BEYOND DIVERSITY: WOMEN, SCARIFICATION, AND YORUBA IDENTITY

OLATUNJI OJO
BROCK UNIVERSITY

I

On 18 March 1898 Okolu, an Ijesa man, accused Otunba of Italemo ward, Ondo of seizing and enslaving his sister Osun and his niece. Both mother and daughter, enslaved by the Ikale in 1894, had fled from their master in 1895, but as they headed toward Ilesa, the accused seized them. Osun claimed the accused forced her to become his wife, "hoe a farm," and marked her daughter's face with one deep, bold line on each cheek. Otunba denied the slavery charge, claiming he only "rescued [Osun] from Soba who was taking her away [and] took her for wife." Itoyimaki, a defense witness, supported the claim that Osun was not Otunba's slave. In his decision, Albert Erharhdt, the presiding British Commissioner, freed the captives and ordered the accused to pay a fine of two pounds.[1] In addition to integrating Osun through marriage, the mark conferred on her daughter a standard feature of Ondo identity. Although this case came up late in the nineteenth century, it represents a trend in precolonial Yorubaland whereby marriages and esthetics served the purpose of ethnic incorporation.

Studies on the roots of African ethnic identity consciousness have concentrated mostly on the activities of outsiders, usually Euro-American Christian missions, repatriated ex-slaves, and Muslims, whose ideas of nations as geocultural entities were applied to various African groups during the era of the slave trade and, more intensely, under colonialism.[2] For

[1]Albert Erhardt, journal, 18 and 22 March 1898, Ondo Div. 8/1, Nigeria National Archives, Ibadan (NAI).

[2]See Kristin Mann and Edna Bay, eds., *Rethinking the African Diaspora: the Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil* (London, 2001); Linda Heywood, ed., *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (Cambridge, 2001); Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., *The Yoruba Diaspora in the*

History in Africa 35 (2008), 347–374

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

instance, prior to the late nineteenth century, the people now called Yoruba were divided into multiple opposing ethnicities. Ethnic wars displaced millions of people, including about a million Yoruba-speakers deported as slaves to the Americas, Sierra Leone, and the central Sudan, mostly between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. As the Yoruba-speaking exiles encountered other groups in the diaspora, they found similarities in their cultures and through a process of ethnogenesis created the Nago and Lucumi (Americas) and Aku, later Yoruba (Sierra Leone) nations, into which later Yoruba and several non-Yoruba-speaking slaves were incorporated. After the cessation of the Atlantic slave trade, repatriated ex-slaves, Christian missionaries, and British colonialists introduced and marketed these diasporic ethnic designations to people left in the homeland.[3]

This is an attractive thesis, but one that requires modification. Without discountenancing those external factors that underpinned Yoruba identity consciousness, the paper argues that not enough attention has been paid to domestic factors that made this diasporic initiative acceptable to people in the homeland. With particular reference to the role of Christianity, very few Yoruba truly converted, and many of those who attended churches in Sierra Leone and the Americas relapsed into Orisa worship or Islam or a mixture of the three soon after their return. For practical purposes, the attitude of the Yoruba to Christianity was rooted in their understanding of Orisa worship to the degree that Christianity became Yoruba, as much as the Yoruba were Christianized.[4]

At levels comparable to the Atlantic world, people who remained in the Yoruba homeland also experienced enslavement, and population displacement and mixing, which resulted in the construction of new identities. Obviously, how people became "Yoruba" in the diaspora mirrored the absorption

Atlantic World (Bloomington, 2004); Ahmad Baba'a, *Mi'raj al-Su'ud: Replies on Slavery*, annotated and translated by John Hunwick and Fatima Karrak (Rabat, 2000); Leroy Vail, ed., *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (Berkeley, 1989); Thomas Spear and Richard Waller, eds., *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa* (Oxford, 1993); Charles Ambler, *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism: the Central Region in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 1988); and Bill Bravman, *Making Ethnic Ways: Communities and Their Transformations in Taita, Kenya, 1800–1950* (Portsmouth, NH., 1998).

[3]See S. W. Koelle, *Polyglotta Africana, or a Comparative Vocabulary of Nearly Three Hundred Words and Phrases* (London, 1854), 6; John D. Y. Peel, "The Cultural Work of Yoruba Ethnogenesis" in Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald, and Malcolm Chapman, eds., *History and Ethnicity* (London, 1989), 198-215; Robin Law, "Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: "Lucumi" and "Nago" as Ethnonyms in West Africa," *HA* 24(1997), 205–19; and idem., "Yoruba Liberated Slaves Who Returned to West Africa" in *Yoruba Diaspora*, 349–65.

[4]J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington, 2000).

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of Owu into Egba, Ijebu, or Oyo after 1820; the Yorubanization of Lagos after 1800; or the birth of Ekiti in the 1850s.[5] This paper focuses on how the activities of homeland Yoruba shaped the process of ethnic identification. In particular, it concentrates on the institution of marriage, foreign wives, and cicatrization during the turbulent ethnic wars of the nineteenth century. It shows that warfare and the attendant population mix induced inter-ethnic marriages and the production of children with mixed ancestries. Population contact increased cultural adaptations such as the spread of certain religious rituals and scarification brands to places where they previously did not exist. Hence, through inter-ethnic marriage and redefinition of links between ethnicity and tattoos, new ideologies came into place that boosted the quest for a geocultural ethnic identity that became Yoruba in the period after 1860.

This paper has its root in my reflection over a brief event in my life. In 1992 I went to visit a niece who lived at Ibadan. My niece was not at home, so I left message with her housemate. When we finally met, my niece relayed to me how she was told: *alâìkọlà kan bèèrè yín* (an unmarked person asked of you). At Ibadan, *alâìkọlà* figuratively means "foreigner," "uncivilized," "unfashionable," and "ugly." I took the comment for granted and did not think about it until recently. Information also came from interviews I conducted between 1993 and 2001 about women's life histories and how issues of identity played into the prosecution of the nineteenth-century Yoruba wars. The interviews, supplemented by archival and secondary works on Yoruba warfare, slavery, gender relations, and fashion provide details about the patterns of Yoruba identity formation, citizenship, and esthetics. The paper is divided into three sections. It begins with the political crisis that destroyed Yorubaland during the nineteenth century, desertion of turbulent frontiers, and new residential patterns. This is followed by an analysis of how these wars affected people differently, stressing the fate of women and their ritual practices. The third part discusses Yoruba scarification patterns. It shows the ethnonational symbolism of body marks, yet argues that these were more spatially confined and less diverse than hitherto assumed.

II

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Yorubaland experienced major sociopolitical changes caused by a combination of the collapse of

[5]For a related thesis see David Northrup, "Becoming African: Identity Formation among Liberated Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone," *Slavery and Abolition* 27(2006), 1-21.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Oyo, the most powerful Yoruba state, the spread of radical Islam, and the consequences of the rise and later cessation of the Atlantic slave trade. The wars, widespread state failure, population displacement, and raids for slaves, which the new sociopolitical system produced, shaped the subsequent history of the region. Although the Yoruba shared identical cultural practices—language, political organization, kinship, religion, urbanism, body markings, a widespread notion of common origin from Ile-Ife, and had lived together in a contiguous region for about 5000 years, no perception of oneness existed among them. Rather, they were divided into Oyo, Igbomina, Egbado, Egba, Epo, Ijebu, Ado/Awori/Ota, Ikale, Mahin, Idoko/Ondo, Owo, Akoko, Owe, Bunu, Oworo, Ijumu, Yagba, Sabe, Ketu, Owu, Idaisa, Ife, Ijesa, and Efon/Ekiti ethnic groups. Some of these groups were further carved into smaller, often antagonistic, states. For instance, Oyo consisted of the Ibolo, Epo, Ibarapa, Onko, and the Oyo metropolis; Egba comprised Ake, Okeona, and Agura; Ijebu included Ode and Remo, and Ekiti was composed of sixteen chiefdoms. To the degree that these divisions served to legitimize violence, the enslavement process was more than one Yoruba capturing another. The flow of refugees, traders, and soldiers and the ensuing spread of the frontiers of instability that attended the Yoruba wars largely underpinned the general violence which engulfed many Yoruba districts during the nineteenth century.[6]

[6]See Edward Roper, "What I Saw in Africa: Sketches of Missionary Life in the Yoruba Country, Part II," *Church Missionary Gleaner* 3(1876), 35-38; British Parliamentary Papers (hereafter PP) C5144, encl. 1 in no. 8, Samuel Rowe to Derby, 18 May 1888; Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (Lagos, 1921 [1976]), 178-283; Saburi Biobaku, *The Egba and Their Neighbours, 1842-1872* (London, 1957); Bolanle Awe, "The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power 1851-1893", DPhil, Oxford University, 1964; J. F. Ade Ajayi and Robert Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1964); Peter Morton-Williams, "The Oyo Yoruba and the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1670-1830," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3(1964), 24-45; Anthony G. Hopkins, "Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-1892," *Economic History Review* 21(1968), 580-606; Stephen A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893: Ibadan Expansion and the Rise of Ekitiparapo* (London, 1971); Emmanuel A. Oroge, "The Institution of Slavery in Yorubaland with Particular Reference to the Nineteenth Century" (PhD., Birmingham, 1971); Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire c .1600—c. 1836: a West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford, 1977), 245-302; Francine Shields, "Palm Oil and Power: Women in an Era of Economic and Social Transition in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland (South-Western Nigeria." (PhD., Stirling, 1997); Idowu A. Akinjogbin, ed., *War and Peace in Yorubaland 1793-1893* (Ibadan, 1998); and Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington, 2007).

