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CONTENTS

Fictive Motion in Chinese and English Tourist Guidebooks

Peggy Wei-lun Tsai; Shelley Ching-yu Hsieh (1)

Philosophical Inclusion in the Measurement Problem in Quantum Theory

Kyrian A. Ojong; Emmanuel Iniobong Archibong (7)

Influence of Culture over Marital Love and Fidelity in Ancient Rome and Ughoaha of Edo State

Monica Omoye Aneni (11)

An Analysis on Development of Public Administration Study in Western Countries

TAN Rong; HAO Lifang (21)

Research on Innovated Social Work Talents' Motivation Strategy

ZHAO Ning; FAN Wei (28)

Shallow Talk about Information Security in the Corporate

WU Xia (34)

Determinant Attributes of City Brand Personality That Influence Strategic Communication

Muhamad Fazil Ahmad; Zulhamri Bin Abdullah; Ezhar Bin Tamam; Jusang Bin Bolong (40)

Religion, Politics and Democracy in Nigeria

Akwara, Azalahu Francis; Ojomah, Benedict O. (48)

Machiavellian Philosophy of Wealth Acquisition in Contemporary Nigeria: A Critique

Ocholor Chinenye Leo; Metuonu Iheanacho Chukwuemeka (62)

Analysis of Profit Allocation in Technology Innovation Alliance Game Model of Industrial Chain

LIU Zhiying; WANG Dandan (68)

Study on Relationship Between Individual Work Value and Work Performance of Civil Servants-Based on the Research in China

WANG Bin; HUANG Lei (73)

Manufacture-Learning-Research Cooperation of the Government's Role and the Position in China

FENG Chunhua; SUN Baojun (78)

CONTENTS

Overview on Online Arbitration and Procedures (Jordan as an Example)

Mostafa Al Ateyat; Ahmad Kh. Al Dhahir (82)

A Study on Users' Attitudes on the Treatment of the Cultural Content in the College EFL Textbook

WU Juan (92)

Small Business Financing in Nigeria: An Investigation of the Angel Option

Olayinka Moses; Joseph Femi Adebisi (98)

The Role of Parents in the Prevention of Hiv/Aids Among Secondary School Students in Ijebuode Ogun State, Nigeria

Onifade, Comfort Adenike; Dele-Osibanjo, Taiwo A. (104)

Research into the Lexical Differences of Chinese Between the North and South of the Northern and Southern Dynasties from the Commonly-Used Words in *Weishu* and *Songshu*

LI Li (109)

The Illustration for the Application of Asset Share in Premium

JI Zhirong; HE Dongjin (114)

The Explanation of Force Dynamics Model for Patient Subject Construction in Contemporary Chinese

PENG Fang (120)

Moss Roberts' Translation of Three Kingdoms and the Inscape of Ancient Chinese Military Culture

ZHANG Yanqing (125)

Influence of Culture over Marital Love and Fidelity in Ancient Rome and Ugbaha of Edo State

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Abstract

This paper, interrogated the roles and pressures of culture over marital love and fidelity and vice-versa in both societies. The study employed historical and comparative methodologies to highlight the influence of culture over marital love and fidelity in both societies. Sources utilised on Ancient Rome were classical and modern authors. Inscriptions from the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL) were also utilized. For Ugbaha, information was gathered from literary works, and oral interviews. The data were subjected to content analysis. This paper argued that culture which has the capacity to influence people's actions with regard to marriage, tended to become partial and in times of change, becomes dynamic in order to suit the needs of contemporary times. This paper concludes by saying that in spite of the Hamitic hypothesis, culture and people of a society can grow and develop independent of each other.

Key words: Marital love; Influence; Culture; Ancient Rome; Ugbaha

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INTRODUCTION

In antiquity, marriages were contracted according to the exigencies of the culture. The custodians of this culture were the ruling elite; the kings and later the consuls. Other bodies involved in the leadership of the State also

contributed to the establishment and interpretations of the traditions of the land. During this period the male gender handled most of the political and social issues, and so were largely the ruling elite. This was also the norm among the pre-colonial and colonial people of Ugbaha in Esan land. This exclusion from decision making may have led to the relegation of women to the background during these periods. It was to such an extent that the female citizens almost shared the same status as slaves, but for the fact that they were citizens. The reason may be adduced to the fact that females were not combatants in both societies. Therefore, important governmental decisions with regard to strategies at war could not have been made by women. All of these may have become glaring in the face of the perception by both societies of women as the weaker sex. Therefore, the culture relegated them to that sphere and so when laws were established women were placed under the authority of men, who were combatants, who made decisions for the welfare and progress of their societies and who were the authors of culture. On ancient Rome, the works of some Classical and contemporary authors who discussed the issue of culture and its effect in the society prove useful for this study. While some examined women's roles and place in the society of the ancient Romans, others viewed relationships between the Ugbaha people and their environs, royalty and some aspects of culture among them.

