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RESUSCITATING AFRICA'S DIVINATION ESSENCE: IFA ORACLE IN ROTIMI'S  
*THE GODS ARE NOT TO BLAME* AND ORACLE OF HILLS AND CAVES IN  
ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

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**Abstract**

Divination is a putative spiritual practice in Africa and most parts of the world. Two established African writers, Chinua Achebe and Ola Rotimi, utilise distinct divination mediums, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves and the Ifa Oracle, to portray Africa's spiritual proclivities in their works. While these divination mediums explain the people's inclination towards traditional spiritual processes within the socio-historical and cultural context in which the texts were written, there is a decline in the relevance and patronage of these divination mediums in contemporary times. This decline partly diminishes Africa's traditional, cultural, and spiritual ethos. Through the framework of postcolonial theory, this paper argues that given the exactitude of their prognostic properties in the texts, if the Oracle of the Hills and Caves in Igboland, southeast of Nigeria and Ifa Oracle in Yorubaland, southwest of Nigeria can be effective divination mediums in the texts, they can play symbolic roles in contemporary times by providing timely insights into the future. They can also identify immediate human dilemmas and reveal solutions for myriad socio-economic and political challenges. Therefore, these divination essences require timely resuscitation by Africa's cultural and traditional elite if the people are to believe and accept them as genuine and forthright, as represented in the texts.

**Keywords:** divination, Oracle of Hills and Caves, Ifa Oracle, African spiritual worldview, culture

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## Introduction

It is difficult to ascertain the precise origin of divination, but there are indications that it originated in Mesopotamia, where Babylonian astrology was used to predict events in human affairs. However, given its ancient, immemorial association with human evolution, divination can be safely linked to prehistoric civilisation when humans maintained a close relationship with supernatural beings, gods, and deities through ritual processes. As humanity developed, it recognised the fundamental principles subsumed in the supernatural realm and fashioned avenues to relate with essences that play vital roles in that mysterious domain. According to Alisa LaGamma, "the term 'divination' describes efforts to foretell future events or to discover hidden knowledge by supernatural means" (7). Divination is mainly associated with the numerous arcane, esoteric procedures through which man accesses or consults supernatural essences to inquire about intractable human circumstances and solutions for the future. It also entails ritual, sometimes occult practices, to know the minds of supernatural essences regarding human dilemma and what must be done to avert impending danger. The practice of divination is not a closed art with global, restrictive measures. It is dynamic and could be carried out through multiple agencies, which vary from region to region, but the most popular are palm-reading, necromancy, clairvoyance, and observing ecclesiastical bodies. There is no global uniformity of divination because different regions design their peculiar ways for such cultural and traditional spiritual praxis. Divination validates man's recognition of superior supernatural forces across the world. Its multivalent procedures testify to a pluriversal spread which demonstrates humanity's unending quest to understand the past, apprehend the present, and unravel the future. Anne Marie Kitz opines that "it would appear that divination is based on one very simple premise: all divine action causes material reaction. This fundamental tenet assumes that the deities, in their omnipotence, are the activating directors of a material world in which individual components can function as their agents" (24).

The channel between the physical realm of existence, represented by humanity and the supernatural realm of existence, represented by gods and mythical images, is constantly lubricated by propitiations and sacrifices. Failure to offer these periodic sacrifices and propitiations strengthens the hegemonic, vindictive arms of the supernatural beings, which could prove disastrous or tragic for humanity. It is the case in Femi Osofisan's *No More the Wasted Breed*, where Elusu, goddess of the inland waters, punishes the Egure community for failing to offer sacrifices to her for twenty-five years. Many such instances abound in Africa, where failure to appease supernatural essences draws the ire of chthonic beings. It thus means that humanity is faced with a responsibility to always grease the supernatural highway to ensure a cordial relationship with esoteric beings that populate the spiritual realm. These regular accesses of the supernatural realm are many times carried out to understand what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen through a divination process. Philip Peek believes that "a divination system is a standardized process deriving from a learned discipline based on an extensive body of knowledge. This knowledge may or may not be literally expressed during the interpretation of the oracular message" (2). From the preceding quote, Peek foregrounds divination as a mastered art which requires nuanced knowledge of the circumstances surrounding

the supplicant. It is believed that this prior knowledge helps the diviner to make accurate predictions in his or her art.

