

Urbanised City Modernised Marriage: Examining Internal Dynamics of Marriage Institution in Contemporary African Societies.

Olusegun Olakunle OLANIYI PhD

History and International Studies
College of Liberal Studies
Bowen University, Iwo
olusegunolaniyi2020@gmail.com
olusegun.olaniyi@bowen.edu.ng
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2434-8752>
+2348037150917
And

Moses Olanrewaju LASABI

History and International Studies Programme
College of Liberal Studies
Bowen University, Iwo
Lanrelassabi19@gmail.com
+2347038301022

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13120130>

Abstract

This study investigates the effects of urbanisation on marriage institutions in contemporary modern African cities. The study use contemporary modern African cities to depict and construct how the internal dynamics of the structure of marriage system in Africa has been affected by modernization and increasing urbanization in the colonial and post-colonial period. It examines how modernisation has spurred new socio-cultural and economic contest and reshaped power relations within marriage institutions in urban centers. In doing this, relevant empirical data are drawn for this work from oral interviews and documented instances of divorce cases in urban cities in Nigeria. The data for this work are analysed within the frame of modernism which promotes self-consciousness and views traditional socio-cultural ways of life as unsuitable for the spatial-order of socially progressive system of modern industrialised cities. The study argues that modernisation and high pace of urbanisation significantly reshaped internal structure of marriage institution in colonial and post-colonial African cities as against African cosmological view of marriage as a stage of human trajectory of birth, growth and death.



Introduction

One of the torchbearers of African culture is the marriage institution. In traditional African society, marriage as an institution is well respected. Although the payment of brideswealth in marriage which is one of the features of traditional African marriages has been knocked as it is said to favour the man and gives the man undue advantage over the woman as well as sustaining the Patriarchal nature of most African societies, yet it cannot be denied that it was a stabilizing effect on marriage institution in traditional African society“.

Indeed, the notion that “*oko ni olowo-ori aya*” literally meaning husband is the owner of whatever belongs to the wife which stem from the payment of brideswealth by the husband seems to no longer hold true in urbanized marriages where socio-economic issues including poverty, change in power relation in the home among other issues have eroded the powers and authority of the husband and have made many husbands mere figure heads in their respective homes. This of course is a peculiar feature of most homes in many urban cities in Africa where the wives no longer respect their husbands again simply because some of them are career women who even at times earn more than their husbands. While there is nothing wrong in a woman being a career woman or even earning more than the husband. It is expected that this should help in maintaining the sanctity of the marriage institution in contemporary African societies, however, contrary to expectation, marriage institution in most African societies especially the urban cities are passing through turbulent times.

While it will be tantamount to exaggeration and oversimplification of the problem to assume such marital issues are peculiar to modern cities alone in contemporary times, it can be claimed that other towns and cities experience their own levels of frustration in the area of marriage, yet it cannot be denied that the rate is higher in urban cities compared to other cities and towns.

Hence, the authors in this article examine how modernisation has affected the institution of marriage in urbanised cities in Africa and how the contestation in power relations in the home has continued to affect marriage institution in contemporary African societies.

Traditional versus Elitist View of Marriage Institution in Colonial African Society: Lagos as an Example

Although it has been claimed that Lagos became a modern city during the reign of Oba Akinsemoyin who reigned *circa* 1790 though the exact date of his reign has been a subject of contention due to lack of proper records of the reigns of Lagos kings during the period.¹ The reason for this assertion was as a result of the influx of foreigners like the Portuguese and the Brazillians into the new town during his reign and the building of a modern city.² The period also coincided with the period when European trade began in Lagos and since it was Akinsemoyin who initiated the trade through his contact with the Portuguese trader when he was exiled to Badagry, it was normal that the emergence of modern Lagos should be credited to him.³

¹ A. Adefuye, “Oba Akinemoyin and the Emergence of Modern Lagos” in A. Adefuye et al.(eds.,) *History of the Peoples of Lagos-state* Lagos: Literamed Publications Limited, (2002),.33-44

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*p.36



While it cannot be contested that as at the middle of the 18th century Lagos had been having contact with the Europeans as a result of its proximity to the sea and the influence of the repatriated slaves who arrived from Sierra-Leone and other places. However, the modernisation of Lagos in the context we are referring and which influenced significantly as to change the internal dynamics of important institutions such as the marriage institution did not start until several years after the annexation of Lagos into a crown colony in 1861 by the British which signaled the beginning of colonial rule in Lagos and other parts of Nigeria.

