



# **A Semiotic Investigation of Philosophical Relations between *Ifá* and *Ayò* *Ọlọ́pọ̀n* among the Yorùbá People of Nigeria**

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Ifá is believed to be the foundation of Yorùbá culture. This means every aspect of Yorùbá life, including religion, philosophy, science, ideology, recreation, literature and so on has one link or another with Ifá. Previous works on Yorùbá philosophy have neither related Ifá semiotic symbols nor elements with Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n nor established any connection between the two. This study examines the relationship between Ifá and Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n objects and symbols with reference to Yorùbá culture. The work relies substantially on Yorùbá literary texts, especially Ifá literary corpus. Semiotics, which is the science of signs, is adopted for the analysis of the data, because, symbolism underlies the Ifá divination system. It is found out that, there is a synergy between Ifá and Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n game in terms of the use of moral code. This shows that, African philosophies are expressed through their religious and social symbols, objects and artifacts that are ancient means of Africans communication and writings.

This work examines the relationship between *Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n*, a locally played and internationally recognized Yorùbá traditional

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game, in terms of moral code. *Ifá* has been defined by scholars in different ways that establish the inexplicable and unlimited scope of its knowledge, wisdom and values. Indeed, it is regarded as the bedrock of other aspects of Yorùbá life. Therefore, to simply define *Ifá* as a religion, without exploring its social and cultural links will be inadequate. Akíntólá (1999, p.1) sees *Ifá* as the philosophy of or wisdom divinely revealed to the Yorùbá deity of *Ifá*, *Ọ̀rúnmilà*. According to Farrow (1926, p. 36), *Ifá* is the greatest oracle of the Yorùbá that is “consulted on all important occasions.” *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 (Abímbólá 1977a).

Munoz (2003, p. 179) sees *Ifá*'s scope beyond the Yorùbá cultural society when he says “*Ifá* is the most universal divinity among the Yorùbá and other West African people.” *Ifá* is known to different people by different names throughout the world. For example, *Ifá* is known as *Fá* among the Fon of Republic of Benin, *Eva* to Nupes, *Ifá* in Cuba, USA, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Surinam and Togo. *Ifá* is referred to by the Ewe as *Afa*, *Ephod* by Jews, *Geomancy* by Europeans and Margays (Odeyemi 2013, p. 5). With these different realizations of *Ifá* nomenclature which cut across nations of the world, the prominence of *Ifá* is not in doubt. In 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed *Ifá* as one of the 86 traditions of the world to be recognized as masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage of humanity (Robinson 2008, p. 1). 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 interest to scholars in different areas of human endeavors-like medicine, philosophy, religion, art and culture.

The association of *Ifá* with humans by some scholars involves the two aspects, which are scientific knowledge and religion (Yemi-

tan and Ògúndélé (1970, p. ix; Abímbólá 1976 and Sàlámi 2000). However, here it will be examined principally as a philosophy.

*Ifá* corpus has been a means by which Yorùbá culture, especially as a philosophy, is propagated at home and in the Diaspora. Scholars have established that- *Ifá* influenced every aspect of Yorùbá life as seen in the following quotation:

Ifá divination literature is perhaps the most accomplished product of Yorùbá traditional culture.... No one who has studied Ifá in detail will fail to see the fact that the people of traditional African societies were not ignorant as we have often been told. The peoples of traditional Africa were largely illiterates to be sure. But they were no fools. Among them were elite classes such as the babaláwo who have preserved all the ingredients of their own culture in an almost completely oral form but in such a way that knowledge is codified and transmitted orally with care, patience and perseverance. Ifá is the Yorùbá traditional thought system per excellence (Abímbólá (1976, p. vi).

The preservation of the Yorùbá culture and philosophy is guaranteed through *Ifá*. All the cultural contents of *Ifá* have been 'codified' in one form or the other. These codifications are in *Ifá* symbols in forms of *Odu Ifá* (medium within which *Ifá* corpuses are coded into chapters and verses). Karenga (2012) opines that,

nowhere is the profundity and beauty of African spirituality more apparent than in the Odu Ifa, the sacred text of the spiritual and ethical tradition of Ifa, which is one of the greatest sacred texts of the world and a classic of African and world literature. Its central message revolves around the teachings of the Goodness of and in the world; the chosen status of humans in the world; the criteria of a good world; and the requirements for a good world.

These *Odu* corpuses are believed by the Yorùbá people in particular and *Ifá* worshippers in general to contain the capacity to solve all existential problems of man. *Ifá* epistles have certain codes attached to them which form the basis of *Ifa* traditional spirituality accounting for the basis of all the Yoruba systems of divination.

*Ifá* philosophy has been observed to be unique among world religions; "*Ifá* literary corpus, *Ifá* philosophy has become an exem-

plary figure in the diversity of world religions philosophy” (Òkún má kindé 2010, p. 22). *Ifá* corpus have been “preserved and disseminated from ancient times. It is believed that in this way the texts in *Ifá* literary corpus have been kept free from errors” (Abímbólá 1976, p. 20). It is further observed that, *Ifá* poems comprised a sacred Yorùbá genre that nobody may add or subtract from. Most of the Yorùbá philosophies are entrenched in *Ifá*. Akintola (1999, pp. 3&4) says *Ifá*,

is an intriguingly rich source, in so far it is true that the thought-pattern of the Yorùbá finds its fullest expressions in the *Ifá* corpus. Therefore, *Ifá* is the natural and logical starting point for any meaningful study which aims at identifying, interpreting, analyzing and evaluating these expressions which constitute Yorùbá philosophical thought...In all embracing relevance, the *Ifá* system serves as the architectonic force portraying the wholeness and completeness of Yorùbá life mode. In fact, in scope, it provides not only the religious and spiritual philosophy, but also the alchemical or kabalaic support for the people. It is the fountain- source of Yorùbá wisdom and the never- dying source of Yorùbá system of thoughts.

The whole of *Ifá* corpus is philosophical in content. Akíntólá, (1999, pp. 1&2) observes that, *Ifá* is a “philosophical scripture and unique source of Yorùbá ethics and metaphysics.” He focuses his work on the identification of “ethical, mystical and metaphysical expressions of *Òrúnmílà*<sup>2</sup>, the codification of which expression is otherwise known as *Ifá*.”

