



ITAN: PART 1

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TO BE CONTINUED...



ÌTÀN: PART I

**A GRAPHIC NOVEL BASED ON
YORUBA ORAL LITERATURE**

COMPOSED AND ILLUSTRATED BY STEPHEN HAMILTON

FOREWORD

THE FOLLOWING WORK IS INSPIRED BY THE GREAT ORAL TRADITIONS OF THE YORUBA PEOPLE. THE ANCIENT CIVILIZATION OF THE YORUBAS IS BASED IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA, BENIN REPUBLIC, AND TOGO. THERE THEY DEVELOPED ONE OF AFRICA'S MANY GREAT ARTISTIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS. DESPITE THE TRAGEDIES OF THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE THESE CUSTOMS HAVE PROVIDED THE BASIS FOR MANY OF THE RELIGIOUS AND ARTISTIC TRADITIONS IN THE AMERICAS, ESPECIALLY BRAZIL, CUBA, TRINIDAD, AND HAITI. YORUBA CULTURE PROVIDES ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL AFRICAN CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA. AT THE CENTER OF YORUBA RELIGIOUS THOUGHT ARE CUSTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE IFA ORACLE. IFA IS THE COMPLEX SYSTEM OF DIVINATION THAT IS THE CORNERSTONE OF YORUBA RELIGION. THIS SYSTEM MAKES USE OF A VAST ALMOST ENDLESS COLLECTION OF DIVINATION POETRY, WHICH IS INTERPRETED TO REVEAL THE SACRIFICES AND OTHER ACTIONS, WHICH MUST BE UNDERTAKEN TO RECEIVE BLESSINGS, AVERT MALADY AND REVEAL ONE'S DESTINY. THESE ESE (VERSES) ARE CONTAINED WITHIN THE 256 ODU (CONTAINERS) OF WHICH EACH IS REPRESENTED BY A PARTICULAR SIGNATURE CORRESPONDING WITH 256 DIFFERENT POSSIBLE COMBINATIONS OF THE OPELE (DIVINATION CHAIN). THIS KNOWLEDGE IS MEMORIZED BY THE BABALAWO/IYANIFA (IFA PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES), WHO DEDICATE THEIR LIVES TO THE STUDY AND PRACTICE OF THE RITUALS ASSOCIATED WITH IFA WORSHIP AND DIVINATION. THE ESE ALSO CONTAIN THE EPIC STORIES OF THE ANCIENT HEROES, DEITIES (ORIA) AND LEGENDARY BABALAWO/IYANIFA (IFA PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES) WHO CONSULTED THE IFA ORACLE IN THE PAST. IFA IS VAST AND THE YORUBA TRADITIONS ARE INCREDIBLY DIVERSE. THIS WORK IS NOT MEANT TO BE A DEFINITIVE SUMMARY OF YORUBA THOUGHT, NOR IS IT A STRICTLY CANONICAL APPROACH TO STORYTELLING. IT IS RATHER A SMALL PEAK INTO THE VAST AND COMPLEX ORAL AND ARTISTIC TRADITIONS OF ONE OF AFRICA'S MOST INFLUENTIAL CIVILIZATIONS.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SPECIAL THANKS TO AWODELE ONIFADE, WHOSE KNOWLEDGE AS A BABALAWO AND HIS PATIENT TUTELAGE WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS BOOK.

SPECIAL THANKS TO ŞANGODARE AJALA, ADEDOYIN OLOŞUN, YEMI ELEBUIBON AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE TRADITIONAL ORIŞA COMMUNITY OF OŞOGBO, OFATEDO AND EDE , WHOSE GRACIOUS WILLINGNESS TO SPEAK WITH ME ABOUT THEIR ANCIENT CUSTOMS WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN INCREASING MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE YORUBA RELIGION.

