Yorùbáland

Yorubaland

Ìlẹ-Yorùbá

Southwestern Nigeria, Southern and Central Benin and Central Togo

— Cultural region —

Yorubaland (green) indicated within Nigeria, Benin and Togo.

Part of

Nigeria

Benin  Togo

Seat

Ile-Ife

Composed of

List[show]

Time zone

WAT (UTC+1)
Yorubaland, or Yorùbáland (Yoruba: Ìlẹ-Yorùbá), is a cultural region in Nigeria, Benin, and Togo that includes the indigenous territory and cultural reach of the Yoruba people.

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History
Oduduwa is regarded as the legendary progenitor of the Yoruba. There are two versions of the story of how he achieved this feat.

The Creation Theory

This version also has two variants:

(A) A certain number of divinities were to accomplish the task of helping earth develop its crust. On one of these visits the Arch divinity (Obatala) took to the stage equipped with a mollusk that held in its shell some form of soil; two winged beasts and some cloth like material. In this, the soil was emptied on a flat marshy area and soon after, the winged-beasts began to scatter this
around until the point where it gradually made into a patch of dry land; the bigger piles became hills and the smaller piles valleys.

The Arch divinity leaped on to a high-ground and named the place Ife. The land became fertile and plant life began to flourish. From handfuls of earth the Arch divinity began to mould figurines, gathering the gasses from outer space Olódùmarè sparked an explosion that shaped into a fireball, the destination of which was set for Ife, where it dried much of the lands and simultaneously began to bake the motionless figurines. It was at this point that Olódùmarè released the "breath of life" to blow across the land, and the figurines slowly came into "being" as the first people of Ife.

(B) This variant of the theory does not credit the Arch divinity with the completion of the task. Referring similarly that the Arch divinity was given "the task", it goes on to suggest that the Arch divinity became intoxicated even before he got to the earth and as such was unable to accomplish the task. Olodumare then sent Oduduwa to find out what was going on. When Oduduwa found the Arch divinity in a tipsy state, he simply took over and completed the tasks. The place which he leaped onto from the heavens and which he redeemed from water to become land is called Ile-Ife and is now considered the sacred and spiritual home of the Yoruba. The Arch divinity was embarrassed when he woke up and, due to this experience, he made it a taboo for any of his devotees to drink palm wine. Olodumare forgave him and gave him the responsibility of molding the physical bodies of human beings. The making of land is a symbolic reference to the founding of the Yoruba kingdoms, and this is why Oduduwa is credited with that achievement.¹
The Statesman Theory

According to this version, there existed a civilization at Ile-Ife prior to the arrival of Oduduwa (unlike the others, this Oduduwa was a Yoruba emissary); said to have come from the east, sometimes understood by some sources as the "vicinity" true East on the Cardinal points, but more likely signifying the region of Ekiti and Okun sub-communities in Yorubaland, Nigeria.\[2\]

Pre-Civil War

Between 1100 CE and 1700 CE, the Yoruba Kingdom of Ife experienced a golden age. It was then surpassed by the Oyo Empire as the dominant Yoruba military and political power between 1700 CE and 1900 CE. The nearby splinter Yoruba kingdom of Benin was also a powerful force between 1300 and 1850 CE.

Yoruba people are said to feel a deep sense of culture and tradition that unifies and helps identify them. There are 16 established kingdoms that are said to have been descendants of the Oduduwa. There are countless sub-kingdoms and territories that are branches of the original 16 kingdoms.

There are various groups and subgroups in Yorubaland because of the fact that there are many distinct dialects of Yoruba. The government of this diverse people is quite intricate and each group and subgroup vary, but in general government begins at home within your immediate family. The next level is the clan, or extended family with its own head, Baálé, then the town chiefs, Baálè rule over clans, and these chiefs are subject to their Oba, and this king may also be subject to another Oba.