The Yorùbá philosophical solutions are sometimes evinced by verbal code such as, *àwọn baba wa ní...* (Our fathers do say that...). This is called *òrò àgbà* (words of the elders) in Yorùbá tradition. To the Yorùbá people, *òrò àgbà bí ò sẹ ló wùúrò á sẹ lójó alé* (elders words must sooner or later come to pass). This is sometimes rendered as: *àwọn àgbà ní...* (The elders say...), *àwọn Yorùbá ní...* (The Yorùbá do say that...) or *Àwọn Yorùbá máa ní pòwè pé...* (According to the

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<sup>2</sup> *Òrúnmílà* is the *Ifá* progenitor: The Yorùbá divinity of wisdom, knowledge and a prophet to the divinities and human beings.

Yorùbá proverb that...). This is “generational.” It is handed down from one generation to another. According to Abimbólá (1977a, p. 31), “In a culture... the wisdom of the past are highly valued and regarded by all.” What philosophy entails is wisdom, as explained earlier. In other words, these sets of words are indisputable in nature. The authority of such words cannot be challenged. Therefore, every aspect of the Yorùbá life must be connected in one way or the other with *Ifá*, the philosophy of the Yorùbá people, based on their knowledge of the symbols of *Ifá*, and the symbols of *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* as one of the important Yorùbá recreational means are to be related in this work. This work will among other things seeks to establish *Ifá*'s concepts and elements in *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* as they relate to the Yorùbá philosophy.

Recreation, in any society is an innovation and invention closely associated with people's values. It “denotes the mental excellence of the people” (Roy 2003, p. 657). This is because, it is a social cultural activity established by the people. While there have been different researches on *Ifá* divination system, no known attempt has been made to associate *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* with *Ifá* divination. This gap is filled by this study. This study will demonstrate the inter-code relationships of *Ifá* divination with *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n*. The study will further account for the value of *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* within the Yorùbá sociocultural and religion contexts.

Scholars in the areas of sociology and anthropology of Yorùbá have written about Yorùbá traditional games. Kòmọ́láfẹ́ (1978 pp. 178 – 88) estimates there are over twenty Yorùbá traditional games. He categorized them into four: indoor games, outdoor games, children games and adult games. Among all the games, *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* is, according to Mustapha and Aromọ́lẹ̀ (1976, p. 139), a game that has more materials than the other games. It is the only Yorùbá game that has international recognition; it is also the game that has the most standardized rules and processes-probably because of the game's association with *Ifá*.

Ládélé, et al (1986, pp. 1–18), Dáramólá and Jéjé (1967, pp. 8–12), and Mustapha and Arómọláran (1976, pp. 139 & 40) worked on the principles governing *Ayò Ọlọ́pón*. However, these works did not attempt to relate symbols and codes in the *Ifá* divination system to those symbols and codes in *Ayò Ọlọ́pón*. This was probably because their works were more of an introduction meant for illustration and pedagogical purposes for secondary schools. Because of this, there was no mention in these works of any link between the two.

*Ayò Ọlọ́pón* is one of the Yorùbá traditional games played locally and internationally today. For instance, apart from its popularity among the Yorùbá, it is called *Gisoro* in Burundi, *Oware* in Ghana, *Achochodi* in Ivory Coast, *Adjito/Vadjito* in Benin, *Ayo Eleh* in Igbo and *Kalati* in Sweden (Appiah-Aggy 2013, pp. 1&2). *Ayò Ọlọ́pón* is first among equals in Yorùbá local games because of its traditional value and importance in the Yorùbá culture. The game plays important roles in some Yorùbá festivals. For instance, it was introduced to the Ọ̀ṣun Ọ̀ṣogbo festival<sup>3</sup> some nineteen years ago (Azuh 2011, p. 14). It is “one of the oldest local games among the Yorùbá and has been in existence, since time immemorial” (Fatureti 2015, p. 1).

*Ayò Ọlọ́pón* is played on the traditional game board containing twelve holes on two horizontal lines (six holes by the right hand and left sides of the players). The game is mostly played by two matured males (from fifteen years of age) in the open and watched by the spectators. It is played in such a way that, the players face each other with the game board at the centre of the players sitting on a bench or object. The game starts with each of the twelve holes occupied by four *Ayò* seeds, making a total number of forty-eight *Ayò* seeds. Any of the players takes any four *Ayò* seeds in a hole from his row. The game progresses in this manner until *Ayò* seeds containing two or

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<sup>3</sup> Ọ̀ṣun Ọ̀ṣogbo is a river goddess, worshipped annually by the devotees.

three *Ayò* seeds in a hole up to the maximum number of five holes are won in a movement of *Ayò* seeds. The winner is determined by the player having more number of *Ayò* seeds than the opponent. That is, a player with more than twenty-four *Ayò* seeds emerges as a winner, since the total number of *Ayò* seeds on the game board is forty-eight. It is possible for the two players to play to a draw. In this case, no winner emerges. This is traditionally described as *òmi* (draw game). The game continues until a winner emerges twice. If a loser of *Ayò* game is defeated more than twice, he gives way for another *Ayò* player to display his competence with the winner. However, this rule is not rigid, as the players may continue after a player is defeated twice, if there is no interested player to play. "Sowing" in *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* is carried out when a player drops the *Ayò* seeds in his hand one after the other in each of the holes on the *Ọpọ̀n Ayò* in an anticlockwise movement until all the *Ayò* seeds in his hand are exhausted. None of the holes must be skipped when sowing. "Harvesting" or "capturing" is done, when the *Ayò* seeds in a hole (after sowing) are two or three up to the maximum of five holes in a single movement or sowing of *Ayò* seeds.

It is significant to examine and investigate critically the relationship of *Ifá* with the game so as to determine with a reasonable degree of accuracy, its value in relation to Yorùbá culture. This is because, "The Yorùbá regard *Ifá* as the repository of their beliefs and moral values...In traditional Yorùbá society, the authority of *Ifá* permeated every aspect of life because the Yorùbá regard *Ifá* as the voice of the divinities and the wisdom of the ancestors" (Abimbólá 1977a, p. v). A thorough investigation of the link between the game and *Ifá* will significantly improve our understanding of the values and the importance of the game beyond entertainment.

