Women's Inheritance Rights Among Kambari People of Niger State, Nigeria: A Socio-Linguistic and Theological Re-examination in the Context of Numbers 27:1-11

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Abstract

Inheritance sharing, which is the process of dividing, allocating, or distributing the belongings and finances of a deceased individual among his or her family members, is a universal practice. The idea of sharing the inheritance of a deceased person is common to both Jewish and Kambari cultural practices; however, Kambari women suffer a lot of denial and discrimination when it comes to inheritance sharing. Previous studies have primarily examined the concept of inheritance in ancient Israel in comparison to other African cultures, but there is a lack of significant research that directly compares inheritance sharing in ancient Israel with that of the Kambari culture. The Kambari people of Niger State are predominantly bible believing Christians, but their culture exhibits discriminatory practices against women in terms of inheritance and property rights. This obstacle hinders the progress towards achieving the 5th Sustainable Development Goal of gender equality. Thus, in this paper, qualitative methodology was employed to compare the inheritance rights in Ancient Israel (Numbers 27:1-11) and Kambari culture through a thematic and comparative analysis. with a view to advocating women inheritance right (especially, land inheritance) among the Kambari people of Niger state, Nigeria. Findings reveal that ancient Israelite society from the Zelophehad daughters' narrative in Numbers 27:1-11 approves the right of women to own, use, or receive property, while on the other hand, the Kambari culture is divided against them. Therefore, church leaders, through their teaching and preaching from the Bible, should strengthen and protect women's inheritance rights.

Keywords: Kambari tribe, Inheritance culture, Women's inheritance rights, Numbers 27:1-11, Zelophehad's daughters

Introduction

The intricate nature of religion and culture in the contemporary Nigerian society has remained in the norms of society, especially regarding the rights of women (Abara, 2012). Traditional practices tend to override the laws and the international treaties that exist. In the Kambari of Niger State, inheritance tends to be impacted negatively by traditional practices in the inheritance matters of the people. According to Abara (2012), the land ownership of women is only 4 percent in the northeast as opposed to more than 10 percent in the southeast and south-south, with the disparity being mostly ascribed to inheritance customs that disadvantage women. Christianity, as represented by European Missionaries in the 15th century, has been very significant in the development of the legal and moral code of Nigeria, and the Bible is one of the starting points of many. In the Bible, religious laws assumed to have been given to Moses are found in Torah (the first five books). In spite of the fact that the biblical texts refer to justice and equality, opinions of theologians, scholars, and local traditions differ so much with respect to the rights of women to be inheritors. The interpretation of law in the biblical era was defined by the accepted societies of the people, and the same thing happens today, where the cultures of local communities in Nigeria affect the translation and execution of the religious laws (Radford, 2000; Naznin, 2014).

The paper is devoted to the biblical story of the daughters of Zelophehad (Num 27:1-11) where women were acknowledged rights of inheritance in case when no male relatives. The reading is applicable in the interpretation of the struggle that women experienced in inheriting property in the traditional Kambari community, where culture does not allow the acquisition of property by the female gender. The article involves the Zachophehad story functioning as a theological analysis and an ethical perspective to evaluate the possible contribution of biblical teachings in modifying what is traditionally done in terms of land inheritance among Kambari societies. The paper will establish the links between the concept of justice in the ancient Bible and current controversy relating to land rights of women in northern Nigeria most especially among the Kambari community of Niger State in the effort to demonstrate the necessity of attitude changes and legal changes to implement women-related emancipation and gender equality.

