**AFE BABALOLAUNIVERSITY**

**ADO-EKITI, EKITI STATE**

**A TERM PAPER ON THE CULTURE OF PEACE IN YORUBA TRIBE**

**PRESENTED**

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**BACKGROUND**

The Yoruba people are an ethnic group of southwestern and north-central Nigeria, as well as southern and central Benin. Together, these regions are known as Yoruba land. The Yoruba constitute over 40 million people in total. The majority of this population is from Nigeria, and the Yoruba make up 21% of the country's population, according to the CIA World Fact book, making them one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa. The majority of the Yoruba speak the Yoruba language, which is tonal.

As an ethnic description, the word "Yoruba" was first recorded in reference to the Oyo Empire in a treatise written by the 16th century Songhai scholar Ahmed Baba. It was popularized by Hausa usage and ethnography written in Arabic and Ajami during the 19th century, in origin referring to the Oyo exclusively. The extension of the term to all speakers of dialects related to the language of the Oyo (in modern terminology North-West Yoruba) dates to the second half of the 19th century. It is due to the influence of Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first Anglican bishop in Nigeria. Crowther was himself a Yoruba and compiled the first Yoruba dictionary as well as introducing a standard for Yoruba orthography. The alternative name Akú, apparently an exonym derived from the first words of Yoruba greetings (such as Ẹ kú àárọ? "good morning", Ẹ kú alẹ? "good evening") has survived in certain parts of their diaspora as a self-descriptive, especially in Sierra Leone.

**LANGUAGE**

The Yoruba culture was originally an oral tradition, and the majority of Yoruba people are native speakers of the Yoruba language. The number of speakers is roughly estimated at about 30 million in 2010. Yoruba is classified within the Edekiri languages, which together with the isolate Igala, form the Yoruboid group of languages within the Volta-Niger branch of the Niger-Congo family. Igala and Yoruba have important historical and cultural relationships. The languages of the two ethnic groups bear such a close resemblance that researchers such as Forde (1951) and Westermann and Bryan (1952) regarded Igala as a dialect of Yoruba.

As of the 7th century BCE the African peoples who lived in Yorubaland were not initially known as the Yoruba, although they shared a common ethnicity and language group. By the 8th century, a powerful Yoruba kingdom already existed in Ile-Ife, one of the earliest in Africa.

The Yoruba were the dominant cultural force in southern Nigeria as far back as the 11th century.

**ARCHITECTURE**

The Yoruba are among the most urbanized people in Africa. For centuries before the arrival of the British colonial administration most Yoruba already lived in well structured urban centres organized around powerful city-states (Ìlú) centred around the residence of the Oba. In ancient times, most of these cities were fortresses, with high walls and gates. Yoruba cities have always been among the most populous in Africa. Archaeological findings indicate that Òyó-Ilé or Katunga, capital of the Yoruba empire of Oyo (fl. between the 11th and 19th centuries CE), had a population of over 100,000 people (the largest single population of any African settlement at that time in history). For a long time also, Ibadan, one of the major Yoruba cities, was the largest city in the whole of Sub Saharan Africa. Today, Lagos (Yoruba: Èkó), another major Yoruba city, with a population of over twenty million, remains the largest on the African continent.

Archaeologically, the settlement of Ile-Ife showed features of urbanism in the 12th–14th century era. In the period around 1300 CE the artists at Ile-Ife developed a refined and naturalistic sculptural tradition in terracotta, stone and copper alloy - copper, brass, and bronze many of which appear to have been created under the patronage of King Obalufon II, the man who today is identified as the Yoruba patron deity of brass casting, weaving and regalia. The dynasty of kings at Ile-Ife, which is regarded by the Yoruba as the place of origin of human civilization, remains intact to this day. The urban phase of Ile-Ife before the rise of Oyo, c. 1100–1600, a significant peak of political centralization in the 12th century is commonly described as a "golden age" of Ile-Ife. The oba or ruler of Ile-Ife is referred to as the Ooni of Ife.

Ife continues to be seen as the "Spiritual Homeland" of the Yoruba. The city was surpassed by the Oyo Empire as the dominant Yoruba military and political power in the 17th century.

Most of the city states were controlled by Obas (or royal sovereigns with various individual titles) and councils made up of Oloyes, recognised leaders of royal, noble and, often, even common descent, who joined them in ruling over the kingdoms through a series of guilds and cults. Different states saw differing ratios of power between the kingships and the chiefs' councils. Some, such as Oyo, had powerful, autocratic monarchs with almost total control, while in others such as the Ijebu city-states, the senatorial councils held more influence and the power of the ruler or Ọba, referred to as the Awujale of Ijebuland, was more limited.

**RELIGION AND MYTHOLOGY**

The Yoruba faith, variously known as Aborisha, Orisha-Ifa or simply (and erroneously) Ifa, is commonly seen as one of the principal components of the African traditional religions.

Orisa'nla, also known as Ọbatala, was the arch-divinity chosen by Olodumare, the Supreme God, to create solid land out of the primordial water that then constituted the earth and populating the land with human beings molded out of clay.

