



A Functional Stylistic Analysis of Selected *Odù* in *Ifá* Corpus

Samuel Kayode Olaleye, Ph.D.

Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper seeks to examine the linguistic aesthetics of the language of Ifá as understood in Yorùbá tradition. Ifá, a storehouse or infinite source of knowledge cuts across every aspect of knowledge: science, technology and humanities including language. In Africa, particularly among the Yorùbá, Ifá is the most potent means of knowing the future. However, modernity, western education and foreign religions have led to its neglect thereby creating a vacuum for its development. But Ifá is a universal language spoken by every Babaláwo- Ifá priests around the world. Therefore, whenever and wherever divination takes place the language of Ifá is spoken. This makes every Babaláwo functional when it comes to disseminating Ifá messages which include proverbs, riddles, jokes, incantations, rituals, Ìyèrè Ifá and so on. It is on this note that we tried to examine language used in Ifá corpus and its importance. The research hinged essentially on the data collected through rapid research method in some cities in Yorubaland in south western Nigeria through phone and quick in-depth interview that was held among twenty Babalawo- Ifá priests who are highly experienced in the act of divination. Information gathered was content analysed. The study submits that if only the Yoruba/African children are educated through the language derived from Ifá and not through western system of education, African continent would have highly moral and philosophical youths capable of taking up any course of study, have a sane society where we can be our brother's keepers at the same time be a master communicators. African should wake up to the challenge of updating, unify and strengthen its cultural sphere with its Original African intellectual framework across Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Ifá is believed to be the word of Olódùmarè, God in Yorùbá belief given to *Òrúnmilà* (a primordial divinity) as a special tool for the job of creation. *Ifá* is a religious and universal language that is full of philosophical, ethical and moral values for the benefit of humanity. It is universal because there is nowhere in the world where divination is not carried out. This is the reason *Ifá* is a universal language spoken by every Babaláwo-*Ifá* priests around the world. Therefore, whenever divination takes place, the language of *Ifá* is already spoken. That was the reason why *Òrúnmilà*, the custodian of *Ifá* travelled round the world to learn all the languages and dialects available

for the dissemination of Olódùmarè's messages as attested to by *Èjìogbè*¹ where *Ifá* says;

¹ Biodun Ajaja, Ifa Priest, Telephone Interview, Ikole Ekiti, 15/5/2021

<i>Èdè Òyó ò jọ t'Ègbá</i>	Oyo's dialect is not the same thing with Egba
<i>Ede Ègbá ò jọ t'Ìjèbú</i>	Egba's dialect is not the same thing with Ijebu
<i>A dífá fún Òrúnmìlà</i>	Cast divination for Orunmila
<i>Babá n lọ kédè káàkiri ayé</i>	He was learning languages all over the world
<i>Won ni bawo ni o se gbó?</i>	He was asked, how would he hears
<i>Òrúnmìlà ni ewe ogbo a je koun gbo</i>	Orunmila says Ogbo leaves will allow him to hear
<i>Wonni bawo ni o se mo?</i>	How would he know?
<i>Òrúnmìlà ni ewe imo a je koun mo</i>	Orunmila says leaves of knowledge will let him know
<i>Wonni bawo ni ose ni gbagbe?</i>	He was asked, how would he not forget?
<i>Òrúnmìlà ni boun ba fe gbagbe,</i>	Orunmila says if he wanted to forget
<i>Ariran a ran oun leti.</i>	Remembrance will remind him
<i>Ebọ lawó ní kóşe.....</i>	He was asked to offer sacrifice

As earlier said above, *Ifá* is found all over the world even in ancient Near East and Arabs world. Yoruba form of *Ifá* is been regarded as the origin. In Africa continent, divination systems that have resemblance with that of the Yoruba *Ifá* are found scattered in many of the places like Fon of Benin republic, the Ewe of Togo, the Igbo of Eastern part of Nigeria.² The presence of Yoruba form of *Ifá* can also felt in places like Cuba, Brazil, Malagasy, America and other parts of the world with method and some linguistic forms common to both. For instance, *Odu Èjìogbè* in Yoruba is known as *Via* in Euro Geomancy, *Tariq* in Arab Rama or *Hati*, *Taraika* in Malagasy Geomancy and *Derech* in Hebrew Ephah with the same symbols or imprints³. The Stylistic language of *Ifá* Corpus is so enshrined that sometimes it is only the initiates and the wise that could understand. How many of these languages do we know today is the question to be asked. It is on this note that we want examine the philosophical and ethical concept found in *Ifá*, the universality of linguistics language used in *Ifá* corpus.

The Position of *Ifá* in the Religion of the Yorùbá

The religion of the Yoruba is traceable to Olódùmarè through his word called *Ifá*. It is also linked with their belief in deities, spirits, ancestors and mysterious powers in connection with magic and medicine. In the view of Aina Adewale Somadhi⁴, the practice of traditional Yorùbáreligion from time immemorial has basically remained unchanged and *Ifá* takes

preeminence in the religion. The reason for this is not farfetched, in the temples, shrines and groves where worship of takes place on daily, weekly quarterly and annually with items like gin, water, palm oil, kolanut and so on, there, prayer is always the major reason for worship. And wherever prayer takes place in any of these forms of worship (direct or indirect), to ascertain the acceptability of such a prayer, there must be casting of kolanut and wherever this takes place, divination is already done. This is the reason why *Ifá* is at the central of every worship and prayers in Yorùbá religion. This is also the reason why Orunmila, the custodian of *Ifá* was made the spokesperson of all the Orisas as buttressed by *Ifá inÌrètè Òdṛ*. There *Ifá* says;

