Distorted, Relegated and Colonised: Reconceptualising Ogun as the God of Justice in Sunnie Ododo's *Hard Choice*

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Abstract The effort to name and ascribe duties to African gods using Eurocentric knowledge can lead to violence, hence causing them to be tagged negatively. Due to the imperial distortion of African history, the people were made to believe that they need civilisation, salvation, and reconstruction. The colonisers had to convince Africans that all that emanated from the continent was filled with 'darkness' and therefore needed to be civilised, reconstructed and humanised by Europe. African myths and religions suffer from this deceptive move by the Europeans and the gods are often relegated to being wicked and unjust. In this paper, which attempts to correct such erroneous beliefs, the focus is on Ogun, the Yoruba god of war, who has been subjected to mistaken identity by scholars, researchers and critics. It is against this backdrop and misrepresentation of Ogun that the authors delink from the notion that the god is a vengeful and obstinate god. They conclude that Ogun is not a god who engages in reckless devastation of life, as is commonly argued in literature criticisms of the Ogun figure, but a god who seeks justice when wronged. Decolonial thought and its view on 'unthinking' Eurocentric epistemologies on Africa are used to unpack Ogun's characteristics as a god of justice in Ododo's *Hard Choice.*

Key words Ogun; coloniality; decolonial turn; Yoruba mythology; Nigeria

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Introduction

This paper is written from a decolonial epistemic perspective as emphasised by scholars (Mignolo 2007; Ndlovu-Getshani, 2013), which is a critical theoretical approach that initiates an epistemic break from Eurocentric knowledge. A decolonial epistemic perspective refers to the intervention that seeks to challenge modernity brought by colonialism, thereby placing African subjects at the centre, to understand their subjectivity as ways to counter modernity and its tenets (Sithole vi). In this paper, Ogun, the Yoruba god of war and iron, serves as a misinterpreted African subject by scholars due to the influence of modernity.[1] Ogun is a subject of global attention and has been widely researched by scholars such as Soyinka (1990), Barnes (1997), Adu-Gyamfi (1997) and Poynor (2012), who were largely influenced by modernity and therefore constructed Ogun as a stubborn, wicked, unfriendly and sometimes paradoxical god. For example, Poynor argues that "Ogun is a paradox. Although founder and champion of civilisation, he is the terrifying and violent god of war, the ferocious maker of weapons, charms and medicines that strike, wound and kill" (14). The use of the words violent, ferocious and terrifying might be misleading and one could be persuaded that Ogun does nothing but kill and cause commotion in the community. Therefore, this paper explores the decolonial interpretation of Ogun and his contribution to asserting peace in Ododo's *Hard Choice.*

Applying a decolonial epistemic perspective, Ododo's thinking and ideas in *Hard Choice* are examined as they contribute to understanding Ogun's identity and subjectivity in the postcolony.[2] Subjectivity denotes the way in which knowledge

1 This will be based on the themes explored in the play to acknowledge what the Yoruba people believe about Ogun. The word 'Yoruba' serves in this paper as a range of similar or analogous cultural practices among people who claim south-western Nigeria as their ancestral home (Adeuyan 72). Although the ethnic group regarded as Yoruba is also found in the diaspora, for example in Ghana, Togo, Benin, Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Leroy 132; Eades 4), for the purposes of this paper, the Yoruba people are seen as those that migrated within the south-western part of Nigeria. Adopting the word 'Yoruba' in this paper does not suggest that the Yoruba people, both in south-western Nigeria and in the diaspora, all share the same experiences merely by virtue of the fact that they are from the same roots.