Consequently, efforts are made to show and establish the semi-otic philosophical interrelationship of *Ifá* divination and *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n*. These levels of relationship are analyzed into or around moral code that provide guides for life and good living. The establishment of

this semiotic element will afford us the opportunity to relate *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n*'s code to *Ifá* code. This new semiotic orientation and significations about *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* as established in this study will go a long way to help discover and redefine the relevance and importance of the game in the Yorùbá sociocultural and religious lives. Cultural studies that focus attention on these areas, that is, the semiotic interlinks between *Ifá*, and *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* are therefore desirable. Not much (if any) attention has been paid to the sociocultural and recreational aspects of *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n*, in relation to *Ifá*.

*Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* is known and played world wide. The present links between *Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* will be one of the proofs on the originality of the game with the Yorùbá people on one hand and to extend the value of the game beyond social or recreation to philosophical life of the people on the other hand. For instance, the game has been discovered to have medical values such as cure of dementia, hypertension and poor sight (Òkékándé 2017). To this effect, a proposal was made by Oyeleke et al (2014, p. 25) on the benefits of inventing *Ayò* game on social media, "since *Ayò* is the most ancient traditional board games, it implies that sufferers will once again have the feel of their culture on mobile platforms...Its acceptability by demented people and potential sufferers will not be an issue...These attributes we believe will help African sufferers to recover faster." This agitation is aimed to have access to the game anywhere. However, their work did not relate the medical value *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* with *Ifá*. For instance, the medical value in *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* has been investigated to be derived from *Ifá*-the source of all medicine in Yorùbá culture (Òkékándé 2017).

Likewise, *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* is to be further investigated to have philosophical value derived from *Ifá*- the foundation of the Yorùbá culture. It is noted here that, some Yorùbá social and religious problems are being solved through some statements associated with *Ifá* corpus and *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* philosophies. In the opinion of Ọlatunji (2008, p. 62), "African philosophy is an attempt by philosophers to



make the folklores, myth, soothsaying, religion and other aspects of African culture relevant to African needs not through any dogmatic attachment to standards used in evaluating the African culture or African culture itself, but through creative critical examination and logical methodologies which are not peculiar to Western culture." The excavationists movement in African philosophy plays a vital role here. According to the Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2017, p. 1), "some of them aimed at retrieving and reconstructing presumably lost African identity from the raw materials of African culture. The scholars under this are called 'ethnophilosophy'...and they thrived in the early period of African philosophy...Their concern was to build and demonstrate unique African identity in various forms."

The explorations of African oral tradition, symbols objects and artifacts are means by which African philosophy can be established without any foreign influence. The call for the use of African heritages as springboards of development has been made by Walter (2009, p. 160) who argued that, "so long as any African society could at least maintain its inherited advantages springing from many centuries of evolutionary change, then for so long could the superstructure continue to expand and give further opportunities to whole groups of people, to classes and to individuals."

This research work will show the apparent links between *Ifá* divination and *Ayò Ọlórún* in terms of moral code. The moral virtues are encouraged and vices discouraged, as encoded in *Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlórún* philosophies. "The field of ethics (or moral philosophy) involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of rights and wrong behavior...This may involve articulating the good habits that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow, or consequences of our behavior on others" (Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017, p. 1 ). The Yorùbá people express their beliefs on *ìwà* (character) as stipulated in *Ifá*. Akintola (1999, pp. xv and xvi) succinctly express this opinion that:

It is in this sense that we can rightly say that the set of moral beliefs and practices implied in the Ifá corpus has been conditioned by Yorùbá culture and the Yorùbá system of thought from which that the term “Yorùbá ethics” may be conceived as a meaningful and illustrative concept. It is also appropriate to conceive ethics or moral philosophy as the branch of philosophy that is concerned with what is morally good and bad, right and wrong, fitting, right or obligatory to do or not to do...The Yorùbá, too, are not excluded from developing set of rules of conduct regulating inter- personal and general societal conduct.

This present study of the belief of the Yorùbá people on *ìwà* demonstrates that such moral codes are not limited to the religious aspects of Yorùbá lives, but extends to social aspect of their life. The realization of the moral philosophy of the Yorùbá people beyond religion demonstrates the importance associated with it.

*Ayò Ọlópọ̀n*, relates with the social epistemology, “the subfield of epistemology that addresses the way that groups, institutions, or other collective bodies might come to acquire knowledge” (2017, p. 3). This game is one of the ways Yorùbá people acquires knowledge. In this case, moral knowledge associated with the Yorùbá beliefs, based on right and wrong, deemed fit to be justifiable, in a just society are evinced from *Ifá* in relation with *Ayò Ọlópọ̀n*. *Ọpọ̀n-Ifá* (Ifa divination board) and *Ọpọ̀n Ayò* (game board) on which the divination and game process are carried out belong to art works of the Yorùbá people closely associated with epistemology. This is because, such art works are expressions of the Yorùbá knowledge. As a result of this, “there is indeed something about the content of an artwork that can be said to be knowledge producing...Works of arts are taken to possess the ability to give us imaginative and epistemic access to certain kinds of experiences relevant to moral knowledge and judgment. Not only can we respond emotionally to particular moral situations presented through artworks; we cannot help but find ourselves morally outraged or saddened by the plight of certain fictional characters” (Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017, pp. 6&7). In this study, the *Ifá* philosophies are discussed around or into moral code

to establish that- *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* philosophies are encapsulated or evinced from *Ifá*.

### **Theoretical Framework: semiotic approach**

Code- is the semiotic element employed for this study. A code is "a means of conveying messages, a vehicle of communication...The coding takes place simultaneously on different levels, and many other factors, such as memory span and general extralinguistic knowledge, play a part" (Geoffery and Short 1981 pp. 122 and 124). The linkage of signs and their meanings are made known by code. This may be realized in a multi-level coding as in this study, where there is simultaneous or concurrent use of moral code to establish the relationship of *Ifá* philosophy with *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n*. Code helps to simplify phenomena in order to make it easier to communicate experience. Interpretation of code (which hermeneutics is concerned with), is important in the understanding the meaning of a sign, symbol or text. In this case, the interpretation of moral code of *Ifá* with *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* is desirable for the understanding of philosophical thoughts associated with *Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* elements (see Irvine 2004).

The interpretation and understanding of philosophical thoughts in *Ifá* texts is to be related to *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* context. In this case, the interpretation of *Ifá* as an art work is interpreted as "subsequent art works or supplementary texts" of *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n*. An ethical or moral code is one of the major themes in *Ifá* corpus; this is informed by the importance the Yorùbá people attached with it. The understanding of the knowledge of moral theme in *Ifá* can properly be interpreted around codes. This is because- codes are semiotic elements into which the messages of *Ifá* ethical philosophy can be comprehended. Ethical philosophy is "an aspect of philosophy which examines human actions and conducts inasmuch as they are judged good or bad, right or wrong. Thus it is also a subject that

concerns itself with matters of duty, obligation and moral responsibility of individuals” (Aderibigbe 2016, p. 152).

