

gathered with casual conversations and interviews with key members of the company. Because she is aware that most of her readers will never have had (nor ever will have) the opportunity to see the Adejobi theater in performance she provides synopses for fifteen of their plays spanning the period from the late 1940s to 1992.

In addition to the valuable information she provides about the origin and development of the theater, the daily routines of the personnel, and the logistics of operating a traveling theater, she also indirectly clarifies some of the controversies that have attended the Yoruba theater movement in general, among others, whether it arose from traditional observances, its contribution to the struggle against colonialism, and its status as a truly popular form that not only emanated from the people but also reflected their interests.

Barber, who has native fluency in Yoruba (the language of the theater), exemplifies the sort of linguistic competence required for the study of African verbal texts and performances. Had she depended on the services of an interpreter she could hardly have avoided drawing attention to herself and her presence, thus undermining the advantages of her methodology. Moreover, her book is generously documented and lucidly written, and it characteristically does extremely well by the people who took her into their midst and confidence.

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Bibliographical Survey of Sources for Early Yoruba Language and Literature Studies, 1820–1970

BY F. ADETOWUN OGUNSHEYE

Ibadan: U of Ibadan P, 2001.

360 pp. ISBN 978-121-128-8.

Available from African Books Collective Ltd., The Jam Factory, 27 Park End Street, Oxford, OX1 1HU, UNITED KINGDOM.

Email: abc@africanbookscollective.com, <http://www.africanbooks-collective.com>

This volume bears witness to the remarkable early efflorescence of Yoruba-language writing in southwestern Nigeria, which began in the 1820s, gathered momentum in the 1880s with the rise of Yoruba cultural nationalism, and has grown steadily ever since. Its origins were in the church, and Bibles, prayer books, and edifying Christian literature loom large in the corpus of writings documented here; but the educated elite of Lagos, Abeokuta, and Ibadan were also prolific producers of poetry, essays, histories, topical commentary, and works on cultural heritage.

F. Adetowun Ogunseye was able to search private collections in Nigeria as well as some major library holdings in Nigeria, the USA, and the UK, and he is to be congratulated for this pioneering attempt to bring together documentation of a large

field, which has hitherto been patchy, scattered, and made problematic by the fact that so many Yoruba-language publications were pamphlets printed by local presses and often not widely or systematically distributed.

This volume, however, can only be regarded as a preliminary effort. There are noticeable gaps in the documentation. For example, there is an entry for S. A. Adenle's *Iwe aiye toto fun* (1934), but not for his longer and more ambitious poetic narrative *Iwe Iwa rere l'Oso Enia* (n.d.). There are entries for J. O. Ajibola's *Orin Yoruba* (1947) and *Owe Yoruba* (1947), but not for his *Itojo tabi ofin marun* or his booklet, co-authored with B. Somade, *Ounje ile Yoruba*. One source that Ogunseye evidently did not consult was the magnificent collection of Yoruba texts assembled by W. R. and Berta Bascom from the 1930s onward, and now available in microfiche. The details (of names, dates, printers, etc.) of some of the entries in the Bibliography do not correspond to the originals in the Bascom Collection—either because printers produced multiple variant reprints (which is quite likely) or because there are errors in the existing bibliographies from which Ogunseye derived much of his data.

The introductory section of the Bibliography does a useful job of surveying the field and tabulating the bibliographic data by year and by subject matter. This is helpful; but I am less convinced of the need to organize the bibliographic entries themselves under 18 main topic headings and a further 16 subheadings. In the case of major and distinctive bodies of writing such as dictionaries and grammars, or Bible translations and liturgical texts, it makes sense to organize them in their own sections. But for most of the other material, the effect of so many subdivisions is to make the bibliography hard to use, and to obscure the fact that much of what the early Yoruba writers produced was multigeneric or fell simultaneously into several categories. For example, A. K. Ajisafe's famous *Aiye Akamara* is a series of edifying exhortations to schoolchildren, in verse form—should it be in the section for “poetry,” “school texts,” or “moral instruction”? The 21 entries for the prolific Lagos newspaper-proprietor E. A. Akintan (which do not include his *Aiye l'oja orun n'ile* or *Iwe Ajisa loru*) are scattered among no less than ten categories, obscuring the essential unity of his project. The problem is compounded by the fact that even within the subsections, the entries are not always arranged in alphabetical order: thus, looking for the historian Samuel Ojo Bada, I was surprised to find an entry for him between “Wood, Jonathan Buckland” and “Oke, Michael Owolabi” (p. 72)! Nor is the Index entirely accurate.

Ogunseye's text is innocent of diacritics. If, however, the reason for this is an intention to make the Bibliography available for conversion into an electronic database (where subdots and tone-marks simply mess things up), then it is a move that is to be welcomed. And all scholars working on Yoruba texts must hope that the author will find support to develop and expand this valuable work in a future edition.

—KARIN BARBER

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