

# **Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn Market in Ilé-Ifẹ̀: Investigating the Nexus between the Mythical and Modern era of the Yorùbá History**

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## **Abstract**

Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn 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 Ìlárẹ̀ street in Ilé-Ifẹ̀ reminds one of that mythical Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn market and the mysteries that surrounded it. One of the questions that normally flow into one's mind is whether or not the modern Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn market is also shrouded in such mysteries as attributable to the mythical one. This study aims at ascertaining the importance of Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn 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 Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn 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 Oluwolé's definition of market as "a place where transactions for the exchange of goods and services take place."<sup>1</sup> This definition was corroborated by Olupe, when he defined market as "an institutional arrangement that brings buyers and sellers into a close contact."<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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 Oja` Oba (The king's market). In Ilé-Ifè for instance, Oja` Oba is located at a stone throw to the king's palace.<sup>5</sup> The market is given other appellations like, Oja` Ifè (Ifè market), Oja` Ajé (Ajé's market), Oja` Èjìgbòmekùn (Èjìgbòmekùn market), Oja` Ìlú (town's market) and most remarkably Oja` Òrúnmi`là (Òrúnmi`là's market).<sup>6</sup>

Èjìgbòmekùn 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 Èjìgbòmekùn 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.<sup>7</sup> This portends

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1 T. Oluwolé. (2017), "Markets, Marketing and Advertisement," in Toyin Falola and Akintunde, Akinyemi (eds.), *Culture and Customs of the Yorùbá*. Austin: Pan African University Press, p. 553.

2 D. Olupe. (2017), *Cultural Practices of the Yorùbá*. Lagos: Rilfax Books, p. 82.

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 in form of tributes and tolls to the king's agents in the market.

Èjìgbòṁkùn, 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.<sup>8</sup> For example, from the time immemorial, the Ajé Shrine (*ojúbọ ajé*) was located in Èjìgbòṁkùn 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:

*Ajé ló bí Ojà*  
*Ojà ló bí Ajé*  
*A dí fá fún Èjìwòwò*  
*Tó loun ó lọ ná ojà láimówó lówó*  
*A kì í perí ojà láì lówó lówó o*  
*Ejìwòwò má re ojà láimówó lówó o*  
*Ko o má baá gbọnwọ popo lábọ ojà.*<sup>9</sup>

The goddess of money begat market  
 Market begat the goddess of money  
 Divine for Èjìwòwò  
 Who was going to the market without money  
 No one discusses the issue of market without money  
 Èjìwòwò 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

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

8 M. K. McIntosh. (2009), *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*, Indiana: Indiana University Press. p. 66.

9 Oral interview with Chief Akinwande Olajire, *ibid.*

10 A.L. Mabogunje and J. Omer-Cooper. (1971), *Owu in Yoruba History*, Ibadan: Ibadan University press. p. 108.

11 O.B. Olaoba. (2000), *Bodija Market in Ibadan 1987-1995*, Ibadan: John Archers Publishers, p.11.

Olojo festivals in Ile-Ife, palace officials are expected to visit Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn 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.<sup>12</sup> 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 (*oja oba*) in Osogbo.<sup>13</sup> Official announcement of Ogun festival in Ondo is also done in the market, nine days to the festival.<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>15</sup> Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn 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.<sup>16</sup> Markets were places where celebrants of important occasions brought their entourage and drummers.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn 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 ẹtu*) 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.<sup>18</sup> The Oro and

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12 Oral interview with Chief Akinwande Olajire; *ibid*.

13 M. Joseph Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford. (2001), *Osun Across the Waters: A Yoruba Goddess in Africa and Americas*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press. p. 54.

14 J.K. Olupona. (1991), *Kingship, Religion, and Rituals in a Nigerian Community: A Phenomenological Study of Ondo Yoruba Festivals*. Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell International (Stockholm Studies in Comparative Religion, No 28, p.119.

