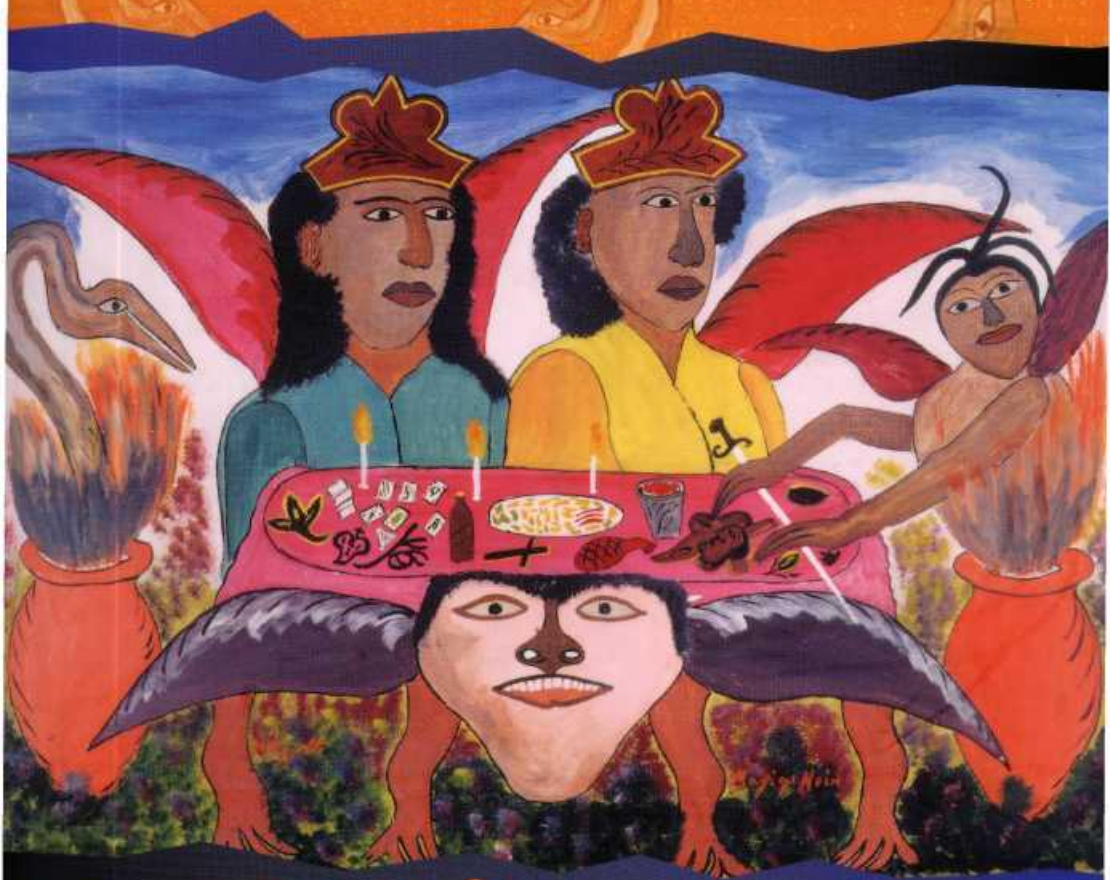


THE SECRETS OF
**AFRO-CUBAN
DIVINATION**



*How to Cast the Diloggún,
the Oracle of the Orishas*

Ócha'ni Lele

The Secrets of Afro-Cuban Divination

How to Cast the Diloggún,
the Oracle of the Orishas

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the extended spiritual family that gave me life again: John
Pilato, Naomi Alejandro, and Christine Jaffe. I love you all!

¡Nsala Malecum/Bendición!

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Introduction

Since the United States Supreme Court ruling in the case of the Church of the Lucumí versus the city of Hialeah, Florida (June 11, 1993), Santería has ceased being an underground relic hidden for fear of persecution.¹ Adherents are now free to practice their beliefs unhindered by social or political mores; and as information about these religious practices floods the media, many people are realizing that this nature-based faith is a joyous expression of God, the divine. While firmly grounded in the present, Santería is an ancient faith with roots in the fertile banks of Africa's Niger River, where the Yoruba people propitiated spirits that later came to be known as the *orishas*.

The religion teaches us that the ultimate creative force, Olódumare (owner of the womb), divided itself into innumerable aspects, or orishas. Each orisha is a living, spiritual personification of limited *aché*

1. The term *Santería* is a misnomer for the faith. It means "worship of the saints." In truth, the Catholic saints are not worshiped in this religion, although they do have the adherents' reverence for helping to save the worship of *orishas* (spirits) from extinction. Many believers, however, retain their Catholic ties to some degree, using the term *Santería* for their beliefs affectionately. Throughout this text, the word *Santería* is used with the same spirit of reverence.

(a word that loosely translates into “power, grace, and life”). The *aché* of an orisha depends on the aspect of Olódumare from which it was spawned. Olokun, the hermaphroditic deity ruling the depths of the ocean, draws her *aché* from the part of Olódumare that is secret, mysterious, and unknown; hence her home is the depths of the ocean where none may descend while living in the flesh. Ainá, mistress of flame and constant companion to Shangó, is the limitless fire of Olódumare’s existence; and Yemayá is the sweet, life-giving, mothering principle of the unknowable deity. Too vast to be known as a whole, Olódumare is made knowable through the religion’s myriad deities.

An orisha, as received by an initiate of this faith, has three components: implements (handcrafted tools), *otanes* (sacred stones), and *diloggún* (cut cowrie shells used for ritual divination). The *diloggún* houses the soul of the orisha and is the most important component. When commercial slavery removed blacks from the Mother Continent by the thousands, the Africans took these holy shells, the *diloggún*, into their bodies and made the Middle Passage to the New World. Priests and priestesses secreted the shells in one of three places: the hair, vagina, or digestive tract. Those who hid their shells in either the hair or vagina were less successful in bringing their deities to the New World. Those who swallowed their shells (repeatedly, for obvious reasons) were able to hide theirs from captors. This is one of many illustrations of the unshakable faith the Africans held in their gods. Those who survived and settled under Catholic slavery were able to worship the orishas in secret, especially in the tropical climates of the Caribbean. (Cuba and Brazil provided the most hospitable locales for orisha worship.) There is some archaeological evidence that both the orisha faiths and Palo Mayombe, the Congolese cult of the dead, were brought to the mainland (what is now the United States) at this time. However, slavery under Protestant rule separated the family and social units, which prevented worshipers from keeping the faith alive. But because Catholic slavery kept family and social groupings intact, slaves in both the Caribbean and Brazil were able to pass along their faith to their children. Against inhumane, harsh treatment, the African gods sustained their people.

It has been more than four hundred years since the first blacks were kidnapped and brought to the New World, and even now the orishas are actively worshiped in both Cuba and Brazil. A barbaric

yet profitable trading brought a continual flow of new priests and priestesses to the island from which *la regla Lucumí* (the rites of the Lucumí) were born, and these replenished and renewed the religious faith as it evolved and amalgamated with Catholic beliefs. The syncretism of Catholicism and orisha worship itself does not indicate a wholesome eclecticism; rather, it provided a means for the Africans, the Yoruba, to hide the worship of their orishas behind a veneration of the saints. Those ignorant of the Africans' spiritual practices nicknamed the rituals Santería, "worship of the saints."² With the beginning of Cuban immigration to the mainland United States in the early nineteen hundreds, the Cubans brought their orishas with them. Yet it was not until the arrival of Pancho Mora (a Babalawo, or priest of Ifá, a form of divination earlier than the diloggún) from that island that the orishas were as firmly seated here as they were in Cuba. Since that time Santería has become a flourishing faith, growing to encompass not only those of Afro-Cuban descent, but also those of Hispanic/Latino, Puerto Rican, Caucasian, and African ancestry. The orishas have moved beyond their original people to embrace those of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and this worship continues to evolve and grow daily. *Evolution* is a key word for the religion, especially in reference to the past thirty years, with this decade showing a particularly accelerated period of growth.

With the arrival of Santería came another African faith from the Congo, Palo Mayombe. Unlike the Yoruba religion, however, Palo heralds only two deities: Nsambi, the creative force, and Lucero, the morning and evening star. The entire basis for this cult is the worship, elevation, and propitiation of the dead. Unlike the treatment of *egun* (ancestors) in Santería, the treatment of the *nfumbé* (the Congolese word for "spirit") can vary from veneration and propitiation, to humbleness, to mastery; all this depends on the *nfumbé* or *nkisi* (ancestral,

2. So important were the Catholic saints to the survival of orisha worship that the *iyawó* (initiate of the faith) must go into a Catholic church after his or her initiation ceremony to pay homage to those spirits who allowed their names to be used in facilitating the survival of the orishas. Some houses of Lucumí worship dictate that the *iyawó* be baptized a Catholic before the initiation ritual may be done; others go so far as to emphasize the practice of Catholicism. Not all houses keep the amalgamation to this degree, but most will follow the custom of having the *iyawó* pay homage to the saints at the closure of the initiation ceremony.

nature spirit) with which the *palero*, or Palo priest, works. The dead are classified according to the place in nature where they find peace or unrest. Kalunga denotes spirits of the ocean, while Mama Chola speaks of those who are among the sweet river waters. The *nfumbé* of Tiembla Tierra walk through the mountains, the rumbling earth, while Mama Kengue denotes those of the cemetery, the place that lies between the realm of the living and that of the ancestors. Paleros have drawn associations between these parts of nature and the orishas: Kalunga is Yemayá, Tiembla Tierra is Obatalá, Mama Chola is Oshún, and Mama Kengue is Oyá. Using their own ritual techniques, priests and priestesses of Palo are working with the orishas spiritually. Some even give the initiation of the *elekes* (beaded necklaces) and the warriors.³ Ultimately, many have begun to manipulate the *diloggún* in their own special syncretism of Palo Mayombe and Santería.

Spiritism, or *Espiritismo*, a phenomenon begun in France by Allan Kardec that took Latin America by storm and was eventually absorbed into Santería, has also embraced the spirituality of the orishas in their mediumistic work. In New York, an eclectic marriage between *Espiritismo* and Santería has taken place. It is called *Santerismo*. Although this syncretism seems evident only in the city itself, it has a significant number of adherents; they include Afro-Cubans, Afro-Americans, and Hispanics. Some of these are adherents of Santería who never took the initiation *kariocha* (the major initiation ceremony of the religion).

3. When an *aleyo* (noninitiate) comes to Santería, two steps must be taken before the final initiation ritual, or *kariocha*. The first step is the initiation of the *elekes* (also known as "getting the beads"). In this initiation, the *aleyo* is baptized in the religion. The ceremony is simple, but time-consuming. Old clothing is worn to the home of the godparent (the priest or priestess who sponsors the *aleyo* in the religion); this is ripped off, and the adherent is washed in *omiero* (an herbal elixir made by three or more priests and priestesses). A *rogación* is given, a simple cleansing that refreshes both the physical and the spiritual head (one's soul and consciousness). Finally, four necklaces are given to the initiate, one for each orisha: Obatalá, Yemayá, Oshún, and Shangó. Once these necklaces are donned, the initiate lives under the orishas' constant supervision. He is now officially a godchild in a house of *ocha* (a shortened form of the word *orisha*), and is under the spiritual guidance of the godfather (*padrino* in Spanish) and godmother (*madrina* in Spanish) who put the *elekes* around his neck.

Receiving the warriors is the second step that an *aleyo* must take before initiation as a priest or priestess. The orishas Elegguá, Ogún, Ochosi, and Ósun are received in a lengthy ceremony. Once taken, this initiation gives the *aleyo* the right to worship and propitiate these Spirits in his own home, under the guidance of his godparents.

Unable to afford the expenses of this weeklong “marriage” ceremony, yet sincere in their worship of the orishas, they turned to Santería as a way to express their devotions.

Finally, the desire to worship the orishas has also permeated the reconstructed faith of ancient Europe: Wicca. While few Wiccans (practitioners of Wicca) have any traditional grounding in African spirituality, they yearn to worship the pagan deities of a living pantheon, yet they cannot give up their belief in an all-powerful Mother Goddess as creatrix (as opposed to creator) of all things. Therefore, they worship by the ritual means they have learned in their own faiths.

As an adherent of Santería, I must say that I do not wholeheartedly condone these practices. Yet as a Wiccan/palero who also believes that gods and goddesses are everywhere and care not by what name they are known or how they are worshiped as long as the rituals are from the heart, I cannot condemn them. The rites of *ocha* (in this context, *ocha* refers to Santería) have traditionally been passed down orally and by initiation: One’s orishas, and one’s head (spiritual consciousness), will be reborn through the rites of *kariocha*. The Spirits descend from the godparent’s orishas and the head is reborn in the same way. The intricacies of ritual—washing the *diloggún* and *otanes* of each orisha, the care and worship given each Spirit, the systems of *obí* (a form of divination that uses coconuts instead of shells) and *diloggún*—all are learned by observation, participation, and private instruction. Yet the overabundance of new initiates and the lack of a carefully trained priesthood to instruct these initiates has resulted in an overwhelming amount of misinformation. The costs for the ceremonies increase yearly with inflation: There are bolts of cloth, several tureens, dozens of freshly picked herbs, many animals, countless implements (made of gold, silver, bronze, copper, and wood), and various other expensive items included in the rites of *ocha*. It is not unusual for an adherent to save four thousand to ten thousand dollars to cover the extensive costs of catering, clothing, work, and other items that go into “making the saint,” or the ritual of *kariocha*. Experienced elders are overworked, trying to keep up with the needs of their godchildren; inexperienced novitiates are frustrated by their own lack of traditional knowledge. Many are turning to alternative paths for the orishas simply because the traditional seem so hard to follow.

Yet for those who are sincere and not easily overwhelmed by the obstacles between them and the faith, Santería remains an unbroken link to a powerful, spiritual past. As it is practiced today, the religion can be divided into two active aspects that feed on each other: worship and divination. Worship of the orishas takes many forms. There is the worship given daily in the home by the priest and noninitiate (*aleyo*) alike, the pouring of water and giving of prayers recited to Olódumare, Elegguá, egun, and one's guardian orisha. Done to cool the divinities, they, in turn, cool the worshiper so that the day is blessed. There is the weekly worship of Elegguá, fate, destiny, the opener of all roads; on Mondays, he is propitiated and plied with offerings of wine, rum, and cigars. There is the weekly worship of one's patron orisha when he or she is refreshed with special oils, prayers, and libations. Orisha priests and priestesses will present a wide array of meats, drinks, and thanksgiving offerings throughout the year on behalf of other aleyos and initiates. Votive offerings are made infrequently, as are propitiatory sacrifices. Finally, there is the yearly or anniversary offering of the *ilé* when initiates and godchildren come together to drum, dance, chant, and sing on the holy day of any one Spirit. Worship easily becomes a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly affair for the faith's adherents.

The second aspect of Santería, divination, is grossly misunderstood, sometimes even by those who adhere to its practices. People in all ages and cultures have sought shades of the future, desiring knowledge of what is to come. Pagan practices have always incorporated the art of divination in their religions; from the Greek oracle at Delphi to the Ogham of the Celts, its arts were a part of, and not separate from, religion. In today's New Age movement, however, divination is often an act performed outside one's spiritual faith. No longer are gods, goddesses, or spirits consulted. Some patronize fortune-tellers and psychics, hoping to glean the inner intentions of a lost lover, while others seek a quick peek at future careers and prosperity. There are those who use "spirit guides" in their consultations. Although this is closer to the African spiritual systems that survived on the Mother Continent, many still credit the entire act of divining to the higher, inner self, and this is anathema to African beliefs.

It is the love of our African souls, our ancestors, our roots, and our orishas that brings us each, in time, to Santería. Yet it is the desire to worship the orishas better, to care for them as they wish to be cared for,

that brings us to the oracles. Through the “random” patterns (the *odu*) produced by sixteen cowrie shells on the mat, we learn of each Spirit’s will. Our destiny, goals, loves, and losses are displayed with each sacred mandala. Divination is an act that feeds our worship, and the worship then given fulfills the prophecies of divination. This book concerns itself with that aspect of the orisha traditions that was nourished by the Caribbean’s lush, tropical climate—the true art of divination.

Although this volume might seem massive, it should not be approached as a definitive treatise on the many patterns that can fall when using diloggún. Initially, I envisioned a book that would not only explain the basic material essential to divination, but also detail the *niche osain* (amulets), herbal baths, special prayers, incantations, and ritual procedures that are born in each letter. However, space constraints prevented me from exploring more than the essentials. I also hoped to include a very important element of divination: the *patakís*, or sacred stories, told by the odu. These are the legends of our faith, comparable to the parables of the Christian Bible and the mythologies of other pagan faiths. Some tell about the lives of the orishas on earth; some tell of the lives of our Spirits in heaven. Many tell about the beginning of humans, earth, and Cosmos, and also the lives of ancient humans who lived and died following the way of the orishas. Finally, there are stories about each odu itself, for even the odu were once alive on earth as mortals, walking among men and women as they would. It is from these myths that many of our customs are born. It is through a diviner’s study and interpretation of the *patakís* that the meanings of odu expand and evolve. But, since there can be anywhere from two to twelve *patakís* in any single pattern, adding even one *patakí* to each chapter would have made this book unmanageable. Several companion volumes are in the works to explore these exciting avenues of cowrie-shell divination.

Therefore, let this volume serve as both a starting point and a guide for the aspiring *italero*, or diviner. It contains all the information essential to the casting of the diloggún. Paired with training by an elder in the religion, the student will come away with a firm grasp of the process of divination. Beyond adherents of Santería, Palo Mayombe, Espiritismo, and Wicca, this book will be of value to diviners who wish to research and study alternative methods of divination. And I cannot overstate the academic and scholastic value of this book.

• Introduction •

Most of the information has never before been published, even though outsiders and cultural anthropologists have tried for decades to glean the inner workings of this faith.

My prayer for all those who study this book is that Elegguá opens the roads to knowledge, and that Obatalá helps the attained knowledge lead to spiritual evolution. ¡Aché! ¡Tó!



Manipulating the Diloggún— The Oracle of the Orishas

While many consider the diloggún to be merely an African oracle, in truth it is a spiritual process of rituals, liturgies, and discoveries. Its process is unique. The oracular system is based on one used in Nigeria, the Holy Land and origin of the Yoruba, the predecessors of the Lucumí. There, before humans knew of orishas or odu, there was only Orúnmila. Born from Olódumare herself, he was the great witness to creation, and knew all things. Orúnmila incarnated among mortals, bringing his infinite knowledge of odu and divination to earth. What he taught is known as Ifá. The sacred science of Ifá was first passed to Asheda (the first Ifá priest, or Babalawo) and then to Akoda (the second disciple). Together, these two men spread Orúnmila's cult of divination among the Yoruba, and it was from this that the original sixteen-cowrie-shell oracle emerged. Yet the forced transplantation of slaves to Cuba brought the necessity for change. Political factors behind slave trading ensured that many Babalawos were left in Nigeria, and without the cult of Ifá, orisha worshipers in the New World needed an advanced oracle. Using a broken knowledge of the 256 odu, the sixteen-cowrie-system grew slowly. It remained incomplete until a priest named Obadameji (omo-Aganyú) made the

Middle Passage to Cuba, bringing a thorough knowledge of Ifá. Though not a Babalawo himself, it was under Obadameji's guidance that the final reformations were completed and a new oracle was born to the religion: the oracle of the diloggún.

The word itself, *diloggún*, may be described in two fashions. First, when speaking of diloggún, one may be referring to the cowrie shells received by a Lucumí priest or priestess upon initiation. In the ritual known as *asiento* (or *kariocha* or just *ocha*), an adherent to the faith is crowned with the guardian or ruling orisha.¹ The major orishas of the faith are received at this time: Obatalá, Yemayá, Oshún, Shangó, Elegguá, Ogún, and Oyá. As I touched on in the introduction, each of these orishas has three main components: otanes, implements, and diloggún. The otanes form the body of the deity; they are stones, and it is upon these that sacrificial offerings are given. The implements are the metal or wooden tools sacred to each Spirit. Diloggún is the most important aspect of an orisha, for within these cowrie shells are the soul of each deity. All except for one Spirit, Elegguá, will have eighteen shells in his or her diloggún. Elegguá has twenty-one shells in his, for twenty-one is his sacred number and is shared with no other Spirit.

The second way of defining *diloggún* is within the context of divination. When reading or casting the oracle, only sixteen shells from each orisha's hand of shells are used. These are picked at random, and the remaining cowries are set to the side facedown. Cowries put to the side are known as *adele* (witnesses), and while they must be present for divination, they remain unused. For the purposes of this book, when one speaks of casting or reading the diloggún, it is assumed that one is speaking of the sixteen shells used in divining with odu.

Unlike tools that draw on a diviner's psychic skills or subconscious mind (such as the tarot and crystal gazing), the diloggún is a complex system based on the sixteen holy odu made manifest when Olódumare unfolded, creating all things. Each odu has a name and a number of open-mouth shells associated with it; these are the parent odu of the

1. The concept of a guardian or ruling orisha is central to this faith. It is believed that each person who lives is ruled by one orisha, and when the ritual of *asiento* is given, that one Spirit is put to the initiate's head and is worn, briefly, as a crown. After this is done the initiate becomes a *iyawó* (bride) of that Spirit and is properly initiated into the mysteries.

diloggún. These sixteen signs and their numerical equivalents are: Okana (one mouth), Eji Oko (two mouths), Ogundá (three mouths), Irosun (four mouths), Oché (five mouths), Obara (six mouths), Odí (seven mouths), Eji Ogbe (eight mouths), Osá (nine mouths), Ofún (ten mouths), Owani (eleven mouths), Ejila Shebora (twelve mouths), Metanla (thirteen mouths), Merinla (fourteen mouths), Marunla (fifteen mouths), and Merindilogún (sixteen mouths). Spiritually, each marks a different milestone in creation, specific energy currents needed to bring forth manifestation from God's womb. These concepts will be investigated in later chapters of this book. For divination, each odu may be thought of as a single chapter comparable to those found in the Christian Bible; although the literature is oral in our tradition, it is no less powerful, no less meaningful, than the most eloquently written proverbs or psalms.

Just as each book of the Bible has several chapters in itself, so is each odu composed of sixteen chapters. These are called *omo odu* (children of odu). Each is part of a spiritual family linked by the parent odu that gave it birth. When casting the diloggún, an italero must access one of these patterns. He does this by gently awakening the spirit of an orisha with an invocation known as *mojubando*, a litany that pays homage to God, the earth, the ancestors, and the orisha whose diloggún is being cast. Two throws are required to extract the omo odu. The first names the parent odu, and the second letter modifies the first, narrowing the reading down to 1 of 256 combinations offered by the oracle. For example, if the diviner's first casting of diloggún results in a mandala of nine open mouths on the mat, the parent odu is Osá. Casting the cowries a second time, if the diviner counts three mouths, the odu Ogundá has fallen. The first casting of Osá is modified by the second. The resulting odu is named Osá Ogundá, and the diviner knows he must search his memory for the meanings of that sign.

Each of these odu forms a spiritual organism, a complete entity that forebodes various blessings (known collectively as *iré*) or misfortunes (known collectively as *osogbo*). The qualities of *iré* and *osogbo* must be extracted from the odu once the composite letter has been cast. This is done by using eight *ibó* (divination tools). Depending on the questions asked, these eight *ibó* can be used in an infinite number of pairings; together, the diviner and client manipulate both the

cowries and the *ibó* in tandem to determine the orientations of *odu*. From these are the predictions of any one letter drawn, and *eboses* (offerings) are also determined, to placate volatile essences. Harmony is created: Evolution unfolds.

Throughout this text, I will explore not only the manipulations of this oracle, but also the metaphysics and meanings behind each letter of *diloggún*. Remember that although each *odu* contains all the facets of our faith and lives, they are not stagnant, unchanging, mere collections of sacred stories and scripts conceived centuries ago. Each of these letters is alive in the universe and in our lives. They are organisms of energy, creatures of symbiosis awaiting connection with our own human energies as they are opened on the mat. A divination session, then, becomes the most important focus of *Lucumí* worship. The sacred shells reveal the forces at play in an adherent's life, and these energies are redefined and placated as the *orisha* priest manipulates the letters in an attempt to help his client evolve. *Diloggún* is an oracle, yes; yet it is also a long, arduous road to change and personal transformation. It is the heart of *Santería* and New World *orisha* worship.

Opening the Diloggún

Initial preparations for the casting of *diloggún* are minimal. The diviner must provide a room that will be private and unfrequented by noninitiates during the consultation. There should be a table with enough chairs to accommodate the client, godparent(s), diviner, and any priests or priestesses who are acting as assistants or students.² A grass mat should be laid upon the diviner's working surface. The room should be set up so that the client sits on one side of the table with his or her godparents, and the *italero* and other elders/students sit on the opposite side of the table. A *jícara* (gourd) of water, lit cigar, and lit candle should be placed on the table to give *aché* and strength to the spirits consulted; and beside these should be placed the *diloggún* of the *orisha* and the complete set of *ibó* used for the reading. The

2. In *Lucumí* worship, to properly learn the oracle one must undergo an apprenticeship with a competent *italero* or a period of study with an *oriaté* (an expert in the ceremonies of *Santería*). Books such as this are valuable guides and study texts for the casting of *diloggún*, yet they cannot replace the intimate environment provided by a novice-elder relationship.

symbols for *ibó* are eight in number: *efun* (a white, powdered chalk), a black stone, two bound cowries, a seashell, a piece of bone, a guacalote seed, a doll's head, and a piece of broken china or pottery. The assistant making a record of the reading should be provided with a pen and plenty of paper.

Having properly arranged the room and seated everyone for divination, the diviner should have his assistant record the client's full name given after birth at the top of the paper. If the client is a married woman, her full name at birth plus her married name are recorded. This information should be kept nearby so that the diviner can refer to it during the *mojuba* (prayer); naming the client in full is integral to the invocation of that person's *egun* (ancestors) during consultation. Once this is done, the diviner takes the *efun* and rubs it over both his hands until the palms, fingers, and thumbs are covered in white. This is done to the client as well (one must have clean, pure hands before handling the shells of an *orisha*). Now, the client is instructed to take the *derecho* (the small fee, usually twenty-one dollars, that is sacred to the *orishas*) and fold it tightly into a small ball. He crosses himself with it, marking the four quarters of the body, and gives it to the diviner. This is an important moment in the reading, for with the passing of this money, the energy exchange among the client, *italero*, and *orisha* is begun; from this moment the oracle is considered open and there should be no interruptions. The final preparation is for the *italero* to mark a white chalk circle on the grass mat, drawing double lines through the four cardinal points: north, south, east, and west. All is now prepared, and the oracle is opened.

Before praying to the *orisha*, a *jícara* of fresh water is carried in the left hand, and using the fingers of the right, three dashes of water are splashed before the Spirit's shrine with the following words.

Omi tutu; ona tutu, aché tutu. Tutu ilé. Tutu Laroye. Tutu Arikú Babawa.

Fresh water; freshen the road to the orisha, refresh my power. Freshen my home. Freshen Elegguá in his path of Eshu Laroye. Bring us freshness that has no end.

Before praying to any *orisha*, this simple libation is offered to bring coolness and freshness: to our roads, to our *aché*, to our homes, and to *Eshu Laroye*. These are all things that could hinder the consultation.

The world is a place of hot and cold, stagnation and refreshment, growth and decline; when working with the orishas, however, we put ourselves in a place where only evolution can be found. Those things that tend to overheat and destroy are removed. A very special avatar of Elegguá, Eshu Laroye, is both honored and refreshed by this ritual gesture. He is the companion of Oshún, the orisha who makes life worth living, and he is one of Elegguá's most mischievous paths. If we desire our prayers to reach the orishas, we must first honor and cool him so that he will help, and not hinder, our communication. It takes only a moment to do this, yet it is one of the most crucial points in our invocation.

Having refreshed ourselves, our homes, and Eshu Laroye, the ritual of mojubando begins. As this prayer is intoned, the italero holds the diloggún of the orisha (sixteen of the shells that form the spiritual body of the deity, putting the rest of them to the side with the ibó, facedown) and adds to this the derecho that the client has provided for the consultation. All these are rubbed briskly, yet gently, between his two hands to slowly awaken the soul that sleeps in the cowries. If the diviner's hands are too small for this, the sixteen cowries and the derecho he was given may be rubbed in a circular, clockwise motion on the mat. This gentle manipulation of the shells continues until all prayers are complete.

Mojuba Olófin. Mojuba Olorún. Mojuba Olódumare. Mojuba Olójoni. Oní Odún Mocuedun. Olorún Alabosúdaye. Olorún Alabosúnife. Olorún Alayé. Olorún Elemí. Olódumare Oba aterere kaje. Olódumare, mojuba gbogbo ikú imbelese. Olódumare, ibaé bayé tonú. Mojuba atijó ojo. Mojuba atiwó orún. Mojuba ayái odún, oní odún, odún olá. Mojuba Orún. Mojuba Oshúkua. Mojuba ile ogere a foko jerí.

Homage is paid to the part of God closest to the earth. I pay homage to the God in the heavens, God who is eternal and everywhere. I pay homage to the one who owns this day. Today, I greet you! Olorún, who is the keeper and protector of the earth. Olorún, the one who protects the first, holy city of Ifé. Olorún, living one and owner of the earth. Olorún, you who owns all spirits. Olódumare, the one who encompasses the entire Cosmos. Olódumare, I give homage to all the ancestors that sit at

your feet now. I praise the creative forces and those that have sacrificed their own lives for the continuity of life. I pay homage to the awakening sun, the sunrise. I pay homage to the dying sun, the sunset. I pay homage to all eternity: yesterday, today, and tomorrow. I pay homage to the sun. I pay homage to the moon. I pay homage to Mother Earth.

Beginning with the first three sentences of the mojuba—"Mojuba Olófin. Mojuba Olorún. Mojuba Olódumare"—the supplicant is invoking and addressing the powers of creation, the very forces that began the universe aeons ago. Because all things are descended from and created by the collective forces known as God, before beginning to address the orisha the supplicant must give honor and respect to the origin of all things human and divine. The intonation begins with Olófin, a force that some consider an ancient, all-powerful aspect of God—the part of creation that is closest to earth and the most easily approachable. *Olófin* is a Lucumí contraction meaning "owner of the palace," the palace being all of the earth, the majestic home in which dwells the spirit of the divine. It is through Olófin that we pray to Olorún and Olódumare, for those aspects of the divine are the most primal and farthest from creation. *Olorún* is yet another Lucumí contraction, meaning "the owner of heaven." Olorún is seen in the daytime sky, the symbol being the sun, and although one does not worship the sun itself, praise is given to it as the symbol of Olorún on earth. Finally, the word *Olódumare* is a contraction that denotes "the owner of odu and the womb." Odu is a woman, and the womb is part of the feminine reproductive system. Thus, although Olódumare is beyond gender, it is not incorrect to think of this being as the Great Mother, the starry night sky from which all is born.

Mojuba Orúnmila Eleri ikin. Mojuba igba Irunmole ojukotún. Mojuba igba Irunmole ojukosí. Mojuba Irunmole wamale. Mojuba Akoda. Mojuba Asheda. Mojuba ejubona Mefa. Mojuba gbogbowan Obá Ilé Ifé. Mojuba Odúduwa. Mojuba Oranmiyan. Mojuba Arabá lotu Ifé. Mojuba Olokun. Mojuba Olosa. Mojuba awon iyá afinju eje. Mojuba Ajé-ogunguluso Olambo yeye aye. Mojuna itá Merindilogún. Mojuba Orún Okó. Mojuba okún Okó. Mojuba Okiti awo Okó. Mojuna ará. Mojuba ilé. Mojuba yeye. Mojuba baba.

**Mojuba gbogbowan Imale Iju. Ibaé tototo Olódumare y
mojuba. Kinkanmaché Orún, mojuba.**

I pay homage to Orúnmila, the witness to creation and the recorder of all the odu. I pay homage to the two hundred divinities on the left side of God. I pay homage to the two hundred divinities on the right side of God. I pay homage to the divinities that came to earth. I pay homage to Orúnmila's first student. I pay homage to Akoda's first student. I respect all those who teach others the sacred path of Ifá. I pay homage to all the chiefs of the sacred city and cradle of civilization, Ilé Ifé. I pay homage to the founder of the Yoruba empire. I pay homage to Odúduwa's son. I pay homage to all the diviners who live in the sacred city. I respect the spirit of the ocean that first owned all the land. I pay homage to the spirit of the lagoon that first formed as land arose from the sea. I pay homage to the council of the Mothers, the beautiful birds [the Witches] who are the Mothers of the forest. I give homage to the spirits of the forest who have come to the aid of the Mothers of the forest again and again. I pay homage to the sixteen odu of creation, the containers of all existence. I pay homage to the stone of heaven, the immovable stone of Olódumare. I honor the strength of the stone, and the mystery of the stone of creation. I pay homage to the body. I pay homage to the earth and land. I pay homage to all the mothers, and my Mother. I pay homage to all the fathers, and my Father. I pay homage to all the invisible spirits who are present at this time. I give all my praise to the spirit of creation, and give my humble thanks. For all the blessings that come to me from heaven, I give thanks.

These litanies are not used by all ilé ocha. In the Lucumí religion, there is a divide, an irreconcilable chasm between those houses that work with Ifá and the Babalawos closely and those that do not. Much of this chasm stems from the work of Ferminita Gomez, an influential religious ancestor who some say “reclaimed” our religion from the hands of Ifá. The priests of Orúnmila, the Babalawos, however, are still indispensable to the religion. There are many functions performed by these initiates that an orisha priest or priestess cannot fulfill. No matter how little or how much time one spends in this religion, we all come, at some point, to the feet of Orúnmila. If a member of this faith has received anything from the Babalawos, even if it was only a reading, it is in good taste to offer these few lines of praise to the myster-

ies of Orúnmila. As with any other aspect of this religion, when in doubt as to what should be done, question the godparents. They know what is best for spiritual evolution.

Mojuba gbogbowan Olodó ara orún: oluwos, iyaloshas, babaloshas, omo-kolaba egun imbelese Olódumare. Mojuba gbogbowan Olodó ara orún: oluwos, iyaloshas, babaloshas, omo-kolaba egun elelegba³ lagba-lagba imbelese, timbelese Olódumare.

I pay homage to those who have gone to the river and who are now citizens of heaven, the dead priests and priestesses who rest with Olódumare. I pay homage to all the oluwos, iyaloshas, babaloshas, and Babalawos who have Olófin, the dead who are at the feet of God. I pay homage to those who have gone to the river and who now live in heaven with Olódumare: oluwos, iyaloshas, babaloshas, Babalawos who have Olófin, and also to the dead of Elegguá who are now at the feet of God.

By now, not only has the diviner addressed the primal powers of creation, but he has also begun to pray to the dead elders of our faith. These are the ones who have made the rites of kariocha while living and have now passed beyond the land of the dead to Olódumare. These sum up the powers of heaven, the invisible realm, those forces that we call *ará omú*, or the inhabitants of heaven. By honoring these greater powers, the italero ensures that only positive energies are called to the mat. He proceeds with all their powers and blessings behind his actions. Then, the focus is narrowed a bit; one begins praying for and to the ancestral priests and priestesses who lived and died in the service of a specific orisha (in this case, the children of Elegguá). One of the mysteries of this religion is that of egun and ancestral reverence; it is believed that while on earth, each of us is the child of a specific orisha, and beyond death, our energies melt and merge into the whole of that

3. This is a Lucumí contraction that means “the dead priest/esses of Elegguá.” For the other orishas, place *ol* or *olo* directly before their names, and say them as one word. Examples: olobatalá, oloshún, oloshangó, oloyá, oloyemayá, ologún, olochosi. In the case of orishas who are not crowned on the head, but are given *oro* in *santo*, a hyphenated word is used. *Omo*, which means “child,” is hyphenated onto the name of the orisha. Examples: omo-Ibeyi, omo-Ainá, omo-Inle, and so on.

sacred spirit. Indeed, even the orishas themselves were once human, and upon their earthly demise they moved beyond the grave and back into the whole whence they came.⁴ The fact that these Spirits were even born to earth makes our own egun, from the most distant past, the Mothers and Fathers of God.

Having addressed the greater forces of creation and the body of egun that makes up a specific orisha, the supplicant then begins to narrow his focus once more. He moves into prayer for the ancestors that brought him to birth, the egun of his spiritual family (giving birth to his *orí*, or consciousness). He also prays to those egun bringing his physical head/body to birth, his family line. Among our faith we say that we stand on the shoulders of those who have come before. Even though it is an orisha to whom one prays, one would not be praying to this force had the ancestors not given birth to both the physical and spiritual heads. The next part of the *mojuba* pays homage to them, asking for their blessings, their strength, their knowledge, and their *aché* before invoking the macrocosmic forces that are known as orishas. It brings our invocations full circle and narrows us down magically to this one moment when we celebrate our humanness, our weakness, and our strength, and it gives us sacred time and space in which we may call upon our gods.

Ibaé bayen tonú gbogbo egun ará orún orí emi nani [your name in ocha or your given name if ocha has not been made.]

I give homage to all the ancestral forces that join me on my journey, I who am known as _____.

Ibaé bayen tonú gbogbo egun ará orún orí iyá (or baba)⁵ tobi mi, [name of your godparent]. Ibaé bayen tonú gbogbo egun ará orún orí Yubonna mi, [name of your Yubonna]. Ibaé bayen tonú gbogbo egun ará orún orí igboro kale ile. Ibaé bayen tonú

4. This is the mystery behind each orisha's path, or avatar. The earthly incarnations of each Spirit mark a new path of the orisha in Santería. For example, Elegguá is called by many names, among them Eshu Ayé, Eshu Laroye, and Eshu Bi. Each of these is a part of Elegguá, yet comes from a different incarnation of that Spirit.

5. *Iyatobi* is the proper Lucumí word to use if the godparent is female. *Babatobi* is the proper word if the godparent is male.

**gbogbo egun, gbogbowan Olodó, lagba lagba otokú ará orún
timbelaye, imbelese Olorún, Olódumare.**

I pay homage and give my respect to all the ancestors that accompany the head of my godmother/godfather, [name of your godparent]. I pay homage and give my respect to all the ancestors that accompany the head of my Yubonna, [name of your Yubonna]. I pay my homage and give my respect to all the ancestors that accompany the priests and priestesses visiting my house. I give my respect and pay homage to all the dead, all those who have gone to the river and are now my spiritual ancestors; I pay homage to all those in heaven who are now at the feet of Olódumare.

Ará orún, Ibaé bayen tonú [name of deceased priest or priestess] Ibaé.

Those who now live in heaven, my respects are paid to those who have gone to the other land in the sky [name of deceased priest/ess], homage is paid.

[Name of deceased priest/ess] Ibaé.

This is continued until all the ancestors in the religion have been named.

**Ibaé gbogbo egun iyá mi, [the name of your mother]. Ibaé
gbogbo egun baba mi, [the name of your father].**

My respects are paid to the dead ancestors of my mother, [the name of your mother]. My respects are paid to all the dead ancestors of my father, [the name of your father].

[Name of deceased family member, starting with the most recent] Ibaé.

This is continued until all the known blood ancestors have been named in full. Having honored creation and egun, the mojuba becomes a prayer for the protection and health of all priests and priestesses and brothers and sisters in the house (ilé ocha). Whenever a ritual of ocha is done, its energies unfold to incorporate all those who might be present and those who are not. Through these rites, it is hoped that the blessings gleaned from these prayers will better not

just the person praying, but the entire ilé ocha, or family of orisha, of which the supplicant is a part. And even though they may not be present, the supplicant asks permission of his godparents and elders to proceed with his religious practices, for although they are physically removed from the sacred space, the heads that gave birth to the priest, or the aleyo, are always spiritually present with him. As names are called for the blessings, those who are present for the divination will answer, “Aché,” to give strength to the prayer that was said for them, and to thank the supplicant for his blessings.

Kinkanmaché iyá/baba tobi mi [your godmother/father].

Kinkanmaché Yubonna mi [your Yubonna].

Kinkanmaché _____ [Oluwo, godfather in Ifá].

Kinkanmaché is a word that asks for protection, blessings, and the good things in life.

Kinkanmaché (from here until the end, you continue with all the living godparents, grandparents in ocha, and so on, of your own godparents; once that is done, you name those priests and priestesses who might be present).

Kinkanmaché orí, Eledá emi nani _____ [your own name in ocha, if ocha has been made].

Kinkanmaché gbogbo kaleno, igboro, abure, ashire, oluwos, iyaloshas, babaloshas kale ilé.

So that nothing bad can happen to those who are present in my home: my brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, visiting priests and priestesses, priests of Ifá, the mothers, the fathers, and the keepers of the Spirits who have come to my house.

Finishing this part of the prayer, the diviner begins an intonation to all the orishas that are considered *fundamento* (those given in the ritual of kariocha). There is a specific rule for invocation that must be followed. First, one must petition Elegguá, as he alone opens the doors to the divine, and then each Spirit is given a brief series of praises ending with the client's guardian. If this Spirit is not known, the diviner must proceed in the order of his own ocha, beginning with Elegguá and ending with a prayer to his crowning orisha. During this litany, the italero explains to the orishas that the client has come for a consultation at their feet. It is important to name the

client in full: first, middle, last, and married name if any. Finally, license must be granted by the Spirits to proceed, so the diviner asks their permission before proceeding. It is also traditional to ask that the results of this session prove beneficial not only for the querier, but also for the diviner, his ilé, and the attending priests and priestesses. The fundamental orishas and their order of invocation are Elegguá, Oshún, Yemayá, Shangó, and Obatalá. To correctly petition the Spirits, if any orisha beyond Obatalá has gone to the head, that orisha is prayed to last and Obatalá will be prayed to second. For instance, a priest of Oshún would pray in the order of Elegguá, Obatalá, Yemayá, Shangó, and Oshún. A child of Yemayá would pray Elegguá, Obatalá, Oshún, Shangó, and Yemayá. Finally, a child of Shangó would pray Elegguá, Obatalá, Yemayá, Oshún, and then Shangó. The priest of Elegguá would begin with Elegguá and end with Elegguá.

Until more complex prayers, praises, and call names are learned, the following simple formula may be used (written for a child of Oshún).

Mojuba, mojuba Elegguá mojuba y bendición. Mojuba, mojuba Obatalá, mojuba y bendición. Mojuba, mojuba Yemayá mojuba y bendición. Mojuba, mojuba Shangó mojuba y bendición. Mojuba, mojuba Oshún mojuba y bendición.

I come to you all today on behalf of _____; she has come to consult with the diloggún, and I ask for the aché to proceed and make contact with Olorún, egun, and orisha on her behalf. Let the results of this consultation be beneficial for her, for me as her diviner, and for all the members of this house.

At this point, the italero should begin praying to the orisha whose shells are being read. Normally, the diloggún of Elegguá is used, and the following prayer illustrates the process of invocation. Godparents will give those who are involved in the faith more traditional litanies.

Eshu Elegba olo gbogbo na mirin itá algbana baba mi unlo na buruku nitosi le shonsho kuelu kuikuo odi kosí ofo, kosí ojo, kosí arun, ni oruko mi gbogbo omo nile fu kuikuo. Adupe, baba mi Elegba.

Owner of all four corners, elder of roads, my Father, take all evil away, so that we can walk with plentiful health. Let there be no illness, let there

be no loss, let there be no revolution, let there be no death. In the name of all the sons of this house I thank you very much, my Father Elegba.

Once this part of the prayer is done, the diviner again begins to mojuba in Lucumí, banishing all the evil and osogbos that might stand in the way of a beneficial consultation.

Kosí ikú. Kosí ofo. Kosí ano. Kosí inya. Kosí fitibo. Kosí akopa. Kosí inya. Kosí fitibo. Kosí akopa. Kosí tiya tiya. Kosí araye. Kosí gbogbowan osogbo unlo. Fun iré owo. Iré omo. Iré arikú babawa. Ko un soro ofo pa oda oda pa ofo. Ko un soro ofun malobe malobe ofun.

May Death be no more. May loss be no more. May sickness be no more. May war be no more. May nothing be overwhelming. May nothing be disrespectful. May there be no arguments. May there be no gossip or evil words. May all misfortunes be no more. So that we may have the blessings of money. So that we may have the blessings of children. So that we may have blessings and not see Death. So that the bad is not spoken or mistaken for the good. So that the good spoken is not mistaken for the bad.

Once the prayer has been intoned, the diviner (still holding diloggún and derecho in his left hand) touches the client's body in the main centers of aché, naming each part in Lucumí as this is done.

Orí inu—the head

Eshu ni pacuó—the back of the neck

Esika meji—the shoulders

Okokán—the heart

Inú—the stomach

Akwá meji—the arms (here, the inner fold of the elbow is touched)

Onukun meji—the knees

Elese meji—the feet

Owo osi owo otún ono wale—the hands

It is at this point that many italeros will place the diloggún gently in the client's hands; this must be done with care, with reverence, for what is held are the mouthpieces to odu, the sacred alphabet of the

orishas, and the very soul of the Spirit being consulted. The gentle circular movements of the italero's hands, the force of a prayer in the orisha's native tongue, and the skill with which the diloggún has been handled all serve to gently awaken this force (the Spirit is said to sleep in the shells). Now, this titanic orisha waits to hear the client's troubles. Silently, he may think about the difficulties in his life, or aloud, he may tell the orisha the reason he is at their feet. Once the italero has retrieved the shells, he raises them again in his left hand and says, "Ocháreo," which means "We join to the orishas." The shells are cast to the mat, while those present say, "Adaché," which means, "Of our own free will." The first odu is marked as the diviner counts the shells falling mouth up, and it is written down at the top of the sheet of paper. Once the opening odu is recorded, the diviner once again picks up the hand of shells, putting the derecho to the right of the mat beside the ibó, and casts them, calling, "Ocháreo," while all those present answer, "Adaché." This second odu is counted and marked on the paper beside the first, creating a composite, or omo, odu. For example, if the first odu that fell was eight, Elleunle, and the second that fell was five, Oché, the composite odu is marked 8-5, and it is named Ejiogbe Oché. The oracle is now opened, and the diviner must proceed by using ibó to mark the orientation.

Using Ibó in Divination

Ibó are essential to the process of divination. Now that the oracle has been successfully opened and the initial odu revealed, client and italero will manipulate ibó and cowries in tandem; both will participate in the process of extraction for several spiritual qualities: orientation, degree of orientation, predictions, prohibitions, taboos, and eboses. Each odu is a container with limitless contents, and not all of these will apply to everyone at every session. Methodically the opening letter is explored for those messages that apply to the client. While each line of questioning has its own rules that must be followed, the basic format for using ibó remains the same: First, the diviner must pick two symbols as possible yes/no answers to his question. One, if chosen by odu, will answer in the affirmative, and the other will answer in the negative. Unlike other oracles, this system allows no room for vague responses. Cupping the two ibó in his left hand, the

diviner touches each to the open mouths on the mat, asking his question in Lucumí if possible.⁶ The *ibó* are then given to the client while the diviner intones, “[name of the affirmative *ibó*] lo si wayu, [name of the negative *ibó*] beko [name of the affirmative *ibó* again] ke *ibó*.”⁷ This is a short prayer asking that the best answer come from the orishas. Once the client has these tools in his hands, he is instructed to shake them briskly and then to separate one into each closed fist. There they will remain until *odu* demands that one or the other be revealed.

In the *diloggún*, eight *ibó* are used. They are listed below.

otá: This *ibó* consists of a small, smooth black stone; traditionally, the diviner must search for it himself in the woods. Stone is one of the earth’s most durable creations; it withstands the centuries, being worn and polished slowly into something more beautiful, more ornamental. Therefore, it is used to represent the immortality and stability of the soul and spiritual truths. While *otá* always answers in the negative and can be paired with any of the remaining seven *ibó*, it is almost always used with *efun*. Its oracular meaning can sometimes change to the affirmative depending not only on the question asked, but also on the *ibó* with which it is paired.

efun: *Efun* is a loosely compacted, powdered chalk made from crushed and powdered eggshells. Softer than normal chalk, it rubs off and coats objects with ease. *Obatalá* owns this *ibó*, as he owns all things that are white. Normally, *efun* will be paired with *otá* for divining yes/no answers, and always it will mark the affirmative. Since *Obatalá* can speak in all *odu*, whenever the *italero* is unsure of what *ibó* to use for a positive response, he should automatically pick the *efun* for a yes answer.

6. There are diviners who, toward the end of a session, will allow the client to ask secret questions of the oracle. When this is done, the two *ibó* are placed reverently in the client’s hands and he is allowed to whisper his concerns to the orishas. It is important to instruct this person on the proper phrasing of questions: Yes or no answers are all that are allowed. Once done, they are given back to the *italero* so he may touch them to the *diloggún* and complete the process.

7. A good translation for this phrase would be, “[affirmative *ibó*] answers yes, [negative *ibó*] answers no, [affirmative *ibó*] is blessed/preferred.”

- ayé:** In many Spanish texts, the ayé is identified as a saltwater shell; however, the type of shell used for ibó is not specific. It may be of any species as long as it is elongated and spiral. It must also be small enough to be secreted in a client's hands. This symbol is limited in questioning. It is used to ask the following: questions of relationships and marriage, questions relating to illness, and questions relating to water orishas.
- owó:** Normally, *owó* is a Lucumí word denoting wealth and money. Curiously, the original medium of exchange among the Yoruba was the cowrie (money cowrie) shell. It comes from the salty waters of Olokun and Yemayá (in her guise as the sea); hence the belief that these two titanic orishas together own all the wealth in the world and can bestow financial riches upon their children. When used as ibó, owó may take one of two forms: two cut cowries tied with the cut sides together, or a single, uncut cowrie a bit larger than those used for the diloggún. This symbol may be paired with two others: with efun, and it will mark the negative, or with otá, and it will then mark the affirmative. Questions dealing with any type of financial situation can demand the use of this ibo. Note that it is not very popular with most italeros, but the oriaté (an expert in the ceremonies of Santería) will always employ owó in his or her readings.
- apadí:** Another of the less popular ibó, apadí is used when the diviner is marking those things concerning arguments or wars. It is made from a broken piece of pottery or china.
- gungun:** When Elegguá is fed a goat, and that goat is then used to feed those in the ilé, the left hind leg is used to make this ibó. It will always be paired with otá, and it is used to mark the affirmative to questions dealing with the dead, egun, or those spirits said to dwell in heaven with Olódumare. While most diviners try to avoid the use of this ibó, it is essential to those questions mentioned above; they cannot be properly marked without its use.
- ewe ayó** (more commonly known as osán/sesán): In most Spanish texts, this ibó is listed as a large, bulbous seed; however, the use of any seed for this tool is incorrect. The proper seed to use

with the diloggún is that from the guacalote tree. It conceptualizes both offspring and, curiously, illness. One's children and progeny are found here because the seed holds the potential to grow a new tree and thousands of seeds; illness is found here because the fruit hiding the seed must rot before a new tree can grow. Whenever used in a reading, this *ibó* will respond in the negative.

eri-aworan (more correctly known as *orí agboran* or *orí ere*): For this *ibó* the diviner must find a tiny doll's head, one that can be easily hidden in a closed fist. Most *italeros* and *oriatés* will use the head of a tiny jester's doll. It is used in anything dealing with the client's *orí*, and it will always answer in the affirmative.

Now that the diviner has chosen appropriate tools for his question and given them to the client, the sixteen shells are gathered into the *italero's* left hand and gently tapped on the mat three times. After the third strike, the hand is brought up and opened so that they may gently roll out. The *odu* is counted and marked, and the *italero* must determine whether an elder or younger *odu* has opened. Letters having elder status are Okana (1), Eji Oko (2), Ogundá (3), Irosun (4), Eji Ogbe (8), Ofún (10), Ejila Shebora (12), Metanla (13), Merinla (14), Marunla (15), and Merindilogún (16). If one of these eleven signs is present upon casting, the left hand is chosen; the client must first display the symbol held there. This is the diloggún's answer to the question posed. If any of the five remaining *odu* opens upon casting, both fists are to remain closed while the diviner gives a second casting of the shells.

The five remaining signs are considered the younger *odu*, and their order of seniority from youngest to oldest are Oché (5), Odí (7), Obara (6), Osá (9), and Owani (11). To be effectively employed, they must be memorized in this order. When a younger *odu* opens on the mat upon the initial casting, the diviner must instruct the client to keep both hands closed while he once more gathers the sixteen cowries. He again strikes the left hand to the mat three times, letting the shells fall after the third strike. Once more, the opened sign must be marked. The basic rule for opening the client's hands under this circumstance is this: If the first throw of cowries is younger than the second, the right hand is opened. When an older *odu* opens first, and a younger *odu*

opens second, the left hand is chosen. Thus does the oracle mark its answer.⁸

Those are the basic rules, but as with all rules, there are exceptions. First, among the younger odu we say that two are of the same age, even though they are given younger/older status in their ranking; those two signs are Obara and Osá. Obara will always rank as younger than Osá because it was created after Osá. However, if the odu marked when determining the hand of *ibó* is either 6-9 or 9-6, the left hand is always chosen out of respect for these two letters. In this way, we say that there is no war between them. There will also be times when a younger odu falls twice and becomes a *meji*, or twin, of itself (5-5, 7-7, 6-6, 9-9, or 11-11). This makes the letter one of the sixteen primaries, and these demand the opening of the left hand. Finally, there are two additional rules concerning the elder odu Elleunle (8) and Irosun (4). When Elleunle or Irosun falls, the answer is always yes, the affirmative. Once this has been marked, however, the diviner should still direct the client to open his left hand. If the affirmative *ibó* is found there, all is well. If the negative *ibó* is found there, the *italero* knows that there is a spiritual war going on within this person, and even he does not agree with what the orishas have marked. This will need to be discussed, for it will cause spiritual problems.

Anywhere during the initial casting of the cowries, or during the marking of *ibó*, there is yet another sign that may develop and fall in the diloggún: the odu that is not an odu, Opira. Falling with all mouths facedown and closed, we say that Opira has come to the house, and for a time, the routine process of diloggún becomes suspended so the diviner may attend to this catastrophic symbol. The circumstances with which this letter deals are cataclysmic: natural disasters, insanity, mental instability, famine, death, and general calamity in the client's life. So severe are some of this sign's predictions that most *santeros* (priests) will immediately close the oracle, telling the client that "the

8. Two special notes concerning the hands during this process: First, the right hand is considered to be younger than the left hand. This serves as a good device for remembering the hand to be chosen. Second, any answer that is found in the left hand not only is stronger, but also will be made more immediately manifest than if it were found in the right hand. For any type of *iré* to be marked in the left hand is a good blessing; yet if any *osogbo* is marked in the left hand, we say that the curse is already upon this person.

shells have left my hand.” A competent Ifá priest is then sought out to remove the osogbo that opened when Opira fell on the mat. For those houses who do not work closely with a Babalawo, however, there is a set of rituals that can be performed when Opira has fallen; this way the letter can be cleared and the need to sit with Ifá avoided. The client, if ibó are being chosen, should keep those in his hands, not changing their position; we do not yet want to know if the sign has fallen with an even greater osogbo marked (this positioning of the shells will never bring good fortune). Next, the priest or priestess who is working as the diviner’s assistant should gather all the shells into the jícara of fresh water (they should first be turned so that all the mouths are opened) and take them to the front door. The water in the gourd cools the heat of the sign a bit, so none of this must be allowed to fall on the floor between the diviner’s table and the front door.

When the diviner’s assistant stands at the front door, it must be opened wide so the water may be flung far out into the street. The gourd is then inverted on the ground just outside the door, allowing the diloggún to fall into a new pattern. Lifting the gourd, the priestess then counts the number of shells that have fallen faceup, calling this out to the italero. Cowries are put back into the jícara, the door is closed, and fresh water is poured again over the diloggún. Once all is done, these things are returned to the italero so the session may continue. The marking of Opira continues thus: First, the diviner asks if the sign fell for the client, and if the answer is no, the diviner asks if it fell for himself. After that, the marking goes to the client’s godparents, and then to the priests or priestesses who may be present. If the oracle answers no to all these, the marking continues on the godparent’s houses of ocha first and then the diviner’s. Once an affirmative answer is found, that information is noted and the reading may continue. If Opira cannot be marked on anyone in this line of questioning, nor on any ilé represented in the room, both the client and diviner should see the priests of Ifá. The reading is closed. If Opira is marked, the one for whom it has been marked should have a session with the diloggún immediately so that its heat may be placated. In any case, the diviner cannot read for anyone else that day until he has read for himself.

Once the opening odu for the session has been extracted and recorded, the diviner must proceed with the divination in a strictly set pattern. First, the orientation of the opening odu must be determined: The

diviner must discover if this odu opens in good fortune. For this, both efun and otá are chosen. Holding them in his left hand, the diviner asks, “Iré ni?” which means, “Is a blessing predicted through this letter?” and then touches the positive ibó to each of the mouths open on the mat, keeping the negative ibó securely behind this and hidden in his hand. He then hands the two pieces to the client, giving him the efun first and the otá second, saying, “Efun lo si wayu, otá beko, efun ke ibó” ([affirmative ibó] answers yes, [negative ibó] answers no, [affirmative ibó] is blessed/ preferred). Assuming that this is the client’s first reading, the diviner explains which ibó will answer yes and which will answer no; the client is then advised to shake both together briskly, allowing one to fall into each hand. He should hold each tightly in a closed fist. The diviner then takes the diloggún firmly in his left hand, and, striking the table three times, he lets the shells fall after the third strike. Following the rules for determining which hand to pick, the diviner chooses the appropriate hand to get the letter’s answer to the question “Iré ni?”

When the Reading Opens in Iré

Having opened in iré, the diviner must now proceed in a set pattern for extracting the rest of the odu’s orientations; the type of iré must be determined so that the client will not miss his blessings. There are a variety of origins for the goodness predicted in odu, and each of these must be named until the oracle marks one as the source. The following list is generally accepted as the origin of most iré, although many experienced diviners will personalize it with their own questioning. Begin with the question “Iré Arikú?” and proceed to the end of the list. If none of these can be marked, we say that the source of iré is unknown and not firm; an *ebó* (offering) must be marked and the reading will continue as if it fell in mild osogbo. Blessings will come only through the client’s own works and good behavior.

iré arikú: When this type of iré is predicted, it brings vitality, health, and immortality of the soul; many consider it to be one of the best types of iré that the orishas may give. The word *arikú* has many translations, the most common being “to not face an untimely death.”

iré elese eledá: “Goodness at the feet of one’s orí.” In this orientation, the odu is saying that the luck and evolution will come

through the client's own orí, his higher self and guardian angel.

iré otonowá: "Goodness from heaven." In this marking of iré, the client will find his blessings falling from the hands of Olódumare and all the Spirits of heaven.

iré elese ocha: "Goodness at the feet of the orisha." When this type of iré falls, it shows that the evolution and blessings predicted in the odu will come about through one of the orishas speaking in this sign. The diviner must now deviate from normal process. Using the efun and otá, he begins to question the oracle as to which orisha brings the blessings. Starting with the first orisha that speaks in the letter, and continuing in order until the oracle points out which spirit is bringing iré, the diviner should ask, "Iré elese [the name of the orisha]?" Unless the iré in this sign is firm and manifest in this life, this is the spirit that will demand ebó as *larishe* (a remedy to overcome osogbo and bring iré).

iré elese egun: "Goodness at the feet of the ancestral spirits." This orientation, when marked, says that the iré of odu will manifest through one of the many egun that work on behalf of the client. These can be either the blood or spiritual ancestors. In some houses of ocha, diviners insist on marking which egun accompanies the client to bring iré; however, this is excessive and unnecessary. Egun work together on behalf of a single person; and although one may work with many spirit guides or Congolese spirits to further evolution, those are not egun. They are just spirits. When iré elese egun is marked, the diviner lets the client know that his blessings are coming about through the work of ancestral spirits, and if eboses are called for (*eboses* is the plural of *ebó*), they are directed toward egun and not the spirits of another tradition.

iré elese ará onú: "Goodness at the feet of the spirits of heaven." This type of iré, ará onú, is often confused and marked with iré elese egun; however, there is a distinction between egun (spiritual/physical ancestral spirits) and ará onú (the denizens of heaven). First, egun are more tied in with the client's spiritual and physical makeup. Egun are a part of one's soul and a part of one's genetic makeup. Egun follow an individual his whole

life. They are a collective energy that work continually for his or her evolution if they are given love and spiritual care. Ará onú are different. These are spirits unrelated to the client physically and spiritually; they are foreign souls that for whatever reason have taken an interest in this person. They can come from any cultural or spiritual background, for heaven does not discriminate on the basis of religion, and in the end, we all worship one creative force: God or Goddess. Offerings made to ará onú may be done with egun; however, the client should be told the distinction between these two types of spirits.⁹

iré ayé: “Goodness through increase of fortune.” This type of blessing explains itself: Financial blessings are predicted in odu if the orisha’s advice is followed.

iré elese elenú: “Goodness from the speaker’s tongue.” When this type of iré is marked, we say that it will manifest through the client’s words; however, because Elegguá owns the tongue and the alphabet, our own house will say that Eshu (another name for Elegguá), as well as the tongue, brings the blessings predicted.

iré lowó: This orientation of iré points out that the client is in control of his own iré; the translation is “evolution through works, the client’s own hands.” The client is advised to work hard, for through his own good works will his salvation out of difficulty be found.

iré dedewan t’Olokun: This blessing comes from Olokun; usually, it points out that iré will be found by or through the depths of the ocean. Olokun may also be needed by the client (since having her brings the mysteries of the sea into the client’s home), or offerings given to her if the iré is not firm. This is an especially powerful origin of blessing and goodness if it comes about in Olokun’s sign, Irosun.

iré ashegunota: This orientation of iré points out that the good fortune predicted will be brought by one of the otanes, or sacred

9. An additional note: The spirits of ará onú do not include “familiar spirits” or those types of spirits seated in the *nganga* (pot or cauldron) of the palero (there are odu that point out the workings of these types of beings). Any spirit tied or bound to any object or any place cannot be said to exist in heaven. Those are earthbound spirits; they can bring few blessings on their own.

stones, of the orishas; different houses, however, will have different ideas as to what this means. In our own house, we first mark which orisha will bring the blessing following the order of orishas that speak in each odu (for this we ask, “Iré elese [name of orisha]?”). Once this has been marked, depending on whether or not the iré is firm, a variety of eboses will be prescribed to that Spirit. Often, the client who comes in an iré ashegunota that is not firm will have to receive that orisha. The client will seek out the stones for this Spirit.

iré elese araoko: “Goodness at the feet of the fertile land” is a good translation for this phrase. A person for whom this letter falls needs to travel away from the city, spend time away from the city and civilization, or move deep into the country to find his evolution and iré.

iré elese abure: When marked, this type of iré will bring blessings from a brother or sister by blood or ocha. The client must strengthen family/spiritual ties under the influence of this orientation.

iré elese obini: Here, the blessings will come from women.

iré elese okuni: Here, the blessings will come from men.

iré elese omo: This type of iré will come from one of the client’s children. If the client has no children, it will still come from a child. When this type of iré opens in some odu, it marks the arrival or birth of an unexpected child. Additionally, when iré elese omo opens, we prohibit the consultant from having an abortion or a termination of pregnancy. Likewise, the client is prohibited from recommending abortion as an alternative to childbirth. This would forever destroy the iré of this sign, and no eboses can reclaim it.

iré elese arubo: “Blessings and goodness at the feet of the elders.” This blessing will come through the hands of an elderly person. No matter the letter or advice given by the letter, Obatalá figures in this orientation, and the client must spend more time with the elderly; he must give them his total respect. Note that those with gray hair, even if young, must be given respect, because good advice might come from these people.

iré ibujoko: “The goodness and blessings of change.” When this type of iré is marked, it forebodes many changes for the client, and it is by accepting these changes that the iré will come (almost always, these are catastrophic). The odu that opens on the mat will give hints as to what types of change are being predicted, and the diviner must carefully relay this information.

iré aláfia: This type of iré brings peace to the client’s life.

iré elese babatobi: This marking shows that the blessings of the sign will originate with one’s own godfather. In our own house we have noticed that this type of iré usually falls in Iroso Umbo (Irosun Elleunle, 4–8 in the diloggún), or else it comes for those who are in dire need of the religion, yet are too poor to afford the ceremonies of the orishas. When this falls, the diviner needs to keep the client’s financial state in mind. Additionally, it marks the need for the client to become closer to his own godparent.

iré elese iyatobi: This blessing, like the former (iré elese babatobi), comes from one’s godmother. The same considerations for iré elese babatobi apply in this orientation.

iré banda loguro: From the depths of the earth will this blessing come; it is one of the more mysterious, and it usually requires the reception of the darker orishas (especially orisha Oko).

iré elese ewe: When this type of iré is marked, it shows that the evolution predicted would come from mild gambling. Unless the iré is firm and manifest in this life, however, more money could be lost than won.

iré elese orí yoko: This blessing will come only if the client is initiated. If the iré is not firm, eboses must be marked to the guardian orisha; and, if this is not known, the head must be marked before this session can come to a close.

iré iyekú: This iré marks many tragedies before it will manifest; almost always, it comes through death and inheritance. It can also mark lawsuits and personal injury claims. In iré iyekú, the diviner should explore options for ebó so that the iré comes without the tragedy.

Once the type of iré has been marked, the diviner writes the odu that was used to open the hand under the opening odu on the piece

of paper and writes the type of iré predicted beside this. Remember: If none of these types of iré can be marked, then the iré is not firm; the diviner cannot and must not ask for firmness, or firmness to manifest in this life (the next two questions). The proper procedure in this case is to go to the section in this chapter titled “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” There, the diviner will search for an ebó that will make the iré manifest firmly in this sign. If a type of iré can be marked, the priest/ess must then determine if the iré predicted is firm. Two questions must be asked: “Iré yale?” (“Is the blessing firm?”) and “Iré yale timbelaye?” (“Will the firm blessing manifest in this life?”). If the question to the first is yes, the second must be presented to the oracle; if it has answered that the iré is firm. If the answer to the second question is yes, the oracle has answered that not only is the iré predicted firm, but it also will manifest in this life. The oracle has then closed itself and the diviner must relay the information to the client. If the answer to “Iré yale?” is no, then it is known that the iré predicted is *kotoyale*, or incomplete. The diviner must mark ebó. If the answer to “Iré yale timbelaye?” is no, then the iré is complete yet not stable (*tesitesi*), and ebó must still be marked. A negative answer for either question does not close the oracle, and the diviner will still need to follow the procedures for closing it at the end of this chapter.

When the Reading Opens in Osogbo

When the answer to the question “Iré ni?” is no, the diviner knows that the reading has opened in osogbo (misfortunes are being predicted), and the next step is to mark the type of osogbo that is predicted. Just as in marking iré, the diviner must ask his questions in a specifically marked order until an orientation is found. The following list is in the order that these osogbos should be asked. If the diviner reaches the osogbo called *ewon* (which predicts imprisonment), and still the oracle marks nothing, it is said that the osogbo is predicted in *eshe*, or general afflictions. Once an osogbo is marked, the odu bringing the osogbo is recorded, along with the type predicted.

ikú: The literal translation of *ikú* is “death”; and in the Yoruba beliefs, *ikú* is sometimes personified as the spirit of Death. When trying to determine if this is the osogbo predicted by odu, the diviner will use the otá and the gungun as the ibó. When gungun

is in the chosen hand, it marks ikú for the client. If the otá is in the hand marked by the letters that fall, then the diviner must continue trying to mark an osogbo from this list. Any affirmative answer found in the left hand is stronger than that found in the right, and when an osogbo is marked by the left, the client is being warned that the negativity is already upon him. The eboses prescribed in this odu must be done quickly to avert danger.

ano: In attempting to mark this osogbo, the diviner must use the ayé (shell) and otá (stone) in tandem. *Ano* translates as “illness,” and when the letter marks this as the type of osogbo, the odu is promising some type of disease upon the client if the letter on the mat is not properly appeased. The ayé will mark ano; the otá requires that the diviner continue to explore the orientation of this odu.

eyo: Giving the client the otá (black stone) and apadí (broken pottery shard), the diviner tries to mark this as the next possible orientation of odu. Eyo brings legal complications, bad tongues, and unforeseen tragedies; with the apadí as the ibó used, an affirmative response marks that there will be much quarreling and argument in the client’s life. Otá symbolizes the negative response, and that eyo is not the osogbo in this odu. The diviner must continue to explore the letter’s orientation.

arayed: Giving the client the apadí and otá once more, the diviner will next ask if arayed is the osogbo predicted. This orientation marks arguments, evil tongues, and witchcraft on the client. It is a hot osogbo, and the eboses must be done quickly even if the client’s life is currently going well. Arayed promises quick devolution and destruction in one’s personal affairs. If the apadí is in the hand chosen, this is the osogbo; if the otá is in the hand chosen, this is not the osogbo.

inya: Once again, the otá and the apadí are used when the diviner tries to mark this orientation as the osogbo; *inya* means “war,” and if the apadí is in the hand chosen, inya is marked. Choosing the hand with the otá mandates that the diviner continue to explore this odu.

ona: To mark ona, the diviner once more gives the client the otá (negative) and apadí (which marks this osogbo). *Ona* is a general

term that brings afflictions to the client (home, body, and family) and closed roads. Although he may not speak up specifically in the odu that has opened, Elegguá is the one to be propitiated by the client when ona is predicted.

ofó: *Ofó* translates into “loss”; when this osogbo is marked, every aspect of the client’s life will suffer: business, personal, economic, and so on. Once again the diviner must use the apadí and the otá to mark this orientation, with the apadí ending the search for osogbo here.

ogo: Ogo brings negative, destructive witchcraft from any number of sources (either human or spiritual). Some diviners will use the apadí and otá to mark this osogbo, and the apadí signifies the answer is yes; however, since witchcraft is a female mystery, many diviners will use the ayé and otá for this. If the ayé (or apadí) is chosen, ogo has been marked.

akoba: This is a general osogbo showing that things are not good. Use the apadí to mark the affirmative and the otá to mark the negative.

fitibo: This osogbo marks death, yet the death is close, as opposed to ikú, which predicts eventual death. In our own house we have seen the differentiation of these two osogbos thus: When fitibo opens on the mat, the client is in danger of violent acts or accidental death from the moment he walks out the diviner’s door. When ikú opens on the mat, death may be accidental; the accident, however, is far into the future. Ikú can also point out death from slow, wasting diseases, while fitibo marks more sudden illnesses such as a heart attack. Use the gungun and the otá for this osogbo, with the gungun marking the positive and the otá marking the negative.

égba: Égba is paralysis and loss of all that is good in the client’s life; and although this orientation will never be specific as to what is to be paralyzed, depending on the odu that has opened, paralysis of the body (or a part of the body) is a possibility. A famous Latin American singer (who shall, for legal and ethical reasons, remain nameless) received Babalwaiye (an orisha; the father of sickness and infectious disease) as the ebó against certain “égba elese lowó” (paralysis from this person’s own hands).

An accident had left this entertainer paralyzed. The spine was severed, and although doctors told him that there was no hope of ever walking again, within a year this entertainer was back on the road! *Maferefún Babaluaiye!* Since *égba* is a type of sickness, many diviners will use the *ayé* and *otá* as *ibó*, and *ayé* marks this *osogbo*.

oran: The client is committing either legal or moral crimes, and these will bring this *osogbo*. Although *ebó* will be marked to help alleviate this negative orientation, the only true *ebó* is to no longer commit these offenses! Use the *apadí* and the *otá* to mark this *osogbo*, the *apadí* meaning that it is *oran*.

epe: *Epe* translates into “curse”; and although many priests and priestesses who still retain Catholic ties will begin to denounce the evil afflictions of “witchcraft” sent by others, it is important for the diviner to hold his tongue until the exact origin of *epe* is known (even God can curse!). For this *ibó*, use the *otá* and the *osán*; in this case, it is the *otá* that will mark the *osogbo*.

Note: We differentiate between *epe* and *ogo* for many reasons, the most obvious being that a curse is a direct, malefic attack, whereas *ogo* can be sent with good intentions by another, yet still have destructive effects on the client’s personal destiny.

ewon: *Ewon* is an *osogbo* that brings imprisonment. While it can mean physical incarceration, the client can also become a prisoner of his own life, thoughts, emotions, and habits. The *apadí* and *otá* are used, with the *apadí* marking the *osogbo*.

If the oracle will mark none of these, the *osogbo* is said to be *eshe*, or general afflictions. The *odu* that fell when the diviner tried to mark *ewon* is written down and “*eshe*” is written beside it. Now, the diviner must mark from where the *osogbo* comes. The question should be phrased thus: “[name of *osogbo*] (already determined from the previous list) *elese* [origin of *osogbo*] (chosen, one at a time, from the following list)?”

otonowá: *Otonowá* is a *Lucumí* contraction that means “from heaven,” and the diviner may take this to mean that *Olófin*, *Olorún*, and *Olódumare* are sending the *osogbo* itself. Although there may be one or more *orishas* who stand up in the reading

to offer their advice and help if the client performs ebó, this person must make direct petitions to Olorún if the osogbo is to be lightened or lifted. The diviner must spend time explaining ethical action and moral responsibility in relation to this person's troubles. God demands nothing but the best from each of us, and only our best should be given back to God. The efun and otá should be used to mark this origin of osogbo, the efun answering in the affirmative.

elese eledá: When this origin of osogbo is being marked, the diviner gives the client the *ibó orí ere* (the doll's head) and the otá. The former marks the affirmative and the latter marks the negative. *Elese eledá* translates into "from the head" or "at the feet of the head." This means that the client's own head brings about any ill luck or harm. No matter the orishas standing up for ebó, the diviner might need to mark a *rogación* (cleansing of the head) and feeding of the orí to help this person align once more with his higher self and guardian orisha.

elese egun: *Elese egun* translates into "at the feet of the ancestral spirits"; it means that the osogbo predicted in this odu will come from the ancestors of either blood or ocha. Many diviners will try to mark the spirit that is bringing these calamities; however, in our own house we find that this is a ludicrous practice. Egun denotes a collective force of spirits that work to help the client evolve, and osogbo from them results either from negligence of these forces, or the futile attempt of the spirits to push this person closer to his true path (psychologists call this negative reinforcement). Spirits we know as "spirit guides" would not be classified as egun; they would belong to the practices known as Espiritismo, Spiritism, witchcraft, or Palo Mayombe, and there are certain odu that allude to their work. For this origin, use the gungun and the otá for *ibó*. If the gungun is chosen, the origin of the osogbo comes from egun, and that is all the diviner and client need to know to work through these difficulties.

lowó arayé: This marks that the tragedies predicted will come through evil eyes, tongues, and circumstances. In spite of the eboses prescribed, the diviner must warn the client to avoid arguments and gossip so that this orientation does the least harm

to his life (note that this oracle is filled with good old-fashioned common sense!). Apadí and otá are the ibó chosen, with the apadí marking this as the source.

elese ará onú: *Elese ará onú* translates into “at the feet of the citizens of heaven, the spirits with Olódumare.” This marks heaven, the invisible realm, as the source of the osogbo; it does not, however, mark egun or Olófin/Olódumare as the source. Efun and otá are the ibó used to mark this origin.

elese ocha: Here, it is revealed that an orisha is the source of all osogbo; it translates into “at the feet of the orisha.” Begin by using the efun and otá as ibó; efun is used to mark the affirmative, while otá marks the negative. In this orientation the diviner must determine which orisha brings the osogbo to the client. Following the order of orishas given at the beginning of each chapter on odu (“The Orishas Who Speak in [Okana, Eji Oko, and so on]”), the diviner should question the oracle now as to who sends “punishment.” Remember to use the ayé and otá when asking if the origin is one of the water orishas, such as Yemayá and Oshún. Even though this orisha may remain silent throughout the rest of the reading, the diviner must mark ebó to this Spirit; and if the Spirit will take no ebó, the client must still be told to appease this orisha constantly.

elese tiya-tiya: This marks arguments, gossip, and slander as the origin of the osogbo. Use the apadí and the otá, remembering that apadí marks this as the origin. No matter the advice given in the odu itself, with this orientation the client must be continually on guard against the slander of others; he must also ensure that he takes no part in any argument or gossip that might come his way.

elese obini: This Lucumí phrase means “at the feet of a woman”; and it will be a woman who brings the osogbo predicted onto the client. Apadí and otá are chosen as ibó. The apadí will mark the origin while otá marks the need to continue with this list.

elese okuni: This Lucumí phrase translates into “at the feet of a man.” When this is the origin of the osogbo, the evil predicted will come about through a man. Apadí and otá are the ibó used for this origin as well.

elese abure: This marks the osogbo as originating with a brother or sister (related by either blood or ocha); use the apadí and otá as ibó. Apadí signifies this as the origin.

lowó: The client's osogbo comes through his own hands; it will be his own works that bring his ruin. Use the apadí and otá as ibó, with the apadí marking this source.

elese ogo: *Elese ogo* means “at the feet, or through the works, of witchcraft.” This is an interesting origin that marks magic as the source of troubles. Sometimes, it can be the client's own mystical involvements that bring danger to him. For this orientation, use the ayé and the otá; ayé answers in the affirmative. Note that the word *ogo* can translate into “witch,” “witchcraft,” or “sorcerer.”

alaleyo: “Those who are outsiders to the faith, commoners who live in the world” will bring the osogbo. It is an interesting origin, not very precise, and puts the client on guard against others whose true intentions are not known. When marking this, use the otá and osán/sesán (guacalote seed) as ibó. The otá will mark this as the source of osogbo, while the osán/sesán will answer in the negative. If the opening odu marks any person or type of people as the origin of danger, and this orientation of osogbo has opened, the diviner must caution the client to stay away from them at all costs. They will bring the client's ruin.

If none of these can be marked, we say that the osogbo comes from *elese elení*, or the client's own tongue. The letter thrown for alaleyo should be recorded with this phrase written beside it.

Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu

The information given in this section is instrumental throughout this book and the rest of the divination process as well (when trying to close an odu). In some letters, many orishas will stand up for undetermined offerings; the diviner will have to use this process to determine what is needed. Once the diviner has marked either iré or osogbo, it is time to mark one of the many remedies, or larishes, that can be found through odu. Whenever an osogbo is predicted, ebó (an offering) should be prescribed; also, whenever iré falls in anything but iré yale timbelaye (that is, iré that will manifest in this life), some small token

ebó or *larishe* should be marked to stabilize and lock in the goodness predicted by an *odu*. It is here that the diviner needs to proceed slowly and cautiously. Keeping in mind the general energy pattern of the opening sign, the priest/ess can more skillfully manipulate the *diloggún*; knowing the *orishas* that speak in a letter, and what *eboses* or offerings those spirits normally require, will help in this process and save valuable time throughout the divination. Remember that in the section for each composite *odu* there will be a list titled “The *Eboses* of [composite *odu*’s name]”; although one or more of these things may be required to close the reading, these must not be confused with *larishe*. Marking *larishe* is a moment when both the *orisha* and the *odu* are allowed to speak, to “personalize” the sign, dictating exactly what is required to bring the client’s *aché* back into alignment. The world is made of this power, *aché*, and those things used in *ebó* will be transmuted by the Spirits into the energy they need to reweave a person’s destiny. A competent diviner can mark *ebó* to almost any human problem; however, there are a few times when the *orishas*, *odu*, and *egun* will not prescribe *larishe*. The client is left on his own to face what amounts to nothing more than his own karma.

First, the diviner selects the *efun* and *otá* to be used as *ibó* throughout this process: *Efun* is used because the calming influence of *Obatalá* permeates all the *odu*, and he is the most forgiving of all the *orishas*. With his blessings, anything can be overcome.¹⁰ *Efun* will always answer yes and mark the *ebó*, while *otá* will signify that the diviner must continue to manipulate the *diloggún* until a resolution is found. The first question that must be asked is, “*Larishe si?*” or, “Is there a remedy?” If the oracle answers that there is no remedy to be prescribed, the diviner must then ask, “*Igboro larishe?*” or, “Is there advice from an initiate that is present?” If the answer is yes, then the priests and priestesses present at the divination will be allowed to advise the client on *eboses* based on their own personal experience with the *odu*. They will also be allowed to give advice on problems being faced after the diviner has had his chance to speak. This advice

10. *Elegguá*, as well, will speak through all the *odu*. Since he opens the doors to the divine, there can be no act of divination in which he is not present. *Elegguá*, however, is not always as forgiving as *Obatalá*. He is destiny and fate, and he is difficult to propitiate at times.

and the eboses are written down on paper as if the oracle had prescribed them itself. If the answer to this question is no, the diviner must ask, “Ocha onire?” or, “Will an orisha give a blessing to clear the sign?” The orisha giving the blessing should be determined by following the order of orishas given in “The Orishas Who Speak in [Okana, Eji Oko, and so on]” found in each chapter; the diviner must ask “[name of orisha] onire?” until the proper orisha is found. Finally, if the answer to this question is no, the diviner should ask, “Egun onire?” or, “Will egun give a blessing to clear this sign?” If none of these results in a yes answer, the diviner must not despair; he begins to give the reading to the client. The initial energy of odu is only offering advice now, and before the reading is closed out there will be more opportunities for the diviner to prescribe eboses that will help the client with his difficulties. The odu that fell for “Egun onire?” should be recorded with the words “no larishe at this time.”

If the initial answer to “Larishe si?” was yes, or if the diviner has determined that either an orisha or egun will stand up on behalf of the client, he must then proceed to mark ebó. He begins with the following list and the question “Adimú?” Once a type of larishe is determined, the diviner must then continue to work the diloggún and ibó in tandem until the exact ebó required is determined. The diviner’s assistant records this information: Both the letters marking the specific ebó, and the ebó itself, are to be written in the record of the reading.

The options for eboses are as follows.

adimú: An adimú is an offering, often something edible. If the answer to larishe is adimú, first the diviner must use ibó to determine which orisha wants adimú (unless this information is already known from the process of divination). Once that is determined, the diviner must mark what the orisha requires (a candle, some fruit, some cooked food, a material object, flowers, and so on). For this type of ebó animal sacrifice is not marked; an adimú is anything simple and cool, whereas blood is complex and hot. Once this is done, the remaining specifics about the ebó also need to be marked: how long it is to be left with the orisha, and what is to be done with the offering once the ebó is complete.

aladimú: This marks any type of offering based on what the di-

viner knows the orisha likes. If the answer to *larishe* is *aladimú*, the diviner must first mark which Spirit wants the offering (again, if this information is already known from the process of divination, it will not need to be marked). Although the diviner does not need to mark the specific offering, he should still mark how long it stays with the orisha and what is to be done with the offering when it is removed.¹¹

eboshure: In this orientation the diviner will not need to mark an exact offering; the Spirit is requesting an *ebó* made of anything that can be eaten. The diviner will just tell the client what fruits the orisha likes and have him provide a small basket for that Spirit. The orisha taking *eboshure* must be marked (unless this information is already known). The food left in *eboshure* remains with the orisha until it begins to spoil.

ebó keun edun keun: This is a daily cleansing done before the orisha's shrine. Each day, something different is used. The diviner will ask the oracle to which orisha the cleansing should be done, what articles are to be used, and how many days it is to be done. Also, the diviner will ask the oracle where the offering should go after the cleansing is completed. This type of *ebó* is almost always done with fruits or grains; never is an animal sacrifice to be used. When cleansing through *eyebale* (animal sacrifice) is needed, the oracle will first prescribe *eyebale*.

koshe ocha: Literally, this translates into "the reception of an orisha." If the list of *eboses* for each composite *odu* details that a certain orisha should be received, then the diviner does not need to mark which Spirit is standing up. If no orisha is listed there, the diviner should go down the list of orishas who speak in the *odu* until one is marked.

ebó misi: This marks a spiritual bath (herbal waters) to be taken

11. Experienced diviners often use the numbers of the *odu* and orisha to determine this information; in these cases, they will not mark either the number of days it is to remain with the Spirits or the method of disposal required by the Spirit. For example, an *ebó* to *Ogún* made in *Ogundá Oché* would stay with *Ogún* either three or seven days (those are his numbers) and would be taken to the railroad tracks (his home) or the river (which is symbolized by *Oché*). Our house, however, prefers to let the orisha dictate this information since it is that Spirit that must be appeased. If *Ogún* is not happy with the total *ebó*, it will be worthless.

by the client. The diviner should mark the items to be used and the number of times the bath is to be taken. Some odu will include directions for specific spiritual baths. When this is the case, that is the bath to be used.

yoko ocha: This marks that salvation is to be found by being crowned. Unless the guardian orisha is known, this letter will not close out until the head has been marked.

ocha onire: This ebó shows that an orisha will remove the volatile heat of the letter. The diviner must mark both the orisha and the ebó required by that orisha. The questions to be asked are, “[name of the orisha] onire?” and then, “Ebó elese [name of the orisha]?” If the orisha wants nothing, we say the orisha loves the client freely and no offering is required. A token adimú, however, should still be given. When a larishe is being marked to the initial questions “Ocha/Egun onire?” this larishe is not marked again.

egun onire: This marks that egun will remove the volatile heat of this letter. Although the specific egun is not marked, the diviner must determine if egun want anything in return for their help. (The question to be asked now is, “Ebó elese egun?”). If no ebó is required, we say that these spirits love the client for free, yet a token adimú should still be given. When a larishe is being marked to the initial questions “Ocha/Egun onire?” this larishe is not marked again.

