Is *Ifá* Divination Girded by Logic? A Case for *Ezumezu* Logic

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Abstract

Several criteria for what constitutes African philosophy have been offered by different African and non-African scholars. For Jonathan Chimakonam (*Ezumezu: A System of Logic for African Philosophy and Studies*. Cham: Switzerland, 2019), a philosophy is either African, Western, or Asian because of the logic that fortifies it. Chimakonam, following this conviction, foregrounds *Ezumezu* logic as a prototypical African logic which mediates thought, theory, and method within the African sphere, yet is also applicable in non-African contexts. To interrogate its stance as a prototypical African logic, this study examines *Ezumezu* logic apart from its *Igbo* inspiration, via the traditional *Yorùbá* ritual archive. We embark on a foray into the *Ifá* divination procedure for this exploration. Through critical analysis and hermeneutics, this study finds that in most cases, *Ifá* divination, through employing *ìbò* in its procedures, conforms to the classical laws of thought. However, when further reflection is given to the method through which the truths and insights of *Òrúnmìlà* are sought during divination, one may easily discern the presence of a trivalent logic therein. This understanding is demonstrated side by side with Chimakonam's description of the ways in which his logic functions. Hence, this article submits that the logic criterion for African philosophy is apt and that, when it is applied to an African ritual archive in *Ifá* divination, there is no doubt that Chimakonam's attempt to prove the originality of the African way of thought, theory, and method is well articulated.

Keywords: African logic; African philosophy; *Ezumezu* logic; *Ifá* divination; Jonathan Chimakonam

Introduction

The reports that returned to Europe concerning Africans after the "encounter" were "commendable" enough to erode whatever ritual archive was in place, with the result that Western logos began to dominate all spheres of life. According to Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1995, 43), traditional Africans were

> primitive people who had no idea of natural explanation. As people whose dreams are real experiences lacking the mental wherewithal to distinguish between subject and object, good and bad, moral and immoral. Primitive, barbaric, irrational, uncivilised and most importantly people without capacity for critical and rational thinking—qualities that is natural to doing philosophy.

David Hume, who roused Immanuel Kant from his dogmatic slumber, said that Negroes and other races are naturally inferior to the European race (in Popkin 1978, 215). Later, Friedrich Hegel (1975, 177) perceived the African as "an example of animal in all his savagery and lawlessness". These comments are not detachable from power and the knowledge that it propagates.

It is on this crest that the effort to argue for a converse position—that reason is indeed universal—has led to an array of discussions concerning the place of the African in world intellectual history. Emphasis has thus been placed on the question of African philosophy and what makes it unique as the African contribution to the world. It is on this basis, some have argued, that the question of the African identity can be settled (Uduma 2009). As a way of justifying the philosophical capacities of Africans who lived before the encounter with Europeans, there have been interesting instances of genius, like the divination system among the *Yorùbá*, called *Ifá*.

Ifá, however, has not commanded serious academic reflection before now, owing to the influence of Euro-Christian and Arab-Islamic civilisations among contemporary Africans. The recent turn to the *Ifá* literary corpus has unearthed the philosophical and logic components of the divination system. However, it has become clear that classical bivalent logic is not capable of mediating the theory of *Ifá* divination. Hence, the purpose of this study is to survey the different criteria that have been submitted for the originality of African philosophy and then give critical attention to the latest submission: the logic criterion of Jonathan Chimakonam (2019), via an engagement with the *Ifá* literary corpus.

The reader will encounter four sections in the pages ahead. In the first, attention is given to the various proposals that have been put forward regarding what makes a philosophy African, and why Chimakonam (2019) seems to think that they are inadequate. In the second section, we discuss Chimakonam's logic criterion. We begin with the question of African logic and disclose how *Ezumezu* appears to mediate originality in the African sphere. In the third part, *Ezumezu*, the logic of conversational thinking, will be employed to demonstrate its viability in *Ifá* divination. The fourth part is a brief conclusion.

A Synopsis of the Various Criteria for African Philosophy

The trajectory of African philosophy since the Great Debate reveals traces of Western logos and universalism in the African sphere. This was initiated into the African space by Peter Bodunrin, Kwasi Wiredu, Pauline Hountondji, and Henry Oruka Odera, who are the African accomplices, perpetrators, and "conquistadors" of the Global North within the African sphere. These minds, tutored in the Global North, returned with the whiff of universalism and Western intellectual hegemony (which commenced with Aristotle) "and attempted casting it upon emerging philosophers who had the misfortune of being their students" (Chimakonam 2019, 94). The question of "What makes a philosophy African?" soon became replete with responses.

