IFA DIVINATION PROCESS

Bade Ajayi
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Divination is universally concerned with practical problems and it seeks information from which practical decisions may be made. The source of such information is not conceived as mundane.

The divinatory arts are many and a broad understanding of them can only emerge from a survey of actual practices in various cultural settings. Men all over the world practise divination and device various methods of doing this. The Assyro-Babylonians have their Bam (seer and diviner) who employs hapatoacopy-divination by observing the liver of sheep which had been used for sacrifice. The Buddhists in India practise astrology and they use lots and oracles as means of divination. The Greeks had their oracular shrinks of Jupiter at Dodona and Apollo at Delphi. The Romans used the Sortes and the Japanese use Ornoplatoscopy. In Rornan society, auspices (auspicia) are the means by which the Romans seek to ascertain the support of the gods.

Other forms of divination are palmistry, cream interpretation and astrology. Diviners of similar kinds include the many types of media who may communicate with the dead (necromancy process) as well as-crystal gazers, dream interpreters and diviners by automatic writing.

Like the other peoples of the world, the Yoruba employ various system These systems include *erindinlogun* which involves the casting of sixtecn cowries, which employs a set of separate strings with four markers each and iyanrin tite (sand and cutting). Others areobi dida (casting of kolanut), *omi wiwo*(water gazing), owo wiwo(paImistry), *owo* wiwo(gazing on money), atipa or abokuusoro(necromancy) and *wjwo oju* (gazing on the eyes). One of our informants, Awoyerai Elebu-ibon, emphasises that *get* (three cowries),' eerin (four cowries) and eejo (eight cowries) were used for divination in the distant past. Among others, Ogimbiyii (1952: 83-84) Awolalu (1.979: 121), Bascorn ((1969:11) and Qlatunji (1984: 109) have-described some of the processes and forms dtdivination among the- Yoruba.

Of all the methods of divination employed by the Yoruba, Ifa divination is considered the most reliable, and the most popular means of divination (Bascom 1969:11 and Awolalu 1979: 122). Till these day, the Ifa priests are located over the Yorubaland. As this research reveal most of the various forms of divination among the Yoruba take their.sources from *Ifa* divinatioin .

Ifa. divination is both a body of knowledge and a system of social, emotional, pathological control, employing relevant historical and mythological precedents contained in the special divinatory verses to be recited, chanted or song by the *babalawo.* lfa divination is the most complex system of divination both in its repertoire of verses and in its range of applications. To the Yoruba, divination or consultation with the supreme divinity (Orunmila) is of crucial spiritual importance. The oral tradition emphasises the parit played by *Orunmila* is guiding the destiny of man and divinities. One reason given for his intimate knowledge of matters affecting man's destiny is that *Orunmila* is present when man is being created. Therefore he knows all the secrets of human beings and thus he can reveal what one has destined and if the destiny is an unfortunate one, *Orunmila* canprescribe remedies to avert the misfortune. This is why *Orunmila* is being described as Elerii-ipin (the witness of destiny or lot), 'Obirikiti A-pa-ojo-iku-da' (the great one, who alters the date of death).

If a divination is operated by means of the configuration called *Qdu.* In the *Ifa* corpus are as many as 256 possibilities (16 principal and 240 minor *Odu)* each containing mythological stories which the *babalawo* narrates in the process of divination. The sixteen principal *Qdu* (plus the signs) in order of seniority are listed below (for easy reference).

ODI MEJI [4]	IWORI MEJI [3]	OYEKU MEJI [2]	E.JI OGBE[1]
0 0 00 00 00 00 0 0	00 00 0 0 0 0 00 00	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
OKANRAN MEJI [8]	**OBARA MEJI [7]**	**OWORI MEJI [6]**	**IROSUN MEJI [5]**
00 00 00 00 00 00 0 0	0 0 00 00 00 00 00 00	00 00 00 00 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 00 00 00 00
OTURUPQN. MEJI [12]	**IKA MEJI[11]**	**OSA M EJI [10]**	**OGUNDA MEJI [9]**
00 00 00 00 0 0 00 00	00 00 0 0 00 00 00 00	00 00 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 00 00
OFUN MEJI[16]	**OSE MEJI [15]**	**IRETE MEJI[14]**	**OTUA MEJI [13]**
00 00 0 0 00 00 0 0	0 0 00 00 0 0 00 00	0 0 0 0 00 00 0 0	0 0 00 00 0 0 0 0

Note: The numbering order (1-16) follows the system in which the *Qdu* signs are always marked by the *babalawo.*

2 The Babalawo

The Babalawo are the trained dedicated Ifa priests and diviners in the Yoruba community of Nigeria. In Yoruba tracdtional .society, a babalawo is a 'doctor[1]'', a 'pharmacist', a herbalist and the most popular diviner who the people' consult for advice, guidance and medical treatment. When a pregnant woman is under labour, when a person is seriously sick or when there is a breakout of epidemic disease, the *babalawo's* help is .sought personally or on behalf of the victim. It should however be noted that the *babalawo's* unique position in the Yoruba society is neither attained through lineage or honour. The status of a *babalawo* can only be acquired after many years of rigorous training and experiences. The detail on training follows later.

At any point in. time, no practising *babalawo* vines without using either the *opele (*the divining chain) or the ikin (the sacred palmnut). The use of these instruments would enable *him,* to know, the nature of his client's problem. The diviner relies on the dictate of the gods. The diviner. thus serves as a link between two worlds: the ephemeral and eternal, the material and the spiritual. Just as a medical doctor always takes with him a stethoscope, a technician has .an avometer, a screwdriver and pliers ready with him for an emergency work, a *babalawo* pockets his portable *opele* when he is invited to a nearby town or village for divine consultation.