Orúnmila onire: In this orientation, it is Orúnmila that stands up on behalf of the client. The orisha priest or priestess is powerless to mark ebó to Orúnmila; only a Babalawo may prescribe his eboses. For this reason, many diviners will not try to mark “Orúnmila onire.” If, however, the question has been asked and the answer is yes, the reading must be brought to a close and the client taken to Ifá. The reading should continue in the normal fashion. The ebó marked by this should be written in the record thus: Ebó elese Orúnmila. The client must go to see Ifá.

Olorún onire: This marks that the blessing will come at the feet of Olorún and Olódumare. The ebó for this is automatic: The client should salute the sun every morning.

orisha onire: This signifies that the blessing will be brought by the more obscure, mysterious orishas, those that know the secrets of life and death itself: Orisha Oko, Yewá, Oba, Naná Burukú, Babalwaiye, Nanumé, and so on. These are the ones that stand up to free the client from his *osogbo*. First, the diviner must determine which of these Spirits speaks in the *odu* that has opened, and then he must mark which of them is giving the blessing to clear the sign. Once this information is known, eboses to the orisha must be marked. If the orisha will accept no *ebó*, and if the letter will not close out, the client is marked for the reception of this orisha. The diviner should mark this and then close the reading. Note that it would be wise for the client to receive this Spirit's *eleke* (the beaded necklace associated with this orisha) no matter the *ebó* marked in the letter. Also, if the reception of a dark, obscure orisha is marked under the eboses for the composite *odu* (listed in each chapter), that is the orisha that must be received; the diviner does not need to mark it because *odu* already has.

igboro larishe: The remedy will come from one of the priests or priestesses present at the mat. They should be allowed to give the client eboses (but not advice unless the diviner specifically asks for it later). Any *ebó* prescribed by any priest or priestess in the room should be written in the record as if *odu* prescribed it itself. These will be the works that clear the *osogbo* in the sign that fell.

ebó kere: *Ebó kere* is a beautiful yet complicated set of offerings. It consists of several spiritual cleansings for the client. First, when this is marked as *ebó* the diviner needs to ascertain the orisha taking *ebó kere*. Then, he must mark a series of offerings to be given and used for the cleansings. The length of time, in gradual increments of weeks, must also be marked. For example, the oracle answers yes to *ebó kere*, and the diviner discovers with *ibó* that Yemayá is to receive the offerings. Since her number is seven, he decides that each offering should remain with her for seven days, and he marks the following items for a period of four weeks (one month): a watermelon, molasses, flowers, and a basket of fruit. After the offerings are marked, he then

uses the oracle to mark where each offering should be taken after one is removed and the next given. The oracle answers that they should each be taken to the lake for disposal, so as the offerings are removed and replenished, the client takes the old ones to a lake.

sarayeye: This marks that a cleansing is needed. In sarayeye it is customary for the diviner to first mark it to egun (unless the ebó is being sought for a specific orisha), and if the oracle's answer is no, he then begins with the list of orishas that speak in the sign. After the proper Spirit is determined, the item with which the client should be cleansed is marked. Sometimes, this can be an animal. In sarayeye, however, it is customary for the animal to be set free after the cleansing since no sacrifice was dictated by either the odu or the orisha (if a blood sacrifice is needed for a cleansing, the odu will dictate that eyebale, sacrifice, is needed). Finally, the method of disposal should be marked as well (if the cleansing is done with an animal, the oracle should dictate where the animal is to be set free).

koborí eledá: This ebó prescribes an ebó made to one's orí. Usually, this is a rogación (a cleansing of the head), but the diviner should mark the things that need to be used in the rogación. Depending on the problems faced by the client, and the odu that has fallen, the rogación might need to be done at the feet of a specific orisha. The odu will dictate when this is the case. This type of offering will not dictate the "feeding" of the orí with sacrifice; such an ebó would be marked by eyebale (animal sacrifice).

kaure: These are prayers; the diviner should mark whether they are to be made to egun or orisha. If the prayers are to be done before an orisha, he must mark which one. The prayers should be dictated to the client. In kaure, it is customary for the client to make adimú with a candle before the prayer and fruit after the prayers are completed.

If the oracle will take none of these, we say the larishe is eyebale, or the sacrifice of an animal. Blood offerings are very hot and volatile; it is important to note that this is always a last resort for ebó. Life on all levels is a precious gift, and it is taken, reverently, only when there are no other options. If the oracle has not yet determined whether the

offering goes to egun or orisha, the diviner must now ask these questions. First, the diviner must determine if it goes to egun by asking, “Eyebale eles egun?” or, “Does the animal sacrifice go to egun?” If not, he must ask, “Eyebale eles orisha?” or, “Does the animal sacrifice go to orisha?” If both egun and orisha refuse eyebale, the oracle is dictating that the sacrifice should be made to the client’s own head. A rogación is to be given, and with this cleansing an animal sacrifice must be offered directly to the crown of the head (this is the area that links the physical head on earth with the spiritual head in heaven). Only in this way will the client’s issues be resolved, for in this case we say that his own spiritual and physical orí is causing confusion in the reading. All of this information should be written in the reading’s record by the diviner’s assistant.

Once the diviner has completed the processes detailed above, the initial manipulations of the diloggún are complete. The odu has been opened, its orientations determined, and the initial larishes prescribed to bring the client back into alignment with odu, egun, and orisha. This is the most important information to be gleaned from the letter; it is now time for the diviner to impart what he has learned to his client. Note that in many houses of ocha, eyebale is not the last larishe included in the pattern of questioning. Many diviners will end the session with the question of eyebale, and if the oracle responds negatively, it is said that the larishe is “Ko larishe” or “No larishe.” This, however, is frivolous; odu would not answer yes to the question “Larishe si?” only to tell the client that the ebó required is “Ko larishe.” It is possible that this confusion arises from an exception to this line of questioning. In some of the odu, when a letter will not close out, there are specific orishas that must be questioned in turn about the possibilities of larishe and ebó. Out of respect for both the odu opened and the orisha questioned, the possibility of eyebale must be given as a *direct choice* during questioning. When eyebale is refused by that Spirit, there are eboses that are then considered marked, and those are the offerings that will bring the client back into alignment with his destiny, turning osogbo to iré. When this pattern of questioning is needed, the option will be flagged in the chapter about that odu.

Giving the Reading

By this time, the initial manipulations of the diloggún are complete; the diviner has performed the mojuba and marked the orientations, and the diviner's assistant has recorded all that was gleaned from this. Before anything else is done, the diviner should perform any initial gestures, prayers, and rituals associated with the odu that has opened. These are outlined in each chapter on the odu. See the sections titled "Special Notes on [odu's name]" in each chapter to check if any opening rites for the letter are needed. Now the diviner may proceed with the reading of the odu appearing on the mat. There are some initial steps to giving the reading that must be followed, ensuring that odu is properly placated. First, the diviner calls off the name of the sign that has opened, followed by a complete rendition of the orientation and *larishe* prescribed in both *Lucumí* and the native language of the client. What has been done with the initial manipulations is the writing/interpretation of one or more sacred sentences by the diloggún, and this initial pronouncement is essential to the final interpretation of odu.

As an example, turn to the illustrations of properly recorded readings given in appendix 2. In the first example, the diviner would begin to give his reading with the words, "Iroso Umbo: ona elese ocha, elese Olokun. *Larishe* si: koshe Olokun." He would then translate the phrase into English (or Spanish, or whatever native language is spoken): "Iroso Umbo: closed roads and afflictions at the feet of the orishas, Olokun. There is a remedy: the reception of Olokun." The second example gives the following initial sentence: "Obara Meji: iré elese elenú; iré yale. *Larishe* si: adimú elese ocha, Shangó." In English, the diviner would then say, "Obara Meji: Blessings and goodness come through (at the feet of) one's own tongue; the iré is firm (yet not guaranteed to manifest now in this person's life). There is *larishe*, a remedy: an adimú at the feet of the orisha, Shangó." Finally, our third example of a recorded reading marks the following: "Ejiogbe Oché: ikú elese otonowá. Igboro *larishe*." This translates into, "Ejiogbe Oché: Death comes at the feet of heaven, Olódumare. There is good advice from an initiate that is present."

It is not important for the diviner to explain the steps involved with the *larishe* at this time. What is necessary is to let the client (who by this time will be both worried and confused about the process of div-

ination) know the essentials of what is predicted, along with any pronouncement of his problem's solution. Next, the diviner must keep this information in mind as he gives one or more of the many proverbs associated with this letter. In our first example, Iroso Umbo, the most relevant proverb to match both odu and the *larishe* prescribed would be, "Nobody knows what lies at the bottom of the sea." We pick this from the parent odu, and not the composite, for Olokun is the depths of the sea, and it is her reception that will clear the initial *osogbo* predicted in the sign. After rendering the proverb, many diviners will then tell one of the many *patakís*, the sacred stories associated with the composite letter that has opened on the mat. Since this reading seems to revolve around the orisha Olokun thus far, in Iroso Umbo the diviner might wish to deliver the story about the shoemaker's apprentice¹² because Olokun is one of the major characters/orishas involved in the plot of that tale.

In the second example, the proper proverb to tell could be, "With your tongue, you may save or destroy the town. Control the tongue." This would be a direct allusion to the firm *iré* coming through the client's own tongue, and it would also explain why the client might not have this *iré* manifest in his life: The tongue is out of control. The diviner would then tell the *patakí* of this odu titled "The Food of Obatalá," for this story revolves around Shangó (to whom *ebó* must be made) and the tongue, the best *and* the worst food in the world. Also, in our third example from Ogbe Oché, the diviner would begin this reading (death at the feet of heaven, *Olódumare*) by reciting the proverb, "Lies bring revolution," or the proverb from the parent odu, "The head carries the body: Do not lose the head." Both allude to falsehood and destruction, and our final example foreshadows death if the head is lost. Our *patakí* "The Truth Is Sweet like Honey" could also be told, for it teaches the results of ethical actions in this odu, and any *osogbo* brought by heaven is an evil visited upon one who is truly deserving of such things. God never makes a mistake!

Now, it often happens that a client will come to the mat with a specific problem, and the opening odu, *larishe*, proverb, and *patakí* will seem to have little, if any, bearing on the troubles faced. If the client

12. The *patakís* for each odu will be published in future volumes to this book. To illustrate how a proper reading should be done, I have included the *patakís* that are mentioned above in the second appendix.

begins to ask questions at this point because of this, he must be immediately silenced. The diviner should explain that before the session has ended, the oracle will answer his question in full, and if not, the client will have three chances to ask specific questions to clarify his concerns. Odu might have been approached because of a specific trouble, a central concern; however, each omo odu concentrates on not just one aspect of life, but the entire spectrum of life concerns that any one person can face at any one time. Just as a physician treats not just a specific symptom or disease, but a total organism, the odu reaches into the full vortex of the client and his environment to determine what is out of alignment. Once odu has determined this, it works gently to pull this person back into focus, back into his personal destiny and harmony with both orí and orisha. A single problem faced by anyone can have roots that extend throughout many different aspects of life. A single symptom cannot be treated alone.

Now that these initial steps have been taken, the diviner faces his most difficult task: turning the massive amount of information contained in both the parent and omo odu into a cohesive whole, weaving a reading out of the divinatory meanings given in each letter. To begin, the priest or priestess who has opened diloggún should keep in mind the orientation of the letter; if an *osogbo* has opened and the odu contains specific messages that should only be delivered in *iré*, obviously those will not apply to the client's situation at this time. The diviner should begin by assessing how the parent odu relates to the "sentence" diloggún has written for this client. Once he has his plan of delivery in mind, the diviner must then relay these things slowly and deliberately, remembering that as he speaks, the assistant will have to write these things in longhand. Once the options for discussion have been exhausted in the parent odu, the diviner begins to relay the meaning of the composite odu that has opened on the mat, and these things are recorded by the assistant as well.

The final two steps to a proper delivery are the enforcement of taboos and the explanation of *larishe*. First, the diviner must once again think about the phrase delivered from the initial manipulations of odu. Also, if the client has offered any information about his present life circumstances, these things must be considered. Finally, having weighed the seriousness of what has been uncovered by odu, the diviner will prescribe prohibitions based on the parent odu. These are

dutifully recorded by the assistant priest or priestess so that after the reading, there will be no question as to what the client should or should not do based on the orisha's advice. Within the many composite odu, there are also additional prohibitions that may be mandated. If an omo odu says there are dangers in specific actions, these must be relayed to the client (the diviner should trust the odu and not his discretion in this). If any specific prohibitions are outlined therein, these, as well, must be given. Now comes the explanation of the *larishe*. Since the *larishe* that has been prescribed is already recorded, the assistant may cease writing unless the diviner is moved by the orishas to add to what was given. The following things must be detailed for the client: the nature of the orisha or egun who wants *ebó*, the type of *ebó*, and what steps are necessary to fulfill the offering. The diviner should specifically ask the client, "Do you have any questions about this *ebó*, or any of the material that we have gone over?" This is the client's one chance to clarify all that was brought up in the session.¹³

Now that all of these things have been done, the diviner is finally allowed his first attempt to close the session. The question "Eboda ke un soro?" is put to the oracle; this translates into "Is the conversation here sufficient? Has all been accomplished?" If the answer to this is yes, the client must be instructed to kiss the fingers of both hands; and then he is directed to touch the mat, showing respect for the odu that opened and the orishas that spoke. Once done, the diviner gathers the *diloggún* from the mat. It is cupped in both hands while he blows on the shells, saying the words "Tó, aché!" to allow the Spirit to depart. If the answer to this question, however, is no, the odu and the orishas have more business with the client that they would like to discuss. Perhaps it is only another *ebó* that is needed by odu, so the diviner must once again begin with the question used to mark the first *ebó*: "Larishe si?" The pattern that has already been laid forth in this chapter's section titled "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu"

13. If the *larishe* prescribed was "Igboro *larishe*" (which means the remedy will come from a priest or priestess at the mat), then the initiates present may begin to advise the client based not only on their own experiences with the odu, but also on the eboses they might have done in the past to help appease the letter that has fallen. This conversation begins with the eldest in *ocha* present and continues until everyone has had a chance to speak, if he so desires. Those things given by the initiates present must be noted in the record of the reading.

must again be strictly followed. If an ebó is marked to some orisha or egun, the diviner must begin to explain the implications of the offerings demanded, and the nature of the orisha or spirit that wants the sacrifice in relation to the odu that opened on the mat. It is also possible that at this time the oracle can answer, “Igboro larishe” (which means the remedy will come from an initiate) or, “Ocha/egun onire” (which means that an orisha or egun will remove the heat of the letter). In these circumstances, the diviner must continue his exploration as the odu demands.

Once this process has been exhausted, the oracle, still refusing to close, is directing the diviner to mark one or more of the many eboses contained in the section of each composite odu titled “The Eboses of [omo odu’s name].”¹⁴ Each odu will have its own process for determining these eboses, and the reader is directed to study the section on ebó given for each parent and omo odu. When working through a letter that will not close easily, the list of eboses given for the omo odu should be marked first. Asking each question (in Lucumí, if possible), the diviner should attempt the process for closure once an ebó is accepted. If the sacrifices given in the omo odu itself are not sufficient to close a reading, the diviner may then work through what is listed under the parent odu. If it comes to the point that there is no more larishe, and no more eboses in the composite and parent odu, it is time to allow the oracle to rest. Diviner, client, and all initiates present must now talk, honestly. Something is amiss in the reading, and it can only be sorted out by a thorough conversation with those in the room. The diviner may wish to discuss, in depth, all the implications contained in the parent odu and composite odu. After an honest talk with the client, the oracle is again asked for closure. If it will not close, and the diviner is very experienced, it is time to turn to the eboses of the secondary odu. After one is marked, the diviner again asks for closure. For both the experienced and inexperienced diviner, if even these

14. Many diviners will repeat the questioning that begins with “Larishe si?” only one additional time during the course of a session; if two larishe have been marked and the odu refuses closure, they turn to the many eboses that are already contained in an odu. In our house, however, we let the oracle take us through this phase of questioning as many times as it will allow. It is in this manner, we feel, that the orisha’s diloggún is allowed to speak, marking only those things that are truly essential to the client’s evolution. This point, however, cannot be argued; each diviner must do what he or she feels is proper.

things will not close a letter, it is time to call a more experienced orisha. The session has missed something essential, something important, and it will take one with more wisdom to bring the reading to a close.

Once all is done and the orisha has been dismissed, the priest gives the top part of the paper containing the odu to the client; the bottom part goes to the client. If the client is a godchild, the parent keeps the entire record on behalf of the aleyo (non-initiate). Under no circumstances is the client to have the numbers of odu that have fallen, nor is the odu that has opened to be discussed beyond what was marked during the reading.¹⁶ The client must do, as soon as possible in the order that the work was prescribed: the initial larishes are to be done first, followed by the eboses of the opposite odu, and then the eboses of the parent odu. Once these eboses have been completed, the advice given by each initiate at the session is to be done to ensure that the energies of the letter are properly directed. Only after all this has been done in this order has the client fulfilled his obligations to orisha; and only then will the evolution prescribed by the oracle begin to take effect in his life.

Before a novice begins to work with the consecrated diloggún or orisha, it would be wise to follow these steps in learning how to manipulate the diloggún. First, the material in this chapter should be read many times until the general flow of a reading is understood; then the details of this system should be memorized. Study the names and meaning of *ibó* are memorized, and make sure you know when a specific *ibó* is used to mark orientation/larish. Second, the concept of elder and younger odu should be understood and committed to memory, for if there is any error in picking the appropriate hand of *ibó*, the oracle's messages will not be correctly deciphered and the reading will be of little use to the client.

15. Godparents should always attend a session with their godchildren. If they cannot attend, a stand-in should be appointed.

16. The odu are living organisms of energy, and if the client has the name and number of an odu in his possession, he can unwittingly call that energy to himself again and again, creating devolution instead of evolution. Once the eboses for a letter are done, the client should no longer dwell upon the odu that opened. There are two exceptions to this rule: the reading of *itá* and the reading of the head. *Itá*, given when a client makes *ocha* and is an *iyawó* (initiate), will affect this person for life; these are the letters that mark a person's personal destiny. The reading of the head is like an *itá* for an aleyo: It is the main pattern that will rule his life until *ocha* is made.

Third, study the Lucumí vocabulary that is essential to the delivery of a reading; those words and phrases included in this chapter are integral to the process of divination. Commit them to memory. Fourth, once all these things have been done, follow the examples of recorded readings in appendix 2. These readings have been given to both initiates and aleyos in our own house of ocha, and by referring to these, the novice can see how a specific odu can predict many different things for different people. Finally, an unconsecrated set of cowrie shells should be opened, and the would-be diviner should find a friend who is also studying divination to practice both manipulation and picking hands of *ibó*. If a third party is there to follow the guidelines in this chapter, pointing out mistakes as they come up, this will help the entire learning process. Only once these steps have been followed and the material of this chapter mastered should the initiate throw his first hand of shells under the guidance of an elder.



Opening Okana— One Mouth on the Mat

The Proverbs of Okana

- If there is nothing bad, there can never be anything good.
- The world was created by one.

The Orishas Who Speak in Okana

In this sign, the following orishas are known to speak: Elegguá, Ogún, Babaluaiye, Orisha Oko, Obatalá, Aganyú, Shangó, as well as one's egun.¹

Special Notes on Okana

Although marked by one mouth on the mat, Okana is not the first odu to manifest in nature (the first is Eji Ogbe, the eldest of the

1. While egun are not orishas, many of the orishas were once egun. That is, some of these holy spirits have lived mortal lives and have died. For this reason, one's egun have the option to speak in many odu. One should keep in mind, however, that the egun are not orishas, and not all orishas have been egun.

elders); this sign was born from Ofún, ten mouths. The sign Okana is harsh, heated, being an expression of peace wrought by the destruction of discord (hence its volatile nature). A prominent author and Babalawo of our faith, Awó Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi, writes:

Ifá teaches that in Okanran [another name for this sign], Shangó becomes incarnated as an orisha by the principles of Justice that are manifest through Creation. The historical Shangó was an effective warrior who unified the eastern portion of the Yoruba Nation. After his victories on the battlefield, Shangó became abusive in his use of power and was transformed by his own sense of guilt and shame. This does not mean the Creator is an unforgiving Deity. By incarnating Shangó as orisha, the universe allows for transformation through tragedy and crisis. False pride and egotism can create an illusion of accomplishment and honor, but the laws of Nature are such that the illusion cannot be sustained by itself indefinitely.²

This is an odu of strict, random, and instant transformation brought by the client's own actions and desires. When it opens on the mat, the sign demands a specific series of rituals so that the italero performing the divination can determine the full force of what the client is about to face.

In nature, we find this letter symbolized by all things that are doubled or twinned. It will affect everything that comes in pairs, and in the body it may have severe applications or warnings depending on the odu pulled at the door to modify the sign (see the next paragraph). If this odu opens during an *itá*—or a reading given when a client makes ocha and becomes an initiate—the italero will immediately make the sacred gestures associated with this pattern: Both earlobes are pulled simultaneously while he turns his gaze to meet the eyes of everyone in the room. This calls their attention to the

2. Awó Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi, *Awó: Ifá and the Theology of Orisha Divination* (New York: Original Publications, 1992), 129–30.

fact that Okana has opened on the mat. Next, the fingers of both hands are snapped immediately before the client's face: His attention must be caught, and he must notice that Okana has opened for him. This sign is volatile and will bring many changes to his life beginning at this moment. Once all of this has been done, many *italeros* will chant a prayer in *Lucumí* for placation and appeasement of this sign.

Having done this, the *italero* drops the sixteen shells into a *jícara* of fresh, cool water to purify and calm the *odu*. An assistant is named to take the *jícara*, water, and shells to the diviner's front door. The door is opened wide and the *santero* performing this short ritual faces the street, silently greeting *Olódumare*, *Olorún*, and *Olófin*, praying for peace and blessings. With the gourd in the left hand and the right covering the *jícara*'s open mouth so no shells may fly out, the water is flung far into the street. All these actions are done solemnly to remove Okana from the house. Remember that only the assistant may leave the room to go to the front door. The client, diviner, and *santeros* present must wait quietly beside the mat.

Now the assistant returns with the *jícara* and shells, covering the gourd with one hand so no one may look inside. On the floor before the diviner, this gourd is turned upside down gently; the shells are allowed to fall in a new pattern. Using the left foot, the officiating priest/ess steps lightly on the overturned container. Some will tap it three times with the foot before removing it. If a young child or a virgin is present in the home, that person is summoned to lift the gourd, for it is said that only innocence like a child's may pacify Okana. Lacking either of these, the job once again falls to the diviner's assistant. Once the *odu* on the floor is recorded, the shells are lifted back to the mat and the reading continues. Even though the shells are thrown to the mat once more to find the second half of Okana, the *odu* read from the floor, said to "have come in at the door," is used to further define the letter's double pattern.

Upon closing the reading, there is also an *ebó* that this *odu* demands from the diviner, client, and all those present in the diviner's home (not just those sitting at the mat). A fresh piece of steak or

unground meat should be rubbed thoroughly with *epó* (red palm oil).³ Show this meat to Elegguá, asking him to remove the letter's negative vibrations from those in the house. One by one, present the meat to each person, following this pattern: head, back of neck, shoulders, heart, stomach, arms, knees, feet, and hands (naming each part in Lucumí), and then pass it over the entire body so the offering can absorb the *osogbo*. After everyone has been cleansed, the meat should be left to Elegguá for at least twelve hours (overnight) before throwing it to the street corner the next morning.

While this short ritual will remove Okana's volatility from those present in the home, the diviner will remain heated until he can finally sit for a reading with the oracle. Using Elegguá's *diloggún*, the diviner should open an *odu* for himself and consult with the *orisha* to see if any *osogbo* from Okana remains with him or his home (and those who live with him—his family). If Elegguá prescribes any *eboses* at this point, these should be done immediately before the diviner reads for another client or resumes his normal daily activities. Only then is the sign properly appeased and the work of Okana complete.

The Message of Okana

Those for whom one mouth has fallen on the mat are delivered a warning: Life is entering a volatile energy pattern. The diviner begins the reading by pulling on his ears and snapping his fingers to focus attention on what is being done and said. Following this is a brief ritual performed to ceremonially cool Okana, for this letter brings much spiritual heat into the home. Again, the shells are allowed to modify the opening throw with another letter to explain why the reading has opened thus before giving the final leg that opens its composite.

3. Most diviners will be prepared for occurrences such as this—in all sixteen *odu* are special *eboses* and rituals for which the diviner must be ready, and materials such as these will always be on hand. If, however, the sign comes up and the *italero* performing divination does not have a fresh piece of beef on hand, one of the priest/esses present in the room may be cleansed to Elegguá first and Ogún second with whatever materials are on hand. In order to be cleansed, the priest makes a sacrificial offering to each *orisha* in order to remove negative vibrations from himself. When the offering is presented to the *orisha*, the *orisha* feeds on the negative energies as well, thereby cleansing the person who made the presentation. That person alone may then be sent from the house to purchase the required elements. The reason for this person's departure should be explained to the *orishas* so that they will provide temporary protection while he or she is away.

Okana gets a lot of ritual attention as it tells us the client is not honest with himself (the truth hurts, and others frequently assess his life and actions honestly). The more solemnly its arrival is treated, the more likely the diviner will be able to get his message across. Even those who are closest to the client find that their honest advice is ignored. Indeed, the argumentative tone taken by the client makes others slow to give good counsel. Okana brings little iré, but if the odu marks itself thus, it shows that there will be a way to make present difficulties work out; but this is true only if the letter's advice is followed. This person has a good rapport with children, yet he is too juvenile in his ways to have the same rapport with adults.

From Okana, we know the client is involved in shady dealings. Sometimes these are only minor moral transgressions, but sometimes the composite odu will warn of major doings. All such actions must be stopped, for others will discover the shadiness. Random violence and planned attacks are also a danger now, both by and against this person. If you are the client, be cautious, and work diligently to ensure personal safety. Guarding one's safety, however, does not extend to the carrying of weapons, for these things will only make an attack worse. If the odu that came at the door was three mouths, Ogundá, someone may have an unforeseen accident with a weapon. Do not buy a large knife or a gun for the home, and if these things are already owned, they should be safely locked away. If the composite odu itself is Okana Ogundá (1-3), not only can the accident be in the home, but also someone, a visitor, may bring it from outside the home. A key to avoiding major tragedy is to keep in mind that children always figure strongly in this letter. Also, keep in mind that any heavy tool can become a deadly weapon, the most dangerous and easily available being the hands. Any attack, violence, or altercation could easily bring trouble with the law, so be careful.

Illegal activities may find a way to creep into the client's life even if caution is taken. Purchases of used goods should be avoided, but if the client is determined to buy something from another person, he should investigate the item's origin. It may be stolen. If someone asks to store anything in the home, this request should be refused for the same reason. Anything bought, held, or found could be illegally obtained property. Honesty is the best policy for the next month or so. If the truth cannot be told, then nothing should be said. If one

cannot be honorable, nothing should be done. Occult activities should be kept to a minimum. There should be no cursing figuratively or literally. These things will only intensify the erratic energy of this odu. Both minor arguments and major debates are to be avoided, as well as any rally, cause, or confrontation in which the client has much emotional involvement. Any type of disagreements now will only serve to block the paths remaining open. Belief in the orishas is already a front, meaningless lip service, and even if the client professes faith, it is in the head and not the heart. Negativity and stubbornness have closed the gates to the divine.

Both children and animals figure prominently in this odu; one who has both in the home must be cautious. Teenagers will rebel against their parents; sometimes, these rebellions can bring violence. Animals will revolt against their owners; and these revolutions can bring attacks. Small children should not be left alone with domestic pets, especially dogs, for the innocent can injure. Sickness can plague both, and odu demands proper medical treatment. Opening Okana forebodes disease, and those who are young can become ill. Illness, however, does not include just the body. The mind can suffer silently, diseased by stress and turmoil. Any child with whom one is related can feel the effects of this sign. Erratic behavior, moodiness, or unusual activities demand support and love, not punishment. Only in this way will *osogbo* be turned to *iré*.

The client must be continually concerned about his home until this odu has passed. It must not be left for extended periods. Travel for business will not be profitable, nor will personal vacations be enjoyable. If travel is unavoidable, an *ebó* to protect the traveler and his home should be marked before the oracle is closed. Realize, however, that to go away is to invite bad news as a companion. One specific danger is that of fire: Okana has revealed that the home is heated, volatile, and spiritual qualities may become physical expressions. Keep sources of open flame extinguished or under supervision. Unplug appliances that are not being used, and limit the burning of candles and incense. Loose clothing should not be worn when cooking, nor should children ever be allowed in the kitchen.

The next twenty-eight days will not be a good time for parties or social gatherings: The client must now find solitude. He should seek somewhere safe and quiet where he may organize himself, his life, his

feelings. This person thinks that his life is going well, that there is no need for peace and seclusion. This is a person who resists rest and solitude, preferring to talk out troubles with others, and right now no one cares about the client's problems; no one wants to help. Only the orishas care. Those trusted friends who have come for help in the past would be the ones who turn their backs now. Clear communication is needed from those with whom the client spends time, and those who will not be open and honest must be avoided. The reason for openness, honesty, peace, and solitude is simple: Like attracts like. Bitterness and intrigue will block out the good things life has to offer. Negativity and impatience ensure continual failure. No matter the double odu that has opened, the diviner should prescribe a rogación, or cleansing of the head, giving it before the client is allowed to leave the house. This will help him face his difficulties with a calm, clear head.

Because this letter is so strong, certain orientations of osogbo demand special attention. Whenever any type of osogbo is predicted in this sign, the odu is extremely hot and volatile; the client must conduct himself honorably and legally at all times if he is to avoid altercations with the law. There should be no violence, no simulated violence, nor should there be any harsh, physical activity or practical jokes. In this letter, danger lurks in darkness, so have a light in the bedroom when asleep at night, and do not go out after dark until the energies of this odu have passed. Those who work third-shift jobs dealing with the public are under scrutiny by vagrants and robbers; and for the next nine days the worker should be overly vigilant and cautious. There is a strong prohibition that the diviner must prescribe in any osogbo: If the client hears signs of violence, he must not check it out with his eyes. He should secure himself so that the violence cannot touch him, and then call the authorities. Say only that he heard a strange disturbance, and if they ask him to do a visual check, he should refuse. Do not admit to witnessing anything, for then the danger of this letter might carry over into the courtroom. If the client is sought out as a witness to any crime or accident, he should not admit to seeing anything.

In either the ano or ikú osogbo, the letter foretells illness, disease, and death brought about through accidents or violence, and the client must guard his safety at all times lest he become a victim of another's evil. Do not go out at night; do not go out alone during the day. Locks to cars,

homes, and offices are useless unless they are actually locked: Check and double-check all security systems in the home, office, and car. When driving about during the day (do not drive at night—ever) make sure that seat belts are worn. Do not drive at an excessive speed, and do not become angry or display anger toward other drivers. The roads are hot in this letter. When aráyé opens as the osogbo, the client is overly stubborn and hardheaded; this will be his disgrace and his downfall. No matter how sternly the diviner delivers this reading, the client will not heed the advice. The diviner should tell the client this. Then he should deliver the full list of prohibitions and meanings for Okana, telling the client that he ignores these things at his own peril. That way, when the dangers in this sign are finally manifest in the client's life, the diviner can still be assured that he did all humanly possible to keep this person from harm. The client's downfall is his own doing.

The Prohibitions of Okana

If the client's reading comes in any type of osogbo, the diviner needs to prescribe the following prohibitions for a period of twenty-one to twenty-eight days; unless this is the reading of itá, in which case the odu's prohibitions last for a lifetime. Obviously, not all these will apply in every case; the diviner must depend on his own aché and the shells themselves to determine the prohibitions that are appropriate. Perhaps the most important prohibition brought when Okana comes in osogbo is this: No one may leave the diviner's house until Okana is cleared by the special ebó to Elegguá. This applies to the diviner, client, priest/esses, and anyone else who may be inside the diviner's house when Okana falls in osogbo.

- Many of the legal complications brought by this sign can be avoided if the client ensures that nothing is bought second-hand; if articles are bought anyplace outside of the market or a store, steps must be taken to ensure that the seller has received them by legal means. Ask for warranties, receipts, and places of origin for all objects purchased. Make sure that there is a witness to the purchase, and make sure that the true identity of the seller is known in case anything turns out to be stolen.
- The mouth must be kept pure, especially when either the iré or osogbo of this sign is said to come through the client's own tongue or mouth. There must be no obscene or blasphemous

words spoken; do not tell tasteless jokes, and never gossip. Refrain from obscene gestures as well, and do not keep company with those that do these things.

- Weapons may not be carried, used, or owned. If the client carries anything not normally used for a weapon, yet conceives of it as a weapon, this must be put away in a safe place.
- Large gatherings, parties, and groups are to be avoided; if intoxicants are served, leave immediately. If a social gathering is unavoidable (for the sake of business), it is of utmost importance that the client not get there early, nor must he stay late; he should attend for the barest minimum amount of time required. While at this gathering, do not speak beyond normal, polite conversation, and avoid any forms of gossip or second-guessing. If food and drink are served, do not consume these things. There could be poison (intentional or accidental) or witchcraft hidden therein.
- Remember this: There is no such thing as make-believe violence, and there are few funny practical jokes. Avoid roughhousing and compromising the feelings of others.
- Much violence and hardship in relationships can be avoided if the client does not become entangled in adulterous affairs. If this person is married, he must be wary of his conduct around the opposite sex. Do not make love to another person's spouse; do not flirt with anyone.
- Never mistreat animals.

The Eboses of Okana

When Okana falls on the mat, in each composite odu the client is automatically marked for the reception of the elekes and the warriors; and the diviner must relay this information to him. If these initiations are not enough to close the letter, or if the initiations are already had, the elekes of one or more of the orishas speaking in this sign may be needed. The diviner should ask, "Ebó eleke?" and if the answer is yes, he should then ask, "Eleke de [orisha's name]?" If the eleke of one or more orishas is not needed, or if the letter will still not close, the diviner must turn to the lists of eboses given in each composite odu before returning to the eboses of the parent odu, Okana. The eboses most vital to each of the omo odu follow.

The Eboses of Okana Meji (1-1)

- If this odu will not close on the *larishe* prescribed by the opening of the oracle, the client is directed to receive Eshu Alaketú, the King of all the Elegguás. Eshu Alaketú must be given a crown immediately upon receiving entrance into the client's home.

The Eboses of Okana Ejioko (1-2)

- In this sign, it is important that the client have the *Ibeyi* (the divine children of Shangó and Oshún and the patrons of twins); this does not need to be marked as an *ebó*. If, however, the client has the *Ibeyi* and the odu refuses closure, the diviner should ask if the orishas need *ebó*. Follow the pattern for marking *ebó* given in the section "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu" in chapter 1 of this book. Begin with the question "Adimú?" and end with the question "Eyebale?" If no *ebó* can be marked, a party should be given to the two orishas; only then will they stand up and fight on the client's behalf.
- When Okana Ejioko opens and refuses closure for a priest/ess, the orisha speaking in this sign could be marking a *tambor* as the solution for all the client's troubles (a *tambor* is a sacred festival of an orisha). The diviner should first ask if a *tambor* is required. Then he should ask if the orisha whose *diloggún* is being consulted wants the *tambor*. If that orisha marks a *tambor* yet refuses *batá*, the sacred drums, the diviner should try to mark the drum for one of the orishas given in the priest/ess's *ocha*. If all these refuse the drum, begin asking about the other orishas following the order given at the beginning of this chapter under "The Orishas Who Speak in Okana."
- Additionally, the diviner should note that if the *ebó* of the drum appears during an *itá* for either Elegguá or the orisha of the head, that client is automatically marked to give a drum to all the orishas in time. Also, proper protocol must be followed in giving this *ebó*: The godparent's orisha (from whom the client's head was born) must be given fundamental *batá* first before this client may play the drums for any of his own Spirits.

The Eboses of Okana Ogundá (1-3)

- The elekes should be given to put the client under the protection of Obatalá, Yemayá, and Oshún. If the client cannot afford the expenses of this initiation, then a rogación should be given and Obatalá's necklace put on the client.
- Whenever Okana Ogundá opens for a priest/ess and refuses closure, it may mark one of two eboses: the giving of four legs or the reception of the knife. First, the diviner should ask the oracle if an orisha needs four legs; and then he should ask if the orisha speaking requires four legs. If so, the ebó is marked. If four legs are needed for an orisha beyond the one speaking, the diviner tries to mark it for one of the orishas given in the client's ocha. He must follow the proper order for these Spirits (usually Obatalá, Yemayá, Oshún, Shangó, Oyá, Elegguá, and Ogún are the ones questioned). After questioning these orishas, the diviner questions the orishas remaining (in order) from the section at the beginning of this chapter titled "The Orishas Who Speak in Okana." After the proper orisha is determined, the diviner must determine if that orisha also wants an itá the day after four legs are given.
- If the oracle will not mark four legs and itá for any of the orishas, the diviner should next try to mark the reception of the knife. After this, return to the list of eboses given for the parent odu, Okana; these are discussed in "The Eboses of of Parent Odu" at the end of this chapter.

The Eboses of Okana Iroso (1-4)

- The Ibeyi can be an integral part of this sign; if it refuses closure and the client does not have the orishas, the diviner should ask the oracle if their reception is necessary. If the client has the Ibeyi, he should ask if they need ebó. If an ebó is marked, follow the line of questioning given in chapter 1 under the section titled "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." Begin with the question "Adimú?" and continue through the question "Eyebale?" If none of these is marked, the ebó is to give the Ibeyi a party. In Irosun, this ebó should be completed quickly.

- Olokun is important in this odu as well. If the client does not have Olokun and the letter refuses closure, mark her reception with the shells. If the client has Olokun, he should ask if the orisha needs ebó. If the answer to this is yes, mark the ebó following the pattern for *larishe* (in the same manner you did for the *Ibeyi*, discussed in the preceding paragraph). However, “Eyebale?” is not the last question. If the oracle answers no to the question “Kaure?” then the ebó for Olokun is automatically marked as *eyebale*.
- If the client is an *aleyo* who has *Elegguá*, this orisha might be standing up for more *carga* (the secret ingredients packed into *Elegguá*'s image to strengthen his *aché*) and reinforcement into his clay tray; the diviner should try to mark this. If the client is a priest/ess, this question should be asked as well; and, if the answer is no to that, then the diviner should ask if *Elegguá* wants a crown. This question should never be asked for an *aleyo*.
- The client needs to think about his commitment to this religion, perhaps having the reading of the head done eventually. A *mazo* (a heavily beaded necklace draped over an orisha's shrine) should be thrown on this person; he should then salute his godparents and the diviner should explain the reason for these actions. After marking the client for *ocha*, the diviner should ask the oracle to close. If it will not, he needs to turn to the list of *eboses* given for the parent odu, *Okana*.

The Eboses for Okana Oché (1-5)

- There are two *eboses* that are automatically flagged in this odu: First, the client must clean his house physically and spiritually, for the dirt that is there attracts much negativity and spiritual heat to his life, and second, he must immediately give a mass to the dead, working *egun* frequently. If these two things are not enough to close the letter, the diviner should question *egun*, marking an ebó to them so that all will go well in the client's life.
- The client may have unpaid debts with *Oshún*, and these should be paid immediately. If the client cannot remember making any such unpaid promises, the diviner should ask, “Ebó *elese Oshún?*” to see if an ebó is needed; and if the answer is yes,

he should mark ebó following the guidelines given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If Oshún does not need ebó, recommend that the client give her an adimú anyway to ensure her goodwill.

The Eboses of Okana Obara (1-6)

- When this odu opens and refuses closure, it automatically marks the following eboses that should be done by the client as soon as possible. First, the client must wear white as often as possible to honor Obatalá, for this orisha stands up on his behalf throughout the reading. Also, if there is more than one child in the home, the client might want to consider initiating the oldest to his orisha soon (it is probably either a child of Shangó or Obatalá). As soon as possible, the client might wish to make ebó at the feet of Shangó through one of his priestesses; and if this is not enough to close the letter, an adimú of a white horse should be given at that time. Frequent offerings should also be made at the godparent's Obatalá to ensure his continued favor.
- If this letter refuses closure, Shangó and Obatalá could be standing up for more specific eboses. The diviner should ask, "Ebó elese [orisha's name]?" to both, marking what they each require.

The Eboses of Okana Odí (1-7)

- If this letter will not close out on the initial *larishe* prescribed, Yemayá is standing up in the reading. The diviner should tell the client that if the orisha of the head is not known, it may be Yemayá; and if another orisha has already claimed this client, Yemayá is close to him. If there is currently any sickness, the client should have a *rogación* at her feet as ebó. Note that in this odu, if the client's mother is alive, four snails should be added to the *rogación*—for this will save the mother's life, as well; and if the mother is dead, Yemayá (in her path known as Yemayá Asesu) needs to be given *eyebale* in the drains after the *rogación* is complete. If this is not enough to appease Yemayá and close the odu, the diviner should now ask, "Ebó elese Yemayá?" and if the answer is yes, the diviner must proceed to mark that which is needed. When the ebó is being completed, the client must

leave all his hopes, fears, and problems at her feet. Yemayá will take care of everything.

The Ebores of Okana Unle (1-8)

- When this letter falls, the client needs to have a rogación; in addition, the orí might need to be fed. The diviner should first ask, “Eborí?” to see if the head needs sacrifice, and if it does, in addition to the rogación the client needs to bring two pigeons for his head. Once done, the client should dress totally in white for eight days to honor Obatalá.
- If this is not enough to close the letter, the diviner should next ask, “Ebó elese Elegguá y Obatalá?” If the answer is yes, Elegguá takes a rooster and Obatalá takes two white pigeons and a hen (or rooster, if the Obatalá is male). The orishas must be fed together, but remember that no part of the pigeons may touch Elegguá.

The Ebores of Okana Osá (1-9)

- When this letter falls and refuses closure, the odu marks specific ebores. First, the client needs a rogación at the feet of Obatalá; however, because Oyá speaks so strongly in this letter, the cleansing should include nine different cool, white things. Once the rogación is done, cool fruits should be offered to Oyá and then Aganyú. If this is not enough to close the odu, Obatalá, Aganyú, and Oyá might be standing up for ebó. The diviner should ask each Spirit, “Ebó elese [name of orisha]?” marking what is needed following the guidelines in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.”
- Having explored the previous possibilities, the odu points out that the client needs to work egun frequently, giving them many spiritual masses. In addition, they may need an ebó, and the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese egun?” marking that which is needed.

The Ebores of Okana Ofún (1-10)

- In this sign, it is very important that the client clean his house physically and spiritually, because many dangerous, negative

things have gathered there; and once this is done, it must be kept neat and clean always. If this is not enough to close the letter, then the diviner must also recommend a rogación, and ten things sacred to Obatalá should be included in this cleansing.

- If the letter will still not close, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese ajogún?” If the answer is yes, then a gourd of honey, cornmeal, and water should be put to the warriors, and the diviner should mark anything else needed by following the line of questioning given in “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu” in chapter 1.
- A serious osogbo or refusal of closure by Okana Ofún could mark the need for *eborí* (a blood offering to one’s physical and spiritual head), and the diviner must ask, “Ebó elese orí?” If the answer is yes, two white pigeons and doves must be fed to the client’s head so it may have strength.

The Ebores of Okana Owani (1–11)

- If this odu opens and there is sickness either in the client or his home, an ebó must be made to Babalwaiye. The diviner should first ask, “Eleke de Asohano?” and then, “Ebó elese Asohano?” (Asohano is one of the names for Babalwaiye.) If neither of these is accepted, the client is marked for the reception of this orisha, and he must be received as soon as possible.
- The next question to ask in this letter is, “Ebó elese Elegguá?” and then, “Ebó elese Ochosi?” The diviner must mark what is needed.
- Finally, if the letter will still not close, egun may be standing up in the letter. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese egun?” marking what is needed. Whether or not they want ebó, the client should give them some type of adimú, a mass, and much time should be spent working with these spirits.

The Ebores of Okana Ejila (1–12)

- In this letter, there are certain specific ebores that must be done. First, the elekes are marked automatically, and Obatalá’s should be worn frequently, especially in times of stress. If there is sickness

in the client, he needs to have a silver *idé* (bracelet) washed in *omiero* (herbal waters) and fed with the diviner's Obatalá; this should be worn at all times. Also, *adimú* should be given to Obatalá and Shangó to guarantee their help and goodwill in all things.

- If this is not enough to close the *odu*, then the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Obatalá?” and, “Ebó elese Shangó?” He must then mark what is needed.

The Ebores of Okana Metanla (1–13)

- In this letter, the client needs to have the *elekes*; and with them, he should receive the *eleke* of Babalwaiye. Also, the warriors must be had as soon as possible, for they will fight all the *osogbos* predicted in this sign. Finally, if the client has a dog, he has marked himself for the reception of Babalwaiye; until this *orisha* can be received, he should make frequent *ebó* to him. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Babalwaiye?” to see if there is anything special that this Spirit wants.

The Ebores of Okana Merinla (1–14)

- In this letter, there are some *ebores* that are automatically marked for the client. First, as an *ebó* the color black should never again be worn; wear white instead, and wear it as much as possible to honor Obatalá. Second, the *larishe* and *ebores* prescribed by Okana should be done swiftly, for this sign brings *osogbo* quickly once identified. Finally, this person needs to go to Ifá for a complete assessment by Orúnmila.

The Ebores of Okana Marunla (1–15)

- In this letter, the client needs the *elekes* and warriors as soon as possible. The diviner must ask the question “Ebó elese Shangó?” to see if Shangó wants anything special in this sign, and if not, an *adimú* should be given anyway to Shangó to ensure this *orisha*'s goodwill. Also, this client needs to be taken to a Babalawo immediately for a complete assessment by Ifá.

The Ebó of Okana Merindilogún (1–16)

- Whatever the orishas mark as *larishe* should be done quickly. There are no other eboses for this odu beyond taking the client to see Ifá. If the letter will not close, the diviner should proceed with the eboses listed for the parent odu.

The Eboses of the Parent Odu

Having exhausted the options of *larishe* and ebó in the composite odu, the diviner must now turn to the parent odu to find a method of closure. This sign, Okana, contains within itself many offerings and rituals to placate both the sign and the orishas that are speaking. The eboses for this parent letter follow.

- The diviner should first determine if the client needs a *rogación* by asking, “Eborí?” If the answer is yes, the *rogación* should be given at the feet of the orisha that is standing up in this odu.
- The next question that the diviner should ask when trying to close this sign is, “Ebó elese Elegguá?” If the answer is yes, then three fresh fish should be smeared liberally with red palm oil and given to Elegguá overnight. With the shells, it must be determined what is to be done with the fish once the ebó is complete. Fresh fish should be used; it would be better if the fish were recently caught and still alive; it will have more *aché*.
- If that ebó is not needed, or if the letter will still not close, the next ebó to ask is, “Ebó elese gbogbo ajogún?” which translates to “Ebó at the feet of all the warriors?” If the odu takes this sacrifice, the warriors Elegguá, Ogún, and Ósun should be given a rooster, two pigeons, and a guinea hen. If the client does not have the initiation of the warriors, or if it cannot be made for some time, then this should be done to the diviner’s orishas.
- The next question to ask is, “Ebó elese Ogún?” If the answer is yes, then the client should give Ogún a knife that is smeared with red palm oil; the knife and Ogún should be fed a rooster. This way, Ogún will fight with the knife, and the client will not have to fight alone. This orisha will protect him from all harm and accidents involving iron.

- If the client has Ogún, the following ebó can be done to that orisha after the preceding ebó is complete: A ñame (a type of yam) is brought before Ogún's shrine, and with this the diviner cleans the client spiritually. The root is then given to the orisha; the vine is allowed to grow freely until it is as long as the client is tall. It must never be allowed to grow taller than he. This ñame is left there until it dies.
- If the osogbo is severe and the client does not have Ogún, after giving Ogún the knife and rooster, the diviner should liberally smear a piece of red meat with red palm oil and cleanse the client with this. The meat is left with Ogún, and the next day he must be asked for the method of disposal. The client should remove the meat and take it to its proper place as dictated by Ogún.
- If no other ebó will suffice, ask Elegguá if the home of the client needs his protection. If the answer to this is yes, both dirt and ashes must be taken from the four corners of the client's home, wrapped in red cloth, and given to Elegguá. He will guard the foundation of the client's home.
- Finally, in all combinations of Okana it is possible that the client will need to receive Aganyú. The diviner should use this only as a last resort, asking, "Ebó elese Aganyú?" and then, "Eleke de Aganyú?" If neither the ebó nor the eleke of this orisha will satisfy the letter, the diviner then asks, "Koshé Aganyú?" which means "Should Aganyú be received?" If the answer is yes, the client must receive the orisha as soon as possible.

When no other ebó will satisfy the letter, the sacrifice needed is a four-legged animal to the orisha whose diloggún has been consulted. There is no need to ask the oracle to close because eyebale of four legs will automatically suffice to close the odu; and the sacrifice must be done as soon as possible. No itá is given for this ebó.

Also, note that when marking the ebores or larishes for any odu in the family of Okana, there are certain traditional substances used for this letter. If an eyebale is marked, the following animals are traditional in this sign: a rooster, two pigeons, a guinea hen, and a goat or a ram (when four legs are needed). For adimú offerings: Honey, cornmeal, bananas, toasted corn, smoked fish, *jutía* (an African bush rat) two coconuts, and a ñame are the normal things used.



Opening Eji Oko— Two Mouths on the Mat

The Proverbs of Eji Oko

- One who lives near the market will always hear its noise.
- Today, your brother has become your enemy.
- There will be fighting among brothers.
- Where there are arguments, there can be no peace.
- When the ram moves, it turns its head from right to left.
- Enjoy the moment, for it is all you have, and that, too, will soon be gone.
- An arrow lies between brothers.
- The brothers are enemies.
- The sound of the mortar echoes from where it is used.

The Orishas Who Speak in Eji Oko

In this odu, the following orishas are known to speak: Elegguá, Ogún, Ochosi, Oyá, Orisha Oko, Ibeyi, Obatalá, Orúnmila, and Shangó.

Special Notes on Eji Oko

Eji Oko is one of the four signs known as the parent odu; born with Olódumare's unfolding, the odu existed before the earth, animals, humans, or orisha. Created second in the Cosmos, its only elder is Eji Ogbe, the true king of odu. Eji Ogbe is light; Eji Oko is darkness. The former stands at the east, harbinger of life, light, and awakening, whereas this letter stands at the west and turns all back to primal darkness. Of this letter, Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi has written, "Oyekun Meji [another name for Eji Oko] . . . symbolizes all those forces that can never be known. It is an image of those forces that creates the night."¹ Through its birth come cycles: the earth's fecundity, the moon's transitions, and the sun's rising and falling. Yet it is not through the height of any one cycle that this odu manifests; it is the end, death, that renews those energies already expended.

"The transition from death to that which lies beyond is similar to the transition from womb to birth," Fatunmbi writes. "All growth requires discarding that which is no longer effective. The passage from childhood to adulthood represents the *death* of a child. The passage from adulthood to elder status represents the *death* of a vigorous life to embrace the physical limitations of old age."² Thus, the opening of this sign on the mat marks a passage whose path is ephemeral, fleeting. Like the arrows of Ochosi, that one decisive moment flashes, often unnoticed, and once Eji Oko has made its mark, the portal by which one transcends or descends may never again be crossed. Once childhood is left behind, it cannot be reclaimed; once the wisdom of old age is found, the body may never again be young. Odu tells us to enjoy the moment, for it is all we have—and that, too, will soon be gone.

Falling on the mat with two mouths, the diviner must consider that odu is speaking of both lesser and greater transitions. The lesser transitions will be those exposed in the client's daily life: changing energies that will move this person toward evolution (in *iré*) or devolution (in *osogbo*). Greater cycles will speak of one's place in our faith. The wanderer who has come for a reading will find himself drawn into this reli-

1. Awó Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi, 6.

2. *Ibid.*, 131.

gion. For him, the initiation of the elekes is integral. Those who have their beads will find themselves thrust forward to take the warriors and perhaps ocha, the crowning of the head. Santeros for whom this sign falls will prosper in the religion. Some odu demand the reception of the knife, while others will forebode the initiation of godchildren to the religion. A skilled italero will watch carefully for these signs, for the client will have but a fleeting moment to take these important steps. Proper eboses will ensure that nothing is missed.

The Meaning of Eji Oko

When this letter opens in any form of iré, it becomes one of the more hopeful, blessed signs as far as economics and material evolution are concerned. If all the advice and prohibitions of the parent and omo odu are followed, the client will enjoy a period of life unhindered by stress and strife. If the eboses are done quickly, without hesitation, the orishas that stand up in the letter will work continually to bring increased abundance. Prosperity, however, will not manifest overnight; rather, it will build slowly through a period of months and years, each new aeon in the client's life bringing greater riches and fortune. The firmer the iré, the greater the wealth that is promised; and even if the sign assures "iré yale timbelaye"—which means the iré is manifest in this life—the diviner must press forward with the oracle to mark votive and thanksgiving offerings to the Spirits that stand behind the consultant.

Any orisha speaking in the opening odu should be offered at least some sort of adimú. Also, since Eji Oko marks the need for unexpected travel, in an orientation of iré this person should be encouraged to accept any invitation extended—business, pleasure, and otherwise—for it is on this path that abundance and prosperity will begin. Also, unlike the iré of other signs, in iré this letter can mark a variety of temporary disturbances: A vision, sounds, dreams, nightmares, foul smells, and insomnia will plague this person. No ebó can remove these: They are temporary afflictions that the client must suffer on his path.

In any orientation of this odu, the orishas have marked the client as one who is suspicious of others in general. No one is truly trusted, and even one's spouse is a source of doubt. Some of this suspiciousness is warranted, especially if the orientation is osogbo: Because of a friendship at work, the job may be lost and the client is forewarned to

guard against this, trusting none of his coworkers. An ebó made with cow's tongue to either Obatalá or Shangó may help in this situation: It will destroy the gossip in the workplace. Relatives are wishing evil things upon the querier; and even if this person is a brother, the client is warned not to wish ill back upon him. Right now there are strong prohibitions against cursing, fighting, and quarreling, for although others may wish ill, none of this will become manifest if the client keeps a cool, calm head. Let the client know that his suspiciousness would be better spent on situations right now, not on people; the orishas will take care of those who wish him harm. Avoid journeys, for there may be accidents (this does not apply in iré), and regard all business offers with suspicion: Although things might look good on paper, in reality there is no true opportunity there.

When Eji Oko falls on the mat, the diviner may immediately assume that the client's mind is agitated with thoughts—secret plans and delusions about life in general. Something the diviner might want to note to the person is that he speaks to himself a lot in secret, offering not just encouragement to the self, but also criticism. There is bitterness in the client's life. He is not happy in his house. This odu speaks of someone who starts work on the home yet never finishes it. Warnings given in this letter are geared toward helping this person overcome sourness: Remember, life easily becomes a reflection of the mind. Blocks will remain in the client's life until the temper is controlled and the cursing of others stops. Cursing extends not just to deliberate magical attacks, but to profane language empowered by raw anger—for these things gather energy. Not every curse the client sends reaches its intended goal; many of these things manifest in his own life. Indeed, the client's life reflects the very things he criticizes in others. No matter the orientation of this odu, the diviner should emphasize these points: Do not threaten, do not curse; the client's disposition must change, or the ebó marked for Eji Oko will only slow down, and not reverse, the negative things coming. The obliteration of negative thoughts and impulses should also be extended to everyone who lives in or visits the home. No one should be allowed to swear, curse, or blaspheme (no matter the religion) in the home.

The client is very temperamental, and it is this that gets him into so much trouble. Advise him not to threaten or raise the fist to anyone—there must be no gesture of violence. The temper must be under con-

trol at all times. In spite of the bad in the client's life, there is luck; yet the luck would manifest more smoothly if there were not so many obstacles. Eji Oko points out economic weakness or despair. Perhaps he is behind in rent and finances are slowly falling apart. There should be greater care, greater organization in finances. Warning: Someone may be trying to trick or lie to the client about money. Take care of all personal interests and trust no one. The advice in this reading must be heeded if all difficulties are to be surmounted.

This letter carries some severe health warnings if the type of osogbo predicted is ano. Falls are a danger, and fractures caused by falls can become a serious danger to the client's health. Be especially vigilant over the elderly, for even when in good health their bodies are frail from age. Even though the client believes he is in perfect health, odu announces that he is really fragile. Go to the doctor at the first sign of illness. Bones in the legs and waist could become dislocated; and all double organs of the body such as the sexual organs, kidneys, lungs, and so forth are in danger when under the influence of Eji Oko in ano. Monitor for skin eruptions, headaches, and bleeding: These are all signs that something is amiss. The elderly are susceptible to cold drafts; a blast of cool air could cripple them, so keep the room well heated and sealed from the elements. If the orientation is ikú, not only do all these warnings apply, but also we say that Death is looking for a victim, and what he cannot take through sickness, he will take through accident. Do not dress like a friend, for the client may be mistaken for that friend. Street corners are to be avoided between noon and 6 P.M.: During these times there will be danger. Make sure that heights and unstable terrain are avoided.

There are some additional points to keep in mind with this letter.

- Extremes of temperature are to be avoided in this sign, especially for those that are very young or very old. Guard against drafts and cold winds, especially when outdoors in cold temperatures. Make sure the hair is not wet when going outside. Hot water must not be used for either bathing or drinking: Make sure that all liquids put on the skin or in the body are of tepid temperature.
- Eji Oko avoids restriction, and so should the client. Do not wear anything on the body (especially the head and waist) that is too

binding or restrictive. Tight hats should not be worn; protect the head with something loose and comfortable. Women are never to wear girdles, and neither women nor men should wear pants or belts that are tight in the waist. This unneeded pressure will cause or complicate the health problems inherent in the odu.

- In the client's home is a stone that brings iré. This stone must be found and fed so that greater luck will come. It should be read: It could be foundation for either egun or an Elegguá.
- One's home should be kept well lit and warm. Even in the summertime, do not leave the air-conditioning running for too long. Eji Oko is a sign needing warmth and light to prosper. The air in the home could be bad: In the winter, add plants and give them lots of sun, and in the summer, air out the house frequently.
- There might soon be a journey to visit a sick child. Do not put off this journey if the opportunity arises, for the child could die from negligence.
- In Eji Oko, neighbors can be a source of ill will and hostility. Unless the client owns his home, he must guard against their wrath lest the landlord evict him. While those around the client need to mind their own business, this person would do well to keep his affairs secret and stay out of those of his neighbors. Be ever wary.

The Prohibitions of Eji Oko

If the client's reading comes in *osogbo*, the diviner is well advised to prescribe the following prohibitions for a period of twenty-one to twenty-eight days, unless this is the reading of *itá*, in which case the odu's prohibitions last for a lifetime. Obviously, not all these will apply in every case; the diviner must depend on his own *aché* and the shells themselves to determine the prohibitions that are appropriate.

- Children of Ejioko Meji are forever prohibited from carrying umbrellas; but they should never let the rain keep them from fulfilling their daily responsibilities. Just as their patron did not take shelter from the rain, they should never hide from it. Only in

this way will they accumulate luck and money. A wife will influence prosperity, and if possible, this client should marry young.

- Eji Oko is a paradox: It gives luck, yet it also takes it away. The client must consider all that he has a gift from odu, and do what he must to hold these things firmly. To ensure these, two restrictions must be enforced: Do not pawn and do not lend. Personal belongings must be kept to the self. Do not let others use personal-care items such as combs, brushes, washcloths, and towels. Never let a friend wear one's clothing. Refuse to lend money, even if it is a small amount. Pawning is a form of lending, and this must be avoided. Sell items outright; never borrow against possessions. This extends to bank loans as well, for they require collateral. Signature loans should be avoided, for then all one's possessions are at risk. A wise italero will even restrict a client's usage of credit cards, for anything bought by credit is not owned outright and can be a route for one's luck to escape.
- While the client has many goals and aspirations, it is not wise for these plans to be shared with others. Keep all affairs a secret.
- Remember this: The servant moves in, and the master is forced out. Allow no one to live in your home for even a brief period.
- Do not brag: You will incur the ill will of others.
- The client must avoid any type of litigation for at least twenty-eight days—longer if the odu comes in osogbo.
- Religious images, especially those made of cheap plaster, may not be bought and kept in the home. If the client already has images from another faith, the diviner must ask the orishas if these need to be thrown away or destroyed. Even if these objects hold sentimental value, they may not be given to another.
- Work slowly, patiently, and cautiously at the job.
- Avoid placing family problems at the feet of others; keep these things inside the home.

The Ebooses of Eji Oko

Eji Oko is a complex odu. When the composite or omo odu is opened, the normal line of questioning by the diviner will reveal the orisha speaking and the type of offering required by that Spirit. The parent

odu, however, will demand an offering of its own if the reading is to be closed successfully and the osogbos predicted in the reading are to be avoided. (Even if this sign comes in *iré*, out of respect for the odu one of the following eboses should be done.) The diviner does not need to mark the ebó with the oracle; he must depend on the sign that has opened and his own *aché* to determine what is needed. The four offerings, one of which will be demanded by this letter, follow.

- When this letter opens on the mat, all the composite odu demand that the client either receive the *elekes* or refresh his *elekes*.
- Give *Elegguá* a rooster so that the doors may remain open. He has not closed them yet, but without the ebó *Elegguá* will not continue to help in the future.
- In *Eji Oko*, *Ochosi* speaks strongly, and he should be offered something in thanks for his help.
- The client should feed his head and have a *rogación*. The *orí* needs to be strong to help the client avoid future difficulties.

Note that the work done for this odu must be completed quickly or it will not help. The energy here tends to move swiftly like *Ochosi's* sacred arrows, and the client is warned to move faster than any impending *osogbos*. Realize that this odu also marks a gradual progression in the religion, and the *italero* must assess the client's current level and gently prod him to the next: determination of the guardian *orisha*, *elekes*, warriors, *kariocha*, godchildren, and knife. There is no need to mark this with the *diloggún* speaking; the fact that the client must move swiftly is already inferred from this sign.

Having prescribed the necessary eboses from the list, if the odu will not close once the initial reading is given, do not prescribe another ebó from this list; go through the normal line of questioning for marking the eboses of the composite odu. The list of eboses needed for each of the *omo odu* follows.

The Eboses of *Ejioko Okana* (2-1)

- Integral to this sign is the reception of the *Ibeyi*. They will overcome the client's insurmountable problems. If, however, the client has these *orishas*, they must be given ebó. Ask the question

“Ebó elese Ibeyi?” If the answer is no, or if no ebó can be marked, then they require that a party for children be given in their honor; thus will they overcome the difficulties presaged by this odu.

The Ebores of Ejioko Meji (2-2)

- The client should be given a rogación. After the rogación, four coconuts are sanded and painted white and red. These four coconuts are presented to the head every morning after awakening for four days, and on the fourth they are taken to a crossroads. One coconut should be left at each corner of the crossroads.
- In this sign, it is important that the client have the Ibeyi; this does not need to be marked with the shells as an ebó. If, however, the client has the Ibeyi and the odu refuses closure, the diviner should ask if the orishas need ebó. Follow the pattern for marking ebó given in the section on *larishe* in chapter 1 titled “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with the question “Adimú?” and end with the question “Eyebale?” If the Ibeyi will take none of these, then a party for children must be given in their honor.
- When this letter opens and refuses closure for an *aleyó*, it could be marking the need for this person to attend a *tambor*, a sacred festival given in the orisha’s honor. The diviner should mark this as an ebó.
- When Ejioko Meji falls for a priest/ess and refuses closure, the orisha speaking in this sign could be marking a *tambor* as the solution for all the client’s troubles. The diviner should first ask if a *tambor* is required; and then he should ask if the orisha whose *diloggún* he is reading wants the *tambor*. If that orisha refuses, the diviner should try to mark the *tambor* for one of the orishas given in the priest/ess’s *ocha*. If all these refuse the drum, begin asking about the orishas listed in the parent odu under the section “The Orishas Who Speak in Eji Oko” at the beginning of this chapter.
- If the *tambor* has been marked as an ebó during an *itá* through either *Elegguá* or the orisha of the head, then the client is automatically marked to give all the orishas a *tambor* in time. It is

commitment to this, and the playing of the first sacred drum, that will put this priest/ess on the path to spiritual evolution. Remember: The orisha that gave birth to this client's head (the godparent's guardian orisha) must be given a fundamental drum before any of the client's orishas may have a drum. If none of these eboses will close this letter, the diviner must now turn to the list of eboses given in the parent odu, Eji Oko (see "The Eboses of the Parent Odu" given at the end of this chapter).

The Eboses of Ejioko Ogundá (2-3)

- In this letter, the client needs to receive the initiation of the warriors: Elegguá, Ogún, and Ósun. The diviner must mark this as an ebó using the shells.
- If that will not close the letter, then Eji Oko may be marking the client for the reception of the Ibeyi. If the Ibeyi have already been received, then the diviner must ask the oracle if those orishas are standing up for some type of offering, an ebó. If the Ibeyi want an ebó, follow the method for determining larishe given in "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu" in chapter 1. Begin with the question "Adimú?" and end with the question "Eyebale?" If none of these satisfies the Ibeyi, then the client must throw a party in honor of the two powerful Spirits.
- If Ejioko Ogundá refuses closure for a priest/ess, the oracle may be trying to mark the gift of four legs to an orisha. The diviner should mark this as ebó, and then determine if the orisha speaking wants the four-legged sacrifice. If four legs are marked yet the orisha speaking will not take the offering, each of the orishas received during the client's kariocha should be questioned in the order known as oro. If none of these orishas will take four legs, then the orishas listed under "The Orishas Who Speak in Eji Oko" at the beginning of this chapter should be questioned. Once the proper orisha has been determined, the diviner should try to mark an itá with that Spirit the day after the sacrifice is made.
- If the oracle will not allow the priest/ess to give four legs, then the reception of the knife is a possibility as the ebó. The diviner should try to mark this. If the orisha speaking in this odu will

not mark knife as ebó, then the diviner must turn to the list of eboses given for the parent odu Eji Oko.

The Eboses of Ejioko Iroso (2–4)

- If the odu will not allow closure, the following ebó should be prescribed for the client: A stalk of green plantains or bananas should be put to Shangó, and the client should pray to Shangó about all the problems that are now being faced, especially those that led him to the oracle. The fruit must stay with Shangó until it begins to rot. After this offering is made, Shangó will help the client win all his battles and wars.
- In this odu, the dead (as egun—blood and spiritual ancestors) require frequent attention. First, the diviner should ask the question “Ebó elese egun?” If the answer is yes, ebó to egun must be marked following the pattern for determining larishe given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with the question “Adimú?” and end with the question “Eyebale?” If none of these can be marked, then the ebó is to work egun daily, hosting many spiritual masses for their benefit.
- In this sign, the client needs the Ibeyi, and this should be marked as ebó with the question “Koshé Ibeyi?” If the client already has the Ibeyi, then the diviner must ask, “Ebó elese Ibeyi?” and if the answer to this is yes, he must follow the pattern for determining larishe given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with the question “Adimú?” and end with “Eyebale?” If none of these can be marked, the diviner should tell the client that the ebó is to give a party in honor of them immediately.
- Olokun is important in this odu as well. If the client does not have Olokun, then the diviner should mark this as an ebó with the question “Koshé Olokun?” If the client already has Olokun, the diviner must ask if ebó is needed: “Ebó elese Olokun?” Having marked an ebó to this orisha, he should follow the method for determining ebó in the same manner outlined above for the Ibeyi, with one exception: If the answer to the question “Kaure?” is no, then the ebó is automatically eyebale, the sacrifice of an animal.

- If the answer to all these questions is no, or if the oracle still will not close, the diviner should ask one final question: “Eyebale y adimú ilé Yemayá y ilé Oshún?” If the answer to this is yes, the client must offer a sacrifice and an adimú to Yemayá and Oshún in their respective houses, the ocean and the river. If going to one or the other is impossible, the sacrifice and adimú can be offered to the diviner’s orishas, but it is better to go to their place in nature for this. If this ebó will not close the oracle, the diviner must turn to the eboses given in the parent odu Eji Oko.

The Eboses of Ejioko Oché (2–5)

- There are many mandatory eboses marked in this letter. First, the client has an unpaid promise to Oshún. He must pay it; and if he cannot remember making any promises to her or incurring any debts, the diviner should ask the oracle, “Ebó elese Oshún?” to make sure she is not standing up for ebó. If Oshún wants ebó, the diviner must mark what is needed following the guidelines given in chapter 1’s section titled “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.”
- Second, the Ibeyi are marked for the client in this letter, for they were born of Oshún and Shangó, even though Yemayá raised them; Eji Oko is their true home, and Oshún their true mother. If the client has them, the Ibeyi might be standing up for an ebó, and the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Ibeyi?” If the answer is yes, he must mark what is needed.
- Finally, the client’s house is either physically or spiritually dirty, and it must be cleaned and kept that way. Once this is done, several masses should be said for egun, and to make sure that they are properly placated the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese egun?” to see if anything else is needed for them.

The Eboses of Ejioko Obara (2–6)

- Just as the Ibeyi were important in 2–5 because Oshún gave birth to them, so are they important in this letter because Shangó is the father. If the client does not have them, he must get them; and if they already are in the client’s life, the diviner

should ask, “Ebó elese Ibeyi?” to see if they require an offering. Shangó should also be propitiated in this letter; and if the oracle will not close, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Shangó?” to see if the orisha wants anything specific.

The Ebores of Ejioko Odí (2-7)

- The initiation of the Ibeyi is once again important to this letter, just as it is in the previous two—for although Oshún and Shangó are the biological parents, it was Yemayá who raised them alone without help from either of the two. If the Ibeyi are already with the client, he should offer them an *adimú*, something sweet and in twin dishes. If the letter will not close, it is possible that the Ibeyi want a specific *ebó*, and the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Ibeyi?” to determine this.
- Also, Yemayá speaks strongly in this *odu* on behalf of the client. If there is some unpaid debt with her, it must be paid immediately. She wants this person to have his *elekes*, wearing hers continually even if no others are worn. A *rogación* should be given at her feet, and after the *rogación* the client should pray at her shrine, telling her all his troubles. Once done, a token *adimú* should be left with her. If the *odu* will not close out, Yemayá might be standing up for a specific *ebó* and the oracle should be asked, “Ebó elese Yemayá?” to ascertain this. The *ebó* that she wants should be marked using the process outlined in “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu” in chapter 1.

The Ebores of Ejioko Unle (2-8)

- Because the Ibeyi once saved Obatalá’s life from death by treason/poison, the Ibeyi are just as important in this letter as they are in the previous three. If the client does not have them, he should get them; and if he has them, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Ibeyi?” to see if they want an *ebó*. If no *ebó* is required, then the client is advised to tend the Ibeyi, spoiling them a bit with sweet foods and toys. Also, a *rogación* should be given at the feet of Obatalá, and once the *rogación* is complete, an *adimú* should be offered to this orisha with prayers for spiritual evolution.

- If the odu will not close out, Obatalá could be standing up for an ebó. The diviner should ask, “Ebó else Obatalá?” to see if he requires anything. Realize that if Obatalá wants ebó in this letter, he will also eventually want the client’s head in ocha.

The Ebores of Ejioko Osá (2-9)

- The client has been saved from danger many times by Oyá and the Ibeyi; he should receive the Ibeyi if he does not have them, and make ebó to them both. The diviner should mark the ebó that is required. He should ask, “Ebó else Ibeyi?” and “Ebó else Oyá?” to determine what is needed. Even if the Spirits do not stand up for an ebó, the client should be advised to give them adimú in thanks for their protection and to ensure their continued goodwill. Also, this person’s salvation will be found only by making ocha, and the diviner should explain the steps involved in becoming an active participant in this religion.

The Ebores of Ejioko Ofún (2-10)

- The diviner should try to mark ebores to egun, Elegguá, and Babalwaiye (in this order) by asking each, “Ebó else [name of orisha]?” If any of these Spirits or egun stand up for ebó, the diviner must mark what is needed by following the pattern set in “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu” in chapter 1. After this, he should turn to the closing ebores given for Eji Oko, the parent odu, marking one or more of the sacrifices discussed therein.

The Ebores of Ejioko Owani (2-11)

- Beyond the reception of the Ibeyi, there are no special ebores prescribed by this letter. However, whatever is marked to close the reading must be done as quickly as possible or the work will be of no use to the client.

The Ebores of Ejioko Ejila (2-12)

- In this sign, the client should have the initiations of the elekes, warriors, and Ibeyi as soon as possible. Once the elekes are received, Obatalá’s should be worn every day to keep the head

cool and clear, and once the warriors have been received, Elegguá's should be worn every day as well so the client's roads in life remain open. If any of these initiations are already had, additional elekes may be needed (of the orishas speaking in this letter), or eboses may need to be marked to Elegguá, Ogún, or Obatalá. The diviner should proceed with his questioning thus: "Ebó eleke?" determining the orisha whose eleke is needed with the question "Eleke de [orisha's name]?" Then he should ask, "Ebó elese Elegguá?" and "Ebó elese Ogún?" marking what is needed following the pattern given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." Finally, if the letter will still not close he should ask, "Ebó elese Obatalá?" to see if this Spirit needs anything.

- An adimú should be made to Aganyú and Shangó. If the letter will still not close, the diviner should check with both to see if additional eboses are needed, asking, "Ebó elese Aganyú?" first and then, "Ebó elese Shangó?" He should mark the eboses required to these orishas.

The Eboses of Ejioko Metanla (2-13)

- There is a debt owed to Babaluaiye, and the diviner must investigate and mark what it is the orisha requires. If the debt is not paid, the client's situation will get worse. The questions to be asked are "Ebó elese Asohano?" and then "Eleke de Asohano?" if the ebó is not enough or not required. Finally, in this sign it is important to ask if Babaluaiye must be received, and the diviner must ask, "Koshé Asohano?" before going on to the eboses of the parent odu.

The Eboses of Ejioko Merinla (2-14)

- This ebó marks the need for the client to salute the sun every morning after awakening, giving honor and praise to Olódumare, Olorún, and Olófin. After the praise is given, he must pray to Shangó. This will help him overcome the difficulties that are being faced. The diviner should check to see if Shangó needs anything else in return for his help by asking, "Ebó elese Shangó?" If an ebó is needed, the diviner must mark

it following the guidelines given in chapter 1's "Marking the Ebooses, or Remedies for Odu."

The Ebooses of Ejioko Marunla (2-15)

- To appease this letter, the client must have his elekes, warriors, and the Ibeyi; if these initiations have already been taken, then the warriors or the Ibeyi might be standing up for ebó—and the diviner should try to mark this. Also, if someone in the family becomes ill, the odu requires, as an ebó, that this person be taken to the doctor. Even if there is no money available for medical treatment, this must be done, and the one who becomes ill should come to the diviner as soon as possible for a reading.

The Ebooses of Ejioko Merindilogún (2-16)

- This letter has no specific ebooses prescribed; follow the general guidelines given for marking ebó with Eji Oko. If the client has not taken the initiation of the elekes and the warriors, this should be recommended to this person so that he has the orisha's help in fighting his wars. As soon as possible, this person should go to a Babalawo for a complete assessment by Ifá.
- If the letter comes in osogbo and will not close, the diviner should tell the client that he has committed an illegal act in his past that could soon catch up with him. He will have to receive Ochosi: This is mandated, not marked.

The Ebooses of the Parent Odu

Having exhausted the options that are given in each of the omo odu, the diviner will now need to turn to the following list of sacrifices and offerings to satisfy the parent odu, Eji Oko, before the reading can be closed. If this list is exhausted and the sign will still not close, the diviner will then need to do one of two things. First, he should call an elder in the religion; something important in the sign could have been overlooked. Second, the italeró should look at the list of ebooses given for the secondary letter's parent. (For example, if 2-1 opened on the mat, the diviner would turn to the ebooses given for Okana as parent odu.) The list of ebooses that are used to satisfy Eji Oko follows.

- The diviner should first ask, “Eboshure elese Eshu?” If the answer to this question is yes, then the client must save a portion of all his meals for the next three, seven, or twenty-one days (the diviner should mark the length of time with the shells). This portion should be wrapped in a brown paper bag. At the end of the meal, the bag is taken to a street corner or crossroads and left there for Elegguá.
- The next ebó to be marked is done thus: The diviner asks, “Ebó elese Elegguá?” If the answer is yes, the ebó is eyebale of a chicken or a rooster to Elegguá.
- The next ebó that can be marked to close this letter is, “Ebó elese gbogbo ajogún?” If the answer is yes, the diviner should mark what is required by the ajogún using the guidelines given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.”
- The next ebó to be marked for Eji Oko is “Ebó elese Ochosi?” If the answer is yes, the diviner must mark the ebó that is required by this orisha. If the answer is no, the diviner should then ask, “Koshé Ochosi?” to see if his reception is being marked in this sign.
- The next ebó that this letter could require is an offering to the earth and Orisha Oko. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese orisha Oko?” If the answer is no, then the client might need to receive this orisha, and the diviner should ask, “Koshé orisha Oko?” If the answer to this is yes, arrangements must be made for his reception immediately.
- Next, the diviner should petition the Ibeyi for their help. He asks, “Ebó elese Ibeyi?” and if the answer is yes, the proper ebó for them are twin baskets of fruit.
- Finally, if none of these is accepted, or if the odu will not close, the diviner must first tell the client that he needs a rogación; during this ritual, the orí needs to be fed two white doves or pigeons to give it strength. After this, the client should put a chair behind his front door and meditate every day, praying to Olófin, Olorún, Olódumare, and egun. If the letter still will not close, there are issues with one of the many orishas who speak in this sign, and one or more will require either ebó or reception

• Opening Eji Oko—Two Mouths on the Mat •

into the client's life. The diviner must proceed with this questioning carefully, not marking more than is needed at any one time.

Keep in mind that in this odu, there are certain types of animal and food offerings that are traditional to this pattern. For animals, the diviner can pick from the following: a rooster, two pigeons, two birds that have been caught by the client and not bought, or a goat/ram, when four legs are needed. For simple adimú, the diviner should first try to pick from the following things: two coconuts, two eggs, two fresh fish, two dishes of cooked food favored by the orisha speaking in this sign, red palm oil, smoked fish, jutía, efun, and honey.



Opening Ogundá— Three Mouths on the Mat

The Proverbs of Ogundá

- Tragedy, deception, and despair are near.
- Beware those who come bearing gifts.
- Crying may turn to laughter.
- Things once lost will soon be found.
- Making the wrong decisions brings tragedy.
- As you have sown, so shall you reap.
- Those who fight with the sword will die with the sword.

The Orishas Who Speak in Ogundá

In this odu, the following orishas are known to speak: Olófin, Ogún, Yemayá, Elegguá, Ochosi, Obatalá, Aganyú, and Babalwaiye.

Special Notes on Ogundá

Ogundá was born of Odí. While the latter sign is maternal, nourishing, firm with her creations and yet fierce to protect them, Ogundá is

harsh, random, a force that can destroy as quickly as it creates. We see in the mother-sign rest, completion, and a seal that stabilizes and balances all things. Ogundá is the antithesis to that sign. He is fierce among odu: Hot, volatile in essence and transitive in nature, he is the letter giving rise to bloodshed, war—yet he is still the catalyst for evolution. What Odí holds close is ripped away by Ogundá. It is torn apart, forced to evolve or be destroyed. To understand the power of this mark, one must study its actions in nature, looking to those things that are hard, severe, metallic. Tools and weapons are creations of this sign, and their use is an extension of its *aché*. Opening on the mat in three mouths, the diviner immediately pats his abdomen three times with both hands, and lifts them just below the jaw; with hands opened wide, it appears as if something is balanced on the palms. A quick puff of air seals this sign, throwing the effects of odu back upon the client; no one but he should suffer its fate.

The Special Precautions of Ogundá

Ogundá is an odu that must be treated with caution by both the diviner and the client. Using *ibó*, the orientation is determined (*iré* or *osogbo*), yet it is important to realize that there is no true *iré* or *iré yale* (firm *iré*) in this letter. Ogundá will always foretell danger. Of the sixteen combinations in Ogundá, some are more volatile than others. Letter 3-10 demands caution by the diviner, for it is known that the energies the client carries into the reading are so heavy that danger extends to the priest. As soon as the client leaves, the diviner should wash his head with holy water from seven churches (if he is a spiritual Catholic) or water from seven different locations (if the religious beliefs are pure *Lucumí*). If neither is possible, use the waters of *Yemayá* and *Oshún*. Baths using these waters and purple flowers will also soothe the erratic vibrations brought by 3-10. Depending on the results of the client's divination, the diviner might want to feed his *orí* and mark *ebó* for himself. Precautions must be taken in 3-14 as well; it also carries danger for the diviner.

In addition to letters 3-10 and 3-14, treat Ogundá Meji (3-3), Ogundá Osá (3-9), Ogundá Owani (3-11), and Ogundá Merinla (3-14) as especially dangerous odu for the client. Even if they come with *iré yale*, impress upon the client the severity of Ogundá's warn-

ings. It is often said that if a client comes to the oracle with serious problems and the shells close themselves quickly with firm *iré*, saying *eboda* (“all is well”), then the orishas wash their hands of this consultant. The *odu* listed above cannot bring *iré*; they will never bring *iré*, and often they appear to show the diviner that the client is at the mercy of personal destiny and karma. “As you have sown, so shall you reap” is the essence of this. Investigate clearly and slowly the options for *ebó*, for even in these cases there may be ways to lessen the *Odu*’s harmful effects.