Although divination is practised in many parts of the world during designated periods in celebration of ancestors, gods and mythical images, certain occurrences like omens, draughts, famine, war, barrenness, death, sickness, delayed or catastrophic marriage, and many more could necessitate the need to carry it out either by an individual or a community. It is always carried out by a soothsayer, a diviner or the chief priest of a recognised god or deity in a community. It seeks to reveal the present, restore order and avoid cataclysmic consequences for the future. In modern times, traditional, cultural divination has witnessed challenges from religions such as Christianity and Islam. These religions regard divination as fetish and primitive. Also, science and technology have disputed divination outcomes as evidence of humanity's simplistic, primordial and alarming impulses. Rene Davisch observes that "prejudicial denigration of divination in the twentieth century was the work of reformist modernity in the West and its colonial mindset. Indeed, Enlightenment rationality has sharply confined the scope of science or valid knowledge practice to tangible and objective evidence within a materialistic and mechanistic worldview" (79). However, despite these challenges from religion and science, divination as a traditional cultural practice has played an important role as a spiritual process toward finding direction and revealing solutions to issues that obliterate humanity's quest for fulfilment.

While the above background is necessary to foreground the argument of this paper, the main focus is to demonstrate the effectiveness of divination and how two accomplished writers of African literature, Chinua Achebe and Ola Rotimi, present it as an inexorable spiritual practice which gave direction to two African communities in the texts. In *Things Fall Apart*, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, as a prognostic essence, plays symbolic roles by determining and guiding the people in important matters of destiny each time it is consulted. Achebe demonstrates how the people of Umuofia in the text could not make any major decision as a people without first consulting the oracle through divination, the iconic point being when Unoka consulted the oracle to inquire about the reasons for his poor harvest. Also, Ola Rotimi underscores the significance of divination by highlighting how the people of Kutuje in the text relied on consulting the Ifa prognostic essence to determine what the future of Odewale, the first child of King Adetusa and Queen Ojuola, would be. In both cases, divination revealed that both essences were accurate and precise in determining the future and circumstances of the people. If the Oracle of the Hills and Caves and the Ifa Oracle played such significant roles in the texts, it raises the question of why they and other numerous prognostic essences in Africa no longer play such important roles. Possibly, they do not play such significant roles as they did in the texts because technology, modernization, Western religion, and other foreign ideas have whittled their adherence and potency. In addition, the channels through which these essences are consulted and preserved, it is believed by many people, have been variously polluted by the unstable, immoral, and desecrating attitude of the human agencies responsible for their upkeep. Traditional and modern African societies face enormous socio-political and economic challenges which require the urgent superior intervention of higher powers, given that politicians and the government of the day

have failed to respond effectively to these challenges. One may ask, if the Oracle of Hills and Caves in Igboland, southeast of Nigeria and the Ifa Oracle in Yorubaland, southwest of Nigeria could play such important roles in the lives of the people in the texts, why do the people not rely on them to reveal what must be done to decimate the Boko Haram, terrorism, and banditry challenges in Nigeria? It therefore **demands** the need to resuscitate divination essences in Africa for the renewal of a fundamental, cultural spiritual practice, which might also provide solutions to the myriad of problems confronting the continent.

