

The Form and Content of Ọbasa's Weekly Newspaper: *The Yorùbá News*

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Abstract

The Yorùbá News, published by Ọbasa, co-pioneered journalism, nay publishing, in Yorùbá language in southwestern Nigeria. Based in Ìbàdàn and published by Ìláré Printers, *The Yorùbá News*, a bi-lingual serial in English and Yorùbá languages, remarkably had varying contents and wide circulation covering its localé, Ìbàdàn significantly; the southern protectorate, particularly Yorùbá land appreciably; and the entire nation, Nigeria marginally. Published weekly, Ọbasa – the Editor and Proprietor – successfully edited *The Yorùbá News* for over two decades from 1924 – 1945 when he died. Adopting the Diffusion of Innovations theory, this study examines the form and content of the newspaper. The form examines the structure and layout of the newspaper while the content discusses and evaluates issues covered in the publication. The form of *The Yorùbá News* is discussed in the context of the print media as a periodical by taking technical cognizance of its physical features: format, design and layout, typography, columns, paper, size and production quality. Content-wise, the paper exhaustively describes the subject matters of *The Yorùbá News* by dwelling critically on the issues raised, examining in details and critiquing its recurrent subject matters notably: the news stories, editorials, cover, advertorials, news and notes, etc. The inter-dependence of form and content is also examined to bring to the fore the social, cultural, political, and economic values of the maiden Yorùbá Newspaper: *The Yorùbá News*.

Introduction

The print, an age-long media of communication, received an intractable boost with Johannes Guttenberg's invention of the printing press in the 1450s. Johannes Gensfleisch zur Laden zum Gutenberg was a German blacksmith,

goldsmith, printer, and publisher who introduced printing to Europe with the invention of his printing press known as ‘the movable-type’. At the inception of writing, the print media was the primary tonic and today, it is still fundamental to information dissemination globally, despite the ubiquitous electronic media. Print media simply “refers to channels of communication that present information on paper” (Esimokha 2011: 2). The world of the print media is vast with several types usually categorized into periodicals and non-periodicals. Generally, the hallmarks of periodicals are frequency of production, regulated timing and classified audience/consumers. Periodicals include magazines, newspapers, journals, newsletters, bulletins, annual reports, etc. Periodicals can be classified into two types: popular and scholarly. The popular periodicals include newspapers and magazines while scholarly periodicals are academic and peer-reviewed journals which are subject- or discipline based. The evolution of newspaper was accelerated by Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of movable type for printing. The first English newspaper was the *Courante*; published in London in 1621 while the first in America was named *Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick* and it was created by Benjamin Harris in Boston (Esimokha 2011: 3).

Publishing in Nigeria could be said to be almost two centuries old. This is because the first printing press was established in the country in 1846 (Akangbe 2014:65). The first printing press in Nigeria was installed by the Presbyterian Mission in Calabar. The press was established solely to print religious materials for the use of the church and her converts. From religious printing, there was a shift of focus to newspaper printing with the establishment of *Ìwé Ìròhìn fún àwọn Ègbá àti Yorùbá (Ìwé Ìròhìn)* in December 1859 by Henry Townsend, a missionary in Abẹ̀òkúta with the Church Missionary Society (CMS) (Kalejaiye, Atofojomọ, & Odunlami 2006: 14; Adébàjò 2007: 7). At inception, *Ìwé Ìròhìn* was published fortnightly in Yorùbá language, but it became bilingual from March 8, 1860 when an English supplement was added; thus implying that *Ìwé Ìròhìn* was published simultaneously in Yorùbá and English languages. This, according to Kalejaiye et al (2006), is “by no means a mean achievement even by today’s standard. There is hardly any bilingual newspaper on the newsstand today” (14).

Two other notable Yorùbá newspapers were also established in the nineteenth century. These were *Iwe Irohin Eko* in 1888 by Andrew M. Thomas and *Iwe Eko* in 1891 by Rev. J. Vernal. At the turn of the twentieth century, newspapers that were established include *Nigbati Owo Ba Dile*, by CMS in 1910; *Eko Akete* by Adéoyè Deniga in 1922; and *Eleti Ofe* by E.A. Akintan in 1923. Ogunsina (1999: 12) stated that the 1920s were significant for the publication

of many indigenous Yoruba newspapers to satisfy socio-political needs.¹ It is worthy to remark on the prominence of Lagos as the headquarters of Yorùbá publications and indeed journalism in Nigeria. This was because several of the colonial and post-independence Nigeria newspapers were based and are still based in Lagos. It is equally worthy of note that newspaper publications constituted a higher percentage of the published titles in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. It is therefore obvious that publishing in Nigeria was precipitated by newspaper publications. It was in 1924 that Oḃasa joined the train of newspaper proprietors by founding a bilingual newspaper named *The Yoruba News* which was based in Ibadan. The choice of Ìbàdàn as the location of Oḃasa's newspaper made it the very first in Ìbàdàn. This was not only strategic but immensely beneficial. As noted by Akínyemí (2017),

Oḃasa's choice of Ibadan as the location of his printing press was strategic – none of the other printing press companies already in existence in Nigeria had an office in Ibadan. They were all based in Lagos and Abeokuta. So, with the opening of Ilare Printing Press in Ibadan, Oḃasa was able to draw patronage from Ibadan and other cities (1).

Our preoccupation in this essay is to examine the form and content of *The Yorùbá News*. From literary perspective, Mishra (2011), while examining the views of different schools of thought on form and content, noted that the Formalists “put premium on diction” by holding exclusively that “form” dictates “content” as such “content” is at the mercy of “form” (1). To Genre Critics or Chicago Critics, the relation of ‘form’ and ‘content’ is in the manner of cause and effect. The cause is ‘content’ and effect is ‘form’. They are inseparable. Marxist concept of ‘form’ by and large is based on man's relation to his society and the history of the society. The psychoanalytic approach mainly takes interest in the revelation of ‘latent content’. They divide ‘content’ into ‘manifest content’ and ‘latent content’. This school does not take much interest in style, form or technique. It simply analyses a work of art in the light of writer's psychology. In effect, separation of any sort cannot be justified because in absence of any of them, an artistic whole is altogether impossible.