Titius Livius popularly known as Livy in his *History of Rome*, wrote about the foundation of the empire and her consolidation. While writing about the wars and the victories achieved by the Roman State, the social and economic structure of the society were mentioned. Gaius in his *Institutes*, stated laws that guided the people in the society, laws relating to contractual affairs such as marriage, laws relating to citizenship, slaves, freedmen, women, children and laws relating to adoption. Aspects of Plutarch's writings which records lives of leaders and other great men of ancient Rome such as Caesar,

Coriolanus, Cicero and many others were utilized. Other Classical authors examined in the course of this study all wrote and mentioned people and their attitudes and stance about the ancient Roman Empire. Their works provide insights into relationship between couples in antiquity. Modern authors on antiquity such as Grimal Pierre and Dupont Florence were able to examine relationships among couples and how life was lived daily in ancient Rome. On the Ugho some works have proven useful. They include; Okoduwa (2002), Okoruwa (2004), Eimionoria (2005), Ogbenbe (2012), Izibili (2012), Ebhota and Imuanmhozhohu (2012) and Ebaluneigbeifoh (2012). These authors have in one way or the other, told the history of the emergence of Esan States; historic-geographical cum politico-economic notes of the Esan people. They have also not failed to discuss marriage on 'hire-purchase' in Esan traditional thought as well as the phenomenon of *Uhanmin* (wife-inheritance) in Esanland.

All the authors mentioned in their works matters relating to politics, economics, geography and socio-cultural issues, whether in ancient Rome or Ugho. They have however ignored a comparative possibility of the influence of culture over marital love and fidelity in both societies. This paper focuses on the influence of culture over marital love and fidelity as well as infidelity during the early, late Republican and the imperial era of ancient Rome and the pre-colonial and colonial Ugho. The paper argues that contrary to the Hamitic hypothesis, culture and people in any African society can develop and grow independent of the Hamitic or Caucasian group who were also colonists in Africa. It also argues that the effects of culture on the issues of fidelity and vice-versa in marriage in Ancient Rome were not far different from what obtained in Ugho.

MARITAL LOVE AND FIDELITY IN ANTIQUITY

In early Rome, without the advice of a guardian a woman's activities both in public and in private were prohibited. This was because they were under the control of their fathers or brothers or husbands as the case may be. "...nullam, ne privatam quidem rem agere feminas sine tutore auctore voluerunt, in manu esse parentium, fratrum, virorum" (Livy, 34.8) They were not accorded positions of magistrates and priests; they could not have triumphs, insignia, gifts and spoils of war. "Non magistratus nec sacerdotum nec triumphum nec insignia nec dona aut spolia bellica iis contingere possum" (Ibid). The explanation offered by Classical authors with respect to this ideology was that Roman women were perceived to have *levitas animi* (lightness of mind) and *infirmitas consilii* (weakness of judgement) (Gaius, *Institutes*, 1.144). Consequently, the Roman woman was under the control of her *pater familias* or her husband as the case may be. After marriage,

she came under the control of her husband who now possessed absolute power over her, her property and even her life. This was what marriage *cum manu* entailed. This kind of marriage demanded that the wife remained faithful to the husband and in the case of adultery; the husband had the power even to kill her. Florence Dupont puts it this way; "...a good wife observed the loyalty she owes her husband. She must not betray him or behave badly in public or ally herself with his political adversaries" (Dupont, 1992). This was what the culture demanded. The culture merely relegated women to the background and at that time the culture could not, by any means, be considered erroneous. Therefore, punishment was attached to the offence of contravening culture. This culture was intended among others, necessarily to mould and make a girl or a woman not a man. This was the interpretation from the custodians of the culture.

The Elder Cato (254 – 149 BC) a strong proponent of the culture of early and Republican Rome, believed that the woman's place was beneath her husband. A wife must do her husband's bidding and remain loyal to him. Cato strongly stood alongside this cultural value. It is highly probable that Cato believed that this value would aid in promoting peace, stability and progress for the state, which to Cato may have translated to mean the man. Extracted from a speech which was modified by Livy called "On the Dowry", the Elder Cato has this to say; "It is stated that husbands who caught their wives in adultery could kill them. The husband who divorces his wife is her judge, as though he were her censor; he has power if she had done something perverse and awful; if she has drunk wine, she should be punished, if she has done something wrong with another man, she is condemned to death. If you catch your wife in adultery, you can kill her with impunity; she however cannot dare to lay a finger on you if you commit adultery, nor is it the law." (Livy, 34: 1, 11: 34, 7: 8-9).

The elder Cato's comments on the instances when husbands became adulterous reveal his stance on the acts by men. This is a clear indication that the custodians of culture in the Roman Republic were men who indeed believed that the woman was not deserving of fidelity. It may have been undemanding for society to stand with the men in this matter because these were men who fought for stability and progress of the State and consequently responsible for the establishment of the culture. The *Lex Julia de Adulteris* (See Tacitus, *Annals III 24.*) promulgated in 18 B.C. during the reign of Augustus was another feature of culture attempting to quell the voice of the woman particularly the adulterous woman. However, there was nothing put in place to check the extramarital affairs of men. Whatever there was, was what the Ulpian states; which is that any husband who did not divorce his wife having caught her in adultery could be charged with *lenonicium*, pandering (Edwards, 2002).