Pauline Hountondji (1996, xii) states: "By 'African philosophy,' I mean the set of philosophical texts produced (whether orally or in writing) by Africans." This is what Chimakonam (2019, 23) dubs the "geographic origin criterion". Lucky Ogbonnaya (2018, 115–16) has argued correctly that the geographic origin criterion is restrictive, as "it will prevent non-Africans from contributing to, and benefitting from, African philosophy". Hountondji's call for the abandonment of ethnophilosophy has also been questioned, as this "will rob African philosophy of a source of original inspiration and cause it to mirror Western philosophy exclusively" (Ogbonnaya 2018, 116).

This line of thought is similar to the proposal by Peter Bodunrin (1981), namely that a work passes muster as African philosophy if it is codified by anyone resident or working in Africa. The implication in Hountondji (1996) is not far-fetched—disquisitions by Africans and non-Africans who are not working or resident in Africa do not qualify as African philosophy. What may be noticed is that Hountondji, on the one hand, explains the need to move from ethnophilosophy to rigorous individual exercise as a way of avoiding Eurocentrism; however, on the other hand, she continues to argue that African philosophy can be produced only by Africans. The ambivalence in this position has been called the "Hountondji Dilemma" by Chimakonam (2015, xiii). Whereas Chimakonam (2019) shares some of Hountondji's ideas, for instance that philosophy must be rigorous and personalised, he insists that such philosophy, irrespective of who practises it, must first be grounded in African logic. However, this is not the contention of this article.

Henry Odera Oruka's (1975) proposal has been christened the "many-option criterion" (Chimakonam 2019, 25). According to Oruka, for a work to be presented as African philosophy, one of two conditions must be met. In his words: "either (i) it is a work of an African thinker or philosopher (regardless of its subject matter); [or] (ii) it is a work dealing with a specific African issue, formulated by an indigenous African thinker, or a thinker versed in African cultural and intellectual life" (Oruka 1975, 50). The implications of these conditions have led Chimakonam (2019) and Ogbonnaya (2018, 118) to reject Oruka's proposal. The implication is that if a non-African who is deeply steeped in African cultural and intellectual life publishes a treatise that does not concern African issues, on Oruka's reading such a work will not pass as African philosophy, even though the author is immersed in the African cultural and intellectual pool.

Uduma Oji Uduma proposes the "culture-dependent criterion" (Chimakonam 2019, 34). This criterion puts weight on culture and geography, stressing that a work passes as African philosophy assuming it is built on the African experience and worldview, with an African flavour (Uduma 2014, 143). This seems to overlook the fact that the world is now a global village. There are hardly any distinct cultures or traditions that have not been touched by modernity. Furthermore, assumed or implied in Uduma's scheme is the idea of static cultures and traditions in Africa, when in fact culture is always dynamic. What constituted the African experience and worldview, say, fifty years ago is no longer the case today. We shall use two instances to substantiate our point here.

Ifá divination, from time immemorial, has been a practice that involves the use of the *Ìkín* (sixteen palm nuts) or *ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀* (divining chain). Since 1990, however, reports have surfaced that "Oba Pichardo and his Lukumi collaborators in Miami were able to write codes that allowed them to conduct computer-based *Ifá* divination" (Falola 2018, 919). Another instance that discloses the ever dynamic nature of traditional *Yorùbá* religious cultures is the use of baby dolls or toys in place of *ère* (figurines) during the worship of *Ọ̀sún*, who, according to Oludamini Ogunnaike (2015, 225), is the *Yorùbá* "goddess of sweet waters, love, fertility, brass and honey". The replacement of *ère* with baby dolls imported from China is perhaps due to economic reasons. The charges of the wood carver far supersede the cost of the dolls, hence the motivation for the "adjustment". These two instances vitiate Uduma's (2014) emphasis on African flavour and worldview as though it has not evolved from what it used to be owing to globalisation and modernity. Uduma's position is further diminished when it is recalled that he failed to specify, throughout his treatise, the cultural elements that makes a philosophy African (Chimakonam 2019, 34).

Several other prominent African intellectuals, such as Innocent Onyewuenyi (1991), Chukwudum Okolo (1993), Sophie Oluwole (1989), T. Uzodinma Nwala (1985), and Kwasi Wiredu (1991), have made proposals that have not been able to specify clearly what makes African philosophy unique (Chimakonam 2019, 21–38). It is this failure to articulate how African philosophy may be distinct or exceptional that led Chimakonam to the logic-based criterion. The logic-based criterion seems apt especially when one reconsiders deeply the priority of logic for research and methodology, as expressed by Paul Feyerabend. In his words (1992, 11):

> Scientific education … simplifies "science" by simplifying its participants: first, a domain of research is defined. The domain is separated from the rest of history (physics, for example, is separated from metaphysics and from theology) and given a "logic" of its own. A thorough training in such a "logic" then conditions those working in the domain; it makes their actions more uniform and it freezes large parts of the historical process as well.

