

## *Iyawo Ile* as a Traditional Peacemaking Institution among the Yoruba Wives of Southwestern Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

Yoruba women have always played a unique role in the reconciliation and peace process in the extended family in traditional society as a whole, and that this puts them in a strong position to encourage dialogue between disputing parties. However, much work still needs to be done in regard of the role of women as peacemakers in traditional family settings in Africa. This study appraises the *Iyawo Ile* traditional institution in Yoruba as the transmitters of peace values through the use of diplomatic measures such as secrecy, negotiation and respect for the elders.

**Keywords:** *Iyawo Ile*, Peacemaking, Yoruba, dialogue, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

The Yoruba people are predominantly occupants of the southwestern region of Nigeria. They can also be found in Kwara, Kogi, Benue, and Delta States. Yoruba people are also found in other countries along the coast of West Africa such as the Republic of Benin, Togo and also in South American countries such as Brazil and Cuba (Lawal 1996). The Yoruba people have rich traditional wedding culture and beliefs. One of the beliefs is that a new wife is married into the entire compound family, and not just into an extended or nuclear family. Indeed, all women married into a compound family are considered to be part of a group known as “*Iyawo Ile*” the wives in the family. There is hierarchy in the structure of *Iyawo Ile* in Yoruba land. The senior wives often exercise superior authority over the junior ones. Notwithstanding the presence of hierarchy, there is unity and love among the co-wives; although a newly married wife, into a family, is considered a stranger in the family and will remain at the bottom of the hierarchy till another woman is married into the same family, she still enjoys some rights and privileges too. These women are fond of expressing the love that binds them together by calling themselves pet names such as *Iyawo mi* (my wife), *Iyale mi* (my senior wife), *Ojuloge* (the pretty one), *Idi-Ileke* (one that waist-beads fits), among several other affectionate names. Note that this is not an aberrant quaint custom neither does it have sexual connotation for the women, it is an essential part of the closely integrated social system that promotes the culture of peace and unity among the women.

Iyawo Ile in Yoruba land goes beyond just a gathering of wives in a family. It is an indigenous institution accorded with a lot of responsibilities in the family (Akanmode 2015). These women are responsible for welcoming new wives into the family. The glamorous welcoming ceremony, which normally takes effect before, during and after the wedding ceremony, is a ritualistic practice meant to initiate the new wife, married into the family. This ceremony is accompanied by songs, dance, food, washing of legs and words of admonition for the bride. In the past, precisely during the colonial period, these women were in charge of ensuring the chastity and purity of the new wife. They assure this by carrying out background checks on the woman before marriage and also, on the wedding night, would be part of those that will wait anxiously to receive a stained handkerchief as a proof of the bride's virginity; this wait, is to celebrate one of them, the new one who passed the virginity test proudly. All these steps were considered as important in bringing in a new person to be a part of the family. Virtues were thus, in forms of good character, decency and purity.

An Iyawo Ile must be clean, respectful, caring, loving and hospitable. She must know how to cook, not only for her immediate family, but also, must be able to cater for the extended family. She is expected to be discreet (as nothing kept in her care must go missing). She takes credit for the progress of her husband and gets repudiated for his failure (even when she is innocent). The success of the children is also accorded to her ability to 'mother' them well. Above all, she is expected to bear children and add to the numbers of the family. All the aforementioned qualities and expectations from a wife more often than not, serve as great burden, beyond what a single woman can carry. In order to alleviate some of the effects of these expectations, the Yoruba women synergise on the platform of Iyawo Ile traditional institution to sustain the peace and harmony of the entire family.

One of the critical outcomes of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was the adoption of gender machineries. Before Beijing, more than 20 years ago, many countries did not have the formal structures to advance gender participation in peacemaking. It was an ad hoc endeavour. There were no milestones and monitoring mechanism. However, there was passion. This passion sometimes evaporates and so, the issue of establishing gender machineries around the world started to gain ground. It is worthy to note at this point that Yoruba women have always played a unique role in the reconciliation process in several societies and their place in society puts them in a strong position to encourage dialogue between disputing parties. This study explores the structure of Iyawo Ile as Yoruba traditional institution, the peacemaking techniques employed by these women to promote family cohesion and the changes that had visited the opera-modus of this institution as well as the prospects for continuity in contemporary times.

