

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

- *Yakö, also known as Yakurr, Language is Lokaa, Niger-Congo*

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

- *ISO 639-3: yaz*

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

- *"The territory of the Yakö, just over 150 square kilometers in area, centers on 5°50' N and 8°15' E and lies south and west of the middle Cross River." (1)*

1.4 Brief history:

- *"All Yakurr people share a common tradition of overland migration and ancestry. The ancestral homeland of the Yakurr people is "Akpa". The migration of Yakurr from their ancestral homeland started at about AD 1617, when a misunderstanding between the Yakurr and their neighbours, arising from the violation of a burial custom forced their neighbours to wage a war against them, leading to them being driven from their homeland. The migratory history of the Yakurr people, as given by Ubi (1986 and 1978) is that, between 1617 and 1677, the Yakurr migrated from that ancestral homeland to look for a new homeland following a military defeat from Akpa. About A.D. 1660, some Yakurr migrants founded new homelands in their present locations. These locations are Idomi and Ugep. Between 1677 and 1707, some other Yakurr migrants founded the towns of Ekori and Nko. Between 1707 and 1737 yet another wave of Yakurr migrants founded Mkpani settlement. The reasons for the relocation of populations in new settlements by the Yakurr is mainly due to competing demands for land resources, as a result of growing populations in one hand and unresolved conflicts in the other. This development is aided by the patrilocality of marriages and strong patriarchy in the family system. It was thus easy for patriclans to relocate to new settlements. This has produced a slight parallelism in names of patriclans and strong parallelism in names of matrilineal clans in all the Yakurr settlements." (3)*

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

- *Each of the five major towns considered themselves independent before British rule, now they refer to themselves collectively as the "Yakurr" or "Yakö"*

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

- *"The natural vegetation of the area is that of dense tropical forest, transitional between the evergreen equatorial forest and the mixed deciduous forest of the area farther north. The valleys are prone to flooding in the wet season." (1)*

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:

- *Total population size reached 120,000 according to the latest census records from 1999. There are five main villages where the majority of the population is centered, although some families prefer to dwell in the fields with their farms.*

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- *"The Yakö are primarily agriculturists. Their main crop, except where the soil is exhausted, is the yam, and traditionally all other cultivation was subordinated to its requirements; however, subsidiary crops such as cocoyams, maize, okra, and pumpkins are also grown." (1)*

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- *"Chickens are found in almost every household. Sheep and dwarf goats are also quite common. There are a few pigs and ducks, the latter valued particularly for ritual because of their association with water and "coolness." Originally, dwarf cattle were kept primarily as status symbols by a few wealthy men, but during the colonial period most of these animals were sold to Igbo." (1)*

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- *The most common weapon of the Yakö is the Dane gun.*

2.4 Food storage:

- *Food is most commonly stored in woven baskets, or ceramics if they are available.*

2.5 Sexual division of production:

- *The fields are farmed by the men and their sons while the women remain at home to do "women's work", household chores and raising the children.*

2.6 Land tenure:

- *“Government legislation has made most Nigerian land, in principle, alienable, which must be effecting great changes in Yakö society. Until this legislation was passed, Yakö land had been considered inalienable. Land was claimed by the five agro-towns, each of which had its own exclusive territory. Beneath this level, the land was divided into great blocks extending outward from the town itself, with each block claimed by one of the wards of the town.” (1)*

2.7 Ceramics:

- *“There was no strong tradition of pottery or basket making—pots and baskets have long been supplied by traders.” (1)*

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

- *Not mentioned*

2.9 Food taboos:

- *The Yakö do not eat any eggs, as they are considered unclean.*

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- *Any canoes made or used by the Yakö are designed for river travel and trading.*

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

- *Male: 1.638 m (5 ft 4 1/2 in)*
- *Female: 1.578 m (5 ft 2 in)*

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

- *Male: 148 lbs*
- *Female: 124 lbs*

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

- *Generally between the ages of 14 and 16.*

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

- *Male: 20*
- *Female: 18*

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

- *Male: large variations depending on the number of wives*
- *Female: six births*

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

- *Lowest is 7-9 months, only up until about 3 years.*

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

- *Male: 148 lbs*
- *Female: 17*

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

- *“Very few men divorce their wives, but wives have had considerable liberty to leave marriages they disliked and remarry, provided only that they did not remarry within the same patrician.” (1)*

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

- *Most men have more than one wife, however; there is not a disproportionate amount of older men with a greater number of wives. There is no pattern to the polygamy.*

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

- *Every bride was given along with a dowry. The dowry was returned with the bride in the event of a divorce.*

