

RECLAIMING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP THROUGH YORÙBÁ ORATURE

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the notion that the indigenous African culture enables the marginalisation of women in the leadership composition of Nigeria. Anchored on Mary Kolawole's Womanism, it focuses on selected Yorùbá folkloric texts to highlight icons and models of women leadership in prehistoric Yorùbá societies. The uninterrupted twenty-six years of democratic governance in Nigeria has not yielded equitable representations in leadership for the Nigerian women and the indigenous cultures of Nigeria are often implicated by relevant stakeholders as being largely responsible for the underwhelming involvement of women in politics. Beyond the popular examples of Ìyálóde and Ìyálójá, statutory positions reserved for women in every Yorùbá town, kingdom and city-state, the study draws on relevant Ifá stories as well as related Yorùbá proverbs to underline how Yorùbá cultural heritage promote and institutionalise women's active involvement in leadership. By contrasting these Yorùbá folkloric resources with other literary and historical resources, the study foregrounds that Yorùbá culture is not an enabler of the dearth of women in leadership. Rather, the abandonment of the culture is a reason women are denied access to leadership positions.

Keywords: Ifá, Women leadership, Yorùbá folkloric texts, Prehistoric societies, Womanism

Introduction

Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has never had a female head in any of its elective or military branches of government – whether as executive president, military head of state or president of the senate. The clamour for visible and concrete representation of women in Nigerian leadership structure continues to grow despite “the uninterrupted twenty-six years of democratic governance in the country's Fourth Republic” (Eke, 2024:1). Since 1999, when the present political dispensation, formally recognised as the Fourth Republic, started in Nigeria, no woman has been elected president of the republic or governor of any of the thirty-six states of the federation. As of June 2024, only 157 female members have been elected to the National Assembly, a drastically low number compared to the 2,657 men elected to the Assembly during the same period (Lemo, 2023). Lemo further notes that eighteen political parties participated in the 2023 general election, and of the 15,307 candidates they collectively fielded for various offices, only 1,552 (9.8%) were women. The percentage dropped even lower after the elections, as only 78 women were eventually elected, representing a paltry 5.02% of the total number of women who participated in the elections. What is often implicated in the poor representations of Nigerian women in leadership is the indigenous tradition of the Nigerian people (Lemo, 2023; Omotosho, 2023; Opara & Okoye, 2025).

The negative role attributed to African culture in the marginalisation of Nigerian women in politics has been a subject of many a sociological scholarship including “Influence of Culture on Women and Leadership Position among the Yoruba” by Fasiku et al. (2025). Nigeria is a multicultural country with over 300 ethnic groups and the Yorùbá people are among arguably the most significant in terms of population and rich cultural heritage (Fasiku et al., 2025). While the writers acknowledge that women played prominent leadership roles prior to colonial impositions in the Yorùbá land, they curiously set out to establish cultural practices which they assert help subjugate women in contemporary society, including politics. Hence, they put the blame of poor involvement of women in leadership at the doorstep of tradition, even in the context of undeniable heritage of women's representation in leadership. Among such identified cultural practices is the Oro festival, which women are forbidden from seeing. Also identified are “societal expectations about domestic responsibilities which further suppress women's leadership potential” (2025, p. 1).

This paper contends that while Fasiku et al. (2025) are correct that women had prominent leadership roles in the

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precolonial Yorùbá society, their marginalisation in the present political dispensation is not rooted in cultural enablement but, indeed, in discarding the core of the Yorùbá beliefs. Like they mention, no town council in Yorùbá land is properly constituted without an Ìyálóde (the prime minister of women) and Ìyálọ́já (the women leader of the market or sometimes the minister of commerce). And among the Egúngún cult, there is a prominent role of Ìyá Àgán (chief patroness of Egúngún) occupied by a woman. This is the irony of the women's subjugation levelled against the Oro cult, which belongs to the Egúngún masquerade cult.

Attempts are made, in this paper, to demonstrate, through selected verses in the Ifá corpus and Yorùbá proverbs (two Ifá verses and three Yorùbá proverbs), that cultural practices indeed promote women's participation in leadership and that (neo)colonialism and its enforced social order of patriarchy are the primary culprits. The Ifá verses are extracted from Italeke & Awosanmi (2021) and Frisvold (2016). The Ifá corpus is relevant to the discourse because it is the compendium of the folk history and tradition of the Yorùbá people (Finnegan, 2012).

