



RELIGIOUS/CULTURAL INFLUENCES, INHERITANCE PRACTICES
ON WIDOWHOOD, SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA: A STUDY ON
THE AWA PEOPLE OF IJEBU, OGUN STATE

Abdulrahman Adebayo Suleiman^{1*} (Ph.D.) and Anuoluwapo Ayomide Olujimi²

^{1,2}Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
abdulrahman.as@unilorin.edu.ng¹, bayokijan@gmail.com²

Abstract

Widowhood practices are preserved and conserved within an instinctive operational system of several homogeneous religious and cultural values of sub-Saharan African ethnic groups. In the pre-Islamic and Christian periods of African civilization, those who bore the burden of widowhood practices were barely emancipated, but grudged being socio-economically relegated. With the introduction and wide acceptance of Islam and Christianity, the burden of widowhood practices was lessened, yet the widows were not really comfortable because of their exposure to the socio-economic spheres of Western civilization. Despite the grudge, emancipation, and exposure to Western civilization, widowhood practices are sustained within the sphere of influence of Islamic and Christian culture. The center point of widowhood practices is the inheritance of the widow and/or the properties of the deceased. This study examines the interplay of religious and cultural influences of inheritance practices and their impact on widowhood among the Awa people of Ijebu, Ogun State, Southwest Nigeria. The research explores how traditional Yoruba customs, Islamic, and Christian beliefs shaped attitudes towards widowhood, property rights, and the social support system. The study adopted qualitative interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions. Findings highlight the need for culturally sensitive interventions to promote widows' rights and social justice. The study concluded that widowhood practices in the Awa community are integrated into rites, which undermined the women's rights in contrast to a humane perspective.

Keywords: Cultural rites, religious influences, property inheritance, Southwestern Nigeria, widowhood

Introduction

The custom of widowhood and inheritance practices dates back to the earliest times of humankind. Despite the significant advancements in science and technology, death is inevitable, which is why we contend that human society cannot exist without widows and widowers. According to the United States Bureau of Statistics (2008), there are seven million widows worldwide each year. More often than not, men are exposed to hardship, hard labour, and precarious livelihood activities than their female counterparts. For this reason, men can die too young as a result of a variety of unpredictable events, such as illness, accidents, and wars, among others. Every year, the World Economic Forum publishes the Global Gender Gap Report, which measures gender relegation tendencies, and the reports always shows that female gender are more exposed to precarious socio-

economic conditions across the global nations (Kasahara Michiko & Kelly Midori McCormick, 2024). Sexual politics is related to the context of this work, since it has been observed that some women around the world consider marrying a man for material purposes. Where the social strata encourage provisions to women in their union with their men counterparts, the economic structure of some advanced countries has compelled women to be free of dependence on men, yet, the need to satisfy some emotional instincts among women subjected them to sex politics. However, the social system of those who enforce sex politics, especially in Japan, have transformed from daughters, wives, mothers, and grandmothers who are dependent on their families to individuals who make their own decisions about their lives (Kasahara Michiko & Kelly Midori McCormick, 2024, p. 1976–79). Among the developed countries, there are still gaps. In





most of the sub-African cultural settings, women are the prime suspects of their respective husbands' deaths. To uncover the superficial hidden truth about some husbands' deaths, magico-religious/spiritual explanations and accusations of witchcraft or sorcery are invoked. According to a well-known Nigerian folktale, all happy marriages eventually come to an end when either the husband or wife passes away, or the aforementioned is meant to bear the brunt that comes with widowhood. The objectives of this study are to: (i) examine the geographical location and status of the Awa community; (ii) historically examine the politico-economic and socio-cultural activities of the Awa people of Ijebu; (iii) examine the widowhood rites and inheritance practices of the Awa people of Ijebu, Ogun state; (iv) examine the place of the society on widowhood rites and inheritance practices in Nigeria and its peculiarity to the people of Awa Ijebu of Ogun state; and (v) examine the consequences of widowhood rites and inheritance practices on the politico-economic and socio-cultural life of Awa of Ijebu communities.

Review of Literature Widowhood in World Perspective

Ilogu (1974) expatriated on the intersection between Christianity and Igbo culture, on the grounds that the religion is not isolated from African culture. It was argued from a realistic viewpoint that widowhood is a prevalent occurrence in Nigeria, where a high and rising mortality rate is rampant (Ilogu, 1974). It is a fact that women usually live longer than men, and perhaps the custom of men marrying women who are younger than themselves probably contributes to the point that there are more widows than widowers in society. Although they both go through certain ritual rites after the death of their spouse, over time, historical findings have proved that the

women always have it worse. In some cases, the omen that surrounded the death of a husband is grossly linked to his wife's efforts.

