

THE RELIGION OF  
THE YORUBAS

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THE RELIGION OF THE YORUBAS

ru,

The ... vna ... ie ...

ly illustra ... in the Yoruba ...  
ed the word *Oru(n)*,<sup>1</sup> "sky" or ...  
ard was applied to the sun-god the fo  
rived from it : *Oru(n)*, "the sun," *Oru*,  
he sun), *Oru*, "heat" (originally applic  
an and afterwards to heat in general). Th  
in some of the popular songs.<sup>2</sup>(ε)

re remembered that after the establishment  
om the faith of Osiris spread from Abydos in  
ther parts of Egypt, and according to Prof. S  
ne time universal in Egypt. Horu the sun-god  
by Horu (Horus) the Younger, son of Osiris. La  
, who was originally the god of the dead, was tra  
the sky. With the transference of the Osirian heav  
ddu to the sky Osiris became "the Lord of the Sk  
very title<sup>3</sup> was applied to him when the fusion o  
and the solar faiths was effected. It has been po  
ove that the meaning of *Qlqrun* is "the Lord o'  
This identity of meaning of *Qlqrun* with th  
constitutes a *prima facie* evidence for assu  
nce of some connection between the *Qlqr*  
bas and the Egyptian "Lord of Daddu."  
to s ... er did the present writer perceive  
enc ... a series of facts unfolded itself  
port given by the facts to the abo  
of a definite connection betwee

te is elided and the final vowel

Oru O,  
oka fur :1

ru.

THE RELIGION OF THE YORUBAS

1.  
eye  
1894

Oru O,  
pka fu-

NSR

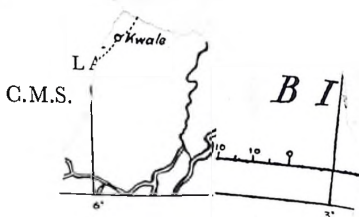
# THE RELIGION OF THE YORUBAS

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS  
AND PRACTICES OF THE YORUBA PEOPLES OF  
SOUTHERN NIGERIA, ESPECIALLY IN RELATION  
TO THE RELIGION OF ANCIENT EGYPT

BY

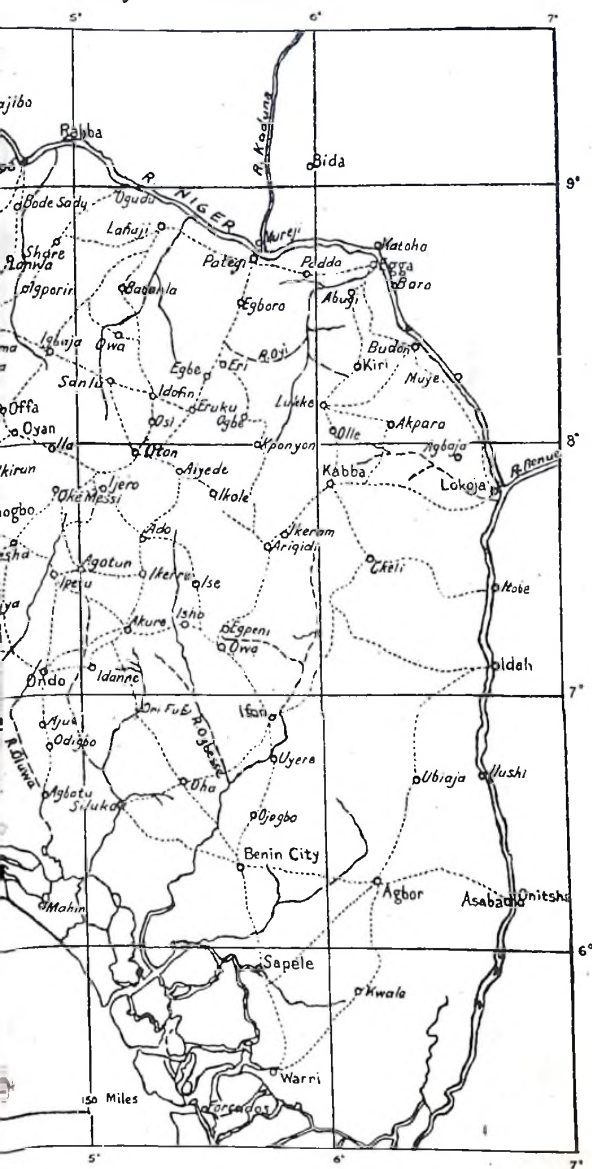
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Thesis approved for the Degree of  
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in the University of Durham, 1942



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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THE question has often been asked as to whether the religions of primitive peoples owe their character to arrested development or to degeneration. A great divergence of opinion exists among anthropologists as regards the answer to this question. Some would agree with Dr. Menzies that "the theory that man was originally civilized and humane, and that it was by a fall, by a degeneration from that earliest condition, that the state of savagery made its appearance, is now generally abandoned,"<sup>1</sup> or with Dr. Estlin Carpenter that "whatever may be the occasional instances of degeneration or decline, the general movement of things advances from cruder and less complex to the more refined and developed."<sup>2</sup> Others would agree with Dr. Nassau that "the source of our knowledge of God is not in us, any more than our spiritual life had its source in ourselves. It came *ab extra* . . . Knowledge of God was thus an original, donated, component part of us."<sup>3</sup> In deciding between these alternative theories a collection of evidence from the primitive parts of the world is an invaluable aid.

Unfortunately, however, as Sir J. G. Frazer recently observed, "the boundaries of existing savagery, are rapidly shrinking"<sup>4</sup> owing to the irresistible force with which the current of western civilization flows into the realms of savagery. The task of collecting such evidence thus becomes a matter of urgent necessity, for within the next few decades many valuable materials may be lost or so transformed as to lose their value as evidence for comparative religion.

In his foreword to Dr. Farrow's book, *Faith, Fancies and Fetich*,<sup>5</sup> Dr. Marett raised the question with regards to Yoruba Paganism in the following significant words: "Dr. Farrow sometimes says 'degraded'; and, taken strictly, this term

<sup>1</sup> *History of Religion*, p. 19 *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Comparative Religion*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Fetichism in West Africa*, pp. 28 and 30.

<sup>4</sup> *Public Opinion*, 29th April, 1932, p. 417.

<sup>5</sup> pp. VII *seq.*

would imply that there has been actual backsliding—a 'falling away from grace'. This is quite a reasonable assumption so long as it is treated as such; and, if we proceed to verify by further research, I have no doubt that in the medley of Yoruba beliefs many elements will be found to have 'come down in the world' in the course of their history. Especially interesting is the question whether *Ọlọrun*, the Supreme Deity, who at present is revered but scarcely worshipped is the relic of a purer faith, a fair tree that has become choked by an undergrowth of animistic superstitions." Dr. Menzies also, after remarking that "leading anthropologists declare that the debased tribes of Australia and West Africa show signs of a higher civilization they have lost," goes on to say that "the races among whom fetichism is found exhibit a well-known feature of the decadence of religion."<sup>1</sup> These quotations raise questions which require further research, a task to which the present writer has addressed himself. The purpose of this thesis is to give an account of research work conducted on the lines indicated above by Dr. Marett, to show what elements in Yoruba paganism "have come down in the world in the course of their history," and to identify the "purer faith" which has now degenerated into rank fetichism. The thesis will also contain criticisms of existing works on the subject, together with additional details which the research has brought to light.

It is hardly necessary to say here that the criticisms of existing works on the subject which will be found in many parts of the thesis are not made in a carping spirit. The writer realizes his indebtedness to previous writers and entertains a deep sense of gratitude to them. All these writers however, must have recognised the difficulties under which they had to labour. They cannot but realize that their measure of success must be proportional to the extent to which the difficulties are surmounted. First among these difficulties is the frequent failure of non-natives to obtain a thorough understanding of native mentality. This difficulty makes a thorough understanding of native ways of thinking and of native point of view well nigh impossible. African mentality is extremely complex, and its complexity which always defies

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

superficial analysis, has led to the erroneous view that it is "equally variable not only as between different individuals, but often in one and the same person."<sup>1</sup> Added to this is the natural resentment of the native at the interference of non-natives with the mysteries of his religion, especially when these are the tenets of a secret society. The penalty attached to the divulgence of secrets was, prior to the establishment of the Pax Britannica, inevitable death. The task of obtaining information thus becomes difficult and perplexing. Miss Mary Kingsley truly says: "Stalking the West African idea is one of the most charming pursuits in the world . . . as beset with difficulty as grizzly-bear hunting."

Another difficulty is that of language. Ignorance of the language or a partial acquaintance with it accounts for a large number of errors. For example, Colonel Ellis and Mr. R. E. Dennett—whose works contain a wealth of valuable information and to whom much praise is due for the courage, labour and perseverance necessitated by research work done in those early days—had but a partial acquaintance with the Yoruba language. Some of their errors have been corrected by Dr. Farrow<sup>2</sup> and need not be repeated here. Miss Kingsley, whose references to Yorubaland are also valuable, had no knowledge of the language at all. The works of Bishops Crowther and Johnson are not much affected by errors due to language. Both Bishops<sup>3</sup> spoke the language with tolerable fluency, although they were Africans who came from Sierra Leone where a knowledge of the language had been lost. Unfortunately the country was not fully opened up in their days as it is now, and hence their field of research was confined within the limits of the towns and villages of the few tribes whom they could safely reach. Besides, neither of them treated the subject from the point of view of comparative religion.

Dr. Farrow's book *Faith, Fancies and Fetich* is probably the best treatise on the subject which has yet been published. He lived in the country for a period of about five years and acquired a working knowledge of the language. All this

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Farrow, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>3</sup> Bishop Crowther was a Yoruba, born in Yorubaland but afterwards taken to Sierra Leone, whence he returned to Yorubaland as a Missionary.

Bishop Johnson was born by Yoruba natives settled in Sierra Leone.

enabled him to obtain information otherwise unobtainable by the average non-native. Yet his work suffers from some of the difficulties referred to above. For example, in spite of his study of the language, mistranslations and wrong expressions occur in his book, which nullify the value of the explanation or theories based on them. Two examples may be given here: Dr. Farrow speaks of "Orun-Afeḥe—the heaven of cool breezes."<sup>1</sup> There is no such expression in Yoruba. The correct expression is "Afeḥe-rere—Favourable wind." Again, after criticising Ellis for confusing the word "duru" with "duro" he says "duru" (always, and only) means "Hard or



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FIG. 1. A TYPICAL YORUBA HUT.

difficult."<sup>2</sup> The real meaning of the word is "important, great, distinguished"; e.g. "Nkan duru," something important or fraught with great consequences. Other errors will be pointed out later. Suffice it here to tender an apology, once for all, for these criticisms which are necessitated by a desire to give an accurate account of the subject.

The present writer is a Yoruba, born and bred in Yorubaland. Not only does he speak his native language fluently, but he has also had the privilege of studying it from the point of view of philology. He has lectured on the language and on Yoruba paganism for many years. His acquaintance with the beliefs and practices of his country is a very close one, as

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

he had shared some of the beliefs during some periods of his life, and had had occasion to take part in some of the practices which light and knowledge gained in succeeding years have shown to be superstitious. His contact with the unsophisticated natives is direct, thus facilitating the task of obtaining first-hand and trustworthy information when necessary.

✕ **YORUBALAND AND ITS PEOPLES.** Yorubaland lies on the south-western part of Nigeria, between the third and the sixth degrees of north latitude. It is bounded on the north and on the east, roughly, by the River Niger, on the south by the Bight of Benin, and on the west by the French Protectorate of Dahomey. It is a fertile and well-populated region in West Africa, rich in tropical vegetation, and producing abundant economic crops.

It has been classified by Sir A. C. Burns as one of the advanced communities in Nigeria,<sup>1</sup> and by other writers as the most advanced community.

According to the last census the population of Yorubaland is approximately 4,000,000,<sup>2</sup> and comprises the following tribes: Yoruba proper, Ibadan, Egba, Ijebu, Ekiti, Ondo, Ijesa, Ife, Ketu, Bini, Jekri and Igara. Some writers exclude the names of Bini, Jekri and Igara from the list, because these tribes are culturally inferior to most of the other tribes. The exclusion finds support in the attitude of the remaining tribes to them. As a matter of fact there are some tribes who are so ignorant of their relation to the Igaras as to use the latter's name as a synonym for thieves or robbers. A study of the



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FIG. 2. AN OYO (YORUBA PROPER).

<sup>1</sup> *History of Nigeria*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> 1931 Census.

languages spoken by the three tribes, however, show that they are more or less remote dialects of the Yoruba language, whilst a study of their beliefs and practices shows that the difference of culture is a clear illustration of degrees of degeneration.

The Yorubas are undoubtedly one of the leading and most progressive peoples in West Africa. Before the advent of the British they were famous for their leather work, chip-carving, smelting of ores, manufacture of steel tools, spinning and other arts. They were also keen agriculturists, although in some parts of the country the deteriorating effect of the slave trade led to the substitution of slave-raiding for agriculture. Their kingdom was sufficiently powerful to resist, with occasional reverses, the successive waves of incursions made by their northern neighbours. There is evidence that their kingdom once extended to Dahomey and the Gold Coast, where gods which originated in Yorubaland are still worshipped.<sup>2</sup> In the sphere of religion, they showed marked superiority to their neighbours. Miss Kingsley gives an example of this when she says "What is one god in Yoruba, you get as several gods in Dahomey."<sup>3</sup>

The achievements of the Yorubas in other parts of the world are also creditable. Some of the slaves imported into America were Yorubas. It cannot be regarded otherwise than just and fair that the Yorubas at home should have a share in the credit due to their kith and kin—the black men in America. Two instances may be cited here. The late Booker T. Washington, the distinguished black man who founded Tuskegee Institute in the United States of America, was a man of real fibre and of brilliant achievement. His career was one which would bring credit to any nation which could claim him as a member. There is no doubt that he was of Yoruba extraction, as his middle name, "Tanifani,"<sup>4</sup> is unquestionably a Yoruba name which is still in use in Yorubaland, especially among the Egbas. Again, the negro spirituals which have thrilled the western world and which show the delicate pathos of the black man, are a development

<sup>1</sup> *History of Nigeria* by A. C. Burns, pp. 63 and 64.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Nigeria* by A. C. Burns, pp. 33 and 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Travels in West Africa*, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> The word is corrupted in America; hence the slight difference in spelling.

of "Negro" music as used by the Yorubas and other tribes in West Africa.

Under the British rule the Yorubas have made great progress. So great has been the progress that it has received both favourable and adverse comments. Whilst some observers rejoice at the rapid and remarkable changes taking place, others deplore them as merely producing a mere veneer of civilization, and giving the natives the husk rather than the kernel of western civilization. The significant fact, however, is the ease and rapidity with which the Yorubas assimilate western ideas, the splendid results achieved by them within the short period between the advent of the British and the present time, the number of leaders produced, and the manifest signs of determination to make improvement in every walk of life. For instance, the Church Missionary Society commenced evangelistic work among the Yorubas in 1845. Within eighty-eight years they have produced six native Bishops, one of whom was the late Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who was rescued as a boy by the British from a slave ship. Such a record has no parallel in any other part of modern Africa. Again, beautiful comments have been made on their military prowess by several distinguished European writers. The following is a specimen: "Throughout this campaign<sup>1</sup> the conduct<sup>2</sup> of the African soldiers of the Nigeria Regiment,<sup>2</sup> and



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FIG. 3. AN EGBA YORUBA.

<sup>1</sup> Campaign against German Cameroon, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> The Nigeria Regiment consists of four battalions. One of these consists mainly of Yorubas.

indeed of all the West African Frontier Force, was beyond praise. . . . Dozens of instances could be given of the gallantry of the troops.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Mollison, recording his experiences in West Africa,

said : " The ancient kingdom of Yoruba may be taken as one of the most interesting of these great tribal divisions, both as regards its geographical situation and national character." " When it is considered that at distances of one day's march from one another are to be found cities of from 20,000 to 60,000 inhabitants, besides the still larger city of Ibadan, and the innumerable farm villages which are scattered over the central portion of Yoruba, making a population which has been variously estimated from two to three million, it is easy to imagine how



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FIG. 4. A WEALTHY IBADAN FARMER.

great must be the agricultural activity of the people and how vast the proportionate area of land under cultivation."

" It must not be forgotten that the Yoruba is by custom a fully clothed mortal. It is considered in the highest degree unfashionable to appear in the public streets without a complete covering of two or three ample and well-dyed cloths, draped round the body in not ungraceful folds."<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted here that the populations of the towns and villages have since increased considerably, the population of Ibadan now being 300,000.

After a visit to West Africa for linguistic purposes, Prof. D. Westerman thus described the Yoruba people : " The Yoruba

<sup>1</sup> *History of Nigeria* by A. C. Burns, pp. 233 and 342.

<sup>2</sup> *The Yoruba Country, West Africa, 1891*, pp. 3, 9 and 10.

people are remarkable for their attainments. They live in large communities (Ibadan has 300,000 inhabitants), have a very highly developed religion and mythology and know something about their own history; they have always been enterprising people, and as traders and settlers exercise a considerable influence beyond the boundaries of their country."<sup>1</sup>

Other instances may be cited.<sup>2</sup> But those given above and the facts already stated make the conclusion almost irresistible that the Yorubas must have been in contact with a higher



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FIG. 5. YORUBAS : EKITI TYPE.

civilization which they have lost. An enquiry into their origin therefore becomes imperative.

**THE YORUBA LANGUAGE.** Before an attempt is made to trace the origin of the Yorubas, some remarks about the character of their language may be made here. The language belongs to the agglutinating class, and to the family known as Sudanic. Its syllables are all open, unless when the final consonant is "n." It is a tonal language and has three distinct accents, viz., the high (´), the middle,<sup>3</sup> and the low (˘).

<sup>1</sup> *Africa*, Journal of the International Institute of African languages and cultures, Vol. II, No. 4, pp. 341 and 342.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., also C. V. Bellamy's paper on "A West African Smelting House" quoted by Dennett in his *Nigerian Studies*, p. 126; also Ellis' *Yoruba-speaking Peoples*, pp. 32 and 33.

<sup>3</sup> No sign is used to indicate the middle tone.

A slight change of accent may change the meaning to the opposite of what is intended. The circumflex (˘) is used to denote a double vowel or an abbreviation. In either case the proper accent of each of the vowels composing the double vowels or appearing in the abbreviated syllables is omitted. These features make the language difficult for Europeans to acquire, and, as a matter of fact, very few non-natives ever learn to speak the language with any degree of accuracy.

As it is a phonetic language, its orthography is very simple. Each letter represents a single distinct sound, except in the case of the nasal "n" and the letter "gb," a deep labial sound, which has no equivalent in English. The consonants are the same as in English, with the exception of the letter "gb" noted above, and the following letters which do not exist: c, q, v, x, z and p (pronounced as in part), the place of which is taken by b, a thick labial sound. The letter s (with diacritical mark) is pronounced like sh in shame.

The vowels are a, e, e, o, o, u, and are all broad sounds.

a	is pronounced like	-ar	in park
e	"	"	" - a " name
e	"	"	" - e " bend
o	"	"	" - o " rode
o	"	"	" -aw " raw
u	"	"	" - u " rule

An important point to be noted in connection with orthography is that the present system is imperfect. Some of the words contain letters which tend to obscure the origin of the words.

Before the note on orthography is concluded it is necessary to explain the rules governing the modifications which foreign words undergo before they are incorporated into the Yoruba language. The rules are almost the same as those governing the modifications which led to dialectic differences in the language. In order to facilitate reference to them, they will be summarized and numbered as follows:

- (1) Yoruba is a phonetic language. Every consonant has its vowel (the nasal "n" being the only exception). If therefore two consonants follow one another in a foreign word, a vowel will be inserted between them. In some cases, one of the consonants is dropped.

- (2) All syllables in Yoruba are open. If a syllable in a foreign word is closed, the final consonant either drops out or receives a vowel, thereby forming a new syllable. For example, the word "pan" becomes "panu" in Yoruba (see also the next rule).
- (3) The double consonant "th" becomes either "t" or "d." *e.g.* "that" becomes "dat" in West African languages generally. In Yoruba it must become "dati." But the form "da" is well known in the pidgin English spoken in West Africa, *e.g.* "that boy" becomes "da boy."
- (4) Final vowels are often nasalized. This is especially the case when a final consonant has been elided or the word has been abbreviated.
- (5) The short "a" does not exist in the Yoruba language. Whenever it occurs in a foreign word it is generally changed to the long sound of "a" as in "bar", or is deflected in "e" as in "pet".
- (6) The vowel sound "er" as in "her" becomes the long "a" in Yoruba.
- (7) The vowels "i" and "u" are sometimes substituted for one another. This also applies to the vowels "a" and "i" and "e" and "o".
- (8) The letter "h" ("h" with a diacritical mark) representing a deep guttural sound, does not exist in the Yoruba language. Whenever it occurs in a foreign word it becomes modified into "g" (hard sound) or "d".
- (9) The double letter "kh" also does not exist in Yoruba. Before a foreign word containing it can be incorporated into Yoruba it must be treated as follows: when it is followed by a consonant it receives a vowel which forms a new syllable with it in accordance with rule 2 above; if it is followed by a vowel and the word is not a monosyllable, the "kh" is omitted.
- (10) A prefix consisting of a vowel or a vowel and an initial consonant is sometimes added to an adopted word to denote a possessor or an agent.
- (11) "p" (as in pat) sometimes becomes "b" in Yoruba, *e.g.* Bishop becomes "Bişoḃu" in Yoruba.

- (12) The aspirate is often elided.  
 (13) " r " is often substituted for " n ".  
 (14) A pure Yoruba noun begins with a vowel, unless it is noun phrase. A noun adopted from another language may be left without any modification, or it may have a vowel prefixed to it, so that it may look like an ordinary Yoruba noun.

THE ORIGIN OF THE YORUBAS. The question of the high religion and civilization which the Yorubas seem to have lost is intimately linked up with that of their origin. Dr. Farrow truly says " any light we can obtain on the history of a people is of value in tracing the origin of their religion, and if certain features in their religion throw light on their origin, the use of this evidence is not necessarily 'arguing in a circle'." Unfortunately there is no authentic history of the Yorubas until within the last few decades. Such records as we possess carry us back only to the end of the eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth century. Various speculations have been made, several theories have been propounded by different writers, but no one has yet succeeded in identifying the locality so as to establish a connexion between that locality and the Yoruba religion.

In the absence of records, the Yorubas themselves have no definite knowledge of their origin. Their popular myths "give to Ile Ife the honour of being the spot where God created man, both white and black, and there can be little doubt that Ife was the first settlement of the Yorubas in their present country."<sup>2</sup> Hence the epithet *ile* "home" is always attached to the name of Ife. From Ile Ife the first home of the Yorubas in Nigeria, the different tribes migrated north and south, founding other towns and absorbing or driving away the original settlers. The Egba kingdom in Abeokuta which was founded in 1837 is perhaps the last kingdom to be founded. The value of the Ife tradition lies in the explanation of the pre-eminent position of Ife in Yoruba folk-lore, and its spiritual importance to the other tribes whose "kings" or "paramount chiefs" still have to obtain the sword of state from Ile Ife. There is no doubt, however, that the Yorubas were immigrants into the country which has now become the

1 *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Nigeria* by A. C. Burns, p. 32.

land of their adoption, although the migration must have taken place at a very early date.

The general trend of opinion among writers is that the Yorubas and some other West African tribes came from the east or north-east. The opinion finds a strong support in myths frequently related in many parts of West Africa. The countries suggested as the original home of West Africans are parts of Asia, Egypt and the Sudan. In the case of the Yorubas the view which has held the field in recent years and



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FIG. 6. A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF ABEOKUTA.

which has been quoted by prominent writers with complacency and seeming approval is that of Sultan Bello of Sokoto. The Sultan states that the Yorubas, "it is supposed, originated from the remnants of the children of Canaan, who were of the tribe of Nimrod. The cause of their establishment in the West of Africa was, as it is stated, in consequence of their being driven by Yaa-rooba, son of Kahtan, out of Arabia to the western coast between Egypt and Abyssinia. From that spot they advanced into the interior of Africa, till they reached Yarba, where they fixed their residence. On their way they left, in every place they stopped at, a tribe of their own people. Thus it is supposed that all the tribes of Soodan, who inhabit

the mountains, are originated from them, as also are the inhabitants of Ya-ory."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the plausible character of this view, it appears to be based on a series of suppositions and mere hearsay, and in consequence of this, to be fanciful and erroneous. The similarity of the words "Yaa-rooba" and "Yarba" cannot but raise one's suspicion against the accuracy of the view. One cannot but ask the question, Is there any connection between the names Yaa-rooba, Yarba and Yoruba? Do the people call themselves Yoruba because they were driven out of Arabia by Yaa-rooba, and do they give their name to the town of Yarba? If there is no connection between the names then it is very curious that the *Yorubas* were driven out by *Yaa-rooba*, and they advanced until they reached *Yarba*! If there is a connection, then the view lays itself open to a serious objection. It suggests that the *Yorubas* adopted the name of their conqueror. The adoption of such a name has no parallel in the history of the world, and anyone who understands the mentality of the *Yorubas* will readily agree that they would be the last people to adopt the names of their conquerors. The view also loses credit by recording the supposition that "all the tribes of Soodan who inhabit the mountains are originated from them, as also are the inhabitants of Ya-ory," a supposition which cannot bear either a historical or linguistic test.

In spite of the fanciful character of Sultan Bello's view of the whole, his statement that the *Yorubas* "originated from the remnants of the children of Canaan who were of the tribe of Nimrod" demands further consideration. Miss Mar Kingsley has discussed the statement, and has adduced evidence leading to the probable conclusion that the Benins (and consequently all the *Yorubas*) were the children of Canaan. Dr. Farrow too has collected interesting facts about the traditions, myths, customs, idioms and sacrifices of the *Yorubas* which show distinct Semitic traces. Commenting on these facts, he says "Whilst they do not necessarily imply any trace of Semitic origin, they would seem to indicate that the Semitic Hebrews and the Negritic *Yorubas* belong to branches which

<sup>1</sup> Clapperton and Denham's Travels, Appendix.  
<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 456 and 457.

at some early stage were united to a common stem."<sup>1</sup> Sir A. C. Burns, following Prof. Leo. Froebenius, the German explorer of Africa, says that "it is probable that the Yorubas were not originally of negro blood."<sup>2</sup> All this suggests that the Yorubas were at one time in Asia, and that Asia may be regarded as their original home. The probability is further strengthened by the fact that the name of Nimrod, corrupted by the Yorubas to Lamurudu, figures prominently in Yoruba mythology.

There is, however, one remark which must be added to the comments on this statement. In the first place, it must be pointed out that although the Yorubas might belong to the tribe of Nimrod they must not be regarded as the children of Canaan, as Sultan Bello suggested. Cush and Canaan were brothers; Nimrod was the son of Cush,<sup>3</sup> and hence the members of the tribe of Nimrod could not have been "remnants of the children of Canaan."

The rejection of the view of an Arabian origin does not affect the probability of an Asiatic origin as far as the Yorubas are concerned. As a matter of fact, some people seem to regard Chaldea as the original home of the Yorubas. Some writers, by laying emphasis on Hebrew idioms and customs, indirectly suggest Palestine. They forget that the idioms and customs are not peculiar to the Hebrews, but are also found among other Semitic peoples. That the Yorubas came into contact with the Chaldean is, in their opinion, strongly suggested by some traces which the Chaldean language seems to have left on the Yoruba language. For example, the name Aki (or Akin—nasal n) is very common in Yorubaland and signifies the name of a hero. There are myths about the origin of the name and of the superhuman exploits of the first bearer of the name. It is interesting to observe that the name occurs in Chaldean legends as the name of the hero who rescued Shargani—Shar-Ali, that is Sargon the Elder, from being drowned.<sup>4</sup> Further evidence is supposed to be given by the fact that contact with the Sumerian element of the Chaldean

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Nigeria*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. x, 6 and 8, for a full discussion of this matter see *History of Egyptian Religion* by Dr. C. P. Tiele, pp. 7-11. Dr. Tiele maintains that the divisions are not racial or ethnographical, but historic-social.

<sup>4</sup> Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, pp. 596-598.

population is attested to by the presence of a few Sumeria words in the Yoruba language. For example, the Sumeria word *zi* means "life". This becomes *si*<sup>1</sup> in Yoruba and possesses exactly the same meaning. *Ko si* in Yoruba means "He is not living, i.e. He is dead" or "someone or something does not exist." The evidence given above is too flimsy to support the theory that "the original home of the Yoruba was in the land between the Euphrates and the Tigris." The theory cannot be accepted until it is based on data supplied by scientific research.<sup>2</sup>

CONNECTION WITH ANCIENT EGYPT. Whilst it is doubtful whether the view of an Asiatic origin is correct, there can be no doubt that the Yorubas were in Africa at a very early date. A chain of evidence leads to the conclusion that they must have settled for many years in that part of the continent known as Ancient Egypt. The facts leading to the conclusion may be grouped under the following heads :

- A. Similarity or Identity of Language.
- B. Similarity or Identity of Religious Beliefs.
- C. Similarity or Identity of Religious Ideas and Practices.
- D. Survival of Customs, and of names of persons, places, objects, etc.

(A) *Similarity or Identity of Language.* The evidence under this heading is very strong. There is a very close resemblance between the language of the Ancient Egyptians and that of the Yorubas. The former has been described as follows : "Both Coptic and Ancient Egyptian are of the utmost simplicity of structure, so much so that the language seems all roots. Inflections are almost absent, parts of speech are hardly to be distinguished. Thus *ran-i* means "name me", and according to the context does duty for "my name" or for "I call", etc. A few auxiliaries mark moods and tenses. The noun is not declined . . ."<sup>3</sup> The above description applies, almost in every detail, to the Yoruba language. Thus, *ran-mi* in Yoruba mean "send me" or "help me", or "infect me" or "pain me" or "call me," etc., according to the position of the accent on the word *ran* or according to the

<sup>1</sup> There is no "z" sound in Yoruba, its place being taken by "s" sound.

<sup>2</sup> See the exposition of the theory by Miss H. Millicent Douglas in the issue of the *Daily Service* (Nigerian Newspaper) for 30th January, 1942.

<sup>3</sup> *National Encyclopedia*, article Egypt, p. 208.

context in which the words occur. Another example of this is the word *wa*,<sup>1</sup> which has as many as twelve different meanings which may be determined by the kind of accent placed upon it and by its function in the context.

The evidence is not limited to similarity of language. There are many words in Yoruba which are identical in spelling and meaning with Egyptian words; there are others which are identical in meaning but whose spelling presents differences which can easily be accounted for by the rules of modifications given above. The writer believes that words which are wholly identical with Egyptian words or contain roots of Egyptian origin form not less than half of the words in the present Yoruba vocabulary. A few examples of these will be given here. The word *bu*<sup>2</sup> in the Egyptian language means "place". This word exists in Yoruba with exactly the same meaning. For example, in the Ondo dialect, the expression *ki bu e e* means "Where (lit., what place) are you going?" The following words contain the word as one of their roots: *ibudo*, "a place to settle," i.e. a camp; *ibusun*, a place to sleep," i.e. a bed; other similar words are *ibu-joko*, "a chair," *ibu-sq*, a station, *a-bu-le*, premises, etc. In the Egyptian language the word *amon* means "to conceal" or "concealed." This word exists in Yoruba with the same meaning, e.g. *fi p' amon*, "conceal it" (lit., "regard it as hidden or cause it to be hidden"). Other examples are: (1) *Uu*=*wu*, "rise up, swell." (2) *Miri*—water; in Yoruba this word is used only as an adverb, viz. *Miri—miri*,<sup>3</sup> "dazzling like water"; but among the Ibos who are the next-door neighbours of the Yorubas, the word is still used to denote water. (3) *Ha*,<sup>4</sup> "great house" becomes *iga*<sup>5</sup> in Yoruba, which means a great house or a king's palace. (4) *Hor*, "to be high," "that which is high" becomes *ori* (h is elided, and r being a final consonant receives an additional vowel to form a new syllable). The

<sup>1</sup> *Wa*—come, seek, then: *wa*—our or ours;

*Wa*—exist, dig, paddle, drive (a car), cling (to);

*Wa*—suddenly, clearly, profusely.

<sup>2</sup> Every noun in Yoruba begins with a vowel; hence a vowel is always added, to *bu* as a prefix. Sometimes the vowel "u" is changed to "i," the word thereby becoming *ibi* instead of *ibu*. Of course, both forms are used in the language. See rule 14 above.

<sup>3</sup> Pronounced by some Ibo tribes as *mili*.

<sup>4</sup> *h* becomes *g* (see rule 8, above).

<sup>5</sup> *Iga Eleko*, the palace of Eleko, the paramount Chief of Lagos.

word *ori* means "top" "head." (5) *Fahaka* means a globe fish which has silvery lines on its skin.<sup>1</sup> *Fadaka* in Yoruba means "silver." The word *Fahaka* survives in modern Egyptian language in the form of *Faddah*, which means "silver."<sup>2</sup>

The word *naprit*<sup>3</sup>, which means a grain, survives in the Yorubas word *inabiri* or *inabere*, which also means a kind of grain.

The connection between the two languages is so close that it is quite possible for the one to help in determining the significance of words whose meanings have not yet been definitely ascertained or have become obscure in the other. Two examples of such words will be given here. Prof. Sayce, commenting on Horus Ahi, says "The meaning of Ahi, the local title assigned to Horus the younger is doubtful."<sup>4</sup> The word *Ahi* becomes *Ēhin* in Yoruba (short "a" becomes "e" according to rule 5 above, and "i" becomes nasalized). The Yoruba word *ĕhin* which means "behind" or "the back of a thing," is generally applied to a junior person, especially to the younger of twins who is named K'ĕhin-de (lit. to come behind). The probable meaning of the Egyptian word *Ahi*, therefore, is "the younger,"<sup>5</sup> and the word is used probably in the same way as the word "Junior" when added to the name of a son bearing the same name as his father. Again, Prof. Sayce, commenting on *Nini*, says "the meaning of the last name (i.e. *Nini*) is doubtful."<sup>6</sup> The word *nini* in Yoruba means "perfect," e.g. *tutu nini*, "as cold as possible." Hence the word *Nini* probably signifies "perfection."<sup>7</sup>

(B) *Similarity or Identity of Religious Beliefs.* Abundant proof of intimate connection between the Ancient Egyptians

<sup>1</sup> Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Lane's *Modern Egyptians*, p. 579; Everyman's Edition, Appendix B,

*Moneys.*  
<sup>3</sup> Maspero's *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 81, Note 2, p becomes b, and final t is dropped.

<sup>4</sup> *The Religion of Ancient Egypt*, p. 145.

<sup>5</sup> Prof. Maspero thinks that *Ahi* means "he who strikes the sistrum, but the word is often used when it is plain that there is no reference to the sistrum. When the word is applied to priests the context always shows that they are regarded as belonging to a lower class of priests who may be regarded as junior to some other class of priests.

<sup>6</sup> *The Religion of Ancient Egypt*, p. 132, Note 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Nini* is also applied in the same sense to the number 400, which is regarded as a perfect square by the Yorubas.

and the Yorubas may be produced under this head. Most of the principal gods were well known, at one time, to the Yorubas. Among these gods are Osiris, Isis, Horus, Shu, Sut, Thoth, Khepera, Amon, Anu, Khonsu, Khnum, Khopri, Hathor, Sokaris, Ra, Seb, the four elemental deities, and others. Most of the gods survive in name or in attributes or in both. Ra survives only in name, for the Yorubas are no longer sun-worshippers. But the words *Irawo*, *rara*, *rara*, etc., preserve the idea. The literal meaning of *i-ra-wo*, a star, is "that which appears when the Ra (that is, the sun) has set" (*wō*—set). The Yoruba expression *ra-ra*, "not at all," is probably an old form of swearing by the god Ra. The word *ra-ra*, "dwarf," bears an unmistakable reference to the Danga dwarfs which, in Egyptian Mythology, hailed the daily arrival of the sun-god in the morning with great delight. Again, the moon-god Khonsu must have been known to the Yorubas. The initial letter "kh" disappears in Yoruba (see rule 9), and the word becomes *osu* in Yoruba which means "the moon."

It has been observed above that the word *amon* exists in the Yoruba language with the same meaning as it had in the language of the Ancient Egyptians. The God *Amon* is one of the gods formerly known to the Yorubas. The Yoruba words *mōn*, *mimōn*, "holy or sacred," are probably derived from the name of the god. Thoth was the Egyptian god of truth and righteousness. The initial letter "th" becomes "t" and the final "th" is dropped. The word thus becomes *tō*, which means right, fair or just. Other words derived from Thoth are *O-ti-tō*, truth (lit., that which belongs to Thoth) *ḡ-tō*, fairness, justice, right.

One more example will be given here. The West African word "Ye" which means "to exist," is subject to many changes in the different languages; "e" sometimes becomes "a" or "i" or "o" or "o" or "o" or "u" or these vowels nasalized. Throughout all these changes the meaning remains the same. For the sake of convenience the root-word is designated "Ye" in this work. The word occurs in several of the leading West African languages, viz., Tshi, Ewe, Ga, Yoruba, Edo, etc.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Pott, *Ueber die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues von Wilhelm v. Humbolt*, Vol. 2, pp. 495-498 (1876). See also the comparative table given by Ellis in the *Yoruba-speaking Peoples*, pp. 373 and 374.

The vowel of the word is subject to modification in the different languages to indicate shades of meaning, and may be replaced by any of the other vowels or these vowels nasalized. "J" sometimes replaces "Y," and a nasal sound sometimes precedes it, e.g. Nye (Ewe language)—to be.

It is quite probable that the word is of Semitic origin, and that it comes from a root which means to live or to exist. The Hebrew word for "to be," "to exist" is הָיָה, *ha-ya*. The first part of this word (*ha*) varies when the verb is conjugated and must have been left out when the word was adopted by the peoples who afterwards migrated to West Africa. It is noteworthy that all the changes which the second part undergoes in the process of conjugation are reflected in the different forms of the word in West African languages. The word is also used in a causative sense. For example, in Yoruba *Yeye mi* means "my mother" or "she who causes me to live" (i.e. in this world). *Yeye* is often contracted to *Ye* or modified to *Iya*; the meaning remains unchanged. In Tshi language *Ye mi* means "My maker" and is applied to the Supreme Deity.

These considerations will help in determining the meaning of the word "Yoruba," which is made up of two distinct words, viz., "Yo" and "ruba." "Yo" is a modified form of the word "ye," and the word "ruba" comes from *rpa*. According to rule 1 above, a vowel must be inserted between two consonants coming together; hence the vowel "u" or sometimes "i" is inserted between "r" and "p." According to rule 11 "p" becomes "b." Thus *rpa* becomes *ruba*. Now the word "rpa" was the name of the hereditary prince of the gods by which Seb was known in Ancient Egypt during "the feudal period of Egypt when as yet there was no Pharaoh who ruled over the whole land."<sup>1</sup> The word "Yoruba"<sup>2</sup> therefore means "the living rpa" or "the Creator of rpa," and is adopted as a name by the worshippers of "rpa" or of "the creator of rpa." That this is the true interpretation of the word is supported by similar instances in other West African languages to which reference will be made later. The

<sup>1</sup> Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the word *Yo-ruba* with *Ia-rba-s*, the name of the North African prince mentioned in *Vergil Aeneid*, Bk. IV, lines 36, 196.

Egyptian gods which are still worshipped in Yorubaland under identical names and with similar ideas will be dealt with in the succeeding chapters.

(C) *Identity or similarity of religious ideas and practices.* The number of Yoruba ideas and practices which are identical with or similar to those of the Ancient Egyptians is so large that it affords a clear evidence of the close connection which once existed between the Yorubas and the Ancient Egyptians. The wonder is that so many ideas and practices remain unchanged in spite of the lapse of several centuries since the Yorubas migrated southwards and westwards from Egypt. Some of these ideas and practices will now be mentioned :

(1) The idea of a future life and that of judgment after death. Reference has been made above to the fact that the Egyptian god Thoth was well known to the Yorubas as the god of truth and righteousness. In consequence of this the Yorubas have a strong belief in judgment after death, when every person will have to render an account of his actions in the present world, and when both the good and the wicked will receive their due reward or punishment. The wicked will be consigned to "Orun Apadi," *i.e.* "Hell." "Hell," says Tylor, "is unknown to savage thought." The existence of a belief in a future life and in hell among the Yorubas is therefore a survival from some higher religion which in this case may be rightly identified with the religion of Ancient Egypt.

There are many Yoruba proverbs showing the existence of these ideas. The following are examples : *Gbogbo ohun ti a ba se li aiye li ao duro ka ni asalu orun*, "We shall have to give an account of everything that we do in this world when we reach the Hall of Heaven."<sup>1</sup> *Nigbati mo ba ku, emi pelu re yio lo ro o niwaju Olorun*, "Whenever I die, both you and I will have to state our case before God."<sup>2</sup>

(2) The deification of Kings. In Yorubaland kings are paid such respect as may be described as divine honours. They are usually addressed as *Oluwa mi, Oba*, *i.e.* "my Lord,

<sup>1</sup> This seems to contain a reference to the Hall of Judgment over which Osiris presided and where Thoth weighed souls in the balance.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Isin Orisha Bibo ni ile Yoruba* by Bishop James Johnson, p. 51.

the King." Šango,<sup>1</sup> one of the deities worshipped in many parts of Yorubaland, is a deified king.

In this connection, the existence, in Yorubaland, of a form of double government such as existed in Ancient Egypt may be mentioned.<sup>2</sup> This has persisted all through the centuries, and although the system is fast dying out, yet it still exists in such an important town as Isehin, where in 1913 it resulted in bloodshed and murder owing to the unrestrained desire of the vazier to usurp powers belonging to the "Alasehin" or paramount chief.

(3) The importance attached to names. This is quite as great as it was in Ancient Egypt. A man's name is supposed to have a real force in determining his character.<sup>3</sup> For example, *Oruko nro o*, "His name is urging him on to such acts." Names are not given haphazardly, but according to the prevailing circumstances at the time when the children were born. Every person takes a pride, not only in his own name, but also in his ancestral names: for example, *Emi Afolabi omọ Lisabi*, "I Afolabi, a descendant of Lisabi."

(4) Strong belief in a future life. The ideas about the future life as held by the Ancient Egyptians and the Yorubas are quite identical, with the exception of such details as the Yorubas seem to have lost. Some of the very terms used by the Ancient Egyptians are still in use among the Yorubas of to-day. They are as follows: Ka, Aakhu, Khu, Sahu and Ba. According to Prof. Sayce, the Egyptian word *Khu*, or the luminous part of man, "is a spark of that divine intelligence which pervades the world and to which it must return."<sup>4</sup> It "passed after death into the other world."<sup>5</sup> That this word should be used in the same sense by the Yorubas is a very interesting fact. The Yoruba word for the verb "to die" is *Ku*,<sup>6</sup> that is, "to become a luminous spirit." The word is further explained in the expression *O ku o di arinako*, "He is

<sup>1</sup> Compare this name with *Sangu*, the name of the Chief Priest in a Chaldean Temple (see Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 675).

<sup>2</sup> Compare the case of Pharaoh and Joseph recorded in the Book of Genesis.

<sup>3</sup> See Flinders Petrie, *Ancient Egyptians*, p. 42, Sec. 35, and compare Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, Chapter V.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>6</sup> The noun is *Iku*, death, that is, the process of becoming a luminous spirit. The word *Ku* is used in the same sense by the Ewe people of the Gold Coast, e.g. *Ma ku Mawu*, "I will die God's death."

dead, he has become a disembodied spirit to be met with at by-paths." In a later chapter it will be shown that the idea of the luminous spirit returning to the divine intelligence is well known to the Yorubas.

The above remarks about the word *Ku* will clear up the difficulty about the meaning of the Yoruba salutation *O ku* and the word *Ku* used with other words for the purposes of salutation. There is no doubt that the literal translation of *O ku* as "May you die" is wrong; so also is the translation of *Ku işş* as "May you die of work."

According to Egyptian conception the *Khu* is enveloped by the soul which it seeks to raise to the same standard of ethereal life and quality. After death, the *Khu* becomes liberated. The wicked soul, which had not responded to the promptings of the *Khu*, passes through a series of sufferings until "it dies the second death, and is annihilated for ever. The good soul, on the other hand, which has listened to the voice of the divine intelligence . . . is permitted to see God face to face and to lose itself in His ineffable glory."<sup>1</sup> This is the idea which forms the background of the Yoruba salutations. *O ku*, therefore, means "May your soul become a luminous spirit"; in other words, the salutation is a wish that the soul of the person to whom it is addressed may be a good soul which will receive the reward described above. In the same way *ku işş* means "May your soul become a luminous spirit as a reward for the work which you are now doing." In the same way the meanings of salutations prefaced by *Ku* become quite intelligible. It is noteworthy that the salutations are still in use although their original meaning has been lost through lapse of time. All that remains is the underlying idea that the salutations express good wishes.

(5) The belief in the existence of guardian spirits. This is a part of the doctrine of the *Ka*. The *Kas* of departed ancestors were regarded by the Ancient Egyptians as the companions of the living and in-dwelling in their descendants. "In Nigeria there is similarly the belief in a guardian spirit, who is invariably of the same family, and usually the spirit of the father."<sup>2</sup> The following Yoruba expression may be quoted in

<sup>1</sup> Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Flinders Petrie, *Ancient Egyptians*, p. 43, Col. 127, Sec. 38.

support of this : *Bi ti baba mi ba gun mi*, "When or if father's spirit spurs me to take action" (lit., When that w. belongs to my father rides me). The belief also finds expression in an interesting custom practised by the Yoruba on important occasions. A hole which is about 15 to 18 inches deep and about 8 to 10 inches wide is dug. Into this hole offerings in kind are thrown in order to secure the help of departed spirits who have been ceremoniously invited to occupy the hole. The object of the invitation is to explain and the help of all the guardian spirits of the family will be earnestly solicited. Failure to observe this customary rite is regarded as fraught with serious consequences, for it will even bring the displeasure of the guardian spirits whose help may be thereby withdrawn.

(D) *Survival of Names and Customs.* The connection between the Ancient Egyptians and the Yorubas may be clearly illustrated under this heading. First of all, there is a survival of names of persons. One of these is the name of Khafra, from which the Yoruba word *afara*<sup>1</sup> is derived. The word is used in two contradictory senses—in one sense to denote the promptness with which the King's orders must be obeyed, and in another sense to denote the delay which usually leads to a man being caught and pressed into the King's service. The name of *Khufu*<sup>2</sup> also survives in the word *ofu* or *ofu*, "waste," a survival which preserves the idea that the time and energy spent in the service of King Khufu were regarded as absolute waste. Other surviving names are (a) *Pasht*, which survives in *Pasi* (*Pashi*)<sup>3</sup>; (b) *Danga*, e.g. *lo bi Danga*, "go as quick as a *Danga* dwarf"; (c) *Atthar*, which survives in the form *Ata*, e.g., *The Ata of Igbirra*.

Secondly, there is a survival of names of animals. The Yoruba word for lion is *Kini-Un*, which is derived from two Egyptian words, viz., *Qimi*, "black," and *Un*, "being." The Egyptian word for hippopotamus is *Ririt*,<sup>4</sup> from which the

<sup>1</sup> The initial *Kh* is elided (see rule of modification No. 9) and a vowel placed between the two consonants *f* and *r*.

<sup>2</sup> The initial *Kh* is elided.

<sup>3</sup> The writer's birthplace faces a Street formerly known as *Pashi Street* in Lagos (Eko).

<sup>4</sup> The final consonant is elided (see rule 2, p. 12) compare the treatment of the following words : *Barnabas* becomes *Banaba* in Yoruba ; the Arabic name "Hamzat" becomes "Amusa" in Yoruba.

Yoruba word *Riri*, "dirty," is derived. The derivation is due, no doubt, to the dirty appearance usually presented by a hippopotamus on emerging from marshy waters. The sacred animal of the city of On (Aunu) survives in the word *Oni*, "crocodile," a name used as the title of one of the paramount chiefs in Yorubaland, that is, the *Oni* of Ife. *Nokit*—



FIG. 7. A YORUBA : LAGOS (EKO) TYPE.

a fabulous beast<sup>1</sup>—also survives in the Yoruba word *Inoki*, a fabulous beast, often identified with an ape. The survival of *Sha*,<sup>2</sup> the Typhonian animal, will be noted in a later chapter.

Thirdly, there is a survival of names of places. *Salug* survives in the name *Şaluga*, e.g. *Aje*<sup>3</sup> *Şaluga*, "the god of wealth of Salug."<sup>4</sup> *Bahtan* survives in the word *ibatan*, "a

<sup>1</sup> See Maspero's *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> See Maspero's *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> *Aje* is derived from the word *ye* or *je* explained, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Salug* an islet in Ancient Egypt. See Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 12, and compare this explanation of the origin of the term with the fanciful derivation given in Dennett's *Nigerian Studies*, p. 145.

relation," a word which perhaps originally denoted compatriot." The Yoruba phrase *apa amu sua*, which means "an unthrifty person," is derived from three Egyptian words: *Apa*, "he who belongs to the house (pa)," i.e. a domestic servant; *amu*, an Amu, one of the Asiatic tribes engaged in domestic service in Ancient Egypt; *Sua* (*Sua-nit*), a name of a woman in Ancient Egypt. The phrase is a contemptuous term which preserves the idea of the wastefulness of foreign domestic servants in Ancient Egypt who hardly knew the value of crockery and other articles which they sometimes smashed to pieces.

Fourthly, there is a survival of customs. Two of these will be mentioned here. Polygamy existed in Ancient Egypt just as it does now in Yorubaland. A noteworthy point of similarity is the position of the first wife. In Ancient Egypt she enjoyed rights and privileges denied to other wives. In Yorubaland this is also the case. She occupies a peculiar position in the house and is addressed as *Iyale*, "mistress of the house"—a title corresponding in significance to the *nibpiru*<sup>1</sup> of the ancient Egyptians.

The burial customs are also similar. Previous to burial the corpse in Yorubaland is dressed like the Egyptian mummy. In the case of the burial of a king, the king's slaves must be buried with him, and his Chief Officers and wives must die on the day of burial. The idea underlying this custom is that the King would require the services of his dependents, especially for manual work, in the next world. Of course, British influence has put an end to such practices,<sup>2</sup> but the idea still survives and corresponds to a similar idea leading to a similar custom in the early days of Ancient Egypt, the practice being slightly modified by the substitution of *ushebtu* figures for living persons.

One more piece of evidence may be added here. It is remarkable that the very words used to denote "Egypt" and "the Egyptians" exist in modified forms in the Yoruba language.

<sup>1</sup> Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 51, and Flinders Petrie, *Ancient Egyptian*, p. 4, col. 12. Position of Women. The words *nibit* and *piru* survive in the Yoruba language, e.g. *Ade-nibi*, the mistress' crown. Words derived from *piru* will be dealt with later.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Charles Phillips had great difficulty in dissuading the Ondo people from continuing such practices during his episcopate covering the last decade of the last century and the first six years of the present one.

language. The Greek word for Egypt, *Aiguptos*,<sup>1</sup> is said to be derived from *Khi-Klu-ptah*, i.e., "the temple of the soul of Ptah." Now figures of animals, particularly of sheep, are said to be carved on the outer walls of Ptah's temple, and it is quite possible for the proletariat to apply the name of the temple to the animals whose figures were carved on its walls. It is quite possible that in this way the Yorubas derived from the Greek word *Ai-gup-tos*, the word a-gu-tō(n), which means "a sheep."

Again, the Ancient Egyptian word for an Egyptian is Rotu, or Roti.<sup>2</sup> The word exists in the Yoruba language, and is used as a name, e.g. *Ifatu-roti*.<sup>3</sup> The word *Qubti*<sup>4</sup> (Qobt), the Coptos of the Greeks, survives in the Yoruba word *Kobiti*, which is a well-known name in Yorubaland, especially among the Egbas.

After an inquiry into West African Religions, including that of the Yorubas, Sir Harry Johnston wrote as follows: "The more one inquires into those intricate religions of West Africa, especially in the whole region of the Niger, the more we come irresistibly to the conclusion that they are founded on ideas which have travelled all the way from Egypt or from the Southern Mediterranean Shores."<sup>5</sup>

Dealing with the same subject, another writer says: "When one thus superficially has surveyed our present knowledge of these Gold Coast people, one cannot but remark a most neglected side of our studies. It is that of the relationship culturally with the culture of the great kingdoms with which they have been in contact. No thorough examination has been made of the impress of Egypt, nor of that of the Greek and Roman Empires. . . ."<sup>6</sup> These remarks apply not only to the Gold Coast and Yorubaland, but also to West Africa in general.

The evidence given above may be regarded as *prima facie* evidence supporting the theory of a close connection between the Ancient Egyptians and the Yorubas.

<sup>1</sup> Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> It will be shown later that the word *Ifatu* is of Egyptian origin.

<sup>4</sup> Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> *S.G.C. Journal*, 27th April, 1914.

<sup>6</sup> *Journal of the Institute of African Languages and Cultures*, Vol. II, No. 4, p. 411.

An effort will be made in the succeeding chapters to examine the impress of Egypt on Yoruba religion and to show that the connection between Egypt and Yorubaland must have dated from centuries antecedent to the establishment of the Old Egyptian Kingdom to the end of the Greek Period and the beginning of the Roman Period.

CHAPTER II

Q̄L̄Q̄RUN, THE SUPREME DEITY



## CHAPTER II .

### OLQRUN, THE SUPREME DEITY

LIKE all primitive religions, the religion of the Yoruba people is of a wholly absorbing character. Every stage of their life being hedged in by some religious observances, they live constantly with a keen consciousness of their relation to the unseen powers. Of them it may truly be said that "they live religiously, eat religiously, and die religiously."

Their religion is mainly animistic. The mysterious, the uncanny, the unfamiliar as well as the great forces of nature, are regarded as being dwelt by spirits through whose agency they possess the peculiar forms or supernatural powers which mark them out as objects of veneration. Fetichism and polydaemonism in the form of worship of ancestral spirits play a great part in the religion, and thus arises the worship of "gods many and lords many." Some of these are worshipped by the people as a whole, others are worshipped by some tribes only, and the rest by individuals only.

Various writers<sup>1</sup> have raised the question as to the of grades among the large number of Yoruba deities. Some of these writers have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to discover any order among the perplexing number whose number preclude any accurate study.

It is true that a large number of Yoruba deities are gradated. But there is no doubt that a certain gradation of some sort exists in native minds, and some are pre-eminently above all others. The relation of one to another and to the other is not yet ascertained.

After a careful and exhaustive study of the gradations of status existing between their deities

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Dr. R. R. Marett.  
by Dr. Marett.

THE RELIGION OF THE YORUB

the Supreme Deity—*Ọlọrun*.

the Major *Oriṣas*,<sup>1</sup> of whom *Eṣu*<sup>2</sup> and *Ṣango* are the most important.

Deified Spirits of Ancestors and other spirits, of whom *Oro*, *Ẹluku*, *Agemọ* and *Egungun* are the most important.

4. The Minor *Oriṣas*.

The gradations of status existing between the deities classified under number 4 above vary among different tribes, especially as the worship of the minor deities is not general in Yorubaland.

Over and above all the other deities classified above and excelling them in power, honour and majesty is the Supreme Deity known as *ỌLỌRUN*, a Being of unique character, possessing attributes far too noble, far too abstract and refined to have originated from the thought of a primitive people. He is credited with omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. He is the just and impartial Judge, sometimes meting out judgment on the wicked in this world and certainly bringing all men to judgment in the next world. He is *Ọlọrun adakọ dajọ* "God, the silent but active Judge." He is *Ọlọrun Olorọdun* "God the benefactor." He is *Ọlọrun Alanu*, "the merciful One." The creation of the universe is ascribed to Him. He bears the title of *Ẹlẹda*, "Creator." Other titles ascribed to Him are equally significant. He is *Alaye*, "the Owner of Spirit," that is the spirit of all human beings, *Ọga-ogo*, "the High One or the Lord."

It is not possible to raise one's suspicion against the possibility that *Ọlọrun* is the product of Yoruba thought. It is true that several persons have argued, for a primitive people, the idea of a Supreme Deity, inborn in the mind. But an explanation is necessary for the origin of these ideas about *Ọlọrun* among the very primitive peoples of the hills and surrounded by groups of savages. Some anthropologists may

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1 Op. cit., p. 29



Nyi comes from the West African word ye,<sup>1</sup> "to live," and Sua from Sua-nit,<sup>2</sup> a nome in Ancient Egypt.

The meaning of Nyisua, therefore, is "the living (soul of) Sua-nit."<sup>3</sup>

- (ii) NYANKUPON. This is the Fanti<sup>4</sup> word for God. It consists of three words, viz., Nyan-ku-po(n).<sup>5</sup> Nyan is a form of the word ye<sup>6</sup>; ku is the modified form of the Ancient Egyptian word Khu, "Soul," and po(n) comes from the word Pua-nit, a nome in Ancient Egypt. *Nyankupon*, therefore, means "the living soul of Punt."<sup>7</sup>
- (iii) NYONMON. This is the Ga<sup>8</sup> word for God. It consists of two words, viz., *Nyon-mon*. Nyo(n) is a modified form of ye<sup>9</sup> and mo(n) is an abbreviated form of Amon,<sup>10</sup> the name of a god in Ancient Egypt. *Nyon-mon*, therefore, means "the living Amon."<sup>11</sup>
- (iv) MAU or MAWU. This is the Ewe<sup>12</sup> word for God. It is derived directly from the name of the Egyptian goddess Maut,<sup>13</sup> the goddess of truth.
- (v) ORISE. This is the Jekri<sup>14</sup> word for God. It will be shown later that this word is derived from Horus.
- (vi) CHUKU. This is the Ibo<sup>15</sup> word for God. The first syllable appears to be a softening down of the word Khu (Egyptian Khu, "luminous spirit," "soul"). The original word, then, would be *Kuku*. The doubling of the word *ku* shows that God is regarded

<sup>1</sup> See Note on this word in Chapter I, pp. 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> The second syllable is left out.

<sup>3</sup> This is a common designation of the presiding deity of nomes in Ancient Egypt. Cf. the "living soul of Ra." See Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> The Fanti Language (Twi or Tshi) is spoken on the Gold Coast, West Africa.

<sup>5</sup> Nasal "n."

<sup>6</sup> See Note 1 above.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter I, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> The Ga Language is spoken on the Gold Coast, West Africa.

<sup>9</sup> See Note 1 above.

<sup>10</sup> Cf., the Yoruba word "mon," see Chapter I, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> See note on this word in p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> The Ewe language is spoken on the *Olodumar*.

<sup>13</sup> See Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization* must refer to the idea of the story of the "son."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The Jekri Language is spoken in the West African region.

<sup>15</sup> The Ibo Language is spoken in the West African region.

<sup>16</sup> The word "son" is known to the Yorubas.

as "the luminous spirit par excellence." Khu has been modified also in the Ibo language to Chi, Spirit. Hence Chu-ku has been taken to mean *Chi-uku*, "the Great Spirit."

- (vii) CHINEKE. This is another Ibo word for God. *Chi-neke(n)*. The first syllable here also is a modification of the word *ku*. The second syllable comes from *Nekhen*, a nome in Ancient Egypt. The literal meaning of *Chineke*, therefore, is "the soul of *Nekhen*."<sup>1</sup>
- (viii) AYIBA. This is the Ijaw<sup>2</sup> word for God. *A*=he who *yi*=ye, to make; *ba* is another word for soul corresponding in meaning to the Greek word  $\Psi\upsilon\chi\eta$  *Ayiba*, therefore, means "The Creator of Souls."
- (ix) ORU. This is the Nembe<sup>3</sup> word for God. It is derived from the Egyptian word *Horu*<sup>4</sup> noted above.
- (x) ABASI. This is the Efik<sup>5</sup> word for God, the derivation of which may be traced to the Egyptian word *Bast*. The Efik term for Almighty God—*Abasi Ibu(n)*—seems to be derived from *Bu-bastis*, with a reversal of the order of its component parts.

Further evidence in support of the theory of a close connection between *Ọlọrun* and *Osiris* is contained in one of the titles borne by the former. He is styled *Olodumare*. The meaning of this title has baffled many writers. Dr. Farrow thus comments on the title :

"The derivation of the word is uncertain. It is generally taken to denote 'the Almighty One.' Bishops Crowther and Johnson seem to regard it, but the latter gives an alternative 'The Ever-righteous One'."<sup>8</sup>

The difficulty about its derivation, and consequently about its meaning, arises from failure to understand the meaning of its component parts, which are as follows: *Ol'odu-ma-re*

<sup>1</sup> See N 3, p. ?  
god in A Eg  
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This very title "the soul of *Nekhen*" is applied to  
Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 40, Note 1016  
spoken in Nigeria, West Africa.  
spoken in Nigeria, West Africa.

<sup>2</sup> The Eastern part of Nigeria, West Africa  
<sup>3</sup> A vowel too from a syllable. See

The word *Odu*<sup>1</sup> means "a chief," "an exalted personage." *Olodu* is its intensive form, indicating completeness (e.g. *Obiri*,<sup>2</sup> "woman; *olobiri*, a woman in the full bloom of womanhood"). *Ma-re* means "I shall go or I must go." The meaning of *Olodumare* then is "the Chief or the Exalted One to whom I must go or return."<sup>3</sup> Now according to Egyptian belief the highest reward which will be given to the good soul is to be permitted "to see God face to face and to lose itself in its ineffable glory."<sup>4</sup> A return to Osiris followed by identification with him is the desire of every devout worshipper of Osiris. Among the Yorubas, the idea of the soul going or returning to the Supreme Deity after death is in existence and is enshrined in the word *Olodumare*, as its meaning clearly shows. The idea is one which may be rightly regarded as a relic of the Osirian faith.

An impartial consideration of the above facts cannot but lead to the conclusion that a close connection exists between Ọlọrun of the Yorubas and Osiris of the Ancient Egyptians, and that there must have been a time when the former was identified with the latter.

There are one or two questions, however, which must be raised at this point. If the connection between Ọlọrun and Osiris is so close, why is it that Ọlọrun is only revered but hardly worshipped by the Yorubas? Osiris had temples where worship was regularly offered to him, and it is quite natural to expect that Ọlọrun should be worshipped in the same way. In answer to this question, it must be observed that although the faith of Osiris was widespread, his worship was almost entirely the monopoly of the priestly class. The common people believed in him but knew very little about his worship. To them he was well represented by his "Didu," the images of the gods subordinate to him, and the animals sacred to him. Their worship was given to these images or

<sup>1</sup> The Egyptian word "Du" means a "mountain," an elevated piece of land.

<sup>2</sup> It will be shown later that this word is of Egyptian origin.

<sup>3</sup> The word *Odu* may also be related to the *du* in *du-dan* "domain in Sekhet-Aaru presided over by Osiris." *Olodumare* says: "I am the owner of the Ot or domain to which I must return." "The idea of the story of derivation is accepted, the underlying idea is by *du* or son."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>4</sup> associated with the other derivation. The word *Olodumare* is known to the Yorubas.

<sup>4</sup> Sayce, *op. cit.*, pp. 69 and 179.

gods which were regarded as intermediaries between Osiris and themselves.

The peasant could not soar to the heights of priestly speculation or be content with empty abstraction; he could not follow all the intricate niceties of organized worship. He therefore clung to the divinity which he could see and handle, and confined his worship to such a divinity. It is quite possible that there was a small priestly class for *Ọlọrun* among the Yorubas, for there is a faint trace of the worship of *Ọlọrun*.<sup>1</sup> But a knowledge of the rites and ceremonies of the worship has vanished with the transference and limitation of religious worship to the lesser deities.

Again, the question may be asked: If the connection between Osiris and *Ọlọrun* is so close that at one time the latter was identified with the former, why is it that the name of Osiris was not adopted and retained by the Yorubas as the name of their Supreme Deity? After the lapse of so many centuries it may not be easy to give a satisfactory answer to the question.<sup>2</sup> But this difficulty does not militate against the theory of a close connection between Osiris and *Ọlọrun* since the name of the latter was coined from the title of the former.

The name of Osiris, however, is well known to the Yorubas, who use it in a sense which shows that they are conversant with the myth of Osiris. The name survives in its original form of *Osiri* in the expression *gba osiri re*<sup>3</sup> or *da osiri bo o*,<sup>4</sup> which means "to plot against an innocent person with a view to murdering him." The meaning of this expression is certainly derived from the myth of Osiris, part of which is reproduced here from Sir J. G. Frazer's *Golden Bough*<sup>5</sup>:

"Reigning as a king on earth, Osiris reclaimed the Egyptians from savagery, gave them laws, and taught them to worship the

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a newly-born child is not assigned to any *Orisha* as is customary in Yorubaland. The Priests describe him as an "*Omo Olorun*," "a child of God," that is, the child is not to worship any *orisha*; he is simply to worship *Ọlọrun*.

<sup>2</sup> In dealing with this question the following extract is noteworthy: "From what Herodotus says, and from other indications in mythological texts, it is probable that the Egyptians like the Jews and Hindus, had a name it was not lawful to mention, and who manifested a certain degree of mania for the occult. It is quite possible that disinclination on the part of the priests to mention the name of Osiris led to the adoption of the name of *Ọlọrun* in the *Ọlọrun* dialect."  
Sir J. G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 2nd ed., p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> Herodotus says, and from other indications in mythological texts, it is probable that the Egyptians like the Jews and Hindus, had a name it was not lawful to mention, and who manifested a certain degree of mania for the occult. It is quite possible that disinclination on the part of the priests to mention the name of Osiris led to the adoption of the name of *Ọlọrun* in the *Ọlọrun* dialect.

<sup>5</sup> Abridged Edition, p. 363.

gods. . . . Osiris is said to have been the first to gather fruits from trees, to train the vine to poles and to tread grapes. Eager to communicate these beneficent discoveries to all mankind, he committed the whole government of Egypt to his wife Isis and travelled over the world. . . . Loaded with wealth that had been showered upon him by grateful nations, he returned to Egypt and, on account of the benefits he had conferred he was unanimously acclaimed as a deity. But his brother Set (whom the Greeks called Typhon<sup>1</sup>), with seventy-two others, plotted against him. Having taken the measure of his good brother's body by stealth, the bad brother Typhon fashioned and highly decorated a coffer of the same size, and once when they were all drinking and making merry he brought in the coffer and jestingly promised to give it to the one whom it should fit exactly. Well, they all tried one after the other, but it fitted none of them. Last of all, Osiris stepped into it and lay down. On that the conspirators ran and slammed the lid down on him, nailed it fast, soldered it with molten lead, and flung the coffer into the Nile."

This myth actually exists in a modified form in Yorubaland.

Further evidence of the fact that the myth of Osiris is well known to the Yorubas is contained in the following Yoruba legend :

"The sacred city of Ife was once plunged into great affliction and misery owing to the frequent raids of the Igbos, who presented themselves in a supernatural guise. All efforts to check the raids were unsuccessful. All prayers for help were unanswered. The oracle gave no helpful response. Moved with grief, but fired with patriotic zeal, M̄r̄m̄i, the wife of one of the mythical kings of Ife, made efforts to save the city. The key to the salvation of the city lay in the discovery of the true nature of the invaders. This discovery M̄r̄m̄i determined to make. Before setting out from Ife, she went to the river Osimiri and vowed to offer a costly sacrifice to the god of the river if her efforts should be divinely crowned with success. Her prayers were heard. Her search for the secrets of the Igbos was successful. She discovered that they were mere men covered with grass or rushes. She returned and disclosed this secret to her compatriots, who defeated the Igbos by setting their grass cloaks on fire. She returned to the river to fulfil her promise. The god, however, was not satisfied with all that she brought, but he demanded the sacrifice of her only son Ela or Olurogbo. The son was duly sacrificed ; but he managed to revive, and ascended into the heavens by means of a rope."

Commenting on this myth Dr. Johnson says :

"We may discern in this legend a confusion<sup>of</sup> idea of the story of Jephtha, and that of the Blessed Virgin and <sup>her</sup> son."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It will be shown later that the name of Typhon<sup>of</sup> is known to the Yorubas.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, p. 148. f O

In dealing with primitive legends no greater mistakes can be made than to view them with preconceived Christian ideas, and to identify them haphazardly with scriptural stories. The prominent figure in the above legend is a heroine, not a hero as in the case of Jephtha. The Blessed Virgin could not be said to have only one son. No. The legend has no connection with scriptural stories. It is only a combination of details borrowed from the myth of Osiris, Isis and Horus.

Moręmi represents Isis, and Ela or Olurogbo represents Horus, the son of Isis, whom Set tried to destroy. The Yoruba legend states that it was the son of Moręmi who ascended into the heavens. It should be observed that the word Egbęji, the alternative name of the son of Moręmi, means "the son of the living one." According to the Egyptian legend, Osiris was the person whose body was cut in pieces and who afterwards revived and, through the influence of Ra, ascended into the heavens. The transference of these details to his son may be due to the fact that Osiris had been given another part to play in the myth.

The most important point in the legend is the reference to the River Osimiri. This river is the Nile, and the Nile god is Osiris. The word *Osimiri* consists of two parts, viz., *Osi* and *miri*. *Osi* is an abbreviation of *Osiris*, and *miri* comes from the Egyptian word *miri*,<sup>3</sup> the name of the goddess of the banks of the Nile. The word *Osimiri*, therefore, means "the efflux of Osiris" or "the Nile overflowing its banks," about which Plutarch wrote as follows :

"They (i.e. the Ancient Egyptians) call not only the Nile, but also without distinction all that is moist, *Osiri*. Efflux."<sup>4</sup>

The god of the river referred to in the myth is none other than *Osiris*.

There are other survivals of the name of *Osiris*. One more instance will be given here.

The name survives in *Oriřa Osi*, "the idol of the god *Osiris*,"<sup>5</sup> a national god of the Yorubas. It was worshipped

1 G. F. Moore, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 163.

2 See Maspero, *Daun of Civilization*, p. 38.

3 The final *o*, "soi" t "t" is elided.

4 Flinders Petrie, 1  
"a river." The Ibo  
south-central and south

9, Col. 116, Sec. 10. The Ibo word *Osimiri* means  
the next door neighbours of the Yorubas in the  
western parts of Nigeria.

5 See Note 2, p. 44.

by Ọranyan,<sup>1</sup> the son of Odudua,<sup>2</sup> the mythical founder of the Yoruba race. There is a legend that when Oranyan was setting off for an expedition he gave strict injunction to his *locum tenens* to "observe the customary worship of the gods Idi and Oriṣa Osi."<sup>3</sup> The Yorubas therefore regard the worship of Oriṣa Osi as a national obligation.

The relegation of the worship of Ọlọrun to the background does not lead to an entire ignorance of Him as the Supreme Deity. Although He is regarded as too holy and exalted to be approached directly with sacrifices, and apart from the instances to be noted below, His aid is invoked only on rare and special occasions, yet He is regarded as taking cognizance of, and active interest in, the affairs of men when necessary. He is not an absentee God, Who, after creating the world, refused to be bothered with its affairs and safeguarded Himself by locking Himself up behind the metal sheet of the clouds. His exalted nature necessitates the presence of intermediaries to whom long prayers and addresses and sacrifices are made. But short prayers are often offered to Him, and these show the existence of a belief in His readiness to help in times of urgent necessity or dire calamity, a belief in His activity in the world, and a recognition of gratitude to Him as a special duty incumbent upon man. A few of the prayers will be given here: *Ọlọrun gba mi*, "May God save me," and *Ọlọrun ṣanu* are prayers usually offered in times of great distress: *Ki Ọlọrun ji wa re*, "May God wake us up well," is a prayerful wish on retiring to bed at night; *Ki a ma ri i* which is a contraction of *Ki Ọlọrun ma jẹ ki a ri i*. "God forbid," lit. "May God not allow us to see such a thing."

The Yorubas attribute their preservation to the direct agency of Ọlọrun. Before retiring to bed they entrust one another into His keeping as is shown above. Early in the morning the first complimentary expressions are those of gratitude to Him. For example, the morning salutations are: *O ko ji re*, "Do you wake well?"; *Ara kẹ le bi?* "Are you

<sup>1</sup> Ọra(n)-ya(n). Ora comes from Ra, the name of the Egyptian sun-god and ya(n) is a modified form of "ye." Ọranyan, therefore, means "the living Ra." Cf., "Living soul of Ra." Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Odu-dua, Odun-guns "a chief," "a lord" and dua comes from the Egyptian word *duaub di*h means "other (world)." Odudua, therefore, means "Lord of the other world." Cf., *Duat*, "the Book of the other world." Cf., "an abbreviation of Osi-ris."

well?" ; *Awon ara ile nko?* "How are the members of the family?" To each of these salutations the reply is *A dupe* *iqun Olorun*, literally "We thank God." This is sometimes contracted to *A dupe*, "Thanks."

Belief in Olorun's Omniscience is very strong. This is well brought out in the saying *Bi enia ko ri o Olorun ko ri o?* "If man does not see you, does not Olorun see you?"

The belief is also illustrated by one of the titles usually given to Olorun, viz., *Oba a ri inu ri ode*, "The King who sees both the inner and the outer parts of man." Belief in His omnipotence is shown in His title *Alewilese*, "One who not only speaks but can also act," and by the invocation of His aid as a last resort when the powers of intermediary agencies have reached their extremity.

RELATION BETWEEN Olorun AND HIS WORSHIPPERS. A point has now been reached where the question of the relation between Olorun and His worshippers may be raised. Love for the Deity certainly does not exist; nor is fear as a distinct emotion ever entertained towards him. Hence there is no need to propitiate Him with sacrifices, no need to erect temples and consecrate priests for His worship. Feelings of awe and reverence exist, and these show themselves in the titles given to Him and in the frequent expressions of gratitude to Him. Belief in His omnipotence leads to humble dependence upon Him for protection and preservation, and for help in times of dire calamity when the character of the need or the exigency of time demands resort to the greatest living power known to man. Apart from the offering of short prayers and the returning of thanks, worship is non-existent. A god with whom such a meagre relation is maintained cannot satisfy the deep and constant yearnings of the human soul for active dependence on the Unseen. The absence of *Oni* worship of Olorun by means of which full and allegiance to Him could be secured has led to *ol* of the god multitudinous gods. The character of the was worshipped sketched in the succeeding chapters. Sufficient that the usurpation of the place of Olorun by deities has led to a loss of the knowledge of *Ibo* word *Osimiri* means the Yorubas, with the *Or* he *ii* of the Yorubas in the who still pose to know 'hing ab'

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### CHAPTER III

## THE MAJOR DEITIES : THE ORIŞAS

### (A) EŞU, THE DEVIL

NEXT to Ọlọrun, the Supreme Deity, Eşu (Eshu) is the only deity accorded general recognition throughout Yorubaland. Between the conception of Ọlọrun and that of Eşu, however, there is a great difference. The conception of Ọlọrun is that of a pure spirit, an exalted personage too remote to be worshipped. There is no representation of him in any shape or form. On the other hand, Eşu belongs to the animistic system. He is an *Orişá* which occupies the most important place among the other *orişas*. He is represented by different kinds of images. He receives worship in the form of offerings and prayer, and must first be propitiated before any other *orişá* receives an offering. His worship arises chiefly from fear. As the supreme power of evil, the fear arising from the abhorrence of his malevolence leads to propitiatory offerings being constantly offered to him. He is generally described as *uruku*, "wicked to death," being ever ready to do mischief. In consequence of his malevolence his shrine is often made outside the town or outside the house. Hence the saying "Eşu ko ni iwa ; a kọ ile rẹ si ita," "Eşu has no character ; his house is made for him in the street." He is supposed to go about with a knobbed club, known as *Agongo Ọgọ*,<sup>1</sup> with which he attacks his enemies or those who indiscreetly dishonour him.

In some parts of the country (e.g. Ondo) he is very actively worshipped. The worship offered to him by his devotees does not appear to arise entirely from fear. Rather, it is sometimes inspired by feelings of admiration for his great strength. in

<sup>1</sup> knobbed club diminishing in size from the top to the bottom.  
for his *Yoruba* languages by Alice Werner.



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consequence of which prayers and gifts are offered to him, not only to avoid his malevolence, but also to secure his active favour, especially against enemies. There is a strong belief in his power and readiness to confer benefits on his worshipper and this accounts for the fact that the following names are borne by the Yorubas :

- (i) *Eṣu-bi-yi*, "A scion of Eṣu."
- (ii) *Eṣu-ri-ohun-bi*, "A worthy scion of Eṣu."<sup>1</sup>
- (iii) *Eṣu-gba-yi-la*, often abbreviated to *Eṣugbayi*, "A person saved by Eṣu."<sup>2</sup>
- (iv) *Eṣu-to-sin*, "Eṣu is sufficient to worship."<sup>3</sup>

#### IMAGES

The representation of Eṣu assumes different forms.

(i) A common form of representation is by means of a stone slab or a piece of rough laterite stuck into the ground in a slanting manner. The ceremony of sticking a stone in this way is known as *gigun Eṣu*, "sticking the stone of Eṣu on the ground." Such a stone is found near the entrance to every town and in front of the entrance to many houses. The stone is often covered with a rough shed made of *ikin* leaves supported by four short poles or mud pillars. Corrugated

<sup>1</sup> A cousin of the writer is known by this name.

<sup>2</sup> The late paramount chief of Lagos was known as *Eṣugbayi*.

<sup>3</sup> This is the name of a worshippant of Eṣu who is well known to the writer.

iron sheets are now being substituted for *ikin* leaves in places near the coast.

(ii) Another form of representation is that of an earthenware pot with a hole in the middle, sunk into the ground. This form of representation is found in Benin City, Ijebu-land and a few other places.

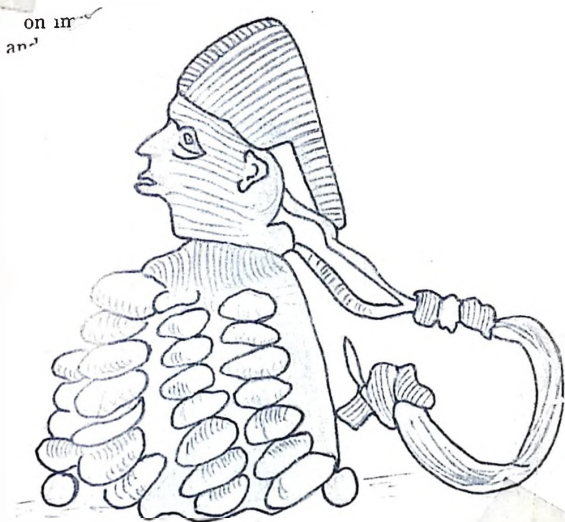


FIG. 9. ANOTHER IMAGE OF EŞU.

