

Yoruba Writing: Standards and Trends

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the state of Yorùbá orthography. The first effort at standardizing Yorùbá writing system came in 1875, and there has been a great deal of refinements and orthographies since. Specifically, a great rush of activity in standardizing written Yorùbá came in the years after independence when effort to introduce the teaching of Nigerian languages in schools and the application of those languages to official activities. The present standards were established in 1974, however, there remains a great deal of contention over writing conventions-spelling, grammar, the use of tone marks. The paper explores examples from journalism, religious writing, education and literature, and advertising to demonstrate ongoing deviations from the approved orthography.

Key Words: Yorùbá, Orthography, Standard, Trends, Writing

Introduction

The term 'Yorùbá' is considered as the association of several subgroups bound to one another by language and tradition, Igwe (1973:9). Yoruba occupies a large area in the south-western part of Nigeria extending through Lagos, Ògùn, Ọ̀yọ́, Ọ̀sùn, Òhí dọ́ Èkítì, Kwara, Kogi and Edo States. Yorùba can also be found in the Republics of Benin and Togo, and also in Brazil, Cuba, Sierra-Leone and Trinidad and Tobago. The Yorùbá outside Nigeria is regarded as 'Diaspora Yorùbá'. The spread of Yorùbá population in Diaspora is extremely thin, their language has not benefited from the advantages of the linguistic development derived from the work of Anglo-Saxon missionaries. This has led to little (if any) development of the Yorùbá language in these countries. This we assumed has also led to the Yorùbá cultural weakening and destroyed among them, the idea of their belonging to a wider Yorùbá national group, which would have manifested itself as a linguistic entity.

The name 'Yorùbá' is also applied to the language of the people. Yorùbá language belongs to the West Benue-Congo family of the Niger-Congo phylum (Williamson and Blench 2000:31). In their efforts to stimulate writing in Yorùbá language for evangelism in Yorùbá nation, the missionaries, involuntarily and perhaps unconsciously, contributed to the creation of a written form, known as standard Yorùbá. It is believed that standard Yorùbá has a place of honour among its dialects because it is the only variant which is socially defined within the linguistic area; other dialects are geographically and socially restricted. This standard Yorùbá is however, only a part of the Yorùbá language, Adetugbo (1973: 183). The Yorùbá language being an aggregate and not the sum total of all the dialects it subsumes within the Yorùbá linguistic area.

The language has various dialects, which have been classified into major dialect areas by different scholars like Adétùgbọ́ (1967), Akinkúgbé (1976), Oyèláràn (1976) and Awóbùlúyí (1998). These dialects share some linguistic features which allow some degree of mutual intelligibility,

Writing is a way of communication which uses a system of visual marks on some kind of surface, Crystal (2003:257). It is one of graphic expressions. The graphic marks represent, with varying regularity, individual speech sounds, in an alphabetic system such as is found in Yorùbá and other natural languages. Yorùbá was not reduced to writing until the nineteenth century, mainly through the efforts of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). During the period, the CMS organized a mission to the Yorùbá country under the leadership of Rev. Henry Tonwonsend and Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first African clergyman within the CMS. Several fruitless efforts were made to invent new characters or adapt the Arabic script from its Islamised neighbours to the North. The Roman script was eventually adopted, as the mission believed that this would help its members to overcome the problem of having to learn strange characters before they could undertake scholastic and evangelistic work.

The Historical Development of the Yorùbá Orthography

The historical development of Yorùbá orthography is recorded in different works such as Johnson (1921), Ajayi (1960), Bámbgbósé (1965), Oyèláràn (1973) and Aroh unṣmóláṣe (1987), among others. Yorùbá was reduced to writing by people with very little or no formal training in Linguistics or language studies in the early nineteenth century. According to Ajayi (1960:1-2), Yorùbá was reduced to writing by Bowdich (A British diplomat in the Gold Coast). Research has revealed that Bowdich collected Yorùbá words for numerals in 1817. His collection was published in his book *"Mission to Ashantee"* in 1819. This was the first attempt to print Yoruba words. In 1829, Mrs H. Kilham collected and published Yorùbá vocabularies. She was the first known linguist to produce Yorùbá vocabulary in written form. Clapperton, a notable explorer, also collected and published Yorùbá vocabulary in 1829. Between 1830 and 1832, Raban published his booklets, which thus became the first volumes in the Yoruba language.