This begs the questions; why would culture so relegate

the woman or wife to this sphere? Are the reasons mentioned earlier persuasive enough? The answer may be found in what a sexologist, McIntosh E. says; "...women reach their peak of organism frequently in their 30s and have a constant level of sexual capacity up to the age of 55, with little evidence that ageing affects this in later life" (McIntosh, 2007, p.79)

Masters and Johnson while corroborating the above declares; "there is no decline in libido or the capacity to be orgasmic with ageing. There is no doubt that women improve sexually with age, but with men, it is usually the opposite, they peak at 25" (Masters and Johnson, 2007, p.79) If a husband could barely fulfill his conjugal duties before he peaked at 25, what would become of him when he gets older? Or what was a man supposed to do in the face of a sure challenge to his prowess after he had peaked? It is highly probable that these laws were put in place basically to protect men, and since members of the society were duty bound, they had to obey the demands of culture and traditions of the land.

Culture is so powerful that it influences decisions to be made by the people. It is highly probable that if the culture in antiquity had demanded love and fidelity from husbands, no one would have questioned the ideology and there would have been evidences of some of such men in antiquity. Society tends to go headlong with the demands of culture until such times when change overwhelms the system and culture is reorganized in tune with the needs of contemporary times.

CULTURAL INFLUENCE OVER MARRIAGE IN PRE-COLONIAL UGBOHA

In pre-colonial Ugbaha, women were excluded from political, social and sometimes religious activities. They did not occupy important positions or hold certain offices. They could not become kings, judges or native doctors. However, they could become priestesses of certain deities only if they were specially sought out and selected by the deity, although it rarely occurred. They partook of economic activities. Girls and women cultivated independently their fathers' or husbands' farmlands and sold proceeds from the farms.

A girl went to her husband's house from under the authority of her father. Marriage was contracted in any of four different methods and people adopted whichever they so desired. A girl could be betrothed at birth to another baby boy born at about the same time as the girl. Because parents of the children support the idea, they nurture friendly relationships with the hope that the children would tie the knot as adults. Another method was that the girl was taken to her husband's house at about the age of 12 or 13. She helped with household chores until such time she could procreate. Some other time, a girl was married between age 16 and 18. Another method was

when her husband died, she was married off to one of her brothers-in-law. With the exception of the last method, the girl child remained under the authority of her father until such time when she was ready for marriage. Under the tutelage of her parents especially her mother, she was put through the fundamentals of a dutiful wife and mother. At the betrothal, circumcision was an important aspect of marriage; a girl who had stayed a virgin was expected to look towards this event. A girl of easy virtue could easily be detected through the act. The culture of the Ugbaha people in Esanland demanded that a man could marry several wives if he possessed the wherewithal. It was not conceived as unfaithfulness. It was the norm. Culture approved of it. On the other hand, women could not be polyandrous. With culture, it was unheard of. This was unnatural. It could not be conceived.

A man was expected to provide basic necessities for the wives and children. Usually, some husbands did not start out with several wives. A man could have two wives or possibly three for different reasons. Most men married two, three or four, however six wives were uncommon, exceptions were with the king. Men married several wives for different reasons. A man would marry more than one wife if his brother passed away leaving the wife behind. The late man's wife was given as wife to her brother-in-law. Culture demanded that this new husband must help preserve the lineage of his late brother. Also, a man took a young girl as wife to assist the first wife in catering for the children until she was matured enough to procreate. Another reason a man would marry a second wife would be for procreation. If the first wife was unable to conceive a child or a male offspring, then the man was advised by his extended family members including sometimes the wife, to marry another woman who would have children or male children by the man. A man also married an additional wife if the first wife was unruly, stubborn and disrespectful to her husband and or in-laws. The people understood these aspects of culture and conformed to the norm.

On the part of the wife, she was regarded as her husband's property until death when she was buried in her father's village. She did not ally herself with her husband's enemies and did her husband's bidding at all times. A wife's duties included; tending to her husband's needs, procreating, working in the husband's farms and generally taking care of the home. She did not dare question her husband's orders. And when her husband died, she was married off to one of her brothers-in-law. The limit of the woman's freedom was bounded by culture and it did not usually exceed the home, either of her father's or husband. The woman could not exercise freedom of speech especially in the political sphere because she lacked it. Her role as wife and mother in her husband's home was very definitive in Ugbaha.

