"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- Òbọ 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 òbọ 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 a general 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 òbọ 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 òbọ 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: òbọ? the yorùbá, ìfá, jesús, christian.

GJHSS-A Classification: FOR Code: 220499
"Ebo Tan Ebo Ku? Yoruba Indigenous Religion's Viewpoint on the Death of Jesus Christ as the Final Sacrifice"

S. Kayode Olaleye

Abstract: Ebo is an offering made to the Deity, the divinities and other agents considered by the Yoruba 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 ebo 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 a general 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 ebo 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 vicissitudes like murder and stealing? Why is it that some Christians still carry on in the tradition of offering ebo till today? Why is it that God has not struck the adherents of African Indigenous Religion who still offer sacrifices in Yoruba 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: ebo? the yoruba, Ifa, Jesus, christian.

1. 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, ebo, (a term which in English means ‘sacrifice’), connotes a whole lot more to the Yoruba. According to Olaleye¹, ebo in African belief system particularly in Yorubaland 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, Ajé, Emere, Abiku, Oso 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 ebo – sacrifice in the life of the Yoruba 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 ebo – in man’s daily life. Hence, there is ebo ope – sacrifice of thanksgiving and ebo iyinlogo – sacrifice of praise among others. The physical ebo which are seen to be placed at various prescribed places, or however required, and whatever material which individuals use in offering ebo, are nothing but prayer supplements. Also, worthy of note is Beyioku’s view as related by Olaleye, which opines that ebo means debt that must be paid to get relieve from our ailments.

However, from the above indications, we may infer that the concept of ebo in both religious backgrounds connote two divergent views. An understanding of the purpose of ‘ebo’ in both faith systems perhaps reveals why the Yoruba 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.
relevant books, journals and internet materials and were subjected to descriptive analysis.

Yoruba 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 Yoruba 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 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, 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 Yoruba from the perspective at which we are looking at the subject matter believe that ayé lọ̀ ọ́kọ̀ ọ́kọ̀ a tó ń tó sè ńrùn, 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 submits that one of the requirements of making the good heaven-ńrùn is for becoming an ancestor and being an accomplished 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 ìpò 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 ìpò is, therefore, the Yoruba’s tool for securing a place in the good heaven through the continuous ìgbalá – 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:

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 ìpò remain an important tool to assist those virtues. Therefore, ìpò is a continuous process in the indigenous belief system, through the constant offering of ìpò, 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 Odúgòke, an informant. FadareFamoriyo is

---

3 OlaniyiOsinbola, 50 years, Traditionalist, Oral Interview, Lagos: December 2015.
5 AdefabOdugoke, 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
also of the view that there are occasions when a sick person would be advised in orthodox hospitals to go and “fi ẹsẹ ilé tọ̀pọ̀” – 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 Akinola7. 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, theologians8 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 Robert10 that there is nowhere in the Old Testament where prophecy of the coming of a world savior was made. According to them, though the Jewesun literally means ‘let the leaf sleep’. However, he was not portrayed by Ifa as the savior of the world. Rather, Ifa in the Odu has this to say about him.

Furthermore, information in Odu Ivẹ Ọjẹ11 talked about Jewesun who is being referred to as first child of Olodumaren – the Supreme God. A lot of people interpreted Jewesun to mean Jesu in Yoruba 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 Ifa as the savior of the world. Rather, Ifa in the Odu has this to say about him.

---

7 Isaac Akinola, 43 Years, Oral Interview, Christ Apostolic Church, OkeAgbara, Ashi District, Ibadan  
10 Knight and Lomas, 63.  
13 Jawolusi Idowu, 65 years, Oral Interview, Ibadan: June 2015.
Here, Ifá called his name Jewesun (if we and n are removed from the spelling, what remains is Jesu which, according to Yoruba 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 Odu Òyékú Mě́jí⁴⁴ has this to say about the above assertion. Though here, Ifá declared that he was the only son of Olodumare. Here he was believed to be the high priest after the order of Melchisedec in Hebrew 6.20.

