

ÌFÀLỌMỌ/ORÒ ÌDÍLÉ (FAMILY RITES) AS A FORM OF DNA TEST IN PRE-COLONIAL YORÙBÁ SOCIETY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MARITAL FIDELITY

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Abstract

From time immemorial, parents, especially fathers have contended with the problem of paternity fraud. In recent years, the incidence has grown tremendously and the consequences have been grave, including sudden deaths, murder or suicide when men realize that they have labored their whole lives raising children that are not theirs. These treacheries in homes are revealed through deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) test. Contrarily, in most of African countries particularly in the pre-colonial Yorùbá society, they had established mechanisms of detecting bastards in each family. Children are subjected to some family rites (Orò Ìdílé) before and immediately after their birth. These rites eliminate the possibility of perpetrating paternity fraud and the fear of being found wanting in this regard guides the affairs of married people who lived in this age. This paper is poised to juxtapose Ìfàlọmọ/Orò Ìdílé (Family Rites), which served as a form of DNA test in in the pre-colonial Yorùbá society with what applies in the contemporary society in order to draw implication for marital fidelity. Thus, this paper tries to answer the following questions: what constitutes Ìfàlọmọ/Orò Ìdílé in the pre-colonial Yorùbá society? What were the processes and parties involved in these rites? What are the reasons for paternity frauds? These questions and other similar ones were answered in this paper by conducting interview among 25 people in Yoruba society personally and through telephone with the view of drawing lessons for marital fidelity in the contemporary society. The study found out that Ìfàlọmọ/Orò Ìdílé and DNA test are both used to identify and establish paternity frauds. However, Ìfàlọmọ/Orò Ìdílé has the advantage of removing all possibility of future cries and trauma for the husband over DNA test. The paper recommends that married men and the society should not make childlessness the problem of the wife and undue pressure should not be put on women. Also, any woman with nothing to hide should not be wary of DNA test.

Keywords: Orò Ìdílé, deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), Pre-Colonial, Marital Fidelity, Yorùbá Society

Introduction

Children are very important dynamics in the life of a person as their presence or absence dictate a lot of things. In marriages, parenthood comes with a lot of responsibilities as parents dedicate a significant part of their lives in terms of time, finance, emotions, spirituality and other crucial areas to raising children. Parenthood comes with much of sacrifice from conception to adulthood. It is wrong to even consider the thoughts that parenting revolves only around pregnancy and delivery. In reality, a man's life changes drastically once a woman he has been intimate with gives him news of pregnancy, whether they are married or not. The moment a man accepts the fathering of a child whether born or not, he has assumed a great duty from antenatal visits and costs to taking care of the woman. It is even more burdensome for a man when the pregnancy has some health concerns, thereby adding domestic and medical care to other responsibilities. Such men and other men eagerly await the completion of the nine months of pregnancy and the birth of the baby. However, the jubilation accompanying the arrival of the new born is also a pointer that the pressure on the man has just started. Even, when there is not much financial pressure on the man, fatherhood comes with its own demands.

It is also true that there are some irresponsible fathers, who even though have acknowledged paternity, have contributed nothing to the said child other than the semen responsible for conception. The pressure of fatherhood is felt more in circumstances where the man shoulders a larger portion of financial needs from feeding, education, accommodation, healthcare, clothing to other needs that are tied to money. Some men do multiple jobs, take loans, deprive themselves of holidays, spend little or nothing of what they earn on themselves and also do other sacrificial acts to raise their children and take care of their families.

After living years of deprivation, it is heartbreaking for such men to realize that they have spent their whole lives raising children that are not theirs. The Nigerian media has been awash with news of paternity frauds in recent years that one may wonder the reason for the surge in cases related to paternity frauds. Paternity frauds occur when a man is falsely made to accept and assume responsibility of a child or children that are not his. The cases of paternity frauds are established and also brought to limelight by deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) test done on children. Incidentally, there is a similar mechanism in the indigenous Yorùbá society, where the concept of *Ìfàlòmọ/Orò Ìdílé* is employed to rule out paternity frauds. This paper seeks to unravel *Ìfàlòmọ/Orò Ìdílé* in the pre-colonial Yorùbá society. This will be done by highlighting the processes and parties involved in the newborn rites and bringing to the fore, the penalties of the breach of these rites. It also seeks to the fore the rise of DNA tests and contemporary cases paternity frauds in Nigeria. These concerns and other similar ones will be addressed in this paper with the view of drawing lessons for marital fidelity in the contemporary society.

