Èjìgbòmèkùn Market in Ilé-Ifè: Investigating the Nexus between the Mythical and Modern era of the Yorùbá History

Abiodun Ajayi and Olusegun Rotimi Faturoti
Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Nigeria
biodunajayi1@gmail.com
fattseg60@gmail.com

Abstract
Èjìgbòmèkùn market has featured prominently in Yorùbá folklore, Ifá verses, maxims, and proverbs. Therefore, the presence of a market by that name in the modern time at the northern end of Ìlărè street in Ilé-Ifè reminds one of that mythical Èjìgbòmèkùn market and the mysteries that surrounded it. One of the questions that normally flow into one’s mind is whether or not the modern Èjìgbòmèkùn market is also shrouded in such mysteries as attributable to the mythical one. This study aims at ascertaining the importance of Èjìgbòmèkùn market in the Yorùbá history as references are usually made to it by the entire Yorùbá race as an important institution. The study also aims at investigating the link between the mythical and the modern Èjìgbòmèkùn markets with the use of historical method which involves the use of oral data gathered through interviews, archival documents, and relevant texts. It is hoped that historicizing such an institution with a mythical existence that have a modern offshoot will engender a better understanding of the Yorùbá history.

Introduction
While farming remained the dominant occupation before the advent of the colonial administration in Yorùbáland, markets provided the lucrative outlets for the trading of the farm produce. Thus, market had been a vital part of the Yorùbá life as it was a lubricant that oiled the wheels of the people’s economy.
and the associated traditional system. The nature of the Yorùbá market is in line with Oluwole’s definition of market as “a place where transactions for the exchange of goods and services take place.” This definition was corroborated by Olupe, when he defined market as “an institutional arrangement that brings buyers and sellers into a close contact.” In the words of Akinwande, of the three prominent places where the Yorùbá people mingle, such as social events, town hall meetings, and markets, market takes the lead. All of these combine to underpin the fundamentals of mutual co-existence among the Yorùbá vividly, particularly with regards to market which has been found out to be an important part of their life.

In line with Yorùbá traditional lore, market is not an accidental institution. This is because, before a market could be established, it had to be at the discretion of the king, who in turn would engage the services of the diviners for consultation with Ifá oracle in order to determine the location of the proposed market and its period. In most Yorùbá communities, markets are usually located in front of the king’s palaces, which were usually the center of the town. Such markets were aptly titled Ojá Oba (The king’s market). In Ilé-Ifé for instance, Ojá Oba is located at a stone throw to the king’s palace. The market is given other appellations like, Ojá Ifé (Ifé market), Ojá Ajé (Ajé’s market), Ojá Èjìgbòmèkùn (Èjìgbòmèkùn market), Ojá Èlù (town’s market) and most remarkably Ojá Òrùnmì là (Òrùnmì là’s market).

Èjìgbòmèkùn market exhibits all the features of Yorùbá market. All these features that are attributable to Yoruba traditional markets are indicative of the roles they play. The siting of Èjìgbòmèkùn market in the neighborhood of the king’s palace gave the king the opportunity to maintain effective control on market proceedings through his representation by the queens and palace envoys. This is because, the king was forbidden by tradition and custom to attend market sessions himself. The reason for this location was to ensure security of the market, since the king enjoyed unparalleled guard by powerful men, reputable hunters, and the magical personalities. This portends

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3 Oral interview with Chief Akinwande Olajire, the Baba oja of Ejigbomekun market, 65 years, 12/10/2019.

4 Ibid.

5 D. Ogunremi. (1998), “Foundation of the Yoruba Economy in the pre-Colonial era” in Deji Ogunremi and Biodun Adediran (eds.), *Culture and Society in Yorubaland*, Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication, p. 120.

6 Oral interview with Chief Akinwande Olajire, the Baba-Oja.

7 D. Ogunremi. (1998), “Foundation of the Yoruba Economy, p. 120.
assurance of adequate protection for the attendants of the market, and they paid for this inform of tributes and tolls to the king’s agents in the market.

