

## **ÀKOSÈJAYÉ: TREND AND STATUS IN YORÙBÁ COMMUNITIES OF SOUTH WESTERN NIGERIA.**

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### **Abstract**

*Our society is in disarray today ; things are not working according to plan . Different members of the society do not realize their ambitions or expectations principally because , the modern people have neglected consulting Ifá for guidance. Parents especially no longer consult for the Àkosèjayé of their children. This study therefore investigates the importance of Àkosèjayé/consulting Ifá with a view to understanding its relevance in traditional Yoruba society and how it can still be used in this contemporary society. This study adopted cultural adaptation theory , which permeates change and individual diversity as theoretical framework . A total numbers of 20 Babaláwo and 40 people comprising fifteen adult males, fifteen adult females and ten youths, five males and five females were interviewed to gather their views on Àkosèjayé. The study shown a unanimous agreement by respondent Babaláwo - Ifá priests and twenty seven of the people interviewed that destiny may be cut short as a result of inability to keep to instructions given while Àkosèjayé is being done. This could be on the type of food, colour and vocations to avoid. Also in ability to keep to taboos stated, or family traditions. However, considering many benefits that can be derived from the exercise, which included balanced life style devoid of sickness and pains, every other pit falls can still be avoided.*

**Key Words:**Àkosèjayé, Yorùbá, Ifá priest, culture, destiny.

### **Introduction**

Every continent, every nation and ethnic group has their age-long customs and traditions. Some had been forgotten and abandoned while some are still firmly upheld by the people practicing them in spite of modernization, science and technology, western education, religion and general changes in world events. Àkosèjayé is an aged -long tradition of the Yorùbá that showcases their belief in Olódumarè and what he has in stock for every individual . Today, this age-long tradition is no longer fashionable among the Yorùbá as a result of western education, civilization and embrace of foreign religions. Thereby creating problems like barrenness, joblessness, poverty and misconduct and so on

### ***Àkòsèjáyé: Trend And Status In Yorùbá Communities Olaleye Samuel Kayode***

in our society today. The blame for some of these is heaped on the witches, enemies of progress and the government. The questions are, are these problems really entirely handiworks of the witches and enemies alone? As individuals, don't we have the share of the blames? *Àkòsèjáyé* is an exercise common to every ethnic groups in Africa, Nigeria in particular and Yorùbá land to be precise with little variations, all leading to the same point. That is, making enquiries into the future, particularly a new born baby.

However, it is practically impossible to cover the whole of Africa, even the whole of Nigeria because of language barriers and time frame for this kind of work. In order to do justice to this topic therefore, our attention shall be on the Yorùbá land. Twenty *babaláwo* and forty people comprising fifteen adult males, fifteen adult females and ten youths, five males and five females were randomly selected and interviewed in *Oyo, Èkìtì* and Lagos States of Nigeria. The study adopted cultural adaptation theory. Culture is defined as the heritage of learned symbolic behaviour that makes humans human. However, with the quick turnaround of change in every aspect of human life today and individual diversity, we cannot categorically say that culture is the heritage people in a particular society share. Adaptive systems of culture foundation was laid by Leslie Alvin White (January 19, 1900, Salida, Colorado – March 31, 1975, Lone Pine, California) was an American anthropologist known for his advocacy of theories of cultural evolution, sociocultural evolution, and especially neo evolutionism, and for his role in creating the department of anthropology at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor and was remodeled by scholars as Sahlins, Rappaport, Vayda Haris and a host of others who attest to diversity of culture of which *Àkòsèjáyé* is among in Yorùbá land today. All these scholars agreed that cultures are system (of socially transmitted behaviour patterns) that serve to relate human communities to their ecological settings. These ways of life of these communities include; technologies and mode of economic organization, settlements, modes of social grouping and political organization, religious belief and practices.<sup>1</sup> All these ways of life adapted to by the Yoruba have greatly affected all areas of our culture and religion as a body and not *Àkòsèjáyé* alone.

### **Yorùbá concept of *Àkòsèjáyé* and its importance in human destiny**

*Àkòsèjáyé* is an enquiry in totality through *Ifá* into the future of a child born or about to be born into the world. It is an enquiry into everything (from the beginning to the end) which a child will become in life, or what a child came to the world to accomplish. It is a window through which a child's life, in its entire clarity package is seen. It is an art, an ability by which the end is known from the beginning; on how a child will live his or her life, all activities from childhood to adulthood, and from adulthood to his death. In those days, *Àkòsèjáyé* was an important aspect of the Yorùbá culture and tradition. It is *Àkòsèjáyé* that will tell the kind of *Ori, Ìpín, Àyànmó, Ògo, Ìràwò, Kádàrá,* and *Àkòsílẹ̀* that accompany a child to the world. It is this *Àkòsèjáyé* that explains how such a child will use