This is because colonialism and European infiltration into the administration of Lagos and other parts of the area that later came to be known as Nigeria, apart from bringing modernisation of every structure and institution of the area also changed drastically. The administrative structure of the territory as colonial courts were established to try all cases including marital cases that had hitherto remained prerogative of the family heads. It also introduced the people to the European ways of life as well as European concepts of marriage and family life as many of the elite in Lagos during this period embraced the European attitude towards marriage institution. Apart from few educated elite, majority of the educated ones resident in Lagos in the late nineteenth century had divergent views and opinion about marriage, while some were avowed monogamists others were unrepentant polygamists who believed in the African traditional concept of polygamous marriage. In comparing the attitude of the educated elite of the late nineteenth century Lagos to marriage institution, Ayandele opines thus:

Mojola Agbebi saw polygamy in Nigeria as creating a much better moral standard than the monogamy being introduced by the elite in Contemporary society; James Johnson believed that it was not a basic evil, an original sin, and that the Church should learn to live with it until economic forces brought about the supposed ideal of monogamy; for Samuel Ajayi Crowther, however, polygamy was an original sin even when he could not adduce any reason for his credo. For I.H. Willoughby, an Oyo Yoruba, the polygamist was “an animal of sensuality” who “has no mind left for his savior, Redeemer, and Lord and master”, for Henry Carr-and that in spite of his barren wife-monogamy was the ideal that should ultimately prevail in Nigeria. For the majority of the leaders of the so-called African Churches, polygamy had scriptural and moral sanctions, was rational and an instrument for dispensation of social justice.⁴

The above excerpt shows the attitude of the elite in Lagos towards marriage institution even as at the eve of introduction of colonialism when it was expected that modernization as a result of early contact with the Europeans would have taken firm root in the society. Therefore from the period of colonialism up to the end of colonial rule in 1960, there was little change in the concept and idea of appropriate type marriage from the perspective of majority of Lagosians and others living in cosmopolitan cities in Nigeria and Africa in spite of various changes that occurred in the institution of marriage as a result of introduction of colonialism and modernization in various parts of Africa.

⁴ E.A.Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, (1974),31-32



Theoretical Framework

This article examines marriage institution in contemporary African urban cities from the perspective of impact of modernization and contacts with the colonialists on marriage institution and how this contact has in one way or the other affected the internal dynamics of marriage institution in a cosmopolitan and urbanized city like Lagos. Hence, the major theory or school of thought upon which this work rests is the “Modernisation theory”.

The Modernisation theory originated from the ideas of German Sociologist Max Weber who lived 1854-1920 which eventually provided the basis for Modernisation paradigm developed by Harvard Sociologist Talcott Parsons (1902-1979). The theory is employed in explaining the process of modernisation within societies. The theory refers to a model of a progressive movement from a “Pre-modern” or “traditional” to a “modern society”.⁵The theory was a dominant paradigm in the social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s but went into a deep eclipse before making a comeback after 1990 though remains a controversial model.⁶

Modernisation theory attempts to identify the social variables that contribute to social progress and development of societies and seeks to explain the process of social evolution. The theory looks at internal dynamics while referring to social and cultural structures and the adaptation of new technologies. It maintains that traditional societies will develop as they adopt more modern practices. Historians tend to link modernization to the processes of urbanization . According to Kendall,, “Urbanisation accompanied Modernisation. ”⁷ The theory of modernisation assumes that traditional or pre-modern societies can be brought to development and urbanisation in the same manner more developed societies have been able to achieve this, the developing societies need assistance from the developed ones.⁸

Therefore, the theory is adopted to discuss how contact with the developed world through colonialism and lately globalization have succeeded in altering the internal workings of most institutions in developing countries as well as how collection of people of diverse backgrounds in urban city such as Lagos has influenced drastically the marriage institution.

The Nature of Marriage Institution in the Pre-modern Era

This paper focuses mainly on the influence of modernity on many institutions, particularly, marriage institution in most cosmopolitan African cities. Marriage institution in the pre-modern era in most African cities and towns was honourable, respected and basically stable as divorce was frowned at by families in spite of many challenges faced by the institution especially in the area of women’s rights. This seeming stability was encouraged by the patriarchal nature of most African traditional societies. A situation where marriage was seen as a union between two families rather than between two individuals who were expected to be partners.