Éjigbòmekùn, like every other Yorùbá traditional markets, also served as a rendezvous for various social activities. Such activities include celebration of festivals, performance of public rituals that have to do with the peace and prosperity of the community among others. For example, from the time immemorial, the Ajé Shrine (ojúbo ajé) was located in Éjigbòmekùn market. Ajé is a Yorùbá goddess of wealth. The import of the shrine in the market is that, there is an intimate relationship between money and market, hence the saying:

\[
\text{Ajé ló bí Qjà}
\]
\[
\text{Qjà ló bí Ajé}
\]
\[
\text{A dí jà fún Ė ji wòwò}
\]
\[
\text{Tò lónún o ló ná ojà láimówó lówó}
\]
\[
\text{A kí i péérí ojà lái lówó lówó o}
\]
\[
\text{Ejiwòwò má re ojà láimówó lówó o}
\]
\[
\text{Ko o má baá gbọnwọ popo lábọ́ ojà.}
\]

The goddess of money begat market
Market begat the goddess of money
Divine for Ėji wòwò
Who was going to the market without money
No one discusses the issue of market without money
Ēji wòwò do not go to the market if you don’t have money
Lest you come back empty handed

Similar cases were also observed by Mabogunje and Omer-Cooper in Kuta, where the chief goes to Mosun market to dance on the second day of Alugbua festival, and this ends the official part of the festival. As the market served as the sources of such ritual materials, so were they consummated right there in the market with the king and priest officiating.

An important feature of Éjigbòmekùn market was its serving as a medium of disseminating information. For instance, in the evening of Edi, Aje and

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9 Oral interview with Chief Akinwande Olajire, ibid.
Olojo festivals in Ile-Ife, palace officials are expected to visit Òjìgbòmèkùn market to make announcements and to collect sacrificial items in the same way as it happened in Osogbo, during wiwa Osun, a ceremony in preparation for Osun festival in Osogbo.\(^ {12} \) During this time, the Ataoja and the Iya Osun visit the market to declare publicly that it is time “to eat new yam” and thus remove the taboo forbidding the harvesting and selling of new yams at the king’s market (ọja ọba) in Osogbo.\(^ {13} \) Official announcement of Ogun festival in Ondo is also done in the market, nine days to the festival.\(^ {14} \)

Although there was a specialized medium for this, decisions, policies and programs of development had better hearing during market sessions, because attendants would take the information home for the benefit of other members of their families.\(^ {15} \) Òjìgbòmèkùn market was also a place for entertainers, a hideout for criminals, debtors, etc. Other people that could also be found in its sessions included, beggars, and love makers, friends, and relations who came to meet for settling quarrels, make deals, and exchange views. medicinal herbalists, religious proselytisers, diviners, and so on also attended markets to win new converts and sell their products and services. Equally, political matters, discovery of new ailments, of new techniques and of new crops were made known in the markets.\(^ {16} \) Markets were places where celebrants of important occasions brought their entourage and drummers.\(^ {17} \)

On the other hand, Òjìgbòmèkùn market is always closed during religious or cultural confinements or ceremonies. An important example is during Edi festival, when Tele will carry ritual items to Moremi Forest (Igbo Moremi) in the company of other spiritual officials of the king. On their way from the Moremi Forest, Eri, a priestess of the goddess Moremi will hold an antelope lap (tete ètu) which she would hand over to the first person she met on her way. The victim here dares not reject it. As soon as a person was on sight and was targeted by the Moremi Priestess, the individual will not be able to run, as certain spiritual forces would have held him down. The implication of this is that, the person will not live to witness another year.\(^ {18} \)

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12 Oral interview with Chief Akinwande Olajire; ibid.
18 Oral interview with Chief Akinwande Olajire, ibid.
Èjìgbòmèkùn Market in Ilé-Ifè

Egungun cults do not imposed curfew in Ile-Ife as in some parts of Yorubaland, but Èjìgbòmèkùn market witness closures on the actual day of Olojo festival during which the king comes to the market to pray at the shrine of Aje goddess. The importance attached to this is inherent in an Ife adage, *olojo n laa fojo fun* (the day is better given to its owner). Èjìgbòmèkùn market is also closed during Aje and Itapa festivals. Various other Yoruba traditional markets also witnessed total closure on festive occasions. For example, markets in Ibadan are usually closed for a day or two during the annual festival of Oke Ibadan. Likewise, in Oyo and Ondo towns, markets are expected to be closed for a day, during annual festivals of Oro and Moko respectively.