### **Postcolonial Criticism**

Postcolonial criticism provides a critical searchlight into colonial experience in the colonies. It also examines how these experiences are reflected in literature. Given its posture to challenging imperialist policies in Africa, postcolonial theory is regarded as a radical framework for investigating the deteriorating and subjugating experiences of African countries during and after colonial rule. The experiences of Africans during the colonial and postcolonial era inevitably shaped the socio-economic idiosyncrasies of the continent, at least within the realities of the colonial environment. The commitment of the literary critic is to examine how the colonial experience in Africa is reflected through various genres of literature or conveyed through demonstrable failures to uphold traditional cultural tenets in the texts. Many times, too, literature portrays how colonial contact obliterated many African cultural and traditional practices, which projected the identity of the local people. Thus, by diminishing these cultural and traditional practices, colonialism also challenged the African identity, plunging it into the abyss long after the dismantling of colonial structures. For Lazare Rukundwa and Andries Van Aarde, "postcolonial critique can be defined as a dialectical discourse which broadly marks the historical facts of decolonisation. It allows people emerging from socio-political and economic domination to reclaim their sovereignty; it gives them a negotiating space for equity" (1174). Undoubtedly, one of the 'historical facts of decolonisation' is the site of religious and spiritual dismantling, which ushered in new Western modes of worship and spiritual renewal. The new religious and spiritual methods in the colonies relegated the old traditional ways of religion and spiritual processes.

Although postcolonial criticism mainly focuses on the impact of colonial rule and to what extent the maladies can be corrected, there are also positive aspects of colonial experience which have helped to catalyse the African continent towards technological and scientific advancement. That explains why Benjamin Zachariah argues that the political concern of the postcolonial project is to redefine the negative perceptions of colonialism, especially in the third-world countries where colonialism held sway. According to him "at its best, postcolonialism's political project is to change the ways in which colonialism and its consequences are thought about and written about" (380). Zachariah's remark is a reaction to the different ways in which many narratives chronicle the destabilizing and crushing effects of colonialism in the colonies. He insists that postcolonial experience for the colonies is not all doom and gloom, therefore, the positives should also be highlighted and explained. However, this article focuses on the extent to which the advent of colonialism contributed to the decline of divination practices as aspects of African culture, and the need for the

revival of these spiritual procedures, which constitute an essential element of the people's identity. One of the victims of colonial incursion into Africa is the people's culture. An aspect of African spiritual culture, which played a vital role in the people's spiritual and ritual advancement, is divination. Yufeng Wang posits that, "as we know, postcolonialism is mainly concerned about the study of cultures formerly (or currently) colonized power, struggle between cultures, and the intersection of cultures. Culture has been an important concept for the study from the very beginning of this literary theory" (651).

Before the arrival of colonial overlords, Africans had a way of life by which they survived in all ramifications. In religion, the local people worshipped their ancestors and consulted gods and deities through divination or ritual process. Therefore, through divination, the gulf between the living and the dead, the physical realm and the supernatural realm was diminished because gods and humans achieved complementarities with each other. The natives believed that their gods and deities possessed the powers to protect and guide them, thus they relied on them for instruction, direction and advice. On the other hand, they offered sacrifices and propitiations to the gods through rituals to ensure a seamless reciprocal relationship. Chinua Achebe captures these realities in his novel *Things Fall Apart*. He presents the Oracle of Hills and Caves, also known as Agbala, as the spiritual link between the people of Umuofia and their gods. Overseen by the priestess Chielo, the people depend on the oracle for guidance when they need to make vital decisions that would have far-reaching implications for their general well-being. No one doubts the oracle. It has the collective confidence of the people and they believe that any decision of the oracle is sacrosanct, even if it may not immediately favour the community. Such is the inviolable authority of the oracle. In the same vein, the people of Kutuje in Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* rely on the Ifa Oracle for revealing solutions to the present and future. It is their spiritual compass which gives them direction when the people are confronted by sundry existential issues. The oracle thus occupies a pride of place in the people's spiritual provenance.

