

Contextualizing the Lucan Gospel: An Examination of the Role of Women in Jewish Culture in the Context of Yoruba Cultural Setting

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Abstract

Gender as a concept has often been misunderstood. It is not just a terminology describing the sexes – male or female but it also connotes a social structure which is dynamic. The status of women in traditional Africa has been a major discourse for scholars. This research x-rays the life of women in the biblical era with a view to comparing how Yoruba cultural practices may have also relegated women to the background. Employing aspects of Socio-cultural and Critical hermeneutics such as Liberation and Feminist theologies in contextualizing the Lucan Gospel, the research argues for a change in aspects where it negatively impacts the female folks as well as cautions against a total overhaul of Yoruba cultural practices.

Keywords: Patriarchal discrimination, subjugation, Yoruba culture, Gender, Lucan Gospel

Introduction

Patriarchal domination of women in many African societies is a phenomenon being challenged in modern times. Disadvantaged from the announcement of their arrival at birth, to being perceived as the property of her future husband and being cut off from inheritance of parental property are a few examples of gender discrimination in many African climes. This research engages the Socio-cultural and Critical hermeneutical approaches in contextualizing the Gospel of Luke to the Nigerian setting with special focus on the Yoruba people and their cultural practices. The researcher argues for a change in aspects of Yoruba culture that restrict the freedom of women and a continuation of those ones that enhance the general societal development.

Gender and Culture as Concepts

According to the World Health Organization, Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are *socially constructed* (italics mine). This includes norms, behaviors and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy as well as relationships



with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.¹

Culture on the other hand, is the customary beliefs, social forms, characteristic features of every day existence or way of life shared by people in a place or time.² Gender as a concept has been misunderstood to only describe the sexes – male or female but it also connotes a social structure which is dynamic. It functions as an organizing principle for society because of the cultural definitions given to being male or female. Culture in many societies plays a dictatorial role in apportioning roles to both male and female either in the home front or work place.³ Culture has often been used as an excuse for gender inequalities especially as seen in violence against women.

Jewish Society

The Jewish people are members of an ethno-religious group⁴ originating from the historical Israel and Judah. Judaism is the ethnic religion of the Jewish people. Though it may be strictly observed by some and not observed at all by others,⁵ it is observed that Jewish ethnicity and religion are strongly interrelated.⁶ Among the Jewish people, the role of women is determined by the Hebrew Bible, the Oral law also known as the rabbinical law (which represents the laws, the statutes and legal interpretations that were not recorded in the Five Books of Moses but are accepted by orthodox Jews as being prescriptive) and cultural factors. In Jewish society, though the children are described through their father's name, it is generally known that their Jewishness is passed down through the mother.⁷

In terms of religion in the Jewish tradition, the covenant made between the Israelites and the God of Abraham at Mount Sinai was worded in

¹World Health Organization, "Gender and Health" https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender#tab=tab_1 Accessed May 24, 2021

²Merriam-Webster Dictionary| Culture <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture> Accessed May 24, 2021

³ Johanna Schalkwyk, *CIDA: Questions about culture, gender equality and development cooperation* (June 2000) <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender/development/1850708.pdf> Accessed May 24, 2021

⁴ Craig R. Prentiss, *Religion and the Creation of Race and Ethnicity: An Introduction*. 2003. NYU Press, 85. ISBN 978-0-8147-6700-9

⁵Pew Research Center, "A Portrait of Jewish Americans." October 1, 2013. <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/> Accessed June 29, 2021

⁶Tet-Lim N. Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul's Jewish Identity and Ephesians*. 2005. Cambridge University Press.102 ISBN 978-1-139-44411-8

⁷ John Bowker, *World Religions: The Great Faiths Explored and Explained*. 1997. London: Dorling Kindersley Limited, 121, 131. ISBN 0-7894-1439-2

such a way as to bind the men directly and the women indirectly.⁸ According to rabbinic laws, as far as religious activities were concerned, women were given fewer responsibilities than men. For example, they were exempted from fixed prayer at particular times of the day. This reflects female subordination as Scholar Judith Hauptman observes that if women were to observe religious requirements as the men it would "lessen her husband's dominance over her because she would have to cease temporarily from serving him and instead serve God."⁹

