fan wọn Ifa!

Egbe: Axẹ.

Otura-Rera

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Eṣe 2:

Oloye Agboṣa: Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc.

Ara-ara awo Ile lo difa fun ILE
Wọn nfi oṣọ iku ẹ da ireni.

Orin: Araa
Araa

Alapari ẹwa loja.

Egbe: Gbogbo oṣọ-kilu ile wọn lee pa' le mọ.

Awure: Ma jẹ ki ilee wọn parẹ,
Ma jẹ ki aasiki wọn bajẹ.

Egbe: Axẹ.
Axẹ.

Agboṣa: Ara-ara a difa fun ILE
Nijo ti oṣọ rẹ o l'ori
Wọn ni o kaalẹ ẹbọ ni o xe
Wọn wa gbarijo
Wọn fọkan x'owo.

Awure: Orunmila, jẹ ki oṣọ wọn yori si rere, Ifa
Jẹ ki wọn le kọle ti wọn fẹ kọ, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Otura-Rera Otura-Ogunda Verse 2

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa etc.

That was a great master, that was;
The one who divined for House
When his enemies swore he would die
No less certain than four days.

Song: When we make sacrifice as told
When we offer tithes as due,
We live secure
We live triumphant,

Refrain: All his enemies combined,
Vowed but failed, to kill House.

Prayer: Let not the glory of Ijo-Ato be ever tarnished
Sustain their renown,
Let success attend their endeavours, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Agboḡla: That was a great master that was
The one who divined for Earth
When her future seemed hopeless.

"Pull yourself together, offer sacrifice."

So declared Ifa-Oracle to Earth
With friends and relations rallying round
Sacrifice was offered
And success assured.

Prayer: Ifa!
May Ijo-Ato always find quick solutions to their problems
May their plans to build their own house quickly succeed.

Response: So may it be.

Otura-Rera (Otura-Ogunda)

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Èşę 3:

Oloye Agboqla: Ifa ko o j'ębọ nan o fin *etc.*

Igbo tęęę kan'ko
Qnọ tęęę kan do
Qna wurę-wurę-wurę, lokan bi a nre,
A dia fun Alaiku ọmọ-a-ye-l'ohun-kere
Orukọ,ti a i pe Qrunmila.

Awure: Qrunmila ma ję ki ọmọ-araye gbohun l'ęnu Ifa.

Egbe: Axę.

Otura-Rera or Otura-ogunda Èşę 4:

Oloye Agboqla: Ifa ko o j'ębọ nan o fin *etc.*

A rari iwun ọfin.
A dia fun wọn l'Ode-Iwaku
O ri Iwaku gb'ęyę Ètu
O si gb'ęran Ètu.

Orin: Iwa ji mbi o ji?

Egbe: Iwa ji gidi-gidi,
L'ęşę Qba-Orixa.

Awure: Ję ki iwa Ijọ-Atọ o ji de, Ifa.

Egbe: Axę.

Otura-Rera or Otura-Ogunda Verse 3

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa.

"We approach farmsteads
Though narrow paths;
We approach spring waters
Though crooked tracks;
We approach success
Though difficulties and trials."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to him who was blest with eternal life and abiding health and whose real name is Orunmila.

Prayer: Protect the members of Ijo-Ato from the snares of the evil world, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Otura-Rera or Otura-Ogunda Verse 4

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Difficult problems
Simple answers."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the citizens whose existence appeared doomed.

Ifa added:

"If you sacrifice one guinea-fowl
If you offer one duiker
If you propitiate your Ori"¹
Your fortune will turn auspicious"

Song: Were the citizens saved from doom?
Did their fortune turn auspicious?

Refrain: Their fortune turned auspicious
Their life was saved from doom.

Prayer: Grant good auspices to Ijo-Ato, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Ori - Guardian Angel, Inner personality, Real Ego For full exposition of this concept see Chapter II C.

Qxẹ-M'osa

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Eṣẹ 1:

Odu Oluwo-ijo (Oloye Adesilu)

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin

Onile ki-i fi ile rẹ ile

Qxẹ'Moṣa o d'owọ, ẹ o!

Atete-xe oogun,

Qmọ kekere

To ba gbọ iburu,

Y i o dide-

A yi ile

A tamọra

A si gba'apo oogun b'orun"

A dia fun Qxqlake

Nijọ ngbogun lọ Ilobirin.

Orin: Sun mọ ọ mi.

Egbe: Ogun ni obirin.

Orin: Pọ geḡe mọ ọ l'orun.

Egbe: Ogun Obirin ni.

Awure: Jẹ ki wọn ma a xegun, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Oxẹ-M'osa

$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$

Verse 1

Chief Agboḡla: "Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

The celebrant does not neglect his own requests
While pleading others.

"First to strike is first to win:
At first alarm the young warrior dashes into his armoury
dons his battle-dress replete with armulets and charms and
attacks the enemy."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Oxḡlake on his way to besiege that
fortress which women hide and defend from intrepid male assault.

Song: In this peculiar battle
Caresses and embraces.

Refrain: Are weapons of offence
Best calculated for victory.

Prayer: Grant Ijḡ-Ato victory in their enterprises, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

The verse is a thinly veiled symbolism for the sexual act.

Ọxẹ-M'osa Ẹsẹ 2:

Oloye Agboọla: Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc.

Sara fi ni,
Sara fẹ ni
Babalawo Refe lo difa fun Refe
Refe nr'aye ilainiku,

Orin: Ruru ẹbọ,
Eru atuk'Exu.

Egbe: Keepe, Keejina
Ka wa ba'ni laiku Kangiri
Aiku kangiri la i ba'ni l'ẹsẹ ope.

Awure: Jẹ ki ajinde o jẹ fun wọn, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Ọxẹ-M'osa Ẹsẹ 3:

Oloye Agboọla: Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin.

Saragede, Saragede,
Dia fun Adiẹ-Okoko
Ni jo ti ngbogun lọ Ilu-Eemo,

Orin: Awa yun ire
Awa bọ ire.

Egbe: Saragede,
Awa mama bọ,

Awure: Ma jẹ ki nkan o xe wọn, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Oxẹ-M'osa Verse 2

Chief Agboḷa: Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Practise moderation, avoid excesses."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Refe as he set out from Heaven, Earthward bound "Your life will be peaceful and long." Added the Oracle.

Song: If we sacrifice to the gods

If we propitiate Exu,

Refrain: We do not have to wait too long

We do not have to wait at all

To gain that boon of health and life

As those enjoy,

Who devoutly worship Ifa.

Prayer: Grant Ijo-Ato good health, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Oxẹ-M'osa

Verse 3

Chief Agboḷa: Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa.

"Be alert,

Be circumspect."

So declared Ifa-Oracle to Hen, as she set out to visit the "City of surprises" with her new-hatched brood.

Song: The going was pleasant,

The return triumphant.

Refrain: Alertness and circumspection

Yield happy returns

As Ifa-Oracle declared.

Prayer: Protect Ijo-Ato from every harm, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Oxẹ-M'osa

$$\begin{bmatrix} 00 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$$

Èşẹ 4:

Oloye Agboḡla: Ifa, ko o j'ẹbḡ nan o fin *etc.*

A ki-i ba Baba ọmḡ tẹ'fa
Ka b'ọmḡ e t'ajigḡḡ.

Dia fun Axa awo ori-i gi
Dia fun Idi awo ẹşẹ oke
Dia fun Agbigbo-ni wḡḡḡḡ ti i di tie ni igo-igi.

Ifa legi ma ko
Agbon o ko goguta ka fewo gbo
A dia fun Adimu baalẹ axẹ'gi.

Orin: Adimu, mama la."

Egbe: Adimu d'olowu,
Adimu mama la.

Awure: Jẹ ki wḡḡḡḡ la l'ḡḡḡ ẹ Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Oxẹ-M'osa

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Verse 4

Chief Agboḡla:

Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"A diviner that keeps covenant with the father does not practice deceit with the son. One covenant embraces both."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to three diviners — one nicknamed "**Falcon That Lives on Tree-Tops**", the second, "**Kite that Dwells in Valleys**" and the third, "**Agbigboni-Wonran, monstrous-headed Bird that Hides in Tree-Trunks**";

The same was declared to Adimu "Lord of Herbs" adding:

"Those who profit by plants and roots should not despoil the forest."

Song: Adimu prospers.

Refrain: Adimu blooms like the cotton-tree.

Prayer: May Ijo-Ato prosper in your service, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Ogbe-alara

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

(Ogbe-'tura)

Èşę 1: Odu Oloye A. F. Agboqla: Ogbe-Alara or Ogbe-Otura

Oloye Fadairo Ajagbe (Awixę Eko):

Onile o ni ję ilee rę o baję
Ifa ko o j'ębq, nan o fin
Mo kere-kere ewe oye mi xe xeke-xeke,
Mo dagbadagba ewe oye mi hu gogo-rogo,
A dia fun Qrunmila
Tio l'ori rere ju ęgbę rę 'yoku lq.

Orin: Ori rere ni temi,
Ori rere ni t'Esuro-Igbo,

Egbe: Ęranko a-faiwe a si k'osun,
 Ęranko.

Awure: Qrunmila maję ę ile Agboqla o baję.

Egbe: Axę.

Ogbe-Alara (Ogbe-'Tura)

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Verse 1.

Master from Ede (Chief Fadairo Ajagbe):

The celebrant should not neglect his own request to Ifa;

Make this sacrifice auspicious, *Ifa etc.*

"In youth you will receive civic honours
In mature age royal titles."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila.

"Destiny" added the Oracle, "places you above your peers."

Song: I am fortunate like Esuro.

Refrain: Beautiful animal of the woods
That neither bathes nor dresses
And yet is fairer than camwood.
Such is a man
Blessed by Destiny.

Prayer: Never let Agboola's fortunes sour, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Odu Oloye A. F. Agboola: Ogbe-Alara or Ogbe-Tura Ẹṣẹ 2:

Baba Ede (Oloye Fadairo Ajagbe): Ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

Mo b'Erin ja,
Mo d'Erin,
Mo b'Ẹfon j'a,
Mo d'Ẹfon,
Mo b'Ọlọrun ja,
Ọlọrun lo da mi s'ile-aye
Ọlọrun da,
Ko xe da l'oro.

Orin: Dia fun Ẹda ti ixẹ ọmọ Olodumare.

Egbe: Ire-aje l'ọwọ mi nwa, l'ọwọ mi oto?
Egbo yẹyẹ.
Sure o lọ gba a wa fun mi,
Egbo yẹ ẹ yẹ.

Orin: Ire aya, Ire-ọmọ l'ọwọ mi nwa l'ọwọmi o to?

Egbe: Egbo yẹyẹ.
Sure o lọ gba a wa fun mi,
Egbo yẹ ẹ yẹ.

Orin: Ire gbogbo l'ọwọ mi nwa l'ọwọ mi o to?

Egbe: Egbo yẹyẹ.
Sure o lọ gba a wa fun mi,
Egbo yẹ ẹ yẹ.

Awure: Gbogbo ire ni ko oxe fun Agboola, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Ogbe-Alara (Ogbe-'Tura) Verse 2.

Master from Ede (Chief Fadairo Ajagbe):

Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

I fought the Elephant
I threw him down,

I fought the Buffalo
I threw him down,

I fought with God
God threw me into the World.

One thrown by God
Cannot be harmed by men."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Creature,
the Omnipotent's handiwork.

Song: If I reach for wealth
But fail to grasp it,

Refrain: May this sacrifice
Quickly make it mine.

Song: If I desire good things in life
But cannot have them,

Refrain: May this sacrifice
Quickly make them mine.

Prayer: Grant Agboola manifold blessings, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Odu Oloye A. F. Agboola: Ogbe-Alara or Ogbe-Tura Eṣe 3:

Baba Ede (Oloye Fadairo Ajagbe):

Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, etc.

Eetan gbaka-gbaka, awo ile Oṣumila

Dia fun Oṣomọ Atapa

Yi o bi mọ si di Agbọn.

Orin: Irọ ni wọn npa,

Eke ni wọn nxe,

Egbe: L'ọju Ifa,

Ojola o le gb'awo mi.

Awure: Ko o ma a daabo bo Agboola, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Odu Oloye A. F. Agboola: Ogbe-Alara (Ogbe-Tura) Eṣe 4.

Baba Ede: Ifa, ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin

Emi ni Ngori?

Emi ni Ngori?

Dia fun Oṣumila

Ifa fẹ lọ ru ixi titun I'odun.

Orin: Ile aiku ni mo mu'raa mi wọ

Egbe: Emi ni Ngori, Emi ni Ngori?

Orin: Ile aiku ni mo ma yaa mi wọ

Egbe: Emi ni Ngori, Emi ni Ngori?

Orin: Ile aiku ni mo m'omọọ mi wọ

Egbe: Emi ni Ngori, Emi ni Ngori?

Orin: Ile aiku ni mo mu gbogbo eni i mi wọ

Egbe: Emi ni Ngori, Emi ni Ngori?

Awure: Jẹ ki o daa fun gbogbo wa, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Ogbe-Alara (Ogbe-'Tura) Verse 3.

Master from Ede (Chief Fadairo Ajagbe): Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Receiving offerings from high and low,
The garbage-heap, despised and scorned,
Grows higher day by day."

So declared Ifa-Oracle to Olomofe Atapa.

"Despised as you are," continued the Oracle
"You will be fruitful like the Palm Tree."

Song: Our enemies wish us ill,
But their prognostications are false
And the truth is not in them.

Refrain: Under Ifa's watchful eyes
No evil can befall his devotee.

Prayer: Protect Agboofa at all times, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Ogbe-Alara (Oge-'Tura) Verse 4.

Master from Ede: Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"What is the difference
Between Ngori↗
And Ngori↘."

Ifa-Oracle questioned Orunmila preparing for the New Yam festival.

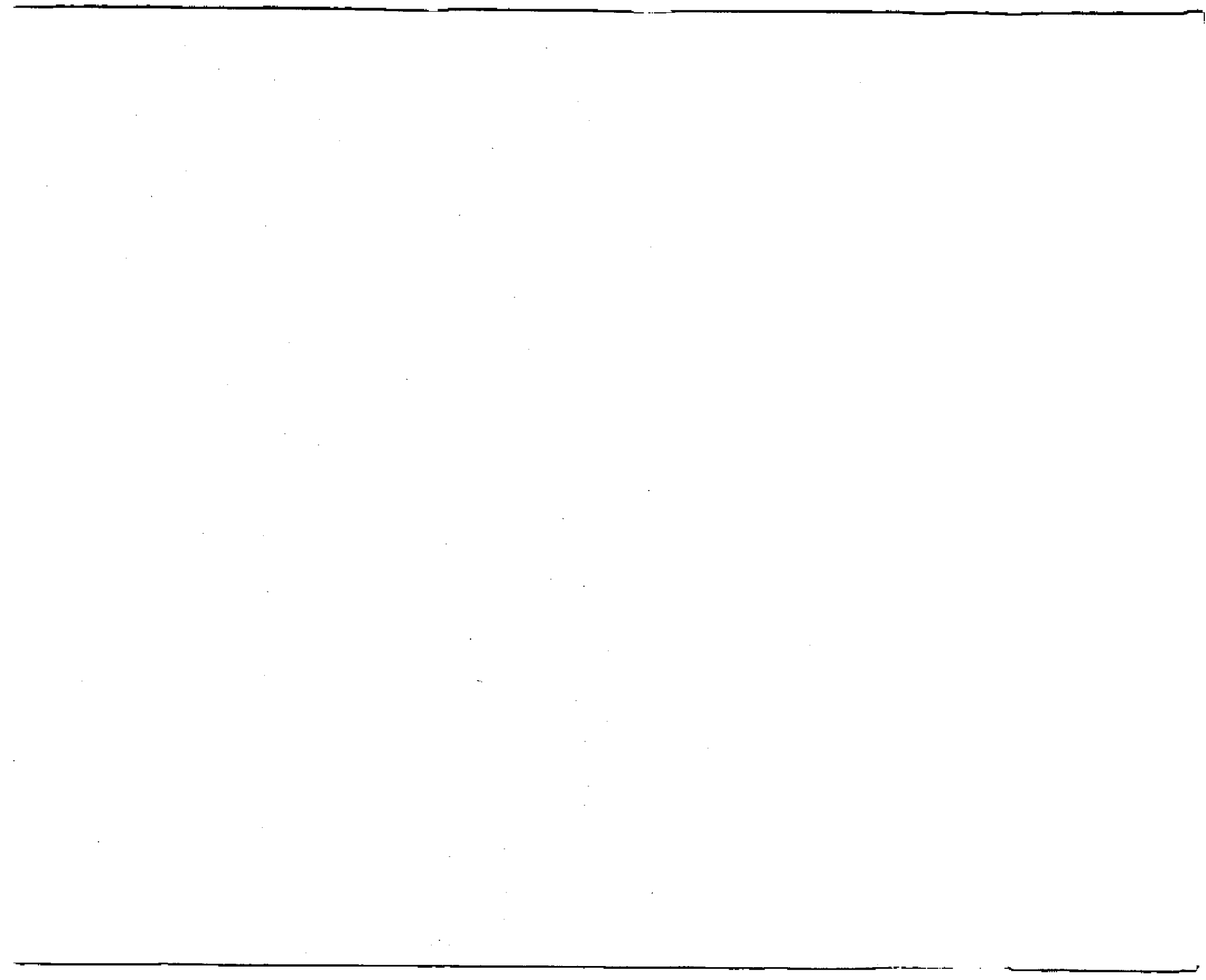
Song: The difference between Ngori↗ and Ngori↘
Is the difference between life and death
I choose life for myself,
I choose life for my wives and children,
I choose life for my friends and relations.

Refrain: Ngori↗ and Ngori↘
That is the difference between life and death.

Prayer: Make the coming year prosperous for us all, Ifa.

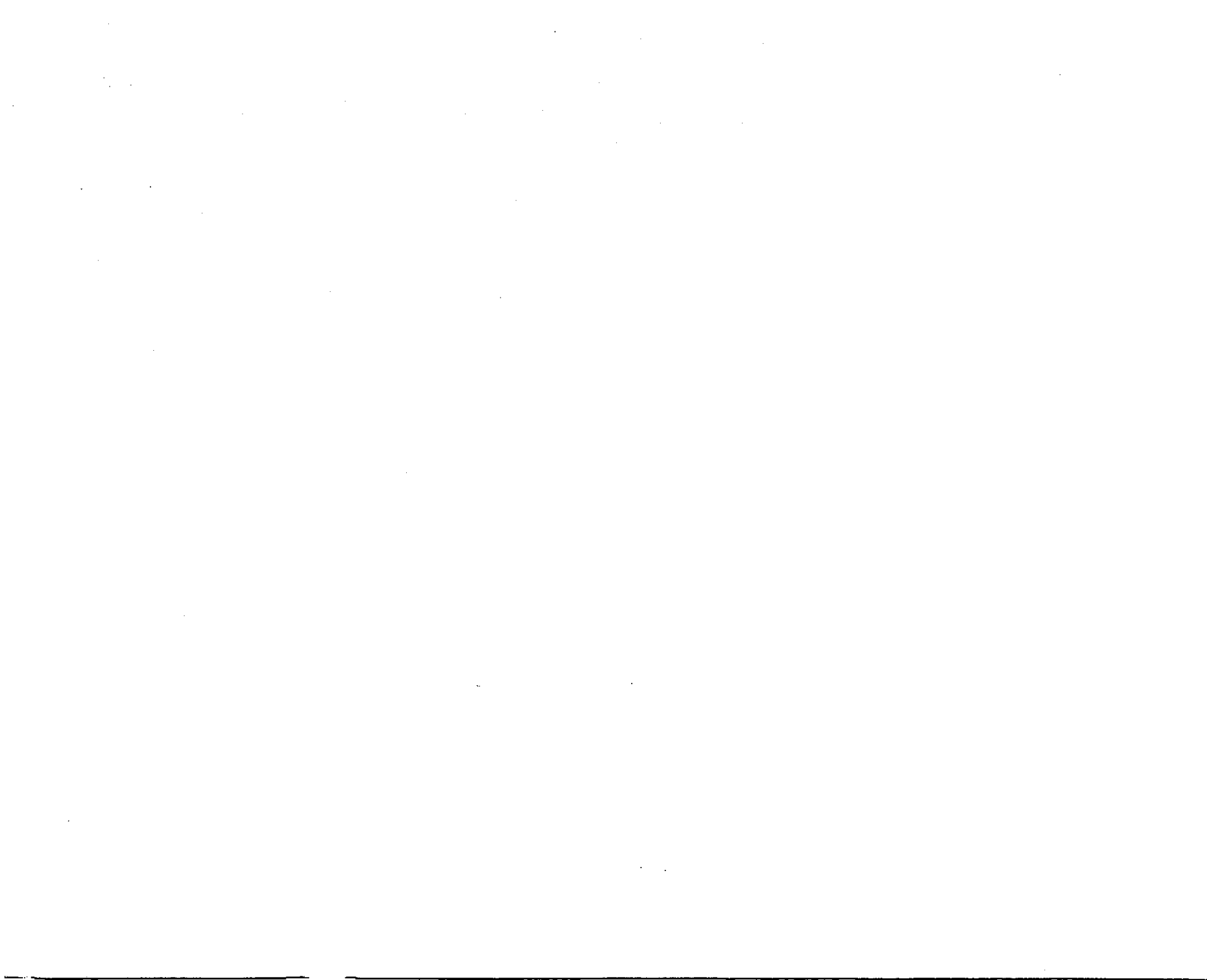
Response: So may it be.

Note: ↗High Tone ↘Low Tone.



Part VI

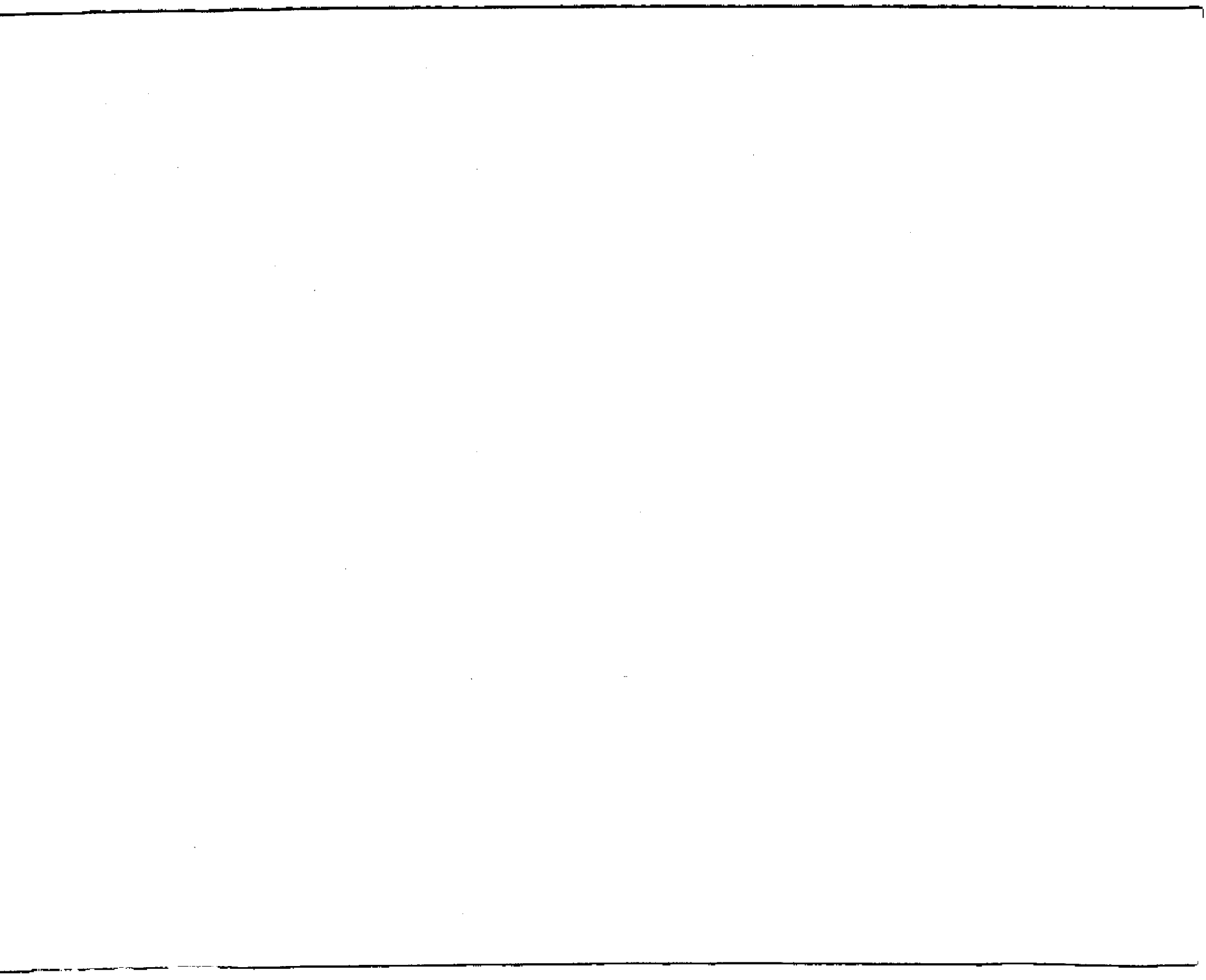
The Conjunction Odu



Part VI

The Conjunction Odu

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Part VI

The Conjunction Odu

The next stage in the ritual is the recitation of verses from certain Odu considered as *mantras* (Words of Power).

Below are enumerated the Six Odu in the order followed by the Agboḡla School.

(1)	Oxẹ-'Tura	$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$	Special Plea to Oxun
(2)	Oxẹ-'Gbireṭe	$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 00 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$	Plea to Olodumare
(3)	Okorḡn-S'ode (Okorḡn-ogbe)	$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$	Mantra before splitting the Kolanuts
(4)	Ogbe-Ate (Ogbe-ireṭe)	$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$	Mantra before Gin-Libation
(5)	Owḡrin-X'ogbe	$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$	Special Plea to Exu
(6)	Irosun-Ireṭe	$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 00 & 00 \\ 0 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$	Confession of Faith in the Orthodox Ifa School of Oḡrunmila

Part VI A

Oxẹ-Tura

The Conjuraton Odu: Oxẹ'tura



Ese 1

Under this Odu, Oxun, universal mother, materialisation of the cosmic feminine principle is supplicated for her assistance in obtaining good auspices for the sacrifice. Pleas are made to Ọrunmila and other deities as well.

Oloye Agboọla: Ifa ko o j'ẹbọ nan o fin, *etc.*

Oxẹ-'Tura tee-tee-tee
Ko o gberu k'ẹbọ o fin,
Ko o gb'eru k'ẹbọ o da.
Akeremẹtu nn lẹni ti nd'agba
Odogiri l'e eni ti nda remi.
Eegun mohun Alagbaa,
Alagbaa mohun Eegun,
Ebora e du mi,
Ebora e la mi.
Kohun kọọ ni i xawo Ewi-Alado,
Ọrun-mu-dede-kanlẹ ni i xawo Oke-Ijero,
igba alakan ni mbe l'odo
Wọn laka ra aye pẹ-
pẹ-pẹ
Dia fun Igba Imọle Ojuk'ọtun,
A bu fun Igba Imọle Ojuk'osi
Dia fun Agbọnniregun ọmọ-onida-ọrun-ọwawa
ọlọja l'ẹhin Ẹbora
Nijọ ti wọn nti'kọle-ọrun bọwa ikọle-aye
Wọn la'gbo-oro
Wọn l'agbo-ọpa
Wọn l'ana gbooro Olufe rin
Wọn d'ohun,
Wọn gbimọ,
Wọn o fi t'Ọxun xe
Wọn p'Egun, Eegun o je,
Wọn p'Oo-xa, Ooxa o dahun,
Wọn lana gbooro Olufe wọn o rẹ'ni tọ.

The Conjunction Odu: Oxe-'Tura

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no	no
o	o
o	on

 Verse 1

Chief Agboḡla: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa;
Ifa, under your appearance as *Oxe-'Tura*
Hasten to accept our sacrifice;
Grant us good auspices
Validate our prognostications.

If the lowly rise to great honours in life
The great should not forget their lowly origins.

The Egungun masquerade recognises his leader by voice,
The Leader acknowledges the masquerade by voice,
Each listens to the other's plea.
Listen to our plea ye divinities and powers above.

In ancient times *Kobunkoo* King Alado's diviner
Orun mudede-kanle master from Ijero Hills
And a third, nicknamed "Sure of Foot Like Crab on Beach"
consulted Ifa-Oracle —

For the 200 divinities of the Right

For the 200 divinities of the Left

For *Agboḡmiregun*, wisdom incarnate, first among deities

— As they journeyed from heaven earthward-bound.

Having erected altars to *Oro* and *Opa* they offered sacrifice and made
straight for Ife but, alas, they failed to propitiate *Oxun*.

Consequently when they conjured the departed ancestors,
When they invoked the *Arch-Divinity*, *Orixá* no one answered.
So when they entered the City of Ife,
Not a child, not a woman, not a single man,
Only visible emptiness, only audible silence greeted them.

Note that the propitiated deities *Oro* and *Opa* are male whereas the neglected deity, *Oxun*, is female.

Oxe-Tura Ese 1 contd.

Oloye Agboola:

Agèdèngbè-Oxumare,
Oxumare nan a-boju gèdèngbè,
Dia fun Oxun Xengexe"
Aya Orunmila,
O gbe n'kòkò,
O gbe n'baba
N ba gbogbo ẹ bọ irunmọlẹ ẹ jẹ

Orin: Jẹ k'ẹbọ o da f'ẹlẹbọ,

Egbe: Oxun o xoro Ẹfọn
Jẹ ẹ'bọ o da f'ẹlẹbọ
Oxun oxoro-Ẹfọn.

Orin: Gunyan-gunyan ti mbẹ n'lle-Ifẹ, Obirin ni.

Egbe: Oxun o xoro-Ẹfọn,
Jẹ ẹ'bọ o da f'ẹlẹbọ,
Oxun oxoro-Ẹfọn.

Awure: Jẹ k'ẹbọ nan o da, Ifa
K'awọn Obirin ma ba eyi ti a nxe yi jẹ Ifa
K'Oxun o gbe Ijọ-Orunmila-Atọ
K'Oxun o la wọn,
Ki wọn ma ri ija omi.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Oxe-Tura Verse 1 contd.

Agboqla:

As these events unfolded
Oxun, Orunmila's consort, privied by her diviner,
Nicknamed "*Rainbow*"
Secretly frustrated
Covertly negated
The divinities' sacrifice.

Song: Not neglecting you, Oxun,
But respectful, we come,
Asking good auspices for our own sacrifice;

Refrain Oxun, gentle lady of mysteries
Sacred to the City of Efon,
Grant us good auspices for this sacrifice.

Song: Food-sellers and petty traders of Ife,
Of every city the world over,
Are women just like you.

