

African Culture and the Status of Women: The Yoruba Example

by

O.O. Familusi, Ph.D.

fameofame@yahoo.com

Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan,
Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

Issues relating to the rights of women across the globe are a major focus of contemporary scholarship. Quest for women emancipation has been on the increase in religious, political and economic spheres. This is premised on the fact that women are always at the receiving end. This however has been discovered not to be true in its entirety as women in every society enjoy some inalienable privileges. This paper therefore discusses the status of Yoruba women in traditional Africa from a holistic perspective, with emphasis on how culture has impacted negatively on their well-being, although there are benefits derive from their status in society. Thus, it recommended that cultural practices that are harmful to women should be discarded, while caution must be exercised in the quest for the liberation of women so that African cultural values can be retained, and thus not destroyed under the guise of civilization.

Key words: Africa, culture, Women's right, Yoruba

Introduction

Discourse on the rights of women in Africa has been a major focus of contemporary scholarship in Africa. Many scholars of feminist studies have been largely unanimous that aspects of African culture are hostile to women, hence the need for a paradigm shift so that the supposed hitherto marginalised woman will be emancipated, this paper discusses the right of African women in a Yoruba context with emphasis placed on two divides of culture as possible agents of women oppression and therefore, its relevance in promoting rights of women. Hence, this is a way of correcting misconception about culture in relation to the gender question.

Culture has been variously defined; it is understood as a way of life of a people. Thus, culture is made up the customs, traditions, beliefs, behaviour, dress, language, works of art and craft, attitude to life among others, which varies from society to society and suggests that cultural values are largely relative. And similarly, E.B. Tylor has acceptingly defined culture as “That complex whole, which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of society”. (Edo 2005:2)

The Woman in Yoruba Culture

The Yoruba people predominantly belong to the Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Ekiti and Lagos States. They equally form parts of Edo, Kwara and Kogi states; (Awolalu and Dopamu 1979:3) and some parts of Republic of Benin and Togo. The question of their origin is debatable and in the present state of knowledge, not much is categorically known about it. (Idowu 1996:4) However, two different answers are found in oral traditions. The first holds that their founding fathers were immigrants from a northern source variously identified as Egypt, Meroe, Yemen or Arabia while it is claimed in the second body of traditions that Ile-Ife was the first habitable place created on earth, from which all earthly creation began. For this reason, Ile-Ife is referred to as the cradle of the Yoruba race. (Akintoye 2004:1) In this paper, emphasis is on the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The Yoruba nation like many other African societies is essentially patriarchal; hence men are understood to be more privileged than women. Such a society is described by (Ubrurhe 1999:82) as that which is characterised by male super ordination and female subordination. Men show superiority over their women counterparts, who are usually relegated to the background. Therefore, socially, politically, economically and religiously women are to a very large extent, disadvantaged since decision were taken mostly by women the males. This has consistently manifested in various way as shall be established in this section. According to Adetunji, (2001 :106) the cultural and gender problem, which African women have been facing dates back to their birth as in many homes the birth of a baby girl does not receive the kind of enthusiastic reception that is usually given to that of a baby boy. Thus if somebody is treated with inferiority right from birth, it may be difficult for such a person not to be perpetually caught in the web of such a treatment. Olabode (2009:136) is also affirmative that:

Immediately a child is born, the question that will be posed will centre on sex, not minding of health of the mother. If the baby is a female, the mother will be scolded and treated as a lazy, good for nothing woman. On the other hand if the child is a male, praise will be showered on the mother, not considering the fact that Biology has shown that it is the father who determines the sex of an offspring.

Oduyoye 's view is that African culture is replete with language that enables the community to diminish the humanity of women.(Oduyoye 2001:3) While Akintunde believes that African culture has been a long tale of discrimination and injustice to women as there has not been equity in the opportunity, dignity and power between men and women. Her reason is that there are various aspects of African culture which restrict them from attaining equal status with men. (Akintunde 1999:74) This is often the story of Yoruba women. Let us discuss manifestation of gender discrimination in Yoruba culture one after the other.

