

## Natural and Supernatural Human Beings in African Philosophy: A Semiotic Investigation of Links between *Ifá* and *Ìbejì* among the Yorùbá

Olúwoḷé Tẹ̀wógboyè Òkẹ̀wándé, Ph.D.,

Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages,  
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

E-mail Address: oluwoletewogboye@yahoo.com.

### Abstract

*Ifá* is believed to be the foundation of Yorùbá culture. Therefore, every aspect of Yorùbá life, including religion and philosophy has one link or another with *Ifá*. Previous studies have not related the philosophy around *Odù* (a code of *Ifá* communication) in *Ifá* to *Odù* in *Ìbejì*. This study is set to fill this gap. The current study relies substantially on Yorùbá texts, *Ifá* corpus, panegyrics and incantations. Semiotics, which is the science of signs, is adopted as, symbolism underlies *Ifá* divination system. The findings have revealed that *Odù* and hermeneutics codes of *Ifá* and *Ìbejì* are related. It is also revealed that, there is synergy between the philosophy in *Odù-Ifá* and *Odù* in *Ìbejì*. Consequently, the philosophy behind the birth of *Odù* is related to the Yorùbá philosophy on the birth of *Ìbejì*. The study concludes that, the Yorùbá philosophy behind *Ìbejì* is derived from *Ifá*. The study suggests one of the possibilities of the Yorùbá producing the highest twinning rate around the globe.

**Keywords:** *Ifá*, *Ìbejì*, *Odù*, Yorùbá language, semiotics

### Introduction

Among the Africans generally and the Yorùbá in particular, there are philosophies associated with the birth of individuals. The society's belief and systems of living are keenly regulated and controlled by those philosophies (Ogunwale, 2016). Age (birth) is a venerated natural force that in Africa and among the Yorùbá people. The period of birth between one child and another, including *ìbejì* (twins) determines the seniority between the two children. There are societal philosophies that are associated with the situations that surround the first and second child among the twins. The birth situation in *Ìbejì* is however related with the philosophies surrounding the birth of *Odù-Ifá*. Therefore, the comings of the *Odù* to the surface of the earth have been here observed to be closely related with the birth of *Ìbejì* among the Yorùbá people. The philosophies surrounding the birth and the life of *Odù-Ifá* and *Ìbejì* form some basic systems of good living among the Yorùbá (Òkẹ̀wándé, 2017).

The Yorùbá is associated with the highest number of dizygotic twin<sup>ii</sup> birth. However, the mystery behind this gift of nature has been the focus of research for long. *Ifá*, however, is the foundation of the Yorùbá culture, the intermediary or spokesperson between the living and the dead, the ancestors, divinities and the supernatural forces (Abimbólá, 1976).

Therefore, *Ifá* serves as the reference and starting point for establishing the veracity of the Yorùbá cultural and philosophical principles that guide the peoples' life. The compositions of the principal *Odù-Ifá* are based on the principle of duality<sup>iii</sup> (McGEE, 1983). The principle of dual nature observed in *Ifá* has been springboard on which the philosophy on the birth of the *Ìbejì*<sup>iv</sup> rests (Òkẹ̀wándé 2017).

Throughout the world, the associations of the Yorùbá people with *Ifá* and *Ìbejì* is not in doubt. However, despite the prominence of *Ifá* and *Ìbejì*, the two have not been examined by previous scholars and authors as pointed out in (Òkẹ̀wándé, 2017). Therefore, this study attempts to relate the philosophies in *Ifá* with the *Ìbejì* and, to demonstrate the influence of those philosophies to the Yorùbá people.

### *Ifá* and *Ìbejì* among the Yorùbá People

*Ifá* is “the philosophy or wisdom divinely revealed to the Yorùbá deity, *Òrúnmilá*” (Akintólá, 1999, p. 1). In this regards, the *Ifá* philosophies are the reference point to the system of living of the Yorùbá people. In whatever the Yorùbá people propose to do, in times of troubles, soliciting for guidance or solution, *Ifá* is the starting point. That is, “there is hardly anything people of a traditional Yorùbá society would do without seeking support and approval from *Ifá*, the god of

wisdom” (Àjàyí, 2009, p. 8). This is because; *Ifá* provides instruction and guidance about the future and/or the cause of an action. *Ifá* consultation is equally necessary to seek the endorsement and sanctions of the ancestors, divinities and supernatural agents whom *Ifá* serves as a spokesperson.