Kantiyok (2000) posited that no widow is completely free from the plight of widowhood rites (and their effects) in Kano, Nigeria. He added that a widow is being seen as the prime suspect of her husband's death and is compelled to go through an ordeal to prove her innocence. Adepoju (1997) confirmed that in many African societies, the practice of levirate, a marital union of the widow to her deceased husband's brother, still thrives. He contended that despite campaigns to eradicate levirate, it is closely linked to the distribution of and right to wealth and property of the deceased, which in turn leads to the poverty and economic situation encountered by her widow and even her children. Adeyemo (2016) highlighted the cultural disparities in the practices of widowhood between widows and widowers, despite the modernization of the twenty-first century. The study reveals that illiteracy, poverty, poor socio-economic status of women, religious belief, and traditional inheritance Laws are factors responsible for the harmful practices. Eze and Nwebo (2009) assessed the factors that aided widowhood practices among the Igbo of eastern Nigeria. He stressed that the lack of infrastructural amenities and facilities in the Igbo communities constituted a barrier to economic power, which could aid women's emancipation against the ill aspects of widowhood and inheritance practices.

Adam and Haruna (2015) pointed out various health and physiological states, mental, emotional, and spiritual challenges that widows go through. The authors provided relevant information related to the passing away of a husband in African society. Several rites are to be delivered by the widow(s) to their late husband to please the ghost spirit of their late husband. The rites involved specific customary mourning





rituals, which were observed to sever the spiritual connection between the surviving widow and the deceased husband (or wives). The authors posited that some aspects of the rites undermined fundamental human rights. Marriage is inseparable of the spiritual notion, and far as female spirituality is concerned, it has long been defined by the concepts of masculinity and femininity as understood in the context of this research, and based on western traditional notions, female spirituality is assessed as being about emotions and the body, and male spirituality as about the mind and the spirit (Van Dijk, 2025, p. 399-428.). Women's significant participation in media outlets is imperative among the factors that are to be considered for the impetus that could necessitate women's emancipation. Forero-Montoya (2020) contends that 'the media representation of a Latin American woman, Anita Alvarado, was instrumental in the othering processes of foreign identities in Japan.

Faye (2018) traced shared national narratives about women, work, and precarity. The study examined the films made by East German women directors in the state-run DEFA studios before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which comprises an analysis and review of Evelyn Schmidt's *Das Fahrrad* (*The Bicycle*, 1982) and Helke Misselwitz's *Herzprung* (1992). Both works emphasised the ideological system to study and reveal the late socialist and emerging capitalist systems, which produced and perceived a gender socio-economic instability. The strategic focus of the work is premised on 'rendering visible the struggles of unskilled single mothers for autonomy and fulfillment in environments marked by apathy and disdain' (Faye, 2018, p. 21-47). The concept of widowhood and its practices is seen as a major life event with numerous implications. It has been observed that widowhood is not a pleasant experience for the women who have experienced it.

Contrarily, men are just subjected to brevity over the loss of a wife, and in African cultural settings, they are not supposed to observe any widowhood period over the demise of their wives. The Awa, just as the Yoruba cultural settings admit loss of husband as a bad omen, which bequeathed emotion, psychological, and spiritual imbalance to the widow, and the loss is potential to perpetually causing permanent deprivation, confusion, which may lead to untimely succession death to the widow, and the entire members of the deceased. To prohibit the subsequent menace of the death of a husband, the wife or wives must observe a widowhood period. To the Yoruba and some other ethnic groups of the sub-Saharan states, a widowhood period must be observed by the deceased wife or wives to know whether the wife or wives conceived a pregnant to the late husband. In this situation, there will be a clarity of ambiguity before the wife or wives would be allowed to remarry. Mostly, the sub-Saharan African cultural context perceived wives as subordinate/subservient to the husband. Whoever owns the slave owns his or her properties. In this regard, the parents and the 'families' of a man are, as far as indigenous traditional Africa is concerned, his owners. Widows are subject to the whims of African traditional society, over which they have no influence and must surrender themselves. Widowhood is an unavoidable occurrence and practice among African sub-Saharan ethnic groups. Irrespective of a woman's age, she must observe a widowhood period upon the demise of her husband. A wife is regarded as the closest to have known the privacies of her husband, and wield what all to influence either the long or short life of her husband. Where a wife is suspected of having influenced the untimely death of her husband, some African spiritual traditional concepts hope that she will be revealed in the course of the widowhood period.





