Secret strategies: Women and abortion in Yoruba society, Nigeria

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Abbreviations

AIDS  Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
ANC  Antenatal care
CHAN  Christian Health Association of Nigeria
D&C  Dila(ta)tion and curettage
DFID  Department for International Development
DHS  Demographic and health survey
EVA  Electrical vacuum aspiration
FGD  Focus group discussion
FOMWAN  Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations of Nigeria
FP  Family planning
GH  General Hospital
HIV  Human immunodeficiency virus
IFH  International Family Health
IPAS  International Projects Assistance Services
IPPF  International Planned Parenthood Federation
IUCD  Intra-uterine contraceptive device
IVF  In-vitro/vivo fertilisation
JSS  Junior secondary school
LGA  Local Government Area
LIMH  Lagos Island Maternity Hospital
LSHMB  Lagos State Hospital Management Board
LUTH  Lagos University Teaching Hospital
MCH  Maternal and child health
MMR  Maternal mortality ratio
MVA  Manual vacuum aspiration
NGO  Non-governmental organisation
OCP  Oral contraceptive pill(s)
PHC  Primary health care
PID  Pelvic inflammatory disease
PPA  Postpartum abstinence
PPFN  Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria
PSI  Population Services International
SFH  Society for Family Health
SSS  Senior secondary school
STD(I)  Sexually transmitted disease (infection)
TBA  Traditional birth attendant
TOP  Termination of pregnancy
UNFPA  United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF  United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID  United States Agency for International Development
VA  Vacuum aspiration
WHARC  Women’s Health and Action Research Centre
WHO  World Health Organization
Glossary

The Yoruba alphabet includes the letters ẹ, ọ and ẹ; ẹ and ọ correspond to the opening vowel sounds in ‘bet’ and ‘not’ respectively, ẹ is pronounced ‘sh’. Yoruba is a tonal language with three pitches: high (’), medium (”) and low (‘’) – these pitches are not always indicated in texts; I also did not include them. Yoruba has no plural form of nouns; by numerals and/or the context of the sentence it has to be deduced whether plural or singular is meant (see also Eades 1980:xiii).

Abiku     spirit child  
Agan      barren woman  
Agbẹbi    midwife  
Agbo      herbal medicinal drink  
Airomobi   infertility  
Ajẹ        witch  
Ako se jaye destiny  
Aladura   spiritual African Christian churches  
Aran      worm  
Aran ginisẹ ginisẹ worm living in the uterus, which may cause infertility  
Aṣẹjẹ     medicinal soup  
Aṣiṣẹ      secrets that will cause embarrassment if revealed  
Atpẹ       sexually transmitted infection – gonorrhoea  
Baṣa       father, address of respect for older men  
Babalowo   Ifa priest / traditional spiritual healer / herbalist  
Ebu        black medicinal powder  
Eda        sperm flowing out of the vagina  
Elewu ọmọ herbalists, mostly women  
Emere      wicked spirit  
Gbẹẹẹ       incision mark with medicine rubbed into it  
Idile      patrilineage  
Igbadi     waistband  
Ifa         major Yoruba deity who is in direct contact with Olorun (Supreme God of Yoruba)  
Iju         fibroid (in the uterus)  
Iya         mother  
Iya abiku  mother of an abiku child or children, mother whose children die young  
Juju       magic, charm, spell  
Kaan       potash, used in cooking and for self-abortion  
Oba        king  
Ogogoro    local gin  
Ọko orun   spirit husband  
Olofin wẹwe traditional healer specialised in reproductive health, literally: owner of small children  
Oriṣa      deity  
Oruka      ring  
Woli       priest in Aladura Church