A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN THE PAST AND THE 21ST CENTURY AFRICAN SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF*ÌWÒRÌTÚRÚPỌ̀N* IN *IFÁ* DIVINATION

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary time, the mission of every country in the entire continent is to provide employment support for women who are in one disadvantaged position or the other. As a result of this, many programmes are designed to help in this capacity. However, looking at women empowerment from the past, can one really say that women are not empowered particularly in Africa and in Yorùbá society in Nigeria to be specific even from the time of the gods to the present time? This question is important because there were notable figures (women) in the history of the Yorùbá society then and now that were/are greatly empowered. Aje, the goddess of wealth in Ìwòrìtúrúpọ̀n, Ẹlẹ́kọdèrè in Ìrósùn Méjì, Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúrà, the Ìyálóde Ibadan of her time, Ẹfúnroyè Tinúbú, Ayé the powerful rich lady of Adó Èkìtì just to mention a few were women that were greatly empowered. In fact, there were no women in the past who were not one way or the other empowered in various businesses. One may be tempted to ask, what is the missing link between the past and the present that necessitated the shout for the women empowerment today for the sake of future? Have all the programmes so designed been able to cater for women empowerment? These were the questions this paper tries to interrogate by interviewing 30 women, 20 men in the city of Ibadan and their opinions content analysed. The study revealed that empowerment is not new to African and the agitation thus, has foreign hands, and product of intellectual poverty considering the fact that the structure of African society is an organised one based on gender roles. The paper therefore, recommends that we should value where and how the Creator placed us rather than looking for what is not lost.

Introductions

Women empowerment should not be a subject of debate because there was never a time in the history of humanity that women were and are not empowered, most especially, in theYorùbáland, south western Nigeria. In the Yorùbá society, there was never a time a woman was idle without any form of work or the other. Even if it were a matter of helping her husband in his farm work that was prevalent then and in the process of doing that, such women will also make their own small farm beside their husbands own. Such farm would be independent of their husbands and whatever comes out of it, the husband has no power over it **(Ogunsua, Personal Interview)**[1].Physically and spiritually, women are empowered, even in the time of the gods; Ọ̀ṣun was so empowered spiritually by Olódùmarè to the extent that she thwarted all the efforts of other fifteen principal gods that were assigned to carry out some works on earth until they succumbed to her enormous power. Ajé (that later became Ọ̀rúnmìlà's wife) was a rich business woman who had more than two hundred slaves that were transporting her goods to the market each day.

However, the dimension at which humanity is agitating for women empowerment to attain gender equality suggests that something is wrong somewhere. This is because there was no such agitation in the past when men and women in the society knew their duties and limits in all things they do. For instance, in the old African/Yorùbá system of communal living/setting, the oldest woman in every compound was empowered with the duty of early childhood education of all the children produced in that compound while the rest of the women would busy themselves with one business or the other or better still, help their husbands in their farming business. That was the reason why some women were found in some vocations believed were exclusively reserved for men such as farming, hunting and divination system. Ọ̀ṣun is a very good example here. It was Ọ̀rúnmìlà that was traveling to Olokun's place. That time, Ọ̀ṣun was still the wife of Ọ̀rúnmìlà. While Ọ̀rúnmìlà was going, he said he was going for 16 days but ended up staying there for 16 years. However, before he left, Ọ̀ṣun asked him what would be the faith of his clients and the sick while he was away? Ọ̀rúnmìlà then gave Ọ̀ṣun*owóẸ̀ẹ̀rìndínlógún* (16 cowries) for making enquiry (divination) for anyone that comes for that. That was how *owóẸ́ẹ́rìndínlógún* (16 cowries) became a tool of enquiry especially among women and men followers of Ọ̀ṣun the goddess of Ọ̀ṣun river of which (Bascom, 1980, 4)**[2]** associated with Ọbàtálá, Èṣù, Sango, Ọya and many other Yoruba Òrisa. However, *Orógbó síṣọ*-Casting of BitterKola is associated with Sango and Ikin with Esu who was the first apprentice of Orunmila as viewed by **(Salami, 2008, 152)**[3]

Therefore, women empowerment in the 21 century is a total departure from the past. This is the reason why there could be agitation for equal opportunities with men, an opportunity that was not there from the beginning of humanity on earth. Today, women are agitating for women empowerment to alleviate women from poverty, genital mutilations, and early marriages, disproportionate labour in the field and in households**(N/N, 2016,** https://Elvischifwafwawww.siami.se**)**[5].

Thereby bestowed on today's woman agitations intellectual poverty that has reflections on their offspring's because they have neglected their natural duties bestowed upon them by the creation.Upon all these facts, one may then ask, what is the missing link between the past and the present that necessitated the shout for the women

[1] Madam Talabi Ogunsua, *Food Stuff Seller/Farmer*, *Interview Respondent*, Mogaji Owe Village, Ibadan, 12/April 2020

[2]William Bascom, 1980, *Sixteen Cowries: Yoruba Divination from Africa to the New World,* London: Indiana University Press, 4

[3]Ayo Salami, 2008, *Yoruba Theology and Tradition: The Worship,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company,152

[4]2016, *Is Gender Inequality in Africa about Culture or is it about Poverty?*https://Elvischifwafwawww.siami.se 6/3/2020

[5]2016, *Is Gender Inequality in Africa about Culture or is it about Poverty?*https://Elvischifwafwawww.siami.se 6/3/2020

empowerment today? Have all the programmes so designed been able to cater for women empowerment?With these questions, it is apt to know how women are viewed in Yoruba society.

