Volume 19 Issue 3
Originally issued as A2



Global Journal of human-social science: A
Arts & Humanities - Psychology
Volume 19 Issue 2 Version 1.0 Year 2019
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

"Ebo Tan Ebo Ku? Yoruba Indigenous Religion's Viewpoint on the Death of Jesus Christ as the Final Sacrifice"

By S. Kayode Olaleye
University of Ibadan

Abstract- Ẹbọ is an offering made to the Deity, the divinities and other agents considered by the Yorùbá to be responsible for the imbalances in the life of humanity, in order to correct the inevitable disequilibrium or to show appreciation. The offering of ẹbọ could be on daily basis for those who are priests and priestesses. Personal or communal exigencies determine the frequency of sacrifice, except offerings for thanksgiving for success and good health which are regular. However, in Christian religion, it is ageneral belief that Jesus Christ came to the world to die for the salvation of humanity. According to Christians, Christ offered himself as the final sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, there is no reason for further offering of ẹbọof any form. If this is the case, the questions one needs to ask are; if Jesus truly came for the salvation of man from sin and the sacrifice has been made once and for all, why do we still have sicknesses of all kinds in the world today? Can we say his own manner of salvation does not cover sickness, pestilence and other social vices like murder and stealing? Why is it that some Christians still carry on in the tradition of offering ẹbọ till today? Why is it that god has not struck the adherents of African Indigenous Religion who still offer sacrifices in Yorùbáland? These are some of the questions that this paper tried to answer. Data were collected through oral interview and was subjected to descriptive analysis.

Keywords: *ebọ? the yorùbá, ifá, jẹsus, christian.*

GJHSS-A Classification: *FOR Code: 220499*



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2019. S. Kayode Olaleye. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

"Ebo Tan Ebo Ku? Yoruba Indigenous Religion's Viewpoint on the Death of Jesus Christ as the Final Sacrifice"

S. Kayode Olaleye

Abstract- Ẹbọ is an offering made to the Deity, the divinities and other agents considered by the Yorùbá to be responsible for the imbalances in the life of humanity, in order to correct the inevitable disequilibrium or to show appreciation. The offering of ẹbọ could be on daily basis for those who are priests and priestesses. Personal or communal exigencies determine the frequency of sacrifice, except offerings for thanksgiving for success and good health which are regular. However, in Christian r3eligion, it is ageneral belief that Jesus Christ came to the world to die for the salvation of humanity. According to Christians, Christ offered himself as the final sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, there is no reason for further offering of ẹbọ of any form. If this is the case, the questions one needs to ask are; if Jesus truly came for the salvation of man from sin and the sacrifice has been made once and for all, why do we still have sicknesses of all kinds in the world today? Can we say his own manner of salvation does not cover sickness, pestilence and other social vices like murder and stealing? Why is it that some Christians still carry on in the tradition of offering ẹbọ till today? Why is it that god has not struck the adherents of African Indigenous Religion who still offer sacrifices in Yorùbá land? These are some of the questions that this paper tried to answer. Data were collected through oral interview and was subjected to descriptive analysis.

Keywords: ebọ? the yoruba, ifa, jẹsus, christian.

I. Introduction

"This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). This was the message that came down from above as Jesus was baptized by his forerunner, John the Baptist, in the river Jordan, affirming his divine status as the begotten son of god. John 3:16, perhaps the most popular verse in the Bible in present times, expressly states "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." Hence Jesus Christ, the beloved begotten son of god, in whom the father is well pleased, was sent by the father himself, as a sacrificial lamb, who, though he led a sinless life, was, by divine arrangement led to be crucified in order to activate god's ultimate salvation plan for mankind and to reconcile His most precious creation to Himself. This divine orchestration thus marks the 'final sacrifice to Christians, through which all men are saved and must no further engage in any other act of sacrifice.

On the other hand, ẹbọ, (a term which in English means 'sacrifice'), connotes a whole lot more to the Yorùbá. According to Olaleye[1], ẹbọ in African belief system particularly in Yorùbáland is an essential part of their daily life, referring to an offering made not only to the Deity (as emphasized in Christian traditions), but to divinities and other agents (like Ajogun, Àjẹ́, Emèrè, Àbíkú, Ọ̀ṣọ́ etc.) who are responsible for the imbalances in the life of human beings, so as to correct such imbalances whose occurrences are quite inevitable. Olaleye further avers that, "these imbalances could be in the area of social, economic, political, health, or religious life of man." His expression on the importance of ẹbọ – sacrifice in the life of the Yorùbá goes to the extent that even the food eaten on daily basis to maintain healthy life and the casual and regular prayers offered to the deity, ancestors, and other divine beings, are all manifestations of ẹbọ – in man's daily life. Hence, there is ẹbọ ọpẹ́ – sacrifice of thanksgiving and ẹbọ ìyìnlógo – sacrifice of praise among others. The physical ẹbọ which are seen to be placed at various prescribed places, or however required, and whatever material which individuals use in offering ẹbọ, are nothing but prayer supplements. Also, worthy of note is Beyioku's view as related by Olaleye, which opines that ẹbọ means debt that must be paid to get relieve from our ailments.

However, from the above indications, we may infer that the concept of ẹbọ in both religious backgrounds connote two divergent views. An understanding of the purpose of 'ẹbọ' in both faith systems perhaps reveals why the Yorùbá find it difficult to accept hook, line and sinker, the Christian 'salvation scheme' of Christ as the ultimate sacrifice. In carrying out the research, 30 people comprising fifteen Christians and fifteen African traditional religion worshippers were interviewed so as to know their opinion about the subject matter. Data were also collected through

Author: Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. e-mail: kayodeleye2005@yahoo.com

[1] Sam Kayode Olaleye, Ebo as a Healing Technique in Ifa Divination System, Saarbrucken: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing 2013, 78.

© 2019 Global Journals

relevant books, journals and internet materials and were subjected to descriptive analysis.