### Statement of the Problem

There have been many reviews about the difference that gender machineries make in peacemaking efforts around the world (Agbaje 2017; Deutch, Coleman and Marcus 2006; Gizelis 2011; Ibok and Ogar 2018; Strickland and Duvury 2003; Ukpolo 2010). However, there is still gap in the areas of what women do as stakeholders and custodians in managing and maintaining the peace in the home especially in recent times with the increase in the rate of divorce in Africa (Clark and Brauner-Otto 2015; Enwereji 2008; Lazarus, Rush, Dibiana and Monks 2017; Ntoimo and Akokuwebe, 2014). Specifically, the efforts of Yoruba women in advancing the course of peace in their various families remain a huge underutilized resources. The Yoruba women have been crucial in preserving social order and when communities collapsed, in restoring tranquility yet their potential contribution to peace and security was still under-valued and they were still under-represented at the decision-making level. Conflict resolution and prevention called for creative and flexible approaches and these women have responded to this call at different levels one of which is their important traditional platform of Iyawo Ile.

Quite a lot of literature have been committed to expressing the status of women within the framework of family in Africa (Afonja 1990; Berger and White 1999; Hakansson 1989; Heaton and Hirschl 1999 Kjerland 1998; Msila and Netshitangani 2016; Talbot 1926). Most especially, scholars have focused on the roles and responsibilities of women as wives in Africa in general and among the Yoruba of the Southwest Nigeria, in particular (Aluko, Onabanjo and Alliyu 2011; Denzer 1994; Familusi 2012; Familusi and Oke 2019; Johnson 2010; Levine 1982; Lloyd 1966; 1970; Otite 1991). However, there is still a significant gap in the areas of capturing some of the female-based traditional institutions that had helped in maintaining social order in Yoruba land among which is the tradition of Iyawo Ile. The versatility of this category of women in making peace in Yoruba family as axiom to a more harmonious society have not received adequate scholarly attention. It is in the light of the above that this study explores and appraises their role in peacemaking using Iyawo Ile Institution as a platform.

### Literature Review

The Yoruba family, according to Lloyd (1974), has descent groups as its antithesis. The concept of family starts with the descent group or lineage, which stresses group loyalty rather than individual independence. This descent has been described as predominantly agnatic, through the father and in few exceptional cases (in Ekiti, Ondo and part of Kogi States) are cognatic in descent patterns. A family can trace their origin to a person and or group. This does not exempt the dead because they are the ancestors and are believed to retain their interests in the affairs of the family (Guyer 1990; Kopytoff

2006; Olaoba 2005). Inherent in pre-colonial Yoruba family is the hierarchical structure whereby seniority is assigned by birth, marriage, gender, titles, physical ability, and supernatural endowment (Lloyd 1974). Fadipe (1970:103) describes the intense interaction of the kinsmen and co-wives of the traditional compound thus:

A large part of the day is spent in the open ... everyone eats and drinks and talks in the full view of everybody else ... quarrels and rebukes take place within the full hearing of neighbours... each individual's weaknesses and vices are open to the observation of others.

From the excerpt above, only a limited amount of privacy is possible hence the reason Yoruba women employ some of the traditional mechanisms to deploy their peacemaking fete, often secretly.

