



# **A Semiotic Investigation of the Relations between *Ifá* and Yorùbá Indigenous Markets, Markets Location and Marketing Theories**

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Relationships in a cultural domain like religion account for wider patterns of relationships among human societies. In a predominantly Yorùbá society, *Ifá* is believed to be the springboard of Yorùbá culture. Virtually every aspect of Yorùbá life - religion, local culture and the market - links back to *Ifá* in one way or another. Previous studies have not related *Ifá* with the Yorùbá markets, location of markets and marketing theories, nor have they established *Ifá's* influence on the market institution as an aspect of economy among the Yorùbá communities. This study seeks to fill this gap using work that relies substantially on oral data collected from *Ifá* practitioners', field observations, literary texts, and *Ifá* literary corpus. A semiotics approach was utilized for data analyses with relevant data samples carefully selected. By comparing *Ifá* symbols with the Yorùbá indigenous markets the study found that: *Ifá* influences the Yorùbá markets, marketing and the establishment and/or location of the Yorùbá indigenous markets on a daily basis. As a result, the Yorùbá market symbols serve as paradigm with which the Yorùbá market system can be described and differentiated from other African markets.

Keywords: *Ifá*, *ọ̀jà*, market, symbols, sacrifice, semiotics

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This paper establishes and examines the relationship between *Ifá* symbols, the Yorùbá markets and marketing theories as well as *Ifá's* influence on the location of these markets. *Ifá* has been defined differently by many scholars with its diverse scope of knowledge, wisdom and values serving as the bedrock of Yorùbá life. However, the previous works have underdiscussed economic influence such as that of market on the life of the Yorùbá people. Due to its complexity and position of high regard in various cultures, *Ifá* cannot simply be defined as a religion without exploring its socioeconomic links as well.

In *Yorùbá Ethics and Metaphysics* (1999, p.1), Adébòwálé Akíntólá defines *Ifá* as the philosophy of, or wisdom divinely revealed to, the Yorùbá deity of *Ifá*, known as *Òrúnmìlà*. In this view, *Ifá* is regarded as the spokesperson for both divinities and the living. In many ways, *Ifá* is regarded as the "living foundation of Yorùbá culture" (Abímbólá 1977a, p. 14), with *Ifá's* knowledge believed to be connected in some way with life-belonging to the Yorùbá people. Louis J. Munoz (2003), on the other hand, understands *Ifá's* scope beyond Yorùbá society, asserting that, "Ifá is the most universal divinity among the Yorùbá and other West African people" (p. 179). This is also true, as *Ifá* is not necessarily geographically isolated, demonstrated by the different names and peoples it is known to throughout the world. *Ifá* is known as *Fá* among the Fon of Republic of Benin, *Eva* to Nupes, *Ifá* in Cuba, USA, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Surinam and Togo and *Afa* by the Ewe (Ọdẹyẹmí 2013, p. 5). With these different realizations of *Ifá* nomenclature which cut across nations of the world, the spread of *Ifá* is not in doubt.

Given the geographic and cultural spread of different nomenclature in 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) included *Ifá* as one of only 86 transnational cultural traditions to be recognized as masterpieces of oral heritage (Robinson 2008, p. 1). By this proclamation, *Ifá* became a more esteemed in need of urgent preservation. Through its various

interpretations, *Ifá* remains of great interest to scholars across disciplines like medicine, philosophy, religion, art and culture (e.g. Àjàyí 1990, Yemitan and Ògúndélé 1970, Abímbólá 1976 and Sàlámi 2002).

In my doctoral thesis, I adopted semiotics to establish links between *Ifá*, *Ìbejì* (twins) and *Ayò Ọlọ́pón* (game board). I demonstrated such links around codes, icons, symbols and indices. The study establishes that *Ọrúnmìlà*, as the progenitor of *Ifá*, is the inventor of *Ayò Ọlọ́pón* as well. The thesis also accounted for the mystery surrounding the global association of the Yorùbá people with the highest dizygotic (a male and a female non identical) twinning rate to be spiritual as having great influence with *Ifá* (Òkékándé 2017a). In Òkékándé (2017b), I examined Yorùbá markets, marketing and advertisement. The study demonstrated that- the Yorùbá people have formidable markets, marketing and advertisement strategies that can withstand and flourish with the modern or current development. In Òkékándé (2017c), I examined the relationship of the *Ifá* numerical symbols in Yorùbá personal names. I established in the study that *Ifá* numerical symbols 2, 8 and 200 influence names such as '*Dèjì*, (becomes two), '*Dèjọ* (becomes eight) and '*Digba/Pégba* (becomes or up to two hundred), which have connotations with royalty, honor and wealthy among the Yorùbá people.

All the above studies affirm the influence of *Ifá* on the life and systems of living associated with the Yorùbá people in various ways. However, to date, no research work has been conducted on *Ifá's* association with the Yorùbá people's economic life, or specifically with their indigenous markets, markets location and market theories. This gap is filled by the research study presented in this essay.

In a Yorùbá community, *Ifá* consultation is the first step that must be taken by the community or individual regarding any of their proposals like installation of new king, priest, village head, and wedding, choice of a business or trading. The settlement or location of most ancient Yorùbá towns and villages were based on the direc-

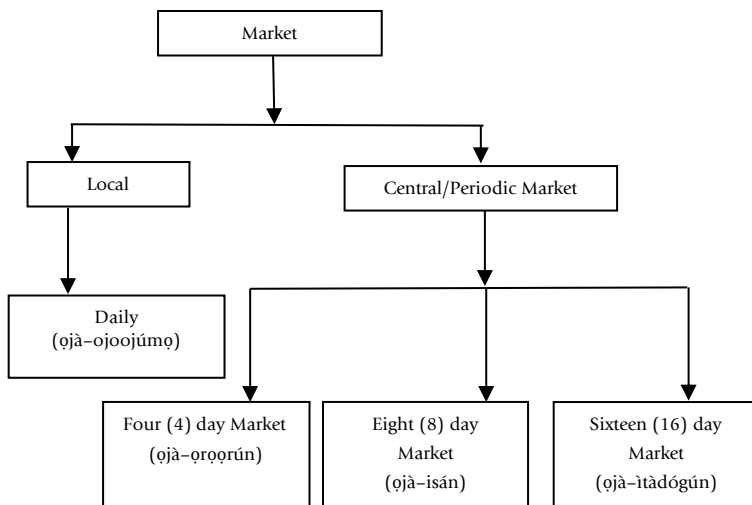
tives of *Ifá*. Adédòtun Ògúndèjì (2017) noted that, “rite and the rites done for the foundation of a town (*títẹ̀ ilú dọ*) or marketplace (*dídá ọjà sílẹ̀*), the *odù ifá* that emerge at such occasion are also taken as special symbols of such individual, town, or marketplace” (pp. 272-3). This is applicable to most aspects of the Yorùbá life. According to Àjàyí in his inaugural lecture delivered on “Yorùbá cosmology and aesthetics: The cultural confluence of divination, incantation and drum-talking”, he observed that, “There is hardly anything people of a traditional Yorùbá society would do without seeking support and approval from *Ifá*, the god of wisdom” (2009, p. 8). This is because *Ifá* provides instruction and guidance about the future and/or the cause of an action. This is done- to seek the endorsement and sanctions of the ancestors, divinities and supernatural agents whom *Ifá* serves all as spokesperson. Consequently, the market institution, location and marketing strategies relating to the Yorùbá are not different from other important aspects of the Yorùbá life.

