



Aesthetic Intersection of *Ifa* and *Raml* Divination: Comparative Analysis and Socio-Cultural Evidence

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Abstract: It is an established fact that literature is replete with different scholarly works on divination. This is because afflicted people always look for the solution to different challenges of life; therefore, it is global in belief and its practice is common among many people in the world. Divination has been used since the earliest times to find solution to human problems. The influence of divination on people is very remarkable that it occupies prominent place in the daily activities. Hence, divination remains a worthy discipline deserves scholarly attention. The main objective of the study is to examine *Ifa* divination and Arabic divination (*Raml*) in the area of divergence and convergence, and the common characteristics of *Ifa* and *Raml* divinations. The study adopted an analytical research method. *Ifa* Divination is a special skill developed by the Yoruba people, though both the holy Qur'an and Bible rebuke the practice of divination; it is a problem that an average Muslim and Christian finds it very difficult to stay away completely from it. Therefore, a group of learned Muslims (*Alfa*) practice *Raml*, a form of divination that parallels to *Ifa* divination. For instance, Muslims instead of visiting *Ifa* priest, prefer to consult Muslim diviners who divine by fingers on the sand - cutting. The study provides an insightful information on the *Ifa* corpuses, the intersection and major themes of *Ifa* and *Raml* divinations, and the socio-cultural impacts of divinations on the society. Findings of the study show that *Ifa* divination and Arabic divination (*Raml*) are similar in forms and practices but differ in term of languages employed to operate and this is only on semantic level. The study concludes that the intersection of *Ifa* and *Raml* divination attests to the idea of culture contact between Africans and the Arabs through the introduction of Islam and trade routes passing Africa, which are avenues of contact with other cultures.

Keywords: *Yoruba, Ifa Divination, Islam, Arabic-Raml and Socio-Cultural Evidence.*

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Introduction

Research has revealed that divination is a universal phenomenon that is found in many races and at different ages. It is a systematic method and organized skill that provided insightful knowledge into various challenges of life. (Peak, 1991) The practice of divination is old as long as the history of mankind on the earth. Many races in the world like Mesopotamian, Arab, Indian and many countries in West Africa relied on the heavenly bodies; stars, planets, constellations, eclipses and comets, they engaged in the studies of these sciences not only to tell time and understand seasons but also for signs of portent or to decipher divine will. While other races paid special attention to terrestrial omens such as animal migrations, weather pattern, and forms of tossed sticks, bones, amulets or rocks. Divination is employed to know future events or occurrence of happenings; it is carried out by various means. In his words, Miller (2007) divination is operated most frequently in contemporary time in the form of horoscopes, astrology, crystal gazing, palmistry, tarot cards, the Ouija board, Scrying through the use of reflective water surfaces, mirrors, or the casting of lots were among the most widespread forms of divinatory practice.

Study Area: Yorubaland

The Yorubaland is located in the southwestern Nigeria, between latitudes 6° and 9° North and longitudes $2^{\circ} 3^{\circ}$ and $6^{\circ} 3^{\circ}$ East covers an area of about 181,300 square kilometers. The Yoruba people are found primarily in southwest Nigeria and the adjoining parts of neighboring countries. They form one of the ethnic groups in Nigeria and occupy the whole of Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Ekiti, Osun, Lagos, and parts of Kwara and Kogi states. A considerable number of the Yoruba people are found in the south-eastern part of the Republic of Benin, and they are also found in Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Puerto

Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela, and other parts of the America. (Akintoye, 2010) Today there are Yoruba speech communities in European countries where Yoruba villages and towns exist.



Source: From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

From available sources, the Yoruba *Ifa*, Dahomean *Fa* and Sikidy of the Malagasy are most probably emerged from the Arabic method. After the performance of divination based on the findings, recommendation and remedial prescriptions are made. In a situation where the priest or herbalist makes herbal concoctions in the Yoruba traditional method, an *alufaa* would use relevant Quranic verses and other Arabic formulae as necessary materials of his own prescriptions. (Abubakre, 2003) Leaves, roots and backs of tree are added together to make drugs in the treatment of ailments by *Ifa* and *Raml* diviners in the Yorubaland. The application of contagious elements of some organic and inorganic substances is common in the preparation of drugs and amulet by the Yoruba diviners. *Ifa* is a



system of divination based on sixteen basic and 256 derivative figures (Odu) obtained either by the manipulation of sixteen palmnuts (ikin), or by the toss of a chain (opele) of eight half seed shells. (Bascom, 1969; and Longe, 1983) Therefore Ifa is the most interesting system of divination among the Yoruba in Nigeria, and in some African neighbouring countries and the descendants of the Yoruba in the new world.

In this line of thought, given the importance of Ifa divination, Gbadamasi (1978) in his work noted that: *Ifa* is a body of Yoruba beliefs permeated the whole fabric of Yoruba life and culture, *Ifa* and other diviners were consulted everywhere by all Yoruba who had to formulate policies or make important decisions.

