

NETWORK OF YORUBÁ PRINT CULTURE – “YORUBA PRINT”

Shola Adenekan, Oluwabunmi Tope Bernard and Nureni Aremu Bakenne

YORUBÁ PRINT CULTURE: 1840 – TILL DATE

Yorubá Print Culture: Network and Modernities

Since 1852, when the first Yorubá dictionary was compiled, Yorubá print culture has been influencing all cultural forms in South-West and North-Central Nigeria, from short stories in magazines, to scripts for Nollywood films (the world's second largest film industry that is based in Nigeria), and to poetry reading in school halls. Some of the fictional characters that one sees on local television often reprise the portrayals from Yorubá language newspapers, books and magazines, over the years. However, a lot of the existing scholarship on Nigerian and Yorubá print culture – in the context of comparative literary studies – focuses on works written in the English language. Nevertheless, much of the materials that we have surveyed so far at archives in Nigeria and elsewhere produced original thoughts and ideas in Yorubá, and much of what they articulated is grounded in a worldview that is uniquely Yorubá. Albert S. Gerard (1986) and Phillip S. Zachernuk (2000) do broadly the same thing, in their respective studies of African and southern Nigerian intellectual cultures.

Why Yorubá Print Culture?

Yorubá Print Culture is important because of its articulation of its relationship between transcontinental print networks and local contexts of production. The newspapers, small magazines and books of colonial and postcolonial Nigeria, especially those in Yorubá language, produced new cultural spaces and intellectual traditions that made new publics possible. Early signs of anti-colonial struggles in colonial West Africa can be found in the various networks of Yorubá print publications that existed during the colonial era. The subversive assertions and complications of postcolonial identities also make Yoruba print culture significant, especially through its foregrounding of the epistemic violence of colonialism and an emergent activist response to this. In postcolonial years, new networks helped to produce new genres of poetry such as Ewi, and this also influenced the formations of new Christian denominations such as Redeem Christian Church of God, which has several branches in Europe and the Americas. The world's second biggest film industry Nollywood, thrives because of its link to Yorubá print culture. This project challenges the single story-of abject and poverty - about Africa, by showing that societies on the continent use print technology as an important tool that allows them to adapt and connect with an ever-changing world, as well as actively participate in the world republic of letters.



Yorubá culture is one of Africa's most prominent and influential cultures. About 50 million Yoruba people in today's Nigeria are to be found in the South-West and North-Central of Nigeria. Outside of Nigeria, there are Yorubá - speaking people in the West African countries of Benin Republic, Togo, Gambia, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone. Outside of Africa, there are people who identify as Yorubá or with Yorubá culture in countries like Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil, Cuba, and the United States. Although, there are no definite headcounts, there are arguably over a million people of Yorubá descent in Europe. According to the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, "A mixture of the old and new descendants of the Yorubá now live in North America, the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe." Many of these people directly and indirectly engage with Yorubá print culture regularly through a myriad of media formats, which include printed materials, the broadcast media and digital platforms.



