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The Metaphysical, Sexism and an African Culture

Christopher E. Ukhun

Introduction

Godwin Sogolo proposes an orientation or "option in African Philosophy" or scholarship whereby an African intellectual or philosopher,

Start[s] by looking into the logical structure of certain important beliefs widely held in his culture. He may, for instance, examine the conceptual issues of how immaterials such as 'human intentions', 'incantations', 'spoken words', etc., can possibly aid the pharmacological powers of herbs administered for cure. Does this belief presuppose, in the minds of those who entertain it, a continuity between the physical and the non-physical? . . . Is the belief governed by a unique system of logic?¹

Apparently, Sogolo is advocating a dual role for African philosophers who, apart from engaging in the abstract exercise dictated by the nature of their subject, should also be concerned about the utilitarian relevance, or what might be called "useful philosophy," that should get the African philosophers "out and about into the

business of examining" at a critical level, the basis of socio-cultural issues that affect their society.

Following Sogolo's recommendation for African intellectuals, Olusegun Oladipo asked a rhetorical question as to what should be the commitment of the African philosopher in the contemporary world.² One of the necessary conditions for ascribing commitment and relevance to oneself and to one's discipline is the response to the demand for social responsibility³ which is a legitimate demand that any society can make of its scholars.⁴ Reiterating Julius Nyerere's opinion, Oladipo asserts that the commitment of the African scholar is both a responsibility and a challenge⁵ given the symbiosis, which exists between the African scholar and his society. Oladipo has indicated that what the African does should certainly not be a commitment to knowledge for its own sake. Rather, it would be a commitment to Africa, its problems, hopes and aspirations.⁶ Oladipo opines that the African scholar would have to put whatever intellectual skills he has acquired to the service of the African quest for growth, development, justice and freedom.⁷

Against that backdrop, I have taken on the task of examining the question of sexism targeted against the African woman, especially the rural Esan woman in Edo State in the Southern part of Nigeria. Admittedly, over the past decade, discussions regarding the status of African women have grown in every respect. Unfortunately, considerations or assessment and understanding of the actual condition of the African woman are often marred by very persuasive arguments that deny the existence of sexism targeted against the African woman.

This paper does not attempt to chronicle all the arguments on sexism against African women. Instead, I posit an undiscussed and unarticulated metaphysical basis of sexism directed at African women using the rural Esan woman as a focal point. It is my hope that the present

discussion will strengthen the volume of literature which exposes sexism in which women in Africa are victims, and that it will provide another perspective regarding the status and condition of rural African women. This is not to say that there are no instances of sexism in Africa in which men are the victims. Indeed, it is on record that in some African societies, some women are reported to sit on men. O.W. Ogbomo and Q.O. Ogbomo inform us that Iyede women were very much like their Ibibio counterparts who had an "institution of sitting on a man" who is sanctioned for violating "customary laws" which relate to women. However, it is common knowledge that sexism as a phenomenon is targeted more against women than men. Sexism against African women is more demonstrated.

Is Sexism Against African Women a Farce?

There is a plethora of assertions which deny sexism against African women. Such assertions particularly indicate that precolonial rural African women did not experience oppression as has often been reported in the writings of Western and non-Western feminists and historians. With an historical mind-set, Wilson Ogbomo argued that the gender experience prevailing in Nigeria today is an off-spring of colonial arrangement. This arrangement was necessitated by administrative convenience. According to Ogbomo,

the present gender order in Nigeria, in which men dominate public domain can be said to be a carry-over from colonial period. The ruling British colonial officials did not see women as equal to men. The thinking was based on the Victorian concept of womanhood, which argued that there were separate spheres for male and female . . . under colonialism, Nigerian women lost their traditional areas of responsibility and participation.⁹

The importance of Ogbomo's thesis is not so much about indicating the "Eurocentric bias" in reporting the history of the African woman, but to report that in reality, the African woman was not as passive as many people think. Drawing from the existential situation in Owan society of Edo-speaking people of Southern Nigeria, Ogbomo posits that Owan women were far from being passive. The issue of female passivity was only a reality in the minds of colonial officials and their African male allies.¹⁰

Speaking on the status of women in Iyede tribe of Delta State of Nigeria, O.W. Ogbomo and Q.O. Ogbomo agree that although Iyede women could have experienced sexism, they exercised considerable power in the past among Iyede people.¹¹ The refutation of female passivity in precolonial Africa is highlighted by the claim that amongst other things, Iyede women were active in economic and religious spheres. Admittedly, Ogbomo and Ogbomo reiterate that in Iyede, both men and women participated in fishing. It was also their role to appease the gods and goddesses of their rivers to release many fish¹² for the well being of their society.