In the various works produced so far, variations could be noticed in spelling conventions adopted by different writers in their works. Such variations gave rise to controversy over the rules for reducing the language to writing. The controversy led Gollmer (1847) to propose an orthography that formed the basis of the Church Missionary Society's (1848) 'Rules for Reducing Unwritten Language to Alphabetic Writing in Roman Characters.' Further efforts towards standardizing Yoruba orthography followed in 1875 when the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) organized a conference on Yorùbá orthography between January 28th and 29th at the C.M.S, Faji Mission House, Lagos. Ajayi Crowther was one of the Africans who featured prominently at that conference (Bámbgbósé 1965:5). After a careful consideration of some motivations, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, the conference resolved a number of anomalies noticed in the spelling conventions in use at that time. The conference produced what it thought was a harmonized orthography for use. However in the 1930's, the International African Institute (IAI) took up the responsibility for providing guidelines for practical orthographies for African languages Oyèláràn (1973:37). The institute, which explicitly based its alphabet on IPA symbols, came up with its first memorandum entitled, 'Practical Orthography of African Languages'. The authors of this memorandum were so much familiar with the 1875 Yorùbá Orthography that they included Yorùbá among the languages used to demonstrate the use of their own proposed alphabet for the design of reformed orthography for African languages. IAI's alphabet has since inspired the orthographies of a large number of African languages. However, in the later years, the overall trend seems to be a retreat from the IAI symbols with greater recourse to ordinary Roman letters and diagraphs as used in writing of English or French.

Almost twenty-five years after IAI came up with its 'practical Orthography of African Languages', Wolff (1954) undertook the study of Nigerian Languages with a view of proposed framework from which the orthographies of Northern Nigerian languages can be derived. He was aware in matters concerning the Yorùbá Orthography that the Roman alphabet as opposed to Arabic scripts was inadequate. He opined that the people of Nigeria may wish to learn to read languages spoken in other parts of the world and alphabets should not be a stumbling block in the way of their efforts.

The harmonized Yorùbá Orthography of 1875 was in use for almost a century until Àjàyí (1960) advocated for another conference to further reform it for use in schools. In anticipation of such a conference, Bámbgbósé (1965) appraised the 1875 orthographies and made recommendations for its reform because of the difficulties the native speakers are experiencing in using it. In response to these two scholars, the government of the old Western Region (a linguistically homogenous state), acting through the Western Nigeria Ministry of Education, set up a Yorùbá Orthography Committee in January 1966 to review the 1875 orthography and recommend to the Ministry a Yorùbá orthography which would be standard for the whole region such that the Ministry could easily justify making Yorùbá compulsory in all schools in the Region.

When the committee met, it gave a restrictive interpretation to its terms of reference. That was why the Committee's report showed that neither a standard orthography nor a general convention existed for use. The report also created new controversies that gave rise to divergent practices. Besides, some of the recommendations contained there cannot be justified. In the light of this, the Western State government set up yet another Orthography Committee in March 1969 to review the 1966 orthography report. The Committee met between March and November 1969 and reviewed the 1966 Yorùbá orthography. Unfortunately, however, a good number of their recommendations were based solely on the authority of the 1875 Faji House orthography.

Between 1969 and 1971, different scholars and groups made private attempts to standardize Yorùbá orthography. Thus, in 1971, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities set up orthography committees to look into the orthographies of some Nigerian languages with a view to reforming and standardizing them. Among the languages selected were Efik, Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá. The committee that worked on Yorùbá orthography requested and received memoranda containing suggestions about reforming that orthography. In 1973, the Federal Ministry of Education set up its Joint Consultative Committee (J.C.C) to look into the orthographies of some Nigerian languages with the aim of standardizing them. The Ministry, in matters concerning Yorùbá orthography, collected the orthography reports of 1966 and 1969 along with the recommendations of the orthography committee set up by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities and gave them to the J.C.C to work out a standard Yorùbá orthography. After a thorough examination of the orthography reports on Yorùbá, the J.C.C approved the report of the committee set up on Yorùbá orthography by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors as 'Standard' Yorùbá orthography in June 1974. This 'Standard Yoruba' orthography was to be used in schools, Ministries of Education (Federal and State) and in WASC/GCE and Grade Two Yorùbá examinations.

The Standard Yorùbá Orthography

The standardized writing system of a language is known as its orthography. Orthography consists of the symbols and conventions used in writing a language. The principles of a good orthography are well expressed by Williamson (1944: 7-8). Some of these include (a) it must have different ways to write all different significant sounds of the language ; (b) the same sound or word must be written same way whenever it appears; (c) it should be convenient to use and (d) it should be familiar as possible in appearance.