Have pity on our women-folk,
Let not evil befall them.

Refrain: Oxun, gentle lady of mysteries
Grant us good auspices for this sacrifice

Prayer: Make this sacrifice acceptable, Ifa,
Let not the anger of women frustrate our rites.
Look favourably on Ijo-Ato, Oxun,
Save them from wrathful visitations
We implore you, Oxun
Our Lady of streams, rivers and lakes.

Response: So may it be.

Oxe'tura

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oo	nn
o	o
o	nn

 Ese 1

Oloye Agboqla:

Ifa ko o j'ebq nan o fin
Peri p'okun
P'okun peri
Exu bambi
A dia fun Akan
QmQ Olu-iwara-oje.

Orin: Kekere Akan baba ni,
Agba Akan baba ni
A ki-i ba kekere Akan l'ai kQle.

Awure:
Qrunmila, je ki Ijq-Atq le kQ ile yi, Ifa.

Egbe: Axq.

Oxe-'Tura Ese Keta

Oloye Agboqla: Ifa ko o j'ebq nan o fin *etc.*

Ori Oku wqn o ni'na n'nu
Eşq Oxika o xe e mq l'qna
Ailobirin O xee dakq lasan
O to ki gbogbo aye o ba'ni gbq q,

Oxe'tura

o	n
oo	oo
o	n
n	oo

 Verse 2

Chief Agboḡla: Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa.

Pursue him here
He is over there;
Follow him there,
He is back here,
So, in confusing detours,
Revels the divine trickster, Exu.

Song: Small Crab
 Has a small hole;
 Big Crab has a big hole.
Refrain: Small hole, big hole
 Home is always home.

Prayer: Grant Iḡ-Ato a home of theirs, Ifa.
Response: So may it be.

Verse 3

Chief Agboḡla: Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa.

"Death is not written on the forehead,
Evil is seldom betrayed by foot-step,
Silence ill befits celibacy.
There is a time for silence
Another time for crying out loud in the market place."

Oxe'tura

o	u
oo	nn
o	o
o	oo

 Ese 3 (Continued)

A dia fun Igba-imọlẹ Ojuk'otun
A bu fun Igba-imọlẹ Ojuk'osi
Dia fun Agbọnniregun Ọmọ-onila-ọrun-ọwawa,
Wọn ngbogun ada loo oju-omi.

Wọn d'ọhun ogun fọ bi Igba,
Ogun ya bi axọ,

Ọrunmila ni "O dọpepe."

Ifa mo lo d'ogun Irunmọlẹ fọ
Xọngo nbọ l'ọnọ odo gbe e lọ,
Ooxa nbọ l'ọnọ odo gbe e lọ
Oxun nbọ l'ọnọ odo gbe e lọ,
Gbogbo ọkan-kan-le-nirinwo Irunmọlẹ
Ti nbọ nn lodo ngbe.

Ọrunmila wa n bọ l'ọnọ,
O b'Apa pa awoo Itagun
O ba Iroko awoo Igbona
O ba Arere awoo Ijoko
Wọn ni : "Baba t'obrika delẹ a maa mu u"
Ọrunmila ni : "Eewọ Orixax"
O ni: A-i bulẹ lori i kin ẹni
O ni: Ojiji-mọkọ-okun
O ni: Oun ni Oun tẹ ẹ nfa
O ni: Ooni lwa-ika alẹ-odo
O l'oun l'oun tẹ n'fa.

Oxe'tura

o	o
oo	oo
o	o
o	oo

 Verse 3 (Continued)

So declared Ifa-Oracle to the 200 divinities of the Right and the 200 divinities of the Left and the same to Orunmila, Omniscient among deities, as they set out fully-armed meaning to wage war across the seas.

Joining battle, they were scattered like broken plates, torn to shreds like cloth of out-worn weave.

Utterly amazed, Orunmila asked: "What happened?"

"This is the end', came the reply, "here is complete defeat."

One after another the four hundred divinities sought retreat across a perilous sea: Xongq was drowned, Orixalwa washed away, Oxun carried off, every one of them lost.

Then it was that Orunmila began his own crossing and straightway he came up against the diviner from Itagan nicknamed "*Apa Tree*" because of his skill in sorcery. Orunmila encountered the diviner from Igbona nicknamed "*Iroko Tree*" because of his love of malice. Orunmila came up against the diviner from Ijoko nicknamed "*Arere Tree*" because of his bent for treachery.

"Sire" said these three wicked characters to Orunmila, "the day is lost, the net is spread round you, your doom certain."

"God forbid" replied Orunmila, "initiates do not harm their master. Do you know 'Electric Fish of the Ocean'? Well, I initiated him unto Ifa. 'Wicked Crocodile of Rivers' too? well I initiated him into Ifa.

Oxe'tura

o	o
oo	oo
o	o
o	oo

 Ese 3 (Continued)

Oloye Agboqla:

Alakan-ni-aga to feegun e to ate-ate
O l'oun l'oun te n'fa.
Ikoro ti i tepa Oxun
O l'oun l'oun te n'fa.

Woni Baba ni 'bq l'qnq
"Elexin-Qyan,
Baba ni nbq, l'qnq
Adagba-ojomu,
Baba ni nbq l'qnq.
Okinkin ti i je "eyin Erin o fon
Baba ni nbq l'qnq,"
Ojiji-mokq-okun bq q odo
O m'Qpa
Q ni-iwa-ika-ale-odo bq q odo
O m'obele;
Te gba ti i feyin p'okq bq q odo
Wqn tq Qrunmila titi-iti
D'aarin ila-meji oju-oni
Nn l'Qrunmila ni: Ha!
O ni ojlugba abere oun bo o omi
Wqn ni; "Baba xa maa nxo"
Elexin-Oyan
Adagba Ojomu
Okinkin ti i je ehin Erin fon",
Wqn tq Qrunmila titi-iti
Wqn ti i de Oke-Odo,
Wqn te ite-ododo
Wqn gbe Baba leri i re

Oxe'tura

o	o
oo	oo
o	o
o	oo

 Verse 3 (Continued)

'Crab that Crawls Along River-Banks'

Well I initiated him into Ifa;

'Periwinkle of Streams, Oxun's Devotee'

Well, I initiated him into Ifa.

At this the three repentant diviners bowed in obeisance saying:

"It is indeed the Grand master that approaches.
Royal Knight of the City of Qyan,
First citizen of Ojomu,
The mighty Lord* whose name is
The sound of the elephant's trumpet.
It is indeed the Grand Master approaching"

"Electric Fish of the Ocean", pole in hand jumped into the sea.
"Wicked Crocodile of Rivers", oar in hand, jumped into the sea.
Rudder, he that guides boats from the rear, prepared to work.

They, guiding Orunmila over the waves, suddenly in mid-high sea,
heard him exclaim:

"My 240 needles have dropped into the deep"

But they, unruffled, made answer to Orunmila:

"Be not disturbed, Grand Master
Royal Knight of the City of Oyan
First Citizen of Ojomu
Whose name is 'the sound of the elephant's trumpet',
Be not perturbed."

Surely, safely,
They guided Orunmila to the upper bank
Where, spreading out a royal carpet,
They placed the Grandmaster there-on.

* An echo of Juan Mascaro's rendering of Chapter 10 verse 36 of the "Bhagavad Gita":

"I am the cleverness of the gambler's dice".

Oloye Agboḡla: Oxe'tura

o	u
oo	oo
o	u
o	oo

 Eṣe 3 (Continued)

Ojiji-moko-okun bḡ o odo
O m'abere mejile l'ogoji,
Ḣni-iwa-ika-ale odo bḡ o odo
O m'abere mejile l'ogoji,
Alakan-ni-aga-to feegun-e to-ate bḡ o odo
O m'abere mejile l'ogoji,
Ikoro-ti-i-t'epa-oxun bḡ o odo
O m'abere meji le l'ogoji,
Tegba-ti i-fehin-p'okḡ bḡ o odo
O m'abere mejile l'ogoji
Wḡn ni "Baba, abere yin pe mbi o pe"
O l'abere oun pe pere-pere
Bi ewe pere
Omo-awo e gba mbi e-e gba?
Wḡn l'awḡn gba godogodo ara
Okunkun wa m'ese mejeeji tido dain-dain
A dia fun Agunra ti i xe emexo ilele
Wḡn ni Ogun aye o ni ja a,
Wḡn ni t'orun o ni ja a.

Orin: Eewo orixa.

Egbe: Ko s'ogun ti i ja
Ti i gb'Agunra.

Awure:
Ma je o gun-aye oja Iḡ-Atḡ,Ifa,
Maje ogun-Ḣrun o ja wḡn.

Egbe: Axḡ.

Oxe'tura $\begin{pmatrix} o & o \\ oo & on \\ o & o \\ o & on \end{pmatrix}$ Verse 3 (Continued)

Whereupon,
"Electric fish of the Ocean" diving deep
 brought back 42 needles
"Wicked Crocodile of Rivers" diving deep
 recovered 42 needles
"Crab that crawls along River-Banks" diving deep
 brought back 42 needles
"Periwinkle, Oxun's devotee" diving deep
 recovered 42 needles
"Rudder that guides boats from the rear" dived deep
 brought out 42 needles.

Then they asked: "Grand master are your needles complete or not?."

Orunmila replied: "My needles are complete
 As complete can be."

Turning now to Initiate-Adepts,
 Orunmila asked: "Do you comprehend?."

They replied: "We comprehend perfectly
 What the Grandmaster says in parable."

Orunmila continued:

"The parable teaches
 That same lesson
 Taught to Agunra in the days of yore

When Ifa-Oracle declared:

You will not succumb to the wiles of the World
 You will not perish from heaven's wrath.

Song: God forbid!

Refrain: That Agunra should suffer any visitation.

Prayer: Protect Ijo-Ato from the wicked World
 Shield them against heaven's wrath, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Oxe'tura

o	o
oo	oo
o	o
o	oo

 Eṣe 3 (Concluded)

Oloye Agboṣṣa:

Orunmila wa mbṣ l'ona,
O wa ngbṣ taata at'igbo asa
O wa ba Lalode awo-aye
Mama-siko-ko-gede awo Ode-Orun,
Amorimo-yi-pon-gede-pon-gede awo Oloye
Awon meteta ni won ti nlu'kin fun Oloye.

Ifa ni: "Ikin a-t'aye-b'aye
Ikin a-t'irele-d'irele
Nn Ie wa 'nda laarin igbe.

Won ni: "Qdun o ke bebe
Bi ara Oloye Oji l'eni'.

Ifa ni ki won ni Orogbo agbe
Ki won ni iyangi Aparo,
Ki won ni paapa Agbonrin.

Orin: At'orogbo agbe,
A t'iyangi Aparo,
A ti paapaa Agbonrin.

Egbe: A t'oyin aiku,
L'Oloja nmu.

Awure:
Je ki aiku j'e fun Ijo-Ata
Je e won dagbalagba, je won d'arugbo.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Oxe'tura

o	o
oo	oo
o	o
o	oo

 Verse 3 (Concluded)

Agboqla:

After these events, Orunmila, travelling on, heard a familiar sound of drums reverberating from the very depths of the woods and following this sound he came upon three diviners:

Lalode, Master-diviner on earth,
Mama-sikoko-gede Master-diviner from heaven
A morimo-yi-pon gede-pongede Personal diviner to King Oloye.

— All three holding office as household diviners to the King.

With great shock and utter amazement Orunmila exclaimed

"Dare you bring into this lowly forest
 Ancient and primordial implements
 To hold consultation with Ifa?"

They, dejected, replied:

"Grave matters
 Require these desperate measures.

The King is ill, very ill,
 Tomorrow's festival bodes ill for all citizens
 Ourselves foremost
 Were he to die of this illness."

Orunmila tutored them:

"Make sacrifice
 With choice Bitter-Kola
 With one well-fed Bush-fowl
 With one spotless Deer."

Song: We have choice Bitter-Kola,
 One well fed Bush-fowl
 And One spotless Deer.

Refrain: Add one flaggon of honey pure and unmixt
 The King will live.

Prayer: May the members of Ijo-Ato live to a ripe old age.

Response: So may it be.

Notes to Verse 3

P.O. Ogunbowale "Awon Irunmale Ife-Yoruba" gives a variant of this verse ascribing it to OXE-Tura.

The botanical cognomens of these diviners may be explained by the Yoruba belief that some trees are the abodes of evil spirits or principles. Abraham (A Dictionary of Modern Yoruba, 1958) is helpful in this regard.

Apa-Tree is the Mahogany Bean Tree but according to Abraham.

"This tree is believed to be the abode of an evil spirit. It is said that witches and wizards gather at night at the foot of Igi-Apa" (page 57).

Iroko-Tree (African Teak) is commented on by Abraham thus:

"This tree is believed to be inhabited by a roguish, fairy" (page 316).

There is an unexplained discrepancy between the stated number of needles lost and the number of those recovered (210) and yet the text records that the needles were completely recovered. As in some Ifa verses this may be due to textual corruption.

Again the second part of the narration pertaining to the King of Oye's illness and subsequent recovery bears no obvious relation to the first part recounting the defeat of the divinities in a maritime battle.

Oxe-'Tura Ese 4

Oloye Agboḡla: Ifa ko o j'ẹbḡ nan o fin *etc.*

"Apere ma p'ete,
Apere ma p'ete,
Perepe."

A dia fun A-ji-ma x'oro ti i x'aya Ẹdu

Ayḡmileḡba ti i x'aya Ọsanyin

Korowo Koyeḡa

Ki m lḡ Iḡna

Dia fun Agoge maji no keja

Ọmḡ Orixia-Igbo-daji.

Orin: Bi mi o ba xowo mḡ.

Majo koo mi,

Egbe: Alagemo

A-fai xowo

A-dagba-axḡ.

Awure: Ibi yiowu ka wa, jẹ k'ire o maa ba wa, Ifa.

Egbe: Axẹ.

TRANSLATION:

Oxe-'Tura Verse 4

Chief Agboḡla: Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Speak the truth, eschew falsehood

Choose honesty avoid deceit

Truth pays, honesty pays."

So declared **Ifa Oracle** to **Impiety** wife of **The Black One**, another name for Ọrunmila. The same was declared to Midwifery, Osanyin's wife.

"Philanthropy is the price of money."

Thus declared Ifa to **Business**, devotee of Obatala the venerable deity.

Song: If I fail in business, I will not be moved

Refrain: I am unsolicitous like chameleon

Who does not buy, who does not sell

Yet is adorned with clothes of myriad hues.

Prayer: May blessings come our way, unsolicited, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Oxe-'Tura Ese Karun

Oloye Agboola: Ifa ko o j'ebọ nan o fin, etc.

"Too ni t'Oluwo,
Beẹ ni t'Oba-Ejio
Tufẹ ni t'Ojugbọ,
Adia fun arugbo
A-b'ori koko yeye,
Nijoti nlọ Oja-Ejigbomekun
T'oun t'axẹ lenu.

Oni: Eyiti a wi fun ogbọ l'ogbọ i gbọ,
Eyiti a wi fun ligba ni'gba i gba
Qrọ Tẹtẹ ba Ilẹ sọ n'llẹ i gbọ
Ẹnu Ẹyẹle l'Ẹyẹle i fi tun itẹ ẹ xe,
Bidan-bidan l'Alantakun fi i mu Igi-Oko,
Moriwo-Qpẹ ki-i x'iju wo ibomi,
Bi o xe oju Olodumare
Abamoda ki-da tiẹ ko ma-a xẹ
Aba Alagẹmọ ba da l'orixa i gba
Abede ni t'okra,
Okra-k'ida ki-i bẹ ti ẹ ti.

Orin: Iba Akukọ walaja.

Egbe: Eni t'o ti sun ko dide.

Awure:

K'ajinde o jẹ fun gbogbo Ijọ-Ato, Ifa,
Ma jẹẹ wọn o dubule Ojojo.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Oxe-'Tura Verse 5

Chief Agboola: Make our sacrifice auspicious, Ifa *etc.*

"Soon as the Oluwo, Master of the craft, makes a sign the
Ojugbono, his principal assistant, makes haste to comply;

"Soon as Oba-Ejio, Chief Priest of Oduduwa-Cult says a
word, straightway it comes to pass."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Venerable Age, bald and white with years
As he set out, armed with words of power,
To visit Ejigbomokun, ancient market of the gods.

Venerable Age said:

Whatever word I pronounce must come to pass,
Whatever command I give must be obeyed.

Spinach spreads over earth as it pleases
Oblivious of any hindrance to its wish;

Pigeon is architect of his own nest,
Spider weaves magic webs,
Delicate but secure,
From tree-top to tree-top.

Palm-fronds shoot straight heaven-ward
Turning an instant gaze
At the Omnipotent's very face.

I am the spinach,
I am the pigeon
I am the spider
And the palm-fronds.

I am Abamoda the shrub that wills to do and triumphs in doing.
I am the Chameleon that wills a colour and straightway becomes that
colour.

I am the sharp sacrificial blade that cuts once and cuts clean.
Whatever I will must come to pass.

Song The cock crows,

Refrain Dawn breaks

And behold the sleeping world wakes.

Prayer: Grant the members of Ijo Ato strength and health of body, Ifa.

Response So may it be.

Part VI B

Oxẹ-'Gbirẹtẹ

Oxe-Gb'Irete

o o
o o
o o
o o

The verse quoted below is a mantra believed to ensure the acceptance of the sacrifice by Olodumare, God Omnipotent.

Ofo (Oloye Agboqla):

Kojegege
Ikọ ọ ti,
Ikọ ọ fa
Ikọ-ọ-pe-aweni
Ipenpeju ni i x'ilekun f'ekun
Agara ni i x'ilekun f'ẹje
Omira ni i x'ilekun f'omọ
Ajaruwa ni i x'ilekun fun ooni
Olodumare ni i x'ilekun fojo.
Oxe-Gb'irete
Iwo l'ọ nxilekun ẹbọ ọ lẹ
Ti i fi d'ode-ọrun
Xilekun eyiti a nxe yi ko d'ode-ọrun.

Awure: Ijọ-Atọ x'ọdun ọdun yi,

Jẹ ẹ wọn xe t'amọdun.
K'igba wọn o le
K'awo wọn o le, Ifa
Ma jẹ ki nkan xe obirin wọn,
Ma jẹ ki nkan xe omọ
Orunmila ki wọn o r'ọju, ki wọn o r'aye, Ifa.

Egbe:

Orunmila ka ma f'eleyi xe axemọ
Axẹ.

Ofo:

Ikọnkọ reu-reu,
Ibamba gadi-gadi-gadi,
Ibi a ba ru'gbo si loni
Ibe l'a nbagbo l'ọla
Adia fun Ọlọfin A-fai ku-x'ayọ.

Orin:

Beni o ba ku eni a maa l'aye
Aiku ma ni iwai
Mani wa-man'iwa,
Aiku ma ni iwa.

Oxẹ-Gbirete $\begin{vmatrix} o & o \\ o & oo \\ oo & o \\ o & oo \end{vmatrix}$ Mantra

Chief Agboḡla: I invoke you *Oxẹ-gb'Irete* by the power of this mantra:

Kojegege, Ikqoti, Ikqora, Ikq o-pe-awe ni.

As the eyelid opens the gate for tears to fall
 As the dagger breaks the sluice-gate for blood to flow
 As the waters in rupturing herald the new-born babe
 As Ajaruwa alone holds the secret of the royal door of the king of Ifẹ
 As the Omnipotent alone can let out the morning sun
 So also in your appearance as Oxẹ-Gb'Irete,
 You Ifa, clear the way
 For sacrifice to reach the Omnipotent.

I now invoke you *Oxẹ-gb'Irete* to clear the path for our present sacrifice to ascend heaven-ward.

Prayer: Orunmila! Grant Ijọ Ato the grace
 To celebrate next festival as happily as this one.
 Bless them, increase their prosperity;
 Protect their women folk and their children;
 Orunmila! Grant them health of body and peace of mind;
 Ensure us many happy returns of this festival.

Refrain: So may it be.

Mantra (Chief Agboḡla): *Ikonko reu-reu,
 lbamba gadi-gadi*

Agboḡla: This mantra signifies that:
As the tree falls so shall it lie.

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Oduduwa, the Olofin.
 "You," said the Oracle, "shall rejoice in longevity."

Song: If we live long,
 Prosperity is ours;

Refrain: If we live well,
 We should live long.

Oxẹ-Gbirete $\begin{pmatrix} o & o \\ o & oo \\ oo & o \\ o & oo \end{pmatrix}$ Mantra (Concluded)

Orin: Bẹni o ba ku ẹni a, laya, ẹni a bimọ.

Egbe: Aiku ma ni wa
Maniwa-maniwa,
Aiku ma n'iwa
Bẹni o ba ku, ẹni a ma a kọ'le
Aiku ma n'iwa'
Man'iwa-man'iwa
Aiku ma n'iwa
Bẹni o ba ku ẹni a goroye baba ẹni
Aiku ma n'iwa
Man'iwa-man'iwa
Aiku ma n'iwa.

Awure

Qrunmila
Majẹki Ijo-Ato o ku
Ko-o ma binu si wọn
Ko-o ma ba wọn ja
Ko-o ma binu s'awa nan o,
Ko o fiyedenu, Qrunmila o.

Oxẹ-Gbirete $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \\ 00 & 0 \\ 0 & 00 \end{bmatrix}$ Mantra (Concluded)

- Song If we live long we shall have
 Many wives and children.
- Refrain If we live well,
 we should live long.
- Song If we live long
 The whole world is ours.
- Refrain If we live well,
 we should live long.
- Song If we live long
 Our heritage is secure.
- Refrain If we live well
 we should live long.
- Prayer: Save Ijo Ato from untimely death Ifa,
 Do not be sore vexed with them.
- Response: So may it be.
 Have pity on us all, Qrunmila.
-

Part VI C

Ọkọrọn-Sode (Ọkọrọn-Ogbe)

Conjuration Odu: Okoron-S'ode (Okonron-Ogbe)

o	oo
o	oo
o	oo
o	o

The Mantra below is recited during the splitting of the Kola-nuts and the Alligator, pepper pods. Eight valves of kola obtained from two split nuts are placed, concave-side up, on a plate.

Oloye Agboḡla: Eriwo x'o ko.
Egbe: Baa yin.
Oloye Agboḡla: Sode-so o
Okanran sode so
Ijo Iku obi ni iku ata o.
Egbe: Okonron-sode so.

TRANSLATION

Chief Agboḡla: Adept, be attentive.
Response: We are attentive.

Chief Agboḡla: Hail to you Ifa,
Obeisance to you as Ọkọrọn-s'Ode
As we split these Kola-nuts we also split the Alligator pepper pods.
Bless our rite, Ifa.
Response: By the aid of Ọkọrọn-S'Ode
The auspices will be good.

Ogbe-Atẹ (Ogbe-Ireṭẹ)

Ogbe-Atẹ $\left| \begin{array}{cc} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{array} \right|$ (Ogbe-Ireṭẹ)

The Mantra below accompanies Gin-libation

Oloye Agboṣa: Ifa ko o jẹbọ nan o fin *etc.*

Ka ta a'le,
Ka ta ẹ ẹnu
Otara-tara ni ixọn odo
Dia fun Kufodo
Omọ Ọlọti apẹ.

Orin: Erigi-Alo.
Egbe: Ifa, mama jẹ k'iku o pa Kufodo
Ka ri bi mu.

Awure: Ọrunmila ma jẹ k'iku o pa awọn Ijo-Atọ.
Egbe: Axẹ.

————— TRANSLATION —————

Chief Agboṣa: Make this sacrifice auspicious, Ifa.

"Correctness is the essence of true ritual.
Those who, accepting this teaching,
Offer libation, first to Mother-Earth
And then to the lips
Sail through life over smooth and calm waters."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Kufodo, he who serves wine in pitchers.

Song: Ifa, mighty Lord.
Refrain: Save Kufodo from the hidden hands of death.

Prayer: Save Ijo-Ato from premature death, Ifa.
Response: So may it be.

Part VI E

Qwq̄rin-X'Ogbe



Owonrin-X'Ogbe

Since Exu presides over the sacrificial ritual the first parts of the offerings necessarily belong to him. The verse quoted overleaf from Oworin X'ogbe clearly indicates the purpose of the ritual which is to avert Exu's adverse interference with the auspices.

Symbolic elements of the offerings are placed on a clean plate as follows:

1. Stalks removed from the split kola-nuts
2. Some grains of alligator pepper
3. Hairs from the sacrificial animal
4. Water Libation
5. Gin Libation
6. Some Palm-Oil

During the recitation of the verse, the officiating priest touches the plate containing the symbolic elements of sacrifice to the forehead of all Babalawo present. The ritual, special to Babalawo alone, seems designed to avert Exu's wrath from the priests.

The placation of adverse forces in sacrificial rituals is cardinal in Hindu practice also as the quotation below aptly illustrates.

"The Guru should the day before initiation worship the Deva of Obstacles with offerings according to his ability for the removal obstacles"¹

¹From *Mahanira Tantra: Tantra of the Great Liberation* by Arthur Avalon.

Owonrin-X'Ogbe

0	00
0	00
0	0
0	0

Oloye Agboqla:

Egbe

Oluwa mi akonpa o,
 A p'Eku, A p'Eja, A p'Eye, A p'eran, A pa'xu
 Eriwo xoko
 O dogbe, kini
 Ayin k'omode-ile wa gba fun Gbongbon
 Gbongbon isi wo ni?
 Gbongbon ti ki-i xi ni l'oko
 Gbongbon ti ki-i xi ni l'ado
 O dogbe-'Keji
 Won ni k'omode-ile wa gba fun Gbongbon
 Gbongbon isi wo ni?
 Gbongbon ti ki-i xi ni l'oko
 Gbongbon ti ki-i xi ni l'ada

Akonpa, Akonpa O
 Akonpa, Akonpa O
 Baayin
 Hen
 Hen
 Hen
 Hen
 Hen
 Hen
 Hen
 Hen
 Hen

TRANSLATION:

Chief Agboqla: Obeisance to you my sovereign lord
 Response: Obeisance to our sovereign and dread lord.
 Agboqla: Here are the sacrificial offerings:
 Bush-Rat, Dried Fish, Fowl, Beast, New Yams
 Response: Obeisance to the-sovereign lord, may he be pleased with us.
 Agboqla: Be attentive, adepts,
 Response: We are attentive.
 Agboqla: At first call, a little child was summoned to carry offerings
 to the dread lord.
 Response: Yes.
 Agboqla: Who is this dread lord?
 Response: He it is who neither farms nor trades.
 Agboqla: At second call the little child was asked to take offerings to
 the dread lord.
 Response: Who is this lord?
 Response: He it is who neither plants nor harvests.

Owonrin-X'Ogbe (Continued)

Agboḡla	Egbe
Qdḡbe'keta, wḡn ni k'ḡmḡde-ile wa gba fun Gbḡngbḡn	Hen
Gbḡngbḡn isi wo ni?	
Gbḡngbḡ ti ki-i xi ni I'ḡkḡ	Hen
Gbḡngbḡn ti ki-i xi ni l'ada	Hen

Agboḡla: Kini mbḡ l'ḡna ti nḡ Gbḡngbḡn o ?

Egbe: Exu Qdara ni mbḡ l'ḡna
Ti i jḡ Gbḡngbḡn O
Orunmila o o o
Exu Qdara ni mbḡ l'ḡna ti nḡ Gbḡngbḡn

Oloye Agboḡla:

Orin: Exu gba O b'odi a re
Egbe: Qwḡ-nrin-X'Ogbe k'Exu gba

Orin: Exu kuro lori awo o
Egbe: Owonrin-x'Ogbe K'Exu gba

Orin: O pa'le o di o fi'le odi jḡ
Egbe- Owonrin-X'Ogbe K'Exu gba

Orin: Exu gba tirḡ ko o lo
Egbe: Owonrin-x'Ogbe K'Exu gba

Orin: Exu kuro l'ori mi o
Egbe: Owonrin-x'Ogbe K'Exu gba.

Owonrin-X'Ogbe (Translation Continued)

Agboṣṣa: The third time the same request
Response: Indeed?
Agboṣṣa: But who is this mighty sovereign?
Response: He it is who neither ploughs nor sows.

Agboṣṣa: He bestrides the cross-roads!
We address him as the dread lord!
Who is it?
Response: It is Exu
The magician, the wonder-working lord,
It is Exu, the dread lord,
Who reigns over cross-roads,
Oh Orunmila.

Song: Accept this offering Exu and leave the auspices free
Refrain: May Exu accept the offering,
By the grace of Owonrin-x'Ogbe.

Song: Exu, let there be no obstacles to the diviner's rite
May Exu accept his tithes
Refrain: And leave undisturbed the auspices.

Song: Exu, let there be no contraries or enmity.
May Exu accept our offering
Refrain: And leave the auspices free.

Song: Accept your portion of the sacrifice, Exu
And grant us your good graces.
Refrain: May Exu accept our offering
And leave the auspices undisturbed.

Song: Exu, clear obstacles and hindrances
From my path, celebrant of this rite.
Refrain: May Owonrin-X'Ogbe be our witness
That we have propitiated Exu in due form.

Part VI F

Irosun-Ireṭe

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Irosun-Irete

Ofo

Agboṣṣa: Eriwo xoko
Egbe: Baayin

Agboṣṣa: Sarabiliki Awo ondo,
Oyigi awo Ode-Ijexa
Awon ni won xeke-xeda
Ni won xeda awo l'orun
Won ni o ma a ba ibi lo.

Orin: Aa bo mbe O
Egbe: Bṣṣ-bṣṣ bṣṣ-bṣṣ.
Orin: A a gbe ti'wa si're
Egbe: Bṣṣ-bṣṣ bṣṣ-bṣṣ

Awure (Oloye Agboṣṣa):

Da bo Orunmila!
Ko o fiyedenu Orunmila Agbonniregun,
Ifa!
Ko o fi ye de'kun
Ko o fi ye de gbogbo ara
Ifa ko o j'ebṣṣ nan o fin
Ijṣ-Atṣ X'ṣdun ṣdun yi je ki won xe
t'amodun
Je ki'gba won o le,
K'awo won o le,
Si asiki
Ninu alafia-ara
Orunmila ire ti won ti ni, majṣ ṣ o bo
Ma je ki won pedin
Ki won ma a le kun ni.

(0 0)
(0 0)
(00 00)
(0 00)

Irosun-Irete

Invocation.

Chief Agboḡla: Be attentive adepts.

Response: We are attentive.

Chief Agboḡla: Because Sarabiliki, master from Ondo City and Oyigi, master from the City of the Ijexa turned treacherous and because they broke covenant with their brother diviners, an evil curse was put on them to trail misfortune round the world.

Song: We will not suffer their fate.

Refrain: We certainly will not.

Song: We will keep faith,
We will keep covenant,
Like true brother-diviners.

Refrain: We will.