**TRADITIONAL YORUBA RELIGION**

The Yorùbá religion comprises the traditional religious and spiritual concepts and practices of the Yoruba people. Its homeland is in Southwestern Nigeria and the adjoining parts of Benin and Togo, a region that has come to be known as Yorubaland. Yorùbá religion is formed of diverse traditions and has no single founder. Yoruba religious beliefs are part of itan, the total complex of songs, histories, stories and other cultural concepts which make up the Yorùbá society.

Cockerel on Osun chalice. In the Yoruba creation story, Olodumare the supreme God sent Obatala to earth to create mankind. One of the things he took with him was a rooster, which spread soil over the earth by using its clawed feet

One of the most common Yoruba traditional religious concepts has been the concept of Orisha. Orisha (also spelled Orisa or Orixa) are various godly forms that reflect one of the various manifestations / avatars of God in the Yoruba spiritual or religious system. Some widely known Orisha are Ogun, (God of metal, war and victory), Shango or Jakuta (God of thunder, lightning, fire and justice who manifests as a king always wielding a double-edged axe which conveys his Ashe or divine authority & power), Esu/Eshu elegbara (The trickster and sole messenger to the pantheon, who conveys the wish of men to the gods. He understands every language / tongue spoken by humankind, and is also the guardian of the crossroads, Oríta méta in Yoruba). Eshu has two avatar forms which are manifestations of his dual nature- positive and negative energies; Eshu Laroye, a teacher instructor and leader, and Eshu Ebita, jesty, deceitful, suggestive and cunning, Orunmila, The god of Infinite Knowledge, divination, wisdom and fortune-telling, who reveals the past, solution to problems in the present, and the future, consulted through the Ifa divination system by oracles called Babalawos.

An Iroke or Irofa (Ìròkè Ifá) is the divination tapper of the Yoruba. It is long, slender and often slightly curved. Used in combination with the Opon Ifa or divination board. Traditionally made from Ivory, but also brass & wood.

Olorun is one of the manifestations / avatars of the Supreme God of the Yoruba pantheon, the owner of the heavens, and is associated with the Sun known as Oòrùn in the Yoruba language. The other two avatar forms of the supreme God are; Olodumare, the supreme creator and Olofin, who is the conduit between Òrunn (Heaven) and Ayé (Earth), Oshumare a god that manifests in the form of a rainbow, also known as Òsùmàrè in Yorùbá, Obatala god of clarity and creativity Etc. This religion has found its way throughout the world and is now expressed in practices as varied as Candomblé in Brazil, Lucumí/Santería in Cuba and North America, orisha or ifa in Trinidad (Trinidad Orisha), Kélé in Saint Lucia, Anago and Oyotunji, as well as in some aspects of Umbanda, Winti, Obeah, Vodun and a host of others. These varieties, or spiritual lineages as they are called, are practiced throughout areas of Nigeria, the Republic of Benin, Togo, Brazil, Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, Uruguay, Argentina and Venezuela, among others. As interest in African indigenous religions grows, Orisha communities and lineages can be found in parts of Europe and Asia as well. While estimates may vary, some scholars believe that there could be more than 100 million adherents of this spiritual tradition worldwide.

**MYTHOLOGY**

Beaded crown (Adé) of a Yoruba Oba, the Ogoga of Ikere, Ekiti State. According to Yoruba customs, only kings who are direct descendants of Oduduwa can wear a beaded crown.

Oral history of the Oyo-Yoruba recounts Odùduwà to be the Progenitor of the Yoruba and the reigning ancestor of their crowned kings.

His coming from the east, sometimes understood from Ife traditions to be Oke-Ora and by other sources as the "vicinity" true East on the Cardinal points, but more likely signifying the region of Ekiti and Okun sub-communities in northeastern Yorubaland/central Nigeria. Ekiti is near the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, and is where the Yoruba language is presumed to have separated from related ethno-linguistic groups like Igala, Igbo, and Edo.

After the death of Oduduwa, there was a dispersal of his children from Ife to found other kingdoms. Each child made his or her mark in the subsequent urbanization and consolidation of the Yoruba confederacy of kingdoms, with each kingdom tracing its origin due to them to Ile-Ife.

After the dispersal, the aborigines became difficult, and constituted a serious threat to the survival of Ife. Thought to be survivors of the old occupants of the land before the arrival of Oduduwa, these people now turned themselves into marauders. They would come to town in costumes made of raffia with terrible and fearsome appearances, and burn down houses and loot the markets. Then came Moremi on the scene; she was said to have played a significant role in the quelling of the marauders advancements. But this was at a great price; having to give up her only son Oluorogbo. The reward for her patriotism and selflessness was not to be reaped in one lifetime as she later passed on and was thereafter immortalized. The Edi festival celebrates this feat amongst her Yoruba descendants.

**ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY**

The Yoruba are traditionally a very religious people, and are today pluralistic in their religious convictions. The Yoruba are one of the more religiously diversified ethnic groups in Africa. Many Yorubas can be found in different types of Christian denominations. Many others are Muslims, as well as practitioners of the traditional Yoruba religion. Yoruba religious practices such as the Eyo and Osun-Osogbo festivals are witnessing a resurgence in popularity in contemporary Yorubaland. They are largely seen by the adherents of the modern faiths, especially the Christians and Muslims, as cultural rather than religious events. They participate in them as a means to celebrate their people's history, and boost tourist industries in their local economies.

**CHRISTIANITY**

The Yorubas were one of the first groups in West Africa to be introduced to Christianity on a large scale. Christianity (along with western civilization) came into Yorubaland in the mid-19th century through the Europeans, whose original mission was commerce.The first European visitors were the Portuguese, they visited the Bini kingdom in the late 16th century, as time progressed other Europeans- such as the French, the British, and the Germans followed suit. British and French were most successful in their quest for colonies (These Europeans actually split Yorubaland, with the larger part being in British Nigeria, and the minor parts in French Dahomey, now Benin, and German Togoland). Home governments encouraged religious organizations to come, and to Christianize the so-called "animist" Africans. Roman Catholics (known to the Yorubas as Ijo Aguda, so named after returning former Yoruba slaves from Latin America, who were mostly Catholic, and were also known as the Agudas, Saros or Amaros) started the race, followed by Protestants, whose prominent member- Church Mission Society (CMS) based in England made the most significant in-roads into the hinterland regions for evangelism and became the largest of the Christian missions. Methodists (known as Ijo-Eleto, so named after the Yoruba word for "method or process") started missions in Agbadarigi / Gbegle by Thomas Birch Freeman in 1842. Henry Townsend, C.C.Gollmer, and Ajayi Crowther of the CMS worked in Abeokuta, then under the Egba division of Southern Nigeria in 1846.

Hinderer and Mann of CMS started missions in Ibadan / Ibarapa and Ijaye divisions of the present Oyo state in 1853. The Baptist missionaries-Bowen and Clarke concentrated on the northern Yoruba axis-(Ogbomoso and environs). With their success, other religious groups- Salvation Army, Evangelists Commission of West Africa (ECWA) became popular among the Igbomina and other non-denominational Christian groups joined. The increased tempo of Christianity led to the appointment of Saros and indigenes as missionaries, this move was initiated by Venn, the CMS Secretary. Nevertheless, the impact of Christianity in Yoruba land was not felt until fourth decade of 19th century, when a Yoruba slave boy, Samuel Ajayi Crowther had become a Christian convert, linguist, whose knowledge in languages would become a major tool and instrument to propagate Christianity in Yoruba land and beyond. Today, there are a number of Yoruba Pastors and Church founders with large congregations, e.g. Pastor Enoch Adeboye of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Pastor David Oyedepo of Living Faith Church World Wide also known as Winners Chapel, Pastor Tunde Bakare of Latter rain Assembly, Prophet T. B. Joshua of Synagogue of All Nations, William Folorunso Kumuyi of Deeper Christian Life Ministry and Dr Daniel Olukoya of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries. The Yoruba are known for their love of privacy and respect for other ethnic groups - particularly around bigger cities such as Lagos and in Diasporan communities.

**ISLAM**

Islam came into Yorubaland centuries before Christianity and before the first Europeans ever set foot in Yorubaland. Yorubas first came in contact with Islam around the 14th century, as a result of trade with the Fulanis of the Malian Empire, during the reign of Mansa Kankan Musa. Hence, why Islam is traditionally known to the Yoruba as Esin Male or simply Imale i.e. religion of the Malians. On the other hand, another school of thought describes Imale as a compound form of the Yoruba phrase "imo lile" which literally means "hard knowledge". This definition of the Islamic Religion is simply due to the way the adherents of the religion sought to spread Islam forcefully, thus the word "lile" in Yoruba which could also be translated as "with force". In fact, Islam was practiced in Yorubaland so early on in history, that a sizable proportion of Yoruba slaves taken to the Americas were already Muslim. Some of these Yoruba Muslims would later on stage the Malê Revolt (or The Great Revolt) which was the most significant slave rebellion in Brazil. On a Sunday during Ramadan in January 1835, in the city of Salvador, Bahia, a small group of slaves and freedmen, inspired by Muslim teachers, rose up against the government. Muslims were called Malê in Bahia at this time, from Yoruba Imale that designated a Yoruba Muslim.

According to Al-Aluri, the first Mosque was built in Ọyọ-Ile / Katunga in 1550 A.D. although, there were no Yoruba Muslims at the time, the Mosque served the spiritual needs of foreign Muslims living in Ọyọ.

**FESTIVALS**

**The Arugba leading the procession to the Osun grove**

One of the first observations of first time visitors to Yorubaland is the rich, pomp and ceremonial nature of their culture, which is made even more visible by the urbanized structures of Yoruba settlements. These occasions are avenues to experience the richness of the Yoruba culture. Traditional musicians are always on hand to grace the occasions with heavy rhythms and extremely advanced percussion which the Yorubas are well known for world over. Praise singers and Griots are there to add their historical insight to the meaning and significance of the ceremony, and of course the varieties of colorful dresses and attires worn by the people, attest to the aesthetic sense of the average Yoruba.