Hitherto, reflections on the question of African philosophy had used the laws of thought and classical bivalent logic for their analyses. It is on this basis that some errors and misconceptions concerning African ontology have surfaced, leading to the failure to see

that for the African, reality is complementary dualism (see Oluwole 2015, 133) or, as Innocent Asouzu (2020, 273) calls it, complementary ontology.

This article agrees with Chimakonam: to identify an authentic philosophy that is African, the logic which fortifies its ontology needs to be formulated first. This is necessary to avoid the undesirable claim that the traditional African is pre-logical, as Lévy-Bruhl (1967) has argued. And as Chimakonam (2020, xvii) rightly notes: "Literally, the prefix 'pre' could mean, 'having not attained the capacity for logical reasoning'." There are even some contemporary African scholars whose views have come to imply this position, in the bid to vitiate the possibility of regional logic. In the section that follows, these views will be the focus, together with some other pertinent issues, leading to the emergence of *Ezumezu* logic.

The Question of African Logic and the Emergence of *Ezumezu* Logic

In presenting his thesis on the logic criterion, Chimakonam (2019, 35) states:

> Any discourse that treats African or non-African issues whether produced by an African or non-African versed in African cultural and intellectual life but is capable of universal application can qualify as African philosophy insofar as it is produced with African cultural-inspired methods grounded in the logic of African ontology or the instrument of logic tradition in Africa which is arumaristic in structure.

As a way of reinforcing the veracity of his logic criterion of African philosophy, Chimakonam maintains that *Ezumezu* grounds certain theories in African philosophy. These include Afro-communitarianism, Ibuayidanda philosophy, Consolationism, and Ubuntu. As much as his arguments are penetrating and illuminating, we believe it would be more appropriate to have a dialogue between Africa's raw ritual archives and *Ezumezu*, to be sure of Chimakonam's (2019) claim that the instrument of a unique African logic can birth original African ideas.

It needs to be stated that the so-called African theories which Chimakonam applies his *Ezumezu* logic to are Afro-indigenous ideas diluted with Western orientations. They are like the instances of computer-based *Ifá* divination and China dolls as replacements of the figurines in *Òsún* worship. For us, these theories cannot serve as the basis to justify Chimakonam's verdict in the foregoing excerpt. These theories have been propounded to mediate the African ontology and worldview, but one wonders if these theorists have ever taken their theories into the field to see if the indigenous and religious cultures across Africa display the tenets of their theories. These theories are nothing but codifications by scholars trained by the Western tradition, interpreting African perceptions from the conjunction of the Western and African glance. This is in line with Toyin Falola's (2018, 926) endorsement that "to fall on the use of ritual archives, we must delink knowledge from Europe-based education and literacy".

Following Falola, this study delinks *Ezumezu* from Chimakonam's postulate that it grounds African theories that are already shaped by or diluted with Western gazes and languages for a prototypical African ritual archive. This research takes the laws of thought girding Chimakonam's logic into the *Ifá* corpus, in its raw and undiluted form. This, it is hereby stressed, is one plausible method to ascertain whether or not logic is alien not just to Africa but to traditional Africans, who were the target of Lévy-Bruhl. It is, however, surprising that some contemporary African scholars seem to think that there is only one logic—that is, classical logic—which is universal; when this logic was found to be non-operating among traditional Africans, they concluded that traditional Africans were non-rational. Since logic "investigates the principles governing correct or reliable inferences" (Hanks 1976, 933), these "baptised" elites seemed to think that Africans had no unique ways to discern this. The debate on this issue will now be entertained before returning to Chimakonam.

There are three orientations regarding the question of African logic: the polemicists, the apologists, and the system builders (Chimakonam 2019, 55). The first group comprises the "baptised" elite (in Falola's terms), and they maintain the universal characterisation of Western logic to mediate thought, theory, and method as absolute. The second orientation proposes that there is or could be African logic. The final orientation takes the bold step of building a system of logic that is African-inspired.

The polemicists are correct to have offered that logic is indeed universal and applies to all and sundry. However, what they fail to realise is that there is a wide lacuna between logic being universal and logic being absolute. Scholars in this orientation coalesce universalism with absolutism and then use this faulty conjunction to argue that there is no African logic but only logic in Africa, at most. And the logic tradition they have in mind is "the wholesale applicability of Western logic as a universe of discourse" (Chimakonam 2019, 59). Prominent African scholars that fall within this category are Uduma Oji Uduma (2015), Moses Akin Makinde (2010), and Kwasi Wiredu (1991). The common denominator among these minds is that the notion of culture- or geography-bound logic is otiose. For them, logic is a universal affair, like mathematics, that cannot be relativised (Makinde 2010, 43). Similarly, Wiredu (1991, 101) dismisses the question of African logic as "precipitous" and "blanket" speculations. For Wiredu (1991), it is wishful thinking to suppose that African logic exists. Uduma (2009, 285) furthers two dogmas on logic which the apologists fail to take cognisance of: universal and topic neutral.