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

III

Uncomfortable as the disruptions seemed to be, the consequent population flow resulted in a complex cultural mixture that altered existing ethnic boundaries. Oyo refugees moved largely into Epo districts, south of the kingdom, yet many also settled on Egba, Egbado, Owu, Ijesa, Igbomina, Sabe, Ketu, and Ife territories. Owu was completely evacuated and its people resettled in Ijebu and Egba towns, while the Egba abandoned their towns for Abeokuta and nearby Egbado and Awori towns. Demographic realignment later complemented the broad geographical and linguistic links among Yoruba-speakers, all of which provided a basis for the transformation of ethnic identities and new political systems. Gabriel Oguntomisin, among other writers, has examined the political reforms that attended the mixture of Yoruba population. He highlights the rise of composite towns, with each section representing a re-creation of an extinct community and how the political system of host communities changed to accommodate the immigrants.[7]

In addition to their ethnic diversity, Yoruba towns were also socially stratified. A substantial part of the Yoruba urban population was composed of slaves. The size of slaves relative to the total population of Old Oyo, Lagos, Abeokuta, and Ibadan was estimated (perhaps with exaggeration) at about one- to two-thirds of Old Oyo in 1830; 50 to 90 percent of Lagos, one-half of Ibadan, and between 20 and 50 percent of Abeokuta during the second half of the nineteenth century.[8]

[7]Gabriel Oguntomisin, "Political Change and Adaptation in Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 15(1981), 223-37. Also see J. F. A. Ajayi, "Nineteenth Century Wars and Yoruba Ethnicity;" Isola Olomola, "Demographic Effects of the Nineteenth Century Yoruba Wars;" Gabriel Oguntomisin and Toyin Falola, "Refugees in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland;" and Niyi Oladeji, "Language in Ethnic Rivalries: an Analysis of Ethnocentric Use of Yoruba in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland" all in *War and Peace*, 9-19, 371-79, 381-98, 451-60.

[8]Richard and John Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger*, (2 vols.: New York, 1832), 1:181; Church Missionary Society Archive [hereafter CMS], CA2/049b, David Hinderer to Henry Venn, 26 October 1855; National Archives of United Kingdom (hereafter NAUK), FO84/1061, Benjamin Campbell to Clarendon, 27 and 28 March 1858; Richard Burton, *Abeokuta and the Camaroos Mountains: An Exploration* (2 vols.: London, 1863), 1:81-82; NAUK, CO 147/133, "Evidence of J. P. L. Davies" in Denton to Chamberlain, 4 June 1898; CMS, G3/A2/0/191, "Notices of the Villages;" P. Amaury Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria* (2 vols.: Oxford, 1926), 1:124; NAI, CSO 26/29939, R. L. V. Wilkes, "Intelligence Report on the Central Awori Group in the Ikeja and Badagry District of the Colony;" Sandra T. Barnes, *Patrons and Power: Creating a Political Community in Metropolitan Lagos* (Bloomington, 1986), 23, 27–36; and Robert Smith, ed., *Memoirs of Giambattista Scala: Consul of His Italian Majesty in Lagos in Guinea, 1862* (Oxford, 2000), 65.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Slaves came from dispersed locations but certain ethnicities predominated in particular areas: Ibadan sourced most of its slaves from northeastern Yorubaland. Because of the extensive nature of Ibadan military campaigns, slaves arrived in the city in large numbers. In 1855 David Hinderer of the Church Missionary Society noted huge influx of slaves from ongoing expeditions in northeastern Yorubaland: the "population had been augmented . . . by immigrants from the provinces [and] by the thousands of slaves brought in annually."[9] On a visit to Ibadan in 1877, Rev. James Johnson found many slaves and remarked how Ijesa accents prevailed among them to the extent that most slaves assumed an Ijesa identity even though many came originally from Akoko, Ekiti, and Igbomina. Isaac Akinyele, the local historian of Ibadan, confirmed this Ijesa factor. In his words, the Ijesa phrase "*Oyo kàbí ọnì[y]à[n]*" (Oyo or human beings) became the password among the slaves of Ibadan during the nineteenth century, and it was not uncommon for a freeborn to mingle with the slaves of a powerful chief in order to share the great privilege that was theirs.[10] Like Ibadan, with slaves imported through military expeditions, because of their location in frontier Yoruba districts, Lagos, Ijebu, Ilorin, and Abeokuta also sourced slaves from trade. Hence, slaves in these cities came from all over Yorubaland, the central Sudan, Dahomey, and Benin.[11]

But population mixture was not sufficient to create Yoruba solidarity—on occasions it intensified conflicts. At Ile-Ife and Ondo after 1850, the immigrants, rather than been absorbed by their hosts, constituted separate towns at Modakeke and Okeigbo. About 1850 tensions between the hosts and guests degenerated into open conflicts that sacked both Ile-Ife and Ondo. Urban complexity at Lagos and Ibadan was at the root of incessant civil uprisings, which pitched ambitious chiefs and their wards against one another. Less than two decades after Ife and Egba settlers were expelled from Ibadan, a federation of Oyo provincial chiefs from Ibolo, Ikoyi, and Epo (old Egba and Owu towns) towns captured the city's administration, blocking their metropolitan (Onko, Ibarapa, Saki, and Egbado) counterparts access to senior posts.[12]

[9]CMS, CA2/049b, Hinderer to Henry Venn, 26 October 1855; NAUK, FO 84/976, Campbell to Clarendon, 7 December 1855; and Johnson, *History*, 324, 381.

[10]CMS, CA2/056, "Report of James Johnson, August 1877" and I.A. Akinyele, *Iwe Itan Ibadan ati die Ninu Awon Ilu Agbegbe re bi Iwo, Osogbo, Ikirun* (4th ed.: Ibadan, 1980), 209.

[11]George Robertson, *Notes on Africa* (London, 1819), 290-91; Robin Law, "Trade and Politics Behind the Slave Coast: the Lagoon Traffic and the Rise of Lagos, 1500-1800," *JAH* 24(1983), 343-48; Mann, *Slavery*; and Ann O'Hear, "Ilorin as a Slaving and Slave-Trading Emirate" in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam* (Princeton, 2004), 55-68.

[12]See Johnson, *History* and Akinyele, *Iwe Itan Ibadan*.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

IV

One antidote to ethnic differences was cultural engineering aimed at emphasizing that which united rather than separated these numerous groups and ultimately the inculcation of new loyalties. Acculturation depended on the demography of the displaced population. To what extent did demography relate to acculturation? What was the sex and age composition of the society, and how were these shaped by warfare?

Yoruba wars were fought for a variety of reasons, but few were intended to inflict mass casualties. Except for major pitched battles such as the Egba-Dahomey war of 1851, in which about 2000 Dahomians were killed in a single day, or during the Ijaye war, when Chief Ogunmola of Ibadan alone lost about 1800 soldiers between 1860 and 1862, Yoruba warfare generally produced low casualty rates.[13] Indeed, soldiers gained most by taking captives rather than killing them. Hence, siege warfare by barricading enemy towns for upward of months or even a few years at a time, while the attackers ate and plundered nearby farms, was the most popular mode of attack. The major aim of a siege was to deny people in the beleaguered town access to water, food, and weapons beyond the city walls. Having finished the resources retained within the city wall and faced with starvation, the people would either surrender or look for escape routes. To prevent anyone from fleeing, the invaders had patrols set up around major exit routes with the task of seizing those escaping from the barricade. Thus hunger and not bullets served as a vital weapon of war. Since the practice was to commandeer food within the city for the military non-combatants, women, children, the aged, and the sick suffered more from sieges. It rendered them vulnerable to attack and explained why they dominated the population of Yoruba slaves and refugees. Unlike the soldiers who died in battle or were captured and sold into foreign slavery or the old, infirm, and infants who were killed or allowed to perish because they had little or no productive value, women were mostly enslaved for their high productivity and ease of assimilation.[14]

An invading army did not fare much better when soldiers leave their wives behind in the towns while at war. In particular, certain armies would invade a town only when the latter's defense was weak. One example was the 1881 Ijebu attack on Ibadan, when its forces were engaged at Kiriji.[15] In

[13]Samuel Crowther, journal, 3 March 1851. Cf. *Church Missionary Record* 12(1852), 277; PP, 1852, vol. lxiv (221), Henry Townsend to John Beecroft, 20 March 1851; Thomas J. Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa From 1849 to 1856* (London, 1968 [1857]), 120; and Johnson, *History*, 354.
[15]See "Description of a Slave [Joseph Wright of Aku]" in John Beecham, *Ashantee and the Gold Coast* (London, 1841), 349-58; Edward Irving, "The Ijebu Country," *Church Missionary Intelligencer* 7(1856), 69; Sarah Tucker, *Abbeokuta or Sunrise within the Tropics* (London, 1853), 17; CMS, CA2/075, Daniel Olubi, journal for 1870; and John-

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

1858 Daniel May, traveling from Ilorin to Ibadan, was struck with the general preponderance of females in the population of towns he had visited. At Iwo, he noted that sex disparity "seemed . . . to be greater than usual."[16] What he did not mention, perhaps unknown to him, was that Iwo men, alongside Ibadan soldiers, were at the time fighting in northeastern Yorubaland. To prevent rear attacks, soldiers who could afford the cost went to war with their families. Otherwise a detachment of soldiers was kept behind for home defense.[17]

Refugee and slave influx into the towns increased the heterogeneous nature of Yoruba cities and the pool from which spouses were selected. One goal of Yoruba marriage was to foster communal peace and alliances. Among members of the Yoruba elite, marriages were often arranged to create mechanisms for the control of state institutions. In Buganda, for instance, the Kabaka, by marrying his daughters and sisters to neighboring chiefs and bringing in foreign women, used the marriage institution to concentrate power in the palace at the expense of clan affiliations.[18] As Yoruba state formation expanded during the nineteenth century, state bureaucracy and labor obligations became reconstructed in ways that reflected patriarchy, and as such women themselves became important objects of exchange and commodities, to be stored and traded by the ruling elite.