Prayer (Chief Agboḡla):

Obeisance to you, Orunmila Agbḡnmiregun Ifa,
Be patient with us,
Bear with us,
Have mercy on us at all times
Grant us good auspices for this sacrifice, Ifa.
May the next festival of Ijo Ato be happier than this
Grant success to their members
Increase their wealth,
Sustain their renown,
Grant them soundness of health
Take not away their prosperity,
But grant them more;
Let not their number decrease
That their fold may grow from strength to strength.

Irosun-Irete

o	o
o	o
oo	oo
o	oo

 Ofọ (Continued)

Awure

Oloye Agboqla:

Ma jẹ ki wọn r'Exu,
Ma jẹ ki wọn r'ejọ,
Ma jẹ wọn daran,

Ki aboyun-ile bi tibi-tire,
Ki aagan tọwọ ala b'osun,
Ki ọkunrun'-mbule dide.

Ki ile o r'ọju k'ona o raye.

Dabọ o Ifa!
Ma jẹ ki Ijọ yi o baje,
Ma jẹ ki ile oluwo won o baje,
Ma jẹ ki nkan xe awọn ọmọ wọn.

Dabọ o!
Ma jẹ ki nkan o xe babalawo Ijọ nan.

Gbogbo wa ti a wa l'eni jẹ ki a wa l'amọdun
Majẹ ki a fi eleyi xe axemọ.

Irosun-Irete

o	o
o	o
oo	oo
o	oo

 (Continued)

Prayer

Chief Agboola

Protect all members of Ijo-Ato from the trials of Exu,

Protect them from costly litigation and catastrophe.

May their women folk with child

Be safely delivered.

May the sick take up their beds and walk.

May all the members enjoy peace in their homes

And attain success in their work.

Obeisance to you Ifa!

Protect also the master-diviners of Ijo-Ato.

May we all here present today

Live to celebrate next year's festival together,

And may this festival not be our last.

Irosun-Irete Ọfọ (Continued)

Oloye Agboọla:

Ko o fiyedekun, Ọrunmila
Ko o fiyedekun
Ko o fiyede gbogbo ara.
Koo xeti were dan-danan-dan
Ọrunmila ko o ma binu,
Ọrunmila ko o ma binu, Ifa.

Ese-Ifa (Oloye Agboọla):

Ọrunmila lo di gbure de.
Ifa, mo lo d'ọlọmọ wape-wape.

Ọrunmila lo d'ọkaka
Ifa mo lo d'ẹran ori hun
Ifa l'oun o la'gi-agba dana.

Ọrunmila ma la'gi-agba dana
Ifa ni ti a ba pe k'oun ma lagi agba dana
Ifa l'oun o p'ọkẹrẹ oun jẹ.

Orin: Ọrunmila jọọ
Ifa ko-o ma p'ọkẹrẹ rẹ jẹ
Ijọ ixẹ-riran,
Ijọ ibo-didi,
Ijọ apo-kiko,
Ijọ oko-lilọ nkọ?

Ifa l'oun o ni i p'ọkẹrẹ oun jẹ mọ.

Irosun-Irete Invocation (Continued)

Chief Agboqla: Be patient with us, Orunmila!

Bear with us,
Have mercy on us always,
Give attentive ear to our supplications.
Turn away your wrath from us, Orunmila
And be not sore-vexed with us.

Verse (Chief Agboqla):

Orunmila said:

There is a matter on my mind.

I asked: Is this matter serious?

Orunmila replied:

It is serious for I am minded to destroy the Agba-drum, to
set fire to it like ordinary wood.

I pleaded:

Orunmila, be appeased, do not destroy the Agba-drum with
fire.

Ifa said:

If I accept your plea not to destroy the Agba-drum then
instead I shall eat up my Bush-Rat.

Song: Orunmila please do not eat up your Bush-Rat.

Think of all his services to you —

Running errands;

Casting lots at divination;

Keeping your treasury;

Planting and harvesting your crops.

If you do eat him up, pray, who will render you these services?

Chief Agboqla:

"Very well then," replied Ifa. "I will not eat up my Bush Rat."

Irosun-Irete Ofọ (Continued)

Ese-Ifa

Oloye-Agboqla

Ifa lo di gburede
Ifa mo lo d'olomọ wape-wape.

Orunmila lo d'okaka
Ifa mo lo d'eran ori hun
Ifa l'oun o l'agi-Agba dana,

Orunmila ma l'Agi-Agba dana,
Ifa ni ti wọn ba ni k'oun ma lagi-Agba dana
O l'oun o pa apẹtẹ-bi oun jẹ.

Orunmila jọọ
Ifa ko-o ma p'apẹtẹbi rẹ jẹ
Ijọ iyan-gi gun,
Ijọ ọbẹ-sise,
Ijọ omi-pipọn
Ijọ ile-pipa nkọ?
Ifa l'oun o p'apẹtẹbi oun jẹ mọ.

Awure:

Orunmila ma jẹ ki nkan xe gbogbo obirin Ijọ-Atọ.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Irosun-Irete Invocation (Continued)

Chief Agboola:

Orunmila said:
There is a matter on my mind.

I asked:
Is the matter serious?

Orunmila replied:
It is serious:
I am minded
to set fire
to the Agba-drum.

I pleaded:
Orunmila, do not destroy the Agba-drum.

Ifa said:
If I accept your plea, If I do not set fire to the Agba-drum,
then, instead I shall eat-up my handmaid.

Song:

Orunmila please
Do not eat up your Handmaid.
Think of her services to you:
Pounding Yam,
Preparing Stew,
Fetching clean water,
Keeping your house clean.

If you eat her up, pray,
who will render you these services?

Chief Agboola: "Very well then" answered Ifa," I will not eat up my Handmaid."

Prayer: Protect Ijo-Ato's women-folk, Orunmila.

Response: So may it be.

Irosun-Irete Ofọ (Continued)

Ese-Ifa

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa lo di gburede,
Ifa mo lo d'ọlọmọ wade-wape
Orunmila lo d'ọkaka,
Ifa mo lo d'ẹran orihun
Ifa l'oun o l'Agi-Agba dana
Ifa ni bi wọn ba ni k'oun ma l'Agi-Agba dana
Ifa l'oun o p'Akapo ọmọ oun jẹ.

Orin:

Orunmila jọọ
Ko-o ma p'Akapo ọmọ rẹ jẹ.

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ijo eku mejioluwere.

Egbe: Ariro

Ifa ko-o ma ro eyi ti moxe
Ariro.

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ijo ẹja meji abiru gbada-gbada.

Egbe: Ari ro,

Ifa ko-o ma ro eyiti mo xe
Ari ro.

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ijo obi'dię meji ab'ẹdọ ruku-ruku.

Egbe: Ari ro,

Ifa ko-o ma ro eyiti moxe,
Ariro.

Agboḡla:

Ijo Ewure meji abamu rẹdẹ-rẹdẹ
Ariro,

Egbe:

Ifa ko-o ma ro eyiti mo xe
Ariro.

Irosun-Irete Invocation (Continued)

Chief Agboqla:

Orunmila said:

There is a matter on my mind.

I asked:

Is the matter serious?

Orunmila replied:

It is serious:

I am minded

to set fire

to the Agba-drum.

I pleaded: Orunmila, do not destroy the Agba-drum.

Ifa said:

If I accept your plea, If I do not set fire to the Agba-drum,
then I will eat up my own Devotee.

Song:

Orunmila please

Do not eat up your very own Devotee.

Think of his services to you:

Chief Agboqla: His regular offering

Of two well-fed Bush-Rats.

Refrain:

Have mercy, Ifa

Look not on his offences,

But have mercy.

Agboqla:

His regular offering of two large Fish,

Have mercy, Ifa.

Refrain:

Look not on his offences,

But have mercy.

Agboqla:

His regular offering of two over-fed Hens,

Have mercy, Ifa.

Refrain:

Look not on his offenses

But have mercy.

Agboqla:

His regular offering of two spotlessly black Goats.

Refrain:

Have mercy, Ifa

Look not on his offenses

But have mercy.

Irosun-Irete Ofọ (Concluded)

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa ni to ba jẹ bẹẹ ni
O l'oun o ni pa Akapo omọ oun jẹ mọ
O ni: K' Akapo oun o n' Igbin, ko ni koko Ewe-Ifa.

Ifa ni: Ile Igbin ki-i ni Igbin lara
Ewe otẹye-gbile ki-i b'ale ja
Mo di Ewe Olotipe-dile, sọ,

Egbe: Ifa majẹ ile awo bajẹ, Ologbo.

Awure: Ifa, majẹ ẹ Ijo-Atọ o bajẹ
Ko-o ma binu si Ijo-Atọ.

Egbe: Axẹ.

TRANSLATION

Irosun-Irete Invocation (Concluded)

Chief Agboḡla:

Ifa said:
You have reasoned and pleaded aright and now that I think over your
pleas I find it right and proper not to eat up my own Devotee, but
as propitiation my Devotee should offer: Giant-Snails and Sacred Ifa-
leaves.

~~The Devotee snails~~ and here the leaves.

Ifa said:

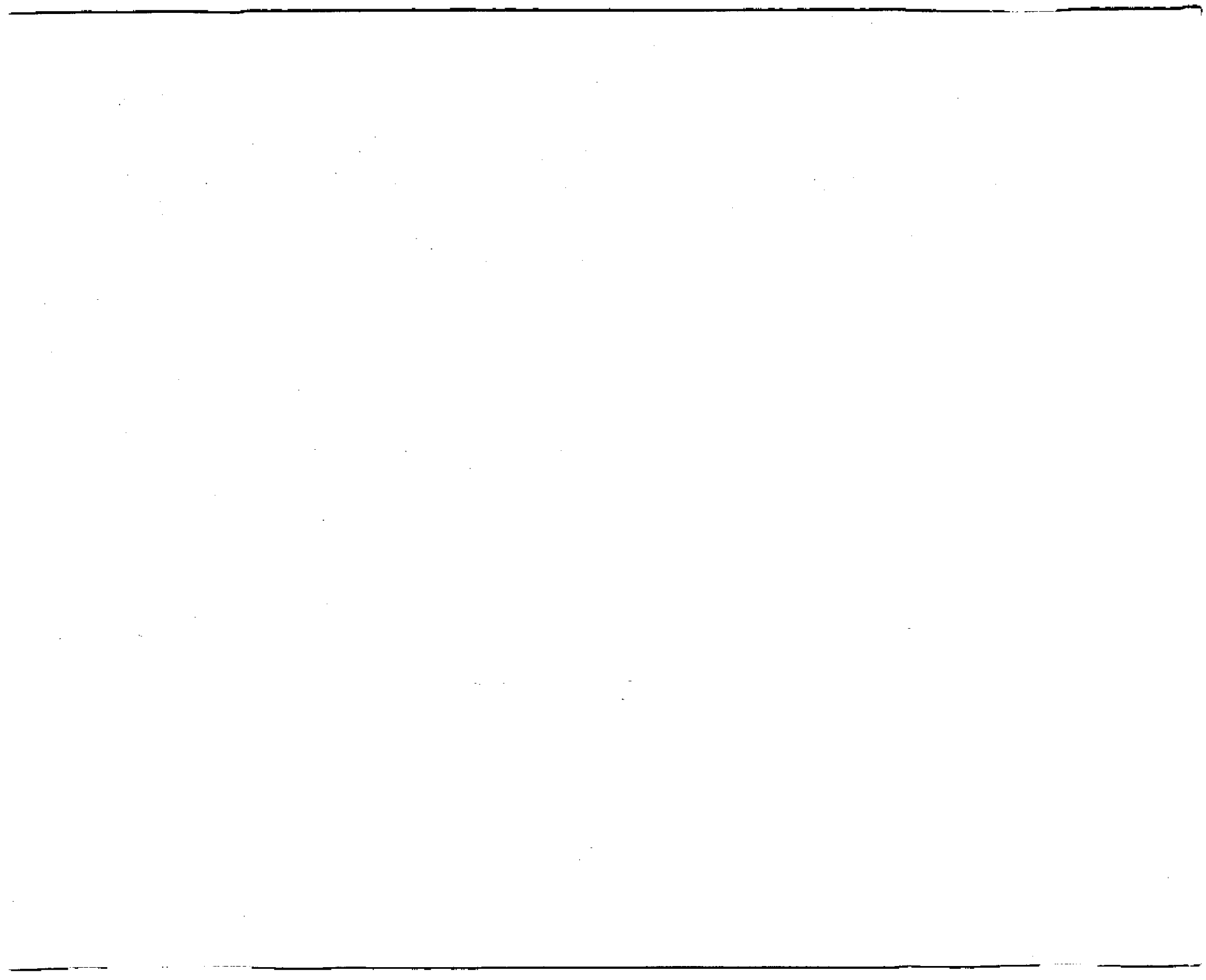
Just as the Giant-Snail
Lives secure within its shell
So secure shall be your life;

Just as Creeping plants
Live in harmony with Earth,
So shall you live in harmony with all men.

Prayer: May peace and harmony reign
in the diviner's household.
May Ijo-Ato flourish for ever,
May Ijo-Ato never incur your wrath, Ifa.

Response: So may it be.

Part VII
Casting the Kola-nuts



Part VII

Casting the Kola Nuts

(Oturunpon-'Fun)

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0	00

Before casting the kola-nuts, it is obligatory for the officiating priest to recite verses under the odu known as Oturunpon-'Fun. These verses stress the importance of ritual correctness and hygienic protocol as necessary conditions for obtaining a favourable outcome on casting. Details of the verses recited by Chief Agboq;a on vigil nights of different festivals, as edited by me, are given in the pages that follow.

The auspices are read as favourable on first cast when the eight valves of kola-nuts fall with 4 concave faces upward and 4 concave faces downward.

Two other permutations accepted as auspicious are:

1. All valves falling concave face upward.
2. All valves falling with concave faces downward.

Any other permutation is rejected and repeated casts must be made until one of the three acceptable permutations mentioned above appears.

Spontaneous jubilation from the audience usually follows a first favourable cast; the officiating priest is profusely congratulated for his ritual expertise and Orunmila is eulogised for ensuring the Almighty's Acceptance of the year's sacrifice. Hence the Jubilation Verse from Irẹte-Meji $\begin{matrix} \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \\ \circ & \circ \end{matrix}$ appended at the end of the chapter.

Otunrunpon-Fun

Oloye Agboqla

Ipe: Ifa ko-o ma binu si Ijo-Atọ
Koo fiyeden u, ko o fi yekun, ko o fiyede gbogbo ara
Ko o j'ebọ nan o fin Orunmila, Agbonniregun, Ifa
Obi Odun wọn ni yi, Ifa
Ti ko ba si nkan-kan, ko o gba a
Orunmila, Agbonniregun, Ifa
Wọn x'odun odun yi jẹ wọn xe tẹ mi
Ijo-Atọ x'odun yi jẹ wọn xe t'amodun
K'i gba wọn o le,
K'awo wọn o le
O-o binu si wọn? O-o ba wọn ja?
Wọn o x'eku? wọn-o run?
Orunmila obi odun Ijo-Atọ re.

Ese-Ifa:

Ko o fi yedenu, Orunmila o
Iliki wọn l'aran wọn-o l'ade
Ega xẹ-xẹ-xẹ
Wọn l'aran wọn-o l'agogo-idẹ
Elemo-nikun l'awo Akoko
Akan l'awo ibaba,
Akan l'awo ikokọ
Akan ti nrin n'ibaba
Nna na ni nrin n'ikokọ
Bi eniti ko b'olodo tan
A-ko-Ikin-n'nu-igba-da,
In'n l'awo otun-ni yaga.
Ejigbo-owu-o-to-karahun-ahun-nifo
Awo iba, awo ibokun.

Otunrunpon-'Fun

oo oo
o oo
oo o
n oo

 Plea to Ifa

Chief Agboola:

Ifa, do not be sore-vexed with Ijo-Ato
 Be patient with their faults,
 Bear with their short-comings.
 Have mercy on them at all times.
 Grant good auspices for their sacrifice.
 Orunmila Agbomiregun Ifa.

Ifa, I present these Kola-Nuts from Ijo-Ato; if there be nothing
 grievous, grant their members an unequivocal verdict on the very first
 cast.

Hail to you Orunmila Agbomiregun Ifa
 Grant them happiness,
 Increase their wealth,
 Multiply their prosperity.
 Are you sore-vexed with them?
 Will they enjoy long life?
 Will they enjoy good health?
 All these we ask as we prepare to cast the Kola-nuts;
 Deign to grant their requests.

Verse

"Iliki, not a king but velvet clothed
 Is the name of one diviner;

Weaver-Bird noisy like golden gongs
 Is the name of another;

Woodpecker, King among birds
 Is the name of one diviner;

Secretive Crab disdainful of other watery sprites
 Is the name of another;

I prefer palm-nuts for divination
 Is the name of one diviner;

Coral beads striped like tortoise-shell
 Is the name of another;

Masters from the cities of Iba and Ibokun
 Complete the divination college.

O-o le roju
Ko o ko o bayi
Ko o da a bayi,
Ko o tẹ ẹ bayi.

A-f'ewu ọrun difa,
In'n ni x'awo Igbara-xoko
Ixu lo jina tan
Awo Ọlọyẹ moyin
Awọn oke l'ona Ibadan.

Adia fun Oduduwa a-gbira-nikasin
Yio f'aye gbogbo x'ofẹ je
Ẹrin sobo-sobo ni t'opo,
Ẹrin sen wele-sen wele ni ti ọdọkọ
Dọkọ-d'ọkọ a-b'erin sẹnwele-sẹnwele,
Ilẹkun o mẹnse aase
Aase o mẹnse ilẹkun;

Axọ awe o bale
A maa gba gburu-gburu n'ita Ọba
Ayanbiliki awo Iliki
Iliki awo iliki
Awo kere-kere-kere
Awo ọaja'lẹ
In'n l'awo aj'ado gbiri-gbiri.

Adia fun Ẹdun
Wọn ki Ẹdun o bọri Elu
Ẹdun bọ'ri Elu, ko fin.

These diviners practised the orthodox method, to wit: they collect the palm-nuts in the left palm, next they gather as many as possible of the nuts with the right hand; what remains in the left palm, one nut or two, indicates the correct configuration to mark.

Of the orthodox school were also these masters:

One named: "*I will sacrifice even my last cloak*", diviner from Igbara x'oko.

and the other: "*Oven-fresh like newly-cooked yams*", diviner from the city of Oyo and the hills of Ibadan.

They consulted Ifa-Oracle
For Oduduwa — He who was
destined for greatness
from the birth of Time.

And the Oracle declared to Oduduwa:

"You will inherit the whole world as a free gift for
eternity."

It came to pass.

Three masters belonging to a different school who were
nicknamed

*"The widow smiles wistfully, The adulteress
smiles seductively."*

and

*"The door has no footstep just as the foot
lacks hinges."*

and

*"This fellow's cloak stops short of his feet yet sweeps the king's
square clean as he walks"*

They consulted Ifa-Oracle for a diviner surnamed "White
Monkey" when he had to perform sacrificial rites for a client
named Elu. Alas, the sacrifice was not accepted by the gods.

Adia fun Iro
Wọ̀n ni o x'ọ̀run Agbira Irẹ̀si,
Iro x'ọ̀run Agbira-Irẹ̀si ko da.

Won ni: E e xe iwọ̀ Ẹ̀dun
To o bọ̀'ri Elu ti ko fin?
O l'oun ji o l'oun o boju ale.

E e xe iwọ̀ Iro,
To o x'ọ̀run Agbira-Iresi, ti o da?
O l'oun ji o l'oun o wẹ̀ ẹ̀sẹ̀ ikasi owuro.

Inanaran awo Inannaran
Inannaran awo Inannaran
Afẹ̀ẹ̀ bojo,
Gbaruku-alẹ̀
Ti a logbu-logbu-lo mu wọ̀le,
Orente
Yio gb'obi l'ọ̀wọ̀ kan.

A dia fun Iki dẹ̀rẹ̀.
Njọ̀ ti nlọ̀ re e x'ọ̀run Qlọ̀fin.

Orin: A r'awo l'oni, a r'Iki

Egbe: Ifa x'ọ̀wọ̀ dẹ̀rẹ̀
Gbobi ẹ̀ oo
x'ọ̀wọ̀ dẹ̀rẹ̀.

These three unorthodox masters likewise counselled a diviner surnamed "*Red Monkey*" when he had to perform sacrificial rites for the lord of Iresi. Red Monkey's sacrifice was similarly rejected by the gods.

Naturally there were questions why these events should be so.

When "White Monkey" was asked; "Why was your sacrifice not accepted by the gods?" he replied:

"I did not wash my dirty face ere I commenced the sacrificial rites."

When "Red Monkey" was asked "Why was your sacrifice rejected by the gods?"

He answered:

"I neglected to wash my dirty feet on the morning of the sacrificial rites."

There was a diviner named "*Iki*" (*Fat Animal*) who avoided the mistakes of "*White Monkey*" and "*Red Monkey*" by consulting masters of the orthodox school in preparation for a divination assignment for the Olofin.

These masters, named "*Inannanran the Great*", "*Afebojo Evergreen of memory*", "*Vast in Ifa*" and "*Accurate in divination*" declared to "*Iki*" in these words.

"The auspices will be good and unequivocal provided you follow correct procedure."

These words came to pass.

Song

I am, that Iki of ancient days
And I come before you today, Ifa.

Refrain

Accept these Kola-nuts with favour,
Ifa,
Accept them with blessing.

Odun Ifa

Oloye Agboḡla:

Ifa, Obi nan re o!
Awo-ile,
Awo-ode
Ogboni-Efon,
Obi nan re o, Ifa.

Egbe: Ifa aa gba a, A gba a.

Awure:

Wḡn x'ḡdun yiję ki wḡn xe t'ęęmi, Ifa Ijḡ-Atḡ x'ḡdun ḡdun yiję ki
wḡn xe t'amḡdun
T'ḡrḡ ba mbęę a-a pe ko-o ma wi, Ifa.

(Oloye Agboḡla da obi, Obi yan l'ḡwḡ kan)

Egbe: Heepa!

Oluwo Adesilu: Ko ję ma-a gba a,

Oluwo Ijḡ-Atḡ) inu rę lo dun sii o,
Ifa o je ma gba a,
Inu rę lo du si i o
Ifa o jęę kḡ Obi s'awo l'ḡwḡ.

Egbe: S'awo l'ḡwḡ o e e e e
Ifa o ję ma-a gba a,
Inu rę lo dun si i o
Ifa o ję kḡ Obi s'awo l'ḡwḡ.

Chief Agboqla: Ifa, once again, I present the Kola-nuts to you as I prepare to cast them. I call upon master-diviners here present and wherever dispersed and I supplicate the Lord of the city of Efon to bear witness to the correct procedure in this rite and so support me with their authority.

Response: Ifa will accept the Kola-nuts, Ifa will surely accept.

Prayer:

Chief Agboqla: May the members of Ijo Ato live to celebrate every festival as happily as they do this year's.

If there be an ominous thing Ifa, we do not forbid you to declare it.

Chief Agboqla's cast is auspicious on first throw.

Song

Chief Adesilu
(High Priest of Ijo Ato):

The lord cannot but accept our supplication
For the Lord is pleased with us.
Ifa is pleased with us, therefore,
Ifa cannot reject his devotee's supplication.

Refrain

Ifa never rejects the supplication of the devotee with whom
He is pleased.

Note on the Verse: The original Yoruba text is difficult to translate, (into lucid English because of the involved symbolism and complicated imagery telescoped into one another. I have attempted to get over the difficulty by narrating the verse as one continuous story whilst taking the liberty to interpolate unto it the unstated ideas underlying the verse as a whole.

These ideas centre round the theme of ritual correctness and orthodoxy. Lijadu gives a variant text in verse 32 page 38) of Lijadu, E. M. *Orunmila* (1908; 1972) which he however ascribes to Irete-sa not Onurunpon-Fun as in our text.

Kiki Odu lori Obi ti o yan l'owo kan

Irete-Meji

0	0
0	0
00	00
0	0

Baba-Ilorin nki Ifa
Baba-Ede ngbe e l'ese

Akin jeje Akin Olowu,
Akin gidigidi, Akin Olowu,
B'eni ba nre'le-imule,
K'eni san oḅe baba,
K'eni san oḅe oje,
Nitori awo eni nn ni i x'eni ni'hun
Ina ori o to po
Opo nan o to Ina ori.
Ki eḗrun yan,
K'a pade le luju f'Ogbogbo
K'a f'ori agada rupo je
Aja ni i f'ami ni'bu,
Aja ni i f'ami l'oro,
Exinxin o pate ileke
Iyanmu-yanmu de igba oniyo o kun-yunmu-kun-yunmu
A difa f'Ogoja ti i xe omoba lalade Oyo,
Di fa fun Arira ti ixe omoba L'Otu-lfe
Ikan nsunkun pe oun o loke,
Ikan nsunkun pe oun f'aya.
Ruru ebo,
Eru atuk'Exu
Keepe, keejina
Ewa ba'ni ni jebutu omọ
Omọ ti a ki odu yi xe ewe-lfa re
K'a ma a pe ni *Ojodu*.
Eke waa pa'bi o di gagaaga
Qdale pa'bi o di gogoogo
Eninu're pa'bi o yan gbangba
Adia fun Ojodu ti i xe Omọ Arira n'lfe
Emi wa dupe ore Obi to yan.

Jubilation verse after an auspicious first cast: Irete-Meji $\begin{pmatrix} o & o \\ a & o \\ oo & oo \\ o & o \end{pmatrix}$

Master from Ilorin leads (Master from Èdẹ repeats line by line):

Be bold but cautious,
Be manly and circumspect; be wise
As initiates that meet in secret conclave
Armed with hidden daggers
Of sharp pointed copper or of lead.

Be careful:
For oft a brother obligated
Is none but enemy concealed.

Be wary:
A little matter may seem trivial
A trivial matter may prove fatal.

Be provisioned,
Long before returning drought
Turns into dry brown, fields that once were lush green.

Thus declared three diviners named:

*"Dogs lap up water standing or crouched",
"Flies lay eggs that mimic tiny beads",
"Mosquitoes fly over salt in abortive quest."*

They declared it

To Ogoja, Princess of Oyo, sorrowing for a husband,
To Arira, Prince of ancient Ifẹ wanting a wife.

"Sacrifice to the gods," said Ifa. "Offer tithes to Exu. You will be happy in marriage, fruitful in bed."

They married, they begat and named their son *OJODU* As Ifa-Oracle predicted.

And to this very Ojodu, son of Arira, prince of Ifẹ,

The Oracle declared: "The unrighteous and deceitful
Receive bad auspices
When they supplicate me with Kola-nuts;
"The pure in heart and upright
Receive tokens of favour
So often as they fly to my patronage."

Ọdun Ifa

Baba Ilorin *ati* Baba Ede:

Orin: Nxe
Ojodu de ọmọ Arira
Ojodu de o, ọmọ Arira.

Egbe: Awo ma dupe ore obi to yan o ee
Ojodu de ọmọ Arira
Heepa Ifa! Heepa 'mọle!

TRANSLATION:

Master from Ilorin *and* Master from Ede:

Song: Please join me in this song,
I am Ojodu son of Arira.

Refrain:
Like Ojodu in ancient days
The diviner gives thanks
for good auspices
received from Ifa today.

Hail, Hail to you Ifa,
Hail to you mighty divinity.

Notes on the Verse

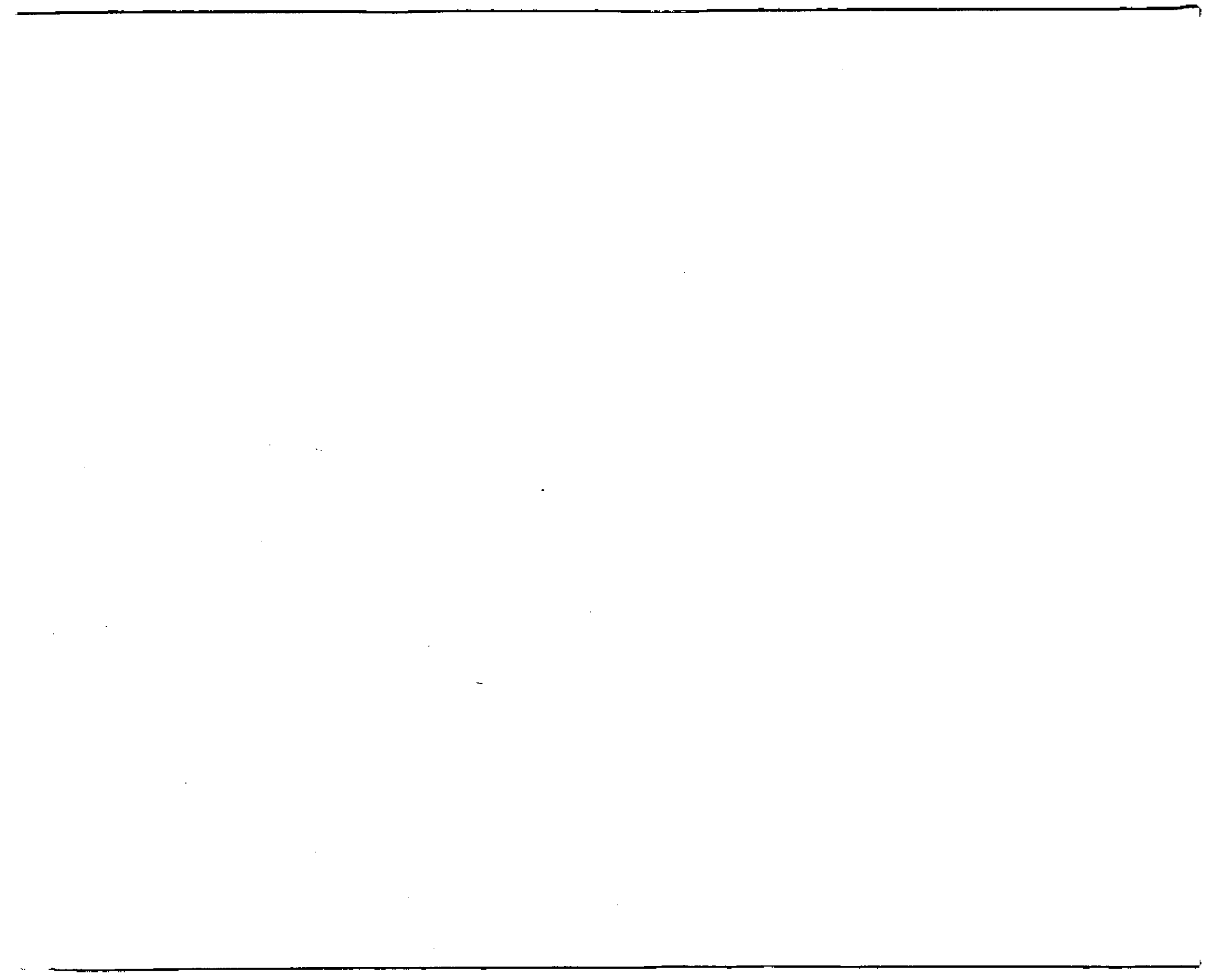
Wm. Bascom (1969) "Ifa Divination" pages 446-448 gives a variant of this verse including the story not given in the Babalawo's text above. As the story clarifies the text I quote from Bascom below. The story concerns Osu an Ọyọ Princess (Ogoja in our text) and Arera (Arira in our text) Prince of Ife.