Chimakonam (2019, 56) grafts three strands of apologists, each with its core representative. There is logical radicalism (Leopold Senghor, Godwin Sogolo, and Peter Winch), the visionaries (Joseph Omeregbe, Chukwudum Okolo, Campbell Mommoh, and Udo Etuk), and cultural logicians or ethnologicians (Bernadette Eboh, Kazeem Fayemi, I. B. Francis, Edwin Etieyibo, etc.). Each of these orientations contends that there is African logic of some sort, and it is from here that the system builders derived the inspiration to dig deeper.

The system builders, on the authority of Chimakonam (2019, 66), are "primarily interested in constructing specific systems of logic that could be called African". Helen Verran, Innocent Asouzou, Chris Ijiomah, and Jonathan Chimakonam are prominent names here. Chimakonam faults each of these minds on several fronts. For instance, he contests that Verran did not attempt to discourse on the substance of African logic, its structures, and principles (Chimanoman 2019, 69). He bemoans the fact that "Asouzou's complementary logic falls short of a complete system on the one hand and rejects relative systems of any form on the other hand" (Chimakonam 2019, 70). Ijiomah did not explicitly formulate the logical rules and principles or the laws of thought that undergird his harmonious monism (Chimakonam 2019, 259). A system of logic comprises three objects: a formal system, a methodology, and philosophical logic. Ijiomah and others failed to construct a system of logic that evinces these elements and the laws they conform to. This is why Chimakonam's proposal is more encompassing.

Ezumezu is an Igbo word that connotes aggregation. It is suitable as a philosophy of logic, a methodology, and a formal system. Chimakonam (2019, 96) explains:

> Ezumezu as a prototype of African logic studies values, meanings and understanding of logical language. Nothing is treated without content. It is both an art and science which studies the logical relationship among realities expressed in terms of propositions and symbols. Ezumezu therefore is a logical framework that can be used to explain and analyse experiences in African world-view.

Ezemezu is trivalent since it "consists of three values namely; truth (ezu), falsity (izu) and ezumezu with small letter 'e' (complemented). A system of logic is trivalent if it has three values. This is opposed to bivalence in which a system of logic boasts of two values namely: truth and falsity" (Chimakonam 2019, 98). Although "T" and "F" are treated as contradictories in Western thought, the author proposes that they are sub-contraries. Chimakonam does not shy away from the idea that *Ezumezu* logic is not the first trivalent logic. In his words, *Ezumezu* is "a variant of three-valued logic that is context-dependent which unlike the variants by Jan Lukasiewicz and Stephen Kleene, prioritises complementarity rather than contradiction" (Chimakonam 2019, 160).

Here we should recall the dominant perception that Western logic operates on three laws of thought: identity, non-contradiction, and excluded middle (Alozie 2004, 56–61). Since ancient times, these laws have been "considered immutable and true under all circumstances" (Alozie 2004, 53). It is, however, interesting to note that there was a fourth law (though unpopular)—the effort of Gottfried Leibniz, a prominent logician, mathematician, and contemporary of Isaac Newton. He added the law of sufficient reason (Alozie 2004, 53). While commenting on this law, Sir William Hamilton (1860, 67) notes: "In modern times, the attention of philosophers was called to this law of Leibniz, who, on the two principles of Reason and Contradiction, founded the whole edifice of his philosophy." This law says: "Every true thought should be sufficiently substantiated" (Alozie 2004, 60). In a recent formulation, the law of sufficient reason is depicted thus: "For every substantive fact Y there are some facts, the Xs, such that (i) the

Xs ground Y and (ii) each one of the Xs is autonomous" (Dasgupta 2016, 412). In plain language this means that every event must have a reason or a cause. This is a principle that is present in the reflections of Anaximander, Archimedes, Cicero, Avicenna, Aquinas, and even Spinoza. Assuming Aristotle's classical logic were not treated as universal and absolute, this law too should have been added, to make the total four. Hence, Chimakonam is not the first to recognise the incompleteness and inconsistencies of the laws of thought. Even within the Western tradition, Leibniz's Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR) and Alfred Whitehead's (1948) warrant against the law of excluded middle and non-contradiction have already revealed the deficiencies that Chimakonam (2019) amplifies.