2 The term 'postcolony' has been coined by Mbembe to refer to how "state power creates, through its administrative and bureaucratic practices, a world of meanings all on its own, a master code which, in the process of becoming the society's primary central code, ends by governing - perhaps paradoxically – the various logics that underlie all other meanings within that society" (Mbembe 3).

practices are informed by conditioned ways of knowing and understanding an individual or group of individuals' lived experience (Sithole vi). In this paper, Yorubaland is seen as the postcolony, where Ogun is subjected to a series of definitions and interpretations that are guided by principles of modernity. It is pertinent to note that the Yoruba people moved to their present abode before the colonial masters' advent, and one of the researchers learned about the Yoruba god from participating in Ogun festivals and listening to Ogun myths from elders.[1]

Decolonial epistemic perspective also gives freedom to knowledge that has been distorted, bastardised, ignored and rendered irrelevant by the Euro-North American kind of knowledge. In Sithole's words, a decolonial epistemic perspective "privileges the subjectivity of the subject from its own existential locale and it is foregrounded outside modernity emphasising the fact that there is no monolithic knowledge, but what is referred to as ecologies of knowledges" (vi).[2] This theoretical approach assists in understanding some key factors that decoloniality addresses, such as locus of enunciation, coloniality of time (in this case colonialism, postcolonialism, precolonialism), subjects and subjectivity.

Relevant here is the locus of enunciation, which refers to the writer or researcher's point of view or basically the subject.[3] This means that where a person stands is where he/she thinks from. Locus of enunciation explains that a person thinks from a certain position. Mignolo on 'Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity' posits that knowledge should not be determined by those that are not positioned where the subjects are (Mignolo, *Delinking* 460). The argument in this paper is that the knowledge about Ogun has been mainly dictated by what scholars are meant to believe about the god. As such, Mignolo suggests an "epistemic shift from the loci of enunciations that had been negated by the dominance and hegemony of both the theological and ego-logical politics of knowledge and understanding" (460). In

1 Being a part of the Yoruba community had a tremendous influence on my knowledge of Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron and war. Choudry suggests that in order to understand ideas, we have to take history seriously (7). In line with Choudry's opinion, the Ogun myth is a well-researched field in books, novels, and poems (Barnes 1997). Choudry also argues that "direct access to resources and intellectual involvement" (9) with research materials helps in gaining knowledge about a particular field. Participation in the Ikere Ekiti Ogun festival from childhood assisted me in gaining more knowledge about the god of iron.

2 The notion that beliefs are an integral part of our identity while knowledge and ideas are exterior to Africans or ex-colonised is seen as biased. As such, Bonaventura de Sousa Santos posits that "we (ex-colonised world) are what we believe, and we also have ideas" (Santos 68).

3 This is defined as the geopolitics of language; place from which knowledge is created and articulated (Mignolo, *Geopolitics* 61). The ways in which knowledge is being colonised will also be looked at from the angle of Yoruba *oriki* (panegyrics).

this paper, a decolonial epistemic perspective is utilised to expose three kinds of coloniality in *Hard Choice*, namely coloniality of being, knowledge and power.

According to Mignolo, "decolonial thinking is already about thinking otherwise and assuming from the start a de-modern thinking as well. To de-colonize means at the same time to de-modernize and de-modernizing means de-linking from modern Western epistemology, from the perspective of which the questions of 'representation' and 'totality' are being constantly asked" (*Global* 143). Mignolo explains that to de-modernise does not mean going back in time; it means understanding that coloniality still exists in scholarly discourse. Decoloniality asks one to forget the generally accepted juxtaposition as modernity's 'dark other' and to accept that the confusion caused in the world today is because "some people regarding others as inferior" (144).

The main argument in this paper is to delink from the argument that Ogun is a bloodthirsty god. Ogun's feature as a bloodthirsty god is a characteristic that is well represented in scholars' studies that might have been influenced by modernity. Ogun's association with blood has been constantly misinterpreted in texts. For example, Adu-Gyamfi concludes that some Ogun principles such as the warriors do not relish the taste for animal blood, but a taste for human blood, which describes Ogun's ferocity in war and association with his fierce nature (79). This is in contrast to what the Yoruba people believe. In the Yoruba cosmology, it is believed that when Ogun is unhappy or vexed, he makes requests that pertain to bloodletting. This is a form of warning to his people who will not wish to break any code of conduct for fear of Ogun demanding blood sacrifices. It is also believed that the request is to maintain law and order in the society.