15 P. O. Sada and M.L. McNulty, “Traditional Market in Lagos: A Study of the Changing Administrative Processes and Marketing Transactions”, in *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1974). pp. 149-165.

16 . D. Ogunremi. (1998), “Foundation of the Yoruba Economy... p.121.

17 M. K. Mcintosh. (2009), *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Changes*. p. 66.

18 Oral interview with Chief Akinwande Olajire, *ibid*.

Egungun cults do not imposed curfews in Ile-Ifè as in some parts of Yorubaland, but Èjìgbòṁkùn 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 Ifè adage, *olojo n laa fojo fun* (the day is better given to its owner). Èjìgbòṁkùn market is also closed during Aje and Itapa festivals.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, in Oyo and Ondo towns, markets are expected to be closed for a day, during annual festivals of Oro and Moko respectively.<sup>21</sup>

As in many Yoruba markets, several trees that are regarded as habitual residence of certain spirits or gods were planted in Èjìgbòṁkùn 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.<sup>22</sup> In the modern time, Èjìgbòṁkùn 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 Ifè, 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.<sup>23</sup>

In the ancient time, Èjìgbòṁkùn 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 Yorubaland. According to Chief Akinwande, Èjìgbòṁkùn 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 Oṣegànderuku, the ninth Oṣoni of Ifè.<sup>24</sup> According to oral traditions, Èjìgbòṁkùn market was also known as the Oṛúnmi'la's

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19 Oral interview with Mrs. Toibat Omisore, a seller in the market, 88 years old, 8/2/2020.

20 M. K. McIntosh, 2009, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*...p. 66.

21 J.K. Olupona, Kingship, 1992, *Religion, and Rituals in a Nigerian Community*: ... p. 62.

22 E.B. Idowu, 1975, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, Great Britain: Campton Printing Press. p. 126.

23 Oral interview with Chief Akinwande.

24 Ibid.

Market because immediately after its establishment, Ọ̀rúnmi`là was always sighted at the market square to purchase most of his ritual items. Therefore, it was Ọ̀rúnmi`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, *Ọ̀rúnmi`là wá sẹ̀ mí lówọ́ kí n rí tajé sẹ̀ lónì-ín* (Ọ̀rúnmi`là, kindly come and be my first buyer so I can sell very well today). This was how Èjìgbòmekùn market assumed the alternative name, Ọ̀rúnmi`là's Market.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Origin and Nature of Èjìgbòmekùn Market**

Èjìgbòmekùn was believed to be the first market in Ilé-Ifẹ̀ and Yorùbáland in general. According to Ife oral tradition, when Ọ̀rámfẹ̀ and Ajé descended from heaven, they looked around the world for a good place to settle and Ilé-Ifẹ̀ was the place of their eventual destination. The place they settled eventually became known as Èjìgbòmekùn 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.<sup>26</sup> The first set of people to sell things in the market were the *lékuléja* and *eléwe-omọ* (sellers of ritual items). Thus, the location became a market for Ifá priests and it became known as Ọ̀jà Ọ̀rúnmi`là as mentioned earlier. Many Ifá literary corpuses report of how Ọ̀rúnmi`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, Ọ̀rámfẹ̀, and Ọ̀sun were friends and founders of Èjìgbòmekùn market. Osun would come from Ìta-Ọ̀sun to join Ajé and Ọ̀rámfẹ̀ in the market.<sup>27</sup>

In Èjìgbòmekùn market, commercial transactions spanned through day and night. The day session was called Ọ̀jàtayé (Earth market) and the mid-night, Ọ̀jàtoru (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 (Ọ̀gùsọ/Ọ̀fànràn). There is the effigy of Oṣu Ejió 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 *Ifẹ̀ Oòdáyé, ibi ojúmó rere tíí mó wálé ayé* (Ifẹ̀, 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 Oṣu Ejió is the sun that rise to light up the whole world.<sup>28</sup>

