

NIGERIAN HISTORY, CULTURE AND ART UP TO 1800 (YORUBA, HAUSA AND IGBO PEOPLE AND CULTURE OF THE MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS).

BY

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Introduction

The Nigerian culture is multi-ethnic because the country has several diverse groups. Being a multinational state, Nigeria has several ethnic groups, with the largest one being formed by Hausa - Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba, Crowder (1962). Different ethnic groups in Nigeria speak different ethnic languages. The Nigerians usually cherish their culture through traditional languages, dance, music and literature (Arts). Many ethnic groups shape the Nigerian culture because the nation has several languages, close to 527 and over 1150 dialects. The dominant ethnic groups in the country are Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani. These three ethnic groups are dominant, though we have some other minor ones like Tiv, Ibibio, Kanuri, Efick and others. The way Nigerians cherish their culture is shown or exhibited in ancient and modern art through their booming film industry (Nollywood).

Geographical Location of Nigeria

Nigeria is a nation located in the West Africa region. The country borders Benin Republic in the West, Gulf of Guinea/ Atlantic Ocean in the South, Cameroon in the East, Chad in the Northeast and Niger Republic in the North. Nigeria shares its maritime borders with Equatorial Guinea and Ghana, Isichei (1958). Nigeria was colonized by the British and gained its independence in 1960. The country became a British protectorate in the year 1901; during the pre-colonial period, British rule had significant influence in the West African kingdoms like the Oyo Empire, Islamic Empire, the Igbo of Onitsha, and the Kanem-Bornu trading Empire. The slave trade flourished significantly during the pre-colonial period, however, it was later abolished and declared illegal in Britain in the nineteenth century. The capital city of Nigeria has evolved from Calabar to Lokoja then Lagos and presently Abuja which was founded by decree in 1976. Lagos, the former capital retains its prominence as the country's leading commercial and industrial hub.

F i g u r e

S A H A R A D E S E R T



A SKETCH OF NIGERIAN MAP SHOWING ITS BORDERS

People of Nigeria

Nigeria is a densely populated country. The country has a diverse population with hundreds of languages spoken such as Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa-Fula, English and others. Nigeria has over 180 million citizens and over 270 ethnic groups with different customs, traditions, and dialects. The Nigerians have different ethnic groups and diverse cultures. The three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria include the Hausa in the north, the Yoruba in the west, and the Igbo in the east, which account for 60% of the total population. Also, about 53.5% of the people are Muslims while 45.5% are Christians. In Nigeria, the English language is called the "Lingua Franca" Ajayi (eds.), (1977).

Nigeria Culture

In Nigeria, culture is shaped by various ethnic groups. The nation has over 500 languages spoken and over 1,150 dialects. The three largest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani dominant in the North, the Igbo in the Southeast and the Yoruba, who mainly live in the Southwest.

The main food staple in Nigeria is jollof rice, which is recognized as Nigeria's national cuisine. It is cooked using tomato sauce and other flavors but the ethnic groups still have their cultural recipes for instance, the Igbo's have cultural foods such as yam, pou

nded-yam, fufu, cocoyam, *nsala* soup, *uha* soup, bitter leaf soup, the Hausa-Fulani have; *tuwo shinkafa*, *tuwo masara*, *miya kuka*, *miya geda*, *fura de nunu*, *kunu*, *masa* and others, while the Yoruba's have; *amala*, pounded-yam, *ewedu* soup, *efun* soup and others. British colonialism impacted Nigerian culture in several ways, leading to the loss of culture and identity. When the British colonialists took over Nigeria, the native suffered a massive loss of their culture and identity.

Politics and Economy of Nigeria

Nigeria was home to many indigenous states and kingdoms during the pre-colonial era. The current government originated from British colonialism. The British administration established many government and legal structures while exercising their rule indirectly in Nigeria through traditional chiefdoms Eluwa (2011).

After gaining independence, a democratically elected government was established. Today, Nigeria politics are conducted under a representative democratic republic led by a President in which government exercises executive power. There are two legislative chambers in Nigeria. The House of Representatives and the Senate.

Nigeria has a mixed economy with multiple sectors like manufacturing, service industry, communication, information technology, entertainment, recreational sector etc. The British occupation and imperialization had a massive impact on the history of Nigeria. The Nigeria culture played a critical role in strengthening the British colonial administration. However, British colonialism impacted Nigerian culture leading to the loss of culture and identity.

Movement in Nigeria

By the end of World War II, it was increasingly clear to both Europeans and Africans that the old colonial ventures would serve to no one's interest long term. Africans had been inspired by the actions of Mohandas Gandhi and others to gain independence from Europe and felt that Africa should be administered by Africans. Likewise, the costs of maintaining large empires was acutely felt by the Europeans, who now had to deal with the very real threat of a soviet advance. As an added benefit, more freed colonies could mean more diplomatic partners against the spread of communist ideology Nwachukwu (2011). As a result, the British in particular started passing legislation that would free many of its former colonies, but in such a way that would maintain some level of influence. According to Arend (1977), the emergence of Nigeria independence was as a result of the activities of some Nigerian nationalists like Herbert Macaulay, who founded the first Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) this party dominated the political scene especially in the Lagos area, Nigerian Youth Movement led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the West African Students Union founded in London in 1925 by a Nigerian law student Ladipo Solanke, the Northern People Congress formed in 1949 b