*Ifá* philosophy has been observed to be unique among world religions; “*Ifá* literary corpus, *Ifá* philosophy has become an exemplary figure in the diversity of world religions philosophy” (Òkúnmákindé, 2010, p. 22). *Ifá* corpus have been “preserved and disseminated from ancient times. It is believed that in this way the texts in *Ifá* literary corpus have been kept free from errors” (Abimbólá, 1976, p. 20). It is further observed by authors such as Abimbólá (1976) that, *Ifá* poems comprised a sacred Yorùbá genre that nobody may add or subtract from. Most of the Yorùbá philosophies are entrenched in *Ifá*. Akintola (1999, pp. 3&4) says *Ifá*,

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

The whole of *Ifá* corpus is philosophical in content. Akintólá, (1999, p. 1&2) discovered that, *Ifá* is a “philosophical scripture and unique source of Yorùbá ethics and metaphysics.” Agbájé (2005, p. 1) asserted that, Yorùbá philosophy “has to do with life, perhaps in human beings, animals, rocks, soil and plants” *Ifá* is a vehicle of Yorùbá philosophy. “Yorùbá philosophy and values are preserved and disseminated through *Ifá* medium” (Abimbólá, 1977a, p. 14). There is no aspect of the Yorùbá life that is not regulated by *Ifá*. *Ifá* contains

philosophical statements that are facts and representation of truth.

Munoz sees *Ifá*'s scope beyond the Yorùbá cultural society when he says “*Ifá* is the most universal divinity among the Yorùbá and other West African people” (2003, p. 179). *Ifá* is known to different people by different names throughout the world. For example, *Ifá* is known as *Fa* among the Fon of the Republic of Benin, *Eva* to Nupes, *Ifá* in Cuba, USA, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Surinam and Togo. *Ifá* is referred to by the Ewe as *Afá*, *Ephod* by Jews, *Geomancy* by Europeans and Magasy (Odeyemi, 2013). With this different nomenclature across the nations of the world, the spread of *Ifá* is not in doubt.

In 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed *Ifá* as one of the 86 traditions of the world to be recognized as masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage of humanity (Robinson, 2008). By this proclamation, *Ifá* joined the league of heritages threatened by extinction and therefore requiring urgent preservation. *Ifá*, as a religion, science or literary text, has over time been of great interest to scholars in different areas of human endeavor, like medicine, philosophy, religion, art and culture.

*Ifá* also has some interesting associations with *Ibejì*. There are two forms of zygotes monozygotic and dizygotic. Jerkins notes that, while the birth rate of monozygotic twins (twins of the same zygote) is relatively constant worldwide, “that rate for dizygotic twins varies widely” (1978, p. 2). “Dizygotic twins occur when two eggs are fertilized by two separate sperm, leading to two separate zygotes, unlike monozygotic twins, dizygotic twins do not share the same genes... dizygotic twins are also known as fraternal or non-identical twins” (Gurevich, 2013: 1). There are six forms of *Ibejì*, based on their sex and their level of resemblance. (Three forms for monozygotic and three forms for dizygotic twins). There are three gender possibilities of dizygotic twins: the Male-Female twins (the most common kind of dizygotic twins, occurring 50% of the time, Female-Female twins and Male-Male twins (Òkèwándé, 2017).

The male-female dizygotic twins can be regarded as the commonest form, while other forms are variants (Leroy, 1995). The male-female dizygotic twins are also the foundation

(basis) of *Odù* (the coding system of *Ifá* symbols), therefore, dizygotic (Male-Female) twins are prototype symbols (Òkékándé, 2017). Jerkin asserts that each of the *Odù* has a dual nature, that is, male and female. Although the Yorùbá are associated with the highest dizygotic twin birth throughout the world, no acceptable factor has been established for this high production of dizygotic twins among the Yorùbá people. This issue is fascinating to the extent that it is even discussed in the popular media such as *The Nation*, October, 2012. In the daily, Gad says the “researchers may need to take further steps in unraveling this myth.” The only reason suggested for the high rate of twin births among the Yorùbá is the consumption of specific specie of yam, cassava flour and *ilasa*<sup>v</sup> soup in Igbóorà. Further reports about Igbóorà as the world capital of twin birth says, “interestingly, this rare gift of nature has shot the obscure community into international limelight with the United Nations World Health Organization rating it as the community that has the largest number of twins globally...The cassava flour and *ilasa* (dry okro leaves) soup that we eat have been touted to be responsible for the multiple births over the years” (*The Nation*, 2012, p.12). These food nutrients contain a natural hormone (phyteostrogen) which may stimulate the ovaries to produce an egg from each side. This claim has generated a lot of interest among scientists, is yet to be proven on any reliable findings. On this issue, Asiedu affirms that, “nobody has provided any scientific explanation or evidence that could prove that yam consumption can cause multiple births” (2014, p. 4).

