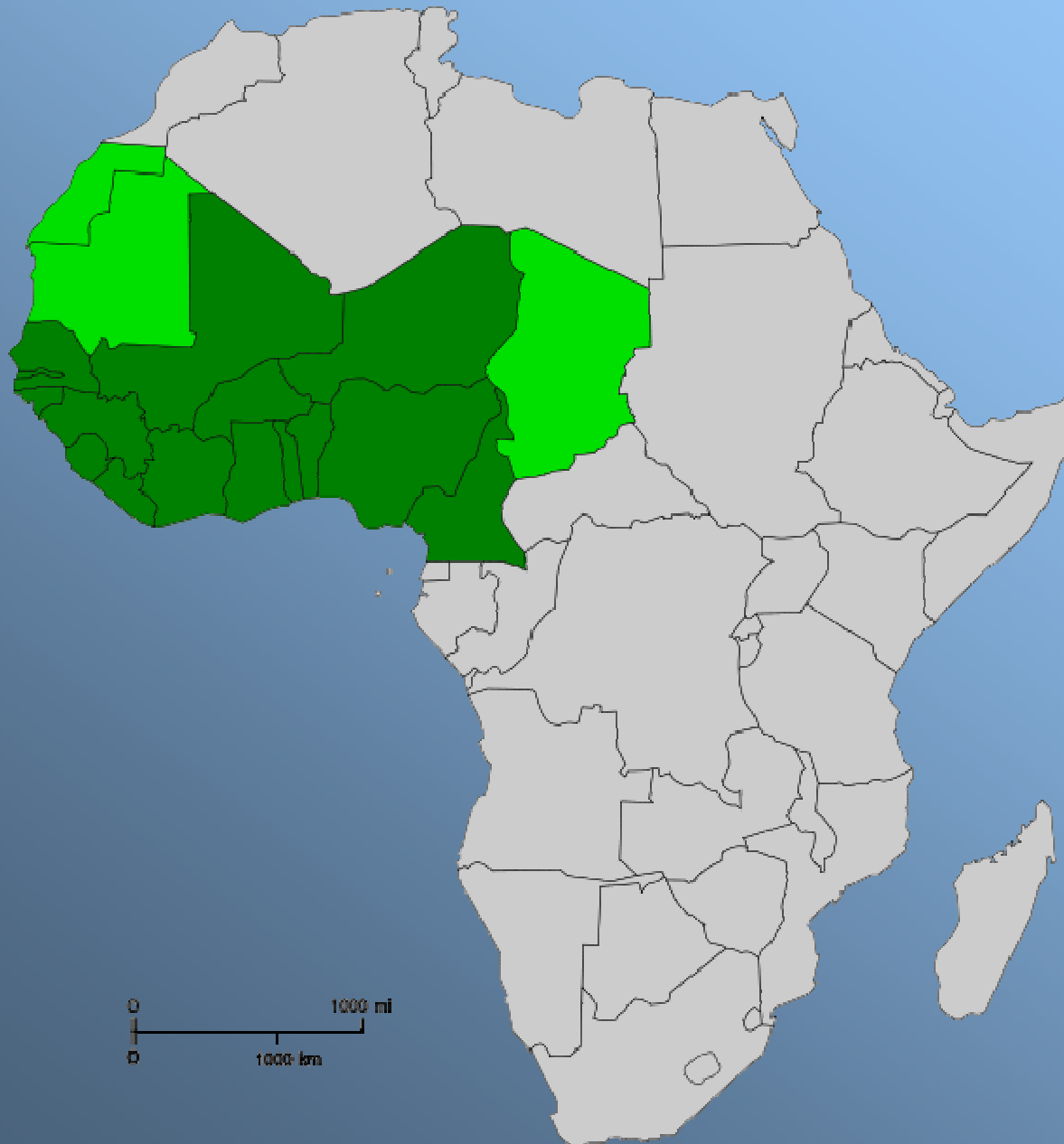


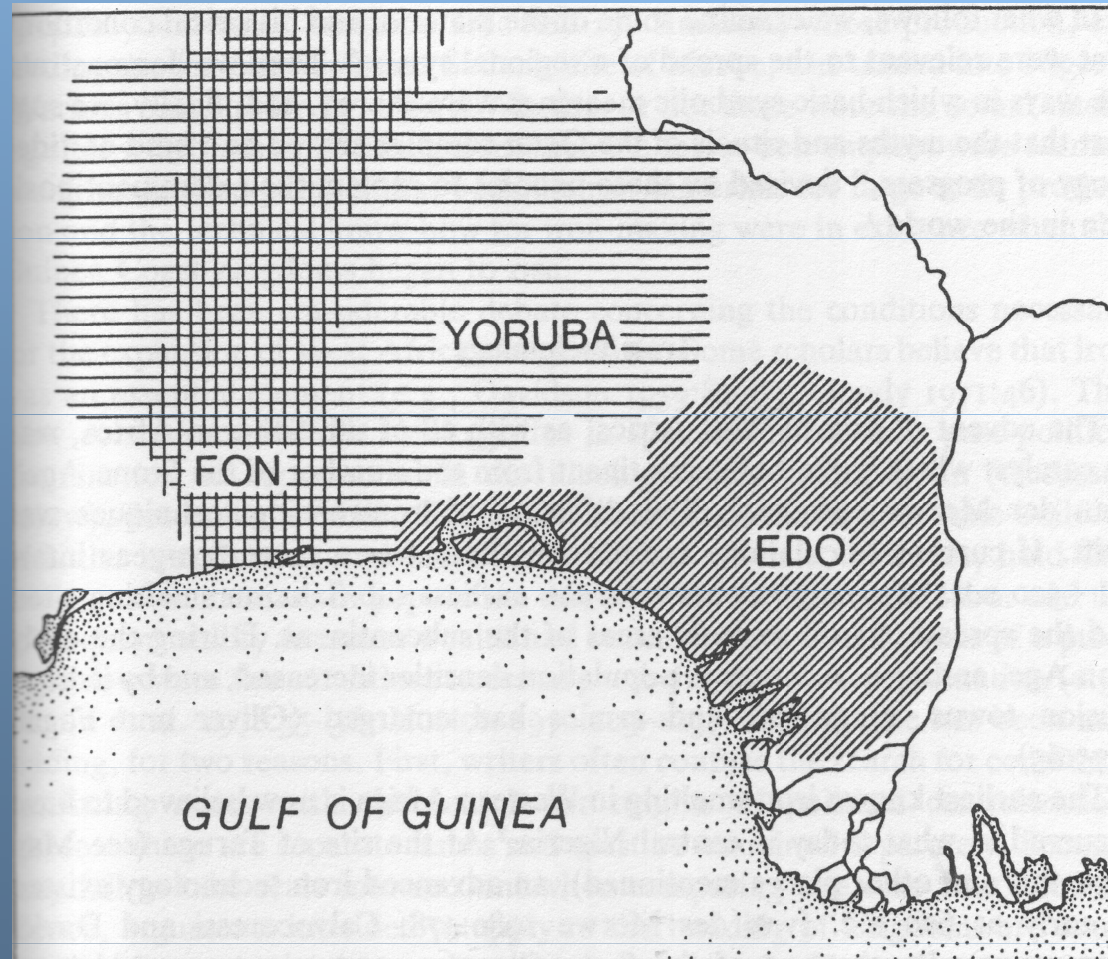
Map of West-Africa

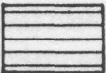
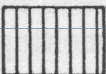



Short History of the Yorùbá