y Aminu Kano, a Northern radical and in 1950, he also formed the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). A number of factors contributed to the rise of nationalism which eventually led to the achievement of political independence in 1960. For example, the constitutional/political development: following the introduction of the Clifford Constitution in 1922, Nigerians were granted elective positions in Lagos and Calabar areas. As a result of this, for the first time in the history of colonial rule in Nigeria, four Nigerians were elected, one represented Calabar area while three represented Lagos and this elective principle was highly criticized by the Nigerian nationalists which further stimulate nationalist consciousness, the rise of political parties: As a result of these constitutional developments which had given at least elective positions to Nigerians in the legislative council, led to the formation of political associations and parties. The first political party formed was the National Nigerian Democratic Party (NNDP). Other political parties formed during this period are the National Council of Nigeria and Camerouns (NCNC), the Northern People's Congress (NPC), the Action Group (AG) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the rise of the press like the West African Pilot founded by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe: The press played the same essential role as that of the elected members of the legislative council as the mouthpiece of the people in criticisms and information gathering, the influence of the Nigeria students abroad: Some of the Nigerian students after obtaining their education abroad, they therefore needed to use such to provide the challenge needed against the colonial masters. And in the 1950's Nigerian nationalists and politicians turned their energies from attacks on the government system to seizing benefits within it and in 1956 Chief Anthony Enahoro called for self-government at the Central Legislative House. And by 1960, the most populated country in Africa was independent.

IGBO CULTURE AND HISTORY

Early Igbo History

According to Umeh (1999), the Igbo (Ibo) people form one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, with about 15 million living in Nigeria and another millions living outside. Their farming communities are broadly situated between the Niger River in the West and Cross River in the East, stretching from Delta swampland near the Southern coast through tropical rainforest to open grasslands to the North. The Igbo language has dozens of dialects which developed because Igboland was an aggregation of self-contained towns and villages, separated from each other by dense bush. Before the twentieth century, it would have been incorrect to speak of the Igbo as a single people; they were made up of over two hundred separate groups. Although their customs and languages were clearly related, each group could have been considered a distinct society, encompassing perhaps twenty or thirty villages. An Igbo person, who travelled thirty miles in Igboland might have had great difficulty making himself or herself understood. However, during the colonial period (1900 – 1960), many Igbo people ventured far from

m home and congregated in urban centres, at the work place, and in institution of higher learning. Many realized that what they thought were distinct languages were different dialects of the same language and that all Igbo-speaking people had the same basic culture and socio-political organization. In that sense, the concept of a common Igbo identity is a product of the twentieth century.

An Igbo creation myth relates that in the beginning the surface of the earth was covered by water and no humans lived on it. Then one day *Chukwu* (God) created the first human family composed of *Eze Nri*, his wife, his sons and his daughters. *Eze Nri* and his family stood on the top of an anthill and had nowhere to go because the land was submerged. They were also hungry. *Chukwu* looked down and took pity on their conditions. He gave *Eze Nri* a piece of yam and said "Take this", it is edible. *Eze Nri* and his family ate the yam and found it was good, Njoku (2000).

The following morning, they were hungry again and *Eze Nri* prayed to God for more yam. *Chukwu* listened attentively and then gave him some yam seeds, saying. "Plant these and you will have an abundance of yams". *Eze Nri* accepted the yam seeds with the gratitude. He looked around him and said to *Chukwu* "But the land is covered with water". *Chukwu* instructed him to send for Awka blacksmiths, who came with their bellows and blew until the land was dry. *Chukwu* then asked *Eze Nri* to sacrifice his first son and his first daughter and plant the yam seeds in their graves. *Eze Nri* obeyed. Shortly afterwards, yam and cocoyam tendrils sprouted from his children's graves. Eventually, *Eze Nri* harvested yams and cocoyams and shared them among the Igbo people.

This story established the Igbo people's belief in a supreme god (*Chukwu*) who created all things and demanded obedience. It also suggests that religion has long been an integral part of Igbo life. The myth points to the origins of agriculture, the antiquity of the family, and the importance of iron working in shaping the Igbo community. Above all, since this myth makes no mention of migrations from distant places – as opposed to the majority of African traditions of origin – it suggests that the Igbo people have occupied their present local for a very long time, a suggestion that is confirmed by archaeology. For instance, at one of the Afikpo sites, the number of stone implements gradually decreased as the amount and variety of pottery increased, showing the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture.

Igbo people have smelted and forged iron for centuries, and their oral traditions are rich with accounts of iron working and iron use. At *Lejja*, a small town situated about ten miles South of Nsukka, an ancient iron-working settlement existed where smelting was done in a pit or bowl furnace, initially using rather primitive techniques, Afigbo (1975). Over time, the Igbo improved their technological skills and began to produce sophisticated metal tools such as spearheads, arrow heads, swords, hoes, knives, earrings, finger rings, bracelets, anklets, hammers, scissors, cooking pots etc. By the first mi

llennium of the Christian era, they were already producing bronze masks and figurines, of the types that archaeologists discovered in Igbo-Ukwu.