(iii) The most common form of representation is that of a pillar of mud. Sometimes the pillar is a solid one, at other times it is hollow. Sometimes it is erected as a mark on it. At other times it is adorned with talismans between the holes. In Benin City and in a few other places both morally and physically the pillar is the embodiment as the stone described above.

(iv) The images of Eşu for *In I Images* by Alice Werner.

made of mud or wood, and are set on *orupo* or clay couch. Here offerings of blood or palm oil are made to them.

The deity is generally represented as a naked human being sitting on his feet with flexed knees and folded arms or sitting with the hands resting on the knees.

(v) The portable images of Eṣu are also made in human form.

Two kinds of such images are thus described by Farrow :

- (a) "The first figure shows the devil in a kneeling posture, supporting with its hands breasts of the female type. The expression is that this deity gives nourishment. It is to be noted that figures of the devil are always given a hair dressed in the fashion of women."
- (b) "The second image is a very small one, only 3 inches height; but is of special interest on account of the markings engraved upon it. This image, below the breast is not in human form, but merges into a square pillar. On its top and two sides is engraved a board precisely similar to a Mohammedan writing tablet (*wala*)."

It should be noted that the number of lines engraved on the front and back of the latter image is usually seventeen, that is, representing the sixteen (plus one) palm nuts used in Ifa divination. Between Eṣu and Ifa, the god of divination, there is a close relation. Myths explaining the cause of this close relation will be given in the next chapter.

The numbers five and seven engraved on the sides are significant since they are odd numbers; the number seven, *eje*,<sup>1</sup> signifies "perfection" in wickedness, and the number five, which is the number of days forming a complete cycle in a Yoruba week,<sup>2</sup> contains a reference to the idea of Eṣu's malevolence being operative on every day of the week.

### WORSHIP

The worship of Eṣu is very simple, but is sometimes dreadful. Offerings are generally made to him in the form of cowrie shells, and dogs are killed, and their blood is poured into his shrine as a mark of respect.

<sup>1</sup> E-je. derived from *ye* explained above. <sup>2</sup> The week consisting of Eṣu's offerings is inclusive.

the Yorubas, who still pose to know

others as a female deity. The first figure of a portable image of the deity described above is that of a female, whilst the second figure is that of a male. Struck by these contradictory features, Dr. Farrow thus commented on the feminine characteristics of the first figure :

“ This (*i.e.* the hair dressed after the fashion of women) might lead to the supposition that Eşu is regarded as a female personage, or that there is a male and a female devil. The truth is, however, that he is regarded as the one and only such being, and is always spoken of as ‘ he ’ ; but this does not preclude him from possessing certain feminine characteristics.”<sup>1</sup>

Quite apart from any other consideration, the mistake involved in the use of the masculine pronoun “ he ” is sufficient to nullify the value of this explanation. Yoruba is a Sudanic language ; it is therefore not inflected for the purposes of gender.<sup>2</sup> The Yoruba word for the third personal pronoun for all genders is “ O ” or “ On ” (nasalized form). There is nothing in the form of the word which necessitates its being translated “ he ” and not “ she ” or “ it.”

Efforts to solve the difficulties enumerated above have hitherto met with anything but success. The present writer, however, feels that they will be solved if the theory of a close connection between the religion of the Yorubas and the religion of Ancient Egypt, proposed in the first chapter and applied in the second, is also applied here.

The first clue to the solution of the difficulties lies in the Yoruba saying “ *Eşu li ọta orişa*,” “ Eşu is the enemy of Orişa.” This implies the existence of an attitude of antagonism between Eşu and Orişa. As a matter of fact the conception of Eşu involves a dualism in which Eşu, the supreme power of evil, stands in opposition to Ọlọrun, the most beneficent deity. With the transference of worship from Ọlọrun to the lesser deities, the antagonism is also transferred to these deities.

Now dualism is not a characteristic feature of primitive religions. In the last chapter it was pointed out that the Yoruba peoples were conversant with the myth of Osiris. Ancient Egyptian religion contains a dualism between Osiris and Set. “ Osiris is the good power both morally and in the sphere of outward nature while Set is the embodiment of all

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> See *Structure and Relationship of Modern Languages* by Alice Werner.

that the Egyptian regards as evil.”<sup>1</sup> If Osiris is well known to the Yorubas and the lofty conception of him as the “one and only God” is also familiar, then it follows that they must have a deity which corresponds to the enemy of Osiris. Such a deity is Eṣu. He is regarded as the enemy of Ọlọrun (identified in the last Chapter with Osiris) and is believed to live in constant opposition to him. The conception of Set as an evil deity living in active opposition to Osiris lies at the root of the conception of Eṣu in relation to Ọlọrun. This identification of the Yoruba deity Eṣu with the Egyptian deity Set or Sut is strongly supported by the fact that the Yoruba saying quoted above is also applied to Osiris and Set. Just as the Yorubas say that “Eṣu is the enemy of Oriṣa” so writers on Ancient Egyptian Religion always say that “Set is the enemy of Osiris.”<sup>2</sup>

It must be noted that the word *oriṣa* is used instead of Ọlọrun. This demands an explanation. In the case of Ancient Egyptian Religion the opposition existed originally between the elder Horus and then between Osiris, and subsequently the younger Horus on the one hand, and Set on the other. In the case of the Yoruba religion, the opposition is transferred from Ọlọrun to the lesser deities

the origin of the term “*oriṣa*”? First of all, it is noted that there are three forms of the term, viz., *oriṣa*,<sup>3</sup> and *oriṣe*,<sup>4</sup> each of which signifies an idol, a deity or a god. The word “*oriṣa*” may be divided into two parts, viz., *ori* and *ṣa*. The first part is a modified form of the ancient Egyptian word *horu*.<sup>5</sup> The survival of this word in Yoruba has been pointed out in the previous chapter. The conclusion that the word “*ori*” is connected with the word *horu* is further strengthened by the fact that the Egyptian god Horus-Bakhu,<sup>6</sup> “the god of the mountain” of the East, survives in Yoruba as *Oriṣa-Bekku*, signifying “the god of the mountain.”

<sup>1</sup> Menzies, *History of Religion*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Sayce, *Religion of Ancient Egyptians*, p. 74; Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, popular edition, p. 475; Brugsch, Maspero, Wioldeman, Wilkinson, etc., etc.

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<sup>4</sup> This form is also used in Benin City. It is modified to *ori-tṣhe* by the Jekris.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> The Egyptian word *hor* = to be high.

The second part of the word, *se*, is derived directly from Set,<sup>1</sup> and its other form, *şa*, is derived from the name of the animal *sha*,<sup>2</sup> which is the animal representative of Set. The word ori-sa or ori-se, is therefore a modified form of the word "Horus-Set," the name of a double deity whose worship existed for centuries in Ancient Egypt.

The grounds for identifying "Orişa" with Horus-Set requires amplification. It will be remembered that Horus represented the Asiatic invaders who settled in Ancient Egypt, whilst "Set represented the population which had been conquered by the Pharaonic Egyptians."<sup>3</sup> Horus became the title or part of the title of the deities worshipped in Southern Egypt. The worship of Horus was widespread, and that of the Horus gods was at one time general. Set the representative of the North, was widely worshipped there, but was regarded as the enemy of Horus, the representative of the South. His worship was not confined to the North of Egypt, but was spread to other parts of Egypt, Nubia and Ethiopia. Hence Dr. Menzies says "the evil power Set was much worshipped, and would be approached in private as well as in public by all who had anything to fear from him—that is to say by all."<sup>4</sup> When the crowns of the two kingdoms were united there came into existence a double worship of Horus-Set,<sup>5</sup> and certain districts persisted in this double worship down to the latest times of paganism.<sup>6</sup> The Yorubas must have migrated from one or more of such districts.

Further evidence in support of the identification of Eşu with Set is supplied by the fact that Eşu is represented by a stone, which is often adored by passers-by as *Oluwa mi*—"My Lord." Set was also represented by a stone. According to Wickdemann, "another Egyptian god<sup>7</sup> who was occasionally

<sup>1</sup> T, a final consonant is elided. This is a common occurrence in Yoruba. The final consonant of a monosyllable receives an additional vowel, but if the monosyllabic word is joined to another word, the final consonant is elided.

<sup>2</sup> See Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 83, vignette and Note 3.

<sup>3</sup> Sayce, *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 150-1.

<sup>5</sup> *History of Religion* by G. F. Moore, Vol. I, p. 149.

<sup>6</sup> Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>7</sup> Other gods so regarded are Amon and Ptah. The Yoruba word for a stone is *O-ku-ta*, i.e. the soul of Ptah or that which incorporates the soul of

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What, then, is the origin of the term "oriṣa"? First of all, it should be noted that there are three forms of the term, viz., oriṣa, oyiṣa<sup>3</sup> and oriṣe,<sup>4</sup> each of which signifies an idol, a deity or a god. The word "oriṣa" may be divided into two parts, viz., ori and ṣa. The first part is a modified form of the ancient Egyptian word horu.<sup>5</sup> The survival of this word in Yoruba has been pointed out in the previous chapter. The conclusion that the word "ori" is connected with the word horu is further strengthened by the fact that the Egyptian god Horus-Bakhu,<sup>6</sup> "the god of the mountain" of the East, survives in Yoruba as Oriṣa-Bẹku, signifying "the god of the mountain."

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<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 150-1.

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<sup>6</sup> Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

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regarded as incorporate in a stone was Set."<sup>1</sup> Eṣu is also represented by pillars; so also was Set.<sup>2</sup>

It is quite possible also that the word "Oriṣa" is derived from Horus, the Greek form of the Ancient Egyptian word "Horu." The derivation, then, would be as follows: Horus; h is elided, and the final consonant receives a vowel which is either "a" or "e." The word thus becomes O-ri-ṣa or O-ri-ṣe.

It should be noted here that there are several words in West African languages which denote deities and are traceable to the same origin. For example, the words O-ri-ṣe (Sekiri language), Arose, A-lu-si, A-ru-si (Ibo language) are phonetic modifications of either horus-set or horus.

The origin of the term Set is thus given by Dr. Tiele:

"The name Set is perhaps connected with . . . Sati-ray of the sun and Phallos."<sup>3</sup>

It is probable that the root idea of this word has survived in a few images of Eṣu which are made with disproportionately long phallus. In consequence of these images, Colonel Ellis has described Eṣu as a phallic god. The present writer has seen a few of the images, but he is convinced that Eṣu is not a phallic divinity, and the stone representations of the deity are not crude imitations of the phallus. Nevertheless, the images lend an indirect support to the theory of a close connection between Eṣu and Set. It must be admitted, however, that some degenerate tribes do pay undue attention to the phallus in the images.

Whence once the foregoing theory is accepted, it is easy to solve the remaining difficulties. According to Egyptian mythology there was a god named *Shu* who came forth from the primeval waters. He forcibly separated *Sibu*,<sup>4</sup> the god of the earth, from *Nuit*, the goddess of the starry sky.<sup>5</sup> He thus became the god of the space between earth and sky. His representation was that of a god in a kneeling posture holding up the sky with both hands.<sup>6</sup> Later on he became fused with *Ṛa* the sun-god, and thus became a sun-god. As a

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> Set is represented by pillars, owing to his identification with *Shu*, see below.

<sup>3</sup> *History of Egypt* (trans. Ballingal), p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Sometimes transliterated Geb or Keb.

<sup>5</sup> Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. the

<sup>6</sup> See vignette on p. 129, Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*.

sun-god he was regarded as a beneficent deity and an impersonation of power. He was the life-giver, "The principle which animates matter." Through his benign influence, righteousness and truth reign.

At a later period, however, greater attention was paid to the scorching heat emanating from him than to the animating effect of his rays.

"He thus became, as the god of the scorching sun-heat, the dread sun-god, most closely allied to Set; and the ass, the animal of Set, which is also called Shu, appears to have belonged to him as well."<sup>1</sup>

The derivation of the name Shu is given as follows: The root whence his name is derived has a twofold signification, first that of scorching, and secondly that of stretching out, growing.<sup>2</sup> The above considerations show that Shu is regarded both as a benevolent and as a malevolent deity.<sup>3</sup>

The resemblance between the character of the Egyptian god Shu sketched above and that of the Yoruba god Eşu (E-shu)<sup>4</sup> will help in unravelling the mystery surrounding the latter. It is clear that the conception of Eşu is a fusion of the conception of Set and that of Shu. The Yoruba word şu (shu) means "to stretch out over something" and hence "to cover up, to darken." For example, the Yoruba expression, "Orun şu" means "the sky is covered up," that is, with clouds; in other words, clouds have stretched out over the sky. The Yoruba verb meaning "to fall" is şu-bu (shu-bu), that is, stretch out over or cover up the place (bu—a place, both in Ancient Egyptian language and in Yoruba).

The Yoruba deity thus derives its name and character both from Set, the enemy of Osiris, and from Shu, the sun-god, originally regarded as a beneficent deity and afterwards as the dreaded sun-god closely allied to Set. The reason why Eşu is credited with the opposite qualities of beneficence and malevolence thus becomes clear. His beneficence and malevolence are traceable to the conception of Shu, whilst his malevolence is also traceable to Set.

An illustration of the fusion of elements in Egyptian

<sup>1</sup> Tiele, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> Tiele, *op. cit.*, pp. 85 and 86.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Book of the Dead*, Chapters 93 and 98, edition by Professor Budge.

<sup>4</sup> E-su = E-shu (s in Yoruba = sh). The initial vowel is added because all Yoruba nouns begin with a vowel, the only exception being noun phrases or borrowed words.

mythology in Yoruba religion can be given in support of the above conclusions by quoting a passage from Dennet's *At the Back of the Black Man's Mind*. The passage,<sup>1</sup> which contains a description of a "juju house" at Idrigena, near Benin City, runs thus :

"As you enter you notice the figure of a man without legs (Oke<sup>2</sup>), the door-keeper ; then turning to the left, you will see a figure in clay dressed in chain armour as in the days of Elizabeth, riding a horse. He is called OKAKWU<sup>3</sup> or an officer. Passing along the left wall we find a figure dressed as a prime minister or IYASE. Then in the open space in the centre of the square there are two figures, one on your right and one on your left as you stand with your back to the door facing AKE. The one on your left represents OYISA (god) and that on your right EŞU, the devil. EŞU is dressed as a slave in a hat and cloth, carrying a knife at his waist and a stick called UKPOFO,<sup>4</sup> in his right. OYISA on the other hand is dressed like a king. We now stand before the throne of AKE, who dressed like a king seated with a wife (IREBU) with her babe on either side of him."

Ake is the name of a god. The meaning of the word is "an axe." It will be remembered that an axe (𓂏, neter<sup>5</sup>) is the symbol of a god in Ancient Egypt. Iyase means "the living Set" (ya from the word ye, which means "to exist," and se, an abbreviation of the word Set<sup>6</sup>). Oyisa (Horus-Set<sup>7</sup>) is the generic title for a god. In the above passage it is used simply as a substitute for Horus. The figure of Ake, who, dressed like a king, is seated with a wife and her babe on either side of him, strongly suggests that it is a relic of the figure of the divine triad of Horus, Osiris and Isis (son, father and mother).<sup>8</sup> Irebu is derived from Rebu,<sup>9</sup> the name of a people who dwelt on the west of Egypt, who were often referred to in hieroglyphic inscriptions.

It may be remarked in passing that the practice of symbolizing a god by means of an axe or by means of a figure resembling an axe in form is well-known in other parts of

<sup>1</sup> pp. 220 and 221.

<sup>2</sup> Similar figures existed in Ancient Egypt. The figure is also known as *Alapafuja* in Yoruba.

<sup>3</sup> O-ka-kwu is derived from two words, viz. ka and khu.

<sup>4</sup> This stick is the same as Agongo Qq̄ or the knobbed club described above (see p. 60).

<sup>5</sup> See Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 221 ; Budge, *Ancient Egyptian Language*, p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> See note on p. 13 above.

<sup>7</sup> See pp. 13-14 above.

<sup>8</sup> See Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>9</sup> See Tiele, *op. cit.*, p. 14 ; Rebu and an initial vowel.

Benin and of Yorubaland in general. The name is sometimes given to the centre of a deity's worship or to the district inhabited by a king who is regarded as wielding supreme authority on behalf of the deity.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty arising from the feminine characteristics generally attributed to Eṣu and from the origin and meaning of the name *Ẹlẹgbẹra* or *Ẹlẹgbara* will now be explained.

It has been noted above that the conception of Eṣu is partly derived from that of the Egyptian god Shu. It has also been pointed out that Shu became a sun-god by being fused into the body of Ra. Now Ra is known by two other names, which are the names of other deities who have been identified with him. He is thus the one god known by three different names. As he himself says : " I am Khepera in the morning, Ra at noon, and Tum in the evening."<sup>2</sup>

The fusion of Shu into Ra and the application of the names of Khepera and Tum to Ra would facilitate the substitution of these names for Shu. As a matter of fact, this is what happened. The name of Khepera was also applied to Shu. As a result of this, *Ẹlẹgbara*, the alternative name for Eṣu, is derived from Khepera. For the sake of clearness the process of derivation will be fully given here. The initial letter Kh is a thin sound which, when followed by a vowel, is elided in Yoruba, unless it occurs in a monosyllabic word.<sup>3</sup> When followed by a vowel in the middle of a word it is hardened into *k*. When followed by a consonant, it is also hardened into *k*, but it must be given a vowel to form a new syllable since every consonant must have its own vowel in Yoruba.<sup>4</sup> Kh in Khepera is therefore elided, leaving *epera*. The labial sound *p* does not exist in Yoruba, its place being taken by *b* or by a thick labial *p* spelt *kp* in other West African languages, or by *gb*, another thick labial peculiar to West African languages. In the case of *Epera*, *p* is changed to *gb*, and the word becomes *egbera*. As a substitute for Shu who, as was noted above, symbolized power, the word becomes a synonym for power.<sup>5</sup> A reduplication of the initial vowel of a word

<sup>1</sup> For example, Ake the central part of the town of Abeokuta.

<sup>2</sup> Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> *e.g.* Kh becomes ku.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter I, p. 12 No. (1).

<sup>5</sup> The Yoruba word for power is *agbara*, which is undoubtedly a modified form of *egbera*. Some tribes use the form *egbara*.

together with the letter *l* is often made, which when added to the original word, signifies "fullness, completeness."<sup>1</sup> It is thus that the word becomes *Ẹl'egb̄era*. The change of the third *e* to *a* is easily explained by comparing the word with *agbara* (power), which is certainly a modified form of *egb̄era*. The change is perhaps suggested by a word which is sometimes added to *Ẹl'egb̄era*. That word is *Bara*, which makes the deity's full name *Ẹl'egb̄era Bara*. The additional *a*'s supplied by the word *Bara* may lead to the change of one or more *e*'s to *a* in the first part of the name.

The name of *Ẹl'egb̄era*, *Ẹl'egb̄ara*, *Ẹl'egba* or *'L'egba* (the last two being modified forms of the first two words) is thus clearly shown to be derived from *Khepera*. This statement is further confirmed by the fact that the additional word *Ba-Ra* means "the soul of Ra," a word which shows a close connection between *Ẹl'egb̄era* and *Ra*, and thereby through *Ẹl'egb̄era* and *Khepera*.

This identity of *Ẹl'egb̄era* with *Khepera* will explain the reason why *Eṣu* is credited with feminine characteristics. *Khepera* is a god, and not a goddess. Why the Greeks chose to give his name a feminine termination is unknown. The fact that he was represented by female images<sup>2</sup> probably led the Greeks to prefer the feminine to the masculine form of the name.

One noteworthy fact in this connection is the derivation of the Yoruba word for woman from *Khopri*, which is the original Egyptian word for *Khepera*. The derivation is as follows: *Kh<sup>3</sup>* is elided leaving *opri*, *p* becomes *b*,<sup>4</sup> and as Yoruba is a phonetic language any two consonants coming together in a word must be separated by a vowel. The word thus becomes *obiri*,<sup>4</sup> which means a woman. The survival of female images of *Elegbara* (*Khepera*) the feminine termination of *Khepera* and the derivation of the word *obiri(n)* "woman" from *Khopri*—all point to the existence of female images of

<sup>1</sup> cp. *Qlqrun, Olobiri*, Chapter II, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> There are two hieroglyphic representations of *Khepera*. One of these is a male figure and the other a female figure. See Budge, *Ancient Egyptian Language*, pp. 52 and 53, Section 3, Nos. 18 and 19.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 75 (*Kh*) *epera*.

<sup>4</sup> Sometimes spelt with the nasal *n* thus: *obinrin*. The same *ob* exists in the Ibo language spoken in Southern Nigeria and in the Fanti language spoken in the Gold Coast. In each case the meaning is the same.

Khopri (Khepera) in Ancient Egypt in consequence of which Eşu is now credited with feminine characteristics.

#### QBA'UFON OR QBALUFON

The identification of Eşu with Set will also throw light on the origin and character of a deity known as Qba'ufon or Qba-lufon. The deity has been described as "the god of a prosperous empire," "the god of the peace of the kingdom," or "the Lord of Speech." Dr. Farrow thus writes about the deity :

"Although not so well known as some of the others, he is the possessor of considerable power. He is the only deity to which a human sacrifice was *publicly* offered during the writer's sojourn in Abokuta."

The origin of the deity and the reason for the considerable power attributed to him can be explained on the same lines as the difficulties already explained.

Reference has been made above to the prevalence of the worship of Set. Now the Greek name for Set is Typhon, and it should not be surprising if this name survives in Yorubaland, in view of the identification of Set with Eşu. The fact is that the word Qba'Ufon or Qbalufon is partly derived from Typhon. The word may be divided into two parts, viz., Qba and 'ufon or lufon. The word Qba means "a king," derived from the Egyptian word "ba," which means "a soul," the king being regarded as the incarnate soul of the people. The second part 'ufon or lufon comes from Typhon (Greek τυφον, t-u-ph-o-n, *ph* being equivalent to *f* in sound). The name Typhon must have been obtained by the Greeks from the Phoenicians, who identified Set with Ziphon, the god of storms. When the word was adopted by the Yorubas the initial letter *t* or *z* was elided<sup>1</sup> in keeping with the rule that every noun in Yoruba must begin with a vowel. To the word 'ufon the word *qba* is added, and the compound word becomes *qba'ufon*, and is pronounced by some Yorubas in this way till to-day. The placing of two vowels together is unusual in Yoruba. Hence the letter *l* is inserted for the sake of euphony and the word becomes *qba-l-ufon*. The name Qba'ufon or Qbalufon is therefore another name for Eşu and is derived from Typhon the Grecian name for Set or Sut.

<sup>1</sup> the elision of *t* occurs frequently in the Yoruba Language, especially if it denotes possession, e.g. *Ile ti emi* becomes *Ile'mi*. Also *Satide* "Saturday" generally contracted to *Sa'ide*.

In confirmation of the identification just made, it should be noted that the pig, an animal whose form Set sometimes assumes in mythology, bears a Yoruba name which associates it with Typhon. The Yoruba word for a pig is *ḡ-lḡ-dḡ*. This word is derived from the Egyptian word *deb*—"to pierce" or "piercing."<sup>1</sup> *Elḡḡ* therefore means "he who pierces" or "he who possesses the instrument for piercing." When it is remembered that it was in the form of a pig that Typhon, while hunting by night, pierced the eye of Osiris, the reason for the name given by the Yorubas to the pig becomes obvious.

Ọbalufon possesses considerable power because he is the same god as Set or Shu, who is regarded as an impersonation of power and who has been identified with Eṣu. During the last century he was often propitiated with human sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> The reason for the statement that the human sacrifice witnessed by Dr. Farrow was a sacrifice to Eṣu will now be clear.

One of the great blessings accruing from the establishment of British Protectorate over Yorubaland is the stoppage of human sacrifices. A few instances of human sacrifices made to Ọbalufon (Eṣu) last century may be given here, especially as copies of the newspaper from which they are taken are now very rare. They are as follows :

(i) *Iwe Irohin*.<sup>3</sup> October 3, 1861 :

"Human Sacrifice : We hear that from some cause or other the priest of Ọbalufon, who offered the human sacrifice in Ikereku, died about a week afterwards."

(ii) *Iwe Irohin*. November, 1861, Appendix :

"We have again to deplore the fact of a human sacrifice which took place at Ikereku on Tuesday morning the 12th. This town annually sacrifices a slave to Ọbalufon.

"The victim in this case is the third intended for the purpose this year ; the first died, and the second escaped.

"Regarding human sacrifices in this town by the Egbas, we have obtained the following information which we believe to be correct. Of the two hundred townships in Abeokuta the following were

accustomed to sacrifice human beings before they left their town :	
Igbein	1 annually to Ọbalufon
Ikereku	1 annually to Ọbalufon
Iwo	1 annually to Ọranmijan <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> *Iwe Irohin*—the first newspaper published in Yorubaland and edited by C.M.S. Missionaries at Abeokuta.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter II, p. 45.

Owu	1 annually to Amunibuwa <sup>1</sup>
Oko	7 annually to local deities ; not done since the tribe left their old town to come to Abeokuta."

It will be seen from the instances given above that, apart from Ileşa and Ondo, where the worship of Eşu was most pronounced, human sacrifices to Eşu or Qbalufon were widespread in Yorubaland. The prevalence of human sacrifice to Qbalufon is an additional and striking confirmation of the derivation of the word from Typhon, since human sacrifices were also linked with the name of Typhon in Ancient Egypt. According to Plutarch, "In Eileithapolis they used to burn living men to ashes . . . calling them Typhoneian ; and the ashes they winnowed away and scattered. This, however, was done publicly and at one special time."<sup>2</sup> This statement may be considered together with the following extract from Maspero's *New Light on Ancient Egypt* : "Human Sacrifice. The victims may be seen carried on a sledge, then strangled and perhaps afterwards burnt." Human sacrifices similar to those in Ancient Egypt survived in Yorubaland up to the end of the last century.<sup>3</sup>

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The foregoing remarks supply adequate grounds for regarding Eşu as being closely connected with the Egyptian god Set, and therefore with Shu, Khepera and Typhon. The conception of Eşu is a fusion of ideas connected with each of the three Egyptian gods who had been identified with Set in Ancient Egypt. His worship is another relic of the Osirian faith, which has survived through the centuries with some of its gruesome elements. Rooted in the distant past and carried through a vast expanse of desert, the belief in Set is as strong as ever in Yorubaland to-day and is centred on Eşu, a deity who is sometimes beneficent and sometimes malevolent whose malevolence has so preponderated over his benevolence that he is now regarded by many as "the Supreme Evil" and the "Prince of Darkness."

<sup>1</sup> A name of uncertain derivation. It probably means "our Settlement"—*Amun—ibu—wa*.

<sup>2</sup> *Isis and Osiris* (translation by Mead), LXXII

<sup>3</sup> Public human sacrifices have ceased in Yorubaland of very rare occurrence, thanks to the vigilance of



on of E  
Govern

II

CHAPTER IV

THE MAJOR ORIŞAS—*continued*

B. IFA



JO  
5 cr  
1725

calabash or gourd vessel sacred to  
denied to those of the first two groups.

Every accredited babalawo must  
his body, and shave his head, and wear a  
blue dress.

### MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGIN OF THE CULT

The Ifa cult is the best organized religious system of the Yorubas. As it has been pointed out above, it is maintained by an intelligent priesthood whose members are subjected to a protracted course of instruction before initiation. What, then, is the origin of the cult? Who is Ifa?

There are several myths explaining the origin of the cult and giving details about the deity. A few of these will be reproduced here. They are given not because any reliance can be placed upon them, but because they contain details which can serve as clues towards the unravelling of their true origin.

The first of these myths is given by Mr. Oyesilẹ Kẹribo in a pamphlet published by the Egba Government at Abeokuta in 1906. It runs thus:

"Ifa was a native of Itase near the Ifẹ Country, and of poor parentage. In his youth he had great aversion to manual labour, and therefore had to beg his bread. To better his condition he applied to a wise man for advice, and this sage taught him the art of divination, traditional stories with matters relating thereto, and medicine, as an easy means of obtaining a livelihood. He afterwards became very popular. The sixteen original *Odu* correspond to the sixteen original stories taught to Ifa, etc. His parents, being poor, were not known in the country. Hence he was afterwards considered as without parentage and was deified after death."

The next myth is given by Colonel Ellis and summarized by Dr. Farrow as follows:

"In the early days of the world when the human race was few and far between, the gods had to hunt for themselves. Ifa took to fishing, but (7) Bara had a magic staff (8) Okara (9) Ika meji (10) Osa meji (11) Irete meji (12) Irete meji (13) Irete meji (14) Irete meji (15) Irete meji (16) Irete meji. Irete meji, the chief man, he would show and benefit mankind, and so receive the name Irete meji; but he stipulated that the first

## ON OF THE YORUBAS

... would be his. Ifa agreed, and went telling him for what purpose he required. At the prospect, took his wife with him. ... Orungan's wife ... bore them to ... then taught Ifa, who in turn taught Orungan, and so ... him the first babalawo."

Another interesting myth is given by the late Mr. Feyișara Șopein in the *Nigerian Chronicle* of March 12, 1909 :

"Ifa was born at Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba people. He was a skilful medical man, who had an extensive practice and was an eminently skilful diviner. After he had become famous he founded a town called Ipetu and became king of the place. . . . People from every part of the Yoruba country flocked to him. . . . Out of these, we are told, he chose only sixteen men. . . . The names of these apprentices are said to be identical with the names of the sixteen divinitary signs called *Odus*, and the order of precedence among them, which was probably based upon priority of appointment, is said to be still preserved in the present order of the *Odus*."

Another myth showing the intimate relationship between Ifa and Eșu is given by Dennett :

"As the story goes, Odudua has no other Orișa except Ifa, and, whenever he consulted any one, he consulted Ifa. Ifa came one day to sacrifice to Odudua, and he was very satisfied with the offering. . . . so, on this occasion, Odudua gave Ifa Eșu. Thus Eșu was the slave of Odudua, and became Ifa's messenger. And when anyone wants to sacrifice to Ifa they say that it is best to square his messenger, as he is a very wicked person."

## OTHER NAMES OF IFA

The Yoruba people are very fond of giving titles to deities and distinguished persons. They are also reluctant to call a distinguished person by name, hence they sometimes substitute titles for names. The following is a selection of titles given to Ifa :

1. Orunmila
2. Oludumare
3. Ikuforiji
4. Olujeni
5. Oba Olofa a sun l'ol:
6. Mini
7. Erintunde

8. Edu
9. Alajiki
10. Okitibiri a-pa-øjø-iku-da
11. Əla
12. Oyigiyigi.

## MODE OF DIVINATION

The materials used for divination are a whitened circular board known as *Ọpọn Ifa*, and sixteen palm nuts. Sometimes a rectangular board or a rectangular fan is used. At other times the number of palm nuts is increased by one. When the diviner has secured all the necessary materials he proceeds in either of the following ways :

- (i) He puts all the palm nuts on his left palm and attempts to take them up with one grasp of the palm of his right hand ; or
- (ii) He holds the sixteen palm nuts loosely in the right hand and throws them through the half-closed fingers into the left hand.

When either of these processes is adopted, if one palm nut remains, two marks 11 or 00 are made with the finger on the divining board ; if two nuts remain, a single mark 1 or 0 is made. The process is repeated eight times, and the figure formed by recording the results is called an *Odu*—a “chief,” a “head,” a “deity” represented by a palm nut. Behind each of the 16 *Odu*s are sixteen subordinate *Odu*s, thus bringing the number to 256. Behind each of these 256 *Odu*s are other subordinate *Odu*s, bringing the total to 4,096 *Odu*s, for each of which there is an appropriate story or couplet when it appears on the divining board.

The following is a list of the sixteen principal *Odu*s :

- |                 |                   |                    |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| (1) Eji Ogbe    | (2) Oyekun meji   | (3) Iwori meji     |
| (4) Odi meji    | (5) Iroshu meji   | (6) Ọwara meji     |
| (7) Bara meji   | (8) Ọkara(n) meji | (9) Ogunda meji    |
| (10) Ọsa meji   | (11) Ika meji     | (12) Oturupọn meji |
| (13) Oturẹ meji | (14) Irete meji   | (15) Ọşẹ meji      |
| (16) Ọ meji.    |                   |                    |

Following are the diagrammatic representations of the

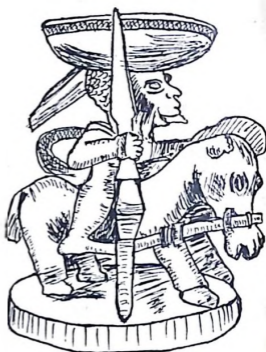
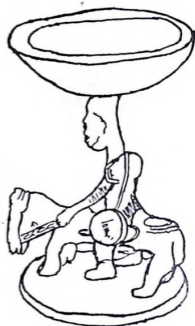
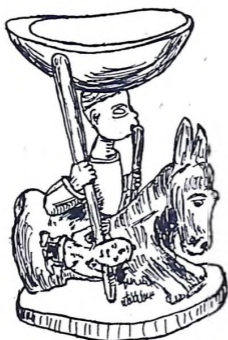


FIG. 10. IFA UTENSILS. PALM NUTS AND OTHER ARTIF  
 THESE BEAUTIFULLY CARVED TRAYS *fu n* *GED IN*  
*e folle*

## 1. Eji Ogbe.

1	1		0	0
1	1	or	0	0
1	1		0	0
1	1		0	0

## 2. Oyeku Meji.

1	1		0	0
1	1	or	0	0
1	1		0	0
1	1		0	0

## 3. Iwori Meji.

1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
	1		1	or	0	0	0
	1		1		0	0	0
1	1	1	1		0	0	0

## 4. Odi Meji.

	1		1		0	0
1	1	1	1	or	0	0
1	1	1	1		0	0
	1		1		0	0

## 5. Iroshu Meji.

	1		1		0	0
	1		1	or	0	0
1	1	1	1		0	0
1	1	1	1		0	0

## 6. Qwara Meji.

1	1	1	1		0	0
1	1	1	1	or	0	0
	1		1		0	0
	1		1		0	0

## 7. Bara Meji.

	1		1		0	0
1	1	1	1	or	0	0
1	1	1	1		0	0
1	1	1	1		0	0

THE RELIGION OF THE YORUBAS

8. Ọkara(n) Meji.

1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	or	0	0	0
1	1	1	1		0	0	0
1		1			0		0

9. Ogunda Meji.

	1	1		0	0		
	1	1	or	0	0		
	1	1		0	0		
1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0

10. Ọsa Meji.

1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
	1	1	or	0	0		
	1	1		0	0		
	1	1		0	0		

11. Ika Meji.

1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
	1	1	or	0	0		
1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0

12. Oturupon Meji.

1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	or	0	0	0	0
	1	1		0	0		
1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0

13. Otüre Meji.

	1	1		0	0		
1	1	1	or	0	0	0	0
	1	1		0	0		
	1	1		0	0		

14. Irete Meji.

	1	1		0	0		
	1	1	or	0	0		
1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
	1	1		0	0		

## 15. Ọşẹ Meji.

1	1	0	0
1 1	1 1	or	0 0 0 0
	1		0
1 1	1 1		0 0 0 0

## 16. Ofu Meji

1 1	1 1	0 0	0 0
1	1	or	0 0
1 1.	1 1	0 0	0 0
1	1	0	0

The oracular response of Ifa is given in the form of a parable. Hence the saying :

Owe ni Ifa ipa  
 Ọmọran ni imọ ;  
 Bi a ba wipe mọ  
 Ọmọran a mọ  
 Nigbati a ko ba mọ  
 A ni, ko ẹẹ

“ Ifa always speaks in parables,  
 It is the wise man who understands his speech.  
 When we say, understand it,  
 It is the wise man who understands it.  
 If we claim to understand it  
 When we really do not understand it,  
 Then we say, There is something terrible about it.”

When a particular *Odu* turns up on the divining board the diviner recites the appropriate story or couplet and interprets the response to the enquirer as best he can.

Of all these *Odu*s, Eji Ogbe is regarded as the prince. Whenever his figure appears on the divining board, the *baba-awo* attaches the greatest importance to the occasion and, after warning the enquirer about the serious nature of the response to be expected, *een, ee, ee* in the second, *ee, ee* words :

number of the *Odu*s of Ifa is sixteen. It is quite clear that this number is derived from the number of *Odu*s referred to above. The Yorubas would refer to the number in the first list, one for Osiris himself, and another for the *awo* who provide an *Odu* (Eji Ogbe), and another for the enquirer who, according to the Osirian faith, would be the *ogbo*.

A da  
 O ru

aiye gbọ pe o ti gba aṣẹ lẹwọ Olodumare, nwọn si nwọ tọ ọ  
Gbogbo eyiti o wi si nṣẹ. Lati igbana wa ni a nwipẹ, Aṣẹ!

“When we wash our face,  
When we wash our nose  
We finish off beneath the chin.”

“Ifa was consulted for Ọrunmila, when the latter was going to receive authority from the Almighty. He sacrificed. And the Almighty gave him authority. When all the world heard that he had received authority they came to him. All that he said came to pass. Ever since then we say ‘Amen’ or ‘So be it!’”

### Ọpẹlẹ.

There are other deities which are consulted as oracles by the Yorubas. The chief of these is Ọpẹlẹ, who is regarded as Ifa's messenger, and is consulted for minor matters, especially as it is easier and less expensive to consult him than to consult Ifa. In theory he is expected to be consulted every day by everybody, but in practice this is not the case. “He is always represented by eight flat pieces of wood or metal or something else, strung together in two rows of four on each side, placed at equal distances from each other and joined together.”<sup>1</sup>

### HISTORICAL ORIGIN

An enquiry into the historical origin of the cult is an easy task if the theory of a close connection between the religion of the Yorubas and that of the Ancient Egyptians, which was proposed and applied in the preceding chapters, is also applied here. Although the existence of the system as a complete whole cannot be traced in Ancient Egyptian records, yet its essential elements can be found in various records. Most of the ideas connected with it are, unquestionably, relics of the Osirian faith.

The first point to note is the name of the deity—Ifa.

This word	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
The derivation							
with another							
specimen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

14. Irete Meji.

	1	1	0	0
	1	1	0	0
	1	1	0	0
	1	1	0	0

Ellis' *n* *nefer* is dropped, leaving *efer*. An "e" sound re-  
 p. Oron d in Yoruba by "i," and the sound "er" bei  
 non-existent in Yoruba, is changed to "a." Hence the word  
*nefer* becomes *ifa*. It is noteworthy that the initial consonant  
 "n" is retained when the word is attached to another word,  
 e.g. *Ọpẹ-nifa* or *Ọpẹ-lifa*—"The tree from which the palm nuts  
 used for Ifa divination are obtained."

The next point to be considered is the origin of the term  
*Odu*. Among the Ancient Egyptians the belief existed that  
 the abode of the dead was divided into regions or domains.  
 These domains (Aats, Ots or Ods) were under the rule of  
 different deities. The Pyramid Texts of the Book of the Dead  
 contain frequent allusions to the Aats or Domains of Horus  
 and Set, and lists of the Aats of Sekhet-Aaru over which  
 Osiris presided. In view of the survival of elements of the  
 Osirian faith in Yoruba religion pointed out in the previous  
 chapters it should not be surprising if the belief in the Aats  
 over which Osiris presided also survives. As a matter of fact  
 the belief does survive in the Ifa Cult. Most of the words  
 connected with the cult are derived directly from the names  
 of the Aats of Sekhet-Aaru. The word *odu* itself is derived  
 from Aat (or ot, od), the derivation following the phonetic  
 rules of modification of foreign words to be incorporated into  
 the Yoruba language. The derivation is as follows: Aat  
 the first "a" is usually replaced by o in several books; the  
 second "a" is elided; the dental "t" becomes "d," and  
 receives a vowel to form its own syllable, there being no closed  
 syllables in the Yoruba language. Hence the word becomes  
*Odu*. Ot or Od is found in books on Egypt as the equivalent  
 of Aat.

The two lists of the Aats or Ots or Ods of Sekhet-Aaru,  
 reproduced by Professor E. Wallis Budge in his edition of the  
*Book of the Dead*, deserve consideration. The number of Aats  
 in the first list is fourteen, and in the second, fifteen. Now  
 number of the Odus of Ifa is sixteen. It is quite easy to  
 hat this number is derived from the number in each of  
 lists referred to above. The Yorubas would easily add  
 to the number in the first list, one for Osiris himself, for  
 A da  
 O ru  
 m they provide an Odu (Eji Ogbe), and another one for  
 nquirer who, according to the Osirian faith, would expect

and a place in the fields of Aaru after death. Similarly add one to the number in the second list and although they do not add one more for the enquirer to bring the number to seventeen, yet the need for an odu to represent the enquirer is recognized by the fact that many Ifa priest's always provide sixteen plus one palm nuts. The extra one is known as the Adele or "the odu which watches the house," and is never used for the purpose of divination.

It is noteworthy that each of the Odus is described as having a twofold character, e.g. Obara meji,<sup>1</sup> Ofu meji. The explanation of this lies in the fact that each odu represents a domain and the deity presiding over it, as shown in the lists referred to above.

It has been pointed out above that as soon as an Odu turns up the babalawo (Ifa Priest) recites an appropriate story or couplet. A number of such stories or religious songs is given by the Rev. D. O. Epega in his book entitled *Ifa, Imole Re*. Between these stories or songs and the statements made about the Aats by Osiris as given by Professor Budge on pages 485 to 498 of his edition of the *Book of the Dead*, there is such a close resemblance in respect of language and ideas as cannot be lightly described as accidental. The conclusion is irresistible that the Yoruba passages are modelled upon the statements of Osiris about the Aats of Sekhet-Aaru.

Another noteworthy point is the fact that in recording the results of his divination the babalawo uses Egyptian symbols, that is, strokes or circles—111 or 000.<sup>2</sup>

The derivation of the names of the Odus will now be given. To facilitate this, a comparative table of four lists of the sixteen principal odus will be inserted here. It will be seen that the differences between the names of the Odus in the four lists are, in almost all cases, phonetic differences. The lists are as follows :

	Ellis'	Johnson's	Phillips'	Dennett's
1.	Buru	Ogbe	Ogbe	Ogbe
2.	Yekun	Oyekun	Oyeku	Oyeku
3.	Ode	Iwori	Iwori	Iwori
4.	Di	Edi	Odi	Odi
5.	Losho	Urosi	Iroshu	Iroshun

<sup>1</sup> Meji = Two.

<sup>2</sup> See Budge. *Ancient Egyptian Language*, pp. 107 and 127.

	Ellis'	Johnson's	Phillips'	Dennett's
6.	Oron	Qwara	Qwourin	Qwourin
7.	Abila	Bara	Qbara	Qbara
	Akala	Qkaran	Qkauran	Qkouron
	Kuda	Ogunda	Oguda	Oguda
	Sa	Qsa	Qsa	Qsa
1.	Ka	Eka	Ika	Ika
2.	Durapin	Oturupon	Oturupon	Oturupon
3.	Ture	Etüre	Otura	Otura
14.	Leti	Erete	Irete	Irete
15.	Shi	Qsş	Oshe	Oshe
16.	Fu	Ofu	Ofu	Ofu

1. Ogbe is derived from *uben-f*, a title of Osiris (see *Book of the Dead*, p. 578.<sup>1</sup>) Compare *Nefer-uben-f*; "u" becomes "o," and "b" becomes labial "gb." Buru appears to be a local name.
  2. Yeku(n)—Ye-ku=the living Ku. This occurs in the 3rd Aat, 1st List, introduction, p. 180.<sup>1</sup>
  3. Iwori comes from Aaru, which first becomes Ooru, then Oworu, then iwori—change of the vowel letters a, i, u, the one for the other, being frequent in both Egyptian and Yoruba languages.
  4. Odi comes from Atu. A similar derivation has been given above; see Aat=Odu, above, Atu appears in the 2nd list, introduction, p. 181.
  5. Iroshu=Iro-shu, the Pillar of Shu. See page 93.<sup>1</sup>
  6. Qwara comes from Uar-t. "U" becomes "w" and receives an initial vowel, "r" receives a vowel to form a syllable, and "t" is elided. Uart is the name of the 13th Aat in the 1st set, introduction, p. 181.<sup>1</sup>
  7. Abila is wrong spelling. Ba-Ra=the soul of Ra. "O" is only an initial vowel.
  8. Qkaran comes from Kher-aha. Initial vowel O, then a=er), then "r" inserted to separate two vowels and a (n), a contraction of aha. See the 14th Aat in the 1st list, introduction, p. 181.
  9. Kudu, Ku-Da=the soul of Da, an Ancient Egyptian god. See 5th Aat, 1st list, introduction, p. 181.
  10. Osa comes from Ha-ser-t. Ha becomes "O" (h elided), ser becomes sa, and "t" is elided. See 7th Aat, 2nd list, introduction, p. 181.<sup>1</sup>
  11. Ka=Soul. ning
  12. Durapin appears to be a wrong spelling of Oturupon. Oturu comes from Atru or Otru and pon fric to ia-nit. See 13th Aat, 2nd list, introduction, p. 181.<sup>1</sup> defect: m Atru or from a
- Etüre, or Otura, probably cor. ion gen
- two whc 1. All the references in this section are for of the *Book of the Dead*, edition  
 re Professor Budge.

- combination of Atu and Re or Ra. See 4th Aat, 2nd list introduction, p. 181.<sup>1</sup>
14. The derivation of Irete is difficult. It probably comes from Rertu. See p. 481.<sup>1</sup>
15. Oşç, or Oshe, comes from Asc-s. Shi is wrong spelling. See 7th Aat, 1st list, introduction, p. 181.
16. Ofu probably comes from Auf, part of the title of Osiris, i.e. Auf-nefer. See page 450.<sup>1</sup>

The derivation of the Odus explained above clearly shows that the ingenious guesses contained in popular works on the subject have no historical foundation.

It is interesting to compare the titles of Ifa with those of Osiris given in Chapters 141 and 142 of the *Book of the Dead*. Many of the former are derived from those of the latter, or from Egyptian words. A few examples of these will be given here: (i) Orun-mi-la. The literal translation of this word is "Heaven knows those who will be saved." There is no doubt that it is derived from Horu-m-la, one of the combinations of the names of Egyptian gods (compare Hor-m-Khuti). La is the name of the Egyptian lion god. (ii) Èla. This is derived from La. (iii) Edu, a contraction of eyi-didu—"That which is black." The word is derived from Didu, the black image of Osiris. (iv.) Oludumare. This has been explained in Chapter II.

The mythological stories given above also contain elements from the myth of Osiris. The stories refer to the goodness of Ifa, the benefit he conferred upon others, his persecution and deification. All these details have parallels in the myth of Osiris. The relation between Ifa and Eşu also finds a parallel in the one existing between Osiris and Set.

The reference to *Orungan* in the stories is significant. The meaning of this word is "The noonday sun." Now the name of the noonday sun in ancient Egyptian Religion is Ra. The sun-god is believed to have said: "I am Khepera in the morning, Ra at 1.0<sup>1</sup> 1.0<sup>2</sup>, and Tum in the evening."<sup>2</sup> The relation between Orungan, Ra, Shu and Set has been explained in the preceding chapter, and it is interesting to see that further proof of this relation is given by the references to the gods in the Ifa stories.

<sup>1</sup> All the references are made to the *Book of the Dead*, by Professor Budge. *Ancient Egyptian The Religion of Ancient Egyptians*, p.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The survival of the Osirian faith in Yoruba and is better illustrated than in the case of Ifa, the god of

The origin of the Ifa system must be traced to a basis lies in the Osirian faith in general and in the doctrine of the Aats in particular. The identical system as a whole has not yet been traced, but a similar system, known as *Derb el ful* or *Derb el raml*, has been discovered in many times by Mr. James Hamilton and described in his book entitled *Wanderings in North Africa*.<sup>1</sup>

The Ifa system of divination is not confined to the Yoruba. Among the Ibos it is known by the older title of Efa (E pronounced as in E-phraim) and by the later title of Afa or Aga. It is described by P. A. Talbot as follows :

"The charm consists of two pairs of strings, each composed of four 'Osing' shells. These are laid side by side on either hand of the Diviner. Those on the right are supposed to be male, and those on the left female."

"The shells composing the four strings are naturally capable of falling in almost innumerable combinations and, as a consequence, an expert Mboni has an extensive system on which to work."<sup>2</sup>

A few points in the above description are noteworthy. The Ibo diviner uses two pairs of strings, each composed of four Osing shells. The number of shells is thus sixteen, and this corresponds to the sixteen palm nuts used by the Yoruba diviner. The word "Osing" is also noteworthy. It is the word *Osi* nasalized and is derived from *Osi-ris*, who, as pointed out above, was the chief presiding deity of the Sekhet-Aaru, from which the Ifa system originates from whose title (*nefer*) the system derives its title of the diviner "Mbo-ni" should be derived from *ba* or *bau*, *bo-u* soul of a person. Mboni therefore means "The people who possess in their soul or souls of the ancestors. A similar term is used by the Yorubas, and is applied to the priest regarded as the ancestor of the diviner. This will be described in a later chapter. The word *ba*, that is, *la-grba*, *Qma(n)* or *Qm*, defects in the action generally applicable to the ancestor of the diviner." <sup>1</sup>



FIG. 11. THE TEMPLE OF OṢUN.

A similar system is also found among several peoples Southern Nigeria, namely, the Ijaws, the Popos, the Ibos, Ibio-bios, the Ekois, the Iyalas and others. Many of the peoples use four strings consisting of four shells or nut stones and also retain the original name of Ifa or Efa.

Belief in Ifa is deeply embedded in the mind of the Yoruba. In view of its antiquity and vigour there is no doubt that in spite of all the rapid progress of western education, centuries will elapse before its last traces can be obliterated from the mind of the average Yoruba.

CHAPTER V

THE MAJOR ORIŞAS (*continued*)

C. OBATALA

D. ODUDUWA

E. AND F. AGINJU AND YEMOJA

ead. f  
p.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MAJOR ORIŞAS—*continued*

#### C. QBATALA

NEXT in importance to Ifa comes Qbatala, who is popularly described as "the great god." He belongs to the animistic system, and commands the worship and respect of a large number of Yorubas. He easily evokes their religious feelings. The anthropomorphic description of his character brings him very near to the imagination of simple peasants, who are never thrilled by abstractions. The more lofty and grand the conception of Qlurun becomes, the more intense the worship of Qbatala becomes. Tradition says that he is really the vice-gerent of Qlurun, and as such holds precedence over all other deities. In actual fact, however, Qbatala's importance does not eclipse that of the animistic gods described in the previous chapter.

**MYTHS.** The myths about Qbatala represent him as Qlurun's vice-gerent. He is said to have created all things, including the human race, but did not complete the work. Before the world came to live as an absentee god, he entrusted the task of completing the work of creation to Ifa. It is said that Ifa to have made man as a rough and solid figure, and he to put the finishing touches by giving him eyes, ears and skull.

Another myth represents Qbatala as the first man and woman whom he formed out of earth. This myth ascribes to him the work of forming the human race, and hence all physical defects are regarded as mistakes or as sure signs of his desire to punish persons. Persons having physical defects are dedicated to him. Another function generally ascribed in the myths is that of Protector of the

therefore, frequently represented by a horseman with a spear, attended by a serpent, fish, tortoise and leopard.)

WORSHIP. Obatala is the only Yoruba deity which enjoys uniformity of colour in respect of his worship. "His worshippers must wear white clothes, and eat white food, using shea-butter (instead of the usual red palm oil) in their cooking, abstaining from red meat, and using and offering the white (or "bitter") kola instead of the red one."<sup>1</sup>

His worship is very simple. Inexpensive offerings of edibles and snails are made to him. On important occasions his worshippers indulge in feasting and dancing. Prayers for the good of children are frequently offered to him by would-be mothers.

He is one of the Yoruba gods worshipped outside Yorubaland. Among the Ewe-speaking peoples at Porto Novo, he serves as an arbiter of disputes, especially in determining the guilty person. This he does by means of an oracle known as the "messenger, ambassador). Colonel Ellis gives the following description of the oracle :

of a hollow cylinder of wood, about 3½ feet in length, the top of which is covered with draperies and the other end is closed with the edible snail."<sup>2</sup>

Obatala, the Yoruba god of purity. He represents the highest virtue attained by the Yorubas. His influence is the superiority of the Yorubas to many other peoples, as attested to by several observers.<sup>3</sup>

Obatala are the titles of the god : Obatala, Obatala, Obatala. The word has been translated as the "King of the White Cloth," "Lord of the White Cloth," according to the nature of the titles. On the last two vowels by each other, the real meaning of the word will be

<sup>1</sup> Brugsch, *Thesaurus*, "Oriṣa who kneads clay," or Oriṣa who kneads clay."  
 Works by Maspéro, "The Oriṣa who owns the best clay."  
<sup>2</sup> Maspéro, *Dau-ṣere*, "The Oriṣa who owns the best clay."  
<sup>3</sup> e.g. Ma-po, to make round, model, etc. two titles are given to him in the myth which represents him as the creator of the first man and the first woman whom he formed out of clay.



is hardly any doubt that Oduduwa was originally a female deity. With her adoption as the progenitor of the Yoruba race, there seems to have arisen a tendency to regard her as a leader and a "hero," in consequence of which late stories transforming her to a male deity were invented.

The older myths represent her as the embodiment of virtues. The later myths depict her as an immoral deity worshipped with rites involving unbridled immorality.



OF ODUDUA AND A SUBORDINATE DEITY. THE BIGGER ODUDUA. THE SMALLER STATUE IS THAT OF A SUBORDINATE DEITY. THE LATTER DEITY IS REGARDED AS A GOD.

research into these inconsistencies shows that originally, the worthy wife of Obatala, the Like her husband, she possessed many fine when her worship became degenerated, led in defence of the revolting features worship.

ies also suggest that the bad attributes ger worshipped were transferred to associated with her name, to her illicit passion for a to the Egyptian goddess Hathor.

and the foundation of the town of Ado are so revoltingly certain that the Yorubas would never have adopted such a person as the worthy progenitor of their race. The conjecture is not remote that the idea of immorality is suggested by the conception of Ọbatala and Oduduwa as being locked in inseparable embrace symbolizing the union between earth and sky.

In the earlier myths she is credited with priority of existence as compared with Ọbatala. She is regarded as having independent existence, and as co-eval with Ọlọrun, the Supreme Deity with whom she is associated in the work of creation.

She is the wife of Ọbatala. Their union is regarded as symbolizing the union between earth and sky. The union is symbolized by two whitened calabashes, closely fitted together, one on top of the other, which when once joined are regarded as inseparable. Hence Oduduwa is known as *Iya Agbe*—“Mother of the gourd,” or “Mother of the closed calabash.” She is always represented in a sitting posture, nursing a child. Hence prayers are sometimes addressed to her by would-be mothers.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** The goddess Oduduwa is the survival of an Ancient Egyptian deity.

The derivation of her name has been described by previous writers as uncertain. The name has been taken to mean “the Black One,” the derivation being as follows: *dudu*, “black,” and *iwa*, “existence.” It has also been regarded as a contraction of *Odu ti o da wa*, that is, a “self-existent personage.” Neither of these derivations is correct.

It should be noted that the forms *Oduduwa*, *Odudua*, and *Odua*, refer to one and the same person; the first is an enlarged form, and the third a contracted form, of the second.

The name may be divided into two parts, namely, *Odu* and *dua*. The word *Odu*,<sup>1</sup> as has been explained before, means “a chief,” “an exalted personage.” The word *dua* comes from the Ancient Egyptian word *dua-t*,<sup>2</sup> which means “the other world.” *Odu-dua*, therefore, means “Lord of the Other World” or “Mistress of the Other World.” The title “Lord of the Other World” was priorly applied to Ra and

<sup>1</sup> Du in Ancient Egyptian Language

<sup>2</sup> Compare Am Duat, *The Book of*

...ans a mountain.  
...er World.

to Osiris, and then to the other gods and goddesses female Other World. Yoruba

Which of these goddesses, then, is the predecessor here? Oduduwa?

Two facts are helpful in answering this question. The first is that another name of Oduduwa is *Yemu-u* or *Yemuhu*. The word *Ye-mu-u* or *Ye-muhu* means "the living Mut" or "Mother Mut." The West African word *Ye*, meaning "the living one" or "Mother," has been explained before. The word *Mut* is the Ancient Egyptian name for a very well-known goddess. It is customary among the Yorubas to omit the letter "t" wherever possible.<sup>1</sup> Hence the word *Mut*, which should have become *Mutu* becomes *Mu-u* or *Muhu*, *h* being substituted for *t*, the omission of which brings two vowels together, contrary to the rules governing the structure of syllables in a phonetic language.

It is noteworthy that just as the Yorubas speak of "Mother Mut," so the Ancient Egyptians speak of "Mut," the "Mother."

The second fact is that the union between *Obatala* and *Oduduwa* is regarded as symbolizing that existing between the earth and the sky. It is remarkable that such a conception existed in the religious thought of the Ancient Egyptians, and that one of the deities so united is *Mut* or *Nut*,<sup>2</sup> the other being *Shu* or *Khnum* or *Seb*.<sup>3</sup>

Earlier in this Chapter, *Obatala*, the other deity of the union,<sup>4</sup> has been identified with *Khnum*. An Egyptian text at *Esua* which identifies *Shu* with *Khnum*, states that he "raised *Nut* and put himself under her like a great column of air," and describes him as sustaining "the floor of the sky upon its four supports."<sup>5</sup>

CONCLUSION. The foregoing remarks show that *Oduduwa* derives her name from the title of *Osiris* or *Ra* as "Lord of the Other World," and that she is the survival of the goddess

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Sa'ide* for *Satide* (Saturday); *Obalufon* for *Oba-Typhon* and *Sa'an* for standard.

<sup>2</sup> The original form of the word is *Nuit*.

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes spelt *Geb*. The original form is *Sibu*. See *Maspero, Da* of *Civilization*, p. 129.

<sup>4</sup> The union was originally between *Sibu* and *Nuit*.

<sup>5</sup> Similar stories of the union between the Earth and the Sky, symbolizing the union between the Goddess and the Sky God exist in other parts of the world. See P. Amaury Talbot, Vol. II, Chapters I and IV.

Nuit or Mut the "Mother," a popular deity in Southern Egypt.

The similarity between the Ancient Egyptian deity and the Yoruba deity which justifies the identification of the latter with the former is an additional evidence in support of the theory of a close connection between the Religion of Ancient Egyptian and the Religion of the Yorubas.



FIG. 14. SHRINE OF YEMOJA.

### E. AND F. AGINJU AND YEMOJA

These two deities are the offsprings of *Ọbatala* and *Oduduwa*. Aginju, a male deity, is the deity representing land. The word Aganju or Aginju means "a desert," and it is possible that the early Yoruba who lived in the desert had another idea of the nature of land. The worship of Aginju has fallen into disuse. This is not surprising, for the god of the desert must be supplanted by a deity of fertility when the Yorubas migrated south.

Yemoja, a female deity, is the deity representing water. The word *Ye-mo-ja* is a contraction of "Mother of Fishes," the word *omọ*<sup>1</sup> being

<sup>1</sup> cp. *Omọ eni*

There being no other persons to marry, Aganju and Yemoja married one another and had a son named *Orungan*.

*Orungan* is said to have committed incest with his mother. She fled from him in horror, but was hotly pursued by her wicked son, until she fell backward to the ground owing to exhaustion. Streams of water began to pour forth from her body, and these eventually united to form a lagoon.

From her body the following deities emanated: *Olṣsa* (the lagoon goddess), *Olokun* (god of the sea), *Dada* (the god of vegetables), *Ṣango* (god of lightning), *Ogun* (god of iron and war), *Oya* (goddess of the River Niger), *Oṣun* (goddess of the River Oṣun), *Ọba* (goddess of the River Ọba), *Oriṣa Oko* (god of agriculture), *Oṣosi* (Oshosi, god of hunters), *Oke* (god of mountains), *Aje Ṣaluga* (god of wealth), *Ṣoṣonṣo* (god of small-pox), *Orun* (the sun-god), *Oṣu* (Oshu, the Moon-goddess). The origin of several of the well-known Yoruba deities is thus traced to Ọbatala and Odudua.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** The derivation of Aganju is uncertain. It is probable that the name was adopted from the dwellers in the wilderness after the Yorubas had left the fertile lands of Egypt.

The historical connection of the goddess Yemoja is strongly suggested by her name. As the "Mother of Fishes," she is a survival of one of the Nile-goddesses, probably of the goddess Mirit Qimait or Mirit Mihit, who, together with the male associates—the Hapis—were described as guardian deities of fishes.<sup>1</sup>

The name *Orungan*—"Noonday Sun"—has been explained at "rais," previous chapters.<sup>2</sup>

of air, of the names of the deities who sprang from Yemoja upon its led to the names of Egyptian deities or from Egyptian

**CONCLU:**

derives her "Owner of the lagoon." Sa in Ancient the Other Wc, "Owner of the sea." Khu (Ancient

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Sin*), "Owner of the sea." Khu (Ancient Sa'an for standard.

<sup>2</sup> The original fo.) = soul. Oku(n) is the Yoruba word for the of Civilization, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes spelt G... 1 rarded as the origin of the watery

<sup>4</sup> the union was ... ly bethe soul (Khu) of man.

<sup>5</sup> Sim. . storie: of ... Godder Civilization, pp. 36-38.

of Nigeria. See Southern A, P. 4 IV.

and IV.

- (3) Da-da comes from *Da*, the name of the Egyptian lion-god.
- (4) O-gu(n). Gu(n) is a modified form of Ku (Khu).
- (5) Q-ya. *Ya* is a modification of the West African word *Ye*. This has been noted in Chapter II above.
- (6) Q-shu(n), from Shu, Ancient Egyptian god.
- (7) Q-ba. Ba in Ancient Egyptian language=soul. See Chapter II above.
- (8) O-şo-si=O-shu-osi. Shu and Osi<sup>1</sup> are names of Ancient Egyptian deities.
- (9) Oke=Mountain. The god of the mountain (Horus Ba-khu) has been noted.
- (10) Aje Şaluga, "The Living one of Salug," that is, the God of (Wealth) of Salug. See Chapter I above.
- (11) Şoşoşo. This will be explained later.
- (12) O-ru(n), from Horu=Sun.
- (13) O-şu (Oshu, Moon-goddess). This word is derived from Khonsu, the Moon Deity in Ancient Egypt. See Chapter II above.

CONCLUDING REMARKS. It may be safely concluded that Aginju and Yemoja are survivals of Ancient Egyptian Deities.

<sup>1</sup> Osi is a contraction of Osi-ri referred to in Chapter III.

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CHAPTER VI

THE MAJOR ORIŞAS—*continued*

G. ŞANGO

H. OGUN

I. ORIŞA OKO

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121

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MAJOR ORIŞAS—*continued*

#### G. ŞANGO

ONE of the primary emotions constituting the complex emotion known as the religious emotion is the emotion of fear. In regard to Ọlọrun this emotion has lost its energy. In regard to Şango its energy reaches its climax and raises the emotion to the level of dread or terror. No deity is more dreaded in Yorubaland for its malevolence as Şango, the god of Thunder.

It has been suggested that Şango is not strictly of Yoruba origin. The suggestion arises from the fact that one of his wives is Ọya, the goddess of the River Niger. The ground for the suggestion is flimsy, and no reliable authority has ever been produced in support of it.

Şango is the god of lightning and thunder. He is also known as *Jakuta*, "The Stone Thrower" or "The Fighter with Stone." He has three wives, namely, Ọya (the goddess of the River Niger), Oşun (Oshun) and Ọba (the goddesses of rivers in Abẹokuta). He is supposed to have a large retinue. Oşumare, the rainbow, and Oru, the thunder clap, are his chief attendants.

The priests of the deity are known as Oni-Şango or Od Şango. The chief priests are known as Magbas. The Magba has been taken to mean "one who receives," but this is only a fanciful and literal explanation.

The following description of the deity given by Dr. Farrow, is noteworthy :

"Shango is purely anthropomorphic. He dwells in an immense brazen palace where he maintains a great number of horses . . . and keeps his palace Şango hurls upon the initial chains of iron . . . but this is a redundant modern notion, and the

Ogun have a suspicious resemblance to the thunderbolts of Jupiter forged by Vulcan.”<sup>1</sup>

**MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGIN.** Various myths abound in regard to Şango. Mr. R. E. Dennet reproduced a few of them, but they are all of modern origin.

The most important myth is the one contained in *Iwe Kẹkẹrin* and thus summarized by Dr. Farrow :

“About two centuries ago (?) there reigned as King in the town of Oyo (known to early explorers as Eyo or Katunga), which was situated near the south bank of the River Niger, to the north of the Yoruba country, one Şango, who was a powerful and wise monarch. He was a great medicine man or witch-doctor, and claimed to be able to kill people by ejecting fire from his mouth. His reign was tyrannical and cruel. He had two ministers of whom he was jealous, and set these to fight against each other, hoping both might be slain ; but was himself deposed by the one who came off victor in the fight. Şango fled, accompanied by his three wives Oya, Oşun and Oba, and some of his loyal followers. He wandered in the bush, being gradually deserted by all, until only his favourite wife Oya remained. Then, in despair, Şango hung himself from an *ayan* tree. Oya fled north and became the presiding goddess of the River Niger. Travellers who had seen the body of Şango hanging from a tree entered the town and reported *Oba-so*. The friends of Şango were so incensed that they determined to avenge their deceased monarch.

“They took a number of small calabashes or hollow gourds, filled them with gunpowder. They then covered them with coco fibre and put slow matches to them and waited for the next storm. When this came they ignited the bombs and threw them into the thatched roofs of many houses. The resultant explosions and fire caused the panic-stricken people to cry out ‘ why are all our houses burning?’ The friends of Şango then came forward, saying ‘ Oba so’ (the King has hanged himself) ‘ Oba ko so,’ (he has not hanged himself). He is angry with you for this. Some god has come and has gone up into heaven and sent down fire to punish you. You must bring out oxen, sheep, fowls, etc., and offer sacrifices to him, and henceforth worship him when he will forgive you.”

**ORIGIN.** It has not been possible to trace the name of Şango to any Egyptian bearing the name of Şango or a name which can be derived. The name Sangu<sup>2</sup> occurs in the history of Chaldea, and denotes “on the bank of the river.”

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Ancient Babylonians*, p. 100.

bound to a god," "the representative or vice-gerent of a god." The view maintained by some observers has been expressed in an earlier chapter that the Yorubas seem to have had some contact with the Chaldeans. The similarity between the Yoruba word Sango and the Chaldean word Sangu seems to support the view and to suggest the need for research based on the data now available.

The other name of the deity—Jakuta—unmistakably points to an Egyptian origin. The word Ja-ku-ta means "the living soul (Khu) of Ptah."<sup>1</sup> The Egyptian god Ptah was regarded as incorporate in a stone.<sup>2</sup> The Yoruba word for a stone is O-ku-ta, "the soul of Ptah." Hence the literal meaning of Jakuta in Yoruba is "the fighter with stone."

Another noteworthy Yoruba word is A-pa-ta—"a rock." It consists of two Egyptian words, namely *pa*, "a house," and *ta*, a modified form of Ptah.<sup>3</sup>

The full form of the word Ma-gba is Qma(n) or Qmφ(n)

<sup>1</sup> Compare O-ku-ta, "the soul of Ptah," noted in Chapter III, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> See Wiedeman, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptian*, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> The initial consonant is elided, either because it is redundant in Yoruba.

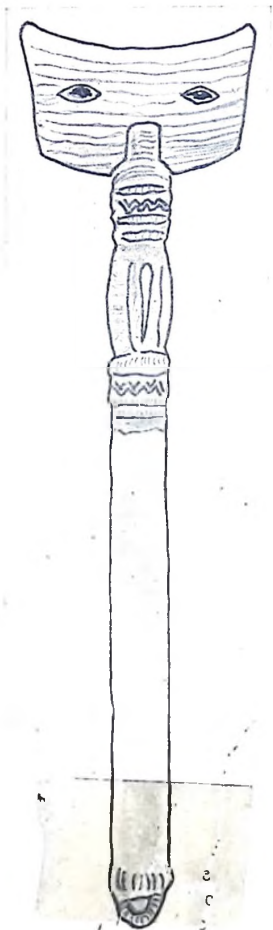


FIG. 15.  
SCEPTER OF SACRED ASPECT OF ŞANGO.

a-gba, that is, "people of the ba," agba or elderly being regarded as possessing in a special way the soul of the ancestors.

Professor Leo Frobesius regards Şango, "the ram-headed god of thunder," as the chief Yoruba deity. This is incorrect in view of what has been written above about the other deities.

It seems probable that the worship of Şango<sup>1</sup> was originally derived from that of Ptah. It became considerably modified in later times, and the addition of the name Şango must have been synchronized with the marked change in the conception of the deity.

## H. OGUN

One of the deities still actively worshipped in Yorubaland is Ogun. In some parts of the country he is worshipped by isolated individuals or by villages, but at Ileşa he is still worshipped as a national god. In this town elaborate rites and ceremonies are performed annually by the Qwa—paramount chief of the town—and by priests duly appointed for that purpose.

Ogun is the god of Iron and of War. He is therefore patron god of hunters and soldiers. No hunter ever dares proceed on a hunting expedition without first offering an appropriate sacrifice to this deity. His worship is therefore kept alive by hunters.

Soldiers, blacksmiths and others who make use of iron implements also worship the deity. They look up to him for protection and for help to achieve success in their work.

The symbol of the god is iron. The soldier therefore regards his iron spear or sword as sacred. The blacksmith also regards his anvil and forge as sacred.

Swearing by the god Ogun is regarded as a severe form of swearing. Worshippers of the deity regard perjury as a serious offence, punishable in the olden days by death. The British Government in Nigeria recognizes the validity of this form of swearing when made in a court of justice by heathen witnesses. The oath is administered by handing a piece of iron to the witness to kiss.

<sup>1</sup> Compare this god with the Egyptian goddess Pasht, "the urining one," and Set, "she who kindles fire," the goddess of the heaven and of the Thunderbolt.

Another form of swearing common among the Yorubas is that of swearing by the ground. Its validity rests partly on the belief that the ground, the final resting place of man's mortal remains, will punish the perjurer by hurling him into an early grave, and partly on the belief held by the worshippers



FIG. 16. Two

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WORSHIP. The g  
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offered to propitiate the god and to ensure success. The victim is usually a slave purchased with money taken from public funds. The day before the sacrifice, he is paraded like a king with great ceremony and pomp through the streets and market places.<sup>1</sup> The honour thus conferred on the victim is an expression of the belief that the reward for his death or propitiatory sacrifice will be that he will be born again as a king.

The animal sacred to Ogun is the dog. This animal is usually sacrificed to the deity together with sheep, or goats or fowls and articles of food, which vary in different parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> Simpler sacrifices of cock, kola nuts or other articles are made by hunters.

The people of Ilesha usually observe at their annual festival the ceremony known as "Ibegan." In connection with this ceremony the worshippers will assemble in a large square in front of the Afin (palace). The priests appointed for the purpose will hold a dog stretched out at full length by having its tightly drawn forward and its hind legs similarly stretched out. When the dog has been stretched almost to the limit, a or a priest cuts the dog asunder immediately raising a

to the deity.  
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as Khur.<sup>3</sup>

black king in Ancient Egypt

The second point is that Ogun is the god of iron and of war, the patron god of hunters and blacksmiths. Such a description is identical with the following description of Horus and Nin-ip by Prof. Sayce: "Though the name Khar or Khur is and must remain Egyptian Horus has much common with the Babylonian sun-god Nin-ip."

Horus and Ogun are both warrior-gods; and just as the followers of Horus were workers in iron, so Nin-ip also was the god of iron.<sup>1</sup> Prof. Sayce further states that "Horus of Edfu, it will be remembered, was served by *smiths*<sup>2</sup> and the shrines he founded to commemorate his conquest of Egypt were known as 'smithies.'<sup>3</sup>"

Such an identity of details can only lead to the conclusion that Ogun is the survival of Horus, the patron god of the Pharaonic Egyptians who with their weapons of metal conquered the natives of Egypt and who as the followers of the god were known as smiths.

One other survival may be pointed out here: Horus has been identified above with Nin-ip, the god of iron. Now the Yoruba word for iron is i-rin, which is certainly derived from Nin, the derivation following the rule that every Yoruba word must begin with a vowel and the rule that the letter "r" is often substituted for the letter "n" in Yoruba and some other West African languages.<sup>4</sup>

## I. ORIŞA OKO

As the god of the farm, agriculture and harvest, Orişa Oko is a popular deity in Yorubaland. Nearly every village or town has a temple devoted to him. His worship usually evokes great religious enthusiasm, which often leads to excesses. He is represented by an iron staff symbolizing strength. Honey bees, indicating happiness, are his messengers.

The priesthood connected with the worship of the god is open to both men and women, but as he is particularly worshipped by women the number of priestesses far exceeds that of priests. The priestesses "really form a *secret* society of their own, and are so powerful, and so highly respected, that

<sup>1</sup> Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> The letters are changed to italics by the writer.

<sup>3</sup> Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter I, p. 14, Rule 13.

no man dare injure, or offend, any of them. They are distinguished by wearing, stuck on to the middle of the forehead, a small vertical badge, about 1 inch long and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide, half red and half white. . . . It is accounted the highest honour to have this priesthood in the family, although the expense of initiation in each case costs from £40 to £50 (a large sum to a Yoruba)."<sup>1</sup>

The god is regarded as an arbiter of disputes, especially among women. This function he performs through the agency of priests who dwell in the temple. If there is a dispute between two women as to which of them is guilty of a crime, especially of possession of witchcraft, an appeal is made to the god in his temple. Here the disputants spend about three days, after handing one white calabash each to the priest. After due consultation of the god, the priest returns the calabashes. The inside of one of them will remain white whilst the inside of the other will be found black when opened. The priest then condemns the owner of the black calabash and kills her by means of an iron club.<sup>2</sup> This club must be purchased by the innocent woman at a great cost, and she thereby becomes the bride or priestess of Oriṣa Oko.

**ANNUAL FESTIVAL.** Oriṣa Oko is worshipped regularly by women at the new moon. He is worshipped by the whole town or village in connection with the annual harvest festival. Before the products of the farm are gathered for sale the first-fruits must be offered to the god. The occasion is one of great rejoicing. Some of the new yams cooked on the occasion will be offered to the god, some will be consumed by the worshippers, and others will be given to the poor and needy. Needless to say that a large quantity of palm wine will be consumed to water down the solids. The consumption of food is followed by general merriment, including public processions and dances.

In some other parts of West Africa, the Yam festival is sometimes accompanied by gruesome cannibalism. This is not the case in Yorubaland, but the yam "harvest" festival is always an occasion of scenes of unbridled immorality which has been given religious sanctions in the case of the priestesses of Oriṣa Oko. Such immorality perpetrated under the guise

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Farrow, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> This club is known as Pọlọ.

of religion and indicating the perversity of the human mind, is not peculiar to Yorubaland, and is disappearing almost to a vanishing point, thanks to the influence of the Government and of Christianity.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** The Egyptian prototype of Orişa Oko is undoubtedly Osiris, but the celebration of the harvest festival in honour of the god contains elements connected with the worship of other Egyptian gods, some of whom were identified with Osiris.

It should be noted, in the first place, that Osiris is a god of vegetation. He is said to have taught the Ancient Egyptians "the art of making agricultural implements—the plough and the hoe—field labour, the rotation of crops, the harvesting of wheat and barley and vine culture."<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, the licentious worship of the deity should be noted. Orişa Oko is a phallic deity. In later Egyptian times Osiris, whom the Greeks identified with Bacchus, was worshipped with elaborate phallic rites.<sup>2</sup>

It will be remembered that Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, was identified with Min, the god of the negroes worshipped at Coptos. Professor Erman says: "when the harvest was gathered in and the peasant sacrificed the first fruits to Min the god of Koptos, he danced to testify his joy and thankfulness to the god, and when the festivals of the great goddesses of pleasure, Hathor and Bastet, were solemnized, dancing was considered as necessary as the shouting for joy or the carrying of wreaths."<sup>3</sup>

The chief elements in this Ancient Egyptian celebration survive in the worship of Orişa Oko.

Thirdly, it has been pointed out that the priestesses of the god are "distinguished by wearing, stuck on to middle of the forehead, a small vertical badge half red and half white."

The colours of the badge are significant. Now in connection with the worship of Min, white is the colour of the bull sacred to him. At a point in the course of the ceremonies

<sup>1</sup> See *Maspeth's History of Egypt*, p. 174. See also *Diodorus*, Book 1, Section 14.

<sup>2</sup> *See also Diodorus*, edition by Bohn, II, 48. See also the same author,

<sup>3</sup> *See also Tiele, History of the Egyptian Religion*,

Littlebury, p. 107.

Balingal, p. 192.

*Ancient Egypt*, p. 245. See also Wiedeman, *Religion of the Ancient*

Egypt, note, and *Plutarch, Isis and Osiris*, translation Mead, XXXVI, 3.

connected with the worship of the deity the priest would declare that "Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, has received the white and the red crowns." It is noticeable that the colours of the crowns of Horus who has been identified with Min, the African god of fertility, survives in the colours of the badge of the priestesses of Oriṣa Oko, the Yoruba god of harvest and fertility.

The foregoing remarks show that Oriṣa Oko is a survival of Osiris and that his worship is a mixture of the rites and ceremonies connected with the worship of Osiris, of Horus and of Min, the African god of Coptos.

### J. ŞOPOŃO

ŞopŃo is one of the most dreaded of Yoruba gods. As the god of the disease of smallpox, he inspires terror not only in his worshippers, but also and specially in those uninitiated to the cult. He is the only god whose worship has been forbidden by the British Government.