²E. McClelland, 1982, *The Cult of Ifa among the Yoruba*, London: Ethnographical Ltd, 7

³ Kolawole Komolafe, 2003, *Ifa and Science: Black People Established the Earth, Ibadan: Ifa – Orunmila Ventures*, 18

⁴ Aina Adewale Somadhi. 2008. *Fundamentals of the Yoruba Religion: Orisa Worship*. San Bernardino, U.S.A: Ile Orunmila Publications. Xxiv

⁵ Ayo Salami, 2002, *Ifa a Complete Divination*, Lagos: NIDD Publishing and Printing Limited, 199

**Ifa* and Orunmila are often times used interchangeably because of their closeness. However, we should note that *Ifa* is the word of Olodumare the Creator (an Instrument) while Orunmila is the custodian of the world (*Ifa*).

<i>Irinwó ẹfòn, ẹgbèrin iwó</i>	Four hundred buffalo, Eight hundred horns
<i>Ogún Fúlàní, òjù kùmòṅ</i>	Twenty Fulani tribesman, forty clubs
<i>ÒkànlénuúTápà, igba bààmú</i>	Two hundred and one Tapatribesmen, Two hundred and one facial marks
<i>Òjì Ìmòle, ọ̀rìn bàtá</i>	Forty Muslims, eighty shoes
<i>Àì kówó rìn ejò</i>	The non-congregational manner of wondering of snakes
<i>Níkú fì npawón lókòòkan lókòòkan</i>	Is responsible for the death killing them one by one
<i>Baba ọ̀rọ̀gidi</i>	Baba ọ̀rọ̀gidi
<i>A dIfá Orunmila</i>	Cast divination for Orunmila
<i>Nijo tIfá nlo sode Osogbo</i>	On the day Ifá*was going to Osogbo (Osogbo is one of the cities in Yorubaland)
<i>Ifá ati okanlenu irunmole</i>	Ifá with a thousand and one deities
<i>Ni won jo nloOsogbo</i>	Was going to Osogbo
<i>Orunmila si je olufokansin</i>	Orunmila is committed to his devotional practices
<i>Lorun lorun</i>	Every five days
<i>Nii mooo ko gbogbo Irunmole jo</i>	He would assemble all the Deities
<i>Sango ni</i>	Be it Sango (god of thunder)
<i>Oya ni</i>	Be it Oya (god of wind)
<i>Obatala ni</i>	Be it Obatala (creative god)
<i>Gbogbo awn oosa to ku yi</i>	All the Deities
<i>Lorunmila maa npese fun lorun lorun</i>	Orunmila provides for them every five days interval
<i>Ngba won de Osogbo</i>	When they got to Osogbo
<i>Òrúnmilà nìkan ni wón fòrò sí lènu</i>	They made Orunmila their spokesman
<i>Gbogbo n ti awon orisa o ba gba</i>	Anything that the other Deities want as sacrifice
<i>Orunmila ni o so</i>	It is Orunmila that would say it
<i>Bi osun o ba gba nkan</i>	If Osun wants anything,
<i>Ifá ni o so..</i>	Ifá would say it
<i>...ni gbogbo won ba pa enu po</i>	All of them resolutely decided
<i>Won ni gbogbo oun yiowu tawon o baa se</i>	Everything that we must do
<i>Ìwọ làwón fì ẹ̀ se olórí...</i>	You would be our leader and spokesperson

Orunmila was one of the primordial Deities who came to the world through the order of Olodumare to use his wisdom to organize and manage the affairs of the society⁶. He did that well but left the world as a result of an insult from one of his sons as explained by *Ifá* in *Ìwòrì Méjì*⁷. The world was in tumult after he had left and was begged to come back. Rather than to do so, he gave them *Ikin Ifá* that whatever they needed in life, they should

consult the oracle. This is the tradition the Babalawo- *Ifá* priests are doing till today. The word Orunmila is interpreted in diverse ways. While some believed it means *Òrun ló mọ ẹni tí ó là*-only heaven knows who would be saved in the end⁸, Lijadu believed it means *Òrunni ó mọ òdà lààor Òrun ni ó mọ ilàjà*, or *Òrun mọ wón í là*-heaven knows how to separate a fight as explained by *Ìròsùn-Ègúntán*⁹ due to a fight between *ode ayé*- earth hunter and *ode òrun*-heaven hunter that Olodumare settled between

⁶ Sophie Bosede Oluwole, 2014, *Socrates and Orunmila, Two Patron Saints of Classical Philosophy*, Lagos: Ark Publishers, 15

⁷ Wande Abimbola, 1968, *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa Apa Kimi*, U K: W.m. Collins, Sons and Co. Ltd, 43-47

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⁹ E. Adekunle Lijadu, 1965, *Ifa Mimo Alabalase, Ado-Ekiti: United Star Printers Ltd*, 9

them amicably that later became the name of the custodian of Olodumare's world called *Ifá*. Orunmila or *Ifá* is an embodiment of law, order and harmony. He is called god of wisdom and he is an upholder of moral laws.¹⁰ In actual fact, *Ifá* is not a philosophy, but it has a lot of concepts with philosophical issues. This is the reason Sophie; a philosopher could compare Orunmila with Socrates and concluded that they were both philosopher and revolutionists though of different times and space¹¹.

As said earlier, *Ifá* is the living foundation and custodian of all the deities, economic, political, religion, healing arts and metaphysical order. *Ifá* is infinite source of knowledge – *ìmò àmòṅ ì mọ̀n tán*¹² that talks virtually about everything one can imagine on earth and in heavens. As observed by Makinde¹³, among the Yorùbá, *Ifá* is the potent source of having an insight into the future as well as the source of their religiosity, a practice they do through the wisdom and rules laid down by Orunmila.