The widespread use of iron tools enabled the Igbo people to make better use of the forest. With iron tools they grew yams (their principal staple food), cocoyams, bananas, plantains etc. Iron tools also helped them to cut down fruits from the tall palm trees, and process them into edible and medicinal oils. Scholars have attributed the current high density of the Igbo population to the antiquity and effectiveness of yam cultivation and their skills at exploiting the oil palm. At its fully developed stage, the Igbo agricultural system was based on shifting cultivation, a type of rotating cultivation where the same fields were planted for several years in succession and then were left fallow to regain their fertility.

Social and Political Structure

A striking feature of Igbo society was the lack of centralized political structures. The Igbo lived in autonomous villages and towns, ruled by their elders. With a few exceptions, they organized themselves in patrilineages – lineage groups organized along lines of descent from father to son. Relationships were based on blood ties and each person faced his or her descent to three groups such as:

House (*Uno*)

A person belonged to the smallest social unit known as “*uno*” or house. This was a natural family consisting of a man, his wife or wives, and their children.

Lineage (*Umunna*)

In this group known as lineage or “*umunna*”, composed of a number of related houses closely related also by blood.

Village or Town (*Obodo*)

Finally, this is a group of lineages which formed a compact village or town called “*obodo*”. This was the highest territorially defined authority of the Igbo. A town or compact village was sometimes named after its founder, or after a striking geographical feature that best described its location for instance the towns Enugu the capital of Enugu state, *Ugwunta* and *Elugwunta* both in Ovim, Isuikwuato L.G.A of Abia State. It might also be named after the most important sociological circumstances that surrounded its foundation. It is important to recognize that the members of a lineage were blood relatives and that each lineage was a semi-autonomous unit within a town. Each house, lineage, and town was headed by a headman called *Onyisi*, who acquired the position by virtue of his age. Town meetings were usually held in the town square, but the most important lineage and house meetings were held in the *obi* (meeting shed) of the most senior elders Afigbo (1973).

Cross – Cutting Ties

The Igbo communities were known as extremely democratic, yet they had no centralized governments. How, then, did they achieve democracy? The Igbo subscribed to the principle of direct participation in government. Their entire social and political structures revolved around the idea of cross-cutting ties. The five most important cross-cutting institutions were the councils of elders, age groups, councils of chiefs, women's associations and secret societies. Without them, the Igbo society would be starved of its essence and would disintegrate. Note that, the traditional Igbo communities did indeed fall apart in the twentieth century when the Europeans destroyed their cross-cutting ties in the process of colonial rule.

Council of Elders

This group comprises of all the most seniors by age from each house or lineage. This council of elders is also known as *ndisi* or *indichie*.

Function

They handle matters affecting lineage members and also in inter-lineage disputes, elders from the affected lineages met to discuss solutions with the oldest man in the presiding.

Age Groups

An age group association, known as *ogbo* or *otu*, is composed of men or women who were of about the same age. All residents of a town born within a few years of each other belonged to the same age group, with separate sections for men and women.

Function

This group with full of energy help the society by handling special duties and responsibilities, in accordance with the principle of seniority.

Council of Chiefs/ Title Holders

Titled chiefs in Igbo land formed their own councils and represented their communities to outsiders. Most Igbo men eagerly sought admission into the council of chiefs and other titles but not all could succeed. Until a man was initiated into certain titles, he could not dress in certain ways or wear hats of certain colours or shake hands in certain ways or take a piece of kola nut in a gathering before other people. Example of titles in Igbo communities are *eze*, *nze*, *alo*, chief, *ichie*, *ogbu-efi*, *onowu*, and *ozo*.

Women's Association

Igbo women had their own clubs, age group associations, and title associations that complemented those of men. Women controlled certain spheres of community life, just as men controlled other spheres. Some notable women associations in Igbo land are; *umuada*, *otu inyemu di*, and *otu omu*.

Function

These associations acted as a pressure group in political matters and imposed fines on men and women who disturbed the peace of the community or marketplace. They also punished quarrelsome women and those who broke certain taboos like incest and adultery.

Secret Societies

Some secret societies were exclusively for men, some for women, and others for both sexes. Very little is known about the secret societies because the men and women who joined them took their oath of secrecy very seriously. Examples of secret societies in Igbo land are; *oboni*, *ekpe*, and *egwugwu*.

Function

They functioned as the mouthpiece of the ancestors, oracles, and spirits. They also handle judicial matters

Igbo Marriage Customs

Marriage in Igboland also served to bring households, lineages, and even towns together. The Igbo regarded it as the corner-stone of their whole social structure. Discussions leading to marriage were taken seriously, and they involved not just the immediate families of the bride and groom but also their entire lineages. The Igbo believed that every adult male and female must marry and build their own homes.

Igbo Religion

The line that separated the religious life from the secular in Igbo culture was as thin as air. The Igbo believed in Supreme Being (*Chukwu*) and in life after death. *Chukwu* lived far away in the sky. He was the origin of all things and directed the activities of all things. The names the Igbo gave their children expressed these beliefs. For instance, an Igbo family might name a baby *Chukwudalu* ('God thank you'), *Ogechukwukanma* ('God's time is the best'), *Chioma* ('Good God'). Moreover, Igbo proverbs, folk tales, and incantations testified to their belief in the existence of God.

