

# NIGERIA, NATIONALISM, AND WRITING HISTORY

TOYIN FALOLA AND SAHEED ADERINTO

# Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History

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Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto



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# Contents

Preface	ix
Acknowledgments	xv
<b>Part One: The Foundation of Knowledge</b>	
1 A Preface to Academic Historiography	3
2 K. O. Dike and the National Archives of Nigeria	27
<b>Part Two: Varieties of History</b>	
3 Political History	37
4 Economic History	53
5 Social History	68
6 Women's History and the Reconfiguration of Gender	82
<b>Part Three: Nationalist Historians and Their Work</b>	
7 Adiele Afigbo: Igbo, Nigerian, and African Studies	99
8 J. F. Ade Ajayi: Missionaries, Warfare, and Nationalism	115
9 J. A. Atanda: Yoruba Ethnicity	129
10 Bolanle Awe: Yoruba and Gender Studies	143
11 Obaro Ikime: Intergroup Relations and the Search for Nigerians	157
12 G. O. Olusanya: Contemporary Nigeria	171
13 Tekena N. Tamuno: Pan-Nigeriana	184
14 Yusufu Bala Usman: Radicalism and Neocolonialism	200

**Part Four: Reflections on History and the Nation-State**

<b>15</b>	Nigeria in the World of African Historiography	215
<b>16</b>	Fragmented Nation and Fragmented Histories	239
	Notes	265
	Selected Bibliography	309
	Index	327

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# Preface

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed the publication of a massive amount of literature on Nigeria by Nigerian and non-Nigerian historians. The primary aim of this book is to reflect on this literature, with a sole focus on those works generated by Nigerians in the context of the rise and decline of African nationalist historiography. Our emphasis on the role of Nigerian historians supports an ever-growing scholarly aspiration for studies on historical methodologies and historiographies. Given the diminishing share by African historians in the global output of literature on Africa, it has become of crucial importance to reintroduce Africans into history writing about Africa.

As we attempt to rescue older voices, we also rehabilitate a stale historiography by revisiting the issues, ideas, and moments that produced it. This revivalism connects very powerfully with a larger desire to challenge the Nigerian historians of the twenty first century to rethink their paradigms and to develop fresher ideas to study the nation, to comprehend its modernity, and to frame a new set of questions on Nigeria's future and globalization. A separate project needs to study the contemporary writings of the younger generation of Nigerian historians to see the extent to which they have absorbed many of the ideas presented in this book, and the ways and manner in which they also have moved away from them. To be sure, nationalist historiography is very resilient, and we demonstrate this in the chapters on the most dominant themes on Nigeria.

In spite of the current problems in Nigeria and its universities, there is no doubt that historical scholarship on Nigeria (and by extension, Africa) has come of age. From a discipline that struggled for recognition by the Western academic tradition in the 1950s, the study of Nigerian peoples and societies went through a rapid process of growth and consolidation such that by the 1980s the country had emerged as arguably one of the most studied countries in Africa. Nigeria is not only one of the early birthplaces of modern African history, but it also produced some members of the first generation of African historians whose contributions to the development and expansion of modern African history is undeniable. Like their counterparts working on other parts of the world, these scholars have been sensitive to the need to explore virtually all aspects of Nigerian history. The book highlights the careers of some of Nigeria's notable historians of the first and second generation.

Meanwhile, the rise of professional scholarship about Africa and Africans did not develop without some prevailing circumstances and stimuli. Among

other competing conditions, the scholarship developed into an ideological weapon of nationalist struggles and decolonization. Pioneering historians wrote to unveil the complexity of state and empire formation in order to prove to the colonialists that the African past was not a dark one and that the peoples of the continent could effectively govern themselves without alien rule. What is more, pioneering historians of Nigeria, like their counterparts working on other regions of Africa, quickly accepted another genre of sources—that is, oral traditions—which they presented as viable and legitimate for reconstructing Africa’s past. It was nationalism, more than any other factor, that propelled the pioneering historians of Nigeria during the 1950s and 1960s to go into the field to collect the large body of oral and written evidence that ended up pointing to the sophistication and dynamism of precolonial politics and economy. These historians were influenced largely by nationalist sentiments when they insisted that the history of Africa should be African-centered rather than European-centered.