The beginning of Ifa divination is precisely not known, however, there was a consensus that Ifa was evolved, codified and modelled by Orunmila who lived in Ile-Ife, over one thousand years ago. Longe (1983), citing Johnson (1921, notes that ‘Oduduwa, was a migrating prince from the East and settled at Ile-Ife, but met Agboniregun (Setilu); the Agboniregun is also known as Orunmila’. In the account given by him, *Ifa Divination and computer science*, ‘*Ifa* entails a body of ancient knowledge, poetic literature and Yoruba orature. It permeates the totality of Yoruba life and culture’ (Longe, 1983). Ifa diviners are consulted everywhere by all Yoruba who had to formulate policies or make important decisions. Thus, all scholars of the Yoruba traditions have reached consensus on the familiar use of *Ifa* Divination, they all agreed that at any time, *Ifa* is consulted for guidance and assurance. He further analyses the divination techniques by mentioning the two alternative but equivalent techniques; these are divination with *ikin*, the sixteen (16) sacred palm nuts, and divination with *Opele*, the divining chain. He compares computer process with *Ifa* Divination where he quotes extensively some basic concepts of computer science such as binary Digit. He argues further that the technique in *Ifa* divination consists of two parts; the eight half- nuts comprise *opele with* two faces.



A concave face denotes binary O and a convex face denotes binary I. The face presented by a half-nut when the opele cast is interpreted. Similarly, each is marked in the powder on the divining slate (*opon Ifa*). He states further that the name of the major *odu* of *Ifa*, such as *Eji-Ogbe*, *Oyeku-Meji*, *Iwori-Meji*, etc., have a pairing or binary connotation.

Aim of the study

Different scholars of allied disciplines have made contributions to the field of divination with different foci. Consequently, many studies have been carried out on divinations. Works of outstanding scholars were consulted in this research work. Among these are Bascom (1969), *Ifa Divination; Communication between gods and men in West Africa*, Abimbola (1976), *“Ifa: an exposition of Ifa literary Corpus*. Stephen Skinner (1980), *Terrestrial Astrology Divination by Geomancy*, Ajayi (1988), “A Descriptive Analysis of Eji-Ogbe: The Premier Ifa Corpus”. Also important are Agbetola (1987), “Tira ‘Magical Medicine’ and Islam in the Northeastern Yorubaland”. Longe (1983), *“Ifa Divination and Computer Science”*, Ajayi (2009), “Yoruba Cosmology and Aesthetics:

The Cultural Confluence of Divination, Incantation and Drum-Talking”. Al-Bunniy (1985), *As-shamsu li- ma“aarif li-kubrah*, Abdul-Rahman, M.O (2012) *Of ‘Illiterate’ Scholars And National Development The Arabic Webs in Yoruba Loom*. At-Tukhi (1992), *manbau’ li usuul ar ramli* have studied various aspects of Divination.

Considered the view that Divination is a socio-cultural practice, this study seeks to add to the existing knowledge in Yorubaland, and those from other parts of Africa and the world, in general to establish the extent to which Divination in Yorubaland is influenced by such specific factors as religious affiliation, socio-economic, cultural and political factors. The works of other scholars of remarkable standing like Fischer (1929), Monteil (1932), Trautman (1940), Schilde (1940),



Maupoil (1943) and Jaulin (1966) were studied. These studies show how different socio-cultural aspects of society are influenced by Divination.

Previous studies on Divination

This section reviews previous studies on divination, therefore a review of relevant works was done and information and ideas obtained from such relevant and related works were taken into account in order to provide basis for the present research work.

Socio-Cultural Relevance of *Ifa* and *Raml* Divination

Divination is a social institution that deals with practical problems and seeks information upon which practical solutions and decisions are done. It is an inquiry about the present and obtains useful information, to make changes to a situation. The term “Divination” was taken from the Greek word, Latin *divinare*, meaning to foresee. Greeks were the first people to attempt to prove divination (Alex Whitaker, 2011). In Encarta World English Dictionary (1999), it is defined that divination is an art of seeking knowledge by special means. It is a special and organized method to foretell the future or discover unknown through omens, oracles or supernatural powers. In illustrated Oxford Dictionary (2003:236), divination is defined as supposed insight into the future, or the unknown gained by supernatural means. To the Chambers Dictionary (2004), Divination is the art or practice of divining, seeking to know the future or hidden things by supernatural means. Chambers concise dictionary and Thesaurus (2003) defines it as the practice of foretelling the future by supernatural means. In Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Divination is the act of finding out and saying what will happen. While Merriam Webster’s collegiate Encyclopedia (2000) defines divination as the practice of evolving the cause of events and foretelling the future. Divination according to The New Encyclopedia Britannica (2007) defines it as the art of foretelling the future using different methods that the diviner may decide. It should be noted that the



various definitions of divination are cognate with one and other. Hence, divination is a pivotal institution which many minds centered upon. It is employed to discover the source of trouble with the intention to remove it and information culled from the diviners whether spurious or true pleases the clients. In the account of Skinner (1980), geomancy is one of the four elemental modes of divination; these are pyromancy (divination by fire), hydromancy (divination by water), aeromancy (divination by air) and geomancy divination by earth). According to Skinner, (1980:1) geomancy is defined as an art of obtaining insight into the present or future by observing the combinations of patterns made on the paper or in the earth by the diviners.

In the health care delivery, the consultation of *Ifa* is also important, because the herbalist will consult *Ifa* to diagnose the health challenges of the patients and recommend appropriate medicines. Pointing to the relevance of *Ifa* in the Yoruba community, Abubakr (2003), notes that:

Health care delivery here is sought from Babalawo (herbalist) who defines and also prescribes either for the purpose of the metaphysical or physical manipulation. He consults *Ifa* oracle. As a counterpart the Yoruba Muslims learnt the Arab method of geomancy *hati* from the Arabic *khatt u'raml* (sand cutting) which has a vogue in North Africa, west Africa and the Sudan. The correlative of Yoruba *Babalawo* in *Ifa* is *aluufa* among Yoruba speech Community.