As in many Yoruba markets, several trees that are regarded as habitual residence of certain spirits or gods were planted in Èjìgbòmèkùn market. For example, the shrine of Aje goddess used to be under one of the trees in the market in the same way as the feet of akoko, peregun and iyeye are shrines where Ogun is usually worshiped in many Yoruba traditional markets. In the modern time, Èjìgbòmèkùn has transformed into a market of lock up shops and Aje shrine has also become a fettered building as opposed to the age long foot of a tree. Many of the trees in the market were removed upon the complaint of the occupants of the newly built shops, that the roots of the trees were affecting the foundation of the buildings in the market. Many of the trees were also removed to create spaces for more shops. However, some trees are still being preserved in the market. On the contrary, the present king of Ise, who was responsible for putting up a modern building for Aje goddess recently gave a directive to the custodians of other gods to ensure adequate preservation of the trees in the shrines at their disposal.

In the ancient time, Èjìgbòmèkùn market was accorded the greatest recognition and importance among other markets in Yorubaland. This is because, it was believed to be the oldest market in Ilé-Ifè and the entire Yorùbàlánd. According to Chief Akinwande, Èjìgbòmèkùn market is as old as Ilé-Ifè itself. Although its exact date of establishment is not known, but it is speculated to be during the reign of Oba Òṣẹgàndéruku, the ninth Oòni of Ifè. According to oral traditions, Èjìgbòmèkùn market was also known as the Qù̀nmì là’s

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19 Oral interview with Mrs. Toibat Omisore, a seller in the market, 88 years old, 8/2/2020.
23 Oral interview with Chief Akinwande.
24 Ibid.
Market because immediately after its establishment, Ṓrunmí là was always sighted at the market square to purchase most of his ritual items. Therefore, it was Ṓrunmí là’s versatility in Ifá divination which resulted in his frequent attendance of the market to buy sacrificial items that made him the best customer to most sellers in the market. This resulted into a saying that, Ṓrunmí là wá sè mí lòwọ kí n rí tajé ọ̀rọ̀́ lóní-ín (مشاركة، kindly come and be my first buyer so I can sell very well today). This was how Ejigbòmekùn market assumed the alternative name, Ṓrunmí là’s Market.  

The Origin and Nature of Ejigbòmekùn Market

Ejigbòmekùn was believed to be the first market in Ilé-Ifè and Yorùbáland in general. According to Ife oral tradition, when Òranfè and Ajé descended from heaven, they looked around the world for a good place to settle and Ilé-Ifè was the place of their eventual destination. The place they settled eventually became known as Ejigbòmekùn market. People all over the world came to them to buy and sell. As time went on, many other people came to join them as sellers in the market, thereby making the market to expand. The first set of people to sell things in the market were the lékulé ja and éléwe-ṣọ (sellers of ritual items). Thus, the location became a market for Ifá priests and it became known as Ojá Ṓrunmí là as mentioned earlier. Many Ifá literary corpuses report of how Ṓrunmí là visited the market on regular basis. It was the first place where cowry shells were used as means of exchange. This is because, the shell is the Ajé’s symbol of honor. According to Ife oral tradition, Ajé, Òramfè, and Oṣù were friends and founders of Ejigbòmekùn market. Osù would come from Ìtà-Oṣùn to join Ajé and Òramfè in the market.