⁵ K. Winston, “Modernisation Theory: Definition, Development and Claims”, Available at <http://www.study.com/academy/lesson/mod>. Accessed on 23-03-2018

⁶W.Knobl, Theories that won’t Pass Away: The Never-ending Story of Modernisation Theory’ in G. Delanty and E.F.Isin (eds.) Handbook of Historical Sociology

⁷ D.Kendall, *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company,2009), Available at <http://www.amazon.co.uk>, Accessed on 02-04-2018

⁸*Ibid.*



However, faced with instability in marriages and high rate of divorces that followed the establishment of colonial courts and railway lines as a result of modernization and colonialism, contestation among Scholars have insinuated that divorces increased as a result of colonial influence and policies on marriage. Baptiste quoting Eboue blamed French administrators for frequency and speed of divorce cases in colonial Gabon between 1939 and 1955 and that with the aid of French administrators' judicial system, women in Libreville committed adultery with impunity.⁹ Roberts observed that the landscape of power changed in the period from late nineteenth century to early twentieth century as traditional form of power became eroded and replaced with new form of power which contributed to high rate of divorce cases in colonial Africa.¹⁰ Byfield posits that the expansion of railway into colonial Egba territory ensured "women defected from traditional authority and fled to new spaces governed by railway commissioners".¹¹

Nonetheless, in spite of these seeming negative influences of the contact with modernity on marriages in Africa, there were positive sides as well as negative sides to the contacts with Europeans especially in the areas of cultural practices indigenous to the people of Africa.

Marriage in Africa just like in the Biblical era was taken seriously because of the believe that it is an institution ordained by God himself and which has its backing .In Pre-modern traditional African setting, marriages were regarded as union between two families rather than between a man and a woman. The patriarchal nature of most African societies also ensured that the man was regarded as the head and owner of the wife and everything that belongs to her, hence, the woman was not allowed to own or hold property but was held as property by the husband and his kin. The wife was seen as the wife of the family and was treated as such by the entire family after she must have been handed over to the *Baale* and *Iyaale* (male and female heads of the clan) immediately the marriage was contracted.¹² Even among those taking on *Agbaagba or asante* as woman kidnapping was called in Yorubaland,¹³ the Bride was still not allowed to divorce or run away from the marriage because of the importance attached to the marriage institution by the society during the pre-modern era.¹⁴ The result of all these was that divorce was low if non-existence as a woman divorced by the husband was viewed as a cursed woman. She was immediately labeled *Adalemosu*.¹⁵

Marriage Institution in the Modern Era

⁹ Rachel Jean-Baptiste, "The Option of the Judicial Path" Disputes over Marriage, Divorce, and Extra-Marital Sex in Colonial Court in Libreville, Gabon (1939-1959)", *Cahiers d' Etudes Africaines*, 47, (2007),651-652
⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ Richard Roberts, "Representation, Structure and Agency: Divorce in the French Soudan During the Early Twentieth Century", *Journal of African History*, 40, 1999, 389

¹¹ Judith Byfield, Women, "Marriage, Divorce and the Emerging Colonial State in Abeokuta (Nigeria), 1892-1904", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol.30, No.1, 1996,32

¹² Interview with Madam Emily Olaniyi, 100+, Ibadan, 20-02-2019.

¹³ Agbaagba was a form of forceful marriage common in traditional pre-modern Yoruba society whereby the wife was forcefully taken to the husband's house even before the due date for formalization of the marriage most probably it was discovered that the wife was no longer interested in proceeding with the marriage because she already had another suitor. Most times, the Bride's parents approved such acts to avoid being embarrassed by the Bride's intention after they must have collected *owojohun*

¹⁴ Interview with Madam Olayemi Ajayi,70+, Moremi Estate, Ile-Ife, 05-0-2019

¹⁵ Adalemosu is the Yoruba name for married women who left their husband's house to leave in the parent's house.



