The Yoruba people live in Southwest Nigeria and Benin. They have developed a variety of different artistic forms including pottery, weaving, beadwork, metalwork, and mask making. Most artwork is made to honor the gods and ancestors and since there are more than 401 known gods to the Yoruba there is much sculpture and artwork made. Because of the vastness in the number of gods, the Yoruba have been compared to the ancient Greeks in the amount of gods and in the similarities between the structures of the gods.

The Yoruba have started to become quite popular among Africans all over the world who claim the Yoruba as their family roots and follow the religion and culture of the Yoruba. Many claim that they are part of the Diaspora of the Yoruba as slaves.

The Yoruba originated from a people known as the Oyo who arose and became quite popular by their trading with the Portugues which gave them a large supply of guns. However, they were unable to push back the Fulani who invaded them and pushed much of the Yoruba to the south. In the late 1800’s the Yoruba formed a treaty with the Fulani and in 1901 they were colonized by the British. Because of their enmity with the Fulani who are the great Islam evangelists most of the Yoruba do not hold to Islam but instead worship many of the gods and spirits that the Yoruba hold to. Economically the Yoruba primarily engage in agriculture, with about 15% of the people employed as merchants or artists and craftsman.

One of the features that make the Yoruba unique is their tendency to form into large city groups instead of small village groups. Most of the large cities of Nigeria and Benin are inhabited almost solely by Yoruba.

Yoruba people (Yo•roo•ba) (Yorùbá in Yoruba orthography) are one of the largest ethno-linguistic or ethnic groups in west Africa. The majority of the Yoruba speak the Yoruba language (Yoruba: èdè Yorùbá; èdè). The Yoruba are found predominantly in Nigeria, constituting approximately 21 percent of its total population, and around 30 million individuals throughout West Africa.

As well as having access to the sea, they share borders with the Borgu (variously called Bariba and Borgawa) in the northwest, the Nupe (who they often call, ‘Tapas’) and Ebira in the north, the Edo who are also known as Bini or Benin people (unrelated to the people of the 'Republic of Benin'), and the Èsan and Afemai to the southeast. The Igala and other related groups are found in the northeast, and the Egun, Fon, and other Gbe-speaking peoples in the southwest. While the majority of the Yoruba live in western Nigeria, there are also substantial indigenous Yoruba communities in the Republic of Benin, Ghana and Togo.
**Borgu** was a country in Africa, partitioned between the Great Britain and France by the Anglo-French Convention of 1898. It lies in what is now Nigeria and the Republic of Benin.

**General history**

Ife bronze casting of a king's head currently in the British Museum.

The African peoples who lived in the lower western Niger area, at least by the 4th century BC, were not initially known as the Yoruba, although they shared a common ethnicity and language group. Both archeology and traditional Yoruba oral historians confirm the existence of people in this region for several millennia.

Some contemporary historians contend that some Yoruba are not indigenous to Yorubaland, but are descendants of immigrants to the region. It is believed that an important man called Oduduwa, (also known as Odudua, Odua or Eleduwa), who many believe to have arrived from an easterly direction, established a kingdom at 'Ile Ife' (also known as
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Ife) and thus became the first 'oba' (meaning king or ruler in the Yoruba language) of who today are known as the Yoruba people.

Further information: Oduduwa

Between 1100 AD and 1700 AD, the Yoruba Kingdom of Ife experienced a golden age, the oba or ruler of Ife is referred to as the Ooni of Ife.\[^{10}\] It was then surpassed by the Yoruba Oyo Empire as the dominant Yoruba military and political power between 1700 AD and 1900 AD,\[^{11}\] the (oba) or ruler of Oyo is referred to as the Alaafin of Oyo. Ife, however, remained and continues to be viewed as the spiritual homeland of the Yoruba. The nearby Benin Empire, with its capital in the modern day Benin City in modern day Nigeria was also a powerful force between 1300 and 1850 AD, the ruler of Benin City is referred to as the Oba of Benin.

