

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Yoruba, Niger-Congo

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

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): West Africa (primarily Nigeria; also Benin, Ghana, and Togo). (2). Sometimes also called Yorubaland.

1.4 Brief history: The Yoruba are one of the largest African ethnic groups south of the Sahara Desert. They are, in fact, not a single group, but rather a collection of diverse people bound together by a common language, history, and culture. Within Nigeria, the Yoruba dominate the western part of the country. (2)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: During the four centuries of the slave trade, Yoruba territory was known as the Slave Coast. Uncounted numbers of Yoruba were carried to the Americas. Their descendants preserved Yoruba traditions. In several parts of the Caribbean and South America, Yoruba religion has been combined with Christianity. In 1893, the Yoruba kingdoms in Nigeria became part of the Protectorate of Great Britain. Until 1960 Nigeria was a British colony and the Yoruba were British subjects. (2)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: 18,850,000 in Nigeria. Population total all countries 20,000,000. Including second language speakers: 22,000,000. (1)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): The Yoruba diet consists of starchy tubers, grains, and plantains. These are supplemented by vegetable oils, wild and cultivated fruits and vegetables, meat, and fish. The daily family diet relies on cassava, taro, maize, beans, and plantains. One of the most popular foods is *fufu* (or *foo-foo*), similar to a dumpling, but made of cassava (white yams). Rice and yams are eaten on special occasions.

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

2.4 Food storage: Pots

2.5 Sexual division of production: Both men and women weave, using different types of looms. Cloth is woven from wild silk and from locally grown cotton. Men do embroidery, particularly on men's gowns and caps, and work as tailors and dressmakers. Men also make floor mats and mat storage bags. Women are the potters. In addition to palm oil lamps, they make over twenty kinds of pots and dishes for cooking, eating, and carrying and storing liquids. Woodcarvers, all of whom are men, carve masks and figurines as well as mortars, pestles, and bowls. Some Yoruba woodcarvers also work in bone, ivory, and stone. Blacksmiths work both in iron and brass to create both useful and decorative objects. (2.)

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): Male: 1.638m, Female: 1.578m

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): 13.59yr

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): Females: 19yr

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): 5.38 children born/woman (4)

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): 3 years

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Women: 17yr

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Majority

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Must bring the family a payment called a bride wealth which is paid in three installments. (2)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: The father is strict and distant. Often, he sees little of his children. (2)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: N/A

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): None Yoruba practice polygamy.

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? No

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

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? No.

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

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

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? No

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: No

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? Another of the husbands wives.

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

4.22 Evidence for couvades

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

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: Every Yoruba is born into a clan whose members are descended from a common ancestor. Descent is patrilineal—both sons and daughters are born into the clan of their father. (2.)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules:

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes, Wedding ceremonies begin at the bride's house after dark. There is a feast to which the groom contributes yams. The bride then is taken to the groom's house. There she is washed from foot to knee with an herbal mixture meant to bring her many children. (2)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? Since it is generally believed that names are like spirits which would like to live out their meanings, parents do a thorough search before giving names to their babies. Naming

ceremonies are performed with this in mind. The oldest family member is given the responsibility of performing the ceremony. Materials used are symbols of the hopes, expectations and prayers of the parents for the new baby. These include honey, kola, bitter kola, atare (alligator pepper), water, palm oil, sugar, sugar cane, salt, and liquor. Each of these has a special meaning in the world-view of the Yoruba. For instance, honey represents sweetness, and the prayer of the parents is that their baby's life will be as sweet as honey. (11)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Within the community. Marriage is seen as a union of the families.