David Sweetman is also of the view that the status or condition of the African woman was never a sordid one. Sweetman seems to suggest that Africa is not a continent riddled with absolute sexism against women. In his work, Sweetman identifies African women leaders throughout the length and breath of Africa. Women such as Kahina of the Maghreb, Dona Beatrice of Zaire and Nehanda of Zimbabwe were cited by him as women of valor and vision who played formidable roles in the affairs of Africa. Kahina, for instance, was a widow and was already very old . . . legend has it that she was the queen of Aures for thirty years.¹³

An extract from Ezeanya provides credence to the non-existence of sexism against rural African women. In this connection, explicit reference is made to the role African women played in religious matters in Africa. For instance, divination is not the prerogative of one sex. In

Zululand, for example, ninety-five percent of Zulu diviners are married women, and it is believed by the Zulus that the welfare of the community depends on these female diviners.¹⁴ In Iswana, divination is also open to men and women.¹⁵

It will be significant, in the issue under review, to consider the claims of P.K. Uchendu. According to him, people are under the impression that the status of African women in the pre-colonial epoch was that which was demeaned, and that women were subjects of discrimination and relegation in Africa. Uchendu argues that this impression is uncalled for in light of the cardinal political roles women have played in the communities they lived. Citing the case of pre-colonial Nigeria, Uchendu submits that,

Women have however emerged and played outstanding roles in the political life of their societies. History, folktales and oral traditions in all the major ethnic groups of the country had places of honor and respect for such great women. Queen Amina of Zaira stood out among the people of Nigeria, because of her widespread conquests in the sixteenth century, while among the Yoruba and the Igbo, woman like Madam Tinubu the Iyalode of Abeokuta, and Okwei of Igili of Osomiri stood out respectively in the minds of Nigerian historians as great women politicians.¹⁶

Uchendu's contention is given some credibility by Bolanle Awe. Awe observes that especially in the pre-colonial times, women in Africa were not docile or mere observers of the affairs of Africa. Her views are that women brought fundamental changes in their various spheres of influence, influences which were enduring. Awe draws our attention to the case of Inkpi, a princess

of the Igala royal family who is noted to have saved her territory or society from the Ijukuns by making a supreme sacrifice. In order not to face extermination from the Ijukuns, a priest Edigi . . . often referred to as a medicine man advised Ayagba (the Prince of Igala) to sacrifice his most prized possession to save his people.¹⁷

To Ayagba (the prince of Igala), his most prized possessions were his children and of them all, he loved his princess most. He was naturally unwilling to sacrifice her, but Inkpi herself soon released her father from the difficulty by dying to save her people. She died in a heroic way by burying herself alive.¹⁸

The disposition of I.G. Rybalkina is in consonance with our earlier discussions. She notes that the history of African women has never been on the trivial side, that African women have constantly exerted their influence on matters arising in their environments. Rybalkina advances the claim that in African history there are many well-known women who were great rulers, outstanding stateswomen, military leaders, fighters against colonialism, and champions of peace and independence of their motherland.¹⁹ Corroborating Rybalkina's exposé, Ama Ata Adioo acknowledges that Africa, over five centuries, produced countless women soldiers and military strategists, many of whom died in the struggle to rescue their societies from external invasion.²⁰

For Oyewumi Oyeronke, gender and sexism are colonial constructs. Her discussions are in support of Ogbomo's earlier contention that sexism against African women has a colonial origin and had no bearing with anything culturally ingrained. Against this backdrop and relying on Gayle Rubin, she states that gender was not an organizing principle in Yoruba society prior to colonization by the West. The social categories "men" and "women" were nonexistent, and hence gender systems

were not in place.²¹ She argues further that the primary principle of organization was seniority, defined by relative age.²²

Quoting Judith Lorber, Oyeronke says that the social categories, "women" and "men" are social constructs deriving from the Western assumption that "physical bodies are social bodies."²³ In fact, chapter two of her book, *The Invention of Women: Making An African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, is an explicit representation of the concerns about the incorrect impression of the condition of women in pre-colonial Africa. That is to say that sexism against pre-colonial African women never existed.