There are other subject matters that *Ifa* and *Ramli* are consulted for by the Yoruba, for instance a barren woman as soon as she approaches *Ifa* diviner who is regarded as a specialist, gynecologist, obstetrician and general practice physician starts working on the woman immediately. According to Olajubu (2003), '*Ifa* diviner would listen to the woman first, after he would consult *Ifa* oracle' Thus, *Ifa* is the most important art of divination in Yoruba life which was consulted at moment of making important decisions, such as marriage, house building,



settlement at new places, choice of occupation, knowledge of the future life of a newly born child etc. It is noteworthy that certain Yoruba children whose parents professed traditional religion are declared by the Ifa diviners as destined to be Muslims. The driving force behind this development is a particular *Odu* (corpus) in *Ifa* divines Islam as a religion for certain people; the particular corpus is *Otura meji* (the thirteenth *odu* corpus).

Methodology

This section discusses the social and religious context of the study, this followed by an account of the sources of information used and fact established in the study. The analytical research method used is equally discussed. Therefore, the present study draws its sources from the existing literature from Arabic, English and Yoruba materials. The research like earlier studies such as skinner (1980), Bascom (1969), Abimbola (1976), Longe (1983) and Ajayi (2009) found content analytical research method very useful. The method enabled the researcher to present facts and figures in tables to aid our understanding.

Practice of *Ifa* Divination

There are many works employed in this study that established the practice of Divination in the Yorubaland. In Bascom (1969), *Ifa Divination; Communication between gods and men in West Africa*, analyses *Ifa* as a system of divination based on sixteen (16) basic and two hundred and fifty-six (256) derivative figures (*Odu*) obtained either by the manipulation of sixteen palmnuts (*ikin*), or by the toss of a chain (*opele*) of eight half seed shells. In his view *Ifa* is the most interesting system of divination among the Yoruba in Nigeria, and in some African neighbouring countries and the descendants of the Yoruba in the new world. *Ifa* as the most consultative oracle among the Yoruba; *Ifa* priests form the first sacerdotal order. They always dress in white and shave the head and the body.



Another important work considered under literature review is Abimbola (1976) "*Ifa: an exposition of Ifa literary Corpus*. Abimbola an authority in the field of Yoruba mythology presents *Ifa* as an intricate process of divination that is performed by an initiated Priest and Priestess. He discusses the basic concepts of *Ifa* and the methods applied by the *Ifa* priests in divining. He mentions the various materials necessary by the priests such as sixteen (16) palm nuts or Opele (divning chain), Divination trays (upon *Ifa*), Bowl (agree *Ifa*), Tappers (iroke *Ifa*), Divination powder (iyere osun). Abimbola outlines the process of training of *Ifa* priests as a long-life process; it takes from fifteen to twenty-five years of full-time studies to qualify as *Ifa* priest. He likens *Ifa* training to modern academic training; the education of an *Ifa* priest is a lifelong process.

Every *Ifa* priest knows not only that he has to gain constant re-enforcement in the things which he has learnt but also that he has to expose himself to new trends in the development of his field of specialization. Thus, by continuous process of learning, the devoted priest of *Ifa* keeps himself informed throughout life. It is worthy of note the work of Atanda (2017) 'A Historical perspective of Intellectual Life in Yoruba Society Up to C. 1900'. The work gives detailed account of the practice of *Ifa* and how it was developed in the Yorubaland dated back to the advent of Orunmila who was believed to be the founder of *Ifa* cult. According to him *Ifa* cult developed in Yorubaland early and had spread to all parts of Ife between the advent of Oduduwa in Ile- Ife and the reign of Oba (King) Ofinran in Oyo. The present study notes that the studies of Bascom (1969), Abimbola (1976) and Atanda (2017) agreed with each other.

Another significant work worthy of note is Ajayi (2009), "Yoruba Cosmology and Aesthetics: The Cultural Confluence of Divination, Incantation and Drum-Talking". The author notes that *Ifa* divination process has a structural pattern that distinguishes it from other forms of divination among the Yoruba races. He argues that *Ifa* divination process can be divided into three (03) broad structural



parts; these are prologue, narrative, and epilogue. This divisional pattern is different from the division stated by Abimbola (1976). Apart from three division made by Ajayi (2009), he adds a number of sub sections to each division. In the prologue after the client has informed the priest of his or attention, homage is paid by *Ifa* priest to the divinities and unseen spiritual powers, invoking their presence in the divination process.

The *Ifa* priest thereafter casts the divining chain or manipulates the sacred palm-nut (*Ikin*) for a decisive *Odu* to emerge. According to him, the appearance of an *Odu* marks the beginning of the structure of *Ifa* divination process. The second part of *Ifa* is narrative of *Ifa* divination process which involves the interpretation of the *Odu* sign or narration of the stories connected with the *Odu*. Thus, the *Ifa* declaration is generally (by the client) true. The report given by *Ifa* is further supported by a cosmological system in relation between human beings, divinities, ancestors and other mythological figures are viewed as a projection of relation between people in particular society. The offer of sacrifice is very important in *Ifa* divination and the client is expected to perform the prescribed sacrifice to have psychological relief and finally the explanation of *Ifa* declaration by the priest and offer of sacrifice form the central theme of the epilogue. (Ajayi, 2009).