Usually, widowhood has a significant impact on a woman's status, stability, and security.

Widowhood practices are a collection of norms for how the widow should act and behave, and how others should behave toward the widow. Considering the practice of widowhood, it is an example of ceremonial cleansing that tradition mandated for all members of the society after any death in the town (Omokhodion, 2006, p. 277–81).

An Overview of Widowhood Practices across Some Geo-Political Zones in Nigeria

This section offers a concise summary of widowhood customs within various geopolitical zones in Nigeria, with the intention of highlighting the diversity in these practices.

In the South-Western State of Ondo, a widow spends seven days in confinement after her spouse passes away, not allowed to leave the house or use the restroom. She is shaved on the seventh day and is forbidden from courting, leaving the house, taking the kids away, or looking in the mirror out of dread of seeing the deceased.

In the southeastern state of Anambra, Ogidi town, the widow is confined to the house for the whole year of mourning, sitting on the floor for four weeks while having her hair scraped. She is forbidden from speaking, laughing, extending a hand to welcome guests, baking, or cooking. She wears "the ikpim," a pitch-black cloth called mourning clothes, and her clothing is known as "Ogodoupa."

In the South-South State of Edo, the Binis have two stages to their widowhood ceremonies: first, for seven days following the interment of her late spouse, she is sequestered in a chamber outside the family home, wearing all-black clothing and uncombed hair, and weeping day and night. She is prohibited from sleeping on the seventh day when a wake-keeping ritual is conducted.

In Benue State's North Central area, a widow is confined to a single location, limited to one room if she is still of reproductive age. She must spend three months in mourning. Among the Etulo people, this period can determine whether or not she is pregnant. Her only clothing is a piece of fabric called a bento, which is said to be a ceremonial item.

In the North-Western State of Kano, the widow observes the Takaba, a period of silence and solitude lasting four months and ten days. The widow is free to be married again, either within the family or without, after the period of mourning. Inheritance matters in these regions are governed by Islamic laws, with widows qualified to inherit at least 1/8th of the property and land that their deceased husbands had.

The concept of property inheritance and its practices could be categorised into the traditional, religious, and modern conventional patterns. However, these three patterns are relatively not isolated because some traditions mix the patterns to suit the challenges of circumstances, while some are given to be adamant, especially traditional patterns, to achieve an intended purpose, although one can affirm that some traditional patterns are strict for the sake of belief and religious/cultural ordinances. Based on the fact above, several definitions of property inheritance have emerged. Considering that Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups, the structure of succession under customary law would differ depending on the ethnic group. Inheritance is often patrilineal, and asset distribution favors the male offspring in Nigeria (Inheritance and Customary Laws in Nigeria, n.d).

Inheritance, often known as succession, is the transfer of property to a successor or heirs following the death of the owner. Inheritance also refers to the property itself. The law governs the process in minute detail in modern society. Inheritance is simply the practice of transferring one's possessions,





assets, and properties to their beneficiaries. There are several definitions of property and inheritance in the literature. Aboki (1997) contends that the concept of property in this study is a moral connection between two or more individuals with reference to an item or things, the right to use and enjoy, or to exclude the use and pleasure of such a thing or things.

