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A SEMIOTIC INVESTIGATION OF LINKS BETWEEN *IFÁ* AND *ÀRÒ* CODES

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Abstract

Ifá is believed to be the foundation of Yorùbá culture. Virtually every aspect of Yorùbá life- history, religion, philosophy, science, ideology and so on has one link or another with *Ifá*. Previous studies have not related *Ifá* with *Àrò*, this has denied us the opportunity to explore some inherent values *Àrò* manifests in relation to historical and socio-cultural aspects of Yorùbá life. This gap is filled by this study. The study relies substantially on data from Yorùbá literary texts, especially *Ifá* literary corpus and *Àrò* poems. Relevant data are carefully selected as samples and analyzed with semiotics, which is the study that concentrates on science if sign and symbol. This is because, *Ifá*, that is the basic element in this study communicates in signs symbols. It is found out from the study that *Àrò* is related with *Ifá*, thereby, making *Àrò* to be better appreciated as an important Yorùbá oral genre in the socio-cultural and historical life of the Yorùbá people.

Keywords: *Ifá*, *Àrò*, Oral genre, Poetry, Code, Semiotics and History

Introduction

This work examines the relationship between *Ifá* divination poetry¹ and *Àrò* poetry.² *Ifá* has been defined by scholars in different

¹ *Ifá* has been the most formidable means of establishing the Yorùbá history. In other words, the veracity of the Yorùbá economic, political, social and cultural histories of the Yorùbá people are evinced from *Ifá*

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. Therefore, to simply define *Ifá* as a religion, without exploring its social and cultural links will be inadequate. *Ifá* is regarded as the spokesperson not only for the gods but also for the living. It is regarded as the living foundation of Yorùbá culture.³ Munoz⁴ 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* 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.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.⁶ By this proclamation, *Ifá* joined the league of heritages and therefore requiring urgent preservation. *Ifá*, as a religion, science or literary text, has over time been of great

² *Àrò* is an oral poetic universal genre. It is one of the major Yorùbá indigenous poetry. It contents are historical analysis on certain aspect of the Yorùbá system of living or belief.

³ Abimbólá, W. *Àwọn Ojú Odù méréèrìdínlógún*. Òyó: Aims Publishers, 1977a, p. 14.

⁴ Munoz, L. *A living Tradition Studies in Yorùbá Civilization*. Ìbàdàn: Bookcraft, 2003, p. 179.

⁵ Qdèyemí, J. "Ifá and Òrìṣà Temple" From <oyekuofin.com/what-is-ifa/> 2013, p. 5.

⁶ Robinson, B. "Ifá The Religion of the Yorùbá People" From <http://www.religious toleranceorg/Ifa.htm>, 2008, p.1.

interest to scholars in different areas of human endeavors, like history, medicine, philosophy, religion, art, literature culture.

Àrò has been described as "a minor genre of Yorùbá spoken art"⁷ performed by children, adults alike purely for entertainment. "*Àrò* is a type of Yorùbá oral poetry used not only by the children but by the adults as well. It is rendered in the moonlight meetings and used as entertainment."⁸ Abimbólá describes *Àrò* as a "type of puzzle, rendered partly in poetic and partly in prose form".⁹ The universality of *Àrò* in Yorùbá tradition cannot be overemphasized. The genre is generally known as *Àrò* throughout the Yorùbáland, with the exception of a few areas where it is known by other names such as *Imò* in Ìjẹ̀sà and *Péròó* in Ègbá.¹⁰ Although, the genre is regarded to be "a minor genre of Yorùbá spoken art",¹¹ its popularity is universal. For instance, it is not a local type of oral poetry associated with a community, as *ègè* among the Ègbá, *olele* among the Ìjẹ̀sà people, *ẹ̀kún iyàwó* among the Ọ̀yọ or *alámò* among the Èkítì people. Like any other Yorùbá oral poetry, *Àrò* materials (language, symbols or objects) belong to the Yorùbá community at large; as the poems make use of the familiar materials (living and non-living). This form of oral poetry is "Poetry's roots in orality and community, bespeak a public function: the poet, or more properly (since oral/communal version often has no single, recognized 'author', but instead is developed and formalized by repetition and tradition, carried by many voices), articulated communal

⁷ Babalólá, A. "Àrò: A Minor Genre of Yorùbá Spoken Arts." This was a paper presented at the Ninth West African Languages Congress, held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1970, p. 1.

⁸ See Babalólá, A. "One of Yorùbá Folk Narrative called ÀRÒ" *FABULA*, 1973, p. 179.

⁹ Abimbólá, W. *Sixteen great poems of Ifá*. Niamey: UNESCO, 1975, p. 358.

¹⁰ Awóbùlúyì, Q. "On the structure of Àrò" *African Notes*, 1974, p. 59.

¹¹ Olátúnjì, Q. "Classification of Yorùbá Oral Poetry. In A. Afọláyan (ed.) *Yorùbá Language and Literature*. Ilé-Ifè: University Press, 1982, p. 58.

experiences, desires, histories, narratives"¹² In this form of oral genre "the performance functioned as a statement of community more than a statement to the community, because the performance itself formed part of the communal recognition of its own group members."¹³

Objective of the Study

Therefore, the major objective of this work is to establish the semiotic associations of *Ifá*, the foundation on which the Yorùbá culture rests. The investigation links between *Ifá* and *Arò* will go a long way, since one of the reliable ways to establish the veracity of Yorùbá culture is to reference its etymology from *Ifá*.

Review of Related Literature

Awóbùlúyì¹⁴ examines the peculiarity of *Àrò* structure. He focuses his work on thematic, syntactic and lexical structures. He examines different sentence structures associated with the genre. According to him, what differentiates *Àrò* from other Yorùbá oral genres is "it's very definite and completely regular form. It would seem that this form is in part the *raison d'être* of the genre considering it remains the same while the words used may vary from locality to locality."¹⁵ He equally identifies three forms of *Àrò*: "the versified word play type; the chain reaction tale type in segmented prose; and... the tale story type in ordinary prose."¹⁶ The work of Àjùwòṇ¹⁷ discusses the stylistic features known with *Àrò*; as well as how the genre shares with the Yorùbá folktale; the entertainment,

¹² Matterson, S. and Jones, D. *Studying Poetry*. London: Hodder Arnold, 2000, p. 144.

¹³ Ibid, p. 92

¹⁴ Awóbùlúyì, Q. "On the structure of Àrò" *African Notes*, 1974, p. 59.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 69

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Àjùwòṇ, B. "Àrò: The Yorùbá Folktale Poetic Puzzle" *IFÈ Annals of the Institute of Cultural Studies*, 1986.

and moral and “aetiological education”¹⁸ functions of *Àrò* in addition to its chain-like episodic structure.

