Investigating Religious Ethics and Sociocultural Relationships in-between Ifá and Ayó Olópón among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria

A Critical Comparative Study

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Abstract:
In Africa, ethics are encapsulated their various religious and social activities. Among the Yoruba, ethnical codes are propagated in religious activities especially, Ifá and in socio-cultural activities such as ayó olópón. Ifá, the springboard on which Yoruba culture rests have specialized formal and informal rules regulating its activities. This informs why violation of rules guiding Ifá profession is regarded as ethical misconduct; the punishment of which may attract severe spiritual and/or human sanctions. Likewise, ayó olópón - indigenous Yoruba sociocultural board game have informal ethical rules. However, despite the national and international nomenclatures of Ifá and ayó olópón, no study is known that undertakes ethical interrelationship between the two cultural elements together. Employing code - a semiotic element, a channel through which communication is encoded. Ethical code of Ifá is compared with ayó olópón. It is found out that, there are affinities between operational rules guiding against Ifá divination profession and rules guiding against ayó game. This study concludes that, among the Yoruba, ethical codes of Ifá and ayó olópón are activated for sustainability of peace and development. Ethics of Ifá and ayó olópón are found related and therefore, ayó olópón ethical code is an extension of Ifá ethical code.

Keywords:
Ifá; ayó olópón; code; culture; ethics; semiotics.

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Introduction

Generally, “ethics is a component of philosophy which is committed to the study of the formulation of theories underlying our socially acceptable behaviour as human beings (Bamiṣaye, 2001). Among the Yoruba, there are formal and informal cultural ethics by which a society is governed or controlled. Formal or informal, ethics has to do with philosophy relating to ensuring good behaviours capable of propagating peace and development in a society. On the one hand, formal ethics are written constitutions and rules guiding the behaviours and practice of organization, group and profession. That is, they are sets of formal norms, also known as mores and laws. They are standard behaviours regarded to be important in any given society. Violation of such formal standard behaviour attracts a severe punishment or sanction. On the other hand, the informal ethics has to do with norms, customs, folkways and taboos realized as informal cultural ethics. That is, informal norms refer to standards of behaviours that are considered less important, but still influence how we behave in a society (Maciver&Page, 1950 and Alake, 2004). Meaning that, ethics has to do with morality and virtues that promote good behaviours. In the opinion of Ejizu, “morality derives directly from the Latin, MOs mores, which means custom or way of life of a people. It has its equivalent in Greek- ethos from which the English word ethics is derived” (2008, p. 4-6). In this study however, ethics covers more than morality, but includes code of conduct guiding operation in doing things or profession. That is, it goes far beyond religion but to socio-cultural life of people.

Etymology of the word- Ethics, is described to be rooted in “the formulation of such terms as ethos, ethics and moral. Ethos is defined as character, sentiment, or disposition of a community or people, considered as a natural endowment; the spirit which actuates manners and customs, ...Ethos is a Greek word corresponding roughly to “ethics.” Something is moral if it pertains to right rather than wrong and ethics is the study of moral issues” (Szućs, et al, 2012, p. 1499). Ethics is concerned with the science of morality. It involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of rights and wrong behaviour...This may involve articulating the good habits that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow, or consequences of our behaviour on others. Generally, ethical code has been mostly used in religious context. However, while it is reasonable to associate ethics with religion, it is also logical and appropriate that some people and activities that are unrelated to religion also observe some ethical rules and codes such as undertaken in ayò olópón in this study.

The informal cultural ethics is associated with some religion and socio-cultural activities such as Ifá and ayò olópón. Unlike is foreign recreational activities such as chess and ludo that are exclusively for relaxation and entertainment, recreation among the Yoruba encodes cultural values- virtues beyond entertainment and relaxation. That is, religious concepts are enshrines in other aspects of life. However, both formal and informal cultural ethics work towards the same goal- positive behavioral or moral code.