The exchange of women between chiefs and their allies opened avenues for accessing material and political benefits in society. Thus, unlike the daughters of Yoruba commoners, who could be requisitioned by chiefs for marriage with little chance of divorce, Oyo princesses operated like free dealers and chose their own spouses.[19] "Freedom" of "spousal choice"

son, *History*, 331-54, 377-82. Soldiers and the elderly were also victimized as a form of breaking the political cohesion of a community and by that prevent future resistance. In Johnson's words "[t]he distress caused [by warfare] . . . cannot be described. Aged people who could not be carried were left to perish." See Johnson, *History*, 200-201, 205.

[15]Ibid., 450-51.

[16]Daniel May, "Journey in the Yoruba and Nupe Countries in 1858," *Journal of Royal Geographical Society* 30(1860), 213.

[17]"The Yoruba Mission," *CMI* 6(1855), 250; also see Bolanwe Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura" in Awe, ed., *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* (Ibadan, 1992), 57–71; Funso Afolayan, "Women and Warfare in Yorubaland During the Nineteenth Century" in Toyin Falola and Robin Law, eds., *Warfare and Diplomacy in Precolonial Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Robert Smith* (Madison, 1992), 78-86; T. M. Ilesanmi "The Yoruba Worldview on Women and Warfare" in *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 87-92; and Bolanle Awe and Omotayo Olutoye, "Women and Warfare in Nineteenth Yorubaland: an Introduction" in *War and Peace*, 121–30.

[18]Barnes, "Ritual, Power, and Outside Knowledge," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 20(1990), 248-68. On Buganda see Nakayinke Musisi, "Women, "Elite Polygyny," and Buganda State Formation," *Signs* 16(1991), 757–86.

[19]Alfred B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa: Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Language* (London, 1894), 187.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

allowed chiefs to deploy their daughters in attracting and rewarding allies and punishing renegades as well. In search of British support against Sokoto forces during the 1820s, Alaafin Majotu of Oyo offered to marry a daughter, whom he had earlier given to his head slave, to a visiting British diplomat, Hugh Clapperton. When Clapperton declined the offer, four beautiful princesses were proposed to his assistant, Richard Lander who also declined.[20] An acceptance of this offer would have conferred on either man Oyo citizenship, easy access to the palace, and other benefits.

Dynastic marriages enabled diplomatic relations and political alliances during periods of conflict and sanctuaries for troubled chiefs. Notable products of Yoruba interethnic dynastic marriages included three rulers of Lagos—Osinlokun, Akintoye, and Kosoko—each of whom sought alliances with their maternal kin at Ijebu, Owu-Egba, and Mahin respectively.[21] Marriage alliances between the Ekiti rulers of Aramoko and Ado; Ikole, Otun and Ido, and Okemesi and Ogotun in Ekiti also produced traditions of brotherhood among their ruling houses.[22] There was also such an alliance between the Emir of Ilorin and Basorun Oluyole of Ibadan (1833/37-1847). Finally, Samuel Crowther, the ex-slave turned CMS Bishop and nationalist, descended from a Ketu father. His grandfather, the *baalẹ* of Awaye-Petu had migrated to Osogun in Oyo during the eighteenth century, while his mother Afala was of Oyo royal blood. Much as Crowther identified himself as having come from the "Eyo [Oyo] country" his dual ancestry plausibly influenced his view of pan-Yoruba ethnicity and the good reception accorded him in both Ketu and Oyo districts.[23]

In other regions, princesses were married to powerful soldiers as "bribes" against military attacks and to win a warlord's favor. The marriage between Ogedengbe, the Ijesa war chief and an Ila princess barred him from attacking Ila.[24] Women were also central to Egbado, Egba and Ibadan diplomatic relations. Ayawo, an Egbado princess, had been married to Sodeke of Egba in the 1830s. After Sodeke's death in 1845, she was inherited by Somoye, another Egba chief and Sodeke's relative. She accompanied Somoye to the

[20]Clapperton, journal, 6 February 1826. Cf. James B. Lockhart and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Hugh Clapperton into the Interior of Africa: Records of the Second Expedition, 1825-1827* (Leiden, 2005); and Lander, *Records of Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa* (2 vols.: London, 1830), 2:224-26.

[21]Losi, *History of Lagos*, 22, 33.

[22]See Isaac E. Babamuboni, *Itan Ewi, Elekole ati Ajero*, (Ibadan, n.d.).

[23]Crowther to William Jowett, CMS Secretary, Fourah Bay, 22 February 1837, "Detailing the Circumstances Connected with His Being Sold as a Slave," *Church Missionary Record* (1837), 217-23; and Crowther, "Report of Visit to Ketu in 1853," *CMI* 4(1853), 243–52.

[24]Awe/Olutoye, "Women and Warfare," 127.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Ijaye war (1860-62), where she was captured by Ibadan forces in 1862 and handed over to chief Ogunmola, whom another tradition says was Somoye's son in-law. For losing his wife to Ibadan, Somoye, among other things mobilized the Egba to block the trade route between Ibadan and Lagos. Soon, Ogunmola released Ayawo to her husband, and by that action reconciled Ibadan and Egba.[25] If Ayawo was at the center of diplomatic networks between Ibadan, Egba, and Egbado, other accounts show how slave wives contributed to the production of Yoruba identity.

The elitist nature of the Yoruba society resonated strongly in the character of marriage. A man's social status is measured partly by the number of his followers, including wives. During carnivals, when Yoruba chiefs marched with their followers, the community was less interested in the seniority of chiefs than in the size of their contingents. Wealthy traders and powerful chiefs used their resources to amass women, and polygyny increased during the century.

Parents married their daughters to people they trusted. Hence, the older, well-to-do, and great personalities in the society had a near monopoly of wives, while many young men could not afford the cost of marriage. Inequalities in the number of women in a community/household reflected disparities in the regional resource endowment of Yoruba districts. For instance, the richer districts of Ibadan, Oyo, Abeokuta, Ijebu, and Ondo had more slave wives, more polygynous households, and greater socio-economic and political clout than Ekiti and Okun towns where slaveholding was less extensive.[26] At Oyo in 1826, Lander estimated the Alaafin's wives at over 400, but the monarch himself did not know "how many wives . . . he had but he was sure . . . hand to hand [they] wou[l]d reach from [Oyo] to Janah."[27] Three decades later, Robert Campbell, a Jamaican agent of an American "Back to Africa" movement, believed that the Alaafin had about 200 wives. In the 1890s Rev. S. G. Pinnock of the American Baptist Mission and Thomas Harding of the CMS claimed that the number was much larger, ranging between 450 and 1500, all lodged in no less than 15 palace

[25]Johnson, *History*, 250.

[26]Oroge, "Institution of Slavery;" Karin Barber, "Money, Self Realization and the Person in Yoruba Texts" in Jane Guyer, ed., *Money Matters: Instability, Values and Social Payments in the Modern History of West African Communities* (Portsmouth, NH., 1995), 205–24; and Jane Guyer, "Wealth in People, Wealth in Things: Introduction," *JAH* 36(1995), 83–90; also see Roper, "What I Saw in Africa," 38; James. B. Wood, "On the Inhabitants of Lagos: Their Character, Pursuits, and Languages," *CMI* 33(1881), 685; and Charles H. Gollmer, *Charles Andrew Gollmer: His Life and Missionary Labours in West Africa* (London, 1889), 119-20.