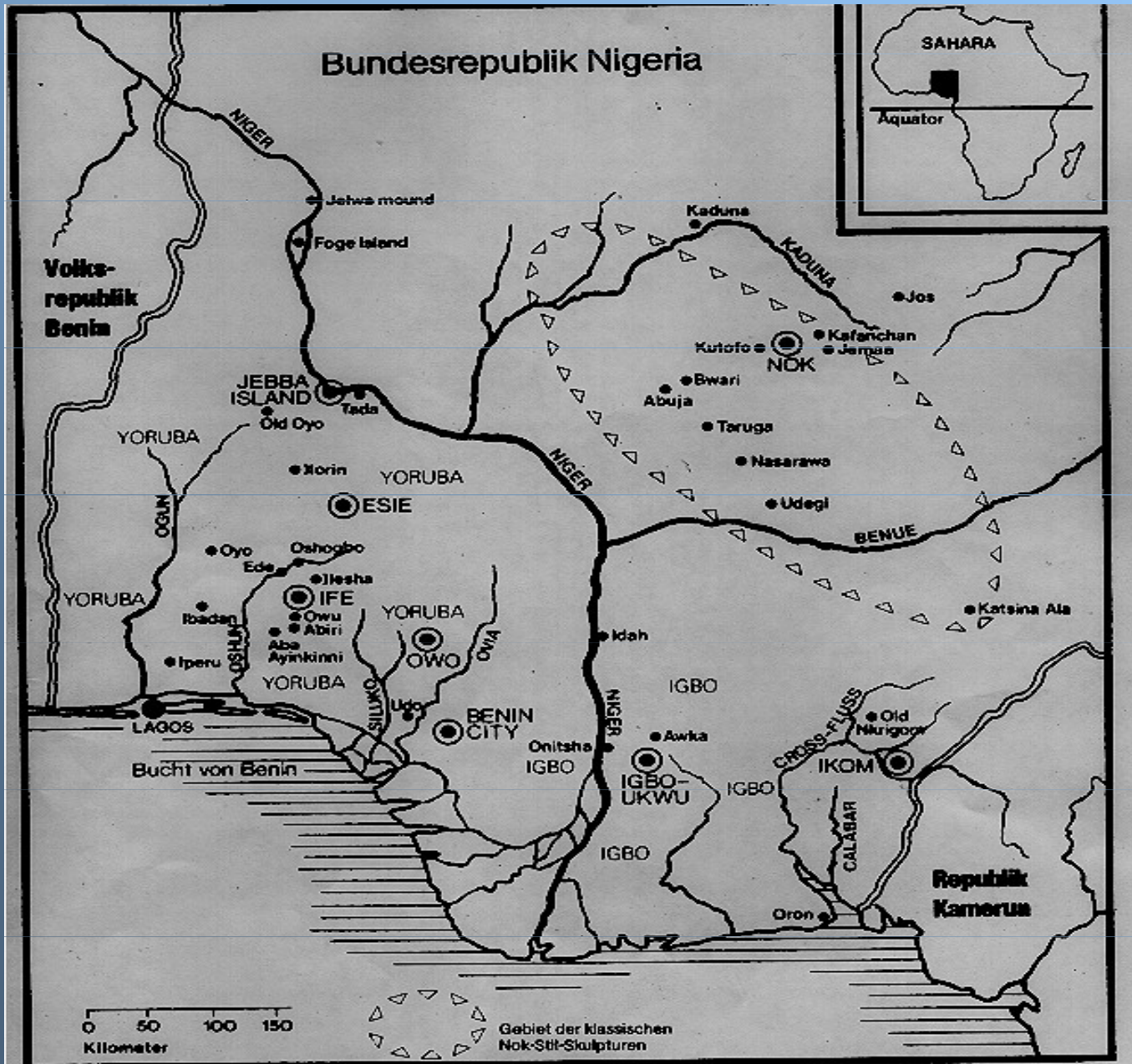


Guinea Empires 15th to 18th century



-  Oyo Empire, 18th century
-  Kingdom of Dahomey, 19th century
-  Kingdom of Benin, c. 15th-16th centuries