In any case, we should simply state that *Ezumezu* logic admits the three popular traditional laws of thought but adds another three supplementary laws, making six in total (Chimakonam 2019; Chimakonam and Chimakonam 2022). These three supplementary laws are *Njikoka*, *Nmekoka*, and *Ọnọna-etiti*. The law of *Njikoka* states that "A is true if and only if it is true in relation to its opposite that is false" (Chimakonam and Chimakonam 2022, 336). The law of *Nmekoka* states that "C" is or equals a complement of "T" and "F". This "C" is the third truth value, called *ezumezu* or *nwa-izugbe*. In a new rehashing of this law, Chimakonam and Chimakonam (2022, 335) render it thus: "If an arumaristic proposition is true in a given context, then it cannot be false in the same context." Whereas *Njikoka* hints at individual identities within the group, *Nmekoka* emphasises group power or identity through the convergence of individual elements. *Ọnọna-etiti*, the third supplementary law, is presented as a conjunction, and is therefore ohakaristic in structure. It simply states that "an ohakaristic proposition is both true and false in a complementary mode of thought" (Chimakonam and Chimakonam 2022, 336). It is calculated to cater for the realities that Aristotle's excluded middle does not admit. This is one of the most striking features of *Ezumezu*, and one which endears it to the interdependent and complementary nature of the African worldview.

Besides the six laws of thought upon which Ezumeu logic rests, it is important to discuss the two inferential methods: arumaristic and ohakaristic, the latter of which was briefly mentioned during the articulation of the three supplementary laws above. It is the case that "the inference from premises to conclusion in *Ezumezu* logic is either from the peripheries to the centre (arumaruka) or from the centre to the peripheries (ohakarasi)." (Chimakonam 2019, 116). In *Ezumezu* logic, arumaristic reasoning explores how the supplementary law of *Nmekoka* brings two variables, say "T" and "F", so their distinct identity may be strengthened in the collective or centre. Then, the law of *Ọnọna-etiti* comes in to justify the conjunction at the centre, such that the truth value of each proposition or variable accounts for the truth value of the group. In the case of ohakaristic reasoning, the supplementary law of *Njikoka* brings two variables, say "T" and "F", into a logical relationship so each can strengthen the collective. Then, *Ọnọna-etiti* makes it possible for the truth of the individual to be accounted for by the collective.

To put this in more practical terms, when there are seemingly contrasting variables (that is, of dissimilar ontological categories), say "T" and "F", *Ezumezu* logic calls for a third value which is not a synthesis of these individual variables. According to Emmanuel Ofuasia (2021, 53–54), "this third value is a complement where the two seemingly opposed variables do not lose their identities". The third variable, it needs to be added, can be "both true and false (truth-glut), rather than neither true nor false (truth-gap) or either true or false (determinism). The complementing variables assume strict values of true or false when they depart the complementary mode and return to what is called the contextual mode" (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya 2021, 6). As a result, it has been said that "in this system of logic, propositions are evaluated on the basis of their being necessary, impossible or the complement of both seemingly opposed variables" (Ofuasia 2021, 54).

There are two levels of reasoning that can be situated in this third value: "notional solidarity and creative struggle. In notional solidarity, two similar variables are involved, whereas, in the case of the second, two seemingly opposed variables are involved" (Ofuasia 2019b, 74). According to Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya (2021, 3), "it is the latter type of relationship that yields new ideas". What this means is that synthesis cannot be the goal in the logic of conversational thinking. When critically examined, the logic shows that "synthesis is an anathema, hence, there is both a conjunction and disjunction motion in the exchange between the two seemingly opposed variables enmeshed in creative struggle" (Ofuasia 2021, 54). In response to the tendency among some to say that the logic of conversational thinking is no different from Hegel's system, Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya (2021, 5) reiterate:

> We show that any attempt that presents the relationship of seemingly opposed variables in the African systems of thought as a Hegelian-style dialectics that yields a synthesis is mistaken. The conjunctive motion that leads to the relationships of notional solidarity and creative struggle, is temporal and is interrupted now and then by "tension of incommensurables." It ultimately terminates at "*benoke* point" that prevents a synthesis.

So, in the process of the two seemingly opposed variables interacting, as shown in Figure 1, it is important to understand the following (Ofuasia 2021, 54):