However, while Achebe narrates how the Umuofia relationship with the Oracle of Hills and Caves was abrogated by the arrival of European missionaries who introduced Christianity, there is no such account in Rotimi's drama that the arrival of missionaries dislocated the relationship between the people and Ifa Oracle. This could be attributed to Rotimi's lack of originality because he adapted the text from Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. Although Rotimi does not dramatize how the incursion of Western missionaries led to the abandonment or waning of the Ifa Oracle, it can be argued that the importance and reverence accorded to the Ifa Oracle in precolonial times have diminished in contemporary times due to the activities of foreign religion. While postcolonial criticism examines the lives and times of Africans and how the Oracle of Hills and Caves gradually lost relevance after colonial incursion in *Things Fall Apart*, it scrutinizes the perception and reputation of the Ifa Oracle in *The Gods Are Not To Blame*. Therefore, the 'post' in colonialism can be understood in two ways, the period during colonialism and the period after colonialism. Seth Sanjay reminds us that:

The 'post' in postcolonialism, let it be noted, is not a periodisation that signals the beginning of an era where colonialism is part of the past; on the contrary, it signifies the claim that conquest, colonialism and empire are not a footnote or episode in a larger story, such as that of capitalism, modernity or the expansion of international society, but are in fact a central part of that story and are constitutive of it. (174)

While we can view the Oracle of Hills and Caves as a victim of colonial incursion, the Ifa Oracle can be seen as a victim of colonial entrenchment.

Through the critical lens of postcolonial criticism, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is examined to reveal the iconic, spiritual relationship between the people and Oracle of Hills and Caves during precolonial times. Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* also presents an African society deeply immersed in spiritual practice through the Ifa Oracle. The two oracles could be viewed as synecdochical, representing many other oracular mediums across Africa whose essence and relevance have dwindled over time. Closely examined, the people of Umuofia and Kutuje in the texts live in harmony, trusting their oracles to intervene and save them from impending doom. Such a relationship does not exist in contemporary times between the people and the oracles. Traditional African belief and spirituality thrive on divination and future revelations. That Africa's traditional institutions have ceased to command the type of respect they had in precolonial times affirms the gradual but steady vanishing of these institutions. Also, Africa is challenged on many fronts with the leaders perambulating aimlessly, failing to chart a new socio-economic and political pathway for the continent. This demonstrates the need for the revival of their traditional spiritual sources, which hitherto offered direction, advice, and solutions.

### **Resuscitating the Oracle of Hills and Caves and Ifa Oracle**

The oracle of Hills and Caves, also known as Agbala in *Things Fall Apart*, occupies a symbolic patch in the spiritual lives of the people of Umuofia. The people depend on and trust it for timely insight when confronted by circumstances beyond their control, either to uncover the truth about the past or to reveal the truth about the future. The priestess of Agbala, Chielo, a widow and mother of two children, represents the physical embodiment of the oracle since it could not be seen. Through Chielo, the people of Umuofia relate with the Oracle of Hills and Caves to know its mind towards knotty issues that defied human intelligence. The oracle's pronouncement was seen as a direct message from the gods, it carried authority and reverence. When the oracle advised Umuofia not to go to war, they obeyed the instructions even though they had a justified case to fight. If they disobeyed the oracle, they would be defeated in the war. The people's relationship with the Oracle of Hills and Caves is part of their religious inclinations because it allows them to relate to the supernatural realm. Emmanuel Uzuegbunam argues that, "for the purpose of ensuring the ultimate well-being of human beings, divination is the nerve centre of African Traditional Religion. The need to inquire into the past and into the future to ascertain the ultimate well-being of human persons, forms the fulcrum of African Traditional Religion" (46).

Unoka, Okonkwo's father, consulted the oracle to know why he was unsuccessful in his farming with regular poor harvests after timely propitiations to appease the gods. The gods, through the oracle, told him that he was lazy and his poor harvest was a result of his laziness. No one doubted the oracle. The people held the pronouncement of the oracle as sacrosanct. Unoka died a miserable man with so many debts.

