

Yorùbá: a Snapshot

Gbemisola Isimi (CEO and Founder of CultureTree)

<https://culturetree.co.uk>



Yoruba language and culture

Spoken in south-western Nigeria, Benin and Togo, Yorùbá is a Niger-Congo language related to Igala, Edo, Ishan, and Igbo. It is one of 500 languages in use in Nigeria and is spoken by more than 20 million people. Yorùbá is a tonal language and uses the Roman alphabet.

Yorùbá has a rich and vibrant culture reflected in its food, dress, arts and crafts, music and dance. Amongst the most popular foods are Amala (yam-flour), Gbegiri (soup made from beans) and Ofada rice (natural rice). Dress for both men and women is vibrant and colourful with bold patterns as seen in the ankara designs. Drums, including 'dunduns', are prominent in Yorùbá music and dance.

A popular event is Yorùbá Arts festival held in London's Clissold Park each year.

<https://yorubafestival.org>

Yorùbá in the UK

In the UK most Yorùbá speakers are to be found in London with significant communities in Southwark, Greenwich and Hackney. The Peckham area of Southwark is known as 'little Lagos' and has become a Yorùbá heartland offering a huge variety of Nigerian food, clothing and other goods. There are significant Yorùbá communities in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham also.



Yorùbá education

Opportunities to learn Yorùbá in schools in and outside London are limited at present, but more and more organisations are offering online classes for children and adult learners.

CultureTree

CultureTree started off as an online platform where we created animated Yorùbá nursery rhymes, stories read aloud and educational videos to help children learn Yorùbá language on our YouTube channel CultureTreeTV: <https://m.youtube.com/c/CultureTreeTVYoruba>

In October 2018 CultureTree Centre (cultural and recreational centre) was launched in Peckham, South-East London with the aim of engaging the Yorùbá community in London culturally in a fun and entertaining way. Face-to-face language classes are offered for adults and children, along with Yorùbá rhyme-time sessions for parents and babies, workshops, book clubs, arts and crafts activities, special events, talks etc. Unfortunately, the Centre closed in 2019 with all activities moving online during the pandemic.

As well as producing our popular online children's programme Yoruba Stars, we also focus our efforts on creating content for children's TV and have produced several Yorùbá nursery rhyme videos for BBC's Tiny Happy People:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/yoruba-nursery-rhyme-under-the-orange-tree/z2g9g7h>

For information on CultureTree Yorùbá classes and our other activities please visit www.culturetree.co.uk.

Supporting Yorùbá speakers in your school

For information and advice, contact CultureTree: Gbemisola Isimi

info@culturetree.co.uk

[With sincere thanks to CultureTree for providing photos]