In Ejigbòmekùn market, commercial transactions spanned through day and night. The day session was called Òja tayé (Earth market) and the midnight, Òjatóru (dark market). In the day, the market was meant for the humans. Many people come to buy and sell their goods and services while the mid-night session, according to oral traditional, was meant for the animals, demons and the dead. The tradition claims that during the mid-night session, sellers put on lantern (Ogùsù/Òfànán). There is the effigy of Oṣù Ejó deity (made of diamond) in the market. At day break, it shined in the market to announce the arrival of a new day. This ascribed the name Ðè Oòdáyé, ibi ojúmọ̀ rere tīi mó wále ayé (Ifè, the dawn, where sun rises and lightens the

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25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
world). This is because, the people believed Osú Ejió is the sun that rise to light up the whole world.  

Buying and selling activities that the market is all about is what the Yorùbá people eventually tagged Ajé. Since Ejigbômèkùn market, the first market in the entire Yorùbáland is related to Ajé, so all other Yorùbá markets are closely related to Ajé. Ajé and market are inseparable.

The Ejigbômekùn Market in the Primordial and Present times- The difference

As it was for other Yorùbá traditional markets, Ejigbômekùn market in Ilé-Ifè was an open space. Hence, merchandise were displayed in the open on bare ground, in containers or on make-shift tables and counters. Sometimes, temporary sheds made of palm fronds or fairly-used clothes were erected to cushion the heat of the sun. However, the narratives had changed today as lock-up shops are the order of the day. The practice becomes necessary in order to prevent theft, a cankerworm that has marked a departure from the old practice when after each market day, goods are covered and left until the next market day. The market has many officials, they include the Bàbáló́já, Deputy Bàbáló́já, Iyalaje, Deputy Iyalaje, and various other officials that make up the market council.

In the past, Ejigbômekùn market was a five days market (Ọja orun), and the palace guards (Ẹmẹṣe Oba) used to visit Ejigbômekùn market on daily basis to collect all kinds of foodstuffs for their feeding. This they did, of course, with the king’s consent. Today, this practice is no longer in practice. Also, in the past, selected aides of the king of Ife was in the practice of visiting Ejigbômekùn market to collect market fees (owo Ọjá). The fees were meant for the maintenance of the king’s palace. This practice too had been stopped as the local council under which the jurisdiction the market falls is now directly involved in the collection of the market dues, being a major source of its internally generated revenue. The market day has now been fixed to honor the Aje goddess. Thus, it is now a Monday market (ọjọ ajé) of eight days.

In the present day Ejigbômekùn Market, the age-old Ajé Shrine is still standing tall even though there has been a little shift from its original location. This was done to pave way for its edification as a big temple has been made to replace an uncovered shrine by the present king of Ife. It is on record

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28 Oral interview with Chief Olajide Osuolale, the Deputy Babaloja Ejigbomekun market, 60 years, 12/10/2019, he was the head of the Lekuleja sellers in the market.
29 Ibid.
30 Oral interview with Mrs. Toibat Omisore.
31 Oral interview with Chief Olajide Osuolale, deputy Babaloja…
32 Oral interview with Mrs. Toibat Omisore…
that, the king is always present whenever the Ajé festival has to be celebrated in the newly constructed shrine. This usually takes place in the month of March amid pomp and pageantry. This implies that the strong bond between Ajé goddess and market cannot be over-emphasized and that the king, being the political and religious head still plays prominent roles in the economic and religious development of the ancient town.  