Fig. 1: Yoruba Book Series by D.O. Fagunwa

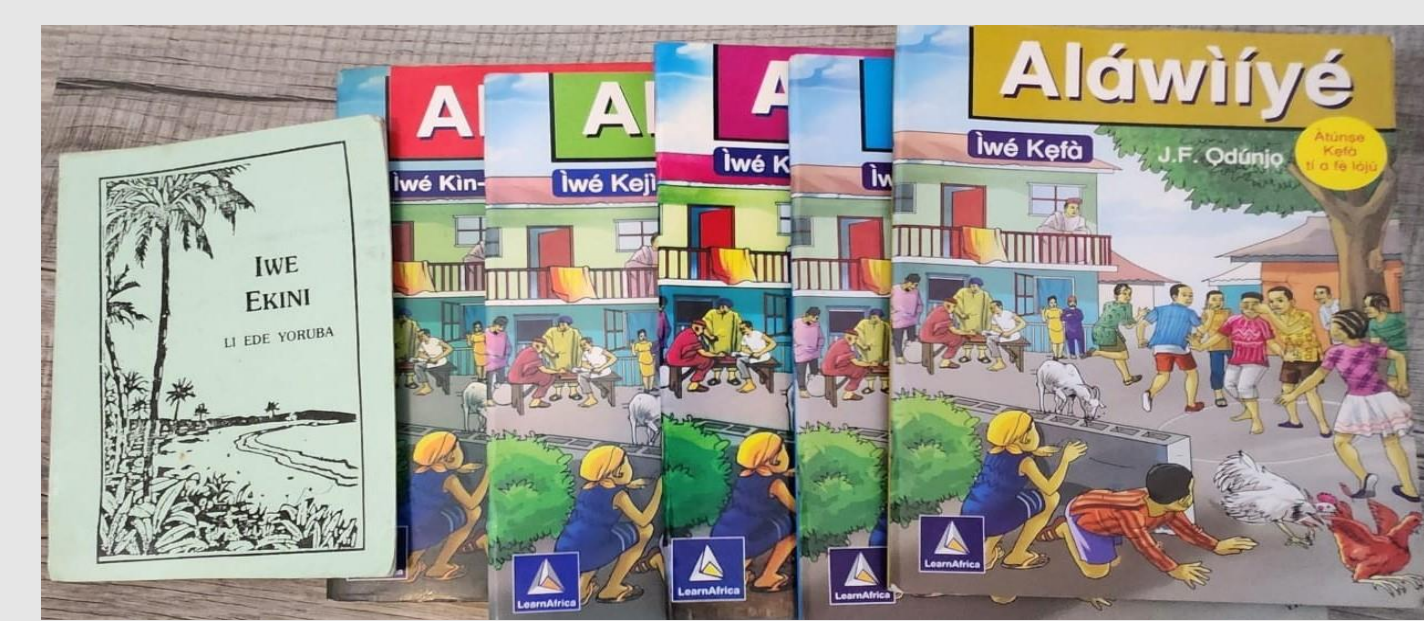


Fig. 2: Alawiyé Book Series by J.F. Odujio

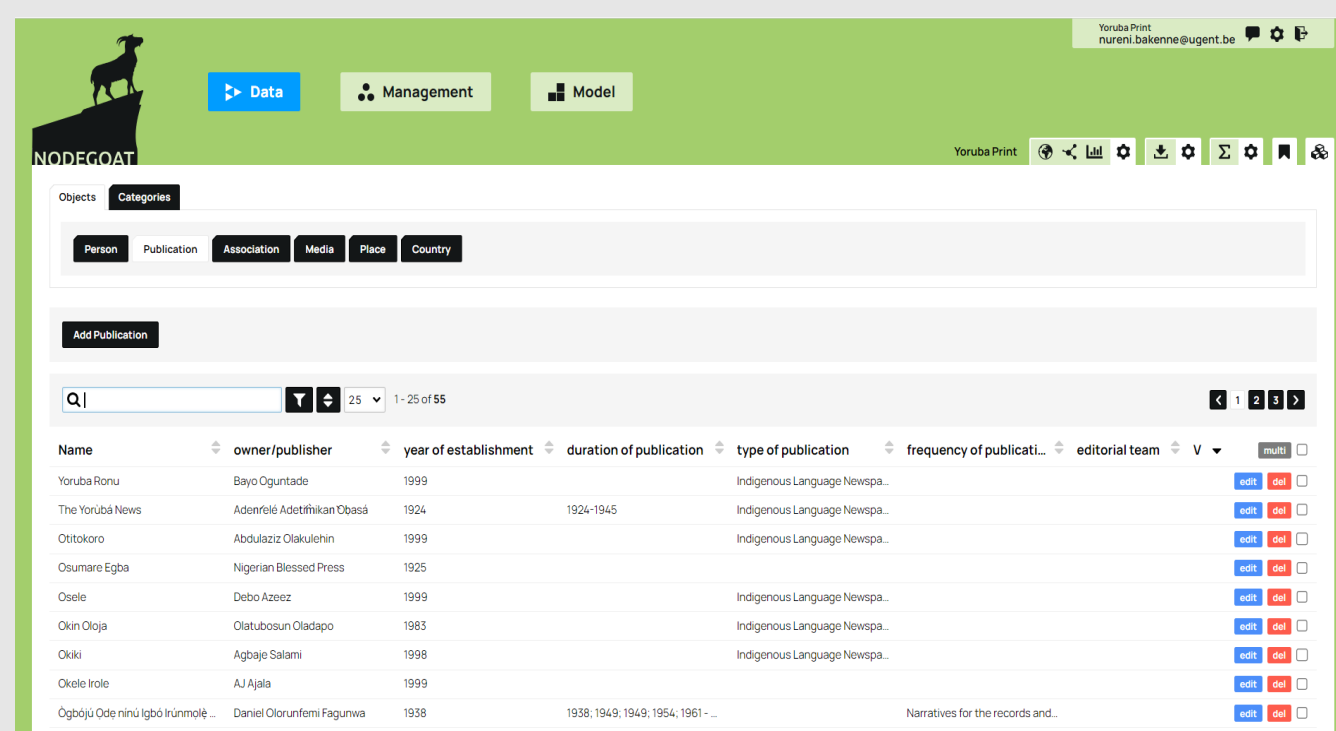


Fig. 3: Node Goat Indicating Yoruba Publishers

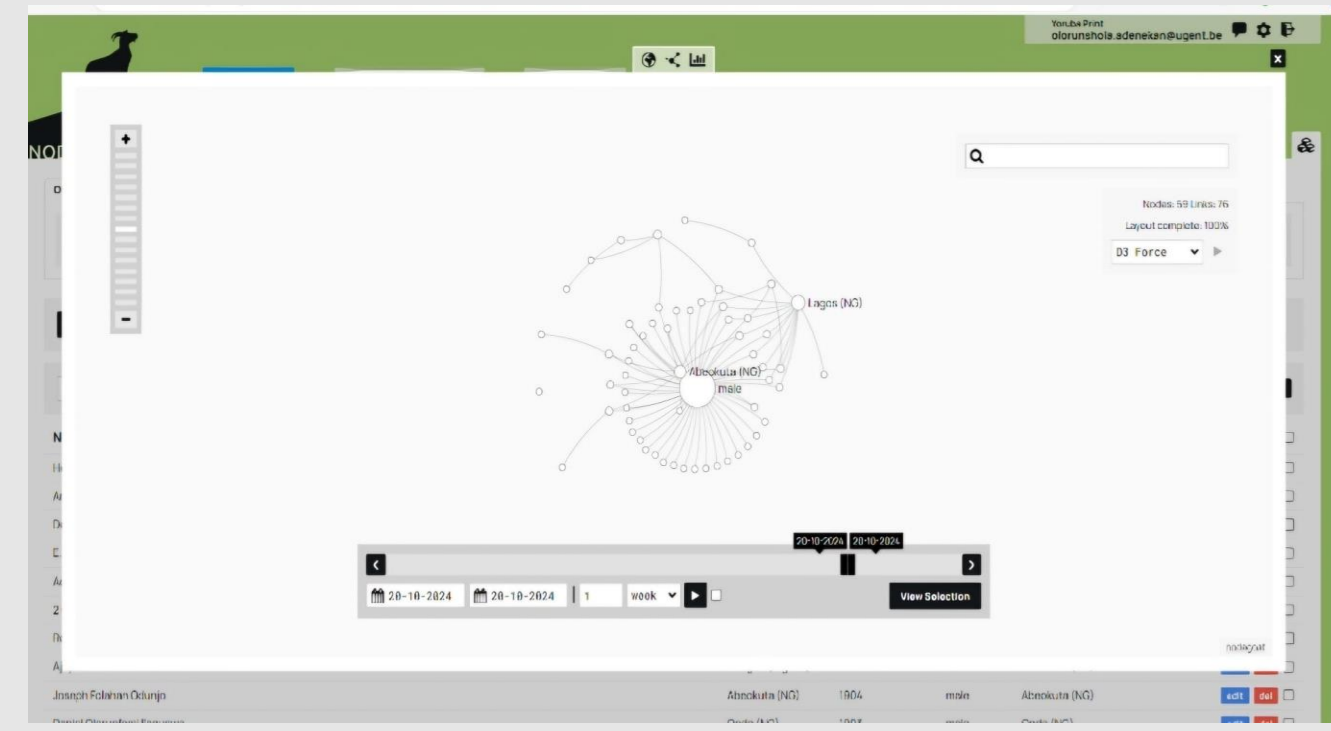


Fig. 4: Node Goat Indicating Social Visualisation of Information

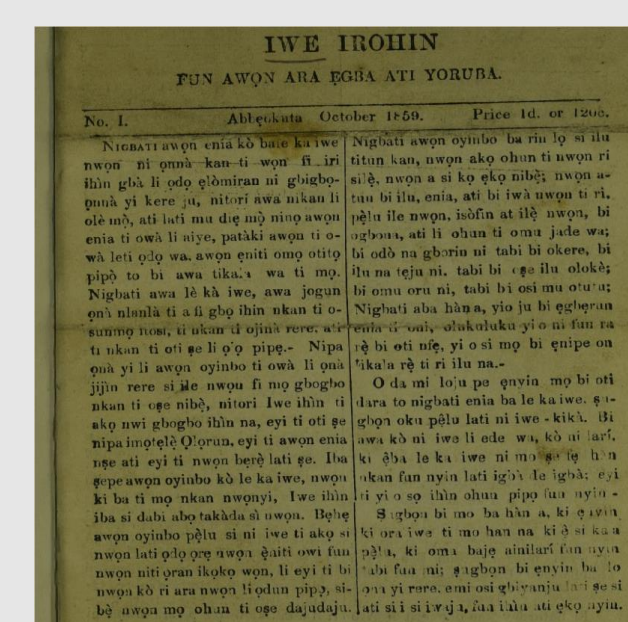


Fig. 5: First Newspaper in Nigeria, October 25, 1859

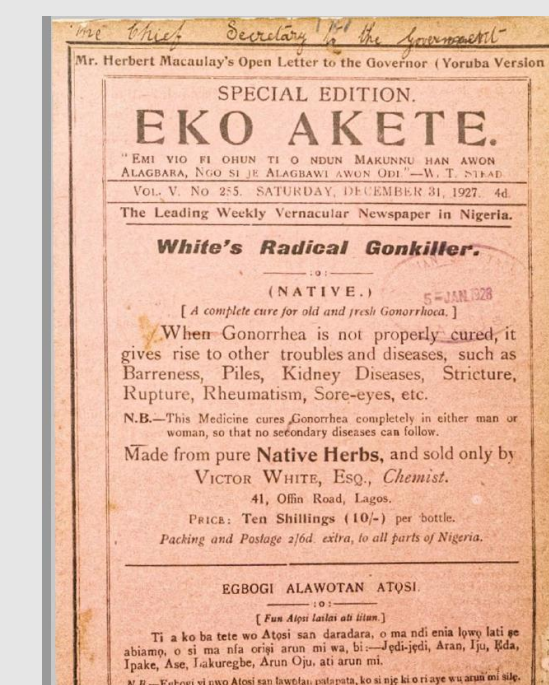


Fig. 6: Eko Akete, December 31, 1927

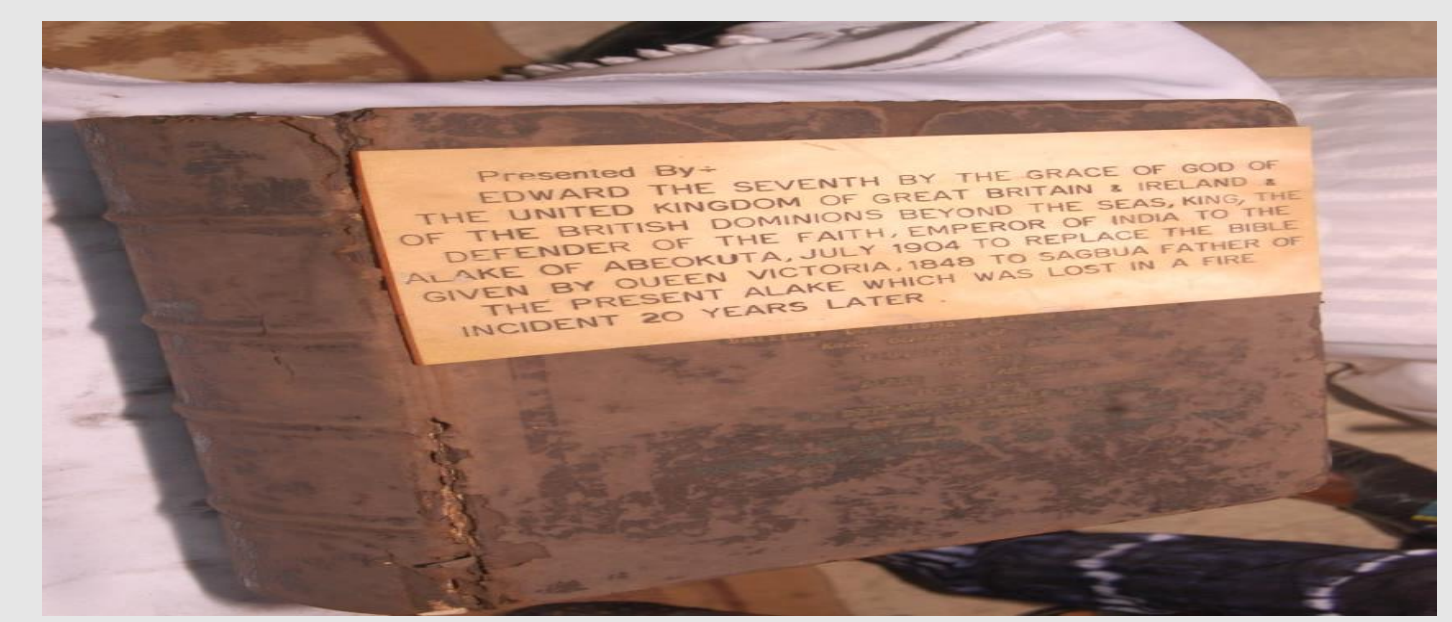


Fig. 7: First Bible written in Yoruba, 1900

Research Materials

The “YorubaPrint” team, made up of Shola Adenekan (Principal Investigator), whose work dwells on Network of Yorubá Print Culture; Oluwabunmi Tope Bernard (Postdoctoral