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INVESTIGATING THE NIGERIAN POLITICAL SITUATION THROUGH *OGBÈYÈḲÚ AND ÌRẸTẸ̀GÚNDÁ*

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Abstract

This paper examines the contemporary Nigerian political situation through *Ogbèyèḳú* and *Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá* in ifá divination. The paper seeks to inspect the political situation found in Odù ifá and relates it to the political glitches in the contemporary Nigeria society. The study adopts the theory of hermeneutics for analysis. Myth in *ifá* divination which serves as the primary data was collected through oral interview from ardent *ifá* priests. By examining these myths alongside contemporary Nigeria political realities, the study reveals both the relevance of traditional Yorùbá political philosophy and the shortcomings of present-day political practices, which are often characterized by corruption, abuse of power, ethnic division, and poor leadership. The findings suggest that Nigeria's political development can benefit from the ethical principles embedded in ifá mythology, integrating these indigenous values into political discourse, leadership training, and civic education could contribute to promoting good governance, national unity, and sustainable development.

Key Words:
Mythologies, Politics, Contemporary Society, Nigeria, Hermeneutics.

Introduction

Politics in Nigeria has remained one of the most debated aspects of the nation's development because of its profound influence on governance, social cohesion, economic growth, and national stability. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

experienced military interventions, democratic transitions, electoral irregularities, corruption, insecurity, ethnic and religious tensions, and persistent leadership challenges. These realities have generated sustained scholarly interest from political scientists, historians, sociologists and literary scholars. Increasingly, indigenous knowledge systems are also being explored as valuable frameworks for understanding the causes of political instability and proposing pathways toward sustainable governance. Among the Yorùbá, Ifá occupies a central position as a repository of indigenous philosophy, ethics, history, and political thought. Beyond its role as a divinatory system, Ifá embodies a comprehensive worldview that provides guidance on leadership, accountability and communal well-being. The corpus contains numerous odù that address the responsibilities of rulers, the danger of greed and abuse of power, and the importance of wisdom and consultation in governance. Consequently, Ifá offers an indigenous intellectual framework through which contemporary political realities can be interpreted and evaluated. Within the vast corpus of Ifá literature, Ogbèyèḳú and Ìrẹtègúndá contain narratives that illuminate issues of governance and the relationship between leaders and the people. The contemporary Nigerian political situation reflects many of the concerns articulated in these odù, such as poor leadership and abuse of public office. These challenges suggest that modern political institutions alone may not be sufficient to address political deficits without the ethical foundations emphasized in indigenous knowledge traditions such as Ifá. This study therefore, investigates the Nigerian political situation through the myths embedded in Ogbèyèḳú and Ìrẹtègúndá with a view to demonstrate that Ifá is not merely a religious or divinatory tradition but also a rich source of political philosophy and ethical guidance.

Scholars and writers such as; Vansina (1961), Abímbọ́lá (1968, 1976 & 1977), Bascom (1969; 1976), Finnegan (1970; 1972; 1975; 1977), Ìṣọ̀lá (1973), Ọlátúnjí (1973), (1984), Ògúnbà (1975), Olúkòjú (1978), Láoyè (2002), Bọ́lárìnwá (2019 & 2020), Òjó and Bọ́lárìnwá (2021) and Oyèbámijí and Bọ́lárìnwá (2025) among others have worked extensively on oral literature and they all submit that it is use to transmit views and opinions about the past, present and future events. Mbiti (1966:31) observes that literature is a mirror of life as "it reflects what the people do, what they think and how they live". It is also a means of articulating man's response to his environment. *Ifá* divination is an aspect of oral literature, and it can be described as a complex system of wisdom and practice used in Yoruba society to gain insight and guidance on any situation through myths embedded in it. Myth is a traditional story that naturally aims at explaining a natural or social phenomenon.

The term 'Myth' is originated from the Greek word, *mythos*, meaning a spoken or written story. In clear terms, myths are stories, with traditional origins, which use symbols and imagery to explain ideas, mysteries and truth. In contemporary society, myths are not

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

interpreted literally; they are believed to hold real meanings which are metaphorical, symbolic and moralistic. Myth represents a traditional story that explains an origin, a natural occurrence or social phenomenon and the phenomenal relevance is paramount to all societies. Scholars, such as Ìṣòlá (1973), Ọlátúnjí (1973), (1984), Ògúnbà (1975), Olúkòjú (1978), Láoyè (2002), Bọ́lárìnwá 2019&2020 and Oyèbámijí and Bọ́lárìnwá (2025) among others), have contributed to the conceptualisation of myths.

African myths are stories about African gods, ancestors and other spirit beings that behave like humans but with supernatural powers. Kanu (2021) submits that African myths are narratives articulated by the ancestors as responses to questions about the nature and origin of the universe, humanity, creation and the deities that govern the land, temple, cult, etc. These responses are kept in myths so that they may continue to be sources of knowledge for the present and the coming generations.

Literature Review

Yorùbá societies are so religious that all responses given to the matter concerning the universe, through mythologies, are basically rooted in religion. That is why Malinowski in Ikenga-Metuh (1969) describes it as "pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom". God, gods, ancestors, spirits, religious figures and others are always at the centre of mythologies. This informs Idowu's (1962:45) assertion that "myths enshrine the theological and philosophical thoughts of the Yorùbá". This means that myths are absolute sources of Yorùbá philosophy and theology. Marshall (1988:449) refers to them as "the stories of the gods".Lugli (2014) study traces the myths back to the 4th century B. Greece where tradition was connected to folklore as oral forms were privileged over writing. He expatiates that the use of supernatural characters is common in myths and it is often dated back to the ancient period before the ascendancy of civilisation.