Consulting *Ifá* can take different forms and the use of different instrument such as *Opele*- a kind of fruit, *Obi-kolanut*, *Olókun*-Shells from the ocean, *Owó Eḡrindínlógún*- Cowries, *Agbigba*- a kind of fruit and water gassing. However, regardless of any forms of divination one might have used, *Ifá* is in three parts. These are *dídá ọwọ́*- divination. That is, consulting the Oracle to diagnose the problem brought by the client. Then there is *títẹ̀ alẹ̀*- imprinting of the *odù* that comes out of divination. By reciting these *Odù* by the Babaláwo, even the client would have had a glimpse of what he/she came to make enquiry on. Then there is *ọ̀karara ẹbọ*- sacrifice that has to do with offering prescribed by *Ifá* through the *Odu* that comes out and imprinted on the *ọpón Ifá*-divination tray.

Among the paraphernalia of *Ifá* divination is the ancient *Ikin* which is the sixteen palm nuts,

ilù Ifá- drums of *Ifá* that are in different types such as *asbẹ̀mbẹ̀*, *àpèrè*, *Abẹ̀bẹ̀*, *Àràn*, *agogo*, *ìgbá* and *ìgì* that are used during meetings and festivals. There is also *Ìyẹ̀rẹ̀òsùn* that is spread on divination tray to imprint the *Odu* that comes out. It is also used for sacrifice. *Bùmu* is a pit like wood where *ẹbọ* materials and water for sick people and for cleansing are put. There is also *Ọ̀sùgàgà* that *Babalawo* carry along with them as a sign of prestige.

¹⁰ E. McClelland, 1982, *The Cult of Ifa among the Yoruba*, London: Ethnographical Ltd, 12

¹¹ Sophie Bosedé Oluwolé, 2014, *Socrates and Orunmila, Two Patron Saints of Classical Philosophy*, Lagos: Ark Publishers, xxv

¹² M. A. Makinde. 1988. *African Philosophy, Culture and Traditional Medicine*. Athens: University Center for International Studies. 5.

¹³ M. A. Makinde. 1988. *African Philosophy, Culture and Traditional Medicine*. Athens: University Center for International Studies. 10.

It is a long staff and is important to the *Babaláwo*. Whenever *Ọ̀sùgàgà* is stands on erect in front of somebody's house, it means that the person has been chosen as a chief and such a person has no moral right to reject such an offer¹⁴.

¹⁴ Fakorede Olomola, an Ifa Priest, *Personal Interview*,

The Stylistic Means of Disseminating IfáMessages

The stylistic means of disseminating Ifámessages include philosophical and symbolic manners, puzzles, incantations, riddles, *Ìjásà/Ìyèrè*, proverbs and in futuristic way. For instance, Ifá can speak philosophically and symbolically to the client like the one we have in *Ogbè, Alára*¹⁵ that has this to say in support of the above claim.

<i>Ori inú ló gbèran</i>	It is the inner head that takes animal
<i>Tòde ò gbèran</i>	The outer one does not
<i>A difá fún Ìwà</i>	Cast divination for Character
<i>Ìwà tíi sòmọ Olókun sèmi adé</i>	Character the daughter of Olokun
<i>A difá fún Ọ̀rúnmìlà</i>	Cast divination for Ọ̀rúnmìlà
<i>Èyí tí nlo rè fẹ̀ Ìwà niyàwó</i>	Who was going to marry Character as wife
<i>Njẹ̀ Alára sọo ríwà fúnmi</i>	Alara did you see Character for me
<i>Ìwà</i>	Character
<i>Ìwà, Ìwà lànwá o</i>	Character, it is Character that we are looking for
<i>Ìwà.</i>	Character
<i>Ajerò sọo ríwà fúnmi</i>	Ajero did you see Character for me
<i>Ìwà</i>	Character
<i>Ìwà, lànwá o</i>	Character, it is Character that we are looking for
<i>Ìwà</i>	Character
<i>Bóo lówó bóo níwà</i>	If you have money without character
<i>Owó olówó ni</i>	It is other people's money
<i>Ìwà</i>	Character
<i>Ìwà lànwá o</i>	Character, it is Character that we are looking for
<i>Ìwà</i>	Character
<i>Bó olólá bóo níwà</i>	If you are wealthy but lacks character
<i>Olá olólá ni</i>	The wealth belongs to others
<i>Ìwà</i>	Character
<i>Ìwà là nwá o</i>	Character, it is Character that we are looking for

Also in *Irosun Okanran*,¹⁶ Ifá symbolically says;

<i>Ako nf'ese se iru</i>	Ako nf'ese se iru
<i>A dífá f'Ọ̀rúnmìlà</i>	Cast divination for Orunmila
<i>A nş'orò silẹ̀ dé é nilẹ̀ àlẹ̀</i>	A trap was set for him at his concubine house
<i>A ní kí ó rú ajá kan àti egbèje</i>	He was asked to offer a dog and one thousand four hundred cowries as sacrifice
<i>Kó má bà kú sí ibi tí ó nlo yí</i>	So that he would not die in the place he was going
<i>Ọ̀rúnmìlà gbọ̀, ó rú.</i>	Orunmila heard and offered

In puzzles, Ifá can speak to the client as we have in *Ogunda Meji*¹⁷

¹⁵ Ayo Salami. 2008. *Yoruba Theology and Tradition the Man & the Society*, Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company. 36

