Áfa, the Ǹri-Igbo counterpart of *Ifá*

Conference on *Ifá* divination in Africa & the Diaspora, Harvard University, 14 March 2008. Grupo de Estudios Africanos e Afrobrasileiros em Línguas e Culturas, Universidade do Estado da Bahia, 15 April 2009 (Os caminhos de Ifá).
[20 pp. A4, last modified 10 June 2015]

ABSTRACT: *Áfa* and *Ifá* are two out of of many localizations of a farflung West African 'oracle' (spanning system capabilities of information retrieval and Llullian *ars combīnatōria*) whose digital processor keys natural language text to 256 ordered pairs of 4-bit arrays (ordered binary sets), cf. Fọlọ́rúnsọ & Akínwálé (2009). While being ported south and west from the Benue rivervalley some 500 years ago, the oracle's own name and other proprietary terms underwent sound change in the receiving languages. These phonetic shifts, plus paralinguistic mutations, remain behind as footprints on the transmission routes. The texts themselves and their uses also evolved along their branching path, as emergent élites turned from ancestral legitimation rooted underground, to novel ideas of authority dangling from the sky.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE: Two files of supplementary data included in earlier versions of this manuscript are now posted separately:

Comparison of 4-bit array names and associated information from oracle localizations across 5 historical zones
[1 p. 410 x 230 mm, last modified 28 August 2014]

8-bit semantic key for duplex (8-bit) array names across oracle localizations
[5 pp. 438 x 320 mm, last modified 26 May 2015]

Furthermore, the main printed sources on Ìgbo *Áfa* and Èdó *Ìha Ominigbọn*, being difficult to obtain, are separately posted in the support of transparency in the aforementioned analyses of historical relationship:

Ọ́nwụejị́ọ́gwù (Onwuejeogwu), M. [1978/1997]. *Áfa Symbolism & Phenomenology in Nri Kingdom & Hegemony; an African philosophy of social action*. Ph.D Thesis, University College, London/Ethiope, Benin-City.

Egharhevba, J. [1936/1965]. *Iha Ominigbon; Efen Nokaro, Nogieva, Nogieha, Nogiene, Nogisen kebve Nogiehan*. Kopin-Dogba Press, Benin-City.

Part two of this research can be found in the companion manuscript Before *Wazobia*; *Òminigbọn* and polyglot culture in medieval *9ja*, posted immediately below.

Before *Wazobia*; *Òminigbọn* and polyglot culture in medieval *9ja*

[41 pp. A4, last modified 19 June 2015]
Walter Rodney Seminar, African Studies Center, Boston University, 13 February 2012. Handout [4pp. A4, last modified 8 March 2012]

ABSTRACT: A scholarly reincarnation of Egharhevba's *Ìha Ominigbọn* (1936) is long overdue. This Èdó classic has intrinsic value as cultural description but is virtually unobtainable today and readable only with difficulty. It's also relevant to wider historical relationships — even if not in the Ifẹ̀-centric way intended by its author — and requires critically-informed translation for both academic and popular access.

Preliminary comparisons with Yorùbá *Ifá* and Ìgbo *Áfa* show that Èdó *Òminigbọn* — alias *Ìha* — breaks the presentist mold of an encompassing Yorùbá-Èdó world system (Ògúndìran 2003, 57, cf. Burton 1863, 222). Ìgbo etymologies exist for core *Ìha* terms *ògwẹ́ẹ̀ga* and *n'áàbe*, as well as for Ogbẹide — the second appellation of the person who introduced the system to Èdó (Egharhevba 1936, 3, no tone indicated). Respectively, the Ìgbo sources are *òkwé èja* 'oracle seeds', *n'áàbọ* 'double' and *ò-gbú ìre* '[performing/possessing] very effective [sacrifices/medicine]'. An Ìgbo source is independently plausible from comparison of *Òminigbọn*'s casting method with those of *Áfa* and *Ifá* (Emọvọn 1984, Ọ́nwụejị́ọ́gwù 1978, Abímbọ́lá 1976). Transmission from Ìgbo to Èdó is also consistent with evidence of loanword phonology as to how oracle-specific jargon crossed the southern *9ja* area in medieval times (Manfredi 2009a). Obvious matches between the 256-part semantic keys of *Áfa* and *Ìha* surpass 35% — well above chance similarity — though it is harder to measure the extent of Èdó innovation in the remainder, as well as in the relationship between Èdó oracle narratives (*èría nọ dìmwín*) and their functional counterparts in Yorùbá (*ẹsẹ Ifá* parts 2-6) and in the Gbè-speaking area (Maupoil 1943a, Kligueh 2011b).

These observations and a long list of others support the view that Yorùbá oral history has confused Odùduwà with Ọ̀rúnmìlà (Erediauwa 2004, 206) in the thrall of Ifẹ̀-centric narratives motivated by the modern politics of *9ja*, the *Nàìjá* area, colonial Nigeria (cf. Ryder 1965; Vansina 1971, 457; Law 1973; Ọbáyẹmí 1979). The advanced codification of *Ifá* as compared to its 9ja relatives shows the mnemonic bias of several arguably modular cognitive domains — number, folk biology, folk sociology, theory of mind — plus the nonmodular but eminently memorable genius of paganism (Augé 1982) and its superstimuli (Sperber & Hirschfield 2004, 45).

UPDATE 12 January 2013: On Saturday 5 January 2013, the boss of Ifẹ̀ Central Local Government joined General Akínrìnádé and the Ọ̀ọ̀ni at the commissioning of the gigantic Orí Oló.kun edifice […] at the Mayfair Roundabout (Adéṣìnà 2013). This is the very spot where 9ja police (alias *Sorrow, Tears & Blood*) fatally stampeded a peaceful anti-Ṣíjúwadé protest on Sunday 7 June 1981 (cf. §3 5 of my paper). Public doubling down on the Frobenius myth shows the force of Wazobịan consciousness; in the same vein, Olúpọ̀nà (2011).

Adéṣìnà, B. [2013]. At Orí Oló.kun launch, Yorùbás canvass cultural renaissance. *Guardian* [Lagos], 11 January.

Olúpọ̀nà, J. [2011]. *City of 201 Gods; Ilé-Ifẹ in time, space & the imagination*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

UPDATE 14 April 2014: Prof. Akin Oyèébọ̀dé, progressive eminence of international law at the University of Lagos, explains in this engaging interview (20 min.) his recent proposal at the improvised and unsovereign National Conference to drop the name Nigeria because of its dubious colonial antecedents, its negative notoriety acquired during the past 54 years and its indelible etymological association with the N-word of racist usage.

UPDATE 30 April 2015: Incomplete English translations of 73 chapters of *Ìha Ominigbọn*, prepared on request by Jeff Ọ̀mọ́ruyì (Benin-City), can be read here alongside the second edition of Egharhevba's Èdó text. The unfortunate disappearance of the first edition (1936) from public record leaves unexplained numerous obscurities and inconsistencies of the 1965 text — not to mention a dozen mysterious Bible interpolations!

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE: Part one of this research can be found in the companion manuscript *Áfa*, the Ǹri-Igbo counterpart of *Ifá*, posted immediately above.

Before *Wazobia*

Òminigbọn and polyglot culture in medieval *9ja*[*]

Victor Manfredi
African Studies Center, Boston University
last updated: 19 June 2015

Abstract

A scholarly reincarnation of Egharhevba's *Ìha Ominigbọn* (1936a/1965) is long overdue. This Ẹ̀dó classic has intrinsic value as cultural description but is virtually unobtainable today and readable only with difficulty. It's also relevant to wider historical relationships—even if not in the Ifẹ̀-centric way intended by its author—and requires critically-informed translation for both academic and popular access.

Preliminary comparisons with Yorùbá *Ifá* and Ìgbo *Áfa* show that *Òminigbọn* alias *Ìha* breaks the presentist mold of an encompassing "Yorùbá-Ẹ̀dó world system" (Ògúndìran 2003, 57, cf. Burton 1863a, 222). Igbo etymologies exist for the core *Ìha* terms *ògwẹ́ẹ̀ga* and *n'áàbe* as well as for "Ógbẹ̀ide"—the second appellation of the person who introduced the system to Ẹ̀dó (Egharhevba 1936a, 3, no tones indicated). The respective Ìgbo sources are *òkwé ẹ̀ja* 'oracle seeds', *n'áàbọ* 'double' and *ò-ghú ìre* '[performing/possessing] very effective [sacrifices/medicine]'. An Ìgbo source is independently plausible from comparison of *Òminigbọn*'s casting method with those of *Áfa* and *Ifá* (Emọvọn 1984, Ọ́nwụejiógwù 1978, Abímbọ́lá 1976). Transmission from Ìgbo to Ẹ̀dó is also consistent with evidence of loanword phonology as to how oracle-specific jargon crossed the southern *9ja* area in medieval times (Manfredi 2009a). Obvious matches between the 256-part semantic keys of *Áfa* and *Ìha* surpass 35%—well above chance similarity—though it is harder to measure the extent of Ẹ̀dó innovation in the remainder, as well as the relationship between Ẹ̀dó oracle narratives (*èría nọ́ dìmwín*) and their functional counterparts in Yorùbá (*ẹ́sẹ Ifá* parts 2-6) and in the Gbè-speaking area (Maupoil 1943a, Kligueh 2011b).

These observations and a long list of others support the view that Yorùbá oral history has "confused Odùduwà with Ọ̀rúnmìlà" (Erediauwa 2004, 206) in the thrall of Ifẹ̀-centric narratives motivated by the modern politics of *9ja*, the *Nàìjá* area, colonial "Nigeria" (cf. Ryder 1965; Vansina 1971, 457; Law 1973; Ọbáyẹmí 1979). The advanced codification of *Ifá* as compared to its 9ja relatives shows the mnemonic bias of several arguably modular cognitive domains—number, folk biology, folk sociology, theory of mind—plus the nonmodular but eminently memorable "genius of paganism" (Augé 1982) and its "superstimuli" (Sperber & Hirshfield 2004, 45).

Contents

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* *Òokun, o, òòrìṣà!* Remembering late Adé Ọbáyẹmí, Professor of History in the University of Ìlọrin, Director-General of the National Commission for Museums & Monuments and builder of Àkòdì Afirikà in Ùhè-Ìjùmú ["Iffe-Ijumu"]. *Ọ́ba ghà tọ́ kpẹ̀ẹ́ rè!*

Also thanks to Prof. 'W. Abímbọ́lá, Prof. R. Abíọ́dún, Dr. Ọ. Àdùnbí, late *Ígnié* B. Àkụ́nné, late Ambassador *Ígọ̀ló* K. Ánọ̀ká, Prof. A. Apter, late Prof. R. Armstrong, Dr. Ọ. Babájídé, Benin Club of Massachusetts, Dr. P. Darling, Chief Ọ. Ẹ̀bọhọ́n, Chief Orok Edẹm, Ẹ̀dó Ọ̀kpámákhin, Prof. P. Ekeh, Dr. P. Ífẹ̀ùkọ́, Alhaji M. Ighilẹ, late I. Ighodaro M.D., late Justice S. Ighodaro the *Íyàsẹ́* of Benin, Ụ. Íhìọ́nụ́, Chief N. Ìsekhurhẹ, Dr. S. Jell-Bahlsen, Prof. A. Lühning, *Babalorichá* J. Mason, Dr. I. Miller, late Prof. D. Nwáọ̀ga, Dr. K. Ọbaseki, Prof. M. Ochonu, Dr. Ọ. Ògie, Prof. A. Ògúndìran, Prof. I. Okpehwo, Prof. D. Ókwu, Prof. J. Olúpọ̀nà, K. Olúwọlé, T. Ọmọlúabí-Idiodi, late Prof. M. Ọ́nwejiógwù, Dr. C. Òṣáṣọnà, Prof. 'S. Oyèláràn, Chief D. Peavy, Prof. P. Peek, Prof. Y. Pessoa, late K. Saínz Almoguera, Prof. I. Sow, Dr. U. Stewart, Prof. S. Tambiah, Prof. U. Ùsuánléle, late Rev. Dr. M. Ụ̀walááàka, Fundação Pierre Verger, Dr. M. Vickers and late *Àdùnní Oló.rìṣà* S. Wenger.

The title of this paper tweaks Beier (1956a), cf. also Cohn (1994). To denote the containing modern "nation space" (Ṣóyínkà 1996, 110), the current indigenous label *Nàìjá* (= *9ja* in SMS mode) truncating the folk etymology *Niger area* is adopted in preference to century-old *Nigeria*. Both terms are equally anachronistic for medieval times, but Ms. Flora Lugard's neologism pretends to implausible legitimacy and is falling out of popular use despite—or because of—official prescriptions to the contrary (cf. Òbí 2010). Another option is to talk of "the Niger basin" (Èjiógù 2011) but only if understood to exclude the upper and middle Niger and to include most of the Benue valley.

The terms *geomancy* and *oracle* are used here in preference to *divination*, to avoid unintended metaphysical baggage. Notwithstanding the critique of the concept of *divinity* in §4, this conventional term is kept as a defeatist translation of untranslatable *òrìṣà*. *Medieval* here refers to the late iron/early bronze age in southern 9ja, a period which most historians nowadays call "classical" following Frobenius' Ancient Greek allusions in his 1910 Yorùbá trip, which still inform Euro-African comparisons in many cultural domains, e.g. Ṣóyínkà (1973).

Crosslinguistic spelling rules. Where possible, transcription is orthographic per nearest standard language; outdated colonial spellings are normalized, mostly without comment by "quiet copyediting" *www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/CMS_FAQ/Quotations/Quotations24.html*. Nonroman mid vowels [ɛ, ɔ] are replaced by their Lepsius/Crowther counterparts [*ẹ*, *ọ*]. Tones *where known* are marked consistent with best scholarly practice if not current popular usage, in the respective language. Throughout Benue-Kwa (BK), [´] = high, [`] = low, but the tone value of an unmarked syllable differs between the BK1 and BK2 subgroups, correlated in a principled way to morphosyntactic type (Manfredi 2009b, 331). In 'isolating' BK2 (comprising the Gbè, Yorùbá, Nupe and Ìdọmà macro-clusters) with a triple lexical pitch contrast H/M/L, marking economy is *paradigmatic* i.e. syllable-by-syllable, thus no mark = M, whereas in 'agglutinating' BK1 (BK's historic remnant including Àkan, Ẹ̀dó, Ìgbo, Tiv, Cross, "Bantu" &c.) with only 2 lexical tones, marking economy is *syntagmatic*, i.e. based on the preceding syllable, thus no mark = same as preceding syllable and a sequence of two H marks = downstep starting on the second mark (Swift & *al.* 1962, 49*f.*; Welmers & Welmers 1968, *iv*; Nwáchukwu 1995, 2*f.*; close approximations were used by Christaller 1875, 15 and Nwáchukwu 1976, 20, cf. Roberts 2011, 84), e.g. Ẹ̀dó *Ólokún* (HH!H) '[tutelary supernatural]'. BK2 languages allow for a more limited downstep, namely preceding M, and this is indicated by a word-internal period, e.g. Yorùbá *Oló.kun* (MH!M) 'possessor/epitome of *òkun* (LM) [the ocean]' vs. *olókun* (MHM) 'possessor/epitome of *okun* (MM) [energy]'. The same punctuation expedient is useful in both BK1 and BK2 to signal a non-spreading word-internal juncture between high and a following low, e.g. Yorùbá *oló.dù* (MH!L) 'possessor of an *òdù* (LL) [clay cauldron]' vs. *olódù* (MHL) 'possessor of an *odù* (ML) [8-bit oracle sign]', cf. also Ẹ̀dó *nó.dẹ̀* (H!L) 'yesterday' (Bámgbọ́ṣé 1966b, 1972; Amayo 1976).

1. Ancestry or synchrony

Human cultures (plural) are epigenetic: instead of persisting automatically though time in inherited biochemical codes, they attain diachronic "macrostability" indirectly, by "constructive propagation"—a type of synchronic transmission (borrowing) which is adaptively "biased toward… cognitive and practical abilities and goals" (Sperber & Claidière 2006, 21, cf. Koster 1988; Jablonka & Lamb 2005). A good example is *Ifá*, the 8-bit binary oracle which evolved in Yorùbá-speaking West Africa within the past 500 years at the end of a long chain of borrowing from beyond the Niger-Benue confluence, soon thereafter becoming a global phenomenon (Abímbọ́lá & Miller 1997). The codification of *Ifá* shows the mnemonic bias of several arguably modular cognitive domains—number, folk biology, folk sociology, theory of mind—plus the nonmodular but still but eminently memorable "genius of paganism" (Augé 1982) and its supernatural "superstimuli" (Sperber & Hirschfield 2004, 45). Now is of course too late to observe the successive phases of *Ifá*'s development directly, and relevant exchange networks have changed meanwhile, but some steps can be retraced by alternate means: by comparing modern outcomes in different localities (§2), by inferring bygone crosscultural links in other, related empirical domains (§3) and by analogizing backwards from the present.

Analogy first. The compound expression *wá-ẓó-bị́á* amalgamates the predicate roots translating 'come (here)' respectively in Yorùbá, Hausa and Ìgbo—the three most populous indigenous languages of the land area currently known as *Nàìjá* (= *9ja* in texting mode, cf. Ífẹ̀ụ̀kọ́ 2010). *Wazobị̀a* means at least three things. (i) Literally it denotes a federal policy of parallel trilingualism in schools and government (Báḿgbóṣé *ed.* 1976; Báñjọ & *al.* 1991).[1] (ii) Applied indexically as an ethnic shibboleth, it refers to the aggregate population speaking one of these three languages as a mother tongue.[2] (iii) During a briefly optimistic historical moment, the word evoked progressive, cosmopolitan social praxis, even inspiring the name of a stage heroine who led an anti-patriarchal *coup d'état* in an imagined western Ìgbo town (Ọ́nwụ́me 1988).[3]

Adopted as a national brand, *Wazobị̀a*™ decorates the signboards of 9ja *émigré* bistros worldwide, but no amount of saccharine nostalgia for parse (iii) can hide the bitter taste of parse (ii) in immiserated and oil-polluted districts back home. There, "linguistic minorities" decry "hegemonization of the three big ethno-national groups of Hausa-Fulani, Yorùbá and Ìgbo in a so-called WAZOBIA arrangement" which emerged "sequel to the imposed unification of the country's diverse cultural and linguistic groups" (Ekuerhare 2007, 556). In 1914, Lewis Harcourt's North-South amalgamation used "fraud" (Akínjídé 2000) to impose residential apartheid on a caste of southern "native foreigners" working in northern towns (Ńnọ̀lí 1978, 3*f*., 116, 194) while shielding quisling emirs from secular dissent (Dudley 1968; Òkóńjọ 1974, 76). Then in 1945, the resource grab of Arthur Richards' "Obnoxious Ordinances" (Coleman 1958, 281) equipped successor regimes to gorge on 'national cake' while slicing the three autonomous regions of 1939 into ever more dependent client-*istans*: a dozen in 1967, three dozen in 1996 and still more on the drawing board (Ẹ̀lá 1983; Àwọm 2010). Thus did the colonial formula for a "united Nigeria" become instead a recipe for "disintegration" (Awólọ́.wọ̀ 1968, 72). Propped up on the *wazobị̀an* "tripod" (Ọmọ́ruyi 2001) or "unholy trinity" (Áfiigbo 1989, 15), Lugard's absolutist leviathan presses the buttons of "federal character"—a constitutional "forgery" (Sagay 2000, 40) ensuring "that it is only possible to be a Nigerian through the membership of an ethnic group" (Ekeh 1989, 40). Struggling for citizenship rights, local "strangers" clash with "indigenes" in bloody skirmishes over public goods (Human Rights Watch 2006, cf. Dudley 1973; Joseph 1987; Mamdani 1996; Chandhoke 2005; Ochonu 2009, 2010; Vickers 2010).[4]

Whether for good or ill, *wazobị̀an* gigantism had substantially emerged before the Atlantic economy began. But how did subcontinental demography get to be so lopsided? Some large features of the language map reflect mass migrations on a time scale measurable in millenia. (i) Standard inferences of stochastic drift show that proto-"Bantu" speakers departed towards central, east and southern Africa from the Niger-Benue confluence (Greenberg 1963, 1972).[5] (ii) The same logic traces Yorùbá to the confluence, based on the diversity of northeast dialects and adjacent Ígálà (Akínkugbé 1978, 30).[6] (iii) Similar considerations indicate the southward spread of the Ẹ̀dó cluster alias "Ẹdoid" (Elugbe 1979, 94). (iv) Ịzǒn ("Ijaw") speakers were probably nudged into their delta niche by Ìgbo, Ùrhobo and Ìsóko-speaking farmers (Williamson 1983; cf. Jones 1963, 28-30; Ǹzewụ́nwa 1988).[7] (v) Smaller and more recent currents internally shuffled up large parts of the Yorùbá and Ìgbo clusters (Adétúgbọ̀ 1967; Ọ́nwụejiọ́gwụ̀ 1970b, Law 1977b). Unlike these fact-based scenarios (some of which still subsist in part in collective memory), popular histories of southern 9ja are full of Biblical blowback including tales of epic migrations from fanciful Semitic roots (Johnson 1897; Basden 1938; Lucas 1948; Egharhevba 1953; Ìdòwú 1962; Aye 1967; Àrịńze 1970; Odùúyọ̀yè 1971).[8]

By itself however, no amount of human movement—real or fantasized—could ever explain the key *wazobị̀an* effect: the disproportion of a few gargantuan speech communities nested among numerous units of similar form but lesser magnitude. That

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1. General Múrítàlá Mohammed penned the *Wazobị̀an* trio into the draft constitution of October 1975 (T. Ṣólá.rin *p.c.* 1977) and by 1983 the Government Printer was preparing for quadrilingual Hansard transcripts of legislative debate (cf. Báñjọ & *al.* 1991), but utopian federalism was crushed by the IMF-Babangida putsch (1985-93), then in 1996 General Abacha took Chirac's bribe to join Françafrique and "shunt" French ahead of indigenous languages in the policy queue (Ìgbọanụ́si & Pütz 2008). *Wazobị̀a* the aborted multilingual ideal must be distinguished from *Guosa*, an unlikely esperanto devised by an Ẹ̀dó journalist who named the concoction after himself (cf. Fákúwàdé 1992).
2. Thus someone with no communicative ability in Ìgbo is said "not to even understand ordinary *Bị́á!*"
3. This dramaturgical device probably recalls the real insurrection of 1929-30, when women of several ethnolinguistic groups shut markets and de-capped puppet chiefs across a large area of the southeast in protest of colonial taxes among other legitimate grievances (Green 1947; Áfiigbo 1972; Gailey 1974). In the same script, a further *jeu de mots* cleverly symbolizes regressive village consciousness with the divided names and ideologies of the king's three junior wives *Wa*, *Zo* and *Bị́a*. More subtly, the author represents the region's ethnicaly hybrid identity with the Ìgbo calque *Òbí-Ògisó* for *Ọ́ba Ògisó*, the stock Ẹ̀dó tyrant of Àṇọ́ma folktales (e.g. Manfredi 1991, 321).
4. In the 1980's, Radio Nigeria added token Hausa and Ìgbo musical riffs to the Yorùbá *dùn-dún* drum phrase which since the '60's had been the lead-in to the hourly time signal and national news bulletin. This *dùn-dún* text is famously over-interpretable (Beier 1969, 12).
5. Guthrie had claimed "westward" (1962, 281) movement, in order to save Bleek's 1862 assumption that "Bantu" forms a coherent unit apart from Niger-Congo. However, as the most recent Bantuist handbook admits with commendable candor, it's "impossible to draw a clear line between Bantu, however defined, and non-Bantu Niger-Congo" (Nurse & Philippson 2003, 5, cf. Bennett 1983; Marten 2006).
6. Manfredi (1991, 24 *fn.* 15, 31) cites the tones for this ethnonym as LHL conforming to Nupe pronunciation (Banfield 1914, 178). Ìlọ̀rí (2009) gives MHL tones, but this is a Yorùbáism for HHL, because Ígálà strictly probibits initial vocalic M (Èrù & Mìáchî 1991, 7).
7. The Ịzǒn ("Ijaw, Ịjọ") cluster's relatively low structural similarity to the other branches has made its historical attachment to the rest of Niger-Congo a matter of perpetual uncertainty, e.g. as reflected in successive family trees drawn by the late Prof. K. Williamson.
8. The eternal attraction of such whimsy, no matter how well and often debunked (e.g. by Wescott 1964; Báḿgbóṣé 1972; Nwáọ̀ga 1984; Schuh 1997), demonstrates deep ideological linkage between the two senses of 'roots'—as etyma and as ancestors—amounting to a folk belief that culture is encoded genetically. Thus a recent p.r. pamphlet from the University of Wisconsin malapropically but tellingly boasts that "because Ìgbo *speakers* have permeated the world's societies in many different ways, they have also *increased in population by childbirth* and marriage" (NALRC 2002, my italics). In fundamentalist Abrahamic monotheism, ethno-lineal identity is more graphically expressed: "The seed of Islam is passed through the father like the seed of Judaism is passed through the mother" (Blackburn 2010).

recursive geometry diagnoses a different dynamic: fractal self-organization—an algebraically distinctive pattern of nonlinear tiling around generative "seeds" (Mandelbrot 1982, 168). In southern 9ja at any rate, iron production was the most obvious takeoff factor for these big cultural blooms. Around 2000 years ago, smelting furnaces began to proliferate south of the savanna, expanding hunting and horticulture, boosting fertility and trade into the humid tropics (Andah 1979; Shaw 1985; Ògúndìran 2005). Eventually a wide terrain from northeast Ẹ̀dó to western Ìjẹ̀bú was honeycombed with ramparts and moats "of total length in excess of 16,000 km" enclosing "in excess of 6,500 km²" (Darling 1981, 106 cf. 1976, 1984; Lloyd 1959). In the middle of this giant lattice sat the sprawling Ẹ̀dó capital now called "Benin City" which already by the time of the first recorded Portuguese visit in 1485 had been paved in Haussmannesque, concentric stately avenues (Ryder 1965, 28, cf. Ofeimun 2003).[9]

The literally ferric cores of 9ja's large forest formations—the big language clusters of today—exerted a metaphorically magnetic attraction on a later, more abstract technology. Colonial reports (Ruxton 1907, 379*f.*; Meek 1931, 276-84, 326-28) mention a binary oracle regulating salt markets in the medieval mid-Benue valley for a polity which Hausa speakers called "Jukun" and whose "southern region was known as Apa" (Erim 1981, 15, no tones, cf. Shain 2005). Some sources cite the latter name as "Apa or Akpa" (Áfìigbo 1977, 137, cf. Nwáụ̀wa 1991, 309 *fn.* 10), the latter reflecting Cross River pronunciation (Alagoa 1980, 60, no tones). Comparative phonetics point to a lax (nonplosive) onset articulation which can be notated [*'p*]. This oracle's more remote origins remain obscure, but if its characteristic jargon, procedures and paraphernalia gestated within the **A'pa* state, then the **A'pa* name is a likely basis for the oracle's verbal handle. The etymology also works phonetically (Manfredi 2009a), anteceding diverse present-day pronunciations like *Áfa*, *Eba*, *Ifá* &c. via regular loanword treatments in the respective languages such as the automatic rule converting lax *p* to *f* in Yorùbá *káfínńtà* 'carpenter' (Abraham 1958, 357).[10]

Across the middlebelt, the **A'pa* oracle reached north (Danfulani 1995), south (Downes 1933, 69*f.*; Kasfir 1989) and west (Nadel 1954; Boston 1968; Ọbáyẹmí 1983), but reports of its vocabulary, ideology and praxis in those savanna locales are inadequate for historical reconstruction.[11] In the forest zone, by contrast, *Ifá* and *Áfa* have been described in comprehensive dissertations by top scholars fluent in the respective languages as well as themselves being oracle initiates (Abímbọ́lá 1976; Ọ́nwụejìógwù 1978).[12] The oracle's third-best documented local format is *Ìha Ominigbọn*.[13] If Egharhevba's *Ìha* book eventually becomes accessible to non-dó speaking readers, it may be possible to decide whether the 81 oracle narratives transcribed on 74 pages therein rescue Egharhevba's story that Òminigbọn "brought Ìha to Ẹ̀dó from Úhẹ̀ (Ilé-Ifẹ̀)" where "his teacher was *Ọ̀bó* Ọ̀rọ́nmìla [= Ọ̀rúnmìlà]" (1936, 3). So far, at least, five independent sets of evidence favor an opposite vector, that *Òminigbọn* developed from Ìgbo-speaking *Áfa* (maybe via Ùrhobo *Èpha*). These data are presented below: the oracle founder name whose Ùrhobo counterpart is alternatively "Dibie"—the West Ìgbo term for 'native doctor' (§2.1), Ìgbo etymologies of key *Òminigbọn* terms which have no analysis in any other language (§2.2), unidirectional phonetic adaptation from *Áfa* to *Ìha* of the morphologically opaque names for the sixteen 4-bit signs (§2.3), roughly 35% match between the *Áfa* and *Ìha* semantic retrieval keys (§2.4) and mechanical similarity in *Áfa* and *Ìha* oracle procedures in contrast to those specific to *Ifá* (§2.5).[14]

Òminigbọn is not Ifẹ̀-centrism's only headache. §3 reviews pitfalls in archaeology and related fields, across which art historians have blithely strolled despite friendly warnings from technical experts (Connah 1968b; Shaw 1970b; Williams 1974; Eyo 1977). Most of this sceptical literature predated Ọ̀mọ N'Ọ́ba Erediauwa's (2004) critique of Egharhevba, but none of it was even implicitly acknowleged in the brusque and rambling putdown delivered by a high-profile Yorùbá professor:[15]

> At least those who said that Benin tradition agree[s] with Ifẹ̀ tradition quote Egharhevba who was a Benin chief, who actually did a lot of research not only on Benin but on Àkúré and surrounding areas, Ùrhobo and Iṣẹ̀kiri. He even wrote a book entitled *A Short History of Benin*. And any day, I will rather follow that book than follow what an Ọba who is not an expert in the field [writes]… His own father used to attend and meet at the conference of Yorùbá Ọbas regularly during the colonial rule. His own father did not object to this… What did he study that was not available to Egharhevba? … [T]he story told about Ifẹ̀ in Benin is less likely to be credible than the story told about Ifẹ̀ in Ifẹ̀. …I believe the story as told by the Ọ̀ọ̀ni of Ifẹ̀. It is better founded than what the Ọ́ba of Benin is trying to tell Nigerians. The Ọ́ba of Benin has no *locus standi*, as it were, to tell the story of Ọ̀ràmíyàn. (Àjàyí 2004)

By the same logic, a fair-minded historian would also admit that Ifẹ̀ lacks ethnic *locus standi* to tell stories about "Benin"—no matter whether these stories were codified by "a Benin chief, who… even [sic] wrote a book".[16]

In sum (§4), Ifẹ̀-centric inversion occurred in more than one historical arena (dynasties, oracles, artwork…) but with one consistent effect: to clear other, older, oriental cultural influences from long-term memory. This disappearing act is interesting not just as grist for academic debate, but on its own as a gimmick of cognitive evolution: rebooting, self-legitimizing tradition. The

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9. Ìjẹ̀bú-Òde (Yorùbá) has the highest such earthworks, called "eredo" (Lloyd 1959; Darling 2001, no diacritics in source). This bare spelling is compatible with a meaning 'moat (i.e. *ẹ̀rẹ́* 'plastered surface' < *-rẹ́* 'cut back and forth with a blade', cf. Awóyalé 2008) built by *Ẹ̀dó* people or in *Ẹ̀dó* style'. The scale seems disproportionate to territorial marking or defense from human aggression, which leaves a third guess: flood control, explaining their topographic orientation (Connah 1967, 609) and the inundation motif heard in many (nonbiblical) local tales.