The Yoruba are a very expressive people who celebrate major events with colorful festivals and celebrations (Ayeye). Some of these festivals (about thirteen principal ones) are secular and only mark achievements and milestones in the achievement of mankind, these include wedding ceremonies (Ìgbéyàwó), Naming ceremonies (Ìsomolórúko), Funerals (Ìsìnkú), Housewarming (Ìsílé), New-Yam festival (Ìjesu), Odon itsu in Atakpame, Harvest ceremonies (Ìkórè), Birth (Ìbí), Chieftaincy (Ìjòyè) and so forth. Others have a more spiritual connotation, such as the various days and celebrations dedicated to specific Orisha like the Ogun day (Ojó Ògún), The Osun festival, which is usually done at the Osun-Osogbo sacred grove located on the banks of the Osun River and around the ancient town of Osogbo. The festival is dedicated to the river goddess Osun, which is usually celebrated in the month of August (Osù Ògùn) yearly. The festival attracts thousands of Osun worshippers from all over Yorubaland and The Yoruba diaspora in the Americas, spectators and tourists from all walks of life. The Osun-Osogbo Festival is a two-week-long programme. It starts with the traditional cleansing of the town called 'Iwopopo', which is then followed in three days by the lighting of the 500-year-old sixteen-point lamp called Ina Olojumerindinlogun, which literally means The sixteen eyed fire, the lighting of this sacred lamp, heralds the beginning of the Osun festival. Then comes the 'Ibroriade', an assemblage of the crowns of the past ruler, Ataojas of Osogbo, for blessings. This event is led by the sitting Ataoja of Osogbo and the Arugba Yeye Osun (who is usually a young maiden dressed in white, who carries a sacred white calabash that contains propitiation materials meant for the goddess Osun, she is also accompanied by a committee of priestesses.A similar event holds in the New World as Odunde Festival.

**Eyo figure in Lagos**

Another very popular festival with spiritual connotations is the Eyo Olokun festival or Orisha play, celebrated by the people of Lagos. The Eyo festival is a dedication to the God of the Sea Olokun, who is an Orisha, and whose name literally mean Owner of the Seas. Generally, there is no customarily defined time for the staging the Eyo Festival, this leads to a building anticipation as to what date would be decided upon. Once a date for its performance is selected and announced, the festival preparations begin. It encompasses a week-long series of activities, and culminates in a striking procession of thousands of men clothed in white and wearing a variety of coloured hats, called Aga. The procession moves through Lagos Island Isale Eko, which is the historical centre of the Lagos metropolis. On the streets, they move through various crucial locations and landmarks in the city, including the palace of the traditional ruler of Lagos, the Oba, known as the Iga Idunganran. The festival starts from dusk to dawn, and has been held on Saturdays (Ojó Àbáméta) from time immemorial. A full week before the festival (always a Sunday), the 'senior' eyo group, the Adimu (identified by a black, broad-rimmed hat), goes public with a staff. When this happens, it means the event will take place on the following Saturday. Each of the four other 'important' groups — Laba (Red), Oniko (yellow), Ologede (Green) and Agere (Purple) — take their turns in that order from Monday to Thursday.

**Eyo Olokun**

The Eyo masquerade essentially admits tall people, which is why it is described as Agogoro Eyo (literally meaning the tall Eyo masquerade). In the manner of a spirit (An Orisha) visiting the earth on a purpose, the Eyo masquerade speaks in a ventriloquial voice, suggestive of its otherworldliness; and when greeted, it replies: Mo yo fun e, mo yo fun ara mi which in Yoruba means: (I rejoice for you, and I rejoice for myself). This response connotes the masquerades as rejoicing with the person greeting it for the witnessing of the day, and its own joy at taking the hallowed responsibility of cleansing. During the festival, Sandals and foot wears, as well as Suku: A hairstyle that is popular among the Yorubas, one that has the hair converge at the middle, then shoot upward, before tipping downward, are prohibited. The festival has also taken a more touristic dimension in recent times, which like the Osun Osogbo festival, attracts visitors from all across Nigeria, as well as Yoruba diaspora populations. In-fact, it is widely believed that the play is one of the manifestations of the customary African revelry that serves as the forerunner of the modern carnival in Brazil and other parts of the New World, which may have been started by the Yoruba slaves transplanted in that part of the world due to the Atlantic slave trade.