Overview of Women in Yorùbá Society

Women in Yorùbá society, like other nations around the globe are seen vastly different from men in so many ways; appearance, character, intellect and behaviour. Again, in the society of the Yorùbá, women are seen in different perspectives. Some perceive women to be lazy types like Ọrọ̀, the wife Ọ̀rúnmìlà in*Ọ̀bàràMéjì* **(Abimbola, 1968, 67)**[6] where *Ifá* pronounces:

Apánlánigiàjẹ́
Apanlanigiaje
Ọ̀ṣèabigi rẹ̀rẹ̀ẹ̀rẹ̀
Ose abigirereere
A dIfáfúnỌ̀rúnmìlà
Ifa divination was performed for Ọ̀rúnmìlà
Ifánlolèé gbé Ọ̀rọ̀
Ifa is about to marry Oro
Tííṣomo Olówuníyàwó.....
The Daughter of Olowu
…Nigbati o di osuketa in the third month
Ti Ọ̀rúnmìlàko When Ọrúnmìlà
Tí kò dé mọ́
Failed to return
Owóàtioúnjẹ́tán lọ́wọ́Ọrọ̀
Money and Food stuff left for Oro were exhausted
Bẹ́ẹ̀ni Ọrọ̀ kòsìfọwọ́kanisẹ́ka nrí…
And Oro has never engaged in any work (before then

While some view them as traitors and deceiverslike Olójòngbòdú*Obìnrin Ikú-* Olójòngbòdúthe wife of death in *Odù Ọ̀yẹ̀kúMéjì* **(Abimbola, 1968, 26)**[7]where *Ifá*says;

Títítíloríogbó
Títítíloríogbó
Bìrìpébìrìpélomiọkọ̀ọ́ dà
Bìrìpébìrìpélomiọkọ̀ọ́ dà
Dídàlomiọkọ̀ọ́ dà
Boat water only spill
Omi ọkọ̀ kìí yí
Boat water doesn't roll
*A dIfá fúnOòduà atẹ̀wọ̀nrọ̀…*Ifa divination was consulted for Oodua who descended with a chain
…Obìnrin lèké
Women are treacherous
Obìnrin lọ̀dàlẹ̀
Women are betrayals
Kéèyàn mọ́ finú hànfóbìnrin
One should not distrust a woman with secrets
*A dIfá fún Olójòngbòdú*Ifa divination was consulted for Olojongbodu
Obìnrin Ikú…
The wife of death…

or as deceitful and crafty as Abẹ́ṣújiyan's wife in *Odù Ọ̀wọ́nrín Ìrẹ̀tẹ̀* **(Salami, 2002, 324)**[8] where *Ifá* declares;

Atọ́párá ní fikú ṣeré
Atọ́párá ní fikú ṣeré
A dIfá fúnAbẹ́ṣùjiyàn
A dIfá fúnAbẹ́ṣùjiyàn
Èyí tí ṣawoỌlọ́fin
Whose Olofin's initiate
Ó dá àṣò mẹ́ta sórí
Created three…
Àṣò mẹ́tẹ̀ẹ̀ta tí sì nbẹ lórí rẹ̀
These … were on his head
Mẹ́tẹ̀ẹ̀ta ló lórúkọ
The three … have names

[6] Wande Abimbola,1968, *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa Apa Keji,*U.K: Wm. Collins, Sons and Co. Ltd, 67
[7] Wande Abimbola, 1968, *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa Apa Keji,* 26
[8]Ayo Salami, 2002, *Ifa, a Complete Divination,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing and Printing Limited, 324

Àwọnènìyàn a pé ààṣò yí
People will ask that these…
Kí lo nfiwọ́n ṣe? What were they meant for?
Abẹ́ṣùjiyàn a túnyan sọ́tún, a túnyansósì
Abẹ́ṣùjiyàn will walk majestically
A pé ààṣò ìmọ̀nrànni… And say it is ..aduice
…Abẹ́ṣùjiyànsì ní ìyàwó kan,
…and Abe yiyan has a wife
Àwọnìlú bá lọ bá Obìnrin òhún The whole community went fo her
Wọ́n báa mulẹ̀
And had a vow/swore on oath with her
Ààṣò orí ọkọ rẹ yìí
We have tried to know the names
Àwọngbìyànjú àti mọ́ orúkọ wọn
Of the … on your husband's head
Àwọn ò sì mọ́
But we couldn't
Òunsì làwọnnsanwó lé lórí
he /it is the reason why they are praying
Kí làwọn ó ṣetáwọ́n ó fi mọ̀ ọ́? What shoul they do in order to know (the names)
Nígbà ó yá,
Later,
Obìnrin yí bá lọ bá ọkọ ọ rẹ̀ Abẹ́ṣùjiyàn this woman went to Abe yiyan, her husband
Ní bá nfiorí yi lára
And started caressing him
Látijọ́ yìí tóun ti dé ọ̀dọ̀ rẹ
Since you have married me
Òun ò mọrúkọ ààṣò orí rẹ̀ yí…. I never know the names of the … on your head