Yorùbá Religion's Concept of Salvation in Comparison with Western Christianity.

Another approach to this theme, which is worthy of note, is the juxtaposition of African religion's concept of salvation vis-à-vis Christianity's. Salvation in African belief system particularly from the perspective of the Yorùbá is more of a physical and spiritual as against the spiritual perception of it in Christianity. An understanding of the concept of salvation in Christianity rests on the coming of Jesus Christ as the messiah of the world, who, through his sacrificial death, bore the sin of mankind and saved them from the yoke of the original sin committed by the progenitors of the human race (Adam and Eve), as a result of which all men are born into sin. On the other hand, salvation in African traditional religion, according to Mbiti[2], is related to the physical welfare of life. Salvation is concerned basically with physical and immediate wellbeing in terms of healing from diseases and infirmities, success in business endeavors, vocations, protection from harm, danger and death, deliverance from the attacks from supernatural forces (witches, sorcerers, ajogun etc.) and all forms of unpalatable situations hindering the total wellbeing of the individual and community.

Hence while the Christian salvation is toward the end of acquiring freedom from the yoke of the original sin and making heaven at the end of time, African traditional religion salvation is toward experiencing immediate freedom and peace in everyday life. Put in other words, while salvation in Christianity relates an abstract experience with the consciousness of making heaven and enjoying a blissful and eternal afterlife, salvation in indigenous religious belief of Africa is a constant experience of physical deliverance and victory from all sorts of hindrances, towards enjoying a blissful and fulfilled life. This however does not mean that there is no notion of heaven and afterlife in indigenous belief system. Noteworthy is that the Yorùbá from the perspective at which we are looking at the subject matter believe that ayé la ó kọ́kọ́ ṣe kí a tó ṣe ọ̀run, meaning, it is on earth we first live before we live in heaven. It is after we have lived on earth that we can go to heaven. OlaniyiOsinbola[3] submits that one of the requirements of making the good heaven-ọ̀run rere and becoming an ancestor is to have lived a good life, die at old age, and have good children that would give the person a befitting burial. Such criteria as long life, leaving good children behind, leading a prosperous life, peaceful death, leaving good legacies and being of amiable character are all requirements of making the good heaven and becoming an ancestor. Thus salvation in indigenous religious belief in general requires constant victory against all negative forces that may hinder man from achieving all untimely death, poverty, disappointments, etc., either manipulated or natural, must hence be consciously resisted in order to live a life worthy of becoming an ancestor. Since it has been earlier mentioned that ẹbọ is an essential agent to the attainment of equilibrium in life and warding off the challenges directed at man by various negative forces, the constant offering of ẹbọ is, therefore, the Yorùbá's tool for securing a place in the good heaven through the continuous ìgbàlà – salvation it brings to him all through life's challenges, eventually enabling him live the worthy life required to become an ancestor. This is evident in what Madam Hilari Adesina said:[4]

It is customary, however, that whenever a dead person appeared there, he or she would hold a goat in hand. This is in the area where Africans live. She said further, while the deceased is being welcomed some people will get hold of the rope used in tying the animal and drag it to a place which I don't know anything about. Unfortunately, whoever arrived without the goats would be neglected, scorned and be given a cold reception, I was later told that the goats which the deceased brought with them were those killed for them by their relatives or families shortly after their death.

Although no doubt, other things like ìwà – character, conduct and behavior may count in the great beyond but ẹbọ remain an important tool to assist those virtues. Therefore, ẹbọ is a continuous process in the indigenous belief system, through the constant offering of ẹbọ, towards attaining the final 'salvation' of making heaven. This is contrary to the Christian view on salvation that postulated the death of Christ as the final sacrifice. One may then ask; if truly Jesus Christ is the final sacrifice for the remission of sin, why is the world so full of sickness, epidemic, pestilence and social vices, such as stealing and murder, probably more than when Christ was on earth? Why the need for hospitals, drugs, huge budget on health, foreign trips for medical treatment and fear that one might die from sickness? Why is it that as the world advances in science and technology, so the problem of humanity advances and increases? Why do we have more wars and sophisticated weapons of mass destruction than before? If Christ has truly removed the sins as emphasized, why is the world at large so troubled and unpredictable today? These are some of the questions asked by Odùgoke[5], an informant. FadareFamoriyo[6] is

[2] John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion, Ibadan:* Heinemann Publishers Ltd, 1975, 66.

[3] OlaniyiOsinbola, 50 years, Traditionalist, Oral Interview, Lagos: December 2015.

[4] Mike Omoleye, Mystery World Under the Sea, Ibadan: Omoleye Publishing Company, 1979, 57.

[5] AdefabiOdugoke, 56 Years, Traditionalist, Oral Interview, Ifadiwura Temple, Isalu, Iseyin Oyo State, June 2016

[6] FadareFamoriyo, Ifa Priest, Oral Interview, Ifadiwura Temple, Isalu, Iseyin, Oyo State, June 2016

© 2019 Global Journals

also of the view that there are occasions when a sick person would be advised in orthodox hospitals to go and "fi ẹsẹ̀ ilé tọ̀ ọ́" – to go and seek alternative means for the healing of the patient, or when one faces social, economic, political or religious problems that may require offering one form of ẹbọ or the other, why do Christians who believe that Christ came to the world for their sins normally abandon this faith to patronize the traditionalists in times of troubles like these? This is an indication that Africans in general will rather show love than religion when trouble comes. This is not an indication that their religion is completely abandoned. One may also be forced to ask why some Christian churches still offer ẹbọ today.