The meaning of a symbol (including linguistic, object or art work) is revealed by the code of that symbol. “A symbol is a representation of a meaning or a value, an external sign or gesture which by association conveys an idea or stimulates a feeling. All communication, whether through language or otherwise, makes use of symbols” (Maciver and Page 1949, p. 153). This means, communication is made possible by symbol. However, meaning associated with any symbol is conveyed by code. For instance, *ìwà* (character), on which is the major concept of Yorùbá moral or ethical philosophy rests, is a symbol. “What Ifá wants us to understand by using this symbol is that every individual must take care of his character” (Abimbola 1975, p. 400). One can only comprehend meaning of *ìwà* in Yorùbá tradition through the moral or ethical code associated with it in *Ifá*.

Despite the fact that the *Ifá* text is a culture bound genre, our data is translated into English for the benefit of a wider audience. Some cultural terms or names are not translated to preserve the local or cultural flavor, color and values of African oral arts; this is to avoid misinterpretation and low comprehension “since the indigenous language is more conducive to the interpretation of an indigenous genre” (Ilésanmí 2004, p. 111). However, such are explained as may be necessary to ensure their understanding.

### **Why Semiotics with African Philosophy?**

On one hand, African philosophies have evolved from signs, symbols, objects and artifacts on which the basis of the knowledge of semiotics is established. On another hand, semiotic systems encode and decode the philosophies- and semiotic analysis can be applied to anything connected with humans, including all philosophies. Looking at culture from semiotic perspectives, Irvine (2004, p. 2) defines culture “as the sum of rule-governed, shared, learned and

learnable, transmittable, symbolic activity used by a group in any given place and time." Irvine's definition is relevant to the context of this work, as it sees culture as a phenomenon that is associated with a group (Yorùbá in this case). The phenomenon also has attributes of 'rules' that are 'learned' or 'learnable' and through symbols, are transmitted from one generation to another. This means that, many cultural systems and the Yorùbá cultural system in this case are codified in objects and symbols. In other words, the Yorùbá cultural system can be studied and properly understood in the use of cultural objects and symbols, and this is reflected in all aspects of Yorùbá life. The challenge of identification or discovery, reading and interpreting African symbols, objects and artifacts as they relate with African cultural, religious social and philosophical ways of life among others is open to research, especially for archeologists and anthropologists.

Some social and religious cultural values of the Yorùbá people are yet to be established; such as the cultural significance in *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n*, which has not been related to other aspects of the Yorùbá people beyond relaxation. Since the authority of *Ifá* permeated every aspect of Yorùbá life (as explained earlier), its relationship with *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* is important. It is noteworthy that, some things have been taken for granted regarding the traditional game: *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* and its relationship with *Ifá* philosophy. For example, it is observed in this study that, some significant symbols on *Ọpọ́n-Ifá* have been examined within the *Ifá* divination system alone without relating them with their presence in other Yorùbá social or religious aspects of life. This has denied us the opportunity of having in-depth understanding of *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* philosophies in relation with *Ifá* as social organization and practices among the Yorùbá.

### Analysis and Discussion

In Yorùbá culture, it is absolutely impossible to talk about moral philosophies without looking at *ìwà* (character). This is because, the Yorùbá believe that- *ìwà* is the essence of living. There is good character and there is bad character. Virtues of good character such as patience, hard-work, generosity, benevolence among others are encouraged; and vices such as laziness, wickedness, theft, selfishness are discouraged. Many extant Yorùbá values are associated with *ìwà* to the extent that, it denotes religion- *ìwà lẹ̀sìn* (character is religion). Integrity of an individual is measured or adjudged by his or her moral- *ìwà*, known with the person in Yorùbá society.

The moral philosophy associated with *ìwà* is not limited to when an individual is alive on the surface of the earth alone- but, it is a determinant factor to life after- heaven. In other words, an individual with good character, which the Yorùbá associates with *omọ́lúàbí* (one with good character) “makes heaven”; while a person with bad character on earth “loses heaven.” One can say that, there is no any other thing that the Yorùbá value more than good character coded as *ìwà rere* or *ìwà omọ́lúàbí*. *Ìwà* gains value over riches and wealth.

The Yorùbá believe that whatever may be the achievement of any man on earth, if he does not have good *ìwà* to go along with it, that person has actually achieve nothing. Many Ifá poems therefore mention the importance of *ìwà* to human life. Indeed, Ifá divination poetry states that a person who does not have good *ìwà* while on earth, will be punished in Ọ̀run after his death...It is the wish of Olódùmarè and the ancestors that human beings should uphold the moral values of the society...This is the reason why the Yorùbá say: “*ìwà lẹ̀sìn*.” (Good character is the essence of religion) (Abimbọ́la 1977a, p. 33).

To demonstrate the Yorùbá thoughts and beliefs on *ìwà*, it is said to connote the *ẹ̀wà* (beauty) of an individual. In other words, an individual with good character has beauty (looks attractive and cherished). As explained earlier, some epistemological philosophies are

encoded in people's art works. The Yorùbá art works of *Ọ̀pọ̀n Ifá* and *Ọ̀pọ̀n Ayò*, on which *Ifá* divination and *Ayò* game are performed, belong to cultural elements that evinced the beauty, aesthetic and philosophical thoughts of the Yorùbá people.

The Yorùbá people give prominence to moral- *ìwà*, even over money or wealth. This is contained in *Ifá* corpus- *Ọ̀bàrà Ìwòrì*, in Agboḷá (2012, p. 57) (with author's translation) that,

*Èni tó bá fẹ̀ràn owó láfẹ̀jú, ìwà rẹ̀ a bàjẹ́  
Ìwà rere ni ẹ̀sọ́ ẹ̀niyàn.*

Those who worship money too much spoil their character.  
Good character is better than riches.