It must be stated, however, that some Yorùbá words are deliberately retained from the Ifá verses to avoid misinterpretation and misrepresentation. Such words – which include Òrìṣà, Olódùmarè, Èṣù and Ọ̀run – are often conveniently translated as gods, God, Satan and heaven. It is the position of this writer that these translations may not adequately capture the sense of what the words convey in their original Yorùbá imagination. The Òrìṣà, for example, are not gods in a way as to compete for supremacy with Olódùmarè. They are not gods in the same mould as the Greek gods, who had Zeus as their king, in an arrangement that appeared to be a collegial system of gods.

Etymologically, the Òrìṣà can be said to be *ẹ̀ni orí dī dī dá* (specially made/created beings). And if they were created, it only means that they were created by Olódùmarè (the Supreme Being). Olódùmarè is retained, instead of the translation to God, in order to avoid the tendency to imagine the Yorùbá Supreme Being in Judeo-Christian imagination. It is the same reason that accounts for the retention of Ọ̀run, rather than have it translated to heaven or paradise. Olódùmarè inhabits Ọ̀run with his Òrìṣà and Irúnmọ̀lẹ̀, who straddle the Ilé-ayé (the earth) and Ọ̀run. In this sense, what can be likened to Òrìṣà and Irúnmọ̀lẹ̀ in the English language and the Judeo-Christian tradition are the angels. However, none of the literature consulted calls the Òrìṣà angels, and so, in order to avoid unnecessary distraction from the focus of this study, the words are retained in their original Yorùbá language. The Èṣù in the Yorùbá worldview is the Òrìṣà of chaos and the crossroads, whose duties include cosmic balance in the relationship between Olódùmarè, Òrìṣàs and mortal beings (Fadipe, 2025). Èṣù's depiction cannot be equated with the Judeo-Christian portrayal of Satan/Lucifer.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Mary Kolawole's Womanism, articulated in her work *Womanism and African Consciousness* (1997), as its theoretical anchor. Womanism, for Kolawole, is an African-oriented feminist theory and criticism which can be defined as a totality of 'feminine self-expression, self-retrieval and self-assertion in positive cultural ways' (Awodun 2). The theory developed as a reaction to the inadequacy of Western conception of feminism to account for gender relations in Africa. That the theory is strongly rooted in African folklore makes it more appropriate for this study. The thesis of Kolawole's argument is that African women in the traditional African societies, as evidenced in folklore, were neither voiceless, unseen nor unrepresented (Kolawole, 1997). The argument is built to counter the misassumption that African women were traditionally voiceless and unseen in the society and concludes that these narratives are false and are not grounded in historical evidence. These ideals of Womanism are deployed to interrogate the representations of women in the selected Ifá verses and other Yorùbá folkloric expressions.

Ọ̀sẹ̀ Túá and Women's Claim to Representation in Leadership

Oluwole (215) quotes from Ọ̀wọ̀nrín Ọ̀bàrà (a chapter in the Ifá corpus), a poignant Yorùbá proverb which establishes governments of inclusivity across Yorùbá land. The proverb goes thus: "Àgbà méréń ló ń ṣẹ́lú; àgbà ọ̀kúnrin, àgbà ọ̀bínrin, àgbà ọ̀mọ́dé, àti àgbà àlẹ́jò" meaning the governance of a city-state is shared among four categories of people, which comprise experienced men, experienced women, experienced youth, and experienced foreigners. This shows the thoughtfulness of the progenitors of the Yorùbá people in aggregating the views of everybody in managing the affairs of the people.

Odù Ọ̀sẹ̀ Méjì is described as a feminine Odù which concerns itself with feminine affairs like "fertility, children and womanhood in general" (325). In comparison to other odùs, it also features the highest number of female forces like

Ọṣun who is the mother of Èṣù and wife of Ọrúnmilà, Yemowo who is the wife of Ọbàtálá and source of artistic creativity, and Àjẹ Saluga who is a wife of Olókun and associated with beauty and wealth.