Buying and selling activities that the market is all about is what the Yorùbá people eventually tagged Ajé. Since Èjìgbòmèkùn 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.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Èjìgbòmèkùn Market in the Primordial and Present times- The difference**

As it was for other Yorùbá traditional markets, Èjìgbòmèkùn 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 Bábálójà, Deputy Bábálójà, Iyalaja, Deputy Iyalaja, Iyalaje, Deputy Iyalaje, and various other officials that make up the market council.<sup>30</sup>

In the past, Èjìgbòmèkùn market was a five days market (*oja orun*), and the palace guards (Èmeṣè Oba) used to visit Èjìgbòmèkùn 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 Èjìgbòmèkùn market to collect market fees (*owó oja*). 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.<sup>31</sup> The market day has now been fixed to honor the Aje goddess. Thus, it is now a Monday market (*ojó ajé*) of eight days.<sup>32</sup>

In the present day Èjìgbòmèkùn 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.<sup>33</sup>

### Misconceptions about Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn Market

Possibly, lack of adequate knowledge and its associated poor documentation has resulted into some misconceptions about Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn 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 Èjìgbò, especially when such a person has never visited Ilé-Ifẹ̀ or Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn Market. For instance, Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn Market has been erroneously associated with Èjìgbò town in Òṣun 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.<sup>34</sup> This is misleading, since there is no reference to Ile-Ife in the description. Wande Abimbola described Ejigbomekun as *Ejigbo, omo ekun* (Ejigbo, the child of the Tiger), a town called Ejigbo".<sup>35</sup> Whereas, it is a market in Ilé-Ifẹ̀ which had its origin in primordial time. At the same time, the aboriginal inhabitants of Èjìgbò also have their origin traced to Ilé-Ifẹ̀.<sup>36</sup> According to oral tradition, a pregnant woman from Èjìgbò 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 Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn.<sup>37</sup> The authenticity of this story is in doubt as it has no base in any Ifá literary corpus, Yorùbá adage, or any other tradition. A tradition has also associated Èjìgbòṁẹ̀kùn market with the Ugbo people who were believed to be autochthonous inhabitant of Ilé-Ifẹ̀. 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...

34 A. Salami, (2002), *Ifa, A Complete Divination*, Lagos: NIDD Publishing and Printing Limited, p. 53.

35 W. Abimbola, (2006), *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa, Apa kin-in-ni*, Ibadan: University Press PLC, p. 24.

36 See, B. Lasisi, (2005), *Ejigbo Local Government: A Positive Reference Point and the Profiles of Prominent Indigenes*, Osogbo: BIL Communications and Publishers, p.16 and "Ejigbo" *Oyo State Town Series*, No.2, Vol 14, p.5.

37 Baba Oja Ejigbomekun, Ile-Ife.



In Ifá literary corpus, the market was always referred to as Èjìgbòmèkùn market without any link with the duo of Èjìgbò town and Ìgbò 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, Èjìgbòmèkùn 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, Èjìgbòmèkùn surpasses other Yorùbá markets. For example, in Ifá literary corpus, mentioned were also made of markets like Akèsán, Òjé, among other ancient Yorùbá markets. This implies that Yorùbá people had a lot to do with Èjìgbòmèkùn market. Some examples of Ifá references to the market that are pregnant with meanings included the followings:

*Ogbè-òfún (Ogbèfún)*

*Agbé relé*

*Agbé ròde*

*Agbe gègègè rojà Èjìgbòmèkùn*

*A diá fún Owóléléwà*

*Tí n tòrun bò wáyé*

*Wón ní ó rúbọ*

*Kó le baà ríre gbogbo*

*Ogbebonbe ó rúbọ kèè pé bèè ni kè jìnà*

*Abáni bóla bá peregede*

*Àşẹ owó le wa ohun aya*

*Èyàn è é şe fújà láìlówó*

*Owo lẹwà ohun aya*

*Ile lẹwà ohun omọ*

*Èyàn è é şe fuja láìnílé*

*Ilé lẹwà ohun omọ.<sup>38</sup>*

It was carried home

It was carried out

It was carried aloft to the market of Èjìgbòmèkùn

Cast divination for Owóléléwà

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

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38 A. Salami, (2002), *Ifa, 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.<sup>39</sup>

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 Ejigbomekun market where many children would follow him and people would give him money.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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.