"Both were trying to get children. They met and Arera had intercourse with Osu and Osu became pregnant. Arera told Osu that his child should be called OJODU. The people of Ife wanted to buy him so that the Oni should sacrifice him. When they tied Ojodu down he began to weep that he had been taken to his own town as a captive. So the King of Ife gave him 8 valves of Kola-nut and when he cast them four fell concave side up four concave side down. Then the people began to sing: This is indeed Ojodu, son of Arera."

Note: I have corrected the slight error in Bascom's translation of the last paragraph.

Part VIII

The Concluding Sacrificial Rites



Part VIII

The Concluding Sacrificial Rites

The concluding sacrificial rites consist of the undermentioned four stages:

- (a) Sacrifice to Ifa
- (b) Second sacrifice to Exu (or other designated Orixá)
- (c) Casting of a second set of Kola-nuts
- (d) Casting for interested individuals in the audience

1: Sacrifice to Ifa

The sacrifice to Ifa is made with parts of each of the offerings presented by the celebrant for the year's festival viz-Kola-nuts, Bitter-Kola, New Yam, Blood from the sacrificial animal, Palm-Oil, Salt, Gin-Libation, Blood from the Tortoise, Fluid from the Giant-Snail, Head of the Bush-Rat, Head of the Dried-Fish, Head of the immolated animal.

The details of this particular rite are given below.

1.1 Kola-Nuts

As noted earlier two Kola-nuts have already been selected at the beginning of the ceremony. These nuts have been split and cast as described under Part VII of this book.

Ọdun Ifa

Now, Valves of kola-Nuts are distinguished as "male" and "Female" according to certain structural characteristics so that the eight valves resulting from splitting the 2 nuts consist of four male and four female parts.

Following a satisfactory cast one male and one female valve are given to the celebrant whilst another pair of male and female valves is put in the dish of sacred Palm-nuts as Ifa's share of the offering.

The rite is accompanied by the chant and refrain given below:

Abọrẹ:

Ọrunmila gb'Obi ẹ.

Egbe:

Dede a j'obi

Jayo Jayo O

Dede a j'obi.

TRANSLATION:

Priest:

Ọrunmila!

Be pleased to accept your share of Kola-Nuts.

Refrain:

The Lord will accept,

He will surely accept them.

1.2 Bitter-Kola

Two Bitter-Kola Nuts have their ends cut off. The remaining nuts are then split length-wise so as to produce four valves. Each valve has a plain cut surface and a concave surface.

The four valves are cast in the usual way the result being interpreted as favourable if two plain surfaces turn upwards and two plain surfaces turn down wards.

One upward turning valve and one downward turning valve are given to the celebrant whilst the remaining pair is put in Ifa's dish as its share of the offering.

1.3 New Yam

One tuber is selected from the Yam offering. The two ends are cut off to obtain two cone-like pieces. Each cone is then cut diagonally into two using a new knife specially provided for the occasion. Two of the resultant four pieces of Yam-tuber are rubbed with palm oil on their cut surface, the other two are not so treated.

The four pieces are cast in the usual way. The auspices are read as favourable if two oiled surfaces and two un-oiled surfaces turn upwards. One oiled piece and one un-oiled piece are put in Ifa's dish as its share of the Yam offering.

1.4 Immolation

The sacrificial animal is brought in. A junior priest selects one of the sacred Palm-Nuts and uses it to strike the animal on its forehead in unison with the following Chant and Refrain:

Abore:

Kamala, Kamala
Aja to ba f'ori K'Ogun
O ti K'amala sile
Kamala, Kamala.

Egbe:

Kamala, Kamala
Ewure to ba f'ori K'Edu
O ti K'amala sile
Kamala, Kamala.

TRANSLATION:

Priest:

Ready for the Knife
Ready for the pot
The dog* that dares Ogun
Is ready for the table.

Refrain:

Ready for the Knife
Ready for the pot
The goat^[3] that knocks against
The Black-Lord
Is ready for the table.

*The bleating of the frightened animal on its way to immolation evokes a chant
from the audience.*

Eriwo

Èran ti o roro,
Awọn ni o le o,
Eran ti o roro.

Audience

If the beast is wild,
Strong must be the net,
Wild beast, Strong net.

*The bleating rises to a crescendo and suddenly stops as the animal's head is
severed in one clean sweep.*

1.5 Blood

The warm blood gushing out of the immolated animals neck vessels is collected in a large bowl which is brought before Ifa's shrine. Handfuls of the

blood are scooped unto the dish of sacred Palm-Nuts to the accompaniment of the chant and refrain below:

Abore A r'omi rara o!	Priest Ifa does not request water!
Egbe Ejẹ ni o jẹ o!	Refrain: He prefers blood!
Abore A r'omi rara o!	Priest He does not want water!
Egbe Ejẹ ni o jẹ!	Refrain He prefers blood!
Abore Ejẹ lu xoro-xoro!	Priest Rivers of blood!
Egbe Iye ọmọ o o F'ẹjẹ s'ọmọ l'ọju sun Iye ọmọ.	Refrain The new-born child First views its mother Through rivers of blood.
Abore Ijọ Iya mi bi mi,	Priest The day I was born,
Egbe Ejẹ mo mu x'osun kin ara.	Refrain I was anointed with blood As if with camwood.
Abore Ejẹ Ejẹ re xoro-xoro	Priest Blood, Rivers of blood.
Egbe Ejẹ bale ibi a d'ẹrọ!	Refrain: Let it flow, Blood propitiates evil!

1.6 Palm-Oil

Some Palm-Oil is poured unto the sacred Palm-Nuts thoroughly mixing the oil with the blood and other contents in the dish: this prevents clotting.

During the rite the following chant and refrain are sung:

Abore:	Priest
Ojodu de eyin Ife	Here is rich red oil
Beḡ ba repo rere!	To make good stew!
Ẹ bu s'ọbẹ O.	So says Ojodu to you Ife nobles.
Egbe:	Refrain:
Ojodu de eyin Ife	You nobles of Ife
Be e r'epo rere	Here be good red oil
Ẹ bu s'ọbẹ!	For good stew!

1.7 Salt

Some salt is sprinkled unto the sacred Palm-Nuts in the dish whilst the chant and refrain below are sung.

Abore	Priest
Olu,	Lord,
Mama jẹ n tẹ o	Let me never fall from grace ^(*)
Egbe	Refrain:
Kaka K'awo O tẹ.	Diviners never fall from grace.
Awo a r'okun r'ọsa	Food cannot lack salt
A re gb'iyọ.	So long as oceans and seas prevail.

^(*) There is a word play on the three meanings of the Yoruba verb "tẹ" viz: "to lack salt" "to be taste less" "to fall from grace"
Miser = Tortoise. Like the fox in European folk tales, the tortoise is portrayed in Yoruba as a miser and a trickster.

1.8 Gin

Gin libation is poured on the Sacred-Palm-Nuts to the accompaniment of the following chant and refrain.

Abore
Oti re karo!

Priest
I pour you this libation, Ifa!

Egbe:
Mo ba o mule
Mama da mi
Mo ba o mule.

Refrain:
We share this drink
An everlasting covenant
Mother-Earth being our witness.

1.9 Tortoise

The head of the tortoise is slowly severed by repeated sawing of it against the sharp edge of its shell in the neck region.

The priest says:

Ida Awun ni afi i pa Awun.

TRANSLATION:

The Miser is sacrificed with its own sword.

The blood from the sacrificed tortoise is allowed to drop unto the sacred Palm-Nuts.

1.10 Giant-Snail

The conical end of the Giant-Snail's shell is knocked off allowing the darkish green fluid from the snail to drop freely on the sacred Palm-Nuts. Whilst the following Chant and refrain are sung:

Abore
Ki ni Igbin fi ju won lo? Why is the Giant Snail unequalled?

Priest

Odun Ifa

Egbe

Aixeje n'Igbin,
fi ju won lo
Aixeje

Refrain

Because its sacrifice
is bloodless

As the dripping fluid is passed round the audience, each person collects some of it in his palm and proceeds to rub it over the crown of his head. This is supposed to confer blessings of a peaceful life as the following Chant and refrain assert:

Abore

Igbin de,
omọ ẹlẹrọ akoko

Priest

Hail to the Giant-Snail
Though its shell be hard
It's fluid brings peace

Egbe

Peṛọ si mi n'ile,
Peṛọ si mi l'ona.

Refrain

Grant me peace at home,
Grant me peace at work.

1.11 Bush-Rat

Next to the goat, the Bush-Rat is Ifa's preferred sacrificial animal, the one used for sacrifice is bought ready-killed and dried then pierced through from mouth to tail end with a long stick for easy handling. In this condition of the animal the head is very easily removed from the body. The detached head is touched to the sacred Palm-nuts as a symbolic offering of the whole animal to Ifa whilst the song and refrain below are chanted.

Abore

Erigi gb'ori Eku!

Priest

Accept the head of this Bush-Rat!

Egbe

Ori Eku ni o gba,

Refrain

May your acceptable sacrifice

Mama gb'ori ẹni o,
Ori Eku ni o gba.

Be the Bush-Rat's head
And not a human head.

1.12 Dried Fish

The Dried-Fish's head is next offered symbolically to Ifa whilst chanting in refrain thus:

Abore
Erigi gb'ori Eja.

Priest
Lord,
Accept the head of this Fish.

Egbe
Ori Eja ni o gba,
Mama gb'ori ẹni o,
Ori Eja ni o gba.

Refrain
May your acceptable sacrifice,
Be the head of this Fish,
And not a human head.

1.13 Immolated Animal's Head

Earlier on, the animal's blood was poured over the Palm-nuts as the offering of the animal's life to Ifa, but now its head is symbolically given to Ifa by touching it to the sacred Palm-nuts, the head being the centre of the principal psychic energy (Chakra in Hindu ritual). The chant and refrain below are sung during this rite:

Abore
Erigi gb'ori Eran.

Priest
Lord,
Accept the head of this Beast.

Egbe
Ori Eran ni o gba,
Mama gb'ori ẹni o,
Ori Eran ni o gba.

Refrain
May your acceptable sacrifice
Be the head of this Beast
And not a human head.

2. Second Sacrificial Offering to Exu

At the annual Ifa festival two separate sacrificial offerings are made to Exu. The first consists of symbolic parts of the articles to be sacrificed given to Exu in his role as the deity presiding over the ritual so that the auspices may be left undisturbed. This rite of appeasement must be performed before casting the Kola-nuts and has been fully described in Part VI E. Owonrin-x'Ogbe, the conjuration odu.

For the second — the main — sacrifice of the festival, the articles are physically offered as follows.

On a large earthen plate are placed:

- (a) The severed head of the sacrificial beast together with the rope that was previously tied round the live animals neck;
- (b) The head of the Bush-Rat;
- (c) The head of the Dried-Fish;
- (d) Blood from the sacrificial animal;
- (e) Some Palm-Oil and Gin libation;
- (f) Money i.e some cowrie shells representing the money offered for the sacrifice by the celebrant.

It is to be noted that these articles had already been offered symbolically to Ifa as fully described in Part VIII Section 1.

The officiating priest now intones the following mantras (with appropriate responses from other priests) over the earthen plate containing the sacrificial articles.

Abore
Eriwo xoko!

Priest
Attention adepts!

Egbe
Baayin.

Response
We are all attentive.

Abore:
Emi ni x'uju yanko?

Priest
Is there cause for joy or sadness?

Egbe:
Hen.

Response
Is there?

Abore:
Ara lile ni t'aja!

Priest
The house is protected by ceiling!

Egbe:
Hen.

Response
Yes.

Abore:
Ara lile ni t'oyo.

Priest
Ceiling protects against rain.

Egbe:
Hen.

Response
Yes.

Abore:
Ile nan nko?

Priest
What about Mother-Earth?

Egbe:
Hen.

Response
What about her?

Abore:
Omọ alagba maja.

Priest
Our universal mother.

Odun Ifa

Egbe:

Hen.

Response

Yes.

Abore:

Aba gbabun ehin ole

Priest

If the younger be called

Egbe:

Hen.

Response

Why?

Abore:

O san mi j'egbọn lọ.

Priest

Perhaps he will out do the elder.

Egbe:

Hen.

Response

Perhaps.

At this stage the sacrificial plate is passed from hand to hand among the audience. Each person touches the plate to his heart psychic centre before passing it to the next. Whereas during the ceremony of the first sacrifice to Exu only the Priests receive the plate and touch it to their forehead psychic centre, in the second sacrificial rite all and sundry participate.

The following chant and refrain are sung:

Abore:

Ojẹ ku o.

Priest

The Adept never dies.

Egbe:

Mọrẹrẹ I'ade Eriwo,
Mọrẹrẹ.

Response

The adept is crowned with palms of glory.

Abore:

Ade owo, ade omọ.

Priest

The adept is crowned with wealth,
He is blessed with progeny.

Egbe: Mọrẹrẹ I'ade Eriwo Mọrẹrẹ.	Response The adept is crowned With palms of glory.
Abore: A-gba-fi-kan-aya ni tẹlẹbọ.	Priest The sacrificial plate Touched to the heart centre Assures blessing To the Devotee.
Egbe: Mọrẹrẹ I'ade Eriwo, Mọrẹrẹ.	Response The adept is crowned With palms of glory
Abore: M ba ni m ba bun ọ.	Priest Were I rich, I would be generous.
Egbe: Mọrẹrẹ, I'ade Eriwo, Mọrẹrẹ.	Response The adept is crowned With palms of glory.
Abore: Aini lo sọ mi d'awun	Priest Being poor I seem miserly.
Egbe: Mọrẹrẹ I'ade Eriwo, Mọrẹrẹ	Response The adept is crowned With palms of glory
Abore: Ade owo, ade ọmọ	Priest Crowned with wealth, Blessed with progeny
Egbe: Mọrẹrẹ I'ade Eriwo Mọrẹrẹ	Response The adept is crowned With palms of glory

The sacrificial plate is then taken out to be placed before Exu's shrine or in specific cases before the shrine of any other Orixa previously designated at divinatory-consultation.

An additional sacrifice known as *Adimu* may occasionally be required as fully discussed by Wm Bascom, "Ifa Divination" (1959) pages 55-59.

2.1 Casting of A Second Set of Kola-Nuts

After the rite of the second sacrifice to Exu a new set of KolaNuts and Bitter-Kola is cast to ascertain the acceptance or otherwise of the sacrifice by Olodumare (*The Omnipotent*) who, according to Yoruba theology, is the ultimate goal of worship.

The criteria for good auspices are observed as previously explained.

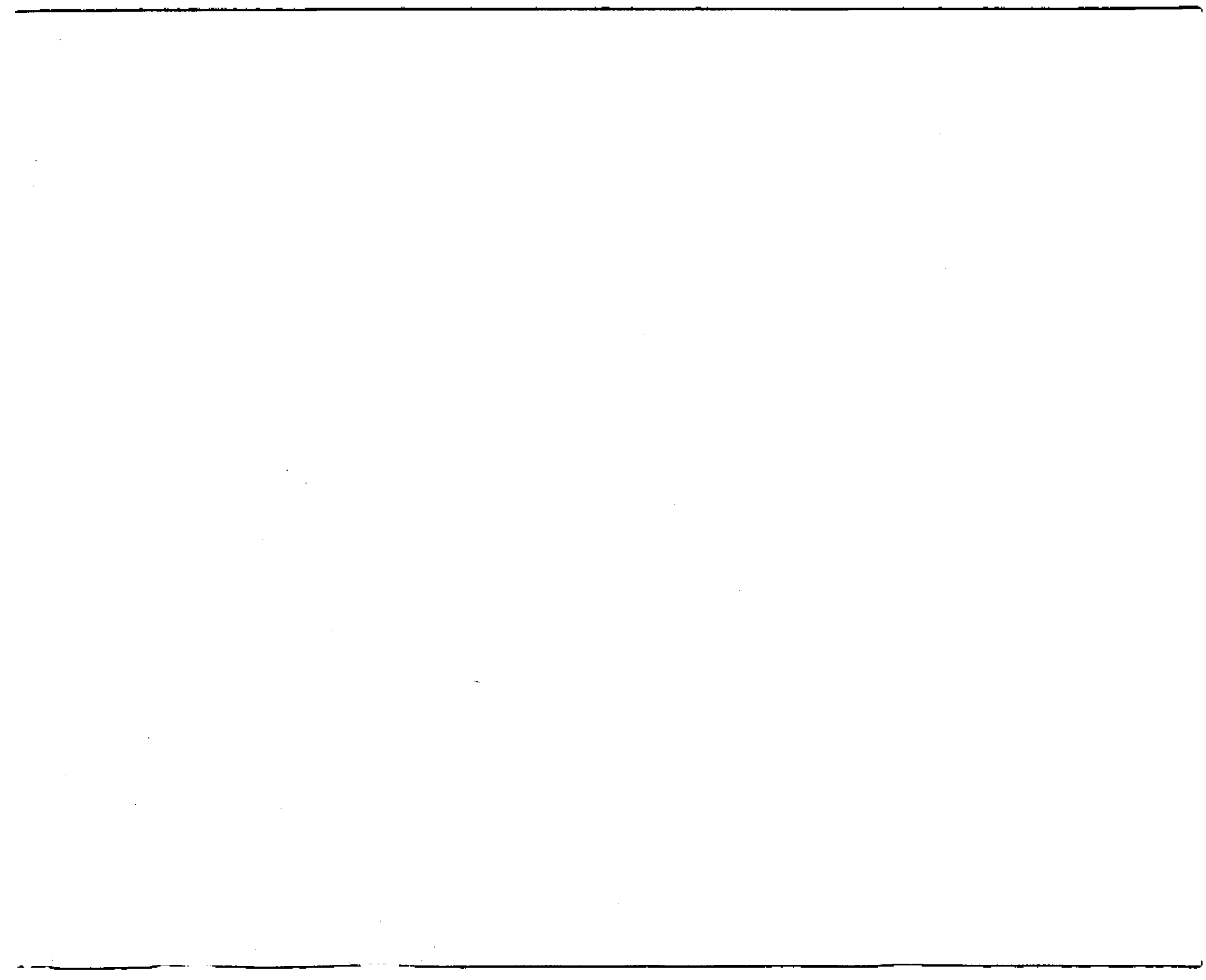
2.2 Casting for Interested Individuals

Once the auspices are declared favourable, relief and jubilation become the order of the evening.

All and sundry approach the officiating Priest with their own Kola-Nuts over which their private request have been made and ask him to obtain for them Ifa's message for the ensuing year.

The eight valves obtained from splitting two Kola-Nuts are cast and interpreted in the usual manner. One male and one female valve are given to the querent, a similar pair is put in Ifa's dish as its share whilst the remaining four valves are reserved in the general pool for consumption by all.

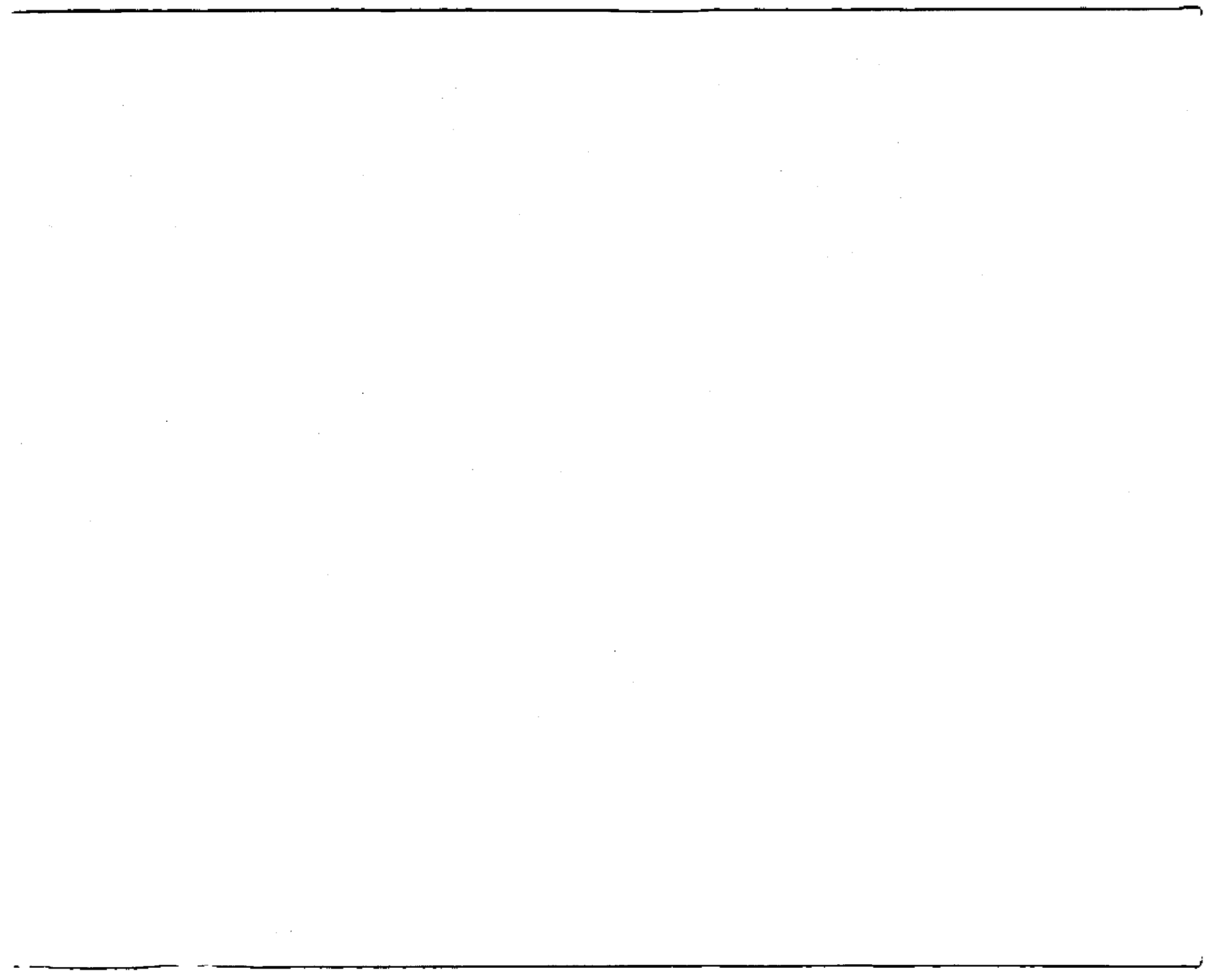
Part IX
Chants after Sacrifice



Part IX

Chants after Sacrifice

	Page
A: Narrative Short Verses	572
B: Narrative Long Verses	580
C: Catechismal Genre	594
D: Iyere Genre	611



Part IX

Chants after Sacrifice

The sacrifice concluded, the priests take refreshment, following which they begin the congregational recitation of Ifa verses taking *Eji-Ogbe* first and then working through as many of the remaining 255 chapters as there are willing participants present. Of course a demanding performance like this cannot possibly be completed in one single night but is in fact spread out over the nine days preceding the tenth day of the festival when the annual divination is done according to the practice of the Agboola School.

In congregational recitation the leading priest chants one line of verse which is repeated by the audience. Thereafter, leader and audience go through the verse responsorially - a method that allows the acquisition of unfamiliar verses into the *repertoire* of younger priests. The older priests commend scholarship — or ridicule pedestrian contribution, as the case may be — thus promoting a highly competitive atmosphere enjoyed by professionals and lay audience alike.

A selection from the recitals is offered herein, in Parts IX A, IX B and IX C of this book — to illustrate four aspects of Ifa prosody.

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|-------------|
| 1) | Narrative Short Verses | A-1 to A-12 |
| 2) | Narrative Long Verses | B-1 to B-4 |
| 3) | Catechismal Genre | C-1 and C-2 |
| 4) | Iyere Genre | D-1. |

For convenience all the examples are taken from Eji-Ogbe.

Part IX A Narrative Short Verses

Eji-Ogbe

0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

- A-1. "Ogun l'ohun ọlọgbọn
Ọgbọn l'ohun axiwere,
M o-o fẹ, m o-o gba
L'axiwere fi i jare ọlọgbọn.
A dia fun Xọmbọlọxọ, arẹmọ baba-ode
"E x'ode ni hiiin
Ọdẹ ha-hiiin-ha
Ọdẹ hiiin."
- A-2 "Ọpẹẹẹ lo kọ'le tan lo f'ọju-ọrun he e."
A dia fun oloola-kẹkẹ-owu
Ọla o ma a ro b'Ifa xe i ro ni.
Ọwa finu jo, finu jo
Ọwa fẹhin jo, fẹhin jo,
Ọwa fi gbogbo ara jo mukulu-mukẹ
Adia fun Baba-a-l'ohun-ọlọtọ-ma-l'ẹgbaa-n'le
Ifa wa ri o ri aiku l'ọrun.
- A-3 "Ibinu ko xe nkan fun ni."
Adia fun Inubibi ọmọ-Alara
"Suuru ni baba iwa"
Adia fun Ẹdọ-fufu, ọmọ-Ajero
"Agba to ni suuru ohun gbogbo loni"
Dia fun Inu-adẹtu, ọmọ-Orangun.
Inu-adẹtu nikan ni i bẹ lẹhin ti i jọba
E wori otukọ ti nj'a gbere
Ijigba-Ade ti mbẹ l'ẹhin ọkọ
E wori otukọ ti nja gbere.
-

Recitals Narrative Short Verses Eji-Ogbe (A)

A-1

"Wisdom speaks in twenty words
foolishness in thirty;
Stubbornness betrays the fool
Silence portrays the wise"
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the foolish scion of hunting lineage.

"Be wise," said Ifa,
"Uphold the hunting life
Uphold your ancestral line."

A-2 "The Bulbul-Bird builds his nest and roofs it with sunlight."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Cotton-Tree
Promising it honour and dignity.

"Palm-leaves sway forward
Palm-leaves sway backward
Palm-leaves sway this way and that
Dancing with the gentle breeze
Gleeful with inward joy."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle
to the client weighed down
with much care and little money.

"Ifa promises you longevity.
Blessing far surpassing wealth."

A-3

"Anger," said Ifa-Oracle to the prince of Ara, "is profitless."
"Patience," said Ifa to the Prince of Ijero "is king of virtues."
"Wisdom allied with patience conquers all." So declared Ifa-Oracle
to the ever-gentle Prince of Illa youngest of the three but quickest to
hearken to the Oracle. He eschewed anger, studied patience, learnt
wisdom, and so was crowned king. And now the ordinary common
rating is captain of the ship. The erstwhile common rating.

Odun Ifa

A-4 B'agba ba wi fun'ni, e je a gbo, B'agba s'oro fun ni e je a nan suuru
si i A dia fun Orunmila Yio te Olooto n'fa te Ika kehin re.
Olooto nikan ni mbe l'ehin ti i rubo.
Me ma le huwa Ika.

Orin: Otitọ la ran mi
Me ma le h'uwa Ika.
Emi o le huwa Ika ki m wa a ku.
Otitọ la ran mi,
Me ma le h'uwa Ika.

A-5 Onibinu ni i so ibi oun ti wa,
A-lajagbila ni i fara re han;
O-ko-ixee-re-de, ooko ni i so'ni
A difa fun Ina
Ina l'oun o j'oye a-mo-ro-ro;
A dia fun Oorun,
Oorun l'oun o j'oye a-mo-ro-ro;
Adia fun Oxupa,
Oxupa l'oun o joye a-mo-ro-ro.

Orin: Ina bo o ti daa to,
A xe, o-o ni iwa nnu.

Egbe A m'oxupa j'oye ara tu'ni.

Oorun Oorun bo o ti daa to,
Axe o-o niwa n'nu.

Egbe A m'oxupa j'oye ara ro'ni.

A-4

"Hearken to the words of the sage
Listen to the voice of the agéd."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila on his way to initiate Virtue
and Vice into the mysteries of divination.

Only Virtue hearkened to Ifa
Only Virtue sacrificed as told.

Song: I choose the path of Good
And eschew Evil
For Evil leads
Straight unto death.

A-5

"Persistence in anger
Leads to disgrace;
Obstinacy and distemper
End in shame."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to fire, sun and moon when all three vied
for the crown of light.

Song: **Fire,**
Golden-hued your flames may be,
Unbearable is their angry heat.

Refrain: See how,
Through gentleness,
Moon wins the crown of light
Bathing earth with sweet content.

Song: **Sun,**
Glorious though your rays appear
Scorching is their stubborn touch.

Refrain: See how by gentle touch
Moon wins the crown of light
Bathing earth with sweet content.

Odun Ifa

A-6 "Ojo maa rọ maa rọ,
Eye oko maa dun win-win,
A dia fun omọ titun
Ti i t'ikọle-ọrun bọ wa 'kọle-aye.

Ọrunmila ni:

A ti x'ẹbọ. Ojo maa rọ, maarọ
Eye oko maa dun win-win.

A-7 Ọnọ to taara ma ya
A dia fun Ọrunmila,
Ifa o maa r'ire meji-meji l'oojọ.

Awure:

Ifa ma je ki ire meji t'eni o se mi Arinako,
Mama je k'ire meji teni o se mi
Poore teere awo inau-igbo
A dia fun Aje Omọ Olojidi njigi
Ọnọ to taara ma ya
Dia fun Eji-Ogbe ti nsunkun pe oun o l'aje
Aje de oniso,
O ba so sile awo.

A-8 Xoxoxo l'ọju oro fi i p'ẹran je
Difa fun Ọrunmila,
Baba nsunkun a-lai-l'obirin
O maa ni:
O n'a fin,
O l'arọ,
O ni rara
Iba a fin, iba arọ
Mo juba rara k'awo o xe idenọ.

- A-6 "Let it rain and rain again
Let it rain,
Let the birds in the woods
Chirp merrily and twitter."
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the New-Born Babe setting out from
heaven earth-ward bound.
Orunmila added:
"Sacrifice offered, sacrifice accepted.
Now may gentle rain and merry twitter
Welcome home the New-Born Babe."
- A-7 "Straight is the road that leads to success."
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila promising him double blessings
for every day that dawns.
(Prayer: Ifa, I pray you
Let not this day's blessing pass me bye
For unpredictable is fortune!)
- "Straight, unbending like forest-pine."
So declared Ifa-Oracle about Aje, our bountiful goddess of prosperity,
- "Straight as the road to success."
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Eji-Ogbe when he sorrowed for lack of
wealth.
(Prayer: Aje, visiting goddess of wealth
Bless us adepts with your smile!)
- A-8 "Pitiless is the eye of the hunter
That strikes game and strikes it dead."
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila who bemoaned his lack of
wives whereupon Ifa blessed him with three wives one cripple, one
albino and one dwarf.
Orunmila bowed uncomplaining, and said:
"I pay obeisance to albinos,
To cripples, to dwarfs
443 May Ifa bless diviners forever."
-

Qdun Ifa

A-9 Eṣe kan xoxo ni ko ta girigiri w'oja
A dia fun Ogbe ti ix'awo re le Alara.

