

On Consulting *Ifa* and Completing Your *Ebos*

**Greetings: *Oriire fun owo!* (Good Tidings to you!)**

**I pray that you are feeling awake, aware, and elevated in mind, body, and spirit wherever you are, and whatever may be happening around you!  
*Ase! Ase! Ase o!***

**I am *Baba Umar, Oluranse Emese*, (Voice of the Emese), *Member of the Isoro Traditional Council of Chiefs*, and *Babalawo of Ile Awo Orisa*.**

For those of you who are following the *Ifa Iwa* (*Ifa* Practice) series of videos this particular video *On Consulting Ifa and Completing Your Ebo* should be viewed in conjunction with *Ifa Iwa Lesson 4: On Understanding Afose*. You can link to that video in the Library section of the website or access it on this *Ile Awo Orisa* Playlist.

In the Yoruba cosmology the Universe is divided into two opposing and interdependent camps or forces, the **benevolent** supernatural powers and the **malevolent** supernatural powers. These two opposing groups of supernatural forces or energies (positive and negative) are in control of the universe as they strive to dominate the domains over which they have been given authority, and to influence the affairs of human beings.

In *Odu Ogbe Idi / Ogbedi* (21) *Ifa* says that: 'every positive creates it's' balancing negative'.

The result of the 'nature of things' is inevitable conflict, friction, and uncertainty in the lives of human beings. To help human beings confront and cope with the inevitable difficulties of life the Yoruba deity called **Orunmila** (also called by the name **IFA**) gave to the people *Ifa* Divination (**Afose** - the system of divination used by devotees of this spiritual tradition). In this Post, *Ifa* will refer to the spiritual tradition and method of divination, and I will use **Orunmila** to refer to the deity, the Yoruba god of wisdom.

**The Sacred Oracles of *Ifa*** or the 256 **Orisa Odu** carry the aggregated knowledge and wisdom of our ancestors going back thousands of years, or as we believe on a

deeper level, going back to the very origins of creation and life). This is what we mean when we say:

***Ifa ni ki isin!*** Ifa is not a religion!

***Ifa ni bawo aiye sise!*** Ifa is how the universe works!

***Ifa ni iwa ti aiye!*** Ifa is the nature of the universe!

***Ifa*** divination provides you, as the seeker, a method of accessing this universal wisdom in order to solve your relationship problems, avoid difficulties and unforeseen evils, to manage your health, to conduct your business affairs, and to fulfill your destiny, and much more.

Most importantly you should remember that when you go to consult ***Ifa***, all you are doing is finding out the wishes of your own ***Ori*** (***Ori Inu*** - spiritual/inner head, higher consciousness).

**The Sacred Oracles of *Ifa*** can be divided into two general categories:

- The ***Odu*** (the configuration of lines or marks that represent a particular ***Orisa Odu***)
- The ***Ese*** (the stories contained within or carried by the ***Odu***).

It is said that each of the ***Orisa Odu*** carries eight hundred stories or ***Ese Ifa*** generating a total of 204,800 ***Ese*** or stories in the ***Ifa*** literary corpus. As my Mentor / ***Babalawo*** once said to me that, '**each of the 256 Odus contains 360 *Ese*, and each *Ese Ifa* has 360 variations.**' (That's  $256 \times 360 \times 360 = 33,177,600$  *ese*.) However, the ***Ifa*** Corpus is a living body of oral traditions and therefore, these numbers are not fixed or static, and are intended only to reflect the **expansiveness** of this ***Ifa*** divination tradition. Obviously, the more of these ***Ese*** the diviner / awo / ***babalawo*** knows, the more resources they have to assist the devotee with their particular concerns.

Uninhibited by the passage of time, advancements in science and technology, or cultural tradition, the ***Ese Ifa*** speak of human beings and also animals, birds, insects, and cultivated and uncultivated plants as personified characters in the wisdom stories addressing every aspect of human existence and daily living. In ***Ifa*** we say,

***Bi owe, bi owe, ru Ifa soro!***

Like proverbs, like proverbs, is how ***Ifa*** speaks!