Adepegba further highlights the reason for the association as a precaution against accidents caused largely by the use of iron implements. In his words, "Ogun can even prevent death involved in using metal implements – knives, hunting tools, weapons of war, cutlasses, spearheads, swords and guns – as well as present day dangers of death or accident by motor vehicles" (110). Ogun's association with bloodshed is misleading to individuals who could hasten to conclude that Ogun is fierce or wicked. However, the significance is that on occasions that might lead to bloodshed, a faithful adherent of Ogun will gain the god's support and will be saved from any unfortunate circumstance.

Ododo's *Hard Choice* presents a marital communion between the Nigerian Igbo community of Emepiri and the Igedu community of Yorubaland. This relationship is achieved by instituting a traditional royal marriage ceremony between the families of the Emepiri Kingdom's Eze Okiakoh and King Iginla of

Igedu land.[1] The play opens at the traditional wedding ceremony between Azingae, the Princess of Emepiri, and Oki, the Prince of Igedu. As a result of this cultural union during the traditional wedding, the people of Igedu have the support of Ogun as their god, as much as Emepiri has the backing of Oguguru. The influence of these African gods is evident in the manner in which the traditional wedding is performed. The ceremony continues until three men in masks, commissioned by Chief Ubanga, a chief in the Emepiri Igbo Kingdom, interrupt the ceremony and make off with King Iginla's crown. Owing to the missing crown, King Iginla, the groom's father and his entourage are unable to return to their Yoruba community. The abduction of the crown causes a tense atmosphere in the Emepiri Kingdom as both communities, who are supposed to be celebrating a marital union, divert their attention in an attempt to locate the royal object. In their Emepiri refuge, the Yoruba monarch and his chief warlord, Bashorun, plan to wage war on Emepiri if the Emepiri rulership fails to retrieve the crown. From this synopsis, the question that begs answering is therefore: how does Ododo reconstruct Ogun In view of the primary setting of the play being an Igbo space? Ogun is embodied in this play mainly through the characters of Bashorun and Prince Oki and his characteristic, in this instance, is principally as a god of justice.

Bashorun, an Embodiment of Ogun Principles of Justice

While colonial 'knowledge' of Africa conveniently scatters comforting myths of Africa as a vacant prehistoric wilderness to be benevolently colonised by the white man in his saintly 'burden' to save the pagan from darkness, it is 'knowledge' that is bereft of truth but pregnant with racism in its Eurocentric spin to dispute the humanity of Africans to justify the crime of colonialism (Mpofu 108).

In *Hard Choice* Bashorun is presented as an African subject who represents Ogun in the society. The knowledge that Ogun is swift to come to the aid of his people and able to rid the community of corruption has been distorted. The Yoruba people have been made to believe that the god kills recklessly, and he is wicked. The Eurocentric knowledge that the people now have about the god is that he only kills through accident and iron implements. Therefore, the truth about the god, as a god of justice, is being distorted. Ogun represents strength, and all iron implements belong to him. The imperialists' knowledge tends to appear 'saintly' in the sense that all festivals and worship to Ogun are regarded as barbaric and outdated.

1 The Oba is the monarchical head of a typical Yoruba community, while the Eze has the same status in the Igbo community. 'Community' here refers to a group of people within the same geographical space.

The keyword 'Ogun' is not mentioned in the play *Hard Choice*; instead, Ododo uses characters from Igedu to project how the Igede people construct Ogun as a god of justice. An example of such a character is Bashorun, the grand commander of the Igedu army. While defining the concepts of strength, courage, peace and war, Ododo highlights certain Ogun features in his representation of Bashorun. This representation reflects elements attributed to Ogun by the Yoruba people. Bashorun might not be directly referred to as Ogun in the play, but his actions and determination to execute justice on the Emepiri Kingdom for abducting the Igedu crown symbolises principles of justice associated with Ogun.