In our own view, form and content are dependent on each other. Form refers to the structure, or the appearance of a written piece. It is best described

1 All texts: titles, excerpts, names, headlines and quotations in Yoruba language from *The Yoruba News* and other publications of its time are deliberately not tone-marked so as to retain their original format. We decided not to rewrite or tamper with them so as to reflect how they were written originally. This, we feel, will make a strong historical statement about Yoruba publications of old.

as the way a piece of writing is presented. It is physical and as such quality of appeal is one of its overriding indices. Content, on the other hand, implies what is expressed in a piece of writing. This simply refers to the message. Situating form and content in publishing therefore, form will imply mould, frame, outline, structure, or arrangement of the publication. In other word, it is the physical characteristics of the publication in question while content refers to the issues, topics, subjects, or messages contained in the publication. Arising from this background, we can categorically state that in publishing, form is extrinsic while content is intrinsic. Content is the real essence of the publication. In a good piece, form is complimentary to content and vice versa. Since what is said cannot be divorced from how it is said, it is our opinion that the relationship between form and content is symbiotic as the two impinge on one another.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

This study adopts Everest Rogers' diffusion of Innovations theory. The study of the diffusion of innovations began during World War II, prior to the establishment of communication study in university schools and departments (Rogers 2003). So, diffusion research was not an exclusive preserve of the field of communication studies as widely believed. Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system (Rogers 2003). Basically, diffusion of innovations theory seeks to explain how new ideas and technology spread, why they spread, and at what rate they spread. Arising from this definition; innovation, communication channels, time, and social system are the four key components of the diffusion of innovations.

Innovation implies the act or process of inventing something new. In the words of Rogers (2003), "An innovation is an idea, practice, or project that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (12). An innovation is not necessarily conditioned by how recent or old its introduction is; rather it is the perception of individuals that matter. For instance, an innovation may have been invented a long time ago, but if individuals perceive it as new, then it may still be an innovation for them. This is applicable to Obasa's *The Yorùbá News*. The innovation was the newspaper – *The Yorùbá News*. Even though the concept of newspaper was not new to the world in 1924 when Obasa's title hit the stand, it was nonetheless new in Nigeria as there were only few newspapers in English language and of course fewer that were bilingual. As a result of adoption or rejection of an innovation, there is bound to be changes; it is these changes that occur in an individual or a social system as a result of the adoption or rejection of an innovation that Rogers (2003) called

“consequences” (436). Consequences refer to the advantages and disadvantages derivable from adoption or rejection of an innovation. Rogers variously classified consequences into: desirable versus undesirable (functional or dysfunctional), direct versus indirect (immediate result or result of the immediate result), and anticipated versus unanticipated (recognized and intended or not).

Communication channels is the second element of the diffusion of innovations process. To Rogers (2003), communication is “a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding” (5). Communication occurs through channels between sources. According to Rogers, “a source is an individual or an institution that originates a message and a channel is the means by which a message gets from the source to the receiver” (204). Basically, diffusion as a specific kind of communication includes these communication elements namely: an innovation, two individuals or other units of adoption, and a communication channel. Mass media and interpersonal communication are two communication channels. Mass media channels include a mass medium such as television, radio, or newspaper while interpersonal channels consist of a two-way communication between two or more individuals. So, diffusion is a social process that involves interpersonal communication relationships. Essentially communication relationships may be homophilous when the two or more individuals who interact share certain similar attributes such as beliefs, education, socioeconomic status, gender, etc. or heterophilous when they exhibit dissimilarity in certain attributes. In Rogers’ view, “one of the most distinctive problems in the diffusion of innovations is that the participants are usually quite heterophilous” (19).

The element of time is significant in diffusion of innovations. This is because innovation-diffusion process, adopter categorization, and rate of adoptions all include a time dimension. Social system is the last element in the diffusion process. This is what Rogers defined as “a set of interrelated units engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal” (23). Diffusion of innovations take place in the social system, it is therefore influenced by the social structure of the social system. Social structure refers to “the patterned arrangements of the units in a system”. Rogers claimed that the nature of the social system affects individuals’ innovativeness, which is the main criterion for categorizing adopters.

Rogers identified a five-step decision-making process of Diffusion which are awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption. These are integral to this theory. An individual might reject an innovation at any time during or after the adoption process. Salawu (2001:108) outlined the five steps as (1) Knowledge (Awareness), (2) Persuasion (Interest stage), (3) Decision

(Evaluation stage), (4) Implementation (Trial stage) and (5) Confirmation (Adoption stage).

Knowledge stage is the exposition stage when the individual is just getting aware of an innovation. What? How? and Why? are the critical questions in the knowledge phase. Persuasion stage is interest generation stage when individual expresses likeness for the innovation and is curious to learn and acquire more information about it. Decision stage is a crucial level where the individual decides whether to adopt or reject the innovation based on the advantages and disadvantages derivable from either the adoption or rejection of an innovation. The individual seriously weighs the pros and cons of the innovation at the decision stage. At the Implementation stage, the individual consolidates the stand taken at the decision stage by determining the usefulness of the innovation and may seek further information about it. Confirmation stage is the resolution stage when the individual decides finally to adopt the innovation. This stage is both intrapersonal and interpersonal.

Form of *The Yoruba News*

Conventionally, a good newspaper must meet certain conditions. Groth (1920) as cited by Esimokha (2011: 11-12) itemizes a number of characteristics which are pertinent to newspaper publications. These include regularity of production i.e. as a periodical, it must have a fixed period of publication be it daily or weekly; mechanical production i.e. it must be produced through a mechanical device; timeliness; multifarious contents; and accessibility i.e. it must be within the reach of all, both the rich and the poor. In line with this, this section examines the physical appearance of *The Yorùbá News*. The indicators employed in this paper for examining the form of *The Yorùbá News* are: format i.e. paper and size, design and layout, typography, columns, page extent or volume, numbering, production schedule and quality.

Format implies the physical form of *The Yorùbá News*. It refers to the dimensions or size in which newspapers could appear on newsstand. The well-known standard formats are tabloid and broadsheet (Esimokhai, 2011:13) but *The Yorùbá News* did not follow either at inception. Its size at inception, and indeed for most parts of its existence, was trimmed A4 size ($8^{1/2}$ x 11 inches). Later from around 1936-1945, it adopted a size ($10^{1/2}$ x 13 inches) which was longer than ledger but not up to tabloid size. Rather than having 5-7 columns as typical of tabloid, it had 4 regular columns. *The Yorùbá News* was printed on newsprint all through its existence. Newsprint is a low-cost non-archival paper consisting mainly of wood pulp and most commonly used to print newspapers and other publications and advertising material.

Design and layout is another indicator of the form of *The Yorùbá News*. It is otherwise called 'Make up'. "Make up is the process of designing a newspaper through careful selection and arrangement of headlines, stories, pictures and other elements to make a unified and attractive whole" (Esimokhai, 2011: 127). In an earlier work, I argued that, "design is a creative process which entails conception, planning, specification and expression of the physical and visual components of a publication. It is a process of technical interplay of text, graphics (images) and space" (Akangbe 2015: 2). Broekhuizen (1995) also submits that for a publication to effectively perform its communicative function, it must have the potential to attract the attention of readers, be legible and makes lasting impression on the audience. In newspaper design therefore, the important issues of legibility, clarity, aesthetics, and lasting appeal on readers are paramount to design – which is an integral part of publishing; and to the designer, – a key professional in the publishing chain, whose role and contribution cannot be undermined. The design of *The Yorùbá News* was simple and modestly technical in that it consistently had a clear two equal columns. It was quite attractive and beautiful in its own way during its time. Quality wise, it was of good standard. It is remarkable that *The Yorùbá News* employed the best of what the available technology could offer at its time as all the editions maintained legibility and clarity, and was attractive to readers.