Jesus Christ and his mission in the world

At this level, we may not concern ourselves with the birth of Jesus Christ, his early development and his ministry, rather, our attention shall be on why he came from heaven to the earth, what he came to the world to do and where he carried out his mission. As earlier said, it is a general belief of Christians that Jesus Christ is the messiah of the world, who through his sacrificial death, bore the sin of humankind and saved them from the yoke and unborn inherited sin as emphasized by Isaac Akinola[7]. However, this is debatable because, in the first instance, the sin that the Bible claimed Adam and Eve committed was a sort of a bait presented to them by the God of the Christians. It was a bait in the sense that, if God is omniscient (all knowing), he must have known that they would do something of that nature to arouse His anger. As a result, He would not have planted the seed in the first instance. He was the owner of the garden and He was the one who put them there. Therefore, He is capable of blindfolding them spiritually so as not to see the fruit that made them sin against Him let alone eat the forbidden thing. However, theologians[8] are of the opinion that the moral evil comes as a result of disobedience to the will of God an argument supported by open-theism that God lacked a full knowledge of the future because human beings have free will.[9]

According to Rotimi Oti, the work of salvation that Christ came to do is to acquire freedom from sin and to secure heaven for whoever believed in him at the end of his or her life. As a matter of fact, it has been argued by Chris and Robert[10] that there is nowhere in the Old Testament where prophecy of the coming of a world savior was made. According to them, though the Jews expected a leader to emerge, who would be an earthly king from the house of David.[11] However, Jesus was not the messiah of the line of David because he did not succeed in becoming the undisputed king of Israel who would carry arms against the enemies of the Jews then. The Jews were not expecting a God or a world savior. Rather, they were expecting a political leader like David. Besides, his claim to be 'son of God' was an ancient style in Middle Eastern cultures as at that time. Therefore, one must be from man-god's parentage before one can successfully claim the title. According to Christian belief, Joseph, the husband of Mary was not the father of Jesus. Rather, he was the offspring of a mysterious event. Therefore, if he was the son of God, he could not be the royal messiah from the line of David. This is responsible for the reason why Jesus was not accepted in the land of the Jews till today as a savior who came to carry their sins away like Oluorogbo who Adelegan[12] called Ẹ̀là in his work. Thus, they continue to offer their different kinds of ẹbọ as found in their traditional religion of Judaism from where Christianity even emanated till today.

Furthermore, information in Odù Ìrẹtẹ̀ Méjì[13] talked about Jéwésùn who is being referred to as first child of Olódùmarè – the Supreme God. A lot of people interpreted Jewesun to mean Jesu in Yorùbá if letters 'we' at the middle and 'n' at the back are removed from the name and mean Jesus of Hebrew. Jewesun literally means 'let the leaf sleep'. However, he was not portrayed by Ifá as the savior of the world. Rather, Ifá in the Odù has this to say about him.

[7] Isaac Akinola, 43 Years, Oral Interview, Christ Apostolic Ch=urch, OkeAgbara, Ashi District, Ibadan.

[8] G. A. Ositelu, Religion, God and Evil Issues in Philosophy and Religion, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2010, 52.

[9] A.O. Adebo & H.A Labeodan, Open-Theism, the Theological Problem of Evil and the nature of God in Christianity: A Critical Engagement, Ife Journal of Religions, vol. 8 (2012): 55.

[10] Knight and Lomas, 63.

[11] AdelaganAdegbola, Ile-Ife: The Source of Yoruba Civilisation, Lagos: Oduduwa International Communications, 2009, 113.

[12] AdelaganAdegbola, Ile-Ife: The Source of Yoruba Civilisation, Lagos: Oduduwa International Communications, 2009, 113.

[13] Jawolusi Idowu, 65 years, Oral Interview, Ibadan: June 2015.

© 2019 Global Journals

Awó wán n wá	The early cult,
Ní ṣawo ilé ayé	Is the cult of the earth
Ọjànígbàrà	Ojanigbara
Nií ṣawo òde ọ̀run	Is the cult of heaven?
Àwọn méjèjì ló fìdí oògùn ṣọlẹ̀	They both establish the cult of charms
Tí wọ́n kọ́lé awo wọnsókè ìgétì	They built the house of their cult at okeigeti
Níbi tí oògùn pin sí	The edge and pinnacle of charm
Àwọn méjèjì yí náà ló ṣefá f'Ólódùmarè	The duo consulted Ifá for Olódùmarè
Nígbà tó n retí ọmọ	while he waiting for a child
Tí ó wá gbáwoníyì lóde ìsálayé	That will come and on earth
Èyí tàwo rẹ̀ ó borí gbogbo awo tó ti n bẹ…	Whose cult will out-whelm other cults?

Here, Ifá called his name Jewesun (if we and n are removed from the spelling, what remains is Jesu which, according to Yorùbá is the name of the son of God) and acknowledged him as the son of God, but not as the only son of God as the Bible portrays him in Matthew 3:17. Yet another Odù Ọ̀yẹ̀kú Méjì[14] has this to say about the above assertion. Though here, Ifá declared that he was the only son of Olódùmarè. Here he was believed to be the high priest after the order of Melchisedec in Hebrew 6:20.

Àtànpàkò kúrò lẹ́sẹ̀	The absesnce of toes
Gbogbo ara ò jọ rìn pé	Makes all body parts move incomplete
Bí a bá pe òkú ní pópó	When death is called at away of a distance
Alàáyè ní ng dáhùn	It's living being that will response to the call
A díFá fún Jéwésùn –	Prognosticated Ifá for Jewesun the son of
Almighty-	
(Jesù – Kristi)	(Jesus Christ)
Tínṣe ọ̀kànbí Olódùmarè agòtún	The only child of Olódùmarè Agotun
Ọlọ́mọ atẹ́ní ọlá légélégé forí ṣagbeji	The child of he that spreads mat of wealth
Nígbàtí ó nbẹ nígbàtemu ọmọ aráyé	When he was in the midst of enemies
Ẹbọ wọ́n ní kó ṣe.	He was asked to offer sacrifice
Èrò Ìpo, èrò Ófà,	People of Ipo, people of Ofa
Ẹni gbẹ́bọ nbẹ̀ kó tójú oun ẹbọ.	He who heard about sacrifice should make provision for sacrifice item

In the same manner, Ọ̀wọ́nrín Ṣogbè[15] is also in support of the above claim.