> The "*benoke* point" is the maximum place where two seemingly opposed variables interact and retain their individual identities, whereas the "tension of incommensurables" is the minimum place of interaction. It signals the breakdown of conversation. In a nutshell, the *Benoke* point is the limit whereas tension of incommensurables signifies failure in the process of creative struggle. If the tension of incommensurables is surmounted, then there is a conjunctive and disjunctive interchange between the two discussants from whence new vistas to knowing are attained. More so, it must be stated that the series of conjunction and disjunction motions between "T" and "F" are set between the two extremes—*Benoke* point and tension of incommensurables.
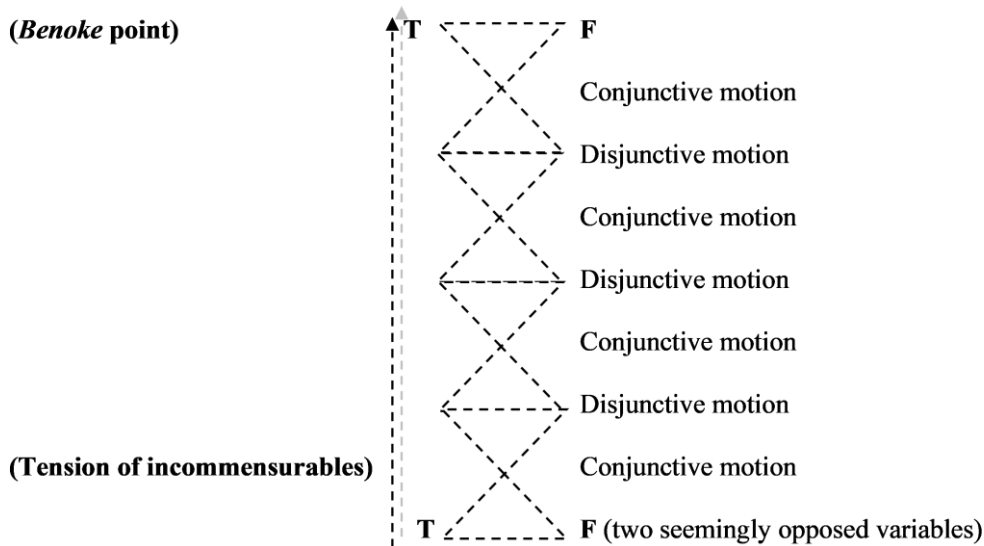
Figure 1: Creative struggle in the third value of *Ezumezu* logic (Ofuasia 2023, 147)

To round up our terse exploration of the main canons of *Ezumezu* logic, we relay its twin theses: logical and ontological. The ontological thesis affirms realities both as independent units but also as entities that are capable of converging, initiating a status quo of interdependent relationships. The logical thesis maintains that values are to be given to propositions on the basis not of facts but of contexts. On first assessment, this looks similar to Gottlob Frege's (1960, xxii) proclamation: "Never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition." It is, however, important to explain that Chimakonam (2019, 119) goes beyond Frege to articulate that "what we call truth may not always be dependent on the collection of facts which a proposition asserts but rather, on the context in which that proposition is asserted". This is the basis of Chimakonam's context-dependent variable (CdV).

The inadequacies of the traditional laws of thought have been noted by several scholars. Yet, no one has been intrepid enough to provide supplementary laws within the spectrum of a system that is formal, methodological, and philosophical, other than Chimakonam (2019). The goal of the next section is therefore to see whether his supplementary laws of thought can cater for thought in an African ritual archive.

Ezumezu Inferential Modes and the Laws of Thought in the *Ifá* Literary Corpus

In her 1996 essay entitled "African Philosophy as Illustrated in the *Ifá* Literary Corpus", Sophie Oluwole quoted two verses of the *Ifá* corpus to demonstrate why the corpus constitutes an instance of African philosophy. Her efforts, though commendable, have

been branded "a fragmentary and tentative treatment of *Ifá*" (Adegbindin 2014, xx). According to Omotade Adegbindin, Oluwole's employment of just two *ẹsẹ̀* (verses), out of the numerous *ẹsẹ̀* within each of the two hundred and fifty-six *odù* (chapters) of the corpus, will not do. This observation seems to have been derived from Wande Abimbola (1976, 19–20), who maintains that "in ancient times, nobody would be respected as a good *Ifá* priest unless he has learnt by heart at least sixteen *ẹsẹ̀* in each of the two hundred and fifty-six *odù*". We, however, implore critics to have leniency, as Oluwole (1996) would not have been able to explore the philosophic ideas undergirding all these *odù* within an article of just nineteen pages. The improvement by Adegbindin in this connection is sublime, as he forays "into virtually all the sixteen principal *odù* of *Ifá* and a considerable number of sub-*odù*s to establish the philosophical significance of *Ifá*" (Adegbindin 2014, xx). A caveat: this article is not committed to following Adegbindin's exploration of the philosophic ideas in the sixteen major *odù Ifá*, owing to space and time limitations.

Usually, the route is to begin with the origin, meaning, and nature of *Ifá* and how it is similar and distinct from *Ọ̀rúnmìlà*. Several studies[1] have explored the origins, development, ways of knowing, and postmodern nature of *Ifá*; hence, the effort herein is to disclose the place of the system regarding the laws of thought. For the present purpose however, we admit that *Ifá* encompasses *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* (the divinity that founded the system), apparatuses of divination, and the literature itself, whereas *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* refers mainly to the individual deity, who may be mentioned without implying *Ifá*. In this article, reference to *Ifá* depicts the former sense.

As a way of illustrating how Chimakonam's logic is applicable to *Ifá*, the rest of this article is committed to divulging how the classical laws of thought and the supplementary laws of thought are present in *Ezumezu* logic. The starting point then is to provide a cursory glance into the divination process which initiates the relevant *ẹsẹ̀ Ifá*, which the *Ifá* priest/priestess will chant for succour.