all these aforementioned. Hardly do we know or realize that the food we eat could be a hindrance to a child's *Ìpín*. *Èèwò*-taboo could endanger a child's *Kádàrá* greatly. The kind of cloth a child wears could sometime spell doom for the child because there are some colours that do not agree with all *Ìpín*. If we do not distance ourselves from these colours, to be successful in life will be a war. It is *Àkòsèjayé* through *Ifá* that will dictate the kind of vocation a child should engage in, in order to be successful in life. Some people are destined to be rich early in life while some are at the prime age and some when they are already old. But because of our ignorance, often begin to labour till when we are destined to be rich and successful in life. Marriage is an important issue in the life of man, if it is not properly handled, it can make or mar anybody involved because, it is another stage in man's life. If a man is successful before he gets married, the kind of woman he marries will determine whether the success will still continue or not. If he was not successful before he gets married, the kind of woman he marries will also determine whether he would eventually make it. This is the reason why this issue is not handled with levity. But *Àkòsèjayé* make things easy for the Yorùbá who value good life and healthy living. During an enquiry into the *Àkòsèjayé* of a child, the parents of a child will know the kind of a woman their son will get married to in future before the child grows to puberty. Through *Àkòsèjayé*, they would have known whether the child can marry more than more wives, married a divorcee, or snatch another man's wife without encountering any problems and so on just as it was also seen in the case of *Odéwálé* in *The gods are not to blame*. The importance of *Àkòsèjayé* was highly demonstrated in the story where *Odéwálé's Àkòsèjayé* was carried out and *Ifá* revealed that the newly born child would kill his father and marry his mother. To avert this trouble, he was asked to be killed immediately. However, the warning was not heeded and this brought calamity on the entire town<sup>2</sup>. *Odù Èjìogbè*<sup>3</sup> too also has this to say about the points raised above.

*Òkú gbé ohùn orò,*

He is lost to us through death, is a cry full of pain

*Mari dódò ohùn òjìngbìn*

I will walk, talking to myself in a very low voice

*Ológbò ní fì odù še ara*

Cat is the one that dresses in style with raphia cloth

*A dá fún ọmọ arésè sànsà túrùpè,*

Was the one who cast *Ifá* for the one that scatters dirt with very long feet

*Wọ̀n ní aya sànsà kan ló gbà*

They asked, is he going to take a slender woman as his wife?

*Wọ̀n ní àfì tó bá lóbi m̀erindínlógún, abo adie meta,*

They said it would be bad for him unless he offered *ẹ̀bọ* of sixteen kola nut, three hens,

*Àwo dúdú tuntun, igbá àdému tuntun, àti egbèta.*

A new black plate, a new calabash for covering drinks and one penny eight oninis

*Ó kọ̀ kò rúbọ̀*

He refused to offer the *ẹ̀bọ*

### ***Àkòsèjáyé: Trend And Status In Yorùbá Communities Olaleye Samuel Kayode***

*Ó sì gba aya náà  
Léyìn èyí, egbò da silé  
Èyí sì mu kí òkùnrin náà kú.*

He took the woman as his wife  
Afterward sores confined him to his house  
This resulted to his death.

If the child is a girl, *Àkòsèjáyé* will spell it out for the parents the kind of vocation she can engage in and be successful in life, the kind of names to bear, and the kind of man she can marry and be happy. In Yorùbá land, there is what is called “*Ìyàwò Ifá*” - *Ifá*'s wife. This is the kind of a woman signified that she should marry a *babaláwo* when she is of age. If she or the parents go contrary to this, she may not live a successful life, or she may be barren for life. All these can be known even before the child is born, just as we have it in *Ogbèdì*<sup>4</sup> where *Ifá* says;

*Ìrófá abenu gíngíní,  
A òfá fún àgàn àbí*

*Ifá*'s bell has pointed mouth  
Was the one who cast *Ifá* for the barren woman

*Èyí tó torí ọmọ òfá  
Wón ní yíó bímọ  
Şùgbón ẹbọ ni kó rú.*

Who divined because she had no children?  
They said she would give birth to a child  
But she should offer ẹbọ

*Èku méjì, ẹja méjì, àgbébò adię méjì  
Pèlú ẹgbàá méjì ó lé okòò loun ẹbọ.*

Two rats, two fish, two hens,  
Plus twenty cowries was the ẹbọ

*Yíó bímọbínrin kan,*

She will give birth to a baby girl

*Èyí tí a kò gbòdò pa orúkọ rẹ dà.*

Whose name must not be changed?

*Dàda ni ọmọ náà yíó maa jé*

Dada is what the child be called

*Babaláwo ni yíó sì şe ọkọ ọ rẹ.*

*Ifá* priest must be the husband

*Àkòsèjáyé* will also spell out the kinds of companies a child will keep when growing and when fully grown, the towns the child cannot go to before he or she attains certain age, or that he or she will never visit, sleep, or live in his/her entire life, the towns where the child will live and become successful in life, *Ifá* will spell it out during *Àkòsèjáyé*.

### **The place of children in Yoruba culture**

In Yorùbá land children are considered an important heritage till today . This is the reason why bareness is regarded as sickness that must be cured . As a result of this, a barren woman will do everything possible to make sure she has a child before she dies . This is evidenced in the Yorùbá word that says a barren woman is eager to have children that is suggesting that she should give birth to a child in the morning and die in the evening . This is to show how the Yorùbá valued children . Again, the Yorùbá do not want just any children , rather, they would pray for very good one. The one that will give (parents) them befitting burials when they die . An average Yorùbá man believed that a house is built to cover ones secret , money gives prestige and honour , while children are wealth from Olódùmarè. This is the reason why they go to any length to make sure they

are successful once they are given birth to by making enquiries to what can hinder their progress in life.