Inheritance

Inheritance as a cultural practice among the Yoruba is not women friendly. Traditionally the issue of will was non- existent. Thus after the burial of the deceased, the oracle was consulted to fix a time for the sharing of the property (human -wives, offices and material). Sharing of offices is male centred as women cannot be made the head of the family. No matter how young a male child is, he is superior to female children in this regard no matter how old they may be. However, it is not impossibility for female children to inherit property especially when they are single, but this is not always the case for married women because of the belief that they in their entirety belong to their husbands. Of course, it is not dignifying for a married woman to claim any right regarding inheriting her father's property. What obtains in Igbo land is more hostile to women as they do not have any right to inherit anything from their fathers. (Oke 2001:52) If a man dies without having a son, his belongings go to his brother or uncle, and his name is believed to have been lost. This is why having a male child in the area is sacrosanct and the relevance of the name *Ahamefula*- My name is not lost.¹Hence, it important to note that while a woman may not inherit, she could be inherited, thus, traditionally wives of the deceased were part of his property. In such a situation, she could be inherited by somebody too old for her or somebody who may be younger than her own son.

Proverbs and Taboos

Proverb is defined as a concise statement, in general use, expressing a shrewd perception about everyday life or a universally recognized truth. Most proverbs are rooted in folklore and have been preserved by oral tradition. (Encarta 2009) A proverb is a short sentence usually, usually known by many people, stating something commonly experienced or giving advice. (Tiamiyu and Olaleye 2009:116). Proverbs are very significant in traditional Africa, hence the saying among the Yoruba *Owe lesin oro , oro lesin owe; ti oro ba sonu owe la fin nwa* – meaning A proverb is a guide to a word and a word is a guide to a proverb; when a word is lost, a proverb is used to find it. Corroborating this Achebe 1986:5 says that “proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten.” They are intimately related to culture of a people and they address themselves to many themes and areas of knowledge. Also they are collections of wisdom of people and they carry authority in respect of social relationship. (Olabode 2009:131)

As relevant as proverbs are in Yoruba society, they are used to portray women as less important and immoral entity. The following proverbs and their explanation will lend credence to this claim. *Owu ti iya gbon lomo n ran*. The attitudes of the mother are emulated by her offspring. This proverb is related to conduct or behaviour. In this case the mother is seen as immoral and ill-mannered; and every bad behaved child takes after her and summarily belong to her. The father is exonerated as good children belong to him and he is always proud of such children. Hence the saying “*Omo to dara nim ti baba eyi ti ko dara niti iya*” a well behaved child belongs to the mother and vice versa. The reservation men have about a bad child could be expressed beyond proportion as they could disown him or her and accuse the mother of unconfirmed case of adultery. Another proverb that expresses women being disadvantaged is *Ai lokurin nile lobinrin njogun ada* – the absence of male affords a female the opportunity of inheriting a cutlass. Cutlass as a farm implement is traditionally used by men. It symbolises power and essence of survival.

Women hardly engage in farm work except when crops are to be harvested. Therefore, for a woman to assume the mantle of leadership, the head of the house hold must be irresponsible, lazy, or dead. When this is not the case, women are understood to be substitutes. This is similar to *tio ba nidi obirin ki ije kumolu*– Woman cannot be named Kumolu for any reason. This name is given to men especially those who are potential leaders of their families. This confers much respect and dignity on them. It follows that where there are men, women are not reckoned with. What about *kaka ko san fun iya aje on fi omo bo obinrin, eye nyi lu eye?*– rather than a witch faring well, she keeps giving birth to female children and witches keep increasing. Witchcraft is female system of religious activity in Yoruba society while wizardry is male system of religious activity. However, witches are treated with ostracism that a confessing witch could be stoned by an irate mob. Quite ironic those wizards are not treated as such. The proverb implies that if a woman belongs to this system of religious activity her daughters will be initiated. (Tiamiyu and Olaleye 2009:118-120) An inference that could be drawn from the foregoing is that a man who is married to a witch (if he is aware) will not be happy if she keeps giving birth to female children. This is another way of showing preference for male children in patriarchal society.

There is a proverbial joke that further buttresses the perceived irrelevance of women. A male child populates the family while the female one depopulates it. This belief has occasioned this saying “*Adekunle ni oruko okunrin, Adetule ni oruko obinrin*” In the Yoruba society, when a woman is married she move to her husband’s place and becomes a member of the family. Given this reality, a male child who will bring a woman or women in is preferred to the one (female child who will leave her parental home after marriage. This is why the male child is metaphorically referred to as the pillar of the family *opomulero* while the female one symbolises a seasonal stream. The view is largely responsible for why parents in the past were not favourably disposed to sending their daughters to school. We shall discuss this in detail later in this work. The list of proverb that so portray women as not as important as men is long. What we have attempted to do in this piece is an analysis of some of them.