Bashorun is a hunter and the warrior leader of the Igedu community. Hunters and warriors in Yorubaland are characterised as Ogun's symbols among the people (Ojo 1063).[1] As Ojo observes, "He (Ogun) is the god of iron and of war and therefore, the god of hunters and soldiers" (1063). Bashorun is a fearless warrior whose courage and strength makes the Igedu community rely on him for the recovery of the crown. The following lines from scene three of the play are informative:

> *In a hideout.* KING IGINLA *is surrounded by two of his chiefs and his son* OKI*, with an attendant fanning him.* BASHORUN *comes in agitated.*
>
> BASHORUN: How is he?
>
> CHIEF AJAO: Still visibly shaken, Bashorun. He has refused food these past two days.
>
> OKI: Any luck?
>
> BASHORUN: I'm afraid not. I saw Baba Onifade before I set out early this morning from Igedu. He consulted ifa [sic] and reveals that the crown is now in the custody of some fiery gods fuming with anger. If not recovered in seven days from now, he dies. (*Points to the king. Shocking expressions by all present.)*
>
> CHIEF SHAMU: You're the Bashorun, the grand commander of Igedu army, what do we do? In a foreign land, we have all been humiliated; we cannot go home without the crown; what is a masquerade without his mask?
>
> ATTENDANT: Facekuerade.
>
> CHIEF SHAMU: Shut up, is this a time for careless jokes?

1 The worship of Ogun is popular amongst hunters, who believe that he resides in their implements and what Robin Brooks describes as "habitation of Ogun" (Brooks 167). The Yoruba people believe that Ogun is present in all iron implements, and a gathering together of metals can symbolise the presence of Ogun in the meeting.

ATTENDANT: It is not a joke, sir. A masquerade without a mask is a facekuerade.

CHIEF SHAMU: I say, shut up; you fool *(*ATTENDANT *murmurs.)* Please Bashorun.

BASHORUN: My war commanders are already on the alert. They are preparing our warriors for the ultimate; war, if it comes to that. In the main time [sic], I have sought audience with the Eze later in the day on the missing crown. (*Hard Choice* 20)

More arresting than anything else in this excerpt is the fact that Bashorun had to represent King Iginla in Igedu and still have the time to travel to Emepiri. Since he is the second in command to King Iginla, Bashorun's strength in seeking the good of his community cannot be overemphasised. Similar to Ogun's characteristic of being a fearless warrior is Bashorun's martial nature, which is associated with hunters in Yorubaland. In Yorubaland, In Yorubaland, no one in Bashorun's position can falter in defending the community against potential aggression. Bashorun, the grand commander of the Igedu army, has the huge task of finding King Iginla's crown because without it the king will die. Bashorun is therefore ready to wage war against the Emepiri should the Emepiri elders fail to locate the crown. Like Ogun, Bashorun is enraged by the theft of his master's crown, which is the ultimate sign of disrespect, not only to the king, but also to the entire Igedu Kingdom. His anger towards the disrespect shown to royalty and willingness to protect his people are comparable to Ogun's readiness to battle with those who disrespect him. As shown in the quotation, Bashorun tenders his readiness to combat the miscreants from Emepiri and prepares his army for war (*Hard Choice* 20).