### Yorùbá thoughts on *ori inú* –Human Destiny

*Àkòsèjáyé* was originated by Olódùmarè who later put *Òrúnmilà* in charge of it. All those people that Olódùmarè wishes to send to the earth, he would first of all send them to the house of *Àjàlá mọ́rí mọ́rí* as found in *Ogbègúndá*<sup>5</sup> to go and pick *ori* that contains all good things of life or what they would accomplish on earth which may be, to get money in abundance, many children, long life and so on. However, no one can choose more than one of those things mentioned above. He who chooses money will not marry. He who chooses wealth will not have wife and children. So was the situation before *òrúnmilà* went to Olódùmarè to make his own choice. Before going to see Olódùmarè, *Òrúnmilà* had consulted *Ifá* to make enquiry on how he would get all the good things of life. *Ifá* asked him to offer *ẹbọ* to *ẹ̀sù*, *ọ̀balúáyé* (*şànpòná*), *Ògún* and *àjẹ*. He offered *ẹbọ* to *Ògún Obalúáyé àjẹ* and gave *ẹ̀sù* what he wanted. They enquired from *Òrúnmilà* why he gave them what they wanted and he told them that he wanted to go to the earth and where people are choosing their *ori*, *Àjàlá* will not allow them to pick more than one. How he would be allowed to pick more than one *ori* is the help he wanted from them. They all asked him to go before them to the *Òrìşà*. When they got to *Òrìşà*'s house, the four of them asked *Òrúnmilà* to start choosing all that he wanted. *Òrúnmilà* started picking and saying, “*un ó lówó, aya, ọmọ, olá, ọlá, ẹ̀mí gígùn àti bẹ̀ẹ̀ bẹ̀ẹ̀ lọ kí ntó wá*”- I will get money, wife, children, riches, wealth and so on before I come” and the four of them were chorusing *àşẹ*- amen until he *Òrúnmilà* had picked everything. Two days later, some groups of babies went to *òrìşà* to choose *ori* when they were set to come to the earth. *Òrìşà* started asking for the where about of all the good things (*ori*) and his messengers asked him that was he not there two days ago when *Òrúnmilà* came to choose *ori*? They told him that *Òrúnmilà* had made away with them all. *Òrìşà* then told the babies to go to the earth, when they get there, they should go and meet *Òrúnmilà*. How their lives would be okay. Ever since then, people of the earth have been making enquiry from *Ifá* on how a child would be prosper, bear children, get money, long life, his or her vocations in life and thousand and one enquiries, it is *Ifá* that will tell them so says one of the informants and cited *Odù òtúrá méjì*<sup>6</sup> to buttress this assertion where it says;

*Ajénjé nìrègún*

*Egbọ̀ọ onidẹ*

*A dífá fún Òrúnmilà*

*Nijọ́ tí nti Ìkòlẹ̀ Ọ̀run*

*Bọ̀wá sikhòlẹ̀ ayé*

*N ó lówó lówọ́ kí ntó wá, egbọ̀ọ onidẹ ọ̀*

*Ajenje niregun ọ̀*

*N ó laya kí ntó wá, egbọ̀ọ onidẹ ọ̀*

Ajenje niregun

Egboro onide

Ifá divination was cast for *Òrúnmilà*

on the day he was coming from heaven

to the earth

I will get money before I come, egboro

onide

Ajenje niregun o

I will have wives before I come, egboro

***Kòsèjayé: Trend And Status In Yorùbá Communities Olaleye Samuel Kayode***

<i>Ajenje nìrègún ò</i>	onide Ajenje niregun o
<i>N ó nire gbogbo kí ntó wá, egborọ onidẹ òl</i>	will have all good things of life before I come, egboro onide
<i>Ajenje nìrègún ò</i>	Ajenje niregun
<i>N ó pẹ tíí láyé kí ntó wá, egborọ onidẹ òl</i>	will live long on earth before I come, egboro onide
<i>Ajenje nìrègún ò</i>	Ajenje niregun o.

At one point or the other in his life, man experienced joy, happiness, sorrow and misfortunes of which he could not fathom the reason why they are happening. Different interpretations are given to these happenings depending on whether the happenings are good or bad. It is all a matter of luck that is, to the man's *ori*- head. The good fortunes are attributed to *ori rere* – good head, while misfortunes are tagged and attributed to *ori búrukú* - bad head . The Yorùbá believe that it is to this *ori* that *Ayànmó, Kádàrá, Ípín, ògo, iràwò* and *àkòsilẹ* for a person are given by *Olódùmarè*, God in Yorùbá belief.

