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Perception of Propertied Women on Marriage Forms, Widowhood and Living Patterns in South West, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was conducted to assess the importance of property on the status of women and their perception on three major issues namely marriage forms, widowhood, and living patterns. This was done against the backdrop that property influences status and change in status also impact on role within the production process. The paper drew input from both quantitative and qualitative field work where 195 women were interviewed. The paper argues that there is a wide condemnation of polygyny and polyandry as forms of marriage; widow inheritance is fast fading away as a result of status transformation experienced by the propertied women and living patterns remain the same as families still live together as one despite the new statuses worn by the women. The paper concludes that property as a means of income generation is indeed an impetus to changing the status of women, their perception, role and management of their life.

Introduction

Studies on women and what affect women have increased over the years to the extent that there are libraries on women studies littered all over the world. Despite this remarkable documentation, studies on women, propertied women and widows are

still very few. Another factor that contributes to the paucity of data on widowhood includes male-centered bias, which leads to discussing women only in relationship to men-primarily in terms of marriage and motherhood.

What this article intends is to examine the propertied women and their views on marriage, widowhood and living pattern within the ever changing Yoruba culture which is increasingly exposed to western influences and as such has transformed remarkably in all facets of life including the status of women and widows in the last three decades. Perception of these women is particularly important in view of the fact that property acquisition has in a way improved the status of the propertied women. It is therefore hopeful that their views must have changed subsequently as it relates to marriage, widowhood and living pattern in Yoruba land (Olutayo and Akanle 2007). Specific areas of importance are the administration of inheritance right that reduced women to property to be shared among other belongings of the deceased (Alliyu 2006b). The residential pattern equally calls for concern especially when a widow's residence becomes a big issue at the death of the husband.

The family as a social institution plays a very important role in marriage, widow inheritance and living pattern. The family has also been exposed to diverse changes, which has affected its role and functions in the last one decade or more (Olutayo and Akanle 2007). Its roles in the institutional arrangement governing the inheritance of widows in the light of other obvious transformation in the society have also been affected significantly.

Methods

The study was designed to capture propertied women in South West Nigeria predominantly occupied by Yoruba people. The respondents cut across propertied women resident in Lagos and Ogun States, South West Nigeria. As far as indigenous content of property is concerned, carefully selection of women who have lands and houses for either personal or commercial purposes or small scale business dealing in only indigenous goods and not imported was made. As for the modern content of property, the field process involved women who have registered industry (manufacturing); registered commercial business dealing in foreign and/or modern goods alone.

The researcher was able to locate 32 women who actually own lands/houses for the survey (questionnaire) through some Community Based Organisations (CBO) like Thrift & Credit Societies. This was done with the assistance of the CBO executives who were familiar with the socio-economic statuses of their members. The chances of sampling were limited here. Hence propertied women purposively identified by the CBO executives for the study were surveyed. Contrarywise, a sample of 67 women was drawn from a population of propertied women dealing in

indigenous items such as timbers and planks. Since they were well organized into stalls, systematic random sampling was used to arrive at the sample population of 67. In all, a total number of 99 indigenous propertied women were gotten.

For the Lagos areas, a total of 20 women who own small-scale industries were gotten through the services of Market Facts Limited a research and marketing based firm operating in Lagos. Another 76 commercial propertied women both at Ikeja and Lagos Island local government areas were gotten at their market stalls using, systematic random sampling method. In all, a total of 96 modern propertied women were drawn. The total of both the Lagos and Ogun respondents amounted to the 195 respondents sampled and selected for the study.

About 225 questionnaire were distributed out of which 195 was considered useful for analysis. In addition to the questionnaire, the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Semi Structured Interview (SSI) were also used to ‘get behind the scene’ of some of the responses in the questionnaire. This became necessary in order to gain insight into some issues that need further and/or wider explanations or clarifications. A total of four FGDs sessions were held for all the respondents in Ogun State and twelve SSI sessions were held for respondents in Lagos State. This was followed by qualitative analysis that revealed the underline social processes and realities. Specifically, the qualitative data were analysed by a manual content analysis taken into consideration the detail process in (QDA).