After the oracle closes, there is an *ebó* that must be done to quell the remaining energies of *Ogundá* in the diviner’s home. Remember the volatility of these letters and realize that whenever a diviner opens the oracle for a client, he is not only looking into the client’s life, but he is also participating in it (at least while the oracle is opened between them). Rub a piece of beef with red palm oil; both the diviner (first) and the client (second) should cleanse themselves with this piece of meat. Put it to *Ogún*. The *italero* should encourage his consultant to leave immediately once this ritual is done, and the meat should be taken from *Ogún* as soon as possible and given to a dog in the street to eat. The phrase “*Eshu batie sode*” should be said, which translates to “*Eshu* takes the negativity of the consultation.”

The Message of Ogundá

When a client’s reading opens in *Ogundá*, there are many assumptions the diviner can immediately make about the person’s life. It is filled with disagreements, tragedy, and heartache. There is much fighting, struggle, and cursing. If the client is female, she has either been raped or victimized by men; and if the client is male, he is of the mind-set to victimize women. Head injuries are often revealed in this *odu* no matter how major or minor. Also, there may be scars on the body; the diviner should immediately ask the client the extent of these injuries and how they were obtained. Normally, scarring will come from either fire or iron. Even if this is not the reading of the head, a client for whom iron has scarred the body may be a child of *Shangó*, and whenever one of his children opens in *Ogundá*, serious problems are about to be experienced. A client who has been burned by fire might be right at home in this *odu*, for that person is a child of *Ogún*; this letter was

named for him. There is a constant rivalry, a sacred war, between these two titanic orishas, and as a symbol of these conflicting energies a child of one may be marked by the force of the rival orisha.¹ For once they fought bitterly over Oyá's affections and Ogún lost. It is also said that in one fight, Shangó stole Ogún's faithful companion, the ram, and gave him only dogs to follow Ogún all his days. Whenever Ogundá falls, the diviner should keep these things in mind even if the orisha of the head is not known, and regardless of whether the client is becoming actively involved in the religion. The diviner's duty in this letter is to identify the forces at work, to outline the severe prohibitions that follow this letter, and to find a way of calming the volatile energies of Ogundá as they unfold in the client's life.²

Note that the client has hidden enemies, two-faced friends, and those who seem to have his best interests in mind can betray by accident. Whether or not the odu comes in iré, the following things should be discussed: The client is to leave behind his life of arguments and violence, nor should such thoughts be entertained. Have no dispute with people, and avoid altercations like the plague. This is not a time for fighting, debating, or struggling. Now is the time to promote calmness and personal security. Gather all resources, whether they be inner or outer, and prepare for a war. Secrets or inner desires should not be expressed to others even if the client is sure of their friendship and goodwill, for this odu points out that now is a time when others will become careless with their speech. A trusted friend could give away secrets without malice. Betrayal is not always a matter of ill will; it can be a matter of circumstance. Keeping this in mind, realize that evil intentions are harbored toward the client, and large groups of people, in the form of social gatherings, should be avoided. This includes

1. Children of Shangó are often marked by Ogún's iron, and children of Ogún are often marked by Shangó's fire.

2. There are many who feel that Ogundá is too severe an odu, and become frightened when its energies open on the mat. Others who are not involved in orisha worship criticize the existence of such a letter in our divination system, since little good can come of its energies. However, if any divination system is to be of use to its believers, it must contain not only the good, but also the bad, and all life's extremes must be found within its boundaries if the system is to give an accurate portrayal of life. It is in Ogundá that we find many of life's terrible extremes, and that is what makes this odu so important to the system of the diloggún.

parties, and more so when it is a party that serves intoxicants. They could bring danger. Gossip is to be avoided, and this is all but impossible among large groups of people who are familiar with each other. Offers to take long journeys are another key in this letter. Beware of them, for on journeys the evil intentions of others may unfold. Jealousy brings tragedy: Remember this.

Danger extends to the street as well, especially at night. Even though there may be danger, the client must be advised to not carry or use weapons: guns, knives, or anything made of metal, as well as clubs or bats, things made of wood. These implements not only can needlessly kill, but they also can be turned against the user. Better to avoid dangerous places than to go into them armed for war. The first weapon of choice is the hand; it should never be raised to another in anger. Even if someone is beaten in self-defense, the client will be entangled in the legal system, and the law presents problems right now. Whenever speaking to civil authorities or uniformed people (even if this uniform is that of a mailman or nurse), measure that which is said; something illegal might be discovered. The law could even take an innocent client by mistake; how often do the innocent suffer for crimes they did not commit? The client must never ever take the law into his own hands, even though personal property is in danger. If a thief breaks in through the front door in spite of security precautions, run out the back door. One should not defend one's life or property unless there is no other option. Anyone who fights, uses weapons, or attacks another while under the influence of Ogundá risks a legal mess, and only that client will suffer.

On the rare occasion that Ogundá opens in some form of *iré*, remember the letter is almost making a mockery of the client's fate. Until Ogundá closes in his environment, this is a person who will be tossed about by his own karma. Karma, however, has a strange way of balancing itself, and after being "purified by fire," the blacksmith's forge, this person will be transformed into something new, truly "resurrected." Tragedy will eventually result in blessings, although this type of *iré* will manifest through the client's picking up the pieces of life that are left to him. Business, no matter how poor, will eventually triumph if the client proceeds in an ethical manner, cleaning up what was impure. Economic riches can follow once Ogundá closes, but only

after prolonged sickness, disease, illness, and heartache. Money made manifest through Ogundá in *iré* is always wrought through tragedy: lawsuits, severance, and inheritances.

Health concerns of Ogundá are severe if the orientation of the *osogbo* is *ano*. The back is weak; heavy lifting, frequent bending, and swift movements are to be avoided. If back pain develops, it demands immediate medical attention. Avoid back surgery at all costs until the *orishas* say it is safe. Avoid surgery on any other region as long as there is an appropriate medical alternative. Conduct background checks on all possible surgeons, choosing the one with the most experience and the best record. Before surgery, make *ebó* to *Ogún* so metal will bring health and healing. Remember that *ano* brings physical turmoil: Blood loss, intestinal trouble, and abdominal disturbances are all normal for this sign. Diseases that waste the abdomen, womb, and intestines are all a danger. Fractures and deterioration of the skeletal system are also possibilities. The heart is currently in distress, so avoid vices. Take good care of any puncture wounds, bites, or severe infections. Since Ogundá gives birth to the disease known as lockjaw, have a tetanus shot in case the skin is compromised in any way.

In any other type of *osogbo* (barring *ikú*, which brings death), Ogundá flags many types of situations. This is a person experiencing unreturned love. Two options may seem feasible to the client: obsession/stalking and love magic. These avenues should not be explored, for the only one hurt will be the client. Just as *Ogún* once raped his own mother and then punished himself, so he punishes any that tries to force sick affections on another. Also, at this time the client should be warned to be wary of iron and iron implements. Try to avoid fights, arguments, shots, stabbing, and car accidents. Dogs and animals might die, so protect the pets. Beware of robberies: Safeguard all belongings. Pollutants should not be put into the body. If arguments ensue between the client and spouse, the client must avoid raising the hand in anger: The spouse will be hurt. And the client should never argue with civil authorities, for only the client will lose and he will go to jail.

When a woman opens in the letter Ogundá, regardless of her marital status, the letter forebodes unexpected and unwanted pregnancies. Since this sign can bring a variety of illnesses and health warnings no matter its orientation, it would be wise to limit sexual activity or

refuse to participate in it for twenty-one to twenty-eight days. Conception in this sign often brings miscarriage and spontaneous abortion, medical difficulties, and cesarean births. Women must also be cautioned to watch the comings and goings of their spouses if married or living with a man, for he will be tempted to leave. Men who open in this letter are forbidden sexual activity outside the marriage/relationship; they are also warned that to walk out on their wives will bring their eventual downfall (point out that beyond the present spouse, there are few other women who will tolerate his miserable ways). In the home are arguments and wars; these will precipitate into violence or separation. To save the relationship, one must change. In regard to personal relationships that are affected by Ogundá, the following two prohibitions must always be kept in mind. First, do not go out at night. Second, do not travel in groups of three; do not be the third person involved in any group or activity. The number three and the quality of darkness both invite Ogunda's wrath.

There is also a special set of concerns that must be addressed in this sign if the client is involved in business—especially if the client owns the business or works in tandem with partners. Realize that the client for whom Ogundá has fallen does not always walk with the law, and three mouths—this sign—brings justice. From this moment on, prohibit the consultant from having anything to do with outlaws; the italero must prohibit this person from breaking the law. If the client insists this is not the case—that he always conducts himself and his business legally—then the diviner is led to look at the partners and employees with whom the client works. Unknowingly, the business is running contrary to the law, and perhaps one of the business's partners/employees is acting on the wrong side of the law. Caution must be had with partners; caution must be had if the client is thinking about taking a partner. Papers and contracts that are presented for the next month or so will not be what they seem, and the client is to be very careful of what he signs or allows others to sign in his name. Legal counsel should be sought. Before putting one's name to paper, the shells must again be consulted and the advice/ebó given must be followed.

In addition to these things, advise the client of the following points.

- Through Ogundá, things that were lost will mysteriously reappear. While this normally applies to possessions, at times the

prediction can extend to animals and humans. This will bring rejoicing; this will bring weeping. Usually, the return of things lost will come just after they were needed. Also, things that are old and useless will one day find new usefulness, so when Ogundá opens on the mat it is not time to give away or throw away possessions. Do not give up on a friendship now, either; hold that friend at arm's length for a time. While all these predictions might seem senseless to the client now, he should remember them, for their truth will be revealed in time.

- Ogundá is futility; however, if the client begins a project and becomes overwhelmed with its futility, odu warns that he should complete his work. There will be a reward.
- Ogundá brings slavery and imprisonment. The client must be cautious that he does not become the unwilling slave of another, nor should he become the blind instrument of another person's desires.
- Ogún owns all roads, and he is found wherever there are accidents. To avoid harm while traveling, the client must ask the orishas for their permission before taking a journey. If they say yes, make ebó to Ogún to guarantee his goodwill (use cool fruits); if they say no, make ebó anyway and do not go.
- Ogundá marks treason, gossip, and ill will; its mark is three, and it is found wherever there are large groups. For this reason, the client must avoid parties and social gatherings. He must also avoid being a third party in anything. Parties, social gatherings, and business meetings are all places in which Ogundá can manifest for the next twenty-one to twenty-eight days. Avoid these. If a large get-together must be attended, make ebó to Ogún and do not eat or drink while at the event. The danger is that someone might lace the food or drink with either witchcraft (intentional) or poison (intentional or accidental).

While it may seem that some of these things will not apply in every reading, they should still be explored as legitimate warnings for the client. The orishas see much further into the future than we; and they know much better how one may avoid the twisted paths of fate and personal destiny. Ogundá demands an in-depth exploration.

The Prohibitions of Ogundá

For at least twenty-eight days, the normal passage of a single odu, the client should follow these precautions. Although most odu give the italero the option of prescribing prohibitions based on the energy of the omo odu that has opened, in a letter as strong as this each of the following taboos should be carefully delineated and explained to the client. In cases of severe *osogbo*, it would be wise to consult with the shells to determine if the prohibitions should be followed for a longer period.

- Ogundá is home to Ogún, and he lives along the railroad tracks. For now, do not journey by train, and do not cross his home without paying some token homage to the Spirit of iron.
- The head is not meant for carrying loads; use it to think, and carry things with your hands.
- Do not eat rooster.
- Under this letter, the client will attract people who are intoxicated, medicated, or mentally unstable. He should do his best to keep away from these people.
- Do not go out into the streets during the following times: noon, 3 P.M., 7 P.M., and 9 P.M. These are times and numbers that are sacred to Ogún and his metal, iron, may bring danger to the client. (If the *osogbo* is severe, restrict all outdoor activities between noon and 9 P.M.)
- There is no such thing as a funny practical joke. Do nothing to compromise the safety, feelings, or integrity of another.
- Ogundá brings ambush from behind: Protect the back at all times. When in a strange place, stand close to an exit with the back to the wall: It should face neither the exit nor an open space. When standing on the street, keep the back to the wall so all directions can be seen at once. Do not stand at or near corners. Do not stand in a group, especially one that is facing the same direction. Avoid lifting heavy objects and do not lean back in a chair (one risks injury to the back). And never ever ignore this advice at night. (Why would a client who has opened in Ogundá be out at night anyway?)

- Never confide secrets to another; they are secrets only if no one else knows them.
- Keep personal belongings private and secure. Make sure that nothing is missing. There is a danger of robbery from a visitor. Do not allow strangers into the home, and be vigilant even with those with whom you are familiar.
- Be wary of triangles in relationships among both friends and lovers.
- Do not neglect the health. Have a complete physical now! If this is the itá of initiation, the iyawó should schedule an appointment before the three-month ebó, and have a physical every year for the duration of his life.
- Avoid situations in which falling is a possibility. Do not climb ladders. Avoid heights or scaling high places. Do not reach above the head. Never perform acrobatics or do maneuvers that stretch the body beyond its normal range of motion. An accident now could be fatal.
- Do not cross ditches or trenches. Walk around them, not over them.
- Do not jump over holes. Walk around them, not over them.
- Do not ride horses. There is danger of falling.
- Do not hold anything for anyone.
- Do not go fishing, because fish can be the salvation of the client in this pattern.
- If the client is involved in the occult, or involved with others who participate in magic, there is the danger that someone will use harmful witchcraft. Beware of this!
- Do not harbor thoughts of revenge. Do not harm another, even if there be just cause.
- Be cautious of those who ask you to do things never done before.
- The sacrificial meats of Ogún and Elegguá may not be eaten; and if this is the child of Ogún, the sacrificial meats of Shangó may not be eaten. Also, if this is Shangó's child, the animals sacred to Ogún must not be consumed. (This includes feathered and four-legged animals.) The consumption of these animal

products will not only anger the orishas and cause spiritual damage to the client, but they can also bring a variety of physical and gastrointestinal problems. Do not ignore this prohibition!

These prohibitions are not options for the client's discretion: They are severe, and must be followed. In addition to these, the oracle may dictate other prohibitions and these should be divulged by the diviner. Once the diviner has relayed these to the client, the diviner is freed from responsibility, and the client is then responsible for his own safety.

The Eboses of Ogundá

When prescribing the eboses for Ogundá, the procedure recommended in this odu is a bit different from that used in the other letters. The diviner must first try to close the odu off from the information gleaned in the initial manipulations of the diloggún. If the sign will not close, there are certain eboses that are shared by each composite odu, and the diviner must investigate this before proceeding through the list of eboses given in each section. The eboses to be marked first are as follows.

- If the odu will not close with just the *larishe* that has been prescribed by odu, the client is automatically marked for the reception of the *elekes*. The diviner must tell him that he needs this initiation, and he must spend some time discussing the significance of this initiation in relation to the reading given. Once this is done, he should ask for closure of the oracle. If this initiation has already been had, or if it is not sufficient to close the oracle, then the client needs the *eleke* of one or more of the orishas who speak in this sign. The diviner should mark this *ebó* by asking, "Ebó *eleke*?" which means "Is the *ebó* the *eleke*?" If the answer is yes, then each orisha that has spoken to the client in this odu must be asked one by one, "Eleke [orisha's name]?" If one of the orishas answers yes, the diviner should ask for closure; and if none of the orishas answers yes, then the diviner should continue with the list (in order, and removing the names that have already been asked) until an orisha's *eleke* is marked. If an orisha answers that his or her *eleke* is needed, the diviner should ask for closure of the oracle.

- If an eleke is marked yet the oracle will not close, the diviner should try to mark ebó to the orisha whose eleke is to be received: “Ebó [orisha’s name]?” If the orisha wants ebó, the diviner must follow the pattern given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with “Adimú?” and end with “Kaure?” If the orisha takes none of these, then the ebó is automatically eyebale. Ask for closure of the oracle. If it still will not close, ask, “Ebó eleke?” until the oracle will not prescribe any more elekes for the client.
- The next ebó the diviner should try to mark is “Koshé ajogún?” which asks whether the warriors should be received. If the client already has the warriors, or if the answer to “Koshé ajogún?” was no, these orishas might still be standing up for an ebó. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Elegguá?” and then, if the answer is no (or if the oracle still will not close), “Ebó elese Ogún?” If the answer to either is yes, an ebó must be marked following the pattern given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” If the answer to “Kaure?” is no, the ebó is automatically feathers in this letter. For the client who does not yet have the warriors, the ebó is made to the diviner’s orishas.
- Whenever Ogundá Meji opens for a priest/ess and refuses closure, it may be trying to mark this person for the reception of the knife. The diviner should ask this question first: “Ebó de pinaldo?” If this ebó is marked, the reception of the sacrificial knife must be made as soon as possible.

Once these things have been explored and marked, if the oracle will still not close, the diviner must then turn to the list of ebores given in each composite odu. Each is worked through systematically until closure can be brought to the oracle. The ebores for each omo odu follow.

The Ebores of Ogundá Okana (3-1)

- Because driving poses such a danger to the client right now, a piece of red meat should be oiled with epó and sealed in a brown paper bag; this bag should then be rubbed by the client over all four tires of his car. Before driving, he should walk this bag to the nearest crossroads and leave it at the street corner with the words “Eshu batie sode,” which mean, “Eshu removes

the negativity of the consultation.” Once this is explained to the client, the diviner may ask for closure of the oracle.

- If this is not enough to close the odu, the car itself needs to be given the elekes; this should be explained to the client, and then the odu can be asked for closure. The car should be washed in omiero, and the sacred beads are then to be hung over the rearview mirror. They are never to be taken off or worn by the client; they are for protecting the car only. If this is not enough to close odu, the diviner will need to turn to the list of eboses given for the parent odu Ogundá.
- Shangó can speak in this sign; if the letter will not accept or close off the above eboses, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Shangó?” If the answer is yes, the proper ebó to offer is a stalk of plantains to the orisha. They are left with him until they begin to turn, and they are then wrapped in brown paper and taken to the foot of a palm tree.

The Eboses of Ogundá Ejioko (3-2)

- In this pattern the Ibeyi can be a necessity. If the client does not have them, the diviner should mark them with the question, “Koshé Ibeyi?” If the client has the Ibeyi, or if the Ibeyi are not needed, these Spirits might still be standing up for ebó. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Ibeyi?” If they want an ebó, follow the same pattern for determining ebó as one would the warriors. Begin with the question “Adimú?” and end with the question “Eyebale?” If the answer to all these is no, then the orishas want a party thrown in their honor, and this should be done as soon as possible. An ebó that is dictated for someone who does not have the Ibeyi should be done to the diviner’s orishas.
- This odu can also mark things owed to Shangó. The diviner should first determine if any eboses were marked yet not given to the orisha. If not, then the diviner must ask, “Ebó elese Shangó?” to determine what the orisha requires.

The Eboses of Ogundá Meji (3-3)

- Oshún should be petitioned in this odu, for she has the power to bring sweetness into the client’s life. The diviner must ask if

she will stand up on his behalf, asking, “Iré elese Oshún?” and if the answer to this is yes, he should then ask, “Ebó elese Oshún?” If Oshún stands up for the client and wants ebó, the diviner must follow the guidelines given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” If Oshún stands up for the client and does not want ebó, we say that she defends this person for free. To honor her, however, the diviner should tell the client he must give his Oshún something to thank her and ensure her future goodwill.

- If the client does not have the eleke of Elegguá, he must receive this; Ogundá Meji gives birth to his necklace in the colors of white, red, and black.
- Whenever Ogundá Meji opens for a priest/ess and refuses closure, it may be trying to mark this person for the reception of the knife. The diviner should ask this question first: “Ebó de pinaldo?” If the answer is no, he needs to continue with the list of ebores given for the parent odu.

The Ebores of Ogundá Iroso (3–4)

- Olokun is important in this letter, and if the letter will not close it may wish to mark this person for Olokun’s reception. The diviner must ask, “Koshé Olokun?” and if the answer is yes, he may then ask for closure. If the answer is no, or if the client already has Olokun, she may be standing up for ebó. The next question is, “Ebó elese Olokun?” The ebó for this orisha should be marked in the same way as that for the warriors.
- If none of these will close the oracle, the diviner should try to mark the client’s oldest child for ocha before going on to the list of ebores for the parent odu.

The Ebores of Ogundá Oché (3–5)

- If the client has an illness affecting the abdominal region, the ebó marked when this letter will not close is a rogación of the abdomen and head at the feet of Oshún. Also, women for whom this letter has fallen may never again cut the hair short, and if a man wishes to change the length he wears his hair, he must consult with Oshún first. These things should be explained to the

client and written in the record of the reading, and then the oracle is once again asked for closure.

- Oshún is very important in this letter; if it refuses closure, she may be standing up for ebó. First, the diviner should ask, “Iré elese Oshún?” to see if she is standing up on his behalf, and if she is, the diviner should then ask, “Ebó elese Oshún?” If the answer is no, we say that Oshún protects the client for free, yet he should still offer some small adimú to her in gratitude. If Oshún is standing up for an ebó, the diviner should try to mark it in the same manner as marking ebó for the warriors, beginning with the question “Adimú?” and ending with the question “Kaure?” If the answer to kaure is no, then the ebó marked is automatically eyebale, and it should be given as soon as possible.
- The next question for the diviner to ask is, “Ebó elese egun?” which means “Are egun in need of ebó?” for they stand up in this letter. If the answer is yes, the diviner must proceed in the same manner as that for Oshún.
- If none of these will close the oracle, the client may need to receive Inle; the diviner should mark this with the question “Koshé Inle?” If the answer is no, or if the client already has Inle, the orisha might want ebó. The next question for the diviner to ask is, “Ebó Inle?” If this is marked by the odu, the diviner must then follow the same line of questioning to determine ebó as used for Oshún. After this is done, the oracle is again asked for closure. Remember: If ebó is needed and the client does not have Inle, the ebó is to be made to the diviner’s orisha.

The Eboses of Ogundá Obara (3–6)

- If this letter will not close, the client has issues pending with Shangó; the diviner should first ask the question “Larishé Shangó?” which means “Does Shangó have the remedy?” If the answer to this is yes, then the diviner must follow the method for marking larishé as given in chapter 1’s section “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with the question “Adimú?” and end with the question “Kaure?” If the answer for kaure is no, the ebó marked is automatically eyebale, and feathers are to be given to Shangó.

- If the letter still refuses closure, then this client has issues pending with Osain. First, ask the oracle if the client needs a *niche osain* (an herbal, beaded charm made for a specific purpose or orisha, based on Orisha Osain's sacred medicines) with the words "Ebó niche osain?" If the letter will take niche osain, question as to which orisha needs the charm by following the order given at the beginning of this chapter in "The Orishas Who Speak in Ogundá." If no niche osain may be given, the diviner may then ask if the orisha is to be received with the question "Koshé Osain?" Use this as a last resort for an aleyo (mark it only after turning to the list of eboses in the parent odu, Ogundá). For the priest/ess, it must be asked before going to those eboses.

The Eboses of Ogundá Odí (3-7)

- If the odu will not close, the diviner should explain the following eboses to the client. First, Yemayá watches over him, and he should wear her eleke every day so she can protect him wherever he goes. Second, the client needs to be cautious with the head; no one should touch it. The orí needs to be strengthened with a rogación, and if there is any illness, this ritual should be done at the feet of Yemayá. She will fight all his battles and be his therapist, so he should leave all his problems, fears, and wars at her feet. Because Yemayá stands up so strongly in this letter now, the diviner should check to see if she wants ebó with the question "Ebó elese Yemayá?" If the answer is no, she protects the client for free—but he should still offer her a token adimú. If the answer is yes, the diviner must mark the ebó using the list for *larishe* in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." Begin with the question "Adimú?" and end with the question "Kaure?" If the answer for *kaure* is no, then the ebó is automatically *eyebale*: Feathers should be given. Now that these things have been done, ask the oracle for closure.
- If the oracle will not close, explain to the client that Elegguá must be offered a part of every ebó done for the orishas in this sign. He might also want something else, and the diviner should then ask, "Ebó elese Elegguá?" If he wants an ebó, it should be

marked in the same manner as that for Yemayá; and if he wants no ebó, the oracle should then be asked for closure.

The Eboses of Ogundá Unle (3–8)

- If this letter refuses closure, the diviner should first have a mazo thrown over the client's neck; if the guardian orisha is not yet known, the necklace used should be that of Obatalá. The client is then directed to salute the godparents if they are present, or the diviner's Obatalá (or the orisha of the head, if this is known). After this, the diviner must explain the following things: The client is destined to make ocha, and will not find his evolution until this is done. Men will need to see a Babalawo for mano de Orúnmila, and women will need to see the Babalawo to get kofá de Orúnmila. Advise the man that he may need to make Ifá after making ocha, but this is only a possibility dictated by the shells. Only Ifá can say this for sure. Then, the diviner may once more ask the oracle for closure.
- If the letter will still not close, the odu may be trying to mark ebó for both Elegguá and Obatalá. The diviner should ask the question "Ebó elese Elegguá y Obatalá?" If the answer is no, these orishas protect this person for free, yet a token adimú should still be made to them. If the answer is yes, then the diviner must mark the ebó needed by following the pattern for larishe given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." Begin with "Adimú?" and end with "Kaure?" If the answer to kaure is no, then the ebó is eyebale (feathers) to both. It must be given as soon as possible.

The Eboses of Ogundá Osá (3–9)

- In this odu, it is mandated that a set of deer horns be washed for Ochosi and put in Ogún's pot. This honors the pact that the two Spirits have always to work and live together.
- In this odu, the diviner must deviate a bit from the order of questioning that was detailed in the section on eboses for Ogundá. First, if the oracle will not close based on the larishe already prescribed, we say that Ogún is standing up in the client's defense, and then the reception of his eleke is mandatory.

It should be worn every day until the effects of this odu have passed. Second, Ogún might want an ebó in return for his goodwill and protection, so the diviner must now ask, “Ebó elese Ogún?” If the answer is no, Ogún defends and loves the client for free, yet a small, token adimú should still be given to ensure his goodwill. If the answer to the question is yes, the diviner must mark an ebó using the method for determining larishe in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with the question “Adimú?” and end with “Kaure?” If the answer to kaure is no, then the sacrifice is automatically eyebale with feathers. It must be given when the eleke is received. After marking this, if the odu will not allow closure, the diviner should return to the normal line of questioning beginning with the elekes as detailed in the section in the earlier part of this chapter on ebores for Ogundá.

- If the letter refuses closure after those things have been marked, there are issues pending with Aganyú. The client should ask the question “Ebó elese Aganyú?” following the same pattern for determining ebó as given for Ogún if the answer is yes. If there is no ebó prescribed for Aganyú, a priest/ess might need to receive this orisha, and the diviner should ask, “Koshé Aganyú?” to see if he is needed.
- If the client is a priest/ess, this letter can also mark the reception of Osain. The diviner should ask, “Koshé Osain?” to see if he is needed.

The Ebores of Ogundá Ofún (3–10)

- When this letter opens on the mat and will not close, the following things should be discussed with the client before any other ebores are marked. The client must clean the house thoroughly, putting all empty bottles and containers in the trash, removing them immediately from the home. Bad spirits and energies can hide in these things. The client must dress in white often and at least every day for the next seven days. Many spiritual baths with the plant known as *prodigiosa* should be taken over the next twenty-eight days. The leaves of this plant should

be ripped and shredded into cool, fresh water and allowed to soak overnight. The next evening the client should draw a tub of warm water, and, standing in that, the bath should be poured from the shoulders down. He should then soak for a while in this bath.

- Immediately upon returning home, if the client has the warriors he should put a mixture of water, honey, and cornmeal in a gourd, giving this to them. The next morning, it should be thrown to Eshu in the street. Once these things are discussed and recorded as ebó, the diviner should again ask the letter for closure. If it will not close, he may then begin the normal line of questioning for the family of Ogundá beginning with the reception of the elekes.
- If the client is facing an operation and this letter opens, the diviner should try to mark an ebó to Ogún with the question “Ebó elese Ogún?” If he will take ebó, the pattern given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu” should be followed. Begin with “Adimú?” and end with “Kaure?” If the answer to kaure is no, then the ebó is automatically eyebale (the sacrifice should be of feathers).

The Eboses of Ogundá Owani (3–11)

- When this letter will not close with the initial larishe, the method of questioning deviates a bit from that outlined in the section on eboses for Ogundá. First, the diviner must explain to the client that Eshu wants three baby chickens in return for his help, and if the client does not have the warriors, this sacrifice is to be made to the diviner’s Elegguá. Second, a length of chain should be cut to equal the client’s height, and this chain should be put to Ogún; Ogún must then be fed a rooster. Again, if the client does not have the warriors, this ebó is to be done to the diviner’s Ogún. The oracle should now be asked for closure.
- If the letter will still not close, Eshu and Ochosi together may be standing up for ebó. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Eshu y elese Ochosi?” If the answer is yes, the diviner must follow the line of questioning for determining the larishe as

given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." Begin with "Adimú?" and end with "Kaure?" If the answer to kaure is no, then the ebó is automatically eyebale (feathers should be used) for both of the orishas.

- Now that these things have been explored, if the odu is still not closed the diviner should begin questioning about the elekes and the warriors. If those eboses will not close the letter, he should then turn to the eboses for the parent odu, Ogundá.

The Eboses of Ogundá Ejila (3–12)

- Before questioning the oracle about the elekes or the warriors, the diviner should begin his line of questioning in this odu with Babaluaiye. He should ask, "Ebó elese Babaluaiye?" If the oracle marks that ebó is needed, the line of questioning given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu" must be followed. In this way the appropriate ebó will be marked. If the oracle answers that no ebó is needed, one says that the orisha defends the client for free. A token adimú must be given, however, to ensure his goodwill. The diviner should then try to mark the elekes and warriors. If the answers to these questions are no, then the diviner must ask, "Koshé Babaluaiye?" If the answer to this is yes, the eleke of this orisha should be given until he is received.
- If the letter will still not close, an ebó should be marked to the two orishas Eshu and Ochosi. The question "Ebó elese Eshu y elese Ochosi?" must be put to the shells. If the answer is yes, follow the same line of questioning given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If the answer to "Kaure?" is no, the ebó is eyebale and feathers should be given to both orishas.

The Eboses of Ogundá Metanla (3–13)

- When this letter will not close, the diviner should first ask the client if he possesses a niche osain for one of the orishas; if he does, the ebó is automatically marked that this should be washed again in omiero and fed to recharge it. If the letter will

not close after this has been discussed, return to the initiations of the elekes and warriors.

- The next step to try closing this letter is to ask, “Ebó elese Oshún?” for there may be a debt with her. If the answer is yes, the diviner must mark ebó following the pattern for *larishe* given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” If the answer to “Kaure?” is no, then the ebó is automatically *eyebale*, feathers. If this will not close the letter, continue with the list of eboses given for the parent odu, *Ogundá*.

The Eboses of *Ogundá Merinla* (3–14)

- If the *larishe* of *Ogundá Merinla* are not enough to close this letter, the client should be given the following ebó (it does not need to be marked): A small knife or a small razor should be kept hidden somewhere on the client’s body for a period of twenty-four hours. No one should be allowed to see or touch this razor/knife. Once twenty-four hours have passed, the client should return to the diviner’s home so that it may be put to his *Ogún* (it may go to the client’s *Ogún* only if he has the initiation of the knife). It may be necessary to give *Ogún* an *adimú* when this is done. Before his shrine, using *obí* (the coconut) as the oracle, ask, “*Adimú elese Ogún?*” If *obí* answers that an *adimú* is needed, the diviner should mark a food or drink offering to be given at that time (this will exclude animal sacrifice). What *Ogún* wants must be given immediately.
- Also, if the letter will not close and the client has children, the youngest one may be in danger of rape, molestation, accidents, or illness. The client must bring her to the diviner’s home immediately so she can be cleansed at the feet of *Ogún* with meat and red palm oil; *Ogún* will destroy the danger this child is facing. Now, the diviner may once more ask the oracle if it will close. If it will not, he should proceed to mark the eboses of the elekes and warriors as detailed in the section on eboses for *Ogundá*.

The Eboses of *Ogundá Marunla* (3–15)

- If the letter will not close, before marking the initiations of the elekes and the warriors the diviner must let the client know that

he has issues with both Yemayá and Ogún that need to be resolved. The client must receive their elekes and wear them every day for twenty-eight days, and if this is not enough to close the odu, he must then try to mark an ebó to them both. Begin by asking, “Ebó elese Ogún?” and then, “Ebó elese Yemayá?” Follow the line of questioning for *larishe* given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with “Adimú?” and end with “Kaure?” and if the answer to *kaure* is no, then the ebó is automatically *eyebale*, feathers. The ebó must be done immediately after the elekes of these orishas are given. Now the client should return to the normal line of questioning as given in the section on ebores for Ogundá.

- If this letter still refuses closure, it might be marking the client for the initiation of Asohano; the diviner should mark this with the question “Koshé Babaluaie?” (Asohano is another name for Babaluaie.) If the answer to this is yes, then the client must receive him as soon as possible; in the meantime, the eleke of Asohano should be given to this client.

The Ebores of Ogundá Merindilogún (3–16)

- There are debts and issues with Oshún, and the diviner must mark an ebó to her if the client does not know what the debt could be. If she will not accept an ebó, the client should try to offer an *adimú* to ensure her goodwill. If the client is suffering from disease of the abdominal region, an ebó must be marked to Oshún, and a *rogación* must be done at her feet. The proper line of questioning for this is, “Ebó elese Oshún?” If she will take no ebó, the client must be advised to propitiate her anyway. If she will take ebó, follow the line of questioning given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with “Adimú?” and end with “Kaure?” If the answer to *kaure* is no, then the ebó is automatically *eyebale*, feathers. Once this is done, the diviner should return to the normal line of questioning beginning with the elekes and warriors.

The Eboses of the Parent Odu

Having worked carefully through these, if the diviner finds that the eboses of each composite sign are not necessary or not enough to close Ogundá, he must then work through the list of eboses given for Ogundú itself. The eboses of the parent odu follow.

- First, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Ogún?” and if the answer is yes, one of two eboses must be done. First, and preferably, the client should be cleansed with meat (smear it liberally with red palm oil) at the feet of Ogún. If this will not close the oracle, or if the diviner does not wish to prescribe this ebó, food should be given to Ogún for three days, and when the adimú is removed each day it should be taken to railroad tracks.
- If this will not close the oracle, the diviner must then ask, “Eborí?” If the answer is yes, a rogación should be given at the feet of Obatalá; and while it is being done, two pigeons should be fed to the head to give it strength.
- The next question to ask is “Ebó elese Elegguá, Ogún, y Ochosi?” If the oracle dictates that this is needed, the client should be cleansed in front of each orisha (Elegguá, Ogún, and Ochosi) before leaving the diviner’s home. Meat should be used for all three orishas if the osogbo is severe; and the following day the client might need to be cleansed with cool fruits before each Spirit so the heat of the odu is placated.
- If nothing else will close the letter, the client must be chained to the earth, and the earth itself should be fed a rooster and grains so that it will not claim the client before his time.

If none of these eboses will close the letter, then the sacrifice needed is automatically four legs to the orisha that is speaking; the reading should then be ended. Also, remember that when closing a reading of Ogundá, there is a special ebó that must be done to remove the negative energies of the odu from both diviner and client: A piece of red meat is rubbed with red palm oil, and it is used to cleanse first the diviner and then the client. The client should put the meat to the diviner’s Ogún so the orisha may feed and remove the energies of the consultation. Once the client leaves (and this, unfortunately, should be immediately after the cleansing), the diviner must remove the

meat from Ogún and throw it to a dog in the street. The words “Eshu batie sode” are said, which translates into “Eshu removes the negativity of the consultation.” For a few days after this, it might be wise for the diviner to placate his Ogún with cool fruits, and the client might do likewise if the initiation of the warriors has been made.

Note that in this sign, there are certain types of animal and food offerings that are traditional to use. For eyebale, or sacrifice, try to pick what is used from the following list: a rooster, three hens, three pigeons, and red meat (beef is best). For four legs either a goat or a ram is used. For adimú-type offerings, the diviner should pick from fresh and smoked fish, jutía, a knife, three coconuts, a white sheet, cornmeal, and either seven or three ears of corn.



Opening Irosun— Four Mouths on the Mat

The Proverbs of Irosun

- Nobody knows what lies at the bottom of the sea.
- Beneath all water and land, the fires still burn.
- The child born healthy and strong grows weak from lack of care.
- Things unseen are best left unseen.
- Open the eyes; there is much to see.

The Orishas Who Speak in Irosun

In this odu, the following orishas are known to speak: Shangó, Elegguá, Olokun, Yewá, Dada, Boromu, Borosía, Oba, Orúnmila, Obatalá, Aganyú, and Ochosi.

Special Notes on Irosun

Irosun is a mysterious sign: It speaks of the visible, the seen, cautioning the client to open his eyes to what is happening in the environment, yet it also alludes to the invisible realm, those things known only by the soul. Its advice is always simple: "Take care of what lies before you, and let the orishas care for that within." Born from the pattern known as Owani (eleven mouths), Irosun is younger than Eji Ogbe is, king of all the odu. This letter, however, is given respect equal to its monarch. Symbolically, it alludes to the eyes; it is found in all the body's pairs, those appendages or organs that work as twins. Opening the reading thus, the *italero* shows his respect by making the sacred gesture for the letter: The middle fingers on both hands are descended to touch the mat while the remaining digits hang suspended in midair, and then they are brought up to stretch the lower eyelids down. This gesture not only calls everyone's attention to the opening of Irosun on the mat, but it also serves as a warning that all present must open their eyes wide to see the secrets that this letter is about to reveal.

Unlike the previous odu, Ogundá, or the first, Okana, Irosun carries no warnings for the diviner, nor does it have any special eboses that must be done once the reading is closed. It does, however, carry two observations that must be kept in mind. First, as Irosun opens on the mat, the priests and priestesses present know that the client has come to test the diviner's skills at divination. In extreme cases, this person might actually be an initiate or a Babalawo from another house, spying. Coming just for a reading, the *aleyo* could be scouting new houses of ocha, looking for new, more knowledgeable godparents. If the letter 4-6, Iroso Obara, falls to open the reading, this deception becomes even more obvious. Note that one of Iroso Obara's proverbs states, "The cat walks on fences, and people must not." Second, Irosun throws a red flag on the possibility of a godparent/godchild relationship. Romantic desires and fantasies may develop between these two—*italero* and client. In this religion, lovers may not exchange things of the orishas, for this would be seen as an incestuous relationship. These warnings should not be told to the client; they should be kept secret among the priests and priestesses gathered together in the room. Although the diviner can perform the prescribed eboses, it would be wise to not give anything of ocha to this person until his intentions are fully understood.

The Message of Irosun

Irosun is an odu of mystery, of deception, and when it opens on the mat, many diviners begin the reading by saying, "Maferéfún Olokun. Maferéfún Olorún." The client sitting before the shells is deep, mysterious. Although he thinks he might know himself well, being in touch with the depth of emotions and feelings that course within, he has yet to tap into more than the surface reflection. Much as a glacier shows only a fraction of its mass above the ocean, the client has seen only a brief portion of himself. No one truly knows this person, nor does this person know himself, yet this odu points out that Olokun and Olorún know all, even things that the client does not know, nor will ever know. The eyes are closed to what goes on in the environment; others have laid traps, planned deceit, and the mighty Olokun has kept her eyes on these. Now that the client has come to the oracle, she insists that he open his eyes; stop looking within, and stop wandering about aimlessly with the eyes shut to the world. Spend time learning to see what things are worth the effort of attainment, and who is worth loyalty and trust.¹

A generalization that holds true for most clients opening in Irosun is this: They come with smiles, pleasant faces, and relaxed demeanors; yet the big smiles and bright, hopeful eyes are a mask of this person's hopes, not an accurate reflection of what lies within. Under this mask is darkness; bright eyes hold tears, and smiles hide depression. For some, the surface is no more than a conditioned response to the turmoil seething inside. Alone, this person cries. All around are false friends, enemies, gossip, bad tongues, evil thoughts, and treason. Deception hides, waiting for its chance to come out. Olokun points out the client's naïveté. The diviner, as a counselor, should tell this person to not let the actions of others bring him down. Refuse to let others bring despair; those around him will take falls, and he should not try to catch them. He would then fall himself. To avoid ruin, the diviner must lay down these prohibitions: Keep away from those who must hide to live, and keep nothing that should be hidden. Learn to keep

1. Many clients that open in this sign are those involved in other New Age paths, searching for "meaning" or "mystical attainment." While these things are good, and while Irosun is a mysterious odu, its advice is for the client to stop living in the otherworld, making his home firm here in the material realm. One must live life to its fullest; allow the orishas, for now, to take care of the other realms. Thus will there be evolution in both worlds.

secrets and personal counsel. This mask is a good defense; however, the client himself should not believe that his mask is his true face. The first step to healing is to admit that one is sick; the second step in the healing process is to accept help and treatment. The orishas will be this person's physician.

Make new friends very slowly, cautiously. Keep the new people at a distance, calling them no more than a casual acquaintance. Naïveté is a quality this client has innately, and others sense this. People will take advantage of him. A good rule for the client to follow is to look at others with distrust. Did his mother never tell him to not talk to strangers? Be polite, but only as polite as well-mannered society dictates. No favors are to be done for others unless the client gets something immediately in return. In this odu, we say that perceived friends are enemies, and those that we think are enemies are actually friends. Irosun is a sign of reversal. Keep this in mind so that the client is ever vigilant against fraud, against deceit. Irosun is also darkness; do not become trapped in this. In business, remember that there are no true friends, only clients and salesmen; so, if someone wants to begin a business with or for the client, make sure that a fair contract is first issued and signed. Do nothing on faith, but have all documents scoured by an attorney. Do nothing by good word alone, but have all promises put into writing. Signature loans should not be co-signed, for it will be the client who pays off the debt. In the end, however, the client need not worry, for the orishas will provide for him if their advice is followed.

Irosun is also lost. Through its energies, the client will feel disjointed, unwound. Emotions will come boiling to the surface; women will be tempted to describe themselves as "hormonal" and men will feel weak. Advise this person to not become lost in these things with the odu. Eyes are to be focused ahead at all times. Visualize a goal, a place to which one wants to travel. Walk in a straight line. Even if weakness ensues, even if the client feels exhausted and wants to rest just for a time, he should continue his journey. Olófin will watch what tries to strike from above, and Olokun will be vigilant over those things that come from within. The power of this sign guarantees that to move continually and ethically will bring the assistance of all the Spirits that stand up in odu. Be steadfast: Let naught stop or turn one away from plans and aspirations. But while the orishas will

watch the heavens, the back, the client is on his own to watch his path—to keep his own counsel and let no one else interfere with his progress. All will come to closure, and attainment will be had.

Relationships become tricky in this odu. A man could lose his wife to adultery. Initially, it was the client's own behavior that led his spouse to these actions: The spouse felt unwanted, unloved, and her own attempts to rekindle passion went unnoticed. Now, however, she is falling in love with the new suitor. This person's influence sways her to argue, to quarrel, and the man must refuse to participate in this if he hopes to save the marriage. If a relationship or marriage is worth having, it is worth fighting for, and the client must now fight for his lover. A woman is evil; her thoughts are no good, and she will speak badly of everyone she knows. Her eyes are focused on the diviner's subject, and she is looking for a way to bring ruin, perhaps even imprisonment. The eboses prescribed will protect the client from her. Gossip about loved ones began with her mouth, and when it reaches the client's ears, he should pay it no mind. Irosun may also forebode the birth of twins into the family. It also points to the reception of the Ibeyi, the sacred twins, and the client must soon welcome these orishas into his home.

In addition to these things, the diviner should explore how Irosun touches other aspects of the client's life. Among these are:

- Health concerns in this letter focus on the eyes (go to an ophthalmologist for an exam) as well as the pairs of the body. The legs, feet, arms, hands, ears, kidneys, lungs, and lymphatic systems could all suffer injury or disease. If there is any physical discomfort from any of these organs, consult a physician before it becomes serious. Protect the eyes and the abdominal region, especially if this letter comes in ano, because strikes to these areas will result in serious injuries. The head must be protected as well. Do not participate in any sport without the proper safety equipment; and when traveling, wear seat belts. On motorcycles and bicycles, protective helmets and goggles should always be worn. Be ever vigilant over the body's health and well-being.
- In this sign, we say that money is found and trashed. The client works himself to death on too many goals at once, and until one project finds completion another should not be begun.

- The client will one day make ocha, even if he has only come for a reading. Love for this religion and the orishas will grow.
- There is either a birthmark or a scar on the client's body; one day he or she may be scarred again. Be careful of heat sources and open flames.
- Headhunters will come after this person and tell him that his godparents know nothing. Do not mistake this for goodwill and assistance. People like this are only interested in fraud and deception.

The Prohibitions of Irosun

When Irosun opens in an osogbo, the diviner must prescribe the following prohibitions. The more serious the osogbo, however, the more the diviner must rely on the prohibitions to keep the client away from harm; and once these are given to him, it is up to the client to ensure his own safety. Prohibitions normally last for only twenty-eight days, the passage of time that a single odu will inhabit; but if this is the reading of itá, the prohibitions given will last a lifetime. Except in cases of iré yale, most diviners will still mandate some prohibitions to ensure that the blessings predicted for the client are not missed or lost due to carelessness; whether this is done depends on the house and the oriaté performing the rituals.

- Irosun speaks of holes and traps that are made with holes; it is through an open area that this client's luck will eventually escape. Prohibit the following: sticking body parts through holes, looking through holes, and spying through holes. Do not look for loopholes in anything; Act honorably at all times. Do not wear things that have holes (ripped/torn clothing) and do not wear anything that has holes incorporated into its decorative design.
- Do not speak to anyone over a fence; go around it so you are not separated from the other person. The client should never jump over a fence, even if he thinks he knows what is on the other side. Ditches, gullies, hoses, cords, ropes, and even string can all be dangerous at this time as well. Never leave them lying around the house or yard. Do not jump, walk, run, or step over

these things. Watch the ground carefully for small holes. When driving, an accident could be caused by an unexpected pothole, so watch the road carefully (especially at night). Also, in areas that are geologically unstable (places that have sinkholes, earthquakes, mud slides, avalanches, and so on), it is possible that a hole could open up unexpectedly near or around the home. Be careful of this.

- Red clothing draws too much attention, and the color itself is hot. Do not wear it. Any red furniture in the home should be covered or reupholstered.
- There should be no cats living in the client's home; if the client already has a cat, it must be treated with respect and love.
- For now, do not eat any type of grains. Additionally, do not eat anything made from the heads or the intestines of animals, and if the meat eaten at a meal has bones, the client should not gnaw or suck on the bones. There is a danger of choking on these things. Ensure that all foods eaten are thoroughly cooked and prepared.
- In this odu, it is not unusual for the client's house to be in disarray; sometimes, this person will even live in filth. Irosun prohibits this type of living. As ebó, the home must be thoroughly aired and cleaned once the reading is complete, and it must be kept this way continually. Trash, filth, and clutter are prohibited in this odu, as are opened, empty containers and garbage or dirt in corners. Nothing should be stored under the bed.

The Eboses of Irosun

As in the previous odu, Ogundá, there is a slight deviation from the normal procedure when it comes to marking ebó in this letter. First, in Irosun we find that Olokun speaks sternly in all the odu; this is her true home and not Odí (seven mouths, as many priests and priestesses will profess). In all combinations of severe osogbo, Olokun will need to be either propitiated or received by the aleyo and initiate alike. Second, the Ibeyi are also a strong influence in this letter, and although doubles and twins are attributed to Eji Oko, two mouths, they are just as important to this family of letters. Because

it is not only the propitiation but also the reception of these orishas that is integral to these odu, Elegguá must be received if the aleyo does not have him already. Although Irosun does not require the full initiation of the warriors, if Eshu is marked by the reception of an orisha it would be wise for the client to receive all the ajogún (warriors) together. Therefore, if the larishes prescribed by an odu are not sufficient to close the oracle, ending the reading, the diviner should proceed as follows.

- Olokun may be standing up in this letter for either ebó or reception; the first question that the diviner should ask is, “Ebó elese Olokun?” If the answer to this question is yes, the diviner must proceed to mark the ebó in the pattern for larishe given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” The one question normally inferred but not asked—“Eyebale?”—must be asked specifically of the oracle. If an ebó is required, and yet the final question—“Eyebale?”—does not mark an offering, the proper ebó for this orisha is to give her a blue, finely decorated mask as adimú. She will then hide those things within the client that need to be hidden from others. If the client does not have Olokun, this ebó is done to the diviner’s orisha.
- If this will not close the odu, the next question to ask is, “Ebó elese Ibeyi?” If the answer is yes, then the diviner needs to mark ebó in the same pattern as that for Olokun. If “Eyebale?” does not mark an ebó, then the proper offerings to give in this sign are four pigeons (two for each orisha) and two identical baskets of fruit. The day after this is done, the client should give a huge party in honor of the Ibeyi. If the client does not have the Ibeyi, the entire ebó should be done for the diviner’s orishas.
- If the odu still will not close, the client might need to receive either Olokun or the Ibeyi. The question “Koshé Olokun?” should be asked first, and then if the oracle says no or will not close, ask, “Koshé Ibeyi?”

If the letter will still not close, it is time for the diviner to turn to the individual eboses marked for each composite odu before returning to the eboses listed next for the parent odu, Irosun. The eboses that may be marked under each of this sign’s composites follow.

The Eboses of Iroso Okana (4-1)

- In this letter, we deviate just a bit from the normal order of marking ebó as described in the previous section, “The Eboses of Irosun.” Before attempting to mark any ebó listed above, do the following things. First, a mazo is thrown over the client if he is an aleyo, and he is then asked to salute the orisha of his head (if known; if not, salute Obatalá and use his mazo) and then the godparent or the diviner. He is now in bondage to ocha, and this should be explained. Tell the client that he should get his elekes and warriors as soon as possible. If the client does not make ocha, or does not want to make ocha, one day his oldest child will be lost; this should be explained gently. After this, if the oracle will not close, the diviner should turn to the initial set of eboses listed previously under “The Eboses of Irosun.” After these are explored, the diviner may return to the eboses listed here in this section.
- If the letter will still not close, the next option is to ask, “Ebó elese Ogún?” If Ogún wants ebó, it should be marked in the same manner as the eboses for Olokun and the Ibeyi. However, if the question “Kaure?” is answered no, the ebó marked is automatically eyebale, feathers.
- The next option for closure is, “Iré elese Ifá?” If the answer is yes, then the letter is automatically closed and the client should be taken to a Babalawo for a full assessment.

The Eboses of Iroso Ejioko (4-2)

- When this letter opens and refuses closure for a priest/ess, the orisha speaking in this sign could be marking a tambor as the solution for all the client’s troubles. The diviner should first ask if a tambor is required, and then he should ask if the orisha whose diloggún is being consulted wants the drum. If that orisha refuses the ebó, the diviner should try to mark the tambor for one of the orishas given in the priest/ess’s ocha, following the order of importance as dictated by the orisha into whose mysteries this initiate was made. If none of those orishas will take the drum, then the diviner must use the list of orishas provided in the beginning of this chapter under “The Orishas Who

Speak in Irosun.” Remember: Before a drum may be played to this initiate’s Spirits, the orisha from whom the initiate’s head was born must be given fundamental *bará*.

The Eboses of Iroso Ogundá (4-3)

- Whenever this pattern opens for a priest/ess and refuses closure, it may mark one of two eboses: the giving of four legs (and an *itá*) or the reception of the knife. First, the diviner should ask the oracle if an orisha needs four legs; and then he should ask if the orisha speaking requires four legs. If so, the *ebó* is marked and no *itá* is required. If four legs are needed for an orisha beyond the one speaking, the diviner tries to mark it for one of the orishas given in the initiate’s *ocha*. If an orisha will not take four legs, the diviner then proceeds through the list given at the beginning of this chapter in “The Orishas Who Speak in Irosun.” After an orisha is marked, the diviner must remember to ask if an *itá* is needed or the letter may not close out.
- If the oracle will not mark four legs or an *itá* for any of the orishas, the diviner should next try to mark the reception of the knife. After this, return to the list of eboses given for the parent *odu*, Irosun, to try to close out this letter.

The Eboses of Irosun Meji (4-4)

- When this letter opens on the mat in an *osogbo* and will not close based on the initial *larishes* prescribed, the client is automatically marked for the following eboses. First, an initiate must obtain a silver coin, having it washed during the *lavatorio* (birthing) of every orisha whose ceremony he attends. This coin should be kept safe and carried at all times: It is a powerful amulet for prosperity. It will work only for those who come under this sign. Second, *Oba* should be fed in this sign; she should be given two hens on a plate, and the entire *ebó* is to be done in a cave. After she has been fed (not before), a piece of rock should be removed from the cave to make a four-faced *Eshu*. This path of *Elegguá* has no name. It takes the normal *carga* and is used by the priest/ess only; it is never used to work for another person, nor can it ever give birth to another *Elegguá*. Each face of

this Elegguá should have the following carga added: efun, aché de Ósun (the secret herbal “packing” in an herbal staff of Osain), charcoal, and dirt from the cave. Finally, if the osogbo of this sign is severe, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Shangó?” If the answer is yes, the client should be told that his Shangó has left him due to disobedience (the client will know why) and the only way to bring his Spirit back to the otanes is to feed the otanes a ram and sit for itá with Shangó.

- If the client is an aleyo, he is marked for the following things (the priest/ess should do these as well): First, his Ósun must be reinforced. It needs strength to fight for his head. Second, a ceramic pumpkin should be washed for Oshún, and money should be put in this every week as a devotion to her. This way, the client will never be poor. Also, the client wanted to play, or stopped playing, an instrument as a child. Elegguá wants the client to play this instrument again; and when it is not being played, it is to be left with Elegguá. Happiness will come back into this person’s life.
- If the client does not have the complete initiation of the warriors, he needs to get this as soon as possible. If these eboses are not enough to close the letter, the diviner must now proceed with the normal pattern given in the final section of this chapter, “The Eboses of the Parent Odu.”
- If the letter will still not close, the client must commit to giving Olokun a ram at the ocean. This should be done as soon as possible, and must be marked with the question “Ebó elese Olokun, ilé Olokun?”

The Eboses of Iroso Oché (4–5)

- In Iroso Oché, both Shangó and Oyá are overseeing the client spiritually, and both might want some type of ebó in return for their protection. Before any other eboses are marked, the diviner should ask the questions “Ebó elese Shangó?” and “Ebó elese Oyá?” to see if they require anything. Even if no ebó is marked, the client should be directed to give some token adimú to both orishas together.

- If this letter cannot be closed, the client may need to have a rogación at the feet of his orisha, if known; the diviner should ask, “Ebó orí else [orisha’s name]?” If the guardian orisha is not known, ask, “Ebó orí?” If the answer is yes, then the diviner must give a rogación to this person before he leaves his home. The oracle should then be asked for closure.
- If the letter does not allow closure after this, the diviner should ask, “Ebó else egun?” which means “Are the dead in need of ebó?” If the answer to this is yes, the diviner must proceed to mark what is needed following the guidelines given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with “Adimú?” and end with “Kaure?” If the answer to kaure is no, then the ebó needed is automatically eyebale, feathers.
- If the client is a priest/ess and the letter still does not allow closure, then Dada may be needed. The diviner must ask, “Koshé Dada?” With Dada should be given an Ósun (herbal staff) equal to the initiate’s height.

The Eboses of Iroso Obara (4–6)

- There are two eboses in this letter that must be explained to the client and noted in his record of the reading before the diviner may ask for closure. First, if this is a priest/ess, the client needs to decorate a red cloth with many cowrie shells. Make the design aesthetic and pleasing to the eye, and once done it should be put to Shangó, left over his tureen to cover it completely. This cloth stays with that orisha. The initiate is now marked to receive Babaluaiye; and upon his reception, the client is to remove the red cloth from Shangó and use it to cover Babaluaiye’s tureen. It is never to be removed, to honor the pact that the two orishas have together.
- The second ebó is to be done by both aleyo and initiate—a sacrifice to the earth and orisha Oko. In the ground, the client must dig a large hole (big enough to hold the items needed for the ebó: several types of grain, a pumpkin, and a rooster). The pumpkin should be hollowed out, and inside it the diviner places seven pieces of coconut that have been smeared with red

palm oil. On each of these a single grain of guinea pepper is adhered to the top. A white candle is lit and mounted inside the pumpkin. Once all is prepared, at night, the diviner sacrifices the rooster to the earth (inside the hole); the animal is thrown in, and the pumpkin is placed over this. A cleansing is then made at the hole: The client is ceremonially cleansed with the different types of grain, followed by the cleansing of all those who might be at the ceremony. All is then buried silently. We feed the earth thus so that Orisha Oko will not feed upon the client's body before his time.

- If the letter will still not close, the diviner then begins the normal line of questioning for the composite odu of Irosun (that is, marking whether Olokun and the Ibeyi are standing up for ebó or reception).
- If those things are not sufficient to close odu, the client may need to receive Orisha Oko. The diviner should ask, "Koshé Orisha Oko?" If the answer is yes, this Spirit's beads should be given until the rituals can be done.

The Eboses of Iroso Odí (4-7)

- When this letter falls for the client, there are certain eboses that must be detailed and written in the client's record before the diviner can ask for closure. First, the client needs to have a rogación. If he has come to the oracle because there is sickness, this rogación needs to be given at the feet of Yemayá, and once done a token adimú of fruit should be given to her so that this orisha heals him and fights all his battles. The initiation of the elekes is of utmost importance; they must be put on and worn every day so that Yemayá and the other orishas can protect this person from all osogbo. Once these things are explained, the diviner may then ask for closure. If the reading cannot yet end, the diviner should begin with the normal line of questioning for this odu.
- There could be debts with Obatalá if Iroso Odí will not close; the diviner should ask, "Ebó elesé Obatalá?" If the answer is yes, he must then mark ebó following the pattern for determining

larishe given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If the answer to the final question—"Kaure?"—is no, then feathers must be given to this orisha as eyebale. If the oracle will still not close, ask if a rogación should be given after the ebó: "Ebó orí else Obatalá?"

The Eboses of Iroso Umbo (4-8)

- Before this odu is asked for closure, the diviner must tell the client that he needs to get his warriors; they are an integral part of this odu. He must also explain to the client that he is now bound to make ocha. A mazo should be removed from Obatalá's shrine (or the orisha of the head, if known), and then it must be thrown over the client's shoulders. He is directed to first salute his orisha (or the guardian orisha, if known) and then the diviner or godparent. Once these things are done, the diviner may then ask the odu for closure.
- Note that as ebó, the diviner may not charge this client for either the reading or the eboses prescribed by odu. He should fold up the derecho (fee) for the reading, cross himself with it, and return that money to the client. Once this is done, the eboses marked by odu from this point on must be done for free; and if the client cannot afford the materials for the eboses, the diviner is obligated to provide them himself. Now, he should begin to mark the eboses for this letter as detailed by the section on eboses for Irosun.
- If the letter will still not close, a rogación may be needed at the feet of Obatalá. The diviner must ask, "Ebó orí?" and if the answer is yes, this rogación should be given before the client leaves the diviner's home. If the letter will still not close, the diviner must ask, "Eyebale orí?" If the oracle answers yes, then the rogación should include two white pigeons at its conclusion to feed the client's head. If animals are not immediately available, the rogación should be repeated in full with sacrifice in a few days.
- If the letter will still not close, this person may have debts or unresolved issues with Elegguá and Obatalá. The diviner should

ask, “Ebó elese Elegguá y Obatalá?” If the answer is yes, the diviner must follow the pattern laid forth in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” If the answer to “Kaure?” is no, the ebó is automatically eyebale, feathers, for both orishas. They must be fed together.

The Ebores of Iroso Osá (4–9)

- Before trying to close this odu, the client should be told that he must make ocha in time; and if the guardian orisha is not known, the client must have his head read soon. The initiation of the elekes and the warriors is needed as soon as possible, and egun are in need of much attention; a *bóveda* (altar) should be kept for them, and the client should have his opá ikú (staff of the dead). *Elegguá* is this person’s foundation in all things, so this orisha must be continually propitiated. Once these things are explained and recorded, the diviner may try to close the odu.
- If the letter will not close, one or more of the following orishas may need ebó: Oyá, Shangó, Oshún, and Elegguá. The diviner should ask each in that order, following the guidelines given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.”

The Ebores of Iroso Ofún (4–10)

- In this letter, the diviner may not try to close the oracle until he has explained to the client that he is now marked for Babalwaiye; this orisha must be received as soon as possible, and until this can be done, his eleke should be given and worn daily. Additionally, if either the client or the diviner has a dog, the following ebó should be done: Attach a short chain to the dog’s collar and take him out into the street. Let the dog loose and walk back into the house, keeping the front door open. The dog must not be called back home; he must be allowed to return and enter of his own free will. Once both diviner and client do this, the luck that has left both of their lives will soon return. The diviner may now try to close the oracle; if it will not end the reading, he may begin the normal line of questioning for odu.

- If the letter will still not close, Asohano (another name for Babalwaiye) may be standing up for ebó; the diviner must ask, “Ebó elese Babalwaiye?” If the answer is yes, the ebó must be marked as outlined in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” If the answer to the final question “Kaure?”—is no, then the ebó is automatically eyebale, feathers.

The Eboses of Iroso Owani (4–11)

- When this letter opens in an osogbo, it automatically marks certain eboses that must be done. First, the client must never wear black; he should wear white as much as possible to honor Obatalá. Second, if sickness comes to the client or someone in his house, an idé (made of silver) should be washed in Obatalá’s omiero and fed with this orisha. It is to be worn by the client and never removed. Yewá demands attention here as well: In her house (the cemetery) a dish of baked red snapper garnished with tomato and *gofio* (roasted flour or cornmeal) should be offered to her. If this is not done soon, she may soon take the life of someone close to the client. Pray that she is merciful! Once these things are done, the client must prepare himself to make ocha, taking the initiations of the elekes and the warriors as soon as possible. Now that these things have been explained and recorded, the diviner may ask the oracle for closure; if it will not close, he continues with the normal line of questioning for odu.
- Shangó may be standing up in the reading for ebó; the diviner must ask, “Ebó elese Shangó?” If the answer is yes, following the method given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu,” one must mark the requirements of this orisha. If the answer to the question “Kaure?” is no, then eyebale, feathers, are necessary.

The Eboses of Iroso Ejila (4–12)

- If Iroso Ejila will not close, the diviner should explain to the client that there may be foul magic at work in his life, and the following ebó will clear these negative energies. A clay pot should be filled with fresh, cool water, and this should be taken just

outside the front door. It is then allowed to drop from the client's hands, shattering on the ground. The water must be allowed to dry naturally, and the clay shards are swept away and thrown in the outdoor trash. The broom used to clear these pieces must also be thrown away. After this, the door must be refreshed with a libation of cool water given to Olódumare, and this must be done every day.

- A priest or priestess needs Dada and an Ósun equal to the height. The diviner should try to mark this with the question "Koshé Dada?" If the answer is yes, then preparations should be made for the ceremony as soon as possible.

The Eboses of Iroso Metanla (4-13)

- Before trying to close the odu, the client should be told that the following eboses are necessary: He should take the initiations of the elekes and the warriors, and he should then begin preparing for ocha. If the head has not been read, the guardian angel should be called down to the mat soon. If this client is a priest/ess, then Dada and an Ósun equal to the height must be received. Once these things are marked and recorded, the diviner may try to close the oracle. If it will not close, the normal line of questioning for Irosun should be followed.
- Babaluaiye figures prominently in this odu, and the diviner should use the following line of questioning concerning him: "Ebó elekes de Babaluaiye?" If the answer to this is yes, then the eleke of Asohano should be given. If the answer is no, or if the oracle will not close, the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Babaluaiye?" marking ebó in the pattern given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If the oracle will still not close on that, the diviner may try, "Koshé Babaluaiye?" If the reception of Asohano is indicated, it must be done as soon as possible.

The Eboses of Iroso Merinla (4-14)

If this letter marks any type of osogbo, there are several eboses automatically marked for the client, and they must be done as soon as possible.

- Both the elekes and the warriors are needed in this odu; the client must receive them as soon as possible. The elekes of the orishas who have stood up in this reading should be given as well.
- If the client is childless, yet wants a child, the following ebó will help (it will work only when used in this odu): Fill a large basket with black-eyed peas, leaving this in the home for five days. On the morning of the sixth day, take them to the river with prayers for Oshún.
- If the client wants wealth and love, there is yet another ebó that can be done in this letter. Give the Ibeyi a party, inviting as many children as possible. The divine twins love to be surrounded by laughing children, so serve sweet foods and provide games (a piñata is a necessity). Throw money and coins to the children if you desire riches, and serve as many candies and pastries as possible if you desire love. Let the children do whatever they want, and do not yell at them or discipline them while the party is being celebrated. The things that the client pines for will soon arrive.
- Once these things have been explored with the client, the diviner should ask the odu for closure; if it will not close, he should follow the normal line of questioning for the odu that has opened.
- If the odu will not close, there may be issues at hand with Oshún; she may want ebó to bring some of the riches and wealth born to the world in this letter to the client's life. The diviner must ask, "Ebó elese Oshún?" and if the answer is yes, he should mark ebó using the pattern given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If the answer to the question "Kaure?" is no, then eyebale, feathers, are the proper ebó to give.

Note: Once the reading has ended, the client should be taken to salute Obatalá, saying the phrase "Maferéfún Obatalá"; and this phrase should be said daily. Say it once upon awakening, and once upon retiring, as well as several times throughout the day.

Eboses of Iroso Marunla (4-15)

- Before the diviner asks the oracle for closure, he should explain to the client that he is close to death by disease or accident; this odu, however, offers an ebó to Yewá to save him. Bake a red snapper with tomato and gofio, but to it add nine sweet balls of gofio and nine slices of tomato. This dish is taken to the cemetery, asking Yewá to have mercy and offer her protection. The client should then ask if the letter will close, and if it will not, he should ask, “Ebó elese Yewá?” If the answer to this is yes, the diviner must then mark ebó to her following the pattern given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” After this, the diviner may go on to continue the normal line of questioning for Iroso Marunla.
- If the letter will still not close, it may be trying to mark this client for the reception of Yewá. As a last resort, the diviner should ask, “Koshé Yewá?” If the answer to this is yes, the client should have Yewá’s eleke so that he is under her protection until the rituals can be done.

The Eboses of Iroso Merindilogún (4-16)

- When this letter has opened on the mat, there are certain eboses that are marked for the client automatically. First, he needs to have his elekes and warriors as soon as possible; and when the warriors are being given, a length of chain must be washed and put to Ogún. A single link of this chain should be first separated from the length, and the remaining length should be equal to the client’s height. After Ogún is received and the orisha’s implements fed, the single link of chain is to be carried with the client at all times. Remember this saying while carrying the link: “A single link of chain does not break!” If the osogbo is severe, a chunk of iron ore must be washed for Ogún as well. The iron ore itself must be fed alone and then with Ogún’s stone; they are both to be given a rooster. This rock should always be kept inside Ogún.
- If the oracle has not closed and the initial line of questioning for this odu has been followed, either Ogún or Oshún might be

standing up for eboses, or they might both be. The diviner should first ask, “Ebó elese Ogún?” and then he should ask, “Ebó elese Oshún?” The eboses for these orishas are to be marked as detailed in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.”

- If the *osogbo* is severe and the *odu* will still not close, *itá* may be needed with *Elegguá*. The diviner should ask, “*Itá elese Elegguá?*” If so, arrangements for an *oriaté* to give four legs (a goat) must be made, and *itá* must be given the day after the *matanza* (sacrifice).

The Eboses of the Parent Odu

Having exhausted the eboses listed under each of the composite *odu*, the diviner must now mark one or more of the following to successfully close the oracle, ending the reading. The offerings that usually satisfy *Irosun* are as follows.

- A fishing net is taken to the ocean. *Ebó* is made to *Olokun* there (mark what is needed by this orisha), and then the net is cast into the ocean. It is then drawn back out and hung over the client’s back door to keep out evil and bring in the blessings caught at the ocean. The client himself should also sew a red flag, and this flag is hung over the front door to honor *Shangó*. After the red flag is in place, the *ebó* of hot and cold water should be done to cool the home: Have a glass of hot water and a glass of cold water. From inside the house, fling the hot water to the street, and from outside the house, fling the cold water into the home. Let this dry while all faucets are allowed to run cold tap water. When all the water is dried inside and outside the house, the faucets may be turned off. Until the *odu* has passed from the client’s life, this person should do all daily prayers while running cool, clear water into the house from the sink faucets.
- After these have been explained and written in the client’s record of the reading, the diviner should check to see if there are issues pending with *Elegguá*. If he is not living in this person’s home, he needs to be, and this should be explained to

the client. If Elegguá is already there, he might need ebó; the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Eshu?” If the answer is yes, the proper ebó to give is more carga so that Eshu has more strength, and then a rooster. If the client is a priest/ess, Elegguá might also need a crown, and the diviner should try to mark this. After these things are done, try once more to close the oracle.

- If those eboses are not sufficient to close odu, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Ochosi?” If the answer to this question is yes, then ebó must be marked in the manner of determining larishe as outlined in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” If an ebó is called for and kaure is not marked, the ebó is automatically eyebale, feathers.
- The next question to ask is, “Ebó elese egun?” If the answer to this is yes, the diviner must follow the same method for determining the offering as used for Ochosi.
- There are two other orishas that could be standing up for reception or eboses in this parent odu: Orisha Oko and Babalwaiye. The diviner should first ask, “Ebó elese Orisha Oko?” and then, “Ebó elese Babalwaiye?” If neither orisha wants ebó, then the diviner should ask, “Koshé Orisha Oko?” and “Koshé Babalwaiye?” If one or the other is marked for reception, that orisha should be given as soon as possible, and in the meantime, the diviner should give the elekes of that Spirit so he may begin to work for the client.
- If the odu will still not close, there could be further issues pending with any of the orishas listed in the beginning of this chapter in “The Orishas Who Speak in Irosun.” Anything from an eleke to an ebó to an orisha could be needed, and the diviner should think carefully about his options before proceeding with this line of questioning. At this point, it would be a good idea for the diviner to call an elder who is more experienced at divination for help in determining how to close this odu.
- After these options are explored, some diviners will then turn to the eboses listed under the secondary odu as parent odu; but if the reading progresses this far and still will not close, there

could be some error or oversight on the diviner's part. An experienced elder/diviner should be called at this point for advice.

Also, note that this letter has certain specific offerings that are native and traditional to this sign, and whenever possible the diviner should pick from this list to offer *eyebale* or *adimú*. If the sacrifice of an animal is called for by one of the orishas, use one of the following: a chicken, two roosters, or four pigeons. If an *adimú*-type offering is needed, pick from these: a ñame, an arrow, smoked fish, *jutía*, a white sheet, four small sacks, or four cakes.



Opening Oché— Five Mouths on the Mat

The Proverbs of Oché

- Just as there are rivers on the earth, there are rivers in the veins.
- While your tongue is your luck, it is also your disgrace.
- Oché is blood that runs through the veins.
- There is a proper time for everything.
- In *iré*, we say that all food tastes sweet; in *osogbo*, we say that all food tastes sour.

The Orishas Who Speak in Oché

The following orishas are known to speak in this sign: Oshún, Elegguá, Orúnmila, Obatalá, Oyá, Yemayá, and Ochosi.

Special Notes on Oché

It is said that when creation stood upon its final threshold, Olódumare looked down on the earth from heaven and wondered, "What more can I give to the world?" He looked upon the vastness, the

beauty, of all things made and Oché sprang from his thoughts. He smiled. The world was complete. Being the last odu to arrive on earth, Oché is the youngest; and yet it is the sweetest, the most powerful. It was born from Elleunle (eight mouths), and is found in all the sweet river waters of the world. In the body, it rules perhaps the most important part—the blood, the heart, for these veins are the true rivers of the body. When it opens on the mat, even if this is not itá, most diviners will honor it by giving the sacred sign: Both hands are first patted on the tops of the thighs, and then on the sides. If the diviner's head was born from this odu in ocha, he then crosses both arms over the chest and bows his head deep in reverence and respect; those present in the room often follow suit, for this is the most awesome of all the odu. There are no special precautions that must be taken when this pattern opens on the mat. The diviner should remember, however, that Oshún's influence is felt in every composite odu that opens, and even if the letter prescribes no eboses for her, the client would do well to offer some sort of adimú to the sweetest of all the orishas. She brings to us all that Olódumare forgot to give.

The Meaning of Oché

Oché is the youngest of all the odu, yet it is one of the most powerful, the most awesome; in its grasp are all things bittersweet. For while Oshún, goddess of love, money, eroticism, and fertility, owns this odu, the most beautiful of all the orishas can be the most antagonistic, the most horrible to offend. Crying profusely, this sweet orisha expresses her joy, her happiness, and her love; laughing, she forebodes things evil, sinister, and displays her displeasure at mortals. Oshún is the youngest of the orishas. She is tiny, small, and fragile to behold. So it is with this odu, Oché. Yet Oshún is the strongest and the most powerful, having learned to wield those things that make life bearable like a two-edged sword. Make her proud, spoil her, and give her the due that she deserves, and Oshún gives freely of her blessings. Make her angry, scorn her, and those things that make life sweet are withheld; there is only bitterness. So it is with the odu Oché. Be not fooled by this letter's youth or folly. Under the influence of this sign, all things small become great and powerful, and under its effects, even the strongest mountain can be felled.

It is for these reasons that the opening of Oché on the mat deserves

strict ritual attention and observance. Oché is the source of fresh water and rivers that flow through the earth, nurturing life; it is the source of the blood that flows through the veins. Opening on the mat in five mouths, the reading is temporarily suspended while the diviner places both hands gently on his thighs, resting them there for a moment before placing them on the sides of his legs. Those who have ocha follow the italero's lead, yet those whose heads are born from this sign carry their reverence just a step further: They cross their arms over their chests and bow their heads, silently intoning the sacred prayer that honors this odu. For to have one's head born through Oché is both an honor and a curse. Controversy surrounds this odu, and depending on the house of ocha and the oriaté that performs the ceremony of itá, a iyawó can lose the right to read an orisha's diloggún, give an orisha, or even work the religion of the orishas for another. It is beyond the scope of this book to go into this further, but the reader should know that the controversy surrounding Oché is born of its power, its mystery; and the implications of this sign in the diloggún should never be underestimated.

Having opened the reading thus, the italero and those present at the mat are before a client who is called, by right of birth, to be a priest or priestess in this religion. Oché says that the head must be marked soon by either an oriaté (preferably) or a Babalawo (if a skilled oriaté cannot be found). Once the guardian orisha has been brought down to the mat, initiation will soon follow. If this is an aleyo that has been involved in the orisha faiths for some time, the diviner knows that he has felt cheated, fooled into parting with his hard-earned money for things of the spiritual world. Perhaps this is one who has come from another house and the previous godparents with whom this child associated were scandalous and of ill repute. All this will change. Until Oché opened on the mat to reveal this person's destiny, there was nothing that could be done: No amount of eboses and not even the most skilled priest or priestess could help this client attain his destiny. Past involvement in this religion served only to clear the osogbo that hindered spiritual evolution, and all the scandals of the past were a result of this one person's malicious karma. The client was locked in poverty, in despair. Those locks have been broken. Life was bitter, sour. Now, Oché brings just a taste of sweetness. There will be evolution. There will be prosperity; and the bitterness of the past will only serve

to make the future taste sweeter. The diviner must tell the client to consider this day, the opening of this odu, to be a rebirth and a renewal of his faith.

Oshún should be given praise and honor for testing this client's will, his determination, as he sought to find a path to the orishas. There have been trials by fire; those fires are now quenched. There has been much crying, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Those things are over; the wounds have been dressed and they will be healed. Since this person first sought the gods of Afro-Cuban religion, he has been in search of a family, a religious haven in which these mysteries could be explored. Oché says there needs to be no more searching: The client is home. The trials and tribulations that led this person to the rites of ocha are no more. Tell the client these things: He had luck once, and that luck was lost. He had true love once, and that love was let go, thrown away, killed by lack of trust and nurturing. These were but a few of the tests and trials that he had to go through to find evolution. If one were to eat sweet food every day, there would be no way to know what sweetness is. Without bitterness, even the sweetest foods taste bland. The difficulties that have been experienced will now serve as pointers toward evolution. Keep those things in the past; remember them, and never allow one's self to become caught up in them again. Remember: We stand on the shoulders of those that have come before. Use the foundation that has been laid. Pray to Oshún; pay any debts that are owed to her and depend on her for guidance. She will remove all worries—but she must be pampered, as she deserves. Note that because this orisha is taking an interest in this client, many of her children will come into this person's life. He should be warned to be wary of them. Have no arguments with Oshún's children; bring none of them to shame, and never cause them to feel humility. Her children can bring joy and heartache to this client's life. They should all be kept (even her priests and priestesses) as distant acquaintances until he is sure he can safely enter into a relationship with them.

Oché marks many osogbos within the client, many of which have to do with envy and evil thoughts. These are the things that caused his original fall and many of his problems, and these will bring him many problems again if they are not overcome. An aleyo who comes in any pattern of Oché for the first time very often comes from an impoverished background, and while basic necessities and even a few luxuries

were had, life never lived up to his expectations. There is a tendency to look covetously at the possessions of others, to desire the things that others have for no other reason than to feel equal. The italero must tactfully tell this person that the possessions of others have little bearing on his own self-worth; with the exception of a few people who were born into this world with excellent karma, most have to work hard to attain a life of luxury, of wealth. Warn him not to judge others by the things they have: clothes, jewelry, cars, houses. Look only at the person and the energy that is embodied. Also, the diviner should warn this person not to criticize those of whom he is envious; never belittle those who are wealthy or better off behind their backs. Bitterness and sweetness will attract more of the same. A true secret of prosperity for those who enter in this sign is emulation: Learn from the elders and those who have wealth; listen to how they achieved satisfaction and balanced their lives. It would also make this client feel better if the italero shared this one small secret revealed by Oché: There are those who see this client as being prosperous and having luck himself. He, too, is the recipient of others' envy and evil intentions. What is poor to one is rich to some. Thank Oshún for the many blessings she has given, and more will come.

Those who have done ocha also have special concerns and considerations when this letter falls on the mat. Even if this is a iyawó sitting for itá, it will come to pass that this person will be disillusioned with the religion of the orishas. This will come not because the gods are treating him badly, but rather because those with whom he associates are self-centered and vain (again, be wary of Oshún's children, for she is wonderful but they are not). If this is a priest/ess who is surrounded by many godchildren, they will be the source of worry, anger, and disdain. Oché points toward unrealistic demands and impossible requests. The italero, as elder and guide, must inform the client that leaving this faith would bring his final destruction; if things get bad, go into seclusion. For company, keep only those other priest/esses and godchildren that are trusted and loved, and who give trust and love in return.

Among our kind, everyone eventually comes to this realization: There are godchildren who are family, and there are godchildren who are clients—and this division must always be kept in mind. For a time, treat the religion as if it were a business, a source of income, and those

who try to stay close to you for reasons beyond the religion are truly family. Those are the ones to whom you devote your time, your energy, and your teachings. Also, do not give away the knowledge of ocha for free; others are to earn it through hard work and perseverance. Do not teach others the mysteries of this faith. Let them learn it by working hard for you at religious functions. The child of Oché does, in time, learn all things under heaven and earth, yet they must be learned through blood, sweat, and tears. Should not others have to work at least this hard? Finally, the italero should give the priest/ess who has come for a reading this warning: If ever he thinks about leaving this religion and can find no reason to stay, do not give away or throw away the orishas. They should be carefully wrapped in cloths and put away in storage, for many years down the road the day will come when this person regrets his loss—and the orishas will still be there, waiting.

Oché rules much of the body: the blood, the pelvic region, and the electrical/chemical stimulus of the nervous system. If the sign falls in *iré*, all will be well with the body and there will be good health. In *osogbo*, however, there are a variety of health concerns raised. When this *odu's* energy is not balanced, affliction of the areas that it rules can manifest in the client's life: hypoglycemia, diabetes, sepsis, and many types of poisoning are all possible. While the following health concerns manifest mostly in women, these concerns could also be shared by men: sexual and reproductive disease, digestive disturbances, and intestinal trouble. If there is any sickness in these areas during the next year, the client should go immediately to a doctor and have a complete physical. Sometimes, the afflictions are only temporary: They are Oché's method of getting the client's attention and bringing him back into alignment. It is not unusual to suffer temporary sexual dysfunction or lack of genital stimulation under the influence of this *odu*. However, if the loss of sexual function is complete, or if sterility/impotence ensues, the client must immediately go to the doctor. The italero must warn the woman who has come for a reading that Oché often forebodes unwanted pregnancies. If having a child is impossible or not realistic now, the woman should either abstain from sexual relations or use proper birth control at all times. Oshún says that abortion is not a viable option at this time; having one will only incur her wrath, and the mother will suffer permanent sterility or even death. A man who opens in Oché is forbidden to suggest an abortion

to anyone, for the mother of the unborn will come to regret it and see the adviser as the source of her despair.¹ Finally, Oché warns that this client should take time for adequate rest, sleep, and recreation, for the nerves are unstable and exhaustion could debilitate the health.

This sign also addresses home and family. In Oché, it is said that the home should be a source of rest, pleasure, and solitude, yet often it is not. Oshún wants the house to be clean, well lit, and comfortable at all times. She finds that the atmosphere is often repressed and oppressing. Lighten it up with laughter and music. Invite close friends with whom one is accustomed to spending time, and entertain. Before the client has found his true home, however, he may be moving a total of three times over the next few years, and in each dwelling the broom should be left behind so that it not take the negativity of the old home into the new. Before moving any furniture or personal possessions, the orishas and their implements should be moved into the new home, and they should be given their choice of where to live in that house. Finally, always begin the move in the morning and finish in the evening; whatever cannot be moved in one day should be left behind in the old residence, or sold or given away. Once everything is unpacked, a housewarming party should be thrown in honor of Oshún; she will bring many new blessings into this client's life.²

When dealing with friends and family, Oché warns the client not to be either a nag or a pest; the personality of those who open in this sign tends toward obsessive-compulsive disorder (in varying degrees) and he tends to bother the same people with the same requests. Lighten

1. While this odu, to our knowledge, harbors no such prohibition for women, it would be well for a woman to abstain from advising abortions as well. These are things that belong to the realm of women and their own counsel; however, there was a time when Oshún herself could not conceive, and it was only through the intervention of Orúnmila that she was able to have the third Ibeyi, Ideu. Therefore, the concept of abortion is anathema to this orisha and is usually prohibited in her sign. The italeró, if a woman, should deliver this prohibition and leave it up to the woman to decide what is just. The man, however, would do well to hint at this and leave it up to the woman to decide herself.

2. While alcohol is prohibited at orisha functions, for such a housewarming party it is not. Realize, however, that inebriation before the orishas at such an event would be disrespectful, and the host or hostess should carefully monitor guests for intoxication. Do not allow anyone to become drunk! At the conclusion of the party, make sure that no one is leaving drunk, for Ogún does not like such people traveling on his roads in this condition. Those invited to this party, however, should be in the religion and should already be aware of such things.

up. Tell the client he should ask once, and he should then wait for some time before he asks or makes the same request again. Bitterness in personal relationships is to be avoided at all costs. Speak sweetly, or do not speak at all. Remember that Oshún owns all honey and sweetness, and with this she can tame even the strongest of orishas (she once even tamed Ogún with her honey). To have one's way with others, be not demanding. Be kind. Bitterness always brings more of the same. For a time, the family has been, or will become, a source of worry. There will be many trials and tribulations with those related by blood. These should not be allowed to become a source of worry and stress; the italero must tell his client to not get caught up in family difficulties. Give help when help is needed, but do not lose sleep over the problems of others. Also, tell this person this: In time, even his mother will come to forgive (he will understand). Listen, but do not speak; watch, but do not act. In time the family will change its ways, and if they do not, all will suffer save for this client.