The Concept of *Ìfàlòmọ/Orò Ìdílé* (Family Rites) in Pre-colonial Yorùbá Society

Ìfàlòmọ/Orò Ìdílé is a rite performed in different families in Yorùbá society in the past before the advent of foreigners to know the true sons and daughters of every family. This was before the arrival of the modern test known as DNA. It is done in various forms depending on the family, village or town. The idea came into existence as a result of marriage infidelity

particularly on the side of women who are always desperate and can go to any length to make sure they have children after marriage. This is because of the importance attached to offspring by the Yorùbá who believed that *B'íná bá kú, a f'èerú bojú, bó gé dé kú, a fómó rọ pò, báládí ò bá sí nilé, ómó éni ní jogún éni-...*

Marriage is a sacred institution in Yorùbáland. It is an institution ordained and approved by Olódùmarè and other Orisas, otherwise, calamity, sadness, sorrow and regret will be the end result of any marriage not approved by these agents. That was the reason why necessary precaution must be observed before and after marriage have been completed. When two adults are of marriageable age (male and female because the Yorùbá system of marriage does not in any way permits same sex marriage), the process of marriage begins by looking for *Alárenà*-an intermediary who will be the 'go between' the two. Once the male partner has spotted a lady he likes, and the lady in question consented to the marriage proposal, both parties will inform their parents. If the parents agreed, they begin to make enquiry to know more about their families most especially history of sicknesses like madness, leprosy, epilepsy and other incurable diseases peculiar to each family. General characters of the family members that would be a great factor and determinant of whether the whole process will end there if the enquiry is negative. This is done privately and independently by both families most especially if the two families involved are not from the same village or town.

Once the coast is cleared, spiritual investigation through Ifa divination would be next. This is done to enquire whether the coming together of the two will be fruitful with long life, sound health, and peaceful coexistence with many children which is believed as the fruits of the union. That was the reason why it was a must for a woman to give birth and they can do anything to achieve. The desperation of women could even lead to flirting with another man to impregnating her. Such a child will be brought home to her husband as a legitimate child because, a marriage in Yorùbá society without a child is a waste and fruitless life even if the person is blessed in other aspect of life. This is clearly explained by Ejiogbe¹ in Ifa divination system as follows:

<i>Ọ tọ tọ ọtọ Babaláwo Olówó</i>	Otototo, (name of a person) priest of a rich man
<i>Ló difá fún Olówó</i>	Divine for a rich man
<i>Ọ tọ tọ ọtọ Babaláwo Ọlọ rọ</i>	Otototo, (name of a person) priest of a wealthy man
<i>Lo difa fun Ọlọ rọ</i>	Was the one that divine for a wealthy man
<i>Ká jẹ pà ká gbónwọ ré pòròpòrò</i>	For one to eat groundnut and clean ones hand
<i>Babaláwo Ọlómó</i>	The priest of owner of a child
<i>Ló difá fún Ọlómó</i>	Cast divination for owner of a child
<i>Ikú p'Olówó, owó ré gbé</i>	Death killed a rich man, his riches become vain
<i>Ikú p'Ọlọ rọ, ó ti gbọ rọ é ló</i>	Death killed a wealthy man, he went away with his Wealth
<i>Èrò ìpo, èrò Ọ fà</i>	People of Ipo, people of Ofa

¹ Adeoye C.L., 1979, *Asa ati Ise Yoruba*, London, Oxford University Press, 233

Àṣáyé Ọlọ́ mọ́ kii parun So live of he that has children does not go to extinction
*Also, Ifá in Ọ̀ bàrà Irété*² explained the importance of children in Yorùbá society. There *Ifá* says;