From a decolonial perspective, Bashorun's fierceness embodies Ogun in a positive way. This is in contrast to Adu-Gyamfi's submission that Ogun has a "destructive explosion of an incalculable energy" (106), depicting him as an unpredictable god of war and destruction. Bashorun's decisive will reconfigures Ogun, not as a god of "destructive explosion" but as a god of immense willpower. As Kumar remarks, "Ogun has a strong willpower to rescue his adherents" (39). Babalola supports Naveen Kumar's assertion when he argues that, "Ogun is a heroic figure, who is strong enough and violent enough to bring dread into the hearts of people, yet protective enough to render them grateful for the benefits that are a product of his strength" (168). Ogun's heroic characteristics are attributed to people who show determination, "courage and strength – which are attributes dominant in Ogun's imagery" (Drewal 239), in helping their people. Ododo portrays Bashorun

as a courageous man, "the generalissimo and akogunmogun of Igedu army" (*Hard Choice* 23). Bashorun is the heroic figure to whom the Igedu people now turn as their Kingdom faces demise; he is the physical representative of Ogun who will rescue the community from annihilation by retrieving the crown from Emepiri. He emphasises his determination in the utterance, "[M]y war commanders are already on the alert" (20). Knowing his position as the representative of Ogun in the community, Bashorun shows his readiness to combat the enemy of his people.

Bashorun organises his armed forces to recover the crown from the Emepiri Kingdom, in terms of his position as the war general of the Igedu Kingdom. This relates to Azeez's interpretation of Aare Kurunmi in *Kurunmi* by Ola Rotimi as the Ogun principle, since Kurunmi is also a "generalissimo" in this text (Azeez 104). Yoruba people also give surnames to people who show Ogun characteristics in their lineage, such as Balogun (a war generalissimo). The act of according names in honour of Ogun is intended to preserve the people's knowledge concerning the god. In scene three, Bashorun depicts himself as the "generalissimo" (*Hard Choice* 23), who has been assigned the role of the messiah to recover the Igedu crown and restore Igedu pride.

The Ogun principles in *Hard Choice* range from administering justice, encouraging truth-telling and combating corruption, to exposing evil plans. Bashorun embodies all these principles in how he handles the theft of the Igedu crown. He interrupts the gathering of Emepiri chiefs and fires gunshots in the air to signify both the anger of Ogun against the Emepiri Kingdom and Ogun's backing in his visit. The gun, being a weapon of iron, conjures the image of Ogun deploying his tools to wage battle against his transgressors. Bashorun laments during his confrontation with the Emepiri council of chiefs that "the Igedu aristocratic structure is about to crumble because of a security breach in your domain. You betrayed friendship and humiliated the crown essence of Igedu Kingdom" (23). Bashorun projects the abduction of the Igedu crown during the traditional wedding ceremony of Prince Oki and Princess Azingae as not only a humiliation to the Igedu aristocracy, but also a betrayal on the part of the Emepiri council members. As a representative of Ogun, Bashorun submits that the god of justice detests betrayal (see Ojo 1063) and therefore there will be grave consequences if amends are not implemented.

Bashorun refers to war to remind Eze Okiakoh and his cabinet members about Ogun's wrath to be visited on the Emepiri community if the Igedu crown

is not located (*Hard Choice* 23).[1] This is evident from the conversation in scene four during Bashorun, Takute and Shamu's confrontation with the Emepiri chiefs. Consider Bashorun's words during the confrontation:

> BASHORUN*: (Approaches EZE OKIAKOH frontally.)* I am Bashorun, the Akogunmogun and generalissimo of Igedu armed forces. The Igedu aristocratic structure is about to crumble because of security breach in your domain. You betrayed friendship and humiliated the crown essence of Igedu kingdom, why Eze Okiakoh, why?
>
> EZE OKIAKOH: Bashorun, the incidence of the abducted crown is indeed an unfortunate one. My chiefs and I have been brainstorming on how to recover it and save ourselves this mutual embarrassment.
>
> BASHORUN: Good to know, but your highness, your search is rather too slow for us. In case you don't know, the life of our king hangs on that crown. If in three days it is not recovered and surrendered, we shall be left with no other choice but to match [sic] on your kingdom and recover the crown ourselves. I believe you know what that means. In one word … WAR! *(Turns and leaves with his men. The others remain speechless as the message sinks.)*
>
> EZE OKIAKOH: Summon the royal dibia at once! (*Hard Choice* 23)