The Odù Ọṣẹ Méjì combines with Odù Ọtúá to make Ọṣẹ'Tùá. Ọṣẹ'Tùá tells the story of Oláyínká, daughter of Apènà Ìgbórè, who was the leader of Ọgbóni confraternity. This particular odù provides an account of why women are often represented in the leadership of human societies. Women were also initially forbidden from membership of Ọgbóni confraternity. One day, however, Apènà was not around, and his house was engulfed in fire. Oláyínká, being a very smart daughter, retrieved most of the valuable stuff in the house and saved it from the conflagration. Among the saved items were the Ọgbóni paraphernalia kept in her father's possession, including a certain chest used for storing objects sacred to the Ọgbóni confraternity. It is prohibited for a woman to see the inside of the chest.

When her father returned, he became melancholic, thinking that he had lost all the Ọgbóni paraphernalia, the sacred chest in particular, to the inferno. Oláyínká calmed his nerves and assured him that she had saved every item, including the chest. The father probed whether she had seen the contents of the chest, and she replied in the affirmative. The father became worried because a taboo had been committed. Hence, Oláyínká was inducted into the membership of the Ọgbóni confraternity, and it is through this process that women have become members of the Ọgbóni cult. It also accounts for why women are represented in the leadership of every sector of society. For instance, the prominence of Ìyá Àgan – a role designed for a woman – within the Egúngún cult was established earlier in this discussion. There is also among the Ọgbóni cult the Ìyá Àbíyè, an office which is, by prescription, held by a woman. It must also be restated that the positions of Ìyálóde (women's prime minister) and Ìyálójá (minister of market affairs) are statutorily held by women in a typical Yorùbá town or city-state of precolonial era. The Ìyá Àgan's role in the Egúngún cult is curiously interesting because Egúngún cult is out of bounds to women. Women are not meant to see or know the secret of Egúngún. Yet, a woman is at the heart of the cult's secret. Odù Ọṣẹ Tùá says:

<i>À ì sí nílẹ̀ ọkùnrin ni obìnrin ñ jogún àdà</i>	It is the absence of a man that occasions a woman to inherit a machete
<i>Dífá fún Oláyínká ọmọ apènà Ìgbórè</i>	Divining for Oláyínká, daughter of Ìgbórè's Ọgbóni head
<i>Ohun isòrò ì bá kà ti rá</i>	Things of the cult would have been lost
<i>Tí è bá kí ñ ẹe Oláyínká ọmọ Apènà Ìgbórè</i>	If not for Oláyínká, daughter of Ìgbórè's Ọgbóni head

(Italeke & Awosanmi 11)

The presence of women in the proverb about four categories of people governing a city-state and Oláyínká, as well as the prominence of other feminine figures in the Ifa corpus, aligns with the argument of Kolawole (1997) that women are vocal in orature. The women understudy here are vocal and active participants in the affairs of their various societies.

Ọṣun and Consequences of Disregarding Women in Leadership

Odù Ọṣẹ also tells of the pre-eminence of Ọṣun among the other 401 Irúnmọlẹ sent by Olódùmarè from Ọrun to create Ilé-ayé. Ọṣun was the only female Ọrìṣà among all the Ọrìṣà sent on this mission. However, the other Ọrìṣà side-lined Ọṣun being a female, believing that she had nothing to offer in the rigorous task of creating the world. All their efforts on earth proved abortive as plants failed to germinate, their sacrifices were not accepted, and every endeavour resulted in failure. They resorted to reverting to Olódùmarè, asking why they were faced with so much difficulty after they had been assured of prosperity on earth. Olódùmarè asked what became of the woman he put among them and they responded by discountenancing her presence among them, wondering the relationship between their earthly difficulty and role of Ọṣun in their plight. Olódùmarè told them point-blank that their lack of regard for the woman was the reason for their difficulty. He charged them to beg her and incorporate her into their endeavour if they really wanted to be successful. They begged her and got her blessings, and the results were immediate: rain began to fall, plants began to germinate, and every other activity became a success. This narrative aptly defies the politics of women exclusion in Nigerian leadership structure. The Nigerian women can, through massive electoral participation, mobilise their kind into elective and appointive offices, on a scale which reflects their strength, deploying in the process the passive aggression of Ọṣun.