**MUSIC**

The [Batá drum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bat%C3%A1_drum) – from left: *Okónkolo*, *Iyá*, *Itótele*

The music of the Yoruba people is perhaps best known for an extremely advanced [drumming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drummer) tradition especially using the dundun hourglass tension drums. The representation of musical instruments on sculptural works from Ile-Ife, indicates, in general terms a substantial accord with oral traditions. A lot of these musical instruments date back to the classical period of [Ile-Ife](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ile-Ife), which began at around the 10th century A.D. Some were already present prior to this period, while others were created later. The hourglass tension drum (Dùndún) for example, may have been introduced around the 15th century (1400's), the [Benin bronze plaques](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benin_Bronzes) of the middle period depicts them. Others like the double and single iron clapper-less bells are examples of instruments that preceded classical Ife.Yoruba [folk music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_music) became perhaps the most prominent kind of [West African music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_West_Africa) in [Afro-Latin and Caribbean musical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afro-Caribbean_music) styles. Yorùbá music left an especially important influence on the music of [Trinidad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinidad), the [Lukumi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucumi_religion) religious traditions, practice and the [music of Cuba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Cuba).

**Yoruba hollow slit drum**

Yoruba drums typically belong to four major families, which are used depending on the context or genre where they are played. The [Dùndún / Gángan family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talking_drum), is the class of hourglass shaped talking drums, which imitate the sound of Yoruba speech. This is possible because the Yoruba language is tonal in nature. It is the most common and is present in many Yoruba traditions, such as [Apala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apala), [Jùjú](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%B9j%C3%BA_music), [Sekere](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sekere) and [Afrobeat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrobeat). The second is the [Sakara family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakara_drum). Typically, they played a ceremonial role in royal settings, weddings and [Oríkì](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriki) recitation; it is predominantly found in traditions such as [Sakara music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakara_music), Were and [Fuji music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fuji_music). The [Gbedu family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gbedu) (literally, "large drum") is used by secret fraternities such as the [Ogboni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ogboni) and royal courts. Historically, only the Oba might dance to the music of the drum. If anyone else used the drum they were arrested for sedition of royal authority. The Gbèdu are conga shaped drums played while they sit on the ground. *Akuba* drums (a trio of smaller conga-like drums related to the gbèdu) are typically used in afrobeat. The *Ogido* is a cousin of the gbedu. It is also shaped like a conga but with a wider array of sounds and a bigger body. It also has a much deeper sound than the conga. It is sometimes referred to as the "bass drum". Both hands play directly on the Ogido drum.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AgogoChrome-2tons.JPG)

[Agogo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agog%C3%B4) metal gongs

Within each drum family there are different sizes and roles; the lead drum in each family is called *Ìyá* or *Ìyá Ìlù*, which means "Mother drum", while the supporting drums are termed *Omele*. Yoruba drumming exemplifies West-African cross-rhythms and is considered to be one of the most advanced drumming traditions in the world. Generally, improvisation is restricted to master drummers. Some other instruments found in Yoruba music include, but are not limited to; The [Gòjé](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goje) ([violin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violin)), [Shèkèrè](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shekere) (gourd rattle), [Agidigbo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agidigbo) (thumb piano that takes the shape of a plucked [Lamellophone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamellophone)), *Saworo* (metal rattles for the arm and ankles, also used on the rim of the bata drum), *Fèrè* ([whistles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whistle)), *Aro* ([Cymbal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cymbal))s, [Agogô](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agog%C3%B4) ([bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bell_%28instrument%29)), different types of [flutes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flute) include the *Ekutu*, *Okinkin* & *Igba.*

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:TalkingDrum.jpg)

The [talking drum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talking_drum)

[Oriki](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriki) (praise singing), a genre of sung poetry, which contains a series of proverbial phrases, praising or characterizing the respective person is of [Egba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egba_people) and [Ekiti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekiti_people) origin, is often considered the oldest Yoruba musical tradition. Other Yoruba vocal traditions include Ijala (hunter chants), Ewi (poetry), and Odu (Ifa worship songs) Yoruba music is typically [Polyrhythmic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polyrhythm), which can be described as interlocking sets of rhythms that fit together somewhat like the pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. There is a basic timeline and each instrument plays a pattern in relation to that timeline. The resulting ensemble provides the typical sound of West African Yoruba drumming. Yorùbá music is regarded as the most important components of the modern Nigerian popular music scene. Although traditional Yoruba music was not influenced by foreign music, the same cannot be said of modern-day Yoruba music which has evolved and adapted itself through contact with foreign instruments, talent and creativity.

**TWINS IN YORUBA SOCIETY**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Yoruba_Ibeji_figures,_representing_twins_Wellcome_L0035694.jpg)

Wooden *Ere Ibeji* figures representing twins. Yorubas have the highest [twinning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twin) rate in the world.

The Yoruba present the highest [dizygotic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dizygotic) twinning rate in the world (4.4% of all maternities) They manifest at 45–50 [twin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twin) sets (or 90–100 twins) per 1,000 live births, possibly because of high consumption of a specific type of yam containing a natural phytoestrogen which may stimulate the ovaries to release an egg from each side. Twins are very important for the Yoruba and they usually tend to give special names to each twin. The first of the twins to be born is traditionally named *Taiyewo* or *Tayewo*, which means 'the first to taste the world', or the 'slave to the second twin', this is often shortened to *Taiwo*, *Taiye* or *Taye*. *Kehinde* is the name of the last born twin. *Kehinde* is sometimes also referred to as *Kehindegbegbon* which is short for; *Omo kehin de gba egbon* and means, 'the child that came behind gets the rights of the elder'

**CUISINE**

Solid food, mostly cooked, pounded or prepared with hot water are basic staple foods of the Yoruba. These foods are all by-products of crops like [cassava](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cassava), [yams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yam_%28vegetable%29), [cocoyam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cocoyam) and forms a huge chunk of it all. Others like [Plantain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooking_bananas), [corn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corn), [beans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beans), [meat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meat), and [fish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fish) are also chief choices.