Most of the city states were controlled by Obas (rulers) with various titles and councils made up of Oloye, guild of noble leaders or chiefs, and merchants. Different states saw differing ratios of power between the kingship and the chiefs' council. 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 Oba, referred to as the Awujale of Ijebuland was more limited.

Cosmogonic origin mythology

"Orisa'nla" (The Great Divinity) also known as Ṭbatala was the arch-divinity chosen by Olodumare, the supreme deity, to create solid land out of the primordial water that constituted the earth and populating the land with human beings.\[^{13}\] Ṭbatala descended from heaven on a chain, carrying a small snail shell full of earth, palm kernels and a five-toed chicken. He was to empty the content of the snail shell on the water after placing some pieces of iron on it, and then to place the chicken on the earth to spread it over the primordial water.

Recently, historians have attributed this cosmological mythology to a pre-existing civilization at Ilé-Ifẹ which was invaded by a militant immigrants from the east, led by a king named Oduduwa. Oduduwa and his group had been persecuted on the basis of religious differences and forced out of their homeland. They came to Ilé-Ifẹ where they subjugated the pre-existing Ugbo inhabitants (often erroneously rendered as Igbo but unrelated to the present Igbo people), under the leadership of Oreluere (Ṭbatala).

After Oduduwa
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Upon the death of Oduduwa, there was a dispersal of his children from Ilẹ-Ifẹ to found other kingdoms (Owu, Ketu, Benin, Ila, Sabe, Popo, and Oyo). Each made a mark in the subsequent urbanization and consolidation of Yoruba confederacy of kingdoms, with each kingdom tracing its origin to Ile-Ife.

Pre-colonial Yoruba society

**Government**

![Map of Africa and Nigeria](image)

**Oyo Empire and surrounding states.**

Monarchies were a common form of government in the Yoruba-speaking region, but they were not the only approach to government and social organization. The numerous Ijebu city-states to the west of Oyo and the Ẹgba communities, found in the forests below Ọya's savanna region, were notable exceptions. These independent polities often elected an Ọba, though real political, legislative, and judicial powers resided with the Ogboni, a council of notable elders.

During the internecine wars of the 19th century, the Ijebu forced citizens of more than 150 Ẹgba and Owu communities to migrate to the fortified city of Abeokuta, where each quarter retained its own Ogboni council of civilian leaders, along with an Olorogun, or council of military leaders, and in some cases its own elected Obas or Baales. These independent councils then elected their most capable members to join a federal civilian and military council that represented the city as a whole.

**Foreign observation**

Commander Frederick Forbes, a representative of the British Crown writing an account of his visit to the city in an 1853 edition of the *Church Military Intelligence*, described Abẹokuta as having "four presidents", and the system of government as having "840 principal rulers or 'House of Lords,' 2800 secondary chiefs or 'House of Commons,' 140 principal military ones and 280 secondary ones." He described Abẹokuta and its system of government as "the most extraordinary republic in the world."
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Leadership

Gerontocratic leadership councils that guarded against the monopolization of power by a monarch were a proverbial trait of the Egbà, according to the eminent Oyo historian Reverend Samuel Johnson, but such councils were also well-developed among the northern Okun groups, the eastern Ekìtì, and other groups falling under the Yoruba ethnic umbrella.

Even in Oyo, the most centralized of the precolonial kingdoms, the Alaafìn consulted on all political decisions with a prime minister (the Basọrun) and the council of leading nobles known as the Oyo Mesi.

City states

The monarchy of any city state was usually limited to a number of royal lineages. A family could be excluded from kingship and chieftancy if any family member, servant, or slave belonging to the family committed a crime such as theft, fraud, murder or rape.

In other city-states, the monarchy was open to the election of any free-born male citizen. There are also, in Ilesa, Ondo, and other Yoruba communities, several traditions of female Òbas, though these were comparatively rare.

The kings were traditionally almost always polygamous and often married royal family members from other domains.