There are countless reasons for proceeding to the *Ifá* priest/priestess for divination. However, when a person does so, s/he greets the priest/priestess with an indication of the urgency of the need to communicate with *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* over some pressing concern. The person whispers his/her problem to an *Ifá* apparatus or money and drops it on the mat or floor before the priest/priestess. Assuming the priest/priestess uses *ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀* (a divining chain), s/he lays it on a mat or raffia and begins to chant verses from the *odù Ifá* that surfaces (Abimbola 1976, 9–10). The priest/priestess continues until s/he arrives at a story with a problem that is similar to that of the client. The problem is, however, unknown to the priest/priestess, since the problem was whispered. It is here that "the client stops him and asks for further explanation of that particular poem. The Ifá priest will interpret that particular poem and mention the sacrifice which the client must

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1   See, for instance, Adegbindin (2014), Abimbola (1976), Abimbola (1975), Bascom (1969), Oluwole (1996), Fayemi (2018), Ofuasia (2019b).

perform" (Abimbola 1976, 9–10). This is the standard practice or method of *Ifá* divination. It is at this juncture that one can appreciate how the traditional laws of thought are deployed in the divination process.

This is possible, since a client may ask Òrúnmìlà yes-or-no questions as the priest/priestess manipulates the *ìbò* (Bascom 1969, 13). The *ìbò* consists of a small bone, which stands for "no", and two cowries tied together, which depict "yes" (Ofuasia 2018, 339). Clearly, two truth values are displayed here that obey the laws of the excluded middle—"Of two contradictory judgments, one is true, the other false, and a middle value does not exist" (Alozie 2004, 58–59)—and of non-contradiction: "two opposing judgments may not be true at one and the same time and in one and the same relation" (Alozie 2004, 56). Through the law of identity, each truth value retains its meaning (Alozie 2004, 53). With these words, allow us to now disclose how they function during divination.

For the cross-examination, the *Ifá* priest/priestess asks Òrúnmìlà, for instance, whether or not the prescribed sacrifice in the *odù* suffices for the present client. S/he touches the *òpèlè* with the *ìbò* and then hands the *ìbò* over to the seeker. The seeker clutches the bone and the cowries, jiggles them, and then separates them, taking one in each fist (Ofuasia 2019a). Then, the priest/priestess casts the *òpèlè* twice. If the *odù* that appears first is senior to that which appears second, the seeker opens his/her left hand to reveal the answer. If the junior *odù* appears first, the right hand is opened (Ogunnaike 2015, 261). This is how the client may pose a series of yes-or-no questions to Òrúnmìlà and make the solution to the problem more specific (Ofuasia 2018, 339). Here, the law of excluded middle is fully apparent—either the sacrifice(s) recommended in the *odù* suffices for the present seeker or not. The revelation of an *odù* through manipulation and probability as well as the affirmation of the *odù* via the *ìbò* seem to underscore both internal and external factors of justification, which is peculiar to African epistemology (Akande 2018, 213). This assessment assumes that there are no discrepancies, especially such as when the divination does not make any sense or does not tally with what initiated a seeker's query. There are, however, many such cases, when a priest/priestess may have to recommend a client to an older and more advanced priest/priestess for divination.[2] Furthermore, it is noticeable that the traditional laws of thought are in full evidence.

Before considering the place of *Ezumezu* in *Ifá* divination, it is helpful to relay that there have been at least two prior efforts at indicating the logic in *Ifá* divination. It has been stated previously by Oluwole (1996) that the stories within the *Ifá* corpus possess strings of thesis and antithesis in argumentative form. However, her 1996 study is immersed in classical logic and the laws of thought. Even though her 2015 book, *Socrates and*

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2   We are immensely grateful for *Awo* Ifalola Omoboye Abiodun for inadvertently calling our attention to the reasoning (suggestive of logic) that guides the structure of the *Ifá* verses, during our intellectual engagement with him at Adekunle Ajasin University, Ondo State on April 25, 2019.

Ọ̀rúnmìlà: Two Patron Saints of Classical Philosophy, is clearly circumspect in terms of the traditional laws of thought, she did not take into account the trivalent logic that mediates thought, theory, and practice in African philosophy. In Figure 2, we substitute Oluwole's thesis and antithesis for variables "T" and "F" respectively and then reveal how the complementary variable "C" is affirmed via the creative struggle for meaning during divination.