10. Among other details reviewed in §3 of Manfredi (2009a), is the nonparallel outcome in both Ìdọmà and Nupe of the oracle name versus the name of '◆◇◆◇', which became *-b-* and *-f-* respectively. Transcription of binary arrays: ◆ = concave surface down, ◇ = concave up, left side = top. Asymmetric 4-bit signs are rotated 180° in the Ẹ̀dó oracle (Emọvọn 1984, 4*f.*) as well as in Ùrhobo and Nsúká.

11. New primary research on Ìdọmà, Ígálà, Ebira and Ìjùmú-Yorùbá versions of the oracle, if still feasible today, could be revelatory.

12. Abímbọ́lá continues publishing and interpreting *Ifá* texts on a world scale. Ọ́nwejìógwù's *Áfa* book suffered from the technical and economic decay of the IMF-Babangida-Abacha years and the author's own lack of linguistic training, but the sociological analysis is characteristically original and profound. In the 1960's, the even less orthodox Pierre Verger compiled an *Ifá* archive whose publication was aborted in 1979 when some Yunifẹ̀ colleagues arranged his deportation—as remorsefully and posthumously recounted by two of them: Ọ. Yáî (Nóbrega & Echeverria 2002, 274*f.*) and 'W. Ṣóyínká (2006). In April 2009, Prof. 'S. Oyèláràn and I were fortunate to consult some of Verger's color-coded *Ifá* typescript at the Fundação Pierre Verger of Salvador, Brasil; see also Verger (1977a,b; 1995).

13. Here I'm not counting Gbè-speaking *Fá* (Maupoil 1948) separately from its proximate Yorùbá source. There are a few differences however, e.g. when Fɔ̀n-Gbè borrowed the word *àwo* from Yorùbá *awo*, not only was the prefix tone automatically adjusted to the Fɔ̀n pattern, but the primary meaning shifted from 'secret' to 'deception' (Maupoil 1948, 112; Höftmann & Ahohounkpanzon 2003, 111).

14. As was clear to a casual observer 1982, *Ifá sensu stricto* is indeed practiced in modern Benin City (cf. Bradbury 1957, 54), but it's different from *Ìha Ominigbọn* as described by Egharhevba. Apparently unaware of the distinction, Horton (1979, 123) mistakes the undisputed former fact as supporting evidence for Egharevba's much disputed Ifẹ̀-centric narrative about the latter.

15. Àjàyí (2004) substantially restates Akinọlá (1976) just as Erediauwa (2004) recaps Aimuwu (1971, cf. now also Ákẹnzùa 2008).

16. Prof. Àjàyí sounds amazed that any Benin chief ever went to school. He also showed angst about oral tradition, when in dinner conversation with Africanist colleagues in Amherst, Mass. in early 1993, he rebuked my offhand mention of the term *ethnohistory*. At the time I assumed he was making the uncontroversial point that all folk narratives should be held to the modest standard of "authenticity (as a genuine tradition, if not as accurate history)" (Law 1984, 212), but as it now seems, he meant that some ethnic histories are more equal than others.

*babaláwo*s aren't wrong to say that *Ifá* reached Ifẹ̀ at the end of a long chain, and their image of the other links dangling in 'heaven' neatly expresses *Ifá*'s radical innovation *vis-à-vis* its antecedents. What's unrealistic—and Romantic with a capital *R*—is their urge to tie cultural authenticity exclusively to *vertical descent*, be it with the visual metaphor of a skyhook or the biological simplification of a unique lineal ancestor, erasing imprints of *horizontal contact* along the way. Tendentious auto-exoticism of this kind is not unique to Ifẹ̀ and appears also in Ǹri-Igbo, Ígálà and Nupe narrations (Thomas 1913; Nadel 1935b; Weise 2003). Having so often beguiled *Wazobịan* historians, its instrumental role in emergent consciousness deseves a closer look.[17]

2. Oriental *Òminigbọn*

The second paragraph of *Ìha Ominigbọn* begins as follows:

> Ominigbọn (Ogbẹide) ọ re a tie eni ọmwan nọ rhie Iha na ke Uhẹ (Ile-Ifẹ) ghadi Edo. Ọbo Ọrọnmila nọ re Uhẹ ọrọ na rue iha, rẹn ọre ovbiewaisẹ n'ọdiọn ọghe Ọrọnmila vbe ẹghẹ nii, ọ ke vbe rẹn iha dinmwin ẹsẹsẹmwẹsẹ ọ ke do mu ọghe obọ rẹ tobọ-re y'otọ gha fi vbe Edo. (Egharhevba 1936a, 3, no tones in source)[18]
>
> [Òminigbọn alias Ogbẹide is the name of the person who brought *Ìha* to Ẹ̀dó from Úhẹ̀ (Ilé-Ifẹ̀). His teacher in Úhẹ̀ was the oracle-priest Ọ̀rọ́nmìla, and he had already become Ọ̀rọ́nmìla's senior apprentice and thoroughly mastered *Ìha* before going on to establish his own practice in Ẹ̀dó.]

This text is as interesting for its silences as for what it says outright. It doesn't actually state that the person called *Òminigbọn* a.k.a. *Ogbẹide* was primarily Yorùbá-speaking, nor does it claim that the *Ìha* learned in Úhẹ̀ is derived from what's now called *Ifá*. Both inferences are natural, but neither one is specifically affirmed and the ambiguity is fortunate, because both are disproved by facts to be discussed in this section. The text quoted above is more reticent and correspondingly harder to falsify. It could be narrowly true so far as anyone knows, but remains pure hearsay without independent support, because "there is nothing in *Òminigbọn* myth [or] its corpus that helps to corroborate the claim of Úhẹ̀ origin" (Emọvọn 1984, 2).

Egharhevba's later publications overcame his early reticence, possibly due to additional field research but evidently as the result of sly literary techniques enhancing internal (ideological) consistency at the cost of external (empirical) verisimilitude. But scholars have caught on to this authorial game. Between 1933 and 1936 the first Ẹ̀dó copper-alloy caster, called "*Iguehae* (a rather strange name for an Ifẹ̀ man)" (Eyo 1977, 134), acquired the convenient, supplementary identity of an ex-servant of the Ọ̀ọ̀ni of Ifẹ̀. Between 1936 and 1953, the reported location of the grave of Éwẹ́ka the First moved from the Ẹ̀dó site of Ùsamá to Ilé-Ifẹ̀, although this emendation is "not likely to be the product of new findings" (Ùsuánléle & Fálọ́lá 1998, 374-77). From 1936 to 1953 to 1968, as the set of early Ẹ̀dó rulers called *Ògisó* steadily increased from one to twelve to fifteen, the list of Ògisó-era accomplishments grew apace, remarkably coming to mirror what had originally been credited only to post-Ògisó rulers (Eisenhofer 1995, 145-48, 154*f.*).[19] These fingerprints of overzealous irredentist political correctness aside, a prescient early warning was already given by Egharhevba's friend and protégé Dr. Bradbury who, after rightly saluting the author's "industry and integrity" as well as "accuracy" in reconstructing "the period from 1715 onwards", candidly evaluated the pre-17th century chronology in the book's second English edition as "very uncertain" (1959, 285*f.*). In sum, there's never been any compelling reason to accept the *Short History* as independently *confirming* the Ifẹ̀ perspective on "Benin" affairs; rather, it *is* the Ifẹ̀ perspective.

The patent motive to embroider the medieval era in this way is modern *wazobịan* politics. When southwestern 9ja first came under Frederick Lugard's Fulani-philic colonial mandate, "the claim of descent from the royal family of Ilé-Ifẹ̀ was sometimes fabricated by kings anxious to legitimate their rule" (Law 1973, 211, cf. Aṣíwájú 1976). As noted by Horton (1979), *Ifá* was Ifẹ̀'s main emblem of its own legitimacy, and Ọ̀mọ N'Ọ́ba Erediauwa takes this point a step further in suggesting

> …that modern historians (including Yorùbá)… confused Odùduwà with Ọ̀rúnmìlà, the bringer of *Ifá* divination. It was Ọ̀rúnmìlà who, according to [the] traditional account, had sixteen children, each of whom he sent to rule over each of sixteen communities in his own world, among which were Ifẹ̀ and Adó (Benin). (Erediauwa 2004, 206)

This intentional mixup is indirectly hinted in other ways: by the curious duplication of Ifẹ̀'s two delegations of celestial immigrants—*Odùduwà* with 16 "elders" and *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* with 16 *odù* (Fábùnmi 1969, 3*f.*; Abíḿbọ́lá 1976, 26*f.*)—and by the presence of the word *odù* 'binary oracle signature' in the name *Odùduwà* itself (Manfredi 2009a, 10).[20] Although *babaláwo*s with 16 or more natural offspring aren't unheard of, the names of Ọ̀rúnmìlà's 16 'children' are unknown unless they were more algebraic than genetic. Erediauwa, following Ryder (1965), revises the relationship of Ifẹ̀ and Ẹ̀dó monarchies from a parental to a sibling metaphor: not as dynastic succession from A to B, but as shared inheritance coming neither from A nor from B but rather from C, "some common source which, perhaps, no longer exists" (Jones 1786/1807, 34, cf. Haas 1969, 18*f.*).

Lexical and ritual clues disprove any Ifẹ̀→Ẹ̀dó transmission of *Ìha* and conclusively point to Ìgbo as its source. The relevant data divide into five types whose mutual independence—i.e. 'unbundled' transmission in separate information channels—makes their parallelism much more determinant. That linguistic data have been overlooked may be due to their "unconscious character" which makes them less prone "to secondary reasoning and to re-interpretations" (Boas 1910, 67). This doctrine applies primarily to the grammatical categories of gender, shape, location and time (cf. Hale 1986). By contrast, proper names as nonanalytic signs are prone to folk etymology, like the punning glosses of *Bìní* and *Éwẹ́ka* as *ilẹ̀ ìbínú* 'vexatious land' and *ọwọ́ mí ká* 'I have won' (Egharhevba 1953, 6-8). These Yorùbá-phonic riffs are fittingly replied (revenged) by the Ẹ̀dó-ification of *Odùduwà* as "*I ma do d'uwa* (meaning 'I have not missed the road to good fortune')" (Erediauwa 2004, 209, cf. Akinọ́lá 1976, 25).[21]

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17. Ideological preference for descent over diffusion wasn't unique to 9ja, of course. The *Aeneid*, a poetic hit of Ancient Rome, flattered the Julian ruling house as being descended from a Greek goddess and a Trojan hero. Greco-Roman cultural similarities do exist, but most can be naturalistically explained as shared Indo-European heritage (Benveniste 1969) overlaid with pan-Mediterranean ingredients assimilated from Phoenecian trade (Bernal 1987) and capped by conscious Roman imitation of Greek colonies in Sicily and Italy. Our Augustus being no Herodotus, he paid Virgil to pen a epic about a founding migration without a shred of evidence, and the resulting self-excusing song of Roman expansionism parallels the Hebrew "Patriarchal narratives" (*Exodus &c.*) in many mythopoetic traits (Weinfeld 1988).

18. Here I've corrected the typo of "Obọ Ọrọnmila" to *Ọbo Ọrọnmila* while also implementing modern Ẹ̀dó spelling conventions.

19. Àṇi ọ́ma Ìgbo folktales refer to a singular character called *Ọ́ba Ògisó*, the overreaching tyrant of a place called "Ìdúù" (Okpehwo 1998).

20. Moreover, an unidentified Yorùbá source paraphrased by Courlander (1973, 53, 158) mentions Ọ̀rúnmìlà as having ruled Ẹ̀dó before the time of Ọ̀ràmíyàn, implying that the oracle's authority was the basis of the *ọba*s'. In that light, it's relevant that the name *Ọ̀ràmíyàn* 'My crisis has been sacrificially resolved' itself includes the oracle-specific predicate *-yàn* (Abraham 1958, 687).

21. The best-available guess for the etymology of the ethnonym *Bìní* (colonial "Benin") is that it's a form of the southern Nupe place name *Bìni* (Banfield 1914, 47; Dupigny 1920, 7) or *Benί* (Nadel 1935a, 274), based either on "confusion" or on a real association (Ryder 1965, 31*f.*)

2.1 Primary name

Whether following Egharhevba's text or independent, oral tradition, the Ẹ̀dó palace regards *Òminigbọn* as the name of the oracle's introducer (Chief N. Ìsekhurhẹ, *p.c.*), so it's relevant to ask what kind of name it is and what it means. Its polysyllabic form entails that it's a compound or other type of lexicalized phrase, thus in principle its meaning is a product of the meaning of its parts, just as *ọ̀gu'emọto* 'chauffeur' decomposes as *ọ̀*- 'someone who' *-gu‹a›* 'drives/pulls' *èmọ́tò* 'a car' (Melzian 1937, 162).[22] But any lexical item can be semantically opaque, especially if internal structure is obscured by intervening sound change, and this goes double for proper names because they have a unique referent and therefore don't 'need' to deploy analytic semantics.

An Ẹ̀dó analysis of *Òminigbọn* is morphologically workable, semantically surprising and historically informative. The unabridged Ẹ̀dó dictionary presents one other item starting with the string *òmini*…, namely *òminigie* "class of people who possess no titles", and Melzian relates this to *ègie* 'chieftaincy title' and then by transitivity to *ògie* 'chief/he who commands' cf. the root *-gie* 'send' (1937, 63, 135, 144).[23] Also relevant is a repeated oracular formula *Emini ẹre nọ wẹ*… 'What *Emini* says is…' (Egharhevba 1936a *passim*, no tone). *Emini* has no dictionary entry, but from this unique context it apparently names the unseen source of quoted oracular messages, possibly therefore representing an allomorph of a collective *òmini*- (on the analogy of other old nounclass pairs like *ọ̀diọ́n* 'senior person' vs. *èdiọ́n* 'senior persons/oldest age grade/collective ancestors' (Melzian 1937, 160).

If *òmini*- is a factorizable, meaningful constituent, whose final vowel *i* descriptively elides the vowel prefix of its complement, then subtracting *òmini*- from *Òminigbọn* leaves …*gbọ̀n*—an accidental gap in the set of Ẹ̀dó predicate roots, which does however occur in two listed nominals, respectively with ‹*à*› or ‹*Ì*› initial vowels whose elision is supported by analogy to *òmini-‹e›gie*:

> ‹*à*›*gbọn* LL Lebenswelt i.e. "world, esp. in contrast to *ẹ̀rínmwìn*… world of the dead and the unborn" (Melzian 1937, 4, 55)
> ‹*Ì*›*gbọn* LL "the Ì[g]bo people" (Melzian 1937, 85)[24]

Taking *òmini‹e›gie* as a model, it's hard to find an analogical interpretation for hypothetical *òmini‹I›gbọn*, whereas *òmini‹a›gbọn* would literally mean "class of people who don't possess [aren't located in] the visible world". Such a conjectural gloss neatly enough describes the cosmology of the paired oracle messengers venerated in the nearby locality of Ùrhobo:

> The most popular divination apparatus among the Urhobo is specially made of 16 half-shells of the *agbragha* fruit, and it is from this tree that Epha derives its other name *Agbragha*. …In Urhobo mythology the spiritual forces behind *Agbragha* are those of Againabe and Akunabe. These two spiritual beings are thought to have been mortals who… were able to operate freely in both the physical world (*akpo*) and the spiritual realm (*erivbin*). When they died a dispute arose between the people of *akpo* and those of *erivbin* over where they should be buried… because both the people of *akpo* and the inhabitants of *erivbin* regarded Againabe and Akunabe as traitors and tale-bearers who, in their lifetime, had specialized in learning the secrets of the one world and divulging them to the other… In the end it was decided as a compromise to bury them at the border between the two realms… A fruit-bearing tree known as *agbragha* was planted on their graves. …These two spiritual-cum-mortal beings… vowed not only to continue but to intensify their efforts at revealing secrets of both realms to anyone who established communication with them through the *agbragha* fruits. The legend goes further to say that in a dream Againabe and Akunabe revealed to a hunter named Ominigbo how to divine, that is, establish this communication with them through the *agbragha* fruits. It is however stated in another version that the secret of divination was first revealed to a hunter known as Dibie. These shells are believed to be spiritually charged with the powers of those who stand astride *akpo* and *erivbin*, hence they are able to know secrets not only of the physical world but also of the spiritual sphere. Therefore this system of divination, which is referred to as either *Agbragha* or *Epha*, is taken to be the most reliable of all… (Nabofa & Elugbe 1981, 6-8, no diacritics)[25]

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22. Elided vowel ‹*in angle brackets*›. Melzian notes that English *èdráevà* is more used than *ọ̀gu'emọto* or *èdúrávà*, both of which were dropped from the second edition of his dictionary (Agheyisi 1986). Similarly for Igbo *dí rajvà* vs. *ọ̀nya mótò*, Yorùbá *dírẹ́ bà* vs. *awa'kọ̀* and German *Telefon* vs. *Fernsprecher*. This consistent pattern suggests that an analytic, monolingual descriptor needs some special reason to resist a loanword.

23. Ẹ̀dó roots by themselves include no pitch information which is not predictable from moraic shape (Melzian 1937, *xii*; Ámayo 1976, 230).

24. Emọvọn defines *Ìgbọn* simply as "a foreigner" (1984, 2, cf. Peavy 2009) and Agheyisi's edition of Melzian gives both glosses: "a derogatory Ẹ̀dó word for the Igbo-speaking people (not much in use any more with this meaning, but [instead] as a general abusive term [for non-Ẹ̀dó])" (1986, 67). The Ùrhobo version of this word is *Igbo* (Ukere 1986). In Ịzọ̀n ("Ijaw"), *Ìgbọn* is glossed as "Hausa, Northerner" (Williamson & Timitimi 1983, 79) though it's unknown if this also includes Igbo speakers, who do live literally north of the delta. Many modern ethnonyms are former 'exonyms' (outsider labels), e.g. *Yarriba* was a Caliphate term for 'pagan' pre-*jihād* Ọ̀yọ́ (Burton 1863, 222; cf. Awóníyì 1981; Peel 2000, 283, 384 citing Law 1977a, 5 and Farias 1990). The phonetic difference between *Igbọn* and *Igbo* could reflect the northern Ìgbo rule deleting all suprasegmental nasality (Williamson 1973; Manfredi 1991, 32*f.*) with concomitant loss of the narrow pharynx feature (= orthographic subdot), which is a redundant enhancement of nasality in Ẹ̀dó and Yorùbá (Ámayo 1976, 109; Elugbe 1986, 116; Adétúgbọ̀ 1967, 172; Awóbùlúyì 1978, 141 but cf. Capo 1985). Potentially relevant denasalization is also attested in Ùrhobo, e.g. *àkẹ* 'tooth', *àkpọ* 'Lebenswelt' versus Ẹ̀dó *àkẹn*, *àgbọn*. Other conjectures are reviewed by Ézè & Manfredi (2001, 322*f.*).

25. *Áfa* Nri has a similar cosmology (Ọ́nwejìọ́gwù 1997, 103). Ascription of oracular insight to twins—if that's what "Againabe" and "Akunabe" represent—is common in chiefdoms of the plateau Bantoid or 'grassfields' zone of western Cameroun, where twins are not classified as earth-abomintions in the Ìgbo way, but they do receive ritual protection similar to Ìgbo *ọ̀gbânje* consistent with anomalous reincarnation status (Manfredi 1997). In Bangwa, for example, many ethnographic details echo the Urhobo story above:

> Twins… are known as *befak* (sing. *lefak*). *Lefak* is used for a child delivered by breech birth, with a caul round its neck, with six fingers—any child in fact who exhibits physical or, later, psychological abnormalities. Twins are… likened to 'spirit beings' and called 'children of the gods'. They are thought to be endowed with the gift of seeing their way back to the world of unborn children (*efeng*). Children are sometimes converted into the twin (*lefak*) category after long bouts of illness. Once their propensity for dying has been removed ritually, they remain twins. …Chiefs choose 'twins' to succeed them. The parents of twins assume special titles (*anyi* for the mother, *tanyi* for the father) which give them the right to take up ritual office of practice as diviners. *Efeng*, the world of unborn children, was described to me as a vast black cave, peopled by the spirits of children who wander around in pairs or groups looking for suitable parents. The Bangwa believe that the supply of children's spirits is constant, being replenished constantly by the spirits of dead Bangwa who are reincarnared in their descendants. …Children have to be seduced from *efeng* into their mother's womb. In some cases they go in pairs and are born… as twins. If this happens and no special ritual is performed, one of the twins' parents or their grandparents must immediately die to correct the imbalance in *efeng*. It is, however, rare for the spirit pair to agree to enter a single womb. …Some enter a womb and remain there for some time before one decides to return to *efeng*. A child who has been convinced by his parents that life with them will be the best thing for him may be tormented by his twin, who lurks in the shadows of the fire burning in the hut of the pregnant woman, trying to seduce him back to *efeng*.
> (Brain 1969, 215f., no tone in source; cf. Diduk 1993, 552; Argenti 2011, 283, 286)

> A father-of-twins (*tanyi*) may become a priest of the earth and performs innumerable rites from the 'fattening' of adolescent girls to country-wide fertility rites. *Tanyi* has an important role during the crowning of the chief. [...] The new chief once crowned is not called chief but *tanyi sọ* ('new father-of-twins'); his title of chief is accorded him only after he has fathered a son and a daughter. …[N]*juindem*… literally means 'woman of God' and refers to the role of certain gifted mothers of twins as diviners. The titles *ngwindem* (or *njuindem*) and *anyi* are used interchangeably. (Brain & Pollock 1971, 90, 124, no tone in source)

This narrative adds four relevant points. (i) By making etiological reference to mythic inhabitants of the boundary of the two cosmological worlds, it indirectly supports the Ẹ̀dó etymology of *Òminigbọn* as *òmini‹a›gbọn* 'invisible-world beings'.[26] (ii) Out of all known pronunciations of the oracle signs (cf. §2.3 below), the Ùrhobo tutelaries *Agai*(*-nabe*) and *Aku*(*-nabe*) are most closely matched by the Ìgbo pronunciations *Ágári* (*n'áàbọ*) '(double) ◇◇◆◆' and *Àkwụ* (*n'áàbọ*) '(double) ◆◆◆◆'. (iii) Assuming that the Ùrhobo pronunciation of 'Lebenswelt' as *àkpọ* results from devoicing and denasalization rules which did not affect Ẹ̀dó *àgbọn* (Elugbe 1986, 178), the *-gb-* in Ùrhobo "Ominigbo" [= *Òminigbọ*] shows that the name was borrowed from Ẹ̀dó after devoicing expired but while denasalization was still a live rule.[27] (iv) "Dibie"—an alternate name of the Ùrhobos' oracle culture-hero—is obviously *díbiẹ̀*, the ordinary Ụ́kụ̀ànị̀ and Ágbọ̀ word for herbalist/oraclist corresponding to standard Ìgbo *díbịa* (Williamson *ed.* 1968, 34; Williamson 1972, 91; Manfredi 1991, 321; Ígwè 1999, 125). Unless the narrator's mention of "Dibie" is a conscious *wazobịan* gesture—and such is doubtful, since Nabofa & Elugbe are either blissfully unaware of the Ìgbo source or else in active Ìgbophobic denial—then the coreference chain *Díbiẹ̀* = "Ominigbo" = *Òminigbọn* attaches yet another Ìgbo-speaking association to the origin of this Ẹ̀dó oracle.[28]

Another reason to view Ùrhobo as a transmisson path for this oracle to Ẹ̀dó comes from Barbot's late-17th century journal:

> The priest of Loebo [=Ùrhobo], a town near the mouth of the river Fermosa [=Formosa], or Benin river, is esteemed, and very famous among them, for his intimate familiarity with the devil, and for being an eminent magician; whose prerogatives are such, that he can at his will, cause the sea either to advance or draw back, and foretel the most remote events; in regard whereof, the king has bestowed on him and his heirs forever, all the lands of the territory of Loebo, with all the slaves that were therein; and from his name the town was called Loebo. This priest is counted in the rank of their chief sacrificers, and so dreaded by all the people, that none dares come near him, much less to touch his hand, the king's envoys not excepted. (Barbot 1688-1732, 375)[29]

2.2 Secondary name and two other translatable terms

Òminigbọn's secondary name, written "Ogbẹide" (Egharhevba 1936a, 3), has no known analysis in either Ẹ̀dó or Yorùbá, but even in the absence of tonal information an Ìgbo etymology can be proposed here, on both semantic and phonetic grounds.[30]

In the context of an activity, *-ghú* means "to do [something] with forceful movement of the hand" (Ígwè 1999, 583) and its agent nominalization *ò-ghú* 'cutter/killer' forms synthetic compounds like *ò-ghú ède* 'planter of *édè* [cocoyam]' and *ò-ghú éfi* 'cow-slaughterer→chief'. A homophonous item has the static meaning 'middle/depth' as in the genitive phrases *ògbú míri* 'depth of water→deep water' and *ògbú ụrá* 'depth of sleep→deep sleep' (Williamson 1972, 363; Ígwè 1999, 583).[31] These two uses are syntactically distinct, and certainly have separate lexical entries, but they could nevertheless share a semantic common denominator: the superlative culmination of a gradable property understood either as a resultant outcome or a permanent state. This sense bridges from certain active and transitive idioms to other, pseudoreflexive and stative ones:[32]

-gwé-ghu	'grind-kill→grind perfectly or to a powder'	(Ígwè 1999, 209, 277, 376)
-rí-ghu	'eat-kill→chew perfectly or into pulp'	
-sí-ghu	'boil-kill→cook perfectly or overcook'	
-jọ́-ghu ònwé yá	'ugly-kill self→be utterly ugly'	
-má-ghu ònwé yá	'beautiful-kill self→be utterly beautiful'	

The second half of "Ogbẹide" can be parsed in Ìgbo as *ìle* 'effectiveness [of a medicine or sacrifice], fulfilment [of a prediction or agreement]' built on the root *-lè* 'efficacious, fulfilled' (Williamson 1972, 179, 253*f.*).[33] An epithet formed by combining *ògbú* with *ìle* would predictably refer either (i) agentively to a person 'who effectively or curatively throws [the oracle apparatus]' or 'whose [oracular predictions and sacrificial interventions] are reliably fulfilled' or else (ii) statively to a medicine or prediction 'possessing utmost effectiveness'. Either gloss would be appropriate for a *díbịa áfá*.

As to how *ògbú ìle* would be pronounced—and spelled—by an Ẹ̀dó speaker, the internal vowel sequence of "Ogbẹide" is arguably within the range of Ìgbo coalescent assimilation of *u*+*i* after a labial onset (cf. Émènanjọ 1978, 24), and the second consonant is within the range of Ẹ̀dó coronal allophony (Wescott 1962, 23*f.*; Ámayo 1976, 87; Elugbe 1986, 78).[34]

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26. Ancestral liminality also confers oracular power in an Ifá poem about *ìbẹjì* 'twins'—a type of *àbíkú* 'child that dies before puberty and tries to be reborn in later pregnancies' (cf. also preceding footnote). As *awo* Fátóògun of Onḍó told Olúpọ̀nà (2008), the parents of *ìbẹjì* saved Ifá from ordained premature death by sending him to Oló.kun, as a result of which Ifá acquired the name *asọ̀rọ̀-dayọ̀* 'who, by mere speaking, changes [badluck] to joy'.

27. This observation should make it possible to assign a chronological window to the borrowing of the word, and hence also of the oracle named by the word, once the interaction has been worked out between denasalization and devoicing in the history of Macro-Ẹ̀dó—the parent cluster which includes Ùrhobo. Elugbe (1986) is limited to reconstructing proto-sounds, and doesn't address rule timing.

28. The first draft of this paper posited an etymology of *Òminigbọn* containing *Ìgbọn*, before the one with *àgbọn* came to mind. Ìbiẹ́ gives "Ominigun" (1993, 1-4, no tones) as a Yorùbá (possibly Onḍó?) version of the name, citing *Ogbè Ìretẹ̀* ("*Ogbè Até*") and *Òfún Ogbè*.

29. The text was published posthumously in a "composite" form with "derivative" contemporary material (Law 1982, 156, 165). Identification of Barbot's "Loebo" as Ùrhobo is confirmed by geographical details in this and other passages.

30. A biculturally Ẹ̀dó and Onḍó-Yorùbá recension of Ifá identifies Ogbẹide as Òminigbọn's "eldest son" (Ìbiẹ́ 1993, 6).

31. The typeshift "qualificative" noun→attributive modifier is generally available in Ìgbo, e.g. *ágadí nwaànyị̀* 'advanced age of a woman→old woman' (Émènanjọ 1978, 47*f.*; Mádụ̀ká-Durunze 1990; Ígwè 1999, 17). The noncompound i.e. phrasal status of 'deep sleep' is shown by the genitive downstep [**!**] on the final syllable of *ògbú ụrá* [LH H**!**H], versus its occurrence on the penult of *ò-ghú éfi* [LH **!**HH] 'chief'.

32. An unambiguous example of superlative *-ghú* occurs with the root *-sọ́* 'sweet/tasty' in a traditional western Ìgbo *Trinklied*, recorded by the author in the early 1980's in a cover version by polyglot Nigerdeltan troubadors of the Palmwine Drinkerds Club:

Mánya, mánya nkwụ́ ó, mánya!	Wine, wine of oilpalm yes, wine!
Ó sọ́-gbu-sọ!	Supersweet! [←It sweet-kill-sweet!]

33. This root is pronounced *-rè* in southern Ìgbo varieties (Ígwè 1999, 259, 723) and in Ágbọ̀ (Elugbe 1969; Manfredi 1991, 32; 1992, 110*f.*).