Another aspect of Yoruba culture that is significant in respect of the status of women is the imposition of taboos. Taboo is a prohibition against performing certain acts and it is motivated by magical or social sanction. (Balandier and Magnet 1974:314) It is a way in which a society expresses disapproval of certain kinds of behaviour believed to be harmful to its members, either for supernatural reason or because such behaviour violates a moral code. (Wardhaugh 1986:230) Taboo is common to all civilization but it is systemised in many African countries. Among the Yoruba for instance, taboos are used to enforce moral rules. Whether or not they can stand the test of empiricism and logicity is another issue that has not escaped the attention of scholars (Familusi 2010:105 &109) It has been discovered that some of them limit the rights of women and for this reason some taboos have been understood as a way of enforcing patriarchal dominance. The following are examples of those taboos.

1. A menstruating woman must not participate in the sacrifice to Obatala- Yoruba divinity of fertility and other religious activities. Obatala is renowned for whiteness and this symbolises purity (as menstrual period is believed to be a time impurity or defilement). Also, they are forbidden from entering into any sacred places because they could render all objects there ineffective. This taboo apart from depicting women as being unclean equally reduces their relevance in religious activities.

2. Women are forbidden from watching Oro. Oro religious activities are an exclusive preserve of men. In order to prevent women from having its knowledge, they are traditionally not allowed to see or get involved in it so as not to see its nakedness. A defiant woman risks sanction, hence the saying *'boobinrin ba foju kan oro, oro a gbe*, that is, if a woman watches oro, it will deal with her. (Olabode 2009:135; Tiamiyu and Olaleye 2009:122) Also there is a limit to the involvement of women in the *Egungun* cult. Like the Oro, *Egungun* is mainly for men and it involves an element of secrecy. Even if a woman knows the secret, she must not tell anybody. This literally explains the saying *'b'obinrin mawo ko gbodo wi*. The masquerades that come out in the night are believed to be naked. Thus they must not be seen women if the need arises for women to go out in the night during *Egungun* festival, such must be announced so that the nocturnal masquerades will disappear. In contemporary time, these taboos infringe seriously on the freedom of movement of women.

Sexual Fidelity

Chastity before marriage on the part of the woman was essential. A woman who was not virtuous at marriage was a disgrace not only to herself, but also to members of her family. (Idowu 1982:157) It follows that virginity was a cherished virtue in Yoruba society. The first a couple spent together was a very special one; members of the bride's and bridegroom's family were to sleep outside the married couple's room and strain their ears to catch the exclamation of pain coming from the new wife during what was supposed to be her first sexual experience.

If she was not found to be virgin, the members of her family would run away for safety as the disappointed husband could violently react. In the following morning, a symbolic message of a half keg of palm wine would be sent to her parents and she in turn would be given a broken pot to go and fetch water from the stream. This was to show her infidelity. The bride's father on his part would send a message of consolation to the bridegroom and could request that she should be sent back to him and there she would be flogged until she mentioned the name of the person who deflowered her. When the man was identified, he would be sued customarily for damages. (Fadipe 1970: 25) As good as this practice was in respect of ensuring chastity, women were at the receiving end as the punishment meted out to the man – a co-offender was minimal if at all he was sanctioned. One needs to say also that the society was not concerned about whether or not a man had slept with other women before marriage. One expects that this should be mutually exclusive. This practice has become outdated as virginity is no longer publicly celebrated and its loss has ceased to be a thing of disgrace. (Adeoye 1982:233, Familusi 1999:86)

On extra marital sexual affairs, the woman is duty bound to be faithful to her husband while the rule is loose regarding the man. In fact, women are expected to be calm when their husbands have been found to have been involved in extra marital sexual affairs. Ebenezer Obey, a Yoruba musician sings that

*Okunrin le ni aya mefa
Ko bu
Okunrin kan soso
Ni Oluwa yan fobinrin*

A man can have six wives

It is not bad

But to one man only

God appointed a woman to marry (Culled from Dopamu and Alana 2004:160-162)

A Yoruba proverb says "*A k ii moko omo tan, ka tunmale omo*" meaning it is not proper to know one's daughter's husband and her concubine. Nothing is said about knowing one's son's wife and his concubine. This might not be a crime in a patriarchal society. While adultery is an adulterous woman is seen as a murderer, adultery is construed as proving the valour of men. (Olademo 2009:104) Lending credence to the foregoing Edewor 2006:375-376 says that:

Nigerian culture, as many African cultures, allows or even encourages men to contract polygamous marriage and a man who engages in extra marital relations does not receive general condemnation as a woman does. He might even be privately hailed for his behaviour. On the other hand, not only would such an act by a married receive wide condemnation but would in fact be ruthlessly and severely punished.