Colonialism as earlier pointed out came with modernity as the establishment of colonialism and invariably modernisation altered greatly a lot of internal workings of the marriage institution in colonial Africa. Most importantly many of the customary practices common in the pre-colonial era though not totally perfect but were perfect enough to ensure stability in marriages were affected by the advent of colonialism and modernisation. The belief is that the colonialists came with the intention to introduce European marriage into Africa. As Parr observes:

It seems probable that the Colonial Government, the Colonial Office, and the missionary societies genuinely wished to help Africans to reach a higher conception of marriage than they already possessed; the missionary societies at any rate (and perhaps the other two parties) wished to establish 'Christian Marriage' throughout Africa.¹⁶

In another vein, the stress that characterized marriage institution in most Yoruba cities in the latter half of the nineteenth century has been associated with the social and economic changes that followed the gradual degeneration that accompanied the collapse of the Oyo Empire and the eventual imposition of British rule which altered significantly the political geography of the region. For instance, in a city like Abeokuta, these changes were exemplified by the emergence of an increasingly important Christian community, the rise of a new class of wealthy warrior traders, and the town's increasing incorporation into the international economy through legitimate trade.¹⁷ Explaining further how these changes imparted on the society, Byfield posits thus:

These larger developments inspired and created opportunities for dependent men and women to challenge their status and position in Egba society. During the last decade of the century, slaves increasingly deserted Abeokuta farms in their bid for freedom. Chroniclers of the town's affairs also noted a substantial increase in divorce by the first decade of the twentieth century. Marriage, in particular came under great stress during the colonial period as significant numbers of women left unsatisfactory unions.¹⁸

Desertion of their masters by slaves in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was not peculiar to Abeokuta alone, it was a general occurrence throughout Africa. For instance, it was reported that from 1905 onwards, the changes ensured that slaves in the Western Sudan began to desert their masters to assert their independence thereby bringing to end slavery in Africa.¹⁹ The coming of colonialism brought about establishment of institutions such as native courts which changed the configuration and the balance of power in marriages in colonial West Africa. For instance, in the French Soudan, Roberts observes that the establishment

¹⁶ M. Parr, "Marriage Ordinances for Africans" *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol.17, No.1, Jan., 1947, p.3, Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1156934>, Accessed on 11-12-2014

¹⁷ Judith Byfield, Women, "Marriage, Divorce and the Emerging Colonial State in Abeokuta (Nigeria), 1892-1904", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol.30, No.1, 1996,32

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ See Richard Roberts and Martin Klein, "The Banamba Slave Exodus of 1905 and the decline of Slavery in the Western Sudan", *Journal of African History*, 22, 1980,375-394. See also, Richard Roberts, "Representation, Structure and Agency: Divorce in the French Soudan During the Early Twentieth Century", *Journal of African History*, 40, 1999,392.



of new court that followed the introduction of colonialism was greatly maximized by women in French Soudan. According to him:

In using the new courts, women not only acted in their interests, but forced subsequent changes in the landscapes of power in the French Soudan, including representations of African marriages and the authority of fathers and husbands.²⁰

This was the situation in the French Soudan and many parts of Africa immediately after the establishment of colonial rule that made Roberts conclude that:

The landscapes of power during the three or four decades of transition from the late pre-colonial to early colonial Africa changed very rapidly. Established forms of power and authority were often eroded, only to be replaced by new or re-constituted forms established first by Africans responding to the crises associated with the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and then by the practices and policies of colonial officials.²¹

Hence, it came as no surprise that with the coming of colonialism some of the customary practices that were common to the African marriage set up began to be challenged with the instrumentality of Native court system introduced by colonialism and colonial authority. These include issues of child custody which hitherto had been prerogative of the father, issue of payment and refund of Bridewealth, the practice of incorporating captured women into the society as slave wives, the absolute hatred of divorce and many other practices prevalent in the pre-modern era.²² The issue of divorce most importantly was no longer considered bad as modernisation encouraged divorce as women became more daring in taking to court cases that ordinarily would have been resolved internally using the traditional dispute settling mechanism afforded the society. Of course the institutionalisation of these courts by the colonial authority also assisted in safeguarding and promoting the rights of women in marriages as men approaching the Native courts for enforcement of marital rights could only be successful in their litigation only if they have paid the required Bridewealth.