Leroy, et al (2004) put the percentage birth rate of dizygotic twins among the Yorùbá at 4.4% of all maternities, while Buckles and Trentin (2010) put the percentage figure at 4.7% per 1000 births. Mòboládé (1971) in his work viewed *Ìbejì* as an aspect of the Yorùbá religion, as *Ìbejì* is considered to be a powerful divinity similar to any other important god among the 401 estimated Yorùbá deities. The present research study does not only agree with the position of the scholars mentioned above that *Ìbejì*, like *Ifá* has religious connotation, but it goes further to show the religious link between the two by investigating their symbols.

*Ìbejì* is one of the most powerful Yorùbá divinities (Adéoyè, 1985). *Ìbejì* is classified and regarded as one of the senior deities that

descended along with other Yorùbá gods. “Ipò irúnmoḷè ni àwọn baba òlá wa tò wón sí láti igbà iwásè” (Adéoyè, 1985, p. 350). Meaning that, *Ìbejì* divinity is classified as a divinity by our fore fathers from the ancient time. *Ìbejì* (twins) belongs to the spiritual world. “*ÌBEJÌ* is actually a spiritual entity, which originally manifested itself in human form as twins, within the indigenous traditions of the Yorùbá tribe, *ÌBEJÌ* is in fact the Yorùbá word for “TWINS”” (Bòlá, 2011, p. 1). The spiritual being (nature) of twins is associated with the Yorùbá belief. The spirituality and supernatural virtues possessed by twins make them to be regarded as one of the major Yorùbá divinities that is referenced and worshiped throughout the Yorùbá land.

It will be difficult to talk about *Ifá*, without *Odù* (Òkékándé, 2017). This is because *Odù* is a symbol of identification- names in *Ìbejì* having philosophical affinities with *Ifá*. The spirituality essence of names is also associated with naming in Africa. Names evince the tribes, family history including religion and future aspirations on the individuals with the names. “In Yorùbá philosophy and religion, name given to a child at birth often times designate among other things tribal or clan affiliations, family ties, religious/deity affiliations, or even the hopes of the family for the child. These names tie neatly into family praise singing known as *oriki*” (Odéyemí, 2013, p. 7).

The above opinions on names equally show that, *Orúko* (names), are clues to the comprehensive account about such name. Such name is also connected with past religious, social or attitudinal of the related name. Names associated with *Ìbejì* and are symbolic and are suggested here to be related with *Ifá*.

On one hand, African philosophies have evolved from signs, symbols, objects and artifacts on which the basis of the knowledge of semiotics is established. On another hand, semiotic systems encode and decode the philosophies- as semiotic analysis can be applied to anything connected with humans, including all philosophies (Òkékándé, 2017). The names of *Odù-Ifá* and *Ìbejì* are observed in this study to contain the Yorùbá philosophies. The names of symbols and the meaning including the signified are philosophical. For instance *Ìbejì* is believed to be special name exclusively used denotatively. The philosophy behind the name of *Ìbejì* shows that,

Twins are therefore given special names and believed to detain special preternatural powers... Among Yorùbá traditional beliefs and lore some twin-related themes are represented which are also found in other parts of the world. Basic features of the original Yorùbá beliefs have found their way into the religious traditions of descendants of Africans slaves imported in the West Indies and South America (Leroy et al, 1995, p. 1).

This opinion recognizes the supernatural being nature of *Ìbejì*. It equally established the spread and internalization of the religious beliefs on *Ìbejì*. Such belief is the human symbolism of *Ifá* on *Ìbejì*.

The extent to which we associate the *Ìbejì* philosophy with *Òrúnmilà/Ifá* philosophy has been a subject of research for long, and more work deserves to be done to have a more illuminating insight. The association involves the two aspects of Yorùbá life with which *Ifá* has been related, which are scientific knowledge and religion. Yemitan and Ògúndélé assert that, *Ifá* can be divided into two broad areas- as a science and as a religion. “Ó jé ìmò ìjìnlẹ̀ lótò ara re, ohun tí a lẹ̀ pẹ̀ ní ẹ̀ka ìmò sáyẹ̀nsì. Ẹ̀kejì, ó jé oríṣìí ẹ̀sìn ibílẹ̀ ilẹ̀ Yorùbá kan” (1970, p. ix). Meaning that, *Ifá* is a branch of science on its own. Secondly it is a separate Yorùbá religion. However, the knowledge of the symbols of *Ifá* as a religion and the symbols of *Ìbejì* as one of the Yorùbá supernatural gods are shown to be related in this work. The religious aspect of *Ifá* is relevant in this study as both *Ifá* and *Ìbejì* form important ways of belief system of the Yorùbá people.

