CHANGING VALUES OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE AMONG THE AWORI IN BADAGRY LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Abstract
Some decades ago, it would have seemed absurd to question the significance of traditional marriage among the Awori-Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria, as it was considered central to the organization of adult life. However, social change has far reaching effects on African traditional life. For instance, the increased social acceptance of pre-marital cohabitation, pre-marital sex and pregnancies and divorce is widespread among the Yoruba people of today. This however appeared to have replaced the norms of traditional marriage; where marriage is now between two individuals and not families. This research uncovers what marriage values of the Yoruba were and how these values had been influenced overtime. The qualitative method of data collection was used. Data was collected and analyzed utilizing the content analysis and ethnographic summary techniques. The study revealed that modernization, education, mixture of cultures and languages, inter-marriage and electronic media have brought about changes in traditional marriage, along with consequences such as; drop in family standard, marriage instability, weak patriarchy system, and of values and customs. Despite the social changes, marriage remains significant value for individuals, families and in Yoruba society as a whole.

Keywords: Traditional values, marriage, social change, Yoruba.

INTRODUCTION
The practice of marriage is apparently one of the most interesting aspects of human culture. The study of marriage has been considered as one of the most interesting aspects of anthropological studies. Marriage as a fundamental social institution is more than a mere contract. Through the institution of marriage, men and women unite their lives, establish families, and become a fundamental component of a community. Spouses acquire a special relationship to each other and to society (Dodson 2012). That is why marriage has long received attention in behavioural sciences as a key demographic event serving as a near-universal marker of entry to adulthood and customarily the point at which childbearing commences (Harison 2007). Marriage has, despite the recorded shifts, significant value for the individual, families and the society (Nock, 2005). When looking at marriage as an institution, as opposed to a free-standing concept, marriage represents socially sanctioned behaviour. Marriage embraces traditionally virtuous, legal and predictable assumptions concerning what is moral and what is proper (Nock, 2005). Through marriage an individual is transformed; they are perceived and treated differently by society and even enjoy rights / privileges unmarried individuals do not. Married couples are perceived as more mature, stable, committed and responsible. Many people consider marriage as the unimpeded, blissful joining of two individuals. However, Carter and McGoldrick (1989) have suggested that marriage really represents the merger of two entire systems combining together in developing a new, third family system.

Just as marriage maintains a central role in the world, its rates have also been falling, but more strikingly, the importance of marriage at different points in the life cycle has changed, reflecting rising age at first marriage, rising divorce followed by high remarriage rates. Cohabitation has also become increasingly important, emerging as a widely used step on the path to marriage.
The problem.
The institution of traditional marriage that encourages proper rites before a man and woman come together suffered from several setbacks, especially among the Yoruba people of south-west. Between 1984 and 2000, the proportion of people thinking that there is nothing wrong with pre-marital sex increased from 42% to 62%, while the proportion thinking it to be always wrong decreased from 17% to 9% (Barlow et al 2001). Increasing social acceptance of childbirth outside marriage is affecting marriage stability. Female chastity has also become completely eroded, and in fact, it is hardly ever mentioned today. It is increasingly uncommon for first sexual intercourse to take place within marriage. Divorce rates and our reactions to divorce have changed drastically with time. Marriage has become more unstable than it was in the past. Fadipe (1931) wrote “Marriage is one of the social institutions of the Yoruba which has been most in a state of flux as a result of the diffusion of foreign ideas and the quick process of economic growth”. In 1921, Henry Carr wrote “Native marriage is now the loosest tie imaginable”.