In Sikana's (2008:140) view "myth is a collection of stories that says the story of the origin, including the lineage of people, natural events, the magic, heroism, belief and so on". Oral poetry is an integral part of the Yorùbá people`s literary ingenuity that conveys intense emotions and feelings. Literary artists employ it to express their feelings. An example of Yorùbá poetry is *ẹsẹ Ifá,* whose scope covers every aspect of the people's lives. *Ẹsẹ Ifá* embraces subjects like medicine, magic, observations about various aspect of nature, e.g. plant, animal, spirit, mountain, river, earth, water, rock supernatural being, natural being either human being or animal and all other living things. This goes in line with Biobaku's (1973) submission that *ẹsẹ Ifá* is the whole range of Yorùbá thought and belief and there is no subject that cannot feature in *ẹsẹ Ifá.* It is a historical information that comprises the ancestors' lives and their exploits. In the opinion of Fọláyan (1975) certain *Ifá* poems can help in supplying ancient myth about place and personal names and lists of ancient tools and implements. The problems that life poses necessitate the Yorùbá society to search

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

for cultural solutions and *Ifá* is seen as a means of assisting people through inquiries and consultations. It can be considered as a vital source of Yorùbá myths, their spiritual and temporal knowledge.

Myth as a significant part of *ifá* divination, is one of the instruments used by *ifá* priests to identify, clarify and surmount a difficult situation. Therefore, myths in *ifá* divination have a great importance and must not be overlooked in the contemporary Nigerian society. Many scholars, such as May (1991), Adélékè (2005), Ọlátẹ́jú (2005), Bọ́lárìnwá (2019), Malinowski (1948) have worked extensively on myths. Benjamin's (1991) study centres on the importance of myths. The work explains the origin of human beings. He articulates that most myths deal primarily with the origin of man and with the origin of certain social and ritual institutions that account for real-life situations.

Malinowski (1948) in his argument states that myths give answer to some questions of life and they help in building religious beliefs. Meanwhile, he does not prove the achievement of these functions of myths. Adélékè (2005) explores the Yorùbá myths on the origin of language. He elucidates that those myths are told to explain why and how language has become a special characteristic of homo-sapient. In narrating some Yorùbá etiological myths, the narrations inform readers about the reason for some things in society. For instance, it narrates a myth about why a new born baby cannot talk. It also discusses the myth that explains why animals cannot speak like human beings. Despite the comprehensive narration, the lessons learned from those myths and their relevance were not fore grounded and related to the present society.

Furthermore, Ọlátẹ́jú (2005) examines the language of myths in *ifá* divination. He comments on the scholars' agreement that myth has its origin in the Greek work mythos, even though there is no specific definition. He then states various definitions given by scholars and deduced his idea that myth refers to tales or traditional stories that are not quite factual. In essence, this means before a story can be qualified to be described as myth, it must possess some elements of reality. Ọlátẹ́jú (2005) particularly explores the seven stages found in *ifá* divination and how the language of myth is been employed. The work also expatiate the different between *ifá* divination and folktale. Vico (1984), when discussing the genealogy of myth, affirms that myth helps one to know one's source or root. The work also established that myth is not only conceptual but also ritualistic in nature.

However, it is observed that none of the foregoing scholarly arguments make adequate reference to *Ifá* divination as a veritable source of Yorùbá myths. *Ifá* divination encapsulates myths about virtually everything on earth. This informs the Yorùbá saying that "ifá fá ohun gbogbo tán", meaning ifá covers everything. Ifá has long been recognized as one of the richest repositories of Yorùbá indigenous knowledge and scholars such as Abimbola (1976, 1977), Oluwọlé (2014), and Hallen (2000), Ògúnáìkè

(2020), Okudolo, Ojakorotu, and Oni (2025), Akínyẹmí (2026), Bẹ́wàjí (2026) and Fáloḷá (2026), argue that the odù preserve Yorùbá conceptions of morality, justice, leadership, law, social order, and communal responsibility. These foundational studies demonstrate that political authority in Yorùbá thought is inseparable from ethical conduct and accountability. Myths are designed to uphold and preserve the tradition of a community; but much attention has not been given to how this could be achieved thereby creating a gap. This study therefore investigates the Nigerian Political situation through Ogbèyèḳú and Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá's myths with a view to foregrounding its relevance to Nigerian political situation.

Methodology

The study focuses on the interpretation of Ogbèyèḳú and Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá's myths with a view to foregrounding its relevance to Nigerian political situation. In carrying out the study, an interview was conducted. Since the study is focused on myths in Odù *Ifá* divination, Yorùbá society were chosen because Yorùbá people worship several deities and among these multitudes, *Ifá* enjoys a prime of place. Two *Ifá* priests (one from Ọyọ́ town and one from Ìbàdàn) were purposively selected for the interview. Two political myths from Ogbèyèḳú and Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá constitute the primary data. Journals, library and archival materials serve as secondary data, data were then subjected to literary and content analysis using hermeneutics theory that help in reflecting and relating the preoccupation of the selected myths in Odù Ogbèyèḳú and Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá to the happening in the contemporary Nigerian political situation.