Who are propertied women?

This study relied on the concept of mode of production as demonstrated by Westwood’s theoretical position on women’s status and contribution to development in a patriarchal society. It also provide an opportunity of situating the analysis of women and property within a materialist dynamics, thereby providing a starting point for the analysis of men-women relation in a male dominated society through the economic infrastructure upon which the super structure is rested. In her thesis, she demonstrated the process of acquiring and controlling property by women in two different modes of production, i.e. pre-capitalist and capitalist.

For Westwood, property is one aspect of the relation of production. It mediates the relationship between gendered subjects and the mode of production and it is the relationship, which ultimately confers power through ownership and control. The usual focus on property in this theory is an attempt to unravel the complex relationship between women and the mode of production (mostly controlled by men). The theory explains that women have the major role in reproducing the relations of production, which provided one set of inter-relationship between women and the mode of production (Alliyu 2006a).

Consequently, in any society where women are able to perform their role in reproducing the relations of production very well and to their own advantage, they are likely to exert a reasonable degree of influence and control over the forces of production by acquisition of means of production (property) and power.

Reproduction is understood in three ways as described by Westwood:

- Simple biological reproduction
- Reproduction of labour power
- Social reproduction (which is the induction of new member into the dominant ideologies held within the social formation).

While the first two are located within specific practice in the domestic sphere and essentially the preserve of women's work, the third implies a means by which women, through their role, have maintained their own oppression (Bryson, 1992). This is an interesting area that still remains unexplored.

Property is one aspect of the relations of production. In this study therefore, it mediates in the relationship between gendered subjects and the mode of production and how this ultimately confers power through ownership and control on either men or women.

Westwood's analysis of property relation is based on two modes of production (i.e. pre-capitalist and capitalist), that are differently characterised and are operating under two different systems of sanctions.

- a. The one related to custom and convention are upheld within indigenous institutions; and
- b. The other related to the system of legal precepts, which uphold and protect private property.

In the first mode of production, i.e. pre-capitalist, property relations are embedded in structures of kinship and decent which allow or frustrate access to and control over property in form of title to land and resources and positions within prescribed hierarchies (Westwood, 1984; Aidoo, 1988; Pearson 1992). The relationship described above is not only embedded in the kinship structure, it is also noticeable in all the structures in the society. In fact, they are linked together and often support one another to keep women in a position of subordination (see Pearson, 1992). Reflecting on structural subjugation of women, Westwood posits that:

Alongside these structures are the definitions of the final status of members of the collectivity. These rights and definitions are not

independent of over arching ideologies, which, among other things, define and construct the gendered subject-woman. Thus a patriarchal ideology will have an important effect upon the institution of property (Westwood, 1984, p.141).

The second mode of production, which is in contrast to the first one, is where this study dwells on. It is the capitalist mode of production. Under this mode, property is synonymous with private property. Macpherson, following Karl Marx, argues “the development of capitalism and the market economy necessitated the generalisation of private property as a system which is allowed for the alienation and transferability of resources, including land and capital” (1973, cited in Westwood 1984, p.141).

In addition to that, Macpherson writes that “labour” which was made so much a private exclusive property has to be alienable, i.e. marketable. It then means that labour is a commodity or property to be sold for money. Although, labour power as a commodity in the colonial context, was understood as a male property. Female productivity was neglected and they were subordinated while male productivity was encouraged (Boserup, 1970). Westwood argued that “women under this mode of production are involved in the sale of their labour power, however few they might be, their right to a livelihood and access to income depends more on their right to land and ability to acquire capital. This situation has impact on the nature of property. Whereas, property rights and titles may be sold under this mode of production, it cannot under the other mode of production because access to property is located in the kinship structure.