There are .two major categories of *babalawo* in Yorubaland: the- *Awo Qlodu* and the *Awo Elegan.* The *Awo Olodu* (the devoted Ifa diviners) are the most recognised and the most

knowledgeable class of *babalawo* in the Yoruba society of Nigeria. They are only the diviners but also the worshippers of *Orunmila,* the god of divination and wisdom. The *Awo Elegan* on the other hand, are those *babalawo* who are not fully engaged in Ifa divination. These consist of the *Agbamole* and *Sawosesegun.* The *Agbamole are* the set of *babalawo* who either inherited the divining chain or partially trained in .the art of Ifa divination but uninitiated into Ifa cult. When this class of babalawo feel like doing so, they can divide for themselves or. any member of their family, but never an outsider. The area of specialisation attached to Ifa literature include the Ifa divination art, healing and chanting of Iyere (the ifa songs). A, *babalawo* may specialise in one or two of the areas. The *Asawosesegun,* the second sub-category of *Awo Elegan* mentioned above, are those
babalawo with combined honours degree in Ifa literature. They combine divination with healing of serious illnesses such as leprosy, epilepsy and mental disorder. Usually, they are more popular as a healer than a diviner. Chief idowu Obayomi (alias Afinju Babalawo) of Ijagba compound, Sagamu in Ogun Stale of Nigeria and late Aladokun of Ikirun Oyo State of Nigeria are two examples of *Asawosescgun* interviewed in the course of this study. To whichever category of *babalawo* one may belong, the code of conduct which binds them all must be preserved. A *babalawo* is always generous, faithful, Knowledgeable, and a good traditional counsellor to the members of his community. A *babalawo* in discharging his duty, always believes he has an obligation to fulfil in respect of *his* client (s) and this he does willingly.

The *babalawo* are highly respected, not only for their wisdom and intelligence but also for their faithfulness and generosity to the members of the society. Under normal circumstances, no one insults or fights them.

Mo ru eewo orisa,	I say it is a taboo to the *orisa,*
Enikan o gbodo na babalawo,	No one beats an Ifa priest,
To ba gbofa yanranyanran lotu Ife	Who is Very Versed in Ifa in the city of Ife.

Generally, every babalawo knows his right and also keeps te law of the land. A *babalawo* by his training and practice, is prepared to advise and guide anybody who consults him. He knows something about the life and teaching of *Orunmila* and when he divines for his clients, he interpret only the message of *Orunmila.* Whatever may be the problem or complaint of a client is no secret to *Orunmila* and any trained and certificated *babalawo* should be able to read the language of *Orunmila* through the *Odu* signs. But if a ***babalawo*** does not receive a proper training, he may have some problems in interpreting *Odu* sign and thus deliver wrong message to the client. In such a circumstance, the clients whose faith in Ifa divinity is not strong enough may complain of its inability to foresee all things.

Ope-oseru,	Ope (Orunniila) is not dishonest,
Qniki ni o gbofa,	It is the chanter who is'not versed in *Ifa,*
Ohun a ba b'*Ifa.*	Whatever we ask *Ifa*
Nifa i so.	Is what *Ifa* reveals.

If this happens, it is the *babalawo* who has "misrepresented the divinity. Anyone who has successfully passed through the rigours of *Ifa* training would be able to identify the problem of his clients. The *babalawo* should base his expertise on the training he has acquired. Those who use charms to find out the hidden problems of their clients are not true *babalawo* and in fact, they are not fit to be one. This class of *babalawo* (if any), are being dishonest, and they pay dearly for it. In the later part of their life, emphasised our informants, such *babalawo* lose their sight permanently.

It is highly essential that one who' aspires to be an *Ifa* priest (babalawo) receives adequate training from a versed and experienced *babalawo* that he may be able to meet the responsibilities of the important positions in which he would later find himself in the community. While in training, the would -be *babalawo* would be taught the *Odu* signs and commit to memory a great number of' *ese Ifa* (stories) associated with the *Qdu* starting with *Ejiogbe* (the first. *Odu in* the corpus). After the.mastery of the required stories in each of the sixteen principal *Odu.* the proceeds to the stories in he minor *Odu* As emphasized by our informants, the study of *ese Ifa* require deep concentration, otherwise the trainee will be wasting time in repeating the stories of an Odu several times.

In his work, Abimbola (1976:18-24) describes the system of training and initiation of a would-be *babalawo*. Nevertheless there are some other facts worth knowing for, understanding fully the process of training of a would-be *babalawo* . Before an trainee lays his hand on anything, divination has to be performed for him on order for him to know the *Odu* which is destined for him. Thed *babalawo* usual terms for the this notion is '*Odu* to bi enikan' which literally means the *Odu* which gives birth to someone (the trainee in the case). It is this *Odu* which will guide the master *babalawo* the way to treat the person in training. The trainee begins his education with the identification of the signature of each of the sixteen principal *Odu* and essentially the *Opele* is the major instructional materials for the purpose. The *Opele* used for the training is made from pieces of calabash (paaakara) which looks inferior to the usual *Opele the babalawo* use for divination. The process of studying the signs of Odu is referred to as *Sisi Opele*(the opening of Opele). This term derives from the fact that the master-*babalawo* uses his hand to form the pattern of each *Odu* when teaching his students. It must be noted that it is only the principal *Odu* that are learned this way. After a trainee has mastered the signs of the sixteen *Odu,* he would be examined by his master and perhaps in the company of a few fellow *babalawo*. The performance of the trainee would determined whether or not he would proceed to the minor *Odu*.

Assuming that the trainee has displayed mastery over the principal *Odu* he starts learning the minor *Odu* (beginning from the first minor Odu-Ogbeyeku). His master now uses the method casting the *Opele* to teach him. When the *Opele*, any *Odu* can emerge and in this case the trainee does not only learfn the minor *Odu* but also revises the principal *Odu.* A trainee learns better by understanding his master as he (he master) divines for various clients. The trainee learns the correct stories to each *Odu* and the correct tone which distinguishes *ese Ifa* from all other poetic arts as *esa* and *Ijala* among the Yoruba.