A standard orthography is therefore, a convention which is learned, consistent, stable and accepted as correct across a community. It is a set of conventions which are observed by all writers and it is used in formal education.

The desire to have a standard writing system for Yorùbá and other African languages by the C.M.S in the nineteenth century emphasized the need for a fixed system for those languages. Yorùbá orthography consists of a set of letters (alphabet) and their variant forms i.e. capital, small letter, spelling system and a set of punctuation marks. The 1974 JCC approved Yorùbá orthography has remained the standard orthography for the language until today. The following are some of its highlights.

Old Orthography	Standard Orthography	Gloss	Remark
Aiya aiye yio eyē lailai	Àyà ayé yóò eyē laelae	Chest world will bird old,ever	The retention of i in the spellings of these words may lead to some confusion and the new spellings should be adhered to.
fún u nà á dín i pòn ọ	fún un nà án dín in pòn ọn	give him beat him/it fry it put it (child) on the back	The third pronoun singular pronoun after a verb having a nasalized vowel must be nasalized.
On onjẹ	Ọ̀n Oúnjẹ	3 rd person Singular pronoun Food	The only spelling that can be substituted for n is un .
okorin obirin enia adiẹ ìtọ̀n ìşọ̀n ẹ̀tọ̀n ìban ahan	Okùnrin obìnrin èniyàn adiyẹ itàn ìşàn ẹ̀tàn ìbọ̀n ahọ̀n	man woman people fowl story muscle deceit gun tongue	To be written as pronounced.

Nā yĩ dada ōgun ōtọ ānu eleyĩ mīran olōgbé alāfía ēri pāpā ọlọpā gān ōrun	nāā yīi dádádá òógùn oògùn òótọ àánú eléyīi mīiràn olóògbé alàáfíà èérí pàápàá ọlọpàá gan an òórún òòrùn oorun	the this well sweat, perspiration medicine, charm truth mercy this another late, deceased peace, health, bliss filth, dirt especially police exact, specifically smell sun sleep	The use of the phonetic symbol called a tilde (~) in the old spelling convention as an indicator of double vowels implies two tones, the tilde was abolished and its place taken by as many vowels as there are plausible successive tone features.
ní íṣe kí í ṣe kò ní íwá	ní í ṣe kí í ṣe kò ní í wá	has to do with it is not he won't come	The habitual formative í should be written separately independently of the verb.
lati ọwọ ọmọ mi babaa rẹ	lāti ọwọ ọmọ mi bàbá rẹ	by my son your father	The writing of a mid tone vowel to indicate what some people regard as possessor marker/genitive morpheme in the language is rejected.
Ọtta Ọffa Oshogbo Shittu Shọla Shina Shaki Ilesha Jebba Shogamu	Ọta Ọfà Ọshogbo Şittu Şolá Şínà Sakí Ilésà Jẹbà Ságámù	Names of Cities/ town/ people	The spellings in this column were introduced either by, or under the influence of Europeans who could not be bothered to use the accepted Yorùbá (Bámgbè 1965). The double consonants is replaced by single ones and sh is replaced by ş
Tani kini ewoni jẹki wipe gegebi eniti ibiti nitoripe bakana nitorina nigbagbo begege bẹkọ biotilejẹpẹ	ta ni kí ni ewo ni jẹ ki wí pé gẹgẹ bí ẹni ti ibi ti nítorí pé bákan náà nítorí náà nígba gbogbo bẹẹ gẹgẹ bẹẹ kọ bí ó tilẹ jẹ pé	who is it what is it which is it let that say that just as person who place where because that even though because of in all times just like that even if/ though	The words here were written as single words in the old orthography. The standard writing convention rejects writing them as single words.
nlo ngbo mbọ	ń lo ń gbọ ń bọ	he is going he is hearing he is coming	ń should be allowed to stand by itself and not be written with the verb.

njeun	ń jeun	he is eating	
nwon enyin nyin	won eyin yin	they you (pl.) you/your	There was no good case retaining the spellings of nw and ny which are supposed to indicate nasality of sounds represented by the letters w and y .
Nkan oronbo dundu kọnkọ	nńkan òronò bó dùndú kòhńkọ	something orange fried yam frog	Tone mark should be indicated on the syllabic nasal having a high tone or a low tone and not for a syllabic nasal having a mid-tone. Mid tone is not marked in the language

Tones: The old writing convention indicated that tone marks are unnecessary in writing, since there is usually little or no ambiguity as to what a particular word means in its context. Because tones are significant in a way that consonants and vowels are, the standard writing convention indicates that tone should be indicated on words. High tone to be indicated by acute accent ['] as in **bá** 'met', a low tone by the grave accent [̀] as in **bà** 'hit' and mid tone should be left unmarked as in **ba** 'hide'.

