Archeology of The Word Yoruba

Introduction

Scholars before us worked tirelessly in vain to find etymology of the word Yoruba. We admire their commitments and persistence of these dedicated scholars, because of their labor and challenges they faced we are able to make contributions towards understanding the meaning of Yoruba word.

In providing solution to the meaning of Yoruba word we concede difficulties and insurmountable problems which future scholars will continue to encounter; if scholars persist in their ignorance, that in order to understand reality of indigenous African culture, they can ignore systematic references to Ancient Egyptian sources.

After presenting facts relating to problems of finding meaning and etymology of Yoruba, we offer precise facts which corroborate Ancient Egyptian origin of the word Yoruba. Timothy A. Awoniyi informed us;

The term “Yoruba” (or sometimes ‘Yooba’ which the follow for the various sections of the Yoruba-speaking people of the Western State, of Nigeria and their language is of doubtful origin. All the indications from available sources seem to suggest that it was probably not a ‘Yoruba’ word. In fact the word has no meaning in the language of the Yoruba.

It is a national embarrassment for Yoruba linguistics to have struggled for years and have been unable to explain the meaning of Yoruba word for several generations.

The word Yoruba currently used to reference to a major cultural group in Africa according to (Awoniyi: 1981) lacks meaning in Yoruba language. This problem of determining meaning of the word Yoruba confronted several scholars who attempted and were unsuccessful in finding the meaning of the name. We outline lists of scholars who made efforts to understand the meaning of the name Yoruba.

**Scholars and Semantic of Yoruba Word**

1. Ulkam/Ulkun/Alkamy (1670): Drapper O
2. Ulkam/ Ulkun/Alkamy (1732): John Barbot
3. Lucumi (variation of the term Oluku mi =my tribesman used in Cuba)
4. Aku (Sierra Leone 1787): (British Government)
5. Yoruba were called Yariba by the Moors but “Yarba” by the natives (1819): Bowdich
6. Clapperton (1825-1826) recorded a legend from Sultan Bello that the Yoruba people after being driven by Yaa-rooba son of Kahtan from Arabia. So the Yoruba name was derived from
7. Koelle, (1848) Yoruba is a reference to people of OYO according to Yoruba informers in Sierra Leone.
8. Lucas (1948) claimed Yoruba was derived Egyptian terms rpa, and rba.
9. Salau, A. (2006) Yoruba is derived from Egyptian word for Pharaoh which means Great Place: Bw-Wr→ Wr- Bw which became Yr-Ba=Yoruba.
Bowdich postulated that the term Yoruba originated from Hausa people who used it to refer to Yoruba people. Bayarabe is the singular form for Yoruba man, and Yorubawa is plural form for Yoruba people. Awoniyi cited the fact that Bayajidda legend dealing with origin of Hausa people listed Yoruba people as being one of the ‘Banza Bakwai’ one of the seven bastards with others six being Zamfara, Kebbi, Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, and Kwararafa ‘seven cultural groups related to Hausa people.

Based our knowledge and understanding of Hausa we agree with Bowdich that Hausas were familiar with Yoruba people, and there term of reference for Yoruba is Yara. The Hausa word for Yoruba people was derived from a Yoruba group or a clan called Yara, a people living near the original town of Òyó south of River Niger.

**How Hausas Make References To People**

Certain Yoruba clans living below River Niger valley are called Yara, and Aworo. Both Yara and Aworo are an ethnic or clan name which survives in our epoch, and in fact there is a place known as Iyara in Kogi State, and Awori is clan name among Egba people. The seat of the administration center of Òyó Empire was located in Òyó. Òyó which has the same consonants like Iyara or Yara both of which are derived from Ancient Egyptian title Wr or Wrr or Wrtr which are royal titles for lower or upper Ancient Egypt.
These facts are attested to in the following book below.² So the Hausa word for Yoruba people was originally derived from Yoruba. It is dubious and misleading to say that it was Hausas who gave Yoruba people their name Yoruba as scholars like historian Yusuf Bala Usman claimed.

Both Aworo and Yara are Yoruba clans residing in southern part of River Niger in Nigeria. Yoruba name originally was used to refer to people of Ḍiyọ who are Alafin or sovereigns, the title Yoruba was used to refer to Ḍiyọ people who are all related to Alafin. In fact in 1848 a lot of the non- Ḍiyọ peoples found this title Yoruba degratory, and rejected it but later embraced it according to Awoniyi³.