[27]Clapperton, journal, 7 February 1826 and Lander, *Records of Clapperton*, 1:106, 2:196-97.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

courts, each containing about 30 women.[28] At Ijaye Robert Stone of the Baptist Mission describes the compound of Kurunmi, the head chief, as a vast labyrinth covering 11 acres accommodating more than 1600 people, including Kurunmi's 300 wives.[29] In Ondo, an unnamed Osemowe was reputed to have 1000 wives,while in the 1870s Lisa Edun had between 300 and 400 wives, most of whom he kept "for the pleasure of seeing them."[30]

Although polygyny was less extensive in Ekiti, local chiefs nonetheless displayed their wealth in wives. At the peak of the Kiriji war in 1885, and many miles away from their domains, several middle-aged women accompanied the Ore of Otun and the Ajero of Ijero to meetings. The Ajero had with him 12 to 15 women of various ages at his meeting with a CMS delegation.[31] The picture was not much different in the 1930s, when Edward Ward of the Catholic mission estimated the wives of some Yoruba chiefs as follows: Osemowe of Ondo—75, Lisa of Ondo—205, Alake of Abeokuta—400; Alaafin of Oyo—250, Awujale of Ijebu-Ode—150, Ooni of Ife—200, Ataoja of Osogbo—75, Owa of Ilesa—250, and many men with three to 200 wives.[32]

Of course, we must accept these figures with caution. Probably not all the women were royal wives. By law, Yoruba rulers inherit everything, including the widows of their predecessors. Also, Yoruba palaces, like other large compounds, were inhabited by members of extended families, all linked by a common ancestor. Additionally, the palace served as community centers, including hostels for visitors and divorced princesses, prisons, markets, and resorts for women transacting a range of businesses, convicts, trade, recreation, court cases, and religious rituals. As a result, many of the so-called royal wives would have been the monarch's sisters in-law, stepmothers, prisoners, traders, priestessed, sisters, nieces, and many women who out of curiosity had come to the palace to see royal visitors.

In Yorubaland, many foreign wives were indeed slaves kept as workers and commodities. Andreas Ulsheimer, a German trader near Lagos in the early seventeenth century described the differential treatment of male and female captives:

[28]Martin R. Delaney and Campbell, *Search for a Place: Black Separatism and Africa, 1860* (Ann Arbor, 1969), 59, 191; Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions in Nigeria* (Richmond, 1917), 63-64; and NAI, CMS (Y) 1/7/10, Harding to Friends, 30 September 1892,
[29]Stone, *In Afric's Forest and Jungle or Six Years among the Yorubans* (New York, 1899).
[30]CMS, CA2/078, Phillips, journal, 26 August 1878 and NAI, Ondo Div 8/1, Hunt to Resident, 13 January 1915.
[31]NAI, CMS (Y) 1/7/5, "Account of visit to Kiriji camp in March 1885" in Wood to Lang, 19 August 1885.
[32]Edward Ward, *Marriage among the Yoruba* (Washington, 1937), 28-40.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> the Blacks [near Lagos] rushed in with all force, and subdued and conquered the town. They struck down all men fit for military service but took the women and children as captives and shared them among themselves. Each of us too was given a woman.[33]

More than two centuries later, Johnson described how Afonja of Ilorin in the 1810s enrolled able-bodied male captives in his army, and he sold many women and children into slavery to procure weapons for his troops.[34]

A long-term trend of the Atlantic slave trade shows the preponderance of male slave exports derived from African supply forces that retained more women on the continent. In the eastern Bight of Benin, the quota for male slaves rose from 63.4 percent of total exports in 1701–1809 to 67.4 percent in 1810–1863, while the female quota fell from 33.8 to 20.2 percent over the same period. In effect, the entry of more male slaves into the Atlantic trade meant that more female slaves remained in Africa. Yet the proportion varied regionally, with market and cultural forces further reducing the quota of women and children sold from Muslim slates into the Atlantic trade.[35]Although, Yorubaland had a large Muslim population, its proximity to the coast cheapened the cost of slave transportation and reduced the overall sex and age disparity in the volume of deported Yoruba slaves. Yet there were similarities between Muslim and Yoruba demand for female slaves, especially in ways that surviving memoirs of nineteenth-century Yoruba slaves show the prevalent exportation of male slaves and retention locally of women and girls. Although at a rate lower than hinterland societies, the retention of many women captured in coastal towns when they could be moved quickly and cheaply into the Atlantic sector show that local economic and cultural factors underpinned the different sex ratios of exported Yoruba slaves.[36]

[33]Ulsheimer, "Voyage of 1603-4" in Adam Jones, ed., *German Sources for West African History, 1599-1669* (Wiesbaden, 1983), 24.

[34]Johnson, *History*, 200-201, 205.

[35]David Eltis and David Richardson, "West Africa and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: New Evidence of Long-Run Trends," *Slavery and Abolition* 18(1997), 16–34; Claire Robertson and Martin Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH., 1987); and Lovejoy, "Internal Markets or an Atlantic-Sahara Divide? How Women Fit into the Slave Trade of West Africa" in Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph C. Miller eds., *Women and Slavery, 1: Africa, the Western Indian Ocean Islands and the Medieval North Atlantic* (Athens, OH., 2007), 259-80.

[36]See "Endeavours to Carry the Gospel into the Interior of Africa," *CMG* 3(1843), 126; "Commencement of Missionary Operations at Abbeokouta" and "Meeting of the Rev. Samuel Crowther with his Mother," *CMG* 7(1847), 17-18, 63-65; Irving, "Ijebu Country;" idem., "The Sufferings and Deliverance of James Gerber, a Twice-Liberated African" and idem., "How Thomas King Became a Slave," *CMG* 10(1850), 20-23, 138-41; Tucker, *Abbeokuta*, 220-27; *CMR* 23(1852): 276-86; Mary Barber, *Oshiele or Village Life in the Yoruba Country* (London, 1857), 45-55, 125-36, and Hinderer, *Seventeen Years*, 143-47, 292-93.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Foreign wives prevailed more in the cities, slave societies, and elite households than in smaller and poorer societies. For instance, owing to its many military victories, Ibadan became a rendezvous for aspiring soldiers and ambitious young men. The male bias in this initially military garrison reduced opportunities for endogamous family formations, and the transmission of values through family lines was affected. From its early years, sources indicate that Ibadan soldiers captured women for the purpose of marriage. Before 1840 they took many Egba and Owu women as wives. Such women became the mothers of the first generation of Ibadan-born children.

By the 1850s the practice of Yoruba soldiers going to war for the primary reason of capturing women for the purpose of marriage had developed to a remarkable extent. According to Samuel Johnson, senior Ibadan and Ijaye soldiers added prime female captives to their harems, while the young men saved themselves bridal expenses by making wives of any woman they captured.[37] Charles Phillips, writing contemporaneously about Ikale in eastern Yorubaland, reached the same conclusion: the "Itebu . . . have been increasing their . . . household by slaves whom they purchased from the interior[; the men] are employed as laborers but the female slaves are added to their harems."[38] Among these Ikale wives were several Ondo women whom Ward interviewed in the 1930s for his study on Yoruba marriages. On a visit to Igbotako he met "a number of aged Ondo women" taken as "part of the spoils of war of an inter-tribal war of the past." When asked if they wished to return to Ondo, one of the women replied, "*Me fe lo pada si Ondo mo. Igbotako ni ile me nissiyi* [sic]" (I am not returning to Ondo. Henceforth, Igbotako is my home). The impact of slavery on marriages in Ondo was such that one colonial officer believed that not less than half of the prominent citizens in the 1930s, including chiefs, descended from slaves.[39] All these changes highlight strong links between warfare, slavery, and marriage and how Yoruba cities served as cultural melting pots.

Attractions for foreign women, especially slaves, may be located in the uneven sex ratio of the Yoruba population. In some places the bulk of prime women had been taken into slavery and surviving men resorted to wife-stealing. In the "Yoruba Report" the compilers wrote: "[a]s a general rule males do not marry before the age of 25. But the sons of kings and chiefs and rich men marry between the ages of 18 and 25."[40] My survey of Ekiti

[37]Johnson, *History*, 324.

[38]NAI, Phillips 1/1/3, Phillips to Wood, 9 January 1890,

[39]Ward, *Marriage among the Yoruba*, 15, 27; and NAI, CSO 26/11799, vol. iv, R. Foulke-Roberts (DO Officer, Ondo) cited in Secretary Southern Provinces to G. C. Whiteley, 17 March 1937.

[40]Hopkins, "A Report on the Yoruba, 1910," *JHSN* 5(1969), 81-82.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

marriages for the period 1880 and 1930 also shows that the scarcity of women, prevented many men born after 1870 from marrying until around the age of 30, five to ten years later than the average Yoruba age.[41] In female-deficient areas, the cost of marriage was beyond the ability of poor men. For example dowry was raised to between £2 and £12/10 in 1903, up from two shillings in the 1890s, thereby forcing many young men to pawn themselves in order to raise bridal fees.[42]

Men also preferred slave wives because of their inferior status and provision of cheap and free labor. A freeborn girl was generally betrothed at an early age, and her future spouse would confirm his interest with periodic payments in cash, gifts, and labor services to the girl and her parents until the girl was about 16 to 20 years and considered ready for marriage and motherhood. Such long periods of payments amounted to expenses so burdensome that young men and parents pawned themselves or children towards raising cash. Bridal exchanges constituted not the "sale" but compensation for the transfer and loss of a girl's service from one lineage to another. The Yoruba patriarchal system gave men power to control their wives, yet it retained significant rights for women. Although a girl might have grudgingly consented to her chosen partner, she had economic autonomy, familial protection against spousal molestation, and membership of her descent group with its associated rights. An abusive husband risked being divorced, paying huge fines for spousal neglect, and possible rejection of marriage proposals by other women.[43] These sanctions set limits to how husbands could treat their wives with impunity.