Historical Background and Geographical Location of the Kambari People

Kambari people are an active case study in constructing ethnic identity, whereby challenged oral histories of Middle Eastern diaspora collide with sociolinguistic indications of autochthonous West African origins and become a multifaceted and stratified historical consciousness. The history of the Kambar*i* people has sparked numerous debates and generated a wide range of viewpoints. Historians and missionaries, both Christians and Muslims, have produced limited writings and information on the subject. The origin of the tribe's name, 'Kambari', remains uncertain (David, 2016). The Kambari community in the *Salka* area holds a controversial belief regarding the origin of the name 'Kambari'. It was believed that the word 'Kambari' came from the time when the Fulani jihadists were fighting the aborigines during the *Aliyu Nagwamatse* war. The account maintained that during the clashes between the fighters, the Fulani jihadists were hearing the people conversing with each other using the word '*kambayi*,' which was repeatedly used in all the territories controlled by the Kambari. In the language of Kambari, the word '*kambayi*' translates to 'come back'. The term was widely known among the individuals fleeing from the jihadists who had set up ambushes for them. The victims will always demand or command the fleeing kinsmen to return. As a result, the jihadists misinterpreted the word to refer to the name of the people. So, *Kambayi* is often misunderstood to be *Kambari* (Adamu and Abubakar, 2014). The different groups of the Kambaris include but not limited to: Avadi, Awanci, Akimba, Ashen, Agadi, and Ashingini (Adamu and Abubakar, 2014). It is important to note that the term *Kambari* is used to refer to different dialects of the *Kambari* language. These dialects share many similarities in terms of vocabulary, names, and cultural practices. Adamu and Abubakar (2014) conclude that:

> Kambari groups relate to one another linguistically; having similar words with little variations, yet when they co-exist in a short period, they easily understand each other. Other than cultural practices, religion, and trade, being Kambari is also shared by the group owing to the fact that all other language groups share a common given name.

The Kambari as a Diasporic People: Deconstructing Origins Through a Socio-Linguistic and Migration Lens

According to Adamu and Abubakar (2014), the history of the *Kambari* tribe can be traced back to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. They expressed their view thus:

> The best-known story of where the Kambari people say they came from, a tale earliest Kambari storytellers still share, features two figures named Adamu and Abubakar. According to them, the pair once lived in Mecca until a serious religious dispute with the holy prophets about the use of the Sacred Mosque forced them to leave; if that meeting happened, it would have taken place sometime between 611 and 632 A.D. After departing the city, they carried with them one of the deities they honour-Lata, a divinity they remember as standing out inside the Kaabah itself. Later, some of the immigrants settled in the Ngaski district in what is now Kebbi State. They built temples to their gods in a woodland they finally called Kurmi Lata. Adamu claims that Lata is still the most revered divinity in the area.

From the above assertion, the *Kambari* tribe has long existed, as well as immigrants from the Middle-East of the world. Nonetheless, the so-called relationship between the Kambari of modern-day Nigeria and the Middle East, quoted according to Adamu and Abubakar (2014) is an intriguing case study in terms of ethnic identity formation and social memory. Using a social migration prism, we may examine such alleged Middle Eastern origin as not a historical fact that could be established, but as a powerful diasporic story. These stories are typical of most West Africans (e.g. the Yoruba, Hausa and Fulani) and are often used to justify the location of a community within the world by connecting it with the exalted centres of Islam and Abrahamic origin.

In this sense, the flight of Adamu and Abubakar out of Mecca over a religious conflict serves as a myth of origin that describes the uniqueness of the Kambari. The migration itself is a typical social migration trope, in which the people are depicted as a group of people who were selected by fate, as survivor warriors who found their new home. Of special importance is the process of carrying of the deity *Lata* out of the Ka'aba. It figuratively carries sacredness of

a well-known sacred place in the world and relocates it to the Nigerian land (*Kurmi Lata*), effectively deifying the new land and making it their divine right.

This story could be viewed as a means of creating cultural independence and historical depth, which makes the Kambari not the native people but a community with a rich history of heroic migration.

Nevertheless, a socio-linguistic examination gives a very clear and more empirical account of the story. The Kambari language is not a Semitic language such as Arabic and neither is it an Afro-Asiatic language such as the Berber languages of North Africa. Rather, Kambari belongs to the Niger-Congo language family, namely, Kainji sub-family. This linguistic group clearly locates its roots in the confluence of Niger-Benue in modern day central Nigeria. The deep-time historical relations of the Kambari language are to other Nigerian groups, but not with Middle East.

The social-linguistic data also supports the local and regional migration trends. The observed resemblances of the Kambari and Nupe names (*Kolo, Agana, Ajiya*) and the statement of Abdullahi (2024) that the Kambari once were a portion and part of the Nupe nation lead to the assumption that the sociocultural interaction between the two was long-standing and close (Blench, 2018). This implies internal movement and inter-marriage and cultural exchange with the neighbouring West African peoples, which is linguistically verifiable, but is sometimes dwarfed by the more glamorous Middle Eastern diasporic assertion.

