A Structural Analysis of Programmatic Features in Yoruba *IFA* Corpus Language and Style.

By

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Abstract

Ifá corpus narratives is an integral part of Ifá divination process usually packaged in parable and metaphorical format, the in exhaustible nature of its source is affirm by related studies done by Yorùbá language and literature scholars as rich in poetic flowery language but complex in comprehension. It is observed that every attempt to interpret Ifá corpus often result into obliteration of it thematic preoccupations and other vital part of the corpus. Despite this, little attention has been paid to Ifá corpus structural consciousness. This work full the vacuum. The study is pivoted Vladmir Propp and Claude Levi Strauss stucturalist approach as its theoretical framework. The theory is chosen because, it foregrounds the structural analysis could represent the social context and linguistics as well as the folklore text. Data for this study are drawn from some relevant verses of Ifá textual materials and content, analysed in aesthetic evaluation style which are subjected to repetition parallelism, tonal counterparts, wordplay symbology etc. The study affirms that underlying Ifá corpus structurally could endear applicability of Ifá Oral literature for education toward effective indigenization of Yorùbá cultural values.

Keywords: analysis, feature, language styles, Ifá corpus, Yorùbá.

Introduction

Language is the method of human communication, whether spoken or written, that uses words in a structured and socially accepted manner. Language style**,** on the other hand, refers to the particular choice of words and expressions an individual uses when communicating. For example, bureaucratic language style includes specialized terms, jargon, and abbreviations commonly employed in government and official settings.

In literature, style refers to the distinctive way an author uses language. It encompasses the choice of words, sentence structure, figurative language, and overall arrangement of sentences, all of which work together to create mood, imagery, and meaning within a given context.

Ifá is undoubtedly the most important among the numerous divinities of the Yoruba people. Beyond the name Ifá, he is also widely known as Òṛúnmìlà. Additionally, Ifá bears several other titles and appellations. In the Òyó dialect, he is called Afèdèfèyọ̀ (master of knowledge), and in other dialects, he is referred to as Akéré finú sògbón (the small one with a mind full of wisdom). Ifá priests also address him as Obàrìsà (king of divinities), a title that affirms his supreme position among Yoruba deities. Given Ifá's divine and premier status, the language and style of communication used to invoke or address him are necessarily unique, distinct from everyday speech, and carefully structured to reflect his sacred significance.

This paper is organized into four sections**.** The first section explores the origin and role of Òṛúnmìlà in Yorùbáland. The second focuses on the Ifá oracle**.** The third examines the language and styles of the Ifá literary corpus, discussing in detail the universality and antiquity of Òṛúnmìlà, as well as the religion and philosophical teachings of Ifá. The final section presents the conclusion**.**

Structuralism refers to a broad framework of study that examines the underlying structures of signification in human practices. Signification occurs wherever a meaningful event takes place, whether in an action or in its documentation, giving rise to what is often termed "signifying practices" (Williams, 2009). Most meaningful events involve either a document or an exchange that can be recorded,

commonly referred to as a **"text."** From a structuralist perspective, all texts, meaningful events, and signifying practices can be analyzed to uncover the underlying structures that make them possible. Such analysis identifies the fundamental elements that characterize the system supporting these texts and practices. Structuralism views all aspects of human culture, including literature, as part of a system of signs. According to Melrose (1994), a sign is a perceptible reality that establishes a relationship among fundamental elements in language, literature, and other fields, forming the basis for higher mental, linguistic, social, or cultural structures. These structural networks generate meaning within a specific individual, system, or culture, which in turn shapes and influences the actions of both individuals and groups (Microsoft Encarta, 2009).

Two of the most prominent structuralist theorists are **Vladimir Propp (2003)** and **Claude Lévi-Strauss (1972)**, whose work became highly influential in the study of folklore in the 1960s. For Propp and his colleagues, **structural analysis** could reveal not only the linguistic and narrative structures of folklore texts but also the **social context** in which these texts emerged. Such analysis helps to uncover cultural values, anticipate patterns of cultural change, and provide insights into psychological and acculturative processes within a society.