Hermeneutics theory

Hermeneutics is both a theoretical methodology and philosophy of people with a common feature. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is generally acknowledged to be the founder of hermeneutics. Scholars such as Chladenius (1742), Schleiermacher (19988), Palmer (1969), Silverman (1994), Moran (2000), Smits, (2001, 2002), Richardson (2002), and Agrey (2014) are proponents of hermeneutics. These theorists view it as a perfect approach for the human sciences. Hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation can be traced back to the ancient Greek. Agrey (2014) elucidates that the word hermeneutics came from the Greek roots of the verb, *hermeneuein* (to interpret) and the noun *hermeneia* (interpretation).

Hermeneutic investigation attempts to gain an understanding of living through the interpretation of myth and text of society. Inwood (1998) describes hermeneutics as expression, explanation, translation or interpretation. The term *hermeneutics, according to Palmer (1969)*, Dilthey (1990) and Gadamer (1960) has its origins in the 17th century, when it was introduced as a method for biblical and traditional literary interpretation to

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

illuminate the meaning of history, myth or text. It is originally used for biblical interpretation, but recently, it has become a philosophical support for studies in various fields such as science, education, arts and philosophy. Smits (2001) posits that hermeneutics is basically a philosophical discipline that deals with questions of what enables interpretation and understanding.

Hermeneutics dwells on history. It is the study of interpretation and it focuses on the meaning of myth, history or text. Oyebamiji (2018) views it as a literary theory of interpretation, most especially the interpretation of literature which joins the traditional antiquities together with both the traditional and modern contemporary events where the two complement each other and both project to traditional and modern events in the future. Hermeneutics as a philosophical theory could be used to investigate myths and other historical and traditional life of people such as religion, culture and belief system.

Results and Discussion

Myths in *Ifá* divination can be categorised into two which are etiological myths and historical myths. Etiological myths are creation myths while historical myths are myths centre on happening or events such as politics, economy, marriage, rivalry, competition and so on. However, for this paper, two historical myths (from Ogbèyèẹ́kú and Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá) that centre on politics were collected from Baba Awo Awosọlá Táíwò Fátósìn from Ìbàdàn and Baba Awo Fámúìwá from Abà Mọ́gàjí, Ọyọ́ town.

The Ogbèyèẹ́kú analysed below informs Nigerian about women participation in political administration in the society. According to Bolarinwa (2016:139) "Politics can be defined as the process whereby some individuals or groups acquire power and exercise that power over others. The idea of allowing women in taking part in the political system of contemporary Nigerian society is not a new concept. The myth foregrounds the fact that women are highly relevant in the politics and their participation has a great benefit that cannot be overlooked.

Ogbèyèẹ́kú

Àìsí ọkùnrin nílé lobìnrin ń jogún àdá
A dífá fún Ọlayinka tí í sọmọ Apènà Ìgbórè
Ẹbọ lawo ni ó máa mú sẹ.
Ọlayinka jé ọmọ Apènà Ìgbórè, ó sì ní nǹkankan tí ó dàbí ẹrù ìlú ni ilé rẹ̀. Ẹrù ìlú yìí jé òrìsà kan ti àwọn òsùgbó, ògbóni àbáláyé máa ń lò láti fi darí ìlú, òrìsà yìí jé òkan lára àwọn ohun tí wóṇ fi ń tẹ ìlú dó, àwọn òrìsà yìí ni ó máa ń yan ọba sí ipò, léyìn tí ifá bá ti mú ọba àwọn òrìsà yìí ni wóṇ fi ń sẹ orò fún ọba sùgbóṇ òḍò Apènà ni òrìsà yìí máa ń wà. Ó ní ibìkan tí wóṇ ń pè ní ilé òsúgbó (ilédì) ibè ni àwọn Apènà, Olúwo, Lísà,

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

ìyá Ìbíyè, Irelú, àwọn ìwàrèṭà, inú ilé yìí ni wóṇ máa ń wà, tí wóṇ ti máa ń sẹ àkóso ìlú.Wóṇ máa ń fi ojú lámèétó̩wo ìsẹ ọba, bí ọba bá hu ìwà àìdára àwọn ni wóṇ máa ń pe àkíyèsí ọba sí ìwà kòtọ́ tàbí kí wọ́n bá ọba wí.