From a modernist perspective, war is a battle of nations for power and supremacy (Hanson 19). Modernists understand war to be a battle for dominating peoples or territories. In the decolonial context of Ododo's play, war serves a different purpose. In this play, Ogun is not projected as merely a god of war engaged in conquering communities for selfish interest. Ogun's association with war is always for specific purposes. In this regard, Bashorun's adoption of war is not a reference to a domination battle, but a war in honour of a Kingdom and preserving a king's life. Bashorun's threat of war is to exact justice and to defend the people's honour and their king's. It must be emphasised that Bashorun does not declare war on Emepiri irrationally, but warns Eze Okiakoh and his council members of the imminent danger facing them because of their betrayal. Bashorun's emphasis on 'war' signifies that Ogun's anger is imminent. Because Ogun is the god of war, Bashorun visualises Ogun as being the only deity who can retrieve the missing crown when dialogue between the two communities has failed. In his words, "if in three days it is not recovered and surrendered, we shall be left with no other choice but to match

1 Ogun is a mighty warrior and a blacksmith, the keeper of the secrets of iron (see Fai 44; Omatseye 538; Azeez 105). These characteristics make him a deity of iron and war.

on your kingdom and recover the crown ourselves. I believe you know what that means. In one word … WAR!" (*Hard Choice* 23). Thus, Ogun is constructed here as a god who pursues war only as an alternative to dialogue, who engages in warfare only when every other peaceful method of resolving conflict has failed to yield the desired results.

Bashorun's role in administering justice, encouraging truth-telling, combating corruption and exposing evil in an Ogun-like fashion is further evident when Oki brings an apprehended Chief Ubanga before King Iginla and Eze Okiakoh. Chief Ubanga claims innocence about the missing crown, but under pressure he admits to abducting Igedu's crown as a protest to the marriage of Princess Azingae to a Yoruba Prince who will become the next king at Eze Okiakoh's death. In his confession, Chief Ubanga refuses to mention his co-plotter, but after Bashorun threatens him with a dagger, an Ogun instrument of justice, Ubanga reveals that he has been working in conspiracy with Queen Amaka. Note Bashorun's intervention when Chief Ubanga refuses to tell Eze Okiakoh who his accomplice is:

> CHIEF UBANGA: I'm not persuaded, your highness. The gods and God will never approve that an Igedu Prince becomes the King of Emepiri Kingdom. Unfortunately you're the only one who thinks otherwise just to keep faith with some unguided promises made behind your council of chiefs. This is a state affair and not a domestic one. Besides, it wasn't my idea. Yes. We planned a protest, but abducting the crown wasn't part of the plan.
>
> EZE OKIAKOH: If I may ask, whose idea?
>
> CHIEF UBANGA: I am under oath not to disclose.
>
> BASHORUN: *(Before now, he has been trying to contain his anger and he is now enraged; moves to jerk CHIEF UBANGA up.)* Enough of this impudence and foolery; who is behind this humiliation?
>
> CHIEF UBANGA: Please be gentle with me.
>
> BASHORUN: *(Tightens his grip and draws a dagger.)* I say who?
>
> CHIEF UBANGA: *(Looks at EZE OKIAKOH).* The Queen … Your wife, Your highness. *(All react and confused silence descends.)*
>
> BASHORUN: *(Throws CHIEF UBANGA down and commands his warriors.)* Take him into detention. *(They move in smartly and lead CHIEF UBANGA away. Bashorun leaves the scene and motions PRINCE OKI to come with him. Evocative traditional instrumental music fills the atmosphere. The two kings take in the situation and in terrified dignity turn backing each other and move out in opposite directions followed by their aids* [sic]. *Fade out.)*

(39-40)