This scenario is described by Onayemi 1999:47 as the other woman and it means a man despite having many wives at home still keeps a woman friend, girlfriend or a concubine outside his home. The wives at home do not have the right to protest; the best that can be done is for the eldest wife to take it upon to speak with the man to formalise the marriage. Doing this may be in the interest of the man or to deal with the new wife. Whatever may be the reason, the man seems to be at liberty to engage in extra marital affairs, which the woman must not contemplate doing. Yoruba sexual control mechanism are gender in nature as men do believe that only women should be prevented from committing adultery. Let us consider the issue of Magun- a traditional magic against sexual immorality, which is used to prevent, expose or punish a promiscuous woman, her lover or both. This is of various types. Ogunsakin - Fabarebo (1998:9-20) identifies twenty three types of *magun*, some are destructive while some are preventive; but the main reason for making use of it is to guard against sexual immorality. This method of curbing sexual immorality needs to be viewed with objectivity as it may not completely be completely beneficial. The reason is that the man who places on his wife may equally be involved in extra marital affairs. It follows that if his wife is prevented by the use of *magun* and the husband continues to have affairs with other women it is as good as legitimising adultery. On a very sensitive note, the fact that this mechanism is procured by men further confirms African culture of male superiority, which is an issue of concern to feminists. The question is how do women prevent their husbands from involving in extra-marital affairs? Looking into this is a matter of expediency because one expects marital faithfulness on the part of spouses in a society that does not believe a sex is superior to the other.

Morality

Immorality of all forms is detested among the Yoruba that immoral people are treated with ostracism. Given this people try to abide by the norm of society. This however does not suggest that moral rules are not flouted. Immorality as a matter of fact is not gender based. In other words, both the man and the woman could be guilty of unethical conduct. In line with the status of women in traditional Yoruba society, women are believed to be agents of moral ineptitude. This is why they are blamed for their children's bad behaviour. As reflected in Yoruba oral tradition, several moral vices are perpetrated by women. It is a popular saying that *obinrin koni gogongo*, that is, women do not have Adam's apple. This suggests that they cannot keep secret and that they must not be confided in. An *ijala*² verse says:

Obinrin lodale, obinrin leke,

Emo finu han obinrin.

Women are disloyal deceitful, do not expose your inner thought to a woman. (Olademo 2009:103)

These lines ascribe deceitful behaviour to women alone whereas the act is an attribute of both men and women. Since ijala is masculine one expects such a conclusion as regards the attitude of women. It is usually said *ema finu han obinrin, ibi ti oju re oto enu re debe*. The literal interpretation of this is- do not be open minded to a woman, where her eyes are absent, her mouth will go there. This further explains the portrayal of women as not being reliable but deceitful. Therefore they must not be trusted or relied on as doing so will result in betrayal and treachery because they are believed to have loose tongues. (Tiamiyu and Olaleye 2009:121) And as earlier noted bad children belong to the mother, while the good ones are proudly associated with by the father. It is absurd to blame mothers only for the misdeeds of children. Although one is not oblivious of the fact that the responsibility of child's upbringing falls heavily on them because at the initial stage, the child is closer to the mother than any other person. In most cases, the father is not always at home and the mother sees it as her responsibility to train him or her. Besides, she is the first agent of the child's socialization. This may be the reason why the child's first language is referred to as the "mother tongue". (Lawal: 2005 131) Despite the enormity of the mother's responsibility in child rearing, his or her misdeeds must not be entirely blamed on the mother.

