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A Feminine Deconstruction of the Concept and Tenets of *Àrólé* in Oyo Empire and its Place in Yoruba Philosophy

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Abstract

The concept of Àrólé occupied and still has a significant position in Oyo Empire. Àrólé among the Yoruba is the first male child in a family. Such child has sociological, economic and religious advantages over his siblings. In fact, a family without an Àrólé, regardless of the number of female children, is somewhat incomplete. Thus, a wife goes all out to ensure she "produces" one for her family in order to make her motherhood complete and her place as a wife secured. This paper seeks to deconstruct this concept embedded in the beliefs of the Yoruba by offering a rational reflection on the tenets of Àrólé and the significant power it wields among children, in the Oyo Empire, the family and the Yoruba society at large. This is done from a feminine perspective in order to analyze, critically, Àrólé from a mother's or sister's viewpoint. This study seeks to answer the following questions: what is Àrólé to a Yoruba and the intent of identifying a child as one? What are the advantages and disadvantages (if any) of being an Àrólé? What are the tenets of Àrólé? Is Àrólé still relevant in a contemporary Yoruba society? These questions are answered in this study with a view to offering a female holistic view of Àrólé, presenting the logical flaws in the concept, and unraveling the tenets of Àrólé and its place among the Yoruba in the 21st century. Recommendations were also suggested.

Keywords: *Àrólé*, Female deconstruction, Yoruba Culture and Philosophy, Oyo Empire

Background to the Study

The struggle for the gender equality has generated a lot of reactions from scholars over the years. This has culminated into several discourses on the emancipation of women and their freedom from the unnecessary burden of gender inequality which mothers, sisters and daughters have borne over time. The concept of *Àrólé* is a classic summation of gender inequality within the family. It is easy to expect that children born into the same family would be equal with none having certain advantages over her/his siblings. It is also easy to expect that parents or the society would not display signs of the superiority of a child over her/his siblings. It is also very easy to think that children in a family have equal access to the privileges or wealth in a family. The concept *Àrólé* is a clear departure from these beliefs. This is because right from birth, an *Àrólé* sits on a pedestal among his siblings. He exists in a class of his own and he enjoys what his siblings may only see but cannot enjoy. An *Àrólé* is aware of this difference between him and his siblings from childhood and he lives in this consciousness even to adulthood. The presence of *Àrólé* wields a lot of power in a family that a man covets him earnestly and that the earlier he is able to have one, the earlier his mind is at rest, since this vital need of his as a father or a man is taken care of. *Àrólé's* power in a family is so great that it drives a woman to any lengths to "produce" one at all costs, regardless of the number of female children that she already has, the economy of the family, or even the risk to her own life. A wife that has not produced an *Àrólé* is believed to be somewhat incomplete and not yet successful in

her motherhood, making her vulnerable to replacement as the *ààyò*-beloved or cherished wife of her husband. This study seeks to contribute to the course on gender inequality by deconstructing the concept and tenets of *Àrólé* among the Yoruba, from a feminine perspective, that is, *Àrólé* is critiqued from a mother's, sister's or daughter's point of view.

What is *Àrólé*?

Àrólé is the first male child in a family. Even when several sisters have been given birth to before him, the birth of the first male child is usually anticipated and welcomed with a lot of fun-fare and celebration.

Immediately a child is born, the question that will be posed will centre on sex, not minding of health of the mother. If the baby is a female, the mother will be scolded and treated as a lazy, good for nothing woman. On the other hand if the child is a male, praise will be showered on the mother, not considering the fact that Biology has shown that it is the father who determines the sex of an offspring. (Familusi, 2012: 300)

Thus, children are definitely not born equal, since a male child, especially one that has been hoped for over time, calls for jubilation, while a female child, especially another female child, calls for blame and ridicule of the mother.