On the contrary, most slave wives were bought, taken in war, kidnapped, or received as gifts or payments for debts, and usually married against their will. It was cheaper to marry a slave woman because the obligations and payments involved in having freeborn women were absent. The absence of consenting families and detachment of a slave wife from relatives made her amenable to affinal control. In Islamic Africa free and unfree wives were called "wives" and "concubines" respectively. Although the Yoruba did not make this clear distinction, they distinguished between superior and inferior wives, which often correlated with the status of freeborn and slave wives.[44] While marriage could improve the treatment of slave wives, especially mothers, they endured restrictions peculiar to their enslaved status. Children

[41]Also see Peel, *Ijesha and Nigerians: The Incorporation of a Yoruba Kingdom 1890s-1970s* (Cambridge, 1983).
[42]NAI, Ekiti Div 4/4, Civil Record Book, 14 July 1903.
[43]NAI, CMS (Y) 3/1/2, "Minutes of Abeokuta Clerical Conference, 25 September 1877."
[44]Lovejoy, "Concubinage in the Sokoto Caliphate (1804–1903)," *Slavery and Abolition* 11(1990), 159–89.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of slave wives, even if the father was free, could inherit their mothers' inferior status. A man commanded a huge percentage of a slave-wife's productivity and had greater control over her children than those of free women. Oftentimes, the relative freedom granted to a slave wife could be withdrawn after the death of her husband. She was constantly reminded of her slave status. She had no freedom of action and could not leave the husband without redeeming herself and children. Although frowned on, a slave wife could also be sold or made a ritual victim.[45]

The desire to exploit slave wives perpetually is evident in the agitation by Yoruba male elite against European anti-slavery laws and the legal institution of divorce during the nineteenth century. For example, in a petition to British administrators in Lagos in 1855, Egba chiefs and traders expressed doubt about the possibility of legitimate trade in palm oil and cotton production without the labor of slave wives.[46] At Ibadan in 1893 local chiefs objected to having a British consul in the city, fearing the loss of their wives to members of the colonial army.[47] In effect, the rights of a slave wife depended largely on what the owner-husband could accommodate. These points contradict the popular notion that any slave woman taken as a wife becomes *ipso facto* free.[48]

One outcome of the lopsided distribution of women was sharp friction between married and single men and elite citizens and their dependants. In turn this forced young and poor men to live in adultery with their patrons' wives and concubines as men-servants. Adultery therefore was a by-product of *àlè* (concubinage). Like in Asante, *àlè yíyàn* (choosing a lover) in Yorubaland is viewed as theft, "the taking away" of a man's sexual prerogative to his wife.[49] Eastern Yoruba society seemed to be sufficiently conscious of the dangers inherent in polygyny, when several young men

[45]Barber, *Oshielle*, 192-93; CMS, CA2/069, George Meakin, journal, 20 April 1859; CMS, CA2/049, Hinderer, journal, 27 April 1859; NAI, CMS (Y) 3/1/2, "Abeokuta Clerical Conference;" NAI, Phillips 1/3/3, journal, 26 August and 20 November 1878; Johnson, *History*, 54-55, 459, 490, 492; Hopkins, "Report on the Yoruba," 81-82; Oroge "Institution of Slavery;" Mann, *Slavery*; Judith Byfield, "Women, Marriage, Divorce and the Emerging Colonial State in Abeokuta (Nigeria), 1892–1904," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 30(1996), 32–51; Shields, "Palm Oil and Power;" and Ojo, "Slavery, Pawnship and Marriage in Yorubaland, 1870-1900" in *Engendering the Atlantic*, forthcoming.

[46]IUP, PP, Colonies Series, vol. 63, inclosure in no. 17, S. B. Williams, "Report of Egba Mercantile Committee, 17-18 September 1855."

[47]Johnson, *History*, 226, 236, 324–26, 638.

[48]Ibid., 325 and Francis C. Fuller, "Report on the Interior" in Lagos Annual Report, 1899.

[49]Jean Allman, "Adultery and the State in Asante: Reflections on Gender, Class and Power from 1800 to 1950" in John Hunwick and Nancy Lawler, eds., *The Cloth of Many Colored Silks* (Evanston, 1996), 30.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

remained unattached, that a special form of sexual networking evolved, enabling men to have sex with the wives of a relative. Unfortunately, those ignorant of the system termed it "polyandry among backward and promiscuous tribes of Ondo."[50] Under this system young and unattached males lived in adultery with the wives and concubines of the elite in contracts approved by the latter. To obtain this permission, the adulterer paid a fee and attached himself to the concubine's husband to render services in a way similar to those of a manservant. According to Young

> if a man has a wife the wife must be known to be the concubine of the son or a brother of his. That in case the husband hears that his son or one of his relatives has any connivance with his wife, and keep her as his concubine the case will be brought forward and if it is proved to be real, the husband will then lay a fine upon the son or brother, that is, one goat, and one or two calabashes of palm wine. After this is done, the husband is to swear himself, the son or brother together with the woman to their heathen god that the woman and the man should continue to play together till such time as they will choose to part from each other, that he will no more trouble them or charge the man of it again. But he is only considered to be the right husband—the woman is to look upon both of them as husband and concubine [*sic*] and should there come any child in so doing, the child is the husband's and [the child is only] a [nephew or niece] to the [lover].[51]

We cannot ascertain the exact origin of this system, but it seemed linked with a disproportionate male-female ratio, the scarcity of unattached women, and the high cost of bridal fees. Moreover, that the practice also facilitated the entrenchment of clientage relationships might be related to the vagaries of Yoruba wars, where unequal social relations widened the

[50]Hopkins, "Report on the Yoruba," 81-82. On the persistence of adultery see John C. Caldwell, Pat Caldwell, and Israel O. Orubuloye, "The Family and Sexual Networking in Sub-Saharan Africa: Historical Regional Differences and Present Day Implications," *Population Studies* 46(1992), 385-410.

[51]CMS, CA2/098/10, Young, journal, 27 June 1875; CMS, CA2/078/24, Phillips, journal, 23 November 1877; NAI, Phillips 1/1/3, Phillips to R. Lang, 13 January 1890; NAI, CMS (Y) 2/2/4, Phillips, "A statement of the peculiar difficulties which impede the progress of the infant church at Ondo," 14 February 1891; and NAI, CSO 26/4/30172, A F. Bridges, "Intelligence Report on Ondo District, 1935," 61. The proper word for "concubine" in this context is paramour, lover, or adulterer. An approved lover could sue a rival. See Fadase and Kinyokun vs. Fletcher in NAI, Phillips 3/11, Phillips, diary, 15 November–3 December 1901.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

disparity in the distribution of power. Whatever the case might be, concubinage and adultery increased after 1850, when commercial wealth and warfare enabled elite men and women to acquire many female slaves and male clients. Young men underpinned the military prowess of warlords as the immediate instruments of any chief's power. Therefore, the increased level of polygyny served dual purposes. It provided a mechanism for chiefs to attract male followers to themselves, while, through the provision of sexual linkages between their women and unattached men, polygynists exerted a form of social control over their clients. By gatekeeping access to women, "big men" turned sex into a tool for placating loyal followers and punishing the unruly.[52]

V

The incorporation of foreign wives/children and their descendants reconfigured Yoruba ethnic loyalties, kinship relations, and cultural practices in major ways. It also exemplified one way of creating Yoruba identity. While Yoruba women frequently married from within their immediate communities and lived mostly in male-headed families in pre-war years, population displacement, which sometimes carried away an entire community, increased the scale of extra-local marital relationships. As foreign wives were incorporated through marriage and raised new children, the ethnic orientations of many people changed. Identity shift in Ife district is reflected in the statement made by Modakeke (Oyo) leaders in 1886:

> Truly our fathers were not natives of this place, but we are born in this place and the mothers of most of us are Ifes. Hundreds of Ifes are our wives today and hundreds of our daughters were also given in marriage to the Ifes and they are with them to this present day. We have become one people with them by intermarriage so that it is very difficult for us to separate . . .[53]

Of course, this statement was made partly in order to defuse the call for the destruction of Modakeke after years of clashes with Ile-Ife, yet, it points to a degree of integration between the two communities.

Military towns, renowned for their war casualties, contained huge numbers of widows, and female household heads because the fathers, for

[52]For an interesting discussion of how female slaves were used to incorporate male slaves and ensure their continued loyalty in the Western Sudan see Martin A. Klein, "Women in Slavery in the Western Sudan," in *Women and Slavery*, 82-84.
[53]PP, C4957, "Statement of the Modakeke, 28 November 1886."

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

instance, had gone to war or been killed in combat. Richard Lander noted that most of the chiefs he met during his first journey through Yorubaland in 1826 and 1827 were dead when he returned in 1830.[54] Johnson writes that "[t]he doleful lamentations . . . of thousands of widows and orphans were heartrending . . ."[55] Also, during the nineteenth century rising urbanization quickly depleted farmlands near the cities and farmers increasingly found it necessary to travel long distances to find cultivable land. This led to the location of many farms from three to fifteen miles outside the town walls.[56] Many farmers and their slaves and junior wives and children lived in these farm villages. The senior wives and those engaged in trade lived in the cities with their children.[57]

Another practice was that in the big households competing attention from multiple wives and children, as well as ritual obligations, reduced contacts between fathers and their children. Ibadan traditions say that Oluyole (*fl.*1835-47) had so many wives and slaves that they stole and sold from among their number to him.[58] In Ekiti, rituals barred some kings from seeing new babies. At Ado, for instance, pregnant royal wives must leave the palace to stay with their natal relatives and foreign wives with friends, until their babies were born. Some wives never returned to live in the palace. By this, Ado princes and princesses had double descents deriving from their membership of the royal family, as well as the household of their birth.[59] In some ways, this double descent in Yorubaland, as among the Asante, limited paternal rights to a child and gave mothers the primary responsibility of socializing their offspring. Thus, it was not uncommon for wives to live apart from their husbands and to socialize their children in ways different from those raised under the fathers' supervision. This residential system is reflected in religious and linguistic practices, associated with the several nineteenth-century Yoruba compounds.