*Ìrosùn Ọsá*  
*Èkùrọ Oríta mẹta ni ó ẹnu sọ́nso sọ́lókó*  
*A díá fún Ọ̀rúnmi là*  
*Níjọ tí ní lọ rẹe yanrí lóde Ìdó*  
*Yóò sí yan iwà lójà Èjìgbòmẹkùn*  
*Wọ́n ní ki baba ó rúbọ*  
*O rúbọ*  
*Kèè pé bẹẹ ni kẹ̀jìnnà*  
*Abáni bọla bá peregede*  
*Èlà nikan ló ní wà rere*  
*Àwọ́n tó yanrí ò ní wà lówọ*  
*Èlà nikan ló ní wà rere.<sup>42</sup>*

*Èkùrọ Oríta mẹta ni ó ẹnu sọ́nso sọ́lókó*  
 Cast divination for Ọ̀rúnmi là  
 On the day he was going to choose his destiny in the ancient city of Ìdó

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39 Ibid.

40 Oral interview with Abiodun Ifagbenro on 15th October 2019, an Ifa Priest in Telemu Osun State, 62 years.

41 M. K. Mcintosh, 2009, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*...p. 66.

42 A. Salami, (2002), *A Complete Divination*...p.242.

And he would choose character in Èjìgbòṁkùn 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.<sup>43</sup>

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 chooses good character as demonstrated by Orunmila.

*Òtúrúpòn Ọ̀sẹ̀ (Òtúrúpònsẹ̀)*  
*Òrúpa-jé-gédé-awo-ẹ̀bá-ò̀nà*  
*A díá fún Ató*  
*Níjótí ń sòwò rojà È jìgbòṁkùn*  
*N lo rẹ̀é pónko*  
*Wón ní kó fí aṣọ̀ àdìrẹ̀ àrà rẹ̀ rúbọ̀ nítorí ikú*  
*Ogbebonbe ó rúbọ̀*  
*Kẹ̀ pé bẹ̀ẹ̀ ní kẹ̀ jinnà*  
*Aba ní láìkú kàngiri*  
*Àìkú kàngiri là ń báni lẹ̀sẹ̀ Ọ̀ba ò̀rìṣà*

Òrúpa-jé-gédé-awo-ẹ̀bá-ò̀nà  
 Casts divination for Ató  
 On the day she was trading to Èjìgbòṁkùn market  
 She was going to sell pap  
 She was asked to perform sacrifice with the àdìrẹ̀ cloth on her in order to avert death  
 She performed sacrifice  
 It was not too long  
 She was met with longevity of life  
 The type that the deities can secure for their worshipers (Salami 2002: 669).

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43 Ibid, p. 243.

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.<sup>44</sup>

Èjì Ogbè  
 Ọ̀dà owo awo koro  
 Aabo obinrin re  
 Ọmọ wọn òkè Ìjerò  
 Bí ọ̀dà owó ti ń dá mi  
 Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni ààbò mi ń bò mí  
 A díá fún Ọ̀rúnmi là  
 Níjọ tí olojò méta ó wò sílé baba  
 Ifá o si ni owó kan áà yọ ná  
 Ni Ọ̀rúnmi là bá pe Ààbò obinrin è  
 Pé kí o ko àwọn nkan ìní òhun lọ sójà Èjìgbòmẹ̀kùn lọ tà  
 Ìrọ̀ké tí Ọ̀rúnmi là rà ní ègbẹ̀je  
 Nwón ẹ̀ẹ̀ ní ogóje  
 Ìrọ̀ké tó rà ní ègbẹ̀fà  
 Nwón ẹ̀ẹ̀ ní ogófà  
 Iboriifá re ẹ̀gbẹ̀rindínlógún  
 Nwón ẹ̀ẹ̀ ni ọ̀kànlélógún  
 Ni ààbò bá mékún ó fi dígbè  
 Ó fi iyèrè ẹ̀hùn arò  
 Ó ní awo oja náà ò pójú owó  
 Ni Ọ̀rúnmi là bá fi iyèrè dáa lóhun  
 Pé kí ó ta awọn ọ̀jà náà bẹ̀ẹ̀ bẹ̀ẹ̀  
 Ni Ààbò bá ta ọ̀jà náà ní itàkutà  
 Ló bá mowó ra oúnjẹ wálé  
 Awọn olojò méta náà, Ikú, Àrun àti Èsù ẹ̀jun wón sì yó.<sup>45</sup>