There Ifa has this to say;

Ọ̀wọ́nrín só	Owonrin so,
Ogbè só,	Ogbe so,
A díFá fun Ọ̀rùnmìlà	The alias of Diviners cast IfáforỌ̀rùnmìlà
Baba nlọ́tẹ Jewesun níFá	When he wanted to pass Jewesun into Ifá,
Ẹbọ wọ́n ní kóṣe,	He was advised to make sacrifice.
Njẹ́ Jewesun ṣe rere	Jewesun was prosperous
Jewesun Ọmọ ọ̀pẹ̀	Jewesun the son of Ope "Ifá"

With the assertion made in all the Odù Ifá in connection to Jesus, it is believed and assumed that Ifá has been on earth before the birth of Jesus. This also corroborated Olu Longe's [16] assertion in his inaugural lecture entitled: "Ifá and computer science," where he explained that computer science adopted 8-bit byte as the standard unit of computer data in 1964. However, he went further to say that the 8-bit byte had been the standard in Ifá centuries before 1964.

Again, Jesus also viewed to be an awo by the Yorùbá if we consider the accusation in Luke 22:17-20 when he was accused by the Pharisee that he was drinking blood and flesh. However, his own brand of awo, according to the odù will overshadow the rest of awo of his time, but it never said he would eradicate them and be the only one. The rest of the odù talked about how he was performing great things called miracles today. The account of his sonship in the Bible

[14] Babawo Adewale Adekanmilfagbuyi, www.osunbotanica travels.vpweb.com, retrieved on the 11th July, 2016.

[15] Babawo Adewale Adekanmilfagbuyi, www.osunbotanica travels.vpweb.com, retrieved on the 11th July, 2016.

[16] Olu Longe, Ifa and …

© 2019 Global Journals

casts a cloudy look on the issue because of the question John the Baptist sent his own followers to go and ask JẸ̀ṣùs when he heard of his miracles 'was he the son of God or they should expect another' (Luke 7:19)? Notwithstanding he was the one that baptized Christ with the so-called voice heard from heaven that Christ is the beloved son of God (Luke 7:18).

Again, concerning where his mission was carried out and why, we learnt that the mission of Jesus was carried out in the land of the Jewish nation. Though his mission was universal, he focused on his immediate environment because he was sent to the lost sheep of Israel. This is a statement made by Jesus Christ himself in Matthew 15:22-26 when a Canaanite woman approached him for help over her daughter who was possessed with demon spirit. According to the passage, Christ told the woman that he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel and that, the food meant for the son must not be given to the dogs. This type of assertion is not far from the belief system of the Jews. According to Marcus Wright, [17] the Jews believed that their God, Yahweh, was the only god, besides which, others were seen as mere idols. This is part of the belief that Jesus also shared. Therefore, Jesus Christ was sent to the lost sheep of Israel just as Ọ̀rúnmìlà was sent to the Yorùbá to come and save their world when it was at the verge of collapsing from where he went round the whole existing world then because his impact is felt all over the world today through divination.[18]

It is crucial to say that foreign religion and culture have encroached upon African religion and ways of life, particularly the Yorùbá. Nearly all things about Yorùbá had been contaminated, including the language. It is pertinent therefore, to mention that the foreign notion of salvation has largely permeated the belief system of the Yorùbá such that some traditions and interpretations of indigenous philosophies reflect an incorporation of the Christian salvation concept. Ogunade [19] relates the myth of Ẹ̀là with the story of Christ, which is one of the most popular of such traditions. Giving a brief account of the myth, he goes a step further to establish a link between the myth and Yorùbá names for the days of the week. According to Ogunade, Ẹ̀là, the son of Olódùmarè, was sent to the human world to transform the immoral society. Challenged by the patron of evil, Ẹ̀ṣù, who succeeded in killing him, Ẹ̀là, however, declared that he would resurrect on the third day and ascend to heaven. Ogunade even goes further to establish that "the proclamation in honour of this is that, the human world would not know perfect peace until Ẹ̀là comes back to the world the second time to defeat Ẹ̀ṣù and establish the kingdom of Olódùmarè on earth."[20] Thus the words "Ẹ̀là rọ̀wá" – Ẹ̀là descends is an urge, hope and Yorùbá expectation for him to come and do a repair job on the damaged world. This is thus similar to the incarnation, mission, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and expected second coming of Jesus Christ in Christianity.

Putting it in another form, Adelegan opined that Ẹ̀là was the son of Moremi the wife of Oranmiyan who was a native of Offa in the present Kwara State. She was the one who saved the Ifẹ̀ people from the hands of their Igbo enemies who were continually raiding them and taking them to slavery. Before she was captured and taken to Ugboland, she had made a vow with a particular stream called Esinmirin that whatever came out first from her house on her return would be sacrificed to the stream. She fulfilled her vow by sacrificing the only child Ẹ̀là to the stream. As a reṣult, Ẹ̀là is celebrated annually by the Ifẹ̀ people and Moremi became a heroine and her name changed to Ìyá AyéGbogbo – mother of all.[21] This is not different from the way Mary the mother of Jeṣus is celebrated especially by the Catholic Church till today.