The Yorùbá believe that the above mentioned combined together to determine man's success or failure in life. It is assumed that if one of these is missing, the rest becomes powerless. They believe that *ori inú* – inner head is the representative of the physical *ori*, the receiver of *ipín, àyànmó, ògo, iràwò, àkòsilẹ, kádàrá* and *àkúnlẹyàn* on behalf of man. As a result of this, the success or failure of man in this regard, according to *Abimbola*,<sup>7</sup> depends largely on the type of *ori* he chooses or was given in heaven . Thus, such Yorùbá sayings like ; “*Tóri ò bá dání, kílòrìsà ó gbè*”? If *ori* did not create one, what would *òrìsà* stand by? “*Eni tó gbón, ori rẹ ló pé kó gbón, èniyàn tí kò gbón, ori rẹ ló pé ó gò ju 'su lẹ*”<sup>8</sup> He who is wise, it is his head that made him to be wise, he who is stupid; it is his head that made him so. “*Èniyàn ò fẹ ká rẹrù ká sọ ori eni ló nsoni*”-Human beings do not want one to carry load and brings it down, it is one's head that will accomplish one to bring it down “*Orí loníṣe èdá làyànmó*”<sup>9</sup> and so on. *Àkúnlẹyàn* is a concept in Yorùbá traditional belief system that talks about man's destiny before coming to the earth. This concept stated that before man came into the world, he had knelt down before his creator , *Olódùmarè* to choose what he would become in life. It has to do with what we are experiencing in our lives here on earth, because it is believed that we are the determinant of those things we chose in heaven . It is even in the saying of the Yorùbá that “*ori loníṣe èdá làyànmó*”- the creator determines man's destiny. *Àkúnlẹgbà* is also a concept in Yorùbá tradition that rests on the belief that before coming to the world , every individual had knelt down to receive some things from *Olódùmarè* in heaven . These things which we had received in heaven are there for us to use when the time comes. However, many had forgotten these when they got to the earth. Also, majority of people did not ask for what they were before leaving heaven to the earth. Although, according to information gathered, it is not mandatory or

compulsory that we ask for these things before leaving heaven, because with the help of *Ifá*, *ẹbọ* and *ètùtù*, Olódùmarè will send those things that we received, allotted or wanted to us when our prayer/s are answered. *Ifá* made this clear in *Ọyèkùlka*<sup>10</sup> where *Ifá* says:

*Gúnnugún bà lórùlé*

*Ojú rẹ a tólé*

*Ojú rẹ a tóko*

*A dIfá fun Sàniyàn*

*Ẹbọ lẹrúnmilà mò*

*Gbogbo nńkan tẹẹ bá yàn*

*Tìò bá dáa,*

*Òun ni ó mò ọ́ báa yín f ẹbọ gbe sójú ònà*

the vulture perched on the roof

its eye will see the whole house

its eye will see the whole farm

cast divination for Saniyan

Ọrúnmilà knows only ẹbọ

All things that you chose

that is not good

He would be using ẹbọ to put them right

Again, he who asked before leaving heaven has work to do so that good *ìpín* will not become bad and the bad *ìpín* too should become good because it is the saying of the Yorùbá that;

*Àkúnlẹyàn làdáyébá,*

*A kúnlẹ a yànpín,*

*A délé ayé tán,*

*Ojú n kán wa.*

what we knelt down to take is

what we met on earth

we knelt down to take *ìpín*

we got to the earth,

we were in a hurry

*Kádàrà* is the destiny that the Yorùbá believed that no one can change at all. Although, it can be delayed, but it cannot be altered by any being, except Olódùmarè Himself through *Ifá* by the offering of *ẹbọ*- sacrifice and *ètùtù*- rituals as said earlier. This is the reason why some people have that belief that *Ifá* can change human destiny if appropriate *ẹbọ* is offered. *Kádàrà* is closely associated with the concept of *Ayànmọ* - that which is attached to a person by Olódùmarè. *Kádàrà* is what is attached to every human before leaving heaven for the earth. This is an indication that one cannot do without it. It is the belief of the Yorùbá that *Ayànmọni kádàrà*- what is attached to a person is his or her destiny. They also believed that *Ayànmọ ọ gbòògùn*, *ọjó ikú ọ gbé bọ*- what is attached to someone cannot be cured with medication, while the day of one's death cannot be averted with *ẹbọ*. *Àkọsilẹ* is a concept that is talking about what has been written down for every individual on earth. It is a concept that cut across all the known religions in the world. The same thing applicable to the concept of *Ọgo*-glory and *Ìràwọ*- star which the Yorùbá believed that they have a lot to do with our living and success in this earthly life.

*Ọgo* and *Ìràwọ* are materials used to measure how a newly born child would be successful in this earthly world. *Ọgo* is how glorious and special the destiny of a child is. While *ìràwọ* show case how his destiny is brightly shown. These two according to information gathered from competent *babaláwo*- *Ifá* priest are what people of the underworld (*Ayé*, or *Ajé*- witches) usually worked