Odù Ayélalà and Female Powers

Olódùmaré ní kí wọn lọ fìmò ẹ̀ẹ̀ t'Ọ̀ṣun

Wọn wá padà wá sílé ayé

Wọn wá fìmò ẹ̀ẹ̀ t'Ọ̀ṣun

Nígbànáà gbogbo èro àti iṣe

Wọn bèrè síí gún

Nítorínáà, a fìmò ẹ̀ẹ̀ t'Ọ̀ṣun

Yèyè wa a bá wọn pé nímò

Olódùmaré told them that they should go and
give due respect to Ọ̀ṣun

They returned to earth

And they gave due respect to Ọ̀ṣun

It was then their efforts gave success

And things started to go right for them

Because of this we give due respect to Ọ̀ṣun

Our ever present mother

(Frisvold, 2016: 354)

The Odù Ọ̀ṣẹ further mentions Ayélalà, which Frisvold (355) calls “the community of female powers in Ọ̀run”. Hence, women are fully acknowledged and represented in every stratum of existence in the imagination of the Yorùbá people of the prehistoric era. The implication here is that women are, by the design of the progenitors of the Yorùbá people, to be recognised in politics and administration. They are not just to be seen and heard; their opinions and concerns must be thoroughly considered. This contrasts starkly with what obtains in the world of Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Okonkwo, the novel’s antihero, pointedly tells a man who contradicts him in a clan’s meeting that he is a woman and “This meeting is for men” (Achebe 21). The implication is that Okonkwo and people who think like him believe that women have no place in the administration of their own society. The magnitude of the insult from Okonkwo becomes glaring when one notes that the insulted person is not even a woman but a man who is less successful than Okonkwo. Therefore, Okonkwo sees being a failure or less successful as synonymous with being a woman. It is instructive to note that in the thick of the raging patriarchy of Okonkwo’s Umuofia is Chielo, the priestess of the Oracle of Agbala who dares Okonkwo by barging into his house at night to take his daughter away to the shrine with Okonkwo unable to offer any kind of resistance.

Oláyínká and the Necessity for Women’s Involvement in Leadership

The story of Oláyínká brings to the fore another Yorùbá proverb highlighted by Oluwole (167) which says: “*Dágigé dágigé, ááké kan ò lè dágigé. Dágilà dágilà, èèlè kan ò lè dágilà. Bí kò sí Erelú àti Apènà, Ọ̀ṣúgbó kan ò lè dá’wo ẹ̀.*” The proverb means that the axe alone cannot cut trees since it will need a human being to hold and guide its use. The same applies to a wedge, which cannot, on its own, wedge a tree or wood. Hence, without its female members, the Ọ̀ṣúgbó cult, which constituted the judicial arm of government in the precolonial Yorùbá city-states, cannot function. This is another testament to the visibility and audibility of the women in Yorùbá orature as postulated in Kolawole (1997).

A common contention often made by male feminists and some liberal female feminists is that patriarchy also perpetuates harm against men, implying that they, too, are casualties of the same systemic oppression (Adichie, 2014). The exclusion of women’s perspectives stifles the progress of the patriarchal society of Okonkwo’s Umuofia, just as the disregard for the perspectives of Ọ̀ṣun hampers the progress of the world being created by the other Ọ̀rìṣàs. Instead of fostering collaboration, the men suppress women’s voices while simultaneously fighting colonial imposition. This is exemplified by Okonkwo’s refusal to engage in discussions about ‘state’ issues with his wife, dismissively reminding her that she is not part of the *ndichie* – the council of elders. For him, women are to be given instructions, and their opinions are not to be sought or taken seriously (Achebe, 2008).

If Oláyínká had not taken the bold step of rescuing her father’s sacred Ọ̀gbóni paraphernalia from the inferno, the whole cult might have been eradicated. The step she took – doing something forbidden and escaping unscathed – made a strong case for the acceptance of women into the confraternity. Non-inclusion of Ọ̀ṣun in the leadership structure of the world created by the other Ọ̀rìṣàs shows that the desired results would be elusive. The lesson from the story of Oláyínká and Ọ̀ṣun and other Ọ̀rìṣà is that discountenancing the views and presence of women in statecraft can be detrimental to the people, on the individual level, and to the state as a whole. Oluwole (2017) affirms that for Ọ̀rúnmilà, women’s participation in all aspects of societal life is a sacred mandate, ordained by Olódùmaré.