To make these two accounts agree, it is necessary to define the former as a kind of social and ideological emigration. Kambari are the natives of northwestern Nigeria, whose historical background is based on the territory (Crystal, 2019). Yet, the long-term exposure to the growing Hausa states and the impact of the trans-Saharan trade networks, introducing the Islamic cultural and religious paradigms, produced strong pressures to integrate (Last, 1979; Lovejoy, 2016). In this framework it is not impossible that the Kambari, or subgroups of them, came to receive and modify a story of a Meccan origin. That is how such invented traditions are usually employed to re-align the identity of a group in an evolving social environment as theorized by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). The Kambari might have been attempting to associate themselves with the overarching cosmological system of the Middle East by purporting to have a

high status genealogy, which would have gained them more social and political status.

The Kambari people are currently in a dual peripheral state. Their location geographically and politically is in a region that has been marginalized in the state of Nigeria (Miles, 1994). On the linguistic and cultural front, they are greatly pressured by bigger and domineering populations, majorly the Hausa. Kambari language is currently used, but it is being exposed to Hausa lexicon and syntax, and there is a threat of extinction amongst younger generations that are more urbanized Blench (2012). Such linguistic assimilation is a direct impact of current patterns of social and economic migration where Kambari people attempt to migrate to urban centres to obtain education and jobs where Hausa is used as lingua franca (Fishman 1991).

Female inheritance denial that is the focus of this paper is itself a symptom of this condition. The patrilocal regime, which was stronger with the help of inter-ethnic contact and stricter patriarchal standards adopted by the neighbouring Islamic societies, has been strengthened. In this way, the modern social status of the Kambari consists in coping with the maintenance of a distinct cultural and linguistic identity - with its own convoluted history of internal and ideological immigration - with the dominant, homogenizing processes of national integration and global modernity. Their history is not that of a direct descent of Mecca but a much more complicated and deeply African one of resilience, of adaptation, and of the unending struggle to establish oneself in a world that is shifting rapidly.

The Concept of Inheritance

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, inheritance refers to the financial and material assets that one receives from a deceased person (Hornby, 2010:772). According to this definition, an inheritance refers to a tangible or intangible property that is left behind by a deceased individual for a relative to utilize. According to Otite (1978), the operationally defined concept of inheritance is the culturally approved pattern of wealth transfer between generations that is used to recreate the social structure of a lineage to reinforce patrilineal control and gender inequalities as well as to define an individual access to economic power and social position. This definition transcends what is inherited to why and how it is inherited and this is where its real sociological

functions lie. The term for inheritance in Hebrew is *nahalah*, which means something inherited, occupancy, heirloom, estate, or portion (Nixon, 1982). According to Nixon (1982), the theological concept of inheritance originated when God bestowed upon Abraham the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:7)

According to Moahi (2023), Africans have a deeply ingrained understanding of culture and tradition when it comes to the inheritance of property after death. This culture is closely linked to the significance of rituals related to burials, funeral ceremonies, mourning practices, and the passing down of traditional leadership roles within families and larger ethnic communities. As a result of the patriarchal structure of the Nigerian society, which continues to exist to date, in most African societies, only males are allowed to pass on land, property and power (Moahi, 2023). In the conventional understanding, the distribution of family inheritance is heavily influenced by the economic standing of each family or clan. Danfulani (2009) affirms this when he states:

> Sons, not daughters, inherit the belongings of the deceased father in most cultures. Nevertheless, in certain tribes, economic inheritance, including land and property, is transferred from mothers to their daughters. In a peculiar cultural practice, when a father passes away, it is not his children who inherit his belongings, but rather the children of his sister. Then the sons took the belongings of their deceased uncles. Even when the sons are employed and live with their fathers, they still do not receive any portion of the inheritance.

In certain African cultures, the wife and children are not allowed to inherit the property of the deceased husband or father. The possessions of the deceased husband are taken from her, including the children. Occasionally, the surviving spouse's relatives can also receive an inheritance from her late husband (Danfulani, 2009). This tradition has been a part of African culture for a long time including the Kambari people of Niger State, Nigeria.

Inheritance Rights in Nigeria

Like ancient Israel, traditional Nigerian societies viewed land as divinely owned and administered by kinship groups across generations (Yakubu, 1985; Ayandele, 1966). Land could not be permanently alienated, and individuals only held land based on their belonging to a family unit, similar to

the Israelite mishpahot (Meek, 1957). This communal ownership was rooted in protecting land productivity and ensuring intergenerational equity (Boecker, 1985).