*Ifá* divination is mostly performed by an initiated *Ifá* priest, traditionally known as *babaláwo*. *Ifá* is a religious cult, and the training associated with it is so rigorous that many trainees dropped out in the course of their apprenticeship. The *Ifá* divinations are mostly carried out by *ikin* - sixteen sacred palm nuts (these palm nuts are of specified types) - or *òpẹ̀lẹ̀* - the *Ifá* divination chain. The recognition of the *Ifá* symbol, the marking of the symbol on the divination board and the interpretation of the symbols can only be rendered by the *Ifá* priest. Symbol in *Ifá* is known as *odù*. This means *odù* has denotation value with *Ifá*. That is, *odù* only occurs in *Ifá*, or in *Ifá*-related contexts. Importance of the use of *ikin* and *òpẹ̀lẹ̀* in divination is expressed by Àjàyí that, “under no circumstances does a *babaláwo* divine without using either the *òpẹ̀lẹ̀* (the divining chain) or the *ikin* (sacred palm-nuts); for he will not guess the dictate of the *Òrìṣà* [gods]” (2002, p. 4). This is why *ikin* and *òpẹ̀lẹ̀* are described as “most prestigious” within divination (Adéèkó 2010, p. 286). In this study, the numerical structures and the symbols associated with *Ifá*

(òpèlẹ̀ and ikin) have been discovered to relate with the Yorùbá market.

In the African sense, a market in the present day is a demarcated site where traders and consumers meet to exchange products. Still, trading could be made in places which were not- strictly understood as markets. For example, there were 'road-side markets' where goods were spread on the ground for viewing and sale (Ugboajah 2005, p. 103). A "market" is simply the location at which an institutional arrangement brings buyers and sellers in very close contact. It is any place where exchange of goods and services occur. They can also be a channel through which the products of farmers and artisans flow to consumers. The establishment of markets presupposes that it is an avenue, where farm produce and craft-materials, among other products, are patronized for sales.

The Yorùbá have a highly complex market system. According to Títílopé Ọládẹ̀jọ (2017), "Yorùbá markets are important in the circulation of investment capital. The cruxes of transactions were carried on in the markets and the capital inflow and outflow presupposes that the commodities are linked commercially in the markets" (p. 524). At the center of this system is the town market. Each town and village organizes one or more markets depending on its respective population. Yorùbá markets are realized in different forms, but an organized and regular market can typically be understood in two broad forms: the local/daily market and the central/periodic market (Fádípẹ̀ 1970). This two-form understanding of Yorùbá market is what is- discussed in this essay, illustrated with the chart below:



The Chart Showing Yorùbá Regular Markets and Types  
(Òkèwándé 2017b, p. 555).

Based on the structure provided above, the major *Ifá* divination objects, the- *ikin* and *òpèlẹ̀* are demonstrated.

### **Objective of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to establish *Ifá's* symbols influence on the institution and location of markets and on marketing theory. Therefore, the links of *Ifá* with the marketing system as an economic aspect of the Yorùbá people are to be demonstrated in this study.

### **Theoretical Framework and Methodology: Semiotic Approach**

Semiotics was adopted for this study because “symbolism underlies *Ifá* divination” (Ọlátúnjí 2005, p. 135). *Ifá* communicates via signs and symbols, which are best interpreted and comprehended through the knowledge of semiotics that is the scientific study of

signs and symbols. Semiotics can be traced to the pioneering works of American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, and Swiss Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. According to Saussure (1974), semiology is the study of signs as part of social life.

According to Peirce, semiotics is an abstract entity. A sign is something which stands to somebody or something in some respects or capacity. The Peirce model was adopted for this study. This is because, in the first place, *Ifá* communicates with symbol which is one of the three major modes of semiotic descriptions as adopted by Peirce (the other modes of semiotic significations are icon, and index). The symbol's connection with its object is a matter of convention, rule or agreement between the users. In Yorùbá tradition, it can be realized in form of *Àrokò* (symbolism), as such an object or something stands for something or somebody in real life. For example, *Ayé lojà òrun nilé* – that is, the world is a marketplace, heaven is home. No one sleeps in the marketplace. Ibigbolade Adérìbigbé (2016) says, “after each day's transactions he or she [the market vendor] returns home to sleep” (p. 203). It is from home-heaven that, the Yorùbá concepts of philosophy and ideology about the market begins. The symbolism of the market with the world and heaven with the home are symbols of location or place.

People's beliefs are strongly encapsulated in the philosophy that market connotes the world or earth and heaven home. For example, the work of Otakpor Nkeonye (1996) entitled “The world is a market-place” on Igbo belief concerning markets concluded that, *Uwa bu afia*, “the world is a market-place” - is far more than an ordinary statement to be taken on its face value. It is fully loaded and tightly packed in meaning at its deeper layers...; by studying the way meaning inheres in the expression, we are opening the way for incorporation of the world-view of a people in their use of language, since every language has a hidden code... It is a reminder that the world is not a permanent place of abode just as a market is not” (pp. 529&30). As *aye lojà, òrun nilé*, in Yorùbá philosophy reminds one

that the world is a temporary place, heaven is the permanent place of abode so is *uwa bu afia* in Igbo.