MYTHS. ŞopŃo is one of the deities which are believed to have sprung from the body of Yemoja. A popular myth about him is as follows :

"Shankpanna is old and lame and is depicted as limping along with the aid of a stick. According to a myth, he has a wooden leg. One day, when all the gods were assembled at the palace of Qbatala and were dancing and making merry, Shankpanna endeavoured to join in the dance ; but owing to his deformity, stumbled and fell. All the gods and goddesses thereupon burst out laughing, and Shankpanna in revenge strove to infect them with small-pox, but Qbatala came to the rescue and seizing his spear, drove Shankpanna away. From that day Shankpanna was forbidden to associate with other gods, and he became an outcast, who has since lived in desolate and uninhabited tracts of the country."<sup>1</sup>

Another myth given by Mr. Feyṣara Şopçin under the pen name of "Adeṣola," is as follows :

"One tradition states that ŞokpŃonna (small wicked boy who often excited great commotions in one occasion when he had beaten to death several of his festival he was taken by his parents and sold to a native doctor, lity which him the use of very bad and poisonous drugs."<sup>2</sup> priestesses the guise

<sup>1</sup> Ellis, *Yoruba-speaking Peoples*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *The Nigerian Chronicle*, February 25th, 1910.

for the *SHIP*. The worship of the god *reushu* of his dreaded character. Temples, shrines and paraphernalia of worship are found only outside the town, especially in the bush. The worship of the god consists chiefly in the secret dissemination of the germs of the foul disease. This is the work of the priests, who always seek secluded or sheltered places to work their evil purposes. The priests claim not only the victim of the disease, but also his property for the purpose of mediation on behalf of the family affected. The foulness of the disease and its highly infectious character inspire such a dread in the people that they are willing to accept any terms, and they are ready to surrender the victims and their property to the priests. As soon as the epidemic ceases to rage, the relatives of the victims have to send a congratulatory message to the priests. Hence the god is known as "Alapadupe," one who kills and is thanked for killing.

The following materials are used by the priests in spreading the disease: (1) A calabash containing some portion of the corpse of a victim of the disease; (2) a pot of black liquid made up of water collected from the corpse of the victim or that with which the victim's rashes have been washed; (3) a vessel of black powder compounded with dried scabs, etc., from the victim. It is this black powder that is secretly thrown into the compound or entrance of the would-be victims of the god.

A few years ago outbreaks of the disease became frequent in Lagos. Dr. Oguntola Šapara, a son of the soil, who had received medical education in England, became initiated into the small-pox cult and thus had facilities for studying the *modus operandi* of



FIG. 17. IMAGE OF ŠOPONO, GOD OF SMALLPOX.

the cruel worshippers of the god. He discovered the cruel declare of spreading the germs of the disease and the part he white by the priest or native doctor who, under the pretence of healing the disease, was the most active agent in spreading it, since the property of the unfortunate victim who succumbed became the property of the priests.

Dr. Şapara placed his findings at the disposal of the Government, who immediately declared the worship of Şoşonşo illegal. Outbreaks of the disease have since become very of N.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** Before tracing the historical origin of the god a note on his name seems necessary. Dr. Farrow<sup>1</sup> sharply criticizes Colonel Ellis for spelling it as Shan-kpan-na. He says that the correct spelling is Sho-po-no. The fact is that both of them are right, each in his own way. Colonel Ellis spells the word as it is pronounced by the Northern Yoruba, who always substitutes "a" for "o" of the Southern Yoruba. He also uses kp, which is used in West African Phonetics other than Yoruba, for the thick labial sound which does not exist in English language.<sup>3</sup> He also included the nasal n, because each or all the vowels of the word may be nasalized. S with a dot is pronounced as Sh. The correct spelling in Yoruba is Şoşonşo. For the purpose of pronunciation it may be spelt phonetically as Shaw(n)-paw(n)-naw(n)<sup>4</sup> or Sha(n)-pa(n)-na(n),<sup>5</sup> the "n" in brackets being nasalized.

The word Şoşonşo seems to be derived from two Egyptian words, namely Shu and Pua-nit. Reference has already been made to the fact that the god of Punt survives among the Fantis as Nyan-ku-po(n) (the living soul of Punt).<sup>6</sup> Po-nşo appears to be the Yoruba modification of the word Pun-t or Pua-nit. This is confirmed by the fact that among the Ewe-speaking peoples, the god is known as So-po-to(n), poto(n) being another modification of the same word with the letter "t" retained and a vowel added to it. Şo (Shaw) is a modification of Shu, the change of vowel being made probably

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> O with a dot = aw.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter I, p. 13, Rule 11.

<sup>4</sup> Southern Yoruba vocalization.

<sup>5</sup> Northern Yoruba vocalization.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that a people called "Pun" were known to the Ancient Egyptians, see Tiele, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

for the sake of euphony. Şoꝑoꝛo then appears to denote "Shu of Punt," which is probably the title of Atthar, the Southern Arabian god of Punt who was introduced into Ancient Egypt by the name of Hathor, the Lady of Puanit.

The title survives among the Yorubas, who use it in naming a strange god who came into existence after their migration into West Africa.

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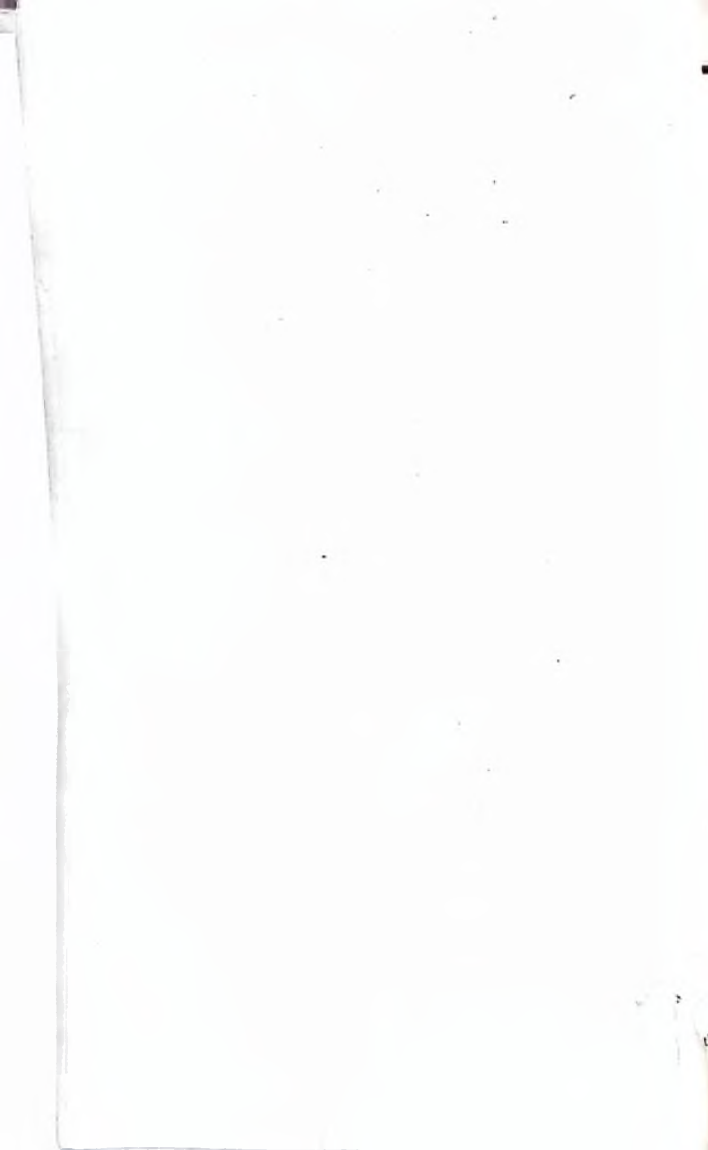
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CHAPTER VII

THE DEIFIED SPIRITS OF ANCESTORS AND  
OTHER SPIRITS

A. ORO

B. ẸLUKU



## CHAPTER VII

### THE DEIFIED SPIRITS OF ANCESTORS AND OTHER SPIRITS

It has been remarked above that fetishism and daemonism in the form of the worship of the spirits of ancestors play a great part in the religion of the Yorubas. An account of the worship of departed spirits will now be given.

The fundamental belief of the Yorubas in connection with this worship is that they are actively in touch with the spirit world, that the departed spirits of ancestors still take active interest in the affairs of their descendants, and that contact between the two can be very real, for good or ill.

Organizations exist in different parts of the country for the worship of ancestral spirits, so that their protective, disciplinary and helpful influence may be secured for the benefit of the whole community. These organizations are secret societies, open only to male members after due initiation. Before the establishment of the British Government in Nigeria the penalty for intrusion into these secret societies by women or by the uninitiated was death without mercy. Some of these cults exercise a social influence through the worship of ancestral spirits in the family. Others exercise a political influence through the worship of the spirits of the tribe, safeguarding the interest of the tribe by securing the favour of the spirits and by punishing or banishing such members of the tribe as are likely to bring it into disfavour.

Stress has been laid by some writers<sup>1</sup> on the distinction between Oriṣa-worship and spirit-worship.

It is true that the terror inspired by the Oriṣas is not always inspired by the spirits of the dead. But it should be noted that the leading ancestral spirits are regarded as deities, although no generic name is applied to all of them.

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Dr. Farrow, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

It has also been said by some writers that the Yoruba secret societies are cults connected with male mysteries.<sup>1</sup> No forms of spirit-worship in Yorubaland contain phallic rites or instructions on sex, and no secret societies are cults involving initiation into male mysteries. The erroneous impression is created by the existence of similar male cults in other parts of West Africa and that membership of the Yoruba secret societies is confined to male persons. Actually in all cases initiation takes place before or after puberty—that is at any age.

Spirit-worship assumes different forms among the different tribes. The following is a detailed account of the different cults connected with the worship :

#### A. ORO

Oro is one of the spirit-gods worshipped in Yorubaland. His chief worshippers are the Egbas in Abeokuta, where his "voice"<sup>2</sup> used to be heard on most nights of the year, and the Aworis who live near the Coast. The Ijebus also make use of the influence of the god for political and medical purposes, although they do not possess any rite and ceremonies for his worship.<sup>3</sup>

Oro is a god residing in the bush. He comes to the town only by means of his representative—The Oro-stick or the "bull-roarer"—through which he makes his "voice" heard. Dr. Farrow gives a good description of the "bull-roarer" as used by the Yorubas :

"The instrument as used by the Yorubas is a wooden lath varying in size from 6 inches in length by  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch broad to 2 feet 6 inches in length by 4 inches in breadth. The larger sizes are generally somewhat oval in form, and slightly rounded on one side, while nearly flat on the other. The edges are not serrated, nor (as a rule) are there any special marks, or designs engraved on it, as in the case of the *Churinga* of the Australian aborigines. The lath is perforated at one end, through which a string is passed, varying in length from 6 feet up to 10 yards. In the case of the small and medium-sized lath, or 'Oro-stick,' the cord is attached at the other end to a somewhat flexible rod, or wand, 6 feet or more in length, so that the instrument is raised in the air when in use. The cord

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Colonel Ellist, *op. cit.*, III et passion.

<sup>2</sup> The sound emanating from the "bull-roarer" which is the representative of the god.

<sup>3</sup> Whilst visiting Ijebu Ode recently the writer heard the sound of the "bull-roarer" on several nights.

of the large powerful ones is attached, at the end remote from the lath, to a ball of cloth, grass or string which is held in the hands of the operator. . . . The small instrument gives a high, shrill note; but the pitch can be made to vary greatly according to the speed at which it is made to revolve round the operator. The length of the cord also affects the pitch—the bigger the circle described, the deeper is the tone produced. It is impossible to realize without having experienced it, how intensely weird and awe-inspiring a thing it is, to lie awake in the stillness of the night and to hear the deep booming of a full-sized bull-roarer. . . . It is possible to swing the instrument without producing an audible sound. The secret of producing the note is that it is revolving in a circle. This is effected by getting a twist on the string, which, once started, will be maintained automatically. The Oro-stick is correctly swung 'clockwise,' never (by a Yoruba) anti-clockwise."<sup>1</sup>

**THE ORO GUILD.** Worshippers of the god Oro constitute themselves into a guild known as Oşugbo. The members of this guild make an exclusive claim for the possession of knowledge of the Oro mysteries and for the right to perform the ceremonies which are jealously guarded from the view of the uninitiated.

The guild possesses great political power. In the days of the independence of Abeokuta, members of the guild formed the majority in the political council known as the Ogboni Council. They met periodically to settle civil disputes and to deal with criminal charges. As the executive of the god Oro, the Ogbonis who were members of the guild dealt with persons convicted of serious criminal offences. The penalty imposed might be banishment, execution, deprivation of property or any other form of punishment commensurate with the magnitude of the offence. The Ogbonis functioned not only in a judicial capacity by trying the cases in Council and fixing the punishment, but also in an executive capacity by actually inflicting the punishment on the criminal.

The King of the Egbas in those days was known as the Alake.<sup>2</sup> His principal Chiefs were the Nlado or the Prime Minister, the Jaguna or the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, the Mogaji or the probable successor to either of the former chiefs. The Alake, Chiefs and priests were all members of the Ogboni Council.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Fari'ow, *op. cit.*, pp 69-71.

<sup>2</sup> Now the title of the paramount chief of Abeokuta.

**WORSHIP.** Rites and ceremonies are performed both in the town and in the bush.

Ceremonies performed in the town are preceded by a proclamation of confinement of women and the uninitiated. This is made by the sounding of the Ogboni note on the drum, and the herald shouts "He-e-e-pa ! He-e-e-epa !! He-e-e-e-epa-ri-pa !!! Wo o firi ko m'ọju kuro !"—that is, Ter-ror ! Te-r-ror !! T-e-r-r-or !!! Dare you look at it ! This is sufficient warning for all women and the uninitiated to seek for a safe hiding-place. Every house must be sufficiently closed as to make intrusion impossible. The confinement may last for a period ranging between twenty-four hours and three lunar months.

On ordinary occasions or on the occasion of the Yam festival, the ceremonies consists of a parade round the town by the members, dancing, drumming, drinking and ceremonially swinging the Oro-stick on their way to and from the Council Hall or Ile Oṣugbo (House of Oshugbo).

The following important ceremonies are performed in the town :

(1) Ceremony connected with Irana (Calabash of Irana.) This is a ceremony by means of which an evil spirit is exorcised from the dwelling.

(2) Ipade Ceremony. This is performed outside an exorcised dwelling on the wearing apparel and other belongings of the exorcised spirit, prior to their removal into the bush.

(3) Ceremony for the banishment or removal from town of a criminal or an unwanted person. The house of the person concerned is surrounded by the members of the Oro guild swinging their Oro-sticks. The person is then arrested and carried away into the bush either for banishment or for execution. It is usually said of a person thus banished "Nwọn fi Oro le e ni ilu." "He is banished by means of Oro."

(4) Burial ceremonies. Corpses of members of the guild cannot be buried until the necessary ceremonies have been performed. For the performance of the ceremonies the relatives of the deceased have to pay a fee to the Ogbonis. Burial will not be sanctioned until the fee is paid and valuable presents of drinks are made to the Ogbonis. This custom is now being viewed with disfavour and may soon be wiped out.

Ceremonies are also performed in the or "the incarnate purpose a secluded spot is selected. This is the title of the Oro, or "Igboro," "the grove of Oro." Here the ceremonies are performed. There is only one penalty for Yoruba into the grove—death.

The following ceremonies are performed in the burials used  
 (1) Ceremony of *Oro Doko*. This ceremony is performed as in the Igboro at Ondo, probably in connection with the year festival. It used to last three lunar months.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Ceremony of *Oro Pagi*—(Oro destroys the tree) or Oro Jęgi (Oro eats the tree). This ceremony always takes place at night. A tree is selected for the purpose. At dawn every leaf, every tender branch, every young shoot will entirely disappear from the tree. Oro is then said to have devoured the tree. All the remnants of the leaves stripped from the tree are usually removed from the spot and hidden; hence the proverb "*A ki i ri ajęku Oro.*" "No one ever sees the remnants of the food eaten by Oro."

(3) Ceremony of executing criminals. On this subject Adeşola thus writes:

"Oro worship has a political side. The god assisted the State to give capital punishment to criminals in return for services rendered it by the State. . . .

"The Oro decapitates (pa) in which case the head of the criminal is nailed to a tree as a warning to others; or takes away (gbe) the criminal body and soul out of the arena of life when neither the living man nor the lifeless is ever seen after. . . .

"Their spirits (*i.e.* of criminals) are supposed to be the Oro, they revisit the earth on festive occasions only to wander about in corner places. Hence they are called *Pakpkę* (loiterers in the corner). . . .

"The Oro is also employed as an instrument of banishment."

LEGENDS. A legend states that Oro came into existence as a result of the anguish caused to parents in olden days by a sore affliction. Nearly all the children died a short time after their birth. They consulted a babala, who pointed out to them the need for another god. So they said to devote themselves to Oro. Then people began to worship the god at day, and the population increased.

On one occasion the King was in the presence of women. The god gave a sign. Myth.

then explained to the King that he survives in Yorubaland.

<sup>1</sup> A similar ceremony is also Maspero, *Etudes de Mythologie et de* Vol. II, pp. 18 et seq., pp. 231 and 232.

WORSHIP. R<sub>1</sub>. The women having been sent away, the the town and in<sup>o</sup>c immediately became audible. Hence the Ceremon<sup>o</sup>-worship are closed to women.

proclama<sup>t</sup>r legend states that some people were living in a This is rled Akin-Oro. One of them dreamt that Olorun and the<sup>m</sup> to leave the place. They all decided to offer pa-ri<sup>g</sup>.<sup>ys</sup> appease Oro.

Fortunately Oro himself, who was a hunter, appeared to them and taught them how to worship him and how to make the Oro-stick. He also asked them to offer sacrifices to him every seven days, and told them that the real name of the place was Ibu Mole<sup>1</sup> (or Male<sup>2</sup>).

On the occasion of a feast the king's wife peeped at the Oro ceremonies from the King's chair where she had concealed herself. The people called upon Ita (another name for Oro), but there was no answer. On their trying to swing the Oro-stick, the piece of flesh which Oro had torn off from himself and with which he had made the string for the Oro-sticks, flew off and returned to Oro, since the rule that women should not be allowed to see the mysteries had been broken. The piece of flesh cut the woman's throat before returning to Oro.

Oro the hunter came back, blamed the people for their disobedience, and substituted a piece of string tied to a stick for the gift of his own flesh. Then he departed from the world.

HISTORICAL ORIGIN. The origin of the term Oro has given rise to much speculation. A contributor to the *Nigerian Chronicle*,<sup>3</sup> who styles himself *Neipos ara Orun*, says "In regard to derivation, the word Oro is a purely onomatopoeic one and is derived from the sound heard at the discovery of the Abe or Ise of the musical god." Dr. Farrow is quite satisfied with this explanation and considers it the best. He then goes on to say in rega<sup>o</sup> the origin of the Oro cult, that "the simplest explan<sup>o</sup>ceremon<sup>o</sup>d perhaps the most reliable, is that the causa people arried until bull-roarer' to scare the birds away per their i. For the P<sub>2</sub> ingenious Yoruba adopted it as a relat<sup>o</sup>f s<sup>o</sup>of the deceased No Yoruba can read these words Burial will not be sanctione<sup>t</sup>tendency to accept the simplest presents of drinks are made now being viewed with disfav<sup>ion</sup>.<sup>on</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

explanations as the best always betrays a or "the incarnate drudgery of adequate scientific research," is the title of the shown in some parts of Dr. Farrow's work, the value of an otherwise good work. In -d by all Yoruba Dr. Farrow,<sup>1</sup> quoting Dr. Andrew Lang<sup>2</sup> as -d for "son."<sup>1</sup> says that we find this instrument used in connenents used spirit-worship in the various countries. It is reminded as however, that it was unknown in Yorubaland until the H. used it to scare the birds, and the ingenious (*sic*) Yorubas thr ; adopted<sup>3</sup> it as a form of spirit-worship.

It would not be wise to dismiss all Yoruba myths and legends as unreliable. Some of them bear the stamp of late origin. Others have been so modified as to lose their value for practical purposes. But there are a few which contain elements which have survived from the remote past.

In unravelling the historical origin of Oro the theory of a connection between the religion of the Yorubas and that of the Ancient Egyptians will prove helpful if applied.

The first thing to note is the name of the god—Oro. There is an Ancient Egyptian god whose name is very similar to that of Oro. That god is Orion or Orion-Sahu.<sup>4</sup> The Yoruba god Oro is a survival of the Egyptian god Orion. The derivation of the name is as follows : to incorporate a foreign word into Yoruba language, the final consonant of the word (if any) must receive a vowel so as to form a syllable or must be elided. Hence " n " in Orion is elided, leaving Orio. In Yoruba, two vowels coming together are either separated by the addition of a consonant or reduced to one by the omission of any one of them. Following this rule Orio becomes "Oro."

In one of the legends given above Oro is said to be a hunter. The Egyptian god Orion is also a hunter.<sup>5</sup> In connection with Oro worship, Oro is said to devour the tree used for the sacrificial ceremony, and in the case of execution, to devour the criminal. Orion is said to devour the gods, some in the morning, others at mid-day, and others in the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> *Custom and Myth.*

<sup>3</sup> The underline is the writer's.

<sup>4</sup> It will be shown later that Sahu survives in Yorubaland.

<sup>5</sup> See Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 234. See also Maspero, *Etudes de Mythologie et de Archeologie Egyptiennes*, Vol. I, p. 156 ; Vol. II, pp. 18 *et. seq.*, pp. 231 and 232.

WORSHIP. R<sub>h</sub>. coincidence cannot be regarded as accidental, the town and igoc - the theory which has been propounded Ceremon<sup>o</sup>ro-wor<sup>o</sup>ied in the previous chapters.

proclama<sup>r</sup> legends given above contains a Yoruba word This is rled Alcal with the Ancient Egyptian word for a god. and the ema word is ITA, which is derived from NETER,<sup>1</sup> the pa-ris- Egyptian word for a god.

The derivation is as follows : All Yoruba nouns commence with a vowel, hence n is elided ; e = i and er = a in Yoruba ; hence the word becomes Ita. It should be noted, however, that as in the case of nefer pointed out above,<sup>2</sup> the n is not elided when the word is in combination with another word or it is used as an adjective. For example, in the word Qba-nita<sup>3</sup> or Qbanta<sup>4</sup> (Divine King), which is the name of a god worshipped by the Ijebus, the letter n reappears. Ita is another name for Oro.

One of the titles of Oro is Qmō Ye-Nu(n), that is the son of Mother Nu. Now Nu-it is the name of the goddess of the sky and the mother of the stars, one of which is Orion. The title of Oro is significant, for it corresponds to the description of Orion in relation to Nuit as given by Egyptologists.<sup>5</sup>

Another title of Oro is Imale,<sup>6</sup> that is, Son of the Earth. Geb, the god representing the earth, is the husband of Nu-it, the goddess representing the starry sky and the mother of Orion. It is easy to see the reason why Oro is described as the Son of the Earth.

The significance of the following words should also be noted :

OGBONI. O-gboni. O is the initial vowel required by all Yoruba nouns. Gbo is a modified form of bau (spirits), gb being a thickened form of the labial b and o, a substitute for the two vowels au. Ni is a contraction of uni or eni (persons or beings), un being the ancient Egyptian word for " a being." Ogboni, therefore, means " those

<sup>1</sup> See Budge, *Ancient Egyptian Language*, p. 125.

Compare " ifa " and " nefer " in Chapter IV, pp. 80 and 81.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter IV, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Qpç nifa, Chapter IV, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> A contracted form of Qba nita.

<sup>5</sup> See Maspero, *Down of Civilization*, p. 129. See also Lanzone, *Dizionario di Mitologia*, Pl. lxi, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Victims of Oro are known as Èru Malç, " slaves of Imaleç."

who possess the spirits (of ancestors)" or "the incarnate form of the spirits of ancestors." It is the title of the elders of the community.

**IŞE.** I-şe. I is the initial vowel required by all Yoruba nouns; "se" is the Ancient Egyptian word for "son."<sup>1</sup> Işe is the name of the smaller of the two instruments used for Oro worship and may be figuratively described as the son of the bigger instrument.

**AGBE.** A-gbe. A is the initial vowel described above; gbe is a modified form of bau (spirits), e being substituted for au. Agbe, therefore, means that which contains the spirits (of ancestors).

**NLADO.** N-la-do<sup>2</sup> or Oni-la-do. la = Ancient Egyptian god; do = Ancient Egyptian word for settlement. Oni = the possessor. Onilado, therefore, means "He who possesses the divine spirit in the settlement."

**JAGUNA.** Ja-gu-na. Ja = the living<sup>3</sup>; Gu is a modified form of Khu. Jaguna, therefore, means "the living spirit of the way" and is applied to the Commander-in-Chief of the army.

**IBU MALE.** Bu is the Ancient Egyptian word for place. It is used in the same sense by the Yorubas. Ibu Male, therefore, means "the place of Imale" and is applied to the grove of Oro.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS.** The detailed account of the Yoruba god Oro shows that he is a survival of the Ancient Egyptian god Orion. The latter is regarded as a powerful god—powerful enough to hunt and devour the other gods.<sup>4</sup> It is, therefore, easy to see the reason why Oro, the survival of such a powerful god, wields a very great power in Yorubaland.

The depth of the impression which the god makes on the Yoruba mind can be measured by the extent to which he is dreaded, and by the variety of sense in which the word Oro is used,<sup>5</sup> showing the character of the god as an ancestral spirit belonging to the family, the tribe or the nation and

<sup>1</sup> See Tiele, *History of the Egyptian Religion*, trans. Ballingal, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Nlado is a contracted form of Onilado.

<sup>3</sup> Ja from the West Africa word Je or Ye, which means "to live, to exist."

<sup>4</sup> Recently a human sacrifice to Oro was alleged to have been offered at Ikorodu. The child involved was about four years old. See *Nigerian Daily Times*, August 20th, 1941.

<sup>5</sup> See Dennet, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

illustrating the severity of the punishment which the god is capable of inflicting.

## B. ẸLUKU

Like Oro, Ẹluku is worshipped in more than one district. He is worshipped by the Ẹgbas in Abẹokuta, where his worship has been eclipsed by that of Oro. He is worshipped occasionally by the Aworis. But the country where he is actively worshipped, like Oro among the Ẹgbas, is Ijebu.

Ẹluku is a deified spirit of an ancestor. Great secrecy is enjoined in connection with his worship. There is a guild consisting of initiated persons, and these have so far jealously guarded their rites and ceremonies that very little information has filtered through to the world of the uninitiated.

The chief obstacle in the way of obtaining information is that the performance of the ceremonies takes place outside the town only at night, and only once a year. Before the ceremonies begin, a confinement similar to that of Oro is proclaimed. All women and the uninitiated have to hide themselves in their houses and see that they are not caught in an attempt to intrude into the esoteric ceremonies. The members of guild assemble in their guild house and then make a procession through the town to the Ẹluku grove. Persons specially selected make loud and weird shrills as the procession wends its way through the town, whilst the remaining members of the guild sing various songs. Some of the songs describe the power of the god as executioner, others contain praises to him as a benefactor who amply rewards his true worshippers. The following is a translation of one of the songs :

“ My child, my child, long life to thee  
 Coupled with health !  
 A parent thou 'lt be  
 Of living sons and fruitful daughters.”

It is in connection with funeral rites, however, that some interesting information concerning Ẹluku worship can be gleaned. If a member of the Ẹluku guild dies, the surviving members meet to perform solemn funeral rites. Unlike the funeral rites connected with Oro worship exorbitant fees are not charged by the performers.

The ceremonies are performed on the third, seventh and

fortieth days after the death of the member. Three, seven and forty are sacred numbers to the Yorubas. The ceremonies on the fortieth day are fast falling into disuse; in some cases the day is changed to the fourteenth, probably because the fortieth days seem to be too far distant from the day of death. The ceremonies on the seventh days are the most important. They have been well summarized as follows:

"The coffin, with the corpse or bones of the deceased, or a bare plank to represent the same, is placed an hour after sunset, in a well-lighted compound, and the spirit is invoked, and questions asked and answered about him. This chorus is sung:

J' epo l'aiye o!  
 B' ai jẹun l'ọrun a ko mọ  
 Ẹ re l'aiye o  
 B' ai ẹere l'ọrun, a ko mọ.

That is:

Eat richly in this world!  
 We know not whether there is eating in heaven,  
 Do well in this world!  
 We know not whether there is well-doing in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

Sacrifices are offered, the deceased is again invoked and responds (!) in the loud cries of Ẹluku. On the fourteenth day the shrine is fixed.<sup>2</sup>

**MYTHS.** Most of the myths about Ẹluku are euhemeristic. He is said to have been born at Iraye in the royal house of Oniloku, the king of Iraye. During his lifetime he showed such spiritual power that after his death his spiritual power was believed to be still available to his followers.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** It should be noted that both Oro and Ẹluku may be worshipped in the same town, but may not be worshipped together at the same time. Where one is the leading deified spirit, the other takes a subordinate position, and the worshippers of each pay deference to one another according to the place occupied by the deity in the locality.

It has been said that Ẹluku means "wicked to death" or "beat him to death." Neither of these meanings is correct. The word Ẹ-lu-ku consists of three parts; ẹ is an initial

<sup>1</sup>Compare this with the Egyptian Song of the Harper. See Canon Rawlinson's *Notes for the Nile*, pp. 188 and 189, and Professor Erman's *Life in Ancient Egypt* (English translation), pp. 386 and 387.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Farrow, *op. cit.*, pp. 82 and 83.

vowel, *lu* is a modified form of the word *ye*,<sup>1</sup> which means "to live," and *ku* is a modified form of *Khu*, which means a "luminous spirit." The word *Ẹluku*, therefore, means "the living spirit."

It is not possible to identify the worship with any particular one in Ancient Egypt, but there is no doubt that it is a survival, in a practical form, of the belief that the soul of man does not die but lives on as a *khu* or luminous spirit.

<sup>1</sup> *Yu* sometimes becomes *lu*.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEIFIED SPIRITS OF ANCESTORS AND  
OTHER SPIRITS—*continued*

C. AGEMO

D. EGUNGUN

E. ADIMUORIŞA

F. GELEDE

G. ABIKU

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## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DEIFIED SPIRITS OF ANCESTORS AND OTHER SPIRITS

#### C. AGEMO

The previous chapter contains an account of the disembodied spirits worshipped in Yorubaland. An account of the spirits which assume materialized forms will now be given. The forms vary among the different tribes.

Among the Ijebus the chief ancestral spirit is known as Agemo. It has been asserted by previous writers that Agemo is the materialized form of Eḷuku. As far as the present writer has ascertained the two gods are distinct from each other and are worshipped with different rites and ceremonies.

There is no deity which excites so great a terror among the Ijebus as Agemo. As soon as it becomes known that there is an Agemo outing, women and uninitiated men flee into their houses or into sheltered places in the bush. Intrusion into the secret worship is punishable by death.

The light of civilization has, however, reduced the darkness surrounding the cult. Agemo procession can now be witnessed by the uninitiated, although, in some cases, women are forbidden to witness an Agemo display. The penalty of intrusion has also been modified. It has now been changed to a strong form of imprecation known as *Epe*. It appears that black magical art is a part of the Agemo cult, for persons on whom dreadful imprecations have been uttered are known to have lost their mental balance or have suffered some grievous bodily harm or have passed some serious accident according to the nature of the imprecation.

The Agemo itself is a cylindrical object varying in height between two and a half to three feet and in radius from eighteen to twenty-four inches. It is open at the top and contains some of the most secret paraphernalia of the cult. What

the contents are no uninitiated person can say, as these are jealously guarded by the members of the cult.

The writer witnessed an Agemọ festival in Ijebu Ode a few years ago. It is usual for the members of the cult to go into a deep bush. There one of their number is selected to carry the Agemọ on his head. In addition to this he wears a headgear containing two ram's horns and feathers. He is entirely enveloped in reeds or rushes (Iko). Two or three other men wear headgears more or less resembling that of the Agemọ. Then there are two smaller masqueraders dressed almost like the Agemọ and known as his sons. It is said that on some other occasions the Agemọ is covered with mats covered all over with feathers. This form of Agemọ is known as *Oniwuruwuru*. Some of the members of the cult are entirely wrapped up in mats, whilst others wear a wrapper tied to their loins, leaving the upper part of their bodies bare and having their heads clean shaved. These members usually surround the masqueraders, and carry with them pots, staves, and other articles.

As soon as the Agemọ party emerges from the bush, all women have to leave the streets. Lorries containing female passengers have to be screened with curtains. The party proceeds through the town until it reaches the spot selected for the display. There the party is met by the Awujalẹ or Paramount Chief, and dancing commences. After a short time some ceremonies are performed under cover, and the blessing of the Agemọ is invoked on the Awujalẹ and his people. Dancing then continues for about an hour, after which the Agemọ party leads, and the Awujalẹ and suite follow until the palace is reached. The Agemọ party then retires to the lodge house where dancing and merriment continue throughout the day. All through the ceremony great respect is shown to the Agemọ. Even chiefs prostrate before it. Women who are allowed to witness the dancing have to prostrate themselves sideways.

On the following day the Agemọ paraphernalia back to the bush and concludes the festival with the performance of rites and ceremonies in the bush.

In times of crisis there are Agemọ outings in order to make propitiation or atonement for the people.

present is that the Yorubas piously believe that the spirits of is satisfied members of the family are never far away, and they All that to take an active part in all matters pertaining to dress or be of the family or of the community.

an aning. the sentiment prompting the worship of the spirit clearly described above is chiefly that of fear, the chief sentiments in the case of Egungun are those of affection and reverence. The sentiment of fear is not entirely absent, for the persons of Egunguns are regarded as sacrosanct and inviolable on pain of death. But the dominant sentiment is that of affection for the departed ones, and the appearance of their spirits in the materialized form of Egunguns is a practical demonstration of the indissoluble union existing between the living and the dead members of the community.

An Egungun is therefore regarded as an embodiment of the spirit of a deceased person who returns from heaven to visit his people. Hence he is called an "Ara-Orun"—"A citizen of heaven." He appears in the form of a man covered up from head to foot with the dress known as "Ago," an aperture being made in the part covering the face to enable him to see the external world. The dress may be made of native cloth or grass. Distinguished Egunguns wear a wooden mask. No part of the Egungun's body must be visible.

An Egungun may appear at any time. He may do so singly, accompanied only by one or two persons known as Arokun "Escort." When going about the street he carries a flexible whip and speaks in a ventriloquial voice, thereby giving the impression that he is a real "Ara-Orun." All persons scrupulously avoid touching his dress. Those who are Egungun worshippers prostrate or genuflect on his approach. Others offer him presents. This practice of giving presents to Egunguns has led to the degeneration of the cult into a form of beggary in modern times. Would-be beggars who are named of being so described now find it convenient to assume the role of dignified beggars under the cloak of an Egungun. Small companies of Egunguns may appear. They parade in the same way as the single Egungun and receive presents in the same way. Some towns the Egunguns form themselves into guilds:

Over each guild there is a chief Egungun. The members are members may be large or small, but they all owe fealty to their chief. Each chief Egungun has a title. Some of the titles borne by chief Egungun are as follows: *Ajolojo*, *Egungun Ajofoyinbo*, *Egungun Oye*, *Egungun Ode*.

Of all the Egunguns, *Oya* is the most dreaded. When he appears he is accompanied by a large band of *Atoḡuns* (Escorts), and elderly men carrying whips. In front of the Egungun goes a band of women who are clad up to their waist, the remaining part being left bare.<sup>1</sup> The *Oya* wears a much fuller and more picturesque dress than the other Egunguns. He wears a mask which gives him a weird appearance.

*Egungun Oya* is supposed to have been imported from the Niger District. *Oya* is the name of the goddess of the Niger, and *Egungun Oya* is regarded as the incarnate form of the spirit of the goddess who assumes the form of a man. Hence the appearance of the Egungun is heralded by a bevy of women, and hence women are allowed at all to take part in the parade.

No guild can hold an Egungun play in a town without the permission of the chief Egungun of the town. Failure to do this may lead to serious consequences. Sometimes the guilds in a town may be at enmity, and the play of one guild may be forbidden by another on pain of serious consequences.

An Egungun play is interesting to watch. Quite apart from the duties of the members of the guild in rushing at the crowd assembled to witness the play, the drumming on the occasion is always the best that the Yorubas can produce. The play gives the drummers an opportunity of showing their skill. Various rhythms are used to mark different parts of the play. Some are used to announce the approach of the chief Egungun; others to show that a particular display is imminent, whilst the chief drummer, using the language of the drum, enumerates the ancestral titles of the chief Egungun or of any other distinguished person who may be present.

Egunguns claim the power to metamorphose themselves to animals and to change their sex. A display of this power is supposed to be given when there is an Egungun play. The

<sup>1</sup> This dress has been modified in modern times. Some of the women now tie their wrapper up to the chest.

present writer has watched a number of Egungun plays. He is satisfied that there is no genuine case of real metamorphosis. All that can be observed is a "make-believe" by means of dress or skin of animals worn by a person who tries to imitate an animal. The human form behind the cloak or dress is clearly their Ka-nible. This point is emphasized because there are stories in Yorubaland crediting Egunguns with the power for real metamorphosis.

The story is told of an Egun who, without the permission of the chief Egungun in the town, metamorphozed himself into a crocodile. It is said that by means of enchantment the offended Egungun prevented the metamorphozed Egungun from regaining his human form, and that the latter was compelled to sprawl into a pond, and that it was not until due propitiation for the offence had been made was the offender allowed to come out of the pond and to regain his original human form. It may be granted that by the use of black art the offended Egungun could enchant his offender. But that real metamorphosis took place is incredible, in view of the fact that for a period of over thirty years neither the writer nor any reliable person with whom he has discussed the matter has ever witnessed a case of real metamorphosis or come across anyone who has seen anything different from the disguise or masquerading described above.

In the more civilized towns Egungun plays are fast losing their popularity owing to the introduction of other forms of amusements and to the moral revolt against the enactment of scenes of gruesome obscenity connected with some of the plays.

Many tribes still hold an annual Egungun festival in June of each year. In Oyo and Awẹ, where Egungun worship is strongly entrenched, the festival is scrupulously observed. Large numbers of Egunguns appear, and the whole town is *en fete*. There are parades and plays which last for seven days. The festival has been rightly described as the Yoruba "All Souls" festival, although it is, in a sense, a festival of mourning for the dead, yet it is a joyful festival because it gives a firm assurance that the spirits of the dead are alive and are capable of manifesting themselves in the form of Egunguns.

The Egunguns usually perform ceremonies in connection with funeral obsequies. These ceremonies were described later. So

In modern times the single Egungun is regarded as a mere masquerader. The respect usually given to an Egungun has been considerably diminished. He himself sings and dances, begs for presents, chats with an acquaintance, and at times converses in English!

The chief Egunguns, however, are still given a measure of respect and worship, by those who belong to the cult, and the plays organized by such persons still attract large crowds, which are composed of unsophisticated persons and those who lack any other form of amusement.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** The historical origin of the Egungun cult is easy to trace. First of all, it should be noted that the translation of the word as a "bone" or "skeleton" is wrong. The error is due to an imperfect knowledge of the language. The Yoruba word for a bone is *egungun* or *egun*; there is no accent on each of the vowels of the former, as they are all middle tone vowels; the circumflex on the first vowel of the latter shows that the first syllable is a contracted form of the former.

The word for the masquerader is *egúngún*, the first vowel is a middle tone vowel, and the remaining two are high tone vowels; hence the high accents placed on them. The word therefore differs entirely from *egun-gun*, which means a "bone."

In order to explain the origin of the word it is necessary to break it up into its component parts, thus, *e-gu(n)-gu(n)*. *E* is the initial vowel required by all Yoruba nouns, *gu* is a modified form of *Khu*, the Ancient Egyptian word for a luminous spirit. *Gu(n)-gu(n)* is therefore a duplication of the word to denote plurality or perfection.<sup>1</sup> Similarly the word *i-ku-ku* is applied to mists because they correspond, in regard to their whiteness and unsubstantiality, to the Yoruba idea of a spirit. It is probably because the word *ku-ku* is already used in this sense that the word for the incarnate spirit is modified

<sup>1</sup> The belief exists among the tribes that Yoruba is the language of heaven. Hence an Egungun does not need to change his language.

<sup>2</sup> See Dr. Farrow, *op. cit.*, p. 76, and Colonel Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter II.

to e-gu(n)-gu(n)<sup>1</sup>—a word which in accordance with its derivation given above, means “spirits.”

The egungun cult is therefore the survival, in a practical form, of the fusion of the Ancient Egyptian beliefs that after death righteous persons become luminous spirits (Khu) and that their Kas (soul bodies) are capable of moving about and of assuming human forms.

### E. ADIMUORIŞA

The cult of Adimuorişa or Adamu-orişa is connected with funeral obsequies. A short time after the burial of a leading member of a town an Adimuorişa festival is arranged in his honour. The celebration of the festival is expensive, and therefore takes place on rare occasions when the family of a deceased person can afford the cost of the rites and ceremonies it entails.

The cult is peculiar to the Aworis, who dwell near the coast. It resembles that of Egungun in that it involves the appearance of spirits in incarnate forms, but it differs from it in that the members of the guild cannot appear at any time as masqueraders, except on festival occasions.

An Adamuorişa festival is celebrated in the following way. A proclamation is made that an Adamuorişa festival will be celebrated in honour of a deceased person whose name is given and the date of the festival is announced. A few days later people are forbidden to go out on a certain night. Any persons caught on that night will be used for the purpose of the festival. In the olden days some of the persons thus caught were sacrificed as propitiation of the orişas to ensure a successful celebration of the festival. One of them is reserved to take the part of Adimuorişa.

Three days before the festival the executive body of the guild meets privately at Agodo (the meeting house of the cult) and performs some secret rites and ceremonies. A secret password is agreed upon, and this is communicated to all the initiated members of the guild for use in connection with the festival. A severe penalty is inflicted on anyone who joins in

<sup>1</sup> The Ibo word for egungun is Mawu or Mau, a word which is derived from the name of the Ancient Egyptian goddess Mau-t. See Chapter II above, p. 39.

the festival as a masquerader without knowing the password. In the olden days the penalty of death used to be inflicted.

Two days before the festival the trunk of a banana tree or the trunk of a small tree is wrapped up like a mummy and dressed up with expensive cloths and other decorations and laid up at Agodo or at the Iga (palace or great house<sup>1</sup>) of one of the chiefs. This mummy is supposed to represent the body of the deceased person in whose honour the festival is to be celebrated. When the mummy has been properly laid out, it is guarded by some of the leading members of the cult. Drumming goes on merrily and crowds assemble to see the



FIG. 18. ADIMUORIŞA—A GROUP OF EYQS.  
Note Opabata (Wand).

mummy richly laden with decorative jewels. Refreshments are served in the adjoining parts of the Agodo or Iga. The expense of the mummy and refreshment must be borne by the family of the deceased person.

Shortly after midnight on the day of the festival, one of the persons caught wandering about on the forbidden night is taken to a place known as Oju Eḷegba or Oju Eḷegbara and sacrificed. This human sacrifice is intended to propitiate Eṣu or Eḷegbara, who must first be propitiated to obviate his malevolent interference in the subsequent proceedings.

Early on the day of the festival the incarnate spirits begin to appear in various forms. Most of the spirits appear as

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Farrow, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

Ẹyọs. The dress of an "Ẹyọ" is not one piece. It comprises a large gown (Agbada), sewn in native fashion with very long and wide sleeves, a long white veil, and a broad-brimmed hat, also a piece of strong cloth to rub the earth with. A special wand (white) is carried.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a coloured veil is used, but white is the usual colour.

The aropalẹ must entirely cover the Ẹyọ's feet and trail behind him at a length not less than two feet. Some Aropalẹs are about ten feet long. The wand is called Ọpabata, and is made of the thick part of a long palm leaf.

The Ẹyọs appear singly or in companies. As they parade the streets they accost passers-by in a ventriloquial voice as follows: "I-ha-ha! I-ha-ha!! I-ha-ha!!! E s'erukeru. O ẹ mi tibalaka tibalaka, O ẹ mi tiboloko tiboloko. I-ha-ha-aa!!!!" "Hal-lo!

Hal-lo!! Hal-lo!!! There is no cause for fear. I feel like dancing this way. I feel like dancing that way. H-a-l-l-o-o-o!"

The spectators usually reply by saying "A-gogoro Ẹyọ! Mo yo fun ẹ, mo yọ fun ara mi"—"What a tall or imposing Ẹyọ! I congratulate you, I congratulate myself," that is, on having the good luck to participate in or to witness the festival.

Some of the important spirits appear in the form of Agere (Stilt-walker), Oniko (a masquerader whose dress is made of rushes), Ọlọgọdẹ (a masquerader whose dress is made of banana leaves). Each of these is escorted by a number of



FIG. 19. ADIMUORIŞA—A SINGLE ẸYỌ.

<sup>1</sup> This wand is known as Ọpabata.

Ẹyọs, ranging from thirty to a hundred. Each set of escort wears a distinctive hat with an appropriate badge.

The most important spirit is the Adimu. He is clad from head to foot in native cloth and wears a wooden mask with a protruding but closed nose. Hence he is called *Adimu Oriṣa*—"The orisha with the closed nostrils." Sometimes the nose is open, and then he is called *Adamu Oriṣa*—"the Oriṣa with the open nostrils."<sup>1</sup>

There is no aperture in front of his face, and hence he cannot move about easily. He has to be led by a number of elderly members of the cult who are not in costume. He is also escorted by a strong force of Ẹyọs, sometimes numbering over two hundred, who run up and down in front and behind him, thereby preventing any but the initiated to come too near him. Even the other Ẹyọs and spirits have to run away at his approach. He is credited with supernatural powers to punish those who offer him insult or disrespect.

The Adimu is the chief mourner at the festival. He is also known as O-gu(n)-ra(n). Formerly the Adimu and the Ogunran were two distinct incarnate spirits and, according to tradition, the two used to appear on the occasions of Adamu-oriṣa festivals. At present the two terms are applied to the same masquerade. There are some people, however, who believe that they must be kept distinct.

Drawings in white and red colours are made on the mask worn by the Adimu.

Early on the day of the festival, the Adimu first goes to Oju Ẹlẹgba after sacrifices have been made, and performs some ceremonies. He then goes to the Iga, where the mummy is laid and bewails the death of the deceased. He then retires to the Agodo. Later in the day he joins in parading the streets like the other incarnate spirits. At the end of the day he returns to the Agodo.

The Adimu is the first incarnate spirit to appear in the streets. No other masquerader must precede him. The death penalty was always imposed for the infringement of this rule in the olden times.

Throughout the day of festival the great respect, amount-

<sup>1</sup> Adamu Oriṣa does not mean "We confuse the oriṣas." Such a wrong translation is due to imperfect knowledge of the language.

ing to divine honour, is paid by all to the Adimu. Even the Oba (king or paramount chief), who may himself be an Eyo on that day, has to pay him great respect. After the festival he returns to his status as an ordinary person, and it has been said that, as a result of the ceremonies he has had to undergo before the festival, he will either become an idiot or he will die within a few days.

The priesthood connected with the cult is drawn from the Akarigbere and Idejo Chiefs of Lagos. The priests are always scantily clad and clean-shaven.

The Eyos and other masqueraders are sometimes escorted by large retinues. If their followers are chiefs they must be bare from their loins upwards. Other followers must not wear a headgear. In the olden days all those who come across an Eyo must take off their hats; those who fail to do so used to be mercilessly beaten. This demand for compulsory homage has been greatly modified, owing to the inrush of civilization and the presence of a large non-native element in the population. Nevertheless, respect for the Adimu is being demanded, discretion being used by the escorting Eyos in making exceptions.

Sometimes the festival takes place at night, like the Eflukuval. The masqueraders are then known as Eyo Oru—"night Eyos." The night festival is by no means elaborate popular.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** The historical origin of this cult is same as that of the Egungun cult. The word E-yo comes in the word "ye," which means "to live," "to exist." Eyo therefore means "living ones or living spirits."

It may be interesting to note the following passages describing the beliefs in Ancient Egypt which have survived in Egungun and Adimuorisa spirit worship in Yorubaland:

(1) Professor Wiedeman says: "the soul might . . . take up its abode in its former body and return to earth under that form and thus revisit the spots where it had once dwelt."<sup>1</sup>

Again, the same writer says: "The power of the soul (ka) to incarnate itself at pleasure became one of the chief reasons for embalming the dead."<sup>2</sup>

(2) Writing about the nature and functions of the Kas

<sup>1</sup> *Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

(soul bodies), Professor Flinders Petrie says: "that each person received a part of the family spirit which guided him and was the inner personality, and on dying he rejoined the whole family spirit which received and preserved him."<sup>1</sup>

The object of the appearance of the *Ēyos* in connection with Adamu Oriṣa cult, therefore, seems to be to accord a ceremonial welcome to the spirit of the deceased back into the whole family spirit.

The following points, referring particularly to the Adamu-orisha cult, should also be noted:

(1) The respect paid to the Adimu, regardless of class or position, and even by the *Ọba* (king or paramount chief). It strongly suggests that the Adimu festival is, in some respects, a survival of the festival of the Mock king in Ancient Egypt, which is thus described by Klunzinger<sup>2</sup>:

"A very ancient popular festival is that of this mock king, which survived in Upper Egypt till the last century. A *fellah* was dressed with a false beard, carrying a long sceptre. For his day everyone obeyed him, even the governor gave way, till at last the dress was burned away, and the relic of power was over."

(2) The word Adimu itself, which is a survival of the Atumu or Adumu, the name of a well-known Egyptian god. It should be observed that the letter "t" is often changed; d, i and u are often used substituted for one another by Egyptian writers.

The reason for the divine honour paid to Adimu thus becomes obvious. Atumu or Adumu was one of the most revered gods in Ancient Egypt. He was always depicted in the form of a man.<sup>3</sup>

The alternative name of Adimu, that is, O-gu-ra(n) is noteworthy. Gu is a modification of Khu, and Ra is the name of the Egyptian sun-god, O-gu-ra(n), therefore, means "the soul of Ra." Now in Ancient Egypt Atumu was a sun-god. According to Professor Maspero, "The sun existing before the world, they (*i.e.* the Egyptians) called *Creator—Tumu, Atumu.*"<sup>4</sup> In the theology of Heliopolis, Atumu and Ra were identified under the single name of Atumu-Ra; that

<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Egyptians*, p. 43, column 127, section 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Upper Egypt*, 1878, p. 184.

<sup>3</sup> Sayce, *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 138.

sun-god pre-mundane and eternal.<sup>1</sup> It is, therefore, surprising that the word Oguran, "the soul of Ra," is used

The Yorubas as an alternative name of Adimu. The use of this word is a further indication of the Egyptian origin of the cult.

It may be added here that Atumu or Adumu survives not only among the Yorubas but also among other West African peoples. For example, an important Deity among the Ijaws is known as Adumu.

The colours of the drawings on the mask worn by Adumu, namely, white and red. These colours agree with the colours of the royal crown of Horus as described in the following passage :

"Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, has received the white and red crown."<sup>2</sup>

The phrase *Oju Ẹlẹgbara*. Ẹlẹgbara has been identified with Khepera, the sun-god. "*Oju Ẹlẹgbara*" therefore means "the eye or eyes of Khepera." Now "the eyes of Ra" or "the eyes of Ra" and "the eyes of Khepera" are well-known phrases in Ancient Egypt. It is interesting to note that a similar phrase survives in Yorubaland. It is noteworthy that in connection with the cult the names of an Egyptian sun-god, namely, Ra, Khepera and Atumu, are mentioned.

The above facts, together with the survivals of the Ancient Egyptian beliefs noted above, clearly show that Adimorisa is of Egyptian origin.

## F. GẸLẸDẸ

The spirits who appear in the form of Gẹlẹdẹ bear great resemblance to those of the Egunguns and Ẹyọs. Unlike these, however, their ceremonies are not connected with funeral obsequies. The Gẹlẹdẹ spirits appear only on festival occasions arranged by members of the cult.

The dress of the Gẹlẹdẹ is smarter and more artistic than that of the Egungun or the Ẹyọ. He is represented by a human being wearing clean and close-fitting dress and a

<sup>1</sup> See also E. De Rouge, *Etudes sur le Rituel Funeraire*, p. 76; Brugsch, *Religion and Mythologie*, pp. 231-280. <sup>2</sup> Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 66.

wooden mask, the top of which is exquisitely carved like each and well ornamented. The mask is made to represent the head of a man or a woman, with all the appropriate marks, and sometimes to represent any of the lower animals such as birds, alligators and others.

Most of the *Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀* assume the form of a full-grown woman with magnificent busts and plaited hair. Some *Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀* are more gaily dressed than the others, female ornaments such as ear-rings, bangles, beads and jingles placed on the ankles are used in larger quantities than in the case of the others.

On festive occasions large numbers of *Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀* can be seen parading the streets. They do not attempt to frighten anyone. It is although the appearance of some of them who are beset with chalk and camwood is frightful.

They dance about the streets, shaping their movements rhythmically to the sounds of drums and musical instruments. They cause great amusement, and after dancing for some time they receive presents from the onlookers.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** It is difficult to look at the *Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀* without thinking of the forms which the Horus Gods used to assume in Ancient Egypt whenever they paraded the streets on festival occasions for the benefit of the peasants, especially those who could not grasp the abstract teaching of the priests regarding the gods who resided in the temples. The masks of some of the *Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀* resemble some of the masks worn by the Horus gods and the funerary gods in Ancient Egyptian pictures.

The word *Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀* itself appears to be of Egyptian origin. It consists of two parts, namely *Gẹ̀* and *'lẹ̀dẹ̀*; *Gẹ̀* is an abbreviation of *Geb*,<sup>1</sup> and *'lẹ̀dẹ̀* is an abbreviation of *ḫ-lẹ̀-dẹ̀*. The last syllable *dẹ̀* has been explained in a previous chapter as being derived from the Egyptian word *deb*, which means "to pierce."<sup>2</sup> *ḫ-lẹ̀-dẹ̀*, therefore, means "one who pierces." The whole word then means "Geb who pierces." As all the myths connected with the cult have disappeared, it is difficult to know why such a name was given to such a harmless incarnate spirit as *Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀*.

It may be concluded, however, that the *Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀* cult is a survival of a similar element in Ancient Egyptian Religion.

<sup>1</sup> See *Agemo* above, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter III, p. 66.

## G. ABIKU

The Yorubas believe that there is a certain class of spirits which enter into new-born children, causing them to die in infancy according to a pre-arranged plan. These spirits are regarded as members of a fraternity. They live in the woods, in big and shady trees, the chief of which is Iroko.

If any of these spirits were to enter into a new-born child or into a child *in utero*, the child would die in its infancy. Hence the word Abiku, "born to die." The explanation of this belief is that the spirit has had instructions from the fraternity of Abiku spirits to return to them on a pre-arranged date. If a woman loses several children, she is said to be troubled by Abiku spirits.

These spirits must, therefore, be placated. Means must also be found to nullify their influence on the child. The mother of an Abiku child continually offers sacrifice of food to the Abiku spirits. The underlying belief of this sacrifice is that the other Abiku spirits who are not privileged to enter the child normally demand their share of the child's food and will compel the child to join them by eating up all the essential parts of the child's food if they fail to get their share. The child's mother is thus put into periodical expense of sacrifice. Another method of preserving the child is to provide him with charms and amulets such as rings, anklets, wristlets of beads, jingles, and so on. It is believed that the sound of jingles will frighten away the evil spirits, and that the protective amulet will prevent them from forcing him to rejoin their company. It is also believed that the child can be saved if it can be preserved beyond the pre-arranged date for its death. Unfortunately, this date is always unknown.

If, in spite of all efforts, the child dies, its body is maltreated, wounds and blows which are believed to make indelible marks being inflicted on it. Sometimes the body is hacked to pieces, and in every case it must be thrown into the bush. The idea behind such maltreatment is that the Abiku spirit thereby suffers and becomes incapable of re-entering a human body.



CHAPTER IX  
THE MINOR ORIŞAS



## CHAPTER IX

### THE MINOR ORIŞAS

THE number of Yoruba deities is said to be four hundred and one. Of these, some are so great as to command the worship of every Yoruba or of the majority of the Yorubas. Others are mere local deities worshipped by a few tribes or towns. Others again have become so nebulous in character as to command the worship of only a few individuals or to lose their names and worship.

An account of the worship of the major Orişas and of spirit worship in different parts of Yorubaland has been given in the previous chapters. An account of the minor Orişas which deserve attention will now be given.

#### A. AJA

Aja is a beneficent deity. She is supposed to be a spirit who carries off persons whom she meets into deep bush with a view to teach them the medicinal properties of herbs and plants. Those who are thus fortunate become native medical doctors. They regard the goddess as their tutelary deity and worship her by placing presents of food in front of the "Aja vine," the leaves of which they often use for curative purposes.

The word Aja is derived from the West African word *Ye* or *Je*,<sup>1</sup> which means "to exist." Aja, therefore, means "the living one." The goddess is described by Bishop S. Adjai Crowther as "a fairy, said to be diminutive in form, who carries persons into the wilderness and instructs them in magic and all kinds of medicines."

#### B. AJE ŞALUGA

Reference has already been made to this deity in a previous chapter. There it is pointed out that the name means "The

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I.

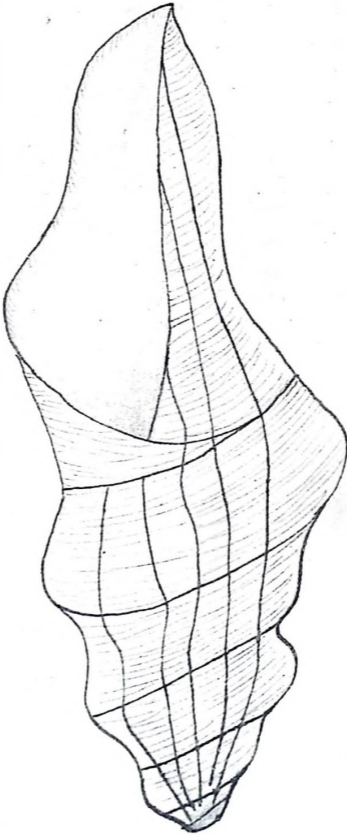


FIG. 20. A LARGE COWRIE SHELL—EMBLEM OF AJE  
SALUGA, THE GOD OF WEALTH.

living one of Salug." Salug is the name of an islet in Ancient Egypt. Aje Şaluga is therefore the survival of an ancient Egyptian deity.

In Yorubaland he is the god of wealth. Traders and others who actively seek after wealth adore him as their patron, but they regard him as full of whims and caprices. In their opinion, there is no truth in the proverb "the early bird catches the worm," for they say that Aje Şaluga sometimes favours the person who comes behind as against an ambitious forerunner. Hence the Yoruba proverb "Aje Şaluga fi ęni iwaju silę, o Őe ęni ęhin li oge"—"Aje Şaluga often passes by the first person as it comes to market, and loads the last with blessings"; that is, "The race is not for the swift."

He is also regarded as a god of good luck. To find a large cowrie shell on the road is considered a sign of good luck, as such a cowrie shell is the emblem of the god.

It is not correct to describe him as a farm god. Farmers and traders in dyes and farm products worship him, not as a farm god, but as the god of wealth who also can bless them with the good fortune of realizing substantial profits from the sale of their wares.

Civilization has not yet succeeded in obliterating the last vestige of the worship of this deity among the educated elements in Yorubaland. On important occasions, when large sums of money have been spent, it is usual to hear shouts of *Aje O!* *Aje O!* implying that such expenditure or lavish display is only possible through the blessing of the god, and that such occasions give a practical demonstration of his munificence.

Further, if a street hawker's offer of goods is declined by anyone, the usual reply is *Aje*, implying a wish that the hawker may be favoured by the god.

### C. ARŦNI

Like Aja, ArŦni is a god of medicine who dwells in forests. Unlike Aja, however, he is credited with benevolence and malevolence alike. He is a great admirer of courage. Whenever he comes across a courageous person, he takes him into the forests and treats him kindly, teaching him the secret power possessed by herbs, plants and trees. When the person becomes proficient, he becomes a favourite of the god who

sends him back to the world as a fully-fledged medicine man, and gives him a hair of his own tail as a certificate of proficiency in medicine. On his return such a person becomes a highly respected member of the community.

On the other hand, he hates cowardly persons. Those who flee from him he immediately devours. In dealing with such persons his malevolence is implacable.

The god has been described as an elf possessing the head and tail of a dog and only one leg, the other parts of its body being of human form. Its monstrous appearance would account for the terror which it is supposed to strike into cowardly minds.

The historical origin of Arṣni cannot be definitely stated. The word Arṣni is a compound word consisting of two words, namely, Ara and Ṣni. Ara means "a native" and Ṣni is probably derived from the Ancient Egyptian city On (Annu). The word, therefore, means "a native of On" and is probably the survival of a deity connected with the famous city of On.

#### D. DADA

Dada is the god of new-born babies, especially of those who are born with curled hair. Such children are named Dada. Periodically the parents of such children have to cook vegetables and beans in honour of the children. Hence the god came to be regarded as the god of vegetables, and these have to be used in paying respect to the children who are named after him.

The usual representation of the god is a calabash ornamented with cowrie shells and surmounted with a ball of indigo.

The word Dada is of Egyptian origin. The name of the Ancient Egyptian deity from whom the word is derived is *Da*. This deity, together with its associate *La*, was much worshipped in Ancient Egypt. Dada is a duplication of the word *Da*. It survives as the name of a Yoruba deity having very little in common with its ancient Egyptian namesake.

#### E. ẸKUN AND AMỌṬEKUN

Animal worship does not exist to any great extent in Yorubaland. A few animals, however, are held with veneration.

tion almost amounting to worship. One of these animals is the leopard.

The Yoruba word for a leopard is *Amotekun*, but the word *Ekun* ("Tiger") is sometimes substituted for it.

The leopard is regarded by the Yorubas as a king. When it is killed its face is covered and its pardon asked. This belief accounts for the assumption by the *Alafin of Oyo* (the paramount chief of Oyo) of the title of "Leopard," and the payment of what almost amounts to divine honours to him by almost all the Yorubas. The Yorubas also hold the belief that a man's spirit may be reincarnated in a leopard or tiger. The word *Ẹ-ku(n)*<sup>1</sup> is derived from the Ancient Egyptian word *Khu* (luminous spirit), and the word is used as the name of the animal which is often regarded as the incarnation of a man's spirit.

*Amotekun* may be divided into three parts—*Amo*, *te*, and *ku*. *Amo* is, "Amon is as great as a *Khu*." Such a name is given to the leopard is

F. IBEJI

ans Twins. The elder of Twins is the younger is known as *Kehinde*.<sup>3</sup> and honour in Yorubaland. Unlike Africa, where they are regarded as are cruelly treated, Yorubaland gives reverence almost amounting to worship. of Yorubaland as a whole, with the ere contact between the Ondo people degenerate tribes has led to the ne of any pair of twins.

The reverence to twins is due to the fact that they are specially protected by Twin-gods (*Orişa Ibeji*). Images of the Twin-god exist in some parts of Yorubaland, but twin children are regarded to some extent as their real representatives. Hence the reverence paid to twins and the offerings made to them.

<sup>1</sup> E is an initial vowel characteristic of Yoruba nouns.

<sup>2</sup> *Taiwo* is a contraction of *Tai-aiye-wo*, that is, to taste the world, one who first tastes the world before the other.

<sup>3</sup> *Kehinde* — *Ko-chin-de*, to come behind or after another person.

To such an extent is the belief in twins as representative of the Twin-gods carried into practice that if one of the twins happens to die, a wooden image is substituted for the child, and the parent must always have the wooden image along with the living child. The children must be two in number, and it is regarded as sufficient to substitute a wooden image



FIG. 21. ORISHA IBEJI (TWIN-GODS).

for the dead child. Failure to do this will incur the displeasure of the Twin-gods, who may punish the parents by causing the remaining child to die.

During the lifetime of one or both of the twins, periodical sacrifices are made to the Twin-gods. The sacrifices are simple, usually consisting of cooked beans or vegetables.

It is customary for the mother of twins to beg on their

behalf. Passers-by are saluted in the name of the twins (Ibeji nki ɸ—"Twins are saluting you"). Sometimes twins are carried about for this purpose. Persons so saluted have to give a present, large or small, as a token of their respect to the representatives of the Twin-gods.



FIG. 22. A WOMAN CARRYING HER TWINS AND ASKING FOR ALMS.

A species of monkey called *Ẹdun Dudu*, or *Ẹdun Ori-okun*, is sacred to the Twin-gods. Offerings of fruits are sometimes made to it by parents of twins who must never eat its flesh.

Near Badagry, a town where heathenism exists in a well-organised and strongly conservative form, there is a temple sacred to the Twin-gods. In the olden days twins, as well as their parents, used to make pilgrimage to it.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** It is not difficult to see that Oriṣa Ibeji in Yorubaland are survivals of twin-gods in Ancient Egypt. In the latter country, there were twin-gods representing the soul of Osiris and Ra,<sup>1</sup> or the souls of Shu and Tefnut.<sup>2</sup> A noteworthy point is that the Egyptian twin-gods were regarded as "one pair made one in two bodies," or, to use the Egyptian expression, "one soul in its two twin bodies."



FIG. 23. A SILK-COTTON TREE.

This unity survives in connection with the Yoruba Twin-gods who are regarded as inseparable to such an extent that if one of the twin children who are his representatives happen to die, a substitute must be made for the child in the shape of a wooden image which must always accompany the living child.

#### G. IGI (TREES)

Yorubaland has its sacred trees. Of these the most important are the following :

<sup>1</sup> *The Book of the Dead*, translation by Budge, pp. 94, 102, 238 and 239.

<sup>2</sup> Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 141.

1. Peregun, the silk-cotton tree.

The silk-cotton tree is one of the giant trees in West Africa. Its majestic appearance cannot but evoke feelings of awe and reverence from primitive peoples. It often grows to a height approximating 300 feet, "far out-topping all other trees of the forest."<sup>1</sup>



FIG. 24. TAPPING THE PALM TREE FOR PALM WINE.

2. Iroko, African Oak.

The Iroko is another giant tree. It is often marked with a white piece of cloth, about nine to fifteen inches wide, tied around its trunk at a height of about fifteen feet from the ground.

Sacrifices are often made to it. Its shady trees make its surroundings the meeting place of guilds.

<sup>1</sup> Frazier, *The Golden Bough*, Vol. II, p. 14.

## 3. Ayan.

This tree is sacred to Şango, the god of lightning. It is from its hard timber that the club or axe of Şango is made.

## 4. Apa, African Mahogany.

Apa is venerated on account of its usefulness.

## 5. Akoko and 6, Ekika.

These trees are sacred on account of the medicinal properties of their barks and leaves.

## 7. Qpç, the Palm Tree.

By far the most useful tree in Yorubaland is the Palm Tree. It is an economic tree producing Ẹmu, palm wine and Ekurò, palm kernels. Its leaves and trunk are put to a variety of uses. It is therefore regarded as sacred. Reverence is paid to a species of the tree which is regarded as a representative of all the others.

Palm leaves are emblems of sacredness. Any place or object to which they are tied thereby becomes sacred. They are used to mark groves and shrines.

It should be noted that the Yorubas regard the sacred trees as being indwelt by spirits which give them their majestic appearance or the peculiar quality which marks them out as objects of veneration.

## H. QBA

Qba is a river goddess. She has been described as the third wife of Şango, and is identified with a river flowing near Ibadan in a south-easterly direction towards the lagoon.

The word *Q-ba* is derived from the Ancient Egyptian word "ba," which means "a soul or spirit." With its accents reversed, the word means "a king"—the king being regarded by the Yorubas as the incarnate soul of the nation.

## I. OKE

The word Oke means "a mountain or a hill." It is also the name of the tutelary deity of mountains or hills.

The god Oke is worshipped by people who live in a hilly or mountainous country. He is a powerful deity who is capable of protecting his worshippers in the crags of rocks or in holes on the side of the hill or mountain. The falling of rocks or landslips are regarded as signs that his worship has

been neglected. As soon as this happens sacrifices of food and drink are offered to propitiate him.

At Abeokuta, where the town is built on rocks and hills, the god is much worshipped. One of the hills is known as Olumọ, that is, a hill made by the lord or deity. Until a few decades ago it was believed that a hole on this hill could serve as a hiding place for all the earlier settlers at Abeokuta and would become hermetically sealed should the enemy assail them there.

At Ibadan also the god Oke is worshipped. The town is built on two mountains, and its inhabitants would naturally turn to the deity of the mountains for aid.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** It has been pointed out in a previous chapter that the Ancient Egyptian god of the mountain survives in Yorubaland.<sup>1</sup> He is Horus-bakhu, and is known in Yorubaland as Orişa-bẹku, the god of the mountain. Oke may possibly be a distant survival of the same Egyptian god.

## J. ỌLAROSA

Ọlarosa is the tutelary deity of houses. In a country where belief in witchcraft is strong and the dread of evil spirits is great, no pains are spared to protect each house against the inroad of wicked and invisible forces. A stick or sword representing the deity hung at the entrance of a house is a guarantee of protection to the inmates.

The origin of the deity is obscure, but its name (Ọ-la-ro-sa) contains two ancient Egyptian words, that is *la*, a god and *sa*, a sacred protective and rejuvenating fluid.<sup>2</sup> Ọlarosa probably means "the god *la* stands (at the door) as a means of protection."

## K. OLOKUN

Olokun is one of the deities springing from the body of the goddess Yemọja.

The word Olokun (Oni-Okun)<sup>3</sup> denotes the owner or lord of the sea. Olokun is therefore the presiding deity of the sea and is worshipped chiefly by residents near the sea and by those who have much to do with the sea, that is, fishermen and canoe-men.

<sup>1</sup> Chapter III, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> See Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> Compare Ọ-lọrun "Lord or Owner of Heaven."

In Lagos sacrifices are made to the deity at Victoria beach. In the olden days human sacrifices used to be made to the deity.

The writer witnessed the ceremonies performed by the devotees of the deity at Victoria beach a few years ago. The ceremonies began early in the morning and continued till late in the afternoon. The male worshippers were clad in black or blue-black dresses, black being the colour of the deity's dress. The female worshippers were clad in white, that being the colour of the dress of Olokun-su, the wife of Olokun. The ceremonies began with a series of prostrations and genuflections, followed by a simple meal. Then followed swimming by those who are able to do so, and then dancing. An important feature of the ceremony was a sumptuous meal. The food provided on the occasion far exceeded what the worshippers could normally consume. After the meal the remainder, which was greater than the quantity consumed by the worshippers, was thrown into the sea as a sacrifice to the deity. Dancing and general merriment concluded the ceremonies.

Olokun-su, or Èlusu, the wife of Olokun, is the guardian deity of the bar between the Lagos lagoon and the Bight of Benin. She is supposed to dwell in the bar. All fishes in the vicinity are sacred to her. No fisherman can trespass by fishing on the bar with impunity. His canoe will be upset, and he himself may be drowned.

Just as a rough sea is supposed to be an indication of the anger of Olokun, so is the rough bar supposed to be due to the anger of his wife.

Near Benin City there was an altar dedicated to Olokun.<sup>1</sup> In front of the altar were chalk marks.<sup>2</sup> These marks will be explained later. The Benin people believe that the deity of the river, Oha, is the first wife of Olokun, and that the deity of the river Sapoba or Igbagbon is his second wife.

MYTHS. The following is one of the myths current about Olokun. The myth is selected because it is typical of the deluge stories current in Yorubaland :

<sup>1</sup> See Burton, *Great Benin*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> A picture of the altar is given by Dennet. See *At the Back of the Black Man's Mind*, p. 225.

sun being enraged with mankind because of their neglect of endeavoured to destroy all of them by overflowing the land. and destroyed large numbers when Qbatala interfered to save remainder, forced Olokun back to his palace, and bound him in iron chains until he promised to abandon his design."<sup>1</sup>

**STORICAL ORIGIN.** The historical origin of this deity is discussed later, but it should be noted here that its name is derived from an Egyptian word. The name consists of two parts, namely, Oni, Oku(n). Oni (often changed to Oun for euphonic reasons) means owner or lord. Oku(n) is derived from the Ancient Egyptian word khu, which means a water spirit. The word Okun must have been applied to the sea on account of the watery vapour, conveying the idea of spirits, which is often found floating above it.

### L. OLORI MƏRIN

The words *Olori Mərin* mean "The owner of four heads." They are applied to a deity which is regarded as the tutelary deity of towns and cities.

The figure representing this deity is that of a monstrous animal, half man and half beast. The legs and feet of the animal resemble those of a goat or a baboon, whilst the upper part of the body resembles those of a man having four heads. The figure is usually placed on a hillock outside the town. Where no hillock exists, an artificial mound is provided for the purpose. Sometimes a hillock or a mound having four rounded tops is regarded as a sufficient representation of the deity. The deity is supposed to appear sometimes at night in the form of a serpent.

The four heads of the deity point to the four points of the compass or to the directions of the four winds known to the Yorubas. The deity is thus able to keep watch in all directions and to protect each town from war and pestilence.

In some parts of Yorubaland the figure is regarded as the representative of a single deity, but in other parts it is regarded as a combined representation of the four deities Jakuta, Ifa, Qbatala and Odudua, who are regarded as representatives of the East, West, North and South winds respectively and as joint custodians of towns.

<sup>1</sup> Ellis, *Yoruba-speaking Peoples*, p. 71.

WORSHIP. Olori M̄erin is one of the few minor deities to whom human sacrifice is offered. Four times a year an infant three or four days old used to be offered to the deity. The sacrifice must be performed in the presence of the child's mother, and it must be made by a priest who would cut the child's throat, collect the blood issuing therefrom in a calabash, which would later be placed on the mound. The body of the ill-fated child would then be cut in pieces and buried in different parts of the mound.

HISTORICAL ORIGIN. There is no doubt that the origin of this deity must be traced to the four elemental deities<sup>1</sup> of Hermopolis in Ancient Egypt. The first point to note is the fact that the four Yoruba deities referred to above are elemental deities just as the auxiliary gods to Thoth in Hermopolis were regarded as elemental deities. Secondly, the Egyptian deities were represented by baboons.<sup>2</sup> It is significant that this representation survives in the Yoruba figure, the lower part of which resembles the feet and legs of a baboon. Thirdly, the Yoruba deity is supposed to appear at night in the form of a serpent. It will be remembered that the wives of the four Egyptian deities referred to above were serpent-headed.<sup>3</sup> This survival is noteworthy. Fourthly, the four Egyptian deities were regarded as the impersonation of the four pillars consisting of the arms and legs with which Sibu supports the roof of the earth at its four corners.<sup>4</sup> The four heads of the Yoruba deity are regarded as representations of the four corners of the earth. Fifthly, in Ancient Egyptian mythology, the god Shu, when separating Sibu from Geb, had to make use of a mound.<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that the Yorubas use a mound either as the representation of Olori M̄erin or as the base upon which its figure is superimposed. Sixthly, the connection between the worship of Olori M̄erin in Yorubaland and the myth of the separation of Sibu from Geb by Shu<sup>6</sup> is further illustrated by the gruesome sacrifice offered to the Yoruba deity. It is the connection between the deity and Shu in the myth just referred to that explains this evil custom. It has been pointed out in Chapter III that the Yorubas derive some of their ideas about

<sup>1</sup> Sayce, *Religion of Ancient Egyptians*, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> G. F. Moore, *History of Religions*, Vol. I, pp. 171 and 172.

<sup>3</sup> Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 148.

<sup>4</sup> G. F. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 128, Note 4.

<sup>6</sup> Maspero, *op. cit.*, pp. 128 and 129.

from those relating to the god Shu, and that as the latter was identified with Sut or Set by the Yorubas, the same gruesome human sacrifice offered to Set or Typhon in Ancient Egypt<sup>1</sup> was often offered to Eşu in Yorubaland. The need for human sacrifice to Olori Męrin must have arisen from his connection with Shu.

### M. QLOŞA

Qloşa is a beneficent goddess. Like Olokun, she sprang from the body of Yemoja, the goddess of waters generally. She is thus the sister of Olokun, and she is also his chief wife.

The word Qloşa means the owner of the Lagoon (Qsa). The goddess Qloşa is therefore the presiding deity of the lagoon which surrounds Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, and flows into the sea. Unlike Eşusu, she is kind to fishermen, helping them to secure a plentiful supply of fish. She also protects them from accidents and from molestation by crocodiles who are regarded as sacred to her.

In return for her kindness, sacrifices of fowls, sheep, goats and other animals are often made to her. In the olden days an annual sacrifice of a maiden, gaily bedecked, used to be made to the deity.

Temples in her honour were built along the shores of the lagoon, but very few of these now remain. In these temples offerings of food are placed periodically, and these are consumed by crocodiles who are supposed to convey the food to her.

The deity is supposed to live on the bed of the lagoon. It is interesting to know what became of her when the lagoon was dredged so as to ensure safe passage to large representing liners.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** The historical origin of Qloşa cannot be definitely traced, but there is no doubt that she is the daughter of one of the river deities in Ancient Egypt.

Reference has been made above to the word *Sa*, which is a sacred, protective fluid." This fluid was supposed to be obtainable from "the pond of Sa." It is probably for

always <sup>1</sup> *Dat* on that the Yorubas apply the word *Q-sa* (Aw-sah) to the lagoon, and the word *Ql-şsa* to the lagoon deity.

<sup>1</sup> *Dat* on that the Yorubas apply the word *Q-sa* (Aw-sah) to the lagoon, and the word *Ql-şsa* to the lagoon deity.  
a hawk, 1  
 Horus) in  
 small bird  
*Isis and Osiris* (translation by Mead), LXIII, 3 and 4.

## N. ŌRUN AND OŞUPA

The Yorubas do not worship any of the heavenly bodies. Whenever an eclipse of the moon (Oşupa) occurs, however, prayers are offered to the Sun (Ōrun). Crowds may be seen parading the streets, singing weird songs and making loud shouts, hoping that by their prayers and noises the sun will be induced to disgorge the Moon, which it desires to swallow.

The word Oru(n) is derived from the Ancient Egyptian word Horu, which was the old name of the Sun-god in Ancient Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

The word Oşu-pa is derived from two Ancient Egyptian words, namely, *Khonsu* and *pa*. *Khonsu* is the name of the Moon-god in Ancient Egypt, and it becomes Oşu in Yoruba by the following process. *Kh* is elided, since nouns in Yoruba usually begin with a vowel; *On-su* is further modified by the elision of the weak nasal consonant, which if it had been a hard consonant would have received a vowel to form its own syllable; the word thus becomes O-şu (the moon). *Pa* means a house or a district. The word Oşupa, therefore, means "Khonsu (the god) of the house or district."

## O. ŐSAHIN

Ősahin (or Ősayin) is one of the Yoruba gods of medicine. Unlike Aja and Arōni, he does not carry people into the forest for instruction, but he heals those who pray to him, either by inspiring them to use suitable medicinal herbs without material medium. His worship is general, and health is regarded by all as precious wealth.