The rights of women to inheritance are, however, traditionally restricted in Nigeria. Just as it was in ancient Israel, women were frequently excluded as possessors of land due to the patriarchal system forcing them into subordination under their male family members. However, the case of the daughters of Zelophehad has a positive counterargument to patriarchal customs. In both cases, exceptions were drawn when justice required inclusion. The arrangement of inheritance in Nigeria has a cultural similarity with the Ancient Near East, such as that land was the property of a supreme god and the wealth of a community. Women should have a share; disputes of the role of women in the area of heritage proceed; however, some similarities in the biblical rules and African customs leave the way to reform, which is rooted culturally and grounded theologically (Oyelade, 2006).

Land Use Decree of 1978 and the Rising Status of Women in Nigeria

Nigeria's historical land tenure system has undergone one significant change after the introduction of the Land Use Decree in 1978 under the regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo. The effects of this decree were to give the ownership of land in urban and specific regions to the governors of the state instead of the ethnic chiefs or kinfolk as had always been the case (Yakubu, 1985). The policy increased land tenurability of individuals and companies, this aspect stimulated socio-economic growth in Nigeria. The decree, significantly, made the acquisition of land easier for women as it gave them a legal basis under which any citizen, including women, could purchase land, which implied that women would have a higher economic and social status.

In Nigeria, land technically was under lineages and kinship groups. Though both of these men and women were considered as languishing organizations, they used inheritance through the male line. Women were arranged into patrilocal marriage, which meant that they would go to live with their husbands, which meant they lost the right to inheritance in their families. Instead, the dowries were offered as compensation for land exclusion (Nwabueze, 1972). Another source of women acquiring land was through levirate marriage, which implied that a widow, in order to be allowed to reside

on the land, was supposed to marry a member of the male family of the man she was married to. This, however, normally implied that the land was in the trust of her children or husband, as noted by Meek (1957); however, this is not the case with all Nigerian cultures in equal measures.

Even though legal progress has been made, in reality, the number of women who own land is small. Legal rights are always superseded by customary practices, even though the 1978 decree theoretically applies to all Nigerians. In the Kambari culture, women are legally allowed to own land, yet they are held back culturally from doing so without the aid of their husbands. The land that women purchase is mostly jointly owned with husbands or other male relatives. In case of patrilocal marriage systems, land possessed by women in the aftermath of marriage is usually joint property. Moreover, the rights of women to the land may be violated even after death since relatives of the opposite sex can inherit the land, particularly when the woman bought it before the wedding.

However, the decree has brought about positive transformation as some women are now purchasing land to construct houses or conduct businesses. Nevertheless, there is still a set of systemic problems, such as accessing loans without male guarantors. Further, even in cases where women own the land on a legal basis, inheritance remains patrilineal.

Women's Inheritance Rights in Kambari Culture

Historically, there are usually stories of denial and marginalization when it comes to land acquisition and other properties owned by women in Nigeria (Ajayi & Olotuah, 2005). As a culturally diverse nation with more than two hundred and fifty ethnologies in excess (250), which are further subdivided into three main ethnic groups (the Igbo, the Hausa, and the Yoruba ethnic groups), patriarchal practices and traditions will seem a redundant phenomenon uniting the experiences of the entire female population in the country (Ekhator, 2018).

The *Kambari* people called inheritance sharing, *une'esu wa gadu*. The term refers to the distribution of the belongings of a person who has passed away to his children. When a man or woman who has assets dies, the first thing to be done is to identify and list his biological children by his legal married wife or wives or husband or husbands. The order in the Une'esu wa gadu is from the

eldest to the youngest of the children. The inheritance is divided into portions, with the distribution determined by the age of each beneficiary. The oldest child receives the biggest portion. The inheritance customs of some Kambari clans preclude female children, rationalized by the view that women, as future members of their husbands' lineages, are temporary members of their own (Interview with Rebecca Peter on 18 February, 2024).