¹⁶ E.M. Lijadu, 1923, *Ifa: Imole re ti ise Ipile Isin ni Ile Yoruba*, Exeter: James Townsend & Sons, 59

¹⁷ E.M. Lijadu, 1923, *Ifa: Imole re ti ise Ipile Isin ni Ile Yoruba*, Exeter: James Townsend & Sons, 59

<i>Abemole eekan aboju regunregun</i>	Abemole eekan aboju regunregun
<i>A dIfá fun Orunmila</i>	Cast divination for Orunmila
<i>Ifá nt'ode orun bo wale aye</i>	<i>Ifá</i> was coming from heaven to earth
<i>Won ni ko rubo ko ba le pe laye</i>	He was asked to offer sacrifice to live long on earth
<i>Won ni ko ru ogun atare,</i>	He was asked to offer twenty alligator pepper
<i>Ko lee ba pe ogun odun laye</i>	For him to live for twenty years
<i>Orunmila ru ogun atare</i>	Orunmila offered twenty alligator pepper
<i>O si pe ogun odun laye</i>	He lived twenty years
<i>Won ni ko ru ogota atare</i>	He was asked to offer sixty alligator pepper
<i>Ko le baa pe ogota odun laye</i>	For him to live sixty years on earth
<i>Orunmila ru ogota ataare,</i>	Orunmila offered sixty alligator pepper
<i>O si pe ogota odun laye</i>	And lived sixty years on earth
<i>Won ni ko ru igba atare</i>	He was asked to offer two hundred alligator pepper
<i>Ko le baa pe igba odun laye</i>	For him to live two hundred years on earth
<i>Orunmila ru igba ataare</i>	Orunmila offered two hundred alligator pepper
<i>O si pe igba odun laye</i>	And lived two hundred years on earth
<i>Won ni ko ru eyo ataarekan</i>	He was asked to offer one seed of alligator pepper
<i>Ko le baa se opolopo odun laye</i>	So that he can live forever on earth
<i>Orunmila ru eyo ataare kan</i>	Orunmila offered one seed of alligator pepper
<i>O si se opolopo odun laye</i>	And lived for ever on earth
<i>Orunmila wa wipe,</i>	Orunmila said,
<i>Eo ripe igba odun odun kan ni</i>	Don't you see that two hundred years is equal to one year

Also, *Ifá* has this to say on speaking in parable. In *Ògúndá Òbàrà*¹⁸, *Ifá* says;

<i>Orunmila wi ogbon inu, Ifá mo ni aye ikun</i>	Orunmila says inner wisdom, <i>Ifá</i> I say sober reflection
<i>O ni ogbon inu la fii gba epo lowo iha</i>	He says it is the wisdom we use to make palm oil
<i>O ni ogbon inu ode ni ode fii pa eran</i>	He says it is the wisdom of a hunter that makes him succeed in killing animals
<i>O ni ogbon inu isowo ni fii se owo</i>	He says the business person uses wisdom to do business
<i>O ni ogbon inu agbe ni agbe fii roko</i>	He says it is the farmer uses wisdom to farm
<i>Won ni, Orunmila, bawo lo se nfo bi egun bi eyo si</i>	They ask Orunmila, why are you speaking in tongues
<i>O ni akapo oun ni oun nbawi</i>	He said he was directing his speech to his devotee/disciple
<i>O ni ti Ènìyàn o ba fii ogbon inu ki oun</i>	He says if the <i>Ifá</i> priest does not use wisdom to interpret the divine message,
<i>O ni won yoo so pe ko ja Ifá</i>	They will say he is talking rubbish

On incantation, *Obara Meji*¹⁹ has this to say;

¹⁸ Osunwusi Adekola Aworeni, Ifa Priest, *Personal Interview*, Apata Ibadan, 12/5/2021

¹⁹ Wande Abimbola, 1968, *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa Apa Kinni*, U K: W.m. Collins, Sons and Co. Ltd 83

Ìgbúnwó ti kékeré yóké
A difá fún Agúnlénubiágogo
Òjò ló palábahun
Pèlú ẹ̀wù ilẹ̀kẹ̀ lórùn
A difá fun eni a soro fun
Tó lóun ò ní fẹ́
Eni a sọ̀rọ̀ fún
Tò lóun ò ní fẹ́
Ewé jẹ́mi ní hòò
Lóní kó máa jẹ́ mi ní hòò
Wón ní bí agbe bá jí,
Kágbe ó máa jẹ́ mi ní hòò....

Igbunwo from young had hunchback
Cast divination for somebody with pointed mouth like a gong
It was rain that bits tortoise
With garment of beads
Cast divination for the person we advised
That says he would not agree
The person we spoke with
That says he would not agree
Leaves of answering me
Says you must answer me
They said, if Agbe –bird wakes up,
It must answered me....

On riddles, *Ifá* says in *Ejioḡbe*²⁰ that;

Orunmila ni hunhun-un-hun
Ifá mo ni kilo se o to n kun,
Bara elesin oyan
Orunmila kilo se o to n kun si
Àdàgbàà ojòmù
Ifá ki lo se o to n kun si
Okinkin ti meyin erin fon
O loro lo po ninu oun
Ó lóun ò mọ́ irú ẹ̀ni tà à bá sọ́ ní...

Orunmila was murmuring
Ifa I say why are you murmuring
Bara elesin oyan
Orunmila what are you murmuring over
Elder of Ojomu
Ifa what are you murmuring over
Okinkin that blows trumpet with elephant tusk
He said there are too much words in his stomach
He said he do not know who to discuss with...