Akínyemí¹⁹ makes two classifications of Tales-Riddle: the Non-Ifá-Based Poetic Tale-Riddle and Ifá-Based Poetic Tale-Riddle and Ifá Based prosaic-Poetic combination Tale-Riddles. He noted in his work that the non-Ifá-Based Prosaic Tale-Riddle, did not involve *Òrúnmìlà* as the protagonist, but rather, Tortoise, “who always prevails at the end of the story.”²⁰ According to him, this category of Tale-Riddles is described that “Clearly, these are not classic ‘true riddles.’”²¹ These forms of Tale-Riddles are untrue or fallacious.

These illustrations of the Ifá-Tale-Riddles involving Tortoise as the protagonist described by Akínyemí as untrue stories is against the present opinion being canvassed in this study. This is because, it is the general belief of the Yorùbá people that, *Ifá* cannot lie.²² In other words, stories in *Ifá* are real, that is, including the *Àrò*, in *Ifá* context, involving Tortoise.

All *ẹsẹ-Ifá* are events or histories, stories that happened in the past, coded in *Odù* (sixteen principal and two hundred and forty minor *Odu*). The opinion of Abimbólá in regards to *ẹsẹ-Ifá* buttresses further on this that “What has emerged so far is that *ẹsẹ-Ifá* is a type of ‘historical’ poetry. Every poem of *Ifá* is an attempt to narrate, through the particular structure of *Ifá* divination poetry, *things which the Ifá priest has been taught to believe actually happened in the past by narrating these stories of the past*”²³ (italics mine). This means that, the *Ifá* divination poetry of *Ifá-Àrò* should be regarded as true stories that actually happened at a particular historical period. In

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 56

¹⁹ Akínyemí, A. *Orature and Yorùbá Riddles*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers, 2015.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 116

²¹ Ibid, p. 117

²² It is canvassed here that if all the contents in *Ifá* are true stories and histories, then, then, folktales, including *Àrò* under this study cannot be said to be untrue.

²³ Abimbólá, W. *Àwọn Ojú Odù méré̀ẹ̀ridinlógún*. Òyó: Aims Publishers, 1977a, p. 20.

other words, in both *Ifá* and *Àrò*, the stories are believed to have taken place at a period of Yorùbá historical event.

The *Àrò* that involves Tortoise cannot be regarded to be untrue; this is because, Tortoise is as well given recognition by *Ifá*, just like any other animal. If stories that relate with other animal are not quarried or questioned, that of Tortoise should not either. According to Pogson and Pogson and Akande, the images of different kind of animals are represented on the *Ifá* divination tray as well. The *opón Ifá* (divination tray) “allows the use of representations of all types of animals, human and other Ifá paraphernalia and all forms relating to decorate the tray.”²⁴ Tortoise is also represented on the divination tray, “the edges of each tray dominated by intricate patterns of different objects such as birds, reptiles, tortoises.”²⁵ These decorations, including tortoise have to do with relationship with *Ifá*. Associating *Òrúnmìlà*’s ancestors with some animals suggests relationship with those animals, including Tortoise.

The opinion that some events and stories believed to be unreal in the present time have been addressed by scholars and theorists. For example, Valbuena opines that, such claims that some stories involving Tortoise to be untrue might have been as a result of our ignorance and limited knowledge about natural existence and events.

When something in nature seems ridiculous to us, absurd or bad, is because we just have a partial knowledge of things, because we generally ignore order and the coherence of nature all together, and because we need that everything are disposed according with the dictations of

²⁴ Pogson, O. I. and Àkandé, A. O. *Ifa divination trays from Isale-Oyo*. Retrieved from cea-revues.org/196, 2011, p. 22.

²⁵ Abimbólá, W. *Àwọn Ojú Odù méré̀ẹ̀ridinlógún*. Òyó: Aims Publishers, 1977a, p. 9

our own reason; although what our reason declares bad is not bad according to the order and laws of universal nature but only according to the laws of our own nature²⁶

The relationship and coexistence of animals and plants may presently look obscured to us, as we have limited knowledge that accounts for such relationships. But we should be reminded about “possible worlds theory-states that anything that you can imagine is real. This means that we have infinite choices, it does not mean we have to choose”.²⁷

The scientific or literary theory that analyses the connection of *Àrò* with *Ifá* is open to research in Yorùbá cultural scholarship. Yémitàn and Ògúndélé assert about *Ifá* that, “ó jé ìmò ìjnlẹ̀ lótò ara rẹ̀, ohun tí a lẹ̀ pẹ̀ ní ẹ̀ka ìmò sáyẹ̀nsì. Èkejì, ó jé oríṣìí ẹ̀sìn ibílẹ̀ ilẹ̀ Yorùbá kan.”²⁸ Meaning that, *Ifá* is knowledge of science on its own. Secondly, it is a separate Yorùbá religion. The implication of this statement is that, *Ifá*’s knowledge can be better understood by scientific analysis or literary theory. “Scientific theory begins to look indistinguishable from literary theory...Science, is said to deal with hard facts, and other areas of culture should either imitate, or confess their inability to imitate, the scientists’ respect for brute factuality.”²⁹ Interestingly, *Àrò* is discovered by this finding to have shared some codes with *Ifá*, which invariably attest to *Àrò* as sharing the attribute

²⁶Valbuena, S. *Philosophical, Scientist, Moral, Ethics and Religious Analysis in the Juridical Compared Science in the law of cloning*. New York: Daklass Publishers, . 2005, p. 37

²⁷Christopher, L. *Binary Questions: How Dualism still rules the Modern World*. Retrieved from <http://D:Binaryquestionshowdualismstillrulesthemordenworld-yahoo!voices-voices>, 2009, p. 4.

²⁸Yémitàn, Q and Ògúndélé, Q. *Ojú Òṣùpá. Apá kìnì. Ibàdàn*: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. ix

²⁹Rorty, R. “Criticism and knowledge.” In P. Rice and P. Waugh (eds) *Modern Literary Theory*, New York: Hodder Arnold, 1989, pp. 449 & 53.

of realism; including *Àrò* with the Tortoise as the protagonist.

Methodology: Semiotic Approach

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. Saussure³⁰ classifies signs into two entities: “signified and or sign-vehicle or meaning”³¹ 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, “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.”³² 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

³⁰Saussure, de F. (1974). *Course in General Linguistics*. London: Collins, p. 60.

³¹Ibid, p. 60

³²Peirce, S. “semiotics” <<http://www.singnosemio.com/peirce/semiotics.asp>>, 1931, p. 35.

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. These animals are believed to be the families' ancestors³³

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 bákàn?"³⁴ (fish or crab?). It is culturally accepted that "fish" symbolizes (stand s 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 oòrùn dé" (a he-goat is around with odour) or in a statement such as "bíná bá jó lóko mọjàlà ni yóó sòfófó"³⁵ meaning that, *mọjàlà* is the tell-tale of the bush burning.