Orin: Ogbè nya O,
Ogbe nra,

Egbe: Ko s'eniyan ti i m'ohun Ogbe nta.

A-10 Eḅiti ja f'a ya lule,
Dia fun Yeye-A-ḅe-ti-ḅe.

Orin: Alẹ owo ki-i P'awo.

Egbe: Ehin-iwa, k'eni ma ro wa pin,
Ehin iwa.

Agba-Awo:

Arugbo n'Ifa nn ni
E je o ma a lo.

A-11 Akoda Olu,
Ire ni Ifa o so,
Oo kan lbo,
Ire l'ope o fo
A difa fun Qrunmila
Nigbati oke-lponri re o ta wara gbe e mo.

Awure:

Ifa ta wara ko o wa gbe mi o,
Eṣisi-Oko ki-i jo omọ lai ta wara
Qgbọ lo ni ki won gbọ t'emi ni rere
Imọ lo ni ki won mọ mi l'ṣin-ope
Eṣisi-oko ki-i jo omọ lai ta wara.

A 12 "Iku o pe K'Oorun ma la,
Awo Ori lo difa fun Ori
Nijọ Ori nt'orun bo w'aye.

Orin: Ero Ipo,
Ero Ofa,

Egbe: Eyin ko mo pe Ori l'alaran w'aye eni.

- A-9* "Because prosperity walks on two feet
 You cannot hear the sound of one foot
 Marching to the Market-Square."
 Thus declared Ifa-oracle to Ogbe on his way to practise divination in
 King Alara's Court.
 Song: Ogbe borrows
 Ogbe buys,
 Refrain: Who knows what Ogbe sells?
- A-10 "String snaps
 And flat fails the trap"
 So declared Ifa-Oracle to the client approaching her evening of life
 bereft of hope and good cheer.
 Song: Ifa devotees do not die poor.
 Refrain: Ifa devotees never do.
 (Comment from audience: Off with this hackneyed verse)
- A-11 "On first cast, good omens
 On second cast, auspicious verdict."
 So promised Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila when failed predictions came
 near breaking the Lord's heart.
 Make haste to help me, Ifa.
 (Prayer: Make haste to help your child
 As children stung by nettles run home to mother
 So fly I to your patronage
 Validate my predictions
 Increase my renown, Ifa.)
- A-12
 "The sun will rise
 Clouds be they never so thick."
 So declared Ifa-Oracle about Destiny on setting out from Heaven
 Earthward bound.
 Song: Citizens of Ipo,
 Citizens of Ofa,
 Creatures the whole world over,
 Refrain: Do you not yet understand
 That Destiny accompanies all into the world?

Ogbe in this verse is contrasted with the normal configuration

Eji-Ogbe (Double Ogbe, Two-footed Ogbe) thus: $\begin{bmatrix} o \\ o \\ o \\ o \end{bmatrix}$ Ogbe or $\begin{bmatrix} o & o \\ o & o \\ o & o \\ o & o \end{bmatrix}$ Eji Ogbe.

Part IX B

Narrative Long Verses

Ifa Nlanla Eji-Ogbe (B)

- B-1 Orunmila lo d'olomọ owelẹn-welẹ
Ifa ni ta'a ba ji ka xe'gba olojo iteni-iteni,
Ta'a ba ni ka xe'gba olojo itoro-itoro.
Ifa ni ka x'qmi da
Ka ma ba-a da'mi s'olojo rere lara
A difa fun Lamoju ti o bi Eji-Ogbe so s'ile-aye
Ifa ni t'eni ba ji k'eni o ma a ki'ni
Ai-ki ni xa l'odi eni.
B'Agbe ba ji ko ma a k'Olokun-xeni-ade
Oni Agbe a maa d'aro-m'aro.
- Awure: (Ki m maa d'aro-marọ n'ile-aye)*
B'Aluko ba ji ko maa f'akara b'Oxa
Yio ma a k'osun-m'osun rẹ ni.
- Awure: (Ifa jẹẹ m k'osun-m'osun t'emi n'le-aye)*
B'Odidẹrẹ ba a ji ko ma a K'oluwo-idẹ.
Wọn ni iko idii rẹ yio ma a kẹ-riri-kẹ-bẹbẹ.
- Awure: (Ifa jẹẹ ki iko idii mi ma a kẹ-riri-kẹ-bẹbẹ)*
Wọn ni b'Erin ba ji ko maa k'olu-Igbo
Wọn ni a gbo'gbo olu-yeyẹ-tu-yẹ
Wọn ni b'Efọn baa ji ko maa k'olu Qdan
Wọn ni a gbogbo olu-yeyẹ-tu-yẹ.
Wọn ni b'Agbọnrin Odogia baa ji
Ko maa ki Olu-Igbo sidin-sidin
Wọn ni yio gbogboogbo
Ilaa rẹ o si ni parun n'le-aye.
- Awure: Orunmila moji mo k'atola IbQru*
Mo ji mo k'atola *IbQye*
Moji mo ka sun mini kun-mini kun *IbQixcE*.
-

 Long Verses. Eji-Ogbe

- B-1 Orunmila asks: What is the mark of gentle birth?
 Ifa says: Courtesy and circumspection are the marks of gentle birth.
- When we receive a visitor we should offer him
 Things that are clean and decent.
- Before we throw water into the street
 We should look left, right, fore and aft
 Lest we receive a visitor of moment
 With most unwelcome shower.
- So Ifa-Oracle advised Lamoju, gentleman on earth who was preparing
 to receive Eji-Ogbe as visitor from heaven.
- Ifa says:
- On waking we should wish all around us good morning for neglect
 of this is nothing short of Ill-will.
- Touraco-Bird on waking should pay obeisance to Olokun our Lady
 of oceans who dispenses wealth and Touraco-Bird will receive in
 return more shine to his deep blue plumage.
(Prayer: May such be mine, Ifa)
- When Aluko-Bird wakes he should sacrifice to Oloṣa our Lady of
 Lagoons who dispenses blessings and Aluko-Bird will receive in return
 more sheen to his purple feathers.
(Prayer: May such be mine, Ifa)
- The Parrot should pay obeisance each morning to copper smiths so
 he can receive in return red feathers to adorn his tail.
- Elephant should pay obeisance each morning to the Lord of forests
 and he will be blessed in return with health and longevity.
- Buffalo, on waking, should pay obeisance to the Lord of plains and
 he will surely receive blessings of strength and vigour.
- Stout Deer waking each morning should praise the Lord of woods so
 he will receive in return blessings of happiness and of his lineage
 there will be no end.
- Prayer: Orunmila!
 I pay obeisance for this day's sacrifice offered
 I pay obeisance for sacrifice received,
 I pay obeisance for good auspices obtained.
-

B-2

"Ogun x'ebi, Ogun gbaye
Exu Ọdara ni i xe'di ni i gbeledi
Ọrunmila lo x'eun ti o sun wọn tan,
Wọn ni ti wọn ma a du loju kele-kele.
A dia fun Ọrunmila, Ifa nt'ikọle-ọrun bọ wa 'kọle-aye wọn k'ẹbọ,
k'edi ti Baba. Wọn ni Baba o ni k'ere dele, wọn ni Baba o ni ri'hun
mu bọ wale
Ọrunmila ni: Irọ ni wọn npa,

Ọ ni: Eke ni wọn nxe,
Emi a kere dele,
Emi a r'ohun mu bọ wale.

Ọ ni: Baba wọn ni o ni k'ere dele,
Iye wọn ni o ni k'ere dele,
Awọn araa wọn ni o keree de'le
Emi a k'ere temi dele danandan
Ọrunmila ni ki wọn da ẹrindilogun jọ
Baba ko rau, Baba da rau
Ọ da a, o ẹq'bo
Ọrunmila l'oun o ti wi?

Ọ l'oun ti pe baba wọn ni o ni k'eree d'ele
Pe lye wọn ni o ni keree de'le
Oun ti pe oun a k'ere toun de'le danandan

Ọrunmila ni: Igba oju ni i x'iju wo'fa
Agbara wọn o ni-i ka a
Atẹlẹ lọ-atẹlẹ bọ ki-i x'ọju-ona ni nkan.
Emi ti d Araba, mo ti diti
Apa araye wọn o tun ka temi.
B'Ọxupa ba sọran okunkun
Ara bantẹ la o pa
Awọn onitumọ ba mi tumọ tata
Awọn jeku wọn i-i j'Asin m'eku.

Agba Awo: Gbere!
Aye o ni-i k'ohun ti ẹ!

B-2

"Ogun, patron of workers in metal
Thrives on violence, glories in strife;
Exu, wonder-working Lord of tricks
Prompts the executioner consoles the victim.
Be not like them, Orunmila
Practise divination, preach gentleness."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila setting out from heaven
earthward bound.

At this his enemies hatched conspiracies, uttered spells pronounced
curses and swore that the Grand-Master would never succeed on earth
and would return to heaven empty of hand.

Orunmila replied:

"Their prognostications are false
And the truth is not in them.
I will return with success
I will return with profit.
But as for their fathers and their mothers, they themselves
and their lineage, they will return without success, without
profit while I certainly will return in triumph."

Orunmila requested 16 Palm-nuts gathered them with a sure hand,
cast them and received good omens, cast again to confirm and
obtained good auspices.

Then he said:

"I said it before did I not? that their fathers and their mothers, they
themselves and their lineage will earn disgrace but that I myself will
return in triumph.

Though 200 eyes fix their evil gaze on Ifa
Their magic combined, will do him nought;
Though a thousand feet walk the road each day
Their goings and comings will achieve nothing.
I am the infinite circumference of the Baobab-Tree that no
human arms can embrace;
I am the moon that shines artwath clouds thick and ever so
dark though they be.
The wise understand what I say
Just as gourmets know good meat from bad.
(Comment from the audience: Bravo, very well Said)

B-3

Idọbalẹ agba ni ix'omọ lẹgbẹ keredudu-keredudu

Adia fun Olọ ti nsunkun p'oun o bi mọ.

Wọnni yio bi Yayanya

Wọn ni yio bi Yayanya

Wọn ni yio bi Yaya-ku-Iya-Baba-Ọmọ

Olu-Igbo ni: Emi ni nje Yayanya?

Won ni Ọmọ ta a bi ninu ni i je Yayanya.

Awure: (Ifa je ki m bi Yayanya nile-aye)

Olu ni ki ni nje Yayanya?

Ọmọ ẹgbọn, Ọmọ aburo,

Wọn ni iyẹn ni i je Yayanya.

Awure: (Ifa je ki m bi Yayanya nle-aye)

Olu-Igbo ni emi ni nje Yaya-ku Iya-Baba-Ọmọ

Wọn ni Yaya-ku-Iya-Baba-Ọmọ

Oun la i pe l'ẹru

L'a i pe ni iwọfa

Nn la a mo ile e ri.

Awure: (Ifa je ki m bi Yaya-ku-Iya-Baba-Ọmọ

Ifa je ki m ya ki m ra n'le-aye).

B-3

"Reverence for Age

Is fountain of blessings for Youth."

So declared Ifa-Oracle to MUSHROOM who sorrowed for lack of children.

Ifa said: You will beget *Yayanya*↗
 You will beget *Yayanya*↘
 You will beget *Yaya-ku-Iya-Baba-Omo*

Mushroom wondered: What are *Yayanya*↗?

Ifa replied: Strong healthy children,
 One's very offsprings
 That exalt the lineage.

(Prayer: May I be blessed with such)

Mushroom wondered: What are *Yayanya*↘?

Ifa replied: Nephews, Nieces, Cousins that increase the clan.

(Prayer: May I be blessed with such, Ifa)

Mushroom asked: What are *Yaya-ku-Iya-Baba-Omo*?

Ifa replied: The slave without ancestry
 The pawn without lineage
 The one bought, the other kept
 To draw water and hew wood
 These are they whom we call
 Yaya-ku-Iya-Baba-Omo.

*(Prayer: May I be blessed with such,
 Ifa May I possess slaves
 May I retain pawns in my house-hold.)*

Note: ↗ = High tone ↘ = Low tone.

The imagery of *mushrooming* is employed in the verse to convey the Yoruba concept of progeny. *Yayanya* and *Yaya-ku-Iya-Baba-Omo* are neologisms formed from the verbal root "-ya" meaning "to beget".

B-4

Akinyemi awo Ori-Ogun,
Apojuejue awo Demuren
Gborigi awo Igbari,
Ridi-ridi awo Ile-Olofin,
Awon mererin ni ix'omokofa Orunmila
Orunmila ko won ni dida-owo, won mo o da,
O ko won ni Onte-le won mo o te,
O ko won ni ikara-ebio ni hiha
Won mo o ha koro-koro-jako
Orunmila yan apo fun won,
Won rin lo saaa,
Won pada to Orunmila wa
Won ni Ifa to o ko won,
Won ni Ogun to o ko won,
Won ni iwofun ni won ma fi pa,
Won ni omofun ni won ma fi pa,
Won ni aya re ni won ma fi pa,
Won ni ebi re ni won ma fi pa.

Orunmila ni:

Igbati o je pe oore l'oun xe fun yin?

- O sare to awon muni-muni awo Ile-Alara lo
- O sare to awon Bere-Bere awo Ile-Olofin lo
- O sare to awon Exu-Gagaaga ti ixe Alale Ojo lo
- O sare to Oxala ti i soju orere tapa lo
- Won ni "Ee ti ri, Orunmila?"

B-4

Akinyemi, the proud, *Apojuejue* the plotter, *Gborigi* the crafty and *Ridi-ridi* the sly were four students of Ifa under Orunmila.

Orunmila taught them the casting of palm-nuts and in this they became proficient.

He taught them the markings of the configurations and in this they excelled.

He taught them the intricacies of sacrifice and in this they surpassed.

Orunmila appointed them master-diviners and sent them forth. Away they went for a while to test their skills, then confident, they returned to Orunmila and threatened him in these words:

"The secrets of Ifa-divination you taught us
The mantras and magic you gave us,
These we will use to kill you and your children
These indeed we will use to kill your wives and kinsmen."

Orunmila replied them!

"Would it not be wondrous grateful of you to return these evils for the good I did you?"

There upon Orunmila fled to king Alara's house-hold diviner named *Avenger*.

He fled to the king of Ife's diviner named INQUISITIONER;

He fled to mighty *Exu*, last resort of the persecuted;

He fled to *Oxala*, compassionate friend of the distressed.

These masters asked:

What ails you Orunmila?

Orunmila ni: Nitori *Akinyemi* Awo Ori-Ogun, *Apojuejue*
Awo Demuren, *Gborigi* Awo Igbari, *Ridi-ridi* Awo
Ile-Olofin awon Omọ Ikofa oun mererun ni.
O ni oun ko won ni dida-owo, won mo o da,
Oun ko won ni Onte-Ile won mo o te
Oun ko won ni i karara-ebọ ni hiha
Oun mo apo fun won.
Won rin lo saaa,
Won to oun Orunmila pada wa,
Won ni Ifa t'oun ko won,
Oogun t'oun ko won,
Oun ni won ma fi pa,
Omọ oun ni won ma fi pa,
Aya oun ni won ma fi pa,
Ebi oun ni won ma fi pa.
O ni oun ni oun fi sare de'be
Won ni k'o lo ni Ewe-Ifa,
K'o ni Eku-Ifa,
K'o ni Ata Ifa,
Won ni ko jo won po.
Won ni to ba fi lip l'eni,
ko fi fokọ mu l'ola.

Won ni:
Ti won ba ri Ifa ire ko
Ti won ba ri Oogun ire ko
Ti won ba sa a si iwọ Orunmila,

Won ni:
Ifa araa won ni won ma fi pa
ogun araa won ni won ma fi pa.

Ọrunmila replied:

"*Akinyemi* the proud, *Apojueju* the plotter, *Gborigi* the crafty, and *Ridi-ridi* the sly were four Students of Ifa under me.

I taught-them the casting of Palm-nuts, the marking of configurations and the intricacies of sacrifice to perfection.

I appointed them as master-diviners and sent them forth. Away they went for a while to test their skills. Then confident, they returned only to threaten me that the secrets of Ifa-divination I taught them, the mantras and magic I gave them, these they would use to kill me and my children my wives and kinsmen. It is for this reason I fly to your patronage.

The four masters, *Avenger*, *Inquisitioner*, *Exu* and *Oxala* told Ọrunmila to obtain certain sacred Ifa leaves, one Bush-Rat and Alligator Pepper. He should burn them into fine powder, which powder he should take with a small quantity of Palm-Oil one day, the next day he should take the powder with pap and continue to alternate the prescription from day to day.

They assured Ọrunmila thus:

"If your sometime students whom you taught beneficent Ifa, whom you gave good mantras and white magic now decide to use these against you for evil ends their evil Ifa, their wicked mantras, their black magic will return like boomerang to kill them."

Akinyemi, awo ori-Ogun
O ri Ifa ire kọ,
O sa a si Qrunmila
Ifa rẹ pa a.

Apojuejue, awo Demuren
O r'oogun ire kọ,
O sa a si Qrunmila,
Oogun rẹ paa.

Gborigi, awo Igbari
Ori Ifa ire kọ
O sa a si Qrunmila,
Ifa rẹ pa a.

Ridi-ridi, awo Ile-Qlofin
O r'oogun ire kọ
O sa a si Qrunmila,
Oogun rẹ paa.

Awon ẹbi won wa nkigbe
Awon ẹbi won wa npoxe
Ni won wa nlogbe Qrunmila.

Pe Qrunmila lo pa awon omọ-ikofa ẹ mererun
Qrunmila xi o dọdọ awon Munimuni awo Ile-Alara
O dọdọ awon *Bere bere*, awo Ile-Qlofin
O dọdọ awon *Exu-gagaaga* ti ixẹ alalẹ-oja
O dọdọ awon *Oxala* ti ix'uju orere tapa "
Won ni: E e ti ri, Qrunmila ta fi ri o nibi?
Qrunmila nitori awon Omọ-Ikofa oun mererun ni.

Akinyemi the proud was taught beneficent Ifa He used it for evil against Orunmila.

His evil Ifa returned like boomerang and killed him.

Apojuejue the plotter, was taught white magic He used it for evil against Orunmila.

His black magic, returning like boomerang, killed him.

Gborigi the crafty, was taught beneficent Ifa He used it for evil against Orunmila.

His evil Ifa returned like boomerang and killed him.

Ridi-ridi the sly, was taught white magic. He used it for evil against Orunmila.

His black magic, returning like boomerang, killed him.

Then it was that their families cried aloud.

Then it was their families uttered lamentations accusing Orunmila of killing his sometime students.

Once again Orunmila fled, to king Alara's diviner named *Avenger* to king of Ife's diviner named *Inquisitioner* to mighty *Exu* last resort of the persecuted to *Oxala* compassionate friend of thee distressed

They asked Orunmila: What brings you here again?

Orunmila replied: It is this same matter of my four sometime students.

Odun Ifa

Oni:

Wọn ri Ifa ire kọ
Wọn ri Oogun ire kọ,
Wọn sa a si oun Orunmila.

Oni:

Ifa wọn pa wọn,
Oogun wọn pa wọn
Awọn ẹbi wọn wa nkigbe
Awọn ebi wọn wa nlogun oun Orunmila
Pe oun l'oun pa awọn OmO-Ikọfa oun mererin.

Wọn ni:

Ifa rẹ nko?

O ni:

Ifa oun mbẹ.

Wọn ni:

Oogun rẹ nkọ?

O ni:

Oogun oun mbẹ.

Wọn ni ko ma a lọ sa'fa bi ẹni nsa Oogun
Ko ma a lọ saagin bi ẹni nsa'fa
Wọn ni ti Aje ba nke soororo
Bi kowee ba ndun bi ohan
Bi Ogbingbin ba nrin gbingbingbin
Ogun aye l'aye ndo.

Wọn ni ki Orunmila maa ni:

Adan de e e e

Adaro ẹyẹ

Adan de o o

Adaro ẹyẹ

Iku o kan mi

Iku o kan omọ mi

Iku o kan mi

Iku o kan aya mi

Iku o kan mi l'Ẹyẹ-Adan nke o o o.

Orunmila continued:

My sometime Ifa students learnt beneficent Ifa and white magic.
They tried these for evil against me Orunmila.
And now, when their evil Ifa and black magic, returning like
boomerang, struck them dead, their families cried about in public
squares accusing me Orunmila of killing my sometime students.

Avenger, Inquisitioner, Exu and Oxala asked Orunmila:
Do you still have authentic Ifa?

Orunmila answered: Yes

The four masters asked: Do you still possess potent mantras?

Orunmila answered: Yes.

Then the four masters said:

Arm yourself with powerful Ifa, Orunmila
Arm yourself with potent spells and mantras
When witches flash like lightning before,
When witches boom like thunder behind;

When the *Kowee-Bird* shrieks with terror
Announcing death's imminent visit,
When the *Ogbigin-Bird* struts in the square
Heralding the approach of catastrophe,
Adepts need have no fear.

At such portentous times utter these mantras:
I am the bird of elegy
I am the bird of lamentation,
I am Bat,
I am the song of the bat.
Death is not for me
Death is not for my children,
Death is not for my wives,
I am the song that the bat sings.

Part IX C
Catechismal Genre

Long Verses:

(Catechismal Genre)

Verses C-1 and C-2 illustrate the less common genre of Ifa prosody, the catechismal, whose question and answer structure has analogy with the Socratic and Upanishadic method of instruction from guru to chela.

While C-1 expounds on the material and existential benefit of sacrifice C-2, in a more complex manner, discusses the numerology of the progression 1-2-2²-2⁴.

As is well-known Ifa configurations derive from two basic signs marked either as (0), (00) or (I), (II). So when the catechism on the number 2 says: "*Duality* is the basis of Divination" the oblique reference is to these two signs.

Similarly under the catechism on the number 16 the reference in the statement: "*Sixteen is the complete square number*" applies to Ifa configurations.

I fear that my translation may not have done full justice to the Yoruba text because the complicated literary devices of tonal variation can best be appreciated by bilingual readers.

For comparison the interested reader may consult C.O. Ibie's version (*"Ifism"* pages 94,95) quoted below which translates the Yoruba, word for word, without a gloss.

Yoruba Text

Eni - Shee inoo ni moo

Eji - Jiji le ekpon agbo oji-eejaa

Eta - Maa taaku nu, maa taarun daanuu.

English Translation

One - A person adds to what he already has

Two - No matter how the testicles of a ram shake, it does not sever from its body.

Three - I will survive the cold hands of death.

Kiki-Ifa Ifa Nlanla Eji-Ogbe C-1

Qrunmila ni:

Qsan p̄on Kanri-Kanri

Mo ni:

Baba mi Agb̄onniregun aajin jin l̄o jina-jina
Baba ni nbo ni mo ti l̄o, nbo ni mo ti l̄o?
Mo ni awoo mi ni w̄onrin-w̄onrin ti w̄onrin.

Ifa ni:

Ɛran ki ni mo pa mb̄e?

Mo ni:

Ɛran Aaya ni mo pa mb̄e Baba mi Agb̄onniregun Baba ni ki m mu
u wa.

Mo ni:

Kini Baba o ti xe e?

O ni oun le fi da ire gbogbo s'ile emi akapo toun ni.

Qrunmila ni:

O di Qsan p̄on kanri-kanri
Baba mi aajin ji l̄o jinrin-jinrin.

Ifa ni nbo ni mo ti l̄o, nbo ni mo ti l̄o?
mo ni aw̄on awoo mi ni w̄onrin-w̄onrin ti w̄onrin
mo ni Ɛran ki ni mo pa nbe?
mo ni Ɛran-Ɛmo ni mo pa nb̄e, Baba mi Agb̄onniregun.

Baba ni m mu u wa

Baba o ti xe e?

O ni k'oun ba a le w'eri te'mi,
Ko ba a le e m̄o totooto ni.

Qrunmila ni:

O di qsan p̄on kanri-kanri
Baba mi aajin jin l̄o jinrin-jinrin.

Ifa ni nbo ni mo ti l̄o,
nbo ni mo ti l̄o?

Mo ni aw̄on awoo mi ni w̄onrin-w̄onrin ti w̄onrin.

Long Verses Eji-Ogbe (c) Recitals C-1

Orunmila asked: "Is it bright noon?"

I replied: "No my Lord Agbõnniregun it is deep midnight"

The GrandMaster asked where could I have been from morning to midnight?

I replied that I went hunting on my diviner's advice.

Ifa asked what game did I kill there?

I replied "A robust Red Monkey my Lord Agbõnniregun"

The Grand Master requested I should give it over.

What ever would the Lord do with Red Monkey?

He replied that he would in return direct manifold blessings unto the household of me, his devotee.

Orunmila said: It must be noon

I replied: No, my Lord it is midnight.

Ifa asked where could I have been from morning to midnight?

I replied that I went hunting on my diviner's advice

Ifa asked what game did I kill a-hunting?

I replied, A Rabbit my Lord Agbõnniregun.

The Grand Master requested I should hand it over.

Whatever would the Lord do with Rabbit?

He replied that he would in return wash misfortune off my life, exchanging it for prosperity.

Orunmila said: Surely it is noon.

I replied: No my Lord it is midnight.

Ifa asked where could I have been from morning to midnight?

I replied that I went hunting on my diviner's advice.

Ifa asked what game did I kill a-hunting?

Ọdun Ifa

Ifa ni ẹran ki ni mo pa?
Mo ni ẹran-Igun ni mo pa nbẹ Baba mi Agbọnniregun
Baba ni ki m mu u wa
Baba o ti xe e?

Ọ ni ki ire gbogbo lee kun ile akapo t'oun ni
Ọrunmila ni: o di ọsan pọn kanri-kanri
Baba aajin jin lọ jinrin-jinrin.

Ifa ni nbo ni mo ti lọ, nbo ni mo ti lọ?
Mo ni awọn awo m ni wọnrin-wọnrin ti wọnrin
Baba ni ẹran ki ni mo pa nbẹ?

Mo ni ẹran-Okete ni mo pa nbẹ Baba mi Agbọnniregun
Baba ni ki m mu u wa.
Mo ni Baba o ti xe e?

Ọ ni:
K'iku o ba l'ee re kete l'ori akapo to'un ni
K'arun o ba lee re kete l'ori akapo t'oun ni
K'ewu gbogbo o ba lee re kete l'ori akapo t'oun ni.

Awure:

Njẹ
K'iku re kete l'ori emi akapo t'irẹ,
K'arun re kete l'ori emi akapo t'irẹ
Ki gbogbo ewu re kete lori emi akapo t'irẹ
Ki Ajogun gbogbo re kete lori emi akapo t'irẹ.

I replied: A vulture my Lord Agbõnniregun.

The Grandmaster requested I should give it over.

What would the Lord do with a vulture?

He replied that in return, blessings without number would encompass the household of me, his devotee.

Orunmila asked: Is it not noon? I replied: No my Lord, it is indeed midnight Ifa asked where could I have been from morning to midnight.

I replied that I went hunting on my diviner's advice.

Ifa asked what game did I kill a-hunting?

I replied: A squirrel my Lord Agbõnniregun

The Grand master requested me to hand it over.

What would the Lord do with a squirrel?

He replied: Give over the squirrel

And I will ensure in return

That Death leaves you untouched

That illness leaves you unscathed

That dangers pass you bye unharmed

That the deadly knights of vengeance let you be.

Prayer: If that be the case

I willingly offer a squirrel

That death may leave me untouched

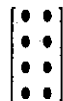
That illness may leave me unscathed

That dangers pass me bye unharmed

That the deadly knights of vengeance never visit me.

Ifa Nlanla

Eji-Ogbe



Qrunmila lo d'eni,
Ifa mo lo d'eni,
Adia fun Niniqla omq won nile Olufunade.

Qrunmila lo d'aji.
Ifa mo lo d'aji ra eji.
Eji wqoqkq ni t'Igi-Iyeye
Eji wqere lo buyi fun Eje-Ile.
Adia fun Eyikeji ti i xomq won Oke-Itase.

Qrunmila lo d'eta,
Ifa mo lo d'eta.
Ohun ode ba ta la a tq
Eniti exin ba ta ti o ku
E ki eleyiini, e pe o ku ori-ire.
Dia fun qia-ni i-ta'ni-loore
ti i xe omq won nile ikuta.

Long Verses ~ Recitals

Eji-Ogbe

$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$

Orunmila said: When we count do we not start from ONE?

I replied: We do indeed start from one, Ifa.

Ifa said: I once declared this to Niniola of Olufunade lineage:

'Ni' in your name derives from *eni* (one) but the same root. Ni may also mean 'Have'; so you will have wealth and enjoy royalty.

Niniola did not understand, do you?

Answer: The multiple is derived from the unit, of course.

Orunmila said: Consider Eji, the number TWO.

I replied and said: I do indeed recognise Eji, as the number Two.

Orunmila said:

'Iyeye' is the Tree of life and has its branches in Twos to teach the lesson of universal Duality.

The Home-Pigeon by laying its eggs in Twos teaches the same lesson.

I once declared this to the scion of Itase Hills and he realised that Duality is the basis of Divination.

Orunmila said:

Think of ETA, the number THREE - ta means 'shoot' as when the hunter shoots and gets his game, -ta means 'kick' as when the horse kicks but misses the fortunate rider, -ta means 'give' as when we give a present.

I once declared this to OLA-NI-I-TA-'NI-L'ORE from IKUTA lineage and he understood that "Wealth is the father of generosity".

Qdun Ifa

Qrunmila lo d'erin,

Ifa mo lo d'erin.

Ẹrin la a rin k'ona o ti
Ẹrin l'agbara i rin k'odo Iona .

Dia fun Ẹlerin xegege
Qmọ elewe-ila-dogba
Ẹrin ko gbodo hin do l'ehin.

Qrunmila lo d'Arun.

Ifa mo lo d'Arun.

Ohun ta a run lenu la a gbemi.

Dia fun Qwọ
Qmọ a-bi marun-jere-arun.

Qrunmila lo d'Ẹfa.

Ifa mo lo d'Ẹfa.

Ẹfa ile ẹfa oko ni ti eruko-ile,
Ẹnu l'aberẹ fi i faxọ.

Difa fun Afifa
ti o x'ẹbọ ọlẹ k'Ifa o toode.

Orunmila said: Now to ÈRIN, the number FOUR.

I replied: Teach me the number FOUR, Ifa.