However, using the Ga society of Ghana, Westwood was able to demonstrate the empirical potential of the radical feminist perspective rooted in Karl Marx’s concept of mode of production at it relates to women and property in a patriarchal society. She posits that:

Ga social reforms are deeply patriarchal not only at the level of ideology, but in the institutional expression of male dominance” (P.142). Nevertheless, “it is possible to underline certain crucial areas in the relationship between women and property (in a patriarchal society such as Ghana). Due to the system of residence that separates men and women, the process of reproduction of labour power is within the control of women ... (although) they have less access to rights to property and land through the lineage ... As a consequence, women have to look to the market place as a source of economic power and the possibility of acquiring property. Some women are very successful in this sphere and they became wealthy owners of land, houses, trucks, large stocks of goods. But for most,

the market place is simply a means of livelihood, independent of men. Men and women do not share their resources and Ga women have used this tradition as a basis for acquiring power and influence both within the Ga community and beyond it. In addition, some Ga women exercise power and influence through their control over a certain arcane knowledge (intellectual/property) and their ability as priestesses to interpret the world and protect people against its vicarious nature. In these ways therefore, women are a threat to the overriding nature of Ga forms (P.155).

From the above, the main highlight of the emerging conceptual framework for this study can be stated as follows that:

1. Property is a historically conditional social form of the appropriation of material values (the means of production above all) by people.
2. Property determines the social system of production as well as the status of the people.
3. Ownership of property would not only mean legal right to own something but the actual totality of economic relation between women and men regulating to the access, control, use and benefit of the means of production.
4. Form of property changes from one mode of production to another. To that extent, both traditional and modern form/content of property co-exist in Nigeria.

In this study, propertied women would mean women who actually own, use, control and benefit from any asset for the purpose of production of goods and services that is exchangeable for monetary reward.

Findings and Discussion

Culture is simply the way of life of a people. This includes the norms, values, ideas and beliefs upon which such a people are organized and function as a group or society. All culture has both material and non-material components. While the material culture is made up of the physical-social environment typified by tangible elements such as tools, crafts, arts, artifacts etc, the non-material culture is comprised of inner behaviour of people typified by intangible elements such as values, norms, philosophy, ideas, music and dance (Isola, A 2010). The details concerning material cultures do not require recounting here. What the study is concerned with here is the non-material culture that is 'the bed-rock of the gender ideology which has ruled the world since the start of the history of man' (Aina, 1998). Indeed, quoting Aina rather extensively, she noted that:

The non-material component of culture tend to dictate many of the societal social arrangements, including gender role ideologies..... member of a society are not merely differentiated depending on their roles, rather, such roles are hierarchically ranked such that some acts of behaviour are classified as either superior or inferior. Generally, each society delineates between what men ‘do’ and what women ‘do’ and the rewards which accrue to them respectively in terms of ‘power’, ‘wealth’ and ‘prestige’. (1998: 3)

It is within the context of the above situation that the respondents’ views on some social institutional arrangements such as polygyny and polyandry; issues around widows and widowers and residential pattern are discussed.

Marriage Forms

The respondents’ view on polygyny and polyandry was specifically sought for against the backdrop of controversies that often surround such arrangement. Below are the views of the respondents in bullet points on polygyny and polyandry.