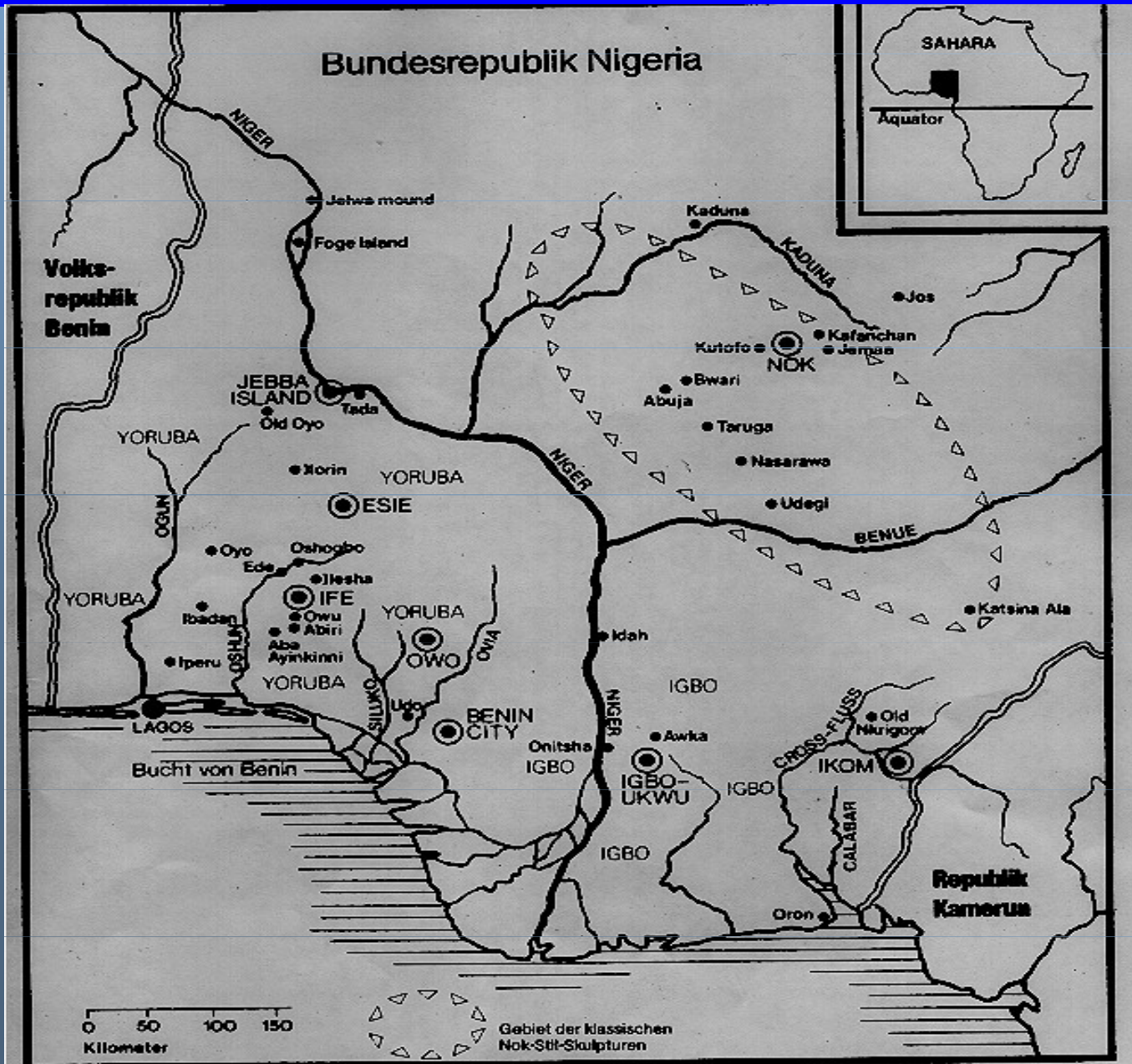
Map of Yorùbáland





- ~1000: Starting point of Yorùbá urban culture
- Ifé: Place of origin of Yorùbá culture, according to myth place of creation. Odùdùwa: First Òóni (oba = king) of Ifé
- ~1300: Ifé at the height of its political power
- ~1650: Supremacy of Oyo
- ~1800: Decline of the kingdom of Oyo.

Map of Yorùbáland



Copper figurine,
found at Tada
(Nupe-village)
Origin: Ifé



One out of 16 bronze castings of king's heads found in Ifé (11th-12th c. ce) The holes on the forehead and above the upper lip were used to detach the beaded strings that cover the king's face. Technique of „lost wax“