Again, the oracle informs the people that Ikemefuna must be killed to finally settle the dispute between Umuofia and the neighbouring Mbanta village. This decision, although cruel, was not challenged by the people because they believed in the supremacy of the oracle's pronouncements. Such was the absolute spiritual authority which the oracle wielded in Umuofia and the neighbouring villages. Achebe uses Umuofia and the neighbouring communities to represent the entire Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria and their relationship with oracles. The people tenaciously believe that in so far as the oracle existed, they would not go wrong in their individual and collective dealings because it provided answers and queries for immediate and future advancement. Pascal Boyer remarks that, "Omens, oracles, and divination have guided decisions and provided supposedly reliable information in all human groups for as long as our records exist" (1). However, with the arrival of Western missionaries, the people are forced to embrace the new religion and repudiate their traditional spiritual fidelity towards the oracle. In modern times, the Igbo ethnic group lack a collective or individual conviction towards any spiritual essence which they rely on for guidance and protection like the relationship that existed between Umuofia and the Oracle of Hills and Caves. Although there are different gods and goddesses, spiritual essences which the people consult for different reasons, the immediacy and symbolic authority which the Oracle of Hills and Caves enjoys has waned considerably. While the Oracle of Hills and Caves renounced injustice, cheating and double standards, the gods and goddesses in the present day can be compromised to encourage these negative, deviant standards among the people. When in modern times the Igbo community is faced with a myriad of problems ranging from insecurity and economic woes, one would expect them to consult an oracle in the mould of Agbala for guidance and advancement because oracles and divinations are part of Africa's psycho-spiritual and socio-cultural realities. Sonia Silva points out that, "not only is divination ubiquitous in Africa, but it also plays a central role in countless African societies" ("Taking Divination Seriously" 398). Achebe presents the oracle as accurate and precise in the text. Such accuracy and precision are lacking in contemporary times in the relationship between the people and their traditional spiritual worship. The activities of Christian churches and doctrines have also affected the people's traditional beliefs. Although the people of Umuofia are forced to accept the Christian church, Christian worship in contemporary times has not effectively replaced the African oracle's undiluted and impartial identity among the people. The exactitude of Agbala's prophecies in the text and their positive influence on the lives of the supplicants necessitate a call for the revival of such prophetic essences across Africa. In precolonial times, African communities lived in close harmony and contact with their gods, a relationship which was maintained through periodic oracular consultations. Given the challenges facing Africa today as a result of the embrace of Western spiritual values, some of Africa's citizens long for the revalidation and resuscitation of such oracular mediums as the Oracle of Hills and Caves.

The Ifa Oracle in Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame* occurs as the people's spiritual, prognostic compass, which they depend on for guidance in their immediate circumstances and future unravelling. According to Pogoso and Akande, "The history of Ifa divination among the Yoruba can be said to be as old as the people themselves" (20). This means that the origin and history of the Yoruba are inexorably tied to the Ifa divination essence. The difference between Achebe and Rotimi's presentation of the two African divination essences is that while the Oracle of the Hills and Caves was eventually replaced by the white missionaries, the Ifa Oracle was not. The Ifa oracular medium in Yoruba cosmology is reputed to possess the spiritual powers to reveal the secret of human endeavour. It represents the link between the people and the gods. Through that link, the mind of the gods is revealed to the people. In the text, it is the tradition of the people of Kutuje to always take the first male child of the king to the Ifa Oracle to determine his future on earth. The Ifa Oracle is trusted with this divine responsibility of revelation and prophecy. Like the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, the people of Kutuje and, by extension the entire Yoruba ethnic group in the text do not doubt the Oracle. Its pronouncement, no matter how fatalistic and tragic it seemed, is adhered to and carried out. Seven days after King Adetusa and his wife Ojuola had their first baby, they brought the baby to the Ifa Oracle to find out what his future would be on earth. Through the Ifa priest, Baba Fakunle, the oracle affirms that the baby would grow up to kill his father and marry his mother.