Trans-ethnic (mixed) marriages provided a basis for other cultural ties. Foreign wives came with their cults which they added to the ritual repertoire

[54]Lander/Lander, *Journal*, vol. 1.

[55]Johnson, *History*, 200-201, 205. In 1855, as Ijaye army headed for war in Sabe area, the women invoked Orisa to protect their soldiers. Cf. CMS, CA2/077, Charles Phillips, journal, 22 March 1855.

[56]Alvan Millson, "The Yoruba Country, West Africa," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 13(1891), 577-87; A. L. Mabogunje, "Some Comments on Land Tenure in Egba Division, Western Nigeria," *Africa* 31(1961), 258-69; and Niara Sudarkasa, *Where Women Work: a Study of Yoruba in the Market Place and in the Home* (Ann Arbor, 1973), 31.

[57]See Lander, *Records of Clapperton*, 2:197.

[58]Johnson, *History*, 307.

[59]See Lloyd, *Yoruba Land Law* (London, 1962), 192. Tradition also forbids the Elejelu (king) of Ijelu-Ekiti from seeing a new baby. Interviews with Madams Comfort Ogunleye, Ijelu, 30 June 2001; Abigail Ajibade and Marian Iyanda, Omu-Ekiti 24 June 2001.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of host communities.[60] One of the earliest links between women and Orisa concerns the marriage around the sixteenth century of Alaafin Oluaso of Oyo and Arugba Ifa (carrier of Ifa), an Awori woman. When the couple's son became ruler, Arugba introduced Ifa and related cult objects (Aje, Opon, Ajere, Osun, Esu, and Iroke) into Oyo.[61]

Identity transformations among the Ijebu and Egba have also been attributed to marriage alliances between the two groups. At Igbore (Egba), for instance, traditions claim their ancestors left Ile-Ife due to an outbreak of warfare, and wandered through the Egba forest before finally settling down at Orile-Igbore. As refugees, they did not travel with their wives. In a bid to avert their extinction by lack of reproduction, the men approached the neighboring Ijebu towns of Ipara, Isarun, Isara, Ogere, and Akaka for women. Those without the resources to marry, seized Ijebu women. Marital links between the Igbore and Ijebu is memorialized in an *oriki* (praise poem), where Igbore is described as *Ọlọjọ, ọmọ Ijebu* (Olojo, offspring of Ijebu.)[62]

Opportunities available for women to transport their cults and induct friends and children marked one basis for the networking of orisa worship and birth of Yoruba ethnic consciousness. Apart from the freeborn/slave divide, Yoruba wives were ranked based on the length of a woman's marriage into a family and her spiritual prowess. While the longest married woman is also the most senior, a junior wife could use her ritual endowment to assume high status. Senior wives had responsibility for organizing the household and supervising untitled and junior wives. Elite wives played an important role in the state. They also constituted scales through which palace politics could be gauged. Thus for Buganda and Dahomey, Musisi and Bay show that royal wives played important roles in balancing internal and regional politics.[63] At Oyo there were about 140 titled royal wives, each with designated ritual assignments and the performance of their assigned tasks, in addition to empowering them also sustained Oyo administration. It was their task to train members of the royal family about ritual practices and court etiquette, and the fate of many Yoruba chiefs depended on how faithfully these Orisa wives discharged their responsibilities.[64]

[60]Barnes, "Ritual, Power, and Outside Knowledge."

[61]Johnson, *History*, 158–59.

[62]Interviews with Oba Babington-Ashaye, the Ologere of Ogere, 1 September 1981, and J. Odusanya, Ijebu-Igbo, 29 August 1981. Cf. Babatunde Sofela, "Egba-Ijebu Relations during the Nineteenth Century" (M.A., University of Ibadan, 1982).

[63]Musisi, "Elite Polygyny" and Edna Bay, *Wives of the Leopard: Gender, Politics, and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey* (Charlottesville, 1998).

[64]Johnson, *History*, 60-67, 391 and Solomon Babayemi, *Topics on Oyo History* (Lagos, 1991), 97-108.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A similar trajectory is evident in the spread of Agemo, the leading Ijebu cult to Egba through women who had sought ritual help against infertility from Ijebu priests. Where the assistance was successful, such women, in admiration of Agemo, dedicated themselves and their children to it. The cult also spread through marriage networks. Egba wives of Ijebu origin, while obliged to participate in Egba rituals, continued to patronize Agemo as their ancestral cult. In these two ways, Agemo gained following in Egba border towns like Odo, Igbore, and Ila, where Ijebu women and cultural contact were prevalent. Through Ijebu wives, ritual visits and holiday exchanges between Egba and Ijebu towns became common. Ijebu ritual entrepreneurs came to lead Egba worshippers during Agemo festivals, and the Egba visited Ijebu for ritual apprenticeship. Thus began annual pilgrimages and ritual tours of Alagemo between the two districts. Interactions among the Alagemo in both districts is contained in two *oriki* recorded at Odo: *Ijebu re o ile baba wa o* (This is Ijebu, our fatherland) and *Lúmésì ma l'ànà, àní kobá ma l'ànà, ko l'ànà títí dé Ijebu Ode . . . Ẹbí Ijebu . . . ọmọ elediẹ tyí iyin bí awo kùgbékùgbé* (Lumesi make the way, and when you do, extend it to Ijebu Ode . . . Ijebu associates . . . descendants of poultry keeper whose hens lay eggs like the partridge).[65]

It is plausible that Yoruba women were better religious adherents than men during the nineteenth century. A study of archival materials on nineteenth-century Yoruba religious behavior reveals that women appeared to have dominated church attendance, patronage of orisa shrines, and exhibition of cult objects.[66] In 1851, after nearly 27 years in Sierra Leone, William Odusina Moore reunited with his family, from which he had been separated at the fall of Isaga in 1824. Initially, his mother, enslaved at the same time, was ransomed by relatives and taken to Oba, a neighboring village. Around 1826 she was recaptured at the fall of Oba and sold to an Ijebu woman. After several years in slavery, through the aid of a guide she came to an Egba town. Unfortunately, her guide was treacherous and wanted to sell her, so she sought protection from local chiefs. Afraid to commit herself to another guide, and not daring to leave the town alone, she remained there for many years. At length the town also fell, and she was captured for the third time and sold once again to Ijebu. She passed between a few owners

[65]Interviews with Chief M. Oyapinda, Oluwo of Odo and J. O. Lamupejo, Odofin Ikija, 26 August 1981. Cf. Sofela, "Egba-Ijebu Relations." Also see Karin Barber, "Oríkì, Women and the Proliferation and Merging of Orisa," *Africa* 60(1990), 313–37.

[66]See "The Emancipados and Their Fatherland," CMI 6(December 1855), 276; Peter McKenzie, *Hail Orisha! a Phenomenology of a West African Religion in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leiden, 1997); and Peel, "Gender in Yoruba Religious Change," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32(2002), 136-66.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and survived bouts of illnesses and two attempts to kill her during ritual sacrifices.[67] For her sufferings during the near three decades of enslavement, she sought refuge in religion and collected several *orisa* of which she had "a bag of idols" at her manumission in 1852.[68]

Resorting to multiple Orisa was common in nineteenth-century Yorubaland, especially in polygynous houses where the wives came with their own cults. In 1867, Thomas B. Wright of the CMS visited a Lagos woman whose "room [wa]s filled with every kind of rubbish—calabashes of every description, & pots of various kinds—every one of which is a representative of an Orisa."[69] This produced orisa clusters that some Yoruba compounds became a sort of ritual Olympics—temples of multiple divinities. The linkage between warfare, slavery and the dispersal, and later interactions of Orisa practices and people, especially women, during the nineteenth century, leads one to the conclusion that women and interethnic marriages were central, not only to the networking of Orisa rituals, but to the emergence of a structured pan-Yoruba Orisa worship, a distinct feature of Yoruba identity.