Terracotta-
figurine from
Ifé



Traditional conically
shaped
crown of Yorùbá-
Kings



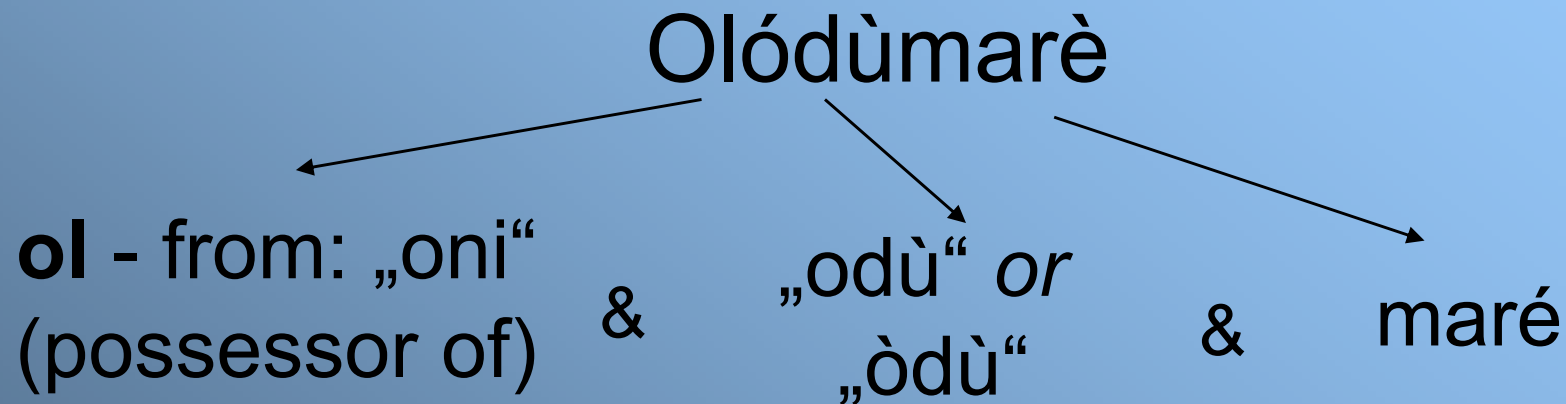
Religion of the Yorùbá

- Òrun and ayé: Heaven/Earth: Two halves of a Calabash
- Aṣẹ: „power“
- Olódùmarè: High-God, Creator of the world, „Deus otiosus“
- Òrìṣà: Spiritual beings
- Ifá-Oracle: System of divination
- Merindilogun: System of divination
- Obi: Simple oracle
- Egungun: Ancestor-worship
- Gèlèdé: Masking Society

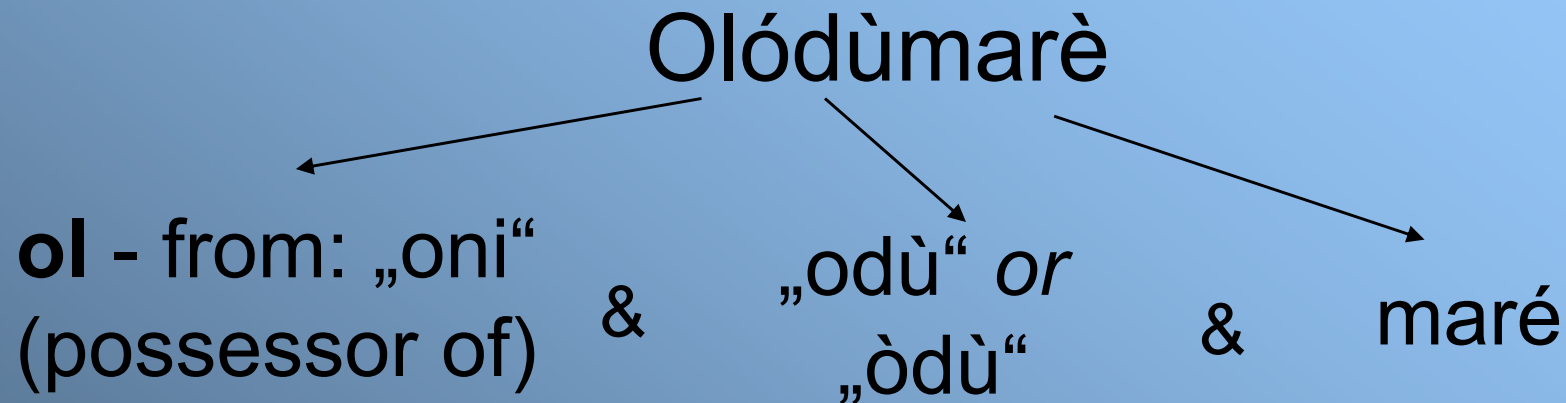
Aye l'oja, orun n'ile

The calabash is a symbol of the cosmos:
òrun & aye,
Heaven & Earth
fitting closely
together





- **oni**= denotes possessor
- **odù** (middle-pitched o) = a chapter (of Ifa)
sovereign, authority,
sceptre
- **òdù** (low-pitched o) = a big, deep pot;
- **òdù-kàrì** = an òdù, that is perfectly
filled



- **omoèrè** = the offspring of the primordial Boa
- **má rè** = „do not go!"; That, which does not move, does not change
- **odù m'árè** = linking of odù (sceptre) and árè (a symbol in the king's crown)
- **oni & odù-kàrì**: the one that possesses perfection

Olódùmarè

ol - from: „oni“
(possessor of) &

„odù“
or

„òdù“

& **maré**

olódù = the one who
possesses power
olódù = a perfect being

omoèrè = offspring of
the boa

má rè = „don't go“; that
does not change

odù m'árè = the linking of
the odù (sceptre) and the
árè (sign featured in the
crown)

Olódùmarè

1. Olódù, the offspring of the boa
2. Olódù, who does not go or change, the one that remains.
3. The one combining the sceptre & the crown.
4. The one that possesses ultimate perfection.

Olódùmarè: other names

1. Olórun: the one that owns órun
2. Eléda: the creator, progenitor
3. Elémi: the one that gives the émi, the breath of life.

Religion of the Yorùbá

- Cult of the òrìṣà
- Ifá-divination
- Ancestor-worship

Character: *Gods of natural phenomena, cultural heroes, historical figures (often melted into one person)*

Political meaning: *one main òrìṣà for each town*

No fixed pantheon: *Varying local traditions, different numbers given (for instance: 401 = on more than you can count)*

Cult of the òrìṣà

*ohun-tí-a-ríṣà = that which has been
found and collected*

*orí (“head”) & ṣẹ (“begin”) = the source of
orí*

Cult of the òrìṣà

***irunmole** = the 16 (17) òrìṣà that have descended initially from òrun to ayé to fulfill the ovrk of creation*

òrìṣà funfun & òrìṣà gbigbona

òrìṣà funfun (cool òrìṣà)

- Obàtálá (Òrìsànlá) =
The king in white dress,
the great òrìṣà (Ifé)
- Òrunmilà the founder
of the Ifá divination-
system (oracle)

òrìṣà gbigbona (hot òrìṣà)

- Eṣu (Eleggua): Trickster,
the universal translator
- Ṣàngó (Oyo): Thunder &
Lightning, Electricity
- Ògún: God of Iron & war

Some female òrìṣà

- **Yemòó, Yemojá:** The wife of Obàtálá (in Ifé), goddess of salty water, of the oceans, goddess of love
- **Oya:** (One of the) wife (wives) of Şàngó, Goddess of wind and storm
- **Oşun:** Goddess of the river Oşun, goddess of water, goddess of fertility, the only female òrìṣà engaged in creation, patron of merindilogun divination

Eṣu (Elleggua), the Trickster Deity

- The universal Interpreter
- The one who opens the road
- To be propitiated as the first one in every ritual
- The guardian of crossroads and doorways
- The one who brings sacrifice & prayer from ayé to òrun
- The one transmitting in Ifá-Divination
- The one playing tricks on you (and on the other òrìṣà)
- In Cuba: one of the „seven African Powers“
- In Fon/Ewe Religion = Legba

Eṣu (Ellegua), the Trickster Deity

A figurine of Eṣu,
with phallic elongated
head, cowrie shells
& a bird (like on the
crowns of kings?)

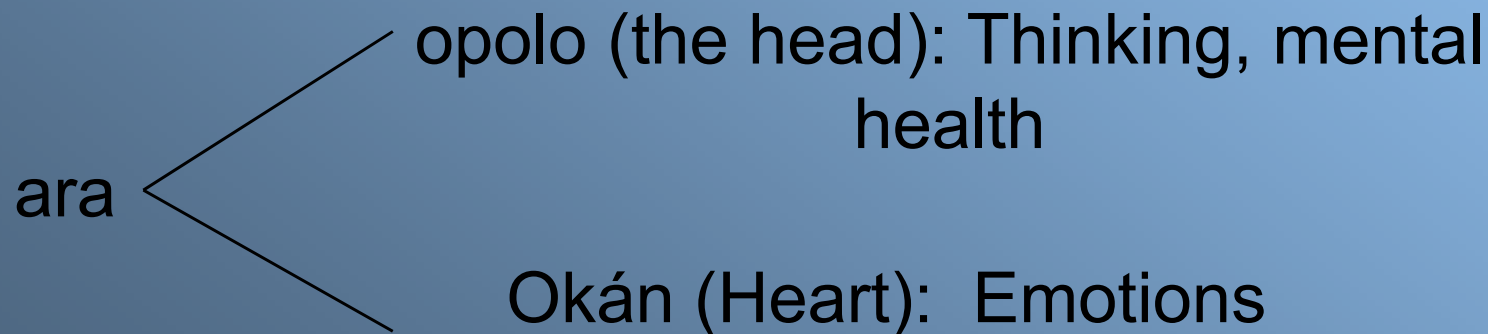


Central Role in creation of the world

- Place of creation of the world = Ifé
- Olódùmarè sends 16 òrìṣà (plus
- Obàtálá brings with him sand, a rooster and 201 herbs
- Ile-Ifé: from Ilè yi fè, „this land widens“
- Obàtálá forms humans, Olódùmarè breathes life into them
- After Obàtálá got drunk, Odùduwà continues his work
- Igbo (Men of the forest) & Ifé
- Handicapped people are protected by Obàtálá

„Person“ =~ Èniyàn

- *ara* (material component) stems from Obàtálá
- *èmi* (the soul as breath) stems from Olódùmarè
- *orì inu* (inner head= destiny) stems from Ajalá



As ruler of Ifé

- Odùduwà : First Òóni of Ifé
- Obàtálá: One of his lieutenants
- Obàtálá revolts against Odùduwà
- Odùduwà & Obameri drive Obàtálá out of the city
- Obàtálá goes into Exile to his friend Obawinni
- Nightly raids of Ifé
- By mediation of a woman peace is restored
- Obàtálá becomes the forth Òóni of Ifé

Main aspects of the òrìṣà Obàtálá

- His role in creation of the world
- Humility and moral purity: by the hardships and circumstances of his life he has been humbled and purified: symbol of peace and balance of power
- Successful old age
- He is „the great òrìṣà“ Òrìṣà-nlá (myth about Òrìṣà-nlá, his slave and Òrunmilá)

Òrìṣà Ṣàngó

- God of natural phenomena
(Thunder and lightning)
- Deified Ancestor
 - 4. Alafin of Oyo
 - Descendent of Odùduwà
- Cultural hero (Electricity, Fire)

C. L. Adeyoe: two Ṣàngó

Irunmole
(deszendierte Geister)

Òrìṣà
deifizied Humans

R. Dennet / R. Canizares:
Ṣàngó was syncretised with Jakuta
(thrower of stones)

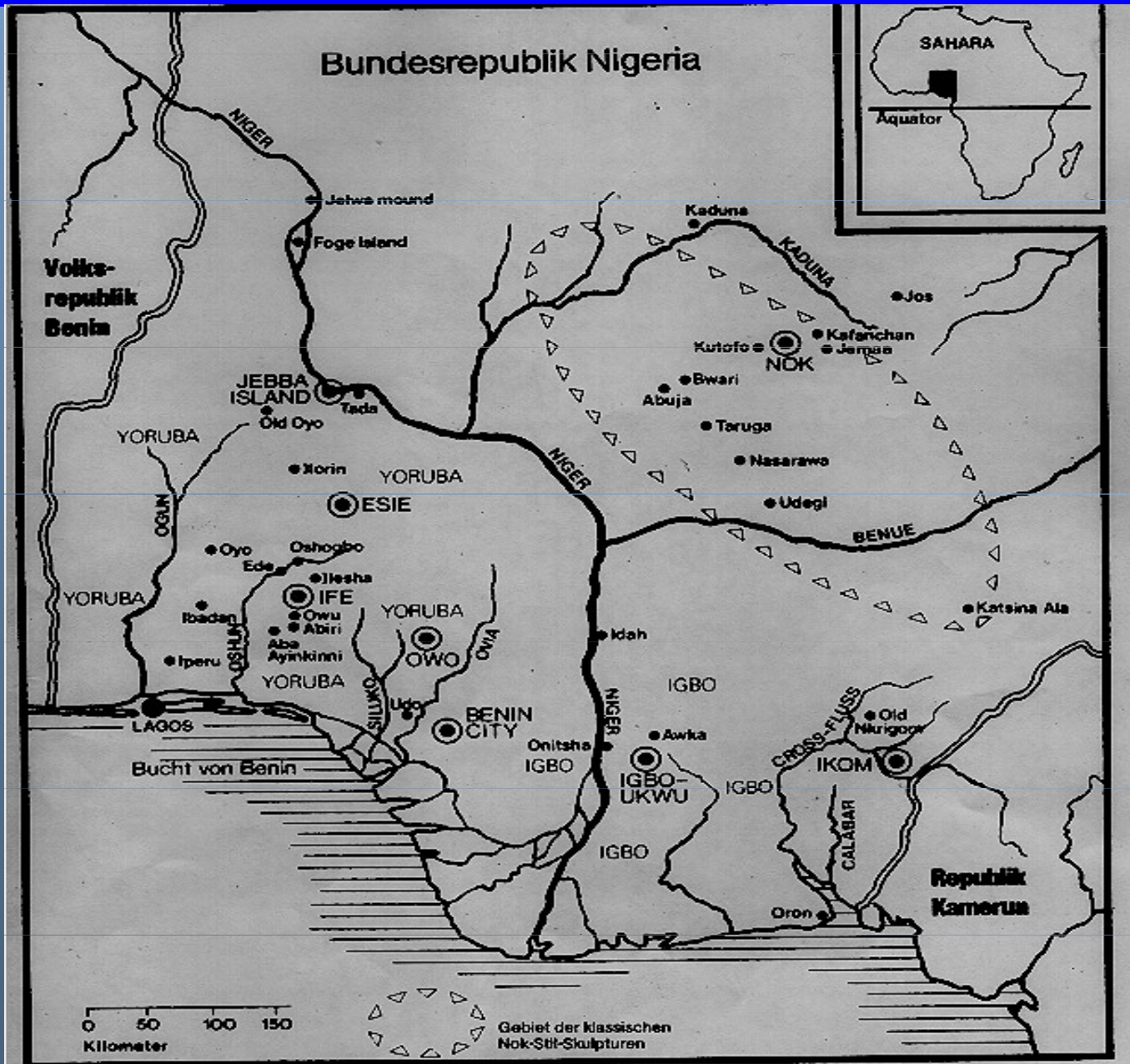
- Ṣàngó the King:
 - Follows his brother Ajaka as a ruler
 - His palace burns down
 - Goes into exile
 - Ṣàngó ṣo - Ṣàngó ko ṣo
 - St. John Abakuso (Trinidad) *Oba ko ṣo*
 - Priestly House Koṣo in Oyo:
 - Ṣ. Goes to the forest because of wives
 - Search for him
 - Goes to òrun from where he rules by thunderbolts and lightning
- Ṣàngó the Sky-God: stories about him and Oya

A myth about Obàtálá and Şàngó

- Obàtálá wants to visit his friend Şàngó
- The oracle warns him
- He undertakes the journey
- Eşu plays tricks on him
- He gets arrested, falsely accused of stealing Şàngó's horse
- 7 years of drought and all kinds of problems
- Şàngó finds out: this is because an unguilty person was imprisoned
- Finally, balance of power is restored

- In Ifé the wife of Obatálá (often called Yemòó)
- Ibadan: „the mother of the fish children“
- Abeokuta: (after emigration of Egba) she became the Goddess of the river Ogun
- Ayede (brought there by king Eshubiyi) wife of òrìṣà Oko, the òrìṣà of farming (who is considered female in other parts of Yorùbáland)
- Sàngó and Ogun are considered her children in Ayede
- Goddess of salty waters, love & fertility
- In Santería one of 7 African Powers, mother of (most of) the other òrìṣà
- In Brazil: very prominent, related to virgin Mary

Map of Yorùbáland



Òṣun = source, (orísùn =the source of a river)

- In Ijesa (=Òṣun state), main deity, Goddess of the river Òṣun, (Oshogbo)
- Goddess of fertility, clear water
- Water is effective, when taken in the morning
- A water pot filled with stones (otan) and water serves as sanctaury symbol
- In other towns Goddess of other rivers
- Also the „owner of brass“

- The only female òrìṣà among the irunmole
- Patroness of the Mèrìndílógún (16 cowries)
- The story of Òṣun, Yemojá and Yemoji, wives of Şàngó
- In Santería: one of the 7 African Powers, related to La Caridad del Cobre

- The owner of brass
- Exclusive to her cult are bangles, hairpins, combs, fans and special containers for water made of brass
- These mostly have to do with women (hairplating, beauty, preparing of food)
- Other brass objects are also found with other òrìṣà, like cutting tools: knives, swords and the like.
- Symbols of defense
- Òṣun's knife also ensures healthy menstruation

- Of major importance in all of Yorùbáland
- God of iron and warfare
- Among the irunmole
- The story of the place called „no way“
- Different local traditions
- Seven Ògún
- Ògún Onire
- Also God of hunters and warriors
- Taxi drivers, trains, places of metal
- Traditional Sacrifice = a dog

- The lord of the earth
- God of smallpox
- His priests used to use the smallpox virus
- Also called Sopona
- in Ewe and Fon Religion called Sakpaté

Òrìṣà as artists

- Obàtálá: The paradigmatic artist (for his role in creation)
- Ògún: he concludes and makes perfect the work of Obàtálá, like at the end of carving
- Àjàlá: The potter of the òri

Art = oná

- Creative capacities, that manifest themselves in an object and are the sources of its singularity
- olón = artist
- Every artist has a tutelary deity

Òrìṣà as Tutelary Deities

- **Òsun & Ìyá Mápó:** Patron Deities of female artistic activities (pottery, dyeing)
- **Obàlùfòn:** Patron deity of metal workers (casting)
- **Olòkun:** Patron deity of the beadworkers (ade, the crown), also deity of the depths of the oceans

Artistic Objects and forms of expression in Yorùbá Religion

- In the context of the cult of the òrìsà
- In the context of the cult of the ancestors
- In the context of divination

Artistic Objects & Forms of expression in the context of the cult of the òrìṣà

- Objects: Depictions of the Orisha, Dance Wands, Fans, Calabashes and the like
- Expressive arts: Drumming, Dancing, Oriki, Rituals that last for several days.

Cult of Òṣun in Oshogbo

- Water is carried in Brass-Containers from the River to the shrine of the Deity
- Adepts wear bangles of brass
- Priestess carries a fan: Lizards & birds
- Cross: the meeting of two spheres, divine & natural forces òrun & ayé



- Initiated Media (Women) receive the *òrìsà* in a state of possession
- Cult-groups, locally organised; may be inherited, may be by a „call“
- Yearly festivals for *òrìsà*, different cult-groups take part, sacrifice to communicate *aṣé*
- In most cases, not the *òrì* but more often their adepts are represented in artwork; their power resides in the *otan* (stones in calabashes)

The cult of òrìṣà Obàtálá

The annual festival for Obàtálá in Ifé

- Yemoja (Yemòó)
- Oluorugbo: Onisoro Obalase
- Eluyare represents the Igbo under Obawinni
- Òoni v. Ifé
- Obàtálá - Priests headed by Onisoro Obalale

The cult of òrìṣà Obàtálá

The annual festival for Obàtálá in Ifé

Tag 3:	Ojó Orù	Day of Invocations
Tag 4:	Isule	Procession
Tag 5:	Òké Ilé	Vigil
Tag 8:	Ìtápá	Visit of the palace
Tag 10:	Ojó Odun	Celebration day

The cult of òrìṣà Obàtálá

The annual festival for Obàtálá in Ifé

- Carved figurine of Obàtálá
- Carved figurine of Yemoja
- òrìṣà Ilare (male)
- òrìṣà Yeye (female)
- Alajagun (war lieutenant)
- Drums
- Gongs

The cult of òrìṣà Obàtálá

The annual festival for Obàtálá in Ifé

Ojó Orù : day three- day of invocations

Morning: Sacrifice/Oracles at the shrine

Afternoon: Sacrifice, Cooking, Dancing

- Dance of all devotees (about Obàtálá's fate)
- Dance of the priests in white clothes around the shrine

The cult of òrìṣà Obàtálá

The annual festival for Obàtálá in Ifé

Ojó Orù : day three- day of invocations

1. The intension of O to go to exile“
2. Gratitude of O towards Obawinni
3. The Òóni: War between Igbo and Ifé
4. Smallpox
5. Oath of secrecy
6. Optimistic Song: hope for success
7. Dance, where the whole crowd joins in:
withdrawal of O. from war

The cult of òrìṣà Obàtálá

The annual festival for Obàtálá in Ifé

Isule: day 4: procession to Ita-Yemòó

- Procession from Obàtálá-shrine
- Gathering of the 201 herbs
- „Office hour“ of Obàtálá
- Producing of a medicine

The cult of òrìṣà Obàtálá

The annual festival for Obàtálá in Ifé

Interpretation of the procession to Ita-Yemòó

- Relationship to myth of Obàtálá
- Relationship to myth of creation
- Framework of healing
- Sacred kingship
- Binding male power to female power

The cult of òrìṣà Obàtálá

The annual festival for Obàtálá in Ifé

Òké Ilé: day 5 - Vigil

- Statues of Yemòó & Obàtálá
- Yemòós stool
- Bottle with herbal medicine
- Gongs
- 16 snails, bush-rats, fish, and cola-nuts each
- Oracle
- Procession to the shrine outside the town

The cult of òrìṣà Obàtálá

The annual festival for Obàtálá in Ifé

Òké Ilé: day 5 - Vigil

- Dance of the priests in 3 phases:
 - With statue of Yemòó
 - With statue of Obàtálá
 - sacrificing the goat
- Dance of all devotees
 - Present of the Òóni
 - Symbolism of the snail
 - Symbolism of Returning

The cult of òrìṣà Obàtálá

The annual festival for Obàtálá in Ifé

Ìtápá: Day 8: Visit of the palace

- Reintegration of the Igbo-group
- Selection of the Mediums; Purification, gender-role
- Inhabitants: Ifé-Gruppe
- Priester: Igbo-Gruppe
- Messengers of Òóni
- Direct kontakt of Òóni and Yemoja is a taboo

Ojó Odun – day 10: Celebration Day

Cult of òrìṣà Ṣàngó

- Magba = „high priest“
- Elégùn = Media (special hair-style, special clothes; when in trance „wabi“ is worn and the dance-wand becomes part of the clothing)
- Laba = Bag of Magba
- Edun-ara = „Thunderbolts“ = neolithic celts
- Sere = Shaker
- Oṣe Ṣàngó = The dance wand of Ṣàngó