Typography is another element of form which is primary to design. It refers to the style and appearance of printed matter. Typography is a process and an art. As a process, it bothers on style, arrangement and appearance of letters; and as an art, it is the technique of arranging type to attain legibility, readability and beauty in written texts. Type, in modern sense, simply refers to computer characters or different 'handwritings' in the computer. There are different types, and each type has its own unique outlook which is otherwise called 'face'. Each typeface has different size, which is indicated by numbers. This is technically called type size. Togunwa (2009: 241) classifies types used for publication design into two which he called body types and display types. Body types are used for typesetting the main body of a publication and it is usually not more than 12points or 14points. Points refer to sizes of types. 12points is equivalent to one-sixth of an inch, thus an inch is equivalent to 72points. Display types are the types that are employed for cover design, headlines, title page, heading, and for special effects and emphasis in publication design. They are usually set between 14-72 points. A good knowledge of types will also enable the designer to know typefaces that are suitable in this respect.

The Yorùbá News employed effective typography for its publications. The headings of all its news and reports were consistently set in capital letters to differentiate them from the body of popular columns such as "Òwúyé," "News and Notes," "Editorial," "Correspondence," etc. This typographical style was

adopted for both the Yorùbá and English language insertions. The headings were set in 14points and above depending on intended emphasis by the editor. A high emphasis was also laid on advertisements as their headings were usually set in bold capital letters while the texts were variously set in initial capital letters and lower cases. There were cases where the contents were also set in bold italics while in other limited instances, the textual contents were set in smaller point sizes that were as small as 10 points. The title of the newspaper (*The Yorùbá News*) on the cover page was boldly presented in initial capital letters for Letters ‘Y’ in Yorùbá and ‘N’ in News. But for the running heads on the pages of the newspaper, ‘Yorùbá News’ was always set in bold capital letters. Contrarily, the body texts of all articles maintained a high consistence of 12points set in sentence cases as occasions demanded. Another style adopted in the layout of *The Yorùbá News* was the use of moderate thick lines to demarcate one article from another. It was also common for the editor of the newspaper to end the headings of every article with a period or full-stop, which we consider as a grammatical error because headings or topics do not bear full-stop / period.

Column is a peculiar feature of newspapers. It refers to one of two or more vertical sections of printed material on a page. In another sense, column also implies an item in a newspaper or magazine that is usually written by the same person or is usually on the same subject. Both instances are applicable to *The Yorùbá News*. As remarked initially, *The Yorùbá News* had two columns at inception but later had four columns when it adopted a bigger size. In the same vein, it also featured some regular columns which included “Òwúyẹ́,” “News and Notes,” “Advertisements,” “Editorial,” “Letters and Correspondence.”

Volume is another determinant of the form of *The Yoruba News*. It refers to the page extent of the newspaper. Volume is indicated by the number of pages a publication has. Pagination is certainly a pertinent feature that indicates the form of a publication. *The Yorùbá News* had varied pages extent as we had editions with 8 pages, 10 pages and 16 pages. At inception, an edition had a volume of 8 pages with two columns of equal sizes on each page. There were several editions that had this page extent. However, there were instances where production for a particular week was skipped due to circumstances beyond the control of the production crew; so rather than releasing the following week, it would be published the next fortnight. So instead of having a single edition of 8 pages, we had a dual edition with 16 pages; that is two editions in one. An example was Volume II Numbers 2 & 3 of January 20 – 27, 1925 of 8^{1/2} x 11 inches size. This edition had 16 pages which was the size of two editions in one. It was sold for 3d. Incidentally, Volume II Number 4 of February 3, 1925 which was a single edition was also sold for 3d. The implication of this is

that irrespective of the quantity of its pages, *Yorùbá News* maintained a constant price for each edition. By 1936, *The Yorùbá News* had adopted a longer size of $10^{1/2} \times 13$ inches. The content of the editions of this size was like twice the size of the earlier ones. For instance, Volume XI Numbers 11 & 12 of May 5, 1936 was sold for 2 pence. The succeeding edition: Volume XI Number 13 of May 5, 1936 of equal page extent had 1 penny as its cover price. Our investigation revealed that by 1938, the long size of $10^{1/2} \times 13$ inches had reduced from 8 pages to 4 pages. Samples included Volume XIII Numbers 23 & 25 of November 22 – December 6, 1938, a dual edition with a cover price of 1 penny. The succeeding edition: Volume XIII Numbers 26 & 27 of 13 – 27 December, 1938 was also a dual edition with just 4 pages and was sold for 1 penny.

We noticed in-house inconsistency as a dual edition in Volume II Numbers 2 and 3 of January 20 & 27, 1925 doubled its page extent in order to make provision for the lost edition of the previous week but it was no longer so in later years. The decision to maintain regular page extent could have been informed by economic factors. An error of numbering was equally discovered in Volume XIII Numbers 23 and 25 of November 22-December 6, 1938 where Number 24 was omitted. A similar error of numbering was noticed in *Atóka* photoplay magazine, a Yoruba drama print publication but the error was corrected in the following edition by normalizing the numbering sequence (Akanḃbe, 2014: 83).

Numbering, which is technically called 'folio' has direct bearing with page extent or volume. Conventionally, documents are numbered either in roman numerals or arabic numerals. In book publications, the practice is to number the preliminary pages which are otherwise called 'early matters' in roman numerals while the main book section, called 'body matters' is numbered in arabic numerals. This practice is not applicable to serial publications like newspapers and magazines. What is however required is to maintain consistency in the adopted numbering format even though arabic numbering system is commonly used. Another feature of numbering is the spot where numbers are located. The approved spots are left, right or centre beneath the page or left, right or centre on top of the page, though from observation, writers are more at home with numbering below the page particularly in book publications. Consistency is however required. Essentially, *The Yorùbá News* adopted arabic numbering pattern and such numbers are alternately put on either left or right side on top of the page as appropriate. However, some inconsistencies were noticed in Volume II Number IV of February 3, 1925 where the cover and inner cover pages and back cover and inner back cover pages were numbered in roman numerals while other pages were numbered in arabic numbers. This practice was at variance with the usual style of continuous numbering using arabic numerals without segregating the front and back

covers from the inner part. It should be remarked that numbering is an intricate element of house styling in publishing so inability to maintain consistent pattern readily makes house style styleless.

The Yorùbá News maintained a regular production schedule over the two decades of its existence. It was a weekly newspaper and Tuesday was the release day when it hit the stand.