The Yorùbá give prominence to home -heaven, as it is a permanent place, where one rests and sleeps; while a market is a temporary place, where one works. This is corroborated with the *Ifá* oral information collected from Awódoyè Akáláifá, a famous *Ifá* worshipper and priest, who said that, the institution of Yorùbá market on earth begins from heaven. The earth is where various transactions take place. These transactions are symbolized with the individual behaviors or characters. This is why the Yorùbá says that, *owó la fi ní sayé, iwà la fi ní sòrun*, which means- that- money is a means of transaction on earth while the moral character of a person is a means of transaction to gain heaven. For example, just as money is a means or medium of transaction or exchange of goods and services in the market, the same is behavior or character of one on earth is associated with heaven. This is why *Ifá* encourages an individual to do well while on earth, because in heaven there will be compensation of whatever everyone has done. Wándé Abímbólá (1977a) expressed *Ifá's* opinion that- "indeed, *Ifá* divination poetry states that a person who does not have good *iwà* while on earth, will be punished in *Òrun* after his death.... It is the wish of *Olódùmarè* and the ancestors that human beings should uphold the moral values of the society" (p. 33). In other words, human activities are not limited to the earth but such activities are revisited in heaven.

While on earth, one is expected to do good to all, to both those who are- known and those who are unknown. As a market place is a meeting point for all human beings, including many who may be strangers to oneself, to the Yorùbá people, they say *bí a bá sòkò sọjá, ará ilé ẹni ni í bá* (Every mischief done at the marketplace comes home to roost) (Şótúndé 2009, p 153). This refers to the emphasis on treating everyone well, even strangers in the market as doing contrary may have- adverse consequences on individuals in heaven. The symbolism of the market with the world by the Yorùbá people is



demonstrated in different philosophical expressions entrenched in *Ifá*.

Oral interviews, relevant *Ifá* texts or corpus and field research are used as sources of data relevant to the *Ifá* and the Yorùbá indigenous market. African history may be incomplete without orality. Liz Gunner (2007) says, "orality was the means by which Africa made its existence, its history long before the colonial and imperial presence of the west manifested itself. In this sense, orality needs to be seen not simply as 'the absence of literacy' but as something self-constitutes *sui generis*" (p. 67). Adélékè Adéèkó (2010)- identified the relationship of *Ifá* with orality and the contents or expressions in it are subject to various interpretations and meanings. According to him, "*Ifá* divination protocols are the closest an 'oral' society could develop to fulfill the requirement of genuinely divine writing and speaking" (p. 288). In orality "an utterance connotes anonymity, a collective voice, whereas a text implies individual authorship, a singular consciousness" (Ìrèlè 2007, p. 80).

In this essay, oral data evidence from the *Ifá* professionals (especially *Ifá* corpus) in the aforementioned study is explored to complement the written texts and available texts which were inadequate in and of themselves to account for the analysis of the study. Despite the fact that, *Ifá* text is a culture-bound genre, data is translated into English for the benefit of a wider audience. The Yorùbá data are interpreted in some cases and in other cases, uninterpreted, in order to retain the *couleur locale* of the original texts, especially, *Ifá*, "since the indigenous language is more conducive to the interpretation of an indigenous genre" (Ilésanmí 2004, p. 111).

### ***Ifá* Daily Divination and Festival Symbols in Relation with Yorùbá Daily Market**

The head or founder of a market is often referred to as- the *ọlọjá* (the owner of the market). *Ọ̀rúnmílà* was first to be addressed as *ọlọjá*

among the other Yorùbá divinities. As will be established with *Ifá* corpus in this study, *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* was first to institute the first market among the Yorùbá (on earth). Among the divinities, *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* was addressed as *ọ̀lọ́jà`ẹ̀bọ̀ra* (the market owner among the divinities). As Adéoyè (1985) aptly stated, “*Bí wọ̀n bá sọ pé ‘Ifá Agbọ̀nnìrẹ̀gún’ àwọ̀n èniyàn á bá wọ̀n parí ẹ̀ pé ‘ọ̀lọ́jà`Ebọ̀ra’ ni gbogbo ayé bá tún n’ pé Ọ̀rúnmìlà ní ‘Ifá Agbọ̀nnìrẹ̀gún, Ọ̀lọ́jà`Ebọ̀ra’*” (whenever they called that, *Ifá Agbọ̀nnìrẹ̀gún*, people will end it by saying that “owner of market among the divinities”; by so doing, everyone calls *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* as “*Ifá Agbọ̀nnìrẹ̀gún* the owner of market among the divinities”) (p. 180).

Daily *Ifá* divination is usually conducted by the *Ifá* priest. The daily *Ifá* divination is not a flamboyant or elaborate one because its goal is just to commit one’s way to the hands of the divinity. Daily *Ifá* divination is conducted to provide daily food for the priest. Adéoyè (1985, p. 256) aptly put it that: “*Aájò kí awo má sun ní ebi wà nínú ohun tí í mú babaláwo bọ Ifá ojoojúmọ́.*” In order not to sleep hungry, daily *Ifá* ritual is conducted. Relating the functional roles of daily *Ifá* divination with the Yorùbá daily market, a key purpose of the daily market is to provide daily or domestic needs for individual and the community; just as the daily divination is to provide the *Ifá* priest with the daily bread.

In the Yorùbá community, the local market is located at the front of the king’s palace, which is mostly situated at the centre of the town. “Markets are generally located in public squares, adjacent to the palaces or community centers” (Adéọ̀sun 2017 p. 475). As a result of this, almost all the Yorùbá towns have a central market known as *ọ̀jà`ọ̀ba* (king’s market). *Ọ̀ba* (king) is, according to Munoz (2003), “the founder (*auctor*) - ... He is the *ẹ̀keji`òrìṣà*, the gods’ companion, as stated in one of the titles of the Aláàfin of *Ọ̀yọ́*” (p. 56). Since the institution of Yorùbá market will be incomplete without the *òrìṣà* (gods), then, *ọ̀ba*, who is the representative of the *òrìṣà* must be one of the custodians of a market. This is the situations at

*ọjà ọba* markets in front of Èwí of the city of Adó-Èkìtù and- 'Dẹ̀jì of Àkúrẹ̀, among others. In very rare occasions like that of Abẹ̀òkúta, there is no market in front of ọba Aláke's palace. However, this is subject to further historical research outside the scope of this work. Still, it is important to note there is a daily market present there, such as Ìtòkú market in Abẹ̀òkúta.

### **Numerical Symbols of *Ifá* Divination and Festival Periodicity in Relation with the Periodicity of Yorùbá Markets**

Yorùbá markets and marketing periods are here observed to be structured on the *Ifá* major divination objects, - *ikin* and *ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀*. These structures are numerically symbolized with four (4), eight (8) and sixteen (16).

Periodicity may be the most conspicuous and fundamental characteristic of the marketing scene. It accounts to an important degree for the relative locations of the markets and sets of rhythm regulating the circulation and convergence of people and goods. The distribution of market periodicities and market networks presents a complex array of functionally distinct, contiguous, and overlapping systems—a kaleidoscopic pattern of space-time interrelationships (Good, 1973, p. 1).