The acquisition of *Ifa's* skill starts at early age of life; this is started with the preliminary or orientation phase, the trainee spends the period to familiarize him with the learning environment, know members of the *Ifa* cult and watch the process of *Ifa* divination, identifying its paraphernalia and listening to the chanting of *Ifa* verses and their interpretation. This is followed by formal training which has five stages. At the first stage, the trainee learns the use of the divining chain and the sacred palm nuts, as well as the names of the signatures of the principal *odu*, the great poems of *Ifa*. In the second stage he begins a systematic memorization of the *odu*. At third stage, the trainee learns the interpretation of the sixteen (16) principal



odu. Reaching the fourth stage, he presents himself for examination which if he passes, immediately is initiated as babalawo (Ifa priest).

At the final stage the trainee undertakes post –initiation training to specialize. According to Atanda (in Toyin Falola, 2017) this post- initiation training is similar to house Manship undertaken by prospective modern doctors. Another important contribution that may be regarded as precursor of this paper is the work of Abdul-Rahman (2012), *Of ‘illiterate’ scholars and National Development: The Arabic Webs in Yoruba Looms*. He notes that Shaykh Harun Matanmi popularly known as Harun Gege was a predestined Muslim. Abdul-Rahman, (2012), in his work reports as follows:

There was in Ibadan then a king by name Oluyole he had been foretold by the (Ifa) Oracle of the arrival of a Shahkh in the city whose prayer were efficacious. When Shahkh Uthman arrived Ibadan, he met this king who did as instructed by the oracle.

Another important work considered for literature review is Gbadamosi (1978) *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba 1841-1908*. Gbadamosi narrates that there are many instances of some of the notables in the Yorubaland who became Muslims because *Ifa* diviners declared that they were destined Muslims. He made instances of some of the traditional rulers like Oba (King) Lamuye of Iwo, who reigned around 1886 and Timi Abibu Lagunju of Ede were declared by Ifa diviners as destined Muslims and there were significant number of Yoruba notables who were declared by Ifa as predestined Muslims. Gbadamosi, (1978) reports further that at the eve of Christianity in Yorubaland, some of the political office holders at Ibadan were disturbed and brought the council of the traditional rulers and the leaders of thought to an impasse until when they consulted Ifa which endorsed the admission of the Christian missionaries to the town. He concludes that ‘the Yoruba people are faithful to *Ifa* corpus when it is divined; this manifests the vitality and confirms the importance of *Ifa* among the Yoruba people.

Procedure of *Ifa* Divination

Bascom (1969) in his work notes that:

There are different forms of Opele (divining chain/pod), the pattern of Oyo divining chain is made of Opele pods and the preferred kind of brass chain with cowries at each end. The overall length is 50 inches. While divining chain from Ilara made of replicas of Opele pods cast in a light white metal with coins at each end. The overall length is 35:75 inches.

The following divination objects are necessary, before the diviner embarked on divination process.

- i. Divination trays (opon *Ifa*)
- ii. Bowls (agree *Ifa*)
- iii. Tappers (iroke *Ifa*)
- iv. Sacred palm nuts (ikin *Ifa*)
- v. Divination chain (opele)
- vi. Divination powder (iyere osun)

Figure1



Source: Google, Orisa life style.com



Divination Techniques

Ifa divination varies in application, but it follows the same basic procedure of casting the apparatuses; palmnuts (*ikin*) or the divination chain (*opele*) to determine the appropriate verse for the client and the introduction of the verse to the clients.

Procedure 1

The client is asked when visits the priest to whisper to a coin or any legal tender to express his or her problem and then drops it on the divination tray. The diviner (*Babalawo*) before he embarks on an act of divination offers prayers and invocations to *Ifa* and other deities while the objects of divination are already made available. The diviner salutes *Ifa* and urges *Ifa* to provide the appropriate answer to the client's problems without delay. He calls on *Orunmila*, who is regarded as having knowledge of prenatal destiny (*ayanmo*) of every human being. He offers *Iba* (salute) in acknowledgment of supremacy to the *Ile* (the earth), *Olodumare* (the Almighty God). The diviner also calls on ancestor diviners to witness the proceeding before he then casts the palm nuts eight (08) times if *ikin* object is employed, and he marks the results of each cast on the *iyeroosun* (divination powder on diviners' tray. (Longe, 2003) The result must match one of the two hundred and fifty-six (256) possible *Odu* signs.

Procedure: 2

Another method of *Ifa* divination is by *Opele* (*Ifa* divination chain). The tools consist of eight (08) seed pods or small copper –alloy plate with concave or convex surface linked together by a metal or bead chain. The diviner holds the chain at its center point and casts it so that it falls on already laid clothe before him to reveal a pantheon of the *Odu* sign. On reading the revelation of the cast the diviner recalls the similar story in or poem revealed in the *Odu* sign.

Figure 2



Source: newunivers.com

The *Opele* divining chain is cast into a 'U' shape so that the open ends of the U are facing the diviner in such a way that four half nuts on either side of the U. The faces presented by the half nuts are read from right to left. A complete round of divination marks the end of the exercise of obtaining a signature. This is followed by chanting a divination poem that is relevant to the results obtained and interpreting the poem and its significance in relation to the situation being divined.

