

1. Description

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

-Yoruba is the language spoken by large group of people. As Ford states "Yoruba has been commonly applied to a large group, united more by language than by culture, whose members speak of themselves as Oyo, Egba, Ijebu, Ife, Ilesha, and other names of various tribes" (Forde 1). They are from the bantu language family.

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

-You.

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

-The geographical position of the Yorubaland is a bit more ambiguous than other groups. Because the people are so spread out it is harder to determine a particular location. Fadipe explains it in these terms "Yorubaland lies between the parallels 5.86 degrees and 9.22 degrees north, and between 2.65 degrees and 5.72 degrees east. Its southern boundary is the Bight of Benin, and extends from the eastern limit of French Dahomey on the west to the Western border of the kingdom of Benin on the east. To the east it is bounded by the territory of the same Kingdom, and by the Niger up to Etobe, at about 7.3 degrees N. From this point the boundary is in a north-westerly direction, along a straight line drawn rather arbitrarily to meet 9 degrees of latitude immediately due south of Jebba" (Fadipe 21).

1.4 Brief history:

-The Yoruba people are very much connected through their language and cultural similarities, but yet as geography changes, some history changes as well. Yorubaland consists of the following groups, Egbado, Awori of Ilaro division of Abeokuta province of Nigeria; the Egba of Abeokuta province; the various groups of Ijebu in Ijebu province, the Oyo, and Ilorin province; the Ife and Ijesa of Oyo province; the Ondo, the Idoko, Ikale and Ileje on Ondo province; the various small groups of related people collectively known as Ekiti, the most of which are the people of Otun, Ado, Ikole, Efon (Fadipe 29). Although they are separated by geography, these groups of people share a common language and agree upon many basics of their origin. For example, all are united in claiming that Ile-Ife as their place or origin. And, they all claim decent from Oduduwa (Fadipe 31-32). These similarities also bring to claim a theory by the Anthropologist Talbot. He claims that there were two waves of immigration from the Ile-Ife of the Yoruba speaking people. First one was in second millennium BC and arrived in Southern Nigeria, while the second wave was between 600-1000 AD (Fadipe 33). Also, it is important to note that in the 18th century there were constant wars with the Dahomey, and they began to disintegrate in the 1810s, with civil wars. Many wars continued throughout the 19th century and from them Yorubaland had emerged into multiple chiefdoms (Forde 4).

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

- Missionaries begin coming to Yorubaland around the 1840s. Their influence was great, since it is through them that literacy is introduced (Biobaku 1-3). It is from these missionaries we get early accounts of Yoruba history. For example, Dr. Irving in the 1840s interviewed many people regarding the devastation of Egbaland (Biobaku 15-16).

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

- Yorubaland falls in 3 different physical environments:

The coastal zone “about 12 miles wide, raised only slightly above sea level, consists of peninsulas, islands, sandbanks, lagoons and swamps. The surface is composed of marine and river sand with alluvium and decaying vegetable matter and the whole area is more or less covered with aquatic plants, mangrove and forest vegetation” (Forde 5).

The plain “about 40 miles wide, ends inland a little south of Abeokuta and Ondo, where it has risen to about 650 feet. There are extensive deposits of red clayey and mainly unstrained sand, known as Benin sand. This zone is in the rainforest belt, and iroko oil bean, rubber, Mahoney, silk, cotton and other trees are found. There is some open parkland among the forest” (Forde 5).

The Interior Plateau “rising to height of 500-1200 ft., consists of dissected granitic. The deciduous trees appear and gradually increase northwards ending in a forest which, further north, thins out considerably and is replaced by tall grass” (Forde 5).

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

The Yoruba population is the most urban of all Africans. In the 1931 census holds population at about 3,116,164 (Forde 3). In the Southern province there is 2,667,164, with Oyo with the population of 1,332,843, Abeoketu 434,410, Ondo 381,013, Ijebu 305,568, Colony 205,563, Owerri 3,346, Onitsha 2,099, Benin 2,055, Calabar 824, Ogoja 195, Cameroons 35. In the Northern province the population is 498,212, with Cercle of Porto-Nova at 90,000, Ketu 10,028, Cercle of Savalou 55,566, in French Togo land 13,000 (Forde 3).

2. Economy

The economy of the Yoruba circles around agriculture, cocoa farming, palm products, crafts, and trade (Forde 6-10). Each village can specialize in a certain area.

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

Yams, maize, bananas, pumpkins, peppers, nuts and kernels (Forde 6).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Sheep, chickens, guinea fowls, ducks, turkeys, black goats, pigs, beans and palm oil (Forde 6).

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

Before firearms were introduced, the Yoruba primarily used swords, throwing spears or lances, javelins, bows and arrow, including crossbows (Smith 123).

2.4 Food storage:

The main source of storage is pottery. The principal forms are bowls; water jars, cooking hearths and large dye vats. The pottery is made without the use of potters wheel, rather is built by the coiling process or by beating over a mould (Forde 10).