In the same manner, Òwónrin Òṣogbé¹⁵ is also in support of the above claim.

There Ifa has this to say;

| Òwónrin só | Owonrin so, |
| Ogbe só | Ogbe so, |
| A dífá fun Òrunmílǎ | The alias of Diviners cast Ifá for Orunmilá |
| Baba ńpọ́tẹ́ Jewesun ńfá | When he wanted to pass Jewesun into Ifá, |
| Ebo wό́n ní kọ́ ńyẹ́ | He was advised to make sacrifice. |
| Njẹ́ Jewesun se rẹ̀ | Jewesun was prosperous |
| Jewesun Òmpọ́ ńpẹ́ | Jewesun the son of Ope “Ifá” |

With the assertion made in all the Odu 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’s¹⁶ 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 Yoruba 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 odú 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 odú talked about how he was performing great things called miracles today. The account of his sonship in the Bible


¹⁶ Olu Longe, Ifa and …
casts a cloudy look on the issue because of the question John the Baptist sent his own followers to go and ask Jesus 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, 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 Orunmila was sent to the Yoruba 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. 

It is crucial to say that foreign religion and culture have encroached upon African religion and ways of life, particularly the Yoruba. Nearly all things about Yoruba 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 Yoruba such that some traditions and interpretations of indigenous philosophies reflect an incorporation of the Christian salvation concept. Ogunade relates the myth of Ela 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 Yoruba names for the days of the week. According to Ogunade, Ela, the son of Oloodumara, was sent to the human world to transform the immoral society. Challenged by the patron of evil, Esu, who succeeded in killing him, Ela, 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 Ela comes back to the world the second time to defeat Esu and establish the kingdom of Oloodumara on earth.” Thus the words “Ela rowa” – Ela descends is an urge, hope and Yoruba 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 Ela was the son of Moremi the wife of Oranmiyan who was a native of Ofa in the present Kwara State. She was the one who saved the Igbo 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 Ela to the stream. As a result, Ela is celebrated annually by the Igbo people and Moremi became a heroine and her name changed to iyaya Ayegbogbo – mother of all. This is not different from the way Mary the mother of Jesus 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 Odu Ifa 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.” Hence, such myths and adaptations which are efforts to contextualize foreign doctrines in traditions of Yoruba religion reflect an incorporation of the Christian concept of salvation into indigenous religious traditions. Again, looking at some Odu Ifa, it seems that the authenticity of Ifa had been tampered with. A very good example is found in a chapter under Odu Ovonrin Ogbe. There Ifa says;
This may be a latter invention into Ìfá when compared with the one in Òrìṣà Mèjì where Ìfá called Jesus ‘Jèwèṣù’ – let the leaf sleep, after Christianity came to Yorùbáland. This may be as a result of finding relevance for the place of Ìfá in the new religion.

The Purpose and Importance of ìbò in Traditional Ìyorùbá Religion

Ìfá 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 Babalawo – Ìfá Priest, while ìbò is the ultimate solution to ensure that the problem is permanently solved. If it were a good fortune, ìbò is used to make it come to pass and avert bad future. Therefore, ìbò 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 Babalawo with a mind-boggling problem, the diverger consults ìfá oracle to know the cause of the problem. After knowing the cause of the problem, the next stage is to imprint the Òdu that comes out of the divination tray with iyẹrẹsùn – divination powder. The last stage is the offering of ìbò, which is a way of proffering solution to the problem that brought the client to the Ìfá Priest.

It is the most important aspect of divination. Agbọọla25 emphasizes the essence of ìbò to the Ìyorùbá, 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 ìfá and offer ìbò so that the endeavour may be successful and fruitful. This view is affirmed by Olaleye26. According to him, "It is difficult for any Ìyorùbá to embark on a mission, journey, business or any venture without first getting assurance from ìfá that what he intends to do will be fruitful. This supports Idowu’s27 assertion that if it requires ìbò, they will do so to get his approval on the matter before going ahead". This view reflects the essence of ìbò to the average Ìyorùbá, as a vital part of everyday life and activities. Daily survival and success of endevours largely rest on the offering of ìbò on virtually everything that concerns man. This is so because the gods are not left behind by the Ìyorùbá in all things they do either to give thanks or appeal for favour from them with their ìbò.