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2 Ethnics is therefore not imported concept to Africa generally and among the Yoruba in particular.
It is pertinent to note that, African societies are being governed by the informal cultural ethical code enshrines in various oral genres such as proverbs, philosophy and aphorisms. In addition, “the foundation role of the inscription system in Ifá distinguishes it as a ‘literate’ learned means of inquiry – Ifá is commonly called alákòwé, the scribe or literate one... Ifá divination protocols are the closest an ‘oral’ society could devise to fulfil the requirement of genuinely divine writing and speaking” (Adeękọ, 2010, p. 288) This opinion establishes that, in orality, there is a form of learning process in form of symbols that communicate ideas and information. Orality is described as “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” (Gunner, 2007, p. 67). The implication of this opinion is that orality does not imply absence of literacy. African generally and Yoruba in particular have cultural or indigenous ethics – a set of moral principles or issues that govern a person’s behaviour or conduct of an activity.

Ethical code of Ifá is formal-learnable. It’s knowledge containing of “multiple components, including formal and informal systems. Formal systems are the tangible organizational elements pertaining to ethics that are purposefully designed and implemented (e.g., ethics programs), whereas informal systems are the unwritten policies, practices, and values that are relevant to ethics” (Casoliva-Cabana, 2019, p. 2). This opinion informs why every aspect of Ifá’s knowledge- philosophy, economic, social, religion, science etcetera is learnable. However, social activities such as ayọ olọpọ̀n are complementary media of ensuring peaceful and sustainable environment. That is, informal cultural ethical code is as old as the African societies. Its existence predates the formal cultural ethical code that was introduced by the western nations. As a result, the study of African indigenous systems of living must be sustained and developed.

Eventhough, the general belief on Ifá is religious, however, it is erroneous to limit its scope to religion alone; because, Ifá’s knowledge in addition to religion encapsulates philosophy, medicine, science and technology, mythologies and history among others. However, the sociocultural influence of Ifá, as proposed in this study cannot also be an exemption; since Ifá is believed to be the Yoruba cultural convergent point for all cultural activities of the Yoruba. The prominence of Ifá is however not limited to the Yoruba nations alone, but, its nomenclature cut across nations of the world. The value of Ifá on human activities and life is recognized and appreciated. This prompted the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to proclaimed Ifá in 2005, as one of the 86 traditions of the world to be recognized as masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage of humanity. By this declaration, Ifá is regarded as one of human heritages requiring urgent preservation. Ifá’s heritage is enshrined in the “international law and policy. .... therefore, has a universal value in which everyone has a reasonable interest” (Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2018, p. 2). The implication of this opinion is that, Ifá ethics have been formalized through various indigenous cultural activities.
Ayò ọlọpọ̀n is a Yoruba indigenous board game. Like Ifá, the international status of ayò ọlọpọ̀n is also not in doubt. Apart from its popularity among the Yorùbá people of Southwestern Nigeria, it is called Gisoro in Burundi, Oware in Ghana, Achochodi in Ivory Coast, Adjito/Vadjito in Benin, Ayọ Eleh in Igbo and Kalati in Sweden. The prominence of ayò ọlọpọ̀n in socio-cultural life of the Yoruba people is demonstrated in various socio-religious activities such as festivals and the deployment by artists in drama for entertainments and propagation of some cultural values. It becomes more pertinent to re-examine the orientation of Yoruba people that erè lâ à fomọ ayọ ẹ. That is everything around ayò ọlọpọ̀n is fun, play or entertainment.

The Aim and Objectives

The main aim of this study is to establish the crisscrossing of ethical and moral code between Ifá and ayò ọlọpọ̀n. The objectives are to; establish ayò ethical and moral codes as extension of Ifá codes and to stablish the intercultural confluence between the religious and social activities of the among the Yoruba.

Materials and Methods

Ethics and Culture: A Review

There are two forms of cultural relationship: the intercultural, which has to do with the relationship of one cultural element and another and intracultural, that is, cultural relationship within culture. An intercultural cultural relationships was undertaken by İbrahimoğlu, Çiğdem and Seyhan "to better understand the impact of cultural differences in perceptions of ethical attitudes of Turkish and Arab societies" (2014, p. 1). The work establishes relationship between the two cultures. In this case, the intercultural relationship is accounted for. Likewise, such ethical relationship may exist in form of cultural diffusion- a cultural spread from higher concentration to the lower concentration within culture, such as perceived with Ifá and ayò ọlọpọ̀n in this study. That is, the cultural spreads of the ethical code from Ifá to ayò ọlọpọ̀n.

Cultural activities such as ethics influence the entire cultural system since all other cultural activities and institutions are undertaken by human-beings in a society.