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Marriages are arranged. A man must negotiate with the girl's father. (2)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Peaceful

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

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

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

4.18 Cannibalism? No

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Gerontocratic leadership councils that guarded against the monopolization of power by a monarch were a proverbial trait of the Eḡba, according to the eminent Oyo historian Reverend Samuel Johnson, but such councils were also well-developed among the northern Okun groups, the eastern Ekiti, and other groups falling under the Yoruba ethnic umbrella. In Oyo, the most centralized of the precolonial kingdoms, the *Alaafin* consulted on all political decisions with the chief/prime elector or president of the House of Lords (the *Basorun*) and the council of leading nobles known as the *Oyo Mesi*. (10)

5.4 Post marital residence: For the first eight days after marriage she divides her time between her husband's and in her parents' compounds. On the ninth day she moves to her husband's home. (2)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Kinship is the most important relationship for the Yorubas. Best friends are very important as well. A best friend is referred to as "friend not-see-not-sleep." This means that one does not go to sleep without having seen his best friend. When approaching death, a Yoruba shares his last wishes with his best friend.

5.8 Village and house organization: Traditional compounds (which house clans) in Yoruba villages are made up of rectangular courtyards, each with a single entrance. Around each courtyard is an open or a partly enclosed porch. Here the women sit, weave, and cook. Behind this are the rooms of each adult. (2.)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? On ground.

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: When a group of young friends starts spending time together, they form a club. They choose a name and invite an older man and woman to serve as advisors. The clubs continue through adulthood. They hold monthly meetings, with the members serving as hosts in turn. (2)

5.12 Trade: The Yoruba enjoy trading. Huge markets with over a thousand sellers are common. Trade in foodstuffs and cloth is confined to women. Meat selling and produce buying are the province of men. (2)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? The family unit is of vital importance in the life of every Yoruba. As in many African societies, the concept of the family extends far beyond one's own parents, siblings, wife and children. It includes a whole clan often composed of more than a hundred people among which mutual assistance is compulsory. The head of this extended family is the clan elder called Bale (6). Within the clan, the senior is always superior to the junior. The former, however, has the obligation to support the junior. If needed, he must, for instance, take over the role of the junior's father (8).

The next level of Yoruba social organisation is the village community assembling several clans that are closely linked to each other in a brotherly way. A number of village communities combine in the form of a principal Yoruba tribe occupying a given area. At the head of each tribe reigns a king called Oba who used to deal with supraregional matters. Nowadays, the Obas no longer have a say in official policy making although they are still honored and respected as traditional rulers. Beaded crowns are worn by the ba kings during festivities to emphasize their spiritual powers and royal lineage (7).

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Birth: A newborn infant is sprinkled with water to make it cry. No word may be spoken until the infant cries. Also, no one younger than the mother should be present at the birth. The infant then is taken to the backyard. The umbilical cord is bound tightly with thread and then cut. The placenta is buried in the backyard. On the placenta burial spot, the child is bathed with a loofah sponge and rubbed with palm oil. The child is held by the feet and given three shakes to make it strong and brave. (2)

Death: Burials are performed by the adult men who are not close relatives but belong to the clan of the deceased. The grave is dug in the floor of the room where the deceased lived. After the burial there is a period of feasting. (2)

6.4 Other rituals: Local festivals are usually dedicated to individual deities. Yoruban's may also celebrate the following holidays, depending on whether they are Christians or Muslims: New Year's Day, January; *Eid al-Adha* (Feast of Sacrifice), June or July; Easter, March or April; *Maulid an-Nabi* (Muhammad's birthday); Ramadan, followed by a three-day feast; Nigerian Independence Day (October); *Eid al-Fitr* ; Christmas (December). (2)

6.5 Myths (Creation): There are two versions of the Creation Theory. (Theory 1) A

certain number of divinities were to accomplish the task of helping earth develop its crust. On one of these visits the Arch divinity (Obatala) took to the stage equipped with a mollusk that held in its shell some form of soil; two winged beasts and some cloth like material. In this, the soil was emptied on a flat marshy area and soon after, the winged-beasts began to scatter this around until the point where it gradually made into a patch of dry land; the bigger piles became hills and the smaller piles valleys. The Arch divinity leaped on to a high-ground and named the place Ife. The land became fertile and plant life began to flourish. From handfuls of earth the Arch divinity began to mould figurines, gathering the gasses from outer space Olódùmarè sparked an explosion that shaped into a fireball, the destination of which was set for Ife, where it dried much of the lands and simultaneously began to bake the motionless figurines. It was at this point that Olódùmarè released the "breath of life" to blow across the land, and the figurines slowly came into "being" as the first people of Ife. (3)