Geographers have established influential effects of periodicity and African markets. The periodicity in marketing is observed here to be influenced by African religions. One of the functions of African religions, including *Ifá*, is according to Ejizu (2007), "the world-view with which people explained, predicted and controlled space-time events" (p. 9). The market, is discovered by this study to be one of such space time events among the Yorùbá people, having affinity with *Ifá*. Market periodicity determines the functions as well as the values associated with a market.

*Numerical symbol four (4) in Ifá, in Relation with the Yorùbá four-days Market*

The Yorùbá market held every four-days can be referred to as a local market, because its geographical spread is limited to nearby villages. The symbol four (4) plays various important roles in *Ifá* divination and sacrifice. For example, every four days, which is a Yorùbá ancient week, a special *Ifá* celebration must be observed. According to Abímbólá (1976), "every fifth day, when an *Ifá* priest make sacrifices to his god, he opens the bowl and takes out the sacred palm-nuts. Holding the palm-nuts on his hands, he prays to them in the belief that they are the physical representation of *Ifá* on earth" (p. 11).

In Yorùbá indigenous system of counting, the five days symbolizes four days as the first day is counted in. This is known as *orún*. This day is devoted to worship the divinities. Sàlámì (2002) in *Odù Òtúúrúpòn* avers (with author's translation) that: *Kí la ó máa sìn tórún bá pé? Òrìṣà. Òrìṣà la ó máa sìn bọ́rún bá pé* (What are we to worship on the fifth day? Gods. It is gods we will worship every fifth day, gods) (p. 189). From the *Ifá* corpus, the *Ifá* client was blessed through the fifth day via *Ifá* divination. Therefore, that day is the day of intercession and supplication to the divinities for good life and prosperity (Adéoyè 1985). As a result of this, *Ojà orún* (four-days market) falls on *Ifá* divination, which serves as a major link between the economic and religious life of the Yorùbá people. The synergy or affinity between the four-days market and *Ifá* is inseparable to the extent that *Ifá* divination and festival and the four-days market are observed together in the same day. This is entrenched in *odù Ifá Òtúá-kúnkàá*<sup>2</sup>, as Oḍégbólá (2014) observes, "*Ṣẹ̀bí òní lórún ojà, e wálé Ifá*" (is today not a market? Come for the *Ifá* divination) (p. 612). Both the market and *Ifá* divination occur together in the same

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2 This is *Ifá* corpus

day. This is the true situation on ground in Yorùbáland as, "Markets touch every city, town, village and hamlet, linking them in economic, social and civil networks" (Àjàdí 2012, p. 83). There is hardly of a village, hamlet or town in Yorùbáland that is not known with a four-days market. The four- days market, *ọjà ọrún*, is the commonest periodic Yorùbá indigenous market; just as the five days *Ifá* periodic divination is as well the commonest. For example, we have *ọjà ọrún* (four day markets) in Èkítì State, Nigeria such as Iyìn-Èkítì, Emùré, and in Ọyọ State, Ọjé-olofí and Ọlórundá-àbá in Ìbàdàn, Gàmbàrí, Ìlújù and Tewùré markets in Òbómòṣò among others.

*Numerical symbol eight (8), in Ifá, in Relation with the Yorùbá eight-days Market*

The eight-days market is a type of Yoruba market that can be called the national market. This is because its geographical spread covers more towns around the Yorùbá states than the four-day markets. *Ifá* divination is also associated with the eighth day. According to Adélékè (1965), "*nígba tó bá di ọjó kejọ, tí Yorùbá n pè ní isán, ọdún Ifá máa n wáyé, nínú èyí tí ipèsè jíjẹ ti n wáyé fún orìṣà ati fún àwọn ènìyàn pèlú*" (On the eighth day, known as *isán*, *Ifá* festival takes place, where there will be food for the divinities and the entire people) (p. 8). The symbol eight is obtained from the *Ifá* divination chain. For example, Ilésánmí (1998), reports that, "*Odù wo nínú Ifá ni gbogbo méjèjè ọpèlè, mèrin lápá ọtún àti mèrin lápá òsì máa n sájú sí?*" (Which of the Odù *Ifá* has its symbol with four of the eight ọpèlè seeds opened to the left and four opened to the right?) (p. 14). Eight is a very important symbol in *Ifá* divination system. According to Lijadu (1908b), "*Ifá* units are mixed 8 times (i.e. n=8), the total number of arrangements possible is 256 (i.e. s=256)" (p. ix). This demonstrates that as eight-days market stands at the center between four and sixteen-days market, so it stands at the center of *Ifá* numerical number or figures of- 4, 8 and 16. The eight-days market serves

as the middle market between the *orún* (four days) market and *itàdógún* (sixteen-day) markets.

The eight-day markets are bigger in size and more organized than either the daily or four-days market. This is because distance markets are usually larger in size. People patronize such market from far and near. The calculation of this market day is the easiest of the three Yorùbá periodic markets because the market day falls on the same day of the week. Despite, eight-day markets being a bit uncommon today, one can still be located in every Yorùbá state. For example, the eight-day market is observed in Òṣun State, such as Èjìgbò market (every Saturday) and Ànáyè-òkè, in Ìrágbìjì (every Wednesday). In Òyó State eight day market is observed at Òkè-hò, known as Bínúkonú market (every Monday). In Òndó State, Òrè market in Òdìgbó local government is observed on the eighth day (every Friday). Also, in Kwara State, Şàáré market is observed on the eighth day (every Saturday).

*Numerical symbol sixteen (16), in Ifá, in Relation with the Yorùbá sixteen-day Market*

The sixteen-days market can be regarded as an international market. This is because its geographical spread extends a little beyond the vicinity or locality of the other markets. In this category, the sixteen-days market is referred to as the *itàdógún* market. It is the farthest from another sixteen-day market. In Yorùbá culture, which *Ifá* is the springboard, "the symbolic value of number sixteen for the Yorùbá should be recalled as it is also the number of the palm nuts used in *Ifá* divination and the *odù* of the *Ifá* Corpus" (Munoz 2003, pp. 50&1). As the "specialist trading" (the professional) is associated with sixteen-day market, so is the sixteen principal *odù* and the sixteen *ikin* (sacred palm nuts) are used by *Ifá* specialists (Abimbola 1976). All the sixteen principals of *Odù Ifá* are *olójá* (market owners) in their own right; as each of them is a window with which one or

some problems of human life are solved. The great *Ifá* festival also holds on the *itàdógún* day. For example, Areoyè (1980) says that, “*òsè nílá àwọn babaláwo máa n bọ sí ìtàdógún. Òsè nílá kan náà ni n jé òsè awo...eléyìí máa n mú ipàdè òsè jágùn*” (The great week of the *Ifá* priest holds on the sixteenth day which is also refers to as the cult week...This makes the week to span for long) (p. 24).