Quoting a concerned native writer as early as 1915 after the establishment of colonialism, Asaaju continues:

Before the coming of the white man, divorce was unknown in Yorubaland, and no woman was allowed to desert her husband for some other man. If a woman was unfaithful she was handed over to the head of her family for punishment- usually, heavy punishment and seducer came in for drastic treatment. If the wife of a chief were seduced the male offender seldom escaped death.²³

²⁰ Richard Roberts, "Representation, Structure and Agency: Divorce in the French Soudan During the Early Twentieth Century", *Journal of African History*, 40, 1999, 390

²¹ *Ibid.* 391

²² For more on these customary practices and how they were resolved See M. Asaaju, *The Native Court and the Regulation of Marital Relations in Colonial Egbaland*, pp.67-70

²³ *Ibid.*



However, with contact with the Europeans and invariably modernization, the situation and orientation concerning divorce in contemporary African societies changed. Examining the influence of colonialism and modernization on divorce in colonial Yorubaland, Asaaju quoting a Senior Resident in the Southern province posits thus:

Before the introduction of the Native Courts and the partial break-down of the patriarchal system, divorce was comparatively rare and not easily granted by those in authority in the various quarters of the cities... It has always been the object of parents and elders to enforce the settlement of differences between husband and wife. Divorce was only granted on definite grounds such as impotence, incurable disease, long desertion, the exile of the husband and persistent cruelty. With the establishment of the Native Courts, the settlement of these cases was taken out of the hands of the Obas, District Heads, and Heads of their quarters or the head of the town but proceed direct to the court, where they pay their fee and the case comes up for hearing.²⁴

The above excerpts point to the fact that alongside colonialism came modernisation which altered significantly Africans' perspectives about marriage, divorce and family life, a situation which only became aggravated as a result of conglomeration of people of diverse ethnic and social background in most modern and urban African cities like Lagos. The next sub-heading therefore examines current trends in marriage institution in modernized city like Lagos.

Apparently, establishment of colonial courts which came with the introduction of colonialism reformed many unwholesome practices common in most colonial Africa. One of these was the practice of husbands in colonial Libreville receiving monetary compensation from their wives' lovers for adultery which to the French administrators amounted to prostitution.²⁵ Further to this was the habit of lovers attempting to make wives commit adultery or lovers attempting to "turn the heads' of wives to divorce their husbands, offence which were punishable by fines of up to 5000 francs.²⁶ All these brought sanity to marriages in colonial Gabon.

Current Issues Affecting Marriage Institution in a Modernised City: A Case Study of Lagos-State

From The turn of the millennium, there has been fundamental increase in the amount of issues confronting marriages in modernized cities such as Lagos. It became clear that in marriages things are no longer at ease as the centre fails to hold. Modernisation has totally radicalized the internal dynamics of marriage as an honourable institution ordained by God himself. The people in the city both men and women no longer see anything bad in married couples being separated or divorced within months of marriage for flimsiest of excuse and excuses as ridiculous as anything. Between January and September 2016, there were 30000 official cases of broken and failed marriages in

²⁴Asaaju, *Native Court and the Regulation of Marital Relations in Colonial Egbaland*, p.64

²⁵ Rachel Jean-Baptiste, "The Option of the Judicial Path" Disputes over Marriage, Divorce, and Extra-Marital Sex in Colonial Court in Libreville, Gabon (1939-1959)", *Cahiers d' Etudes Africaines*, 47, (2007),651-652

²⁶ *Ibid.*



Badagry alone which was one of the divisions that made up Lagos state.²⁷ The story is not different in other parts of Lagos state.

A lot of reasons have been attributed for this seeming high rate of divorces in Lagos but majority of the blame had been placed on the cosmopolitan nature of the city. The total departure from family values due to the metropolitan nature of the city where civilization clashes with cultural ideology and whereby married couples pick up foreign ideas which in most cases contradicts marital values is an important factor in marriage break-ups in Lagos.²⁸ The women in this case are more culpable. A situation where a married woman places civilization and city life above family values is one of the factors that have eroded marriage culture and led to high rate of marriage failures in Lagos.²⁹ Many young women these days now cherish the idea of being referred to as single mums, a practice frowned at by the society in time past. They see it as thing of pride to be referred to as a single mother and hence immediately they have one or two kids, they believe they have no need for the presence of man again, more so as this will also give them the needed freedom to roam about and enjoy all the “goodies” of the so called city life ranging from nightclubs to society parties without any encumbrance of a man checking their movements.