Orunmila said: The root of ÈRIN is "-rin" and may mean "to laugh", "to walk", or "to flow" depending on accent.

Now listen to this:

I walk laughing to the house of wine
So flows the torrent river-ward.

Do you comprehend?

I once declared this to the Prince of Xagege, fourth in line to the throne but last in wisdom. He failed to grasp the pun on four.

Orunmila said: Consider ARUN, the number FIVE.

I replied: Let us indeed consider the number FIVE.

Orunmila said: The root of Arun is -run: There is '-run', 'to chew' as in the proverb "What we chew, Is what we swallow" Understand? I once declared this to Hand and he straightway begat five healthy children, comprehend?

Orunmila said: Take EFA, the number SIX.

I replied: Teach me the number SIX, Ifa.

Orunmila said: '-fa' in Efa means 'to draw' or 'to bring'

Now listen to this pun:

"It draws prosperity to the home

It brings wealth from the farm"

What is 'It'? Hoe, of course. '-fa' may also mean 'to pierce' as when the needle pierces cloth turning it to clothes.

I once declared this to Afifa but he failed to perceive that '-fa' is the principal root of Ifa.

Qdun Ifa

Qrunmila lo d'EJE,

Ifa mo lo d'EJE.

Olugbo x'oro k'ije,
Aręsa x'oro wõn k'ije.

Emi nan yoo kije oye,
Mo k'ije iyawo,
Mo k'ije omõ-bibi-inu,
Ije õfõ nikan ni o sian.

Difa fun Olajeni
omõ ogbole-ajote
Omõ a-fun-lele-bõ-wõn-l'ori.

Qrunmila lo d'Ejõ.

Mo lo d'Ejõ.

Axõ to ba jo ni la a mu ro,
Ewu to ba jõ'ni la a mu wõ
Ohun to ba jõ'raa wõn la-a fi i we raa wõn.

Qkẹrẹ lo j'Qkun,
Odunkuun si jõ Afe,
Turuku jõ Ełẹđe-Igan
Epo-Epajõ posi eliri
Epo-Awun jõ ahun-õpẹ
Qrẹ mi jõ mi mo j'õrẹ mi
Kiwaju o jõ, kẹhin ojõ.

Difa fun Abijõ ti i x'omõ wõn l'Ode-Igbajõ.

Orunmila said: Now to EJE, the number SEVEN.

Olugbo marked his chieftaincy title with a feast on the seventh day.

Areṣa celebrated his seventh day as chief with a feast.

I pray to celebrate happy events - chieftaincy, marriage, child-birth but not the seventh day of untimely death.

Olajeni understood this and lived to celebrate the seventh day of victory over plots and conspiracies.

Orunmila said: Consider Ejo, the number Eight.

I replied: I do consider it Ifa.

Orunmila said: '-jo' the root of Ejo means 'similar', as when we say the dress should fit the wearer in colour and style.

As in dress so in other matters, comparison should be between similars.

We know that *OKERE* resembles *OKIN*.

Both are squirrels but one is quick to hear the other deaf.

ODUNKUN and *AFE* look alike: one is a rat the other a field-mouse.

Turuku, the wild Boar, resembles *ELEDE*, swine, but one is vicious, the other delicious.

The big toe is the head of a snake though rather smaller.

My friend looks like me viewed from the front because I look like him viewed from behind.

I once declared this to *ABIJO* yet he did not comprehend though his name means *like father like son* and he comes from the city of *IGBAJO* were good people meet their likes.

Qrunmila lo d'Esan.

Ifa mo lo d'esan.

Esan l'esan i gbo axo

Awogbo la a w'ewu

Ti a ba nki oloja Akesan

Won a san'ni s'owo, won a san'ni s'omọ.

Qrunmila lo d'Ewa,

Ifa mo lo le.

Wiwa ni won i wa Babalawo rere kiri

Ko to o wa rubo fun ni.

Difa fun Olupo-Owawa,

Qmọ a-gb'ori-ẹxin-wakun.

Qrunmila ni: O di Okonla-n wale,

Ifa mo lo le.

A dia fun Okanlawon

Qmọ Qloro koso.

Orunmila said: The next number is ÈSAN, NINE, is it not?
I replied: It is so indeed, Ifa.

Orunmila said: '-san' the root of Esan means 'torn'
Clothes are not torn till the ninth washing, the ninth
washing is when clothes are thread-bare.

Listen to this pun on the root '-san'.

"The master of market at AKÈSAN repays
courtesies with money and clothes."

Do you comprehend?

'-San'in AK-ÈSAN resounds to '-san'in ESAN.

Orunmila said: The count is now at ÈWA, the number TEN.
I replied: Ifa, with EWA, Ten, the count enters double digits.

Orunmila said: '-wa' the root of EWA means 'seek' and also means 'come' so
do you understand when I say:

"Seek and seek again a skilled diviner
To come appoint the right sacrifice.

The tenth Lord of the City of Ipo understood this and straightway
was blessed with jewels and horses.

Orunmila said: Now to ÒKÒNLÀ, the number ELEVEN.
I replied: ÒKÒNLÀ, Eleven, is one step beyond TEN, Ifa.

Orunmila said:

'Your Father is eleventh time lucky',
Said I to *Òkònlawòṅ* of the royal lineage of Koso only son
in the tally of eleven children.

Qdun Ifa

Qrunmila lo d'Ejila,
Ifa mo lo le
Ele ni wọn i d'iru Alara.

Qrunmila lo d'Etala
Ifa mo lo le
Ele ni wọn i di'ru Ajero.

Qrunmila lo d'Erinla,
Ifa mo lo le
Ele ni wọn i d'iru Qwa-Qrangun-Aga.

Qrunmila lo d'Eḡdogun
Ifa mo lo le
Ele ni wọn i di'ru Qḡni Alana kan-esuru.

Qrunmila lo d'erindilogun
Ifa mo lo ko
ḡkun geḡ ni imi Aparo
ḡkun geḡ-ni imu ḡxin nḡnu ko raa wḡn.

Orunmila said: We are on to EJILA, the number TWELVE

I replied:

Yes, Ifa
Ejila, is two plus Ten

Orunmila said: Twelve is royal:
The Lord of Ara
Receives his tithes
In dozens.

Orunmila said: We are on to ETALA, the number THIRTEEN

I replied: Yes, Ifa Etala is three over TEN

Orunmila said: Three and ten is the measure accepted as unit by the Lord of Ijero.

Orunmila said: Now to ERINLA, the number FOURTEEN

I replied: Yes, Ifa ERINLA is four over TEN.

Orunmila said: Orangun, Lord of ILA receives FOURTEEN as unit where lesser chieftains accept TEN.

Orunmila said: Next comes EEDOGUN, the number FIFTEEN.

I replied: Yes, Ifa Eedogun is five over TEN or five less TWENTY.

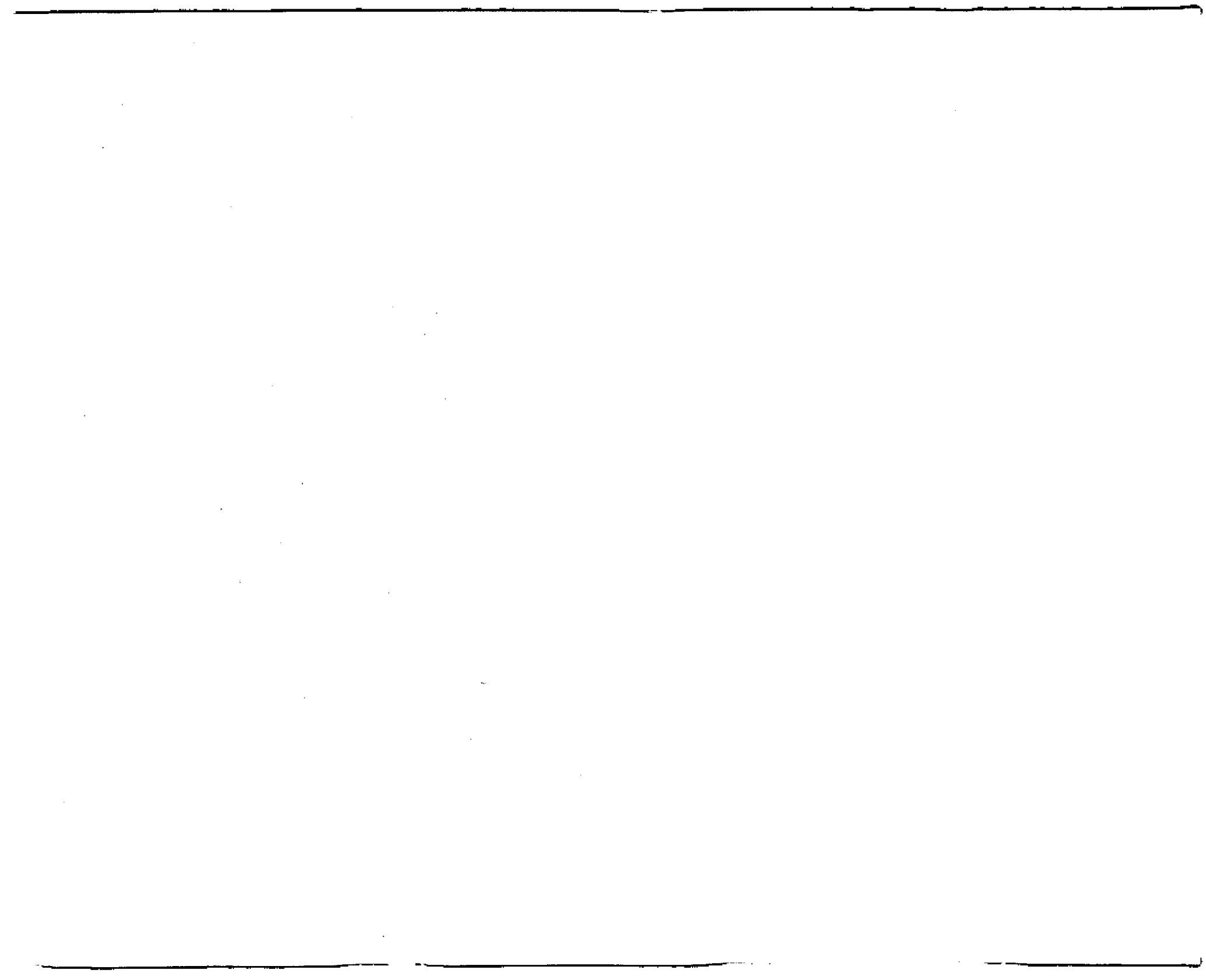
Orunmila said: The ancient king of Ife nicknamed 'Treasure Trove' accepted units of FIFTEEN not TEN.

Orunmila said: And now ERINDINLOGUN, the number SIXTEEN;

I replied: ERINDINLOGUN is four less TWENTY, Ifa Erindinlogun is the complete, perfect number.

Orunmila said:

Whether we consider the small as with Bush-Fowls
Whether we count what is big as with Horses
Sixteen is the complete perfect number
The complete square number.



Iyere: (Plaints)

Iyere differs markedly from the purely narrative verses exemplified in A.1 - A.12 and B.1 - B.4 in that the bridging expression "... *O da fun*" or "... *diafun*" meaning "... *so declared Ifa-Oracle to*" is frequently absent in Iyere.

On the other hand Iyere shares some features of the catechismal genre exemplified in C.1 and C.2 by having a short accompanying refrain like "Yes", "Indeed", "exactly" to each line of verse.

However the most distinctive quality of Iyere is its didactic and philosophical imperative. So in D.I given overleaf hospitality to strangers is recommended not merely as morally, but more importantly as materially rewarding. This is the same lesson underscored by St.Paul when he wrote in "Hebrews, 13.2":

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

It is interesting to note that Wande Abimbola's* variant of our text, D.1, gives the story in standard narrative verse quoting the three disguised visitors as *Death, Disease and Èxu* not *Epilepsy, Dropsy and Yaws*.

Abimbola, Wande (1968) 'Ijinde Ohun Enu Ifa'
Ese Ekeje.

Iyẹrẹ - D.1

Babalawo	Egbe
<i>Akuwarapa</i> , awo adana alẹ,	Hen
<i>Onijebute</i> awo oni-kutu-kutu-owuro,	Hen
<i>Agbekaledifa</i> awo oni-gbodogi-xenu-yankan-yankan,	Hen
Awon metẹta n'ti'kọle-ọrun bowa 'kọle-aye.	
Ọrunmila xe ikẹ wọn,	Hen
Ọrunmila xe igẹ wọn,	Hen
Ojo lo pa wọn de'bẹ.	Hen
O mu axo to daa o fi fun wọn.	Hen
O wa po ẹkọ to daa o fi fun wọn mu.	Hen.

Wọn ni ẹniti o xe ikẹ awon bayi
Wọn ni awon nilati xe ikẹ ẹ.

Nigbati won nbọ
Apo metá ni won ko dani,
Won gbe e sile Ọrunmila.

Nijọ ti won nlọ
Won fi apo yen silẹ.

Iyawo Ọrunmila
O ni ki won pe awon Alejo nan
Ki won wa ko ẹru won.

Ifa wa s'ẹkun d'ẹkun igbe
O s'ohun d'ohun iyẹrẹ,

*(Agba to gbọ 'fa ti ko gb'ohun iyẹrẹ
Beẹ ni ko gbọrọ ti Ikin i sọ)*

 Recital - Iyẹrẹ (Plaint)

D.1 Eji-Ogbe

Reciter

Refrain

"Diviner at eventide" disguised as Epilepsy
 "Diviner at dawn" disguised as Dropsy
 and
 "Diviner at night-fall" disguised as Yaws
 Were three heavenly visitors
 Earthward bound to Ọrunmila.

Yes!
 Indeed
 Really

Reciter

Refrain

Ọrunmila accorded them right royal welcome
 Ọrunmila took special care of them.
 They were rain-soaked they were hungry
 Ọrunmila gave them warm clothing
 Ọrunmila offered them reviving gruel.

He did!
 Excellent
 Indeed
 Good
 Well done

Reciter

So the heavenly visitors said among themselves:

"Right good and proper it befits that we requite this kindly man for such divine welcome."

So on departing Ọrunmila's house-hold the three visitors left behind, on mindful purpose, the three bags they had with them on their journey from heaven earthward-bound. Ọrunmila's wife, discovering the bags, post haste sent envoys to request them in Iyẹrẹ verses to return (*and, in truth, none save adepts in Ifa can receive the inner message of Iyẹrẹ*).

Odun Ifa

Babalawo

Egbe

O nke-Bẹẹ ni o eeeee

Hen

Akuwarapa awo adanọ alẹ

Hen

Onijẹbutẹ awo oni-kutu-kutu-owuro

Hen

Agbekalẹ difa awo onigbodogi

Hen

Xenu-yankan-yankan

Hen

Apo xọxọ ti mbẹ nilẹ nkọ?

Hen

Apo girixi-girixi ti mbẹ nilẹ nkọ?

Hen

Apo xọxọ ti mbẹ nilẹ nkọ?

Hen

Wọn wa ni:

Apo xọxọ, ooo, iyẹn apo owo

Hen

Apo girixi-girixi, iyẹn apo omọ

Hen

Apo xọxọ, iyẹn apo okun o

Hen.

Egbe

Apo xọxọ ni ko o muu lẹ fun mi o.

Orunmila O!

Apo girixi-girixi ko o' muu lẹ fun mi

Apo xọxọ ko o muu'le fun mi.

Reciter

Refrain

Orunmila said:

Pray give ear to my plaint.

"Diviner at Eventide." you that came as Epilepsy

Diviner at Dawn, you that came as Dropsy

Diviner at Night-fall you that came as Yaws

Did you not, on departing leave three bags behind?

Is one not neatly-tied, pyramid-shaped?

Is another not roundly-packed spheroid-shaped?

Is the third not delicate-bound heavy-loaded?

Yes
Indeed
Exactly
Oh?
Really
Indeed
Oh?

In like chant the three visitors replied:

Yes one neatly-tied pyramid shaped

Is the bag of wealth

One roundly-packed, spheroid-shaped

Is the gift of progeny

And the third, delicate-bound, heavy-loaded

Contains beads and jewels.

Yes
Yes
Yes.
Yes.

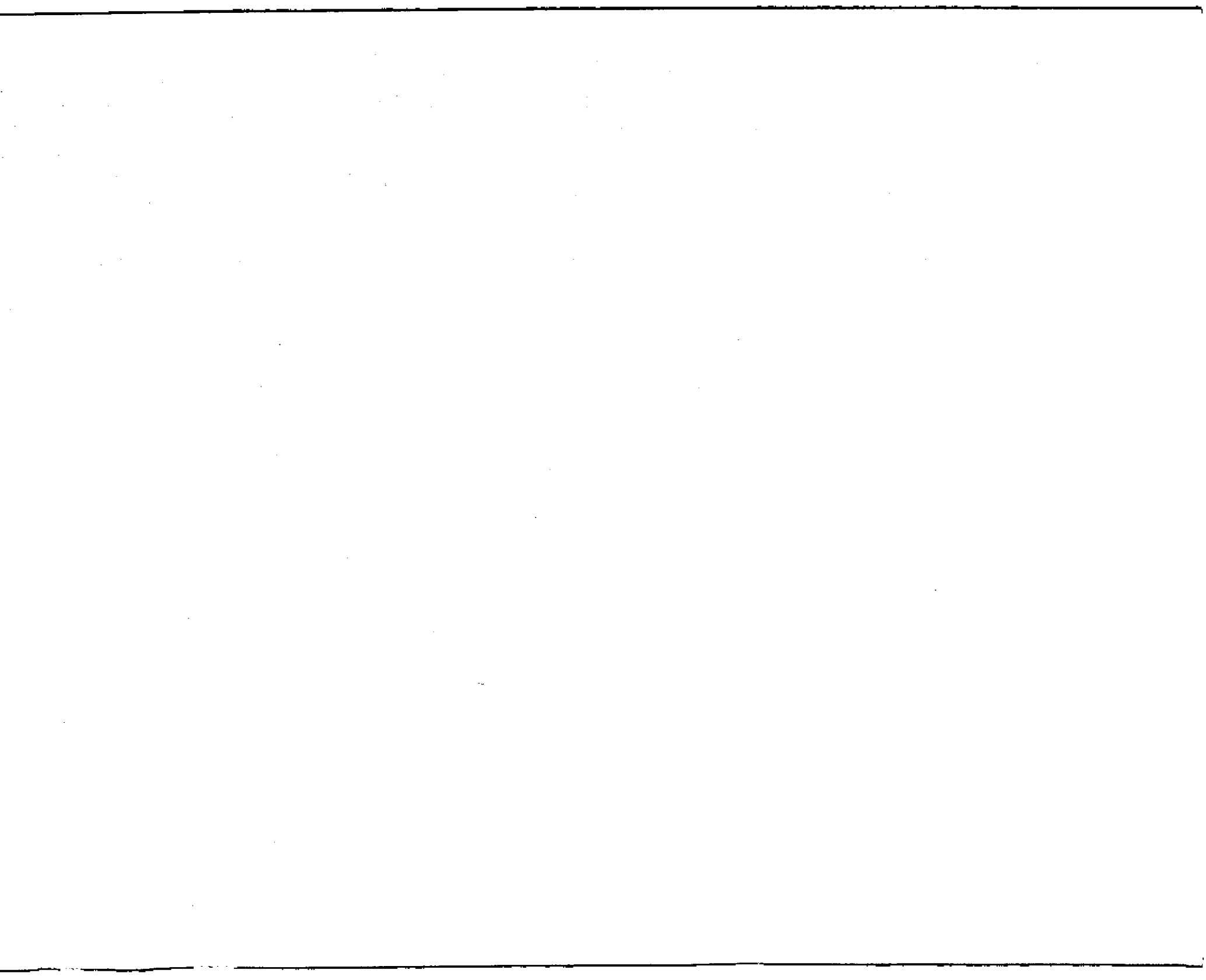
Refrain

Bags of wealth,

Gift of progeny

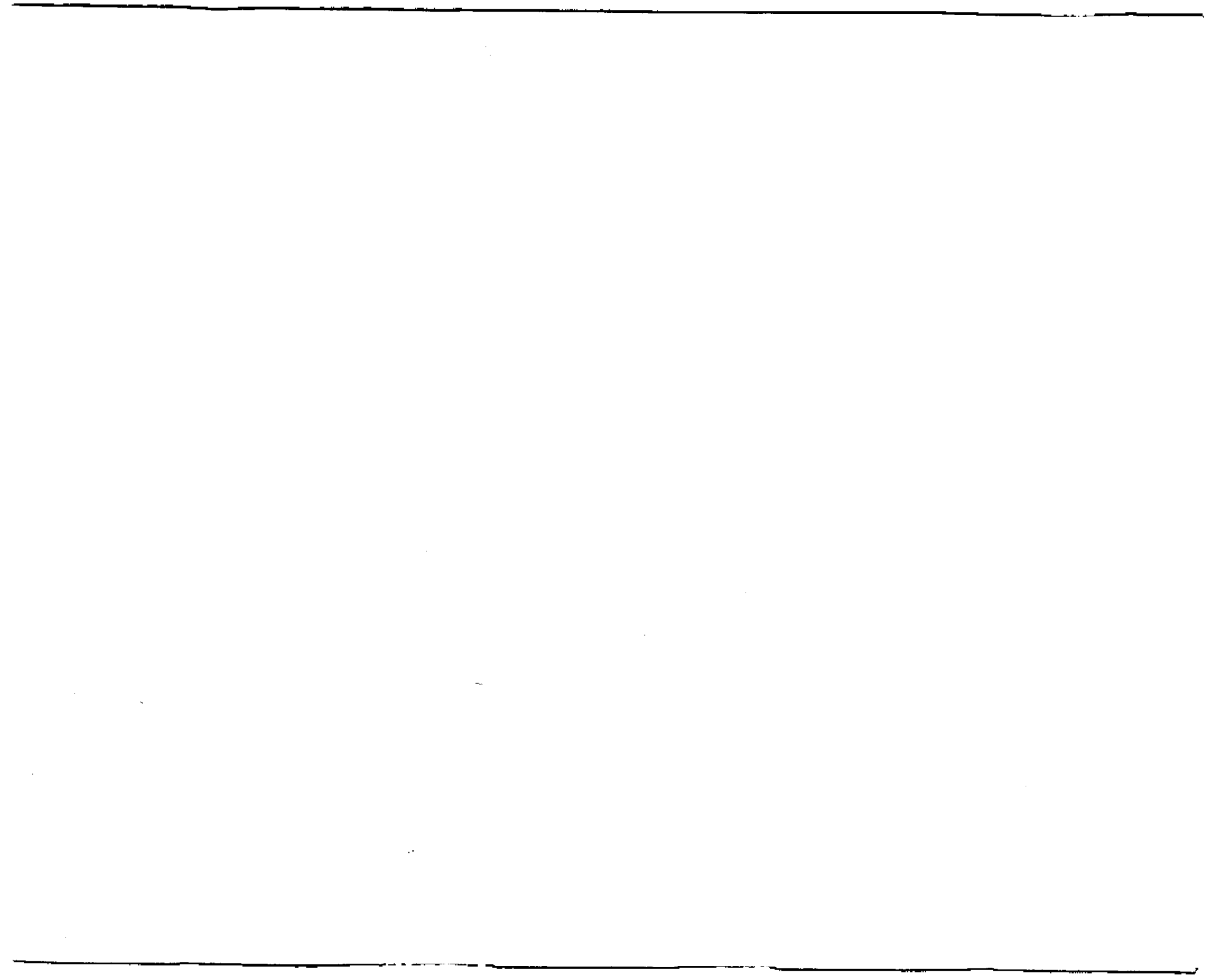
Bags of beads and jewels

Do thou, O Orunmila, bequeath me.



Part X

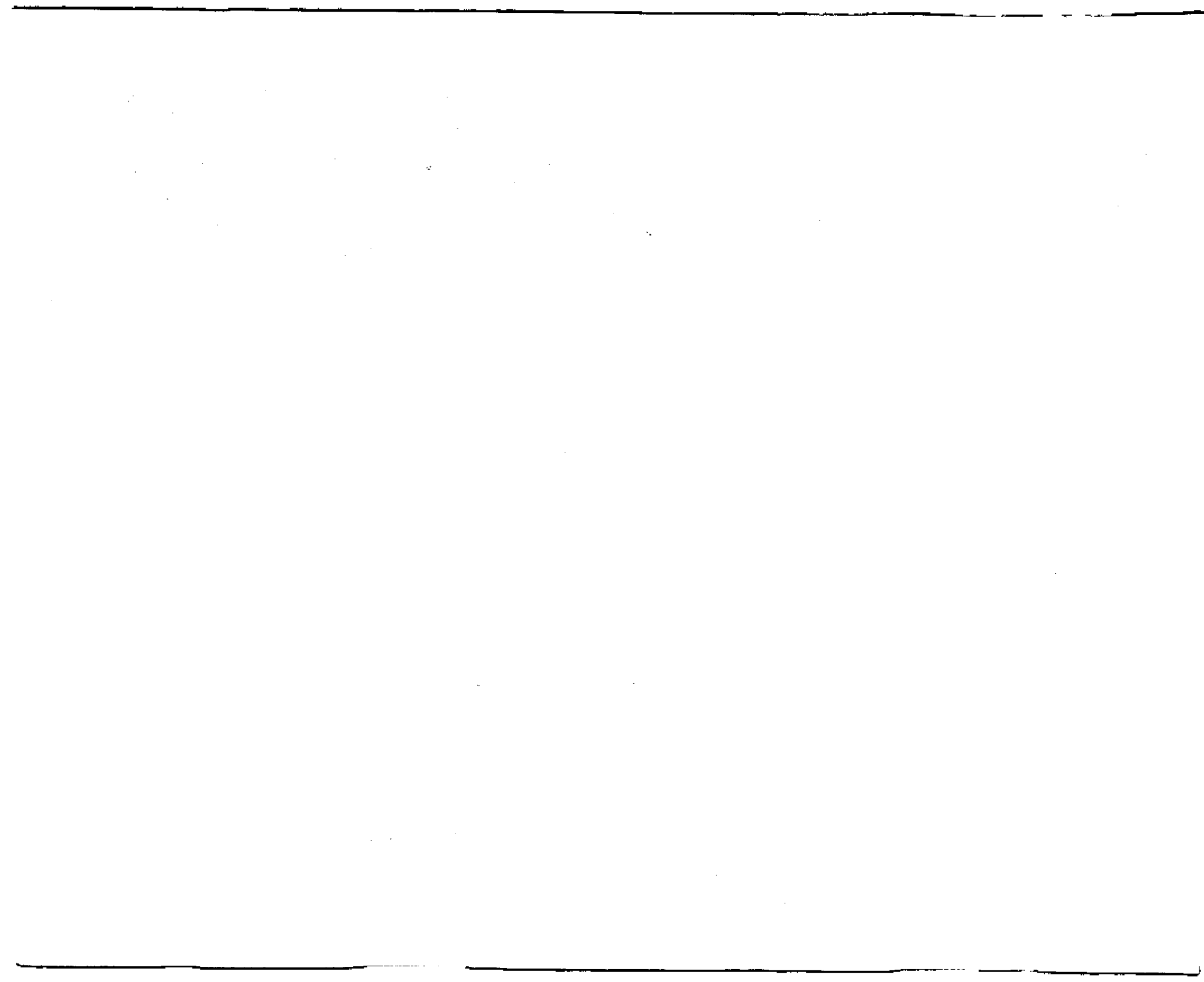
Annual Divination and Sacrifice



Part X

Annual Divination and Sacrificial Rites

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B: Ẹbọ (Sacrificial Rites)	649



Part X A

Dida Ifa Qdun (Annual Divination)

The annual divination for all and sundry is performed on the 10th festival day according to the practice of the Agboola school though other schools may elect to perform theirs on the 3rd 5th or 7th day.

Chief Abosede Bodunrin, presented himself for consultation in the usual way.

The resulting configuration, Ogunda-b'Ede is explained by five Babalawo with the Araba of Lagos Chief Akano Fasina Agboola, (now deceased,) summing up.

Babalawo I (Chief Awodiran Agboola) $\left| \begin{array}{c} \text{p} \\ \text{u} \\ \text{a} \\ \text{a} \\ \text{an} \end{array} \right|$

Odu ti o yọ nigbati a difa Qdun yi, 1989, fun Oloye Abosede Bodunrin ni Ogunda-b'Ede.

Awon eewo Odu nan niyi:

Akoko, Oloye Bodunrin ko gbodo je Akara-Kengbe
Ekeji, won ko gbodo je Ila
Eketa won ko gbodo je Okete.

Awon eewo wonyi wa fun qdun 1989 yi titi di emi.

Diviner I (Chief Awodiran Agboola)

Ogunda-b'Ede was the configuration cast for Chief Abosede Bodunrin for this year. 1989. The following taboos are attached thereunto:

First Chief Bodunrin must not eat Bean-Cakes deep fried in palm-oil.

Secondly he must not eat Okro.

Thirdly he must not eat Squirrel - meat.

These taboos are to be observed from this year 1989, till next festival.

Odun Ifa

Babalawo II (Oloye Fadairo Ajagbe, Awixe Eko, Baba Ede)

Ogunda-b'Ede Ki wọn ma jẹ okete. Odun yi yio daa fun wọn, wọn a ni ilọsiwaju wọn a si ni akojọ. Iyẹn ni ti Ogunda b'Ede.

Ihun ti i jẹ bẹ ẹ:

Okete g'ori ebe
O fọ namu-namu.

Itan Ifa nan

A dia fun Eleti-Odiwo
Oun le la, k'oun nilari, k'oun di ẹni nla lo dafa si. Wọn ni ko rubọ,
wọn ni ko ni Ila, ko ni Ikan, ko ni Osun, ko ni Ixu, ko ni Agbado,
ko ni Ẹyẹ-Ile, ko si ni igba ọkẹ.
O rubọ.

Egbe: O xe'un.

Baba Ede

Gbogbo nkan bẹrẹ wa daa fun un; alafia to o, O lowo l'owọ o to eeyan
O wa nyin Babalawo, o ni:
Okete gori ebe
O fọ namu- namu
Adia fun Eleti- Odiwo.

Orin:

Ti Ila ba g'erebe nkọ?
Ti Ikan ba g'erebe nkọ?
Ti Ixu ba g'erebe nkọ?
Ti Agbado ba g'erebe nkọ?

Egbe:

Ire, iwa mi a tọwọ yẹ ire.
Ire, iwa mi a tọwọ yẹ ire.
Ire, iwa mi a tọwọ yẹ ire.
Ire, iwa mi a tọwọ yẹ ire.

Baba Ede:

Ti eleyi yio daa xugbọn ki eleyi x'ọra fun eewọ titi di eemi. Ifa ni ọkan rẹ yio si balẹ. Ogunda-b'Ede Ifa ni eleyi yio xẹgun ọta. Ifa ni ọwọ a maajẹ fun un. Ifa ni oun o ma a yọọ ninu ibi, oun osi maa file fun un ninu.
Bi Ifa ti wi nu 'un.