Some also see them as the most powerful of all creatures like Ọ̀ṣun the goddess of Ọ̀ṣun river in *OdùỌ̀ṣẹ́ Túrá***(Adeoye, 2023, 204)**[9] where *Ifá* speaks;
Konunkoro
Ko unkoro
Awo Ewi Adò
The initiate of Ewi Ado
Òọ̀rùn mu dèdẹ̀dẹ̀ se okun
Oorun mu dedede se okun
Awo Ode Ijesa
The initiate of Ode Ijesa,
Akan nbelodo
The crab resides at the river
Won o ma la k'aye
They will prosper in all facets of life
Pee peepee
Peepeepee
Awo oju Omi
Theinitiare of water
Awon ni won difa fun
They made divination for
EjerindinlogunOrodu,
EjerindinlogunOrodu
Won ntikoleorunbo,
When they are coming from the heavenly realm
Wasikole aye
To earth realm
Won la igbodu sile
They gone past the initiate's forest
Won tun la igboopa
And also go beyond opa's forest
Won ko fi ibajo ti Ọ̀ṣun They never pay homage to Ọ̀ṣun
Won si se ile aye tititi
They lived long on earth
Ile aye ko gun rara…
The world never knows peace
A dífá fúnàgbàágbà mẹ́rìndínlógún
Ifa divination was consulted for the sixteen elders

While some people believed that women are known for good like Mọ́rèmí who liberated Ile-Ife people from Ugbó, their adversary that tried to exterminate them through slavery, others see

[9] Adeoye C.L., 1985, *Igbagbo ati Esin Yoruba,* Nigeria: Evans Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Limited, 204

them as evil **(Adegbola, 2009, 112)**[10]. They are also seen as gossipers, ingrates like Elekodere**(Abimbola, 1968, 63)**[11], tempters, murderers, heartless, witches, jealous-co-wives and full of shameless characters. Thus, according to **(Ilesanmi, 2013, 7)** [12], the enormous of woes attributed to women are so much that one may not see anything good in them except evil.

Through women, reproduction takes place. They turned their off springs to adulthood. They educate and train their children physically and spiritually. To a large extent, the success of Young ones in the society depends on women because they are always together most of the time. (Therefore, they(women) are the first educators. In fact, the roles of Yorùbá women can be felt in virtually all aspects of the cultural life).

According to (Ilesanmi, 2013, 5)[13], Yorùbá women, past and present, old and young believe it is a honourable thing to be a mother and miserable, wretched and sorrowful to be barren. This is the reason a Yorùbá woman will do everything possible to make sure she has a child. Sometimes, they will even prefer to have a still birth to remove the shame of bareness. Thus, the saying *ojú ló npọ́n àgàn tó ndábá àbíkú, kíl'ọmọ bíbíká nṣe fúnmi*- It is adversity that makes a barren woman contemplate a stillborn, what benefits can stillborn do for one*?* best describe the situation.

As earlier said above, giving birth to children is just the beginning of motherhood, other duties like feeding carrying and educating the child are the primary responsibility of the parents particularly the mother. A Yorùbá woman will prefer to have only one cloth on them than to see her child so hungry or unsuccessful in life. This is one of the values a Yorùbá woman places on child birth that gives rise to cherishing the child and care for the child till maturity. Even at maturity, they still continue with their duty of caring for their children and later extend the caring to their grandchildren that gave rise to the expression *ọmọ kìí dàgbà lójú òbí ẹ*- a child never grows old in the presence of his/her parents.

It is unfortunate that this culture of caring and cherishing is gradually eroding in this modern age. Today, we often seen unwanted babies inside a gutter, toilet, near gates (particularly of rich people), refuse dump and near hospitals. But a close and deep thinking about this kind of an act reveals at the action is still tinted with value placed on child birth. Though they care and have concern for the child, but possibilitythat others who needed them and can take care of them with a better means made them dump the children where they can easily be accessible to those who can care for them. Though this is not the bestor good idea anyway.

Again, we see in our society today that many Yorùbá women are not interested in marriage or giving birth to children. Rather, they will prefer to adopt whichever numbers of children all in the name of modernity and emulation of another people's culture without remembering the saying of the Yorùbá that *Àgbàbọ́ òjọ ọmọ ẹni*. This assertion is supported in the*Ifá* verse sited on page three in *Odù Ọ̀wọ́nrín Ìrẹtẹ̀*. In the *Odù,* when Abesujiyan was to be executed, his adopted child ran to the king shouting and wailing that they should help him remove his cloth he was wearing so that blood will not spill on it. The thought of every one present is, if he were his own child, he would not be concern about the cloth. Rather, about losing his father in the hands of executional.