The concept of the sacrifice of Christ as a final one totally differs from the idea of ìbò in the Yorùbá belief system. This view is not so much different from the view of other writers on divination and Yorùbá Religion. According to Abimbola28, ìbò is very important for the client that consulted ìfá. Whether the outcome of divination is good or bad, ìbò must be offered. This ìbò, according to him is different from the one Jesus Christ came to offer himself for. That is, ìbò for the salvation of human kind from the yoke of sin. Rather, it is sometimes a food for the Babalawo because it forms part of what he eats if ìfá permits,29 since a Babalawo earns no salary. Under Òdù Iwọ̀ Ogbe30, Ôrùnmìlù divine for Èìèmẹ̀ Èlè and Èìèmẹ̀ ìkọ̀wọ̀ where ìfá allowed Ôrùnmìlù 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 Babalawo whether the client offers ìbò or not. That is the reason why the Yorùbá say “Ìfá fore ìfọ̀bi, owo tí a bá ti dănìyàn tí Babalawó ní i se” – whether the result of consulting ìfá is positive or negative, consultation fee is for the Babalawo. It is also a mark of confidence for the client that what he consulted ìfá for is approved by both the visible and invisible elements.

In Òlebuibon’s31 view, ìbò goes beyond a food to the Babalawo 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, ìbò is so important that it can be used to ward off epidemics and it can be used to fulfill a vow. The importance of ìbò is better explained by Salami32 as the means by which one may seek to attain to the ways and words of Òlodumàrè. In his words, “ìbò 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 ìbò that we are in a worship of devotion as he said. However, the word ìbò has a much deeper meaning than the English translation of sacrifice which means ‘what you forfeit, forgo or give up.’33

---

26 Olaleye, 204.
32 Salami, 409.
33 Awolalu, 135.
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 Babalawo 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 Babalawo. 34 What we are saying here is, Ọfọ may permit Babalawo 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 ẹbọ which are edible for the Babalawo and his family. There are times ẹbọ could be offered in its totality like that of Ọdúnbaku in a verse under Ọwọrin Mẹjì 35. Sometimes, it could be nonphysical, e.g. a piece of advice as the one given to Mágbagbéola under Ọyékù Ọkànràn. 36 Nevertheless, a Babalawo will not, because of feeding his family charge more than what Ọfọ has prescribed. Any Babalawo 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 Ọfọ 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 sàrááʃọkú ọrun – 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 Odu Ọfọ 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 Ọfọ call items for such as an ẹbọ ‘irànì Akāpọ’ – buyback for the ori. Ogunsà Òtùà 39 explained this further on what happened between Orunmila and his Akápọ where Ọfọ says;

Ọrunmila wí ó ló dí síláślúa
Iṣà mọ lá dí síósíló
Ọmọ èkú nṣé síláślúa
On ẹ síósíló
Mońi kíí nṣé síláślúa, síósílósí,
Ọmọ èkú ní nitori ọmọ ní,
Ọrunmila ní ọ sì wọ ọmọ èkú ó sín…

Ọrunmila spoke, he said it is shivering
Iṣà, I said it has returned trembling.
the child of a mouse is shivering,
It is trembling
I asked, why is it trembling
The child of a mouse said it is because of its child
Ọrunmila 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. Orunmila 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, Orunmila 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. As from that day, the animals became Irànì – buy back for human beings.

34 Salami, 42.
35 Salami, 274.
36 Salami, 79.
37 BabawolfayemiYokelepekun, 57 years, Oral Interview, Ibadan: June 2015.
38 Babawolfasayo, 69 Years, Iṣa Priest, Oral Interviews, Oluwonla, Ile Road, Ibadan.
40 Kolaowo Abimbola, Owe, Akari Ede atiAsayan Oro Yoruba, Ilorin: Timiagbale Ventures, 2006, 27.
Ebo, according to Fadoro, 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 ebo offered is a message in one aspect or the other. There are times when an ebo could be directed to the Creator Himself or His abode to solve one problem or the other. In Odú Òṣélwó, Òrúnmiṣá sent ebo to Olódúmaré for the sake of his child.