There was a high level of consistency in meeting production schedule but there were occasions when the crew failed to meet the weekly appointment with its readers. At such times, two editions were released together in the subsequent week. Our archival investigation revealed that *Yorùbá News* was off stand for two years. From record, Volume I was released in 1924 while Volume II was in 1925. Logically, 1936 should bear Volume XIII instead of Volume XI that was printed on it. This prompted our curiosity which was resolved by a correspondence written by Adéṣínà Ògúndèjì to the Editor of *The Yorùbá News* on page 2 of Volume XI Number 2 of March 3, 1936. The elated Mr. Adéṣínà Ògúndèjì was commending the Editor for his untiring effort on his publication after three years' absence from the journalistic arena of Nigeria. The opening paragraph to the letter read thus:

Dear Mr. Editor, please allow me a space in your valuable paper to congratulate you for your untiring effort which had made the re-launching of your widely read journal the "Yoruba News" an accomplished feat after about three years' absence from the journalistic arena of Nigeria.

By deduction, *The Yorùbá News* suspended production for two years, 1934 and 1935 and resumed in January 1936. The cover price of the newspaper at inception in 1924 was 3d. It experienced price review in 1936 to 1 penny. This cover price was maintained till 1945 when the newspaper ceased production as a result of the editor's death.

The Content of *The Yoruba News*

The contents of newspapers in modern time are diverse and varied. Medleys of issues are treated ranging from different kinds of news, information, opinions, letters and correspondences, advertisements, and non-news items. According to Uyo (1987) as quoted in Esimokha (2011:40 – 44), newspaper and magazine messages include news stories, in-depth report, news analysis, interpretative reports, investigative reports also called muckraking, feature stories, editorial, column, reviews, advertisements, obituary, letter to the editor, cartoon and comic, editorial cartoon, photorama, vox pop or public opinion poll, and other types of messages like "verbatim interview, special news

report, personality profile or portrait, advertorial supplement, news side bar, puzzle, horoscope, the game, etc” (44). The content of *The Yoruba News* was not as diverse and varied as listed above, but it effectively covered some key aspects of the above list. Its main contents are discussed under the following subheadings: news stories, editorial, correspondence, creative column, òwúyẹ́, news and notes, and advertisements.

The coverage of *The Yorùbá News* was commendable because its news stories were not limited to its Ìbàdàn localé, it appreciably published local, protectorate, national and international news. These were the hallmarks of every edition right from inception. In the same vein, its circulation strength went beyond Ìbàdàn which was its base and its patronage also had a fairly national spread.

Local news refers to the news items that centered on specific localities in the publication. The locality could be a small community, village, or town. Such news were localized to the particular community. Examples of this abound in the newspaper and as a matter of fact, it constituted appreciable percentage of the contents of the publication. Let us draw examples from Volume XI Number 3 of March 10, 1936. An example was the “Agura Chieftaincy Question” written by Dogo Yaro in which he canvassed for a literate person to be appointed to fill the vacant stool of Agura of Gbagura in Ègbàland. In the same edition, we have a long list of the prominent Ìbàdàn citizens who were honored by Baálẹ̀ Abasi Okunolá Alẹ̀shinlọ́yẹ́. Another item was on Honorable Professor N.D. Oyerinde, a member representing Q̄yọ́ Division in the legislative council, who has been in town a few days and a commendation service was held in his honor at First Baptist Church Ídí ìkan in Ìbàdàn. Another screaming headline was “First Oyo Troop of B.P. Boys Scouts Investiture Ceremony”. The inauguration of the Boys Scout movement was held on Thursday 11th April, 1936 at 3 p.m.

Another piece of local news was that of the agitation of a society in Q̄yọ́ Alááfin that Ìbàdàn be placed under Q̄yọ́ town. Captioned: Q̄yọ́ At It Still? The opening paragraph went thus:

It is understood that a petition from Q̄yọ́ Progressive Union praying that Ibadan may be placed under Q̄yọ́ was handed the Chief Commissioner lately. Such a movement if true, at this age of enlightenment certainly brands the promoters as the most unprogressive body of lettered people in the whole of Yoruba States.

It is quite revealing that there was a time in history when Q̄yọ́ town contested for political power with Ibadan.

Protectorate news implies all news that centred on the Southern protectorate of the nation Nigeria. Such news covered the present-day Southwest, Southeast and Southsouth geographical zones of Nigeria. The attention of the newspaper, however, was more on Yorùbá land which is the Southwest. In Volume XIV Number 9 of February 27, 1940 was a captivating headline: “Awon Oni-wayo” (The con-men). The news was considered provincial because the geographical scenes of the story stretched from Ìjẹ̀bù-Òde to Ògbómòṣò, down to Ìbàdàn and back to Ìjẹ̀bù-Òde. It was particularly a revealing piece which showed that the corruption in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is endemic and has being an age-long practice. The summary of the story is that, seven criminals who left Ìjẹ̀bù-Òde for Ògbómòṣò to swindle one Mr. Àlùkò were convicted and jailed. Sorunke, the gang leader; Amusa, Sadiku, Sofunke, Jolaoṣo, Richard and Onisa all left Ìjẹ̀bù-Òde in Lorry J. 420 for Ògbómòṣò in police uniform with fake currency. Arriving Ògbómòṣò at night, they pleaded with Àlùkò to sell gasoline to them and he agreed. They paid him, he gave them change but they alleged that he issued fake currencies to them as change. Being law enforcement officers, they asked him to bring out all the money in his possession. He opened his safe and gave them the three pounds he had. They collected it, bundled him into their lorry and drove him away. On their way to Ìbàdàn they pushed him down and rode off. Unfortunately for the gang of swindlers, Mr. Àlùkò survived and he reported the incident to the police station in Ìbàdàn. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) took over and apprehended the culprits. They were charged to court and were eventually sentenced to imprisonment. This piece of news revealed that bad elements had been in the NPF for so long as two serving police officers were among the seven criminals.

In Volume XI Number 2 of March 3, 1936 was a report captioned “A Progressive Oba Alaiyeluwa the Oni of Ife”. It reported the visit of the Oni of Ife to Agricultural Department at Ìbàdàn on Monday February 24, 1936 in connection with a model farm scheme at Ife. We also have another headline: “Balẹ of Ibadan at Ile-ife”. The lead went thus:

His Honour, Abasi Okunola the Balẹ of Ibadan and his chiefs visited the Oni of Ife on Saturday February 29, 1936.

We noticed D.A. Oba's passion for tradition and culture related issues. He was always quick to publish news on Yorùbá traditions and institutions. This was not a surprise as he was a founding member of a socio-cultural group named “Ègbẹ̀ Àgbà ọ̀ Tán” (Elders Still Exist Society). Akínyemí (2017:7-8) captured the essence of the society thus:

From the late nineteenth century onwards, some Yoruba culture activists founded a number of socio-cultural organizations, including Eḡbé Àḡbà ò Tán, which played a major role in establishing in the collective psyche of the people a sense of their own importance in the colonial system. These elders thus assumed the role of community leaders or elders who acted as cultural brokers between indigenous socio-political paradigms and the novel creations of the colonial state.