Money should be controlled towards implementation of good things for the betterment of the society at large. "The principle of *ìwà* shows that African traditional religions are based on profound and meaningful philosophical ideas" (Abimbólá 1975, p. 418). It should be noted that, the *Ifá* moral or ethical code, especially the philosophical ones, are unlimited. In other words, "the thematic contents of Yorùbá Ethics are copiously revealed in several portions of *Ifá* Corpus...However, too, it is not possible to exhaust the list of themes making up *Ọ̀rúnmilá's* Code of Ethics" (Akintọla 1999, p. 99). The inexhaustible moral themes in *Ifá* are informed by the prominence the Yorùbá people associate with it in their religious and social beliefs.

In order to demonstrate the prominence that the Yorùbá associates with the moral aspect of their life, the moral philosophies are coded through religion such as *Ifá*. For instance, Sàlámi (2002, p. 836) notes in *Ọ̀sẹ́ Ọ̀bàrà*, showing *Ifá's* aversion to 'greed'.

*... Ọlómọ a jẹ́ diẹ̀diẹ̀ láá p'Ọ̀rúnmilá ...  
Ọ̀rúnmilá pé ká kíyèsí àwọn tí n'jẹ́ ijẹ́ wọ̀mù.  
Ó ní ẹ́ mọ́ wo abọ́ ìgbẹ̀yìn wọn ẹ̀ẹ́ dáá.  
Ó ní sùgbọ̀n ẹ̀ni tí n'jẹ́ diẹ̀diẹ̀,*

tí o jẹ èrù mọ ọn,  
ipáa wọn ọ níí kaa.  
Ngba ọ jẹ pé ọòtọ ni fi n rin...  
Njọ eku kéré kéré kéré.  
Diédìè N lọpẹẹ jẹẹ là ...

...*Ọrúnmilà* said we should notice those that eat with greed 'wait to see their ultimate end'.

He said 'their terminal end would never be fine'.  
'But whoever that eats little by little' 'and refuses to take what is not his' ...  
He said that person would never suffer in the hands of his foes.  
Since it is with truth that he does his things ...on days of few rats little is what  
Ọpẹ would eat to make wealth ...

It is observed that, the moral philosophies are coded not only through religion such as *Ifá* alone but, in their social aspect of life as well. *Ayò Ọlọpọ́n* is one of such social institutions through which the Yorùbá moral philosophies are propagated, preserved and disseminated in Yorùbá society.

Yorùbá (*Ifá*) philosophy is against greed, as it is one of the vices of *omólúàbí* (the Yorùbá concept of good character). For example, in the above *Ifá* verses, *Ọrúnmilà* warned against any *Ifá* diviner that is greedy, by taking or accepting those things meant for *Ifá* oracle: *èrù-Ifá* (*Ifá* sacred gifts), converting it to personal (diviner's) use or gains. This is taken to be a form of manipulation to *Ifá* divination practice. The *Ifá* moral philosophical excerpts above are extended to *Ayò Ọlọpọ́n* as well. For example, as it is forbidden for the *Ifá* priest to convert *Ifá* sacred gifts to his personal use, it is equally observed and enforced in *Ayò Ọlọpọ́n* that- players must not through dubious means- manipulate *Ayò* seeds for his selfish or personal benefits or gains. That is, as it is unethical for the *Ifá* priest to eat *Ifá* sacred gifts refers to as *èrù-Ifá*. This form of rule is equally enforced on *Ayò Ọlọpọ́n*. For instance, it is binding on the players against *èrù-şíşe* (manipulation by dubious act) during the process of the game.



In *Ifá* divination, the use of the pre-*Ifá* divination money as sacrifice (realized in form of *èrù-Ifá*) is not to satisfy the personal interest of *Ifá* priest; but it is specified or rendered by *Ifá* oracle on how it must be used. Therefore, the money realized through this form (pre-*Ifá* divination) is sacrilegious. It must not be manipulated by the *Ifá* priest (Òkẹ̀wándé 2017). Abímbólá (1968, p. 37) explains these symbols of *Ifá* pre-divination fees as prescribed by the *Ifá* corpus, *Ọ̀yẹ̀kú Méjì* that:

*Ejì: èrù tí ibò ifá ó gbà.  
Èyí jẹ́ ara owó tí babaláwo n' gbà gẹ́gẹ́ bí erù.  
Èyá itẹ́nì ní owó tí babaláwo ó gbà, kó tóó tẹ́nì láti dá Ifá*

Two: for lots is received from client by *Ifá* priest.  
This is part of offering that *babaláwo* receives as gift.  
Three: for mat spreading is money that *babaláwo* receives before he spreads mat to perform divination.

The sum total of these symbols is five (5), as a pre-divination obligatory offering or consultation fee that must be paid for *Ifá* divination to be on course. The two (2)- is a symbol for lots, while three (3)- is a symbol for mat spreading during the process of *Ifá* divination (as contained in the *Ifá* corpus above). These figures in *Ifá* divination are equally connected with figures in the *Ayò Ọ̀lọ́pọ̀n*. For example, it is observed in this study that, these numbers control the capturing in *Ayò Ọ̀lọ́pọ̀n*. Two (2) or three (3) only be captured in a hole at a time. The maximum number of holes to capture seeds at a sowing is also five (5) holes (as earlier explained). This means, harvesting of *Ayò* seeds is possible in any hole containing 2 or 3 seeds between 1-5 holes on a board (including sown seeds). "Each contestant has the opportunity of taking two or three *ayò* seeds found in any of the holes of the opponent spoils (Orímóógùnjé 2004, p. 39). These numbers (2, 3 or 5) are guided in both *Ifá* divination and *Ayò Ọ̀lọ́pọ̀n* by moral or ethical philosophy. While the moral code against fraud by the *Ifá* priest to convert *Ifá* oracular gifts described as *èrù Ifá* (*Ifá*

fraud), as shown in the *Ifá* corpus above- it is referred to in the context of *Ayò Ọlórọ́n* as *èrú Ayò* (*Ayò* fraud). There is tone variation as a result of change of context-*Ifá* divination to *Ayò Ọlórọ́n*. In both *Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlórọ́n* philosophies, contentment with one's rights in life is encouraged, while greed is discouraged and abhorred. References to both *Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlórọ́n* show that 'tenets' of the Yorùbá are inscribed, entrenched and encapsulated in their various symbols: religious, social, political and economic among others.