Beyond the issue of women’s idiosyncracies about family life and single motherhood is also the issue of economy which has turn most men to mere figure head and absentee daddies in their various homes and which had elevated most women to the status of bread-winner. As a result, such women find it difficult to be submissive to men. The result is that they become arrogant and find it difficult to see whatever belongs to them as belonging to the man being the head of the home. They, therefore, use all sorts of derogatory adjectives such as gold digger, thief and so on to qualify their husbands after which they file for divorce. In a case filed at a customary court in Agege area of Lagos state and which was reported by Vanguard newspaper, a woman complained thus about her husband and her reason for filing for divorce “My Husband is a Thief, he use to steal from me.”³⁰

Also, the idea of “Baby mama” or “Baby Daddy” which is trending among young men and women these days is also a factor. This is the idea whereby a young woman rather than seek marriage will prefer to have a child or two for a rich man in order to be entitled to baby support from such man. It is an idea popular among celebrities and “socialites” but which of course is gradually finding its way into the circle of other young men and women in the society especially in Lagos and other cosmopolitan cities of the world. Most young men are also collaborators in this as many of them prefer such lifestyle which gives them freedom and allows them to be free from responsibilities associated with fatherhood.

The influence of to called celebrities cannot also be ignored. The penchant for them to get marry and divorce as fast as they get marry is another important factor as most young ladies and men see

²⁷S. Adekola et al., “Divorce Epidemics in Lagos, 30000 Cases in Badagry Alone”, *SaturdayTribune*, 22 October 2016, p.22

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰S. Adekola, “Court Dissolves 25-year-old Marriage over Husband’s Stealing Habit”, *Vanguard*, 15 November, 2018, p.18



them as role models. Hence, people through this have come to see marriage break-ups as no big deal.

The religious institutions these days also fail to live up to expectation as even many of the so called Clergy men fail to act what they preach. Many of them are themselves caught in web of controversy these days as some of them are accused almost on a daily basis of marriage infidelity, adultery and sexual abuses of members of their congregation among many other scandals.³¹ Those who are supposed to preach against divorce in religious centres, also, do not see anything wrong in divorce.³² These scandals should be noted are more prevalent among the so called modern day Pentecostal pastors further highlighting the influence of modernization on marriages and relationships in urban cities. Of course it may be argued that majority of the cases and events being referred to did not occur in Lagos, however in this age of modernization and globalization when information travel fast and where events happening in one part of the world resonate louder and influence events in other parts of the world, it is no surprise therefore that majority of things happening in other parts of the world are copied by residents of Lagos and other urban cities in Nigeria. Therefore, we cannot divorce these external events from having influence on the internal dynamics of marriage institution in Lagos.

Modernisation at times can be very important in checking some untoward marriage practices in most urban societies in Nigeria such as the practices of primary and secondary marriages prevalent among the Irigwe people in Benue-Plateau area of Nigeria.³³ A practice whereby the woman after spending some time with her primary husband whom she had been betrothed to early proceeded to stay with another man, this time a secondary husband after the father had received a marriage payment of about thirty to forty shillings.³⁴ I doubt if any female who had moved to an urban city like Lagos would still indulge in this type of practice which would have been seen as a normal and compulsory practice had she remained in the community without which she would have lost her prestige. It has invariably prevented the bereavement on the part of the children of such marriage mobility by the mother known in Irigwe as “spoiled stomach”. Important also is the issue of preferential marriage among the Rukuba people of Benue-Plateau axis of Nigeria where there is a straight exchange of women between the component units of two exogamous moieties in which case youths and girls of each of these units pair off in formalized relationships until girls marry out in the other moieties.³⁵ In this type of marriage, the exchange pattern between the moieties works in such a way that the eldest girl of a set of uterine sisters must marry her mother’s last lover’s son and her junior sisters are preferentially married in their mother’s natal component unit

³¹Akinwale Akinyoade, Ese Walter Breaks Silence on COZA Pastor’s Sexual Abuse Scandal, Available at <https://m.guardian.ng.life/ese-walter-she-does-not-want-to-be-dragged-into-coza-sexual-abuse-scandal>, Accessed on 01-06-2019

³² See Naij. Com. “Pastor Chris Explains His Messy Divorce”, Available at <https://www.legit.ng>, Accessed on 30-05-2019. See also, Africa Independent Television, Pastor Chris Oyakhilome Denies Adultery Accusations, Threatens to Sue Journalists, Available at www.aitonline.tv, Accessed on 30-05-2019