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"³⁶ this may be realized in a multi-level coding. Code

³³ In Yorùbá culture, history and religion every individual and family has a culturally forbidden rule that must be followed. This may be not to eat an animal, harm or kill such animal that is historically linked to the individual or family's ancestors.

³⁴ This is culturally symbol or sign that is rendered in the opposite. One symbol symbolizes positive or yes, while the other symbolizes negative or no.

³⁵ Sótundé, F. I. *Yorùbá Proverbs and Philosophy*. Abẹ̀okúta: Damsan Nig. Ltd, 2009, p. 178

³⁶ Geoffery, N. and Short, M. *Style in Fiction: Linguistic Introduction to English Fiction Prose*. New York: Longman, 1981, p. 124

helps to simplify phenomena in order to make it easier to communicate experience. Codes are realized in different forms: behavioral code, verbal code, gnostic code, poetic code, mythic code, linguistic code, and so on. However, codes of *Ifá* are related with *Àrò* codes, the basis on which the connections are established.

Signs are reduced to denotative signified or connotative signified forms. That is, meaning is reduced to both denotation and connotation. By denotation, is means the primary referent or literal meaning or general sense of a word or sentence. Connotation on the other hand, refers to the socio-cultural or personal association to the sign. The meaning is open to different interpretations in this case. Denotation belongs to the "first-order" signification system, while connotation belongs to the "second-order."³⁷

Discussion: *Ifá* Codes Links to *Àrò* Totemistic (*orilẹ̀*), Panegyrics (*oriki*) Historicity and Musico-poetic Codes of *Ifá* Links to *Àrò*

To the Africans in general and Yorùbá in particular, there are totemic objects and symbols which may be living or non-living things represented to be the ancestral image and symbol. "Totems are closely-tied up with relationship."³⁸ Totem is a symbol that connects the present with the past. A loss of totemic symbol leads to a lost of an identity.

Oriki/orilẹ̀ is used among the Yorùbá people establish identity and relationship. "It is through their shared *oriki orilẹ̀* that these scattered groups recognize a relationship."³⁹ *Oriki orilẹ̀* is used as "trace element." The minor *odù-ifá* (*àmúlù-odù*), *Ògúnndá-Òsẹ̀*,⁴⁰

³⁷ Olóruntóba-Ojù, T. *Language and Style in Nigerian Drama and Theatre*. Ìbàdàn: Ben-EL Books, 1998, p. 72

³⁸ Káyòdé, J. *Understanding Afrian Traditional Religion*. Ilé-Ifẹ̀: University Press, 1984, p. 11

³⁹ Barber, K. *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow*. Edinburgh: University Press, 1991, p. 135

⁴⁰ This is one of the *Ifá* divination symbols.

contained in Akintólá enjoins that, it is virtuous to respect traditions, for doing so commands sanity.⁴¹ The past is connected with the present by *oriki*. *Oriki* is based on history, and *orilẹ̀* is concerned with "origin, custom, religion and taboos."⁴²

Musico-poetic code is concurrently used along with historicity code in some *Ifá* and *Àrò* contexts; since it is rendered as the story progresses. The code is realized as a means to an end of stories. The Yorùbá musico-poetic tradition is categorized into two: traditional and neo-traditional. The pre-colonial forms are regarded as traditional while, the ones introduced during and after the colonial periods but follows the traditional patterns are regarded as neo-traditional.⁴³ The traditional pattern is however associated with *Ifá* and folktales. Poetic code is realized in poems or verses form in the performances of *Ifá* and *Àrò*.

In Yorùbá tradition, the totemic symbol for the *Òpómúléro* clan is *òpó* (pillar/post). This is expressed in poetic code, *odù-ifá* *Òsé Méjì* verse five.

...*A díá fún Òpó*
ti nṣawo ròde Ìbàdàn.
Òpó, awo wọn lóde Ìbàdàn.
Ló díá fún wọn lóde Ìbàdàn,
Mèsì Ọ̀gò
Níjọ́ tí nwọn ńfomi ojúú sògbéré ọmọ
Níjọ́ tí nwọn ńsunkún àiríbí,
Tí nwọn ńgbààwẹ̀ àirí pòn⁴⁴

⁴¹ Akintólá A. *Yorùbá Ethics and Metaphysics*. Ògbómòşò: YALOYN Publishing Ventures Limited, 1999, p. 194

⁴² Barber, K. *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow*. Edinburgh: University Press, 1991, p. 25

⁴³ Ogúndèjì, P. "A semiotic study of Dúró Ládiípò's Mythoi-historical plays." Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ìbàdàn, Ìbàdàn, Nigeria, 1988.

⁴⁴ Abimbólá, W. *Ìjìnlẹ̀ ohun ẹnu Ifá. Apá kii ní. Ọyọ*: Aims Press and Publishers, 1968, p. 144

Cast divination for *Òpó* (pillar)
 when the divination for the Ìbàdàn was ongoing,
Òpó ti cult of Ìbàdàn,
 which cast divination for them in Ìbàdàn,
Mèsì ọ̀gò
 when their faces were full of tears, crying for
 children to born,

when they were crying because of barrenness,
 when they were fasting for inability to back children...

Òpó (pillar/post) is a totemic symbol of a clan in Ìbàdàn. *Oriki* (panegyrics) that serves as history of the event is expressed with the last three line of the above *ese-ifá*. There are interwoven codes of totem, panegyrics and historicity in the above *Ifá* corpus. The totemic image of *Òpó* is equally at play in *Àrò*, rendered in musico-poetic code.

...*ọmọ ọ̀pó kọ̀ọ̀bítí kọ̀ọ̀bítí, oníwànú gbéra ńlẹ̀ o dide.*
ọmọ ọ̀pó kọ̀ọ̀bítí kọ̀ọ̀bítí
Òpó *tí ò gbọ̀ràn, ẹ̀ jẹ́ á fẹ̀nu ẹ̀ gbún gi*
Igi tí ò gbọ̀ràn, ẹ̀ jẹ́ á mú kan ná
Iná tí ò gbọ̀ràn, ẹ̀ jẹ́ á bomi pa á
Omi tí ò gbọ̀ràn, ẹ̀ jẹ́ á mu pọtí
Ọ̀tí tí ò gbọ̀ràn, ẹ̀ jẹ́ ká mú un fún ọmọ líle mu
Ọmọ tí ò gbọ̀ràn, ẹ̀ jẹ́ ká kọ̀jú Mọ̀rílẹ̀wá sí ogun
Taa n'yoó mu 'tí ọ̀hún ọmọ iyá mi?
Àfọ̀njá *tí yóó mu 'tí ọ̀hún ń bẹ́ ń'lé Ìlọ̀rin*
...Ogun l'Àfọ̀njá lẹ́ tí ò padà mọ́⁴⁵

Son of *òpó kọ̀ọ̀bítí kọ̀ọ̀bítí, oníwànú* rise up and stand

Son of *òpó kọ̀ọ̀bítí kọ̀ọ̀bítí*

Post that proves stubborn, we should ram its tip into a tree

If the tree proves too stubborn, we should set it on fire

⁴⁵ Babalólá, A. *Àwọn Oriki Oriḽẹ̀ Mèiàdínlógbòn*. Ìkẹjà: Longman, 2000, p. 24

If the fire proves too stubborn, we should put it out with water

If the water proves too stubborn, we should brew it into wine

If the wine proves too stubborn, we should serve it to the recalcitrant child

If the recalcitrant child proves too stubborn, we send

Mòrìléwá to the war fronts

Who is to drink the wine my brothers?