The new wave of nationalism predates the 1950s, and in fact began in the nineteenth century when Western-educated elites, who newly constituted a group of local/indigenous intellectuals, began to document the history and customs of various ethnic groups in order to counter Eurocentric ideas of African cultural backwardness and stagnation. The nineteenth-century writers were also moved by the need to document the history of their societies for purposes of posterity, sensing the possibility of a sort of “historical extinction” accentuated by the gradual demise of the older generation. Their project was thus a rescue mission aimed at ensuring that the past was transmitted to future generations. By the third decade of the twentieth century, these local/indigenous intellectuals had succeeded in documenting various aspects of Nigerian history and culture, ranging from marriage and family to medicine and astronomy, agriculture and artisanship to peace and conflict, state formation and political disintegration to African traditional religion and faith systems. Indeed, they wrote during the prime days of the racism and racial prejudice that permeated the colonial administration and church hierarchies.

Professional nationalist historians as well as the cultural nationalists and local intellectuals shared two agendas: the need to defend African cultural heritage in the face of Western stereotypes and the desire to document the past for posterity. The factors setting the professional nationalist historians and cultural nationalist intellectuals apart include the period in which they wrote, their methodology, and the type of scholarly training they received. These intellectuals’ writing began to appear in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and reached its peak around the 1930s. Whereas the writings of the local intelligentsia were not geared toward demands for self-determination, the nationalist historians were aware of the need to use history as a bulwark of decolonization and national pride. These two categories of intellectuals used oral evidence in unveiling the histories of the various societies

about whom they wrote. In addition, they did not discard sources like the travel journals of European traders and missionaries if these proved useful to their projects. However, the nationalist historians, because of their professional training, were able to handle these sources with greater caution.

One obvious fact about Nigerian studies is its vastness, which of course produces two mutually exclusive challenges. While on the one hand it popularizes the experiences of Nigeria's more than three hundred ethno-cultural cleavages, it nevertheless makes a complete grasp of the major ideas and directions difficult. Newcomers to Nigerian studies may be overwhelmed and intimidated by the expanse of its various fields and subfields, but established scholars cannot boast of a full mastery of the growing body of ideas about the world's most populous black country. Yet despite this challenge, certain salient trends in the study of Nigerian history are discernible.

To date, there is no book that examines the evolution of the various fields of Nigerian history, its major themes and ideas, and the ideologies that have shaped the writings. We have yet to see a volume that merges the ideas of frontline Nigerian historians with the conditions that instigated those ideas. To be sure, there have been scattered celebratory works on the achievements and contributions of some Nigerian historians, in conferences and edited Festschriften. Thus, there have been conferences on Jacob Ade Ajayi (August 1998), Adiele Afigbo (1992 and 2008), and Obaro Ikime (2006). Festschriften have also been presented to E. J. Alagoa, J. A. Atanda, Bolanle Awe, Toyin Falola, G. O. Olusanya, and T. N. Tamuno.<sup>1</sup>

Given the number of conferences and historiographical essays written about Nigerian historians and their work, we can speak of "a nationalist historiography of Nigeria by Nigerians." A tone of celebration is clear in the conference papers; critical assessments, however, are avoided. In large part, the tendency has been to look at all areas of the authors' lives and examine their contributions to scholarship in a less detailed and sophisticated manner.<sup>2</sup> Even the few Festschriften that examine the contributions of pioneering Nigerians to African studies do not thematically appraise their writings on various aspects of Nigerian history.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, some of these celebratory volumes do not make evaluative contributions to the scholarship of their subjects.<sup>4</sup>

This volume crisscrosses many terrains in Nigerian history without overlooking precision and detail. By fully reviewing the scholarship of the selected pioneers of Nigerian history, and indeed African history, we seek to amplify the role of historians in the production of knowledge, as well as their thinking about a genre of history that celebrates and defends the African historical and cultural heritage. However, we do not stop there. By comparing and contrasting the works of these historians with those of their colleagues, we intend to bring fully into the limelight the ways individual historians have tackled the problems of interpreting such significant topics

as indirect rule, Christian missionary activities, the evolution of the Nigerian state, the place of oral traditions in the development of professional historical writings, the origins of the Nigerian peoples, and the role of agency in the formation of states and empire, to mention but a few. We are convinced that it is only through a process of comparative analysis that one can fully unearth the complexities associated with historical interpretation of both the well-known and the hidden pasts of Nigerians. No book has yet attempted to bring all these germane and contested themes of Nigerian history into a single coherent dialogue.