SPECIAL THANKS TO MY TEACHERS CHIEF NIKE OKUNDAYE, MRS AGNES UMECHE AND MR ADEKUNLE ADEWUMI, WHO SHARED WITH ME THE KNOWLEDGE OF YORUBA TEXTILE AND SCULPTURE ARTS INSTRUMENTAL IN CREATING THIS BOOK.

SPECIAL THANKS TO ARTS CONNECT INTERNATIONAL, WHOSE SUPPORT PROVIDED ME WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRAVEL TO NIGERIA, A VOYAGE THAT MADE THIS WORK POSSIBLE.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE AMAZING YOUNG ARTISTS WHO HELPED INSPIRE ME TO MAKE THIS COMIC BOOK AND WHO INSPIRED THE PHYSICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ORIŞA DEPICTED IN THIS BOOK.

**JORDAN NELSON
CARMEN PAULINO
ADRIANA DALICE
TATIANA DALICE
LUIS URENA
REGINALD PINKNEY
SAMUEL ANDRE
CARLSON GURLET
TONY PEREZ
SAMANTHA MCKENZIE
FREDERICK PLOWRIGHT
MAAZA FADEL EL SAID
ISABELLA MASSEY
COLEISHA TURNER
WILTON TEJEDA
CRISTAL FELIZ
JESUS MENDES
MALIK DEVAULT
RUKIYA MOHAMED
DAQUAN HAINES
AUNDRE GRAY**

GLOSSARY

Ş IS PRONOUNCED AS SH

ORISA

THE DEITIES, POWERFUL BEINGS THAT REPRESENT BOTH PERSONIFIED FORCES OF NATURE AND CIVILIZATION AS WELL AS DEIFIED ANCESTORS.

IRUNMOLE

THE PRIMORDIAL ORISA, THE FIRST THE DESCEND INTO THE UNIVERSE.

OŞUN

THE PERSONIFIED SPIRIT OF OF THE OŞUN RIVER. A DEITY OF FERTILITY, MOTHERHOOD, WEALTH AND COOL WATERS. A POWERFUL MANIFESTATION OF FEMININE POWERS.

BABALU AYE

AN ORISA OF BOTH SMALLPOX AND HEALING. A POWERFUL DEITY ASSOCIATED WITH THE BOTH SICKNESS AND HEALING.

OSANYIN

THE ORISA OF MEDICINAL PLANTS AND HEALING. ASSOCIATED THE THE CURATIVE POWERS OF NATURE.

OLODUMARE

THE SUPREME BEING, THE ULTIMATE CREATOR.

ORUNMILA

DEITY OF IFA DIVINATION. ORISHA WHO TAUGHT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE IFA ORACLE TO MANKIND.

OBATALA

ORISA OF THE WHITE CLOTH. THE ONE WHO SHAPED MANKIND. STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH CREATIVE FORCES.

GLOSSARY

OGUN

POWERFUL ORISA OF IRON, HUNTING, WAR AND INDUSTRY. STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH BOTH CREATIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE FORCES, AS ALL THOSE WHO USE METAL ARE PATRONS OF HIM.

ŞANGO

ORISA OF FIRE AND THUNDER. STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH WAR, CONQUEST AND ALSO JUSTICE. HE IS CLOSELY TIED TO THE ROYAL FAMILY OF THE OLD OYO EMPIRE AS HE WAS OF OF THEIR LEGENDARY RULERS.

IFA

THE DIVINE ORACLE IN WHICH THE DESTINY OF MANKIND IS HELD. THE SYSTEM OF IFA DIVINATION MAKES USE OF A VAST ALMOST ENDLESS COLLECTION OF DIVINATION POETRY, WHICH IS INTERPRETED TO REVEAL THE SACRIFICES AND OTHER ACTIONS, WHICH MUST BE UNDERTAKEN TO RECEIVE BLESSINGS, AVERT MALADY AND REVEAL ONE'S DESTINY. THESE ESE (VERSES) ARE CONTAINED WITHIN THE 256 ODU (CONTAINERS) OF WHICH EACH IS REPRESENTED BY A PARTICULAR SIGNATURE CORRESPONDING WITH 256 DIFFERENT POSSIBLE COMBINATIONS OF THE OPELE (DIVINATION CHAIN). THESE ESE ALSO CONTAIN THE EPIC STORIES OF THE ANCIENT HEROES, DEITIES (ORISA) AND LEGENDARY BABALAWO/IYANIFA (IFA PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES) WHO CONSULTED THE IFA ORACLE IN THE PAST.