Àfònjá that will drink the wine is in Ilorin.

Àfònjá went to fight war without coming back again.

The *oríkì/orílẹ̀ Àfònjá* is coded in the above *Àrò*. This is traditionally expressed as “Àfònjá Òpó ọmọ Mòrìléwá.” Meaning that, Àfònjá Òpó the son of Mòrìléwá. It is by this *Ifá-Àrò* one is able to relate the history of Àfònjá with Òpó, as a totem for his clan. Àfònjá, who was power drunk, was to dethrone the then *Aláàfin* of Òyó, the kingdom he was the Commander-in-Chief. He connives with some of his subjects to achieve his personal ambition. This is expressed in historicity code. Àtandá⁴⁶ reports about Àfònjá that:

The leader of these over-ambitious persons whose activities led to the destruction of the Old Òyó Empire was Àfònjá of Ilorin. Towards the end of the eighteen century, Àfònjá was appointed the *Arẹ̀ Ọ̀nà Kakanfò*, that is the Field Marshall of Òyó army, by Aláàfin Aólẹ̀, who succeeded Aláàfin Abíódún in 1789. Instead of using his position to defend the empire from external aggression as the constitution demanded, Àfònjá made plans to carve an empire of his own out of the Old Òyó Empire. The first step he took towards achieving his

⁴⁶ Àtandá, J. *Yorùbá history*. Ìbàdàn: University Press, 1980, p. 31.

objective was to rebel against the authority of the Aláàfin ... Àfònjá got his opportunity of rebel openly when he was ordered by the Aláàfin to lead an expedition against Ìwéré-Ilẹ̀, a town situated south-west of Old Òyó...

Due to Àfònjá's stubbornness, Aólẹ̀ (the Aláàfin), ordered him to fight Ìwéré-Ilẹ̀ in war, which he knew might be difficult for him; as no kingdom has ever conquered Ìwéré-Ilẹ̀ in war. This was a calculated attempt to get rid of Àfònjá, so that the tempo of the antagonistic elements will reduce in Òyó Empire. Àfònjá and his cohort rebelled against Aláàfin and therefore, fought back the Òyó kingdom. Aólẹ̀, discovered the conspiracy against him, decided to commit suicide in 1796. Yet, after Aólẹ̀' death, Àfònjá declined to recognize the control of authority from Maku that succeeded Aólẹ̀. Àfònjá sought the aid of Sheikh al-Salih (Alimi). Alimi took the advantage of the political crises in the Yorùbáland with the invitation by Àfònjá to fight the Òyó Empire, but the Jihad fought Àfònjá and “within a short time, Àfònjá was murdered, and the Jihadist first under Alimi and later under his son Abd Salaam seize power in Ilorin”⁴⁷ According to Johnson (), “but Àfònjá perceived his error when it was too late, his very egotism was the cause of his fall.”⁴⁸ In a related context, *Òpómúléro* with symbol of *Òpó* (post/pillar) is an important clan in the Old Òyó kingdom. According to Ládélé, T., Mustapha, O., Awórindé, I., Oyèrindé, O., and Ọládàpọ̀, O. “Bákan náà èwẹ̀ ní idílẹ̀ pàtàkì kan, Òpómúléro ní Òyó àti agbègbè rẹ̀, fi Òpó-ọ̀fin, tí a fi ń hun aṣọ ẹ̀ àmì orílẹ̀ wọ̀n nítorí iṣẹ̀ aṣọ híhun ní olú iṣẹ̀ wọ̀n.”⁴⁹ (Likewise, we have an important family, *Òpómúléro* in Òyó and its environment, that adopted post associated with cloth

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Johnson, S. *The History of the Yorùbás*. Lagos: CCS Bookshops, 1921, p. 234.

⁴⁹ Ládélé, T., Mustapha, Oyebamiji., Awórindé, I. Oyèrindé, Oyedemi. and Ọládàpọ̀. Ọlatunbọsun, *Àkọjọpọ̀ Ìwádìí Àṣà Yorùbá*. Ìbàdàn: Macmillan Nig. Limited, 1986, p. 181

weaving as their totem, because their major work is cloth weaving). Here, the historical account of Àfọnjá's with Òyọ and his links with Òpó (post) as totem is further established. It is in *Orilẹ̀ Òpómúléro* that we have *Òpó gbàjá* (post is wrapped with *òjá*: a tying cloth). This story is perceived to have informed the association of the Ìlọrin with *aso òfi* (*òfi* cloth) till date. Through the interplay of totemistic, panegyrics and the historicity codes employed by this *Àrọ* genre we are able to see the impact, input and the influence of these Yorùbá oral values; the source of which is established in *Ifá*.

Gnomic and Hermeneutics Codes of *Ifá* Links to *Àrọ*

The whole of *Ifá* is philosophical and a vehicle of Yorùbá philosophy. "Yorùbá philosophy and values are preserved and disseminated through *Ifá* medium."⁵⁰ Most of the Yorùbá philosophies are rendered in form of proverbs. This is why Sótúndé asserts that "Yorùbá proverbialism is a complete representation of the Yorùbá philosophy of life."⁵¹ These philosophical statements are facts and representation of truth cult of the ancestors.

The hermetic aspect of philosophy is useful in the present understanding of the Yorùbá philosophy under examination. Crofton noted, "the belief that there is a secret, ancient body of wisdom, surviving in written texts of the 1st-3rd centuries AD that accurately discusses the working of the natural and supernatural worlds and that mastery of these texts provides an enhanced understanding and control of nature."⁵²

⁵⁰ Abimbólá, W. *Awon Oju Odù merèrèdinlógún*. Òyọ: Aims Publishers, 1977a, p.14.