The excavationists movement in African philosophy plays a vital role in this study. “Some of them aimed at retrieving and reconstructing presumably lost African identity from the raw materials of African culture. The scholars under this are called “ethnophilosophy”...and they thrived in the early period of African philosophy...Their concern was to build and demonstrate unique African identity in various forms” (Chase, 2017, p. 1). The uniqueness of the Yorùbá philosophy about *Odù-Ifá* and *Ìbejì* regulates their system of living and philosophy of the Yorùbá people. As *Ifá* is associated with the Yorùbá culture, *Ìbejì* is as well identified with culture and philosophy of the Yorùbá society.

### Methodology: Semiotic Approach

Semiotics can be traced to the pioneering works of Charles Sanders Peirce (1931), the American philosopher and Ferdinand de Saussure (1974), the Swiss Linguist. According to Saussure (1974, p. 60), semiology is the study of signs as part of social life. He focuses on the functions of social and cultural phenomenon within semiotic system. Saussure classifies signs into two entities: ‘signified and or sign-vehicle or meaning’ He refers to the signified, mostly in form of materials (objects, images, sounds and so on). Saussure (1974) is credited with structuralism approach. To him, language is formed by signs which are related in multiple ways. A sign or a word consists of two parts: one part is its form; the other part is its meaning. The association between form and meaning of a sign is fixed by conventions of language use. The link between the form and meaning are inseparable.

In the opinion of Peirce (1931), semiotics is an abstract entity. Sign is something which stands to somebody or something in some respects or capacity. This relation of ‘standing for’ is mediated by an interpretant. “A sign is anything which determines something else (its interpretant) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its object) in the same way the interpretant becoming in turn a sign” (Peirce, 1931, p. 35). That is anything can be adopted as a sign, so far such a thing can be associated with meaning.

If semiotics involves associating meaning to a given cultural sign and symbol, then it is appropriate that an analyst be adequately acquainted with the culture within which the signs and symbols originated. Therefore, analyses of cultural symbols require cultural knowledge and cultural meaning. Individual knowledge usually includes the greater part of cultural knowledge, depending on the range of experience of the individual. “Personal knowledge usually includes the greater part of cultural knowledge, depending on the range of experience of the individual, but we are all some way apart from commanding all cultural knowledge, as we all have little experience in many areas of everyday life” (Lobner, 2002, p. 201). The distinction between semantic knowledge and world knowledge is a doctrine of traditional semantics. It is plausibly argued that we do not need to have the total cultural knowledge about a sign and symbol in order to

know the meaning of such a symbol (Lobner, 2002). In this study, symbols and their associated meanings in *Ifá* are compared with that of *Ìbejì* as basis of their relationship.

Three modes of significations, including code are regarded to be sufficient to describe any form of sign in the opinion of Peirce (1931). These are icon, symbol and index. In an iconic mode, the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified in one way or the other. One can perceive a direct resemblance between the signifier and the signified. For instance, a picture of an individual is an iconic symbol. This may be in form of an animal. However, since this study employs code, it shall restrict its analysis within it.

A code is “a means of conveying messages, a vehicle of communication” (Geoffery and Short, 1981, p. 124). The link rule of signs and their meanings are made known by code. Code helps to simplify phenomena in order to make it easier to communicate experience. Codes are realized in different forms: behavioral, verbal, gnomic, poetic, mythic, linguistic, acting, binary, *odù* codes and so on. The hermeneutics and *Odu* codes are employed in this study.

The knowledge of semiotics is multi-various, because, the study is related to all aspects of life. For example, computational semiotics concentrates on the semiotics about calculation, while bio semiotics focuses on the human aspect of life. That is, “we have two meanings of ‘semiotics’: semiotics as a discipline or general science of signs and semiotics as specifically human semiosis” (Petrilli and Ponzio, 2007, p. 3). The human semiosis is what this study employs as it relates with human symbolism in *Ìbejì* with *Ifá*.

Hermeneutics is the “philosophical tradition concerned with the nature of understanding and interpretation of human behavior and social tradition” (Crofton, 2000, p. 89). Even though, the word originates from “problems of biblical interpretation, hermeneutics has expanded to cover many fields of enquiry” (Crofton, 2000, p. 89). One of the fields of study covered by hermeneutics is semiotics.

Hermeticism is “the belief that there is a secret, ancient body of wisdom, surviving in written texts of the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD that accurately discusses the working of the natural and supernatural worlds and that mastery of these texts provides an enhanced understanding and control of nature” (Crofton, 2000, pp. 89 & 90).

There are ancient philosophical values by which the ancient people (Yorùbá) regulate themselves and their society. In this study, the hermeneutics and *Odu* codes that form the philosophical life of the Yorùbá people are investigated. *Odu* and hermeneutics codes are to *Ifá*, the foundation of the Yorùbá culture. *Odu-Ifá* contains philosophical statements that are handed down from one generation to another. “In a culture...the wisdom of the past are highly valued and regarded by all” (Abimbólá, 1977a, 31). In other words, the sets of cultural words are indisputable in nature. That is, authority of such words cannot be challenged (Òkékándé, 2017).