on to tamper with human destiny especially, those that are very special. According to *Arífálo*<sup>11</sup>, *àjé* cannot and will not sit at a place to study, look at or see any child's *ìpín*, *kádàrá* or *àyànmó*. Rather, they only look for *ògo* and *ìràwò* of such a child. They however see only the brightness of *ògo* and *ìràwò* not that they will see the *ògo* and *ìràwò*. Again, the density of the brightness shows how the person or the child will be successful in life. This is what *ayé*, or *àjé* worked on in the life or destiny of a child. He expressed further that, when *àjé* realized that a newly born child will bring out the *ògo*- glory of any family, village or town, if it would jeopardize their own plan, they will try at all cost to block such *ògo* and *ìràwò*. However, according to another informant, this can be done for a limited period of time, because the Yorùbá believed that "*Ayé kò lè pa kádàrá dà, wón kàn le sún ojú oore síwájú ní*"- witches cannot change *kádàrá*, they can only defer it. *Àràbà Oláyemi*<sup>12</sup> opined that this is the area of concentration where *babaláwo*- *Ifá* priest has a lot of work to do during and after *àkòsèjáyé* had been done to block the view of *ayé*-witches from seeing the *ògo* and the *ìràwò*- star. Besides the measures and instructions that *Ifá* will pass across to safe guide the *ògo* and *ìràwò*- tarthrough *ẹbọ* - offering, *èèwò*- taboos and other measures like ; the child should be taking away from the place of birth for certain period of time, or the child should not be allowed to visit some places and towns for a stipulated period and so on , the Yorùbá also have other measures that they can employ to guide such *àkòsèjáyé*. Through experience, a good *babaláwo*- *Ifá* priest can do a powerful medicine like *mádàrikàn* to prevent *ayé* from tampering with such *ògo* and *ìràwò* even in a situation whereby they, (*ayé*) see it. They will so much fortify the child to the level that the child will become a proverbial stone and egg. Such that "*béyin bá forí sọ àpáta, eyin á fọ, bí àpáta bá forí sọ eyin, eyin á fọ*"- if an egg hits its head on the stone, it will break, at the same time if a stone hits an egg, the egg will break. Again the *Babaláwo-Ifá* priest can also do a powerful *ẹyónú* and *àríyò*. The work of these medicines is to always be happy with such a child whenever or wherever they see him or her. In fact, this time, they would be the one that will be guiding the child physically and spiritually from any harm or danger that could prevent the child from attaining his destiny. Such a child has become a bottled corn that fowl will look at and take away its eyes.

*Ìpín*<sup>13</sup> is what everyone becomes or does when he/she gets to the world from heaven. As earlier said, it is the *orí* that receives *ìpín* after *orí* had been chosen from the house of *Àjàlá*<sup>14</sup> the skill porter. After *ìpín* had been chosen or allotted, there are some *ẹbọ*- sacrifice that must be offered by individuals before coming to the earth. Even before the commencement of chosen *orí*, some *ẹbọ* must be offered so that one can choose very good *orí* since this determined the success and failures of man on earth. According to information gathered, after *ìpín* had been allotted, there are some *ẹbọ* that individuals must be offer before coming to the earth as said earlier. The first *ẹbọ*- sacrifice was *ẹbọ igbo*- (old age sacrifice), "*Ká rúbọ igbó kábá le pé láyé*" - we must offer *ẹbọ*- sacrifice *igbo* so that we can live long. Those who offer this *ẹbọ*-sacrifice are the types of people



that live longer than expected. They lived well, attained an enviable old age. They spend so many years on earth, left behind good children and at the end died a natural and peaceful death and they are given a befitting burial. They are the types that qualified to be called the ancestors when they eventually died.<sup>15</sup>The second was *ẹbọ kòtò òfò*, (pit of losses sacrifice), “*ká dí kòtò òfò , kófò má báá jàwá*”- we must fill the pit of losses so that we do not suffer loss in life. Those who offered this *ẹbọ*- sacrifice do not suffer death of children and loss of properties in their life time. Then there is *ẹbọ àìrì*- (unseen sacrifice), “*ká rúbọ àìrì kówó wa lè tẹ oun tí aín fẹ*” - we must offer *ẹbọ*-sacrifice of the unseen so that we can get whatever we want in life. People in this respect do not lack anything in life. Whatever they wanted, they get it at the beckon of their hands. Again we must offer *ẹbọ*- sacrifice against three enemies of the world. The first has no mouth but can devour, the second has no horn but can nail and the third has no tail but can sting more than scorpion. The first that has no mouth that can devour is suffering, the second that has no horn but can nail is disgrace while the third one with no tail is poverty. Lastly, when this *ẹbọ*- sacrifice is prepared, it will be taken to *ìgbónlá* – (thick forest) in heaven.<sup>16</sup> However, it is not everyone who completes this *ẹbọ*- sacrifice before coming to the earth. But whoever completes all of them in heaven before coming to the earth will live a happy and successful life here on earth. They are like people who had worked in heaven but only came to the earth to receive payments for the work. Whatever they lay their hands upon is always fruitful. They neither use medicine, nor make incisions. They do not sweat before they make their living in life. They do their things like magic. As said earlier, they are like stones while others are like eggs: if they hit eggs the eggs will break; if eggs hit them still it is the eggs which will break. – “*béyin bá forí sọ àpáta , eyin á fọ , bápátá bá forí sọ eyin , eyin a fọ*” The Yorùbá called such people “*Àkàndá èniyàn*”- special breeds and they are always very few in every society.