The Igbo also believed in the existence of *Ekwensu*, which is Satan, whose prime occupation was to lead people astray Umeh (1999).

The Igbo people had no symbols of *Chukwu* because no one knew what he looked like. They rarely kept special altars or shrines for his worship, since he was everywhere at the same time. Every transgression was ultimately an offense against him, and they constantly prayed that those trespasses that they might unknowingly have committed be forgiven them. The Igbo people nursed a deep reverence for the mysterious nature of *Chukwu*. They were not sure how to approach him, but they knew that he was a spirit and that those who worshipped him must do so in spirit. They therefore communed with him through the major spirits and ancestors.

Igbo people had a wide range of spirit symbols that often took the form of natural phenomenon like rivers, streams, lakes, hills, mountains, forests, big trees, etc. A spirit symbol might have its own priest or priestess.

Any object could be turned into an object of worship if consecrated. Even after its consecration, the object would never acquire the qualities of a god, nor would it ever become a god, instead it would become a religious object, assuming the name of the spirit it represented. Its power would depend on the strength of the spirit that lived in it. A body of water, a piece of metal, a stone, or even a piece of bone might serve as an object of worship, however, it is not the stone, metal or bone that is being worshipped; but rather the spirit that it represented. Many outsiders have jumped to the conclusion that the object is the god itself.

The most common object of worship was *Ikenga*, a wooden carving that symbolized a man's strength and success, distinguished by its prominent horns. Anyone can buy an *Ikenga* in the marketplace and make it his personal *chi* (god) or household *chi*.

The Igbo people did not believe that a man's *chi* controlled his entire destiny. No matter how "good" his *chi* was, a person would achieve success only if he worked hard and led an upright life. They emphasized the importance of hard work in the saying 'if a person says "yes", that person's *chi* says "yes".'

Hausa Culture and Traditions in Nigeria

Hausa people are one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, occupying the northern part of the country and also known for their hardworking nature. They engage in multiple economic activities to provide for their families Smith (1961).

Population and location

There are over 20 million Hausa people in present-day Nigeria. The ethnic group is among the top three largest communities in the country. People from this community are

mainly found in northwestern Nigeria. Over the years, they have become widely distributed geographically due to urbanization. Many have intermingled with other ethnic communities.

Language

Persons from this community speak the Hausa language, which belongs to the Chadic group of the Afro-Asiatic family. The language is heavily infused with Arabic words due to Islamic influence.

Religion

A significant percentage of Hausa people are Muslims. They believe in Allah and Muhammad as His prophet. The teachings of the Quran guide their lives. In some rural communities, Hausa people do not follow Islam. Instead, they worship nature spirits called *bori* or *iskoki*. These people are known as *Maguzawa*.

Oral History

According to the Hausa culture and tradition, it is believed that the community's mythical ancestor is *Bayajidda*. *Bayajidda* migrated from Baghdad in the 9th or 10th century AD. He stopped at the Bornu Kingdom. He fled west of the Bornu Kingdom due to circumstances. One day, he helped the *Daura* King to kill a venomous serpent. The *Daura* King rewarded him with the Queen of *Daura* in marriage. *Bayajidda* and the Queen of *Daura* welcomed a son named *Bawo*, who founded the city of *Biram*. *Bawo* was blessed with six sons who ruled other Hausa city-states. All seven city-states were called Hausa *bakwai*.

Rites of Passage

The Hausa culture and tradition includes several rites of passage. The first happens after the birth of a child. About seven days after birth, a naming ceremony is held. The child receives their name during the ceremony, which is mainly done according to Islamic teachings. The second rite of passage is circumcision. Male children are circumcised when around seven years. The next rite of passage is engagement, which happens when young men and women are in their mid-to-late teens. In the traditional set-up, early marriages were common. Wedding ceremonies follow, and these take several days. Celebrations start among the bride, her family, and friends as she is prepared for marriage. Male representatives of the bride's and the groom's families meet at the mosque to sign the marriage contract according to Islamic law. The couple is then brought together. But marriages between relatives, e.g. cousins, are preferred. When a member of this community passes away, Islamic burial principles are followed and wives mourn their deceased husbands for approximately three months.

Family and lifestyle

In the rural set-up, people live in large households called *gidaje*. A *gidaje* consists of a man, his wives, and children. It also includes his sons' wives and children, if married. Polygamy is widespread and accepted. Examples of Hausa culture include being quiet and not showing emotion, especially among men. Respect for grown-ups and the elderly is encouraged, and people are required to live happily and peacefully with each other. From a tender age, children are allowed to form friendships with their neighbours. Relatives work together in economic activities and are supposed to be supportive of each other.

Traditional Occupation of the Hausa

The Hausa economy has rested on the intensive cultivation of staple and cash crops. The community members are known for growing maize, sorghum, millet, and other crops. They use manure from livestock for agriculture. Besides farming, community members also engage in silver smiting, weaving, thatching, and leatherworking Smith (1955). The products from these crafts are sold on market days.