General Overview of Women Empowerment

The word empowerment is defined or interpreted in many ways. To some, empowerment is an authority, power or order given to someone to do something on one's behalf. In this manner, the person given

[10] Adelegan Adegbola, 2009, *Ile-Ife: The Source of Yoruba Civilisation,* Nigeria: Oduduwa International Communications, 112

[11] Wande Abimbola, 1968*, Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa Apa Kinni*, U.K: Wm. Collins, Sons and Co. Ltd, 63

[12] Ilesanmi Thomas Makanjuola, 2013, *Obinrin: A Cultural Assessment of Yoruba Women,* Nigeria: astra-J Multimedia Nig. Ltd, 7

[13] Ilesanmi Thomas Makanjuola, 2013, Obinrin: A Cultural Assessment of Yoruba Women,5

authority is still the one acting indirectly because without giving the order for the person to act on his behalf, nothing can be done. This is the kind of authority given to the political office holders to make laws on behalf of the general masses, the king, bishops, governors, president etc. It is also the process of assisting other persons to discover and claim personal power. This often happened during chieftaincy title or kingship in Africa or during election.

Women empowerment therefore, is related to the above but with a special focus on women alone. However, based on the types of empowerment of women, which is social, educational, economics, political and psychological, one may then say women empowerment is the granting of political social, economic, political and psychological power to women collectively or individually to make them strong and make them have confidence in controlling their lives and makes them demand for their right. This is an indication that they don't have these rights initially and now agitating and fighting to get it. According to the bureau for employers' activities**(**https://www.uo.org**,)**[14], they believed that globally, women are under-represented in business and management activities. They observed that only very few women attain top management positions, chairpersons and members of company boards. Therefore, there is a need for gender diversity for economic growth and competitive business performance. If this assertion is right, then women empowerment is nothing more than gender relations in the world at large. According to (Anna-Yao, 2004,https://www.codestria.org)[15], gender is a socially constructed term depicting the system of relations between women and men that has to do with behaviour, attitudes, roles, status and other processes that govern, relationships among sexes in a given socio-cultural socio-economic and socio-political context that vary from social classes and from one unity to another.

Therefore, women empowerment wherever its being advocated for all over this would stem from gender equality, inequality, imbalance in the areas of education, social, religious and politics that the advocates believe is the only effective way to combat poverty, hunger, disease and promote development that is truly sustainable**(**Geo-Jaja, Hallain and Baum, 2009,https://www.researchgate.net)[16]. As a result, real development lies in the empowerment of women and to really empower woman according to (Ravinder and Narayana, 2006,https://www.researchgate.net)[17] is to give women employment that will not only increase their standard of living but will also make them independence on men by giving them independence on men by giving them autonomy and security so that they will be able to take good care of their family, particularly their children. This, today women are found in almost all the professions on earth. In politics, they are playing key roles as ministers, governors, president and even prime ministers. Today, there are successful business women all over the world contributing their quota to the economy of the global world. In religious circle, women are not found wanting and they are adequately playing their roles.

One may then ask at what point does the issue of women empowerment or equality becomes global issue? Was there any part in time that women were not empowered or discriminated against?

Women empowerment in Africa/Yorùbá Society

[14]*Improving the bottom line. Women in Business and Management*, https://www.uo.org, retrieved 10/4/2020

[15]Elizabeth Annan-Yao, 2004, *Analysis of Gender Relations in Family, Formal Education and Health*, https://www.codestria.org retrieved 10/04/2020.

[16]Macleans A. Geo-Jaja, Sara J. Rayne, Pamela R.. Hallain and Donald R. Baum, 2009, *Gender Equality and women empowerment in Africa: The Education and Economic Globalisation Nexus*, https://www.researchgate.net.,

[17]Ravinder Rena and N. Nare Yana, 2006, *Gender Empowerment in Africa: An analysis of women participation in Eritrean Economy*, https://www.researchgate.net, retrieved …

Women in Africa particularly in Yorùbá society are extremely active as economists, educator, political, religious and social influencers from time immemorial till present time. Marcus Cox systems this in part that "women are more active as economic agents in Africa than anywhere in the world. According to him, women in Africa perform the majority of Agricultural activities, own a third of all forms and in some countries, make up some 70% of employees.(Marcus, 2015,)[18] This is a perfect description of African women particularly the Yorùbá women have been empowered are way or the other. Spiritually, they are endowed with power of reproduction by the creator. Olódùmarè God in Yorùbá belief. They give birth and nurtured the child to maturity. Education of the children invested on their shoulder. If from a royal home, the training and education of such children is carried out by the mothers in the palace to take up the mantle of political leadership in the near future. Economically, every Yorùbáwoman engaged in one profession/business or the other. Among the professions that the Yorùbá women engaged in are weaving of traditional clothes, tie and dye of clothes, palm oil production, buying and specialising in the selling of farm produce weave clothes, make local dye,*àdín*- palm kernel oil, coco nut oil for local pomade or cream, kolanut, bitter kola, food stuff of all kinds, production of locust beans in large quantity for those who will retail and sell it etc. they engage in all these to enhance their lives at the same time support their families.. as a result of this, there was never a time a Yorùbá woman was never engaged and empowered. Till today, every Ìjèbú woman is always engaged with one or two professions no matter how educated. Socially, the Yorùbá women belong to one group or the other. They are therefore not found wanting in socializing. On the religions sphere, the Yorùbá woman control almost every religions cult. May it be *Orò, Egúngún*, and some other cults even with those ones that women are forbidden, research show that they women are behind these forbidden laws. Due to certain reasons. In Ifá divination which some priests believed women should not belong, we discovered that before a man can become an *Ifá*priest, there is a role a woman will play without which such a person will not be ordained. Again, *Olókun* and *Ẹ́ẹ́rìnínlógún* which are forms of divination inYorùbáland are dominated by women diviners as and as far as traditional religion in concern there are no cases of inequality. At this junction, one may then ask, what is the view of *Ifá*divination on women empowerment particularly with reference to *Ìwòrì Túrùpọ̀n*?