In this study, *Odu-Ifá* semiotic elements are related with the *Ìbejì* to establish their relationship. This is because, “the basic strategy in using a symbol as a cue is to pair something with the thing that it is to cue. Depending on the particular person, if this pairing is done often enough, with enough intensity, over a long duration the person will come to associate the two things with each other, such a symbolic association allows one thing to be used as a cue for the other” (Comb and Freedman, 1990, p.126).

In Yorùbá tradition, the earliest forms of communication were oral stories and histories that were passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. The *Ifá* corpus epistle is therefore believed to be preserved in preliterate societies. It is a medium which, “could develop, preserve and disseminate bodies of academic knowledge even without knowing the art of writing” (Abimbólá, 1983, p. 10). *Ifá*'s corpus materials remain intact till date. *Ifá* “therefore, remains till today one of the most reliable genres of the Yorùbá” (Abimbólá, 1976). Therefore, justification for my approach to data collection is reliable based on the fact that the data are sourced mostly from *Ifá* corpora texts that are difficult to be faulted.

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

indigenous words are explained as may be necessary for their understanding.

### Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to establish the philosophical relationship of in hermeneutics and *Odù* codes in *Ifá* with *Ìbejì*. The association of the connection of *Odù* in both *Ifá* and *Ìbejì* is aimed to unravel one of the reasons of the mystery of the Yorùbá people with dizygotic twins throughout the globe.

### Analysis and Discussion

Before now, the use of *Odù* connotes with *Ifá*. The output of divination is revealed through *Odù*, which “are regarded as divinities in their own right” (Abimbólá, 1976, p. 26). However, an attempt is made to relate the *Odù* philosophy with *Ìbejì*. That is, the meaning extension of *Odù* is not limited to *Ifá* alone but, also in *Ìbejì*. The association of *Odù* in both *Ifá* and *Ìbejì* is based on relationship. The kinship of *Òrúnmilà/Ifá* and *Ìbejì* is also observed in the myth of the descent of *Odù* to the earth. Most Yorùbá deities are associated with one *Odù* or the other. It is reported that both *Òrúnmilà* and *Ìbejì* descended with *Èjì-Ogbè*. Adéoyè reports that: “Òpòlòpò babaláwo ni ó gbà pé odù Èjìogbè tí Òrúnmilà bá rò nàà ni ibejì bá rò, sùgbón, odù tí àwọn àgbà babaláwo gbà bí odù ibejì ni Èjìòkò” (1985, p. 346). Meaning that, most of *Ifá* priest believed that, *ibejì* descended with the same *Èjìogbè* that *Òrúnmilà* came down with, but elderly *Ifá* priests believed that, *ibejì* is associated with *odù Èjìòkò*. It is noted that, both *Òrúnmilà* and *Ìbejì* are observed in this study kith and kin.<sup>vi</sup> This observation is supported by the symbols marked on the *Ifá* divination tray of *Èjìogbè* are the symbols of *Èjìòkò*, the *Odù* symbol of *Ìbejì* (Òkèwándé, 2017).

Furthermore, there is etymological relationship between *Èjìogbè*, “two friendly” in *Odù-Ifá*'s and *Èjìòré*, “two friendly” in *Ìbejì*'s name. It is observed here that, *Ogbè* and *òré* are that form one of the compound names are semantically related. The relationship between the two words in *Ifá* and *Ìbejì* pave way for establishing Yorùbá philosophy about them. This is supported with *Ifá* corpus in Abimbólá (1977b, p. 5) in *Èjìogbè* verse five that: *Èjèèjì ni mo gbè*. Meaning that, I favour in two. This opinion also supports the philosophy behind dualism among the Yorùbá people. For example, the Yorùbá

philosophy about *tibi-tire*- good-bad is coded in the duality nature of the *Odù* as implied in dizygotic twins (Òkèwándé, 2017).

The philosophy of the Yorùbá about good-bad is believed to be inseparable, just as a new born child is inseparable from the placenta. The philosophy is premised on *tibi-tire la dá lé ayé*. Meaning that, the world was created with the good and the bad. The philosophy of the Yorùbá with *ibi*, literarily meaning bad or evil is noticed at the birth period. This is why the Yorùbá will not announce the birth of a baby or babies without the placenta of the baby coming out. The placenta is referred to as *ibi-omo*, meaning the evil or bad of the child's (placenta). “The Yorùbá believe that, apart from man himself, there are two opposing forces in the universe, one of which is benevolent to man while the other is hostile” (Abimbólá, 1975, p. 389). It is on this *Ifá* philosophy that the Yorùbá belief on *Ìbejì* is observed in this study to be based.