City of Ibadan

Ibadan, a city-state and proto-empire founded in the 18th century by a polyglot group of refugees, soldiers, and itinerant traders from Oyo and the other Yoruba sub-groups, largely dispensed with the concept of monarchism, preferring to elect both military and civil councils from a pool of eminent citizens. The city became a military republic, with distinguished soldiers wielding political powers through their election by popular acclaim and the respect of their peers. Similar practices were adopted by the Ìjesa and other groups, which saw a corresponding rise in the social influence of military adventurers and successful entrepreneurs.

Groups, organisations and leagues in Yorubaland

Occupational guilds, social clubs, secret or initiatory societies, and religious units, commonly known as Ègbë in Yoruba, included the Parakoyì (or league of traders) and Ègbë Òdè (hunter’s guild), and maintained an important role in commerce, social control, and vocational education in Yoruba polities.

There are also examples of other peer organizations in the region. When the Ègba resisted the imperial domination of the Oyo Empire, a figure named Lisabi is credited with either creating or reviving a covert traditional organization named Ègbë Aro. This group, originally a farmers’ union, was converted to a network of secret militias throughout the Ègba forests, and each lodge plotted to overthrow Oyo’s Ajeles (appointed administrators) in the late 1700s.

Similarly, covert military resistance leagues like the Ekitì Parapọ and the Ogidi alliance were organized during the 19th century wars by often-decentralized communities of the Ekìtì, Ìjesa, Ìgbómìnà and Okùn Yoruba in order to resist various imperial expansionist plans of Ibadan, Nupe, and the Sokoto Caliphate.

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The Yorùbá religion comprises religious beliefs and practices of the Yoruba people of old before the Yoruba community encountered Islam, Christianity and other faiths. It originated from Africa (chiefly in Nigeria and Benin Republic), and in the New World, where it has influenced or given birth to several Afro-American religions such as Santería in Cuba and Umbanda and Candomblé in Brazil in addition to the transplantation of the homeland religions. Though specific numbers are unknown, it is possibly the largest African-born religion in the world. Though claims are made for an ultimately Egyptian/African origin to Judaism, Judaism was finalized as the religion of the Hebrew people of the Levant. Christianity and Islam also have long histories in Africa, but neither of those can claim to be African in origin in their present state like the undoubtedly African religion of the Yoruba. While much of Africa has increasingly adopted foreign religions, many indigenous faiths remain. The lack of proselytizing or establishing written "rule books" prevents these religions from spreading as much as Islam or Christianity. Regardless, they survive, both in Africa and the Western Hemisphere.

Yoruba religious beliefs are part of itan — the complex of songs, histories, stories and other cultural concepts which make up the Yorùbá religion and society.

The philosophy of Yorùbá (also known as Irunmole, Ifa, Orisha or Aborisha) is that all humans have Ayanmo (manifest destiny) to become one in spirit with Olódùmarè (Olòrún, the divine creator and source of all energy). Each person in Ayé (the physical realm) uses thought or action energies to impact the community of all other living things including the Earth, and so to move towards destiny. As such, one's destiny is in one's hands. To attain transcendence and destiny in Òrún-Réré (spiritual realm of those who do good and beneficial things), one's Orí-Inu (spiritual consciousness in the physical realm) must be elevated to unify with one's Iponri (Orí Òrún). Those who stop improving are destined for Òrún-Apadi (spiritual realm of the forsaken). Life and death are cycles of habitation in physical body and spiritual realms while one's spirit evolves toward transcendence. This evolution is most advanced in Irúnmomọ (oní irun, of the unique hair that distinguishes humans from beasts; imo, enlightened of destiny, ilẹ on the land)

For most people, iwapele (balanced culture), meditation and sincere veneration sufficiently strengthen one's Orí-Inu. One is able to gbadúra (pray) for support of the Egungun (one's elevated ancestors) or the Orí-Òrún for application of the Odu (knowledge of all ages) to one's benefit. Those with strong motivation to manipulate destiny may consult Orunmila through Ifá (divination sciences) and ẹbò (offering). In invoking the Orunmila so directly, care is required to ensure alignment of thought and action. The Orunmila brings into motion either Orí/uni (benevolent or angelic forces) or Ajẹ (malevolent or demonic forces). All communication with the Òrún is energized by invoking Âsẹ (the essence of Olódùmarè that gives life to all). Âsẹ is delivered by Ògìlégbara (Eṣu, the divine messenger) who, without distortion or partiality for good or for bad, negotiates communication to the Òrún and navigates Òrún forces to the Ayé.