Related Works

Origin and Role of Orunmila Deity in Yorubaland

In the Yoruba pantheon, Òrúnmìlà is regarded as one of the highest and most benevolent primordial divinities. Other notable deities include Òrìṣà-nlá, Olókun, Ògún, Èṣù (Ẹlẹ́gbárá), Ṣàngó, Ọya, and Òṣun**.** Oral traditions emphasize Òrúnmìlà's crucial role in guiding the destinies of both gods and humans. According to Yoruba belief, Olódùmarè granted Òrúnmìlà exceptional wisdom and knowledge, making him His accredited representative in matters concerning human destiny. Òrúnmìlà is believed to have intimate knowledge of human affairs**,** a privilege attributed to his presence during the creation of mankind, the moment when each individual's destiny was determined. This unique insight allows Òrúnmìlà not only to foresee the future but also to prescribe remedies or guidance for any eventuality affecting human life.

Ifa Oracle

Associated with the cult of Òṛúnmìlà is the geomantic system of divination known as Ifá, a Yoruba oracle that serves as the medium of Òṛúnmìlà. Ifá functions as a cultural practice and ritual, acting as a bridge between the spiritual realm and the world of the living. Wole Soyinka, however, treats Ifá as distinct from Òṛúnmìlà, describing Òṛúnmìlà as the "essence of wisdom" and Ifá as the "god of divination and order" (Idanre and Other Poems, 1967:37). In his epic poem *Idanre*, the two are portrayed as separate deities (p. 70). This paper, however, assumes that Òṛúnmìlà and Ifá are one and the same deity**,** based on the perspective of most Yoruba scholars who consider them identical (Abímbọ́lá, 1976:3). Consequently, the study of language and style in Èsẹ́ Ifá in Yorùbáland proceeds on the understanding that both names refer to the same divine entity.

Òṛúnmìlà is believed to possess complete knowledge of human secrets, which is why he is referred to as Eleriipin (the witness or advocate of destiny) and Olumòràn (the one who knows the secrets of the mind). From the hidden to the mysterious, nothing is beyond his insight. People often turn to Òṛúnmìlà as their divinity either to ensure that their fortunate circumstances are maintained or to seek correction and guidance in times of misfortune.

The above discussion is particularly relevant because Òṛúnmìlà functions as an oracle frequently consulted in Yoruba society to disclose hidden knowledge to the people. This explains why Babaláwo (Ifá priests) are regularly sought for guidance, especially when important decisions are to be made. In support of this view, Farrow (1926:71) notes:

Ifá, which encompasses the philosophy, knowledge, and actions of Òṛúnmìlà during his time on earth, represents a comprehensive and all-encompassing system. Its breadth and complexity are reflected in its many parts and components, which collectively address every aspect of human life. As the deity of wisdom, Òṛúnmìlà embodies the entirety of worldly knowledge. To ensure the transmission and preservation of this primordial wisdom**,** it is said that two hundred and fifty-six (256) of his foundational disciples were appointed to maintain its completeness for the benefit of humanity.

For those seeking to grasp the deeper significance of accumulated Ifá wisdom and its structural organization, Abímbọ́lá (1976) provides an extensive collection of original Ifá teachings. The corpus is organized into volumes totaling 256, and subdivided into chapters (Èsẹ́), the number of which is so extensive that an exact count is difficult to establish reliably.

Ifá is regarded as the primary active spokesperson of the Yorùbá traditional religion in its entirety. Among the Yorùbá, the significance of other deities is believed to depend on Ifá. It acts as an intermediary connecting the people with the gods, the living with their ancestors, and the dead with the living. A common Yoruba saying reflects this role: *"Òrìṣà tí ń kọ́ ní bá ti bó Òrìṣà mîírán"* (Ifá is the only divinity that instructs one on how to worship other divinities). In this capacity, Ifá promotes and popularizes the worship of other gods**.** Furthermore, if a person is to face punishment from any deity, it is only through consulting Ifá that such knowledge can be revealed.