Misconceptions about Ejigbomekün Market

Possibly, lack of adequate knowledge and its associated poor documentation has resulted into some misconceptions about Ejigbomekün Market. This is not unconnected with the relatedness of their names, such that, on hearing the name of the market, one’s thought goes to the Yoruba town of Ejigbo, especially when such a person has never visited Ilé-Ifẹ or Ejigbomekün Market. For instance, Ejigbomekun Market has been erroneously associated with Ejigbo town in Ọṣun State. While explaining difficult words in Ifa verses, Ayo Salami described Ejigbomekun as an ancient city in the Yoruba enclave known for its thriving market. This is misleading, since there is no reference to Ile-Ifẹ in the description. Wande Abimbola des cribed Ejigbomekun as Ejigbo, omo ekun (Ejigbo, the child of the Tiger), a town called Ejigbo”. Whereas, it is a market in Ilé-Ifẹ which had its origin in primordial time. At the same time, the aboriginal inhabitants of Ejigbo also have their origin traced to Ilé-Ifẹ. According to oral tradition, a pregnant woman from Ejigbo town who was a regular attendant of the market fell in labor in the market, she gave birth to a boy and that was how the market adopted the name Ejigbomekun. The authenticity of this story is in doubt as it has no base in any Ifa literary corpus, Yorùbá adage, or any other tradition. A tradition has also associated Ejigbomekun market with the Ugbo people who were believed to be autochthonous inhabitant of Ilé-Ifẹ. This has been done through the adulteration of the name of the market to become, “Igbomekun Market”. However, all these have emanated from people’s desperate bid to ascertain the origin of the market.

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33 Oral interview with Chief Akinwande Olajire…
37 Baba Oja Ejigbomekun, Ile-Ifẹ.
In Ifá literary corpus, the market was always referred to as Òjìgbömękùn market without any link with the duo of Òjìgbo town and Ígbò or Ugbo people. However, devotion of time for an exercise as this will help in no small measure to correct the feedback effect that has emanated from lack of adequate knowledge and poor documentation mentioned earlier.

In addition to the above features, Òjìgbömękùn market was the most cited in Ifá literary corpus. Although, market is often mentioned in Ifá corpus, but when it comes to the mentioning of specific markets, Òjìgbömękùn surpasses other Yorùbá markets. For example, in Ifá literary corpus, mentioned were also made of markets like Akèsa, Òjì, among other ancient Yorùbá markets. This implies that Yorùbá people had a lot to do with Òjìgbömękùn market. Some examples of Ifá references to the market that are pregnant with meanings included the followings:

\[ \text{Ogbè-òfún (Ogbèfún)} \]
\[ \text{Agbé relé} \]
\[ \text{Agbé ròde} \]
\[ \text{Agbe gègègè roja Òjìg'àgbàmékùn} \]
\[ \text{A diá fún Owóleléwá} \]
\[ \text{Tí n tórun bò wàyé} \]
\[ \text{Wón ní ó rúbo} \]
\[ \text{Kó le baà ríre gbogbo} \]
\[ \text{Ogbebonbe ó rúbo kèè pé bèè ni kè jìnà} \]
\[ \text{Abáni bólá bá peregède} \]
\[ \text{Àṣẹ owó le wa ohun aya} \]
\[ \text{Èyèn è é sè fújà láilówó} \]
\[ \text{Owo lewà ohun aya} \]
\[ \text{Ile lewà ohun omò} \]
\[ \text{Èyèn è è sè fuja láinilé} \]
\[ \text{Ilé lewà ohun omò.}^{38} \]

It was carried home
It was carried out
It was carried aloft to the market of Òjìgbömékùn
Cast divination for Owóleléwá
That was coming to the earth from heaven
He was asked to perform sacrifice
So that he would have good things of the earth
It was not too long after he had offered sacrifice

\[ ^{38} \text{A. Salami, (2002), Ifá, A Complete Divination…p.50} \]
He was met with plenty of good things
Therefore, money is the beauty in conjunction with wife
No one sets for showoff without having money
Wealth is the beauty in conjunction with the wife
Therefore, the house is the beauty in conjunction with children
No one sets for showoff without having a house
The house is the beauty in conjunction with children.  

In the above Ifa literary corpus, Owolewa was a masquerade that was coming into the world. When he consulted the Ifa oracle on how he could be wealthy and enjoy, the oracle advised him to always be dancing towards Ejigbomékün market where many children would follow him and people would give him money. Therefore, the market where very many people were in attendant was the place where all his needs would be met. This explains the reasons for masquerades attendance of markets even in the modern time and corroborates McIntosh’s claim that Yoruba traditional market was a place where attendants with diverse motives met. And since masquerades attendance was in line with oracle advice as seen in Owolewa’s case, then markets were meeting places of humans and spiritual beings.