The place of local intellectuals in the evolution of professional historical writing has been the subject of such book-length studies as Toyin Falola's *Yoruba Gurus* and a piece authored by Robin Law.<sup>5</sup> In addition, a few essays have been published on oral traditions and missionary records, and their place in the development of African historiography. In the present collection, we attempt to move beyond the existing confines by chronologically and thematically examining the evolution of professional historical research on Nigeria in the light of extant writings and documentations by external agents including missionaries, explorers, and colonial social anthropologists and by local thinkers. All these early writers provided the intellectual foundation upon which the professional historians have built. Essays on the National Archives of Nigeria have been published in *History in Africa*.<sup>6</sup> However, these essays do not fully reveal the origin of the archives, its contributions to the development of modern African historiography, or its current problems and challenges.

Chapter 1 examines, chronologically and thematically, the evolution of professional historical scholarship in Nigeria. In chapter 2 we discuss the origin and significance of the Nigerian National Archives to the development of historical research about Nigeria and its peoples. Chapters 3 through 6 each explore a major field of Nigerian history. These chapters do not pretend to explore fully all the works on the various aspects of Nigerian history. However, a careful attempt has been made to bring out the major ideas espoused by scholars specializing in these various fields. Chapters 7 to 14 delve into the scholarship of selected pioneering historians of Nigeria, including A. E. Afigbo, J. F. A. Ajayi, J. A. Atanda, Bolanle Awe, Obaro Ikime, G. O. Olusanya, Tekena Tamuno, and Yusufu Bala Usman. Although the list of scholars in this category is long, the type of work they have done and the importance of each one's scholarship to Nigerian historical studies influence our choice of subjects. The ideas of other influential scholars of Nigerian studies such as E. A. Ayandele, Omoniyi Adewoye, E. J. Alagoa, Nina Emma MBA, and Adeagbo Akinjogbin, to name a few, are echoed in various chapters of this book. Chapters 15 and 16 engage the pedagogy of Nigerian studies and reflect on a number of issues including the place of history in the construction of nationhood.

Our choice of historians highlighted in this book is also based on a combination of factors, essentially the need to

- cover the emergence of modern academic writing—as in the case of Kenneth O. Dike in chapter 2;
- understand the early formation of Nigerian historiography—as in the case of J. F. Ade Ajayi in chapter 8;
- relate history writing to the ideas of the Nigerian nation—as in the case of Tekena Tamuno in chapter 13 and G. O. Olusanya in chapter 12;
- emphasize the interest in precolonial nationalities—as in the case of Adiele Afigbo in chapter 7 and J. A. Atanda in chapter 9;
- signify the major shift in the historiography, most notably interests in women and in gender studies—as in the case of chapter 10 on Bolanle Awe; and
- note the infusion of radicalism into a somewhat conservative historiography—as in the case of Yusufu Bala Usman in chapter 14.

This selection is not arbitrary. Even if such other notable figures as Okon Uya, Philip Igbafe, and Abdullahi Smith have been left out, the cumulative contributions of all the scholars who emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century have been represented. Whether they write about the Tiv and Igala in central Nigeria or the Ibibio in eastern Nigeria or about the myriad of other ethnicities, we have analyzed what such works communicate by way of the ideas of the nation, ethnic representation, and nationalism. Irrespective of the omissions of certain works and scholars, this book fully captures the creation and growth of the historical discipline in Nigeria with a focus on its key essential elements: the conditions that led to the creation of the field; the themes expanded upon; the representative main voices; and the evaluation of its cumulative impact. We hope that our endeavor in this volume will encourage others to take up an examination of the scholarship of those historians left out.

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Our expression of thanks must start in Nigeria itself, where we have received maximum support from various libraries and archives. As we traveled to these places of learning, we marveled at how people do their work in spite of great difficulties. A number of younger workers struggle on a daily basis to come to their offices, with the pangs of survival written on their faces. Sometimes, we looked like “wealthy researchers” to these folks, making the acquisition of knowledge a costly project. In particular, Saheed Ade-rinto would like to thank the University of Texas at Austin for funding his trips to Nigeria and to the family of Colonel Alawode of Kaduna for their hospitality during fieldwork at the Kaduna National Archives. He is grateful to Western Carolina University’s History Department for office support.

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## *Part One*

# The Foundation of Knowledge

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# 1

## A Preface to Academic Historiography

We were trained to be inferior copies of Englishmen, caricatures to be laughed at with our pretensions to British bourgeois gentility, our grammatical faultiness and distorted standards betraying us at every turn. . . . We were denied the knowledge of our African past and informed that we had no present. . . . We were taught to regard our culture and traditions as barbarous and primitive. Our textbooks were English textbooks, telling us about English history, English geography, English ways of living, English customs, English ideas, and English weather.

Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*

Intellectual history does not emerge in a vacuum. First, it has to be created by those who think, talk, and write about events and people and places. Second, what they write, think, and discuss has to be located in the context of the interactions of people in society, and of the interactions of that society with other places and spaces. Third, by turning ideas into some sort of power, those who generate knowledge envisage a future for themselves and their society. The foundation of writing about Nigeria—a component of African historiography and intellectual history—was laid during the nineteenth century, although with events and traditions that preceded that era. The circumstances that led to modern Nigerian historiography contained a combination of external and internal factors, and a small group of individuals with the facility to write exploited this opportunity to inaugurate a process of documentation and reflection.

A number of intellectual trajectories combined to produce the emergence of academic research on Nigeria and its peoples. The first dates back to the nineteenth century, when such developments as the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, the planting of Christianity in Africa, the emergence of the new Western-educated elites, and the establishment of colonial rule created the conditions under which Western-style literacy flourished. Although the pioneering writers on Nigeria (missionaries, their African converts, and local intellectuals) had diverse intentions, they shared a common sentiment—the desire to improve the knowledge of the present and past.

#### 4 *The Foundation of Knowledge*

The African writers had another agenda as well: as Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of independent Ghana, observed, there was a need to change the way Africans were thinking about themselves. While the writings of missionaries and explorers were targeted toward understanding the customs and cultures of Africa as a means for improving Europeans' knowledge of the so-called savages, African writers wrote for cultural nationalist purposes. While the market and audience of foreign writers was located in the West, local intellectuals' market and audience was predominantly in Africa. From the very outset, writing the history of Nigeria and its peoples had always been part of a larger agenda tied to identity, self-fashioning, and nationalism.

The second intellectual trajectory was related to certain consequences of British imperialism. Colonialism facilitated the rise of a new genre of writing on Africa. This genre, which can be called the "social anthropology of colonial Nigeria," was carried out in order to enhance understanding of the culture and customs of the people. The colonialists desired a good working knowledge of Nigerian cultures in order to devise appropriate administrative and political machinery needed for the human and material exploitation of the country. In other words, African ways of life were not documented for altruistic purposes.

Before the late 1950s, in writing about Nigerians, Westerners neither studied Nigerians in the Africans' own terms nor saw the need to help them document their history. With the emergence of modern African historiography, the cultural nationalists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries wrote purposely for Africans. They identified the infiltration of Western values as an impediment to the continued existence of African cultures and customs. They wrote from below. As members of their immediate ethnic groups, these intellectuals combined cultural and linguistic skills to produce the best local ideas and knowledge of the period.

Modern African historiography cannot be separated from the aforementioned developments that prepared the ground for its emergence. This modern historiography, which forms the subject of this book, remains a watershed in the history of the Nigerian peoples as it paved the way for dedicated scholarly interpretation of their history and culture. The emergent academic historians continued with the cultural nationalist agenda of the local intellectuals and amateur historians by demanding that Nigerian history be written Afro-centrally. While the local intellectuals' ideology was shaped by racial prejudices in the European mainstream churches and the exploitative practices of the colonialists, the emergent academic historians' careers were shaped largely by the politics of decolonization, which demanded an African-centered counterdiscourse to the objectionable idea that Africans could not govern themselves and thus had to be placed under alien rule. In other words, modern African historiography emerged as an ideological weapon of nationalist struggle.

Both the amateurs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the professional historians of the post-1950 era inherited two rich legacies—the first, a rich body of knowledge in oral forms; and the second, an extensive body of knowledge based on the use of the Arabic language and its creolized forms (e.g., Hausa-Arabic). We will start with a discussion of these two legacies, and move on to the two trajectories that led to the era of modern academic scholarship.