Ọ̀dà owó awokóró  
 Ààbò obinrin rẹ̀  
 Ọmọ wọn òkè Ìjerò  
 As I am getting broken

44 Ibid.

45 W. Abimbola, (2006), *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa*, ... pp.20-21.

So is my covering taking care  
 Cast for Ọ̀rúnmi là̀  
 When three owners of the days visited him  
 And he has no money for entertainment  
 The, he called Aabo his wife  
 And ordered her to take his belongings to market for sale  
*Iroke* that Ọ̀rúnmi là̀ 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  
 The cover of his Ifá that he purchased with three thousand two hundred  
 Was priced at twenty-one  
 This made Ààbò to burst into tears  
 And she began to communicate with his husband in *iyèrẹ̀* voice, that the  
 items  
 were poorly priced  
 Ọ̀rúnmi là̀, her husband also replied her with *iyèrẹ̀* 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 Èsù then ate to their satis-  
 faction and  
 spared the entire household.<sup>46</sup>

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 before 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.

*Ọ̀yèkú Méjì*  
*Awuruku mọ̀dàgbàá*  
*Oduduruku ni wọ̀nrọ̀nrọ̀n niwọ̀nrọ̀nrọ̀n*  
*Àwọ̀n ọ̀mọ̀dé kẹ́ékẹ́ékẹ́é darí jọ*  
*Nwọ̀n paya ikú nigbe lójà Èjìgbòmèkùn*  
*Nítorí apopo orì ẹ̀ran*  
*Ikú gbọ́ ikú han bí gate*  
*Ikú moka ẹ̀ kesé, o mere ẹ̀ sokunfà*

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46 Ibid.

*O fa kekee pa kese ija mese danindanindanin*  
*Ikú tẹ orí Igbá, Igbá gbiramunle*  
*Ikú tẹ orí apa, apa gbiramunle*  
*Ikú tẹ orí oro, orí gbiramunle*  
*Esisì agbala n lotutu legbo*  
*Ewe won ló kona firifiri*  
*A dia fun Ayunre ti n sọmọ ikẹhìn wọn léríjéléríje*  
*Wón ní korubọ láikú ara rẹ*  
*Ogbébo n be orubo*  
*Ikú to lóhun o paYunre o le paYunre mo*  
*Ikú wa yo teere o fige sale, o wa fariwo ta sááleşáále*  
*Ayunre ni mo jawe oluyeere o, oyeye*  
*Mo jáwé oluyeere o, oyeye.<sup>47</sup>*

*Awurukumodagbaa*  
*Odudurukuniwọnrọnrọnniwọnrọnrọn*  
 Children gathered  
 And cause Iku's mother to weep in Èjìgbòmẹkùn market  
 Because of the head of a goat  
 Iku' heard and cried like gate  
 Iku' harmed himself with Oká and Erè  
 And scorpion was added to them  
 Iku' got to Igbá tree and killed it  
 Iku' got to Apá tree and killed it  
 Iku' got to Oro tree and killed it  
 Èsìsì plant had a fresh root  
 But has hot leaves  
 Cast divination for Ayunrẹ 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 Ayunrẹ again  
 Iku striped and fell down and hit the ground with his chest, he cried out  
 in agony  
 Ayunrẹ said I plucked *oluyeere* leaves to avert death  
 I plucked *oluyeere* leaves to avert death

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

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47 W. Abimbola, (2006), *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa*, pp. 26-27

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.