In marriage and family, Jewish culture in biblical times favored men over women. An example is that a man could divorce a wife if he so pleased but a wife could not divorce a husband without his consent. Again, the practice of Levirate marriage, a type of marriage where the brother of a deceased man is obligated to marry his sister-in-law was prevalent. Though levirate marriage applied to widows who were childless, it never applied to widowers of childless deceased wives. These actions suggested that women were subordinate to men in the Jewish society of biblical times.¹⁰ Feminists and Liberation theologians often cite instances in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) that support the ill treatment of women. Biblical scholar, Cheryl Exum¹¹ lists a number of ways in which women were treated in the Old Testament such as:

- a. Few female names mentioned and if at all the relationship is that of subjugation to men.
- b. Women described as victims
- c. Women do not tell their own stories
- d. Silent on woman's pain
- e. Women sexually described in terms of virgin, whore or mother while man's sexuality has no labels
- f. Women relegated to the background regardless of intellect or ability.

Furthermore, in the Jewish society of biblical times, education of female children was very minimal. The long-standing idea that women do not need to be educated that exists in many cultures has deep roots in Jewish history. Few women in Jewish culture who were educated were either women from learned families with no male children or women

⁸ Judith Hauptman, "Women," *EtzHayim: Torah and Commentary*. Ed. David L. Lieber, The Jewish Publication Society, 2001. 1356-1359.

⁹ Judith Hauptman

¹⁰ Judith Hauptman, 2001.

¹¹ Cheryl Exum, "Plotted, Shot and Painted: Cultural Representation of Biblical Women" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Series*, 215; Gender, Culture, Theory, 3. (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1996)

from learned families who benefited from the education of their brothers.¹² However, the Bible also depicts some strong female characters like Deborah a religious leader and others like Hannah, Ruth and Esther who play very important roles in the biblical narrative.

It should be noted however that patriarchal discrimination against women was never the intention of God from the beginning. It is simply a result of the departure from the will of God. The text in Genesis 3:16b which says "...and he shall rule over thee" has often been misinterpreted to mean that it was God who commanded it so. The Greek rendition of the text "and he shall rule over thee" in the LXX (that is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) is "καὶ αὐτός σου κυριεύσει (Gen 3:16 LXX). Our interest is in the word "κυριεύσει" – this means "to be lord over, rule or control" and the verb is in the indicative, active, future third person singular¹³. This implies that the action of 'ruling over' the woman is an action the man takes by choice, it is in the future tense meaning it was not so originally and most importantly, it is a statement of God foretelling what the man would do in the future as a result of his personal choice and the prevalence of sin. It is therefore, not God's express command but a revelation of what the man would do in future being that God is Omniscient. To further buttress this point, we observe that the Mosaic Laws given to the children of Israel protected both men and women. A few examples are given below:

1. Case of Inheritance for Female children – The case of the five daughters of Zelophehad of the tribe of Manasseh (Numbers 27:1-11). Their father had died and had no male children. God instructed Moses to ensure they were not left out in the sharing of land. Both male and female inherited their father's properties according to the command of God.
2. Laws Governing Marital Relations and Sexual Misconducts
 - a. Men were punished for sexual misconducts (Deuteronomy 22:13-19)
 - b. Women were punished for sexual promiscuity (Deuteronomy 22:20-21)
 - c. Extra-marital affairs were also punishable offenses for both men and women (Deuteronomy 22:22-24)
 - d. Rape was also a punishable offense (Deuteronomy 22:25-29)

¹²Tallan, Cheryl and Emil Taitz. "Learned Women in Traditional Jewish Society." *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. December 31, 1999. Jewish Women's Archive. <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/learned-women-in-traditional-jewish-society> Accessed June 29, 2021

¹³ Joseph Henry Thayer *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti*. (1889)

Thus, we can conclude that discrimination against women was never the will of God but the outcome of patriarchal display of power over the weaker vessels (1 Peter 3:7) and ultimately sin.