Yorùbá Orishas, literally, owners of heads, are the means to get into contact with the supernatural. The term is often translated as deities

An Orisha (also spelled Orisa or Orixá) is a spirit or deity that reflects one of the manifestations of Olodumare (God) in the Yoruba spiritual or religious system (Olodumare is also known by various other names including Olorun, Eledumare, Eleda and Olofin-Orun). This religion has found its way throughout the world and is now expressed in several varieties which include Anago, Oyotunji, Candomblé, Lucumi/Santeria, and the Orisa religion of Trinidad, as well as some aspects of Umbanda, Winti, Obeah, Vodun and Vodou as well as many others. These varieties or spiritual lineages as they are called are practiced throughout areas of Nigeria, the Republic of Benin, Togo, Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, and Venezuela among others. As interest in
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African indigenous religions (spiritual systems) grows, Orisha communities and lineages can be found in parts of Europe and Asia as well. While estimates vary, there could be more than 100 million adherents of this spiritual tradition worldwide.

Olodumare

Olodumare is perhaps the most important divinity. Olodumare is so important, that there can be no gender assigned to this God, for Olodumare is seen mostly as a spirit. Olodumare is therefore more correctly referred to as an IT. IT is the owner of all heads, for during human creation, Olodumare gave the emi, or breath of life to humans. To the Yorubas, Olodumare is seen as their god. If there was a conflict among the other Orishas IT would take over and the fight would end.

Irunmole

The irunmole were spirits sent by Olodumare to complete various tasks, often between Orun (the invisible realm) and Aiye (the physical realm). Some were acknowledged as Orisha for their accomplishments. The orishas help to create and maintain order on earth.

"Everything wrote are okay but Orisa is different from Irunmole. Human beings can become Orisa if they performed extra ordinary tasks in the world before they are gone to heaven. Examples are Nelson Mandela, Bill Gates, Murtala Mohammed of Nigeria, Martin Luther, Jesus, Mohammed, Barack Obama, etc. But Irunmole are numbered, they are not more than 401. The number cannot increase. They are the ones Olodumare (Supreme Being) gave the rights to care for the earth before the human beings came to the world. And they also thought us how to live life as we are living today. We are worshipping God through them. We are not worshipping Orisas, they are human beings like us. In Yoruba belief, human being cannot be worshiped but they can be honored. We are honoring Orisas and our Ancestors. The number of Orisas would continue to be increasing as the world is existing. There is no English word for Irunmole, better to leave it as Irunmole, the servants of Olodumare, God, the Supreme being. - by Prince (Babalawo)Adigun Olosun MA MA PGDJ PGCR. (www.yorubareligion.org)

Egun

The egun are ancestral spirits who made transition, but are still placated to assist and guide one throughout life.

Egun is a part of the Yoruba pantheon of divinities. The Yoruba religious system is sometimes referred to as the 'Yoruba Religion' or simply 'Orisa Worship'. In the tradition of Orisa and ancestor worship, the Egungun represents the "collective spirit" of the ancestors. Ancestor worship or reverence is everywhere in traditional Africa. Egungun is a part of this worship.

Ancestors assure a place for the dead among the living. It is their responsibility to compel the living to uphold the ethical standards of past generations. Egungun is celebrated in festivals (Odun Egungun) and family ritual through the masquerade or custom. In family situations a family elder or Alagba presides over ancestral rites and may or may not be initiated into the local Egungun society. But in community settings, Egungun priests and initiates that are trained in ancestral communication, ancestral elevation work and funeral rites are placed in charge of invoking and bringing out the ancestors. Elaborate costumes adorn the Egungun masqueraders (dancers), and through drumming and dance, these dancers become possessed with the spirits of the ancestors. The Egungun then spiritually clean the community and
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through exaggerated acting/miming demonstrate both ethical and amoral behavior that occurred since their last visit, exposing the strengths and weaknesses of a community with hopes of encouraging behavior more befitting of their descendants. Once this occurs messages, warnings and blessings are doled out to spectators. Some important Egungun include the Elewe of the Ìgbómìnà Yoruba sub-ethnics, which is common in the towns of Òkè-Ìlá Òràngún, Ìlá Òràngún, and Arandun.