34. In the documentary film *Mammy Water* (Jell-Bahlsen 1990), an epithet "Ogbuide" for Ụ̀hámmiri the lake goddess of Úgwuntà ["Oguta"] is heard several times as *Ògbúídé* LHH**!**H perhaps an allegro form of LH**!**HH. "According to consultants, the name *Ogbuide* originates from Benin" (Jell-Bahlsen 1998, 102 *fn.* 17) but that's reasonable only because the Ìgbo root *-sí* is ambiguous between "originate" and "travel via" (Williamson 1972, 466; Ígwè 1999, 744*f.*). "Ogbuide" has no parse in the Ẹ̀dó ["Benin" or "Bìní"] language, although the multilingual Ẹ̀dó *kingdom* did at times include part of the western Ìgbo penumbra. In oral tradition, confusions of origin and route are not rare. For example, Ágbọ̀ ["Agbor"] produced an 18th century figure now known in Úgwuntà and other Ìgbo-speaking towns as "Ézè Chíìma" and said to have "come from Benin", even though a string *Chíìma*, like *Ògbúídé*, is meaningless in Ẹ̀dó (cf. Ọ̀hadíké 1994; Okpehwo 1998). Multiple details

Another polysyllabic word belonging to *Ìha* is *ògwẹ́ èga*. This doesn't analyze into meaningful components in either Ẹ̀dó or Yorùbá, but in Ẹ̀dó it has two concrete referents: (i) the tree *Detarium senegalense* and (ii) the set of four oracle strings, each connecting four half-pericarps of the seeds of that tree (Melzian 1937, 137). The same ambiguity of tree and artefact is found with Ìgbo *òkwe* (*Ricinodendron africanum*) in *Áfa* (Williamson 1972, 373*f.*; Ézikéojìakụ 1984, 38; 1987, 64; 2001, 72; Ígwè 1999, 601), and with the Ùrhobo counterpart (cf. §2.1). As a yet-unattested Ìgbo phrase, *òkwé èja* (the regular counterpart of *òkwé àja* in a 9-vowel Ìgbo dialect) would mean '*òkwe* seeds for *èja* (ritual sacrifice)' (cf. Williamson 1972, 17; Ígwè 1999, 32; Ézikéojìakụ 1984, 57*f.*). The loan trajectory Ìgbo *òkwé èja* > Ẹ̀dó *ògwẹ́ èga* is straightforward: the tonal match is exact and a soundshift of Ìgbo *-j-* > Ẹ̀dó *-g-* is plausible: Ẹ̀dó lacks affricated *-j-* but has palatal stops as synchronic positional variants of velars (Wescott 1962, 46).[35]

A third meaningful *Ìha* term which analyzes in Ìgbo but not in Ẹ̀dó or Yorùbá is *n'áàbe*, applied by Ẹ̀dó and Ùrhobo oraclists to any identical pair of 4-bit arrays (Melzian 1937, *xviii*, 137; Nabofa & Elugbe 1981, 9). Standard Ìgbo *n'áàbọ* (= *n'áàbẹ* in some dialects) has the same specialized use in the *Áfa* oracle (Ọ́nwụejìọ́gwụ̀ 1997, 52; Ézikéojìakụ 2001, 73), but with the difference that in Ìgbo it's also the ordinary word for 'double' (Williamson 1972, 190, 359; Ígwè 1999, 456). This extra Ìgbo analyticity makes the Ìgbo > Ẹ̀dó (and/or Ìgbo > Ùrhobo) loanword trajectory for *n'áàbe* into a sure thing.[36]

That three *Ìha*-specific expressions, all morphologically opaque in Ẹ̀dó (and in Yorùbá for that matter), all happen to have relevant parses in Ìgbo would be bizarre unless they were indeed all three borrowed from Ìgbo. It's furthermore improbable that three separate items would have been borrowed by Ẹ̀dó oraclists from Ìgbo colleagues, without the rest of the *Ìha* oracle getting borrowed at the same time. This conclusion can be made consistent with Egharhevba's published text, only with the extra assumption that the persons called *Òminighọn* and *Ọ̀rọ́nmìla* in that text were themselves Ìgbo speakers, whether or not the place referred to as *Úhẹ̀* was primarily Yorùbá-speaking. But given the methodological criticisms referenced above, the odds are stronger that either Egharhevba or his informants were unduly influenced by Ilé-Ifẹ̀'s modern *wazọbịan* prestige, to the point of either naively or cynically naming Ilé-Ifẹ̀ as the source of *Ìha* rather than simply admitting ignorance of *Ìha*'s provenance.

2.3 Array names (untranslatable)

A core feature of **A'pa*, not shared with other binary African oracles like Arabic *khet't er remel* 'sand writing' (Hébert 1961) or South African "four-tablet divination" (Binsbergen 1996), is the set of 16 esoteric names for the 4-bit arrays, equivalent to hexadecimal memory addresses (Lóńgé 1983, 26-41). Here are the main variants of these names across a dozen localities:[37]

←top	*Fọ̀n-Gbè*	*NW Yorùbá*	*NE Yorùbá* *no tones in source*	*Nupe* *no tones in source*	*Ngas* *no tones in source*	*Ẹ̀dó* *↺180°*	*Ùrhobo* *↺180°* *no tones in source*	*WÌgbo*	*Ǹri-Igbo*	*Ǹsúká-Igbo* *↺180°* *no tones in source*	*Ígálà*	*Ìdọmà*
◇◇◇◇	Gbè	Ogbè	[Ọ̀ṣika]	[Ṣikan]	[Shi]	Ógbì	Ogbi	Ógbì	Óbì/Ógbù	Obi	Èbí	Ébì
◆◆◆◆	Yẹ̀kú	Ọ̀yẹ̀kú	Ọyẹ̀ku	Eyako	Kum	Àkó	Ako	Àkwu	Àkwụ/Áhwụ	Akwụ	Ákwù/Ọyẹ̀ku	Àkwú
◆◇◇◆	(W)ólì	Ìwòrì	Ogori	Gori	Guiri	Òghoi	Oghori	Ògoli	Òyeri/Ògori	Ogoli	Ògòlì	Ògòlì
◇◆◆◇	Dí	Èdí/Òdí	Oji	Eji	[Nwa]	Òdín	Edi/Odi	Òdí	Òdí	missing	Òjí/Òdí	Òjí
◇◆◆◆	Ab(á)là	Ọ̀bàrà	Ọbara	Bara	Mbara	Ọ̀(v)ba	Ọ(v)bara	Ọ̀baí	Ọ̀bala	Ọbara	Ọ̀bàrà	Ọ̀blà
◆◆◆◇	Aklán/Akánà	Ọ̀kànràn	Ọkọna	Kana	Gina	Ọ̀kan	Ọkanran	Ọ̀kaí	Ọ̀kala	Ọkara	Ọ̀kàrà/Ọ̀kọ̀nọ̀	Ọ̀klà
◇◇◆◆	Lósò	Ìròsùn	Orosun	Rusu	Lusu	Órúùhu	Urhur(h)u	Úlúshù	Úrúrù	Uhu	Ólòrù	Ólò
◆◆◇◇	Wọ̀lín/Wẹ̀lé	Ọ̀wọ́nrín	Ọga	Ega	[Chiyong]	Ọ̀gháe	E/Aghare	Ọ̀gá(l)í	Àyári/Àgári	Egali	Ẹ̀gálí	Ẹ̀gálí
◇◇◇◆	Gùdá	Ọ̀gúndá	Ogunta	Guta	Kura	Ìghítan	Ighitẹ	Èjíte/Ògúte	Ìjíte/Ògúte	Ijite/Ogute	Èjítá/Ogwute	Èjítá
◆◇◇◇	Sá	Ọ̀sá	Osa	Esa	Saa	Ọ̀há	Ọrha	Ọ̀shá	Ọ̀rá	Oha	Ọ̀rá	Ọ̀lá
◇◇◆◇	Lẹtẹ̀	Ìrẹtẹ̀	Irẹtẹ	Etia	Lete	Ète	Ete/?Eke	Ète	Ète/Èke	Ete	Ètè/Ọlẹtẹ	Ete
◇◆◇◇	Túlá	Òtú(r)á	Otura	Turia	Toro	Èrúrẹ	Erhurẹ	Ètúle	Òtúre	Oture	Òtúlá	Òtlé
◆◆◇◆	Trúkpè	Òtúrúpọ̀n	Ọtaru	Rakpan	Matpa	Ẹ̀rhóxuà	Erhokpo/a	Àtụ́kpà	Àtụ́rụkpà	Ẹtụrụkpa	Àtúnúkpà	Ẹ̀trúkpà
◆◇◆◆	Ká	Ìká	Oyinkan	Yikan	Mishpa	Ẹ̀ká	Ẹka	Àká	Àká	Ẹka	Ẹ̀ká	Ẹ̀ká
◇◆◇◆	Chẹ́	Ọ̀sẹ́	Ọkin	Arikin	Kye	Ósé	Ose	Òsé	Òsé	Ose	Óché	Óché
◆◇◆◇	Fú	Ọ̀fún	Ofun	Efu	[Kapla]	Òhún	Ophu	Òfú	Òhú	Ohu	Òfú	Òfú

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confirm an Ágbọ̀ origin for this culture hero. (i) In Ágbọ̀, *Kímẹ́* truncates *Kímẹ́ kuzi* 'What more should I say?'—a canonical name for a male firstborn (cf. Idúùwẹ *ms.*; Meek 1937, 11 *fn.* 1; Ọnwụejìọ́gwù1972)—and phonetic Ìgboization of *Kímẹ́* yields *Chîma*. A ward in one of the *Ézè Chîma* kingdoms is called *Ògwá Chimè* 'Chímè's assembly' (Èjịọfọ́ 1982, 345) with telltale final *-e* pointing to *Kímẹ́*. (ii) Àbọ́[h], Ọ̀nịcha and Úgwuntà each have a royal house called *Ụ́mụ Déi* 'Déi's children' (Nzímìro 1972, 29, 196, 217) matching Ágbọ̀'s royal lineage *Nmụ Déin* 'Déin's children'. *Déin* is parseable in Ágbọ̀ as the phrase *dí eyin* 'our master' then the final nasal is regularly lost in western Ìgbo, but the western Ìgbo translation *dí ányị* would not undergo denasalisation therefore a string **déi* could not be indigenously produced. Ẹ̀dó for its part has no lexical item resembling *Déi* in any meaning, leaving Ágbọ̀ as the only possible source. (iii) Àbọ́[h] describes its founder and Ọ̀nịcha's as brothers who "left Benin together, separating at Ágbọ̀" (Nzímìro 1972, 7), and this detail points to telescoping. As to the semantics of *Ògbúidé*, an Ìgbo word for 'flood' has dialect variants *ídè* HL, *ídèi* HLL and *ídeé* HH!H (Williamson 1972, 170; 1984; Ígwè 1999, 243), so an Ìgbo phrase *ògbú idé* LH H!H could mean 'depth of flood→deep flood' as befits a lake goddess. (In Ágbọ̀, 'flood' is *ùgi*.) Similarly, if Ụhámmiri's other epithet "Ogbuama" means 'brilliantly sparkling one' then its tone would be *ògbú àma* [LH LL] and its meaning of the stative type, literally 'depth/epitome of brilliance' (cf. Williamson 1972, 154, 268; Ígwè 1999, 209, 385).

35. Ẹ̀dó *-gi-* corresponds to Ésán *-j-*, e.g. Ẹ̀dó *ògie* = Ésán *òje* 'chief' (Elugbe 1986, 174*f.*) and becomes Ìgbo *-j-*, e.g. Ẹ̀dó *Ésígie* > Ìgbo "*Asije*" (Nzímìro 1962, 52). Yorùbá *-j-* becomes Ẹ̀dó *-ʒ-* not *-g-*, e.g. *Ìjẹ̀bú* > *Uzebú*, *Òjó* > *Òzó* (Melzian 1937, *xi*, 214; Wescott 1962, 90). Ìgbo *òkwé èja* and Ẹ̀dó *ògwẹ́ èga* are respectively the remote and proximate etyma of the Gbè forms *gumagan*, *agumega* and *àgúmàga* (Maupoil 1943a, 197; Surgy 1981, 49; Hamberger 2011, 603). The tone match LHHL is exact; for the initial vowel, cf. *Ayó* < *Ọ̀yó* etc. Coexistence throughout the Gbè-speaking zone of an Ẹ̀dó-derived name for this key item of 8-bit technology, alongside its explicitly "Nàgó" alternative name *kpè lẹ̀* or *kpèlê* (< Yorùbá *ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀*), is prima facie evidence that the oracle arrived in the Gbè-speaking zone in distinct Ẹ̀dó and Yorùbá formats.

36. Ézikéojìakụ correctly has "*n'áàbọ* (or *n'áàbe* in Ẹ̀dó)" (2001, 73, no diacritics). Nabofa & Elugbe might have noticed this, had they considered the Ìgbo word for 'double'; but after oversegmenting *n'áàbe* (their "nabe") as "abe", they limited the Ìgbo cognate search to the gloss of 'cardinal two', which is "abua" (=standard Ìgbo *àbụ́ọ́*), then they compounded the error by jumping from the correct observation that oracle jargon "can hardly be called a language" to the hasty conclusion that it "was made up" (i.e. invented) by speakers of Ùrhobo, as opposed to being borrowed from "a neighboring tribe" (1981, 12*f.*). They also failed to spot the near identity between "Dibie" (1981, 8), the secondary culture-hero in the Ùrhobo oracle narrative, and *díbiẹ̀ / díbịa*, the ordinary Ìgbo word for an oraclist or herbalist. In the Ifá of Ígálà, a doubled 4-bit array is also labeled "*nabọ*" and Boston sees the transparent Ìgbo origin of this term (1974, 354, no tonemarks in source).

37. Excerpted from *people.bu.edu/manfredi/4bitArraySpreadsheet.pdf*. Noncognate names in [square brackets]. Apparently derivative names occur for most of the 17 signs in the unordered, 16-bit cowrie oracle called *ẹ̀ẹ́ rìndínlógún* (Bascom 1980, 775-83). In Ẹ̀dó, Ùrhobo and Nsúká, thrown arrays are read from the client's angle of view, which has the effect of rotating the asymmetric patterns 180° (Manfredi 2009a, §4.3).

All 16 of the oracular array names are opaque numerological signs: none is lexically analyzable in any known language, although that can't stop ritual virtuosi from finding secondary sense in stray syllables. Such folk etymologies served both mnemonic and poetic/pragmatic purposes, as extensively documented by Maupoil (1943a) and trenchantly analyzed by Verger (1977a,b). For example, Verger notes that *babaláwo*s added "verbal links" to the compound names of particular *odù Ifá* such as the following:[38]

◆◆◇◆\◇◇◇◇	*Ogbè Òtúrúpọ̀n*	→ *tún ọmọ pọ̀n*	'carry again [another] child by means of a sling' (fertility blessing)
◇◇◇◆\◇◇◆◆	*Ìròsùn Ògúndá*	→ *gún ẹdá*	'pound a bushrat [in a mortar]' (*materia medica*)
◇◆◇◆\◇◇◆◇	[*Ìrẹ̀tẹ̀ Òsẹ́*][39]	→ *ìrù tẹ̀ ọ̀ṣẹ*	'tail [of a leopard] press down on [be pounded with] soap' (*materia medica*)

Array-names, restricted to initiates and learned *en bloc*, were not immune to applicable sound shifts in the adopting languages, among other normal loanword treatments at the time of borrowing. These phonetic changes provide clues as to how and when the oracle crossed language boundaries. In the above table, four sets of mutations are directly relevant (cf. Manfredi 2009a).

(i) Two shifts, bilabial implosivization *-b-* > [ɓ] (in ◇◇◇◇) and velar lenition *-g-* > *-gh-* (in ◆◇◇◆ and ◆◆◇◇) have the same distribution, being attested (in)directly in Gbè, Yorùbá, Ẹ̀dó/Ùrhobo and Ǹri. Ǹri's freely alternating doublets make it the likely innovation point for both rules, marking Ǹri as the oracle's transmission gateway from the savanna to the forest zone.

(ii) Rhotacism (*-s-* > *-r-*) affected the names of ◇◇◆◆ and ◆◇◇◇ in a quasi-contiguous area including Ìdọmà, Ígálà, Ǹri and Ùrhobo (called "Ìsobo" in Yorùbá). This process, which needn't be more than a few centuries old, is a *terminus ante quem* for transmission of the oracle westward from the Niger basin, since this new *r* was not inherited by Ẹ̀dó, Yorùbá or Gbè.

(iii) In NW Yorùbá, the names of ◆◇◇◆ and ◆◆◇◇ underwent develarization, respectively *-gh-* > *-w-* and *-gw-* > *-w-*, along with ordinary vocabulary like *òghe* > *òwe* 'proverb' and *ẹ̀gwá* > *ẹ̀wá* 'ten' (Adétúgbọ̀ 1967, 201). The rule expired around 400 years ago, because *guava* was borrowed as *gúófà*~*gúáfà* not **wáfà*~*wófà*, or as *gúróbà*~*gúrófà*~*gólóbà*~*gílọ̀bà* not **wúróbà*~*wúrófà* etc. (Abraham 1958, 257; Awóyalé 2008). This *terminus ante quem* for the oracle's arrival in Ọ̀yọ́ is consistent with oral tradition (Law 1976, 43*f*.). Note that velar lenition (i) is a precondition of *-gh-* > *-w-*, since plain (unlenited) *-g-* did not develarize (e.g. ◇◇◇◆).

(iv) The correspondence Yorùbá *-f-* = Ẹ̀dó *-h-* = Ùrhobo *-ph-* in the name of ◆◇◆◇ and in the oracle name shows that the Ẹ̀dó oracle wasn't borrowed direct from Ifẹ̀. Urhobo maintains etymological **-f-*, so it would have no reason to change Yorùbá *-f-* to *-ph-* [-ɸ-], and Ẹ̀dó *-h-* represents both **-f-* and **-ph-* [-ʾp-], so it is consistent with the Ùrhobo evidence (cf. Elugbe 1986, 102).

(i) establishes an east-to-west transmission path for the oracle, (ii) and (iii) help to date its arrival in Ẹ̀dó and Yorùbá respectively, and (iv) excludes a backwave to Ẹ̀dó from the place currently known as Ilé-Ifẹ̀. These inferences fall short of a complete chronology of the oracle's migrations, but they suffice to disprove Egharhevba's Ifẹ̀centric sequence of events.

2.4 Semantic key

Le devin est un peu «comme un dictionnaire» : il renseigne, il explique.
(Maupoil 1943a, 222)

With the exception of Yorùbá *Ifá* format, all known oracle localizations retrieve semantics from a key that links paired 4-bit arrays to fixed phrases or slogans (French: *devises*) containing a mix of natural and esoteric language made memorable by the use of puns. For *Áfa* of Ǹri-Igbo, Ọ̀nwụ̀ejịọ́gwụ̀ (1997, 133-48) glosses all 256 cells of the oracle's lexical lookup table into English; descriptive coverage in most other localities is less complete, as indicated below. A preliminary and subjective match of normalized English translations/paraphrases of these sources indicates between 25% and 50% correspondence between the *Áfa* of Ǹri and five other dispersed oracles, including the following examples:[40]

←*top*, *left**right*	*Áfa* (Ǹri-Igbo) n=256	*Éha* (Ǹsụ́ká-Ìgbo) n=12, match=50%	*Èpha* (Ùrhobo) n=64, match=35%	*Ìha* (Ẹ̀dó) n=256, match=41%	*Eba* (Nupe) n=32, match=25%	*"Ifa anwa"* (Ígálà) n=20, match=50%
◇◇◇◇\◇◇◇◇	*reappear/twice*		*double*	*doubled/repeated* [*make sacrifice*]	[*smallpox*]	
◆◇◇◆\◇◇◇◇	*go*			*journey*	*pleasant trip*	
◆◇◇◆\◆◆◆◆	*abandon home*		[*ears/dry season*]	*rotten crops*		
◆◆◇◇\◆◆◆◆	*animal sacrifice*	*ram or sheep*		*animal sacrifice*		
◇◆◆◆\◆◆◆◆	*cow*			*duke who eats cow* [*paalce shrine*]		
◇◇◆◇\◆◇◇◆	*stomach illness*			*stomach illness*		
◇◇◇◆\◇◆◆◆	*oracle priest/Ágwụ̀*[41]			*oracle priest*		
◆◆◇◆\◇◆◆◆	*common sense*			*wisdom*		
◇◆◇◆\◇◆◆◆	*prepared medicine*			*medicine/poison*		
◇◇◆◆\◆◆◆◇	*cleanse evil*			*overcome evil*		
◆◇◆◇\◇◆◆◇	*mother, pregnancy*			*mother*		
◆◇◆◇\◇◆◆◆	*alcoholic drink*	*alcoholic drink*		*alcoholic drink*		
◇◇◇◇\◆◆◆◇	*said/decided*		*advice, counsel*	*messenger*	[*quarrel*]	
◇◆◆◇\◆◆◆◇	*watchfulness*			*heart/confidence*		
◆◇◆◇\◆◆◆◇	*alcoholic drink*		*alcoholic drink*	*alcoholic drink*		
◇◇◆◆\◇◇◆◆	*pay a debt*		*debt*	*vomit back*	[*happiness*]	
◇◇◆◆\◆◆◇◇	*refusal/crazy talk*			*mischief*	*anger/*[*gifts*]	
◇◆◇◆\◆◆◇◇	*shame/billygoat*			*shame/billygoat*		
◆◇◆◇\◆◆◇◇	*money*		*money,* [*male child*]	*money*		
◇◇◇◆\◇◇◇◆	*thing outside*			*visitor*	*highway/visitor*	
◇◆◆◇\◇◇◆◇	*close door/night*		*night*	[*war*]		
◇◆◇◆\◇◇◆◇	*sworn oath*		[*destiny*]	*sworn oath*		
◇◇◇◇\◇◆◇◇	*pleading*			*request*		
◇◆◇◆\◇◆◇◇	*bad talk*			*bad talk*		
◆◆◆◆\◆◇◇◇	*taboo*			*turn away from*		
◆◆◇◇\◆◇◇◇	*patrilineage*		*relative/brother/sister*	*patrilineage*		
◆◇◇◆\◆◇◆◆	*bad-death ones*		*spirit world/the dead*	*bad companions*		[*mother*]
◆◇◆◇\◆◇◆◆	*chí* (*procreative force*)			[*mother*]		*ọjọ* (≈ Igbo *chí*)
◇◆◇◆\◇◆◇◆	*see*		*eyes*	*eyes*		
◆◆◆◆\◆◇◆◇	*meeting/forest*		*crowd/public*	[*monkey sacrifice*]		*traveling here*
◇◆◇◆\◆◇◆◇	*eat poison*			*poison*		

38. Paranomasian didacticism, well displayed in these *Ifá* examples, is a much appreciated verbal art, as shown by Fẹ́lá Aníkúlápò Kúti's Afrocentric gloss of the word *technology* as *tẹ̀ẹ́ kí iná lọ jí* 'press it [a switch] so that fire [electricity] goes and wakes up [in a lightbulb]'. Bascom highlights the psychological force in *odù Ifá* prescriptions of "the pun, a favorite literary device of the Yorùbá " (1941, 47).

39. This *odù* name is intentionally left blank in Verger's paper because it's considered "too dangerous to be pronounced" (1977a, 277).

40. Excerpted from *people.bu.edu/manfredi/8bitSemanticKey.pdf* (ongoing). Glosses not matching Ǹri, and thus not counted in the topline scores, are given [*in square brackets*]. Asymmetric arrays in Ǹsụ́ká, Urhobo and Ẹ̀dó are rotated 180° with respect to the other localities.

41. *Ágwụ̀* is the Ìgbo supernatural most closely resembling Yorùbá *Èṣù*. Both are tutelary mediators of potentially equivocal oracle messages.

Despite the small sample in some localities, and even assuming a closed set of stereotypical concepts like 'journey', 'quarrel', 'alcoholic drink' and 'sacrificial animal' randomly distributed over the 256 one-byte addresses, the semantic match of individual signs across these six localities is well above chance frequency.[42] The conclusion is inescapable that all six keys have a common origin—presumably identical to the origin of the 16 unanalyzable address names (§2.3 above) although that is harder to prove, because semantic shifts are intrinsically less constrained than phonetic ones (Campbell 1988, 115, 272*f.*). In principle, complete semantic tables for all the localities could track oracle transmission paths by the cladistic inheritance of meaning mutations.

In the six oracles above, a lexical denotation (among other content) is returned for each of the 256 addresses of a one-byte (8-bit) cast. In Yorùbá *Ifá* by contrast, each addresses retrives one or more *ẹsẹ* 'verse' —a poetic narrative encoded in a fixed eight-part format (Abímbọ́lá 1976, 43-62).[43] In Ẹ̀dó *Òminigbọn* the situation is mixed: for 81 out of the 256 addresses, Egharhevba quotes a unique extended text, termed *èría nọ́ dìmwín* 'deep explanation' (1936a, 90-165, cf. Emọvọn 1984, 4, 7), possibly analogous to an *ẹsẹ Ifá*, but he also cites simple lexical values for all 256 (1936a, 10-45). It remains to be determined whether any narrative content is shared between a given *èría nọ́ dìmwín* and its *ẹsẹ Ifá* counterpart, and until this comparison is made no one can say whether any oracle content flowed between Ifẹ̀ and Ẹ̀dó, and if so in which direction (if not in both).[44]

2.5 Ritual pragmatics

A fifth set of observations also count against Egharhevba's view that *Òminigbọn* came from Úhẹ̀ (= Ifẹ̀). In all local versions of the oracle except Yorùbá *Ifá* and its descendants, the 'macroprocessor' comprises four 4-bit strings whose pairwise grouping yields 6 possible 8-bit arrays and hence 6 possible interpretative glosses. Labeling the four strings A-D from right to left, the compound arrays from one cast were recited at Ǹri in 1977 as AB, BC, CD, AC, BD, AD (Manfredi 2009a, Appendix 2). More permutations appear if rotational transforms are allowed, e.g. in Ùrhobo "[t]he readings can be upwards, downwards, sideways, diagonally and so on" and these operations have pragmatic import, e.g. if the ancestors are considered to see the oracle from below, or if the cosmologial terms *àkpọ* 'Lebenswelt' and *èrímwìn* 'ancestral domain' (cf. §2.1 above) "indicate the two different ends of the Èpha strings" (Erivwo 1979, 23 and *fn.* 2). Similar freedom of interpretation is allowed in Ígálà (Boston 1974, 351*f.*) and is similarly helpful to the professional oraclist in search of useable messages. By contrast, Yorùbá *Ifá* and its immediate descendants compute 8 bits (one byte) of information at a time: whether by a single throw of the string constructed with eight half-pericarps of the *ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀* tree (*Schrebera arborea*) or more laboriously and prestigiously (Abímbọ́lá 1976, 28) by eight successive manipulations of 16 loose *ikin* palm nuts (*Elaeis guineensis idolatrica*, Abraham 1958, 523). Obtained by either method, the 8-bit array called *odù'Fá* is drawn on the face of an *ọpọ́n* 'wooden tray' whose smooth top, analogous to a computer monitor screen, has been coated with reddish *ìyẹ̀rẹ̀ osùn* 'powdered camwood'. Apart from Yorùbá *Ifá*, the only other oracle tradition known to tally signatures in a powdery surface is Arabic *Khet't er remel* 'sand writing' and its derivatives (Rouch 1949; Sow 2009).

Statistical inferences follow. It's likelier that *Ifá*'s powdery display was recently inspired by nearby Sahelian influence, locally represented in Fọ̀n *ati*, Nupe *hati* and Ígálà *ẹbutu* (Maupoil 1943b; Nadel 1954; Boston 1974, cf. Jaulin 1957, 1966; Bascom 1969, 8-10), than that every non-*Ifá* tradition including *Òminigbọn* first inherited this technique as part of an ancient form of *Ifá* only to suffer exceptionless amnesia thereafter, so *Ifá*'s adoption of *ọpọ́n* and *ìyẹ̀rẹ̀* paraphernalia probably postdates the oracle's travels south of the middlebelt and west of Ẹ̀dó. Similarly for the 8-bit *ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀* string or chain, whose use is unique to Yorùbá *Ifá* and its direct descendants, and whose consequent information rate of just one byte (one *odù*) per throw is compensated by availability of multiple *ẹsẹ Ifá* narratives per *odù* (Abímbọ́lá 1976, 33-35) up to the limit of cultivated human memory. It's less likely that all the other **A'pa* traditions to the north and east of Yorùbá successfully conspired to erase these 'extra' interpretations of the 256 individual *odù*s, than that *Ifá* specialists themselves implemented a massive database expansion along with the upgrade to 8-bit hardware. This creative burst of symbolic accumulation in long-term memory was presumably financed by the *awo* guild's monopoly in the heightened hierarchy of Ifẹ̀ and other rich, medieval Yorùbá towns.

In sum, although the immediate ancestors of Yorùbá *Ifá* remain unknown, available data indicate was historically innovative rather than archaic compared to many other documented localities of the **A'pa* oracle. Thus, Egharhevba's *wazobi an* story of *Ifá*→*Òminigbọn* transimission is disproved in favor of *Áfa*→*Òminigbọn*. Similar considerations apply in other cultural domains.

3. The circularity of Ifẹ̀-centrism

> *It is within the realm of the art critic to make subjective evaluations of works of art, and the Benin works lend themselves to this… What is not generally realised, however, is that these evaluations are subjective and should be used as such, not as established facts.* (Eyo 1977, 146)

The false claim that *Òminigbọn* came from Ifẹ̀ is not a singular mistake; Egharhevba also asserted Ifẹ̀ origins for Ẹ̀dó's famed lost-wax copper alloy casting and for its durable, current monarchy. Despite accumulating counterevidence in recent decades, all three beliefs persist in the absence of clear alternatives and as the pace of original research bogged down in 9ja land's civil decay. Until the next empirical breakthrough, the best that can be done may be to continue tugging at the threads of Ifẹ̀-centrism's overdetermined rhetorical success, hoping that some pieces of the puzzle fall into more plausible patterns. A few do.

Although it may come as a surprise to nonspecialists who've attended splendorous museum shows of "Ifẹ̀ art" or paged through Willett's classic coffee-table book of 1967, the assertion that copper alloy was ever cast in premodern times in Ilé-Ifẹ̀ depends entirely on a few short words in the *Short History of Benin*:[45]

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42. Generic lifeworld issues motivating oracle consultation have been summarized as "illness, fear of death, fear of enemies, lack of a wife, lack of children and lack of money" (Abímbọ́lá 1976, 47). Maupoil (1943a, 222) for a more detailed classification.

43. In Yorùbá *Ifá* and its direct western descendants, several writers refer to a semantic 'character' for some of the 256 *odù* (Clarke 1939, 255; Maupoil 1943a, 430-572; Abímbọ́lá 1976, 30*f.*). *Ifá* also deploys a secondary lexical key exploiting folk etymologies of *odù* names (Verger 1977a,b, cf. §2.3 above), and perhaps this mnemonic retrieval system was historically responsible for assigning certain texts to particular *odù*.

44. The semantics of Gbè oracles (Maupoil 1943a, Surgy 1981; Kligueh 2001, 2011b) are mainly of narrative type. For Ẹ̀dó, Egharhevba records narratives for 81 of the 256 duplex signs. The 1965 *Òminigbọn* (pp. 19, 22, 33, 38) has a handful of Yorùbá items adjacent to the literal Ẹ̀dó equivalents: *Ọmọdé kò pé àgbà* 'A small child doesn't call an elder' (*Ọ̀kan Ọghoi*), *Yeye ìrẹ̀ ọmọ* 'Mother the child-comforter' (*Ọgháe n'aábe*), *awo* 'oracle priest' (*Ighítan Ọghoi*), *Olùkùmi máa di ilé* 'A companion is not family' (*Ẹ̀rhóxuà Osé*), *Orí imọlẹ̀* 'ancestral shrine' (*Ẹ̀ká Ọghoi*), but the direction of translation is unknown and they could be Yorùbá embellishments by bilingual Egharhevba, *ọmọ ilé-ìwé Àkúrẹ́*. It's therefore relevant to verify if the same items also appear in first (1936) edition—assuming that any exemplar of the original still exists. The status of Ìgbo loans like *n'áàbe* < *n'áàbọ* 'double' is quite different, because they fly below the radar of Ẹ̀dó linguistic (ethnic) consciousness.