According to Olaleye, *Àrólé* among the Yorubais the first child that is born that will continue to bear one's name after death. (Olaleye,

2018)Olajubu (2003) corroborates this belief while elucidating on the presence of gender construct among the Yoruba. She holds that the Yoruba have expectations of males to succeed their fathers and that the importance of this is seen as it warrants an explanation when this is not possible. She says that the heir in a family is known as *Arólé*, and that when there are exceptions to this norm, an explanation is offered thus, '*Bí onídíí, obìrìn òkìn jekúmólú*'- A woman is not named *Kúmólú* if there is no reason. Olajubu expatiates on the meaning and significance of *Kúmólú* among the Yoruba. She says, "In Yoruba cultural idiom and practice, this (*Kúmólú*) is a name signifying that the family of the female so named has no male heir apparent because all their male children have died." (Olajubu, 2003: p. 9) Olajubu on another note offers a linguistic analysis of the name *Kúmólú*, stating that: "*Kúmólú* is the shortened form of the phrase *ikú muólú*- death has taken the heir. Hence for a woman to be so named assumes the absence of a male child." (Olajubu, 2003: p. 131) Naming any female child *Kúmólú* is too great a burden for any child to bear. This is regardless of the gender of the child, because for the child to have such a name shows the lack of regard for her/him as a child. It also shows that the child is definitely not a 'first choice', since the one preferred has been taken by death. Unfortunately, since the logic for having a *Kúmólú* in the first place is because the male heir is no more, this makes it an unhappy name for a female child. This is a constant reminder of her status in the family and each time she is called by that name, she is reminded of this sad, sober fact. Another meaning of *Arólé* derivative of the name *Kúmólú* is the concept of *olú* which in this context means chief, head, main, great or important. This is why it is not strange to hear a Yoruba pray as follows: *Édumare se mí lolú omó*- God, make me a great child. A great child stands out and s/he is distinct among her/his peers. *Kúmólú* indicates that the *Arólé* of the family is no more. Thus, it is a grave thing for a daughter's name to be a perpetual reminder of the loss of the 'important child' of the family.

Another meaning of *Arólé* can be seen from the etymology of the term. *Arólé* is derived from the word *ró* which has its root in the word *duró*. *Duro* means wait, stay back, remain, or tarry. *Arólé* is the one that will wait, stay back or remain in the home. When the father is gone, the *Arólé* will stay back or remain in the home in his place. According to Olaleye (2018), *Arólé* shows a clear difference between the social life of the Yoruba and the one held in the West. The Yoruba believe strongly in the importance of the lineage line of a person, especially the importance of

the perpetuity of one's name. He says further that no one wants his name to disappear. The first son will continue the lineage of that particular family line, since a female child is expected to marry and drop the name of her father. Interestingly, the choice of not marrying is even clearly beyond the female child because she is aware of her temporary sojourn in her father's house right from a tender age. It is only the male children, especially the first, that are expected to remain in the home. Although it is held that in pre-colonial Yoruba society, children only have their first names, they do not have surnames. The idea of having a surname, which a female child drops after marriage, is as a result of colonial influence. Yisa Kehinde Yusuf elaborates this as he discusses sexism in English and Yoruba languages. He states thus:

Another evidence of the imposition of the sexist structure of English on Yoruba is found in the surnaming of the children of Westernised parents and the adoption of husbands' names by Westernised wives ... However, with the imposition of British colonial rule on the country and the acquisition of Western education by the Yoruba, children started to be given surnames and women began to adopt their husbands' names as was the case in the cultures of the colonisers... The desires to perpetuate the male line have given rise to the widespread preference for male children, since female children obscure or obliterate father's identities on marrying. (p.12)

On a similar note, to further buttress this point, Familusi (2012) holds that among the Yoruba, "a male child who will bring a woman or women in, is preferred to the one (female child who will leave her parental home after marriage)... male children are metaphorically referred to as the pillars of the family *òpómùléró* while the female one symbolizes a seasonal stream". (p.302) The fact that female children leave their parents' house make parents to prefer having male children.