Narrating the same story of Moremi and her son which he called Oluorogbo, McClelland draws a resemblance between the myths which could be found in the Odù Ifá and the basic beliefs of the Christians. Relating the full story, she emphasizes that on sacrificing her son, Oluorogbo, the latter, hung dead on a tree, is believed to have risen and drawn up to heaven on a rope. Thus, according to McClelland, "certainly this is a story of sacrifice of an only son to save a people, he dies on a tree and rises again[22]". Hence, such myths and adaptations which are efforts to contextualize foreign doctrines in traditions of Yorùbá religion reflect an incorporation of the Christian concept of salvation into indigenous religious traditions. Again, looking at some Odù Ifá, it seems that the authenticity of Ifá had been tampered with. A very good example is found in a chapter under Odù Ọ̀wọ́nrín Ogbè[23]. There Ifá says;

[17] Marcus J. Bond and N.T. Wright, The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions, New York: Harper Collins publishers Inc., 1999, 31.
[18] E. Bolaji Idowu, Olodumare God in Yoruba Belief, Lagos: Longman Nigeria Limited, 1977, 76.
[19] Raymond Ogunade, Yoruba Religious Worship in Modern Context. IFE: Journal of the Institute of Cultural Srudies-Special edition, (2010):7.
[20] Adelegan Adegbola, Ile-Ife: The Source of Yoruba civilization, Lagos: Oduduwa International Communications, 2009, 114.
[21] Adegbola, 112.
[22] McClell, The Cult of Ifa among the Yoruba: Folk Practice and the Art, Volume I, London: Ethonogbaphica, 1982, 115.
[23] Ayo Salami, 2002, Ifa: A Complete Divination, Lagos: NIDD Publishing company, 2002, 274.

© 2019 Global Journals

Pẹ̀kútúyẹkẹ, pẹ̀kútúyẹkẹ	Pe kutu ye ke, pe kutu ye ke
Awo Jéṣù lódífá fún Jéṣù	The priest of Jeṣus consulted oracle for Jeṣus
Nígbà tíntọ̀run bọ̀wálé ayé…	when he was coming from heaven to the earth…

This may be a latter invention into Ifá when compared with the one in Ìrẹ́tẹ̀ Méjì where Ifá called Jeṣus 'Jéwéṣùn' – let the leaf sleep, after Christianity came to Yorùbáland. This may be as a reṣult of finding relevance for the place of Ifá in the new religion.

The Purpose and Importance of ẹbọ in Traditional Yorùbá Religion

Ifá divination is a means to determine the problem confronting a client to find the best solution to the problem that brought the client to the Babaláwo – Ifá Priest, while ẹbọ is the ultimate solution to ensure that the problem is permanently solved. If it were a good fortune, ẹbọ is used to make it come to pass and avert bad future.[24] Therefore, ẹbọ is an integral part of divination. It is the third arm of divination in general. The first arm is divination. That is, when a client approached a Babaláwo with a mind-boggling problem, the diviner consults Ifá oracle to know the cause of the problem. After knowing the cause of the problem, the next stage is to imprint the Odù that comes out of the divination tray with ìyẹ̀rẹ̀òsùn – divination powder. The last stage is the offering of ẹbọ, which is a way of proffering solution to the problem that brought the client to the Ifá Priest.

It is the most important aspect of divination. Agboola[25] emphasizes the essence of ẹbọ to the Yorùbá, asserting that whenever an individual intends to do, be it purchase of an item, going into marital relationship, employment of workers, embarking on a building project or sponsoring a religious project or activity, etc., the person should first consult Ifá and offer ẹbọ so that the endeavour may be successful and fruitful. This view is affirmed by Olaleye[26]. According to him, "It is difficult for any Yorùbá to embark on a mission, journey, business or any venture without first getting assurance from Ifá that what he intends to do will be fruitful. This supports Idowu's[27] assertion that if it requires ẹbọ, they will do so to get his approval on the matter before going ahead". This view reflects the essence of ẹbọ to the average Yorùbá, as a vital part of everyday life and activities. Daily survival and success of endavours largely rest on the offering of ẹbọ on virtually everything that concerns man. This is so because the gods are not left behind by the Yorùbá in all things they do either to give thanks or appeal for favour from them with their ẹbọ.

The concept of the sacrifice of Christ as a final one totally differs from the idea of ẹbọ in the Yorùbábelief system. This view is not so much different from the view of other writers on divination and Yorùbá Religion. According to Abimbola[28], ẹbọ is very important for the client that consulted Ifá. Whether the outcome of divination is good or bad, ẹbọ must be offered. This ẹbọ, according to him is different from the one Jeṣus Christ came to offer himself for. That is, ẹbọ for the salvation of human kind from the yoke of sin. Rather, it is sometimes a food for the Babaláwo because it forms part of what he eats if Ifá permits,[29] since a Babaláwo earns no salary. Under Odù Ìwòrì Ogbè[30], Ọ̀rúnmìlà divine for Elémele ilé and Elémele oko where Ifá allowed Ọ̀rúnmìlà to take part of the prescriptions as his own. However, this does not happen all the time anyway, but the fact remains that consultation fee is exclusively for the Babaláwo whether the client offers ẹbọ or not. That is the reason why the Yorùbá say "Ifá fore Ifá fọbi, owó tí a bá fi dàníyàn ti Babaláwo ní I ṣe" – whether the result of consulting Ifá is positive or negative, consultation fee is for the Babaláwo. It is also a mark of confidence for the client that what he consulted Ifá for is approved by both the visible and invisible elements.

In Elebuibon's[31] view, ẹbọ goes beyond a food to the Babaláwo or mark of confidence on the part of the client, It is also a means of averting, assuaging/propitiating the anger of the divinities and spirits, means of averting and evil machinations of the enemy. In his opinion, ẹbọ is so important that it can be used to ward off epidemics and it can be used to fulfill a vow. The importance of ẹbọ is better explained by Salami[32] as the means by which one may seek to attain to the ways and words of Olódùmarè. In his words, "ẹbọ is about given up in order to use it in worship, devotion or in exchange for better circumstances in life." Nevertheless, this divination has its own deficiency, for example, it is not in every situation at which we offer ẹbọ that we are in a worship of devotion as he said. However, the word ẹbọ has a much deeper meaning than the English translation of sacrifice which means 'what you forfeit, forgo or give up.'[33]

[24] Joseph OmosadeAwolalu, Yoruba Beliefs and sacrificial Rites, U.K.: Longman Group Limited, 1981, 132.
[25] AgboolaFAsina, Ojulowo Oriki Ifa (ApaKini) Lagos: Project Publications Limited, 1989, 121.
[26] Olaleye, 204.
[27] Bolaji E. Idowu, 1962, Olodumare God in Yoruba Belief, Nigeria: Longman Group Limited.
[28] Wande Abimbola, 1968, IjinleOhunEnu Ifa ApaKini, U.K: Collings, Sons and Co Ltd, 13.
[29] Ayo Salami, 2008, Yoruba Theology and Tradition; The Worship, Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company, 420.
[30] William Bascom, Ifa Divination, Communication Between Man and Gods in West Africa, London: Indiana University Press, 1969, 347.
[31] Yemielebuibon, The Healing Power of Sacrifice, new York: AtheliaHeriette Press Inc, 200, 12.
[32] Salami, 409.
[33] Awolalu, 135.