The Lucan Gospel

The Gospel of Luke is part of the three books which make up the Synoptic Gospels. Taken from the Greek word 'synoptikos' meaning 'seeing all together,' the three Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) give account of events concerning the life, ministry, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ with strong parallels existing among them.¹⁴ Majority of scholars ascribe the third Gospel to Apostle Paul's companion Luke.¹⁵ The Gospel of Luke though directed to Theophilus supposedly Luke's patron and publisher¹⁶, was principally written to strengthen the faith of believers and provide answers to attacks from unbelievers about the authenticity of Christianity. Thus, Luke's gospel helped in providing a strong footing for Gentile Christians who believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

In Luke's Gospel, women are mentioned more than in any of the other Gospels and given important roles to play in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.¹⁷ This trend as chronicled by Luke ran counter-cultural to the patriarchal domination of women in Jesus' day. The Lucan Gospel begins and ends with a focus on women and the role they played in the ministry of Jesus Christ. He mentions thirteen (13) women not mentioned elsewhere in the Gospels. Perhaps with Luke's firsthand knowledge of patriarchal discrimination against women, he intentionally emphasizes the teachings and attitude of Jesus toward women.¹⁸

The Role of Women in the Lucan Gospel

Beginning with the courage and bravery of Mary the mother of Jesus Christ, in accepting the word of God concerning the birth of the Messiah (Luke 1:36-38), the author portrays her as having uncommon courage knowing the apparent consequences of carrying the child of another

¹⁴ Mark Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way through the Maze*.16. ISBN 0567080560

¹⁵ Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: an investigation of the collection and origin of the Canonical Gospels* (2000) 34-115. ISBN 1563383004

¹⁶ BIBLICA – THE INTERNATIONAL BIBLE SOCIETY: Intro to Luke
<https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-luke/>
Accessed May 27, 2021

¹⁷ Eugene H. Maly, "Women and the Gospel of Luke," August 1, 1980. *Mt.St. Mary's Seminary* (Cincinnati, Ohio 45212) <https://doi.org/19.1177/014610798001000302>
Accessed May 27, 2021

¹⁸ D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* 4th ed. (Downers Grove: Inter-varsity Press, 1996) 103-104

man while being betrothed to Joseph her fiancé. It was shame and dishonor for her and her family and could lead to death by stoning (Deuteronomy 22:23-24)

Besides Mary the mother of Jesus, Luke records the story of Elizabeth a woman who exercised great patience like Hannah in 1st Samuel chapter one. They both received the brunt of societal abuse and rejection due to childlessness. Elizabeth's patience and faith in God paid off (Luke 1:39-45, 57-60). Against tradition, she stood her ground in naming her child. Another woman recorded by Luke was the prophetess Anna who was reported as having a good report. She had been married for seven years and in widowhood she was respected as one who was faithful in serving God. She played a part in announcing the arrival of the Messiah to all who were present and were in expectation of the redemption the Messiah would bring. (Luke 2:36-38)

The encounter of Jesus with the widow at Nain (Luke 7:11-15) and the resurrection of her son back to life shows his care for women and their emotional wellbeing.

The Lucan Gospel also records that there were women who assisted Jesus Christ from their resources (Luke 8:2-3) and Jesus' acceptance of their care shows that women are resourceful and should be appreciated and encouraged in ministry. These women were also recorded as being present at his crucifixion when all the disciples of Jesus except John had abandoned him for fear (Luke 23:49).

There are other accounts involving women in relation to the ministry of Jesus, however, we will focus on his teaching with regards to women. The examples of the importunate widow and the ill treatment of widows by religious leaders will suffice to buttress the point.