EŞU ELEGBA

EŞU ELEGBA IS A POWERFUL AND EVER PRESENT ORISA ASSOCIATED WITH THE CROSSROADS, CHANCE, OPPORTUNITY, CHOICE, CHANGE AND MOVEMENT. HE HAS BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES AND IS THE MEDIARY BETWEEN MANKIND AND THE ORISA. IT IS FOR THIS REASON HIS VISAGE IS PRESENT IN MUCH OF THE ICONOGRAPHY AND ITEMS USED TO CONSULT IFA.

ORIKI

THE ELABORATE TRADITION OF PRAISE POETRY USED BY YORUBA VERBAL ARTISANS. ORIKI IS COMPOSED TO PRAISE BOTH CELEBRATED INDIVIDUALS SUCH AS ARTISTS, KINGS, PRIESTS, AND HUNTERS AS WELL AS THE DIVINITIES THEMSELVES.

ODUDUWA/ OODUA

THE LEGENDARY FOUNDER OF ILE IFE, OR AT THE VERY LEAST ITS PRESENT DYNASTY. KOWN AS "THE ONE WHO DESCENDED TO EARTH ON THE IRON CHAIN " HE IS WIDELY RECOGNIZED AS THE FATHER OF THE YORUBA PEOPLE.

ÌTÀN: PART I



EJI OGBÈ

**BASED ON TRANSLATIONS
BY AWODELE ONIFADE**

**OPENING INCANTATION,
EXCERPTS FROM EJI OGBE
AND ORIKI ORUNMILA**

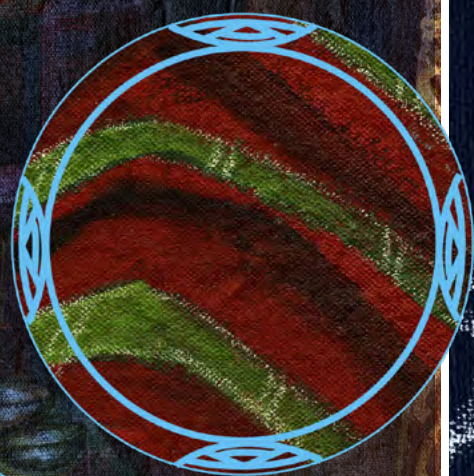
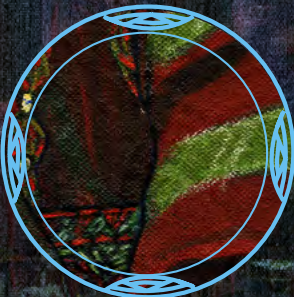
AFIN ORUNMILA