This clearly exposes the abounding flair of Oḃasa' for socio-cultural issues. His attentiveness to socio-cultural issues was not limited to Yorùbá only. For instance, in "Atta Oba Igbira" he covered the visit of Alhaji Ibrahim Oba Igbira, a traditional ruler in the then Northern protectorate, thus:

Ni agogo mejila ṣan Friday ogunḡ oṣu yi ni Alhaji Ibrahim Oba Igbira eniti o ti re koja lo mu faaji l'Eko pada de si ile yi. Baḡ wa Oloḡa si fi Oba na wo bi o ti to. Ki o ma wa wo bi gbogbo awon Igbira ti mbe ni t'ile t'oko Ibadan bi won ti n tu ye lo ki Oba won ni Ile Baḡ.²

It was at twelve noon on Friday the 20th of this month that Alhaji Ibrahim who had being to Lagos on vacation arrived in town. Our Baale, His Honor, gave him a befitting reception. Come and behold how the Igbira sons and daughters from the nooks and crannies of Ibadan were trooping to Baale's palace to pay homage to their traditional ruler.

In the two news stories on Oḡni of Ife above, we noticed that, possibly due to an oversight on the part of the reporter, the actual name of the reigning Oḡni then was not mentioned whereas that of Baale of Ibadan was captured. This was a severe omission as it gave incomplete information on the profile of the Oba. It also missed the historical essence it was supposed to serve. However, the Oba in question was Oba Sir Titus Martins Adesoji Tadeniawo Adereḡi who ascended the throne of his fathers in 1930 and passed on in 1980 after reigning for fifty years.

National news was also given adequate attention in *The Yorùbá News*. There was appreciable quantity of news stories that was national in outlook. One of the issues that preoccupied the attention of *The Yorùbá News* was education, no wonder it published the result of London Matriculation examination in Volume XI Number 2 of March 3, 1936 where he congratulated the following eleven successful candidates: Joshua Adeyemo Adeyefa, Ebenezer

2 The text is deliberately not tone-marked so as to retain its original format. We decided not to rewrite or tamper with text so as to reflect how it was originally written. This, we feel, will make a strong historical statement about Yoruba publications of old.

Latunde Laşebikan, John Agboola Olaloye, Joseph Oladipo, Egun Şoremekun, and Emanuel Oladapo Tayo from Ibadan; Fidelis Adophy and Şola Şosanya from Lagos; Joseph Akinwumi Oşanyin from Okene; Khadina Crispin Thorpe from Onitsha; and Mac Neil Gabriel Ejaife from Warri. The result reflected that the educational gap among the geo-political zones in Nigeria had been there long ago as only one candidate passed the exam from the Northern protectorate and even at that, the candidate, by name, was likely from the South-west geopolitical zone. The remaining ten were from different parts of the Southern protectorate.

In Volume XI Number 8 of April 14, 1936 for instance, the crucial issue of the Nigerian Railway was covered under the headline: "Nigerian Railway Guards Working Links" while Number 9 of April 21 of the same Volume on its page 1 was "His Excellency, The Governor's Visit" which reported "the visit of His Excellency Sir Bernard Henry Bourdillon KCMG, KBE, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria and Lady Bourdillon to Ibadan on Sunday the 19th instant". In Volume XI Number 2, March 1936 was a captivating news story titled "Wonder at Jebba South: Lame Man Miraculously Cured after 28 Years". It was a report on one Amodu, an indigene of Sokoto, who lived in Jebba and was miraculously made whole after carrying out a prescribed sacrifice. The appreciable presence of national news in *The Yoruba News* is, no doubt, commendable.

International news is reports of global issues and events in *The Yoruba News*. The quantity and frequency of report of global events in the newspaper is rather surprising. D. A. Obasá laid emphasis on foreign reports. He also gave such reports prominence by placing them on the front pages. Many of such global news were also the focus of quite a number of his editorials. One of such issues was the rumour that Nigeria might be transferred from being a British colony to Germany. *The Yoruba News* aptly captured this on its cover page that "Nigeria Not For Transfer". Published in its Volume XIII Number 25 of 6th December, 1938, it centred on "the loyalty of Nigerians to the British Throne and how strong was the attachment of the people to the British Empire..." There was a mass refutation to the insinuation of the previous week that Nigeria may be transferred to Germany. The issue received a wide spread protestation at home and abroad. In fact, a protest was carried out by the African students in London in the United Kingdom. "The Resolution of Protest" was the headline on the same issue published in Volume XIII Numbers 26 & 27 of 13th – 27th December, 1938. The resolution was:

Unanimously passed at Africa House, 1, South Villas, London N.W. 1 by African Students of Great Britain & Ireland under the auspices of the West

African Students Union on the 26th of November 1938 against transfer of Nigeria or any other African territories to Germany.

The rumoured move was widely rejected and opposed by Nigeria and other African territories considering the antecedents of Germany under Hitler in the on-going Second World War.

It is remarkably interesting that in *The Yorùbá News*, international news were not only published in English but also in Yorùbá language. For instance, In Volume XIII Number 34 of Tuesday September 4, 1939 was this caption: "Iṣẹ ti Gomina Ran si Gbogbo Orile Nigeria".

The piece read thus:

Ni agogo mokaṅla owuro yi ni ijoba Geesi kede pe Ogun mbe larin ilu Gesi ati Jamani. Beṣe na ni ijoba Faranse tun kede tire...Iru ija ojiji ti awon omomogun re nile ati ni ofurufu oju-orun lo fi kolu Poland ni aru kutu Friday ojo kinni osu yi, lai kede ogun tele, lai ni esun, lai ni idi tabi ohun ikewo kan, fi ipinnu HITLER lati so ominira akikanju orile ede na (ti awa ti seleri lati daabobo) di yepere ati ilu amona won; ko si enikan ti o le jian pe Poland je okan ninu awon orile ede ti HITLER fe fi ipa gba, ninu ona eyiti o ti nlo jinna pupo ju ti o si nfe te ori gbogbo awon orile Ilu-Oibo yoku ba si abe ese re...³

It was eleven a.m. this morning that the British government announced that there was war between her and Germany. The French government also made the same declaration. ...The unexpected attack by Germany on Poland by her army and air force in the early hours of Friday, the first day of this month, without any prior notice of battle, without allegation or accusation revealed HITLER's resolve to make a mockery of the independence of that indefatigable country and put it under her rule. Nobody can deny that Poland was one of the countries that Germany wants to colonise, a step that is taken too far which aims at subjecting all European countries to Germany's dominance.