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

- *“The houses and land have traditionally gone to patrikin and movable goods to matrikin. By the mid-1930s, however, it was being reported that sons resented the transmission of the father's wealth to the matrikin. Whether inheritance is now effectively patrilineal is doubtful because debts are also inherited by the matrilineal heir. Inheritance was not an unmixed blessing. There was no strict rule about inheritance in relation to particular children. Houses of the dead were allowed to fall into ruin, and the sites were then claimed by sons about to marry. Fallow land passed within the patrilineage, but not by strict division to brothers or sons. The main matrilineal heir was the person who was prepared to take responsibility for debts and the general cost of the funeral; this person then allocated the deceased's personal possessions to the kin, taking the main share for himself or herself.” (1)*

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

- *“In Yakö society, as in others in the area, great emphasis was placed on a child becoming a well-behaved member of his or her age set. Children were taught from the age of 6 or 7 that they must not quarrel with their age mates; rather, they must cultivate the self-discipline to meet obligations toward them and settle any disputes in an amicable manner. It is preferable to accept decisions counter to one's interests than to alienate one's age mates.” (1)*

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

- *Not mentioned*

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

- *“The patrician that supplicates at the same e-pun-det shrine is an exogamous unit (despite any gossip about what may have been different ultimate origins). The matrilineage (but not the matriclan) is also exogamous.” (1)*

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?

- *“As in other African societies, the payment of the bride price gives the husband legal rights to his wife's services and to the social fatherhood of the children born to her during the marriage.” (4)*

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)

- *If a woman miscarries or becomes ill during the course of her pregnancy, she seems to be at fault. It is her responsibility to create and protect her children.*

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

- *Not discussed*

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

- *Rape is severely frowned upon among the Yakö. There is a vampire demon specifically associated with the rape of young girls.*

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

- *There is no preferential category, only which women are available at the time.*

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

- *Women enjoy sexual freedom, but since most of them are circumcised they do not often seek extramarital affairs.*

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

- *Extramarital offspring not treated any differently, nor receive any special favors.*

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

- *“In the event of divorce, the wife had the right to take her younger children with her. Her daughters stayed with her and her new husband until they themselves married. Her sons were supposed to return to their father's compound, at least when they were old enough to farm; however, in practice, it seems to have been quite common for them to become effective adoptees into the patrikin groups of the stepfather.” (1)*

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

- *Not mentioned*

4.22 Evidence for couvades

- *Not discussed*

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

- *Extramarital affairs are not recognized, so the only acceptable potential father is the husband.*

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

- *Sororal Polygamy is not permitted*

4.24 Joking relationships?

- *Not discussed*

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations:

- *The Yakö were the first group with double unilineal descent to be well described. Patrikin were concerned with land, residence, and work. Matrikin groups were concerned with the transmission of property that could be physically moved and with claims over individuals.*

4.26 Incest avoidance rules:

- *Sororal Polygamy is not permitted*

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

- *Not discussed.*

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

- *Not discussed*

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

- *"The great majority of marriages are endogamous within the town" (1)*

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

- *"Kin are, of course, involved in marriage: the patrikin of the groom are concerned with the bride who is coming to live in their midst; her matrikin, who will be replenished through her offspring, are concerned ritually with her fertility, and, traditionally, they organized, for a girl's first marriage, both visits to matrilineal shrines and a clitoridectomy rite (female circumcision was common throughout much of the middle Cross River area)." (2)*

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

- *"Other groups are, however, involved in marriages even more than the kin. For a first marriage, the age mates of the bride's mother and those of the groom's father play very important roles; a married couple turn for help in any marital difficulty mainly to their age mates, not to their kin. Ultimately, the town as a whole is concerned with the marriage of its women, given that the great majority of marriages are endogamous within the town." (2)*

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

- *Not discussed*

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

- *Most violent deaths occur when the villages of Yakurr go to war with one another.*

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

- *Out of group killings are rare, since there is very little conflict between the Yakö and others. The Yakurr villages do fight amongst themselves frequently.*

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

- *The last major war between the Yakö and a neighboring society occurred in 1953. Relations are good and trade flourishes.*

4.18 Cannibalism?

- *Not discussed*

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

- *The smallest village holds 2,500 residents whereas the largest is known to have close to 15,000 residents. The Yakö are known for their large village sizes.*

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

- *Not mentioned*

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

- *The villages are divided into patrilineal clans, each overseen by a clan chief.*

5.4 Post marital residence:

- *“Traditionally, a girl did not take up residence with her husband's people until the birth of their first child. In her husband's compound, she had her own house and was not subservient to the wives who were already in residence.” (1)*

5.5 Territoriality? (Defined boundaries, active defense):

- *The village territory is well defined as it is located on the river.*

5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex):