The philosophy of the Yorùbá holds that the entire nature is built on the principle of duality. This nature is expressed in *Odù-Ifá* and coded in *Ìbejì*, for example, “There is the male-female complementarity” (Ilesanmi, 2004, p. 108). Ilesanmi observes that, while “the world” sees the binary system as being oppositional the Yorùbá see it as being complementary. It is in the complementarity of the binary system that we can fully appreciate the interdependence and interrelationship of all the aspects of our being. The symbolism of the twins' complementarity is derived from *Ifá*. Their relation is in complementary.

The Yorùbá philosophy about *tibi-tire* is coded in *Odù-Ifá* and *Ìbejì*. This is realized as duality in *Odù-Ifá* and in *Ifá* divination process as the interpretation of *Odù* can be good or bad fortunes. “Each of the *Odù* has a dual nature, that is, male and female” (McGEE, 1983, p. 100). Relating this with the *Odù-Ifá*, Abimbólá (1976, p. 5) says, *Èjìogbè* symbolizes goodluck and life, while *Lóngé* (1983, p. 29) says *Òyèkú* symbolizes death. The *Odù-Ifá* above is in opposite relations. The marking of their symbols and interpretations are equally in opposite relation. We should be reminded that the male-female complementarity of *Odù* is evident. The dizygotic twin is equally based on his *Ifá* philosophy about life. The meaning relation of these two *Odù* is in duality, that is, in the opposite. This is related to the dizygotic twins that this research work is based. The twins

are realized in male and female, negative and positive, yes and no; believed to have been derived from *Odù*, the interpretation of which each of the *Odù* is limited to. Further study reveals that, *Ifá* does not connote absolute duality such that every *Odù* is therefore capable of good (positive) or bad (negative) fortune.

The philosophy of duality is also realized in *Ifá* and *Ìbejì* as heaven and the earth. This is the philosophy that, the

belief in a struggle between Heaven and Earth...between two forces symbolizing on one hand the totality of virtues in the world beyond and on the other hand representing the imperfections on earth...Furthermore, the necessity for Earth to acknowledge Heaven's supremacy in all matters, a lesson howbeit learnt only after much misadventure. Since prosperity descends from above, Earth has always to offer sacrifice to Heaven (Lijadu, 1908a, pp. 10&1).

The Yorùbá place more importance to the life after death. It is believed that the journey of individual must be seen to have begun from heaven and ends in heaven. This is supported by the Yorùbá philosophy is that “concept of existence transcends the time when the individual is on earth, it goes beyond that period” (Abimbola, 1975, p. 417). This philosophy is supported by the *Odù-Ifá* and *Ìbejì*.

*Ìbejì*, in the Yorùbá belief, symbolizes dualism-soul and body, physical and spiritual, heaven and earth. The philosophy of the Yorùbá behind this is that, when twins are born, “the spirit double has been born on earth. Since there is no way of telling which the heavenly being is and which the mortal is, both are treated as sacred from birth” (Curry, 2010, p. 25). In case, any of the twins dies, an image is carved by professionals “to serve as a repository for the child's spirit so that it may return to this world and resume its journey to adulthood” (Curry, 2010, p. 25). This is because, “Twins do not have individual souls, and they share one soul. When the soul is divided half in “*òrun*” and “*ayé*”, it causes an extreme unbalance... twins share the same soul, they are call twins “*èjiré*” or two who are one” (Dieffenbach, 2010, p. 18). In other words, “Soul is the addition of powers of body, it cannot exist without the other, and they both constitute a symbiosis in an organic

whole” (Valbuena, 2005, p. 19). The inseparable nature of body and soul symbolized, by *ayé* (earth) and *òrun* (heaven), which, if threatened by death, demands for *ère-ibejì* to maintain a balance.

In Africa, the society is comprises and controlled by two worlds- the visible and invisible.

For traditional Africans, community is much more than simply a social grouping of people bound together by reasons of natural origin and/or deep common interests' values. It is both a society as well as unity of visible and invisible worlds; the world of the physically living on one hand, and the world of the ancestors, divinities and souls of children yet to be born to individual kin-groups in a wider sense...The invisible members, especially ancestors and spiritual beings are powerful and by far superior to human beings (Ejizu, 2007, p. 9).

The Yorùbá society is equally influenced by the belief that, the society is controlled by the invisible and the visible beings.