PUNISHMENT FOR DISOBEYING CULTURE

The general image of early Rome was one of faithful and virtuous women who possessed qualities that naturally contributed to the stability of marriage. They had a sense of responsibility to husband and children, and the moral and social values of fidelity just as culture demanded. Consequences for acts of defiance against culture, for both women and men (lovers of single girls of repute or married women, and of course more often than not, men of no repute), were evidenced in antiquity. Livy (Titius Livius, 1: 15-30) tells us that Lucretia who was forced by Sextius Tarquinius to submit to his sexual desires, having reported the incidence to both her father and husband, punished herself through suicide. Her reason was that she had to share in the punishment for her sin, so that women would not use such situations as opportunities to be false to their husbands and obtain freedom from the hangman's noose.

Lovers of girls and adulterous women underwent punishment from their fathers and husbands for the deed done. An outraged husband whipped his rival to death. Another had him mutilated so that he would not endanger another woman's honor. Yet some husbands were handicapped in dealing with their wives.

In Ugboha, extra-marital affairs with married women on the part of the man was not the ideal. If discovered, the man was expected to pay certain fines. However, if he claimed ignorance of the adulterous woman's status, he usually went unscathed. More often than not, some men committed adultery with women who lived a great distance from the man's village. Prostitution was practiced, but it was not common. Prostitutes were usually women who had lost their husbands and who ran away from the home of their brother-in-law-husbands for various reasons. It is important to note here that most men never really welcomed the idea of marrying their late brother's wife or wives as the case may be. They merely complied with the exigencies of culture. No one dared disobey the culture.

Consequent on the status of a wife, it was unheard of, an inconceivable idea that the woman should become unfaithful. The consequences were dire. And so it rarely occurred. However, there were sometimes violations of the exigencies of culture. Consequences of adultery on the part of the wife were either death via serious ill health for her husband or children. The husband or children were delivered if after consultations with the village oracle the adulterous woman openly confessed her infidelity. Punishment for the adulterous woman having been discovered included public disgrace within the extended family. She was thus brought to the centre of the family house where she was scorned by the other wife or wives and her sisters-in-law and flogged. She was not sent away from her husband's house. She was not condemned to

death. The husband was mandated to stay away from her for the most of two years before he was to go near her. This was to let the husband heal completely from the curse his wife had placed on him through adultery. This was what the culture put an adulterous woman through. It was believed that adultery committed by a woman was fatal for her husband or children.

PARTIALITY OF CULTURE

Culture in antiquity was accommodating of women of servile ranks who engaged in extra marital affairs and prostitution. It was also obliging of men who partook in extra marital affairs with these categories of women; freedwomen, slaves, prostitutes and courtesans. This set of women mentioned above could not be charged with adultery. Extra marital affairs with these women were permitted as long as they did not impair the honor of a married woman or a young girl from a good family. Was it rational or acceptable for culture to show favoritism to a set of people and not to others? It is highly probable that this feature of culture may have prompted a shift in paradigms in marital relationships that may have led to changes within family settings in antiquity.

In ancient Rome, some outraged husbands who were probably distinguished in the society, no longer disclosed their dishonor to the public. Petronius informs us that a man who caught his wife in bed with the steward could not dare to touch his wife because her father was a magistrate in their little town. His wife's lover was thrown to wild beasts, because he was a man of servile rank. This is an example of culture's bias. The magistrate, by virtue of his office, was a custodian of culture. Here culture tended to protect its own and the lesser being remunerated unjustly? This is also evidenced in the case of Publius Maenius who spared his daughter's life but killed her teacher because the freedman gave the girl, who had reached marriageable age a harmless kiss. The father killed the teacher because he thought the daughter should be handed over to her husband, and as Pierre Grimal puts it, "...not only virgin in body but uncontaminated by any kiss" (Grimal, 1912). Another father for a worse offence killed his daughter as well as her lover (Ibid).

Another example of partiality on the part of culture in antiquity was the case with regard to unmarried, yet influential women. The Vestal virgins were not bound by the mandates of this aspect of culture. Established by Numa, the second king of Rome, the Vestal Virgins were dedicated to serve the goddess *Vesta*. Therefore, they were free to manage their affairs without guardians. They could drive through the streets of Rome in carriages. They were not different from magistrates, priests and men of high rank in terms of respect and honour. They were attended to by lictors and they could make wills. They could also

not be bound by any oath. They also possessed the power to revoke the death penalty of a culprit if they met such accidentally on his way to execution (Gaius, *Institutes*, 1: 145; Plutarch, *Numa*, 10, 3-4; Seutomus, *Divus Augustus*, 44: 3). Culture is influential and so dynamic that it cannot be straight-jacketed. The complexity is such that one cannot, but attempt to understand the dynamics in order to have a balanced system that suits members of society.

In Ugboha culture was accommodating of priestesses. Women were naturally not admitted as diviners into religious cults, or permitted to touch sacred objects in a shrine. A priestess was usually specially chosen by the deities, and set aside as one. Culture also protected the daughters of the king, especially if she lost her virginity prior to marriage, although it rarely occurred. The would-be-husband dared not reject her. Culture also gave a lee-way to prostitution in the land. Probably because prostitutes were not considered as sane, culture spared them. A prostitute did not stand the risk of punishment from the society for being one. She was merely not allowed in the congregation of respected women in the society. Her profession also exempted her from partaking of some spiritual rites during important festivals.