The Yoruba perceive a fundamental difference between men and women especially in terms of concealing secrets (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994). While men are professed not to possess the ability to keep secrets, women are reputed for having the ability to be self-contained. This ability is described by Crowther (1852 cited in Drewal and Drewal 1983) as the concept of Iroju (endurance, resilience). The ability to endure and keep secrets, therefore, was said to have been derived from Iroju. In essence, Yoruba women have mastered the arts of self-control, patience and perseverance. These are peaceful virtues attributed to Yoruba women. Secrecy is also considered a virtue as well as source of power for women. Abiodun (1989:5) illustrates this by narrating the mythology of Osun deity in Yoruba land thus:

...They did not know that Osun was a witch and that God had chosen her as the guardian of all the good things sent along with them: They never knew she was a witch. When they were coming from heaven, God chose all good things. He also chose their keeper and this was a woman...

The Yoruba are not exempted when it comes to family conflicts. The popular causes of conflicts are non-support by the husband, trouble with co-wives, trouble with in-laws and lack of children Ademowo 2015; Ajayi and Buhari 2014). All the outlined causes of conflicts, among other issues, are subjects of deliberation at Iyawo Ile gatherings/meetings. However, the fact that anger is given very little overt expression or is expressed diplomatically in noncommittal sarcastic words whose literal meaning is the opposite of the true meaning of the speaker is observed by Fadipe (1970).

According to Verger (1965), it is the prerogatives of the mothers to moderate forces within the society in order to assure a just apportionment of power, wealth and prestige. It is also their responsibilities to maintain moral, laws and conducts. Diplomacy includes the ability to communicate through gestures and innuendos, combining wisdom with a

capacity to be devious and to keep the inner self hidden in the interests of the entire family (Babatunde 1992; Lienhardt 1980). In similar vein, Aluko et al. (2011) mention the centrality of family to the maintenance of law and order in Yoruba societies. According to them, feminine gender is not always synonymous with oppression and domination rather family well-being is mediated by the principle of complementarity between males and females. In support, women are considered as highly differentiated group of social actors who possessed valuable resources and capacities (Bouta and Frerks 2002:27). African women are also perceived as crucial to maintenance of sanity with great strength and imagination (Nnaemeka 2005: 31). Furthermore, Ekejiuba (2005) mentions that women of Africa are very active independent actors, shouldering responsibilities, taking risks, making different contingency plans, striving to maximise their livelihood options as well as having positive impacts of efforts on their dependants.

In a bid to portray the role of women in Yoruba family, Makinde (2004) and Abiodun (1989) explore the concept of motherhood and how it empowers women in Yorubaland. Makinde looks at the various ways by which Yoruba culture views women such as priestesses, wives, daughters, witches, princesses and mothers. He further narrates how motherhood in Yoruba culture can enhance the considerations given to women at the policy formulation stage in contemporary times. Traditional institutions have different approaches to conflict management and peace building. Boege (2006) states that there are as many different traditional approaches to conflict transformation as there are different societies and communities with a specific history, a specific culture and specific custom even in the global south. Traditional practice, therefore, refers to the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities around the world. Such is knowledge based in the practice of *Iyawo Ile* among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, which this study thus elucidates.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts cultural feminist theory. This is because it emphasises the fundamental personality differences between men and women, and that women's differences are special and should be celebrated (Echols 1983). This theory supports the notion that there are biological differences between men and women. Cultural feminism is the theory that seeks to overcome sexism by celebrating women's special qualities and experiences (Ritzer 2007). Cultural feminism attributes to those differences distinctive and superior virtues in women as a basis for sisterhood and connectivity. It stresses on feminine unity, solidarity and shared identity and hence encourages building a shared women's culture. This theory is appropriate for this study because peacemaking among wives in Yoruba land is all about care, cooperation, and egalitarianism. These virtues, inherent in Yoruba women can be argued as basis for their inclusion in decision-making processes, not only at home, but also, in the society at large.