Food

According to Smith (1959), the traditional Hausa diet is rich and healthy. Staple grains in the community include rice, millet, sorghum, and maize. These grains are normally ground into flour used to make various dishes. Breakfast often consists of porridge. Sometimes, fried beans called *kosai* or wheat flour made goodies called *funkaso* are eaten in the morning. Lunches and dinners mainly consist of a heavy porridge called *tuwo* and a soup or stew called *miya*. Soups are made using tomatoes, peppers, onions, okra, pumpkin, spinach, and other vegetables.

The community is known for consuming spicy food. The main sources of protein in the diet are peanuts, beans, milk, and meat. The must-try dishes from this community are *tuwo shinkafa*, *masa*, *tsire/ suya*, *dambu*, *zogale*, *kuli kuli*, *fura da nono*, *kilishi*, and *miyan taushe*.

Clothing

This community has an elaborate dressing style. Men normally wear large flowing gowns called *gare* or *babban riga*. These gowns have elaborate embroidery around the neck. They also wear colourful caps called *hula*. On the other hand, Hausa women wear wrap-around robes made of colourful fabric with matching blouses. They also wear head ties and shawls. Traditionally, women were reserved in the private sphere of life, meaning they seldom left their homesteads. When married women leave their compound, they should wear veils and are often escorted by their children.

Cultural Heritage, Sports, and Recreation

One way of preserving culture and traditions among children is through folklore called *tatsunya*. *Tatsunya* means stories with a moral lesson. Through these stories, they also learn

proverbs and riddles. Art and music play are also common. Children take part in dances and local dramas. During community ceremonies, praise singers sing about the community's heroes, leaders, and history.

Important Lesson from the Hausa Ethnic Group

Are all Hausas Muslims? No, a large percentage are Muslims, but the community has people called *Maguzawa*. These are people who worship nature spirits called *bori* or *iskoki*. What is Hausa culture known for? The Hausa culture is known for being predominantly Muslim and following Islamic teachings and doctrines. It is also known for its rich folklore and love for harmonious living.

Is Hausa a tribe or ethnic group? Hausa is both a tribe and an ethnic group. It is one of the largest ethnic groups in the country, and people from this community speak the Hausa language. The Hausa culture is rich, and adults do their best to preserve it by passing it on to their children. Most people from this community are Muslims, meaning the Islamic teachings and doctrines have influenced their lifestyle.

The Yoruba People and Culture

The Yoruba have been living in advanced urban kingdoms for more than 1,500 years. They created a strong economy through farming trading, and art production. Their outstanding and unique artistic traditions include woodcarving, sculpture, metal work, textiles, and beadwork Johnson (1997).

Religion (*Ẹ̀sìn*)

According to Baba (1994), the Yoruba are said to be religious people, but they are also pragmatic and tolerant about their religious differences. Whilst many profess the Yoruba school of thought; many more profess other faiths e.g. Christianity (*Ẹ̀sìn Ìgbàgbọ̀*), Islam (*Ẹ̀sìn Ìmàlẹ̀*).

Law

Yoruba law is the legal system of Yorubaland. It is quite intricate, each group and sub group having a system that varies, but in general, government begins within the immediate family. The next level is the clan, or extended family, with its own head known as a *Baálẹ̀*. This chief will be subject to town chiefs, and these chiefs are usually themselves subject to their Oba, who may or may not be subject to another Oba himself

Most of what survived of this legal code has been assimilated into the customary laws of the sovereign nations that the Yoruba inhabit.

Language (Èdè)/ Linguistics

Yoruba people traditionally speak the Yorùbá language, a member of the Niger-Congo language family. Apart from referring to the aggregate of dialects and their speakers, the term Yoruba is also used for the standard, written form of the language Fagborun (1994).

Yoruba written literature begins with the formation of its grammar published in 1843. The standard language incorporates several features from other dialects.

Yoruba Philosophy

According to Ogunyemi (2003), Yoruba culture consists of the folk/cultural philosophy, the autochthonous religion and folktales. They are embodied in *Ifa-Ife* Divination, known as the tripartite Book of Enlightenment or the Body of Knowledge in Yorubaland and in its diaspora. Other components of the Book of Knowledge or the Book of Enlightenment are psychology, sociology, mathematics, cosmogony, cosmology, and other areas of human interests.

Yoruba cultural thought is a witness of two epochs. The first epoch is an epoch-making history in mythology and cosmology. This is also an epoch-making history in the oral culture during which time the divine philosopher *Orunmila* was the head and a pre-eminent diviner. He pondered the visible and invisible worlds, reminiscing about cosmogony, cosmology, and the mythological creatures in the visible and invisible worlds. This philosopher, *Orunmila*, epitomizes wisdom and idealism. He has been said to be more of a psychologist than a philosopher. He is the cultivator of ambitions and desires, and the interpreter of *ori* (head) and its destiny. The non-literate world, compelled by the need to survive, impelled by the need to unravel the mysteries of the days and nights, made *Orunmila* to cultivate the idea of divination.

The second epoch is the epoch of metaphysical discourse. This commenced in the 19th century when the land became a literate land through the diligence and pragmatism of Dr. Ajayi Crowther, the first African Anglican Bishop. He is regarded as the cultivator of modern Yoruba idealism.

The uniqueness of Yoruba thought is that it is mainly narrative in form, explicating and pointing to the knowledge of the causes and nature of things, affecting the corporeal and the spiritual universe and its wellness. Yoruba people have hundreds of aphorisms, folktales, and lores, and they believe that any lore that widens people's horizons and presents food for thought is the beginning of a philosophy.