CULTURAL POWER AND INFLUENCE IN ANTIQUITY AND UGBOHA

By the Republican era, cultural values with regard to the status of women began to shift. Culture became accommodating of women's growing independence and prominence. Women were becoming freer, and perpetuating events that were unprecedented.

In 491 B.C a group of women led by the mother and wife of Coriolanus, prevented Coriolanus from leading the Volscians against the Romans (Plutarch, *Coriolanus*, 33-40.). In 390 B.C a resolution was passed. It provided that some married women should be honored with public funeral orations on their death because they had offered their gold to pay the ransom to the Gauls. (Ibid). A patrician woman called Virginia dedicated a shrine and an altar to *pudicitia plebeia* (a cult of plebian chastity) after the patrician matrons excluded her from worshipping *pudicitia patricia* (a cult of patrician chastity) because she married a plebian (Livy, 10 & 23) In 331 B.C, one hundred and sixteen women were condemned for assembling to concoct charms and poisons (Ibid). These women damned the consequences of defying rules and regulations laid down by culture. It is highly probably that the custodians of culture had to accommodate these acts especially when they were good deeds. Bad deeds could only have occurred because of the courage exhibited by actors of good deeds. Culture had to accommodate these acts and rewarded the actors accordingly. The same culture that forbade women in early Rome, in partaking of activities whether public or private without

the aid of guardians, in the Republican era could become cooperative of the afore-mentioned acts by women. This may be due to the fast rate of change overwhelming culture. Since culture understands change, it works in tune with these changes so that society would experience growth and success. It is pertinent to note here that at this period, marriage *sine manu* (here, the wife was not under the control of her husband and was legally under the *potestas* of her father's family. Children born in this marriage were legally members of the husband's agnatic kin) had practically replaced marriage *cum manu*.

After the second Punic war, women gained more freedom, and their conditions improved, more women were getting recognition and women were generally becoming popular. They could attain wealth, either through the aid of their husbands or by acceding to the estates of their men who were victims of the disasters at Transimene (217 B.C) and Cannae (216) (Livy, 22:44). This freedom fostered their desire to display their wealth in such a way that evoked public denunciation and consequently brought about the enactment of the Oppian Law. In c. 195 B.C women protested against the Oppian Law. They appealed to the consuls, praetors and other magistrates. They came out en-masse to protest, declining to stay at home. Although, Cato a stickler for the old traditions of marriage spoke to the senators to reject the women's pleas, he did not succeed and the Oppian Law was repealed (Cato, <http://www.bartleby.com/268/2/3.html>). The earlier notion that women were perceived to have *levitas animi* (lightness of mind) and *infirmity consilii* (weakness of judgement) did not hold water any longer. The deeds by women were indeed unprecedented. Culture can be dynamic merely because the custodians are dynamic as well. When culture becomes stagnant, it is an indication that the custodians of culture have simply refused to improve or build on the old traditions in order to conform to contemporary needs and requirements. This is certainly necessary if society is to be termed modern.

Women may have been encouraged to become bold due to the stance of the moralists Plutarch and Seneca born in 5BC and AD 46 respectively. Seneca believed that married couples should submit to the same moral code of conduct. He says; "You know that a man does wrong in requiring chastity of his wife while he himself is intriguing with the wives of other men; you know that as your wife should have no dealings with a lover, neither should you yourself with a mistress; and yet you do not act accordingly" (Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, 94.26). Plutarch believed that married couples should equally observe chastity. If the husband is engaging in extramarital affairs, fault should not be found with the wife if she is engaged in such. "A man who bars his wife from pleasures which he himself enjoys is like a man who surrenders to the enemy while ordering his wife to fight to the end (Plutarch, *Lucullus*,

<http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/lucullus.html>). Having understood and propagated the ideals of morality, both Plutarch and Seneca concluded that a wife was certainly equal to her husband.

The stoic believed that true love stood for esteem, devotion, and comradeship and even complicity compared to the old idea of love which was self-effacing, respect and obedience. On the other hand, the Epicureans considered love to be the satisfaction of sensual desires (Epicurus, "Letter to Menoecus", contained in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Book X <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epicureanism>). All of the factors mentioned above facilitated in no little way towards the freedom of women and whoever believed in whatever doctrine was faithful to such. Women stuck to what they considered convenient; either the Stoic's idea of love, or the Epicureans' idea of love. It became a free for all therefore, the imperial period witnessed a lot of immorality perpetrated by both sexes.