Punctuation: The standard writing convention in Yorùbá recommends that this should be used as appropriate.

The Trends in the Yorùbá Writing

Despite all the reforms suggested and accepted in the JCC 1974 Yorùbá orthography, that orthography remains unsatisfactory to some linguists. The reasons for this are not hard to see. As earlier noted in Bámgbóse (1965:2), the situation in Yorùbá is such that the spelling conventions still allow for some measure of individual variations. Besides, Yorùbá is a developing language, unlike English; it does not have a definite set of conventions. No wonder therefore that some linguists have come up with further suggestions for its reform.

Some of these suggestions are contained in Aróhunmòlășe (1987). Even if these suggestions are implemented I doubt if the divergences in Yorùbá writing standards are amendable. For now, the standard Yorùbá orthography of 1974 remains valid regardless of its known inadequacies. Any attempt to jettison it will cause chaos within the Yorùbá writing system. Bearing this in mind, almost everyone writing the language today tries to make use of the 1974 spelling conventions. However, his/her knowledge of the conventions determines how each person writes. For the purpose of illustrations, we shall look at how people write the language in the following domains: Journalism (print), Religion, Education, and advertising (Handbills/Billboards).

Yorùbá Writing in Religion

On January 9, 1844, Rev Ajayi Crowther preached in Yorùbá for the first time in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He preached from the gospel according to Luke, Chapter one, verse thirty-five. This was how he wrote the verse down.

'... ohun ohworh ti aobih ni inoh reh li aomakpe li omoh olorun' Lk 1:35
... 'that holy one who is to be born will be called the son of God.'

This was the beginning of writing in Yorùbá for religious purposes. Thereafter, Henry Townsend and Gollmer played active roles in the translation of Bible passages into Yoruba. In 1851, Crowther re-wrote Lk 1:35 as follows: *ohun mimọ ti aoti inọ rẹ bi, ọmọ Ọlórún li aoma pe e'.* This was an improvement on his first attempt. Between 1850 and 1856, Rev Ajayi Crowther translated the New Testament of the Bible into Yorùbá. From the 1850s to the 1870s, work continued on the translation of the Gospels and the Old Testament. It was not until 1900 that the complete Yorùbá Bible: *Bibeli Mimọ tabi Majemu lailai àti Titun* came into being. It was published by International Bible Association, Dallas, Texas. Extracts from that Bible are given in appendix (1). The Bible made use of the 1875 orthography. The right to publish the Bible was later transferred to the Bible Society of Nigeria which has been printing it for decades now.

In 1993, a new version of the Yorùbá Bible: *Bibeli Yorùbá Atọka (Majemu Ti Laelae ati Majemu Titun)* was published by Kaybal Bible Mission Nig. INC. The Bible made use of the 1974 Standard orthography with a curious mixture of old spellings. See appendix (2) for an extract from that Bible. In 2002, another version of Yorùbá Bible:

Bíbẹ̀lì Mímọ̀ Atọ̀ka ati Ìwé Deutero -Kànoníkà (Àpókřifà) was published by St Pauls Nigeria (Catholics). The Bible faithfully followed the standard writing convention. See appendix (3) for an extract.

These new versions of the Yorùbá Bible, it would appear, adversely affected the sales of *Bibeli Mimọ* (1900 edition) by Bible Society of Nigeria, for in 2003, that Society published a revised edition of with few modifications to its spellings (see appendix 4). In 2004, the CSS Bookshop, Lagos, published a new version of the Yorùbá Bible: *Bíbẹ̀lì Yorùbá Alásoyẹ̀ (Majemu láéláé ati Titun)*. The translation for the most part followed the Yorùbá Standard Spelling Convention, with a light mixture of old spellings as shown in appendix (5). Realizing that its Bible was becoming rather old fashioned, the Bible Society of Nigeria, in 2006, revised its house rules and came up with *Bibeli Mimọ* which conforms to the 1974 Yorùbá spelling convention. The Society later came up with *Bíbẹ̀lì Mímọ̀ Atọ̀ka*. An extract from it is shown in appendix (6). Finally, in 2007, Beulahland Bible publishers, Ibadan, published *Beulah's Bilingual and Parallel bible (Yorùbá/English)*. The publication contains a mixture of old and new spellings.