Women Empowerment in the Context of *Ìwòrìtúrúpọ̀n*in *Ifá* Divination

Before the advent of foreign religions in Yorùbá land, *Ifá*is the path finder of everyone. Whatever we do, *Ifá*dictates the directive. Therefore, whatever *Ifá*says is the final and since *Ifá*had already told us in *Ìrósùn Ẹ̀gà*(Bogunmbe, 2013,69)[19] that;

Iṣẹ́ lódùnúnṣe
To work is profitable

Olèjíjà kò sun àn
Stealing is never an option

Ifání a kìíf'ojoyúmọ́r'ólèjà
Ifa said, we do not see things to steal everyday

Oun tódára ni kájíkáṣiṣẹ́
What si profitable is to work

LódIfáfúnAkápò
Ifa divination was consulted for Akapo

Tíí ṣ'ọmọỌ̀rúnmìlà
The offspring of Ọ̀rúnmìlà

Lọ́jọ́ tíyóódákodíèlágbàlá.
On the day he will cultivate in the palace garden.

[18]Marcus Cox, 2015, *Empowering African Women an Agenda for Action, African Gender Equality,*

[19]Awogbemiga Fasina Bogunmbe, 2013, *Awon Idi abejo inu odu Ifa (The reason why, from ifoduoduifa*, ibadan, Oyeku olododo Traditional publishing Ent., 69.

Since this is and instruction for everyone, it is mandatory therefore, for all to be up and doing regardless of sex. That is the reason why everyone is engaged in one profession or the other in Yorùbá society without any discrimination. As earlier said, there were and there are no cases of inequality in traditional African religion most especially among the Yorùbá. Religious practices and in the socio-economic and political system. In the time of the gods, *Ifá*explained in *Ìwòrì Túrùpọ̀n*(Lijadu, 1998, 122)[20]

Èkìtìbàbààbà
Ekiti babaaba

A dIfáf'Ọ̀rúnmìlà
Ifa divination was consulted for Ọ̀rúnmìlà

Ntuowóẹ́rújọ́láì wífún Èṣù Was saving money to purchase a slave without informing Esu

Níọjọ́kẹ́ta tíỌ̀rúnmìlàraẹ́rú yí The slave died untimely

Ni ófòṣanlẹ́ tó kú
On the third day Ọ̀rúnmìlà bought him

Ọ̀rúnmìlààti gbogbo ilé rẹ̀sìnsọ́kún
Ọ̀rúnmìlà and his household were crying

Èṣùwọlé wábèrè péèéṣe
Esu entered and asked why

Ti Ọ̀rúnmìlà fi nsokun?
Ọ̀rúnmìlà was crying?

Ọ̀rúnmìlàdáhùn,
Ọ̀rúnmìlà answered that

Ó níẹ́rú tí mo rà nîìjẹ́ta
The slave I bought three days ago

Ni ófòṣánlẹ́ tí ó kú…
Died…

Esu asked him, whom did you tell before Ọ̀rúnmìlà went to purchase the slave? He told Ọ̀rúnmìlà to quickly bring a goat for him. Ọ̀rúnmìlà gave Esu the goat. Esu took away the dead of the slave. He dressed her up very beautifully and sat her down at *Oríta* (a place where three-foot paths meet) and placed a chewingstick in her mouth. He placed before her a tray of tobacco and the day happened to be on market day that people were moving to and fro. As people were moving to and fro, they desired to buy tobacco from her but she didn't answer anyone until Aje with her 20 slaves that were assisting her to carry her wears to the market got there. She wanted to buy tobacco from her but did not answer her until she touches her with a stick and the dead body fell down. The point we are trying to make here is, Ajé was so rich that she had well over 200 slaves that were carrying her goods to the market.

Likewise,*Odu OseMéjì* (Agboola, 1989, 236)[21] in *Ifá* Divination spoke about a particular woman called Wáléolú who was very rich with many servantsand other chain of businesses ranging from fabrics, food stuff production and selling, cooked food like *àkàrà*– bean cake and so on. *Ifá* also talked about Elekodere in *Odu Ìrósùn Méjì*where *Ifá*says:

Olowo o wa
The rich came

Aladin o wa
*Aladin*came

Asiereeeyan
The lunatic

Ni mbenidieko
Are in Lagos

Eeyann to o lowo
The person who is rich

O maagbooruulekule
Percieved aroma

[20]Lijadu E.A., 1998, *Ifa Mimo Alabalase, palerokinni, ondo*; J.A. Ife Oluwa Printing Press, 122.

[21]Fasina Agboola, 1989, *Ojulowo Oriki Ifa Apa Kinni*, Lagos: Project Publication Limited, 236.