***Ar-Raml* Divination (Arabic Geomancy)**

There are various forms of divination practiced in Arab societies, while Medieval Arabs had a special interest in the study of heavenly bodies. The Arabs of desert area often travelled at night and made use of the knowledge of the constellations for guidance in their journey. The art of divination was widespread and popular among the Arabs in ancient time; the historical reference was ZarIfa, the wife of 'Amr b.'Amr *mai' as sama'* who skilled in the art of divination. She disclosed to her husband the dream she had that announced the impending calamity and the end of the reign of her husband as follows: 'Go to the Dyke if thou see a rat



digging holes in the Dyke with its hind-legs be assured that the woe hath Come upon us'. She said to her husband''. So, her husband went to the Dyke and looked carefully where he found a rat moving an enormous rock which fifty men could not have rolled from its place.' (Nicholson, 1985)

Ibn Khaldun (d.1406) in his work *Maqaddimah* (1988), mentions the widespread and importance of diviners in the Arabian society in pre-Islamic era. Suffice is the following poetic verses as illustrative examples.

فقلت لعرف اليمامة داوي فانك ان داويتي طبيب

I said to the *Yamamah's* diviner: Cure me

You are indeed a doctor If you cure me,

Another poet says:

جعلت لعرف اليمامة حكمه وعرف نجد ان هما شفياني

فقالا شفاك الله والله ما لنا بما حملت منك الضلوع يدان

I made an oath to the diviner of the *Yamamah*, whatever his request
And I did the same to the diviner of Najd, if they would cure me.
But they said: May Allah cure you. By Allah we have no power
Over (the disease) that you carry around with you in your body.

With the introduction of Islam in the 7th century, the Arab Muslims and non-Arab Muslims felt a need to determine the time of prayers, the direction of *Ka'aba* and the correct location of the mosque. These compelling needs gave a religious impetus to the study of astronomy and contributed towards the belief that the heavenly bodies were influential upon terrestrial affairs as well as human conditions, which humbler spirits are believed to intervene in troublesome ways. Therefore, the art of Divination in Islam took new forms; but the main forms of divination include *Kihana*, *taa'bir* (oneinromancy) and of course *raml*, more precisely *al- khtti bi raml*. (Divination by sand cutting) *Ta'bir* has been the most popular, followed by *raml* the Arabic geomancy. *Raml*, literary sand is variously described as *derb al-raml*, *derb al- ful*, *'ilm ar-raml*, the science of sand. (Skinner,



1980) *Khatt* in the other hand means the lines which a diviner drew in the sand to prognosticate the happy or unlucky outcome of an undertaking or event about which he was consulted. *Khatt* (geomantic lines) is also regarded as the lines which the geomancer traces on the sand. The development from *khatt* to *raml* began with the juxtaposition of the two terms; consequently, *khatt-al-raml* is frequently used to denote geomancy. The new English Dictionary defines geomancy as divination by means of lines, figures or dots on the earth or on paper, by particles of earth cast on the ground.

Divination is employed in Islamic societies to foretell future events or expose hidden issues. (Peak, 1991) Its primary use is to determine the wisdom of understanding a particular course of action. One of the most popular forms of divination is known in Arabic in the modern time as “*ilm al-ramil*” (the science of the sand) which is called Geomancy in Europe. It is also called *Hati Raml* or “*Atimi*” (science of sand cutting). Divinatory geomancy has its roots in Arabic sand divination, which appears also in various guises as African divinatory systems on the west coast (*Ifa* and *Fa*) and Madagascar. Sand –cutting (*Iyanrin –tite*) is a widespread form of geomancy, practiced by many Muslim diviners in the Yorubaland. *Raml* is employed to discover the source of trouble in order to remove it. Ibn khaldun (d.1406), in his work *Muqaddimah* (prolegomena), gives a description of the sixteen geomantic figures, each named and classified into favorable and unfavorable. He explains the classification in terms of the astral influences which are brought to bear by each of them.

Divination Techniques in *Raml*

The procedure of *Raml* has been explained in literature by some researchers in previous studies. (Fischer, 1929; Monteil, 1932; Trautman, 1940; Schilde, 1940; Maupoil, 1943; Jaulin, 1966; Bascom, 1969; Skinner, 1980) These studies show the conventional procedure in divination by *Raml*. The procedure of *Raml* consists of making a random number of marks in the sand or dust, deleting them two by two



until only one or two marks are left and drawing a single or double line; a single line is made if one mark remains, while a double line is made if two marks remain. This procedure is repeated four (04) times, the result yields one of the basic sixteen geomantic figures of *Raml*. It is clear from the reviewed literature that the Divination has established procedure, regardless of its geographical setting, the Divination procedure is encoded through specific method chanting of formula.

According to Tukhi (1992), the following obligatory acts must be observed in order to carry out accurate results.

Obtaining white clean sand for divination

Facing the Qibla (*Ka'aba*)

State of purity of the place of divining and diviner

Observance of two *Raka'at* prayer

Condition of the weather free from blowing of wind and falling of rain

Recitation of chapters and verses of the holy Qur'an, such as *Surtul Ikhlas* (3 times) *Suratul Fatiah*, verses of *Suratul Al-Baqarah*, *Suratu 'l imran* and *Suratu 'L Yasin*.