Ọ̀rún Òṣá
Èkùrò Ọrìta mẹta ní òṣenu ọ̀ṣọ́ṣọ́ ọ̀lókọ́
A diá fún Ọrùnìnlà
Níjó tí ní lọ̀rèè yànrí lódè Ìdó
Yóò sì yan iwà lójà Èjigbòmèkùn
Wón ní ki baba ọ̀rúbọ̀
Ọ̀rúbọ̀
Kèè pé béè ní kèèjinná
Abáni bọ̀la bá peregede
Èlà nikan ló ní wà rere
Àwọn tó yànrí ò ní wà lówó
Èlà nikan ló ní wà rere.  

Èkùrò Ọrìta mẹta ní òṣenu ọ̀ṣọ́ṣọ́ ọ̀lókọ́
Cast divination for Ọrùnìnlà
On the day he was going to choose his destiny in the ancient city of Ìdó

39 Ibid.
40 Oral interview with Abiodun Ifagbenro on 15th October 2019, an Ifa Priest in Telemu Osun State, 62 years.
And he would choose character in Èjìgbòmèkùn market
He was asked to perform sacrifice
He performed sacrifice
It was not too long when he became much favored
It is Ela alone that has good character
Those who chose head has no character
It is Ela alone that has good character.\footnote{Ibid, p. 243.}

The import of the above Ifa literary corpus is that, it is not enough to have good fortune, good characters are equally important if one would have peace and enjoy in this world. One is expected to learn how to comport oneself in the market of the world where we meet people with diverse behaviors. For example, in the market of the world, people will love and hate you, many will quarrel with you and teach you many things. According to the literary corpus, it is from the diverse people in the market of the world that one choses good character as demonstrated by Orunmila.

\begin{verse}
Èjìgbòmèkùn Market in Ilé-Ifè
\end{verse}
This Ifa corpus confirms the fact that market is a meeting point of the human and spirit. Ato was asked to offer her *adire* cloth (the cloth she normally wear in the market) as a sacrifice because her spiritual being was coming to visit her in the market. The cloth that was demanded from her for sacrifice was the only thing that her heavenly visitor had to identify her. However, she was spared of the untimely death, having been obedient and offered sacrifice.44

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44 Ibid.

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So is my covering taking care
Cast for Òrùnmìlà
When three owners of the days visited him
And he has no money for entertainment
The, he called Àabo his wife
And ordered her to take his belongings to market for sale
Iroko that Òrùnmìlà purchased with one thousand four hundred
Was priced at one hundred and forty
Iruke that he purchased with one thousand two hundred
Was priced at one twenty
This made Ààbò to burst into tears
And she began to communicate with his husband in ìyèrè voice, that the
items
were poorly priced
Òrùnmìlà, her husband also replied her with ìyèrè voice that she should
sell them
at any price
Ààbò then sold the items and used the proceed to buy food items
The three owners of the days, Ikú, Àrun and Èshù then ate to their satis-
faction and
spared the entire household.46

This Ifa corpus teaches that the choice of life and death lays in one’s hand
and that the choice of life is always accompanied with a high cost. The fact
that people were aware of the cost of the divination wares of Orunmila be-
fore they priced them down abnormally is a reference to market as a place
to choose character. Thus, Orunmila pursued life at all cost. Death that was
looming sequel to the unwanted visitors he had was eventually averted.