Diviner II (Chief Fadairo Ajagbe, Awixe of Lagos, Master from Ede)

Here is the protocol under Ogunda-b'Ede Chief Bodunrin must not eat Squirrel-meat. If he observes this taboo together with others advised him, the ensuing year will be good for him and will bring him success in his undertakings. His resources and affluence will increase.

This is Ifa's message under Ogunda-b'Ede.

The authority for this opinion derives from this verse:

"Squirrel gets atop the ploughed earth
Gives a boastful shout as if to say
I have overcome, I have overcome.
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Eleti- Odiwo.

The Story

Eleti-Odiwo consulted Ifa-Oracle asking: would his life be successful, would his position in society be one of prestige and honour?

The diviners requested Eleti-Odiwo to provide the following sacrificial articles: Okro, Garden-Egg, the pot-herb Osun, Yam-Tuber, Corn, one Home-Pigeon and 200 bags of Cowries. He complied.

Refrain: He acted wisely.

Master from Ede

Consequently Eleti-Odiwo became healthy and prosperous. He thereupon sang his diviner's praise thus:

"Squirrel gets atop the ploughed earth
Gives a boastful shout as if to say
I have overcome, I have overcome."
Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to me, Eleti-Odiwo.

Song: When Okro gets atop ploughed earth
When garden, Egg, Yam Tuber and Corn
Get atop ploughed earth,
What does the farmer expect?

Refrain: Abundant harvest, rich harvest.

Master from Ede: Ifa's message:

This client will be successful provided he observes the stated taboos. He will enjoy peace of mind, victory over his enemies and every protection under Ifa's patronage.

Ese 11

Baba Ede:

Tuturuku, tuturuku ↗
Tuturuku, tuturuku ↘
Tuturuku Ajanaku lo fẹṣẹ xan'le giri-giri.
A dia fun Ogun nijọ ti o nlọ re e b'ori Ede.

Itan

Ede yi nkọ, ni mba Ogun x'ọta. Oun le x'ẹgun k'oun bori Ede"inn'
ni Ogun dafa si. Ifa ni oun o jẹ Ogun x'ẹgun ọta. Ifa ni ko rubọ. O
rubọ o si x'ẹgun ọta.

Bi o ti bori ọta nuun ti o fi jẹ pe iwa rẹ fi daa n'uun

Ogun wa nyin Babalawo,

Babalawo wa nyin Ifa,

O wa xe:

Tuturuku, tuturuku,

Tuturuku, tuturuku,

Tuturuku Ajanaku lo fẹṣẹ xanle giri-giri

A dia fun Ogun nijọ ti nlọ ree bori Ede.

Orin:

Baba Ede: Ti iku ba nwa mi i bọ nkọ?

Egbe: Pirigidi, ẹ fi ikoko de mi m'ọlẹ pirigidi.

Baba Ede: T'Arun ba nwa mi i bọ nkọ?

Egbe: Pirigidi ẹ fi ikoko de mi mọlẹ pirigidi.

Baba Ede: T'Aje ba nwa mi i bọ nkọ?

Egbe: Peregede, Ẹ ma ma xi mi i lẹ o, Peregede.

Baba Ede: B'Ire gbogbo ba nwa mi i bọ nkọ?

Egbe: Peregede, Ẹ ma ma xi mi i lẹ o, Peregede.

Baba Ede: Ifa ni oun yio xi ire gbogbo silẹ fun yin Ọdun yi yio si daa
fun yin o Abọru, Abọye.

Master from Ede:

"Whirlwind in front
Cyclone behind
Sound and fury everywhere
As Elephant marches
Majestic and confident
Stirring up fear and panic"

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Ogun, the Warrior-god, the day he prepared to confront his arch-enemy Ede and defeat him.

The Story

This fellow Ede^[*] was Ogun's arch-enemy. So Ogun consulted Ifa asking: would he defeat Ede and triumph over him?

Ifa replied that Ogun would triumph provided he first offered sacrifice. Ogun promptly complied and thereafter over came Ede and obtained a happy life for himself. Thereupon Ogun sang the praise of his diviner whilst the diviner gave the glory to Ifa. Ogun Sang:

"Whirlwind in front, Cyclone behind,
Sound and fury everywhere
As Elephant marches confident and majestic,
Stirring up fear and panic"

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to me Ogun the day I confronted my arch enemy Ede and defeated him.

Song

Diviner: When death threatens what is the first care?
Refrain: To seek protection beneath The Huge Pot
When illness threatens?

Refrain: Seek protection under The Huge Pot^[**]

Diviner: When prosperity beckons what is the best move?
Refrain: To shout for recognition

Diviner: When manifold blessings descend what is the best course
Refrain: To receive them bare-headed.

Diviner: Thanks to Ifa

*Ede = Destroyer.
** The Huge Pot = Ifa.

Babalawo III (Oloye Okumeri)

Nigbati a da Ogunda-b'Ede, Ifa pe ki eleyi o rubo pe ota po fun un xugbon yio xegun ota, ki eleyi ma si xe awun, ko si ma a bo Ifa.

Ese 1

Nigbati ada Ogunda-b'Ede, e-e r'ona ti Ifa nan gba tii fii je be.

Eke t'eke,
Awe t'awe,
O t'ohun ta a foju owo han ni ta a f'ehin re tan'ni je
A dia fun Orunmila 'nn be nirogun ota.

Itan

Won ni ki Orunmila o rubo, O rubo, Won ni opolopo ikan ni ki Orunmila o ru. Won ni ko ru Abo-adi, Akuko-adi, ko ru oke merinlelogun. Ko fi Abo-adi bo oke-pori ati Ikan won ni ko fi x'eb.

Orunmila xe be.

Egbe: O xeun!
Ni iku ba gba Ikan ni iku ba lo, ni awon ota Orunmila ba nku lo,
Orunmila ba ngbe aye.

Ifa wipe emi eleyi yio gun. O ni be ni awon Babalawo oun xe nxe nu rere ki'fa.

Eke t'eke
Awe t'awe,
O to ohun ta a fi han ni oju-owo
Taa f'ehin re tan'ni je
A dia fun Orunmila 'nn be nirogun ota.

Orin

Oloye Okumerin: Iku gba'kan
Iku ti lo.

Egbe Igbati iku gba'kan la o ku mo,
Iku gba'kan Iku ti lo.

Diviner III (Chief Okunmeri)

When the configuration, Ogunda-b'Ede, is cast for a client, Ifa's prescription is that sacrifice be offered so that the client may overcome his enemies no matter how numerous.

The client must not be miserly and should be unfailing in the worship of Ifa.

The authority for this opinion derives from a verse from Ogunda-b'Ede:

"What is deceit
What is falsehood
What else is subterfuge?
Than proffering the open palm of friendship
Whilst concealing the closed fist of hatred."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle
To Orunmila at that time
When deadly enemies
Encompassed him unbeknown.

The Story

Ifa Oracle advised Orunmila to offer sacrifice with garden eggs, a hen, a cock and twenty bags of cowries; the hen to propitiate his Guardian Principle and the garden-eggs to appease Death.

Orunmila complied with every instruction.

(Audience: He acted wisely.)

Death accepted the sacrificed garden-eggs and quickly departed.

Thereupon Orunmila's enemies died one after another leaving him free to enjoy a long life.

(Ifa says Chief Bodunrin will live long.)

Orunmila began to praise his diviner saying:

"What is deceit?
What else is falsehood?
What more is subterfuge
Other than proffering the open palm of friendship
Whilst concealing the closed fist of hatred?"

So declared Ifa-Oracle to me Orunmila when I lived encompassed by deadly enemies unbeknown.

Song: Death accepted the sacrifice and departed.

Refrain: Death accepted the garden eggs sacrificed
And we are free to life.

Dida Ifa - Odun Babalawo III Oloye Okunmerin Ese 11

Nigbati a ba da Ogunda-b'Ede, a pe ki eleyi ko ma purọ, ko ma a x'ootọ ki gbogbo nkan rẹ ba a le daa.

È ẹ ri ọna ti Ifa naa gba ti fi i jẹ bẹ ẹ?
Ọpa tẹrẹ kanlẹ, o kan ọrun.
A dia fun Irọ
Irọ nti'le-Ọlọrun rọ wa'le-Aye
Wọn ni ko rubọ, wọn ni ẹnu Aye ko ni ran an...
(Enu Aye ko-o ni ran Eleyi o!)

Itan . . .

xugbọn ko ma purọ. Oun naa wa ri pe igbati oun puro yi awọn eeyan a maa ko nkan ti oun. O ba lọ s'ọdọ awọn babalawo. Won ni ko rubọ, wọn ni to ba si ti rubọ wọn ni ẹnu awọn Aye ko ni ran an.

Wọn ba yan an l'ẹbọ, wọn ni Akukọ-Adiẹ męta, Ikan męta, ọkẹ, mętalelọgbọn. Lo ba rubọ. Ni wọn ba pa a, pa a ni ko ba ku mọ.
Ifa ni ki Eleyi o si ma a xootọ, ko ma purọ, pe ẹnu-Aye ko ni ran Eleyi.

○ ni bẹẹ ni awọn babalawo oun xe nxẹ ẹnu rere pe Ifa
Ọpa tẹrẹ kanlẹ
○ kan Ọrun
A da fun Irọ
Irọ ntile Ọrun rọ wa Ile-Aye.

Orin: Wọn pa'rọ parọ
Irọ o ku o,

Egbe: Irọ dopitan l'aye.

Awure:
Eleyi yio d'opitan l'aye o.

Egbe: Axẹ.

Oloye Okunmeri: Abọru, Abọye.

Furthermore, when **Ogunda-B'Ede** is cast at divination, Ifa's advice is that the client should refrain from lies, he should be always truthful so that the course of his life may run smoothly.

Here is another verse in support of this opinion.

"Though stretched thin
From heaven to earth
Truth is a staff
That does not break"
So declared Ifa-Oracle to Falsehood
On his way from heaven earthward bound.

The Story

Falsehood was advised to offer sacrifice to foreclose the evil-minded on earth from giving him a bad name and so kill him...

(Audience: Chief Bodunrin will not be so treated.)

... but that Falsehood himself should eschew lies. Arrived on earth Falsehood disregarded Ifa's injunction.

Consequently the more lies he told the more he was hated and persecuted. At last he consulted diviners who advised he should offer as sacrifice: 3 cocks 3 garden eggs, and 33 bags of cowries. He complied. Henceforth the more often he was persecuted the stronger he waxed.

(Ifa advises Chief Bodunrin to be truthful at all times and to refrain from lies. That way the evil-minded will never succeed in ruining him.)

Falsehood began to praise his diviners saying,
"Truth is a staff stretched thin from heaven to earth yet does not snap"
So declared Ifa- Oracle to me on setting forth from heaven earthward bound.

Song: As often as he is killed
Falsehood waxes strong.

Refrain: Falsehood reigns supreme on earth.

Diviner III: Chief Bodunrin will make history on earth.

Refrain: So may it be.

Diviner III: Thanks be to Ifa.

Note: By a clever word-play on the verbs *pavo* = "to kill lies" and *puro* = "to tell lies" the Yoruba text seeks to explain the persistence of falsehood in human society.

Babalawo IV

Ogunda-b'Ede:

Ifa pe ire aiku fun Eleyi. Ifa ni wọn yio si x'egun ota, Ota pọ fun wọn xugbọn yio si bori wọn patapata. Ifa pe olooto ni, k'o si ma a x'ooto nan, amon awon ota yio fe ma a fi tiẹ pe odi - Ifa ni yio x'egun.

Ese I

Eeri bi Ifa ohun ti i je beẹ?
Erin lo j'oko tan
Erin f'eyin lu'yin kekeke;
Efon lo j'odan tan,
Efon sun l'araarin abata;
Ogbologbo Imado ni i rin ni koroyin-koroyin"
Lo dia fun Qbalufon ti i r'aye alainiku.

Itan: Won ni ki Qbalufon rubo. Won yan an l'ebọ.
Qbalufon rubo. Nijo ti Iku o ni-i pa a mo niyen
(Ifa o ni je Iku o pa yin o!)

Egbe: Axi.

Qbalufon wa nyin Babalawo, Babalawo nyin Ifa
O ni:Erin lo joko tan.

Erin f'eyin lu'yin kekeke;
Efon lo j'odan tan,
Lo sun la ra a rin abata;
Ogbologbo Imado ni i rin ni koroyin-koroyin.

Dia fun Qbalufon ti i r'aye ilainiku.

Orin: Ogbo d'ogbo edan l'oni.

Egbe: Ogbo Olufon
Ogbo edan o,
Ogbo Olufon.

Babalawo: Ni awon ota ba wo, Qbalufon si gbe'le.
Ifa pe e e x'egun won.

Diviner IV

Under Ogunda - b'Ede Ifa predicts a long life for Chief Bodunrin. Even though his enemies be many he will overcome each one of them decisively. Chief Bodunrin is a truthful person and should continue to be so. His enemies will find various excuses to ruin him but he will frustrate their plans. Here is the Ifa verse to support my opinion.

Verse I

"Elephant eats up lush farms
And taps a note of triumph with his tusks:
Buffalo consumes rich fields
And rolls victoriously in the dust thereof,
Hefty Boar marches in grandeur
Making great show of his strength"
Thus declared Ifa- Oracle to Obalufon promising him a long life.

The Story:

Obalufon offered sacrifice as prescribed and thereby freed himself from sudden death.
*(Ifa will protect you, Chief Bodunrin from sudden death.)
(So be it).*

Obalufon thereupon praised his diviners and they in turn gave the glory to Ifa. Obalufon said:

"Elephant eats up lush farms
And taps triumphantly with his tusks;
Buffalo consumes rich fields
And rolls victoriously in the dust thereof
Hefty Boar marches in grandeur
Making great show of his strength"
So declared Ifa-Oracle
To me
Promising me longevity.

Song Like the Edan^(*) of the Ogboni Cult

He will age and age and never die

Refrain Obalufon will grow old and live forever

Diviner IV: So Obalufon^(**) lived long whilst his enemies all died.
Ifa promises you, Chief Bodunrin, a long life.

* Edan = symbol of Longevity.
** Obalufon = Obatala.

Babalawo IV

Ese II

Oju omọ kekere nwo'ni bi i k'a ku
Bẹẹ la a ni ku;
A dia fun Igba Irunmọlẹ oju-k'ọtun
Wọn kọle tan wọn k'ẹhin rẹ s'Olodumare gbagbaagba;

Oju agbalagba nwo'ni bi ka lọ ode-orun
Bẹẹ laa l'ode-orun un lọ
A dia fun Igba Irunmọlẹ oju-k'osi
Wọn kọle tań wọn k'ẹhin rẹ s'Olodumare gbagbaagba;

Ewo ni ka xe ?
Olaka Igi ni ko gbe'leji enia ni sisun
Dia fun Orunmila
Ifa kọle tan o kọ'ju rẹ s'Olodumare gbagbaagba
Wọn wa bẹ Ajogun-Aye,
Wọn wa bẹ Ajogun-Orun,
Wọn ni wọn ma a ba Orunmila xe nkan pọ oun la a pe Aje
Wọn ni wọn ma a ba Orunmila xe nkan pọ.

Orin Babalawo:

Nje ẹni o ba ni ki Abọsẹde ku ni iku nkan.

Egbe: Piri ajija. Eleyi ni ni Iku nkan, Piri ajija Ba.

Osan - xu gudu lo ni ki wọn ma a sanku

Egbe: Piri ajija, Eleyi ni ni Iku nkan, piri ajija

Baba: Ogun Odun l'Ooro fi i ka ewe

Egbe: Piri ajija, Eleyi ni ni Iku nkan, Piri ajija

Baba: Aka-i-ka-tan l'omode i ka axọ Oyele,

Egbe: Piri ajija, Eleyi ni ni iku nkan, Piri ajija

Baba: Aka-i-ka-tan l'omode i ka Iyanri agbo

Egbe: Piri ajija Eleyi ni ni iku nkan, Piri ajija

Baba: Aka-i-ka-tan l'omode i ka Ewe Agbonyin

Egbe: Piri ajija Eleyi ni ni iku nkan Piri ajija

Baba: Ẹni o pe ki gbogbo awo ku ni iku nkan

Egbe: Piri ajija, eleyini ni iku nkan, Piri ajija

Babalawo: Ifa ri ixegun fun Eleyini, yio si toju ile fun un Abọru,
Abọye.

Diviner IV: Verse 11

"The youthful eyes of Envy
Threaten death
But we will not die."

So declared Ifa-Oracle to the 200 divinities of The Right when they made their plans and kept them secret from the Almighty.

"The wizened eyes of Malice
threaten death,
But you will not die."

So declared Ifa-Oracle to the 200 divinities of The left when they made their plans and kept them secret from the Omnipotent.

"Of sacrifice and defiance, which is better?
Safety excludes prevarication;
Choice is a narrow bed
that ill contains two in comfort."

So declared Ifa-Oracle to Orunmila. He chose wisely, made his plans and laid them open before the Almighty.

At this, the desperate warriors of evil on earth and the deadly knights of doom from heaven allied themselves with our ladies — short in stature but wicked in act — whom others call witches, and threatened Orunmila with instant destruction. They failed.

Song: Whoever threatens Abosede with death will die the death instead

Refrain: Like boomerang, death will strike the plotters.

Song: Death will strike at plotters like lightning.

Refrain: Returning like boomerang death will strike at them

Song: The Ooro-Tree, cut down, sprites anew.

Refrain: So be it with Abosede's life

Song: As innumerable as are the feathers of a hen

Refrain: So be it with Abosede's years on earth

Song: As innumerable as the leaves in the forest

Refrain: So be it with Abosede's years on earth

Song: Whoever threatens diviners with death

Refrain: Will surely die the death himself

Diviner IV: Ifa promises victory to Chief Bodunrin and protection over his household.

Obeisance to you, Ifa.

Babalawo V (Oloye Ojugbona)

Abọru, Abọye O!
Ibiti a gbe ri Ogunda-b'Ede, Ogunda-a-t'ori-xe, Ifa pe wọn fun ni ni
aiku. Ifa wipe oun o xẹ'gun ọta. Ifa wipe Eleyi ari ire axe y'ọri.
E-ẹ ri bi Ifa nan gbe nje bẹẹ?
Ori gidi ki
Lo dia fun Ọbọ, ara ọbọ ni o ya
'Origidikilo difa fun Iro
Nijẹ ti o nxe arun kege-kege.

Itan

Wọn niki awọn mejeeji rubọ: Ọbọ rubọ, Iro nan rubọ.
Nigbati o daa fun wọn, ti ara wọn ya tan, ẹẹ ri i, ni Ọbọ lẹ bọ si ori-igi l'oke
o l'oun ye rigidiki. Nigbati Iro nan ti o gbe'ra l'ori igi ige-aya ni nba bọ wale,
lo kigbe o l'oun ye kese.

(Ifa o ni jẹ ki Iku o pa yin o! - Axẹ.)

Ijo ni won njo.
Ayọ ni wọn nyọ
Wọn ni bẹẹ ni babalawo awon xe i xe ẹnu rere ki Ifa
'Oriigidiki
Lo o difa fun ọbọ ara ọbọ ni o ya
'Origidiki lo difa fun Iro
Nijoti o nxe arun kege-kege.

Orin Babalawo Ẹjẹ Ologun ojo, ẹjẹ ọlogoji o yọ
Egbe Origidiki, marigidi, origidi.

Babalawo (Ajinde a ma a jẹ fun yin o! - Axẹ!)

Bi Iro ba ja l'ori-Igi
A fi arun fun alarun

Egbe Origidiki
Marigidi,
Origidi.

Babalawo Ọrunmila yio jẹ ki ara oya yin o!
Egbe Axẹ.

Diviner V (Chief Ojugbono)

When *Ogunda-b'Ede*, otherwise called '*Ogunda rectifies Misfortune*', is cast for a client, Ifa's message is that the client will live long; that he will obtain victory over his enemies and achieve success in every undertaking. Listen to the Ifa verse that supports this opinion:

"This illness is not unto death."

So declared Ifa-Oracle to Monkey who lay at death's door;

"Good health in the offing."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to Baboon who was bed-ridden.

The Story

Sacrifice was prescribed for Monkey and Baboon. Both sick clients offered sacrifice as advised. Thereafter their health improved so well that they got up from their sick beds.

You should see Monkey's changed behaviour. Up he climbed atop a tree and, beating his chest in zestful celebration he exclaimed; "I am healthy again and strong." Not to be left out Baboon took a leap from off the highest tree around and just missed landing on his chest as he shouted all the way down. "I have shaken off illness."

(Ifa will protect you Chief Bodunrin from sudden death — So may it be.)

Dancing round for joy Monkey and Baboon praised their diviners in these words:

"This illness is not unto death."

So declared Ifa-Oracle to me, Monkey, when I lay at death's door,

"Good health in the offing."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to me, Baboon, when I was bedridden.

Song: Dance twenty times for joy
Sing forty times with mirth

Refrain: Good health for me,
Good health for you
Good health is here to stay.

Song: Whenever Baboon leaps from treetops
He shakes off illness
He shakes off death

Refrain: Good health is here to stay for good

Diviner V: Orunmila bless you with good health
So may it be.

Babalawo V (Oloye Ojugbona) Ese 11

E-ẹ ri bi Ifa nan xe nje be?
"Okete lo g'ori ebe
O mu ko kooko
O si f'ese mejeeji wa kusa-kusa lehin."
Dia fun Oka nigbati yio bi Esi l'omọ

Itan

Oka niyi, o bi Esi l'omọ. Igbati o ya ni aixe-deede de si Oka o di pe ko ri nkan xe mọ.
Omọ wa di omọ to o ma ra koro, todi omọ ti o ndi ogiri mu kiri, 'n na ni iya re ni oun ko le fara da iya ni toun o! Lo ba lo.

Axe omọ olọla olọla omọ ti gbogbo aye maa ke Kabiyesi fun, oun lo bi nlẹ. Ni iya ba ngbe omọ ju ilẹ, lo ba kọ'ri si ibomi.

Baba ba nwo omọ. Bi o ti mọ o w'omọ - Olodumare si nba toju u re. Igbati o di ojo kan, omọ ti dagba, nibiti o gbe nba awon egbe re xire lo, ti won ba fe jeun eleyi a ni oun lo qdọ iya oun lo ree jeun, t'ohun a wi a l'oun nlọ s'qdọ iya oun lo ree jeun. Omọ Oka ke ree igba o ba xe Baba re ni o i lo ree ba, ko ri iya re.

O wa di ojo kan l'omọ ba ni, Baba oun, baba re ni:

"Ho o o."

Omọ ni gbogbo awon ore oun nlọ qdọ iya awon lo re e jeun, xe oun ko wa ni iya ni? xe oun ro lati oju-orun ni? Baba re ni "ko ri be." "

Diviner V: Verse 11

Here is another verse to support my opinion.

"Squirrel, sitting atop ploughed fields
Digs in front with two paws
Burrows behind with two feet
Savouring the sweet taste of victory."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to 'COBRA' when about to beget 'BOAR' as son.

The Story

Now this fellow nicknamed COBRA begat a son nicknamed BOAR. Soon after, his affairs took a turn for the worse such that he could no longer make ends meet.

It was about the time that his little boy BOAR began to crawl and attempt getting on his feet by holding on to the walls when his mother, finding the hardship unbearable quit the household.

Little did she know that her son was destined for greatness and royal honours. So she abandoned the boy and left for another home.

With the Omnipotent's assistance the father did his best to care for the boy. When the toddler grew older he began going out with other boys of his age but he soon observed that after play one of the boys might say:

"Im off to my mum to have a bite."

another would say:

"Im starving. I'm going home to mum to eat something."

As for COBRA'S son he had nowhere else to go but home to his father - no question of mum like in his friend's case.

One day BOAR said: "Father,"

COBRA answered: "Yes, my son,"

"All my friends," said the son, "Very often say they are off to their mother's to eat, haven't I got a mother? Did I just drop down from heaven?"

"No, Not so at all," replied the father.

O ni.

"O-o rọ loju sanma"

O ni nigbati oun fẹ iya rẹ o ni ge re nan ni o si x'oyun lo si bimọ nan fun. O ni nigbati o ya ni airilo, airinan, airixe de si oun. O ni ni iya rẹ ko ba le fara mọ wahala ni o ba gbe ọ juulẹ nigbati o xẹxẹ ndide ti o nfi ọwọ mu ogiri ni iya rẹ ba lọ.

"Haa" l'ọmọ wi, iyẹn ni pe oun ni Iya! Baba ni: "O ni."

Ọmọ ni:

"Baba, eni ni o o mọ pe o bi'mọ."

Ẹ-ẹ ri i, ni ọmọ ba bọ, si ita, ni o ba xa okuta jọ, o xa okuta o pe mešan, o ni ki baba oun fun oun l'owo l'o lọ ree ra orogbo mešan lo ba bọ Xongo nibẹ.

Nigbati o bọ Xongo tan ni ojo ba xu logan orun lo ba di pe ile xe kasii.

"Ha, ha nisisiyi ni orun ran yi! ki ni a de?"

Xongo a fe xe nkan nibikan nibi?"

Ẹ-ẹ, ri i, l'ojo ba bẹrẹ, kaa-kaa-ka-ka. Iro gbamu-gbamu ti wọn gbọ bayi ẹ-ẹ ri i, Ibiti iya ọmọ yi lọ ree l'ọkọ, ibẹ ni Xongo, ibẹ ni oke - l'ọnri ẹ lọ.

Ha! ọkọ ti o gba iya ẹ l'ọwọ baba ẹ pinpin ni Xongo pi in yeḗ-yeḗ.

The father continued:

"You didn't drop down from heaven, not at all, you were born very shortly after I married your mother. After some time hard times came and, what with penury and want, your mother quit — saying she could bear it no longer. You were just a little toddler then."

"Is that so," exclaimed the son.

"Well father," said the son "just you wait for what is coming. Today you will discover what stuff your son is made of."

What do you think the boy did? he gathered some stones from the streets - nine stones in all, celts sacred to the thunder God, Xongo. He took some money off his father, and bought nine bitter-kola nuts. With the nine stones and nine bitter-kola the boy invoked Xongo to wreak vengeance on the mother for deserting him and his father.

No sooner was the invocation completed than the weather changed. Dark clouds heavy with rain suddenly appeared in the sky. Darkness covered the whole earth. Everyone cried out in panic asking:

"What does this portend? A moment ago it was bright sunshine. Why this sudden change to darkness? Is Xongo angry with anyone around here? Has he a deadly score to settle with any one here?"

What do you think happened? First there was a very heavy downpour. Then three loud bangs of reverberating thunder burst out of the sky, hurled, without doubt, in response to the boy's invocation, by Xongo's angry spirit. Thunder bolts landed directly on the very roof of the house where the boy's errant mother had found herself a new husband.

In no time at all the usurper husband was blown into unrecognisable smitherings.

Babalawo V (Oloye Ojugbona) Ese 11 Itan

Ni iyaa rẹ yọ foo ni nxe "ka...ka...ka...kabiyesi O! kabiyesi."

Wọn ni:

"Qmọ wo ni uun?"

Wọn ni:

"Qmọ ti Qkà bi ti nje Esi ni wọn ke kabiyesi fun."

Babalawo

(Ifa ni oun o ma a je ki wọn ke kabiyesi fun yin titi di ojo-alẹ.
Ifa si ni qmọ ti yio yan, ti yio yan ju ni ẹ maa bi - Axẹ!)

Ni Qka ba nyin awọn babalawo, ni awọn babalawo nyin Ifa:

O ni:

Okete g'ori ebe,

O mu ko kooko,

O si f'ese mejeeji wa ruku s'ehin kuta-kuta

Dia fun Q ka ti yio bi Esi l'qmọ.

Babalawo Keepe, keejina.

Egbe

Ẹ waa ba ni l'aruxegun

Aruxegun laa ba'ni lese Qpe.

Oloye Ojugbona:

Ifa pe oun o fun yin ni aiku, pe oun o bayin xẹ'gun qta;
pe qmọ rere le o bi, pe ẹ o jere wọn nibiti a gbe ri Ogunda- a t'ori-xe.

Ifa si wipe ka rubọ pe a - a ni xogbere t'qmọ, pe awọn
ti mbẹ nilẹ nan, wọn yio ye, wọn yio yanju.

Leaping out of the house, the boy's mother implored Xongo:

"ka... ka.... ka biyesi — meaning your.... your....your majesty — have pity please."

Some around there wondered:

What dignitary attracts such royal address?

Others answered:

It is **Boar** (Esi) **Cobra's** (Oka's) Son.

Oka (Cobra) - **Bi** (Bogat) **Esi** (Boar).

Kabiyesi.

(By Ifa's grace honour and royalty will be yours, Chief Bodunrin, to the very evening of your life).

As 'Cobra' praised his diviners, the diviners in turn gave the glory to Ifa thus:

"Squirrel,
Sitting atop ploughed fields
Digs in front with his paws
Burrows behind with his feet
Savouring the sweet taste of total victory."

So declared Ifa-Oracle
to me, **Cobra**,
when I begat my son, **Boar**.

Song Soon as sacrifice was offered,
Refrain Our enemies were defeated.
 Victory to the Palm-Tree's devotees!

Diviner V:

Chief Bodunrin, Ifa promises you longevity and victory over your enemies. You will rejoice in your Children's success. But, never neglect to offer the prescribed sacrifice.



Portrait of
Agbongbon (Archbishop) A. O Osiga
Olulana ati Oludasile (Founder) of Ijo Orunmila

Note on Verse 11 of Diviner V

Idiomatically *Kabiyesi* means "long live your majesty." In the verse there is a subtle word-play on '-ka' and '-esi' the two roots of *Kabiyesi*. By adding the prefix 'o' to '*ka*' a new word 'Oka' (cobra) is formed, the verb '-bi' (begat) couples *Oka* (Cobra) to *Esi* (Boar), to form a sentence *Oka (Cobra) -bi (begat) -Esi (Boar)*.

According to the story in the Yoruba text there is no biological difficulty in accepting that "*Cobra Begat Boar*" Since it was stated earlier that *Cobra and Boar* were the names of the father and son respectively. The linguistic *tour de force* merely anticipates the word-play on 'Ka' and '-esi' that converts 'Oka-bi -Esi' to '*Ka -Bi- Esi*' (long live your majesty).

Unfortunately my English translation cannot convey the hidden mechanics of the pun which I have just explained. James Joyce's pun in *Ulysses* comes to mind as a close example:

Question: What rail-line looks like an Opera?
Answer: *Rose of Castille.*

Unless we are quick to spot that a rail-line consists of *rows of cast steel*' we miss the pun.