Western Education

Before the introduction of western education, traditional Yoruba people had always transmitted their cultural values from one generation to another. Therefore, there is Yoruba concept of education, which is aimed at character development, development of intent and physical skills, inculcation respect for elder and leaders, understanding, appreciating and promoting the cultural heritage of society among other. (Lawal 2005: 129) Western education was received with disinclination in most places and the few who were willing to send their children to school did not consider it wise to send the female ones. Therefore those who had initial exposure to this form of education were largely men. This is attributable to the fact that a woman is seen as property and beast burden at the mercy of the pleasure of the husband. In the past, some parents felt that if girls should acquire some formal education and were privileged to work, they would surrender their pay packets to their husbands and not their parents. (Adebisi 2009:153) According to Adetunji, the African woman is not encouraged to avail herself of educational opportunities, rather she is encouraged to tom go into such an institution where functional education is acquired to prepare her for motherhood. (Adetunji 2001:106) It should be noted though women now go to school; their enrolment in some places is very low. The point being made is that Yoruba culture was not favourably disposed to educating the girl child, which was a way of entrenching patriarchy. The current clamour for increased participation of women in Nigerian politics could be traced to this factor. Since initially they were not exposed to education, a factor that gave rise to participation in politics and nationalism, it may be difficult for them to compete favourably with men.

Widowhood Practices

Widowhood is associated with many practices traditional Africa some of which harmful and dehumanizing. These practices vary from culture to culture. Among the Yoruba, the duration of mourning for a Widow is one year. During this period, she is to refrain from sex and she must not remarry. In the past, she was not to bathe or go out for fourteen days. It is for the reason that a proverb is often said:

Obun ri'ku oko ti'ro mo

Oni ojo ti oko oun ti ku oun ko tii we

A dirty woman attributes her not bathing to the death of her husband.

This proverb confirms the practice of not bath, but it may be an alibi for a dirty woman who was not bathing regularly when her husband was alive. Although she could not as a matter of right inherit her husband's properties, she could be inherited by a member of her husband's family. Widows are forbidden from attending social functions and no adornment of any kind is allowed. They are made to wear black attire or other dull colours. A widow surrounded by hostile in-laws is vulnerable to inhuman treatments that are not necessarily cultural. She could be accused of having killed her husband and she may sent out of her matrimonial home while those inherited could be exposed to unhealthy rivalry with the wife or wives of the new husband. It apposite to remark what obtains in Yoruba land is mild compared with cultures like Igbo in Nigeria (Ukpokolo 2005:124) and Luo in Kenya. (Ressy-Mamo 2005:53) There is no specific mourning period for the widower. In fact, he may remarry shortly after the death of his wife because of domestic care. There is no rule binding on those who have more than one wife. (Familusi 1999:63)

The woman in Yoruba culture has been understood so far in this work as less privileged and largely endangered species. However the negative impact of culture has limits as women in their own right are influential and at times enjoy some rights. Therefore, the question of their being marginalised must not be blown out of proportion. In Yoruba ethics, it is the responsibility of men to give protection to women as weaker sex. When they walk together, the woman should be allowed to go in front while the man follows her so as to afford her protection ad defence in case there is and danger. The woman as a matter of necessity should be sheltered and afforded the first chance of escape when the need arises. (Idowu 1982:164) By virtue of this privilege, the woman cannot be said to be a second class human being. Implicitly, she is more cherished in this regard. Up till today, it is considered imperative for a Yoruba man to protect his wife or wives. (Dopamu and Alana 2004:164)

Women are not in any way insignificant in specific religious activities, their prohibition during menstrual period notwithstanding. Traditionally they were assigned roles in religion as priestesses and functionaries and in spite of the fact that many are male dominated, some give room for women participation and such may be led by either a man or a woman.

(Orebiyi 2001:77; Afolayan 2006:1) Examples of these systems are Osun, Ogun and Sango. This is why titles like *Iya Sango* and *Iya Osun* exist. It is on record that the late Susan Wenger “Adunni Oloosa” was an important personality in Osun Osogbo. Traditionally, there are things that cannot be accomplished without the influence of women. Many successful men are beneficiaries of their wives covert contributions and many a man has fallen or ceased to be relevant as a result of withdrawn loyalty of women. In Egungun religious system the roles of women are important, though they mainly operate behind the scene. For instance, there are female titles holders *Ewesorun* and *loobariin* especially among the Ijesa while the most powerful masquerade *Ladunwo* in Imesi-ile, Osun State must pay homage to *Yeye Oro*- mother of religious activity. Also in Ilawe Ekiti, the ingenuity of women is apparent in the worship of Orinlase. As noted Ilesanmi (1996:8-9):