The *Kambari* people have various viewpoints on the distribution of inheritance. An interview with Rebecca Peter on 18 February, 2024, reveals the following point of view:

> If a man (father) dies and leaves behind properties like land, houses, animals, farm produce, cars, clothes etc., these will be shared by the sons or grandchildren If a woman (mother) dies and has properties such as clothes, beddings, kitchen utensils, farm produce, animals, shop goods etc., they are shared to both male and females. If a brother passes away, whether he is married or single, his possessions are divided among his brothers and sisters. The parent who gave birth to him does not receive any property as an inheritance from him. In the event of the death of an elder or junior sister, whether married or single, the properties are distributed among the daughters, sons, senior or junior sisters of the deceased. In this particular scenario, the stepchildren of the stepmother are entitled to a portion of the inheritance.

In some instances, the grandchildren are not included in the distribution of the assets. From the various viewpoints and insights, it becomes evident that there is no universally accepted principle for distributing inheritance among the *Kambari* people. This could be because the *Kambari* traditional religion does not have a written scripture that guides how to divide an inheritance. In a personal oral interview, Tonoshi (2024) affirms that:

> There are instances when beneficiaries of the deceased's family members are not content with the way the properties are allocated. The individuals who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their case have the option to appeal to the family, tribal, community, or religious leaders. If the actions taken by leaders are still not satisfactory, the concerned party(ies) can file a lawsuit against the civic authorities, such as the

court, for further investigation and resolution. (Oral interview with Esther Tonoshi on 19th Feb. 2024).

This decision has an impact on the relationship between the deceased family members and those responsible for dividing the property.

Additionally, a thorough examination of the limited existing literature on *Kambari* inheritance customs indicates that in the traditional *Kambar*i society, the distribution of inheritance to women is influenced by the social standing of girl children within the family. The role of women in the family varies among different tribes of the *Kambaris*. The different groups of the *Kambaris* are: *Avadi, Awanci, Akimba, Ashen, Agadi*, and *Ashingini*. Right from the beginning, the mixed emotions in the response of the parents and the society towards the female child raise questions about her status and rights, including the right to inheritance. In certain *Kambari* tribes, women are seen as valuable assets within the household, as they bring economic benefits through the payment of their bride price. Therefore, she is not to receive any inheritance when sharing her parents' properties but some *Kambari* tribes like the *Awanci* and *Ashingini* of *Salka* in Niger State consider women in the sharing of inheritance (Tonoshi, 2024). In another view, it is said that a woman whose father's inheritance is shared cannot get the share from her father's properties, but if she has given birth to a girl child in her matrimonial home, that girl child has the right to receive a share of her grandfather's inheritance. According to the Kambari of Salka, if a mother passes away and leaves behind properties, the daughters of this mother, whether they are married or single, are entitled to inherit these properties. Nevertheless, the other Kambari tribes, such as Avadi, Akimba, and Agadi, do not permit women to inherit from their deceased parents (Interview with Valuro Kamashi, [82 years] on 4th April, 2024).

Discussion on the Intersection of the Gender and Culture in the Nigerian Society.

In Nigeria, gender is not an independent identity but rather a social construct that is entrenched and regulated by the complex structures of culture, kinship and ethnicity. The statement that the cultural background, which comprises of kinship and ethnicity, play a significant role in shaping gender standards and gender roles is not only an observation but it is also a statement of an operating principle of the Nigerian society. These aspects constitute a system of

interlocking, which distributes power, resources, and responsibilities, culminating in the creation and reproduction of societal norms that tend to marginalize women which is clearly seen in the Kambari inheritance case. This part is explained in the following sections:

1. **The Primacy of Patrilineal Kinship and the Othering of Women:** Patrilineal kinship is the most important cultural determinant of gender roles in most of the ethnic groups in Nigeria (Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, Kambari and numerous others). This system only follows lineage, inheritance and belonging of the male lineage.

Hausa-Fulani Society: This patrilineal system is enforced by a system of purdah (seclusion of women) which greatly limits the movement and accessibility of women to economic and political open areas. The social identity of women is mostly a daughter in the house of her father and a wife in the house of her husband. Her work and offspring are a part of the family of her husband. According to Imam (2005), this system forms a patriarchal bargain where women receive social respect and economic sustenance by abiding by and isolating themselves, which is an exchange of independence to security.

