

# Odu Ifa Ose Meji: Clarifying the Ibadan Stereotype of political violence and free-for-all, through Yoruba Cosmology

'Kayode Eesuola,  
PI, Lagos ACC

# Background

Many researches in African Studies still suffer **Euro-modal limitation and anthropological reductionism.**

They lack some critical Afro-peculiar sources, methods and approaches.

Results from them depict little African realities.

This is a problem that must be addressed in 'Reconfiguring African Studies'.

**This presentation is a modest step towards demonstrating the use of Afro- peculiar research instruments to explain and clarify the political behaviour of a social group in West Africa: The Ibadan.**

# Ibadan

**Ibadan is a Yoruba city located in the south-west of Nigeria. It was the Capital of Nigeria's Western Region and, now, the Capital of Oyo State.**



# Oriki (Traditional Clan Attribute) of Ibadan

Ibadan, Ile Oluyole  
Omo ajegbin jekaraun,  
Omo af'ikaraun foori mu  
Ibadan Ilu Ojo, Ilu Ajayi, Ilu Ibikunle  
Ibadan Ilu Ogunmola olodo o ker  
O wo kembe re'bi ija  
Ibadan kii banii s'ore ailo s'oku ogun,  
Ija igboro n'iwa Ibadan  
Omo Agesinkole  
Ibadan o bani bole wi  
O ni kin l'oloun se juu be un....  
Pupo Ibadan ni jaguda, pupo ni  
janduku,  
Eyi Ibadan bi ti o jale, oju lo n ro





# Oriki Ibadan interpreted

- Ibadan, the home of Oluyole
- Where theft victim is blamed, not the thief
- The clan that consumes the snail with its shell
- The clan that improvises the snail shell as plate for taking pap
- The Land of Ojo, Ajayi and Ibikunle
- The Land of Ogunmola Olodo o Keri
- He who goes fighting in loose pants
- Once a friend to Ibadan, must accompany him to war
- Ibadan is characterized by free for all
- Many are hoodlums, many are criminals
- Born in Ibadan but not a thief merely endures.



# Olubadan, Oba Saliu Adetunji 2016 –present



# Ifa

- **In general, Ifa** is Yoruba's indigenous knowledge system of divination, philosophy and, as many still insist, religion (See Olupona 2010, Akin-Otiko 2015). Cosmologically, "It is a thematic approach to the examination of historic issues of life that had, in the time past, shaped the conduct of man within the context of his history, environment and age" (Odunlaru, 1990).
- It also represents a primary embodiment of unwritten ageless Yoruba wisdom (Odunlaru; Oluwole 2013), and **"each of its verses or odu is a body of stories deriving from a single theme and addressing the issue of life"** (Alao 2009: 9).
- **In Yoruba Cosmology, each of the Yoruba clans is associated with one odu Ifa or the other.**

## Ose Meji

Ose Meji is the fifteenth **(15th) of the 256 odu** (verses) in Ifa Corpus. It is the cosmological progenitor of Ibadan, hence, its choice for explanation and clarification of the political violence and free for all stereotypical attributes of the clan.





# Significance

- Nigeria, like other African countries, is plagued with political violence.
- For proper understanding of the scenario in Africa where majority of states are multi ethnic, a clan-oriented approach to political behaviour works better.
- Policy planners and implementers in the areas of security and logistics will find this clarification useful for planning during elections, population census, religious activities and other sensitive issues in their countries.

# The Ibadan Stereotype

- Ibadan is often stereotyped as a **politically violent and free-for-all city and people.**
- Hooliganism, larceny and racketeering are often attributed to it.
- **IBADAN:** “Ipata (rascally) **Boys Are Dangerous at Night**” (Agboola 2012:70).

# Stereotypes of some other Yoruba clans

- Aside Ibadan, other Yoruba clans have their stereotypes.
- A kii waye, ka ma l'arun kan laa      It's impossible to live without a plague
- Ina-jijo nii da Iseyin laamu      Fire outbreaks troubles Iseyin
- **Ija-igboro larun Ibadan**      **Ibadan is defined by intra- metropolis violence**
- Ma su, ma to ni t'Eko      Extreme restrictions pervade Lagos
- Ka ro'ni l'oye ni t'Ofa      Ofa is known for chieftaincy deposition
- T'ogun t'ogun ni s'omo Ogbomoso      Warlike tendencies embellish Ogbomoso.....