Methodology

This paper draws on the earlier works of esteemed scholars such as Wándé Abímbọ́lá, Yẹmí Ẹlẹ́bùrúbọn, and Qládélé Orímóògúnjé, who have analyzed and explained the Ifá literary corpus in ways that inform the approach taken here. The study is based on research I conducted on the language and style in Èsẹ́ Ifá in Yorùbáland. All uncredited quotations are drawn from existing collections. Translating Èsẹ́ Ifá (chapters or incantations from the Ifá corpus) into English while preserving their precise meanings is a challenging task. In this work, I have addressed this challenge by adopting a literal approach, striving to remain as faithful as possible to the original texts in my translations.

Result and Discussion

The Language and Style in *Ẹsẹ Ifá*

The Yorùbá language is remarkably rich and expressive. While its basic structure is simple, variations in accent and intonation create a complex and melodious sound that is pleasing to the ear. For instance, a single word can convey different meanings depending on how it is pronounced. Similarly, in Ifá, just as in modern

poetry, a variety of linguistic styles and techniques are employed across different incantations, reflecting the flexibility and depth of Yorùbá oral expression.

Unique Composition of Ifá

Ifá comprises sixteen odù which can be likened to chapters they are the most important of all odù Ifá In each odu there are so many verses of Ifá called *Ọmọ Odù*.

The major chapters in Ifá popularly known as *Odù Ifá mẹ́rìndínlógú*.

It can thus be said that the Òdù serve to organize and assign meaning to the thousands of poems—estimated at 256 × 600 within the Ifá literary corpus**.** In this way, Ifá functions as the voice of the divinities (Abímbọ́lá, 1977:18).

Sixteen Ifá principal chapters or according to this ranks. (*Àwọn ojú Odú mẹ́rẹ̀ẹ̀dínlógún*)

> ***1.Èjì ogbè, 2 Ọ̀yèkú méjì 3.Ìwòrì méjì 4.Odì méjì 5.Ìrosùn méjì 6.Ọ̀wọ́nrín méjì 7.Ọ̀bàrà 8.Ọ̀kànràn méjì 9. Ògúndá méjì 10.Ọ̀sá méji 11.Ìka méjì 12.Òturupọ́n méjì 13.Òtúá méjì 14.Ìrẹ̀tẹ̀ méjì 15.Ọ̀sẹ́ méjì 16.Òfún méjì***

There is nothing we cannot find in Esẹ Ifá from main birth to death, creation sustainability, existence of life to everything we behave destiny has bestowed on humanity composition Ifá poetry.

This distinctive structure sets Ifá apart from other forms of Yoruba oral literature, such as Ìjálá, Ìwì Ẹ̀gúngún, Oríkì**,** and other poetic genres. Ifá verses are typically organized into a minimum of four and a maximum of eight lines**,** with some verses being long and others short, reflecting variation in form and expression..

The Babalawo regards long verses Ifá ńlá ńlá very well
Ifá ńlá ńlá lá fi gbá
Ifá ńlá ńlá ńlá

One way to understand the language of Ifá is that it often begins with the name or title of an ancient diviner (Babaláwo) who has accomplished something noteworthy. At times, however, the opening may not mention a Babaláwo at all;

instead, it could reference a tree or another object that seems to have no immediate or apparent meaning.

The first three lines in the following is the nick name of babalawo who have done remarkable thongs in the past.

- *Ikún níí fagbásí selé;*
  Àtàrí ni ọ jóòrùn ó pàgbọ̀n ìsàlẹ̀
  Ọlọbọunbọun níí f'apá ara rẹ̀ dá gbèdu
  Adíá fún Ọláìtán
  Ọmọ Ọ̀rúnmìlà
  Nígbà tí o ń jeun níròGùn ọ̀tá
  Ńwọ́n ní ó rúbọ nítorí ikú
  O o sẹ é ikú ò pá
  Oní èrò ipo
  Ọlá ofá níi rùn
- The second the sentence that followed the nicknamed or name of *babalawo* that Ifá was performed for …*A díá fún* …
- After the name of the person that the Ifá was performed for the next this is the reasons why divination was performed at times this will not be mentioned.
- The next thing is what babalawo asked him to do, this could be omitted too.
- The next thing is the result of aftermath of the divination performed.
- The next is the song that came out of the mouth of babalawo and the person the ifá was performed for.