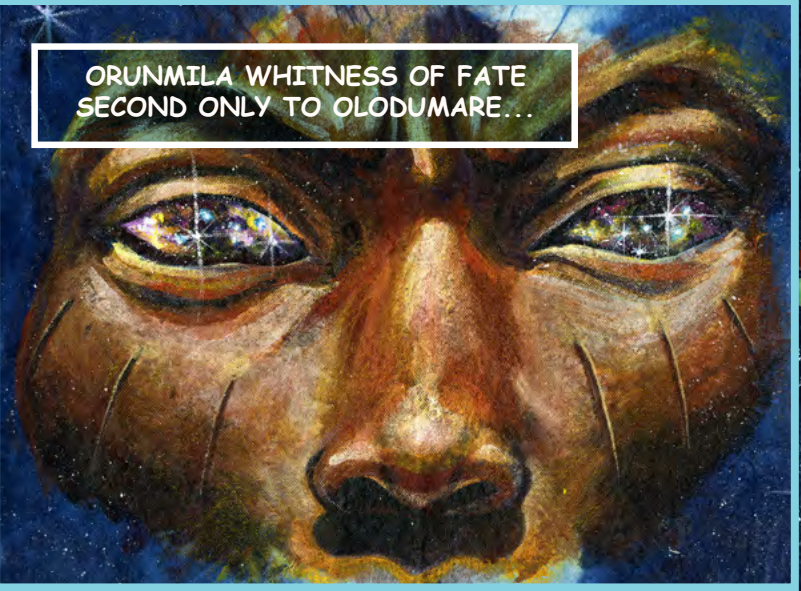
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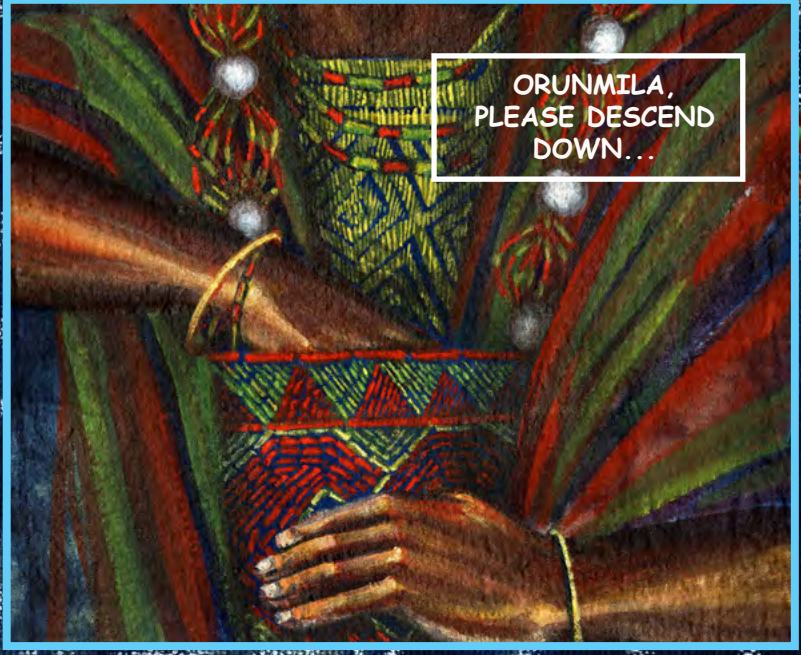
ORUNMILA,
PLEASE DESCEND
DOWN...