Igbo Society: Women are referred to as *nwadiana* (a person of another place), meaning that after marriage a woman becomes an alien in her own house and a guest in the family of the husband. This dislocation and displacement is poignantly summed up by the well-known Igbo adage, A woman has no kitchen in her father's house, no backyard in her husband's house. In her seminar publication, Male Daughters, Female Husbands, Amadiume (1987) proves that although the Igbo society was flexible in its gender roles, which offered women a chance to become status holders (such as through the institution of the female husband), the colonialism and the establishment of the patriarchal norms solidified these limits, entrenching the denial of female inheritance in the name of preserving the patrilineal purity.

Kambari Case (As Previously Analysed): This logic of the patrilineal denial of land to daughters is a direct one. A daughter is considered a transient individual which will be transferred to another family by patrilocal marriage. The transfer of her natal land is perceived to be passing on ancestral property to an alien lineage, which disintegrates the partiline. This is directly related to the

social migration lens whereby the marriage of a woman is a kind of displacement, which cuts off her main economic rights.

2. **Ethnicity and Gendering of Gender Ideologies**: The principles of kinship have been codified by different ethnic groups into different, yet in many ways, similarly patriarchal gender ideologies.

The Economic Dimension (Bride Price vs. Dowry): In most cultures of Nigeria, the bride price (*rubu* in Hausa, *ime ego* in Igbo) is common. Although it is sometimes presented as a symbolic valuation of the woman in her family, it has the effect of strengthening the idea of a woman as a commodity of exchange between two male-dominated families. This is an economic transaction that reinforces the ownership of the woman and her children by the man and this is where the explanation lies as to why the woman should not be in the inheritance of her own family. Unlike in some other Nigerian ethnicities, in the Yoruba tradition, the family of the wife makes use of a portion of the wealth given by the groom family to supply her with a marriage home. According to Sudarkasa (1973), this practice is a characteristic of a different dynamic in which the natal family of the woman invests in her new status; yet, in a wider framework of society, which is still essentially patriarchal (Oyewumi, 1997).

The Socio-Religious Dimension: The cultural and religious beliefs tend to be closely related to approve a gender role. Socio-linguistic lens is very important in this case. As an example, proverbs and folktales are effective means of gender socialization. An ordinary saying such as what a man can do a woman can do better can be subversive yet more prevalent are proverbs that stress female subordination (Achebe, 1958). In some northern Nigerian communities, particular interpretations of Islamic law according to Imam (2005) are used to justify seclusion and limited inheritance rights for women (often granting them half the share of a male), which then syncretizes with pre-existing customs, as seen in the Kambari context where Christianity has not fully displaced these deep-seated norms (Blench, 2012; Otite, 1978).

The Political Dimension (Primogeniture and Leadership): Gender and primogeniture are virtually the only mediators to access the traditional leadership and political power. Male-only leadership Kingship, chieftaincy, and family headship ("Okpala" in Igbo, "Mai Gida" in Hausa) are the prerogative of males (Amadiume, 1987; Okonjo, 1976). This relegation to the informal spheres

of power deprives women of the right to shape or transform such same practices that oppress them, and this forms a vicious circle (Imam, 2005).

3. **The Long-Run Effect on the Societal Norms and Standards**: These culturally and ethnically specific practices have the cumulative effect of forming powerful, cross-cutting societal norms that are not confined to the individual ethnic groups (Connell, 1987, 2005).

Normalizing Male Hegemony: The message that is repeatedly promoted in most of the primary cultures is that men are natural leaders, heirs and heads of families (Oyewumi, 1997; Olatunji, 2021). It turns into a national norm, affecting even corporate boardrooms and the national politics, making the society where women, even with their considerable economic and social input, assume the role of leaders by default (Bourdieu, 2001; World Bank, 2020).

The "Culture Card" Against Legal Reform: As in the case of the Kambari and the Nigerian Land Use Act, the statutory laws meant to ensure equality are usually undermined by the powerful defence of cultural preservation. Once the traditions are introduced as something sacred and unchangeable, they become a strong obstacle to the law and social reforms. It has been recorded by Ekhator (2018) and others that despite the legal provisions in favour of women in Nigeria regarding their right to own property, the customary law continues to dominate the case.

Internalisation and Perpetuation: These norms are internalized during childhood by means of socialization. Women become conditioned to be domestic and obedient whereas men are conditioned to be authoritative and possessive (Bourdieu, 1977). This makes the system self-replicating, women themselves tend to become the imposers of these norms and socialize their own daughters to embrace their roles, which in the case of the Kambari, can involve a certain dispossession (Blench, 2012).