The client is instructed to make intention on money (or on any legal tender)

The diviner will generate number of lines, but not less than twelve lines as follows:

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or making random number of marks in the sand, deleting them two by two until only one or two marks are left, and from this drawing, a single or double line is marked. This is repeated four times, this procedure produces one of the basic sixteen geomantic figures of *Raml*, through which the diviner soothsays. The recitation of the following verse is very important in the beginning of *Raml* divination process:

With Him are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knoweth but He. He knoweth whatever there is on the earth, and in the sea. Not a leaf doth fall but with his knowledge: There is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered) But is (inscribed) in a Record Clear (to those who can read). (Qur'an 6:59)

Divination Techniques

In the process of computations, quadruple figures are generated. The first figure is called mother, a second quadruple figure is called daughter and additional figures are derived through further computation called granddaughter. It is observed that both *Ifa* and *raml* divinations share these processes. (Bascom, 1969; Skinner, 1980; and al Bunniy, 1985)

Findings of the Study

This section discusses the findings of the present study. Specifically, it makes the comparative analysis of *Ifa* divination and *Raml* (Arabic) Divination.

Convergence and Divergence

Studies on *Ifa* and *Raml* divinations (Bascom, 1969; Abimbola, 1976; Gbadamasi, 1978; Skinner, 1980; Abdul Rahman, 2012) have tended to share some similarities in terms of structures, signature and results. On the other hand, Skinner (1980), Longe (1983) and Ajayi (2009) noticed that the names of sixteen basic figures in *Raml* (Arabic Geomancy) differ from those of *Ifa*, but correspond to one and others as depicted in table 3



- Ogbe* corresponds to *Tariq*
- Oyeku* corresponds to *Jama'at*
- Iwori* corresponds to *al-Ijtimah*
- Odi* corresponds to *al-aqlah*
- Irosun* corresponds to *Nasrah Haarijah*
- Owunrin* corresponds to *Nasrah Dahilah*
- Obara* corresponds to *al-ayaha*
- Okanran* corresponds to *al-inkisi*
- Ogunda* corresponds to ' *Utbah Haarijah*
- Osa* corresponds to ' *Utbah Dahilat*
- Ika* corresponds to *al-Hamarat*
- Otuurupon* corresponds to *al-Bayaad*
- Otura* corresponds to *Naq-al-Khadi*
- Irete* corresponds to *al-Jawdalat*
- Ose* corresponds to *Qabidu Harijah*
- Ofun* corresponds to *Qabidu Daakhli*

Table 1: Geomantic Figure and Exegesis Of Life Symbols Of Ifa Divination

S/N	NAMES	SYMBOLS	INTERPRETATIO OF SYMBOLS
1.	Ogbe	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Life
2.	Oyeku	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	Death



3.	Iwori	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Impetus
4.	Odi	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Containment
5.	Irosun	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Deception
6.	Owonrin	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Diseases
7.	Obara	0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Plenitude, Excess
8.	Okanran	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Rapidity, proliferation
9.	Ogunda	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Male Aggressiveness
10.	Osa	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Female Aggressiveness 0
11.	Ika	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Blighting
12.	Otuurupon	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Sacrifice
13.	Otura	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	World Chance
14.	Irete	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Earth, Fate
15.	Ose	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Violation, Putrefaction
16.	Ofun	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	Purification, Transcendence

Source: Longe, (1983:29)

Table 2: Arabic Geomantic Figure of *Raml* And Exegesis Of Life Symbols

N/ S	NAMES	TRANSLITERATION	SYMBOLS	INTERPRETATION
1.	الجودلة	<i>Al Jawdalat</i>		Long life, nobility and magnanimous
2.	الأحياني	<i>Al – Ayana</i>		Fortune, riches, gains and profits
3.	عتبة داخلة	<i>Utbah Dahilat</i>		Brethren and kinsmen
4.	البياض	<i>Al – Bayaad</i>		Parents
5.	نقى الخد	<i>Naq Al -Khadi</i>		Children and attainment of great honour
6.	عتبة حارجة	<i>Utbah Haarijah</i>		Manifests disease
7.	الحمرة	<i>Al – Hamarat</i>		Marriage, wife, riches, honesty and good honour
8.	الانكيس	<i>Al – Inkisi</i>		Death, natural and honest burial
9.	نصرة حارجة	<i>Nasrah Haarijah</i>		Prosperous journey
10.	العقلة	<i>Al – Aqlah</i>		Luxury and fame
11.	الاجتماع	<i>Al – Ijtimah</i>		Hope
12.	نصرة داخلة	<i>Nasrah Dahilah</i>		Enemies hardly to be resisted
13.	الطريق	<i>Ar – Tariq</i>		Probator



14.	قبض خارج	<i>Qabidu Harijah</i>		Questioner
15.	الجماعة	<i>Jamaat</i>		Balance and equilibrium
16.	قبض داخل	<i>Qabid Daakhli</i>		Judgment