Parable of the Importunate Widow (Luke 18:1-5)

In the account of the importunate widow, Jesus gives a parable to illustrate his teaching on persistence in prayer and showing kindness to women. The judge had refused seeing her, he had refused giving her the justice she required against her adversary. The noun 'adversary' in the Greek 'antidikos' meaning 'an opponent in a lawsuit'¹⁹ could be one proposing to dispense with her late husband's properties and the judge was delaying giving her justice! Joel Green²⁰ sees the parable as an injunction for Christians not to lose heart nor be discouraged but to

¹⁹ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti*. (1889)

²⁰ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Eerdmans, 1997) 636-643 ISBN 0-8028-2315-7

persist in prayer. William Barclay²¹ on the other hand sees the parable as talking less about persistence in prayer and focusing more on 'how much more' God is able and willing to give justice to His children in contrast with the attitude of the judge.

It should be noted that the Lucan Gospel presents the widow as a symbol of persistence and resilience. Women are goal getters and achievers. Once they set their hearts to anything, they do not rest until they achieve it. Eve has overtime been accused of luring Adam into disregarding the express command of God and thus she should forever afterwards occupy a subordinate position. However, it can be said that she simply exercised her natural power of persuasion to achieve her aim. As Oguntoyinbo-Atere observes, she should be praised as a strong woman who exercised her power of persuasion on her husband, who perhaps had eaten the fruit not so much out of love for the wife but to achieve his own ambition.²² The widow in the parable also exercised her power of persuasion on the judge and she finally had her way.

Treatment of Widows by the Scribes (Luke 20:45-47)

In the Lucan account, Jesus publicly reproves the scribes, the religious leaders of His day. They were known to 'devour widow's' houses and for appearance's sake offer long prayers.' Biblical injunction is clear on the treatment of widows in the society. Care and provision for widows was promoted in Mosaic Laws (Deuteronomy 14:29; 24:19-20), laws safeguarding against neglect and abuse were also put in place and curse placed by God on any who denies justice to the widow (Deuteronomy 27:19)

Jesus Christ shows us the tender care to be shown to widows by His own example at the crucifixion just before His death (John 19:26-27) and God the Father declares Himself as the father and defender of widows (Psalm 68:5) In the Lucan narrative, the religious leaders were singled out by Jesus for their pride, arrogance, selfishness and greed.

In New Testament times, women owned substantial amount of property. Under Roman law, freedom to own property handed down by parents to both male and female was not unusual.²³ Women were

²¹ William Barclay, *The Parables of Jesus* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1999) ISBN 9780664258283

²² M.I. Oguntoyinbo-Atere. The Dynamics of Power and Violence in the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15: Case Studies of some Nigerian Married Christian Women. *Legon Theological Studies Series*, Legon, Ghana. (14)316

²³ Susan E.Hylen, "Widows in the New Testament Period" *Candler School of Theology, Emory University* (Georgia, February 2019) <https://bibleinterp.arizona.edu/articles/widows-new-testament-period> Accessed May 27, 2021

legally independent and exercised control over their property during marriage. Generally, women with such good fortunes were wealthy. This however pertained to Roman citizens. According to Hylen, the lives of Jewish women was also similar to those of non-Jewish women²⁴. In New Testament times, women were generally presented as being poor but this was not always the case. The passage in Luke 20:45-47 lends credence to it:

Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples, Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

The passage conveys the message that widows were also vulnerable. Their finances were preyed on by the scribes, who posing to assist them, made long and pretentious prayers. This is also prevalent among Christian ministers in our day and age. However, this abuse by religious leaders has been highly debated by some scholars. Bock opines

Was the widow's property now dedicated to the temple handled in a way that defrauded them? Did the leaders take undue advantage of their hospitality? Did they accept debt pledges that they knew could not be repaid? Did they charge for legal advice against the dictates of the Law? Scholars are not sure, but abuse occurred.²⁵

Jesus showed His displeasure for any form of injustice meted out to widows by singling out religious leaders. Religious leaders were supposed to defend the rights and safety of widows in the society but this was not the case. For those who still mete out unjust acts to women and widows, great condemnation awaits them as it did the scribes in Jesus' day. The only way to escape divine retribution is by repentance.²⁶ The Lukan Gospel portrays women in society in positive light as being brave and courageous like Mary, patient and faithful like Elizabeth, dedicated and loyal to the service of God like Anna and resourceful and dependable like the companions of Jesus in His ministry. The examples of Jesus in His healings, teachings and personal care for women he came across is a call to treat women in our modern day society as He did.