### **Methodology**

This study is qualitative in its approach. Data were collected from primary sources comprising of 60 women purposively selected to represent the six states that make up the southwestern part of Nigeria namely; Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti States. Ten women were selected from each state for participation in this study. The women between the age brackets of 50 to 80 years, who have sufficient knowledge of, and have participated in Iyawo Ile activities were purposively selected for this study. Oral in-depth interviews and group interviews were the main instruments of obtaining data from these women. Data collected were transcribed and analysed to establish homogeneity as well as minor differences in the structure of Iyawo Ile institution among women in each community. Secondary sources of data include textbook, journal article and the internet. Data collected were transcribed and content analysed.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Even though the traditional Yoruba families were organised and structured in a way that encouraged cohesiveness and peaceful co-existence within the society, from time to time, like any other human society, they experienced conflicts. One of the regulatory machineries for managing the conflicts is the concept of Iyawo Ile (women in the family). It includes all the wives married to a particular family either home or abroad. It is a bond that unites all the women beyond the physical. Their contributions, ranged from their respective homes to the entire family at large. The viability of these women in promoting peace could not be undermined. They are pillars of morale constructed in order to maintain peace in the lineage. According to a participant (in-depth interview 2018), the meetings of Iyawo Ile can either be scheduled or spontaneous. Spontaneity often occurs during ceremonies when the wives have to come together to cook, clean and prepare for the occasion. It is a common practice that a wife will express her concerns to the hearings of other wives and they too, will offer her solutions even as they continue their ceremonial shores.

“Whenever there is a family occasion, the Iyawo Ile are the party planners, who choose clothes, cook food and add glamour to the party. In the process, we discuss family matters and offer advice to ourselves without our husbands knowing about it...” (In-depth interview 2018).

In the domestic sphere, the study reveals that the sight of a wife is a sight of peace. This is because the traditional Yoruba women had the prerogatives of ensuring peace and tranquility at home. A wife is not expected to be adulterous, greedy, dirty, or possess bad manners since all these attributes are believed to trigger crisis in the domestic arena. In a family setting, issues such as envy and discontentment might breed conflict

between co-wives living in a compound. Since conflict is inevitable, a wife is expected to facilitate quick reconciliation through dialogue and sometimes, by reporting the matter to the senior wife in order for peace to reign in the compound. It was forbidden for a wife to publicly fight with her husband.

When making peace in the domestic arena, women had been adjudged the following qualities: First, a woman promotes understanding between herself and her co-wives. Second, she bonds her family and her husband's family and third, she builds a bridge between her family and her community. Thus, Iyawo Ile is an institution that has a dual sex and political system of cooperation which allowed for substantial female representation and involvement in governance and administration of a family. The gathering of Iyawo Ile is a place where general negotiation skills could be learned and applied in a wide range of activities. It is thus revealed that the traditional practice of Iyawo Ile as media of peacemaking processes create an environment of safety and security where family conflict issues are dealt with tactfully. Some of the discovered techniques employed by wives in Yoruba land to deal with their family issues are:

### Secrecy

The first discovered mechanism of maintaining family orderliness among Yoruba wives is the oath of secrecy (Drewal 1977). The rationale behind their secrecy is the concept of *Ori* (an interior personality of a woman). It is believed that this inner personality controls all thoughts and actions of a woman in the homestead hence the warning to an aspiring bride thus

‘Ile oko lo n lo ni  
Mu ori lo, jowo ma mu ewa lo  
Ewa a maa sa, Ori eni nii selegbe leyin eni’

Meaning:

As you are going to your husband's house  
Have in your possession, your (spiritual) head  
Please, do not rely on your beauty (physical head)  
Beauty will fade but your head will always be there to help you.

(Group interview 2018).

Expressions such as the above are rendered to buttress the fact that the character and potential of an individual actually reside in an unseen entity known as the Ori. Secrecy among Yoruba wives is linked with Ori because the concept of Ori symbolises spiritual intuition and destiny (Camara 1996). It is believed that a woman can preserve her dignity, heal herself, maintain a balanced physical and spiritual disposition if she imbibe her