In another context, fraud is unethical to the *Ifá* profession, as in *Ayò Ọlórọ́n*. These moral or ethical philosophies are enforced in the knowledge, understanding and interpretation of the outcome of the divination which are exclusively revealed by the *Ifá* priest. It is widely believed in the Yorùbá religions generally, and in *Ifá* in particular, that, it is impossible for *Ifá* to lie, eventhough, the *Ifá* priest can manipulate the *Ifá* oracle's message to suit his interest. In this case, the voice of *Ifá* oracle has been manipulated by man, the- *Ifá* priest. However, the god (*Ifá* oracle)- is not to be blamed of any repercussion as a result of this manipulation. This is because, *Ifá's* profession is associated with truth, honesty, and transparency. *A kùí sawo ká puró* (the person sworn to the divination profession mustn't lie) (Adéèkó 2010, p. 287). The symbol of *Ọrúnmilà* (*Ifá* progenitor) symbolizes truth, honesty and transparency. According to Şàlámi (2002, p. 660) on *Ìwòrì Mèjì* verse one:

... *A díá fún ọ̀pẹ̀ sẹ̀gì sẹ̀gì,*  
*Baalẹ̀ a sòótó,*  
*Ọ̀pẹ̀ rẹ̀, ọ̀ótó ní í sọ ...*  
*ọ̀pẹ̀ ọ̀ gbọ̀dọ̀ puró.*  
*Ọ̀rọ̀ tó ba sọ ọ̀ níí yin.*  
*Bẹ̀ ni ọ̀ ríí.*

... Cast divination for ọ̀pẹ̀ sẹ̀gì sẹ̀gì  
 The chief truth teller.  
 Ọ̀pẹ̀ tells the truth always...  
 Ọ̀pẹ̀ would never tell lies

her pronouncements would never be found to be untrue.  
It would be exactly as foretold ...

*Ọ̀pẹ̀* is known as 'Palm-tree' which symbolizes *Ọ̀rúnmilá*. *Ọ̀pẹ̀* is used to symbolize *Ọ̀rúnmilá*'s physical ascension to heaven (Abimbólá 1968, p. 41 and 1977b, p. iv).

This virtue of *omọ̀luàbí* is also contains in *EjìOgbè*, that, truth is a positive directive for living. Truth must always be demonstrated in all situations. Akintola (1999, pp. 140&41) says (with author's translation):

*Ṣ'òtító.*  
*Èní ṣòtító,*  
*Ni imọ̀lẹ̀ gbè*

Speak truth,  
be truthful always  
For the gods or divinities  
favour only those who  
speak the truth

Attitudes such as lying and dishonesty violate moral code and are subject to severe punishment not only by human but, by the divinities as well. In the same manner, *Ayò Ọ̀lọ́pọ̀n* is mostly played in the open, where everybody will have access to see and comment on the process of the game, since most of the spectators have the knowledge of the game. However, any act of dishonesty is referred to as *òjọ́óró* (Dáramólá and Jéjé 1967, p. 10), and is always frowned at. *Ọ̀jọ́óró* is synonymous with dishonesty. The context of use differentiates the word from religion to social life (*Ifá* divination and *Ayò Ọ̀lọ́pọ̀n*). The connections in the moral codes of *Ifá* with *Ayò Ọ̀lọ́pọ̀n* is informed by their relationship, which is in this study, observed to be an extension of the *Ifá* philosophies in *Ayò Ọ̀lọ́pọ̀n*.

The *Ifá* moral or ethical philosophical thoughts above equally encourage *Ifá* priests to accept gifts in the name of *Ifá* minimally. In *Ayò Ọ̀lọ́pọ̀n*, this is reflected in the harvesting or capturing of *Ayò*

seeds. For instance, only *Ayò* seeds in a hole or those holes that contain two or three or its multiples up to five holes can only be harvested or captured at once. This makes harvesting or capturing of *Ayò* seeds to be regulated, in such a way that, the enjoyment values of the game is sustained. Any act of manipulation of *Ayò* seeds against this rule is regarded as act of dishonesty. This attitude or behavior is discouraged in *Ayò* game, as it violates the established (cultural) rule associated with the harvesting the *Ayò* seeds- minimally. *Ifá* moral philosophy of eating gifts minimally (as evinced from the *Ifá* quotation above) is extended to the rule of *Ayò Ọlópón* philosophy about life. In this case, *Ayò Ọlópón* is related in this study to relate with *Ifá* philosophy that teaches and preaches satisfaction with little things with peace rather than to live in plenteous without peace. The appellation of *Ọrúnmìlà* (the *Ifá* progenitor) attests to this as contained in the *Ifá* moral philosophy above- *Ọlómọ a jẹ dièdiè* (one that is contented with little by little).

The Yorùbá believe that *téré-téré kése sàṣà jù jùgbún-jùgbún páfẹ*-literally meaning that, small-small that last is better than plenty for just a while. *Ayò Ọlópón* is equally guided and regulated by these moral or ethical philosophical thoughts. The gradual or little by little principle of life that the *Ifá* corpus encapsulates is coded in *Ayò Ọlópón* that: *Dièdiè ni ọmọ Ayò ndínkù tí tí yóò fi tán páta'* (The *Ayò* seeds begin to be reduced little by little until it finishes) (*Dáramọlá* and *Jéjé* 1967, p. 11). This moral code has shown the influence of *Ifá* moral philosophy on *Ayò Ọlópón* game. One of the values and aesthetics of *Ayò* game is lost or eroded, if all the seeds are manipulated by harvesting most of the *Ayò* seeds by a player. This is because; the enjoyment of the game that should be shared by both players has been manipulated by one player. For example, if most of the *Ayò* seeds are hurriedly harvested by a player, it terminates the course or duration of the game and the cultural value is lost. This is why the game becomes more interesting if the two players are skilled- so that, the process of the game will be long before a winner emerges. In this

case, *Ayò* becomes interesting to both the players as well as the spectators, because, there is room for both players to engage each other and show their prowess, relate and interact together. Likewise, life becomes enjoyable and interesting if an individual is not greedy, by manipulating things for generality to oneself. Individual is likely to live longer as a metaphor of *Ayò* seeds that are won minimally rather than maximally that put an abrupt termination to the process of *Ayò* game.

*Ifá* moral philosophy is further evinced in *Ògbè yónú* contained in Agboólá (2012, p. 46) (with author's translation that):

*kérékéré leku njawo*  
*Adífa fun Èèrà*  
*Tí yoo sàkapò ilẹ̀ pé títítí*  
*Ayé tété ni un ó jẹ*  
*Èmi ò jẹ wàràwàrà kí nwáá kú*  
*Ayé tété ni un ó jẹ*

The rat eats its objects slowly  
Cast divination for Ants  
Who will associate with the floor for a long period.  
I will enjoy life smoothly  
I will be patient and not be in haste so that I won't die  
I will enjoy life slowly.