Women Advocacy in Non-Fiction and Precolonial Nigeria

Chinua Achebe, the author of the *Things Fall Apart*, distances himself from the maddening misogyny of Okonkwo and his society in an interview when he was asked about the terrible way women are treated in the novel. He asserted that the novel is actually a subtle advocate for women's perspectives, and that Okonkwo's downfall is, in part, a consequence of his misogynistic behaviour. His mistakes and misfortunes, according to Achebe, can be seen as a reckoning for his offences against the women. Indeed, the downfall of the Umuofia clan is a consequence of their disregard for their womenfolk (Bob Thompson, 2008). Hence, it can be said that the only difference between the plight of the male Òrìṣàs in the Odù Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ Tùá and that of Okonkwo is the awareness that something is amiss in both their societies and the opportunity to seek redress before it gets out of hand.

It is, therefore, not out of place that women are always represented in every stratum of the traditional Yorùbá society. This Odù also puts into perspective the Ègbá women's riots of 1946-1948. The main grievance of the women was that they had no representation in the native authority government, which was headed by the Alake of Ègbáland, and which administered the Abeokuta (the capital of the Ègbáland) and its environs on behalf of the British colonial government, in the name of indirect rule (Shasore, 2018). Before the colonial imposition and the attendant introduction of the indirect rule system, the Ègbá women had enjoyed representation in their town's government and were not taxed directly. The colonial government, however, introduced direct taxation for women and at the same time denied them representation in government. It became an assault on their sense of being and cultural heritage.

Hence, it is apt to argue that African women did not learn feminist ideals from the Western world. The United Kingdom, the country that colonised Nigeria, did not grant all women of voting age suffrage until the year 1928. The United States of America extended universal adult suffrage to its women in 1920. France, another Western colonial power in Africa, did not grant women the right to vote until 1944. And Greece, the cradle of Western democracy, only gave women equal voting rights in 1952 (Temkin, 2024). Yet, women in Africa, Yorùbá land in particular, were not just participating in choosing their leaders, but were integral parts of the day-to-day administration of their states – villages, towns, and city-states, before the colonial invasion.

It should be noted, however, that the positive representations of women in statecraft in the Ifá literary corpus do not come about without some grudges. The Odù Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ 'Tùá opens with a line that is instructive: "It is the absence of a man that occasions the bequeathing of a machete to a woman". In a way, therefore, it runs contrary to the order of nature, according to Odù Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ 'Tùá, for a woman to own, hold, and use the machete. This is undoubtedly a metaphor for hard work, which the Yorùbá people of old believed to be a masculine trait. Hence, the concession of some seats to women in the Council of State should be understood in its rightful context: the men who were in charge of the state conceded the seats to the women grudgingly. That is, the seat, or membership (as in the case of Oláyínká, daughter of Apèná Ìgbórè) of confraternity groups conferred on women was given on certain conditions. If Oláyínká had not saved the day for her father and had not checked the contents of the chest, which she salvaged from the fire, she would not have been inducted into the cult. Her induction into the Ọ̀gbóni cult was, therefore, occasioned by the absence of her father. Hence, Ifá too recognizes gender imbalance but recommends ways which it can be addressed.

Indeed, Oluwole (168) recognises some misogynistic proverbs in the Yorùbá language resources, among which is "Ọ̀jó obìnrin j'ọ̀ba, ilú bàjẹ̀" meaning that women ideally are not meant to rule; the day a woman rules, the kingdom is destroyed. It is a proverb such as this which informs the production of films like *Lágídígba*. *Lágídígba*, a 2000 Yorùbá Nollywood film, narrates the story of a woman-king who becomes addicted to power and ends miserably, consequently bringing her kingdom to ruin. The ultimate thesis of the film, as espoused by *Monkele* (played by Seun Ojabanjo) in what appears to be the epilogue of the film, is that women are not suitable for leadership, and that they are divinely mandated to be submissive to their husbands. Making this conclusion based on the example of Queen Jadesola (played by Sola Sobowale), without any effort from the filmmaker at creating a foil character, affirms what Omotosho (2023) calls "feminised corruption" where news of corruption charges against women are grossly sensationalised, magnified and weaponised against women in politics. It is, therefore, convenient to conclude that the Yorùbá verbal act, Ifá inclusive, is a potpourri of the good and the bad representations of women. It is left to the researcher, scholar, writer, filmmaker, and other interested culture enthusiasts to mine whatever aspect of the heritage that catches their fancy and advances their bias and prejudice. In this sense, Irele & Irele (2010) are not wrong in their article: "Ifá and the Image of Women," where they highlight only the negative portrayal of women in the Ifá literary corpus. Yemi Adegunju, Bambo Adebajo, and Yemi Remi, makers of the film *Lágídígba*, are also

not incorrect in their preoccupation that the Yorùbá culture has elements of misogyny. These are, however, single stories (Adichie, 2009) that do not tell the whole narrative.