<i>È kú àná</i>	E ku ana
<i>È kú òní</i>	E ku oni
<i>Àìfẹ́ ni Í kí</i>	It is when you are not interested in greeting someone
<i>N'lé kú ijẹ́ta ò ṣeé kíra wọ́n</i>	That
<i>È kú àná ló dàdùnjù</i>	
<i>A difá fún Adéyókùn</i>	Cast divination for Adeyokun
<i>Nijọ́ tí nfomi ojú ṣògbéré ọ́mọ́</i>	On the day she was crying for lack of a child
<i>Wọ́ n ní ó rúbọ́</i>	She was asked to offer sacrifice
<i>Ojú ọ́mọ́ ní pọ́ n Adéyókùn</i>	Adeyokun was in pain for lack of a child
<i>Wọ́ n ní yíó bímọ́ láyẹ</i>	She was told she would have a child on earth
<i>Wọ́ n lẹ́ mọ́ é ó sì pọ́</i>	They said his children shall be many
<i>Wọ́ n ní ó fì dígí rúbọ́</i>	She was asked to offer a mirror
<i>Ó ṣé é</i>	She heard and offered
<i>Oṣù mé sán lẹ́ yìn igbà náà</i>	Nine months afterward,
<i>Ọ́mọ́ bá dé</i>	A child came (she gave birth to a child)
<i>Òun náà</i>	Her myself?
<i>Ayé yẹ́ é</i>	The world was in her favour
<i>Ni nwá jó nií yọ́</i>	She was dancing and rejoicing
<i>Ni Í yin àwọ́n awo ré</i>	She was praising her priests
<i>Àwọ́n awo ré nyinfá</i>	Her priests were praising Ifa
<i>Ifá ún yin Olódùmarè....</i>	Ifa was praising Olódùmarè...

Yorùbá marriage is a longer route and once it is done, the husband has a total control over his immediate family, his wife and particularly the children. This is the reason why the Yorùbá is of the opinion that *Aya ọ́ lẹ́ là ngbà, a kii gb'ọ́mọ́ ọ́ lẹ́-*. It is expected of the wife to obey and be submissive to the authority of the husband at all levels so that the children too will follow the footsteps (because the Yorùbá viewed that *Iyawo bé é bé é bé é, ọ́mọ́ bé é bé é ní*

bí fún ni-) of the mother since women are always closer to the children than the fathers in most cases because the father must provide for the family needs at all time. Therefore, they are always out for these provisions.

The Yorùbá go through this longer route to prevent giving birth to bastards because they believed that” *Ilé tó bá tòrò tó bá gún gé gé , ọ́mọ́ àlè ibé ni ò tii dàgbà*”. This is an indication that there are evidences of bastard children in the society that are always causing trouble that must be prevented from causing more harm to the family and the entire society. Again, one other measure to prevent women from giving birth to such children is for the

² Ayo Salami, 2002, *Ifa, A Complete Divination*, Lagos: NIDD Publishing and Printing Company,387

woman to get to her husband as a virgin. This is an indication that she has not had any sexual act with any man before marriage. In the past, it is a thing of shame for a woman and her family not to be a virgin before marriage. If a woman is complete and walk in to her husband's home with her virginity and had delay in getting pregnant for the husband, it is going to be the concern of the entire families (both her family and the husband's family) to make sure that the problem is solved. Such a woman is also believed will not give birth to bastard children.

Therefore, a day after the wedding ceremony, the rite of *Iyan Ibale*-pounded yam of virginity is performed. The rite is done to give thanks to the parents of the woman that she was well trained. The pounded yam is accompanied with a delicious soup garnished with assorted meat, a full keg of palm wine and a white cloth stained with the blood of her virginity as a symbol that she was truly a virgin. If it is otherwise that she was not a virgin, there will not be any pounded yam. Rather, a keg of palm wine that is half-filled, evidence that she was not a virgin, or an empty box of match to symbolises that she was empty when the husband met her is sent to her family. It is a thing of shame and no one cares much if she does not give birth on time. Non-virgin wives are sometimes the reason for *Ìfàlòmọ/Orò ìdilé* because no one would be certain that such a woman cannot bring home bastard children for the husband. Even during the time of the gods, there were evidences of such like the case of *Ọ̀ rúnmilà* and *Ọ̀ rọ̀* his wife who gave birth to three children for *Ọ̀ rúnmilà* and another three for three different men in *Ọ̀ bàrà Méjì*³.

After a woman has successfully given birth, the rite of *Àkọsẹ́ jayé/Èsẹ́ ntayé* of the child is carried out. In some places in Yorùbá land, it is done on the second day while in some areas, it is carried out on the eight days of delivery while it may take longer period like two or three months in other places. To do this, *Ifá* divination is consulted to know the kind of destiny that the child brought to the world to accomplished, the Orisa that the parents would be appealing for or on behalf of the child and the ancestor that has just come back from the husband's family.

The Processes and Parties involved in *Ìfàlòmọ/Orò Ìdilé* (Family Rites) in Pre-colonial Yorùbá Society

The processes of *Ìfàlòmọ/Orò Ìdilé* (Family Rites) usually involve a lot of people particularly from the husband's family who are always interested in knowing the true paternity of their children. Therefore, we can say it involves the entire members of the husband family. For instance, among Oke ogun people of Oyo State, if and when a woman gives birth, within eight days of the child on earth, one adult man will stand at the middle of the room while another one will be outside with their backs to each other and their legs wide opened. The child would be thrown from one person to the other through their legs for about nine times if the child is a male and seven times if a female. If the child is a bastard, is going to die before the completion of the rite. Another one is, the moment the child is born, a particular snake called Nini- will come and be sleeping beside the child for certain period of time. This kind of snake, it is human

³ Wande Abimbola, 1970, *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa, Apa Keji*, U.K.: Wm. Collins, Sons and Co. Ltd, 110-112

being that usually transform into it for the sake of guiding the tradition of the family. If such a child is a bastard, the snake will bite the child and the child will die before naming⁴. Evidently, paternity fraud is not new, as these ancient rites originated to checkmate the occurrence and also serve as a deterrent for others. With the rise and success of science, a more advanced mechanism is developed to identify paternity frauds known as Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) test.

Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Test and its Rise to Popularity in Nigeria

Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) test became popular in Nigeria as a result of its role in the quest for immigration. Although immigration is as old as man, the United States of America has remained a choice destination for Nigerians and result of DNA test is a major requirement for child dependents in the immigration process. According to the US Department of State-Consular Affairs website, DNA technology is the only non-documentary method accepted for proof of a biological relationship.⁵ It is widely believed that a DNA test is a reliable empirical proof of biological relationship between people. This reliability makes the test admissible as guaranteed evidence of parenthood in different climes. It is believed that the rise and popularity of DNA testing have provided answers to the traditional philosophical tensions between individualistic and communitarian ideas of personal identity. DNA testing has led to the evolution of “personalized medicine” by providing insights into to focus on the uniqueness of each person in the world as individual's genome. This approach has allowed a “reductionistic” form of individual atomism. As DNA Worldwide claims: “Your DNA determines who and what you are. No one has ever had the same DNA as you; it is the source of your uniqueness”⁷

According to the Synlab Diagnostic Centre, as quoted by *GODFREY GEORGE* of the Punch Newspaper of 16th December 2023, “Paternity testing provides strong scientific evidence by using DNA to establish whether a paternal biological relationship exists between a man and a child. The use of several segments of DNA called short tandem repeats allows paternity to be practically proven with a 99.999 per cent probability. When the probability is zero per cent, paternity is excluded”⁶ The next question is how is this test conducted? According to Abiodun Salami, a senior geneticist with DNA Centre for Paternity Test, Allen Avenue in Ikeja, Lagos in an interview with Jayne Augoye of the Premium Times Newspaper.

We use different samples like the mouth swab, hair, blood, wax, sweat, chewing gum, and toothbrush. But the best is the mouth swab where you just use cotton wool, it is those lose cells from the mouth that we extract the DNA from the

⁴ Tope Edward Ogundepo, Farmer/Hunter, *Telephone Interview*, Ilua, Oke-Ogun, Oyo State, Interviewed on 02/12/2023

⁵ U.S Department of State-Consular Affairs website, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction.html>

⁶ A. Nordgren & E. T. Juengst (2009) Can genomics tell me who I am? Essentialistic rhetoric in direct- to-consumer DNA testing, *New Genetics and Society*, 28:2, 157- 172, DOI: 10.1080/14636770902901595

nucleus of those cells. Once the DNAs are extracted, we then compare the genes. As a human being, I inherit half of the genes from my father and another half from my mother. So, what we do is to compare half of my father's DNA with half of mine and there must be a complete match. If there is a complete match, then the probability of paternity is about 99.99%. If there is a mismatch in one or two or three places, it will automatically come down to zero.⁷

Salami further differentiates the types of DNA tests “We have the paternity test to determine the father of a child. We have a maternity test to determine if the mother of a child. We have avuncular testing to determine paternity when the father is not available for testing. An avuncular test will also determine if a sibling (a full blood brother or sister) of the father in question is related to a child, and thus prove paternity. We can do also an uncle-child or aunt-child test in avuncular testing.”⁸It is pertinent at this juncture to cite some cases of paternity frauds reported in some Nigerian Newspapers.

Real Life Cases of Paternity Frauds Reported in Popular Nigerian Newspapers Case A

Mr. Olanrewaju (surname withheld). “How can four of the kids who call me father not be mine?” The children who are 16, 12, eight, and five years old were tested after Olanrewaju discovered what he termed ‘promiscuous moves’ from his wife. After the first child’s DNA did not match his, he decided to carry out tests on all the four children, which returned negative. After secretly conducting a deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) test to confirm his first son’s paternity at the DCC DNA Diagnostic Centre in Osogbo, Osun State, he received the shock of his life. Sharing his story in tears on a radio station in Ibadan, Oyo State, the 44-year-old Osun State indigene said his wife, whom he married in 2007, brought another man’s children for him to father.⁹

Case B

Steven Opeyemi Moses who has the AA genotype was shocked to discover that his child has an SS genotype. In his confused state his wife told him that the enemy was “doing them” and they continued to pray and fast together while the boy’s health crisis continued, draining them of money. Personal research, promptings of friends and the counsel of health workers further made him uncomfortable about the paternity of the child and he was unable to afford a DNA test at this point. He was directed to the justice court that they will do the DNA test for him

⁷ G. George, 16th December, 2023.” Paternity Fraud: Shocking Revelations as More Couples embrace DNA Testing” Punch Newspaper retrieved 22nd march, 2024 from <https://punchng.com/paternity-fraud-shocking-revelations-as-more-couples-embrace-dna-testing/>

⁸ J. Augoye, September 18, 2021 “INTERVIEW: Six of 10 children in Nigeria brought for DNA testing not fathered by supposed fathers – Geneticist “Premium Times Newspaper retrieved 22nd March, 2024 from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/485520-interview-six-of-10-children-in-nigeria-brought-for-dna-testing-not-fathered-by-supposed-fathers-geneticist.html?tztc=1>

⁹ G. George, 16th December, 2023.” Paternity Fraud: Shocking Revelations as More Couples embrace DNA Testing” Punch Newspaper retrieved 22nd march, 2024 from <https://punchng.com/paternity-fraud-shocking-revelations-as-more-couples-embrace-dna-testing/>

for free. The test revealed that he was not the father of the child. He cried out after this revelation that the marriage had wrecked him.¹⁰

Case C

Christopher Johnson, a retired architect, received the greatest shock of his life when a stranger came to him one day and claimed to be the biological father of his three children, Esther 19, Shirley 17 and Stephen 15 who were all born to him by his late wife. This stranger challenged him to DNA tests on the three children and unfortunately for Mr Johnson, the tests revealed that the stranger was indeed the father of the three children. It was later revealed that the stranger had been his late wife's lover for many years.¹¹ (Vanguard Newspaper, January 10, 2021)

Case D

According to Salami when narrating one of the craziest cases they have experienced on the issue of paternity frauds, he cited the case of when two men were fighting over a child.