## Stereotypes of some other Yoruba clans, cont'd.

- Ipanle larun Ijesa Ijesha contracts hooliganism
  - Ara Owu e e ranro: Owu people don't revenge,
  - Awi-i-menu-kuro ni t'Owu: But they ever recount
  - Ka ta, ka jere tun fe gba towo eni Excessive and desperate profiteering  
ni ti Ijebu is that of Ijebu
  - A gb'Awusa, a gbo'Lorin, a gbo Imesi Even with unlimited language skills,
  - Oloja Oke,
  - Enikan o le gbo oun t'ara Oyo n wi No one beats the cunning acts of the Oyo
- (Alaafin Lamidi Adeyemi 111, November 2017. Translation: Ayo Yussuf, and Bisoye Eleshin, 2020) .

# Political violence and free for all

- Two main behavioral attributes are found in the Ibadan Stereotype: **‘Political violence’** and **‘free for all’**.
- Generally, violence is a “destructive harm' or 'destructive force”, which includes “not only physical assaults that cause damage to the person, but also magic, sorcery, and the many techniques of inflicting harm by mental or emotional means “ (Walter, 1964:3).
- When such acts occur in, around and for the purpose of politics, they are often called political violence.



# Political Violence, cont'd.

- **Political violence** belongs to the sub discipline of **political behaviour** which refers to a broad spectrum of human activities that can directly or otherwise influence political decisions and power play. It is a manifest of free for all behaviour.
- **As a subset of human behaviour** that involves politics and power (Robbert, Golder and Golder 2013), political behaviour can be both legitimate and otherwise, and in both senses it often covers “**voting, activism, social movements and revolutions**” (Oxford Reference 2020). Political violence is a common means of exhibiting political behaviour, and **it is the main focus of this paper within the context of the Ibadan stereotype.**

# Stereotyping

- **Stereotyping is an age long human tradition.** It has been described as an over-generalized belief about a particular category of people (Cardwell, 1999), and is often used for **explanation of social events**, justification of groups activities and general differentiation of one group from another (Haslam et al, 2002).
- Many times, stereotypical attributes can be “**fundamentally incorrect and derogatory generalizations of group traits**, reflective of the stereotyper’s underlying prejudices (Adorno et al. 1950).
- Examples in Nigeria: ***Mallams are illiterate, Nigerians are 419, Ijebu are stingy, Igbo tenant will always take over his landlord’s property.***

# Stereotyping , cont'd.

- But in the same Nigeria it is stereotyped that ***“Hausa like power, Yoruba love education , Igbo are traders, Edo girls go to Italy and Calabar like service, etc.”***,
- In this case, the stereotypes are popular beliefs arrived at based on history and long-time observation of groups or individuals (See Hippel 1996, Cardwell, 1999).
- This means that some stereotypes are “mental representations of real differences amongst groups” (Hilton and Hippel 1996).
- They can be useful in interrogating social phenomena and explaining political behaviour.

# Questions

- Since stereotypes have sources, what are the different probable **sources** of the Ibadan Stereotype?
- What **explanations and clarifications does Ose Meji** offer, as the progenitor of Ibadan in Yoruba Cosmology (on who perpetrates the stereotypical attributes amongst the various social groups: state, indigenes, settlers, visitors; and possible class dimensions to the stereotypical attributes )?
- To what extent are the probable sources and Ose Meji's narrative consistent with **established theoretical explanation of political behaviour?**
- Why do the stereotypical attributes endure instead of fading off over the years?
- How do answers to these questions assist the Nigerian state in policy planning?
- How does this work draw the attention of researchers to some Afro-peculiar methods of conducting research as a means of Reconfiguring African Studies ?