In addition, to his knowledge of *Ifa* and.the process of divination an aspiring *babalawo* rnust know the appropriate sacrifice for each *Odu.* He must also acquire a vast amount of herbal and pharmaceutical lore with its accompanying repertoire of charms and incantation. It therefore follows that those who ultimately qualify as full practising *babalawo* are men of some intellectual strength and judgement. Above all, the *babalawo* is not only an artist but the custodian of Yoruba cultural heritage.

In respect of the age of the trainee, both the young and old can decide to learn *Ifa* According to Adebayo Kehinde of Elepe Onipele Compound, Oyo, a boy of ten to twelve years would spend sixteen years (as against twelve years stated by Abimbola) before he can be granted-freedom to practise on his own. It is then the young *babalawo* is said to be fairly mature to shoulder the responsibility of a *babalawo.* Nevertheless, the young *babalawo* is still under thirty at his graduation and thus his age and- experiences might prevent him from speaking with full authority especially when he is in the midst of the old master- babalawo.

We should realise that *Ifa* training is the most complex of all the systems of divination among the Yoruba. For example, the training of *Erindinlogun, Agbigba, Osanyin* and some other forms of divination does not involve too long time and skill. Within a short time, an Erindinlogun trainee starts divining for some clients. It is difficult (if not impossible) for one to become a responsible *babalawo* without an adequate knowledge and thorough understanding of the *Qdu* and the *ese* of *Ifa.* This is why Idowu (1962:137-138) describes the Ifa divination system as 'an intricate art which is painfully and laboriously learned before it can be mastered to an appreciable degree.

One has to learn and commit to memory the 256 *Odu* with the endless stories connected with them and the practical application of the stories. He should also learn to prescribe appropriate sacrifice and medicinal preparation. All these are the skills which take much time, patience and energy. Furthermore, a would-be *babalawo* or diviner does not stop studying once his apprenticeship is complete and he has begun to practise on his own. Fie continues to learn new verses and medicine from his teacher and other *babalawo* or diviners. In effect, the period of studying ***ese*** *Ifa* never ends. A diviner keeps on learning until he dies.

There is no doubt, the baba*lawo* rare very intelligent but they do not claim to know everything. Bascom (1969) describes the *babalawo* as the best,,organised and most knowledgeable, magico-religious secf of the country. When a *babalawo* is in search of knowledge, he could consult any other *babalawo,* old or young. Even when *Orunmila* was alive, he once sought knowledge from one of his children.

Agba to moyi ko.moyi,	The elder who knows one thing may not know the other,
A diafun *Qnmmila,*	Performed *Ifa* divination for *Orunmila*
Ti yoo si tun kdfa lodo Amosun re.	Who would still learn *Ifa* from Amosun, one of his followers.

The excerpt above shows how humble and ambitious the *babalawo* are. No true *babalawo* pretends to know everything. He is always prepared to learn more anywhere and from anybody. It is a common attitude of the *babalawo* that they are always prepared to teach *Ifa* to anyone at any time.

When one wants to acquire some knowledge on *Ifa* corpus, he approaches a *babalawo* and tells him his mission. He will readily impart the knowledge.

If a group of *babalawo* assembles for a meeting, a festival or certain ceremony where there is a need to chant e*se lfa,* each member (beginning from the youngest *babalawo) ch*ants, recites or sings *ese Ifa* which is appropriate to the situation or an *Odu* which emerged. But if a *babalawo* who is called upon does not know certain portion of *Ifa* he would corne .out frankly that he has forgotten or that he has no idea of that particular aspect (for *Ifa* mythology stories are so numerous that no single person can claim to know ail). This is why the babalawo say aboruboye, o ya ju iro lo' (confession of one's ignorance is better and more honourable than pretence).

3 The Client

The term client, in this study, refers to the person who consults a b*abalawo* for advice and guidance by means of divination. Before a client consults a *babalawo,* he should share the belief in the institution of traditional, divination because the factor of faith plays an important role in a positive outcome of the practice. Whatever his social status, religious inclination, age or educational attainment, a client must submit himself to the authority and direction of the *babalawo* . This is because the *babalawo* is believed to be endowed with the knowledge to solve the client's problem. And as the most trusted diviner, the *babalawo* too does his best to fulfil the obligation.

To the Yoruba, consultation with the supreme divinity (*Orunmila)*is of crucial spiritual importance when one is about to choose a wife, when a. child is born, when one intends to build a house or when one plans a journey or undertakes any project with chances of profit or loss. He "believes that by following the set rules of the system, he can achieve a direct contact with *Orunmila* the wisest divinity and the most trusted member of the pantheon.

It is interesting to find in the existing works and fresh data collected on *Ifa* literary corpus that *Orunmila* himself, the *Odu,* the divinities as well as animals and inanimate objects had once been clients. They consulted ***Ifa*** oracle for various reasons, lack of money, children, wives, or for victory over enemies. Foe example, *Orunmila* consulted other *babalawo* when he had no money, to buy food for his visitors as shown in the excerpt below:

Oda-owo, awokoro,	Qda-owo, *Ifa* priest of koro,
Aabo, obinrin re,	Aabo, his wife,
Omo won oke Ijero$_t$	Their child in the city of ljero,
Bi oda owo ti n dami,	Just as.lack money,
Bee ni aabo mi n bo mi,	I also have security,
A dia fun Orunmila,	Performed Ifa divination for Orunmila,
Nijo ti aalejo meta,	On the day three strangers,
O wo sile baba,	Were to lodge in the father's house,
Ifa o si nii ni ookan,	And Ifa did not have any cowry (money),

A a yoo na(Abimbola 1968: 25-26). Which he could spend.

Another event is when the *babalawo* divined for *Eji-Obara,* one of the sixteen principal *Odu.* Poverty was the cause of his consultation. Here is the *ese lfa*

Ise o sohun amusere; Poverty is not a thing to play with;
Lya o sohun.amusawada;. Suffering is not a thing to jest with;
A.dia fun Eji-Obara; Divined for Eji-Obara
Ti n hagbon ola, Who is weaving baskets to be wealthy, Ti gbogbo aye n tin And everybody is laughing at him.

