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A Semiotic Investigation of Links between Prorairesis Code of *Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlọpọ́n* among the Yorùbá

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Abstract

Ifá is believed to be the foundation of Yorùbá culture. This means that every aspect of Yorùbá life, including religion, philosophy, science, ideology, recreation, literature, etc. has one link or another with *Ifá*. This research work is aimed at relating *Ifá* with *ayò ọlọpọ́n* on one hand and also relating line tracing in *Ifá* divination with *ayò ọlọpọ́n* on the other hand. Semiotics, which is the science of signs, is adopted as the theoretical approach because symbolism underlies *Ifá* divination system. This work relies substantially on Yorùbá literary texts (especially *Ifá* literary corpus) and survey method for the collection of data. It is found out from this study that, the objectives of *Ifá* divination and *ayò ọlọpọ́n* cannot be realized without the use of lines. It is equally discovered that there is synergy between prorairesis code in *Ifá* and *ayò ọlọpọ́n* game. The prorairesis code relates with the concept of lineage family pattern in Yorùbá tradition. The work establishes and concludes that African symbols, objects and artifacts are the recipe for establishing African beliefs system.

Keywords: *Ifá*, *ayò ọlọpọ́n*, prorairesis, code, semiotics, lineage

1. Introduction

This work examines the relationship between *Ifá* and *ayò ọlọpọ́n* in prorairesis code among the Yorùbá people of Nigeria. Proairetic code is “the code of actions where the lineal arrangement is fully considered” (Ọ̀gúndẹ̀jì: 1988: 75). Line tracing is very important, without which *Ifá* divination as well as *ayò ọlọpọ́n* game exercises cannot be carried out. On one hand, *Ifá* has been defined by scholars in different ways that establish the inexplicable and unlimited scope of its knowledge, wisdom and values. Indeed, it is regarded as the bedrock of other aspects of Yorùbá life. Munoz (2003: 179) sees *Ifá*’s scope beyond the Yorùbá cultural society when he says “*Ifá* is the most universal divinity among the Yorùbá and other West African people.” *Ifá*’s influence on the life of the Yorùbá people has been a research theme for some scholars. This is because; any aspect of Yorùbá life that is not rooted in *Ifá* is believed to be a mirage. Therefore, it is necessary to relate the element of *Ifá* with *ayò ọlọpọ́n*.

Ayò ọlọpọ́n on the other hand, is one of the Yorùbá traditional games played locally and internationally today. It is first among equals in Yorùbá local games, because of its traditional

value and importance in the Yorùbá culture. It is a Yorùbá traditional game board that contains two rows of six holes. It is played by two matured males, with six holes on a player's row. The international status of *ayò olópón*, its sociocultural roles, as well as their relationships with *Ifá*, have not been known to be established.

2. Background to *Ifá* and *ayò olópón*

Ifá is known to different people by different names throughout the world. For example, *Ifá* is known as *Fá* among the Fon of Republic of Benin, *Eva* to Nupes, *Ifá* in Cuba, USA, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Surinam and Togo. *Ifá* is referred to by the Ewe as *Afa*, *Ephod* by Jews, *Geomancy* by Europeans and Margays (Odeyemi 2013, p.5). With these different realizations of *Ifá* nomenclature which cut across nations of the world, the prominence of *Ifá* is not in doubt. In fact, *Ifá* has over 70 million followers in Africa and the America. In 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed *Ifá* as one of the 86 traditions of the world to be recognized as masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage of humanity (Robinson 2008). By this proclamation, *Ifá* joined the league of heritages and therefore require urgent preservation. *Ifá*, as a religion, science or literary text, has over time been of great interest to scholars in different areas of human endeavors, like medicine, philosophy, religion, art and culture.

Like *Ifá*, the international status of *ayò olópón* is also not in doubt. For instance, apart from its popularity among the Yorùbá it is called *Gisoro* in Burundi, *Oware* in Ghana, *Achochodi* in Ivory Coast, *Adjito/Vadjito* in Benin, *Ayo Eleh* in Igbo and *Kalati* in Sweden (Appiah-Agy 2013: 1–2). The game plays important roles in some Yorùbá festivals. It was introduced to Òṣun Òṣogbo festival in Nigeria some nineteen years ago. It is the only Yorùbá game that is played in over 70 other Yorùbá festivals. Perhaps, the popularity of *ayò olópón* among the nations of the world comes about as a result of the perceived links the game has with *Ifá*. Before now, not many research works have been carried out on the cultural significance of the game to the Yorùbá people. Therefore, it is significant to examine the relationship of *Ifá* with the game so as to determine with a reasonable degree of accuracy, its origin in relation to Yorùbá. A thorough investigation of the links between the game and *Ifá* will significantly improve our understanding and claim that the game started or originated among the Yorùbá people.

