

placeholder for omnibus file in progress, combining and updating the following archived manuscripts:

Áfa, the Ñri-Igbo counterpart of Ifá

<people.bu.edu/manfredi/IfaAfaNri.pdf>

Conference on Ifá divination in Africa & the Diaspora, Harvard University, 14 March 2008

Grupo de Estudos Africanos e Afrobrasileiros em Línguas e Culturas, Universidade do Estado da Bahia, 15 April 2009

[41 pp. A4, last modified 19 June 2015]

Before Wazobja; Òminigbõn and polyglot culture in medieval 9ja

<people.bu.edu/manfredi/BeforeWazobia.pdf>

Walter Rodney Seminar, African Studies Center, Boston University, 13 February 2012

[20 pp. A4, last modified 10 June 2015]

Handout [4pp. A4, last modified 8 March 2012]

Comparison of 4-bit array names and associated information from oracle localizations across 5 historical zones

<people.bu.edu/manfredi/4bitArraySpreadsheet.pdf>

[1 p. 410 x 230 mm, last modified 28 August 2014]

8-bit semantic key for duplex (8-bit) array names across oracle localizations

<people.bu.edu/manfredi/8bitSemanticKey.pdf>

[5 pp. 438 x 320 mm, last modified 26 May 2015]

abstract below...

# Icons & oracles across the confluence\*

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NOTE: PLACEHOLDER FOR THE OMNIBUS MANUSCRIPT IN PROGRESS

## ABSTRACT

Five or more centuries ago, virtuosi of two artistic techniques—*cire perdue* copper-alloy casting and a hermetic-poetic oracle that calls and interprets duplex 4-bit binary strings—crossed the Niger-Benue confluence and left phonetic footprints in the Ìgbo-, Èdó- and Yorùbá-speaking zones. Without inferring such a transmission route, it would be hard to explain a list of independent observations of directed diffusion as collated here. For example, seven salient vocabulary items of Èdó (alias *Bìní*, “Benin”), all semantically opaque in that language, unscramble with Ìgbo loanword etymologies:

### two prominent genres of ritual sculpture and the recounted names of two pioneer copper-alloy sculptors

*ikéègà* [obó] ‘altarpiece representing an individual’s enthroned wrist/hand/arm/tools’ (Bradbury 1961)

< *ikhéngba* ‘horned, seated altar figure representing an individual’s right arm/hand’ (cf. Ígálà “*okega*”, Boston 1977, 2)

[*ùkhubhè*] òbó ‘*Detarium senegalense*; token/icon of same, used in convoking ancestors’ (Keay 1989, 206, Èhigiamusoe 2013, 189f., Ekhosuèhi 2014)

< òfó ‘*Detarium microcarpum* or *senegalense*; bundle of its node-segmented twigs, used in convoking ancestors’ (Dalziel 1937, 188, Meek 1937, 63, Keay 1989, 206, Aka[h] & al. 2012, cf. Boston 1977, 48)

“*Igue-Igha*” or “*Iguegha*” (unparsable proper name as spelled by Egharhevba 1936b/1953 vs. 1960/1968, no tones)

< *ìgvé ìhìha* ‘molten metal’ (Williamson 1972, 175, 446f.; Ígwè 1999, 227, 245)

“*Abamangjwa*” (unparsable proper name in garbled transcription reproduced by Reed & Dalton 1899, 5, no tones)

< *Àbà-ń-a-jjú-nwa* ‘My [family] name doesn’t refuse child[birth]’ (canonical proper name)

### two unique items of *Ìba Ominigbòn* metalanguage and a secondary name for its reputed introducer

*ògvéègà* ‘*Detarium senegalense*; oracle strings formed from its linked half-endocarps’ (Èhigiamusoe 2013, 189f.)

< *òkwé èja* ‘oracle seeds’ cf. *òkwe* ‘*Riciodendron africanum*; its seeds’, *àja/èja* ‘sacrifices/oracle’ (Williamson 1972, 17, 373f.; Keay 1989, 152f., Ígwè 1999, 32, 270, 601), cf. Èdó *òkhuè* (Melzian 1937, 155)

*n’áàbe* ‘doubled oracle sign’

< *n’áàbò* ‘double’ (Williamson 1972, 359; Ígwè 1999, 456)

“*Ogheide*” (unparsable appellation of *Òminigbòn* as spelled by Egharhevba 1936a, 3, no tones)

< *ò-gbú ire* [someone with] very efficacious [sacrifices/medicine]’ (Williamson 1972, 179, 363; Ígwè 1999, 259, 582)

Because their probabilities are multiplied, the conjunction of these telltale echoes is already sufficient to dismiss the notion that either Yorùbá *Ifá*, or a few dozen conjecturally attributed fine-art castings scavenged and salvaged in the 20th century by Frobenius, Murray and Willett from secondary contexts in Ilé-Ifè, attest to “the birth of the Yorùbá-Èdó world system” in “the 13th century... Classical period” (Ògúndìran 2003, 51, cf. Burton 1863a, 222, Egharhevba 1936a,b, Willett 1967, Garlake 1977, Horton 1979, Ògúndìran 2002, Àjàyí 2004). That fond fancy depends on the direct extrapolation indefinitely back in time of Yorùbá-Èdó linkages evident in modern *Ọja*—the British “*Nàìjá* area” enclosed as “Nigeria” in 1914—and thus shows the susceptibility of present ethnic consciousness “to secondary reasoning and to reinterpretations which... generally obscure the real history of the development of ideas” (Boas 1911, 67, 71, cf. Bradbury 1959, Vansina 1971, Ífemésija 1976, 88, Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983, Eisenhower 1995). Non-selfie forensics instead support a contrary scenario, as follows.

Neolithic savanna skill-sets, thriving in rainforests cleared with post-Nok iron tools, evolved rapidly on pathways shaped by mental “superstimuli” of the “genius of paganism” and by the mnemonic cognitive modules for number, folk biology, folk sociology and theory-of-mind (Augé 1982, Boyer 1998, Sperber & Hirshfield 2004, cf. Verger 1977a, Donald 1991, Foley 2004, Assmann 2008). As migratory mutations accrued in feudal Ifè, stoked by profits from the production of cobalt *sègì* beads (Elúyemí 1987, Lankton & al. 2006), *Afá*’s stringed geomantic detector of underground ancestral advice flipped to become *Ifá*’s divining chain of clairvoyant authority dangling from the sky—no matter that this inversion effectively “confused Odùduwà with Ọrúnmilà” (Erediauwa 2004, 206) and redefined an old word for ‘death’ (Verger 1966, Abímbólá & Miller 1997, 22, cf. Ryder 1965, Bámgbòsè 1972, Law 1973, Ọnwuejìogwù 1978, Ọbáyemí 1979a, Emọvọn 1984). As tropical Africa exited its “geographical accident” of medieval isolation and became “coeval” with Eurasian seaborne trading spheres (Mbembe 2002, 631, Fabian 1983, Augé 1994, cf. Wallerstein 1974, Beaujard 2012), theologizing trends of local “belief” electively converged with heavenly doctrines of the “Axial Age”—stranding in the process an unassimilable residue of stubbornly terrestrial, irreligiously enchanted metaphysics, thenceforth exotically labeled *folklore*, *fetish*, *witchcraft*, *voodoo* and *jùjú* (Jaspers 1949, Idòwú 1962, Iacono 1985, Bellah 2011, Peachey 2012, Swidler 2012, cf. Goethe 1809, Feuerbach 1841, Weber 1920, Horkheimer & Adorno 1947, Tambiah 1990, 17).