46 Ibid.
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O fa kekee pa kese ija mese danindanindanin
Ikú tẹ orí Igbá, Igbá gbiramunle
Ikú tẹ orí apa, apá gbiramunle
Ikú tẹ orí oro, orí gbiramunle
Esisi agbala n lotutu legbo
Ewe won ló kona firifiri
A dia fun Ayunre ti n somọ ikehìn won léńjeléńjẹ
Wón ní korubo láíkú ara rẹ
Ogbébo n be orubo
Ikú to lóhun o pàYunre o le pàYunre mo
Ikú wa yọ teere o fíge sale, o wa fariwo ta sáálesáále
Ayunre ni mo jawe oluyeere o, oye ye
Mo jàwé oluyeere o, oye ye.47

Awurukumodagbaa
Odu durukuniwon ronron niwon ron ron
Children gathered
And cause Iku’s mother to weep in Èjígígbòmëkùn market
Because of the head of a goat
Ikú heard and cried like gate
Ikú harmed himself with Òká and Èrè
And scorpion was added to them
Ikú got to Igbá tree and killed it
Ikú got to Apá tree and killed it
Ikú got to Òro tree and killed it
Èsísì plant had a fresh root
But has hot leaves
Cast divination for Ayùnùrẹ tree who happened to be the youngest of them all
He was asked to perform sacrifice so as to avert death
He obeyed
Death could no longer kill Ayùnù rẹ again
Ikú striped and fell down and hit the ground with his chest, he cried out in agony
Ayùnùrẹ said I plucked oluyeere leaves to avert death
I plucked oluyeere leaves to avert death

The above Ifa verse is also a confirmation of Èjígíbòmëkùn market serving as a meeting point of the heaven and the earth. Such that evidence of the

attendance of the gods and antigods abound. For example, Iku is an antigod. This is absolutely mythical, and the mentioning of tree names as humans is proverbial, all confirming the spirituality of the market in the ancient time. However, since there were two sessions, *oja taye* and *oja torun*, the deeper meaning belongs to those who can discern the things of the spirit.

Ödí Méjí
*O dýrý, nípēkun òpòpó
Ó bērē nípēkun òpòpó
Okoti Babaaba ni n be nípēkun òpòpó*
*A diá fún Òṣùwọn
Tí n lọ sójá Èjígóòmekún*
Wón ní kó rúbọ̀ kó lè baà níyì
*Ogbebonbe ó rúbọ̀*
Igba to dojá ní wọn ba n faa láfàgbà
*Ójó ni jó, ayò ní n yò*
O n yin àwọn awo, àwọn awo n yinjá
Ó ya ènu kókó orin awo kó sì lènù
Ó n tootoo gbedê lawo
*Ósunwọn tooto lo gbedelawo.*

He stood at the end of a street
He stooped at the end of a street
Okoti Bababa is at the end of the street
Cast divination *Òṣùwọn*
That was going to Èjígóòmekún market
He was asked to perform sacrifice in order to have value
He obeyed
When he got to the market everybody wanted him
He was dancing and rejoicing
He was praising the *Ifá* priests and the priests were in turn praising *Ifá*
He opened his mouth and began to sing the priests’ songs
He said, it is true, you are well versed as a priest
Òṣùwọn, it is true, you are well versed as a priest.

Òṣùwọn (measurement) in the above *Ifá* corpus was and is very popular in the market. At the same time Òṣùwọn is a common feature of the market. But this *Ifá* verse is attributing its popularity to its obedience exhibited with

49 Ibid.
respect to the sacrifice it had made right from the primordial time. The fact that modern Òṣùwọn is not human implies that there is a deeper meaning that Abimbola tagged the use of personification in Ifá explanation.⁵⁰

Moreover, Idin-Iwori is another Ifá corpus that confirms the primordial Èjìgbòmékùn as a market for the heaven and earth. In this corpus, also, was the evidence of the dead attendance of Èjìgbòmékùn market to transact business with the living. It is also a place where other spiritual beings attended to transact businesses with man. For example, in Idin-Wori, there was a record of a fairy who came to Èjìgbòmékùn market. The beauty of this spiritual being who was a woman endeared a man to her. The man was also in the market to sell his merchandise (hoes) in the Ifá corpus below.