Haggerty (2011, p.1) asserts that, "*Ayò Olópón* is the oldest board game that is still widely played in the world today. It has been in existence for the seventeen thousand years.... Its exact origin has been lost to history." *Ayò olópón* is played and valued in the Diaspora than its source of origin, the Yorùbá nation (Ogunmola 2012). The popularity of *ayò olópón* in the Diaspora perhaps makes its origin to be contested nowadays. For example, "the Swedish people are laying claims to the invention of the game" (Haggerty 2011, p.1). The original cultural significance of the game has almost disappeared, as *ayò olópón* is mainly nowadays valued for its entertainment purpose. This observation was made by O'Connell (2012: 3) when he noted that, "nowadays, this game board is played worldwide and many of the original values are not upheld or recognized." For example, a proposal was made by Oyeleke et al (2014: 25) on the benefits of inventing *Ayò* game on social media, "since *Ayò* is the most ancient traditional board games, it implies that sufferers will once again have the feel of their culture on mobile platforms...Its acceptability by demented people and potential sufferers will not be an issue...These attributes we believe will help African sufferers to recover faster." This

agitation is aimed to have access to the game anywhere. However, their works did not relate the family or lineage in *ayò ọlọpọ̀n* with *Ifá*.

Scholars in the areas of sociology of Yorùbá, culture, language and anthropology have written about Yorùbá traditional games. Kòmọláfẹ́ (1978, pp.149–78) estimates Yorùbá traditional games to be over twenty. He categorized the Yorùbá indigenous games into four: indoor, outdoor, children and adult games. Among all the games, *ayò ọlọpọ̀n* is, according to Mustapha and Aromọlára (1976, p.139) a game that has more materials than the other games. It is also the only Yorùbá game that has international recognition as well as the game that has the most standardized rules and processes, probably because of the presumed association believed to connected with *Ifá* religion.

Ládélé, Mustapha, Awórindé, Oyèrindé and Ọládàpọ̀ (1986, pp.1–18), Dáramọlá and Jéjé (1967, pp. 8–12), Arómọlára and Mustapha (1978, pp.139 – 40) worked on the principles governing *ayò ọlọpọ̀n*. However, these previous works did not attempt to relate symbols and codes in *Ifá* divination system to those symbols and codes in *ayò ọlọpọ̀n*. This was probably because, their works were more of an introduction meant for illustration and pedagogical purposes for secondary schools. It seems the previous works did not see *ayò ọlọpọ̀n* beyond its entertainment value. As this research work will show however, there exist links between *Ifá* divination and *ayò ọlọpọ̀n*, particularly in *proraisis* code. In Òkẹwándé (2017a), I established the relationship of *Ifá* with *ayò ọlọpọ̀n* around symbols, icons, index and codes. The philosophical relations between *Ifá* and *ayò ọlọpọ̀n* are given attention using a semiotic analysis in Òkẹwándé (2017c). The study establishes that, *Ifá* moral philosophy greatly influences *ayò ọlọpọ̀n*, which demonstrates the influence of *Ifá* on *ayò ọlọpọ̀n* as the foundation on which the Yorùbá culture rests.

Abímọlá (1976, p.ix), rightly observes that scholarship in Yorùbá tradition, specifically “literature” and “religion”, has always taken a lot of things about socio-cultural and philosophical lives of the Yorùbá for granted. This problem is compounded when dealing with the African World view. This problem is glaringly manifested in oracular structure, content and form.” It is noteworthy that some things have indeed been taken for granted regarding the traditional game: *ayò ọlọpọ̀n* and its relationship with *Ifá* religion. Thus, as noted above, significant symbols on *Ọpọ̀n-Ifá* have been examined within the *Ifá* divination system alone without relating them with their presence in other Yorùbá social or religious aspects of life. This has denied us the opportunity of having an in-depth understanding of the relationship of some symbols and the social organization and practices among the Yorùbá. Cultural studies that focus attention on these areas, that is, the semiotic interlinks between *Ifá*, and *ayò ọlọpọ̀n* are therefore desirable. Not much attention has been paid to the socio-cultural and recreational aspects of *ayò ọlọpọ̀n*, in relation to *Ifá*. This research attempts to fully establish links between *Ifá* and *ayò ọlọpọ̀n* connection. This will add to a greater understanding and appreciation of the Yorùbá cultural family values.

3. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to demonstrate that, the Yorùbá family structures and patterns are based on *proraisis* code, using *Ifá* and *ayò ọlọpọ̀n* among the Yorùbá people as insights. That is, the Yorùbá family and society’s belief systems are based on lineage. The study aims to demonstrate that, African generally and the Yorùbá in particular can trace, retrieve and establish their lost histories through their symbols.

4. Theoretical Approach: Semiotics

Semiotics, which is the study of science of signs, is better understood through symbolism. This approach is adopted because, *Ifá*, the central element in this work communicates in signs and symbols with the interaction of divination objects. Semiotics can be traced to the pioneering works of Charles Sanders Peirce, the American philosopher and Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss Linguist. According to Saussure, semiology is the study of signs as part of social life. He focuses on the functions of social and cultural phenomenon within semiotic system. Saussure (1974, p.60) classifies signs into two entities: “signified and or sign-vehicle or meaning.” He refers to the signified, mostly in form of materials (objects, images, sounds and so on). Saussure is credited with structuralism approach. To him, language is formed by signs which are related in multiple ways. A sign or a word consists of two parts: one part is its form; the other part is its meaning. The association between form and meaning of a sign is fixed by conventions of language use. The link between the form and meaning are inseparable.

According to Peirce, Semiotics is an abstract entity. Sign is something which stands to somebody or something in some respects or capacity. This relation of ‘standing for’ is mediated by an interpretant. According to Peirce (1931, p.35), “a sign is anything which determines something else (its interpretant) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its object) in the same way the interpretant becoming in turn a sign.” This means anything can be adopted as a sign.

Three modes of significations are regarded to be sufficient to describe any form of sign. These are icon, symbol and index. In an iconic mode, the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified in one way or the other. According to Peirce, one can perceive a direct resemblance between the signifier and the signified. For instance, a picture of an individual is an iconic symbol. This may be in form of an animal. This belief is associated with some Yorùbá traditions that forbid some families to eat, kill or harm some animals. It is forbidden for the *Alápà*’s family to eat, kill or harm snakes, just as for the twins or the family of twins to eat any species of monkey as explained earlier. These animals are believed by Yorùbá tradition to be the families’ ancestors (Káyòdé, 1984).

In symbol mode, there is no resemblance or connection between the signifier and the signified, that is, the object and what it stands for. A symbol’s connection with its object is a matter of convention, rule or agreement between the users. In Yorùbá tradition, it can be realized in form of *Àrokò*, as such an object or something stands for something or somebody in real life. For instance, the Yorùbá believe that “fish” stands for negative and ‘crab’ for positive or to determine the ‘yes’ or ‘no’ of an interrogative statement such as ‘*ẹja n bá kàn?*’ (fish or crab?). It is culturally accepted that ‘fish’ symbolizes (stands for) no or negative and ‘crab’ symbolizes (stands for) yes or positive.

In an indexical mode, the signifier is not arbitrary but is directly connected in some ways (physically or casually) to the signified. For instance, “odour” is an index for the presence of a he-goat around. This makes Yorùbá to say “*òrúkọ dé òórùn dé*” (a he-goat is around with odor) or in a statement such as “*bíná bá jó lóko m ọjàlà ni yóó ẹ ọfófó*” (*mọjàlà* is the tell-tale of the bush burning) (Şótúndé 2009, p.178).

The link rule of signs and their meanings are made known by code. A code is “a means of conveying messages, a vehicle of communication” (Geoffery and Short 1981: 124). This

may be realized in a multi-level coding. Code helps to simplify phenomena in order to make it easier to communicate experience. Codes are realized in different forms-behavioral, verbal, gnomonic, and proraiesis among others.

