THE GEBIRA ROLE IN THE ANCIENT ISRAELITE ROYAL CULT AND WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN IFE-ZONE OF CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT:
Leadership roles have long been mistaken to encumber special rights of the male gender. This paper engages in a descriptive analysis of Inter-cultural Hermeneutics on the role of women in Ancient Israel and the Cherubim and Seraphim churches (C&S) at Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Ancient Israelite society was organized according to a patriarchal social order. Masculine presence dominated every framework of the nation. The Gebira role of the Canaanite and Syrian-Phoenician cult provided every queen mother the leadership role of the royal cult and prominence in the monarchical succession of any deceased king. Equally, Africa is organized after the patriarchal social system. Feminine presence in the leadership of her social framework is infinitesimally low. However, the promotion of charismatic demonstration of spiritual gifts has woven women into the public glare in Ile-Ife, especially among the C&S. Women leadership has continued to be celebrated in the C&S since 1925 till date.

Introduction
Jewish patriarchal culture has greatly influenced the interpretation of both the Old and New Testaments. It has also rubbed its influence on the perception and relevance of both genders (feminine and masculine) in socialization, social development and the family as the smallest unit/system of ordering human community. Margaret Crook notes that
in all three of the great religious groups stemming from the land and books of Israel – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – men have formulated doctrine and established systems of worship offering only meager opportunity for expression of the religious genius of womankind.¹

This is because “people see things or are oblivious to them in part because of how they have been formed through their experiences.” Consequently, there are “different ways in which women’s experience is shaped by culture, class, ethnicity, religious community, and other aspects of social identity.”² Hence, biblical texts on family sustenance and social ordering of the community have received diverse views and some suspicion about gender equality and gender balance. However, Dorcas A. Akintunde rightly avers that the Bible has a prophetic or liberating tradition embodied in its prophetic messianic message… contains good news to and for women in the church, but those who interpret the message make it oppressive… it affirms the equality of both sexes and the involvement of women in ministry, thus debunking the claim that the Bible contains oppressive texts …the Bible, rather than suppressing women, has been a source of women’s emancipation. Women generally, and Nigerian women in particular, have found in the Bible role models, who are prototypes of leadership positions.³

Newsom and Ringe also acknowledge that

because of its religious and cultural authority, the Bible has been one of the most important means by which woman’s place in society has been defined. Throughout the centuries, of course, the Bible has been invoked to justify women’s subordination to men. But it has also played a role, sometimes in surprising ways, in empowering women.4

Babalola therefore adds that “in the early Christian community, men and women were properly recognized.” Yet, in the church, there was “perhaps a stronger tension than one might have expected between a progressive and a Jewish reactionary tendency.” The suspicion and tension was about the consideration of every woman as a complement of a man owing to an assumption that a “woman is still subject to man in spite of her equality in divine sonship.”5 Thus, J. Enuwosa asserts that even, “the New Testament increased the tempo of hierarchical patriarchy.”6

In the view of C. U. Manus, “male chauvinistic group” litter through the Bible which describes the necessity of “reciprocity between man and wife” in family and social ordering. However, he re-affirmed “the necessity of unity between incomplete man and incomplete woman” in order “to constitute one human unit” in the

worship of the church. J. H. Mamman also averred that the practice of headship and leadership by men at the exclusion of women is to argue “for the subordination of women on the basis of the order of creation and the fall.” In other words, “women are complementary to men—they bring their own riches, not equality, to the up-building of the church.” So, Chris Obi avowed that Jewish rabbinic interpretation was appealed to with “the law in the absolute way as binding on Christian behaviour” in the subjugation of women in the society. But, “what is more surprising is the fact that the law does not say any such thing.” Where women are to remain passive, seen but not heard, silent and adoptive rather than being responsive, several questions may necessarily be asked.