Male children are generally preferred to the female ones. Labeodan M.(p.9) avers as follows:

Emphasis has always been placed on the male especially in the family system; mainly because the families in Nigeria are patrilineal, the males are seen as continuity of both family name and lineage and the men are supposed to be dominant with

women being subject to them. The males are described with strong adjectives such as perfect, strong, fit, authoritative, self-sufficient etc

Even among the male children, an *Àròlé* stands out and he is distinguished as the first male of the family. *Àròlé* is also called *olórièbí* among the Yoruba. *Olóri* means head or leader while *èbí* means a family or a clan, thus, *olórièbí* means head or leader of a family, literally, it means the owner of the head (portion). An *Àròlé* knows himself, since he is called *Àròlé* or *olórièbí* from birth. He grows with this consciousness and even his elder female siblings are aware of his position in the family. According to Olaleye (2018), the elder female children in the family do know and they also understand that the *Àròlé* of the family is their leader. *Àròlé* is never a subject of contention in a family because everyone knows who the *Àròlé* is. It is a *fait accompli*.

A Chronology of *Àròlé* in the Oyo Empire

Oyo Empire has occupied a significant position in the history of the Yoruba. It grew to become very important and significant in the history of the Yoruba race. This empire is believed to be founded by one of the crown princes of Oduduwa, Oranmiyan. In the olden days, the first prince of a king enjoys almost the same benefit as the king. In fact it is only the crown that makes him different from a king. He enjoys the same wealth and honour. It is believed that in the olden days, he is expected to die with the king. If this is the expectation, then the purpose of his being an heir or *Àròlé* is defeated. However, this practice has stopped over time in the history of Oyo Empire.

The first *Àròlé* in the Oyo Empire was Ajaka, the son of Oranmiyan. He was also known as Ajuan. When he became king, he was described as lacking the warlike spirit his brother Sango had. This culminated in a series of events that led to his brother, Sango ousting him from the throne. According to ShinaAlimi and A.O Adesoji (2011), who provide a historical narrative of how the first *Àròlé*, who subsequently became *Alaafin* in the Oyo Empire was removed, they state thus: “the young Ajaka was a weak *Qbà* who devoted his time to husbandry. He could not provide the warlike spirit and protection much needed by his people. Consequently, he was deposed by his more belligerent brother Sango.” (<http://alimology.blogspot.com/2011/08/oyo-empire-up-till-1893.html>) Several *Alaafins*, have

been crowned from the time of *Alaafin* Ajaka in the 12th Century till date and some *Àròlés* who are mostly known as *Àrémò* ascended the throne of their fathers to become king. A timeline of the history of *Alaafin* of Oyo by Ayomide Akinbode (2018) can be used to narrate the chronology of *Àròlé* in the Oyo Empire: Aganju Sola was the *Àròlé* of *Alaafin* Ajaka and he became king in 1277. Kori was the son of Aganju Sola and he became king in 1340. Kori's *Àròlé* was Oluoso, who became king in 1401. Several other kings emerged from 1401 and their reigns were marked with different historical events. However, during this period, a remarkable historical event occurred; the emergence of the first and only (ever) female *Alaafin* of Oyo. She was Orompoto, who reigned 1554-1562. She was a fearless warrior who also fought and won many battles. She ascended the throne due to the lack of any male *Àròlé* from her elder brother *Alaafin* Eguguojo. It was reported that she had to cut off her breasts and also resorted to wearing male clothes for her to be accepted as *Alaafin*. She was called Orompoto “the custodian of the vagina that kills evil plots”. She was a great woman and also a great leader. She died in 1562 at the battle of Ilayi. Decades after Orompoto, Jayin was another *Àrémò* that succeeded his father *Alaafin* Karan. Jayin's *Àròlé* committed the sin of falling in love with the wife of his father. This act led to his being killed by his father *Alaafin* Karan. The next *Àròlé* was Ayibi, who was the grandson of the prince killed. Ayibi became *Alaafin* in 1676. Several other kings also reigned in Oyo between the 16th and the 17th Centuries and their reigns played significant roles in the history of the Oyo Empire. King Adelu Agunloye was another *Àròlé* that became a king and he reigned between 1838 and 1858. Some other kings had also reigned from the time of King Agunloye till the time of the current *Alaafin* of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Olayiwola Adegimi III, who became king in 1970 till date.