Because culture had become permissive in this aspect, marriage became an arduous task. People repudiated marriage due to its degradation. Some women, especially the less influential, even opted for prostitution, since it was a form of escapism from the wrath of the law. It was to such a degrading extent that Augustus when he became Emperor first introduced reforms that forced citizens to marry. Senators were encouraged to take wives of their own rank. In spite of this measure, intimate, pure and stable marriage still eluded the people. Yet some women kept to the Stoic code of conduct in marriage. Popular among them was Arria the wife of Caecina Paetus. In a letter devoted to her, Pliny relates that her husband and son were both mortally ill. After the son's death, she would not disclose the matter to her husband. She merely pretended before him that their son was well or had had a good appetite. She handled the funeral herself. She would cry her eyes out and would not go back to see her husband until her eyes were dry and she was cheerful again. When Paetus was strong enough to bear it, she disclosed their son's death. Again, Caecina Paetus had taken part in a revolt in Illyria against Clodius and was defeated, he and his fellows were arrested and as they put him in a ship bound for Rome, Arria begged the soldiers to take her along so that she could be his slave and take care of him. When the soldiers refused, she took a fishing boat and followed the ship. At his trial, she exhibited an indomitable spirit, such that when her husband was condemned to die, she took the dagger first and plunged it into her bosom. Drawing it out covered with blood, she handed it to him saying, "It does not hurt, Paetus (Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 3.16, <http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/wlgr/wlgr-publiclife170.shtml>). Although her children persuaded her to avoid suicide, she would not be dissuaded. According to her she had lived with Paetus for long and in sweet harmony.

There were other women who were also faithful to their husbands. The patrician Virginian, who belonged to the good old days, singing her own praises, claimed that she entered the temple or cult of patrician modesty as a chaste woman and she had known only one man (*univira*) throughout her life. She was very proud of her husband, his honors and his victories (Livy, 10. 23).

Cornelia (133 - 121BC) the wife of Tiberius Gracchus, mother of the Gracchii brothers was believed to have remained faithful to her dead husband, and so her fellow citizens erected a bronze altar in honor of her (Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus*, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/tiberius.html>). Terentia, the wife of Cicero was a virtuous, faithful, upright and a devout worshipper of the gods (Cicero, *Epistulae ad familiares*, Book XIV 1, pg 174). Livia (58 BC - AD29) the wife of Augustus won Augustus' heart and love because she was chaste, gratified his personal desires and did not meddle in his affairs (Dio Cassius, LVIII 2-5).

Turia who lived during the reign of Augustus, had lived with her husband for 41 years without a child. This woman implored her husband to divorce her, retain her property and marry another woman in order to beget children, promising him that she would treat the future children as her very own. Her husband, of course, did not indulge her because he cherished their marriage, which had lasted for such a long period of time (*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 8393). Cornelia; wife of Aemilius Paulus was eulogized for having married only one man (*univira*) (Horace *Odes* III, 14.4; Propertius IV, II. 36). Taxaea and Sextia demonstrated their love for their husband by dying alongside them (Tacitus, *Annals* VI.29; Martial I, 13; Dio Cassius LX 16, 5-6). Some epitaphs in the imperial period tell of women in the lower class who were faithful to their husbands (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* Vol. VI 12845, 12853, Vol. XI, 3276S).

Just as there were women who observed to do what the culture demanded, and were faithful to their husbands during the imperial period, there were unfaithful wives who lived immoral lives. Livy reveals that a certain Plaucina allegedly murdered her husband Piso in 184 B.C. He also informs us that in 154 B.C two noble ladies were accused of poisoning their husbands. The Vestal virgins, Optimia and Floronia were convicted of unchastity. The latter was forced to commit suicide and the former was burnt alive (Livy, Vol. 3; 22:57). The other Vestal Virgins who were also convicted of unchastity escaped punishment by performing miracles through the help of the goddess Vesta (Ibid). Culture became accommodating of these terrible acts by some women because either the custodians of culture could not convict some of these women because they were influential or because society was becoming familiar with these acts by the women.

The Roman writer Ovid (Ovid, *Amores*. III. 4. 37-40, 1.4; 1.9) implied that some women of his time

were deceptive. They made their husbands believe they had gone to worship certain deities whereas they were cavorting with other men. In this regard, he remarked that his beloved wife Cynthia usually spent ten nights in the ritual ceremonies in honor of the goddess Isis; a goddess who was generally believed to have caused the separation of ardent lovers. Consequently, he considered the cult of Isis, which has spread from Egypt to Rome as a curse. Martial (Martial, *Epigrams*, Bk X. 69; Bk XII. 91.) also complained of Polla who would set a watch over her husband but would not desire any set for her. She would behave in any way she so desired not considering the consequences.

Julius Caesar was believed to have had affairs with Lollia wife of Gabinius, Tertulla wife of Crassus and Mucia wife of Pompey (Suetonius: *Divus Julius*, 50, 52.). It was said that Publius Clodius was in a love affair with Pompeia wife of Julius Caesar (Plutarch, *Caesar*, 10.6). Sempronia wife of a consul of 77 B.C is portrayed as an intelligent but unscrupulous woman, who threw caution to the winds as regards modesty and chastity. She ran after men more often than men chased her (Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, 25).