Although, the sixteenth market day is not common today among the Yorùbá, its economic influence cannot be overemphasized. Local financial associations that were based on the market product(s) that is/were sold were formed and are now known as *èḗsú dídá* (micro-credit finance). It is a subscription contributed and collected through a rotation. There is a fixed - minimum amount of money to be contributed known as *owó'* (a tranche). Furthermore, the realization of the *itàdógún* is not limited to the *Ifá* festival alone; but equally to span to other Yorùbá festivals. This shows how markets sit in connection with the traditional festivals and other informal or irregular markets, such as *Orò* (an exclusive cult of men), which are worshipped in *Oṣí Èkìtì*, Èkìtì State of Nigeria on every *itàdógún* (seventeenth day).

The symbolization of the sixteen-day market, traditionally known as *ojà ìtàdógún* is common in the old Yorùbá indigenous market system. This is equally represented in *Ifá*. For example, *Odù Ọwónrín*<sup>3</sup>, the author says that, “*Ọrún ni wón dájó ilá. Ìtàdógún ni wón n nájà l'Èrìn*” (The five-day circle is the harvesting interval for Okro. Seventeen days is the cycle for Èrìn market) (Salámi 2002, p. 3). This is evidence that, the Èrìn market presently in *Ọṣun* State was observed on the sixteenth day among the Yorùbá nations.

The *itàdógún* market is the largest and most organized of the indigenous Yorùbá markets.

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3 One of the major *Ifá* corpus

Since it is the biggest market, it almost takes care of all human market needs. It should be noted that the sixteen principal *odu Ifá* are believed to take care of all possible human problems and needs with proffered solutions to these problems. Among these markets are: Apòmù which serve Ifẹ̀, Òwu, Ijẹ̀bú and Ègbá, Òşogbo market situated within Ijẹ̀şà kingdom<sup>4</sup>, with boundary with Ọ̀yó Ọ̀gbómìnà and Ifẹ̀ the Àkúré market situated within Èkítì with boundary with Ijẹ̀şà and Ondó kingdoms, and so on (Akínjògbìn 1980). However, this study was only able to account for two of these markets. One in Ilẹ̀şà, called Àtákúmọ̀şà market in Ọ̀şun State and Ọ̀jé market in Abẹ̀òkúta, Ọ̀gùn State, both are held every sixteenth-day till today.

These market days are also realized as differentiating market symbols of the Yorùbá market system from other nations in Nigeria, Africa and the entire world. The Yorùbá market symbols serve as a maxim or paradigm with which Yorùbá market system can be described among other African market system. For example, “among the Bete of Southern Cote d’ivoire, market meetings were held every ninth day, seven-day markets were more wide spread in Ghana, Northern Nigeria, among the Wolof and the Minianka. Six-day markets were the practice of the Dynla of Senegal and the Dagomba and Konkomba of Ghana” (Ugboajah 2005, p. 104).

### ***Ifá* Links with the Origin and Location of Yorùbá Indigenous Markets**

Until today, there is no research on the origin of the Yorùbá indigenous markets. In Africa, there are various ways of accounting for the origin of market with different nations. As earlier explained in this study, orality is a means of sourcing for information in Africa.

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<sup>4</sup> A kingdom is represented by a major tribe among the Yorùbá. There is always an imperial king, who is a political head overseeing affairs within his territory or province.



As a result of the non-availability of written record about the origin of the Yorùbá market, an oral interview was conducted with *Ifá* priest and practitioner, Awódoyè Akáláifá on July 28, 2017. According to him, the Yorùbá market was first instituted by *Ọ̀rúnmilà`* the *Ifá* progenitor, who consulted *Olódùmarè`* the God<sup>5</sup> three times, to seek for his approval to the earth and launch market for his son - *Àlọ̀rà̀n*. According to *ÈjìOgbè`*:

Ọ̀rúnmilà` ló dọ̀pàpà`  
 Ifá mo ló dọ̀pàpà`  
 Ọ̀rúnmilà` lóun kọ̀sẹ̀ pàràpàrà` lẹ̀ rọ̀wọ̀ Olódùmarè`  
 Olódùmarè` ní "Ta ní kọ̀sẹ̀ pàràpàrà` lẹ̀ rọ̀wọ̀ Ọ̀un"?  
 Ọ̀rúnmilà` lóun ni.  
 Olódùmarè` ní "È é ti rí"?  
 Ọ̀rúnmilà` lóun fẹ̀ lẹ̀ dájà` Àlọ̀rà̀n lóde ayé ni.  
 Lòhun wá gbàşẹ̀ lẹ̀wọ̀ ìwọ̀ Olódùmarè`

Ọ̀rúnmilà` says it is hurriedly  
 Ifá says it is hurriedly  
 Ọ̀rúnmilà` says he hurriedly sought the authorization of Olódùmarè`  
 Olódùmarè` asked "who is coming consistently to him for his consent"?  
 Ọ̀rúnmilà` says he is the one  
 Olódùmarè` says "What are you seeking my consent on"?  
 Ọ̀rúnmilà` says he wants to go and launch market for Àlọ̀rà̀n on Earth;  
 so he has come to seek the approval of Olódùmarè`

From the *Ifá* corpus above, it is clear that *Ọ̀rúnmilà`* was the first divinity to institute a market for his son - *Àlọ̀rà̀n*, on earth<sup>7</sup>. The sanction to do this was given in *ọ̀run* (heaven) by *Olódùmarè`*. The Yorùbá believe that *ọ̀run* is a place where the creator of the cosmos, *Olódùmarè`*, resides and where individuals is assigned his/her *orí* (destiny), that is, the human master-plan of events to be accomplished on earth. Therefore, it can be concluded that the first stage to launch

5 *Olódùmarè`* is God, the Supreme-being in Yoruba belief.

6 The first of the sixteen major *Ifá* corpus.

7 As earlier indicated in this study, *Ọ̀rúnmilà`* was referred to as market owner - *olójà`*, among the divinities. This oral source of information attested to *Ọ̀rúnmilà`* as market owner.

a market in Yorùbá tradition must be to seek the consent of *Olódùmarè* through the *Ifá* oracle.