Source: al- Buuniy, 1985:543

Table 3: Divergence and Convergence of Ifa Divination And *Raml* Divination

S/ N	Names	Symbols	Interpretation	Names	Symbols	Interpretation
1.	Ogbe	<pre> 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 </pre>	Life	Ar-Tariq		Probator
2.	Oyeku	<pre> 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 </pre>	Death	Jamaat		Balance and equilibrium
3.	Iwori	<pre> 00 00 0 0 0 0 00 00 </pre>	Impetus	A- Ijtimah		Hope
4.	Odi	<pre> 0 0 00 00 00 00 0 0 </pre>	Containment	Al – Aqlah		Luxury and fame
5.	Irosun	<pre> 0 0 00 00 00 00 </pre>	Deception	Nasrah Haarijah		Prosperous journey
6.	Owonri n	<pre> 00 00 00 00 0 0 0 0 </pre>	Diseases	Nasrah Dahilah		Enemies hardly to be resisted
7.	Obara	<pre> 0 00 00 00 </pre>	Plenitude, Excess	Al – Ayana		Fortune, riches, gains and profits
8.	Okanra n	<pre> 00 00 00 00 00 00 0 0 </pre>	Rapidity, proliferation	Al – Inkisi		Death, natural and honest burial



9.	Ogunda	<pre> 0 0 0 0 00 00 </pre>	Male Aggressiveness	Utbah Haarijah		Manifests disease
10.	Osa	<pre> 00 00 0 0 0 0 0 0 </pre>	Female Aggressiveness	Utbah Dahilat		Brethren and kinsmen
11.	Ika	<pre> 0 0 0 0 00 00 00 00 0 0 0 0 </pre>	Blighting	Al – Hamarat		Marriage, wife, riches, honesty and good honour
12.	Otuuru pon	<pre> 0 0 0 0 00 00 00 00 0 0 0 0 </pre>	Sacrifice	Al – Bayaad		Parents
13.	Otura	<pre> 00 00 0 0 0 0 0 0 </pre>	World Chance	Naq-Al- Khadi		Children and attainment of great honour
14.	Irete	<pre> 0 0 0 0 00 00 0 0 </pre>	Earth, Fate	Al- Jawdalat		Long life, nobility and magnanimous
15.	Ose	<pre> 00 00 00 00 0 0 0 0 </pre>	Violation, Putrefaction	Qabidu Harijah		Questionee
16.	Ofun	<pre> 00 00 00 00 00 00 </pre>	Purification, Transcendence	Qabid Daakhli		Judgment

Source: Hashimi (2016)

Discussion of the study

The geomantic figures of *Ifa* and *Raml* corpuses showed degree of variances; this finding supports the findings of Bascom (1969) and Skinner (198s0). These are noticed in the area of correspondence and interpretation. It is worthy of



note that the interpretation of symbols and signatures that emerged in the course of divinatory process differ completely from one and others. For instance *Ogbe* the number one (01) geomantic figure of Ifa Divinatory symbolizes life, and while *Tariq* in *Raml* stands for probate.

Intersectional ties of (*Ifa*) and (*Raml*) Arabic Divination

It is interesting that *Ifa* Divination and Arabic Divination (*Raml*) are intersected in many aspects. Despite the geographical remoteness of these two means of divination, they have interrelated connection with one and other even though they are at variance in some occasions. This is in conformity with the findings of Bascom (1969) and Skinner (1980).

Geomantic Figures

The present study reveals the sixteen (16) geomantic figures that are commonly employed by *Ifa* diviner and *Raml* practitioners showed in Table 3. The application of sixteen figures is a necessary and inevitable derivative from the principles that govern the divination. However, the sixteen (16) basic figures differ markedly in terms of arrangement and names. For instance *ogbe* corresponds to *Tariq*. *Ireti* is equivalent to *al-Jawadalat*, number fourteen of geomantic figure of *Raml* that also symbolizes life. Thus the order of *Hatimi* reads 12, 7, 10, 12, 1, 15, 11, 8, 5, 4, 3, 6, 9, 13, 16, 2 . The geomantic numbers of *Raml* are completely at variance with orders of *Ifa*. Another area of differences is observed in the divination process, in *Ifa* divination if one mark remains, two lines made drawn, but if two marks remain a single line is drawn. In *Raml* if one mark remains, a single line is made and if two marks remain two lines are made. This is also in line with the observations reported in related studies by Longe (1983) and al-Bunniy (1985)

Chanting Of Verses and Story-Telling Elements

It is an established practice in *Ifa* divination to chant series of memorized verses and stories in the interpretation of *odu* signs which is rendered in narrative



form and message is communicated to the client and sacrifice (ebo) is recommended. (Ajayi, 2009) On the other hand, Arabic divinations, *raml* neither does it entail chanting of poetic verses, nor it recommend sacrifice (Al-Bunniy, 1985). The paramount importance of sacrifice in *Ifa* divination depicted in the studies of Abimbola (1986) and Agbetola (1987) as follows:

Won p'awo lekee

Won p'esu lole

Won wo'run yan yan yan

Be eni ti o ni ku mo laye

Won waa koti ogboun s'ebo

They (the Clients) took their *Ifa* priests to be liars

They took *Esu* for a thief

They looked scornfully towards heaven

As if they would never die

They turned deaf ears

To their *Ifa* Priests' instructions about sacrifice

Tossing of manipulating tools

There is no tossing of any divinatory tool in *raml* (Arabic geomancy), which is a usual practice in *Ifa* Divination. Therefore, the method of sand-cutting differs from tossing a chain or manipulating palm nuts.