In the data below, inanimate objects (some drinks) appear as the clients.

Iwo lo se e It is you who offends,
Mee ba o wi That l blame you,
Oran isiin won o toja, Matters of nowadays should pot cause a quarrel,
Ija naa lo de lorin dowe, It is the quarrel which makes a song sound proverbial,
A dia *fo ti* Performed Ifa divination for Oti (wine).
Qmoo won lode Ilare Their offspring ax Hare
Iwo lo se e It is you who offends,
Mee ba o wi, That I blame you,
Oran isiin won o toja Matters of nowadays should not cause a quarrel,
Ija naa lo de lorin dowe It is the quarrel which makes a song sounds proverbial, A dia fun Ogoro, Performed If a divination for Ogoro (date palm-wine)
Tii somoo won lode lode, Who is their offspring at Bode
Iwo lo se, It is you who offends,
Ti mee ba o wi That I blame you,
Oran isiin won o toja, Matters of nowadays should not cause a quarrel,
Ija naalo de lorin dowe, It is the quarrel which makes a song sound proverbial,
Difa fun omi tutu, Performed Ifa divination for *omitutu* (cold water),
Omoo won ode Otun Moba Their offspring at Otun 'Moba '(Irosungbemi) (a minor odu)

There is need to discuss further the-relationship between the diviner and the client. In most cases, the diviner is an authority and the most active participant in the course of Ifa divination. He (the babalawo) casts the divining chain or operates the sacred palrnnuts and when an *Odu* emerges, he interprets and narrates the relevant stories and prescribes sacrifices. All along the client remains passive and listens attentively to the divine message. However, he may briefly react to the general findings of the diviner, whether what he (the clients) has in mind has been touched or not. After the performance of any prescribed sacrifice, the client has emotional relief and psychological ; satisfaction.

4. The Ifa Divination Practice

4.1 *Some Instruments Used in the Practice of Ifa Divination*

Prominent among the Ifa instruments used for divination the the Ikin (the sixteen sacred palmnutof divination), the Opele (the divining chain) and the various objects which form the *ibo* (instruments for casting lots). Others are the Iyerosun (divination powder), Opon Ifa (the divining tray), Osun (ornamental Ifa metal staff), Iroke (the carved ivory rattle) and *apo Ifa* (bags for keeping Ifa divination instruments). We are aware that Abimbola (1975,1976, 1977) and Bascom (1969) describe these items but we are going to re-examine and describe in detail, the *ikin,* the and the *ibo* which are very crucial for a better understanding of Ifa divination process among the Yoruba.

a The Ikin (the sixteen sacred palmnuts)

These are the sacred palmnuts *with* which *Orunmila* replaced himself when he was returning to heaven. Every *babalawo* regards *Ikin* as the most original and the most sacred *instrument* for *Ifa* divination. Divining with *ikini*.is a very tedious and laborious operation. For a single question put to *Orunmila,* up to thirty draws of palmnuts may be made. In addition to the trouble entertained in obtaining the main response, several steps are Liken to find out what sacrifice will be accepted or the manner and place in which the sacrifice is to be made.

The i*kin* are obtained from a special .kind of palm tree the *babalawo* call *Opele Ifa* Such palm tree looks slightly different from all the other palm trees. Compared to the normal palm tree, *Ope Ifa* fronds are often folded and short. Awo falade Alabi and Fasola Areo from Ogbornoso in Oyo State of Nigeria confirm that out of several bunches of palmnuts on a palm tree, a single one may bear *ikin.* In such a bunch, at least one of the nuts must have four eyelets, which each normal *ikin* has. When a *babalawo* collects the whole bunch of palmnuts, he concencrates them after which he selects one out of the sets of sixteen palmnuts. Each set is called ‘owo kan’ or *'owo* Ifa' (literally, hand of Ifa), A *babalawo may* have at least two sets of *ikin,* all put in a single *Ifa* plate (awo Ifa). One set is buried with the *babalawo* when lie dies .and the other is inherited by one of his sons (if he has one who decides to be a *babalawo),* otherwise, the other set l(s) will be hung somewhere in his house.

(b) The Qpele (The Divining Chain)

The *Opele* is the second most commonly used instrument .of instruction in the process of Ifa divination. Like the *ikin,* the *Opele* is handed over by *Orunmila* to his children and adherents. The *Opele* which is regarded as the original is made from the fruit of *Opele* tree(Schrebera golungensis). Besides that, some *Opele* are made from a light, white metal or brass (ide) and the chain may be made of silver (fadaka), lead (oje), iron (irin) or beads (ileke) strung together with strong cords. Every type of *Qpele* has concave and convex surfaces, but, the outer surface of metallic *Opele* are decorated with simple geometric patterns. Such type is rarely used for divination but when employed for important divination, the sacrifice so prescribed always costs much money. There is another type of *Opele* made from pieces of calabash and used by apprentices where they are studying divination process.

Apart from, the *Qpele* made of pieces of calabash which may be made as many as the number of the would-be *babalawo* in training; a *babalawo* may have two or more types of *Qpele.* The lightweight metallic *Opele* is-often taken along whenever the *babalawo* goes, just as a practising Muslim puts a rosary in his pocket.

It is important to note that divination with *Opele* is simpler, quicker and permits the asking of questions through alternatives. This probably accounts for the common statement that the divining chain talks more than the sacred palmnuts. Nevertheless, the two methods of *ikin* and *Qpele* yield the same set of *Oda* with the same names, rank, order and the same stories,

(c) The lbo {Instrument for Casting Lots)

In the process of *Ifa* divination, the *Qdu* signs are obtained by means of either *ikin* or *Opele* but the *ibo* form and indispensable object for the interpretation of *Orunmila’s* message.The oracular interpretation of the message as contained in *ese Ifa* is usually very broad and of general application. In order to make the interpretation relevant to a particular person or situation, one needs further clarification from the divinity himself through the use of *ibo* Bascom (1969) and Oyesanya (1986:4) describe *ibo* as 'determinant'. Qpeola (1985) instruments' and Abimbola (1977) describes them as 'the instruments for casting lots'. But Abimbola's description of *ibo* seems to be more appropriate because it is based on the use for which the objects are put.