Another effort is the one by Chiedozie Okoro (2017), who tries to disclose the deductive structures of *Ifá* divination. The problem is that Okoro continues to apply the limited bivalent logic which, as a previous section has shown, cannot properly mediate African ideas. This is the principal flaw in his account and the reason why we decided to settle for Chimakonam's logic rather than Okoro's. Figure 2 clearly displays the steps and creative struggle in *Ifá* divination using Chimakonam's (2019) logic.
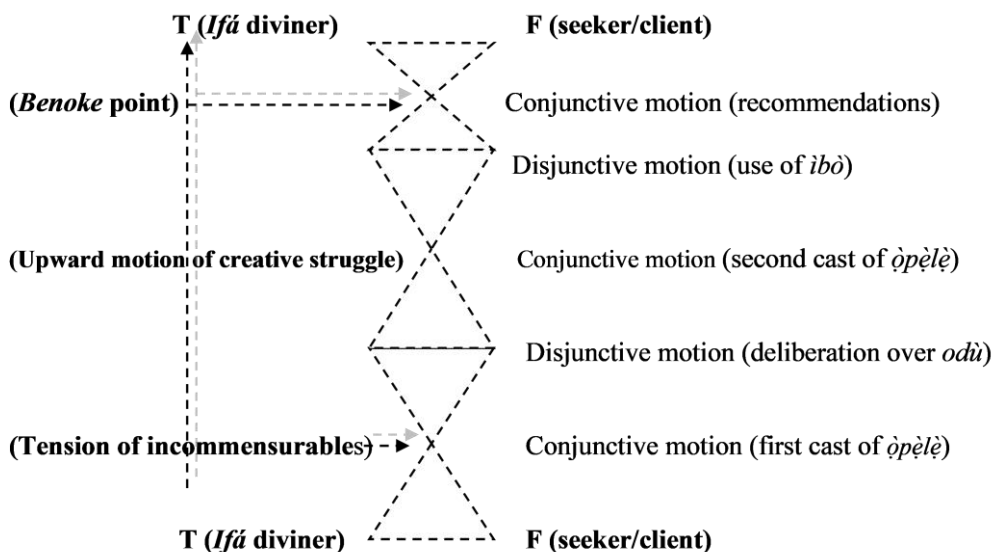
Figure 2: Creative struggle in Ifá divination depicting the interaction between the diviner and seeker (Ofuasia 2023, 245)

In this case, "T" depicts the *Ifá* diviner, who encounters the seeker or client who has come to seek the wisdom of *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* over a pressing matter, whereas "F" connotes the seeker. The enterprise of engaging each other to solve a problem or dilemma is underscored by the complementary value, "C". In this complementary value, one finds the creative struggle between the diviner and the client. The entire process of trying to find an answer to the life quandary that brought the seeker to the diviner illustrates the link between *Ifá* divination and *Ezumezu* logic.

In Figure 2, the upward motion indicates that the two ontological variables, diviner and seeker, come together to investigate an issue troubling the latter. As already discussed,

the client communicates his/her perplexities, not to the diviner but to Òrúnmìlà via objects of divination. The complementary value ensues at the first cast of the divining chain, òpèlè (assuming this is the route for divination familiar to this diviner). Afterwards, there is a disjunctive motion, which signifies the two ontological variables deliberating over the manifesting odù Ifá. Assuming that there is the need for further insight or that there are doubts, it is possible for the diviner to invoke another casting of the òpèlè. Since the seeker does not usually tell the diviner the problem, it is easier to see how the process is fair and original. If there are further doubts as to the appearing odù Ifá, the ìbò is invited to assist with yes-or-no answers to questions. So, for instance, the diviner may ask Òrúnmìlà via ìbò whether the sacrifice prescribed in a cited Ifá verse suits the condition of the present seeker. Depending on what appears, a series of such affirmation or negation questions are tendered to Òrúnmìlà in order to be sure of the next course of action. When all the possible efforts at meaning-making have been exhausted and both the seeker and diviner can go no further, then, following the principle of Ezumezu logic, the benoke point has been reached.

Lastly, it is important to now turn to how the tension of incommensurables functions in the process of Ifá divination. As explained in the previous section, the tension of incommensurables is "the failure in the process of creative struggle" (Ofuasia 2021, 54). Several factors can account for this during divination. Two of these shall be discussed. First, the tension of incommensurables occurs in Ifá divination when the diviner's knowledge is limited to specific Ifá verses. So when an Ifá verse which is beyond the scope of the diviner is encountered, the traditional custom is to refer the seeker to a higher and more knowledgeable diviner. There is no shame in this; after all, a medical practitioner who specialises in a particular field ought to refer a patient with a problem outside of the doctor's scope to a specialist in the relevant field. Secondly, it is possible that the seeker may find the diviner to be incompetent, even if the diviner does not wish to disclose this to the seeker. Understanding that this may affect the efficacy and reliability of the divination venture, there could be a breakdown in the attempt to commence the creative struggle.

Conclusion

This article highlights that Chimakonam's logic criterion for African philosophy can be used to analyse traditional African thought, and not just contemporary African theories that have been steeped in the Hellenistic pool of thought. The output of this research does not in any way amount to a statement of finality, and it calls for further exploration. This is a fallible proposition; hence, this disquisition will have attained its expected character assuming our bold propositions here can be falsified. It is on this note that this study submits itself to critical scrutiny to be corrected where logic and coherence are flawed.

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