In this, government begins at home. The father of the family is considered the "head" and his first wife is the mother of the house. If her husband chooses to marry another wife, that wife
must show proper respect to the first wife even if the first wife is chronologically younger. Children are taught to have respect for all those who are older than they are. This includes their parents, aunts, uncles, elder siblings, and cousins who they deal with every day.\textsuperscript{[3]} Any adult presumably has as much authority over a child as the child’s parents do. All members of a particular clan live in the same compound and share family resources, rights, and possessions such as land \textsuperscript{[3]}

**Civil War**

Following a Jihad led by Uthman Dan Fodio and a rapid consolidation of the Hausa city states of contemporary northern Nigeria, the Fulani Sokoto Caliphate annexed the buffer Nupe Kingdom and began to press southwards towards the Oyo Empire. Shortly after, they overran the Yoruba city of Ilorin and then sacked Òyọ-Ile, the capital city of the Oyo Empire.

Further attempts by the Sokoto Caliphate to expand southwards were checked by the Yoruba who had rallied to resist under the military leadership of the City State of Ibadan which rose from the old Oyo Empire, and of the Ijebu city-states.

However, the Oyo hegemony had been dealt a mortal blow. The other Yoruba city-states broke free of Oyo dominance, and subsequently became embroiled in a series of internecine wars. At a particular period when millions of individuals were being forcibly transported to the Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Venezuela and other parts of the World.

**European colonization of the Yoruba**

These wars weakened the Yoruba in their opposition to what was coming next; British military invasions. The military defeat at Imagbon of Ijebu forces by the British colonial Army ensured a
tentative European settlement in Lagos which was gradually expanded by protectorate treaties, treaties which proved decisive in the eventual annexation of the rest of Yorubaland and, eventually, of southern Nigeria and the Cameroons. In 1960, greater Yorubaland was subsumed into the Federal Republic of Nigeria.\[^4\]

According to Yoruba historians, by the time the British came to colonize and subjugate Yorubaland first to itself and later to the Fulani of Northern Nigeria, the Yoruba were getting ready to recover from what is popularly known as the Yoruba Civil War. One of the lessons of the internecine Yoruba wars was the opening of Yorubaland to Fulani hegemony whose major interest was the imposition of sultanistic despotism on Old Oyo Ile and present-day Ilorin. The most visible consequence of this was the adding of almost one-fifth of Yorubaland from Offa to Old Oyo to Kabba to the then Northern Nigeria of Lord Frederick Lugard and the subsequent subjugation of this portion of Yorubaland under the control of Fulani feudalism.\[^5\]

**Naming**

Main article: Yoruba

The term "Yoruba" can refer to various situations or instances, these are a few examples:

- Yoruba culture, culture of the Yoruba nation
- Yoruba people, a Yoruba community
- Yoruba language, the language spoken by the Yoruba people
- Yoruba religion, the traditional religion of the Yoruba people
- Yoruba name, name of a Yoruba person
- Yoruba music, the music of the Yoruba people
Geology

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Geography

The area of the Yoruba people overflows into the Republic of Benin; over 50 million people worldwide speak Yoruba. The Nigerian component comprises today's Ọyọ, Ọsun, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, and Lagos as well as parts of Kogi and Kwara states[6]. The Beninese portion consists of Ouémé department, Plateau Department, Collines Department, Tchaourou commune of Borgou department, Ouïhni and Zogbodome commune of Zou department, and Kandi commune of Alibori department. The Togolese portions are the Ogou and Est-Mono prefectures in Plateau Region, and the Tchamba prefecture in Centrale Region.

[edit] Topography

Geophysically, the area of Yorubaland spreads north from the Gulf of Guinea and west from the Niger River into Benin; dividing into costal plains and jagged highland region.[6]

[edit] Hydrology

With coastal plains, interior plains, and highlands, Yorubaland have several large rivers and streams that crisscross the terrain.[6]

Demography
Population

The total population of Yorubaland is approximated at about 50 million people throughout West Africa and are found predominantly in Nigeria.

References


2. ^ Article: Oduduwa, The Ancestor Of The Crowned Yoruba Kings


6. ^ a b c Defence Language Institute, Curriculum Development Division: Yoruba Culture Orientation, 2008

7. ^ Every Culture Online

8. ^ CIA World Factbook