For those who left for the earth in a hurry without completing these *ẹbọ* - sacrifice, when they get to the earth, they are faced with lots and lots of challenges, sufferings, misfortunes and troubles. Their lives are full of ups and downs; they are often toiling without success. For them, there would be too much pain, too much sorrow and anguish till they die if care is not taken. Some will struggle to make it in life at all costs to the extent of resorting to stealing, armed robbery, drug trafficking, ritual money and all kinds of illicit businesses because they are in a hurry to make it. Therefore, they will be treading on the wrong paths of life. They have forgotten that he who is in a hurry to receive the key of wealth will eventually use such a key to open the door of sorrow. According to *Ifá* in *Ogbègúdá*<sup>17</sup> it says;

*Èbiti ẹgbákè ní yèdí pẹ́é  
A dífá fún Orisẹkú omọ ògún*

*A bù fún Òrìlémèrè omọ ìjà*

ebiti egbake ni yedi pee,  
cast divination for Oriseku the son of  
*Ògún*  
was given to Orilemere the son of Ija



world. Since then, whatever he laid his hands upon always prospered. Where others failed, he succeeds. This is where the issue of *Àkúnlẹ̀yàn*- what one kneels down to pick and *Àkúnlẹ̀gbà*- what one kneels down to accept played a very big role. *Oriṣẹ̀kú* and *Orilemèrè*'s case was an issue of *Àkúnlẹ̀yàn* because they picked the *orí* by themselves. They took what they felt was good for them, but later realized that it was a very big mistake on their part. However, they did not realize this until they got to the world where all their efforts to make and become somebody were fruitless and they had to consult *Ifá*. *Afūwàpé*'s own case was *Àkúnlẹ̀gbà* because it was *Ajálá* himself who knew the best that gave him his own simply because he had offered required *ẹ̀bọ* – sacrifice that will enable him do the right thing (although, disobedience is one of the things that the Yorùbá frowned at, but it helped in the case of *Afūwàpé* possibly because he offered *ẹ̀bọ*-sacrifice. This is to show how important *ẹ̀bọ* is in the belief system of the Yorùbá). The fact that majority of people who came to the world always chose their heads by themselves is responsible for why *orí* is held in high esteem by the Yorùbá even to the extent of venerating it.

*Orí* is an important *òrìṣà* in Yorùbá land . This is the reason why the Yorùbá says that “*Orí làbá ọ̀ làbá fòrìṣà sílẹ̀ , nìgbàtìkú npani kilòrìṣà ún wò<sup>18</sup>?*”- It is the head that we should offer sacrifice to, not the *òrìṣà*, when death was killing people what was *òrìṣà* looking at? Whatever we do on earth that is good is believed to be as a result of our *orí*. If it is not good enough too, it is ascribed to our *orí*. This shows that *orí* is responsible for whatever we are doing on earth. In *Ògúndá méjì*<sup>19</sup>, *Ifá* says there is no one that is capable of following one to a far distance journey except one's head. This is the reason why *orí* is worshipped on every fifth day of the week, every month and every year. However, one is cautioned not to compare *orí* in life because it is part of Yorùbá believe that we all chose our heads differently. A song in *Ifá* attests to this fact where it sings thus;

<i>Miò mọ̀bi olórí gbé yanrí o,}</i>	I don't know where the owner of the head chooses it
<i>Mba lọ yan temi.}2tms</i>	I would have gone there to choose my own
<i>Ibikanná lagbé yanrí ò</i>	we all chose our heads at the same place
<i>Kádàrà ò papòni.</i>	It is kadara that differs

Man's destiny on earth hanged on all the concepts mentioned above and they are very important in the life of humanity because they all work together. Research revealed that if one is missing among them as earlier said, the rest will become powerless. Our social status, and structure, our presence on earth, our predestination and destiny on this planet earth are what had been in the unseen world that came to reality on the physical earth on our arrival on earth. These are things that *Ifá* must have revealed during *Àkọ̀sẹ̀jayé* so that adequate caution would be taken to guide them jealously to fulfilment. This is to guide against the opinion of some people that until man fulfilled his destiny, he will not stop coming to the world. Although, some opined that whether a man lives his life up

to a ripe age, or his life is cut short, at every journey to the earth, he would always appear before the creator to choose a new destiny or to seek permission to complete the former life through re-birth that will give him opportunity to fulfil the destiny allotted to him by the creator.

### **Processes and Practice of *Àkòsèjáyé***

*Àkòsèjáyé* is usually done in three different forms. One, *Àkòsèjáyé* can be done before conception takes place in a woman. Two, when a woman is pregnant. Three, when the child is born. All these forms are vital and important in the life of man here on earth.

***Àkòsèjáyé* before conception:** Partial *àkòsèjáyé* can be carried out when a couple is having difficulty, or delay in getting a child. If a *Babaláwo-Ifá* priest is consulted, it could be in this process when they are looking for solution to the problem that partial *àkòsèjáyé* always comes out as to the kind of a child that the couple will give birth to usually come out just as we have seen in the case of *bàrà* – melon in *Òbàrà méjì*<sup>20</sup>. Among other things that *Ifá* may reveal about the expected child included; the kind of vocation he would engaged in. If she is a woman; the type of husband she would marry, the type of food she should avoid. It could also be on names as evidence in *Ogbèdì*<sup>21</sup> where a barren woman was told that she would bear a female child and her name would be *Dàda* which the mother must not change.