Some common Yoruba foods are iyan (pounded yam), [Amala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amala_%28food%29), [eba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eba), semo, [fufu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fufu), [Moin moin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moin_moin) (bean cake) and [akara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akara). [Soups](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soup) include [egusi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egusi), ewedu, [okra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Okra), vegetables are also very common as part of diet. Items like [rice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rice) and [beans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beans) (locally called ewa) are part of the regular diet. Some dishes are also prepared for festivities and ceremonies such as [Jollof rice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jollof_rice) and [Fried rice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fried_rice). Other popular dishes are Ekuru, [stews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stew), corn, cassava and flours – e.g. maize, yam, plantain and beans, [eggs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eggs_%28food%29), [chicken](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicken_%28food%29), [beef](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beef) and assorted forms of meat (pumo is made from cow skin). Some less well known meals and many miscellaneous staples are arrowroot gruel, sweetmeats, fritters and coconut concoctions; and some [breads](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bread) – yeast bread, rock buns, and palm wine bread to name a few.

* Yoruba cultural dishes
* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Amala.jpg)

*Àmàlà* is a brown doughy dish made from Yam and Cassava flour usually eaten with stews, soups and other recipes.

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Akara.jpg)

[*Akara*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acaraj%C3%A9) is a recipe by the Yoruba, which has been adopted by the rest of Nigeria. It is present in the Americas as [*Acarajé*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acaraj%C3%A9)

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Eba_Eforiro_and_asoorted_meat.png)

*Eba*, is a doughy dish made by processing [*Garri*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garri) in hot water, and turning till it becomes a consistent dough (shown combined with other dishes).

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:A_Plate_of_Pounded_Yam_(Iyan)_served_in_Birmingham_UK.JPG)

*Iyan* or pounded yam with mixed vegetables and fish stew

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Moin_Moin.jpg)

Cut [Moin Moin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moin_Moin); "ewe eran" leaves (Thaumatococcus daniellii) are traditionally used to improve flavouring.

**DRESSING AND CLOTHING**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kwarastatedrummers.jpg)

[Yoruba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_music) [drummers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drum), wearing very basic traditional clothing

The Yoruba take immense pride in their attire, for which they are well known. Clothing materials traditionally come from processed cotton by traditional weavers. They believe that the type of clothes worn by a man depicts his personality and social status, and that different occasions require different clothing outfits.

Typically, The Yoruba have a very wide range of materials used to make clothing, the most basic being the [*Aṣo-Oke*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aso_Oke_fabric), which is a hand loomed cloth of different patterns and colors sewn into various styles. and which comes in very many different colors and patterns. Aso Oke comes in three major styles based on pattern and coloration;

* *Alaari* - a rich red Aṣọ-Oke,
* *Sanyan* - a brown and usual light brown Aṣọ-Oke, and
* *Ẹtu* - a dark blue Aṣọ-Oke.

Other clothing materials include but are not limited to:

* *Ofi* - pure white yarned cloths, used as cover cloth, it can be sewn and worn.
* *Aran* - a velvet clothing material of silky texture sewn into Danṣiki and Kẹmbẹ, worn by the rich.
* [*Adirẹ*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adire_%28textile_art%29) - cloth with various patterns and designs, dye in indigo ink (Ẹlu or Aro).

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:African_Lace_VLM_14.jpg)

*Agbada* clothing historically worn by Yoruba men

Clothing in Yoruba culture is gender sensitive, despite a tradition of non-gender conforming families. For menswear, they have *Bùbá, Esiki* and *Sapara*, which are regarded as *Èwù Àwòtélè* or underwear, while they also have *Dandogo, Agbádá, Gbariye, Sulia* and *Oyala*, which are also known as *Èwù Àwòlékè* / *Àwòsókè* or overwear. Some fashionable men may add an accessory to the Agbádá outfit in the form of a wraparound (Ìbora).

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aso_Oniko.jpg)

Finished *Adire* clothing material

They also have various types of *Sòkòtò* or native trousers that are sown alongside the above-mentioned dresses. Some of these are *Kèmbè* (Three-Quarter baggy pants), *Gbáanu*, *Sóóró* (Long slim / streamlined pants), *Káamu* & *Sòkòtò Elemu*. A man's dressing is considered incomplete without a cap (*Fìlà*). Some of these caps include, but are not limited to; *Gobi* (Cylindrical, which when worn may be compressed and shaped forward, sideways, or backward), *Tinko*, *Abetí-ajá* (Crest-like shape which derives its name from its hanging flaps that resembles a dog's hanging ears. The flaps can be lowered to cover the ears in cold weather, otherwise, they are upwardly turned in normal weather), *Alagbaa, Oribi, Bentigoo, Onide*, and *Labankada* (a bigger version of the Abetí-ajá, and is worn in such a way as to reveal the contrasting color of the cloth used as underlay for the flaps).