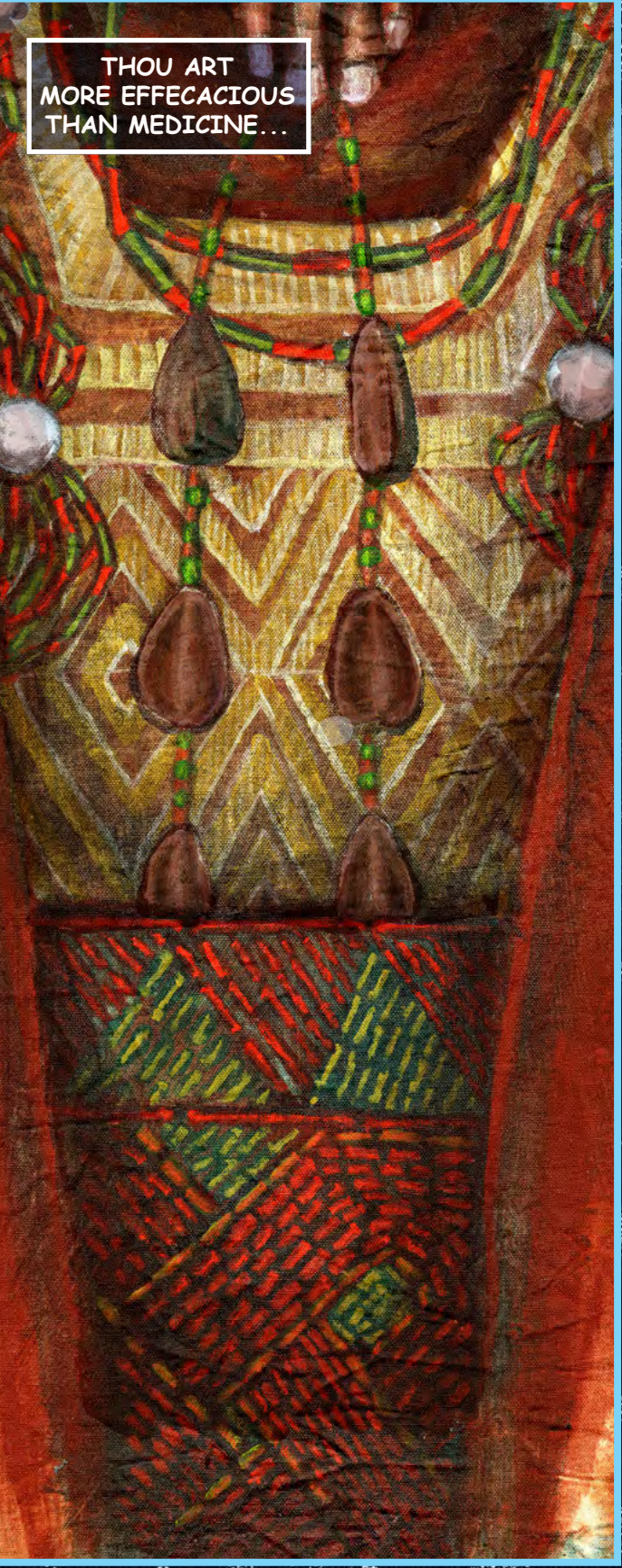
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SECOND ONLY TO OLODUMARE...