Ifá, as a converging point of all Yoruba cultural activities have influence on the systems of living of the Yoruba people. This is done through socialization ethical and moral codes, activated in the religious and social life of the Yoruba people. This shows that “culture is an integrated system of learned behaviour” (Roy, 2003, p. 663). Socialization happens in a way that, “when an individual born in a society, he is automatically born into a culture. Although, the individual cannot perceive the culture directly, he is exposed to the social influences that play upon his physical and mental structure. Gradually, he adapts the pattern of behaviour sanctioned by the group; culture molds him as per the expectation of the society” (Roy, 2003,
The implication of this opinion is that there are established cultural activities (formal or informal) through which ethics codes are enshrined. *Ifá* and *ayọ ọlọpọn* are such cultural elements wherein ethical codes are encapsulated.

Ethics and moral codes remain critical and universal components of human culture that shape or mold human behaviours positively. Meaning that, ethical and moral codes “develop out of culture. The specific culture pattern helps an individual to build some moral principles, which are transmitted through various customs, norms values, prohibitions of the society. Thus different cultures produce different moral codes and so on the prevailing behaviour in one society may seem to be strange and even repellant to the other” (Roy, 2003, p. 502). A critical look at the cultural activities unfolds some latent ethical behaviours capable of sustainable peace and development.

Ethics, is mostly associated with behaviours, which is one of the major themes in *Ifá* corpus. This informs the importance Yorùbá people attached to behaviour. Ethics applies to all aspects of conduct of individuals, groups, and organizations or societies. The “concepts of ethics refer to classification such as good-bad, beautiful- ugly, true false which the community members with in the same values to the human behaviour and relations have added. Ethics deals with human behaviour. Ethics can be thought of as also a framework covering philosophy, moral philosophy, moral problems and moral judgments” (Mehalu, 2011). In this context, ethics is a set of norms and values which have been improved to praise or criticize the behaviour of the individuals living in the same community (Jones & Kavanagh, 1996). A society is valued by the forms and influence of ethical elements available in culture.

**Methods**

Code, is one of the semiotic elements propounded by Peirce (1931) is adopted for this study. Other semiotic elements are symbol, icon and index. Code is adopted for this study; because “semiology has so far concerned itself with codes” (Barthes, 1964, p. 1). One of the concerns of semiotics is understanding the code with which sings are communicated. The signs and their meanings are made known by codes which is, “a means of conveying messages, a vehicle of communication” (Geoffery and Short, 1981, p. 124). In a cultural activity, there can be concurrent use of two codes. That is, there may be simultaneous occurrences of two or more codes in a cultural context or event. The connections of signs and their meanings are channeled by code. Codes help to simplify phenomena in order to make it easier to communicate ideas. Understanding codes requires cultural knowledge involving linking signs to the meaning.

Interpretation of codes or symbols is a major task for a semiotician because it is the main outcome of semiotics or semiosis. Interpretation of codes in a culture is important to the establishment of meanings of the codes. That is, interpretation of code is important in the understanding the meaning of a sign, symbol or text., because, a sign can create multiple
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meanings, depending on the cultural context it exists. Understanding and application of the cultural element on human life largely depends on the knowledge or experience of individual in a culture.

In this study, ethical codes of *Ifá* are related to the ethical code of *ayó olópón* to demonstrate that the ethical code of *ayó olópón* evolve from *Ifá*. This is done by establishing relationship between the two ethical cultural elements. Relating religious ethics in *Ifá* to *ayó olópón* will increase the understanding that ethics go beyond religion as “religious ethics can as well be seen as comparative religious ethics which is an expression used to refer to the study of religious ethics when the study is not confined to a single religious tradition” (Nyoyoko, 2012, p. 69). Implication of this statement is that religious ethnics are validated in social ethnics. The Yorubá adopts this consciousness of pairing two similar things that share related features, values and forms in common.