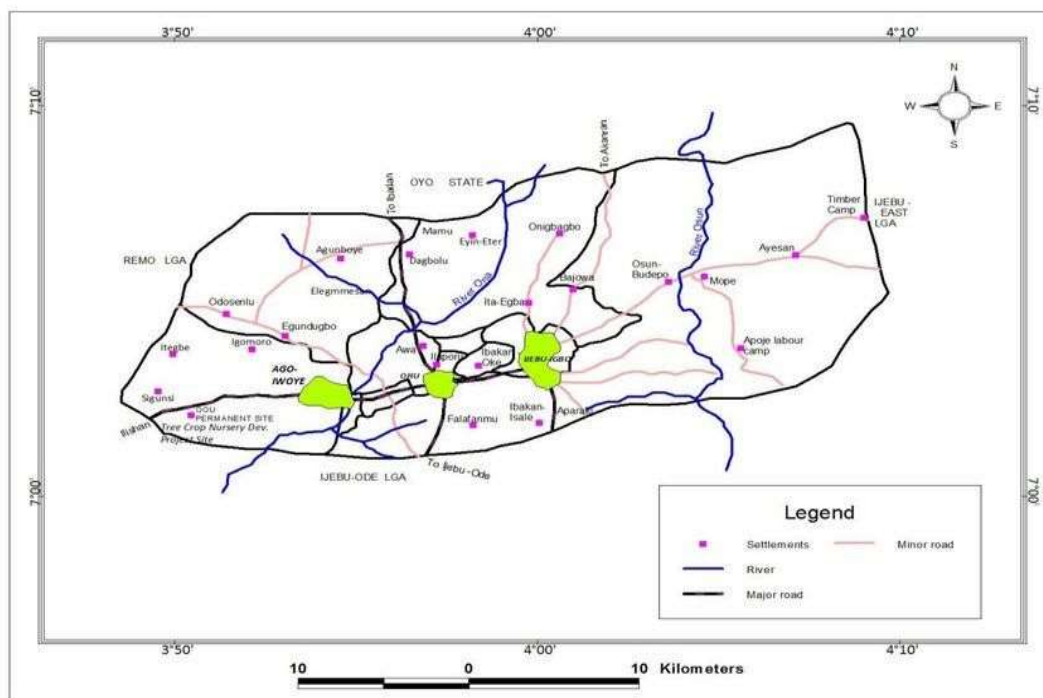
This definition is best selected because it indicates that what is important is not the object (property) itself, but the right to utilise it without resistance or victimization. Ige (1993) stated that inheritance is the act of obtaining property from a deceased person, and can be written or documented in a will, or it can be done without a will (i.e., intestate). Due to the presence of several ethnic groups in Nigeria, the patterns of property inheritance, particularly intestate estate under customary law, are very diverse. Although the severity of prejudice varies throughout traditions, discrimination against women is a consistent element in all of these variations. Iruonagbe (2009) submitted that with the use of the ancient canon of descent and the principle of natural justice as applied by the courts, customary law evolved norms of inheritance for intestacy.

Location and Description of Awa Community

The timeline and origin of the Awa people of Ijebu-North cannot be traced without notable reference to the origins of the people of Ijebu itself. It can be categorically inferred that the Awa people are a part of a community under Ijebu North, which is a local government in Ijebu. This leads to the conclusion that there is a significant relationship between the histories of the Awa people and the Ijebu. Ijebu North Local Government Area (LGA) is located in the Eastern part of Ogun State, 110 km North-East of Lagos, and 100 km

from the Atlantic Ocean. The LGA comprises several towns and villages, including Ijebu Igbo, Ago-Iwoye, Oru, Awa, Ilaporu, Atikori, Ojowo, Japara, and Ome. Owing to the acceptance of the modern European administrative embracement, the towns co-exist based on 'multiculturalism in the extant sociological literature' (Mathebe, 2025). Awa is 30 kilometers from the Sagamu-Benin Expressway and 10 kilometres from the Ijebu-Ode-Ibadan highway. The Awa community bears the Latitude of 6° 59' 36" N, and the Longitude of 4° 19' 30" E. The climate condition is considered as wet and Tropical Savanna. The climate falls into two distinct seasons, the Harmattan dry season (November to March) and the rainy season (April to October), interrupted by a short August break, reaching its peak in the months of June and September. Mean annual rainfall is about 1590 mm, with an average annual temperature of 27.5°C. Generally, the soil falls into the ferritic group, characterised by deep soils with distinct profiles, higher natural fertility, and high water retaining capacity.





The map of Ijebu and the Awa Community

The Origin, Migration, and Settlement of the People of Awa

The Awa community is considered to have no origin because nobody is permitted to talk about its origin except if he/she wish to die overnight or right there on the spot. Due to the limitation in getting an accurate source on the story behind the origin of Awa, the researchers view that the history of Awa has either faded away into the period of archaeological twilight or there is indeed a mystical story behind her history. That they do not speak about their origin does not make them bastards, the indigenes contend. An indigene of Awa has to be a descendant of either the two great families, which are the Itun-La and Itun-Aga's (royal household) or the Oke-Iseowon (Interview with Mama Ige Adedoyin, 2023). The Awa people recorded that these two families laid the foundation of Awa. The Itun-la family arrived first in the morning to settle in that area, and then the Itun-Aga people joined them two days later at night. The two families did not pay in the same location, but within the same jurisdiction. Another family

is the Oke-Iseowon, who were directed by the Itun-La family to stay in the Iseowon forest to avoid conflict between the two families. Tracing the lineage of these families suggests that they are all descendants who migrated from Ile-Ife and Oyo Ile, located in the present-day Osun State and Oyo State, Nigeria, respectively.

One of the primary economic sources of income for the Awa community is agriculture, which is practiced solely on a regenerative method, under the statutory role of the community head, Limeri, and his council. The people are also involved in commercial and trading activities. The cultural perspective of the Awa community is no different from that of other Yoruba communities. Three major religious practices are common among the people of Awa: Traditional religion, Christianity, and Islam. Due to the influx and practice of foreign religions, the people of Awa now mostly practice Christianity, but they still very much hold to the traditional religious paraphernalia. A common Yoruba song among the Ota and the Awa people in



general is: *Igbagbo o pe kawa ma soroilewa* – meaning (Christianity or Islam, as the case may be, does not prevent us from our traditional rites) (Interview with Oba Abib, 2023). The strategic location of the *Qna* (way) river, known as the Ogun river, as part of the outskirt territories of the Awa community in the Ijebu kingdom, was important because it provided a navigable entry point for the Europeans (Portuguese) in the sixteenth century.

Widowhood and Inheritance Practices among the Awa People of Ijebu

According to Charan et al. (2020), Culture always plays an important role in creating and affecting happiness in human beings. Basically, this work examined socio-cultural facets of the Awa people, which, in the course, has a preference for instilling sensitive-sex-gender value, in the homogenic tradition of Awa child raising. Brinkman and Mossissa (2025) explore gender construction and expectations in Oromo oral narratives, highlighting their fluidity and openness to evaluation. The study confirms that gender portrayal within Oromo oral narratives is dynamic.

Widowhood is defined as the period of time following the death of one's spouse. According to the people of Awa, widowhood rites and property inheritance are observed quite similarly, but with a kind of difference from other parts of Nigeria. The widows of Awa have had it more lenient in the practices of the widowhood rite and property inheritance, compared with the widowhood practices among Igbos, Ibibio, and Itsekiri, among other ethnic groups of Nigeria. This claim only rests on the fact that the widow is considered faithful, loving, and respectful to her in-laws and her deceased husband before his death. If the widow does not qualify for the above claims, she faces harsh and lonely widowhood rites as she is rejected as part of the deceased's family. A widow in Awa must be confined within her deceased husband's house for a consecutive

period of four months and eleven days before the colonial intervention. According to the rites, it is forbidden for a widow to see her own or another person's shadow. A widow may be assisted with some house chores, but strictly not to be assisted in washing her clothes throughout the period of confinement. A five-month mourning period is ritually enforced for widows on the husband's death. A widow is spiritually ordained to submit all the clothes worn during the five-month mourning period of her deceased husband. The clothes are meant to be burned. After five months of mourning, the widow is allowed to change clothes. In the Awa community, a compulsory confinement period of eight to fourteen days is ritually enforced within the five-month mourning period. On the day a widow leaves her confinement space, she is required to walk a great distance to another town where she must be greeted by an anonymous person before she returns home. If she is not greeted, she continues walking. A widow is allowed to eat any kind of food during the confinement. She is allowed to attend social gatherings like parties, church, and distanced markets. Whether or not the widow will be allowed to have a portion of her late husband's property shares depends on loyalty, obedience, stubbornness, and arrogance to the husband and families before the husband's death.ⁱ A widow with a child or children is likely to be of good luck in the sharing of the deceased's properties compared to one without. What could have been the adversary conditions of a childless widow can be maneuvered to a complementary relationship, if she was offered and accepted remarriage among her deceased husband's family. A new Awa king must inherit the wife(s) of the king, who is his predecessor, because the rites recognised them as the property of the successor (Interview with Oba Abib, 2023).





The Role of Religions on the Widowhood Practice and Inheritance in the Awa Community

The African Traditional Religion (ATR) encourages widowhood practices through a trial by ordeal – a situation by which a widow is made to swear an oath before the village shrine as proof of her innocence and exoneration at the death of her spouse.

The most significant element of the Islamic ideology includes the extension of basic legal rights in marriage, divorce, and property. Under Islamic law, widows are entitled to inherit at least one-eighth of the dead husband's property and land. The children, the deceased, and the parents have some portions of shares in the deceased's property. At the same time, a widow must observe a waiting period, called 'iddah, for four months and ten days after her husband died to mourn, ensure she is not pregnant, and prevent remarriage. If she is pregnant, her 'iddah lasts until she gives birth. During this time, she is to avoid remarriage and adornment and stay in her home, although she may leave for necessities. Some of the properties of the deceased husband are 'managed' by the brother-in-law of the deceased. It was observed that Muslims in the Awa community are very few, and in treating a widow, they have to follow the guidance of the Islamic law.

The biblical doctrine of "wives submit to your husbands, as is fit in the (Lord in Colossians 3:18), encourages total submission of women to their husbands. Owing to this, Christians in the Awa community are relatively accepting of the traditional rite of widowhood but modify its course to ameliorate its hardship on widows. The widowhood rite, which is practiced in Awa community premised on the tenets of the ATR and has become an integral part of the Awa people's culture. As regards property inheritance, no question is raised as the woman is excluded from her husband's family as property. The ATR widowhood

traditional rite forbids a widow from rejecting remarriage among the family members of the deceased. A widow is ideologically dealt with, in case she rejects the offer of a family member who has demonstrated an interest. Through the Ogun State Government's intervention, the king of Awa has logically amended the rite in part, that the widowhood rite must be subject to the choice and absolute well-being of the widows (Interview with Oba Abib, 2023).

The Influence of Colonialism on Widowhood and Inheritance Practices among the People of Awa Ijebu

Before colonial rule, widowhood practices in Ijebu were deeply rooted in the cultural traditions and customs of the region. These practices were intended to uphold cultural values and maintain social order. The British colonial administration had a significant impact on traditional societies, including widowhood practices in Ijebu. Smith (1969) emphasises that the colonial administration introduced new legal systems and laws to eliminate harmful practices, often clashing with traditional inheritance and property rights. European missionaries and administrators introduced their own cultural norms and values, criticised traditional practices, and introduced Christianity. This led to calls for the reform or abolition of certain widowhood practices, as well as the elimination of patriarchal influence in inheritance practices. It is imperative to mention that the colonial administration bequeathed the legacy of human rights, which was annexed and accomplished by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) (Perera, 2025, p. 170-203). This branch focuses on the right to development across global national communities, and the draft of the branch is expected to be adopted by the Inter-Governmental Working Group on the Right to Development to the UN General Assembly for further action. Women and female members of the Awa community were sensitised to awaken





against any native ordinance that infringed on their freedom. Education and modernization also played a role in these changes, as education spread and some individuals challenged traditional practices in favor of progressive and egalitarian values. This led to women co-owning properties with their husbands and in their names (Vaughan Olufemi, 1991).

Changes and Reforms in Widowhood and Property Inheritance in Awa Community

Social, cultural, economic, and political contacts influenced changes and reforms in widowhood and property inheritance in the Awa community. The Awa people hold their traditions and ancestral customs in high esteem. They are seen as sacred and non-negotiable aspects of their cultural heritage. They view the widowhood and inheritance practices as the lifeblood of their identity and a sense of continuity with their forebears. The restrictions created by socio-cultural practices can be blamed for the poor participation of women in politics and the decision-making process.

The practice is also linked with their ancestral norms and values. Basically, the practices are linked with both spiritual and religious doctrines. Despite the clamor for change and modernization, the Awa community stands divided, with its elders who are practicing the African Traditional Religion (ATR) forming the bulwark of resistance. They oppose some attempts to modify the age-old practices governing widowhood and property inheritance, arguing that these practices are the bedrock of Awa's cultural identity. They fear that any concession to modernity would erode their unique cultural identity, leaving them adrift in a sea of homogeneity. Western education was introduced to the western part of Nigeria in 1842, and the Awa people were not spared among the early adopters of the education. The spread of Western education socialized several people to the need to resist the hardship of the practices.

Economic contact played a vital role in promoting, criticising, and advancing women's emancipation against these practices. The economic gain that will be accrued to the deceased family members, whether the widow inclines or declines to the observation of the rite, is a prime factor in the upholding of the practice. However, the economic relegation of the widows is an obstinate, worthy trigger for emancipation among the women, because during the period of the observation of the widowhood, widows were partially inhibited from attendance and punctuality to their various businesses and enterprises.

Education has played a significant role in empowering women in the Awa community, dismantling traditional practices, and empowering them to assert their rights in matters of widowhood and property inheritance. Education has equipped the Awa community women with knowledge of their rights, legal literacy, critical thinking skills, and community engagement. Educated Awa community women through their educational exposure are better equipped to evaluate customs and traditions governing widowhood and property inheritance, questioning the fairness of these practices and advocating for change. Their educational awareness has been raised about gender-based violence and empowers women to report and seek assistance when subjected to abuse. The changes brought about by education include reduced stigmatisation of widows, advocacy for reform, and legal recourse. Some of them are at the forefront of advocacy efforts aimed at reforming widowhood practices, leveraging their knowledge and networks to challenge customs that infringe upon their rights. Their awareness through education has also influenced property inheritance practices, with educated women demanding equal inheritance and challenging traditional bias. However, the government, both at the state and federal levels, has provided an enabling environment through which the





violence/abuse against girls and women could be eradicated. Ways through the government intervened included educational programmes, health-care initiatives, economic empowerment, the Legal Reform Act, and the National Gender Policy.

Findings

The findings of this study are that:

- (i) the study of widowhood practices and property inheritance in Awa underscores the complex interplay of tradition, religion, education, and governance;
- (ii) the socio-cultural variables, which tuned the practices of widowhood rites and inheritance among the Awa people of Ijebu communities, have received influences from across the nationalities of the Nigerian society;
- (iii) traditional customs, influenced by African Traditional Religion, have historically subjected widows to arduous rituals and left them vulnerable to property dispossession;
- (iv) the intrusion of foreign religions, Christianity and Islam, has introduced varying degrees of change and, in some instances, moderated these practices; and Western education has played a pivotal role in challenging these age-old traditions through widows' knowledge empowerment.

Conclusion

The research provides a history of widowhood and property inheritance among the Awa people of Ijebu, Ogun State, South-Western Nigeria. This study highlights the importance of recognising variations in widowhood/inheritance among the people. Introduction of foreign religion and colonisation influence changes and continuity in the widowhood and inheritance practice pattern. Legal Safeguards have helped to promote the codification of these positive practices into legal frameworks to ensure their continuity and provide widows

with legally recognised rights to inheritance. Educational initiatives helped raise awareness about the importance of gender equality and the rights of widows. The Government has established support mechanisms, such as access to legal aid and economic empowerment programmes, to further enhance widows' well-being and self-reliance. The work provided a platform to improve policy development and improvements on the widowhood and inheritance practices among the Awa people and beyond. The rich cultural heritage of the Awa people involves the widowhood and inheritance practice, which are fully respected and protected.

References

- Aboki, Y. (1997). Property Rights of the Customary and Islamic Law Spouse in Divorce Issues. Problems and Proposal for Reform. Rights of Children and Women in Divorce. In Olonade, A. and Ipaye, T. (Eds.), Lagos: Franchard Publisher for Fredrick Foundation.
- Adam, P. P., & Haruna, A. I. (2015). Facts from Fiction, Myths from Reality, Widowhood Rites in an African Society: A Barbaric Tradition or a Consolidation of African Values. *Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(4).
- Adepoju, A. (1997). "Family, Population and Development in Africa". Zed Books Ltd., London, New Jersey.
- Adeyemo, C. W. Widowhood and Its Harmful Practices: Cause, Effects and the Possible Way Out for Widows and Women Folk. *World Journal Educational Research*, ISSN 2375-9771 (print) ISSN 2333-5998 (online), Vol. 3.
- Charan, I. A., Xin, S., Wang, Z., & Yao, D. (2020). Concepts of Happiness and Well-Being: Socio-cultural Aspects of the Pakistani Community in China. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 48(5-6), 618-642. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-04805016>.