Table 1: Respondents’ Views on Polygyny and Polyandry

POLYGyny	POLYANDRY
What is your opinion about a man marrying more than one wife?	Why can’t a woman marry more than one husband?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ It is a very ungodly phenomenon that allows social vices like hatred come into a matrimonial home. ❖ It should be discouraged; its very abnormal. ❖ It’s a bad practice, my sons and daughters would never be involved, I have seen a lot. ❖ It has no benefit, so it should be discouraged. ❖ Its absolute nonsense, people should stop the practice. ❖ It’s a lot of trouble. ❖ Its improper. ❖ There is nothing bad in it. ❖ There will never be any meaningful cordial relationship and it involves extra spending. ❖ It is very bad, it allows for setback in families. ❖ It’s a bitter experience in recent times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ It is not heard of in our culture (Yoruba) i.e. it has no precedence. ❖ The culture would not allow it. ❖ Because of cultural values, moreso, its not morally upright. ❖ It against the Society’s culture/custom. ❖ The society will not take it easy with such person (woman). ❖ When one is not crazy, its not moral. ❖ She will be sent out of the town because the society frown at it. ❖ A woman cannot live in two houses at the same time. ❖ Its unethical. ❖ It is not recognized in Yorubaland. ❖ It is not found in Nigeria, its bad. ❖ I can’t do it. ❖ It is a sin. ❖ It is adultery. ❖ It is an abomination.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The mind of everyone in the household will not be settled. ❖ It is against Christian conduct. ❖ It is a sin. ❖ It is a blessing from Allah. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ It is an obsolete behaviour. ❖ It is not good but there is nothing a woman can do to prevent it. ❖ It's a normal practice that takes care of less privileged women in the society. ❖ Its not a proper attitude. ❖ It's a manageable act if the people involved are God-fearing. ❖ Hey! It should be discouraged, I went through hell. ❖ It is not good, my husband neglect me and my children for no cause at all. ❖ It is an indication of wealth. ❖ I think its absolutely stupid. One wife is one responsibility and 'problem' so also many wives will be many 'problems'. ❖ It is an act of irresponsibility. ❖ It is in accordance with Islamic religion. ❖ It is not the best, women should resist it now. ❖ I will not allow it to happen to me, women should rise up now and fight against it. ❖ It is generally an illiteracy idea. ❖ Men that are not reasonable marries more than one wife. ❖ It shows Allah has blessed the man. ❖ It is outdated. ❖ It is a dirty behaviour, its men with low integrity that goes for more than a wife. ❖ It does not portray love because there is no way a man can share his love with two people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ It is against our Islamic conduct. ❖ It is improper and dirty. ❖ A woman cannot manage to cater for more than one husband with two different sets of families. ❖ The society does not leave room for that. It is an abomination. ❖ It is an adulterous act. ❖ It is against the doctrine of Islam. ❖ I think it should be allowed, if a man can marry more than one wife then same should go for a woman. ❖ A woman cannot share her body with two men. It is improper. ❖ It does not portray a good image of the woman ❖ Women are more reasonable and better principled and will not marry two husbands. ❖ It is a stupid idea, it's not practicable.

The study attempted here to combine the two separate ideas and thoughts raised on polygyny and polyandry by the respondents and show how it has shaped their behaviour in a patriarchal society. Both polygyny and polyandry are severely condemned by the respondents. While polygyny is condemned on the basis of various

direct and indirect experiences suffered by the respondents, polyandry's condemnation is anchored on the 'culture' of the society under study – a male dominated one.

The 'culture' frequently referred to here by the respondents is simply a 'culture' arranged socially and institutionalized in favour of the males over females. In such a culture, a man could marry more than one wife and a woman could not. If she does 'the society will not take it easy with such person'. Indeed, 'it is not heard of in our culture (Yoruba) a respondent claimed.

In such culture, polygyny 'is a normal practice that takes care of less privileged women in the society'. Contrariwise, polyandry is abnormal because 'a woman cannot manage to cater for more than one husband with two different sets of families'. The implication is that men in such culture are seen, expected and capable of taking care of women and as such could marry many wives.

Women, on the other hand, are seen as less privileged (a situation brought about by deliberate male institutional arrangements) and as such should be taken care of by men – a situation suggestive of incapability of women to marry more than one husband. If she does, it is counted as adultery and punishable according to tradition (institutionalized by men) (Alliyu 2006b). The same tradition sees 'nothing bad' in polygyny. In fact, 'it is an indication of wealth'. Women, in this case, could be described as asset men acquire once they are wealthy. The same does not apply to wealthy women.

Interestingly, some of the respondents see polygyny 'as a blessing from Allah'. It is indeed 'in accordance with Islamic religion'. Polyandry on the other hand, is 'against our Islamic religion'. While men in this situation are privileged to have more women as wives, women are not so privileged to have more men as husbands. The idea of who have who and in what quantity really signifies who controls who and where power lies in a relationship between male and female in the society. It is implied here that religion also plays a vital role in the social arrangements that favour men over women in the society. Unfortunately, it is an area that has resisted change over the years. To some of the women surveyed, polygyny 'is not good but there is nothing a woman can do to prevent it'. However, some others felt that 'women should rise up now and fight against it'. How far can they go on the subject in a patriarchal society particularly in light of religious support for it?