Casting of Divinatory tools

Raml, Arabic Geomantic figures are obtained on the sand floor, by sand-cutting process, which deleting the random marks in sand-cutting, a single line is made if one mark remains, and two lines are made if two marks remain. (Al-Bunniy, 1985) However, in *Ifa* divination double lines are made if one mark remains, and double lines are made if one mark remains. Here *Ifa* and *Raml* are at variance.



Social functions of divination

Divination is a consultative institution that touches many aspects of mankind that occupies prominent places in the cultural, historical, social, economic, political, scientific and technical needs of any community. It is pertinent to know that divination constitutes important element in the Yoruba traditional beliefs, therefore Ifa Priests occupies important place in Yoruba cultural system, their verdict is accepted by the individual and people in general. This implies that they enjoyed this position and respected for their accumulated knowledge. (Gbadamasi, 1978) In the health care delivery, the consultation of Ifa is also important, because the herbalist consults *Ifa* to diagnose the health challenges of the patients and recommends appropriate medicines. This in line with the view of Abubakre (2003)

There are other subject matters that *Ifa* and *Ramli* are consulted for by the Yoruba, for instance a barren woman as soon as she approaches the Ifa diviner who is regarded as a specialist, gynecologist, obstetrician and general practiced physician starts working on the woman straight away. This is noted in study of Olajubu (2003), '*Ifa* diviner would listen to the woman first, after he would consult *Ifa* oracle' Thus *Ifa* is the single most important avenue in Yoruba life which is consulted at moment of making important decisions, such as marriage, house building, settlement at new places, choosing occupation, knowing the future life of a newly born child etc. This agrees with the definitions given by Encarta World English Dictionary (1999), Illustrated Oxford Dictionary (2003) The Chambers Dictionary (2004) and Chambers concise dictionary and Thesaurus (2003); they all define divination as 'the practice of discerning the hidden significance of events and foretelling the future'.

It is noteworthy that certain Yoruba children whose parents professed traditional religion are declared by the *Ifa* diviners as destined to be Muslims. (Clark, 1939) There is in *Ifa* corpus, a particular *Odu* (corpus) divines Islam as a



religion for certain people; the particular corpus is *Otura meji* (the thirteenth *odu* corpus. (Gbadamasi, 1978) It is permeated the whole system of Yoruba life and culture'. *Ifa* diviners are consulted everywhere by majority of the Yoruba who had to formulate policies or make important decisions. This prompted all scholars of the Yoruba culture to have reached consensus on the familiar use of Ifa Divination; they all agreed that at any time, *Ifa* is consulted for guidance and assurance.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to explore the socio-cultural perspectives that underpin the practice of Divination in the Yorubaland, Nigeria. The study adopted an analytical research method. Several works were consulted on Divination, and the review of relevant and related studies was done. The present study therefore determined the origin, sources, divergence and convergence, the mechanisms and processes involved in divination. Furthermore, the study took account of socio- economic and cultural implication of *Ifa* and *Raml* divinations. The findings show that *Ifa* and *Raml* influence the socio-economic and cultural practice of the Yoruba speech community. This is in tadem with the findings of Clark, (1939) and Gbadamasi (1978). This study notes that the geomantic figures of *Ifa* differed in two major ways from *Raml*. First, the interpretation of symbols emerged in the divinatory process differed completely from one and other. The illustrative example is *Ogbe*; the number one (01) of geomantic figure of *Ifa*, which symbolizes life corresponds to *Jawadala* of number fourteen (14) of geomantic figure of *Raml*, which also symbolizes life. Second, the research reveals in the course of divinatory process in *Raml*, if a single line remains, one line is marked and if a double line remains, two lines are marked. However, in *Ifa* divination, if a single line remains a double line is marked and if a double line remains a single line is marked. These findings are in line with the findings of Bascom (1969) and



Skinner (1980). The study also reveals that the socio-religious status of *Ifa* and *Raml* divinations influences the belief system of the clients especially the Muslims, because Islamic religious scriptures; the holy Qur'an and *Hadith* are reprehensible to the practice of divination. (Agbetola, 1987) Generally speaking, as reported in the previous studies (Clark, 1939; Bascom, 1969; Gbadamasi, 1978; Skinner, 1980; and Ajayi, 2009), divination reflects the socio- economic practices, belief system and the cultural setting of the Yoruba people. As the findings of this research work are significant notwithstanding, the study suggests further areas for research. Considered the fact that this present study focused on the practice of *Ifa* and *Raml* divinations, convergence and divergence, it will be interesting to see whether the same findings can be obtained when other means of divinatory practices are employed and compared with *Raml*. Further research could also seek information from the priests of crystal grazing, palmistry, and divination through the use of reflective water surface. The study presents further a comprehensive mechanism employed by the practitioners of *Ifa* and *Raml*. Based on the findings discussed above, the present study has two implications. In terms of contributions to knowledge the study demonstrates that apart from religious realm of *Ifa* and *Raml*, divination has socio-cultural significance (Jaulin, 1966; Bascom, 1969; Skinner, 1980) However the spectrum of *raml* varies in the degree of approach and application. Nevertheless, the *raml* and *Ifa* divinations agree with one and other where the results of some methodological processes are met.

The study concludes that *raml* and *Ifa* divination in all likelihood are the same, they share a lot in common regarding primary objectives and goals, this is to gain information of a mundane sort by means conceived of as transcending mundane. This is to discover the source of trouble in order to remove it whether by sacrifice, counter sorcery or accusation and ordeal.



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