The interplay of gender and culture in Nigeria is thus a narrative of how localized kinship structures - mostly of the patri-lineage type - and ethnic customs have constructed a national gender structure that systematically favours men. This is not a background force but an active, dynamic force that allocates power, determines belonging, and resources. The destiny of the Kambari woman who is denied her inheritance is no isolated anomaly, but a direct expression of

this general cultural logic. It is an intricate web that cannot be understood without any meaningful intervention, be it theological, legal or social advocacy because it shows that gender inequality can only be fought by breaking or transforming the strongly held cultural and kinship ideals that perpetuate it.

A Comparative and Linguistic Analysis of the Concept of Inheritance in Ancient Israel and Kambari Cultures

The comparative analysis is integrated on the basis of three themes.

1. **The Inheritance Linguistic Architecture: *Nahalah* vs. Une'esu wa gadu**

An analysis of the essential words used to describe inheritance in language shows the differences in worldview. The Hebrew word *nahalah* means a permanent inheritance or an heirship of Yahweh in Ancient Israel (Nixon, 1982). This is a theologically loaded term, and it presents land as a gift of God with a promise of stability and continuity to the whole family line as the one with God covenanting with Abraham (Gen. 12:7). Conversely, the Kambari word *Uneesu wa gadu* has the meaning of sharing the belongings of the deceased. This is essentially transactional and contingent, concentrating on the action of giving out, instead of either a God-given, inalienable right. The focus of linguistic attention is on the partitioning of resources, which, according to the statistics, is the process that women can and are frequently excluded. Such vocabulary describes a cultural system in which the right to property is a privilege bestowed by custom, rather than a God-given right of personhood.

2. **The Gendering of Eligibility and Threat of Lineage Extinction**

Ancient Israel (Numbers 27:1-11): The story of the daughters of Zelophehad includes an innovation in law. The plea of the daughters--why should the name of our father be taken away out of his clan since he had no son? (Num. 27:4) emphasizes the crisis of a lineage termination which is perceived. Their appeal is not in individualistic terms of rights but of the collective terms of maintaining the *mishpahah* (clan). The decision made by God to rule in their favour is a practical and fair measure of a social issue, which set a precedence of female inheritance in the case of no male heirs, though this later was governed to retain tribal land (Num. 36).

Kambari Culture: Kambari system is also characterized by variability and inconsistency. Findings indicate a sharp contrast in the fact that sons are automatic inheritors of a father, whereas daughters are usually completely deprived of the property of a father (Interview with Rebecca Peter, 2024). Among certain Kambari sub-groups, such as the Awanci and Ashingini, the women are allowed to inherit the personal property, but not land, of their mother. There is an instructive paradox in that a woman is not to inherit her father, but her daughter (the granddaughter of the grandfather) can do it (Interview with Valuro Kamashi, 2024). This patch of rules highlights the point that female exclusion is more of a cultural preference rather than a law set in stone and strongly related to the act of patrilocality.

3. **The Dispossession role of Social Migration (Patrilocality).**

In this case, the social migration lens comes into play. The Kambari system of patrilocal marriage, in which a woman moves out of her birth home to become part of the family of her husband, is an effective tool of social and economic displacement. In terms of social migration, the woman is being viewed as having migrated to a new economic unit. Her work and her children are now a part of the family of her husband. Therefore, giving her inheritance in her home of birth is considered as a loss of family property to another clan. This is also similar to the first issue in Numbers 36 where the daughters of Zelophehad are directed to marry within their own tribe to avoid selling of land. However, the Kambari system has no counterbalancing Jubilee or tribal protection of ancient Israel. The outcome is a dispossession that is permanent. The fact that the woman is now socially and geographically removed, deprives her of the main source of economic capital or land in her areas of origin and marriage, rendering her economically dependent and vulnerable. This is the cultural reasoning behind the interview data that perceives women as economic values in terms of bride price as opposed to legitimate heirs (Interview with Rebecca Peter, 2024).