# Oriki as a source of the Ibadan Stereotype

## Oriki Ibadan

Ibadan, the home of Oluyole

Where theft victim is blamed, not the thief

The clan that consumes the snail with its shell

The clan that improvises the snail shell as plate for taking pap

The Land of Ojo, Ajayi and Ibikunle

The Land of Ogunmola Olodo o Keri;

he who goes fighting in loose pants

Once a friend to Ibadan, must lead to war

Ibadan is characterized by free for all

Many are hoodlums, many are criminals

Born in Ibadan but not a thief merely endures

## What is Oriki?

- **Attributive descriptive poem that expresses what a clan is (Johnson 1921:85)**
- **‘Praise poem’ that explains what a child is likely to be based on what the predecessors and progenitors were (Cocker, 2015)**
- **Plays a multiplicity of roles in the Afro-Yoruba worldview:**
- **Tells the truth about someone's personality and describes physical appearance” (Akintunde 2001)**
- **Has medical psychotherapeutic healing values (Orimoogunje 2016:1)**



# History as second source of the Ibadan Stereotype

- All available history of Ibadan converge on the following points as documented by the Central Council of Ibadan Indigenes.
- A **Yoruba** city, (Ìbàdàn or fully (Ìlú) Èbá-Òdàn, (the city at) the edge of the savannah)
- Pre-colonial history centered on **militarism, imperialism and violence**
- **Formed by refugees and warriors** from many Yoruba clans after the collapse of Oyo Empire.
- **Grew militarily and economically** to dominate Yoruba land by the end of 1829
- In 1893 Ibadan area became a British Protectorate after a treaty signed by **Fijabi (born of crisis), the Baale of Ibadan** with the British acting Governor of Lagos, George C. Denton on 15 August.
- (<http:ccii.ng/history of Ibadan>)

# Specific occurrences as source of the Ibadan Stereotype

- Specific occurrences can also be source of stereotyping, and, in the case of Ibadan, they play a major role.
- By specific occurrences we mean a plethora of documented events that can be referred to in explaining or, and interrogating social phenomena.
- As will be shown in the next slides, newspaper and other media source have the specific occurrences.

## Ibadan: Operation Wetie

Operation Wetie is the 1962 Action Group Crisis.

Power tussle between Awolowo and Akintola plunged the entire Western Region into protracted crises.



## Ibadan: Wild Wild West

The crisis started from Ibadan before spreading to other parts of the Region. It generated fatal riots and arsons that led to the first military coup in 1966.

‘Operation Wetie’ earned the entire west of Nigeria the alias **Wild Wild West**.



Frequent intra and inter-group crises, especially of the NURTW & the NURTWE and others.





The Eagle online:  
August 23, 2018

# Assassination of political opponents at state and non state levels



# Violent godfatherism

**Known as 'Godfather of Ibadan Politics', Lamidi Adedibu had both coercive and spiritual powers to make and mar governors in Oyo State. He could use his action to summon a Nigerian President and he often declared publicly, that 'trouble and violence are the attributes of true sons of Ibadan'.**



<https://youtu.be/nHTTmA8klW8>

Lamidi Adeshina  
Harassed to  
surrender and  
prevented from  
getting a second  
tenure as Governor  
of Oyo State.  
Adedibu was the  
actor.





# Godfatherism

Known as 'Godfather of Ibadan Politics', Lamidi Adedibu in a 2011 conflict with Ladoja, Oyo State Governor, hijacked state power to effect removal of the Governor from office. Both are of Ibadan origin.



## Politically Motivated Assassination

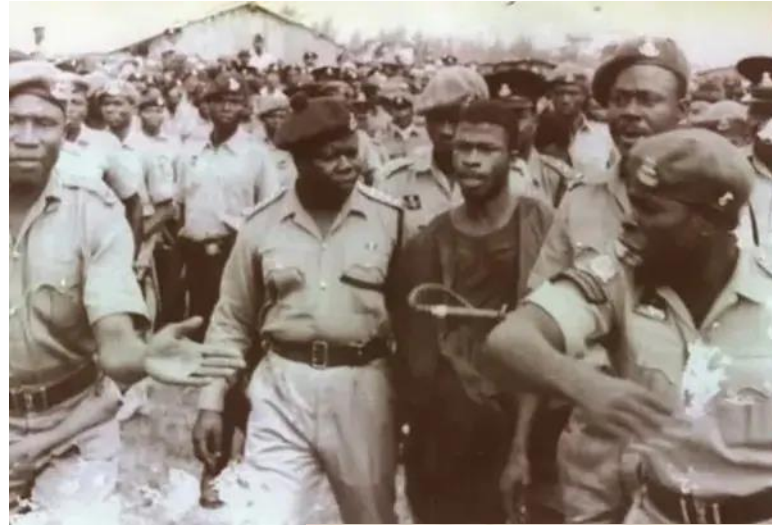
Ibadan 2001:  
Bola Ige, an  
Attorney General  
of Nigeria was,  
while in service,  
killed in his  
Bodija residence.