It should be noted that the excerpt above was a direct translation of the initial report in English under the heading: "The Governor's Message". On page 2 of the same edition, the Editor made this remark:

3 Thi text is deliberately not tone-marked so as to retain its original format. We decided not to rewrite or tamper with text so as to reflect how it was originally written. This, we feel, will make a strong historical statement about Yoruba publications of old.

IN THIS NUMBER, we publish a Yoruba translation of His Excellency the Governor's message to Nigerians for the benefit of our readers who do not understand English language. It is our loyal duty to follow the Governor's advice as British subjects, this is the best way of contributing our share of service towards the winning of the war.

It is interesting that the succeeding edition – Volume XIII Numbers 35 & 36 of 19th – 26th September 1939 also carried the news of the war on its front page Titled “Iroyin Ogun Lati Ilu-Oyinbo”. This is an indication that *The Yorùbá News* was highly conscious of its Yorùbá speaking readers and as such devoted equal attention to both its Yorùbá and English-speaking audience. Salawu (2004) succinctly corroborated this that:

The newspapers do not pretend their allegiance to the grassroots. This is reflected in the kinds of stories they carry (stories that deal with common folks), the presentation of their stories (as an effort to explain current affairs in the manner the common folks would understand them), and in the way they cast their headlines (100).

Editorial was another critical content of the newspaper. The editor took on several and diverse issues. This ranged from politics to economy, social events, farming, business, foreign affairs, etc. According to Alan Weintraut,

An editorial is an article that presents the newspaper's opinion on an issue. It reflects the majority vote of the editorial board, the governing body of the newspaper made up of editors and business managers. It is usually unsigned. Much in the same manner of a lawyer, editorial writers build on an argument and try to persuade readers to think the same way they do. Editorials are meant to influence public opinion, promote critical thinking, and sometimes cause people to take action on an issue. In essence, an editorial is an opinionated news story (<https://www.geneseo.edu/~bennett/EdWrite.htm>).

In *The Yorùbá News*, the editorial comment could be written in either English or Yorùbá language based on the discretion of the editor; both versions however were not presented simultaneously in the same edition.

For example, the editorial of Volume XIII Number 45 & 46, November 28th – December 5th, 1939 titled “Akiyesi Ti Ijọba Nipa Owo Cocoa” was in Yorùbá. Other examples in Yorùbá were “Ibẹsilẹ Ogun Ilu Oibo” published in Volume XIII Number 48 & 49 of December, 1939; and “Cocoa Igi Owo?” in Volume XIV Numbers 5 & 6 of January 30th and February 6th, 1940. It was the style of

the editor to repeat editorial comments, particularly those on foreign issues. We noticed that this was a common practice and the editor did not hesitate to inform its readers that the piece of news concerned was being repeated. As a matter of fact, the date such item was first published would be indicated. Another trend was a continuous editorial, a form of serialization where the editorial ran across different editions for weeks. A vivid example was "Irohin Ogun Lati Ilu Oyinbo" that was published seven good times. The seventh part, for instance, was published in Volume XIV Numbers 3 & 4, January 16th – 23rd, 1940. In summary, the overall effects of the editorials of Yoruba News were to explain or interpret, criticize, persuade and praise.

"Òwúyẹ́: a soro iso bi oro, oro p'ẹnikan lana" is a popular column on tit bits in Yorùbá. It featured medley of news in brief ranging from personal to communal, events, announcements, issues, chieftaincy, births, naming, deaths, appointments, transfers, leave, celebrations, reports, etc. It is a recurring column in every edition and examples abound in every edition of the newspaper right from inception to its demise. Òwúyẹ́ was always short and sharp. In some cases, it delivered its message in three to four lines. For instance, in Volume XI Number 1 of February 25, 1936, we have the following few examples, among several others.

- i. Oḃḃḃ Salami Agbaje – On Balẹ́ Ibadan's decision to honour him with a chieftaincy title.
- ii. Samuel Longẹ o ku ewu! – Congratulating the named for surviving an accident.
- iii. Jẹri-si-i! – Reporting Jehovah's Witnesses crusade in Ìbàdàn.
- iv. Alago Balẹ́ – Reporting the Balẹ́'s gong-bearer's message announced on Saturday 15th February 1936 that 'Oḃun Oke'badan' (Oke Ibadan festival) would hold on Thursday 27th February, 1936.
- v. Oḃa titun – Reporting that Ibadan municipal council had started a new road project from Kotu Bẹrẹ́ to Agodi. The Òwúyẹ́ went thus: Ijọba Ibadan ti bẹrẹ́ iṣẹ oḃa titun larin ilu nisisiyi; eyi ti wọn kọ dawọle ni oḃa Kotu Bẹrẹ́ lọ si Agodi nibiti nwọn ti wo oḃḃḃ ile lulẹ. Awọn onile wọnyi si ti gba owo ile wọn....
- vi. Gomina Agba – Reporting the visit made by Sir Bernard H. Bourdillon who replaced Governor Cameron to Ìbàdàn.
- vii. *Iwuye Mr. Salami Agbaje* – Reporting the installation of Mr. Salami Agbaje as Ikḃlaba Balogun on March 7th, 1936.

These are medley of news in brief that kept people informed of happenings in their localities. It also gave regular updates as seen in the case of Mr. Salami Agbaje who was nominated for chieftaincy award by Baale Ibadan in February and by March when he was installed, it was also reported to update readers about happenings and developments.

News and Notes is an exact replica of *Òwúyẹ́*. In short, News and Notes is *Òwúyẹ́* in English form as it shared all the features and performed the functions of *Òwúyẹ́*. Examples also abound. Here are excerpts from Volume XI number 5 of March 24, 1936:

- i. Dead body in town – Reporting that the corpse of an Asaba man was found in the morning of Thursday 19th March at Agbeni with flies already settling on it adding that it was removed at about 11.30 a.m.
- ii. Obituary – “We regret to announce the death of Madam Ayisatu Foworanu mother of J.A. Sanni of Posts and Telegraph of Jos. The sad event took place at Ibadan on 10th instant our sympathy. Mr. J.A. Sanni arrived here for the burial obsequies.”
- iii. Mr. J. A. Taiwo of the Telegraph office, Nigerian Railway Ibadan left for Abeokuta on leave and was relieved by Mr. S. Ade Adeyemo.
- iv. Mr. T. A. Apeleyin of the Telegraph Office was also on leave and was relieved by Mr. Modie from Jebba.
- v. Mr. F.S. Odeyale of the Nigerian Railway Jebba left on transfer to Ebute-Metta Junction.
- vi. In Volume XI Numbers 11 & 12 May 5 – 12, 1936, on page 6 was the notable obituary of Josiah Sobowale Sowande a.k.a. Sobọ Arobiodu who passed on on Sunday 19/04/1936 at age 80 years.