From the *Ifá* corpus above, moral philosophy is canvassed by the habit of the rat and ant that eat their foods minimally as against greedily. By this gradual and minimal habit of eating, the ants eat for long. In order to broaden our knowledge of the *Ifá* epistle on moral philosophy, the moral teaching is extended beyond human environment to the animals as well. For example, the rats' manner or behavior of eating leather is described as minimal. These are done in order to bring the *Ifá* teaching nearer home as encoded in *Ayò Ọlópón* game, as a form of applied *Ifá* moral philosophy. The moral theme

of the *Ifá* corpus above ends with supporting contentment contrary to the habit of being greedy that result in untimely death.

The minimal capturing of *Ayò* seeds should be done jointly by the players. This prevents a player from monopolizing the game to his own advantage only. For instance, the game only becomes interesting if the two players are harvesting *Ayò* seeds little by little until the seeds are almost exhausted on the game board or when it is certain that the seeds harvested by a player are more than the *Ayò* seeds harvested by the opponent player. At this stage, a winner is determined and continuing the game will not make any difference. However, before this stage, there must be sharing of *Ayò* seeds between the two players because, *Jẹ́ kí n jẹ ní máyò dùn* (Harvesting of *ayò* seeds by both *Ayò* players make the game to be interesting). The Yorùbá believe that, *àjọjẹ ló layé* (life becomes interesting by social enjoyment). This philosophy about life is to discourage selfishness and exploitative habit of manipulating good things to oneself.

The ultimate goal of moral philosophy is to achieve character reformation in conformity with good living so as to create an ideal life worthy of living. To achieve this, one must not be too desperate to acquiring wealth and riches of life. The repercussion of this attitude may result in sudden death. This is why the language used in the course of *Ayò* in a statement like, *jayò pa* (He terminates the continuity of the game) is discouraged as such an attitude terminates the continuity of the game. This is even reflected in the use of the expression: *O ò j'ayò pa* (to mean you are not wrong or you have not gone beyond your boundary) in everyday Yorùbá conversations. It is true that it shows prowess and skill, it is not encouraged because, by this individual attitude of selfishness, by harvesting almost all the *Ayò* seeds, it diminishes or sometimes terminates the recreational value and enjoyment of *Ayò*, at that very moment. In the Yorùbá philosophy associated with *Ayò Ọlórún*, one must not put an end to the enjoyment meant for the good living of the generality, because, *enìkan kì í jẹ kílẹ̀ fẹ̀* (one does not eat to change nature).

The moral or ethical code of *Ifá* in relation with *Ayò Ọlórọ́n* is an “applied Ethics.” This is because; moral issues in practice are demonstrated in the religious and social aspects of Yorùbá life. In the *Ayò Ọlórọ́n* context, such an attitude is described as, *Iwà ànìkàn jọpón* (monopolizing the game board). This attitude is unethical to the Yorùbá people. *Ayò Ọlórọ́n* reflects the philosophy of the Yorùbá people as found in the daily use of moral codes in *Ayò Ọlórọ́n* to regulate the behaviors of people in the society. The Yorùbá believe that whoever monopolizes benefits of generality will in the end, singularly face the consequences in life. This reflects in their philosophy of life in regard to *Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlórọ́n* that, *eni tó ba dáyé jẹ, yóò dá'ìyà jẹ* (whoever monopolizes the benefits of life to himself or herself will personally face the repercussion); because, benefits of life are for the generality as against simply the individual. *Ayé kì í sẹ tenì kankan*. (Life is for all). As far as *Ifá* priest cannot manipulate the *Ifá* divination on the *Ọpón Ifá*, against the wishes of *Ifá* oracle for his own benefits so also it is binding on *Ayò Ọlórọ́n* players to monopolize the *Ọpón Ayò* meant for the benefits of the two players. These elements (*Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlórọ́n*) demonstrate transparency, which is one of the moral ethics upheld by *Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlórọ́n*.

The above *Ifá* corpus equally encourages thinking about ‘the end.’ Those *Ifá* priests that are greedy by eating *èrù-Ifá* don’t think about their end in life. Their end is not always good- *ìgbẹ̀yìn wọn èé dáá*. This code is linked to, *ìgbẹ̀yìn laláyò ó ta* in the *Ayò* context. This means that, it is the end of the *Ayò* that matters (winner or loser). The Yorùbá believe in *ẹ̀yìn ló jù* (the end matters most) or *ẹ̀yìn làárò* (one should always think about the end). These links in the moral code of *Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlórọ́n* suggest some levels of relationships between the two. It will be recalled from the *Ifá* corpus above that, the moral or ethical philosophy about the *Ifá* professionals that convert *Ifá* sacred gift, *èrú Ifá*, to their own personal use or gains- *ìgbẹ̀yìn wọn èéé dáá* (their end will be disastrous). Sometimes, *ẹ̀yìn* or *ìgbẹ̀yìn* (afterwards or end), is used as metaphor. For example, the relations of

the dead are usually greeted among the Yorùbá that *ẹ̀yìn òkú yóò dára o* (calamities will not survive the demise of the dead). The left behind, especially the family of the dead is metaphorically refers to as *ẹ̀yìn òkú*. The Yorùbá belief about *ẹ̀yìn or ẹ̀gbẹ̀yìn* (afterwards or end) is expressed in Yorùbá aphorism, *ẹ̀yìn là á rọ̀*, which literally means one should bears the end in mind always. This is a philosophical statement used by the Yorùbá people to ensure a just society. Domestic animals such as goats or sheep and dogs are named *ẹ̀yìn lààró* so as to bring the memory of moral philosophy “nearer home” in their daily activities. The *Ifá* moral or ethical philosophies also contain in *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* to bring the memory to their minds so as to reflect in their manners of living.

Sometimes, Yorùbá moral philosophies are expressed in the use of proverbs employed when playing *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n*. For instance, Orímóògùnǵẹ̀ (2014, P. 42) notes the importance of proverbs that relate to *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* in the lives of Yorùbá people when he says that, “*Òwe* (proverb) which are aphorisms through which the Yorùbá give explanation to crucial issues also occur in *Ayò*-players’ verbal behavior. Through *òwe*, one can easily understand the Yorùbá society.” In other words, the intelligence of the society that can be measured by their recreation explained earlier in this work is revealed in *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* to demonstrate further the Yorùbá intelligence in their recreation.