***Àkòsèjáyé* during pregnancy:** When a woman is pregnant, enquiry could be made through *Babaláwo- Ifá* priest to know the kind of a child that is coming which can be carried out at any stage of pregnancy, most especially, when the baby is fully formed. This is to know whether the expected child has come to this earthly world before. This, I presumed correspond with the belief of the Yorùbá about ancestors so as to know which of the ancestor is coming to the world again. Ancestral Worship is one of the pillars of Yorùbá traditional religion . Man, according to this Yorùbá belief is divided into five component parts. That is, the physical body, the shadow, the heart, the breath and finally the soul which is the real man, the essence of being . It is this soul that the Yorùbá religion believes reincarnates and continue to in the hereafter. This is the reason why the Yorùbá view death not as extinction but as a change from one life to another . When the Yorùbá speak of the ancestors therefore , it is the spirits of their forbears who lived in the land of the spirits that the living still maintain cordial relationship with. Therefore, the child could be one of these elders that had just departed. This is the why there are names like *Babátúndé, Íyábò, Yéjídé and Babárínsá*<sup>22</sup> as said earlier. The child could also be a victim of sudden death that prevented the child from fulfilling his destiny. This kind of enquiry is necessary and important especially for a woman that in constantly giving birth, only for the child to die immediately he was born, or few days, weeks, months after he was born. This according to information gathered is to guide against this recurrence death. If there are sacrifices to be offered before the child is born to prevent his immediate

death after birth, this type of *àkòsèjayé* will provide the opportunity just as in the case of *élémele ilé* and *élémele oko* in *Ìwòrì ogbè*<sup>23</sup> is a very good example.

Besides using *Ifá* oracle to make this kind of enquiry, there are some other aids that competent *Babaláwo-Ifá* priests can use to make this type of *àkòsèjayé*. Among such aids that can be used is what the Yorùbá called *Àsogbó*. It is a medicinal preparation that is specially prepared to communicate with the world of unseen. It works like the modern day cell phone. Once used in the morning, wherever the name of the user is being mentioned, or any discussion about the user, the user would be hearing loud and clear. Therefore, *àsogbó* is a hearing and speaking aid used by the *Babaláwo-Ifá* priests to speak and hear from the spiritual realm. Through this means, the *Babaláwo- Ifá* priest would be able to speak with the unborn child by placing the instrument on the stomach of the pregnant woman, recite some incantations to invite the spiritual being, then the conversation begins. Again, there is another aid called *Ìrìran*, or *wíwẹ ojú*. This is an ability to see through the third eye. It is done through collection of fresh herbs, wash them in water and use the water to wash face. With this means, the *Babaláwo-Ifá* priest can easily see what is going on in the spiritual realm and his immediate environment which we cannot be seen with physical eyes. However, this is done on daily basis, or as need be. *Sinsín ojú* (making incision on the lower part of the eyes) can also be of help for *Babaláwo-Ifá* priest to see what is going on in the spiritual realm. This also is done by collecting some herbs together and burns them to charcoal. If need be the *Babaláwo- Ifa* priest may recite some incantations on the medicine, make some numbers of incisions on the face (usually three or seven at the lower part and rub the medicine on the incision made). The only disadvantage of this chain is that it works till the *Babaláwo-Ifá* priest dies. Although, the charm can still be deactivate through another means. This medicine can also be mixed with *Tiròò* (eye lashes powder) for eyelashes. Whenever the *Babaláwo-Ifá* priest uses it, he can see through to the spiritual realm. With this aids, the *Babaláwo-Ifá* priest will not only see the child, he would equally see where the child is coming from. This will enable the *Babaláwo-Ifá* priest to know the reason for the child's frequent coming and going. The reason, according to information gathered could also be as a result of evil machination, violation of family traditions, violation of taboos, or inability to keep to certain instructions given. The *Babaláwo- Ifá* priest would then know how and what to do and use to prevent the frequent coming and going of such a child.

***Àkòsèjayé* after a child is born:** Information gathered revealed that, few days after a child is born, his or her *àkòsèjayé* can be carried out since every parents of a newly born child would wish to know the type of *orí* that their child brought to the world, this is the major reason for *àkòsèjayé*. The child would be strip naked by the mother and then the *Babaláwo-Ifá* priest would collect the child from the mother, turn the child upside down and allowed his head to touch his *opón Ifá* – *Ifá* tray that contained *ìyèrè òsùn*- divination powder. He would recite *Ifá* praises

and asked *Ifá* to reveal to him everything about the new born baby. This symbolic touching of the head the baby on the *opón Ifá – Ifá* tray is to create a link between the earth and heaven where the Yorùbá believed the child is coming from so that *Ifá*, who is believed *gbáyé gbórun* – he who lives on earth and in heaven would reveal the type of *ori* the child brought. Then the *Babaláwo-Ifá* priest will take his instrument of divination, usually *Ikin* – a kind of palm nuts. As he is casting the *odù* which he will do for at least three time, he will be printing it on the *opón Ifá* on each occasion, he would mentioned the *odù* that comes out and interprets it. What follows is to render the message of *Ifá* as to the kind of person, and the kind of life the child would live on earth. The taboos that is associated with the child's life will also be mentioned and ask the parents of the child to please follow every instructions and warnings given by *Ifá*. Some of the taboos could be to abstain from certain foods, certain vocations, and clothes. It could also be an instruction that when the child attain certain age, sacrifice should be made for the child to live a fulfilled life. It could sometimes be an annual events or ritual for the child.