Nígbà tí Apènà bá ń lọ sí Ilédì tí à ń wí yìí, ó máa ń gbé ẹrù náà lóẏó́. Apènà ní ọmọbìnrin kan tí orúkọ rè̩ń jé̩.Ọlayinka, ó sì máa ń sọ fún ọmọ rè̩.Ọlayinka kí ó má dé inú ilé tí òun gbé ẹrù ìlú sí.Ní ọjó̩.kan Apènà kò sí nílé, lójijì iná sọ ninú ilé náà, ina òḥún pò, ó sì jó gbogbo ilé, Ọlayinka rántí pé ẹrù ìlú wà ninú ilé náà ṣùgbọ́n baba òun ti kìlò̩.pé òun kò gbọdò̩. wọ ibè̩. Ọlayinka bá fi èyìn rìn wọlé, ó gbé àpò tí ẹrù náà wà, ó sì lọ tójú rè̩.sí ibìkan. Bí baba sẹ ń bò, ó ń gbó̩.ariwo pé ilé Apènà ló ń jó yẹn o, ilé náà jóná kanlè, Apènà dé ilé, ó káwó̩.sórí, ẹrù ìlú ni ohun tí ń pa á léḳún torí bí kò bá rí ẹrù ìlú gbé kalè̩.wọn yóò tojú rè̩.mú idà lákọ̀, wọn yóò sì ti èyìn rè̩.kì í bò̩.ó̩.nítorí pé ẹrù yìí ni àgbéḳèḷé ìlú. Gbogbo àwọn tí ó jé̩. òṭá Apènà nínú ìlú ni inú wọn ti ń dùn pé, ó ku ibi tí Apènà yóò gbé òṛò̩. náà gbà, láìmò̩.pé ọmọ rè̩.obìnrin ti tójú ẹrù náà. Ọlayinka wá bèèrè lóẏó́.bàbá rè̩.pé kí ni ó ń pa á léḳún, Ọlayinka ní bí ó bá jé̩.ti ẹrù, nígbà tí ilé ń jóná òun ti fi èyìn rìn gbé ẹrù òḥún, òun sì ti sẹ ẹrù náà lójò̩. ṣùgbọ́n àwọn òṭá ń yò̩, inú wóṇ ń dùn, wóṇ ti lọ sọ fún kábíyèsí pé ẹ̀rù ìlú ti jọ́ná. Kíá ọba ti ránsẹ̩́.sí Apènà, Apènà ní kí wóṇ jé̩.kí àwọn pàdé nídìí òsùgbó. Àwọn ènìyàn bá ní kò le sẹ é sẹ torí pé ẹrù ìlú ló yẹ kí ó kóḳó̩. wọlé, kí àwọn ènìyàn tó wọlé, ẹrù náà sì ti jóná. Apènà ní dandanláá, kí wóṇ sá jé̩.kí àwọn pàdé nídìí òsùgbó, wóṇ sì dájó̩. Nígbà tí ọjó̩.pé, kí àwọn ènìyàn ìlú tó dé, Apènà ti débè, ó sì ti gbé ẹrù ìlú sílè, Apènà sàlàyé pé lóòótó̩.ni ilé òun jóná sùgbóṇ ẹrù ò jóná, kábíyèsí bèèrè ọgbóṇ tí ó dá sí èyí, ó sì sàlàyé pé ọmọ òun ló bá òun gbé ẹrù náà jáde. Àwọn ará ìlú ní ẹrù tí obìnrin ò gbọdò̩.rí ni ọmọ rẹ gbé jáde, ó sì sàlàyé pé èyìn ni ọmọ náà fi rìn lọ gbé ẹrù náà jáde.

Kábíyèsí sì dáhùn pé nígbà tí ọmọ rẹ ti rí ẹrù yìí, àwọn ní láti fi ọmọ náà sẹ awo. Wóṇ bá mú ọmọbìnrin yìí láti fi sẹ awo yẹn gan an gan, ọmọ náà bá di Erelú, ó di ìyálóde láàárín ìlú. Láti ìgbà náà ni ifá ti sọ pé gbogbo ohun tí wóṇ bá fé̩.sẹ ní ìlú obìnrin gbóḍò̩.wà níbè̩. Láti ìgbà yìí ni obìnrin náà ti bè̩rè̩.sí ní wà nínú sísẹ àkóso ìlú.

Ijó ni ń jó
Ayò̩.ni ń yò̩.
Ó ní béè̩.gégé̩.babaláwo òun sẹ ń sẹnu rere kifá
Àìsí ọkùnrinnílé lobìnrin ń jogún àdá

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

A dífá fún Ọlayínká tí í sọmọ Apènà Igbórè
Ohun ìsọrò ìbá mà tira
Bí kò bá sẹ Ọlayinka ọmọ Apènà Ìgbórè
Ohun Ìsorò ìbá mà tirá
(BabaawoFàtósìn Awósọlá)

Ogbèyèḳú(English translation)

Women inherited cutlass when there are no men
It divines for Ọlayinka, the daughter of Apènà Igbórè
Ifá instructed them to make sacrifice.
There is something we call town's load kept with Apènà Ìgbórè in his house. This town's load is a deity that the Òsụ̀gbó, ògbóni àbáláyé used to control the town and its administration. It is one of the deities used to claim land as well.This deity is used to select king that will come to the throne. After *ifá* must have chosen the king, they use this deity for initiation. In that town, there is a place they called Òsụ́gbó (ilédì) where Apènà, Olúwo, Lísà, ìyá Ìbíyè, Irelú, and the ìwàrèṭà often meet, and that is where they used to decide any matter that has to do with the town.These groups often observe and jugde the king's action and if the king has done wrong, they are the one to punish or call him to order.
Whenever Apènà was going to Ilédì for a meeting, he often went with the load. Apènà has a daughter known as Ọlayinka, Apènà always tell his daughter, Ọlayinka not to enter the room where he kept the town's load because it is forbidden for woman to see. One day, Apènà was not around and suddenly there was a fire outbreak in his house, the fire was so much and everywhere was burnt down. But when the house was burning, Ọlayinka remembered that there is a town's load in one of the rooms and his father has warned her not to go there. Therefore, Ọlayinka entered into the room in a backward manner because she must not sight the load, she carried the load and kept it in a secured place. As Apènà was coming, he was hearing people shouting that his house was on fire.When he got there, he busted into tears, the town's load was all that made him to cry. That load is the hope of the town and if he cannot present it whenever it is needed, they may kill him. All Apènà's enemies were so joyful about what has happened saying that they wanted to see what Apènà will do, without knowing that his daughter, Ọlayinka has improvise a means to carry the load and kept it somewhere. Ọlayinka then asked his father the reason why he was