Most notorious armed robbers in Nigeria's history: Ibadan.

**Ishola Oyenusi,**  
**Babatunde Folorunsho and Shina Rambo** all have some connections with Ibadan, either as resident, native, students or others.



Ibadan: Soka  
2014, 'Soka' 2015  
Soka ritual killing  
den 2014

Anotehr 'Soka'  
was discovered in  
in 2015 at the  
same Ibadan.



# So far,.....

- Every social formation at any time is made up of **three social groups: indigenes, settlers, visitors.**
- The Oriki (Traditional Clan Attributes) **supports** the Ibadan stereotypical attributes of political violence and free for all, but is **silent** on the social group (s) that perpetrates them. However, using 'omo', which means 'native' in the Oriki will imply that the stereotypical attributes are of the indigenes.
- History supports that Ibadan is characterized by militarism and violence and economic prosperity (Central Council of Ibadan Indigenes).
- Specific occurrences also support the Ibadan stereotypical attributes of political violence and free for all, but are silent on the social group (s) that perpetrates them. Of all available cases of violence, only the **Ladoja/Adedibu's** is a case of two indigenes of Ibadan.
- However, all of the foregoing sources **STRONGLY** support the Ibadan Stereotype of political violence and free for all. **So, what is the real situation? Ose Meji tells.**

# Ose Meji's Clarifications

- Although put together, the forgoing inferences seem to support the Ibadan stereotype of political violence and free for all, they yet leave many questions unanswered. **Who perpetrates the stereotypical attributes amongst the various social groups in Ibadan; for instance, the indigenes, the settlers or the visitors? Are there class dimensions to the stereotypical attributes? In what way is the state as a social group located in the stereotype? Should the stereotypical attributes of Ibadan not have changed over the years thereby fading away the stereotype?** These are some of the clarifications that Ose Meji will make in this presentation.
- The Ose Meji will be first recited in Yoruba, its original language, in order to preserve the linguistic and literary structures in it. Interpretation in English will follow.



# Ose Meji in recitation

- Tori ba da'ni, ka so p'ori dani
- Tori ba gb'eni, ka so p'ori gb'eni
- Ewo ni ka sowo, sowo ka ma kere dele?
- Sese Olongo, Iri Ebiti
- A difa fun **Orunmila**
- Ifa o maa **s'owo ijakade** kiri kari agbaye
- O jijakadi titi lo **Eba Odan**
- **Igbo reere a n le janduku si**
- **Ile Oba di meji won a jija agba**
- **Oba di merin o lee f'enu k'araa won**  
Ebo ni won ni ki Baba o se
- Orunmila gb'ebo nbe o rubo



# Ose Meji in recitation, cont'd

- Nje, **Alara** da mi o s'ogun, sese onlongo, edu o le ja, sese onlongo
- **Ajero** da mi o s'ogbon, sese onlongo, edu o le ja, sese onlongo
- **Owarangunaga** dami o s'aadota, sese onlongo, edu o le ja, sese onlongo
- **Oba leyin ajori** dami o sa'adorin, sese onlongo, edu o le ja, sese onlongo
- **Oro Ibadan di lodi lodi**, eyin o rifa awo ki bi ti n se.
- (Ifalosee Taye ati Kehinde, 2020), Akinbola 2020, Fawole 2020).



# Interpretation of Ose Meji

As earlier stated that “each verse of Odu Ifa is a body of stories deriving from a single theme and addressing the issue of life” (Alao 2009: 9), Ose Meji can be briefly interpreted thus:

Pre historic Ibadan was established by those banished from many Yoruba clans.

It was very prosperous.

Four rulers eventually developed from settlers: Alara (from Oyo), Ajero (from Ekiti), Owarangunaga (From Ijesha) and Obanileajori, (From Ijebu).