**BABA FAKUNLE:** This boy, he will kill his own father  
And then marry his own mother! (Rotimi, 3)

Therefore, the oracle recommended that the boy should be killed to avert his bad mission on earth. The king's special messenger, Gbonka, whose responsibility it was to kill the boy, disobeys the oracle's warnings and spares the boy's life, handing him over to a childless hunter, Ogundele. Later, the oracle's prophecy came to pass, as Odewale grew up to inadvertently kill his father and married his mother. As the spiritual consequences of incest in Kutuje (Odewale marrying his mother and raising children by her) come upon the people in the form of sickness and death, the people consult the Ifa Oracle once more. Again, the oracle, through Baba Fakunle, the Ifa priest, accurately informs them that the plague in the land is a result of the presence of a murderer, someone who murdered King Adetusa, the former king. At the end of the play, the Ifa Oracle is vindicated and Odewale's true identity revealed. The plague in the land ceases. The Ifa Oracle in Yoruba land still exists in contemporary times, but it does not command the kind of respect and prestige it used to command in the precolonial era.

In the precolonial times, when the people were sick, they consulted the Ifa Oracle. When they experienced a poor harvest, they consulted the Ifa Oracle. When there was any existential threat to their well-being, they were sure that Ifa Oracle would reveal the secret of their circumstances. For the people, the Ifa Oracle provided the much-needed access into the recesses of the supernatural realm that the people believed

harboured the secret of life. Such a relationship does not exist between the people and their gods in contemporary Africa. Chukwuemeka Anyika infers that, "While its forms have evolved over time, divination remains a pervasive phenomenon, manifesting in various cultures. In European culture, for instance, divination takes the form of horoscopes and astrology, which remain popular practices to this day" (2). Indeed, the image and perception of oracles and divinations have changed over time and across different cultures. If the people believed the oracle as a guiding light into the seed of time, if the people relied on these traditional religious essences for advancement in the precolonial days, and they served their purposes, such a relationship should be revived by resuscitating the spiritual and supernatural verve of the oracles. In modern times, there are Ifa worshippers and the festivals are observed in most parts of Yorubaland. But Ifa no longer possesses the accuracy and prestige it used to have in the precolonial days. Silva remarks that, "divination provides an answer to practical yet difficult questions that lie beyond human grasp. Oracular messages constitute a form of objective knowledge, untainted by personal biases and opinions" ("Object and Objectivity" 507). Scholars of African Traditional Religion have argued that the decline in the efficacy of African oracular mediums could be attributed to several factors among which are the advent of foreign religions, especially Christianity, the progress of science and IT, and the desecration and compromise of the African spiritual channels through underhanded, despicable practices which work at cross purposes with the spiritual tenets of the oracles. At a time when Africa is faced with uncertainties, when the future is bleak, and the people suffer all manner of misfortunes, the activities and prowess of the oracles through divination would serve enormous, positive purposes if they can be resuscitated. African traditional elite have a responsibility to propagate these realities to ensure that the gulf between the people and their gods is bridged for positive ends.

### **Perspectives on African Divination**

Many African communities embrace divination for different purposes. These purposes range from a concern to unravel immediate circumstances or reveal the future to guide humanity aright. Scholars and critics interpreting divination through the Oracle of Hills and Caves in *Things Fall Apart* and Ifa Oracle in *The Gods Are Not to Blame* have provided divergent, yet profound views about the importance of these divination essences to the ethos and values of the two African communities where they are domiciled. Odeke and Ikechukwu, while appraising the Igbo society and their inclination to oracles, remark that:

Igbo oracles served many personal, group and communal needs. Apart from questions on some mysteries in many communities, oracles were believed to have the power to answer questions on personal matters. They were indispensable in Igbo cultural diplomacy because Igbo people depended much on them for confirmation of deeds, to seal most business and social deals, to ascertain if a marriage would be peaceful and fruitful, etc. (68)