Some of the objects which form the *ibo* include the cowry shells, pieces of bones, stone and broken plates each symbolising different things or notions. For example, a-pair of cowries tied back .to back symbolises money, goodness, well-being and it denotes affirmative (Yes) but a piece of bone symbolises death. It simply denotes negative (No), A stone symbolises immortality, long life, whereas, apiece of broken plate signifies defeat of enemies (victory). However, the black seed of ake-apple fruit symbolises *Orunmila* himself, who is believed to be a very black person. A small

shell stands for marriage or sickness. It must be noted that any two of these objects can be used by the diviner to find out mere details about the general message *Orunmila* sends to the client(s).

The divine message to the client or the diviner himself, which is contained in *Ifa* stories, may be clarified and supplemented by asking a number of specific questions phrased in terms of two or more mutually exclusive alternative proposition; thus *Orunmila* may be presented with the choice between several specific courses of action or may be asked questions which must be answered either 'Yes' or 'No'. These questions are posed in terms of two statement; the first, affirmative and the second, negative. For example, if it has been revealed that the client consults *Ifa* for his intention to travel, the first statement will be 'This person could travel today' and the second statement is to be 'This person should not travel today'. These questions, although not marked by question mark, are posed following the initial throws before its verses are recited or chanted. Such questions are most frequently asked when the divining .chain is employed.

It is true that either *ikin* or the *opele* may be used for divination, but because of its simplicity and quick result, most *babalawo* use the *Opele* to divine. Before casting the *Opele* he must touch the divining chain with the cowry shells denoting 'Yes' and place it on his- side. Again, he touches the with another object of *ibo,* usually, a piece of bone indicating 'No', and places it on his left side. When the diviner casts the *Opele,* the rank of the ***Odu*** which emerge during the first and second casting will determine the response of *Orunmila* either affirmative or negative. This is why it is highly essential to master not only the names and the signs of all the *Odu* but also the position of each *0du §*specially the principal ones which form the basis for the minor *Odu.* As a matter of fact, this is one of the most technical aspects of ***Ifa*** divination process. Normally when, divining, the *Opele* is cast twice and the status of the *Odu* which appears will determine the *jbo* which one will pick whether u is the one on the left side or the one on the right. But if the *Eji-Ogbe* or the *Ofun Meji* is cast first or either of them is second in the casting, no other casting follows. It is mythologically believed that *Ofun* is the eldest of the ***Odu*** and the *Eji-Ogbe* is the father and the leader of all the *Odu* in the corpus. Once any of the *Odu* emerges as the divination progresses, there is no more casting but the interpretation immediately precedes the narration of the relevant stories.

As mentioned.above,it is important to master the position the position of each *Odu* in the hierarchical order of the principal *Odu,* otherwise the choice of the *ibo* will be affected. lt is on the choice of i*bo* that the interpretation and the message of *Orunmila* which the diviner seeks rests. If, for example, *Ogunda Meji (9th Odu)* is revealed, the diviner has to cast the *Opele* once more and if *Irosun Meji (5th Odu*) is revealed in the second casting, the left hand side of the diviner is picked.
In other words, the. piece of bone on the left side of the diviner denoting "No" is select Here, *Qgunda Meji* which is junior to ***Jrosun Meji*** is revealed first and when this happen, the determinant on the left is picked. But where a senior *Odu* is revealed before a junior one, the i*bo* on the right side of the diviner is picked Similarly, if any of the sixteen principal *Odu* (except *Eji* ***Qgbe*** and ***Ofun*** *Meji)* is revealed before any of the minor *Odu,* the *ibo* on the right hand side is picked and vice versa.

When the minor *Odu* are revealed at the first and second casting, what the diviner considers most is the position of the *Odu* which falls to the right. For instance, if *Ogbebara*

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is revealed at the second casting, the diviner has to consider the position of ***Ogbe*** and *Obara* in the list of the major ***Odu.*** Since *Qgbe* is senior to *Obara,* the right hand side is picked. In another instance, if *Qtua-Ogbe*

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is revealed first and *Otua- Ofun*

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is then revealed, the-right hand side is picked since the first of both minor ***Odu*** is the same (*Otua).* We may keep on multiplying the examples above. Thus, the process of finding out details with the use of the *Ibo* especially when a *babalawo* or a diviner divines all by himself, placing the *ibo* in the open is as described above.

The second type of *ibo* technique may be compared to a secret ballot in an election. When a *babalawo* is to divine for his client, he asks the client or -his trainee to conceal the pair of *ibo* objects, one in each of his or her palms. lt is worthy of note that 'as the client or trainee sits facing the diviner directly, his or her right hand normally faces the left of the diviner. Then, therefore, the diviner or the *babalawo* casts the *Opele* as he often does, such that he would have picked the *ibo* on the right. He would then ask the person holding the object to drop the *Ibo* on his left hand first. Hence, the *babalawo* often says ‘otun awo losi adibo' (the right hand of. the diviner is, the left of the person who concealed the *ibo).* What this means is that the right hand of the diviner is directly opposite the left hand of the client or anybody who holds the i*bo* and vice versa (Oyesanya 1986:6).