³³Primary and Secondary Marriage practices was the type of marriage that demands that men and women be married to several spouses in differing tribal sections in the course of their adult lives and as well precludes divorce.. See W.H.Sangre, “Going Home to Mother: Traditional Marriage among the Irigwe of Benue-Plateau State, Nigeria”, *American Anthropologist Association*, New Series, Vol.71, No.6, Dec.,1969, Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/670959>, Accessed on 26-06-2013, p.1051.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵ J.C. Muller, “Preferential Marriage among the Rukuba of Benue-Plateau State, Nigeria”



which invariably introduce a delayed exchange between the component units of opposite moieties working concurrently with the straight exchange system between the moieties.³⁶

These are few of marriage practices that were peculiar to certain society in Nigeria but have been affected by modernization and the rise of urban cities because it is not surprising that most people who ordinarily would have been part and parcel of these practices assuming they live in their towns and villages tend not to be bothered about these practices once they move to the urban cities or they become exposed to modern practices.

Marriage in contemporary African society is an important institution with its own practices. An average African family or society had its own way of viewing marriage and divorce, however, many of these African contexts or views of marriage have totally been eroded. For instance modernization and the rise of urban city has also helped to abolish the dichotomy that existed in human lives in Africa which prevented certain persons from getting married to certain categories of people such as the Osu caste system in Igbo land whereby an Osu is not allowed to get married to a freeborn, however, when the two meet in an urban city and are affected by the modernizing influence of such city they put aside the caste system. Hence, due to the modernizing effect of urban cities, it is right to say an urbanised city can mean different things at different times in marriages, in the case of Osu marriage earlier mentioned, modernised city is a LEVELLER as it makes an Osu to be equal with a freeborn when they meet outside their communities while in the case of the preferential marriage among the Rukuba and the primary and secondary marriages among the Irigwe both of the Benue-Plateau state in Nigeria, modernization and urban city is an ABOLITIONIST. This is so because the practices that could not be abolished through legislations were made possible through modernization in an urbanised marriage.

The point been made is that it is possible in an urban city like Lagos to find a conglomeration of families from different parts of Nigeria where they have different forms of marriage practices living in the same compound and none will observe such marriage practice peculiar to the societies or communities they come from. This is even more than the impact colonialism and evangelization had on such practices. For instance, Osinubi pointed out that although colonialism and evangelism provided outlets for the Osu which allows them new spaces of self-fashioning in churches, schools and colonial service, however, such impacts of colonialism and evangelism pale into insignificance when compared to courtship or marriage as families rejected potential brides or grooms upon discovering their Osu ancestry.³⁷

Furthermore, the practices which could not be abolished through legislations were made possible through modernization and urbanized marriage. For instance, the interpretation of the 1956 supplementary convention on the abolition of slavery, the slave trade and institution and practices similar to slavery into the Eastern region of Nigeria legislation in 1956 generally referred to as “the Bride price Laws” was ineffective in eradicating the Osu marriage practice in eastern Nigeria since Igbo individuals and communities and not the nation-state controlled marriage.³⁸ Hence, here urbanized marriage in a modernized city serves as ABOLITIONIST.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷T.A Osinubi, “Abolition, Law, and the Osu Marriage Novel”, *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, December, 2014, p.6

³⁸*Ibid.*p.11



The point being emphasised is that it is only modernization and urbanization that can make such practices become irrelevant in marriages. Nothing more can illuminate perfectly the transformational effect of urbanized marriage in a modernized city than the admonition of Sam Okoli, a cabinet minister to Obi in the book “No Longer at Ease” by Wole Soyinka where he suggested that Obi should abandon the Umuahia Progressive Union (U.P.U), his community Umuahia with all its segregationist systems and limiting influences, move to Lagos and get married to Clara, an Osu girl where both could enjoy and lead a transformed life in the European quarters of Lagos.³⁹

CONCLUSION

The study examined the influence of modernization on internal workings or changes that occur in marriages in urban cities. It began with the comparison of the pre-modern and family system with the modern marriage. It further expatiated on the concept of Lagos as a modernized city as used in the study and concludes with some of the current issues affecting marriage institution in a modern city like Lagos.

The study found out that urbanized marriage in a modernized city like Lagos can mean different things at different periods to different people. It can function as a leveler, an abolitionist or a transformer in most cases.