In some parts of Yorubaland, Ősahin is consulted of sick persons. Quack priests, playing upon the credence of the people, sometimes make large fortunes by claiming of divination, especially in regard to the cure of disease, and the possibility of recovery from illness by a patient.

He is usually represented by the figure of a bird perched on an iron bar. Dr. Farrow gives a good illustration of the figure.<sup>2</sup>

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** The origin of Ősahin must be traced to Egyptian mythology. The word Ő-sahi(n) is derived

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I above and Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 100. *ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Faith, Fetich and Fancies*, p. 66. *ibid.*, p. 129.

the Egyptian word *Sahu*, which is the name of a star god identified with Orion. The Egyptian god is sometimes designated Sahu-Orion. Reference has been made to the god Orion in a previous chapter where it is pointed out that he survives as *Oro* in Yorubaland.

There is another Ancient Egyptian word *Sahu*, which means a spiritual body. This spiritual body was said to "germinate" from the mummified body.

The ideas underlying the conception of the Yoruba god *Qsahin* are derived from those associated with the god *Sahu* and the spiritual body known as *Sahu*. It will be remembered that *Sahu-Orion* was identified with *Osiris*, and his wife with *Sothis*. *Sahu-Orion* and *Sothis* had no son, and therefore the figure of *Horus*, the son of *Osiris* and *Isis*, was usually placed between the figures of the former god and goddess. Professor Maspero gives a picture containing *Orion* and the cow *Sothis* separated by the sparrow-hawk.<sup>1</sup> The figure of *Horus* is the sparrow-hawk mounted on an iron rod. It is this same figure, though crudely drawn by the Yorubas, that is used as a representation of *Qsahin*, the Yoruba survival of *Sahu* (*Orion*). It is also noteworthy that the bird represented by the Yorubas is a hawk. The figure of *Horus* must have been transferred to *Qsahin* by mere association of figures always seen together.

<sup>1</sup> *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 97. A bird, usually a hawk, is the representative of *Kori* (*Horu* or *Horus*) in Yorubaland. As a hawk is rare, any small bird is generally substituted for it.

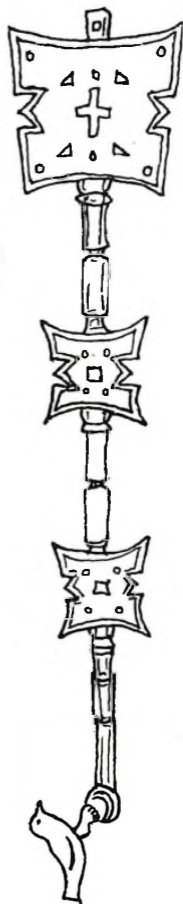


FIG. 25. A CHIEF'S STAFF; SHOWING THE BIRD QSAHIN.

Ọsahin is the god of medicine, whilst Sahu was not. It is probable that the idea of medicine became associated with Ọsahin from the fact that various chemicals were used to embalm or to heal (as it would appear to unsophisticated minds) the body from which the Sahu is "germinated."

### P. OȘOSI

Oșosi has been described above as one of the sons of Yemoja. Like his brother Ogun, he is a patron of hunters. He assists his worshippers in various ways, especially by protecting them whilst engaged in hazardous hunting and by driving animals into snares and pitfalls. He collaborates with his brother in giving effective assistance to hunters.

He has two modes of representation. He is represented simply by a bow or by a man armed with a bow.

It has been pointed out above that the name Oșosi is a contraction of two words, that is, Oșu(n) and Osi (Osun-osi). O-șu(n) is derived from the name of the Egyptian god Shu, and Osi is a contraction of Osi-ri. Both deities have been described above.

### Q. OȘUMARE

Oșumare is the Rainbow deity among the Yorubas. He is regarded as a great snake whose beautiful appearance in the sky symbolizes blessing to mankind. A species of python called Erē, whose skin has several colours, is sacred to him and is regarded as his messenger.

The meaning of his name has baffled several writers. The name may be divided into two parts—*Oșu* (Oshu) and *Mare*. The first part comes from the Ancient Egyptian word *Shu*, which means "to gather, to collect, to cover."<sup>1</sup> The second part has been explained in Chapter II in connection with the word *Olodumare*. The full form of it is *emi yio re*—"I will go or return." Oșumare, therefore, means "The deity to whom I shall return."<sup>2</sup> The deity is probably a survival of an Egyptian deity with whom the faithful Egyptian hoped to be united after death.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter II, p. 41.

## R. OŞUN

Oşun (Oshun) is the name of the goddess of a river bearing the same name. She is regarded as the second wife of Şango.

The river flows near the town of Oşogbo (Oshogbo), where the goddess is actively worshipped. The name of the town itself is compounded from the word Oşun, namely, Oşun-ogbo.

The goddess is worshipped in many parts of Yorubaland, especially at Abçokuta, where her worshippers may be seen wearing the distinctive badge of her worship; that is, a necklace of amber-coloured beads.

The animals sacred to the goddess are crocodiles, which bear special marks. Sacrifices of food are sometimes thrown into the river to be consumed by the crocodiles. Worshippers of the goddess understand the means by which the crocodiles can be invited to the surface of the river to receive the food prepared for them.

Oshun is one of the deities to whom human sacrifices are made in time of need.

The origin of this goddess is not difficult to trace. Her name—O-şu(n) or O-shu(n)—is derived from the name of the Ancient Egyptian god Sut or Shu described in a previous chapter.<sup>1</sup>

## S. OYA

The goddess Oya must be distinguished from Oya, the spirit of ancestors described in the preceding chapter.

The goddess Oya is the goddess of the River Niger, which is named after her (Odo Oya). She is supposed to be the first, and therefore, the favourite wife of Şango, the god of Thunder. Tradition says that the river was formed originally by the copious tears which she shed on the death of her husband.

She has a messenger called *Afeşe*—"gentle breeze." This idea must have originated from the comparatively cool breeze which those who sail on it usually enjoy.

She is worshipped in several parts of Yorubaland, but at Lokoro, near Port Novo, there is a temple consecrated to her and containing a symbolic image of her with eight small heads

<sup>1</sup> *Ibis and Osiris* (translation by Mead, LXXIII, 3 and 4).

surrounding her own in the centre. This image symbolizes the Niger and its delta.

The word *Q-ya* comes from the West African word "ye,"<sup>1</sup> which means "to exist." It, therefore, means "the living one."

### T. QYE

The dry sirroco wind which comes from the Sahara during the months of December and January has made such an impression on the mind of the Yorubas as to wrest from them the honour of a deity. The deity belongs to the class of deities which the Yorubas began to recognize on their arrival in Yorubaland. As such he receives no worship. He is supposed to dwell in a cavern near *Ilorin*. A later tradition says that he dwells on the mountain named *Igbeti*, near the palace of *Eṣu* or *Ẹlẹgbara*.

The word *Qye* is derived from the West African word "ye," which means "to live, to exist."<sup>2</sup>

### U. ṢUGUDU (OR ṢIGIDI)

Opinion is divided among writers on Yoruba heathenism as to the exact nature of *Ṣugudu* (*Shugudu*) or *Ṣigidi* (*Shigidi*). For example, *Ellis* says that *Ṣugudu* is "a deified nightmare," and regards it as an *Oriṣa*.<sup>3</sup> *Dr. Farrow*, after denying that it is an *Oriṣa*, says that it is "an utterly bad form of demonology or witchcraft, perpetrated through the agency of an evil spirit. It is akin to *Eshu* (*Satan*) and is employed by the *babalawos*."

The truth is that *Ṣugudu* is an *Oriṣa*, but it differs from the other *Oriṣas* in that it is made for a special occasion and for a special purpose. As soon as the occasion is over and the purpose is fulfilled or becomes incapable of fulfilment, the *Ṣugudu* made for the occasion ceases to be an *Oriṣa* and is destroyed.

Whenever anyone wishes to revenge himself on another secretly, he consults a *babalawo*. The *babalawo* then makes a short and bulky image of a human being. The image is made of clay and is adorned with cowrie shells. Sometimes

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I, pp. 21 and 22.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter I, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> See his *Yoruba-speaking Peoples*, p. 74.

a thick blunted cone of clay is used. The babalawo then sets to "develop" the image or clay into an Orişa. By way of preparation for this, he had mixed the clay with some drugs. When the image is completed or the cone of clay is selected he applies several charms to it and recites some incantation over it. This process of "development" sometimes takes about a week to complete. At last the image or clay has attained to the status of Orişa Şugudu. It has become endowed with supernatural power to inflict injury on the person for whose ruin it was made. It is credited with powers of motion. It is believed that it can be sent out at night to carry out its evil mission.

The person against whom it is sent may escape injury if he takes the necessary precautionary measures. Some of the measures have been thus described by Ellis :

"Houses and enclosed yards can be placed under the guardianship of Shigidi. In order to do this a hole is dug in the earth, and a fowl, sheep, or in exceptional cases, a human victim is slaughtered, so that the blood drains into the hole, and is then buried. A short, conical mound of red earth is next built over the spot, and an earthen saucer placed on the summit to receive occasional sacrifices. When a site has thus been placed under the protection of Shigidi, he kills, in his typical manner, those who injure the buildings, or who trespass there with bad intentions."

The sender of the Şugudu must remain awake while it is on its mission. If he were to fall asleep, the evil that he had planned for another person would fall on his own head. The Şugudu will immediately return and inflict grievous bodily harm or the punishment of death on the sender.

The writer does not believe in the existence of a Şugudu who moves about and performs deeds such as are described above or are more vividly described by Mr. I. O. Delanç in his book entitled *The Soul of Nigeria*.

The best explanation of the phenomenon is that which has been offered by the late Professor Abayomi Cole, of Sierra Leone. He believes that the Şugudu demonology operates on the basis of thought projection. All the babalawo does is to project his thought to another person, wishing him serious injury or death. He develops his will power in projecting the thought by concentrating his attention on Şugudu as a material medium for accomplishing his purpose, the medium greatly

helping to strengthen his will. Under certain psychological conditions, such a thought projection is efficacious. The present writer is inclined to accept this explanation as reasonable and scientific, especially as no eye-witness evidence of a *Şugudu* walking along the streets on its mission has ever been offered by any reliable person, though cases of *Şugudu*'s activities are often alleged to occur.

**HISTORICAL ORIGIN.** The theory enunciated above can be applied to unravel the historical origin of *Şugudu*.

The word *Şu-gu-du* consists of three parts. *Şu* (Shu) is a modified form of *Sut* or *Shu*, the Ancient Egyptian god whose character has been sketched above.<sup>1</sup> *Gu* is a modified form of *Khu*, spirit, and *du* is the Ancient Egyptian word for mountain. The word *Şugudu*, therefore, means "Şu (Shu), the spirit of the mountain."

It may be thus seen that *Şugudu* is also a survival of the god *Sut* or *Shu*, which has been identified with the Yoruba god *Eşu* (Eshu).

The worship of *Şugudu* is similar to that of *Eşu*. Hence Dr. Farrow says that *Şugudu* is akin to *Eşu*.<sup>2</sup> The image of *Eşu* is decorated with cowries ; so also is the image of *Şugudu*. *Eşu* is an evil and fighting deity ; he receives human sacrifice. This is also true of *Şugudu*, to whom human sacrifice used to be offered in bygone days when its image was still in the process of "development" to the status of an *Orişá*.<sup>3</sup> According to the Ancient Egyptians, "Sit was the spirit of the mountain, stone and sand, the red and arid ground as distinguished from the moist black soil of the valley."<sup>4</sup> It has been pointed out above that *Şugudu* means "Shu, the spirit of the mountain."

It is noteworthy also that the material used in making a mound to protect a house from the attack of a *Şugudu* is the red earth.

These considerations show that *Şugudu* is another survival of the worship of *Sut* or *Shu* in Ancient Egypt.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> See above quotation from Ellis re the guardianship of *Şugudu*.

<sup>4</sup> Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

## CHAPTER X

### PRIESTHOOD AND WORSHIP

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. PRIESTHOOD        | 4. IMAGES OR IDOLS  |
| 2. PRAYER            | 5. TOTEMISM         |
| 3. PLACES OF WORSHIP | 6. SECRET SOCIETIES |



## CHAPTER X

### PRIESTHOOD AND WORSHIP

"MAN is the creature of religious instincts,<sup>1</sup> and must worship something," says Immanuel Kant. This necessity finds expression among the Yorubas in the worship of several animistic deities and spirits of ancestors and in the reverence paid to Olorun, the Supreme Deity. The modes of worship vary in the different parts of the country, but all spring from the impulse to worship the higher powers from a sense of need.

Religious worship has been defined as "a kind of commerce between men and gods."<sup>2</sup> The inadequacy of this definition has been shown by several writers, but there is no doubt that some primitive forms of worship lay undue stress on the benefits derivable from a due performance of the acts of worship. The chief object of Yoruba religious worship is to secure the active favour of the gods, thereby ensuring the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of the worshipper. The belief is strong that if worship is duly given to the gods and spirits, they in their turn will fulfil their own part of the "commerce" by granting the worshipper his heart's desire. On the other hand, failure to perform the customary rites and ceremonies or the adoption of wrong modes of worship is regarded as fraught with serious consequences to the individual or to the community. The essential goodness of the gods is, therefore, a fundamental idea in Yoruba religious worship.

In this work, the word worship is used in its widest sense. It embraces both private and corporate worship, and includes the usual elements of worship, namely, prayer, praise, adoration and sacrifice.

gods propitious."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The instincts have been discussed by J. G. Dougall in his *Social Psychology* (1921), Chapter XIII, "The position of the individual in Man," and

<sup>2</sup> See also R. H. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 21. *Toruba-speaking Peoples*, p. 96.

In a book entitled "The Religious Consciousness," Pratt distinguishes between two types of worship, which he describes as the objective and the subjective. "In objective worship, the leading idea is to have in some way an effect on God or to communicate with Him; while in subjective worship, the aim is to have some sort of effect on the minds of the worshippers." Whilst the sharp distinction drawn by Pratt is open to criticism as a drawing in black and white of "what can only be represented truthfully by the use of various shades of grey," it may be used for describing the two types found in Yoruba religious worship. The two types do not exist in watertight compartments, but in some forms of worship the objective element is most prominent when the leading idea is to have an effect on the god or spirit by means of rites and ceremonies acceptable to it. It must be noted here that this type of worship easily degenerates into magic by means of which efforts are made, not merely to propitiate the god or spirit, but chiefly to compel him to bestow certain benefits.

Forms of worship of the subjective type are more common. As the aim of the worship is to have some sort of effect on the minds of the worshippers, elaborate and sometimes grotesque paraphernalia, together with similar rites and ceremonies, form the essential features of the worship. This type of worship greatly strengthens the faith of the worshipper both in the efficacy of the worship and in the goodness of the deity.

Yoruba religious worship is of an emotional character. The emotions of admiration, awe and reverence play a principal part in the worship. Whichever of these emotions is called into play usually throws the intellectual side of the worship into the background. The emotion of fear is often excited as a simple emotion; but it is sometimes fused with admiration, resulting in the complex emotion of awe. This explains the worship of malevolent deities such as *Elegbara*, who is worshipped to the admiration of his malevolence and

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## PRIESTHOOD

The Yorubas attach great importance to the correct performance of acts of worship. This importance necessitates the establishment of orders of priests who have been trained to serve as intermediaries between gods and men.

One of the reasons why the primitive Yoruba religion has resisted to some extent the onslaught of western civilization is the fact that it is maintained by an organized and, in some cases, a trained priesthood. The stronger and the more intelligent the priesthood is, the more conservative and irrepresible the religion becomes.

Among the Yorubas, priests occupy positions of great respect in the community. Dr. MacDougall considers that there are a few human beings able to exercise reverence, and that those who do are generally regarded as the ministers and dispensers of divine power. The chief priests in Yorubaland enjoy great respect almost to the point of reverence, especially the Babalawos and the *Orisa* who perform propitiatory sacrifices to much dreaded deities. *Third Order*. Two titles which place them on a high pedestal have been described in some parts of the country, they are more than 1 inch long and  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch wide.<sup>1</sup>

In all important societies. The *Ogboni* or similar societies. The *Ogboni* is described above<sup>2</sup> as a secret society and other priestesses of power in each town or village. Its functions are determined by the *Ogboni* Guild often performs the functions performed by the different *Ogboni* Guild in each town or village as performed by the *Bori*—“Next to the Gods”—and through the religious, the social and the priestly character of the Guild. According to Ellis, “the re-

An account of the highest place in the Yoruba priesthood will now be given. The priest of Ifa, the god of

THE FIRST AND NECESSARY TO BE DONE TO THAT OF THE PRIESTS OF Ifa. This order of the Ifa thus, to a certain extent. Its members are known as *Babalawos* of the other gods, and *Orisa* of Secrets.”

Within this order, it is their business to determine. The first grade is that of *Oluwo*, “to make the gods propitious.”<sup>1</sup> All the members of the order owe obedience. Next to the gods, a candidate must undergo

<sup>1</sup> Compare the *pos* of Southern Nigeria by Talbot, Vol. I, p. 2. <sup>2</sup> *Yoruba-speaking Peoples*, p. 96.

comes the *Ajigbona*, the chief assistant to the Oluwo. After him comes the *Odofin*, the Oluwo's deputy, who is second in rank to Oluwo; when acting as a deputy, the *Ajigbona* functions as the chief assistant to him. The third priest in rank is the *Aro*, who acts as deputy for his two seniors, when both are absent. The next in rank is the *Asare-Pawo*, the messenger who summons meetings and prepares the *Ile Oşugbo* or *Ile Odi* (the place of meeting); he has a deputy named *Asawo*. The chief priestess of this order is known as *Apetebi* although in reality she may be the wife of *Orunmila*, or other priest. The priest who takes precedence over all the remaining priests of this order who have not been specifically mentioned is known as *Aworó*; he takes precedence over all the remaining priests of this order who have not been specifically mentioned. The second rank of priestesses belongs to the first rank. The third rank of the gods of *me* consists of the priests of *estesses of Obatala and the gods of me* consists of the priests of *Insignia of the first order* consists of the priests of *est at Ile Ife, all the priests* consists of the priests and *white clothes.* *T*

A Babalawo's insignia consists of a white, blue and red staff and a sacred staff. The insignia forms: (a) a staff with a red top; (c) a staff with a white stick describing a crook.

#### SECOND ORDER

■ The priestess, that is the side near the crook have precedence, the priests

1 S.  
3 S.

reception of the Ifa of the first order wear light blue

of palm fibre block's or cow's horn one of the (b) a rod with a staff shaped like a staff shaped like chapter.<sup>2</sup> The priests includes: These are the twelve assistants. at which Şango the earth. In town Magbas. go or Odu-Shu-

(3) The priests of all the other Oriṣas except Oriṣa Oko. These form the second rank of the order. *Insignia of the Second Order.* The priests of Ṣango wear a badge of red, white and black beads as necklaces or armlets; those of Ogun wear an iron bracelet on the left arm; those of Ṣhgun wear amber-coloured beads as necklaces, also brass anklets and armlets.

Red and white are the chief distinguishing colours of this order.

THE THIRD ORDER. The third order includes :

(1) The priests and priestesses of Oriṣa Oko, the god of Agriculture.

The priestesses are treated with great respect and even with greater respect than the priests, and are regarded as "brides of the god." The priesthood of Oriṣa Oko is a powerful secret society.

(2) The priest of the remaining Oriṣas and deified spirits of ancestors.

*Insignia of the Third Order.* The insignia of the priestesses of Oriṣa Oko have been described above. These consist of a vertical badge 1 inch long and  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch wide, half red, half white, stuck on to the forehead of the wearer, and white dresses generally.

Priests and other priestesses of this order wear a white badge on their foreheads.

The above orders are determined by the importance of the functions performed by the different priests and priestesses. The functions performed by the Babalawos are the most important from the religious, the social and the political points of view. According to Ellis, "the reason of the Babalawos taking the highest place in the priesthood is that it is through his agency as the priest of Ifa, the god of divination, that man learns what is necessary to be done to please the other gods. The priests of the Ifa thus, to a certain extent, control and direct the worship of the other gods, and in times of calamity, war or pestilence, it is their business to declare what ought to be done to make the gods propitious."<sup>1</sup>

TRAINING AND FUNCTIONS. To qualify for admission to the higher priesthoods, a candidate must undergo a course of

<sup>1</sup> Yoruba-speaking Peoples, p. 96.

training. In the case of a Babalawo, the course is long and expensive. This has been described in Chapter IV above. The course is sometimes shortened, and no one has been found who has gone through such a long and thorough course as to enable him to perform the feat of reciting the 4096 Ifa Stories from memory.

Candidates for the other priesthoods also undergo a novitiate of a more or less duration. The training, especially in the cases of the priests of Aroni and Osahin, is considered indispensable.

Among the Eguns of Badagry, the next-door neighbours of the Yorubas—the priesthood is well organized and the period of training is long. Youths are sent to heathen “colleges” and take a course of instruction in “heathenism” for a period of seven years. This period has now been shortened to five or three years. The training given during the period is so thorough that a century of Christian teaching has made very little impression on the people of Badagry. Mohammedan infiltration also has been negligible, whilst heathen temples far outshine many of the other buildings in the town, and heathen priests engaged in propagating their tenets as a counteraction to Christian propaganda are ever active in the streets.

The functions of the priesthood which require adequate training for their accurate performance may thus be summarized :

(1) The priests act as intermediaries between gods and men. They offer prayers and sacrifices.

(2) They act as diviners. The work of divination belongs particularly to the priests of Ifa. Their mode and instruments of divination have been described in Chapter IV above.

Other priests practise divination in a small way, using various methods. Some use the method known as *Keke*. This is done by casting lots by means of small sticks and stalks of grass, each representing an individual. Others use the method known as *Gogo*. This is done by drawing lots by means of a number of grass stalks, one of which is bent, the guilty person being believed to be able to draw the bent stalk without fail.

(3) They conduct trials by ordeal, thereby enforcing morality, they also prepare and sell charms, amulets and other jujus in their stock-in-trade.

In order to perform these delicate and important functions satisfactorily, priests are regarded as sacrosanct and their persons are inviolable. Insult or violence offered to priests is always severely punished.

The office of a priest or priestess is hereditary in the family. It is regarded as an honour to the family. In the case of Oriṣa Oko, the office is compulsorily hereditary, as the iron staff—emblem of the god—cannot be got rid of when once it is introduced into the family.

The public priesthood does not conflict with or eliminate the family priesthood. "Almost without exception, every family—and sometimes each member of it—possesses a shrine for household worship; and, though special priests are appointed for the principal lodges or temples and often also for the town shrines, as well as for those of chiefs of importance; yet, as a rule, it is the oldest man in a family and in a "quarter", who performs the ceremony."<sup>1</sup>

**HISTORICAL CONNECTION OF PRIESTHOOD WITH ANCIENT EGYPT.** The account of the Yoruba priesthood just given cannot but reflect the influence of the religion of Ancient Egypt on that of the Yorubas.

A few points of similarity in regard to the priesthood may now be noted.

First, there is similarity in regard to the position of priests in each country. On this subject, Diodorus says about the Egyptian priesthood: "The priests are in great credit and authority amongst the inhabitants of the country as well because they have the cure and care of divine things, as for that they are full of knowledge and doctrine and to teach others. . . . These priests are called to assist the Kings with their counsel in matters of great importance, foretelling things to come. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Compare this statement with the account of the position and functions of priests given above.

Secondly, the office of a priestess was hereditary in Ancient

<sup>1</sup> Talbot, *The Peoples of Northern Nigeria*, Vol II, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Book III, Chapter IV and (translation by Cogan).

Egypt. According to Sir Flinders Petrie, "the title priestess was hereditary in the female line of the royal princesses."<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, in Yorubaland, the priestesses of Oriṣa Oko are known as the "brides" or "wives" of the god. The following passage shows the existence of a similar idea in Ancient Egypt: "In all temples . . . we find female singers . . . and indeed in great numbers. . . . The god was regarded as an earthly prince, and the singers, who made music in his presence, were the beautiful singers, the inmates of the house of women. The singers form the harem of the god."<sup>2</sup>

Fourthly, the ceremony of consecrating a young virgin to Oriṣa Oko<sup>3</sup> in Yorubaland is identical in almost every respect with the ceremony of dedicating a virgin of the greatest beauty to Amen.<sup>4</sup> The licence granted to each of them and the ceremonies of purification are identical.

The origin of the white and the red colours or of the white colour of the priestly insignia has been traced to Ancient Egypt in Chapter VI, Section 1, Oriṣa Oko.

A few words used in connection with the priesthood also deserve attention. The title of an ordinary priest in Ancient Egypt was *ue-b* or *u-eb*, that is, "pure one" or "washer." It is remarkable that two Yoruba words are derived from this word. The first is *wẹ*, "wash," "purify," and the second is *ẹbọ*, "sacrifice," "that which has been purified and offered to a deity." Sua (Plural Suau), another title of Egyptian priests, survives in Yoruba. Sua means "consecrate," "set apart by washing." The word survives in the Yoruba word *Ṣa(n)*, which means "to cleanse," "to purify by washing." It also survives in *O-ṣu*, "a round lock of hair, symbolical of priesthood or consecration to a deity." Compare also *O-ṣu-gbo*,<sup>5</sup> a priest, lit. *O-ṣu-gbo* = a consecrated person to a *ba* or incarnate soul of the tribe or nation.

The word *Kher-ib*, or *Khar-ib*, was the title of a priest or magician in Ancient Egypt. Some Yoruba words are derived from the title. For example: *A-ka-ri-gbo* (*Kh* become *K*, *e* becoming *a*, and *b* becoming the thick labial peculiar to West African languages), and *Akarigbo-rc*. *Akarigbo* was, accord-

<sup>1</sup> *A Season in Egypt*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Dennet, *Nigerian Studies*, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Strabo (Edition Bohn), XVII, 0

<sup>4</sup> *Gbo* is a modified form of *ba*

<sup>5</sup> *man, Life in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 295-296.

dr. souls.

ing to Yoruba tradition, formerly a priest, but the title is now used for the paramount chief of Ijebu Remo, a district in Yorubaland. A-ka-ri-gbe-re is the title of one of the chief priests connected with Adamu-orisa in Lagos. The phonetic modification of Kherib to A-ka-ri-gbe-re is almost identical with that of Akarigbo just noted ; the final syllable -re which is derived from Re the Sun-god suggesting that Akarigbe-re was originally the chief priest of Re or Ra the Sun-god, as in Ancient Egypt.

Another word derived from Kher-ib is Ke-ri-bo, a popular name among the Egbas.

Some of the priestly titles which are of Egyptian origin have been explained in the preceding chapters.<sup>1</sup>

### PRAYER

The Yorubas firmly believe in the efficacy of prayer. They believe that a prayer conscientiously offered by a worshipper or by a properly qualified person, either in a consecrated place of worship or wherever circumstances demand, is bound to be answered. Hence from dawn till dusk they offer ejaculatory prayers as occasions demand ; they never leave their homes without offering an appropriate prayer to their tutelary deity ; they never pass by a shrine or symbol of their respective deities without a word of adoration and prayer ; they never omit the customary corporate prayers.

This proneness to prayer is due to the operation of three important factors. The first of these is the operation of the natural human impulse to seek for help from the unseen powers believed to possess objective existence. The second is the operation of the instinct for self-preservation which is constantly stimulated in a primitive community where life is much exposed to danger owing to the ignorance of many of the laws of nature. The third factor is the operation of the belief firmly rooted in the mind of West Africans generally that there is constant interaction between spirit and matter, that spirits and gods take active interest in human beings and that the favour of the former can be secured by the latter by appropriate means, and that the forces of the world are directed by intelligence. Such a belief as this inevitably tends

<sup>1</sup> *e.g.*, Magba (Chapters IV and VI), Eṣu (Chapter II).

to develop one of the greatest of Roman virtues, namely, *pietas*, or submission to the will of God or of the deities and spirits.

Prayers are offered to Ọlọrun, the Supreme Deity. As the Deity is only revered and not worshipped, prayers to him are short and occasional. The following are a few examples. *Ọlọrun gba mi*—"May God save me"; *Ọlọrun şanu*—"May God have mercy"; *A dupe ọwọ Ọlọrun*—"We thank God." Other examples have been given in Chapter II.

Prayers are offered to the household deities by the elderly members of the family, since the greater priesthoods do not forbid or eliminate the household priesthood. This is similar to what obtained in Ancient Egypt. According to Maspero, "Each family . . . had a place in some corner of the house, a niche in its walls; lamps were continually kept burning before them, and small daily offerings were made to them, over and above what fell to their share on solemn feast days. In return they become its protectors, its guardians, and its counsellors. Appeal was made to them in every exigency of daily life."<sup>1</sup> This statement is true in almost every detail in regard to the Yoruba worship of household deities to whom prayers and offerings are constantly made.

Four postures of prayer are recognized by the Yorubas. These are prostration, genuflexion, kneeling, and postures determined by rhythmic movements of the body when dancing.

The different orişas have separate days of worship. This is exactly as it was in Ancient Egypt. Prof. Wiedemann says about the Ancient Egyptians: "Each month was presided over by a certain deity. . . . Late texts represent every day of the month as dedicated to a certain deity."<sup>2</sup> This system of allotting a particular day to each deity serves as a basis for the calculation of the Yoruba week and for the rotation of market days.

The day sacred to any particular deity is observed as a day of rest. It is known as *Ọjọ Ọsẹ*, and is generally regarded as the first day of the week by his worshippers.

The earliest form of Yoruba week consists of a cycle of four days. This, according to the inclusive method of reckoning, is described by the Yorubas as a week of five days.

The frequent recurrence of the day of rest probably led to

<sup>1</sup> *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 261.

the extension of the week to a cycle of eight days, and later, of sixteen days. These are described by the Yorubas as the weeks of nine days and of seventeen days respectively.

The list of days and their presiding deities are as follows :

- 1st Day : Eṣu or Ifa or Awo.
- 2nd Day : Ọbatala or Oriṣala.
- 3rd Day : Odudua or Ogun.
- 4th Day : Jakuta.

It is easy to see that the above system is of Egyptian origin. The names of all the deities in the list are all derived from Egyptian words, and the deities themselves are all survivals of Egyptian deities.

Eṣu in the above list is a survival of Shu, who, as it has been pointed out before, was identified with Ra, and through him with Osiris. Hence the title of Osiris, Ifa (Ancient Egyptian Nefer),<sup>1</sup> is used as substitute for Eṣu. Awo (A-wo, A-hwo, A-khu-o) is probably derived from Khu; it means "an unknown entity," "a secret."

Ọbatala is the same deity as Orisala. Odudua means "Lord or Mistress of the Other World," and is a title applied to Osiris or his consort as the presiding deities of the other world. Ogun is the god of iron; his name is derived from the word Khu. Jakuta is the Yoruba warrior god, "the fighter with stones." The name Ja-ku-ta means "The Living Soul of Ptah,"

It may now be seen that the deities named above are survivals of the four auxiliary gods of Thot, the god of Heliopolis. The following comparative table will make this clear :

<i>Yoruba.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>
1. Eṣu (E-shu).	Shu (husband of Tafnuit). <sup>2</sup>
2. Ọbatala.	Sibu (husband of Nuit).
3. Odudua.	Osiris (husband of Isis).
4. Jakuta.	Sit (husband of Nephtys) or Ptah or Min.

Eṣu corresponds to Shu, Ọbatala corresponds to Sibu, since

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IV.

<sup>2</sup> For full details about the auxiliary gods of Thot and their wives see Maspero, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-152. The names given above are the original names given to the deities at Heliopolis. On this point see the analysis given by Professor Maspero in *Etudes de Mythologie et d'Archaeologie Egyptiennes*, Vol. II, pp. 337 *et seq.*

Ọbatala has been identified with Khnum, and both Sibū and Khnum are creator gods; Odudua is here regarded as a male deity and corresponds to Osiris, "Lord of the Other World"; Jakuta corresponds to Sit, the Egyptian warrior god, or to Ptah or Min.<sup>1</sup>

The existence of Thot, the presiding deity, seems to be recognized by the Yorubas, in view of their constant use of the word five instead of four as the number of days. The insistence on the word five may not be entirely due to inclusive method of reckoning.

The Hermopolitan Ogdoad seems to survive in the extension of Yoruba week from four to eight days. The survival of the wives of the gods as serpent-headed deities has been noted in a previous chapter. It should not be surprising if the male and frog-headed deities also survive in Yorubaland. As a matter of fact, they survive in an indirect way. In a picture drawn by Faucher-Gudin from a photograph by Beato and reproduced by Professor Maspero, the eight gods are shown and described as an Ogdo-ad.<sup>2</sup> Such a picture as this, containing frog-headed deities and named Ogdo-ad, must have been known to the Yorubas. By association of ideas, the word Ogdo-ad is applied to another object containing frogs, which have come to be regarded as deities. That object is a *pond*, and hence the Yoruba word for a pond containing frogs is Ọ-gọ-dọ, which is certainly a modification of the Greek word Og-do-ad.

The eight gods were known collectively in Ancient Egypt as Khominu. This word survives in Yoruba in the name Ọṣi-Kọminu. "Osiris, (one) of the eight gods."

The word Monad applied to Thot, the leader of the eight gods, survives in the Yoruba words *mu-na*, "sharp," "strong," and *A-mọna*, "a leader," "a guide," words reminiscent of the strength and leadership of Thot.

The Yoruba word for a frog is derived from the collection of frog-headed deities in the Ogdoad. The word for a frog is Ọ-pọ-lọ; *pọ* is a modified form of *pau*, "many," and *lọ* is a modified form of *la*, "an Egyptian god." Ọ-pọ-lọ therefore means "many gods"—an obvious reference to the large number of gods collectively forming the Ogdo-ad.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V.

<sup>2</sup> *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 148.

The survival of the name of the Egyptian god *Thot* has been noted in Chapter I above.

The legend that *Thot* gained the five intercalatory days of the Egyptian year by playing dice with the moon survives in Yorubaland in the ideas associated with *Akq-qqj*—"an extraordinary day." It has been pointed out that the Yoruba week consists of four days (five days according to Yoruba mode of reckoning). Seven such weeks make a lunar month, which is used as a basis for measurement of time. It would appear that the Yoruba had an idea that the thirteen lunar months would not make a complete year, and hence they usually have a few additional days, ranging between two and five in number, which are known as *Akq-qqj*; and are observed as days of rest. The claims of the gods to which the days are sacred are superseded. The only god who could be worshipped on such days is *Q-sq*. The days do not enter into the calculation of the "week," and are therefore intercalatory.

Later *Akq-qqj* became identified with the first day of the "week," thereby giving its name and character as a day of rest to the latter.

It should be observed that the word *Q-sq* comes from *Set*, the Greek form of the Egyptian deity *Sit* or *Sut*, who has been confused with *Shu* by the Yorubas.

Some of the minor orisas may be worshipped on the same day as the one appointed for a major orisa. Care must be taken, however, to offer the prayer or sacrifice appropriate to each deity.

## PLACES OF WORSHIP

Some of the Yoruba gods can be worshipped anywhere, but others must be worshipped in appropriate places.

In each household there is always a rectangular block made of clay and generally about two feet wide, on which the image of the family god is set. On this block offerings of palm oil, kola nuts and other articles are made to it daily, and prayers are offered. The block is generally coloured red; otherwise its edges are coloured red. The part of the wall over against which the image or idol leans is usually marked with red or red and white rectangular lines. This is noteworthy in view of the existence of a similar custom among the Ancient

Egyptians. According to Flinders Petrie, "In the houses (of the Ancient Egyptians) there were permanent places of worship, marked by a recess in the main hall, about 2 feet wide, coloured red."<sup>1</sup>

The shrine of Eṣu, as it has been pointed out above, is made outside the house or town.

Idol houses may be seen in towns. These are generally constructed with palm leaves and roofed with thatch.

In some of the large towns, where the worship of the god is carried on by trained and well-established priesthoods, more



FIG. 26. A GROVE IN ILE IFE.

solid buildings are erected. For example, the temple of Oṣun at Oṣogbo is a solid building where the paraphernalia of the god are scrupulously kept by the priests, although the god is worshipped primarily on the bank of the river bearing the name of the god.

Some of the gods are worshipped in "groves." These are places where the thickness of the bush lends itself readily to the occult and sometimes nefarious practices carried on therein. Not far from the grove there is a warning by means of a red flag or of palm leaves that a grove is in the vicinity. The sacred spot itself is marked by having one or more palm-fronds

<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Egyptians*, p. 47, column 139, N. J. 59.

stretched across its entrance. The palm-fronds serve as a sign to the uninitiated to avoid meddling with the grove, under pain of severe penalty. The palm-fronds are known as *Mariwo*, and are regarded as effective jujus to such an extent that, although there are no human guardians on duty at the groves, the fear of the efficacy of the juju serves as an efficient check to the would-be intruders.



FIG. 27. GROVE SHOWING MARIWO.

The Yoruba word for a grove is *Igbo*. To this word is attached the appropriate name of the god worshipped in any particular grove. For example, *Igbo Oro* (usually contracted to *Igboro*) is "the grove of the god Oro," *Igbo Agemọ(n)*, "the grove of *Agemọ(n)*," *Igbo Ẹluku*, "the grove of *Ẹluku*," and so forth.

The solid temples to which priests are attached are fairly clean; they are swept periodically, especially on *Ako-ọjọ*

“extraordinary or intercalatory days” and also in preparation for approaching festivals. The stench of groves where there have been animal sacrifices is indescribable, but some of the other groves are kept clean.

The temple of Oriṣa Oko is found in every town or village. In order to facilitate the settlement of disputes between parties, elaborate accommodation is provided for the officiating priests and the paraphernalia of the god. The method of settling disputes in this temple has been described in a previous chapter.

Some of the sacred places are known as *Ile Oriṣa*, “Idol House,” *Ile Odi*, “the house of Odi,” *Ile Oṣugbo*, “the house of Oṣugbo,” “*Ile Ogboni*, “Ogboni Lodge” (same as *Ile Oṣugbo*).

A few words in this section deserve attention. The first is *Mariwo*. This word has been taken to mean “Do not pry into secrets.” The writer is inclined to think that it contains a Latin expression which has filtered into the Yoruba language through Egypt. The full form seems to be M-a-riwo; that is, *Qmṣ-a-riwo*. The word *riwo* seems to be a modified form of *rivo*<sup>1</sup>; the phrase *a rivo* then means “from the river,” *i.e.* the River Nile. *Qmṣ* means “a child.” The palm frond is therefore regarded as “the child from the river”; that is, what grows in the soil after inundation.

The phrase *a rivo* also seems to survive in the Yoruba word *a-riwo*, “noise” literally, “that which comes from the river,” “that which is produced by the rushing of the waters of the river (Nile).” Another survival of the phrase may be found in the word *a-riwa*, “north,” *i.e.* the direction in which the River Nile flows. That this explanation is probably correct is suggested by the fact that the Yoruba word for “south” is *gu-su*, that is *Khu-su*. *Su*<sup>2</sup> is a part of the word *Am-su*, a river god in Ancient Egypt. *Gu-su* therefore means “the soul of the river,” *i.e.* the source of the River Nile which lies in a country south of Ancient Egypt. Another survival from the Latin language which may be noted here is the Yoruba word *turari*, “frankincense”; the Latin word for frankincense is *turali-s* or *turari-s*.

<sup>1</sup> The letter V does not exist in the Yoruba language; its place is taken by *f* or *w*. The letter *v* in Latin is pronounced as *w* in English.

<sup>2</sup> The word *Su* means river or water in some of the West African Languages; *e.g.* Tchi, Ga and Ewe.

The Latin word *ferè* "almost" survives in its entire form and with the same meaning in the Yoruba word *fèrè* "almost." These apparent survivals of Latin words in the Yoruba language raise the question of the impress of Rome on West African culture, a subject which requires further research. There is no doubt, however, that the survivals form a striking confirmation of Sir Harry Johnston's statement that "some faint reflex of Egyptian and even of Roman influence penetrated to the Gulf of Guinea on the Gold Coast and in Benin."<sup>1</sup>

The word *Igbo* is of Egyptian origin; it comes from the word *bau* (souls), the thick bush being regarded as the abode of souls or spirits. The word *Odi* comes from the name of the Egyptian god *Od* or *Ot* (*Aat*).<sup>2</sup> The word *Oṣu-gbo* means "the consecrated persons" to the "ba" or incarnate soul of the tribe or nation, and is used by the worshippers of the god *Oro* who has been identified in a previous chapter with *Orion-sahu*.

### IMAGES OR IDOLS

Most images in Yorubaland are made of wood or clay. Some of the wooden images are beautifully carved; these show traces of Egyptian origin. The images of *Ṣugudu* and a few other deities are made of clay. *Eṣu* (or *Èṣẹbara*) is represented by a stone which is treated as an idol. Iron is used both as a symbol and as an idol of the god *Ogun*.

It may be noted here that just as in Ancient Egypt there were periodical processions of the *Horus-gods*, so also there are processions of *oriṣas*, especially of the spirit gods in Yorubaland.

There are private as well as public idols. In every house there is an image of the tutelary deity in the inner recesses, and images of other deities on the verandah which faces the open courtyard of each compound.

Portable images exist, and these are used more as protective or tutelary deities than for the purpose of worship.

When one or twin children dies, the mother has to make a wooden image of the deceased child and carry it about; otherwise evil will befall the surviving child or it will die and rejoin the company of twins in the spirit world.

<sup>1</sup> See his *Opening up of Africa*, p. 122. Similar survivals exist in the Gold Coast languages of *Ga* and *Tshi*. Yorubaland is bounded on the south by the Gulf of Guinea.

<sup>2</sup> See Budge, *Book of the Dead*, p. 485.

Images for a particular individual are destroyed after the person's death ; the spirit or the guardian angel of the images is supposed to have left them, thereby reducing the images to the level of mere material substances.

The Yoruba word for an idol is *Oriṣa*, the Egyptian origin of which has been given in Chapter III. The word for an image is *ere*. This is probably derived from the Egyptian *q-ere-s*, "an image"—*q* is dropped because most Yoruba nouns begin with a vowel ; the final consonant which does not receive a vowel to form a new syllable is always dropped in Yoruba.



FIG. 28. WOODEN IMAGES OF EṢU.

## TOTEMISM

In all parts of the world, particularly in North America, totemism can be seen in operation. Yorubaland is not an exception to the rule. Although a belief in totemism is not as strong among the Yorubas as among their West African neighbours, yet it exists among some of the tribes, and traces of it can be found where the belief is extinct.

Sir J. G. Frazer, in his *Totemism and Exogamy*, has pointed out that the influence of totemism on religion was great and ramified. There is no doubt that this influence must have played a great part in moulding the shape of the Yoruba religion and left its traces in the large number of tabus or ewo<sup>1</sup> observed at present by the Yorubas.

Totemism, as several writers have pointed out, is a stage of society through which every race has to pass. Some races

<sup>1</sup> Ewo = Ay-waw (phonetic spelling).

or tribes pass from this stage to that of animal worship. The stronger the totemistic belief, the easier the transition to animal worship. For example, among the Ancient Egyptians, where totemism was strong, animal worship was widespread and pronounced.<sup>1</sup> Although totemism is not so strong in Yorubaland, yet it develops to the stage of animal worship among some of the tribes.

It should be noted that in Yorubaland, as well as in other parts of West Africa, the totem is not regarded as a god. It is regarded more as a father or a grandfather or a brother. For example, in Ashanti on the Gold Coast, the totem-animal is addressed as "grandfather," and this same title is applied to the King of Ashanti, who, according to a well-known West African idea, is the incarnate soul of the tribe. Among the Yorubas the leopard-totem is regarded as a brother; any member of the leopard clan who accidentally kills a leopard usually says "Alas, my brother."

The influence of totemism in strengthening the bond of fellowship in the tribe cannot be over-estimated. The possession of a common totem strengthens the feeling of unity in the tribe or clan and provides a basis for religious fellowship which, in the more civilized communities, rests on an agreement to a common belief. The reason for the acceptance of the totem may not be easy to trace. It may be that the clan or tribe is regarded as possessing some "affinity" with the totem; it may be that the totem is regarded as the incarnate form of ancestors of the tribe.<sup>2</sup> It may be that an ancestor or a leading person in the community is believed to have been metamorphosed into the animal-totem which must therefore be never injured. Whatever the reason may be, the influence of the totem safeguards the unity of the tribe.

The Yoruba word for a totem is *Orile*. The word denotes a parent stock, a family origin or a totem. A few of the *orile* names are: Iji-mere (red monkey or br<sup>n</sup>. on); Agbo (ram); E<sup>n</sup>kun (tiger); Amotekun (leopard) and E<sup>n</sup>fon (buffalo); A-gbo(n)-ri (n) (hart or stag); E<sup>n</sup>du(monkey); Eri(n)

<sup>1</sup> See Wiedemann, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 178 and 179, and Diodorus 11, 3, et passim.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. the Leopard is designated "Amo(n)-te-ku(n)"; this suggests that it is regarded as incorporating the spirit (possibly) of the ancestors of the clan of which it is a totem.

(elephant) ; Ika(n) (rope) ; Opo (post or pillar) ; Ogu(n) (iron, originally the god of iron) ; Ẹlẹ-gu-gu (crocodile).

In most parts of Yorubaland the tabus and the proper regard due to the totem have been forgotten ; the orilẹs merely remain as family or clan names and as symbols of unity. Among the Ekitis and the Benins, however, an elaborate totemistic system still exists, and the tabus associated with the totems cannot be violated with impunity.

There is no doubt that the totemistic system in Yorubaland owes its origin to Ancient Egypt. All the words used by the Yorubas in connection with the system are of Egyptian origin. The word Ori-ḷẹ means the "chief quarter," *i.e.* headquarters (ori comes from the Egyptian word *hor*—"top, head").

The Egyptian origin of Ẹkun, Amotẹku(n) and Ogun has been noted in the preceding chapters. The full form of the word Iji-mere is Iji-omọ-ere ; Iji comes from the West African word "ye" and denotes "a living being" ; omọ means a child ; re is the name of the Egyptian god Re. Iji-mere therefore means "a living being, the child of Re." This name definitely refers to the historical fact that in Ancient Egypt apes or baboon which used to adore the solar disc in his bark with songs were regarded as the children or favourite servants of Ra.<sup>1</sup>

A-gbo (ram) is a modification of the Egyptian word ba or bau (soul or souls), the ram totem being regarded as an incarnation of the soul or souls of the clan. Ẹ-fon is probably derived from Ty-phon. A-gbọ(n)-ri(n) contains the word ba or bau (gbo) in a modified form. Ẹ-ḷẹ-gu-gu means "the possessor of spirits" (khus, gu-gu being a form of the plural ; cp. Ku-ku, clouds). Other names of totems can similarly be traced to Egyptian words.

Animal worship is rare in Yorubaland ; but an animal totem may become an object of worship if it is regarded as the incarnation of a god.<sup>1</sup> For example, Ijimere (red monkey or baboon), which is still regarded, is saluted by passers-by as *Oluwa mi*, "My Lord, and is given offerings.

According to Wiedeman,<sup>2</sup> "the idea of an animal incarnation of deity is thoroughly Egyptian . . . in order to associate

<sup>1</sup> See Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, pp. 147-152 ; *Etudes de Mythologie et d'Archéologie Egyptiennes*, Vol. II, pp. 259-261 and 381-385.

with mankind he (*i.e.* a god) must of necessity become incarnate, otherwise he cannot express himself in human speech, nor act with visible effect."<sup>1</sup> This idea has survived in Yorubaland.

Legitimate children in Yorubaland inherit their father's totem. Illegitimate children who are not acknowledged by their father cannot inherit their father's totem, but they must inherit their mother's totems.

Closely associated with totemism is exogamy in Yorubaland. Prohibitions of marriages contrary to the Yoruba table of affinity are crystallized in the form of tabus or ewos, but as Dr. Johnson truly says, "intermarriages within the same clan was originally not allowed, as coming within the degree of consanguinity, but now the rule is not rigidly observed."<sup>2</sup>

### SECRET SOCIETIES

A notable feature in the social life of West Africa is the existence of secret societies. No visitor to West Africa could fail to notice some of these societies and the power or influence they wield in their respective communities.

The societies rest upon strong psychological bases. First of all, they are the products of the operation of the gregarious instinct. The need for self-preservation and for the preservation of the tribe easily excites this instinct, especially in a primitive community where tribal feeling is strong and safety is guaranteed by membership in a recognized group. Secondly, the instinct of self-elation results in the selection of a sub-group which considers itself superior in intelligence to the other members of the group. The sub-group always lays claim to esoteric knowledge and latent power denied to others. Thirdly, the instinct of curiosity is always excited by these societies, with the result that the uninitiated are impelled to seek admission to the societies wherever or whenever it is possible to do so.

West African secret societies can be divided into three classes, namely, totemistic, religious, and semi-religious. Examples of totemistic societies are the "Leopard," the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 173 and 174.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Yorubas*, p. 86.

“ Crocodile,” the “ Alligator ” and similar societies found in the Sierra Leone Protectorate, on the Gold Coast, especially among the Tchi-speaking peoples and in various parts of Nigeria. The members of such societies wear masks or dresses symbolizing the animal totem. This practice is reminiscent of animal worship in Egypt.

Examples of religious societies are the Oro guilds of the Yorubas, the Ibudu societies of the Ijaws and Ibos, and the Egbo society of the Efiks. In these cases the worship of a god or spirit is most prominent.

Examples of semi-religious societies are the Ogboni guild, the Agẹmọ guild, the Egungun guilds of the Yorubas, the Bundu worship of the Sierra Leone Protectorate, the Mọ (Maw) of the Ibos, and the Ekpe of the Semi-Bantu peoples of Southern Nigeria. These societies are partly religious and partly social or political.

The chief secret societies among the Yorubas are the Ogboni, the Agẹmọ, the Egungun, the Oro, the Sọpọna (Small-pox), the Gẹlẹdẹ, the Ẹluku and the Adamu-Oriṣa guilds. To this list must be added the Oriṣa Oko guild, a section of which is reserved exclusively for women, and the Witchcraft guild. Some of these guilds have been established for the due performance of funeral ceremonies, others for the maintenance of law and order in the community, and others seem to have been aimed at keeping the women in subjection.

Some of these societies have been described in the preceding chapters. Details about burial ceremonies and witchcraft will be given later. It must be stated here, however, that the festivals of some of the guilds such as Adamu-Oriṣa, Gẹlẹdẹ, Egungun and Agẹmọ are occasions of general rejoicing, when various ceremonies are performed. In some cases the festivals last only a day, whilst in others the period of celebration ranges from a week to three months.

Since the membership of more than one guild is open to a single person, social status is often determined by the number of societies to which a person is admitted and the positions assigned to him in the societies. Admission to the guilds is in most cases preceded by initiatory rites, including the administration of an oath of secrecy in regard to the mysteries

of the cult or guild. The penalty for the divulgence of secrets is always severe ; before the establishment of the British Government, as it has been pointed out above, the death penalty used to be imposed.

CONNECTION WITH ANCIENT EGYPT. Yoruba secret societies show traces of connection with Ancient Egypt. The names of almost all the secret societies mentioned above are of Egyptian origin. The derivations of some of them have already been given in the preceding chapters. A few other points of connection with Ancient Egypt will now be given.

Similarity in regard to the scrupulous guarding of secrets can be illustrated by quoting the following passage written by Clement of Alexandria : " The Egyptians neither entrusted their secrets to anyone, nor degraded the secrets of divine matters by disclosing them to the profane, reserving them for the heir apparent to the throne and for such of the priests as excelled in virtue and wisdom."<sup>1</sup> The Yorubas are equally scrupulous about guarding the secrets of their guilds against profanation by the uninitiated.

The word *egbe* denoting society in general demands attention. It is probably derived from the Egyptian word "ba" or "bau," which in several West African languages have been modified to i-ba, e-gba, i-bo, i-gbo, e-gbo and similar words. The forms ending in "o" are derived from the plural "bau,"<sup>2</sup> souls, and they usually denote "a crowd of souls or persons," or "places where such a crowd can be found." The word e-gbe is a further modification of the same word "bau,"<sup>2</sup> and it denotes an assembly of persons or souls, that is, a society.

A West African word usually applied to secret societies or their meeting places deserves attention. The Yorubas call it I-gbo-du, or I-gba-odu, that is the grove of the god Odu or the soul of the same deity. The Limbas in Sierra Leone call it Bu-ndu, that is the place of Odu, or Ba-undu, the soul of the god Odu or Od (Ot). The Ibos of the Degema District call it I-bu-du ; those of Onitsha call it O-bo-do, land or town (originally the place inherited by a clan or guild). The

<sup>1</sup> *Stromata*, I, p. 670.

<sup>2</sup> Bau or bou, a or o being used interchangeably in Egyptian books.

Onitsha Ibos also use the word M-gbo-du, *Oracle*. Other tribes use similar words identical in meaning and general application with those given above. The widespread use of the original word and its modifications illustrates the impress of Egypt on West African culture, especially in regard to religious or semi-religious secret societies. The original is probably *bu-du*, the place or shrine of Od or Ot.

## CHAPTER XI

### PRIESTHOOD AND WORSHIP—*continued*

1. SERVICE AND SACRIFICE
2. CANNIBALISM
3. TABUS



## CHAPTER XI

### PRIESTHOOD AND WORSHIP—*continued*

#### SERVICE AND SACRIFICE

THE religion of the Yorubas covers the whole period of life from the cradle to the grave. Rites and ceremonies are performed at each stage of existence and as circumstances require. The frequency of these rites and ceremonies clearly show the strength of the belief that men are in active touch with the unseen world and that right relationship with the unseen powers is a prerequisite for human happiness.

The birth of a child is greeted with prayers and thanks to *Ọlọrun*. The usual expressions are :

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <i>Ọlọrun, ku iṣṣ !</i>      | “ Well done, <i>Ọlọrun</i> ! ”           |
| <i>Ki Ọlọrun</i>             | “ May <i>Ọlọrun</i> number the child     |
| <i>Ka a kun wa.</i>          | with us,” that is                        |
|                              | “ May the child not die young ” ;        |
| <i>Ki Ọlọrun ba wa wo o.</i> | “ May <i>Ọlọrun</i> assist us in looking |
|                              | after the child.”                        |

On the third day after the birth of a new-born child the ceremony of appointing a tutelary deity for the child takes place. In the presence of a *Babalawo*, the child is acknowledged by the father. The *Babalawo* then consults *Ifa* and declares which of the *oriṣas* the child is to worship and enumerates the *tabus* or *ewos* (*ewaws*) it is to observe. Sometimes the *Babalawo* declares that the child is to worship none of the *oriṣas* as a tutelary deity ; such a child is known as *Ọmọ Ọlọrun* “ the child of *Ọlọrun* ” and is expected to look for direct protection from *Ọlọrun*.

This custom of inviting a *Babalawo* to declare what god the child should worship and what *ewos* (*tabus*) he must observe may be compared with a similar custom in Ancient Egypt which has thus been described by Prof. Erman : “ at the birth of a child come the seven Hathor goddesses and

discover what fate *his god* has allotted to him, and even though a man attempt to escape his destiny, *the god verily does what he will.*"<sup>1</sup>

On the seventh day after the birth of a girl, or on the ninth day in the case of a boy, an important ceremony is performed. This ceremony is known as *I-komq-jade*—"a child's (first) outing." For the purpose of this ceremony the babalawo who has been summoned brings consecrated water. When this water is thrown to the roof of the new-born child's house, the mother and the child will run out of the house to catch the drippings of the water. This is done three times, and on each occasion the babalawo pronounces the child's name. The rite is known as "*Iwenumq*" "Purification," and is performed after the babalawo has offered sacrifice to Ifa and to the indwelling spirit of the child's head either in his own house or at the new-born child's house. The rite of purification is followed by the ceremonial of putting out a fire which has been made in the house and the carrying of its embers to a place outside the house.

The performance of a ceremony of purification in connection with the first stages of a child's life is closely in keeping with Ancient Egyptian custom. In the case of the Ancient Egyptians it has been pointed out that "for any service purification was the first step."<sup>2</sup> Prof. Wiedemann also says that "purification by water is one of the most frequently mentioned ceremonies in the Egyptian cult."<sup>3</sup> Other instances of purification among the Yorubas will be noted later.

The ceremony of purification is followed by the ceremony of naming the child, when each member of the family gives it a name and at the same time offers it a present and prayerful wishes.

Service to the orisas may take place in the house or in the groves or temples. The priest performs the daily service in the temples just as the individual or the family does in his house. Public service is of a highly emotional character. In the temples some of the priests and priestesses chant songs of two or three notes until they work themselves into a frenzy. Such persons are regarded as being temporarily indwelt by

<sup>1</sup> *Egyptian Religion*, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Griffith, *World's Best Literature*, p. 5290.

<sup>3</sup> *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 23, p. 269.

the god. The usual expression is *Oriša gun u*—"the god has taken hold of his personality." The idea is similar to that of the Greeks, who regard the god as temporarily dwelling in a frenzied worshipper (enthumos, a word from which the English word enthusiasm is derived).

Just as in Ancient Egypt, some of the priests and priestesses are known as singers,<sup>1</sup> so also in Yorubaland they are known as singers or *a-sun-rara*—"those who chant the songs of the god Ra."

Service in the temples, groves and in other places is generally of a highly emotional character. On the occasions of festivals, the emotions are given free rein. Intoxication, rude demonstrations of the phallus, singing of immoral songs, shameless dances are some of the elements in the licence which prevails on such occasions. It is unnecessary to recount some of these gruesome features as other writers have done; suffice it to say that the crude elements in the worship of bygone centuries have survived with possible additions. There is no doubt that a part of the licentious worship characteristic of the popular religion in Ancient Egypt has survived in Yorubaland. Testimonies to the existence of such a worship have been borne by several writers of Egyptology. The following are a few examples of the testimonies which show similarity between Ancient Egypt and Yorubaland in regard to licentious worship :

- (1) Plutarch says : " And when they (that is, the Ancient Egyptians) keep the feast Pamyliā, which is phallic . . . they bring out and carry round an image having a phallus three times the size of it."<sup>2</sup>
- (2) Herodotus says : " This festival to Bacchus (Osiris) . . . the Egyptians celebrate much as the Greeks do, but only instead of phalli they have invented certain images, as much as a cubit in height, moved by strings, which women carry about the villages, and which have the member . . . 'ing, in size not much less than the rest of the body . . . a pipe leads the way and the women follow, singing the praises of Bacchus."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 295-296.

<sup>2</sup> *Isis and Osiris* (translation, Mead), XXXVI, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Edition by Bohn, II, 48.

A similar custom exists in Yorubaland in connection with the feast of Oriṣa-Oko.

- (3) Prof. Wiedemann says : "The feasts of Hathor were festivals at which drink flowed freely and much intoxication prevailed."<sup>1</sup>

Similar intoxication may be observed in Yorubaland during the celebration of the harvest festival.

An important feature of the religious worship of the Yorubas is dancing. There is hardly any important festival which is not accompanied or followed by dancing. It is through this medium that the Yorubas express their joy in the presence of their deity. Religious dances are features of primitive religions, and in the case of the Yorubas, they assume the form of joyous dancing in the presence of the deity, joyous dancing through the streets of the town, or group dancing at a selected spot.

These dances usually appear at first sight to the non-native as grotesque and confused. A close study of them, however, will show that they involve intricate rhythmic movements to the beating of the drum and ripples of bodily movements which can be described as graceful, especially in the case of group dances.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of dancing in the religious worship of the Yorubas is similar to that of the Ancient Egyptians. According to Prof. Erman, "No feast was considered complete without dancing. To the Egyptian mind it was the natural expression of joy—to rejoice and to dance were synonymous expressions in their poetry."<sup>3</sup> This statement is true in almost every detail in regard to the Yorubas. It should be noted that the Yoruba words ḡḡ ("to rejoice") and ḡḡ ("to dance") come from the same West African root word ḡe, which means "to live, to show signs of life, to be active." The Yoruba *A-jḡ-jḡ* ("general rejoicing") also contains dancing as an underlying idea.

A point has now been reached where the important subject of *Sacrifice* should be discussed.

Sacrifice may be truly described as the kernel of Yoruba

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 61, note.

<sup>2</sup> The group dances at selected spots resemble those of the New Empire in Egypt described by Erman in his *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 245.

religious worship. So strong is the belief among the Yorubas that right relationship with the gods, as well as their favour, can only be secured by giving them their dues. "By gifts men and gods are swayed." This seems to be a fundamental idea in regard to the sacrificial worship of the Yorubas.

The first point to note is that sacrifice among the Yorubas has both a positive and a negative aspect. The positive aspect is shown in the offering of gifts to the gods; the negative aspect may be seen in the observance of *ewos* or tabus, by which the worshipper shows a spirit of self-denial by refraining from things which are indifferent in themselves.

The next point to note is that in theory, sacrifices must be performed by the priest or priest king; in practice only the major sacrifices are performed by the priests or priest kings, while ordinary sacrifices may be offered by any individual or family or town or village in the absence of the priests or priest king.

On important occasions the priest is consulted, and he not only intercedes for the worshippers, but also indicates the will of the god. Sometimes an audible appeal is made to the god. The worshipper stands or prostrates near by, whilst the priest carries on conversation with the god to the hearing of all who may be present. The god replies in a "bird-like chirping, twittering voice."<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that the response comes from a confederate priest, but some simple-minded worshippers regard the voice as that of a god. This practice may be compared with what obtained in Ancient Egypt as described by Professor Maspero: "The Pharaohs had a priesthood specially charged to inform them of the will of the gods."<sup>2</sup> "It is clear that the statues really spoke in a loud and intelligent voice. . . . The temple had . . . a class of priests whose duty it was to do these things. Their function was not secret, they perform it in the sight and with the knowledge of all . . . and all the people knew that the voice or hand of the god was theirs (*i.e.* the priests)."<sup>3</sup>

Further, it should be noted that whilst offerings are many and varied, care is taken to offer the object or object from

<sup>1</sup> Such a voice is used also by the Egunguns (Chapter VIII) and the (Chapter VIII). The use of such a voice is widespread among several See Dr. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Vol. I, p. 452.

<sup>2</sup> *New Light on Ancient Egypt*, p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> *Liber idem*, p. 422.

appropriate to each deity. Appropriate offerings to some of the deities are as follows :

Offerings to Eṣu (Eshu) include he-goat, dog, sheep, pig and cowrie shells.

Those to Ifa include pig, goat, fowls and pounded yams.

Those to Ọbatala include snail, white or bitter kola, fowl, goat, sheep and a few articles of food. To the worshippers of this deity, dogs, palm wine, pink kola are ewoṣ or tabus.

Those to Ogun include dogs and beans.

Those to Ṣango (Shango) include ram, fowl, kola and dry fish.

Those to Odudua include sheep and palm wine.

Those to Oriṣa-Oko include dried meat, snail, yams and beans.

Those to Ọṣun include rats, mice, goats, fowls and rabbit.

It is noteworthy that most of the animals are sacred animals in Ancient Egypt, and some of them are animals sacred to the deities with which Yoruba deities have been identified. For example the goat was sacred to Osiris in Ancient Egypt ; the same animal is sacred to Ifa (Nefer), who has been described as a survival of Osiris. The pig was sacred to Su-t in Ancient Egypt ; the same animal is sacred to E-ṣu, the Yoruba survival of Sut.

Just as appropriate offerings must be made to deities, so also must appropriate offerings be made for particular purposes. Bishop James Johnson, who has studied the subject of Yoruba sacrifice closely, writes :

" For every particular sacrifice a certain victim is prescribed, and sometimes the same animal may be prescribed for more than one sacrifice ; and so it is with meat and drink offerings, *e.g.* against death in sickness, a *sheep*, and for longevity, a *dog* ; for strength to the body, a *ram, sheep and a cock* ; against losses, a *basket of eggs*, most of which are usually employed with leaves sacred to Ifa ; against being lied upon (*i.e.* being slandered), *domestic pigeons and palm nut shells* ; against trouble and misfortune, *rats* ; against drought, small *crabs* from which water drops each time each makes a leap ; against flood from incessant rain or for confusion of a plot, *snails* ; against the accident, a *wild hog or a duck* with different kinds of Ifa leaves ; <sup>2</sup> *story in a time of war, a ram or a sheep and an old cock* together ; <sup>3</sup> *Life* the death of a very young child, a *hen* that has had chickens ;

in Egypt

to be permitted to come to a title and for the destruction of a plot, *a wild hog.*"<sup>1</sup>

An analysis of these offerings shows that they are connected with the sacred animals in Egypt. For example, the sacrifice of *a wild hog* is necessary for the destruction of a plot. It will be remembered that it was in the form of a pig or hog that Set or Sut treacherously injured the eye of Osiris, his enemy. The destruction of a pig or hog is therefore regarded in Yorubaland as capable of effecting the destruction of a plot just as the destruction of the pig or hog in the case of Osiris would have frustrated the plot of Set or Sut.

When prayers are answered, the Yoruba returns to give thanks. He then offers the same or similar sacrifice. This is quite in keeping with the Ancient Egyptian custom thus described by Wilkinson :

"Thanksgiving for the birth of a child, escape from danger or other marks of divine favour, were offered by individuals through the medium of the priests. The same was also done in private ; and secret as well as public vows were made in the hope of future favours."<sup>2</sup>

Sacrifices can be described from the point of view of the range of persons for whom they are intended or from the purpose for which they are intended.

Sacrifice for an individual is usually described as *Ẹbọ Ori* (sacrifice to one's guardian spirit).

A family sacrifice is known as *Ẹbọ Agbole*—"Sacrifice of the household."

A township sacrifice is known as *Ẹbọ Igboro*—"Sacrifice of the open street."

A city sacrifice is known as *Ẹbọ Agbalu*—"Sacrifice of sweeping the town" or *Ẹbọ Oba*—"Sacrifice of the king."

Sacrifices which derive their titles from objects for which they are offered are many and varied. Bishop Johnson's collections of such sacrifices is very representative and is given in the following passage :

"There is a great variety of sacrifice, and each prescribed sacrifice, or each set of such a sacrifice, takes its name generally from which it is offered.

Among them may be mentioned the following :

<sup>1</sup> *Yoruba Heathenism.*

<sup>2</sup> *Manners and Customs, III, p. 422.*

the redemption sacrifice ;  
 the exchange sacrifice ;  
 the wealth and the longevity sacrifice ;  
 the sacrifice for recovery from illness and preventing death ;  
 those for the possession of strength and for the avoiding of losses of any kind ;  
 those for protection against being a cause of trouble to one's own self ;  
 those against being successfully plotted against ;  
 those against a fire accident and for the removal of drought, or the prevention or the cessation of a flood of rain ;  
 that for attaining to some title and office of dignity and that for securing a long enjoyment of the office, especially if he who seeks it had been told beforehand through Ifa divination that his enjoyment of it will not be long ;  
 that for securing the sign or mark on one's forehead that would assure him of his safety from the approach and touch of the angel of death, and of victory and triumph over difficulty and trouble ; and that for acquiring superiority to others, etc.

These various sacrifices mentioned, being atonement sacrifices, suggest the existence originally in the mind of the Pagan Yoruba, that sin and the anger of an offended god are the cause of the various ills incidental to human life, that blessings are only to be had from him and according to his will, and that for this he is to be propitiated by means of sacrifice and offering, since he who desires them is a sinner."<sup>1</sup>

**MODES OF SACRIFICE.** Modes of sacrifice vary according to the nature or object of the sacrifice.

When the object of the sacrifice is to redeem or to make an offering in exchange for the life of the person the following modes may be adopted :

(a) The sacrifice will be taken to a street, a cross-road<sup>2</sup> or highway and left there. The sacrifice usually consists of food or animals. A noteworthy sacrifice treated in this way is that of seven young chickens offered in the belief that their death will replace that of the person for whom the offering is made. It is supposed to be offered to certain nameless goddesses whose appeasement will replace death with life for the offerer.

(b) The sacrifice will be burnt with fire and the ashes thrown outside the house.

<sup>1</sup> *Yoruba Heathenism.*

<sup>2</sup> Compare sacrifices offered by the Ancients at cross-roads to Hecate, goddess of Night. See *Lucian Dialogues*, I.

(c) In the case of *Ẹbọ Iparọ Ori*—"The sacrifice of the exchange of one's fate or destiny" (lit., one's head)—the offerer lays his hand on the animal victim. Sometimes he touches the forehead of the animal with his own head and rubs the whole body of the animal with his hands. This done, the animal is carried far away into the bush and



FIG. 29. A PATH LEADING TO A DEEP BUSH.

allowed to escape. The belief underlying the sacrifice is that the fate of the offerer is transferred to the victim.

Offerings of the type just described are known as *Ẹbọ Irapada*—"Redemption or Exchange Sacrifice."

When the chief object of the offerer is the transference of guilt from the offerer to the offering, the following modes are adopted :

(a) The animal victim may be taken across a river (if any) and led into a deep bush.

(b) The victim may be thrown into a river or buried alive with or without chains around the neck.

(c) The victim may be taken to the edge of a river and fastened so as to ensure that it perishes either by hunger or by drowning when the river floods its banks.

(d) Sometimes the victim is paraded through the streets of the town. The inhabitants come out in turn to lay their hands on it, to ensure the transference of their guilt to it.

Offerings of this type are known as Guilt Offerings.

When the chief object is to secure divine help for accomplishing a purpose, the following method is adopted :

The blood of the victim is sprinkled upon the lintels and upon the door hanging on one of them. If a bird is used as a victim and if a feathered animal is used, its feathers are hung on various parts of the blood-stained surface. The flesh of the victim must be boiled or roasted, and must be entirely consumed as quickly as possible by the offerer, in a standing posture. Such a sacrifice is known as *Ẹbọ Aba*, that is a purpose sacrifice or *Ẹbọ Aṣẹ*, that is, accomplishment sacrifice, each being offered to a deity regarded as associated with or interested in the fulfilment of purposes.

It should be noted that *Ọlórún* (the Supreme Deity) is often described as *Alaba-láṣe*, but sacrifices are not offered to him as such.

An interesting mode of sacrifice is adopted in the case of sacrifice for protection against enemies or for the suppression of enemies. The priests stand in a straight line and throw the offering to one another without allowing it to fall on the ground. This is known as *Ẹbọ Agbesọ*; that is, Heave offering.

No less interesting is the mode adopted in the case of an atonement sacrifice. The head of the offerer is streaked with the blood of the victim, thereby marking him as the person for whom atonement is sought and assuring him of the acceptance of his offering. This form of sacrifice is often used when chiefs are being installed to their office, and its detestation by Christians has proved an impediment to their acceptance of chieftaincies.

A somewhat similar method is adopted in the case of *Ẹbọ Isami*. The Babalawo and his assistant, the Ajigbona, usually kill some victims and mix their blood with mud and some sacred Ifa leaves. The mixture thus made is used in marking the forehead of the offerers who had been waiting outside the grove whilst the preparation is being made. This marking is a visible sign assuring the offerer of escape from death. Hence after the ceremony the offerers usually chant the song: "*Edu ti sa ni li ami, a ko ku mọ. Iwerejeje ni Edu fi sami*"—"Edu has marked us, we shall not die again. It is the leaf of Iwerejeje herb that he has used in doing the marking."

It is worth noting that in some cases the sacrifice is eaten at once, as in the case of *Ẹbọ Oṣu*, whilst in other cases some of which have been pointed out above, the sacrifice is thrown away or must not be eaten. In some cases the sacrifice is attached to a pole and tossed about in the wind until the last remnant of it disappears.

Dealing with the sacrifices of the Yorubas, one cannot but be struck with their resemblance to some of the Hebrew sacrifices. Among the sacrifices described above are those which resemble the Hebrew Sin-Offering on the Day of Atonement, the Scapegoat, the Passover, the Heave Offering and the consecration of Priest and of Cleansed Leper. (Leviticus, Chapter VIII, vv. 23, 24, and XIV, 14 and 17.)

Commenting on the parallels between the Yoruba and the Hebrew sacrifices, Dr. Farrow says:

"These various resemblances to Hebrew religious customs and legislation, particularly when taken in conjunction with the Hebrew native tradition of immigration from the east or north-east, have considerable cumulative force. While they do not necessarily imply any trace of Semitic descent, they would seem to indicate that the Semitic Hebrews and the Nigrific Yorubas belong to branches which at some early stage were united to a common stem, and whether this is so or not, it is very possible, if not probable, that Hebrew and early Christian influence have many centuries ago been brought down through the Sudan, but the traces of Christian influence which may be found are too faint and too degenerate to have been introduced by European voyagers to the West Coast."<sup>1</sup>

This view traces the origin of the resemblances to contact between the Yorubas and the Hebrews "at some early stage."

<sup>1</sup> *Faith, Fetich and Fancies*, pp. 167, 168.

On the other hand, P. Amaury Talbot seems to trace the origin of the resemblances to the fact that the Yorubas have migrated from Egypt, and the fact that there was close contact between Egypt and the Sudan down to the Gulf of Guinea for many years after the migration of the Yorubas and other West African tribes from Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

Further, Professor Leo Frobenius believes that the cultural survivals in manners, beliefs and customs must be traced to a North-western "Atlantic culture."<sup>2</sup>

The question of the cultural survivals has been partly dealt with in Chapter I, and will be finally discussed in the last chapter. It must be said here, however, that the evidence on the subject strongly suggests that the resemblances to Hebrew culture must be traced to contact between the Yorubas and the Hebrews whilst both of them were in Egypt. During the exile several colonies of Jews resided in various parts of Egypt, and many Jews settled in Egypt after the Dispersion, some of whom were included in the comprehensive term "Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven."<sup>3</sup>

The resemblances are so close as to suggest actual contact rather than mere infiltration.

The sacrifices resemble not only the Hebrew sacrifices, but also some of the Egyptian sacrifices. Attention has already been called to the fact that purification plays an important part in the religious ceremonies. In the case of several sacrifices, the offerer is often first purified with water. This is quite in keeping with Ancient Egyptian custom. Another important resemblance may be pointed out here. A Yoruba sacrifice of seven chickens to some nameless goddesses has been described above. The goddesses are undoubtedly the seven Hathor goddesses who decide the fate of each person born into the world<sup>4</sup> or the seven spirits frequently mentioned in the Book of the Dead, to whom prayers were often made for safety or maintenance of one's life.<sup>5</sup>

Further, care should be taken that the nature of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vols. I, II and III, passim.

<sup>2</sup> *The Voice of Africa*, Vols. I and II, Chapters VIII-XV, particularly Chapter XV and Chapters XXI-XXVIII.

<sup>3</sup> Acts, Chapter II, v. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Erman, *Egyptian Religion*, p. 179.

<sup>5</sup> Brugsch, *Thesaurus*, pp. 117 *et seq.*; *The Book of the Dead* (Edition, Wallis Budge), Chapter 17; Griffith, *Demotic Magical Papyrus*, pp. 78 and 79.

Yoruba sacrifices is not attributed wholly and solely to Hebrew influence. There are several sacrifices practised by the Yorubas which are similar to those in Ancient Egypt. The meat offerings, drink offerings, harvest offerings and others may be mentioned as examples. Even the burnt offering was found among the Ancient Egyptians. For example, Setna, an Egyptian King, is said to have "caused ox, goose, wine to be brought; he made a burnt-offering, a drink offering before Isis of Coptos and Harpokrates."<sup>1</sup> Again, it was the duty of the prince in Ancient Egypt who was also the high priest to offer burnt sacrifice to the local god.<sup>2</sup>

Reference has been made in Chapter III to the prevalence of human sacrifice in Yorubaland before the advent of British Government. A list of instances of such a sacrifice was also given, showing how closely allied was the sacrifice to the worship of Eṣu, the survival of the Ancient Egyptian god Sut or Set. Attention was also called to the similarity between the practice of human sacrifice in Ancient Egypt<sup>3</sup> and the same practice in Yorubaland.

Detailed descriptions of the sacrifice as witnessed or experienced by various writers or observers will now be given :

Writing about the practice in Lagos at the close of the eighteenth century, Captain John Adams says :

"The horrid custom of impaling alive a young female to propitiate the favour of the goddess presiding over the rainy season, that she may fill the horn of plenty, is practised here annually. The immolation of the victim . . . takes place soon after the vernal equinox, and along with her are sacrificed sheep and goats; which, together with yams, heads of maize and plantains, are hung on stakes on each side of her. Females destined to be thus destroyed are brought up for the express purpose in the king's or caboccer's seraglio, and it is said that their minds have been so powerfully wrought upon by the fetish men that they proceed to the place of execution with as much cheerfulness as those infatuated Hindu women who are also burnt with their husbands. One was impaled while I was at Lagos, but of course I did not witness the ceremony.

<sup>1</sup> Griffith's *World's Best Literature*, p. 5273.

<sup>2</sup> Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 122; See also Maspero, *Lectures Historiques*, pp. 71-73.

<sup>3</sup> The prevalence of human sacrifice in Ancient Egypt can be judged by the numerous references to the practice in works on Ancient Egypt. The following are a few instances: Maspero, *New Light on Ancient Egypt*, pp. 31, 32; Murray, *Osireion*, p. 30; Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* (translation by Mead), LXXIII, 3, 4; *Athenaeus* (edition Bohn), IV, 72, etc.

I passed by where her lifeless body still remained on the stake a few days afterwards."<sup>1</sup>

In a letter dated 20th August, 1861, Mr. Bickersteth, who paid a visit to Abeokuta, described a human sacrifice which was performed as a means of propitiation for the election of a new king. The ceremony contained features which would shock the most hard-hearted person, unless he believes that such a gruesome incident is necessary for the well-being of the community, including himself.

Bishop James Johnson, who had studied the subject very carefully, and had probably witnessed the dreadful ceremony on several occasions, gives the following interesting account of the victim and of the mode of sacrifice :

"the human victim . . . is commonly led and paraded through the streets of the town or city of the sovereign who would sacrifice him for the well-being of his government and of every family or individual under it, in order that he may carry off the guilt, misfortune and death of everyone without exception. Ashes and chalk would be employed to hide his identity by the one being freely thrown over his head and face painted with the latter, whilst individuals would often rush out of their houses to lay their hands upon him, that they might thus transfer to him their sin, guilt, trouble and death. This done, he is taken through a temporary sacred shed of palm and other tree branches, and especially of the former, the *Igbodu*, and to its first division, where many persons might follow him, and through a second where only the chiefs and other important persons might escort and accompany him, and to a third, where only the *Babalawo* and his assistant, the *Ajigbona*, are permitted to enter with him. Here, after he himself has given out or started his last song, which is to be taken up by the large assembly of people, who have been waiting to hear his last word, or his last groan, his head is taken off and his blood offered to the gods. The announcement of his last word, or his last groan, heard and taken up by the people, would be a signal for joy and thanksgiving and for drum beating and dancing, as an expression of their gratification, because their sacrifice has been accepted, the divine wrath is appeased and the prospect of prosperity or increased prosperity assured."<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes the victim is offered by means of a basket into which he is hurled and which would then be forcibly thrown down from a great height. This is known at Abeokuta as *Basket Sacrifice*.