While most Yorùbá Bible publishers take care to see that their publications follow the approved spelling conventions for the language, those who publish hymn books, books of liturgy and pamphlets for weddings, funerals, and harvests continue with rare exceptions to follow otherwise discarded old writing conventions. This is illustrated in appendix (7). One of the rare exceptions to such publishers can be seen in *DIGI Awọ̀n Obinrin Kristiẹ̀ni (Christian Women Mirror and Jí (Awake)* See Appendix (8) for illustration.

From our discussion so far, it is clear that most bible publishers and Christian denominations have tried to make reading and comprehension easy for their readers by making use of the approved spelling conventions in their publications. One major defect in such publications, however, is that they take tone marks to be optional, when they ought to use such marks fully and appropriately.

Yorùbá Writing in Print Journalism

The first Yorùbá newspaper appeared in October, 1859(Ògúnshínà 1980). It was named *Ìwé Ìroyin fún Àwọ̀n Ará Ẹ̀gbá Àti Yorùbá*, edited and printed by Henry Townsend. The 1875 Yorùbá orthography tentatively solved for the Yorùbá, the practical problem of a workable orthography for writing their thoughts down in pamphlets, booklets and newspapers their own language. Therefore, between 1888 and 1929 many Yorùbá newspapers came out. They include *Ìwé-Ìroyin Eko* (1888) by I.B Thomas, *In Leisure Hours/Nígbà tí ọ̀wọ̀ bá dílẹ̀* (1910) by the C.M.S, *Ẹ̀kó Akéte* (1922), edited by Adéoyè Dénigà, *Eletí Ọ̀fẹ̀* (1923) edited by Awóbọ̀ Akítan, *The Yorùba News* (1924) edited by D.A Qbasa, *Ẹ̀kó Ìgbẹ̀hìn* (1926) and *Akéde Ẹ̀kó* (1928) edited by I.B Thomas. The establishment and publication of these Yorùbá newspapers had a tremendous effect on evolving and stabilizing Yorùbá orthography during the period.

Between 1930 and now, several other newspapers have been produced to satisfy the socio-political needs of the people. They include, *Òsùmarè Ẹ̀gbá*, *Ẹ̀gbáland Echo*, *Ìroyin Yorùbá*, *Gbòungboùn*, *Ìṣòkan*, *Ọ̀kín Ọ̀lọ̀jà*, *Akéde Àgbáyẹ̀*, *Akéde Oòduà*, *Alàróyẹ̀*, *Magasíni Alàróyẹ̀*, *Àlàyẹ̀*, *Àjorò*, *Olóótó*, *Alálàyẹ̀*, *Ìpayá*, *ó sẹ̀lẹ̀*, *Àsoyẹ̀*, *Káyẹ̀gbọ̀* and *Ìtànśán*. The years of establishment, editors and addresses of some these Yorùbá newspapers are contained in Ògúnshínà (1992:34-35) and Olúmúyiwá (2002:9-11). Some of these newspapers however, have since gone into extinction. The few that are currently on the news-stand are *Ìtànśán*, *Alàróyẹ̀*, *Akéde*, *Àgbáyẹ̀*, *Akéde Oòduà* and *Aláríyà*. All, of them, except *Ìtànśán* observe standard Yorùbá spelling conventions in their publications to a great extent. But even then, they feature curious departures from those conventions, as in the following examples:

Alàróyẹ̀/Akéde Àgbáyẹ̀/Aláríyà/Akede Oòdua		Standard Orthography	Gloss
i.	fẹẹ	fẹ	want
ii.	too	tó	enough
iii.	waa	wá	come
iv.	lọọ	lọ	go
v.	gege bii	gẹgẹ bí	just as
vi.	lóni-in	lónií	today
vii.	ni-in	ni	(an introducer)
viii.	nni	ni	“

These newspapers indicate vowel length by doubling the vowel concerned. Because this type of spelling can easily confuse readers, it has been rejected in the approved orthography. Appendix (10) shows some of these words as they occur in the newspapers in question.

Ìtànśán, a news-magazine observes the old spelling conventions mixed with a few current conventions in its publications. Examples of such old spellings found in the news magazine are:

Ìtànśán	Standard Orthography	Gloss
ńlá	ńlá	big
wipe	wí pé	say that
lóni	lóníí	today
nígbàtí	nígbà tí	by the time
ẹ̀nìpé	ẹ̀nì pé	person who
gan	gan an	exact, specifically
bíótíṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀	bí ó tiṣẹ̀ ẹ̀ pé	it isn't so
nkan	nńkan	something
báyì	báyíí	now
yí	yíí	this
mélò	mélòó	how many?
jẹ́kí	jẹ́ kí	let that
gégẹ́bí	gégẹ́ bi	just as

Nevertheless, despite using old spellings in its publications, *Ìtànśán* is the only existing Yorùbá news magazine that fully marks tones. Other Yorùbá newspapers/magazines rarely mark them.