**Results**

Ethnical codes in religion are not only means of propagating virtues that are panacea for societal development but also encoded in social activities such as *ayó olópón*. Ethics is one of the cultural elements that relates both *Ifá* and *ayó olópón* together. The religious ethnics are encapsulated in Yoruba social activities such as *ayó olópón*. The implication of this result is that, informal ethics are media through which peace is propagated and guaranteed in Yoruba societies. Yoruba society is regulated through formal and informal cultural ethics such as encapsulated in *Ifá* and *ayó olópón*. Ethical code of *Ifá* is a proto, basic or primary code, while *ayó olópón* is derived or secondary. That is, *ayó olópón* - the sociocultural element of Yoruba culture, is dependent on the *Ifá* religion. *Ayó olópón* as an informal ethics is universal - not limited to a religious group. The ethical code of *ayó* establishes that, eventhough it is a sociocultural activity majorly for entertainment and relaxation its values, just like *Ifá*, is premised on sustainable development.

**Discussion**

Every profession, including cultural activities such as games, organization or group has ethics that guide the running and operation of different activities- in interpersonal relationship among members, rules of practice and code of conduct among others. This is also applicable to religious activities. *Ifá* as a religion, have its own ethical rules- both spiritual and physical that are codes of conduct of practice. That is, any unethical practice sometimes resorts to spiritual sanctions in addition to the *Ifá* practitioners’ sanction. It is a rule that *Ifá* priest must “adhere strictly to the ethics and secrets of his profession” (Abimbólá, 1977a, p. 13). There are ethical rules, requirements and behaviours that an individual must possess before one engages in *Ifá* profession to succeed. This is why *Ifá* corpus- *Arótètè-tàn-ôn-sà*, prescribes that whoever will engage in the profession must be “*Babaláwo tó gbán sárásarà níi mọfá.*” That is,
a very knowledgeable Ifá priest is proficient in Ifá divination. The corpus verse states the importance of knowledge in Ifá divination. This is not strange as Ifá is the divinity of wisdom; whoever will associate with it must be wise and knowledgeable.

To ensure that the ethical sanctity of Ifá profession is enforced, certain qualifications and requirements are prerequisites before initiation to Ifá profession cult is instituted. Prior to this, before an Ifá priest begins to practice, he must have been initiated into Odù cult: The Ifá code of communication. This is because Ifá symbols are coded in Odù, the knowledge of which must be understood by prospective Ifá practitioner. Identification, recognition, understanding and interpretation of Odù requires a very high intelligent quotient. That is, the prospective priest must have a high intelligent quotient (IQ). This is needful because, there are minimum numbers of Odù or eso-Ifá verse a trainee must be able to recite, along with the associated sacrifices. During these exercises, different codes of ethics of Ifá profession are thought, learned and performed by the would-be Ifá priest, through Ifá ethical codes, enshrines in various Ifá corpora. That is, “the thematic contents of Yorùbá Ethics are copiously revealed in several portions of Ifá Corpus...However, too, it is not possible to exhaust the list of themes making up Òrùnmílẹ̀’s Code of Ethics” (Akintọ̀la, 1999, p. 99).

Generally, skills acquisition has been associated with ethics, because, it focuses on realizing good conduct, being an effective moral agent, and bringing values into one’s work, all require skills in addition to a moral inclination. Studies have uncovered four skill sets that play a decisive role in the exercise of moral expertise” (Saucier, 2018, p. 2). In short, it is expected that, ayò olòpón players possess some personal qualities that show his dexterities-skills, like Ifá. Eventhough in ayò olòpón, the players are not initiated, because, while Ifá objects are sacred and spiritual, that of ayò olòpón, is basically associated with social values. This is because, the game is not confines to a particular religion. It is a recreational activity that different people with different background involve in. As a result of the wide scope the game has over religion, there is no doubt the influence of socio-cultural ethics, such as coded in ayò can be underestimated. Imbibing and abiding by the ayò olòpón ethical code provides a social institution through which some social vices such as selfishness and fraud among others are curtailed or checked.

To engage in ayò olòpón, the players must be intelligent in calculating and moving seeds around the board to win. It had been established that mathematical knowledge of binary, permutation and combination, arithmetic progression, geometric progression are keenly involved in ayò olòpón. One of the importance of ayò olòpón is to display the competence and dexterity, that is intelligence of a player over another. Like in Ifá divination, in ayò olòpón, before a player can be a master of ayò game, he must have acquired some informal skills over

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4 For example, only initiated apprentices of Ifá are allowed into the guild to acquire the specialized knowledge associated with the training. And no one is given liberty to practice the acquired art until the final step is mastered’ (Ilésanmí, 2004, p. 9). Figures 2(1024) and 2(4096) are among “the various numbers of Odù claimed by different writers and Ifá priests” (McGEE, 1983, p. 111). That is, these figures mark the minimum and standard numbers of eso-Ifá to be mastered by the prospective Ifá priest before initiation.