A dIfáfúnelekoidere
Ifa divination was consulted for elekoIdare

Eyitioloro
Who would be rich

Kalele o toole
Before he/she becomes old

Oju mi n[poelekoidere
ElekoIdere is impoverished and suffering

Oun le lowolowobayi Can he/she be rich

Ni elekoideredIfási
That is the reason why he/she consulted Ifa

Won ni puponireolafún
He/she was told that he/she will be rich

Sugbonebo ni ko wa ru
But he/she should make sacrifice

O rubo, won sefafún un He/she made sacrifice, and the consultation was made.

Ko rowoIfánaa san
He/she was unable to pay

Ti awonawooree
Till the initiates

Fi sawo lo si
Went on Ifa sajourn

Apa OkunIlajiOsa
To the farthest place

Igba ti won o fi de lodunketa
By the time they will return after three years

Elekoidere ti dolowo…
ElekoIdere has become rich

*Ifá*in *Òwọ́nrín Bẹ̀túlà* (Yemitan ati Ogundele, 1970, 77)[22] also mentioned something about empowerment of Atamajubara aya Alágbẹ̀dẹ-Atamajubara the wife of a blacksmith. Here *Ifá* says:

Ọ̀wọ́nrín Bẹ̀túlà
OwonrinBetula

LódÍfáfúnAtamájúbàrà aya alágbẹ̀dẹ Made Ifa divination for Atamajubara alagbede's wife

Tíngbéọ́kọ́ lọ́rèétà
That is going to sell hoe

LọjàÈjìgbòmẹ́kùn
At Ejigbomekun's market

Níbi tí à áná
Where it can be priced

Tí a kìí ófèrè.
That we don't come back on time.

*Ifá*says, the husband a blacksmith will make hoes and his woman will carry them to the market for sale which we can call a division of labour or speciality where women are fully engaged. In fact, there are countless places in *Ifá* that relates with woman empowerment.

Coming to the secular, Aye (Oguntuyi, 1978, 23)[23] was one of the richest women in Ado Ekiti in her time to the extent that she was deified. According to the report gathered, her power as a rich lady was great and her fame as a warrior was also high. During her life, she was engaged in many businesses that was common in her days which included weaving of clothes, making and selling of dye materials, selling of kolanuts and many other minor works. She was a queen of her own quarter just as the king then (Yeyenirewu) was in her palace.Efunsetan Aniwura, the

[22]Oladipo Yemitan ati Olajide Ogundele, 1970, *Oju Osupa, Apa Keji*, Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 77.

[23]Oguntuyi A., 1978, *A Short History of Ado-Ekiti,* Nigeria: Bamgboye & Company Press Limited, 23.

Ìyálóde of Ibadan land (Akinwumi, 2010, 76-77)[24] was another powerful business magnate woman of her time. She had harem of slaves that worked for her and she also engaged in different kinds of businesses. As a result of her wealth, she was made the Ìyálóde of Ibadan land and a patron of the Anglican Church in Ibadan for her involvement in the expansion of Christianity in Ibadan. She wielded both political and economic power in Ibadan during her time. Report had it that her authority within Ibadan and her opposition to the then constituted authority of Aare Latoosa led him to plot her execution. This was revealed in the Yorùbá historical drama of Akinwunmi Isola (Olawale and Ogundipe, 2016,) [25]. Among other successful women that occupied that same post in Ibadan were Ìyálóde Iyaola, (18 74-1893) who occupied the position after Ìyálóde Efunsetan Aniwura. Directly at her back wereÌyálóde Lanlatu Asabi Giwa, 1894-1913, Ìyálóde Isale Òṣun,1914-1917, Ìyálóde Ronilatu Ajisomo,1917-1934, ÌyálódeRukayat Awosola Akande,1935-1948, Ìyálóde Abimbola,1948-1961,Iyalode Adebisi abeo,1961-1974,Ìyálóde WuraolaEsan,1975-1985,Ìyálóde HunmaniAlade,1985-1995,Ìyálóde AminatuAbiodun, 1995-2018 (Olubayo, 2013, https://m.facebook.com)[26] and currently, ÌyálódeTheresa Oyekanmi2018 to date (Akinwale, 2021,https://tribuneonline.com) [27]. Madam Efunroye Tinubu was a royal wife, political advisor, nationalist and economic powerhouse in her life time. She was an ambitious business tycoon not only in Nigeria but across West Africa and wielded economic and political power in Lagos and Abeokuta. She was a successful trader in salt, tobacco, palm oil, coconut oil and cotton (Foster, 2024,https://www.blackpast.org)[28].Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was a political and feminist advocate. One can say she was the first feminist advocate in Yorùbá land. However, she was only advocating for the illiterate women vendors in Abeokuta 's open-air markets that were exploited by the then colonial authorities (https://www.britanica.com,)[29].