Yorùbá Writing in Education

Yorùbá language was included as one of the subjects for the School Certificate examination in 1931. The Yoruba syllabus is for the School Certificate and the General Certificate of Education examinations were broadened in the early 1970s to include Yoruba Literature. In 1966, Yorùbá was approved as an honours degree course at the University of Ibadan. In June 1974, the West African Examinations Council added Yorùbá to its list of Advanced Level subjects. Today, nearly all the government universities (Federal and State) in southwestern Nigeria offer Yorùbá as undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses.

To pass in any of the Yorùbá examinations at any level, students must learn and be fully conversant with Standard Yorùbá spelling conventions. Anything short of this is disastrous. Likewise, Yorùbá creative writers who want their works to be accepted by colleges, universities and examination bodies must make use of the approved spellings. Because of this, Yorùbá creative writers observe the approved spelling conventions in their work. Nevertheless, some spellings errors can be found in some writers' works.

For lack of space, we shall exemplify with only the novel: *Èkó Wèh̃jèlè* (2006). The following spelling errors are discovered there.

Èkó Wèh̃jèlè	Standard Orthography	Gloss
wipe (p5,6)	wí pé	say that
iyáálé (p13)	ìyálé	1 st wife
ṣẹ̀ (p16)	ṣẹ	want
ṣẹ̀ (p17,19)	ṣẹ	want
jẹ́kí (p 21)	jẹ́ kí	let that
abájọ̀ re! (p24)	abájọ̀ rẹ	no wonder
bíi (p25)	bí	as in
yú-ù-yéèh (p35)	yúù-yè!	exclamations
kínni (p47)	kí ní	what is it?
Ah (p71)	ha!	exclamations
bẹ̀ni (p79)	bẹ̀nì	it is so
máṣe (p88)	má ṣe	don't

The problem of spelling errors in writers' works may persist because some publishers are not keen on accepting Yorùbá manuscripts for publication due to their low marketability. What most creative writers do these days is either to publish their works by themselves or pay publishers to publish their manuscripts for them. There is really no serious assessment of manuscripts by publishers.

Yorùbá Writing on Notice Boards/Bill Boards/Web

There is the ill-founded assumption that any educated person who can speak Yorùbá can also write the language without errors. For this reason, most speakers do not see any need for studying it or allowing their children to study it in school. This complacent attitude reflects in what the people write on notice boards, bill boards, hand bills and posters. For instance, most warnings written on notice boards at entrances to estates/streets by landlords are always written in the old orthography.

Consider the example below:

'ENIKENI KO GBODO WO ADUGBO OLUWALOSE QUARTERS LEHIN
AGOGO MEWA ALE (10 P.M) TITI DI AGOGO MARUN OWURO (5
AM). ENITI O BA TAPA SI ASE YI, YIO DA ARA RE 'LEBI'
'Nobody is allowed to enter Oluwalose Quarters between 10.00 PM
and 5.00 AM. Any person who violates this order, should be ready to
bear the consequences of his action.

Likewise, the Yorùbá presented for teaching on most website is usually in a mixture of new and old orthographies. Consider the examples below from Abẹ̀òkúta web page:

Web	Orthography	gloss
E kaaro-ro	ẹ káàárò	good morning
Okuurin	òkùnrin	male
Obirin	obìnrin	female
Bee ni	bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni	yes
Odaa	ó dáa	it is good
Ejo	ẹ j'ọ	please
Se e ni?	şé ẹ ni?	do you have?
E se	Ẹ şé	thank you
Ta-ni?	Ta ni?	Who is it
Kí-ni?	Kí ni	what is it

The author of this web page noted that for simplicity...the programme is typed without accent (tones). Looking critically at these words, the problems with them are not limited just to tones, as familiarity Standard Yorùbá orthography will show.

In the same vein, most Yorùbá film and musical producers/marketers write the titles of their films/music on posters and jackets in old Yorùbá orthography. At times, however, they mix it with the new. Consider the following examples.