⁵¹ Sótúndé, F. I. *Yorùbá Proverbs and Philosophy*. Abẹ̀okúta: Damsan Nig. Ltd, 2009, p. 52

⁵² Crofton, I. (2000), *Instant Reference Philosophy*. Illinois: Helicon Publishing Limited, pp. 89 & 90

Àrọ is seen to be metaphorically coded in hermeneutics and gnomic. For example, Babalọlá relates the *Àrọ* below as:

Ònwànú ọmọ "B'ònpa ò pa, kí l'òngbìn ó gbìn?"

Ìwànú ọmọ "B'òngbìn ò gbìn"

Abimbésú

Emi l'ònhù ó hù?

Abimbésú, 'mọ "B'òhù ó hù.

Ònwànú emi l'òndàgbà ó dàgbà?

Abimbésú, 'mọ "B'òndàgbà ò dàgbà"

Ìwànú, ọmọ "kí l'ò̀nso ó so?"

Abimbésú, mọ "B'ò̀nso ò so

Emi l'ò̀ngbó ó ò gbó?

Ìwànú, ọmọ "B'ò̀ngbó ò gbó.

Emi l'ò̀nlà ó là?

Abimbésú, 'mọ "B'ò̀nlà ò là

Emi l'ò̀nyọ ó yọ

Abimbésú, 'mọ "B'ò̀nyọ ò yọ,

Emi l'ò̀nyẹ ó yẹ?

Ìwànú, ọmọ "B'ò̀nyẹ ò yẹ.

Emi l'ò̀ngbò ó gbò?

Ònwànú, ọmọ "B'ò̀ngbò ò gbò

Emi l'ò̀ran ó ran?

Ìwànú, ọmọ "B'ò̀ran ò ran

Emi l'ò̀tà ó tà?

Ìwànú, ọmọ "B'ò̀tà ò tà

Emi l'ò̀hun ó hun?

Ìwànú, ọmọ "B'ò̀hun ò hun

Emi l'ò̀rà ó rà?

Ìwànú, ọmọ "B'ò̀rà ò rà

Kí l'Èsà ọgbín òò rí rọ borí ròde rée jó jó

Ọjó bá tó

Oñwànú son "if the seed is not pilled, what will planter plant?"

Ìwànnú, son of "if the planter does not plant, what do you suppose the germinator will germinate?"

Abimbéṣú.

What will germinator germinate?

Abimbéṣú, if the germinator does not germinate.

Oñwànú what do you suppose the fertilizer will fertilize?

Abimbéṣú, if the fertilizer does not fertilize

Ìwànnú, how will the fruit be on the plant?

Abimbéṣú, if there is no fruit

How can the fruit be riped?

Ìwànnú, if the fruit is unripe

What will be available for the opener to open?

Abimbéṣú, if the the fruit is not open

What will be available for the picker to pick?

Ìwànnú, if the separator separate not

What will be available for the shiver to shive?

Oníwànnú, if the shiver does not shive

What will the sewer sew?

Ìwànnú, if the sewer does not sew

What will be available to sell?

Ìwànnú, without the seller selling

What will the weaver weave?

Ìwànnú, if the weaver does not weave

What will the buyer buy?

Ìwànnú without the buyer's purchase

What will be available for the masquerade to cover himself when dancing outside?

⁵³ Babalolá, A. *Àwọn Oríkì Orílẹ̀ Mètàdínlógbon*. Ìkẹjà: Longman, 2000, p. 2

The entire *Àrò* poem above is rendered in hermeneutic code. This *Àrò* text rests on the Yorùbá belief that "bí kò bá sí ọ̀ṣu kò sí ohun tí a ó pè níyán; bí kò bá sí àgbàdò, kò sí ohun tí a ó pè ní ẹ̀kọ̀ yangan"⁵⁴ (without yam there is nothing to be referred to as pounded yam; without maize, there is nothing to be called pap derived from maize). "Àgbàdò paradà ó dẹ̀kọ̀"⁵⁵ Meaning that, Maize grains changes to pap. This means, the input of one leads to the output of the other. The beginning of "cloth" starts with cultivation or planting of cotton to the consumption stage. This is why the end users of the cloth in the above *Àrò* are masquerades. The *agò/àṣo egúngún*⁵⁶ (cult cloth of masquerade) would have not been possible without following the step by step verses of the above *Àrò*.

Further philosophical statements can be derived from the above *Àrò* as well. For instance, the Yorùbá do say that "ojú ọ̀mọ̀dẹ̀ nì obì í so, ẹ̀nu àgbà n íí tíí gbó."⁵⁷ Meaning that, Cola nut fruit manifests in the presence of a kid, the determination of the ripeness is by the elder. This have the same semantic components as "Abimbéṣú, mọ B'òṅso ọ̀ so, emi l'òṅgbó ọ̀ gbó?"⁵⁸ (Abimbéṣú, if there is no fruits, how can the fruit be ripped?). Likewise, the Yorùbá do say that "òwú kii là kínú ó bólóko."⁵⁹ That is, the opening of cotton leads to the happiness of the farmer. The verb "là" is used in this statement as shown in the *Àrò*. Furthermore, the Yorùbá do say that "òwú tí iyá gbòn lẹ̀mọ́ ó ran."⁶⁰ That is, the child sewed the thread shiver by the mother. The verbs "gbòn" and "ran" are employed by the *Àrò* poem to reflect this Yorùbá philosophy.

⁵⁴ This is one of the Yorùbá proverbs that buttresses on this claim.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ As referenced from the quoted text above

⁵⁹ This is one of the Yorùbá proverbs that buttresses on this claim.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Different forms of Yorùbá proverbs are connected (chained) together in this *Àrò*. In fact, the essence and beauty of this genre rests on the interconnections between one proverb and the other.

Some *Àrò* poems are rendered in gnomic code as well. This occurs in form of the Yorùbá aphorism as rendered below:

Òpómúléró Moja Àlekàn

Òpó ò gbòràn

Baba wa ní á kojú è síná

Iná ò gbòràn

Baba wa ní á kojú è sómi

Omi ò gbòràn

*Baba wa ní á kojú è sẹ́ẹ̀rù gangan...*⁶¹

Òpómúléró Moja Àlekàn

Post that is stubborn

Our fathers say we should set it on fire

The stubborn fire

Our fathers say we should quench it with water

Stubborn water

Our fathers say set it to the severe drought...

In this *Àrò* poem, there is a traditional set standard as a solution to a problem that goes out of hand. This is metaphorically rendered in the *Àrò* as “ìgì tí ò gbòràn.”⁶² (a stubborn wood), “íná tí ò gbòràn.”⁶³ (stubborn fire) and “omi tí ò gbòràn”⁶⁴ (Stubborn water) and so on.