A Feminist Rational Reflection on *Àròlé*

The idea of having heirs is not peculiar to the Yoruba people as this is seen even in Western cultures, where this is even practiced till today. However, this may be seen as restricted to royalty, where someone is an heir to a throne or when a person is an heir or heiress to a great fortune accumulated over time in a family. Neither of these cases applies in most cases when a child, *Àròlé*, is still given certain preferences or separated from his siblings from birth purely because of his gender and his position of birth. There are some sociological, economic and religious issues

associated with *Àrólé*. These issues also point out to the flaws inherent in adopting any child as *Àrólé* in history and most especially in the 21st Century.

It is no doubt that the Yoruba culture is highly patriarchal and the concept and tenets of *Àrólé* is a classic expression of the disadvantaged position women occupy even within the immediate family system. Awujusuk (2015) explains this as she maintains that gender roles are actually learnt and this is emphasized in the family setting. Although these gender roles that are taught vary within different cultural and religious settings, it is very clear that a girl-child is expected to learn some domestic roles. These roles would not be expected of the male-child, while the male-child also has his own roles well cut out for him, simply because he is male. Even in the immediate family system gender lines which dictate behavioural patterns are clearly drawn and this demarcation oftentimes does not favour the female members of the family. Awujusuk expresses this predicament of the female folk within her own family succinctly:

Behavioural lines are also tailored along gender lines. The girl-child is trained to see herself as a subordinate in the family. She watches as her mother is left out in family discussions, though she may be directly affected. In some areas, the girl watches as her father acquires women as one acquires property. The woman who is seen as the weakling is left to carry out the less prestigious tasks. She is to be seen not heard. (Awujusuk 2015: p.99)

Olanrewaju (2015) echoes this disadvantaged position of women in the patriarchal structure from the perspective of religion. According to her, "the disadvantage is that it is a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex, which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females. Religion comes to play by empowering the system through various taboos and teaching on conformity." (Olanrewaju: p.233) Religion, through traditions and teachings often times promote patriarchy and any woman that attempts to challenge this *status quo*, is seen as a rebel, domineering or even called a witch.

Olanrewaju opines further that men are seen as the head of households, and they also control the productive resources, labour force and even reproductive capacities. This attitude is based on the notions of superiority accorded men, while the inferiority of women is legitimized. Anyone

identified as *Àrólé* within a family is seen as superior to his siblings. When certain things are shared in the family, the share of the *Àrólé* is always different from that of the other children. *Àrólé* enjoys special treatment from birth which may lead to him becoming over-pampered, that is an *àkẹ̀bàjẹ̀*. It is believed that he stands to inherit most, if not all that their father leaves at death. This notion has a demoralizing effect on his siblings; it may also lead to sibling rivalry especially in a polygamous setting.

Another advantage *Àrólé* has over his siblings is that the head of the home, the father, prefers to send him on special errands, such as meetings and other delicate or special duties. This serves as a kind of training for him. According to Olaleye (2015), in some families, the *Àrólé* of such family will be accompanying his father to the shrines or temple from a very tender age. This is to make him know and understand all what his father does, especially if his father is a priest or someone that occupies a significant position. As the *Àrólé* matures, he will be exposed to secrets that his age is believed to be able to handle. This is a remarkable notion that comes with great consequences. It is quite risky to concentrate all forms of education- economic, religious or social on only one child.

Àrólé also enjoys the benefit of associating with the elders in the family. As he matures, he is invited to settle disputes in the *agboilẹ̀*- family. This is done in order to test and develop his *laakaye*-intellect. An *Àrólé* carries a great responsibility and burden since there are expectations from the family, his other siblings, the ancestors of the family and the society at large.