<sup>1</sup> *Sketches taken during Ten Voyages to Africa between the years 1786 and 1800*, pp. 25 and 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Yoruba Heathenism*.

Dr. Farrow thus describes the human sacrifice which he experienced at Abçokuta :

"The last public human sacrifice in Abeokuta was offered in 1891. . . . A slave was purchased who was to become the victim, and was kept shut up for a week or ten days before being killed. . . . The victim during the days of his incarceration was called by the honourable title Oluwo (a title given to a ruler of the country), and was allowed (according to the usual custom) to have every wish gratified, excepting only liberty and life. On the day immediately preceding the death, he was taken in procession round the township, made much of, and allowed to gratify his every desire. On the fatal day he was brought out and publicly clubbed to death. The body was then tossed about, kicked, mocked and abused ; but afterwards worshipped as an oriša."<sup>1</sup>

It may be added here that the more usual custom was the beheading of the victim. The following is a description of the sacrifice in the case of Qranyan :

"The victim destined to be offered up to Awranyan (Qranyan) for success in war, though almost worshipped up to the day of his death, they, however, experienced very different treatment ; he was hustled, beaten and finally dragged along the ground till the grove where he was to be beheaded was reached. In both cases, however, it was considered that the man would return to earth in a high position, and women even used to pray that he might be reborn to them ; after death they decorated the body, rubbed it with camwood, and treated it with the greatest honour."<sup>2</sup>

Human sacrifice was the supreme sacrifice of the Yorubas. It was a practical demonstration of the desire to give the best to the deity to secure his active favour. Although it was most prevalent in Ife, Ondo and Benin, yet it was practised by the other tribes. Nowhere in Yorubaland did it reach the colossal scale which made Dahomey notorious.

The deity to whom human sacrifice was most often offered was Eşu or Eļębara or Qbalufoņ, the Yoruba counterpart of Sut or Set or Typhon.<sup>3</sup> It is also offered to deities such as Ifa, Olorimeřin, Şango and Ogun, in times of stress or urgency. Infants, as in the case of the annual sacrifice to Olorimeřin, were offered just as well as grown up persons. In time of war, when a human sacrifice is offered to Ogun, the soldiers

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 99, 100.

<sup>2</sup> P. Amaury Talbot, *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. III, pp. 858 and 859.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter III.

must take the field before the corpse of the victim became rotten ; otherwise the sacrifice becomes ineffectual.

In the case of human sacrifice to Eṣu or Èṣẹbara, the terror inspired by the deity used to be so great as to necessitate a public assurance that he had been propitiated. Such an assurance used to be given by the public exposure of the victim's entrails before a shrine or temple and by the suspension of his body from a tree or a lofty scaffolding of poles.

### CANNIBALISM

Cannibalism does not exist in Yorubaland. When the Yorubas emerged into the light of civilization, they had reached a stage of refinement which made cannibalism abhorrent to them.

Traces of the practice, however, survive, and these are found chiefly in connection with religious worship. Colonel Ellis gives the following instance :

" the Priests of Ogun usually take out the hearts of human victims,<sup>1</sup> which are dried, reduced to powder, then mixed with rum and sold to persons who wish to be endowed with great courage and who drink the mixture. The reason of this is that the heart is believed to be the seat of courage and to inherently possess that quality ; and that when the heart is devoured and swallowed the quality with which it is imputed is also taken into the system."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Farrow thus records his experience during his sojourn at Abeokuta :

" On the death of a king his heart was taken out and had to be eaten by his successor. Also the head of the deceased monarch was preserved and had to be worshipped by the new ruler."<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Farrow could not say that the heart was actually eaten. Exhaustive enquiries and indirect method of research have resulted in a direct negation that the heart was ever eaten raw or sodden. Usually the heart was preserved in a sacred calabash, or if the new king so desired, it would be reduced to powder and mixed with rum and drunk.

The erroneous supposition that the heart was literally eaten has arisen from the use of the Yoruba word " jẹ " in a restricted sense. The word " jẹ " means " to eat," and

<sup>1</sup> The heart is regarded as the most essential part of the human body.

<sup>2</sup> Yoruba-speaking Peoples, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

therefore the phrase "jẹ Ọba" has been taken to mean "to eat the king or to eat the king's heart." This is a wrong translation. Like several other Yoruba words, the word "jẹ" has several meanings. It has been pointed out in a previous chapter that the word comes from the West African root-word "ye," which means "to exist, to live." The word "jẹ" in Yoruba also means "to become," and therefore "jẹ Ọba" merely means "to become king." If "jẹ ọba" means "to eat the king," then "jẹ aiye" must mean "to eat the world," "jẹ ọga" must mean "to eat the master" even where a person assuming the post of a master has no predecessor, and "jẹ oye" must mean "to eat a chieftaincy." A similar mistake will be made if the root-word "ye" is translated literally in some of the other West African languages. For example, in the Ga language spoken at Accra, *ye gbi*—"to live, to exist"—is literally "to eat a day"; *fei ye*—"to be cold"—is "to eat cold."

The traces of cannibalism are survivals of Ancient Egyptian beliefs and practices. In Ancient Egypt the heart of a deceased person was sometimes taken out before mummification and kept in a vase. Several examples of this practice have been found in tombs, and reference to it can be seen in the Book of the Dead, Chapters XXVI to XXX B.<sup>1</sup> Writing on this subject, Professor E. A. Wallis Budge says :

"a green stone scarab . . . one side of which was frequently made in the shape of a heart, was placed inside the body where the heart was before it was removed before the process of mummification, or over the place of the heart on the breast."<sup>2</sup>

The eating of the heart and the belief in the importance of the heart as the seat of intelligence and courage are also similar to, and may be regarded as survivals of, the practice and belief in Ancient Egypt. The following passage written by Professor Erman clearly supports this statement :

"In the pyramid of Unas it is said that the king feeds on the gods, and devours their hearts and their crowns, and thereby gains their powers, so that their magic is in his body; he swallows the understanding of every god."<sup>3</sup>

In Ancient Egypt, also, the head was sometimes separated

<sup>1</sup> Edition by Professor E. Wallis Budge, pp. 137-151.

<sup>2</sup> *Book of the Dead*, Introduction, p. cix.

<sup>3</sup> *Egyptian Religion*, p. 91.

from the body<sup>1</sup> and preserved by itself in the tomb. Since the king's person is regarded as sacred or divine in Yorubaland, as was the case in Ancient Egypt,<sup>2</sup> it is not surprising that the head of a deceased king was preserved and worshipped by his successor.

### EWỌS OR TABUS

It has been pointed out above that the Yoruba theory of sacrifice has both a positive and a negative aspect.

The negative aspect can be seen in the numerous "ewọs" (sometimes spelt phonetically as "ewaws"). These ewọs are prohibitions or taboos which must be strictly observed. "All things are double of one another." This corresponds with the Yoruba belief, and hence all the positive injunctions in regard to sacrifices have their negative sides.

The ewọs or taboos may be general or particular. The general ones apply to all the members of the community irrespective of tribe or clan. For example, failure to perform the funeral obsequies of a relation is an ewọ to all Yoruba speaking peoples. The particular ewọs are those prescribed specially for the worshippers of the different deities or for the different classes of priests. For example, the priests and priestesses of Ọbatala must not use the red kola or the red palm oil. To them it is an ewọ. The ewọs may be moral or ceremonial, or merely imposed by custom. Some of them are very interesting, and it is remarkable that civilization has proved powerless in abolishing them. Whatever may be their nature or scope, the ewọs are regarded as pre-requisites for the welfare of the individual or group and as necessary conditions for maintaining right relationship with the different deities. Neglect of ewọs is regarded as fraught with dire consequences. Anyone caught whilst infringing the tribal or national ewọs will have himself to blame for the severity of the public punishment which may be exacted for the offence.

<sup>1</sup> See Flinders Petrie, *Ancient Egyptians*, p. 43, col. 129, see also p. 40, paragraph 2.

<sup>2</sup> See Murray, *Osireion*, p. 34; J. E. Quibell, *Hierakonpolis*, XXVI, B.

## CHAPTER XII

### PRIESTHOOD AND WORSHIP—*continued*

1. DEATH AND BURIAL CUSTOMS
2. FUNERAL GUILDS



## CHAPTER XII

### PRIESTHOOD AND WORSHIP—*continued*

#### DEATH AND BURIAL CUSTOMS

SPIRIT worship is part of the religious worship of the Yorubas. Great importance is therefore attached to the process of transition from the incarnate spirit to the disembodied spirit. Every effort is made to see that the disembodied spirit enjoys the blessedness dependent upon the due performance of his funeral obsequies.

A common salutation in Yorubaland is "O ku." This has been explained in Chapter I, and it means "May you become a Khu," *i.e.* a luminous spirit after death. The wish expressed by the salutation is quite in keeping with the belief and hope of the Ancient Egyptians who at one stage in their religious history earnestly prayed and hoped to become a *Khu*—"luminous spirit"—instead of a *ba*—"a mere disembodied spirit." The two ideas survive in Yorubaland, for in addition to the good wish contained in "O ku" the Yorubas use the malediction "Yio ba ϕ"; that is "it will turn you to a *ba* or you will become a *ba*" instead of a *Khu*.

An example of Ancient Egyptian prayer for the privilege of becoming a *khu* is contained in the following passage taken from the Book of the Dead: "Let me remain on earth and not die in an Amentet, and let me be a *khu* therein for ever and ever."<sup>1</sup>

The Yorubas believe that a man's deeds in this world will determine his fate in the next, as to whether he will become a *khu* or a *ba*. They also believe that unless the proper rites and ceremonies are performed the spirit will not be able to join the family spirit, but will be compelled to wander about without rest.

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Professor E. Wallis Budge, Chapter 30, p. 147.

As soon as the condition of a person becomes h preparations are made to afford him due burial according custom.

In the case of the death of an aged person who is survived by one or more children, joy rather than sorrow characterizes the ceremonies. Death in such a case does not wear a sombre hue. As a matter of fact, death does not evoke the same degree of sorrowful feelings as it does among the highly civilized peoples. It is regarded merely as a process of transition. As the Deji of Akurẹ once said, "Death and sleep are alike. Death is male and sleep is female." It is only in the case of a young person that deep sorrowful feelings are evoked, but these soon subside when, according to the usual practice, the babalawo has succeeded in pointing out the witch or wizard responsible for the death and the culprit has been made to pay the penalty. The reason why the funeral obsequies are more or less of a joyful character, marked with feasting and merriment, is that the spirit of the deceased has gone to join the great family of ancestral spirits.

It should not be thought that there is a total absence of sorrow. When the death of a popular person or a chief occurs the friends and relatives assembled by the death-bed usually raise loud mournful shouts and lamentations. Some of them assist in turning the corpse face downwards and cover it up. This done, the majority of them rush into the streets to make a public announcement by cries and singing. At Ondo, if the deceased is survived by sons, the eldest or anyone of them is carried shoulder high by his companions who join in the parade with branches of trees in their hands. In other parts of the country, the parade is not so spectacular. The following is the usual form of funeral cry: "Epa!!! O-oro!!! Baba wa lẹ loni!!! Baba (or Iya) li a nwa! Awa ko ri o! E-epa! O-o-o-ro! Mo de oja, ko si l'oja Mo de ita, ko si ni ita. Mo de ile, ko si ni ile. Ng ko ni ri i mo O. O di ghere, O di arinako." "Alas!!! Oro!!! Our father has gone to-day!!! We cannot find him—Alas! Oro!!! I go to the market, he is not in the market. I go to the streets, he is not in the streets. I go to the house, he is not in the house. Never shall I see him. He has become a disembodied spirit to be met at by-paths."

The corpse must be left untouched for at least three hours after death has occurred.

The eldest son or the brother of the deceased, if there be no son, sends for the babalawo, who will consult Ifa oracle as to whether the death is due to natural causes or to witchcraft, and if the latter is the case, to point out the culprit. If the oracle declare the spirit of the deceased to be in danger, the babalawo performs two important ceremonies. He sacrifices a goat or a sheep, and causes the carcass to be carried outside the town and deposited at a junction of several roads, the idea being that the evil spirits endangering the spirit of the deceased will thereby be dispersed in different directions. The babalawo also performs a ceremony of purification, sprinkling the corpse, the room and the spectators with the fluid he had prepared with water, shea butter and edible snails. After this he exorcises the spirit of the deceased from the house, bidding it proceed to its destination in peace.

The corpse is then taken and carefully washed. The belief is that if the corpse is not properly washed the deceased will be refused admission into heaven where the holy ones dwell, and if the spirit of the deceased were reincarnated all the dirt left on the corpse will cling irremovably to the reincarnated body. This ceremony of purification is therefore regarded as indispensable.

After washing, the corpse is rubbed with camwood and water. It is then clothed in its best garments and laid on a mat spread on the bare floor or an orupo<sup>1</sup> (mud bed). Among some tribes the hands are placed by the sides, and the feet are tied close together. The corpse is then wrapped up with mat up to the neck and tied in three or four places, the whole figure strongly resembling an Egyptian mummy. Among other tribes, the corpse is laid with its back on the mat, its hands are placed over the chest and the thumbs tied together, its feet are brought close together and the great toes likewise tied, the mouth and nose are gagged with cotton-wool, and a bandage is passed below the lower jaw and tied on the head so as to bring the two jaws close together. Each of the children

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Farrow says that a mat is "the only bed known to Yoruba." He does not seem to know anything about an "orupo" or "mud-bed" erected in the verandah or rooms of the houses of several Yoruba tribes.

then covers the corpse with a fine native cloth, the idea being to provide extra cloths for the use of the deceased in the next world.

The corpse usually lies in state for about two or three days, in the case of an important person the lying-in-state may last for a full week. During this period friends and neighbours are invited to join in the mourning. The house of the deceased is lit with lamps, and people sit round the corpse, each new visitor entering with a cry which may or may not be an expression of real sorrow. Loud drumming takes place outside the house, and volleys of shots are fired as a mark of honour in the case of a distinguished person. Food and drinks are provided freely, and guests are sometimes seen who have become intoxicated with an inordinate quantity of gin, beer, rum or palm wine gratuitously provided by the deceased's relatives. Sometimes professional mourners are employed to make lamentations.

The chief mourners are not allowed to take part in the general merriment; they are shut up in a neighbouring apartment. They utter occasional wails, and there they remain during the whole period between the washing of the corpse and its burial. They are forbidden to wash, and to take food at least for the first twenty-four hours. The male members of the family who have some other work to do are often exempted from the observance of this unhygienic custom. The women, too, are sometimes persuaded to take some nourishment.

The work of digging the grave devolves upon the sons or the male relatives of the deceased. The grave is almost invariably dug in the house of the deceased; sometimes it is dug on his premises.

In some parts of Yorubaland the corpse is taken out on the third or the seventh day and paraded through the streets, richly decorated and carried on a piece of board or on a door unhinged for the purpose. Friends and relations of the deceased accompany the bier singing the praises of the deceased and making presents on his behalf by throwing handfuls of cowries to the spectators or passers-by.

<sup>1</sup> This practice has been modified by the substitution of a photograph for the corpse of the deceased.

The procession returns to the house in the evening, read for the interment of the corpse. Before this is done a sheep or a goat is provided for a sacrificial ceremony. As soon as the corpse is laid in the grave (which is usually shallow), the animal provided for the purpose is killed and its blood is allowed to drop over the corpse. The children of the deceased also shed their tears into the grave, while wishing him safe journey to the land of the dead.

It is almost needless to add that funeral expenses in Yorubaland are very heavy. Beside the great cost of providing ample food and intoxicating drinks there is "the amount that must be paid the various social, religious and political guilds to which the deceased is attached, apart from the presents of yams, oil, goats, and other cattle and provisions which must be made at some definite time after interment or during the celebration of the funeral ceremonies." Sometimes a whole family is plunged into ruin by funeral expenses, and members of some families have sold themselves into slavery to meet up the exactions of the funeral guilds. And yet the heavy burden is borne with complacency, the belief being very strong that unless the funeral obsequies are duly performed the spirit of the deceased cannot obtain rest and peace.

### FUNERAL GUILDS

Some guilds or secret societies are connected with the performance of funeral obsequies. The chief of these are the Ogboni, the Egun, the Oro and the Adamu or Adimu Orisha guilds.

A description of each of these guilds has been given above. The part they play in connection with funeral obsequies will now be sketched.

Of all these guilds the Ogboni guild is the most important. To this guild belongs all the chiefs and leading persons in the community. Admission to it is open to all free born men and confers a measure of honour and dignity. When a member of the guild dies his relatives have to pay a large sum of money and give other presents to the other members of the guild for the performance of the necessary ceremonies. Burial is sometimes delayed by the inability of the relatives to procure the presents in good time, and much inconvenience

is thereby caused to all and sundry. The uninitiated are forbidden to touch the corpse, and pressure is thus indirectly exerted on the relatives to hasten the collection of the presents so as to free themselves from the inconvenience of a fast-rottening corpse in a hot climate. Hence the song often heard from the relatives of the deceased :

Ọtalegbeje ro gba  
 Ọmọ rẹ a san ligbẹhin O.

The large amount you have received  
 Will some day be paid by your children.

This means that the same presents given to the surviving members of the Ogboni guild by a deceased member's relatives will have to be paid by the surviving members' children when each of the recipients dies.

Writing on the subject of Yoruba funeral customs in *Nigerian Chronicle* under the pseudonym of "Adeşola," Mr. Feyisara Şopçin, a native of Abeokuta who has studied the subject very closely, thus writes :

" Ọtalegbeje is 1,460 cowries or 36 strings and half. It is not intended to be interpreted literally . . . The amount is for making etutu (propitiatory sacrifices) for the dead ; the provisions<sup>1</sup> to maintain the members when they meet. There is no native but belongs to one or another of these guilds. Some belong to several and a man's rank is estimated according to the guild or guilds to which he belongs. Whatever amount remains after the necessary expenses are made is distributed among the members and every individual is given a portion, however small, in proportion to his official status. The enjoyment of this benefit is regarded as an accumulated debt for every individual and imposes an obligation upon their children to make similar contribution to the guild towards their parents' funerals at their deaths. This song<sup>2</sup> repeated at funerals is to keep them always in recollection of this fact. This is both a political, social and a secret society. In fact it is the King's chief consultative chamber in all matters and its principal members form a Cabinet. They lay the corpse with full masonic rites. In their passage to and from the house of mourning they sound alarm with their state drums of various height and sounds so that every woman or uninitiated man might flee their presence either in the street or in the house of mourning . . . During the process of corpse-laying they continue beating their drums and so at intervals whilst the corpse is still lying in state when they go to make their etutu. At each time they are generally provided with palm wine and native

<sup>1</sup> i.e. presents of oil, yams, goats, cattle, drinks, etc.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. the song given above.

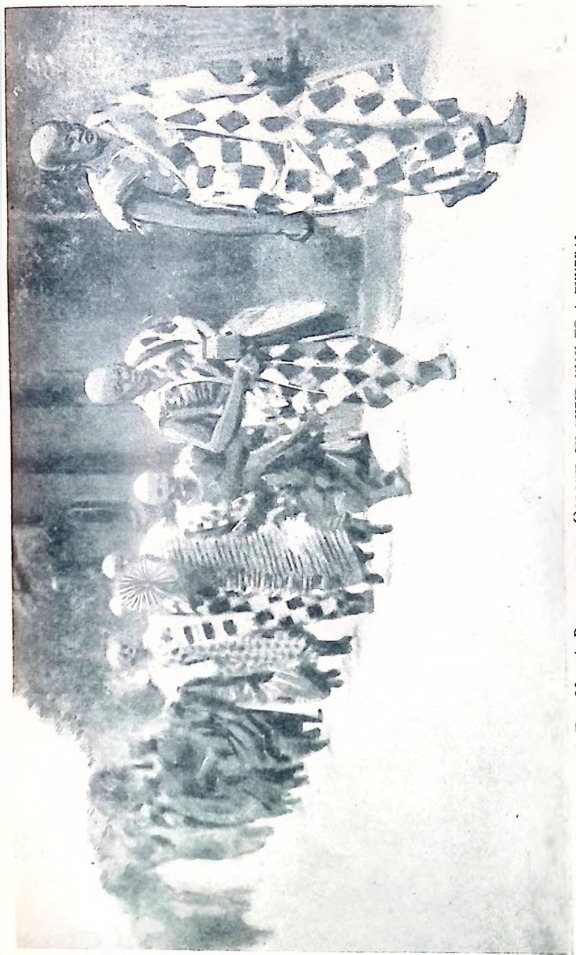


FIG. 30. A PROCESSION OF OGBONIS ON THEIR WAY TO A FUNERAL.

beer. The members are sometimes called Oshugbo. A few elderly women are always admitted and these are generally distinguished from others by having certain strings (*okun*) tied down their wrists; such women are supposed to be for ever precluded from marriage."

Next to the Ogboni guild, the Egungun or Egun guild deserves attention. The part played by Egungun in connection with funeral obsequies is interesting and significant; it shows that the Yorubas firmly believe that the soul lives after death and if funeral ceremonies are properly performed, it goes to the abode of spirits. A graphic account of the Egungun ceremonies is thus given by Dr. Farrow:

"While the mourning relatives are assembled, a person who acts as *Egun* lies hidden in the adjoining room. Presently one of the mourners strikes on the ground thrice and cries out, *Baba, baba, baba!* *Da mi lohun!* (*i.e.* Father, father, father! Answer me!). From the adjoining room comes an answer in 'Egungun Voice' (ventriloquial), and all are comforted and filled with joy, on the supposition that the spirit of the deceased, although unseen, is indeed present with them. Food having been placed by the women in the Egun's room (he having concealed himself or departed) after he has answered, each guest goes in and helps himself, thus performing an act of communion with the deceased. The Egun does not wear his dress while concealed in the room; but should he desire to come out and join in the festivities, he dons it and will then speak as, and state himself to be, the spirit of the one who is being mourned. . . . Some days after the burial an *Egun* comes at night and calls out the name of the deceased; and, after further days have passed, he comes in the daytime, accompanied by followers, and proceeds to the house of the deceased, where he reports that he has safely reached the spirit world, and is well and happy. In response to the good news, he is provided with food, rum and palm wine, of which he partakes in private since spirits must not be seen to eat! When he and his followers have finished, loud groans indicate that he is departing."<sup>1</sup>

These ceremonies are regarded as realities, but actually it is only the children and simple-minded persons who do not realise that they are not more than practical demonstration of beliefs.

The ceremonies just described are usually performed on the "seventh" day after a person's death or burial. The word "seventh" must not be interpreted literally. The ceremonies may be delayed till the eleventh or twelfth day.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

Similar ceremonies known as *Işeku* "burial ceremonies" are performed on the fortieth day after a person's death. The preceding ceremonies are known as *Ita*, "the third day's ceremonies," and *Ije*, "seventh day ceremonies," respectively.

Writing on the subject of *Işeku*, Mr. I. O. Delanõ, author of *The Soul of Nigeria*, gives a graphic and elaborate account of the ceremonies which he was privileged to witness on two occasions. His account gives an impression of his belief in the reality of the deceased's return, especially when he says :

"All of a sudden the crowd swayed and someone shouted : 'He is coming.' Yes, he was coming. And at that moment there was a solemnity that was almost indescribable. Dead silence. The man came slowly . . . He was in very truth the man who had departed this life just forty days ago . . . His face was not covered. It must have been successfully painted, for the wrinkles and scars were all there as evidence of identity."<sup>1</sup>

The present writer has witnessed the ceremonies on several occasions and is convinced that close observation would have revealed to Mr. Delanõ that the figure which he saw on each occasion was a mere impersonation and not an objective reincarnation of the deceased person.

The funeral ceremonies connected with Oro worship are also interesting. If a member of the Oro guild dies all the other members of the guild are bound to assemble and proceed to the deceased person's house. The chief mourners welcome them and provide refreshments of native beer and kola nuts for their enjoyment. A ram is also offered to them. The ceremonies then begin. Each of the kola nuts is made to touch the head of the corpse, and each mourner also touches the same head with closed fists, one on top of the other and then the head of the eldest son or of the son who is to succeed the deceased. This ceremony is repeated three times again when prayers for blessings on the living, especially on the eldest son or the son who is to succeed, are offered to the dead.

The ram is then ceremoniously slaughtered and its blood is caught in a bowl or calabash, from which the children take small quantities and rub on their heads. The figure of a man closely resembling the deceased is drawn on the wall near the deceased person's grave and the ram's head is offered to this

<sup>1</sup> pp. 115 and 116.

figure. These sacrificial ceremonies must be repeated annually by the children.

As soon as the ceremonies in the house are over, the mourners are asked to leave the house. The members of the Oro guild perform certain secret ceremonies and then lock the door as soon as they are ready to proceed to the Oro grove for further ceremonies.

The part usually played by the Oro guild in the Oro grove has also been well described by Mr. Şopçin (anonymously known as "Adeşola") in the *Nigerian Chronicle* :

"The whole company of gods and men proceed outside to what is called the *Oro-pagi* ('Oro kills the tree') or *Oro-jęgi* (Oro eats the tree) ceremony. For its performance the newly deified<sup>1</sup> takes the company to the highest tree in the neighbourhood in order to show proof of his divinity by 'eating up' every leaf thereon, to its latest shoot. At a convenient distance from this tree, gods and men accommodate themselves as best as possible—the gods crying with all their might<sup>2</sup> and the men drumming very loudly, singing and dancing at the same time. As it is not permitted to the uninitiated to know how this spirit feat is performed, suffice it to say that one wakes up in the morning to see that particular tree denuded of its leaves: and it will require the service of the most powerful microscope to discover even the tiniest and latest shoot anywhere about the tree up to the loftiest branch, or on the surrounding surface, or anywhere about the vicinity of the tree. These leaves are supposed to have been literally caten up by the god. Suspended on this tree between two of its branches which are topmost, or sometimes left streaming on one of its branches which is the highest, is a new mat or a white or a red piece of cloth . . . What these mats or cloths are intended to symbolise ought to be evident . . . Unlike the *Egungun* and the *Agçmç* the incarnate form of the Oro is never habited in cloths or mats. What its nature and habiliments are is supposed to be a mystery and jealously guarded up to the present from the gaze of women.

"In fact, Oro is worshipped more in its inane and spiritual form than in a materialised shape. It is to the former that sacrifices are offered, not to the latter. Among the *Ęgbas*, who are the originators of this cult, the Oro *Awç* ceremony is the only funeral rite performed in connection with this worship, when the spirit is supposed to pass from the 'unburied' into the 'buried' state. Viewing it in this connection, the mats or cloths, suspended on the tree, must be taken to represent the mats or cloth with which the dead was buried; and its suspension to signify that the spirit of

<sup>1</sup> That is, the supposed re-incarnation of the deceased spirit.

<sup>2</sup> The voices of the gods may be heard through the medium of the bull-roarer.

the deceased, now purified with funeral rites, and having entered into that state of purified life in which it can be invoked and worshipped, cast behind it on its flight to the spirit world, these earthly encumbrances as useless to it . . . After the completion of this Oro-pagi ceremony they (gods and men) again repair to the house; and having regaled themselves with the remnants<sup>1</sup> they reform



FIG. 31. A TREE PLANTED ON A GRAVE BECOMES SACRED.

into a procession, remove the mariwo from the gate, march direct to the Aboro's<sup>2</sup> and thence to their own house, ere break of day. In the morning the inmates return to the house of mourning, set a mark to the dedicated spot, and congratulate one another that the departed has passed into the Oro stage and can be invoked at any time for worship."

<sup>1</sup> That is, of the food that had been partaken before setting out to the Oro grove.

<sup>2</sup> That is, the chief member of the Oro Guild.

Another funeral ceremony connected with Oro worship is the ceremony of erecting a shrine in honour of the deceased member of an Oro guild. In this shrine, which is usually made of thatch and is about three feet high, are placed a mud image of the deceased, and some of his belongings and offerings of food. The image is carefully made so as to resemble the deceased as much as possible, and hence it usually depicts the tribal marks or scars peculiar to the deceased.

In addition to the above ceremonies, there is a set of ceremonies known as *Pegbèda*, "turning over from one side to the other." These ceremonies are performed periodically after a number of years following the death and burial of a deceased person. The relatives and friends of the deceased visit the cemetery or the grave on an appointed day and give offerings of food or flowers. They sometimes express their wishes or prayers over the grave, after summoning the deceased in whose honour the ceremonies were being performed to listen to them. This done, the family with their friends return to their house, and food and drink are sumptuously provided. Cooking is done throughout the day, and food is sent as a present to friends. A good part of the day is spent in dancing, and the spirit of merriment characterizes all the ceremonies. Actually the Yorubas now bury their dead with the latter lying on their backs, and the need for the ceremonies of turning the corpse over from one side to the other should not have arisen. The ceremonies, however, are a survival of the ancient custom of making the dead lie on its left side, a custom already abandoned by the Yorubas.

It should be noted that full burial ceremonies are denied to persons who die of infectious disease. For example, in the olden days, a man who died of leprosy will not be accorded full ceremonial burial. Professional undertakers would be employed who would perform certain ceremonies on the corpse and then burn it to ashes. The undertakers receive presents of money, kola nuts, fowls and other animals.

Cremation is not practised in Yorubaland except in the case of persons dying from infectious diseases.

The duty of a proper burial of the dead is regarded with great solemnity in Yorubaland. It is believed that those who fail to discharge it will suffer for their negligence ; they will

be haunted and pestered by the restless disembodied spirit in various ways. On the other hand, it is considered a great misfortune for one to die in such circumstances as to miss a proper burial. Hence the common malediction, "*Igbẹ ni iwọ yio ku si*"—"You will die in the bush," that is, you will die where there will be none to perform the burial ceremonies over your corpse. Hence also the expression, *Oku igbẹ*—"a corpse in the bush," implying that one's conduct is such as to merit the misfortune of lying unburied in the bush.

CONNECTION WITH ANCIENT EGYPT. Anyone who has studied both the religion of Ancient Egypt and the religion of Yorubaland cannot fail to detect points of similarity or identity in regard to death and burial customs.

It has been pointed out above that the Yoruba words *Ku* and *Iku*, "die" and "death" are derived from the Ancient Egyptian word *Khu*. This derivation shows at the outset that there is some connection between the two religions.

Next one may note the fact that in Yorubaland there is the belief that no one need to die; death can only be caused by some unseen power or a wicked living person. Such a belief existed in Ancient Egypt. Professor Maspero thus writes:

"The Ancients long refused to believe that death was natural and inevitable. They thought that life, once begun, might go on indefinitely; if no accident stopped it short, why should it cease of itself? And so men did not die in Egypt; they were assassinated. The murderer often belonged to this world, and was easily recognised as another man, an animal . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Hence in Yorubaland when a person dies the Babalawo is summoned to determine whether the deceased has been the victim of some malicious person.

In Yorubaland the disembodied spirit is believed to rejoin the whole family spirit in the other world. A similar belief existed in Ancient Egypt where it was believed that at birth "each person received a part of the family spirit, which guided him and was his inner personality, and on dying he rejoined the whole family spirit which received and preserved him."<sup>2</sup>

The custom of lamenting the dead by parading the streets

<sup>1</sup> *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Flinders Petrie, *Ancient Egyptians* (1925), p. 43, col. 127, sec. 38.

is found in both countries. The custom as practised by the Yorubas has been already described.

The following is a description of the custom as given by writers on Egyptian customs :

- (a) When an individual died, it was usual for the women to issue forth from the house, and throwing dust and mud upon their heads to utter cries of lamentation . . . They sang a doleful dirge . . . On these occasions, the services of hired performers were uncalled for ; though during the period of seventy days, while the body was in the hands of the embalmers, mourners were employed, who sang the same plaintive dirge.<sup>1</sup>
- (b) When a man of any consideration dies, all the female sex of that family besmear their heads and faces with dirt . . . beating themselves as they go . . . whilst the male, on their part, form another company, gird and beat themselves in like manner.<sup>2</sup>
- (c) When any of them is dead, all his kindred and friends (who put dirt on their heads until such time as the corpse is interred, go every day round about the city weeping and lamenting) do neither wash themselves all that while, nor drink wine, nor eat any but low-priced meats, neither put on any clothes that are worth ought.<sup>3</sup>

Compare these details with those of the Yoruba custom given previously. With the exception of the reference to the period of embalming and the modification of the practice of besmearing oneself with dirt, nearly all the details survive in Yorubaland and may be seen in practice among all the Yorubas or among some of the tribes.

The duty of the son towards his father in Yorubaland is also identical with the duty of a son in Ancient Egypt. In the latter, just as in the former, "the duty of the son was . . . to maintain his (father's) tomb and to offer the necessary sacrifices on festival days . . . These duties towards the deceased descended in direct line to the head of the family, but at the same time the obligation rested on the members, even of later generatic wò"<sup>4</sup>

It has been marked already that when an important man died, it was usual in Yorubaland for some of his slaves and wives to be buried with him. The practice is similar to that of Ancient Egypt described as follows :

<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs I*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Herodotus (translation Littlebury), II, 85.

<sup>3</sup> Diodorus (translation by Cogan), II, iv.

<sup>4</sup> Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 157.

"During the early periods of Egyptian civilisation, the right to a future life would only be claimed by the wealthy. The lives of many women, children, slaves and animals had to be sacrificed to accompany his double into the other world."<sup>1</sup>

Later the practice of sacrificing the lives of human beings in this way was replaced by the provision of clay figures known as *ushabtis* and modelled like the figures of human beings. The number of *ushabtis* was at one time very large, but was later fixed at four hundred.<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that 400 is an important figure in Yoruba enumeration, it being regarded as a very important square, that is the square of twenty, an important unit in Yoruba.

Egyptian funerals were very expensive. So also are Yoruba funerals. The only difference lies in the degree of wealth possessed by each country; but there is no doubt that in proportion to the wealth possessed by each country the funeral expenses are heavy.<sup>3</sup>

Similarity also exists in respect of modes of burial. According to Duncan<sup>4</sup>, Egyptian modes of burial are (1) cloth wrapping, (2) mummifying, (3) clay face coffins, (4) wooden coffins, (5) stone coffins. The first mode is the most frequently adopted in Yorubaland; occasionally corpses dressed like mummies are found among some of the Yoruba tribes.

A further description of the first mode is thus given by the same writer:

"The body was almost invariably placed on its back, with the hands by the sides or folded over the breast . . . No trace of mutilation of the corpse was found. From the abundant remains of cloth, we infer that every body was wrapped in cloth before burial, and where we did find cloth in any state of preservation, it was manifest that the body had not been simply dressed in a single garment, but swathed in many folds of linen."<sup>5</sup>

The use of mats in connection with this mode of burial is significant, as it is attested to by MacIver in the following passage:

aspiero, *New Light on Ancient Egypt*, p. 305.

Flinders Petrie, *Ancient Egyptians*, p. 27, col. 80, sec. 36.

There are three manners of funeral among them, namely, the sumptuous between both, and the lowest. In the first is spent six hundred between the second two hundred, and the last is of little cost" *Diodorus*, (by Cogan), II, iv. 62.

Petrie, *Hyksos and Israelite Cities*, p. 47.

Petrie, *Hyksos and Israelite Cities*, p. 30.



FIG. 32. YORUBA CLAY POTS.

"The body is wrapped in a skin and a reed mat. Most commonly there is a tripple layer of coverings, viz., cloth next to the body, then skin or leather, outside which is a wide mat."<sup>1</sup>

The Yorubas do not use a skin, but they use the other two coverings. The colours of the cloths, too, are well-known Egyptian colours, that is, white and red, which are the respective colours representing the North and the South of Ancient Egypt respectively.<sup>2</sup>

The custom of burying children in pots<sup>3</sup> and of putting vases or pots<sup>3</sup> in graves was extensively practised during certain periods in Ancient Egypt.

The Yorubas do not practise the custom of pot burials, but they often place pots on graves and put meat and drink offerings in these pots.

The Yoruba word for a pot is *I-ko-ko*. This seems to be a modification of *Kau-kau*, that is, the plural of *Ka*. The idea prevalent in Ancient Egypt that the *Kas* of deceased persons could enter the pots and eat the food provided therein for them is also found in Yorubaland. Hence the word *I-ko-ko* means that which belongs to the *Kas* or spirits of deceased persons.

It is noteworthy that when the Yorubas wish to consecrate a place they sometimes sink a pot into the place and there place offerings for the orisha or god or the spirit or spirits to be worshipped. In cases of emergency, when the help of ancestral spirits is urgently needed, the spirits are usually summoned and asked for help by addressing them through the medium of a hole dug in the ground or through the medium of a pot sunk into the ground.

Attention has been drawn in the previous chapters to the fact that the names of funeral guilds, that is *Ogboni*, *Egungun* and *Oro* are all of Egyptian origin. The leading ideas connected with the funeral ceremonies of the guild are also of Egyptian origin.

Certain words used in connection with funerals should be noted. The first shout of relatives and friends when death

<sup>1</sup> MacIver, *El Amrah and Abydos*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. White is the colour of the crown of North Egypt and Red is the colour of the South. These colours are also given religious significance in connection with the Adamu-Orisha cult.

<sup>3</sup> See MacIver, *El Amrah*, pp. 7-14.

has occurred is known as *Ibosi*, i.e. I-bi-osi, "the place of an Osi or Osiris." This means that the house has been converted to a place where someone has become an Osiris, this being in keeping with the Egyptian idea that the highest reward due to a righteous man was that he should become an Osiris or a reproduction of Osiris immediately after death. It was an essential element in the Osirian faith that the believer would become an Osiris after death. Prayers that this might happen to devout worshippers of Osiris can be seen in various parts of the *Book of the Dead*.

The word for a grave is *Iboji*, that is I-bi-oji. Bi or bu is an Ancient Egyptian word meaning "place." Oji is derived from the West African root word "ye," which means "to live, to exist, to become," *I-bi-oji*, therefore, means "the place of the living ones or spirits." The word is a clear indication of the Yoruba belief that a man's spirit continues to live after death.

Until recent times the Yorubas are not known to have used coffins. But their word for a coffin strongly suggests that they must have known what coffins were several centuries ago. This is strongly suggested by the fact that the Yoruba word for a coffin is of Ancient Egyptian origin. The word is *posi*, that is, *pa-osi*. Pa is a modification of the Ancient Egyptian word *per*, which means a house. Osi is a contraction of Osiris. Posi therefore means "the house of an Osi," that is the place where one who has become an Osiris is encased.

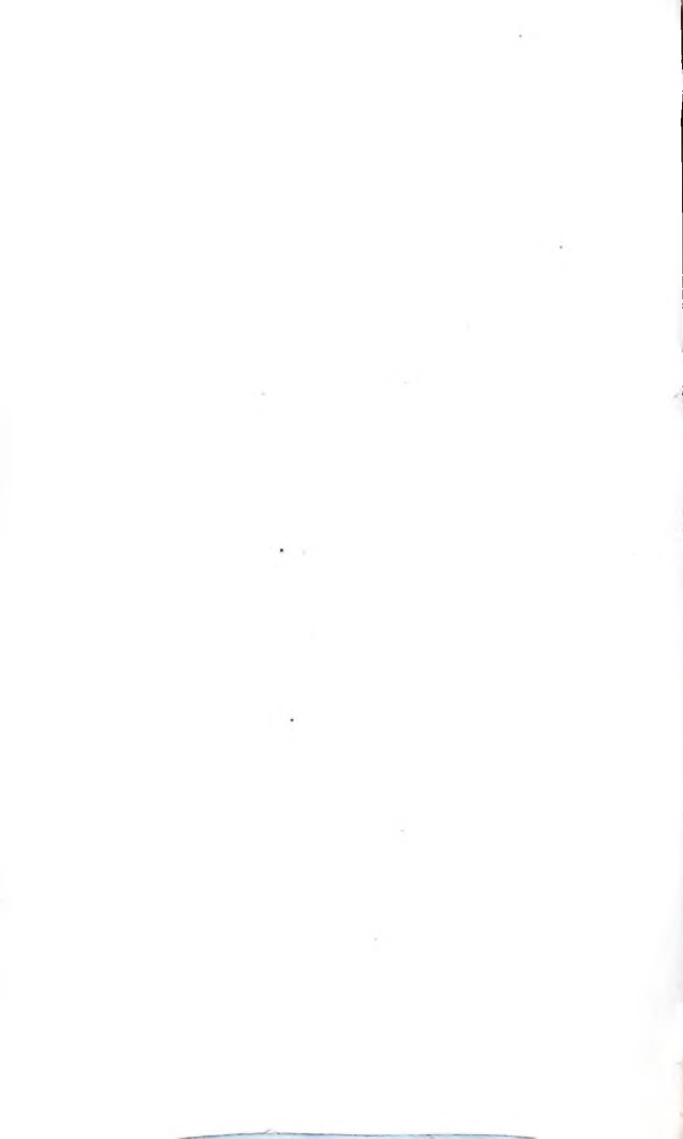
The ceremonies known as *Pegbɛda* are a survival of the Egyptian custom of holding periodical feasts in honour of the dead and of periodical renewal of the food offered to the Kas of deceased persons. The Ancient Egyptians custom is thus described by Petrie :

"Probably the modern custom of going out to the cemetery for a day's picnic taking out food and cooking and feeding in the family, was followed also in Roman times. The many baskets in the chambers, the heaps of dates, date-stones, and peach stones, the pieces of bread, the corn and other food found here, all show that feasts were held ; and doubtless those were the representatives of an earlier custom of funeral feasts in honour of the deceased, or for the renewing of the food for the Ka."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hawara, *Bishnu and Arsinoe*, p. 10.

The word *pegbēda*, "turning over from one side to the other," is a survival of the custom similar to that of the Ancient Egyptians of making a corpse lie on its left side.

The points of similarity and of identity between the Ancient Egyptians and the Yoruba funeral customs described above constitute a further evidence in support of the theory of a close connection between the religions of Ancient Egypt and of Yorubaland.



CHAPTER XIII

THE YORUBA CONCEPTION OF MAN'



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE YORUBA CONCEPTION OF MAN

RELIGION dominates the whole life of the Yorubas, and therefore their conception of man is essentially religious. Man is viewed from the standpoint of his relation to the gods; his life in the present state of existence and his destiny in the future life are all brought into the orbit of religious conceptions.

Like all other races of the world, the Yorubas believe that man's nature is partly material and partly immaterial. They believe that man has a material body by means of which he acts and reacts on his physical environment. They also believe that he has an immaterial entity.

Various writers have explained how the notion of an immaterial entity first arose in the human mind. For example, Mr. Herbert Spencer in his *Principles of Sociology* has traced the origin of the notion to dreams. Primitive man, he observes, dreams that he is engaged in some form of activities with some of his friends and he wakes before the end of the activities. He feels that he has not left his friends, and therefore reasons that there is something which is detachable and which can go out and return at will, that is, a second individuality. This conclusion is further strengthened by the fact that in his dreams, he meets and recognises men who have died or are living in distant lands.

The belief is thus extended to include belief in the possession of a second individuality by every human being.

Such a belief as this is bound to be further developed. The fact that children are born who show physical characteristics possessed by their parents to such an extent as to suggest that they are re-incarnations of their parents or ancestors leads to the idea that the second individuality is a double entity, a part of which may be incarnated in a newborn child, whilst the other part contains the existence of the man as an individual.

In West Africa, the belief in a second individuality exists. Among some of the tribes the second individuality is dual in character, but among others, man is the possessor of several souls or spirits, one or two of which corresponds with the second individuality or the dual individuality described above.

The study of the West African conception of man requires a fair amount of psychological knowledge. It also requires a fair knowledge of comparative religion, since it is obvious that a conception evolved from the standpoint of a religion which stands in genetic relation to other religions must contain survivals of elements from its predecessors. Failure to realize the importance of these pre-requisites has made the subject baffling to superficial observers and caused some writers to say that "African psychology is extremely complex" and that "African mentality is extremely variable in one and the same person." Statements such as the latter reflect discreditably on their authors, as they throw the blame due to the authors' own failure on African mentality and they seem to give the impression that African mentality is sub-human or essentially different from any other mentality.

#### CONSTITUENT PARTS OF HUMAN NATURE

According to Yoruba conception the constituent parts of human nature are: (1) *Ara*, "physical body" (2) *Ojiji*, "shadow"; (3) *Iye*, "mental body, mind"; (4) *Ọka(n)*, "heart," "heart-soul"; (5) *Ẹmi(n)* "spirit," "spiritual body," "spiritual soul."

*Ara*, "physical body," is the medium through which man acts or reacts on his physical environment. During a man's lifetime it can be nourished and caressed. After death it perishes. It is what man possesses in common with the physical world, although it has its peculiar human form.

*Ojiji*, "shadow," is the constant companion of the body during a man's lifetime. It is the visible representation of the inner self or *ọka(n)*. When the inner self comes out at death, the visible representation or shadow ceases to exist and perishes with the body.

*Iye*, "mental body," "mind," is the conscious part of man which depends upon the soundness of the brain. Directly the brain or the cortex ceases to function, *iye* ceases to exist.

When this happens during a man's lifetime the Yorubas say : "Ori re fọ," "His head is broken" or "Iye re ra," "His mental body has disappeared," the word *ra* being used to denote disappearance in the sense that Ra, the sun-god, disappears after sunset.

*Ọkan*, "heart," "heart-soul," is an immaterial part of man.

The word is used in two senses. In the first sense it denotes the material heart, in the second sense it denotes "an individual entity," "the heart-soul," "the seat of intelligence, thought and action." In this latter sense it forms part of the immaterial and imperishable part of man. It is believed to be the spiritual or minor ego of the man.

*Ọkan* is believed to exist before a man's birth. It may be the "Ọkan" of an ancestor or of any deceased person. It may be the "Ọkan" of an *abiku*, that is "one who is born to die" and thereby causes the child into which it has entered to die young.

The word is used in a wide sense. It includes that part of man known as *iyẹ*, "rationality," "mind," and also what is known as *inu*, "inner part," "inner self." It is believed to possess a concrete form containing all the characteristics of the body. It is a substantial part of man which uses the body as the medium of communication with the external world. Yet it is capable of going out of the body without becoming dissociated from it. It does this in the case of dreams, although the word is not expressly used for the human forms seen in dreams. After death it goes out of the body as in the case of dreams, but without becoming entirely dissociated from it, and it may be re-incarnated. It is by no means indifferent to the fate of the original body. This part of the conception of man is not fully worked out to show whether the same *ọkan* can belong to two persons.

The Yorubas believe that as man's *ọkan* or heart-soul may leave the body and become incapable of re-entering it. This idea can be illustrated by two examples. A witch is supposed to prey upon her victim by means of her *ọkan* which metamorphoses into a bird. If the bird is seized, the witch will not wake ; if it is killed, the witch will die. Again if a person becomes demented or idiotic, unable to take any intelligent

interest in his surroundings or to take any initiative action, the Yorubas will say about him, *Ọkan rẹ ti lẹ*, "His heart-soul is gone."

Another important part in the human economy is *Ẹmi(n)*, "Spirit." This is regarded as the seat of life. It is the part of man which is closely related to the gods. *Ọlọrun* the Supreme Deity is known as *Ẹlẹmi*, "Owner of spirits." A man's spirit is thus traced to *Ọlọrun*, and is therefore regarded as the divine element in him. It is also regarded as the highest part of man which makes use both of the *ọkan*, "heart-soul," and of "*ara*," "body." Like *ọkan*, it is imperishable. It leaves the body after death. Its fate will be determined by its doings whilst in the flesh. Although it makes use of the heart-soul, yet the latter can show it the right way and cause it to suffer untold pain if it allows the heart-soul to misdirect the body or to misuse its faculties. In this belief one can see a rudimentary idea of conscience. There is no separate word for conscience in Yoruba; the word *ọkan* is used for the purpose. For example, *ọkan rẹ gun u*, "He is stung by his conscience." The word *ẹri-ọkan*, "the witness of the heart-soul," which is now being used to denote conscience, has been specially coined to make up for the deficiency in the Yoruba vocabulary and is unintelligible to the unsophisticated native.

It appears that the word *Iku* was formerly used in the sense of a spirit. The word now survives in rare cases which strongly suggests that the word formerly denotes spirit. For example, *Iku mi*, "my spirit," "something which is part and parcel of me," and hence "something very easy for me to deal with."

#### MINOR INDWELLING SPIRITS

The parts sketched above comprise the essential elements in man. Several Yoruba tribes, however, believe that man is indwelt by other spirits which are subordinate to his *Ẹmi(n)* or spirit, which may be described as great in comparison with the others. The subordinate spirits are as follows:—

(1) *Olori*, "the owner or lord of the head," which is situated in the head, particularly in the brain. It is regarded as the spirit which brings good fortune. A proverb says: *Olori ni igbe ori 're ko Olori, ki iṣe akan eti odo*, "It is Olori who brings

good fortune to the owner of the head and not the crab on the river bank." He may be regarded as a deification of good luck, especially that which is brought about by intelligence and prudence. He is sometimes worshipped as the family spirit by both sexes.

Every one who desires good fortune makes offerings to *Olori*. The offerings usually consist of fowls, the blood of which is mixed with palm oil and rubbed on the forehead. The offerings must be made periodically in front of his symbol, which is half a calabash, studded with cowries.

(2) *Ipin Ijẹun*, "Sharer of the food." This deified spirit which claims its share in every food is supposed to reside in the stomach, and therefore needs no sacrifices. Hence the proverb: *Oriṣa bi ikun ko si : Ojọjumọ ni o ngba ẹbọ*, "There is no *oriṣa* like the stomach, it receives sacrifice every day."

Dr. Farrow, following Colonel Ellis, thinks that hunger is personified as the servant of *Ipin-Ijẹun*, for the Yoruba equivalent of "I am hungry" is "Ebi npa mi," i.e. "hunger is killing me."<sup>1</sup> This opinion, which is due to inadequate knowledge of Yoruba idioms, is incorrect. There are no Yoruba idiomatic forms corresponding word for word to the English expressions "I am hungry," "I am thirsty," "I am tired" and so forth. In each case the state of the body or mind referred to has to stand as the subject of the sentence and does not in any way imply personification. For example, "I am hungry" is "ebi npa mi," literally "Hunger is killing me." "I am thirsty" is "Orungbẹ ngbẹ mi," "Thirst is drying me up." "I am tired" is "Arẹ mu mi," "Weariness takes hold of me." Several other examples can be given to show that the Yoruba idiom excludes the idea of personification.

Again referring to the proverb "*Ipin Ijẹun ki jẹ ki ina ku li aiye*," "*Ipin Ijẹun* does not allow fire to depart from the earth," Dr. Farrow suggests that fire, too, seems to be personified in the expression "*Ina njo*," which he translates as "fire is dancing." This also is incorrect. The fact is that the word *jo*, of which *njo* is the progressive form, is used like several other Yoruba verbs, in more than one sense. The word *jo* may mean "dance" or "burn" or "sell at a

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

give-away-price." With the accent reversed it has other meanings which need not be enumerated here.

(3) *Ip̄ori*, "the path of the head," or "the locus of the head when it moves on the feet." This deified spirit is supposed to dwell in the great toe of either foot. Offerings are made to it by those who wish to undertake a journey. These are made by the slaughter of a fowl—not a water fowl, which is a taboo or *ewo* in the case of *Ip̄ori*. The blood of the fowl is mixed with palm oil and rubbed on the great toe of either foot.

If a traveller knocks his right foot on a stone or some obstacle on the road when making a journey, the incident is regarded as a sign of good luck; if he knocks his left foot, especially his left toe, the incident is a warning of impending disaster and he must return home at once.

The three deified spirits described above are regarded as guardian spirits subordinate to *Ẹmi(n)* and also to *o<sub>k</sub>an* which is also regarded as a guardian spirit or soul. Of the three spirits, *Ip̄ori* is the least important.

Prayers are offered to the *Olori* and to *Ip̄ori*, but not to *Ipin Ij̄eun*, which receives sacrifices of food daily. The following is a well-known prayer partly offered to *Olori* and *Ip̄ori* :

"Ori ri ibi ire gbe mi de,  
 Ẹṣ̄o ri ibi ire gbe mi re,  
 Edumare maṣai gbe ire ko mi."

"May my head direct me to a place of good luck,  
 May my feet carry me to a place of good luck,  
 May the Almighty grant me good luck."

Writing about the conception of the soul among the peoples of Southern Nigeria, Mr. P. Amaury Talbot says : "There is a general belief that each person possesses four souls : first, an ethereal one, the double and inner frame of the physical form ; secondly, the soul proper, the consciousness, the thinking or mental body ; thirdly, the spiritual or minor Ego ; and fourthly, the Over-Soul, or Chi, the great spirit, which often includes several lesser Egos and always stays with God. . . . The shadow is considered the sign, usually of the ethereal, but sometimes of the mental body. . . . The

ethereal one dissolves with the physical structure, while the greater part of the soul is relatively immortal, and the third and fourth perish."<sup>1</sup>

The Yoruba conception of the soul agrees very nearly with the above description. The ethereal soul corresponds to the *Ojiji* of the Yorubas which, though unsubstantial in character, is intimately connected with the human personality. The second soul corresponds to the *oƆkan*, "heart-soul" of the Yorubas, which is regarded as enveloping the second soul and constituting in a sense, a man's real self. The fourth soul corresponds to the *Ẹmi(n)* of the Yorubas which rules all the other souls.

#### UNITY OF MAN'S PERSONALITY

It must not be supposed that the Yorubas have split man's nature into several incoherent elements or selves. The unity of man's personality is an essential element in the Yoruba conception of man. The personality is not divided up into separate and opposing selves such as are described in the psychology of insanity. All the selves or souls constitute a unity which often expresses itself through the medium of the body (*ara*) and through the agency of the heart-soul (*oƆkan*), the whole individuality being regarded as Spirit (*Ẹmi*) or over-soul<sup>2</sup> or the larger self which belongs and is akin to the Supreme Divine Spirit. As a matter of fact, the Yoruba conception of the larger self and of subordinate selves is in accord with the views of modern psychologists. Dr. William Mac-Dougall, an authority on psychology, when emphasizing his opinion as to the presence of several consciousnesses in one person subordinate to the dominant self says, "I believe that we are compelled to recognize that sometimes, and not infrequently, a single human organism or person is the seat of more than one stream of conscious knowing, feeling and striving, more than one stream of mental activity. . . . I, who consciously address you, am only one among several selves or egos which my organism, my person comprises."

Professor William James, another great authority, says :

<sup>1</sup> See also Thouless, *Psychology of Religion*, Chap. VI, The Unconscious. Also Dr. Geley, *From the Unconscious to the Conscious*.  
<sup>2</sup> A term invented by P. A. Talbot; see *Peoples of Nigeria* (1926), Vol. II, Chapter XV, pp. 279-280.

“Apart from all religious considerations, there is actually and literally more life in our total soul than we are at any time aware of. The explanation of the trans-marginal field has hardly yet been consciously undertaken. . . . Our intuitions, hypotheses, fancies, superstitions, persuasions, convictions and in general all our non-rational operations, come from it. . . . In it arise whatever mystical operations we may have. . . . It is also the fountain head of much that feeds our religion. In persons deep in the religious life . . . the door into this region seems unusually wide open.” The deep religiosity of the Yorubas would make the door into this trans-marginal field wide open, and any irruptions from it into consciousness are likely to be attributed to the operation of a soul or spirit possessed by man.

Further, it should be noted that the Yoruba belief that each *ọkan* (heart-soul) or *ẹmi* (spirit) belongs to a large family group and that certain characteristics possessed by individuals must be traced to their connection with their respective family groups seems to be confirmed by the following suggestion of a “Larger Self” made by Sir Oliver Lodge in the *Hibbert Journal* of October, 1923 :

“We are, each of us, larger than we know ; that each of us is only a partial incarnation of a larger self. The individual as we know him is an incomplete fraction ; a portion only of the whole self is brought, at any one period, into intimate contact with matter and close association with a material body . . .

“As regards Reincarnation it is probably a mistake to suppose that the same individual whom we knew in bodily form is likely to appear again at some future date. There may be exceptions, but as a rule this seems unlikely to happen. What may happen, however, is that some other portion of the larger self becomes incarnate . . .

“How large a subliminal self may be, one does not know ; but one can imagine that in some cases it is very large, so that it contains the potentiality for the incarnation not only of a succession of ordinary individuals, but of really great men. . . .”

#### LIFE AFTER DEATH

Without a consideration of man's life after death or of his destiny in the life hereafter a description of the conception of man would be incomplete.

It has been pointed out above that the Yorubas credit man with both a material body and an immaterial body.

The material body is known as *Ara*. This becomes dissolved at death. Among most Yoruba tribes there is no attempt at the preservation of this material body, although there is a faint trace among a few tribes of the practice of mummification. The only part of the human body which is sometimes preserved is the heart. This is because the heart is regarded as the seat of intelligence and courage and the residence of divinity or genius in the case of a king or any other distinguished person. In the case of a king the heart is preserved in a vase and worshipped as an emblem of divinity; otherwise it is reduced to powder and mixed with rum to be drunk by the king's successor who thus preserves the tribal or national divinity residing in the deceased king.

The dead body is known as *Oku*, a term which has been explained already.<sup>1</sup>

After death, *Ojiji*, shadow, man's image which accompanies him during lifetime, ceases to exist as soon as the corpse is interred. *Iye*, "mental body, mind consciousness," also ceases to exist at death. As a matter of fact, *iye* may be blurred or lost during lifetime and is certainly destroyed before death.

The imperishable parts of man are his *ọka(n)* and *ẹmi(n)*. Sometimes the two terms are used interchangeably. A man's heart-soul proceeds to the Dead-land after death, but it cannot rest unless the proper funeral rites have been performed. It is this part of man which seems to require nourishment in the form of food and drinks. Hence the custom of leaving a hole open on graves, through which food can be passed to the deceased. Hence also the periodical offerings on the grave-side of some deceased ancestors. When it lies unburied and haunts various places it is known as *iwin*, "disembodied spirit." When it has been accorded due ceremonial burial it still remains in close association with the body or may wander at will, and may appear in dreams to members of the family, especially to those to whom the death of its possessor has not yet been announced. It also remains in close association with the souls of the other deceased members of the family.

The heart-soul does not allow the living members of the family to forget it. If the funeral obsequies are neglected, it

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I, p. 25.

will haunt the living members and torment them until they do the needful. If the obsequies are performed it assumes material forms, such as have been described above, and comes to bless them. The heart-soul of a parent always comes to bless the children. Hence the song: *Oku Olomọ ki i sun gbagbe*, "The spirit of a parent never sleeps and forgets his children."

It should be noted that after death the heart-soul is no longer called *ọkan*. It is then known as *Oji*, "disembodied spirit resting in a grave," or *iwin*, "disembodied spirit wandering about in anticipation of customary ceremonial burial, or *ẹmi(n)*, "disembodied spirit viewed in relation to the other members of the family."

The spirit or *Ẹmi(n)* is often credited with the same characteristics as the heart-soul, but it is regarded as living a life dissociated from the body and closely associated with the higher spheres of life beyond the grave. The spirit of a man may be summoned by the living so that prayers for blessing may be made to it. Ancestral spirits are believed to be in close touch with the living, and to be capable of appearing in human forms.

The activities of a heart-soul may be terminated by its re-incarnation in a new-born child. As it has been pointed out above, the Yorubas believe strongly in metempsychosis, and use it to explain what otherwise would have been described as the influence of heredity.

Several Yoruba children have *-tunde* as part of their names. For example, *baba-tunde*, "father has come again," *ye-tunde*, "mother has come again," *i.e.* father or mother has been reincarnated.

A prayer usually heard during the performances of funeral obsequies is as follows: "*Ma ma ẹẹ ki o wa ya lọdọ wa*," "Do not delay in being reincarnated in our home or family."

The activities may also be terminated by transmigration. The Yorubas believe the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration of souls. The human soul may be born in the form of a lower animal. Some of them are the tiger "*Ẹku(n)*" and the leopard "*Amọ(n)-tẹku(n)*," both of which are credited with "khus" or luminous spirits.

The Yorubas believe that the transformation of a human

service in the rare. The belief, however, lingers in the practice was still being told to children in Yorubaland and produced by writers on Yoruba religion on variation and significance. Dr. Farrow has

From the foregoing legend from the version given by Colonel of the death and !

the following P With his brother went to a festival at a neighbouring man stand out they so successfully entertained the people that they

- (1) That man one thousand cowries. On the way homeward the
- (2) That th murdered the younger and took his cowries. In its cons enquiries he said that he had left his brother behind on death. As search failed to yield any trace of the lad it was at he had been kidnapped and sold. From his decaying
- (3) That rang up a very large *Olu*, or edible fungus, which was whiced by his mother, and, as she was about to pluck it, the fungus dur

- (4) Tl Do not pluck me, Mother,  
 F Do not pluck me, Mother,  
 b) Do not pluck me, Mother,  
 a I am a lowly plant on the ground.

- (5) T I went to the village frolic,  
 cc I went to the village frolic,  
 th I am a lowly plant on the ground :

- (6) Tl I was given a thousand cowries,  
 co I am a lowly plant on the ground.

- pr Do not pluck me, Mother,  
 (7) Th Do not pluck me, Mother,  
 scn Do not pluck me, Mother,  
 ot I am a lowly plant on the ground.

- (8) Tha My brother received a thousand cowries,  
 show My brother received a thousand cowries,  
 spirit. I am a lowly plant on the ground :

- (9) That tl he slew me for my cowries,  
 to a larg am a lowly plant on the ground."

- (10) That the s, an, amazed and shocked, called her husband, us  
 to live after called the king, and to each of these, the fung er  
 worth's opini-song, substituting the correct address, "Fath as  
 "Our birth is pectively, as required. The elder son w as  
 The soul that cused. On confession of his crime, he w as  
 Hath had elsewhere its setting  
 And cometh from afar."

THE RELIGION OF THE YORUBA/  
HEAVEN AND HELL

Souls and spirits do not merely go to the fate is determined by the life they had in the flesh. AS

The Yorubas believe in two kinds of known as *Orun rere*—"Good Heaven." The righteous go. Hence immediately after death prayers are offered that the spirit of the deceased may meet with a favourable wind." The sacrifice of a fowl is often made to secure a safe journey for the deceased. The fowl that buys the dist. This fowl is known as *Adiṣ Irana*—"The fowl that buys the dist. This fowl is known as *Orun Ap. ti, liter. odda way.*"

The other heaven is known as *Orun Ap. ti, liter. odda way.* of potsherd," hence "Hell." In order to ascertain which of the heavens the spirit must go, the heart-soul must go to the judgment hall known as *Asalu Orun*, and there it must give an account of the deeds done in the flesh.

It is believed that an extremely wicked person will be compelled to commence his account before his death man give the whole account to the hearing of his fellow men he is allowed to die. When a person is in the pangs of death and he begins to narrate his evil deeds, the Yoruba say "nka," "He is giving an account of his deeds." When gasping for breath, they say "O npoka iku," that is "O yika iku"—"He is inviting the spirit of death."

Belief in a future judgment in the hall of heaven is entrenched in the minds of the Yorubas. It contains the idea of a righteous judgment, of a place where wrongs will be righted and grievances redressed. The belief acts as a deterrent to evil doing and checks a reckless desire for vengeance while soothing the mind of one who feels himself wronged by wreaking his vengeance on a bully or an unknown person.

In heaven, as well as the land of the dead, a person is supposed to live the same kind of life as he led in the mortal world. Hence arose the need of slaves and dependents in the other world and the desire of such persons to accompany their masters or husbands in order to accompany their masters or husbands in the other world. On the occasion of an Alafin of Ife, a hundred of his slaves and wives were taken to the other world with a lower animal. Some of them were the tiger "*Ḙku(n)*" and the leopard "*Amo(n)-teku(n)*," both of which are credited with "*khus*" or luminous spirits.

The Yorubas believe that the transformation of a human

service in the other world. It is with difficulty that the practice was stopped by the British Government.

## SUMMARY

From the foregoing description and from the description of the death and burial customs given in the preceding chapter, the following points in regard to the Yoruba conception of man stand out in bold relief :

- (1) That man's nature is dual—material and immaterial.
- (2) That the material part, *Ara*—"body"—together with its constant companion *Ojiji*—"shadow"—perishes at death.
- (3) That the immaterial part *Iye*—"mind, mental body"—which is closely connected with the body may perish even during lifetime, and certainly perishes at death.
- (4) That the immaterial parts *Ọka(n)*—"heart-soul"—and *Ẹmi(n)*—"spirit"—are imperishable, *Ọkan* and *Ẹrin* being used interchangeably as the real essence of personality.
- (5) That the material heart is perishable, but as the seat of courage and divinity it may be preserved according to the methods described above.
- (6) That death is not the end of existence. A man's spirit continues to exist with essential characteristics which preserve his identity. His name remains unchanged.
- (7) That each spirit can identify its own body or its representative. It can reappear in a form recognizable by others.
- (8) That the *Adimuoriṣa*, *Egungun*, *Oro* and *Ẹluku* cults show the existence of a belief in the resurrection of the spirit.
- (9) That the spirit of man is akin to God and that it belongs to a larger self or a group of spirits.
- (10) That the spirit of man exists before birth and continues to live after death. This may be compared with Wordsworth's opinion :

" Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,  
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar."

- (11) That there is a judgment after death. The heart-soul must go to the judgment hall and there give an account of all that it has done in the flesh. The fate of the spirit in the next world depends upon the judgment it receives at the judgment hall of heaven.
- (12) That the king during his lifetime is deified and worshipped. After death the spirit of man may be deified and worshipped. Hence there are anthropomorphic deities.
- (13) That the spirit-world is in contact with living persons. That the dead still take active interest in the welfare of their family. That their spirit can be invoked, that appeals can be made to them, and that sacrifice avails in securing their favour.
- (14) That the heart-soul goes to rejoin the family group and may be reincarnated or may transmigrate into a plant or animal.
- (15) That the spirit goes back to *Ọlọrun* the Supreme Deity who is known as *Ẹlẹmi*, "Owner of Spirits." The spirit is immortal.
- (16) That there is reward for good conduct in the present world and just retribution in the next world where wrongs committed in the present life will be righted and even justice dispensed.

#### COMPARISON WITH ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CONCEPTION

In many respects the above description of the Yoruba conception of man is identical with or similar to the Ancient Egyptian conception.

Before the points of identity or similarity are discussed it would be helpful to explain the constituent parts of man according to Ancient Egyptian conception.

Professor E. A. Wallis Budge thus enumerates the constituent parts :

(1) The physical body which was called *Khat*, i.e. that which was liable to decay, and could only be preserved by mummification.

(2) The *ka*, a word which by general consent is translated "double" . . . an abstract individuality or personality which possessed the attributes of the man to whom it belonged. . . . it could wander at will . . . and was supposed to eat and drink, and

the greatest care was usually taken to lay abundant supplies of offerings in tombs.

(3) The *ba*, or heart-soul, was in some way connected with the *Ka*. . . . It seems to have been able to assume material or immaterial form at will.

(4) The *ab*, or heart, was closely associated with the soul, and it was held to be the source both of the animal life and of good and evil in man. The preservation of the heart of a man was held to be of the greatest importance, and in the judgment it, is the one member of the body which is singled out for special examination; here, however, the heart is regarded as having been the centre of spiritual and thinking life . . . and it typifies everything which the word "conscience" signifies to us. The necessity of preserving the material heart was very great. . . .

(5) The *Khaibit*, or shadow, was closely connected with the *ba*, or soul. . . .

(6) The *Khu*, or spiritual soul, is often mentioned in connection with the *ba*, or heart-soul, and it seems to have been regarded as an ethereal being, in fact the SOUL, which under no circumstances could die; it dwelt in the *Sahu*, or spiritual body.

(7) The *Sekhem*, or power . . . . the incorporeal personification of the vital force of a man.

(8) The *ren*, or name . . . it ranks equally with the *ka*.

(9) The *Sahu*, or spiritual body, which formed the habitation of the soul. . . . In it all the mental and spiritual attributes of the natural body were united to the new powers of its own nature.<sup>1</sup>

The resemblance between the Ancient Egyptian conception and the Yoruba conception of man can now be traced in detail.

First, there is the physical body, known as *Khat* in Ancient Egyptian and as *Ara* in Yoruba. Both are liable to decay. The Yoruba word *A-ra* means "that which belongs to Ra"; this strongly suggests that the worship of Ra was so strong in some parts of Ancient Egypt where the Yorubas had resided, that they regarded their bodies as the property of Ra, the Sun-God.

Secondly, the word *ka* is noteworthy. From the description given of it above, it is obvious that the ideas connected with it are identical with those connected with the Yoruba word *q-ka(n)*. The word *q-ka(n)* is certainly derived from *ka*; *q* is only an initial vowel characteristic of Yoruba nouns, and *n* is a nasal consonant.

Both *ka* and *q-ka(n)* denote an abstract personality or

<sup>1</sup> *Book of the Dead* (1923), Intro., pp. lix-lxiv.

personality which possesses the attributes of the man to whom each of them may belong. Both could wander at will after death, and both are supposed to need the food and drink offered to them after death.

It should be noted that when a Yoruba man wishes to refer to his real personality he uses the word *ka*. For example, he says "Emi ti ka ara mi," literally "I, of the ka of my body" *i.e.* I myself.

It should be noted that as the same word  $\varnothing$ -ka(n) is used for the material heart, the ideas associated with *ab*, the material heart in Ancient Egypt are also associated with it. Both are supposed to be closely associated with the soul and to be "the source both of the animal life and of good and evil in man." The preservation of the heart was deemed to be of great importance in both countries. Also the two words *ab* and  $\varnothing$ -ka(n) typify "everything which the word conscience signifies to us."

The identification of the heart with the Ka by the Yorubas is supported by a passage in the *Book of the Dead* where the deceased says to his heart, "Thou art my Ka."<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, the survival of the Ancient Egyptian word *ba* has been noted in the previous chapters. Somehow among the Yorubas there exists the belief that it is only the wicked soul that will become a *ba* after death.

In the present world the *ba* is a heart-soul among the Yorubas. For example,  $\varnothing$ -*ba*—"King"—is supposed to be the incarnate soul of the tribe or nation.

The word is used in the same sense as *ka*—Yoruba  $\varnothing$ ka(n)—which is supposed to assume material or immaterial form at will.

Fourthly, *Khaibit* corresponds to the Yoruba *ojiji*. The former is supposed to be connected with the *ba*, or soul, the latter with the *ara*, or body. The difference is that of the point of view; one is the view of it from an external standpoint of its visibility, the other is from an internal standpoint of its significance. This difference of point of view has led to a further difference; the Yoruba shadow, viewed externally, perishes at death; whilst the Egyptian shadow, viewed internally and connected with the heart-soul, is imperishable.

<sup>1</sup> Chapter XXXB, p. 150, Edition by Wallis Budge (1923).

Fifthly, the *Khu*, "spiritual soul," "luminous spirit," is one of the most important words that have survived in the Yoruba language from the Ancient Egyptian language. Its survival as a form of salutation has been noted in Chapter I. Over two hundred distinct salutations contain the word. So frequent is the use of these salutations that the Yoruba people who settled in Sierra Leone are known as "A-ku" people, *i.e.* those who use the word A-ku or O-ku frequently in their salutations.

The Yorubas believe that a man possesses a *Khu*. When a person dies, the usual expression is *O ku*—"He or she dies"—that is, he or she gives up the *Khu* or becomes a luminous spirit, according to Ancient Egyptian idea.

The word used by the Yorubas for "spirit" or "spiritual soul" is *Ẹmi(n)*. It is used in the same sense as the Egyptian word *Khu*. Each of them is regarded as "an ethereal being, in fact the SOUL, which under no circumstances could die."

Just as a *Khu* is regarded by the Ancient Egyptians as the divine element in man, so also is an *ẹmi(n)* regarded by the Yorubas. In fact, the word *ẹ-mi(n)* means "that which belongs to Min," the African god of Coptos, showing clearly that *ẹmi(n)* is regarded as a spiritual element akin to that of a deity. The word may be taken as a further indication of the connection of the Yorubas with Coptos in Ancient Egypt, where the god Min was actively worshipped.<sup>1</sup>

A corpse or a disembodied spirit is known as *O-ku*—"that which has become a *Khu*." "Death" is "I-ku" in Yoruba, that is the process of becoming a luminous spirit or of giving up the *Khu*.

Sixthly, the word *S-ekhe-m* survives in Yoruba as *ẹkẹ*—initial and final consonants are elided. The word *ẹkẹ* means "confidence." Its meaning becomes clearer when one considers the following expression: *Mo gbe gbogbo ẹkẹ mi le*—"I put the whole of my confidence in him," literally, "I trace the whole of my power to him," *i.e.* he alone can support me or give me power to achieve success.

Seventhly, attention has been called to the great importance attached to names in Yorubaland and in Ancient Egypt. In the latter country, the *Ka* name is of the greatest importance.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI, Oriṣa Oko.

The Yoruba word for a name is Orukọ. This is derived from the Ancient Egyptian *ren ka* or *run ka*, "Ka Name." The derivation is as follows : O is the initial vowel characteristic of Yoruba nouns ; the letter *e* is often replaced in Ancient Egyptian language by the letter *u*, e.g. Tem, Tum ; hence *re* becomes *ru* ; final nasal consonant is elided ; the word *ren* or *run* thus becomes *o-ru* ; kọ (kaw) is a modification of the word *ka*. Oru-kọ is thus a survival of *ren ka*, meaning "Ka Name." The reason why the Yorubas attach importance to names thus becomes obvious.

Lastly, *Sahu* or spiritual body, has no counterpart in Yoruba. It must not be confused with *Sahu*, i.e. Orion, which has survived in Yoruba as *O-sa-hi(n)*. The absence of the counterpart is probably due to the fact that the word *ẹ-mi(n)* also connotes the idea of a spiritual body.

Apart from the survivals connected with the constituent parts of man detailed above, ideas which may be regarded as Egyptian survivals exist in Yorubaland in connection with the conception of man and his destiny in the future world. The following are a few of them :

(1) The idea of heaven. Attention has been called above to the survival of elements in the Osirian faith. It has been pointed out that the Osirian heaven has no place for the idle, that there is a belief in judgment after death, and that the spirit of the good person will return to Osiris. All these ideas survive in Yorubaland. The spirit returns to *Ẹlẹmi*—"Owner of Spirits"—and *Olodumare*—"the exalted personage to whom I will or must return."

The idea of return to the gods is not peculiar to the Osirian faith. Prof. Wiedemann says "The living and indestructible parts of a man . . . have found their common house in the living body ; on leaving it after death each set out alone to find its own way to the gods."<sup>1</sup> The idea is widespread in Yorubaland as in Ancient Egypt.

The Yoruba word for heaven is *ọ-ru(n)*, which is derived from the ancient Egyptian word *horu*—"sky, heaven."

The survival of the god *Thot* has been noted in Chapter II, and that of the fields of *Ialu* in Chapter II and IV.

Hell is known by the Yorubas as *Ọrun Apadi*, usually

<sup>1</sup> *Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 10.

translated "Heaven of Potsherd." Apadi is of Egyptian origin. Its full form is A-pa-odi, pa or per, house ; Odi, an Egyptian deity regarded as wicked and always revelling in tormenting others. A-pa-di, therefore, is "the abode of Odi."

(2) The survival of the idea of guardian and family spirits has been noted in Chapter I. The following passage further illustrates the point :

"It seems, then, best to regard the Ka as an ancestral emanation, which was associated with each man from birth and by its superiority would guide and help him through this life and the next."<sup>1</sup>

(3) The idea of metempsychosis. Compare the Yoruba idea with the Egyptian idea expressed as follows : "The Egyptians were the first who asserted the doctrine that the soul of man is immortal, and that when the body perishes, it enters into some other animal, constantly springing into existence. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

(4) The different conceptions of the future life. According to Prof. Erman, "From the earliest ages it was an article of faith amongst the Ancient Egyptians that man existed after death, but where or how he existed was not so clear to their minds. Some thought that he was to be found amongst the stars in the sky ; others that he sat on the branches of trees with the birds, and others that he remained on earth where his bones were laid to rest. . . . The peasant believed . . . that he went to the fields of Earu . . . here he would plough the land and reap the harvests, and when tired in the evening, he would sit under the sycamore, and play draughts with his companions."<sup>3</sup>

These different conceptions survive in Yorubaland. The most prevalent conception among the Yorubas is that in the other world, the dead live much the same kind of life. Hence the need for the noble and the rich to be accompanied by slaves and wives. This was the case in Ancient Egypt, where in the latter days slaves and wives were replaced by ushebti figures.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Flinders Petrie, *Ancient Egypt* (1914), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Herodotus*, Edition Bohn, II, 123.

<sup>3</sup> *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 306.

<sup>4</sup> Flinders Petrie, *Ancient Egyptians* (1925), p. 27, col. 80, sections 35 and 36.

See also Sayce, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt*, pp. 52, 112 and 171.