The knowledge of semiotics covers different aspects of life. This work adopts the cultural semiotics, which is concern with the use of cultural objects or signs associated with cultural meanings. A sign can create multiple meanings, depending on the culture in which it exists. The application of the cultural categories depends on the individual or personal knowledge. "But we are all some ways apart from commanding all cultural knowledge, as we all have little experience in many areas of everyday life" (Lobner 2002, p.201). The distinction between the semantic knowledge and world knowledge (for example, cultural and personal knowledge) is a doctrine of cultural semiotics.

The challenge of identification or discovery, reading and interpreting Africans symbols, objects and artifacts as they relate with African cultural, religious social and philosophical ways of life among others is open to research scholarship, especially for Archeologists and Anthropologists. "Africa is everywhere inscribed...from rocks to masks, sculpture, pyramids and manuscripts...What is called the white Bantu style offers us a true historical archive, full of pictograms and idiograms, which remains to be interpreted. It provides extraordinary information on the concepts and beliefs of Bantu people" (Alain 2009, p.8). What is demonstrated with the Bantu people can generally be applicable to all other African countries as exemplified in this work with *Ifá* and *ayò olópón* game.

5. *Opón-Ifá and Opón-Ayò (Ifá divination board and Opón-Ayò board)*

It is important to briefly discuss the usefulness of *Opón Ayò* and *Opón Ifá* in the processes of *ayò* game and *Ifá* divination. This is because; *Opón* serves as an input or requirement for the realization of the objectives of *Ifá* divination and *ayò olópón*. Both *Opón Ayò* and *Opón Ifá* are made of wood. Wood materials were used by the early men. By this, we are able to know the historical development of Yorùbá society, but are not able to account for the period of the development. For instance, *Ifá* divination was initially performed on the ground before the advent of wood (*Opón*). For instance, *Orínmilà*, the *Ifá* progenitor says, "ilẹ̀ ni mo tètètẹ̀, kí n tóó tọ́pón" Abíódún (1975, p.435). Meaning that, it was on the ground I first printed divination marks before the board was designed. *Ayò* game was also performed on the ground before the advent of *opón ayò* (Òkẹwándé 2017a). *Ifá* divination and *Ayò* were first carried out on the ground and, after a period of development, on the *Opón* (board made of wood). Roy (2000, p.436) asserts that, "Man has used wood since the early days of Stone Age". The advent of *Opón Ayò* and *Opón Ifá* fall within the early period of societal development Abíódún (1975). On the boards are cultural and aesthetics designs that demand for interpretations in relation to their cultural significations. This is because, "those inscriptions we do have allow us to trace the development of one writing tradition" (Yule 1996, p.9).

Adéoyè (1985, p.185) opines that, the family of *Abógundé* are the professional carvers in the history and culture of the Yorùbá people. This implies that, the *Abógundé*'s family are professional carvers of *Opón Ifá* and *Opón Ayò*. Their professional touch is extended to other wooden traditional material such as doors, human statues and images. Because of the Yorùbá cultural belief associated with *Opón*, it mustn't be turned over. As a result of this rule, *Ifá* corpus states that, "ìkaakà ni awo ó bá opón. Ìkaakà ni awo ó bá awo" (Qládàpò 2010: 45). Meaning that, the board must be face up in the course of carving, because, the board must never be overturned to face downward, either during carving or in use by *Ifá* priest. The rule

that guides the carvers in the process of *Opón*'s production is coded in *Ìrètè Méjì* that, "Ìkaaka ni à á gb ẹ opón. Ìkaaka ni à á m ọ awo" (Abimbólá 1977b, p.81). That is, the board must be carved faced up. African cultural heritage materials such as *Opón Ifá* and *Opón Ayò* are some of the "African's artistic knowledge and style as well as his developments with durable paints, but in addition, valuable data are thus provided about African's and their environment during and after the Neolithic Age" (Harris 1972, p.37). One can relate both *Opón Ifá* and *Opón Ayò* in carving and also in use.

6. Family and Lineage

Family is the basis of human society. That is, there is no society without family. "It is the fundamental social group on which the conception of society rests... The family is not only the basis of social group; it is also viewed as an oldest institution of mankind... A lineage is a unilateral descent group. It is made up of consanguine kins that claim their descent from common ancestors, through known link. Lineage, generally include ancestors of five to six generations in sequence" (Roy 2003, p.523).