Another semiotic signification of the relationship of *Ifá* to *Ìbejì* is noticed in the derivation of minor *Odu*. The minor *Odù* derive their names, attributes and behaviors from the half of two major *Odù*. For instance, *Ògbèyèkù* is derived from both *Èjìogbè* and *Òyèkù Méjì*. A form of *àmúlù* (mixture) in names is known with *Ìbejì* as *Táyékéyìn*.<sup>vii</sup> It is equally observed that, either of the twins is the referent with *Táyékéyìn*. Both of them can as well be referent of *Táyékéyìn*. Another meaning relation between *Ifá* divination systems to *Ìbejì* is observed in the derivational names in *àmúlù-odù* (minor *Odù*). Minor *Odù* derive their names from two major *Odùs*, sharing half from each, to form a compound name. Àjàyí (2002, pp. 55-6) and Akintólá (1999, pp. 15-37) gave the names of two hundred and forty (240) *àmúlù odù*. ‘In like manner each of the minor *Odù* has its own name and at least one or two attributes or appellation that characterize individual minor *Odù* of *Ifá*’ (Àjàyí, 2002, p. 5). This is another major dizygotic essence in *Ìbejì* as coded in *Ifá*. The Yorùbá philosophy about no absoluteness of good and the bad coded in *Odù-Ifá* and *Ìbejì* can also be supported by the derivation in their names. For example, there is a relationship in

the derivation of minor *Odu-Ifá* to the compound name formed from the combination of the traditional name *Táyékéyìn* of twins. In this case, the Yorùbá philosophy about *tibi-tire* (good-bad) is apparent. For instance, if *Èjìogbè* corpus symbolizes favour, goodness, and luck or fortunes and *Òyèkú* corpus, the opposite, which symbolizes misfortunes bad and death (opposite), as explained earlier, *Ògbèyèkú* corpus then symbolizes the Yorùbá philosophy about ‘tibi-tire’ (Ogúndeji, 2013). This is human semiotic symbolization of this philosophy coded in *Ìbejì*. The compound name of the twins among the Yorùbá is expressed as *Táyékéhìn*; which is derived by compounding. For example, *Táyékéhìn* is derived from *Táyéwò* and *Kéhìndé*. The relationship of *Ifá* philosophy with *Ìbejì* has given us insights into the Yorùbá philosophy about life- built on the *Ìbejì* philosophy.

Yorùbá believe that, the journey of *Odu*<sup>viii</sup> and *Ìbejì* is supernatural. Such a belief is not only influenced by the terrestrial activities but also by celestial ones. Such celestial influences are beyond human influence. Abimbólá (1976, p. 27) reports that, when *Òrúnmìlà* finally returned to heaven, his children and his followers began to make preparations for the coming of the *Odu* from heaven. For each of the sixteen principal *Odu* they prepared a throne, making sixteen thrones on the whole. One of the sixteen *Odu* seat was specially decorated for the leader and the king of the *Odu*. This special throne was put at the centre, while other sixteen *Odu* were arranged round it. Up to the gate of heaven and the earth, *Òfún*<sup>ix</sup> put *Ejìogbè* in front. Immediately the expectant crowds sighted the *Odu* in front, they carried him “shoulder-high and placed him on the big throne prepared for the leader of the *Odu* thinking that he was the most senior of all” (Abimbólá, 1976, p. 27). This makes the youngest *Odu*<sup>x</sup> to be the leader of all the sixteen *Odu* on Earth. The arrangement in order of their earthly seniority is in this order:

1. *Èjìogbè*
2. *Òyèkú Méjì*
3. *Ìwori Méjì*
4. *Odí Méjì*
5. *Ìrosùn Méjì*
6. *Òwónrín Méjì*
7. *Òbàrà Méjì*
8. *Òkànran Méjì*
9. *Ogúndá Méjì*

10. *Òsá Méjì*
11. *Ìká Méjì*
12. *Òtúúrúpòn Méjì*
13. *Òtúá Méjì*
14. *Ìretè Méjì*
15. *Òsá Méjì*
16. *Òfún Méjì*

This principle of first come first regarded and honored is supported by the Yorùbá philosophy as contained in Abimbólá (1976, p. 26) (with author’s translation) *Èjìogbè* corpus that:

*Àràbà ni bàbá*  
*Àràbà ni baba*  
*Èni a bá lábà ni bàbá*  
*Èni a bá nínú ahéré ni baba*

*Araba* is father  
 The kapok tree is father  
 Whoever we find in the farmshack is father,  
 Whoever we meet in the farmhut is father.