If a market is lunched without complying with this rule, many Yoruba will say that the market, even if successfully launched (patronized by many people initially), will eventually fold up, as the institution of a market among the Yorùbá people is associated with the forces that operate in the universe - divinities, ancestors, supernatural agents and human beings (Abímbólá 1976). Therefore, to sideline any of these powers is regarded as a violation of Yorùbá belief system and tradition.

In the African cosmological worldview, the society is comprised of and controlled by two worlds - the visible and invisible (see. e.g. 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. The opinions of the invisible beings must be sought and approval or consent obtained on important issues that concerns the community at large such as the market. The involvement of the invisible beings in the market is also realized in the beliefs of other people besides the Yorùbá nation. For example, in Igbo, "Human life and activities like market forces may be influenced by unseen hands" (Otukpor 1996, p. 525).

In the African belief system, "the invisible beings are represented by different kinds of symbols" (Ejizu 2007, p. 9). For example, *Ìwà*<sup>8</sup> (character), as a symbol of authority, was given to *Òrúnmìlà* by *Olódùmarè*, to launch the market on earth. Exhibition of the virtues of *ìwà* are equally extended to market institutions as indicated earlier in this study. This is why "Ifá rates *ìwà* above all valuable things of

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<sup>8</sup> *Ìwà* was the primordial wife of *Òrúnmìlà* who brought prosperity to his *Ifá* profession. This is metaphorically

means that without the presence of *ìwà* - there cannot be success. This is one of the reasons why women are more commonly associated with the Yorùbá market than men. See Abimbola 1975, pp. 389-420.

the world. ... *Ìwà* is therefore the most valuable thing among the other thing in the Yorùbá valuable system" (Abimbólá 1975, p. 410). *Ìwà* takes prominence over all other good things that can be achieved, possessed or purchased in the world. I need to add here that there can't be interaction, including "communion" and communication, between the visible and invisible beings without sacrifice. To this end, since the invisible forces play important roles in the institution of Yorùbá indigenous market, sacrifice is critical to actualizing this goal.

In Yorùbá tradition, the prescription on sacrifice is within the prerogative power of *Ifá*. Sacrifice must be offered to the supernatural beings, as it was offered by *Ọrúnmìlà* in his attempt to launch markets on earth. For example, oral interviews conducted in this study indicated that- when *Ọrúnmìlà* was coming to the earth to fulfill the need of instituting a market, he met three aged *Èlẹyẹ* (composition of women that are supernatural agents) under *Ìrókò agúnrejéjé* (a mahogany tree). These *Èlẹyẹ* were in the form of birds, including: *adúhẹhẹ ẹyẹ ilé-ayé*, an earthly black bird with a quack voice, the *afòhùnhùn ẹyẹ òde-òrun*, a heavenly bird that speaks with a tenor voice and *afòkooorójahun*, a bird that has a bass voice with authority. According to this oral history, *Ọrúnmìlà* was interrogated by the supernatural beings earlier mentioned to ascertain if- he was an *awo* (a cult, initiated person) or not, a condition that will make his passage approved. He passed all their tests- and was permitted to proceed on his journey to the earth - however, he forgot to give them gifts (sacrifice). Upon getting to the earth, *Ọrúnmìlà* found that the *ìwà* that *Olódùmarè* gave him to launch a market for *Àlọràn*, was missing. Due to this strange event, he was forced to return to *Olódùmarè*.

On his way back, *Ọrúnmìlà* was engaged by the *Èlẹyẹ* who asked him what he was looking for. *Ọrúnmìlà* replied he was looking for the *ìwà* that was given to him to launch the market. The *Èlẹyẹ* told him *ìwà* was with them. *Ọrúnmìlà* requested for what they would need so as to have it back. According to the supernatural beings, his

ability to answer the two questions to him will convince them that he belongs to their cult. The first question to *Ọ́rúnmílà* was that: what is *Àgbà tó tẹ́pá kùkù wọjà* (an aged person with walking stick going to the market) and *ògèéré omi ọ̀bẹ̀ tí ò ẹ̀ é bù bọ́jú?* The impossibility of rubbing one's face with stew.

Responding to the questions from *Ẹ̀lẹ̀yẹ*, *Ọ́rúnmílà* said, "Àgbà tó tẹ́pá kùkù wọjà is a giant rat." He tapped the ground, and a rodent came out, which he gave to the *Ẹ̀lẹ̀yẹ*. For the second question, he said: "Ẹ̀lẹ̀yẹ, ògèéré omi ọ̀bẹ̀ tí ò ẹ̀ é bù bọ́jú is red oil." He requested for water, so that, he can demonstrate physically to them that he is not a "stranger." *Ọ́rúnmílà* tapped the surface of the water and the water turned to red-oil. The *Ẹ̀lẹ̀yẹ* applauded him. *Ọ́rúnmílà's* - successful completion of the tests permitted him to continue his journey Not far from the *Ẹ̀lẹ̀yẹ*, *Ọ́rúnmílà* rediscovered the *ìwà* that had gone missing.

The movement of humans from the physical world of the *ayé* (market) to the spiritual world *ọ̀run* (heaven) is guided by some spiritual beings that are charged with responsibilities of investigating into human activities. The entries are monitored by *oníbodè* (gate keeper) or *ikò* (ambassador) who interrogates, probe and authorizes movement from heaven to the earth or vice versa as *Àlọ̀rà̀n* was engaged by these gate keepers in his mission to lunch a market on earth. *Àjàlọ̀run*, is referred to as *Ọ̀lọ̀run* (the one who owns heaven) among the Christians. However, among the Yorùbá, *Ọ̀lọ̀run* is equivalent to *Olódùmarè*.

The demand or request for gifts by *Ẹ̀lẹ̀yẹ* from *Ọ́rúnmílà* points to the role of sacrifice in establishing a market. Sacrifice must be offered to the supernatural beings, as it was offered by *Ọ́rúnmílà* in the first instance. The sacrificial prescriptions or order is given by *Ifá*. This can be in two forms: *ohun láte* (inanimate things sold in the markets) such as *ẹ̀kọ* (solid pap), *àgbọ̀n* (coconut) and *ọ̀gèdè* (plantain or banana) or *ẹ̀jẹ̀balẹ̀* (animals or birds with blood) such as *ewúré* (goat), *pépeye* (duck) and *eyelẹ́* (peageon). To this end, sacri-

fi ce is very important to launch a market. Nothing can be successful without it, as it is a primary connecting force between the physical (human) and spiritual (supernatural) world. The group of *Eleye* were mostly women which may suggest the reason why earthly women are associated with the Yorùbá market and marketing systems.