2.5 Sexual division of production:

The women work in some crafts and raising livestock, marketing surplus produce, preparing palm oil, brewing beer, and cooking (Forde 6). Women, after marriage, also generally are responsible for raising the children to a certain age; afterwards she can supplement her husbands' income (Offoha 136). Man generally work in farmlands, and in some towns is expected to be in the military (Forde 23). Considering that the Yoruba speaking areas are highly developed currently, and with developments come increased education. There is now an elite group of both men and women those work as professional careers such as corporate executives, administrators, civil servants, company workers, and college teachers (Offoha 136-137).

2.6 Land tenure:

In Yorubaland, the land is said to descend among the current owner a long time ago. It is passed from father to son, with the largest amount going to the oldest son. Land could not be sold nor taken away for debt. If a person is the member of the tribe, then land can be cleared (jungle land) and can be claimed. Outsiders can be adopted into lineage and secure land rights as members (Forde 25).

2.7 Ceramics:

Pottery is used to build bowls, cooking utensils, etc. They are usually made by women and used for ever day lives and for trade (Forde 10).

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

All sources indicate a great deal of trade and sharing amongst the families and extended families. Communal sharing seems to exist less and less as it becomes more developed.

2.9 Food taboos:

None overall, but there are some Muslims in Yoruba population, so it can be assumed that pigs would be banned for them (Okehie-Offoha 134).

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

From the readings, I can assume that since the have trade with Europe, there are ships used, but they mostly controlled by the British.

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):
No height is given.

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):
None is given.

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):
-Usually around the age of 11-14.

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):
Since women tend to get married between 17-25, birth follows afterwards (Okehie-Offoha 134).

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):
A family not only includes the husband, wives, and children, but cousins, uncles, aunts etc. A family works as a unit and helps each other out in every situation, with the elderly being the head (Okehie-Offoha)

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):
Yoruba people generally tend to let nature take its course when it comes to childbirth, so it is assumed that they had many children. But, there are no actual numbers given.

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):
-For men it is between 20-30. For women between 17-25 (Okehie-Offoha 135).

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
Divorce is considered shameful in the Yoruba culture and looked down upon. Because of this, divorce rate is quite low (Okehie-Offoha 137-138).

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:
There are a large number of men married polygynously, but the number decreases with the increase of education. Generally a man will have multiple wives, but for those that hold professional careers, there seems to be trend for monogamy (Okehie-Offoha 136-137).

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:
A man is expected to pay dowry and provide the father with his services before marrying the female (Forde 28).

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

Inheritance is divided within the male heirs. If the father has no son then it goes to his brothers (Okehie-Offoha 138).

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

Respect for elderly is crucial in the Yoruba community. Respect in general is very important. A child is given quite a bit of freedom but is expected to take care of the elderly in the family and respect them (Okehie-Offoha 140).

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

-Considering that many are Christians and Muslims, we can surmise that a strict hand is taken with those perceived to be homosexuals.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

Marriage can be within or between groups.

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

Women are only married once and there is only one father.

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

-The mother's role is to conceive.

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

-No evidence has been found of this.

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

- Men that tended to have sexual relations with females outside of marriage were looked down upon (Fadipe 66).

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

No evidence of preference.

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

Female virginity is very important, so no (Fadipe 83).

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

This practice is looked down upon, especially amongst the Christian and Muslim Yoruba people.

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

The family, it could be the fathers or the mothers (Forde 26).

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

-It depends on the town, and no specifics have been provided from my sources.

4.22 Evidence for couvade's

-None given.

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

-There is only one father.

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

- Respect for the elderly, anyone older than you is very important (Okehie-Offoha 140).

4.24 Joking relationships?

-None that I have found evidence for.

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

-This differs within the society depending the religion that one adheres to ((Okehie-Offoha 138).

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

-Marriage is forbidden between mates of mothers and fathers family as long as bloodline can be traced (Okehie-Offoha 135).

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

Yes, there is. In the Yoruba culture the marriage ceremony is highly regarded, but the way it is performed differs from the different religions within the group (Okehie-Offoha 133-134).

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

-No evidence found of it.

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

- None that have been mentioned in my sources.

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

In the past, parents would wives for their sons, but in contemporary times couples are more and more likely to pick a spouse of their own (Okehie-Offoha 135).

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

- After the death of her husband, a woman can marry a member of his extended family in order to keep her status and kids (Okehie-Offoha 138).

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
None found.

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
-Invasion was the main cause of warfare in Yoruba society; therefore violence is more through out-group rather than in-group (Fadipe 237).

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: 7.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

-The main reason for war was invasion and civil wars due to it. Also there was a great deal of war with the Europeans in the 19th century (Smith 9-11).

4.18 Cannibalism?
-No evidence.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:
-It differs from different Yoruba societies, so no mean given.

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
-Usually mobility included men that prefer to move around, or women from a different town that like to live between their parent houses.

