

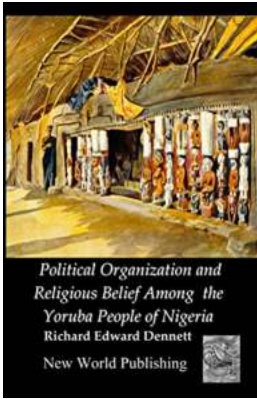
# Political Organization And Religious Belief Among The Yoruba People Of Nigeria



The Yoruba people of Nigeria have a rich and diverse cultural heritage. One aspect of their culture that has been of significant importance throughout their history is the intricate connection between political organization and religious belief.

## **The Yoruba Political Structure**

The Yoruba people have a unique political structure that combines both centralized and decentralized elements. Traditionally, they were organized into city-states, each governed by an oba (king) who was considered the supreme ruler. These city-states were further divided into smaller units led by chiefs and local leaders.



## Political Organization and Religious Belief Among the Yoruba People of Nigeria by Ari Kelman (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 45321 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Print length : 248 pages  
Lending : Enabled



The Yoruba political system is hierarchical, with power and authority flowing from the oba downwards. However, contrary to complete centralization, the oba's power is limited by the Oyomesi, a council of nobles who advise and keep the oba in check.

### Religious Beliefs and Deities

The Yoruba people have a strong belief in various deities, known as Orishas. These deities are considered intermediaries between the human world and the spiritual realm. Each deity represents different aspects of life, such as fertility, prosperity, and protection.

Worship of these deities takes place in shrines and sacred groves, which are considered the abode of the gods. Religious practices among the Yoruba include sacrifices, divination, and ceremonies to honor the deities. The religious beliefs and practices have permeated various aspects of Yoruba society, including politics.

### The Relationship Between Politics and Religion

The Yoruba political structure intertwines with religious beliefs in several ways. Firstly, the oba is not only a political leader but also a spiritual leader who acts as an intermediary between the people and the gods. The oba's legitimacy is derived from his connection to the divine.

The oba's authority is reinforced through religious rituals and ceremonies. For example, during the annual Eyo festival, the oba is believed to embody the spirit of the ancestors, signifying his divinely ordained position of power.

Additionally, the Oyomesi, the council of nobles, also has a religious dimension. The council is composed of influential priests who are believed to possess supernatural powers and ability to communicate with the gods. Their role is to ensure that the oba governs according to the will of the gods.

## **The Impact on Governance**

The intertwining of politics and religion among the Yoruba people has significant implications for governance. Decisions made by the oba and his council are not solely based on rationality or human desires but also on what is perceived as the will of the gods.

This belief system provides a level of legitimacy to the ruling class, as they are seen as divinely appointed. It also reinforces the notion of social order and stability, as deviating from the divine will is believed to result in negative consequences.

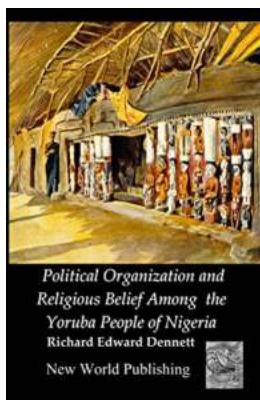
## **Adaptation to Modern Times**

Although the Yoruba society has undergone significant modernization and Western influences, the political organization and religious beliefs continue to play a role in contemporary governance.

Many Yoruba politicians still seek the endorsement of traditional rulers, such as the oba, in order to gain legitimacy and support. Religious rituals and ceremonies are also incorporated into political events to reaffirm the connection between the spiritual and political realms.

The Yoruba people of Nigeria have a unique cultural heritage that intertwines political organization and religious belief. Their traditional political structure, centered around the oba, is reinforced by a religious system that seeks divine guidance in governance. These intricate connections continue to shape the Yoruba society's understanding of power, authority, and social order.

Despite the challenges of modernization, the Yoruba people have managed to adapt their traditional practices to the ever-changing political landscape, ensuring the continued relevance of their political and religious beliefs in contemporary Nigeria.