Fellow) focuses on Short Biographies of Yorubá Writers while Nureni Aremu Bakenne (Ph.D. Researcher) researches on Nigeria's First Newspaper-Iwé Ìròhìn Fún Àwọn Ará Ègbá àti Yorùbá. The team has been collating and digitizing relevant research materials for this project. The research team's activities include research trips to archives; a compilation of a bibliography of resources (updated thrice-yearly on the online project database); the identification of key resources for digital preservation in the online project archive subject to copyright permission. In collaboration with research associates in Nigeria, the team has already digitised some precarious materials from various archives in West Africa and the UK, as shown in the list: ● Akede Eko 1929-32, 1934, 1937-53 ● Eko Akete 1922-25, 1927-29, 1937 ● Eko Igbehin 1946-47 ● Eleti Ofe 1923-30, 1947-53 ● Osumare Egba 1936-3 ● Irawo Obokun 1952-54 ● Irohin Yoruba 1945-54 ● Iwe Irohin 1860-67 ● Iwe Irohin-Eko 1890 ● Yoruba News 1924-26, 1929-32, 1936, 1938-40 ● Irohin Yoruba 1954 – 2016 ● Gbohunbohun ● Iwe Irohin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba. We have also set up a database for the University of Ibadan (Nigeria) libraries, where the digitized materials are stored for local use. The project has been working with the Digital Humanities Research team at Ghent University. The data we are extrapolating are being analysed through a visualization software called Nodegoat.



Fig. 9: Samuel Ajayi Crowther (Centre) with other Missionaries at Kenston, Kent, United States in 1873

References

- Adenekan, Shola. “Yorubá Print Culture: Network and Modernities, 1852-Present ERC Starting Grant 2020”. An ERC Research Proposal (2020):5.
- Barber, Karin. “When people cross thresholds.” African Studies Review 50.2 (2007): 111-123.
- Barnes, Andrew. “Samuel Ajayi Crowther: African and Yoruba Missionary Bishop.” Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History. 2018.
- Falola, Toyin. “African history before 1885.” (2000).
- Gérard, Albert S., ed. European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa. John Benjamins Publishing, 1986.
- Zachernuk, Philip Serge. Colonial Subjects: an African intelligentsia and Atlantic ideas. University of Virginia Press, 2000.

Contact:

olorunshola.adenekan@ugent.be

<https://www.yorubaprintcultureproject.ugent.be>

@akada

Shola Adenekan