Film Titles	Standard Orthography	Gloss
Ile aiye nkanju	Ilé ayé ń kanjú	'The world is in a hurry'
Aiye sokunkun	Ayé şókùnkùn	'The world is darkened'
Egun oruko	Ẹgún orúkọ	'Curses put on names'
Ohun ojumi ri laye	Ohun ojú mi rí láyẹ	'My experiences on earth'
Oro ebeko	Ọrọ ẹ̀bẹ̀ kọ	'No use begging on this matter'
Arin ota	Àárín ọ̀tá	'In the midst of enemies'

However, some film producers/marketers who are conversant with the Standard Yorùbá orthography use it in the titles of their films and musical VCDs as shown in the examples below.

Şawo-Şegbèrì	'The Charlatan'
Ìròyìn Ayọ	'The good news'
Baba Modupe	'Father, I thank you'
Odídeře	'The parrot'

Today, some advertising agencies used the standard Yorùbá orthography to advertise on their bill boards as shown in the examples below.

- (a) 'Bournvita okun-ara tí kò ní ìdádúró'
'Bournvita non-stop vitality'
- (b) 'Ní Ìpínlẹ̀ Ọ̀ṣun, Èniyàn lẹ̀yì nì wá...'
'In Ọ̀ṣun State, We are honorable'

Unlike the above, which are very well written, the Yorùbá advertisement below are only fairly well written.

- (c) 'F'orúkọ SIM MTN re sile nibi'
'Register your MTN SIM here'
- (d) 'QDÉKÙ' (Guinness)

The problem with (c) above is tone marking, while a crucial diacritic is missing in (d): 'QDÉKÙ' there should be 'QDĚKÙ.'

- (e) '0809ja Gbile osi teju kale si bi'

It is so badly written that it is totally incomprehensible.

Also, politicians soliciting for votes are fond of making their messages on posters, handbills and billboards very concise by using standard spelling conventions.

For example

'Fun ife ti e ni si awon Afenifere ati asiwaju ana
E dibò fun... si Ile Igbimo Asoju Sofin Gusu
Ila oorun ati Gusu Iwo oorun Akoko, Ekun Ijoba Apapo'
'For your love for these trusted and great national
leaders...vote...for House of Representatives
Akoko South East/South West, Federal Constituency.'

Despite the fact that there may be some errors in some of the political messages on posters and bill boards, the general trend among politicians or their publicists was that they observed Standard Yorùbá spelling conventions. A close look at the examples in this sub-section shows that most of the writers mentioned here seldom mark tones in their writings. This is the general trend among contemporary Yorùbá writers. Finally, in Government releases, signboards and Nigerian newspapers, the following Yorùbá towns continue against approved conventions to be spelt as Ilesha, Shagamu, Offa, Otta, Oshogbo e.t.c.

Conclusion

Our focus has been on Yorùbá orthography. We traced its history and development. Our findings show that the development has been on for over a century now. The complexities we encounter today are the results of major linguistic and social events that have taken place over a period of time. In the light of the preceding sections, we were able to show that decades after orthography was presented for Yorùbá, the writing system remains in a highly inconsistent state. Although there were clear signs of standardization, as the convention adopted by the 1974 committee became increasingly influential. However the situation in Yorùbá writing system shows that there is still a considerable lack of uniformity in spellings and punctuation. This can be seen in printed and handwritten texts within the work of an individual, printers, authors, sign posts and newspapers. Since there is no perfect orthography anywhere in the world. Whatever the inadequacies noted in the standard spelling conventions, we are of the opinion that it must be followed, at least to avoid chaotic writing convention. That is why we greatly commend the Central Bank of Nigeria (C.B.N) for faithfully implementing Yorùbá orthography in its special area of operation. The C.B.N knows that Nigerian languages are highly important in giving the people an identity and a sense of belonging. It therefore wisely writes the denominations of its five, ten, twenty and fifty naira banks notes in the three major Nigerian languages, i.e. Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá. For Yorùbá, the

denominations of the affected bank notes are all written in perfect Yorùbá orthography complete with tone marking as follows:

Náìrà Mǎrùn-ún (Five Naira)

Náìrà Mẹ̀wàá (Ten Naira)

Ogún Náìrà (Twenty Naira)

Àádṣta Náìrà (Fifty Naira)

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APPENDIX

1. 'Li atetekọṣe Qlọrun da ọrun on aiye. Aiye si wa ni juju...Qlọrun si wipe...Gen1:1-3.Oluwa Qlọrun si fi erupe ile mo enia...enia si di alāyẹ okan Gen.2:7 ... iwọ tani..on si wipe..Gen27:32 ...nwọn si mu ẹwu Josefu, nwọn si pa ọmọ ewurẹ kan, nwọn si ri ewu na sinu eje na. Gen37:31. Kili a o wi fun oluwa mi? Gen 44 : 16. ọkọnrin na...1kgs:11:28. Bẹli o mu awọn enia na..Judg.7:5. (*Bibeli Mimọ tabi Majemu Lailai ati Titun*) 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form..Then God said...And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground...man became a living being...Who are you? So he said...So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood..What shall we say to my lord?...The man...So he brought the people...'