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Richard Edward Dennett was born in Valparaiso, Chile in 1857. He was the son of Reverend R. Dennett MA DCL (1829 to 1908), who was a rector and private

patron of Ashton Church near Chudleigh, Devon, for sixteen years from 1881 to 1897. Dennett worked for Thomas Wilson, Sons & Co., a shipping company based in Kingston-upon-Hull, from 1875 until 1879. He left the UK for Africa in the employment of Hatton & Cookson in 1879. This trading company was responsible for bringing resources such as ivory into the country.

However, he began to notice the harsh treatment given to the people of the Congo and in 1886 he drew attention to these irregularities through his letters to the Manchester Guardian. However, he also edited a manuscript newspaper called "Congo Mirror" and accused the Congo officials of the murders and atrocities being committed. He was to become an active member of the Congo Reform Association.

Dennett left the Congo when he joined the Nigerian Forest Service in 1902, but felt that he did not understand the Nigerian people as he had understood the Congolese. Between 1886 and 1906, Dennett wrote and published three books and numerous articles in Britain about life in the Congo. Much of this material is ethnographic but other articles discuss trade. Between 1903 and 1916 he published a number of ethnographic articles on Nigerian language and ethnography. During this time he became friends with Mary Kingsley, a writer, explorer and advocate of African culture.

Dennett retired to Britain on a pension in 1918 and died in 1921, when he must have been 63 or 64 years old. Letters addressed to his publisher, George Macmillan, and held at the Reading University archives, demonstrate that he was still writing and planning further publications at the time of his death. His later letters are written on the headed notepaper of the Mary Kingsley Society. A letter dated 6th January 1921 demonstrates the more esoteric side of his work. It reads 'I enclose a Ms. "The Soul in Sound" which I should like you to publish - it is an attempt to reconcile the order in Creation (Genesis) with the order of the colours in the spectrum, production, propagation and personal pronouns, in the form of an alphabet with the letters in their natural groups...'. His final letter, dated April

23rd 1921, is addressed from a London nursing home and reads, 'as you can see from the above address, I am in a nursing home and with very little chance of living any length of time. I have written a little book called 'Self and Universal Order'.

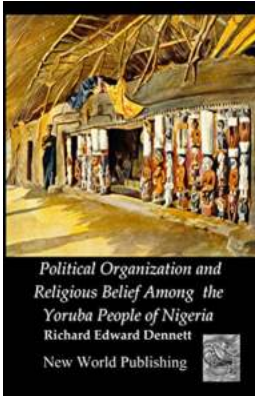
This book is a detailed account written by a sympathetic European observer who spent many years studying West African folklore, culture, and religion. It is useful because it goes into much greater detail than any other previous books from this period about Bantu and Yoruba spiritual practices and philosophy. This work was originally published by Richard Edward Dennett in 1910 by Mac Millan and Company, London and New York under the title of: Nigerian Studies. For the readers and specially for those interested in the Caribbean African culture, this book is a primary source of information and a usefull tool for understanding the Yoruba folklore, culture, religion, and its legacy in the Americas.

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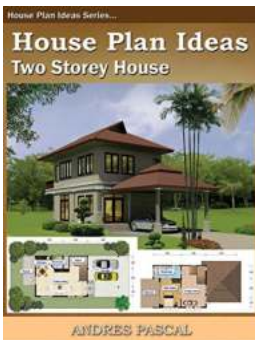
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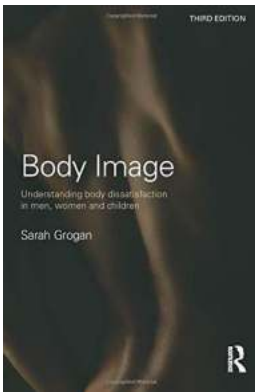
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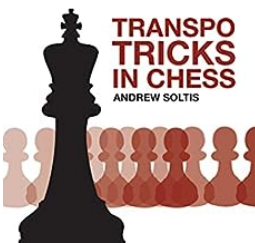
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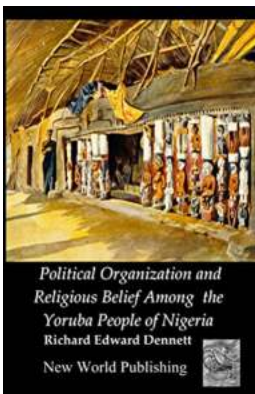
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