Women also have different types of dresses. The most commonly worn are *Ìró* (wrapper) and *Bùbá* (blouse-like loose top). Women also have matching *Gèlè* (head gear) that must be put on whenever the Ìró and Bùbá is on. Just as the cap (Fìlà) is important to men, women's dressing is considered incomplete without Gèlè. It may be of plain cloth or costly as the women can afford. Apart from this, they also have *ìborùn* ([Shawl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shawl)) and *Ìpèlé* (which are long pieces of fabric that usually hang on the left shoulder and stretch from the hind of the body to the fore). At times, it is tied round their waists over the original one piece wrapper. Unlike men, women have two types of under wears (Èwù Àwòtélè), called; *Tòbi* and *Sinmí*. Tòbi is like the modern day apron with strings and spaces in which women can keep their valuables. They tie the tòbi around the waists before putting on the Ìró (wrapper). Sinmí is like a sleeveless T-shirt that is worn under before wearing any other dress on the upper body.

There are many types of beads (*Ìlèkè*), hand laces, necklaces (Egba orùn), anklets (Egba esè) and bangles (Egba owó) that are abound in Yoruba land, that both males and females put on for bodily adornment. Chiefs, priests, kings or people of royal descent, especially use some of these beads, often. Some of these beads include *Iyun, Lagidigba, Àkún* etc. An accessory especially popular among royalty and titled [Babalawos / Babalorishas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babalawo) is the *Ìrùkèrè*, which is an artistically processed animal tail, a type of [Fly-whisk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fly-whisk). The horsetail whiskers are symbols of authority and stateliness. It can be used in a shrine for decoration but most often is used by chief priests and priestess as a symbol of their authority or Ashe. As most men go about with their hair lowly cut or neatly shaven every time, the reverse is the case with women. Hair is considered the ' *Glory of the woman* '. They usually take care of their hair in two major ways; They plait and they weave. There are many types of plaiting styles, and women readily pick any type they want. Some of these include *kòlésè, Ìpàkó-elédè, Sùkú, Kojúsóko, Alágogo, Konkoso*, Etc. Traditionally, The Yoruba consider tribal marks ways of adding beauty to the face of individuals. This is apart from the fact that they show clearly from which part of Yorubaland an individual comes from, since different areas are associated with different marks. Different types of [tribal marks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_tribal_marks) are made with local blades or knives on the cheeks. These are usually done at infancy, when children are not pain conscious.[[*medical citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Identifying_reliable_sources_%28medicine%29)] Some of these tribal marks include *Pélé, Abàjà-Ègbá, Abàjà-Òwu, Abàjà-mérin, Kéké, Gòmbò, Ture, Pélé Ifè, Kéké Òwu, Pélé Ìjèbú* etc. This practice has almost faded into oblivion.The Yoruba believe that development of a nation is akin to the development of a man or woman. Therefore, the personality of an individual has to be developed in order to fulfill his or her responsibilities. Clothing among the Yoruba people is a crucial factor upon which the personality of an individual is anchored. This belief is anchored in Yoruba [proverbs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proverb). Different occasions also require different outfits among the Yoruba.

* Yoruba clothing
* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:African_Lace_VLM_31.jpg)

Simple *Iro* & *Buba* with [Gele](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_tie)

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:African_Lace_VLM_02.jpg)

*Agbádá àti Fìlà* from [Iseyin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iseyin), [Oyo State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oyo_State)

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:African_Lace_VLM_04.jpg)

*Iro & Bùbá*, with [*Gele*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_tie) & *Ipele* blouse, wrapper & headgear

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:African_Lace_VLM_34.jpg)

*Bùbá àti Kèmbè* shirt and short baggy pants for men

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:African_Lace_VLM_83.jpg)

Embroidered [Aso Òkè fabric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aso_Oke_fabric) for women

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:African_Lace_VLM_74.jpg)*Agbádá àti Sóró*, Agbada and long slim pants for men

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:African_Lace_VLM_75.jpg)

*Ìró* & *Bùbá* made from African lace material

**BURIAL RITES**

The Yoruba’s belief that death is not the end of life; rather, it is a transition from one form of existence to another. There is a belief in an afterlife that is a continuation of this life, only in a different setting; the afterlife is conditional, depending on the nature of one’s life and the nature of one’s death. This is the meaning of life.

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 grand children 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.)

When the breath has departed from the body there is the usual outburst of exaggerated grief, with loud cries, lamentations, and frenzied gestures, and the eldest son of the deceased, or the brother, (if there be no son) will be call upon. The family will meet with the children of the deceased on how to bury the death, if the deceased is a Muslim, he or she must be buried same day after which the seventh days and fourth day’s prayers will be conducted by the Imam.