Bashorun's actions here help us to further understand Ogun principles in the play, which in turn confirms the construction of Ogun as the god of justice. First, Bashorun forces Chief Ubanga to tell the truth about his involvement in the abduction of the crown. In response to Chief Ubanga's claim to be "under oath not to disclose" the name of his accomplice, Bashorun threatens him with his dagger, thereby forcing him to admit his alliance with the Queen. The dagger, being an instrument of iron, connotes Ogun's very presence and influence over this truth-telling incident. This suggests that Ogun exacts justice not only by waging war, but also by initiating truth-telling where the tellers bear witness against themselves as deserving whatever punishment is meted against them. Then, by arresting Chief Ubanga with the instruction, "Take him into detention", Bashorun eliminates a corrupt influence in Emepiri, making room for the restoration of honest governance within the Kingdom. Lastly, Bashorun plays a crucial role in exposing the wickedness of the Queen. His intervention forces Chief Ubanga to name the Queen as an accomplice in his evil deeds. Bashorun's demonstration of these Ogun principles reverses the demise that was to be visited upon Emepiri. Omojuwa states the following about Ogun: "[W]hat constitutes offences to Ogun include the breaking of covenant, lying, falsehood, wickedness and stealing. Whoever is guilty of any of the moral offences would incur the wrath of Ogun. This could manifest in form of accident, untimely death, wound and injuries" (Omojuwa 89). Thus, Bashorun's action to detain Chief Ubanga for "lying, falsehood, wickedness and stealing" configures Ogun as a god who punishes transgressors deservedly, not undeservedly.

Conclusion

Many Africans no longer want to participate in festivals in the honour of African gods. Their knowledge has been clouded by the Eurocentric idea that African gods are wicked, and their associated worship or festivals are barbaric. The history and myth of Africa have been distorted by the colonisers. They have also 'murdered' their knowledge in what Bonaventura de Sousa Santos called "epistemicide" (Santos 92). The distortion of history and slaughtering of African knowledge shows that the colonisers have succeeded in emptying the "heads of self-confidence and the hearts of the emotional stamina" (Mpofu 109) of the African people. As Africans, we have been made to believe that the ways that we worship our gods are foul, violent, stupid, backward and without direction. Thus, our knowledge of African

gods and associated myth needs to be reconstructed and refined. This paper, has demonstrated that Ogun is not an aggressive, bloodsucking, warring or arrogant god, as representations influenced by modernity depict him, but a god of justice, truth-telling, honest governance and courageous leadership. Being a play set in an Igbo geographical space, *Hard Choice* also suggests the transcendentalism of Ogun as he operates beyond Igedu land to exact justice for his people. The collaboration between Emepiri and Igedu Kingdoms in locating the Igedu crown forges a partnership between Oguguru, the Emepiri god of oaths, and Ogun the Yoruba god of justice, which eventually leads to conflict resolution and a continued alliance between the two Kingdoms. In many ways, both Ogun and Oguguru function according to the same principle of taking what is rightfully theirs, even if it involves shedding human blood.

Ododo's representation of the Yoruba and Igbo cultures corrects the erroneous notion that African gods are bloodthirsty gods just eager to kill. Ododo portrays Ogun and Oguguru as enforcing honest governance, courageous leadership and truth-telling, compelling its readers and viewers to revisit their heritage and rekindle interest in what is African. Decoloniality helps us to understand how to delink from views that present African cultures as barbaric and outdated. Decoloniality assists us in seeing that African gods do not take pleasure in reckless killing; they only become angry when what is due to them is intentionally denied. Ododo's representation of Bashorun as the embodiment of Ogun principles of justice in *Hard Choice* helps us to understand that African gods work for the good of their communities, not for selfish individualistic interests. They detest deceit, betrayal, lying, disloyalty and corruption. By contrast, they come to the aid of those who display strength, courage and determination for the common good of their community.

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