inner power- Ori. Ori is thus a repository of matters that have the potentials of distorting a normal peaceful coexistence among the Yoruba family. The Yoruba wives have imbibed the use of Ori to keep secrets and sustain equilibrium by aligning earthly experience with the divine. This unseen but important concept serves as the phenomenon within which secrecy among the Iyawo Ile can be located. The ability of women to keep secrets within the framework of Iyawo Ile institution in Yoruba land has informed the perception of the institution as a form of mini-cult of women (Odugbesan 1969). A Yoruba wife detest shame not only for herself but also, for her co-wives and thus will encourage openness within the Iyawo Ile ambience while maintaining the secrets toward outsiders. The women value what is known as *Asiri* (Secret) among each other. One major reason for this is the fact that a mistake on a part of a wife within a family often challenges the morality of the other wives hence the efficacy of Iyawo Ile institution is questioned. In other words, the shame of one is the shame of all. An informant) puts it in a song thus:

“Iru kii le n bara yin so 2x  
E porokitibo, e n tojo atike  
Iru kii le n bara yin so”

Meaning:

What exactly do you discuss with yourselves? 2x  
You form a caucus just to discuss cosmetics issues  
what exactly do you discuss with yourselves?

(In-depth interview 2018)

The above expression is usually from a dissatisfied husband, who has issues with his wife and thus, challenging the other wives within the family of not indoctrinating his wife properly. In order to adequately secure their homes, the women encourage secrecy. As a result, the women avoid any member of Iyawo Ile that is reputed for divulgence. Secrets bordering on sex and sexualities, abortion, sickness, relationships with husband and in-laws among others are discussed among the Iyawo Ile.

Furthermore, it is believed that inscrutable nature of wives’ secrets intensifies their powers in the minds of their husbands. Moreover, thus study finds out that married Yoruba women are expected to maintain good relationship with their own family hence the need for a level of secrecy while dealing with her husband’s family. This, according to Oyewumi (1997)) and Eades (1980) will enable her keep her position in her lineage of birth, including rights and obligations even after marriage. This is expedient because a Yoruba woman is expected to keep an intact relationship with her kinsmen, even after marriage. This practice is very common among Ekiti, Ondo, Akoko and Ijesha people (Group interview 2018). Thus, young wives, who are impatient and quick to anger are



meticulously schooled in the act of secrecy and perseverance (*Iroju*). The senior wives will educate them on the importance of female mysterious disposition and the need for less fickleness and dissipation of negative energy. The peacemaking ability of a wife, therefore, lies in the un-knowableness and the continued effort to achieve positive outcomes despite difficulties or oppositions. Thus, the act of secrecy has been adjudged as instruments of peacemaking among Yoruba women.

### **Cross Examination**

Some specific forms of peacemaking deliberations are identified to be used in many domestic-related situations among the Iyawo Ile in Yoruba land. One of the techniques employed during peace deliberation by women of study is known as Ìjíròrò or Iforowero-cross examination (Group interview 2018). This is a method through which women settle differences using arbitration and negotiation. Ìjíròrò is a process through which compromise or agreement is reached while avoiding argument. This method is also known as Iyànnàyán (exploring the root cause of a matter). The skill of Ìfòròwérò could be of great benefit in resolving any difference that might arise between spouses and or among the women. In any disagreement, individuals understandably aimed at achieving the best possible outcome for their position. In this light, it is stated that the principles of fairness, seeking mutual benefit and maintaining a relationship are the keys to a successful outcome of any Ìjíròrò. The Yoruba women, therefore, encourage the use of deep communication while cross examining every word in order to establish facts as medium of making peace in the family.

Peacemaking among the Iyawo Ile entails that the elders among the women preside over the meeting. This is because the elders are believed to possess the wealth of experience needed for the process. They are also responsible for the cross-examination by interrogating the cause of the disagreement after which they offer viable advice and solutions that will bring peace to the affected home (Group interview 2018). The only ingredient needed for the success of this process is usually the truth. Honesty and sincerity are thus the main ingredients of a successful peace negotiation. It is the role of the peacemaker to instil this value in the process and insist on a commitment to truth-telling from everyone participating in the process. It is discovered that Yoruba women and men differ in the ways they talk about their conflicts. Women discussed at length about the context of conflicts, particularly focusing on their involvement in the relationship with the other party while men tend to focus more on themselves (Group interview 2018). Once the parties involved in a conflict agree to their grievances and indicate readiness for peaceful resolution, the senior wives will prevail over the situation by making peace between them appropriately. The outcome is usually a display of total peace between the conflicting parties. Iforowero, as peacemaking method, therefore,

has been employed to promote openness and facilitate quick reconciliation for ages among the wives in Yoruba land.