Plutarch informs that Praecia, who was no better than a prostitute promoted the political ambitions of her lovers using her associates and companions (Plutarch, *Lucullus*, 6.). The historian Sallust was caught in bed with Fausta wife of Ammius Milo. Consequently, having been trashed was made to pay a huge amount of money (Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, xvii. 18). Caecilia Metella the wife of Publius Cornelius had an affair with Cornelius Dolabella the son-in-law of Cicero (Horace, *Satire*, 11.3.239.). The daughter and granddaughter of Augustus both named Julia were banished by Augustus on the basis of immorality (Suetonius, *Augustus*). The imperial period also witnessed indications of incest between the Emperor Nero and his mother, and between Sextius Papinius (a man of consular rank), and his mother (Tacitus, *Annals*, xiv.2, vi 49, xvi 20).

Domitia, wife of the emperor Domitian had immoral relations with his brother, Titus (Suetonius, *Titus*, 10). It was this same Domitian who tried some Vestal Virgins and inflicted severe punishment on those convicted of unchastity, including Cornelia, the chief Vestal Virgin (Suetonius, *Domitian*, 8.3-5). Culture was responsible for these acts because culture in the first instance had instituted rules that were beneficial to some people. These actions by the men and women mentioned above were corresponding reactions to culture's show of favouritism to a group of people in the society.

According to Plutarch (Plutarch, *Cicero*. 41, *Sulla*, 32), Mark Anthony with mimes and dancers stopped often by the roadside to hold parties, drink excessively and later took part in orgies. His practice of sensual and sexual enjoyment did shock public opinion, especially those of

the aristocratic class, contrary to the opinion of those of the lower class who did adore him as their hero.

Octavius was a man who had little regard for marriage. He was engaged to Servilia, the daughter of Publius Servilius Isauricus. Because the soldiers of Antony and Octavius demanded their generals to seal their alliance with a marriage, Octavius broke his engagement with Servilla and married Claudia the daughter of Fulvia and Publius Claudius. This same marriage was not consummated because Octavius again married Scribonia an aunt of Sextius Pompeius because of a looming crisis that may mark the end of Octavius. Octavius further married Livia because he yearned for an alliance with the Claudii, the very aristocratic family of Livia (Barret, 1996). In spite of the opinions of Plutarch and Seneca, Octavius who was supposed to be one of the custodians of culture with regard to marriage behaved contrary to the norm, and culture had to become accommodating merely because of his status in the society.

COLONIAL UGBOHA

In colonial Ugho, people became bolder, inquisitive and adventurous. The idea that a woman or wife was the man's property began to change with the emergence and spread of Christianity, which in its wake brought western education and almost everything western. Although some cultural values were still upheld, such as respect for kingship and gerontocracy, respect for ancient landmarks, respect for elders and respect for the institution of marriage, some of these ideas regarding marriage were being discarded especially by adherents or converts to the new faith. Women began to realize that they were whole entities and equal with the men. During this period, women would assimilate educational values and learning and would understand and interpret ideas and phenomena surrounding society and people.

Some women especially the educated lot, began to prefer and demand a one-man one-woman relationship despite the circumstances. Their demands were conventional with one of the ideals of Christianity, which recommends equality between husband and wife and demands marital fidelity of both husband and wife. What was culture's reaction? Rather than discard these ideals, culture decided to blend this change with the old traditions. Culture upheld and gave prominence to traditional rites in marriage. Although some men married multiple wives, polygamy was becoming less popular. Many people were adopting the new religion, probably because it was much more convenient as well as impressive. Fostering relationships with foreigners was conceived as superior. Educated men and women were admitted into the employ of the incumbent government and were well remunerated. Some locals emulated and conducted themselves as foreigners. Culture accepted

and adopted this new phenomenon and also retained crucial aspects of the tradition of the land with regard to marriage. At the traditional marriage rites which most couples partook of, that aspect of culture which forbade the woman from engaging in extra-marital affairs were ingrained. Thereafter the bride was educated on the outcome of such acts. It became common knowledge that women must not become adulterous for the consequences were dire. However, it seemed likely that because of these circumstances backed by culture, some women who desired some form of freedom, decided to engage in adultery. They found a way round the outcomes, sometimes they went scot-free, some other times the truth could not be concealed.