Womanism and the Example of Funmilayo Ransome Kuti

In recorded modern history, Mrs Funmilayo Ransome Kuti epitomises the womanist temperaments of the prehistoric women encountered in the Ifá corpus and other folkloric texts examined in this study. In the late 1940s, the women in Abeokuta protested the imposition of what they deemed an unjust taxation – a taxation which ensured that they pay tax like men but which did not give them any representation in governance. Their protest, which was both a fight against the patriarchal order of the day and the colonial imposition which enabled it, eventually resulted in the abdication of the Alake of Egba land (the paramount traditional ruler of Abeokuta under the British indirect rule system) of the time, Oba Ladapo Ademola (Shasore 273-278). The event is the central theme of the biopic, *Funmilayo Ransome Kuti* (2024) produced and directed by Bolanle Austen-Peters.

That the women of Egba staged the protests and successfully had their demands met shows the innate ability of the women to abhor injustice on the basis of gender. Their historic triumph over colonial-cum-patriarchal assault makes the preoccupation of *Lágídígba*, which is a fiction, looks like a parody of gender justice. The message is that a woman's heart cannot be won through violence as the motif of treating women with respect and dignity runs through most of these examined folkloric texts and is also thematised in *Funmilayo Ransome Kuti*. This is definitely not what obtains in *Lágídígba*. The women are treated cruelly and they are also made to regret their attempt to create their own happiness.

Oláyínká and Ọ̀ṣun as Womanist Ideals

The ideals of womanism as defined by Kolawole (1997) aptly define the life of Oláyínká and Ọ̀ṣun in the Ifá verses examined in this study. The women have their voices and give themselves expressions without being apologetic. Oláyínká takes her own initiatives to save her father's paraphernalia, knowing the prohibition of her action and damning the consequences. That she faces no negative consequence for her action challenges persisting conventional thinking. Ọ̀ṣun simply allows the men to labour in vain when they would not take her perspective into considerations. They are forced to reckon with her as they realise that the woman is as important in the scheme of life as each of them is.

The first line of the Odù Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ 'Tùá which says “À ì sí nílẹ̀ ọ̀kúnrin ní obìnrin ñ jogún àdà” also aligns with Kolawole's Womanism which she says indicates “a wholesome pride in feminine look and attributes as opposed to the effacement of feminine qualities” (27). That is, an African woman, of womanist persuasion, takes pride in her femininity by not competing with men in masculine ventures which require a great deal of energy such as “the more strenuous aspects of farming such as tree cutting or building and mending fences” (Kolawole 28) which many traditional societies in Africa, Yorùbá societies inclusive, see as masculine tasks. Hence, in this context, it can be argued that the sentence “It is the absence of a man that occasions a woman to inherit a machete” is fair and not an expression of exclusion or denial.

Conclusion

Nobody can gainsay the fact that women are abysmally marginalised in the leadership of Nigeria. However, implicating the indigenous African culture, Yorùbá's in particular, as a major source of the marginalisation will be tantamount to misrepresentation of the culture. As shown already in this study, the culture does not promise a gender utopia; yet, it provides a springboard upon which gender balance can be achieved in Nigerian leadership composition.

It can therefore be concluded that women are visible and articulate in the leadership of precolonial Yorùbá societies, as seen in the studied folkloric texts. The Yorùbá culture, rather than encourage the subjugation of women in leadership positions, evinces the gains and necessity for government of inclusivity. Advocates for more participation of women in leadership can and will find in Oláyínká, Ọ̀ṣun, among numerous other characters in Ifá literary corpus as well as other Yorùbá cultural texts icons and models of women's assertiveness, visibility and audibility in the administration of their affairs. A point worth noting, however, is that fairness and justice will not be served on a silver platter as seen in the case of Oláyínká and Ọ̀ṣun who literally have to force their way to reckoning. Hence, women and men who believe in gender inclusivity in governance and leadership have to keep the fire of their advocacy burning until their aspirations are met.

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