© 2019 Global Journals

Besides divination, ẹbọ is another means of communicating with the world of the unseen or the spirit world. As mentioned earlier, ẹbọ is food to the Babaláwo since he doesn't earn salary anywhere and the task he is engaged in is demanding. It is a task that requires almost his entire time for the sake of humanity and the fact that his family must eat, therefore, ẹbọ forms part of the upkeep of the Babaláwo[34]. What we are saying here is,Ifá may permit Babaláwo to keep part of the materials brought for sacrifice for his use or personal consumption. However, we should at the same time note that it is not all ẹbọwhich are edible for the Babaláwo and his family. There are times ẹbọ could be offered in its totality like that of Odùnbaku in a verse under Ọ̀wọ́nrín Méjì [35] . Sometimes, it could be nonphysical, e.g. a piece of advice as the one given to Mágbàgbéọ̀la under Ọ̀yẹ̀kú Ọ̀kànràn.[36] Nevertheless, a Babaláwo will not, because of feeding his family charge more than what Ifá has prescribed. Any Babaláwo who does that will surely suffer the consequence.

Ẹbọ is also significant in the area of protection received from the ancestors. Through the food we offer them in terms of ẹbọ, food offered only when Ifá gives an instruction, which is occasional, at annual worship or veneration, they tend to be happy with their children and family members whom they left behind. This is evident in a story narrated by one of the informants when she was kidnapped by a group of people for ritual money. She couldn't be used because her mother was there to protect her. According to her it was the leader of the cultic group that told her to go and offer a sàráàfókú ọ̀run – an ẹbọ to the dead mother because it was her mother who prevented them from using her for the ritual. Therefore, ẹbọ can also be a food for the ancestors for adequate protection for their family members left behind. Although his is not an indication that they cannot survive without the food of the living members, yet it does serve as a link between the living and he dead for a balance and cordial relationship. That is, a happy relationship is still maintained between the living and dead through the ẹbọ offered to them.[37]

Ẹbọ is additionally significant and an important tool for buying back difficult situations; it is a kind of reparation or redemption. To every problem, there is always a corresponding ẹbọ to be offered. Hardly do we see Odu Ifa without one form of ẹbọ or the other. Even an instruction or warning against certain things which, if done, will have dire consequences could serve as ẹbọ.[38] This is the reason why Ifá call items for such as an ẹbọ 'ìrarí Akápò' – buyback for the orí. Ògúndá Òtúá [39] explained this further about what happened between Ọ̀rúnmìlà and his Akápò where Ifá says;

Ọ̀rùnmìlà wí ó ló di sìlásìlá	Ọ̀rùnmìlà spoke, he said it is shivering
Ifá mo ló di sìlósìló	Ifá, I said it has returned trembling.
Ọmọ eku nse sìlássìlá	the child of a mouse is shivering,
On se sìlósìló	It is trembling
Moní kíní nse sìlásìlá, sìlósìlósí,	I asked, why is it trembling
Ọmọ eku ní nítorí ọmọ ni.	The child of a mouse said it is because of its child
Ọ̀rùnmìlà ní se ìwọ ọmọ eku ó sin…	Ọ̀rùnmìlà asked mouse, would you be my devotee?

It was the rat, the fish; other animals and human beings that were having problems because of lack of children. Ọ̀rúnmìlà asked them to become his devotee. It was only human beings who agreed to the terms and took care of him when he came visiting. Angered by the attitude displayed by rat, fish and other animals, Ọ̀rúnmìlà decreed that all those who rebelled against him should henceforth be used as an exchange for the problems that manifest in the life of human beings. Asfrom that day, the animals became Ìràrí – buy back for human beings.

The significance of ẹbọcannot be over-emphasised when it comes to pacifying man's enemies or perceived enemies. This is where the meaning and the real work of ẹbọ come to play. Ẹbọ means to feed, especially man's foes by giving them the food they love most. Even a mere gift given to someone in the physical realm will always soften the heart. Consequently, he or she tends to be happy with us because it is the belief of the Yorùbá that "bẹ́nubáje, ojú a tì" – if one is fed, he tends to be quiet.[40] They also believe that if you eat somebody's food and you are still bent on perpetrating evil against the person, the betrayal will haunt you.

[34] Salami, 42.
[35] Salami, 274.
[36] Salami, 79.
[37] BabawolfayemiYokelepekun, 57 years, Oral Interview, Ibadan: June 2015.
[38] Babawolfasayo, 69 Years, Ifa Priest, Oral Intervies, Oluwonla, Ife Road, Ibadan.
[39] Ayo Salami, 2008, Yoruba Theology and Tradition: The Worship, Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company, 412.
[40] Kolawole Abimbola, Owe, Akanlo Ede atiAsayan Oro Yoruba, Ilorin: Timiagbale Ventures, 2006, 27.

© 2019 Global Journals

Ẹbọ according to Fadoro[41] is also a messenger or errand boy for the client to the spiritual world and sometimes, in the physical realm as explained above. In fact, every ẹbọ offered is a message in one aspect or the other. There are times when an ẹbọ could be directed to the Creator Himself or His abode to solve one problem or the other. In Odù Ọ̀ṣẹ́lwòrì[42], Ọ̀rúnmìlà sent ẹbọ to Olódùmarè for the sake of his child.