Comparative Analysis of Women Empowerment in the Past and the 21st Century African/YorùbáSocietyand the Implication for Future Development

Women are essential commodity in every given society, most especially in the area of reproduction and procreation. Though not that the writeris underrating the importance of men in this regard. After all it is impossible for any woman to procreate without her man's effort. This was confirmed by *Ifá*in *Ogbèyẹ̀kú*(Lijadu, 1998, 79)[30] that:

Ọkọ́ ni awo ilẹ̀
Hoe supports the ground

Abẹ niíṣeawoìwaorí
The shaving blade reckons with head

Àfi èyin àìmọ̀
Except you the unknown

Àfi èyin ahá tí abẹ́ rẹ̀ kò gba ìka
Except you the uncontrollable……

Ni íwípéakọ kọ́ niíṣeawoìwa abo
That says the male is not the female companion

[24]Akinwumi Isola,2010, *Efunsetan Aniwura, Iyalode Ibadan,* Ibadan: University Press Plc, 76-77

[25] Idowu F. Olawale and Sunday A. Ogunode, 2016, Gender and the Politics of Exclusion in Pre-Colonial Ibadan: The Case of Ìyálóde Efunsetan Aniwura, the Journal of Traditions and Beliefs, https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu, Retrieved on 28/04/2020

[26]Rotr Ajani Olubayo, 2013, the List of Recorded Iyalodes of Ibadan, https://m.facebook.com, Retrieved on 28/04/2020

[27] Akinwale Aboluwade, What I will tell Gov. Makinde when we Meet- New Ìyálóde of Ibadan, https://tribuneonline.com, Retrieved on 28/04/2020

[28] Hannah Foster, 2014, Madam Efunroye Tinubu (CA. 1805-1887), https://www.blackpast.org, Retrieved 12/04/2020

[29] Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Nigerian Feminist and Political Leader, https://www.britanica.com, Retrieved on 28/04/2020

[30] Lijadu E.A. 1998, *Ifa Mimo Alabalase, palerokinni, ondo*; J.A. Ife Oluwa Printing Press, 79

Àsì fi èyin èké
Except you treacherous

Àfi èyin ọ̀dàlẹ̀
Except you betrayals

Àfi èyin òkóbó
Except you impotent

Nií wípé,
That says

Abo kọ́ ní kóire bò wá báòun The female is never the one bringing good fortune to him

Njẹ́kíni ire tí abo ní ò?
What good fortune does a female has?

Akọ kìí dalẹ̀ abo
Male never betrays female

Àfiẹnu, àfiojú
Save the mouth, save the eyes

Abo kìí dalẹ̀akọ
Female never betrays male

Àfiẹnu.
Except mouth

An indication that both male and female have roles to play in this regard. As a result, every sex is indispensable to the formation of a family (Familusi&Oke,2019, https://www.researchgate.net)[31]. However, the power of procreation is vested in the hand of woman. She takes care of the baby from conception, birth to maturity. In the contemporary society where civilization and education have taken over so many things, a woman will give birth, take care of the kid for three months of her maternity leave and leaves the rest with her house help to take charge while she is away to the office. Whereas in the past, this is the duty of the eldest woman in the family (known as *Ìyá ní káà*) to do this. This is due to herenormous experience as a mother.

In the past, Yorùbá women were preoccupied majorly with housekeeping and other subordinate roles to those of men. There were no agitations for competition. As a result, they were able to train and monitor the behaviour of their children. They direct their paths to the right directions because they believe that these children were their tomorrow and the reason for marriage. In contrast, contemporary women do not see things this way again. Due to western education, civilization and competition with their male counterparts all in the name of empowerment and gender equality, it is now the headache of the house helps to do this. Some women that their jobs are with high demanding and living in cities like Lagos, Abuja and Kano where they would have to leave home very early and come back late may not be able to interact with their children until weekend when they would behome. As a result of this, early child education that such children supposed to have would be lacking.

In the past, it was exclusive duty of every woman to cook for her family. In the process of doing this, all the girls in the family will know how to cook and handle other housechores. However, contemporary women will leave the responsibility to the househelp where service is available, clean the house, the care of the kids and some other housechores if the husband shifted attention to such a house help, the madam in the house would be crying about that her house help has snatched her husband. Again, in a house where there is no house help, 21st century woman would expect her husband to share these responsibilities with her without considering other responsibilities that the man is shouldering in the family like paying the rent, utility bills, feeding allowance for the family members, school fees and so on. All these are believed by the contemporary women as the sole responsibility of man. The question then is, if it is the responsibility of man to take care of those aforementioned, what are the responsibility of women if they cannot cook, take

[31] Familusi O.O. & Oke O.P, 2019, Changing Roles of Yoruba women as an issue in National Development and Family Stability, https://www.researchgate.net retrieved 19/4/2020

care of their children and other household tasks in such a relationship particularly in Africa?

It is a common practice today as against the past for husband and wives to stay apart in other cities, states or even countries due to the nature of their works since women now involved themselves in the profession that were once controlled by men as a result of agitation for women empowerment and gender equality. They have moved away from traditional politics of the past to a full-blown prominence in modern day politics. As rightly observed by Familusi and Oke[32], all major political parties in Nigeria (not in Yorùbá land alone) recognise the role women can play in politics. As a result, there are women leaders at various levels to help mobilized.

This women empowerment is also noticeable in the religious circle too. Except in traditional religious sects where women still abide to play their roles underground where it is possible, in Christianity, women empowerment has created many positions such as office of the wife of the pastor, priest, general overseer. Therefore, we now have such tittles like Mummy G.O., Mother in IsraelMummy in the Lord, Mummy yard etc. even where are many churches today that women are the general overseers in Yorùbá Society (Bp-Relate, 2016,https://beliversportal.com)[33].