Objectives
- To understand the traditional Ssprinciples of marriage practices among the Awori in Ibereko Badagry.
- To investigate the lines on which Yoruba traditional marriage customs are evolving in Ibereko.
- To analyse the various changes that had taken place in traditional marriage pattern among the Awori

LITERATURE REVIEW
Marriage in Yoruba Tradition.
The Yoruba people are one of the largest ethnic groups in West Africa. The majority of the Yoruba speak the Yoruba language. The Yoruba constitute between 30 and 50 million individuals throughout West Africa and are found predominantly in Nigeria and make up around 21% of its population. The 22 million Yoruba who live in southwestern Nigeria are one of the four major sociolinguistic groups of contemporary Nigeria. The others are the Igbo to the east, and the Hausa and Fulani to the north. Subgroups of the Yoruba in Nigeria include the Awori, the Ijesha, the Oyo, the Ife, the Egba, the Egbado, the Ketu, the Ijebu, the Ondo, the Ekiti, the Yaga, and the Igbomina. These subgroups have been described as belonging to a distinct cultural category because of such binding factors as a generally intelligible language, myth of common origin, and basically similar political structures (International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family 2003).

Marriages are considered sacred in most societies, and especially so in the tradition-steeped of Yoruba land. Yoruba weddings usually involve not just the coming together of the couple in question, but their extended families and sometimes entire communities, although traditions vary vastly across the ethnic group (Lai Olurode and Olusanya 1994). Yoruba marriage is a family affair and involves the combining of two lives, two families, and sometimes even two communities. To obtain the approval of the society it is necessary that the union be formed and recognized in accordance with the unwritten customs and taboos, as in traditional societies, or in accordance with established laws, as in more civilized societies (Kottak, 2012). The custom of marriage differs in various parts of the world and every civilization produces a marriage pattern appropriate to itself (ibid.).

Up until the early 1970s marriage had become increasingly popular and couples were tending to marry at a younger age. This trend has, however, reversed in the last twenty years. In 2007 most families were still headed by a married couple (7%), although the proportion of cohabiting couple families had increased to 14%, from 9% ten years earlier. The change in patterns of marriage influence the roles fulfilled within the home (Owens 2004).

Firstly marriage in Yoruba tradition will be looked at, as well as its recent changes. Then cohabitation trends and factors influencing marriage are discussed to create a better understanding of the relationship structure that appears to be taking the place of marriage for many. Now that people have an alternative to marriage it is hypothesized that marriage could be replaced by cohabitation. Marriage, in this study, refers to traditional heterosexual marriage. Living together without being married is more acceptable today than it was a couple of years ago (Amato, Johnson, Booth, and Rogers 2003).
For African people, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born. All the dimensions of time meet here and the whole history of drama is repeated, renewed and revitalized. Marriage is a drama in which everyone must participate. Marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Otherwise, he who does not participate in it is a curse to the community, he is a rebel and a law breaker, and he is not only abnormal but sub-human. Failure to get married under normal circumstances means that the person concerned has rejected the society and society rejects him in return (Olurode and Adesany 1994).

In the traditional Yoruba society, most marriages were arranged by the parents on both sides. The importance of the family in the selection of marriage partners in the traditional Yoruba society is reflected in the statement by Aluko-Arowolo, Olusola and Jegede, that marriage partners were in those days of yore, chosen by the families of the young ones concerned. To ensure that the spouses have the requisite level of the skills that will enable their family to find its own balance, an elaborate system of calibrated steps and activities tests the endurance of the spouses. These steps reiterate the fact that the selection of the spouse is a communal affair that involves several symbolic steps. The steps are arranged in this order; search period; courtship; Introduction; engagement and marriage. However, before the suitor takes this important step, he should inform his father about his intentions. The father of the suitor then informs the eldest male member of the extended family, Ṣẹlẹ, who is known as the elderly father (Baba agha) (Olurode & Olusanya, 1994). Most literatures affirmed that the family, kinship system and marriage are three-in-one social abstraction that the impact of change is mostly felt. (Olutayo and Yusuff 2012, Olurode and Olusanya, 1994 and Ajala And Olarinnmoye 2013). Some of the reasons highlighted as the causes of this change are: acculturation, exchange of cultural items, globalization in politics and economy, westernization through education and religion. Likewise, the study reveals that the Yoruba traditional marriage forms have been influenced by all of the above mentioned indices.

To Fadeyi, (2014), this only leaves the family to attacks of social problems such as increase in divorce rate, corroborating his assertion is Olutayo and Yusuff, (2012), who saw cohabitation of a man and woman as a new living arrangement that is coming to be part of the Yoruba reality. This wouldn’t have been possible in some two decades ago, as it’s the tradition of the Yoruba people to first engage in the rituals of marriage ceremonies before a woman could move with a man in cohabitation.

Theoretical Orientations
Modernization theory is considered as one of the most conspicuous perspective on social change (Haferkeanp and Smelser, 1992). Modernization is considered as a process of adopting the modern values and modern mode of living style. In its true sense it is an attempt on the part of people who usually are the staunch practitioners of their respective cultural, moral and ethical ideas adapting the modernity. It points out towards a change in peoples’ food habits, dress codes, speaking styles, tastes, choices, preferences, ideas, values, recreational activities and so on (Robert, 2008). People give more importance to science and technology in the process of getting them modernized. The modern scientific inventions have rationalized the society in a distinctive way. The whole web of social relationships got drastic changes and installed new ideologies in the place of traditional ones.

Laying blame and expressing anxiety on modernity, majority of the respondents (43 out 50) affirmed Olutayo and Yusuff (2012) assertion that modernization and other change agents like globalization and internal processes of complication and multiplication have played huge roles in the changing patterns of family, which marriage institution happens to lay its foundation. They argued that the gradual erosion of traditional values and customs in Nigerian societies especially among the better educated and urban segment of the population has been a result of the impact of modernity, particularly the unbridled freedom which it embraces. The data confirmed that indeed modernization as a process, has impacted on the contemporary generation, to reject their valued traditional customs and create their own sub-culture of values and norms that distorts traditional marriage.

Methodology
A qualitative research method was deployed for the study as qualitative research methods are mostly relevant in the study of largely traditional population. Qualitative research method gathering of expressive data. Such data will capture the details of the totality of cultural and normative behaviours.
The Study Population

The study population of this study is the Awori people in Ibereko Badagry. Awori as an ancient Yoruba sub group, which are still largely traditional in orientation as casual observation suggests, can give a true picture of the traditional Yoruba marriage system in the past, and equally provides the window to measure the dynamics of the changes that the Yoruba traditional marriage is going through at present. Ibereko town founded in the 12th century and one of the 19 polities of the Badagry Division in the Olorunda Local Council Development Area (LCDA) in Lagos State. And Badagry is one of the five divisions created in Lagos State in 1968. Ibereko is divided into areas, estates, villages and quarters under its jurisdiction. Today, the Aworis and Egun are mainly the people who reside in the town of Badagry. For this, the scope of the study has been streamlined to areas where Aworis are densely populated at Ibereko, to enable the collection of relevant data.

Research Instrument and Data Collection Methods

The research was hinged on qualitative research method of data collection. For this study, both primary and secondary sources of data collection method was used. The primary source of data collection is the in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation and key informant interviews. The secondary source of data collection is the review of relevant literatures, analysis of documents and materials. The various interviews and discussions were purposively selected. 5 focus group discussions were organized at three visits to the town, 10 key informants were engaged at four visits, more than 30 in-depth interviews were carried out, and a marriage ceremony was attended to observe the people’s marriage practice at firsthand basis.

Discussion of findings

Patterned principles of marriage practices among the Awori in Ibereko Badagry.

Principles guiding the Awori’s traditional marriage are not different from those that are guiding the other Yoruba ethnic groups. Majority of the respondents affirmed Fadipe’s work on Yoruba traditional marriage. Just like it has been documented in literature, marriage is between groups rather than individuals. And it was observed that women are taking the advantage of modernization and education to challenge the old structure of patriarchy. Patriarchal authority remains in theory, but obviously has been challenged in practice.

A respondent summarized it thus:

Marriage is agreement between two families. After agreement and acceptance by the family members to give their daughter’s hand in marriage, they would ask the male's family to take the lady on her way to the stream. This is to confirm the statement of a respondent that: “A ma n ran, omo wa lo si odo” (The family will send their daughter to the stream). The lady is taken on her way to the stream by the male’s family, and message is sent to the girl’s parents that they have taken their wife. [FGD/ 2015]

This is considered the proper way to marry a woman. Another female respondent gave the insight to the value attached to proper taking in of wife in Awori culture

Fife Iyawo nisu loka (marrying a woman in the proper way), this is taking the proper steps and paying of prices and performance of rites demanded by the bride’s family. Here various steps lead to marriage: Ifojusode; Ifa ‘ore; Itoro; Idana; Igbeyawo. “Oni iyi ju igbeyawo ti isin yi lo”. (Marriage then is more valuable than today’s marriage). [IDI/Female/ 60yrs]

Another respondent stated that:

“Igbeyawo je ohun pataki lati so oko pelu aya po. Ti obi ko ba si laye, awon ara ma se agha teru eni na”. (Marriage is an important thing for the union of a man and a woman, and if the parents are not alive, family members and friends will stand for them by taking up the responsibilities). “Igbeyawo ni Ilana tiwa lo dara ju, nitori ofi asa ati ise wa ma’le, owa larin ebi kini ati ikeji, ki n tete su oko ati aya”. (Traditional marriage is the best because it deals with tradition and is between the two families, this would not bring problem between the couples). The traditional marriage practices are essential institution and a union of two families. According to findings, traditional marriage in Yorubaland is divided into two: Ifojusode: a man might see a girl for his son or a male child might see a girl he likes. The parents are informed about it. Then the parents will ask the boy if he truly desires the girl. [KII/ Male/55yrs/2015]

All respondents agreed that Awori marriage takes the identified pattern in Olurode and Ogunsanya 1993. Ifojusode- period of search, Iwadi: period of finding out about the backgrounds of the intending couple they will find out if the family is good, if positive, marriage proceeds). Ifa ‘ore: The intending couples’
families further make inquiry through Ifa (oracle), Itoro: Begging for the prospective bride’s hand in marriage is an important process in marriage. Idana: This ceremony is probably the most important in contracting a marriage. It is during this ceremony that the man’s family pays the bride-price (owo ori) and the bride-wealth (nkan idana) to the girl’s family and Igbeiyawo: this is the final stage in the process of marriage, the ceremony is more elaborate and extended to people from outside of the families involved. Alarina: is another constantly discussed concept among the Awori. Alarina, according to findings, is the person who serves as the link between the man and the woman. The husband to be comes intermittently to see the wife to be in the Alarina presence. The role of Alarina is now outdated. [FGD/2015/]

Lines on which Yoruba traditional marriage customs are evolving in Ibereko.

One of the effects which western values had on Yoruba traditional marriage is the exclusion of an intermediary in the running of a successful marriage. This is no more found in the practice of Yoruba culture or norms. No more Alarina since the spouse now have free access to each other. According to a respondent

No more an intermediary, our eyes have opened. Majority of the respondents attributed this to factors such as; marriage outside one’s group (exogamy) and education which have brought about exposure. The most widely practiced now is to have a mix of engagement ceremony that enforces the distribution of bride’s wealth and payment of bride’s price; eru iyawo (or nkan idana) and owo ori with the western marriage types of Church wedding, registry wedding and the Sharia wedding. The bride’s family play host to the groom’s family amidst an elaborate ceremony. The most important items taken in this modern time are “ireke (sugar cane), Osan (Orange), Eran (goat), oyin (honey), iyo (salt), epo pupa (palm oil), obi (kola nut), orogbo (bitter kola), isu (yam), Bible or Quran” [KII/Female/45yrs/2015].

Virginity was said to be compulsory aspect of marriage in Awori land. All the respondents agreed that virginity was a very serious aspect of traditional marriage ceremony of the Aworis in the past. The girls’ parents, and family members would be waiting and expecting the news. If the wife is found a virgin, the stained white clothe would be brought out. The housewives would rejoice.

As one of the respondents pointed out

“Obinrin ti won ba ban’le ni a n pe l’obinrin t’o pe: a woman "met" at home in our land is complete. Om’epo dele, iyawo awa ti yege, odidi la gbe”’: she delivers her oil intact, she has succeeded, we met her whole, “kofo koko ko to d’odo, opon omi wale”: she did not break the pot before getting to the stream, she brought back water in her pot. All these statements connote that the woman remained intact by being a virgin till her wedding night. The housewives in the groom’s family take the stained cloth to the bride’s family.

The Causes and Impacts of Changes on Traditional Marriage Pattern among the Awori.

Various factors have been identified by respondents as the cause of the changes in the patterns of Yoruba traditional marriage. The causes of these changes according to findings are:

Modernization: Majority of the respondents attribute the changes in tradition marriage to modernization. Few of the respondents called this: “Olaju odi” (negative modernization). According to another respondent he said: “Olaju to bi esin” (modernization that gave birth to religion; Christianity and Islam).

According to respondents modernization has turned everything upside down. Wives do not allow their husbands to marry another woman. Monogamy has taken the place of polygyny. Now wife demands husband’s parents to give prior notice before visiting. A respondent buttress this by saying: “Iyawo ko fe mo iya oko ati baba oko”. The wife does not want to know her parents in-law). Most women already visit the man’s house before marriage. Now, a new wife cooks immediately they get to the man’s house. In the past a man does not just take any woman as a wife. But now as a respondent noted: “Olaju ti pa itiju re” (modernization has taken away coyness). Education: Majority of the respondents see education as one of the causes of change. Education to them brought about modernization. It has been argued that the core cause of change in Nigeria is education (Ajala and Olarinmoye, 2013). The responses of the Awori affirmed this notion. They strongly believe that education had eroded the values in their norms and traditions. The following responses further illuminated on this.

A respondent said:
“Opoju iwe a ma pa ni” (too much of education kills). Majority of the respondents said our culture has been neglected as a result of education. Like a respondent said: “Won ki n bori fun iyawo mo”. (The wife’s head is no more covered). Tradition which makes it paramount for the covering of the wife’s head is now outdated.

Acculturation: The blending of cultures and languages upon contact also account for the observable changes in Awori’s traditional marriage practice. To the Awori, the coming together of different cultures has made people sometimes forget where they are coming from. According to the majority of the respondents, due to inter-ethnic marriage, change has taken place in traditional marriage. People now marry from different ethnic groups and backgrounds bringing about diversities: Electronic Media: According to few of the respondents, electronic media has caused lot of change in traditional marriage. Since we are now expose to other peoples culture, ideas and values. As a respondent pointed out: ko si television ni aye ati, nisii y o n ko oko orisiri: there was no TV in the past, but now we learn different things from the media. While one of the respondents attribute the cause of these changes to end times. [ID1/Females/40yrs; 50yrs/2014/ Iberoko]

The Effects of Change
According to findings the changes in traditional marriage among the Yoruba has brought about consequence in the role fulfilled within the home, family standard and marriage stability. According to majority of the respondents, mate selection process which brings about strong bond between the two families in the past has changed. People now marry without family consent, neglecting the place of family members. This has brought changes in the family standard. In the past instruction is given to both spouses and this made marriage solid. And friendship between families made the marriage last. A respondent said: “Oko a ma w’ola baba ati iya mo iyawo lara tabi ni ida keji”. (The man will over look some fault of the woman due to her parents or vise versa). Another said: “Baba oko ati iya oko ni won ma n fi iyawo le lowo” (Wife then is given to the care of the in-laws). Majority of the respondents said the changing role of family members has also brought about rejection of proper rites on marriage. According to a respondent when family standard was strong: “Iberu wa larin oko ati aya, nitori owa lati odo awon ebi”. (There was reverence between couples because the union came from the families).

Marriage instability: Marriage has become very unstable leading to high divorce rate. Unlike the past, instructions are given to both spouses, on how to live together and endure. According to majority of the respondents, divorces in the past were rare and the only ground for divorce is adultery but now the rate of divorce is quite alarming. Some of the respondents, attributed the cause of divorce to: Education (which bring about working class women), leading to disobedience (ai gb’oro), another cause is not getting contended (ojukokoro), lack of patience (ai ni ifarada). Weak Patriarchy system: Majority of the respondents attributed change in patriarchy system to education. Of course, feminism has attribute liberation of the womenfolk to education, this is much expressed in the cause of the study. According to majority of the respondents, education has a correlation with divorce, because women are now working. An example made was that; a woman who is a Banker would hardly have time for the family and this may lead to separation if the man is not patient enough. According to respondents working women now have authority to challenge their husbands and the lack of submissiveness may lead to divorce. In the past, according to a respondent: “Oko ni olori aya” (The husband is the head of the woman). Majority of the respondents made it know that women now have power of their own to make decisions. Loss of values and customs: Few of the respondents see this as an effect of the various changes. According to data collected our culture is fading away as a result of modernization and education. What we value is becoming weak and irrelevant. A respondent said: “Olagi to de lo je ki a gbogbe asa idile” (Modernization has made us forget tradition).

Another respondent asserted: “Asa ti ku, gbogbo asa ti ku tan, won ti fi iwe paa” (Tradition is dead, education has killed tradition).

According to a respondent he explained that:
“There is a family, when the female child is to get married, 9 days before the wedding; the lady will dance all through the night for 9 days. This is to avoid delay in pregnancy. But now this family rite is neglected and this causes delay in conceiving”.[KII/Male/60yrs/Ibereko/2015]

Findings of this study however revealed that there is an existing marriage pattern among the Yoruba. According to this research the traditional marriage among Yoruba has undergone several changes. These changes are caused by: westernization, education, mixture of culture and language under acculturation,
inter-ethnic marriage, electronic media and end times as believed by the Christians. The implication of this is tradition has changed and people want to experience a new world. A woman can stay in a man’s house even before marriage, mostly the lady might be pregnant for the man or may have given birth before the marriage ceremony is conducted. The issue of marrying a lady as a virgin is no longer cherished. It is common for men to require girls to prove their fertility by becoming pregnant before marriage. Aronson (1980, 45), however, reports that urban women may also prefer to be pregnant before marriage to avoid the many problems that a childless married woman encounters, and therefore the woman also may initiate this process. Western marriage is meant to connect two individuals together as such emphasis is not placed on introducing two families together, this is against the norms of the Yoruba culture which takes involvement of larger family units as a compulsory step before marriage is contracted. However, in this recent time, marriage can be conducted with or without the consent of family members.

This research reveals that education has a correlation with divorce and that arranged marriage still exist but among rich families. Because in the past arranged marriage get the families involved and conflict between couples is easily settled. According to a male respondent:

“Alafisu wa” (a mediator is always available). Majority of the respondents believe that marriages last longer in the past. Majority of the respondents expressed that nothing can be done to reverse the fortunes of traditional marriage in the Yoruba society, because the values attached to traditional marriage have been lost. Majority of the respondents thought the only solution is for individuals to go back to traditional marriage. They however all agreed that the only way out is teaching morals, promoting our language and culture. This justifies the agitation for the renewal of the use of native languages in the foundational and primary education in Nigeria. This is a practical solution to the promotion of Yoruba language, since norms and meanings are coded in language. Majority of the respondents despise the negative changes in traditional marriage said traditional marriage is still the best and as such, be promoted over the western type. [KII/Male/50yrs/Ibereko/2015]

CONCLUSION
Social change has a direct impact on the basic structure and functions of the social institution. Marriage is a part of the social fabric that exists in the world to provide security for children, adult and the society. All societies in the world recognize the significant of marriage as a foundation of a society. However, it appears that certain changes has altered the meaning of marriage from being a sacrament to today’s marriage of personal happiness and the meaning of divorce also changed from that of shame to personal choice and freedom. Today, the pervasiveness of change is clearly evident even to the casual observer on traditional marriage among Yoruba. These changes range from; choice of partner which involve family members to individual choice, living together before marriage, the rate of divorce and changes in values and customs. These changes have brought; loose family ties. Today, Christian, Muslim and court marriage exist side by side with the traditional form. Despite these changes according to findings, there are still some patterns left unchanged though altered in some ways.

This means that the significance of culture cannot be separated from traditional marriage, since marriage is understood in relation to particular standards and culture. Though as the world evolve, there are alterations in practices and adaptation is needed. But the institution of marriage being an important institution in the society, should be protected from losing its importance.
REFERENCES