They had different conflicting values and worldviews.

## Interpretation of Ose Meji, cont'd.

- Orunmila, from his ancestral home, Oke Itase, went to Ibadan where only violence and fight gave prosperity.
- He arrived at Ibadan, had victory in all fight, but never made money like others.
- He returned home.



## Interpretation of Ose Meji, cont'd.

- At home he invited his babalawo: the **“Tori ba da’ni, ka p’ori dani, Tori ba gb’eni ka p’ori gb’eni, Ewo ni ka sowo, sowo ka ma kere dele, Sese Olongo, Iri Ebiti”** who advised that the only way to make money was to be defeated by those he engaged in fight, not to defeat them. Orunmila made sacrifice to Esu; returned to Ibadan with the determination to follow the instruction.

# Interpretation of Ose Meji, cont'd.

- Henceforth, each time Orunmila engaged anyone in Ibadan, he allowed them to defeat him as instructed by his Babalawo.
- Esu would then immediately appear to the victor and say: *'That man you have defeated is no ordinary man. He is an epitome of wisdom. Do you not know that he allowed you defeat him on purpose? Once you defeat him like that wisdom is what he gives you in return and you can inherit to fight your enemies.'*
- The story went round. Each of the four sectional rulers began to invite Orunmila for fight engagement so they could get wisdom to defeat the other.

## ...Orunmila got rich through fight

- Alara engaged Orunmila and paid 20 million cowries.
  - Ajero engaged Orunmila and paid 30 million cowries.
  - Owarangunaga engaged Orunmila and paid 50 million cowries.
  - Obaleyinajori engaged Orunmila and paid 70 million cowries.
- 
- That was how Orunmila became rich through free for all, and returned to Oke Itase. Then, as other people from other clans wishing to travel to Ibadan to make money consulted with him, Orunmila told them to use violence and free for all in all things- trade, commerce, politics and other activities- if they wanted to succeed. Orunmila's words was registered in heaven as the destiny of Ibadan. (He is the witness to the destiny of everyone and everything: **Eleri Ipin**).

# What Ose Meji tells us anew

- **Settlers** who established Ibadan were **banished from other Yoruba clans**.
  - Because they came from **different Yoruba clans**, they could not agree on common values, so they engaged in **constant conflicts and looted one another**.
  - The settlers later ended up in **four political units** headed by Alara (from Oyo), Ajero (from Ekiti), Owarangunaga (from Ijesa) and Obaleyin Ajori (from Ijebu).
  - Their **lack of coercion aggravated power tussle amongst them**.
  - Their **society became amorphous**.
  - Orunmila, who is the carrier of the voice of Olodumare, **visited the land and declared** that it was only through violence and free for all it would be prosperous.
  - All these refer to **settlers in Ibadan, not indigenes**.
- 
- Ibadan will **continue to attract settlers**, so, political violence and free for all will never cease in the polity.

# Therefore, as Ose Meji clarifies...

- The Ibadan stereotype is an accurate cosmological explanation of the social behaviour of settlers who came to Ibadan, not indigenes.
- The stereotypical attributes of political violence and free for all endure because settlers still dominate Ibadan till date, so, the stereotype continues to describe the people.
- There may be gradual shift in the political violence and free for all attributes, but only when the population of indigenes begin to overtake the settlers'.
- This, however, is very unlikely, as Ibadan is surrounded by several small Yoruba clans who daily nurse the ambition of settling there for better economic prosperity.

# Crisis of Hegemony: The theoretical cum behavioral explanation of the Ibadan Stereotype

- From the oriki, the history, specific occurrences and the clarifications of the Odu Ifa Ose Meji, attributing political violence to Ibadan goes beyond mere stereotyping, it is a product of long time social observation that can be best theoretically framed by **Crisis of Hegemony**.
- Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci is the most prominent figure in the theory of hegemony. Gramsci's hegemony extends to the socio-cultural forces in every social formation, which, created by the **ruling class**, in turn establish the **social structures and institutions** for **regulation of social conducts**.
- Hegemony is, according to Eesuola (2009), the uniform ideological apparatus that is used to manage human social affairs using very little or no force. As emphasized in the foregoing, the ruling class is central to hegemony because it establishes the social structures and institutions that regulate social conducts.
- To be a class in itself and for itself, the ruling class must have economic base, which is the substructure upon which a society's super structure rests. Politics, education, trade unionism, religion and the rest issues are of the superstructure.