After *Ifá ori* must have been done, then comes *Ifá ẹ̀sẹ̀ – Ifá* of leg. This is where the word “*ẹ̀sẹ̀ ntayé*” in Yorùbá comes to play a role . The importance of *ẹ̀sẹ̀* cannot be over emphasized in the religion and belief of the Yorùbá. It is even found in the saying of the Yorùbá that “*ibi ori bá ngbéni rẹ̀, kẹ̀sẹ̀ má sin ni lọ ni*” – wherever man's head is taking man to, his leg should accompany him. This is evidence in *Òtúrúpòn méjì*<sup>24</sup> where *Ifá* says all parts of the body gathered together without leg. They could not make any meaningful thing until they invited leg. This has shown how important *ẹ̀sẹ̀* is in the life of man. Like the *Babaláwo-Ifá* priests did to *ori*, so also he touches the *opón Ifá* with the two legs of the child, then he makes his enquiry from *Ifá* as before, interprets and explains what the *odù* brings, strict instructions are also given as before. It was unanimously agreed that destiny may be cut short as a result of inability to keep to instructions given. This could be on the type of food the child should abstain from, or the colour of clothes to avoid and the type of vocation he should not do that could hinder his progress in life. Inability to keep to taboos stated, or family traditions, which could be as a result of certain sacrifice that was to be performed before, or immediately the child is born. *Ifá* will also be enquired to know whether it is the father or mother that has just come back to the family again so as to know the kind of names to give to the child.

### **The influence of modernity on *Àkòsèjayé***

It is a known fact that to make progress on earth, we must make enquiry and offer a lot of *ẹ̀bọ* as earlier said . However, this age long tradition and practice began to fade away and suffered decline as soon as foreign religions were introduced to the Yorùbá . These religious sects, especially Christianity (Islam on its own still maintained a little sanity on the issue through their *yanrin titẹ̀* – cutting of sand which they practice as a form of divination for making

enquiry) that made people realized that consulting *Babaláwo* for any form of enquiry what so ever is evil and dangerous and unchristian in nature. Coupled with the above reason is the exposure to Western civilization, education, science and technology that gave the tradition a devastating blow. With Western way of life, no one wish to have anything doing any *Babaláwo- Ifá* priest, his dirty environments and his prescription offerings if and when consulted. Research also revealed that majority of people disengaged from the age long practice not only as a result of their contact with foreign religion, culture, civilization and western education as earlier said, but based on the negative effect and influence it always has on the children when enemies of their parents are privileged to know about it.

Today, our society is in disarray and in shamble; things are not working according to plans. Western education, civilization science and technology had derailed us from our tracks as a group with common goal. Things has fallen apart, we are one sided in our thinking. We only concern ourselves with the physical aspect of our lives, not minding the spiritual even as a nation. In the olden days, before a town is established, proper investigations are made through *Ifá* (and appropriate *ẹbo*— sacrifice is offered) to know whether the choice of the place picked would be suitable and people would be prosperous there. To also know whether war will not devastate them there. This was how notable towns and villages in Yorùbá land were established. In fact, research had even shown that there is no city, town, or village throughout the world that was not established through one *òrìṣà* or the other. Notable example in our environment is *Abẹ̀òkúta*<sup>25</sup> where the people of *Ègbá* relied so much on *Ifá* to establish the town that later became a big and notable city in Nigeria today. Again, there is no city, town, village or even family that has no witches. Though the witches have the lowest rank in the spiritual realm, yet they have the highest task. If somebody is going to be put under any spell or curse, it is the duty of the witches to run the errand. Contrary to the believe of the orthodox medical practitioners that sudden death of children is as a result of dirty environments, inadequate care and poor nutrition, it is discovered that some of the factors mentioned above are still responsible, not only for sudden death alone but also for social misbehaviours, cultism, armed robbery, sexual promiscuities, bad conducts and so on.

Our cultural and religious values are gone. What we are running away from in our religion, what we thought are bad in our religion are found in all the religions we ran away to embraced, particularly this issue (*Àkọ̀ṣẹ̀jayé*) we are discussing here. The birth of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist Jeremiah and a host of others were fore told even before their birth. Luke 1: 5-28 Jer. 1:6<sup>26</sup> Negligence of the spiritual aspect of our lives, (or wrong application of this spiritual matter) especially in the area of *Àkọ̀ṣẹ̀jayé* is the reality of disarray we are witnessing in our society today, not that *Olódùmarè* did not create us perfectly, love and care for us. We human refused to play our roles.

### **Conclusion**

Looking at the benefits that individuals and the society in general will derive from this practice, we should rather focus on the positive aspect of the practice than dwelling on the negative aspect and see how we can perfect the negative areas. For instance, instead of parents to go for such an enquiry with any members of the family, the parents of the child can go all alone to avoid the secret of their child's life being revealed to the person that could later harm such a child. Again, embracing other people's culture and religion should not be a hindrance for us from making use of an important art like *àkòsèjayé*, after all other nations in the world also have a way of doing this as their culture and religions permit them.



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***Kòsèjayé: Trend And Status In Yorùbá Communities Olaleye Samuel Kayode***

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