The foregoing arguments are several views, among others, that we are invited to accept as providing evidence of the nonexistence of sexism targeted at African women.

The Metaphysical

Levy-Bruhl's account of primitive peoples has given rise to controversies. Such controversies arise from his contention that primitive peoples have practices which differ from our own, because unlike ourselves, they have minds the structure of which is not suited to logical thought.²⁴ Particular to this, is the trivialization of Azande's belief in the metaphysical, such as spirits and witches, as lacking logical and rational import.

Anthony Appiah makes a distinction between "formal philosophy" and "folk philosophy". Just as Odera Oruka, the intention is to call the former worthless or debased philosophy characterized by illogicality, dogmatism and irrationality. What Appiah calls "folk philosophy" is often associated with African belief systems. For Appiah, African belief in spirits and the phenomenon of witchcraft is considered by the West as nonsensical, illogical and irrational²⁵ because it cannot be subjected to and is not held on the basis of rigorous method of analysis. The African belief in witchcraft is dogmatic and it makes

sense only within one culture and the corresponding conceptual framework. It cannot be translated into or understood within a different cultural scheme; hence it cannot meet the requirements of universal rationality.²⁵

Levy-Bruhl's perception or analysis of African belief systems and Appiah's categorization, which are tantamount to a debasement of African thought systems, find disfavor with both Western and African scholars. Evans Pritchard, Peter Winch, S.B. Oluwole and Polycarp Ikuenobe are but a few who do not agree with this lopsided interpretation of African cosmology. For instance, against Appiah's contention, Ikuenobe posits a number of arguments to refute the view that African belief in spirits or witches is irrational and illogical. One of such arguments attempts to show that African belief in the metaphysical must be taken very seriously. Recounting a real life experience of witchcraft phenomenon in Igueben, in Esanland in Edo State of Nigeria, Ikuenobe asserts that,

during the Nigerian civil war, a small town named Igueben (where the writer was born) was liberated by the Federal troops. In the night, the soldiers brought out their blankets and slept in the open field. Very late on the appointed night (in the neighborhood of between 12:00 midnight and 2:00 am), one of the soldiers saw an owl flying around and then perched on one of the big trees in the field. It is believed that this is the time that witches and wizards go to their regular meetings. The soldier saw this owl as strange and then proceeded to attempt to shoot the owl. His high-powered automatic rifle jammed and refused to discharge. He diagnosed that it jammed because of the supernatural power of the owl, which, in other words, meant it was not a normal

owl—it was being animated by the soul of a wizard.²⁶

The behavior of the soldier is informed by two considerations. First, his African cultural background compels him to be suspicious of the owl's activity—flying and perching on a tree close by at the time it did. Secondly, given his supposed supernatural powers, he realized that there was something unusual about the owl. On the basis of these factors or realizations, he proceeded to shoot the owl. As Ikuenobe further claims,

The soldier also had supernatural powers and thus realized what was going on. He made his incantations to neutralize the power of the wizard and then took rifle from his friend and shot the owl. The account given by this soldier was that the owl, acting proxy for the person, wanted to transform into a human being so that the soldier could be accused of killing a person instead of an owl. Because of the powers of the soldier, the transformation could not take place, but when the supposed target landed on the ground, the "thing" was half human (completely naked) and half bird, in that it had wings . . . I could not take a photograph because cameras were rare and there was no other photographic or video documentation.²⁷

Ikuenobe's account regarding the phenomenon of witchcraft in an African culture is not based on hearsay; it was a real life experience that accentuated his belief that witches actually exist.

Corroborating Ikuenobe's view, S.B. Oluwole takes an extract from Idoniboye's article, the "Concept of Spirit in African Metaphysics," in respect of African belief in

the metaphysical. In this connection, Idoniboye is said to have argued that, a fly is trapped in a stopped bottle . . . no amount of shaking would wake the witch . . . the fly was released, and the sleeper awoke.²⁸

Ikuenobe and Idoniboye's exposés do not only concern the epistemological and metaphysical warrants of the phenomenon of witchcraft or the spiritual as embedded in African belief systems; they are also about the reasonableness and relevance of African belief systems that accounts for their perception of reality—a basis upon which they interpret, understand and cope with the vagaries of existence.