Love both the relations of blood and ocha from a distance; in this way, they can never bring harm or disappointment. For now, this is the only sensible way to deal with these people. Especially if the letter comes in osogbo, the client must be on guard against war, envy, strife, and gossip among those he calls family. The sign itself can portend incest (either spiritual or physical) among the client and his relations. This should be avoided; it will only serve to put Oshún's anger into his blood. If anyone related to the client becomes a source of desire, he should immediately remove himself from that person's presence and not go back alone for some time. If anyone related by either blood or ocha shows interest beyond being friends, that person must be avoided indefinitely. This odu also reminds the italero/oriaté or orisha priest/ess that nothing of ocha may be given to anyone with whom a romantic involvement was had, or with anyone whom the priest/ess desires to have a romantic involvement. Such things are akin to incest.

The following concerns are also addressed in Oché, and should be explained by the diviner.

- Beyond the health concerns already mentioned, Oché has much to do with the legs, knees, ankles, and feet. The waist and spine are also vulnerable. Past illnesses will recur, for the client never modified the behavior that brought them on. Proper health care

begins with proper hygiene: Daily showering and deodorizing will do much to improve the health, as will a thorough airing and cleaning of the home. Never let filth gather there again. Keep the nails clean and the feet covered with socks and shoes—there is a danger from tetanus infection. (Now would be a good time to update all immunizations.) Posture should be proper. Never ever take a home remedy. If the client is sick, he should go to the doctor for proper medical advice.

- Always have respect for nature, especially the river, for it is Oshún's true home. Give to her small offerings, and always ask her permission before you cross or swim in river waters. If this is a iyawó sitting for either itá or a reading, he is now prohibited from swimming or bathing in rivers until the end of his year as a iyawó.
- This respect for nature must extend to the natural homes of all the orishas. As ebó, the client would do well to spend time in the home of his patron, doing something to clean up the area (removing trash) and leaving it in a better state than how he found it.
- Keep the kitchen immaculate and clear of spoiled foods, for Oché warns of poisons that accompany what is eaten. Be very careful when eating away from home, and in the home of another, do not eat food that is given with insistence. It might harbor malicious witchcraft or even poison (the host or hostess might not realize this; Oché warns against unintentional poisoning).
- When this letter comes in iré yale, after making the prescribed eboses the client should play the lottery occasionally.

The Prohibitions of Oché

When the client's reading comes in osogbo, the diviner is well advised to prescribe the following prohibitions for a period of at least twenty-eight days, unless this is the reading known as itá, in which case the eboses prescribed will endure the lifetime of the initiate. Obviously, not all these things may apply in every case, and the diviner must depend on his own aché and the shells themselves to determine the

prohibitions that are appropriate. In cases of severe *osogbo* for a client who is not a priest or priestess, the diviner might want to treat these prohibitions more severely, imposing them for a greater length of time. This must be marked with the *diloggún* and *ibó* of the *orisha* speaking.

- This sign carries strict food taboos for the *iyawó*; for a client who has come just for a reading, however, these prohibitions are left to the discretion of the *italero*. First, nothing that comes from the river may be consumed, and this includes all forms of freshwater fish. (Some *oriatés* will also prohibit those things grown beside a river.) Because *Yemayá* and *Oshún* are sisters, many of those things that come from the ocean are prohibited in this sign as well: Shrimp, squid, and octopus are to be avoided. Watercress, *malanga* (a root vegetable), and *canistel* (a mangolike fruit) are prohibited in this letter (all of these are delicacies to *Oshún*, and all are used in *ebo*s to her), as are eggs and all reheated foods. Once cooked, food must be consumed or thrown away (the danger here of food poisoning is great). If food is first cooked and then boxed, frozen, or canned, it cannot be bought and consumed.
- In addition to these food prohibitions, *Oché* often points toward previous food taboos that were not followed. The *italero* needs to explore these with the client, for those foods, even if the prohibitions were temporary, are being taken away permanently because of this person's disobedience.
- *Oché* warns that the client should measure his words. Profanity is never to be used, and blasphemy will be this person's downfall. Do not participate in gossip; do not listen to it, and never repeat anything that might be heard accidentally. Do not brag about your good fortune, for in this way will others wish and bring evil to you.
- Nothing can be pawned.
- Do not share knowledge freely. Make others work for things that are known.
- Do not share, lend out, or use intimate-care items that were used by another. This includes all clothing, linens, soaps, sham-

poons, and combs or hairbrushes. A good rule to follow is this: If it touches the body of another, the client may not use it.

- If the letter Oché Meji appears during itá, the iyawó may never initiate a child of that orisha: The aché of this Spirit is too important to the priest/ess to be given away to another. The dilogún of that orisha should never be opened in a reading unless absolutely necessary. In our house, however, the iyawó may initiate children of the other orishas and still give the orisha for whom Oché Meji fell.

The diviner should impress upon the client that these prohibitions are not options but, rather, mandates from the odu itself, and they need to be followed. In addition to these, which should be prescribed whenever Oché falls, each composite sign may carry its own prohibitions in osogbo. The oracle will dictate these, and it is the diviner's job to list them for the client. He is then freed from responsibility, and the client must take charge of his own health and safety.

The Eboses of Oché

Although there is a list of eboses given in each composite odu, there are certain types of spiritual advice and offerings that must accompany all sixteen of these patterns when they open on the mat; I have included these here. If an odu will not close off the initial larishes prescribed in the letter, the diviner must turn to the eboses given in this section for each omo odu.

- When this letter falls, before the diviner can ask for closure he must do the following: A mazo is thrown over the client's neck, and he is made to salute the orisha of the head (or Obatalá, if that information is not known) and then the godparents (if they are present). If not, the client salutes the diviner instead. He is now bound to make ocha, and the diviner should advise the reception of both elekes and warriors as soon as possible. If the guardian orisha has not been determined, this should be done soon as well. If ocha cannot be made by this person for some time, this letter demands a monthly rogación and washing of the head with the herbs of ocha and Oshún so that luck and health can be acquired.

- In Oché, the client might be in need of a rogación at the feet of whatever orisha has stood up in this sign. To mark this, the diviner should ask the question “Eborí elese [orisha’s name]?” If the answer is no and more than one orisha has spoken through this sign, the diviner should question each orisha in turn.
- If that is not enough to close the composite odu, the following things should be explained to the client. If there are any trips or vacations planned, the client should first consult Oshún and ask her permission: She is taking a special interest in the affairs of the client. If she says not to go and the planned trip is for pleasure, do not go. If she says no and the planned trip is for business, try to mark an ebó to her so all will be well. Oshún also demands a pleasing domicile, and presently the client’s home is not in a good state. It must be given a thorough cleaning and airing; the furniture should be rearranged as well. Advise this person that before he has truly found his home, he will move at least three times in his life. In the third dwelling after this reading, he must throw a party to Oshún: Thus will she bring happiness, joy, and sweetness.

The diviner may now turn to the lists of eboses given in each composite odu to mark those things needed to close the letter. The diviner should explore this list thoroughly, and if the odu will still not close, he will then need to follow the eboses given for the parent odu itself, Oché.

The Eboses of Oché Okana (5-1)

- When this composite odu opens on the mat, it prescribes three special eboses that must be done as special circumstances arise. Even if the letter comes in an osogbo, Oshún stands up to let the client know that his life might still improve if he offers her some sort of ebó. To see if the orisha wants anything specific, the diviner must ask, “Ebó elese Oshún?” He must then mark what is needed following the guidelines given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” If Oshún wants nothing, we say that she is waiting to see what the client is willing to give, and he may give Oshún anything that is in his heart. As he gives, so will she bless.

- If there is abdominal disease, or if any abdominal illness arises, the client is marked for a rogación at the feet of Oshún.
- Oshún says that when the client moves, all the furniture and belongings should be moved in one day; anything that cannot be moved in one day should be left behind. As soon as the new home is unpacked, the client must give a housewarming party in honor of Oshún, for then she will bless the new residence with sweetness and prosperity.
- In this letter, it is mandatory that a knife be fed with Ogún and hidden by the front door so he may protect the home from danger.
- If 5-1 falls for the orisha of the head in itá, the iyawó must always wear a red parrot feather in the hair, for Oché is queen of the diloggún, and the orisha is the initiate's ruler. If this sign falls for an aleyo, he might need to wear one for twenty-eight days only. The diviner should pose this question to the shells for one who is not an initiate.

The Eboses of Oché Ejioko (5-2)

- If there are any diseases now or in the future that affect the abdominal region, a rogación should be given at the feet of Oshún. After the rogación, if the illness is severe an ebó should be marked to her so that all will go well.
- This sign automatically marks many masses and white tables (seances) for egun; they form the foundation for the client in this world.
- In this sign, it is important that the client has the Ibeyi; this does not need to be marked as ebó. If the client has the Ibeyi, however, and the odu refuses closure, the diviner should ask if the orishas need ebó. Follow the pattern for marking ebó given in the section on larishe in chapter 1 titled "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If no ebó can be marked from this, the ebó is to throw a party in honor of the Ibeyi; they can bring great luck and fortune when properly propitiated. The party should be given as soon as possible.
- When Oché Ejioko falls on the mat and refuses closure for one

who is a priest/ess, the orisha speaking in this sign could be marking a tambor as the solution for all the client's troubles. The diviner should first ask if a tambor is required, and then he should ask if the orisha whose diloggún is being consulted wants the tambor. If that orisha refuses batá, the diviner should try to mark the tambor first for Oshún, and then the remaining orishas that speak in this sign. Remember that if a drum is marked here, proper protocol must be observed: The orisha from whom this client's head was born must be given a drum first. After that, he may pay his debt to the orisha in this sign.

The Ebores of Oché Ogundá (5-3)

- This sign forbids the woman who is being read from ever cutting her hair; it must be kept long and beautiful to honor Oshún. If the client is male, he must always ask Oshún if he can cut his hair. Men for whom this sign falls usually find their luck and evolution when the hair is allowed to grow in honor of this sweet orisha.
- Inle's presence is felt strongly in this odu; and although he cannot speak except through Yemayá, the client has issues with him. First, the diviner must ask, "Eleke de Inle?" If the answer is yes, then the client needs Inle's necklace and the odu is once more asked for closure. If it will not close, the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Inle?" marking the ebó as directed in chapter 1. If the orisha will not take ebó, or if the letter will still not close, the diviner should ask, "Koshé Inle?" This is done only as a last resort to close the composite odu.
- Whenever Oché Ogundá opens for a priest/ess and refuses closure, it may mark one of two ebores: the giving of four legs (and an itá) or the reception of the knife. The diviner should ask the oracle if an orisha needs four legs; and then he should ask if the orisha speaking requires four legs. If so, the ebó is marked and no itá is needed. If four legs are needed for an orisha beyond the one speaking, the diviner tries to mark it for one of the orishas given in the client's ocha; he must follow the order that the client petitions these orishas. After those orishas, he follows the rest of the orishas given in the section of this chapter titled "The Orishas Who Speak in Oché."

- If the oracle will not mark four legs and an itá for any of the orishas, the diviner should next try to mark the reception of the knife. After this, continue with the list of eboses given for the parent odu, Oché, at the end of this chapter.

The Eboses of Oché Iroso (5–4)

- In this letter, there is a special ebó that should be done by everyone for whom it falls: The client should go immediately to the market and buy some corn on the cob. This should be taken home and divided into five equal parts. If the client has Oshún, the corn should be placed in a basin of water and left sitting before her, and if the client does not have Oshún, it should be placed in the living room. Let the corn sit there until it sprouts, for when it does the client's luck will sprout. If the client is able, he should plant the corn outside so that his luck will continue to grow daily.
- Also, this sign advises that Oshún wants the client to live with another woman in the house. A man should not have a male roommate, and if the client is female she *must not* live with a man who is not her husband.
- Olokun is important in this composite odu. If the client does not have Olokun and the letter refuses closure, mark the orisha's reception with the shells. If the client has Olokun, he should ask if the orisha needs ebó: "Ebó elese Olokun?" If the answer to this is yes, the ebó must be marked following the pattern given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu."
- If the letter refuses closure, there is a line of questioning concerning Orisha Oko that must be used. First, ask if the client should receive his eleke; and second, ask if the client should make ebó (following the guidelines in chapter 1). Finally, if none of this will be accepted by odu, or if the letter will still not close, ask, "Koshé Orisha Oko?" to try and mark the client for the reception of this orisha.
- If the letter will still not close, and if Orisha Oko is marked for reception, the client might need to have two quails living in his home; the diviner must pose this question to the oracle. After

that, mark some special foods and grains that might be needed in the agbán of this orisha. After the diviner has marked many special types of food, he should once again ask for closure of the letter.

The Ebores of Oché Meji (5-5)

- There is a special ebó that must be done for the client when this letter falls: His head must be washed in an infusion of five herbs sacred to Oshún. But before the diviner does this he must have another initiate bathe his own head with the same herbal waters. A niche osain is to be made for the client from the same herbs used to wash the head, and this should be fed with the diviner's Oshún just before the washings are done. If this ebó is not enough to close the letter, the diviner should ask, "Eborí elese Oshún?" which means "Is a rogación/feeding of the orí needed?" If the answer is yes, the client should have a rogación at the feet of Oshún after the head is washed, and the orí should be fed two white pigeons during this ritual to give it strength. If the oracle will not close, the diviner should follow the normal pattern for exploring this odu and marking ebores.
- If the letter still will not close, it might be marking issues with Babalwaiye. The pattern of questioning to determine what is needed is this: "Eleke de Asohano?" "Ebó elese Asohano?" "Koshé Asohano?" If these things will not close the letter, the diviner will need to turn to the list of ebores given for the parent odu.

The Ebores of Oché Obara (5-6)

- When Oché Obara opens on the mat, there are certain ebores that are automatically marked for the client; the diviner should detail these carefully so that the assistant records them accurately. Even if the client has Elegguá, in this sign Eshu Aye is needed. He will walk closely with this person, opening doors that were once closed. If the client's path of Elegguá is Eshu Aye, a smaller one should be made in a tiny conch shell; it must have foundation, and it must be carried at all times. Also, the diviner might wish to ask, "Ebó elese Eshu Aye?" if the client al-

ready has this Elegguá to see if he is also standing up for ebó; mark what is needed. The orisha whose diloggún is being consulted demands that this person speak to him while sounding a cowbell; the normal instrument for this orisha should be kept at the shrine, but rarely used. The client needs Eshu Aye; he will open the roads that were once closed for the client. Also, whenever this person attends a formal orisha function or ritual, he must now wear a red parrot feather in the hair.

- Also, this odu prescribes a unique ebó that may be used in times of bitterness among family, lovers, or friends: Invite everyone involved to dinner. While waiting for the main entrée, serve a bit of a sweet dessert to everyone, insisting that they eat it while waiting for the meal. Once the dessert has been consumed, serve a bitter entrée, and finish the meal with yet another dessert. The sweet that was turned to sour will be turned to sweet once more.
- Also, Elegguá wants this person to know that if he ever experiences a “holocaust” in his own life, there is a remedy: Make sure that Oshún and the Ibeyi are near Elegguá, and then sacrifice to him an uncastrated goat. Have itá the next day, and do all the eboses that Eshu prescribes. The bad times will then turn to good.
- The diviner should now ask the letter for closure. If it refuses, follow the normal line of questioning for odu. If the sign will still not close, then Oshún wants to be fed two hens in her own home, the river; once the sacrifices are done, an adimú of sweet foods should be left on the riverbank. Oshún says that this client once had a special place for her in his heart, perhaps even a special routine. It ended. She wants that place in his heart and that special routine once more.

The Eboses of Oché Odí (5-7)

- This odu flags some special eboses that the client must do at times. First, it is important to remember that from this sign, whatever the client does for Oshún, he must do for Yemayá and vice versa! The two orishas love this person dearly, and to give one an offering without making ebó to the other could cause a

war between them over the client. If this is the reading of itá, then Yemayá and Oshún must be kept at equal heights; one may not tower over the other, and, if this client is the child of one, he must also consider himself the child of the other. In Oché Odí, he is a child of two waters! Oshún tells this client that to find true iré from the elekes he wears, he must put coral in all of them.

- If this letter will not close out, before following the normal line of questioning for the odu in Oché, the diviner must ask, “Ebó elese Yemayá y Oshún?” If the answer is yes, he must mark an ebó using the guidelines given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” The ebó marked in this sign must be done in a place where two waters meet: the river and the ocean. If this is not possible, it may be done where a river spills into a lake, since some paths of Yemayá live in lakes. After making the ebó, the client should take some of this water for bathing; it will bring luck. Also, the place at which this ebó is done becomes holy and sacred to the client. Whenever there is any need in his life, he should make adimú to these two orishas at this spot and tell them all of his troubles. They will fight his wars and battles!

The Eboses of Oché Ogbe (5–8)

- When this letter opens on the mat, it automatically marks some special eboses that the client should do. First, to bring sweetness back into his life, this person should make a list of everything that he owns; then, he should make a list of all the spiritual things that he has. Once this is done, he should write about all the wonderful people he knows, the places he has been, and the many general blessings in his life. This should be done slowly over a number of days; the list will grow quite large as the client gives it some thought. He should then thank the orishas for the many wonderful blessings in his life—and once he realizes how sweet his life is, it can only become sweeter!
- The client should use coral in all his elekes to honor Yemayá and Oshún. Also, he should begin to play the instrument that was given up while still a child. And to honor Oshún, he should

give her a music box. Whenever there is depression or tears in his life, he should play the music for Oshún so that she takes it all away.

- If the letter still refuses closure and this is a priest/ess, a niche osain should be packed inside a clamshell. Two skeleton keys should be attached on the outside, and once it is washed, it should be fed with the client's Oshún and kept there always. It is never to be carried away from her.
- If the letter still refuses closure, the client needs to receive Inle; this does not need to be marked. Also, if the osogbo is severe, the client will need to see a Babalawo so that a red snapper can be given to his head.

The Eboses of Oché Osá (5-9)

- This odu announces that ikú is close to the client through either an illness or accident; the client's salvation is in making ocha. As soon as possible, the client must receive the elekes and the warriors, and if ocha cannot be made soon, the orisha of the head should be given in this sign. Also, the dead are standing up for masses and prayers; the diviner should also try to mark an ebó to them by asking, "Ebó elsese egun?" If an ebó is required, he should mark it following the guidelines given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu."

The Eboses of Oché Ofún (5-10)

- When this odu opens on the mat, the diviner should deliver the following eboses: If the client has an unpaid debt to Oshún, he should offer payment at this time, and if he cannot remember having a debt with this orisha, he should make an adimú just in case. Also, this letter flags that witchcraft has been sent to the client, and to dispel the influences a mixture of whipped okra and cool water should be rubbed into the front door and frame once a week, and wiped off the day after. These negative energies will be removed from the home. This letter also marks some people for constipation. Do not use over-the-counter medications; use a purgative made from coconut oil, cocoa butter, and castor oil. It will help move the bowels.

- If the letter will not close, before proceeding with the normal line of questioning the diviner should tell the client that Oshún wants an *adimú*: smoked fish, *jutía*, and coconut. This is given only when this *odu* has opened for the client.
- If the letter will still not close after the normal line of questioning has been followed, and if the orientation is *ikú* or *ano*, *ebó* should be made to the head with two white doves to save this client from death. After this, the head should be washed in Oshún's herbal waters, and a *rogación* should be made using stalks of plantain and strings of garlic. These two substances will give the *orí* the strength it needs to save the body from death.

The Ebores of Oché Owani (5–11)

- In this sign, the client has romantic desires toward the diviner (possibly at this moment), and once the reading is finished the priest/ess doing the reading should tell this person that *odu* demands the client leave immediately to fulfill *ebó* (the reason for the sudden departure need not be explained). It would be wise for the diviner not to enter a godparent/godchild relationship with this person. It would also be wise for the diviner not to enter a relationship with this person at all. Once the client has left, the diviner must present two coconuts to his head, and then put these coconuts with the *orisha* of the head until the milk inside has dried. This will cool the priest/ess's head and save it from all *osogbo*.
- The following advice should be given to the client before the *odu* is asked for closure: A fresh bunch of leaves from the carob or locust tree should be hung behind the front door, and they should be allowed to dry. These are never to be removed, for they will keep negativity and malicious witchcraft from the home. If the client moves from this dwelling, the old bunch should be left there and new, fresh branches hung in the new home. Occasionally, the client will want to bathe with an infusion made from fresh leaves. This will also remove witchcraft and negativity picked up while out on the street.

- If the letter will still not close, a niche osain may be needed for the orisha that speaks in this odu. The diviner should ask, “Ebó niche osain?” If the answer is yes, a charm should be made with the orisha’s herbs.
- If the letter will still not close, Elegguá might be standing up for an offering. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Elegguá?” If the answer is yes, the ebó marked is automatic: Elegguá must be given a rooster to keep this client’s roads open.

The Ebores of Oché Ejila (5-12)

- This odu demands an ebó, and the diviner must tell this to the client before trying to close the odu. With a piece of sackcloth or burlap carried on himself, the client must go out into the street and beg alms to honor Babaluaíye; the money that is gotten must then be used to make ebó. The ebó is this: A goat and a chicken should be given to Elegguá (itá must be had the next day), two hens should be fed to Oshún, and four roosters must be fed to Shangó. Between the day the ebó is done and before twelve days have passed, the head of the client must be fed two white doves and given a rogación. Unless the animals are used to cleanse this person, the animal’s vital organs must be cooked and presented to the orishas and the people in attendance must be fed the animal’s cooked meat.
- If after following the normal line of questioning for this family of odu the sign will still not close, Shangó may be standing up for ebó. The diviner must ask, “Eyebale elese Shangó?” Eyebale is sacrifice, and if the answer is yes, the proper ebó for this odu is to feed a ram to him. On that same evening, a lot of people should be invited to dinner to eat ram; the client should feed as many as he possibly can. The day after this ebó is done, there should be itá.
- After all these things are marked, the diviner should return to the ebores in the family of Oché. If nothing else will close this letter and the client is a child of Shangó, ocha must be made. The ceremony must be done flawlessly and extravagantly or else there will be no iré for those who participate.

The Ebores of Oché Metanla (5-13)

- In this sign, there are three special ebores that are required of the client. When he leaves the diviner's home, he should take two pieces of coconut, putting one in each of the front pockets of his pants. As soon as the client reaches the street in front of the diviner's home, he should throw one piece to the curb. Upon reaching the street in front of his house, the other piece of coconut should be thrown to the street. Immediately, he should go inside. This ebó saves from an unmarked, unforeseen danger and brings iré to the client. Also, in honor of Babalwaiye, this person must never ever deny alms to anyone; and the letter is also marking issues with Oshún. Although no ebó needs to be marked to her yet, the client should offer the diviner's Oshún a token adimú or gift to ensure this orisha's goodwill.

The Ebores of Oché Merinla (5-14)

- In this letter, there are two ebores mandated that the client must do (they are not marked by the diviner). First, the client needs to have a rogación; and after this is done, he should dress completely in white as often as possible. Second, an herbal bath should be made with things sacred to Elegguá (the diviner should prescribe the herbs he feels are necessary), and this bath must be used often to bring true luck and iré to the client.
- If the letter will not close, Elegguá might be standing up for ebó. The diviner should mark this by asking, "Ebó elese Elegguá?" If the answer is yes, he should mark what is needed following the guidelines set in chapter 1's "Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu."

The Ebores of Oché Marunla (5-15)

- There are certain ebores given in this letter that are mandatory. As soon as the reading is done, the client should be given a rogación at the feet of Oshún to help avoid the osogbos predicted in this letter. Upon returning home, the client should begin taking many spiritual baths using egg whites and the herb known in Spanish as *maloja*. A bóveda should always be kept to egun with fresh water and fire.

- If the letter will not close, egun may be standing up for ebó. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese egun?” If the answer is yes, ebó must be marked following the guidelines given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” If the answer to the last question—“Kaure?”—is no, then the ebó is automatically eyebale, feathers.

The Ebores of Oché Otura (5–16)

- The closing ebores for this omo odu are the same as that of the parent odu; the diviner must thoroughly investigate the things listed there in order to close this letter. Definitely if the client does not have the elekes or the warriors, they should be prescribed at this time.

The Ebores of the Parent Odu

If Oché will not close, or if those ebores cannot be marked, the diviner must again turn to the parent odu to find a remedy that will solve the client’s problems, ending the consultation.

- There may be one or more egun in need of masses and offerings; the dead need constant help so that they can help the client. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese egun?” and if the answer is yes, he must mark the larishe needed by using the guidelines set in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” If the answer to “Kaure?” is no, then the ebó needed is automatically eyebale, feathers. After the sacrifices are done, the client should vow to keep a bóveda with fresh water and candles at all times.
- Oshún stands up in this letter as well, and she might need to be propitiated. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Oshún?” and if the answer is yes, he should mark what she needs. Additionally, Oshún should be fed two hens in her true home, the river; and both she and Elegguá stand up to say that the client needs more joy in his home. He should continually play music—soft ballads and orchestrations—to purify the energies in the dwelling.
- Another protective charm that can be prescribed in this odu is the feeding of a nail with Ogún; once the nail is fed, it is to be

pounded in the front door so that Ogún may keep it from harm. If the diviner wishes to reinforce this charm, the plaque known as the *ojo y lengua* (eye and tongue) may be hung outside on the front door with this nail. It will nullify the effects of gossip and the evil eye that may be sent to this client by others.

- If the letter still refuses closure, the client could have issues with any of the orishas who speak in this sign. Depending on the severity of the *osogbo*, the *ebó* needed could range from the *eleke* of any orisha to an *ebó* or reception of an orisha. The diviner must proceed with these things slowly and cautiously, asking for the smaller *eboses* before continuing with the larger. Normally, if the reading will not close by this point, it is time to pick up the phone and call an elder who is more experienced at manipulating the *diloggún*.

Remember that in this *odu* there are certain types of offerings that are native to *Oché*, and whenever possible the diviner should include elements in *ebó* from this list. For *eyebale*, or sacrifice, pick from the following: five hens, a guinea hen, or five small “peeps” (newly hatched chickens). If an *adimú*-type offering is required, the diviner should pick from the following: a jar of honey, five freshly smoked fish, five pumpkins, five red parrot feathers, or five peanuts.



Opening Obara— Six Mouths on the Mat

The Proverbs of Obara

- From legends are truths born.
- You are confused by your own lies: You know not what is real, nor what is false.
- The king does not die.
- The king did not lie.
- Money vanishes like smoke.
- The king did not hang.
- From the lie shall the truth be born.
- Watch your treasures. Guard them. You will lose them.
- The right hand washes the left.
- One tree does not make a forest.

The Orishas Who Speak in Obara

In this sign, the following orishas are known to speak: Shangó, Oshún, Orúnmila, Elegguá, Obatalá, Osain, Oyá, and Ochosi.

Special Notes on Obara

Opening with six mouths on the mat, it is said that Obara has come to the house. It is an odu centering on community, its building and continuation (note the proverbs above). It is a sign said to be home to Shangó, yet owned by Oshún. It is a letter seething with energy and volatility, yet soothed by the client's desire to evolve and become something more than himself. Born from Ejila Shebora, it shares in its parent's apocalyptic pronouncements; yet this sign brings more hope that difficulties predicted can be overcome. Whether its orientation is iré or osogbo, the pattern manifests sharply and wantonly like the thunderbolt, and when this mandala is displayed the diviner will placate its master by giving the sacred sign: The buttocks are lifted one at a time (first left, and then right) while the expression "Kawo! Kabiosile!" is intoned. All those present will do the same to honor Shangó, the owner of lightning.¹ It is through Obara that the harshness of his life and heart helped him ascend to become orisha.

The Message of Obara

The opening of Obara marks a short series of solemn ritual gestures that must be done by the diviner and all the priest/esses present in the diviner's room. It is a volatile odu, bringing a variety of blessings, osogbos, coolness, and fire all at once. Before the italero can retrieve the shells from the mat to cast the omo, or composite odu, he must exclaim, "Maferefún Shangó!" for Shangó's presence will dominate in all sixteen patterns of this sign. The others that are in the room will lift their buttocks from the chair (first the left side, and then the right) while they reply, "Kawo! Kabiosile!" out of respect for both Óbara and the orisha Shangó. A paradox to keep in mind when dealing with the odu is this: Although it is Shangó that predominates in all the possible combinations, the true owner of this letter is Oshún. Before the diviner can close the reading, she will have demanded much attention from the client. Through Obara it is said that Shangó gave the ownership of all *calabazas* (gourds, pumpkins, or squash) to his

1. The phrase "Kawo! Kabiosile!" is an expression of praise for Shangó. It means "The king did not hang/the king did not die," because Shangó ascended before death to become an orisha.

wife Oshún (in exchange for use of this sign)—pumpkins, squash, and gourds being but a few among these. Since then, this sweet river orisha uses them to prepare and store her most powerful spells and *trabajos* (magical spells or works), and within the pumpkin she hides all of her wealth. When this sign opens on the mat, the first thing the diviner must tell the client is, “You are now forbidden to use, eat, pick, or give away any form of calabaza. They are sacred to Oshún and are now meant to be used by you only for ebó!” This is just the first of Obara’s many stern pronouncements. To use calabazas for anything other than ebó would offend the sweet orisha and her husband, Shangó.

Beyond Shangó and Oshún, there are many orishas standing up in this sign to influence the head of the client. First is Orúnmila, Witness to Creation; although only a Babalawo can mark this for certain, the awesome orisha foreshadows an eventual passage to Ifá. The degree to which this advice is given depends on the sex and initiatory status of the person being read. Men who do not have ocha must go to Ifá and receive *mano de Orúnmila*; and once there, the Babalawo will advise if ocha, Ifá, or both must be made. A woman under this sign needs *kofá*² (especially if this in an orisha priestess). A *iyawó* (male) sitting for the *itá* of initiation must be prohibited from ever using *diloggún* until a Babalawo has consulted with Orúnmila; this could be one of his children sitting at the mat. Since women may not pass to make Ifá, this restriction will never apply to them. Obatalá is found actively speaking in Obara as well, and before the sign closes he will have much to say (and may demand many eboses as well). Elegguá, however, is in control of the reading for now (especially if his *diloggún* is being read), and before any orisha may claim his or her due, Eshu—another name for Elegguá—must have his own.

If this sign has opened in any type of *osogbo* and the diviner wishes to turn all these to *iré*, he must proceed with the reading in the following fashion. First, any *larishe* that is given by the shells must be prescribed and fulfilled immediately; there can be no hesitation on the part of the client or diviner and priest/esses who are sitting at the mat. Second, even if the *diloggún* has marked nothing for Elegguá

2. If an *omo odu* of Obara marks *kofá* for a woman who has never before had a reading, and who has not had the reading of the head, she is probably Shangó’s daughter; and since Obatalá and Shangó are always close, Obatalá offers his protection to her as well.

upon its closure, some small token adimú, a basic ebó, must be offered to him. The client, out of respect for Orúnmila, should go to a Babalawo for a thorough assessment by Ifá. A rogación should be given at the feet of Obatalá (the italero must also ask if the client's orí needs to be fed). Ebó should be made to him after completion of the rogación. If Shangó demands any eboses during the course of this reading, the client would do well to employ one of his priestesses to make those offerings for him. Finally, the work of Obara is not complete until Oshún has been given an offering; even if the shells mark nothing, the client should be directed to give something in her name.

Those for whom Obara falls may share certain personality traits, the most marked being the fact that they are not well grounded. The tendency is to move aimlessly, without plans or goals, and when plans or goals are set they are insubstantial, lacking form. There are many dreams, many goals; the child of Obara is not afraid to build grand schemes for the future. However, not many, if any, of these dreams are ever attained. And this leads to sourness, for the client was born to be a chief, a leader, and not until the tendency to dream is replaced with pure action will anything be accomplished in his life. One avenue of exploration for this odu is this: The client was born with a special gift, a special destiny, and due to laziness, environment, and loss of connection with the higher self, the talent was lost and destiny buried beneath the turmoil of day-to-day existence. One talent that all Obara's children share is that of divination, and depending on the omo odu extracted, that talent will be stronger in some than in others. At this time the client lacks the necessary wisdom and aché to become a competent diviner. Although the odu giving birth to the spiritualist is 5-5, Oché Meji, the client for whom Obara has fallen might want to explore some of the spiritual methods of divination: tarot, crystal gazing, water gazing, and mediumship. These will open the channels to eventually becoming a diviner in Santería.

This odu, in osogbo, marks a variety of health concerns that must be explained to the client. Depending on the type and degree of this sign's severity, they may be in various stages: future possibilities, current concerns, or progressive illnesses of which the client may or may not be aware. If the health is not carefully monitored, the body will

begin to break down. (If, however, the orientation of Obara is ikú or arayé, the body is already in danger, and the client should immediately go for a physical.) No matter how minute, there is decay in the flesh. First, the client's head is delicate physically and spiritually, and it must be protected at all times. The danger is that an accident or blow to the head could bring about physical injury. This person must be vigilant against all types of accidents, and he must always wear headgear when involved in intense exercise or contact sports. Rafting, canoeing, cycling, skating, football, and jogging are all sports that should be avoided. Spiritually, the orí could pick up the negativity of others through random touches or strokes to the hair and scalp, so allow no one this privilege (for a time, not even this person's lover). Allow no one to cut the hair unless the godparents are present, and always take the shorn hair away from the beauty or barber's shop. Remember: The head is the seat of the soul. When anyone touches the head, that person is unconsciously trying to touch one's soul. The drowsiness, the light trance that ensues from this feeling can leave the client open to danger.

Insomnia and sleep deprivation will cause the health to fail. This symptom must be treated. The cause of sleep disturbances must be removed as this leaves the head weak, the mind clouded, and the body prone to injury or disease. Because this letter prohibits the consumption of home remedies or over-the-counter medications, if the client finds that sleeplessness becomes unbearable he should consult with his physician for a prescription. No matter the doctor's recommendations, however, the medication should be used only for a very, very brief period (this client may have addictive tendencies). Other afflictions brought by Obara in arayé or ikú are many: renal failure, bladder infections, abdominal disturbances, testicular disorders, and female reproductive disorders. The letter also points out unwanted pregnancy. This should be avoided, for there will be abnormalities in a child conceived at this time. If the client experiences brief chills, hot flashes, or unexplained fevers, this is a sign that a full physical should be had; something is amiss medically. Also, keep in mind that if Obara opens in arayé or ikú during the late fall or winter months, the client must guard the health, being extra cautious and vigilant over the body. The systems are weakest when darkness is greatest.

While true to an extent for all the odu, when Obara falls in an osogbo, many of its forecasts will apply not only to the client, but also to his relatives (physical and spiritual). Those who are close, bound by blood and ocha, often share the cyclic patterns of odu, and while the composites that fall for each might vary, the basic predictions and meanings will stay the same. The health of loved ones must be watched closely, and if any of the afflictions flagged by this letter appear, they must be encouraged to seek medical attention. Be very careful what is eaten both within and outside of the home. Check foods and drinks that are consumed for expiration dates, foul odors, and strange tastes. These might hold intentional or accidental poisons. Fire and electricity could also pose threats now, so be overly cautious of all electrical appliances and open flames. Accidents involving these can be serious and sometimes fatal.

The personality of the one who opens in this sign is a bit of a paradox. On the surface, this person is amiable and carefree—one who knows how to enjoy both life and the self. Yet under fire the bad boils within, and it soon comes to the surface in a massive explosion of uncontrolled temper and anger. Advise the client that no matter how terrible things may seem, this temper should never be allowed to surface uncontrolled. A single outburst and the impressions of peers are forever ruined. If the odu comes in any type of osogbo, now is the time that such a thing could happen. There are secret enemies on either side of this person; they hide in shadows and whisper evil things behind his back. This gossip could be his downfall. Stubbornness will soon be revealed, and the newly emerging argumentative attitude will also bring this person's downfall. Consider this advice to be a prohibition of odu: Do not argue, do not gossip, and do not give others any reason to gossip. Watch the back at all times and work hard to know who is a friend and who is an enemy. With prudence, the evil of others will be laid at their own feet, and none save those responsible will suffer. Until the unbalanced energies of this letter have passed, charm and gentle persuasion will always win the war.

In Obara, it is necessary to keep the following points in mind during the reading.

- The client has financial hardship, and these are of his own making. It is important under this odu that a budget be established and followed. While money may come easily to some that fall

under this letter's influence, the tendency here is for money to dissolve like sugar in water. Every penny must be guarded carefully lest poverty ensue. Opportunity does come under this sign; however, it will probably be lost. Advise the client to be vigilant for moneymaking opportunities. When one comes, it must be seized. To not accept the gifts of Obara is to lose one's luck.

- When something unusual is observed, the client should not talk about the occurrence. Being the only witness could come in handy. Likewise, the client should refrain from being a witness in a legal dispute until the influence of Obara has passed. The *odu* speaks of the law, entanglements with the law, and legal complications. To become involved in lawsuits or criminal actions will drain the physical, emotional, spiritual, and financial resources of this person. Do not fight, argue, or defend one's self physically. Do not defend another unless there is no other option. Willfully breaking the law now is suicide.
- Men should avoid affairs or counsel from outside their marriages. Wives must be loved, honored; they are to be partners in all things. Treat the wife with respect and ask her advice on important matters. It will bring luck and strengthen the home.
- If the client has come to the oracle due to marital difficulties and is male, *Oshún* should be petitioned to bring stability and love back into his home. The wife should be loved and adored as he would love the *orisha*. If the client is female, marital difficulties should be left at the foot of *Shangó*; he will keep the spouse from straying.
- If the client has come to the oracle because of financial need, there is *ebó* that can be done to *Oshún*. A ceramic pumpkin should be bought and filled with honey. It should be left at her feet overnight with five small calabazas. The next day, all this should be taken to the river and given to her with five pennies. The honey must be washed out with river water. Once done, the client takes home the ceramic pumpkin and puts money in it every week as a devotion to *Oshún*. As long as he has the pumpkin in his home, he will never be poor.
- If the client has come to this oracle in desperation, there is *ebó* that must be done immediately. To his warriors, *Ogún* and

Elegguá (use the diviner's if the client has not received his warriors), two beaded, forked *garabatos* (branches) must be given. The one for Elegguá should be done in red and black and the one for Ogún should be done in green and black. Note that if the client is a priest or priestess who has received the knife, clear green glass beads should be used on Ogún's branch. Once these branches are presented to the orishas, the client should pray that his paths are opened and his doors unlocked. Finish the ebó by giving Ogún and Elegguá a rooster each, making sure that the beaded branches are fed as well. The next day, offer red palm oil, smoked fish, and jutía; and once seven days have passed, give each orisha a basket of cool fruits. The warriors will open all that has been closed.

The Prohibitions of Obara

Unless the client's reading comes with firm *iré*, the diviner, based on the composite odu that has opened, might decide to prescribe the following prohibitions for a period of twenty-one to twenty-eight days, the normal passage of a single odu. However, if this is the first *itá* of ocha, or *itá* with any *adimú* orisha (an orisha that cannot be crowned on the head or an orisha outside one's *kariocha*), the prohibitions given in this letter will last for a lifetime. A special note: Whenever a reading is given, only the prohibitions given at the time of the reading will apply to the client. For example, if a *iyawó* came in Obara and the only prohibition given by the *oriaté* was against carrying weapons, a few weeks later another priest or priestess could not impress upon the *iyawó* that Obara also carries restrictions against eating food at a social gathering. It is true that this is one of Obara's many prohibitions; yet, the diviner felt the need only to deny the initiate the right to carry weapons. If the orisha speaking in this sign felt that other prohibitions were necessary, that Spirit would not have allowed closure of the oracle until that taboo had been marked and recorded in the *libreta* (notebook). If one accepts that the orishas are all-knowing and all-powerful, one must also accept that they will make no mistake in closing a session without marking all the prohibitions that apply to the client.

There is also another point about the prohibitions that should be kept in mind. If the diviner prescribes a prohibition that is general and vague, and the client then asks a question concerning further restrictions and definitions of that prohibition, the answer by the diviner should always be, "Yes, that is prohibited to you now." As an illustration of this point, if the diviner tells the client not to have "knives, guns, or any metal weapons in the house," and the client immediately asks, "I keep a metal baseball bat in my room. I don't keep it for a weapon, but I could use it like one if I had to. Is that also prohibited?" The diviner's answer should be, "It is now!" There was once a priest of Obatalá initiated in our house, and at itá, Oshún forbade him to eat melons. Before the initiation began, this iyawó had told his godfather, "I hope no one takes watermelon away from me; it's my favorite fruit!" As the oriaté prescribed this prohibition, the iyawó looked down at the floor, almost in tears; and seeing his despair over the taboo, his godmother exclaimed, "Don't worry, iyawó, this letter only forbids the melons sacred to Oshún, not the watermelon sacred to Yemayá!" Yet this was considered a further clarification on odu from someone other than the diviner, and the diviner, sadly, had to say, "It does include watermelons . . . now!" The taboo was recorded in the libreta.

The reason for this is simple: Odu, once opened, envelops everyone in the room, not just the diviner and client, and any word uttered by another automatically becomes a manifestation within that odu—and the words spoken must be treated as if spoken through the shells themselves. Perhaps an orisha has prompted the outburst, or perhaps odu itself has moved through one of those present in the room. Out of respect for the titanic forces involved in even the simplest process of divination, all words spoken, or questions asked, must be treated as manifestations of the divine. Those items should be added to the context of the reading.

The prohibitions found in Obara are as follows.

- Do not assist others lifting that which has fallen to the floor. Lift it alone, or do not lift it at all. If necessary, lie: Say that the back is injured or weak and another injury will bring disability. In this odu it is said that those whom the client lifts will continue to rise, and he will fall into their old position.

- Business offers must always be reviewed suspiciously. Have an attorney look over any papers before they are signed. Do not trust the partners; take an active interest in all affairs of the business.
- This odu brings complications with the law. Co-sign nothing. Do not be a witness to anything. Even if a crime is observed, do not tell what was seen; say nothing was seen, and leave it at that.
- Never help another recover economically. Do not lend money. The client must not let others stay in his home for free. Living or renting with another person should be avoided as well. Those whom this client helps will advance, and the client will fall behind.
- Avoid eating away from home. Do not eat in restaurants. Do not eat food if the method of preparation is not known. Never eat crabs in your own house; better yet, do not eat them at all.
- If this letter comes in iré, the client should not live in the city. If the letter comes in osogbo, the client should not live in the country.
- Do not let anyone touch or molest your head in any way.
- Do not drink alcohol; do not use intoxicants. These are the client's worst enemy.
- Do not use or carry weapons; do not keep guns or large knives in the house.
- Do not play jokes on anyone.
- Do not lend out clothing, towels, washcloths, or personal items; and do not use these things if they belong to another.
- Do not wear stripes, checks, or polka dots.
- Do not smoke in bed.
- Do not deny food to anyone.
- Treat all calabazas as if they were sacred; the squash holds the client's fortune.
- Avoid spreading lies about others, and do not get involved in gossip or rumors. The client is advised always to be frank and speak from the heart. This advice will remove most of his predicaments and conflicts.

- Do not argue stubbornly with anyone, because it will always bring fatal consequences. Those who want to argue with the client want to win because they think they are in the right and better than all others.
- Be cautious around fire and electrical appliances.
- Respect must always be given to the elders in the religious and physical family. Whenever the client wants to discuss his plans and aspirations with anyone, they should be presented only to the godparents and parents. Others will give poor advice.
- If the orientation of this odu is ikú, it is extremely important that the client not visit places of the dead or have anything to do with the dead for now. If this is the itá of initiation, the client may never work any egun beyond his own, ancestral and spiritual (in the family of ocha).
- No matter the sex of the client, this odu announces that women will bring much harm. Take care of issues involving women, for right now they are the worst enemy one could have.
- Nothing should be pawned. Sell personal items outright, or else luck will escape with them.
- The client must always respect the law and the justice system. If respect is not given and the law not followed at all times, this person will become entangled in expensive legal proceedings.
- Do not mistreat cats, for they are sacred to Shangó. If the letter comes in iré, have a black cat in the home, and if it comes in osogbo, never have a cat in the home.
- Be cautious of those dressed in uniforms of any type; talk to no one in a uniform. Do not have a job in which you must wear a uniform.
- If this is an itá for a priest/ess of Shangó, the iyawó may not make an Oshún, nor may he do any work for a child of Oshún. If the iyawó is a priest/ess of Oshún, he may not work for a child of Shangó nor make a Shangó's head. A priest/ess of one may not date a child (priest/ess or aleyo) of the other.
- The client who comes in Obara likes to have more than one lover; for now, the odu forbids this. Heterosexual men who come under this sign have robust "appetites" and these must be

sated with one woman or none at all! Homosexual men influenced by this letter become very promiscuous, and this is to be avoided as well. The woman who comes in this odu can also have voracious sexual needs; however, Obara carries no such prohibition for her. Women should be advised to be cautious about to whom they dedicate themselves, for one day someone will do something desperate for love.

The Ebores of Obara

Although a reading normally prescribes *larishe* for a client's specific problem, Obara *must be placated* with one of the following four ebores. The diviner should use his own *aché* to determine which of these four is necessary. Remember: Beyond this *ebó* and the *larishe* prescribed, the *italero* might need to explore the ebores of the composite odu to bring closure to the session. If the ebores here are not enough to close the sign, those listed for the parent odu, Obara, should be explored as well. They are listed at the end of this chapter.

- All things in the client's house that are completely or partially broken or burnt should be left at the feet of Shangó with an *adimú*; thus will he take away the heat in the client's life and remove the things that are broken from his environment.
- An *ebó* using squash should be made to both Shangó and Oshún. Let these two orishas dictate how the *ebó* is to be done, how long it is to remain, and what is to be done with it once the *ebó* is complete.
- If the client suffers from abdominal problems and the letter refuses to close, a *rogación* should be given at the feet of Oshún. Once the *rogación* is complete, an *adimú* using squash should be given to her.
- If there are legal problems and the letter will not close, an *ebó* should be made to Ochosi to solve the problems. Let him dictate the type and terms of the *ebó*.

Now the diviner should turn to the following list of ebores for the composite odu that has fallen, using the *diloggún* and *ibó* in tandem until one or more have been marked and prescribed. When the options

here have been exhausted, if the oracle will still not close it will be necessary for the *italero* to turn to the lists of *eboses* given for the parent *odu*, *Obara*.

The *Eboses* of *Obara Okana* (6-1)

- In this letter, women must not become pregnant. Proper birth control is to be used by both sexes, for they share reproductive responsibility. If a woman is with child under this sign she should immediately make an *ebó* to *Yemayá* and *Oshún* to guarantee the health of both. If the letter will not close, the *orishas* might be standing up for a specific *ebó*, and the diviner must ask, “*Ebó elese Yemayá y Oshún?*” marking what is needed. The *elekes* of both these *Spirits* should be worn at all times. If there is any chance that the woman will need to have a cesarean, then *ebó* is automatically marked to *Ogún* as well. A new, sharp knife is given to *Ogún* with prayers that he will guide the hand of the surgeon so that the metal is healing, not harmful, and then a rooster is presented to the client and rubbed well over the abdomen. It is sacrificed to *Ogún* and the knife; and with the coconuts, the *orisha* is asked what should be done with the animal remains. A week after the sacrifice, the *orisha* is given a basket of fresh fruits to cool him down, with prayers for healing of both mother and child. Also, if there are legal troubles being faced by the client, *ebó* should be made to *Ochosi*. The diviner must mark what is needed following the pattern given in chapter 1’s “Marking the *Eboses*, or Remedies for *Odu*.”

The *Eboses* of *Obara Ejioko* (6-2)

- When this letter falls in any *osogbo*, it marks the client for a visit to the *Babalawo*; he must receive either *mano* or *kofá de Orúnmila*. Also, if the client is a survivor of twins, or if there are dead twins in the family, many masses need to be said for these *Spirits*. If the letter will not close, additional *eboses* may be needed for *egun*, and the diviner should ask, “*Ebó elese egun?*” marking what is needed by these *Spirits*.
- In this sign, it is important that the client have the *Ibeyi*; this does not need to be marked as *ebó*. If the client already has the

Ibeyi, however, and the odu refuses closure, the diviner should ask if the orishas need ebó. Follow the pattern for marking ebó given in the section on *larishe* in chapter 1, “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” If no ebó can be marked for these orishas, and the letter has come in an *osogbo*, they are in need of a party; thus will they fight on behalf of the client.

- When Obara Ejioko opens and refuses closure for a priest/ess, the orisha speaking in this sign could be marking a *tambor* as the solution for all the client’s troubles. The diviner should first ask if a *tambor* is required; and then he should ask if the orisha whose *diloggún* is being consulted wants the *tambor*. If that orisha refuses *batá*, the diviner should try to mark the *tambor* for one of the orishas given in the priest/ess’s *ocha*. If all these refuse the drum, begin asking about the other orishas, following the order given at the beginning of this chapter under “The Orishas Who Speak in Obara.” *Note:* There are two rules to giving a drum. First, one may not play *batá* for his own orishas before the orisha giving birth to the head (the godparent’s guardian) has been given *batá* by this client. Second, if an orisha that has not been received by a client wants a drum from this client, that orisha’s mysteries must be received before the drum can be played.

The Eboses of Obara Ogundá (6-3)

- In this letter, *Ogún* is causing many of the client’s problems and must be appeased. For some reason there are many unresolved issues with this Spirit (and the client probably knows what these are). An *adimú* should be offered. If this is not enough to close the letter, *Ogún* might be standing up for ebó and the question “Ebó elese *Ogún*?” should be asked. Following the guidelines given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu,” the diviner should mark ebó. If the client does not have *Ogún*, these things must be done to the diviner’s orisha, and then he should receive the complete initiation of the warriors as soon as possible.
- An ebó should be marked for *Yemayá*, asking her, “Ebó elese *Yemayá*?” Whatever she needs should be marked; and if *Yemayá*

will not mark an ebó, an adimú should still be given to her in her home, the ocean. After making this offering, client and diviner should cast a net into the ocean, dredging the bottom of the ocean floor with it. Whatever is found in the net should be used to make ebó at the diviner's shrine for Yemayá. The net is then hung over the client's back door to bring iré and keep away osogbo.

- If this letter still refuses closure, there may be unresolved issues with Aganyú. The diviner should ask, "Ebó else Aganyú?" marking what is needed; and if the letter will still not close, the diviner should then ask, "Koshé Aganyú?" to see if his reception is necessary.
- Finally, if this sign opens for a priest/ess and refuses closure, it may mark one of two eboses: the giving of four legs (and an itá) or the reception of the knife. First, the diviner should ask the oracle if an orisha needs four legs; and then he should ask if the orisha speaking requires four legs. If so, the ebó is marked and no itá is required. If four legs are needed for an orisha beyond the one speaking, the diviner tries to mark it for one of the orishas given in the client's ocha. After those orishas, he asks about the rest of the orishas in the order given in "The Orishas Who Speak in Obara," a section earlier in this chapter.
- If the oracle will not mark four legs and an itá for any of the orishas, the diviner should next try to mark the reception of the knife, asking, "Koshé pinaldo?" After this, turn to the list of eboses given for the parent odu at the end of this chapter.

The Eboses of Obara Irosun (6-4)

- When this letter falls upon the mat, it automatically marks certain eboses and spiritual works for the client. First, Obara Irosun alludes to the squash and the vine upon which it grows, and many spiritual baths should be taken using the squash and its vine. Second, this letter alludes to a troubled spirit that has attached itself to the client, a suicide, and this spirit must be given spiritual masses so that it can move beyond the plane on which it is stuck. Finally, Elegguá stands up in this letter to

demand more attention from the client; he should be treated as if he were the orisha of the head. If the diloggún being consulted is that of Elegguá, and if the client is an initiate of our faith, the diviner should check to see if this Spirit is standing up for a crown.

- Olokun is important in all composite odu that incorporate Irosun. If the client does not have Olokun and the letter refuses closure, mark her reception with the shells. The question “Koshé Olokun?” should be asked. If the client has Olokun, he should ask if the orisha needs ebó. If the answer to this is yes, mark the ebó following the pattern given for larishe in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.”
- The Ibeyi can be an integral part of this sign. If the letter refuses closure and the client does not have these orishas, the diviner should ask, “Koshé Ibeyi?” to see if their reception is needed. If the client does not need them, or if he already has them, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Ibeyi?” marking the ebó that they require.
- Asohano stands up in this letter as well, and if it will not close, the client may need to make ebó to him also. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Asohano?” and if the answer is yes, the ebó must be marked. If the answer is no and the client does not have Babaluaiye, the diviner should ask, “Koshé Asohano?” Until the orisha is received, the client should be given Babaluaiye’s eleke for protection.
- If the letter still refuses closure, this person may need Osain. “Koshé Osain?” should be asked, and the orisha should be received as soon as possible.

The Eboses of Obara Oché (6-5)

- This letter automatically marks certain eboses for the client. First, he should plant a single vine of squash indoors, and when the vine is big enough, it should be transplanted outdoors. This vine is to be guarded well, for the fruit that grows on it belongs to Oshún and should be given to her as adimú; the more squash that ripens for her, the more money she will bring to the client. Second, there is a possibility that clocks will

stop in the homes of those present at the reading once this odu is closed, and they must be restarted as soon as possible so that ikú does not come knocking at the door. The third ebó marked by this letter is the making of a niche osain for the client; it must be packed with herbs of the orisha that first spoke in this letter. Finally, if the client wishes to do any travel while under the influence of this odu, he must first consult with Oshún. If she says no and travel is for pleasure, do not go. If she says no and the travel is for business, offer her ebó so she will let the client go safely.

- If the letter refuses closure, there may be unpaid debts with Oshún, and if the client cannot remember making her any unpaid promises, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Oshún?” to see if she requires anything. If the answer is no, the client should still offer her adimú to ensure her continued goodwill.
- If the letter will still not close, the client must wear a red parrot feather in his hair at all times. Then the diviner should ask about the eboses listed for the parent odu.

The Eboses of Obara Meji (6-6)

The client should do the following eboses.

- Both Shangó and Oshún should be given an adimú of fresh squash, and from this moment on the client may not eat, pick, pierce, cut, or give away this fruit. It holds the key to his future prosperity.
- The guardian orisha, if known, should be given an adimú (anything that the client wants to give him or her). Once done, he should be given a rogación at the feet of this orisha.
- A visit to a Babalawo is needed to receive the idé (bracelet) and eleke of Orúnmila.
- Elegguá must be fed a rooster deep in the woods, and once this is done a niche osain should be made (of Elegguá) for the client.
- If the prescription of these things is not enough to close the letter, there may be an unpaid debt with Oshún. If the client cannot remember promising her anything and leaving it unpaid, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Oshún?” marking what is

needed. If she will take no ebó, the client should still offer her an adimú to resolve issues with her.

- This letter can mark the reception of Osain. This, however, should be asked only as a last resort to close the odu.

The Ebores of Obara Odí (6-7)

- In this odu, Yemayá and Shangó made a pact to eat together because she was going through economic turmoil and was in need; and Shangó, who loved his adoptive mother, wanted to take care of her. The client should make an adimú to these two orishas together. If this is the reading of itá, whenever an offering is made to one, part of that offering should go to the other.
- A niche osain should be made for the client; it needs to be made for either Elegguá or Shangó, depending on who speaks in this letter. Whenever the orisha for whom this niche osain is made eats, the charm should eat with him. Leave the niche osain in the orisha's *sopera* (tureen) when it is not being used.
- If the letter refuses to close, the client may need to receive Osain; this, however, should be marked only as a last resort.

The Ebores of Obara l'Ogbe (6-8)

- In this letter, the client must be given a rogación at the feet of Obatalá to strengthen the head; it is weak. If the osogbo is severe, such as ano or ikú, the orí must be fed two white pigeons to offer it strength. The diviner must ask if Obatalá needs an ebó once the rogación is complete, asking, "Ebó elese Obatalá?" and marking what is needed. Even if no ebó can be marked, the client should come prepared to make a simple adimú in thanks for the orisha's support.
- Elegguá might be standing up for ebó in this letter, and the diviner must try to mark one. Even if Elegguá will take nothing as ebó, he is waiting to see what the client will offer; an adimú should be made as soon as possible.

- This is one of the few letters in which orisha Oke stands up; the client may need to make ebó to either the mountain or the hill.³ The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese orisha Oke?” and if the answer is yes, the diviner must mark what is needed. If the ebó is eyebale, the sacrifice should be made outdoors on top of a hill or on a mountainside.

The Eboses of Obara Osá (6–9)

The client must do the eboses of this letter as soon as possible.

- First, he will need his elekes and warriors; the elekes of Oyá and Ochosi should be given at this time, as well.
- If egun have stood up at any time in this reading, they must be fed a sheep. It would be best to have an experienced oriaté or Babalawo do this ceremony.
- The diviner must try to mark eboses to the following orishas: Yemayá, Oyá, and Ochosi. If none of them will take an ebó, the client should still offer some type of adimú to each of them.

The Eboses of Obara Ofún (6–10)

- In this odu, the reception of the warriors is mandatory, and once Elegguá is in the home the client should give him a ñame to eat. The vine that eventually will grow from this root should not be allowed to grow longer than the client is tall, and it should remain with his Elegguá until it goes bad. From this moment on, the client may not eat ñame.
- After this has been done, all the warriors should be given a mixture of cornmeal, water, and honey; this should be left overnight in a gourd. Elegguá must be tended frequently once these eboses have been done.

3. Orisha Oke is the spirit of the mountain, the first point of land that rose from Olokun's watery domain. Orisha Oke is the first point where Obatalá comes to earth; it is his foundation.

- As soon as possible, a rogación should be given to feed and strengthen the orí. Use ten things sacred to Obatalá, since Obara Ofún marks the number ten in most of its eboses. Unless the oracle dictates otherwise, this ebó should be done at the feet of Obatalá so the client is always under his protection.

The Eboses of Obara Owani (6-11)

- This odu mandates the following ebó: The client should dress in red after the reading and walk out into the street, calling as much attention to himself as possible. Once this has been done, he should go home immediately and dress all in white, walking the previous path once more in silence. Once done, his enemies will always be looking for the one who is dressed in red; they will never find him.
- Receive the warriors; if the client has this initiation, he needs to attend Elegguá frequently. The diviner should mark some special eboses that are to be done with Elegguá from time to time by this person.

The Eboses of Obara Ejila (6-12)

- There are two eboses that are mandated in this odu. First, the client needs to take frequent spiritual baths to cleanse the heat in his life. Use white baths of things belonging to Obatalá, and the leaves of the water lily. Second, he needs his elekes plus the eleke of Babaluaiye. The necklaces of Obatalá and Asohano should always be worn.

The Eboses of Obara Irete (6-13)

- In this odu, the client may have incurred a debt to Asohano. If he cannot remember having any such debt, the diviner must mark the ebó by asking, “Ebó elese Babaluaiye?” and if the orisha wants nothing, an adimú should still be offered to clear up the issues with him.

- If the client is a man, he may be in danger of losing his wife or lover. The following ebó should be done: Give a fan made of blue things to Yemayá, leaving it with her for a brief time. The fan should then be replaced with a more expensive adimú, and the fan should be given to his lover. She will not stray if the client treats her well.

The Eboses of Obara Merinla (6-14)

- The client needs the initiation of the warriors first, followed by that of the elekes, immediately.
- The eboses demanded by the orishas must be done immediately or the client's life will be in danger.

The Eboses of Obara Iwori (6-15)

- In this odu, the client is in desperate need of a rogación; he should not leave the diviner's home until one is given. Later, the rogación can be done again, and the head should then be fed two white pigeons to give it strength. The spiritual prescription here is to take many white baths and to remain calm at all times.
- The client must have the elekes, wearing the necklace of Yemayá frequently. All problems should be left at her feet with an adimú, and she will take care of all adversaries.

The Eboses of Obara Merindilogún (6-16)

When this letter opens on the mat, the client must do each of the following eboses.

- The client needs to take a spiritual bath of things belonging to Obaralá and then Yemayá; after this, the diviner should cleanse the client with a small dark chicken that is then set free to run in the woods.
- A bottle of water and cornmeal is put to Oshún; cap the bottle tightly so that the water does not evaporate. Ask Oshún with

coconuts how long it is to stay with her, and where it is to be taken once the ebó is done.

- Omiero should be used to wash the front door of the client's home. Pray to the orishas for protection.
- The client needs the initiations of the elekes and the warriors immediately.

The Eboses of the Parent Odu

Having given the reading, the *larishe*, one of the mandatory eboses, and the eboses of the composite odu that apply to the client, if the letter will still not close there are certain eboses belonging only to the parent odu, Obara, that might need to be marked. The diviner should then go through this list slowly and thoroughly until that which the letter needs is found. After marking an ebó from this list, it must be explained thoroughly to the client—the ebó performed will affect the total meaning of odu—and then the oracle must once again be asked for closure.

- The client for whom this letter has fallen might need to receive the elekes as ebó; the diviner should ask, “Koshé elekes?” and if the oracle answers yes, the initiation must be scheduled as soon as possible. If Obara does not accept this ebó, the diviner should go to the next ebó in this list.
- If the client for whom this letter falls has not received his warriors, these might be needed in the Odu. The diviner must ask the question “Koshé ajogún?” and if the answer is yes, then this initiation must be given as soon as possible. If the client already has the warriors, or if the letter does not dictate their reception, then either Elegguá or Ogún could be standing up for ebó. Ask, “Ebó elese Elegguá?” and then, “Ebó elese Ogún?” If either of these will take ebó, the diviner should mark what is needed following the pattern given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.”
- If either Shangó or Oshún has not stood up for ebó in the composite odu, one of them might want ebó through the parent odu. The diviner should ask the questions “Ebó elese Shangó?”

and “Ebó elsele Oshún?” If either of these wants ebó, the diviner should mark what is needed.

- Because Osain and Shangó are close, Osain’s influence can be found in all the letters of Obara. The client could need a niche osain (an herbal charm) for one of the orishas standing up in odu. The diviner should ask, “Ebó niche osain?” and if the answer is yes, he should question the orishas one by one (following the order given in “The Orishas Who Speak in Obara” earlier in this chapter) until the proper orisha is found. If none of these orishas is marked, the niche osain is for odu, and it is made from the herbs of Elegguá (since he is in all odu).
- Finally, to close this letter the reception of one or more of the following orishas could be necessary: Ochosi, Aganyú, Ibeyi, Olokun, or Osain (as a last resort). The diviner should try to mark one of these orishas, and then close the odu.
- Note that if the client’s path of Elegguá is being marked through this reading, the opening of Obara demands that certain elements be included in this orisha’s construction. First, the oracle is used to mark the path of Eshu to be given. Once done, the client is instructed to go to that Eshu’s place in nature and find three smooth black pebbles. One of these stones will be used as Elegguá’s foundation; however, the diviner must use the oracle obí (the divining coconuts) to determine which of the three stones is to become Elegguá. A rooster is then sacrificed to this foundation, and after the matanza, some jutía, smoked fish, honey, rum, and cigar smoke must be given as well. Before the bird’s carcass is disposed of (under the direction of Elegguá), the rooster’s tongue must be cut from the mouth and put on the stone to cure. Once the elements are dried, the stone is inverted so that it rests on top of the tongue, and all is packed into Elegguá’s image with the additional carga required. Nothing is to be washed off; blood, feathers, and additional sacrificial elements must be included in the image of Eshu.

Remember that in each odu, there are certain types of offerings that are symbolic and traditional of the letter that has opened, and

when marking any type of ebó or larishe, these items should be included. For eyebale, or the sacrifice of animals, choose from the following list: one pigeon, a guinea hen, two roosters, and two hens. For adimú-type offerings, use: a small cane, sixteen pumpkins, sixteen coconuts, red cloth, smoked or fresh fish, jutía, a white sheet, a single cake, anisette, rum, two bottles of water, a single pumpkin, a single coconut, two candles, and used clothing exchanged for white after a rogación.



Opening Odí— Seven Mouths on the Mat

The Proverbs of Odí

- In Odí, the hole (the grave) is finally dug.
- In adultery there will always be danger.
- It will take more than luck to catch the biggest fish: It will take the biggest hook in the biggest ocean with the best bait to win.
- While today it will seem small, tomorrow it will be big. [This refers to the inherent *osogbo* in all the signs.]

The Orishas Who Speak in Odí

In this sign, the following orishas are known to speak: Yemayá, Ogún, Elegguá, Otín, Ochosi, Babaluaiye, Obatalá, Inle, Orisha Oko, Olokun, and Korikoto.

Special Notes on Odí

The sign that we know as Odí in the *diloggún* was born from Okana (one mouth). Just as the latter sign is an expression of harmony and

justice (brought through radical or harsh change), Odí is the completion of that balancing and the seal that holds it firm. There is no better way to describe the concept of a seal in orisha worship than through the words of Awó Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi:

Seals are used in a ritual way to define that which is desired, and to block that which is unwanted. At the end of an invocation the awó will breathe on the mat or tray and say the word *tó* (pronounced tow). In Yoruba the word *tó* means "enough," "it is finished," or "that is how I say it should be." The word *tó* clearly marks the end of an invocation so that other statements made after a ritual do not merge with the invocation process.¹

As a seal to creation, Odí ensures that what exists is here only by the will of Olódumare and the orishas; all that exists is either an expression of holiness or a force designed to allow that holiness to continue and manifest.² To understand the implications of this odu, one must meditate upon its symbols in nature: the four cardinal points, the sun, and a horse (no one in our house understands the implications of that symbol, yet the elders say it is so). While many associate no traditional gesture with this letter, the italeros in our house will often fold the arms over the breast as if cradling and nursing an infant (this is in reference to Yemayá, who owns this odu in the diloggún). However, few have seen the elders in ocha make this series of gestures.

The Special Precautions of Odí

Having opened the reading in Odí, the first warning that this letter gives is for the italero only: He must be careful what is said and how it is said, for this letter opens the door to malicious gossip and evil tongues. The first danger here is that the client who has come for a reading will take those things said at the mat to others beyond the

1. Awó Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi, *Awó: Ifá and the Theology of Orisha Divination* (New York: Original Publications, 1992), 137-8.

2. For a deeper understanding of this odu's metaphysical applications, study the child of Odí known as Osá; the information about Osá in the section titled "Special Notes on Osá" in chapter 10 compares and contrasts that given here for Odí. It also illustrates how the cycle of one odu melts and merges into the next.

room, and from this will much evil be wrought. Refuse to name names during the course of the reading, even if those names are known. Trick the client into coming up with his own assumptions. Indeed, it is an offense to the orishas to repeat the sensitive information gleaned during divination to others, yet not all care who is offended. The priest/ess performing these holy rituals must ensure that he or she is involved in neither the client's problems nor the gossip that will result from this session. Also, make sure that the reading room itself is secured from the eyes and ears of others, since even if all precautions are taken there is still the danger that another will eavesdrop on the reading—which is yet another way that Odí can bring gossip.

The Meaning of Odí

When seven mouths open on the mat, it immediately points toward the client's relationship with his own family, bringing up issues with first the mother and then the father. The relationships in the family unit are strained to the point of continuous anxiety. If the mother is still alive, there is a strong strain in the relationship between the two, and the client needs to realize that neither she nor his father will ever change; yet the relationship needs to be worked out. There needs to be communication. The birth of this person to the family was both a strain and a joy, and so it has remained until today. Odí marks suffering on the part of children. If the client is not a parent, he soon could be, either by giving birth to a child or through adoption (if this is a priest/ess, there could also be a new godchild). If the client already has children, he needs to be careful of where they go and with whom. Guard against molestation, kidnapping, and accidents, for any of these could occur, and any of them could be fatal to the child. While children are still young, Odí points out that they should be taught the quality of respect for elders: Do not let them run wild, and do not let them have their way in all things. Strong love always equals good discipline. Remember that no matter what, when it comes to family this client will find that he stands alone; relatives are full of envy and almost never have this person's best interests in mind. There will be even greater envy and worry when this person makes ocha, for then he will find his destiny: He is a priest/ess by right of birth.

Envy is an external quality that seems to permeate this client's life a lot these days. Although the client may not be aware of how much

he is envied, he must accept this and learn to deal with it. He holds position over those with whom he associates. Much of this is due to the fact that the client takes friends for convenience; he is close to those from whom he needs something monetarily, emotionally, physically, and so on. When the purpose is fulfilled, he leaves those people behind as he seeks out new friends. Old, longtime friends should never be abandoned for the new; the client should begin forming close ties with those who are similar to him. Gossip comes in two forms: about others and about himself. Whenever these things are brought to him, he should ignore them, for gossip will bring his downfall. Investigating gossip will bring severe consequences. The client does not have fixed ideas. There can be something violent in his character. People speak badly about him and they hurt him with what they say. They always have him in the middle of intrigues and false testimony. If the client feels that others are doing him wrong, he should tell all to the orishas and leave it there. They will deal with the evil being done.

Odi speaks of one who lives in continuous anxiety. This person suffers from insomnia, and it is this unhealthy lack of sleep that causes much of his mental disturbances. When he sleeps he wakes from sensations of falling and agitation, and he lands, jumping on the bed in the same position in which he went to sleep. He sees the dead in the night, and when he dreams he usually dreams with the dead. Ask this person if he or she dreams of the ocean, for it is in dreams that Yemayá and her dead come to him; this may well be her child. Egun whisper in darkness, in sleep, and even though many of the nocturnal visions seem far-fetched or unrealistic, he should be told to keep their basic principles in mind. There will be many warnings given about the future. Something that both Yemayá and the dead have tried to tell him many times is that the mother's health may not be good; it will not be long before she falls ill, maybe even dies. Three men are in love with this client (if it is a woman or a gay man). One of these men will have gray hairs. There will be a total of three suitors: one black, one white, and one with gray hair. One of these men will be sick, possibly with a venereal disease, so be careful with whom sexual relations are had. The client may become infected. The man must always be cautious of his testicles and diseases that can affect that area.

We say that this odu is the true home of Yemayá: It alludes to the ocean, earth, and sky. While Yemayá arose from Olokun, the depths of

the sea, she walks on land and once ascended into heaven by her own *aché*. Therefore, if the client is not her child, he is well protected by this powerful *orisha*. The letter may not close out at all unless this person's head is marked to her, or some *ebó* marked to ensure her continued goodwill. Since *Odí* always marks issues with *Yemayá*, it would be wise for the diviner to pause during this reading to ask the client if he has any issues with her, any promises that remain unpaid. In this case, the *ebó* will be simple: Pay the debt. If there is no debt owed or remembered, the diviner will need to consult with *Yemayá* to see what she requires, marking *eboses* to her so that there are no unsettled issues between the client and the *orisha*. In addition, before this sign has closed out the client must be told that *Yemayá* demands he be crowned soon—especially if *Odí Meji* falls on the mat. A mazo of *Yemayá* (or the guardian *orisha*) should be thrown over his shoulders, and he must salute the *orishas* and the godparent. His lack of a crown (which was promised before birth) is the cause of all this person's troubles. Life will get better once *ocha* is made.

When *Odí* comes in a severe *osogbo*, it often points to a woman who is suffering from illness or disease in the reproductive and sexual organs; sometimes, this illness is due to a past abortion(s), or the disease/problems could have resulted in miscarriage. The woman for whom this letter falls must be told that *Yemayá* claims her sexual organs now, and all sexual acts and conceptions that occur from this moment on are sacred to her; they must be treated with love and respect. Abortions are now taboo. If the client is afraid of having an unwanted pregnancy, there are two options: Abstain from sex or ensure that adequate birth control is used at all times. *Yemayá* is the mother of all, and to her there is no greater blessing than that of children. This person could become very blessed; exercise caution. If the client becomes pregnant, there could be complications during the pregnancy. *Ebó* should be made to *Yemayá* to ensure both her health and the health of the unborn child. A woman whose session opens in *Odí* is weak during menstruation; she must protect herself well in a time that is filled with much spiritual heat. Adultery is also taboo in this letter, and the man or woman for whom *Odí* falls must remain faithful to the lover.

In the orientations of *ikú* and *ano*, there are many serious health warnings that the diviner should deliver to the client. *Odí* marks the

following areas for trouble: ears, lungs, eyes, head, stomach, testicles, womb, and all the reproductive systems. If any severe blows to the head are sustained, they may cause permanent injury to the brain and skull, so always protect the head when playing sports. Spiritually, the head should be protected as well; avoid letting others touch this area. Venereal disease runs rampant in the orientation of ano and ikú: Gonorrhea, syphilis, human papilloma virus, and AIDS are not unusual, and if the client lives frequently among the gay community, many of his friends could die within the next seven years. Men need to ensure that their testicles, scrotum, and penis are protected from injury, especially while playing sports; and women must address the cause of irregular periods. There could also be disease forming in the liver and blood; be on guard against the following diseases and infections: colitis, constipation (in the elderly, it can kill), cirrhosis, and all forms of hepatitis. If ano falls in Odí Meji, mental derangement, psychosis, and nervous breakdowns or disorders are a possibility. In addition to these things, if the letter falls in ikú, death may come by drowning, choking, or suffocation, especially at the ocean. Be careful.

Impress upon this person that if the eboses prescribed by the composite odu are not performed quickly, evil and negativity will overwhelm his life. While not one of the four primary letters of the dilogún, such is the sign's power that it moves swiftly and permeates every area of one's life; it alludes to everything that exists in the heaven, sky, and earth. Odí is both a blessing and a curse: The blessings come when the reading is followed to the letter, and it becomes a curse if odu is not given what is demanded. Unfortunately, the person for whom Odí falls has little faith in the orishas or this religion, and he may not feel the need to follow the italoero's prescriptions. Therefore, it is important for the diviner to explain not only the good things that this letter can predict, but also the bad, so that the client can see the two ways his life can go from this moment on. Once the predictions of Odí begin to fulfill themselves, this client will then come to make ebó to stop or stall those things that have been foretold.

The Prohibitions of Odí

If Odí's composite odu opens in any type of osogbo, the diviner must prescribe the prohibitions that fit the client's situation for a period of twenty-one to twenty-eight days, the normal amount of time in which

an odu passes. If, however, this is the reading of itá, the prohibitions prescribed must be followed for a lifetime. There may be times when the diviner is unsure if he has prescribed enough prohibitions to help the client avoid all osogbos predicted by odu. This, however, should not be a concern, for if more prohibitions are required than are delivered in the reading, Odí will not close out.

- Avoid chemical, drug, or sexual vices.
- Any intoxicants or medicines that could cause addiction are to be avoided. Even if the doctor prescribes narcotics or other medicines, these should be taken only as directed and only if the doctor can provide no other substitute.
- Beware of those in a uniform who visit the house. The client should say that he is too busy to receive guests and not let them in.
- Gossip is to be avoided, especially if it comes from the mouth of a woman. Women who gossip are to be treated as enemies.
- Do not show disrespect to either your parents or your godparents.
- Never strike a child, especially on the head.
- Do not curse or blaspheme, no matter the words or the religion.
- Do not become involved in romantic triangles.
- There should be no eating in another person's house.
- Do not jump over holes, look through holes, or wear things that have holes.
- Do not lift heavy objects alone; there will be injury.
- Home remedies and over-the-counter medications are now prohibited. If there is illness, go to the doctor.

The Ebores of Odí

When the diviner begins to mark the ebores for Odí, the first thing to be considered is whether the client is interested in the religion or whether he's desiring a quick fix to his problems. In Odí, all of the odu can prescribe the basic initiation of the elekes, yet we save this lengthy, complicated ceremony for those who desire entrance into our faith. If the osogbo of the letter is great, however, the elekes will be needed by

the one for whom this letter has fallen, and the first ebó the diviner will try to mark in this case will be “Ebó de elekes?” If the answer is yes, then the ceremony needs to be done as soon as possible. If the answer is no, the client could need just the eleke of any one orisha that speaks in this odu, and the diviner can try to mark this by asking, “Ebó eleke de [orisha’s name]?” If the letter will still not close, the italero must then begin to attempt the marking of the eboses given for each composite odu; these may be needed to effectively bring the session to an end. The offerings, sacrifices, and eboses for each composite follow.

The Eboses of Odí Okana (7-1)

- There are three eboses that are marked automatically when this letter opens on the mat. First, the client needs to receive the initiation of the elekes immediately, and if the sign came in a severe osogbo, the elekes of Elegguá and Ogún should be given as well. Once this is done, the one being read should also receive the warriors. Finally, in Odí Okana, Yemayá stands up on behalf of the client to solve all his problems; he should leave all the evil that others have done to him at her feet with an adimú, and she will protect him from harm. If the letter will not close out, she may want a specific offering; the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Yemayá?” to see if there is anything specific that she requires.

The Eboses of Odí Oyekun (7-2)

- When this letter opens on the mat, there are three eboses that the client will need to do. First, seven spiritual baths need to be taken with the following things: efun, leaves from an orange tree, *flores cordiales*, and *quita maldición*. The herbs should be infused in boiling water, allowed to cool, and then strained. Once strained and cooled, the efun should be added. The second ebó marked by this letter is that the client needs his elekes, and if the full initiation cannot be taken at this time, the eleke of Yemayá should be given. The client must wear this necklace every day. Finally, Shangó figures prominently in this odu, and even if he offers no advice, the client should give him some token adimú. If the letter will not close, Shangó might want something specific, and the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Shangó?” to see if he requires anything.

- In this sign, it is important that the client have the Ibeyi; this does not need to be marked as an ebó. If the client has the Ibeyi, however, and the odu refuses closure, the diviner should ask if the orishas need ebó. Follow the pattern for marking ebó given in the section on *larishe* in chapter 1 (“Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu”). If no ebó can be marked, the Ibeyi want a party thrown in their honor.
- When Odí Oyekun opens and refuses closure for a priest/ess, the orisha speaking in this sign could be marking a tambor as the solution for all the client’s troubles. The diviner should first ask if a tambor is required; and then he should ask if the orisha whose *diloggún* is being consulted wants the tambor. If that orisha refuses *batá*, the diviner should try to mark the tambor for one of the orishas given in the priest/ess’s *ocha*. If all of these refuse the drum, begin asking about the other orishas, following the order given at the beginning of this chapter under “Orishas Who Speak in Odí.”

The Eboses of Odí Ogundá (7-3)

- Because of Odí Ogundá’s nature, this letter has some severe eboses that must be done by the client as soon as possible. First, the letter is dangerous, and to protect those present in the room when odu opened, all must stay until after the diviner can do the closing ebó of Ogundá (see chapter 4 for details on this ebó). The *elekes* are not an option in this sign: The *elekes* are a necessity in this sign. If they cannot be had within a few days, the client should at least receive *Yemayá*’s, wearing it every day. Soon, he must also get his warriors, and if he already has them the diviner must ask if they need ebó: “Ebó elese *Elegguá*?” and “Ebó elese *Ogún*?” should both be asked, giving them a chance to speak as to the offering that they require. Note that this letter is difficult to close; we say in Odí Ogundá that the orishas are unhappy, angry, and any Spirit that has spoken to the client during the course of this reading might demand an ebó as payment for past offenses. One by one (if the letter will not close), the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese [orisha’s name]?” in the order given under “Orishas Who Speak in Odí,” marking what is

required. If an orisha has spoken yet not demanded ebó, the client might still wish to present an adimú to ensure the Spirit's goodwill.

- When Odí Ogundá opens for a priest/ess and refuses closure, it may mark one of two eboses: the giving of four legs (and an itá) or the reception of the knife. First, the diviner should ask the oracle if an orisha needs four legs; and then he should ask if Yemayá wants the ebó (this is her home, Odí). If Yemayá answers that she wants four legs, there is to be an itá and a huge feast cooked and given in her honor; the more that are fed by the animal, the greater the iré that will come from the ceremony. If Yemayá does not want four legs, the diviner should next question the orisha whose diloggún is being consulted (no itá is to be given) and then the rest of the orishas, following the order given in "The Orishas Who Speak in Odí," asking if itá is needed.
- If the oracle will not mark four legs and an itá, the diviner should next try to mark the reception of the knife. After this, return to the list of eboses given for the parent odu to find a way to close the sign.
- If no closure can be found there, two orishas might be needed by the client. First, the diviner should ask, "Koshé Inle?" and then he should ask, "Koshé Osain?" It may take one or both of these, Inle and Osain, to successfully close the letter.

The Eboses of Odí Irosun (7-4)

- If the client has not received the initial investment of the elekes, this should be done as soon as possible, followed by the initiation of the warriors. Ogún needs to have a small machete in his pot so that he does hard labor for the client, and not the other way around. Also, in this letter it is mandated that the client keep a bóveda permanently. It should have seven, not nine, glasses of fresh water plus a candle at all times.
- The Ibeyi can be an integral part of this sign; if it refuses closure and the client does not have these orishas, the diviner should ask the oracle if their reception is necessary. If the client has the Ibeyi, he should ask if they need ebó. If an ebó is

marked, follow the line of questioning given in chapter 1, “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” If ebó is required and yet none can be marked, they want a party given in their honor as soon as possible.

The Eboses of Odí Oché (7-5)

- We say that Odí Oché is a special odu, and those for whom it opens are special. It is rare that this sign will fall on the mat for one who was not born under these circumstances: near a river, near an ocean, near the joining of two waters (river and lake or ocean), or during a rainstorm. We say that this client is a child of two waters, and this sign automatically marks the reception of a special charm for Yemayá and Oshún known as *dos aguas*. From this moment (even if this is not itá), whatever the client does for one of these two orishas must be done for the other; to ignore one is to incur the wrath of the other! Additionally, if the client has come for problems with infertility, the solution is to make ebó to Yemayá (and Oshún); the diviner should mark what is needed. If the client has come because of family problems and there are children involved, the life of one of the children is in danger. Again, ebó should be made to Yemayá (and Oshún); thus will a life be saved and family problems solved.
- “Maferefún Inle,” for he speaks strongly in this sign. If the letter will not close, the client may need to receive this orisha. The diviner should ask, “Koshé Inle?” to see if he is needed.
- Finally, if the client has come in a severe osogbo and nothing will serve to close Odí Oché, orisha Oko must be given. If the letter will accept this and will still not close, we say that the client is in a period of war and needs to feed the earth to survive. This should be done while orisha Oko is being given and fed.³

3. “Feeding the earth” is a special ebó done to prevent the earth from “feeding” on the client before his time. A qualified oriaté must perform this ceremony. Its detail is beyond the scope of this book.

The Eboses of Odí Obara (7-6)

- In this odu, the client should buy a peony-beaded necklace to be washed in the omiero of the orisha that is speaking. Wear it occasionally, and when the client is not wearing it, the orisha should wear it. If there is ever an insurmountable problem or a decision that the client cannot make for himself, he should wear this necklace while thinking about all the options. Put it back onto the orisha and let him or her deal with the decision.
- A large vessel of water should be kept in front of the orishas every day; and in the morning, before talking to anyone, it should be thrown to the street and refilled. Do the normal morning salutations and then continue with the day. The orishas will open and freshen all the roads in the client's life.
- There are three other eboses mandated in this sign: First, for the orisha whose diloggún has been read, a balance scale should be bought and on one side there should be a bottle with sixteen peony seeds and on the other enough weight to put the scale in perfect balance. Once this is done, a doll with two faces should be bought, washed in omiero, and put to Elegguá. The two faces give Eshu the power to look in all directions for danger. Finally, a niche osain should be made for Shangó; it is washed for him and fed with him. Whenever the client is not carrying the charm for luck and protection, it should be put either inside his sopera or in the place where the elekes are kept.