There are hierarchical Yorùbá traditional solutions to the societal problems. This as well shows that there are checks to dominating and oppressive forces in the Yorùbá tradition. No one is above the traditional standard and authority. Any individual that proves stubborn is checked by the norms in Yorùbá tradition. According to Aláké, a norm “is a specific guide to action which

⁶¹ Babalolá, A. *Àwọn Oriṣe Mètadinlógbon*. Ìkeja: Longman, 2000, p. 27

⁶² As quoted in the text above

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Ibid

defines the acceptable and appropriate behavior in particular situation.”⁶⁵ These are personified by symbols and objects by the above *Àrò* poem. Yorùbá societal solution is evinced in the above *Àrò* text by “àwọn baba wa ní...”⁶⁶ (Our fathers do say that...). This is called “òrò àgbà”⁶⁷ (words of the elders) in Yorùbá tradition. To the Yorùbá people, “òrò àgbà bí ò sẹ́ lówùrò á sẹ́ lójó alé.”⁶⁸ Meaning that, elders words must sooner or later come to pass. This is sometimes rendered as: “àwọn àgbà ní...”⁶⁹ (The elders say...), “àwọn Yorùbá ní...”⁷⁰ (The Yorùbá do say that...) or “Àwọn Yorùbá máa ń pòwè pé...”⁷¹ (According to the Yorùbá proverb that...). This is “generational and communal.”⁷² It is handed down from one generation to another. In other words, these sets of words are indisputable in nature. The authority of such words cannot be challenged.

Poetic, *Odù* and Linguistic Codes of *Ifá* Links to *Àrò*

Both *Ifá* and *Àrò* share a common medium of performance. In other words, large portion of the contents of *Ifá* and *Àrò* are rendered in poetic code. All the *esẹ-ifá* is coded in *odù-ifá*. The relationship, recognition and association of *Àrò* by *Ifá* can be accounted for. For instance, *Ifá* have some relationships with *Àrò* as coded in *Odù Òtúúrùpòn Òtúá*⁷³ that:

⁶⁵ Aláké, A. *Introductory text on Sociology*. Lagos: Adlakand Associates Human Resources and Management Consultants, 2004, p. 23

⁶⁶ One of the cultural statements associated with proverb rendition in Yorùbá society.

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ One of the Yorùbá proverbs that buttresses the claim of fact and truth.

⁶⁹ One of the cultural statements associated with proverb rendition in Yorùbá society.

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Since proverbs are the cultural inheritance of the Yorùbá people, it is handed down from a generation to another.

⁷³ One of the *Ifá* divination symbols

Bóó bàá tú bùkẹ́
 Kó o tú bùkẹ́
 Bóó nalẹ gbàjà
 Kó o nalẹ gbàjà
 O ò le è tú bùkẹ́
 Kó o nalẹ gbàjà
 Kó o bẹ̀jì Ogbè ọ́ọkọ jẹ
 A díá fún ẹni ara ò rò
 Tí n da Ikin lógànjó
 Ebo n wón ní ó ẹ
 Ara fẹ́ẹ́ rọ mí ná o
 Àrọ
 Àrọ abọmọ yééye
 Àrọ
 Ara ó rò wá nígbàyìi o
 Àrọ
 Àrọ abọmọ yééye
 Àrọ⁷⁴

If you want to spread
 Spread
 If you want to lay flat
 Lay flat
 You can't spread
 And lay flat
 And relate with Èjì-Ogbè by name
 Cast divination for someone that is uncomfortable
 That performs divination in the mid-night
 He was instructed to perform sacrifice
 I am about to be comfortable
 Àrọ

⁷⁴ Sàlámi, A. *Ifá: A Complete Divination*. Lagos: NIDD Publishers, 2002, p. 662

Àrọ, the one with many children
 Àrọ
 We will now be comfortable
 Àrọ
 Àrọ, the one with many children
 Àrọ.

This *Odu-Ifá* is an account *Ifá* divination performance that shows the involvement of impact, input and the influence of *Àrọ*; especially in a critical situation for the supplicant. “Tú bùkẹ́”⁷⁵ is used to describe the situation of *Ikin* (the major *Ifá* divination objects) on the surface of *Ifá* divination tray or board. Likewise, if *Ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀* is used for divination, the situation is described as “nà gbàjà.”⁷⁶ One of the methods must be employed at a time of divination. This is why the *Odu* says “O ò le è tú bùkẹ́, kó o tún nà gbàjà.”⁷⁷ The position of *Ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀* will either be opened or closed. In other words, *Èjì-Ogbè* symbol manifests, when all the nuts are opened.⁷⁸ This is the message of this *Odu* that there is no any other name than *Èjì-Ogbè* when this symbol surfaces.

By the interlink power of *Ifá-Àrọ*, the critical situation of the supplicant in the *Odu* was brought under control, and everything was normalized back. In another context, the manifestation of the power to turn the situation of things around that reflect in *Àrọ* poems is accounted for that,

We appreciate the fact that what cannot be achieved realistically may be done in fantasy in folktales, but the ways and manners in which

⁷⁵ The descriptive form of *Ifá* divination objects, by the use of *ikin- Ifá* sacred palm-nut for divination.

⁷⁶ The descriptive form of *Ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀*, another *Ifá* divination object, when it is cast on the floor

⁷⁷ This is an expression that both of the divination objects cannot be used at once. One will have to be used after the other.

⁷⁸ Adeoye, C. *Igbàgbọ àti ẹ̀sin Yorùbá*. Ìbàdàn: Evans Brothers Publishers Limited, 1985.

marvellous events occur in *àrò* is worthy of notice. Rather than achieving marvellous events by the aid of fantastic devices and creatures such as fairies, Ogres, and witches, as in the Yorùbá folktale-proper, marvellous events in *àrò* poetry are achieved with the introduction or the assistance of magic, or by that of the “mysterious powers”⁷⁹,

Objects and symbols employed by the *Àrò* poems perform magical events like that of *Ifá*, “sometimes mythical or magical qualities are adduced to symbol”⁸⁰ The *Odù-Ifá Òsè Iworì* also attests to the cult between *Ifá/Òrúnmìlà* and *Àrò*, in poetic code.

Òsè pàá bí ọkọ
Ìwòrì jòwòlò bí rádùn
Àrò re rée
Awo ilé Òrúnmìlà...
Ní'Àrò ré re rée
*Awo rere*⁸¹

Òsè pàá like a hoe
Ìwòrì jòwòlò as pleasant event

This is *Àrò*

The cult of *Òrúnmìlà*'s household
 is ever of the *Àrò*
 cult of goodness.