Like *Òwúyẹ́*, News and Notes is a very significant column that provided modest information on a wide range of issues and topics. There was no doubt that it contributed a lot to making *Yorùbá News* a potent social, cultural, political and economic megaphone of its time.

Advertisement was a unique segment of *The Yorùbá News* and a veritable source of income generation for the publication. Advertisement is a product of advertising and a key element in modern marketing research studies. Advertising is an important promotional strategy and a vital marketing tool which aims at drawing attention, persuading and reminding the potential consumers of the existence and usefulness of a particular product. As Yorùbá proverb says: *ìpolówó ojà làgúnmu òwò*, advertisement is the soul of business. Pride and Ferrell (1985: 142 cited in Odemena 2004: 25) see advertising as “a

paid form of non-personal communication that is transmitted to consumers through mass media, television, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, mass transit vehicles and outdoor displays. Advertising is regarded as any paid form of non-personal communication about an organization's product or service by an identified sponsor and the print media is the ancient home of advertising. The print is the root of all media and magazines and newspapers have been advertising media for more than two centuries. For several years, they were the only major media available to advertisers. Even till today, despite the competition from the broadcast media, newspapers and magazines have remained important media vehicles to both consumers and advertisers. It is not surprising therefore that *Yorùbá News* laid emphasis on advertisements and its patronage increased consistently from its inception till its demise.

So many products, services and organizations were advertised in the newspaper. In Volume II Number 4 of February 8, 1925, when the newspaper was still barely 13 months old, there were 15 different advertisements. These included those of S.B. Agbaje & Co. general merchants; S. Abinusawa Motor Mechanic; L.L. Ricketts Agriculturist; The Ilare Press (itself, the printers of *Yorùbá News*); D.W. Okuṣoṭe Tailor and Draper; Oibo Alagḃon; Hudson Cole Builder and Contractor; Ibadan Billiard Saloon; Mustafa Adeniran: Oniṣona Atata ni Opopo Bode Oṇa Ido; Iṣe Olodumare Dispensary; E.T. Ṣoḷoḷa General Merchant; and Anglo-Colonial Trading Corporation Limited. Advertisements were placed by clients in English and Yorùbá languages. It is noteworthy to remark that from time to time *The Yorùbá News* used to advertise itself. The Editor, D. A. Oḃasá also frequently placed the advert of his books which he called: 'Awon Akewi' or 'Yoruba Philosophy Books'. He had three of such books which were frequently advertised. Akinyemi (2017:9) remarked that,

Some of the marketing strategies Oḃasa adopted to promote his yet-to-be-published book of poetry included: (1) the adoption of the heading of the column "Awon Akewi or Yoruba Philosophy", under which he published excerpts of his poems in *The Yoruba News*, as the title of the book; (2) the addition of his position as editor of *The Yoruba News* to his name as author; and (3) the listing of the publisher as his Ilare Printing Press, Ibadan.

In Volume XI Number 2 of March 3, 1936; apart from the self advertisement of *Yorùbá News* and that of 'Awon Akewi' or 'Yoruba Philosophy Books III; adverts of *Iwe Oriki Awon Oriḷe Yoruba* Book I by D.A. Oḃasá, *The Comet*, a newspaper edited by Mr. Duse Mohamed Ali and 'Agbo Oṃo Eke-e Ti Craig' (Craig's Infant Preservative) were also placed. In addition to these, we had the promo of a Novel Exhibition slated for Easter Monday which was to

be declared open by ‘Hon. Eric Moore, the first Lagos member of legislative council.’

Apart from income generated from adverts and sale of copies of the newspaper, there were donors who were supporting the publication with their resources. On page 2 of Volume XI Number 8, April 4, 1936, the Editor acknowledged with thanks the receipt of various sums of money from the following listed as ‘our patrons’: Chief Salami Agbaje, The Rev. Canon J. Okuseinde, The Rev. D.A. Williams, The Rev. N.A.B. John, The Rev. E.M. Alalade, Mr. D.T. Akinbiyi, and an anonymous friend. In another edition, the list of the patrons was longer which implies that the publication was receiving support from time to time from its well-wishers.

The Cover was a unique component of the content of *The Yorùbá News*. The cover is the outer layer of the publication and usually, it is designed with attention with the intention of attracting the readers. In books, cover is usually made of a tougher material like card or board so as to prolong the life span of the publication. Newspapers, however, usually have self-cover by using the same material for the text (newsprint) for the cover. At inception, there were attempts to play on color for cover. An example of this was found in Volume II Number 2 – 3 of January 20 and 27, 1925. Generally, the cover of *The Yorùbá News* (both front and back covers) were in one colour (black and white) just like the inner pages. On the topmost part of the cover is usually displayed the title of the publication written boldly with its motto thus: “Yoruba News: For God, The King and The People.” The name, motto, and publication reference: Volume, Number, seat of the publication – Ìbàdàn, day of release - usually Tuesday, date(s) for the edition(s) including year, and the cover price occupied about one-fifth of the entire page. The remaining space was in most cases devoted to advertisements or lead stories.

Creative work column is also a notable segment in the contents of *The Yorùbá News*. In his wisdom, Oḃasá, as a reputable and prolific poet, had a column for his creative works. It is remarkable that his column in his newspaper was the first port of call for almost all his poems. He published them progressively before publishing them as a collection. This was applicable to his three books on collection of poems. Akínyemí (2017:8-9) made an orderly list of the poems in Oḃasá’s Book One and provided the dates they were published in *The Yorùbá News*. It was revealed in the list that quite a number of the poems were republished as we had remarked earlier. On page 3 of Volume XVI Number 22 & 23, June 4 – 11, 1940, Oḃasá had these lines in his creative column named ‘Awon Akewi or Yoruba Philosophy’ in his poem titled “Aṣeṣa-Aṣete.”

Ọgbẹni Hitler:
O nkowe S'ẹtẹ!
O nf'abuku l'ẹsẹ?
Pènlẹ-penlẹ ni o tẹ
Enia kereje ni o da
Eni ba p'oun o se bi
Bi Ọba Nàpó (Napoleon)
Àwà-dànu sí Seny-Eli (St. Helence)
L'ori omi okun réré-ré ...

Mr Hitler
Is courting downfall
Is inviting insult
His fall will be great
He will become little
Whoever plans evil
Like King Napoleon
He will perish in St. Helence
Lost in the great sea...

The poem was obviously a reaction to Hitler's arrogance to the United Kingdom. It was a social commentary on the global affair of its period. Ọbasá did not limit his poetry to Yorùbá only, he also wrote poems in English. His brilliant poems in English included 'Ethiopia Bleeds' in Volume XI Number 10 of April 28 and 'Sacrificed' in Volume XI Number 12 of May 12 both of 1936. The two poems are reproduced below.

ETHIOPIA BLEEDS⁴

Men of Nigeria, Awake, Awake
Ethiopia bleeds!
A Victim of Unprovoked assault
Ethiopia bleeds.
Both Male and Female, Young, old and babe,
Ethiopia bleeds.
Slaughtered by the thousands everyday
Ethiopia bleeds!
By an aggressor across the seas,

4 The content and style of the two poems: 'Ethiopia Bleeds' and 'Ethiopia Sacrificed!' are replica of the original. So the punctuations, abbreviations, indentions, capitalisations, spacing, etc. are retained as in the original versions.

Ethiopia bleeds!
 With lethal weapons and poison gas,
 Ethiopia bleeds!
 To extend his sway on Afric's soil,
 Ethiopia bleeds!
 Regardless of all human sufferings,
 Ethiopia bleeds!
 Shall we stand here looking on still, while
 Ethiopia bleeds?
 "Never", "Never", Echo refrains, while
 Ethiopia bleeds!
 Shall we remain in idleness, while
 Ethiopia bleeds.
 So help defend the defenceless poor,
 Ethiopia bleeds.
 Tho brave but lacking armaments, still
 Ethiopia bleeds.
 Awaiting your financial help, still
 Ethiopia bleeds.
 Help to save her, ye Afric's sons, while
 Ethiopia bleeds
 Contributing your pounds, shilling and pence,
 Ethiopia bleeds!
 To buy munitions and food: O! stop.
 Ethiopia wounds. (By D.A. Obasa, *Editor of The Yoruba News*)

ETHIOPIA SACRIFICED!

Sacrificed! Yes, Sacrificed!
 For her trust in others, and
 Ethiopia was Sacrificed.
 The simple child of nature,
 For faith in League of Nations,
 Ethiopia was Sacrificed.

Sacrificed! Yes, Sacrificed!
 For Faithfulness to Vows, and
 Ethiopia was sacrificed.
 As innocent as a lamb,
 Lacking duplicity, and
 Ethiopia was Sacrificed.

Sacrificed! Yes, Sacrificed!
For the Peace of Europe, and
Ethiopia was Sacrificed.
The guileless Ethiopian
For fully trusting the League,
Ethiopia was Sacrificed.

Sacrificed! Yes, Sacrificed!
By her deceitful friends, and
Ethiopia was Sacrificed
They told her "Peace, Peace" for aye
When they really meant "War", and
Ethiopia was Sacrificed.

Sacrificed! Yes, Sacrificed!
European war to stem, and
Ethiopia was Sacrificed.
Acceptable to Mars, can
Such a Victim ever be?
Ethiopia was Sacrificed.

Sacrificed! Yes, Sacrificed!
To wipe off Europe's debts, and
Ethiopia was Sacrificed.
Land grabbing debts, O, how great!
For hate and reprisals, and
Ethiopia was Sacrificed.

Sacrificed! Yes, Sacrificed!
To their whims and caprice, and
Ethiopia was sacrificed.
France played her little game, for
Italy's aid to court, though
Ethiopia was Sacrificed.

Sacrificed! Yes, Sacrificed!
With none to plead her cause, though
Ethiopia was Sacrificed.
Excepting Albion's forces
Mobilised, whilst Europe waves,
Ethiopia was sacrificed.

(By D.A. Obasa, *Editor of The Yoruba News, Author of Yoruba Philosophy, Ibadan*)

Masthead is also a notable content of *The Yorùbá News*. In publishing, a masthead is a list at the top of a page that includes the names of editors, writers, and owners, as well as the title of the newspaper or magazine. It usually occupies a corner in the early pages of the publication. In *Yorùba News*, its masthead is commonly placed on the top left hand of page 4, detailing the title, name of the editor/proprietor, office address, and subscription rates. Photograph also constituted a part of the content of the newspaper though it was not as significant as it is now in that the technology of photography was not a common place then. As a matter of fact, photograph did not appear in *The Yorùbá News* until late 1930s. In Volume XIII Number 28, August 1, 1939; the picture of J. Kofo Adeyinka who was the writer of the column named “Kòkòrò Ile Aiye” was published boldly. The succeeding edition featured the picture of Mr. D.A. Obasá with his varying designations – Manager and Proprietor Ilare Press, Editor “Yorùbá News”, Author of *Awon Akewi*, etc. as shown below:



D.A. Obasa: Manager and Proprietor Ilare Press

Appraisal of Form and Content

From the foregoing, it is very glaring that *The Yorùbá News* played crucial social, educational, religion, cultural, political and economic roles in the

colonial Yorùbá society in particular and Nigeria in general. There were lots of development-oriented stories on general welfare, agricultural practice and development, family planning, health matters, and cultural happenings.

Apart from the aforementioned, social issues, communal development programs, educational matters, economic affairs, housing and environment, political occurrences, and governmental policies also featured adequately in *The Yorùbá News*.

From our explication of the form and contents of *The Yorùbá News*, we are able to see clearly that there was relational parity between the two concepts. The relationship was symbiotic as one enabled the other and vice versa. There was a corresponding fidelity between the two as the form, with its different indices, conveniently accommodated the contents. The quantity of the contents did not task or overweigh the form in such a way that the latter could leave a telling effect on the former. The content was not verbose or wordy for the form. There was an effective and efficient interplay of texts, graphics and space to attain functional design. The formatting, layout, typography, design, columns, publication size, paper type, printing and overall production quality effectively accommodated and enhanced the diverse contents: the news stories, editorials, Òwúyẹ́, cover, advertorials, news and notes, etc. *The Yorùbá News* is a very useful primary source for historical research on the colonial Nigeria as it ably chronicled and clearly reflected the social, culture, history, economy, politics, sentiments, and idiosyncrasies of its time. It is indeed a veritable archival material which provided glimpses of the society of its time through its diverse lens. In a nutshell, the alliance between the form and contents of *Yorùbá News* was efficacious and as such, very successful.

Conclusion

That *The Yorùbá News* made immense contribution to the development of the colonial Yorùbá society was not in doubt. It was a potent megaphone of information dissemination and its impact was not limited to its Ìbàdà̀n localé, but was also felt in the southern protectorate and even, though to a fair extent, in the entire country of Nigeria. Its bilingual nature was novel and creative. Employing both Yorùbá and English languages gave *The Yorùbá News* a wider spread and coverage. The bilingual medium of communication was of economic benefit to the Ìláré printing press which was the publisher of the newspaper as it boosted its sales and patronage. The diverse issues and wide items covered in the newspaper was a reflection of the creativity, ingenuity and dynamism of the Mr. D. A. Oḃasá, the Editor. These qualities also enabled the newspaper to retain her widely dispersed readers for over two decades. In conclusion, the inter-dependence of form and content in *The Yorùbá*

News was quite resourceful and productive. The synergy of the two concepts was able to effectively project the social, cultural, political and economic values of the historic Yorùbá newspaper: *The Yorùbá News*. There was therefore a functional deployment of form and content in the highly creative and ingenious publication.

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