The Eboses of Odí Meji (7-7)

- This odu carries many eboses that are marked by the opening of the letter. First, if the client does not have his warriors, he must get them, and inside Ogún there should be four machetes. These will give him the strength to protect the client from harm in all four cardinal points of the world. The Elegguá needs to be made with a stone that the client finds on the seashore, and if he already has an Eshu, another should be made. To clear the osogbos of this letter, many spiritual baths must be taken with herbs sacred to the orisha whose diloggún is being read; the diviner must prescribe these herbs based on his knowledge of odu and orisha. Finally, a niche osain must be made, washed,

and fed with this Spirit, using the same herbs that are used for the spiritual baths.

- If this is not enough to close the letter, the initiate should wear a red parrot feather in the hair at all times; the aleyo should wear one for the next twenty-eight days, longer if the odu presages a severe *osogbo*. The diviner might want to mark the length of time the feather is to be worn, and then what is to be done with it once the *ebó* is done. To protect the home, a red flag should be sewn and hung by the front door in honor of *Shangó*.
- Somehow, this person has incurred a debt with *Obatalá*. If he cannot remember having any unpaid debts, then the diviner should mark some type of *adimú* to this orisha so that there are no unresolved issues. The question “*Ebó elese Obatalá?*” should be asked, letting the orisha dictate what is required. Even if he will not prescribe an *ebó*, the client should be instructed how to make an offering to him.
- All the orishas that are considered warriors can speak in this sign, and if it will not close, the diviner should try to mark *eboses* to as many of them as possible. There are serious, unseen wars being fought around this person, and he will need their protection.

The *Eboses* of *Odí Ogbe* (7-8)

This sign mandates the following *eboses*.

- When this reading is over, the client should do the following *ebó* before the diviner’s *Elegguá*. A brown bag is filled with toasted corn, *jutía*, and smoked fish. Standing before *Elegguá*, the client crosses himself with the bag and rubs it slowly over his entire body in cleansing. It is then left with *Eshu*. Before leaving the diviner’s home, the bag should be thrown to the street. This *ebó* should also be done in his own home to his *Elegguá*, with a few modifications: At every meal, a small portion of the food should be wrapped in the bag before anything is eaten. Then the *ebó* is done and the client may sit down to his meal. Once he is done eating, he should walk to a crossroads and leave the brown bag there, telling the *Eshu* in the street all

the problems that he faces. Both his Elegguá and the Elegguá at the crossroads will fight all his battles.

- Drums figure prominently in this odu. First, if the client is an aleyo who has Elegguá, he must buy a small set of drums for his orisha. Whenever he speaks to Elegguá about his problems, he should tap out a basic rhythm on the toy drums to excite Eshu into action. Any other time, use the instrument normally played. Drums are therapeutic, and it would be wise for this person to learn how to play the instrument (he could be a drummer by birth). For both aleyos and initiates, the orishas want more joy, more music, and more laughter in the house. Play music often in their honor—both popular rhythms and orisha music. Thus will the atmosphere at home become lighter. For the priest/ess, the first fundamental batá played should be given to the orisha whose diloggún is being consulted, and until that time comes, give a set of toy drums to this Spirit. If ever a war is being fought, play those drums: The war will be won.
- Egun should have a bóveda with continual light and seven glasses of water. A new opá ikú must be found and fed. Give the Spirits masses and music for their evolution. Seven cigars should always be left on this altar tied with seven different-colored ribbons.
- Pregnant women must go immediately to see a Babalawo to have a hand of Ifá washed for the unborn child. If this is not done, the baby may not live or be healthy.
- For continual prosperity, the client should sacrifice to both the sea and the earth (in that order); the diviner must mark the ebó by beginning with the question “Adimú elese kalunga y ile?” Follow the guidelines given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.”
- If all these things have been prescribed and the odu will still not close, the client needs to receive Yembo; the diviner should mark this with the oracle, asking, “Koshé Yembo?” Arrangements for the ceremony should be made as soon as possible.
- Finally, this sign can mark the priest/ess for the reception of the knife. If the expenses for this ceremony are too great at this

time, the guardian orisha should be given four legs with itá. This will settle the client's affairs for now.

The Eboses of Odí Osá (7-9)

- The client is a direct child of Olokun, and he should receive her immediately. Although not born to be a good priest, this client should be initiated as soon as possible, and the client should learn how to work as an *espiritista* (medium), for that is where his destiny lies. Before ocha is made, either a palero or a santero who has taken that initiation should seat the nfumbé in a *nganga* (pot or cauldron).
- There should be many spiritual masses given to the client's egun; the yucca stalk should be placed with egun as soon as possible. A spiritual bóveda should be kept in the home to the spirits.

The Eboses of Odí Ofún (7-10)

Odí Ofún demands that the following eboses be done.

- First, if the client is a homeowner, the interior and exterior needs to be painted white as soon as possible in honor of Obatalá; thus will this orisha keep all negativity at bay.
- If there are children in the house, the youngest daughter must have Olokun; this orisha will keep her from getting lost in life.
- The client has a talent for working spirits, and he should begin attending, and then hosting, masses as soon as possible.
- Ten days in a row, the following ebó should be given to Olorún: The leftovers on the plate at the evening meal should be saved until sunrise the next day. Then, the client needs to take that plate outside to the street, touching the plate to the head as he says, "Olorún: Here I am, your humble child and servant, making my ebó. Have pity on me, for I am but a humble man." This way, the luck that the client has been missing will be found.

The Eboses of Odí Owani (7-11)

- If the aleyo for whom this letter falls does not have an opá ikú (a priest or priestess should already have one), then he should

go out and find one in the woods with his godparent; the godparent should then feed it. From this moment on, egun should be his foundation in the religion and in life, and to keep the relationship between himself and egun strong, he should go for long walks outdoors using the staff as a walking stick. Attend much to egun; the diviner should mark several eboses to these spirits. The client could be an exceptional spiritualist.

- All vices should be removed at this time, especially smoking. Do not drink or use intoxicants.
- The client should buy a straw basket and cut a hole in the bottom. This basket should then be put to his Elegguá so that he no longer carries things in “baskets with holes.” If the client does not have Elegguá, he should receive him as soon as possible.

The Eboses of Odí Ejila (7–12)

- In this sign, the client may possess many charms, especially of the orishas, and one of them has all but lost its power. The diviner must mark to which charm this letter refers and then mark the eboses needed to recharge this item. It must not be thrown away!
- The client should give a ram and drum to Shangó; and then he should have itá. Thus will he find true happiness.

The Eboses of Odí Irete (7–13)

- Odí Irete is a dangerous odu for the diviner. Once the reading is over, he should quickly arrange for the following ebó. In a place where the feet cannot touch the floor (such as on top of the roof or seated on a chair from which the feet dangle freely), two guinea hens should be fed to the diviner’s orí by an elder priest or priestess. Once the head is fed, he must be given a rogación in that same place. Once the rogación is complete and the signs of Obí are satisfactory, that same priest/ess should feed the diviner’s Eshu a rooster.⁴ If this ebó cannot be done soon, the

4. There are five basic signs of Obí: Alafia, Etawa, Ejife, Okana, and Oyekun. For this ebó, only the signs Alafia and Ejife are satisfactory. Obí divination is beyond the scope of this book; it will be explored in a future volume devoted entirely to that subject.

diviner should at least have a rogación until it can be done.

- There are certain eboses marked automatically for the client when this letter opens. First, he must go to a Babalawo as soon as possible for a reading with Ifá: Orúnmila has business with him. Seven red parrot feathers must be put into a crown for Yemayá (either his own or his godparent's). And there is one ebó that may be saved for when finances are in total turmoil: The client should dress in burlap and beg for alms in the street, remembering to do this in honor of Babalwaiye. The money received is marked to make ebó to this orisha; it should consist of two guinea hens and then an agbán at his feet.
- If the letter still refuses closure, the client needs to pray frequently to Naná Burukú and Obatalá, making frequent adimús at their shrines for help and evolution. If the client is an aleyo, he may need to receive Obatalá lavado (Spanish for "washed"—when one's orisha is received in the ritual of kariocha, it is known as *santo lavado*, the washing of the saint), plus the guardian orisha if this is known. The diviner should ask, "Koshé Obatalá?" to see if this is needed. If the client is an initiate, the diviner should ask, "Koshé Naná Burukú?" to see if her reception is necessary.
- The next question to ask the oracle would be, "Ebó elese Olokun?" If the answer is yes, the proper ebó to give her in this odu is three roosters. She will help the client clear his osogbos.
- Finally, if nothing else will close the letter, the diviner should ask the oracle, "Ebó elese Ósun?" If this is needed, an experienced oriaté must be called in for the ritual: Ósun will need to be painted special colors, and at the end of the ceremony, Yemayá will need to be put on top of Ósun (during this ceremony, Yemaya's fresh water is replaced with ocean water). Only the oriaté will know the secrets for doing this ritual.

The Eboses of Odí Merinla (7-14)

- The eboses that are normally marked for this letter are the same as those that are used to close Odí; however, the aleyo for whom this letter has fallen should take the initiations of the elekes and warriors immediately if they have not already been had.

The Ebores of Odí Marunla (7-15)

- The ebores for this odu are the same as those that close Odí. The aleyo, in this letter, must have the initiation of the warriors and the elekes. In serious cases of osogbo, the client should have a reading at the feet of Orúnmila.

The Ebores of Odí Merindilogún (7-16)

- The diviner must mark an ebó to Elegguá, asking, “Ebó elese Elegguá?” If he will not mark an ebó, and if the letter will not close, then Elegguá needs to be offered the following: a rooster, a goat, and a chance for itá with the client.
- This person must go to Ifá for a reading and a rogación. There is no other way to completely remove the obstacles he is having in his life.

The Ebores of the Parent Odu

If these have not been sufficient to bring the oracle to closure, the diviner must then begin to pick the offerings given for the parent odu, Odí; it will take one or more of these to bring the session to closure.

- If the letter has not closed off the basic ebores given for the composite odu, the diviner must find out if this person’s mother is still alive. If she has passed, then Yemayá Asesu must be fed in the drains of the client’s house and many spiritual masses should be given for his mother’s spirit. If the mother is alive, the odu is demanding that she have a rogación with four snails added to strengthen her orí; she will die if this is not done. Not being in the religion, the client may have the rogación in her name. Once this is complete, he will have to sacrifice a hen to Yemayá to save his mother’s life.
- In any orientation of osogbo (especially if the letter opened in ano or ikú), the client could need a rogación at the feet of Yemayá; the orí might also need an ebó of two white pigeons to offer it strength against sickness. The diviner should first ask, “Rogación elese Yemayá?” and if the answer is yes, he should then ask, “Eborí?” If both the rogación and eborí are marked, they should be done within the week. Once the cleansing is

done, Yemayá should be offered some type of ebó or adimú. To see if she wants anything specific, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Yemayá?” If Yemayá will take a specific ebó, the diviner should mark what she requires.

- In Odí, the client could have many unresolved issues with the dead, egun; the diviner should ask if they need ebó: “Ebó elese egun?” If so, the diviner must mark what they need. Even if they will take no specific ebó, the client must work egun frequently; with an opá ikú, they should be called daily and offered some type of adimú, even if that adimú is only fresh water. Masses should be given the dead to offer them strength and light.
- Babaluaiye speaks often in this sign, and there may be unresolved issues with him. The diviner should check to see if the client has ever made an unpaid promise to this orisha. First ask, “Ebó eleke de Asohano?” and if the answer is no, he should ask, “Ebó elese Babaluaiye?” If yes, begin with the question “Adimú?” as given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” If no ebó is required, and there are no unpaid debts, the diviner should ask, “Koshé Asohano?” to determine if the client needs to receive this orisha.
- There are two other orishas whose reception can normally be marked in this Odu: Olokun and Orisha Oko. Beginning with Olokun, the diviner should ask this series of questions: “Ebó eleke de [orisha’s name]?”; “Ebó elese de [orisha’s name]?”; and, finally, “Koshé [orisha’s name]?” Once these questions have been asked for Olokun, if the letter will not close they should be asked for orisha Oko. Whatever is marked should be done as soon as possible.
- Finally, this letter can point out the need for the client to be initiated as soon as possible. If ocha cannot be made soon, he should receive the elekes and warriors. Keep in mind that if this client has many children, the youngest of them all will need to make ocha before he does, or if the client is one of many siblings, the youngest sibling should also make ocha as soon as possible.
- Odí can also point out that there are more serious issues with the orishas themselves. Maybe one or more is “upset” with the

client over his actions. The diviner may need to contemplate the odu from this vantage, slowly questioning each orisha that speaks in the sign if he or she needs an offering or an ebó to clear the osogbos inherent in Odí. If the letter comes to this line of exploration and the diviner is not seasoned in his arts, he should immediately call an elder in the faith for assistance.

Keep in mind that when marking or prescribing the eboses for this letter, there are certain traditional substances used in Odí. When marking any eyebale, or sacrifice, the animals that can be used for the orishas are a turtle, a hen, a rooster, two pigeons, two roosters, a duck, or a small calf that was bred, born, and raised to honor Yemayá (in our house, we affectionately call this a “holocaust” offering; red meat is the hottest that can be used, and it should almost never be used for sacrifice or consumed by humans!). For adimú-type offerings, try to select from the following: a gourd, two ears of corn, all types of beans, two coconuts, seven coconuts, seven ears of corn, seven different-colored cloths, seven cakes, and two gourds plus one red parrot feather.



Opening Elleunle/Eji Ogbe— Eight Mouths on the Mat

The Proverbs of Eji Ogbe

- Remember: It is the head that carries the body; do not lose the head!
- Young palm fronds will grow more vigorously than their elders will.
- To not learn from one's mistakes: This is the biggest mistake.
- Do not destroy with your feet what you create with your head.
- Love yourself so you can then love others.
- One will never desire a hat more than a crown.
- You will be poor when the ocean is poor.
- To have everything is to lack all.
- Where there is life, there is always hope.
- Only one king can govern a town.
- When my head is on my shoulders, my feet in salty waters, and my thoughts extend beyond the horizon, there is no doubt in my mind that I stand facing the ocean.

The Orishas Who Speak in Eji Ogbe

In this sign, the following orishas are known to speak: Obatalá, Oduduwa, Orúnmila, Oshún, Oké, Olokun, Yemayá, Naná Burukú, Oba, Ajé Shaluga, Iroko, and all the orishas whenever it is necessary.

Special Notes on Eji Ogbe

Although opened when eight mouths fall on the mat, Eji Ogbe is the first odu manifested in nature. As Olódumare unfolded in Cosmos, a single point rushing outward holding the potential for all things, it was Eji Ogbe that awakened. Fatunmbi calls it “the primal impulse for expansion, evolution, and ascension . . . a way of knowing that involved the whole Being and not just the intellect.”¹ Its stirring created the light, a power soon balanced by Eji Oko (darkness); its movement birthed the Irunmole, the first orishas who sprang from heaven. Having opened the reading thus, the odu is given ritual respect. First, the italero touches his forehead with both hands. By doing, he pays homage to his own head, his orí, and the seat of consciousness. It is here that Eji Ogbe and Obatalá, the true owner of this odu, manifests. Yet it is important to remember that Eji Ogbe speaks not only of intellectual process, but also of instinctual knowledge, the illumination that comes from within. Having honored his orí, Obatalá, and Eji Ogbe, the diviner brings his arms across his chest, tightly folded and crossed. The head is bowed, the eyes are closed, and all follow suit in honor of odu. Before the composite letter can be opened, efun must be used to mark everyone’s forehead in the order of diviner, client, and elder to younger priest/esses. Once done, slivers of cocoa butter are sprinkled over everyone’s head in the same order.

The Message of Eji Ogbe

Having come down with eight mouths on the mat, the ritual of dilogún becomes a solemn, yet joyous occasion; for a moment, the reading is suspended as all present touch their foreheads and cross their arms over the chest with the head bowed slightly. Silently, the diviner’s assis-

1. Awó Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi, *Awó: Ifá and the Theology of Orisha Divination* (New York: Original Publications, 1992), 138.

tant marks the third eye of those present with efun and pinches slivers of cocoa butter to sprinkle over the crowns of their heads. Even if this is just a reading for a casual client, some diviners will recite the chant associated with this odu, and although the composite letter has not yet been opened, soft mutterings of “Maferéfún Eji Ogbe; Maferéfún Obatalá” will be heard throughout the room. Opening with Eji Ogbe, the reading transcends to a time marking the beginning of creation, and also the dissolution of all things. This sign is the oldest of the elders, the first odu awakening in the east; and it is the path by which the Ironmole began their descent to earth. Just as it marks the beginning and the ending, alpha and omega, so does it mark cyclic evolution for the client. This sign rules the orí (physical/mental/spiritual head) and the heart; it will affect all these areas in the client’s life.

Since Obatalá is the owner of this sign, creating consciousness before birth, many italeros will remove this orisha’s mazo from his shrine and throw it over the client’s neck. When worn, this heavily beaded necklace should be draped like a banner over the client’s left shoulder and under his right arm. This person is then directed to prostrate himself before the godparents to receive their blessings; and after this, Obatalá and the italero should be saluted to receive their blessings as well. For Eji Ogbe binds the client to ocha, and even if he has no intention of going deeper into the faith, he must be told this is where he will find true happiness. The rites of ocha are his religious home. Depending on the composite’s orientation, the diviner may secretly assume how quickly this client will walk his path to the orishas. If iré is predicted, and if the iré is firm, this person will make steady progress toward initiation. Any type of iré tesi-tesi will mark wavering on the aleyo’s part, yet he will realize happiness is to be found with the orishas. Finally, osogbo will mark hesitation and uncertainty—and if the osogbo is severe, only an eventual tragedy will bring him to the feet of the orishas.

The best way to study the eldest of the elders is to examine its meanings when the composites open with iré, blessings. Being the impetus of Cosmos and the first letter created by the unfolding of Olódumare, Eji Ogbe marks spiritual alignment with the orí in heaven (the immortal self); it is perfect alignment and flawless achievement. Opening thus, the one at the mat has an uncanny knack for knowing: Material, emotional, mental, and spiritual truths come intuitively. Knowledge

flows continually and ceaselessly to this person. Manifesting Eji Ogbe in iré, the source of the iré will show in what manner this sign will manifest. Some may be blessed with perfect beauty and health, while others will complement perfectly with an orisha (such an occurrence in this sign may be a Spirit's attempt to claim this client's head). Obviously, the orientation of odu's iré is essential to the interpretation of this sign. All clients, however, will enjoy the unlimited blessings of Olódumare and Obatalá if its advice is heeded, prohibitions minded, and eboses performed: Coolness, health (mental/physical), fulfillment (material/emotional), and longevity are generated in this sign.

Examine and inventory the client's life at this time. In iré, it is not unusual for this person to have previously experienced devolution in one or more areas of his life. Health may be failing; there could be aggressive decay and disease. Emotionally, this consultant could be drained; relationships, marriages, and friendships could be strained to the point of loss. Financially, materially, economically—this person could be on the brink of disaster. Yet eight mouths with blessings guarantees that these will be stalled. Evolution is coming. The tendency until now has been for this client not to recognize blessings when they manifest, and the greatness of this odu demands recognition, humility, mirth, and reverence. These lessons needed to be learned before iré could be brought. Tell the client this: There has been laughter, but more tears; there has been health, yet it faded. Now comes rebirth and renewal. Plan to make ocha, for only in this way will the client find happiness.² If ocha has been made, Eji Ogbe in iré demands a token ebó that must be done occasionally (or for life if this is itá): Wear a red parrot feather in the hair at all orisha rituals, putting this to Obatalá after the festival is done

No matter the orientation of Eji Ogbe, however, the one for whom this odu opens is a paradox: The client has many personality extremes buried deep within, each extreme manifesting as the environment changes. A child of eight mouths desires nobility, craves status, and

2. Although there are times when it is said a person should not make ocha, such as with the elderly or the chronically ill or weakened, this odu in iré demands that all go through initiation in time. If the guardian orisha is too strong for the weakened head, Obatalá should be made and the true guardian orisha will step down to become the complementary Mother/Father of the Iyawó.

spends much time projecting an image of caring, of concern. The desire is for altruism, yet the reality is a buried stinginess. So much time is spent doing selflessly (yet selfishly) for others that his own life deteriorates. Perfection is the ideal: He works toward clear dreams, astute aspirations, and delineated goals—yet little time is left for rest. There is only exhaustion, and this brings tears. Overwork and overextension of physical, mental, and emotional resources drive the client closer to his desires, yet the overwhelming lethargy from insomnia and lack of rest weakens and clouds the mind. Rarely will a child of Eji Ogbe make a mistake when working at his optimum level; however, overextension toward too many goals brings carelessness and recklessness. To achieve, to excel, as is this person's nature, one goal must be chosen and accomplished before the next is begun. Encourage this client to complete one of the many projects he has begun, leaving the rest for future attainment. This will bring evolution.

The italero should tell the client these things: Rarely does he give himself recognition and self-praise for the good works done. Seeking approval from others, there is only disappointment; his sly presentation of goals achieved and good works done is seen as vanity and bragging by most. Rewards will not come from without; the reward must first come from within. Work hard, achieve superior results, and keep quiet. Others will see what has been done, and even if they remain quiet the client should know that they are impressed. Another quality that this person has is his opportunistic nature. He sees what must be done, and then he completes those tasks. Perhaps this is why he gets so much in spite of himself; and perhaps this is why others are full of evil thoughts and jealousy. The diviner must warn the one who sits at the mat that others are jealous. There is envy around every corner. His peers believe themselves superior, yet they are not. Others work hard to emulate the client, yet it is their own jealousy that holds them behind. Ebó must be made continually so that this negativity does not manifest as a curse.

Perhaps the most important advice for the client's conduct is this: Do not become overwhelmed, overexhausted, or overworked. Do not let the head become heated, and never leave the company of gentle people for those who are harsh or coarse. Depression, exhaustion, and oppression will bring out the darker side of this client's personality,

and it is under these conditions that he will be tempted to curse, blaspheme, or leave the nobility of his own nature for something darker and more selfish. Blasphemy is pronounced at these times, and Eji Ogbe forbids blasphemy and cursing under any circumstances. Warn the client to beware of jealousy and jealous people; do not keep their company. One may count the number of true friends on a single hand, and this person must realize that he has few real friends. Many talk behind his back: Everyone has his own plans for him, and he should harden himself toward these things. In this way, he can never be used.

In spite of all the good that this sign can bring, and even if all the warnings of odu are heeded, the orientations of ano and ikú bring special considerations for the child of this letter. First, it will no longer promise evolution and material progress; in most cases of these two osogbos, the letter will bring only ruin. Health problems are exaggerated, and for the elderly this sign will bring death unless ocha is made. Prescribed eboses must be made quickly, and once these are done, the client should be sent to a doctor for a complete physical. Advise caution and vigilance over the body. He must not ignore pains that come in the legs, feet, or abdomen; these are the first signs that the serious health concerns predicted by Eji Ogbe are coming to pass. General aches, pains, and cramps could all be experienced, and the diseases foreboded by these symptoms could leave the client bedridden for an extended period. Colic in infants and throat problems in children and adults are not uncommon. If this letter falls in the darker months of the year, these concerns become critical. Exhaustion, mental breakdown, and physical paralysis are possible for those who do not mind the health. Anything that attacks the chest, thoracic, or cranial cavities must be taken seriously even if the physician says the complaints are minor.

There are other general predictions made for the client who opens in this odu, and the diviner should spend time exploring them.

- Although the client might tend to be intuitive and emotional, this sign dictates that the head must always be put first. Do not be led blindly by the feet; think about the steps that are being taken. If anything gets the client excited, the proper advice to follow is to stand back, take a deep breath, and think about the situation for a few days. When the head is cool, calm, and clear, things might not look so promising.

- When misfortune comes (and it will), the client must not cry or complain to others. He should wear a happy face, forcing himself to smile and hold his head high no matter the adversity being faced. Sweetness and assurance will always attract more of the same.
- No matter the orientation of odu, the digestive tract cannot handle hot and spicy foods. For optimum health, this person should avoid heavy meats and things that are filled with peppers, herbs, and spices. Eat a bland diet most of the time.
- Robbery can be a danger in this sign, and the client must ensure his personal safety at all times. A key to avoiding harm is this: If a disturbance is heard outside, do not check it out. Make sure that the doors and windows are closed and locked. Call the police after this is done. Admit to seeing nothing; say only that a strange noise was heard and allow the authorities to check it out.
- The one who is a child of this odu is adventurous and likes to travel. Depending on the orientation, these desires may be fulfilled in various degrees. One day, this person will venture outside the country.
- Those who come in this letter and are single will one day get married. Odu says that the first child after marriage will probably be a daughter. Even if this person has reproductive difficulties, adoption is still a possibility for the future.
- This odu offers an ebó that can be used to lighten up the environment when things get too heavy or dark: Laugh freely. Fake laughter will bring true laughter in time. Do not let the environment get too oppressive.
- Eji Ogbe predicts that this client will one day own property. The amount of property owned will depend on the client's desires and willingness to work and save money. If this is a current property owner, however, land will first be sold or lost before more is purchased.
- This sign also says the client will not find the rewards for the good things he does immediately—yet the rewards will come in time. Never become discouraged, and continue to work hard.

The Prohibitions of Eji Ogbe

When the client's reading opens in an osogbo, the diviner will need to prescribe some of the following prohibitions to the client so that he may avoid tragedy; the exact prohibitions given depend on the omo odu that has fallen onto the mat. Unless this is the reading known as itá, all prescribed taboos should be followed for a period of twenty-one to twenty-eight days. If this is the reading of the head, the taboos given should be followed for a longer period (for in this circumstance, the client should treat it as if it were an itá, just until ocha is made; with a sign like this, ocha will be made!).

- This sign points out that the elder in the family can be lost through disease or accident. Much care must be given to this person, and even if she is not the elder, the mother of the client could be in danger. If this sign comes in either the feet or the head in itá, the elder of the spiritual family could be lost, and eboses must be done to save that person.
- The client is disrespectful of the elders: This sign enforces respect of these, especially the elderly who have gray hair. Some day, Obatalá could come disguised as the elderly or infirm.
- The client should not use anything that is not his, including those items left in his care. Do not steal what is not owned; and never ever sleep with someone else's spouse or lover.
- The client should be told that his home is his temple. It must be kept neat and orderly. Do not hide anything under the bed or in the corners of the house; make sure that these areas are kept tidy and free of clutter. One day, something hidden there could harm the client.
- Whenever someone calls, do not answer unless the identity of the caller is known. Let the answering machine pick up the phone, and ask for identification before opening the door for anyone. If it is night and the client has gone to bed, he should not get out of bed to answer the door. We say that even if it is God knocking, he will come back another day.
- Do not go to visit the sick, or frequent other places where Ikú might travel. If a close friend or relative becomes ill, check with the orishas before going to visit.

- Do not sunbathe, and never get wet in the rain. If exposure to the elements is unavoidable, protect the head and face at all times.
- Never make fun of anyone, especially those who are elderly or imperfect. One day, one of these will be Obatalá in disguise.
- Do not tell dreams to anyone.
- Do not take anything that belongs to the dead.
- Do not handle broken or burnt things, especially if they are blackened or reduced to ashes.
- There are prohibitions against the wearing of tight clothing, especially of things that are knotted or tangled. Keep the hair neat and untangled; it must be well groomed at all times. Do not put colognes, perfumes, or scented waters on the head. If any article of clothing becomes torn or damaged, do not mend it. Throw it away. White is to be worn frequently, and black is to be avoided.
- Stay out of basements: There is danger there. Do not climb stairs that are circular, winding, or broken.
- Be very careful of what is eaten; food might be spoiled. Do not eat white beans, nor drink white beverages. Never eat intestines or sausages. Reheated foods and leftovers should be avoided. Sweet potatoes and peanuts are taboo.
- Avoid alcohol and other intoxicants; they will cloud the mind, induce foolish behavior, and bring ruin to the client's life.
- Beware of passionate intrigues, liaisons, and adultery. Do not participate in these.

The Ebozes of Eji Ogbe

When this letter falls on the mat, the diviner should consider the fact that the client is now marked to make ocha. Even if this is an aleyo who has no designs on becoming involved in the religion (as in one who has just come for a reading), the ritual of the mazo should still be done, and the basics of our faith should be explained once the reading is complete. In marking ebozes, there will be some composite odu that will not close out unless the investments of the elekes and warriors are marked. Such is the power of the elekes: Many who have no desire to

enter our faith commit to it once the initiation is complete. It is a simple yet powerful cleansing of one's past and sets the feet firmly upon the road to the orishas. And once this is done, the investment of the warriors opens paths in life that were once thought closed, and such is the *aché* of Elegguá that even the most destitute client will one day be able to afford the expenses of initiation.

In Elleunle, the eboses of each omo odu should be explored first. Our own *ilé* is the house of Elleunle; it is a sign that speaks for many of our initiates, and through generations of newly initiated priests and priestesses we have come to know well the intricacies of this letter. Each composite odu will list a multitude of eboses that we have learned will settle and placate the unbalanced energies of the sign; these should first be explored if the letter refuses closure from the initial larishes.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Okana (8-1)

- Shangó should be taken out to the back porch or patio and left there for six days; while there, the orisha should be given cooked cornmeal or *amalá* (cornmeal porridge). Give it to him fresh every day, asking him where the previous day's offering should be deposited (the trash, the woods, and so on.).
- A cactus should be planted outside the home, if possible, to destroy negative vibrations being sent to the client. If this is not possible, it should be planted indoors near the front door.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Ejioko (8-2)

In this letter, the following three eboses must be prescribed to the client!

- Whenever a visitor comes to the client's house, he must feed something to that person. The more food the visitor eats, the more *iré* the client will have.
- Spiritual baths should be taken incorporating leaves from the plant known in Spanish as the *zapote* (*Sapota achras*).
- For twenty-one days, the client should always speak in a low voice.

Additionally, the following eboses should be checked and marked by the oracle.

- In this sign, it is important that the client have the Ibeyi; this does not need to be marked as ebó. If the client has the Ibeyi, however, and the odu refuses closure, the diviner should ask if the orishas need ebó. Follow the patterns for marking ebó given in the section on *larishe* in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If no specific ebó can be marked, then the Ibeyi want a party thrown in their honor. It should be given as soon as possible.
- When Ejiogbe Ejioko opens and refuses closure for a priest/ess, the orisha speaking in this sign could be marking a tambor as the solution for all the client's troubles. The diviner should first ask if a tambor is required, and then he should ask if the orisha whose *diloggún* is being consulted wants the tambor. If that orisha refuses *batá*, the diviner should try to mark the tambor for one of the orishas given in the priest/ess's *ocha*. If all of these refuse the drum, begin asking about the other orishas, following the order given at the beginning of this chapter under "The Orishas Who Speak in Eji Ogbe."
- *Note:* If a tambor is marked during *itá* for a *iyawó* through either *Elegguá* or the orisha of the head, this client is automatically marked to give a drum to all the orishas in time. Also, proper protocol must be followed in giving this ebó: The godparent's orisha (from whom the client's head was born) must be given fundamental *batá* before fundamental *batá* may be played for any of his own orishas.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Ogundá (8-3)

- When this letter falls, *Ogún* is demanding a sacrifice in the woods. If the client has not yet received the warriors, he must seek *Ogún's otá* (stone) in the forest, and after he is born, *Ogún* must be taken back to the woods to be fed.
- In Ejiogbe Ogundá, it is said that *Olokun* is angry, and the diviner must mark eboses to pacify her.

- The orisha speaking in this odu might want a real stuffed alligator. The diviner should check this only if the odu refuses to close. (If it is impractical or impossible to obtain an entire stuffed alligator, an alligator's head and/or feet will suffice.)
- A niche osain for the orisha speaking in this letter should be packed in an alligator's tooth.

Once those things have been prescribed, the diviner should check with the orishas (using the diloggún) to see if the following eboses should be done.

- Whenever Ejiogbe Ogundá opens for a priest/ess and refuses closure, it may mark one of two eboses: the giving of four legs (and an itá) or the reception of the knife. First, the diviner should ask the oracle if an orisha needs four legs; and then he should ask if the orisha speaking requires four legs. If so, the ebó is marked and no itá is required. If four legs are needed for an orisha beyond the one speaking, the diviner tries to mark it for one of the orishas given in the client's ocha. After those orishas, he follows the rest of the orishas given in the section of this chapter titled "The Orishas Who Speak in Eji Ogbe."
- If the oracle will not mark four legs and an itá for any of the orishas, the diviner should next try to mark the reception of the knife. After this, return to the list of eboses given for the parent odu at the beginning of this chapter.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Iroso (8-4)

When this letter opens on the mat, the client needs to do the following eboses.

- In this letter, the diviner should say, "Maferefún Elegguá, Obatalá, Yemayá, Shangó, and Orúnmila." The five orishas demand that this client give all his orishas candles for eight days. If he gives them light for this amount of time, they will keep him from walking in darkness and danger. The ebó is done to the client's orishas, and if he has not made ocha, the candles for the orishas he does not have should be presented on white plates with two coconuts each to the diviner's shrines.

- The godparent's Shangó should be presented two white candles, two coconuts, and a derecho (small fee) on a white plate. Once these things are given to the orisha, the client should have a rogación at Shangó's feet. If the osogbo of this letter is severe, he should also present a white horsetail to the orisha so he will save the client from all wickedness.
- The client must have the warriors if they have not been received; and once Elegguá is born, he should be offered a rooster as sacrifice. This ebó should also be done to Elegguá if the client already has him.
- If this person is not a priest/ess, he or she must make ocha soon. If this is an initiate, Dada should be received.

If these things have been prescribed for the client and the odu will still not close, the diviner must continue to mark eboses from the following list.

- The Ibeyi can be an integral part of this sign, and the diviner should ask the question "Koshé Ibeyi?" if the client does not have these orishas. If the client already has them, the proper question to ask is, "Ebó elese los Ibeyi?" If the answer to this is yes, an ebó must be marked for them following the guidelines given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu."
- If Elegguá's shells are being read for an initiate and the odu refuses closure, Elegguá might be standing up; he could want a crown. The diviner should ask Elegguá if this is necessary as an ebó. From this moment on, the client must treat him as if he were the orisha of the head.
- Olokun is important in all composite odu that incorporate Irosun. If the client does not have her and the letter still refuses closure, mark her reception with the shells asking, "Koshé Olokun?" If the client already has Olokun, she might be standing up for an ebó and the proper question to ask for this is, "Ebó elese Olokun?" If the client needs Olokun, or if she wants an ebó, the proper ritual to give her in this sign is a sacrifice and an agbán. Once the agbán is done, everything must go to the ocean in a basket with blue cloth.

- If the letter still refuses to close, the client needs a series of rogaciones; let the oracle dictate how many and how often. These should be done at the foot of Shangó, for in this sign it is he who stands up to fight the evil the client faces and to strengthen the head from all osogbo. A niche osain using Shangó's herbs should also be made and fed with him; this should be presented to the client at the end of the first rogación given.
- Finally, if the diviner has marked all these things and the letter will still not close, the odu mandates a rogación with a red snapper; only this will offer the client the strength he needs to evolve. Note that only a Babalawo may do this ebó at the feet of Orúnmila. It would be wise for this person to receive either mano or kofá de Orúnmila; and if the consultant is male, he may be marked for Ifá. Only the Babalawo, however, can determine these things.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Oché (8-5)

In this sign there are certain eboses that are automatically marked; the ones done, however, will depend on whether the client is an initiate or an aleyo. The eboses for both initiates and aleyos follow.

- In Ogbe Oché, egun stand up for attention; there is no need to ask if the Spirits want ebó. The diviner, however, must try to mark the ebó needed by following the guidelines given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If no ebó can be marked, then egun are to be given a sheep.
- The client needs to have a niche osain for Oshún; it must be washed and fed with her, and he should keep it on himself at all times. If the client is an initiate, however, it may be left with Oshún when it is not being carried or worn.
- If the client is an aleyo without the warriors, he needs to receive at least Elegguá. An initiate may need to have another Elegguá made, and the diviner should ask the diloggún if this is needed. This Elegguá then needs to be taken first to the ocean and then to the river; and at each place he should be fed a rooster on clean sand. After each sacrifice, the client should dance around

Elegguá playing a flute, concentrating hard on that which he desires. Once the orisha is brought home, he should be given the flute. Thus will Elegguá make the client's dreams come true. *Note:* This ebó works only when done in this odu, as Elegguá owns all wind instruments and would take this ebó as an offense at any other time! If this is marked in itá for Elegguá, it is a powerful spell that the iyawó may do whenever he is in dire need.

The eboses for an aleyo follow.

- The client needs to receive the initiation of the elekes, and then the warriors (in that order). He also needs to have a rogación at the feet of Oshún; before the rogación is given, he should present a derecho on a white plate with two coconuts and two white candles to the godparent's orisha. Once the rogación is complete, a jar of honey with some honeycomb and a yellow ribbon should be presented to Oshún, the most beautiful of all the orishas; she will bless the client's life with sweetness in return. If this is not enough to close the letter for an aleyo, the diviner must ask, "Ebó elese Oshún?" to see if she requires anything else from the client; and if she does, the ebó should then be marked.

The eboses for an initiate follow.

- This odu mandates the following eboses for the initiate. First, the client must throw a party for Oshún. At the party, she must be given a crown as a present, for from now on, she is the true Queen of the client's home. There are special directions for the making of this crown: Before the party, a goat must be sacrificed to her, and the skin should be saved so it may line the inside of the brass used to make her crown. It may be necessary to have an itá with Oshún if the letter will still not close, and the diviner should ask, "Itá elese Oshún?" to see if this is needed. Once the crown is made, five red parrot feathers should be embedded in the goat's skin just behind the crown's five points. As time passes, the number of feathers should be increased until there are a total of fifty-five red parrot feathers in Oshún's crown. The best way to do this (as an ebó for iré from Oshún) is to add five more feathers each year on her birthday, giving her a huge party and throne in honor of the mighty queen!

- Second, the initiate must wear a red parrot feather in the hair or on the head at all times. Many priestesses attach these to an earring, while priests will have to secrete the feather in the hair somehow.
- Finally, this sign could mark the initiate for the reception of Oba; the diviner must ask, “Koshé Oba?” to see if this is necessary.

The Ebores of Ejiogbe Obara (8–6)

- Both the *batea* (wooden tureen) and *odo* (mortar) of Shangó should be repainted in the colors red and white. A leopard skin should then be put to the orisha.³
- This sign dictates that a man should wear a special belt. It should be half red and half white. On the red side, there should be eight shells embedded in the leather, and on the white side there should be six cowrie shells embedded. A pocket should be sewn into the inner part of the belt to contain a niche osain for Shangó. Women should wear bloomers that are red on one side and white on the other.
- When this sign opens in a tragic osogbo, it shows that Shangó has left the house and only may be brought back thus: He must be offered a ram immediately. Until a ram can be found, supplicate him at his shrine with two coconuts that have each been painted half red and half white. This will protect the client so that neither enemies nor the law can overcome him.
- After all these things have been prescribed, if the letter will still not close the diviner should ask, “Koshé Oba?” for the sign could be marking her reception.

3. Some houses make the mistake of putting tiger skin to Shangó when this odu falls; and this is a big mistake! The tiger is of Indian origin, not African. The ancient Yoruba knew nothing about this animal, and would never put it to Shangó.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Odí (8-7)

- When this letter opens for one who has neither the elekes nor the warriors, the reception of both initiations is marked. Ogún's necklace must be given when the elekes are received, and an eleke for Elegguá must be made when the warriors are born. If the osogbo predicted in this sign brings disgrace and misfortune, a sacrifice should be made to Ogún as soon as possible; in exchange for a rooster, he will watch over the client and keep him from harm.
- Some type of adimú should be offered to Shangó and Dada. They will stand up to fight the client's battles. The diviner does not need to mark the adimú given; he only needs to suggest what the two orishas prefer, letting the client decide what he should offer them.
- Finally, Obatalá should be placated and petitioned for spiritual evolution. Once the prayers are done, a ñame that has been painted white with efun should be presented to him on a white plate. It would be wise for the client to always have a ñame with his Obatalá, or ensure that his godparent's Obatalá always has a fresh root in his shrine.
- If after prescribing the above eboses the odu will still not close out, the diviner should continue with the following prescriptions. First, every year the river should be given tribute (it is best to do this on Oshún's birthday); two hens must be sacrificed to her there. Once this is done, Oba needs to be fed also, for in Africa she owns a river as well (this can be done to the diviner's or godparent's Oba if the client does not have her).
- Every year, the client needs to sacrifice to the earth, egun, and orisha Oko (in that order); it would be best to do this on orisha Oko's birthday, which is March 22, the same day as Saint Isadore.
- If the osogbo that is predicted in this letter is severe, the client needs to give a goat to the earth and orisha Oko immediately. Once this is done, Obatalá should be fed a she-goat, and a

rogación should then be given beside him while the head is fed a guinea hen. The next day, the client should have itá with Obatalá.

- If this letter still refuses to close, the reception of Dada and Yembo are needed.⁴ If the client already has either of these orishas, the diviner should ask them one by one if they need ebó. Eboses marked in this sign should be done quickly.
- If the letter still refuses closure, the following three orishas may be needed: Ochúmaré, orisha Oko, and Oba. The diviner should ask, “Koshé [orisha’s name]?” one at a time to see which is needed.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Meji (8–8)

- When this odu opens on the mat, the client needs the elekes, warriors, Ibeyi, Olokun, and ocha as soon as possible. To emphasize this, a mazo of the guardian orisha should be thrown over the head to bind the client to ocha. If the parent is not known, use the mazo of Obatalá.
- Whenever the client has great problems to resolve, he should dress in black and pray to Olokun.⁵ The clothes should be removed, and the client should dress totally in white; the old clothes are then thrown into the ocean so Olokun can remove all blocks from the client’s destiny. This ebó will work only for those for whom this odu has fallen.
- The client needs a rogación, and in severe cases of osogbo, the head must be fed two white doves or pigeons. If the letter will not accept this, then there must be a rogación given every day by the godparent for a total of sixteen days. The aleyo will have to dress in white this entire time.
- The sacrifice of a goat to Elegguá might be necessary for a priest/ess. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Elegguá?” and if the answer is yes, the sacrifice is marked.

4. Remember: Yembo is a very old, ancestral Yemayá and considered by most initiates to be the mother of all the orishas!

5. This also prohibits the client from ever wearing black again unless the ebó is being done.

- If this odu falls as the iyawó's head for itá, the following things are necessary: A charged white horsetail (also called a fly-whisk) should be put to Obatalá. Have caution that no one steals any of the orisha's implements. A pigeon should be fed to the front door and to Ogún for protection against harm. Dress in white often; depending on the severity of the osogbo, the iyawó may need to dress in white every day for the rest of his life. Finally, when the year of initiation is finished, this person needs to receive the knife and make the ebó of the year.
- If the letter refuses closure, the client may need to receive Oba and orisha Oko. The diviner should ask, "Koshé [orisha's name]?" beginning first with Oba and then orisha Oko.
- If the letter will not take any ebó or larishe, the following is mandated: An oriaté must make a rogación for the client using an eel and two white doves at the feet of Obatalá. Eboses from the parent odu, Elleunle, should then be marked to try and close the letter.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Osá (8-9)

When this odu falls on the mat in any type of osogbo or iré that is not firm, the following eboses are automatically marked for the client.

- Spiritualism is to be left alone by the client, and he is to deal with his ancestral spirits (family and spiritual) as egun only; leave other spiritual systems alone for now. There should be no bóveda and no white tables, and other forms of ancestral worship like Palo Mayombe are to be avoided. If the letter will not close out after this list of eboses has been exhausted, the dead are standing up for sacrifice and should be given a single white sheep.
- There are issues in this letter with Obatalá. He points out that this client once had some routine, maybe even an altar, for the orisha; now this altar and routine have been abandoned. The orishas are reclaiming their space, and these old customs must be begun again. Only when the client starts paying homage at this space again will he evolve. Luck will then be found where it is least expected.

- There are also issues with Shangó in this sign. First, Shangó stands up to offer his aid and protection from all the osogbos predicted. So that he may offer his full protection, a beaded bat or club should be given to him. It must be washed in omiero and fed with the Spirit. In addition to this, a niche osain should be made for the client using Shangó's herbs; this should be washed and fed with the bat as well. In the orientations of ano or ikú, Shangó should be fed a ram, and the innards should be placed at the feet of a royal palm (a type of palm tree). The orisha himself should be allowed to dictate what is to be done with the carcass.
- An Elegguá should be mounted in a dry coconut shell for the client.

If all these things have been explained to the client and the oracle will not close, the diviner needs to proceed with the following line of questioning.

- Obatalá, Yemayá, and Shangó could all be standing up for specific eboses in this sign. The diviner must ask for each, "Ebó elese [orisha's name]?" marking what is required. If Yemayá answers that she wants ebó, then it marks the raising of two baby ducks in her honor. When they are grown, an oriaté should feed these two ducks to her. If either Obatalá or Shangó stands up for an ebó in this sign, for the next month the client should try to spoil them both with many gifts and adimús.
- When this sign comes in an itá, every year Oyá must be fed two hens; once she has been fed, Shangó must be given a ram. If the iyawó does not have Oyá as one of the orishas given in ocha, she must be received before the week is over. After Shangó is fed the ram each year, the oriaté must ask with Obí if the client is to sit for itá. If this sign does not come during an itá, then this ebó may need to be done only once; the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Oyá y Shangó?" to see if the odu will mark it.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Ofún (8-10)

- Do not kill or sacrifice pigeons; in time, build a coop stocked with white pigeons and dedicate it to Obatalá.

- The client should attend to all his orishas well, for Obatalá is watching his conduct with them.
- When 8–10 falls on the mat, if the client is looking for his happiness, he should do the following ebó: Put a pigeon's nest in which the eggs have hatched to Obatalá. Leave this next to him forever as a symbol of that for which he seeks. Whenever he desires something special, fresh pigeon eggs should be put to Obatalá as an ebó.
- Two silver machetes, one sharp and one dull, should be given to Obatalá. (*Note:* These are to be small like the rest of his tools and kept in Obatalá's tureen.)
- If this letter refuses to close, it may mark the reception of ochanla (one of Obatalá's eldest forms). The diviner should ask, "Koshé ochanla?" to see if the reception of this path of Obatalá is needed.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Owani (8–11)

- When this letter falls, it marks that the client needs to spend more time with egun, making an offering of lilies to them as a special adimú. A spirit might be standing up for a sacrifice, and to check this the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese egun?" to see if anything special is required.
- The orisha speaking in this odu might want an ebó made with a she-goat that has recently given birth. The diviner should mark this by asking, "Ebó elese [orisha's name]?" to see if this ebó is required.
- Elegguá and Babaluaiye might be standing up for something in the reading; the diviner needs to mark that which they require by asking, "Ebó elese [orisha's name]?" and marking what they require. If neither will take an ebó, then the client should be instructed to give them both some type of adimú so that their goodwill can be assured in the future.
- If the letter will still not close, the diviner should ask, "Koshé Babaluaiye?" to see if the reception of this orisha is needed.

- The reception of orisha Oko, Yembo, and the diloggún of Ogún⁶ can all be marked in this sign. If the letter will not close, the diviner should investigate each of these options (only asking Yembo and diloggún of Ogún if the client is an initiate) before he goes to the eboses for the parent odu. Note that no work for Ogún and Yembo should be done at the same time. The washing of the orisha Yembo and the cowries of Ogún must be done on separate days.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Ejila (8–12)

- When this letter falls, the client might need to receive each of the following orishas: Eshu Eshun Irirke (who walks with Osain), Oba, and Osain. The reception of Osain is used only as a last resort after the eboses of the parent odu have been explored. The diviner should ask, “Koshé [orisha’s name]?” for each to determine if the reception is necessary.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Metanla (8–13)

- The client should pray on his knees every day so Olódumare hears his pleas for help and blessings.
- The client should pray to Asohano (Babaluaiye) frequently.
- In severe cases of osogbo, it may be necessary to receive Babaluaiye and Naná Burukú. The client should question the diloggún to see if the reception of either is necessary.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Merinla (8–14)

- The client needs a rogación: Give two white pigeons or doves to the head.
- Sacrifice a rooster to the warriors.

6. When Ogún is received in the initiation known as the warriors, none of the orishas receives its diloggún. Eleggua’s diloggún is not washed until ocha is made. Ogún’s diloggún is not washed until the knife is received. For this odu, however, Ogún’s diloggún may be washed outside the reception of the knife.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Iwori (8-15)

- If the client does not have the warriors or elekes, they are needed in that order; the warriors are demanding sacrifice, and the diviner must mark what is needed. At least give a rooster to the warriors. Ósun needs to be reinforced so he may protect the client's head from malicious witchcraft.
- This person would be a good osainista, and should receive Osain as soon as possible.

The Eboses of Ejiogbe Otura (8-16)

- A jutía should be given to Elegguá, and after the sacrifice, the animal should be skinned and the pelt given to the orisha. One day, the client will have to use the pelt for a special ebó; Elegguá will tell him when.
- The client needs to receive Olokun immediately.

The Eboses of the Parent Odu

If the italero has investigated the eboses for the composite odu and the letter will still not close out, the eboses of the parent sign, Eji Ogbe, will need to be explored. Those offerings and rituals follow.

- If the composite odu will not close with the eboses listed for that sign, the letter Eji Ogbe is marking the following: First, the client will need to take a spiritual bath on the evening of whatever day he considers to be the end of his week. It should be made with things sacred to Obatalá and Elleunle: water, milk (goat's milk if the sign opens in serious osogbo), efun, cocoa butter, cotton, prodigiosa leaves, coconut milk, and white flowers. The diviner may also prescribe other herbs and substances as his intuition dictates. The morning after the bath, before going out the front door, the client should rub cocoa butter on the soles of his feet to cool and refresh his path, and his hands should be rubbed with efun. When the front door to the house is opened to begin his day, he should blow the chalk off his hands and into the street, saying, "Maferefún Obatalá!" This will clear many of the obstacles from his path.

- Note that if this sign comes for a iyawó during itá, and only if it comes as the sign of the head, he or she will need to put eight red parrot feathers in a silver crown, which will then be put to Obatalá. A serious osogbo marks the need to wear a red parrot feather in the hair at all times.
- This sign also marks that a bolt of white cloth should be brought to the diviner's Obatalá as ebó; Obatalá is known as the King of the White Cloth, for it is from this color that he weaves the world and destiny of all things within it. The white cloth should be presented with a white plate, two coconuts, two candles, and a derecho. (*Note:* Often the coconuts presented to Obatalá are painted white with efun.) After the presentation of this ebó, the client should also have a rogación at the feet of Obatalá. If the osogbo is severe, the diviner might wish to wash the client first in omiero to cleanse him of all dangerous energies. For eight days after this ebó is done, the client should dress totally in white. If these eboses will still not close off the letter, the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Obatalá?" to see if that orisha requires anything else for an ebó. If the answer is yes, then he should mark what is needed following the guidelines given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." Keep in mind that when ebó is made to Obatalá in this sign, the number eight should mark all offerings.
- If a rogación is marked in this sign, yet the letter will not close, the letter may be trying to mark a sacrifice to the orí. The diviner should check this by asking, "Eborí?" which means, "Must the head be fed?" If the answer is yes, the client needs to have two white pigeons or doves fed to his head during the rogación.
- Olokun speaks strongly in this sign; there could be issues pending with her. First, the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Olokun?" and if the answer is yes, ebó must be marked to her. Her reception could also be necessary, and the diviner should ask, "Koshé Olokun?" to see if she is needed.
- Refusal to close at this point can mark issues with any number of orishas who speak in Elleunle (keep in mind that any orisha can speak in this letter). It is at this point that the inexperienced diviner must consult with his elders on the reading. If the

diviner is secure in his skills, he may ask the following questions, or any questions that his own *aché* dictates for the *omo odu* that has opened: “*Ebó* *elese* [orisha’s name]?” “*Eleke* de [orisha’s name]?” and “*Koshé* [orisha’s name]?” Try to follow the order given in the section earlier in this chapter titled “The Orishas Who Speak in Eji Ogbe.” Remember that the marking of *ebó* for any orisha in a composite *odu* changes the implications of the letter. The orisha’s attributes should be explained to the client, and using his *aché* and knowledge of *odu* and *ocha*, the diviner should then explain why this orisha is standing up for the client, and the benefits to be gained by honoring the Spirit with *ebó*.

- If the letter will still not close, its implications become more serious. First, the orisha that guards the client’s head could be standing up for *ebó*, and if this Spirit is not known, the reading must mark the head before it can be ended. The diviner, having determined this information, should then ask, “*Ebó* *elese* [guardian orisha’s name]?” If the answer is yes, the *ebó* must then be marked and done as soon as possible to placate both *ori* and orisha. If no *ebó* can be marked, the diviner should ask, “*Koshé* [guardian orisha’s name]?” If the answer to this is yes, the client needs *santo lavado*, or “the washing of the orisha.” The guardian orisha and *Obatalá* must be received; the guardian Spirit wants to be in the client’s home/heart immediately, and if *Obatalá* is not the parent, *Obatalá* must be received to keep the client from being overwhelmed by the Spirit.⁷
- Further refusal for closure could be pointing the diviner to the *eboses* listed from the secondary *odu*; for example, if *Ejjiogbe Okana* will not close at this point, the diviner needs to explore

7. When *santo lavado* is given, the orisha of the head is put to the head but not in the head; this is a mystery that can be done only when *ocha* is made. The Spirit, however, will want to be inside the client’s head; and unless *Obatalá*, who is the owner of all heads, is also given and first put to the head, this will cause problems for the client. The desire to make *ocha* will be overwhelming; but this is the least of the problems created by this orisha’s reception. Mental disturbances can become overwhelming; this is the most dangerous problem caused by the orisha’s desire to be inside when it cannot. *Obatalá* will ensure that only *iré* comes from the reception of the parent, and not *osogbo*!

the prohibitions and eboses listed under the parent odu Okana to find closure for the letter. Even if the diviner is experienced with the diloggún, at this point an elder priest/ess must be consulted!

When marking ebó for this odu, the diviner should also keep in mind that there are certain substances traditional to this letter. For offerings that require the sacrifice of an animal, animals from the following list should be used if possible: two white pigeons, eight white pigeons, and eight snails (some say slugs, but we use only snails in our house). For adimú-type offerings, try to use elements from this list: a stick of the client's height, cocoa butter, two red parrot feathers, eight red parrot feathers, cotton, eight feet or yards of white cloth, four or eight balls of efun, and anything that is silver or white. Four coconuts, eight coconuts, and two, four, or eight white candles can also be used.



Opening Osá— Nine Mouths on the Mat

The Proverbs of Osá

- You have left behind many things; do not recover them.
- Your friend is great; the evil that he brings will be great as well.
- You have many friends, yet none is true.
- Your best friend is your worst enemy.
- Change is coming.
- Falsehood, revolution, torments, and treason are coming.

The Orishas Who Speak in Osá

In this sign the following orishas are known to speak: Oyá, Aganyú, Obatalá, Elegguá, egun, Oké, Yewá, Babaluaiye, Oduduwa, and Olokun.

Special Notes on Osá

Osá was born from the odu known as Odí (seven mouths). Just as the latter sign is known as completion, the seal of creation, this sign is the force that breaks that seal through natural disaster: Floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and forest fires all derive their destructiveness, in part, from this letter. While its volatility might be frightening, in truth these things are a vital part of the re-creation of what Olódumare began many millennia ago; nothing in our world is stable or stagnant. All moves in a continual cycle of change, destruction, and creation that revives and revitalizes the earth. Thus, these natural disasters are nothing more than the fulfillment of what deity began. To grow, there must be decay; to be born, there must be death. Osá ensures that this cycle moves continually and smoothly. To understand the power of this sign, one must meditate upon its symbols: the wind, the market, and the moment between life and death. Each of these shows a type of transition that is eternal yet momentary, predictable in occurrence yet not predictable in time. Osá is the assurance that all will change, yet it is also the randomness that happens when nature, and life, goes through upheaval and becomes something new. When this sign opens on the mat, to avoid the dangerous energies that radiate from it, the diviner will quickly whip his head from side to side to deflect what has opened.

When this sign opens, the italero will find that any number of atmospheric disturbances can and will occur around his home. These can vary from medium to strong winds, to tornadoes, to storms of unexplained energy. The closer the composite odu comes to being Osá Meji (9-9), the stronger and more surprising these manifestations will be. In many houses, the italero giving the reading will open the window so that all in the room can glance at the sky from time to time to see what is developing. In addition to this, the odu Osá tends to drain the diviner's physical and spiritual strength. A brief rest or nap after the session may be necessary to restore the energy balance. If the exhaustive effects of this letter are overwhelming, the diviner might wish to open odu again for personal enlightenment, making sure that nothing negative was picked up from the client. Marked eboses should be done as soon as possible to remove these osogbos.

The Message of Osá

Nine mouths seems to be one of the least frequent opened in the orisha's diloggún. When a composite of Osá does fall on the mat, it becomes a solemn occasion, and all present brace themselves for the harsh reading that will follow. Elders present will mutter, "Maferéfún Oyá!" for she rides on the energy currents opened here (energy that manipulates and controls the air itself), and the diviner quickly gives the protective gesture of this odu, the gentle turning of his head from side to side to deflect odu's energy. It is a letter filled with heat, with volatility, yet it can bring much iré if its words are heeded. The italero must speak firmly, and, at times, harshly. Wavering in attention, the client should continually be refocused: His mind will wander as if lost in the wind. All present may tire quickly, especially the diviner, for Osá opens powerful currents of force that drain the psyche. Set the mind to one goal: delivering the messages of odu. If this is not accomplished, then the energy of this reading is wasted.

For a moment, set aside the orientation in which Osá has fallen. To properly assess this odu, the italero must begin with the concept of two faces or two sides to one coin. This letter is similar to the metaphor of yin and yang, to borrow a concept from Chinese philosophy: light balanced by darkness, yet each carrying the seed of the other. A client for whom nine mouths have fallen will tend to live mostly on one side of this coin: He will dwell in either light or dark. The orientation (of iré or osogbo) will determine whether he manifests not only the quality of light or dark, but also the extreme that is held like a seed within. The outer quality that is embodied may not be what is shown to the world. Inner darkness and turmoil can easily overwhelm light, while a single spark of light can also dissipate darkness. These are the factors that make Osá so complex and draining to those present in the room; these are the things that must be considered and delivered to the client.

Creation and dissolution: These are the two sides to Osá, and both can be equally harsh. During creation, there are decisions that must be made, decisions that involve the destruction and decay of things outworn, useless. To create, one must begin with an idea, a plan, and a goal. One must clearly delineate the steps taken toward the goal, and all things that do not complement the chosen path must be left aside.

Blockages in one's path must be broken down. Dissolution is the end result of creation; nothing in this world, not even one's incarnated soul, can be immortal. All must eventually return to the source. A painting will chip. A picture will fade. Life flourishes, and then succumbs to disease and death. Even the earth upon which we stand, the water that refreshes us, the food that nourishes us: All these things will one day be destroyed. It is part of evolution, and evolution is never a totally painless process.

On the light side of Osá, the client is proud, noble, and honorable; this is a person who extends himself to others graciously, one who believes in the greater good. Yet it is for this reason that he finds himself used, taken for what he has to give and no more. Remember the proverb of this sign: One's best friend is one's worst enemy. When this client's resources are exhausted, when he has nothing left to give, he will have no more friends. The seed of darkness will overwhelm. On the dark side of Osá these things are reversed. He is the best friend and yet he is the worst enemy. The two-faced nature is held within, and he shows both faces as it suits him. For a time, he will smile at those who have something to give, and when there is nothing left, the smile turns to a sneer. Filled with envy and betrayal, those friends are left in the cold as he seeks new acquaintances. Note that on both sides of this coin there is only eventual disappointment and destruction. Either this person takes too much or he gives too much. Only the orientation of this odu can determine whether all will come out well.

Having come to the mat in this letter, the priests and priestesses present for the reading can be assured of one thing: This client's life has been filled with treason, betrayal, and false friends. To say that life is difficult would be an understatement. Yet Oyá, the mighty, bearded warrior-woman, stands firm in this sign—and she wields her machete on his behalf. If attended and well propitiated, Oyá will be his salvation. Ignored, that machete can turn into a weapon of destruction. Before she can help, however, there are certain issues that the client must address on his own. To say that he is stubborn and obstinate would just scratch the surface of this one's personality—and it is here that the tendency of Osá to disperse into the air becomes a grave danger. This client does not like to listen to advice, especially when that advice deals with him and the manner in which he conducts himself. Risky ventures and plans are undertaken, and even though others

with more wisdom and experience may advise against these things, the client rarely listens to them. He thinks, "No one but I knows what is best." This is always his downfall. There is recklessness in his daily life, in his romantic life, and in his business life; it is this quality that leads him to get hurt time and time again. Caution is not a word in this person's vocabulary.

The diviner must tell the client these things: You are reckless; you are hardheaded. Two words sum up the personality: carefree and arrogant. Until these qualities are addressed and put under control, there can be no evolution. The winds of change brought by Osá will beat and batter this person relentlessly. He will be a victim of fate and his own ill-conceived plans. Relationships will fall apart, marriages will be brought to ruin, businesses will crumble, and in the end the client's life will be shattered and ruined. Not to heed the advice of Osá is to invite disaster. Within this odu are certain eboses, certain rituals that must be done immediately, and there are some that must be done periodically until the energy of this letter has passed; these things will help the client evolve in spite of his dual nature. First, the orisha whose diloggún is being read demands one thing in this sign: that a mask be put to him or her. This mask should be washed in omiero and dressed in the orisha's favorite colors (those of the orisha's eleke); with it, the client's true intentions will be hidden from the world behind the mask of the orisha. To Elegguá, put a two-faced, wooden doll. In this way Eshu can fight in both directions, and he can help the client determine who is with him and who is against him. Finally, a set of theatrical masks (in the form of a pendant) should be washed in Oyá's omiero and worn on a chain around the neck. In this way the client will have the power to hide his true intentions from others and see what lies behind their own masks.

Under the influence of Osá, the italero will notice distinct differences between the sexes and how they conduct themselves. Women will share in many of Oyá's attributes. They will be very masculine in nature, very rough around the edges and lacking in women's "social graces." They will be strong willed, hot tempered, and energetic. Their nature will be similar to that of a warrior. Many will be athletic, preferring a flurry of activity to a more sedentary, domestic life. A woman in Osá will prefer the company of strong men to that of weak women. While none of these is a bad quality in itself, there are times when these

attributes are carried to excess; they should be downplayed for a time. If the client is a married woman, she is stronger than her husband. In osogbo, the sign could be showing that this marriage is falling apart. The diviner must advise his client that to make this marriage work, she will have to let herself be weak for a time so her mate can be strong. Only in this way can a balanced, stable marriage be promoted.

For both men and women, marriages and sexual relationships suffer in Osá. Surrounding this client are many miserable people whose own relationships do not work well. These like to spread their misery by breaking up the relationships of their friends. They delight in separation and divorce. Ironically, when spouses and lovers scorn their friends, they are among the first at the scene to offer comfort. Beware of these friends, for they are dangerous. Be assured that the client is already aware of these things; he is just afraid to acknowledge them. Most are not loyal, and this is known as well. There are times when even the spouse will stray. Be not as one's lover no matter how great the temptation. Osá forbids adultery, adulterous designs, or even the casting of the eyes toward another. As long as one spouse remains faithful, there is hope that a marriage can be saved with ebó and perseverance. Once the relationship is secure again, the one who remained faithful will hold all the power. Some things are worth the fight, so fight honorably and remain ethical.

No matter one's sex or sexual orientation, the client for whom Osá has fallen would be happier and more prosperous living alone than with a lover. This sign dictates that all aspects of a client's life should be given the counsel of the orishas, so if one decides to take a lover, the diloggún should first be consulted to divine the parameters of the relationship. If this client is currently single, the italero must deliver this warning: Do not insist on taking a lover quickly. The guardian orisha will bring one in time, and the one hoped for will come when the orishas are ready to provide. Do not force a new relationship to progress with either wiles or witchcraft. Without the orishas' approval, this could bring death to the desired lover. Some things are just not meant to be. If this is itá for a child of Oyá, the taboos about marriages and relationships may be even stronger: Oyá says her children are best unmarried, and although she allows them to take lovers, often they wind up widows or divorcees. Without her consent, she will destroy or drive away the spouses of her children.

Men have special concerns that must be addressed in Osá. They tend to be keenly intelligent and wickedly subversive; this falls back on the dual nature of Osá. How they use this personality trait can often be determined from the orientation of iré/osogbo. Some will use it to benefit themselves, while others will use it to destroy their peers. To evolve, to progress, caution men to always be aware of their actions and consequences. Sexually, the male is voraciously active, consuming women as one would a treat. This angers Oyá, and the energies of Osá will destroy this man if he does not pick one lover and remain faithful. A man who dates a child of Oyá must be especially cautious of adultery and intrigues. Do not have sex with another until the relationship with Oyá's child is ended. Eventually, this man is destined for a partner stronger than he is, and he will spend his life under her heels if he is not careful.

Although relationships between men and women figure prominently in this sign, family issues are addressed here as well. The social structure of the client's family is tangled and stressed at its best; it is worn and falling apart at its worst. Osá points toward children who are related, yet they have different biological mothers and fathers. These may come from previous marriages, lovers, or even extramarital affairs. Not all may know each other or even be known, but one day these stray branches of the family tree will come together. The parents of one child must respect and love both half siblings and stepsiblings of their own children and spouses; to withdraw one's love would anger the orishas. The client is also warned to give both honor and respect to his own brothers and sisters; this extends to the half siblings, stepchildren, and relatives by ocha. Falsehood will be punished by one's own patron Spirit. Remember and consider this: Although friends will not remain loyal under the influence of this odu, family will always offer love no matter what. Even if there are strong arguments in the family unit now, do not separate from blood. Learn to stick with them through the good and the bad.

In the religion, Osá directs the client to become more involved with both the Spiritual family and the orishas; in this way the inherent osogbos of the letter may be overcome in full and turned to iré. First, the client who has come only for a reading should settle into a house of ocha with godparents that can be trusted, honored, and loved. Once this is done, the head should be read so that this person can begin to

worship the Spirit that claims him. The settling into an ilé and the reception of his orishas will give him more than his physical family to fall back on. It will also provide a sound Spiritual family to help him go through his trials and introduce him to his Spiritual family in the world of the orishas. If the client already keeps his religious responsibilities, he should be directed to pay more attention and respect to his godparents. They offer love in exchange for respect. Someone else in this person's family will soon come to the orishas; and the godparents of this client should be theirs as well. It will help strengthen family ties. The italero should warn the one who sits at the mat, however, that his relative would probably make ocha before he does. Harbor no jealousy; rejoice! This will make his own path easier.

Opening in an osogbo, there are many miscellaneous issues that the diviner must explore with his client. First, directly ask the client if he has thoughts of moving away from his present residence and into a new home. If the answer is yes, the client must be told his move is now a necessity marked by odu. Until this move is done, the entire house should be thoroughly cleaned. Pay attention to the corners and closets, for someone may have put malicious powders or amulets in these places. Be sure that the client empties out his cabinets and storage places soon, discarding all broken or chipped glasses, dishes, appliances, tools, and mirrors. Keeping useless items in the environment will attract more useless things into his life. Finally, this odu demands that the client's house be kept tidy. Towels, washcloths, clothing, and personal-care items must always be stored out of sight so no one else can get to them.

An osogbo in Osá can also mark tragedy in this client's life. Someone could die in his home; do not let sick or injured guests visit for extended periods, and be careful of children and the elderly when they visit. Electricity and heat can be a hazard in this sign as well, so do a thorough assessment of all appliances in the home. Keep nothing plugged in unless it is being used, and extinguish all sources of flame when leaving the home. Robbery, theft, slander, and random violence both within and outside of the home are possible, so take extra steps to ensure personal safety. Use locks on doors and windows. Travel in large groups, and avoid excursions after dark. If the client must travel alone at strange hours of the night, he should make sure that others know his itinerary and anticipated hour of return. If the osogbo is

severe, the diviner should tell his client this: Life is sometimes hard, yet it is not worth destroying yourself. Suggest some form of professional counseling because this person might take his own life.

Finally, the orientations of ano and ikú demand special consideration by the itálero. Ano in Osá speaks of death and disease that rises from the earth. Grains, roots, or vegetables that touch the ground (as in celery, lettuce, cabbage, and so on.) should not be consumed. They will provide a channel for sickness to enter the body. Osá speaks of the air that we breathe, and the lungs with which we breathe. From this moment on, the client cannot smoke any type of tobacco product. To do so is to offend Oyá, who owns his lungs. Both the flu and the common cold could prove fatal to one who has opened in an ano orientation of Osá; at the first sign of respiratory distress, this person should go immediately to the doctor. Do not take home remedies. Both food and drink should be fresh and properly stored. Consuming spoiled goods will bring death. The client must avoid stress and excitement at all costs since these things hurt the heart and brain. Caution against becoming angry, for this will make the blood hot and it will rush to the head, causing a stroke even in the young.

Any composite of Osá that opens in ikú is to be feared. In this reading, ebó must be made quickly. The itálero should consider not only the fact that this letter has opened in ikú, but also the origin of ikú. If ikú comes from one of the following origins, the client will have to make ebó and modify his behavior drastically to avoid the disasters inherent in this sign: Otonowá (heaven), eledá (his head), egun (ancestral spirits), ará onú (spirits in heaven), ocha (orisha), and lowó (his own hands). Orientations of lowó aráyé (arguments/gossip), tiya-tiya (stubbornness), and elenu (tongue) will demand behavior modification on the client's part; ebó will not help. The remaining origins for ikú show that the client has either angered those close to him or is associating with undesirables. Those orientations will involve the client's removal from the present environment to avoid the osogbo of ikú.

While giving his reading, the itálero should also keep in mind the following points; odu will often refer to many of these issues in the client's life.

- Osá falls often for those who are involved in metaphysical and spiritual pursuits; however, those in these systems of magic often

use their studies for cursing and not healing. If this client wants evolution in his life, he must use his spiritual studies to benefit himself and others. The cursing must stop.

- The client finds himself filled with brilliant ideas, yet he quickly forgets these and does not act on them. He should write down random thoughts as they come, judging later if they are worth the effort to attain.
- There may be a malicious entity following this person; the client will hear his name called out frequently, especially at night. Unless the one calling for the client is in full view (and is known), he must not answer. It could be death (Ikú) calling for him.
- There will be many opportunities for reunions with family, friends, and coworkers; the client must not go to these. There will be danger. Nor should he spend time at parties. Now is a time to be alone.
- Many opportunities will come to reclaim things that have been lost. These may involve property, jobs, and people. None of these things should be brought back into the life at this time. They were lost for a reason!
- If someone close to the client is offering home remedies, medicines, or homemade foods, they should not be accepted. These things are laced with bad intentions.
- If the opportunity comes to purchase property, take advantage of it.
- Under the influence of Osá, it is possible that a poor man can become rich. The rich, however, will lose their fortunes.
- Unless ebó is made, a relative could die before a year has passed.
- The client will soon make plans to go on a trip, yet this trip will not be taken.

The Prohibitions of Osá

Osá is an extremely volatile odu. Even if the letter comes in iré, there will always be warnings of danger and of intrigue, and in every reading of Osá the diviner might do well to prescribe some of the following prohibitions for the aleyo. Keep in mind the composite odu that has

fallen. While Osá may be the opening odu with its own prohibitions, the secondary odu will also carry its own warnings of danger, and the prohibitions of that letter should be kept in mind if the priest/ess wants to keep the client from harm. In a normal reading, the period of twenty-one to twenty-eight days should be sufficient to avoid the osogbos predicted, but if the letter falls in one of the more serious orientations such as ikú or ano, prescribe the taboos for a longer period. The client who has come for the reading of the head should treat the letter Osá as if it were given in an itá. Until ocha is made, the advice of the letter should be followed. And, of course, if this reading is an itá, the prohibitions and warnings will last for a lifetime.

- The client should dress conservatively. Avoid checks and plaids, and do not wear colors considered gaudy.
- Falsehood to one's own flesh and blood should be avoided, especially if these are brothers and sisters. Anger could make blood rush to the brain; anger could cause a hemorrhage or stroke. Be calm under pressure. Do not speak harsh words.
- Buy a new broom for your home every month. Do not sweep with an old broom, and never take an old broom from an old home and into a new one.
- Osá can point toward travel for the client, although the trip most desired might not be taken. If extended journeys are begun while under the influence of this sign, ebó should be marked and made before going.
- Osá speaks of the dead and danger from the dead. Do not go to places where death or the dead are known to frequent.
- Darkness hides many things; always turn on a light.
- Do not help anyone lift anything from the floor: That person will rise, and the client will fall.
- Do not accept gifts from strangers.

The Eboses of Osá

When working with this odu, the italero who is conducting the divination should first explore the proverb, meanings, and prohibitions that apply to this client, and then he should lay forth the larishe(s)

that the oracle has given to help attain evolution. Once all this is done, if the oracle will not allow closure the diviner must turn to the list of eboses given for each composite odu, marking those that are needed and then relaying this information to the client. The eboses for each composite odu follow.

The Eboses of Osá Okana (9-1)

- The client must receive the elekes; if he already has them, then they must be refreshed. He may need the necklace of orisha Oko, but the diviner should confirm this first with the shells.
- The head must be washed with the herbs sacred to the orisha speaking and then given a rogación; only then will it have strength to lead the client to success.
- This client could have issues pending with Orisha Oko. First, the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Orisha Oko?" marking what is needed with the oracle. If no ebó is called for, or if the letter will still not close out, the diviner should ask, "Koshé orisha Oko?" to see if this Spirit's reception is necessary.

The Eboses of Osá Oyekun (9-2)

- There should be many masses and white tables given for this person's egun; he should work frequently with a spiritual bóveda.
- A rogación should be given with the mark of nine; let the shells dictate what is to be used.
- There are debts with Shangó and the Ibeyi; the diviner should try to mark what is needed to pay the debts by asking, "Ebó ẹlese Shangó?" and then, "Ebó elese Ibeyi?" Even if one or both of these orishas do not stand up for ebó, the client should still be advised to offer them an adimú; the diviner must explain what the Spirits like as offerings.
- If the letter will still not close, the client's orí might need to be fed. The diviner should ask, "Eborí?" to mark this, and if the answer is yes, two white doves or pigeons should be offered to the head when the rogación is made.
- In this sign, it is important that the client have the Ibeyi; this does not need to be marked as ebó if the diviner has come this

far in the odu and it still will not close. If, however, the client does have the Ibeyi and the odu refuses closure, the orishas are standing up for a party, and it should be given to them as soon as possible.

- Finally, there could be issues pending with any of the orishas listed in the section of this chapter titled “The Orishas Who Speak in Osá.” The diviner should consider the problems that this client is facing and ask each orisha in turn, “Ebó elese [orisha’s name]?” If the diviner feels this is too lengthy, he can also opt to ask at this point, “Orisha onire?” which means, “Will an orisha give a blessing to clear this sign?” If the answer is yes, mark the orisha that is speaking on behalf of the client and then try to mark an ebó. If no ebó is found, we say that the orisha defends the client for free, but he should still offer an adimú to ensure this Spirit’s continued goodwill.
- When this letter opens and refuses closure for a priest/ess, the orisha speaking in this sign could be marking a tambor as the solution for all the client’s troubles. The diviner should first ask if a tambor is required; and then he should ask if the orisha whose diloggún is being consulted wants the tambor. If that orisha refuses batá, the diviner should try to mark the tambor for one of the orishas given in the priest/ess’s ocha. If all of these refuse the drum, begin asking about the other orishas, following the order given at the beginning of this chapter in “The Orishas Who Speak in Osá.”

The Ebores of Osá Ogundá (9-3)

When this odu falls on the mat, the following two ebores should be explained to the client.

- Ebó must be made with a turtle. The diviner must mark which orisha will take the ebó, and what is to be done with it.
- This letter marks the need for a drum. Following the guidelines for marking the drum for the priest/ess given in “The Ebores of Osá Oyekun,” the diviner should mark for whom the drum is to be given. In Osá Ogundá, there is no need to mark the drum; it is automatic.

Once these have been explained, if the odu will still not close, the diviner should explore the following options as ebó.

- The client could have issues with both Oyá and Aganyú. If this is an aleyo, the diviner should ask, “Ebó else Oyá?” and then, “Ebó else Aganyú?” marking what is needed by these Spirits. If no ebó can be marked, or if the letter will still not close, the exploration with these two orishas ends here for the aleyo. For the initiate, the diviner then asks, “Koshé Oyá?” and “Koshé Aganyú?” to see if either or both of these orishas are needed by the priest/ess.
- Since the orisha Oge is born in this letter, the sign could be marking his reception; the diviner must ask, “Koshé Oge?” to see if this is needed. (Oge acts as Shangó’s messenger in the world.)
- Also, whenever Osá Ogundá opens for an initiate and refuses closure, it may mark one of two eboses: the giving of four legs (and an itá) or the reception of the knife. First, the diviner should ask the oracle if an orisha needs four legs; and then he should ask if the orisha speaking requires four legs. If so, the ebó is marked and no itá is required. If four legs are needed for an orisha beyond the one speaking, the diviner tries to mark it for one of the orishas given in the client’s ocha. After those orishas, he asks about the rest of the orishas in the order given in the section of this chapter titled “The Orishas Who Speak in Osá.”
- If the oracle will not mark four legs and an itá for any of the orishas, the diviner should next try to mark the reception of the knife. After this, turn to the list of eboses for the parent odu at the end of this chapter.

The Eboses of Osá Iroso (9-4)

When this sign falls on the mat, the diviner should explain the following three things to the client before trying to close the letter.

- When this letter falls, Shangó is angry with the client, and the only way to appease him is to give him a ram and to have itá. A large party should be given to Shangó the next day and the meat should be served to as many people as possible.

- For iré, a guinea hen should be bought and allowed to roam free in the backyard. If it runs away, buy another.
- Once these two eboses are done, the client should play the lottery sparingly, yet regularly. Iré will come.

If the letter will still not close, the diviner should then explore the following things.

- The client should take many spiritual baths using Shangó's herbs; the diviner should depend on his own aché and knowledge of odu to prescribe what is appropriate.
- If Elegguá's shells are being read for a priest/ess and the odu refuses closure, Elegguá might be standing up for a crown. The diviner should ask Elegguá this question, marking it as ebó with the shells.
- Olokun is important in all composite odu that incorporate Irosun. If the client does not have Olokun and the letter refuses closure, the diviner should ask, "Koshé Olokun?" to see if she is needed. If the client has Olokun, he should ask if the orisha needs an ebó. If the answer to this is yes, the ebó should be marked following the pattern given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu."
- The Ibeyi can also be an integral part of this sign. If the letter refuses closure and the client does not have the orishas, the diviner should ask the oracle if their reception is needed. If the client has the Ibeyi, he should ask if they need ebó. If an ebó is marked, follow the line of questioning given in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If no larishe can be marked, the Ibeyi want a party. The client should give this party as soon as possible, making sure that there are two piñatas provided for the children who attend.
- If the letter still will not close, the client has issues with Oyá. For the aleyo, the exploration of this begins and ends with the question "Ebó else Oyá?" and the diviner must mark what this orisha needs. For the initiate, the diviner should ask, "Koshé Oyá?" to see if her reception is needed.

The Ebores of Osá Oché (9-5)

- When this letter opens on the mat, the diviner must first impress upon the client that his godparents will soon be asking for his help, and he cannot refuse this help lest their crowning orishas become upset with him.
- In this sign, there are two orishas that could be standing up for ebó: Oshún and Olokun. The diviner should question each of them “Ebó elese [orisha’s name]?” if the sign will not close out, marking what is required by each. If the client does not have Olokun, he might need her, and the diviner should ask, “Koshé Olokun?” to mark her reception.
- If these things have been explored and the letter will still not close, the client (if a priest/ess) may need to receive Ajé Shaluga, the orisha of riches and owner of the marketplace. The diviner should ask, “Koshé Ajé Shaluga?” to see if her reception is necessary. If so, the ritual should be planned as soon as possible; after her reception, the client’s fortune will increase.

The Ebores of Osá Obara (9-6)

When Osá Obara falls on the mat, the following ebores are marked automatically for the client.

- A rogación is to be given at the feet of the orisha speaking in this sign; it is this Spirit who will work to clear the inherent osogbo that hangs over the client’s head. Because Osá marks nine things in all ebores and cleansings, there must be nine ingredients included in the rogación. Most of them should belong to Obatalá, and the remaining ingredients should be things that the orisha likes. Later, if the letter will not close out, the diviner may ask if the orí needs to be fed by questioning the oracle “Eborí?” If the answer is yes, a guinea hen should be fed to the client’s head before the rogación.
- This client has weak connections with his egun, and these ties with ancestral spirits should be strengthened. Many white tables and masses should be hosted in his home for these spirits. In addition, an opá ikú should be found and fed by the godparent.

Later, if the letter will not close, egun could be standing up for ebó. The diviner should then ask, “Ebó elese egun?” to see if this is needed, marking the offerings they require.

- Finally, if the client has had dreams of money, ebó should be made to Elegguá so that the money will come. A simple adimú, whatever the client wants to give, should be put to either his Eshu or the diviner’s.

If all these things have been explored and the letter will still not close for the client, the following eboses should be explored by the diviner.

- Any of the following three orishas could be standing up for an ebó by initiate and aleyo alike: Oyá, Asohano, and Aganyú. Beginning with Oyá and ending with Aganyú, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese [orisha’s name]?” marking what is required. If none of the orishas wants ebó, or if the letter will still not close, the final option for an aleyo in this sign (this is also an option for an initiate) is the reception of Asohano. The diviner should ask, “Koshé Babaluaiye?” to see if he is needed.
- The initiate could need to receive one or both of the following orishas: Oyá or Aganyú. The diviner needs to put the question “Koshé [orisha’s name]?” to the oracle, marking what is needed. (Note: If the client already has one of these orishas, that Spirit could also be standing up for four legs. This question should be put to the oracle only if no other ebó will suffice to close this composite Odu.)

The Eboses of Osá Odí (9-7)

When this letter falls on the mat the sign mandates the following

eboses.

- A niche osain should be made to the orisha speaking through this letter. It is to be packed with this orisha’s herbs, and once this is done, it must be washed in an omiero using the same plants. Both orisha and osain should be refreshed in the liquid, and the two should be fed together. The client is to keep the niche osain with him at all times.

- Olokun must be given sacrifice in her home, the sea. Also, if this person does not have Olokun, he must receive her before the sacrifice is made. It would be best to do all these things on the same day.
- An initiate must put a crown to Yemayá.

Once these things have been explored, if the odu will still not close the diviner must explore the following options for eboses.

- The client has a strong affinity for Palo and witchcraft; there is even a Congolese spirit that is close to him. A palero should be employed to seat this spirit into a nganga. If that is not enough to close the letter, the client will have to be cut to Palo¹ so he may properly care for this spirit and others that will soon follow.
- There are issues with Oyá. First, the diviner must determine if she needs ebó. If not, or if the letter will still not close, the client might need to receive her. The diviner should question, “Koshé Oyá?” marking her reception with the shells.

The Eboses of Osá Ogbe (9-8)

Note that when this letter falls on the mat in any type of iré, the letter itself cannot bring true blessings; it only softens the negative meanings of the odu. The following eboses should be explained to the client, as they will weaken the osogbos inherent in this sign.

- The client needs the elekes. If he has them, Obatalá’s needs to be refreshed and worn often. All the client’s children should receive the initiation of the elekes, and if this is a financial impossibility, they should at least be given the eleke of Obatalá.
- The client should have a rogación with the mark of nine—nine things are used to clean and feed the orí—at the feet of Obatalá. It will help him find peace.
- Herbal baths with *espanta muerto* should be taken frequently.
- If the client is facing a war, Shangó should be fed two guinea hens in the middle of the patio.