Such issues that bother a radical mind about the subordination of women to men include: how were those who were spinsters or those who were married to non-Christians going to find answers and clarification to what was not clear about Christianity; if women were only allowed to ask questions from their husbands and fathers who were not Christians at home? How did some women greeted in Pauline Epistles become proprietresses and sponsors of building facilities that were used as house-churches and matrices of early church growth and development of missions? How did a woman in the early church become a female Apostle Junias and rise to become “outstanding among the apostles” (Rom. 16:7 NIV)? Why would Paul mention female co-worker Priscilla/Prisca first before mentioning her husband, Aquila in Acts 18:18,26; Rom. 16:3; I Cor.

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16:19 and 2 Tim. 4:19 since whoever was mentioned first had greater respect in Roman world view? How could Priscilla be allowed to “explain the way of God more adequately” to Apollos, a male church itinerant preacher if women were to be passive and remain silent (Acts. 18:26 NIV)? The complementary role of Christian women as “co-workers” with the apostle was a master stroke that established female leadership role in early churches of the saints and gave success to missionary exploits of the itinerant apostles. How could this be, if women were to be seen and enjoyed like a product rather than being responsive?9

Intercultural Hermeneutics of Women Leadership Role in Ile-Ife

Olanisebe and Olaniyi acknowledged that in Nigeria, there is “the lack of balanced preaching among many Christian leaders and inability to use scriptural passages to confront new challenges and to correct social dislocation in the society.”10 Manus also identified that “in contemporary African Christianity, there are, in fact, pluriform methodologies being adopted in biblical interpretation.” Yet, every methodology comes out of and bears the imprint of a definite socio-cultural milieu of its consideration as a lasting and outstanding characteristic. So, in purveying theologically approved doctrines,

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some biblical exegetes adopt a “deductive method” of biblical interpretation known as “the historical critical method.” They start hermeneutics from “the texts of the Bible” as “universal principles” and discern the application of their meaning to particular African contexts. Other interpreters commence hermeneutics from “contextual experience” and Afterwards draw out universal principles of such an experience. However, there is a pervasive “veracity of the preachment” that demeans “the historicity of the texts” in New Religious Movements (NRM) like Aladura churches, African Independent Churches (AICs) and contemporary Pentecostal and Evangelical churches in Africa. Consequently, there is a need “for contextualized hermeneutic approaches” in assisting the religious faithful and churches in Africa “to tell and re-tell the sacred stories.” These approaches are known as “Folkloristic and Intercultural Hermeneutics” that devise “methods that are culturally informed and yet faithful to biblical tradition.”\footnote{C. U. Manus, 2003. \textit{Intercultural Hermeneutics in Africa: Methods and Approaches} Nairobi, Kenya: Action Publishers, pp. iii, iv, 2.} It uses resources and happenings in Africa as subject of exegesis and makes African social environment the determinant of meaningful consideration of biblical texts. As a “Folkloristic Approach,” it retrieves the values found in worldviews that are provided by customs and “traditions handed down to posterity through folktales, poems, hymns, proverbs, riddles and art” for communal education and development of succeeding generation. Its essential procedures include: (a) employing the message of a biblical text as a heart-felt address of God within cultural values of the audience of the biblical author that can be compared with traditional practice of the readers of contemporary African exegete (as both audiences are different peoples of God living in separate ages and context). (b) delimiting and decoding the main message of a text which had previously been composed in the Bible to speak to and make certain contexts meaningful and re-addressing it to present
circumstance. (c) re-casting the narrative pattern of a story/viewpoint of the narrator in the Bible as initial message of a previous audience in a form that is identical to African model to discuss and reach agreement on a new situation. (d) systematically interpreting the symbols that are involved in African folklore. (e) making the context in which the text is read or interpreted as the subject of interpretation, thereby urging the text to speak from the perspective of the exegete that aims at providing the lesson meant to be drawn by the African reader in line with the implicit interests of the audience of the exegete.\(^\text{12}\)