(5) The existence of several individualities in one and the same Ego. This is the same in Yorubaland as in Ancient Egypt. Prof. Erman, writing on this subject says :

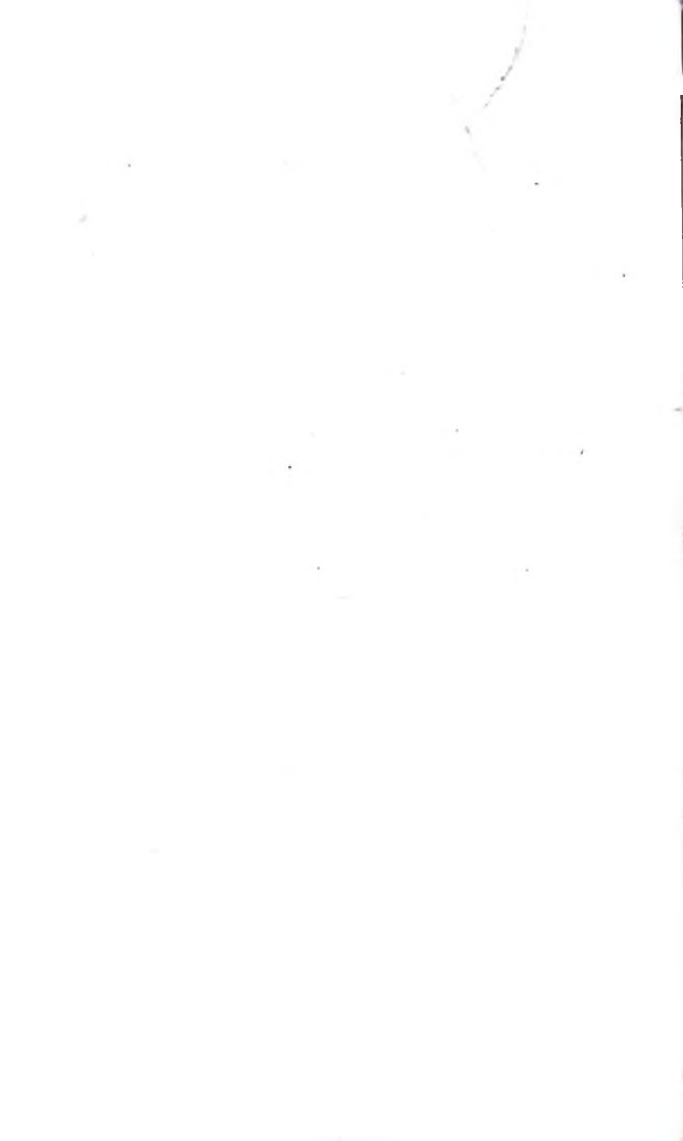
“ They (*i.e.* the Ancient Egyptians) did not consider man as a simple individuality ; he consisted of at least three parts, the body, the soul, and the ghost, the image, the double or the genius, according as we translate the word *Ka* . . .”<sup>1</sup>

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is no doubt that the advanced conception by the Yorubas in regard to the nature of man is due to contact with the lofty religion of Ancient Egypt. Lofty ideas of immortality, heaven, and judgment after death are not often found among primitive people, and their presence in Yorubaland can only find solution in a theory of contact between the Yoruba civilization and a higher civilization. That civilization is the Ancient Egyptian civilization, as may be seen in the points of similarity and identity noted above in this chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 307.

CHAPTER XIV  
MAGIC IN YORUBALAND



## CHAPTER XIV

### MAGIC IN YORUBALAND

CLOSELY associated with the religion of the Yoruba peoples are magical beliefs and practices. So close is the association that in some respects, religion and magic in Yorubaland seem to be indistinguishable. The one is so dovetailed into the other that the resulting belief or practice may be associated with the one no less than with the other. The offices of the priest and of the magician are sometimes held by one and the same person, and ceremonies are sometimes performed with an admixture of religious and magical elements.

The Yoruba religion is a primitive religion. As in the case of other primitive religions, the antagonism between priest and magician does not exist. According to Sir J. G. Fraser, such an antagonism "seems to have made its appearance comparatively late in the history of religion. At an earlier stage the functions of priests and sorcerer were often combined, or to speak perhaps more correctly, were not yet differentiated from each other."<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of magic in Ancient Egypt, Professor Maspero says that "we ought not to attach to the word magic the degrading idea which it almost invariably calls up in the mind of a modern. Ancient magic was the very foundation of religion. The faithful who desired to obtain some favour from a god had not the chance of succeeding except by laying hands on the deity, and this arrest could only be effected by means of a certain number of rites, sacrifices, prayers and chants, which the god himself had revealed and which obliged him to do what was demanded of him." This statement about magic in Ancient Egypt applies in its entirety to magic in its relation to religion in Yorubaland. Even in the case of black magic, success is always attributed to the possession of mysterious means of obtaining help from

<sup>1</sup> *Golden Bough*, Abridged Edition, p. 52.

the gods or evil spirits worshipped or acknowledged by the magician.

Professor Breasted's description of magic in Ancient Egypt applies equally well to Yorubaland. The description is as follows :

"It is difficult for the modern mind to understand how completely the belief in magic penetrated the whole substance of life, dominating popular custom and constantly appearing in the simplest acts of daily household routine. . . . It constituted the very atmosphere in which the men of early oriental world lived. Without the saving and salutary influence of such magical agencies constantly invoked, the life of an ancient household in the East was unthinkable."

As in the case of Yoruba religion, the foundation of Yoruba magic must be sought in the firm belief in the reality of the unseen world, in the existence of beings underlying, causing and controlling the phenomena of nature and the physical and mental world, in the possibility of establishing contact with the unseen powers and of obtaining favours from them either by prayers or by force of charms and incantations.

Theoretical Magic does not exist in Yorubaland. "The primitive man knows magic only on its practical side." On the other hand, Practical Magic, both positive and negative, form an important part in the life of every Yoruba person or household. Negative magic takes the form of taboos. These taboos have been described in a previous chapter where attention has been called to their importance as a cohesive factor in the social life of the community. Positive Magic assumes the forms of sorcery, exercise of mysterious powers for good or ill, use of charms and practice of occultism for therapeutic or other purposes, and performances based on a claim to possession of esoteric and mysterious knowledge. Belief in the interaction between mind matter and the interdependence of both on one another is an important factor in the Yoruba practice of magic. This is not expressed theoretically, but the practical working of magic in Yorubaland is inexplicable without such a belief as is so clearly seen in all aspects of Yoruba magic.

It should be noted also that the Yorubas believe in the efficacy of sacrifice as a means of setting spiritual forces in motion. They sometimes perform sacrifices with the wish

that the desired blessings should be proportional to, or as unceasing as, their sacrifices. Hence the saying "*Iṣẹbọ ni Iṣogun*," Sacrifice is a means of making "medicine," that is, a means of acquiring magical power.

A variety of terms has been used to designate the means by which magical powers are wielded or the manifestation of magical power or influence.

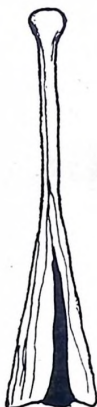
One of these terms is "fetich," which is derived from the Portuguese word "Feitico," a name given by the Portuguese to the gods, charms and amulets of West Africa. Another term is "juju," derived from the French word "jou-jou," which means "A TOY." The terms "FETICH" and "JUJU" are generally applied to visible objects, living or dead, which are worshipped on account of their supposedly inherent supernatural qualities.

The terms used in designating invisible objects include "WITCHCRAFT," "SUPERSTITION," "OCCULTISM," "MAGIC," "MEDICINE," "MANA," "ORENDA," and others. Of these, the terms "Medicine" and "Mana" deserve comments.

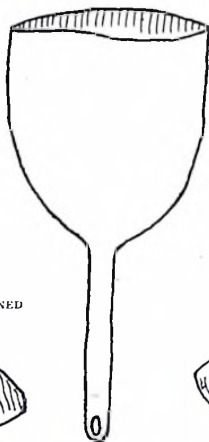
In connection with magical practices in Yorubaland, the term "medicine" has been applied to the supernatural means of compassing one's ends. The Yoruba word usually translated "medicine" is "ogun."<sup>1</sup> The translation is obviously inadequate, and has been adopted through lack of a better or more suitable word. The term "OGUN" really means "an occult, mysterious or supernatural power by means of which one's end is achieved." It connotes the idea that such an end cannot be achieved by ordinary process. The term must be distinguished from *egbogi*, which is also translated "medicine" and which refers primarily to material medicine. It must be stated, however, that the terms *egbogi* and *ogun* are now being used indiscriminately for material medicine

<sup>1</sup> The word *Ogun* is used in different senses according to the position of the accents on the syllables. Thus

- (1) *Ōgùn* = wicker basket used by fishermen as traps for crab-fish, etc.
- (2) *Ogùn* = medicine, spell, charm supernatural power ;
- (3) *Ògún* = god of iron, god of war, iron rust ;
- (4) *Ógùn* = river ogun ;
- (5) *Ogun* = War, battle ;
- (6) *Ogún* = Inheritance, heritage ;
- (7) *Ōgún* = twenty ;
- (8) *Ōgún* = Sweat, perspiration. The use of the word in so many different senses has baffled several non-native writers.



METAL BELLS USED IN THE WORSHIP  
OF THE GOD Q̄BATALA.



SHANGO BELL MADE  
OF METAL.

A DEVIL STONE STAINED  
WITH BLOOD.



SACRED STONE OF  
SHANGO.



FIG. 33. BABALAWO'S PARAPHERNALIA.

and supernatural means. A clear distinction is always made when the term is applied to persons making use of the means. Thus, ONI-ŞE-GUN—"Maker of medicine," "Medical Doctor" is used in a good sense; ELEGBOGI is used indifferently; BABA-ALAWO and ADAHUNŞE are used indifferently according to the use made by the persons so designated of their knowledge and powers; OLOGUN—"Owner of medicine," is always used in a bad sense; *Ologun Buruku*—"Owner of bad medicine"—is definitely a "BLACK MAGICIAN."

The term *Mana* is also translated "Medicine." This term has been widely used by anthropologists; Bishop Codrington first called attention to it. He discovered that it was widely used by the native tribes of Melanesia, Australia and other islands in the South-west Pacific.<sup>1</sup> The term, however, does not appear to be confined to the tribes just mentioned. It is probably the same term which was applied by the Hebrews to the strange material object which was supplied to them as food in the wilderness. This object was designated Manna, a Hebrew word which means "What is this?" The word *mana* exists in the Yoruba language ejaculatory expression for what is uncanny is "KI RE?" or "KINI YI?"—"What is this?" It is quite possible that the Hebrew word for "what is this?"—Manna—was adopted by the Yoruba from the Hebrews whilst both were residing in Ancient Egypt and applied to lightning, which, in Yoruba, is *mana-mana*.

Another Yoruba term deserving attention is *nkan*, which does not merely denote "something," but also "something undefined, undefinable, mysterious and powerful." Hence the expression *o lo nkan* does not merely mean "he uses something," but also means "he uses supernatural or occult means." Also the threat "*Iwo yio ri nkan*" must not be simply translated "you will see something," but its real meaning must be given as—"Something mysterious and far-reaching in its effect will befall you."

#### PRINCIPLES OF MAGIC

In order to understand clearly the practice of magic in Yorubaland it will be helpful to state the principles on which the practice of primitive magic is based. The principles have

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. J. Estlin Carpenter, *Comparative Religion*, p. 80 *seqq.* and Dr. R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion*.

been defined by Sir J. G. Fraser as follows : First, that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause ; and, second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed. The former principle he calls the Law of Similarity, and the latter, the Law of Contact or Contagion. Charms and actions based on the former he calls Homoeopathic Magic, and those based on the latter, Contagious Magic. These two types of sympathetic Magic are found in Yorubaland.

### EXAMPLES OF HOMOEOPATHIC MAGIC

Examples of Homoeopathic magic abound in Yorubaland. At first sight it seems incredible that wonderful results could be achieved by the primitive methods of imitative magic. The instances, however, are so numerous that they deserve attention even if there is a belief that spiritual or psychic forces are at work.

A few examples will now be given :

(1) *Apeta*,<sup>1</sup> or " invocation shooting." This is a common form of Sympathetic Magic and is used chiefly as secret means of revenge. Dr. Farrow thus describes it : " A person desiring to kill anyone against whom he has a grudge makes a mud image of his intended victim, and at night sets this up, calls the name of his foe three times, and then shoots at the figure with a miniature bow and arrows. At that instant the victim feels a sharp pain in the region of the body which, in the figure representing him, has been struck by the arrow. A wound, or abscess, quickly develops, from which he soon dies, unless he recognizes the nature of the injury and can apply a counter-charm, a more powerful " medicine " (ogun) than that which has injured him."

Instances known to the writer have occurred when the victims have died within a few days of their being warned against " invocation-shooting."

<sup>1</sup> This practice of invocation-shooting is widely diffused in different parts of the world. It is found among the black men of South Africa and Australia. It is found also among other races in Egypt and Babylon, India and Ceylon, and even in Europe, notably in the Scottish Highlands. Sir J. G. Fraser has given several examples of the practice in different parts of the world in *The Golden Bough*, *Magical Art*, Vol. I, pp. 57, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69.

A confirmatory evidence of the efficacy of sympathetic magic was given by the Rev. J. Buckley Wood, who spent forty years as a Missionary in Yorubaland. He related how he visited a chief, who said of a man who had offended him at a great distance, "He will die tomorrow." Although the distance made a material means of killing in a few days impossible, news was brought within a week that the man had died on the day predicted.

(2) *Didi-Ẹmi*, or "the tying up of a man's life." The writer was present on one occasion by the bedside of a dying man who had been attended by a native doctor at an earlier stage of his illness. The medical practitioner who subsequently attended to him had given up the case as hopeless, and yet the patient was in the throes of death for over a week without relief. The native doctor was called in again, and he pointed to a stone which he had tied up pensively in a corner of the room. He remarked that the man's spirit had been tied up by means of the rope and stone and the man would not die until the rope had been cut. The native doctor cut the rope, the stone fell on the ground, and the patient died within a few minutes. This form of magic is also known as *Sokuro*.

(3) *Ogun Ifọju*, or supernatural means of inflicting blindness. This is done in two ways. A mud image of the intended victim is made. After the recital of appropriate incantations the eyes are speared with a sharp knife. The intended victim's eyes will immediately become blind.

Another method of doing this is by means of a wooden image with blind eyes. Incantations are chanted on the image until it acquires the intended virtue. It is then wrapped up with a piece of cloth. Whoever is the first person to see the unveiled image will become blind.

An effort was made recently to use the latter method in dealing with a public offender. A rowdy mob surrounded the offender's house and asked him merely to look out of windows, at the same time assuring him that no violence was intended. The offender, sensing the danger, went to bed with his head covered up and eyes shut.

If the latter image is not used on the victim a sacrifice must be made to remove the virtue from it.

(4) *Nina-ika*, or pointing the finger. This is another method of inflicting blindness. A finger over which incantations have been chanted is pointed at the eyes of the intended victim whilst the operator recites the following incantation :

Ika ko loju,  
 O ko ma loju  
 Ika ki i riran,  
 O ko ma riran.  
 "A finger has no eyes ;  
 You will have no eyes.  
 A finger never sees ;  
 You will never see (again)."

(5) *Asun-fonfon*. This is a "medicine" used for causing people to fall into a deep sleep. It is used chiefly by burglars. The "medicine" is made in this way. The burglars divide themselves into two sets. Two pieces of thin sticks are stuck on the ground and a heavy stick is placed on them. Some robbers remain at home chanting somniferous incantations over the sticks as follows :

Asun-fonfon ni ti ifon,  
 Asun-fonfon ni ti igi aja.  
 O ki yio şai sun-fonfon.

Soundly sleeps sound sleep,  
 Soundly sleep the house rafters.  
 Soundly you must sleep.

As soon as the remaining robbers reach the scene of their operations they chant the same incantations in subdued tones while the inmates fall into a deep sleep until the burglary is completed.

(6) *Pipa Ojiji*, or "injuring the shadow." This is similar to No. (1) above, but instead of an image, the intended victim's shadow is used. It is believed that a man can be injured or killed by throwing a "medicine" (*Ogun*) made of "alligator" pepper on the shadow. Whatever part of the man is hit will develop a sore which will lead to blood-poisoning, and then to death, unless powerful counteracting "medicines" are applied.

(7) *Ikoko gbigbona*, or "hot pot." This is a "medicine" consisting of decoctions of herbs and other ingredients which

are boiled in a pot. It is used for two purposes. It is used for promoting a strife between husband and wife by an interested third party. The belief is that as long as the pot is boiling, strife and misunderstanding will develop in intensity. A common threat among the Yorubas is *a ti gbe Ikoko re ka ina*—"Your pot is already on the fire"—that is, supernatural forces have been set in motion by means of the hot pot for the disruption of your domestic peace and happiness.

The second purpose for which the "hot pot" is used is the achievement of victory. The herbs used for this purpose differ from those used for the purpose described above. The underlying belief is that as long as the pot is kept boiling, fortune will smile on the person or persons for whom the "medicine" is made. In the case of a duel or a contest, success goes to the person or party which has the more powerful "pot" on the fire. When a team loses a football match, the taunt generally levelled on the players by the derisive crowd is "why does your native doctor allow your pot to get cold?"

(8) *Şugudu*. *Şugudu* has been described by some writers as a form of demonology based on the principle of homoeopathic magic. In Chapter IX above it was described as an orisha made for a special purpose and that its efficiency depends upon the exercise of the will power of the sender. The opinion expressed there is confirmed by the following passage written on the subject by Roger Bacon :

"Where the attention, desire and virtue of a rational soul, which is worthier than the stars, concur with the power of the sky, it is inevitable that either a word or some other instrument of marvellous power be produced which will alter the things of this world, so that not only natural objects but also souls will be inclined to those ends which the wise operator desires."

To this passage P. Amaury Talbot adds : "Again, if some malignant soul thinks hard of infecting another, and longs for this ardently and has full confidence in his own power to inflict such injury, there is no doubt that nature will obey thought ! "

In view of the available evidence it must be admitted that the Yoruba *adahunse* (medicine-men) have developed their will-power to such a high degree that wonderful results have

followed its exercise. This will-power is constantly being developed by the use of charms and incantations, and especially by the use of "ŞUGUDU" or "Şigidi" which serves as a concrete object on which attention is concentrated for the strengthening of the will-power. Thought-projection is thereby effectively practised. Ripples of thought which are set in motion by the exercise of will-power spread on to the victim and affect his innermost mental recesses for good or for ill. Belief in the efficacy of thought projection is strong among the Yorubas. Although there is no equivalent expression to thought projection in Yoruba, yet the idea is present. When the thought-projection is expressed in words, the process is known as "Epe" cursing, "malediction" which is really "an oral expression of the transmission of mysterious mental poisons which affect both body and mind." Among the Ijebus the use of *Epe* is common. The users have so developed their will-power that inhabitants of the neighbouring districts sometimes go to "buy" epe from them. It is believed that in the case of powerful *epes* the range of their efficacy is not limited by distance and that their action is immediate.

The fear of *epe* is so strong that a loose expression of the evil consequences of an act may be twisted into an *epe* and may bring a sharp rejoinder that one is uttering a curse—*O şepe fun u*—"You are cursing him."

The use of *epe* is considered here because it is often accompanied by imitative acts. For example, a man who wishes another to collapse through paralysis may demonstrate the intended effect by the movement of his hands or by gestures or by a practical imitation of a collapse.

According to the Yorubas an important principle affecting the efficacy of thought projection is that "Like associates with like." They believe that the projection of evil and harmful thoughts by an evil person cannot affect a good person. This belief is expressed in several Yoruba sayings, of which the following is an example :

Èni şe ire şe e fun ara rẹ,  
 Èni şika şe e fun ara rẹ.  
 Ire ko ni şai gbe ni.  
 Ika ko ni şai ka onika.  
 Bi inu ba mọ, eşinşin onika ko le kun ni.

“ One who does good does it for himself,  
 One who does evil does it for himself,  
 Virtue has its good reward,  
 Evil has its evil consequences.  
 If one's conscience is clear, the harmful fly sent by a  
 wicked man can do one no harm.”

### EXAMPLE OF CONTAGIOUS MAGIC

The Yorubas believe in the efficacy of contagious magic. They exercise great care in keeping their wearing apparel or other belongings which, by a stretch of imagination, can possibly be used for evil purposes.

The following examples of contagious Magic may be given here :

(i) *Bibu-lẹsẹ*—“ The use of footprints for harmful purposes.” There is a strong belief that a person's feet or legs can be injured if his footprints on the sands or on soft earth be treated with *ogun* (medicine). Persons suffering from acute rheumatism or elephantiasis very often trace their suffering to malicious treatment of their footprints.

This use of footprints is often resorted to by malicious persons who fail to secure a direct means of wreaking vengeance on their offenders. A law of retaliation in Yoruba is : “ *Bi o ba ba a, ki o pa a ; bi o ko ba ba a, bu u li ẹsẹ.*” If you meet him, that is your enemy or offender, kill him ; if you do not meet him, poison or harm him by means of his footprints.”

In the olden days the person pointed out by the *babalawo* as having caused the death of another person in this way used to be sentenced to death.

(ii) *Kiko-itọ*—“ The use of spittle for harmful purposes.” The inrush of western civilization has hardly diminished the belief among the Yorubas that a severe cough or consumption may be caused by removing a person's spittle and treating it magically. As a matter of fact, consumption was at one time regarded as being caused exclusively by this means. Hence the Yoruba equivalent for consumption is *arun-ikotọ*—“ disease arising from the magical treatment of spittle.” The alternative term *Ikọ-ẹgbẹ*—“ wasting or consumptive cough”—is of comparatively late origin.

(iii) *Gbigbe pako, bata, etc.*—“ Removal of tooth brush, boots,

shoes and other articles." The Yorubas believe that physical harm may be done to a person whose property is removed and treated magically.

- (iv) *Bibuje-aja*—"dog's bite." In the case of a dog's bite there is a belief that the wound from a dog's bite will be quickly healed if a piece of bread is soaked with the blood flowing from the wound and the dog is persuaded to eat the piece of bread. This will set healing properties radiating from the dog in motion, and thereby result in the victim's rapid healing.
- (v) *Bibu-enia-je*—"bite from human beings." A method of retaliation for a bite by a human being is to wash the wound with water which has been used by a blacksmith in dealing with hot iron. The magical effect of such treatment of the wound is the loss of all the biter's natural teeth.
- (vi) *Didi-enia*—"Binding up a person." This is a process combining the principles of Homoeopathic and of Contagious magic. A garment, shoe, cap, or any other article which has been used by a person is securely tied and suspended on a wall. This is supposed to be a symbol of the physical or mental powers of the owner tied up in a particular manner. The owner becomes incapable of movement in a particular direction or maintains an inexplicable form of movement for which he is not responsible. Hence when a person fails to act when he ought to act or behaves in an irresponsible way, the Yoruba taunt is *Nwọn di tabi nwọn ndi ọ ni*—"Have you been magically bound or are you being so bound?" This remark will put the person concerned in his right sense, if he is not really under magical influence.
- (vii) *Ma kan*—"Do not touch," "Untouchable." Some objects are regarded as untouchable or inviolable. If these are touched, immediate death may be the result. Otherwise the magical force in the objects will continue to operate on the objects they have touched, although contact has long been severed. An example of such a sacrosanct object is the dress of an *egungun*.<sup>1</sup> The virtue in the dress continues to act on the person who has

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VIII above.

touched it until the destruction of the sacrilegious person is completed.

Another form of this Magic is known as *Ma gun* which, when effectively applied, always spells instantaneous death for an adulterer.

### CHARMS AND AMULETS

The use of charms and amulets is widespread in Yorubaland. Neither civilization nor any form of superior religion introduced into the country has had much effect in restricting their use.

A great variety of the charms and amulets may be found in different parts of the country. Some of them are animate, others are inanimate.

It is noteworthy that animals are used as protective charms. In Ilesha the monkey is used as a protective charm. The belief is that there is a force emanating from the animal which can nullify powerful medicines or *ogun*. Hence the animal may be found at the entrance of a chief's compound or anyone who has the means of keeping one. In January 1940, when the house of a powerful chief in Ilesha was attacked by a violent mob, the first object of attack was the chief's monkey. A loud shout was raised when the animal was killed. The underlying belief was that the death of the protective animal would allow the house to be stormed with impunity.

Snakes are also used for protective purposes. Some of them are kept in bedrooms, after they had been tamed. They are credited with great power for protecting the inmates from harm, especially from accidents.

A few of the inanimate charms used for protective purposes may be mentioned here.

Chains of large size are laid across doors or across premises to neutralize the effect of any powerful medicine (*ogun*) which may be introduced by a malicious visitor.

Stumps or barks of trees, dried leaves, bunches of feathers and other objects are hung above the lintels inside houses, as protective charms. These are first rendered efficacious by the recital of incantations over them.

In the olden days charms were widely used for the protection of property left on the roadside or in an open farm.

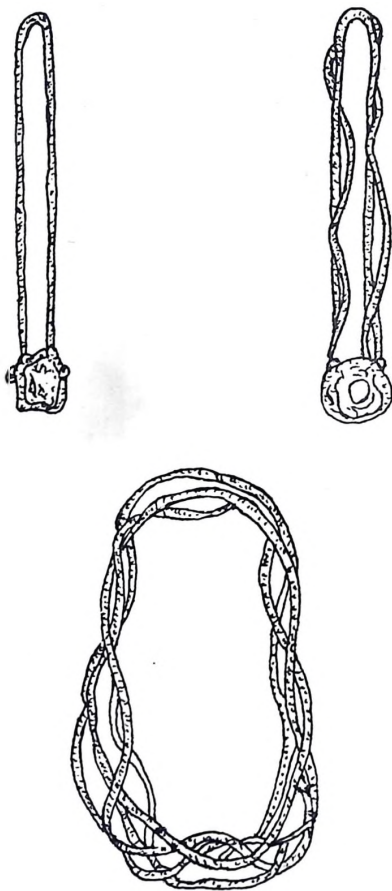


FIG. 34. SPECIMENS OF AMULETS.

The charms may consist of palm nuts, feathers, stones or some other familiar objects. These charms are so dreaded that no one would dare to steal articles protected by them. The charms are known as *ale*, "protective juju," and the process of securing a property in this way is known as "*pe ale le li ori*"—"invite ale to protect it." Ale, therefore, seems to be an ancient or long lost and much dreaded god or goddess of vengeance, probably the same deity *Ale* worshipped by the Ibos as a powerful Earth Goddess.<sup>1</sup>

The dread of these *ales* made it possible in the olden days to hold what were then known as "wayside markets." In these markets, which may be found on lonely roads, wares are exposed for sale without anybody being placed in charge of them. They are simply protected by *Ales*. The value of each ware is indicated by the number of stones placed near it. The buyer comes along, assesses the value of the ware by counting the stones, puts down the required sum of money, and takes away nothing more than that for which he had paid. The tribal or national morality thus enforced was very effective. Cases of theft were rare; so great was the dread of the *jujus* or *ales*.

One of the painful results of the contact between western civilization and primitive culture is the removal of powerful sanctions of morality centred around the dread of *jujus* or "medicines," and the substitution for them of sanctions which operate ineffectively as deterrents from evil-doing. Well may the native exclaim: "Ye have taken away my gods which I made . . . and . . . ye say unto me, What aileth thee?"<sup>2</sup>

Non-natives often say that the primitive native possesses a higher standard of morality than the civilized native. Whilst such a generalization is not wholly admissible, the fact must be stated that the unsophisticated native still has the privilege of being guided by efficient sanctions of morality which the civilized or semi-civilized native had been deprived of and for which an equivalent which would operate with the same force is left unprovided or is being gradually understood. A form of civilization which destroys along practices and sanctions

<sup>1</sup> *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria* by P. A. Talbot, Vol. II, pp. 43-46. The goddess Ale is sometimes depicted with a machet in hand. Compare the Egyptian goddess Pasht, "The devouring 'one'."

<sup>2</sup> Judges, Chapter 18, verse 24.

of morality without providing adequate substitutes is a curse rather than a blessing to Yorubaland or to West Africa in general.

Charms used as mascots for good luck are known as *Awoire*. Those used as rejuvenators are known as *Ajidewe*—"A means of ever becoming as young as a little child." Those used as a means of protection against sudden death are known as "Maku"—"Do not die." Several other charms exist, and are named after the purposes for which they are used. These include acquirement of skill, wisdom, speech, immunity from gunshot wounds or from the poisonous effect of snakes or insect bites, success in keenly contested competition, and a variety of others. There is no doubt that these objects strongly evoke the faith of its users and thereby help in securing a vast amount of invisible force for the realization of aims and objects.

Customs die hard. A century of Christian teaching has not succeeded in obliterating the use of charms in Yorubaland. Christians, as well as Pagans and Mohammedans, still use them. Centuries will elapse before the belief in the efficacy of the charms can be dislodged from the subconsciousness of the Yorubas. As long as the belief exists there, it will always emerge into full consciousness and express itself in the use of charms.

Reference must be made here to the images used by the Ogbonis as charms. These are known as *ɛdas*, and are used both as offensive and as defensive charms. The *ɛdas* are usually made of brass and are images of human beings, male or female. They are miniature replicas of a pair of idols known as *Ẹda Mọlẹs*, which are figures of a man and a woman whose heads were connected by a chain and whose lower extremities are fitted with iron prongs. The *Ẹda Mọlẹs* are usually placed in the centre of the shrine in every Ogboni house. It is on these idols that the Ogbonis and their High Priest place their sacrificial offering. It is in front of these idols that the most solemn ceremony of initiation takes place.

The *Ẹda* images may be compared with the Ibo images, which are known as *Agu* or *Egu*, and which are used by "medicine men" for almost the same purposes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Peoples of Southern Nigeria* by P. A. Talbot, Vol. II, p. 161. See also *Niger Ibos* by Dr. Basden, pp. 76-97.

Charms used as philtres are numerous in Yorubaland. Their use is not confined to would-be lovers or persons anxious to retain the love of their wives or husbands, but by servants who wish to procure strange and inexplicable attachment by their masters or mistresses to them. For this purpose various kinds of herbs and plants as well as parts of the bodies of highly-sexed animals are used. Belief in the efficacy of philtres is strong in Yorubaland. Undue attachment on the part of one of a married couple to the other is always attributed to magical philtres. The usual expression is *O ti ko o li aiya jẹ*, literally, "He or she has eaten the heart-soul of his or her partner," *i.e.* he has secured absolute control over the other person's soul by means of a powerful magical philtre.

#### WITCHCRAFT

The subject of witchcraft must be considered along with that of magic. Witches and wizards claim the possession of magical or supernatural powers. These powers may be exercised for good purposes. For examples, witches have been found who state that the magical powers were acquired for the purpose of protecting their own children. Very often, however, the powers are used wholly and solely for evil and anti-social purposes.

A few years ago the Editor of a Nigerian newspaper arranged for the publication of a symposium of views on witchcraft. The symposium shows that witchcraft is still a terrible reality in African life. Contributors to the symposium are agreed that witchcraft is used almost exclusively for evil purposes, and that belief in it still holds sway in civilized or semi-civilized communities.

The practice of witchcraft has always been viewed with disfavour. Hence the organizations connected with it are secret societies. In spite of the existence of a strong public opinion against the practice, and in spite of the fact that in the olden days death or sickness caused by witchcraft was punishable by death, yet witchcraft guilds exist, and these meet in secret and often enough to guarantee their existence and efficiency. The secret meeting of these guilds is known as *ajọ*—"assembly meeting." The popular belief is that the members of the guilds must supply a human victim for use at

each meeting. Hence the well-known retort to the effusions of any angry woman: *Ma fi mi da ajo*—"Do not use me for the ceremonial opening of your witchcraft meeting," i.e. Do not bewitch me.

Witches are credited with the power of transforming their heart-souls (*okan*) into birds or cats. In these objective forms they prowl around for their prey and suck the blood of their would-be victims. When a witch has metamorphosed herself into a bird or a cat she falls into a deep sleep or she becomes unconscious, since her heart-soul is gone. It is popularly believed that if the bird is killed the witch will die immediately. If it is detained, she will be unable to wake or become conscious.

The weird cries of birds at night are often regarded as definite signs of the presence of witches. Should a person become ill or die shortly afterwards, the witch-doctor or *babalawo* (medicine man) must be summoned to detect the witch responsible for the crime. The underlying belief in this respect is well illustrated by the saying *Ajẹ ke lana, omọ ku loni*—"The witch bird chirped yesterday, the child dies to-day." Witches are supposed to be most active between midnight and two or three in the morning.

A person accused of witchcraft used to be tried by ordeal. Should she be found guilty, she would be punished by death. The hatred of the practice, however, is so great that the culprit could be lynched without any trial. Of course, such a mode of trial or of violence has ceased owing to British influence. Trial by ordeal, however, still goes on in private.

Wizards are not as active or as numerous as witches in Yorubaland. They are also credited with supernatural powers, and they have their secret guilds, their favourite haunt being the foot of the African mahogany tree known as *Apa*. This tree is sacred in Yorubaland. It is regarded as an emblem of vengeance and must not be cut down until the indwelling tree spirit has been duly propitiated by the offering of a fowl and palm oil.

Wizards are also credited with the power of converting their heart-souls into owls. In this objective form they carry out their nefarious practices at night.

There is no doubt that somnambulism is practiced by

witches and wizards, but the belief in metamorphosis is a relic of superstition. Thought-projection, operated by a well-developed will power, is undoubtedly an important element in witchcraft and wizardry.

It must be added here that, although the average Yoruba is a happy and merry person, yet the numerous occasions of dread inspired by supposed activities of witches and wizards are dark spots in his life. The benefit conferred upon the natives by disseminating the light of knowledge by means of which the darkness of ignorance and rank superstition can be dispelled, is, therefore, inestimable.

### DIVINATION

In some of the earlier chapters a description of the chief supernatural methods by which the Yorubas claim ability to divine the future has been given. The methods centre around the Ifa Cult, and also the *Ọpẹlẹ* Cult which is used in a lesser degree.

In addition to these there are a few other methods of divining the future.

The first of these is by the use of ceremonial water. This is known as *Wiwo omi*, literally, "looking at water," i.e. the process of foretelling the future by interpreting signs or figures rendered visible in water by magical processes. For this purpose the babalawo puts water in a large bowl. He then recites a large number of incantations until he believes that the water has been developed thereby into a supernatural condition. He looks into the water after hearing the question of his client, and by means of the signs or figures which he claims to be visible to him, he proceeds to give the correct answer.

The writer once had the privilege of seeing a babalawo at work with his ceremonial water. He had been approached by an anxious father, whose only daughter was reported ill in a boarding school about one hundred and twenty miles away. Both the babalawo and the father were unknown to each other prior to this occasion. The father enquired about the condition of his child. After looking at the water in front of him and uttering the required incantations the babalawo declared that the child was a girl and that she was very ill. In reply to further enquiries the babalawo replied that the child would

die and that there was no remedy. On the father asking for help with an agonizing cry, the *babalawo* declared that only the timely services of a powerful medicine man living in a certain village could save the child. The news of the child's death was telegraphed the following day, in spite of the efforts made by medical doctors qualified in some of the best British universities.

Another method is that of using lustral water. This has been well described by Dr. Farrow: "A young child is taken by the priest, and after the offering of a sacrifice, the child's face is washed with lustral water, which is prepared with shea-butter and edible snails. The child, in a trance, sees and hears what is going on in the spirit world, and reports to the priest. The child's work being finished, the priest, by the use of appropriate charms, restores it to normal consciousness, when the medium no longer remembers anything of what he has reported, the priest alone retaining the knowledge."

The method just described bears a strong resemblance to the method of hypnotism and clairvoyance. It is also an illustration of the great extent to which the *babalawos* develop their will powers, thereby forcing others into a state of suggestibility.

There is another interesting method of divination known as *Wiwo ilẹ*, literally, "looking at the ground," *i.e.* a precautionary measure for ascertaining the future before embarking on a project or in order to find out explanations of unintelligible phenomena. The *babalawo* draws some figures on the ground, and by means of incantations he claims to be able to foretell the future from the conclusions he draws from his figures. *Wiwo ilẹ* is a practice which will take several decades to become extinct in Yorubaland.

All the above methods are sometimes described by means of a comprehensive term, namely, *wiwo nkan*—"looking at something." The thing "looked at" may assume any of the forms described above.

#### RAIN-MAKING

Among the magical powers claimed by Yoruba magicians is that of rain-making. In every African Society the rain-maker or the rain-doctor is a well-known person. In Yorubaland there are no professional rain-makers, but there are

several babalawos, powerful chiefs or members of secret societies who claim the power of causing rainfall at prescribed hours or prescribed days. Rainfall being abundant in Yorubaland, there is no need for evolving an order of priests who would magically or sacrificially cause rainfall. But the fact that rainfall is copious and is limited to certain seasons offers strong inducement to the claim or power to cause it at any prescribed hour.

It sometimes happens that there is a festival or an outing which is viewed with disfavour by a section of the community. The popular belief is that unless the chief of that section is placated by means of gifts, he may cause a heavy downpour of rain to mar the occasion. Persons intending to stage a show or perform marriage ceremonies or any other ceremony requiring fair weather are often advised to consult or placate persons reputed for the possession of magical controlling powers over the weather.

Instances are not wanting when rival chiefs or influential persons threaten one another with the marring of some impending ceremonies by causing a heavy downpour of rain. These instances are numerous enough to cause the superstitious belief to linger even in the minds of educated Yorubas.

### NECROMANCY

Necromancy is practised by the Yorubas, who strongly believe in the possibility of communicating with the dead.

It is practised in a mild form by the heads of families. Reference has been made above to the practice of talking to the dead about any important step to be taken by one of its members. For this purpose a small hole, some nine inches deep and four inches wide, is dug, and the blood of a fowl or some other feathered fowl is poured into it. The head of the family then invokes the spirits of the deceased members of the family, explains the step to be taken, and asks for their approval and help.

Necromancy, however, assumes a professional form. This has been well described by Bishop James Johnson: "There are amongst the heathens those in our country who profess to exercise the office of speaking with the dead and of being media of communications from them to the living, and who

are known as *Awon Abokusoro*—‘Speakers with the dead’—and whose deliverances have generally been found to be true. But the system does not seem to be so elaborate with them as with their fellow-Professors in Europe and America. . . . These divinations have often been successful. . . . This success must be attributed to either a synchronizing of divinely ordered events with those divinations, or to God’s permitted employment of them through the agency of the devil, with his superior knowledge and capacity to deceive those who would be deceived . . . in spite of warnings.”<sup>1</sup>

The practice of necromancy is similar in many respects to what obtains among modern spiritualists in Europe and America. The necromancers claim that their intercourse with the dead is real, and they sometimes furnish the proof of its reality. The practice commands universal assent. The means of holding this mysterious intercourse is a secret jealously guarded by the priests.

A form of necromancy connected with burial customs is known as *Iyaku*—“parting with the dead.” It has been vividly described by the late Mr. Feyisara Şoşin in the *Nigerian Chronicle* under the pseudonym of “Adeşola.” His account has been thus summarized by Dr. Farrow :

“There is a form of necromancy practised, if the deceased has died intestate, to find out what is his will concerning his property and the disposal of his dependent relatives. A council of elders is appointed, and two days are decreed, with a week’s interval between them, for the necessary ceremonies. On the first day sacrifices are offered and a white fowl is tied to a pole. A figure in white dashes from the room of the deceased, seizes the fowl and flees into the bush, while the friends cry out, ‘Filç, Filç!’ i.e. ‘Leave it. Leave it!’ They follow, but none overtake the ‘spirit.’ Only the feathers of the fowl remain to mark the course taken. A week later, further sacrifices are offered, kola-nuts are split in divination and their fragments thrown into a little hole dug for the purpose, together with some oil, water and sacred leaves. Three men, each holding in his hand the *atun* whip, demand the attendance of the spirit of the deceased. Their leader calls out his name and asks him to come out when he strikes on the ground, e.g. Buko, o-o-o-o-o-o-o! Mo pe o-o-o-o-o-o! Bi mo ba fi şan yi lu ilç, ki o jade wa o-o-o-o-o-o!”

i.e. “Buko Oh! I am calling thee, Oh! If I strike the ground with this whip, come out! Oh!”

<sup>1</sup> *Yoruba Heathenism*, p. 36 seq.

There is no response at the first or second call. A third call is given, with an abusive reproach, "If you do not reply, I shall go away with the belief that your soul has gone away into the body of an Ogbugbu (wild-duck), etc." Then a shrill voice is heard in a neighbouring grove, which, after repeated strikings on the ground, declares his will, as requested.

The above account shows evidence of collusion and, although its genuineness is supported as an eye-witness account, it is difficult to regard it as a genuine case of necromancy.

#### CONNECTION WITH ANCIENT EGYPT

It has been noted above that in Yorubaland, as in Ancient Egypt, the opposition between the priest and the magician does not exist, and that in both countries magic is the very foundation of religion.

Professor Maspero, writing about magicians in Ancient Egypt, says :

"The extent of their power exposed the magicians to terrible temptations : they were often led to use it to the detriment of others, to satisfy their spite or to gratify their grosser appetites. Many, however, made a gain of their knowledge, putting it at the service of the ignorant who would pay for it. When they were asked to plague or get rid of an enemy, they had a hundred different ways of surrounding him without his suspecting it. . . . In order to compose an irresistible charm they merely require a little blood from a person, a few nail-pairings, some hair, or a scrap of linen which he had worn and which from contact with his skin had become impregnated with his personality. Portions of these were incorporated with the wax of a doll which they modelled, clothed to resemble their victim ; thenceforward all the inflictions to which the image was subjected were experienced by the original ; he was consumed with fever when his effigy was exposed to the fire ; he was wounded when the figure was pierced by a knife."<sup>1</sup>

The above description of magicians and their methods in Ancient Egypt is almost entirely true of magicians in Yorubaland, the chief difference being the mere substitution of mud in some cases by the Yorubas for the wax used by the Ancient Egyptians.

Some other points of resemblance or identity in regard to magic in Yorubaland and in Ancient Egypt will now be noted.

(1) The prevalence of magic. In regard to Ancient Egypt, Professor Maspero says "Magic entered into all acts of

<sup>1</sup> *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 213-4.

life, with all its passions, love, hate, ambition, revenge, into the care of the sick."<sup>1</sup> Professor Erman also says that "The objects for which magic was called upon to serve were as numerous as the requirements of life."<sup>2</sup>

These statements are also descriptive of the prevalence of magic in Yorubaland.

- (2) Divination. Professor Maspero says that "The Egyptians . . . did nothing without consulting the gods."<sup>3</sup> This is also true of the Yorubas.
- (3) Medicine. Magic is used in both countries for therapeutic purposes.<sup>4</sup>
- (4) Extensive use of amulets. Amulets were used extensively in Ancient Egypt. Over 2000 specimens have been preserved at University College and catalogued by Professor Flinders Petrie in his book entitled *Amulets*. Amulets are also used extensively in Yorubaland for a variety of purposes.
- (5) The Evil Eye. "The superstition of the evil eyes was rife in Ancient Egypt and every sort of precaution was invented for guarding against those of either sex affected with the vice."<sup>5</sup> This is true also in Yorubaland.
- (6) Injurious Magic. The use of figures of a person for injurious magic was usual in Ancient Egypt, as it now is in Yorubaland. Black magic in the form of witchcraft and sorcery, the art of inflicting persons with blindness and of making oneself invisible for the purpose of perpetrating crimes, and the idea of a person sucking another person's blood magically and invisibly were all found in Ancient Egypt as they are now found in Yorubaland.<sup>6</sup>

CONCLUDING REMARKS. The above description of magic in Yorubaland shows that it has much in common with magic as practised in other parts of the world, but the impress of Ancient Egypt on it is clearly discernible. The points of similarity and identity cannot but form a part of the cumulative evidence in support of the theory of a cultural connection between the Yorubas and the Ancient Egyptians.

<sup>1</sup> *New Light on Ancient Egypt*, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> *Egyptian Religion*, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> *New Light on Ancient Egypt*, p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> See Wiedemann, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 271, 272.

<sup>5</sup> Maspero, *New Light on Ancient Egypt*, p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> See Deveris, *Memoires*, II, 202; *Athenaeus* (Ed. Bohm), XII, 58; *Herodotus* (translation by Littlebury), III, 11.

CHAPTER XV

SURVIVAL OF HIEROGLYPHICS, EMBLEMS AND  
OTHER SYMBOLS



## CHAPTER XV

### SURVIVAL OF HIEROGLYPHICS, EMBLEMS AND OTHER SYMBOLS

SOME survivals of elements in Ancient Egyptian culture, supporting the theory of a close connection between the Ancient Egyptians and the Yorubas, have been noted in the preceding chapters. Another important survival will now be discussed. It is the survival of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphics.

Various writers have seen the hieroglyphics, but their significance has hitherto been shrouded in mystery. Their identity with Egyptian hieroglyphics is a surprising revelation to the present writer. The survival of these inscriptions in spite of the lapse of so many centuries cannot but excite feelings of admiration for the intelligence and conservatism of their preservers.

The hieroglyphics may be found in different parts of the country, especially at Benin and Ile Ife.



#### SURVIVAL OF HIEROGLYPHICS AT BENIN

A collection of hieroglyphics has been made by Mr. R. E. Dennett, who, not knowing their significance, simply described them as "Chalk Marks," and explained some of them by a series of ingenious conjectures.<sup>1</sup>

His collection, published in a book entitled *At the Back of the Black Man's Mind*, is as follows :

(1) Inscriptions on page 215.

It should be noted that Dennett inverted the figures.

(a) The lower symbol of (a)  (nefer)<sup>2</sup> is the Egyptian hieroglyphic meaning "good." The half moon  is the symbol for the half part of Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See his *Nigerian Studies*, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Budge, *Egyptian Language*, p. 93, section 24, No. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Budge, *Egyptian Language*, p. 75, section 13, No. 47.

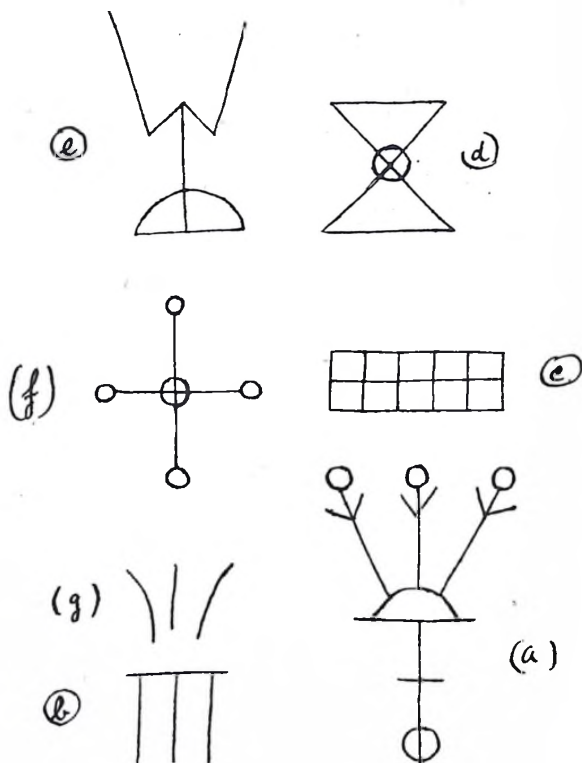








FIG. 35. HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS.  
 (Inscriptions on page 215—Dennett's.)

Each of the three symbols stuck to the half moon is the Egyptian symbol *Onku*<sup>1</sup> usually held by deities. The symbols, therefore, denote a triad of deities—probably the triad of Osiris, Isis and Horus—reigning over Southern Egypt.

- (b) The symbol is an Egyptian symbol.<sup>2</sup>
- (c) The symbol marked (c)  is the Egyptian word *hesp* or *sept*, a “nome.”<sup>3</sup>
- (d) An Egyptian symbol for “the land on one side of the Nile” is *ateb*,<sup>4</sup>  the symbol for all Egypt being . The figure consisting of one *ateb* inverted over the other and joined together by a circle, therefore, denotes the “union of both parts of Egypt.”
- (e)  is the Egyptian letter “s,”<sup>5</sup> the initial of the god Set or Sut. The half moon  is the symbol of Northern or Southern Egypt. The figure, therefore, denotes ‘Set reigning over Northern Egypt.’
- (f) Figure (f) is probably a representation of the four elemental deities<sup>6</sup> worshipped in Ancient Egypt and surviving in Yorubaland as *Olori M̄erin*—“The four-headed deity.”<sup>7</sup>
- (g) Figure (g)  is a survival of a cluster of lotus flowers.<sup>8</sup>

The above inscriptions are made on the ground in front of Ake, a deity in Benin. Figure (a) refers to Egyptian deities, probably the triad of Osiris. Figure (e) refers to Set. Figure (d) refers to the Union of all Egypt. The figures, when considered as a whole, give a striking confirmation to the theory of a close connection between the Ancient Egyptians and the Yorubas.

<sup>1</sup> Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 264, note 3.

<sup>2</sup> Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 75, Nos. 45 and 46.

<sup>4</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 75, No. 47.

<sup>5</sup> See Genesisius, *Hebrew Grammar*, lists of Alphabets W is the Phœnician or Coptic modification of the original letter seket. See similar examples on the Moabite stone.

<sup>6</sup> Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter IX above.

<sup>8</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 72, Nos. 40, 42 and 43.

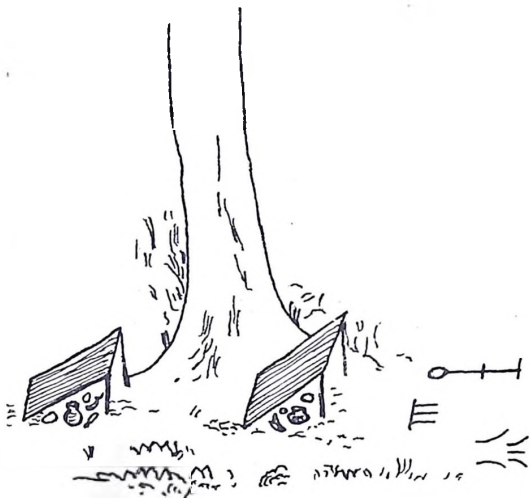


FIG. 36. HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS.  
(Figure on page 221—Dennett's.)

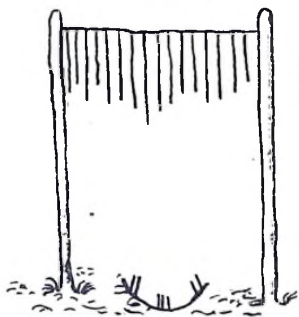
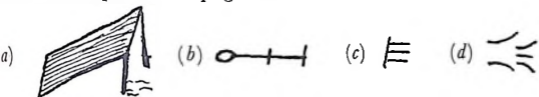



FIG. 37. HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS.  
(Figure on page 192—Dennett's.)





2. Inscriptions on page 221.




These inscriptions are generally found at the foot of trees, the whole forming a group of objects known as *Ake*—"Axe."

The lean-to sheds (a) are in the shape of an axe (  neter, a god).<sup>1</sup> Figures (b) nefer and (c) Seklet have been explained above.<sup>2</sup> Figure (d) is a representation of the Egyptian lotus flower.

3. Inscriptions on page 192.

The figure marks the entrance to Arovia, a grove sacred to Ovia. The name of the place is Omi-ihī (wrongly spelt Omey). It is remarkable that the three hieroglyphic letters in the figure  I<sup>3</sup>  H<sup>3</sup>  I form  |. H |, which is a part of the name of the place where they are found.

4. The figure on page 197.

The figure is that of a wooden object and two pieces of ironstone placed outside the wall of a house on a clay platform and covered with a piece of board leaning in a slanting way on the wall. Pieces of iron are driven into the board in the form of , that is, in the modified form of the Egyptian letter s—sekhet—the symbol of the animal of Sut.<sup>4</sup>

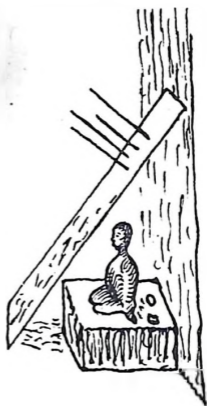



FIG. 38.  
HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS.

5. The figure on page 202 strongly resembles the Egyptian syllabic word , mas.<sup>5</sup>

6. The figure on page 224.

The figures at the top and at the bottom may be regarded as symbolizing the union of both parts of Egypt.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. vii above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 2 above.

<sup>3</sup> See Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 223.

<sup>6</sup> See Fig. 1 (d) above.



FIG. 39. HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS.  
(Figure on page 202—Dennett's.)

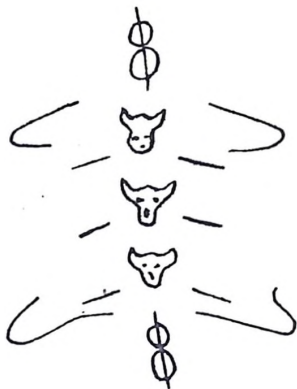





FIG. 40. HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS.  
(Figure on page 224—Dennett's.)



FIG. 41. HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS.  
(Figure on page 225—Dennett's.)



The sign  is the Egyptian letter s.<sup>1</sup> The figures described by Dennett as cows' heads are probably crude representations of the head in the hieroglyph for Set.<sup>2</sup>

7. The figure<sup>3</sup> on page 225.




 strongly resembles the Egyptian character determinative of land.<sup>4</sup>  also resembles the character determinative of nu, city.<sup>5</sup>

O<sup>6</sup> survives in the Phoenician alphabet as the letter z.

8. The figure on page 226.

Compare the symbol  or  with the Egyptian sign for water.<sup>7</sup>



### SURVIVAL OF HIEROGLYPHICS IN OTHER DISTRICTS



1. A few years ago the writer visited a chief at Isagatedo and noticed the following inscriptions on the wall near the couch on which the idols were placed:  .  <sup>8</sup> are Egyptian symbols for twenty, and  is nefer, explained above. The number probably indicates the number of deities worshipped in the village.

2. Ifa symbols. It has been noted in Chapter IV above that in recording the results of his divination the babalawo uses strokes or circles III or OOO.<sup>9</sup> These symbols correspond with Egyptian symbols for numerals.

3. Yoruba Tribal Marks. It is interesting to note that most of the Yoruba Tribal Marks are Egyptian hieroglyphic symbols, as may be seen in several works on Egyptology.<sup>10</sup> A few examples of the marks will be given here.

### QYQ MARKS

(a) Abaja in sets of three  or 

(b) Abaja in sets of four  or 

<sup>1</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 62, No. 21.

<sup>3</sup> The characters in this figure closely resemble Phoenician characters, see the comparative table of Alphabets in Genesis, *Hebrew Grammar*.

<sup>4</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 76, No. 1.




<sup>6</sup> See Genesis, *Hebrew Grammar*, list of alphabets.

<sup>7</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 75, No. 55, the sign is well known in Egyptian writings.

<sup>8</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>9</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 107. III or OOO.


<sup>10</sup> See works by Budge, Maspero, Champollion, etc.

(c) Variations of the Abaja   or 

(d) Pele  (e) Ture 


(f) Kẹkẹ or Gọmbọ  or 



### Owu Marks

(a) Abaja Olowu 

(b) Kẹkẹ Olowu 

Ifẹ Marks  (Three long strokes.)


Ondo Marks  (One thick stroke on either cheek.)


Ijsha Marks  or  (Three long strokes.)  
(Four horizontal strokes.)

Ifon Marks  (Eight thin strokes.)

Igbomina Marks  (Three thick strokes.)

Jẹbu Marks  (Three long strokes.)

Ègba Marks  (Three short strokes.)  
(Vertical and horizontal strokes.)

Yagba Marks 

The above examples show that most of the strokes are hieroglyphic strokes in sets of three or four, arranged in parallel lines, either vertically or horizontally, as in Egyptian writings. Variations are made either by doubling the sets or increasing the number of strokes or by bending the strokes slightly into curves. Most of the marks are identical in arrangement with Egyptian numerals given by Professor Budge in his *Egyptian Language*, pages 127 to 129, and with sets of Egyptian numerals accompanying vignettes on pages 547 to 571 of his edition of the *Book of the Dead*.

The Yagba tribal marks deserve comment. They are three long lines on each cheek, converging to a point, namely,



The figure resembles a cluster of lotus flowers, well known in Egyptian writings.<sup>1</sup>

As compared with other facial marks in West Africa, the Yoruba marks may be said to be very neat.

EGYPTIAN EMBLEMS IN BENIN

Egyptian emblems also survive in Yorubaland.

UKHURE

The first of these is the sacred emblem known as OYISA, or EŞU, or UKHURE. This is a long bamboo with a wicker basket at the top.

The words Oyisa and Eşu have been explained in a previous chapter.<sup>2</sup> The word Ukhure is of Egyptian origin like the preceding two. It consists of three parts, namely, U-khu-re; U is the initial vowel characteristic of Yoruba nouns; Khu is the Egyptian word Khu, meaning "soul," "luminous spirit"; and re is the name of the Egyptian god Ra or Re. The word therefore means "The soul of Re or Ra."<sup>3</sup>



FIG. 42.

UKHURE I.  
SACRED STICK.



FIG. 43.

UKHURE II.  
SACRED STICK.

<sup>1</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. 72, Nos. 40-46.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter III above.

<sup>3</sup> This phrase occurs several times in Ancient Egyptian books, e.g. Budge, *Book of the Dead*, p. 145.

The shape of the emblem is suggestive of its origin. It will be remembered that the lotus plant was regarded as sacred in Ancient Egypt. Its flower was often used in connection with the emblem of the god Ra or Re! The god is supposed to spring out of a lotus flower at dawn.<sup>1</sup> The upper part of the emblem UKHURE resembles the figure of the bud of an Egyptian lotus flower.<sup>2</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising that the emblem is designated UKHURE, or the soul of Re or Ra, implying that which contains the soul of Ra, from which, according to Egyptian belief, the god springs forth at dawn.<sup>3</sup>

The next emblem is another form of Ukhure. This is a stick made of bamboo, but differing in shape from the one described above. Near the top of it are tassels resembling the petals of a lotus flower. Such sticks are found on nearly all altars in Benin. They are also found in the private houses of chiefs, some of the chiefs having as many as six. They are carried about on ceremonial occasions and are sometimes venerated as sacred objects. The Ukhure bamboo and sticks are survivals of the Egyptian lotus plant, together with the beliefs about the god Re associated with it.

Ukhure survives in other parts of Yorubaland as A-wu-re.<sup>4</sup> An Awure is a juju—an armlet, a waist-band, a ring or anything worn in some part of the body—as a sign of good luck. A strong belief in the potency of Awure exists in Yorubaland. When a person is successful, the Yorubas say "Awure rẹ jẹ"—"His awure is successful."

By doubling the word U-Khure the Yorubas obtain the word kure-kure—"a fairy, elf, or hobgoblin." The initial vowel is not needed in a noun phrase.

#### EMATON

The next emblem which has survived in Yorubaland is the *Ematon*. This is an important emblem in Benin. It consists of an iron staff ornamented with two figures of the chameleon, between which there are four leaflike figures repre-

<sup>1</sup> See Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> See Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> See Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> Figures similar to Ukhure are found in Egyptian Books. Compare the Lotus figures on pp. 263, 264, 265, 356, 480, etc., of the *Book of the Dead* (Edition by Wallis Budge). In each case it is used as a sacred symbol, especially in connection with objects pertaining to the god Re or Ra.

senting the god Aja which has been described in a previous chapter.

At the top of the staff is a bunch of figures surmounted by what has been described as the representation of a horse and a bird.

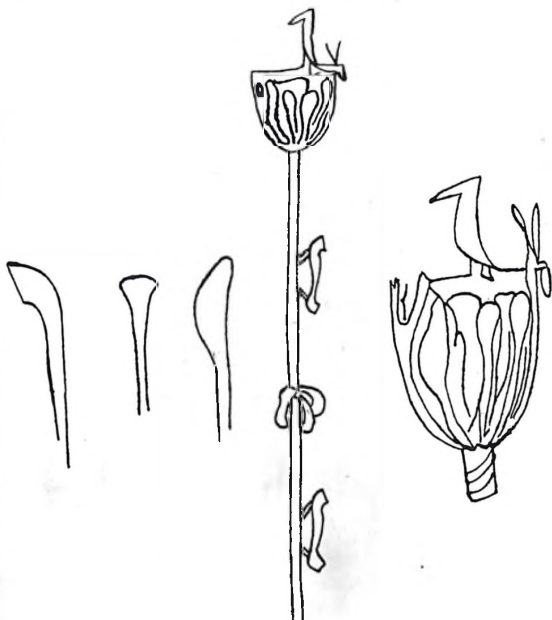



FIG. 44. EMATON—SACRED EMBLEM.

The emblem is a combination of several Egyptian emblems. The circular top of it is a survival of the lotus flower in full bloom.<sup>1</sup> The different parts of the circular top are survivals of Egyptian emblems. Dennett has given pictures of the different parts, and it is easy to see those which he numbered

<sup>1</sup> See a similar figure in Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 136. A similar figure is given by Budge in the *Book of the Dead*, p. 263, Vignette, and p. 35.

6 and 8 are , the flail and the crook, Egyptian symbols which are usually carried by Egyptian kings and deities.<sup>1</sup> The bird in the figure is a survival of the Egyptian bird known as Bennu.<sup>2</sup> A comparison of the figure of the bird with the figure of the bennu bird as it is found in books on Egyptology<sup>3</sup> clearly proves this statement. The long beak of the latter, as well as its general appearance, survives in the former.

In the vignette given by Prof. Maspero in *The Dawn of Civilization*, Ra is seen springing from a lotus flower in the form of a human being and holding the crook and the flail.<sup>4</sup> In the papyrus of Ani (sheet 28) a head is seen springing from a lotus. This is also the case in the papyrus of Turin (see Lepsius, *Todtenbuch*, Bl. 31). In other vignettes Ra springs from the lotus in the form of a bennu bird,<sup>5</sup> by means of which he is often represented. The figure of a bird on a figure similar to a lotus in shape is a further confirmation of the Egyptian origin of the emblem.

Further, a part of the emblem has been described as the representation of a horse. This description is incorrect. A close study of the part seems to suggest a crude representation of a bark. In books on Ancient Egypt there are vignettes showing the bird bennu standing on the bark of Ra.<sup>6</sup> The two feathers on the right side of the bark are either a representation of the two feathers usually found on the back of the head of the bennu or a crude representation of the prow and the stern of the bark.

#### PILLARS

Pillars can be seen in many parts of Benin. The noteworthy point about them is that several of them are usually three in number when found together.

For example, at Esule, in the Kukuruku country north of

<sup>1</sup> Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 13; Budge, *Egyptian Language*, p. 119, No. 49, etc.

<sup>2</sup> This bird has been identified with the phoenix. The word bennu is very similar to the Yoruba word I-bin-nu (Ebini) or Benin, and it is probable that the latter is derived from the former.

<sup>3</sup> See Budge, *Book of the Dead*, pp. 187, 188, 268, 389, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Same as Note 1 above.

<sup>5</sup> The bennu bird has been described as the "morning star of Ra." See Budge, *Book of the Dead*, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> Budge, *Book of the Dead*, pp. 305, 389.

Benin proper, there are three pillars, the figures on them being those of two males and a female.

There are also three pillars at Iaiu, a place whose name bears a strong resemblance to that of Ialu in Ancient Egypt.

Well-informed persons in Benin believe that these pillars are representations of a god and his wife and their son.

The images in the juju house at Idungena have been commented upon in Chapter III. They closely resemble the images of Osiris, Isis and Horus given by Professor Maspero on page 175 of *The Dawn of Civilization*. It is noteworthy that in the case of the latter, just as in the case of the former, Osiris, the father, squats on a pillar.

The pillars in Benin which are regarded by the people as representations of a triad of deities, may also be regarded as a survival of the triad of Osiris, Isis and Horus.

The survival of the above emblems constitute a further evidence of the impress of Ancient Egypt on Yoruba primitive culture.

#### EGYPTIAN EMBLEMS AND SYMBOLS IN ILE IFÈ

ỌPA ỌRANYAN AND OTHER PILLARS. Reference has been made above to Ọranyan<sup>1</sup> (the living Ra), the mythical founder of the Yoruba nation.


In Ile Ife there is an obelisk known as *Ọpa Ọranyan*. The word Ọpa comes from the Egyptian word *per*<sup>2</sup> (*O* is an initial vowel, and *er* becomes *a* in Yoruba). *Per* means "a house," "a building"; *nyan* comes from the West African root word "ye," which means "to live, to exist." Ọpa Ọranyan, therefore, means "the obelisk of the living Ra."

Dr. Johnson gives a good description of the obelisk :

"The obelisk is about 10 to 12 feet in height, and about 4 feet square in width at the base ; it tapers to a point, and has upon one face of it several spike nails driven into it, and some carvings as of ancient characters. The nails are arranged in such an ordered manner as to render them significant. First, there are 61 in a straight line from the bottom upwards at intervals of about 2 inches in the midline ; and next, at about a distance of 4 inches on either side of this and from the same level on top, two parallel lines of 31 nails, each running downwards and curving below to meet those

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter II. p. 45, Ọ-ra(n)-ya(n) = the living Ra.

<sup>2</sup> See Budge, *Egyptian Language*, p. 76, No. 3.


of the midline. Then in the space between these three rows of parallel lines and about the level where they converge, is found most conspicuous of the carvings .

"What is conjectured as most probable is . . . that . . . the carvings are the ancient characters Resh and Yod which stand for Qranyan."<sup>1</sup>



FIG. 45. QPA QRANYAN.

This conjecture is ingenious but incorrect.

It is only an imperfect knowledge of Hebrew characters that can lead to such a conjecture. The first symbol differs considerably from the Hebrew letter Resh; its top is thick and does not curve up like Resh . The second symbol has to be turned round before it can bear the slightest resemblance to Yod.<sup>2</sup> The present writer believes that the two symbols

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Yorubas*, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> See the characters as drawn in the accompanying sketch of the Obelisk.

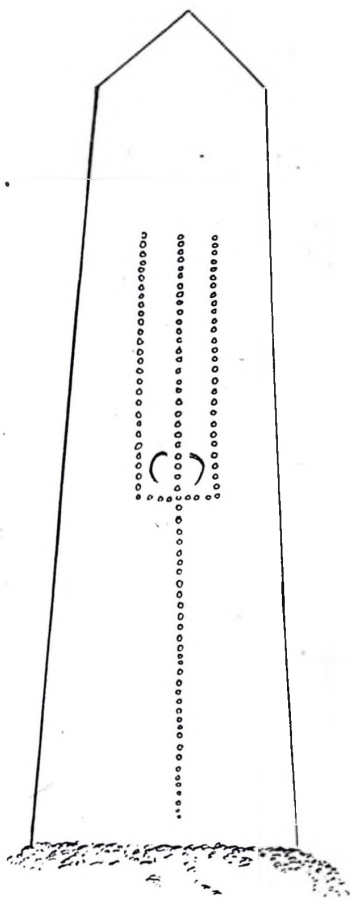


FIG. 46. Q-RANY ..

are the emblems of dominion and sovereignty, usually held by Egyptian deities.

(2)



(1)



The first symbol is the flail, and the second symbol is the crook. These emblems are usually held by Ra, and their appearance on an obelisk of Ra is quite appropriate and in keeping with Egyptian custom. Professor Maspero gives a vignette showing the god Ra holding the same emblems on page 136 of the *Dawn of Civilization*.<sup>1</sup>

Near the pillar are the remains of two other pillars, the rectangular bases on which they formerly stood being found nearer the foot of the standing pillar. The three pillars probably formed a triad. Since the pillar still standing has been shown to be an obelisk of Ra, it is not too far-fetched to imagine that the two other pillars are obelisks of Tum and Khepera respectively. It will be remembered that these gods were always associated with Ra<sup>2</sup> in Ancient Egyptian mythology, the three gods forming a triad in Heliopolitan theology.<sup>3</sup>

For the sake of accuracy attention should be called to some popular mistakes in regard to *Ọpa Ọranyan*. Some writers regard the pillar as a crude representation of the phallus. P. Amaury Talbot speaks of "Awpa Awranyan, the stick (or phallus) of Awyraran, one of the earliest of Yoruba Kings. Dennett also says than on enquiry he has been informed that the word Ọpa is a slang for the penis.<sup>4</sup> Leo Froebenius regards the pillar and similar ones as representation of elephants' tusks.<sup>5</sup> Talbot also subscribes to the idea of elephant tusks and says "The pillar seems to represent an elephant tusk, which was perhaps at the time reckoned one of the insignia of chieftainship but was no doubt principally worshipped as an emblem of fertility."<sup>6</sup> Captain Elgee, in his paper to the African Society, translates the words Ọpa Awranyan as "The walking stick of God." It may be stated here quite definitely that no native would assign such meanings to the words.

To confirm the meaning of the words given above, that is

<sup>1</sup> See also vignettes on pp. 380 and 588, *Book of the Dead*, translation by Budge.  
<sup>2</sup> *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. 11, p. 340.


<sup>3</sup> See *Religion of Ancient Egypt* by Sayce, p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> *Nigerian Studies*, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> *The Voice of Africa*, Vol. I, pp. 298-299.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 349.

"the house or the obelisk of the living Ra,"<sup>1</sup> attention should be called to the fact that the shape of the pillar is similar to that of an Egyptian obelisk as shown in books on Ancient Egypt.<sup>2</sup> The pillar may be compared with the obelisk of Usertasen I still standing on the plain of Heliopolis.<sup>3</sup>

Writing on the subject of obelisks in the Old Kingdom of Egypt, Dr. C. P. Tiele says: "The single obelisk of the Old Kingdom that we know of was erected there (*i.e.* Heliopolis) by Usertasen I. Obelisks like this had a twofold purpose; primarily, they symbolized the rays of the sun . . . their other purpose was to express steadfastness and durability. . . . They were a stone representation of the props of Shu, upon which Ra walks. Hence at Heliopolis they were found in great number."<sup>4</sup> This passage is significant. It shows, in the first place, that obelisks regarded as houses or haunts of the sun-god existed in Ancient Egypt. Secondly, it throws light on the figure formed by the nails stuck on *Qpa Qranyan*. The figure resembles a modified form of *sekhet*, , the Egyptian letter S<sup>5</sup>. Now the obelisks in Egypt were known as "Pillars of Shu."<sup>6</sup> It is significant that *Qpa Qranyan* bears the hieroglyphic for s (*sekhet*), the initial of the god Shu. Thirdly, it shows that there were several such obelisks in Heliopolis just as there are several obelisks or pillars in the Ile Ife to-day. Fourthly, the ideas of steadfastness and durability have survived. A well-known Yoruba expression is "O le koko, o duro gbogin bi *Qpa Qranyan*."—"It is as strong or durable as, and it stands steadfastly as, the obelisk of the living Ra." Fifthly, just as the obelisks in Egypt were made of stone, so also were the obelisks in Ile Ife.

It would be well to repeat here that in addition to *Qpa Qranyan*, there are other stone pillars in various parts of Ile Ife. Most of these appear to have been erected for the same purpose as that of *Qpa Qranyan*, but there are a few which the natives describe as the symbols of Ogun. Among the former the most noteworthy is the Ikere monolith, whose

<sup>1</sup> "The House of Ra" that is Pa Ra is a well-known expression in Egyptian Books. On (Heliopolis) is known as "Pa Ra."

<sup>2</sup> Budge, *Egyptian Language*, p. 78, No. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 507.

<sup>4</sup> *History of the Egyptian Religion* (Ed. Ballingal), 1882, pp. 130-131.




<sup>5</sup> See p. 3 above Note 1.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter IV, Iroshu or the Pillar of Shu in the Odus of Ifa.

shape has strongly suggested the idea of representation of elephant tusk to various writers. The word I-ke-re it may be noted, is a survival of the Ancient Egyptian word qere-s, which means "a statue, an image."



FIG. 47. IKERE MONOLITH.

To sum up : Opa Oranyan and several other pillars in Ile Ife are known as the "pillars of Shu" and regarded as the houses or haunts of the sun-god Ra. The figure formed by the nails on Oranyan is the Egyptian letter S  and the figures carved on it are the crook  and the flail , emblems of dominion and sovereignty in Ancient Egypt, often carried by the human representations of Ra, Horus, Osiris and other gods.

#### ORÈ, AND HIS SLAVE

Next in importance come the stone statues of Orè and of his slave.

The statue of Orè is, according to Yoruba mythology, the actual body of an Ancient Oni (pronounced Awni) or King of Ifè converted into stone. There is no doubt, however, that it is the work

of a stonemason, and that the myth must have been invented when the knowledge of such masonry had vanished.

The statue is "about thirty inches high, with hands folded over the abdomen, which is covered by a kind of apron, while at the other side hangs an appendage consisting of tassel-like ornaments. A necklace is carved round his neck, while another hangs from it over the abdomen, and there are armlets on the wrists. The head has been much defaced and the forehead and upper part worn away, probably by the constant

libations poured over it. There is a hole in the forehead, said to have been caused by a bullet fired against him by rebels. The hair is represented by little iron pegs inserted into small holes, while the ears are rather large."<sup>1</sup> "The treatment of the hair in this granite head is specially of the greatest interest. The hair is represented by little iron pegs inserted in small



FIG. 48. Qrę.

holes." "The interesting part . . . is decidedly its head . . . the thick-lipped, broad-nosed face is negroid in type. The ears are large. A long lock of hair, missing on the right, hangs down from the left ear."<sup>2</sup>

At a short distance on the right of Qrę stands the statue of "Gbanna Qrę" or "the slave of Qrę." The statue is

<sup>1</sup> Talbot, *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. II, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, Vol. I, p. 298.

“some thirty-two inches in height, similar in type, but the negroid face is in a much better state of preservation. This also has a sort of ruff round the neck, from which a chain hangs down as in Awre, while the tassel appendages are again carefully sculptured.”<sup>1</sup>

In these two statues there is a survival of representations



FIG. 49. QRE'S SLAVE.

of the god Re or Ra. The word Q-rę is a literal survival of the word Re, O being the initial vowel characteristic of Yoruba nouns.

The interesting thing about the statue of Qrę is its similarity to the figure of the child Horus in whose form Ra springs out of a lotus flower in the vignette reproduced by Maspero on page 136 of *The Dawn of Civilization*. The points

<sup>1</sup> Talbot, *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. II, p. 339.

of similarity are as follows : In both figures the god wears necklaces ; in the case of Qr̥ the necklaces are merged into a kind of rufflike ornament. In both figures the god wears wristlets. Also in both figures there is a lock of hair hanging down one of the ears ; in the case of Re, the hair is on the right side, whilst in the case of Q-r̥, it is on the left. This



FIG. 50. Qr̥ AND HIS SLAVE.

lock of hair is known in Ancient Egypt as "the divine lock of the god Ra."<sup>1</sup> which was once hidden in a reliquary of stone at Pa-aart (House of Lock) and afterwards cast into the great lake of Pa-aart where it became a crocodile.<sup>2</sup> The survival of this lock of hair in the Yoruba statue of Qrę is a striking confirmation of the theory of close connection between the Ancient Egyptians and the Yorubas.

The second statue standing near the statue of Q-rę contains features similar to those of Qrę described above. The statue has been described as "the slave" of Q-rę. There is no doubt that the statue is a representation, in a human form, of one of the followers of Re in his daily journey.

The deity represented here in a crude form is probably the constant companion of Re (or Horus), known as the Eye of Re (or Horus).<sup>3</sup>

It may be remarked in passing that the negroid features of the two statues very closely resemble the negroid features of the great sphinx of Gizeh ! This should not cause any surprise in view of the complete identification of Ra with Horus.<sup>4</sup> The Sphinx, which is an image of Horus, may, therefore, be regarded as the image of Ra and may rightly have features in common with statues representing Ra or Re.

#### OTHER SYMBOLS

Among the other relics the most important are the symbols found in the crocodile temple at Ile Ifę. These consist of stone representations of crocodiles and eggs placed in a rudely constructed temple. "Symmetrically placed there is a stone crocodile to the right and left in front of a stone block artificially rounded, set on end. These blocks . . . I would like to call drop-stones . . . Before each of these drop-stones, the more oval of which is twenty-four, and the more conical one nineteen and a quarter inches high, there is a crocodile, the larger and better-finished of the two is twenty-four and three-

<sup>1</sup> Compare also the lock of hair in the vignette in the Papyrus of Oni in the British Museum, No. 10, 470.

<sup>2</sup> See Griffith, *Minor Explorations in the Seventh Memoir of the Egypt Exploration Fund* (1890), pp. 71-73. See also Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, pp. 169-171.

<sup>3</sup> Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 137 *et passim*.

<sup>4</sup> G. F. Moore, *History of Religions*, pp. 152-168.

eighths, and the other twenty-one and a quarter inches long."<sup>1</sup> Each crocodile lies by the side of an egg.

Here in the stone representations of crocodiles and eggs there is survival of elements of Ancient Egyptian sun-worship. The symbol of the egg is well known in connection with the Ancient Egyptian religious symbolism and is constantly applied to the sun-god, particularly to Ra or Osiris and Horus who are identified with him. Representative examples may be given here. Ra is thus described in the *Book of the Dead* :

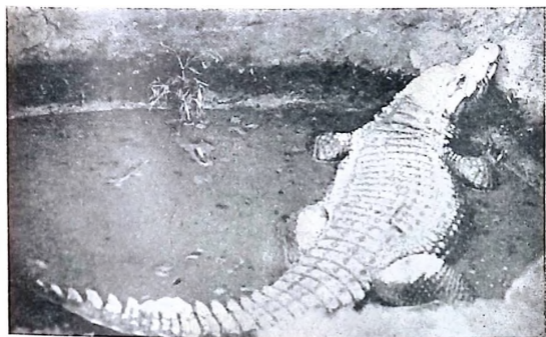


FIG. 51. A SACRED CROCODILE WHICH WAS WORSHIPPED AT OJE MARKET, IBADAN, FROM 1895-1939.

"O Ra in his egg who shines through his disk, who glitters on the horizon."<sup>2</sup>

The sun was regarded by the Ancient Egyptians as an egg which was laid daily by the mate of Sibū. The egg was regarded as an emblem of fertility, and also as an abode of the sun-god especially of Ra.<sup>3</sup>

Equally significant is the vignette and the description of the ninth Aat of Seket Aaru in the *Book of the Dead*. The vignette contains the figure of a crocodile touching with its

<sup>1</sup> Leo Frobenius, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> Edition by De Rouge, Chapter XVII.

<sup>3</sup> The Egyptian ideas in general concerning the egg are described by Lefebvre in *l'Égypte dans la Religion Égyptienne*, in the *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, Vol. XVI, pp. 16-25.

snout a figure which has been described as a vase but the shape of which strongly suggests that it is an egg. In the description of the Aat there are frequent references to a divine egg. The god Osiris, who had been identified with Re or Ra, is adored as "O thou holy god who dwellest in thine egg."<sup>1</sup> It is highly probable that a crocodile and an egg are found together in this vignette just as they are found together in the crocodile temple at Ile Ife.