The Yorùbá lineage, in particular and Africa generally is based on the mother and the farther. For example, Walter (2009: 40) says "In Africa, before the 15th century, the predominant principle of social relations was that of family and kinship associated with communalism. Every member of an African society had his position defined in terms of relatives on his mother's side and on his father's side... Those things were crucial to the daily existence of a member of an African society." As explained earlier, the belief on the concept of lineage has links with the ancestors, both farther and the mother. Meaning that, the living cannot disconnect or dissociate him/her from the line. It is the 'generational glue or cord' that binds the people in a society together. "Actually member of a lineage form a corporate group who perform the same ritual acts but possess autonomy in everyday affairs. A lineage is always a strict exogamous unit and the ancestor of a lineage is never a mythological or legendary figure" (Roy 2003, p.545). This invariably makes the concept of lineage to be spiritual, as it incorporates or integrates the visible (living human beings) and the invisible (the ancestors) together (Òkéwándé 2016). The successive steps for the development of family put consanguine family (with which the Yorùbá is associated) at the base. Family is formed at this stage as a result of group marriage within the member of the same generation, "thus the consanguine arrangement has been pictured as 'a nucleus of blood relationship surrounded by a fringe of spouses' the brothers and sisters representing the core of the family unit." However, the structural family pattern varies from a community to another. Africans generally and the Yorùbá people in particular appreciate and indicate their belief in lineage.

7. *Ifá* and *Ayò Olópón* Processes

In *Ifá* divination, two divination objects are mostly used by the *Ifá* priests. These are *òpèlẹ* (divination chain with eight *òpèlẹ* seeds tied to it), and *ikin*, the *Ifá* sacred palm nuts. *Ikin* form of object is however employed in this study. This is because, on one hand, *ikin* is an iconic symbol of *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* and on the other hand, *Ikin*'s medium of divination is more reliable or dependable than other media of divinations. In the performance of *Ifá* divination by *ikin*, the *Ifá* priest puts the sixteen sacred palm-nuts (*ikin*) in his palms and attempts to take the palm-nuts with the second palm, "if one palm-nut is left in his hand, he makes two marks on the yellow powder of divination, but, if two palm-nuts are left in his hand, he makes one mark. If none of

the palm-nut is left, he makes no marks at all. This process is repeated until an *Odu* signature is obtained" (Abimbola 1976, p.11).

Ayò olópón is played on the traditional game board containing twelve holes on two horizontal lines (six holes by the right hand and left sides of the players). It is played in such a way that, the players sit in direct opposite to each other with the game board at the centre on a bench or an object. The game starts after each of the twelve holes is occupied by four *ayò* seeds, making a total number of forty-eight *ayò* seeds. The game is mostly played by two mature males (of estimated fifteen years of age) in the open and watched by the spectators.

The *ayò olópón* game starts by taking any of the four *ayò* seeds on the row of the game board player, distributing it in an anticlockwise movement in the next four holes. This is known as sowing. This exercise is repeated until all the *ayò* seeds in his hand are exhausted. None of the holes must be skipped when sowing. "Harvesting" or "capturing" which is the process of winning *ayò* seeds of the opponent player is done, when the *ayò* seeds in a hole (after sowing) are two or three up to the maximum of five holes in a single movement or sowing of *ayò* seeds. The winner is determined by the player having more number of *ayò* seeds than the opponent. That is, a player with more than twenty-four *ayò* seeds emerges as a winner, since the total number of *ayò* seeds on the game board is forty-eight. It is possible for the two players to play to a draw. In this case, no winner emerges. This is traditionally described as *òmi* (draw game). The game continues until a winner emerges twice. If a loser of *ayò* game is defeated more than twice, he gives way for another *ayò* player to display his competence with the winner. However, this rule is not rigid, as the players may continue after a player is defeated twice, if there is no interested player to continue the game.