In Brazil, the main cult to the Egungun is practised in the Island of Itaparica in the State of Bahia but houses in other States exist.

Other concepts

Ifá dafa as well as merindinlogun or (cowrie shell divination) are important element of Yorùbá religious practices.

In traditional Yoruba culture, Ifá refers to a system of divination and the verses of the literary corpus known as the Odú Ifá presented in the course of divination. Orunmila is the deity associated with Ifa divination. In some instances, the name Orunmila is used interchangeably with the word Ifa. Orunmila brought Ifa divination to the world.

(It should be noted that this article sometimes uses the word "Yoruba" to refer to the system of traditional spiritual belief and practices, as well as modern day practitioners. This should in no way be confused with the Yoruba people that primarily live in the southwestern region of Nigeria. Not all Yoruba people practice this traditional spiritual system, although the tradition primarily originates from their culture, history, and beliefs. The best descriptor would be "Ifa/Orisha tradition.")
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Ifá originated in West Africa among the Yoruba ethnic groups. It is also practiced among believers in Lucumi, (sometimes referred to as Santería), Candomblé, West African & Diaspora Vodou, and similarly transplanted Orisa’Ifa lineages in the New World. In Togo, it is known as Afa, where the Vodou deities come through and speak. In many of their Egbes, it is Alaundje who is honored as the first Bokono to have been taught how to divine the destiny of humans using the holy system of Afa. The Ifa Divination system was added in 2005 by UNESCO to its list of "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity".

The Yoruba divination system enabled diviners to invoke the word of God through the teachings of Orunmila, the Yoruba deity of wisdom, prophecy and ethics. Esu (Eshu), who is in charge of spiritual justice, as well as the god directly in charge of transportation of ebos, lends his authority or ase to the oracle for the purpose of clarifying the issues at hand and providing direction to those seeking guidance. Ifa divination rites provide an avenue of communication between the spirit world and that of the living.

Performing Ifa divination is called idafa (or dida owo and ounte ale). Idafa is performed by a Babalawo or Iyanifa (an initiated priest). Babalawo can be translated as "father of the secrets". The babalawo provides insights about the current circumstances impacting the life of a person requesting this information and provides any necessary information to aid the individual. Awo is a reference for devotees in Orisa worship. It includes Babalawos, Babalorishas, Iyalorishas and even uninitiated devotees.

Initiation into Ifa requires rigorous study. An aspiring Babalawo must learn AT LEAST four verses from each of the 256 chapters (Odu) of Ifa. The minimum of four verses will of necessity include ebos and ooguns (medicine) that are embedded and relevant to each of the verses, plus other issues that complement divination. An accomplished Babalawo must know about ten verses of each of the 256 chapters of Ifa (256 Odu Ifa). Regardless of gender, whoever aspires to practice Ifa must have this qualification. In essence, Ifa practice does not preclude a woman provided such woman acquires the required qualification. Odu—a special Orisa—can only be received by a Babalawo who decides to perform the special initiation that will allow him access to Odu. In essence, initiation into Ifa is the first step into initiation into Odu. A woman cannot be initiated into Odu. Character Traits of a Babalawo: Orunmila demands humility from his priests, therefore, a Babalawo should be an embodiment patience, good character, honesty, and humility. Apetebi is the term for a Babalawo’s wife. No initiation is required for apetebi title because it comes with being married to a Babalawo. Iyanifa is a title and not the opposite term of Babalawo.
Special instruments are used to assist in the divination to transcribe Orunmila's wisdom through the diviner. The items used for divination include:

- a group of sixteen Ikin, commonly known as palm nuts, which are used to create binary data
- Dust from the Irosun tree (Iyerosun)
- a vessel for the seeds (Ajere Ifa)
- a divination tray (opon Ifa).
- a tapper instrument (iroke Ifa)
- a fly whisk (Irukere Ifa)
- beaded belts for the babalawo to wear (this is not required)
  - another form of divination is with the Opele, though Ikin is considered superior

The (opon Ifa) or tray and (iroke Ifa) or tapper are used in Ifa divination, a central ritual within Ifa tradition. This tray, adorned with carved images and dusted with powder, serves as the template on which sacred signs (odu) related to the personal concerns of a diviner's client are traced as the point of departure for analysis. In contrast to those transitory signs, the more permanent backdrop of the carved motifs on the tapper and tray constitutes an artistic exegesis of the forces that shape human experience and the universal needs fulfilled by such quests for enlightenment.

To initiate the ritual, the babalawo places the tray in front of him and taps rhythmically on it with the pointed end of the tapper, invoking the presence of Orunmila, past diviners, and other Orisa.

There are a variety of palm nuts that are available, but only specific kinds may be used for Ifa divination and must have at least 3 "eyes" or more. The palm nuts are grouped in one hand, then the diviner attempts to shift them all to his/her other hand at once, and counts the remaining Ikin left, hopefully to discover that either one or two remain. (Odu, which are the foundation of the binary data, can only be marked with either one or two palm nuts, remaining in the diviner's original hand. As this process goes on, the diviner marks single or double marks in wood powder spread on his divination tray until he or she has created one of the 256 odu that are available.

Each of these odu is associated with a traditional set of Ese (verses), often relating to Yoruba mythology, which explain their divinatory meaning. These verses represent thousands of years of observation and are filled with predictions, and both mundane and spiritual prescriptions that resolve issues found in that Odu. Within Ifa, Believers find all the knowledge of the world past present and future.
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After obtaining the Odu that governs a situation or event, the diviner then determines whether the Odu comes with Ire (which is poorly translated to mean good luck) or Ibi (which could be viewed as obstacles or impediments to success). After this process the diviner now determined appropriate offerings, spiritual disciplines and/or behavioral changes necessary to bring, keep or compel success for the person receiving divinatory counsel.

Eledua

Another manifestation of the Yoruba belief in reincarnation is the belief in the *emere*.

Àjòdún / Festivals

This schedule is illustrative for 10050 year (2008 A.D.) Note the actual dates may vary.

Șèrè / January

Erele / February

Olokún = Oríṣà of Okún, the deep seas or oceans, patron of sailors, and guardian of souls lost at sea Erele/Feb 21-25

Èrèna / March

Annual rites of passage for men Èrèna/March 12 – 28

Odudua (odudu, the dark pigment; ni ewa, is the beauty) / Iyaagbe (iya, mother; agbe, who receives) = Oríṣà of Earth and matron of the Ayé. Odudua endows the ebony dark skin pigment that accords greatest gifts of spirituality, beauty and intellect to the bearer. The essence of procreative love. Èrèna/March 15 – 19

Oshosí = Oríṣà of Adventure and the hunt Èrèna/March 21 – 24:

Igbe / April

Ogun = Oríṣà of the metal and war crafts, and engineering. The custodian of truth and executioner of justice, as such patron of the legal and counselling professions who must swear to uphold truth while biting on a piece of metal. Igbe

Oshun = Oríṣà of Fertility and custodian of the female essence. who guides pregnancies to term. Igbe starts last Saturday of April, for 5 days-

Onset of wet season (Spring)

Ebibi / May

Egungun (Commemoration of the Ancestors, including community founders and illustrious dead. Èbíbí: starts last Saturday of May, for 7 days

Okudu / June

Yoruba New Year Okudu 03: Onset of the Yoruba New Year (2008 is the 10,050th year of Yoruba culture)

Shopona (Oríṣà of Disease, shopona, small pox is a virual disease) and Osanyin (Oríṣà of Medicine and patron of the healing professions: osan, afternoon; yin, healing) Okudu 7 - 8

Annual rites of passage for women Okudu 10 - 23
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Yemoja = matriarch of the Òrún-Rere). Oduduwa gave birth to a boy Aganju (Land) and Yemoja (Water) from marriage to Òbàtala. Yemoja in turn birthed many other Oriṣà. The old Ile-Ife kingdom arose on her burial site. Okudu 18 - 21

Agêmo / July

Ọ̀rùnmìlà / Ifá = Oriṣà of Divination and founder of the Ifá sciences, whose divination is with 16 palm nuts. Mass gathering of the yoruba Agêmo: first and second weeks in July

Oko (Agriculture) Harvesting of the new Yam crop.