Another major advantage an *Àrólé* has over his siblings especially the females ones is the issue of inheritance. Familusi (2012) paints a graphic picture of the ordeal which female children pass through in regard to the issue of inheriting properties from their late father. He also shows the advantaged position of the first male child, *Àrólé* on the subject of inheritance:

Inheritance as a cultural practice among the Yoruba is not women friendly. Traditionally the issue of will was non-existent. Thus after the burial of the deceased, the oracle was consulted to fix a time for the sharing of the property (human -wives, offices and material). Sharing of offices is male centred as women cannot be made the head of the family. No matter how young a male child is, he is superior to female children in this regard no matter how old they may be. (Familusi: p.301)

It is however striking to note that an *Àrólé*, even though he enjoys a number of benefits by the virtue of his identification as the *Àrólé* of a family, at the same time suffers some dangers associated with his position. The first major disadvantage of *Àrólés* is that such children are prone to attacks. They are the subject of attention of the family. If care is not taken, their parents may even contribute to their failure when they are over-pampered or over-indulged. The Yoruba race is conscious of metaphysical realities, Idowu (1982) calls people vested with such powers 'people of the underworld', or *Ìkà, omọra'ráiyé* - 'children of the world'. People having such diabolical powers, can make use of them on this class of children. Diabolical manipulations on such a child may be done in order to punish the parents or even out of sheer jealousy for the child. If all the children in the family are equal, there would be no need to subject any child to such problems/attacks.

There are some obvious flaws in identifying any child as *Àrólé* in the contemporary Yoruba society. It is disheartening to realize that in spite of modernity, education and economic realities of people, some wives, daughters and sisters still pass through the agony of the concept and tenets of *Àrólé*. In order to present a critical analysis of the relevance or irrelevance of the concept of *Àrólé* in the contemporary Yoruba society, the experiences of a few women would be narrated. It should be pointed out that the names that would be used in the following narratives are not the real names of these women in order to protect their identities.

The Case of *Mamá Caró*

Mamá Caró was happily married to her husband and they had two girls. *Mamá Caró* was the name everyone calls this woman, as it is the usual practice among the Yoruba to call a woman by the name of her child, usually the first. In this case, *Caró* was the first. The troubles of this woman began when she had her third child, another daughter. Though her husband was in no way a wealthy man, since they were living in a small rented apartment, they could also be relatively comfortable if they could live within their means. Her in-laws either mounted pressure on her husband, or her husband allowed his family to convince him that his wife was a failure since she could not "produce" an *Àrólé* for her husband. In order to save her marriage, *mamá Caró* became pregnant again, hoping for a male child this time. Her nightmare began after she gave birth to the fourth girl. Series of events took place, culminating in the arrival

of a new wife, who was believed to be capable of producing the much desired *Àrólé* for the family. The second wife became pregnant, and as fate would have it, another girl was born and *Caró* had a new step-sister. The second wife tried again the second time, hoping for a boy, and it was again a girl, till she also became a mother of four girls. The members of this large family were all cramped in their tiny apartment. After some time, *mamá Caró* and her family moved away from the neighborhood, making it impossible to know what has become of the pursuit of an *Àrólé* and its irreversible consequences.

The Case of *Mamá Dupe*

Mamá Dupe is a petty trader whose whole means of livelihood is less than ten thousand Naira (below thirty dollars) in a month. Her husband is a security man on a salary of Fifteen Thousand Naira, around \$40 per month and they had five girls. *Mamá Dupe* became pregnant again, hoping to have an *Àrólé* this time. She did not get her wish as she 'welcomed' another beautiful girl into the world. She lost her charm, her wit and her confidence as a woman, thus, hiding the daughter for a period of time.