On the same issue, *Ifá* also said this in *Oḡbe Ate*²¹

Orunmila lo di ewon
Mo ni o di ohun aḡiro
Won ni nibo lo ro si,
O ni o ro si ori Iroko aláḡétun merindinlogun
Tí méjọ́ gbe, tí méjọ́ ò gbe
Akapo re ni bawo ni ti mejo to gbe
Orunmila ni ibe ni arugbo nto lo ode orun
O ni mejo ti ko gbe ni omo tuntun nto waye.

O ni kini oun yio se ti yio fi ge mejo to gbe?
Ti agba ko fi ni lo sode orun mo
Ti omo tuntun o si maa sa wale aye

Orunmila it has become a chain
I said it has become hanging
They said where is it hanging
He said it is hanging on iroko tree with sixteen branches
Eight are dried, the other eight are fresh
Akapo says how about the eight dried ones?
Orunmila says that's where old ones are following to heaven
The eight fresh ones are where new children are following to the earth
He asked how would he cut the eight dried ones?
So that elders will not go to heaven again
And new children will be coming to the world

²⁰ Fasina Agboola, 1998, *Ojulowo Oriki Ifa Apa Kinni*, Project Publication Limited, 2-4

²¹ Ifalere Odegbemi Odegbola, 2014, *Iwe Mimo Ifa: Esin Akoda Olodumare*, Ibadan: Odegbola Traditional Global Services, 92

Orunmilani ki akapo oun toju kérénsèlé Orunmila says his Akapo should get Kerensele
Láránngbàjá, Láránngbàjá
awuruku moja láwó, Awuruku moja láwó
Òkúukù afàyàfà, Láránngbàjá awuruku moja láwó
Omi tooro ti ko see bu boju, A water that is not enough to wash face,
agba to fi àiléwú ke similai, Agba to fi ailewu ke similai
Ki o toju oke merindinlogun. He should get sixteen thousand cowries
Akapo loun gbo ti oke merindinlogun Akapo said sixteen thousand cowries is
understandable
Kini itumo gbogbo oun ti e ka sile wonyi? What is the meaning of the rest?
Bayi ni baba kan pade won ni igboje elujuje A man met them in the seven forest and seven
savannah
O ni akapo, kini se iwo baba He said Akapo, what happened between you
and Baba
Ti e fi nle ara yin kira kita loju ona, That you were running about on the road?
O ni sewo o mo ni pe He said don't you know that
Larangbaja ni eja Larangbaja is fish
Ahun ni awuruku ajalawo Tortoise is Awurukumajalawo
Okuuku afayafa ni a npe igbin Okuuku afayafa is snail
Epo ni omi tooro ti ko see bu boju Palm oil is omi tooro ti ko see bu boju
Agba to fi ailewu ti o ba won ke similai ni a npe emu. The elder that has no grey hair that shouted
similai is what we called palm wine
Orunmila ni bawo ni okunrin yi se gbo ena oun Orunmila asked how did the man understand
his riddle?
O ni ogbo loni koun gbo He said ogbo was the one that allows him to
hear
Baba ni bawo lo se mo? Baba said how did he know?
O ni imo lo ni ki oun o mo He said knowledge propelled me to know
Orunmila ni bawo ni o se ko to bayi Orunmila says how come it's like this?
O ni gege ni imi esin n ko ara won. He said horse excrete is always the same
Ni Orunmila ba fi osun owo re gunle Orunmila hit the osun in his hand on ground
O ni ki won maa pàgó He said they should make a tent
Won si se bee They did like that
Ko ju bi odun melo kan After few years
O si di ilu It became a town
Won ni ilu ki wa ni ki a mo si? What name shall we know the town for
Orunmila ni ilu ti won ti ri eni ti o mo ena oun Orunmila says in the town where they know his riddle
Ki o maa je Ìgbómìnà Let it be called Igbomina
Ilu naa ni a mo si Ìgbómìnà lonii. Is the town we called Igbomina today
Apart from speaking in a puzzle, *Ifá* also have a way of explaining the meaning and reason for

everything itsays just as we have here the reason why Ìgbómìnà are called that name. This also applicable to each town, city, man and animals. Ifa has a way of providing information about history, mythology, philosophy not of the Yoruba race where Ifa originates alone but every nation around the world and about the concepts they have formed about the world they lived in²².

ifa also speaks through *Ìjásà/Ìyèrèsisun*- chanting as found in *Ejiogbe*²³ and other places in *Ifá*.

<i>E ku o</i>	Hello o
<i>Ìṣépéwéréwéré. Awo inú igbó,</i>	Ìṣépéwéréwéré, the priest of the bush
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Itibanba awo ale odo o</i>	Itibanba the priest of under water
<i>Hinin</i>	Yes
<i>Irawelebelebe ni sawo ajaro oju omi</i>	Irawelebelebe is the priest of ajaro oju omi
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Awon meteeta ni won ki'fa fun Olokun ajaro okoto</i>	The three of them divined for Olokun ajaro okoto
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Nijo ti omi okun o to bu boju</i>	On the day ocean was not enough to wash face
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Nijo ti omi okun o to bu wese o</i>	On the day ocean was not enough to wash the leg
<i>Hin.</i>	Yes
<i>Lo wa dori oun otawerewere inu omi</i>	It was my turn Otawerewere inu omi
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Oun l'oun wa dIfá f'Olokun seniade</i>	I divined for Olokun seniade
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Ee ri iji feli-feli ti ngbe oun un re folueri,</i>	The col breeze that is taking me to Olueri
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Ee ri iji feli-feli ti ngbe oun un re folueri, Orunmila o o</i>	Don't you see the cool breeze that is taking me to Olueri
<i>Ee ri iji feli-feli ti ngbeun un re folueri</i>	Don't you see the cool breeze that is taking me to Olueri
<i>Ee ri iji feli-feli ti ngbeun un re folueri</i>	Don't you see the cool breeze that is taking me to Olueri
On proverbs, <i>Owonrin Rosun</i> ²⁴ says;	
<i>Ori alesinu ni keni maa le</i>	We should brag inwardly
<i>Keni ma le tode</i>	We should not boast outward
<i>A dIfá fun Akoko ti nse olori gbena gbena eye oko</i>	Cast divination for wood pecker the head of all caver of the birds
<i>Igba ti ko sebo, ti ko gba ikilo</i>	When he refused to offer sacrifice, and take heed