In this paper, a Yoruba adage that describes efforts of women at redeeming/solving a social stress but mistaken for a deviation from customary practice is employed. The proverbial statement reads: “nitori atimoje ki omo padanu ogun-ibi ni abiamo fi di alatenumo-alagbata ti iso oja di owon (efforts at preventing loss of family inheritance to one’s ward turns motherhood to become aggressive retailer that inflates merchandise).” This adage assumes that customary expectation and traditional procedure of commercial and economic relations in a Yoruba community are geared towards providing for the wellbeing and development of the community at cheap price. This customary assumption is literally adhered to in every bid to address a crucial concern or social problem in Yoruba land. But, strict bureaucratic routine and administrative lock-jam often makes the social system excessive and complicated, while the community languish under the stress of the problem in which an old element and pattern is ineffective. Yet, tension and suspicion are bred when a caring mother/social nurturer adjusts, adapts and renegotiate the hosting tradition of her context for a pragmatic element and approach at solving the challenge. The wrath of the male authorities of cultural orthodoxies is also incurred as the saving mechanism gets

labeled or stigmatized as an aberration and the ‘messianic’ actor as the aberrant.

Women As Leaders In The Cherubim And Seraphim Churches (C&S) IleIfe, Osun State

Initially in Yoruba land, ownership of landed properties belonged to individual households/clans that constituted a community known for farming, rearing of animals and trading of cash-crop, processed produce of farming, cloth and textile woven from locally grown wool and mined mineral resources. Transference of ownership of landed properties rotated within same clan; from grandfather to father and to son or grandson. Landed properties were not private possessions of individuals. Assumption of leading role and nobility in the society required a reputation of proficiency and result producing feat in any of the bases of occupational mobility: farming, animal husbandry or trading. However, owing to western civilization, education, privatization and capitalism in business entrepreneurship and globalization of ideas in Yoruba land, amidst a cultural system of subordination of women to men, the Aladura as an arm of the NRMAs and AICs “encourage women in the church ministry.” Today, amidst gender imbalance, there are many women who have become “founders, leaders and prophetesses in the Aladura.”13 In view of these experiences, there is an ongoing transformation of patriarchal system of leadership of social and religious organizations in Ile-Ife, Osun State and Yoruba land. Distribution of heirloom and ownership of landed properties which initially wrested on the male gender and financial status for traditional chieftaincy award in Yoruba land are also being negotiated. Several women have been made traditional

chiefs in contemporary times. More women are becoming priestesses and in some cases high priests amidst male chauvinistic tension.

Mary Olaniyan was the founder and minister in charge of The Kingdom of Light Gospel C&S Church Aladura, Ifewara, Ile-Ife. She was born into the Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C), Oke-Ibukun, Iloro, Ile-Ife. C.A.C is globally known for exclusion of women from ordination into shepherding ministry. She left Ile-Ife for Lagos State in search of lucrative means of living in the 1980s. She thrived successfully in food-stuff business, having a large ware-house as a wholesaler. Early 1990, she was intercepted by a strange and roaming prophet while monitoring some supplies of goods into her branches around Iyana-Ipaja, Lagos. An unsolicited prophecy was cast upon her that “Jehovah chose you to build an altar for him, where he would be healing drowning souls. Go and start the church to avoid incurring disaster and disgrace.” Mary ignored the prophecy for some months till when repeatedly she was having night-mares with a dream where she saw her daughter’s corpse. She sought several consultation with a church-prophet (name withheld), “for a year for prayers on immunity against forces of death.” But, the girl suddenly fell ill and died. After a while her business failed from yielding gains as she was repeatedly duped leading to the sale of the ware-house and its local branches. She became a fulltime housewife. Afterward, in mid-1990s she repeatedly dreamt of her ex-husband having sex with her best-lady. She challenged her husband and her best-friend who jointly denied it. In another dream, she was told to locate “The Kingdom of Light Gospel C&S Church.” She found it at Igando area after several attempts. The church-pastor gave her a revelation to “withdraw from giving your hair for local hair-plaiting or perm her hair and seek God with prayers to get the hidden enemy of your life.” She did and after several months her best-lady came to ask for forgiveness that she was told to beg for her forgiveness to avoid sudden death and that she was pregnant for her ex-husband and not to abort it. When she recovered
from the shock at a hospital, she was told that her pastor had called to visit her. She approached her pastor who told her that God was ready to ruin her if she would not become a shepherd. But, the C.A.C does not permit females as pastors. She prayed and was directed to return to Ile-Ife to plant and become the shepherd of the church. She got to Ile-Ife and a job with the National Museum, Ile-Ife after some months. She also remarried after two years at Ile-Ife. But she was severally rejected from two male shepherded churches before she was directed at C&S Itedo-Jesu, Road 7 lane to start the present church at Ifewara with her nuclear family in 2000. She led a mixed gender congregation of about sixty-two people.14