The Case of *Sade*

Sade is the firstborn of her family and her parents and her mother is a house wife. *Sade* has a younger sister and a much younger brother. The difference between the ages of *Sade* and her brother is well over ten years. *Sade* narrated her ordeal that all through her life, growing up in her family, she was treated like a second class citizen by her own parents, especially her father, while her mother looked on in silence. Her father told her many a time, that he was not willing to waste his money on someone that would go to another person's house. Thus, all the efforts and resources of the family were concentrated on their younger brother, whom the father calls his *Àrólé*. *Sade* dropped out of school in the junior secondary and was forced to learn a trade. Even after successfully learning the trade, the father is unwilling to establish her business, with the excuse of not willing to invest for another man.

Àrólé and its Logical Flaws

It is morally wrong, and it is a sin against humanity, to maltreat a child because of her/his gender. The case of *Sade* as cited above is one out of several girls facing such inhumane treatments in their own families. A lot of girls have been denied benefits they are truly entitled to only because they did not

come as males. Unfortunately for the parents of such girls, they do not know that they also stand to benefit from the education, training or empowerment that they have denied their daughters. It is very saddening to note that in most cases, such girls tend to fall prey to the first 'Dauda' (Dauda is a common male name) or suitor that calls their name, and the cycle of low esteem, poor education of girls and unnecessary procreation continues. Thus, *Àròlé* is also a contributory factor to the problem of early marriage. Early marriage, also known as child marriage, occurs when a girl marries before age eighteen. *United Nations Document of 2012* on child or early marriage is a clarion call to all decision makers, parents, communities all over the world to put an end to child marriage. The *United Nations Document (2012)* highlights some of the dangers of early marriage:

Child marriage jeopardizes girls' rights and stands in the way of girls living educated, healthy and productive lives. It also excludes girls from fundamental decisions, such as the timing of marriage and choice of spouse. Girls living in rural areas of the developing world are twice as likely to be married before age 18 as their urban counterparts, and girls with no education are over three times more likely to do so than those with secondary or higher education... Child marriage is a grave threat to the lives and prospects of young girls. It violates their rights, denies them of their childhood, disrupts their education, jeopardizes their health, and limits their opportunities. (United Nations: <https://www.unfpa.org/end-child-marriage>)

This position of the United Nations shows that there are serious consequences to creating circumstances that can make a girl to marry below eighteen years. A girl that is unloved because she is not the male heir will easily fall prey to show of attention. Thus, the concept of *Àròlé* could also contribute to the menace of early girl marriage.

It should also be noted that the undue search for an *Àròlé* is a contributory factor to poverty. The cases of *mamáCaró* and *mamáDupe* discussed above show that a lot of families could avoid the unnecessary burden of extra mouths to feed, especially when it cannot be afforded. There is a saying among the Yoruba that expresses the link between having too many children and poverty. They

say: *Ọmọ beere ọ̀sì beere*. The meaning of this saying is that when children are 'voluminous', the same way, wretchedness will be voluminous. When there is no search for an *Àròlé*, the parents can plan their lives accordingly and the size of the family can also be planned. The pursuit of *Àròlé* can also make some families polygamous, a factor that can also stretch the resources of such family.

Yet, another logical flaw in the concept of *Àròlé* is that men, who are usually the ones in search of male-heirs, are the ones that "call the shots" as far as the gender of their off-springs are concerned. The burden that they make their wives bear in the name of looking for an *Àròlé* is un-called for. It is logically flawed for any man to blame his wife for the gender of his children since biology makes us understand that the male chromosome, during fertilization determines if the egg fertilized would be a girl or a boy. According to a study in Newcastle University published by *Science* daily, the role of men in the gender of their off-springs is expatiated as follows:

Men determine the sex of a baby depending on whether their sperm is carrying an X or Y chromosome. An X chromosome combines with the mother's X chromosome to make a baby girl (XX) and a Y chromosome will combine with the mother's to make a boy (XY). (Newcastle University, 2008: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/12/081211121835.htm>)

In addition to the fact that the father of a child determines its gender, it is very wrong to think or even suggest that a child cannot be successful because she is a girl. It is also logically flawed to aver that the maleness of a child will contribute to his taking care of his parents in old age.