5 Different ayò olòpón players come from different religions.
a duration of time. Like other skills, players of ayò starts by watching of the game, during which he learnt a lots of the informal ethics guiding against the game.

In Ifá divination and ayò ológóng systems, the use of human skills, intelligent and wisdom come to play. Skill acquisition in ayò ológóng requires some level of intelligence, for it is a game that rests on knowledge. Even though, skills in ayò ológóng is informal, however, "the game is not easy" (Agbalajobi, Cooper and Sonuga, n.d., p. 375), which makes the skill to be associated with high level of intelligence. Such training is invariably sustained by constant practice. The ‘strategies’ in the manipulation of ayò ológóng seeds, determine the level of skill of a player. In fact, the success of winning ayò ológóng is predicated on the skills of the player

Due to the limited human knowledge products- outcome of Ifá divination and ayò ológóng are unpredictable. The outcomes of Ifá divination through ikin⁶ or ọpèlè⁷ are only predicted after completion of the process of divination on the skills and knowledge of a diviner. However, while the training and knowledge of Ifá divination acquire both formal and informal rigorous training, that of ayò ológóng requires informal. However, both involve training. This is associated with perseverance "perseverance is the ability to decide on a moral plan of action and then to adapt to any barriers that arise in order to continue working toward that goal” (Clement, Vincent and Casanovas, 2012a, p. 2). That is, a competent ayò ológóng player must be a strategist as the “game requires deep thought and good strategy to move seeds with the ultimate aim to win” (Clement, Vincent and Casanovas 2012a, pp. 2-3). The application of the mental knowledge makes the process involved to be complex and as such, playing ayò ológóng should not however be easy, but should allow for considerable variation of expertise, which variation should be easily describable as a hierarchy of strength of performance. It is also desirable that there be many different strategies available to the player, so that the strategy adopted by the subject may be a reflection of his personality. If there are also a numbers of tactics to master, it will prove illuminating to observe how a novice subject learns to use them. The degree of outward manifestation of thought process behind a subject’s performance is also an important parameter in the selection of a game. While protocols may be used to make performance more explicit, information derived from the performance itself is more reliable (Agbalajobi, Cooper and Sonuga, n.d., p. 474).

Reliability of information from ayò ológóng is relative. That is, it derives this peculiarity or attribute from Ifá. As Ifá generally concerned with obtaining information on every practical problem of everyday life. The opinion above demonstrates that, eventhough, ayò ológóng in basically for recreation and entertainment, however, the game has complementary values that cannot be underestimated. The relative values of ayò ológóng to Ifá suggest that, both in Ifá and ayò ológóng, like any other profession, the success depends on the personality of the Ifá priest and ayò ológóng players- the level of his dexterity and acquisition of necessary skills.

⁶ Sacred Ifá palm-nuts, usually in sixteen
⁷ Ifá divination chain made of eight ọpèlè seeds. It has two faces- concave and convex; making sixteen faces.
Generally, it has been observed that there are individual traits to ethnical understanding and "beside this individualistic conditions such as age, sex, religion, etc., also have an impact on ethical perceptions and attitudes" (İbrahimoğlu, Çiğdem and Seyhan, 2014, p. 1). The individual traits are strictly guided by the ethical code so as to realize the socio-cultural and religious objectives. The more adherence to the ethical code, the more the desired results or goals are achieved. Since Ifá ethical code is associated with religion, the practice involves the interaction with spiritual agents, some ethical codes are not opened to the public, that is, they are cultic. This is why it is only an initiated Ifá priest that can interpret the language of Ifá oracle. This is why the training involves both formal and informal training. Ifá client is ignorant or novice about the outcome or results of the divination. Unlike in Ifá divination, however, ayò olópón ethical code is opened. All the activities of the game are conducted openly. The audience or spectators understand all the rules, except for those that are learning the game by watching. Since Ifá divination ethical code involves both formal (because whoever is not an initiated Ifá priest will be ignorant or novice of some Ifá ethical code) and informal, opened and closed, the informal ethical code is complemented by the ayò olópón ethical code.