It is this Igbo appropriation of the oracle as an agency of justice, revelation and truth that Achebe recreates in his novel. Achebe, describing the power and influence of the Oracle of Hills and Caves in his novel, reminds us that "people came from far and

near to consult it. They came when misfortune dogged their steps or when they had a dispute with their neighbours. They came to discover what the future held for them or to consult the spirits of their departed fathers" (12). The oracle represents their trusted spiritual ally, which guides their parts, fortune, and sundry engagements. No major decision is taken by the people, individually or collectively, without consulting the oracle. When the oracle approved of their convictions and readiness to go to war with another village, they embarked on such a civil enterprise because they were sure of victory. However, when the oracle warned them not to embark on any war, they adhered to the warning and desisted from embarking on the war because if they disobeyed the oracle, defeat would be inevitable.

In the same vein, some critics provide valid perspectives on the importance of the Ifa Oracle in Yorubaland, southwest of Nigeria. This importance is depicted in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. In the text, the people of Kutuje rely on the revelations of the Ifa Oracle as a guide to their lives and daily engagements. O. Olu-Osayomi and B. Adebua remark that, "Ifá divination is a geomantic type of divination. It is the most frequently used and important divination technique. The Yoruba people attribute great wisdom and power to Òrúnmìlà, the prophetic deity of wisdom, who is among Olodumare's main delegates in the world" (109). While adapting Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, Ola Rotimi cast the Ifa Oracle in his play in the same mode as the Delphic Oracle in the Greek cosmology. Both the Ifa Oracle and the Delphic Oracle play the same role in the two texts, which is to reveal the future of Odewale and Oedipus after both babies were born. As far as Yoruba people are concerned, the Ifa oracle possesses in its clairvoyant belly the future and destiny of every man. Adeniyi argues that "Ifa is a religious practice employed to solve human socio-biological problems among the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria. The Yoruba explore Ifa divination with the intention of extracting from it the information that can be used as solution to man's problems" (175). Ifa plays its role in Rotimi's play by accurately predicting that the baby Odewale will kill his father and marry his mother. The prediction came to pass.

From the critical perspectives above, divination serves a fundamental purpose for Africans as depicted in the two texts under reference. Some scholars have looked beyond the geographical location of the Oracle of Hills and Caves and Ifa Oracle in the texts and used them as genuine templates to interpret divination as a general socio-cultural, spiritual practice in different parts of Africa. Laura Grillo is convinced that "in the traditional context, divination is pivotal to West African religions precisely because its interpretation of suffering shows the person to be at the center of a cosmic web, one in which one's physical well-being as well as personal destiny is inextricably bound to right relations with family, community, ancestors, witches, spirits, genies, and God" (921). Despite all the argument about the strength and effectiveness of divination essences in Africa, there are arguments against their existence especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when the continent is beset by myriad of socio-political and economic challenges. These essences have been dormant or are hardly consulted, as was the practice many years ago which is depicted in the two texts.

## Conclusion

This article has argued the need for the resuscitation of divination and oracular essences in Africa using the Oracle of Hills and Caves in *Things Fall Apart* and Ifa Oracle in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. While the Oracle of Hills and Caves determines in different ways how some characters in the novel navigate their lives, the Ifa Oracle also plays symbolic roles in determining the future and tragic end of King Odewale. However, sundry oracular essences in Africa today do not possess the same verve and spiritual energy which made them famous among the people in precolonial days. Undoubtedly, there is a shift, a dislocation or a waning in the power and relevance of these oracular essences in Igboland, Yorubaland and other parts of Africa. Although Western religion, including science and information technology, have all combined to play substantial roles in the dwindling fortunes of African divination systems, the myriad problems confronting the continent indicates the need for these essences to be revived and resuscitated. Christianity, Islam, science and technology have proved inadequate in penetrating the African spiritual and cultural canvas to solve problems peculiar to the people. Thus, the need to revive and resuscitate Africa's oracles and their divination capacities is needful and timely.

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