Identifying a child as *Àròlé* can also lead to the problem of low self-esteem in other children regardless of their gender. A psychological definition of low self-esteem is that it "is characterized by a lack of confidence and feeling badly about oneself. People with low self-esteem often feel unlovable, awkward, or incompetent...hypervigilant and hyperalert to signs of rejection, inadequacy, and rebuff" (Psychalive, 2017: <https://www.psychalive.org/low-self-esteem/>) Any parent that identifies a child as the *Àròlé* of the family has contributed to the low self-esteem of the other children. Children react differently to different issues, a child that is already having issues of self-worth or incompetence will suffer more once another child is already seen as superior to her/him.

Another concern that shows the problem with the concept of *Àròlé* is the health issues related to it. Most times, women risk their lives in the quest for securing their place as a wife or their place as a mother in such a home. Such women are blinded by the quest for a male child at all costs, with little or no regard to the state of their health or the concerns of their medical care givers. They want an *Àròlé* at all costs. The society has created such problem for women because of the undue importance attached to *Àròlé*. Women should not allow their lives to be risked for such quest, it is only a woman that is alive that can be a mother or a wife.

The concept of *Àròlé* also leads to sibling rivalry and rancour in the family. As was mentioned earlier in this paper, who an *Àròlé* is in a family is not a subject of debate; this is clearly known by all. An *Àròlé* is called by his title and name straight from cradle. This identification and separation from others will lead to sibling rivalry and ultimately, rancour in the family. This would be more obvious in a polygamous family, where the acrimony is more pronounced.

There are social problems that are also associated with the idea of *Àròlé*. A child that is over pampered and over indulged because he is an *Àròlé* will not only be a problem for his parents in the future, but a problem for himself and the society at large. In the same vein, robbing other children of the quality of life they should have enjoyed or education, especially girls, plays a great role in the problems they will encounter later in life. These are ultimate problems for such families and for the society at large.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It should be noted that it is not all Yoruba fathers that are driven by this egocentric search for an *Àròlé*. There are great fathers who have trained their girls and have not neglected them. It would be wrong to conclude that all fathers have neglected their girls because they have not been born as males. Such men are worthy of emulation. Nonetheless, any child can be an *Àròlé* and at the same time all the children in a family can also be *Àròlé*. If they are all trained, educated and enabled to succeed in life, they will definitely be pillars in their families and the society at large. When children are not robbed of their potential because they are not *Àròlé*, they can attain greatness by immortalizing the names of their parents. A lot of women have contributed immensely to the development of their society and their respective fields of endeavor. Women like Oby Ezekwesili, Dora

Akunyili, Abike Dabiri-Erewa, Moremi, OkonjaIweila, Jumoke Akinjide, Patricia Eteh (the first woman to become the Number four citizen in Nigeria), Erelu Olusola Obada, Idiat Adebule, Sarah Sosan, Kemi Adeosun, Folorunsho Alakija, Ibukun Awosika, Arinpe Adejumo, Helen Labeodan, Aduke Adebayo and many other women too numerable to mention. What about them? What male can flaw our list? Their names would not have been known today if their fathers left them in pursuit of an *Àròlé*. Insisting that a particular child is an *Àròlé* and concentrating all resources on him at the expense of his other siblings is logically flawed and is detrimental to the child himself, his siblings, his parents, the family and the society at large.

There is no child that cannot be successful, male or female, undue emphasis should not be placed on wanting a male child. Women should not make themselves victims at the altar of producing a male child at all costs, thereby putting their lives at risk. Procreation should be planned to make families comfortable, and in order to stem the tide of poverty in the society.

In spite of civilization and modernity, *Àròlé* is still wielding its power in the 21st Century, this is evident in the cases of people cited in this study, they represent many other mothers, sisters or daughters facing the same or similar problems. Thus, the problems associated with the concept of *Àròlé* are far from being solved. This justifies the need for this study and other related issues connected to the concept of *Àròlé*. However, a lacuna still exists on the concept of *Àròlé* especially from a masculine point of view, calling for attention in future studies.

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