1. When one is initiated to the Congolese religion Palo Mayombe, the body is given several shallow cuts in secret places, which allow the forces of the Mayombero to enter the initiate’s body.

If these eboses are not enough to close out the reading, the client should take the following initiations: the warriors and Olokun. Elegguá should be placated frequently, for he will open the door to evolution while closing the paths that enemies tread to harm this person. Olokun should be left alone, for she will do her work silently on behalf of the client once she has been received.

The Eboses of Osá Meji (9-9)

When this odu opens on the mat, there are specific eboses marked that must be done by the client, and the diviner must carefully explain each of these before trying to close the letter.

- Once a month until the cycle of this odu has passed (to be sure, the diviner should prescribe it until the next reading with the diloggún is given), the client must have a rogación with the mark of nine in it. If this is an itá, then the rogación is marked once a month for the rest of this client's life.
- The following three things should be done by the client immediately: A white flag to honor Obatalá should be hung at the front door, an ornate mask to honor the orisha speaking is to be made, and a two-faced doll is to be put to Elegguá. The white flag draws Obatalá's attention and protection to the home, while the mask will help the orisha speaking in this sign hide the client's true feelings and intentions from his enemies. The two-faced doll given to Eshu will enable Elegguá to watch for danger in all directions.
- Egun must be attended well from this moment on; the client should have a spiritual bóveda with nine glasses of water, a white candle, and nine cigars wrapped tightly in nine different-colored ribbons. If the letter will not close easily after these things are prescribed, the first question that the diviner should ask is, "Ebó else egun?" marking what, if anything, they require.

Having prescribed these eboses to the client, if the letter will still not close the diviner should then proceed with the following line of questioning.

- There could be issues pending with Babaluaiye; the diviner needs to ask, "Ebó else Babaluaiye?" to see if he is standing up

for anything. If so, the ebó must be marked. The client, however, must pay for his ebó in the following manner: Wearing a piece of burlap or sackcloth, he should go out into the streets and beg alms from strangers for a day. (If this sign came in a severe osogbo, he should be given a rogación and the eleke of Asohano the night before going out into the street. This eleke is to be worn while begging.) This money is then presented to Babalwaiye on a white plate with two coconuts and two white candles as a derecho. Once this is done, the ebó to satisfy the orisha may be performed by the diviner. From this moment on, the client may not make fun of vagrants or beggars, and he can never ever refuse alms to anyone.

- Shangó could also be standing up in this sign for an ebó; the diviner must try to mark one. Even if no ebó can be marked to Shangó, the client should be advised to give him a small, token adimú to ensure his favor and goodwill.
- If this letter still refuses to close, there could be further issues pending with Oyá, Aganyú, or Babalwaiye. Each should be asked if there is ebó, and if there is, the ebó must be marked. If the eboses marked are not enough to satisfy the odu, the diviner must ask the question “Koshé [orisha’s name]?” for each of the three Spirits to see if their reception is necessary.

The Eboses of Osá Ofún (9–10)

- When this letter opens on the mat, odu is mandating that the client collect rainwater and bathe with it frequently.
- Obatalá wants the client to have evolution in his life, which this orisha can provide only if the client performs ebó. This ebó, however, does not need to be directed to him. The diviner should begin his line of questioning with “Ebó elese Obatalá?” marking what he requires. If no ebó will be taken by him, or if the letter will still not close, the diviner should try to mark an ebó for each orisha speaking in this letter following the order given in the section of this chapter titled “The Orishas Who Speak in Osá.” These eboses should be done in a timely manner. Note that it is not unusual for many orishas to stand up for offerings in this odu.

The Eboses of Osá Owani (9–11)

When this odu opens on the mat, the following three eboses should be prescribed to the client.

- In this odu, there is a special ebó that can be done to open all the client's roads in life, bringing iré. A rope the height of the client should be measured and tied into nine knots. It is then put to Elegguá. On a staff of bamboo, tie nine strands of multi-colored ribbons, tying a jingle bell at the end of each strand. The staff, which will become the client's opá ikú, is then fed a rooster. Elegguá should then be given a chicken, and Oyá three hens. Once all is done, the client should have a rogación with the mark of nine—one of these things being the addition of four snails. For the rest of the day and night, the client should stay in the home of the godparent, who must also be given a rogación by another priest/ess that same day. After all these things are done, Obatalá should be questioned with obí to see if all will come out well. If his answer is no, the diviner must again consult with the shells to see if this, or another, ebó must once again be done to dispel the evil influences surrounding the client.
- If the osogbo of this sign is severe, a separate rogación should be given before the above ebó is made; this cleansing should also have the mark of nine in it, but after the rogación is complete, two pigeons should be fed to the orí to give it strength.
- Finally, two fresh coconuts should be offered to Shangó as soon as possible as a simple adimú. If after all these things have been prescribed the odu will still not close, the diviner should ask, "Ebó else Shangó?" to see if there is anything else that this orisha requires.

Having prescribed all these things, if the odu will still not close, the diviner should explore the following eboses with the oracle.

- The initiation of the elekes, if it has not been received, may be needed. The diviner should recommend this to the client, including the eleke of Babalwaiye in the ceremony if the osogbo of this sign predicts bad health or death through disease.

- Oshún offers her sweetness and love if this letter comes in any type of iré, but in osogbo she will not offer these things unless she is properly placated. The diviner should question, “Ebó elese Oshún?” to see if she is standing up for an ebó, and if not, the client should still be told to offer her a token adimú to ensure her goodwill.
- Finally, Babaluaiye could be standing up for an ebó, and the diviner should question the oracle about this. If Babaluaiye will take no ebó and the odu will not close out, the client might need to receive this orisha. The diviner must ask, “Koshé Babaluaiye?” to mark this.

The Eboses of Osá Ejila (9–12)

- This odu flags issues with Shangó. If the client is an initiate, a party must be thrown for this orisha to regain his favor, and for both aleyo and priest/ess, the diviner should ask the diloggún, “Ebó elese Shangó?” marking whatever else he requires as an ebó. For any sexual dysfunction, the client should have a rogación at the feet of this orisha.
- In severe cases of osogbo, the client should see a Babalawo so he can feed the orí a red snapper.

The Eboses of Osá Metanla (9–13)

- This client has declared war on one of Shangó’s children, and the orisha is sending him “fire” in his life because of this. To regain Shangó’s blessings, end the situation and make ebó to him. The diviner should try to mark the ebó by using the guidelines in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” Shangó will then take care of all evil done to this client by his own children. Elegguá, as well, will stand up for the client if he ends the war. To ensure his help, however, the diviner should ask the diloggún, “Ebó elese Elegguá?” to see if he wants anything in return.
- Babaluaiye demands attention; there are issues pending with him. The solution to this can range from the reception of the orisha’s eleke, to an ebó, to the reception of the orisha himself.

The diviner must mark what is needed to restore the client's balance with Babaluaiye.

The Ebores of Osá Merinla (9-14)

- In this odu, the client needs the initiations of the elekes and the warriors immediately. In addition to the beads of Obatalá, Yemayá, Oshún, and Shangó, the client should be given the beads of Oyá. If he already has the elekes, he should wear the beads of Oyá frequently.
- A ñame should be mashed and mixed liberally with red palm oil; this is put into a brown paper bag, and the client should clean himself well with it, putting it to Ogún once he is done. Using the coconut, he should then ask Ogún how long the ebó should be left with him, and where it should go when done. Ogún will work to remove many of the obstacles faced by the client.
- If the letter will still not close after these things have been marked, there may be issues pending with Babaluaiye: His eleke, an ebó, or the orisha himself may be necessary to restore the balance. The diviner should explore these options with the diloggún.

The Ebores of Osá Marunla (9-15)

- When this letter opens on the mat, the client should do the following ebó as soon as possible: An apron with two front pockets should be sewn. In one pocket, there should be some toasted corn, and in the other, there should be some small stones. Go out to visit another, and while there, start eating the corn. When they ask what is being eaten, hold out a handful of stones and say, "Stones. Do you want some?" This will cleanse you of evil vibrations and help open the roads in your life.
- In this letter, the client needs the initiations of the elekes and the warriors immediately. If he has these, he needs to make ebó to the warriors so they will fight his battles, and he needs to wear the beads of Oyá frequently.
- There could be further issues pending with either Oyá or Babaluaiye. The elekes of these orishas, ebores to these orishas,

or the reception of these orishas are all possibilities. The diviner should mark what is needed with the diloggún.

The Eboses of Osá Otura (9–16)

- If the client suffers from sexual dysfunction, he should go to the doctor immediately; in addition, he should make whatever eboses the odu prescribes rapidly. Once these things are done, three guinea hens should be given to Ogún. Sexual function will soon return. (*Note: This ebó works only when this odu has fallen for the client. It will not cure all cases of sexual dysfunction.*)
- This odu speaks of husband and wife: Both need rogaciónes, and both need to make ocha. The husband in this odu must make sure that his wife is initiated, for she could be a child of Oshún.
- The client needs to honor Obatalá by wearing white frequently, and he needs to honor Oshún by honoring the spouse (if married).
- If the above things have been explained to the client and the letter will still not close, there could be further issues pending with Ogún, Oshún, or Obatalá. If the initiation of the elekes has not yet been given, the client must receive them plus the eleke of Ogún. The diviner should also check to see if any of these three are standing up for ebó by asking, “Ebó elese [orisha’s name]?” The eboses that they require should be marked and done quickly by the client.

The Eboses of the Parent Odu

Having worked through the eboses for the omo odu that has fallen on the mat, the diviner must once again try to close the oracle. If it refuses closure again, one or more of the eboses from the parent odu might need to be marked before the reading can be safely closed. Those eboses follow.

- Refusal to close off the eboses for the composite odu automatically marks the client for a rogación with the mark of nine. Normally white, cool things that belong to Obatalá should be used (such as efun, cocoa butter, coconut, goat’s milk, coconut milk,

cotton, and so on), but additional ingredients sacred to other orishas may be added as dictated by the oracle. Examples of other things that could be required in a rogación are honey (for Oshún) and molasses (for Yemayá). Any offerings and sacrifices that were prescribed in this letter must now include the mark of nine so that they will be acceptable to the odu and the orisha that spoke through it.

- Also, the aleyo for whom this letter has fallen must now spend his life making ebó. The shells should be consulted frequently, for there are many orishas that have taken an interest in this client and they will want frequent, specific eboses made. The client will soon have to make ocha.
- The initiate for whom this letter has fallen will need to have a crown of red parrot feathers made for his or her guardian orisha. The priest/ess may not buy this crown; one or more of his or her godchildren must purchase the crown, decorating it with the red parrot feathers as an ebó to the orisha. Thus will the house of ocha prosper. Also, someone in this initiate's house needs to make ocha, and the diviner should try to mark one of the heads of those who are in the religion at this time. The person marked is said to have a mazo thrown over his neck.
- The diviner should next check to see if egun are standing up in this letter by asking, "Ebó elese egun?" If so, he must mark what these spirits need. When egun stand up in this sign, it is important that the client have an opá ikú. This staff should be found under the guidance of the godparent, and together they must search Osain's house—the forest—until an appropriate piece of wood is found. Using the opá ikú in place of the bóveda, the client must work egun frequently. On a daily basis, fresh water and prayers should be offered to give them strength and refreshment.
- Ebó needs to be made to Yemayá and Oshún. The diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Yemayá?" and then, "Ebó elese Oshún?" to see if the orishas want anything specific. If not, the client is given guidelines as to what types of adimús these two Spirits like. The eboses for both Spirits must be done at the same time.

- Finally, in this letter both Oyá and orisha Oko could be standing up for eboses and reception by the client. First, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Oyá?” marking what it is she wants. If no ebó is needed, or if the letter will still not close, the diviner must ask, “Koshé Oyá?” to see if she is needed at this time. The same process is repeated for orisha Oko.

Remember: When marking ebó for this letter, there are certain substances that are traditionally used as ebó. When marking any type of eyebale or animal offering for Osá, the diviner should try to use the animals and number of animals given in the following list: two hens, two pigeons, and one rooster. If any adimú-type offerings are required by the orisha speaking in the composite odu, try using the following as ebó to satisfy the letter: a small machete, nine honey cakes, two stones from the client’s property, nine red parrot feathers, nine coconuts, and nine candles of different colors.



Opening Ofún— Ten Mouths on the Mat

The Proverbs of Ofún

- [Ofún is] Where the curse was born.
- The one who curses shall be the one who is cursed.
- Whatever is thrown into the ocean will sink to the bottom; it cannot be recovered.
- Your position was lost at birth.
- This is the odu of phenomenon.

The Orishas Who Speak in Ofún

In this sign, the following orishas are known to speak: Obatalá, Oshún, Oyá, Odua, egun, Iroko, Yewá, Naná Burukú, Babaluaiye, Osain, Elegguá, and Ogún.

Special Notes on Ofún

Ofún is an odu that brings discord through discussion. There are those elders who say it is one of the parent odu, born directly from

heaven and Olódumare; there are elders who attribute its birth to Osá, nine mouths. Our house follows the former and not the latter belief, attributing the emergence of this sign to ilé Orún (house of the sun, that is, heaven). It is elusive and mysterious, and its symbols are the act of doubting, those things that are hidden from view, and the egg (from which physical life comes). Awó Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi has nicknamed this sign "the giver"; when the priest/ess of our faith begins to actively search for those truths inherent in the diloggún, it is under the influence of Ofún that much is learned and enlightenment achieved. In our own house, we have nicknamed this letter "the confuser," for although searching for spiritual truths is an active, sometimes delineated process, Ofún does not always guarantee that an energetic quest will result in enlightenment. Often, the spiritual warrior will find that the quest results in more confusion, and a prolonged study of the spiritual will raise more questions than answers. As is inherent in its symbols, a spiritual journey will raise doubt; it will lead the one taking this journey to examine things that are unseen by most, hidden from view. And like the age-old question "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" the priest/ess will become caught up in a cycle that has no beginning, no end. Ofún flows into Okana and then Odí; it ends with the sign known as Osá. Finally, it circles back onto itself into this letter, Ofún.

Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi writes of a patakís that can be found in this sign explaining the confusion inherent in Ofún:

The folklore of this Odu says that when the Immortals lived on Earth there was much confusion and turmoil. The reason for this disharmony was because the Immortals left earth and went to Heaven at different times, so there was no unity in Heaven. Orúnmila called the Immortals together and prepared a feast. After the meal, Orúnmila instructed the Immortals to go to Heaven as a group. From that day on there was unity in Heaven.¹

1. Awó Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi, *Awó: Ifá and the Theology of Orisha Divination* (New York: Original Publications, 1992), 141.

He sums up the moral of this sacred story as this: There is much confusion, many debates, and little unity between the practitioners of Yoruba-derived religions throughout the African Diaspora. While each claims a direct lineage from the Yoruba Empire and old Oyó, few share beliefs or ritual systems. Within Ofún one learns that Olódumare spread wisdom throughout the world—and wisdom is great and vast. Each can hold but a little part. The various traditions should remain separate and distinct, yes—yet each can learn from the next; each has but one part of the greater whole. When the end of times comes, we will go to heaven as a group, so should we not each try to walk that path as closely as possible? Thus will the inherent confusion of this odu turn to enlightenment for the world.

Whenever this odu opens on the mat, the italero should begin the reading by making the series of sacred gestures attributed to this sign. First, the diviner should cover his eyes with his hands. The right palm is placed over the right eye, and the left palm covers the left eye. This alludes to the fact that Ofún will always hide more than it will reveal to those attending divination. Once done, both of the italero's hands are brought down to pat the abdomen, for the truths of odu may only be felt intuitively and never known intellectually. Because of the heat brought into the room by the opening of this sign (heat that originates with the client), the diviner will then bring up both palms below the mouth and blow across them with pursed lips as if directing a powder at the client. This is a purely defensive measure; it symbolizes that what the client has brought into the room remains with him only. Once these things are done, the priest/ess giving the divination may retrieve the shells from the mat and open the composite odu. The reading is begun.

The Special Precautions of Ofún

Among different houses of ocha there are different ritual means of dealing with the energy of Ofún. Although no odu is inherently evil, this, next to Ogundá, is one of the more negative letters. During the course of the most simple readings, especially if the client is not in the religion, the diviner will mark his own forehead with efun while

chanting prayers to banish all things in *osogbo*. He then continues by marking the head of the client and then the priests and priestesses present during the consultation. Later, more involved cleansings will be done for all those who were in the room at the time that *Ofún* fell. Among the houses that do this simple ritual, after the divination a mixture of water, cornmeal, cocoa oil, *efun*, and a leaf from the *prodigiosa* plant is prepared. This mixture is put into a gourd and sprinkled liberally throughout the house. The remaining mixture is then put at the feet of *Obatalá* until midnight. After midnight it is thrown into the street. Everyone present in the room—priests and priestesses—will do the same ritual when they get to their own homes.

Our own house has its own way of dealing with the negative energies that are brought into the home when *Ofún* falls on the mat. The diviner's assistant must prepare a *saraeko*. This is a mixture of water, cornmeal, and honey. The *saraeko* is prepared in a gourd outside the room, then brought back into the room so that everyone may drink a small amount. The normal progression of the gourd is to the diviner first, then the client, and then each priest or priestess in order of elder status. A small gourd is then filled for *Elegguá* first, and another for *Obatalá* while the rest goes immediately into the street. The second *odu* is then thrown, and after the reading is done both the gourd for *Elegguá* and the gourd for *Obatalá*, are taken far out into the street and thrown there on the ground with the words "Eshu batie sode," meaning "Elegguá takes the negativity from the reading." One final precaution is followed with this letter in our house as well: If *Ofún Meji* opens on the mat, the diviner must not open the *diloggún* again on that day for anyone but himself. The purpose of his own reading is to mark *eboses* to remove the *osogbo* from himself, his home, and his religious *ilé*. Otherwise, the negativity of this *odu* might stay with him as well as the client for whom it has opened.

The Message of Ofún

When *Ofún* opens on the mat, the ritual of *diloggún* is interrupted for a bit while the *italero* performing divination begins a series of rituals to honor, cool, and placate the *odu*. First, the sacred gesture of the sign is made: The diviner covers his eyes with the palms of both hands while reciting the *mojuba*, or prayer, associated with this letter. Having

done this, the hands are brought down to pat the abdomen once, and they are then brought up to the mouth so the diviner can blow across them as if directing a powder back at the client. (These steps are done to ensure that the full force of the odu remains with him and not those in the room.) Once complete, the opening ebó of the sign must be done to not only cool Ofún, but also to placate two orishas: Elegguá and Obatalá (who together speak through all odu). A saraeko is made using water, cornmeal, cocoa oil, efun, and a prodigiosa leaf (water, cornmeal, and honey may be used if all these ingredients are not on hand). Everyone is directed to sip the mixture (beginning with the client, then the italero, and then the remaining priests and priestesses in order of elder status). Then a gourd is filled for Elegguá and put to him with prayers for protection, and the same is done for Obatalá. Note that some of this mixture must be saved to be sprinkled lightly throughout the house, and some must be thrown into the street as well.

Ofún is often called "the odu of revolution and upheaval." When this letter falls on the mat, the danger here is that either the client or those present will not perform ebó, and this danger is innate, latent yet flowering if the composite odu Ofún l'Ogbe opens (10-8). It is for this reason that all precautions must be taken, and the random heat of this sign becomes especially dangerous if any type of osogbo is predicted. Many elder italeros like to tell the story of this omo odu even if it does not open; it is a historical illustration of what can happen when the orisha's oracle is consulted to better one's life and then it is not heeded. New Year's Eve 1958 in Cuba, the Babalawos assembled for the annual calling down of Ifá. Orúnmila and Odu herself were brought down, and this odu (10-8) was opened in osogbo. By manipulating Ifá, it was ascertained that political treason and revolution were coming to the nation, and the one who was currently in power (Cuban President Fulgencio Batista) would be overthrown. Batista was reputed to be an adherent of orisha worship (although no one in our house is sure how deep his involvement was). The orishas were all gathering themselves for a spiritual war to be fought in heaven and earth, a war that directly involved Batista and indirectly affected all the Yorubas' spiritual descendants on the island.

Ebó was marked: Orúnmila declared that Olokun would save the

island from the rule of a new dictator if the five Babalawos gave her a tambor and danced her sacred dance with masks. Those present at the reading sighed in relief, for the orishas would save them from political revolution (Batista was loved by many); yet the Babalawos were frightened. To dance Olokun's dance is no easy task: The spiritual strain is so great that it drains physical energy. Whenever she is called upon in the New World through these rituals, one of the dancers will die before the year has turned. Alternate eboses were done to appease this mighty Spirit; and while the lesser oracles dictated that those eboses were accepted, revolution still came (although it did not immediately ruin the island and the Cuban people). Batista, being devoted to the orishas, was saved from execution at the hands of Fidel Castro, the new dictator of the island. As the story is told, the former president sat in his chambers with a gun to his head while Fidel's men tried to gain entry into his room; the plan was that once they broke in, they would watch as he took his own life. The orishas had other plans for his loyalty and worship. Just before the door was broken in, his own soldiers came through a window and whisked him to a waiting helicopter. With millions of dollars at his disposal, Batista was saved and taken to Spain, where he lived the rest of his life in comfort. Fidel took over the island due to the Babalawosí disobedience, and things have gone rancid economically and politically ever since.

While not every client who comes to the mat in Ofún l'Ogbe, or even any combination of Ofún in osogbo, will face such severe trials and tribulations in his life, the odu guarantees that unless the eboses prescribed are done as the oracle dictates, there can be no evolution. Events will occur affecting the rest of the client's life. Like a pebble thrown into a pond, ripples will ensue and creep outward, making immediate changes that will touch every aspect of life. Before beginning the reading, the diviner should tell his client this information up front: Everything that is done from this point on will affect everything else that happens throughout his life. While the energy pattern of a single reading exists only for twenty-one to twenty-eight days, Ofún paves the way for future events (in itá, this sign will last for the iyawó's lifetime). The events marked by odu will eventually come to pass, and even if the advice given throughout this reading seems to have no bearing on present circumstances, it should still be acted upon. Spiri-

tual forces are at work in this letter, powers that are attempting to lay stable foundations for the future. The rugged cornerstones and inflexible basis being built now can either be infinite or finite, depending on the client's faith in the orishas. The larger the foundation built in the spiritual world, the greater the accomplishments of the client.

There is an initial avenue of exploration that the diviner should consider for all his clients, no matter their initiatory status: The guardian orisha is announcing anger due to disrespect or ignorance, and the client will need to make eboses to appease this Spirit. Those outside the religion will not know who the guardian is, and before this sign closes the diviner might have to call down that orisha so appropriate eboses can be marked. While this is also true for the aleyo, most will already know their guardian Spirit and the diviner will not have to turn this into a reading of the head. The priest or priestess who comes in this sign, and who has incurred his or her orisha's wrath, will have to perform more complex, involved eboses—and before the sign has closed that orisha will have much to say. Take into account the orientation of the reading (*iré/osogbo*) and the type of orientation that has fallen when investigating odu from this vantage; these issues revealed under *Ofún* can range from mild displeasure to outright hostility.

These two qualities of *Ofún*, loss and disobedience, spiral and feed upon each other; the one who has come to the mat in this letter has faced many losses, and these are the initial impetus for the disobedience against the guardian orisha. There are many issues that need to be explored before this relationship can be restored to its proper balance. First, in *Ofún* there is the danger that the elders, the elderly, and deformed/diseased humans have been given varying degrees of disrespect. If the *osogbo* predicted by this oracle is great, the disrespect might actually be abuse. Those who are imperfect or old must be given consideration: They must be given love, honor, loyalty, and care. In this sign *Obatalá* manifests most often as an old man, and those in poor health or suffering congenital defects are his true, chosen children. To anger them is to anger the orisha. These issues must be addressed immediately or no amount of prayers, eboses, or sacrifices will be useful in restoring the Spirit's goodwill; the wound between the mundane and spiritual worlds will only fester and grow. Another

source of displeasure from the orisha is that material and spiritual opportunity have been presented many times over the course of this person's life, and each time the blessing was either missed due to ignorance or abused due to carelessness. The gifts of the orishas are infrequent and rare; always, they must be accepted graciously.

The italero must tell his client these things: "The orisha will no longer tolerate disdain, thanklessness, or carelessness. There must be no more disrespect. Think before acting, and make sure that all actions are honorable and for the greater good." Behavior modification is essential to this odu. Note that many promises have been made not only to the orishas, but also to egun, and these forces are moving to reclaim what has been offered. Many of the eboses predicted through this letter will not be demanded to provide evolution; rather, they are marked to even out the imbalances in this client's life. Ebó will give back to the Spirits what they were originally offered. The orisha of the head, especially, is demanding that all debts be paid. Already, this one disagrees with how his or her child is conducting personal affairs, and there will now be a spiritual war between client and orisha if these things are not heeded. The italero should tell him, "In a war fought between heaven and earth, you will not win. Do not fight with your own head, your own destiny!"

An experienced italero will notice that those who open under this odu will share specific personality traits, and that these will deepen and become more severe in the darker osogbos of this sign. These are people who are recklessly proud, dangerously disobedient, and very verbal when it comes to expressing both pride and prejudice. Impatience is this one's vice, yet he sees it as a virtue. Morals and character are given low priority (this person is very self-indulgent at the cost of others); rarely are the rules of etiquette and polite society followed. When acting poorly, others are intimidated by this person's actions and they say nothing. While visiting the homes of the elders, elderly, and the handicapped, this client follows the same boorish behavior, not realizing that he disgusts the people around him. To pacify this odu, the client must pay more attention to his words, actions, and their effects on others. While he is around friends and peers, he should keep in mind their own personalities and temperaments. Watch how those people act, and mirror good taste even if they continue to act like animals. When around the elders, give them the respect that is deserved.

The diviner should lay down the following prohibitions: Do not make fun of those who are old, deformed, ugly, or weak. Those suffering from mental and emotional disorders should be given support, and begin to treat everyone as if he were the personification of his orisha on earth. In this way there will be no debts with the spiritual world.

To further this person's evolution under the influence of Ofún, the diviner should also explain the following things: Do not allow oneself to experience violence or violent emotions such as anger, hatred, and jealousy. Do not quarrel with friends, and when one happens upon two friends who are quarreling, they should be left alone and allowed to finish the argument on their own. It is dangerous to be in the same room, or even the same house, where two lovers are fighting over jealousy or adultery, so leave immediately. When others bring their problems into the client's home, he should tactfully ask them to take the argument elsewhere, and if they will not leave, he must call the authorities immediately before an embittered argument becomes an impassioned fight. A curious nature is a dangerous nature, so always stay out of other people's business. Ten mouths is known for causing blindness among those who see things they should not see, and it is also known for bringing deafness to those who hear things they should not hear. Do not go looking for trouble, and do not listen or eavesdrop on the private conversations of others. Also, if the client is involved in magical arts, the diviner must strictly prohibit this person against using malicious magic and witchcraft. All curses cast come home to roost, and only he will be the one hurt under this letter.

There are special considerations in this sign regarding the client's home as well. First, Eleguá says that the streets are his, and that this person spends too much time roaming them. He should go home and stay there, especially at night. If it becomes necessary to venture outdoors after dark, do not walk. Travel by car, and always in the company of a trusted friend. Remember: There is safety in numbers. If the sign comes in any type of osogbo, the diviner should tell this person that his home, as well, has been marked as a target for robbery, burglary, violence, and loss; make sure that the interior and exterior lights on the house all work. Windows and doors should be kept closed and locked for the next twenty-one to twenty-eight days, even if the client is home. Do not leave for extended periods (the house is being watched) and do not be afraid to call the authorities if anything suspicious is

seen or heard outdoors. While it may seem wise to depend on neighbors for home security while away, in truth this is a poor plan. The client will find that there is someone close to him who wishes much evil, and the one breaking into his home might be a trusted friend. There will also be strange people knocking at the door during odd hours of the day and night; answer the knock, but never open the door unless the caller is known. Say that now is a very bad time—that there are guests, and you cannot open the door to talk. Immediately, call the police to let them know there are strangers in your neighborhood going door to door. In this way will the client avoid harm.

Obatalá speaks in this odu as well to say that his client needs to make his house more like a home. The environment is not as quiet, serene, or beautiful as the orishas would like it to be. First, tell the client that his residence needs a thorough cleaning to remove both physical and spiritual “dirt” (under some orientations of Ofún, curses and powders have been placed in the home by occult enemies). Make sure to air out the sleeping place well; look under the bed and separate the mattresses, making sure there is no dirt or clutter there. These things will interfere with one’s rest, and already this client has experienced insomnia. Once the home is clean, it should be kept that way. Freshen the front door with plenty of cool water, and then cleanse it spiritually with two white doves. Begin at the back of the house and work through to the front. Outside the front door, say a prayer to Olódumare and the orishas for renewal, for protection, and let the doves fly free. When they take to the air, they will take all the evil with them. Once the house has been cleansed, make sure that it stays this way. Arguments, quarrels, and fights are now taboo in the home. It must be kept peaceful. Do not pick fights with friends, lovers, or the spouse. Finally, while this place is to be a refuge, it is to be the client’s refuge. Never let friends or relatives move in, for then the client will be tempted to move out to regain his peace.

When the *osogbo* marked is *ano*, serious illnesses are creeping up on this person (they are probably manifest already); not only must the *ebo*s prescribed be done immediately, but also the client must run, not walk, to the doctor for a thorough exam. The orishas will guide the physician’s hand in offering treatment and diagnosis. Women who experience *ano* in Ofún are prone to reproductive difficulties. Try not to get pregnant now, for there are too many problems in the uterus

and ovary to carry a healthy baby to full term. There is retention of the period and difficulties in menstruation that cause cramping and discomfort; under Ofún's energy, these things will only worsen. In both men and women, the illnesses will occur in the same areas: stomach (pains from constipation and menstruation), tumors, and blockages in the digestive and circulatory tracts. The brain and eyes are vulnerable, so protect these regions. Be meticulous about personal hygiene, for many rare illnesses are spread through filth and sloth. Even if the client feels no pain, nor experiences any symptoms, the diviner must mark a medical checkup as one of the eboses and insist that this person go! If the orientation is ikú, however, the physician could be the one to bring unnecessary danger through unwarranted medical procedure. Ikú announces that death is near, usually through illness but not always—and in medical procedures, invasive surgeries will be risky and can be the cause of death.

Beyond these things already explored, there are various unrelated issues that the diviner will need to convey to his client. The italero should frankly discuss each of these issues and their relation to the client's life at this time.

- Ofún brings disturbances and disaster by water. Anything that holds water in reserve could be a source of decay, and this includes rivers, the ocean, rain, dams, plumbing, and the human body. Respect all natural sources of water and the orishas/Spirits that live in them. If the household plumbing begins to leak, call a plumber immediately before a small problem becomes something large. Finally, diseases of the body that involve dehydration or fluid retention could become a source of discomfort and severe illness. Be on guard against chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pneumonia, edema, nausea, digestive discomfort, and diarrhea. Go to the doctor if any strange symptoms develop.
- Note that Ofún in any osogbo forbids cosmetic surgery. It is unwise to operate on healthy tissue, and the aging process is not a diseased state.
- In a severe osogbo, the following dangers exist for the client: rape, spousal abuse, assault and battery, legal complications and injustice, unemployment, emergency operations, and economic loss. If the osogbo is mild, these things will likely happen to

another, yet will affect the client's life (by occurring to a close friend or a relative). Take steps to ensure personal safety, and perform marked eboses as soon as possible.

- If the *osogbo* is severe, there is also the chance that a body could be found near the home. It may even be buried under or beside this person's house.
- If the client has mused about moving to a new home, an orientation of *osogbo* marks that move as *ebó*. The diviner should ask the client first if he has thought about finding a new house or apartment and then should relay this information so there is no chance that the client will lie. To stay in this house now would be to court disaster. The *orishas* should be given the final say as to where the client moves.
- Those in this client's family who are of childbearing age should not conceive now; and if anyone becomes pregnant she should go for an exam and proper neonatal care. The danger here is that an imperfect child will come to the family if one has not been born already. Although there is no prohibition against abortion in this *odu*, *Oshún* has a soft place in her heart for the children of *Obatalá* and might later stand up to demand that this pregnancy be carried to term. The best option for now is either abstinence or proper birth control.
- If the orientation of *Ofún* makes it clear that a curse has been cast upon the client, only the intervention of *Obatalá* will remove what has been sent. The *italero* must work the *diloggún* until an *ebó* is marked to this *orisha*, and this offering or set of rituals must be done immediately lest the client suffer irreversible harm. Disaster will come from the combined efforts of two women and one man.
- The elderly who open in any orientation of *Ofún* will have degenerative diseases of the muscular, cardiovascular, and skeletal systems. Progressive diseases of this nature cannot be reversed, yet their advancement can be slowed with exercise, good nutrition, and proper medical care. Encourage a complete physical with a doctor.

- If the client does not have a place of his own to call home, Obatalá stands up again to demand that the client work harder to acquire one.
- Any holes in the house must be covered. Bottles should not be allowed to accumulate; they must be capped, covered, or thrown away.
- Finally, any type of osogbo in Ofún will mark the client as one who can become potentially ill, exhausted, or depleted; all resources will be overextended, and it is only through more hard work that they will be renewed. Priorities must be set so that no one part of life is out of balance with the next. Sickness brought by exhaustion will leave the client bedridden for a long time, so the body should be given adequate rest, care, and nutrition.

Once the reading is finished and the oracle has allowed closure, the *italero* should remove the gourd of *saraeko* from Elegguá's shrine, throwing it far out into the street with the words "Eshu batie sode," or "Elegguá takes the negativity of the reading." Note that when this is done, it is customary for all those present at the reading to go out into the street with the diviner and then leave immediately once the porridge has been cast forth. Do not throw it onto the path that those leaving must travel; the energies might latch on to them again and follow them home. Once home, these priests and priestesses should perform this entire ritual of *saraeko* for themselves, ensuring that nothing negative will remain from the reading. The diviner, in honor of Obatalá, should leave his gourd sitting with the shrine until midnight. At that time, it is removed and thrown far, far away from the house so the last vestiges of Ofún are removed. If the osogbo of the letter was severe, before retiring he should put a cool offering to both Elegguá and Obatalá. Only then is the work of Ofún complete, and the heat that could bring disaster and discord removed from the priest/ess's home in full.

The Prohibitions of Ofún

Ofún is an extremely volatile letter, and through experience with its pattern our house has a unique means of prescribing prohibitions: Whenever the *diloggún* opens in *iré* with this letter, the diviner

performing the reading will prescribe the taboos that are dictated by the secondary letter. For example, if 10-2 opens in iré on the mat, even if the iré is firm, Ofún dictates that the prohibitions of Eji Oko be followed for a period of twenty-one through twenty-eight days. If it is the reading of the iyawó known as itá, the taboos are followed for life. Any other orientation beyond iré, any type of osogbo, demands that the following prohibitions are prescribed; the diviner must use his own common sense and aché to determine which ones from the list apply to the client sitting at the mat. If the letter refuses closure no matter the eboses prescribed by the orishas, then the prohibitions from the secondary odu are given to ensure that the client avoids all harm.

- No other color beyond white may be used on the bed; definitely, do not sleep on stripes or patterns. The client should dress in white when sleeping, and he should wear white frequently. Even if colors are worn, white should be somewhere on the body on a daily basis to promote coolness.
- The food taboos are as follows: no alcohol, no intestines, no white beans, no sweet potatoes, and no gritty fruit (fruit that has small seeds scattered throughout the flesh, such as strawberries). All fruit should be thoroughly washed before being eaten so that there is no trace of dirt on its outer skin.
- The following prohibitions should be followed in the client's home. Do not let anyone stay in the house for an extended period, especially those of the opposite sex. Trash should be removed on a daily basis; trash should always be gathered into one receptacle. Empty bottles and things with holes should be thrown away immediately. If the client has sat down to eat a meal, he should not open the door or answer the phone for anyone, and if the client has gone to bed, he should not answer the door or the phone no matter who is knocking or calling. As we say, even God will come back another day!
- There should be no vices entertained, especially those involving any type of drug. Do not smoke; the orishas have now taken that away!

- If the client goes for a walk in either the rain or the moonlight, he must cover the top of the head.
- Although it may seem superstitious, do not walk under ladders. Walk around at a good distance lest something fall.
- Avoid funerals and wakes if they are not for family members, and if someone in the family dies, consult with the orishas before going so a protective ebó may be marked. Ikú could be at this ceremony, waiting to take another life. If anyone falls gravely ill outside the family, do not go to visit without making ebó. Better yet, do not go.
- If anyone has Ofún in the head from itá (a child of Ofún), do not argue with that person. Avoid children of Ofún as much as possible.
- Do not steal, curse, or accuse falsely. Do not agree with the testimony of others if you know it to be wrong.
- Do not entertain jealousy. Do not argue.
- In the orientations of ano and ikú, do not wish for death, even as a joke, for death is already very near and will come even closer.

The Ebozes of Ofún

When Ofún falls on the mat, it automatically marks the aleyo for the reception of both the elekes and the warriors; these two strong ebozes will be needed to pacify and overcome the volatile energies that have been opened in the diviner's room. Take note: If an orisha has stood up for the question "Larisha si?" and has claimed an ebó, the necklace of that Spirit must be given with the initial investment of the elekes. If other orishas stand up during the reading to offer advice or to claim an ebó, the elekes of those Spirits must be given in time. Treat each investment as a separate ebó. When the warriors are made for this client, the beads of both Elegguá and Ogún should be given so that the client may carry their influence and protection with him throughout the day. Once these things have been explained and written in the record of the reading, the diviner may ask the odu for closure (unless

Ofún's composite mandates specific eboses; these should also be explained to the client first, and the assistant must note these things in the reading's record).

If both of these initiations have already been taken, the investment of additional necklaces should also be explored; the beads of any Spirit that has stood up through Ofún might need to be given. Also, the warriors Elegguá and Ogún could be standing up for some sort of ebó, and the diviner should give them this option by asking the questions "Ebó elese Elegguá?" and "Ebó elese Ogún?" Because Ofún can mark a variety of wars, tragedies, and afflictions, the goodwill and protection of these two orishas will be needed to avoid the inherent osogbos. Having explored the options for eboses available to all sixteen composites of Ofún, if the letter will still not close the diviner should proceed with the list of offerings and rituals provided in each composite odu. That list follows.

The Eboses of Ofún Okana (10-1)

- When this odu opens on the mat, it is mandated that the client dress in white every day for seven days; he should pray to Obatalá for protection during this time. There is a prohibition: Do not leave the home unless it is absolutely essential. Do not go out after dark, and until this odu has passed the client should wear white as much as possible. If this is not enough to close the letter, Obatalá might be standing up for an ebó and the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Obatalá?" to see if he wants anything at this time.
- Shangó could also be standing up in this letter for ebó, and the diviner must ask, "Ebó elese Shangó?" to see if this is needed. If nothing is required, the client should be directed to make a token adimú to this orisha so that his continued goodwill is ensured during the difficulties that will follow.

The Eboses of Ofún Ejioko (10-2)

Note that in this odu, the diviner must make his own eboses before making ebó for the client, and whatever the diviner does should also be done by the priest/esses in attendance. After the initial reading, the

oracle should again be opened (the client should not be in the room) to determine if anything needs to be done to pacify the energies of the letter. These things marked by the diviner for the priest/esses who were in attendance at the client's reading should be done just before ebó is made for the client.

- The following two eboses need to be done by the client: If the client is a woman, she has been marked for kofá and should see a Babalawo, receiving this initiation before too much time has passed (to do it within ten days would be best). Also, for twenty-one to twenty-eight days, the client should wear a red parrot feather in the hair (if this comes in itá, this should be done for life).
- In this sign, it is important that the client have the Ibeyi; this does not need to be marked as ebó. If the client has the Ibeyi, however, and the odu refuses closure, the diviner should ask if the orishas need ebó. Follow the pattern for marking ebó given in the section on larishe in chapter 1 titled "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If no ebó can be marked, then the Ibeyi want a party given in their honor.
- If the odu still refuses closure, its ebó must be done. First, the client must sleep that night with a chain and a lock around his hands (the lock should be one with a key). In the morning, he awakens with his godparent and goes outside with a rooster. At the first gate or door that is found, the godparent should unlock the lock and untie the chains. Everything is left before this door, except for the rooster and the key. The rooster should then be given to Elegguá so that he unlocks all the doors in the client's life, and the key should be taken to the ocean and thrown in. (*Note:* Many priests and priestesses will take their Elegguá with them to feed before the locked door.)
- Later that day, after the key has been given to the ocean, the godparent should make a rogación to the client using the mark of ten (that is, using ten items to clean and feed the orí); and in this rogación, the orí should be fed a pigeon and a rooster. For the next sixteen days, the client is to dress in white from head to toe, using a red parrot feather in his hair every day during this time.

- When Ofún Ejioko opens and refuses closure for an initiate, the orisha speaking in this sign could be marking a tambor as the solution for all the client's troubles. The diviner should first ask if a tambor is required, and then he should ask if the orisha whose diloggún is being consulted wants the tambor. If that orisha refuses batá, the diviner should try to mark the tambor for one of the orishas given in the priest/ess's ocha. If all of these refuse the drum, begin asking about the other orishas following the order given at the beginning of this chapter under "Orishas Who Speak in Ofún."
- Note that if the tambor is marked during a iyawó's itá through either Elegguá or the orisha of the head, that client is automatically marked to give a drum to all the orishas in time. Also, proper protocol must be followed in giving this ebó: The godparent's orisha (from whom the initiate's head was born) must be given fundamental batá before it can be played for any of the client's own orishas.

The Ebores of Ofún Ogundá (10-3)

- This letter mandates many strong ebores: Elekes, warriors, and Olokun should all be given to help him fight the many tragedies presaged in odu. If all these things are had, an ebó equivalent to the warrior's *entrada* (welcoming ceremony) should be given so that Elegguá, Ogún, and Ósun will have the strength to fight all battles and protect from all harm. Immediately upon returning home, the client who has the warriors should put a saraeko made of water, cornmeal, and honey to Elegguá and Ogún; also, he should pray to them daily for protection, strength, and renewal. Some type of token adimú should be given to Olokun if she lives with the client; she will take care of those issues of which the client is unaware. There is also a strong prohibition in this letter that must be treated as ebó: If it rains at all during the next seven days, the client must not venture beyond his home during the rain, not even for work.
- In this sign, Oshún might be standing up for an ebó, and the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Oshún?" to mark what she needs.

If no ebó can be marked, the diviner must recommend that the client offer her some type of token *adimú* in exchange for her goodwill and protection.

- Whenever Ofún Ogundá opens for a priest/ess and refuses closure, it may mark one of two eboses: the giving of four legs (and an itá) or the reception of the knife. First, the diviner should ask the oracle if an orisha needs four legs; and then he should ask if the orisha speaking requires four legs. If so, the ebó is marked and no itá is required. If four legs are needed for an orisha beyond the one speaking, the diviner tries to mark it for one of the orishas given in the client's ocha; he must follow the order in which they were given and received in the initiation. After those orishas, he must follow the rest of the orishas given in the section of this chapter titled "The Orishas Who Speak in Ofún."
- If the oracle will not mark four legs and an itá for any of the orishas, the diviner should next try to mark the reception of the knife. After this, return to the list of eboses given for the parent odu, Ofún, at the beginning of this chapter.

The Eboses of Ofún Irosun (10–4)

- When this odu has fallen, it marks that the client must make food offerings to the earth, the ocean, and *egun* in that order. Unless the *osogbo* is severe, the offerings may be of cooked food, fruits, and grains; if something stronger is called for, the diviner must mark what is needed with the shells and then preside over the sacrifices.
- The client should be given a *rogación* at the feet of Oshún, and the diviner should put ten things in the *rogación*. Include those things that are sacred to both Obatalá and Oshún. This ebó is very important if the client has come to the oracle because of marital problems in the home; the spouse might soon stray.
- Oshún might be standing up for an ebó; the diviner should check what, if anything, she needs. He must ask the question "Ebó *elese* Oshún?" marking what she needs. If Oshún requires nothing, the client should still offer her a token *adimú* to ensure the Spirit's goodwill and protection.

- Many spiritual masses and regular offerings should be made to egun; have a special place in the house, a bóveda, upon which one may make spiritual offerings. If the letter will not close, the diviner should ask, “Ebó else egun?” to see if they require anything special. Using the shells, the offerings must be marked.
- Olokun is important in all composite odu that incorporate Irosun. If the client does not have Olokun and the letter refuses closure, mark her reception with the shells, asking, “Koshé Olokun?” If the client has Olokun already, he should see if the orisha needs ebó. If the answer to this is yes, mark the ebó following the pattern given for larishe in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.”
- The Ibeyi can be an integral part of this sign; if it refuses closure and the client does not have these orishas, the diviner should ask the oracle if their reception is needed. If the client has the Ibeyi, he should ask if they need ebó. If an ebó is marked, follow the line of questioning given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” If no larishe can be marked, then the Ibeyi are asking that a party be given in their honor.
- If the oracle is being read for an initiate, Elegguá could be standing up in this sign for a crown and the diviner must check this.
- If all these things have been prescribed and the letter still refuses closure for an initiate, Maferefún Iroko; the client needs to receive him and have him in his home.

The Eboses of Ofún Oché (10-5)

- The client has debts with his egun; also, Oshún and Elegguá are standing up to claim something from this person. The diviner should check to see what, if anything, is needed by these Spirits. He must ask, “Ebó else [orisha’s name]?” for each, marking whatever is needed. Since Oshún rules Oché, even if Oshún requires no ebó the client should still offer her something to ensure her protection and goodwill.
- Everyone who is in the house at the time of this reading must eventually make ocha, and this should be explained to everyone.

- The client needs a rogación with ten things in it; the diviner should mark what is needed in this cleansing.
- Oshún is close to this client, so he should spend much time praying to her. Make ebó to Oshún frequently to ensure love and sweetness in life.
- A mixture of cornmeal, water, and honey should be put to the warriors every day for fifteen days, and during this time a spiritual bath with various herbs should be taken. Wear all white during this time.
- In this sign, the client (if an initiate) needs to receive Iroko, and if he already has this orisha, many eboses should be marked to him to ensure his continued goodwill and help.

The Eboses of Ofún Obara (10-6)

- If a woman has come to the oracle for help in conception, this odu demands that sacrifice be offered to Iroko; it is he who will help the client conceive. The diviner should mark what the orisha requires by asking him, “Ebó elese Iroko?” If the orisha will take no ebó, he will not help this client conceive, so the diviner must explore this option carefully.
- For all other clients, this odu mandates that the client adore the ceiba tree, leaving offerings at its feet; again, the diviner should mark what is needed. When the odu will not close in osogbo, Iroko is marking his reception.
- In all types of osogbo, the client must put a red melon to Ogún. The diviner should mark how many days this melon is to remain with him, and then ask where it should be disposed of.
- Yemayá stands up to save this client, and the diviner should mark as many eboses to her as possible. Pray frequently to Yemayá, and wear her eleke every day.
- If the letter will not close and the above eboses have been explained and marked for the client, he needs to plant a ceiba tree with all its rituals; an oriaté, not the diviner, will need to preside at this ceremony. The rituals for planting the ceiba are secret and lengthy; their disclosure is beyond the scope of this text.

The Eboses of Ofún Odí (10-7)

There are three specific eboses mandated in this sign that must be done under specific circumstances.

- If the client who has come for a reading is soon to be wed, the orishas demand that he and his fiancée be married by two separate ceremonies: African-style before the orishas, and in the custom of their ancestors for the sake of their egun. Being married by a justice of the peace will not suffice if this union is to survive.
- If there is a young girl living in the client's house, he must pay for her to receive Olokun or she may become pregnant—either willingly or through rape. Olokun will protect her from harm.
- Anyone who comes in any type of osogbo must offer to the sun and the moon; the diviner will have to mark what is needed and how it is to be done.
- If these things have been prescribed and the odu will not close, egun could be standing up for ebó. The diviner should ask, “Ebó else egun?” marking whatever they require with the oracle.
- If the osogbo is severe and the odu will not close, it is marking this person for the reception of Babaluaiye in conjunction with Naná Burukú; they must be received at the same time. To ensure that they are needed, the diviner should ask, “Koshé Babaluaiye?” If the client is an initiate, he must then ask, “Koshé Naná Burukú?”

The Eboses of Ofún l'Ogbe (10-8)

- In this letter, the reception of Olokun is of vital importance to the client. And if there are any priests or priestesses present at the reading who have not been initiated to this orisha, they should receive her as soon as possible; her influence is that strong in this odu. Those who already have Olokun should give her as much attention as possible during the next month, giving her frequent eboses and offerings. Prepare an agbán for all those in this ilé. The diviner should ask, “Ebó else Olokun?” to see if she requires any type of offering or ebó, and this should be done not only by the client but also by all those who were in the room when the odu fell.

- The client needs to live relying on the Spirits for protection. This includes not only the orishas, but also egun; do not neglect religious duties anymore.
- If the client lives in the country, he should keep a coop filled with white pigeons to honor Obatalá. If all the birds put in this pen die, do not start again; Obatalá has claimed his ebó and the debt is fulfilled. If the pigeons prosper, they must be kept for life; it is with them that the client will find his luck. If the client is a priest or priestess, once this pen is built he may never again sacrifice a pigeon to any Spirit. Another priest/ess must do this in his place.
- If the odu has removed the right to sacrifice pigeons, there is an ebó that the client may do in times of overwhelming need (a veritable holocaust in his personal life). Take two white pigeons and dedicate them both to Olorún with prayers and a libation of water (some recommend making *nangareo* before this ceremony). Once this is done, the priest/ess may sacrifice the two pigeons to the orisha asking for them. He will then have the blessing of both Olorún and the orisha.
- In addition, if the orí ever stands up for an ebó, having another priest or priestess offer two pigeons first to Olorún and then the client's head will bring increased strength, blessings, and luck. This should be done only during a "holocaust"—a time of great need—when no other method of cleansing will suffice.
- The elekes of Obatalá and Olokun should be worn frequently; the eleke and idé of Orúnmila should be received and worn frequently.

The Eboses of Ofún Osá (10-9)

- If the client is a man, he should feed Oshún a goat soon; and if the client is a woman, she should have fed Oshún a goat as of yesterday. Feed her immediately!
- In this letter, there are people other than the client who are marked for ebó. First, if there is an older person living in this client's house, he or she will have legal problems soon and must be told to make ebó to escape harm. Second, if the client has an

only child, or if the client is an only child, the only child must make ebó within a few days because death is following. If neither of these will make ebó, the client may, if he desires, do ebó on their behalf.

- If this letter comes in any type of osogbo, the client needs to make a strong ebó to avert danger: Receive the elekes and warriors, or give a sacrifice to the orisha speaking in this sign. The eleke of Oyá should be received and worn frequently, as well as the eleke of the orisha that speaks in this letter.
- A priest or a priestess who does not have Oyá should receive her as soon as possible so she may fight on this person's behalf. The diviner should ask the diloggún, "Koshé Oyá?" to see if her reception is needed. If not, he should then ask, "Ebó elese Oyá?" to see if she is standing up in this sign for an ebó.
- Upon getting home after this reading, the client should give saraeko to Elegguá and Obatalá (if he has these orishas); the head should also be marked with white chalk (efun), and this should be worn to bed. Sleep in white.

The Ebores of Ofún Meji (10–10)

This letter demands very strong ebores, and if the client lacks either the elekes or the warriors, these should be obtained immediately so that he is under the orishas' full protection. If the elekes and warriors have been received, strengthen and refresh the elekes, and offer sacrifice to the warriors: This is needed to bring the client through the severity of this letter. In addition, the godparents of this aleyo might want to give him the elekes of the orishas to whom he has to make ebó, and the elekes of Ogún and Ochosi so he might be protected by them on a daily basis. The key to averting disaster in this odu is to prescribe everything possible under its influence.

- If it has been determined that the grave is, indeed, opened for this client, he should feed the earth, orisha Oko, and Yewá. The diviner must mark what is to be done with the shells. There is no need to ask if ebó must be done; just tell the oracle that you wish to mark ebó to that Spirit, and proceed following the

guidelines in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If no ebó can be marked, something must still be offered.

- Eboses should be marked to Obatalá; the client must tend him frequently if he wants his environment to become or remain cool and calm. Ask, "Ebó elese Obatalá?" marking what is needed for this orisha.
- A rogación with the mark of ten things should be given, and the client should dress in white from head to toe for ten days. Do not go out at night during this time.
- The client must receive Iroko (this may be needed even for an aleyo; however, in this case Iroko should be received in conjunction with Obatalá), and if he already has this orisha, the diviner should mark eboses to him to ensure this orisha's goodwill. For the initiate, ask the question "Koshé Iroko?" if the letter will not close, and for the aleyo, do not ask this question until the options for eboses have been exhausted under the parent odu. If Iroko is needed, the sign will not close out until it is marked.

The Eboses of Ofún Owani (10-11)

The following eboses are mandated in this sign.

- The client should not have anything of witchcraft (Palo) in his home. If he has been thinking about taking the initiations or receiving a nganga, he must not. If he has a nganga yet is not a palero, he should think about dismantling the cauldron. If he is a palero and this letter falls (obviously he is involved in Santería as well), he must not use his witchcraft for wicked ends. Rely on the orishas more than on the dead or nature spirits.
- In the house there is a stick that trips people occasionally. If the client cannot think of what this stick is, he should go into the woods and find a stick his own size. This should be brought to the diviner with a belt, a pouch, and anything else marked by the orisha taking this ebó. The pouch is filled with the ingredients for the ebó and tied to the stick with the belt, and the stick is then stood in the earth. The stick should be fed in the name

of the orisha asking for the ebó and then left to be taken down by the elements.

- If the client can find the stick in his home that trips people from time to time (a broom, a mop handle, for example), he should bring it to the diviner so he can make the above ebó with it. Once done, the client should play the lottery occasionally: He might win soon.

Once these options have been explored, if the odu will still not close, the diviner should investigate the following eboses.

- A cane should be beaded and given to Obatalá; if the client does not have Obatalá, it should be given to either the diviner's or godparent's Obatalá. It needs to be washed in omiero and fed before being left with the orisha.
- The eboses marked to pay the client's debts to Yemayá/Oshún should be done immediately. If the client cannot remember having any debts, the diviner must mark eboses to placate the two orishas. The questions "Ebó elese Yemayá?" and "Ebó elese Oshún?" should be asked, with the diviner marking whatever is needed.
- If this letter will still not close for an initiate, he needs to receive Iroko, and if he already has this orisha, the diviner should mark eboses to him so that he helps keep the client from harm. For the aleyo, the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Iroko?" marking what the orisha needs; he should not, however, mark one who is not an initiate for this Spirit except as a last resort (when even the eboses of the parent odu fail).

The Eboses of Ofún Ejila (10-12)

- In this sign, it is imperative that the client have a rogación at the feet of Obatalá with the mark of ten things; in more serious osogbo, the orí should be fed two white pigeons.
- Strong eboses are needed for this letter; the client should have in his possession the elekes and the warriors. The eleke of the orishas speaking in this sign should be given and worn frequently.

- A gourd filled with water, cornmeal, and honey should be put to the warriors Elegguá and Ogún.

The Ebores of Ofún Metanla (10–13)

It is important that the following three ebores be prescribed to the client when he comes in this sign.

- The client should have a rogación with the mark of ten; it needs to be done at the feet of Obatalá. In more serious osogbo, the orí should be fed two white pigeons.
- Strong ebores are needed for this letter; the client should have the elekes and the warriors. Also, the elekes of all the orishas speaking through Ofún Metanla should be given and worn daily.
- A gourd of cornmeal, water, and honey should be left with Ogún and Elegguá.

After those things have been explained and written in the record of the reading, the diviner should ask the oracle for closure. If the odu is not placated, then the following options should be explored.

- In this letter, the client may have unresolved issues with Oyá. First, for the aleyo, the diviner should ask the oracle, “Koshé eleke de Oyá?” and if the answer is yes, then her beads should be given to the client. Next, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Oyá?” to see if she is standing up for ebó in the reading. If she is, the diviner must mark the offerings to be given. If she does not want ebó, then the eleke should be given at her feet following a rogación.
- Next, the aleyo for whom this letter falls could be Oyá’s child if this has not yet been determined; with a sign as strong as this, the diviner should now begin to determine the guardian orisha. If it is Oyá, then the client needs to receive her as a lavado orisha in conjunction with Obatalá—and ocha should be made as soon as possible.
- An initiate who does not have Oyá might need to receive her, and the diviner should place the question “Koshé Oyá?” to the shells to see if her reception is needed.

The Ebores of Ofún Merinla (10-14)

When this odu opens on the mat in anything beyond iré yale, all of the following ebores must be prescribed by the diviner.

- When this letter falls, the client is in need of a rogación; it should be done at the feet of Obatalá with the mark of ten. In serious cases of osogbo, the orí should be fed two white pigeons.
- The initiations of both the elekes and the warriors should be given; and after the elekes have been received, the client should also be given the beads of Babalwaiye. If any other orisha stands up in this sign, the beads of that Spirit should be given as well.
- A gourd of cornmeal, water, and honey should be put to Elegguá and Ogún.
- Unless this odu falls in iré, ebores should be made to Elegguá at the street corner, to Elegguá in the house, and to the orí of the diviner. The ebores for both Elegguás will consist of a rooster, while the ebó to the diviner's orí will consist of a rogación and the feeding of two white pigeons. The client must present a derecho even for the diviner's ebó; and this money may not be spent by the priest/ess on anything until at least four days have passed.
- The client should receive Babalwaiye as soon as possible. Until this can be done, his eleke should be worn continually (still observing the prohibitions).

The Ebores of Ofún Marunla (10-15)

- In this letter, the client should give Yemayá a watermelon in her home, the ocean; if this is not possible, he should give it to the godparent's Yemayá. After this, the client may never eat melon again.
- The client is in need of a rogación at the feet of Obatalá; use the mark of ten. If this letter falls in a serious osogbo, the client's orí must be fed. After this, a white scarf is presented first to Obatalá, and then to the client's head. Until the energy of this odu has passed, the client should keep the head covered in white when going outdoors in the sunlight.

- Strong ebó is needed in this sign: The client should have the initiations of the elekes and the warriors in addition to the elekes of the orishas that speak in this letter.
- The client should do one or more of the eboses for Ofún, the parent odu; the diviner should mark that which is needed.

The Eboses of Ofún Merindilogún (10–16)

- In this sign the client has serious unpaid debts to Shangó, and these must be paid. If the client cannot remember such debts, the diviner should mark as many eboses as this orisha will take so that his goodwill toward the client is ensured.
- A rogación should be given at the feet of Obatalá with the mark of ten things; and if the letter comes in serious osogbo, the orí should be fed two white pigeons. In addition to this, a sacrifice of two white doves and a basket of cool fruits should be made to this orisha, and using the shells, the diviner should determine if Obatalá requires anything else.
- If the client does not have them, he needs the initiations of the elekes and the warriors immediately. The elekes of the orishas speaking through Ofún Merindilogún should also be given, and the client should wear them frequently.

The Eboses of the Parent Odu

If options given in the omo odu have been explored and Ofún will still not close, the parent odu is demanding one or more of the following offerings under the following circumstances.

- First, if the client is a woman with children, she should make a votive offering to the first orisha that spoke to her in this sign. This will ensure that her children come to no harm either in the house or in the street (Ofún marks tragedies for children related to the client). Normally, this ebó is done to Elegguá, for it is his diloggún read for the aleyo and initiate alike; but if an orisha stands up who embodies some sort of motherhood (like Yemayá or Oshún), the offering needs to be directed to her. If there is any confusion, the diviner should mark the orisha taking the ebó and the ebó itself with the shells.

- The second circumstance of Ofún that marks ebó is the coming of a married man to the oracle. Any type of osogbo for this client mandates that he make a votive offering to Oshún lest his wife be influenced by this letter. The worst-case scenario under this sign is that she will feel impelled to leave her husband while he is under Ofún's influence. The diviner must mark the ebó to Oshún so her acceptance is assured.
- The third circumstance that marks ebó under the influence of Ofún is the possession of the warriors. Immediately upon returning home, the client should put a saraeko made from water, cornmeal, and honey to Elegguá and Ogún. This should be left there overnight and thrown to the street the next morning; the offering itself is remade every day for three days. If the osogbo is severe, then a dry white wine should be added to the saraeko.
- For all those who come in an osogbo in Ofún, if the letter will not close off the eboses of the composite odu, the following things should be done: For ten days, the client should use a spiritual bath made of *quita maldición*. For more severe osogbos, fourteen different herbs sacred to the first orisha that spoke in this letter should be added to this bath. If the letter does not close easily, the baths should be repeated for fifteen days. Also, for the next ten days the client should dress totally in white; again, if the letter will not close easily, this should be extended to fifteen days, just as with the spiritual baths. Finally, until the energy of Ofún has cleared (twenty-one to twenty-eight days), the client should mark both his hands and his feet with cocoa butter and efun before going out his front door the first time every day. This will help him encounter only coolness and freshness throughout his daily journeys.

Having prescribed the eboses from the list above that apply, the diviner must then pursue the following options.

- At the feet of Obatalá, a rogación with the mark of ten things should be given to the client (note that from this point on, the number ten should be involved in all the eboses marked by

Ofún, especially anything that involves the client's head or orí). If this ebó is not strong enough for the odu, give a rogación with the mark of ten every day for four days, demanding that the client dress totally in white during this time. The following prohibition should be delivered after administering the first cleansing: Avoid dark places or those areas where the dead walk.

- If the rogación cannot be marked, or if more than a rogación is needed, Obatalá needs an ebó with four cool fruits. Let the oracle mark the fruits that are given. If either Obatalá or Ofún demands more, the same four fruits should be given anew every day for four days, and after the last set of fruits is taken away from him, two doves or white pigeons should be offered in sacrifice.
- If all else fails, at this point the diviner should try to mark ebó to Oshún asking, "Ebó elese Oshún?" The offering needed must be marked as detailed in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." The ebó needs to be done within the next ten days.
- If nothing else will close this letter for the aleyo, santo lavado needs to be given. If the guardian orisha of the head is not Obatalá, Obatalá must be received in conjunction with the orisha of the head.
- Finally, a priest or a priestess could have unresolved issues with any of the orishas who are listed in the section of this chapter titled "The Orishas Who Speak in Ofún." The issues can range from the reception of an eleke, to an ebó, to the reception of the orisha, and the diviner should proceed with this line of questioning slowly and thoroughly so that only what is needed is given.

Keep in mind that within Ofún there are certain elements of ebó that are considered traditional in the odu. Since Ofún marks ten in all things, each ebó marked with the shells should incorporate this number somehow so that the letter itself is placated with the orisha. Additionally, whenever a sacrifice is needed through this sign, try to

pick the animals used from the following list: two pigeons or doves, a single rooster, a single hen, or four white pigeons. Any rogación given might also include snails (since these are sacred to Obatalá and their secretions cool and refresh the orí). Adimú-type offerings can include efun, cocoa butter, coconuts, coconut oil, and horse's hair (in the form of the "fly-whisk" given to the orishas that are considered to be royalty).²

2. A fly-whisk is a horse's tail mounted in a wooden handle that is beaded in the same colors as an orisha's eleke. Orishas given fly-whisks are considered royalty in the pantheon: Oyé, Obatalá, Yemayá, Oshún, and Shangó.



Opening Owani— Eleven Mouths on the Mat

The Proverbs of Owani

- Two phrases sum up this client: ungrateful and full of mistrust.
- When water is carried in a basket, it drips between the reeds.
- Water cannot be carried in a basket.
- Only the coconut knows if it has worms inside.

The Orishas Who Speak in Owani

In this odu, the following orishas are known to speak: egun, Elegguá, Oshún, Babaluaiye, Oyá, Ogún, Ochosi, Naná Burukú, Osain, and Shangó.

Special Notes on Owani

Owani rises from Metanla¹ (thirteen mouths). Although the former sign may be read by an italero, the latter is a sign left to the skill of an oriaté (master of ceremonies) or a Babalawo (priest of Ifá). To understand the implications of Owani, however, one must briefly examine Metanla's most primal implications. It is the first letter "owned" by Babalwaiye; it is also the pattern giving birth to "the hot winds that bring infectious disease . . . tropical epidemics [that] will blow through an area and strike at random."² The connection between Africa's varying tropical climate and the rise and fall of global epidemics and harsh weather is a fact that has been known among the Lucumí and their Yoruba ancestors for centuries, yet known to the scientific community for only a decade or two. Even in its most gentle orientations, Metanla can bring Asohano's wrath: disease of skin and immune systems, famine, poverty, and familial and communal disasters. Yet from these things come iré; that which does not kill us only makes us stronger. Through its actions, weakness is destroyed and strength is instilled in our species.

Once the energies of Metanla were solid in creation, the force of that odu spilled out and became Owani. Of this sign Fatunmbi writes, "Once the past has become solidified in the present moment, it lays the foundation for that which is to come . . . every present moment carries the potential to change the future as an act of will."³ Owani is an odu very rooted in the past, yet fulfilled only in the present. It is a sign of introversion and introspection, and a letter that encourages sacrifice of the superfluous for the accomplishment of one goal. At every crossroads a person must make one of three choices: turn right, turn left, or forge ahead. Picking one sacrifices the remaining two, while staying still keeps all avenues of choice alive yet unfulfilled. Metanla destroys what is weak so Owani can use what is strong to evolve. Such is the power of this odu that Fatunmbi makes one final

1. Metanla is the first of four chronological signs that are "closed" to an italero. The other three are Merinla, Marunla, and Merindilogún. For information on how an italero ends these readings when the odu opens in these signs, see the end of this chapter and chapter 13.

2. Awó Fá'Lokun Fatunmbi, *Awó: Ifá and the Theology of Orisha Divination* (New York: Original Publications, 1992), 144.

3. *Ibid.* 141.

assertion, that it "incarnates great prophets, those who have the courage to deviate from the past in search of a better future, in search of deeper levels of understanding and harmony."⁴

Therefore, the casting of eleven mouths on the mat is a moment filled not only with fear and apprehension, but also with fullness and hope. During the ritual known as *itá*, the *oriaté* will give the sacred sign of *odu*: Both hands are placed on the mat, palms upward, while the fingers of both are wiggled several times in succession.⁵ Once done, the *oriaté* continues with the *mojuba* of Owani while all present bow their heads in reverence. While an *italero* might not share in these actions for a reading, both *italero* and *oriaté* will need to use the following set of rituals when this *odu* opens as a primary on the mat: The casting of the composite is put on hold while all the shells are gathered from the mat and put together in a gourd of fresh, cool water; once the opening *odu* has been written in the record, the diviner's assistant takes this gourd to the front door, opening it wide. Using one hand to cover the open end (just leaving the fingers fanned so water may flow out), this priest/ess flings the water as far away from the front door as possible. Thus is the heat of Owani removed from the home. *Odu* is now spiritually "cool" enough to be handled, and the shells are returned to the diviner so he can proceed with the casting of the composite *odu*.

The session with Owani now proceeds normally until the orientations and origins of *iré/osogbo* have been determined. Again, the reading is interrupted for a brief series of rituals designed to cool the erratic vibrations opened in this sign. Opening in *iré*, the *odu* demands that a *saraeko* of water, cornmeal, and honey be put immediately to *Elegguá*. Opening in *osogbo*, a *saraeko* is made for *Elegguá* with red palm oil, *jutía*, and smoked fish (plus the previous ingredients). After this is done, three small brown bags are filled with three pennies each, toasted corn, *jutía*, smoked fish, and red palm oil. Attendees at the reading use these to cleanse themselves before *Elegguá*, and then everyone else in the house must do the same. This *ebó* must be left with the *italero's* *Eshu* throughout the consultation;

4. *Ibid.*, 142.

5. Owani is often called "wiggly," for those who are born through this sign have soft, weak backs; however, no one would ever dare refer to this sign by this name during *dilogún*.

afterward, they are thrown into the street. Finally, if the composite odu Owani Meji (11-11) opens for the client, or if a lot of Owani opens during the manipulation of diloggún, some food must be cooked and put to Elegguá as ebó before giving the reading. After the consultation, all the eboses done are taken to the street with the words "Eshu batie sode." Using obí, the diviner should ask Eshu if all is well. If not, there at the street corner the diviner must mark the eboses that will placate this orisha using four pieces of coconut. The eboses divined must be done immediately.

The Message of Owani

Owani is a grave sign. Even if it opens with iré, the diviner must treat the letter as if it fell in an osogbo. Not that iré won't bring goodness, but its warnings and prohibitions are to be regarded sternly so the client may avoid the tragedies, the inherent dangers, that come when this odu falls on the mat. An italero has the responsibility of ensuring understanding of eleven mouths by his client: The full impact of the reading, the orisha's will for conduct and ebó, the taboos dictated—all these must be delineated. To pick apart the many prophecies in this pattern, begin by determining if this client is one for whom the head has not been read. The orí could be Elegguá's, and it is through him that one must work to understand Owani's implications. If the client has no Eshu, his reception is mandatory. The elekes, the warriors—these can wait until after the client has his Elegguá. For whatever reason, this orisha wants to be in this person's life; and until he is there, the client will have no evolution.

Being an aleyo, even if the client already has the initiations of the elekes and warriors and the reading of the head, in Owani the propitiation and adoration of Elegguá are essential. If a Spirit beyond Eshu rules the head, Elegguá is still so close that he might as well own the head. The godparents should spend time giving instruction about this orisha's nature. Prayers, songs, and eboses to Elegguá should be shared so he might walk closely with the godchild. Although the oracle needs to be asked first, the diviner might need to mark an additional path of Elegguá for this client; the reception of this new path will do much to clear the osogbo from this person's life. An orisha priest/ess opening in Owani will share the same concerns as the aleyo;

however, the opening of this pattern points to a lack of respect and reverence toward Elegguá. The orisha of the head is first and foremost, but caution the client that without Eshu's goodwill there can be no communication between humans and the divine. Even an Ifá priest must give Elegguá attention equal to that shown to the mighty Orúnmila, for only in this way will there be evolution.

In any orientation of Owani, certain osogbos will be shared. Iré will mark that these are possibilities, dangers that can be avoided if the client is careful. If osogbo is marked, these are already destroying the client. To catch his attention, the italeró should begin, "You are not now as you once were; your life changes quickly but know that in a few months you will not be as you are now. The changes you have gone through—you know those, and they are part of the reason you are here. The changes that are in the future, are they for the good or for the bad? Only Eshu knows, and right now he won't say. Yet through Owani he tells us what must be done so that it comes for the greater good and your own evolution." The diviner should then continue to tell the one at the mat the opening information about odu and Elegguá. The client's attention will now be centered, focused, for it is worry about past changes and an uncertain future that has brought him to the mat. Having gained the client's attention, this priest/ess's job is halfway complete.

There are other general predictions in this letter that the diviner can use to gather and focus this client's attention. Tell him first that he is facing a period of grief: Relationships can suffer under this odu to the point of dissolution, yet Elegguá can keep the doors to a reconciliation either open or closed, depending on his whim. Avoid bragging to one's lover; avoid arguing with one's lover. These are things that can quickly end the affair. Economics figure prominently under this sign as well; the client should learn to save money and avoid frivolous expenses. Finances can become tight at best, dismal at worst, and a series of economic choices will have to be made. Spiritual and physical difficulties will plague this client: Disease, depression, and exhaustion are all possible in varying degrees. The advice of Owani in these things is prevention, preparedness, and precaution; act as if every decision made in the areas of finances, relationships, and health will affect the rest of one's life, even if the decision is minor. This way, there will be no drastic emergency, no surprises.

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The following orishas demand propitiation for specific situations; the italero should relay what is appropriate to his client. Elegguá and Oyá are the ones to be petitioned when others try to bring intrigue, scandal, or harm. They offer protection even against unseen enemies. They stand up in Owani to take care of the evil brought by others, and the diviner should try to mark eboses to them if his client is facing these things. When the one at the mat feels his life is in danger at the hands of another, he should go to Shangó for protection. Offer him adimú and pray that he fights in all wars the client is facing. Through Obatalá, the client opening in Owani may find peace. He should clean himself and his house with two white pigeons, feeding these to him. A rogación given at Obatalá's feet will soothe the orí; after all has been done a white hen or rooster (depending on the italero's path of Obatalá) should be given in thanksgiving. If the help of either Shangó or Obatalá is enlisted, both should be honored, for in Owani they walk closely. Finally, emphasize the honoring and propitiation of Eshu until Owani has passed. He is of integral importance, and this cannot be overemphasized. Owani can be placated only by continual ebó, and the client must be told this.

Opening with eleven mouths there are also many assumptions that the italero can make about this person's character. First, the client is very strong and decisive; when his mind is made up, he pursues his goals ruthlessly, almost recklessly. More than any other character trait, this will bring his demise. He is afraid to listen to advice since so many offer so much, and little of that is good. The tendency is for others to use him; they rely on his personal strength for their own ends. Already poor in communication skills, for a time the one who opens under this odu will find that few people understand what he is saying or expressing. *Note:* This letter does mark, no matter its orientation, two lovers who are in love. Determine if there is a significant other, and then deliver this message: "You are very much in love, as is your partner. But now is not the time for deep, meaningful discussion about the past, present, or future. Avoid disagreements. Keep communication simple. There is a danger of escalating arguments, and these will hurt your love; it is fragile now under this sign. Be careful." To argue with one's lover now is to invite separation and eventual divorce; make sure that he understands this.

Family concerns also figure prominently in this odu. The client for whom the letter falls faces one of many possibilities concerning children. First, the woman in this sign either has or will have children by different fathers. It is not uncommon for a married woman in this sign who has committed adultery to be unsure of the parentage of at least one child. The man in this sign might have children by two different women, and there is the possibility that these children have never met (he might be unaware that he has a child by another woman). In family units such as these, especially those involving adoptions or stepchildren, it is imperative that both spouses love all children equally. They are innocent of their parents' mistakes and should not suffer emotionally because of them. Human nature often dictates otherwise; however, Owani demands equality. By following this advice, a brief period of good fortune will follow among all family members (it will be transitory). Sickness among family is marked here as well, even if the sign has opened in *iré*. Only *ebó* will be able to save those who fall gravely ill. The client as well is marked for disease, the severity depending on his own character and constitution.

While the things discussed so far will apply in all orientations of odu, when the letter falls in *osogbo* a whole new set of difficulties are marked through Owani. It will bring destruction, ruin, treason, scandal, and scarcity to this person's life. To work through this letter, the diviner must now determine if the *aleyo* has had the reading of the head. If not, the *orisha* of the client's head will need to be determined before the session can continue; he or she is now demanding that this person become more humble and thankful for whatever blessings exist now lest they all be taken away. He must also be extremely grateful for things done or given at the hands of others; it is his own *orisha* that prompts these actions. Until the client's current attitudes change, his guardian will turn his back on him and life will begin to unravel. It is the *italero's* job to determine this *orisha*, marking *eboses* that will slowly bring the client back into alignment. Also, the mighty *Babaluaiye* and sweet *Oshún* arrive here to claim debts owed to them (if the client is a child of either *Oshún* or *Babaluaiye*, his problem has just deepened). These debts must be cleared up or their goodness will be lost as well. *Note:* Once *ebó* has been made to the client's *orisha*, the diviner should use *Obí* to determine if this person needs to move soon. There could now be danger in the home.

As in all the odu, the orientations of ano and ikú demand special study and attention. Ano, no matter its origin, will flag illness that is already present; the client's body is being attacked from within and it is only his strong constitution that keeps him from experiencing symptoms. Lifestyle and vices have brought decay to the internal organs. It is possible that this illness is only in the beginning stages. Behavior modification will do much to lessen or even reverse the damage done. One class of illnesses marked for this client's future is entirely avoidable: sexually transmitted diseases. Caution this person against unwise sexual encounters; many of these illnesses are asymptomatic for years, and some can leave one an invalid after infection. When ikú appears through Owani, it can mark death on either the client or one who is close to him. This sign now gives a severe prohibition: Do not grab, shove, or push anyone. Do not be rough with children or the elderly. It could bring death. Loss of life through either accident or illness can be marked here. In an osogbo of ikú, the diviner should mark eboses to Elegguá and Ochosi: They are the ones who can save this person from harm.

In addition to things already discussed, Owani can bring a variety of issues, and the italeró should explore these.

- Any arguments between friends, lovers, and neighbors could escalate and require mediation by police. Avoid these.
- The client must learn not to brag; do not talk to others about unexpected spurts of good fortune. In this letter, Eshu is always listening to what is being said, and he will destroy those things that are shown to others. Keep silence and secrecy at all costs.
- Good fortune, if it comes through Owani, is fleeting. The key to holding it and making it last is to propitiate Elegguá continually. He is the whim of fate, and when happy with the client he can bestow many blessings.
- There are many hidden, unsuspected enemies in this client's life. He must watch his back at all times. Do not become entangled in gossip or illegal or immoral acts. People who suggest or do these things are not true friends.
- A mass if required by this client's egun. If the client has had consultations before, he was told to do this as ebó and never

fulfilled their wishes. Until a brief series of masses are given, there can be no evolution.

- In more severe orientations (ano and ikú), one might even say that death stands by this client's side. The dead were petitioned for a specific favor, and the promises made were never fulfilled in exchange for the blessings given. The client must propitiate egun so that no bad fortune or harm befalls him.
- If this is the reading of the head, the diviner should ask his client if he was born next to an ocean or a river. If not, it was raining the day of his birth; this person might be a child of two waters, and either Yemayá or Oshún could claim his head. If either becomes his guardian orisha, he must forever treat them both with equal love and respect.
- The client's home is not very comfortable. He thinks about moving, yet he cannot afford to move.
- Under Owani, it is guaranteed that the client will be around those who argue or fight. Do not get involved, and do not try to separate the parties.
- If this is a priest/ess, or an aleyo with orishas, the tureens housing their stones, shells, and implements must be guarded. Do not leave them unattended around others. Someone will try to steal the client's implements.
- Finally, under the influence of this sign it is not unusual for the client to have many dreams of a sexual nature. He may dream of lovers and naked people. Also, note that an unmarried, sexually active male may soon be named as the father of another woman's soon-to-be-born child.

The Prohibitions of Owani

If Owani opens in any orientation beyond iré, the diviner must prescribe taboos from the following list, keeping in mind the composite odu that has opened; and, if the letter later refuses to close, he might want to prescribe from the list of prohibitions for the secondary letter. In itá, these taboos will last for a lifetime. For an aleyo, the list of taboos should be followed for twenty-one to twenty-eight days. This is considered the normal amount of time for an odu to pass.

- No matter how much harm others do to the client, he should not try to destroy someone's life, nor should he entertain or talk about killing another. This will eventually land the client in jail.
- Do not fall in love with another person's spouse.
- Even if this client is a priest or a priestess, the necklaces of the religion may not be worn, nor should anything tight ever be worn around the neck.
- Avoid gossip, lies, and slander. Do not argue, and do not fight. These are the types of things that will land this person in jail.
- The bad done once should not be done again.
- Communicate clearly with people; always make sure that others understand what it is you are trying to say. This is the only way in which the client will avoid scandal.
- Do not linger around people who are fighting. Do not try to separate people who are fighting.
- Do not play practical jokes on anyone, nor should "play fighting" be entertained. That begun in fun will end in anger.
- Do not use weapons.
- Do not leave others unattended around the orishas, and always keep them in a secure, safe place. They cannot take care of someone who does not take care of them. If the osogbo of this letter is severe, the shells should be locked in a safe place, and the otanes should be moved temporarily to a new location. The orishas might want the client to move them to a new, permanent residence, taking himself with them. The diviner should mark this if the osogbo is severe.
- Because this letter points out that the law is on top of the client, he should not accept gifts from strangers or acquaintances, nor should he hold onto anything for anyone. It might bring incrimination.
- Eshu says there is danger in his home, so do not stand or linger on street corners.
- Do not keep broken pots, and do not plant seeds in pots that are broken, cracked, or chipped.

- Avoid parties, large groups of people, and places in which people “party” and use intoxicants; the orishas say that these things are not meant for the client now. Street corners are sources of danger; stay home. Do not get involved in love triangles or illicit relationships, for these will bring only scandal and harm.
- Do not forget to thank those who offer their help.

The Ebozes of Owani

The initial *larishe* prescribed for this *odu* is important, and it must be done quickly to avoid *osogbo*. It is, however, rare that the reading closes on the initial remedy. One or more *ebozes* will need to be marked from the following lists.

The Ebozes of Owani Okana (11-1)

This *odu* calls for many strong *ebozes*, as do all the composite letters of this sign. *Elekes* and warriors should be recommended for all clients who do not have them, and if both are had, make sure this person has the *elekes* for *Elegguá* and *Ogún*, and the orishas that speak individually in this sign. However, remember that one of the prohibitions in this letter is that necklaces may not be worn, so once the beads are given they may be worn only for the day and then must be taken off. If the diviner feels that the orishas want the client to wear one or two *elekes* for protection, he should check with the shells to determine that this is okay. Never, even if the orishas allow it in these signs, wear more than two *elekes*, and check them frequently while being worn so that they do not become twisted or tangled. This prescription applies to all the composite *odu* that open in Owani.

- If the *larishe* prescribed in this sign is not enough to close the *odu*, *Elegguá* is demanding a very strong *ebó* of the client. A goat must be fed to *Eshu* in the woods, and then one must be fed to him in the client's home. The following day, the client must sit with an *oriaté* for *itá* with *Elegguá*. The godparents should be present to record the results of this *itá* in the *aleyo's* or *santero's libreta*.
- Additionally, if the client does not know his ruling orisha, the reading of the head should be performed so he can begin to pla-

cate this Spirit. In Owani Okana, the parent has all but left the child.

- A special note for the diviner: There is an ebó that must be done when doing the eboses prescribed in this odu. Money given as a derecho should be put in a clay container that has been well oiled with epó. Leave this with Elegguá for three days before it is removed. This ebó will ensure that the client never returns to the diviner's door as an enemy.

The Eboses of Owani Ejioko (11-2)

- The client must have his guardian angel brought down to the mat so he can begin to placate this Spirit. He is now in bondage to ocha, and if he cannot afford to be initiated, he should at least take santo lavado for spiritual evolution.
- The next person who comes to this person's house is destitute; the client must offer him food, drink, and rest to excess. Only in this way will the wars and problems in his home come to an end.
- The client must first have a rogación and sacrifice to his orí, and then he must sacrifice to his own egun, who are trying desperately to help him through all his difficulties.
- The client needs to receive the Ibeyi. They will help protect him from harm.
- When Owani Ejioko opens and refuses closure for a priest/ess, the orisha speaking in this sign could be marking a tambor as the solution for all the client's troubles. The diviner should first ask if a tambor is required; and then he should ask if the orisha whose diloggún is being consulted wants the tambor. If that orisha refuses batá, the diviner should try to mark the tambor for one of the orishas given in the initiate's ocha. If all of these refuse the drum, begin asking about the other orishas, following the order given at the beginning of this chapter under "Orishas Who Speak in Owani." Note that if the tambor is marked during a iyawó's itá through either Elegguá or the orisha of the head, that client is automatically marked to give a drum to all the orishas in time. Also, proper protocol must be

followed in giving this ebó: The godparent's orisha (from whom the client's head was born) must be given a fundamental drum before his own orisha may have one.