Furthermore, another respondent expressed a contrary view on polygyny that 'it is against Christian conduct' and as such it could be a curse to whoever chose to practice it in Christianity. Similarly, polyandry is simply described as sin no person should be involved in. However, there are indications that even Christians do practice polygyny particularly among the Yoruba of South-western Nigeria. Cases of

polyandry are not noticed among them. It is suggestive therefore that factors sustaining polygyny may be much more than religious. Perhaps this is why a respondent felt that 'it is generally an illiterate idea'.

Apart from seeking for opinions of the respondents on polygyny and polyandry, actual documentation of some of the experiences of the respondents from a polygynous family was done. Some respondents recounted their experiences as follows:

Polygyny hinders us in our business 'Orogun kii se Ori Orogun ni rere'. If we ask our husband to give us something, if he was to give us two things, it is with struggle he will give one. (R3)

If you are in a man's house and you engage in business, no wife will allow her rival to know her strength. (Why?) If show knows we do not know what goes on in her mind. She may become envious and dangerous. There is no love that can exist between two wives in a man's house. (R4)

Besides the experiences women from polygynous family passed through, men who practice polygyny are also at some risk according to the viewpoint below:

If a man wants to live longer he should not marry two wives or so many wives. I've seen many cases whereby a man who has about 3 to 4 wives, if anything happens to him, nobody would like to take care of him. What everybody would be after his is their own children, and what they could benefit supposing the man has a lot of money.

Generally, polygyny is unpopular and polyandry is uncultural however there are cases reported by the respondents whereby women are married to different husbands at different times and have children for them successively. It is an emerging trend in recent times, which could be conveniently termed '**SERIAL MONOANDRY**'. It is a phenomenon that needs to be further investigated so as to ascertain its impact on family cohesion and/or disorganization.

Widow/Widower Inheritance

It is no longer doubtful that women are somehow described and seen as part of the estate of a deceased man to be shared by inheritors. This has been well documented in other literature. Nevertheless attempt is made, in this paper to re-examine the situation so as to ascertain the trend now particularly as it affect the respondents – the propertied women. It is not uncommon to see more widows in the African society than widowers. The existence of widows association is also noticeable in parts of Africa.

The widows associations are sometimes formed as a cohesive group to resist the oppression from men and limit the suffering widows are subjected to in a male dominated society. Cases of widowers and an association of widowers are however very remote or unnoticeable. The limited number of widowers in the society may not be unconnected with the fact that, at marriage women marry men older in age hence they are not most likely to die before their husbands (even though age is not the only factor determining death) resulting in a case of widower.

Contrariwise, since men marry younger women at marriage, they are most likely to advance in age and die before their much younger wife or wives as the case may be, (all other factor remaining constant) resulting in a case of widow. Far beyond this factor however, is the issue of social expectations placed on both sexes. Expectation from men, for instance, as the major provider for the family, seems to place men at the risk of doing gender in order to meet with the societal expectations, even when the means are not available or sufficient to support the men in realizing the expectations. This, it is believed, is a likely factor that has led to the sudden death of many men in the society and consequently increases the phenomenon of widows in the society. Such widows, more often than not and even many of the deceased husbands may not be well prepared except in few cases of protracted illness. Perhaps if men try to balance the ideal images society expect them to be with the realities they will, to a very great extent, reduce some personal risks/ destroyers associated with some of the unrealistic ideal images thereby reducing sudden death and, of course, incidences of widowhood in the society. (Korrie De knonie 2001)

Having discussed some of the likely factors contributing to the incidences of widows in the society over and above widowers in the society, the fate of the widows in the society is also focused on here. In this regard, the respondents were asked: In the case of the death of a husband in your community, what will be the fate of a wife (or wives)? Their response is presented in the table below:

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents View on the Fate of a Widow At The Death of a Husband

Fate	N = 195	%
Inherited by another family member	46	23.6
Remain with the husband's family unmarried	20	10.3
Return to her own family unmarried	05	2.6
Live wherever she desires	100	51.2
No response	24	12.3

Field Returns

From the foregoing, table 2 above, more than half (i.e. 51.2%) of the respondents said that widows in their communities could choose to live wherever they desire after the death of their husbands. Another 10.3% are of the view that widows could also choose to remain in the husband’s family unmarried to any member of the family. This was not possible before particularly when widow inheritance was very common. Even though the practice of widow inheritance is decreasing, about 23.6% of the respondent still argued that widows could still be inherited in their communities. Also 2.6% of the respondents claimed that the possibility of a widow returning to her own family also exists.

Apart from other factors that may influence widow inheritance, it was gathered from the respondents through the qualitative instruments that – the family, the status of the widow; and the property combine to determine the fate of a widow in a patriarchal society. The family, for instance, plays overriding roles especially where there is no ‘WILL’ and there are lots to share by the members of the family from the deceased estate. If there are liabilities to share, the family hardly intervenes. However, the role of the family in this issue of inheritance also depends on how good or bad the family. The role of the family may be limited greatly if there is a ‘WILL’ administered by legal practitioner. Such ‘WILL’ does not consider the wife or wives as part of the property to be shared since if the dead were to be alive would definitely not want to share his wife or wives (though a ‘property’ to him!) with any other man. The status of the wife (wives) also plays a very crucial, if not the most important role in this issue of widow inheritance. Below are two cases in point recorded under High and Low statuses?

Table 3: The Role of Status in Widow Inheritance

High Status	Low Status
Me, for example when my husband died, my husband’s younger brother could not approach me for such inheritance because he knows ‘his power’ could not carry me – (why?) (Emi kii se eru e – I am not his ‘property’ at all. Even before my husband died I used to give him money so, such man cannot be bold enough to approach me for inheritance or marriage.	Widow inheritance is not happening again as such. What I feel that is causing it is when the woman has lots of children and she cannot take care of them. In such a situation, the family might force her to re-marry within the family. It might not be of her own wish that she should marry the brother of her husband. But because of her situation, she may have no option but to submit herself totally to the man who wants to marry his brother’s wife.

Field Returns

The implication of the above cases is that the higher the status of a widow the lower the chances of her being inherited and vice-versa.

Since the case of widower is not as common as widows in the study areas, cases of sororate is equally uncommon. Sororate is a form of marriage whereby a man marries the sister of his dead wife (Otite and Ogionwo, 2006). However, pockets of sororate practices are noticeable in the study areas. In some societies the parents of the dead wife take it as an obligation to provide the widower with another wife'. A similar case was reported by a respondent that: "Kobad' did it in this land. When his wife died, he married and impregnated the younger sister to his dead wife". This was a case in point but it is not common here". Being a male dominated society where there are more widows than widowers, such a case above must have generated a lot of controversies going by the word 'Kobad' – meaning 'it is not bad'. The behaviour of the must have been condemned as contrary to the cultural behaviour since it is not common or practiced in the area. However, probably because he is a man in a male dominated society he must have fought back or resist the condemnation by saying 'Ko bad' – a combination of Yoruba word 'Ko', and English word 'bad'. 'Ko', in this context means, 'it is not'. So, when put together, it reads: "Ko bad' meaning 'it is not bad' (i.e. the act of sororate, as practiced by the man, is not bad). This word, the respondents said, became the nickname of the man as he is fondly called till today – "Ko bad'.