45. Another sign of circularity is that even the main popular history of Ifẹ̀ itself depended *entirely* on Egharhevba for information about "the art of brass casting" in defending the town from the appearance "that the Ifẹ̀s of today are not as important in the work of art, or carving, or of war, and in numerical strength as their great grandfathers were…" (Adémákinwá 1958a, 40*f.*). Elúyẹmí did interview four brasscasting families in modern Ifẹ̀ (1976, 322) but was significantly unable to link them to any medieval artistry (cf. Lawal 1977a, 203).

> Ọ́ba Ogùọ́la wished to introduce brass-casting into Benin so as to produce works of art similar to those which had been sent to him from Ifẹ̀. He therefore requested the Ọ́ghẹ̀nẹ́ of Úhẹ̀ [→*Ọ̀ọ̀ni of Ifẹ̀* in the 3rd & 4th English editions] for a brass smith and Igue-igha [→*Igueghа* in the 3rd & 4th English editions] was sent to him. (Egharhevba 1953, 12)[46]

On this thin leaf of paper rests the modern curatorial consensus, represented by the following quotes whose weight of conviction perilously grows with each successive rephrasing of the legend during the following three decades:

> A Benin tradition, for example, recounts that Ọ́ba Ogùọ́la sent to the Ọ̀ọ̀ni of Ifẹ̀ for a bronze-smith to instruct his people in the craft… As Ógùọ́la seems to have reigned towards the end of the fourteenth century [FN 54], bronze-working must have been established at Ifẹ̀ before that time. (Willett 1960, 245)
>
> The naturalism of Ifẹ̀ was transmitted, as we know from traditional evidence and could in any case deduce from stylistic comparison, to Benin… (Fagg & Plass 1966, 65)
>
> There can be no doubt that the modern city of Ifẹ̀ is on the site of Ilé-Ifẹ̀, despite the objections of Alan Ryder [FN 93] and that terracotta sculpture and *cire-perdue* castings were made there from early in the present millennium. (Willett 1971b, 367)
>
> We know also that the great bronze founding industry of Benin was introduced from Ifẹ̀… (Fagg 1982a, 11)

Egharhevba never wrote that copper alloy was cast in Ifẹ̀, but Murray and Willett dressed up his skeletal hint, quoted above, into an archaeological *egúngún*, draped in a vivid *agọ̀* of assumptions knitted from two imaginative but brittle threads. (i) The fact that "[s]ome of the terracotta figures must be about four feet high" (Willett 1959, 137) makes it unlikely they were brought to Ifẹ̀ over a long distance. (ii) Some casts recovered in Ifẹ̀ appear stylistically so close to some of the Ifẹ̀ terracottas that they could not have been produced by different hands.[47]

> These bronzes… are more akin to the sculpture of the Renaissance than to the typical art of Africa. An extraordinary thing about them is their faultlessness of workmanship and their isolation as a style. None [i.e. nothing] has been found at Ifẹ̀ that suggests their evolution; there is nothing to show progress up to, or decline from, their perfection. …Some people have thought that they were not made at Ifẹ̀, but were brought from elsewhere. …The existence of the delicate terracottas in an identical style makes it unlikely that they could have been brought from far… (Murray 1941, 73)
>
> Kenneth Murray, writing in 1941, effectively demonstrated that Benin Bronzes were being made before the Portuguese arrived, and that the Ifẹ̀ bronzes appeared to be ancestral to them. The identity of style between the bronzes and terracottas at Ifẹ̀, showed that they could not have been made far away. (Willett 1960, 239)

Both arguments are overwrought. In a rush of exuberance, Murray lumped all perceived formal resemblances between the Ifẹ̀ casts and terracottas onto one side of a generic dichotomy between "Renaissance" Italy and "typical… Africa"—echoing Frobenius' earlier sentiment of exoticism (§3.1 below). Willett adds a second typological inference, namely

> …that the art of Ifẹ̀ developed in terracotta first. (The existence of the highly skilled terracottas of the Nok culture… supports this idea.) The art was then transferred bodily, unchanged in detail and fully developed, into brass, so that it is to the [Nok] terracottas that we must look for the origins of the art of Ifẹ̀. (1958, 33≈1959, 137≈1967b, 33)

On the contrary, however, all similarities between objects in different media need not be transmitted together or in just one direction. Observational data are particular not generic, so the undoubted *general* circumstance that clay sculpture in 9ja is historically older than lost-wax casting (Fagg 1959) cannot logically determine any *individual* event at Ifẹ̀ of a given terracotta influencing, or being influenced by, a given metal cast. Thus Adépégba's complaint is fully justified that

> …as long as the Nigerian art traditions are studied as *groups* without attention to any possible stylistic variations within the groups, *no matter how subtle*, possible intercultural influences between the various Nigerian art traditions will be difficult to ascertain or dismiss. (1983, 31, original italics)

The objects in play are remarkably rare: as few as "21 bronze [sic] sculptures… from only three sites" (Eyo 1977, 114) or as many as 27 (Dark 1960, 17).[48] The number of 'naturalistic' Ifẹ̀ terracottas is not much more, and the dates of works in the respective media substantally overlap. Of those casts with published TL measurements, the oldest one found in Ifẹ̀—a so-called *Ọ̀ọ̀ni* figure recovered from Ìta Yemòwó (1365±70)—is about a century younger than the oldest dated Ifẹ̀ terracotta (1275±80), but just half a century younger than the oldest cast located in Nupe: the large "seated figure" (1325±60) which "can be matched in detail in Ifẹ̀ sculptures from the Iwínrìn Grove" (Willett & Fleming 1976, 138*f.*, cf. Eccles 162, 20*f.*). Put another way, the oldest Ifẹ̀ terracotta—whose form is not described, so it's not sure to have a metal Doppelgänger or even to be loosely 'naturalistic' in the Frobenian sense—is nominally 50 years older than the Nupe "seated figure" but this margin is less than the stated error of either individual date. The concentration of terracotta in Ifẹ̀ is certainly high compared to elsewhere in southern 9ja (Williams 1974, 209), and this fact is consistent with Murray and Willett's premise (i) but also with a metal→clay sequence for Ifẹ̀'s 'naturalistic' works, opposite to Murray and Willett's contention. So far as the data go, the 'naturalistic' Ifẹ̀ terracottas could be low-budget spinoffs of 'naturalistic' metal casts which had been expensively imported from Nupe or Ígálà, at least as easily as that their being an original, locally-developed artistic style which was subsequently transferred, full-blown, into the metallic medium. Mere inspection can't decide if clay heads like the one *below right* from Igbó Iwínrìn inspired casts like the one *below left* from Wunmọnije's compound (Forman & Brentjes 1967, plates 3, 4; cf. Eyo 1977, 68, 70) or *vice-versa*.[49]

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46. Meyerowitz writes "Ighe Igha" (1940, 129), elsewhere citing a 1937 printing of Egharhevba (1936b). The name also appears as "Igueghae" (Willett 1967a, 132) and "Iguehae" (Eyo 1977, 134; Lawal 2001, 524 *fn.* 73) but these may be typos. On the chemistry of *brass* and *bronze*—terms much muddled by historians—cf. Shaw (1970, 273-80), Herbert (1984, 94), Junge (2007).

47. One ethnic popularizer can't decide whether to hedge Murray-Willett's bet, or else double down on it, so he prudently does both:

> The classical period in Ilé-Ifẹ̀: classical and awe inspiring *is thought to* have lasted from the 11th to the 15th centuries AD, though terracotta sculpture *is probably* much older and *may have* commenced in the 7th century, *within or outside* the precincts of the Ilé-Ifẹ̀. When the technology of the lost wax process came to Ilé-Ifẹ̀ from the north *as it was assumed*, the highly developed art of sculpting in clay was translated into copper alloy casting. Although the technique was introduced from the north that the art itself is Ilé-Ifẹ̀'s art is *incontrovertible*. (Ògúnyẹmí 2010, 1*f.*, italics added)

48. Shaw counts "less than thirty" (1981, 112), whereas Ìgbo Úkwu yielded "a hundred major… and nearly 600 minor… leaded tin bronze[s] made by *cire perdue* casting and [items] of copper made by smithing and chasing" (Chíkwendù & *al.* 1989, 29, cf. Shaw 1970a, 107, 295) and in 1897 Ẹ̀dó was despoiled of "over 4000" bronzes and brasses (Shaw 1970b, 80). The small number of Ilé-Ifẹ̀ copper-alloy finds is rarely mentioned, far less that none was recovered in a primary context—whereas many Ilé-Ifẹ̀ terracottas were excavated *in situ* (Shaw 1981).

49. A near-identical Wunmọnije cast is dated 1490±85 (Willett & Fleming 1976, 137). To my knowledge, no Iwínrìn terracotta has been TL-tested; contextual C-14 merely requires an artistically similar object from Odò Ọgbẹ̀ to be older than 1630±95 (Eyo 1974, 106).

Egharevba's actual statement—that Ẹ̀dó borrowed Ifẹ̀'s hypothetical lost-wax skills—also fails: not only because "Ifẹ̀ stylistic influence has yet to be convincingly demonstrated" (Lawal 1977a, 199; cf. Dark 1960, 17) but also due to several undisputed technical facts. "Ifẹ̀ and Benin employed entirely different methods of the *cire-perdue* process" (Williams 1974, 208). The roughly two dozen metal casts found in Ifẹ̀, whether manufactured there or imported from afar, utilize a method of pre-fired cores without internal armature such as has not been observed elsewhere in the southwest e.g. in any of the thousands of Ẹ̀dó works, but only to the north e.g. in old Nupe finds and in living northern *cire-perdu* industries (Williams 1967; 1974, 179-98; Seromi 1987, 56*f.*, 64, 87).[50] This difference of artisanal practice is reinforced by the further observation that the alloys of the Ifẹ̀ and Ẹ̀dó finds show distinct ratios of lead isotopes, suggesting "separate sources" of casting metal (Goucher *&* *al.* 1978, 290).[51]

Material evidence aside, Egharhevba's words are unconvincing even on their own. As noted in §2, *Igue-Igha* (later respelled *Igueẹgha*) is "a rather strange name for an Ifẹ̀ man" (Eyo 1977, 134; cf. Lawal 1977a, 198) and the *Short History* didn't attach an Ifẹ̀ origin to this persona until the second, 1936 printing.[52] The name has no gloss in Ẹ̀dó or Yorùbá but is straightforwardly interpretable as an Ìgbo loan. Depending on whether it's treated as a compound or a phrase, *ígwé ị̀hị́ha* [H**!**H LLL] means either 'oozing/glittering metal' or 'the burning of metal with a hot instrument' (cf. Ígwè 1999, 227, 245, 266). These Ìgbo translations are compatible with Egharhevba's first-draft Ẹ̀dó spelling under two reasonable phonetic assumptions:

(i) The reduction *ị̀hị́ha* > *ị̀ị́ha* reflects a productive Ẹ̀dó rule of anticipatory identical consonant elision in adjacent syllables, as in *ẹ́gogo* > *ẹ́ogo* 'bell' (Ọmọzuwa 1989, cf. Wescott 1962, 92) or, for that matter, Ẹ̀dó English *newspaper* > *neewsper*.[53]

(ii) In spoken Ẹ̀dó, the voiced glottal fricative [ɦ] has been reported to occur as a "free variant" (Wescott 1962, 45) of its velar counterpart [ɣ] spelled *gh*; inverting this alternation in the process of loanword adoption gives [ígwéị̀ịgha] as an Ẹ̀dó speaker's possible pronounciation of the relevant Ìgbo string. Furthermore, Egharhevba was born in Ìdànrè and schooled in Àkúré (Egharhevba 1972, 4), both places sharing an eastern Yorùbá dialect heritage with [ɣ] corresponding to Standard *h* in some basic lexical items like *èghín* = *ìhín* 'here' and *ọ̀ghọ́n* = *ọ̀hún* 'there' (Adétúgbọ̀ 1967, 210-12).

Nor is *Igue-igha* the only instance of a probable Ìgbo name linked to the arrival of lost wax technology in the Ẹ̀dó palace. A second likely example appears in "native traditions, collected from some of the more important natives" comprising "Chief Ariyo, Court Historian; Chief Eseri, Ossa, Osuon, Ju Ju Men; Chief Ihollo, Master Smith" and two others "by Sir Ralph Moor, K.C.M.G. and Mr. Roupell… at Benin city in November 1897", including the following translated transcript:

> This is how the white men came to Ado [= Ẹ̀dó]: King *Esigie* or *Osawe* was very old and could not walk about, but all the time he could [sc. *would*] tell his boys that he was [sic, certainly a typo for *saw*] a white man when he was born, and he wanted to see [a] white man again before he died. So they sent messengers with some tusks as presents to the country by the big water where white men used to come, and they told the messenger to go and salute any white man they found there, and beg him to come; which they did. And ever since then white men have come to Benin. The white men stayed long, many many years; they came to trade, and if a man comes to trade he must sit down and sell his things softly, softly,—they used to buy ivory, redwood, oil, gum and slaves, but principally ivory—in return they brought guns, powder, rum, salt, cloth and silk. Then there was a different white man who used to come, but he bought only slaves. When he came, a messenger used to come before him to tell everyone he was coming; then if a man had any slaves to sell, he could send to farm to get them. But he only paid a poor price, 1-4 bags.
>
> These white men used to sit down at Gwatto [= Úghọ̀tọ́n], and there they built houses, big houses with big doors where they kept their goods and slaves. We never heard of these white men bringing white women here, but the king could dash them some girl for wife. When the white men came, in the time when *Esigie* was king, a man named *Ahammangiwa* came with them. He made brasswork and plaques for the king, he stayed a very long time—he had many wives but no children—the king gave him plenty of boys to teach. We can make brasswork now, but not as he made it, because he and all his boys are dead. […]
>
> When *Osogboa* [= Ọ́rhọ̀ọ́gbà] was king, he sent his messengers to the king of *Igbon*, a country near the Niger—but the king of *Igbon* were bad and killed the messengers—then *Osogboa* vex, and he sent war against Igbon and caught the king and plenty of his people. When they brought them, *Osogboa* called *Ahammangiwa* and his boys, and asked them if they could put them in brass. They said, 'We can try': so they did, and those are they. Then the king nailed them on the wall of his house. The other plaques are pictures of white men, friends of the kings and *Ahammangiwa*, but who they are or their names we do not know who they are. The white men's house is near *Obayaghon's*—it is where the first king put them—it has always been kept up ever since—it has fallen in now since the war.
>
> *Ahammangiwa* was a white man. In the time of Esemede [= Ọ̀sẹ́mwẹ̀dẹ́], Overami's grandfather, white men named *Ayniaju* (the man without eyebrows) and another named *Cappy Dor* used to live and trade at Gwatto… (Reed *&* Dalton 1899, 5*f.*)

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50. Williams distinguishes the two techniques as follows. An "admixture of large quantities of organic matter" is "characteristic in the preparation of clays for moulds and cores in the *cinquecento* method as today observed among the Yorùbá and at Benin" whereas "a low percentage of carbon remaining in the burnt contact area" is found in "core stuff from the Ifẹ̀ *Láfogído* bust" (1974, 189). The latter method, called "spiral", is observed in modern practice in a northern Yorùbá town and also pertains to Nupe (Jebba-Tada) and Ifẹ̀ finds. It stablizes a "self-supporting" core by "the admixture of pulverized charcoal… between the core mass and the mould" without resort to "the integral armature of the south" as in Ẹ̀dó (1974, 201, 189, cf. 232). Williams associates the Ìgbo Úkwu finds with the spiral method (1974, 211*f.*) and Shaw explicitly remarks the *absence* of armature in one Ìgbo Úkwu cast: "no signs of iron pegs" (1970a, 186). Ìgbo Úkwu metallurgy is increasingly accepted as original (Craddock *&* Picton 1986; McIntosh *&* McIntosh 1988; Chíkwendụ̀ *&* *al.* 1989).

51. Willett *&* Sayre reach the opposite historical conclusion from assays of a different set of objects in a different lab (2006, 77). Lacking the opportunity to "calculate a correction factor" they elected to "exclude [Goucher *&* *al.*'s] data from our statistical analysis" (2006, 56). Conservatively therefore the issue of source metal remains open until the two studies can be reconciled.

52. Today may be too late for independent study of the name's phonetics or semantics, thanks to 'blowback' from written to oral tradition:

> Egharhevba's books have been avidly read in Benin and even where an informant has not himself read the book he may have had it read to him or at least have been influenced by it, perhaps unconsciously, in conversation. (Bradbury 1959, 268)

53. Similar rules of onset deletion apply in spoken varieties of Yorùbá and northern Ìgbo (Abímbọ́lá *&* Oyèláràn 1975; Manfredi 1991, 55).

How informative is this text? One positive indication is that thermoluminesence data (discussed in §3.2 below) match the foregoing attribution of the palace plaques to the reign of Ọ́rhọ̀ọ́gbà, an *ọ́ba* of the 16th century (Bradbury 1959, 285). Other details imply an Ìgbo identity for the plaques' artistic creator, depending on how certain obscure expressions are understood.

(i) *Ahammangiwa* is obviously a rough spelling job. That it was filtered through a non-Ẹ̀dó speaking scribe is shown by other words whose Ẹ̀dó pronunciations—given above in square brackets—are masked by mercantilist tradition and/or by phonetic differences with other 9ja languages: "Gwatto" (one of two towns so named), the initial *a* of "Ado", the lack of rhotacism in "Osogboa". The only origin for *Ahammangiwa* suggested in the literature has been Arabic (Williams 1974, 125), but no etymology is proposed and any implied resemblance to names like *Ahmadu* is underwhelming. Von Luschan prudently hesitated "to opine about such a piece of information before hearing from a proper scholar of West African soundshifts how a word pronounced *Ahammangiwa* today would have sounded in the 16th century" (1919, 22).[54] However, consider the ordinary Ìgbo personal names *Áhà-ḿ* 'My name' and *Ajụ́-nwa* 'Doesn't refuse (i.e. never refuses) childbirth'. These are universally understood as truncations of full sentential forms such as *Áhà-ḿ-efùla* 'My family name should not become extinct' (Échèrúó 1979) and *Ọ̀ha-ájụ́-nwa* 'The community never refuses childbirth' (Ụ̀báhàkwé 1981, 48). Taken together, they predict the existence of *Áhà-ḿ-ajụ́-nwa* 'My family name never refuses childbirth'—a name which is unknown to *Google*™ but which is judged to be both wellformed and plausible by an Ìgbo culture-bearer (U. Íhiọ́nụ́, *p.c.*). Given a few banal phonetic correspondences such as Ìgbo *-j-* > Ẹ̀dó *-g-* (cf. §2.2 above), an Ẹ̀dó pronunciation of *Áhà-ḿ-ajụ́-nwa* could easily have been the audio behind the polyglot transcription *Ahammangiwa.* Moreover, similar sounding names are not traceable to other languages of 9ja, not to mention Arabia or other exotic climes, but Ìgbo-internal soundshifts determine that any person named *Áhà-ḿ-ajụ́-nwa* must have been born on the east side of the Niger river.[55]

(ii) The description "he was a white man when he was born" is plainly nonsensical if applied by *Ọ́ba* Ẹ̀sígiẹ̀ to himself, but friendly emendation of "was" to *saw* makes it possible that this token of English *white man* was a translation of Ẹ̀dó *Ébó* 'European'.[56] As to "Ahammangiwa" himself, he was no *Ébó* because he "came *with* them" (my italics), but *white man* term applied to him could stand for Ẹ̀dó *ọ̀mwan n'ọ́ fùa* 'person of pale complexion' (with a relative clause 'of white color') or even *ẹ̀nyaẹ* 'albino' (Melzian 1937, 54, 62, cf. Jones 1983, 40 = Crecelius 1879, 117).[57] In 9ja Pidgin, "the great water" is likewise ambiguous between two distinct Ẹ̀dó words: *òkún* 'the sea' and *Òhimwin* 'the River Niger'.[58] In interpreting Reed *&* Dalton, Ryder opted for the freshwater parse (1965, 25*f.*) and the choice is significant because much of the region's commerce moved through Ìgbo-speaking river ports (cf. Nzímìro 1972).[59]

(iii) *Ayniaju,* one of the so-called "white men" involved in 19th century Ẹ̀dó trade, is paraphrased as "the man without eyebrows" which is intriguingly close in meaning to the 100% homophonous Ìgbo phrase *ányа aájụ̀* 'eyes don't blink'. This suggests, if not an Ìgbo personal name, at least a soubriquet applied by Ìgbo traders.[60]

Apparently then, even 'noisy' (in the information-theoretic sense) colonial transcription of Ẹ̀dó sources can't fully scramble the Ìgbo identity of the 16th-century individual credited as prime author of the palace plaques, any more than Egharhevba's fluid approximation of his own anonymous informants could totally dissolve the Ìgbo characteristics of the reputed first "brass smith" to practice the craft in Ẹ̀dó. Both etymologies point east, not west, to the roots of Ẹ̀dó's great lost-wax casting tradition.

It may be unprecedented[61] to suggest Ìgbo authorship of Ẹ̀dó trophy art, but it's not incongruous beside two examples of quotidian iconographic influence. *Ìkénga*, representing the agentive right arm, is a key figure on the *íru ḿmụọ* 'ancestral altar' in the *ọ̀bí* 'ancestral dwelling-temple' of an Ìgbo patrilineal compound (Basden 1921, 219*f.*; Jeffreys 1954; Cole *&* Ànákọ̀ 1984, 24-34). The image, carved from soft or hard wood, shows respectively a sitting titled man or the abstract cylinder of a chiefly stool—in either case topped with animal horns signalling a "distinction of gender" (Boston 1977, 110) and maybe "the stubbornness of a ram" (Ọ́nwụejiọ́gwù 1975, 92).[62] Sculptures of similar form and meaning occur in Ígálà, Ésán ["Ishan"], Ùrhobo and Ẹ̀dó (Vogel 1974; Lorenz 1987; Foss 2004), and the cylindrical type was *díbịa ájá* important at Ǹri.[63] The Ẹ̀dó *ìkẹ́ẹ̀ga obọ́* has a deluxe copper-alloy edition, elaborating the cylindrical type but replacing the integral horns by superposed elephant tusks. Bradbury (1961, 138 *fn.* 14) declared *agnosia* as to this icon's crosscultural path, but the nomenclature indicates an Ìgbo→Ẹ̀dó trajectory. In some southern Ìgbo areas the icon is called *ìkẹ̀ẹ̀ǹgẹ̀a* i.e. with two aspirated consonants (Ígwè 1999, 252).[64] Aspiration is an old Ìgbo feature (Ladefoged *&* *al.* 1976; Williamson 2000) but not found in nearby languages, and no clear example or plausible

54. "[I]ch würde es für sehr unvorsichtig halten, zu einer solchen Angabe Stellung zu nehmen, ehe wir von einem wirklichen Kenner west-sudânischer Lautverschiebungsgesetze erfahren, wie ein heute »Ahammangiwa« gesprochenes Wort im 16.Jahrhundert ausgesegen hat…"

55. The only Ìgbo dialects pronouncing 'name' with *-h-* are spoken east of the Niger (Ward 1941, 35). The regular dialect correspondence of *-h-* to *-f-* in *áhà* = *áfà* 'name', *éhi* = *éfi* 'cow', *há* = *fá* '3pl.' etc. can be reconstructed compactly as **'pn*—a glottalized ('lenis') bilabial plosive onset in a nasalised syllable—or to a longer but descriptively equivalent formula (Williamson 2000; Ọ́hirí-Ànị́chè 2003). The date by which *-h-* developed from **'pn* or equivalent in these words is unknown, but is unlikely to be less than 500 years ago.

56. Secondarily, Ẹ̀dó *Ébó* like Yorùbá *Òyìnbó* can also refer to an African who is prosperous, pretentious or literate, e.g. Burton (1863a, 238).

57. The original document in occupation archives should if possible be consulted for latent clues.

58. E.g. "On the lower reaches, the natives speak of it as the 'Big Water'. The addition of the word 'salt' serves to distinguish the sea from the river among the Ì[g]bo people" (Basden 1938, 110).

59. Direct observations of pre-19th century commerce are rare. Íjèọ́ma summarizes the observations of the 1841 British expedition:

> Up to about the mid-19th century, the states of Àbọ́ ["Aboh"] and Ígálà virtually controlled the bulk of the trade on the Lower Niger and did the policing of their spheres of influence. Ígálà would appear to have given safe conduct from Àhaba ["Asaba"] to the confluence of the Benue, while Àbọ́ policed from Àhaba to its location at the apex of the delta. (1983, 39)

60. Ígwè (1999, 282) doesn't list the root *-jụ̀* 'flog/bat' in collocation with *ányа* 'eye(s)' but it occurs in a proverb which I received in October 1976 from the *Ọ̀jọ bụ* (< *Ògi ọ bo*) of Ágbọ̀: *Élu aáfụ ìhian ọ jụ́bèní ẹnyá* 'Life never hurts you to such an extent that you fail to blink'.

61. The possibility was raised once before but apparently only by lucky error. Horton paraphrases Williams (1974) as citing "traditions to the effect that the techniques and style [of the palace plaques] were brought by a white man from over the sea or by 'the Ìgbọn'" (1979, 76) but careful review of Williams' book reveals no basis for the latter attribution. Horton may have misread Read *&* Dalton's statement that the plaques depicted Ìgbọn captives ("put them in brass"). Moreover, as noted in §2.1 above, the Ẹ̀dó term *Ìgbọn* is ambiguous: though it can refer to Ìgbo-speaking populations east of the Ẹ̀dó capital, it was probably not coextensive with the whole Ìgbo-speaking area. Similar ambiguity applies for the usage of Ìgbo-speakers themselves; river ports like Ọ̀nị cha ["Onitsha"] and Úgwuntà ["Oguta"] are well known to describe themselves as non-Ìgbo, despite the obvious fact that they speak core varieties of the Ìgbo language (cf. Ífemésia 1979, 115).

62. In 1985, cement monuments evoking *ìkẹ̀ǹga* and *ọ̀fọ́* were erected in crossroads of the Ímò State capital Òwerí ["Owerri"] by Brigadier Íke Nwáchukwu at the presumed instance of his chief of staff the erudite Chief *Ígolọ́* K. Ánọ̀ká who was culture commissioner of East Central State (Èjízù 1991, 250). During the Abacha dictatorship, they were demolished by Pentacostal Colonel Tanko Zubairu (Ílozùé 1999).

63. Every [*díbịa ájá*] has carved images of *ágwụ̀*, its household and pets, and sacrifices are made on these images to persuade and activate *ágwụ̀*. For example, Èzumézù (Plate 1 = *people.bu.edu/manfredi/Ezumezu.jpg*) is a wooden figure in which all images of *ágwụ̀*'s houshold, pets and cult are carved on one piece of wood. (Ọ́nwụejiọ́gwù 1997, 13)

64. Green *&* Ígwè (1963, 2 *fn.* 6) adopted the convention to write the Ìgbo voiced aspirated velar stop [g**ʰ**] with *ẹ̀* (dotted *h*) as the second element of the digraph, as distinct from the undotted *h* in the representation of the corresponding fricative [**ɣ**]. Ígwè (1999, *xiii*) switched to the convention of Swift *&* *al.* (1962, 49) marking aspiration with an apostrophe, however the apostrophe is widely used in 9ja for lenis or implosive articulation, therefore I prefer to use the 1963 *ẹ̀* diacritic for aspirates at all points of articulation, both voiced and voiceless.

scenario exists for Ìgbo adding aspiration to a non-Ìgbo loan. Ìgbo *ìk(ḥ)éǹg(ḥ)a* lacks a convincing etymology, but plausible word formation components can be discerned.[65] By contrast, Ẹ̀dó *ìkẹ́ẹ̀ga* is fully opaque in its morphology as well as being ambiguous between a primary meaning of 'wrist' and secondary metonymic reference to "an anklet [= bracelet?] of cowries which is worshipped as *Òbọ́* 'hand, arm'" (Melzian 1938, 90). *Ìkẹ́ẹ̀ga*'s opacity and ambiguity in Ẹ̀dó can explain the resort to pleonastic *ìkẹ́ẹ̀ga obọ́* to specify the cylindrical ritual artefact.[66] Another important element of Ẹ̀dó ritual paraphernalia is the ancestral staff *ùkhúrhẹ ọ̀họ́* (Melzian 1937, 213, cf. Vogel 1979). The item is taken from *ùkhurhẹ* (*Detarium senegalense*), which is the same bamboo-like tree as its Ìgbo counterpart *ọ̀fọ́* (Williamson 1983, 274; Ókwu & Úchèégbú 2009). The word *ọ̀họ́* having no independent status in the unabridged Ẹ̀dó dictionary, it's a presumptive loan that came to Ẹ̀dó along with its Ìgbo referent.[67]

Both material artefacts—Ìgbo *ìkêǹga* ≈ Ẹ̀dó *ìkẹ́ẹ̀ga obọ́* and Ìgbo *ọ̀fọ́* ≈ Ẹ̀dó *ùkhúrhẹ ọ̀họ́*—presuppose a cosmology involving the 'personal guardian spirit' known in Ìgbo and Ẹ̀dó respectively as *chí* and *ẹ̀hí* (Thomas 1914, 19), see §4 below. The entire complex of shrine items is activated by the 8-bit oracle, whose migration from Ìgbo to Ẹ̀dó was demonstrated in §2 above.