From this discussion so far, one may begin to have insights into an adequate characterization or definition of the metaphysical in African culture, that is understood, in part, within the ambit of spirits used in the justification of sexism against the rural Esan woman. Lesiba J. Teffo and Abraham P.J. Roux tell us that,

African metaphysics are religious beliefs relating to the African conception of God, the universe, and their interrelations. Further notions such as spirits, causality, persons, space and time, and reality, in their various conceptions, play a significant role in the life of Africans as they grapple with existential realities through phenomena such as religion, ancestral veneration, witchcraft, magic, etc.²⁹

In the African worldview, culture or explanatory model spirits are regarded as causal agents in the actions of men. According to Olusegun Oladipo, in Yoruba culture, for instance, the treatment of some illness is in part associated with non-physical causes (deities and spirits).³⁰

The idea of explaining the totality of human experience or action within the framework of brain activity as invoked in Western intellectual or philosophical

traditions is unattractive to the Africans. The belief that the actions of men are or can be the direct results of the influences of spirits is very ingrained in African societies. The concept of spirits underlying the African worldview or metaphysics is not, in the view of Africans, a delusion. It is, in fact, a reality. Rather, the Africans feel the forces of spirits in their lives in relation to neighbor and communities. Therefore, it is obvious that what underlies the African worldview is the belief in the activities of spirits. Given that Esan people are part of the African cultural milieu, the same inference about them on the issue of spirituality is inevitable. For a better appreciation or understanding of the status of spirits in the life of rural Esan people, there needs to be an examination of some phenomena in which the force or power of spirits are well demonstrated or discernible. Cases of incest and adultery, for instance, are revealed when the culprits begin to behave in a certain unusual manner. The culprits may begin to lose appetite, growl or get afflicted with disease that defies the usual traditional or orthodox cure.

In the case of adultery, the children of the culprits may begin to fall sick or die mysteriously. All these are said or believed to be evidence of angered spirits. To help the situation, or take care of the prevailing scenario, the culprits or victims of the angered spirits are made to confess either voluntarily or by coercion. During such confession, certain specified rituals, such as the slaughtering of a ram or goat, are performed to effect purification of the guilty. After performing such rituals, the culprits usually get well.

A man who plucks a kola nut from a kola nut tree belonging to his brother, or takes a yam from the brother's barn without the brother's knowledge or permission, would be punished by the spirits. In this case, the involvement of the spirits is manifested when the man is forced to confess as a result of an accruing respiratory problem. Similarly, Okhira Omozokpia argues that when the *Odionwele* (eldest man in the

community) denies justice to any one, he gets his punishment by falling down or by getting sick.³¹ On confession, as in other cases, he gets purified and healed when the relevant sacrifices have been made.

In rural Esan, a man who eats a meal prepared by the wife, or sleeps with the wife during her monthly cycle or menstrual period, does not escape the wrath of the spirits. The resulting punishment is that the man would have strange visitors on his sleeping bed at night, and then would fall sick days after. As usual, confession and purification abates the problem.

For Esan people, the concept of spirit is sacrosanct in their lives. The belief in the influence of spirits leads to behavior modification in terms of inter- and intra-personal relations. C.G. Okojie states that the concept of spirit was the cement of good will and fear that kept family as a unit and village as a distinct community group. Admittedly, the role played by spirits in the lives of Esan people is applied in the prevention of unsavory acts. Spirits are said to reward good deeds and punish evil acts. Spirits form the "common backcloth" and the foundation of commonality and communality. Thus, according to Anthony Appiah,

An African would say . . . he is a Ghanaian, Nigerian, Kenyan, but does this yet mean anything? He is an Ashanti, Kikuyu but what does this however mean? He is a Blackman and what is the worth of the Blackman . . . the African asks always not "who am I?" but "who are we" and his problem is not his alone, but his people.³²

In the above assertion, the feeling of oneness, commonality and communality is entrapped within a spiritual milieu, which is the core of African and Esan culture or worldview.