Like in Ifá, performance in ayò revealed that, the system is regulated by scientific knowledge, especially, computer in relation to memory. It is an ethics in ayò olópón, that, “a player may count the seeds in his own holes by picking them up, but not those of his opponent, so that a memory component is introduced into the game. This may be assimilated on the computer builds up a large number of seeds in one hole the number displayed may be set to upper limit” (Agbalajobi, Cooper and Şonuga, n. d, p. 47). The game is more anchored on memory of the players. That is, ability to know the numbers of ayò seeds to his advantage and the ability to block any loop holes that the opponent may explore against him. The more he is able to calculate by using different mathematical methods such as addition, subtraction and multiplication, the more his chances or probability of winning more ayò seeds.

In Ifá divination, children are excluded, as the profession is associated with maturity coupled with high intelligence and memory which demands for memorization and calculation. This is why “many people start their training at early age, usually between ten and twelve, and they remain with their master or the next ten or fifteen years before the firm part of their training is completed” (Abimbola, 1977a, p. 12). That is, the core Ifá training starts at the age bracket of twenty-five years and above. Before this stage, a trainee will only be sent on some errand such as buying of some things and some domestic works unrelated with divination.

In ayò olópón, immature children rarely engage in the game. This is as a result of high memory impact and input such as calculations- addition, subtraction, division and multiplication involved in the game. Relating ayò olópón, to Morabaraba and Macala games8 as one of the precolonial African recreations, it is described as the game that its knowledge covering wide areas in mathematics such as algebra, geometry, theory of numbers, topology, combinatorics, graph theory, set theory symbolic logic as well as probability theory (Gerdes, 8 These are related to ayò game
1994). It has been established that, Mathematics concepts such as Geometrical shapes, Algebra, Ratio and Proportion, Symmentary, Logical reasoning, Counting, Combinational Game theory, Search Algorithms. Logical thinking and empirical and mental calculation” are also embedded in ayò olôpón (Nleya and Ndlovu, 2020, p. 141). All these works on ayò evolved for problem solving using different scientific approaches. These scientific approaches remind us the basic function of Ifá divination- problem solving as earlier explained. Ifá is consulted to provide a way forward in times of trouble and proffer solutions through Ifá oracular order.

The attributes of human mental and cognition in ayò olôpón is here believed to be as a result of the relationship the game has with Ifá as explained. As many adults engage in Ifá divination profession, likewise many adults are involved in ayò olôpón. There is also no age limit to both. In fact, the game is medically recommended for the aged people who are suffering from dementia and sight. That is, the game is discovered to be memory enhancer. In the opinions of Oyeleke, Ige, Emuoyibofarhe, and Aworinde “acceptability by demented people and potential sufferers will not be an issue...These attributes we believe will help African sufferers to recover faster” (2014, p. 25).

Movement in the marking of Odù-Ifá and sowing of ayò seeds on the boards is another ethical code. Movement in sowing of ayò seeds is in an anticlockwise direction (Climent, Caanal and Casanovas, 2012). In process of sowing of ayò seeds, a hole on the board must not be skipped, unless if the ‘looping’ (the hole where the accumulation of Odù is taken) is created. Na’Allah gives hints further on this by saying, “some traditional games like the Yorùbá ayò involve some writing in the form of strokes or lines” (2010, p. 4). This right to left movement is also akin to the marking, reading and interpreting Ifá symbols. That is, “since both the divining chain and the printed marks are read from right to left, like Arabic, the pattern of the right-hand side are considered basic and it is upon them that the 16 basic patterns of the printed marks arranged in order of seniority” (Abimbola, 1977a, p. 16).