Another potential example of Ìgbo esthetic and technical influence in Ẹ̀dó—albeit intrinsically difficult to date, due to its ephemeral medium—is the "mud sculpture" best known from Ìgbo *mbarì* (communal sacrificial temples) and Ẹ̀dó *Ólokún* shrines (Beier 1956b, 1963a; Ben-Amos 1972; Izevbigie 1978, 1987; Cole 1982). Comparing geographically intermediate styles including especially that of Ùrhoníigbe, Odokuma finds that "the origins of the medium and concept, particularly those representing Ólokún, most likely stemmed from the western Ìgbo area and later spread to other neighboring areas through the river Ethiope" (2011, 47). This tentative conclusion parallels the other westward trends of ritual art as reviewed above.[68]

Egharhevba's alleged third pillar of Ifẹ̀ civilization in Ẹ̀dó is the institution of monarchy—this was also the theme of Àjàyí's newspaper criticism of Erediauwa (2004). As with *cire perdue* artistry and the 8-bit oracle itseld, the assumed "common origin" (Bradbury 1964, 159) of Ifẹ̀ and Ẹ̀dó kingship in medieval times has withstood historical scrutiny less because of positive similarities than by default, with no other concrete possibility in view. The explanatory vacuum to the east was sealed up by colonial application of the "stateless" stereotype (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1940, 5), defined by anthropologists as a social order lacking "chiefs with substantial territorial jurisdiction" (Meek 1937, *x*). From the premise that "[c]hiefs in the Eastern Region do not rule in the accepted sense" (Jones 1956, 8), it follows that any "centralized political systems" observed within its boundaries must be due to hypothetical external "conquest" (Áfiìgbo 2005, 483 channeling Meek 1937, 185). The southeastern women's *intifa* □*da* of 1929-30 (Gailey 1974) seemed to prove the official trope of "Ìgbo… ungovernability" (Áfiìgbo 1981b, 307), then British disdain was dialectically flipped as Biafran romance: "the communal democracy which gave stability and morality to the politics of our traditional society" (Òjúkwu 1968, 263) where "[n]obody had any special privilege because of ancestry" (Ọ́nwụmèchili 2000). Several facts are, however, inconvenient for a libertarian take on precolonial Ìgbo life. More than a thousand years ago, inhabitants of the Ọ́ka ("Awka") highlands produced "archaeological evidence for a social institution which indicates a considerable measure of centralization of social authority and an attendant concentration of wealth" (Shaw 1978, 99), and similar structures have been documented nearby in recent years (Ọ́nwụejìọ́gwù 1981, 134; 2001).[69] Many Ìgbo-speaking communities not only distinguished rich from poor—*ọ̀galanya* from *ógbènya*—as marked by the title-taking achievements of potlatching 'big men' (cf. Sahlins 1963, cf. Àchebé 2011), they also enforced *óhù* and *òsú*—ascribed statuses of economic peonage and untouchable caste (Úchèǹdù 1965, 89*f*., 1977; Thomas-Éméagwalị̀ 1984, 1989). So much so, that some of the local resistance to British "native courts" stemmed from the appointment thereto of certain individuals who have been delicately—and undemocratically—described as "ordinary young men of no special standing in indigenous society" (Áfiìgbo 1966, 541). Ìgbo monarchies were thus not flukes, but arose on top of extreme, endemic inequality.

Lugard & *Co.*'s admitted failure to spread the pacifying blanket of Indirect Rule over southeast 9ja left many political contours of that landscape unmapped. Of some the British were simply unaware, but others they intentionally erased after missionary taunts: the Ézé Ǹri's public abdication at gunpoint in 1911 had been loudly urged by Bishop Shanahan (Tovey 1929; Jordan 1949, 35; both cited by Ọ́nwụejìọ́gwù 1981, 175, 184).[70] Similarly in Ẹ̀dó, for decades after Ọ́ba Òvọ́nràmwẹn's 1897 overthrow, colonial practice there was "direct rule" whatever its official designation may have been (Igbafe 1967, 716).[71] But so long as Ìgbo and Ẹ̀dó feudalisms were not directly compared, conventional history clung to the legend that Ifẹ̀ begat the Ẹ̀dó dynasty, even

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65. Neither the relative clause *íke m jì a-gá* HHHLLH "the strength with which I advance" (Ọ́dịtà 1973, 79) nor the looser paraphrase "my strength must go ahead" (Ọ́nwụejìọ́gwù 1975, 93*f*.) offers a workable analysis, and such interpretations are anyway disproved by the fact that the root *-gá* 'go' never occurs in any dialect with aspirated *-gh-*. Given the aspiration, the *-ǹgḥa* constituent may contain the root *-g(ḥ)à* 'scratch, claw' (Williamson 1972, 125; Ígwè 1999, 185) connoting tenacity, consistent with the gloss "strength… to succeed" (Jeffreys 1954, 30 quoting Égbúniwe of Ọ̀nịcha ["Onitsha"]). Assuming that the noun *ík(ḥ)e* 'strength' is a constituent, the loss of its initial H tone is inexplicable; a feasible alternative analysis is to nominalize the root *-k(ḥ)é* 'be hard/strong/difficult' (Ígwè 1999, 305) with the prefix *ì-*, possibly parallel to *ì-jé-lè*, the name of a monumental mask of the Ọ̀mámbala ["Anambra"] valley that 'goes (*-jé*) proudly about (*lè*)'.

66. In Ẹ̀dó, 'wrist' is also expressed as *ùrhú a.bọ́*, composed of *ùrhu* 'neck' plus an irregular form of *òbọ́* 'arm/hand' (Melzian 1938, 133, 209). Agheyisi's abridged (1986) edition of Melzian's dictionary simplifies the labels for the ritual objects in question.

67. The correspondence Ẹ̀dó *h* = Ìgbo *f* is also found in *òhún* = *òfú*, the respective names of the ◆◇◆◇ array. As noted in §2.3 above and §4.3 of Manfredi (2008), Ẹ̀dó and several other local versions of the oracle systematically rotate all asymmetric arrays 180º.

68. The list of such influences may include subtler cases. Ẹ̀dó *òtu* (LL) normally denotes an age-grade cohort (Melzian 1937, 151) but it can also refer to a "guild" such as the ritual brass-casters of the Ìgún lineage (Agbọntaẹn-Eghafona 2010, 25 citing Ọmọregie 1997). The Ìgbo cognate *òtu* (LL) excludes the meaning of age grade (which in Ìgbo is given by *ùke* LL) but has the focal denotation of guild or club (Ígwè 1999, 621, 780) therefore the reported extension of Ẹ̀dó *òtu* (LL) to refer to a guild is potentially another Ìgboism, and the appearance of this Ìgboism in naming the Ẹ̀dó palace brass-casters specifically may be not be accidental, given the discussion in the main text above.

69. Shaw goes on to hedge "that this authority was more religious and moral than political and administrative" (1978, 99) but the quibble begs the question of what counts as politics, and of whether Nri differed much from Ifẹ̀ in this respect. Predictably, given his own Ifẹ̀-centric commitments, Fagg is at pains to paint "the 'divine kingship' of the Nri clan [as] an anomaly among the Ì[g]bo, and probably introduced by the Jukun, who once overran the area" (1963, 112). No evidence exists for either of Fagg's claims, which surpass even those of Meek.

70. For Gwilym Jones, colonial functionary turned anthropologist (*mccoy.lib.siu.edu/jmccall/jones/jonesbio.html*), ignorance was less of an excuse. Interviewed in retirement by M. Ọ́nwụejìọ́gwù (*p.c.*), he admitted manipulating the chieftaincy roster of Eastern Nigeria to downgrade the *Ézé Nri* title in favor of the paramountcy of nearby Ọ̀nịcha ["Onitsha"] (cf. Jones 1956, 10, 21, 53*f*.). This wasn't the only time British rulers rigged the legislature to boost Chief Àzíkàíwe ["Azikiwe" alias "Zîk"], the entertainingly verbose but politically toothless leader of the NCNC party, who happened also to be a titled member of the Ọ̀nịcha palace. With so much help, became 9ja's first governor-general (1960-63) and ceremonial President (1963-66) in preference to Chief Awólọ́.wọ [alias "Awoò"], Fabian Socialist and leader of the Federal opposition (1960-63) who was the principal target of "British election tampering against the Action Group in 1956" (Vickers 2011).

71. Áfiìgbo (1967) insists against Mair (1962) that British colonial theory in eastern Nigeria was more consistent with Indirect than Direct Rule doctrine, however the question of actual practice is more pertinent to British ignorance—or dismantling—of existing Ìgbo feudalisms.

though this creates the conundrum of explaining how they "came to differ so markedly" (Bradbury 1964, 155). Less puzzling would be a scenario of convergence: that the Ifẹ̀ and Ẹ̀dó polities grew from separate roots and became entwined only superficially in later centuries thanks to trade contact and geopolitical competition. Among other points, Bradbury's divergence narrative can't expain the contrast between strict primogeniture in the Ẹ̀dó palace and the more flexible notion of 'seniority' (*ipò àgbà*) in Yorùbá state hierarchy (Adébóyè 2007). Primogeniture is famously strong in Ìgbo, where the special familial authority and inheritance of the first son—*ọ́kpara* or *ọ́phara*—evokes reincarnation and other ancestor ideologies (Úchèńdù 1965, 84*f.*; Ánéné 1966, 13; Manfredi 1997). An Ẹ̀dó overlay in the "West Niger" and *óru* 'floodland' Ìgbo kingdoms (Ǹzímìro 1972; Èjiọfọ́ 1982; Ọ̀hadíké 1994), dating back perhaps to the 16th century, though prominent, does not entail the absence of an older, shared Ìgbo-Ẹ̀dó common ground, which was all the more easily traversed thanks to underlying similarities. There's no particular reason to assume that primogenitural succession in the *Òbí* royal titles of the western Ìgbo towns Ágbọ̀, Ìsele-Úku and Ụbulu-Úku (Íjèọ́ma 1983, 36) began as an Ẹ̀dó-emulating innovation, rather than as an Ìgbo-centric archaism.

The foregoing doesn't deny the existence of an "Ifẹ̀-Benin interaction field" or "Yorùbá-Ẹ̀dó world system" (Ògúndìran 2002, 2003), but it does question *when* this took shape and in respect to *which particular* traits. Unmistakeable Yorùbá intellectual property currently consumed in Ẹ̀dó includes several important divinities. Ẹ̀dó *Èsangó* doesn't appear in the Ẹ̀dó dictionary at all, it's so obviously imported, and its derivation from Yorùbá *Ṣàngó* (plus prosthetic *e*) is confirmed by obligatory appearance of Yorùbá chants in *Èsangó*'s polyglot ceremonies. The Ẹ̀dó divinities *Èsu* and *Ọ̀rọ́nmìla* must have arrived as *Èṣu* and *Ọ̀rúnmìla* in a modern form of the 8-bit Ifá oracle which moved from eastern Yorùbá towns to Ẹ̀dó with itinerant *awo*s, whose recitations are still today performed in Yorùbá with simultaneous Ẹ̀dó translation. But the source of other divinities is less obvious.

Ẹ̀dó origin has been proposed for Yorùbá *Ògún* (Ofeimun 2003), divinity of iron, consistent with the Ẹ̀dó singular/plural pair *ògún*/*ìgún* 'metalsmith/brass smith lineage' and with the absence of readily identifiable Yorùbá traces in Ògún songs performed in Benin-City (Ùgbẹ̀kun, 13/12/1981).[72] Less straightforward is a possible Ẹ̀dó origin for Yorùbá *Oló.kun* (Belasco 1980, 79). In Yorùbá, *Oló.kun* [MH**!**M] unambiguously names the divinity and is formed transparently from *òkun* 'the sea' plus the possessivizing or intensivizing prefix *o-ní-* (cf. Bámgbóṣé 1972, 1975).[73] In Ẹ̀dó by contrast, *Ólokún* [HH**!**H] is morphologically opaque as well as being ambiguous between 'the Ethiope River/the sea' (Melzian 1937, 144) and the name of the supernatural who can also be addressed in ceremonial songs simply as *Òkún* (Welton 1968, 227; Rosen 1993, 37). Therefore, even if the oceanic divinity was originally Ẹ̀dó, the Ẹ̀dó use of *Ólokún* in addition to *Òkún* must be a secondary Yorùbá-ization.[74]

Regional divinities are not the only shared vocabulary items whose derivation is unclear. Given pervasive *r*-deletion in Ẹ̀dó (Aikhiọnbare 1988, 226 *fn.* 5), Ẹ̀dó *óloi* [HHH] 'living queen' could come from Yorùbá *olorì* [MML] 'designated or senior queen' but the tones don't correspond and the word has no Yorùbá etymology. In Ẹ̀dó the inflected plural *íloi* [HHH] 'queens' could be archaic, but it could also be modeled analogically on inherited number inflections like *òkhuo*/*ìkhuo* 'woman/women' and *òvbí*/*ìvbí* 'sg./pl. offspring' (cf. *-bię* 'give birth'). Another example is Ẹ̀dó *ódòdó* 'red flannel', a Portuguese trade item associated with *Ọ́ba* Ẹwúarè (Bradbury 1959, 278). Melzian (1937, 134) relates it to Yorùbá *òdòdó* 'redness' (Abraham 1958, 451), a word with a proverbial cloth association as part of *Ṣàngó*'s flashy *agbádá* gown (Verger 1957, 358, 361), but the tones don't match.

Minimally therefore, Ẹ̀dó-Yorùbá culture contact was not a one-way street. Indeed by the 16th century, part of the present Lagos was already an Ẹ̀dó 'camp' (èkó) whose garrison installed the present royal line of *Ọ̀ba Èkó* (Agírí & Barnes 1987, 18-20 citing Jones 1983, 24, 40 = Crecelius 1879, 101, 118 = Ulsheimer 1616; cf. Ryder 1969, 14; Law 1983, 328f.). Oddly though, by the time the British Empire had annexed the kingdom, Yorùbá hegemony across the region was so "abundantly evident" to a Victorian visitor that no evidence was felt necessary to mention, and 35 years later the same sweeping claim was parroted by museum curators in the colonial metropole, whose own added value was limited to a flashy fillip of pseudoscientific cant:

> It is however abundantly evident that Benin and Dahome are integral parts of Yorùbá, somewhat differing in language, but identical in manners, customs and religion. (Burton 1863a, 222)

> Though their language differs somewhat from that of the inhabitants of Yorùbá and Dahomey, in manners customs and religion these peoples [*sc.* "The Bìní"] must be regarded as integral parts of a single ethnological whole. (Read & Dalton 1898, 362)

The near identity of the two quotes exemplifies "the production of anthropological knowledge in a concrete colonial situation" (Clifford 2003, 7). The repetition rhetorically subjugates "human terrain" (González 2008) and rewrites casual impressions of cultural ties at the onset of foreign domination in a timeless/presentist format which becomes a self-replicating neo-Kantian template—handy for prospective administration by the occupiers, and for retrospective selfconsciousness by the occupied.

In this way, Indirect Rule over the Western Region in the first half of the 20th century promoted Yorùbá hegemony as the default causal-explanatory framework to be adopted by indigenous social actors: by grassroots revanchists like Egharhevba, by lesser chiefs jockeying for status (Law 1973; Aṣíwájú 1976) and by partisans of Ẹgbẹ́ Ọmọ Odùduwà—Chief Awólọ́.wọ̀'s linguistic self-determination movement and forerunner of his Action Group political party (Coleman 1958, 344-49). But in the non-Yorùbá rest-of-the-West, especially in the western Niger Delta, the AG's "cultural nationalism" proved to be less popular than its Fabian "welfarist programme" (Dudley 1982, 47, cf. Ọmọruyi 2001). In the 1951 Western Regional election campaign, Ẹ̀dó, Ágbọ̀ and other nearby palaces violently defected from the AG to Chief Àzíkàíwe's ["Azikiwe's"] eastern NCNC, and eventually won a 1963 plebiscite to create the Midwest—the first postcolonial federating unit of the *wazobịan* 9ja entity (Bradbury 1968, 247; Otite 1975, 75; Vickers 2000; Ìdúùwẹ *ms.*). Less convincing has been the pushback of Ifẹ̀ groupthink in museum catalogs and standard history texts. The remainder of this section discusses prominent examples.

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72. The secondary description of *Ògún* [LH] as a 'god of war' may have been suggested to various authors (Crowther *& al.* 1911, 167; Williams 1973, 151; Lawal 1977b, 56; Belasco 1980, 38) by the near-homophony of the possibly unrelated word *ogun* [MM] 'warfare'. Ẹ̀dó *ólogun* [HHH] 'warlord' is certainly borrowed from Yorùbá, since Ẹ̀dó lacks both the *o-ní-* prefix and the base *ogun* [MM] 'war' which together yield Yorùbá *ológun* [MHM]. The Ẹ̀dó prefix H tone is regular, cf. *ágbada* [HHH] 'wide gown' < Yorùbá *agbádá* [MHH].

73. *Malòkun* the Ìlàję divinity (Ọ̀jòadé 1980, 66) may contract *umalẹ̀* [= *i(rún)mọ̀lẹ̀*] *òkun* (Sheba 2002, 3) literally 'earth-spirit of the sea', but a different analysis is needed for the *m-* of "Àgbó or Màgbó", a coastal Ìjẹ̀bú mask that "perform[s] to honor Oló.kun" (Lawal 1996, 66).

74. It would also entail that the female gender of *Oló.kun* in modern Ifẹ̀ is innovative, perhaps linked to *Oló.kun*'s relegation to the status of a "suppressed divinity" or "conquered deity" after Oòduà overthrew Ifẹ̀'s *ancien régime* (Beier 1956b, 295; 1963a, 62; Ọbáyẹmí 1992) whose obscure, autochthonous population is referred to in Ifẹ̀ as "Ugbo" (Ọ̀ṣúntòkun 2004, no tone marks) but by most historians as "Ìgbò" (Adémákinwá 1958b, 32-42; Fábùnmi 1969, 17*f.*; Elúyẹmí 1975, 123; Babáyẹmí 1988, 33-35; Akíntóyè 2010, 46, some sources with tones).

3.1 Leo *oní original tòkunbọ̀*[75]

Frobenius' 1910-12 travelogue of "Inner Africa" is justly reviled today for its toxic rants on "the dreary moral waste of the black man's soul" (1913, 106) and its hallucinating quest to unearth traces of "a race, far superior in strain to the negro" (1913, 88*f.*).[76] But it's only fair to admit that in other respects the same book has been foundational to current mainstream opinions on Ifẹ̀ art and prehistory. By hyping the urban myth of a metal sculpture representing "the Oló.kun, Atlantic Africa's Poseidon" (1913, 98 and photo facing 308), Frobenius unintentionally patented the logo of Yorùbá exceptionalism which is today emblazoned, as a visible stand-in for the image-less ancestor Odùduwà, on the crests of the University of Ifẹ̀ and the Oòduà People's Congress.[77] After the customary three decades of anthropological reification, the "father of the museum movement in Nigeria" gave government imprimatur to Frobenius' belief that this metal artefact represents "Oló.kun the sea goddess, mother of Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n the second *Ọ̀ọ̀ni*, or king, of Ifẹ̀" (Murray 1941, 72, cf. Bascom 1939; James 1994). Curators are loath to admit that the icon's chain of custody was lost in Ifẹ̀'s "broken… continuity both of traditions and practices" and that the only basis for the "Orí Oló.kun" designation is that the piece is literally a head (*orí*) which "appears to have been dug up in the Oló.kun Grove during the second half of the 19th century" (Willett 1960, 234, 237). Frobenius recognized that Ifẹ̀'s recovered treasures acquired their catalog descriptions only circumstantially (1913, 286), adding with naive candor that "that head in particular [is] named 'Mia' by the natives (why I do not know)" (1913, 313).[78] And the first documented account in Ifẹ̀ makes a different attribution:

> The beautiful and well-known so-called Oló.kun head, which Leo Frobenius has frequently shown in illustrations, is, judging by the head ornaments, according to information given by the Ọ̀ọ̀ni of Ifẹ̀, the portrait of a Yorùbá aristocratic lady and not of a god. (Sydov 1938, 59 *fn.* 1)

Not only is the gender of the head "ambiguous" (Willett 1960, 241 *fn.* 42), so also the gender of its conventionally accepted supernatural referent. Yorùbá Oló.kun is male in one paraphrased Ifá story (Frobenius 1913, 238-40) but female in all modern Ifẹ̀ statements.[79] But apart from the disputed head itself, images of the deity are scarce, and in coastal Ìjẹ̀bú, Oló.kun's own "Àgbó masks… have male and female aspects" (Lawal 1996, 66). Ẹ̀dó Ólokún is strictly male.[80]

Another mystery is the current whereabouts—or more exactly, the *non*whereabouts—of the genuine artefact. Prevailing forensic opinion that the item now kept in the Ifẹ̀ palace is counterfeit (Fagg & Underwood 1949) has been recently challenged:

> In 1948, when the Oló.kun Head travelled to the British Museum, it was examined by specialists Leon Underwood and William Fagg who declared it to be a replica, mainly because of the casting technique. West African art specialist Nigel Barley, a former British Museum curator, briefly examined the Oló.kun Head in January [2010] and says that he now believes it may well be the original. (Bailey 2010, 3)

Frobenius boasted of taking the patinaed prize after hard wheedling and a derisory payment of "six pounds, a bottle of whiskey and a few other trifles", and also admitted planning to substite of "a fresh copy… made at the tinsmith's"—a trick justified in his mind by the "utmost importance to obtain the type and material of a more ancient epoch for comparison with the bronzes from Benin" (1913, 99).[81] But the cash was refunded under colonial duress in exchange for the object's return to Ifẹ̀ palace custody the day before the arrival of the District Commissioner from Òṣogbo (1913, 112) and there's no reason—other than Fagg and Underwood's opinion, or general mistrust of treasurehunters—to think that its custody ever changed after that.[82]

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75. The phrase *original tòkunbọ̀* had to wait 80 years to be coined in 9ja's IMF-era car-parts market. Guyer writes "*tòkúnbọ̀*" [LHL] (2004, 91), but the intrinsic H-tone prefix of inherently [+continuous] *-bọ̀* (Abraham 1958, 113) doesn't occur inside nominals (Bámgbóṣé 1966a, 75).

76. *&c ad infinitum & ad nauseam*, e.g. "Oh Europeans, my dear Europeans, do all the good you can to these black 'children', bring them everything you possibly can, give them work and gladness, fortune and freedom, but never, never forget to bring the whip!" (1913, 130). Even the British did not escape his Teutonic wrath; at a time of diplomatic tension in Europe, Frobenius indignantly complained that "me, who was greatly respected in the German colony [of Togo]… had not been held in honor in the English colony [of Southern Nigeria]… where we pursued our scientific studies with all our might and by spending our good German money!" (1913, 132*f.*).

77. Cf. www.oauife.edu.ng, ooduapeoplescongress.org, www.afenifererenewal.org. On the contraction *Odùduwà*→*Oòduà*, see Abímbọ́lá & Oyèláràn (1975).

78. An obvious guess: "Mia" truncates *Ọ̀ràànmíyàn* alias *Ọ̀ràànńyàn*, held to be "the youngest of Oòduà's sons" (Fábùnmi 1969, 15). Frobenius' lack of curiosity about this clue is both astonishing and unsurprising at the same time.

79. E.g. "Oló.kun… was the consort of Odùduwà, the twain thus seen as primogenitors of the Yorùbá" (Ṣóyínká 2006, 224) or she was "the rich Ifẹ̀ bead trader of Odùduwà's generation" (Akíntóyè 2010, 187). As the latter story goes, childless Oló.kun flaunted her wealth in an attempt to overshadow her co-wife Ọ̀sààrà—"a poor woman but blessed with many children"—but the conceited display was upended by

> …Ọ̀sààrà with her children and children's children with their friends and well-wishers and the usual crowd of inquisitive onlookers who could not be controlled or prevented from trampling on the gems, the jewels, the dresses and all the other costly articles put on show by Oló.kun who, it is related, very quickly took her leave of the unruly crowd and, from that time, 'never smiled again'. (Fábùnmi 1969, 4*f.*)

This portrait contrasts with the one in Ẹ̀dó, where Ólokún is not a barren loser but instead a bestower of children (Welton 1968). This symbolic inversion, added to the sex difference versus the Ifẹ̀ form, is more grist for Lévistraussian analysis and/or historical sequencing, but it's also possible that the two sea divinities are related only indirectly, as two independent reifications of one natural phenomenon.

80. Beier (1956b, published anonymously) labels Ólokún as male on one page (284) but female on five others (280, 282, 286, 291, 294) and doesn't comment on the contradiction apart from one caption defensively identifying a clay shrine sculpture in the town of Ùrhoníìgbe ["Osonigbe"] as "Ólokún, here definitely a goddess" (1956, 291). But no female attributes are obvious in the fully clothed figure shown in the published photo. The mystery is implicitly solved in the second, book-length draft of Beier's study, which types the same picture as male (1963a, 60*f.*) and helpfully elaborates that any Ẹ̀dó representation of "Ólokún as a female deity, a kind of great mother" is limited to just one "far from conventional" sculpture in a "more modern shrine" created by an idiosyncratic female artist who was admittedly "influenced by Western ideas and Christianity" (1963a, 38) and likely also by the Water Goddess of the delta region (cf. Jell-Bahlsen 2008). In confirmation, Nevadomsky remarks that "Ólokún is sometimes confused with Màmí Wàtá and described as female" (1993, 25).

Odùduwà/Oòduà is also of ambiguous gender (Epégà 1931; Ìdòwú 1963, 27; Ọ̀báyẹmí 1992, 65), being officially male in Ifẹ̀ (Fábùnmi 1969, 3) but described in non-Ifẹ̀ sources as "the wife of Ọ̀bàtálá… this union is symbolised by two whitened calabashes closely fitting on top of each other" (Abraham 1958, 451, cf. Crowther 1852, 207; Ellis 1894, 41) and evoking an alias "*Iya Agbè* i.e. 'Mother of the… closed calabash" (Farrow 1926, 45) or "*Iya Agbà*, la mère qui reçoit" (Baudin 1884, 11). Having been told in Ifẹ̀ that "Odùduwà is a female deity, an earth goddess in fact", Beier speculated Bachofen-like "that early Yorùbá society was matriarchal" (1955, 20*f.*, cf. Belasco 1980, 97*f.*), but having encountered female Odùduwà concepts in the Gùngbè towns of Xɔ̀gbónù ["Porto Novo"] and Wémɛ ["Dagbe"], Verger warned of missionary "confusion" about mythic sex-assignment and preferred to interpret the data synchronically via Lévistraussian oppositions like *Odùduwà* : *Ọ̀bàtálá* :: *earth* : *sky* and *Odùduwà* : *Oló.kun* :: *earth* : *water* (1957, 448-64, cf. Baudin 1884, 12; Cabrera 1954, 441). Flexibly symbolist interpretation of divine gender is supported by an *oríkì* from Baningbe, a town near Xɔ̀gbónù: *Ọkọ ni Oòduà, aya ni Oòduà* 'Oòduà is both husband and wife' (Verger 1957, 487, cf. also Augé 1982, 128 citing Vernant 1965). At the limit, such classificatory "untidiness" can be interpreted to show an intrinsic "overlapping and inconsistency of Yorùbá spiritual beings" (Barber 1990, 313).

81. The intrigue was plausible, given Frobenius' admission that a stone carving obtained in Ifẹ̀ was substituted with a "copy made by [artist and fellow expedition member] Carl Arriens" (1913, 119, cf. *x*). By whatever strategem, some antiquities were certainly taken to Germany.

82. With more certainty, Bascom was blamed for "unauthorized export" of antique brass "smuggled" from Ifẹ̀ in 1938 (Tignor 1990, 429*f.*).

Frobenius' "charming little adventure" (1913, 100) in Ifẹ̀'s Oló.kun grove also unearthed nine terracotta heads and rich debris from "the center of the great glass-making industry which had spread blue *sẹ̀gi* beads across West Africa" (Willett 1960, 237, cf. Elúyẹmí 1987). But all the antiques somehow weren't enough without being wrapped up in a romance of modern decline from bygone glory—an impression encouraged the town's 1886 "desecration" at the hands of neighboring Mọdákẹ́kẹ́, causing Ifẹ̀ to be "deserted until 1894" (Akínjógbìn 1992, 159). The aftermath of that disaster prompted Frobenius to cry out "Poor Ọ̀ọ̀ni ! Poor palace! How are the mighty fallen!" (1913, 277) and his nostalgic pity echoes down the decades:

> Yorùbá culture belongs to antiquity by virtue of its inherent "style". The slave traffic of Mediævalism, modern industrial conditions and the foreign rule of today have, beyond question, distorted, transformed and ruined it. Yet we need not first delve a few yards beneath the soil and dig up terracotta to see from their features after such long concealment that these have an austere severity, a "beautiful" style, which is a certain index of their antiquity. (Frobenius 1913, 95, 337)
>
> Gegenwärtig ist die alte Kunst von Yorùbá auf ein sehr tiefes Niveau herabgesunken… [Presently the old art of Yorùbá has declined to a very low level…] (Luschan 1919, 511)
>
> The visitor to the ramshackle and noisome cocoa town of today could have no inkling, save within its museum, of the store which its people once placed on preeminence in every field. (Fagg 1982b, 27)

To explain his sense of Yorùbá uniqueness, Frobenius pointed to material culture traits—the architectural impluvium, specific styles of hand loom and hunting bow—which struck him as less tropical African than Mediterranean, and conjectured that the similarities were transmitted via Phonecian coastal trade (1913, 326-33, 345). This was his "Atlantic" hypothesis, but when the specifics had long faded from attention, what remained was the exceptionally memorable idea of Yorùbá exceptionality. So it was that Ifẹ̀ 'brass' has proved to be a handy brass knuckle in the *rọ̀fọ̀-rofọ̀* rumble against neighboring *wazobịan* nationalisms:

> The Yoruban disposition is absolutely different from that of the so-called "negro" nations. …The soul of this people appeals to us as being so originally un-African… (Frobenius 1913, 146, 319)
>
> Under a system which aims at getting all the peoples in the country to the goal of autonomy at the same hour and minute, the Yorùbás have been compelled to mark time on their higher level while the other sections catch up with them. (Awólọ́.wọ̀ 1947, 49, cf. Dudley 1978, 206)
>
> It would appear that the God of Africa has specially created the Ì[g]bo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the Ages. (Àzịkàíwe 1949, cited by Coleman 1958, 347)

3.2 Fagg the elder

> *In the attempt to extend the time scale of Benin art from the forged antiquities of the present day backward through Ifẹ̀ art—whose directly ancestral status may be accepted as adequately established in art history—to the earliest times, the Nok culture of the central area of Nigeria is now presented as the only candidate at present available for the ancestry of Ifẹ̀ art—though whether the ancestry is direct or collateral remains to be seen. Yorùbá kingship, even though the Benin monarchy was derived from it, is very different from it.* (Fagg 1970, 45, 49)

Unintentionally to be sure, Frobenius' doctrine on the Mediterranean origin of the Yorùbá "soul" is largely compatible with the theory in the Ifẹ̀ palace that "*Oòduàá rọ̀ ni, o*—Oòduà only descended" (Fábùnmi 1969, 4). Factoring out the small difference between supernaturals from the sky and vanished traders from "the Atlantic Ocean's shores" (Frobenius 1913, 321), the two exotic explanations share several historiographical traits: (i) they're vividly monocausal and (ii) beyond reach of empirical evidence; (iii) they pre-empt consideration of influence from nearby 9ja populations and (iv) show sufficient self-enchantment to deflect scholarly critique. All four features persist in the more establishment idiom of William Fagg's art history interventions such as the foregoing extract from a British Museum pamphlet, but this time around the speculative source of the Ifẹ̀ mystique is neither 'heaven' nor the Phoenecian Mediterranean but rather an extinct iron age savanna culture which had been baptized "Nok" by Bernard Fagg—William's *àbúrò* who first excavated terracottas in that tin-mining plateau town (cf. Fagg 1959).

W. Fagg brings the Ifẹ̀ story down from the sky and out of the sea onto the land, but only speculatively. He stretches Ifẹ̀'s presumed timeline backward to Nok in the north and forward to Ẹ̀dó in the south, but little else changes from his prececessors' interpretations. Neither Frobenius nor the palace would demur from Fagg's characterization of Ifẹ̀ as a realm of vanished beauty owing no debt of inspiration to famous neighbors like Ígálà and Nupe, and Frobenius at least would heartily concur with Fagg's disdain for modern culture-bearers, expressed not just by the sneering and gratuitous reference to "forged antiquities" in the above quotation, but also by his infamous denial that the 1897 British looting of Ẹ̀dó amounted to a "sack" (Fagg 1981).[83]

However, the Nok and Ẹ̀dó connections to Ifẹ̀ artistic style are anything but clear. Fagg assumed that Nok ironsmelting and terracotta production took place between 2500-1700 years ago, but further thermoluminescence and radiocarbon dates push back the date of Nok's "disparition" by three more centuries (Boullier & al. 2002, 12, 27). Clearly, a time gap of over a milllennium between ancient Nok's decline and medieval Ifẹ̀'s onset stretches the concept of "ancestry" especially in artistic terms. At most Nok can be considered as a marker for early evolutionary antecedents to the full range of iron age cultures and populations whose descendants populate and enculturate the entire central and southern 9ja territory today.