Before a *babalawo* starts casting, he hands over two out of a set of the *ibo* objects to the client or someone else to be kept in each palm. The *babalawo* could not know which object is concealed in the right palm and which is in the left whether it is a pair of cowries or a pair of bones). When the *babalawo* casts the *opele* , he considers the position of the ***Odu*** that appears, as he has done for .the technique of *ibo* Ifa senior *Odu* is revealed before a junior one, to hirri the *ibo* on the right hand side is the answer to the question put to *Orunmila,* but the *babalawo* will ask the person holding the *ibo* objects to drop the item in his or her left palm first. The reason for this practice is as stated above, that, the *babalawo’s* right faces the left of client. Except the person holding the i*bo* objects, no other person would be sure of the object to be dropped first when the *babalawo* says 'owo otun tabi owo osi? (right or left hand?). The object may be the one depicting fortune or misfortune, do or don't, yes or no. If the response of the divinity through the *ibo* is 'no', the process of casting will be repealed several times and with different alternative till an affirmative response is received from *Orunmila.*

4. 2 The Structure of Ifa Divination Process

_ *Ifa* divination process has a structural pattern which distinguishes it from any other forms of divination among the Yoruba. In this study,*Ifa* divination process has been divided into three broad structural parts, namely, prologue, narrative and epilogue (Akinnaso 1983).

The threefold division adopted here covers what happens from the moment the client enters the *babalawo’s* house until he departs. The internal structure of the divination is as follows:

I The Prologue
- {a) The preliminary exchange of greetings
- {b) The client's intention expressed .
- (c) The *babalawo* paying homage
- (d) The *babalawo* divines for an *Odu* to emerge

II The Narrative
- (e) The interpretation of the *0du* sign
- (f) The narration of related stones
- (g) The explication of the message contained in *ese Ifa*

III The Epilogue
- (h) The client's view of the revelation
- (i) The detailed findings with the use of *ibo*
- (j) The prescription of sacrifice
- (k) The performance of sacrifice

4.3 The Divination Practice

Several ***Odu*** emerged during the series of *Ifa* divination processes watched and undertaken during our research on this work. The following excerpt is one of the cases when Eji-Ogbe emerged. This process would enable us to get the true picture of the three structural parts.

Ibere	*Prologue*
Onibeere: Ago onile o/Aboruboye o!	Client: salute the owner of this house!
Babalawo: Ago o ya o/Agbo, ato o!	Babalawo: I salute you also!
Onibeere: E jowo, mo fe se ibeere ni /Mo fe ba *Ifa* soro	Client: Please. I want to inquire something from *Ifa*
Babalawo: (Awo gbe opele jade) E daniyan/ E mu aniyan wa (Onibeere daniyan jeeje. Awo di opele mu laarin, o na an siwaju re).	Client: (The priest brings out the divining chain) Make your intention known (the client whispers his problem. The priest holds the divining chain in the middle and stretches it forward)
Orunmila o gbo o, Akin-oosa.	*Orunmila* you heard, Akin-oosa
Balogun lode orun, Qlumoran Iode Owo	The officer in heaven, the knower in the town of Owo
Arihin- in rohijn-un,	One who does everything,
O gbo ohun to wi o,	You heard what he said,
Iwo lawo, emi logberi,	You are he who knows what is secret, I am ignorant
Ohun to wi, iwo 1o gbo, emi o gbo	What he said, you heard it, I did not hear it.
Bo ba ti ri ni o wi o,	Tell exactly what you heard,
Ma fire pebi, ma fibi pere.	Don't call a good thing a bad one nor a bad One, a good one.
Iwaju opon, o gbo o,	the front of the divining tray, you heard (what we said),
Eyin opon, o gbo o ,	The back of the divining tray, you heard (what we said),
Olumu lotun-un, *Olukanran* losi.	*Olumu* on the right, *Olukanran* on the left.
Aarin opon, o gbo, ita orun.	The middle of the divining tray, you heard (what we said), open air in heaven.
Ile, o gbo Agbalagude	The ground (praised) Agbalagude, you my heard
Atiwaye ojo, atiwo oorun	The dawn and the sunset
Aje, iwo naa gbo.	The divinity of money, you also heard,
O gbo ohun ti olowo yii wi o.	You heard what the owner of this money said.
Ire! (Babalawo da Opele);	Goodness! (the babalawo throws the divination chain)
Eji-Ogbe, baba Ifa (odu to hu)	Eji-Ogbe is the odu that emerged
Ire ni lfa loun ri.	Ifa said he sees blessing.
Ire owo, aya, omo (awo gbe opele sanle)	Is it blessing of money, wife and children? (the Babalawo casts the opele)
'Bee ko', ni awo yii? (o gbe opele sanle	This broken plate signifies 'No' (he casts the Opele a second time)
Owo otun (Owo eyo to duro fun 'bee ni' ni adibo/ onibeere koko ju sile)	the right hand (the concealer dropped cowry shells indicating ;Yes' to the question).
Itan Ifa	*Narrative*

Babalawo: (Awo bere sii so ohun ti Ifa wi. O n Ki Ifa) Eni to da Eji-Ogbe, Ifa ni ki oniyen rubo. Ifa loun o nii je o te, Ifa loun o nii joju o ti i. Ifa Pe gbogbo ohun ti eleeni ba dawo le ni o maa yori si daadaa. Ifa pe ki oniyen o rubo aje, korubo obinrin, rubo omo, pe ire to tori re dafa si, pe ire naa o sun un bo.

Babalawo: (The priest interprets and narrate Ifa message) The person for whom *Eji-Ogbe* is cast, Ifa requested him to offer a sacrifice. Ifa said he would not let the person be disgraced. Ifa said whatever that person lay his hand on ko would be successful. Ifa instructed the person to perform sacrifice in respect of money, wife, children, that he would have all required blessing in abundance.