Market location is determined by *Ifá*, and sacrifices performed at a spot or square where the centre of the new market is to be located. This means that in the absence of *Ifá*, the institution of the Yorùbá market is impossible. The object/symbol set aside for the institution of the market (discussed below) is buried there in the presence of the Yorùbá market stakeholders and title-holders such as the- *ọlọjá* (king, chief, community head or hero), *babaláwo* (Ifá priest), *iyálọjá* (market matriarch), *bàbálọjá* (market patriarch), *iyálájé* (a woman in-charge of trading), and *bàbálájé* (a man in-charge of trading). Again, this is exclusively performed by the *Ifá* priest. This means that in the absence of *Ifá* priest the process of institution of Yorùbá market cannot be conducted.

In the Yorùbá ancient time, markets rotate within the four week days- *ọjọ Ọsẹ*, *Awo*, *Ọgún* and *Jàkúta*; but today *Ajé* (money- commerce) has its own day among the Yorùbá people as Monday, while *Ọjà* may fall on any of the week days; however, *Ifá/Ọrúnmilà* owns both (*Ajé* and *Ọjà*). For example, according to Abimbólá (1977a) (with author's translation):

Ifá ló l'òní,  
 Ifá ló l'ọ̀la,  
 Ifá ló l'ọ̀tunla pẹ̀lú ẹ̀.  
 Ọ̀rúnmilà ló n'ijó méré̀rìn Ọ̀sà d'áyé.

Ifá is the master of today,  
 Ifá is the master of tomorrow;  
 Ifá is the master of the day after tomorrow.  
 To Ifá belongs to all the four days established by Ọ̀sà on earth (p. 10).

Yorùbá indigenous market day is not determined arbitrarily but- by *Ifá* oracle. *Ifá* owns all the four days of the Yorùbá week as indicated above. As a result of this, *Ifá* allocates market days in the Yorùbá community. This makes the roles of *Ifá* imperative in the Yorùbá market and marketing system. But- if the choice of a market day falls or clashes with another nearby market day, another day is chosen for the new market through *Ifá* divination, so that, each of the divinity is associated with a market day without any clash with another divinity.

One of the processes to launch a market is to bury a symbol of the market at the center of the market square. This is complemented by planting of a tree traditionally referred to as *igi ojà* (market tree). There are special trees that perform this role, such as: *osè* (baobab) and *irókò* (mahogany). It can also be- *ìyeyè* (anacardiaceae), or *akòko* (biagnoniaceae) trees (Ògúndèjí 2017, p. 270). These trees have market symbolic connotations. For example, if *pèrègún* (dracaena fragrans) tree is planted in the market, it “symbolizes longevity and good luck among the Yorùbá and it is planted as hedges and as markers of other *òrìṣà* grooves” (Ògúndèjí 2017, p. 271). The choice of which tree to be planted is dictated by *Ifá* in accordance with *odù* that is associated with the market. This is why there are different types of market trees found in various Yorùbá markets. However, if the appropriate tree is already (naturally) growing around or within the market location, it is adopted as *igi ojà* (market tree) after necessary sacrifice has been performed on it. It should be noted that, the *ẹlẹye* (earlier mentioned) engaged *Ọ̀rúnmilà* under an *irókò* tree. This shows the spirituality involved in the market tree. Certain sacrifice is again performed by *Ifá* priest on the tree for market purpose. Commissioning of market is strictly undertaken at the night. The reason behind this, perhaps- is to create conducive atmosphere or environment for the supernatural agents, ancestors and divinities to play their active roles in the institution of market.

### ***Ifá's Prescriptions on Marketing Theories***

Although- both men and women are involved in long distance marketing or trading, however, “women organized local trade networks and markets” (Hamzat 2017, p. 517). Women are the key or active players in the Yorùbá marketing sector of the economy. Association of women with markets is observed in some Yorùbá philosophies. For example, it is a popular saying among the Yorùbá that- *èrè lobinrin jẹ lábọ̀ ọjà* (A woman always comes home with profit from the market). The use of females collocates with market. It should be noted that, *iwà* that was given to *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* symbolizes his primordial wife - given to him as a symbol. In Yorùbá tradition, a spinster symbolizes *ọjà* (market).

*Ọ̀rúnmìlà* enjoins the women to add profit margin to their market products, as to pave way for both business continuity and, to cater to responsibilities, such as: feeding the family and paying the shop rent, among others. According to *Òtúá Ìkà* contained in *Sàlámì* (2002) with author's translation that:

Nígbà iwásẹ̀  
B'Aláròóbọ̀ bá ra nńkan ní ọ̀ké kan;  
ọ̀ké kan nàà ni ọ̀n fíí tà á...

In the olden days  
If the market woman buys a good for twenty thousand cowries,  
She would sell it for the same twenty thousand cowries (p. 726).

This passage refers to *Aláròóbọ̀* traders, those involved in the marketing of animals such as goats, hens, sheeps, and fowls among others (Òkèwándé 2017b, p. 557). The *Aláròóbọ̀*, in the above *Ifá* corpus sold market products at product price. This resulted into market loss on the products. After consulting the *Ifá* oracle on the way forward, the *Ifá* corpus further prescribed to the *Aláròóbọ̀* that:

'Bóo bá rajà ní ọ̀ké kan',  
'Mọ́ọ̀ pè é ní ọ̀ké kan àbọ̀',

kó lè baà pé ọ'  
kó ọ̀ baà` lẹ̀mìí'  
kó o tó jẹ'  
kó o tó mu'  
Ni Aláròóbò` n' sẹ̀ té e dòní  
Ntífá wí fún ọ̀n nàà ní ọ̀n n' lò

'If you buy your goods for one cowry'  
call it one and a half  
'such that it would profit you'  
And that you would be able to go for another trip'  
you would have to feed yourself  
And fend for your family  
This is the same thing the market women does till date  
What Ifá taught them ever since is what they are practicing till date (Sàlámi  
2002, 726).

*Ifá* proposes profit maximization theory for the *Aláròóbò`* traders as one of the indigenous business theories. Although- *Ifá* concentrates on the *Aláròóbò`* traders in the *Ifá* corpus, the application of the marketing proposals by *Ifá* in this example is applicable to all market traders. However, sometimes the Yorùbá apply the forced sales value theory<sup>9</sup> on their market products so the market theory proposed by *Ifá* corpus here may not be applicable with all situations. The forced sales value theory is applied on goods to be sold at a particular time because of situation beyond control. As a result, *Ifá*, in the alternative, prescribes forced sales value theory. This is the situation in Ọ̀wónrán-ba-Tura verse 52, "ATAMAJUBARA (Luckless Seller), blacksmith's wife on her way to Èjìgbòmẹ̀kùn market to sell hoes, "the diviner told her to sell at any price without bargaining at all and that, a certain man would visit her stall that day" (Lijadu 1908a, p. 41). She was prosperous in her marketing ventures because of her obedience to *Ifá's* instructions.. The *Ifá* market philosophy holds that, sometimes, market success does not depend on one's wisdom,

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9 This is unconditional sales option at a particular time.



market capital/money, business or market experience and goods but rather it depends on- obedience to *Ifá's* order and instructions as prescribed by *Ifá* priest.