Èlègba-Bara (Èlègba, one who has power to seize) / Èṣù (shu, to release eject from; ara, the body) = Oriṣà of male essence and Power, who is the great Communicator and messenger of the will of Olódùmarè. No woman should bara (bara, to rub with, have intercourse with) a man who has not done Ikola (circumcision: ike, cutting; ola, that saves) in sacrifice to Èlègba. Agêmo second weekend of July

Ṣàŋgo (shan, to strike:/ Jakuta:ja, fight; pẹlu okuta, with stones. The Oriṣà of Energy – Ara (Thunder) and Manamana, make fire (Lightening) whose divination is with 16 cowries and whose messenger and water-bearer is Oshumare (the Rainbow). Agêmo: third week of July

Ogun / August

Ọ̀bàtálá = (Obà,to possess; ti ala, of visions or Oriṣà-nla, the principal Oriṣà). Patriarch of Òrún-Rere, the heaven of goodly spirits and beneficial ancestors. As Olódùmarè is too powerful and busy to be pre-occupied by the affairs of any one living being. Òbàtálá functions as the principal emissary of Olódùmarè on Aye, and is the custodian of Yoruba culture. The aso-ala (white cloth) worn by Ọ̀bàtálá initiates is to signify need to be pure in intent and action: A recurring punishment for social misfits was to try to keep white cloth clean in Africa's tropical and dusty climate. The misappropriation of aso-ala connection to Ọ̀bàtálá was/is a major weapon against the Yoruba in their psychological resistance of foreign invasion, as Christian and Islamic converts were/are indoctrinated that anything considered 'white' is pure: a notion that has also become a key tenet of racialist supremacy Ogun: last weekend of August

Òwéré / September

Ọ̀waro / October

Ọya (Oriṣà of the odo Oya (river Niger) whose messenger is Afefe (the Wind), and guardian of gateway between the physical realm (Aye) and the spiritual realm (Ọ̀rùn). Ọwaro

Oṣun (Oriṣa of the odo Oṣùn and patron of the (sovereign) Ijebu nation Ọwaro third weekend of October

Onset of the dry season (Autumn)

Shigidi (Oriṣà of Òrùn-Apadi, the realm of the unsettled spirits and the ghosts of the dead that have left Aye and are forsaken of Òrún-Rere. Custodian of nightmares and patron of assassins. Solemn candlelight to guide the unsettled away from your residence, else they settle in your dolls or other toys. Ọwaro 30 World Slavery Day?

Bèlu / November

Ọ̀pè / December

Obajulaiye (Oriṣà of Ọ̀wò (Commerce) and owo (wealth). Ọ̀pè 15

Onset of the second dry season (winter solstice)
Reincarnation

The Yoruba believe in reincarnation, similar to the Indian dharma and karma. They sometimes name children Babatunde ("Father returns") and Yetunde ("Mother returns") to signal this belief.

Twins in Yoruba society

The Yoruba have the highest ratio of twin births compared to single births in the world. Twins are very important for the Yoruba and they are often known for tending 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'), this is often shortened to Taiwo, Taiye or Taye. Kehinde, (sometimes shortened to Kenny), is the name of the last born twin. Kehinde (or Kenny) is sometimes also referred to as Kehindegbegbon which is short for Omokehindegbegbon and means, 'the child that came last gets the eldest'. The reason for this is because the Yoruba traditionally say that Kehinde, is the true eldest of the twins despite being the last to be born. It is said that in the womb at the time of birth, Kehinde sends Taiyewo on an errand to check whether the outside world is good or not, and in Yoruba culture sending someone on an errand tends to be a prerogative of one's elders. However, the first born twin is also sometimes referred to as Taiyelolu or Tayelolu which is short for Omotaiyelolu and means, 'the child that came to taste life excels.'