This seniority by birth brought about the above Yorùbá philosophy. The first born or elderly are culturally referenced by the younger ones. The birth of the *Ìbejì* as well takes due recognition to this philosophy, even though, the belief that the first child, the younger child was sent by the second child, the elderly. This means, in heaven, the second child of the twins is older. However, the regard of sighting and entering the world first, is associated with the name given to the first child of the twins: *Táyélólú omọ* or *Táyé*<sup>xi</sup> (Fadiya, 2007, p. 52). The philosophy behind the name of the first born of the twins is that, he or she tasted life before the second or partner. The Yorùbá believes that he/she that tasted water of life<sup>xii</sup> is senior to the second one. In heaven, the seniority of *Odu* is maintained with *Òfún Méjì*<sup>xiii</sup> as the leader. Abimbólá (1976, p. 26) gave the order of the seniority of *Odu* as follows:

1. *Òfún Méjì (Òràngún Méjì)*
2. *Òsé Méjì*
3. *Ìretè Méjì*
4. *Òtúá Méjì*
5. *Òtúúrúpòn Méjì*
6. *Ìká Méjì*
7. *Òsá Méjì*
8. *Ògúndá Méjì*
9. *Òkànran Méjì*
10. *Òbàrà Méjì*



11. *Òwónrín Méjì*
12. *Ìrosùn Méjì*
13. *Òdí Méjì*
14. *Ìwòrì Méjì*
15. *Òyèkú Méjì*
16. *Èjì Ogbè*

Abimbólá reports that, “when the sixteen principal *Odù* were coming down from heaven, *Òfún Méjì*, also known as *Òràngún Méjì*, was their leader” (1976, p. 26). This supports the Yorùbá philosophy that the younger one comes first before the older as it is believed that, the younger is an errand of the older one. The Yorùbá philosophy corroborates this further that, *Eégún òlá ni í kẹyìn ìgbàlẹ̀*. Meaning that, the most senior of masquerade comes last from their grooves (Olaoye, 2012, p. 74). It is a mark of honor for the elderly or senior to be introduced last. In a predominantly, Yorùbá society, the younger speak first and the elders last. This philosophy is supported by the belief that, *bí omọdẹ bá láṣọ bí àgbà, kò lẹ̀ ní àkíasà bí àgbà*. Meaning that, if a child has good attire than the elder, there is no way he or she can have old attire than the elder. This is related to the Yorùbá belief on *Ìbejì*, to ascribe honor to *Kẹhìndé* as it is believed that, he/she sent the junior to come to the world. Going by this belief, *Odù Òràngún* who is the eldest of the sixteen *Odù* is related to *Kẹhìndé* in *Ìbejì*.

The Yorùbá society is built on order that place the elder at the top and the younger at the bottom. This is controlled and regulated by the culture. “Culture may recognize, creates and permits the identification of social stratification. Younger members of society address elder members in particular ways and vice versa, ...Social variation of speech is observed, for instance, as in whether one should speak or rather be silent, who to speak to and who never to speak to directly, the choice and avoidance of certain terms of address, the choice and avoidance of certain vocabulary items” (Ekkeh and Wolff, 2000, pp. 302-3).

Despite the rearrangement order of the *Odù* that put the first to the last *Òràngún Méjì*, still, whenever this *Odù Òfún Méjì* surfaces on the divination tray, he is honored by the *Ifá* priest as the father. Abimbólá affirms that, “whenever *Ifá* priests cast *Òfún Méjì*, they hailed him as king, saying *hèèpà* (we hail you)” (1976, p. 26). The Yorùbá religious belief on the *Odu* is that, *Òfún Méjì* sent *Èjì-ogbè* to the world first as

explained earlier. The order of seniority is related to *Ìbejì*. The second child of the twins is regarded and respected to be the senior. As noted earlier, the Yorùbá believes that, *Táyewò* is sent to the world by *Kẹhìndé*. The Yorùbá still gives the senior regard to *Kẹhìndé* saying, *a kẹyìndé gbègbón*. That is, the last to come takes the senior. The *Ìbejì* principle is centered on celestial events. This is why, the order of seniority is maintained among the Yorùbá till today.

### Conclusion

This study concludes that, there exist close relationship between the philosophy of the Yorùbá people between *Odù-Ifá* and *Ìbejì*. In other words, *Odù* connections are one of the hermeneutics and *Odù* semiotic codes of *Ifá* with *Ìbejì*. The associations between the philosophy of *Odù-Ifá* and *Ìbejì* supports the Yorùbá religious philosophy that, *awo nìi gbáwo nígbowó*. That is, no gods or divinity succeeds in isolation. Both *Ifá* and *Ìbejì* exist in complementary relation. The success of one complements the success of the other. Meaning that, *Ifá* among other Yorùbá divinities relates with other divinities, especially *Ìbejì* to succeed. The established philosophical links between *Ifá* and *Ìbejì* in this study is believed to be one of the reasons why the Yorùbá is associated with the highest rate of twin birth throughout the globe.

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