Until the arrival of the colonialists, which led to the adoption of western legal structure, Yoruba communities have used cross-examination to settle their disputes on the basis of traditional norms. The married women have an age-long tradition of local dispute resolution and peace building in accordance with their respective customary laws, most of which are not codified. The Iyawo Ile tradition is considered part of the day-to-day life of the community and is a reflection of the desire to maintain peace domestically. The findings of this study harmonised with the idea of kinship (*Okun ebi*) solidarity as postulated by Lloyd (1970).

### **Respect**

This study also found out that the existence of Iyawo Ile traditional institution among Yoruba women can be likened to a mini-tribunal in the traditional domestic arena, where the affairs of women were undertaken (Group interview 2018). As mentioned earlier, the precedence is usually handled by the eldest woman in the family compound. She constantly provides advice and guidance and in case of conflict, she would make the conflicting parties express their grievances. She awards blames if there is any, and emphasised the importance of peace, using her past experiences as tools. What became evident in this finding was that the women shared an overriding desire for peace, however deep their differences.

It was discovered that, most times, cases like this are usually resolved easily due to what is referred to as *ìbòwòfágbà* (respect for the elders). The word ‘elders’ in this context, is not limited to the presence of the elderly women, but it also referred to the family ancestors. The outcome of this method of peacemaking has been adjudged successful due to the awe and respect given to the elders in a family. According to a study participant (In-depth interview 2018), it is a taboo to disrespect the older wives in a family hence seniority is key in the operation of Iyawo Ile. According to her, these women are not only advanced in age but also, in experience. In her words;

“They have learnt to take life easy as some of them have had their shares of life’s ups and downs

It often seem as if they possess some supernatural disposition to conflicts and all they want is peace”

(In-depth interview 2018).

The elders among the Iyawo-Ile are held in high esteem, have the prerogatives of presiding over peace activities and also, possess the authority to enforce peace among co-wives. The experience they have acquired represents wisdom to the younger

generation; hence, listening to them and yielding to their instruction is a requisite for peace in the family. Nevertheless, some of the elderly women interviewed mention that they are also learning from the perspectives of the younger ones.

### **Change and Continuity**

Interviewed elders expressed their fear of Iyawo Ile practice going into extinction. This is because younger women are moving away from their historical heritage and might not respect traditional institutions. Indeed, as with many gerontocratic African societies, there is considerable inter-generational tension in many Yoruba communities. One major reason given for this disengagement by the contemporary Yoruba wives is modernism and its attendant challenges such as individualism, intensive workload as means of survival and the use of technology – which had adversely affected face-to-face interaction. Notwithstanding, some young Yoruba wives still articulate a strong respect for traditional peacemaking models such as Iyawo Ile institution. They refer to the elderly wives as sources of knowledge, they uniformly assert that communal bonds are still legitimate even though fast becoming insignificant. Overall, the young interviewee appeared to be less likely to engage in the ritualised interaction common to Iyawo Ile in Yoruba land.

Nevertheless, peacemaking techniques exclusive to women are still considered to be very effective as they offer an opportunity to explore and discover that which is as yet unimagined. This is so because in many family conflicts, there are still issues that are forbidden for collective hearings and are mostly dealt with among women, especially women living in peri-urban and rural areas. For example, the anxiety of dealing with conflicts emerging from sexual and economic dissatisfaction may be too uncomfortable. Peacemaking among co-wives, therefore, allows anxiety to be contained and managed using some of the discussed mechanisms as yardsticks. As a result, women would experience relief at being able to talk about issues that have irked them.