In Educational sector that one may say is the brain child behind this agitation for equality and women empowerment, Yorùbá women have achieved a lot. They have moved away from traditional method of education to a conventional one. Today, there are lots of women holders in all the fields of studies available in any diversity in the world. As a teacher in the university, I observed that the population of women in all my courses are far higher than men. This is applicable in nearly all the faculties and departments existing in the university. This is a clear departure from the past.

One may ask, what is the implication of this agitation on individual involved, the family and the community at large? There is no doubt that women have and are still contributing greatly to the wheel of progress of the family and the society economically, socially and religious wise, at large in every continent of the world. However, one may ask, of what benefit is the effect of this contributions to the family and the society at large? Economically, because of the economic down turn in the society today many women are the breadwinners of their family. Thereby taken over the role and duty of men in providing for the upkeep of the family. As a result of this economic power in their lords, many of them do not have regards for their spouse any longer. Many men who cannot bear the insult will quietly park their things out. Sometimes it is even the women that will bow out of the relationship since they know they can handle their lives without the influence of men. This is the reason why there are a lot of single parenting in this generation. The children of such broken relationship will surely bear the brunt of the breakage. Many of such children usually lack basic training they supposed to have particularly during their formative period. Even in some homes that the couple are still able to manage and tolerate one another, in a situation where both parents do not have time to stay with the children at this stage, some things will happen. At the end, the society will have to face the consequences of such children with national behaviours.

Today, there are high and low class economically empowered with good jobs, fine houses, good rides and fat bank accounts that are still single at 40 or 50 years of age. Some are not thinking of marriage while those who are interested could not get one due to the fact that no man in Africa particularly in Yorùbá and is willing to marry a woman that he won't be able to control as the head of the family.

Politically, though the kind of government we run in Nigeria today is not a new one. However, the way we run it is quite amazing. Nigeria today

[32] Familusi O.O. & Oke O.P, 2019, Changing Roles of Yoruba women as an issue in National Development and Family Stability, https://www.researchgate.net retrieved 19/4/2020

[33] Bp-Relate, 2016, Biography of Pastor Mrs. Foluke Adeboye (Mummy G.O.), https://beliversportal.com, retrieved on 27/04/2020

don't have settled home and the effects of their empowerment is not much felt. As earlier said, there is no contention between men and women as far as traditional Yorùbá religion is concerned. But in Christianity as an example, there is this struggle for equality the of which their children bear. They had no time to take care of home. What we should note is that Olódùmarè the Creator deliberately designed men to be the head for him to be responsible. Otherwise, man has nothing at stake in any relationship. It is the woman that will bear the testimony of the sex she had together with man when it results into pregnancy of which the man must have forgotten few minutes or days after the intercourse. It is the woman that will show the whole world the result in terms of baby bump. She goes through the labour pain and nurture the child. Of all these responsibilities, if women are still contending with men in regards to gender equality, then something is wrong somewhere. Besides, looking at the societies where women take priority in every home, the children in most of these societies are often rotten eggs. The children are the ones dictating to their parents with little or no experience. As a result of this freedom, they are often involved in criminal activities drug and other social vices. This is as a result of their compassion love and remembrance pains they went through to raise these children that may not allow them discipline them as required of them particularly at early stage of their character formation.

Conclusion

Whether by God or societal designs, God and the society have designed roles for each sex. What is left is for each sex to abide by the role assigned to him or her either by God or the society. Women empowerment is not an alien tradition to African/Yorùbá. Every Yorùbá woman is empowered in diverse ways that allows them take care of their homes which is the primary assignment as mothers to raise good children for the society. Therefore, agitation for empowerment by the 21st century woman is destroying families, the effect of which the society is contending with now. In traditional Yorùbá religion and society, there were no such agitation. Every woman has her role to play in the society, no mix up, which allows peace to reign in Yorùbá society.

The dimension at which humanity is agitating for women empowerment to attain gender equality suggests that something is wrong somewhere. In the past, there was nothing of that nature because the then women knew that the empowerment that 21st century women are looking for is with them physically and spiritually. What they cannot get physically, spiritually, they get it and that was the reason why there was no agitation then. Contemporary women have lost this power through their indolent. What they lost voluntarily is what they are fighting for today. Through spiritual awakening, they can still regain this status without much agitation if they can go back to their duty designed for them by the Creator and the society, they live in. men and women in the past in all the continent of Africa knew their duties and limits in all things they do.This can still be emulated for a general peace and harmony in each family in Yoruba society and in the entire African continent.Those, whose society can accommodate such agitation, let them continueprovided their countries can accommodate that. This is aptly captured in Yoruba adage says *àpọ́nlé òkú ni bó o dọ́run ko ṣòrun un re, tó bá wú kó dọ̀run kó bọ̀run jẹ́, b'árá ọ̀run bá ti gbà ni*-It is when the dead is honoured that he/she is advised to do or behave well in heaven, if he/she likes let him/her cause damage in heaven if those people he/she meets there allows it.

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