The article argues that in whatever capacity it functions, urbanized marriage in a modernized city can function positively as well as negatively.

References

Interviews

Interview with Madam Emily Olaniyi, 100+, Ibadan, 20-02-2019.

Interview with Madam Olayemi Ajayi, 70+, Moremi Estate, Ile-Ife, 05-0-2019

Articles

1. Adefuye, A “Oba Akinsemoyin and the Emergence of Modern Lagos” in A. Adefuye et al.(eds.) *History of the Peoples of Lagos-state* Lagos: Literamed Publications Limited, (2002),.33-44.
2. Achebe, C, *No Longer at Ease*.(Nigeria: Heinemann Publishers, 1960), p.78
3. Adekola S et al., “Divorce Epidemics in Lagos, 30000 Cases in Badagry Alone”, *Saturday Tribune*, 22 October 2016, p.22.
4. Adekola, S “Court Dissolves 25-year-old Marriage over Husband’s Stealing Habit”, *Vanguard*, 15 November, 2018, p.18.
5. Akinwale Akinyoade, Ese Walter Breaks Silence on COZA Pastor’s Sexual Abuse Scandal, Available at <https://m.guardian.ng.life/ese-walter-she-does-not-want-to-be-dragged-into-coza-sexual-abuse-scandal>, Accessed on 01-06-2019
6. Asaju, M. *The Native Court and the Regulation of Marital Relations in Colonial Egbaland*, pp.67-70.

³⁹ C. Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*.(Nigeria: Heinemann Publishers, 1960), p.78 See also, T.A.Osinubi, “*Abolition, Law, and Osu Marriage Novel*,” p.17



7. Ayandele, E.A *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, (1974),31-32.
8. Byfield, Judith , “Women, “Marriage, Divorce and the Emerging Colonial State in Abeokuta (Nigeria), 1892-1904”, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol.30, No.1, 1996,32.
9. Kendall, D, *Sociology in Out Times: The Essentials* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company,2009), Available at <http://www.amazon.co.uk>, Accessed on 02-04-2018.
10. Knobl, W *Theories that won't Pass Away: The Never-ending Story of Modernisation Theory'* in G. Delanty and E.F. Isin (eds.) *Handbook of Historical Sociology*.
11. Muller, J.C “Preferential Marriage among the Rukuba of Benue-Plateau State, Nigeria, *American Anthropology*, 71(6), 2009, 1057-1061
12. Osinubi, T.A “Abolition, Law, and the Osu Marriage Novel”, *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, December, 2014, p.6

13. Rachel Jean-Baptiste, “The Option of the Judicial Path” Disputes over Marriage, Divorce, and Extra-Marital Sex in Colonial Court in Libreville, Gabon (1939-1959)”, *Cahiers d' Etudes Africaines*, 47, (2007),651-652
14. Roberts, Richard, “Representation, Structure and Agency: Divorce in the French Soudan During the Early Twentieth Century”, *Journal of African History*, 40, 1999, 389
15. Parr, M “Marriage Ordinances for Africans” *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol.17, No.1, Jan., 1947, p.3, Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1156934>, Accessed on 11-12-2014
16. Roberts Richard and Klein Martin “The Banamba Slave Exodus of 1905 and the decline of Slavery in the Western Sudan”, *Journal of African History*, 22, 1980,375-394.
17. Roberts Richard “Representation, Structure and Agency: Divorce in the French Soudan During the Early Twentieth Century”, *Journal of African History*, 40, 1999, 390.
- Winston, K “Modernisation Theory: Definition, Development and Claims”, Available at <http://www.study.com/academy/lesson/mod>. Accessed on 23-03-2018
18. Naij. Com. “Pastor Chris Explains His Messy Divorce”, Available at <https://www.legit.ng>, Accessed on 30-05-2019.
19. Africa Independent Television, Pastor Chris Oyakhilome Denies Adultery Accusations, Threatens to Sue Journalists, Available at www.aitonline.tv, Accessed on 30-05-2019
20. Sangree, W.H “Going Home to Mother: Traditional Marriage among the Irigwe of Benue-Plateau State, Nigeria”, *American Anthropologist Association*, New Series, Vol.71, No.6, Dec.,1969, Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/670959>, Accessed on 26-06-2013, p.1051.