To the Yorùbá, no god succeeds without the assistance of another. In Yorùbá tradition, *awo* or *imùlẹ* is a cult. The intimacy of *Òrúnmìlà* and *Àrò* is inexplicable. The word *awo* is a local word, in some instances realized as *imùlẹ* (cult). In other words, it is neither burrowed nor alien to Yorùbá culture.

each professional discipline has a prefix of *awo* means a specialized training involving a gradual and a graduated system of acquisition of knowledge whereby one does not proceed to the next step until one has mastered the preceding steps. Only initiated apprentices are allowed into the guild to acquire the specialized knowledge associated with the training. And no one is given liberty to practice the acquired art until the final step is mastered⁸²

The implication of these statements is to demonstrate that *Àrò* was performed by *Òrúnmìlà* as an art. In other words, as there exist, *Ifá*'s cult, so is *Àrò* to the cult. This is why Yorùbá do say that “*awo ní gbáwo nígbẹwọ...*”⁸³ (One god (*awo*) assists the other to succeed), without which the god will be disgraced and put to shame. In the *odù-ifá* above, there exist *awo* “a cult”⁸⁴ between *Ifá* and *Àrò* for the accomplishment of each other's goals and objectives. The *awo* between *Òrúnmìlà/Ifá* is very spiritual, cordial and unlimited. That is, whether *Àrò* that involves the Tortoise or otherwise, such *Àrò* remains related with *Ifá/Òrúnmìlà*. The concept, essence and beliefs about *awo*, which is a cult between *Àrò* and *Ifá/Òrúnmìlà* is inimical to lies, fallacies or untrue with which *Àrò* that involves Tortoise is

⁷⁹ Àjùwòṇ, B. “Àrò: The Yorùbá Folktale Poetic Puzzle” *IFÈ Annals of the Institute of Cultural Studies*, 1986, p. 66.

⁸⁰ Aláké, A. *Introductory text on Sociology*. Lagos: Adlakand Associates Human Resources and Management Consultants, 2004, p. 50.

⁸¹ Sàlámi, A. *Ifá: A Complete Divination*. Lagos: NIDD Publishers, 2002, pp. 826-

⁸² Ilésanmí, T. *Yorùbá Orature and Literature: A Cultural Analysis*. Ilé-Ifè: University Press, 2004, p. 9

⁸³ One of the Yorùbá proverbs that supports the claim that no Yorùbá divinity succeed in isolation.

⁸⁴ The spiritual inseparable affinity

described in Akinyemi (2015).⁸⁵ In other words, as *Ifá* is to the “truth”, so is *Àrò*, in whatever context of the performer and performance.

Another relationship of *Ifá* and *Àrò* is in the linguistic code. *Àrò*, is derived by a prefix of “à” with a verb “rò” (à + rò): *Àrò* (something that descends down by hanging). This morphological and semantic relationship is observed with *Ifá* divination object as well. For instance, *Ifá/Òrúnmìlà* replaced himself after his physical disappearance from the surface of the earth by *Ikin* (sacred palm nuts). He directed his children after a lot of pleadings to return back to the earth. *Òrúnmìlà* instead directed them to spread their palms and he gave them sixteen sacred palm nuts by hanging down the sacred palm nuts. According to *Odù Ifá Ìworì Mèjì* verse two that,

*Òrúnmìlà ní òun ò tún relé mó.
Ó ní kí wọn ó tẹwó.
Ó wáá fún wọn ní ikin méréndínlógún.*⁸⁶

Òrúnmìlà says he will never come back home.
He says they should spread their palms.
He then gave them sixteen *ikin*...

Ikin came to the world by *rírò* (hanging down). This is further expressed in *iyèrè-ifá*⁸⁷ rendered in poetic code.

*Ikin fée rò
Ègbèrì ò mò pé' fá Olúfẹ
Ikin fẹ è rò ooo*⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Akinyemi, A. *Orature and Yorùbá Riddles*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers, 2015

⁸⁶ Abimbólá, W. *Ìjìnlẹ ohun ẹnu Ifá. Apá kii ní. Ọyọ*: Aims Press and Publishers, 1968, p. 41

⁸⁷ This is *Ifá* songs rendered by the *Ifá* devotees

⁸⁸ Àreoyè, A. “Ìyèrè Ifá: ọkan nínú ewì àbáláyé Yorùbá” B. A. project, Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Ilorin. Ilorin, 1980, p. 142

Ikin want to descend down by hanging
A novice does not know that *Ifá Olúfẹ* wants to descend by hanging,
Ikin want to descend down by hanging.

In another related context, all the Yorùbá deities descended on the surface of the earth by hanging down. “*Irinwó ni iyejú àwọn tí wọn rò, Méréndínlógún méréndínlógún ni wọn n rò mò Ọrúnmìlà ní rírò èkẹkẹkan.*”⁸⁹ (Four hundred deities **descended by hanging down**. A batch contains of sixteen deities that hanged on *Òrúnmìlà* to **descend down** to the surfaces of the earth).

*Irúnmọlẹ ni àwọn ẹdà tó jẹ pé wọn máa ńrọ
látí Ọde ọrun wá ni... Wọn máa ńrọ wá ni.
Bí wọn bá rò, wọn á máa jìsẹ Olódumarè. Bẹẹ ni
àwọn Ọjú-Odù méréndínlógún tí wọn wà nínú Ifá lóní
bẹẹ ni wọn ti kọ ńrọ wá*⁹⁰

Deities are beings that do descend/hang down from heaven...
They did descend down. Whenever they descend, they delivered
the messages of *Olódumarè*. Likewise, the sixteen major *Odù-Ifá*
today they had descended from heaven before...

The relationship between the sound and meaning of *Àrò* and *Ifá* is further shown in these contexts as well. The semantic meaning of the verb on *Àrò* (*rò*) is also established in *Ifá* divination system.

⁸⁹ Adeoye, C. *Ìgbàgbọ àti ẹsin Yorùbá*. Ìbàdàn: Evans Brothers Publishers Limited, 1985, p. 29

⁹⁰ Àràbà, A. “Èrò àti Ìgbàgbọ Àwọn Yorùbá nipa Ọlórún” In O. Ọlájùbù (ed.) *Ìwé Àsà Ìbílẹ Yorùbá*, Lagos: Longman Nigeria Limited, 1978, pp. 1-11.

Code of Binaries of *Ifá* Links to *Àrò*

The recurrence of number two is rendered in *Ifá* poetic code is observed in the opinion of Àjàyí that:

...*Ọwọ́ méjì ní kí wọn máa dàá.*

Ọwọ́ méjì ní ẹ gbà rànṣẹ.

Ìkí méjì ní ẹ má a kù.

*Òrọ́ méjì méjì ní ẹ má a sọ*⁹¹

Casting of lots should be performed **twice**

Chanting should be rendered **twice**

Greetings should be done **twice**

Words should be done **two by two**.