(Theory 2) The deities (gods) originally lived in the sky with only water below them. Olorun, the Sky God, gave to Orishala, the God of Whiteness, a chain, a bit of earth in a snail shell, and a five-toed chicken. He told Orishala to go down and create the earth. Orishala approached the gate of heaven. He saw some deities having a party and he stopped to greet them. They offered him palm wine and he drank too much and fell asleep. Odua, his younger brother, saw Orishala sleeping. He took the materials and went to the edge of heaven, accompanied by Chameleon. He let down the chain and they climbed down it. Odua threw the piece of earth on the water and placed the five-toed chicken upon it. The chicken began to scratch the earth, spreading it in all directions. After Chameleon had tested the firmness of the earth, Odua stepped down. A sacred grove is there today. (2)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Yoruba music includes songs of ridicule and praise, as well as lullabies, religious songs, war songs, and work songs. These usually follow a "call and response" pattern between a leader and chorus. Rhythm is provided by drums, iron gongs, cymbals, rattles, and hand clapping. Other instruments include long brass trumpets, ivory trumpets, whistles, stringed instruments, metallophones and talking drum. (2)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect: There are amounts of Christianity and Islam practiced amount Yoruba.

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Many rituals are associated with burial and are intended to insure that the deceased will be reborn again.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? N/A

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) The practice of traditional religion varies from community to community. For example, a deity (god) may be male in one village and female in another. Yoruba traditional religion holds that there is one supreme being and hundreds of orisha, or minor deities. The worshippers of a deity are referred to as his "children."

There are three gods who are available to all. Olorun (Sky God) is the high god, the Creator. One may call on him with prayers or by pouring water on kola nuts on the

ground. Eshu (also called Legba by some) is the divine messenger who delivers sacrifices to Olorun after they are placed at his shrine. Everyone prays frequently to this deity. Ifa is the God of Divination, who interprets the wishes of Olorun to mankind. Believers in the Yoruba religion turn to Ifa in times of trouble. Another god, Ogun (god of war, the hunt, and metalworking), is considered one of the most important. In Yoruba courts, people who follow traditional beliefs swear to give truthful testimony by kissing a machete sacred to Ogun.

Shango (also spelled Sango and Sagoe) is the deity that creates thunder. The Yoruba believe that when thunder and lightning strike, Shango has thrown a thunderstone to earth. After a thunderstorm, Yoruba religious leaders search the ground for the thunderstone, which is believed to have special powers. The stones are housed in shrines dedicated to Shango. Shango has four wives, each representing a river in Nigeria. (2)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification: No

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

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Usually is very colorful and elaborate. Traditional fabrics were block printed with geometric designs. (2)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Women wear a head tie made of a rectangular piece of fabric. They carry babies or young children on their backs by tying another rectangular cloth around their the waists. A third cloth may be worn over the shoulder as a shawl over a loose-fitting, short-sleeved blouse. A larger cloth serves as a wrap-around skirt. (2)

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: The first born twin, whether a boy or a girl, is always called Taiwo, meaning 'having the first taste of the world', whereas the second is named Kehinde, meaning 'arriving after the other'. Although being born first Taiwo is considered as the younger twin. His senior Kehinde is supposed to send out his partner to see what the outside world looks like. As soon as Taiwo has given a signal by crying, Kehinde will follow. Kehinde is supposed to be more careful, more intelligent and more reflective, while Taiwo is believed to be more curious and adventurous, but also more nonchalant. (5)

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

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

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them): Yoruba has the highest dizygotic twinning rate in the world (4.4 % of all maternities). (9)

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