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

crying and she told him that if it is the town's load, she has carried it and kept it. However, the enemies did not know this, they were so happy and they reported the matter to the king that the town's load is burnt. Immediately, the king sent for Apènà and Apènà sent back that they should meet in Òsùgbó. The people shouted that it is not possible because there is no town's load, therefore how would they meet at Òsùgbó but Apènà insisted that they should choose a day for the meeting. On the agreed day, before anyone got to Òsùgbó, Apènà was already there with the town's load, Apènà explained to the king that it was true that his house got burnt but the load does not burn. The king asked how he did it that the load did not burn. Apènà explained that it was his daughter that prevented the load from burning. The crowd said why should that be, no woman is allowed to see the town's load and his daughter carried it. He then clarified that his daughter entered into the room in a backward manner and brought the load out.
Kábíyèsí then concluded that, since his daughter has seen the town's load, they have to make her, one of the initiates. That is how they made his daughter, Ọlayinka, that particular deity and she became Erelú and she became ìyálóde in the town. Since that time, ifá recommended that, whatever they wanted to do in the town, women must be there, and since then, women has also been participating in the administration of town.

He was dancing
He was rejoicing
He was praising the initiate and the initiate praise ifá
He said that is how his priests praise ifá
Women inherited cutlass when there are no men
It divines for Ọlayinka, the daughter of Apènà Igbórè
Ifá instructed them to make sacrifice.
He would have died
If not Ọlayinka, the daughter of Apènà Ìgbórè
He would have died

Ogbèyèḳú is derived from two words or two Odù "Ogbè and Òyèḳú". Both of them are Ojú Odù of *ifá* divination. Joining these two words or Odù together (Ogbè+Òyèḳú) gives us Ogbèyèḳú which is known as minor Odù popularly called Ọmọ Odù or Àmúlù Odù. This myth is found in Ogbèyèḳú and it informs us about how *ẹrù ìlú* was been preserved even

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

when the Apènà's house was set ablaze. *Ẹrù ìlú* "Rù" that is found in "*Ẹrù*" is a verb means "carry", and in this contest "Ẹ" in it is a pronoun that refers to the person who carry the load. Ẹ+rù become Ẹrù (load). Ìlú means town. Therefore, Ẹrù + ìlú becomes *Ẹrù ìlú.* According to the narrated myth, *Ẹrù ìlú* is a deity used among the chiefs and elders during their sitting at Òṣùgbó. No deliberation takes place without *Ẹrù ìlú,* so whenever they have any sitting, Àpènà must always be on ground with *Ẹrù ìlú*. In the Nigerian context *Ẹrù ìlú* could be likened to the mace which is believed and accepted to be the symbol of authority of the national assembly. Mace plays a paramount role in the parliamentary chamber, and the parliament relies on it for proper functioning. When the legislators are in the chamber for their business, the first thing they look up for, is the presiding officer and the mace. If there is no mace in the national assembly, there will be no formal setting or discussion. This is portrayed in the myth, for any deliberation to be held in Òṣùgbó, Apènà must always be on ground with *Ẹrù ìlú.* Because the town relies so much on *Ẹrù ìlú* for appropriate functioning. *Ẹrù ìlú* here hermeneutically represents the mace in national assembly. Máyọ̀wá (2020) buttress the importance of mace when he asserts that all the legislatory functions can only be effectively executed when the mace is present in the chamber and through the process of parliamentary practices and proceedings.

Furthermore, *Ìgbórè* is a town in Ogun state. *Igbó* and *Erèé.* Igbó is a forest while Erèé is python. So, the amalgamation of both words gives us *Ìgbórè.* The *Ìgbórè* referring to in the myth hermeneutically signifies the contemporary Nigerian society. Then, the Òṣùgbó in this myth is a group of elders and the wise men in traditional Yorùbá society who sees to the political affair of the entire society. They are the one in the position of law making and they give punishment to anyone that goes contrary to the fundamental law of the land. This reflects the Nigerian political structure where the supposed knowledgeable ones, honourable and senators, were chosen to uphold the political administration. The national assembly lays down the basic principles of lawmaking. Their sole responsibility is law making and also amendment of the constitution. Legislative function is specifically stated in **section 4 (2) of the 1999 constitution** as amended stated that, The National Assembly shall have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government.

This is the exact function of Òṣùgbó in the traditional Yorùbá society. Òṣùgbó in the above myth signifies the national assembly where laws are being made for the entire Nigeria. Also, Apènà according to the narratives is the custodian of *Ẹrù ìlú* and his attention is paramount at Òṣùgbó's meeting. Whenever the Òṣùgbó wants to deliberate, they first look for Apènà who brings *Ẹrù ìlú* to the house. Apènà literally means"someone who is calling for the way" (ẹni tí ń pè ọ̀nà). The etymology of Apènà is (A + pe + ọ̀nà). It has a deep meaning which connotes someone who leads Òṣùgbó (other chiefs) during their possession into their meeting. Apènà here hermeneutically signifies Sergeant-at-Arms

who is responsible for taking mace into the house of assembly in order to commence deliberation.