Likewise, all the *Odù Ifá* (major and minor) is realized in two forms. Ilésanmí asserts that, culture of different people of the world is accounted for in symbols. "Semiotic interpretation involves exposing binary opposition and describing the consequences of this structure throughout a culture."⁹²

Àrò, like *Ifá*, is associated with binary system. For example, Àjùwọn observes that "objects as well of lines are repeated"⁹³ in *Àrò* poems. "Word is repeated twice only when words are repeated twice."⁹⁴ This word may be *igi*, *iná*, *omi*, *otí* and *omọ lile* as occurred in *Àrò* on Àfọnjá cited above. The binary manifestations of items in *Àrò* also occur with lexical schemes. The whole of *Àrò* poems is based on two predominant sentence forms "the interrogative type and

the declarative type."⁹⁵ Furthermore, the two major word class, noun and verb are mostly repeated twice in *Àrò* poems. "Nouns are found in the poems repeated only with other nouns, while verbs are invariably repeated along with nouns derived from them."⁹⁶ This binary expression is observed in the *Ifá*'s marking symbols as well. For example, the symbols on the left must be repeated on the right side of the divination board⁹⁷

The demonstration of this binary manifestation is realized in this analysis in two forms: "oppositional and co-operative" forms. In the oppositional binary form, the repeated items are on the opposite relation rendered in musico-poetic code. This is rendered by the *Àrò* poem below that:

<i>Jónpẹ jónpẹ o</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i>
<i>Ẹ bá mi p'ajá mi o</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i>
<i>K'ó wá jẹ'mí omọ</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i>
<i>Ẹ bá mi p'ẹkùn mi o</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i>
<i>K'ó wá pa'já mi o</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i>
<i>Ẹ bá mi p'ọdẹ mi o</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i>
<i>Kó wá p'ẹkùn mi o</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i>
<i>Ẹ bá mi p'ejò mi o</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i>
<i>Kó wá p'ọdẹ mi o</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i>
<i>Ẹ bá mi p'ọgọ mi o</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i>
<i>Kó wá p'ejò mi o</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i> ⁹⁸
<i>Jónpẹ jónpẹ</i>	<i>jónpẹ</i>
Summon my dog for me	<i>jónpẹ</i>
To eat up the baby's faeces	<i>jónpẹ</i>
Summon my leopard for me	<i>jónpẹ</i>
To kill my dog	<i>jónpẹ</i>

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 63.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 68

⁹⁷ Abimbólá, W. *Jìnlẹ ohun ẹnu Ifá. Apá kù ní. Ọyọ*: Aims Press and Publishers, 1968.

⁹⁸ Awóbúlúyì, Q. "On the structure of *Àrò*" *African Notes*, 1974, p. 60.

⁹¹ Àjàyí, B. *Ifá divination: Its practice among the Yorùbá of Nigeria*. Ìjẹbú-òde: Shebiótímọ Publications, 2002, p. 83.

⁹² Ilésanmí, T. *Yorùbá Orature and Literature: A Cultural Analysis*. Ilé-Ifẹ: University Press, 2004, p. 24

⁹³ Àjùwọn, B. "Àrò: The Yorùbá Folktale Poetic Puzzle" *IFÈ Annals of the Institute of Cultural Studies*, 1986, p. 56.

⁹⁴ Awóbúlúyì, Q. "On the structure of *Àrò*" *African Notes*, 1974, p. 60.

Summon my **hunter** for me *jónpe*
 To kill my **leopard** *jónpe*
 Summon my **snake** for me *jónpe*
 To kill my **hunter** *jónpe*
 Summon my **club** for me *jónpe*
 To kill my **snake** *jónpe*

In the above *Àrò* poem, the highlighted nouns are in the opposite relation: dog/faeces, leopard/dog, hunter/leopard, snake/hunter and club/snake. The semiotic significations of the repeated items are of opposite natural pairs. This pairs exists in opposition relation. "Such natural pairs are invariably loaded with cultural significance of good and the bad, the permitted and the forbidden."⁹⁹ On the other hand, the co-operative binary exists when the repeated items are in natural agreement as shown below:

Onígbá ún fún mí nígbá
Igbá n mo f'élékọ...
Eníṣu n fún mí níṣu
Iṣu mo fóníyán
Ìgúnyán n fún mí níyán
*Iyán n mo fólóbẹ*¹⁰⁰

The calabash dealer gave me a **calabash**
 The calabash I gave to an **ẹkọ** maker...
 The yam dealer gave me a piece of **yam**
 The piece of yam I gave to a **pounded-yam** seller.
 The pounded-yam seller gave me some **pounded yam**
 The pounded yam I gave to a **stew** maker.

The highlighted repeated nouns are in complementary relation: *ẹkọ/igbá*¹⁰¹ (pap/calabash), *iṣu/iyán*¹⁰² (yam/pounded-yam)

⁹⁹ Chandler, C. "Semiotics for Beginners." <<http://www.arber.ac.UK/media/documents/S4B/semioa.html>>, 2010, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Awóbùlúyì, O. "On the structure of *Àrò*" *African Notes*, 1974, p. 63.

and *iyán/óbẹ*¹⁰³ (pounded-yam/stew). This informs why the Yorùbá do say that *ẹkọ onígbá*¹⁰⁴ (pap from calabash). In the Yorùbá hawking advertisement statement associated with pounded yam and stew: *ẹ wójú óbẹ ẹ múyán o*¹⁰⁵ (look at the surface of the stew and eat pounded yam). In this case, the Yorùbá semiotic values of complementary binary distribution as contained in *Ilésanmí*.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

Àrò, as a Yorùbá genre has been established to relate with *Ifá*. The paper established some level of semiotic relationships in codes between *Ifá* and *Àrò* poems. The work specifically accounts for *Ifá* and *Àrò* links in totemistic, panegyrics, historicity, musico-poetic, gnomic and hermeneutic, linguistic and *Odù* and binary codes of these Yorùbá genres. This does not however restrict the inter-code relationship of *Àrò* to the ones examined in this work. For example, *Ifá* and *Àrò* codes are as well related in other codes which I am unable to accommodate in this single paper.

It is established by this work that *Ifá*'s elements, especially in codes, are basic or central to *Àrò* codes. All the *Àrò* in the context of *Ifá* (with or without the Tortoise) have a flavor of realism because of its established links with *Ifá* that is always associated with the truth. *Ifá*, which has been divided into scientific and religious aspects of Yorùbá life cannot be said to be unreal, even, in *Àrò* with Tortoise.

¹⁰¹ This is an associations of the two objects.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ This differentiates the pap with calabash from other forms of pap

¹⁰⁵ This is one of ways the Yorùbá hawks pounded yam

¹⁰⁶ Ilésanmí, T. *Yorùbá Orature and Literature: A Cultural Analysis*. Ilé-Ifè: University Press, 2004.

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