Furthermore, this study ascertains the fact that peacemaking allows new visions and ideas about relationships to be explored. According to a participant:

“As Iyawo Ile, we see ourselves as one. We learn from each other irrespective of our ages and classes. The ones from the cities exchange gifts and ideas with the ones in the village and Vice-versa. We work together for the unity of the entire family. Display of pride and discrimination is highly discouraged”

(Group interview 2018)

The above is a primary difference of value between peacemaking and other forms of conflict resolution. It is observed that the female peacemaker often took on the obligation of protecting everyone, seeing that all are given equal respect and dignity as well as

freedom of expression. It is, therefore, evident that traditional peacemaking techniques used by wives in Yoruba land could address some of the proximate factors that normally fuel conflict at home. Perhaps, that was the reason for the low level of divorce recorded during pre-colonial times (Adeokun 1983; Oguntomisin 2004; Oguntuyi 1979). It has also been revealed that traditional methods of peacemaking among women can provide appropriate, sustainable and long-term peace. It is worthy to note that while peace processes that are exclusive to women might not likely put a stop to domestic conflicts, it can help prevent small disputes among family members from escalating into bigger conflicts. In essence, there is a need to re-assess, modify and adopt some of the peacemaking techniques discovered during this study, which the Yoruba wives have applied in the past, for promoting peace among families in contemporary times.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The study has been useful in proving that traditional and localised peacemaking methods are still trusted by the general population, thereby promoting the indispensability of women in traditional peacemaking process. The women that constitute the Iyawo Ile membership in any given Yoruba society are reported as the transmitters of cultural values to their progeny and to future generations through the use of diplomatic measures such as secrecy, negotiation and respect for the elders. It is discovered that the women's sole responsibility is to offer solace to their family and by extension, to the society at large.

Thus, women are believed to be active intermediaries in conflict situations in all spheres of life, considering the fact that they are undertaking reconnaissance missions to assess possibilities for peace and subsequently facilitating communication and peace negotiations in the homestead that serves as the smallest unit of any society. It is established that wives in Yoruba land employ mediation as a method of making peace. In addition, the study discovered negotiation (*ḷjíròrò, òyànànyán orḷf̣ Ìṛ Ìwéṛ Ì*) as a technique by which women settled differences and through which compromise or agreement is reached while avoiding argument. It has also been made evident that honesty and sincerity are crucial to a successful negotiation. Thus, in making peace, truth-telling and truth-seeking are honoured, integrity was valued, and trust was given in the process of negotiation by the Iyawo Ile.

Taken as a whole, the contributions suggested that tide is changing as far as Iyawo Ile practice is concerned. However, the pace and direction of change has been uneven. In some areas, change is evolutionary or glacial while it is slowed by entrenched traditional institutions in another. A determinant factor for change is the level of urbanisation and modernity that has taken place in the area. Perhaps, an enemy of peace restoration in modern Yoruba families is the long delays in resolving conflicts using

western methods. Adopting some of the traditional techniques for making peace such as examined in the study needed to be seriously contemplated by the contemporary women. Bringing together both local and urban, literate and illiterate women is crucial at this point. This will contribute to the spiritual and social capital as well as human potential and moral imagination capacity needed to transform conflict to peace in the society. The study revealed that traditional and indigenous approaches to peacemaking could offer corrective measures to the failings of the western peacemaking model that often leads to separation and divorce hence any temptation to romanticise western and traditional peacemaking must be resisted.

Extensive research into the diverse contributions of women towards peacemaking will enhance the appreciation of women and their roles in peacemaking especially in the domestic sphere. It is thus recommended that more scholarly attention be directed towards the study of women and their contributions to peacemaking. The culture of communality, within which Iyawo Ile institution is situated, should be inculcated into the minds of the younger generation through values, attitudes and traditional peace education.

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