The Eboses of Owani Ogundá (11-3)

- The client needs to have a rogación, and after the rogación, he must dress in white for a total of sixteen days. Red clothing is now taboo.
- Two pigeons should be fed to the head in yet another rogación once the sixteen days in white are finished. This will give the ori strength.
- Sacrifice to the client's Ogún in his home to appease him. If this ebó is not strong enough to satisfy the orisha, sacrifice to Ogún in the woods.
- Whenever Owani Ogúnda opens for a priest/ess and refuses closure, it may mark one of two eboses: the giving of four legs and an itá or the reception of the knife. First, the diviner should ask the oracle if an orisha needs four legs; and then he should ask if the orisha speaking requires four legs. If so, the ebó is marked and no itá is required. If four legs are needed for an orisha beyond the one speaking, the diviner tries to mark it for one of the orishas given in the client's ocha. After those orishas, he asks about the rest of the orishas given in the section of this chapter titled "The Orishas Who Speak in Owani."
- If the oracle will not mark four legs and an itá for any of the orishas, the diviner should next try to mark the reception of the knife. After this, return to the list of eboses given for the parent odu, Owani, to find closure for the reading.

The Eboses of Owani Irosun (11-4)

- The client should receive the Ibeyi and throw a party for them, inviting as many children as possible. During the party, the children in attendance should not be criticized or scolded. If they are behaving badly, gently redirect their attention to new things. After the party, make a special request of the Ibeyi, and they will grant it.

- After the client has the Ibeyi (and after their party has been given), he should receive Ideu, the third Ibeyi.
- The client needs to have Olokun as soon as possible. She will fight many of the wars that the client fights within himself.
- A sacrifice should be made to the warriors: one rooster. After this, Shangó should be given two roosters. They will fight the wars that need to be fought.
- If the client desires initiation, ebó should be made to help him find the luck and evolution to do this. On a large white platter, present two coconuts, two soles from old shoes, two little fish, two small dolls, and three scarves (one white, one yellow, and one red). Also, on this platter there should be a small toy house, two bunches of plantains, and two full packets of confetti. The client should dress in old clothing, coming to the godparent's house with the derecho for the ebó and a full change of white clothing. A cleansing in omiero is given, and then a rogación. Once all is done, the platter with the articles and the old clothing are taken to the foot of the Iroko tree with a prayer for initiation. Everything is left there with the tree.⁶
- All of the above eboses must be done by aleyo and initiate alike; if, however, the letter will not close for a priest/ess, that person might need to receive Iroko. The diviner should ask the question "Koshé Iroko?" to see if this orisha's reception is needed.

The Eboses of Owani Oché (11-5)

- This odu gave birth to the feeding of egun, and in this letter, they must be fed even if they have not stood up for an offering. After this ebó is done, the client should spend much time with his dead, praying for them and their evolution so that they may, in turn, help him evolve.
- There are implied debts with Oshún in this letter; the client is advised to pay these debts as soon as possible. If he cannot remember incurring any, then he must allow the diviner to mark

6. Iroko is both a tree and an orisha. The orisha Iroko lives in the tree as well as in oranes, shells, and implements.

eboses to placate her and ensure her goodwill. The question “Ebó elese Oshún?” should be asked, and whatever she needs should be marked. If no ebó can be marked, it would still be wise for the client to offer her an adimú.

- Owani Oché marks that a powder or witchcraft has been thrown on the client. The remedy for this is simple: Go to a river, taking adimú to Oshún (she is the true mistress of witchcraft), and then bathe in her waters using a sponge made of hemp. After this, the client should dress in white and have a rogación beside that same river.
- After all these things are done, the client must receive Olokun. Although one would normally “love her from a distance” after her reception, this odu marks that the client must spend much of his time attending to her and doting on her. Remember that the ocean would have overtaken the world had it not been for the grace of one!

The Eboses of Owani Obara (11-6)

- Even though Palo Mayombe is a faith different from Santería, the client needs to be cut to Palo (if an aleyo), or marked spiritually (if a priest or priestess); check this with the shells before the advice is given. If the oracle refuses to let the client be cut or marked, a ngangá must be given to the client so that the Congolese spirit that is close to him will work for him. Although santeros in our faith know how to make ngangas, the letter might refuse closure unless the diviner tells the client he must see a true palero to have a pot prepared. If the client is not allowed full initiation into the religion, this may be all but impossible (although many paleros work closely with orisha priests and priestesses). Mark this only as a last resort.
- If the letter refuses closure after the larishes and above ebó have been marked, Elegguá is standing up for four legs. Give him this, and the next day the client must sit for itá with Elegguá to find out exactly what he wants.

The Eboses of Owani Odí (11-7)

In this sign, all of the following eboses must be done in time.

- To win all of life's wars and evolve spiritually, the fundamental batá must be played. In this odu, the drum must be given to either Elegguá or Oshún, and the diviner should mark which orisha will take the drum. If neither requires it at this time, continue down the list of orishas who speak in this odu until one is marked—but in time, both Elegguá and Oshún must be given drums after the one marked in this odu is given.
- Before leaving the diviner's house, the client should be given a rogación and told to stay indoors as much as possible for eight days. Someone is watching this client, waiting for a chance to attack or hurt him, and after this time, the stalker's attempts will be foiled. There is, however, severe danger for the next eight days.
- Elegguá must be taken into the woods and fed three chickens.
- The client has prospered and will still prosper under this odu; however, sacrifices should still be made in thanksgiving to Elegguá and Oshún so that their goodwill is ensured.
- The diviner should prepare a niche osain when this letter falls for the orisha standing up in the letter. The niche osain should have a little monkey included in its design, and nine brightly colored ribbons should hang from it in the fashion of tails.
- From this moment on, the client should live by making ebó. In time, he will have to make ocha.

The Eboses of Owani Shogbe (11-8)

- If the client is having legal difficulties, we say that it will not take long before the police come to take him away. This odu, however, gives an ebó that promises escape from the legal system. Ochosi should be offered two pigeons, and the client should have a rogación at his feet. The derecho for this work is automatically twenty-one dollars, and the diviner may not keep this fee or else the law will one day come to knock at his door.

The money should be given to a beggar on a street corner; this will be Eshu in disguise to test the italero.

- Even if the client thinks that he attends to his Elegguá well, he should still offer this orisha a rooster so that there are no debts incurred. This should be done as soon as possible.
- The client has many difficulties, and these should be left at the feet of Elegguá. The diviner must mark ebó to this orisha using the shells, and when the client comes to make his ebó, he should first tell Elegguá about all the people and situations in his life that are troubling him. The offering should be made after this is done.
- This odu mandates that the client care for Elegguá frequently; he should also care for a child of Obatalá who lives in his house.

The Ebores of Owani Osá (11-9)

The following ebores must be done when Owani Osá opens on the mat.

- The orisha speaking in this odu demands that a flag in his or her colors be flown over or near the front door to the house. This will put everyone within the home under that Spirit's protection.
- If the client is expecting a new child in the family, ebó must be made to save the unborn baby. Ask which orisha stands up for the child, and what that orisha requires in return.
- If someone ill comes to the client's house, he can make ebó on that person's behalf so that death will not take the sick one before his time.
- This letter prescribes that the client bathe many times with an infusion of sage. The home should be fumigated with sage as well so that evil cannot rest within its walls.
- The client should have a rogación; during this cleansing, the orí must be fed two white pigeons.

Once these ebores have been prescribed, if the sign refuses closure, the diviner should continue with the following items.

- This letter demands a niche osain be made for the orisha speaking up in this reading. The charm should be carried at all times, following the taboos that one would follow for the elekes.⁷ Whenever the niche osain is not being used, it should be kept with the orishas.
- Elegguá and Ogún could be standing up for their own eboses to clear the client's paths in life and to keep his travels safe. The diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Elegguá?" and "Ebó elese Ogún?" to see if these two orishas are in need of anything.

The Eboses of Owani Ofún (11-10)

- In this letter, Babaluaiye is removing his blessings from the client's life due to disrespect. There are debts due him, and he is demanding payment. The diviner must mark what the orisha requires. He should ask the question "Ebó elese Asohano?" giving the orisha a chance to mark the eboses he requires. If no ebó can be marked, the client should be advised to spoil Babaluaiye in return for his goodwill and future blessings. As the client gives to the orisha, so shall the orisha forgive him.
- Elegguá should be offered a rooster so that his goodwill is always ensured.
- If these two things have been prescribed and the odu will still not close, the sign could be marking the client for the reception of Babaluaiye. The diviner must ask the question "Koshé Babaluaiye?" to see if this is necessary.

The Eboses of Owani Meji (11-11)

- No matter how many eboses are made to the orishas, things in the client's life will still remain difficult due to an egun that

7. There are many taboos that must be followed when one wears the elekes or carries any charm of the orishas. One must not go to bars or "seedy" places while they are being worn. One should not drink or take illegal intoxicants while wearing them. Nor should one wear them when engaging in sexual activity or during the menses. Following the latter two situations, one should shower or bathe before wearing them again. One must observe proper legal, ethical, and moral conduct when wearing or carrying anything of ocha.

likes to make this person work for what he gets. This spirit must be placated so that it interferes no more, and the diviner should mark what it will take to keep this egun from being so troublesome.

- After the egun is placated, the client should tend to Babaluaiye. The diviner must mark what this orisha requires. In severe cases of osogbo, the client will have to receive him.
- Elegguá should be fed three baby chicks at a crossroads so that all the roads in this client's life are opened.

The Eboses of Owani Ejila (11-12)

- An adimú of cool fruits should be offered to Ogún to placate him; if this orisha remains spiritually hot, the client will soon be injured by metal. The diviner should mark what is needed to cool the orisha, how long the offering is to stay with him, and what is to be done with it after the ebó is complete.
- Shangó stands up to help this person, but he demands an ebó in return. The diviner should mark what is needed so this orisha may begin his work.

A Note on the Remaining Odu in Owani

Having passed 11-12 in the family of Owani, the diviner can no longer read the oracle for this client. Life's complications are too deep, too heated, and too volatile for the orisha priest's skills at divination. Diloggún evolved in Cuba, a spiritual necessity amid the lack of a trained Ifá priesthood. As it developed, so did a "treaty" with Ifá and Orúnmila: Even though the santero could read composite odu as if working with Ifá, there were still certain signs claimed only by Orúnmila himself. Therefore, only the Babalawo can successfully open and close these letters. These odu are four in number: Metanla, Merinla, Marunla, and Merindilogún. Owani, being formed by eleven open mouths on the mat, is too spiritually close to the last letter allowed the orisha priest, Ejila Shebora. Also, the last four double odu in this family are best left either to the skills of an experienced oriaté who has many years working in our faith and many years of appren-

ticeship behind him with another experienced oriaté, or to the aché of the Babalawo.

For the inexperienced priest or priestess who has neither the right nor the training to claim the title of oriaté, the ebó done as a precaution in this sign should first be given to cool the excessive heat of the double odu that has opened. It would be best to have a virgin child do the ritual of cooling Owani's heat by throwing the water from the jícara in the street; but if there is no child available, have the youngest person in the house do these ritual gestures. Once the saraeko for Eshu has been made (and the brown packets should be done as well—just as a precaution),⁸ the shells are gathered, blown on by the priest, and put back on the covered plate. The money that would have been the diviner's derecho is given back to the client, and the entire reading is then ended. Later, after the client leaves, a large quantity of cool water is thrown out into the street after him to remove all possible harm from the diviner's front door. A Babalawo should be sought out immediately to see the client. The diviner is cautioned to not read for anyone else that day until after he has read for himself; the eboses prescribed in his own reading will serve to remove all harm that the volatile energies of these last four patterns can bring.

In Owani, there will be many instances in which the composite odu will not close out even if the larishes and eboses of that letter have been prescribed (or in the case when the composite odu is beyond the skill of the italero). When this occurs, the diviner will need to turn to the following list of eboses for Owani itself to find an ebó that will bring this session to closure. The key to giving a reading successfully in this letter is for the priest to progress slowly and smoothly: Make no mistake in the divination pattern itself (determining iré/osogbo, the proper type of iré/osogbo, and the marking of larishes for each orisha that stands up in the reading). The prohibitions, as well, must be well delineated for the client, for in a letter so hot as this, not to follow taboo is to invite the inherent osogbo of this letter into one's life. Make sure that the ebó of Owani (the saraeko to Eshu) is done immediately. Once

8. Remember, each brown packet must contain three pennies, toasted corn, jutía, smoked fish, and red palm oil.

the possibilities of each composite have been exhausted, the diviner must then turn to this list to find a possible solution.

- The following eboses should be explained before anything else in this list is marked. First, this letter mandates the reception of Elegguá; keep in mind that the client sitting before the diloggún could be his child. If Elegguá and the warriors have already been received, an additional Eshu should be made, for this will be the path of the orisha to solve all problems being faced at this time. The path to be made must be marked with the shells if a path is not already determined in the composite odu that has opened. Second, the dead are standing up in this sign to claim what they have not been given: prayer, veneration, fresh water, light, and devotion. The client must have an opá ikú fed and it must be used regularly. There is also a need for a spiritual bóveda. Finally, a large amount of red palm oil should be given to Elegguá on a daily basis; this is one of his favorite staples, and it will give him the strength to keep the client's life moving smoothly. Finally, a rogación should be given at the feet of Obatalá, and the client's head should be fed two white pigeons or doves if the osogbo of the letter is severe.
- If these eboses are not enough to close the letter, then Elegguá and egun might be standing up for additional offerings. The diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Elegguá?" and "Ebó elese egun?" to see if they require any additional eboses.
- If Elegguá would not claim an ebó, or if the ebó marked to Elegguá was not enough to close this odu, the following is mandated for the orisha: A rooster is to be given to him, followed by toasted corn, jutía, and smoked fish. The acheses of the animal must be cooked for Elegguá, and a meal must be prepared from the animal's meat (unless, before the sacrifice is made, Elegguá demands that the client be cleansed with the animal). If this is not enough to close the letter, and if the client is an initiate, then four legs and itá must be given to Eshu.
- In Owani, any type of osogbo automatically marks the need for ebó to Babalwaiye. There are debts incurred with him through this sign, even though the client might not be aware of what these debts are. To check that this is necessary, the diviner must

ask, “Ebó elese Babaluaiye?” marking what the orisha requires. If Asohano will not claim an ebó, the client should at least be given a rogación at his feet, and then his eleke should be put around his neck. These beads must be worn every day.

- If the diviner has come this far into the odu and it will still not close, he must take into account the orishas that have stood up in this sign. Normally, Elegguá will speak in Owani with one or more orishas, the most common combinations being Elegguá/Oyá, Elegguá/Ochosi, Elegguá/Babaluaiye, and Elegguá/Oshún. In tandem, the two Spirits could be standing up together for ebó, and the diviner must ask each combination, “Ebó elese Elegguá y [orisha’s name]?” The ebó must be marked and the two orishas given ebó at the same time. If eyebale is called for, and the client is an initiate, keep in mind that four legs and itá could be marked for these Spirits as the solution to all his problems.
- If the composite letter opened in ano or ikú and will not close, it mandates eboses to Elegguá and Ochosi. Also, an ebó should be marked to Oshún to save this person from illness if the illness has not yet manifested.
- Finally, if the diviner has come this far into the odu and it will still not close, the reception of one of the following orishas might need to be marked: Oyá, Babaluaiye, or Ochosi. The question “Koshé [orisha’s name]?” should be asked for each Spirit.
- This is the point when the diviner will want to call a more experienced elder if placation of odu has proved fruitless. The options at this point are to first explore eboses with the remaining orishas that speak in this odu and then to explore the eboses of the secondary odu. Before doing these things, however, the diviner should pause to reflect upon the advice of a more experienced elder; something could have been missed in the process of divination.

Realize that in this odu there are certain elements of ebó that are considered traditional to Owani, and the diviner should try to mark these in the offerings as much as possible during the consultation. If eyebale or the sacrifice of animals is called for, pick from the following list: two roosters, one hen, or one rooster; a single rat or a single bush

rat can also be used. No matter who takes the sacrifice of a rat or jutía, the head must be cut off, oiled with red palm oil, and then put to Elegguá. Smoked fish will also always accompany a sacrifice of the jutía. For adimú-type offerings, a bottle of water, a bottle of rum, three pots, eleven needles, and all types of cooked foods may be offered (fruits are desirable when the odu demands coolness).



Opening Ejila Shebora— Twelve Mouths on the Mat

The Proverbs of Ejila Shebora

- One town must have only one ruler.
- If the house is your home, you should act like a king.
- A town can only have one king.
- The ship is sinking in rough waters.
- If there is a war, one must act like a soldier, and soldiers do not sleep amidst a battle.

The Orishas Who Speak in Ejila Shebora

In this sign, the following orishas are known to speak: Shangó, Oshún, Dada, Oyá, Oba, Osain, Iroko, Obatalá, Orúnmila, and Oké.

Special Notes on Ejila Shebora

“Ejila Shebora is the metaphysical principle used to represent all things which stand on the threshold of completion,” writes Fá’Lokun Fatunmbi. “As we move towards completion of any task, a moment

comes when we begin to sense the consequences of our effort even before it is fully manifest.”¹ This odu, twelve mouths on the mat, is the most heated, most complex of all the letters that an italero can read. It was born from the holy odu Ogundá (three mouths); because the former sign is given to the nature of struggles, wars, and even bloodshed, this letter will share in its parent’s heated, volatile essence. That which is born of war will show the scars of war. Yet this sign is very much a threshold, a doorway. Unless the nature of the client for whom it has fallen exaggerates or aggravates its nature, its tendency is to slowly cool down over a span of time until it is neither too hot nor too cold. Under the influence of Ejila Shebora, life will rearrange itself and make things more supple and supportive, encouraging evolution in spite of the harshness that might remain in the client’s life. It gives order to chaos, peace to struggle, and harmony to discord. Before the sign has run its course, the one for whom it falls will see the end result and understand that there was a plan behind life’s harshness. The key to this sign is not to give up before this vision has been attained.

As symbols of this odu’s place in nature, we see twelve mouths in the molten earth, the viscous, thick lava that gyrates ceaselessly under the earth’s mantle. It is also seen in the action of fire, and wherever electricity exists, there this odu may be found as well (such as lightning). One phrase can sum up the entire focus of this letter’s actions: “the wrath of heaven.” Wherever the odu is in effect, its working will display this before the energies have passed. Of its connection with thresholds and completion, Fatunmbi again writes, “In Nature, one of the places that stood on the threshold of completion was the fire at the center of the earth. There was a point in the past when the fire at the center of the Earth was too hot to sustain life. There will be a point in the future when the fire at the center of the Earth will be too cool to sustain life. At the moment when the great oceans began to form, the Earth stood at the threshold of human evolution.”² It is this moment to which the client’s destiny aspires—yet the road to this point may be fraught with anger, with despair. The reading begun in this sign must immediately be placated and cooled with the sacred

1. Awó Fá’Lokun Fatunmbi, 142.

2. *Ibid.*, 143.

gesture lest the heat of Ejila Shebora overwhelm even the italero. Shangó, the owner of this odu, is given homage as the diviner lifts both buttocks one at a time and says, "Kawo! Kabiosile!" to honor both the orisha and the letter that has fallen.

It is also these very forces that make this odu a dangerous one for the italero to read, and the reason this is the last letter available to the diviner in this system of divination. In Chapter 12, I wrote that the letters after Owani Ejila (11-12) were too hot for the orisha priest to read unless he had experience equal to that of an oriaté. In this odu, all the letters that can open are volatile, dangerous, and the diviner must proceed with the reading slowly and cautiously or not proceed at all. The reason for this, again, is because of the treaty with Ifá; anyone who has read the works of William Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries* and *Ifá Divination*, will know that in Africa, orisha priests and priestesses do not read composite odu as is the practice here in the New World. This is an adaptation, a survival mechanism that was created between the native Yoruba system of cowries and the oracle known to the Babalawos as Ifá. It was made necessary because of the lack of Ifá priests in Cuba, and the proliferation of those who worshiped the orishas. In crafting this new system of diloggún, however, our ancestors in ocha realized that they would never have the full aché in divination that a Babalawo possessed. Orúnmila is the only orisha who knows everything, so the last four odu in this system can be handled only by his trained priesthood. A spiritual treaty exists, and its unspoken etiquette demanded that the odu known as Metanla, Merinla, Marunla, and Merindilogún would remain only in the province of the Babalawo.

Therefore, this is the last letter that an italero may use in our system; and unless the diviner has the skill of an oriaté, it is dangerous to read a composite odu in this pattern. There are too many variables, too many unknowns that can enter into such a pattern. Unless the skills have been honed and perfected, it would be wise for the novice to end this reading after giving the basic advice of the parent odu and seek out a qualified oriaté to give another reading, or even a Babalawo. As a diviner myself, however, I have seen many novices work this letter; and for this reason I am still including this chapter in my book to give advice as to how the newly initiated should proceed. The orishas can see much farther and wider than I, and rest assured that if the diviner does not cover everything this composite odu demands, or does not

say everything the orisha demands must be said, the letter will not close out. It is at this point that the diviner must stop relying on the material given in this book and must use his own skill, or else call in an elder who is experienced at manipulating Ejila on the mat. Remember: It is not a mark of failure to rely on the elders; rather, it is a mark of wisdom to admit that one does not have the prerequisite knowledge, for only then may that knowledge be acquired.

When Ejila Shebora falls on the mat, and before the composite odu is opened, the diviner should gently lift each shell (open mouths first, and then the closed mouths), putting each into the gourd of fresh, cool water. At this point, there are two ways to proceed. First, the diviner should pick the youngest child in the house (a virgin) to lift the gourd from the mat and take it to the front door. Second, if no child is available, the youngest initiate should lift the gourd and take it to the front door. The quality that is needed in this sign is innocence, and children are innocent by nature; this will help placate the heat of Ejila. Once the gourd is at the front door, the opening is covered loosely by one hand so the shells cannot fly out, and the water is flung far, far out into the street. These actions cool the spiritual vibrations brought in by the letter; they are then flung back into the world (which is large enough to handle and cleanse these energies). The shells are then brought back to the diviner, who proceeds to open the composite odu. If, however, the diviner does not feel that he can proceed with this consultation, he blows the Spirit out of the shells, returns them to the covered plate, and gives the *derecho* back to the client. The reading is then ended, and the priest/ess must seek out a more qualified diviner.

If the diviner chooses to proceed with the reading, he must pay special attention to the composite odu that has opened. If Ejila Meji falls, or any other hot letter such as Okana, Ogundá, Obara, Osá, or Owani, he will want to do the ritual of saraeko for Shangó before the orientations, larishes, and eboses for the omo odu are marked. In all signs but Ejila Meji, this ritual is optional; some diviners wait to see if the letter falls in *osogbo* before making saraeko. In our own house, we make saraeko out of things that are cool, sacred to Obatalá, for he and Shangó are close, and while Obatalá cannot partake of all things sacred to Shangó, Shangó can partake of all things sacred to Obatalá. It is this cool orisha's influence that can turn the heat of Ejila into a

blessing. Once the mixture is prepared, the diviner heats up a piece of metal until at least part of it has turned red. The saraeko is placed at the feet of Shangó, and the heated metal is then dropped into the cool fluids and removed once its heat has been quenched. Each person, beginning with the diviner, the client, and then the priests and priestesses in order of elder status, should kneel before Shangó, dipping the index finger of the left hand into the saraeko. The damp finger is then used to make an equal-armed cross on the roof of the mouth with the words "It is better to drown than to burn." Once everyone present at the mat has done this, the iyawós that might be present in the diviner's home, and then the aleyos, must do this short ritual before Shangó as well. Now, everyone returns to the mat and the reading continues.

After the consultation, the client should be encouraged to leave the diviner's home as soon as possible; it is because of the client that this odu has opened (for the odu falling on the mat is a reflection of the odu already open in the client's life). After he has left, the diviner takes the saraeko from Shangó and throws it far out into the street with the words "Eshu batie sode," which mean "Elegguá takes the negativity from the reading." After this, a large quantity of fresh, cool water should be poured at the front door to ensure that no negativity from this saraeko can return to the diviner's home. After this reading is complete, the diviner no longer has the aché to divine for anyone else on this day; the effects of Ejila Shebora drain the power of divination away from the orisha priest until sufficient rest has recharged his strength. He should, however, immediately open the oracle for himself using Elegguá's diloggún to see if any of this letter's effects remain with him. It is important that the priest mark as many eboses as possible so that the full effects of Ejila Shebora may be cleansed from himself, his home, and those who live in his home. Only once this reading has been done is the work of odu complete and the diviner able to relax and recharge for the remainder of the day.

The Message of Ejila Shebora

Opening on the mat with twelve mouths, we say Ejila Shebora has come to the house. Honoring the odu and its ruling orisha, the italero must lift his buttocks one side at a time while exclaiming, "Kawo! Kabiosile Shangó!" Priests and priestesses present should do

the same, paying homage to both odu and orisha. Know that Ejila Shebora is the last sign that can be read by an italero. The reading was almost lost here, and the diviner's skills will be tested as odu is explored for this client. Contradictory, contraindicating currents course through this person's life. Influences are unstable, and spiritual heat builds within and without. As these things are explored at the mat, the assembly of orisha priest/esses might feel edgy, uneasy as the letter is untangled and turned to a tangible reading. This, however, is normal for this pattern; if the diviner follows proper procedure in delivering odu's admonitions, no one can come to unnecessary harm during the rituals that unfold.

In Ejila, Shangó stands up first to speak and claim ebó; behind him stands his father, Aganyú. If the client being read is having his first reading (or if the head has not yet been determined), in a letter as strong as this he might be the child of either Shangó or Aganyú. Keep in mind that the child of one is followed closely by the second, and both will figure prominently in the casting of Ejila Shebora. Falling for either an aleyo or priest/ess of another Spirit, both Shangó and Aganyú are standing up to offer advice and protection. Through twelve mouths, both become aggressive; Shangó is said to be angry in orientations of osogbo. Deliver this stern admonition: "Shangó is now speaking to you, and he speaks only once! Listen carefully lest his protection be withdrawn and you are left to deal with your problems alone." Even if this oracle has marked *larishe*, and even if the eboses for odu have not yet been marked, the diviner should instruct the client about Shangó's nature and the *adimú* that he likes to receive. This orisha's placation is essential at this time.

Through Ejila Shebora, the diviner can make many inferences about this client's character and personality. Realize that this person can be summed up in one word: paradox. While sharply intelligent, the child of Ejila pays little attention to his environment. This results in poor choices. He loves adventure, excitement, the unusual, yet this desire for exotic experience leads him astray. Rarely does this client look at, listen to, or evaluate others. Enemies are hidden, and they do all they can to bring ruin to his best-laid plans. Traps need not be well laid, for the tendency under this odu is for the client to be forward focused. He does not watch his back, nor does he look to either side to see what dangers (or blessings) wait there. When his goals are un-

attained, or plans shattered, he knows not why. When blessings approach from unknown, unseen sources, he does not claim them. A responsible italero will spend time carefully explaining this information. Tell the client, "Your eyes must be opened to other people, other places; watch where you walk and always look in all directions at once. Do not trust anyone save yourself. Only in this way will harm be avoided."

The diviner should also note that those things bringing trouble could also become the client's salvation. While opening his eyes to look in all directions, the client should always keep his focus; if he is aware of the environment, there is little that can stop him or turn him aside. Things attained so far have not been achieved without struggle, and he is stronger for this. Tell the client these things: "There was once a time when life was sour, difficult; you had dug yourself into a hole, and you had to climb out alone. Poverty and danger were all around. There was even imprisonment or danger of being jailed. Maybe you even had thoughts of suicide. Yet inertia, the impetus built up by your motion and struggles, kept you moving when nothing else could! Listen to this reading: Heed the advice of Shangó and Ejila Shebora. You will never be that low again." Advise the client to clean house within himself. Negative traits must now be controlled: Bad temper, violent tendencies, a filthy mouth, pride, and vanity must all be tamed. The client must be softer, not hardheaded, open to suggestion, not stubborn. Recklessness and promiscuousness must be restrained. Thus will there be evolution.

There are many spiritual prescriptions that can be given with Ejila to help the client through this period of difficulty. Elegguá should be employed to trap this person's enemies. Paint three mousetraps red and black, washing them in his omiero. Give them to Eshu with a white candle and some rum, asking that he capture the client's enemies before they capture him. Set the traps, leaving them alone until something trips their springs. Each trap sprung shows that one of the client's enemies has been subdued. It must be removed and thrown into the trash (which Elegguá owns). After each trap has been removed thus, three more should be given to the orisha and left there indefinitely. To keep the evil eye off the client's home and to stop evil gossip from spreading, a plaque with an eye and a tongue (*ojo y lengua*) should also be washed in Elegguá's omiero and hung prominently on the front

door. Again, a white candle should be lit to Eshu, and the client must pray for the protection he desires. The eleke of this orisha should be worn at all times so his protection is bestowed in all walks of life.

Prescriptions involving the orisha Shangó may also be given at this time. To clear away all the broken promises, plans, and effects of his enemies, the client should go through his home to find all things that are broken, burnt, or worn out; these are then brought to Shangó with an adimú. He will remove all blocks from the past that impede future progress. Since much of the negativity surrounding the client originates with the “bad tongues” around him, he should make an ebó to Shangó with a fresh cow’s tongue. If the enemies are known and named, they can be written on a piece of brown paper that is then smeared with red palm oil; over this, sprinkle a liberal amount of hot peppers. A thin slit is made in the tongue, and the paper is folded tightly and placed within. Using red and white thread (Shangó’s colors), the cut is sewn tightly; all is put on a white plate and given to the orisha with two seven-day white candles and two coconuts. While lighting the two white candles, the client should pray to Shangó, asking him to sew shut the mouths and bind the tongues of those that speak evil. Everything is left at the shrine until the candles burn out, and then all is removed and left at the foot of a royal palm (a type of palm tree) with six pennies, the orisha’s derecho. The italero should note to the client that once this ebó is done, the client may not participate in gossip lest Shangó sew his own mouth tightly.

Through Ejila, so tight has this client’s destiny become wound with the mighty Shangó that all future work and placation done with this mighty Spirit will serve to further his own evolution. Yet he must always heed the orisha’s advice and words. Relay this information to the client: “Perhaps your strongest qualities are those that you share with Shangó; even when your mind, body, and soul are weak, your head, the orí is still strong! It makes action a way of life for you, and drives you to achieve even when all the odds are against you. Yet the orisha from whom these things come reminds you to slow down. Do not mirror his negative traits: Carry his good aspects in your heart at all times.” If the italero is familiar with any of the patakís of this sign that involve the two Spirits Obatalá and Shangó, now is the time to explore those. If not, then the diviner must explain some of the more admirable traits bestowed by Obatalá, the most desirable being

respect. Throughout his adventures as both human and orisha, it is this Spirit that has brought him coolness, calmness, and wisdom. In ocha, we often say that whenever Obatalá is present, Shangó is there as well, attending to his father and learning by his actions. There are even times when a child of Obatalá's younger aspects is easily mistaken for a child of Shangó, and vice versa; this client must learn to depend on the coolness of Obatalá to balance the excessive energy of Shangó that runs through his veins.

Obatalá stands up in this odu to tell this client that while there are times when the unquenchable heat and energy of Shangó are needed to get by in life, there are also times when coolness, purity, and spiritual chastity are needed to keep life running smoothly. Now is such a time. While Ejila Shebora will keep the client working and moving at a frantic pace to achieve his goals, his evolution, time must be spent each day in seclusion and quiet contemplation. The body must rest, and the mind must be stilled so that exhaustion is not overwhelming. In this letter, it is foreshadowed that one who becomes overwhelmed will not recuperate fully from exhaustion. Depend on Obatalá to guide the strength that Shangó has given, and look to him for a way to cool the passionate, heated vibrations of the odu Ejila Shebora. If the client is in obvious distress or a state of exhaustion when the reading is given, the italero should offer a cool rogación at the feet of Obatalá before he is allowed to leave the home. Remember: Obatalá, while the oldest of the orishas, is also the strongest, and his strength comes from both age and wisdom. Look to the elders for Obatalá; look toward their age and wisdom to find a passage from all osogbos in this sign. Their advice is integral to the safe passage of this odu.

Having delivered the messages of the orishas that speak frequently in this odu, the diviner may turn to the other issues flagged in this sign. Ejila Shebora addresses many concerns and problems that can arise in the client's home. In the family it can point to issues that exist between the client and the father. At best, the childhood relationship with this parent was rocky; the diviner should ask the client if there were issues of spiritual, emotional, or physical abuse. These concerns need to be addressed now, and the client has some type of resentment that needs to be aired out at the mat. The orishas are listening, and this initial release of negative energy will begin the long process of healing. Right now, Ejila Shebora demands that the client put more

attention to the father. As long as he is alive, there must be open, active communication so that when he eventually passes there are no feelings of guilt or resentment. There is even the foreshadowing of poor health on the father's part, and if he is elderly, death could be strolling about looking for him. If the father falls ill, ebó should be made on his behalf if he is not in the religion; and if the father is in the religion, he should be encouraged to seek the counsel of the orishas if he has any health concerns. Remember that the father might never truly change, but he is not now the person that he once was, and any unresolved issues should be forgiven and put in the past. Thus may the future come new and bright. Also, if the client has any brothers or sisters, he must not fail to set a good example for them, especially if they are younger, for they look to the older one for support and guidance in this life.

Issues in the home center on secret, unknown enemies. Realize that others are using witchcraft to bring harm. While this sign will often point to deliberate cursing, those who are not in the occult sciences often bring malicious magic: It comes by their deliberate wishing of harm. Making ebó will do much to quell these negative thought patterns that manifest in the client's life; but if the orientation of this letter is such that it points out a curse, the diviner must investigate ways of directly fighting the witchcraft. Slander is evident. From the family or from someone who lives in the home there has been deception about an inheritance or a benefit. In time, the client will realize what this deception was. The most dangerous enemy lives in this client's home; and if he has roommates, he should consider living alone, having no one in the house who is not a blood or spiritual relative or a lover. The enemy shares with this person; he could even share this person's lover at this time. Beyond having an enemy in his home, danger also comes from fire. Have no lit candles in the dwelling, nor sources of open flame in the bedroom. When not using an electrical appliance, unplug it immediately, and leave no appliances plugged in when not at home. During electrical storms, stay inside the house away from doors and windows. Check the smoke detector systems, making sure there is one in every room. Have fire extinguishers handy at all times, and have a predetermined plan of escape from the home in case of an emergency. If there are young children in the home, all these things become even more imperative.

Depending on the sex and sexual orientation of the client, there is also specific advice that Ejila Shebora can give. First, heterosexual men have voracious sexual appetites in this letter; so strong is the sex drive that it is not uncommon for them to have two or three lovers, and in many cases, none of them knows about the others. Yet while the client roams about sexually, he loves only one with his heart, and it is to this woman that he will turn in times of trouble. Should she find out about the affairs, she will leave; perhaps she would even do something desperate to keep her man. The client is mirroring the more negative qualities of Shangó's dalliances with women, and Shangó wants this to stop. Learn from his mistakes; do not repeat his mistakes. He also warns in this odu that one of the women with whom the client will have an affair will try to tie him to her. This may be through witchcraft, yet it is more common in this sign that a woman will become pregnant or feign pregnancy to tie a man in marriage. Birth control should be used at all times in this letter, especially under the following combinations of Ejila Shebora: 12-1, 12-3, and 12-5. The danger in Ejila Okana is that the health of both mother and child could be compromised; and in Ejila Ogundá this is warned again with the death of either mother or unborn baby being foreshadowed. Finally, in Ejila Oché the desire for abortion will be strong, yet Oshún forbids the woman to have an abortion, and the man may not suggest this option. Be on guard against this trap.

A man who is homosexual is very promiscuous in this letter; and while none of the client's lovers may know about the others, eventually one will find out. The one who discovers the unfaithfulness could become unbalanced and unstable, and odu promises that this person will do something desperate to either get back at the client or keep him close. Some of the secondary odu will foreshadow sexual diseases, and this is always a strong deterrent to sexual activity. A straight woman who opens in any combination of Ejila Shebora is dealing with a man or men who are unfaithful, and she should open her eyes to what is truly going on. Homosexual women are extremely masculine in this letter, and while in itself that is not a bad thing, this trait is often carried to excess; this type of woman mirrors the worst in heterosexual men. Shangó demands that this type of woman soften a bit for a time.

When Ejila Shebora opens in any type of osogbo, it marks a variety of tragedies on the client's head, and the key to averting these dangers

comes by not only making ebó, but by also observing the many prohibitions and warnings that are given in this letter. First, much bad news could come to the client over the next month or so, and each delivery should be handled with caution, calmness, and coolness. Others will depend on the client's strength and reactions for support. The present life situation is bad, and there must be caution in dealing with this so that the one at the mat is not hurt. Watch well the actions of others, especially close friends, for there could be scandal, gossip, and treason; definitely, at the time that this odu fell on the mat someone was planning a trap for the client, something that will hinder him in his personal goals. Poisoning, by intention or accident, is always a danger in osogbo, so pay attention to how food is prepared both within and outside of the home. If the osogbo of this letter is severe, the diviner can be assured that Shangó is angry with either the client or his actions, and any eboses demanded by this orisha must be done quickly to appease him. Pay Shangó what is needed and owed so that the bad times can be left behind for good ones.

The osogbos of ano and ikú demand special attention in Ejila Shebora. When the reading predicts ano (sickness), the client must be careful with his heart. Heavy foods such as red meat and pork should not be eaten, nor should high-fat foods be consumed. Go to the doctor as soon as possible for a medical assessment. The danger here is that there will be some sort of myocardial infarction or congestive heart disease, and if these are already a danger or present, the symptoms will soon bring disability. The client could become bedridden for some time. If this reading is for someone who is already gravely ill, the orishas say that nothing may be done for twelve hours. If after twelve hours have passed the client is still alive, ebó may be marked and made. This will help save the person's life for a time. Ikú (death) in this letter is the most dangerous of all the diloggún's pronouncements. Be aware that before too much time has passed, someone with whom the client is familiar (at times this could be himself) will die.

In addition to these things, the diviner might wish to explore the following with the client.

- Over the next month or so, the client will become more intimately aware of violent acts that are done without provocation: robberies, assaults, rapes, and murders. Some of these could

strike those with whom he is familiar, and if he is not careful, some of these things could affect him. Impress the need for personal security, and security for those he loves.

- This client has spoken ill of this religion and the orishas. This must never be done again.
- Tell the client that he is, indeed, a child of the orishas; they love him. And yet because of his past indiscretions, he must live his life by making ebó to them. Debts have been incurred with Shangó, and these must be paid. Look to Obatalá for advice and encouragement, and pamper Oshún, for she can bring sweetness back into life when it has become sour.
- There is a lot of physical and spiritual fire around this client.
- No matter the orientation of this odu, when in the street be cautious. There could be danger, and yet there could also be good fortune. If the client is careful, he will encounter someone or something in the street that will bring about his own good fortune and salvation. This object or person must be guarded and treated well.
- This client is a friend to one who likes to play cruel, practical jokes. Realize that cruel jokes are never funny, and sometimes more than a person's feelings can be hurt. The client must never emulate this friend, and if possible, he should distance himself from him for some time. The friend will cause problems.

The Prohibitions of Ejila Shebora

Even if the letter has opened in iré, the prohibitions from the following list should be explained to the client; it is by observing taboo that much of the danger foretold by Ejila Shebora can be avoided. Impress upon the client that each of these must be followed for a period of twenty-one to twenty-eight days, as this is the normal amount of time in which an odu passes. If a severe osogbo has opened on the mat, the diviner might want to prescribe these for a longer period, keeping in mind that the taboos last for life if this is the itá of a iyawó. In cases of osogbo, the priest performing the ritual of diloggún must turn to the prohibitions of the secondary odu as well, marking the taboos

from those lists that could apply to the client who has opened in this sign.

- Do not become involved in any illegal or immoral schemes presented by a brother or sister of blood or ocha. Shangó promises that all these will end in failure.
- The client currently has bad intentions for another person; these plans must not be carried out. Harbor no jealousy or evil thoughts. Shangó stands up in this letter to offer his protection, and the evil that others do or have done should be left at his feet. He will deal with these things.
- Do not arouse any hot emotion in another person; be careful with the heart and to whom it is given. Make no false statements of love, friendship, or fealty to another person unless those things are sincere. Someone in whom the client arouses strong emotions will bring much harm and disaster.
- Do not carry weapons; do not be near weapons. Avoid anyone who has to carry a weapon for either work or protection. Danger comes from such people.
- Do not argue with those in authority or positions of power. This taboo applies to police, rescue personnel, and anyone who wears a uniform. Definitely do not argue with one's boss or the job will be lost.
- Do not become involved with anyone who must wear a uniform; this includes civilians and civil authorities. Do not work in places where uniforms must be worn.
- Do not gossip or listen to gossip. Do not slander others.
- Limit what is consumed in the house of one's lover (it could be poisoned either intentionally or accidentally). Watch how food is prepared, and make sure that no powder or witchcraft is placed in one's food.
- Do not wear or borrow clothing from another. Do not allow personal items to be borrowed or worn by someone else. This includes combs, brushes, towels, bedsheets, hygiene products, and anything else that has intimate contact with the body.
- Do not wear stripes, polka dots, checks, plaids, eyelets, or the color red.

- Do not have fires lit while sleeping, and have no source of flame in the bedroom. Do not smoke in bed or when sleepy. Never leave sources of fire unattended. Unplug all unused appliances before leaving home.
- Do not argue with the children of Shangó or Aganyú; start no wars with them, either. If a child of either does evil to the client, it should be left at the orisha's feet. That Spirit will deal harshly with his own.

The Ebores of Ejila Shebora

When Ejila Shebora opens on the mat, the diviner should begin his line of questioning with the following two ebores before going on to the ones listed for each composite odu.

- If the initiation of the elekes has already been given, the client might need the elekes of Ogún and Elegguá so that their protection is with him at all times; in addition to these, the client might also need the eleke of whatever orisha has spoken in this sign. The diviner should question the oracle thus: "Eleke de [orisha's name]?"
- Once that option has been explored, the diviner should consider that the warriors could need ebó as well. Ask for each orisha, "Ebó elese [orisha's name]?" Both Elegguá and Ogún should be given the chance to mark the required ebores following the guidelines in chapter 1's "Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu." If Ósun stands up for ebó, then he must be reinforced with more carga, and then he must be fed a pigeon so there is enough strength to protect the client's head.

The Ebores of Ejila Okana (12-1)

- In this letter, women must not become pregnant. Proper birth control is to be used by both men and women, for they share reproductive responsibility; however, if the woman is with child under this sign, she should immediately make an ebó to Yemayá and Oshún to guarantee her health and the baby's. If the letter will not close, the two of them might be standing up for a specific ebó, and the diviner must ask, "Ebó elese Yemayá y Oshún?"

marking what is needed. The elekes of both these Spirits should be worn at all times. If there is any chance that the woman will need to have a cesarean, then ebó is automatically marked to Ogún as well. A new, sharp knife is given to Ogún with prayers that he will guide the hand of the surgeon so that the metal is healing, not harmful, and then a rooster is presented to the client and rubbed well over the abdomen. It is sacrificed to Ogún and the knife. With the coconuts, Ogún is asked what should be done with the animal remains. A week after the sacrifice, the orisha is given a basket of fresh fruits to cool him down, with prayers for healing of both mother and child. Also, if there are legal troubles being faced by the client, ebó should be made to Ochosi; the diviner must mark what is needed following the pattern laid down in chapter 1's "Marking the Ebooses, or Remedies for Odu."

The Ebooses of Ejila Ejioko (12-2)

- In this pattern the Ibeyi can be a necessity. If the client does not have them, the diviner should mark them with the question "Koshé Ibeyi?" If the client has the Ibeyi, or if the Ibeyi are not needed, these Spirits might still be standing up for ebó. The diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Ibeyi?" If they want an ebó, follow the same pattern for determining ebó as one would the warriors. Begin with the question "Adimú?" and end with the question "Eyebale?" If the answer to all these is no, then the orishas want a party thrown in their honor, and this should be done as soon as possible. Any ebó that is required for one who does not yet have the Ibeyi should be given to the diviner's orishas.
- When this letter falls in any osogbo, it marks the client for a visit to the Babalawo; he must receive either mano or kofá de Orúnmila. Also, if the client is a survivor of twins, or if there are dead twins in the family, many masses need to be said for these spirits. If the letter will not close, additional ebooses may be needed for egun, and the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese egun?" marking what is needed by these Spirits.
- When Ejila Ejioko opens and refuses closure for a priest/ess, the orisha speaking in this sign could be marking a tambor as the

solution for all the client's troubles. The diviner should first ask if a tambor is required; and then he should ask if the orisha whose diloggún is being consulted wants the tambor. If that orisha refuses batá, the diviner should try to mark the tambor for one of the orishas given in the priest/ess's ocha. If all these refuse the drum, begin asking about the other orishas, following the order given at the beginning of this chapter under "The Orishas Who Speak in Ejila." *Note:* There are two rules to giving a drum. First, one may not play batá for one's own orishas before the orisha giving birth to the head (the godparent's guardian) has been given batá by this client. Second, if an orisha that has not been received by a client wants a drum from this client, that orisha's mysteries must be received before the drum can be played.

The Ebores of Ejila Ogundá (12-3)

- Oshún should be petitioned in this odu, for she has the power to bring sweetness into the client's life. The diviner must ask if she will stand up on his behalf, asking, "Iré elesé Oshún?" and if the answer to this is yes, he should then ask, "Ebó elesé Oshún?" If Oshún stands up for the client and wants ebó, the diviner tries to mark it in the same method as that given for the warriors. If Oshún stands up for the client and does not want ebó, we say that she defends this person for free. To honor her, however, the diviner should tell the client he must give his Oshún something to thank her and ensure her future goodwill.
- In this letter, Ogún is causing many of the client's problems and must be appeased; for some reason there are many unresolved issues (and the client probably knows what these are) with this Spirit. An adimú should be offered. If this is not enough to close the letter, Ogún might be standing up for ebó and the question "Ebó elesé Ogún?" should be asked. Following the guidelines given in chapter 1's "Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu," the diviner should mark ebó. If the client does not have Ogún, these things must be done to the diviner's orisha, and then the client should receive the complete initiation of the warriors as soon as possible.

- If this letter still refuses closure, there may be unresolved issues with Aganyú. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Aganyú?” marking what is needed; and if the letter will still not close, the diviner should then ask, “Koshé Aganyú?” to see if his reception is necessary.
- Finally, if this sign opens for a priest/ess and refuses closure, it may mark one of two eboses: the giving of four legs (and an itá) or the reception of the knife. First, the diviner should ask the oracle if an orisha needs four legs; and then he should ask if the orisha speaking requires four legs. If so, the ebó is marked and no itá is required. If four legs are needed for an orisha beyond the one speaking, the diviner tries to mark it for one of the orishas given in the client’s ocha. After those orishas, he follows the order of orishas given in the section of this chapter titled “The Orishas Who Speak in Ejila Shebora.”
- If the oracle will not mark four legs and an itá for any of the orishas, the diviner should next try to mark the reception of the knife, asking, “Koshé pinaldo?” After this, return to the list of eboses given for this parent odu, Ejila Shebora, at the end of this chapter.

The Eboses of Ejila Irosun (12–4)

- Olokun is important in all composite odu that incorporate Irosun. If the client does not have Olokun and the letter refuses closure, mark her reception with the shells. The question “Koshé Olokun?” should be asked. If the client has Olokun, he should ask if the orisha needs ebó. If the answer to this is yes, mark the ebó following the pattern given for larishe in chapter 1’s “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.”
- The Ibeyi can be an integral part of this sign. If it refuses closure and the client does not have these orishas, the diviner should ask, “Koshé Ibeyi?” to see if their reception is needed. If the client does not need them, or if he already has them, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Ibeyi?” marking the ebó that they require.

- Asohano stands up in this letter as well, and if it will not close, the client may need to make ebó to him too. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Asohano?” and if the answer is yes, the ebó must be marked. If the answer is no and the client does not have Babaluaiye, the diviner should ask, “Koshé Asohano?” Until the orisha is received, the client should be given Babaluaiye’s eleke for protection.
- Finally, if the osogbo of this sign is severe, the diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Shangó?” If the answer is yes, the client should be told that his Shangó has left him due to disobedience (the client will know why) and the only way to bring his Spirit back to the otales is to feed them a ram and sit for itá with Shangó.
- If the letter still refuses closure, this person may need Osain. “Koshé Osain?” should be asked, and the orisha should be received as soon as possible.

The Ebores of Ejila Oché (12-5)

- If the client has an illness affecting the abdominal region, the ebó marked when this letter will not close is a rogación of the abdomen and head at the feet of Oshún; this should be explained. Also, women for whom this letter has fallen may never again cut the hair short, and if a man wishes to change the length of his hair, he must consult with Oshún first. These things should be explained to the client and written in the record of the reading, and then the oracle is once again asked for closure.
- Oshún is very important in this letter; if it refuses closure, she may be standing up for ebó. The diviner should try to mark this.
- The next question for the diviner to ask is, “Ebó elese Egun?” or “Are egun in need of ebó?” for they stand up in this letter. If the answer is yes, the diviner must proceed in the same manner as that for Oshún.
- If the letter still will not close, it might be marking issues with Babaluaiye. The pattern of questioning to determine what is needed is this: “Eleke de Asohano?” “Ebó elese Asohano?”

“Koshé Asohano?” If these things will not close the letter, the diviner will need to turn to the list of eboses given for the parent odu.

The Eboses of Ejila Obara (12–6)

- The client should do the following eboses: If this letter will not close, the client has issues pending with Shangó. The diviner should first ask the question “Larische Shangó?” which means “Does Shangó have the remedy?” If the answer to this is yes, then the diviner must follow the method for marking arische as given in chapter 1’s section “Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with the question “Adimú?” and end with the question “Kaure?” If the answer for kaure is no, the ebó marked is automatically eyebale, and feathers are to be given to Shangó.
- Also, this letter mandates that both Shangó and Oshún be given an adimú of fresh squash, and from this moment on the client may not eat, pick, pierce, cut, or give away this fruit. It holds the key to his future prosperity.
- Finally, the guardian orisha, if known, should be given an adimú (anything that the client wants to give him or her). Once done, the client should be given a rogación at the feet of this orisha.
- If the letter still refuses closure, then this client has issues pending with Osain. First, ask the oracle if the client needs a niche osain with the words “Ebó niche osain?” If the letter will take a niche osain, question which orisha needs the niche osain by following the order given at the beginning of this chapter in “The Orishas Who Speak in Ejila Shebora.” If no niche osain may be given, the diviner may then ask if the orisha is to be received: “Koshé Osain?” Use this as a last resort for an aleyo (mark it only after turning to the list of eboses in the parent odu, Ejila Shebora). For the priest/ess, it must be asked before going to those eboses.
- A visit to a Babalawo is needed to receive the idé and eleke of Orúnmila.

The Eboses of Ejila Odí (12-7)

- This odu carries many eboses that are marked by the opening of the letter. First, if the client does not have his warriors, he must get them, and inside Ogún there should be four machetes. These will give him the strength to protect the client from harm in all four cardinal points of the world. To clear the osogbos of this letter, many spiritual baths must be taken with herbs sacred to the orisha whose diloggún is being read; the diviner must prescribe these herbs based on his knowledge of odu and the orisha. Finally, a niche osain must be made, washed, and fed with this Spirit, using the same herbs that are used for the spiritual baths.
- If this is not enough to close the letter, the initiate should wear a red parrot feather in the hair at all times; the aleyo should wear one for the next twenty-eight days, longer if the odu presages a severe osogbo. The diviner might want to mark the length of time the feather is to be worn, and then what is to be done with it once the ebó is done. To protect the home, a red flag should be sewn and hung by the front door in honor of Shangó.
- Somehow, this person has incurred a debt with Obatalá; if he cannot remember having any unpaid debts, then the diviner should mark some type of adimú to this orisha so that there are no unresolved issues. The question "Ebó elese Obatalá?" should be asked, letting the orisha dictate what is required. Even if he will not prescribe an ebó, the client should be instructed how to make an offering to Obatalá.
- All the orishas that are considered warriors can speak in this sign, and if it will not close, the diviner should try to mark eboses to as many of them as possible. There are serious, unseen wars being fought around this person, and he will need their protection.
- If the odu will not close, the diviner should explain the following eboses to the client. First, Yemayá watches over him, and he should wear her eleke every day so she can protect him wherever he goes. Second, the client needs to be cautious with the head;

no one should touch it. The orí needs to be strengthened with a rogación, and if there is any illness this ritual should be done at the feet of Yemayá. She will fight all his battles and be his therapist, so he should leave all his problems, fears, and wars at her feet. Because Yemayá stands up so strongly in this letter now, the diviner should check to see if she wants ebó with the question “Ebó elese Yemayá?” If the answer is no, she protects the client for free, but he should still offer her a token adimú. If the answer is yes, the diviner must mark the ebó using the list for Iarishé in chapter 1’s section “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with the question “Adimú?” and end with the question “Kaure?” If the answer for kaure is no, then the ebó is automatically eyebale: Feathers should be given. Now that these things have been done, ask the oracle for closure.

- If the oracle will not close, explain to the client that Elegguá must be offered a part of every ebó done for the orishas in this sign. He might also want something else, and the diviner should then ask, “Ebó Elegguá?” If he wants an ebó, it should be marked in the same manner as that for Yemayá; and if he wants no ebó, the oracle should then be asked for closure.
- Because Yemayá and Shangó are mother and son, the two orishas might be standing up together to claim an ebó. The diviner must ask, “Ebó elese Yemayá y Shangó?” to see if this ebó is needed, and if the oracle answers yes, the ebó must then be marked following the guidelines given in chapter 1’s “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” If this is the reading of itá, whenever an offering is made to one, part of that offering should go to the other.
- A niche osain should be made for the client; it needs to be made for either Elegguá or Shangó, depending on who speaks in this letter. Whenever the orisha for whom this niche osain is made sits down to eat, the charm should eat with him. Leave the charm in the orisha’s sopera when it is not being used.
- If the letter refuses to close, the client may need to receive Osain; this, however, should be marked only as a last resort.

The Ebores of Ejila Ogbe (12-8)

- The client needs a rogación, and in severe cases of osogbo, the head must be fed two white doves or pigeons. If the letter will not accept this, then there must be a rogación given every day by the godparent for a total of twelve days. The aleyo will have to dress in white this entire time.
- The sacrifice of a goat to Elegguá might be necessary for a priest/ess. The diviner should ask, “Ebó elese Elegguá?” and if the answer is yes, the sacrifice is marked.
- If this odu falls as the letter of the head for itá, the following things are necessary: A charged white horsetail (fly-whisk) should be put to Obatalá. Have caution that no one steals any of the orisha’s tools or implements. A pigeon should be fed to the front door and to Ogún for protection against harm. Dress in white often. Depending on the severity of the osogbo, the iyawó may need to dress in white every day for the rest of his life. Finally, when the year of initiation is finished, this person needs to receive the sacrificial knife.
- If the letter will still not close, the odu may be trying to mark ebó for both Elegguá and Obatalá. The diviner should ask the question “Ebó elese Elegguá y Obatalá?” If the answer is no, they protect this person for free, yet a token adimú should still be made to them. If the answer is yes, then the diviner must mark the ebó needed by following the pattern for larishe given in chapter 1’s section “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with “Adimú?” and end with “Kaure?” If the answer to kaure is no, then the ebó is eyebale (feathers) to both. It must be given as soon as possible.
- In this letter, the client must be given a rogación at the feet of Obatalá to strengthen the head; it is weak. If the osogbo is severe, such as ano or ikú, the orí must be fed two white pigeons to offer it strength. The diviner must ask if Obatalá needs an ebó once the rogación is complete, asking, “Ebó elese Obatalá?” and marking what is needed. Even if no ebó can be marked, the client should come prepared to make a simple adimú in thanks for the orisha’s support.

- Elegguá might be standing up for ebó in this letter, and the diviner must try to mark one. Even if Elegguá will take nothing as ebó, he is waiting to see what the client will offer; an adimú should be made as soon as possible.

The Eboses of Ejila Osá (12-9)

- Once a month until the cycle of this odu has passed (to be sure, the diviner should prescribe it until the next reading with the diloggún is given), the client must have a rogación at the feet of Oyá. If this is an itá, then the rogación is marked once a month for the rest of this client's life.
- The following three things should be done by the client immediately: A white flag to honor Obatalá is to be hung at the front door, an ornate mask to honor the orisha speaking is to be made, and a two-faced doll is to be put to Elegguá. The white flag draws Obatalá's attention and protection to the home, while the mask will help the orisha speaking in this sign hide the client's true feelings and intentions from his enemies. The two-faced doll will enable Elegguá to watch for danger in all directions.
- Egun must be attended well from this moment on; the client should have a spiritual bóveda with nine glasses of water, a white candle, and nine cigars wrapped tightly in nine different-colored ribbons. If the letter will not close easily after these things are prescribed, the first question that the diviner should ask is, "Ebó elese egun?" marking what, if anything, they require.

Having prescribed these eboses to the client, if the letter will still not close, the diviner should proceed with the following line of questioning.

- There could be issues pending with Babaluaiye. The diviner needs to ask, "Ebó elese Babaluaiye?" to see if he is standing up for anything. If so, the ebó must be marked. The client, however, must pay for his ebó in the following manner: Wearing a piece of burlap or sackcloth, he should go out into the streets and beg alms from strangers for a day. (If this sign came in a severe osogbo, he should be given a rogación and the eleke of Asohano the night before going out into the street. This eleke is to be

worn while begging.) This money is then presented to Babaluaiye on a white plate with two coconuts and two white candles as a *derecho*. Once this is done, the *ebó* to satisfy the orisha may be performed by the diviner. From this moment on, the client may not make fun of vagrants or beggars, and he can never ever refuse alms to anyone.

- Shangó could also be standing up in this sign for an *ebó*; the diviner must ask and try to mark one. Even if no *ebó* can be marked to Shangó, the client should be advised to give him a small, token *adimú* to ensure his favor and goodwill.
- If this letter still refuses to close, there could be further issues pending with Oyá, Aganyú, or Babaluaiye. Each should be asked if there is *ebó*, and if there is, the *ebó* must be marked. If the *eboses* marked are not enough to satisfy the *odu*, the diviner must ask the question “Koshé [orisha’s name]?” for each of the three Spirits to see if their reception is necessary.
- If the client is a priest/ess, this letter can also mark the reception of Osain. The diviner should ask, “Koshé Osain?” to see if he is needed.

The Ebores of Ejila Ofún (12–10)

- This letter demands very strong *eboses*, and if the client lacks either the *elekes* or the warriors, these should be obtained immediately so that he is under the orisha’s full protection. Once Elegguá is in the home, the client should give him a *ñame* to eat. Soon, it may begin to grow a vine; however, it must not be allowed to grow longer than the client is tall. From this moment on, the client may not eat *ñame*.
- After this has been done, all the warriors should be given a mixture of cornmeal, water, and honey; this should be left overnight in a gourd. Elegguá must be tended frequently once these *eboses* have been done.
- If the *elekes* and warriors have been received, strengthen and refresh the *elekes*, and offer sacrifice to the warriors; this is needed to bring the client through the severity of this letter. In addition, the godparents of this *aleyo* might want to give him

the elekes of the orishas to whom he has to make ebó, and the elekes of Ogún and Ochosi so he might be protected by them on a daily basis. The key to averting disaster in this odu is to prescribe everything possible under its influence!

- As soon as possible, a rogación should be given to feed and strengthen the orí; unless the oracle dictates otherwise, this ebó should be done at the feet of Obatalá so the client is always under his protection.
- When this letter opens on the mat and will not close, the following things should be discussed with the client before any other eboses are marked. The client must clean the house thoroughly, putting all empty bottles and containers in the trash, removing them immediately from the home. Bad spirits and energies can hide in these things. The client must dress in white often and at least every day for the next twelve days. Many spiritual baths with the plant known as *prodigiosa* should be taken over the next twenty-eight days. The leaves of this plant should be ripped and shredded into cool, fresh water and allowed to soak overnight. The next evening, the client should draw a tub of warm water; while standing in the bathtub, the herbal waters should be poured from the shoulders down. He should then lie back and relax in this mixture.
- If this sign has come in either ano or ikú and will not close, the client must feed the earth, orisha Oko, and Yewá. The diviner must mark what is to be done with the shells. There is no need to ask if ebó must be done; just tell the oracle that you wish to mark ebó to that Spirit and proceed, following the guidelines in chapter 1's "Marking the Eboses, or Remedies for Odu." If no ebó can be marked, something must still be offered.
- Eboses should be marked to Obatalá; the client must tend him frequently if he wants his environment to become or remain cool and calm. Ask, "Ebó elese Obatalá?" marking what is needed for this orisha.
- If the osogbo of this sign is severe and will not close for an initiate, Shangó might need four legs and itá; the guardian orisha of the head might need this as well. The diviner should mark this with the shells. The day of itá, a huge feast should be pre-

pared from the animals and fed to as many people as possible; the more that are fed, the greater the iré from this ebó.

- The client must receive Iroko (this may even be needed for an aleyo; however, for an aleyo Iroko should be received in conjunction with Obatalá), and if he already has this orisha, the diviner should mark eboses to him to ensure this orisha's goodwill. For the initiate, ask the question "Koshé Iroko?" if the letter will not close, and for the aleyo, do not ask this question until the options for eboses have been exhausted under the parent odu. If Iroko is needed, the sign will not close out until it is marked.

The Eboses of Ejila Owani (12-11)

- In this letter, no matter how many eboses are made to the orishas, things in the client's life will still remain difficult due to an egun that likes to make this person work for what he gets. This Spirit must be placated so that it interferes no more, and the diviner should mark what it would take to keep this egun from being so troublesome.
- After the egun is placated, the client should tend to Babalwaiye; the diviner must mark what this orisha requires. In severe cases of osogbo, the client will have to receive him.
- Elegguá should be fed three baby chicks at a crossroads so that all the roads in this client's life are opened.
- This odu mandates the following ebó: The client should dress in red after he goes home, walking out into the street and calling as much attention to himself as possible. Once this has been done, he should go home immediately and dress all in white, walking the previous path once more in silence. This is done so that his enemies will always be looking for the one who is dressed in red; they will never find him. From this moment on, the client may never again wear red.
- Many of the tragedies in this sign can be avoided by working with Elegguá and Ochosi. The diviner should see if they need ebó by asking, "Ebó elese Elegguá?" and "Ebó elese Ochosi?" If this is not enough to close the letter, or if an ebó is not needed, the diviner must then ask, "Koshé Ochosi?" to see if the reception of this orisha is needed.

The Ebores of Ejila Meji (12–12)

- There are two ebores that are mandated in this odu. First, the client needs to take frequent spiritual baths to cleanse the heat in his life. Use white baths of things belonging to Obatalá, and the leaves of the plant known in Spanish as *flor de agua*. Second, he needs his elekes plus the eleke of Babaluaiye. The necklaces of Obatalá and Asohano should always be worn.
- Before questioning the oracle about the elekes or the warriors, the diviner should begin his line of questioning in this odu with Babaluaiye. He should ask, “Ebó elese Babaluaiye?” and if the oracle answers no, we say that this orisha is standing up in the reading to defend the client for free, yet a token adimú should still be given to ensure his goodwill. The diviner should then try to mark the elekes and warriors. If the answer to this question is yes, then the diviner must proceed with the line of questioning given in chapter 1’s section on determining *larishe*, “Marking the Ebores, or Remedies for Odu.” Begin with “Adimú?” and end with “Eyebale?” If the answer to *eyebale* is no, then the ebó marked is automatically the reception of Babaluaiye. Until this initiation is given, however, the client should be given this orisha’s eleke.
- An adimú of cool fruits should be offered to Ogún to placate him; if this orisha remains spiritually hot, the client will soon be injured by metal. The diviner should mark what is needed to cool the orisha, how long the offering is to stay with him, and what is to be done with it after the ebó is complete.
- Shàngó stands up to help this person, but demands an ebó in return. The diviner should mark what is needed so this orisha may begin his work.

The Ebores of the Parent Odu

Even if the ebores for each composite odu have been exhausted, there will be a few times when the oracle will allow closure unless one or more of the following things are marked and prescribed. However, the diviner must still work through the odu thoroughly, not rushing to mark these offerings in hopes of easily closing the let-

ter. Begin by marking the composite odu's orientations and larishes, and then deliver the reading based on these things. Once all the meanings and taboos of the letter have been detailed to the client, ask the shells if the oracle will close. If not, work through the eboses listed for each individual composite odu, asking for closure after each prescription is marked. Only if the oracle will still not close should the diviner turn to these eboses. The key to working Ejila Shebora is to proceed slowly and thoroughly, not failing to prescribe anything that might apply to the composite odu that has opened. Failure rests on the shoulders of the diviner, not the client, and if the diviner makes a mistake in procedure, it will be his fault if the client does not evolve based on his advice. The eboses of the parent odu, Ejila Shebora, follow.

- In this letter, the client is in desperate need of a rogación at the feet of Obatalá; during the rogación, the orí should be fed two white pigeons or doves. Immediately after the rogación, Obatalá should be offered some sort of adimú or sacrifice, and the diviner must mark what this orisha needs before the session with the oracle can be closed.
- If this will not close the letter, the diviner should ask, "Ebó elese Shangó?" If the answer is yes, a new saraeko should be made for Shangó every day for six days. The client should be present each time the saraeko is made, and he should mark the cross on the roof of his mouth with the words "It is better to drown than to burn." When the new saraeko is made, the old should be taken away by the client and left wherever Shangó decides it should be deposited. Determine the method of disposal with obí on a daily basis. If the client does not discipline himself for this daily routine, the diviner must still make the ebó so that he comes to no harm. Once Shangó has been placated (the diviner should check to see if he needs anything else), the client should then wear his eleke every day.
- Eboses should be marked to Oshún so that she will bring money and economic evolution to this client. Ask, "Ebó elese Oshún?" to give her a chance to mark what is needed. Even if Oshún will take no ebó in this sign, frequent adimú should be given to her so that the client is assured of this orisha's goodwill.

- To calm spiritual heat and violence, the client should make an ebó to Obatalá and then wear his necklace every day. The diviner should explain the types of things this orisha likes as adimú, letting the client decide what he will give the Spirit.
- If the client has come for advice about his projects, career, or personal goals, Shangó is demanding sacrifice so that all will come out well. The diviner should mark what is needed, and once the ebó is fulfilled, the client should take many spiritual baths with infusions of Shangó's herbs. The projects will come out well.
- If the osogbo that fell forebodes wars and injuries, a baseball bat should be packed with some of Shangó's herbs and then beaded; the diviner should wash it in omiero and feed it with Shangó. The bat is then left with the orisha so he can defend the client from harm.
- If any of the warriors stand up during the reading in Ejila Shebora, they must be fed two roosters; Elegguá should then be given some smoked fish and jutía.
- If these eboses are not enough to close the oracle, then the client has further issues pending with the orishas who speak in this sign; to solve these issues, eboses can range from the simple reception of an eleke, to an ebó, to the reception of the orisha. The diviner should progress with this line of questioning slowly, not marking anything more than what is truly needed in the odu. If the diviner has come this far, however, and the letter will not close, there may be some mistake in the process of divination, and an elder should be called in for advice on how to handle the reading in Ejila Shebora.

Note that when prescribing ebó in this letter, there are certain elements and combinations of things that are considered traditional to this sign. Whenever prescribing an ebó that involves eyebale, or sacrifice, choose from the following list: two roosters, red meat (such as steak), and twelve turtles. For adimú-type offerings, choose from these: jutía and smoked fish, cornmeal, twin gourds of cooked beans and rice, a piece of tiger skin, cocoa butter, pigeon peas, a small, beaded bat, or red and white cloths.

The Odu Beyond Ejila Shebora

Humans fear the unknown; it sends us all to the orishas for divination. Coming for help, there is only disappointment, perhaps vulnerability, when one of the four “forbidden” odu opens and the client is told the orishas have nothing to say through the diloggún. Many forget that the diviner must also have a physician, just as the doctor has his own physician. In time, all must seek out Ifá, even the oriaté. Our own orishas have sought Orúnmila’s help when their own lives seemed futile. While those who have ocha know these things, while the italero knows these things, while the oriaté knows these things, the uninitiated do not. To be given back a derecho when one has come for help and told “Orisha sends you to Ifá; they cannot speak on your problems here” can be frustrating. Frightening. The odu beyond Ejila Shebora do not always signal disaster for the client, although some diviners will say otherwise. These signs do bring blessings. They do have iré. They have beauty, light, and abundance for us all. In the diloggún, however, they have no meaning beyond “Go to Orúnmila,” and no existence beyond a shadowing of odu Ifá. These letters have aché, aché that can be explored only by Orúnmila’s priests.

Having opened the orisha’s diloggún in one of these letters (Metanla, Merinla, Marunla, and Merindilogún), the diviner must now follow a specific pattern for ending the reading. Immediately, the session is considered closed; the orisha consulted has declared that this person’s evolution will come through Ifá. Orúnmila has issues to discuss, and only the Babalawo has the right to work with him. The

shells are gathered together and put into the gourd of cool water to refresh them. Next, the youngest child, initiate, or a virgin (someone who is already in the diviner's house) is called to take the gourd to the front door. There, the water is flung out as far into the street as possible while not allowing any of the shells to fly out. The shells are then brought back to the diviner, who blows on them and sets the diloggún back on the covered plate to dry. The Spirit has been dismissed. The derecho is then returned back to the client; no work was done, so no charge can be incurred. Odu's one piece of advice is delivered: "Orisha says you must go to Orúnmila; he has issues to discuss with you, and it is through Ifá that your current life situation must be assessed." No fear, worry, or dismay should be encouraged. No osogbo or evil may be implied.

The only imminent danger that should be assumed when one of these signs falls is upon the diviner; until he checks himself with the diloggún of Elegguá, he should not read for any other client that day. Once he is alone, he should divine to make sure that the orishas have not delivered a warning for him. Many will not open the diloggún for this; instead, using the oracle obí, they will ask Elegguá if all is well. If not, ebó must be marked immediately, and performed as soon as possible to clear the sign from the diviner's home. If Elegguá will not speak or mark ebó through obí, the italero has no choice but to open his diloggún for a session.

If the client has come to the oracle for a serious, life-threatening condition, or if the diviner's aché tells him this person is in danger, there is ebó to relieve the assumed osogbo until Ifá is consulted. A rogación should be given at the feet of that person's orisha. If the patron is not known, do the work at Obatalá's shrine; his calming influence can bring coolness to all the odu. Within twenty-four hours, the client should come back to the diviner dressed in old, black clothing; he must come with a derecho, wrapped in brown paper, on a white plate with two coconuts and two white candles. A complete change of white clothing should be brought as well: underwear, undershirt, underpants, shoes, long-sleeved shirt, pants, and a white cloth to cover the top of the head. The black clothing is to be cut off the client, not merely removed, after the initial rogación is given. All should be put into a brown bag that is then sealed. The client must re-dress in white

and have fresh coconut, cocoa butter, and efun put back on the head, which is then wrapped first in cotton and then with the white cloth. The next morning, all these things on the head are added to the brown bag, and they are left to rot by a river at the soggiest ground that can be found.

For those who insist on knowing what things these odu can foreshadow, I have provided the following lists of meanings. They are not exhaustive; and although they will not provide enough material to provide a proficient reading, they will give the student of odu an idea of what these signs can bring.

Metanla—Thirteen Mouths on the Mat

- Take the water from the river, you destroy the home of fish.
- Only strength can destroy evil.
- The earth cannot fall ill.
- The stone will not die.
- It pays to stoop to conquer.

This odu can, and often does, bring disaster to the client when it opens in Ifá; however, because the italeró has not the right to read this sign, he has not the right to impress this information upon the client. Metanla is the first letter owned by Asohano; it is his odu. It refers to the hot, African winds that fly the entire globe bringing infectious disease and death to the very young, the very old, and the very weak. Sickness, however, has its own aché and the implication of destruction in this sign goes beyond the rotting of flesh. Anything weak or useless in the client's life can be destroyed, leaving room for evolution and spiritual/material progress. This is the iré of the sign. Because Metanla can be read by the oriaté (who has been given Ogún's knife and many years of intimate instruction with other oriatés and Babalawos) and because it is not only so volatile, but also close to Ejila Shebora (and giving birth to Owani), many novice italeros do attempt to continue a session in Metanla, pulling up a composite odu to finish the sign. But this is not wise; the odu must be closed using the ritual described in the beginning of this appendix, and the derecho must be returned to the client. It is very

important that the rogación previously mentioned is done; however, there are a few alterations. It is to be done before Babalwaiye's shrine, and the head should be wrapped in sackcloth before it is wrapped in white. To the bag must be added three items: jutía, red palm oil, and three eggs that have been rubbed with red palm oil and sprayed with rum and cigar smoke. The morning after the rogación, seventeen cents should be added, and the client should be cleansed with the contents of the bag.

There are many issues that can be addressed in this letter. First, those who are building homes will find that their construction is delayed; even if the entire edifice has been going on schedule, unforeseen delays will come. The client should now have a backup plan in case he is desperate to move. Those who are planning to move, but have not yet made commitments to move, should stop. Now is not a good time to be changing residences. Anyone involved in the construction industry should be careful; there is danger of accidents that would prevent this person's ability to work. Hospital administrators should not begin construction on their buildings now, and those who work in areas under construction must be cautious at all times. There is danger of falling or being fallen on. Be careful of hot and cold drafts; avoid the wind. Stay away from others who are sick, if possible. Disease can be found in old buildings that are undergoing renovation; avoid these as well.

Those who are wealthy or in positions of power also must exercise caution now. The danger in this sign is that those who are subservient will rise; the master will fall. Trust no one with secrets, and do not gossip about coworkers. Watch the back at all times. Those who are lower on corporate ladders are jealous and vile, and they will stop at nothing to get ahead. Many will lie to the boss. Many will steal from the boss. Many will not do a good job. The boss must stay on top of this, for in the end it is he who will be held accountable.

Parents must watch over children carefully. If they become sick, take them to the doctor immediately. Do not follow home remedies, for these will not be effective. Do not give the children over-the-counter medicine. Take them to a physician who can treat their illnesses effectively before something small becomes something big. If the client has an even number of children, sacrifice should be made now so that half

of them will not die before their time. A woman has or will suffer the same number of miscarriages, if not more, than she has living children. Her womb is not as strong as she believes it to be. An infertile woman can become pregnant under this odu; however, the child born must one day be initiated as a priest or he will die. Parents must live by making ebó for their children, praying for their safety and well-being lest they grow up to be servants and not masters. Those who are born under this odu will grow up to be brewers, chemists, mixers of elements, dyers; they will be great masters only if ebó is made. It is in this sign that Orúnmila learned all the secrets of prosperity, and the children of Metanla can do the same.

This sign flags travels, wanderings, and goals set with no plan on how to attain them. One day, this person might leave the country for a time, traveling to far-off places that others only dream of. Opening in this sign, the client could have a total of three spouses over the course of one lifetime. If the current marriage is strong, there will be two affairs, and the same goes for the spouse.

Merinla—Fourteen Mouths on the Mat

- Although you lost the battle, you have won the war.
- Hot winds bring disease.
- Things come suddenly; you will miss your opportunities.

Within this letter, one learns the story of how the lamp received his own servant to watch over him and tend him for the rest of his life. Before the lamp was born, there was only a string of cotton and a vial of oil; the two of them were close, and went to the diviner (awó) to learn how they could prosper together all their days. Merinla was the sign that opened, and the awó told the two companions that the oracle declared they should live together as one for life. Immediately, a rooster and a he-goat were sacrificed to Elegguá. After eating his ebó, Elegguá put the cotton into the vial of oil and lit them both with the fire from his home. He sent the two who were now one to earth, naming them “lamp.” Soon, humans saw that the lamp was good: It gave them light, and it gave them fire to cook their meals. Lamp could not take care of himself, however, so soon humans were appointed in each household to tend the fire. Thus did the cotton and the thread

live all their days together as one, and they acquired mortal servants to tend them eternally. Those who receive this sign can have the same blessings of the lamp—eternal love and gratitude, service and tending from others—if ebó is made and the client spends his time offering useful service to his peers.

Merinla also tells the story of the cat. Before she came to earth, she went for divination; cat wished to prosper in life, to become a wild and vicious hunter whose prey would never escape. In heaven, she was soft, fluffy, and weak. Being an animal who would have to survive on her own wits, she needed help. Ebó was marked for her: a pigeon to strengthen the head, and a knife, scissors, and rooster to Elegguá. Cat made her ebó and set off for earth. When she arrived, she discovered that she was cunning, stealthy; her mind was brilliant and she was blessed with the gift of tracking game. From her paws grew long, sharp claws, and anything she trapped was helpless in their grip. Her eyes were razor sharp, able to see in darkness and reflective of even the faintest light so that any animal who gazed at her stare was hypnotized, unable to move. She prospered because she made ebó. Under the influence of this odu, even the weak can become strong, the dull razor sharp, and the unlucky lucky. All that is needed are goals, determination, and ebó. Success can be attained.

Sacrifice to Elegguá is one of the keys to success under this sign; with his goodwill, almost any obstacle can be overcome, and success in moderate degrees can be obtained even when the world seems to have turned against the client. Warn this person that he must strive to become the master and not the servant, yet he must become master by offering those beneath him the use of his time, skills, and talents. When Merinla comes out in a reading for a man, it foreshadows the arrival of a new romantic interest, a woman who will be loyal and devoted to him all the days of his life. When his health is bad, she will nurture him; when he is tired and weak, she will watch over him. The man will die before his wife, and she will serve him even unto death. This loyalty will not come without cost. The man must build his life around her; she is to be his light, his warmth, his best friend, and his only lover. To betray her even once would be to send her away forever. The same advice should be told to the woman; however, she must still be attentive to all her man's needs lest he stray. To let him stray once would be to lose him forever.

Under this letter, the client must live his life by making ebó, placating and tending the orishas so all his affairs will come out well. Great problems will come, insurmountable odds that seem unreachable; yet ebó will make all things manageable. Life will be difficult; this person will live among powerful enemies who try to destroy him, but in the end their efforts will be for naught. He will rise above all adversity.

Marunla—Fifteen Mouths on the Mat

- A good general does not send his best soldiers into battle.
- Strong people work to make others strong.
- Divine shrines will always be shrouded in mystery.
- My father told me to carry the bag of success on my neck, and so I will not surrender this bag of prosperity to anyone.

Under this odu, the client has many gifts; he also has many curses. There are wars and battles being fought, many he is not aware of. While strength is this person's best asset, the sign warns that he should not use all his strength at once. Save "heavy artillery" for the final battles of conquest. Act as if in a war: Do not send the strongest soldiers into the first battles. Rather, defend oneself with the weaker weapons in the arsenal. Those who are trying to destroy this person will assume his weakness to be his strength. Spend time trying to strengthen the weakest parts of one's character, nurturing unused or atrophied talents in the fight to achieve greatness. Once those are exhausted, go into battle with the heaviest artillery you have. Thus will success be attained in all things.

It is very important that this client go to the Babalawos to sit with Ifá as soon as possible. Marunla promises great things for this person if he worships Orúnmila, making ebó to him through his priests. If *mano de Orúnmila* or *kofá* is not had, it would be wise to receive it. Orúnmila has great things in store for this person. Ask if the one at the mat is the third child in the family. If so, he is the reincarnation of the mother's previous miscarriage, or a child that died soon after birth. He is lucky to have lived this long, and he must make ebó soon so that his life continues. The children of this third child could be in danger as well, and readings must be done for each to mark ebó and

ensure that they live full lives themselves. A woman who has just had a miscarriage will soon be pregnant again; the soul of that lost child wants to return. Before her womb dries up, she will have at least three children. She must make ebó to Orúnmila after the third child arrives.

Merindilogún—Sixteen Mouths on the Mat

- The person you met once you will meet again, and you will meet him as an elder.
- Patience brings great rewards.
- A single holy word does more good than a load of profane speeches.
- Trouble comes on the day of sleeping.

Merindilogún (also known as Etura, Otura) is perhaps the most powerful of these four odu. The *kasan* is its symbol, a billowing shirt worn by the Yoruba's most influential political advisers. Saved for only the highest ranking officials, it denotes one who has no power of his own, no rule to hold sway, yet has the innate qualities to influence those who do have the power to change, to create. While there are many who would prefer to be king, sometimes it is better to be confidant to the king, to hold political clout rather than power. For while one cannot openly command the masses, there is satisfaction and safety behind another's authority.

Although the *kasan* is this letter's symbol, words are its power, spoken words enlivened by intelligent thought. Those under this sign's influence carry a spark within them that can ignite history's most potent flames; the course of world events can be changed. The extent of this sign's influence depends on the individual's position in life. Words have power, yes; but their power extends only as far as the speaker's audience, and it creates change only when the words reach the ears of those capable of making change. This is Etura's *iré*: to have the vision, the ideals, and the intelligence to create change. This is also the letter's *osogbo*: to lack an audience or listener who can create change. It is the most frustrating of signs.

The voice of this odu is responsible for the creation and dissolution of our world's many religions: Christianity and Islam both have roots deep within this sign. Both are powerful faiths that have brought

many changes to this world. They have done much good. They have created much evil. Both have frustrating pasts in which powerful orators struggled for an audience, and when those audiences were found, they were moved to go forth, conquer, convert, and crusade for their religious causes. Anyone influenced by this letter can do the same, but on varying levels. Children born to Etura often grow up to become orators, teachers, politicians, lawyers, judges, and even presidents. Those who choose a profession not based on politics or teaching but go the route of other, more mundane professions easily rise the corporate ladder to command their own empire. It is the stuff that dreams are made of.

Opening on the mat in sixteen mouths, the orisha consulted has much to say to this client. First, to rise beyond life's tragedies, this is one who must live his life by making ebó; the orishas must be consulted in all things if the client is to evolve. Social, political, and economic well-being all depend on this. Under Otura, one can either rise to the heights of heaven or crash to the depths of earth. Following the advice of this odu ensures that others will always flock as subservient to this person. One's family will grow large in this generation and beyond; someday, this client's descendants can number in the thousands. Unfortunately, some of those born to this generation will have darkness within them. One will definitely be a "bad seed" and will bring much dismay to the family. He will be filled with greed, envy, and avarice. If the client is expecting a child now, this is the one marked for the osogbo. If the client is not currently expecting but is planning another child in the future, that will be the one. Ebó made will save him from this. This letter also flags danger to the client's mother; if she is still alive, she may soon die from malnutrition and starvation. Much attention should be paid to her, and she must go immediately to the doctor if she falls ill. Sacrifice should be made to her head if she is alive, and if she is not in this religion, the sacrifice must be done to the client in her name.

Etura is the home of unfulfilled dreams. The client has many of these; none will come to pass unless he works closely with Elegguá. For some reason, this orisha is upset in this letter. The diviner must speak frankly with the client to determine the reason for this, and he must then work the diloggún until a sacrifice pleasing to the orisha can be found. Once Elegguá's anger is resolved, this person's luck

will change and slowly he will climb socially and economically. Things that were previously denied to him will become his. Finally, this letter may not close out unless the client resolves to receive Ifá. It is in this odu that Orúnmila brought much wealth to the world, and once he is brought into this person's life, the client's world will become prosperous.

Examples of Recorded Readings with the Diloggún

It is important that the information below be written at the top of the reading's record. First, the date of the reading goes in the upper-left-hand corner, followed by the full birth name plus the marriage name, and then the date of the client's birth. This information makes it easy for the diviner, godparent, and client to look back over the reading at a later date, not only determining its accuracy, but also ensuring that the eboses were fulfilled.

12/10/96 · **Juan Ramírez-Rodríguez** · 10/10/62

4-8 Iroso Umbo [This is the odu that manifested when diloggún was opened.]¹

4 osogbo [This is the odu that determined the hand when the question "Iré ni?" was asked. The answer was no; the odu Irosun demanded that the left hand be opened to find the oracle's answer, and the otá was there. Both the odu that fell and the fact that the reading is in an osogbo are marked on the record.]