Edudu o wule du,	The blackness was not merely blackened,
Okunkun o wule kun,	Darkness was not merely darkened,
Jalagba lawo agbara	*jalagba* was the priest of erosion,
A difa fun Atenilara awo osa	Performed Ifa divination for *Atenilara,* the priest of the lagoon.
Edudu o wule du,	The blackness was-not merely blackened,
Okunkun o wule kun	Darkness was not merely darkened.
Jalagba lawo agbara	*jalagba* was the priest of erosion,
A difa fun Atenilara awo atan orni	Performed Ifa divination for *Atenilara,* the priesf of large water
Atenilara, awo okun	Atenilara, the priest of the sea.
Eni ti o ba ni Iowo *ko* ni isinmi	He who has no money has no rest of mind,
Bee ni ti awo osa	So it was in the case of the priest of the lagoon,
Bee ni ti atan omi	The same was that of the large water.
Orunmila lo wa dafa pe awon atenilara yii,	It was *Orunmila* that consulted his
Meteeta le pe foun, oun o le te bayii?	Won priests whether he would have the three
ni ebo ni ko ru, Orunmila si rubo.	in his possession, he would not be disgraced? They instructed him *(Orunmila)* to offer a sacrifice, Orunmila performed the prescribed sacrifice.
Atenilara awo *okun* loruko a a pe aje.	*Atenilara* the priest of ocean is the name of money.
Ifa ni ki eleeni o rubo aje.	Ifa said the person should offer a sacrifice because of money.
Atenilara awo osa loruko a a pe obinrin	*Atenilara* the priest of lagoon is the name of women.
Atenilara awo atan omi loruko a a pe omo	*Atenilara* the priest of large water is the name of children,
Ifa pe ki oniyen o rubo obinrin,	*Ifa* instructed the person to offer a sacrifice because of children.
Orunmila lowo lowo, o lobinrin, o si bimo, ni inu re wa dun ni n pe	*Orunmila* had money, he had wives, and he had children, he felt happy and began to sing:
Ori mi apere,	My head is a good one,
Aya mi afobi kan	My chest that is touched with Kolanut
Orisa-agbo ko ma ma je ki Atenilara o te mi o.	Orisa-agbo, do not permit Atenilara to disgrace me.

Ifa loun o ni je ki eleeni o te. Ifa pe oun o

Ifa said that he would not let that person

O je ire o to oniyen lowo. Agbebo adie, oke mef a, eku ati e-ja ni ebo re.

be disgrace. *Ifa* said that the person would be blessed. A hen, three naira, rat and fish were then sacrifice to offer.

Ipari (Ikadii)

Onibeere: E seun awo, Gbogbo ohun ti mo daniyan ni e ja, nigba ti e n kifa. Mo setan lari ru ebo ti e ka sile fun mi. (Onibeere rubo. Babalawo si gbe ebo naa siwaju).

Epilogue

Client: Thank you the priest. You have touched all things that I had in mind I am now prepared to perform the prescribed sacrifice. (*The client offers the sacrifice and the babalawo places the offering in his front)*

Babalawo: Nigba ti a da Ifa fun Ajibade, Eji-Ogbe lo jade. O ni ire. Ire kin ni? O ni ire Aje, ire aya , ire omo. Kin la o se? O ni ebo Ni ki a ru. *Ni* igbona gbooru'lo ni ebo ti a ka sile fun un. Ebo naa ni yii o, Ifa Je ko fin. Je ko da. Je lo to de ode orun. Je ki ebo re to owo Eledaa (Awo kifa lo bi ile bi eni) Eji-Qgbe dakun ba ni se e. Fiye denu, Fiye dekun. Fiye de gbogbo ara. Olalekun, Ominikun, Atatabiakun ....

Babalawo: (*directing his attention to the divinity)* When we divined *Ifa* for Ajibade, Eji-Ogbe emerged. It said blessing of what? It said blessings of money wives and children. What shall we do? It said we were to offer a sacrifice. Instantly, he performed the prescribed sacrifice. This is the Offer, *Ifa* please, let the sacrifice be accepted in heaven and let it reach the Creator (the priest narrated many related stories). *Eji-Ogbe*, please, help assist us and whole-heartedly support us in this offer. Olalekun, Ominikun, Atatabiakun …

Oyeku Meji wa a ba ni se e....	Oyeku Meji, please come and bless this offer…
Ko o fiye denu, ko o fiye dekun, ko o fiye de gbogbo ara.	Please, pardon us, whole heartedly, support us.
Eji Iwori wa a ba wa se e...	Eji Iwori come and support us…
Ogundabede waa ba wa se e...	*Ogundabede* come and join us…
Oyekulogbe waa ba wa se e,	*Oyekulogbe* come and join us…
Osetua waa ba wa se e…	*Osetua* come join us…
Qkanransa waa gbebo naa	Okanransa come and accept the sacrifice
Qkanransa awo oko lo difa foko	*Okanransa* the priest of ground divined for farm
Okanransa awo ile 1o difa funle	Okanransa the priest of ground divined for ground
Okanransa awo aso 1o difa faso	Okanransa the priest of cloth divined for cothes
Won la won meteeta o wa rubo. Oko rubo, Ile rubo, aso naa rubo. Won o ku, wo o run, won n se:	The three of them were instructed to offer sacrifice. He performed a sacrifice. They neither died nor fell sick, they started saying:
A i i gboku oko	No one hears the death of a hoe
Ai i gboku aso	No one hears the death of a cloth
Ai i gboku ile	No one hears the death of the ground
Afi bo gbo	It can only get old.
Je ki Ajibade o gbo kange, je ki o fapa jo, je o ferigi jobi ... Okanran o niyo, o m boun o niyo, oun o gbonra sebo (*babalawo gbon opele si ebo, o gbe ebole onibeere lowo).*	Let Ajibade grow very old, let him dance with his arms (when he can no longer stand to dance), let him eat Kolanut when he is toothless …

Gbogbo ohun to ba n fowo gba mu, ma je o baje. *(Awo gbe ebo si ori ile).* To ba kan ile tan, orun elebo nii lo (*won gbe e lo idi esu).*	Okanran has no salt, but it would shake its body over the sacrifice (*the Ifa priest shakes opele on the sacrifice and places the offering on the palms of the client)* whatever he handles, may it not be spoilt (*the priest places the offering on the ground).*Once it touches the ground, it goes to the world beyond (*the offering is taken to the shrine of Esu outside the priest's house).*