Awoniyi cited evidence where other ethnic groups related to Yoruba argued that this term Yoruba should not be restricted to the people of Ḍiyọ. They argued that they have a right to use Yoruba name because they shared a common ancestor of Oduduwa with Ḍiyọ people. We cite this evidence below to make this important point.

It is misleading for the Ḍiyọ to assume the monopoly of the title Yoruba which belongs to all the Yoruba speaking tribes with different dialects since it is admitted that they all descended from Oduduwa⁴.

So Yoruba was derived from Yara and Aworo. To avoid random similarities, and to prove that Yara was a name of a Yoruba clan living in


³ Awoniyi, T.A. op cit: 106

⁴ Awoniyi, T.A. op cit: 106
the present day Kogi State which survived in the Hausa language we provide these examples of terms below used by Hausas to reference other people below.

**Table 1. How Hausas Make Reference to People**

**Example 1: Ture:** (Europe: England)
- **Bature:** (European Male)
- **Baturiya:** (European Female)
- **Turawa:** (European People)
- **Turanci** (European: English language)

**Example 2: Bole:** (One of the ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria)
- **Babole:** (Bole Male)
- **Baboliya:** (Bole Female)
- **Bolarawa:** (Bole People)
- **Bolanci** (Bole language)

**Example 3: Nupe:** (One of the ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria)
- **Banupe:** (Nupe Male)
- **Banupiya:** (Nupe Female)
- **Nupawa:** (Plural)
- **Nupanci** (Nupe language)

**Example 4: Arab**
- **Balarabe:** (Masculine)
- **Balarabiya:** (Feminine)
Larabawa: (Plural)
Larabanci (Arabic language)

Example 5: Chinese

Basine: (Chinese Male)
Basiniva: (Chinese Female)
Sinawa: (Chinese People)
Sinanci: (Chinese language)

Example 6: Yoruba: Yara: Yoruba clan living in the Niger valley in Nigeria

Bayarabe: (Masculine)
Bayarabiya: (Feminine)
Yarabawa: (Plural)
Yarabanci (Yoruba language)

We have demonstrated conclusively from data presented from Table1 above that the term Yarabawa was used by Hausas to designate or reference Yara a Yoruba people with intimate associations with Hausa people. The term Yoruba was derived from Yara a Yoruba clan living in Iyara, Kogi State, Nigeria. These facts were established on the basis of the data we presented above.

Ancient Egyptian Origin of Yoruba Name
We deduced the fact that Yoruba name was derived from Wr and Wrt, however, we need to provide explanation how we obtain this evidence. We provided data above to demonstrate how Yoruba name was derived from Yara using our intimate understanding of Hausa and Yoruba languages. In studying Egyptian and Yoruba languages we observed these consonants Y and W easily interchanged with each other.

We will demonstrate this using data gathered from Mdw Ntr or Ancient Egyptian and Yoruba languages. After which we will demonstrate processes of interchanges between Ancient Egyptian words starting with W’s and Yoruba words starting with Y’s. How these W’s words in Ancient Egyptian were transformed into Y in Yoruba with words having the same semantic meaning in both Ancient Egyptian and Yoruba languages. Is Yoruba word derived from Yara? The Yoruba word is a compound word. The prefix is Yoru and the suffix of the word Yoruba is (Ba), since we know that the Wr means great, magnate, many, and master all terms for king. We cannot assume that the suffix BA is related to immortality of the King. We can compare Aworo, Yara, and Yoru to determine that the three words have consonants Wr Yr and Yr. Yr is a variation of Wr. We demonstrate this graphically below how Aworo, Yara, and Yoruba words are related below:

**Table 2. Comparisons of Woro, Yara, and Yoru**

Woro → Yara → Yoru

w→y=y
Alan Gardiner book (1927) pointed out that:

The hieroglyphs 𓊨 and 𓊩 are weak consonants-signs, but the consonants represented by them being closely related to the vowels 𓊨 and 𓊩 respectively, they exhibit peculiarities in their employment which entitle them to the appellation of semi-vowels. 𓊨 is transliterated i because it seems from the start, to have possessed two sound values in Egyptian 𓊨 and 𓊩.