“They were a childless couple before the wife got pregnant for her childhood boyfriend. She gave birth to twins’ boys, who incidentally looked a lot like her husband but the man outside was pressuring her to bring the children, saying he was ready to marry her. It became a big issue and when it came to the issue of child custody the court brought them for a test and we discovered that the man at home and her childhood boyfriend were not even the father of the child.”¹²

The statistics show a rather disturbing trend, according to Salami, six out of every ten children tested are not the real children of their fathers. “You discover that almost 60 percent of the tests that people come to do are negative. In fact, 6 out of every 10 paternity tests turn out negative. Statistically, in DNA paternity testing, most times, in Nigeria, we see that six out of every 10 children might not be fathered by their biological father.” In another report, Nigeria is ranked the 2nd highest in the world on the issue of paternity fraud. According to the statistics, three out of ten men are not the biological fathers of their children.¹³ These figures

¹⁰ Vanguard Newspaper, March 19, 2024 ‘This marriage wrecked me’ — Man narrates how DNA shows he’s not father of SS ‘son’ retrieved 22nd March, 2024 from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/03/this-marriage-wrecked-me-man-narrates-how-dna-shows-hes-notfather-of-ss-son/>

¹¹ S. Ogundipe, Y. Arebi & E. Usman, January 10, 2021 “Three out of 10 Nigerian Men are not Biological Fathers of Their Children” Vanguard Newspaper, retrieved 22nd March, 2024 from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/05/paternity-fraud-three-out-of-10-nigerian-men-are-not-biologicalfathers-of-their-children-2/>

¹² J. Augoye, September 18, 2021 “INTERVIEW: Six of 10 children in Nigeria brought for DNA testing not fathered by supposed fathers – Geneticist” Premium Times Newspaper retrieved 22nd March, 2024 from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/485520-interview-six-of-10-children-in-nigeria-brought-for-dna-testing-not-fathered-by-supposed-fathers-geneticist.html?tztc=1>

¹³ S. Ogundipe, Y. Arebi & E. Usman, January 10, 2021 “Three out of 10 Nigerian Men are not Biological Fathers of Their Children” Vanguard Newspaper, retrieved 22nd March, 2024 from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/05/paternity-fraud-three-out-of-10-nigerian-men-are-not-biologicalfathers-of-their-children-2/>

are alarming and highly worrisome because if every family has access to DNA tests, a lot of catastrophes will follow.

In Nigeria today, there are a lot of testing facilities in major cities of the country and their services are advertised online. These rule out the problem of availability although the cost is quite expensive for an average Nigerian according to Smart DNA, a popular DNA testing centre based in Lagos, “the personal paternity test (also called peace of mind), the price is N150, 000. Prenatal paternity test costs N1.5m. An immigration test costs N270, 000, unaffordable for most Nigerians. As demands for DNA tests continue to rise, there will obviously be an increase in the number of testing facilities which should lead to a decrease in the test cost.

Reasons for Paternity Fraud

To Trap Men into Marriage: Pregnancy has been used as a bait for marriage from time immemorial and it is not strange for marriage to be the next suggestion once pregnancy occurs. It is very easy for a promiscuous lady to pick out the most successful of her lovers as the father of her child, pinning the pregnancy on him and trapping him to marriage. If the man is unaware of the lady’s promiscuity and he has been intimated with her, it will not be easy to deny the pregnancy.

Solution for Childlessness: According to the Whisler, while narrating the case of a woman who had been childless for seven years. The woman said some paternity frauds occur because the woman had no choice. She said her husband refused to follow her to seek medical, spiritual and other helps for their childlessness. Medical tests revealed that nothing was wrong with her and she was also under unbearable stress from her husband’s family. She narrated that she got pregnant on her first extramarital sexual act and gave birth to twins. Two years later, she repeated the act, and gave birth to another child.¹⁴ Whereas, in precolonial Yorùbá society, if a couple finds themselves in such a situation, there are always a way out even if the husband is an impotent. With an agreement or common knowledge of both and the help of the head of the family, rather than for the woman to look for solution outside the family, they will look for one of the junior brothers of the person in the family that can keep secret. He would be the one that will be handling sexual affairs on behalf of the senior one and all the children that comes from this affair belong to the owner of the wife¹⁵.