According to the myth, when Apènà's house was on fire, the *Ìgbórè* people were joyous because they believed that the *Ẹ́rù ìlú* that is put in Apènà's custody have been burnt. However, his daughter, Ọláyínká rescued the situation. The people who celebrate Apènà's pain are those who do not actually want him in the position as Apènà of Ìgbórè. So, when they found out that his house was on fire, they were happy believing that the symbol of authority kept with him is burnt. Therefore, he would be removed from his position. Happenings like these are not far fetched in the contemporary Nigerian society, more especially in the political arena. The myth metaphorically reflect the political tussle in Nigeria, people in power are not the same; as we have good ones so also, we have wicked ones. The house of assembly is filled with all kinds' of people. Nigerian society is filled with malevolent beings. Enemy is the only factor that is hindering Nigeria from development. "Enemy", According to Oxford Learners Dictionary "is a person who hates someone or who acts or speaks against someone or something". It is a sad thing to know that enemies are also not farfetched in every aspect of contemporary Nigeria. The people who celebrate Apènà's pain signify those ones in the society who will always take pleasure in the downfall of the people in power. The best way to resolve unhealthy rivalry and political conflict is through peaceful dialogue, respect for democratic principles, inclusive governance and adherence to the rule of law. Sustainable political peace is achievable when all stakeholders feel heard, represented, and treated fairly.

In every society each gender has specific roles to play Ojo and Boḷarinwa (2026:114) Submits that "there is hardly any society where men and women occupy equal social status. This is because each individual sex has specific roles to perform, and there are varying ways of awarding merit to these roles". This submission connotes that every individual either male or female has one thing or the other to do in the society. As reflected in the myth, Kábíyèsí installed Ọlayinka, who has played a heroic role in the myth, as Erelú and ìyálóde. This is a full hermeneutic signification that symbolises how the contemporary Nigerian society usually appoints a gallant and vibrant woman to occupy a position of authority. Ọlayinka here symbolically represents few women who are involved in the contemporary Nigerian political administration.

A typical example of this is Natasha's case in the National assembly. Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan is a senator representing Kogi Central Senatorial District and also a member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan has been involved in a high-profile dispute with Senate President Godswill Akpabio, with the federal government filing criminal charges against her for allegedly insulting Akpabio and former Kogi State Governor Yahaya Bello, and some people support her and some mocked her. As it is reflected in the myth, people who do not actually want Apènà to be in the place of

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

authority celebrated his pain. This set of people hermeneutically symbolises those that mock Natasha during her challenges in the national assembly.

Ojo and Boḷarinwa (2026) submits that the most disturbing glitches facing Africa and militating against its development is gender tyranny against women, who happen to be more than half of the population of the society. In the senate, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan was suspended, though some individual and groups like the Coalition for Women in governance and the women in Management, Business and public services (WIMBIZ), have expressed support and condemned the senate's action. However, we still have people who were happy with Natasha's situation in the National Assembly. They believed that she has allegedly made false and defamatory remarks against senate president Godswill Akpabio and former Kogi State Governor, Yahaya Bello during a live television programme claiming that they were planning to assassinate her and because of this she must be removed from her office, (The Guardian, 6 March, 2025).

This myth in Ogbèyèḳú enlighten the society that women participation in governance is not something new, it has been in existence right from inception and what brought about their participation was embedded in the myth. This paper therefore reiterates that women's participation in politics is not merely a matter of fairness but a necessity for national progress. A society that empowers women to engage actively in political leadership benefits from a wider range of ideas, stronger democratic values and more effective governance. Therefore, all stakeholders should work together to create an enabling environment where women can participate fully and confidently in politics.

Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá

The myth in Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá hermeneutically appraised below informs the society about wicked leaders who makes life difficult for people and the consequence of their behaviors.

> Ègbè-ǹ-gberin Èmèlè
> A dífá fún Elémelè ilé
> A bùfún toko
> Ọmọ ọba ni Elémelè ilé àti Elémelè oko, àwọn méjèèjì ni ipò ọba tọ́ sí, èyí ló mú kí àwọn méjééjì díf á, wọ́n ní kí àwọn méjééjì ó rúbọ, wọ́n ní àwọn meéjèèjì ni yóó dé ipò ọbá ṣùgbọ́n ìwà wọn ni yóó gbé wọn débẹ̀. Wọ́n kìlọ̀ fún wọn pé bí wọ́n bá dé orí ipò tán, kí wọn má si agbára lò, kí wọ́n máa se ohun tí ó bá yẹ,àwọn méjèèjì sí dáhùn pé àwọn ti gbọ́, wọ́n sì rú ẹbọ tó yẹ.
> Lẹ́yìn ọjọ́ díẹ̀, àwọn baba wọn tó wà lóróyè tẹ́rígbasọ, wọn bá fi Elémele ilé jẹ oyè, lákòkóò yi náà ni wọn fi Elémele oko jẹ oyè. Lẹ́yìn tí Elémele

ilé dé ipò tán, kó rántí ìkìlọ́, ó n si agbára lò, kò se ojúṣe rẹ̀ ní ìlú, ó ń fi ẹ̀tọ́ dun ara ìlú àti àwọn ìjòyè, bí ènìyàn bá ṣẹ̀ kò ní gbẹ̀bẹ̀, ìdájọ́ burúkú ni ó má a ń ṣe fún wọn. Elémele ilé dẹ́kun gbogbo ẹbọ àti orò tí wọ́n n se fún ìtùbà-tùsẹ ìlú. Ìlú bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí i dàrú, ìlú ò fararọ, lẹ̀yìn ọdún kan sí méjì ara tí ń ni ara ìlú.