The story is told of an adulterous woman who concealed her adulterous acts for a while because of her juju. Her acts were discovered when the powers of her juju began to wane. Her husband had taken ill and was at the point of death, when the family oracle discovered the cause of the illness. Had necessary precautions not been effected the man would have died. What was the adulterous woman's punishment? She was disgraced, scorned and flogged at her husband's family home in the village. Her husband was mandated to keep away from her for two years and she was left with her mother-in-law for the two years. During this period, she was more or less quarantined and everyone was scared to relate with her. On one occasion, she could not bear the shame and furtively ran away to her father's house and told lies against her husband and his extended family. Her father who was a fetish priest sent curses against his son-in-law, unfortunately, the curses worked against his daughter. Consequently, she became mentally deranged and was at the point of death, when the oracle in her husband's home informed the people of her mendacity. The oracle advised that the fetish priest who was responsible for procuring the juju in the first place was the only one who could restore her to health. Having discovered the truth, her father apologized to his son-in-law and cured his daughter. The consequences of an adulterous woman were dire for the husband and her children. Apart from the shame and flogging, nothing else physically happened to an adulterous woman. Culture kept her alive, but killed her husband or children. This was the punishment meted on her. And if her husband died, she suffered more even as a widow, for widows were meted the worst of treatment. That was why, as a widow, a woman was quickly married off to one of her brothers-in-law as this would aid her in reclaiming her status as a woman.

The custodians of the culture believed that the possessions of a woman consisted of the lives of her husband and especially her children. An adulterous woman lost respect and honour from her husband, her sisters-in-law and the society. In pre-colonial and colonial Ugbaha, culture was biased towards men. The

rules were not applicable to everyone. So what were witnessed among a few women, was infidelity and the slow rise of prostitution.

If culture had not been too insistent on suppressing the wife, adultery may not have been an issue. Prostitution which was far worse than adultery was accepted by culture and adultery on the part of the woman was despised and eschewed by culture and its custodians.

Furthermore, new practices by men and women also continued to be witnessed. This was a phenomenon that abused the intrinsic values of marriage and its great traditions. It is what Izibili (2012, pp.132) describes as marriage on 'hire-purchase' in Esan traditional thought. This attitude was not practiced in the pre-colonial era in Ugbaha. It was forbidden. This marriage on 'hire-purchase' is a situation whereby females of marriageable age who out of self indulgence leave their parents' home to live with a young man of marriageable age (Izibili 2012). This is a fraud, it is forbidden and it is not recognized as marriage in Ugbaha and of course in Esan traditional thought. Because the proper procedures for marriage were not observed, the man can not refer to the woman as his wife and she her husband. More so, the couple is denied participation on issues that concern the extended family. No parent desires that their children should involve themselves in such. One may attempt to blame this attitude on modernization and its effects. The truth of the matter is that culture has not singled out these erring people for punishment, due to the fact that modernization tended to encourage and propagate some issues that are dissenting with everyday natural norms. In spite of all this, what is culture's reaction? It is calling for moral rearmament; teaching young males and females to obey and uphold the traditions and values of their culture.

There is also the issue of wife-inheritance. This practice is not common, but is still witnessed. After the death of her husband, the widow is married by one of her brothers-in-law. For it is believed that when a woman marries, she is in fact married to the whole community of her husband. Therefore, it is appropriate to keep her in the family she had lived in prior to her husband's demise. A widow is perceived as helpless and being inherited by one of her brothers-in-law was one of and very important ways of helping her reclaim her status. In Esanland the concept of widowhood is closely tied with its rites. Being a widow marks the woman with a special temporary character of a reduced socio-cultural significance in which case the widowhood rites and practices become necessary steps in reclaiming the original status of the woman (Ogbenbe, 2012).

In the colonial Ugbaha, it was practiced but it was not widespread, probably due to the problem it portends for the wife or wives of the brother-in-law husband. Quarrels and sometimes assassinations trail the woman in this predicament. At a point in time widows were no

longer married off to one of their brothers-in-law but remained in their late husband's house, working to earn income to look after the children. Often times, financial assistance came from other extended family members or from friends or the church, especially with the ones who practiced Christianity.

CONCLUSION

Culture refers to set rules and regulations as well as unwritten codes of conduct that aid people in proper behavior in order that society may become advanced and civilized. It is also the "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." (Edward B. Tylor, 1871, pp.10.). Culture varies from one society to another. It is however the same in the sense that it is synonymous to set rules and regulations as well as "...all those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational, and non-rational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men" (Kluckhohn, C. & Kelly, W. H., 1945.). Members of the ruling elite are more often than not the custodians of the culture, who in turn educate the ruled to participate in one way or the other therefore becoming *part custodians of culture*.

Therefore, we see how culture considerably influenced marital love and fidelity and vice-versa in antiquity as well as pre-colonial and colonial Ugbaha of the Ishan people of Edo State. What obtained in Monarchical Rome began to change in Republican and Imperial Rome. Culture had to adopt some of the new views and philosophies with regard to love and fidelity in marriages. This was necessary if war between the sexes was to be avoided. The same occurred with the people of Ugbaha in Esanland. Culture due to its dynamism had been able to adapt to new trends even in marriages in the society and different attitudes and actions were witnessed. This study has also attempted to show that in spite of the Hamitic hypothesis trends in marital love and fidelity and vice-versa were synonymous in nature, irrespective of race, creed and period of existence of both societies. Studies that may interrogate the role of culture towards unfair treatment of the male gender in both societies are needed.

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