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):
-Chiefdom is their main political system. At this point, there also is the government of Nigeria, but their grievances are overseen by the chief (Forde 19-21).

5.4 Post marital residence:
Parent's home for the women. After marriage she is taken into her husband's home with his family (Forde 28). But, this is not always the case, now with professional couples, many prefer to get a home of their own (Okehie-Offoha 137).

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):
Women cannot refer to her husband by name; although he can engage call her by name (Okehie-Offoha 137). Age is a very important factor, because your age also determines your position in the family. There is a great sense of respect for those that are older (Okehie-Offoha 140).

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

-Your family is held in the highest regard, and is the ones you would be the closest to. For example, if your father could not pay for you to attend college, then your uncle, if he had the means, would be expected to (Okehie-Offoha 133).

5.8 Village and house organization:

“The houses are generally rectangular buildings with saddle back roofs, formerly thatched with leaves or grass, now often covered with corrugated iron; the walls of solid clay one or two feet thick. They are built in groups of more or more facing inward to enclose a compound reached through a gateway. Livestock are often kept in the space in the middle. There is a continuous verandah of the inner side of the house, surrounding the compound. Each domestic unit, usually an elementary or compound family, has two or more rooms adjoining each other, with a common wall between the neighboring apartments. Men and their wives each have their own rooms, the children sleeping with the latter or in their own rooms” (Forde 15).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

There are guilds for both men and women of different crafts, with recognized heads. These guilds usually have a compound of their own (Forde 16).

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

It is my understanding, from the readings, that sleeping arrangements are diverse. Yoruba people that are professionals or more modernized and/or wealthy can afford to sleep in beds, otherwise they on the ground atop something to soften the area.

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

- There are social organizations such as guilds that form the community. There are also age sets “in which members of the community were grouped from before the age of puberty. Each set had the age of 3-4 years and took its name from some striking event, which had occurred in the reign of the ruling chief within period of its formation. Membership was compulsory and was almost entirely political (Forde 16). There are also women’s organizations comprised of traders and craftswomen (Forde 17).

5.12 Trade:

They associate with inter-regional trading as well as trade with Europeans. Actually, trade had grown under the British rule and became more expansive (Forde 8).

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

The Chief is the most highly regarded in the town. There is also the head of the compounds, hierarchy by wealth, and by age.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

There are Shamans in the society and they are said to be possessed by the spirits of former chiefs, and alone have the power to fight off evil (Forde 30).

6.2 Stimulants:

-Christianity has introduced wine.

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

-There are holidays that are related to religion, but otherwise there is little passage ritual except for death in which the deceased is buried or marriage (Okehie-Offoha 138).

6.4 Other rituals:

None mentioned

6.5 Myths (Creation):

Considering religion, once again, the book of Genesis is probably widely accepted, along with the theory of creationism believed by Muslims (which is very similar to Christianity).

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

With the influence of Europeans, Yoruba people have flourished in these areas and have adapted some European ways of life (Okehie-Offoha 144-145). But, they also hold traditional art near as well. For example, handmade pottery is used.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

Women usually mourn (Okehie-Offoha 138).

6.8 Missionary effect:

-Islam and Christianity was introduced to the Yoruba people through missionaries (Okehie-Offoha 130-131).

6.9 RCR revival:

None mentioned.

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

Traditional belief of heaven and hell.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

-None given.

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

- Yes, a father is always to be referred by the name of the child, while the mother can be referred by her name or the child's name (Okehie-Offoha 137).

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

The most interesting part of the Yoruba people is their religion. In their midst they have polytheist religion which incorporates multiple gods, but also through missionary work there is a large population of Christians and Muslim population (Okehie-Offoha 127-131).

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

-None mentioned.

7.2 Piercings:

There are no special piercings mentioned outside of the common ones of ears, nose, etc.

7.3 Haircut:

'Women's hair is cut to a length about 3 inches and braided tightly in a variety of patterns. Men's hair is clipped short to a length about a quarter on an inch. Status may be indicated by special forms of hairdressing, such as those worn by chiefs, their wives, messengers of chiefs" (Forde 27).

7.4 Scarification:

-None mentioned.

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

"Historically the Yoruba prefer brass bracelets, armlets, and earrings; however, with today's contemporary style, gold is preferred (Okehie-Offoha 139).

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

-There are special dress and Jewelry for marriages.

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

It can surmised that man do not adorn themselves (Okehie-Offoha 139).

7.8 Missionary effect:

-Missionaries came to the Yoruba people quite early, and considering that many Yoruba people are either Muslim or Christians.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

-None mentioned. Although it is mentioned that Gold has become more important than the traditional brass (Okehie-Offoha 139).

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

Siblings are classified by age (Okehie-Offoha 140).

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

It is not mandatory but is easily accepted and even expected in some cases.

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

-None mentioned.

One very interesting aspect of the Yoruba people is how modern they are and how easily they transitioned into without losing their own culture.

Work Cited

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