Elémele oko tí wọ́n jọ gorí oyè ní àkókò kan náà rántí ohun tí àwọn babaláwo sọ fún wọn, ó sí ń pa ìkìlọ́ mọ́. Ó ń se ẹ̀tọ́ fún ìlú, ó ń bọ gbogbo òrìṣà tó yẹ ní bíbọ, àwọn ara oko sì ń gbé nìnù ayọ̀ àti ìfọkànbalẹ̀. Nígbà tí àwọn ara ilé gbọ ìròyìn ohun tí ń sẹlẹ̀ ní oko, wọ́n bẹ̀rẹ̀ sì í sálọ sí oko. Oko rọrùn àláàfíà sì ń jọba ní oko. Ní àkókò àjọdún tí wọ́n máa ń se ní oko, àwon ènìyan pé bíríkótó, wọ́n se ìpàdé, wọ́n sì gbèrò pé kí wọ́n lé Elémele ilé kúrò ní ìlú, kí wọ́n sì gbé Elémele oko lọ sí ìlú, kí àtúnṣe le dé bá ìlú tí kò rọgbọ mọ́. Báyìí ni wọ́n se gbìmọ̀ràn pọ̀ tí wọ́n lé Elémele ilé kúrò ní ìlú tí wọ́n sì gbé Elémele oko gorí ìtẹ̀ ọba ní ìlú.

Ǹjẹ́ à ń gbé Elémele oko lọ síle lónìí
Igbe-n-gberin òlele
À ń gbé Elémele oko relé lonìí
Igbe-n-gberin òlele
(Baba Awo Fámúìwá)

Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá (English translation)

Ègbè-ǹ-gberin Èmèlè
Ifa divination was made for Elémelè ilé
And it was also made forElémelè oko
Both Elémelè ilé and Elémelè oko are princes and they both have right to become king. They went for divination and they were told to make sacrifice.Ifá told them that they would become kings through their attitude. They were told that when they ascend the throne, they should not be autocratic, they should not abuse power, and they should learn to do what is right. They both accepted the instruction and made the sacrifice allotted to them. After a while, the existing kings both at home and in the farm died and Elémele ilé ascended the throne in the city while Elémele oko also ascended the throne in the farm. However, when Elémele ilé got to power, he could not adhere to Ifá's instruction and warning; rather, he misused power. He did not perform his responsibility for the city and he denied chiefs and the citizens of their rights. However, if anyone misbehaved, he would

order the person to be killed. Elémele ilé stopped all the rituals and sacrifices that they usually observed in the city for atonement and peace. After one year, there was serious problem in the city.

Elémele oko who ascended the throne the same time with Elémele ilé was doing well in the farm; he remembered *Ifá's* instruction and warning, and he adhere strictly to it. He was doing his responsibility for the people in the farm, he made sacrifice to deities and the people in the farm were enjoying. When the people in the city heard what was going on in the farm, they relocated to the farm. Then a time came in the farm when they needed to celebrate their festival, people came together during this festival and planned on how to dethrone Elémele ilé and take Elémele oko to the city so that he could revive the city. That was how they arranged for a coup and they sent Elémele ilé out of the city and Elémele oko was brought to the city.

Today we are taking Elémele oko to the city
Igbe-n-gberin òlele
Today we are taking Elémelè oko to the city
Igbe-n-gberin òlele

(Baba Awo Fámúìwá)

Analysis

Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá is derived from two Odù "Ìrẹtẹ̀" and "Ògúndá". Both of them are Ojú Odù in *ifá* divination. When both comes together (Ìrẹtẹ̀" + "Ògúndá) they become Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá and this is known as minor Odù popularly called Ọmọ Odù or Àmúlù Odù in *ifá* divination.The name Elémelè is derived from Oní and emelè. Emelè is a kingship title, while Oní means the owner. Through the phonological process Oní + emelè now becomes Elémelè.

The myth narrated in "Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá"hermeneutically reflects the political happenings in contemporary society, especially in Nigeria. Both Elémelè ilé and Elémelè oko symbolize Nigerian politicians who clamor political power. According to the myth, Elémelè ilé and Elémelè oko have the right to be at the corridor of power and they both consult *Ifá.* This is a typical example of what operates in Nigerian context where every citizen has a fundamental human right to vote and be voted for in an election. Consulting *Ifá* in this myth signifies contest in a general election that will bring a candidate to power.. The myth in "Ìrẹtẹ̀ Ògúndá"relays that both Elémelè ilé and Elémelè oko consult *Ifá* and both of them are given power in different localities after the consultation which implies that both of them won the contest in different areas and this reflect happenings in Nigerian political scenario, when people who want to be in a position of authority, contest in an election.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

On getting to the throne, Elémelè ilé abuses his power, and this led to a societal problem that is why Bert and Sung (2021: 1) elucidate that "A governance crisis may not only be detrimental to public trust of the government, but can also be a source of economic stagnation and social instability".Elémelè ilé is autocratic as he denies people their rights and stops all sacrifices and rituals that have been in operation before he gets to power and this resulted in social instability, economic challenges, cultural change and social injustice.Viewing this from hermeneutic perspective,Elémelè can be likened to former Nigeria Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of Army Staff and dictatorial leader, Sanni Abacha, whose leadership epitomises abuse of power.