Cult of òrìṣà Ṣàngó



Annual festival for Ṣàngó

- End of October/ Beginning of November
- 1 month before the exact date is found out
- 3 Phases
 - 1. day: Invocation ceremony & Vigil
 - 2.-6. Tag: Trance & Manifestations
 - 7. Tag: The „grand finale“

Day one

- Ṣàngós calabash is brought to the river in the morning
- Afternoon: Praise-singing Ceremony
- Night: Ṣàngós priests dance his dance (lanku)
- Possession in the moment of sacrifice:

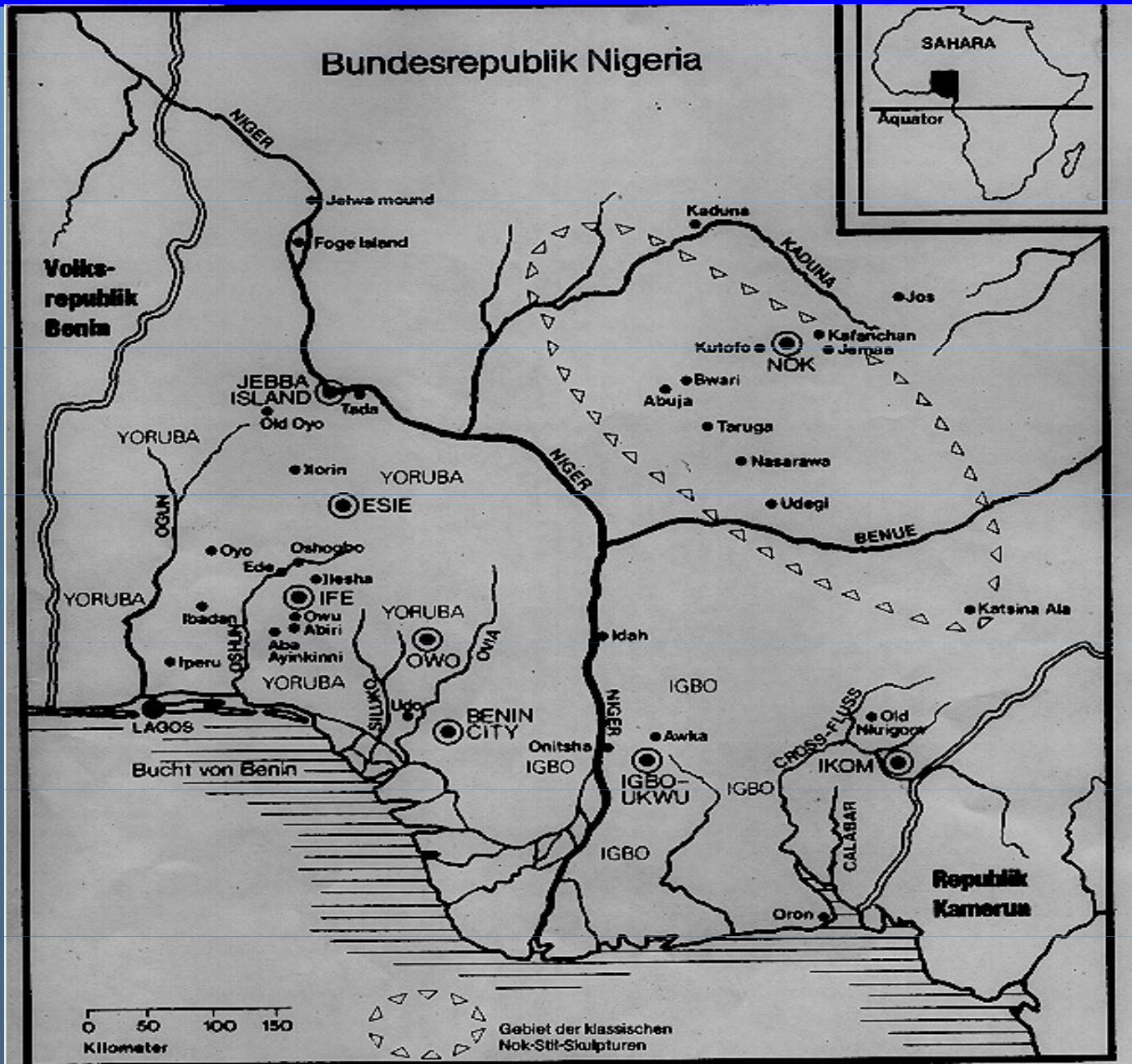
Day 2 to 6

- Dances of possession
- Manifestations of Ṣàngó's power
- Sacrifice and meals
- Processions to the market and the royal palace

Day 7

- Gathering at the market or the palace
- Groups of worshippers of Eṣu and Obàtálá
- Connection to the Myth of Obàtálá, Ṣàngó & Eṣu
- Procession with fire

Map of Yorùbáland







Die 16 Hauptodu des Ifá-Orakels

Eji Ogbe	Oyeku Meji	Iwori Meji	Edi Meji	Irosun Meji	Oworin Meji	Obara Meji	Okanran Meji
I I	II II	II II	I I	I I	II II	I I	II II
I I	II II	I I	II II	I I	II II	II II	II II
I I	II II	I I	II II	II II	I I	II II	II II
I I	II II	II II	I I	II II	I I	II II	I I
Ogunda Meji	Osa Meji	Ika Meji	Oturupon Meji	Otura Meji	Irete Meji	Oşe Meji	Ofun Meji
I I	II II	II II	II II	I I	I I	I I	II II
I I	I I	I I	II II	II II	I I	II II	I I
I I	I I	II II	I I	I I	II II	I I	II II
II II	I I	II II	II II	I I	I I	II II	I I

Mérindílogún