²² E. McClelland, 1982, *The Cult of Ifa among the Yoruba, Folk Practice and the Art*, London: Ethnographical Ltd, 7

²³ Fasina Agboola, 1998, *Ojulowo Oriki Ifa Apa Kinni*, Project Publication Limited, 10-11

²⁴ Ifalere Odegbemi Odegbola, 2014, *Iwe Mimo Ifa: Esin Akoda Olodumare*, Ibadan: Odegbola Traditional Global Services, 289

Eyin o rifa ojo naa bi o ti n se?

Don't you see the way Ifa came to pass?

Ìwà nìkàn ló sòro ò,

Character is all that is requisite,

Ìwà nìkàn ló sòro;

Character is all that is requisite;

Ori kan kù burú ló tù Ifẹ̀,

There is no destiny (Ori) to be called unhappy in Ife city.

Ìwà nìkàn ló sòro.

Character is all that is requisite.

This is an indication that it is not only *Ori* that determines or responsible for what a person becomes in life. Rather, man's character, offering of sacrifice and constant prayers also contribute to the determinant factor. As Iwa a symbol of good character, there are other physical things that can be seen and used symbolically as found in the narration in *Ìròsùn Òkànràn*. The concubine who has seen the danger of beheading Orunmila ahead but could not communicate orally quickly used the camwood (that looks like or symbolises blood) she was grinding to rub the face of the dog Orunmila was asked to offer sacrifice.

In a puzzle, *Ifá* often speak to the client. In the *Ògúndá Méjì* cited above. The interpretation of the *Ifá* verse is *Ifá* will live forever on earth. That is, the religion will not go into extinction. People will continue to turn to *Ifá* for solution to their problems. This is buttressed by the saying, *iró ni wón n pa, Ifá ò leè parun, èké ni wón n se, Ifá ò leè parun* - they are telling lies, *Ifá* will not go into extinction, they are only mischievous, *Ifá* will not be eradicated²⁵. Incantations are potent words that are used to archive certain feat that are believed impossible to archive in an ordinary form. Using it in *Ifá* therefore is to compel a situation to change at all cost. This is important when one faces a terrible challenge that wants to deify solution. In offering sacrifice in such a situation therefore, making use of incantations to force the spirit or deity concern to accept one's sacrifice as used in the *odù Obara Meji* and others in *Ifá* is crucial.

All the riddles are from *Ifá* and are there to teach us moral and wisdom in every matters relating to man. According to *Ifáin Ejiogbe*, Orunmila, speaking in riddle says there are plenty things in his mind but could not get someone to discuss them with. Saying this in the presence of his close friends is ridiculous and some were annoyed. However, he made them realise that he was only looking for a wise one among them who knows the beginning and the end of every matter. This is a riddle that requires high level of intelligence for the person that will give intelligence answer. What *Ifá* is trying to bring out here is man's ability to think deeply that nothing is constant and permanent, everything is bound to change.

Ìyèrè/Ìjásà is one of the divisions in revealing what *Ifá* says after divination has been performed. For instance, there is *Ifá* recitation, there are songs of *Ifá* and there is *Ìyèrè/Ìjásà*. Out of *Ìyèrè* comes *Ìjásà*. *Ìyèrè/Ìjásà* is the voice the Babalawo usually used to chant *Ifá* verses during *Ifá* festivals, naming ceremonies, burial of a priest or any ceremonies relating to *Ifá* to entertain themselves. As said earlier, *Ìyèrè* is the recitation of *Ifá* verses in a songlike manner with a chorus called *Ìjásà* from *Omo Awo* or Babalawo- *Ifa* priest during divination to draw attention of people to what the Babalawo- *Ifa* priest is doing like the sample below:

Éé eríwoyà, eríwo fón gbogbo èrò isòpè ẹ nlẹ̀ ò

Éé eríwoyà, eríwo fón gbogbo èrò isòpè ẹ nlẹ̀ ò

Hin

Yes

Ènìyàn tó dúró ẹ kú idúró

Those who are standing, you are well stand

Hin

Yes

Ènìyàn tó bèrè ẹ kú ibèrè o

Those who stood, you are well stood

Hin

Yes

Gbogbo ajókólóde ẹ mà kú ọwọ̀ ọ wa

All those who sat outside, you are well done

Hin

Yes

Ènìyàn tó lerínwó ó yà ló ní á simi

The person that says we should call eríwoyà is the one that says we should rest

²⁵ Eniafe Oluwasegun, an Ifa Priest, *Personal Interview*, Omi Adio, Ibadan, 22/5/2021

<i>Lóní á simi ò</i>	Is the one that says we should rest
<i>Òrúnmilà o ò o</i>	Orunmila ooo
<i>Èniyàn tó périwo ó yà lóní á simi ò</i>	The person that says we should call eriwoya is the one that says we should rest
<i>Èniyàn tó périwo ó yà lóní á simi.²⁶</i>	The person that says we should call eriwoya is the one that says we should rest.