Further, it has been pointed out above<sup>2</sup> that "the divine lock of hair" belonging to Ra was changed into a crocodile

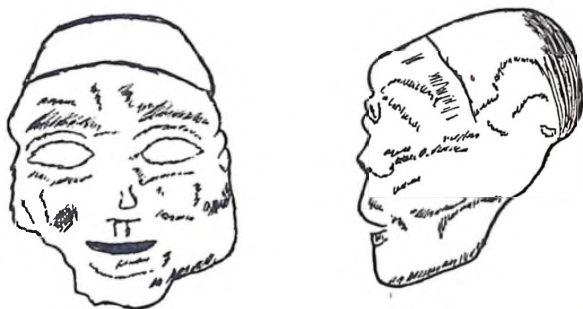


FIG. 52. TERRA COTTAS FOUND IN ILE IFE.

when thrown into the lake of Pa-Aart. The crocodile thus became a sacred animal symbolical of Ra in the popular religion of Ancient Egypt, especially when the great development of solar worship caused Sebek, the crocodile god, to be identified with Ra. Lastly, it should be noted that blocks of stone were often found in Egyptian Temples. This is well supported by the following quotation: "Several blocks of stone with marks of feet were found in the temple."<sup>3</sup>

In view of the connection of the crocodile and the egg with the Egyptian religious symbolism and in view of the existence of crocodiles and eggs in the temple found in the grove of

<sup>1</sup> *Book of the Dead* (Edition, Budge), pp. 492, 493.

<sup>2</sup> See *History of Religions* by F. Moore, Vol. I. p. 169, Sun-crocodile or Sebek-Re.

<sup>3</sup> Flinders Petrie, *Koptos*, 24.

Ọ-re (the survival of the sun-god Re), the latter crocodiles and eggs may be safely regarded as representations of the sun-god Re and as survivals of Egyptian emblems.

A brief reference may be made here to the other relics in Ile Ifẹ.

Among these is the bronze head of Olokun. This effigy clearly shows the skill and dexterity of the Yorubas in making statues of bronze. The features of the effigy are distinctly negroid.

Besides this effigy there are several portrait-heads made in terra-cotta and excavated by the German Inner African Exploration Expedition in December 1910. All these are survivals of a lost art among the Yorubas.

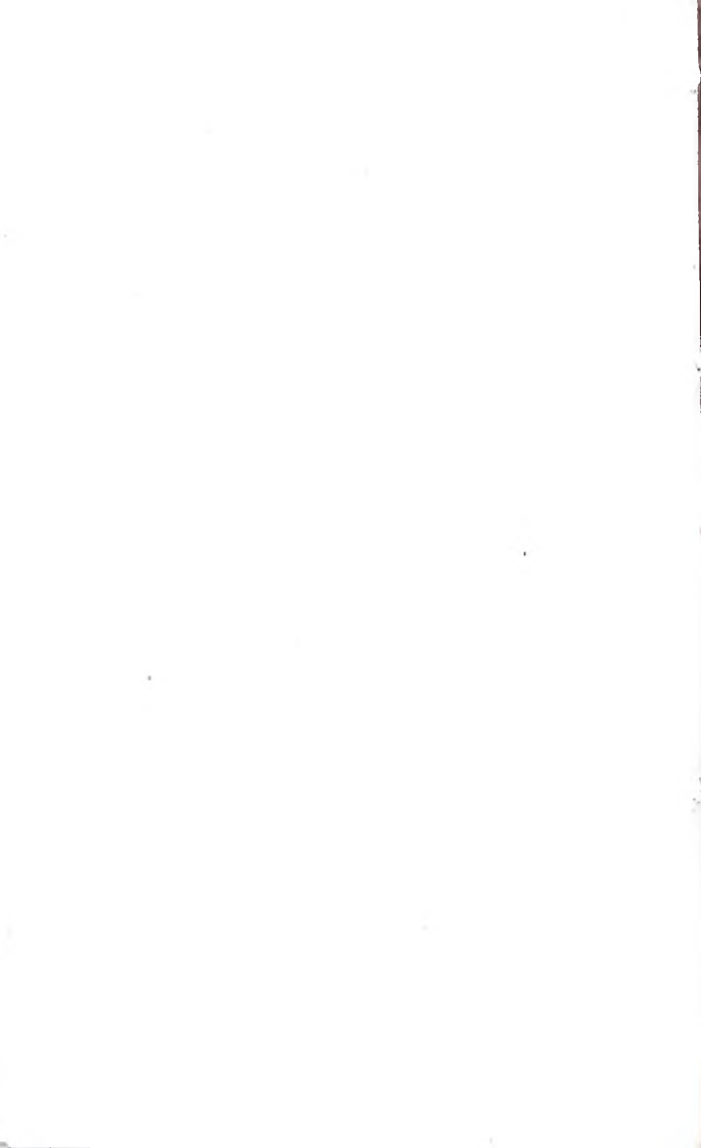
Several terra-cottas may still be found in various parts of Ile Ifẹ. The Rev. J. S. Adejumo has a fine collection of these terra-cottas, and the present Ọni of Ifẹ has a museum of interesting relics. Unfortunately many of the relics are in the possession of natives who know very little about their archæological value and who could hardly be induced to part with their precious treasures.

Lastly, reference must be made here to the stone chair presented by a former Ọni of Ifẹ to Sir William Macgregor, and placed, together with other relics, in the Egyptian Court of the British Museum, where all the relics appear at first glance to be among kindred works of art.



CHAPTER XVI

SURVIVAL OF HIEROGLYPHICS, EMBLEMS AND  
OTHER SYMBOLS—*continued*



## CHAPTER XVI

### SURVIVAL OF HIEROGLYPHICS, EMBLEMS AND OTHER SYMBOLS—*continued*

#### HISTORICAL CONNECTION OF IFÈ RELICS WITH ANCIENT EGYPT

THE existence of the relics described above in Ile Ifè has raised several questions. One can hardly help asking: "What is the origin of the sculptures? Who were the masons? What is the historical connection of the relics with the artistic cultures of other parts of Africa? What is their religious significance?"

Some of these questions have been partly answered in connection with the description of the relics. Attention has been called to the fact that objects similar to, or identical with, the relics existed in Ancient Egypt.

Some writers suggest that the high culture indicated by the relics was imported to Ile Ifè by Phoenician traders from the North, who must have travelled extensively and settled in Yorubaland until they executed all the stone and bronze work which has partly survived. This suggestion is not supported by the nature of the relics. There is very little evidence of Phoenician characteristics in the survivals; as a matter of fact, the intrinsic evidence of the relics, both from the point of view of style and also from the point of view of ideas, symbolism and inscriptions, is distinctly Egyptian rather than Phoenician.

Other writers suggest that the culture must be traced to Portuguese traders coming from the South or to Christians from Europe who have been credited with the introduction of brass and glass work into Benin. This suggestion cannot bear a historical test and can be dismissed as a mere conjecture without any sound foundation.

Professor Leo Frobenius believes that the importers of this high culture have all died out; that they were not the negritic

Yorubas ; that their descendants have become mixed with the " pure " Yorubas, but the strain of their stock can be seen in the light-coloured skin of some of the Yorubas. This belief is based on the assumptions that once a nation is civilized, circumstances and environment cannot cause it to degenerate, and that any degree of culture found in Yorubaland must be treated as non-native. These assumptions cannot be proved. Unless it can be definitely stated that those who executed the stone work in Ile Ife lived just long enough there without in any way influencing the native inhabitants, and dying with their art, the belief of Professor Froebenius must be treated as an inadequate explanation of the phenomena.

Over against these suggestions and belief there is the unshaken evidence of the natives of Ife that the relics were the works of the ancestors of the Yorubas and that most of the relics have a religious significance which agrees with the existing religious ideas and beliefs.

Detailed criticism of the suggestions regarding the Phoenician origin and detailed proof of the views that credit for the relics must be shared by Yoruba ancestors are out of place in a work which deals specifically with the religious side of the question. Taking all the available data into consideration, especially in view of the saturation of Yoruba customs and beliefs by those of the Egyptians, it is difficult to deny active contact between the Yorubas and the Egyptians. This contact was close and uninterrupted for a long period.

According to Talbot, there was much intercourse between Egypt and the Sudan between 2000-500 B.C.<sup>1</sup> It was probably during this period that the first wave of Yoruba immigration took place.

One important fact should be noted here. The stone pillars are objects of worship to the Yorubas. Around them is a chain of religious sentiment which has remained unbroken for several centuries. If the pillars have been entirely the work of visitors or settlers, and the Yorubas themselves have had no traditional connection with their erection, the non-native character of the pillars would have prevented the growth of such a strong religious sentiment around them.

All the available data point clearly in one direction,

<sup>1</sup> *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. I, p. 19.

namely, that the relics are remnants of the culture brought by the Yorubas from Egypt and maintained by successive waves of immigrants until the impulse of the culture had spent its energy.

The culture indicated by the survival of pillars of the sun-god, symbols of eggs and crocodiles, and other objects is, in many respects, the Heliolithic culture of Heliopolis. The description given above, especially the survival in some cases of the name of the sun-god Re or Ra, clearly proves this statement. The Heliolithic culture, according to Professor Smith, spread in all directions from Egypt—from the third to the first millenium B.C. It involves the production of stone sculptures and stone worship.

Professor Perry gives the chief elements of the culture as follows: (1) Agriculture; (2) The use of stones for dolmens, stone circles; (3) the carving of stone images; (4) Pottery making; (5) Metal-working and pearl fishing; (6) The use of polished stone implements; (7) Rulers consisting of (a) The children of the sun, (b) A class associated with the underworld, who survived as war-chiefs; (8) The sun-cult; (9) The practice of mummification; (10) The great mother goddess; (11) Human sacrifice, connected with agriculture and the cult of the mother goddess; (12) Mother right; (13) Totemistic clans; (14) The dual organization; (15) Exogamy.

All these elements survive in Yoruba primitive culture, with the exception of those which are ruled out by geographical conditions.

The affinity of the Yoruba pillars at Ile Ife to the Egyptian pillars at Heliopolis clearly stultifies the theory of Phoenician workmanship. The affinity of the statues of Ile Ife to the statues at Memphis and Thebes also narrows down the conflicting theories of the origin of the former to Egypt exclusively.

It may be added here, however, that Heliopolis was not the only centre of sun worship in Ancient Egypt. According to Professor Wiedemann, "Sun worship existed in Egypt from prehistoric times, and it held its place in popular favour until the latest period of Egyptian history. The obelisks which stood at the entrance of the temples were dedicated to the sun."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Egyptians*, p. 16.

But more elements from the Heliopolitan sun worship seem to have survived in Yorubaland than from any other form of Egyptian sun worship.

An important survival from Heliopolis may be noted here. Plutarch tells us that "the ox that is kept at Heliopolis which they call Mnevis—sacred to Osiris . . . is black also."<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that the Greek word Mnevis survives in Yorubaland by way of Egypt. The initial consonant and the final consonant of the word are dropped in Yoruba, following the rule that a pure Yoruba noun begins with a vowel and the rule that a final consonant which does not receive a vowel to form a syllable is dropped. The word thus becomes clipped into "evi." Now the letter *v* does not exist in the Yoruba alphabet. It is therefore changed to *w*. Hence the word becomes "Ẹwi," the name of a Yoruba King or Paramount chief who, in former years, was given respect approximating to divine honour. The country ruled by this chief is known as "Ado Ẹwi," that is, the settlement of "Ẹwi." The colour of the Ox is noteworthy. The face of Osiris was black, and his black image was known as *didu* or *dudu*, words which mean "BLACK" in the Yoruba language.

Granite statues of gods may be found in various parts of Ancient Egypt.<sup>2</sup> These include statues of Ra or Re, although no whole statues of the god have yet been discovered.<sup>3</sup>

A close examination of some of the statues shows that they are similar to the Memphite Egyptian work of the fifth century B.C. Among those found by Leo Frobenius there is one which Sir Flinders Petrie believes to be "obviously a copy of Roman work of about the second century." This is another Roman survival, but there is no doubt that it has travelled to Yorubaland by way of Egypt.

#### DERIVATION OF ILE IFẸ

An illustration of the extent to which the Heliolithic culture has permeated Yoruba primitive culture is furnished by the large number of Yoruba words embodying elements in the former culture. Nearly all the names of the gods associated with sun-worship in Heliopolis and Hermopolis have survived

<sup>1</sup> *Isis and Osiris* (trans. Mead), XXXIII, 5.

<sup>2</sup> See Erman, *Egyptian Religion*, p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> See F. Petrie, *Tombs of the Courtiers*, XXX, 5.

in Yoruba. Some of the names are Ra, or Re, Osiris, Horus, Khepera, Khopri, Shu, Adumu or Atumu, Tum and Thot. Some survivals of these names or derivations from them have been noted above. Here a few interesting survivals may be noted. Just as Heliopolis, the chief centre of sun worship in Ancient Egypt, was known as *Pa ra*—"The House of Ra"—so also is Ile Ifẹ the chief centre of sun-worship in Yorubaland, known as the "House of the holy souls (of Ra)." The derivation of Ile Ifẹ is as follows :

The word *Ile* means a house. The word *I-ḥ* is of Egyptian origin. It will be remembered that in the *Book of the Dead* there are numerous references to "the holy souls of Ra" at Heliopolis. The Egyptian form of this term is "Neferu-kau-Ra." The word *I-ḥ* is derived from *n-e-fe-ru*; the initial *n* is omitted, so that as a Yoruba noun the new word may begin with a vowel; the final syllable is elided. *N-e-fe-ru* thus becomes *I-ḥ* (an *e* sound in Yoruba is phonetically written *i*). That this is the correct derivation is supported by two facts. First, the word *nefer*; the singular of *neferu* survives in Yoruba as *I-fa* or *-nifa*.<sup>1</sup> The survival of the plural *neferu* cannot be regarded as impossible. Secondly, the word *nefer* survives in the name of a district in Ile Ifẹ itself. That district is known as *Qramḥ* (*Q-RA-MḤ* or *Q-Ra-NIFE*, *m* being often used as a contraction of *ni*, and *O* being an initial vowel characteristic of a pure Yoruba noun). *Qramḥ* is thus a modification of *Ra nefer*, a well-known Egyptian phrase.<sup>2</sup>

Ile Ifẹ may, therefore, be regarded as a survival, in an abbreviated form of "*Pa neferu-kau-Ra*"—"The House of the divine souls of Ra."

Two other survivals may be noted. The first is the word *Wura*—"The Khu or the soul of Ra." The word *wura* means "gold" in Yoruba, and is derived from the colour of the golden orb of the sun at sunrise or at sunset. The second is the word *Biri-kiti*—"round." The word appears to be derived from *Kho-pri Kuti*—"Khopri or the sun god of the two horizons." The idea of roundness is derived from the shape of the sun at sunrise in the eastern horizon and at sunset in the western horizon.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IV above.

<sup>2</sup> Compare *Osiris nefer*, and see various parts of the *Book of the Dead*.

## OLOKUN, ÈBỌ-OLOKUN, ÈBỌRA, IMỌLE

Reference has been made above to Olokun, the Lord or Owner of the Sea, as one of the minor deities. There is evidence both at Ile Ifẹ and at Benin that he was once a major deity.

About two miles north of Ile Ifẹ there is a grove known as



FIG. 53. OLOKUN.

Èbọ-Olokun. It is now thickly overgrown with wood. It was at this grove that the antique works of art were excavated by Professor Leo Froebenius and his co-workers. The relics excavated include a large quantity of glass beads, a large number of terra-cottas depicting human and animal heads, fragments of urns, jars, pottery, jugs, pipes and other objects.

The most important object excavated at Èbọ-Olokun is the bronze head of Olokun himself. This valuable relic is thus described by Professor Leo Froebenius :

"It measures fourteen and a half inches from the tip of the diadem to the neck line; the face from the edge of the forehead to the chin, sixteen and three quarter inches. It is cast in what we call a 'cire perdue,' or hollow cast, and very finely chased indeed, like the finest Roman examples. It cannot be said to be 'negro' in countenance, although it is covered with quite fine tattooed lines, which at once contradicts any suggestion of its having been brought from abroad. The setting of the lips, the shape of the ears, the



FIG. 54. OLOKUN.

contour of the face, all prove, if separately examined, the perfection of a work of true art, which the whole of it obviously is. The diadem surrounding the head is specially remarkable. There is a flower in its centre behind which rises an entwined staff, ending in a button."<sup>1</sup>

Myths current among the people of Ile Ife suggest that Olokun was the creator of the world and of the major deities Odudua and Orişala.

<sup>1</sup> *The Voice of Africa*, Vol. I, p. 310.

The abode of Olokun is, according to the people of Ife, in the bed of the Ocean or Sea. This ocean or sea was formerly on the site of the city of Ile Ife. Having built the city the god retired to the bed of an adjoining river. The people of Ilesha, twenty miles from Ile Ife, say that the Olokun dwells on a sacred mountain. The people of Benin City believe that he dwells in the bed of an adjoining river known as Owre or Ore.

The terra-cottas are known as Eḃora or Imoḃe.

One cannot but ask : " What is the origin of these relics ? " One can easily understand why the people at Lagos who dwell near the coast worship Olokun, the god of the sea or ocean. But why should the peoples of Ile Ife and Benin living in interior cities far away from the sea and who perhaps had never seen the sea be ardent worshippers and admirers of the god of the sea or ocean ?

The answer to these questions lies in the historical connection existing between Ancient Egyptian civilization and Yoruba primitive culture.

According to Egyptian mythology, Tum or Atumu (Adumu) was the god of the primordial ocean,<sup>1</sup> the soul of the deep watery abyss. At Heliopolis he was identified with Ra and was known as Atum-Ra or Ra-Tum. The survival of Ra in Yorubaland suggests the survival of Tum. So close is the resemblance between Tum and Olokun that it is difficult to regard the latter other than as the counterpart of the former. It will be remembered that Tum, the Egyptian god of the primordial ocean is often described in Egyptian books as the " soul (khu) of Ra," the " soul (Khu) of souls (Khus)." Now the meaning of *Oloku(n)* (O-l-o-ku-n) is " the owner or possessor of ku or ku's, that is, a soul or souls." The ocean or sea is probably designated " the possessor of soul or souls " because the soul of a god dwells therein or because it is the source of white watery vapours resembling Khus or souls. Both Tum and Olokun are gods of the primordial ocean. Both are connected with creation ; Tum was regarded as Creator ; Olokun was worshipped at Ile Ife, where human beings, both white and black, were supposed to have been created. In Egypt, Tum was also supposed to dwell on a mountain.<sup>2</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> Tiele, *History of Religion* (trans. Balingal), pp. 76-80.

<sup>2</sup> Tiele, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

Ilesha in Yorubaland, Olokun was supposed to dwell on a mountain where an altar is dedicated to him.

Olokun, as the counterpart of Tum, is an element of survival in Yorubaland of the Heliolithic culture of Egypt.

The description of the bronze of Olokun given above calls for a brief comment. Professor Froebenius says that "it cannot be regarded as 'negro' in countenance, although it is covered by fine tattooed lines." Now the facial



FIG. 55. A COLLECTION OF SACRED IMAGES AT THE ILE IFE MUSEUM.

characteristics of a "negro" or black man are a receding forehead, broad flat nose, full, thick and everted lips. An impartial study of the figure will show that these characteristics are in evidence, though not in exaggerated forms. The figure closely resembles that of a fine West African black man, a typical example of whom may be found in West African books and newspapers. Besides, the fine tattooed lines correspond to the fine tattooed facial and tribal marks found in some parts of Yorubaland.

The name *Ẹbọ-Olokun* is also noteworthy. It has been pointed out above<sup>1</sup> that the word *ẹbọ* comes from the Egyptian

<sup>1</sup> Chapter X above.

word *u-eb*, which means a "priest," the "pure one," "one whose duty is to inspect the purity of sacrificial victims."<sup>1</sup> The word, therefore, means "sacrifice, pure offering in Yoruba." It follows, then, that *Ẹbọ-Olokun* is the sacrifice, or the place of sacrifice to the god *Olokun*.

The word *Ẹbọ-Ra* must be traced to the same source. *Ẹbọ-Ra* means "sacrifice (offered) to Ra, the sun-god." The term is applied to all kinds of terra-cottas found at *Ẹbọ-Olokun*. The existence of sacrifices to *Olokun* (*Ẹbọ-Olokun*) and sacrifices to *Ra* (*Ẹbọ-Ra*) on the same spot constitute a further proof of the identity of *Olokun* with *Tum Ra*.

The word *Imọlẹ* has been explained above. It means "the child of the Earth or of the living one," its full form being *Ọmọ-ilẹ*. *Ilẹ* is probably a modified form of *Iye*—"that which exists, the living one."

The mass of relics found at *Ẹbọ-Olokun* strongly suggests that it was an ancient cemetery. The relics include glass beads, terra-cottas of all kinds, depicting men and animals, jars, pipes, urns, different kinds of pottery and a deep layer of ashes. All these are objects likely to be found in an Egyptian cemetery. Professor Flinders Petrie, writing about the Egyptian funeral, says :

"A great burning took place at a funeral, and the ashes of the vegetable matter, and even the burnt sand beneath it were gathered up and buried in the grave."<sup>2</sup>

These ashes were often deposited into a large number of jars.

"The position of these ash-jars generally was at the north or foot end of the grave."<sup>3</sup>

The terra-cottas of animal heads are reminiscent of ushebti figures usually deposited in Egyptian graves. The remaining articles are also similar to, or identical with, objects found in Egyptian graves.<sup>4</sup>

There is no doubt that the bronze figure *Olokun*, the relics at *Ẹbọ-Olokun* and the names of *Ẹbọra* and *Ẹbọ Olokun* constitute unmistakable links between Ancient Egypt and Yorubaland.

<sup>1</sup> Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> *Nagada and Ballas*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Nagada and Ballas*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> For an enumeration of similar objects see McIver, *El Amrah and Abydos*, pp. 7-14. The objects are intended for the use of the deceased in the next world.

## THE QNI OF IFÈ

The QNI, the King or paramount chief of Ifè, is a priest king. He is regarded by the other kings or paramount chiefs as the chief priest. In his absence, however, another priest may offer important sacrifices in the different towns and



FIG. 56. THE QNI OF IFÈ.

villages. Tradition says that all other kinds or *Qbas* used to go to Ifè for their coronation ceremonies. Until quite recently the sword of state must be obtained from Ifè before the coronation ceremonies of an *Qba* (King or paramount chief) could be considered valid.

The title of the king of Ifè and the importance of the sacred city in regard to coronation ceremonies find close parallels in Ancient Egypt. The title of an important priest in Ancient

Egypt is On-mut-f (An-mut-f) or On-kenemet (An-kenemet). It should be noted also that the Egyptian word for Heliopolis and the name of an ancient god of the city was On<sup>1</sup> or An.

The importance of Ile Ife in regard to coronation ceremonies may be compared with that of Heliopolis. According to Dr. Tiele :

“Heliopolis was held in the greatest esteem ; coronation ceremonies took place there as at Memphis, and the kings who were crowned there had the special title bestowed on them of Haq-an, lord of On.”<sup>2</sup>



FIG. 57. BRONZE HEADS FOUND AT IJEBU ODE.

#### SURVIVAL OF OTHER EMBLEMS AND SYMBOLS

**IFA UTENSILS.** Prominent among Ifa utensils which show traces of Egyptian origin are the Ifa rattles. These are generally made of wood in the shape of human beings or gods. The headgears of these figures are significant in that most of them are shaped like obelisks, an important element in the Heliolithic culture in Egypt.

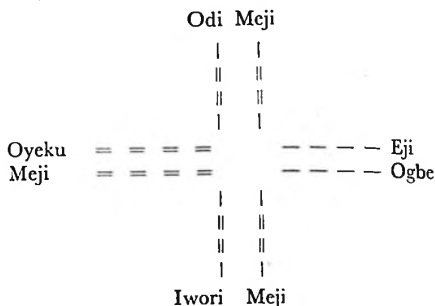
Next to the rattles come the Ifa Trays. These are used by Ifa Priests in different parts of Yorubaland. They are

<sup>1</sup> Heliopolis was known by the Hebrews as On. See Genesis, Chapter 41, verse 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 74 and 75.

made of wood. Each of them has four carved heads<sup>1</sup> pointing to the four points of the compass.

There is no doubt that cosmological ideas are associated with the heads carved on Ifa trays. They represent, according to native ideas, the four deities presiding over the four corners of the earth and whose domains are the four chief Odus of Ifa, namely, Ogbe, Oyeku, Iwori, Odi. The Odus are generally arranged to form the four points of the compass. The arrangement is as follows :



The points of the compass represented and the gods presiding over the respective corners are as follows :

- |                |       |         |
|----------------|-------|---------|
| (1) Eji Ogbe   | East  | E-şu    |
| (2) Oyeku Meji | West  | Şango   |
| (3) Iwori Meji | South | Ọbatala |
| (4) Odi Meji   | North | O-gu(n) |

The above deities are the same as the deities presiding over the respective days of the week. Their identity with the four auxiliary gods of Thot who were associated with the Egyptian cosmogony and guardianship of the world, has been noted in Chapter X.

The Yoruba oracular system, cosmogony, and guardianship of the four corners of the world are closely linked together as survivals of the same ancient culture.

It should be noted here that E-şu (Eshu), the guardian of

<sup>1</sup> Each head usually contains two eyes reminiscent of the eyes of the sun-god in Ancient Egypt.

the East, is not Su-t, the warrior god, but Shu, the god of the rising sun.

In using the tray for oracular purposes the babalawo faces the east and turns the head representing E- $\dot{s}$ u (Shu) and his domain towards the East. This custom of turning to the East in imitation of upper and lower heaven, is similar to the custom of turning in that direction by the priests of Heliopolis when performing ceremonies to Shu, the god of the rising sun. Impressed by this similarity Gerald Massey, in his work entitled *A Book of Beginnings*, in which he attempts to reconstruct and recover the lost origins of the myths, with Egypt for the mouth and Africa as the birthplace, says :

“ Ife is a region of north or lower heaven, out of which the sun issues forth, and is reborn from his burial place.”<sup>1</sup>

This is quite similar to ideas current about the sun-god in Heliopolis, where the sun-god was regarded as issuing forth as “ Khepera in the morning, Ra at noon, and Tum in the evening,” and traversing the lower heaven during the hours of darkness and returning to the upper heaven at dawn.

Professor Leo Frobenius, who has made a thorough study of the subject, has inferred that the cosmogony of the Yorubas, the customs of turning to the East, and the building of a temple at each of the four points of the compass, are surviving elements of the “ Templum ” system found among the Ancient Etruscans and belonging to a North-West Atlantic culture.<sup>2</sup> A detailed criticism of his argument cannot be undertaken here. But it must be observed that whatever may be the ultimate origin of the system as a whole, it has come to the Yorubas by way of Egypt, and it bears the indelible stamp of Egypt on it in Yorubaland, both as regards its phraseology and its leading ideas.

**THE DOUBLE-HEADED AXE.** Of great religious importance is the survival of the double-headed axe. This is in connection with the worship of  $\dot{S}$ ango, the god of Thunder.

In an earlier chapter  $\dot{S}$ ango was identified with Ptah, whose symbolic animal was the ram. The other name of  $\dot{S}$ ango is Ja-ku-ta—“ The living soul of Ptah.” The survival of an axe symbolizing ram’s horns in Yorubaland should not, therefore, be surprising.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, p. 491.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. *The Voice of Africa*, Vol. I, pp. 258-264.

Commenting on the sacred double axe in Nigeria, P. Amaury Talbot says :

“There may have been some association with the Horns of Consecration, which, with the Double-Axe, formed the commonest Cretan symbol. . . . There is a curious resemblance between the double axe and some of the winged Ankh crosses found in Egyptian tombs of the early Christian Era.”<sup>1</sup>

Professor Elliot Smyth is also of the opinion that “the double axe was the homologue of the winged disc which fell, or rather flew, from heaven as the tangible form of the god.”

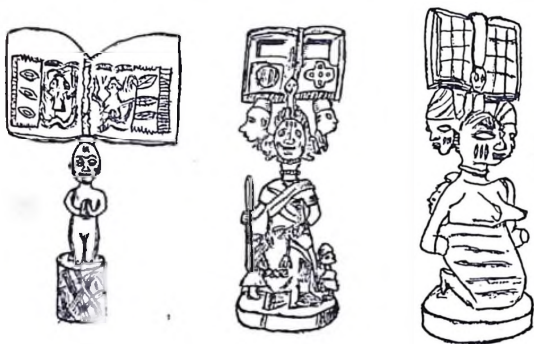


FIG. 58. SPECIMENS OF THE DOUBLE-HEADED AXE IN YORUBALAND.

The origin of the double axe is thus traced to Crete and Egypt. Between the two countries there was intercourse dating as far back as the reign of Minoan I of Crete and the age of Pyramids in Egypt. According to Professor George F. Moore :

“Egyptian Cretan wares or representations of them in Egyptian tombs securely establish certain fundamental synchronisms, and made it possible to assign dates to the principal epochs in Cretan art and architecture. . . . Commerce with Egypt was early established ; Egyptian decorative motives may be recognized in Cretan art at several stages . . .”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. II, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Religion*, Vol. I, pp. 406-407.

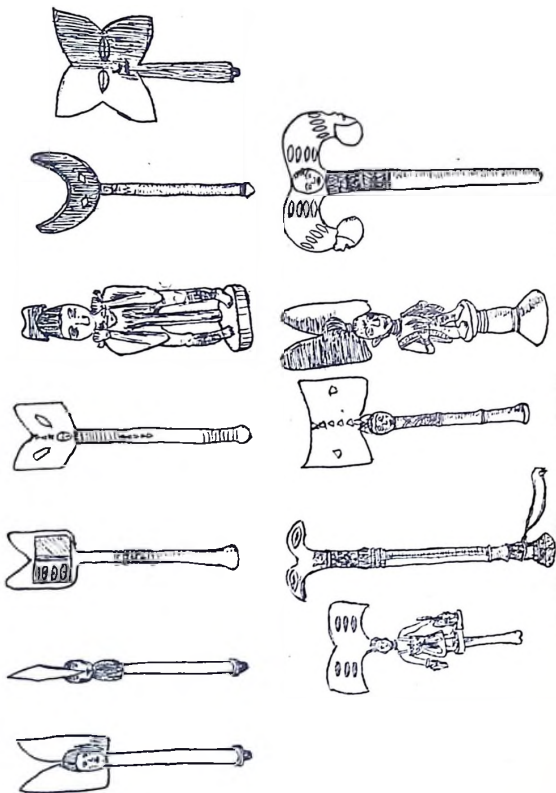


FIG. 59. SPECIMENS OF THE DOUBLE-HEADED AXE IN YORUBALAND.

"Among the symbols to which religious significance attaches are a conventionalized pair of bull's horns, which have been called, somewhat awkwardly, 'horns of consecration,' and the *bipennis*, or double-bitted axe, which occurs with such great frequency as to be a characteristic feature of the Minoan art."<sup>1</sup>

These extracts not only show that the cult of the double-headed axe in connection with the worship of Şango, the ram-headed deity, has survived in Yorubaland from Crete by way of Ancient Egypt,<sup>2</sup> but they also raise the question of the impress of Grecian and Cretan cultures on Yoruba primitive culture. A satisfactory answer to this question can only be the result of adequate research work.

The importance and the degree of sacredness attached to the double-axe can be gauged by the large numbers of the axe, the various forms of it, and its indispensability in connection with the ceremonies connected with the worship of the god. It is usually made of wood, and rarely made of iron. Sometimes it is made of stone, and this double-headed stone axe is sometimes used by Şango priests in the houses of victims of lightning. The discovery of this stone axe in a house struck by lightning means the forfeiture of all the goods therein, which then become the property of the priests.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The survival of elements in Ancient Egyptian culture described in this chapter shows, in a measure, the degree of permeation of Yoruba culture by elements in the former. The elements described in the chapter do not constitute an exhaustive list. The survival of ancient Egyptian deities in Yorubaland and in other parts of West Africa, as well as the survival of Ancient Egyptian words in West African languages in general, and in the Yoruba language in particular, is illustrated in an appendix to this work.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Religion*, Vol. I, p. 409.

<sup>2</sup> See *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. II, pp. 438, 439, 444.



CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSION



## CHAPTER XVII

### CONCLUSION

"SCIENCE is neither final nor absolute. It is only a recent method of looking at things." The truth of this statement cannot be over-emphasized. The student of religion must occasionally review his data to see whether they afford adequate support for his theory. He must test his theory in the light of new knowledge. He must ever be on the watch as to the existence of new materials, new data, new phenomena which would test the soundness of his theory. However attractive or convincing his theory may be, however smashing in its effect on rival or preceding theories his theory may be, he must not strike the note of finality. Science knows no finality. The pet theory of to-day may be the laughing-stock of to-morrow.

The tone of this thesis has in some parts been critical. This is due to two reasons. First, the results achieved by previous writers, highly appreciated as these are, can only be greeted with interim cheers, and not with prolonged applause denoting finality. Secondly, the subject of Yoruba Religion has been approached and treated from a wider point of view. It has been considered from the point of view of comparative religion, ethnology and philology. It has been treated, not as an isolated phenomenon, a freak of nature, or a religious curio, but as a religion whose roots are imbedded in the dim recesses of the prehistoric and the historic past, a religion not unrelated in some respects to some of the well-known religions, and a religion closely resembling one of the most ancient religions in the world.

The description of Yoruba Religion given in the preceding chapters can lead to only one conclusion, namely, that the impress of Egypt on it is clear and indelible.

The facts leading to the conclusion have been set out in different parts of the work. It has been pointed out that the religious ideas of the Yorubas are similar to, and in some

cases identical with, those of Ancient Egypt. The religious phraseology of the Yorubas is thoroughly permeated with Ancient Egyptian words. All the Yoruba words applied to elements in religious or social life are of Egyptian origin. For example, the Yoruba words for the sun, the sky, the heavens, the stars, man, woman, boy, girl, death, spirit, water, heart, head, body, and a host of others, are all of Egyptian origin.

It has been said that words of Egyptian origin form not less than one-half of the words in the Yoruba vocabulary. The extent to which such words have been incorporated into the Yoruba language can best be demonstrated by an examination of a few passages chosen at random from the existing Yoruba literature. The passages will show that the main structure of the language will be destroyed if such words are withdrawn. Here are the passages :

1. *Li Atetekose Qlqrun da qrun on aiye.* Gen. 1, v. 1.  
 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
2. *Qlqrun si wipe, Jf ki a da enia li aworan wa, gęgę bi iri wa ; ki nwon o si jęba lori ęja okun, ati lori ęiyę oju-qrun ati lori ęranko ati lori gbogbo ilę ati lori ohun gbogbo ti arako lori ilę.* Gen. 1, v. 26.  
 "And God said let us make man in our own image, after our likeness : and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."
3. *Egun ki yio si si mę ; itę Qlqrun ati ti Qdę—Agutan ni yio si ma wa nibę ; awęn iranşę rę yio si ma sin i.* Rev. XXII, v. 3.  
 "And there will be no more curse : the throne of God and of the lamb shall be in it ; and his servants shall serve him."

The words in italics in the above passages are of Egyptian origin. They include words derived from Semitic root *ha-ya* (or *cha-ya*), "to exist," from which the Ancient Egyptian word *cha-par*,<sup>1</sup> or *che-per*, "to exist," is probably derived.

<sup>1</sup> It has been pointed out that the Semitic root-word *ha-ya* (or *chaya*) plays an important role in West African languages. The first syllable which varies with inflections in Hebrew is left out in West African languages.

In Ancient Egyptian the same root-word plays an important role. The first syllable *ha-* or *cha-* is the Egyptian *cha-* or *che-* (Greek *NE-*), and the second syllable *-ya* becomes *par* or *per* in Ancient Egyptian. The letter *y* does not exist in Ancient Egyptian language ; its place is taken by *p*. Hence *-ya* = *-par* or *-per*. The older form *Kho-pi-ru* is also found. The importance of the root-word in both the West African and the Ancient Egyptian languages cannot be over estimated. See Ellis, *Yoruba-speaking Peoples*, Comparison of four West African Languages, pp. 305-398 ; Budge, *Ancient Egyptian Language*, pp. 141-142 ; Pott, *Ueber die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaus von Wilhem von Humbolt*, II, pp. 495-498 (1876).

The derivations of most of the words in italics above have been given in the preceding chapters ; those of the remaining words will be found in the select list of Yoruba words given in Appendix 1 of this work.

4. *Ibiti agbara awon ogun titun* ti Britein gbe wa ni idaloju ise ati *yiyayi* awon ti o nfi kekke-ogun ja ninu won. Yoruba War Pictorial, No. 16, p. 8.

"The strength of the new British offensive lies in the efficiency and excellent fighting spirit of the tank-soldiers."

5. Dealing with animals in Yorubaland in a Yoruba reader entitled "Iwe Kika Ekarun," a writer says :

Franko ile Yoruba po pupo : . . . Ewure, Agutan, Malu, Ologbo, Aja, Fledede, . . . Adie peppeye, eiyele . . . ekun, kiniun, igbo, gunugun, . . . peppeye-odo, ogbugbu . . .<sup>1</sup>

"Animals in Yorubaland are many : . . . goats, sheep, horses, etc."

The words in italics in No. 4 above, and the names of animals given in No. 5 above, are all of Ancient Egyptian origin. A fuller list of names of animals is given in Appendix 1 of this work.

It should be noted that in the above passages all the important words are survivals of Ancient Egyptian words. Some of the monosyllabic words which are not in italics may, after further research, be shown to be of Egyptian origin.

The survival of the Ancient Egyptian deities has been noted. Nearly all the leading ones among them survive in Yorubaland in name and in attributes. In most cases the essential features of the deities survive. It is significant that the great gods of Egypt are also the great gods<sup>2</sup> of Yorubaland. Added to this is the survival of names of places.<sup>3</sup>

The similarity or identity of magical beliefs and practices, birth and death ceremonies, priesthood and worship has been noted in the preceding chapters.<sup>4</sup>

By far the most interesting survival is that of Egyptian hieroglyphics. It shows the intimacy of the contact between the two countries. It affords a striking, though indirect, testimony to the value of the work of Young, Champollion and others who have deciphered the Egyptian hieroglyphics.

<sup>1</sup> p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapters II to VIII above.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. Salug in Ancient Egypt and Salug-a in Yorubaland.

<sup>4</sup> Chapters X to XIV.

Professor Petrie,<sup>1</sup> after pointing out "how largely the earliest stratum of Egyptian ideas has been at one with the rest of Africa," gives fifty-eight odd examples from which Egyptologists have recently been able to obtain a clearer vision of the ancient ceremonies of the Egyptians of old. More than seventy per cent. of the examples he gives are found among the Yorubas.

In view of the above facts the conclusion is irresistible that the religion of the Yorubas stands in genetic relation to the religion of Ancient Egypt. It is a survival of the latter. It is a medley of the worship of different deities in different nomes and epochs of Egyptian history. In its essential features it reflects the conservatism characteristic of the Ancient Egyptians. The old is never discarded in favour of the new; both are placed side by side without any attempt at synthesis or reconciliation. Generally speaking, it is a corrupt form of the Ancient Egyptian religion. It is a clear illustration of the saying: *Corruptio optimi pessima est*—"The corruption of the best is the worst."

Here an attempt may be made to answer the question as to whether Yoruba religion is due to arrested development or to degeneration. The facts adduced above show that in common with the religion of Ancient Egypt it must have reached a fairly high stage. The lofty elements which it still contains can be regarded as cases of arrested development, the tendency to develop having been arrested by the influence of environment, and the tendency to deteriorate having been checked by their practical and sociological value. On the other hand, some of the lofty elements in Ancient Egyptian Religion seems to have degenerated in Yorubaland into rank animism or fetichism. The general impression is that the Yoruba religion has degenerated from a more lofty religion, the more primitive parts of it showing close affinity with the Egyptian monotheistic belief in "one and only god."

The evidence supplied by Yoruba religion confirms Dr. Menzies' statement that "the debased tribes of Australia and West Africa show signs of a higher civilization they have lost,"<sup>2</sup> but contradicts his conclusion that the general tendency of

<sup>1</sup> See Parts 3 and 4, *Ancient Egypt*, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Religion*, p. 20.

things is upward. A comparison of Yoruba religion with its prototype contradicts the evolutionary hypothesis supported by Dr. Carpenter and shows definitely that there has been a decadence. Any statement contradicting the fact of decadence of religion must either be due to an examination of data under the influence of a subjective theory, or to the attachment of undue weight to tales related by casual travellers which justify a preconceived theory. Dr. Andrew Lang, in his monumental work entitled *The Making of Religion*, sounds a note of warning against the danger of falling into the latter error when he says: "Nothing can be less scientific than to snatch up any traveller's tale which makes for our theory, and to ignore evidence, perhaps earlier, or later, or better observed, which makes against it." Professor Julian Huxley and Mr. Herbert Spencer are cited as examples of those who fall into this error.<sup>1</sup>

The decadence of religion adversely affected the whole of Yoruba culture. This fact is attested to by Sir Flinders Petrie when he says: "The discoveries made by Leo Frobenius show that there was considerable artistic civilization somewhere between 1000 and 3000 years ago, and that the present West African is much degraded below his former status."<sup>2</sup> This statement applies with equal force to Yorubaland and the Yorubas.

There is a clear evidence of the existence of a monotheistic belief in Yorubaland. Attention has been called to this in a previous chapter,<sup>3</sup> where it has been pointed out that the Supreme Being must have been identified with Osiris in the course of the history of the religion. Identification with Osiris resulted in the title of Osiris as "Lord of Heaven" being given to the Yoruba Supreme Deity and in the transference of some of the lofty ideas associated with the Egyptian deity to the Yoruba deity. The conception of *Ọlọrun*, however, did not thereby become anthropomorphic or animistic. It remained abstract and became gradually nebulous almost up to a vanishing point, resulting in the transfer of worship to the anthropomorphic and animistic deities, and relegating *Ọlọrun* into the background as a Deity too distant to worship.

The survival of several elements in the Osirian faith is a

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ancient Egypt* (1914), p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter II above.

further testimony to the relation between Osiris and Ọlorun as sketched in a previous chapter. The three principal elements which have survived in Yorubaland from the religion of Ancient Egypt are : the Osirian faith, the cult of ancestors or anthropomorphic gods, and the heliolithic culture. Of these three elements, the Osirian faith occupies the most prominent part. The cult of ancestors is widely diffused, whilst the heliolithic culture, widespread though its relics may be, is no longer as active or influential in regard to religious worship as the two preceding ones. In the case of Egyptian religion there is no absolute division between the elements : the three elements eventually became assimilated as far as possible or continued to be placed side by side. This is also true of Yoruba religion, but the Osirian faith occupies the most prominent position.

#### “ATLANTIC” CULTURE

A discussion of the theory that Yoruba primitive culture is a degenerate form of the lofty culture of Ancient Egypt, and that Yoruba religion bears on it an unmistakable stamp of Ancient Egyptian religion cannot be concluded without some reference to what seems to be a rival theory. This latter theory, proposed by Professor Leo Frobenius, the German explorer of West Africa<sup>1</sup> maintains that Yoruba culture is a survival of what he described as “Atlantic” culture.

According to this theory, “Atlantic” culture started from North Africa, somewhere in the region of the Atlas Mountains, and travelled eastwards and southwards. It was a culture centred around Poseidon, the great Sea-God. It was permeated by elements of Etruscan civilization before it started on its journey. It travelled eastwards to Egypt. It passed through the pillars of Hercules or the Straits of Gibraltar, and then along the West coast of Africa in a southerly direction until it reached Yorubaland, where it has for centuries defied attempted obliteration by rival cultures.

In support of this theory Professor Frobenius gives several reasons. He maintains that there is no record of trans-continental dissemination of culture from North Africa in a south-westerly direction. On the other hand, he says that

<sup>1</sup> See the *Voice of Africa*, Vol. I, Chapter XV, pp. 319-349.

there is ample evidence of visits paid by the fleets of North African or Mediterranean powers to the West Coast of Africa as far as the Gulf of Guinea. As a result of this intercourse between the North and the West of Africa, remnants of this "Atlantic" culture can be found in various parts of West Africa.

In the case of Yorubaland he gives the following proofs :

- (1) Water Storage Construction. He points out that Yoruba houses are constructed in a style characteristic of the Etruscans, that is, a style which provides an impluvium in the centre, whilst apartments having verandahs are built round it in a rectangular form.
- (2) The construction of houses with ridge roofs similar to those in North Africa.
- (3) The Bow. He observes that the Yoruba Bow and Arrow are similar to those of Morocco in form and in colours.
- (4) The Hand Loom. He points out that the hand loom is unknown in the Sudan, but was extensively used in North Africa. This North African form of the hand loom is found in Yorubaland and is used chiefly by women.
- (5) Drum shapes and other articles which are peculiar to North Africa, absent in the Sudan, but existing in Yorubaland. These also constitute a proof.
- (6) The existence of the "Templum" idea in Yoruba. This idea appears in the building of houses round a temple or sacred edifice. Whole towns may be planned in this way, houses being grouped and built around the temples in the town. The "Templum" idea is found in North Africa and in Ile Ife. The religion at Ile Ife is shown to be based upon the "templum" idea.

He then says : " We certify that : Firstly—All the monuments of ancient culture are concentrated on the coast ; Secondly : There is, apparently, no originating influence by way of the Interior ; and Thirdly : Definite and characteristic signs at the Northern edge of Africa, such as the construction for water storage, the handloom for women, and the 'Frontal' bow, are recurrent indications of the fact that identical elements of civilization were predominant both in the North and South at an extremely remote period."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 336.

Later, in a tone of assured conviction and finality, he says, *ex cathedra* :

“ I maintain I have re-discovered Atlantis, the Emporium of the culture of the West on the further side of the straits of Gibraltar, that Atlantis, whose walls, as Solon informs us, held within them Poseidon's Castle, where there was a wealth of luxuriant vegetation ; where treelike plants grew which gave forth food and drink and unguants (the oil-palm) ; that a fruit tree, with a quickly decaying fruit (the banana), and desirable condiments (pepper) there flourished abundantly ; that elephants lived there ; that bronze or brass, was won there (as till recently was so, behind the Yoruba mountain range) ; that the natives wore dark blue (indigo ?) garments, and that they had a somewhat foreign style of architecture (ridge roofs of palm leaf). Therefore I lay claim to Yoruba, so tropically lush and rank in its vegetation ; Yoruba, with its channelled network of lakes on the coast and the reaches of the Niger ; Yoruba, whose peculiarities are not inadequately depicted in the platonic account—this Yoruba, I assert, is Atlantis, the home of Poseidon's posterity, the Sea-God by them named Olokun ; the land of a people of whom Solon declared : They had even extended their lordship over Egypt and Tyrrhene ! ”<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that the works of Professor Froebenius are of incalculable value to students of religion and archaeology. His discovery of valuable relics at Ile Ife has won the admiration of students of Yoruba archaeology. With the exception of inferences coloured by negrophobic prejudice which prompted him to ascribe almost every valuable idea or article to non-negritic or “ un-African ” origin and other inferences inspired by anti-British sentiment which prompted him to regard magnanimous acts of enlightened colonial administration as specimens of unwise generosity shown to and undeserved by “ Negroes,” his conclusions are generally acceptable. His theory of the survival of “ Atlantic ” culture in Yorubaland, however, has not met with anything like acceptance by students of the subject.

The first certified statement that all the monuments of ancient culture are concentrated on the Coast must be accepted with reserve. Places like Ile Ife and Ofo, which contain some of the most valuable monuments, are about two hundred miles from the Coast. In the days of slow transport by foot, mule or horse, such places cannot be regarded as “ on the coast.”

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 345.

The second certified statement is the crux of the question regarding the soundness of the theory. It implies that the chief influence on Yoruba culture comes from the North by way of the Atlantic Ocean and that there is, apparently, no originating influence from the Interior.

Over against this statement there is a mass of weighty and overwhelming evidence. First of all, there is the evidence of the Yorubas themselves, who say that their ancestral home was in the North or North-east. Unless it can be proved that they came to Yorubaland by way of the sea, their culture can hardly escape being untouched by the culture of the North or North-east, especially as it has been suggested that they have very little in common, in regard to the survival of foreign culture, with the tribes of the Sudan. Their migration to Yorubaland by way of the Sudan is a fact of history, attested to by Sultan Bello of Sokoto and others.

Further, there is ample evidence that the Ancient Egyptians migrated southwards and penetrated deep into the heart of Africa. According to Talbot, "These migrations may have been set in motion by events in Egypt such as the Nubian wars of Amenemhat I, who overthrew among others the Wawat, and Matzicu Negro tribes about 1870 B.C."<sup>1</sup>

Again, the same writer says: "Many Egyptians migrated to the south and south-west when their country was attacked and conquered by the Persians under Ochus."<sup>2</sup>

In his book entitled *Egyptian Sudan*, Sir Wallis Budge, after declaring that during the Persian wars with Egypt, Herodotus testified to the fact that over 20,000 cities lined the banks of the Nile, expressed the opinion that they must have gone west.

There is evidence that in A.D. 100 and 140 Roman expeditions from Egypt under General Septimus Flaccus and Julius Maternus respectively, penetrated far into the Sudan and probably reached the approaches of the Gulf of Guinea.

It is inconceivable that Egyptians who immigrated in large numbers to the south-west and carried on commercial intercourse with the remotest regions of the Sudan did not exert any cultural influence on the people among whom some of them must have settled.

Dealing with the spread of the cultural influence of Egypt,

<sup>1</sup> *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. I, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 26.

Sir Harry Johnston states that there are traces of Egyptian influence reaching down to the Gold Coast and the Gulf of Guinea.

Intercourse between Egypt and West Africa during the close of the last era and the beginning of the present one is a fact of history.<sup>1</sup> Influence cannot be separated from intercourse; the fact of influence originating from Egypt is, therefore, undeniable.

The greatest argument against the second certified statement lies in the fact that the Yoruba religion, language, customs and other cultural elements clearly indicate influence originating from Egypt. The theory of Froebenius ignores this influence. The extent of the influence has been shown in preceding chapters of this work. It is an influence which is predominantly Egyptian, and cannot be regarded as sea-borne through a West African Atlantic route.

The third certified statement also requires criticism. It draws attention to the survival of Etruscan or Tyrrhenian culture in Yorubaland. The elements of this culture referred to are the impluvium, the bow, the hand loom and the "Templum" idea.

The existence of these Etruscan elements must be admitted. In addition it should be observed that Yoruba "funerary customs resembled those of the Etruscans." The question, however, is: By what way do these elements travel to Yorubaland? It will be helpful in trying to answer this question to note that the Etruscan elements form only a small part of the cultural elements which have been impressed upon Yoruba culture. If the Etruscan elements come by way of the sea, it will be necessary to explain the presence of such a large volume of Egyptian elements, a fact which the theory of Froebenius does not explain. On the other hand, if the theory of percolation of Egyptian influence into West Africa by way of the Sudan is accepted, the presence of Etruscan elements finds a ready explanation in the theory.

Etruscan civilization flourished in Crete. Between Egypt and Crete there was close intercourse for several centuries. In Cambridge Ancient History it is stated that "There are clear connections between the Egypt of Rameses and the Minoan

<sup>1</sup> See Talbot. *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 19.

world,"<sup>1</sup> and also that "it is probable that direct relations existed between the Egyptians and the Cretans as early as the Egyptians pre-dynastic period, and it is certain that they existed during the time of the Old Kingdom, and continued through that of the Middle Kingdom to the Eighteenth dynasty and the period of Crossus. This we know from the evidence of Cretan Archaeology."<sup>2</sup>

An important point worth noting is that the Etruscan "impluvium" style of building had been introduced into Egypt, that the women's hand loom existed in Ancient Egypt,<sup>3</sup> and that the "templum" town planning existed at Heliopolis in Ancient Egypt, a town which appears in many respects as the prototype of Ile Ife.<sup>4</sup> In addition, there is the fact that Etruscan communities known as Turs or Tursh or Turishas existed in Ancient Egypt.<sup>5</sup> These facts make it reasonable to suppose that the Etruscan elements travelled along with Ancient Egyptian and other cultural elements to Yorubaland by way of the Interior—that is, through the Sudan.

The absence of similar elements in the Sudan may be explained by the supposition that immigrants from Egypt would find it hard to settle in the arid desert of a sub-tropical climate. Their influence could only be permanently felt in Yorubaland and other parts of West Africa where geographical conditions favoured a prolonged visit or a temporary settlement.

The identification of Olokun with Poseidon is supported with scholarly arguments by Professor Froebenius. The theory underlying the identification has been shown by the foregoing remarks to be untenable. The view that Poseidon or the ram-headed deity is the major deity of the Yorubas cannot be accepted by the Yorubas themselves or by other students of Yoruba religion. The identification throws Olokun out of the relation which he bears to the other deities. It has been shown in one of the preceding chapters that Olokun—"Owner of the sea"—is the survival of the Ancient Egyptian deity known as Adimu or Adumu—"Lord of the primordial

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, p. 447.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. II, p. 277. On the whole subject of the relation between Crete with its Minoan and Etruscan or Tyrrhene civilization and Ancient Egypt, see *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. II, pp. 431-438.

<sup>3</sup> Froebenius, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 332.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapters XV and XVI above.

<sup>5</sup> Froebenius, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 333-334.

abyss." This identity places him in the natural relation with other Yoruba deities who are survivals of Egyptian deities.

Professor Froebenius refers to the similarity between the Yoruba Ifa cult and a system of divination in Algeria and other parts of North Africa. The North African origin of Ifa cult is not disputed. It has been shown above, however, that the cult is Egyptian in form and in name.<sup>1</sup>

The cult of the ram-headed god, too, could have come by way of Egypt. Ram-headed deities were worshipped in Ancient Egypt.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted also, that Daddu, or Diddu,<sup>3</sup> later known as Busiris,<sup>4</sup> was described in the seal-cylinder "belonging to the oldest period of Egyptian history as 'the city of the ram.'"

After examining Professor Froebenius' theory of Atlantic culture in Yorubaland, P. Amaury Talbot feels that "it is more probable that, in the same way as Minoan and Mycenaean ideas had penetrated from the North-east, so remnants of Tyrrhenian arts filtered through by way of the Carthaginians, who were closely allied with the Etruscans."<sup>5</sup>

To sum up : Yoruba primitive culture does not appear to be a survival of an "Atlantic" culture exclusively, a culture which is supposed to have travelled down the West Coast of Africa from North Africa. The weight of evidence is in favour of the theory that Yoruba primitive culture is a survival of Ancient Egyptian culture, containing, among others, elements of the culture which prevailed in North Africa many centuries ago. Evidence is also available that the transmission of the Ancient Egyptian culture followed a trans-continental route from Egypt to the western shores of Africa.

The theory of a close connection between the Egyptians and the Yorubas, proposed, proved and illustrated in the preceding chapters, throws light on some questions which will be discussed here.

#### ORIGIN OF THE YORUBAS

The question of the origin of the Yorubas has been discussed in an earlier chapter. The view of Sultan Bello of

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IV. Ifa is derived from N-efer.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. Amon.

<sup>3</sup> Diddu, the place where the black spiral column of Osiris was erected.

<sup>4</sup> BU-siris = BU Osiris = the place of Osiris. This word survives in Yorubaland.

<sup>5</sup> *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. I, p. 21.

Sokoto has been examined. The view of an Egyptian origin or of a settlement for a long period has been put forward as a hypothesis. The preceding chapters show such a close connection that a settlement in Egypt for several centuries appears to be demanded to explain the great extent to which the connection can be found. It covers almost every period of Egyptian history. It covers the earliest period when there was no king in Egypt. The very name Yoruba is shown to be derived from rpa, or rba, a mythical king in Northern Africa,<sup>1</sup> and later a feudal prince in Egypt. It covers the period of the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, the New Kingdom, the Greek Period and the Roman Period. The worship characteristic of the different periods, as well as other distinguishing elements, survive in Yorubaland, producing a medley of "beliefs" representing varying stages of development, all of which were to be seen among peoples which successively inhabited the Mediterranean area from palaeolithic to chalcolithic times," and on the whole, resembling "that of the Ancient Egyptians, who combined a belief in the existence of an omnipotent and omniscient supreme God, called Neter, with that in multitudes of subordinate deities, mostly personifications of natural phenomena."<sup>2</sup>

Mere intercourse between the Yorubas and immigrants from Egypt cannot produce such a deep impress on Yoruba culture, especially as there is no evidence of colonization by such immigrants. It would appear that the Yorubas migrated gradually from Northern Egypt to Southern Egypt, and then to the Sudan until they reached their present home.

Egyptologists are not yet agreed as to the origin of the Ancient Egyptians. Agreement has been reached to a large extent, however, that the early Egyptians belong to a "dolichocephalic race, large-featured and tall, with inter-mixture of semitic and negroid elements," the latter greatly preponderating over the former. This race is believed to be different from that of the older inhabitants of Egypt, who are believed to be purely negritic. Further research work by competent scholars may ultimately settle the question as to whether the Ancient Egyptians were Caucasians, Semites or "Negroes."

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I.

<sup>2</sup> *Peoples of Southern Nigeria* by P. Amaury Talbot, Vol. II.

In the meantime it is sufficient to agree with some of the leading Egyptologists that they were not Caucasians, but that their characteristic features show them to be more negritic than semitic. Until the question is finally settled it will not be easy to say whether the Yorubas belong to the older race found by successive waves of immigrants to Egypt and gradually pushed southwards, or to any of the immigrant nations afterwards known collectively as Ancient Egyptians. Suffice it to say that from the point of view of language, religion, magic and other cultural elements, as well as from the point of view of physiognomy, Yoruba culture and the typical Yoruba bear a close resemblance to the culture and the physiognomy of the Ancient Egyptians respectively,<sup>1</sup> thereby supporting the theory that the home of the Yorubas for several centuries must be traced to Ancient Egypt.

There are faint traces and records suggesting Asia as the original home of the Yorubas, but the evidence as a whole is slight in comparison with the strong evidence supporting the theory of a long residence in different parts of Egypt by the Yorubas.

#### RELATION OF THE YORUBAS TO SOME OTHER WEST AFRICAN TRIBES

This is a question which the theory of connection between the Yoruba and the Ancient Egyptians necessarily raises.

Occasional references have been made above that some words in other West African languages are derived from Ancient Egyptian words. Select lists of such words are given in Appendix 1. Words in these languages, which are derived from the Ancient Egyptian language, are of the same type as those which survive in Yoruba. Sometimes the words derived from Ancient Egyptian language are found with exactly the same meaning in two or more languages. For example, the word *ku*—"to die"—in Yoruba is derived from the Ancient Egyptian word *Khu*, a luminous spirit, death being regarded as a process of becoming a disembodied luminous spirit.<sup>2</sup> In the Tchi language, spoken on the Gold Coast, the verb "to die" is *ku*, exactly as in Yoruba.<sup>3</sup> In the Ibo language *kh* is

<sup>1</sup> Professor Froebienus discovers two types of Yorubas, one light coloured and handsome, the other dark and more definitely negritic.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter I, pp. 18-29.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix I. G. Tchi language.

modified to *w* and the word becomes *wu*—"to die." In the Ewe language spoken on the Gold Coast, the verb "to die" is *ku*. In Egun Alada, spoken in Dahomey, the same word *ku* is used for the verb "to die." Again, the word *a-mon* in Ancient Egyptian language means "hidden." In Yoruba it survives as *ϕ-mϕ*—"seed, child"—literally "that which is hidden in the shell or *in utero*." In Ga it survives as part of the name of the Supreme Deity, namely *Nyon-mon*—"The living Amon." In Ibo it survives as *umu(n)* or *o-mu(n)*, child. In Igabo Isoko it survives as *E-ma-mon*—"holy"; it will be remembered that it survives also in Yoruba as *Mϕ(n)*—"holy, clean"—that is hidden or covered up and therefore kept free from pollution. In the Tchi language it survives as *nmo(n)*—"child"—and *oma(n)* or *ϕmϕ(n)*—"people"—which is perhaps an extended use for persons who had passed through childhood.

Just as the name of the Yoruba tribe is derived from an Ancient Egyptian word, so also are the names of several tribes derived from Ancient Egyptian words.<sup>1</sup> For example, Sekiri is derived from Sekri, the name of an Egyptian god; Fanti is derived from Fanti or Fenti, an Egyptian god.<sup>2</sup>

The names of most of the Yoruba deities are survivals of the names of Egyptian deities. This is the case also with West African tribes.<sup>3</sup>

A close study of several West African languages shows that the words common to them are all of Ancient Egyptian origin.

Several other points of identity or similarity of features in the culture of some West African tribes, including the Yorubas, may be given. Those already given lead only to one conclusion, namely, that the other tribes are closely associated with the Yorubas, and if it is agreed that the Yorubas must have migrated from Egypt, their migration from Egypt may be accepted as a reasonable theory.

The names of the Supreme Deities of these tribes seem to suggest the respective localities where they had settled in Ancient Egypt. For example, *Chi-neke(n)*—"the soul of Nekhen"—is the name of the Supreme Deity of the Ibos.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I. E.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix I. E II, No. 18.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A to F.

This suggests Nekhen as the settlement of the Ibos in Egypt. Again, *Nyi-sua*—"the living (soul) of Sua-nit"—the name of the Supreme Deity of the Grebos, suggests Sua-nit as the name from which they migrated. Also, *Nya-ku-pon*—"the living soul of Punt (Pua-nit)"—the name of the Supreme Deity of the Fanti people, suggests Pua-nit or Punt as the nome from which they had migrated.

An acceptance of the theory of a close connection between Ancient Egyptians and some of the West African tribes, and that the latter must have migrated from Egypt will help in overcoming some of the difficulties which have hitherto remained insurmountable. Two examples will be given here. Dr. G. T. Basden, who had lived among the Ibos for thirty-five years and had written two valuable books<sup>1</sup> on their culture, says "All my attempts to trace the origin of the name 'Ibo' have been unsuccessful. My most reliable informants have been able to offer no other alternative than that it is most probably an abbreviation of a longer name connected with an ancestor since forgotten."<sup>2</sup> This difficulty will vanish if the theory of connection with the Ancient Egyptians is applied. The word Ibo is not peculiar to a single tribe. It is found in other West African languages in the same or a modified form. It is the same word as the Yoruba word *Ibo*—"occult beings"—the Ibo word *igbo* applied to an Ibo sub-tribe, the Yoruba word *igbo*—"The haunt of spirits"—the word *e-gbe*, "a community of spirits," the word *aru-gbo* "an old person," the *egbo* "a secret society," and similar words in other West African languages. The words are all derived from the Ancient Egyptian word *ba-u* or *bo-u*, or *bau*, "spirits or souls," plural of *ba*.<sup>3</sup> The letter *b* remains the same in some West African languages, but is changed to *gb*, a thick labial, in the other languages. The word *I-bo* consists of two parts, namely *i* and *-bo*. *I* is an initial vowel, and *bo* is derived from the Ancient Egyptian word *bo-u* or *bau-u*—"souls or spirits." *Ibo*, therefore, means "souls or spirits" or "a

<sup>1</sup> *Among the Ibos of Nigeria, and Niger Ibos* (Seeley, Service and Co., Ltd., London).

<sup>2</sup> *Niger Ibos*, Introduction, p. xi.

<sup>3</sup> Vowels are often used interchangeably in Ancient Egyptian language. Egyptologists assert that the real vowels of most words cannot yet be definitely stated. Some of them use *a* where others use *o*; e.g. *At* and *ot*. The word *ba* may equally be well written *bo* in Ancient Egyptian language.

community of spirits" or persons belonging to the bo-u or "ancestral spirits." The use of such a word as the name of a tribe is not peculiar to the Ibos.<sup>1</sup> Among the Yorubas there is a tribe having a similar name. That tribe is the E-gba—"people of the ba or ancestral soul or spirit."

Near the Yorubas there are the Ba-riba's—"the people belonging to the ancestral soul of *rba*, an Ancient Egyptian feudal deity. The word *ibo* is used by the Yorubas in connection with the practice of lottery, with a view to detecting a malefactor or selecting an official. The idiomatic term is *dibo* or *di ibo*, that is, "to compel the ancestral spirits or occult powers" to settle the matter.

It may be added that there are several other Ibo words, identical in spelling or meaning, or in both with Yoruba words which have survived from the Ancient Egyptian language. A select list of such words is given in Appendix 1 (G). The list includes a number of words, the origin of which has baffled several writers.

Another example of the results which would accrue from the application of the same theory will now be given from a Gold Coast language. Several writers have expressed their inability to trace the origin of the words *O-hene* and *bohnsun* or *bonsum* in the Tchi language on the Gold Coast. The two words are derived from Ancient Egyptian. *O-hene* in Tchi means "chief, paramount chief, king," *hen* in Ancient Egyptian means "Chief, king, majesty."<sup>2</sup> The survival of the word is not peculiar to the Tchi language.

In the Igabo Isoko language spoken in South-central Nigeria, the word survives as *O-ghen-e*—"Lord, God, Majestic Being"—the letter *g* being added because the aspirate is pronounced in a peculiar way corresponding to the original Ancient Egyptian letter *h* (*h* with a dot).

The word *bohnsun* or *bonsum* or *bosum* is also derived from Ancient Egyptian language. It may be divided into two parts, *bo-sum*; *bo* is derived from the Ancient Egyptian word *ba* or *bo*—"soul or spirit"—and *su-m* from *su-t*, the name of an Ancient Egyptian deity; *bo-sum* or *boh-nsum* or *bo-sum*, therefore, means "the soul of Sut," a phrase which points to

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I, E.

<sup>2</sup> See Budge, *Ancient Egyptian Language*, p. 90, No. 6.

the widespread worship of Sut in Ancient Egypt and of his survival in different parts of West Africa. The word *bo-sum* or *bohnsum* is applied generally to idols or objects of worship.

Other survivals of Ancient Egyptian language in Tchi will be found in the select list given in Appendix 1 (G).

The writer has studied at least a dozen West African languages, including Edo, Jekri, Ijaw, Ibo, Igabo Isoko, Egun, Ga, Tchi, Adangbe, Genyin, Ewe, Grebo and others. He has also examined a number of others, including Ibibio, Efik, Limba, Temne and others. The number of Egyptian survivals found in the languages studied and in some of those examined is large. Several words whose origin have been described as obscure are found to be identical in spelling and meaning with Ancient Egyptian words.

The languages of West Africa have been scientifically studied in recent times by expert philologists, including Professor D. Westerman,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Ida C. Ward,<sup>2</sup> Dr. Alice Werner,<sup>3</sup> Dr. H. J. Melzian<sup>4</sup> and others. Some of the difficulties which confronted them will vanish when approached in the light of the theory proposed in this work. There is no doubt that the application of the theory would lead to a revision of the classifications and conclusions set forth in their respective works.

In view of the close resemblance of the religion and language of the Yorubas to those of some of the other West African tribes, particularly the Tchi-speaking peoples, the Gas, the Ewes, the Eguns and the Ibos, one can safely infer that the tribes are culturally related to the Yorubas, and that they must have migrated from different parts of Egypt just like the Yorubas.

#### IMPRESS OF OTHER ANCIENT CULTURES

The impress of Egypt on Yoruba culture has been delineated above. Yoruba culture, however, shows the impress of other cultures.

Reference has been made above to the survival of Etruscan

<sup>1</sup> Author of works on West African languages, see *Africa*, Vol. II, p. 436

<sup>2</sup> Author of works on Southern Nigerian languages.

<sup>3</sup> Author of *Structure and Relationship of Modern Languages*.

<sup>4</sup> A German linguist who recently visited West Africa and studied several languages.

elements, which must have come by way of Egypt. Instances of survival of Greek or Roman terms have also been given. The survival of the Cretan double-bitted axe has already been noted.

Next to Egyptian culture, the greatest influence in Yoruba culture has been exerted by Hebrew culture. The survival of some elements of Hebrew culture has been noted above. Others have been noted by J. J. Williams in his *Hebrewisms in West Africa*.

The question of the impress of the ancient cultures of Greece, Rome and Asiatic lands on Yoruba culture still requires further research. It requires a detailed examination similar to what has been done in the case of the impress of Ancient Egyptian culture. It is most probable, however, that the result of adequate research work will point to Ancient Egypt as the medium which facilitated the impress.<sup>1</sup>

#### MORALITY AND RELIGION

The religion of the Yorubas cannot be fully discussed without some reference to their system of morality. The Yorubas have not yet reached a stage where religion and morality are treated separately. With them, as with other West Africans, there is no division between the secular and the sacred ; all must be brought within the orbit of religion. Dr. J. H. Oldham and Miss B. Gibson's statement on this point is true of the Yorubas, namely, "The lines of division between secular and sacred that have grown up in the West have little meaning for the African. We in the West are only trying now to heal a breach which for him had never existed."<sup>2</sup>

Among the Yorubas the mainsprings of action must be sought for in the dictates of religion. Beyond what religion stipulates the unsophisticated Yoruba will not go, except under compulsion. Religion and morality are closely intertwined and undifferentiated.

The scope of this work forbids detailed discussion and illustration of the important elements in Yoruba morality, but the following summary by Bishop James Johnson will be found useful :

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested above that active contact between the Hebrews and the Yorubas must have taken place in Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> *The Remaking of Man in Africa*.

“The moral system of Yoruba heathenism teaches reverence to the gods which is to show itself in, amongst other things, a daily early morning worship to them before their images before any business is done, the exercise of faith in them and their guidance, and other assistances by consulting them on all important matters ; respect and reverence for age and for all authority ; filial regard and reverence for age and obedience to parents on the part of children always, and care and concern for them under the infirmities of sickness and old age, and in times of necessity produced by other circumstances ; a great regard for marriage and the perpetuity of the bond, submission to their husbands on the part of wives, and care and protection on the part of the husbands ; the exercise of the duties of hospitality to all, especially to strangers ; fidelity to friendship under all circumstances ; chastity, truthfulness in speech, honesty, kindness, and among some tribes courage also ; whilst under its influence, murder and theft, and sometimes the practice of witchcraft, are punished with death, adultery and fornication with a severe social disgrace and fines and selling into slavery, and where the honour of a king's wife is concerned, with death sometimes ; suicide, with a dishonoured burial ; and neglect and indifference to pay a debt, and insolvency, with much social dishonour ; and it discountenances, among other things, pride and vanity and extravagance.

“Among these may be reckoned revenge and retaliation, hatred, jealousy, malice, ill-will, worldliness, anger and wrath and selfishness, some of which have contributed to supply a basis for the system of slavery and the slave trade, and for the life of polygamy which have ruled the country for centuries, and for the very long incessant inter-tribal warfares which have ruined it.

“The motives for virtue are a belief in a retributive providence, either for good or for evil ; the fear of social disgrace and of punishment also, which would fall not only upon an individual wrong and evil-doer, but upon his relatives and other connections also ; the prospect of a long life on earth, desire for prosperity and dread of the anger of the gods and of punishment from them.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Yoruba Heathenism.*

This system is enforced by means of Tabus and of *jujus*, which are regarded as supernatural powers from the gods or ancestral spirits.

Dr. Farrow, after enlarging upon Bishop Johnson's description, points out the following defects in the religious system of the Yorubas :

"It does not, and cannot bring man into close touch and communion with a God of love and goodness.

"It teaches morality of life ; but cannot give the power to practise this. It has no conception of divine grace working effectually in them that believe.

"It gives no real comfort when the sorrow of death falls upon a home. The awful, blank despair of the heathen at such a time is beyond conception, unless it has been witnessed.

"Not only has it these negative defects ; but it has great positive evils."

Dr. Farrow then goes on to blame the system as being responsible for "atrocious and abominable cruelties, self-torture, and torture of unwilling victims, and for countless revolting murders of men, women and children in human sacrifice." In the same strain he might as well blame Christianity for all the horrors of the Inquisition.

It must be admitted that the Yorubas often fall far below the standard indicated by the above system. Gruesome practices and immoral acts may be witnessed among some of the tribes, and this fact has prevented some observers from seeing very little beyond the gruesome practices of the heathen world enumerated by St. Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. A dispassionate survey of the facts cannot but produce testimony to the existence of the moral system sketched above. The difference between Bishop Johnson's description and the dark picture drawn by others lies chiefly in the difference between the accepted ideal of the tribe or nation and actuality as illustrated by actions of individual persons or tribes, falling below the ideal. Such a difference is discernible even in highly-civilized communities outside Africa, irrespective of the centuries of Christian civilization forming the background of their civilization.

It may be repeated that the gruesome practices referred to by Dr. Farrow constitute a clear evidence of degeneracy

from a high ideal of morality which is still discernible among a welter of repulsive acts.

The contribution of religion to the sense of social solidarity among the Yorubas is by no means negligible. Observers have testified to the strong social sense characteristic of the African,<sup>1</sup> to "the sense of the continuity of tribal life which is deeply engrained in the African mind,"<sup>2</sup> and to the fact that "the individual is regarded only as a link in a chain of life which binds together the generations."<sup>2</sup> This sense of solidarity is strengthened by belief in the same deities and by the belief that the bond of union between ancestral and departed spirits on the one hand, and living members of the tribe or nation on the other, is indissoluble by death or distance. Such a belief imposes religious and social obligations on every individual wherever he may be.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Students of Anthropology in Africa have raised the question as to what will happen to the peoples of Africa under the influence of Western Civilization. This question has been described by General Smuts as one of the most "interesting and enthralling problems of the twentieth century." What will happen to the religions of African peoples is one of the important factors which will determine what will happen to them on the whole. In the case of Yoruba religion, the foundation and the superstructure have been adversely affected. The old beliefs are being ousted by science. Some still appear under the stress of circumstances, but it is all a question of time; the irresistible force of Western Civilization which drives them underground at present will eventually sweep them away. Seeing that the foundation of Yoruba morality is thus steadily crumbling, and that the power of dreaded jujus is gradually diminishing, one cannot but ask: "What has Western civilization to offer as substitutes?"

Yorubaland has been opened up, and the peoples are subject to the civilizing agencies of the Government, the Merchants and the Missionaries. The first two of these civilizing agencies introduce much that is material; they

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Edwin Smith, *Golden Stool*, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Oldham and B. D. Gibson, *The Remaking of Man in Africa*, p. 55.



FIG. 60. YORUBA CHRISTIAN WOMEN IN NATIVE DRESS.

destroy without adequate provision for substitutes or for the rebuilding of what is destroyed. That task is left chiefly to the Missionaries. They have to see that a new system of morality is built up, and that adjustment from the old to the new is done without detriment.

In handling this delicate situation a dispassionate study of the religion of the Yorubas sketched above will be found useful. A wholesale condemnation of the religion will meet with bitter resentment and failure. Its good elements should be retained, and if necessary, refined. The bad elements should be discarded.

Christianity was introduced into Yorubaland about a century ago. It has made much progress and has spread to different parts of the country. It is supplying a real want—the best substitute for what the Yorubas have lost religiously and morally. It is supplying valuable spiritual help such as the people have never had before. It is liable, however, to suffer from two great dangers. The first is that it may be swept off entirely, as was the case with the Christianity introduced into South West Africa and into Benin by the Portuguese. At present most Yoruba Christians possess only the veneer of Christianity, the husk and not the kernel of the religion. Its permanence cannot be guaranteed unless it is made “a religion of heart and soul.” The second danger is more subtle than the first. It does not involve a wholesale rejection or abandonment of the religion. The danger is that of its adaptation to local conditions and circumstances as to make it a poor and degenerate form of what it really is. This, as it has been pointed out above, is what has happened to the lofty religion of Ancient Egypt. Mohammedanism in Yorubaland is sharing the same fate. Forces are already at work to make Christianity share the same fate. Unless these forces are effectively checked Yoruba Christianity may become a degenerate form of the original Christianity introduced into the country.

“The twentieth century is Africa’s,” says Professor Aggrey. There is no doubt that Africa is destined to play an important part in world affairs during this century. Whether it will play that part efficiently and successfully depends upon the forces at work and the efforts made by the Africans themselves.

"The African is a grand material, if we give him our best" says a former Secretary of the International Missionary Council. This is true, but the African must help himself.

The Yoruba native has shown capacity for progress. He requires a fair chance. He requires wise and efficient leadership. He requires a virile form of Christianity which influences more by deeds than by words, which replaces the uncouth with the sublime, which builds a new structure upon its own teaching but without disregarding all that is best and noblest in the old. Under favourable conditions he will not only make phenomenal material progress, but he will also develop his latent spiritual powers so as to make an effective contribution to the part which Africa as a whole has to play during this century in the general scheme for the amelioration of the world.



APPENDIX I  
EGYPTIAN SURVIVALS



## APPENDIX I

### EGYPTIAN SURVIVALS

#### A

#### A SELECTION OF YORUBA DEITIES

in whose forms Ancient Egyptian deities survive in Yorubaland or whose names are derived from Ancient Egyptian words.

1. Q-RA(N)—YA(N), the Living Ra [I & IX].
2. ORIŞA—BĒKU, derived from Horus-Bakhu [I & IX].
3. AJE ŞALUGA, derived from Salug, an islet in Ancient Egypt [I & IX].
4. QĻQRUN. Oni-Qrun, Owner of Heaven. Qru(n) is derived from Horu. Lord of the sky=title of Osiris [II].
5. Q-ŞU(N) OSI=Ososi, derived from Shu and Osi(ri) [II, III, V & IX].
6. O-ŞU. The moon-god, derived from Kh-onsu, the moon-god in Ancient Egypt.
7. OLODUMARE = Almighty [II]. Du = Mountain, hence an exalted personage.
8. EŞU. Derived from Shu, Sut or Set [III].
9. QBA-'UFON or QBA-LUFON. Qba is derived from ba, a soul ; 'ufon or lufon, from Typhon (Greek t-u-ph-o-n) [III].
10. ORIŞA. Derived from Horus-set [III].
11. ĒĻĒGBARA. Derived from Khepera [III].
12. BARA. Derived from ba and Ra [III].
13. AMUNIBUWA. Derived from Amon ; bu = place [III].
14. OKE. Compare Horus-Bakhu, the god of the mountain [III & IX].
15. ŞUGUDU. Derived from Shu, Khu, and Du [III & IX].
16. İFA. Derived from nefeş ; compare opeş-nifa [IV].
17. QRU(N)GA(N). Qru(n) is derived from Horu. Ga(n) from ga, to be high [IV].
18. QRU(N)-MI-LA. Derived from Horu-m-la [IV].
19. ODI. Derived from Ot or Od [IV].
20. QBATALA. A survival of Khnum [V].
21. ODUDUA. Derived from Du and dua-t. A survival of Mut [V].
22. YEMOJA. Tracable to one of Nile goddesses [V].