It is not surprising that they are sober and well organized. They are cool and well refined, knowledgeable and reserved in their occult artistry... Women virtually make the deities. Annually they re-enact past events, advertising a hero of their choice to the community for communal acceptance as a deity. They cement their confirmation of deity through ceremonial praise poetry rendered in honour of the deity oral recitation. Their body decoration is enough to attract the men folk thereby forcing them to listen to the message of their recitation... In fact the role of women in perpetuation of religion can not be overemphasized. Just as religion itself, women are a mystery; but they are also the conspicuous second aspect of the binary system of complementarity, which has to be comprehended and appreciated for peacefulcoexistence in this universe in order to maintain a permanent cosmos.

What about Ayelala, a goddess among the Ilaje and Ijo Apoi people in Okitipupa area of Ondo State.? The offering of the enslaved girl (who later became deified) to appease the gods of the land following a crime of sexual immorality should be seen as a form of sacrifice, on the part of women. Although she was forced to die, she is today worshipped and this is to the credit of women. Another example is Queen Moremi of Ile-Ife, who offered to be captured by invading Igbo warriors and through this she was able to liberate her people.(Fatokun 2010:136-138) Can it be controverted that a woman did what men could not do? Women are not in all cases unrecognised.

Apart from related religious activities, women participate actively in community affairs. This is why in every Yoruba community there are female chiefs who are deeply involved traditional governance. For example in the old Ibadan kingdom, the title of Iyalode was created in the 1850s to reward Madam Subuola who used to assist the warriors. The Iyalode must possess qualities similar to those of the Baale. She is described as:

A chief to whom all the women's palavers are brought before they are taken to the king. She is infact a sort of queen, a person of much influence and looked up to with much respect. (Falola 1984:108-109)

Ojo (2004: 238) does not in any way agree that women are inferior to men as she highlights various roles played by them both in the home and society. According to her “Yoruba women are very intelligent, lively, expressive, courageous, devoted to family, enterprising and versatile.” Women are known to be protective of their families and on several occasions they sacrifice personal interest even to the point of death for their children. When men are reluctant to finance the education of their children, women have always faced the challenge of shouldering the responsibility. Their contributions to the upbringing of the child should not go unnoticed. In this era of civilization and acculturation, women are now both seen and heard in Yoruba land. Some of them have become bread winners of their families because of economic reality of the day. The relevance of the saying “Behind every successful man is a woman” is now. Many professions that were no go areas for women in the past are now also dominated by them. In modern day politics women have launched themselves into prominence. In the South-Western Nigeria, apart from being members of Houses of Assembly and the National Assembly, there are at present three female deputy governors and a Speaker. This is good starting point and efforts are being made towards having more representation. The fact that the mother is described as gold *Iyaniwura* while the father is mirror *dingi* suggests to an extent their relevance and value. Economically and socially speaking gold is more expensive and cherished than mirror. While paternity of a child can be in doubt, maternity is incontrovertible. Bayo Adegboyega, a gospel musician is right to sing in an Album titled ‘Dear Mother’ that:

Iya o see paaro

Omo o see paaro

Isoro to wu kole de ba omo

Iya niya o maaje

Mother cannot be exchanged

Child cannot be exchanged

No matter the problem the child is facing

Mother will always be mother (my translation)

Concluding Remark

The status of women in traditional Africa has been a major of attention to scholars, especially female scholars. The woman has always been presented as a victim of cultural practices hence the promotion of women studies, which is a step in right direction. However, women have equally been presented as force that cannot be ignored all aspects of Yoruba life. (McIntosh 2009) Thus if a man is indispensable, I contend that women should also be recognised as such, and value must be placed on the human person, not sex. It needs be recommended that cultural practices that are harmful to women should be discarded. If culture is a way of life and it is dynamic, one does not expect it to be destructive. Our submission in this paper is that the woman and her experience must no longer be viewed entirely from a negative perspective while African feminists are encouraged to exercise caution in their activities. Things such abortion, lesbianism, and choosing to have children or not; advocated by radical feminism (Ukpokolo 2005:119) must be ignored as they negate Africa cultural heritage.

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Notes

¹This name is often given when a long awaited male child comes or when a man who happens to be the only male child of his parents has a male child.

²*Ijala* is the poetry that is sung and performed by hunters, blacksmiths and all who deal in iron work, in honour of *Ogun*, the divinity of iron.