Facts presented below demonstrate that Ancient Egyptian words starting with 𓊩 have identical meaning with Yoruba words beginning with Ọ́. Ancient Egyptian word beginning with 𓊩 becomes Ọ́ in Yoruba language. We provide these facts below to substantiate that Yoruba is derived from Aworo:

Table 3. Evidence Showing W in Egyptian Changes to Y in Yoruba.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egyptian</th>
<th>Yoruba</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 𓊩 𓊨 𓊩 win: decline</td>
<td>Ọ́: decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Gardiner pp. 560)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(C.M. S., pp.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 𓊩 𓊩 𓊩 wnf: be glad</td>
<td>Ọ́: Glad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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We proved above how W changed to Y using comparatives from Egyptian and Yoruba languages. Understanding Ancient Egyptian language can help us resolve contemporary problems facing Yoruba and Benin regarding the relationship of Benin royalty to Ife or Yoruba of West Africa. Biobaku in his Lugard lectures spoke about this relationship of Oba of Benin to Ife which I quote below:

The Oba of Benin and his immediate nobility can trace their descent back to Ife, the Yoruba Holy City. Younger members of the Benin ruling House founded principalities in the Ibo country even across the Niger, although Onitsha was the farthest they established before the British came. Their
influence also extended to the Creeks, notably at Nembe in the Brass District.

The name of one of the Oba of Benin, Ewuare (The Great) comes from the same root as Aworo and Yoruba both are derived from Ancient Egyptian word Wr or Wrt. We provide linguistic proof below which establishes that Wr Wrr, and Wrt survived as a concept survived among Yoruba people of West Africa with semantic meaning as in Ancient Egyptian language. Among other ethnic groups in Nigeria and Africa we also found the word Wr or Wrr in their languages, and cultural universe with the same semantic meaning with Ancient Egyptians which stems from a common origin and cultural kinship between Black Africa and Ancient Egyptian people.

We found several excavated words from our linguistic cultural universe which proves survival of Ancient Egyptian words Wr, and Wrr among Yoruba, other ethnic groups in Nigeria. If we follow Ancient Egyptian of writing which follows a convention of writing only in consonants, we found survival of these words in our languages and cultural universe. We provide evidence below which authenticates with absolute facts Ancient Egyptian word Wr with Yoruba words having exactly the same semantic meaning.

When we removed vowels from our words in Yoruba, it conforms to Ancient Egyptian system of writing with consonants remaining, with new consonants being the same in both Egyptian and Yoruba languages.

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7 Biobaku, Saburi, *Lugard Lectures* pp. 5
Our data below provided us with incontrovertible evidence with gives us full meaning of Yoruba word, and its genetic relationship to Ancient Egyptian language. Exceptions can be explained in terms of consonant changes.

Table 4. Ancient Egyptian Wr, Wrr, among Yorubas and in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egyptian</th>
<th>Yoruba</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. [Ancient Egyptian symbol] A19 Wr: Great One</td>
<td>Ewuare= Wr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Great: Oba of Benin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Gardiner 561)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Gardiner 561)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. [Ancient Egyptian symbol] wr m3w: Greatest of Seers</td>
<td>Aworo ọṣọṣa Wr</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief Priest</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Gardiner 561)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(C.M. S., pp. 50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. [Ancient Egyptian symbol] wr(r): Great</td>
<td>Ọwure: =Wr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Made you Great (King)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Gardiner 561)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Abraham, pp. 82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. [Ancient Egyptian symbol] wr: Many</td>
<td>ọmọ wẹẹrẹ: Wr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>many children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Gardiner 561)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Abraham, pp. 664)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. [Ancient Egyptian symbol] wr: Many</td>
<td>Owara: Wr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8 High Priest of Heliopolis
7.  lwọra: Wr
    greediness, ravening
    (Gardiner 561)
    (C.M. S., pp. 129)