Synthesis: Numbers 27:1-11 as a Challenge to Kambari Praxis

The account of the daughters of Zelophehad offers an excellent, scripturally viable counter-narrative to Kambari practices. It shows how even the law of the Bible has the principle of flexibility in order to provide justice. The fact that the daughters were able to advocate with the success of Moses and

God indicates that inheritance is not a male domain but can be extended to women so that a greater principle of equity and preservation of the family can be achieved. To the Kambari Christian community, this story is a rejection of the socio-linguistic construct of *Uneesu wa gadu* as a customary transaction and a re-interpretation in the theological form of *nahalah* which is a God-given provision to all children. It also addresses the social migration quandary by providing a biblical example in which the status of the women in their family of origin should not necessarily be eliminated through marriage.

Furthermore, Ahiamadu (2007) asserts that the biblical story of the daughters of Zelophehad Num. 27:1-11) provides educative themes of interpreting the female inheritance within the Nigerian society. Three vital dimensions are depicted in the story:

To begin with, even under the patriarchal standards, some extraordinary situations in ancient Israel enabled the females to accept the lands where male descendants were not available. Nonetheless, daughters like them were normally forced to be caught as spouses in the family of their fathers so as to ensure integrity in the land delivered by tribes. This is in contrast to that of Nigeria, which has an exogamous marriage structure where women are married outside their lineage, worsening the situation of land retention and inheritance.

Second, there were the religious and legal processes in the Bible, including the levirate, sabbatical year, and jubilee laws, which ensured that land was not lost to the heir and that (in particular situations) women could enjoy the benefits of these laws (Dybdahl, 1981; Wright, 1989). Such practices (reflected in the Nigerian cultures in the form of the levirate) also maintained family names and properties on occasion when the family was put through trials. Nevertheless, the land passed on by women in the end reverted to the male line, and one of their similarities is the stress on patrilineal continuation in Israel as well as in Nigeria (Ashley, 1993; Boecker, 1985).

Third, contrary to certain assumptions about certain cultures, biblical writings did not preach a taboo on women inheriting land. The Nigerian Land Use Decree also offers men and women the chance to own land. But existing social cultures usually require women to collaborate with male family members or husbands when it comes to owning and possessing land. By so doing, the aspect of women's inheritance will not be regarded as independent but

supplementary to the male power (Amadi, 1982). Such perceptions in culture confirm the ideology that one gender cannot acquire the total respect and creditworthiness of the other.

Cultural and Religious Reflections on Female Property Rights

The bible supports the legitimacy of female inheritance in certain circumstances. In primitive Israel, males in their roles as heads of a house received tribal real estate as part of patrilineal ancestry (Case, 2020; Shemesh, 2007). Nevertheless, during the lack of male descendants, women such as the daughters of Zelophehad received land, which was an indicator of legal flexibility. The Torah does not have any words indicating that women are objects or movable possessions (Hiers, 1993), and therefore, the cultural traditions holding that women are unequal to the male gender are very ancient.

Furthermore, the Bible (the story of Ruth) presents evidence that widows were able to hold or acquire land, and this is one way of revealing the economic agency of women (Lakama, 2019). But the scriptural record about female heredity is scanty and usually subsidiary to male claims. This is representative of an overall conflict of principles between religious stipulation and societal rules, which persists in modern Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that the discrimination against Kambari women in inheritance does not only remain a holdover of the culture but is supported by certain socio-linguistic constructs and social migration patterns. The comparative study on Numbers 27:1-11 shows that the biblical tradition can be used as a solid basis to oppose such exclusionary practices. Thus, the following are vital steps:

1. Pastoral Teaching and Preaching: Church leaders should never cease to teach the story of the daughters of Zelophehad, and make it clear that this story challenges the notion of patrilocal dispossession and affirms the legitimacy of daughters as heirs.
2. Publicity of Wills: The church must also be keen to promote the drafting of legally valid Wills by the church men and women to avoid

discriminatory customary practices and to be assured that their property goes to the right hands as per their religious beliefs.

3. Advocacy and Legal Literacy: The church systems must offer legal literacy programmes to educate women on their rights both according to the Nigerian statutory law (e.g., the Land Use Act) and according to the biblical principles of justice.

With the combination of theological reflection and the socio-linguistic and social migration analysis, the Kambari church can become an even more effective force in changing an injustice that is deeply ingrained, and bring the community closer to the gender equality that is the goal of both the Sustainable Development Goals and the biblical message of justice.

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