General Sanni Abacha's regime (1993–1998) stands as one of the most controversial periods in the history of Nigeria's politics. His military rule was characterised by political repression, human rights violations, and systemic corruption that spoiled Nigeria's global standing. In "Ìrẹtẹ̀ Ògúndá", the myth relayed that all traditional festival, sacrifices and rituals of the community and the meeting of traditional elders' council that uphold communal living were completely banned by Elémelè ilé and the citizens do not find the town habitable again. According to the myth people started relocating to farm where there is peace, harmony and rest of mind. The hermeneutics realities in this myth capture the act of governance and socio-economic happenings in Nigeria during Sanni Abacha's regime. Following his military coup on 17 November 1993, General Sani Abacha suspended the constitutional order by military decree, dissolved democratic institutions, and ruled through the Provisional Ruling Council. There was no freedom of speech and in fact, his government was notorious for suppressing dissenting voice and restricting civil liberty, he ruled by military decree. His government justified this by claiming that strong leadership was needed to stabilise the country and combat corruption. He gave himself absolute power in 1994, by issuing a decree that placed his government above the courts. He ruled Nigeria with an iron grip and his regime was characterized by gross human rights abuses, (Daily Times, Nigeria, 1993).

The farm referred to in "Ìrẹtẹ̀ Ògúndá"signifies another, country that is peaceful and well-organised, while the town in the myth signifies Nigeria. During Abacha's regime (1993-1998) Nigeria faced numerous problems that led to a significant brain drain and relocation of citizen to another country. The relocation of people from town to farm hermeneutically reveals how Nigerians leave their country because of high cost of living and economic hardship. People were leaving for another land where their expectations would be met and enjoy a good living. Adekilekun (2025) while discussing economic and social conditions of Nigeria 1993–1998, observes that economically, the Abacha regime offered a paradox. Nigeria's foreign reserves and external debt increased due to the hike in oil prices and strict control of fiscal spending. Despite this, corruption reached extraordinary levels. He explains further that Reports from Swiss and U.S. authorities eventually

confirmed that billions of dollars, called "Abacha loot", were illegitimately siphoned abroad through family members and relative.

This looting really affected the Nigerian economy beyond control and this has bred the adoption of the colloquial term "Japa syndrome" among the people to describe the mass outmigration in Nigeria. Okunade and Awosusi (2023) elucidates that Professor Toyin Falola describe Japa as a "Yorùbá word that means to flee" and once achieved, a celebration comes with it as it feels more like gaining freedom at last. Nigeria who is often referred to as the giant of Africa has experienced a serious political and economic challenges during Abacha's regime. It was discovered that owing to bad governance, human right abuse, oppression, abuse of power, persecution, economic meltdown, unemployment, unfavourable working conditions and insecurity in Nigeria, people resort to seeking for greener pastures in foreign countries.

Elémelè ilé is rewarded for his autocracy through his disgraceful dethronement and banishment from the town. This hermeneutically reflected what happened when Sani Abacha was declared dead in June 1998 and Nigeria eventually returned to civilian rule in 1999. The myth in "Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá" admonishes leaders, either traditional or political, not to be dictators, authoritarians and human rights abusers. The above myth hermeneutically reveals that the society is filled with both obedience and disobedience people. Elémelè ilé symbolises the defiance ones who are not ready to abide with the norms of the society, while Elémelè oko signifies those that are compliance to the societal norms. The myth further reflects how Nigerians react when their right is being denied by the government or any stakeholder. Elémelè ilé denied citizen of their right and the citizen reacted to this attitude by plotting coup against him. This usually happens in Nigerian contemporary society when political leaders deny people of their right, the citizen always protest and if amendment did not take place on time, the citizen will look for any available means to help their living.

Conclusion

Oral traditions such as myth, song folktale and others have a great role to play in the contemporary Nigerian political administration. It is through those traditions that the contemporary society can surmount political hardship. The myths narrated above were not only seen as a study of what happened in the past but as an attempt at understanding the past as a guide for action in the present Nigerian political situation. This paper, through myths in Ogbèyẹ̀kú, established that women participation in governance is not something new; it has been in existence right from inception and therefore reiterates that women's participation in politics is not merely a matter of fairness but a necessity for national progress. Therefore, a society that empowers women to engage actively in political leadership benefits from a wider range of ideas, stronger democratic values and

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

more effective governance. The myth in Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá, also established that there is a reward for everything in life. The dethronement of Elémelè ilé in Ìrẹtẹ̀gúndá serves as a great lesson for political leader in the contemporary Nigerian society who believes in dictatorship and abuse of power. The relocation of Elémelè oko from farm to the city is a prodigious reward and it is an encouragement to the upright leaders in Nigerian political system.

This study has shown that ifá myth provides a valuable indigenous framework for understanding the nature and practice of politics in Nigeria. Through its narratives, symbols, and moral teachings, ifá presents politics as a responsibility that should be guided by justice, wisdom, accountability, integrity, and concern for the collective good. By examining these myths alongside contemporary Nigeria political realities, the study reveals the relevance of traditional Yorùbá political philosophy and the shortcomings of present-day political practices, which are often characterized by corruption, abuse of power, ethnic division, and poor leadership. The findings suggest that Nigeria's political development can benefit from the ethical principles embedded in ifá mythology, integrating these indigenous values into political discourse, leadership training, and civic education could contribute to promoting good governance, national unity, and sustainable development. Ultimately, investigating Nigerian politics through the lens of ifá myth demonstrates that African indigenous knowledge systems remain significant resources for addressing contemporary political challenges and for envisioning a more just, accountable, and people-centered political order.

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