2. 'Ni àtètèkọṣe Qlọrun dá ọrun ati ayé...Ayé si wà ni júujúu...Qlọrun si wi pe...Gen 1:1-3.Oluwa Qlọrun si fi erupẹ ile da eniyan...eniyan si di alāyẹ okan .Gen 2:7 ...iwọ tani?...Oun si wi pe...Gen 27:32...Wọn si mu ẹwù Josefu, wọn si pa ọmọ ewure kan, wọn si ri ẹwu naa sinu eje naa. Gen37:31 Kinni a o wi fun oluwa mi? Gen44:16Qkunrin naa..2kgs11:28. Bẹẹ ni o mu awọn naa'.Judg 7:5 (*Bibeli Yoruba Atọka*)

3. 'Ni àtètèkọṣe, Qlọrun dá ọrun ọrun ayé. Kò sí nà kankan lori iẹ ayé...Qlọrun si wi pé...Yahwe Qlọrun si fi amọ ile mo ara èniyàn..èniyàn si di ẹmí alāyẹ. Gen2:7 ...Ta ni iwọ? ...ó si wí pé... Gen27:32...Wọn mu aṣọ Josefu, wọn pa ewurẹ kan, wọn rẹ aṣọ naà sínú eje rẹ .Gen 37:31...Kí ni kí a wí fún oluwa mi?' Gen 44:16....(*Bibeli Mimọ Atọka àti Ìwé Deutero-Kànoníkà(Apókřifà)*)

4. 'Ní atetekọṣe Qlọrun da ọrun on aiye. Aiye si wa ni jūju. Qlọrun si wipe..Gen1:1-3 OluwaQlọrun si fi erupe ile mo enia...

5. 'Ni atetekọṣe Qlọrun da awọn ọrun ati ayé. Ayé si wà ni júujúu...Qlọrun si wí pé...Gen.1:1-3. Oluwa Qlọrun si fi eruku ile mo eniyan ..eniyan si di alaayẹkan. Gen2:7...I wọ tani? Oun si wi pe...Gen .27:32..Wọn si mu ẹwù Josefu, wọn si pa ọmọ ewurẹ kan, wọn si ri ẹwù naa sinu eje naa ..Gen.37:31..Kin ni a o wi fun oluwa..Gen.44:16..Bẹẹ ni o ko awọn eniyan naa..' Judg7:5.(*Bibeli Yorùbá Alásọ̀yẹ̀ : Májemú Láéláé àti Titun*)

6. 'Ní atetekọṣe Qlọrun dá ọrun ati ayé. Ayé si wa ni júujúu.Oluwa Qlọrun si wi pe..Gen.1:1-3. Oluwa Qlọrun si fi erupe ile mo eniyan...eniyan si di alāyẹ okan Gen 2:7...Iwọ ni nni? Gen27:32..Wọn si mu ẹwu Josefu , wọn si pa

omọ ewurẹ kan, wọn sì rí ẹ̀wù naa sinu ẹ̀j naa. Gen37:31...Kí ni a o wi fun Oluwa mi? Gen 44:16..Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni o mú àwọn eniyan náà..’Judg.7:5. (*Bíbélì Mímọ Atọ̀ka*)

7. ‘Nigbati a o gbe oku si isa, Alufa yio wipe: Enia ti a bi ninu obinrin, ojo kukuru sa li o gbe li aiye o si ku fun o si ndagba soke, a si gee lule...Li arin iye awa mbe ninu iku; lodo tani awa o ha wa iranwo bikose lodo Re....(*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down...In life we are death(sic) to whom we seek our help’...*)

8. ‘Filipi 4:6 ka bayii pe. Ẹ ma ẹ aniyan ohunkohun; ẹgbọn ninu ohun gbogbo, nipa adura ati ẹbẹ pẹlu iduṣe, ẹ maa fi ibeere yin han fuṣṣun. ...Iwe mimọ fun wa ni ọpọlọpọ aṣẹrẹ awọn ọkunrin ati obinrin ti wọn yi ayidayida aye wọn pada si rere ...(*Philippians 4:6 reads, ‘Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God’...The scripture actually gives us numerous examples of men and women who turned their situations around’..Digi Awon Obinrin Kristieni Chrstian Women Mirror. March 2011*)