Óṣé pàá bí oko
Iwóri jọ wọ́lọ́ bí ràdọ́n
A dírì fún Òrúnmiṣá
Yoó rán akirinbí ebo sáláde òrùn
Nítorí ọmọ rẹ̀
Ebo mágbágbé o jíyín
Akirinbíti
Tóò bá dórùn tó o bá ti jíyín aje.
Kó o rájé rere wá
Akirinbíti
Má gágbígbé o jíyín
Tó o bá ti dórùn tó o bá ti jíyín aya,
Ká ráyá rere fẹ́…

Ebofín, èrúdá – is an aftermath enquiry made to confirm by the Babaláwo from Ifa to know ebo has actually been delivered or not. Abimbola is of the opinion that when we offer ebo, we feed both the eegún – masquerade and ẹniyan- human beings. Whenever Ifá stipulates that the Babaláwo should keep part of the items for ebo 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 Èlèkodèrè in Òrùsùn Mèjì. Besides, Salami explained that “Ifá enjoints that foods, when prepared, after someone had offered ebo, should be shared within the neighbourhood so that everyone would have a share of the bounties of Olódúmaré”. This is the reason why Abimbola said further that by providing food for people around, there is an assurance that eegún – masquerade, Òríṣà – divinities and wise people around are in support of what that person intends to do. This is the reason why Ifa says ẹnu láágbọnífẹ́ – it is mouth that we worship at ìfẹ́.

Ojó pátápáta ní bo èsè olé
A dírì fún Òrúnmiṣá
Níjó tí nri èjèkó akápò ni lé Olódumare

Ojó pátápáta ní boṣé olé A dírì fún Akápò
Níójéé pe Òrúnmiṣá lèjóñílé Olódumare

For it’s the drop of rain that covers the footprints of a thief
A divination is cast for Òrúnmiṣá
On the day he was going to respond to accusation of Akapoin the house of Olódumare
The drops of rain cover the footprint of a thief Cast divination for Akapo
He was going to sue Òrúnmiṣá 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, ÒjímọOhunEnu Ifa Apakini, 13.
45 Salami, Yoruba Theology and Tradition: 274.
46 AsaoluFausui, 61 years, Ifa Priest, Oral Interview, Lagos: December 2015.
It was Akápo who went to go and report Ôrunmila to Òlodumáre that he was not sure if every ebo he gave to Ôrunmila was offered. Òlodumáre sent for Ôrunmila, Ôrunmila also sent for Akápo’s spiritual double to come and testify before Òlodumáre. It was Akápo’s double who told Òlodumáre that Akápo was impatient and that was what responsible for his problem and not because Ôrunmila did not offer the ebo. Nje rirú ebo ni gbéni, ãiri kii gbéniyà – We profit by offering ebo, while refusal offering of ebo will end up in gaining nothing.

II. Conclusion

Foreign religions, education, civilization, science and technology have encroached into every aspect of Yorúbá way of life. Nevertheless, despite all these influences, the Yorúbá still believe that àrùkú ìbò, ãgbákúlàdùrù – offering of ìbò 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 ìbò is still present in both traditions; I mean Christianity and African traditional religion. Today, there are different kinds of ìbò that are offered in Christian circle like celestial Church of Christ and Cherubim and Seraphim Church. There are also ìbò òpè – thanksgiving offering and ìbò pàlò – 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 Yorúbá may not accept the idea based on the point raised above.

Endnotes

5. Adefabi Òdugoke, 56 years, Traditionalist, Oral Interview, Ìfẹwùrù Temple, Ìsàlu, Ìseyìn Òyo State, June 2016.
6. Fadàre Òfamoriyo, Ìfà Priest, Oral Interview, Ìfẹwùrù Temple, Ìsàlu, Ìseyìn Òyo 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.