VI

Body marking constituted one way of defining African cultural identities. Among the Yoruba, markings, given modern terminologies, were of two types. First, tattoos (approx: *ara fínfín*), involving a range of incisions and/or paintings on the body and varied with class, age, gender, and fashion. In 1863 Richard Burton, a British diplomat at Abeokuta, described the artistic elements of Yoruba tattoo, which he noted varied from "the diminutive prick to the great gash and the large boil-like lumps" in the images of "tortoise, alligators, lizards, starts, concentric circles, lozenge, right lines, welts, grouts of gore, marble or button like knots of flesh and elevated scars, resembling scalds."[70] Tattoos also formed part of Yoruba chieftaincy and medical rites. On installation, the Oyo army chief Are-Ona Kakanfo receives 201 incisions (*gbẹrẹ*) on his head so that medicine could be rubbed into his veins to make him fearless and courageous.[71] As living symbols, tattoos, particularly those associated with fashion, usually moved with time based on generational and fashion preferences.[72]

[67]On human sacrifice see Olatunji Ojo, "Slavery and Human Sacrifice in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland: Ondo c.1870–1894," *JAH* 46(2005), 379–404.
[68]Barber, *Oshiele*, 55, 125-36 and CMS, CA2/043, Gollmer, journal, 15 September 1856.
[69]CMS, CA2/097, Thomas B. Wright, journal, 1 May 1867.
[70]Burton, *Abbeokuta*, 104-06
[71]Johnson, *History*, 74.
[72]On Yoruba marks see Lander, *Records*, 1:283-84, 2:215-17; Peter C. Lloyd, "Osifekunde of Ijebu" in Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, 1967), 255-58; William B. Baikie, *Narrative*

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The other type, facial and/or torso scarification (*ilà bibu/kíkọ*), though similar to tattoo, involves cutting or making an incision into the skin, and then allowing the wound to heal, leaving a permanent scar. Scarification refers specifically to ethnic and lineage identities, like those of the Alaafin and Basorun in Oyo, who had marks unique to them. In an interview with French scholar Marie d'Avézac Macaya, in 1839, Osifekunde, an Ijebu Yoruba slave, among other things described major scarifications in the Lagos hinterland and their relationship to ethnicity, age, and gender. Marking, "done for a fee by an artist . . . called alakila [*oníkọlà* or *olóòlà*] between ages six and seven, is a kind of insignia, a national badge, uniform for all individuals of the same group and different from one people to another so as to give each one a distinctive characteristic."[73]

The demarcation between tattoo and scarification is not absolute. In certain respects, tattoos connote ethnic identity since the symbols or images drawn on the skin have geopolitical specificities. The same applies to scarification. Among the Yoruba pigment was introduced into the scarification opening to give it a shining black color and by that to translate an essential ethnopolitical object to a fashion and beauty symbol. Hence, many people equated facial markings with beauty and lack of it with ugliness. In Oyo, for instance, marks peculiar to elite families while reinforcing ethnic differences also signified the wealth, beauty, and class status of their members. Thus it is not uncommon that a phrase like *alátílówó kọ'là* (he who has no money to procure marks) serves as a metaphor for poverty. Finally, depending on the expertise of a tattooer and how well the skin heals, poorly-made incisions could transform into major body marks similar to cases of modern cosmetic surgery gone bad. This paper follows many contemporary writers who use tattoos, "tribal marks," and scarifications interchangeably.

As citizenship symbols, body markings allowed for the incorporation of strangers into a community. Similar to modern routes to citizenship, the

of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwora and Binue Commonly Known as the Niger and Tsadda in 1854 (London, 1966 [1856]), 272; Burton, *Abeokuta*, 104-06; Roper, "What I Saw in Africa," 3436; Stone, *Afric's Forest*, 30-31; J. W. Scott Macfie, "A Yoruba Tattooer," *Man* 67/68(1913), 121-22; Johnson, *History*, 104-09; Oroge, "Institution of Slavery," 116-23; Cornelius Adepegba "A Survey of Nigerian Body Markings and their Relationship to other Nigerian Arts" (PhD, Indiana University, 1976), 82-89, 111-17 and plates xx-xxv; Adebayo Faleti, "Yoruba Facial Marks," *Gangan* (1977), 22-27; Henry Drewal, "Art or Accident: Yoruba Body Artists and their Deity Ogun" in Sandra Barnes, ed., *Africa's Ogun: Old World and New* (Bloomington, 1997), 235-60; Moyo Okediji, "Yoruba Facialographical Art and Oyo Expansionism" in *War and Peace*, 487-96; and Olubimpe Ayeni, "Observations on the Medical and Social Aspects of Scarification in Sub-Saharan Africa," 2004, www.med.uottawa.ca/medweb/hetenyi/ayeni.htm

[73]Lander, *Records* 2:215 and Lloyd, "Osifekunde of Ijebu," 255-56.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Yoruba, usually marked people during childhood, analogous to modern day conferment of citizenship at birth. Otherwise, scarification was carried out on those who missed out at infancy and immigrants (e.g., slaves) by which they got citizenship through naturalization. For instance, in the case of Osundina, an 1892 Ondo Christian baptismal candidate, his mother had been taken and enslaved at Ife, where she bore him. The mother returned to Ondo at an unspecified date, after which Osundina joined her in 1884. Although no information exists about his paternity, unless his Ondo-ness was concealed at Ife to prevent bullying, the fact that he had no facial marks gave him the appearance of an Ife, who as we shall see below seldom had marks.[74] So, shortly after Osundina returned to Ondo, he was marked "to remove the scandal that he is a slave."[75] Like national passports that must be uniform to every citizen of a country, free citizens of a Yoruba state usually had similar marks that people with divergent features were viewed as slaves/foreigners. In effect, Osundina's initial lack of Ondo marks symbolized his "alien" origin and unsuitability for Ondo citizenship rights. In this sense, I share Lovejoy's perception that tattoos sometimes separated free-born from slaves.[76]

By willingly submitting to scarifications, a foreigner could become a naturalized citizen. In other instances, however, as the case of the Ijesa girl cited in the opening paragraph reveals, strangers could also be forcefully scarred, and their identity changed permanently. How often this happened is hard to ascertain, but in a region where not everyone/district had marks, it could have been a widespread practice. At Oyo every member of the royal family including home-born slave (Yoruba: *ẹrú ìbílẹ*) received the *ẹyọ*, composed of two long lines running though the length of their arms.[77] In southern and eastern Yorubaland markings also served to incorporate naturalized citizens. Rev. James Johnson of the CMS noted widespread purchase, adoption, and scarring of child slaves by rich and childless Egba and Ijebu women, while David O. Asabia and J. O. Adegbesan point to the prevalence of Ijesa marks in Owo towns.[78] The latter were products of sexual liaisons between Ijesa soldiers and Owo women following a decade of

[74]Johnson, *History*, 108 and Michael A. Fabunmi, *Ife: The Genesis of Yoruba Race* (Lagos), 114-17.

[75]NAI, Phillips 3/5, "Name of Baptismal Candidates, Ondo, 1892."

[76]Lovejoy, "Scarification and the Loss of History in the African Diaspora," paper presented at York University, Toronto, July 2005, 7, 14.

[77]See Ade Ogunmefun, *Yoruba Legends* (London, 1929), 2-3. Also Johnson, *History*, 106n.

[78]CMS, CA2/056, Johnson to Wright, 21 June 1878 and David O. Asabia and J.O. Adegbesan, *Idoani Past and Present: the Story of One Yoruba Kingdom* (Ibadan, 1970), 5-6.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Ijesa military campaigning in northeastern Yorubaland in the 1870s. Adopted child slaves had the status of home-born slaves and enjoyed fairly good treatment. They could hold family properties in their own right, whereas other slaves depended on their owners to access properties.[79]

While scarifications worked as citizenship symbols, they also aroused danger. As identity brands, markings, more than language/accent that could be learned/unlearned, allowed people to distinguish enemies from allies. Lovejoy has rightly remarked that due to their controversial implications tattoos represented memories that had to be concealed. Unlike modern identity symbols like social security numbers, drivers' licenses, national passports, and flags, which could be concealed or forged, body scarification is less susceptible to privacy and alteration. During warfare and religious rituals, when enemies were prone to attacks, facial marks conferred protection on allies. Robert Stone, a Baptist priest at Ijaye and Abeokuta in 1859/61 described the dangers of ethnic marks in Yorubaland:

> These tell-tale marks on the face make it quite impossible for strangers to conceal their identity and slaves rarely escape to the interior on that account. The fugitive is compelled to follow the roads leading through the towns and the gatekeepers recognize them by their face marks and their scanty outfit, and they are captured and returned to their masters. . . . [G]ate keepers are thoroughly posted in this kind of lore and they know the nationality of every one passing through their gates.[80]

Hence, as a form of punishment and disenfranchisement, criminals sometimes had their marks mutilated akin to tracking devices worn by criminals in North America and amputations in Islamic regions. One such punishment was meted out to Ogedengbe, the Ijesa warrior, when captured by Ibadan forces around 1860. Accused of violating his oath not to attack Ibadan, Ogunmola of Ibadan ordered that rough cuts be inflicted on his face as to form a broad patch, which gave him the appearance of a Bunu man. It is axiomatic that writers who met Ogedengbe in the 1880s referred to his rough scars.[81]

Notwithstanding the importance of scarifications, the notion of a seamless link between Yoruba ethnicity and tattoos could be misleading. A close

[79]Teslim O. Elias, *Nigerian Land Law* (4th ed.: London, 1971), 139; and E. O. Oloyede, "The Laws Relating to Children and Young Persons under the Customary and Statutory Laws of Nigeria" PhD., London, 1970), 209–10. Cf. Oroge, "Institution of Slavery," 135.
[80]Stone, *Afric's Forest*, 30-31. Also see Roper, "What I Saw in Africa," 3436.
[81]Johnson, *History*, 377. Also see Lander, *Records*, 1:283-84, 2:217.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

study shows that the various Yoruba marks could be classified into two families. First, the family of *àbàjà* and its varieties of *gọmbọ* and *kẹkẹ*, composed of a combination of a set of three or four vertical and horizontal lines and pricks on the cheek and face that are generally found west of Ile-Ife. *Àbàjà* was generic to Oyo, Egbado, Egba, Ijebu, and Owu, and similar to Igbomina marks.[82]