Ee eriwo ya, eriwo fon gbogbo ero isope e nle o, that is the person that started while the people that chorused *Hin* is putting *Ìjásà* as their response to the *Ìyèrè* started by the lead Babalawo. At the end of the chant, the lead Babalawo will finish the chanting with a song that all present will jointly sing together. During divination, *Ìyèrè* can come up because some *Ifá* verses or chapters are with *Ìyèrè*. During such a divination, every *omọ* Awo present will join the Babalawo to sing the *Ìyèrè*. *Ifá* explained this in *Òdí Méjì²⁷* where *Ifá* says;

<i>Ó dúró ní pèkùn òpópó</i>	He stands at the end of the road
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Ó bèrè ní pèkùn òpópó</i>	He stood at the end of the road
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Òkítì bàbààbà ní mbe ní pèkùn òpópó</i>	A mighty anthill at the end of the road
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>A dífá f'Òṣùnwòn</i>	Cast divination for Osunwon
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Tí nlo sọjà Èjìgbòmèkùn o</i>	Who was going to Ejjigbomekun market
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Nwón ní k'Òṣùnwòn ó rúbọ</i>	Osunwon was asked to offer sacrifice
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Nwón ní Òṣùnwòn ó níyì púpọ</i>	They said Osunwon will acquire a lot of prestige
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Ó sì ru</i>	He offered
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Ìgbà tó dọjà</i>	When he got to the market
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Ni wón bá bèrè sí ní fàá ní àfàgbà</i>	They started pulling him here and there
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Ijó nínjó</i>	He was dancing
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Ayò ninyò</i>	He was rejoicing
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Ó nyin àwọn àwoo rẹ</i>	He was praising his Priests
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Àwọn awoo rẹ nyinfá</i>	His priests were praising Ifa
<i>Hin</i>	Yes

²⁶ Ayo Okedokun, Ohun Enu Yoruba Radio Presenter, *Telephone Interview*, Lagos, 28/04/2021

²⁷ Wande Abimbola, 1968, *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa Apa Kinni*, U K: W.m. Collins, Sons and Co. Ltd, 57

<i>Ó ya ẹnu kótó</i>	He opened his mouth
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Orin awo ní nkọ.</i>	He was singing initiates song
<i>Hin</i>	Yes
<i>Ó ní,</i>	He said,
<i>Òtítólo gbédè láwo ò</i>	It is true you understands the language of the initiates
<i>Òṣùnwòn,</i>	Osunwo
<i>Òtítólo gbédè láwo</i>	It is true you understands the language of the initiates
<i>Òṣùnwòn.</i>	Osunwon.

Ìyèrè could be used to explain an event just as we find in the case of Olókun-ocean. Three *Ifá* priests divined for him that he would not be big until he met Otawéréwéré who told him he would be big and it happened like that. Olókun was happy and he organised a fist that he invited all and sundry to come and wine and dine with him. All the three Babalawo- *Ifá* priests went but could not come back to their base because water took them away to a distance land. When they were being taken away, they cried out for help with *ìjásà* to narrate the story of what happened between Olókun and the priests before that day. Otawéréwéré also had similar experience but was invited by Olókun to live with him because he was his benefactor. Apart from the fact that the person that this kind of *Ifá* verse is related to will be a successful person on earth, it also made us realise the reason why log of wood, pecks and leaves always flow on the river without sinking.

However, in the opinion of Awosola²⁸, *Ìyèrè/Ìjásà* are more than revealing the message of *Ifá*, rather, it goes along creating awareness and a kind of coded communication, especially in difficult situations as done by one of the wives of Orunmila to let him know the kind of steps she was taking as found in *Ogbè Sá* where *Ifá* says;

<i>Òpá ní sojú omi iyélé iyélé</i>	It is the staff that disturbs the surface of water
<i>Ijè ni soju omi iyèlè iyèlè</i>	It is the Ije that disturbs the surface of water
<i>Dífá fún Mútajèrò</i>	Cast divination for I Mutajero
<i>Tóyìnbó olórò nbò wá gún fún</i>	That a white men is coming to enriched
<i>Èyí tí wón ní ko ta àsíá</i>	Who was asked to erect a flag
<i>Àwọn òyìnbó nìyí wón ti sìnà</i>	The whites have missed their way
<i>Ebi dè npa wón</i>	And they were Hungary
<i>Ná bá yà silé Mútajèrò</i>	They branched at Mutajero's house
<i>Mútajèrò bá ṣewón lálejò</i>	Mutajero entertained them
<i>Ki Mútajèrò tó jí lójò kẹ̀jì</i>	Before Mutajero woke up the following day
<i>Gbogbo àwọn Òyìnbó yí</i>	All the white men
<i>Wón ti kó gbogbo oúnjẹ</i>	They had packed all his food stuff
<i>Tí Mútajèrò kó silé tó fì nṣòwò</i>	She was selling
<i>Nígba tó jí</i>	When she wakes up
<i>Inú bi pé wón ṣe le kó òun lóúnjẹ lọ?</i>	She was annoyed that they packed her food stuff
<i>Bi Mútajero ṣe fì iyèrè ṣòun arò</i>	She sung Iyere sorrowfully
<i>Ó nṣe bẹ̀è ní yé erinwoyà erinwoyà Awo òde Ègbá</i>	She said erinwoyà erinwoyà priest of Egba
<i>Eriwoyà erinwoyà Awo òde Ìjèsà o,</i>	Erinwoyà erinwoyà priest of Ijesa o
<i>Eriwoyà erinwoyà Awo òde Ìjèbú</i>	Erinwoyà erinwoyà priest of Ijebu
<i>Ènìyàn tó pé á perinwoyà lóní á sinmi</i>	The person that says we should call erinwoyà is the one that says we should rest