1. In this odu, the diviner folded up the derecho once this letter opened, crossed himself, and returned it to the client. In Iroso Umbo, the diviner may not charge the client for the reading being given, nor may he charge for the work he does in performing prescribed eboses. Everything must be done for free, with the client providing the material for the ebó. Many diviners have become unscrupulous in their manipulations of Iroso Umbo, delivering the many eboses that can be marked in this sign as advice, not marking them as ebó. In this way, they feel they can get around the prohibition of not charging for their work. This is an unethical practice among santeros; and to my knowledge all who do this lose many times more than they gain financially when the orishas later prescribe outrageously expensive eboses for the simplest of their own problems brought to the diloggún.

5-5 ona [The odu that marked the type of osogbo predicted in this sign was Oché Meji; although Oché is the youngest odu, the fact that it opened in a meji makes it an elder. The left hand was chosen. For ibó, the diviner used otá and apadí, for that is all that may be used when marking this osogbo. Apadí was found in the left hand, the ibó that marks this osogbo.]

4 elese ocha [This is the odu that marked the origin of the osogbo; again, Irosun is an elder odu and whenever an elder falls the left hand is chosen. Otá and efun were the ibó used, and efun was found in the client's left hand; thus the origin of osogbo was marked. In "elese ocha," the next step is to determine the orisha that brings the osogbo.]

4 Olokun [Again, Irosun opened on the mat, and the left hand was chosen. Efun was there, and Olokun was marked as the origin of this osogbo.]

8 Larishe [Odu offers a way to escape the osogbo that is hanging over the client at this time. The odu that fell was Elleunle, the oldest of all the odu. There was no need to open a hand, for this odu answers yes to all questions; however, on a whim the diviner picked the client's left hand anyway. The otá was found there. Odu points out that the client is either at war with himself over finding a way out of difficulty or will perhaps later disagree with the larishe that odu has prescribed.]

4 Koshé orisha (Olokun) [While trying to mark the larishe required by odu, Irosun fell and the efun was found in the client's left hand. Koshé orisha—the reception of an orisha—was marked. Since this reading is filled with Irosun, having opened with Irosun and marking most of its orientations in Irosun, the diviner decides by his own aché that Olokun is the orisha to be received. This is further reinforced by the fact that Olokun is the one bringing the afflictions through odu, and it is she who must be appeased to find a way out of what she has brought. Also, one of the many eboes marked in Iroso Umbo is the reception of Olokun. Now that all has been marked, the diviner begins with his reading, and the assistant begins writing.]

Iroso Umbo: ona elese ocha, elese Olokun. Larishe si; koshé Olokun. Iroso Umbo has opened on the mat; there are closed roads and afflictions at the feet of the orishas. These are brought by Olokun. There is a remedy to the troubles

that you now have; you must receive Olokun. Remember this: Nobody knows what lies at the bottom of the ocean. In this sign we say "Maferefún Olokun. Maferefún Ajé Shaluga." Let me tell you a story.

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THE STORY OF THE SHOEMAKER'S APPRENTICE²

Many centuries ago everyone on earth walked unshod; yet there was a single man, an old, wise man who discovered the method of making shoes. Not wanting to cut his feet anymore on sharp rocks or thorns, he made a pair of shoes for himself, and when others saw how easily and comfortably he walked, they wanted shoes as well. He made them for his family first, perfecting his technique, and then he began to make them for everyone who lived in his town. Because no one else knew how to make shoes, the old man quickly became rich, and the more shoes he made, the more shoes others wanted. He was overworked; and in time, he hired a young boy to whom he could teach his art.

So happy was this poor young man to have employment that he went before the ocean, Olokun's home, every day before going to work; and there he gave thanks for the blessings in his life. In return, Olokun gave him even greater good fortune by bringing the old man and his business new customers. Eventually, the shoemaker's apprentice had enough money to make an ebó, and he gave toasted corn, smoked fish, and jutía soaked with palm oil to the street corner, feeding Eshu, and for the Queen of Oceans he threw a large watermelon into the waters. Eshu accepted his offering—the first the young boy had ever given him; yet since he was at times an evil Spirit, he decided that now was the time to test the young man's faith, bringing him a bit of trouble before he increased his fortune. Soon, Eshu went to the shoemaker (who never made ebó to any

2. The full text of a pataki would not be written in the record of the reading; the diviner's assistant would write down only the title of the story told. Also, the sacred stories that accompany each odu could not be included in the text of this book; it made it too unwieldy, too large. The sacred stories in each letter will be published in future works.

orisha) and told him all the boy did at the ocean and the street corner, saying that he did not do it in thanks, but in the hopes of bringing ruin to the old man's work. The shoemaker was terrified by the news and fired the boy, paying him the value of the work that he had done that day.

The young man did not lose faith. He took what money he had to make yet another ebó to Olokun and Elegguá. Having made his offerings, he was once again broke, and he soon found himself hungry. He began to walk to another nearby town. Eshu smiled to himself, for in spite of the great evil he had visited upon the apprentice, the boy had not lost faith. Truly, he was worthy of blessings.

The boy walked a great time and arrived at a spot where a man sold food; he got a jícara of this, which cost ten cents. After finishing it, he told the man that he had no money. This angered the man and began a fight that drew all the townspeople. They were quick to judge the boy and ordered that if he could not pay for his food, he should be punished severely. Another old man happened to be walking by, and when he learned of the boy's predicament he offered to pay for his food. Satisfied, the crowd broke up and the old man and the boy were alone.

"Why have you done this?" the old man asked the boy.

"Sir," he said, "I was fired this morning and I had no work. I was starving."

The old man asked if he wanted work, and the boy said that he did. "Good, follow me!" When they had walked a long way and the old man was sure they were alone, he told the boy, "Look, your work will be simple." He pointed toward a cave. "We will remove this stone there; it is a hindrance to us. This is the door to a cave, a narrow entrance that would not have room enough for me. But for you, it will be easy to slip inside. Once inside, your work will be to chip away the great stone until the opening is large enough for me to pass through."

He gave the boy a hammer and chisel, and the boy entered and saw that the cave held within a fortune in gold and gems. He began to pick at the boulder and when he was done, the old man asked him what was inside. Immediately the boy thought to himself and responded that he had seen nothing, because he had just begun work

and did not want to lose his job. Thus did this go on for three days. Each morning, the boy would meet his employer at his home for breakfast, and then they would go to the cave to work on increasing the entrance; but on the fourth morning the young man found his employer had died in the night. He was still in bed, sleeping the sleep of ikú.

The boy tended him well and buried him. Then he worked for another week, making the opening of the cave large enough so he could pass through with its riches, and when he was done, a large palace was built above the very cave that made him wealthy. With his newfound wealth, he soon became the owner and master of the entire countryside.

He bought a white horse and went to his town; no one recognized him anymore, and he went to the old shoemaker, who barely remembered him, but upon recognizing him was astounded and afraid of his success. Yet the boy understood the old man's plight, and he did not reproach him for past evils; he treated him well and spoke only about business.

He saw the shoemaker was having hard times, and he made a deal with the old man to alleviate his troubles. Investments were made to increase both their fortunes, and the old man lived a life far more prosperous than any he had ever known. One shoemaker's shop became a string of shops, and an empire; yet the years passed and this old man died. He left everything to his old apprentice, who soon became the richest man in all the land by making shoes.

[After this, the diviner's assistant continues to write the things that the priest/ess delivering the text of odu says. Once the reading has been delivered and all the odu marked and closed, the top portion of this paper stays with the godparent/diviner, while the bottom part is given to the client so that he knows exactly what was predicted: The taboos, prognostications, and eboses will all be there. Everything recorded should be done as soon as possible, and unless something huge and costly is required as ebó—like the *asiento*, the major initiation ceremony when the aleyo becomes a santero—the client should not return for another reading at the feet of the orishas.]

3/16/96

Stephen Bernard Jones

12/22/72

6-6 Obara Meji [This is the composite odu that opened on the mat. The number of mouths that fell, along with the name of the omo odu, is recorded by the assistant.]

8 iré [The diviner asked the diloggún if there was iré, and there was. The odu Elleunle answers yes; but the diviner opened Stephen's left hand and the efun was there.]

6-6 elese elenú [This odu marks the type and origin of the iré: elese elenú. Since Obara is one of the younger odu, a second casting of shells was done: It became a meji. This makes Obara an elder, and the left hand was chosen. It held the efun.]

8 iré yale [The iré that is marked in this odu is firm; it is not, however, guaranteed to manifest in this life. There are still issues pending with both odu and orisha, so the diviner's next step is to see if a larishe will hold the iré firm for the client.]

6-8 larishe si [There is larishe; Obara, a younger odu, was followed by Elleunle, the oldest odu. The first throw was younger than the second, so the right hand was picked. Efun was found in the right hand. Normally, an answer found in the right hand is not as strong as that found in the left; however, because Elleunle fell as the second odu, the diviner is assured that a good delivery of Obara Meji plus strong ebó will hold the iré firm for his client.]

4 adimú [Irosun marked the left hand, and efun was found there. There is an adimú required.]

6-5 elese ocha [Obara is older than Oché, so the left hand was picked and efun was found there.]

6-6 elese Shangó [Obara Meji opened again for the question "Adimú elese Shangó?" Since this is an elder odu, the left hand was chosen. The adimú is to be given to Shangó because the efun was in the left hand.]

[Now that the opening odu and its orientations have been marked, the diviner begins to give the reading, and the assistant begins to write what is said.]

Obara Meji: iré elese elenú, iré yale. Larishe si; adimú elese ocha, elese Shangó! "Kawo Kabiosile! Maferefún Shangó!" Blessings and goodness will come through one's own tongue; the iré promised by odu is firm, but not guaranteed to manifest. There is a larishe; there is a way to lock in what the sign and the orishas promise. Adimú should be made to Shangó, who speaks strongly in this letter. Remember this proverb: With your tongue you may save or destroy the town. Control the tongue. Let me tell you a story.

• • •

THE FOOD OF OBATALÁ

Shangó was but a youth when Obatalá gave him his aché. So young was he that none of the elder orishas believed he deserved their respect; indeed, many of them were insulted that the wise Obatalá would endow such a young orisha with so much power. Their envy grew in time to disdain and distaste for Shangó, and every day it came to pass that one or more of the orishas would go to the King of White Cloth with tales of Shangó's youthful exploits. Many of these were lies crafted to make Shangó a lesser Spirit in Obatalá's eyes, while others were half-truths embellished with outrageous tales of dishonor. Obatalá was no fool and he could tell when the orishas were lying to him, yet so bad were the stories that he had no choice. He called Shangó to his palace and said, "My son, I gave you your aché because, in my eyes, you are a noble orisha. Yet to be what you are at such a young age, you can no longer be a child; you must be above all reproach. You must never beat around the bush with others; always speak what is on your mind. And never ever put yourself into a situation that seems compromising. Give no one any reason to speak badly about yourself!"

"Father, what do the others say about me?" Shangó asked; and he listened sorrowfully as the orisha told him all the stories. "But Father, none of that is true! What am I to do?" Obatalá thought for a moment, and then he said, "My son, I want you to prepare a meal for all my children and for me; I want you to cook the best food there is in the world for all of us to eat."

Shangó was puzzled at this, but he knew Obatalá could see much farther and more clearly than he, so he prepared what he believed to be the best food in the world for all of the orishas to eat. His meal

was simple, consisting of a roasted cow's tongue. As the orishas gathered for the dinner in their father's opulent palace, Obatalá questioned, "Shangó, tongue is the best food in the world?" Shangó answered, "Yes, Father, for good *aché* is the best thing in the world, and the tongue is full of *aché*!" All the orishas were stunned at Shangó's youthful wisdom. "Aché!" they all answered, and then they began to feast.

A few days passed, and Obatalá returned to tell Shangó that he had prepared the best food in the world for his children, but now it was time for him to make the worst food in the world for him and his children. Shangó, once again, prepared cow's tongue (for he now began to understand Obatalá's plan—and wisdom), and as all the orishas gathered for dinner Obatalá asked, "Shangó, if again you make us all the same thing having told me it was the best, why do you now make it and say that it is the worst?" And to this Shangó answered, "Because, my Father," and he looked slyly at all the orishas seated for dinner, "a good tongue will save us all, and a bad tongue will destroy all that Olófin has created!"

Obatalá looked at all the orishas seated in his palace. Once again, they realized that Shangó was very wise, and they all hung their heads in shame. "You are right, Shangó," said Obatalá. "From this day forth, in the *odu* known as *Obara Meji*, is born this saying: A good tongue will save us all, and a bad tongue will destroy us. And all shall speak of you, Shangó, for all eternity, and no matter what is said, good or bad, you will always be the King who did not hang, the man elevated to orisha because of his good works on earth. None will ever deny you your crown."

Shangó smiled and said, "Kawo Kabiosile!"

[After this story was told, the diviner begins to relay the meanings of the parent *odu* that applied to this client's life; he then relays the messages of the *omo odu* in full. All these things are carefully recorded by the assistant. Once the reading is complete, the diviner is given the top part that contains the *odu* and orientations, while the client is given the bottom part in which the advice is written out in full. Thus is the session ended.]

8-5 Ogbe Oché [This is the name of the odu that fell on the mat for this client.]

9-9 osogbo, ikú [The answer to “Iré ni?” was no, and osogbo was predicted. The assistant did not record this odu; there are some houses that do not follow this custom. Ikú, however, was marked with Osá Meji. While Osá is a younger odu, the fact that it is meji made it an elder and the left hand was chosen. Gungun and otá were the ibó used, and gungun was in the left hand, marking ikú.]

8 elese otonowá [Elleunle marks this as the origin of the osogbo.]

4 Igboro larishe [An elder odu opened, and the diviner picked the right hand while marking larishe. Again, in this house the odu that marked the fact that there is larishe was not recorded; this is customary in some houses of ocha. The efun was in the left hand, and this was marked as the solution to the client’s problem.]

[Now that odu has been opened and the orientations marked, the diviner begins to deliver the reading. The assistant is careful, especially in such a disastrous sign, to record all that is said.]

Ogbe Oché: osogbo, ikú—elese otonowá—igboro larishe. Maferefún Obatalá. Maferefún Oshún. Death is coming for you from heaven, Olódumare. The diloggún says that there is a larishe, but it will come in the form of good advice from an initiate that is present. That advice will come only after you hear what the oracle has to say. Remember these two sayings: Lies bring revolution; and the head carries the body. Do not lie, and do not lose your head. Now, let me tell you a story.

• • •

THE TRUTH IS SWEET LIKE HONEY

There was once a time when the Irunmole, the first orishas, walked upon the earth among humans; Orúnmila was no exception, and he spent his days traveling to visit those who were sick and in need. Humans who had emotional, spiritual, and physical diseases sought out the great Diviner, and with Ifá he was able to cure the ills that plagued humanity. Many saw the work the orisha did and gave him

praise, but others were jealous of the diviner's success. Those who were wicked slandered the awó: "While you travel, who cares for your wife?" they asked. "You are unable to keep your woman; you are unable to keep your heart free of adultery. And you who have no stable home try to create stability in the lives of others?" The questions turned to taunts, sneers, and gossip; soon the evils were too great for the mighty Orúnmila to bear. Saddened and weak, he sought out one of his own disciples for advice. He wanted to know if he should stay home, ceasing his good works, or if he should continue to travel and help his fellow humans. The Babalawo's pronouncement was simple: Continue to work on earth. The advice was simple: Continue to ignore the slander as you search out new work. The ebó was simple: Offer strong liquor and sweet honey to Ifá before continuing on your work. Orúnmila made the ebó of Ogbe Oché and set out to continue his work.

The slander reached new heights, and in every town it seemed that fewer and fewer humans sought out his divine advice. Yet one day a saddened woman came to him and begged to see Ifá. She was close to suicide, and yet the words of the oracle so inspired her that within days it seemed her spirit was renewed, and all she touched became sweet like honey. The woman praised the awó to all her friends: "The words that he speaks with his oracle are the truth; they are sweet, like honey, even though one's life be bitter like strong drink." Soon her own friends came to him for advice; and their friends came as well. Inspired by their kind words, Orúnmila began to work longer and harder, and this newfound praise spread throughout the nearby cities. Wherever he went, he found humans who wanted his help. Slander gave way to truth, and he became highly respected at home and abroad. More followers came to Ifá; and with these were born more diviners to his cult. Orúnmila had nothing but praise for his Babalawo and gratitude to Olódumare, for they had helped him find wealth and power. Refusal to listen to gossip and slander had brought fulfillment from his work; the truth of Orúnmila was spread, and the truth became sweet like honey. Soon this odu gave birth to the saying the diviner tells his client when Ogbe Oché opens on the mat: The truth is sweet like honey.

[It is at this point that one of the initiates present, an elder who has ten years of Obatalá done, begins to look distressed, almost as if she is “biting her tongue.” The diviner notices this, and remembering that good advice will come from an initiate present, he prompts her to speak. Her words are written in the record of the reading.]

“I know that you are having problems at your work with your nursing supervisor [the client is a nurse]; you feel that she is unfair and you speak badly behind her back. Don’t do this anymore. Leave your problems at the feet of your Elegguá and offer him the honey and strong liquor; he will give you strength to do your work properly, and he will sweeten your supervisor’s position toward you. Your own feelings toward this person might be unfounded; she might only be doing her job, and she feels your resentment so that it is taken out on you. Break the cycle at your end, and all will come out well. Otherwise, you might be in danger of losing your job.”

[Although this advice did not directly affect the osogbo predicted in this sign, the diviner later questioned Elegguá about the ebó the initiate prescribed. Elegguá accepted it as a solution to this person’s problems at work, and then stood up to claim eyebale as the means to overcome the prediction of odu. This elder also, with the diviner’s consent, gave many more pieces of advice that she believed came through her egun—and in Ogbe Oché, it is possible for egun to speak. It is possible for any orisha to speak. The oracle prescribed a few more of the eboses for the composite odu and then closed out easily.]

Mail-Order Sources for Religious Supplies

Unless one lives in a major city, such as New York, Houston, Miami, Orlando, Chicago, Detroit, or Los Angeles, finding supplies for the Lucumí faith can be difficult. This appendix was created to help alleviate this. All of the botánicas listed are legitimate, headed by real priests and priestesses of various Afro-Cuban and Afrocentric religions. By no means is this list exhaustive; it only provides a starting point for one's journey. Those included here have one major thing in common: They all have catalogs, and they all provide mail-order services. Botánicas can be found throughout the country; all it takes is a little detective work. The easiest way is to check the business white pages for your local area. No matter the name of the business, they almost always list themselves under BOTÁNICA, followed by a Spanish or an African name. Do not look in the Yellow Pages; except in major Hispanic areas, such as Miami and New York, they do not advertise in such an expensive manner. Most are small "mom-and-pop"-type businesses and advertise their services and wares mostly by word of mouth. If no botánica can be found in your locality, the following list of businesses can be of help. Remember: Before turning to these large warehouses, try to support your own local businesses. The orishas will thank you for it!

Botánica Hijos de Africa

125 Passaic Street

Passaic, NJ 07055

Phone: (973) 472-3895

Fax: (973) 472-0721

Web site: www.botanica.nv.switchboard.com

This botánica boasts that it has been serving the Passaic area for more than six years. It specializes in religious items, natural medicines, candles, herbs, and spiritual readings. Although I have not had any personal dealing with this business, I have several friends and acquaintances who have. Unanimously, they love the shop. More information can be found about this business on-line.

Botánica Eleguá

6043 Bissonnet

Houston, TX 77081

Phone: (713) 660-6767

Web site: www.botelegua.com

Botánica Eleguá sells everything on-line, from herbs to candles to books and cards. Its colorful catalog may be viewed on-line. At the time of this writing, one was not prepared specifically for mail order; let us hope that will soon change. It does, however, take telephone orders, giving price quotes as items are named.

Rick's Spiritual Botánica

2903 North Fifth Street

Philadelphia, PA 19133

Phone: (215) 634-7866; (215) 545-8160; (215) 546-0367

Web site: www.members.aol.com/rickspirit/index.html

Rick's Spiritual Botánica was one of the first to have a Web presence. The owner provides a wholesale catalog for bulk buyers only. A mail-order catalog (for individual buyers) indexing all his supplies and products may be ordered by phone or mail. With your first order, he does provide a free catalog; otherwise, as of this writing the cost for a catalog is two dollars.

Botánica y Rayos

6304 Hudson Avenue

West New York, NJ 07093-3016

Phone: (201) 453-0343

This botánica provides a wide range of supplies: statues, crosses, crucifixes, and African gift items. Call for a catalog and price quotes.

Botánica San Lazaro

3231 North Federal Highway

Pompano Beach, FL 33064

Phone: (954) 784-5900

Fax: The fax number is the same as the main phone number; please call before sending a fax.

Web site: www.botanicasanlaz.qpg.com

This botánica boasts more than thirty-five years of service to the community, providing a variety of spiritual supplies. Visit its Web site for more information, or call for a catalog and price quotes.

Botánica Lucumí

4748A University Way NE

Seattle, WA 98105

Phone: (206) 729-1000

Web site: www.seanet.com/~efunmoyiwa/bl.html

This is my favorite Web site and on-line botánica. It provides Ifá and diloggún readings, all religious supplies (Lucumí and Palo), orisha art, and too many other things to list here. Its Web site is a "must-visit," and its customer service skills are outstanding. I highly recommend this resource for both information and supplies.

Botánica Shangó

240 Grand Avenue

New Haven, CT 06513

Phone: (203) 776-5501

Botánica Shangó offers mail-order supplies to individual customers and also sells wholesale supplies in bulk. Its inventory is so large that when a Miami or New York botánica cannot obtain needed supplies, it turns to this wholesaler. A catalog is available free of charge; call or write to order. Unlike other botánicas whose owners are chronically too busy to deal with their customer base, the owner of this business, Angel, is almost always available during normal business hours. Those I know who have done business with this store have nothing but praise for it.

A note on the terms in this glossary: Lucumí, and the original Yoruba whence it evolved, is a tonal language like Chinese. Because the Afro-Cubans had neither the time nor the chance for formal education during slavery, many of these words have no consistent spelling. While I have tried to keep my own spelling consistent throughout my work, my spellings will differ from the spellings of other authors; however, the pronunciation of the words will be similar. For any Lucumí or Spanish term that does not have an accent mark, the proper emphasis goes on the second-to-last syllable in the word. To facilitate proper pronunciation, I have included the appropriate accent for all words that vary from this pattern. Vowel sounds for all non-English words will approximate those of the Spanish language. Also note that in each glossary entry, there may be one or more words italicized; this indicates that these words can be found in the glossary as well.

Keep in mind the following points when pronouncing words.

- The *ch* sound in Spanish is used in Lucumí and Spanish words; the languages have no *sh* sound.
- The ñ character (*enye* sound) is used only in Spanish words, not Lucumí words, because it is pronounced more like the English *y* sound. So the letter *y* is used here where it applies.
- The *y* sound in Spanish has a slight edge to it so that the sounding of the letter will be similar to the English and Yoruba *j* sound. *J* is used here whenever possible.

abako: Spoon.

aban: Basket.

Abata: The male (although some say female) lover, companion, and nurse of *Inle*. He is received in conjunction with *Inle*'s initiation.

abebé: Fan.

abegudi: Uncooked cornmeal.

abere: Razor.

aberinkula: This *Lucumí* word denotes the unconsecrated drums used when playing nonfundamental *batá* to the *orishas*.

abikú: A forest spirit that plagues mothers by incarnating with a child again and again; each time the *abikú* incarnates, it slowly drains the child's life force. *Orisha* initiates disagree on its principles: Some say that the *abikú* is the child's soul, while others say it is the child's companion. There are *odu* that mark this tragedy, and the proper *ebó* to save the child's life is to chain the body to the earth. After this, an anklet is worn for the rest of the child's life on his or her left ankle.

abó adié: Hen.

abo faca: Another phrase for the initiation given to men by the *Babalawos*, *mano de Orúnmila*. This is an initiation prescribed as *ebó* by specific *odu* in the system of the *diloggún*.

abó: Ram.

abure: Brother or sister.

achá: Cigar.

achaba: Chain.

aché/ashé: A very dynamic, universal force. It has many meanings, among which are grace, life, fate, power, talent, and wisdom; these depend on its usage in speech. Most *santeros* will agree that life is *aché*, and *aché* is life.

aché: The spiritual power of Cosmos.

achiré: Rattle.

achire: Sons or daughters; mounts (horses) for the *orishas*.

acho: Cloth

acho funfún: White cloth.

achola: Sheet.

acua: Arm.

acuaro: Quail.

ada: Machete.

adé: Crown

adele: The *cowrie* shells in an *orisha's diloggún* that are not read in a session; for most *orishas*, there will be only two *adele* since the complete *diloggún* is made of eighteen cowrie shells. For *Eleggua*, however, there will be five *adele* since his *diloggún* has twenty-one shells.

Adiatoto: A mythological/historical figure who lived in Africa many centuries ago; he was *Biague's* first son. *Biague* was the first diviner to use *obi*, and *Adiatoto* was the second.

adie: Hen.

adimú: Any type of offering that does not include *eyebale*, or the sacrifice of an animal. *Adimú* is usually prescribed during a session with the *diloggún*.

adimú orisha: An *orisha* given that cannot be crowned on the head; a Spirit that can have no priests or priestesses in the New World. *Olokun* and the *Ibeyi* are examples of *adimú orishas*. Also, the term can refer to any *orisha* given outside one's *asiento*.

afefé: Wind.

afoché: Magical powder.

Aganyú: The owner of volcanoes, born from *Oroina*, the molten center of the earth. He is also the father of *Shangó*.

agbado: Corn.

agbado nene: Popcorn.

agbán: A special ceremony done during the reception of *Asohano*, *orisha Oko*, and *Olokun*. All involve ritual cleansing with various types of foods and grains. At the end of each *agbán*, the *aché* of the *orisha* is passed from *godparent* to *godchild*.

agbani: Deer.

agbebé: Fan.

agbo: Ram.

agegún orisha Oko: The priests and priestesses who become possessed by *orisha Oko*; it is a common phenomenon in Nigeria, yet very rare in the New World. Most houses of *ocha* do not know the rituals for seating *orisha Oko* in the head.

agó: To ask permission; permission.

agogó: Bell.

agoya: Enter.

agutan: Female sheep.

agutí: Bush rat, *jutía*.

aikú: Good health, long life.

ailashara: A *Lucumí* word that translates as “friendship”; it is also a letter in the African system of *obí*.

Ainá: One of the seven *Ibeyi*, or children of miraculous birth. She is the daughter of *Shangó* and is his constant companion because she is the *orisha* of all flame.

ajá: Dog.

Ajaba: One of the names for *Dada*, the brother and crown of *Shangó*.

ajé: A *Lucumí* word that denotes the cult of the witches, the children of the great Mother *Iyamí*.

Ajé Shaluga: This *orisha* controls all aspects of luxury and wealth. Her normal guise is that of a beautiful woman, but when this Spirit wants to appear as a man, she does so. Often, she will accompany *Oshún* on her travels in the world.

ajogún: This word denotes different things to different houses of *ocha*. In some, it denotes the evil forces that run rampant in the world, while in our house we have been taught to use it in referring to the *warriors*: *Elegguá*, *Ogún*, and *Ochosi*. Sometimes, *Ósun* is denoted as one of the *ajogún*.

ajuba: We salute you.

akala: Vulture.

akita: A *Lucumí* word that means “victory”; it is also a letter in the African system of *obí*.

ako: A *Lucumí* term that denotes the two phallic lobes of the seed from *Cola acuminata*, the type of kola tree from which the oracle of African *obí* is derived.

Akoda: The second disciple or *Babalawo* of *Orúnmila*.

akukó: Rooster.

akumí: A *Yoruba* word that means “I am Aku,” from which the word *Lucumí* is derived.

alá: White cloth.

ala: Dream.

aladimú: A *Lucumí* contraction for any type of offering (see *adimú*).

aláfia: A *Lucumí* word that translates into “peace” or “blessings”; it also denotes a letter in the African system of *obí* that means “coolness” when the response is positive. In the New World version of *obí*, aláfia brings blessings, peace, and coolness from the mighty *orisha Obatalá*.

Alafin: The title of old *Oyó*’s king; *Shangó* was the fourth king of old *Oyó*.

alagba, agbalagba: Respected.

alagbara: Any of the violent acts in the world that one can attribute to the *orisha Ogún*.

aleyo: Those who are in *Santería* yet not initiated as priests or priestesses; a noninitiate, an outsider.

amalá: A staple food of the *orisha Shangó*; it is made of okra and cornmeal.

aná: Road.

aña: Sacred drums.

ancestors/ancestral spirits: Also known collectively as *egun* and may include the practitioner’s familial and spiritual ancestors. Spirit guides, *nfumbés*, Congolese spirits, Native American spirits, and so on are used in the religion *Santería*; however, these are not *egun*, nor are they ancestral spirits (unless one is descended from those peoples).

ano: A *Lucumí* word that means “illness” or “disease.”

apadí: One of eight *ibó* used in the divination system called *diloggún*; it is made of broken pottery, and it symbolizes loss, defeat, and marriage.

apotí: The throne upon which the *iyawó* sits during initiation.

ara: Thunder.

ará: Body; the planet on which we live

ará onú: A *Lucumí* word for those spirits (human) that inhabit heaven.

Arara: An area in Dahomey, Africa, now known as Benin; it is the origin of *Naná Burukú* and her son, *Babalwaiye*.

arayé: Envy, ill will.

arikú: A *Lucumí* word that denotes vitality, health, and immortality of the soul. It is one of the many types of *iré* that may be predicted in the *diloggún*.

arún: Sickness.

Asaó: This *orisha* is often nicknamed “the magician of *Olokun*”; he is the twin brother and companion of *Inleóhe*, spending half his time on land and half his time in the ocean. Only the children of Inle may receive this *orisha*; his *aché* is not for the children of the other *orishas*.

ashá: Cigar.

ashé: So be it; the spiritual power of the universe; talent.

Asheda: On earth, this was the first disciple of *Orúnmila*—his first priest and *Babalawo*.

ashelú: Police.

asheogún ota: Victory over enemies.

asho: Cloth.

asiento: The major initiation ceremony of *Santería*, in which an *aleyo* becomes a *iyawó*.

asogi: Fruit.

Asohano: Another name for the *orisha Babalwaiye*.

ataná: Candle.

ataré: Guinea pepper.

até: Grass mat.

aunco: Male goat.

avatar: Many *orishas*, such as *Obatalá*, *Yemayá*, *Oshún*, and *Eleggua*, have different avatars, also known as paths. These are related to their many incarnations on earth; many *orishas* have spent mortal lives among humans. One of the mysteries of the *asiento* is that when an *aleyo* is crowned (the guardian *orisha* is literally put on the head), that person becomes a *iyawó*, and, in some ways, an avatar of the *guardian orisha*. Only those avatars of significant religious, historical, or political importance are remembered specifically, and become paths of that *orisha*. Note that while many houses of *ocha* agree with the origins of specific avatars, the subject itself is one of considerable debate among more knowledgeable *ilé ocha*.

averinkulá: An uninitiated person.

awó: Secret, diviner.

awo: Plate.

ayakúa: Turtle.

ayán: *Orisha* of the drums.

Ayaó: One sees this *orisha* in nature whenever a cyclone touches the earth; she is the sister of *Oyá*, very young and beautiful, who spends her free time in the woods with *Osain*.

ayé: a *Lucumí* term that means "hardship"; it is also a letter in the African system of *obí*. When referring to the eight *ibó* used in the *diloggún*, it denotes any type of elongated saltwater seashell.

ayubbona: Assistant; second godmother or godfather.

babá: Father.

Babalawo: An initiate of *Orúnmila*. A Babalawo is always male because only men may enter *Orúnmila*'s mysteries. Also known as "father of the secrets."

babalocha/babalorisha: A "Father of the Spirits," a *santero* who has initiated other priests and priestesses.

babaloshá: Father of the *orisha*, an *orisha* priest.

Babaluaiye: This *orisha* originates not in Nigeria but in the land of *Arara*, an area of Africa. He is the Father of smallpox, the Father of disease and of afflictions of the skin.

Baba Oru: The male, ruling *orisha* of an initiate, as opposed to *Iyá Oru*, the female ruling *orisha* of an initiate.

babatobi: Father that gave me life; godfather.

bara: Melon.

baradi: Waist.

batá: The sacred drums of *Santería* used to call down the *orishas* during their sacred festivals.

batea: The wooden tureen in which *Shangó*'s secrets are housed.

batie sode: A *Lucumí* phrase meaning "removes the negativity."

Bayanmi: Another name for the brother of *Shangó*, *Dada*.

bembé: The name for the ritual drum celebration given to the *orishas*. Various *odu* in the system of the *diloggún* will call for this as an *ebó*.

Biague: The first diviner to use the African system of *obí*; the second diviner in this system was *Adiatoto*, Biague's son. Some say that these characters are only mythological, but others say that they lived in Africa many centuries ago.

bilongo: *Brujería* with an evil intent.

Boromu: One of *Odua's* companions and guardians. She is the younger sister of *Borosía*. While she lives deep in the forest, Boromu also exerts control over the ocean. Some say she is the ocean's currents. When angered, Boromu can cause a ship to be lost at sea. She can also take sailors home safely.

Borosía: The older brother of *Boromu*, and another of *Odua's* protectors. He guides the *orí* of *Obatalá's* children. Unlike his younger sister, *Borosía* lives only on land and exerts no control over the ocean. Some, however, say he exerts influence over the wind.

Botánica: The Spanish term for the religious supply stores in Latin American communities that carry the items needed in the practice of *Santería*.

bóveda: An altar set up to honor and propitiate the dead, *egun*. Although it properly belongs to the practice known as *Espiritismo*, it has been integrated into the practice of *Santería* because of the loss of the *egungun* cults in the New World. A *bóveda* can be set up to honor any spirit, even if that *egun* is not one of the family or ancestral spirits of the client. Certain *odu* will dictate this as *ebó*.

brujería: The Spanish term for "witchcraft," not to be confused with the type of witchcraft practiced in the New World by Wiccans or the practitioners of *Palo Monte* or *Palo Mayombe*. It refers to any folksy charm intended to influence another person for good or ill, depending on the intentions of the caster. *Bilongo* denotes *brujería* with an evil intent.

busi: Bless.

caballo: A Spanish term that means "horse." In *Santería*, this word is used to describe the "mounts" for the *orishas* that become possessed during the playing of the *batá* in the festival known as the *tambor*.

cabildo: The name of the secret clubs, or temples, in Cuba through which the religion *Santería* was syncretized, saved, and passed down for future generations.

calabaza: Gourds, pumpkins, or squash. All of these are sacred to *Shangó* and *Oshún*.

canastillero: The Spanish name for the cabinet in which the *orishas'* tureens, stones, and sacred implements are housed. Usually, one finds the *orishas* *Obatalá*, *Yemayá*, *Oshún*, and *Oyá* housed in the *canastillero*.

- caracoles:** A Spanish word used in *Santería* for the *cowrie* shells of the *orishas*.
- carga:** The secret ingredients packed into *Eleggua's* image to strengthen his *aché*.
- cencerro:** The sacred instrument used to call down *Oyá* to her sacred stones, the *otanes*.
- cheche:** Beads.
- cowrie:** The type of shell that is used to cut and read an *orisha's diloggún*.
- cuanaldo:** It is through this ceremony that a *Babalawo* receives the right to use the knife in sacrifice.
- Dada:** The brother of *Shangó*.
- derecho:** The ritual fee paid to an *orisha* priest or priestess for spiritual services.
- despojo:** This refers to a number of spiritual cleansings.
- Diaspora (African):** The areas in the New World where the blacks uprooted from Africa were forced into slavery. Brazil, Cuba, the Caribbean, and the United States are all areas of the African Diaspora.
- didé:** Arise.
- diloggún:** The system of *cowrie* divination by which an *orisha* priest or priestess learns the will of the *orishas*; it also refers to the eighteen shells that contain the Spirit, or *orisha*, of an initiate's shrine. The *diloggún* is of utmost importance to the *santero*, or practitioner of *Santería*.
- divination:** The act of uncovering the will of the *orishas*, the desires of *egun*, and the trends of the future. In *Santería* there are three main systems of divination employed: *obí*, *diloggún*, and *Ifá*.
- dos aguas:** While not an *orisha* itself, *dos aguas* is a spiritual charm received by those born in the *odu* 7-5 or 5-7. It contains elements of both *orishas* *Yemayá* and *Oshún* in its *sopera*, and it has its own *eleke* beaded in the colors of those same *orishas*.
- dudu:** Dark.
- ebó:** One of any number of offerings that may be made to an *orisha*.
- ebó de pinaldo:** *Ebó de pinaldo* refers to an initiate's reception of the sacrificial knife. It is a weeklong ceremony in which the right to sacrifice four-legged animals is conferred upon the priest or

priestess. One's *ocha* is considered incomplete until this ceremony is given. Many compare it to the "lid of the calabash" or that which "seals the *sopera*."

ebó kere: A complicated series of spiritual cleansings done for a client before an *orisha*. It involves several different types of offerings, each used to cleanse the supplicant of evil. It is done over a period of hours, days, weeks, or even months. The specifics of ebó kere are obtained from the *odu* of the *diloggún*.

eboda: A *Lucumí* word meaning "it is done" or "it is well." This question is often asked to close the *diloggún*.

eborí: A *Lucumí* contraction of two words: *ebó* (offering) and *orí* (head). The word is used to denote a blood offering to one's physical and spiritual head.

ebores: The plural form of *ebó*. Although the *Yoruba* would use *ebó* as both the plural and singular form, in Cuban *Santería* *ebores* has become accepted for the plural.

eboshure: Generally considered to be a small offering to an *orisha*.

echín: Horse.

edu: Charcoal.

edu ara: Thunderstone.

efun: A loosely packed, powdered chalk made from crushed eggshells. Sometimes it is used as an *ibó* in the divination system known as the *diloggún*.

égba: A *Lucumí* term that means "paralysis."

egun: One of many ancestral spirits related to the client by blood or *ocha*.

egungun: Denotes one who is possessed by *egun*, the ancestral spirit; in Cuba, however, it often referred to the now-dead cult of *egun*—priests and priestesses who dealt with only the ancestral spirits and not *orishas*.

eiye: Bird.

eiye tiyo-tiyo: Baby chicken.

eiyele: Dove or pigeon.

ejá: Fish.

eje: Blood.

Eji Ogbé: One of the sixteen *odu* in the *diloggún*; it consists of eight

open mouths and eight closed mouths on the mat. Another name for this letter is *Elleunle*.

Eji Oko: One of the sixteen *odu* in the *diloggún*; it consists of two open mouths and fourteen closed mouths on the mat.

ejife: The strongest response that one may receive in the oracle known as *obí*; it consists of two white coconut rinds and two black coconut rinds. In a divination session, it always signifies that the answer to the question asked is, "Yes: The world is in balance."

Ejila Shebora: The twelfth and final letter that a *santero* may read in the *diloggún*; this *odu* is opened when twelve open mouths and four closed mouths are present on the mat.

ejire: A *Lucumí* term that translates into "money" or "wealth"; it is also a letter used in the African system of *obí*.

ejo: Court case.

ekó: Cornmeal.

ekpó: Red palm oil.

ekú: *Jutía*, an African rodent.

ekú ejá: Smoked fish and bush rat.

ekún: Leopard.

elder odu: The *odu* that are considered the oldest in the system of *diloggún* that is practiced in the New World. There are eleven elder *odu*: *Okana*, *Eji Oko*, *Ogundá*, *Irosun*, *Elleunle*, *Ofún*, *Ejila Shebora*, *Metanla*, *Merinla*, *Marunla*, and *Merindilogún*.

eledá: Denotes the connection between one's *orí* and crowning *orisha*.

eledé: Pig.

Elegbara: One of the praises given to *Elegguá*; it means "owner of power."

Elegguá: Also known by the names *Eshu* and *Elegbara*. He is often portrayed as fate, a young child, and an old man; *Elegguá* is the messenger of all the *orishas*, and the first and last to be honored in every ceremony performed. Without his goodwill, nothing in the religion *Santería* may be done. In *Ifá*, it is said that there are 256 paths of *Elegguá*, one for each *odu*. Each of these paths is known as *Eshu* and has its own specific name, such as *Eshu Ayé*, *Eshu Bi*, and *Eshu Laroye*. In *ocha*, there are 101 paths of *Elegguá* (each also known as *Eshu*). In many *ilé ocha*, when an initiate receives the warriors, he is told the name of *Eshu* that his *Elegguá* enshrines.

elekes: These are the beaded necklaces given to both *aleyos* and *santeros*. The bead colors denote not only the *orisha* to whom they are consecrated, but also the path of that *orisha*. In the initiation of the *elekes*, an *aleyo* will generally receive four *elekes* unless the *diloggún* specifies otherwise: the *elekes* of *Obatalá*, *Yemayá*, *Oshún*, and *Shangó*. Sometimes, the *eleke* of *Elegguá* is also given.

elenú: A *Lucumí* word for “tongue.”

Elleunle: The oldest *odu* of the *diloggún*; it consists of eight open mouths and eight closed mouths on the mat. Another name for this letter is *Eji Ogbe*.

ení: Mat.

eni: Person.

entrada: Twenty-one days after an *aleyo* brings home the *warriors*, the ritual of *entrada* must be done. Behind the front door of the home, two roosters and two pigeons are fed to *Elegguá*, *Ogún*, *Ochosi*, and *Ósun*. One week after that, they are given a basket of cool fruits. This is a welcoming, a housewarming party for these four *orishas*. It seats them firmly in the *aleyo*'s life and home.

enú: Mouth, tongue.

epe: This *Lucumí* word denotes a “curse” originating from another source beyond the client. *Epe* is that which is maliciously sent.

epó: A thick, viscous red palm oil used for cooking in Africa, and also as an *adimú* offering for certain *orishas*: *Elegguá*, *Ogún*, and *Ochosi* often take red palm oil on their sacred stones.

eran: Meat.

eranla: Cow.

eri-aworan: In divination, this is one of eight *ibó* that are used to determine an *odu*'s orientation. It is the head of a doll, very small, that can be held in a closed fist. In divination, it always represents the *orí*.

erin: Elephant.

ese: Foot.

eshe: A *Lucumí* word that means “general afflictions.”

Eshu Ayé: This avatar of *Elegguá* is said to walk on the shoreline where waves lap at the sand. This *Eshu* works closely with the *orisha* *Olokun*.

Eshu Bi: This avatar of *Elegguá* is both a young child and an old

man; he is forceful and stern. It is said that this Eshu walks with the first two *Ibeyi*, the twins, who were born of *Shangó* and *Oshún*. He is the protector of twins, and also of small children.

Eshu Eshun Irirke: This *avatar* of *Elegguá* works closely with *Osain* and lives in the forest with that *orisha*. This Eshu is very rare, and he is referred to in only one *odu* of the *diloggún*, *Ogbe Ejila* (8–12).

Eshu Laroye: This *avatar* of *Elegguá* works closely with *Oshún* and is her constant companion; he is often referred to as the “little, talkative one.” He is one of *Elegguá*’s most important and popular paths, being the one addressed and refreshed before any invocation or prayer to the *orishas*.

eshu ni pakwó: The nape of the neck.

Eshu/Esu: Alternate names for the *orisha* commonly known as *Elegguá*. While *Ifá* lists one Eshu for each of the 256 *odu*, *ocha* has only 101 paths of Eshu. Some examples of Eshu that are shared by both *Ifá* and *ocha* are Eshu *Ayé*, Eshu Laroye, and Eshu Bi.

esica: Shoulder.

Espiritismo: A Spanish term describing the collective mediumistic practices, or *Spiritism*, begun by Allan Kardec. In *Santería*, these practices are among the many used to make up for the loss of the *egungun* cults in the New World.

espiritista: A Spanish term denoting the practitioner of *Espiritismo*, a medium. It is used for both male and female practitioners.

estera: The special woven grass mat used in many of the rituals of *Santería*; the *diloggún* is read on the *estera*.

etawa: A *Lucumí* contraction that means “three have come”; it refers to the opening of the letter in *obí* in which three white sides and one black are showing.

etí: Ear.

etú: Guinea fowl.

ewa: Gourd.

ewe ayó: One of eight *ibó* that are used in divination. It is a large, bulbous seed from the guacalote tree. When used in divination, it represents both children and disease. It is also called *osán* or *sesán*.

ewe: A *Lucumí* word for “herb”; it denotes any of those plants, roots, or trees that are used in the making of herbal baths, mixtures, medicines, or *omiero*.

ewena: Soap.

ewín: Snail.

ewon: A *Lucumí* word that means “imprisonment.”

ewú: Cotton.

ewure: Female goat.

eya tutu: Raw fish.

eyebale: An offering that includes the sacrifice of an animal.

eyele: Pumpkin, squash.

eyín: Egg.

eyo: A *Lucumí* word that means “tragedies”; in the context of divination, it points out those tragedies that come through legal complications, gossip, and accidents.

fe: Love.

fitibo: A *Lucumí* word that marks an impending, tragic death.

fly-whisk: A horse’s tail mounted in a wooden handle; the handle itself is beaded in the same colors as the *orisha’s* *eleke*. Orishas given fly-whisks are considered royalty in the pantheon: *Oyá*, *Obatalá*, *Yemayá*, *Oshún*, and *Shangó*.

Fon: One of the African tribes from Dahomey.

foribale: One of the two methods of salutation to an elder or an *orisha*; the form of salutation depends on whether the *guardian orisha* is male or female.

foribale: Salute by prostration.

fun: For, give.

funfún: White, cool.

garabato: A forked branch given as *ebó* to *Eleggúá* or *Ogún*.

gbogbo: All.

gidigidi: Very much.

godparents: In *Santería*, the godparents are one’s sponsors in the religion, the priests or priestesses who will give the initiations of the *elekes*, *warriors*, and *asiento*. They are the aspirant’s spiritual guides in both life and religion, and they are consulted on all matters of spiritual importance.

gofio: Roasted flour or cornmeal.

guardian orisha: The *orisha* that claims an *aleyo*, guiding him or her to the ritual of *asiento*. Once *ocha* is made (initiation given), the *aleyo* becomes a *iyawó* (bride) of the guardian *orisha*, and after a year, he or she becomes a *santero* (priest) or *santera* (priestess) in *Santería*.

guerreros: A Spanish word meaning “warriors”; it refers to the initiation in which an *aleyo* receives the *orishas Elegguá, Ogún, Ochosi,* and *Ósun*.

gungun: One of eight *ibó* used in divination; it consists of a bone from the left hind leg of a goat used to feed *Elegguá*. The other *ibó* used in divination are *otá, efun, ayé, owó, apadí, osán,* and *orí ere*.

ha: Broom of *Asohano*.

ibaé bayé t’orún: Rest in peace, a salute to the dead.

Ibeyi: The divine children of *Shangó* and *Oshún*. There are seven *Ibeyi*, also known as children of miraculous birth. The first two *Ibeyi*, however, are twins whom *Oshún* gave to her sister *Yemayá* to raise. It has become common usage in *Santería* for practitioners to refer to these first two children as “the *Ibeyi*.” They are the patrons of twins and the mothers of twins.

ibiri: Broom of *Naná Burukú*.

ibó: When reading the *diloggún*, these are the tools the diviner uses to determine orientation and *larishe*. There are a total of eight *ibó*: *otá, efun, ayé, owó, apadí, gungun, osán/sesán,* and *orí ere*.

ibú: Stream, river.

idé: A bracelet beaded in the colors of the *orisha* to whom it is dedicated.

Ideu: The third *Ibeyi*, a child of *Oshún*. It is a male, and yet it is always accompanied by a doll dressed as a small girl.

idí: Buttocks.

Ifá: The original oracle of the *Yoruba* upon which both the African and Afro-Cuban forms of *diloggún* (cowrie shell) divination are based. It is a system that includes 256 *odu*, revealed by *Orúnmila* to his disciples *Asheda* and *Akoda* (the first *Babalawos*). Only the priests of *Orúnmila*, the *Babalawos*, may read *Ifá*.

igba: Calabash.

igi: Stick.

ikin Ifá: The sixteen palm nuts used by the *Babalawo* for reading Ifá.

ikin: A *Lucumí* word meaning “palm nut.”

ikoide: Red tail feather of an African gray parrot.

ikoko Aganyú: Container for *Aganyú*.

ikoko awo: Container for the *orishas*.

ikoko Shangó: Container for *Shangó*.

ikú, Ikú: *ikú* is physical death; *Ikú* is the *Lucumí* personification of death.

ilá: Okra.

ilé: This is a *Lucumí* term that can mean many different things depending on its usage: home, earth, and family (physical or spiritual, in *ocha*).

Ilé Ifé: In *Yoruba* mythology, the holy city that was built first in the empire; it was founded by *Obatalá* himself, and it is the cradle from which our religion *Santería* eventually evolved.

Ilé Olófinófor: Those *santeros* who retain their Catholic identity, this is the Catholic Church; for those whose beliefs are pure *Lucumí*, this term refers to all of nature, the true home of God.

ilé orisha: The spiritual house of *ocha* or the *orishas*, headed by either a priest or a priestess who has many years of experience in the religion.

ilé orún: A *Lucumí* phrase denoting heaven (house of the sun/land of the sun).

ileechin: Broom of Naná Burukú.

ilekún: Door.

ilu: Drum.

iña/inya: Fire.

Inleóhe: Envisioned as a beautiful, androgynous youth, the patron of homosexuals and fishermen. At one time he was a mortal, but *Yemayá* was so taken by his beauty that she made him immortal and stole Inle away to the bottom of the sea. There, she tired of him, yet he learned all of his lover's secrets. *Yemayá* removed his speech by cutting out his tongue, and then she set him free to walk among the rest of the *orishas*. To this day, Inle will speak only through her. He is also seen as the great physician, the one who

can cure any illness with his extensive knowledge of the medicinal uses of all *ewe* in the forest.

inú: Stomach.

irawo: Star.

iré: Any type of blessing or good fortune that can befall the client as he sits for a session with the *diloggún*.

iré aláfiá: Goodness through peace.

iré arikú: The blessing not to see an untimely death.

iré ashegunota: Goodness from the *orisha*'s sacred stones.

iré ayé: Goodness or blessing of money.

iré banda loguro: Goodness from the earth.

iré elese abure: Goodness from the hands of a brother or sister in *ocha*.

iré elese araoko: Goodness at the feet of the fertile land; goodness from the country.

iré elese arubo: Goodness at the feet of the elders.

iré elese babatobi: Goodness at the feet of one's godfather.

iré elese egun: Goodness at the feet of the ancestors.

iré elese eledá: Goodness at the feet of one's *orí*.

iré elese elenú: Goodness from the speaker's tongue.

iré elese ewe: Goodness from games of chance.

iré elese iyatobi: Goodness at the feet of one's godmother.

iré elese obini: Goodness from the hands of a woman.

iré elese ocha: Goodness at the feet of the *orishas*.

iré elese okuni: Goodness from the hands of a man.

iré elese omo: Goodness at the feet of children.

iré elese orí yoko: Goodness by making *ocha*.

iré ibujoko: Goodness through change.

iré iyekú: Goodness through death.

iré lowó: A *Lucumí mí* phrase meaning "blessings through one's own hands." It is one of the many types of *iré* predicted by the *diloggún*, and it points out that the client is responsible for his own destiny and evolution.

iré otonowá: Goodness from heaven.

iré yale: A *Lucumí* phrase meaning “firm goodness.”

iré yale timbelaye: A *Lucumí* phrase meaning “firm goodness to manifest in this life.”

irofá: The sacred horn cut from a sacrificed deer; it is used by the *Babalawo* when marking the *table of Ifá*.

Iroko: In Nigeria, this refers to a specific tree that is sacred to the *orishas* and *Olódumare*; it is also a powerful *orisha* that assisted *Obatalá's* descent from heaven to earth. In the New World, the *diloggún* made the Middle Passage with Iroko's priests and priestesses, and he claimed the silk cotton tree as his native shrine in the New World.

Irosun: One of the sixteen *odu* of the *diloggún*; it is opened when four mouths fall faceup on the mat.

iruke, irukere: Horsetail switch.

Irunmole: The first *orishas* born in heaven from *Olódumare* and *odu*.

ishu: African yam.

itá: A major divination ceremony, given either to a *iyawó* after the *asiento* or to a priest or priestess who has fed an *orisha* a four-legged animal as *ebó*. The information, *eboses*, and prohibitions prescribed during an *itá* are followed by an initiate for life. Always, one's *itá* is written in the *libreta* given when *ocha* is made.

italero: A Spanish word that denotes an expert in the reading of the *caracoles*, or the *diloggún*.

itu: Gunpowder.

itutu: A series of ceremonies given to honor the death of a *santero*, or initiate of *Santería*. If an *aleyó* has received *orishas* during his lifetime, certain parts of this ceremony are done as well.

iworo: Priest.

iyá: A *Lucumí* word meaning “mother.”

iyá oru: A *Lucumí* term for the ruling female *orisha* of an initiate.

iyala: A *Yoruba* word translating into “health”; it is also one of the letters found in the African system of *obí*.

iyalocha: A *santera*, or priestess of *Santería* who has initiated at least one other person in the mysteries.

iyaloha: Mother of the *orishas*; priestess.

Iyamí: From the *Yoruba* myths. Iyamí was known as the mother of all witches. While not mentioned often in *ocha*, *Babalawos* still placate her, usually before their initiation ceremonies.

iyatobi: Mother that gave me life; godmother.

iyawó: A *Lucumí* term for the initiate of an *orisha*. It literally translates into “bride,” no matter the initiate’s sex. For at least a year after the *asiento*, the rest of the initiates in the house will refer to this person by this term. (Note: the *I* is silent.)

iyó: Salt.

Jakuta: Once a powerful *orisha* in the *Yoruba* pantheon, the “stone thrower” and wielder of the lightning bolt; but with the rise of the followers of *Shangó*, the cult of Jakuta died and was replaced by *Shangó*’s.

jícara: A dried gourd that is cut open to resemble a bowl. It is used to give offerings and pour libations to the *orishas*.

jimaguas: A Spanish word meaning “twins”; it is often used to speak of the *Ibeyi*.

juba: Salute.

jutía: An African bush rat, a large rodent; it is a staple offering for many of the *warrior orishas* such as *Elegguá*, *Ogún*, and *Ochosi*.

kariocha: The major initiation ceremony of *Santería*, in which an *aleyo* becomes a *iyawó*. Also known as *asiento*.

kasan: A loose, billowing shirt worn by the political advisers of the *Yoruba* nation.

kaure: Prayers offered as *ebó*; one of the many types of *larishe* found in the *diloggún*.

kawo kabiosile: A praise given to *Shangó*. It refers to the fact that the King (*Shangó*) did not hang (kill himself by suicide). He ascended before death to become an *orisha*.

kinkanmaché: This *Lucumí* word is a contraction that asks for protection, blessings, and the good things in life.

koborí eledá: This is an *ebó*, usually a *rogación*, done to one’s *orí*. It can involve any type of offering or cleansing that does not include animal sacrifice.

kofá de Orúnla: See *kofá de Orúnmila*.

kofá de Orúnmila: Given to women who need the protection of Orúnmila. This initiation can be given only by the *Babalawo*.

koidé: Red tail feather of an African gray parrot.

koshé: A *Lucumí* phrase meaning “to receive” or “to be had.”

kosí: That there is no.

kotoyale: A *Lucumí* word that means “incomplete.”

kuekueye: Duck.

kunlé: Kneel.

larishe: One of the hundreds of remedies that any one *odu* can prescribe to overcome *osogbo* and bring *iré* to the client sitting for a session with the *diloggún*.

lavado: Spanish for “washed.” All *orishas* must be washed and born in *omiero*. When one’s *orisha* is received outside the ritual of *asiento*, it is known as *santo lavado*.

lavatorio: The birthing of an *orisha* in which the *otanes*, shells, and implements of an initiate’s new *orisha* are washed in *omiero* and are born from the *godparent*’s *orisha*. See also *Osain*, *making osain*, and *niche osain*.

lengua: Spanish word for “tongue.” See also *ojo y lengua*.

libreta: A Spanish word that translates into “notebook.” When this word is used in *Santería*, it usually refers to the notebook the *iyawó* receives once his year in white is finished. Inside this *libreta* will be recorded the names of the *santeros* present at his initiation, the names of the *orishas* that were received at his initiation, and the *odu* that were opened at his *itá*. From *itá* will be listed the complete meaning of each *odu* and its orientations, *larishes*, and *eboes* that are to be performed by this initiate on a regular basis. This *libreta* will grow as more *orishas* are received, and as this priest or priestess progresses in the religion. Sometimes, the *santero* will keep personal *libretas* that list the secrets of *Santería* as he learns them. None of these, theoretically, is ever seen by outsiders. They are passed down between initiates of an *ilé* so that knowledge is not lost.

lo: Go.

lowó arayé: This is a *Lucumí* phrase meaning “tragedy through evil [eyes, tongues, and circumstances].” It is one of many origins of *osogbo* in the *diloggún*.

Lucumí: A contraction of various *Yoruba* words that translates into "my friend." The Lucumí are the physical, and now spiritual, descendants of the black Yoruba slaves in Cuba. This word also refers to the corruption of the native Yoruba tongue that is now used in *Santería*.

madrina: A Spanish term that means "godmother"; in *Santería* it refers to the female sponsor of an *aleyo*, or initiate in the faith.

maferefún: Praise be to, all power be to.

making osain: The sacred ritual of making *omiero*, the herbal fluids used to bathe and consecrate all in this religion. Without *Osain* and his *ewe*, nothing in this religion is possible. See also *niche osain*.

malu: Bull.

mano de Orúnla: See *mano de Orúnmila*.

mano de Orúnmila: The initiation given only to men by the *Babalawos*.

mariwó: Palm fronds used in various initiation ceremonies.

Marunla: One of the sixteen *odu* in the *diloggún*; it is said to be opened when fifteen mouths fall onto the diviner's mat.

matanza: The sacrifice of animals during an initiate's *asiento*.

mazo: A heavily beaded necklace draped over an *orisha's* shrine. When worn by an adherent, it is draped over the left shoulder and under the right arm, like a banner. The bead colors for an *orisha's* mazo are the same as those of the *orisha's* *eleke*.

meji: Twin, double.

Merindilogún: One of the sixteen *odu* in the *diloggún*; it consists of sixteen open mouths and no closed mouths on the mat.

Merinla: One of the sixteen *odu* in the *diloggún*; it is said to be opened when fourteen mouths fall onto the diviner's mat.

mesa: Sometimes called a seance, this is a ritual of *Espiritismo* done to honor the dead. It involves prayers, offerings, and medium possessions.

Metanla: One of the sixteen *odu* in the *diloggún*; it is said to be opened when thirteen mouths fall onto the diviner's mat.

mi: My, me.

mo: I.

moducué/modupué: Thank you.

moforibale: I salute you by prostrating.

mojuba: A prayer recited to give homage to an *orisha* or *egun*.

mojubar: The act of giving praise or homage to an *orisha* or *egun*.

moyuba/mojuba: I pay homage.

ñame: A type of yam, a root used frequently in Latin American cuisine.

Naná Burukú: In some mythologies, this *orisha* was born from *Yembo* when she ascended by her own *aché* to the palace of *Olódumare*; historically, she comes from the land of *Arara* in Africa and is not *Yoruba*. She was later syncretized into the *Santería* pantheon during the time of the *cabildos* in Cuba. She is the mother of *Nanumé* and *Babaluaiye*.

nangareo: A ritual performed to honor *Olorún* and *egun* before *itá*; it can also be done infrequently as *ebó*.

Nanumé: A very old and female *avatar* of *Babaluaiye*; so dissociated from him is she that many consider her to be not only an aspect of this *orisha*, but his sister and a separate entity as well (similar to the relationship between *Yemayá* and *Yembo*). She is the daughter of *Naná Burukú*, and she is said to be the moon in the night sky by elder *santeros*.

nfumbé: This Congolese term denotes the spirit that lives within a *palero*'s cauldron, the *nganga*.

nganga: Originally a Congolese word meaning "priest" or "magician." In both Cuba and the United States it denotes the pot or cauldron that contains the *palero*'s medicines, and it is also the home for the *palero*'s *nfumbé*. Each *nganga* is based on one of the *nkisi* and is filled with items that contain that *nkisi*'s *aché* (such as dirt, herbs, animals, minerals, metals, and tree branches). In Spanish, the word used is *prenda*.

niche osain: An amulet made of herbal, mineral, and animal substances; it is beaded in the colors of the *orisha* to whom it is consecrated. Every *niche osain* is made for a specific purpose: Protection, blessings, prosperity, health, and longevity are among the most basic. See also *Osain* and *making osain*.

nkisi: Collectively, these are the forces of nature in the Congolese religion *Palo Mayombe*. There are several types of *nkisi*; for example:

Siete Rayos (the storm), Kalunga (the ocean), Mama Chola (the river), Tiembra Tierra (the mountain), and Mariwanga (the cemetery). It is upon the nkisi that the *nganga* of the *palero* is based.

nlo: Is going.

Oba: An *orisha* considered to be *Shangó's* only official wife; she is but one among three of his lovers. The other two are *Oshún* and *Oyá*.

obá: King.

Obara: One of the sixteen *odu* of the *diloggún*; it is opened when six mouths fall on the diviner's mat.

Obatalá: An *orisha* considered to be the king of all the *orishas*, and the creator of humans.

obe: Knife.

oberoco: Testicles.

obí: The system of divination based on the coconut; also the coconut itself.

Obí: The man who became an *orisha*, and then fell from grace because of his own pride, becoming the coconut used in divination. Despite this, Obí is still an *orisha* and treated with respect in the religion *Santería*.

obini: A *Lucumí* word for "woman."

obirin: Woman.

obo: Vagina.

ocán: Heart.

ocha: A shortened form of the word *orisha*; it is also used at times to denote *Santería*.

Ochanlá: One of *Obatalá's* eldest *avatars* on earth.

Oché: One of the sixteen *odu* in the *diloggún*; it is opened when five mouths fall on the diviner's mat.

ochinchín: *Oshún's* favorite *adimú*. It consists of an omelet stuffed with shrimp and watercress.

Ochosi: An *orisha*; one of the *warriors* and said to be the patron of the hunt.

Ochúmaré: An androgynous *orisha* born from *Naná Burukú*. S/he is the rainbow, the crown of *Yemayá*. Some say this is the patron spirit of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. One half of the year, this

orisha lives deep in the river and never touches dry earth, and during the other half of the year, this orisha lives on earth and never touches water.

ocuni: Man.

Odi: One of the sixteen letters of the *diloggún*; it is opened when seven mouths fall on the diviner's mat.

odo: Mortar.

ododó: Flower.

odu: One of the many patterns, or letters, that can fall when using the divination system known as *diloggún*. There are a total of four parent *odu*, sixteen primary *odu*, and 256 *omo odu*. Each of these has its own proverbs, *patakís*, meanings, and *ebo*s. The word *odu* is both singular and plural in both *Lucumí* and *Yoruba* usage.

odu ara: Thunderstone.

Odua: An elder *avatar* of *Obatalá*. Many believe *Odua* is female.

Odúduwa: The founder of the *Yoruba* empire. He is also a *warrior orisha*.

ofo: Loss.

ofoché: Magical powders for negative purposes.

Ofún: One of the sixteen *odu* of the *diloggún*; it is opened when ten mouths fall on the diviner's mat.

ofún: White powder.

Oge: This *orisha* is the messenger of *Shangó*.

ogo: Guava-branch hook of *Elegguá*.

Ogún: One of the *warrior orishas*, the patron of ironworkers and civilization.

ogun: Witchcraft.

Ogundá: One of the sixteen *odu* in the *diloggún*; it is opened when three mouths fall on the diviner's mat.

ojo: Spanish word for "eye."

ojo y lengua: Spanish for "eye and tongue." This is a spiritual charm, a plaque, with a painting of an eye above a sword-pierced tongue. It wards off the evil eye, spying, and gossip.

ojú: Eye.

Okana: One of the sixteen *odu* in the *diloggún*; it is opened when one mouth falls on the diviner's mat.

oke: Mountain.

Oké: Referred to as Orisha Oké, he is the spirit of the mountain, the first point of land that rose from *Olokun's* watery domain. Orisha Oké is the first point where *Obatalá* came to earth; it is his foundation and strength, and Oké acts as his messenger between heaven and earth.

oko: Man; husband; penis.

okún: Sea, ocean.

okuni: A *Lucumí* word for "man."

olo: A *Lucumí* word meaning "owner."

Olocha: A *Lucumí* contraction signifying one who has his *ocha* done; an initiate of *Santería*.

Olódumare: A *Yoruba* contraction that translates into "owner of the womb"; this is the supreme deity of the *Yoruba* and the *Lucumí*.

Olófin: It is said among the *Lucumí* that Olófin is "god on earth"; he is the eldest *avatar* of *Obatalá* and can be received only by the priesthood of *Orúnmila*, the *Babalawos*.

Olokun: The androgynous *orisha* who rules and owns the deepest parts of the sea.

Olorún: A *Lucumí* contraction of two words: *olo*, "owner," and *orún*, "the sun." It means "owner of the sun." It is a name for God, his symbol being the sun in the daytime sky.

oluwo: Lord of *awós*, a *Babalawo* who made *ocha* before making *Ifá*.

omí: Water.

omí dudu: Coffee.

omí Inle: Water from the mouth of a river that meets an ocean.

omí lasa: Holy water.

omí odo: River water.

omí okun: Ocean water.

omí osa: Lake water.

omí tutu: Fresh water.

omiero: Any number of herbal waters made by initiates of *Santería*; it is used in bathing the *iyawó* and giving birth to the *orishas*.

omo: Child.

omo odu: This translates into “children of odu.” Any letter that is not one of the parent *odu* is considered an omo odu.

ona: Road.

oñi: Honey.

oni: Owner of.

oñi kan: Molasses.

onide: Parrot.

onire: A *Lucumí* contraction meaning “[to give a blessing] to clear a sign.”

opá egun: Staff of the dead.

opá ikú: Staff of the dead.

Opira: In the *diloggún*, this is a sign that may fall; many call it an *odu*, but it is not an odu. It is a shadow that falls on the mat when the *orishas* do not wish to speak about the client’s concerns. One says that Opira has come to the house when the *cowrie* shells fall so that no mouths are open; they are all facedown on the *italero*’s mat. Its *ebó* is automatic: Send the client to *Ifá*. If Opira falls during a reading, but is not the opening odu, there are rituals that can be done to pacify this sign so that the diviner can continue with his reading. These rituals are detailed in chapter 1.

opolopo: Plenty.

orí: A *Yoruba* word that means “head/consciousness”; it is used to refer to the spiritual head of the client.

orí: Head; cocoa butter.

orí agboran: When referring to *ibó*, a small doll’s head that may easily be held in a clenched fist. It will be used in any questions that deal with the client’s *orí*, and it will always answer in the affirmative.

orí beború: Head.

oriaté: An expert not only in the reading of the *diloggún*, but also in all the ceremonies of *Santería*.

Orisha Oko: The *orisha* who controls the fecundity of the earth. He has two forms: During the day he is envisioned as a handsome black male; at night he becomes a terrifying presence in the darkness. Traditionally, this *orisha* lives in the *santero*’s home for the six

months that the fields lie fallow, and then he goes outdoors with the beginning of the planting season (our house does this on the spring equinox and takes him back inside on the autumn equinox).

orisha: A *Yoruba* contraction that means “select head”; it denotes any of the myriad Spirits in the pantheon of *Santería* that are an extension of *Olódumare’s* *aché*.

Oroina: Lives at the center of the earth; she is its molten core. She gave birth to the *orisha Aganyú*.

orún: Heaven; the invisible world.

orún: A *Lucumí* word for “sun.”

oruncún: Knee.

Orúnla: The *orisha* of the diviners, the *Babalawos*. Only men are called to his priesthood. He is also known as *Orúnmila*.

Orúnmila: Another name for *Orúnla*.

Osá: One of the sixteen *odu* of the *diloggún*; it is opened when nine mouths fall on the diviner’s mat.

Osain: One of the most mysterious *orishas*; he was created after creation. Osain sprang forth from the earth the moment the first green thing began to grow. He is the lord of *aché* on earth, knowing all the secrets of the *ewe*. Without Osain, none of the *orishas* can work its magic, nor can its children be initiated, nor can the *orishas* be born on earth. He will live until the last green thing on this planet perishes. Anyone born with either six fingers or six toes is said to be an *osainista* from birth. See also *niche osain* and *making osain*.

osainista: A priest or a priestess of the *orisha Osain*; an *osainista* is either claimed by Osain in the *diloggún* or claimed by birth (his mark being six fingers or toes).

osán: One of the *ibó* used in divination. It is a guacalote seed used to represent children and their concerns. Sometimes it is used in questions dealing with illness, because before a seed can take root, the fruit holding it must rot. This *ibó* will always respond in the negative.

oshé Shangó: The beaded, double-bladed ax sacred to the *orisha Shangó*.

oshé: Double ax.

Oshún: The *orisha* bringing love, sweetness, money, prosperity, fertility, conception, and all the things that make life worth living to humans. She is also the sister of *Yemayá* and one of *Shangó's* three wives.

osí: Left.

osogbo: Any of the evils that may be predicted for a client through the oracle known as *diloggún*.

osogbo: Negative influence.

Ósun: Some in the New World consider Ósun a minor *orisha*; however, there are many types of Ósuns that can be given in different initiations: that of the *warriors*, *Babalwaiye*, *Naná Burukú*, and *Inle*. Ósun is an *orisha* in one sense, the Spirit that guards the *orí* of the client from danger. Yet more properly, Ósun is the herbal staff of *Osain*, which is packed with herbs and secrets specific to the *orisha* given to an adherent.

otá/otanes: The sacred stones that house the Spirit of the *orisha* to whom they are consecrated. Their number and color will depend on the *orisha* embodied. When referring to the *ibó*, *otá* is a smooth, black pebble that the priest/ess has found in the woods. It represents the strength and immortality of one's soul. In divination, the *otá* can be paired with any *ibó* and will always answer in the negative.

otí guí: Dry white wine.

otí: Firewater (rum).

Otín: An *orisha* whose sole purpose is to serve *Yemayá*.

otún: Right.

Owani: One of the sixteen *odu* of the *diloggún*; it is opened when eleven mouths fall on the mat.

owó: Money (*derecho*); *cowrie* shell; hand. When referring to the *ibó*, *owó* may take one of two forms: a single uncut *cowrie* shell, or two cut *cowrie* shells that have been attached so that their mouths face outward. They are used as *ibó* in any question dealing with money or finances. They can be paired either with *efun* to represent the loss or with *otá* to represent the gain. The use of this *ibó* is not taught in most houses.

owú: Cotton.

Oyá: This female *orisha* is patron of the "fire in the sky" or lightning

that does not touch the earth. She is the gatekeeper to the cemetery, *Shangó's* partner in battle, and the lady of the marketplace. Some also see her in the action of the tornado. This is *Shangó's* third wife, and his favorite even over *Oshún*.

oyín: Honey.

Oyó: A city in Nigeria from which many *orisha* priest/esses were taken and forced into slavery. There are two types of Oyó referenced in *Santería*. The first is Old Oyó, the city from which the slaves were forceably taken. Old Oyó is spread throughout the African Diaspora, and it is the Oyó from which many of our traditions grew. Old Oyó is no longer a place one may visit; it is found in the faces and souls of those who practice *Santería*. New Oyó is the city that remained in the motherland and evolved new sets of customs that are not observed in the New World's version of *orisha* worship. In the Cuban rites of *Santería*, it is the customs of Old Oyó that are observed in ritual.

padrino: A Spanish word meaning "godfather"; it refers to the male sponsor of an *aleyo*.

palero: A priest of *Palo*, a cult that works with the dead.

Palo: A magical religion and set of mystical beliefs that are based on the spiritual practices of those who came from the Congo in Africa.

Palo Mayombe: One of the two main sects of *Palo*.

Palo Monte: One of the two main sects of *Palo*.

patakís: The many sacred stories and legends found in the *diloggún*; some of these are about the *orishas*, while others are about the actions of historical/mythological humans who lived and died in both Africa and Cuba. All *patakís* teach spiritual truths found in *odu*.

pedras de rayo: A Spanish term used to denote the sacred thunderstones of *Shangó*.

pilón: A wooden stand, sometimes called a mortar, upon which *Shangó's* *batea* is placed. It is also used to make the throne for the *iyawó* during the *asiento*.

prenda: A Spanish word for the Congolese term *nganga*, the cauldron received by the *palero* when he is initiated to *Palo*. Inside the cauldron is the medicine of the *nganga*, and the familiar Spirit that serves the *palero* throughout his life.

rogación: A cleansing of the head, the client's *orí*; it involves using grated coconut as the main ingredient and a series of prayers to strengthen and support the head. The specifics of each *rogación* are given in each *odu* of the *diloggún*.

Santería: The name of *orisha* worship as it developed in Cuba; the English translation from the Spanish is "worship of the saints." It was given this name because of the syncretizing of the Catholic saints and the *orishas* of the *Yoruba*.

santero/santera: A priest/priestess of *Santería*.

santo lavado: Spanish term for "washing of the saint." While all *orishas* must be *lavado* in *omiero*, the use of this phrase refers to the reception of one's *guardian orisha* outside the ritual of *asiento*.

sesán: One of the *ibó* used in divination. It is a guacalote seed used to represent children and their concerns. Sometimes it is used in questions dealing with illness, because before a seed can take root, the fruit holding it must rot. This *ibó* will always respond in the negative.

Shangó: The fourth king of *Oyá*, and the *orisha* of the storm, thunder, and lightning.

shishé: Work.

sopera: A Spanish word for "tureen"; it denotes the bowls where the *otanes* and implements of the *orishas* are kept.

Spiritism: The practice of working with the spirits of the dead; it was begun in France by Allan Kardec. Spiritism took the place of the *egungun* cults that were lost in Cuba during the slave trade.

surefún: Bless.

table of Ifá: The sacred table on which the *Babalawo* draws the oracle *Ifá*.

tambor: The sacred festival of an *orisha* in which the drums are played and the mounts are possessed by their *orishas*.

temí: My, mine.

tesi-tesi: A *Lucumí* phrase that means "unstable."

thunderstone: The dark black, smooth, glassy stones in which *Shangó* is said to reside. They are virtually indestructible, believed to have been formed wherever lightning has touched the earth.

tie: Your.

timbelese: At the feet of.

tobí: Who gave birth.

toque: The name for the sacred *batá* rhythms that are used to call the *orishas* down to earth.

trabajo: A magical spell or magical work. See also *brujería* and *bilongo*.

tutu: Cool, fresh.

wa: Come.

waní: Who come.

warriors: The three *orishas* that are received together in one initiation: *Eleggua*, *Ogún*, and *Ósun*. A simulacrum of *Ochosi* is received with *Ogún* in the form of an iron crossbow.

Yansa: Another name for the mighty *orisha* *Oyá*.

yefá: A sacred powder prepared by the *Babalawos*; it is used in the divination known as *Ifá*.

Yemayá: Born when *Olokun* was chained to the bottom of the ocean by *Obatalá*, *Yemayá* arose to become mother to the world and the *orishas*. She is the patron of motherhood and of the fresh waters of the world.

Yembo: There is confusion over exactly who this female *orisha* is. Some say she is an elder path of *Obatalá*; but because she was once the wife of *Obatalá*, our house believes her to be an ancestral *Yemayá*. She is mother of the *orishas* and gave birth to all the waters of the world. *Naná Burukú* was born after *Yembo* was raped by *Ogún*. *Yembo* ascended to *Olódumare*'s palace by her own grief and *aché*, creating the moon and *Naná Burukú* to watch over women and punish those who commit crimes against them.

Yewá/Yegua: A very young, gorgeous *orisha*; yet she is the most chaste of them all, a virgin. She demands no less of her priestesses (men may never be initiated to her mysteries). Many know her as the devourer of the dead; she decomposes the bodies that lie in the earth's grasp.

yeye: Mother.

yeza: The tribal marks of the *Yoruba* ritualistically carved into the face after initiation. In the New World, these marks are made in a paint that may then be washed off the *iyawó*.

Yoruba: The native Africans who originally settled in the southwestern parts of the area known today as Nigeria; their deities, the *orishas*, form the basis of the religion *Santería*. The word *Yoruba* also denotes the language shared by these peoples, the native tongue that mixed with Cuban Spanish to become *Lucumí*.

younger odu: The *odu* that are said to be the youngest in the system of the *diloggún*. In order of youngest to oldest, they are: *Oché*, *Odí*, *Obara*, *Osá*, and *Owani*.

yubonna: A *Lucumí* title for the priest or priestess that assists one's *godparent* in the rituals of the *elekes*, *warriors*, and *asiento*.

Suggested Reading

For those who desire more general information about the religion Santería and its basic beliefs, the following books are highly recommended:

Canizares, Raul. *Cuban Santería: Walking with the Night*. Rochester, Vt.: 1993.

This book is a wonderful testament to the power of Santería from a man who not only was raised in the religion, but was also initiated at a very young age. It is filled with anecdotes and personal stories that illustrate the intervention of the orishas in his life. Inspirational, it is a must-read for those involved in all levels of the religion.

Flores, Ysamur. *Santería Garments and Altars*. Jackson, Miss.: 1994.

This book was written in conjunction with Peña and Roberto J. Evenchuk. It is an exceptionally wonderful overview of the faith's religious elements. Unlike other books written today that promise to teach the religion by a series of "how-to's" that read like an esoteric cookbook, this volume instructs the reader about the faith and its orishas by depicting various coronation gowns and suits, along with a variety of celebration and anniversary altars for the orishas. It gives a wonderful feel for the religion and its celebrations. It is a hardback filled with color plates and photographs, and although it is costly and a bit hard to get, it is well worth the reader's investment in time and money.

González-Wippler, Migene. *Introduction to Seashell Divination*. Plainview, N.Y.: 1992.

———. *Legends of Santería*. St. Paul, Minn.: 1994.

———. *Powers of the Orishas*. Plainview, N.Y.: 1992.

———. *Rituals and Spells of Santería*. Bronx, N.Y.: 1984.

———. *Santería: African Magic in Latin America*. Bronx, N.Y.: 1973.

———. *The Santería Experience*. St. Paul, Minn.: 1994.

———. *Santería, the Religion*. St. Paul, Minn.: 1994.

Although many have criticized her for popularizing the magical side of Santería while downplaying the religious elements, González-Wippler has corrected much of this in the later editions of her work, especially those published by Llewellyn Publications. If not for her writings, many of those now in the religion never would have found Santería.

Neimark, Philip John. *The Sacred Ifá Oracle*. New York: 1995.

———. *The Way of the Orisa*. New York: 1993.

The descriptions of the orishas (Neimark spells them *orisa*) and the attributes are among the best I have read; however, I cannot help but disagree with his conception of Yemayá/Olokun as being one and the same orisha. Although I am an initiate of Santería, I have met a few African priests in my lifetime and none of them agrees with his conception of "how things are done in Africa." Yet his book, as a whole, is a wonderful testament of the orishas as seen from the eyes of a newly initiated Babalawo.

For those who wish to read additional material dealing with the African faith as it is practiced in Nigeria or with the African forms of divination, the following books are recommended:

Bascom, William R. *Ifá Divination*. Bloomington, Ind.: 1969.

———. *Shangó in the New World*. Austin, Texas.: 1972.

———. *Sixteen Cowries*. Bloomington, Ind.: 1970.

William Bascom is the American authority on African spirituality. Although none of his books provides the instructional material needed to work any of the oracles, his writings are filled with scholarly information about the African traditions. His two books on the oracles, *Sixteen Cowries* and *Ifá Divination*, are filled with a wealth of patakís for each odu, and our diviners are continually turning to these volumes as a source of information and clarification.

Fatunmbi, Awó Fa'Lokun. *Awó: Ifá and the Theology of Orisha Divination*. Bronx, N.Y.: 1992.

While this book is often criticized by orisha priests and priestesses for its innovations on the casting of four cowries in the place of four coconut rinds to read the oracle *obí*, it is also praised for its detailed metaphysics. A book that brings controversy also brings much thought; I recommend it for its provocative content.

Idowu, E. Bolaji. *Olódumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. New York: 1995.

This is the best book available about the supreme deity of Yoruba belief; it also sheds light on the original practices that spawned the religion we now practice. It is essential reading for those either in the faith or about to enter it.

For those who can read Spanish fluently, the following books are all excellent and highly recommended.

Angarica, Nicolas V. *Manual del Orihate, Religión Lucumí*. Havana: Private printing, 1955.

Cabrera, Lydia. *El Monte*. Miami: 1971.

———. *Ochún y Yemayá*. Miami: 1970.

García, Cortés. *El Santo (La Ocha)*. Miami: 1971.

Lachetenere, R. *Oh mío, Yemayá*. Manzanillo, Cuba: 1938.

———. *El Sistema Religioso de los Lucumís y Otras Influencias Africanas en Cuba*. Havana: 1940.

Ortiz, F. *Brujos y Santeros*. Havana: 1938.

The following books, dissertations, and articles are also recommended for their scholarly approach to the mysteries of Santería and African faiths.

Brandon, George Edward. "The Dead Sell Memories: An Anthropological Study of Santería in New York City." Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1983.

Castellanos, Isabel Mercedes. "The Use of Language in Afro-Cuban Religion." Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 1977.

Fernandez, Eloise. "The Effect of Spiritism and/or Santería on Psychiatric Diagnosis of Puerto Ricans in New York City." Ph.D. diss., Adelphi University, 1986.

Gregory, Steven. "Santería in New York City: A Study in Cultural Resistance." Ph.D. diss., New School for Social Research, 1986.

Howard, Philip Anthony. "Culture, Nationalism, and Liberation: The Afro-Cuban Mutual Aid Societies in the Nineteenth Century." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1986.

Marrero, Manuel. "The Nãñigo Cult in Ybor City." Paper written for WPA Writers' Project, 1939. It is held in the Special Collections Department, University of South Florida Library, Tampa.

Murphy, Joseph M. *Santería: An African Religion in America*. Boston, 1988.

Simpson, George E. *Black Religions in the New World*. New York, 1978.

Sosa, Juan J. "La Santería: A Way of Looking at Reality." Master's thesis: Florida Atlantic University, 1981.

Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit*. New York: 1984.

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The Afro-Cuban faith, known to outsiders as Santería and to adherents as *Las Reglas de Ocha de Los Lucumí*, is not a static religion but is a living conduit of energy for connecting the spirit world to our own. It has roots in Africa, most specifically with the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria, but came to the New World with the slave trade where it has evolved in response to the surrounding culture. For adherents of Lucumí the Diloggún is the most important focus of worship: the sacred shells reveal the forces at play in an adherent's life and these forces are redefined and placated by the orisha priest, who makes direct contact with the spirit world in an effort to help the adherent evolve. At the heart of New World orisha worship, the Diloggún is both an oracle and a guide on the long road to personal transformation.

While many books have been published about Santería, *The Secrets of Afro-Cuban Divination* is the first to provide complete information on how to cast the Diloggún, including instructions for opening, reading, and closing the oracle, as well as everything necessary for giving a comprehensive reading. With a detailed discussion about why each prayer is offered and insight into the metaphysical core of the religion, this book will bring those seeking the wisdom of the Diloggún closer to the living orishas than they have ever been.

Ócha'ni Lele has been immersed in the underground culture of orisha worship since 1989. By 1995 he had received several initiations in both Santería and the Congo faith Palo Mayombe. This year he made Ocha and was crowned a priest of Oya. He lives in Florida.



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