*The Chapters in which the names of the deities occur in this work are put in brackets.*

23. OLOKUN. Oku(n) is derived from Khu [V] ; also IX, XV and XVI.
24. QLOSA. Derived from sa, a pond [V] ; also IX.
25. DADA. Derived from Da [V & IX].
26. OGU(N). Derived from Khu [V & VI].
27. QŞU(N). Derived from Shu [V].
28. ŞOPQOQ. Derived from Shu or Sut, and Pua-nit or Punt [VI].
29. JA-KU-TA. Derived from Khu and Ptah [VI].
30. OŞU-MARE [VI & IX].
31. ORIŞA OKO. A survival of Osiris and Min [VI].
32. ORO. A survival of Orion [VII].
33. ITA. Derived from neter. Compare Oba-nita [VII].
34. EŁLUKU. Derived from Khu [VII].
35. A-GE-MQO. A survival of Geb-amon [VIII].
36. EGU(N)-GU(N) or EGUN. Derived from Khu [VIII].
37. GE-LEDE. Derived from Geb [VIII].
38. IBEJI. A survival of the Twin-gods [IX].
39. OLORI MEŞIN. A survival of the four elemental deities [IX].
40. Q-SAH(N). A survival of Sahu [IX].

*The Chapters in which the names of the deities occur in this work are put in brackets.*

## B

## A SELECTION OF EGYPTIAN DEITIES

which have survived in Yorubaland.

- |                          |                                       |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Amon [I & VIII].      | 20. Nin-ip [VI].                      |
| 2. Bast [I & II].        | 21. Nu [VII].                         |
| 3. Geb [II & VIII].      | 22. Pash-t [I].                       |
| 4. Hathor [II & V].      | 23. Ptah [VI].                        |
| 5. Horu-m-la [V].        | 24. Ra [I-III, XV & XVI].             |
| 6. Horus-Bakhu [II & V]. | 25. Rpa [I & XVII].                   |
| 7. Horus [III].          | 26. Seb [V].                          |
| 8. Hapi Mirit [V].       | 27. Shu [III, V & IX].                |
| 9. Hapi Quaimit [V].     | 28. Sibn [V].                         |
| 10. Khepera [II & III].  | 29. Sokaris (see below).              |
| 11. Khonsu [IX].         | 30. Sut [III].                        |
| 12. Khnum [X].           | 31. Sahu [IX].                        |
| 13. Khopri [III & V].    | 32. Sekri [III].                      |
| 14. Kherti [II].         | 33. Tum (see below).                  |
| 15. Isis [XI].           | 34. The Living One of Salug [I & IX]. |
| 16. Orion [VII].         | 35. The Twin Deities—La and Da [IX].  |
| 17. Osiris [II].         | 36. The Four Elemental Deities [IX].  |
| 18. Mnevis [XVI].        |                                       |
| 19. Mut [V].             |                                       |

*The figures in brackets refer to chapters in this work.*

## NOTES

1. PTAH also survives in such words as : Ye-gba-ta (the living soul of Ptah), the name of one of the chiefs in Ode Ondo ; Q-ta, a cannon-ball.
2. MNEVIS survives in Yorubaland as Ewi, in Iboland as NNEWI. Ewi = Mnevis. ADO = settlement. EKRI = Khuti, the two horizons (a well-known term in Ancient Egypt). EWI ADO EKITI = Mnevis of the settlement of the two horizons. Khuti (Yoruba, Kuti) survives in the name of important families in Abeokuta (Yorubaland).
3. TUM survives in such words as : tun (again), titun (new), q-tun (right hand). The survivals suggest that the worship of Tum was introduced late into that part of Ancient Egypt where the Yorubas settled.
4. The survival of BARA as part of the name of Egegbara has been noted above. The word Bara is also used to denote a mausoleum.
5. SO-KA-RIS. So, the ka of Osiris. The word So (or So) survives in several Yoruba names.

## C

## A SELECTION OF DEITIES

in other parts of West Africa which are survivals of Ancient Egyptian Deities or whose names are derived from Ancient Egyptian words.

1. ABASI. Supreme Deity of the Efik people in Calabar, Southern Nigeria. A survival of Bas-t.
2. AVI-BA. Supreme Deity of the Ijaw people in Southern Nigeria. Ba = soul.
3. CHI-NEKE. "The soul of Nekhen," the Supreme Deity of the Ibo people of Southern Nigeria. See Chapter II above, and Budge, *Book of the Dead*, pp. 338 and 340.
4. MAU or MAWU. Supreme Deity of the Ewe people of Dahomey and Gold Coast. A survival of Mau-t.
5. NYI-SUA. "The living soul of Sua-nit," the Supreme Deity of the Grebo people in Liberia.
6. NYON-MON. "The living AMON," Supreme Deity of the Ga people of the Gold Coast.
7. ORU. Supreme Deity of the Nembe people of Southern Nigeria. A survival of Horu.
8. YAN-KU-PON. "The living soul of Punt," Supreme Deity of the Fanti people of the Gold Coast.
9. AMOSU. A river deity on the Gold Coast. Amsu is an Ancient Egyptian god.

## D

A SELECTION OF EGYPTIAN DEITIES  
which have survived in other parts of West Africa.

- |                   |                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Amon.          | 7. Mnevis.                      |
| 2. Bast or Pasht. | 8. Sob-ku.                      |
| 3. Horus.         | 9. Tanen.                       |
| 4. Horus-Set.     | 10. The living Soul of Nekhen.  |
| 5. Mau-t.         | 11. The living Soul of Punt.    |
| 6. Amsu.          | 12. The living Soul of Sua-nit. |

## E

A SELECTION OF WEST AFRICAN TRIBES  
whose names are derived from those of Egyptian  
deities or from Egyptian words.

## I. NIGERIA.

- | <i>Name of Tribe.</i> | <i>Derivation.</i>   |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. YO-RUBA.           | Yo (from the root word yc) = living rpa or rba. an Egyptian god. See Chapter II.                 |
| 2. I-BI(N)NI.         | ben-nu, an Egyptian bird, representative of Osiris.  |
| 3. ŞEKIRI.            | Sekri or Sekru, an Egyptian god.   |
| 4. SOBO.              | Sob-ku, an Egyptian god.   |
| 5. BA-RIBA.           | ba = soul ; rpa, see No. 1 above.  |
| 6. I-GA-RA.           | Ga, a modification of ka ; Ra, the sun-god.  |
| 7. F-GBA.             | ba = soul.   |
| 8. A-WORI.            | Ha-oiri-t.   |
| 9. I-JE-BU.           | Jε (from the root yc) = being, person, and bu = place.   |
| 10. I-JE-SA.          | Jε, same as 9 above ; and sa (sha), the typhonian animal representative of Set. See Chapter III. |
| 11. E-KI-TI.          | Khuti, the two horizons. See Note 2 under B above.   |
| 12. YA-GBA.           | Ya (from the root yc) = living ; gba = ba = soul.  |
| 13. I-GBO-MINA.       | Gbo = bau = souls. Mina = Min.   |
| 14. E-GUN.            | Gu(n) = Khu, luminous spirit.  |
| 15. I-BO.             | Bo = bau = souls.  |
| 16. ON-DO.            | On = un = being or beings ; do = settlement.<br>Ondo = people of the settlement, i.e. settlers.  |

## II. OTHER PARTS OF WEST AFRICA.

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| 17. GA<br>(Gold Coast).    | Ga is a modification of ka = soul.   |
| 18. FANTI<br>(Gold Coast). | Fanti, or Fenti, an Egyptian god. See Budge, <i>Book of the Dead</i> , pp. 367, 663. |

- | <i>Name of Tribe.</i>                        | <i>Derivation.</i>   |
|--|--|
| 19. TCHI<br>(Gold Coast).                    | Tchi, a modification of Khu or Chi ; compare Khu and Chi(neken) in Chapter II.     |
| 20. A-SANTI<br>or A-SHIANTI<br>(Gold Coast). | Santi, or Senti, one of the titles of Ra. See Budge <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 342.      |
| 21. SU-SU<br>(Sierra Leone).                 | Original form of Su-t or Shu. See Budge, <i>Egyptian Language</i> , p. 52, No. 18. |

## F.

A SELECTION OF YORUBA WORDS  
with their derivations from the Ancient Egyptian  
Language.

## I. GENERAL.

- | <i>Yoruba.</i>                              | <i>Ancient Egyptian.</i> |   |
|---|--------------------------|---|
| 1. ade<br>(crown).                          | ade-f<br>or ate-f.       | = crown, plumes, dix.   |
| 2. akɔ<br>(male).                           | ak.                      | = male.   |
| 3. abo<br>(female).                         | ab.                      | = female.   |
| 4. ala<br>(boundary,<br>white).             | ala or<br>I-arau.        | } See Chapter V.  |
| 5. ala<br>(part of the<br>name of a deity). | I-alau.<br>I-aro.        |   |
| 6. Amu<br>(a native of Amu).                | Amu.                     |   |
| 7. Amon.                                    | amon.                    | The word is found only in combination with other words, <i>e.g.</i> Apa amu sua. See Chapter I, p. 28, above. Also, da ni amu = confuse, trouble.<br>= hidden. The word is found chiefly in combination with other words, <i>e.g.</i> fi p'amon, cause it to be hidden, <i>i.e.</i> hide. |
| 8. a-pa.                                    | pa or per.               | = house ; a-pa = that which belongs to the house, <i>i.e.</i> a domestic servant. Apa (prodigal) contains the idea of the waste often caused by unskilled domestic servants. Hence apa amu sua (wasteful) domestic servant, an Amu of the nome of Sua-nit.                                |

	<i>Yoruba.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
9.	a-ra (body).	Ra.	The body is regarded as property of the god.
10.	a-ra (thunder).	Ra.	Thunder was regarded as the voice of Ra, the sun-god, who was also "The Lord of the sky."
11.	a-ra (wonderful performance).	Ra.	Superior skill is regarded as a gift of the god Ra.
12.	a-re (a wretched or miserly person).	Re or Ra.	Wretched persons or beggars are regarded in Egypt as incarnations of deities. See Lane, <i>Modern Egyptians</i> .
13.	a-ro (river, name of a town near a river).	I-aro or I-alo.	See No. 4 and 5 above and Chapter V, pp. 91 and 92.
14.	a-sa (shield).	sa.	= a divine fluid regarded as being capable of protecting gods and men from evil.
15.	a-sç (door, gate).	se-b.	= door, gate. See Budge, <i>Ancient Egyptian Language</i> , p. 77, Nos. 43 and 44. See also Yoruba Bible. Isa., LX, verse 11.
16.	a-ke (axe).	qe-h or ke-h.	= axe. Budge, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 85, Nos. 7 and 8; q=k in Yoruba.
17.	a-dua (prayer).	dua or tua.	= to pray, prayer. Budge, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 43, Nos. 5 and 6.
18.	a-ga (chair).	qa.	= to be high, that which is high.
19.	A-ta or Atta.	Atthar.	ATA is the name of the paramount chief IGBIRRA, <i>cp.</i> Nana Oföri Atta, a paramount chief on the Gold Coast.
20.	A-ga-ra.	Ka.	Agara = the ka of the body. Da ni agara = tire one out, lit. wear out the soul of one's body.
21.	Agbara (power, strength).	Khepera.	See Chapter III.
22.	a-gba (an elderly person, old man).	ba.	An elderly or old man is regarded as the full incarnation of the spirit of the tribe.
23.	a-ru-gbo (an old man).	ru-ha ba	= evening } a-ru-gbo = = soul } the evening of the ba, <i>i.e.</i> the later stage of life.

- | <i>Yoruba.</i>  | <i>Ancient<br/>Egyptian.</i> |  |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| 24. a-wu-re.  | Khu & Re.                    | Awure = the soul of Re. It is an amulet or juju for good luck. See Chapter XV.   |
| 25. A-gu-ra.  | Khu & Ra.                    | Agura = the soul of Ra; the name of a district in Abeokuta.  |
| 26. A-ka-ri-gbo.  | Kharib or Kherib.            | = high priest in Ancient Egypt. Akarigbo is the title of the paramount chief of Ijebu Remo. See Chapter X.   |
| 27. ade-nibi.   | atef and nibi-t.             | Ade-nibi = atef nibi-t = the crown of the mistress. A Yoruba name given to a girl whose birth is a source of pride to her mother (the mistress of the house.)                |
| 28. ba.   | ba.                          | ba is used as a form of curse or malediction, e.g. Yio ba o, "evil will meet you," lit., you will become a "ba," as opposed to O ku, you will become a Khu, luminous spirit. |
| 29. ba-ra.<br>(beg).  | ba and Ra                    | = the soul of Ra. See No. 12. ba-ra = to ask for alms; beggars are regarded in Ancient Egypt as incarnations of deities. See Lane's <i>Modern Egyptians</i> .                |
| 30. ba-ra<br>(mausoleum;<br>great house).                       | per and aa. <sup>1</sup>     | = great house. See Tiele, <i>History of the Ancient Egyptians</i> (trans. Ballingal), p. 107.  |
| 31. Dada<br>(a name).   | Da.                          | Da, an Egyptian god. See Chap. IX.   |
| 32. da-ra.  | Ra.                          | dara = to give a wonderful performance. See No. II above.  |
| 33. da-ra.<br>(good, beautiful).                                | Ra.                          | dara probably means "that which is pleasing to Ra."  |
| 34. didu or<br>dudu<br>(black).                                 | didu or<br>dudu (tat).       | didu or dudu is the black image of Osiris. See Chapter II.   |
| 35. enia or eni-yan<br>or uni-yan<br>(human being,<br>mankind). | un.                          | = eni or uni = being; yan (from the root "ye") = living. Enia = living being, hence, mankind, human being.   |
| 36. e-re<br>(play, games).                                      | Re.                          | Probably a survival of games played on festival occasions in honour of the god Re or Ra.   |

<sup>1</sup> See also Griffiths, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 23pp. 72-74.

- |  |      | Ancient<br>Egyptian.                |  |
|--|------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 37. e-re<br>(image, idol).                   |      | qere-s.                             | = image. See Budge, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 45, No. 27.   |
| 38. e-re<br>(species of serpent, python).    |      | ere or ara.                         | See Budge, <i>Op. cit.</i> , p. 68, Nos. 11, 16. ere, ara = Serpent.   |
| 39. e-gu(n)-gu(n) or e-gu(n)<br>(masquerade) | Khu. |                                     | See Chapter VIII.  |
| 40. e-bq<br>(sacrifice).                     |      | u-eb.                               | See Chapter XI.  |
| 41. e-ku(n)<br>(district).                   |      | Khu.                                | <i>E.g.</i> Ekun Osi, the Khu of Osiris, <i>i.e.</i> the district over which the god of Osiris presides.   |
| 42. e-mi(n)<br>(spirit).                     |      | Min.                                | That which pertains to Min, implying kinship between the god and man. See Chapter XIII.  |
| 43. e-şş<br>(sin, offence).                  |      | se-t.                               | se-t = what is bad, evil. See Budge, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 61, No. 66.  |
| 44. fa<br>(carry).                           |      | fa.                                 | = carry. See Budge, <i>Op. cit.</i> , pp. 46 and 49, Nos. 52 and 105.  |
| 45. Fa-te-ru.                                |      | Fat-heru.                           | Fatçru, a Yoruba name; Fat-heru, the name of an Egyptian god.  |
| 46. Fa-wę.                                   |      | Nefer and ue-b.                     | Fa-wę = Ifa-wę = one purified by Ifa (Nefer). ue-b = wash, purify.   |
| 47. fe<br>(blow).                            |      | nef or naf.                         | = wind, breeze, air, breath, to blow. The Yoruba word a-fe-fe = wind, breeze, is probably derived from this word.  |
| 48. fo<br>(fly).                             |      | af.                                 | = fly. In Yoruba, a verb begins with a consonant.  |
| 49. ga<br>(high).                            |      | qa.                                 | = high.  |
| 50. gbo<br>(to be old).                      |      | bau or bou.<br>(souls,<br>spirits). | An old man is regarded as possessing, in a special manner, the spirits of the nation or tribe, <i>çp.</i> No. 22.  |
| 51. gbo<br>(hear, smell).                    |      | ba.                                 | gbo, derived from ba or bau: means "to take in the soul of a thing," hence it means "hear," "smell." This will explain the difficulty found in an idiom peculiar to some West African languages, that is, "to hear a smell." |

<i>Yoruba.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
52. gẹ-ḷẹ-ḍẹ.	Geb & deb.	See Chapter VIII.
53. Iba biri.	ba.	Iba Biri = the soul of Biri. The title of a chief.
54. Igbo-mina.	Bau & Min.	Igbo = bau. Mina = Min. The name of a tribe.
55. Igbo.	Bau.	The Igbos are a Yoruba tribe.
56. Ibu (place, the depth of the sea).	bu.	bu = place. Sometime it is modified to "bi," e.g. ibi = place. Ki bu e e? (Ondo dialect). Lit. what place are you going to? cp. ibusun, ibudo, abule.
57. I-gbo-do (name of a place).	bau & do.	Igbo = bush, forest where the ba's or spirits live. Do = river-side, settlement.
58. I-ke-re-ku.	qere-s and Khu.	qe-re-s = an image. Ikereku = the image of Khu. A district in Abeokuta.
59. I-ku (death).	Khu (spirit).	Iku, the process of becoming a Khu; death.
60. Ifa.	Nefer.	See Chapter IV.
61. Ita.	Neter.	Neter = a god. Ita = place of worship. Later Ita means a street.
62. I-ki-re.	Khu and Re.	= the soul of Re. A town in Yorubaland.
63. I-la.	La.	La, an Egyptian deity. I-la, a Yoruba town or tribe.
64. I-sọ-hin (a town).	sa-hu.	See Chapter X.
65. I-ta-bọ (a town).	Neter and u-eb.	Ita (neter) and ẹbọ (u-eb), place of sacrifice, i.e. a shrine. See Chapter X and No. 46.
66. I-to-ku (a district).	Neter and Khu.	I-to-ku = Ita-oku. Neter-Khu, a well-known Egyptian phrase See No. 65.
67. I-tọ-bu.	Neter and bu.	= a sacred place. Sometimes written Ntebu.
68. I-tọ (throne).	Te-s horu.	= the throne of Horus, derived from the Egyptian through the Greek language. See Sayce, <i>Religion of the Ancient Egyptians</i> , p. 224.
69. Itesi (a district).	Neter-osiri.	= the divine Osiris. Itesi = Ita Esi or Osi(ri).

	<i>Yoruba.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
70.	i-sin (service, worship).	Isis.	See Chapter X.
71.	I-na-biri or Ina-bere.	na-pri-t, na-bri-t.	= a kind of grain. Inabiri or inabere is a kind of grain.
72.	i-lu (city, town, country).	nu.	= city, n is changed to l. See Chapter I, p. 14, rule 14.
73.	I-re.	Re.	= that which is good, goodness.
74.	Ja-ku-ta.	Khu and Ptah.	THE LIVING SOUL OF PTAH. See Chapter V.
75.	ka.	ka.	= soul or spirit. The word occurs in combination with several other words.
76.	Ka-ra(n) (the name of a king).	Ka and Ra.	Kara(n), a famous Yoruba king.
77.	Ka-ra (apartments).	Ha and Ra.	Ka-ra = ha-ra = the house of Ra. Kara = retiring apart- ments in the houses of great men.
78.	Ka-Nla.	Ka and la.	= the great ka. The name of a place in Yorubaland.
79.	Koḃiti.	Qoḃt or Kobt.	Koḃiti, a Yoruba name; Qoḃt, the name of an Ancient Egyptian town, from which the word Copt is derived.
80.	Ko (build)	qo-t or qe-t.	= build. The final consonant <i>t</i> is elided in Yoruba.
81.	ku (die).	Khu.	Khu = luminous spirit. Ku = to become a luminous spirit. The word appears in the same sense in several West African languages.
82.	Kuti (a name).	Khuti.	= the two horizons.
83.	Kemta.	Khu and neter.	= divine Khu. Kemta, a dis- trict in Abḃokuta.
84.	ku-re-ku-re (fairy, hobgoblin).	Khu and Re.	= soul of Re or Ra. See Chap. XV.
85.	Koḃoḃ (corner).	Kon-b or ken-b.	= corner, kon; n takes a vowel to form a new syllable and is then changed to r. See Chap. I, p. 14, Rules 13 and 14.
86.	Kesi.	Kesi.	Kesi, a city in Upper Egypt; Kesi, a district in the town of Abḃokuta. See Budge, <i>Book of the Dead</i> , p. 340.

- | <i>Yoruba.</i>                               | <i>Ancient<br/>Egyptian.</i> |   |
|--|------------------------------|---|
| 87. Lisa.                                    | Horu-Set.                    | Lisa is a contraction of Oriṣa or Oriṣe. It sometimes appears in its full form as Olisa. It is the title of some important chiefs. See Chap. II for full explanation.                       |
| 88. Loro.                                    | Orion.                       | Loro = Ol'oro. The name of a chief in Ilesha. See Chap. VII for Oro and Orion.  |
| 89. Maku.<br>(a Yoruba name).                | Khu.                         | Ma-ku, do not die.  |
| 90. Ma-gba<br>(Ifa priest).                  | Amon and<br>Ba.              | Ma-gba = Ḡmḡn-agba, people of the ba, <i>i.e.</i> those who possess in a special manner, the spirit of the tribe. See Chap. IV.   |
| 91. mḡn<br>mimḡn<br>(holy, clean).           | Amon.                        | Mḡ(n) or mimḡ(n) is an adjective which means clean, holy. The idea is probably derived from the cleanliness of a hidden seed which cannot be touched by dirt or pollution from the outside. |
| 92. mḡ(n) or ma(n)<br>(mould shapen).        | ma-su.                       | = mould, shapen. See Chapter V for full explanation.  |
| 93. Ntḡḡ.                                    | Neter and<br>u-cb.           | Ntḡḡ = a sacred sacrifice. The name of a place in Ijebu Ode. Chapter X, No. 65.   |
| 94. Odi<br>(a deity).                        | Ot or Od.                    | = a deity; t or d receives a vowel to form a new syllable.  |
| 95. Odu<br>(chief, an exalted<br>personage). | du.                          | = mountain. See Chap. V.  |
| 96. odo                                      | do.                          | = lake, river, settlement.  |
| 97. Odu-dua.                                 | du and dua-t.                | See Chap. V.  |
| 98. O-ku(n)-ri(n)<br>(man).                  | Kh-nu-mu.                    | See Chap. V for full explanation.   |
| 99. o-bi(n)ri(n).                            | Kh-ḡp-ri,<br>Kh-ob-ri.       | See Chaps. III and V for full explanation.  |
| 100. o-gun<br>(a deity).                     | Khu.                         | See Chap. V.  |
| 101. o-ku<br>(a dead person).                | Khu.                         | See Ku, No. 81.   |
| 102. O-gun<br>(war, battle).                 | Khu.                         | Engagement in which persons are put to death, that is, they are caused to become Khus.  |

	<i>Yoruba.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
103.	O-ke.	ba-khu.	See Chap. III.
104.	Omi.	i-oma, mi or mu.	= water. See Maspero, <i>Dawn of Civilization</i> , p. 16, and Budge <i>Ancient Egyptian Language</i> , pp. 75 and 76.
105.	Oni-sua or Oli-sua.	Sua-nit.	= a nome in Ancient Egypt. Sua is a district in Yorubaland. Oni-sua or Olisua = owner or chief of Sua.
106.	O-re.	Re.	Ore = fairy, elf, disembodied spirit.
107.	Ori.	hor.	= to be high. Ori = head, top, surface.
108.	Oro (a deified spirit).	Orion.	See Chap. VII.
109.	Oru(n) (sun).	Horu.	= sun-god.
110.	oru (evening, night).	ru-ha.	Evening.
111.	Oru (heat).	Horu.	Horu = heat, that which is caused by the sun.
112.	Ooru(n) (name of a field in Yoruba- land).	Ooru or Aaru.	= the Elysian Field.
113.	Oṣu (moon).	Kh-onsu.	= moon-god.
114.	Osiri (plot, conspiracy).	Osiri.	The word survives in the phrase "da osiri bo o" or "gba osiri re," i.e. plot or conspire against him. The underlying idea is the conspiracy against Osiris by Set and his accomplices.
115.	Oṣi (poverty, wretchedness).	Osiri.	Beggars and wretched persons are regarded as incarnations of deities. Hence osi = poverty, wretchedness. See No. 12.
116.	O-ṣo (wizard, part of a name).	So-ka-ri.	= So, the ka of Osiris. The word So is found chiefly in combination with other words.
117.	O-u(n) or O-hu(n) (voice).	Kher-ou.	= voice. Only one syllable is retained by the Yorubas. Similar examples can be given; compare masu, No. 92.

	<i>Yoruba.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
118.	q-ba (king).	ba.	= soul. The king is regarded as the ba or the incarnate soul of the tribe or nation.
119.	q-ba.	ba.	Qba—name of a place or river.
120.	Qba-ni-sua.	ba and sua-nit.	Qba-oni-sua = the king, the owner of Sua. See No. 118.
121.	q-kan (heart).	ka.	= heart-soul. Qkan = heart, conscience, soul, innermost being.
122.	q-ga (master).	qa.	= to be high. Oga=a chief, an exalted person, master.
123.	Q-dq (hunter).	de-b.	= pierce. Ode=one who pierces animals with spears or arrows, <i>i.e.</i> a hunter.
124.	q-la (honour).	La.	Qla=that which belongs to the god La.
125.	qmq(n) or qma(n) (child).	A-mon.	= hidden. Qmqn is applied to the hidden seed of a fruit, and hence to a child in embryo, and to anything small in comparison with another.
126.	q-pq (quantity, crowd) (po—many).	pau } pau }	= many, company, crowd, end of gods. Pau or Pou.
127.	q-sa (lagoon).	sa.	Pond, lake. See Chap. IX.
128.	q-ta (enemy).	Ptah.	See Chap. V.
129.	Qši-kq-minu (a family name).	Osi(n) and Khominu.	Qši-kq-minu=Osiris Khominu = Osiris of the "Gods Eight." See Maspero, <i>Dawn of Civilization</i> , p. 149.
130.	q-kq (boat).	Kho-t or Khe-t.	= boat.
131.	Sabq (a Yoruba tribe).	Sabc-s.	= divine herald. See Budge, <i>Book of the Dead</i> , p. 443.
132.	ši-gi-nibi.	Shu, Khu, and nibit.	Şiginibi=şu-gu-nibi=Shu, the khu of the mistress, <i>cp.</i> Şi-gi-di=şu-gu-du, <i>cp.</i> also Adenibi, No. 27.
133.	Şu (mould, shapen).	ma-su.	= mould, shapen. See No. 92 and Chapter V.
134.	ta (to break open).	ptah.	= to break open. See Budge, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 69, No. 37.
135.	wq (wash, make clean).	ue-b.	= wash, pure, clean.

	<i>Yoruba.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
136.	wu (rise, swell).	uu.	= rise, swell. .
137.	yi(n) (praise).	hin.	= praise. See Budge, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 41, No. 7. <i>H</i> is elided and <i>y</i> is substituted in Yoruba.
138.	yọ (rejoice).	hoo.	= rejoice. See Budge, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 41, No. 8.
139.	wọmbia.	nubia.	wọmbia=iwọ Nubia=you, a Nubian.
140.	wọmbiliki.	Obeliscus.	wọm-bi-li-ki=Iwọ ọbiliki=you, an obelisk (obeliscus). The words wọmbia, wọmbiliki, have survived from the Egyptian through the Greek language. They are abusive terms applied to a covetous person. Wọmbia (you, a Nubian) shows that the Yorubas are not Nubians. Wombiliki (you, an obelisk) shows that the idea of an obelisk as a large object is familiar to the Yorubas, a covetous person being regarded by them as one who wishes to grab things with a view to becoming as huge as an obelisk.
141.	Suru (patience, forbearance).	Suru-d.	= prosperity, patience, forbearance.
142.	O-go (glory, radiance).	Khu.	= glory, radiance. <i>Kh</i> becomes <i>g</i> , and <i>u</i> becomes <i>o</i> . See Budge, <i>Ancient Egyptian Language</i> , p. 74, No. 9.
143.	O-l-otu (Manager).	Ot. Otu. O-l-otu	= aat = district. <i>Ot</i> becomes owner of the district; hence, Manager, one who is in charge of a group of persons or of a place.
144.	Ta (sell).	Ta.	= give; hence to give in exchange for money or an equivalent, to sell.
145.	O-pa-ba-ta (Stick used by Adamuorisa masquerade).	per ba and Ptah.	pa=per=house; ba=soul; ta=P-tah. O-pa ba ta=the house of the Soul of Ptah. O-pa ba ta stick is used for flogging those who fail to pay



	<i>Yoruba.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
			follow the rule that numbers above two hundred should be multiples of that figure.
151.	Şa(n) (wash).	Sua-u.	= wash, consecrate, <i>c.p.</i> Ibo. Sua = wash.
152.	Ita-gbe (a sacred emblem used by chiefs of Ogboni Secret Society).	Neter and ba.	Ita = Neter ; See Chapter VII. gbe = ba or bau. Ita-gbe = soul.
153.	O-lu-ku-lu-ku (everybody).	Ku.	= spirit. O-lu-ku-lu-ku = oni-ku-oni-ku = every possessor of a ku or spirit, <i>cp.</i> A-ku-a-ku (Tchi) = all, everybody.
154.	Wu-ra (gold).	Khu-Ra.	= the soul or spirit of Ra. The term <i>wura</i> is applied to gold because its colour resembles that of the golden orb of Ra (the Sun-god) at dawn or at sunset. The flesh of Ra was said to become gold at sunset ; See Maspero, <i>Dawn of Civilization</i> , p. 110, Note 1.
155.	Ireḷe (submission, humility).	e-nen.	e-nen ; " e " becomes " i " in Yoruba ; the first " n " is changed to the liquid " r " and the second to " l. " E-nen. therefore = i-nḡnḡ (r) receiving a vowel to form a new syllable = ireḷe. It would be noted that in some dialects, the word is still pronounced as i-nḡ-nḡ. See Chap. I, p. 14, rules 13 and 14.
156.	O ku (a salutation indicating good wishes).	Khu.	O ku is a salutation meaning " may you become a Khu " (and not a ba). It is similar to the Ibo salutation I-gu-e or Igwe. See Chapter I for full explanation, pp. 24 and 25.
157.	Şo (watch).	Sa or So.	= watch. See Budge, <i>Ancient Egyptian Language</i> , p. 50.
158.	O-biri-kiṭi.	Khopri and Khuti.	The derivation of O-biri from Khopri has been noted above (Chap. III) ; that of Kiṭi from Khuti has been noted in

this Appendix under Section B above. Khopri Khuti = Khopri (the sun-god) of the two horizons.

## II. NAMES OF ANIMALS

## Yoruba.

## Ancient

## Egyptian.

- |  |                        |   |
|--|------------------------|---|
| 1. Inoki<br>(ape or baboon).                   | Noki-t.                | A fabulous beast, ape, baboon.  |
| 2. A-gu-ta(n)<br>or A-gu-tɔ(n).                | Ha-khu-ptah.           | See Chap. I, p. 29.   |
| 3. Kini-un<br>(lion).                          | Qimi + Un.             | = black being.  |
| 4. Q-bɔ<br>(monkey).                           | Bau or Bo-u.           | = spirits, souls; the monkey being regarded as indwelt by spirits and sometimes saluted as "Oluwa mi," My Lord.   |
| 5. A-gbo<br>(ram).                             | Ba or bau,<br>or bo-u. | = ram or rams in Ancient Egyptian. See Budge, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 60, No. 15.  |
| 6. Adiye<br>(hen, cock, fowl).                 | Khadu.                 | = slaughter, adiyē = adu-ciye, bird for slaughter, <i>i.e.</i> a domestic fowl kept for edible purposes.  |
| 7. Malu<br>(bull).                             | Amon<br>+ alu.         | Malu = ɔmɔ-alu, native of alu, <i>i.e.</i> the osirified bull of alu. See Chap. II.   |
| 8. Olo-gbo<br>(cat).                           | Ba or bau,<br>or bo-u. | = spirits, souls. The cat, a sacred animal in Ancient Egypt, is regarded by the Yorubas as being indwelt by spirits. Hence the term <i>Ologbo</i> — possessor of spirits. |
| 9. E-ku-te<br>(rat).                           | Ku + Te-mu.            | E-ku-te = the soul of Te-mu, the rat being sacred to Te-mu in some parts of Ancient Egypt.  |
| 10. La-gi-do<br>(monkey).                      | La, Khu,<br>+ Do.      | La-gi-do = La, the Khu (or the spirit god) of the settlement.   |
| 11. Pɛ-pɛ-iyɛ,<br>Pɛ-pɛ-ɛiyɛ<br>(duck, goose). | Pe.                    | = Water. Pɛ-pɛ-iyɛ = pɛ-pɛ-ɛiyɛ = water bird.   |
| 12. Q-ni<br>(crocodile).                       | Au-nu.                 | See Chap. I, p. 27.   |
| 13. Ere<br>(boa).                              | Ere or Ara.            | = serpent. See Budge, <i>op. cit.</i> , Nos. 11 and 16.   |
| 14. K-kun<br>(tiger).                          | Khu.                   | See Chap. IX.   |

<i>Yoruba.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
15. Amo(n)-teku(n) (leopard).	Amon + Khu.	See Chap. IX.
16. A-ka-ta (jackal).	Ka + Ptah.	A-ka-ta = the soul of Ptah.
17. A-ka-la (vulture).	Ka + La.	A-ka-la = the soul of La.
18. A-japa (tortoise).	Pa.	= house. Ajapa = the living one of the house.
19. A-wun or A-un (tortoise).	Un.	= being.
20. E-le-de (pig).	de(b).	= pierce. Eledo = one who pierces. See Chap. II for full explanation.
21. E-ri(n) (elephant).	ri-ri-t.	Ririt = hippopotamus = eri(n)-mi Yoruba = eri(n)-omi, i.e. water elephant. The elephant in Benin district is <i>e-ri-ri</i> or <i>e-ni-ni</i> , "n" being substituted for "r."
22. I-ka(n)-du (ant).	ka + du.	I-ka(n)du = the spirit of the hill or mountain. This name is applied to the species of ants which builds ant-hills. Du (Ancient Egyptian) = Moun- tain, hill.
23. Ka-ri-ka (ant—large type).	Ka-ari-ka.	= the name of a god in Ancient Egypt. Ka-rika is the name of a species of ants.
24. Q-ka (boa-constrictor).	ka.	= a species of snake.
25. O-ke-te.	Khu + Te-mu.	Okete = a kind of large rat.
26. O-gi-da(n) (tiger).	Khu + da.	Khu becomes gi, <i>cp.</i> Ku-da, Chap. IV.
27. Q-pq-lq (frog).	pau + la.	Q-pq-lq = pau-la = many gods, <i>cp.</i> the large number of frog- headed deities of Hermopolis. See Maspero, <i>Dawn of Civiliza- tion</i> , p. 148. See Chap. XI above.
28. Ma-gu-du (a species of ants).	Amon, Khu + du.	Ma-gu-du = Qmq-or Qma(n)- gu-du = the child of the spirit (Khu) of the mountain.
29. Gu(n)-n-te (cockatrice).	Khu + Te-mu.	= the Khu of Te-mu.
30. E-le-gu(n) -gu(n) (alligator).	Khu.	Elegu(n)gu(n) = the owner or possessor of spirits (khus).

## NOTES.

- (1) The above list contains only a short selection of Yoruba words of Egyptian origin. The selection is confined mainly to roots, the compounds from the roots being left out as far as possible. The range of Egyptian survivals in Yoruba covers at least one-half of the entire Yoruba vocabulary.
- (2) Most of the animals mentioned in the above list were sacred animals in Ancient Egypt.

## G.

## SELECT LISTS OF WEST AFRICAN LANGUAGES CONTAINING SURVIVALS OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN WORDS

The Yoruba Language is not unique in respect of survivals of Ancient Egyptian words. Several other West African Languages contain similar survivals. For the purpose of illustration a few of the leading West African languages have been selected, and short lists of words of Egyptian origin in each language have been compiled. Much longer lists could have been given if the scope of this work had covered West African religions in general. The lists given below, however, are sufficient to illustrate the existence and prevalence of such survivals.

The languages selected are as follows :

1. Ibo.
2. Ijaw.
3. Igabo Isoko.
4. Egun (Alada).
5. Ewe.
6. Tshi.
7. Ga.

## IBO.

*Ibo.**Ancient Egyptian.*

- |                             |                    |  |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--|
| 1. Chuku<br>(God).          | Khu.               | CHUKU = Chi-uku = the great spirit. CHI IS A SOFTENING DOWN OF KHU. See Chap. II.  |
| 2. Chi-ncke(n)<br>(God).    | Khu and<br>Nekhen. | Chi-ncke = the soul of Nekhen. The interpretation of this word as CHI-NA-EKE, Creator, is fanciful and is probably due to Christian influence. See Chapter II. |
| 3. Mo (maw)<br>(spirit).    | Ma or Mo.          | = spirit. See Tiele, <i>History of the Egyptians</i> , p. 85. Ma is the Egyptian spirit of Order in the universe.  |
| 4. Miri or Mili<br>(water). | Miri-t.            | Goddess of the River Nile, i.e. Miri-t Hapi or Miri-t Quamit.  |

	<i>Ibo.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
5.	Madu (person).	Madu-t.	An Egyptian god.
6.	Mau (masquerade).	Mau-t.	An Egyptian goddess. Compare this with Mau (or Mawu), the Supreme Deity of the Ewe people.
7.	Ifa or Efa (divination instrument).	Nefer.	Ifa is the same divination instrument as in Yorubaland. See Chap. IV.
8.	Ori-mili, or Ori-miri, or Osi-mili, or Osi-miri.	hor and miri.	Ori-miri = the water of Horus. Osimiri, the water of Osiris. Osimiri is also the name of a river in Yorubaland. Osimiri in Ibo = river, sea.
9.	Wu or Nwu (die).	Khu.	Kh is changed to w. wu=khu = to become a luminous spirit, <i>i.e.</i> to die. See Chap. I.
10.	Owu or On-wu. (death).	Khu.	Derivation : same as in 9.
11.	Ala (land).	Iaro, Ialo, ala.	Ialo, I-ala = river. Ala in Yoruba means boundary, <i>i.e.</i> land bordering on the River Nile ; in Ibo it means land, <i>e.g.</i> Ala Mo or Maw, land of the dead, <i>cp.</i> Yoruba, Ile Oku = House of the dead.
12.	A-gu (spirit, carved images, leopard).	Khu.	= luminous spirit. Agu Mawu in Ibo = the spirit of Mawu, <i>i.e.</i> the bull-roarer. Èkun (Yoruba) = leopard.
13.	N-so (holy, divine).	Sa or So.	= Divine essence of the gods. N-so (N-saw) = that which is divine, holy. Sa in Egyptian language also means sacred person.
14.	Mbo-ni (diviner).	ba and un.	ba or bau = soul or souls ; un = being. Mboni = persons who possess the soul of the community in an especial manner. See Chap. IV, <i>cp.</i> Yoruba Magba in Chap. V.
15.	O-gu or Oggu (magic, juju).	Khu.	Oggu = divine or magical power for working wonders ; also the idol or juju used for such a purpose.

<i>Ibo.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
16. I-bo (a tribe in Southern Nigeria).	ba or bau (soul or souls).	The names of several West African Tribes are compounds of the Ancient Egyptian word "ba", e.g. Ya-gba, the living ba Ba-riba, the soul of Rpa, etc. (See Appendix E above). Bo is a contraction of bau or bo-u.
17. I-ka (a sub-tribe in Iboland).	ka.	For similar examples see Appendix E.
18. Oru (a sub-tribe in Iboland).	Horu.	Ditto.
19. N-gbo (a sub-tribe in Iboland).	bau (souls).	For similar examples see Appendix E.
20. Nwon-gbo (cat).	bau (souls).	Gbo is a modified form of bau. The cat was a sacred animal in some parts of Ancient Egypt and was regarded as an incarnation of the community. <i>cp.</i> Ol'-ogbo (cat) in Yoruba. O-ku-ta = the soul of Ptah. Ptah was supposed to be incorporated in a stone. Okuta is also the Yoruba word for a stone.
21. Okuta (stone).	Khu.	O-gu or O-gu(n) is the Yoruba god of iron. Gu is a modification of Khu.
22. I-gu-e or Igwe (iron).	Khu.	Elu or eru is a modification of the Egyptian word hor or horu = that which is high, top. Eru in Ibo = high. Igu-e or Igwe; see No. 22.
23. Elu-igu-e or Elu-igwe, or Eru-igwe (heaven).	Otu and Khu.	= place.
24. a-bu.	bu.	= place.
25. Q-ba (king) Yoruba, qba = king.	ba.	q-ba = king; the king is regarded as the incarnate soul of the nation. Qba in Yoruba also means a "King."
26. e-kwu.	khu.	= soul. Ekwu is a small conical lump of clay used for the installation of protective idols. E-kwu = belonging to the Khu or spirit.

- | <i>Ibo.</i>   | <i>Ancient<br/>Egyptian.</i> |  |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| 27. Ogu or Oru<br>(twenty).                         | Khu.                         | Twenty is an important unit in the Ibo numeration. Several of the scores following it are named as multiples of it. For example, Forty is Ogu abua= twenty times two; Sixty is Ogu at $\phi$ = twenty times three. Hence twenty is named Khu or the spirit of the chief numbers. Oru, derived from Hor, Horu (high, top) is used in the same sense. Ogu or Ogu(n) in Yoruba= twenty. |
| 28. Zo<br>(heal).                                   | U-za-i or<br>u-zo-i.         | = health. Zo, in Ibo= to heal; ozi-zo = healing.   |
| 29. N-nu<br>(four hundred).                         | Nin or Nu.                   | N-nu (four hundred is an important number; it is the square of twenty (o-gu), the important unit and is the same word as the Yoruba irinwo (four hundred). It has been shown in Chapter VI, p. 109 that the Yoruba word irin is derived from the name of Nin-ip, the Egyptian god of iron.   |
| 30. o-kpa-ra<br>(son).                              | ba and ra.                   | ba-ra = soul of Ra. The phrase "ba-ra" is used in some West African languages to denote a soul; compare ka-ra, "soul," in Tchi. Here the son is regarded as a continuation or reproduction of the soul of his father.  |
| 31. u-mi or o-mi<br>(water).                        | I-onna or<br>I-omi.          | = water. Umi or omi denotes water in an Ibo dialect. Miri or mili is used in other dialects. Umi or Omi is the same as Yoruba word omi= water.   |
| 32. I-gwe or I-gu-e<br>(a form of salu-<br>tation). | Khu.                         | Igwe or Igu-e is a form of salutation denoting good wishes for long life, etc. It is always used in saluting chiefs or persons of high rank.   |

<i>Ibo.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
33. sua (wash).	sua-u (wash).	I-gu-e contains the same idea as the Yoruba salutation Oku or ku, explained in Chapter I. sua-u in Ancient Egyptian means "set apart by washing," "consecrate," "purify."
34. ozo (a titular chief, whose person is sacrosanct).	so or sa.	= a sacred person. "By virtue of the initiatory rites and ceremonies, the man admitted to this titular rank ( <i>i.e.</i> ọzọ) is "ex opere operato" sacrosanct; his person is no longer common; it is holy "Niger Ibos" by Dr. G. T. Basden, Introduction, p. XIII.
35. Ekwe-n-su (Devil).	Khu and Su-t.	E-ku-e-n-su or E-kw-e-n-su = the spirit of Su-t; <i>cp.</i> E- <i>ṣu</i> (Yoruba) = Devil. See Chap. III.
36. O-ge-ne (a chief's title).	Hen.	= king, prince, chief. <i>cp.</i> O-ghe-ne (Isoko) = God; o-he-ne (Tchi) = king, paramount chief.
37. O-du (a chief's title).	Du or Od.	Du = exalted personage, mountain. Odu (Yoruba) = chief, an exalted personage. Od. (Ancient Egyptian deity).
38. Alusi, Alose, A-ro-se (idol, god).	Horus or Horus-sc-t.	A-lu-si or A-ro-se, is modified form of oriṣa or oruse (Yoruba) = idol, minor god. See Chap. III for full explanation.
39. u-mu(n) or omu(n) (children, child).	amon or amun.	= that which is hidden, hence, seed, child (before or after its birth).
40. Egwu-gwu (Masquerades, incarnate forms of spirits).	Khu.	= Spirit. E-gwu-gwu (Ibo) = E-gu-(n)-gu-(n) (Yoruba) = incarnate forms of spirits, masquerades.
41. Di-bia (juju priest).	ba.	Bia is a modified form of ba = soul, spirit. Di-bia = a person (possessing) a ba. Compare Ma-gba (Yoruba) = juju priest; lit. ma-gba = the son or a person of the ba or the incarnate soul of the tribe or nation.

- |     | <i>Ibo.</i>   | <i>Ancient<br/>Egyptian.</i> |   |
|-----|---|------------------------------|---|
| 42. | Oru<br>(slave)<br>i-ru<br>(slaves).   | Horu.                        | The Ibo word for service is n-ru, derived from horu, meaning originally service to the god Horu and later compulsory service. One who renders such a service is called oru. Compare ɛ-ru (Yoruba) = slave.  |
| 43. | O-su<br>(a person conse-<br>crated to the<br>deity, a priest, a<br>slave of the deity). | su-au.                       | = Consecrated to the deity; a priest. See Tiele, <i>History of Egyptian Religion</i> , p. 107. Egyptian ideas. A good person becomes an Osi-ri after death. It is quite possible to regard one who submits to perpetual service to a deity as having already become an Osi-ri, <i>cp.</i> the title of a priest in Thebes "consecrated of Osiris." See Tiele. <i>History of Egyptian Religion</i> , p. 171. |
| 44. | O-no-wu<br>(title of a chief).  | Khu.                         | O-no-wu = one who possesses a Khu, <i>i.e.</i> a luminous spirit.   |
| 45. | E-wu<br>(goat).   | Khu.                         | Several animals in West Africa are named after "Khu" or "ba" or "bi" or "Ka," Egyptian words for a soul or spirit.  |
| 46. | Ala Mo<br>or Ala Maw<br>(land of the spirits).  | Ala and<br>Ma or Mo.         | Ala = boundary, land.<br>Ma = spirit. The same expres-<br>sion "land of Shades or<br>Spirits" was used by the<br>Ancient Egyptians; see Mas-<br>pero, <i>Dawn of Civilization</i> , p.<br>19.   |
| 47. | Ogbu-nike<br>(a minor devil,<br>the servant of<br>Ekwensu).                             | Khu and<br>Nekhen.           | Ogbu (from Khu) = one who<br>causes another to become a<br>luminous spirit; hence, a<br>killer, a destroyer. Nike is a<br>modification of Nekhen or<br>Nikhen. Ogbu-nike = des-<br>troyer of Nekhen; compare<br>Chi-Neke = the soul of Nekhen.<br>= King of the South.  |
| 48. | E-ze<br>(king, paramount<br>chief).   | Se-ten or<br>Su-ten.         |   |

*Ibo.**Ancient  
Egyptian.*

49. O-bi  
(paramount chief).      bi.      = soul, obi = chief or ruler, the leading man in town or village being regarded as the incarnate soul of the nation or tribe.

## IJAW

*Ijaw.**Ancient  
Egyptian.*

1. A-yi-ba  
(Supreme Deity).      Ba.      Ayiba = maker of souls, *i.e.* the Supreme Deity.
2. O-wu  
(Water spirit).      Khu.      The whiteness of watery vapour suggests the idea of the water-spirits being designated Khu = luminous spirit.
3. O-ru  
(Land spirit).      Horu.      An Egyptian god.
4. E-le-chu  
(Earth goddess).      Khu or Chu.      E-le-chu = possessor of spirits.
5. O-gu-gu  
(female deity worshipped by women).      Khu.      O-gu-gu is a duplication of the word Khu, *cp.* Yoruba o-gu(n) derived from Khu.
6. Adumu  
(pythomic deity).      Atumu or Adumu.      = an Egyptian god.
7. O-ra-u  
(sun).      Ra.      = Sun-god.
8. O-wu-la  
(sun).      Khu and la.      O-wu-la = spirit of La, the god of To-day, *i.e.* the sun.
9. A-ka-lu  
or A-ka-ru  
(moon).      ka and Horu.      A-ka-lu or A-ka-ru = A-ka-horu. Ka = soul, horu = sky, heaven. A-ka-horu = the soul of the sky, hence moon.
10. A-ka-ka-i      ka.      = Soul.
11. A-gu-la  
(star).      Khu, La.      Same as No. 8. Agula denotes a star in an Ijaw dialect.
12. O-wu  
(masquerade).      Khu.      = Spirit. Owu is incarnate form of a spirit.
13. U-gu or O-gu  
I-gu-yc  
(iron).      Khu.      *cp.* Yoruba, O-gu(n), god of iron; Ibo, Igu-c, iron; Egun, O-ga(n), iron.
14. Egberc.      Khu and Re.      Egu-re or Egberc = the soul of Re.
15. Ologbo or  
Ologbosi  
(cat).      bau.      = Soul. Compare Yoruba, Ologbo, cat; Ibo, Nwon-gbo, cat.

## APPENDIX I

<i>Ijaw.</i>		<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
16.	Oru-kari (juju priest).	Horu and Kari	= the Egyptian god. = part of the name of an Egyptian god, that is, so-ka-ri.
17.	O-la (chief).	La.	= the Egyptian god.
18.	Kala-oru (fairy or elf).	Ka, la, Horu.	Ka-la-oru = the soul of La (god of) the sky.
19.	I-bi (holy).	bi, ba.	= soul.
20.	O-go-no (heaven).	go, ga, qo, qa and Ra.	go = go or ga = that which is high, that is, the high place; no is a modified form of Re or Ra; O-go-no = the high place or position of Ra or Re the sun-god, <i>i.e.</i> heaven.
21.	A-ka-lu, A-ka-ru (moon).	Ka and Ho-ru.	A-ka-lu or A-ka-ru = the ka of Horu or the soul or son of the sun-god or the sky.
22.	A-go-no-we (moon).	go or go and Khu.	AGONO or ogone, see No. 20; 'we or 'u-c = khu-e = spirit or soul. Agono-we = soul or spirit of heaven.
23.	Bi-ni or Beni (water).	Ni or Nu; Bi.	Bi = soul. Ni or Nu = water or water-god. Bi-ni = the soul of the water-god; that is, water.
24.	O-kpo (earth).	per or po	= district; hence o-kpo = district, land, earth.
25.	Ta-mu-na (Supreme Deity).	Ta Amun.	= Supreme Deity, god of Thebes in Ancient Egypt. See Tiele, <i>History of Egyptian Religion</i> , Chap. VII, pp. 141-157.
26.	I-ka-ka-i (star).	Ka-ka-u or Ka-ka-i.	= genii, images, luminous spirits.

## IGABO ISOKO

<i>Igabo Isoko.</i>		<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
1.	Oghene (God, Supreme Deity).	hen.	= king, majesty, <i>cp.</i> ohene (Tchi) = king, paramount chief.
2.	Ol-ori (Lord, chief).	hor.	= high.

- Igabo Isoko.*      *Ancient Egyptian.*
3. oru-e-aro (prophet).      horu and I-aro.      Horu, an ancient Egyptian deity. I-aro = name of the River Nile. The word oru-e-aro is probably a reference to a horus god which used to be consulted on the bank of the River Nile.
4. A-hu-o or a-hw-o (people).      Khu.      =soul. A-hu-o=souls or people. The word Khu is used in the same sense in other West African languages. *cp.* Tehi-Aku-aku = people, crowd.
5. wu (die).      Khu.      *cp.* Ku (Yoruba) = die, and wu (Ibo) = die.
6. Uwu (death).      Khu.      U-wu = the process of becoming a Khu or a disembodied spirit, that is, death.
7. e-hru (sky, heaven).      horu.      Heaven, sky.
8. e-hru (sun)      Horu.      = sun-god.
9. a-me (water).      i-oma or i-ma or i-ami.      = water, *cp.* omi (Yoruba) = water.
10. u-ru (voice).      Kher-ou      = voice.
11. a-ba-de (sea).      ba.      = soul. De is only an emphatic suffix, *cp.* A-wu-ra-de (Tehi) = Lord; wu-ra = Khu or soul of Ra. A-ba-de = that which produces ba or soul-like things. The name is given owing to watery vapour corresponding to the native idea of a soul or spirit and seen generally above the sea.
12. o-si-wi (saviour).      Osiris.      Osiwi is probably a modification of Osiris, the well-known Egyptian god, also regarded as a Saviour of his people.
13. o-lo-gbo (great).      ba or bau.      gbo = ba or bau = souls. Olo-gbo = that which has many ba's or bau, hence great. Compare Ologbo (Yoruba) = cat; Ologbo or Nwonogbo (Ibo) = cat.

<i>Igabo Isoko.</i>		<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
14.	a-kpo (earth).	per or por.	= district, originally regarded by the unsophisticated as the earth.
15.	om̩-eru-e (calf, bull).	Amon and alu or aru.	Om̩ is derived from amon; <i>cp.</i> om̩ (Yoruba) = child, native of a place. Eru is derived from aru or eru or alu, the Egyptian Elysian fields. Omo-eru-e = a native of Alu = calf or bull. Compare om̩-alu, contracted to malu (Yoruba) = bull.
16.	e-ra-o (beast).	Ra.	E-ra-o = that which belongs to Ra, that is, a beast. Compare ɛra(n) (Yoruba), which means "a beast."
17.	i-we or i-ue (sacrifice).	ue-b.	= pure, washed; hence that which has been purified sacrificially or offered as sacrifice is named i-we; compare ɛb̩ (Yoruba) and afor-ebo (Tchi) = sacrifice, the two words being derived from the same Egyptian word ue-b or u-eb.
18.	Ologbo Oride (most high).	ba or bau. Hor.	For ologbo (great, most) see No. 13. Hor = high in Ancient Egyptian language.
19.	ɛ-ma-m̩ (holy).	A-mon.	Amon = hidden, hence that which is kept free from pollution, pure, holy. E-ma-mo = that which is pure, holy; compare mi-m̩ (Yoruba), holy, m̩ and mim̩, being also derived from Amon.
20.	uzua-zo (life, health).	uzai.	= health.
21.	o-vie (king).	Nefer.	= part of the title of King Osiris. O-vie is a corruption of ne-fer; <i>cp.</i> ovia (Edo) = Ifa (Yoruba) = nefer. <i>cp.</i> also Nifa (Tchi) = queen.
22.	u-vie (kingdom).	Ne-fer.	See No. 21.
23.	oru-aro (glory).	Horu and I-aro.	Horu, an Egyptian god; I-aro, the River Nile. Oru-aro = Horus of the River Nile, who was regarded as a symbol of glory and majesty.

- Igabo Isoko.*      *Ancient Egyptian.*
24. ɸ-ba.      ba.      = soul. ɸba = governor ; the (governor).      governor or the king is regarded as the incarnate soul of the tribe or nation. Compare ɸ-ba (Yoruba) = king, governor, paramount chief.
25. E-we or E-hu-e      Khu.      = spirit, soul. (soul).
26. Ovata-Ore      Ptah and re.      Ptah = to open. Re Sun-god (east).      Ovata-ore, literally=the place of the opening or rising sun.
27. Aru-oriwo      aru, and      Aru = Egyptian Elysian field ; (grace, favour).      hor and Khu.      hor=high, chief ; khu=soul. Aru-ori-wo probably means the blessedness of the chief soul ; hence "grace," "favour," "splendour."
28. I-bi      bi and ba.      = soul. Sacred animals in (serpent, viper).      West Africa often possess names derived from Ancient Egyptian words denoting spirit or soul ; e.g. ɸ-ka (Yoruba), boa constrictor ; the word ɸ-ka is derived from the Ancient Egyptian word ka=soul or spirit. Also ba (ga) = crocodile.
29. ɸ-gɸ-dɸ      og-do-ad.      See Chapter XI for full explanation. (pond, pit).
30. O-tu-ru      O-tru.      = an Ancient Egyptian Deity, probably worshipped by the Shepherd Kings. See *The Book of the Dead* (Edition, E. Wallis Budge), p. clxxxi, introduction, second list of Aats, No. XIII. (shepherd).

## EGUN (ALADA)

- Egun.*      *Ancient Egyptian.*
1. Egun      Khu.      = luminous spirit. Many West (name of the tribe).      African tribes have names derived from Khu (spirit) and ba (soul).

<i>Egun.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
2. A-LA-DA (alternative of the name of the tribe).	LA and DA.	La and Da are two deities in Ancient Egypt.
3. JIHWE-YEHWE (Supreme Deity).	Khu.	Ji = Ji-hu-e ; ji comes from the West African root "ye" ; whe or hu-e is a modification of the word Khu (kh sound being pronounced as h, and "e" being a local addition) ; Jihwe = sky. Ye = living, whe = Khu. Jihwe-yehwe = the living soul of the sky.
4. Jihwe (sky).	Khu.	Ji-hwe = the living kus, <i>i.e.</i> the clouds which resemble lumi- nous spirits in respect of their white colour.
5. Legba (evil spirit, devil).	Khepera.	Legba is the same deity as the Yoruba Elegbara. For the derivation of the word from Khepera see Chap. III, pp. 63 and 64.
6. OHU (sca).	Khu.	Ohu is the same as the Yoruba word Oku(n)—sea—which is derived from Khu. See select list of Yoruba words.
7. ku (die).	Khu.	Same as in Yoruba.
8. o-ku (death).	Khu.	oku = the Yoruba word i-ku = death.
9. o-si(n) (water)	su.	o-si is a modification of the Ancient Egyptian word su derived from Am-sua, river god.
10. osi-o (corpse).	Osi-ri.	osi-o = that which has become an Osiri ; the belief of the Ancient Egyptian was that a good person would become an Osiri after death.
11. o-whe (sun).	Khu.	o-whe = o-hu-c. Hu is a modi- fied form of Khu.
12. o-su(n) (moon).	Kh-onsu.	o-su(n) is the same as Yoruba word osu, derived from Kh- onsu. See Chap. II.
13. o-ro(n) (heaven).	h-oru.	sky, heaven.

<i>Egun.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
14. a-yi-gba (earth).	ba.	= soul, a-yi-gba = the maker of souls (human beings), the earth being regarded as the mother of mankind.
15. Othan (snake).	ka.	In Egun k is often replaced by th; otha(n) = o-ka. Othan is a minor deity in Egunland.
16. ama-than or amo-than (serpent).	amon and ka.	ama = amo(n) = child. Ama-than = the child of ka, <i>i.e.</i> a serpent.
17. o-ga(n) (iron).	Khu.	o-ga(n) is the same word as o-gu(n)—god of iron—in Yoruba.
18. wi-whe (holy).	ue-b.	whe = hu-e = the Yoruba word wẹ (wash, make clean), wi-whe = that which is washed or made clean.
19. ogbo-agbo (ram).	ba.	agbo in Yoruba = ram, and is derived from bau, the ram being regarded as an incarnation of the deity which it represented in Ancient Egypt. O-gbo-a-gbo is a duplication of the same word. Ba (Ancient Egyptian) = ram.
20. a-wo or e-vo (sacrifice).	u-eb.	= wash; v is often substituted for b in Egun. A-vo or e-vo = a-bọ or ẹ-bọ = Yoruba ẹ-bo = sacrifice. See "ẹbọ" in the Yoruba list.
21. a-holu (king).	Horu.	= King of Southern Egypt chief deity for many centuries in Ancient Egypt; a-holu = a-horu.
22. o-ga(n) (chief).	qa.	= high. O-ga = an exalted person, <i>i.e.</i> a chief.
23. o-ku(n) (seed).	Khu.	o-ku = the spirit of a thing; that is, the innermost part; hence it means a "seed."
24. O-du-dua (Supreme Deity identified with Jiwhe-yewhe).	du and dua-t.	Odudua is the same deity as the Yoruba Odudua, but among the Eguns it is a male deity.

	<i>Egun.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
25.	Mau or Mawu (Supreme Deity identified with Jiwhe-yewhe).	Mau-t.	= an Egyptian deity. Odudua is borrowed from the neighbouring Yorubas on the West of Egunland; Mawu is borrowed from the neighbouring Ewe-speaking peoples on the East of the same country.
26.	O-fa (sea or river god).	Ne-fer.	Ofa = Yoruba Ifa, derived from n-efer; see Chap. IV. Unnefer is the title of Osiris, god of the River Nile.
27.	vo-thu(n) (idol).	Ba and shu.	vo = bo = bau. Thu(n) is a modified form of shu; vo-thu(n) = the soul of shu.
28.	Hevi-osu (god of lightning).	Su or Sit.	Su or Sit = Egyptian warrior god. Heviosu = the Yoruba Şango or Jakuta, the stone thrower.
29.	Ita-gbe (important minor deity).	Neter and ba.	Ita = neter; see Chap. VII, gbe = ba or bau. Itagbe = the divine soul.

## EWE

	<i>Ewe.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
1.	Mawu (Supreme Deity).	Mau-t.	= an Egyptian deity.
2.	Ku (death).	Khu.	= luminous spirit. Ku is the process of becoming a luminous spirit, <i>i.e.</i> death.
3.	Ku (die).	Khu.	Same as above.
4.	Vi (child).	bi, ba.	= soul, <i>cp.</i> ba (Tchi) = son, vi=bi. Ewe often substitutes v for b.
5.	Vo (bad).	ba or bau.	b becomes v and au becomes o. The idea underlying the word is that it was regarded as a bad thing for one to become a "ba" and not a "Khu" after death.
6.	Wu (kill).	Khu.	Wu is the process of causing someone to become a disembodied spirit.

*Ewe.*

- |                            | <i>Ancient<br/>Egyptian.</i>              |   |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| 7. Dsu-nu<br>(moon).       | Kh-on-su<br>Nu-it<br>(district,<br>nome). | = moon deity. Dsu is a modification of Kh-onsu ; Nu-it = district or nome. The Yoruba word for "moon" is O-su = Dsu in Ewe. |
| 8. Tsi<br>(water).         | Su or Amsu.                               | Amon = god of a river. Su = river or water. Tsi is a modification of su.  |
| 9. Dsu<br>(purification).  | su-au.                                    | = to purify, cleanse, consecrate with water.  |
| 10. Agbo<br>(ram).         | ba or bau.                                | = soul. A sacred animal is regarded as possessing a soul. Compare "agbo" (Yoruba) = ram.                                    |
| 11. Egbo<br>(goat).        | ba or bau.                                | = soul.   |
| 12. Vo-sa<br>(sacrifice).  | ue-b and sa.                              | b becomes v ; ue is elided ; o is added to v. Sa = holy.  |
| 13. E-rhu-e<br>(sun).      | Ho-ru.                                    | = sun-god.  |
| 14. An-yi-gba.             | ba.                                       | = soul. An-yi-ba = maker of soul ; <i>cp.</i> Ayiba (Ijaw) = maker of soul, Supreme Deity.                                  |
| 15. S-ri<br>(chief, high). | O-si-ri.                                  | = Egyptian Deity of great or high rank.   |

## TSHI OR TCHI

*Tshi or Tchi.*

- |  | <i>Ancient<br/>Egyptian.</i> |  |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| 1. T-SHI or T-CHI<br>(name of a West<br>African language). | Khu.                         | Compare T-chi with Ibo word Chi = spirit ; chuku = Chiku, the great spirit ; Chinke(n) = the spirit or soul of Nekhen. |
| 2. Fanti<br>(a tribe speaking<br>the Tchi language).       | Fanti or<br>Fenti.           | Fanti or Fenti is an Ancient Egyptian god. See the <i>Book of the Dead</i> , Prof. S. Wallis Budge, p. 367.            |
| 3. A-santi or<br>A-shanti<br>(same as No. 2).              | Santi.                       | Santi is an Ancient Egyptian god. See the <i>Book of the Dead</i> , ed. Prof. E. Wallis Budge, p. 342.                 |
| 4. Yankupon<br>(Supreme Deity).                            | Ku and<br>Pua-nit.           | Yan-ku-pon, the living soul of Punt. See Chap. II.   |
| 5. o-hen-e<br>(king).                                      | hen.                         | = king. prince. See Budge, <i>Egyptian Language</i> , Nos. 59-65 and 74-75.  |

<i>Tshi or Tchi.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
6. bo-fo (angel).	ba or bau	= soul or spirit.
7. ba (son)	ba.	= soul. A son is regarded as the reproduction or continuation in some sense, of the soul of the father.
8. o-ba (woman).	ba.	= soul.
9. o-ba-bea (daughter).	ba.	= soul.
10. Oni-pa (man, mankind).	un and per or par.	un = being ; per = house or nome. oni-pa = a being (which dwells) in a house.
11. O-ba-rima (man, male person).	ba.	= soul.
12. a-hen-ni (kingdom).	hen.	= king or prince. A-hen-ni = that which belongs to a king, <i>i.e.</i> kingdom.
13. wu (die).	Khu.	wu (die) is exactly the same word as the Ibo word "wu" which means to die.
14. Nifa (queen).	Nefer.	Nefer was the title of a queen in Ancient Egypt. See Maspero. <i>Dawn of Civilization</i> , pp. 362 and 363.
15. Nifa (right).	nefer.	= good, right ; nefer was used in a moral sense, but it is used by the Tchi speaking peoples in a physical sense.
16. mma or mmo (child).	A-mon.	The Yoruba word for a child is <i>qm̄q(n)</i> , that is, that which is hidden (an embryo). The word is applied to a child before or after its birth ; it is also applied to a seed. It is in the same sense as that of Yoruba that the word mma or mmo is used.
17. O-wu (death).	Khu.	<i>cp.</i> Yoruba I-ku (death).
18. a-wu-fo (a dead person).	Khu.	A-wu ; <i>cp.</i> Yoruba o-ku, a dead person.
19. nkurofo aku-aku (multitudes).	khu.	nkuro = city. Aku-aku = plur- ality of souls. Nkurofo aku-aku = many souls from the cities, <i>i.e.</i> multitudes.

- Tshi or Tchi.*
- Ancient Egyptian.*
20. bo-ne  
(wicked). ba ; un. = a being of the ba. The use of this term to denote a wicked person is reminiscent of the period in Ancient Egypt when it was believed that a good person would become a "khu" after death and a wicked person, a "ba."
21. ota-mfo  
(enemy). p-tah. The Yoruba word for enemy is also "ota." Mfo is a suffix denoting a person.
22. wu-ra  
(lord). Khu and Ra. = the soul of Ra. A person bearing such a title is rightly regarded as a "lord."
23. a-su  
(river). Am-su. = Egypt god of a river.
24. O-man or  
O-mon  
(people). A-mon. See No. 16.  $\text{QmQ}(n)$  = children is used here in a general sense.
25. Ku-nu  
(husband). Kh-nu-mu. The last syllable is elided. The first consonant receives a vowel to form a new syllable ; hence Ku-nu. The Yoruba word derived from Kh-nu-mu is O-ko-ni(n) or O-ku-ri(n) or Oku(n)-ri(n), a male person. Khnumu was a male deity.
26. O-su-ko(n)  
(thirsty). su and ka. O-su-kā = that which desires the "ka of the river" (water), that is a thirsty person. Osuke in Yoruba = hiccough.
27. O-dua  
(thanks, praise). dua-t or tua-t. = thanks, praise. See Budge, *Ancient Egyptian Language*, p. 43, Nos. 5 and 6.
28. se  
(guilty). se-t. = what is bad, *cp.* Yoruba  $\text{e-}\text{ṣṣ}$  = sin, offence, guilt.
29. Ko-ma  
(heart). Khu and a-mon. Ko-ma or Ko-mo(n) = the hidden Khu, *i.e.* the innermost part of a man = heart.
30. nkurofo-ku  
(people). Khu. nkurofo-ku = the souls of cities = people.
31. Osoro  
(heaven, sky). Osi-ri and Horu. Osoro = Osi-oro = Osi-ri Horu, a combination reminiscent of the sky with Horu the sun-god.

- |     | <i>Tshi or Tchi.</i>               | <i>Ancient Egyptian.</i> |  |
|-----|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 32. | Nsoro-ma or<br>Nsoro-mo<br>(star). | Osi-ri.                  | Ma or mo(n) is derived from a-mon; it means a child. See Nos. 16 and 24. Nsoro-ma = child of heaven, <i>i.e.</i> star.   |
| 33. | O-so-fo or<br>O-sa-fo<br>(priest). | Sa or so.                | = a sacred person. See Budge, <i>Ancient Egyptian Language</i> , p. 50 Nos. 126 and 127. Sa also means "to make an offering"; hence o-sa-fo may mean "one who makes an offering"; <i>i.e.</i> a priest.  |
| 34. | h-onho-m<br>(spirit).              | onkhu.                   | = life; hence that which is symbolized by life, <i>i.e.</i> spirit. Compare also Ancient Egyptian word "hon" = servant, prophet, divinely inspired person.   |
| 35. | Kro(n)<br>kro(n)<br>(holy).        | krou<br>(voice).         | It will be remembered that Khro (khrou = voice) is an emblem of sacredness or divinity. By means of it gods were created. (See Maspero, <i>Dawn of Civilization</i> , p. 146.) See also <i>Etudes de Mythologie et de Archeologie Egyptiennes</i> , Vol. I, pp. 93-114. Ma Khrou or Kherou = true voice, genuine voice. Kro(n)—kro(n) is a modification of krou. |
| 36. | o-sa<br>(heal).                    | u-za-i or<br>o-za-i.     | = health.  |
| 37. | okara or Kara<br>(soul).           | ka and Ra.               | Ka-ra (okara) = the soul of Ra.  |
| 38. | awu<br>(to kill).                  | khu.                     | awu = to kill, <i>i.e.</i> to cause to become a khu, a luminous or disembodied spirit.   |
| 39. | su-m<br>(darkness).                | su or shu.               | = to darken (see Tiele, <i>History of the Egyptian Religion</i> , translation by Ballingal, p. 85. shu = to stretch out, to cover, to darken).   |
| 40. | Ku-su<br>(full of darkness).       | ku and su.               | Ku is used in the sense of a large number of Kus. Ku-su therefore means "a large quantity of darkness," <i>i.e.</i> full of darkness. Compare the Yoruba word ku(n) = full and O-ku(n) — ku(n) = darkness, literally a large number of kus.  |

- Tshi or Tchi.*
41. o-sra-fo  
(chief). *Ancient Egyptian.*  
o-si-ri. = the chief of an Egyptian triad of gods, the chief deity worshipped in many parts of Ancient Egypt for several centuries.
42. Obonsam  
(devil). Ba-un-sam. ba = soul ; un = being, living sa(m) = the living soul of the pond, *i.e.* the devil. Note that bon (a contraction of ba and un) means wicked.
43. bohsum or  
bonsum  
(deity, idol). ba and su. bohsum(m) or bonsum(m) = the soul of su or shu, an Ancient Egyptian deity. The word is applied as a generic term for gods or idols.

## GA

- Ga.*
1. Nyon-mo(n)  
(God, Supreme Deity). *Ancient Egyptian.*  
A-mon. Nyon-mon = the living Amon. See Chap. II.
2. Nu-mo  
(spirit). Mo or Ma = spirit.
3. N-so  
(sea). so or sa. = pond, lake, a collection of water.
4. Gbo  
(die). ba. Gbo = to become a ba or a disembodied spirit.
5. Gbo-le  
(death). ba. Gbo-le = the process of becoming a disembodied spirit.
6. Nu  
(water). Nu or mu. = water. See Budge, *Ancient Egyptian Language*, pp. 75 and 76, No. 55.
7. Bi  
(child). Bi, ba. = soul. *cp.* q-ba (Tchi) = (child).
8. Huru(n)  
(sun). Horu. = sun-god.
9. Gbo-yo  
(corpse). ba. = soul. See Nos. 4 and 5.
10. Kro(n)  
(holy). Krou. = voice. It will be remembered that krou (voice) an emblem of sacredness or divinity. By means of it gods were created. See Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 146. Ma krou or matherou = true voice, genuine

<i>Ga.</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian.</i>	
11. Ba (Crocodile).	ba.	voice. Kro(n)-Krou(n) is a modification and a duplication of krou. = soul. Sacred animals are often named in West Africa by means of Egyptian words denoting soul or spirit; e.g. ɸ-ka (Yoruba) = boa-constrictor; Ẹ-lɸ-gu(n) gu(n) Yoruba = crocodile gu(n) being a modification of Khu.
12. To-agbo (ram)	ba or bau.	= soul, <i>cp.</i> agbo (Yoruba) = ram; ba (Ancient Egyptian) = ram.
13. To-gu-anten (sheep).	ku and aten.	gu is a modification of ku. Gu-anten = the soul of Aten, i.e. a sacred animal to Aten, a sheep.
14. Olowo. or Olu-wo (leopard).	hor and Khu.	Olo = owner; olu or oru = horu=chief; wo=huo=khu Olowo or Oluwo = the possessor of Khu or spirit, or the chief spirit, a leopard; compare a-mɸ-tɸ-ku(n) (Yoruba) = leopard.
15. Obla (young person).	ba.	= soul. In the Ga language, a liquid usually slips in between the consonant and the vowel of an Ancient Egyptian word. The simplest form of o-bla is o-ba, as in other West African languages.
16. Ba-lu (locust).	Ba and La.	Ba = soul; La = an Ancient Egyptian.
17. Di or Tù (to be black, black).	Di-du.	= the black image of Osiris. Compare didu (Yoruba) = black.
18. Nu (drink water).	nu or mu.	= water.
19. Dsu (wash).	su-au.	= wash.
20. sra (watch).	sa.	= watch. For the explanation of the presence of r in the Ga word see No. 15.
21. Go(n) (mountain).	qa or ga.	= that which is high.

APPENDIX II  
YORUBA HIEROGLYPHICS



## APPENDIX II

### YORUBA HIEROGLYPHICS KNOWN AS "AROKO"<sup>1</sup>

Having lost the knowledge of Egyptian hieroglyphics the Yorubas invented their own hieroglyphics. These are known as "AROKO." The significance of the symbols is generally understood, but variation and local peculiarities obviate the evolution of a national standard form.

Specimens of the hieroglyphics as used by the Ijòbus are as follows :—



No. 1.—FROM A NATIVE PRINCE OF JÈBU  
ODE TO HIS BROTHER RESIDING  
ABROAD.

By this six<sup>2</sup> cowries I do draw you to myself, and you should also draw closely to me. As by this feather<sup>3</sup> I can only reach to your ears, so I am expecting you to come to me, or hoping to see you immediately.

<sup>1</sup> See Lagos and West African Almanack and Diary for 1894 by J. A. Otonba Payne, pages following page 40.

<sup>2</sup> È-fa (the name expressive of the number six) is from the verb to draw.

<sup>3</sup> Feather is the only object through which one can see or reach the inward bearing organs, so you and I should see or come to each other at all events.



No. 2.—FROM A NATIVE GENERAL OF THE JĒBU  
FORCE TO A NATIVE PRINCE ABROAD.

Although the road<sup>1</sup> between us both may be very long, yet I draw you to myself, and set my face towards you. So I desire you to set your face towards me, and draw to me.

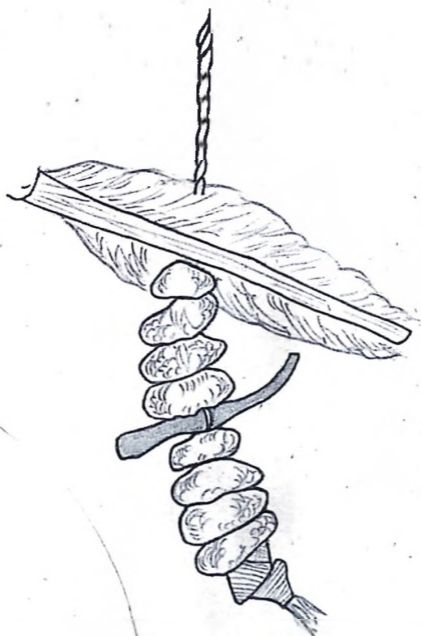


No. 3.—FROM A NATIVE PRINCE OF JĒBU ODE  
TO ONE OF HIS COUSINS ABROAD.

In the midst of numerous people, before and behind, relations are sure to recognise and know each other ; as we have known ourselves to be one, let us set our face to each other, and embrace ourselves together, never to turn against each other.

*Note.*—The two cowries each, up and down, indicate numerous people before and behind, and the two in the middle indicate two blood relations.

<sup>1</sup> The long strings indicate considerable distance or a long road.



No. 4.—FROM HIS MAJESTY AWUJALĚ, THE KING OF JĚBU, TO HIS NEPHEW ABROAD.

Your words agree with mine very much. Your ways are pleasing to me, and I like them. DECEIVE ME NOT: Because the Spice would yield nothing else but a sweet and genuine odour unto God. I shall never deal doubly with you all my life long. The weight of your words to me is beyond all description. As it is on the same family mat we have been seating and lying down together—I send to you. I am therefore anxiously waiting and hoping to hear from you.



No. 5.—A MESSAGE OF PEACE AND GOOD NEWS FROM HIS MAJESTY, THE KING OF JĒBU, TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF LAGOS, AFTER HIS RESTORATION TO THE THRONE ON THE 28th OF DECEMBER, 1851.

Of all the people by which the four corners of the world are inhabited, the Lagos and Jĕbu people are the nearest. As "warre" is the common play of the country, so the Jebus and Lagos should always play, and be friendly with each other. Mutual pleasantness<sup>1</sup> is my desire ; as it is pleasant with me, so may it be pleasant with you. DECEIVE ME NOT : Because the Spice would yield nothing else but a sweet and genuine odour unto God. I shall never deal doubly with you.

<sup>1</sup> The word "Qsan" (name of a fruit) is from the verb "san," to please.



NO. 6.—AN UNFAVOURABLE ANSWER TO A  
REQUEST OR MESSAGE.

The matter is unpleasant to our hearing—  
not easy to be done.



NO. 7.—A MESSAGE OF REPROOF FOR NON-  
PAYMENT OF DEBT.

You have given me the back altogether,  
after we have come to an arrangement about  
the debt you have owed me, I also will turn  
my back against you.



No. 8.—A MESSAGE FROM A CREDITOR TO A  
BAD DEBTOR.

After you have owed me a debt, you kicked against me ; I also will throw you off, because I did not know that you could have treated me thus.



No. 9.—A MESSAGE OF GOODWILL FROM A  
BROTHER TO ANOTHER BROTHER ABROAD  
ASKING FOR A PERSONAL INTERVIEW.

It is a message of joy and gladness. We are all quite well in the family. I would like to see you, so that the four eyes of yours and mine may see each other.

APPENDIX III  
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