As it was in the ancient times, Yoruba people always attach philosophical and religious connotations to whatever they produced or created. Hence some of them are referred to as artist-philosophers. This is an accretion to the fact that one can find a sculpt

or, a weaver, a carver or a potter in every household in Yoruba land.

Despite the fact that the Yoruba cannot detail all their long pedigrees, such as *Oduduwa*, *Obatala*, *Orunmila*, *Sango*, *Ogun*, *Osun* (one of the three wives of Sango), *Olokun*, *Oya* (one of the three wives of Sango), *Esu*, *Ososi*, *Yemoja*, *Sopona*, nonetheless it is a fact of truth that they had all impacted the Yoruba people and contributed to the wellness and well-being of the Yoruba society. Without their various contributions, Yoruba land could have been lost in a hay of confusion.

Although religion is often first in Yoruba culture, nonetheless, it is the thought of man that actually leads spiritual consciousness (*ori*) to the creation and the practice of religion. Thus thought/philosophy is antecedent to religion.

Today, the academic and the nonacademic communities are becoming more and more interested in Yoruba culture, as well as in its Book of Enlightenment. Thus more and more research is being carried out on Yoruba cultural thought, as more and more books are being written on it — embossing its mark and advancing its research amongst non-African thinkers such as the political philosophers and political scientists who are beginning to open their doors to other cultures and widening their views Makunjuola (1991).

Name	Deity Of	Ethnic Group	Religion	Member Of	Homeland
<u>Agemo</u>	Chameleon, Servant	<u>Yoruba People</u>	<u>Yoruba Religion</u>	Orisha	<u>Yorubaland</u>
Akògún	Warrior, Hunter, Wear Straw	<u>Yoruba People</u>	<u>Yoruba Religion</u>	Orisha	<u>Yorubaland</u>
<u>Ayelala</u>	Punishes Crime	<u>Yoruba People</u>	<u>Yoruba Religion</u>	Orisha	<u>Yorubaland</u>
Aroni	Beauty Of Nature, Spirit Of The Forest, Herb, Plant, Tree	<u>Yoruba People</u>	<u>Yoruba Religion</u>	Orisha	<u>Yorubaland</u>
Aje	Wealth, Property, Prosperity, Fortune, Success	<u>Yoruba People</u>	<u>Yoruba Religion</u>	Orisha	<u>Yorubaland</u>

Dada	Mischief & Stubbom	Yoruba People	Yoruba Religion	Orisha	Yorubaland
Egungun	Sainted dead	Yoruba People	Yoruba Religion	Orisha	Yorubaland
Eshu	Trickery, Crossroads, Misfortune, Chaos, Death, Travelers, Messenger	Yoruba People	Yoruba Religion	Orisha	Yorubaland
Oduduwa	Progenitor, Warrior	Yoruba People	Yoruba Religion	Orisha	Yorubaland
Shango	Thunder, Lightning, Fire	Yoruba People	Yoruba Religion	Orisha	Yorubaland

Yoruba Idealism

According to Ogunyemi (2017), idealism in Yorubaland and for the Yoruba people is equated with the ideal purpose of life, the search for the meaning of life and the yearning for the best in life. *Orunmila*, the cultivator of *Ifa-Ife* divination, is the father of ancient Yoruba idealism. His (divine) idealism has inspired the entire Yoruba people in Africa and in the diaspora, especially those who were stolen (to the Americas and the West Indies) during the inhuman slave trade.

Based on the definition of the Yoruba idealism, which is the search for the meaning of life and the yearning for the best in life, Yoruba idealism is a kind of Enlightenment Movement in its own right, as every scion in the land endeavors to reach the height or the acme of his idealistic ambition.

Orunmila's idealism ushered in a more modern idealism that inspired the pragmatic Dr. Ajayi Crowther in the 19th century, and Chief Obafemi Awolowo in the 20th century, who succeeded in creating a moral atmosphere for the Yorubaland to thrive, impacting a moral majority to which idealism belongs and from which realism emerges. His leadership philosophy helped him with big ideas. He built the first Radio and TV House in Africa. He cultivated the big ideas that led to the building of the first modern stadium in Africa and the first Cocoa House in the world. Generally speaking, Yoruba people are idealists by nature.

Art

The Yoruba are said to be prolific sculptors, famous for their terra cotta works through

hout the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries; artists have also made artwork out of bronze.

Esiẹ Museum is a museum in *Esiẹ* a neighbouring town to *Oro* in *Irepodun*, Kwara. The museum was the first to be established in Nigeria when it opened in 1945. It once housed over a thousand tombstone figures or images representing human beings. It is reputed to have the largest collection of soapstone images in the world. In modern times, the *Esiẹ* museum has been the center of religious activities and host a festival in the month of April every year.

Textile

Weaving is done on different types of looms in order to create hundreds of different patterns. *Adire* and *Aso Oke* are some of the popular textiles in Yoruba land. *Adire* (tie and dye) is the name given to indigo dyed cloth produced by Yoruba women of south western Nigeria using a variety of resist dye techniques. *Adire* translates as tie and dye, and the earliest cloths were probably simple tied designs on locally-woven hand-spun cotton cloth much like those still produced in Mali.