In the case of a Christian, the family decides whether to bury immediately or keep the corpse in the mortuary In the meantime a death-feast has been prepared, and now commences, while outside the house a continues beating of drums is sustained, together with frequent discharges of musketry, fired in honour of the deceased. The feast, at which intoxicants are used lavishly, soon becomes a veritable orgia, in which, however, the chief mourners, that is, the widows and daughters of the deceased, take no part; for as soon as they have performed the last offices for the dead, and have placed the corpse at the door, they are restricted to an adjacent apartment, where they are compelled by custom to remain during the three days that a corpse invariably lies in state. While thus immured they are forbidden to wash, and usage requires them to refuse all food, at least for the first twenty-four hours, after which they usually allow themselves to be persuaded to take some nourishment.

The conventional mourning is the business of the women of the household, who, while the men are feasting utter loud lamentations in the room in which they are confined; and, in consequence of this, the epithet isokun, “a mourner,” is often applied to a female child; a male, on the other hand, being sometimes called iwale, “a digger,” i.e., of a grave. A father might thus say that he had begotten two mourners and a digger, meaning, two daughters and a son. Female friends usually come to join in the lamentations, the conventional character of which is while the widows and daughters lament their lonely and unprotected state.

**MARRIAGE**

The Yoruba traditional marriage ceremony, though a serious affair, is full of playfulness, rich contemporary Nigerian music, graceful colors, and sumptuous meals. Weddings are occasions to show best outfits, handbags, jewelry, and even dancing styles.

The traditional wedding is an occasion to alleviate the drudgery of normal life and are greatly anticipated by friends and well wishers.

**The Introduction**

Long before any engagement ceremony takes place, the groom visits the family of the bride in the company of his father and some family members. The occasion is an informal introduction without fanfare but has a cordial atmosphere so they can get to know one another.

The informal introduction does not require much preparation, except for offering some tubers of yam and a few bottles of wine. The family of the bride is purview to the visit and hosts the visitors with a simple meal of rice and mineral water. Apart from the introductions, the group might discuss when the event would take place. This is not a hard and fast rule, and such discussions might take place later.

**Invitations and Venue**

After the date is set, the bride and groom choose an invitation card that appeals to both families. Details included on the card include the date of the wedding, the venue or venues, the name of bride and groom, RSVP information, and, most importantly, the color code for the day. The bride’s family may choose a different color code from the groom’s family and friends so that on the marriage day each family is represented by a color.

The couple may select their own venue or the bride’s family may choose. One interesting thing about choosing a venue is that it is usually a compromise between both families. Even the meals served on the occasion are agreed upon by both parties. Sometimes the more financially capable family contributes a larger portion, but traditional wedding parties are a combined effort by both families.

**Traditional Clothing**

The bride's outfit is a reflection of what the female guests will wear. She might choose damask, lace, Nigerian wax fabric, or any fabric that appeals to her. The outfit consists of gale which is the head tie, the buba tank top, and an IRO, which is a large, ankle-length piece of material tied round her waist.

The colors she chooses reflects the color theme her family has chosen but should also complement the groom's outfit and look identical. She can wear accessories like gold chains, beads, bangles, gold earrings, and shoes to match. Her face would have gone through a beauty regime with professional makeup artists, hair stylists, and color coordinators.

The groom could decide to wear an Agbada, which is a two-layered piece of material of heavy dimensions like the aso oke. It might be cotton and damask or he might wear lace, wax fabric (Ankara). The color combination should complement the bride's and reflect the color his family has chosen.

**The Engagement Ceremony**

The traditional engagement is carried out by a contracted professional called the Alaga ijoko which translates to traditional master of ceremony. This person could be a member of the bride’s family or a complete stranger. The Alaga Ijoko is always a woman. Her duty is to properly officiate and coordinate the proceedings so that each provision of tradition is strictly adhered too.

There are different stages she coordinates. Each stage might involve collecting cash which the Alaga keeps. The groom and his friends are formally introduced to the bride's family. This involves bowing to the family and formally requesting their daughters hand in marriage.

The groom’s people also hire a professional called the Alaga iduro, which means a master of ceremony who follows the groom and family to beg for the hand of their daughter. The Alaga iduro is also a professional custodian of Yoruba wedding tradition. She could be a family member or hired for the occasion.

Other festivities include the letter reading, which is read by a young lady from the groom’s family and which also asks for the bride's hand. The bride's family also responds with a letter of their own.

The engagement is an integral part of the traditional marriage. As the ceremony proceeds, items listed for the engagement are presented. The items vary slightly in each Yoruba traditional wedding, but the general articles are the same.

* A bag of sugar
* A bag of rice
* Alligator pepper
* A large number of bitter kola
* A bag of salt
* Kola nut
* If Christian, a bible
* A keg of honey
* About forty large tubers of yam

Non edible items could include expensive materials like lace, several pairs of shoes, a wristwatch, a gold engagement ring, and a head tie.

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