Another female church shepherd who suffered severally from misogynist is Durodola, Iya-Ijesha who used to regard “working in the church as shepherd as laziness and shortest means to poverty.” At about thirty years of age as a married woman and successful caterer, she had a dream that changed her destiny. She saw herself in a white long gown (soutana) in her eatery where some state government task force persuaded her to enroll with them as a civil servant. She rejected their offer and they packed away all her wares and impounded her certificate of incorporation. She woke-up to find that it was a dream. She sought for prayer and exorcism for about six months in early 1980 to no avail. She was later reminded by a C&S prophet that “you are despising the call of the Creator to be a shepherd as laziness. Until you yield in obedience, more disaster that cannot be averted awaits you.” Owing to her “Ijesha cultural ethos that females are to submit to their male counterparts,” she took refuge under the C&S prophet (name withheld) as a prayer-band leader (Iya Adura); attending to people with prayer of exorcism against various problems. She suffered set back in her catering enterprise and ran into debts after

14 Snr. Rev. Mother Mary Olaniyan was interviewed at her vicarage on 04/11/2011.
about six months of being in the church. She formed a prayer group afterward with nineteen people but was suspected of and labeled a “sheep-thief stealing flock members of another shepherd.” She left the church and took refuge under Prophetess Adeboye, a female church founder of The Sacred C&S Church, Fajuyi, Ile-Ife in 1998. She worked within the new church’s scope and her eatery business was offered a contract which revived her catering enterprise again and paid off all her debts within ten months. Prophetess Adeboye fell ill and died in 1999 leaving the mantle of leadership of the church vacant. Some men who were with the deceased prior to the enrollment of Durodola chose a male prophet to lead to the dismay of many members who had been blessed by the prayer and healing ministry of Durodola. When the conflict erupted into schism, Durodola was left seven members of the prayer-band of the church. She organized seven night-vigils for divine direction and was told in a dream: “I am the Lord your Creator. I bring to live dead and forgotten matters and lives, only continue with me to lift you high.” She assumed the founder and shepherd of the present church since 2000 which had grown to about seventy mixed gender congregation.15

Pre-Monarchical Custom and Patriarchy in Ancient Israel

Several issues informed the patriarchal customary practices and distribution of heirloom among the Israelites from her nomadic state to sedentary settlement and post-exilic age. First issue is mixed origin of the Israelites. John Bright provided numerous evidences about the origin and constitution of the Israelites which are similar to biblical account. The patriarchs of Israel migrated around Upper Mesopotamia and Northern Syria, Semitic residents of the Upper