Turning to Ẹ̀dó, Fagg's analysis was not so original, or so convincing either. With minor tweaks he borrowed von Luschan's (1919) subjective chronology of the Ẹ̀dó copper-alloy casts (cf. Eisenhofer 1997). His thesis of constantly waning stylistic naturalism and technical skill copied the Romantic "model of a decaying artistic expression" (Junge 2007, 195) from Frobenius: "The most beautiful specimens of craftsmanship must have undoubtedly been the oldest" (1913, 95). Fagg only bolstered this conventional wisdom by adopting an idea from Leon Underwood (1949), that the legend of remote tutelage from Ifẹ̀ explains von Luschan's typology of gradual stylistic devolution in Ẹ̀dó. Fagg painted the unified picture in impressively confident detail:

> It is at Benin that we can best discern the aftermath of the Ifẹ̀ school of sculpture…
>
> Of the many bronze heads in the extant corpus of Benin work, one type is by common consent the earliest: namely, the very thin heads of generally naturalistic form… Some informants at Benin have declared that these are the heads brought from Ifẹ̀ before Ógùọ́la's time, but these reports may be discounted because more or less subtle stylistic differences are not among the details that an ancient oral tradition is likely to preserve. It is far more likely, from a close study of their iconography, that they are from the first two centuries of Bìní casting, which terminate with the period of first European contact in the late 15th century. What is very clear is, on the one hand, that the realistic subtlety of their modelling can derive only from the Ifẹ̀ tradition, and, on the other, that stylization of a somewhat superficial kind is already well advanced as compared with the more idealized heads of Ifẹ̀…

83. Fagg even gloated that British burning of the Ẹ̀dó capital was not so bad, since "all the houses up to roof level were of course made of mud and were doubtless all the better for a superficial firing along the top edges" (1981, 20). Eyo (1997) rebuked this callous provocation.

> In the late 16th century the gradually changing artistic tradition seems to have undergone a major reorientation… Perhaps the most striking development was a great increase in the number and variety of the bronze castings… and above all the great series of several hundred wall plaques… which were to adorn the mud pillars and pilasters of the palace courts for the next century and a half, until they were torn down by a later Ọba and stacked in an outhouse to wait another 150 years for the British expedition. …
>
> In the great middle period, so extraordinarily prolific of imposing if seldom masterly bronzes, Benin art stood at a kind of climacteric. The Ifẹ̀ aesthetic had run down for lack of appreciation and nourishment; its aftermath and the philistine influence of a partly alien materialism sere in an equilibrium which made possible the production of works whose most admirable quality was restraint. Only by hindsight do we discern in this period the seeds of decay… In the event, artistic discipline gave way and a flamboyant decadence set in. (Fagg 1958, 62, 64-65; cf. 1963)

> The art of Ifẹ̀ was more naturalistic than that of Benin, but the Early Period at Benin is the most naturalistic, and is not very far short of the nauralism of Ifẹ̀ except that some features such as the ears have become schematic. (Fagg 1970, 43)

To be confirmed, however, the Luschan-Underwood conjecture requires observation of some trait besides subjective naturalism connecting hypothetically "early" Ẹ̀dó artworks with their equally hypothetical Ifẹ̀ antedecents. Fagg offered two potential bits of evidence, but in retrospect neither one of them has any substance:

> According to Benin oral history, it was in *Ọba* Ogùọ́la's time, perhaps in the 13th or 14th century, that a request was sent to the *Ọọ̀ni* of Ifẹ̀ for a master bronze-caster to be sent to Benin to teach the Benin craftsmen how to cast bronze heads, which according to the story had till then been made at Ifẹ̀ for the *Ọba*s of Benin. …Confirmation of this story is found especially from two sources: first, one small figure found at Benin which is undoubtedly in the Ifẹ̀ style (although it may have been made perhaps by Iguegha at Benin); and, secondly, from recent excavations by Prof. Frank Willett at the place called Ọ̀run Ọba Adó at Ifẹ̀, where heads of *Ọba*s of Benin were traditionally buried. A small piece of Benin bronze work was found in these excavations, but, more important, the excavations were found to relate in their lower levels to a period about AD 1000-1200 (and indeed one radiocarbon date related to a period about AD 600). (Fagg 1970, 43)

As to the first suggestion, Egharhevba did urge Fagg to identify the "small figure" as an image cast in Ifẹ̀ by "Iguẹ-Igha" for Ọba Éwúarè and to accept it as "one of the missing links between the style of the Ifẹ̀ heads (probably all belonging to a single period) and the greater stylization of the Benin heads" (Fagg 1950, 70), but Eyo objects that "the interchange of works between Ifẹ̀ and Benin may only reflect contact and may not necessarily mean that one was derived from the other" (1977, 136).[84]

The second point is factually wrong: Willett never reported "[a] small piece of Benin bronze" from Ọ̀run Ọba Adó, but only "seven brass castings" with no mention of Ẹ̀dó origin (1971b, 366; 1971a, 28). Radiocarbon from AD 1060±130 and 1150±200, obtained by Willett "from a layer containing terracotta sculptures" at the same site, does disfavor "the possibility that Ifẹ̀ and its ruling dynasty may have moved to the present site since the 16th century" (Ryder 1965, 36), but such dates are wrongly "taken by Willett as confirming the antiquity of the Ifẹ̀/Benin connection" (Shaw 1973, 233). The Luschan-Underwood conjecture faces—and fails—a more stringent chronological test: to show that some freestanding Ẹ̀dó heads are older than the less "naturalistic" palace plaques. Williams (1974, 149-78) reached the opposite conclusion based on fine-grained stylistics, and his contrary judgement is supported by thermoluminescence data (Goedicke & Henschel 1993) which can be tabulated as follows:

	"plaques" n=19	"figures" n=2	"groups" n=3	other n=4	"heads" n=8	total n=36
mean TL date	AD 1583 SD=67 years	AD 1591 SD=67 years	AD 1674 SD=33 years	AD 1731 SD=145 years	AD 1752 SD=84 years	AD 1645 SD=111 years

The Luschan-Underwood chronology crashes on the fact that the palace plaques—whether taken as a cluster (SD=67 years) or individually—are centuries older than the two stereotypically "naturalistic" heads in the sample. The firing of the earliest plaque (IIIC 27506) is put in the year 1508, whereas two of the "naturalistic" heads (IIIC 7658, 8170) are estimated to have been cast in 1729 and 1859 respectively. Based on metallurgy, Riederer & Forkl conclude that the so-called *Íyọba* and *Ọ́ba* heads now held in Stuttgart "are made from a type of brass which did not yet exist in Benin by the time the plaques were produced" (2003, 231).

Thus, not only is the literal transfer of metallurgical knowledge from Ifẹ̀ to Ẹ̀dó ruled out on technical grounds, as discussed earlier above, but even the transfer of sculptural style between these medieval sites has no basis outside a Romantic flight of fancy with its one-size-fits-all template of cultural determinism:

> As the [self-described] umbilicus of the world, Ifẹ̀ acquired over the centuries a religious organization hardly less elaborate than its political structure… and it would not be surprising if the exercise of spiritual and temporal power on such a scale tended in some sense to corrupt, by fostering among the priests and chiefs a worldly cynicism and materialism such as we know to have developed in Egypt and Greece… In the case of the art of Ifẹ̀, I have suggested a correlation between its worldly naturalism and a (hypothetical) tendency to cynical materialism in the higher levels of the hierarchy. A similar explanation seems to me valid for the Benin court style, and is of course more readily open to verification; the seed may, is reasonable to suppose, have been transplanted from Ifẹ̀ at the time of the original cultural-political penetration. …[T]he great corpus of some thousands of bronze and other antiquities, surviving from the past 500 years of Benin history… can be read almost like a book… [T]hese Benin antiquities are so clear in their broad historical implications that they are destined to provide the armature on which we shall eventually erect the art history of this part of Africa. …Of the late period of Benin bronze art much less needs to be said, for it follows almost inexorably, from what has already been said, in the completion of a cycle of decay… until the overpowering impact of western technology topples the art into a decline which is final and short enough of term. (Fagg 1963, 20, 26, 36*f.*)[85]

Similarly at the starting point of the imagined chronology, a corollary of the theory that Ifẹ̀ art originated in Nok is that closer sites which yielded similar works can be considered only as recipients from Ifẹ̀, not as sources or as recipients from elsewhere. This apriori is openly acknowleged in Fagg's interpretation of the copper-alloy casts situated in Nupe:

> The seated bronze figure at Tada… belongs *undoubtedly* to the Ifẹ̀ school… the extraordinary seated bronze figure of Tada, which is about two-thirds of life size and *certainly* of Ifẹ̀ manufacture… [T]he human and animal figures of Jeba and Tada, on the middle Niger in Nupe country… are said to have been brought thither from Ídá[h] on the lower Niger early in the 16th century by the culure hero Tsoede, who deposited them as sanctions of chieftainship at a number of Nupe villages. Since these include the four largest bronzes ever found in Africa, the possibility must obviously be considered that Idah was once a great center of bronzecasting, but research

84. This example of Ifẹ̀-centric feedback into archaeological record is not isolated. As Shaw drily notes, "most of the ascriptions" of Benin Museum Catalog labels standardly used to ID Ẹ̀dó copper-alloy casts are "probably attributable to Chief J.U. Eghar[h]evba" (1969, 94).

85. As Fagg himself recognized, the tendency of later Ẹ̀dó pieces to be thicker and heavier may have a simple material explanation in the gradual arrival of brass manillas in larger quantity, providing an ever-cheaper casting medium for conspicuous displays (Eyo 1977, 142).

> there has so far failed to confirm this. One of them, the most famous, is *certainly* by an Ifẹ̀ master (and this incomparable seated figure greatly extends our appreciation of the Ifẹ̀ style)... (Fagg 1963, 16, 27, 40, italics added)

> [T]he finest Ifẹ̀ bronze work so far known, the seated figure of Tada… has reposed on the banks of the Niger in Nupe country for five centuries or more. (Fagg 1970, 43)

Once again—overconfident adverbs notwithstanding—the unilineal hypothesis is circular, absent some reason to derive the few Nupe finds from the only slightly more numerous copperalloy objects recovered in Ifẹ̀. Either the opposite direction, or some third-factor multilinear transmission, is more consistent with the observation that the objects from "Tada and Jebba seem to be a meeting point of the Ifẹ̀ and Benin styles" (Dark 1960, 27 *fn.* 41, cf. Ryder 1965; Williams 1974; Lawal 1977a; Ọbáyẹmí 1979a; Thornton 1988). The stubborn resilience of Fagg's belief in the earliness of "early" Ẹ̀dó brass heads, conforming to imagined Ifẹ̀ origins, earned him and by extension his professional guild a memorable tirade of archaeological exasperation:

> The succession of essentially unproven assumptions underlying this identification will be obvious although their continued repetition invests them with the status of fact which can hardly be justified and indeed, this kind of thing is the source of many of the problems that bedevil the writing of Afrian art history. (Craddock & Pickton 1986, 10)

3.3 Willett the true believer

> *It was hoped that evidence of bronze casting might be discovered… but this aim was not achieved.* (Willett 1960, 240)

Willett did more than anyone else to bring Ifẹ̀ art from local lore and foreign romance into academic research, but even while expanding its evidentiary base from imperial treasure-hunts and colonial collections to archaeological digs, he never publicly questioned Egharhevba's unsubstantiated claim that copper-alloy casting skill came to Ẹ̀dó from medieval Ifẹ̀. Ambiguous observations were wishfully used as confirmation. Of a cast found in the Ẹ̀dó palace—pictured in Willett (1967a, 186) and mentioned in §3.2 above—he insisted "that the art-historical importance of the piece is self-evident in supporting the tradition of a connection between the casting traditions of Ifẹ̀ and Benin" (1973, 10). Such leaps of faith landed on archaeological toes. Connah's review of Willett (1967a) protests that Ryder (1965)—then the leading critique of Egharhevba's narrative—"is listed in the bibliography" but that "its arguments are ignored in the text" (1968b, 351). Similarly, Willett cited Ẹ̀dó potsherd pavements dated to 1305±105AD as an example of "[t]he cultural influence of Ifẹ̀" (1967a, 104), but Connah judged this inference "unwise" (1968b, 351, cf. Williams 1974, 310 *fn.* 4) because "such pavements were being made in the Lake Chad region as early as the 8th century AD" (Connah 1968a, 315), long before the earliest Ifẹ̀ example. Werner & Willett's (1975) attempt to link Ẹ̀dó metallurgy to the Ifẹ̀ finds has been thoroughly debunked (Craddock 1985). In reply to Willett (1964), Shaw remonstrated:

> It therefore seems difficult to understand how the idea of 'brass is early, tin bronze is later' at Benin was extraced from the evidence. …The new evidence published here suggests that, if there is any correlation between chronology and metal content it is in fact the other way round, i.e. that bronze is early and brass is late. (1969, 86)

The master art-historical narrative demanded at times quite strenuous doublethink, thus Willett & Fleming insisted that the "[s]eated figure from… the Nupe village of Tada… is clearly an Ifẹ̀ work… and is perhaps the supreme masterpiece of Ifẹ̀ founding" even while conceding, "It is strange that it should have been traded over such a large distance, especially if, as traditions suggest, it travelled via Ídá ["Idah"], the Ígálà capital" (1976, 138*f.*). But on other points, Willett responsibly sought to salvage Ifẹ̀ art historiography from Frobenius and Fagg's highfalutin' fancy of relentless African esthetic decline. To his credit, Willett tried "to explain the unusual naturalism of the Ifẹ̀ sculptures" in an empirically-grounded way, arguing that presumed portraits allegedly cast in Ifẹ̀, such as life-size mask associated with the name Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n—illustrated in Willett (1967a, 33)—had a functional analogy "in mediaeval Europe, where royal funerals employed effigies of the deceased… with the purpose… of emphasizing the continuity of the authority [of the monarch] through successive office-bearers" (1966, 34, 39). In order to make the same theory plausible in 9ja, Willett cited "naturalistic wooden effigies made in recent times for second burial ceremonies at Ọ̀ghọ̀ ["Ọ̀wọ̀"], a hundred miles to the East" of Ifẹ̀ (Willett 1966, 34). Unortunately, however, a leading Ọ̀ghọ̀ specialist judged the basis for this comparison as "inadequate" and its reasoning "strange" (Abíọ́dún 1976, 7), hence the received art-historical narrative of the Ifẹ̀ copper alloy finds still remains entirely evidence-free.[86]

Willett tried to refound the fabulous Ifẹ̀-centric literature on quotidian research data, but when this optimistic goal "was not achieved" by his own admission, he took refuge in curatorial myths constructed by his mentor W. Fagg on stories read from Egharhevba, and chose not to respond to numerous critics whether European (Shaw, Ryder, Connah, Craddock), American (Williams) or of 9ja nationality (Eyo, Ọbáyẹmí, Lawal). No accusation of reticence can, by contrast, be pinned on Prof. Horton.

3.4 Horton the last-ditch defender

> *…bloodied but unbowed… bloodied but unbowed…* (Horton 1979, 90, 93)

This pugilistic refrain consumes six of Horton's 40,000 concerted words on The Ifẹ̀ Question. Ditching the least believable of modern ethnic beliefs—that Yorùbá speakers migrated originally from Arabia and/or secondarily from Ifẹ̀—in favor of the well hedged scholarly consensus that "Ifẹ̀ became prominent *after* the main dispersal of the ancestral Yorùbá-speaking population from a homeland in the area of the Niger-Benue Confluence" (1979, 94, his italics), Horton makes his defiant stand on two other ramparts of the traditional and still popular narative:

(i) that "a 'classical' political and artistic tradition… originated in Ifẹ̀ and subsequently spread to Benin" (1979, 87)[87] and
(ii) that "the city remained the 'spiritual capital' of Yorùbáland" (1979, 70).

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86. Recognizing the problem, Adépégba turned to political economy to justify the assumed stylistic trend:

> The growth of naturalism with autocracy is not peculiar to Nigerian art. In classical Greece and Rome there are evidences that the types of political set-up to some extent conditioned naturalism in art. In the democratic Greek city-states, the arts had no rulers to glorify hence they are mosty impersonal 'perfect' human representation. The naturalism of the portraits of the period, where it exists, can hardly be compared with the portraits of the time of Alexander the Great, or the portraits of the Romans whose political setup was dominated by certain individuals. (1983, 31)

This thesis entails an unprovable sociolological claim, that medieval Ifẹ̀ was significantly more 'autocratic' than medieval Ẹ̀dó.

87. Ògúndìran, too, argues for "adoption and adaptation of the Ifẹ̀-centered innovations" in the "Yorùbá-Ẹ̀dó region as a whole" (2003, 51).

Point (i) admits the dependency of Ifẹ̀'s self-image on "Benin" but doesn't face the lack of traces in the Ẹ̀dó capital for any of the "classical" (i.e. medieval) Ifẹ̀ forms of oracles, arts or kings. Point (ii) is harder to test: Ifẹ̀'s *modern* prestige is clear, but to show psychological continuity with the past depends on lucky inferences; Horton settles on *Ifá* as the most promising:

> Ifẹ̀ influence depended on an *entente*, lasting from the middle of the 17th to the end of the 18th century, between the major successors to the city's economic and military power. …[T]he evidence for this *entente* is still mainly of a negative kind… Another principal contention of this paper is that the *entente* encouraged the development of Ifẹ̀ as an 'elder-statesmanly' and mediating center, and they the city discharged this function through the Ifá cult. (1979, 147)

No one disputes "[t]he Ifẹ̀-centric nature of Ifá" (Apter 1987, 11) but the problem remains that "Yorùbáland" has a larger extent. Northeastern Yorùbá subgroups—part of the multi-ethnic *Òokun* [LMM] zone near the selfsame confluence where Horton accepts that the Yorùbá-speaking populations originated—practice a version of the oracle called "Agbigba" (Ògúnbìyí 1952, cited by Bascom 1969, 7, no tones), which is much more similar to Ìgbo *Áfa*, Ẹ̀dó *Òminigbọn* and the other non-Ifá 8-bit systems (Seton 1929, 43; Nadel 1953, 39; Ọbáyẹmí 1979b, 1983, 83). Point (i) may therefore hold for a large subset of the Yorùbá-speaking area, but not for *Òokun* or for medieval Ẹ̀dó. Having apparently never heard of *Òminigbọn*, Horton took mistaken comfort in the uncontested fact that *Ifá* alias *Ọ̀rọ́nmìla* occurs in modern Ẹ̀dó (1979, 123 citing Bradbury 1957, 54).[88]

3.5 Ṣíjúwadé *olóríi túlẹ̀*, Ṣóyíīnká *olóríi fake tòkunbọ̀*[89]

"All we are saying is give us the head"
(Belgore *&* *al.* 1981, 43)

Despite Horton's lawyerly defense of Ifẹ̀ hegemony, the law soon broke down between the palace and its tenants, whose Ọ̀yọ́ forbears had fled the 19th century Fulani *jihād*.[90] Throughout the postwar *kòkó* boom, Mọdákẹ́kẹ́ sharecroppers kept paying off their Ifẹ̀ landlords until General Ọbásanjọ́ delivered a "[d]ecree… abolishing the customary proprietary rights of families and individuals—and traditional rulers—over both developed and undeveloped land" (Vaughan 2000, 149). Whatever may have been the neoliberal intent of this military law, its collateral effect was to endow a class of neofeudal barons—including many top generals, uncoincidentally—with vast expropriated tracts.[91] To enforce their customary *ìṣákọ́lẹ̀* 'ground-rent' (Berry 1988), Ifẹ̀ chiefs launched a war of machetes, arrows and guns. Casualties included Mr. 'Bùkọ́lá Arógundádé, a University of Ifẹ̀ student whose body was found on 1 June 1981 near Ifẹ̀'s Odò Ọgbẹ̀ grove. The headless condition of the corpse stoked fears of ritual murder. The next weekend, the same university hosted Prof. 'Wáīndé Abíīmbọ́lá's 1st World Òrìṣà Conference. On Sunday June 7th after heavy rain I woke up in a hotel near the campus gate and got a lift from students who were organizing a symbolic funeral march for later that day, demanding *ọba* Ṣíjúwadé (the *Ọ̀ọ̀ni*) to halt the vendetta that had claimed their colleague's life. Ṣíjúwadé also happened to be Grand Patron of the conference (Abíīmbọ́lá *&* Miller 1997, 31) and in the closing session Prof. Abíīmbọ́lá announced that participants should avoid the town. Nevertheless I had a message to deliver on Mọrẹ̀ Street, and joined a minibus which halted halfway on the main road in a chaotic scene littered with stones and shoes. Denied a rally permit, "several thousands" of the aggrieved students had defiantly advanced, singing the above-quoted refrain to the tune of John Lennon's "All we are saying is give peace a chance!" To short-circuit an inevitable rough reception at the palace, the police dispersed the march by shooting in the air, stampeding four students into fatal contact with Mayfair Hotel's wet and ungrounded electric signboard leaking 175 volts. Two months later 'Wọlé Ṣóyíīnká, Professor of Dramatic Arts and chairman of Ọ̀yọ́ State Road Safety Corps (an auxiliary police force run by the opposition party UPN), staged an involuntary interview with the university's Senior Mortuary Attendant, hoping to impugn the pathologist's report on the four students' cause of death and hinting conspiratorial misconduct by the ruling NPN at a time of high political tension (Belgore *&* *al.* 1981, 112*f.*, 153-60).[92]

1981 was not the first time Prof. Ṣóyíīnká delved into the matter of a missing Ifẹ̀ cranium. Less than two years before, he had arranged for General Ọbásanjọ́ to arrest his senior Ifẹ̀ colleague Pierre Verger en route to Brazil, affording to Ṣóyíīnká and a hapless confederate the opportunity to heist from the home of Verger's Argentine-Brazilian friend Carybe an artwork believed (by Ṣóyíīnká's sidekick) to be the same one which Frobenius had tried to snatch from Ifẹ̀ in 1910 under the impression that it represented Oló.kun's head! A decade after Verger's eventual death in Brazil, Ṣóyíīnká printed a *sotto voce* "apology" (2006, 260) which still leaves a large gap with respect to Verger's own narrative of the 1979 fiasco as reconstructed by his biographers:

> À Lagos, juste avant l'embarquement à l'aéroport pour retourner au Brésil, il [= Verger] est arrêté sur des motifs inventés (trafiquant d'armes ou d'œuvres d'art, agent de l'Afrique du Sud…), dénoncé pour des motifs rocambolesques (le vol d'une sculpture en bronze d'Ifẹ̀ connue comme la tête d'Oló.kun) par certains collègues de l'université nigériane qu'il croyait être des amis ('Wáīndé Abíīmbọ́lá, 'Wọlé Ṣóyíīnká, Ọlábíyì Yáì), jeté en prison sans recours et ainsi humilié à l'âge de 77 ans.
> [FN 112: Verger aurait notamment été dénoncé à la police en raison de la jalousie de 'Wáīndé Abíīmbọ́lá (Verger avait fait une copie de tous ses enregistrements sur *Ifá* pour l'Université d'Ifẹ̀, mais Abíīmbọ́lá aurait souhaité accaparer l'ensemble de ses archives). Quelques jours auparavant, Verger s'était opposé à 'Wọlé Ṣóyíīnká qui appuyait alors la thèse de l'existence d'un racisme politique de nature génocidaire au Bresil. Deux professeurs de l'université d'Ifẹ̀, 'W. Ṣóyíīnká, futur prix Nobel de littérature et alors à la tête du département de théâtre, et Ọlábíyì Yáì, se rendent rapidement à Salvador et trouvent dans la maison bahaianaise du peintre et sculpteur Carybé un copie de la tête d'Oló.kun que ce dernier a lui-même réalisée et qu'ils supposent être l'original. Ils se ramènent au Nigeria où ils s'aperçoivent qu'elle n'est qu'une modeste copie en plâtre d'une réplique en bronze de la pièce du British Museum… (Souty 2007, 104, cf. Nóbrega *&* Echeverria 2002, 270-75)

88. Horton was possibly also influenced by Rótìmí (1974), a free dramatization which premiered at the University of Ifẹ̀ in December 1971. But he somehow missed Melzian's clearly contrasting descriptions of *Òminigbọn/Ògwẹ̀ẹ̀ga* versus *Ọ̀rọ́nmìla/Ifá* (1937, 137*f.*, 159). Bradbury never mentioned Egharhevba (1936a) in print, but he did quote specifically *Òminigbọn/Ògwẹ̀ẹ̀ga* material at least once (1961, 134). Even *Ọ̀rọ́nmìla/Ifá* as practiced in Ẹ̀dó and Onọ̀dó does not employ an *odù* order derived from the one used in Ifẹ̀/Ufẹ̀ (Íbiẹ 1986, 65).

89. The expression *túlẹ̀* 'student' denotes concentrated analysis in a downward posture. I'm told that the term *tòkunbọ̀* 'imported secondhand' (*lit.* 'coming from the ocean') has been replaced by *bẹ́jùọn* [<*Belgium*] at least in reference to cars. For "fake *tòkunbọ̀*" see Guyer (2004, 91).

90. Literally someone (*ọmọ* 'person, descendant') incised (*dá* 'cause') with the conspicuous facial scars (*kẹ́kẹ́*) characteristic of the town of Ọ̀yọ́, from which this fugitive population originated, cf. Òkédìjí (1998, 495). Colloquially *Mọdákẹ́kẹ́>Mọdẹ́ẹ́kẹ́* (cf. Abíīmbọ́lá *&* Oyèláràn 1975).

91. "The Land Use Act is a military document" said Jíti Ògúnyè, a lawyer. "It was made by the Olúṣẹ́gun Ọbásanjọ́ administration in 1978 at a time when the federal government was intervening in businesses, institutions and all walks of life of the people"… He also condemned the fact that the Act was by a departing military government in its bid to protect its "land grab" adding that Ọbásanjọ́ himself had acquired "a large expanse of land… in the name of farming. They needed to have that law in place and prevent people… from coming back to them to ask why did you take the land." Mr. Ògúnyè said further that the Act was inserted in the 1979 constitution to make its amendment difficult. (Adébáyọ̀ 2009)

92. The Ifẹ̀ monarch, installed in 1980 by Governor Bọ́lá Ìgè, enjoyed the reflexive indulgence of the opposition UPN (Vaughan 1988, 47*ff.*).

> [In Lagos, just before boarding a flight back to Brazil, Verger was arrested on trumped up charges (arms-or art-trafficker, South African spy…), having been accused on incredible grounds (theft of an Ifẹ̀ bronze sculpture called the *Head of Oló.kun*) by certain Nigerian university colleagues whom he had regarded as his friends (ʼWáńdé Abíḿbọ́lá, ʼWọlé Ṣóyíńká, Ọlábíyì Yái), thrown in jail without appeal and thus humiliated at the age of 77. [FN 112: Verger had notably been reported to the police due to the jealousy of ʼWáńdé Abíḿbọ́lá (Verger had made copies of all his *Ifá* recordings for the University of Ifẹ̀, but Abíḿbọ́lá wanted to grab the totality of his archives). Several days before, Verger had disagreed with ʼWọlé Ṣóyíńká who at the time held the view that genocidal political racism existed in Brazil. Two professors of the University of Ifẹ̀, ʼW. Ṣóyíńká, future Nobel laureate in literature and then Head of the Dept. of Theater, and Ọlábíyì Yái, dashed to Salvador [Brazil] and found in the Bahian house of the painter and sculptor Carybé a copy of the *Head of Oló.kun* which Carybé had himself made and which they believed to be the original. They returned to Nigeria where they realized that it was only a modest plaster copy of a bronze replica in the British Museum…]

As these vignettes show, Ifẹ̀-centrism's grip is not just on minds. Ṣíjúwadé pressed his seigneurial claim not just on traditional Ifẹ̀ lands but literally also on the heads—lives—of all standing upon it, yet he was never charged for inciting the slaughter of either serfs or students. As for Ṣóyíńká, *Olóríkunkun* "stubborn-headed(ness)" (2006, 213) may be the disarming selfdeprecation which he applies to his own selfcentered exploits—two kidnappings, one transatlantic larceny—but it's not so different from another term—"hypocritical self-righteousness"—which he once penned for others and which an Ifẹ̀ colleague turned back on him (Ṣóyíńká 1972, 16; Belgore *& al.* 1981, 154). By the theft of Carybé's *Orí Oló.kun*, Ṣóyíńká became *olórii fake tòkunbọ̀*: possessor of an intentional fake (museum replica) of an original whose fake (Frobenian) nickname denotes an origin in the sea. In his response to Arógundádé's abduction, Ṣóyíńká's behavior fit to the other meaning of *olórí*: not *possessor-of-(someone's)-head* but *person-at-the-head* i.e. an overbearing boss, now called "*ọ̀gá* at the top" (Ézèámàlụ 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaurbDSCgho).

The examples in this section illustrate how a fact-free, self-referencing claim maintained supremacy in scholarly literature and popular culture throughout the 20th century. The game is easy to play; all doubts are dispelled in a few learned pages by Kalous (1967). Ifẹ̀-centrism may be bad science but it's apparently "good to think" in the way that some Australian societies seized on certain animal species as 'totemic' kin group classifiers (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 128). So the question remains, what kind of brain candy made—and continues to make—Ifẹ̀-centrism so indescribably delicious?