Religion in the New World

Many ethnic Yoruba were taken as slaves to Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Venezuela and the rest of the New World (chiefly in the 19th century, after the Oyo empire collapsed and the region plunged into civil war), and carried their religious beliefs with them. These concepts were combined with preexisting African-based cults, Christianity, Native American mythology, and Kardecist Spiritism into various New World lineages:

Santería (Cuba)
Oyotunji (U.S.)
Candomblé (Brazil)
Umbanda (Brazil)
Batuque (Brazil)
Lukumí (Cuba)

The popularly known Vodou religion of Haiti was founded by slaves from a different ethnic group (the Gba speaking peoples of modern day Benin, Togo and Ghana), but shares many elements with the Yoruba-derived religions above. in addition, author Ed Morales has claimed that Yoruba religious beliefs and traditions played a part in early American blues music, citing blues guitarist Robert Johnson's Cross Road Blues as a "thinly veiled reference to Eleggua, the orisha in charge of the crossroads."

Yoruba Mythology (sample)
Olokun, the sea god of the Yoruba people, lives in a palace under the sea, with human and fish attendants. His name means "owner of the sea". Once, Olokun challenged the sky god, Olorun. The winner would be the god with the finest clothes.

The people would decide the winner. Olorun sent his attendant, Chameleon to compete with Olokun. Chameleon matched whatever Olokun wore. Olokun finally gave up the challenge, and Olorun was declared the winner.

Shango was the forth king of the ancient Oyo Empire, the West African center of culture and politics for the Yoruba people. The Oyo Empire thrived from the fifteenth century until 1835. Today, there are about 30 million Yoruba people in West Africa, most in Nigeria.

Shango was a powerful king, but some of the people in the Oyo Empire thought he was unfair. When two of his ministers challenged him for the throne, Shango fled into the forest. He wandered in the forest for a long time and eventually hung himself from a tree.
THE YORUBA PEOPLE

After Shango died, his enemies' houses were set on fire, probably by Shango's friends. But some people believed Shango had gone up into the heavens and was sending fire down to Earth. That's how Shango became known as the god of thunder and lightning.

As the god of thunder and lightning, Shango has some powerful energy. In artwork he is often depicted with a double ax on his head, the symbol of a thunderbolt, or he is depicted as a fierce ram. Shango's thunderous energy became a symbol of the resistance of the Yoruba people during the 19th Century when many Yoruba people were taken from Africa to the Americas as slaves.

Olorun

Olorun, whose name means "owner" is the sky-god of the Yoruba people. He is also known as Olodumare (Almighty). According to the Yoruba people, Olorun created the world and mankind.

At one time the Earth was very watery. Olorun had a snail shell, a hen, a pigeon, and some earth. Olorun threw the earth in one small point of the Earth and put on it the hen and pigeon. The two animals spread the Earth and created solid ground.

Mawu

Mawu is the supreme god of the Fon people of Abomey (Republic of Benin). Mawu, the Moon, brings cooler temperatures to the African world. She is seen as an old mother who lives in the West.

Mawu has a partner called Liza. Together, they created the world. Their son, Gu, is the smith god, or divine tool. They used him to shape the universe. The serpent Da, also helped them during creation.

Mawu was the goddess of night, joy, and motherhood. Liza was the god of day, heat and strength.

Liza

Liza was the Sun god to the Fon people of West Africa. His sister was the Moon god Mawu. The two were twins, but were also lovers. Together, they created the Universe with the help of the cosmic serpent, Da.

It is said that Liza used his son, Gu to shape the world. Gu was the divine tool in the shape of an iron sword. He taught the people many different crafts, including ironworking.

Liza was also the god of heat, work and strength. Mawu was the goddess of night and motherhood.

Reading List: