

## The Concept of Planning in Yoruba Traditional Religion

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**Abstract:** Planning, which is a prepared set of attitudes and actions, requires forethought. Forethought in turn is a characteristic of rational man. This latter is what the some imperialists and even missionaries deny of the African, before, during and even in the post colonial period of Africa. This and many other characteristics of humans, such as the concepts of God and time were denied of the African man. However, scholars of religion and anthropologists, Western and African, had successfully established that Africans have explicit and clear concept of God. The wide-acclaimed religiosity of Africans in the modern period has corroborated their efforts. The concept of planning, however, have not been so established. The failure to do this may be a factor in the economic, political and other prevalent problems in Africa. Since the concept of planning is intricately linked with the concept of time, this was the first to be established in this study. The traditional system of counting days and months in Yoruba has religious origin just like it is in the Gregorian calendar. Three forms of management planning are then explored: Schedule of duties, management of human resources, and management of money and other material resources. Perhaps, if the Western form of planning that the Africans have been trying to copy unsuccessfully is fused with the traditional, the concept will become clearer.

**Key words:** Concept, planning in Yoruba, traditional religion, human resources

### INTRODUCTION

In order to succeed in every endeavour in life, there is need to plan. To plan is to make arrangement for doing or using something (Hornby *et al.*, 1963) to consider in advance; to devise a programme of action; design for a construction or layout, system etc. (The New Webster, 1995). Planning is a process by which one looks ahead and in which a course of action is consciously chosen from available alternatives for the purpose of achieving desired results. Planning is of three broad categories- strategic for overall corporate planning (long ranged), year to year i.e. tactical planning and functional planning (planning by departmentalisation) (Ranson, 1991). Individuals and families plan their various activities. There is plan for education, marriage, children, business, examination. etc. Private and government establishments do plan their programmes and strategies for achieving their goals. As at now, ministries, departments or units for planning are established and manned with professional planners and there is planned economy, Planned Parenthood and so on. In diagnosing administration, planning has become one of the leading keynotes for action.

In April 1975, the International Labour Office in collaboration with Hungarian Chamber of Commerce held a round table on career planning and development

featuring 30 participants from management circles (Horvath, 1926). This study sets out to show that planning is prevalent in Yoruba Traditional Religion even though there is no documentation that is handy to encompass the various aspects. The key aspects of such planning are highlighted.

### PLANNING WITHIN YORUBA TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY

Yoruba people organize their life and plan for all things they want to do within the traditional community. This planning is first and foremost noticeable in the way they reckon days, seasons and times for social and cultural uses.

**Calendar:** In Yoruba Language, there is no word for translating calendar. However, the ingredients in a calendar as obtained in English translation are contained in Yoruba Traditional Religion. Analysis of administration reveals planning in their reckoning of time, days, months and year. The concept of calendar is part of the planning strategies of the administration (Awosusi, 2006). The following statement summarises the planning strategy.

*Yoruba maa n fi eto si ojo,  
 Gbogbo nkan lo ni akoko*

**Translation:**

Yoruba plans the day and time,  
There is time and season for everything.

Before the advent of European culture and the introduction of their calendar, the Yoruba people reckon days, and the months of the year. Under this arrangement, various *Irunmale* are claimed to be worshipped on specific days, at certain months and seasons.

The reckoning of days (without the label of *Irunmale*) is as follows:

Yoruba	Translation
<i>Oni</i>	Today.
<i>Ola</i>	Tomorrow
<i>Otunla</i>	Day after tomorrow.
<i>Ojo merin oni</i>	4 days time
<i>Ojo marun oni</i>	5 days time
<i>Ojo mefa oni</i>	6 days time
<i>Ojo meje oni</i>	6 days time
<i>Ojo mejo oni</i>	7 days time
<i>Ojo mesan oni</i>	8 days time
<i>Ojo mewa oni</i>	9 days time

This advance reckoning of time can be done for a whole month or a year depending upon what is specifically required. As there is reckoning into the future, reckoning is also done into the past as follows:

Yoruba	Translation
<i>Oni</i>	Today.
<i>Ana</i>	Yesterday.
<i>Ijeta</i>	2 days ago
<i>Ijerin</i>	3 days ago.
<i>Ijarun</i>	4 days ago.
<i>Ijefa</i>	5 days ago.
<i>Ijeje</i>	6 days ago
<i>Ijejo</i>	7 days ago
<i>Ijesan</i>	8 days ago.
<i>Ijewa</i>	9 days ago

In terms of unit calculations, certain figures are highly symbolic in religious planning. These days are three, five, seven, nine.

<i>Ojo meta</i>	-3 days
<i>Ojo marun</i>	-5 days.
<i>Ojo meje</i>	-7 days
<i>Ojo mesan</i>	-9 days.

After the contact of the Yoruba with the British, the colonialists and missionaries did not find it difficult to note the reckoning in their own language even though the days of the week have specific *Irunmale* that are worshipped. The months also have specific Yoruba names and they are arranged according to the ascent of the moon festival of *Irunmale* or weather or season.

After the contact with the British and Western education has been introduced into Yorubaland, names of the months of the year in the British calendar had Yoruba names attached to them.

Since then, these names have been taught in schools and in institutions of higher learning as shown below:

*Osu ninu odun*-months of the year (Ayorinde, 1974).

Osu Yoruba	Month.
1. <i>Osu Sere</i>	January
2. <i>Osu Erele</i>	February.
3. <i>Osu Erena</i>	March.
4. <i>Osu Igbe</i>	April.
5. <i>Osu Ebibi</i>	May
6. <i>Osu Okudu tabi aga</i>	June
7. <i>Osu Agemo</i>	July
8. <i>Osu Ogun</i>	August
9. <i>Osu Owewe</i>	September.
10. <i>Osu Owaara</i>	October
11. <i>Osu Belu</i>	September.
12. <i>Osu Ope</i>	December.

The days of the week have Yoruba names tagged to them. Any of the days have some Spiritual Entities as worship days. From the explanations of Ayorinde on the days, the Table 1 is hereby put up as summary.

Difficulties have arisen in respect of the name given to the months. Yoruba reckon with lunar months which are thirteen. How can Yoruba now have twelve months? The names given to the months are not known by many people except people who were taught in schools. The names neither feature in Yoruba proverbs, a collection of sayings in which most of prominent items of data in general Yoruba culture are prevalent nor in general discourse.

Table 1: The days have some Spiritual Entities as worship days.

Yoruba day	English	Comments
<i>Ojo Aje</i>	Monday	<i>Aje</i> is the god linked with wealth, money
<i>Ojo Isegun</i>	Tuesday	<i>Ogun</i> is worshipped
<i>Ojo Riru (RU)</i>	Wednesday	Ifa is worshipped
<i>Ojo Asesedaye</i>		
<i>Tabi Ojobo</i>	Thursday	<i>Sango</i> is worshipped. Day <i>Moremi</i> gave birth to <i>Asesedaye</i> also named <i>Oluorogbo</i>
<i>Ojo Eti</i>	Friday	Travelling is not recommended, or the commencement of any new project
<i>Ojo Abameta</i>	Saturday	<i>Esu</i> is worshipped
<i>Ojo Aiku</i>	Sunday	<i>Orisa-nla</i> is worshipped. <i>Egungun</i> festival also takes off on the day

Table 2: Bi iwadii wa se danuko awon osu-Odun Yoruba niyi:

Geesi	Eto osu ni eni-eji	Oruko miiran (Oyo)	Oruko Orisa (Oyo)	Onkonipaise-Agbe (oyo)
		<i>Alemu; Imole</i>		
December	<i>Eta/Odun</i>	<i>Safare</i>		<i>Beere</i>
January	<i>Ejila Odun</i>	<i>Ponpola</i>		<i>Jelega</i>
February	<i>Okanta Odun</i>	<i>Ekun</i>	-	<i>Igbe-dide</i>
March	<i>Ewa Odun</i>	-	<i>Agidan tabi Mole</i>	
April	<i>Esan Odun</i>	-	<i>Irawe, Oosacila</i>	-
May	<i>Ejo Odun</i>	<i>Osu Aga</i>	<i>Eegun</i>	-
June	<i>Eje Odun</i>	-	<i>Oro</i>	-
July	<i>Efa Odun</i>	-	<i>Sango</i>	<i>Isu titun</i>
August	<i>Arun Odun</i>	-	<i>Orisa Oko</i>	-
September	<i>Erin Odun</i>	-	<i>Ebo-Basonun</i>	-
October	<i>Eta Odun</i>	-	<i>Ebo Agbaagba</i>	-
November	<i>Eji Odun</i>	-	<i>Ebo Onira, Oya</i>	-
December	<i>Eko Odun</i>	-	-	<i>Eekan</i>

If *Agemo* is peculiar to Ijebu, how would a month for all Yoruba with several subgroups have such prominence? The likely answer to these puzzles is that a group of Yoruba people (educated) in the coastal areas now Lagos and Ogun States possibly worked together to tag such names.

With the puzzles raised above in mind, Ladele states that enquiries were made by his group. Their finding shows that there are thirteen months in Yoruba calendar because they are reckoned with the moon as the new moon appears. Thus, it is indicative that reckoning of Yoruba starts in December that worship of *Orisa* (Spiritual Entities) and *ise-agbe*, (farming) are relevant in naming. Also, the months are named differently by subgroups of the Yoruba race; and moreover the counting is from the top to the bottom.

The summary of the findings of Ladele's (1986) group is as follows Table 2:

The fact that the origin of the *Irunmale Orisa* (Spiritual Entities) is yet to be uncovered by research is true. The fact that the origin of the naming of the months as it is being taught in schools and not known to the generality of the people is also true. It is common to Yorubanize the months of the year and day of the week. In his contribution to Yoruba Traditional Religion, Oluwole, a Nigerian Student in the United States of America laments that many of the sources encountered did not attempt to even approach the topic of the Yoruba *Orisa (orisha)*.

We agree with Ladele that there is need for research and consensus-building on names for the months that would be known and used by Yoruba people in Yorubaland. As at now, in Yoruba Traditional Yoruba setting, each country or area has a particular time that the calendar for the Spiritual Entities starts in conformity with the lunar months. At Ado-Ekiti, the festival of *Udi-Iroko*, celebrated around September of each year marks the take-off of the calendar. As a matter of fact, therefore, the reckoning with times, days, thirteen lunar months and seasons seem to be general in all parts of Yorubaland.

**Markets:** In the plan schedule of the Yoruba Traditional Community, there are markets where people sell and buy. The materials include farm products, machandize, all sorts of materials sourced locally and those brought from outside the community. The market schedule of days are three-Oja Ojoojumo (daily) Ojo Ojo marun (every 4th day), ojo mesan, mesan (every 9th day). Mostly, the markets are held during the day time although there are cases where the markets are held in the evenings. In some communities, the markets are near the palace of the *Oba* or in the central area of the town.

As early as 1826-, Clapperton wrote his observation on a market as follows:

- In returning, we came through the market which, though nearly sunset was well supplied with raw cotton, country Cloths, provisions and fruits such as oranges, limes, plantains, bananas, and vegetables such as small onions, chalotes, pepper grown for soups; also boiled yams and accasous. Here the crowd rolled on like a sea, the men jumping over the baskets, the boys dancing under the stalls, the women bawling and enlisting those who were looking after their scatted goods (Fadipe, 1970).

The sellers in the central markets stay together on the basis of their products, a sort of compartmentalising whereby traders of say palm oil, sellers of yams and yam-flour sellers, sellers of meat, dried fish, cooked food, calabashes, herbs etc are generally in rows at specific areas of the market.

The market days are of tremendous value for the planning by Yoruba people. They are target of purchases for use for marriages, social and religious ceremonies. Festivals of *Irunmale* are fixed with the use of market days as guide. In view of the fact that a lot of people come home from their distant farms, far away from the centre, and only on market days, such days remained a key index in planning.

**Festivals-calendar:** Planning is consolidated a long time before a festival of any *Imale* is to take place. The month or season when a particular festival is to take place is already known in the calendar of the year. For example, *Ogun* festival takes place during *Osu ogun*, now august in the British calendar. In most cases, the lunar month is the reckoning reference. In fact, the festivals of *Irunmale* are rolled out in sequence. When *Orisa-nla* is celebrated, the other festivals of *Irunmale* follow in sequence.

This planning gives convenience to every devotee to plan ahead in terms of resources and time to be expended. For example, bush meat are fried and stocked away while yams are preserved in bars. Individual and family programmes are planned not to clash with festivals, if such will affect the families' performance.

**Central management planning:** The Central Management Planning in Yoruba Traditional Religion include general schedule of duties, management of men, money and materials and information dissemination.

**General schedule of duties of yoruba traditional religionists:** A fairly regimented and planned general schedule of duties is passed from generation to generation in Yoruba Traditional Religion. Duties are shared among men and women and each sex also share duties among elders and youths. In the schedule of the duties, the type of centre of worship dictates what goes

to the males and females. At *Igbomale*, *Igbooro*, *Igbo-eegun*, *Igbo-Agemo* which are shrines located in the forested outskirts of the town, the male carry out most of the main duties. At *Ojubo, ile imale, ile Orisa* which are centres of worship in the living areas of communities, we have certain *Irunmale* that are exclusively for women. At such centres, females, have the main schedule of duties: The limitations and specialties of sex also contribute to the schedule. Certain duties can be done well with less hazards by men while certain duties are specialties of women.

**Male schedule:** The following main schedule are identified as men duties:

- Invocation of *igbomale, igbooro, igbo-eegun, igbo-agemo*, (shrines) *ile-imale* or *ile-orisa* (worship building).
- Hoeing / weeding of paths leading to the shrines.
- Cutting of palm-fronds, sticks, ropes and other materials for the building of main shrine and fences. The youths carry out part of these assignments under the guidance of the elders.
- Movement of items of foods and drinks to *Igbomale*.
- Distribution of foods and drinks by the titled-male officials (*asipa, oloojua*).
- The musical department is manned by specially-trained devotees. The various musical instruments are also handled by specialists. The singers are also the endowed devotees with liturgical and poetical knowledge relevant to specific *Irunmale*.
- Job of guides, criers, fore-runners (*ise atokun*). A specific schedule for certain devotees who go before the priestly order. In the case of *egungun*, the guides or criers are part of the musical groups that lead and guide *egungun*, through the sounds and drumming.
- Offering of sacrifice to *Irunmale*.
- Leading of worship sessions.

**Female duties at igbo-imale:** At *igbomale* and *igbooro*, the male plays the prominent roles. In fact female are prohibited from certain parts of the shrine and from parts of the observances. Therefore, women play only some indirect and peripheral duties. Such duties include the following.

- Preparation of food and cooking of meat and soup
- Drawing of water (where relevant)
- Sweeping of outskirts
- Dancing at the outskirts

**Female duties at Ile Imale /Ile Orisa):** Ile imale, also called *ile-orisa* are centres of worship located inside the

communities. There are a number that are mainly female (goddesses) and in these centres, most of the duties are fully performed by females. Such duties include.

- Cleaning and decorating of the centres
- Renovation / beautification of the centres namely *fifi eleboto pa ile, fifi efun sa ara ile*.
- Handling of musical instruments namely drums, gongs
- Offering of sacrifices to *Irunmale*.
- Worship sessions.
- Preparation of food, cooking of meat and soup.
- Distribution of food and drinks by appropriate officials.
- Ritual and ceremonial dancing.

**Management of men:** For a successful administration, a good planned management of human resources is necessary. In Yoruba Traditional Religion, the management of human resources, otherwise, tagged 'management of men' is given proper planning.

**Co-ordinating and directing:** The roles of co-ordinating and directing are handled by the elders who in most cases are constituted by the priesthood order and accredited officials. During normal worships and during festivals, they ensure that the norms and practices are maintained with the greatest sense of responsibility. All devotees adhere to the planned directions and co-ordination of the elders with devotion and sense of fear. The fear of disciplinary measures and the knowledge of repercussions that would take place after misconduct and the joy of peace of mind during and after worshipping *Irunmale* strengthen the individuals to adhere to laid-down rules and regulations of traditional religious observances.

All devotees are aware that authority and power flow from the Supreme Being to *Irunmale* and to the priesthood order (*aworo, abore*) and down to the devotees

**Delegation of duty:** When an official in the Yoruba Traditional Religious administration is alive and hale and hearty, there is no delegation of duty at all. The individual performs his duties and he is accountable and responsible for all actions and behaviours as it is obtained in the generally planned scheme.

A limited delegation is only identified in situations when a devotee is indisposed of having curable illness. In such situations, the next in rank to the individual takes up the duty of the superior officer. For example, if *Oloori-Aworo* (chief priest) is ill-disposed, the next in rank among the *aworo* (priests) carries out the duties. This is also in

line with the acting capacity status in modern personnel administration. It is a well-known planning per excellence.

**Discipline:** An important topic embedded in the general planning is discipline. There are rules and regulations for all activities within the administration of Yoruba Traditional Religion. Any violation of such rules and regulations attract sanctions. Apart from the priesthood order, there are areas where the cults including *ogboni*, *egbe awo isegun*, *awo onifa* and so on adjudicate over certain disciplinary matters. The intricate setting of administration of justice is that the priesthood order are also members of the cults. It is almost impossible for a chieftain or a priest not to be a member of a cult or cults. The cults constitute powerful groups for enforcement of law and order.

Besides the cults, there are *eleegbe* otherwise known as disciplinary committee, an arm of administration in traditional Yoruba community and since members are devotees of various *irunmale* and members of the cults per se, the group constitutes part of Yoruba religious system of maintenance of discipline.

**Management of money and materials:** A strict sense of modern budgeting processes does not exist within the Yoruba traditional religious administration. What obtains is the management of money and materials in terms of acquisition and spending.

**Acquisition of money:** In planning for the acquisition of money, levies are raised in various groups namely the elders, the adults (males and females) and the youths. In the earlier days, cowries was means of exchange. It later became pounds and shillings when the British colonised (Nigeria) Yoruba land. It is Naira and kobo now; Money is normally expended on materials that are not supplied by devotees.

**Acquisition of materials:** It is not the study that money is levied all the time for the administration of the affairs of *Irunmale*. In some occasions, members contribute materials. These occasions are known in plain schedule. The materials include *isu* (yam), *ewure* (goats), *elede* (pigs), *igbin* (snails), *adiye* (fowls), *eyele* (pigeons), *aja* (dogs), *ologbo* (cats). At times, it may not be raw food, it may be prepared food. Such food include *iyam* (pounded yam), *eko* (ground maize), *ibete or asaro* (yam porridge), *akara* (bean meals/cakes).

Moreover, locally-brewed drinks are also brought by families and individuals. These include kegs or pots of palm-wine, *otika* or *burukutu* (kegs of millet drink),

*ogogoro* (locally brewed gin-which was prohibited during colonial days) *omi-oojo* (water drawn from the spring on the day of use), *emu-aibale* (non-mixed palm wine specially brought from the palm without contact with the ground and to the shine) for invocation by special officials is also utilized. Other materials that are contributed include palm-oil, salt, firewood because there are cases where cookings are done within the shrines and places of worship.

Those who come to consult the oracles are also asked to bring certain materials. Some make vows on their own to bring certain amount of money goats cloths, and so on. When these things are brought they constitute items to be consumed during the festival.

An interesting aspect of the management of the money and materials is that the levies are known for various occasions (off-head) for annual festival, for normal routine meeting or worship sessions and so on. Devotees know what are the contributions and activities expected of them. If there would be a cause to subsidise the contribution, the elders always draw from reserves. This is also an aspect of the budgetary system.

## MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION

*Eti Oba nile*  
*Eti Oba loko*  
*Eniyan nii je bee*

### Translation:

Translation  
Home or away,  
The Oba is always  
We-informed.  
Of course, through people

This Yoruba saying clearly suggests that information is disseminated through people by informal system in a Yoruba community. From time immemorial when modern/Western information gadgets were non-existent in the Yoruba traditional society, information was administered in an efficient manner, orally or symbolically.

Family heads or representatives (*olori-ebi tabi asoju ebi*) connected with various *Irunmale* and cults bring information to and from shrines and worship centres. The chiefs brief the *Oba*, the Supreme Pontifex. *Iko*, *iranse*, or *oloojua* are messengers of various grades that statutorily bring information to and from religious officials and worshippers.

Hours of worship at mid-day, sun-set, midnight are known to devotees as they know days (dates) and months of meetings and festivals. With this awareness, devotees are reminded or 'called to worship' by various means which are relevant to particular "*Irunmale*". In

some cases, certain drums are sounded, gunshot fired (*ilu* and *ibon*), *agogo*, (gongs), *upe* or *ekutu* (flute) are used by criers to attract devotees (and non-devotees). *Ike imale, ike ojise orisa* (the cry of the Spiritual Entities or priestess) heralds devotees who immediately come to worship centres. In cases of oro, criers or summoners are usually a number of people to dish out peculiar sounds to the devotees and give warning to non-devotees, non-members and females alike to stay away. While only devotees and males are entitled to come out, non-initiates or women may meet their doom if they do so. Hence, information dissemination is generally for all members of a community.

### CONCLUSION

In this study, planning in Yoruba Traditional Religion has been discussed. Only some of the schedules discussed have been in written form. Yoruba people have good retentive memory and are also very good in planning. Therefore what have hitherto been obtained in traditional communities and Yoruba Traditional Religion were handed down from one generation to the other in oral form. Education, science and infiltration of other cultures and religions have affected some of the plan schedules in one way or the other. No doubt, the cherished thoughts and values still endures so this study raises a challenge for further documentation of aspects that are not are not covered.

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