Marking patterns at Ife further demonstrate the fluctuations and transethnic relevance of Yoruba marks. The popular tradition is that Ife people had no facial markings until the nineteenth century, when they adopted the *àbàjà* marks of Oyo and Owu immigrants. This assertion is contradicted by archeological work. While more research into Ife marks is required, studies have identified three types of Ife art separated by whether or not they have facial marks and scarification patterns. Cornelius Adepegba argues that the stylistic differences in the art works represented stages of Ife dynastic changes, the oldest works with plain faces representing the Obatala dynasty and later works with long cicatrization for Oduduwa.[83] This theory has historical parallels. Ife traditions confirm the overthrow of the Obalufon group by foreigners led by Oduduwa, whose son or grandson Oranmiyan left to found Oyo.[84] Whether Oyo's *gombo* marks came from Ife immigrants we might not know. What it does say is that Ife people previously had marks, after which they were discontinued by a new dynasty around the tenth century, only to be reintroduced by Oyo immigrants after 1800. Overall, by the eighteenth century Oyo political and cultural dominance in western Yorubaland had created a cultural framework that protected the *alàbàjà* from enslavement.[85] The inclusion of non-Oyo districts in the *àbàjà* zone marked a step in the birth of pan-Yoruba identity.

Next to *àbàjà* was the *pélé*, popular in eastern Yorubaland, where Oyo culture was mitigated by Nupe, Igala, and Edo power. *Pélé* ranged from one deep stroke on each cheek in Ondo to three vertical lines in Ijesa and Ekiti, and multiple vertical lines like patches and Bassa-like cat whiskers found in Oworo and Bunu.[86] Also identical were the torso marks: *ẹbẹ* (abdominal) and *ọmọ* (dorsal), worn by the Ijebu and Egba and combined with their mutually intelligible accents spoken in towns around their common borders. During the Egba wars of the 1820s Ogunbona, a young Ikija-Egba man, near the Ijebu border was ambushed by an Ijebu platoon. In distress he

[82]Johnson, *History*, 18, 107-09.
[83]Adepegba, "Yoruba Art and Art History" in Deji Ogunremi and Biodun Adediran, eds., *Culture and Society in Yorbaland* (Ibadan, 1998), 159-61.
[84]I.A. Akinjogbin and Emmanuel A. Ayandele, "Yorubaland up to 1800" in Obaro Ikime, ed., *Groundwork of Nigeria History* (Ibadan, 1980), 121-43.
[85]PP, C4957, Moloney to Rowe, 12 May 1881, encl. in Rowe to Kimberley, 2 July 1881,
[86]Koelle, *Polyglotta Africana*, 6.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

denied his Egba origin, claiming to be Ijebu. There was no way of faulting his alibi for he had *ẹbẹ* marks and spoke Ijebu accent fluently. Consequently, he was enlisted in the Ijebu/Ife army that operated against Egba towns.[87]

The recognition of only two scarification brands rather than many, points to Yoruba cultural similarities. In the long run, certain facial marks symbolized pan-Yoruba ethnicity. In the course of the early nineteenth-century Yoruba wars, the Oyo were easily identified by their tattoos. This phase of the warfare had an Islamic bias, and perhaps for Islam's transnational appeal it became fashionable for people to embrace tattoos that reflected this new ideology. At this time, *pélé*—three short vertical lines of about an inch long on each cheek, not distinctive of any group, became popular. Pioneers of this new mark included Yoruba Muslims who opposed ethnic divisions, but loathed remaining plain-faced. Hence *pélé* replaced *jàmgbàdì* or *mànde* and *túrè* "distinctive of aliens naturalized amongst the Yorubas."[88] All this lends credence to the primacy of fashion and social change. *Pélé* as a symbol of Muslim and pan-ethnic identity appealed to those whose fashion and religious views reflected the political and cultural realities of early nineteenth-century Oyo.

Yet not every Yoruba group had facial markings, thereby limiting its role as "the" symbol of ethnic identity. Except for a few lineages, facial marks were generally unpopular in Kuramo (Lagos/Awori), Ikale, and for a long time, Ife. Hence the Ife were nicknamed *Ojú r'ábẹ sá, wọn kò gbọdọ f'ojú kan abẹ; sọbọrọ b'onílà je; sọbọrọ mi wù mí; ibi dandan ni k'ó má a bá alábẹ* (the face abhors the knife and must avoid it. The plain face condemns a marked one; I love my unmarked face. Woe unto the tattooer).[89]

After 1880 the number of plain-faced Yoruba increased because the ethnic wars which had made markings imperative ended. The end of warfare made certain ethnic specifications no longer fashionable. Like the Muslim marks mentioned above, absence of marks reduced ethnic tension in post-war Yorubaland and reflected the simultaneous rise of Yoruba identity consciousness. Secondly, tattoos also declined because of social change. The loss of "tattoos" in the Yoruba diaspora reverberated in Yorubaland. Following the ascendancy of repatriated ex-slaves to elite positions during the second half of the nineteenth century and most of the colonial period, there began a conflation of plain faces with "modernity," "civilization," and "progress, and Christianity." In some areas people with facial marks were

[87]Irving, "Ijebu Country," 71-72; Ajisafe, *History*, 61-62, and Olufemi O. Ayantuga, "Ijebu and Its Neighbours" (PhD., London, 1963), 31.

[88]Johnson, *History*, 107. These marks probably came with Mandingo and Kemberi immigrants.

[89]Lloyd, "Osifekunde," 257; and Fabunmi, *Ife*, 114-17

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

looked on as conservative, backward, and sometimes bullied. In schools, for instance, pupils with facial marking were mocked with having wrestled with wild cats. Finally, the decline of marking, as with second-generation and child slaves absorbed into the culture of the adopting community rather than that of their parents represents what Lovejoy and Orlando Patterson call the loss of memory or social death among the creole population.[90]

VII

The above analysis has shown how warfare and population shift during the era of the slave trade altered Yoruba ethnic and cultural boundaries and produced incentives for state formation and the creation of new and broader ethnic loyalties. While older ethnicities did not disappear, situations were such that new identities were required to survive this age of confusion. Many of the Ibadan, Ijaye, and Abeokuta soldiers, among others, came from mixed ethnic backgrounds, but fought mostly as "Oyo" or "Egba" and attacked towns described as such. That is, the notion of dual ethnic loyalty was real, mutually reinforcing, even if antagonistic. Military successes enabled composite and complex towns to rise, and powerful soldiers to accumulate a large pool of wives drawn from many ethnicities. Much as political instability and polygynous marriages strengthened the power of elite men and their surrogates, both also worked to bring people that hitherto were avowed enemies together. Ethnic and cultural heterogeneity began to break down as foreign wives settled down and assimilated into their husbands' communities. They learned new languages/accents and ways of doing things. Unlike the ethnic differences between many spouses and cowives, their offspring constituted a new Yoruba generation socialized as a plural society. In essence, several nineteenth-century towns and households were multicultural.In them, a range of orisa—old and new, local and foreign—was visible and patronized by everyone. Also, depending on where the wives came from, the more diverse the places of origin, the greater number of accents and aesthetic representations therein.

Tattoo, as shown above, was the Yoruba primary art of identity representation. So there is a correlation between multiple tattoo brands and ethnic plurality. However, a closer study shows close similarities in the tattoos—an indication of cultural borrowings—that one might speculate there were perhaps not more than two Yoruba tattoo zones each, to the west and east of Ife. Tattoos spread as wives, especially slaves, in the absence of a father, decided when and what tattoo a child got. Refugees also crossed territorial

[90]Lovejoy, "Scarification and Loss of History" and Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: a Comparative Study* (Cambridge, 1982).

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

boundaries, after which they adopted new tattoos or lent their fashion to their hosts. So, when the Yoruba might have drawn distinction among themselves, close residential proximity, interethnic marriages, heterogeneous cities, complex/composite political organizations, and related tattoos gradually made the differences less apparent. At Ibadan, everyone east of Ile-Ife became "Ijesa," while the people of eastern Yorubaland treated those living west of Ife as Oyo and south of the Ondo/Ibadan parallel as Egba or Ijebu. Cultural interactions reconfigured and created a worldview that many Yoruba could relate to, but which the majority of outsiders could not distinguish. How well people understood differences among the Yoruba was revealed in biographies as individuals made sense of their environment. Unlike Crowther, whose anxiety, partly for his youthfulness, rose as he encountered new Orisa and "foreign" accents south of Oyo district, Ali Eisami, a slave of Kanuri origin did not differentiate among the Yoruba as he headed toward the coast for shipment around 1818.[91]

[91]H. F. C. Smith, D. M. Last, and Gambo Gubio, "Ali Eisami Gazirmabe of Bornu" in *Africa Remembered*, 199-216; and Crowther to Jowett.

https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.0.0015 Published online by Cambridge University Press