Residential/Living Patterns

The living pattern after marriage across culture could take several forms. It could be patrilocal, matriloc, neolocal, bilocal and avunculocal. The most common pattern in a patriarchal society are patrilocal and neoloca (Oyeneye 1997). In either pattern, it is the wife that is customarily expected to move from her parent's home to her husband's home. If the newly weds live with the parents of the husband, it is patrilocal and if they chose to establish a separate home of their own away from their families of orientation – it is neolocal. Interestingly, the movement of a woman (wife) to a man's (husband's) home in a patriarchal society, is a thing of prestige to both the man and the woman. While the man feels he has fulfilled institutional arrangement – that place him in a position of superiority/responsibility – by taking a woman for a wife into a residence he acquired, the woman, on the other hand, feels she has also fulfilled the tradition – that places on her a 'respectable image' - by moving from her father's home/control to her husband's home/control. This is the pride of most women whose marriage is properly (culturally) consummated and socially approved.

The implication of the above viewpoint is that the man is socially expected to be in charge and take full responsibility of providing not only the residence to house the wife and children, but must also provide all they need to make a living. He is, traditionally, the head of the home and he wields an enormous power and authority.

Part of the source of his power comes from his wealth and the rest from other sources including institutionalized ideological male superior and dominant position – men traditionally inherit in a male dominated society. It is this superior advantage that, more often than not, paves way for men to acquire wealth far more than women in a society.

Surprisingly however, some women, such as the respondents (propertied women) have been able to break the barrier against women in terms of acquisition of wealth in a male dominated society. They have been able to acquire properties such as houses, industries, vehicles, lands, and so on. Despite this, they still reside in their husband's houses. The emerging theme from their responses was that it is cultural for a woman to reside in her husband's house; it has been so from the beginning and husbands have control over their wife (or wives) and what they do (including choice of residence irrespective of their economic status) and, of course, care for the children. However, a woman may live in a separate residence apart from the husband's on account of:- Divorce; Separation, Permission , Old age; Death of husband; Polygyny.

Below are some of the views expressed by some respondents to support the above reasons:

Reasons Why Some of the Respondents May Reside In Separate House Apart From Husbands'

I prefer to live in my husband's house. I can't live alone so far I am married to him and we are not divorced and I've got children for him.	DIVORCE
Even I myself, I am living in my husband's house before. But when he died, I now rent an apartment in Lagos because it is close to my Shop	DEATH
.....If our husband has not permitted us say because we are old in age, we will stay in his house. But if he permitted us we will stay in our own house	PERMISSION/OL AGE

Expect with the consent of your husband. If he agrees with you or in a case of a polygnous house – Like a man who has about 3-4 wives and you might not like to live with them. You may decide to live in you own house.	CONSENT/POLYGYNY/ SEPARATION FROM OTHER WIVES
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The reasons highlighted and explicated above must have contributed to the distribution of choice of residence by the respondents in the table below:

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents View on Choice of Residence

CHOICE OF RESIDENCE	N = 195	%
Own House	50	25.6
Husband's House	122	62.6
Rented House	21	10.8
Parent's House	02	1.0

Field Returns

More than 62% of the respondents (i.e. 62.8%) reside in their husband's houses. This is the living pattern socially and traditionally approved. This, to a great extent, suggests that though the respondents are propertied and could afford to live separately in their own houses, they however conform to traditionally approve living pattern rather than deviate. Apart from the strength of tradition approval, the family is central to the respondents, particularly their children. Since children belong to both husbands and wife, it is instructive therefore that they must live together as a household.

Contrary to the above living pattern, about 25.6% of the respondents live in their own houses. The justification for this living arrangement could be one or a combination of the reasons advanced above for the likelihood of a separate residence for a woman. Others live in rented houses (i.e. 10.8% of the respondents and 1.0% live in their parent's house).

Concluding Remarks

There is no doubting the fact that property plays a vital role on the issue of marriage, widowhood and living pattern now among the Yoruba. It has transformed the women that have it. It has equally enhanced their status, perception and roles on issues that concern them and other in the society. It can therefore be concluded that property, especially when used in production and generation of income, can be taken

to be central in understanding the power relation between the male and female gender especially in a patriarchal society like the Yoruba. The access to property, its control and management by the women has reduced the degree of influence and control by men over the women particularly on issues of widow inheritance and choice of residence.

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