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Adimula: (*Babalawo* ni ki onibeere dawo mejeeji *bo opele o bere si wure):*	Adimula: (*The babalawo asks the client to cover the opele with .his palms, while he prays thus):*
O gbo Ifa Adimula	You hear, *Ifa,* Adimula
Biku ba n bo, bo o.	When death is coming, cover him up.
Barun ba n bo, bo o.	When disease is coming, cover him up.
Bese ba n bo, bo o.	When a mischief is coming, cover him up.
Be gba ban bo, bo o.	If paralysis is coming, cover him up.
Bire aje, ire aya, ire omo, ire aiku pari iwa ba n bo, ko o si i sile (Oni*beere si owo re mejeeji to da de opele)* Eledaa o gbaajo o *(adura ti babalawo gba ni ipari).*	But when the blessings of money, when children and long life are coming, un- cover him. (*The client removes the divining chain).* May God accept the offering (*the prayer the babalawo said to end the divination).*

5 The Sacrifice

Offering of sacrifice is a very important aspect in *Ifa* divination practice. Whether the message of *Ifa is* good or sad, the inquirer must have to offer a sacrifice, for the Yoruba believe that a sacrifice will help the inquirer to maintain the goodness and dispel the evil. In most cases, the clients perform any prescribed sacrifice so that they may have the support and approval of the deities in their undertakings. When divining for a client, the *babalawo,* in the course of narration comments on the client's compliance as .follows;

O gbo riru ebo	He was asked to perform *a* sacrifice
O ru	He performed it
O gbo eru atukesu	He was asked to make a sacrifice to Esu
O tu	He did so
O gbo ikarara ebo ha fun un	His sacrifice was readily accepted

(Abimbola 1968:21.39).

The above excerpt is the specific register expressing the hope that the present client would learn from the past occurrence and thus perform the prescribed sacrifice. The blessings and the good reward received by the past client after offering the prescribed sacrifice will surely encourage the present client, to offer similar sacrifice. The offering .of sacrifice has to be emphasised because it is on it the *babalawo* depends for his living, and parts' of the items of sacrifice would be given to other divinities such as *Ogun* (the god of iron), *Esu* (the bailiff) and *obatala* (the god of creation), and if need be, the people in the community.

When, on the other hand, the client refused to perform the prescribed sacrifice, the appropriate expression on his (inquirer) attitude is often at the finger tips of the *babalawo.*

O pawo lekee	He took his *Ifa* priest to.be liars
O pesu lole	He took *Esu* for a thief
O worun yan yan yan	He looks scornfully towards heaven
Bi eni ti o nii ku mo laye	As if he would never die

O wa koti ogbon-in sebo — He turned a deaf ear to his *Ifa* priest instruction about sacrifice.
(A common chant)

As mentioned before, *Ifa* divination is the most popular and most reliable system of finding facts about the unknown People with shaky belief in this respect have themselves to blame. This is why the *babalawo* keeps on warning the clients, emphasising the moral of his story and the great importance of sacrifice.

Riru ebo nii gbe ni — Sacrificing brings blessings
Airu kii gbeeyan. — The neglect of it pays no man.
E wa ba ni ni wowo omo — Come and join me where there are plenty of children.

Towards the end of a complete *Ifa* story, the *babalawo* describes the reaction of the client. Here, the client is often reported to have expressed his joy for success after the performance of sacrifice.

Ijo ni n jo — He started to dance
Ayo ni n yo — He started to rejoice
O n yin awon awo o re — He started to praise his *Ifa* priests
Awon awo re n yin 'Fa — While his *lfa* priests praised *Ifa*
O yanu koto — As he opened his mouth
Orin awo 1o bo si i lenu — The song of *Ifa* priests was what he uttered forth
Ese ti o na — As he stretched his legs
Ijo faa — Dance caught them
Agogo ni Iporo — Gongs were beaten in iporo town
Aran ni lkija — Aran drum was beaten at Ikija town
Opa kugukugu lojude Iserimogbe .. — Drumsticks were used making melody at Iserimogbe town.

The expression of joy and jubilation may hot be as full as given above. The usual pattern may simply be lines-l-2, 3 -4 or 5-6 forming different type of the same aspect. The instruction of the *babalawo* to his client for sacrifice can, however, be said to be memorizable. It may be structured.

Won ni o rubo nitori aje/omo/aya — They asked him to perform sacrifice because of money/children/wife

or Won ni o kaaki mole ebo ni o se — They asked him to prepare to perform a sacrifice.

At times, the items of a sacrifice may be listed, as in:

Won ni o reku meji oluwere, — He was asked to offer two fast-moving rats,
Ko reja meji abiwegbada, — Two fish that swim with grace,
Obi die meji abedo lukeluke, — Two hens with big livers,
Ewure meji abamu rederede. — Two goats heavy with foetus.
(Abimbola 1968:22-23).

The patterns of instructing for sacrifice may vary: the variations are expressing the same idea. These latter examples support the claim of Parry (1930) in the existence of series of formula that express similar idea.

To the Yoruba, certain things are greatly valued. These are money, children, wife and all other blessings of life. A client may be asked to offer a sacrifice for any one or all of these essential things.

Won ni o rubo nitori aje — They instructed him to offer sacrifice because of money
Won ni o rubo nitori omo — They instructed him to offer sacrifice because of children
Won ni o nibo nitori aya — They instructed him to offer sacrifice because of wives
Won ni o rubo nitori ire gbogbo. — They instructed him to offer sacrifice because of all blessings.

it is *Ifa* that recommends the sacrifices and pass them to the gods or spirits that require them most often through Esu, the Yoruba trickster god (of Abimbola 1976). The offering of sacrifices is

intended to have magical effect or the client and the outcome of this is psychological healing achieved via the sacrificial objects.

Just as it occurs in all spheres of Yoruba life, prayer may be offered to gods to grant good health and blessings to a client. Supplications may be made to Ifa, Esu or some other divinities as spirits in accompaniment of sacrifice offered by and on behalf of a client.

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