Qdun Ifa

Babalawo V (Oloye Ojugbona): Eṣe III

Kukunduku a-b'ewe geru-geru,
Qpoppo Oogun a si ru'mo gale-gale,
B'eeyan ba l'oppo ogun,
Bo l'eke n'nu ke-e je o je;
Inu rere ni i je'ni j'ewe lo
A dia fun Agan Okunrin
Njoti nmenu xe'rahan omọ
Won ni yio bimọ nan, okunrin ni, awo ni kio ma a xe.

Itan Ifa nan

Won ni omọ nan nbọ, okunrin ni won ti o ba ti de'le-aye ki won yaa
xe'fa le e l'owo, ki won fi opele le e l'owo, ki won bo oke-iponri fun
un.

Nigbati oxu yio le lootọ obinrin re ni oun o ma ri kini oun mo.

Abi ere ni, abi awada.ni? Nigbati o to oxu kewa ni won ba ri pe o bimọ na.

Won ni omọ ti l'ooko nle! Won ni ki l'oruko nan? Won ni Awolola ni. Ifa
ni ki omọ nan maa ki.

(Ifa wipe oun ri ire omọ,
awon omọ nan yio yan,
o yanju - Axẹ.)

Ijo-ni njo,
Ayọ ni nyọ
O ni:
Beẹ gege ni awon awo oun ti i x'enu rere ki'fa.

Diviner V (Chief Ojugbono): Verse III

"Sweet-Potato leaves sprout lush and green
Magic-Potent leaves come no less rich;
Adepts know the first as pot-herbs
And use the other for charms.
Adepts skilled in charms but steeped in deceit
Negate their own spells, frustrate their own magic.
Inner righteousness works better than charms."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to the hapless client who bemoaned his childless state. Ifa promised him a son who should be brought up a diviner.

The Story

The diviners advised that as soon as the promised son was born he should be given Ifa's emblems to wit: *Palm-Nuts and Opele (divining chain)*.

True to prediction, the following month, the client's wife missed her monthlies. Everyone wondered: could it be pregnancy or was it a false alarm? In the event she gave birth in the tenth^[1] month to a son.

"What should the boy's name be?" some asked.

"Ifa has named the child before birth," said others, "and the name is Awolola (The diviner's life is honourable). He must be brought up in the divining profession."

(Ifa promises Chief Bodunrin success and greatness for his children - So may it be.)

The client, now a happy father, danced for joy praising his diviners. He ended with these words:

"Upright diviners receive good auspices each time they consult Ifa for their clients".

^[1]Tenth month - ninth month in English, Yoruba counting being inclusive.

Kukunduku a - b'ewe geru-geru,
Opolopo oogun a si ru'mo gale-gale;
B'eeyan ba lopo oogun,
Bo l'eke n'nu ke-je, o je,
Inu-rere ni i je'ni j'ewe lo
A dia fun
Nijoti menu xe'rahan omu
Won ni yio bimọ nan okunrin ni,
Awo ni ko ma a xe.

Orin

Ojugbona:

Nje, awa omu Ogunda-b'ori-Ogbe.

Egbe:

Awo,
Awo l'awa nxe la o
Awo
Bi a x'awo laa l'awo!

Egbe:

Awolola
Awo l'awa nxe la o
Awo!

Ojugbona:

Qrunmila a je ki e la, ki omu yin o la o.

Egbe:

Axe.

Ojugbona:

Aboru, Aboye.

Then the Client sang:

Sweet Potato^(*) leaves sprout lush and green
Magic Potent leaves come no less rich;
Adepts know the first as pot-herbs
And use the other for charms.
Adepts skilled in charms but steeped in deceit
Negate their own spells, frustrate their own magic.
Inner righteousness works better than charms."

Thus declared Ifa-Oracle to me, when hapless, I bemoaned my childlessness.

Ifa promised me a son
To be reared a diviner.
Ifa's promise was fulfilled.

Song When we worship Ifa under his appearance as Ogunda-B'Ede -
Refrain Ifa requites us with prosperity.

Song Our devotion to Ifa
Is requited with wealth.
Refrain Honourable indeed
Is the diviner's life.

Prayer

Chief Ojugbono:
Chief Bodunrin, Ifa will grant you and your children
everlasting prosperity.

Response: So may it be.

Chief Ojugbono: Obeisance to you, Ifa.

Odun Ifa

Oloye Akano Fasina Agboola

Oloye.

Oloye Bodunrin: Mo nje, baba.

Oloye Agboola:

Xe ẹ gbọ gbogbo Ifa ti wọn ki fun yin? O lo sua, orọ si pọ nibẹ. Ki ẹ ri fi k'ogbọn ninu ẹ. Awọn eewọ ti wọn ka silẹ, ki ẹ pa wọn mo lati odun yi titi di ẹmi.

Olodumare a toju yin, a t'ọju aya ati ọmọ. Ifa a ma fi ixọ ẹ xọ yin, a maa daabo bo yin, a maa yọ yin ninu gbogbo ewu ọjọ yin a daḽe, pẹlu ara lile ati ọpọlọpọ ọwo. Iyi yin ko ni bajẹ: Ki ẹyin naa si maa xootọ, ki ẹ maa xe daada.

Olodumare a wa pẹlu yin o Axẹ.

Chief Akano Fasina Agboola: Chief!

Chief Bodunrin: Yes, master.

Chief Agboola:

I hope you listened attentively to all the verses of Ifa recited on your behalf. There is a lot to learn from them. Reflect on them and act on the precepts therein contained. Observe the stated taboos from this festival till the next.

The Omnipotent will protect you and your family. Ifa will guard you from all evil. Ifa will accord you longevity and good health and prosperity. Your good name will abide forever.

But be careful to live an upright and truthful life.

The Omnipotent will be with you always.

Chief Bodunrin: So may it be.

Part X B Èbọ

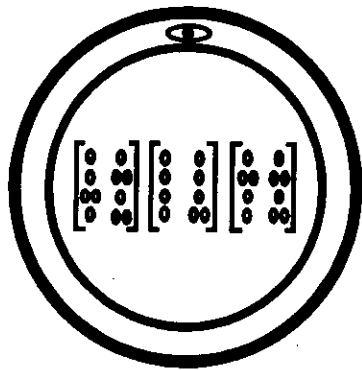
(Sacrificial Rite)

1. On the 10th festival day, Chief Bọdunrin presented himself for divination to ascertain Ifa's prescription to him for the ensuing year. Ogunda-b'Ede, the resulting configuration together with the injunction, advice and taboos appertaining thereto has been fully explained under Part X A.
 2. As a special mark of favour to Chief Bọdunrin, the cost of the requested sacrificial offerings was borne by Chief Akano Fasina Agboola, late Araba of Lagos who, in addition, supervised the actual rite to ensure orthodox correctness. In essence the description that follows is a particular example of the general procedure of Ifa's sacrificial rite.
 3. The disposition of the client (Chief Bọdunrin) and the sacrificial priest in relation to the divining board is shown below. *Exu's All-Seeing Eye* is the denominator used by the Priest in identifying his position, the client's position opposite his own and the four cardinal points shown in the diagram on page 652.
 4. The priest sprinkles a liberal supply of divining-powder (Iyerosun) on the board and marks three configurations (Odu) on it as shown in the diagram, viz:
 - a) **Ogunda-b'Ede'** the divination odu (in the middle).
 - b) **Oxẹ-Tura** the sacrificial Odu (to the right) for propitious outcome of the rite.
 - c) **Oxẹ-Gb'Irẹtẹ** the conjuration odu (to the left) for acceptance of the rite by Olodumare (Omnipotent God).
-

EAST

CLIENT

(Exu's All-Seeing Eye)



NORTH

SOUTH

SACRIFICIAL PRIEST

WEST

5. The money component of the sacrificial offerings is presented, (partly in current specie partly in cowries), to the client. Receiving it the client whispers or says aloud his wishes then touches it to his forehead thrice and next to his heart-centre, also thrice, before handing the money back to the priest.
6. With the money in his clenched right fist the priest makes several circular turns over the powder on the board in a clock-wise direction whilst reciting verses from the Ifa corpus. He first recites verses from each of the first four paired configurations (*i.e. Eji-Ogbe, Oyeku-meji, Iwori-meji, Odi-meji*).

At the end of each verse he says: "May this sacrifice be accepted" then he touches the money in his clenched fist to the client's forehead before proceeding to the next verse.

He repeats the procedure during recitation of verses from the *Divination Odu, Sacrificial Odu, Conjuraton Odu*.
7. The sacrificial animal is brought in with a rope round its neck. The client is directed to touch, first, his forehead and then his heart centre, thrice to the animal's head-centre. Thereafter, the animal is taken out and decapitated.
8. Three earthen bowls (A, B, C,) are placed near the divining board.

Bowl A contains fresh corn-pudding on a leaf under-lay.

Bowl B contains
 - i) the severed head of the sacrificial animal with the rope still tied round its neck
 - ii) Sacrificial animal's blood

iii) Common salt.

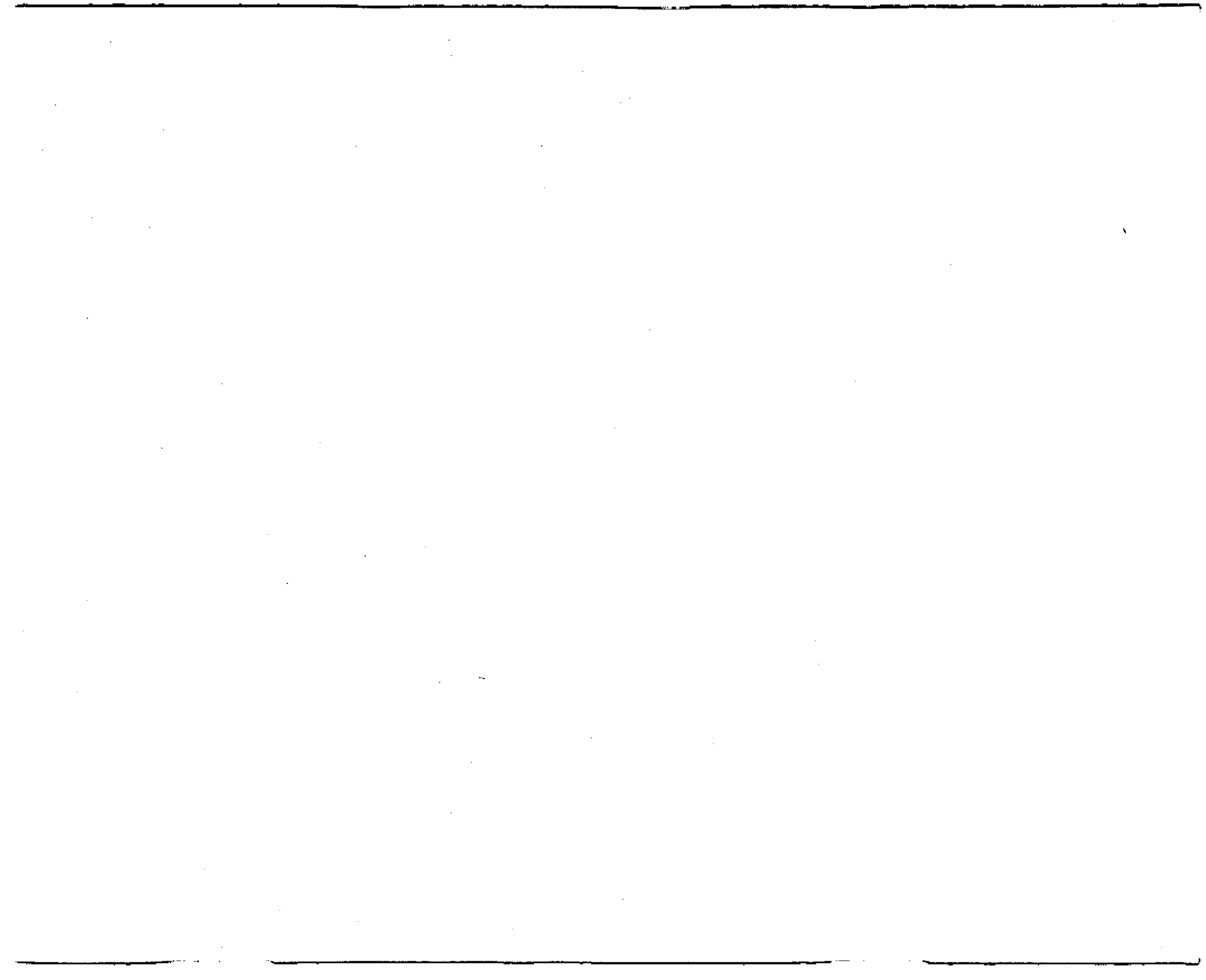
Bowl C contains the remaining sacrificial offerings.

9. Some cowries (the number being determined by casting the divining chain, *Opele*) are given to the client who says, his wishes over them and thereafter touches them three times first to his forehead then to his heart-centre.

The cowries are then pressed firmly into the corn pudding in Bowl A which is now carried to Exu's shrine as that divinity's first-fruits.

10. Bowl B is deposited at the shrine of the Orixá, previously indicated by Ifa, after the client has touched the bowl to his forehead and heart centre three times.
11. Bowl C is placed at the shrine of any other appropriate Orixá.
12. On the return of the emissary-priests the client is directed to touch his palms to theirs. Where the client himself was the emissary this ritual is of course unnecessary.
13. The client grasps his end of the divining - board with both hands whilst the sacrificial priest does the same from his own position opposite the client. Verses of Ifa are recited during this rite asking protection over the client and over all present.
14. The divining - chain is cast to ascertain whether the sacrifice as performed is accepted or requires additional offerings.
15. If the cast is favourable the client prostrates in obeisance and gratitude for the good auspices received.

Appendices



Appendices

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Appendix A

West African Science Studio

REGD. 25TH JUNE 1949.

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Yaba.

OUR REF:

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POSTAL ADDRESS
L. M. OSIGA
FOR SALE BY AUCTIONEER!
16, Moleye Street,
P. O. Box 166 Yaba
Lagos State Nigeria.
W. C. A.

6th Sept 1990

Dear Sir,

Permit me to extend my sincere and heartfelt appreciation to you for the wonderful and immense both morally and financially you always support our Igo Community in Ikorodu Quetta here of which my late father was the founder. For your information your late father of Glover Street Lagos ~~father~~ and late Bayo Doherty with my late father were good friends when we were in Lagos in the 30's your dad then was at Nigerian Medicine Stores at Tinubu Square I was at Eko Boys High School then before I left for Igboka College in 1939. I used to collect my late father's bike in your father's shop before my dad joined bus to Ikorodu then your late father, Bayo Doherty and Isaac Thomas Akede Eko knew much of this denomination and contributed to its development.

Let me know your address at Ovelanda
so that I may send to you a copy of disc
record or Cassette produced for explanation
of Ijo Grammar religion. The first production
has finished I will send a complimentary
to you when the second batch is out
Have these first

Yours Sincerely
D. P.

KIKO (OḶO SILE PELU ODU IFA
 ("IFA" ALPHABETS FOR LETTER
 WRITING) LAYI OWO OLOGBE
 AGBONGBON (ARCH BISHOP) A. O.
 OSIGA OLULANA ATI OLUDASILE
 (FOUNDER) IHO ORUNMILÁ FUN
 GBOGBO ENIA DUDU
 (FOR THE BLACK RACE)
 (Founder's Edition 1936)



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PA OIB OQ OE OE OF OQ OIGB
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OB OS OD

Odun - Ifa 1989
Alaye Latenu Oloye
Axiwaju - Awo Ilu Eko

Ko ye opolopo; won a ni kini odun Ifa tabi Ilaxu Odun? Mo fe xe alaye xoki lori ibeere wonyi?

Odun - Ifa

Ni akoko, ki lo nje Ifa?" Ifa ni orọ enu Eledumare, orọ ti Olorun fi da aye yi.

Eniti o wa so fun wa bi Ifa xe je, ti o s'nkọ wa ni Ifa, oun ni Orunmila; oun ni Oniwaasu pataki nan, oun ni Oniwosan nan.

Ti nkan ba daru ni ile-aye eniyan, Ifa ni won i fi i wadi re. Ifa ni Eledumare fi da Ile-aye.

Awon Ilu imii, won i pe ni ede miran: won ni Kabala ni, awon yen ni Ile Larubawa ati ile Egypt. Xugbon ti e ba wo iwe ti a fi i wadi itumọ orọ won a ni:

"Kabala is oral sacred citation based on number."

Ni ti wa iyen ni pe Ifa je orọ ijinle; kabala tiwa, orọ enu Olodumare, oun ni Ifa. Ni kukuru Ifa ni a i pe ni T'ayexe. Eniti ko ba lodi si ona yen, oun nan fe tun aye xe niyen; eniti ko ba si tun aye xe, kini oruko ti o n e o? Ika eniyan niyen.

Eje ri pe bi orọ nan xe lo yi o kolu gbogbo elesin ti won je elesin otito: yaala kiriyo, yala musulumi, to ba tii je pe won gba orọ Olorun gbọ, onifa ni won nitori Ifa ni orọ enu Eledumare.

Ọdun Ifa

Odun Ifa

Ti wọn ba ni awọn nxe Ọdun Ifa, Ẹlẹdaa wọn ni wọn mbọ yẹn, kii xe pe boya igi kan ni wọn mbọ.

Ikin, Ifa ni yẹn, xugbọn awọn alaimọkan npe e ni ekurọ.

Ikin jọ ekurọ ti a fi i xe epo. Ikin jẹ nkan elo Ifa ti a maa ko si ibiti o mọ toni-toni, ti a maa gbe si ibiti o daa ju ninu ile ẹni.

Ni kukuru, Ẹlẹda ni a mbọ ti a ba sọ wipe a nbọ Ifa.

Ti o ba di ojọ miran ojọ ire, ohun ti a fi i bọ Ifa a maa sọ ọ.

A ki-i fi eniyan bọ Ifa o! Ohun ti Ifa ba beere la a fun un: o le beere ẹja, ko beere ewurẹ, ko beere ọti, xugbon ki-i beere ori eniyan o!

Wọn kii-gbe Ifa si kọrọ, oun lo xe jẹ pe gbogbo awon alejo lati Amerika nkannkan ti wọn l'awọn fẹ kọ Ifa a nmuu wọn lọ si'di Ifa. Ifa kii x'awo ikọkọ awo mimọ ni.

Iyen lori **Ibọfa**.

Ọdun - Ilaxu

Iyen ni eto ti a i xe nigbati a ba fẹ jẹ ixu titun. Ni Ife — Ondaye nibi ojumọ ti mọ wa si ile-aye, ni oxu k'ẹjọ ọdun, oun ni ibẹrẹ odun titun ki i xe oxu kini ti awon *oyinbo* npe ni January - awon oyinbo lo mọ nkan to rọ won l'ọrun ti wọn fi mu January.

Ni ixedale oxu ti ohun ọgbin ba gbo ni ibẹrẹ ọdun titun: Wọn ni owu ti la, ixu ti la. Olodumare ti xee pe ninu ọdun ni nkan titun-titun maa jade. Olorun ti o da ile - aye, o ti xe nkan pẹlu eto to daa. Ni atijo asiko yi ni awon eniyan maa kore oko wọn, maa mu ixu wọn, mu gbogbo nkan lọ fun

Oba-Ilu wipe awon dupe loṣo Eledumare o! Ixu awon ta o!
 Won a wa xe etutu le e pe bi awon ti fe xe odun titun yi ti awon ri ere ni
 t'eexi awon dupe lowo Eledumare. Won toro pe ixu titun nan, awon a je e
 ko maa run awon ni'nu, ko ma pa awon lara, awon a tun ri eyiti a po ju
 bayi lo ni odun to mbo.

Onje xe pataki l'aye. Ki Orunmila to de, awon Irunmole kan ti wa s'aye
 xugbon won ko ru ti onje mo ebo won, won ko mu onje dani wa 'le-aye.

Won xe ile-aye titi, ile-aye o gun. Eledumare wa ke si Orunmila:

"waa lo, awon ti won ti xe ile-aye tele o da bi eniwipe ko gun to.
 Waa lo ko lo to ile-aye fun mi."

Orunmila wa ro o wo pe ohun ti awon agbalagba wonyi ti xe-xee-xe tiko gun
 bawo ni Eledumare xe wa ni oun ni ki oun lo to o?

O wa pe awon

Baba mo ixe-je ixe oluxe - l'aye
Baba mo-aje a-maa-je oluxe
Ofe l'Eru i jeyo lobe, at'oun at'olowo e.

Awon awo orun ni won.

Won wa difa fun Baba mi oro-po-niyun.

Won ni:

Ile aye ti o ni lo yi, won ni won a gbo si o l'enu. Won ni xugbon
 nkan ti awon Irunmole iyoku ko mu dani oun ni onje. Won ni ko
 mu gbogbo ohun ti enu ije dani.

L'Orunmila ba ru gbogbo ohun ti enu i je: O ru ixu, O ru agbado, O ru Ila;
 gbogbo e, pata, ni o ru. Nigbati o wa de ile-aye gbogbo oun ti o ru un, ohun
 ni o di onje ni ile-aye: ixu ta, agbado yo, gbogbo nkan tuba o tuxe.

Ọdun Ifa

Ni araye ba ni ti Ọrunmila ni awon yio gbọ, gbogbo ohun ti Orunmila ba wi ni abẹ ge.

Idi ni yẹn ti o fi jẹ pe onjẹ, oun ni aa fi la ọdun titun. Idi ni yẹn ti a fi i xe Ọdun ilaxu, ọdun ila-onjẹ, ọdun pe onjẹ de. A si dupe ọwọ Eledumare pe onjẹ ti o fun wa ki o ma jẹ ajẹmọ fun wa, ki o fun ni ni ọpọlọpọ si i o. Nitoripe ti ọmọde ba dupe ore ana yio ri'mii gba ni.

Ọdun titun, ọdun-ilaxu ti Baba wa nxe loni yi, wọn a tun la ti eẹmi o. Onjẹ a pọ ni ilu wa. Ilu wa ko ni di ẹru ilu imii. Aidupe, aixọdun ilaxu ni onjẹ fi wọn lode isiyi o.

Iyẹn ni itumọ. Ifa-bibọ ati Ilaxu-Ọdun.

Ela bọru,

Ela bọye,

Ela bọxixẹ.

Ifa Festival ~ 1989
Explanatory Talk by Chief Atanda
Axiwaju-Awo of Lagos

Quite a lot of people do not understand what the celebration of Ifa festival or the New Yam Festival is all about; so I wish to say a few words on this matter.

Ifa Festival

First of all what is Ifa? Ifa is the WORD that proceeds from the Omnipotent's mouth, the WORD where with God treated this world.

The Harbinger and Teacher of Ifa is ORUNMILA. He is the great prophet, the great healer.

When things turn awry in a man's life Ifa is the consultant we approach for their solution since Ifa is the very fabric of creation.

Other nations in their own tongue call Ifa KABALA. These nations include Arabs and Egyptians. When you look it up in a dictionary kabala is defined as "oral sacred citation based on number" and that is the same as our own concept of Ifa. So our Kabala is Ifa, the word proceeding from the Omnipotent's mouth. In short, Ifa is the saviour, the redeemer, the reformer of man's life. Anyone who follows Ifa's teachings is also a saviour, a reformer, redeemer, but whoever does the contrary can only be called a worker of iniquity.

Interpreted in this way Ifa has the same basis as all other true religions be it Christianity or Islam. So we might say that whoever believes the word of God the same is a follower of Ifa's path in that Ifa is the word proceeding from the omnipotent's mouth.

Odun Ifa

Those who celebrate the annual festival of Ifa are, in reality worshiping their creator and are far from being idolators. The uninformed call Ifa's Emblem Palm-nuts but we know it as IKIN to distinguish it from the mundane Palm-nuts from which palm-Oil is obtained. We provide a special, clean container for Ifa's Emblem and place the container in the cleanest and holiest part of Ifa's altar in our household.

To repeat: Ifa's annual festival is held to worship our creator. On another auspicious occasion I shall talk about the articles employed in Ifa worship. Suffice it to say now, and that most emphatically too, that human sacrifice is not performed in Ifa worship. We concede other sacrificial offerings to Ifa such as FISH, BUSH - RAT, GOAT, WINE. Ifa never demands human life. Ifa is not a secret cult. You can see for yourselves how our visitors from America and all over the world are shown and taught everything about Ifa. Ifa is not a secret but a sacred cult. So much on Ifa festival.

New Yam Festival

There are certain rituals performed by us before authorising the eating of New yams. This tradition originated from Ile-Ife, cradle of human civilization. In those days the beginning of a New Year was marked in August unlike the practice with Europeans who no doubt have their own reasons for choosing January.

Our traditional religion recognises the season of harvest of New Crops as the beginning of New Year: the season when the Cotton - Tree blossoms, Yams are harvested.

God the creator of the world has so arranged it that new things herald the New Year in good order and regular sequence. In ancient times at the beginning of harvest, products of the earth, in particular Yam - Tubers, are presented to the king as a mark of gratitude to the Omnipotent for the years bounty.

Certain rituals are then performed. Sacrifices are offered with thanks to the Omnipotent for blessings received in the past asking that the new yam, when eaten may not cause illness or sudden death in the community.

As we all know food is essential to sustain life. There is this story in Ifa: Before Orunmila, other divinities had visited the earth but their attempt to populate the world failed because they neglected to sacrifice for the blessing of food. What was more, they forgot to provision themselves with food from heaven. Where upon the Omnipotent requested Orunmila thus:

"Divinities before you failed to populate the earth, Now you go and set things in order on my behalf.

Orunmila wondered:

"Why has the Omnipotent appointed me this task?" Nevertheless, preliminary to anything else, he consulted three heavenly diviners who declared:

"Only an achiever is entrusted with high responsibility,
An achiever is a diplomat who proceeds tactfully,
Diplomacy is likened to salt that sweetens
food for Lord and Slave alike

Be assured that on your journey earthward bound the inhabitants there will only hearken to you if you provision your mission with food, which serious omission spelt failure to attempts by preceding divinities to settle on earth. Food consists of all things that the mouth consumes. Therefore be well provisioned therewith"

So Orunmila offered as sacrifice every article of food in particular: Yam, Corn, Okra. The articles sacrificed in symbol became on earth the Food that men eat to survive. Yams grew in abundance, Corn sprouted and ripened in due season. Consequently life became prosperous, orderly and peaceful and Orunmila's word became law, his will became fiat.

Odun Ifa

This legend forms the basis of our tradition of opening the New Year with the sacrifice of food articles. And so we celebrate the New Yam Festival in the sure expectation of a year of bountiful harvest to come. Tonight we thank the Omnipotent for giving us food and pray for abundance of it not only in the ensuing year but every year. Our elders say with good reason that he who is grateful for yesterdays blessings will receive greater ones next day.

May our Father, Chief Agboola live to perform the New Yam Festival with greater happiness every year. May we never lack food in our country but may we be abundantly blessed.

May Nigeria never be enslaved by other countries.

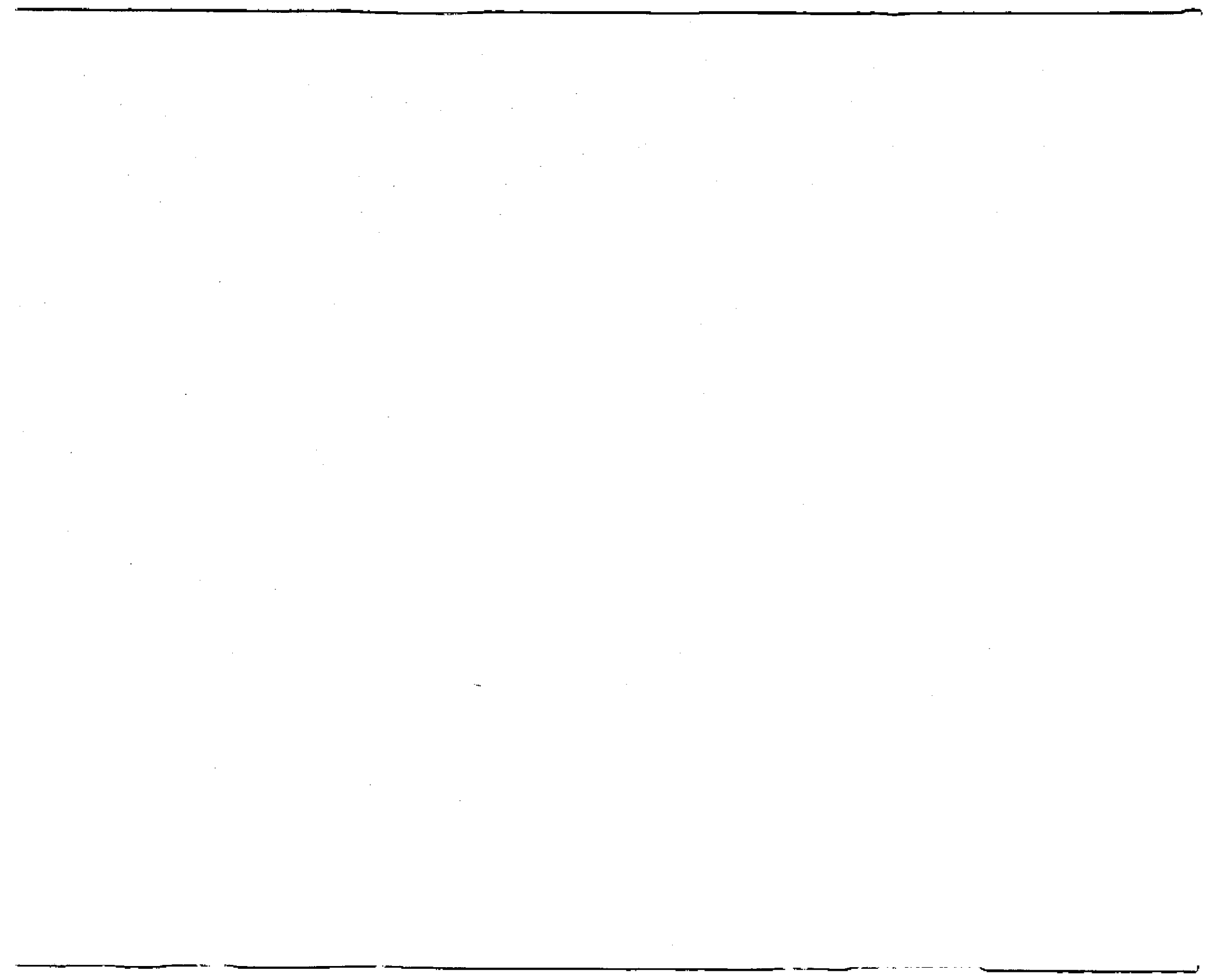
May we always remember that ingratitude to God for past blessings and neglect of the yearly rites of the New Yam lead to want, scarcity and inflation as is the case these days.

Here ends my explanation of the New Yam Festival

Obeisance to Ela, Orunmila.

May our Sacrifice be always accepted and yield us manifold blessings.

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