²⁴ Susan E. Hylen, "Widows in the New Testament Period"

²⁵ Darrel L. Bock, *The New Testament Commentary on Luke* (England: Inter Varsity Press, 1994)330

²⁶ Samuel O. Abogunrin, "Luke" in Farmer (ed)1421

The Yoruba Society

According to oral tradition, the origin of the Yoruba people began in Ile-Ife with the descent of two deities – Oduduwa and Obatala to the earth. Obatala having formed the first human beings from clay, Ile-Ife became the cradle of civilization with Oduduwa as the first divine king of the Yorubas²⁷. The Yorubas are one of the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria constituting about 35% of Nigeria's total population. While the majority of the Yoruba people live in Western Nigeria such as Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo States including parts of Kwara State, there are other communities in other parts of the West African region like Ghana, Togo and Republic of Benin²⁸. The Yoruba people are very religious and today are pluralistic in their religious convictions.²⁹ Some practice Islam, others Christianity while a great deal of other Yoruba people are adherents of the traditional religion. The cultural and gender disparity is much evidenced in the Yoruba tradition which espouses patriarchal domination. Women in Yoruba land are to a large extent disadvantaged politically, economically and religiously. According to Akintunde³⁰, African culture has a long tale of discrimination and injustice to women. She is of the opinion that African culture restricts women from attaining their full potentials and Yoruba women are not left out.

Women in Yoruba Cultural Practices

Gender and cultural discrimination in Yoruba land do manifest in some of the following ways:

Religious Restrictions

In Yoruba culture, restrictions enforcing patriarchal dominance are placed that limit the freedom of women in religious activities. An example is the restriction of menstruating women from participating in sacrifice to Obatala or from participating in Oro festivals. Thus, they are made to feel inferior psychologically.

²⁷ Ile-Ife, Nigeria (ca. 500 B.C.E. -) | The Black Past: Remembered and Reclaimed
<https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/ile-ife-ca-500-b-c-e/> Accessed May 24, 2021

²⁸ Yoruba People of Nigeria – Yoruba People History & Culture
<https://www.cometonigeria.com/about-nigeria/nigeria-people-culture/yoruba-people/>
 Accessed May 25, 2021

²⁹ John O. Honwick, "Religion and National Integration in Africa: Islam, Christianity and Politics in the Sudan and Nigeria." *Series in Islam and Society in Africa*. Northwestern University Press. 103. ISBN 978-0-8101-1037-3

³⁰ D.O. Akintunde, "The Christian Widow in African Culture" in Ife. E. (Ed) *Coping with Culture*, (Ibadan: Oputuru Books, 1999) 74

Marital and Sexual Fidelity

In Yoruba culture, much emphasis is placed on the chastity of women and hardly any on the men. Women who are promiscuous are disgraced publicly and their families put to shame and ridiculed in the community but not the men. Women folk are generally expected to remain faithful to their marital vows while promiscuity in men is seen as a cultural norm, an in-built natural instinct. As Familusi³¹ observes, that “man seems to be at liberty to engage in extra-marital affairs which the woman must not contemplate doing.”

Women are treated with suspicion, distrust and depicted as being deceitful and unreliable. It is a common saying that ‘emafinuhanobirin, ibitioju re otoenu re debe’ which being interpreted means ‘do not reveal your heart to a woman, where her eyes do not see her mouth will go there.’ Thus, women are untrustworthy, irresponsible and are reputable for having loose tongues³².

Proverbial Sayings

One of the common ways in Yoruba cultural practice by which women are depicted as being inferior and morally loose is through the usage of proverbs. An example is the saying ‘omo to daraniti baba eyitikodaranitiya’ meaning ‘a good child belongs to the father, the bad child belongs to the mother.’ There are cases where fathers disown their children for bad behaviors and accuse their wives of infidelity, claiming their children belong to other men. Again the saying ‘tiobanidiobirinkijekumolu’ meaning ‘there’s no reason for a woman to be called kumolu.’ Kumolu is a name which confers pride and dignity to a male potential leader in a family. This implies that women are not to be reckoned with.