There are other factors that can determine the application of forced sales theory, like, the need to meet some domestic and financial exigencies such as- payment of debts, provisions of food, and health care among others. Product(s) may be sold at a loss to redeem or protect one's integrity or image, as this is associated with *iwà* as, "goods and services carry different moral valuations" (Good 1973, p. 4). Many Yorùbá believe that, *iwà lọba àwúre* (good character is the secret for market sales of products). In Yorùbá religious belief, *iwà lòrìṣà, bí a bá ti hù ú sí ni í ṣé é gbeni* (There is a deity in everyone which rewards him according to his conduct) (Şotunde 2009, p. 248 and Ajibọla 1947, p. 23). *Òrúnmilà* found himself in this situation when three supernatural agents- *Ikú* (death), *Àrùn* (decease) and *Èṣù*, all of whom visited him. The forced sale theory was applied by *Òrúnmilà* to preserve his integrity and honor. *Ifá* says, *ká ta nńkan ẹni lọpọ̀ sà̀n ju ká tara ẹni lọpọ̀ lọ* (it is better to sell one's products cheap rather than for one to be put to shame). There were no food stuffs at home to take care of these visitors. He had no option than, to send his wife - *Ààbò* to take some divination materials such as the *ìrọkẹ* (divination club), *ìrùkẹrẹ* and *ìbòrí Ifá* to the market for sales. According to Abímbọlá (1968) in *ÈjìOgbè* (with author's translation):

Ọ́dà owó, awo Kóro, ...  
 A díá fún Ọ́rúnmilà...  
 Ni Ọ́rúnmilà ba pe Ààbò, obinrin rẹ,  
 pé kí ó kó àwọn nńkan inú oun lọ sọjà lọ ta.  
 Nígba tí Ààbò dé ojà Èjìgbòmekùn,  
 Ìrọkẹ Ọ́rúnmilà tí ó rà ní egbẹje,  
 Nwọn ní ẹ ẹ ní ogóje.  
 Ìrùkẹrẹ rẹ egbẹfà.  
 Nwọn ní ẹ ẹ ní ogófà.  
 Ìbòrí Ifá a rẹ egbẹrindínlógún,

Nwọn ní ẹ́ é ní ọ̀kànlélogún.  
Ni Ààbò bá m̀ẹ̀kún, ọ́ fi digbe;  
Ó fi iyèrè sohùn arò.  
Ó ní àwọn ọ̀jà nàà ò pójú owó.  
Ni Ọ̀rúnmìlà bá fi iyèrè dá a lohùn;  
pé kí ọ́ lọ ta àwọn ọ̀jà nàà bẹ̀ẹ̀ bẹ̀ẹ̀.  
Ni Ààbò bá ta àwọn ọ̀jà nàà ní Itàkutà,  
lò bá mówó ra onjẹ wálé.  
Àwọn olójò mètẹ̀tẹ̀ta nàà- ikú, àrùn àti Èṣù-je  
Nwọn yó.

Scarcity of money in Kóro ...  
Cast divination for Ọ̀rúnmìlà,  
Ọ̀rúnmìlà called Ààbò his wife,  
to take his properties to the market for sales.  
When ààbò got to the Èjìgbòmẹ̀kún market,  
The iròkẹ̀ that Ọ̀rúnmìlà bought at One Thousand four hundred,  
Was being priced at One hundred and forty.  
The irùkẹ̀rẹ̀ at One Thousand two hundred;  
was being priced at One hundred and twenty.  
The ibòrí Ifá he bought at One Thousand six hundred,  
Was being priced at Twenty-one.  
Then Ààbò busted into tears,  
In Ifá songs-iyèrè mode.  
She said those goods are not up to the products price.  
Then Ọ̀rúnmìlà replied her in iyèrè mode,  
To go and sell those goods just like that;  
Then Ààbò sold off those goods just like that;  
She used the money to buy food stuffs.  
The three supernatural visitors- ikú (death), àrùn (decease) and Èṣù-eat  
to their satisfactions (pp. 20&1).

When Ọ̀rúnmìlà was at Kóro Èkítì, the scarcity of money compelled him to sell his *Ifá* divination materials below the market values, to maintain the integrity and the sanctity of his *ìwà* (character), by entertaining the visitors. To the Yorùbá people, character matters most - *ìwà ló jù* (character matters most), in all things. Nothing (money or material things) can be as valuable as or above *ìwà*. This is because “the gain for a moral person is the good life which is not necessarily quantifiable in financial terms” (Otakpor 1996, p. 527). This is the situation with Ọ̀rúnmìlà who, thought his material things are better

sold at a loss (temporarily, which market symbolizes) than to sell out his *iwà*, morals (which heaven symbolizes).

### **Summary, Findings and Conclusion**

This study has been able to account for the historical background to establishing a market. The work points out that, the institution of Yorùbá market, marketing and location of market involves spiritual connotations. To this effect, the Yorùbá market days - daily, four, eight and sixteen day markets - have been discovered to be religious symbolism; especially *Ifá*. In relation to the Yorùbá market days, these symbols remain unchanged throughout the Yorùbá nations to the present day.

The institution, sustenance and success of Yorùbá markets depend on the integration and corporate active involvement of the divinities, ancestors, supernatural forces or agents and human beings. It is equally found that, the institution of Yorùbá markets system, location and market strategies start from heaven (invisible world) - just like the journey of the divinities to the surface of the earth and that of human beings. Markets, marketing strategies and market location are religious symbolism evinced from *Ifá*. In other contexts, -the market connotes the world (earth), as heaven connotes home (heaven). It is from home -heaven that, the Yorùbá ideology about markets begins, as indicated in the study. It is observed by the study that, *Ifá* plays a leading role in the Yorùbá market, market location and market strategies. This finding is corroborated by the Akin Ìşòlá's (2010) opinion, when he says that, "if you leave out the religion, you are left with deformed culture" (p. 36). Overall, this study concludes that- Yorùbá cultural and economic life, especially, its market economy, are unique- due to the significance of *Ifá* in the setup, location, guidelines and marketing practices. This uniqueness still persists despite the introduction of the modern and/or foreign cultural influences.

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