²⁸ Awosola Taiwo Fatoosin, Ifa Priest, *Personal Interview*, Alemuloke Area, Sanngo Ibadan, 12/ 05/2021

<i>Èniyàn tó pé á períwoyà lóní á sinmi ò</i>	The person that says we should call eriwoya is the one that says we should rest
<i>Èniyàn tó pé á períwoyà lóní á sinmi</i>	The person that says we should call eriwoya is the one that says we should rest
<i>Èyin ará mi ò</i>	My people o
<i>Òpá ní sojú omi yélé I yélé</i>	It is the staff that disturbs the surface of water
<i>Ijè ní sojú omi iyèlè iyèlè</i>	Ije is the staff that disturbs the surface of water
<i>Difa f'emi Mutajero</i>	Cast divination for I Mutajero
<i>T'oyinbo oloró nbo wa gun fun</i>	That a white men is coming to enriched
<i>Eero ipo ero ofa,</i>	People of Ipo, people of Ofa
<i>Awon oyinbo ko mi leru won mi salo e e</i>	The white have taken my goods and running away
<i>Awon oyinbo ko mi leru won mi salo o o</i>	The white have taken my goods and running away o
<i>Awon oyinbo ko mi leru won mi salo</i>	The white have taken my goods and running away

Because there is *àṣẹ*-command in *Ìyèrè*, no matter how far, the person or people one chanted it to or communicates to will hear. So when the white men heard at the middle of the sea, those who were paddling responded that;

<i>Opa ni soju omi iyélé iyélé</i>	It is the staff that disturbs the surface of water
<i>Ijè ni soju omi iyèlè iyèlè</i>	It is the Ije that disturbs the surface of water
<i>Difá fún wọ Mútajérò</i>	Cast divination for Mutajero
<i>Tóyìnbó olórò nbò wá gún fún</i>	That a white men is coming to enriched
<i>Wé dè yelè wò kó tó má kígbè?</i>	Why don't you check the house before you begin to shout?

When he checked his house, he saw a lot of money where the white people slept. According to Awosola, the origin of *Ìyèrè* began with the death of a dear child of Orunmila called Iyere who died and people were crying and wailing for the death of this child. Orunmila ordered that the child should be burnt. While doing this, those who were burning the child were crying and the crying of that day is another means of communication in *Ifá* today.

Songs are also part of Stylistic means of disseminating *Ifá* messages. The song below is in praise of Olodumare the Creator by Awotola²⁹.

<i>Àróòní sọ níkùn ajílása</i>	Aro sprout from the stomach of Ilasa eater
<i>Yànmò ní sọ níkùn ajògìrì</i>	Yanmo sprout from the stomach of Ògìrì
<i>Aréòpè ní sọ níkùn mi Awótólá daridé</i>	Ifa play is what is sprouting in my stomach Awotola comes back
<i>OmọBabaláwo ò sùn nínúlé bara è lérù</i>	The child of an Ifa Priest that sleeps at home yet afraid of himself
<i>Ifá mo ti sá di ó</i>	Ifa I came to you for safety
<i>Èdú mo ti rò mó o</i>	Edu I cling on you
<i>Ifáalábolà</i>	Ifa the one to be worshipped and be rich
<i>È bá jé á bofá</i>	You could have let us worship Ifa
<i>Ṣe b'Ólódùmarè loba</i>	Olodumare is the king
<i>Aténi légélégé forí ṣagbeji omi.</i>	That spread like water in the ocean

²⁹Awotola Aworeni, Ifa Priest, *Personal Interview*, Ile-Ife, 22/04/2021

CONCLUSION

Ifá has a unique system of communicating with people for ages and in different parts of the world without finding it difficult to understand. *Ifá* is believed to be the owner of all languages in the world because *Ifá* talks about all languages, both native and foreign. *Ifá* mentioned almost all the villages and towns particularly in Nigeria, Hausa, Fulani and Igbo villages are not excluded. *Ifá* talks about Nigerian languages and dialects. In the same manner, there is no place all over the world, no matter how small that the effect of *Ifá* is not felt or known either in languages, dialects and in explaining puzzles of any kinds, in futuristic languages and in telling stories. In short, there is no language that *Ifá* does not speak because in all the means of making enquiry all over the world, *Ifá* is found to be there with its unique styles of communications.

If only the Yoruba/African children are educated through the language derived from *Ifá* and not through western system of education, African continent would have highly moral and philosophical youths capable of taking up any course of study, have a sane society where we can be our brother's keepers at the same time be a master communicators. Unfortunately, African mental slavery and indolence makes western ways of life and religious systems becomes our ways of life and have made us discard the philosophical and scientific foundations of *Ifá*. Even the spiritual content we concentrate on is with contempt. As said at the introduction of this paper, *Ifá* was transferred to all parts of the world and those who were smart made use of it. It was transferred to Mesopotamia where it became the basis of Western astrology. *Ifá* was fundamental to the creation of I Ching. *Ifá*, the African Information Retrieval System was taken to the Arabs and became science of sand called ilm al-raml.³⁰ What is required of African is to wake up to the challenge of updating, unify and strengthen its cultural sphere with its Original African intellectual framework across Africa.

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