Food

Some common foods native to the Yoruba include moin-moin (steamed bean pudding) and *akara* (bean cake). Native Yoruba soups include *ewedu* (jute), *gbegiri* (which is made from beans), and *efo riro* (a type of vegetable soup). Such soups as okra soup (locally known as *obé ila*) and egusi (melon soup) have become very popular in Western Nigeria in recent times and, in addition to *Amala* (yam flour), a traditional Yoruba meal made of yam flour, these can be eaten with *ewedu* and *gbegiri*. Numerous Nigerian meals, including pounded yam (locally referred to as *iyán*); *lafun*, a Nigeria *fufu* made from cassava; semolina; and garri (*eba*).

Some dishes are prepared specially for festivities and ceremonies. jollof rice, fried rice and *Ofada* rice are very common in Nigeria (especially in the southwest region, which includes Lagos). Other popular dishes include *asaro*, *efokore*, *ekuru* and *aro*, stews, corn, cassava, and flours (such as maize, yam and plantain flours), eggs, chicken, and assorted meat and fish). Some less well known meals and many miscellaneous staples are arrowroot gruel, sweetmeats, fritters and coconut concoctions; and some breads such as yeast bread, rock buns, and palm wine bread. Yoruba cuisine is quite vast and often includes plantains which can be boiled, fried and roasted.

Music

Music and dance have always been an important part of the Yoruba culture; they are used in many different forms of entertainment. Musical instruments include *bata*, *saworo*, *sekere*, *gangan*. Musical varieties include *Juju*, *Fuji* and Afro-beat, with artists including King Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey, KWAM 1, Femi Kuti.

Naming customs

The Yoruba people believe that people live out the meanings of their names. As such, Yoruba people put considerable effort into naming a baby. Their philosophy of naming is conveyed in a common adage, *ile ni a n wo, ki a to so omo l'oruko* ("one pays attention to the family before naming a child"): one must consider the tradition and history of a child's relatives when choosing a name.

Some families have long-standing traditions for naming their children. Such customs are often derived from their profession or religion. For example, a family of hunters could name their baby *Ogunbunmi* (*Ogun* favors me with this) to show their respect to the divinity who gives them metal tools for hunting. Meanwhile, a family that venerates *Ifá* may name their child *Falola* (*Ifa* has honor).

Naming

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 the same meticulous care, generally by the oldest family member. Symbolic of the hopes, expectations and prayers of the parents for the new baby, honey, kola, bitter kola, *atare* (alligator pepper), water, palm oil, sugar, sugar cane, salt, and liquor each have a place and 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.

After the ritual, the child is named and members of the extended family have the honour of also giving a name to the child. The gift of a name comes with gifts of money and clothing. In many cases, the relative will subsequently call the child by the name they give to him or her, so a new baby may thereafter have more than a dozen names.

Preordained Names

Some Yorubas believe that a baby may come with pre-destined names. For instance, twins (*ibeji*) are believed to have natural-birth names. Thus the first to be born of the two is called *Taiwo* or *Taiye*, shortened forms of *Taiyewo*, meaning the taster of the world. This is to identify the first twin as the one sent by the other one to first go and taste the world. If he/she stays there, it follows that it is not bad, and that would send a signal to the other one to start coming. Hence the second to arrive is named *Kehinde* (late arrival); it is now common for many *Kehindes* to be called by the familiar diminutive "Kenny". Irrespective of the sex the child born to the same woman after the twins is called *Idowu*, and the one after this is called *Alaba*, then the next child is called *Idogbe*. *Ige* is a child born with the legs coming out first instead of the head; and *Ojo* (male) or *Aina* (female) is the one born with the umbilical cord around his or her neck. When a child is conceived with no prior menstruation, he or she is named *Ilori*. *Dada* is the child born with locked hair; and *Ajayi* (nicknamed *Ogidi Olu*) is the one born face-do

wnwards.

Other natural names include *Abiodun* (one born on a festival day or period), *Abiona* (one born on a journey) *Abidemi* or *Bidemi* (one born without the presence of its father) i.e the child's father didn't witness his baby's naming ceremony but not dead, maybe he just traveled, *Enitan* (one of a story) this child might have had any of its parents dead before its birth, *Bosede* (one born on a holy day); *Babatunde*/ *Babatunji* (meaning father has come back) is the son born to a family where a father has recently passed. This testifies to the belief in reincarnation. *Iyabode*, *Yeside*, *Yewande*, and *Yetunde*, ("mother has come back") are female counterparts, names with the same meaning.

Wedding/ Marriage Ceremony

Marriage ceremony. The dress pattern is typical of the Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria.

The Yoruba culture provides for the upbringing of the child by the extended family. In traditional society, the child is placed with a master of whatever craft the gods specify for him or her (although this rarely happens nowadays). Alternatively, he may take to the profession of the father, in the case of a boy, or the mother, in the case of a girl. The parents have the responsibility for his/her socialization into the norms of the larger society, in addition to giving him a means of livelihood. His or her wedding is also the responsibility of the parents.

A Yoruba bride hugs her mother on her traditional wedding day. This is a farewell hug from mother to daughter.