Some of the most distinctive stylistic features found in Èsẹ́ Ifá include repetition (which occurs in five main categories), word-play, personification, lexical matching, metaphor, parallelism, symbolism, archaic words, onomatopoeia, and the conveyance of deeper meanings. While a detailed discussion of these stylistic devices has been addressed elsewhere, the present study emphasizes **repetition** as the most significant feature in Ifá divination poetry.
The five types of repetition in Ifá divination poetry are:
1. Structural repetition

2. Thematic repetition
3. Linear repetition
4. Lexical and syllabic repetition
5. Phonological repetition**,** including assonance, symbolism, Ifá chants, and songs

As will be shown, these forms of repetition often appear together within a single poem. For clarity, however, each of the five types will be discussed separately in the following sections.

(i) Structural Repetition

A common instance of repetition in Ifá divination poetry is the repetition of structural components within an Èsẹ́ Ifá**.** As noted earlier, an Èsẹ́ Ifá typically has an eight-part structure**.** Structural repetition is introduced by the Babaláwo (Ifá priest) after delivering the seventh part of the text. This form of repetition often involves restating parts (i), (ii), (iii)**,** and sometimes (iv), (v), and (vi)**,** before the priest concludes with part (viii)**.** In essence, structural repetition consists of reiterating some or all of the earlier sections of an Èsẹ́ Ifá between the penultimate and final parts.

In structural repetition within an Èsẹ́ Ifá**,** parts (i)–(iii) are always repeated, while parts (iv)–(vi) may or may not be included. The inclusion of parts (iv)–(vi) often serves the purpose of enhancing the chanting quality of the performance. Consequently, the Babaláwo (Ifá priest) may choose not to repeat parts (iv)–(vi) verbatim, which is notable because these sections form the dynamic portion of the Èsẹ́ Ifá structure, allowing the priest to incorporate his own language and style. For example, in some cases, line 7 may be omitted when the priest repeats the material.

The following example shows the repetition of parts (i)-(vi) in one ẹsẹ Ifá.

Part (i) *Oníkẹ́kẹ́ logún*
Alábàjà lọgọ̀n,
Oníkóló làádọ́ta
Part (ii) A díá fún Ọ̀dúnmobákú
Tíí sọmọ bíbí inú Àgbọnmìrègún.
Part (iii) Wọ́n ní o rúbọ nítorí ikú.

& (iv) Wọ́n ní o fadìẹ ìrànà kan rúbọ.
Part (v) Ó ṣẹ é
Part (vi) ikú ò pá à
Part (vii) Ijó ni ń jó,
Ayọ̀ ni ń yọ̀
O ń yin àwo awoo rẹ̀
Àwọn awoo rẹ̀ ń yin 'Fá.
Ó ya ẹnu kótó,
Orin awo ló bọ́ sí lénu
Ẹsẹ ti ó nà,
Ijó fà á
Part (i) ó ní oníkẹ́kẹ́ lógun,
Alábàjà lọgbọ̀n,
Oníkolo laadota,
Part (ii) A díá fún Ọdúnmbákú
Tíi sọmọ bíbí inú Àgbọnnìrégún,
Part (iii) Wọ́n ní o rúbọ nítori ikú
& (iv)
Part (v) O ṣẹ é,
Part (vi) *Ikú o pà á.*
Part (viii) Ọdún mb̀á kú,
Èjìé́ ti gbádíẹ́ẹ mi lo
Adìẹe mi
Adìẹe 'ránà,
Tí mo fí lè
Lèjìé gbé lọ
Part (i) There were twenty people with *Kẹ́kẹ́* facial marks
There were thirty people with *àbajà* facial marks.
There were fifty people with *kolo* facial marks
Part (ii) Ifá divination was performed for *Odumbaku*
Who was the son of *Àgbonmìrègún*
Part (iii) He was told to perform sacrifice to prevent imminent
& (iv) death.
He was told to offer sacrifice with iranà hen.
Part (v) He did as he was told