8. Discussion: Links between the Proairetic Code of *Ifá* Divination and *Ayò Olópón*

Recreation has been one means of measuring societal intelligence. It "denotes the mental excellence of the people" (Roy 2003, p.657). Although, there have been different researches on *Ifá* divination system but, no known attempt has been made to associate *ayò olópón* with *Ifá* divination. Therefore, this work will describe one of the codes relationship between *Ifá* divination and *ayò olópón*. It will further account for the value of *ayò olópón* within the Yorùbá sociocultural and religion contexts. In other words, as *Ifá* divination system makes use of line (family) tracing in supplicant/client case by *Ifá* priest, so it is observed in *ayò olópón*. The principle of lines is strictly adhered to in the processes of *Ifá* divination and *ayò olópón*. This establishes an association between the two concepts by this code. The process of line tracing is observed in *Ifá*, whatever form that is adopted: sand cutting or the use of divination board. The stroke or marking of *Odu* is strictly based on the line on the divination 'arena'. The marking, identification, reading and interpretation are done on the basis of lines on the divination board. This process brings about symbols (*Odu*) with which the writings on the lines are identified. *Ifá's* divination system employs a wooden board with symbols marked or inscribed with a powder. The diviner then traces lines in the powder to interpret the message. However, the identification, marking and interpretation of the symbols is spiritual- strictly carried out by an initiated *Ifá* priest. In this process, the lines allow for the connectivity between the physical and the human world. "The *babaláwo* begins the session with a client by drawing lines in the sand on the tray...The lines allow spirits to communicate with the living" (Salamone 2012, p.3). This exercise aims at linking an individual to the root.

The process of line tracing as described in *Ifá* divination is also strictly adhered to, in *ayò ọlọpọ́n*. For example, Climent, Canal and Casanovas (2012, p.2) observe that, the process of sowing seed must be “without crossing the limits of the territory or row.” The two rows in *ọpọ́n ayò* are fixed lines. In sowing, a hole must not also be skipped, unless if the ‘looping’ (the hole where the accumulation of *Odù* is taken) is created. Na’ Allah (2010: 4) gives other hints further that, “some traditional games like the Yorùbá *ayò* involve some writing in the form of strokes or lines.” In *Ifá* divination, the line tracing index the connectivity of lines between the physical and the spiritual forces. The line is to trace and connect an individual to the root or with the ancestors. Although, the line tracing in *ayò ọlọpọ́n* is not a medium or channel of human-spirit communication or connection, but, is discovered in this work as an extension of the *Ifá* divination expressed in recreation form. The realization of this rule or principle of line tracing is applicable to both *Ifá* divination and *ayò ọlọpọ́n* systems; which is an indication that suggests links between *Ifá* divination and *ayò ọlọpọ́n*. The principle of line tracing is important not only for the living but equally to the dead as well. This principle is shown with the photograph below:

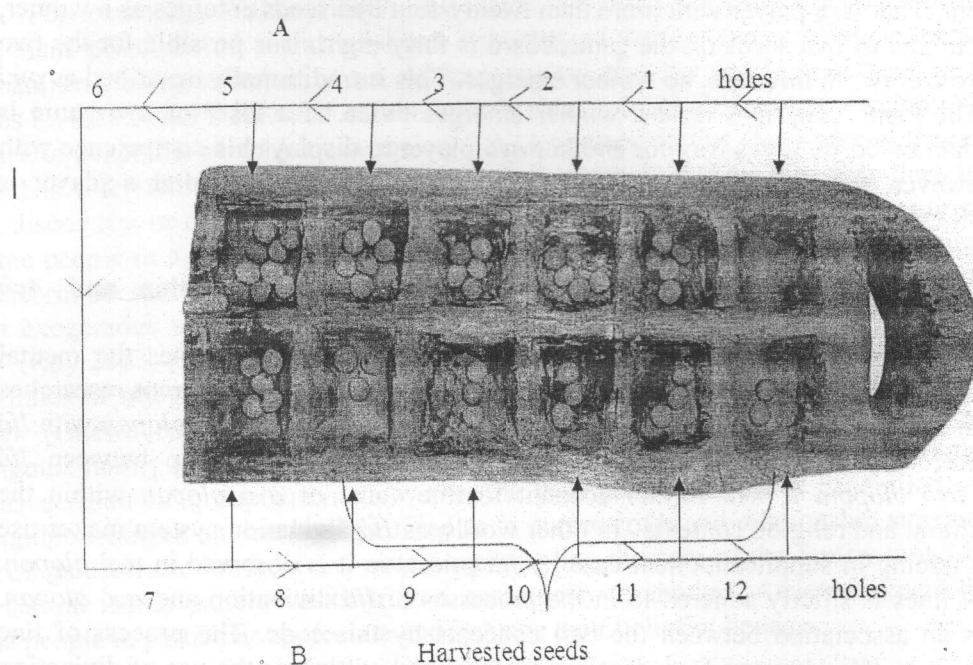


Fig. 1: PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING THE LINE TRACING ON *ỌPỌ́N AYÒ*

From the picture above, the *Ayò* player A traces the line from line A (hole 1) to line B (hole 12) to capture 14 seeds (in holes 8 to hole 12), on the line B of the player. One of the rules of the game is that, no hole should be skipped in the process of dropping the *ayò* seeds in the holes of *ọpọ́n ayò*. The seeds must also be dropped one after the other. In other words, not more than a seed is shown in a hole at a time and no hole must be left empty from the starting hole till the *ayò* seeds are exhausted except the hole from which a player is lifting the seed(s) for the new move.