Ọ̀ṣẹ́ pàá bí oko	Ancient Ose like oko
Ìwòrì jó wọ̀lọ̀ bíi ràdọ̀n	The tender Iwori like radon
A díFá fún Ọ̀rúnmìlà	A divination was cast for Ọ̀rùnmìlà
Yóó rán akirinbiti ẹbọ sálàde ọ̀run	He will send a huge sacrifice to heaven
Nítorí ọmọ rẹ̀	Because of his child.
Ẹbọ mágbàgbé o jíyìn	Sacrifice does not forget to delivergood message
Akirinbiti	Huge sacrifice
Tóo bá dọ́run tó o bá ti jíyìn ajé.	When you get to heaven and deliver the message of wealth
Kó o rájé rere wá	The pleasant wealth should come our way
Akirinbiti	Huge sacrifice
Má gbàgbé o jíyìn	Don't forget to deliver good message
Tó o bá ti dọ́run tó o bá ti jíyìn aya,	When you get to heaven sought for wives
Ká ráya rere fẹ́…	that we may have good wives…

Ẹbọfín, ẹ̀rúdà – is an aftermath enquiry made to confirm by the Babaláwo from Ifá to know ẹbọ has actually been delivered or not. Abimbola[43] is of the opinion that when we offer ẹbọ, we feed both the eégún – masquerade and ènìyàn- human beings. Whenever Ifá stipulates that the Babaláwo should keep part of the items for ẹbọ for himself, especially food items, seldom do we see him eat it alone. Rather he shares it with people around him particularly the poor. There are occasions when a poor client will come to a Babaláwo and he uses some of his items for the client, as it happened in the case of Ẹlẹ́kọdèrè in Ìrósùn Méjì[44]. Besides, Salami[45], explained that "Ifá enjoins that foods, when prepared, after someone had offered ẹbọ, should be shared within the neighbourhood so that everyone would have a share of the bounties of Olódùmarè". This is the reason why Abimbola said further that by providing food for people around, there is an assurance that eégún – masquerade, Ọ̀rìṣà – divinities and wise people around are in support of what that person intends to do. This is the reason why Ifá says ẹnulànbọnífẹ̀ – it is mouth that we worship at Ifẹ̀.

It is also the belief of the Yorùbá that any ẹbọ offered by individual, or collectively is deposited in the bank stack in heaven waiting for one's return in the region of the ancestors. This is part of the accounts man would render to Olódùmarè and the ancestors in heaven. Thus, the Yorùbá believe that "àṣegbékan kòsíláyé, àṣepamọ́ lówà, kálukú ni yíójíyìnisẹ́bo dọ́run" – all our deeds are banked and, we shall all render account of our deeds in heaven. This is the reason why Ifá says in Ìrẹ́tẹ̀Òtúá[46] that;

Ọ̀jọ̀ pàtàpàtà ní bo esè olè	For it's the drop of rain that covers the footprints of a thief
A díFá fún Ọ̀rúnmìlà	A divination is cast for Ọ̀rùnmìlà
Níjọ́ tí nrèé jéjọ́ akápò nílé Olodumare	On the day he was going to respond to accusation of Akapoin the house of Olódùmarè
Ọ̀jọ̀ pàtàpàtà ní bosè olè A díFá fún Akápò	The drops of rain cover the footprint of a thief Cast divination for Akapo
Nlọ́rèé pe Ọ̀rúnmìlà lẹ́jọ́nílé Olódùmarè	He was going to sue Ọ̀rùnmìlà in the court of Olódumare…

[41] FadoroOluwadareEniola, 45 years, Traditional Worshiper, Oral Interview, Ose Meji Temple, Ibadan: December 2015.
[42] AsaoluFausui, 61 years, Ifa Priest, Oral Interview, Lagos: December 2015.
[43] Wande Abimbola
[44] Wande Abimbola, IjinleOhunEnu Ifa Apakini, 13.
[45] Salami, Yoruba Theology and Tradition: 274.
[46] AsaoluFasusi, 61 years, Ifa Priest, Oral Interview, Lagos: December 2015.

© 2019 Global Journals

It was Akápò who went to go and report Ọ̀rúnmìlà to Olódùmarè that he was not sure if every ẹbọ he gave to Ọ̀rúnmìlà was offered. Olódùmarè sent for Ọ̀rúnmìlà, Ọ̀rúnmìlà also sent for Akápò's spiritual double to come and testify before Olódùmarè. It was Akápò's double who told Olódùmarè that Akápò was impatient and that was what responsible for his problem and not because Ọ̀rúnmìlà did not offer the ẹbọ. Njẹ́ ríru ẹbọ ní gbeni, àìrú kíì gbèníyàn – We profit by offering ẹbọ, while refusal offering of ẹbọ will end up in gaining nothing.

II. Conclusion

Foreign religions, education, civilization, science and technology have encroached into every aspect of Yorùbá way of life. Nevertheless, despite all these influences, the Yorùbá still believe that àrúkú lẹbọ, àgbàkúlàdùrà – offering of ẹbọ is to the end of life,while we shall pray till death because the death of Christ has not taken away all sicknesses and problems bedeviling humanity, especially when humans face challenges. Thus, offering of ẹbọ is still present in both traditions; I mean Christianity and African traditional religion. Today, there are different kinds of *ẹbọ*that are offered in Christian circle like celestial Church of Christ and Cherubim and Seraphim Church. There are also ẹbọ ọpẹ́ – thanksgiving offering and ẹbọijó – dance offering among others as mentioned earlier in all the churches in the country today. While the Christians may accept the death of Christ as the final sacrifice therefore, the Yorùbá may not accept the idea based on the point raised above.