Part (vi) And he did not die.
Part (vii) He was dancing
was rejoicing
He praised his Ifá priests
While his lift priest praised IFÁ
As he opened his mouth a little,
The song of Ifá entered therein.
As he stretched his legs,
Dance pulled them
Part (i) There were twenty people with facial marks.
There were thirty people with abaja facial marks:
There were fifty people with koto facial marks.
Part (ii) Ifa divination was performed for Odúnmbákú…

(ii) **Thematic Repetition**
(iii) Linear Repetition
Linear repetition: Is by far the most important type of repetition found in Ifá divination poetry. Two types of linear repetition can be identified in ẹsẹ Ifá, namely, complete and partial.
Complete linear repetition, Incomplete linear repetition:

(iv) Lexical and Syllabic Repetition
Lexical repetition in ẹsẹ̀ Ifá involves the repetition of single words while syllabic repetition involves single syllables. These forms of repetition may be used for emphasis, to embellish the rhythm of the poetry or to achieve word play. Both forms of repetition sometimes occur together.

The following examples shows lexical and syllabic repetition in the items underlined

Fosùn Ka Ká fẹfun to lé ajé,
ìleḳẹ̀
Àkọ́dá orí kìí gbáleẹ̀ ọjà gbé sí.
A díá fẹ́jì Ọ̀bàrà
Níjọ́ tí wọn ńlọ lèé ṣèbọ suru suru
Nílé Ọlọ́fin

Èjì Oḅàrà ka orí
O te e moye
O ni oun le rire
Nílé Ọlọ́fin báyìí?

Let us paint the house of money with chalk,
Let us paint the house of beads with camwood ointment
The first ori to be created does not stay in the deep part of the market
Without good luck.
Ifá divination was performed for Èjì oḅàrà.
On the day they were going to offer plenty of sacrifice
In the household of Ọlọ́fin.
Èjì oḅàrà placed Ifá divination instruments on the head.
And prnted Ifá markson the powder of the divination.
He asked whether he could become prosperous
In the household of Olófin.

In the Yoruba text, the word "ka" in the first line is repeated in lines 4 and 7, while the word "tole" appears in lines 1 and 2. Similarly, the word "oil" in line 3 is repeated in line 7. The third-person singular pronoun "ó" in line 8 appears in the same position in line 9. Additionally, the syllable "le" in *ìlẹ̀kẹ̀* (line 2) is echoed in *gbàlẹ̀* (line 3), and the syllable "lo" in *nlo* (line 5) recurs in *Ọlọ́fin*. Lines 5 and 6 also feature the syllable "ni", as seen in *nílé* and *níjọ*.

(v) Phonological Repetition:- This phenomenon can also be understood as alliteration and assonance, since some of the types of repetition discussed earlier often involve the repetition of consonants and vowels. However, alliteration and assonance can also occur independently, in places where other forms of repetition are absent. These two techniques enhance the rhythm of the sections of an Èsẹ́ Ifá in which they appear. Moreover, the repeated consonants and vowels highlight the syllables and words they comprise, thereby emphasizing these lexical elements within the text.

In the example illustrating lexical and syllabic repetition, the labio-dental voiceless fricative /f/ appears twice in the word *fefun* (line 1) and once in *fosun* (line 2). This same consonant is also found in the personal name *Ọlọ́fin* (line 6) and in *Ẹ̀fì* (line 4). Additionally, in line 3, the voiced labio-velar consonant /gb/ occurs in both *gbàlẹ̀* and *gbé*.

The following example shows the use of assonance in ẹsẹ Ifá:

Ìjì kíi jà
Kó gbódó
Ìjì kìí jà
Kó gboọ̀lo……..

The whirlwind does not blow
And car away the mortar.
The whirlwind does not blow
And carry away the grinding stone.

In the example above, there is a deliberate concentration of (i) sounds in lines 1 and 3, (6) sounds in line 2, and (p (which can transcribed phonetically as {J) sounds in line.

Wordplay

It can be argued that word-play is one of the most significant stylistic features in Èsẹ́ Ifá. Word-play involves the juxtaposition of lexical items that are similar in form, creating an effect of verbal skill and dexterity (Olátúnjí, 1984:37). There are generally two main forms of word-play: lexical word-play and tonal word-play, and sometimes both occur simultaneously.