The wedding ceremony is the climax of a process that starts with courtship. The young man identifies a young woman that he loves. He and his friends seek her out through various means. The young man sends messages of interest to the young woman until such a time that they are close enough to avoid a go-between (known as an *alari na*). Then once they both express mutual love, they let their parents know about their feelings for each other. The man's parents arrange to pay a visit to the prospective bride's parents. Once their consent is secured, the wedding day may be set. Prior to the wedding day, the payment of bride price is arranged. This secures the final consent of the bride's parents, and the wedding day is fixed. Once the day has been fixed through either consultation of the *Orishas* by a *babalawo* (in the case of followers of the Yoruba religion) or the decision of a man of God (in the case of the Muslims or Christians), the bride and bridegroom are warned to avoid travelling out of town, including to the farm. This is to prevent any mishap. The wedding day is a day of celebration, eating, drinking and dancing for parents, relations, the new husband and wife and their friends and, often, even foes. Marriage is not considered to be only a union of the husband and wife, it is also seen among the Yoruba as the union of the families on both sides. But before the bride goes to her husband's house, she is escorted by different people i.e. family and friends to the door step of her new home in a ritual called *Ekun Iyawo*

meaning 'The cry of the new bride', this is to show that she is sad leaving her parents' home and signify her presence in the new home. There she is prayed for and her legs are washed. It is believed that she is washing every bad-luck that she might have brought into her husband's house away. Before she is finally ushered into her house, if she is an adherent of the Yoruba faith, she is given a calabash (*igba*) and is then asked to break it. When it breaks, the number of pieces it is broken into is believed to be the number of children she will give birth to. On the wedding night, she and her husband have their first meeting and he is ordinarily expected to find her to be a virgin. If he doesn't, she and her parents are disgraced and may be banished from the village where they live.

While this is the only marital ceremony that is practiced by the more traditional members of the tribe, Muslim and Christian members generally blend it with a *nikkah* and registry wedding (in the case of Muslims) or a church wedding and registry wedding (in the case of Christians). In their communities, the Yoruba ceremony described above is commonly seen as more of an engagement party than a proper wedding rite.

Polygamy

Polygamy has a longstanding history within traditional Yoruba culture. As seen in a Yoruba framework, marriage is first and foremost a union between families with the goal of childbearing rather than a romantic contract between two individuals. Thus, sexual pleasure and love between the parties involved are not the objects of marriage. Naturally, the position of king holds great importance in Yoruba culture, but importance is also particularly accorded to the king's partners. As it is ideal for the king to produce as many children as possible, he is expected to have more wives than anyone else.

Gender Fluidity

Women as Bridegrooms

As the practice of having multiple wives was common in pre-colonial and colonial times, the primary wife would sometimes encourage and even help her husband find a new wife. This was financially beneficial for the new bride and allowed for the social responsibilities of a wife to be shared between more than one women.

Funeral (*Isínku*)

In death is not the end of life; rather, it is a transition from one form of existence to another. The *ogberis* (ignorant folks) fear death because it marks the end of an existence that is known and the beginning of one that is unknown. Immortality is the dream of many, as "*Eji-ogbe*" puts it: *Mo dogbogbo arose; Ng ko ku mo; Mo digba oke; Mo duro Gbonin*. (I have become an aged ose tree; I will no longer die; I have become two hundred hills rolled into one; I am immovable.) Reference to hills is found in the saying "*Gboningbonin ni t'oke, oke Yoruba belief, Gboningbonin*".

The Yoruba also pray for many blessings, but the most important three are wealth, ch

children and immortality: *ire owo; ire omo; ire aiku pari iwa*. There is a belief in an afterlife that is a continuation of this life, only in a different setting, and the abode of the dead is usually placed at a place just outside this abode, and is sometimes thought of as separated by a stream. Participation in this afterlife is conditional on the nature of one's life and the nature of one's death. This is the meaning of life: to deliver the message of *Olodumare*, the Supreme Creator by promoting the good of existence. For it is the wish of the Deity that human beings should promote the good as much as is possible. Hence it is insisted that one has a good capacity for moral uprightness and personhood. Personhood is an achieved state judged by the standard of goodness to self, to the community and to the ancestors. As people say: *Keni huwa gbedegbede; keni lee ku pelepele; K'omo eni lee n'owo gbogboro L'eni sin*. (Let one conduct one's life gently; that one may die a good death; that one's children may stretch their hands over one's body in burial.)

The achievement of a good death is an occasion for celebration of the life of the deceased. This falls into several categories. First, children and grandchildren would celebrate the life of their parent who passed and left a good name for them. Second, the Yoruba are realistic and pragmatic about their attitude to death. They know that one may die at a young age. The important thing is a good life and a good name. As the saying goes: *Ki a ku l'omode, ki a fi esin se irele eni; o san ju ki a dagba ki a ma ni adie irana*. (if we die young, and a horse is killed in celebration of one's life; it is better than dying old without people killing even a chicken in celebration.)

It is also believed that ancestors have enormous power to watch over their descendants. Therefore, people make an effort to remember their ancestors on a regular basis. This is ancestor veneration, which some have wrongly labelled ancestor worship. It is believed that the love that exists between a parent and a child here on earth should continue even after death. And since the parent has only ascended to another plane of existence, it should be possible for the link to remain strong.

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