15 Snr. Prophetess Durodola was interviewed on 08/05/2011 at about 58 years of age.
Fertile Crescent in Amorite area and Hurrian settlement in East-Tigris region. These locations consist of Assyria, Babylonia, Haran and Palestine. This is consistent with Deut. 26:5-10 that Israelites were initially wandering Arameans/Syrians from Euphrates, beyond the Rivers between Asshur and Ur of Chaldeans (Josh. 24:2-3, 14-15). The Israelites also as seminomads and descendants of Shem, the father of all Eber relatives like Peleg, Serug, Nahor and Terah, the father of Abram who headed for Canaan but resided in Haran (Gen. 10:21-32; 11:10-32 cp. 22:20-24) moved through where water for their flock was available. They roamed from Assyria through Syria-Phoenicia into Canaan/Palestine in time of Jacob/Ya’qub-El and later to Egypt/Mizraim. At the Exodus, some mixed multitude escaped with them necessitating a national identity conference at Sinai, in the regions of Seir and Midian. There was a treaty of relationship among twelve regions/tribes in a covenant with Yahweh as the Jeshurun King who gave other gods to other nations to worship (Exo. 19:1-24:18; Deut. 33:2-5 cp. 4:19-20).16

Second issue is the institution of equality of tribal identity before Yahweh with a sanctuary poll; irrespective of status and gender. This practice owes to the mixed origin and constitution of the Israelites in view of other peoples who joined them but had a different god of worship prior to exodus from Egypt and the amalgamation at Sinai. The merger of the tribes involved a fusion of several traditions of the cultural and political milieu of the second millennium to have a relative egalitarian system of inter-tribal relations. Yahweh cult was used as a paradigm where every tribe was represented by a household leader in providing family identity rite at the shrine of Yahweh. A counting of individuals was required and “a census of some sort” was involved in the process which called for a “crossing

over to the group and class of those whose recognition had God’s approval.” Both the poor and the rich were equally required to pay a half shekel “for sacred uses” as well as “for maintaining service of the sanctuary.” It was to emphasize a “sense of equality of all people regardless of wealth.” In making propitiation and atonement for sins and to pacify Yahweh, the half a shekel was “the standard prize of the Tent of meeting/Tabernacle tax of identification in the presence of God.” It was regarded as “the cost of ransom” and “intensive cover-over” for every Israelite “without sacrifice but by legal rites.” So, the half of a shekel became “the standard weight: implying value of atonement-money (Exo. 30:15)” as well as “the standard measure of equal recognition of those counted or identified in God’s presence.” It was a symbol of “equity of justice and treatment” and emphasis “that poverty was no reason for exclusion from atonement and worship.” In that measure of half a shekel, “God was approachable to every Israelite on equal basis, irrespective of personal and material state or less.”

Third issue is the sustenance of family identity by confinement of ownership of heirloom as inanimate, animate and human resources to families and clans. At sabbatical year, a bought male servant could be set free and disconnected from slavery and welfare of the household of his master/lord, but where women were married or bought through the material infrastructure of the household owner/master, and children were involved; the female servants, women and children were not allowed to be disconnected and dislocated from the household that was a mechanism of their sustenance for those years. While males were the household leaders, they were restricted from abusing and dehumanizing female servants.

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and wives when displeased with them by sending them away, selling them to foreigners and dislocating them from the welfare scheme of the household master. Female servants, slaves and wives were to be ransomed by a kinsman household leader of the women, into the welfare scheme of his family (Exo. 21:1-11). In addition, “actual ownership of land was based on the household (extended family, fathers’ houses).” A census of tribal identity was taken with polls based on their generations, families; fathers’ house and males from twenty years old and upward. Every Israelite was recognized according to his tribal identity and family residence. Every family pedigree was made to have an emblem/ensign and a standard for recognition during tribal identity rite at the Tabernacle and to make community services including rallying fighters to protect the nation and their individual family. Landed properties were also distributed to all the tribal settlements with a tenancy edict that lands were not transferable between tribes and beyond the nation. Inheritance of every Israelite was situated within the landed property of his father under his tribal kin/siblings (Num. 1:20-45; 2:1-2; 7:1-5; 10:4; 13:1-3; 17:1-5; 24:2; 26:52-56; 27:1-11; 33:50-55; 34:13-19; 36:1-13; Deut. 19:14). So, the Israelites were “grouped by ancestral houses headed by an elder”\footnote{S. O. Olanisebe and A. A. Olaniyi, 2011. “Nehemiah’s Reform In Israel: A Challenge For Nation-Building.” in LUMINA, Vol. 22, No.2, p. 5.} 