*Idin-Wori (Odi Iwori)*

_Ìdíngbàgbà iwòrìgbàgbà,_
_Iwòrìgbàgbà mo lorun aladodo_
_Aládodo Íwó_
_Adikaraàṣọ kalè_
_A diá fún oloko tí ń šawo rojá Èjìgbòmékùn_
_Wón ní kó rúbo. kó lè baa ríre gbogbo_
_Ogbebonbe ó rúbo_
_Ebó ló rú béè ni kò sàì kilò_
_Kèè pé béè ni kè jinnà_
_Eyinorísàawokíintinse.⁵¹_

Ìdíngbàgbà iwòrìgbàgbà,  
Ìwòrìgbàgbà _mon lorun aladodo_  
_Aládodo Íwó_  
_Adikaraàṣọ kalè_  
_Cast divination for Olókò that was going to sell in Èjìgbòmékùn market_  
_He was asked to perform sacrifice_  
_He performed sacrifice_  
_But he failed to heed warning_  
_It was not too long after_  
_The words of the priests came to pass_

As stated in the above Ifá corpus, the man was warned to mind his business in the market in addition to the sacrifice he had offered. It was his inability to heed the warning that caused problem for him. As soon as he sold

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⁵¹ Oral interview with Chief Aiodun Ifagenro.
all his merchandise, he saw a woman whose beauty made him to forget the
warning given to him at home. However, he proposed to the woman, thinking
she was human. The woman told him that she could not marry him, but
he insisted and when people were leaving for their individual homes after the
day’s transactions, he followed the woman who was warning him to return
home. When they left the vicinity of the town, the woman began to warn the
man in a song as follow.

\[
\text{Ọlọkọ sin, ọlọkọ sin lēhin mi o sin n o sin}
\]
\[
\text{Bọ̀ bá sin ookan ọ doolóyún sin n o sin}
\]
\[
\text{Bọ̀ bá sin ookan ọ do eléjè, sin n o sin}
\]
\[
\text{Bọ̀ bá sin oo dájúlélé ọrun o sin n o sin.}^{52}
\]

Ọlọkọ return, please return from me
Return, no I will not
If you don’t return you will get to River Olóyún
Return, no I will not
If you don’t return, you will get to the river of blood
Return, no I will not
If you don’t return, you will get to heaven
Return, no I will not

As the woman said in the song, they got to River Oloyún, got to the River
of Blood after which they got to the abode of the woman. At the place, the
woman commanded the ground to open. And as the woman jumped into it,
Ọlọkọ followed him. Thus, he went to a journey of no return.

Also, it was a market for the gods and the anti-gods. Records of the at-
tendance of the market by the gods such as Ifá, Ògún, Sàngó, Ọṣun, Ọya etc.
were common place in Ifá literary corpus. In Ejiogbe, Èjìgbòmẹkùn market
was also a world market as it drew its attendants from all over the world. An
important principle of the market was that, attendants dare not look at faces
of other attendants too much, because, one could see a dead person or a spir-
Itual being and the consequence of this was dangerous as inherent in Idin-
Wori above.\(^{53}\)

\(^{52}\) Ibid.
\(^{53}\) Ibid.
Conclusion

Èjìgbòmékùn market typifies Yorùbá cosmology. Thus, the Yorùbá belief of the world division into spiritual and physical, and the interactions of the inhabitants of the two divisions is well depicted in the examination of Èjìgbòmékùn market. It was a market of the Yorùbá world, simply because, it was attended by the humans, the gods, anti-gods and other spiritual beings. The modern Èjìgbòmékùn market was the continuation of the primordial market in name only, as various features attributable to the primordial one are no longer in place. For example, the night session is no longer holding and the modern market is just a human market. However, in the course of our research, we were made to know that nothing has changed about the market as it is being implied here, because all the attributes of the primordial Èjìgbòmékùn market are intact in the modern one, but they can only be seen or perceived by those who have access to the power of the primordial people. For example, the people of the period could see what natural eyes could not see and they could communicate with the spiritual forces. Thus, they were superhuman. The difference between us and them therefore account for the difference between the primordial and modern Èjìgbòmékùn market.