If, in the perspective of Esan people, concrete social life has a spiritual backdrop, then sexism, as a concrete social phenomenon cannot be extricated from the spiritual. This would be true of any other philosophical and socio-cultural issues involving the people.

Metaphysical Basis of Sexism in Esan Land

Sexism comes in interlocking varieties in Esan culture. In one sense, the metaphysical basis of sexism targeted against rural Esan women can be gleaned through marriage. According to G.C. Okojie, in Esanland, a girl may be forced to accept a man as husband against her will. The man or suitor may be a very wealthy person in the society. He may also be some one who is a family friend. The payment of dowry is not just between the girl's father and the suitor. The spiritual bond makes it impossible for the girl to leave the man imposed on her for another man.³³ If she did, the belief is that she would be punished by the spirits of the land. The punishment may be administered via bareness. The imposed spiritual punishment may be revealed by an oraclist, if consulted. The sexist element in rural marriage is evidenced in the girl's inability to make a choice of her own husband. The constraining force of compliance is a spiritual bond between her father and her suitor or the dowry paid. A corroborating perspective of sexism and spiritualism in marriage in rural Esan is indicated by C.G. Okojie when he observes the consequence upon the failure to convince a girl to marry a man imposed on her:

The rejected, unattractive imposed husband resorted to a bestial mode of cohabitation; the strongman of the family gathered, held the girl down and a grotesquely unnatural husband and wife relationship was effected. The idea was to consummate the marriage and get the girl pregnant at all cost. Once so,

she would be afraid of offending the departed spirits as she would surely do if while carrying a man's child, she was thinking of deserting him, which was equivalent to thinking evil of him.³⁴

Another example of sexism in marriage that has a spiritual undertone is discernible in the manner in which the *Onogie* (king or chief) gets married. Usually, from the traditional standpoint, he is the overseeing and undisputed ruler whose laws and power are guaranteed by spiritually fixated culture. While other male members of the community marry by the dowry system, the *Onogie's* marriage is by "inheritance" and "seizure". On the death of his father, and after performing the necessary burial rites or ceremonies, he inherits his father's wives except his mother. Implicated in this scenario is that his late father's wives are forced to marry him.

By the *Bai Igben* method of seizure, the *Onogie* was at liberty to have any woman of his choice irrespective of the woman's status. Whether the woman is willing or unwilling, single or married, "by a singular act of throwing his hand around the neck of the woman or girl," or "sending a coral bead through his obedient servants" or kinsmen, she becomes his wife without any questions. The girl cannot reject the *Onogie's* overtures. The consequence of rejection is death caused by angered spirits. At Irrua, a town in Esan, the phenomenon of seizure or *Bai Igben* is still in vogue. The central sexist issue in the *Onogie's* method of marriage is that women are forced into marriage that they may not desire or like. The bias is ultimately a metaphysical or spiritual substratum with the threat of death effectible by spirits of departed ancestors who punish women that reject their earthly representatives (the king or *Onogie*).

Mourning in rural Esanland is a ritual that must be adhered to by a widow or widower. Yet, this phenomenon smacks of sexism against rural Esan women. Sexism is discernible when, during a widow's mourning

session, she is required to shave her scalp; whereas, in the case of the widower, he is not subjected to this kind of treatment when his wife dies. The act of scalp shaving was very dehumanizing and humiliating. A refusal by a widow to comply would attract punishment, supposedly from the spirits. Such punishment may manifest as hallucination imposed by angered sprits. It may also manifest as attempted strangulation by invisible hands at night or during the day. To avert all these, she is constrained to perform the rituals, which are followed with certain sacrifices to appease the spirits of the ancestors or departed husband. This is indeed the spiritual foundation of sexism in traditional Esanland. Also dehumanizing is the forced compliance with the rule that during a seven day mourning session, she must sit and sleep with a mat on the bare floor. She also must eat from an unwashed plate with unwashed fingers during the seven days mourning period.

A further phenomenon of a spiritually based sexism against rural Esan women is ancestral worship. Ancestral worship forms part of Esan cosmology or world-view. The practice is provoked by the belief that spirits of the departed can act as intermediaries between God and the living. It is believed that a departed father is closer to God than the ordinary mortals. If there is a calamitous situation in the lives of the people, an appeal is immediately made to the spirit of the departed father, and not the spirit of the mother, to reverse the situation or misfortune.