- Eze, O., & Nwebo, O. E. (2009). "Widowhood Practices, Laws and Customs: The Constraints of Rural Women in Informal Economic Activities in Imo State, Nigeria." © Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2009 (ISSN 0850-3907) Africa Development, XXXIV(1).
- Faye, S. (2018). Women of DEFA: Gender, Labor, and Precarity in (Post)Socialist Cinema. *Camera Obscura*, 33(3(99)), 21–47. <https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-7142152>.
- Forero-Montoya, B. (2020). Representation of a Foreign Woman in Contemporary Japan. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 48(5-6), 513-534. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-04805003https://www.city-facts.com/search?s=ijebu+ode&auto=https://www.leadwaycapital.com/inheritance-and-customary-laws-in-nigeria>.
- The Holy Bible, King James Version Colossians 3:18.
- Ilogu, E. (1974). "Christianity and Ibo Culture." New York: Nok Publishers,
- Ige, T. (1993). "Women and Inheritance Law, Lagos Legal Research and Development Center".
- Iruonagbe, T. C. (1993). "Land Ownership Patterns and the Economic Life of Women: A Study of Ozalla Community in Edo State." Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis Covenant University Ota x.
- Kantiyok, C. D. "Widowhood Rites and Wife Inheritance in Kano State." Rights and Widowhood Practices in Nigeria Inter-African Committee (Nigeria) on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children Lagos, Nigeria, monograph Number 3.
- Kasahara Michiko & Kelly Midori McCormick (2024). Sexual Politics: Photobooks by Japanese Women, 1976–79. *Trans Asia Photography* 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1215/21582025-11297292>.
- Mathebe, L. (2025). Multiculturalism, Democratic Citizenisation and the Case of the Death Penalty in South Africa. *Africa Review*, 17(4), 406-427. <https://doi.org/10.1163/09744061-bja10260>.
- Omokhodion, J.O. (2006). "Globalization, Gender Equity and Local Identity in Nigeria." *Ekistics*, 73(436/441), 277–81.
- Oral interview conducted with Mama Ige Adedoyin, Awa Ijebu, Occupation: Farming; Age: 68, 20/01/2023.
- Oral Interview conducted with Mr. Shoungal fadire. Fadire Compound, Occupation: Trading; Age: 92, 12/6/23.
- Oral Interview conducted with Oba Abib, Awobajo Compound, Oke Ita, Awa, Ijebu; Occupation: the Awa King; Age: 70; 13/3/2023.
- Perera, R. (2025). Between Reformism and Conservatism: The Ideological Orientation of the Draft Convention on the Right to Development. *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and the Law*, 26(3), 170-203. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718158-20252001>.
- Regassa, M., Brinkman, I., & Mossissa, T. E. (2025). The Fluidity of Gender Representations in Oromo Oral Narratives. *Afrika Focus*, published online ahead of print 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1163/2031356x-2025xx03>.
- Smith, Robert (1969). "Kingdoms of the Yoruba." University of Wisconsin Press.
- United States Bureau of Statistics. (2008).
- Van Dijk, M. (2025). Female Spirituality in the Devotio Moderna: Sisters of the Common Life in Statutes, Sisterbooks, and Chronicles. *Church History and Religious Culture*, 105(3-4), 399-428. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18712428-bja10087>.
- Vaughan Olufemi (1991). "The Origins of Nigeria." Currey.
- Mathebe, L. (2025). Multiculturalism, Democratic Citizenisation and the Case





- of the Death Penalty in South Africa. *Africa Review*, 17(4), 406-427. <https://doi.org/10.1163/09744061-bja10260>.
- Omokhodion, J. O. (2006). "Globalization, Gender Equity and Local Identity in Nigeria." *Ekistics*, 73(436/441), 277–81.
- Oral interview conducted with Mama Ige Adedoyin, Awa Ijebu, Occupation: Farming; Age: 68, 20/01/2023.
- Oral Interview conducted with Mr. Shoungal Fadire. Fadire Compound, Occupation: Trading; Age: 92, 12/6/23.
- Oral Interview conducted with Oba Abib, Awobajo Compound, Oke Ita, Awa, Ijebu; Occupation: the Awa King; Age: 70, 13/3/2023.
- Perera, R. (2025). Between Reformism and Conservatism: The Ideological Orientation of the Draft Convention on the Right to Development. *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and the Law*, 26(3), 170-203. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718158-20252001>.
- Regassa, M., Brinkman, I., & Mossissa, T. E. (2025). The Fluidity of Gender Representations in Oromo Oral Narratives. *Afrika Focus*, published online ahead of print 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1163/2031356x-2025xx03>.
- Smith, Robert (1969). "Kingdoms of the Yoruba." University of Wisconsin Press.
- United States Bureau of Statistics (2008).
- Van Dijk, M. (2025). Female Spirituality in the Devotio Moderna: Sisters of the Common Life in Statutes, Sister books, and Chronicles. *Church History and Religious Culture*, 105(3-4), 399-428. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18712428-bja10087>.
- Vaughan Olufemi (1991). "The Origins of Nigeria." Currey.