Endnotes

1. Sam Káyòdé Olaleye, 2013, *Ebo as a Healing Technique in Ifá Divination System,* Saarbrucken: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 78.
2. John S. Mbiti, 1975, *Introduction to African Religion*, Ibadan: Heinemann Publishers Ltd, 66.
3. OlaniyiOsinbola, 50 years, Traditionalist, *Oral Interview,* Lagos: December 2015.
4. Mike Omoleye, 1979, *Mystery World Under the Sea,* Ibadan: Omoleye Publishing Company, 57
5. AdefabiOdugoke, 56 Years, Traditionalist, *Oral Interview,* Ifadiwura Temple, Isalu, Iseyin Oyo State, June 2016
6. FadareFamoriyo, Ifa Priest, *Oral Interview,* Ifadiwura Temple, Isalu, Iseyin, Oyo State, June 2016
7. Isaac Akinola, 43 Years, *Oral Interview,* Christ Apostolic Church, OkeAgbara, Ashi District, Ibadan.
8. Rotimi Oti, Pastor, 48 years, *Oral Interview,* The Redeem Bible College, Redeem Camp, Mowe, Ogun State.
9. Chris knight and Robert Lomas, 1997, *The Hiram key, Pharaoh, Freemasons and the discover of the Secret scrolls of Jesus,* UK: Arrow Books, 63.
10. Chris knight and Robert Lomas, 1997, *The Hiram key, Pharaoh, Freemasons and the discovery of the secret scrolls of Jesus,* UK: Arrow Books, 63.
11. Adelegan Adegbola, 2009, *Ile-Ife: The Source of Yoruba Civilisation,* Lagos: Oduduwa International Communications, 113.
12. Jawolusi Idowu, 65 years, *Oral Interview,* Ibadan: June 2015.
13. Babawo Adewale Adekanmilfagbuyi, www.osunbot anicatravels.vpweb.com, retrieved on the 11th July, 2016.
14. Babawo Adewale Adekanmilfagbuyi, www.osunbot anicatravels.vpweb.com, retrieved on the 11th July, 2016.
15. Olu Longe, 1998, *Ifa and Computer Science (An Inaugural Lecture)*, Ibadan: W. Giradet Press (W.A.) Co., 37.
16. Marcus J. Bong and N.T. Wright, 1999, *The Meaning of Jesus; Two Visions,* New York: Harper Collins publishers Inc.31.
17. E.Bolaji Idowu, 1977, *Olodumare God in Yorùbá Belief,* Lagos: Longman Nigeria Limited, 76
18. Raymond Ògúnadé, 2010, Yorùbá Religious Worship in Modern Context. *IFÈ: Journal of the Institute of Cultural Studies-Special edition*, (ObáfémiAwólówò University: Institute of Cultural Studies, 7.
19. Adelegan Adegbola, 2009, *Ile-Ife: The Source of Yoruba Civilisation,* Lagos: Oduduwa International Communications, 112.
20. McClelland E.,1982, *The Cult of Ifá among the Yorùbá, Volume I: Folk Practice and the Art,* London: Ethnographica, 115.
21. Ayo Salami, 2002, *Ifá: a Complete Divination,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company,2002, 274
22. Joseph OmosadeAwolalu, 1981, Yorùbá Beliefs and sacrificial Rites, U.K; Longman Group Limited, 132.
23. Agboolá Fásìnà A., 1989, *Ojúlówó Oríkì Ifá (Apá Kìní)* Lagos: Project Publications Limited, 121.
24. Sam Káyòdé Olaleye, 2013, *Ebo as a Healing Technique in Ifá Divination System,*Saarbucken; LAPLAMBERT Academic Publishing, 204.
25. Bolaji E. Idowu, 1962, *olodumare god in Yoruba belief,* Nigeria: Longman Group Limited,
26. Wande Abimbola, 1968, *IjinleOhunEnu Ifá Apakini,* U.K: Collins, Sons and Co Ltd, 13.
27. Ayo Salami,2008, *Yorùbá Theology and Tradition; The Worship,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company, 420
28. William Bascom, 1969, *Ifa Divination, Communication Between Man and Gods in West Africa,* London: Indiana University Press, 347
29. Yemi Elebuibon, 2000, *The Healing Power of Sacrifice,* New York: AtheliaHeriette Press Inc., 12

© 2019 Global Journals

30. Ayo salami,2008, *Yorùbá Theology and Tradition; The Worship,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company, 409.
31. Joseph Omosade Awolalu,1981, *Yorùbá Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites,* U.K: Longman Group Limited,135.
32. Ayo salami, 2008, *Yorùbá Theology and Tradition: The Worship,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company, 42.
33. Ayo salami, 2008, *Yorùbá Theology and Tradition: The Worship,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company, 274.
34. Ayo salami,2002*Ifá: a Complete Divination,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company,79
35. BolanleFajenmbola, 50 years, *Oral Interview,* Ibadan: June 2015.
36. BabawoIfasayo, 69 Years, Ifa Priest, *Oral Interview,* Oluwonla, Ife Road, Ibadan.
37. Ayo Salami, 2008, *Yorùbá Theology and Tradition: The Worship,* Lagos: NDDI Publishing Company, 412.
38. Kolawole Abimbola, 2006, *Owe, Akanlo Ede atiAsayan Oro Yoruba,* Ilorin: Timiagbale Ventures, 27
39. FadoroOluwadareEniola, 45 Years, Traditional Worshiper, *Oral Interview,* Ose Meji Temple, Ibadan: December 2015.
40. AsaoluFasusi, 61 years, *Ifá* Priest, *Oral Interview,* Lagos: December 2015.
41. Wande Abimbola, 1968, *IjinleOhunEnu Ifá Apakini,* U.K: Collins, Sons and Co Ltd, 13.
42. Wande Abimbola, *IjinleOhunEnu Ifá Apakini,* 13.
43. Ayo Salami, *Yorùbá Theology and Tradition: The Worship,* (Lagos: NDDI Publishing Company,2008).
44. AsaoluFasusi, 61 years, *Ifá* Priest, *Oral Interview,* Lagos: December 2015.

© 2019 Global Journals