4. "[P]eople start to grope… in the air"

> *Horton's claim is that,* given the structure of the basic African cosmology*, social changes of the kind specified will result in a more monolatric emphasis. …Horton does not say that, as a result of certain social changes, people* first *become more monolatric and* then *switch to Islam or Christianity. What he says is that, as a result of certain social changes, people start to grope for a more elaborate definition of the supreme being, and that if either of the world religions is present* at *this time, its ideas are likely to be enthusiastically if selectively accepted. …Horton's argument is that,* in some respects*, the Christian message contains elements that are very much "in the air" in a situation of weakening microcosmic boundaries…*
> (Horton *&* Peel 1976, 484, emphasis original)

To describe southern 9ja of late medieval times, Horton *&* Peel (1976, following Horton 1971) apply the term *monolatry*—first coined in Hebraic studies for a situation where many supreme gods are recognized to exist, but only one per ethnic group:

> Israels Gott ist freilich einer, aber einer neben anderen, wie schon daraus hervorgeht, daß er einen Eigennamen, Jahwe, trägt, durch den er sich von anderen Göttern unterschiedet. …Im alten Israel besteht Monolatrie, aber nicht Monotheismus. Daß es neben Jahwe andere Götter gibt, ist dem alten Israeliten selbstverständlich, den das Dasein anderer Götter, welche diese verehren, lert es ihm ja deutlich. Jahwe ist Israels Gott, wei Kemosch der Moabs, Milkom der Ammons, Baalzebub der der Etroniten…
> (Stade 1887, 428*f.*)
>
> [Israel's god is surely singular, but one among others, as noted above, since he has one personal name—Jahwe—whereby he is distinguished from other gods. …Ancient Israel practiced monolatry, not monotheism. That there were other gods besides Jahwe was obvious to an Israelite of the time, to whom the existence of other gods that could be worshipped was very clear. Jahwe was Israel's god, just as Kemosch was Moab's, Milkom was Ammon's and Baalzebub was that of the Etronites…]

They could also have used the better-known synonym *henotheism*, invented by the 19th century's echt-most Orientalist:

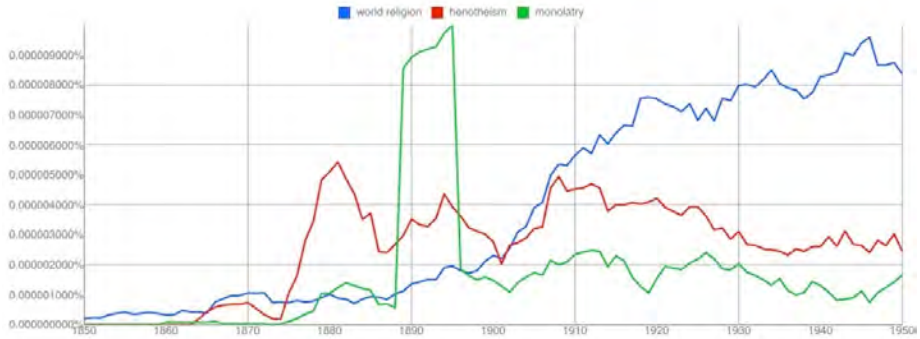
> If we must have a general name for the earliest form of religion among the Vedic Indians, it can be neither *monotheism* nor *polytheism*, but only *henotheism* [FN 1 from *εἷς*, *ἑνός* 'one' as opposed to *μόνος* 'one only']… This is the peculiar character of the ancient Vedic religion which I have tried to characterise as *Henotheism* or *Kathenotheism*, a successive belief in single supreme gods, in order to keep it distinct from that phase of religious thought which we commonly call polytheism, in which the many gods are already subordinated to one supreme god, and by which therefore the craving after the one without a second, has been more fully satisfied. In the Veda one god after another is invoked. For the time being, all that can be said of a divine being is ascribed to him. The poet, while addressing him, seems hardly to know of any other gods. But in the same colection of hymns, sometimes even in the same hymn, other gods are mentioned, and they also are truly divine truly independent, or, it may be supreme. …The poets ascribed the highest powers to the sun, but they ascribed equally high powers to other natural phenomena likewise.
> (Müller 1878, 260, 271*f.*, original italics)

According to Assyriological literature, Hammurabi became henotheist in the 2nd millennium B.C. when he gave Babylon's patron god Marduk a "promotion" to "supreme" status over adjacent ethnic deities (Bottéro 1981, 4, cited by Augé 1982, 139*f.*). The Hebrews are said to have initially held a henotheistic view about their own *YHWH*, conceived as a "national" supernatural, at a time when no one "disputed that other gods existed, any less than that other peoples did" (Caquot 1970, 388*f.*). They adopted a monotheistic mindset only when goaded to do so by prophetic lamentations under Babylonian rule:

> Marduk ne conserva pas toujours la place privilégiée que d'autres divinités lui disputèrent et lui ôtèrernt au gré des fluctuations politiques. Cette organization du divin relève de l'*hénothéisme*, système reconnaissant une place particulière à un dieu, que Bottéro distingue du *monothéisme*, dont il lie l'apparition en Israël à la défaite et à la réactualisation correspondante du discours des prophètes, universalisant la personne de Yahvé a partir du moment où il fait des armées mésopotamiennes l'instrument de sa volonté. Il reste que Yahvé ne serait toujours pas encore ce dieu véritablement unique que suppose le monothéisme s'il n'apparaissait aussi dans le Livre de Jérémie à la fois comme le Dieu transcendant et l'interlocuteur familier des âmes individuelles: «Yahvé demeure le Souverain suprême et transcendant, qui du regard et de la puissance embrasse l'Univers entier; mais il se rapproche en même temps de chacun et se rend présent à son cœur: c'est le seul Dieu avec qui l'on puisse s'épancher et qui rompe notre solitude foncière. Jéremie est le promoteur du monothéisme spirituel» (1981, p. 16). (Augé 1982, 140, original italics)
>
> [Marduk did not always hold his privileged position, which other divinities contested and envied according to political trends. Such a framework of divinity represents *henotheism*, a system granting a special place to one god; Bottéro distinguishes this from *monotheism*, whose appearance he links to Israel's subjugation [by Babylon] and its renewal as reflected in the discourse of its prophets, universalizing the figure of YHWH after he had made the Mesopotamian armies into the instrument of his will. Effectvely, YHWH would never have become this kind of unique god in the monotheistic sense if he hadn't also appeared in the

> Book of Jeremiah as both transcendant God and intimate interlocutor of individual souls: "YHWH remains the supreme and transcendant Lord of the entire Universe in both appearance and power, but at the same time he comes near to everyone and comes directly into his heart. This is the only God to whom one can reveal one's innermost thoughts and who overcomes one's basic isolation. Jeremiah is the sponsor of spiritual monotheism" ([Bottéro] 1981, 16).]

Fast-forwarding the evolutionary clock, Horton & Peel's developmental expection is unfulfilled in our time. It seems that monotheism was no worldhistorical *telos*, just a oneoff mutation whose two main offspring (Christian, Muslim) aren't inexorably taking over the whole planet even to the same extent as the two leading brands of monoflavored sugarwater (*Coke*, *Pepsi*). With their presupposition stalemated, the terms *monolatry* and *henotheism* were eclipsed by the noncommittal, superordinate label of *world religion*, blandly defined by population size as comprising "the Confucian, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Islamic religious ethics" plus Judaism honoris causa as "precursor" of the latter two (Weber 1920, 237f., cf. Masuzawa 2005, 217).



Nowadays, an analogous list of "religions that rule the world" is less conservatively reckoned to include all six of the aforementioned ideologies plus Daoism, Atheism and—significantly enough—"the religion of Yorùbáland and its diasporas" (Prothero 2010, 220, cf. Abímbọ́lá & Miller 1997, 1-6). Specifically in tropical Africa, Horton & Peel's mono-triumphalism is premature for a reason which is much remarked: many avowed African "Christians" and "Muslims" practice, not the spiritual possessiveness of jealous Jeremiahs, but a more relaxed régime of multiple situational loyalties—religious polygamy, in effect.[93]

> Persons don't see their own relgion as a bounded system… They are likely to be selective, rather than all-embracing, of those elements of Christianity or of Islam that come their way… They don't abandon their traditional ways of dealing with misfortune; they rather add on new ones. …This does not mean that they do not believe in the aspects of the external religious practices that they absorb, but as in traditional life there is parallelism between practical common sense and beliefs that mystical powers affect natural and human life, so one finds it here. At Bafodea [Sierra Leone] a farmer employs both his skilled practical knowledge of the land and crops, and also rituals and magical protection, to insure success in farming. This side-by-side quality of traditional thought and action is readily applied to new social and economic situations through new religious forces. (Ottenberg 1984, 447-50)

> Not even converted Yorùbá deny the existence of *òrìṣà*, although a Christian or Moslem will emphasize that he is unwilling to serve them. The *Olórìṣà* says that he does not 'believe' [*gbàgbọ́*] meaning that he is not a Christian [*onígbàgbọ́*], or that he does not perform ablutions [*ṣe àlùwàlá*] meaning that he is not a Moslem [*onímàle*]. But many go to church or to the mosque and nevertheless privately perform *ẹbọ*, the traditional ceremonial offerings to *òrìṣà*. …The Yorùbá is truly capable of integrating certain aspirations and rejecting others. Ṣọ̀npọ̀nnọ́ himself is referred to in his *oríkì* as the *òrìṣà* who performs *ìkí.run*, a term which covers not only Yorùbá prayer but also Islamic ablutions (literally, 'to greet heaven'). The variant forms of Christianity that have arisen here—the various 'African Churches'—remain true to some traditional cultural elements, like polygyn[y] and ritual awakening of the living water by means of nightly dancing, singing, drumming and rhythmic clapping of hands. In this way they tap sacred fecundities and healing powers from Jesus, just as if from *òrìṣà*. Their experience of Christianity is very direct and unreserved. They are reminiscent of early Christianity through their elementary involvement and primal experience of Christ; but there is no sensory deprivation with them or with Christ as they encounter him in elated trance. (Wenger 1983, 59*f.*)

Peel himself—speaking more abstractly and with full scholarly hedges—finds in the Ìjẹ̀bú Yorùbá sector an "Africanization of Christianity" and in Africa at large "the 'domestication' of the world religion[s]" and "the beginning of distinctive indigenous traditions of Islam and Christianity" (1977, 108, 111, 140*f.*). All of this erodes Horton's Weberian assumption that Africans' rapid embrace of Abrahamic idioms and paraphernalia launched them on a new historical path, different from "some of the mystical religions of the East" which are commonly said to show a "lack of impact of Christian missionaries" (1971, 97*f.*).[94]

African parallelistic metaphysics was favored, not just by generic peasant pragmatism, but also by particular political events. For example, 19th century "warfare, enslavement and population displacement, life in refugee camps and villagers' movement into cities" fostered "a gradual creolization of Yorùbá society" and individual "patronage of multiple *òrìṣà*" (Òjó 2009, 55, 66).[95] In such a plural setting, possessive and exclusionary concepts of "apostasy" and "conversion"—effectively, spiritual divorce and remarriage—stood little chance and had scant effect. "Up till today in Nigeria, bishops and Islamic leaders come to the *babaláwo* for divination" (Abímbọ́lá & Miller 1997, 7). This pattern is anticipated in a henotheistic/monolatric setting, understood not as a step towards inevitable monotheism, but—as in Babylon—as a statist political variant of so-called 'paganism' i.e. polytheism.[96]

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93. Such tolerance is threatened by Nigeria's boom in monotheist fundamentalisms under IMF immiseration and educational collapse.

94. Weber's premise, that East and West Asian religions irreversibly diverged, seems less evident today. Some Hindu offshoots like Theravāda Buddhism in the aggressively chauvinist Sinhala state (Rāhula 1974; Tambiah 1992) may have converged with monotheism in practice.

95. Akínjógbìn speaks more loosely but in a similar vein of "the mixing and mingling of different sections of Yorùbá-speaking peoples and the subsequent harmonization of Yorùbá culture" (1998, 5), cf. also Morton-Williams (1956, 102*f.*), Ọlọ́mọlà (1998).

96. The conceptual alternative to (exclusivist) *conversion* is of course (additive) *initiation* (Hubert & Mauss 1904, Evans-Pritchard 1937). The thin harvest of alleged conversion in Africa also undermines the theory of "the making of the Yorùbá" (Peel 2000) as a collateral effect of Bible translation. The more modest thesis—that Anglicans helped in *labeling* the Yorùbá—is easily accepted: a preexisting ethnic term for members the Old Ọ̀yọ́ kingdom, then called "Yorùbás proper" (Johnson 1897, 8, cf. *fn.* 24 above), was simply applied to the Ọ̀yọ́ dialect as standardized by Crowther the "recaptive" Sàró turned missionary (Àjàyí 1960; 1974, 129), then this usage automatically broadened by subreption to refer to the whole population adopting standard written Yorùbá. Less clear is why postmodern scholars would seize on Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983), a Marxist critique of mass culture, but forget that "the study of invented traditions cannot be separated from the wider study of the history of society, nor can it expect to advance much beyond the mere discovery of such practices unless it is integrated into a wider study" of factors such as "[s]ocial mobility, class conflict and the prevalent ideology" (Hobsbawm 1983, 12, 9).

Postulation by monotheistic observers of a "God in Yorùbá *Belief*" (Ìdòwú 1962, emphasis added) is contradicted not only by the dramatic difference of Christian and pagan ritual practice—monotheistic exorcism vesus pagan possession or "*adorcism*" (Heusch 1962; 1965, 145*ff*., cf. Talbot 1926, 268; Maupoil 1943a, 402; Verger 1966, 35; Rouget 1980; Barber 1981)—but also by basic incommensurability of propositional attitude:[97]

> But of course Yorùbá pagans do not select 'belief' as the defining feature of religion… (Peel 1968a, 29)
>
> [T]he Christian *believes* in God, which implies the possibility of disbelief, not only dialectically but as a matter of fact. A Yorùbá finds that absurd. (S. Wenger quoted by Brockmann & Hötter 1984, 65, original italics)

Horton however rejects relativism. Instead, he posits intellectual continuity between "African traditional thought and Western science" (1967) and seeks to explain Africa's superficially rapid uptake of monotheism as a vigorous evolutionary graft onto "the indigenous supreme being" which he believes to have existed there in "concept" long before missionary impact:

> One final criticism of *Aládùúrà* [= Peel (1968a)] concerns the phenomenology of conversion. Despite all the fruitful things Peel has to say on this subject, he makes a serious slip when he talks of Christianity as if it were one more cult coming in alongside the existing cults of the *òrìṣà*. For one salient feature of Christian proselytization in Yorùbáland has surely been the identification of the Christian God with the indigenous supreme being Ọlọ́run, and the presentation of Christianity as the 'true' way of contacting this being [FN4]. Indeed it would seem that missionaries all over Africa have usually striven to discover the name of the indigenous supreme being and, where successful, have then gone on to tell the people of his 'true' nature. Hence the African convert has not accepted an addition to the pantheon of lesser spirits. Rather, he has accepted change and development in his concept of the supreme being. Although some readers may find this point too obvious to be worth stressing, I see it as the key to further development of an intellectualist theory of conversion. (Horton 1971, 100)

Not himself a missionary, Horton nevertheless holds that supreme beings and natural-scientific frameworks of explanation share certain mental virtues, which he considers to be more fully appreciated by participants in larger-scale commercial networks. So hooked is he on this speculative social psychology that he rehashed it unchanged through several decades:

> So far as the immediate external relations of his village were concerned, …the Níké man lived in a narrow world of flux and inconstancy. At the same time, however, his view of the world was far from parochial. A great trader, he would travel considerable distances to markets of those nearby groups which happened at the time to be friendly with his own; and early records show Níké to have been the crossroads of trade routes from such distant points as Édhà ["Adda"], Ọ́ka ["Awka"], Bénde and the Cross River. Such trade was kept open firstly by exogamic ties whereby members of a group were custom-bound to select their wives from a neighbouring community, and secondly by safe-conduct passes from the ubiquitous agents of the Árụ Chúkwu oracle. Even before the advent of Colonial administration, then, the Ì[g]bo had, despite the narrowness of his political affiliations, a well-developed broad view of the world outside his own social group. …It is in the above context that the imposition of a universal upon a parochial supernatural order becomes significant. For these two orders provide two distinct frames of reference within which the individual must act—the first for life within his social group, and the second for his numerous expeditions outside it. Nevertheless, though a man may regard himself as the son of a parochial Àṇị ['Earth'] of his group, he knows that the latter is ultimately a part of the universal Àṇị; and he is constantly reminded by the *ọ̀fọ́* in their shrines of the relation between the parochial cults and Chúkwu. (Horton 1956, 26)
>
> I suggest that the extent to which any population actively worships its high god is partly determined by the degree of its active contact with the wider world outside the microcosm. For the greater its active contact, the greater its need to take practical account of that level of theory which relates the microcosm to the wider world—i.e. the level of ideas about the high god. Again, the greater the active contact with the wider world, the greater the area of experience within the microcosm which comes to be seen, not as peculiar to it, but as part of a general human predicament. Hence the larger the number of occasions within the microcosm when people's practical concerns force them to take active account, not of the lesser gods who are concerned with its peculiarities, but of the high god who is concerned with its universal features. Another factor which may be important in this context is the ascription/ achievement variable. Where the individual's status is largely determined by ascription, his peculiar lot will appear to be something largely dictated by his community. Hence the ideas appropriate to the explanation of his lot will be drawn from the realm of those lesser gods who are concerned with the community and its peculiar features. On the other hand, where achievement plays a greater part, individual and community are likely to appear as partially independent variables. Here, then, explanations of individual vicissitudes may well refer, not to the parochial lesser gods, but to the high god who is concerned with the wider order of things. In the latter situation, one would expect individual worship of the high god to be far more developed than where ascription determines status. (Horton 1962b, 139)
>
> Where the way of life is dominated by subsistence farming and commerce is poorly developed… is likely to favor a religious life in which a great deal of attention is paid to the lesser spirits (underpinners of the microcosm), whilst very little attention is paid to the supreme being (underpinner of the macrocosm). …However, where there is a development of factors making for wider communication (for instance, a development of long-distance trade)… [l]ess attention will be paid to the spirits, and more to the supreme being. This scheme… provides us with the basis for understanding in any given case the outcome of exposure to Islam and/or Christianity. …The central Ì[g]bo, though lacking in state political institutions, have long supplemented farming with a fair amount of intercommunal trade; and it is not surprising that in their indigenous religious tradition, cults of the lesser spirits are supplemented by a cult of the supreme being. …About three hundred years ago, however, a strikingly different situation began to develop in the south-east corner of the area. The Árụ… became more and more deeply involved in the long-distance commerce stimulated by the Atlantic slave dealers… Over the years, moreover, their commercial prestige took on political overtones. …Inseparable from these commercial and political developments were others of a religious nature. Most notable was the development of a cult of the supreme being far more elaborate than anything to be found elsewhere in Ì[g]boland. (Horton 1975, 220, 228*f*.)

In this thesis of cognitive evolution, as in Horton's defense of "classical" Ifẹ̀ (§3.4 above), the Oxonian philosopher burns more intellectual calories the closer he skates to the thin edge of circularity. *Thin*: evidence abounds that monotheism's impact in Africa is more superficial than might be concluded from massive calquing of nomenclature. *Circular*: the proposed economic ratchet towards theoretical abstraction is just another a functionalist just-so story. All alleged examples of this change yield to more convincing, more material analyses, and even the theory's rationalist logic is less compelling than advertised.[98]

To begin with the misreading of names: it's far from "obvious" that Christianity was perceived by "the African convert"—if such generic cutouts can be admitted for the sake of argument—as an instance of "change and development in his concept of the supreme being" (Horton 1971, 100). On the contrary, "[d]octrinal religion… would not hold without the underlying material"

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97. "Christianity became a religion of belief, whereas Judaism and paganism were religions… of traditional practice" (Hopkins 1999, 82). Malagasy propositions about ancestors are outside the scope of belief statements "most of the time" (Bloch 2002, 140). Similarly, Asad critiques the assumption that "what is truly religion… must be joined to discourses which *affirm* something" (1983, 245 original emphasis). Ìdòwú's naive assumption of shared metaphysics was the accidental beneficiary of a temporarily permissive sociological context which has been diplomatically described as the circumstance that "[c]onversion to Islam and Christianity was not so menacing in the past, since individuals were not pressed to give up their old value systems, culture and language" (Olúpọ̀nà 2014). But the contradiction is no less real.

98. Horton doesn't even try to justify his assumption that indigenous Africans held the same ideological interest of dominance over nature which drives "Western science"—a claim which is closer to Frazer and Popper, and further from Tylor and Durkheim, than Horton wants to admit (Tambiah 1990, 91, 131; Horton 1987, 1993b, cf. also Marcuse 1965; Habermas 1968; Peel 1968a, 14; Bookchin 1980).

because "people need manageable superhuman personnel" (Boyer 2010, 36). Thus Yorùbás sold into Christian slave-labor regimes in the Americas subsumed Jesus in the African "pantheon". In *Lucumí* Cuba and *Nagô* Brazil, the human characteristics of the New Testament's main *agonist* qualified him for membership in the *òrìṣà* cluster that continental Yorùbás call *Ọbàtálá* [<?'king of the big courtyard' (Verger 1957, 438)], *Òrìṣà Ńlá* ['big *òrìṣà*'] or *Ọba Òrìṣà* ['king of the *òrìṣà*'] (Ortiz 1906/1973, 129/31; Verger 1954, 192; Bastide 1960, 366*f.*). The identification makes sense. In Yorùbá's stereotypical division of supernatural labor, Ọbàtálá holds the portfolio of physical creation but tragicomically lost his first chance to act in that capacity. His initial descent to ground level snagged on a oilpalm branch, where he nodded out after improvidently imbibing a bellyful of *ẹmu*—the tree's ambrosial, spontaneously fermented sap (Verger 1982, 250). Helplessly dangling in mid air, Ọbàtálá does display a droopy crucified aspect, and gospel-like tales of the so-called 'white god' (*òrìṣà funfun*) recount how his impossible purity of intent brought unearned torments into which the victim nevertheless entered with willing foreknowledge, "accepting bitter and unpleasant consequences without complaint" (Verger 1982, 259, cf. Wenger 1983, 88-93).**99** The assimilation is plain enough in a century-old sketch of *CristoCrucificado* planted on *Obatalá*'s altar (Ortiz 1906/1973, 176/63).**100**

Figura 24.— Altar brujo. (De un apunte del natural)

Conversion enthusiasts may object that abrupt creole outcomes in crowded, cruel American slaveyards need not match more gradual developments in vaster, more lightly administered African colonies. But to dismiss *santería* as mere syncretism already concedes half the battle, because it grants the gist of the old reproach that Catholics are as polytheistic as their own pagan ancestors (Barbot 1732 cited by Sansi 2011, 32; Hislop 1862; Peel 1968a, 299). And if even hereditary Protestants pay more heed to Jesus than to YHWH, Horton needs to explain why Jehovah remains so conspicuously *in*conspicuous in the attention spans, not just of fresh African flocks but also of old European parishioners. A more neutral—say, Martian—observer might conclude that supreme beings are just an inherently tough sell everywhere at all times, and that to analyze any really existing form of Christianity or Islam in fullblown monotheist format is objectively less insightful than to assign the heroic characters of Jesus and Muhammad the identity of splendid *òrìṣà*, each colored with the cultural characteristics of his respective localization. Such an assessment would not be new:

> Si l'on s'en tient à l'exemple des systèmes africaines, on sera tenté de donner raison à Bataille [1973, 46] lorsqu'il écrit que l'effort pour concevoir un Être Suprême a partout échoué: abstrait et lointain ou proche et manipulable, le dieu païen n'est en tout cas jamais l'équivalent de la figure simultanément intime et transcendante du destin individuel qu'a élaborée le christianisme. La différence entre monothéisme et polythéisme se situe dans le rapport de l'homme au(x) dieu(x): rapport nécessaire de reconnaissance individuelle et réciproque qui ne s'accomplit qu'au-delà de la vie dans un cas, rapport fonctionnel uniquement mis en cause par les aléas de la vie individuelle et sociale dans l'autre. (Augé 1982, 139)**101**
>
> [Sticking to African examples, we can agree with Bataille [1973, 46] that the attempt to imagine a Supreme Being has consistently failed. Whether abstract and distant or nearby and easily influenced, a pagan god is never equivalent to Christianity's simultaneously intimate and transcendant divine figure of individual destiny. The difference between monotheism and polytheism lies in the relationship between person and god(s), on the one hand a necessary link of individual and reciprocal recognition which occurs only outside of lived experience, and on the other a functional link activated by the hazards of individual and social life.]

Horton assumes that "nearly all known African traditional religions feature a supreme being who is the creator and sustainer of all that is" (1964, 95), but ironically he owes this Whig interpretation of indigenous nomenclature to the same proselytising monotheists (Parrinder 1949; Ìdòwú 1962; Mbiti 1969; Àrínze 1970) whose anthropology he eventually mocked as "devout" (1984, 392, cf. Okot 1971; Taban 1988). For Horton's 1964 purpose, any vaguely celestial divinity will do. Everybody knows the *sky* is *high* and *high* can mean *supreme*, so if skygod worship is more "active" in contexts of supralocal exchange, it seems to follow that such economic pursuits spur contemplation of "the macrocosm" and "the general human predicament" by germinating "ideas about the high god" and "a more monolatric emphasis" (all quotes repeated from the extracts above).

On the contrary, Verger (1966) rigorously reviewed the lack of evidence for a "Yorùbá high god" before Arab and European contact, and even Ìdòwú admitted that "[t]he name of Ọlọ́run [literally: owner or personification of *ọ̀run*]… appears to have gained its predominating currency through Christian and Muslim impact upon Yorùbá thought" (1962, 37). If supreme god notions still pervade Yorùbá ethnographic texts, it's thanks to the "ambition of scholarly accounts… to construct… a map of the spiritual world which assigns to spiritual beings determinate and permanent positions in a comprehensive scheme of… hierarchical ranking (Oló.dùmarè and his 'ministers' in order of seniority or importance, as described by Ìdòwú (1962))" (Barber 1990, 314). Horton scratches the same itch when he says that Kalaḅarị Ịzọ̀n *tamụnọ* [HHH] is "conceived as creator of the entire world" (1962a, 206), but his colleague Alagoa objects: "In the Nembe language, as in Kalaḅarị, the word *tamụnọ* means that part of a man which exists before he is born and leaves his body at death" (1964, 3) and the correction makes the Ịzọ̀n phrase *ọpu tamụnọ* 'big *tamụnọ*' (cited by Horton) look parallel to Ìgbo *Chúkwu* (<*chí ukwu* 'big *chí*'), for which a convincing non-Hortonian

99. Pretended omniscience tripped by earthly accident is a common trope in southern 9ja lore (e.g. Egharhevba 1951, 46; Manfredi 1991, 342).

100. Back home, the closely related figures of Ẹ̀là and Ọ̀rúnmìlà are the popular alternative choices to be Jaycee's Yorùbá *avatār* (Ayéjìnà 2010).

101. In these terms, 9ja's mushrooming evangelic churches are less monothesitic, insofar as they keep successfully mining pagan doctrines of "lived experience" especially those concering prosperity and its opposite, 'witchcraft' (Jenkins 2006, 91-97, 186*fn.* 6; Oppenheimer 2010).

analysis is at hand. *Chúkwu* became the Árụ name for its patron divinity by translating "the conceptual code of another culture", namely *Ábàsi Íbụ̀m* 'big *ábàsi*' from the neighboring Èfịk trading state, whose "Ibinukpabi" oracle (known to Englishmen as "the long *jùjú*") was intrumental to Árụ slave dealers (Nwáọ̀ga 1984, 57, 60). If a Hortonian then replies *Aha! But where did the Èfịks get their own big ábàsi notion from? Didn't they trade a lot and thereby become cosmopolitan?* the simple answer is *Who cares? To dismiss the claim that supreme skygods emerge from intellect alone, it's enough to show that at least some of them have legs and follow the money.* Horton's theory, by contrast, is unfalsifiable: any part of Africa whose "indigenous religious tradition" is noticed in colonial literature is guaranteed by the time of observation to be already engaged in some kind of "intercommunal trade" if not "long-distance commerce", so any such correlation is less informative about internal dynamics than it may casually seem.

It would be strange indeed if similarly material considerations did not assist "white power… in conversion to Christianity [in] Eastern Nigeria" (Ífekà-Moller 1974, cf. Ékèéchí 1972), but Horton & Peel refuse any such causality in favor of their favored functionalist scenario that "monolatry" is attracted to "weakening microcosmic boundaries" (1976, 484), appealing to the same poetic correspondence of "elective affinity" which Weber first borrowed from Goethe (cf. Howe 1978). Lacking historical or even psychological evidence for a such linkage, leaves only logical necessity, but the logic in question is itself questionable:

> Mais, s'il est bien certain que l'interprétation des événements individuels, familiaux, villageois ou à l'échelle du groupe, de la chefferie ou du royaume peut mettre en œuvre des principes d'explication d'ampleur variable, il ne s'ensuit pas qu'il y ait une correspondance terme à terme entre la nature des maux, l'intensité ou le nombre des gens atteints et la situation «hiérarchique» des entités spirituelles ainsi mises en cause. Aucun panthéon n'a l'allure d'une pyramide. (Augé 1982, 138)
>
> [But granting that the interpretation of events affecting an individual, a family, a village or an entire group, whether chiefdom or kingdom, could deploy explanatory principles of varying scale, from this it doesn't follow that there should be a one-to-one correspondence between the nature of the ill, its intensity or the number of people affected, and the "hierarchical" arrangement of the supernatural entities held responsible for it. No pantheon resembles a pyramid.]

A more sceptic and polytheistic analysis of 9ja skygods takes off from Verger's and Nwáọ̀ga's findings as reviewed above: (i) Yorùbá *ọ̀run,* the modern word for 'sky', once denoted 'death' and connoted ancestry beneath the surface of the earth; (ii) although some Ìgbo communities recognized a sungod, its authority *vis-à-vis* the earth divinity was not 'supreme'.

As to (i), Yorùbá *ọ̀run* (<-*run* 'perish, be ruined') is certainly cognate to Ìgbo *ọ́nwụ* 'death' (<-*nwụ́* 'die') and Ẹ̀dó *ùwú* 'death' (<-*wu* 'die'). To fill the lexical gap caused by *ọ̀run*'s semantic shift to 'sky', Yorùbá resorted to a new nominalization *ikú* 'death' (<-*kú* 'die, be extinguished'). Even *awo* Abímbọ́lá admits that, cosomogonically speaking, "*ọ̀run* moved skywards" (1973, 74).[102]

As to (ii), Àchebé influentially glossed Ìgbo *chí* as "personal god" (1958, 29) as if to solve the bilingual proportional analogy *Chúkwu* : 'God' :: *chí* : '*x*'. From the correct observation that *Chúkwu* is literally 'big *chí*' (*chí ukwu*), he concluded that *chí* is a small god, and the only flaw in this reasoning is tautology: *chí* occurs on both sides of the equation, so what we learn about *chí* cannot escape *Chúkwu*'s conventional English translation.[103] More insightfully, Àchebé observes that in Ìgbo folktales "the place… *chí* inhabits is forbidden to man in a way that *ànị̀ mmọ́*, the abode of his dead fathers, does not appear to be" (1975, 96). Reasonably enough he links this item to a second noun, also pronounced *chí* and straightforwardly meaning 'daylight'—anecdotally citing a ritual by which "a man who… needs to set up a shrine to his *chí* will invite a priest to perform a ritual of bringing down the spirit from the face of the sun at daybreak" (1975, 94).[104] The remaining puzzle is how such an association ever arose. There are three possibilities: (i) the Ìgbo nouns *chí* 'day(light)' and *chí* 'reincarnating spirit-double' are related only accidentally as phonetic homophones, becoming secondarily associated due to mere similarity of sound; (ii) they're historically related but only *indirectly*, through a common predicate root (Manfredi 1997, 177*f.*) or (iii) they were once the *exact same* word, but this lexical identity has been lost through semantic specialization, to the point that even a deeply cultured and reflective Ìgbo-speaker now perceives "two clearly distinct meanings" (Àchebé 1975, 93). Option (i) is the null hypothesis, not news if true. Option (ii) is disproved by a simple phonetic detail which I should have noticed long ago.[105] But option (iii) is both surprising and supported by facts.