Again women in Yoruba culture are seen as depopulating the family tree while men increase the family. This is evidenced by the proverbial joke which says ‘Adekunle ni oruko okurin, Adetule ni oruko obirin.’ Though often used as a joke, it is the reality dictated by gender and cultural social construct³³.

³¹ O.O. Familusi, “African Culture and the Status of Women: The Yoruba Example,” *Journal of Pan African Studies*, VOL.5, No.1, (March 2012) 299-310

³² LaleyeTihamiyu R.A. and G.A. Olaleye “Proverbs and Taboos as Limitations on the Rights and Privileges of Women in South-Western Nigeria” in Kehinde A. (ed) *Gender and Development: Essential Reading*, (Ibadan : Hope Publications Ltd, 2009)

³³ O.O. Familusi,

Inheritance

In many African cultural practices, women are seen as the property of their husbands and could also be inherited. After the demise of a husband, if he had female children as elderly ones and a young male child, the latter becomes the head of the home and the inheritor of his father's properties. Female children who are married have no claim to their father's properties due to the belief they belong to their husbands. In Igbo land, if a man dies without a male child, his properties go to his brother or uncle³⁴. Again if a man dies, the eldest son inherits his father's wife (that is, his step-mother). If she bears children for him without any payment of dowry to her people, her children traditionally belong to her late husband, not the eldest son who is their biological father. At his death the children coming from a marital relationship with his step-mother may be disinherited and may not be entitled to any of his properties if he has other children from a woman he married traditionally.

Treatment of Widows

A widow in Yoruba culture is expected to mourn for her husband for at least a year while abstaining from any form of sexual activity. Their attire for the period are usually dull colors. There is usually the possibility of her being inherited by her husband's family because she was deemed as being part of her husband's property. A widow stands the chance of losing all that her husband and herself worked for as she could be sent out of her matrimonial home on false charges or if she has been inherited, she becomes a target for other co-wives in her new husband's house. On the other hand, the widower is allowed to remarry as quickly as possible. He is immune to the challenges widows usually encounter.³⁵

Role of Women in Yoruba Culture

In the pre-colonial era, division of labor was usually along gender lines. Women were engaged in caring for the home, they controlled such duties as food processing, basket weaving and cooking. Yoruba women were also notably successful in trade and some were able to accumulate wealth and thus gain socio-economic stability and prestige. In the family, authority and privileges was based on age and gender. Thus, elderly women wielded great levels of authority even in a patriarchal

³⁴R.O.Oke, "Inheritance in Africa and the Rights of the Female child" in Akintunde D.O (ed.) *Africa Culture and the Quest for Women's Rights* (Ibadan: Sefers, 2001)

³⁵O.O.Familusi, *Sexual Ethics in Imesi-Ile, Obokun Local Government Area of Osun State: Past, Present and Future* B.A. Long Essay, (University of Ibadan Nigeria, 1999).

dominated system. The success of the Yoruba woman usually earned her the respect and praise of her husband and children.³⁶

In the political sphere, the queen mother among the Yoruba people, who usually is the mother of the king was accorded great respect and had influence in matters affecting the community. In very few cases, women reigned as traditional leaders like Moremi of Ile-Ife.³⁷ The influence of Yoruba women was only seriously threatened by the presence of the British colonial administration in the 20th century and women were further relegated to the background. Nevertheless, during this era, Yoruba women were able to circumvent the system for their own economic and social gain.³⁸

Role of Women in Society: Contextualizing the Lucan Narrative

The practice of Christianity among the Yoruba is gradually paving the way for women to be recognized socially, politically and religiously. Women are allowed to play leadership roles due to the presence of Christianity among the Yoruba people and this is transforming its patriarchal practices to make them more female-friendly and inclusive.³⁹

In recent times, appreciable growth is being achieved with regards to emancipation of women from economic, political, social and religious discrimination.⁴⁰ Women are instruments of economic stability in many homes where they are virtually the bread winners. They are mothers at home and workers in the office. In our modern day, Yoruba women are also involved in politics. Their indispensable role in mobilizing the grass root and having popular following in the community has brought recognition on women at local, state and national levels of government. Women today are local government councilors, chairpersons, commissioners, members of national assembly and even deputy governors.