*Ifá* is an embodiment of Yorùbá cultural life, which is mostly rendered through their proverbs. Some of these moral philosophical teachings are observed in *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ̀n* in the form of proverbs. Clement, Vicient and Casanavas (2009, p. 3) observe that:

There are many Yorùbá proverbs using terms like “*ayò*” and “*omọ ayò*”, which talks about perseverance, endurance, confidence in one, ingenuity, audacity or wisdom. This fact illustrates how *ayò* game is very popular and known among the Yorùbá people, as is reflected in various moral and didactic sentences in their language.



Some Yorùbá proverbs preach the virtues of *omọ́lúàbí* as contained in the quotation above. These virtues are also manifested in the game of *Ayò Ọ̀lọ́pọ̀n*. Mustapha and Arómọ́lára (1976, p. 140), for instance, says that, *Ayò títa máa n' fún àwọn tí n' taá ní ẹ̀mí sùúrù àti ìrọ̀rì* (playing *ayò* give the players the spirit of patience and perseverance). In terms of the *Ifá* divination system, Abímbọ́lá (1977a, p. 11) says, "It is therefore not surprising that an elaborate system of training involving so much time and patience is marked out for all who aspire to become *Ifá* priests." The quotation above on *Ayò* encourages an individual to be patient. This code is believed in this study to be an extension of *Ifá* philosophy. For instance, the Yorùbá (*Ifá*) philosophy believe that, *sùúrù ni baba ìwà* (morality is entrenched in patience). According to the *Ifá* verses contained in Abímbọ́lá (1975, p. 402):

*Ìwà rẹ̀é*  
*Sùúrú ló bí i.*  
*Àkọ́bí Olódùmarè sè ni bàbá rẹ̀ nàá.*  
*Sùúrù, baba ìwà...*

And what breeds morality is patience.  
 It is the first given by Olódùmarè  
 Patience brings about morality...

It is noted that, *ìwà rere* (good character), is given attention than any other virtues of *omọ́lúàbí* as explained earlier. It is sometimes believed that, *Eni tó ní sùúrù ló lóhun gbogbo*. (Whoever is patient has all things). Explaining the concept of *sùúrù*, Abímbọ́lá succinctly put it that, "the significance of this is that, in order to have good character, a man must first of all have patience... Out of all the attributes which a man with good character have, patience is the most important of them... One must therefore be patient with people and learn to tolerate them in order to have good character" (p. 402).

As earlier explained, *Ifá* moral or ethical philosophies are unlimited; that is, there are a number of *Ifá* corpuses that encapsulate

moral philosophical ideas and themes. *Ifá* philosophical concept about life teaches patience in life. One should not be too desperate towards things of life. For instance, one should be patient and of good character when in a reputable position or riches. This is because, life is transient. In this situation, the Yorùbá moral philosophy of *ìwàpẹ̀lẹ́*, -humility and patience, should be adopted. One in this situation, one should think about *àtìsùn* (death), the ultimate end of all things.

Both systems of *Ifá* divination and *Ayò Ọlọ́pón* encourage, preach and teach 'patience' and 'perseverance.' It will be recalled that, *Ayò* seeds are played in such a way that there are two or three *Ayò* seeds in a hole up to the maximum number of five holes in a movement, before harvesting can be achieved. This means, *Ayò* seeds are more associated with numbers or figures. As a result of this, application of the four basic principles of mathematics: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division are prerequisite to win in *Ayò Ọlọ́pón* game. This means that, it is more of a mental game than physical energy or power (Òkẹwándé 2017). The mathematical principles cannot be applied without deep thinking requiring patience, so as not to miscalculate the showing of *Ayò* seeds. In other words, the game requires strategies. This is connected with the Yorùbá philosophical thought in relation with *Ayò* game that, *eni tó paní láyò lè paní lógun* (whoever can win one in *Ayò* game can defeat one in war). In this regards, defeat in war is not only determined by the weapons of war but, rather on the strategies of using the weapons. Through perseverance, a player that lost once or twice in the game may eventually emerge as a winner. This can only be realized, if he perseveres to continue the game without giving up or quitting as a result of the defeat experienced once or twice. A winner of *Ayò* game should normally defeat his opponent in two rounds before he can be declared *ọ̀ta* (the winner) and the loser *ọ̀pẹ̀* (the defeated or a novice) will concede at this stage. As a result of this, patience and persever-

ance are moral virtues in *Ifá* and here observed to be related with *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* game.

The Yorùbá believe that, *onísùúrù ni í jogun ayé*, meaning that, whoever is patient in life inherits the world. This moral code has given us another insight into Yorùbá philosophies being “retrieved” from *Ifá* elements as proto-code and *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* as a subsidiary or complementary code through symbols. The relationship of *Ifá* moral code with *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* established in this study attests to this opinion that, *Ifá* is the foundation on which the culture of the Yorùbá is laid.

### Conclusion

Analysis of the similar moral codes of *Ifá* and *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* have been explored in this study to establish how the Yorùbá demonstrates their philosophical values in *Ifá* (religion) with *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* (social). It has been found out from this study that, *Ifá* is the foundation on which the culture of the Yorùbá people is consolidated. *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* has been established as having philosophical links with *Ifá*. The findings suggest that, indeed, *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n*'s value is beyond recreation or relaxation as it manifests the Yorùbá philosophy- especially with regards to moral code. This means that, the Yorùbá (*Ifá*) philosophies are encapsulated in other aspects of the Yorùbá life such as *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n*.

Different Africans symbols, objects and artifacts are associated with different philosophies associated with their beliefs and ways of life. Although, Africans generally and Yorùbá people in particular are historically associated with “illiterate societies” there abound historical documents in oral forms, especially in *Ifá*, and *Ayò Ọlọ́pọ́n* game which the philosophies of the Africans in general and the Yorùbá people in particular can be established. This means, there are “traces of the instituted Codes that bear fragments of *Ọ̀rúnmìlà*'s record” (Adéèkọ́ 2010, p. 297). It is by these codes one is able to compre-

hend meaning and knowledge of *Ifá* philosophies in relation to social aspect of Yorùbá life such as *Ayò Olóṣón*.

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