Òdí Méjì  
 Ó dúró, nípèkùn òpópó  
 Ó bèrè nípèkùn òpópó  
 Okoti Bababa ni n be nípèkùn òpópó  
 A díá fún Òṣùwòn  
 Tí n lọ sójà Èjìgbòmèkùn  
 Wòn ní kó rúbọ kó lè baà níyì  
 Ogbebonbe ó rúbọ  
 Igba to dojà ni wòn ba n faa láfàgbà  
 Ijó ni jó, ayò ní n yò  
 O n yin àwọn awo, àwọn awo n yinfá  
 Ó ya ẹnu kókó orin awo kó sí lẹnu  
 Ó n tootoo gbẹde lawo  
 Osunwon tooto lo gbedelawo.<sup>48</sup>

He stood at the end of a street  
 He stooped at the end of a street  
 Okoti Babaaba is at the end of the street  
 Cast divination Òṣùwòn  
 That was going to Èjìgbòmèkùn 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  
 Òṣùwòn, it is true, you are well versed as a priest.<sup>49</sup>

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

48 W. Abimbola, (2006), *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa*, ... p. 52

49 Ibid.

respect to the sacrifice it had made right from the primordial time. The fact that modern Òṣùwòn is not human implies that there is a deeper meaning that Abimbola tagged the use of personification in Ifa explanation.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, Idin-Iwori is another Ifa corpus that confirms the primordial Èjìgbòmèkùn as a market for the heaven and earth. In this corpus, also, was the evidence of the dead attendance of Ejigbomekun 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 Èjìgbòmèkùn 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 iwòrigbàgbà,  
 Iworibagba mo lorunaladodo  
 Aládodo Iwó  
 Adikaraòsò kalè  
 A díá fún oloko tí n̄ sawo rojà Èjìgbòmèkùn  
 Wón ní kó rúbo. kó lè baa ríre gbogbo  
 Ogbebonbe ó rúbọ  
 Èbọ ló rú bẹ̀è ni kò sàì kílò  
 Kèè pé bẹ̀è ni kè jìnnà  
 Eyinorífaawokíntinse.<sup>51</sup>

Ìdíngbàgbà iwòrigbàgbà,  
 Ìwòrigbàgbà mon lorun aladodo  
 Aladodo Iwo  
 Adikaraòsò kalè  
 Cast divination for Olókò that was going to sell in Èjìgbòmèkùn 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

50 W. Abimola, (1976), *Ifa, An Exposition of Literary Corpus ...* p. 105.

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.

*Olókó sìn, olókó sìn lẹ̀hìn mi o  
sìn n o sìn  
Bòò bá sìn ookan ò doolóyún  
sìn n o sìn  
Bòò bá sìn ookan ò do ẹ̀lẹ̀jẹ̀,  
sìn n o sìn  
Bòò bá sìn oo dájùlé ọ̀run o  
sìn n o sìn.<sup>52</sup>*

Olókó 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, Olókó 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 attendance of the market by the gods such as Ifá, Ọ̀gún, Ẹ̀ṣàngó, Ọ̀ṣun, Ọ̀ya etc. were common place in Ifá literary corpus. In Èjì ogbè, Èjì gbòmẹ̀kùn 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 spiritual being and the consequence of this was dangerous as inherent in Idin-Wori above.<sup>53</sup>

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52 Ibid.

53 . Ib id.

### **Conclusion**

Èjìgbòṁkùn 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 Èjìgbòṁkùn 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 Èjìgbòṁkùn 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 Èjìgbòṁkùn 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 Èjìgbòṁkùn market.