The first type involves using one or two syllables from the name of an Òdù as a separate word, which then serves as the basis for word-play. The second type uses a word that resembles the name of an Òdù, potentially with a tonal alteration, to achieve the play on words. Examples illustrating these two types of word-play are provided below. (i) The name of Odù is Oọ̀yẹ̀kú Méjì and the syllables that will be used for the word- play is Ye, òyè:

Table 1:

Incantation	**Translation**
1. *Bí o bá yẹ*	*If you move away to one side*
2. Èmi ò yẹ̀	*I will not move*
3. Yangi ilé wòn o gbọdọ̀ yelé:	*The stone foundation of a house must not fail the house*
4. Àtòrì wọn gbọdọ̀ ọjà	*The head must not fail to support the market woman.*

'Ye', here is constituted into only one meaning-
"to move to one side" in lines 1 and 2 and in lines 3 and 4 it means "to fail" Example 2: (II) (Second word-play)
1. Ó yé pèè
2. Ó bó paro
3. B' ọ̀kàn ò yè
"Ye", in these lines means to shift to one side"
1. Ewé olóyèére
2. Yiye ni i se tabo
3 ….Yè dí pèè o waaboo
In the above quotation, "Ye" has different meanings. In line 1 "Ye" is part of the name of a leaf. In line 2, "ye" here is part of "Yi" which when brought together means "to consent".
And finally in line 3, "Ye" is also part of a word. Thus, one can see the addition of the role of tonal word-*play in Ẹsẹ Ifá(which brings different meaning and intonation to the different Ẹsẹ Ifá.*

Onomatopoeic
Words are used in Ẹsẹ Ifá when animals *or objec*ts are referred to. For examples there are sound produced by the breaking of objects:
Example 1: *Òkúta la pàà seẅẹ̀*
We cracked a stone that cannot bleed
"pea" in this example is the sound made when another object is used to break a stone, this brings a sort of crackling noise.
Examples 2: *Àkùkọ̀ Ìrèlè bí Ìrèlè*
O fi apapa ìdí méje,èjì nalẹ̀
Ó ró "jàgàjiigi hanahum"

The sound made in this last line by the cock described when it brings its two tail feathers together, is like that of an iron rod with tiny object tied round, so that when it strikes the ground, it makes a terrible and fearful noise. There is the use of these onomatopoetic words in some parts of Ẹsẹ.

The use of these onomatopoetic words in Ẹsẹ Ifá is to bring home the message in a much quicker manner to the people, it also creates a vivid picture for the listeners, so that the messages conveyed are brought home to the people.

Personification

In Yoruba oral literature, personification as an important feature is also prominent in Ẹsẹ Ifá This is because in Ẹse Ifá (according to Abimbola (1976:30) stories of animals, birds, insects etc are usually told and when these stories are being told about human beings, the human characteristics are related to the animals or ordinary objects of nature. Things also be personified. This enables the priest of Ifá to tell his stories in the characteristics of Ifá form without having to change the language and style.

An example of things being personified is illustrated below: from Òyẹ̀kú Méjì:

"Ògòdò owu sókè sodò
patín kékèèké sólóko
A día fún alántakùn
Bí idán bi idán
Ifá bí idán bi idán
ni o seré tèmi fémi" (Abímbólá 1977:54)

Simile

Similes another figure of speech in Ẹsẹ Ifá because descriptions are made more vivid by the use of this figure of speech

Example:

Pà bí ọsán ǰ
Ọsán já
Awo wọn lóde ìtorí
Àtànpàkò jákùn

O dòbírí kalẹ̀
A díá fún Ọ̀rúnmìlà
Ifá ń lọ táyé olúfẹ̀, orò ṣọ
Bí ẹni ń sógbà
Ta ni ó wá báni
Táyé wa woṇ̀yi ṣọ? Abímboḷá, 77:56 (Ìwòrì Méjì)

	Ifá	Translation
1.	*Ojó t'íkú bá nwá mì iboṇ̀wá*	*On the day Death is seeking for me*
2.	*Ifá ìwo ni o ràgà bò mí*	*Ifá, you are the one to shelter me*
3.	*B'éwé nla tí i ràtàà boori*	*As big leaf shelter solid maize gruel*
4.	*B'éri tii ràtàà bo yanrìn lódọ*	*As large body of water shelter sand in the river*

from the above quotation, one can get a very clear picture of how Ifá (himself as a divinity) is really relied upon by the Yorùbá. Metaphor is another figure of speech Metaphor. This is mainly in the description of human characteristics to non-human objects. The use of metaphor in Ẹsẹ Ifá therefore makes the language highly imaginative.