Monarchical-Age Custom and Women Participation in Politics in Israel

After settlement at Canaan, the Israelites were confronted with some challenges of adjusting from nomadic life and adapting to sedentary relations. There was a need to switch to farming among the little
agrarian space in the hill country. Canaan was a “narrow strip of fertility between the desert and the sea.” It was a land lying “right athwart the great highroads of the ancient world.” Canaan was also a trade route for commercial and economic politics of ancient Near East from Assyria through Syria-Phoenicia to Egypt. There were “rich argosies of products from the looms and shops of Egypt and Babylonia that bore also undeclared imports of spiritual treasures.” But international invasions from her neighbouring states with the Philistines, Egyptians, Syrians and periodic incursions from the North-Eastern Tigris population continued to bedevil the Israelites. Israel experienced “rapid dynastic turnover” as she was “plagued by tension with neighbouring Aram.” There was a transformation from village settlements with charismatic leadership of tribal frontiers that was a stooge of the Law of Yahweh as interpreted by Levitical priesthood to city life system under a municipal governor with absolute power to marshal diverse serving ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). Rallying nonprofessional fighters from tribal representatives meant for rural community services had to drop-out for a development of formidable army for territorial defence. Wage-earning national army under a military warlord spurred the request for the enthronement of a military and priestly king who was expected to invade other nations to raise wages for the national army from the war booty; as done by absolute monarchical system of other

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superpower nations. Prophetic polemic arose against the new system. Gradually, tribal representative system with family inheritance of landed properties which initially was nontransferable beyond next of kin within a tribe dwindled and was eroded by ancient Near Eastern form of privatization and capitalism which depended on land ownership by purchase and exchange with imported goods and commercial exports. A social stratification developed among the royal court (with her serving army, priests and prophets and the MDAs), the middle class business caucus (driven by the system of exportation and importation along western trade route in Haran, Syria, Phoenicia, Damascus and Egypt) and the less privileged lower class (poor tenants in the city, stipend-earning farm workers, and slaves bought or got from war booty). The gap widened with pursuit of survival of the fittest in Northern Israel with the establishment of Omri dynasty, the predecessor of Ahab-Jezebel rule. Some “institutional moves” were made to co-opt prophets and nobles as local heroes that could foment troubles into the new system of “central structures.” But, the Yahwistic prophets opposed the reigns of kings Ahab and Joram and presented Ahab as the king who turned Israeliite peasants to expendable people of the society having lost their control of economic mobility. Commoners as women and powerless peasants throughout the monarchy suffered under the distressful condition as there were more “difficulties of women’s lives

under two kinds of patriarchy, the monarchy and the village clan.”  

This was the situation that Jezebel, wife of Ahab from Sidon of Phoenician absolute monarchical dynasty confronted to function within. She employed the Gebira, Queen-Mother-of-Prince that many notable Israelite women were familiar with; like the role Bathsheba, wife of David and mother of Solomon towards the enthronement of her son as heir apparent to the throne (1Kgs. 1:1-53).

Jezebel introduced the Gebira role to consolidate and sustain the future of her children and the family as “Ahab seems the passive partner to Jezebel’s wanton use of royal power.” Efforts of Jezebel were in favour of securing Ahab’s wish at possessing Naboth’s vineyard as a behest of the monarch in a semblance of Near Eastern form of absolute monarchy/royal prerogative. The Gebira as Queen-King mother was also for the sustenance of Omri-Ahab dynasty by sponsoring 400 prophets of Asherah, persecuting “the exclusivistic nature of prophetic Yahwism” in Yahweh alone caucus that posed political threat and enforcing polytheism and syncretism.