All local varieties of Ìgbo have a noun *échi* 'tomorrow', from older unpalatalized **éki* which is still the Ágbọ̀ pronunciation.[106] Mukarovsky reconstructs the "Western Nigritic" (≈ Niger-Congo) **k(y)án* 'day(light)' and **kì(a)* 'to dawn' (1976, 146, 152) and explicitly includes Ìgbo *chí* in the latter correspondence set. Thus the 'day' meaning of *chí* is clearly old; the puzzle is the other, supernatural use. Many observers have noted that this is pragmatically paralleled in Ẹ̀dó *ẹ̀hi*, even though the forms probably aren't cognate.[107] The contextual analogy brings into play some cosmological annotations in the unabridged Ẹ̀dó dictionary:[108]

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102. Yorùbá can also denote 'sky' with the Arabic loanword *sánmọ̀* (Awóyalé 2008), but this apparently refers more to physical atmosphere than to metaphysical heaven. Ẹ̀dó *ọ̀rọ́n* 'world of the dead' (Melzian 1937, 168), is evidently a loan from Yorùbá, as Ẹ̀dó attests no relevant root **-ron*; note that the Ẹ̀dó meaning fits Verger's claim: the borrowing evidently predated the noun's Yorùbá-internal semantic shift. Ẹ̀dó *-wu* connotes radical extinction, because it "mostly" doesn't apply to a person with living progeny (Melzian 1937, 221).

103. In Àchebé's words, "whatever *chí* may be, it does seem to partake of the nature of the Supreme God" (1975, 99). As the Ìgbo projected from *chí* → *Chúkwu*, the Fọ̀n [or, Fɔn] hold that, in addition to *sẹ́* [or, *sé*] 'individual destiny', "[i]l existe un grand *Sé*, qui est *Mánú* [=the supreme being]" (Maupoil 1943a, 388, cited by Verger 1973, 64; cf. Höftmann & Ahohounkpanzon 2003, 339). Verger compared Fọ̀n *sẹ́* to Yorùbá "*ịṣẹ́ẹ́ṣẹ́*", a shrine object representing "the *orí* 'the head', the father, the mother and *Ifá*… of a deceased family elder" (1973, 64).

104. Similarly, Nri prayers to *Chúkwu* involve pointing a kolanut directly towards the sun (Ọ́nwụejiọ́gwù 1980, 31*f.*).

105. I tentatively proposed (1997, 177*f.*) that the two nouns etymologically share the concept of 'return' which occurs independently in the productive suffix *-chi* in compound predicate roots like *-tí-nye-chi* 'put in place of', *-gbá-chi* 'rotate' and *-kwụ́-chi* 'stand in for' (Williamson 1972, 79, 250). In southern Igbo dialects like Ọ́màáhyá ("Umuahia"), the same suffix *-chi* can also mean simple 'repetition' as in *-gá-chị* 'go again', *-lé-chị* 'look again' and *-kwú-ghà-chị* 'speak yet again' (Ígwè 1999, 119), but the south is also where my etymology dies: the consonantal onset of the 'return/repeat' suffix happens to be aspirated in all the southern varieties of the language which contrast aspriated and plain stops (cf. Ladefoged & *al.* 1976), but aspiration never occurs in either of the *chí* nouns (Ígwè 1999, 110), therefore no derivation of the noun *chí* as 'returner' is possible. Historically in the large Ìgbo linguistic cluster, the aspiration feature derives from nasal plosion in a *CnV* sequence, still clearly audible in the extreme western dialect area of Ágbọ̀ ("Agbor"), cf. Elugbe (1969). All northern Ìgbo dialects necessarily lack aspiration because they all denasalized before the aspiration feature had developed in the first place (Williamson 1973). Standard Ìgbo orthography ignores aspiration so as not to puzzle northern speakers; linguistically adequate spelling of southern dialects codes aspiration as a digraph, employing either an apostrophe (Swift & *al.* 1962, 49; Ígwè 1999, *xiii*) or *h*, which has to be notated as subdotted *ḥ* (unless as unlovely *hh*) to avoid confusion with standard digraphs for fricatives (Green & Ígwè 1963, 3).

106. In some southern dialects, *échi* can also systematically refer to 'yesterday' (Ígwè 1999, 140) to the amusement of more northern neighbors.

107. *Ẹ̀hi* is found in Ágbọ̀ personal names where *chí* occurs in the Ìgbo counterpart: *Ẹ̀hi-edú* = *Chí-nàedú* ['spirit-double leads'], *Ẹ̀hi-wụn-ọ́gwụ̀* = *Chí-bù-ọ́gwụ̀* ['spirit-double is curative'] etc. At Àhaba ("Àsaba") Thomas recorded supernatural *chí*, *èrhi úṇọ̀* ['èrhi of the house'] and *èrhi ófịá* ['èrhi of the forest'], adding "Both the name and the belief are curiously reminiscent of the Ẹ̀dó belief in *ẹ̀hí owá* and *ẹ̀hí ohá*" (1914, 19).

108. Presumably due to Melzian's principal consultant H.G. Adamasu, or else J.U. Egharhevba, J.E. Edegbe or S. Ọbayuwana (1937, *viii-xv*).

> *ẹ̀hi*—(1) one's personal guardian spirit; *ẹ̀hi* is believed to live in the *ẹ̀rínmwìn* [invisible ancestral world]; it "prays in *ẹ̀rínmwìn* for our long life" and it is also responsible for any lucky or unlucky happenings. It is believed to be "with a man all the day" and at night it gives account to *Òsa* ["the Biní high god"]. The *ẹ̀hi* is represented by an object near a man's sleeping place… The *ẹ̀hi* does not want any blood sacrifices. *Ùhúmwùn*, the head, is believed to be the *ẹ̀hi*'s helper and to render account of the happenings during the day to it; *òb-ẹ́ hì nọ́* 'it is the *ẹ̀hi*'s work (lit. 'hand'): this is said whenever a man has achieved anything extraordinary, or has had outstanding luck. … (4) *ẹ̀hi n-ákhọ̀e* region at the back of the head; the hole is explained by the belief that during his stay in *ẹ̀rínmwìn* a man has to pay something for his food, and that a part of his skull is cut out in order to serve as a payment; cf. *hi*…
>
> *hi*—to pray [to] *Òsa* and *Ẹ̀hi* for one's well-being during the next reincarnation (*àrí-avbèhé*)… (Melzian 1937, 51*f.*, 76)

Consider (i) the restriction of the spirit-double's proximity to daytime, and (ii) its habitation of the ancestral world, which is invisible because underground (Talbot 1926, 268; Nabofa & Elugbe 1981, 10). If (i) also held in Ìgbo, simple metonymy would suffice for the spirit-double to be named *chí*, the ordinary Ìgbo word for 'day(light)', and (ii) would then become problematic because daylight doesn't shine below the earth. One way to escape this contradiction is to shift *chí*'s habitation to the sun.[109]

When Ǹri and Ifẹ̀ bigmen hitched their political wagons to the sky, collective ancestors were not disinterred but a new angle did appear, probably much as described centuries later in the administered-trade state of Àgbómẹ̀: "The king was the mediator between the living and the dead" and practiced "collection and redistribution of goods on a grand scale" (Polanyi 1966, 34*f.*, cf. Herskovits 1938, 49). This unequal arrangement recalls the "pyramidal" or "conical" clans of ranked lineages and hereditary aristocrats in Polynesia and in the Golden Triangle of Southeast Asia (Sahlins 1963; Friedman 1975), in whose transit from gift economy to centralized exchange, a key intellectual component intervenes: "the belief in thing-persons produces a general metamorphosis of reality and an inversion in the way one thinks of the real relations involved. Objects are transformed into subjects and subjects into objects" (Godelier 1996/1999, 147/106, cf. Feuerbach 1841, 442; Mauss 1923-24). The mind switch occurs less in functionalist/organic consciousness *à la* Horton, and more by means of metaphysical expropriation from above:

> The creation of an apparently separate religion is closely tied to the history of the state. …The development of the Merina state in Madagascar in the 18th and 19th century shows how the construction of the symbolic state is accompanied by a partial destruction and reformulation of the symbolism of the subjects. Thus, certain key attributes of elders/ancestors were forcibly transferred from local descent groups to the king and his palace… Interestingly, a similar process involving the diminution of the transcendental social of subjects for the benefit and construction of the royal transcendental has been examined for early Egypt… (Bloch 2008, 2058)[110]

Ancient Rome showed a similar shift. "The massive political and social changes which accompanied Roman imperial expansion led to an effective simplification of religious organization" (Gordon 1990, 181). Augustus' elevation as *pontifex maximus* culminated "an already old process, the appropriation by the Roman élite of the religions institutions of the Roman people" (Gordon 1990 183*f.*). This "process of structural differentiation… by which 'religion' (or 'religious authority') became defined for the first time as an independent category" (Beard 1990, 46*f.*, cf. Eisenstadt 1971) was not unique to Rome: also in several other "preindustrial empires" in the "millennium from about 600 BCE to 650 CE… exclusive alliances between church and state constituted a key element in each religion's formation" (Hopkins 1999, 248, cf. Baumard & Boyer 2013, 277).[111]

Symbolic power flip from earth to sky, positioning opportune elites as celestial *agbẹrù*s on the road to 'heaven', may have taken off in several 9ja regions independently, but the racket is too rentable not to have been copied, and its adoption is indirectly attested by the medieval cross-influences sampled in §§2-3 above. Noisy modern linguistic data blur the dramatic semantic shifts that were required. Some latter-day supreme being names like *Oló.dùmarè* and *Chíinèékè* are freighted with fantastic folk etymologies coined by missionary commission (Verger 1966; Bámgbóṣé 1972; Àchebé 1975; Armstrong 1982; Nwáọ̀ga 1984; Yái 1992), but not all mystifications can be blamed on outside meddling. Ifá intellectuals got into the act, Jesuitically splitting one abstraction into three, *babaláwo*s sliced up the unseen universe into separate spheres more closely matching a newly hierarchical social scale. *Òrun àpáàdì* 'the heaven of potsherds' "is the nearest to the Christian hell in our own belief" (Abímbọ́lá & Miller 1997, 35 and *fn.* 6), and the Whig history of the other two worlds betrays the "diminution" of the ancestral realm:

> Since the *Òrìṣà* first entered the earth's crust before re-emerging on the surface as a force of the physical environment, *Ilẹ̀*, the Earth herself became a second *ọ̀run* (heaven). The first heaven which is in the sky and from where the original 400+1 *Òrìṣà* descended is known as *ọ̀run òkè* (heaven above). It is the permanent abode of *Olódùmarè*, but the High God also visits the second heaven, known as *ọ̀run odò*, from time to time. *Ọ̀run odò*, which literally means "heaven below", is also the abode of the ancestors (i.e. all departed humans). (Abímbọ́lá & Miller 1997, 22)

The technicians of the 8-bit oracle had clear material interests in the symbolic expropriation process:

> Since the priests of all deities rely partially upon the diviners for sacrifices and worshippers, it is to their economica dvantage to direct the sanctions of religious faith toward the diviners and their work more than to any other deity or cult, aside from their own.
> (Bascom 1941, 44)

> Ifá priests are in many respects quite different from other *òrìṣà* devotees, being specialist and professional masters of a divinatory system which operates precisely by bringing all the disparate cults and forces into relationship with each other and mediating between them. (For the ordinary non-specialist devotee, however, Ifá does not represent an intellectual or cosmological scheme but a source of recipes and models of action, elicited piecemeal according to need. The spiritual world centres on their own *òrìṣà* and their own ancestors.) But the Ifá cult does in one sense work like any other *òrìṣà* cult writ large, for the effect of all synthesising Ifá stories is ultimately to claim a unique and superior position in the cosmology for Ifa: every divination verse in the vast Ifá corpus reaffirms the sagacity of Ifá and the effectuality of the Ifá divination system, and many explicitly show other *òrìṣà* at a disadvantage in comparison with Ifá.
> (Barber 1990, 335 *fn.* 14)

> Ifá associates itself strongly with the Supreme Being, Ọlọ́run or Oló.dùmarè. Ọ̀rúnmìlà, the *òrìṣà* of divination, is called Ìbíké.jì Oló.dùmarè ('second to God'). Oló.dùmarè, unlike the *òrìṣà*, does not appear as a client of the *babaláwo* in the precedent stories, as the *ẹsẹ* [narrative Ifá verses] are regarded as messages from Oló.dùmarè. If the Supreme Being is expressive of an expanded sphere of social relations, this fits other features of Ifá: the mobility of the *babaláwo*, and the spread of the cult far beyond the borders of Yorùbáland.
> (Peel 1990, 342)

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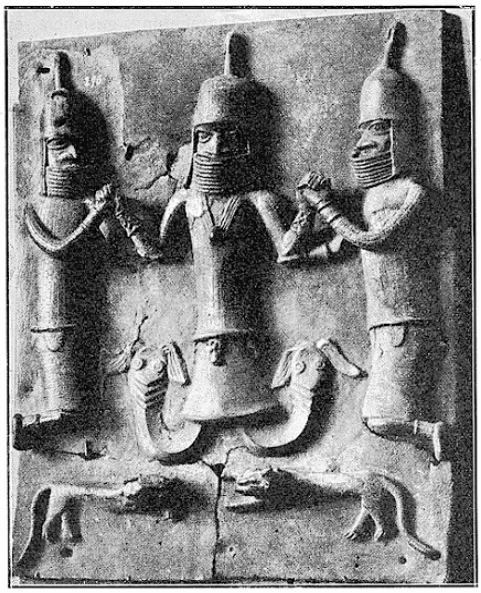
109. Ẹ̀dó faced no such paradox, since its high god had an etymologically unrelated name: *Ò(i)sa* < Yorùbá *òrìṣà*, dated to *Ọ́ba* Ẹsígìe alias Ọsawé (Melzian 1937, 148*f.*; Reed & Dalton 1899, 5). This became *Òlisa* in Ọ̀ṇicha (Williamson 1972, 376*f.*) and *Òlise* in western Ìgbo.

110. Willett effectively assumes the same scenario for the Odùduàn metaphysical putsch : "The indigenous population almost certainly had some cult of the ancestors… [which t]he sophisticated ruling class in Ifẹ̀ seems to have overcome" (1967b, 33).

111. Mediterranean skyworshippers imposed similar ordeals of semantic reassignment. Latin *mundus* 'clean; world' (of which the first meaning is cognate to Sanskrit मुण्ड *muṇḍ-* 'shaved clean' Macdonell 1929, 231) is compositionally negated as *im-mundus* to yield the idea of 'un-clean' (e.g. Italian *deposito di immondizia* 'garbage dump'), but weltfremdlich monotheism applied the pejorative sense also to the non-negated form, which in ecclesiastical usage evoked "this world, the realm of sin and death" (Lewis & Short 1879, 1175 citing *Evangelium Johannis* 17,9).

Corresponding perspectival change was characteristically and instructively different in Ẹdó. Around the 15th century, when the Ẹdó capital was literally being entrenched behind huge concentric earthworks called *ìya* (Connah 1967; Darling 1976, 1984), the old earth-sky dialectic was supplemented by the sea, incarnated in representations of the *Ọ́ba* and the Ólokún divinity. Some old (probably 16th-century) metal plaques show the *Ọ́ba* with upward-pointing catfish instead of downward-pointing feet (Luschan 1901, 25, cf. also Read & Dalton 1898, plate 18.2; Bradbury 1967, 32).[112]



At least since the 17th century, Ẹdó inhabitants have regarded the sea not just as a supernatural force, or even merely as a tutelary divinity in the henotheistic sense of *primus inter pares*, but as the ancestral realm itself:

> The natives of Benin have all a singular veneration for the sea, and use [sic] to swear by it in matters of concern. They celebrate a feast on a certain appointed day in the year, that it may prove a beneficent deity to their country at all times; and they as ridiculously [sic] imagine the state of bliss or torment in the other life will be in the sea. (Barbot 1688-1732, 375)

> Ólokún is the only deity who must be appeased in order to guide and accept the dead on the way to *Èrívbìn.* As he goes to *Èrívbìn* the dead travels through *Okenalubode* (The hill on whch one must not fall down) at [the seaport of] Úghọ̀tọ́n, which is thought to be the final place of departure from this earth. (Izevbigie 1978, 98*f.*)

Ùrhobo—the ethnolinguistic zone which was shown in §2.1 above to have been the most likely transmission gate for the 8-bit oracle en route from Ìgbo to Ẹdó—interestingly presents a foundation myth about the source of the so-called Lower Niger copper-alloy casts, deploying a unique concept: *Ùrhiẹ́ Enù* 'the celestial river' (Foss 2004, 47; diacritics from Ukere 1986). This ideological blend seems to be a creative fusion between the regionally commonplace skygod motif and the specifically 9jadeltan doctrine that "*Ẹ̀djọ n'ame rhé* […] 'Spirits come from water'" (Foss 2004, 47).[113] Apart from attesting the flexibility of indigenous ideas about the location of the invisible world, it shows again the Feuerbachian sensitivity of metaphysics to political economy, parallel to the Ẹdó deification and ancestralization of the sea which grew in synch with Ẹdó's Atlantic trade.[114]

By contrast with Ùrhobo and Ẹdó, less transparent material motive is at hand for Ifẹ̀'s own cosmic shift, deducible by the aforementioned, modern Yorùbá redefinition of *ọ̀run* from 'death' to 'sky'. Failing a hypothesis of such direct causation, it's plausible that the Ifẹ̀ innovation was at least as much borrowed as it was driven by the endogenously unequal political economy. A borrowing scenario is independently possible because the skychain motif of Ọ̀rúnmìlà/Oòduà's fabled descent to ground is not isolated in the ethnic neighborhood, alongside "*ègban Tsoèdè*—the 'chain of Tsoèdè'… the mythical ancestor of Nupe kingdom" who is "the mediator of the [sky] god Sòkó" (Weise 2003, 283; cf. Banfield 1914, 401; Nadel 1935, 278).[115] The figure of Sòkó is said to have been obtained in turn by Nupe from Ígálà (Nadel 1935b, 129, cf. 1935a, 1942, 73; Eccles 1962, 25) and hypothetical southwestward movement of this heavenly icon together with its orature would parallel the best available conjecture for the source of (most) "Ifẹ̀" metal casts, namely either Nupe or Ígálà (cf. §3 above). By such considerations, late medieval Yorùbá skyworship becomes partly intelligible in terms of pre-*wazobịan* crosscultural interactions and exchanges, finessing the need for functionalist neo-Weberian speculations in the Horton vein.

As to the local agents of Ifẹ̀'s radical skyward reorientation, the leading candidates are the selfsame specialists of the 8-bit oracle, whose inheritance of core intellectual stock-in-trade from the 9ja middlebelt/confluence is beyond dispute—even if so many details of its pathway and creative development remain unknown (cf. §2 above). The hypothesis of voluntaristic initiative by the Ifá guild in Ifẹ̀'s formative phase is plausible for another reason: centuries after that ideology had been consolidated, Yorùbá oracle priests played an active role in the encounter with colonizing Anglican missionaries:

> The *babaláwo* sought to incorporate material from the world religions [sic] within their own cosmology. They did do so not just for pragmatic reasons, to enhance the flexibility and appeal of their own system, but from reasons of conviction. For they were intellectuals… (Peel 1990, 350)

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112. Proposed Portuguese transmission of this "fish-legged" motif (Drewal 2008, 43*f.* in reply to Fraser 1972) would only reinforce the saltwater connotations attached to the *Ọ́ba* of Ẹdó as the dryland representative of Ólokún's "new cult of sea wealth" (Belasco 1980, 115).
113. To the extent ascertainable from my limited resources, Ùrhobo *énù* 'up/atmosphere' could be borrowed from synonymous Ìgbo *énu*.
114. Belasco assumes "the founding of the Ólokún cult by *Ọ́ba* Ọ̀hẹ̀n probably in the 15th century…" and concludes that "Ólokún worship was established prior to European landing" (1980, 78*f.*), but the conjectural date could easily be another example of how Egharhevba's inflated oral chronology anticipated medieval events on the order of "a hundred years" (Bradbury 1959, 286). According to Izevbigie, "There is no doubt that communal Ólokún worship began in Úghọ̀tọ́n" (1978, 282).
115. Sad to say, the modern tokens of this sacred relic may literally be recycled Portuguese slaving shackles (Nadel 1935b, 130).

Symbolic violence—defined as "power which manages to impose semantic relations… as legitimate while concealing underlying coercive relations" (Bourdieu & Passeron 1970, 18)—obtains "the consent of the dominated to their [own] domination" (Godelier 1978, 176). Ifá is well suited to this task by its status as a distinguished "pedagogical authority" (Bourdieu & Passeron 1970, 22). Whereas "the worship of the *òrìṣà*s is conceptually ancestor worship" (Bascom 1944, 39), Ifá's urban specialists launched a renaissance of cosmopolitan "self-fashioning" (cf. Greenblatt 1980) by detaching traditional worship from the ancestors and sending supernatural signifiers into outer space (= "heaven" in 9ja English), which became the novel meaning of *ọ̀run*. If that heavenly project made Ifá into a "precursor of Christ" (Brivio 2008, 247, citing Peel 1990), the affinity was elective on the African side: as with the establishment of Abrahamic monotheism, so the inculcation of Ifẹ̀'s *Ọ̀run*-ism required textual support to prolong the "long conversation… of formalized, ritual communication… dominated by the past in the present" (Bloch 1977, 287, 289), stretching out a timescale of legitimacy to one that is significantly longer than the collective memory of human ancestors. To this end, Ifá's updated operating system brilliantly extended the capacity of 8-bit information retrieval, entailing by this cognitive feat the wholesale 'enclosure' of collective peasant consciousness as sacred intellectual property. The investors were well paid, and this great leap of mnemonic voluntarism impressively conforms to Weber's paradigm of religious bureaucratization, as reclaimed for ethnographic Marxism by Bourdieu (1971). And Ifá's trajectory is still far from having run its course, especially as newer digital technologies are added to the older one which didn't rely on (still-scarce) electricity.[116]

As in other historical expansions of text technology whether fully written (West Asia), mainly oral with visual mnemonics (West Africa, *pace* Goody 1986) or dual-channel (South Asia), the "strategic" (Pollock 2006, 499) state-sponsored capture of supernatural ideology by medieval Ifẹ̀'s *babaláwo*s entailed that "national memory was implanted on a base of ritual oblivion" (Sand 2009 189, cf. Cohn 1994, 76*f.*; Dumézil 1940, 43; Dumont 1962, 75). As in the West and South Asian cases, modern political consequences of this paradoxical arrangement have hindered retrospective awareness of the shift also in West Africa, despite abundant comparative evidence as reviewed and extended in the above pages.

5. The oracle as retrospective information processor

Without prejudice to any *babaláwo*'s ability to foresee the future—or more reasonably, to *create* the future constructively by dispensing ritually legitimate advice, as comprehensively explained by Abímbọ́lá and Ọ́nwụejìọ́gwụ̀ in their respective ethnic mileux—this paper and its prequel (*people.bu.edu/manfredi/IfaAfaNri.pdf*) have borrowed the 8-bit oracle for a different purpose, namely in order to peer back into the past on a timescale where collective memory is admittedly both frail and manipulable.[117]

Observable details, fragmentary but copious, substantiate an 'Oriental' hypothesis for the evolution and spread of a bundle of ritual and artistic forms, with the oracle at its core, along vectors of intellectual influence running from the middle Benue valley to the southwest of the Òhimini/Niger river, roughly within the past 500 years. The required theory is both Lamarckian, entailing inheritance of external borrowings plus internally generated mutations, and Marxist, insisting that consciousness has a political economy. Not only is this approach more adequate than Ifẹ̀-centrism—the predominant view of the matter in both scholarly and popular discourse—but it also has the useful spinoff of proliferating consequences in other domains outside the oracle itself, engaging the independent evidence of archaeology and affiliated fields. The main price for this provisional success has been complexity—not just the intrinsic technical complexity of reconstructed sound shifts and lexical borrowings on a large scale of time and space, but also the extrinsic complexity of multiple dimensions of historical dynamics. The Ifẹ̀-centric version has the virtue of simplicity, but at the cost of detachment from the observable world.

I conclude with eight related points.

(i) Many features of Ifá were created in Ifẹ̀, but none of those features traveled anywhere to Ifẹ̀'s east or north before recent years.

(ii) The sixteen *odù* names—the core nomenclature of Ifá itself—were not coined in Ifẹ̀ but only reached there via a constructive transmission chain or network stretching back remotely to the Benue valley through several steps including northern Ìgbo.

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116. Recently some Ifá priests in Lagos founded an "Indigene Faith of Africa Temple" (*www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGGVeZpPBK8*). This may be the first ever Yorùbá shrine devoted to Oló.dùmarè (as opposed to various *òrìṣà* or title societies). Ìdòwú would presumably rejoice, though he had frankly admitted that "the Yorùbá do not erect temples for the cult of Oló.dùmarè, neither are images dedicated to Him" (1962, 141). Our innovative Lagos *awo*s cite market opportunities presented by American *Candomblista* and *Santero* religious tourists, who are creolistically deist, but a more sociological observer might see the form of the Ifá new church as well as its motivational rites as demonstrated in the video referenced above, as being infused with Pentacostal-envy. The participants could also have been more subtly influenced by a much older precedent: the Portuguese-inspired *Àrú Òsa* shrine on Àkpakpá.và Street, Benin-City (Melzian 1937, 148).

117. Thus Ọ́nwụejìọ́gwụ̀'s

> …analysis does not reject the mystical aspect of *áfa* but puts it within its social context whereby 'old' social reality is transformed into 'new' social reality. The transformational process is expessed in the idiom of mysticism and religion though it is achieved through a complex communication network system which involves… signs and symbols. […] Ideally, Nri traditional philosophy is based on the relationship linking the past, present and future. …This conception is expressed in the genealogical structure that models the collective actions of comtemporaties (the living) in terms of predecessors (ancestors) and successors (the unborn). In this system of belief, fathers under certain conditions are expected to reincarnate in their grandchildren… (1978/1997, 2, 121)

Similarly, Surgy rehabilitates the word *divination* with a pertinent play of words:

> La divination… ne prétend nullement prédire l'avenir, mais consiste à "deviner" ce qui se passe ici et maintenent, c'est-à-dire à identifier les forces invisibles à l'oeuvre en l'homme, en train de modeler le cours des évènements. …[I]l y a, à la base de la divination, le souci d'intervenir dans le cours normal des évènements, tels qu'ils affectent intérieurement les gens, et de le faire sciemment, après une analyse de ce qui les conditionne et en provoque l'apparition. C'est là une préoccupation très proche d'une préoccupation scientifique… (1981, 8)
>
> [Divination in no way claims to predict the future, but rather consists in "guessing" what transpires here and now, i.e. to identify unseen forces operating on a person, thereby explaining the sequence of events. …Behind diviniation is the impulse to affect an unfolding sequence of events affecting the internal life of persons, and to do so explicitly after having analyzed conditioning factors which has broutht them to light. Such concern is very similar to that of natural science…]

More prosaically, Bascom identifies the oracle's credibility with the circularity of the answers provided, whether due to frontloading of relevant information in the specific questions being posed, or to the considerable *placebo* value of an artfully morale-boosting routine:

> …an accurate prediction is not simply a matter of coincidence, because the questions themselves are loaded; and since the alternatives proposed are neither wholly good nor wholly bad, it frequently makes little difference which answer is given. But it is important to realize that this does not mean that nothing is gained by consulting the diviner. As Herskovits has indicated in discussing the same system among the neighboring Dahomeans, a conviction that the choice is in the hands of deities who have much greater knowledge and foresight than human beings gives the individual confidence in the decision… Certainly the elimination of fruitless hesitation and indecision would seem to enable the individual to concentrate his entire energy, without distraction, upon the task in hand. (1941, 45, referencing Herskovits 1938, 217)

(iii) Northern Ìgbo made strategic *contributions* to the oracle and indeed to most of the linked political, ritual and artistic complexes, while also acting as their main transmission *gateway* between the middlebelt savanna and the rainforest.

(iv) No trace of *direct* Ìgbo influence appears in the Yorùbá-speaking area, which is unsurprising given the intervening presence of big, distinctive ethnolinguistic zones, especially Ẹ̀dó and Ígálà. Ifẹ̀'s mnemonic virtuosi creatively rebooted a dispersed artisanal craft of ancestral veneration as the exclusive intellectual property of an elite caste, sheltered by the 'umblerra' of state power which they propped up like counterparts of Hindu *brāhmaṇas*.[118] A striking illustration of Bloch's thesis that "the amount of social structure, of the past in the present, of ritual communication is correlated with the amount of institutionalised hierarchy" (1977, 289).

(v) While specifically Ìgbo elements are not found in Ifẹ̀ ritual, artistic or political life, such is indeed the case in Ẹ̀dó, as shown above.

(vi) No specifically Ifẹ̀ trait has been identified either in Òminigbọn, in Ẹ̀dó copper-alloy casting or in Ẹ̀dó monarchy, notwithstanding Egharhevba's irredentist tales canonised by squads of academics carrying out the Wazobịan playbook of the 9ja geopolitical game.

(vii) An embarrassingly large share of modern Ifẹ̀ folklore is contradicted by numerous archaeological findings which mainstream Africanist art historians and their allies in other departments of the scholarly humanities determinedly ignore.

(viii) Ifẹ̀-centrism, historically untenable but maintained in the received opinion of modern *nomenklatura*, helps in turn to maintain the *wazọbịan* political order established by British colonialists and inherited by indigenous elites. Conversely, historically infomed critique of Ifẹ̀-centric ideology clarifies precolonial dynamics and helps to demystify 9ja's present political paralysis.

To explain the modern popular-cum-scholarly oblivion of Ìgbo factors in medieval Ẹ̀dó, it can't suffice to blame the cognitive opacity of linguistic phenomena about which Boas warned, without also acknowledging the 9ja counterpart of those European chauvinist sentiments against which Bernal wrote *Black Athena*. Pre-Bernal, every claim of Indoeuropean origin, no matter how farfetched, for a given trait of classical Greek culture was irrationally protected from Egyptian/Phonecian alternatives when these happened to exist. Ceteris paribus that's the situation of medieval Ẹ̀dó with respect to Ifẹ̀ and Ìgbo respectively. Of course the scholarly contexts aren't the same—literacy arrived much earlier in the Mediterranean, and archaeology has collected far more material there than in West Africa—but the intellectual taboos are parallel. Bernal's breaking of Eurocentric bias doesn't make all Afrocentric derivations of Greek vocabulary automatically correct, but he assembled enough plausible Egyptian and Phonecian etymologies (supported by nonlinguistic forensics) to prove that a major cultural current did cross the ancient Mediterranean at a formative moment of "classical civilization". This study is not an "*Òkóro Oòduà*" and doesn't try to be, but it has shown at least that modern Ifẹ̀-centrism fails to extrapolate back to medieval Ẹ̀dó, which was much more influenced by Ìgbo cultural forms.[119]

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118. 9ja's modern political umbrella was twirled in this viral performance of the 2011 PDP campaign: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JOL1SafQIM.
119. *Òkóro* being a modern epithet of Ìgbo ethnicity, and *Òduà* the indigenous Ifẹ̀ pronunciation of its parachutist founder *Odùduwà*.

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