Translation

1.	*S'ojú olóko ní ikàn seé* *W'ẹ̀wù eẹ̀jẹ̀*	*it is in the presence of the farmer that* *garden egg wears a garment of blood*

Incantation	***Translation***
1. *Ó wá tó gégẹ́*	*it is high time*
2. *K'ájéé ógbáriịọ s'ódò mi wáyi ó*	*Money gathered together and come to me*

The first example gives us the hopelessness of garden eggs in the hands of a farmer who handles it as he wishes.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is also made use of in Ẹsẹ Ifá for emphasis and in vivid descriptions.

Incantation	**Translation**
1. Mo dúro mo ko rún	I stood up and made one hundred soil heaps
2. Mo beẹ̀rẹ̀ mo koṇ̀ fà	I stood down and made one hundred and twenty.

3. Mo f'ìdùbúlè kọ gba I lay down and made two hundred.

One sees here that the sentences are exaggerated, but the speaker in this Ẹsẹ Ifá only wants to convey the great and tiring efforts the farmer bad pit in the job.

Incantation	**Translation**
1. *Ó mú lé pontí*	*He filled the house with drinks*
2. *O mònà rokà*	*He filled the street with food*
3. *Ó fi gbogbo agbada dín'an*	*He used all pots to fry meat*

This is another exaggeration, because one knows it impossible to fill the house with drinks and food alone and also all the pots to fry meat. The aim of the hyperbole here is to show the big expense of the host or the greatness of the occasion.

Symbolism in Ifa(Iparoko ninu Ifa)

Symbolism is the practice of using symbols and objects as a form of communication**.** Unlike conventional symbols, such as those used in mathematics, which have fixed meanings, the symbols in the Ifá corpus often carry multiple interpretations depending on the context in which they appear. While the meaning of these symbols is known to initiates, their interpretation can vary, reflecting the richness and flexibility of Ifá's symbolic language

For example, if we see:-

If we see	**it can be**
1. *Òjò (rain)*	*comfort, triumph*
2. *Esin (Horse)*	*honor, perseverance, long, load caring*
3. *Òyẹ̀(light)*	*light, quest for good thing*
4. *Òsùpá (Moon)*	*light, comfort*
5. *Igún (vulture)*	*destruction, longerity, victory, our sick*
6. *Òorún (sun)*	*iparun, ise, wahala*
7. *Àwòdì òkè (eagle)*	*iyara, agidi, agbara*
8. *Òdòdò (flower)*	*beauty, end suddenly*
9. *Ègbojò (immature)*	*yam suldan deeth, very soon*
10. *Ajá* (dog)	*ogun, hunter, followers, food of the irunmole*

Conclusion

From the analysis above, it is clear that Ifá occupies a central role in the lives of the Yorùbá and their communities. It is arguably the most organized religious system in Yorùbáland, embodying virtually all elements of Yoruba culture. Ifá serves to reveal the future, provide guidance, and help avert impending dangers. Obedience to the directives of Ifá is believed to lead to prosperity and harmonious living, while disobedience can result in misfortune. As Fainran (2010:497) observes, this underscores the enduring influence of the transcendent, mysterious, and metaphysical in the lives of the Yorùbá, even amidst the forces of modernization.

Importantly, this paper has explored the complex linguistic and poetic features of Ifá, which remain relevant in contemporary literature. It is the view of this study that the use of Ifá language and style should be encouraged rather than discouraged, as it represents a tradition deeply connected to Yoruba identity. Ifá serves as a reflection of Yoruba cultural experience and stands as a symbol of their social and cultural identity.

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