Furthermore, time of performance is another ethical rule that must be followed in Ifá divination and ayò olôpón. Both Ifá divination and ayò olôpón are rarely performed out in the night. This is because, night is traditionally devoted for other things, such as settlement of misunderstanding and domestic works. Ifá divination that requires information from the gods through Odù is usually performed during the day time, when the shadow of the divination tray will not be shown. On one hand, the babaláwo believe that, Òrùnmilà must have slept and, on the other hand, there are Odù that are recited along the use of blood- animals and snail-fluid and so on. It is usually difficult to get some of these items in the night. Likewise, ayò olôpón is not played in the morning or at night. It is the common belief that, “bålè bá lè, à fọmọ ayò fàyọ” (Kômóláfè, 1978, p. 180). That is, when it is dark, we desist from playing with ayò seeds. The Yorùbá discourages one from playing ayò olôpón in the morning; believing that, “Orayè ènìyànní tí à tòò àárà.” That is, it is an unintelligent that plays ayò olôpón in the morning. This is to discourage people from indolence, since the game is not a profession. Ayò is played in the evening period as relaxation after the day’s job. Day time is devoted to work. However, development has overtaken this belief and practice as ayò olôpón is played in the
morning, organized as a competition game in some cultural, religious and in drama and films. Likewise, the intelligent players are involved in the game. In Ifá divination, it is practiced in the morning and day time but not night. Perhaps, both Ifá and ayò game are performed with the day-light so as to guarantee transparencies in the processes of the performances. However, this is in addition to the spiritual and cultural rules that guide against their performances.

Another area of ethical relationship between Ifá and ayò game in the performance. The process of Ifá divination must be open and transparent; both the babaláwo and the client(s) must be actively involved in the process. Whether the client is able to read and interpret the message or not, the interactions of the divination objects are open and transparent to him or her. The divination board must be laid opened because, it is ethical that, Ifá’s profession be performed with truthfulness, honesty, and transparency. Ifá priest is under ethical oath that: “A kí ṣawo ká puró” (Adéékó, 2010, p. 287). That is, the person sworn to the divination profession must not lie. The symbol of Ọ̀rúnmílẹ̀- the oracle of Ifá symbolizes truth, honesty and transparency. In order to ensure transparency in ayò, it is a rule that it be played in the open during the daylight period so as that both the players and the spectators can see or view clearly to comment on the activities of the player. Any player that tries to manipulate ayò seeds to his advantage is shouted at by the opponent payer and audience. This attitude is regarded as ọjọ́rọ́- fraud. Whatever fraud hidden from the opponent player is exposed by the audience. This makes the game to be free from manipulation of all forms.

It is the ethics of the game, that a player with most of the seeds supplies the opponent for the objective and enjoyment of the game to be actualized. The ethics of ayò ọlọpón is that:

if all opponent pits are empty, the player must make a move that will give his opponent a move, this is called “Golden rule”. If no such move can be made, the player captures all the remaining seeds on the board, ending the game. If no move is possible the winner is the person with greater number of captured seeds (n. a, n. d, p. 15).

The opinion above, coded through ayò ethical practice requires that, in real life application, the rich should supply or provide the poor where and when possible to do so; revealing that, life is interesting in communal sharing of benefits or things. Any ayò player that monopolizes the board by harvesting almost all the seeds is regarded as anikànjọpón. Likewise, Ifá teaches that, those who are sufficient in some necessities of life such as money and food should supply to the needy ones. Ìwòrí Wọfún corpus states that:

Ká bu ọkan mu, ki  ámbu ẹjì ko ọgbà/To drink a cup and give two cups to an elder

Tí ọgbà bá bojú wèyin, ki  ámb tun ọkan mu/If an elder appreciates, one should drink a cup again

Kí ọ wá bó sí dógba-n-dógba/That it becomes equal

A difá fún Pàràkọ́yí/Cast divination for Pàràkọ́yí (Odégbọ́la, 2014, p. 181).

The Ifá corpus above teaches that one must not be a miser, stingy or selfish but should share from whatever you have with those in needs. The Ifá states that ìwà imo-tara-eni-nikan
kó pé (Odégbọ́la, 2014, p. 181). That is, selfishness does not profit one. The Ifá-ayọ ethical code teaches that society will experience peace and development. This is why Obineche “advocates that a synergy between religion and morality in Nigeria will create a peaceful and harmonious society and make the profession of every religion in Nigeria a meaningful reality” (2021, p. 13). However, as revealed in this study, ethical code is not novel to the Yoruba society. It had been instituted in various cultural and social activities capable of development and peaceful co-existence among the people. The relationships between Ifá and ayọ olọpọ́n ethical code demonstrate synergies between the two cultural elements.

**Conflict of Interest**

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

**Notes on Contributor**

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