In ancestral worship, there is discrimination against rural Esan women. According to C.G. Okojie, only a male—the first son of the departed father—reserves the authority or right to be in custody of the special stick to bless the family. The name of the stick is called *Ukhure*, and it is two feet long and surrounded with cowries). In essence, the *ukhure* represents the spirit of the departed father. In addition, it is used by the first son to anoint or bless the whole family.

At this point, I want to assert that the fundamental sexist element in ancestral worship is the complete exclusion of women from leadership positions. It should be noted that even if the son is a younger brother to the elder daughter of the departed or deceased man, the "mantle" of leadership immediately falls on him in Esanland, that in the circumstance where the son is a minor to the eldest daughter of the family, she cannot hold brief for him. Rather, the advice of the high priest is sought. The discrimination in ancestral worship is justified with the perception that if women were allowed to perform the worship, their prayer would not be heard or answered, thus making the whole worship null. Her participation could spell doom for the whole family via angered spirits. The reason for this is that women are regarded as less important or relevant in the spiritual realm, compared with their male counterparts.

Yet another apparent sexism against rural Esan women is the law of inheritance. The law of inheritance is constitutive of the fact that a woman cannot inherit her father's or family's wealth or property. The weight of the law disinheriting the Esan woman is supported by the belief that giving a woman inheritance rights is tantamount to a drain on the family's wealth; once a woman gets married "what she owns goes to her husband." Accordingly, a man is mindful of the way he shares his property among his children. In exceptional situations in which a man decides to give part of his property to his daughters, he must be cautious not to disproportionately give his property to his daughters over and above his sons. If this happened, the elders of the community would reverse his decision. Even though the disinheritance law may have an economic undercurrent, there is, admittedly, a more fundamental reason—the spiritual. In traditional Esanland, a woman is second-class. If, for instance, a woman or first daughter inherits her father's house instead of the first son, the house collapses under mysterious circumstances. Many other calamities or

misfortunes could happen to the daughter if the decision is not reversed. In Esanland, what a woman inherits is, if not by right, then by favour.

Closely related to the law of inheritance is the vexed issue of burial rites. To begin to show or infer sexism, let us look at what is involved. In Esanland, irrespective of the status of the woman or daughter, she is not allowed to bury her father. The motivation in this is to disinherit her because the rule is that anyone who buries his or her father automatically inherits the father's property. Again, the financial insolvency of a minor might make a wealthy woman bury her father and therefore inherit the family's property. It is obvious that the real aim of disallowing a woman from performing burial performance is to block her chances of inheriting her father's property.

Nevertheless, if the first daughter feels that her father should not remain unburied, she could approach the elders, called *Egbele*, to obtain permission. Authorizing her to perform the burial ceremony will, however, depend on the understanding that she does not intend to inherit the family's property; that she was just "assisting her younger brother in the matter." Giving credence to this, C.G. Okojie asserts that it was this attempt to keep property in the family that led to the custom of a woman, however wealthy, not being allowed to bury her father, since he who performs the ceremony inherited the property.³⁴ If she was very influential and her brothers were minors, she could prevail upon the *Egbele* (elders) to allow her to perform relevant ceremonies, strictly on the understanding that she would do everything on behalf of her brothers. If her intentions were contrary, it is believed that she would be punished by the spirits of the land.

This paper discusses the constraints or limitations imposed on rural Esan woman vis-à-vis the men. Essentially, the imbalance discernible in the above is rationalized or justified on the basis of the metaphysical,

with spirits as the major actors or authorities. When some writers eulogize the status of African women, they give the impression that their assertions represent a scrupulous analysis of the actual condition of African women, thereby rendering any competing claim or defeater suspect. But such assertions do not represent absolute truism about the real situation of African women, given the metaphysical basis of sexism targeted against rural Esan women.