Among the Yorùbá people, a home or house, (a shelter or members of family) is regarded as *ilé*. Likewise, holes on the *Opón Ayò* are referred to as *ilé* (house or family). This linguistic relationship of holes in *ayò* game and the social living among the Yorùbá people is noticed. The process of the game follows the tracing from one hole (house) to the hole (house) where seed are harvested. The hole (house) or holes (houses) where seeds are harvested are symbolic. An individual in African society in general and among the Yorùbá in particular is traced by line to his or her root- *ilé*. The marking of line in the *Ifá* symbols is equally performed by the *Ifá* priest for the *Ifá* supplicant(s). The *Ifá* divination lineage inscription as marked read and interpreted by the professional *Ifá* priest in religious or ritual performance is connected with the actualization and realization of same in the social life of the Yorùbá people as demonstrated with *ayò olópón* in this study.

Similarly, in *Ifá* divination system, the diviner traces line on the divination board to mark out the *Oyèkú Mejì* code as shown in in the picture below:.

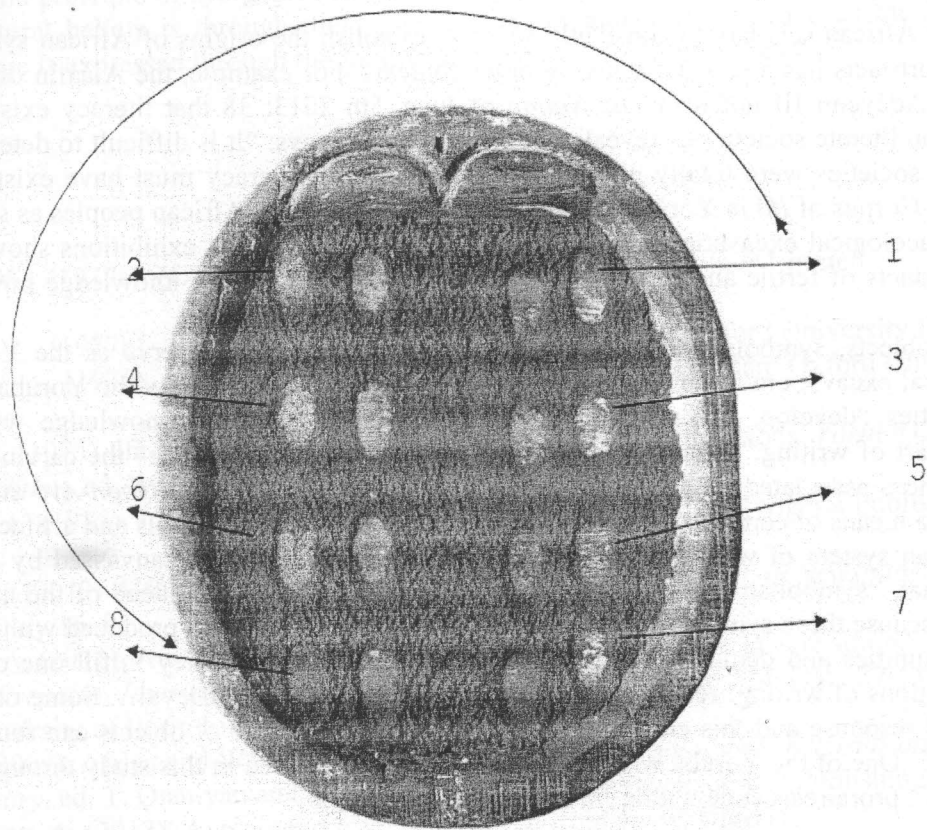


Fig. 2: PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING THE MOVEMENT OF LINE TRACING ON DIVINATION BOARD.