Table 4. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Ancient Egyptian Wr, Wrr, in Yoruba and in Nigeria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.  Wure: Blessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be anointed with oils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wishing blessings from gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Gardiner 561)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.M. S., pp.:231)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.  Wura: Wr Gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.M. S., pp.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Faulkner 54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.  Aworo Ogun: Yoruba Hunter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Faulkner 63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Abraham, pp. 80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.  Ewure: Wr Sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Faulkner 64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Abraham, pp.169)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.  Wèrè: Wr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mad person⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Gardiner 442)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Abraham, pp.:663)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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⁹ Insane people are mentally tired persons
Table 4. Ancient Egyptian Wr, Wrr, among Yorubas and in Nigeria

13. Wr(r): Great
   Awori: Wr, Yoruba clan
   Abraham, pp. 80
   (Gardiner 561)

14. Wr(r): Great
   Owerri: Wrr (Nigeria)
   (Gardiner 561)

15. Wr(r): Great
   Warri: Wr (Nigeria)
   (Gardiner 561)

16. Owuru: Sunrise/Dawn
   (Gardiner 485)

17. Nla: large
   (Gardiner pp: 617)
   (C.M. S. pp. 106)

18. Òwọrin

19. Òwiri: Bellows

20. Òwuru: pit for catching animals

21. Òwèrè: Kind of Fish
   C.M. S., pp. 189
22. wr(r): Great Iwaréfa

23. wr(r): Great Aworo (jobi): kind of bird C.M. S., pp.50

24. wr(r): Great Awóroko: colic, spleen C.M. S., pp. 50

25. wr(r): Great Iwóro-ku: Guts of the blessed C.M. S., pp. 129

26. wr(r): Great Kwari: Hausa (Great)

27. wr(r): Great Wara: Yoruba Cheese

28. wr(r): Great Gwarì=Wr Ethnic Group in Nigeria

29. wr(r): Great Kwara=(River Niger in Hausa)

30. wr(r): Great Wr→ Yl Yola: City in Nigeria

31. wr(r): Great Wr→ Yr: Yauri =: City in Nigeria
Conclusion

The word Yoruba is derived from Ancient Egyptian word Bw-Wr, literally meaning Great Place which means someone important like the Pharaoh. Bw\textsuperscript{10}, means place, or position or Bw\textsuperscript{3}, which means magnate, and notable, the expression buwa survives in Yoruba used to express something beautiful. The word Wr\textsuperscript{12} Wrrt\textsuperscript{13} which means great is a title for prince, princess, king, queen, god, and goddess of upper and lower Kemet (Egypt). The word Wr\textsuperscript{14} Wrt survives in Yoruba as a title for people the original name for Q\textsuperscript{15}Y\textsuperscript{16}Q was Q\textsuperscript{15}Y\textsuperscript{16}Qro according to our Yoruba national historians as attested to in the book, Sources of Yoruba history. Q\textsuperscript{15}Y\textsuperscript{16}Qro will be the title or term of reference for Alafin of Q\textsuperscript{15}Y\textsuperscript{16}Q or when the meaning of the word was lost; it became term of reference for Alafin’s descendants and subjects. It survives in the title of the Oba of Benin. Ewuare the Great, founder of the Benin

Empire, reigned between 1440 -1473 C.E. If we follow writing convention of Ancient Egyptians his name just means great. If we remove vowels from his name his title remains the same as that of Ancient Egyptian king which is \textit{Wr}. \textit{Wr} is a title for prince, princess, king, queen, god, and goddess of upper and lower Kemet (Ancient Egypt). The word \textit{Wr(r)} which means great in Ancient Egyptian survives in the title of \textit{Owelle of Onitsha}; Dr. Nnmadi Azikwe was given this title, the Ancient Egyptian word \textit{Wrr} changed to \textit{Wll} with the semantic meaning remaining the same. The word \textit{Wr} survives as a title \textit{wr m3w:} Greatest of Seers\textsuperscript{16} which is the title of the high priest of (Heliopolis) here written in heiroglyphics \textit{wr 3}. \textit{Wr} survives in the word \textit{AWo\textbf{r}o șașa}. Many of the words great or many which are \textit{Wr(r)} survives in many forms from both Ancient Egyptian and Yoruba languages are cited above. All these facts we uncovered from Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Ancient Egyptian, other Nigerian languages confirms that the word Yoruba has meaning in Ancient Egyptian language, these facts affirms cultural unity of Yoruba, and Ancient Egyptian people.

\textsuperscript{16} High Priest of Heliopolis
References