Conclusion

According to Olusegun Oladipo, we cannot contribute to what Earl Lovelace calls the essential task of building a new and humane society' by running away from the reality of our situation, or trying to forget our experiences. Rather it is our experience that must provide the standpoint from which we make our contribution to the world.³⁵ Therefore, to make contribution to the world, this work has been presented to expose the spiritually or metaphysically fixated sexism directed against rural women in the culture of the Esan people of Southern Nigeria. It debunks the strongly held view that sexism against African women does not exist. This also correspondingly helps to refocus the debates and discussions regarding the status of African women, in the hope that the insights gained will lead to an appreciation of the actual condition of the African women. Implicitly, this thesis posits that to deal with the problem of sexism against the African woman there is a need to be conscious of the metaphysical mindset of African people, the rural Esan people inclusive. The failure to deal with the problem will have serious negative consequences for Africa's development, and by implication global development.

Notes

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- ² O. Oladipo. 1996. "The Commitment of the African Philosopher." *Journal of Philosophical Research* 21:417.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 418.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 419.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ O.W. Ogbomo. 1993. "Women and Society in Pre-Colonial Iyede." *Anthropos* 88:435.
- ⁹ O.W. Ogbomo. 1993. "Assertions and Reaction: A Definitive View on Women and Politics in Nigeria." *Iroko* 5(1/2):60.
- ¹⁰ O.W. Ogbomo. 1994. "Oral Field Techniques and Women's History: The Case of Owan, Nigeria." *Ufahamu* 22(3):13.
- ¹¹ O.W. Ogbomo, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 443.
- ¹³ D. Sweetman. 1984. *Women Leaders in African History*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Limited, p. 19.
- ¹⁴ S.N. Ezeanya. 1976. "Women in Traditional African Religion." *Orita* 10(2):106.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ P.K. Uchendu. 1993. *The Role of Nigerian Women in Politics, Past and Present*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co., Ltd., p. 23.
- ¹⁷ B. Awe. 1992. *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*. Ibadan: Bookcraft, p. 3.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ¹⁹ I.G. Rybalkina. 1990. "Women in African History." *Africa Quarterly* 29(3/4):83.
- ²⁰ A.A. Aidoo. 1992. "The African Women Today." *Dissent* 39(3):319-320.
- ²¹ O. Oyewumi. 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making An African Sense of Western Gender Discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 31.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ H.O. Mounce. 1973. "Understanding Primitive Society." *Philosophy* 48:347.

²⁵ A. Appiah. 1989. *Necessary Questions: A Introduction to Philosophy*. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice Hall.

²⁶ P. Ikuenobe. 1995. "Cognitive Relativism, African Philosophy and the Phenomenon of Witchcraft." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 3:157.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

²⁸ S. Oluwole. 2001. "On the Existence of Witches." In *Symposia: Readings in Philosophy*, p. 105. Boston: M.A. Pearson Custom Publishing.

²⁹ L.J. Teffo and A.P.J. Roux. 1998. "Metaphysical Thinking in Africa." In *Philosophy from Africa*, eds. P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux, p. 137. South Africa: International Thompson Publishing.

³⁰ O. Oladipo. 2000. *The Idea of African Philosophy: A Critical Survey of the Major Orientations in Contemporary African Philosophy*, third edition. Ibadan: Hope Publications, p. 44.

³¹ O. Okhria is one of the sages at Eguare, Ekpoma in Edo State, Nigeria who has taken particular interest in assisting and acquainting researchers with the customs and traditions of Esan people.

³² A. Appiah. 1985. "Soyinka and the Philosophy of Culture." In *Philosophy in Africa, Trends and Perspectives*, ed. P. O. Bodunrin. Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, p. 253.

³³ C.G. Okojie. 1960. *Ishan Native Law and Custom*. Yaba: John Okwesa and Co., p. 21.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

³⁵ O. Oladipo, *op. cit.*, p. 429.

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FICTION

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POETRY

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country in 1911.

2. The second part deals with the general situation of the country in 1912.

3. The third part deals with the general situation of the country in 1913.

4. The fourth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1914.

5. The fifth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1915.

6. The sixth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1916.

7. The seventh part deals with the general situation of the country in 1917.

8. The eighth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1918.

9. The ninth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1919.

10. The tenth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1920.

11. The eleventh part deals with the general situation of the country in 1921.

12. The twelfth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1922.

13. The thirteenth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1923.

14. The fourteenth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1924.

15. The fifteenth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1925.

16. The sixteenth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1926.

17. The seventeenth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1927.

18. The eighteenth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1928.

19. The nineteenth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1929.

20. The twentieth part deals with the general situation of the country in 1930.