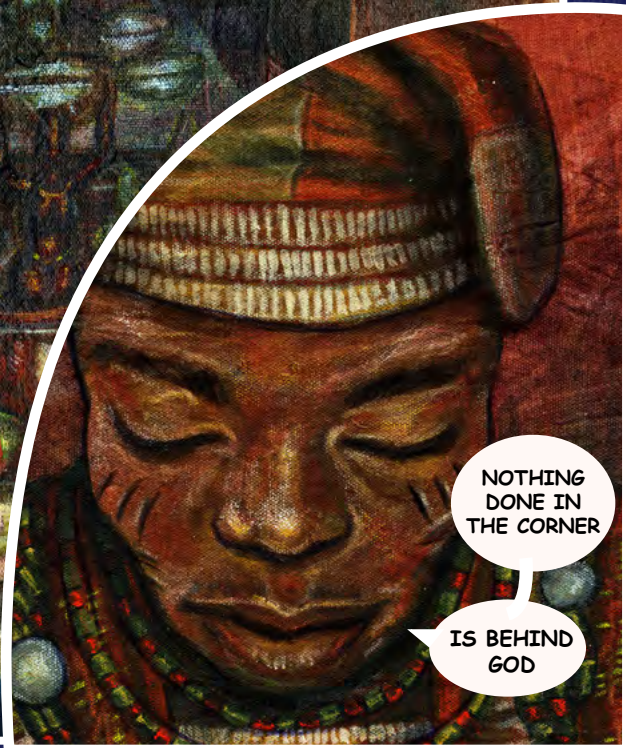
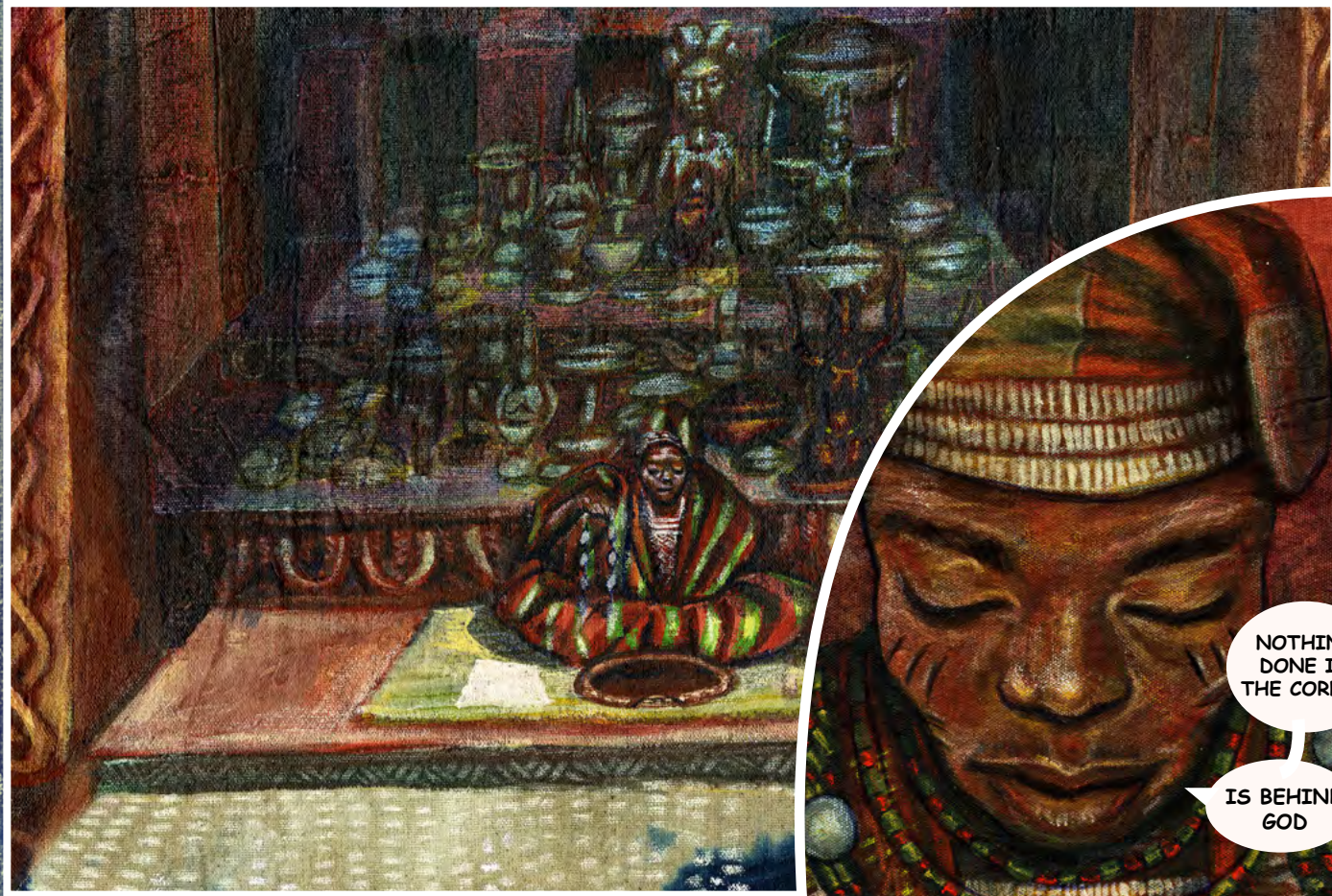
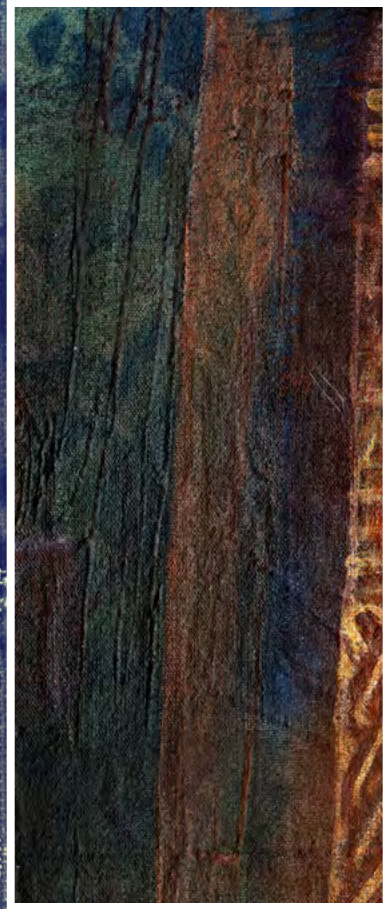
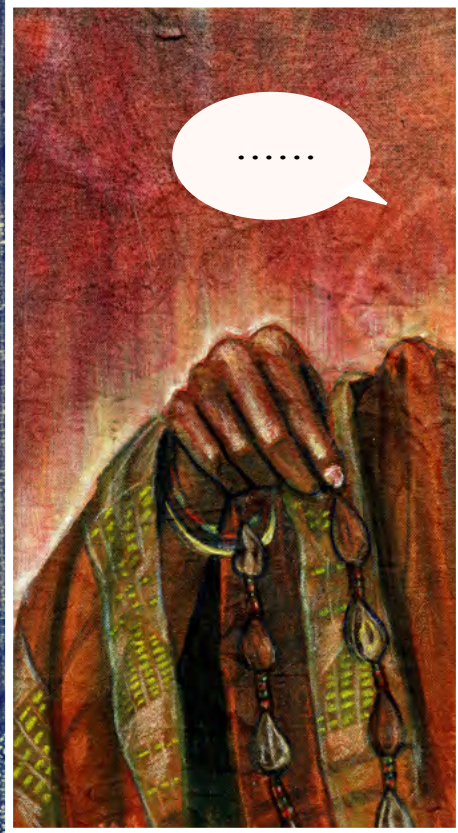
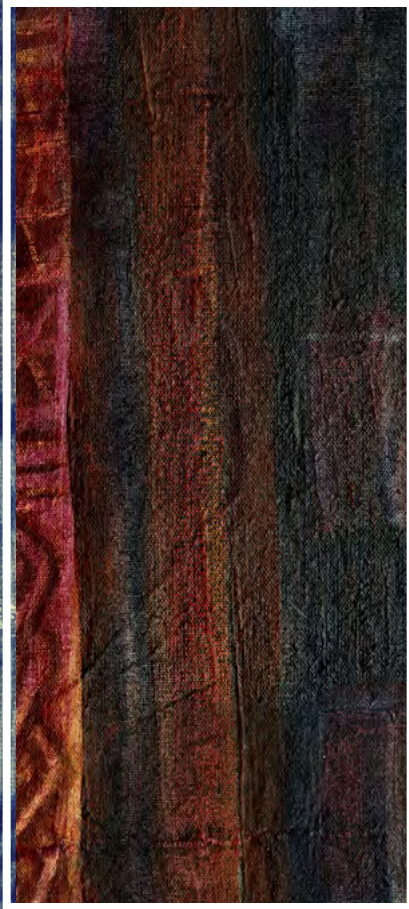


ORUNMILA,
PLEASE DESCEND
DOWN...



THOU ART
MORE EFFECACIOUS
THAN MEDICINE...







CAST FOR
EMILARIN



CHILD OF
ORISHA



THE SECRET
WORD

IFA SHALL
REVEAL



FRONT OF
THE TRAY

I GREET
THEE



REAR OF
THE TRAY

I GREET
THEE



I GREET
OLOFUN ON THE
RIGHT



I GREET
THE ELDER
DIETY OF THE
THE GROUND



I GREET
THE CENTER OF
THE TRAY



I GREET
OLOKANRAN ON
THE LEFT



IYAMI, DIVINE
MOTHERS, I
KNOCK TO GREET
YOU