# Theoretical explanation in political behaviour, cont'd.

- To be able to forge hegemony, the ruling class must also be cohesive.
- But what happens where there is no ruling class, or the existing one is improvised because it lacks economic base or it is amorphous?
- What happens when a society is highly plural in terms of socio-cultural orientations and thus cannot produce a ruling class, let alone a cohesive one?
- Hegemonic values will be difficult to arrive at.
- It will be difficult to evolve social institutions that regulate social conducts and create social order.
- A society without social order will, in a large scale, manifest political violence, riots, intra metropolis conflicts and all other stereotypical attributes of Ibadan.
- From the point of view of political theory, I have argued elsewhere that the legitimacy crisis, elite theft, corruption and nepotism that have turned Nigeria to what Anikulapo-Kuti (1989) calls **Country of Pains** are due to the crisis of hegemony resulting from the amalgamation of 1914. The Ibadan stereotype is just a prototype of it.

# Summary

The Ibadan stereotype of political violence and free for all is examined, and attempts are made to locate the sources.

Oriki Ibadan, history and a plethora of specific occurrences seem to support the stereotype.

Odu Ifa Ose Meji, the progenitor of Ibadan in Yoruba cosmology, confirms the stereotypical attributes, but also **clarifies that settlers, not indigenes are referred to.**

But, depending on where the pendulum swings, **few indigenes too may have the stereotypical attributes but using the poor, hanging settlers to perpetrate them.**

Ose Meji also declares that political violence and free for will endure so long as other clans still settle in Ibadan.

Hegemony Theory is used to framework the Ibadan stereotype within the context of political behaviour.



# Conclusion

- **Stereotypes are popular social constructs, and, in Africa, they sometimes have strong traceable sources; so, they should never be dismissed in analysis of social issues in African Studies.**
- **Ifa remains the most systematized and authentic source of clarifying significant Yoruba matters, in all aspects of life.**
- **Specifically, Odu Ifa Ose Meji confirms the Ibadan stereotype of political violence and free for all, but also clarifies that the attributes are of settlers, not indigenes; they occur in the city, not necessarily by the people.**
- **This should assist the Nigerian state in policy planning and implementation.**
- **Researchers should consider using the Odu Ifa in combination of other Afro-peculiar resources to interrogate and explain African affairs as done here in.**
- **This is a critical step towards Reconfiguring African Studies.**

# Political violence







# Recommendation

- What do we do when a clan that has numerous great people who have excelled in their different careers across the world is derogatorily stereotyped as being politically violent and free for all due to attitudes of settlers?
- The clarifications provided by this research should be available to the public.
- Because, as Ifa predicts, political violence and free fro all will endure in Ibadan, the Oyo State government should encourage settlers to join the Police, the Army and other security outfits for positive conversion of their energy.
- Influx of settlers can be checked to become at least balanced with that of the indigenes.
- While all these are in place, special security attention must be placed on Ibadan during elections, population census, religious and other politically sensitive activities in Nigeria.
- This is because the stereotypical attributes of Ibadan cannot stop, can only be managed.

# Propensity for further research

- **Ifa's cosmological explanation is not restricted to Ibadan. Every of Yoruba nation is explained by one or two of the 256 Odu. The explanations often cover a lot of aspects ranging from health, attitude, longevity, politics, law, childbirth, greatness, commerce, success, marriage and so on.**
- **For instance, cosmologically, Eji Ogbe explains the Otun Ekiti Clan; Irosun Meji explains the Idere clan in Oyo State, Irete Meji explains the Isanlu clan in Kwara State and (eepa, eepa eepa), Ofun Meji, explains the Ila Orangun clan in Osun State.**
- **Other African scholars may wish to investigate and interrogate their disciplinary concerns using Ifa and other cosmological explanations available in other parts of Africa.**

Thanks to the ACC Project of the University of  
Bayreuth



Thanks to the University of Lagos ACC



One more thing, si vous plait,

- **JUST ONE MORE THING**



# Appreciations

Thank you all for listening