- *Not discussed*

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

- *Not discussed*

5.8 Village and house organization:

- *“The Yakö occupy compact villages divided into wards, each containing several patrilineal clans. Patrilineal descent governs rights to farmland, house sites, and cooperative labour. Men of the same patrilineal clan live together and cooperate in farming activities.” (3)*

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

- *Men own wards or compounds in which all of their wives dwell. Each wife has their own house within the compound and their children live with them.*

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

- *“The Yakö sleep in hammocks woven out of raffia rope.”(2)*

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

- *“Although indigenous political integration did not extend beyond each agro-town, it is clear that so many people were resident in these settlements that their organization and the maintenance of relatively peaceful and orderly conditions within these towns depended on a high level of social and political skill.” (2)*

5.12 Trade:

- *“Trading among the Yakö falls into three fairly distinct categories which are to a large extent in different hands. They are: first the purchase for the resale of palm-oil and kernels with which is often combined trading in exported and imported food supplies; second, the retailing of European goods; and third, the local traffic in native food supplies and manufactures which is mostly in the hands of women.” (2)*

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

- *“Although indigenous political integration did not extend beyond each agro-town, it is clear that so many people were resident in these settlements that their organization and the maintenance of relatively peaceful and orderly conditions within these towns depended on a high level of social and political skill.” (2)*

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

- *“Ritual actions involving diagnosis and sacrifice, invocation or control of spiritual beings went on unceasingly. Such rites varied widely from ations on individual initiative, as for instance an unostentatious daily offering made by a household head to the creator, Obasi.”*

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- *“The Yakö regarded almost all but minor illnesses as the result of attacks or errors made by humans. They could be caused by witches; by water-trave ling sorcerers; by vengeful people who covertly placed small objects in powerful shrines and later removed them to wreak harm on some particular enemy; by ghosts of the recently dead; or by the spirits that were associated with shrines if, through some carelessness or greed, an individual trespassed on the places that they guarded.” (2)*

6.2 Stimulants:

- *Not discussed*

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

- *“The Yakö borrowed and incorporated a wide range of cults from neighboring peoples, fitting any that seemed powerful into the appropriate category of spirit agency, hoping that they would be an effective defense against witches, sorcerers, and other malign influences.” (1)*

6.4 Other rituals:

- *“The Yakō mark the main phases of the agricultural cycle by collective ceremonies, These seasonal rites are undoubtedly an expression of the values attached to the thorough and punctual performance of successive tasks in cultivation and of the appreciation of the rewards that flow from these farming activities.” (2)*

6.5 Myths (Creation):

- *The Yakō believe they were created by the god Obasi*

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- *Not mentioned*

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

- *Almost all of the priest positions are filled by men. However, the matriclan priestess is a woman.*

6.8 Missionary effect:

- *Not mentioned*

6.9 RCR revival:

- *Not mentioned*

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

- *“A person's spirit (kidom) journeyed at the death of each individual to the linked town of the Dead (located beneath each town of the living), where behavior, involving farming and going to market, was much the same as in the town of the living.” (1)*

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

- *Not mentioned*

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

- *Not mentioned*

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

- *“The Yakō borrowed and incorporated a wide range of cults from neighboring peoples, fitting any that seemed powerful into the appropriate category of spirit agency, hoping that they would be an effective defense against witches, sorcerers, and other malign influences.”(1)*

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

- *Not mentioned*

7.2 Piercings:

- *Not mentioned*

7.3 Haircut:

- *Not mentioned*

7.4 Scarification:

- *Not mentioned*

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

- *Not mentioned*

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

- *Not mentioned*

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

- *female circumcision is common in the area*

7.8 Missionary effect:

- *Not mentioned*

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

- *Not mentioned*

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

- *“In practice, most kin are addressed by name most of the time, and kinship terms are used primarily as terms of reference, except where particular deference—usually because of a marked difference in age—needs to be expressed, or where groups of kin gather for rites and ceremonies and have specific rights and duties—particularly at funerals.” (2)*

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

- *Not mentioned*

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

- *Both matrilineal and patrilineal, it is a double descent system*

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

- *The postal code for the Yakö territory is 543.*

Numbered references

1. <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Yak.htm>
2. Forde, Daryll (1964). *Yakö Studies*. London, New York, and Ibadan: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute.
3. Encyclopedia Britannica
4. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/store/10.1525/aa.1942.44.1.02a00240/asset/aa.1942.44.1.02a00240.pdf;jsessionid=E441579814D3D7AF8A1460D0E1785467.d03t03?v=1&t=h1o267vb&s=3ccb7581448ab88c254ab55e52bdcae654ee226>