Asherah cult which provided for majority female leadership in Phoenicia was emphasized in Israel by Jezebel having seen extant local shrines of “worship of the Canaanite goddess and her symbol, a pole or stylized tree” in Israel. Asherah cult supported Gebira role called “the queen mother formulas” of having the wife of an old, senile, dying or dead previous king; as a widow and mother of a prince or royal heir assuming certain position of power that made her a kingmaker in the choice of a succeeding king. “The queen mother served as both representative of and counselor to the king in political affairs and could represent the people before the king.” Jezebel therefore, staked the ideological influence and ritual power of

Asherah as advocates of Yahweh cult celebrated patriarchy that appealed to pre-monarchical custom. This was the context of appreciating the monarchical age of “polemical vestiges” that placed “unprecedented emphasis on worshipping one god” while “Asherah was regarded as Yahweh’s consort and a legitimate part of the normative Yahweh cult” in Israel. Women involvement in “goddess worship in Israel” was thereby presented as “the Bible clearly attests, however, that more than one queen or queen mother staked her power on Asherah.” Suffice to say that

although the peasantry and its women lost power under the monarchy, the palace corridors occasionally gave issue to royal women exercising their own strategies of power. In fifteen out of eighteen cases, the succession notice of a Judean king includes the name of his mother.27

Internal evidence of the Bible also presents Jezebel as the Gebira in 2Kgs. 10:13. The account revealed that at Beth-Eked, Jehu killed forty-two men who were relatives of Ahaziah, King of Judah. They were intercepted while visiting Ahab and Jezebel haGGübîrâ.28 In addition, Asherah cult gave the Gebira, queen mother, some

“sociopolitical functions that cannot be divorced from a cultic role.” This is because, “the queen mother’s devotions to Asherah stand behind and are fundamental to the role accorded her in matters of succession of a king.” Ackerman remarked that Jezebel as the queen mother did have an official responsibility in Israelite religion. It was to devote herself to the cult of the mother goddess Asherah within the king’s court...This cultic role was primary among other obligations required of the gebira, the queen mother...particularly with regard to succession upon the old king’s death.

It may be deduced that biblical women participated in cultic rites partly for social and political opportunities that the religion afforded. Although, the influence of Yahweh alone party in Israel and its implication could have informed the demeaning description of efforts of Jezebel as Gebira during the time of conflict of influence and scope of religious space between Ahab and Elijah at a minimum, then, Jezebel filled the role of gebira in the minds of the editors who included 2 Kgs. 10:13 in the biblical text...She was considered gebira by members of the Southern royal family. Jezebel, even when queen, worshipped Asherah in addition to her well-attested allegiance to Baal.29

Conclusion

This paper has traced the development of the Queen Mother role in ancient Israel amidst her patriarchal culture. It made inductive gleaning of scholarly studies on the rationale that informed the pre-

monarchical custom and patriarchy in ancient Israel, the monarchical-age custom and women participation in politics in Israel and its semblance in an intercultural hermeneutics of women leadership role at Ile-Ife. It suggests that in any patriarchal culture/system, influence of women in leadership role may partly not be unconnected with the identification of ‘messianic’ service that the society needs in addressing a social problem that defies previously existing custom. Efforts of women in leadership are not necessarily for a creation of female exclusivist world where males may be wooed, seduced, hired, or tricked to donate sperm for procreation and continuity of humankind. Rather, the progesterone and estrogen in women propel them to pursue acts of nursing and nurturing new and young ideas, seeds, societies and successors from infancy through adolescence into independent relevance and maturity. Women deserve to be celebrated in the aggressive pursuit of sustenance of family inheritance and socio-political heirloom of future generation beyond gender or class stratification.