³⁶Toyin O. Falola, "The Role of Nigerian Women: Additional Information." *Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/role-of-Nigerian-women-1360615/additional-info#history> Accessed June 29, 2021

³⁷Toyin O. Falola

³⁸Marjorie K. McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work and Social Change*. 2009. Bloomington and Indianapolis. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

³⁹Oyeronke Olajubu (2008) "A Socio-Cultural Analysis of Yoruba Women and the Re-imagining of Christianity" *Research Article*, Vol.16, Iss. 3, 312-323
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0966735008091401> Accessed May 27, 2021

⁴⁰Jekayinfa A.A (1999) "The Role of Nigerian Women in Culture and National Development" *Journal of Education and Practice*. 5(1 & 2)

In religious settings, women are making their voices heard. As wives of General overseers, Bible teachers and founders of several churches, women are no push-overs in religious affairs.

In the academia, Yoruba women are known for their academic prowess and have made great progress in fields previously dominated by men. Nigeria's first female professor, Professor Adetoun Ogunseye a student of University College, Ibadan, which is presently the University of Ibadan is from Yoruba ethnic group.⁴¹ The first-ever female combat helicopter pilot in the Nigerian Air Force is late Flying Officer, Tolulope Arotile another Yoruba woman. She won the posthumous award at the 2021 edition of the Royal African Young Leadership Forum held at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.⁴² Other Yoruba women have also excelled in various fields such as religious studies, medicine, law, military, sports, journalism and others. They have won several national and international awards.⁴³ The contribution of women to the society and national development cannot be over emphasized. If the lessons learnt from the Lucan Gospel will be imbibed by the Yoruba society, there will be more tolerance in religion, greater advancement in areas of science and technology and economic stability will be achieved.

Conclusion

The Old Testament is replete with accounts showing patriarchal discrimination against women but it has been established that this was not the intention of God. It is the consequence of drifting away from the divine plan. The New Testament shows us that Jesus Christ came to set the record straight and this is seen in his interaction with women in the book of Luke.

Lessons from the Lucan narrative reveal that women are stakeholders who can benefit the society if given the right atmosphere and conditions to operate. Jesus Christ the founder of the Christian religion saw their potentials and engaged them in service. The Apostle Paul also did the same on numerous occasions by enlisting the gifts and abilities of women like Lydia, Damaris, Priscilla and others.(Acts 16:11-40; 17:16-34;18:1-28), Our society will be better if women are allowed to carry

⁴¹Olujinmi B. "Integrating Women in Nigeria Polity for Growth and Development: Perspective from Obasanjo's Administration (1999-2007)" in Kehinde A.(ed.) *Gender and Development: Essential Reading* (Ibadan; Hope Publications Ltd, 2009) 78.

⁴² City Mirror News, Ooni Honors First-ever Female Combat Helicopter Pilot, Late Arotile in RAYL 2021, May 29, 2021 <http://citymirrornews.com/news/2021/29/ooni-honors-first-ever-female-combat-helicopter-pilot-late-arotile-in-rayl-2021>

⁴³OlumiyuwaO.Familusi, "Changing Roles of Yoruba Women as an Issue in National Development and Family Stability" *LUMINA*, Vol.23, NO.2, ISSN 2094-1188

out their God-given role and engage their God-given intelligence for the progress of humanity.

Recommendation

The Yoruba have a rich cultural heritage which should be taught and practiced by all her sons and daughters as long as they are in agreement with biblical stipulations. However, practices like verbal abuse of women folk through proverbs and sayings, religious restrictions that limit the freedom and right to freedom of association and movement of women should be discountenanced and discouraged. Prohibitions against sexual promiscuity and marital infidelity should be reviewed to include the men folk. This will reduce infidelity on the side of both parties and perpetuate the sustenance of chastity before marriage for both male and female.

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