For purposes of our discussion let me identify seven characteristics or elements of most if not all of the *Ese Ifa*, namely:

- the presence of one or more *awo* or diviners (usually the name is given),
- the person or character for whom Ifa was divined (an *Orisa*, a person, city or town, an animal, insect, or plant is also usually named),
- the problem or situation that is being addressed,
- the message of *Ifa* (what the *Babalawo* said to the devotee or seeker),
- the *ebo* or sacrifice (that which must be done or given in order to move the *Ase* in favor of the devotee),
- whether or not the devotee completed the ebo and made the necessary changes in attitude or behavior (usually stated at the end of the particular *Ese*).
- The final outcome.

*Ifa* says that the way to solve all problems is through sacrifice (although the devotee may also need to utilize specific strategies and tactics, or change their attitude or behaviors in some way in order to bring the results they seek).

It is my observation that in the occasional case where a seeker / devotee feels that *Ifa* has failed them it is generally for **two main reasons**.

**First is a lack of patience.** Unless the reading has prescribed a particular timeline for something to happen the outcome suggested by the reading could take days, weeks, months, or even years to manifest. The outcome may develop in **small stages** and unless the devotee is paying attention they may not realize that the *Orisa* are answering their call and addressing their needs (in stages). In this case, they may **abandon the wisdom and spiritual energy of the divination** and as a consequence **weaken their faith in *Ifa* and their relationship with their *Ori***. I often tell my spiritual godchildren that when they consult *Ifa* and perform their *ebo*, *Orisa* goes to work to **reconfigure the universe** to accommodate the will of their *Ori*. The wisdom is in the part, to reconfigure the universe.

**The idea of the entire universe being reconfigured to make room for their new reality puts things into perspective and helps to nurture patient perseverance.** Vigilant awareness and looking for signs of change after a reading not only enables the devotee to **witness subtle changes** that may be indicators of spiritual forces at work in their life, but it also adds the energy of their own **positive expectation** to the process *Ifa* prescribed. In other words, **their positive**

**anticipation is a part of the divination and *ebo*. The lack of such positive anticipation is an indication of lack of trust, belief, or hope and therein acts counter to the purpose of *Ifa* divination and the stated wishes of the devotee to have a positive outcome.**

**The second reason** some devotees may feel that *Ifa* has not worked for them is also tied to completing the *ebo*. You, as a seeker or devotee of *Ifa*, are in the process of building relationships with **sentient entities**, your *Ori*, the *Orisa*, and your *Egun*. These relationships are nurtured by the deity *Orunmila*, Prophet of *Ifa*, through *Ifa* Divination, and by the diviner who consults for you.

*If your friend or relative gave you a gift, and if someone noticed the gift and commented on it, would you show appreciation for their observation and then acknowledge that it was your dear friend or relative who gave it to you?*

Most people would answer **yes** to this question or do exactly that.

*And if the giver-of-the-gift happened to overhear you stating how grateful you are that they gave you the gift, wouldn't they feel good and immediately exude strong positive energy towards you and the gift?*

Sometimes the devotee forgets that they are in the process of building a relationship with *Olorun*, *Ori*, *Orisa*, *Egun*, and the *Babalawo*. They may also forget that to receive guidance through *Ifa* divination is a gift from *Orunmila*, *Olupilese Odu Ifa* (Author of *Odu Ifa*). As a reminder, I include the following statement at the beginning of my template-based email messages.

**Ifa states** that if the person receives *Ifa* and *Ifa* assists them in solving their problems, or in accomplishing their goals, they must:

- Acknowledge to the *Babalawo* that *Ifa* has helped them
- Show their gratitude in the measure to which they feel they have been helped and according to their means
- Acknowledge to others that it was *Ifa* that helped to bring about the change in their lives

These **three prescriptions** strengthen the relationship between the devotee and the elements of the *Ifa* spiritual universe. Sometimes, devotees forget that these three elements are also part of their reading and *ebo* and in forgetting, they fail to complete the *ebo*, and also weaken the potential of the relationship between them

and ***Orunmila***, the **Keeper of the Secrets of Existence** and the **Voice of Fate**, the One who is also called ***IFA*** and ***Eleri Ipin***, the **Witness of Fate**.

***Ki Olodumare, Orisa, ati Egun fifun e ni***

***Itona, Imoye, ati Opo Ire!***

My Olodumare, Orisa, and Ancestors bestow on you  
Guidance, Wisdom, and Abundant Blessings!

***Ifokanbole!*** Peace of Mind from *Olodumare!*

***Ajolo Ajobo!*** We go out together; We return together!

***Ase! Ase! Ase o!***

(Recommended reading: *Ifa: An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus*, Wande Abimbola)