To have a Male Child: The society and men also put women under undue pressure to have male children no matter the number of girls already given birth to. Science has revealed that it is father of the child that determines the gender, some women armed with this knowledge seek

¹⁴ C. Mefor-Nwa, “He Thinks the Children are His: Why Paternity Fraud Cases are Rising” The Whistler, November 2, 2023 retrieved 22nd March, 2024 from <https://thewhistler.ng/he-thinks-the-children-are-his-why-paternity-fraud-cases-are-rising/>

¹⁵ Agboluaje Stephen Dayo, Business Man, *Personal Interview*, Old Gbagi, Lebanon Street, Ibadan, 12th April, 2023

help or pay to be impregnated by men who have history of producing male children. According to a married man who has five children (all males) whose name is withheld for confidentiality reasons, he narrated that he had “helped” some women in this regard in the past. When asked about those children, he said they were not his, he and the women usually cut all ties and he intentionally did not inquire if there were pregnancies.¹⁶

Unintentional Products of Adultery: As men are involved in adultery so also are women. It is possible that a woman due to reasons best known to her is also sexual involved with other men besides her husband and such activities may result in pregnancy. In pre-colonial Yorùbá society, if such an extra marital affair happened within the same family, extended or not, most especially, if the husband of such a woman is far older than the woman, no one will raise any issue because the person that impregnated the woman will dare not come out to claim the child. Rather, the child belongs to the rightful owner of the woman. Thus, the word *Àgbà tí ò bínú lómó rẹ̀ npọ̀* - An elder who is not angry usually have many children emanated from such an incident because, the man will pretend as if he did not see what is going on. It is believed that if they carry on any form of *Orò Ìdilé* - family rites, nothing would happen to the child since it is the same blood that is running in his/her veins¹⁷.

Confusion on the Side of the Mother: It is believed that even if a woman sleeps with many men, she intuitively knows the one that impregnated her. This does not rule out the chance of a woman not truly knowing the father of her child truly if she has slept with more than one man within the same time frame. According to Salami when asked if women come behind their husbands to conduct DNA tests, “Yes, they come. But this time, they come with the father’s sample. Most times, they come with the man’s toothbrush to know if the child is their husband’s. They don’t tell the man – we extract the DNA of the man and compare it with the child and they take the result.”¹⁸

Baby Swap at Birth: There are some rare cases when babies are swapped at the hospital, the mother is the victim in such cases and not the perpetrator of paternity fraud.

For Financial and Social Benefits: A rich and successful man can be a target for paternity frauds. Once a woman has been intimated with him, a pregnancy can be easily pinned on him for financial and social gains from the side of the woman.

Pregnancy from a Previous Relationship: DNA centers show that most paternity frauds involved firstborns. Women sometimes enter another relationship already pregnant from the

¹⁶ Interview with an anonymous married man on 15th March, 2023

¹⁷ Adeosun Famurewa, Ifa Priest, *Personal Interview*, Salvation Army Area, Oke Padre, Ibadan, 12th April, 2023

¹⁸ J. Augoye, September 18, 2021 “INTERVIEW: Six of 10 children in Nigeria brought for DNA testing not fathered by supposed fathers – Geneticist” Premium Times Newspaper retrieved 22nd March, 2024 from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/485520-interview-six-of-10-children-in-nigeria-brought-for-dna-testing-not-fathered-by-supposed-fathers-geneticist.html?tztc=1>

previous one. According to Salami in an interview with Premium Times, “From experience in DNA testings, most firstborns are not fathered by the husbands at home, because these people have a prior relationship before getting married. Most times, they continue with that relationship, they don’t leave it after marriage”

Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Test in the Contemporary Nigerian Society and *Ìfàlọmọ/Orò Ìdílé* (Family Rites) in Pre-colonial Yorùbá Society

A major area of convergence between *Ìfàlọmọ/Orò Ìdílé* and DNA test is that both of them are used to identify and establish paternity frauds. The two mechanisms can be termed as tools for paternal identity and they both have success stories. Marriage rites also identify non-virgins who are subjected to shame and ridicule together with their families, while nothing is said about the virginity of the man. This is not a call to encourage promiscuity but only an identification of lack of fairness and equity. In both eras of pre-colonial and postcolonial society, children are the greatest victims of paternity frauds. While the innocent child dies in olden days to establish paternity fraud, the child here battles with all the consequences of her mother’s sins such as psychologically, financially, emotionally and crises concerning his/her personal identity. The two mechanisms are accepted among the people, although *Ìfàlọmọ/Orò Ìdílé* is not as popular as it used to be, they are still in practice in some parts of Yorùbáland. The West may not frown so much on incidences of paternity frauds, the Yorùbá society is still a traditional one, regardless of modernity and the same reaction in the olden days, where a woman found guilty is frowned upon. Today, comments on social media and phone in programmes on both radio and TV stations shows the disdain the society has over women involved in these acts.

A major advantage of *Ìfàlọmọ/Orò Ìdílé* over DNA test is that it is usually done on a new born removing all possibility of future cries and trauma for the husband. It has also removed suspicions and such men can raise their children with peace of mind since it has been established that the said children are theirs from birth. *Ìfàlọmọ/Orò Ìdílé* is an alternative for those who are unable to afford DNA test in areas where they are still observed.

Recommendations

Modernity has removed most families from their roots; people should be open to the beneficial aspects of their lineage.

Married men and the society should not make childlessness the problem of the wife and undue pressure should not be put on women. Help should be jointly sought to have children or a male child, if desired.

Any man that has suspicions of adultery on the part of his wife should conduct DNA tests on all his children for the sake of his sanity. Husbands who have proofs of adultery on the part of their wives should conduct tests on all their children for their mental health and to prevent tears in old age. The earlier the truth is known the better for all the parties involved.

There should be more agencies that can provide help in offering discounted or free DNA tests for those who cannot afford it.

DNA tests should be a requirement in the issuance of birth certificates. This will reduce cases of adultery and paternity frauds. It will also prevent men from devastation in their old age.

A patriarchal society like ours is hasty to judge the only the women. It is also men that perpetrated the paternity frauds, where are they in the blame game? Most times these men are also very close by, friends, relatives, colleagues or neighbors of the husbands.

Women who have reasons to doubt the paternity of their children should not wait till the man discovers himself and all hell is loose. Women with results negating their husbands as fathers of their children can weigh their circumstances and make informed decisions rather than wait for the man to discover himself.

Women should also know that apart from their husbands, their children are also victims of paternity frauds as their personal identities are questioned with attendant mental health consequences.

It is true that some women will not be happy to discover that their husbands conduct DNA test on their children, as the act suggests lack of trust. Any woman with nothing to hide should not be wary of DNA test.

Conclusion

Reading the stories of men who have been victims of the menace of raising another man's children with the hope and faith that they are theirs is heartbreaking. More saddening are cases when all the children are involved and the men are already in their old age. Though it is necessary to be cautious in passing judgements, one may still wonder how the women involved sleep at night, while still putting pressure on the man for money for food, school fees and other bills knowing fully well that the man is not the father of the children. Till today in Nigeria, paternity fraud is not a crime and no punishment has been meted out on those found guilty within the confines of the law rather than the public sentiments against the acts. Is it possible to calculate what is spent on a child, or can the parental care be quantified? The contemporary society can borrow a leaf from the pre-colonial *Ìfàlòmọ/Orò Ìdilé* such that consequences can serve as a deterrent unto others. It is worthy to note that the children are the greatest victims in these cases, men can re-marry and have other children, but the stigma, pain and heartbreak remain with the child for life, making it a viable concern for future studies.

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