From the picture above, the line tracing (marking) is illustrated by the arrow around the board. The diviner traces the line from 1 to 8, is indicated by 8 strokes. The line begins from right (marked as 1), to the left (marked as 2) in this order to the eighth stroke (marked as 8). The lines are traced vertically from line one to line eight (1-8). The lines arrangement in both *ayò olópón* and *Ifá* divination marking rule are observed in horizontal (two lines) and vertical (two lines); both from right to the left. The right to the left order in line tracing associated with *Ifá* divination and *ayò olópón* is believed to have been influenced by the Yorùbá contact with Arab nations, which are identified with the right to the left system of writing. This system has been described to be basic to the *Ifá* divination writing system, especially, with the sixteen principal *Odù Ifá*. "The patterns of right hand side is considered basic and it is upon them that the 16 generic names are based" (Abimbólá 1976, p.16). The tracing of *ayò* holes on the two vertical lines on *olópón ayò* by a player, in an anticlockwise direction without skipping any hole except the hole where the seeds were taken in the process of the game is another code that suggests a link of *Ifá* divination to *ayò olópón*.

The need for African scholars to constantly strive to establish the origins of African symbols and cultural artifacts has also been stated in other contexts. For example, the Aláàfin of Òyó, Qba Làmidì Adéyemí III noted in *The Nation* of June, 5th 2013: 38 that literacy existed in apparently non literate societies as revealed by *Ifá* corpus. He says: "It is difficult to determine whether oral societies were totally non-literate. Some form of literacy must have existed as shown by the Corpus of *Ifá* in Yorùbá societies...Ancient cultures of African peoples as shown through archaeological excavations and some of the items in museums exhibitions show that these are products of fertile and highly intelligent people who had some knowledge however crude."

Ifá's objects, symbols and artifacts as well as *ayò olópón* here serve as the Yorùbá "archaeological excavations." Abimbólá (1977a, p.13) notes that, this is how the Yorùbá non-literate societies "develop, preserve and transmit bodies of academic knowledge without knowing the art of writing." The opinion of Abimbólá however failed to see the carving and the performances associated with the objects, as in this case *Olópón-Ifá* and *Olópón-Ayò* and the divination as a means of communication and writing. African objects, symbols and artifacts are ancient African system of writing. For instance, this challenge has been canvassed by Alain (2009, p.9) that, "symbolism has been the topic of several studies. It is indeed of the utmost importance because these symbols are in close relation to speech: they are produced within the speech communities and demand interpretation by this communities. They fulfill one of the essential functions of writing: recording information and enabling its retrieval... Some objects elicit a verbal response and this encapsulates a text. The systemic use of objects can function like writing..." One of the Yorùbá writing systems is realized or seen in this study through the 'semiotic lens': proraiesis code within *Ifá* and *ayò olópón* rubric.

9. Conclusion

It has been demonstrated in this study that, there is a connection in proraiesis code between *Ifá* divination and *ayò olópón* game, which makes line tracing in *Ifá* to be connected to line tracing in *ayò olópón* game. Proraiesis code has equally demonstrates that, lineage connects individual, not only with the living alone but, with the dead as well. In other words, the present generation and individuals are connected with the past through the family lineage. Line tracing

makes continuity of individual, family and generation possible. The principle of line tracing in *Ifá* and *ayò olópon* also demonstrates that, although, Africans generally and Yorùbá in particular are historically associated with "illiterate societies", however, there abounds historical documents in oral forms, especially in *Ifá*, symbols, objects and artifacts among others that express cultural beliefs of the Africans in general and Yorùbá in particular. The two lines in both *Ayò* and *Ifá* markings are symbolized in this study by the mother and the father in family structure. The right marking start point for both of the *Ifá* divination and *Ayò Olópon* equally symbolized positions, mostly the male by the right and the female by the left. The position arrangement of male by the right and female by the left is strictly followed in marriages. It should be noted that, before the matrimonial joining in modern foreign religions, especially, Christianity and Islam, the reversed is the case. For instance, the female couple maintains the right position while the male maintain the left. The shared male-female/left-right positions are realized in binary and dualism, for instance, positive and negative. The positive is symbolized with male, while the negative is symbolized with female. This is established in Yorùbá cultural symbols and the practices associated with those symbols as established in *Ifá* divination and principle of *ayò* game. This study concludes that, one of the ways by which the Yorùbá cultural beliefs is through their objects symbols and artifacts alone as the Yorùbá family lineage is expressed through the *Ifá* divination and *ayò olópon* processes.

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