## Orality and History

The expressions and preservations of history and memory took an oral form in all parts of Nigeria. Whereas in the nineteenth century and afterward historians deal with oral traditions as history in themselves, the academic historians in the post-1950 era have dealt with them as sources. In both cases, oral traditions serve as one of the precursors to the emergence of academic history writing. During the nineteenth century, a new generation with the facility to write began to (a) point attention to this extensive body of oral knowledge; (b) treat it as history, by way of reporting oral sources in newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets, and books; and (c) interpret them as “facts” with which they constructed preliminary narratives of their people. Samuel Johnson, for instance, based his well-researched book *The History of the Yorubas* on the “facts” from oral traditions that he collected, analyzed, and used to create a synthesis.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Johnson very clearly stated that he was developing criteria to follow in accepting or rejecting data—a display of some of the skills academic historians would follow—and used the data to create a sequence of events (as in his creation of a kings’ list for the Oyo Empire); provided causes for events, as well as their consequences (as in his narrative of the fall of Oyo and its aftermath); reached conclusions (as in his prediction regarding the rising tide of Christian expansion); and made judgments—thus connecting his research to his personal moral ethics.

If Johnson was a transcriber, the majority of the Yoruba and other Nigerian groups regarded oral traditions as history, and communicated them with words that described events of the present and interpreted those of the past. Both the past and the present were connected in oral history: the past had to be explained to meet the demands of the present; the present was connected with the past to make sense of contemporary issues; the past was presented on its own terms, but with the language and skills of a narrator who lived in the present; and the present was explained in terms of the past—to answer such questions as, How did we become who we are now? and Who brought this calamity upon us? As writers answered these and other questions, oral historians urged the people to talk about their future and to present ideas that gave the past a power to supply answers to current problems.

## 6 The Foundation of Knowledge

Oral history is far more than a narrative device to present the past. There is a connection between oral history and identity. The language of communication can become the marker of linguistic unity of a people. Idioms, proverbs, and stories indicate the creation of communities, groups, and sub-groups, each trying to use oral history to affirm its independence, its sovereignty, its eagerness to fight for its autonomy. Indeed, almost everywhere, oral history was used to create the idea of a political community wherein power, state, and citizenship are defined. Such definitions drew on history to create bonds among the people (as in the reference to the origins from a common ancestor) and between the people and kings.

All groups had a corpus of ideas to legitimize social and political interactions among people who lived in a defined community, such as the Kanuri, Igbo, or Tiv in their various segments that were organized into villages, towns, and kingdoms. Whether simple or fantastic, stories of origins from an ancestor or a place, and stories of migrations from one location to another to create permanent settlements, were social charters to explain the creation of communities as well as the boundaries between them and their neighbors. Oral history constructed the basis to formulate theories and ideas not just on the relevance of history, but also of religion, philosophy, cosmology, and other topics. In seeking answers to various aspects of their being, their creation, and their real and imagined differences with their neighbors, people turned principally to their oral traditions.

The oral traditions of the nineteenth century clearly reflected the concerns and fears of the people insofar as they speak to the consequences of the trans-atlantic slave trade, the spread of Islam and Christianity, and the encroaching power of the British colonizers. Writers who compiled those traditions were able to “intellectualize” oral traditions and connect them to emerging worldviews on modernity. The events that unfolded in their very eyes influenced their perception of the past, which in turn shaped the traditions that historians collected and processed during the twentieth century. The strong fascination of nineteenth-century newspaper reporters with stories of origin, some of which were recounted in such books as Johnson’s *History of the Yorubas*, illustrates the point about intellectual framework. Nigerian groups were connected with the Middle East as migrants came from there to establish states among, for example, the Hausa and the Yoruba. In turn, the Hausa expanded to cover a large area, and the Yoruba had a strong impact on the creation of Benin and Idah, leading to the creation of still other groups to the east of Benin. These traditions influenced some of the interpretations that emerged in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> The nineteenth-century traditions amalgamated the histories of population movements with those of cultural diffusion, oftentimes with the emergence of dynastic groups. History presented in this manner places emphasis on monarchy and patriarchy, and on the handful of men who founded towns and villages and managed the key institutions of society.

The relevance of oral traditions cannot be overstated in their contributions to the emergence and growth of academic history. First, the rise of African historiography validated those traditions. The historians we highlight here include those who made (sometimes tirelessly) the repeated point as to the value of oral traditions to historical reconstruction. Second, the construction of ethnicities in colonial and postcolonial Africa would turn to these traditions to consolidate such powerful identities as the Hausa, Ijo, and Edo, which historians turned into units of regional/historical analysis.<sup>3</sup> Third, one of the challenges of the discipline of history in Nigeria in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been to create the resources and skills to collect the corpus of traditions in various communities. Such collections became part of advancing the project of the academy and state bureaucracies. Fourth, one of the severe limitations in writing about Nigeria is that places organized into kingdoms (e.g., Oyo and Benin) or caliphates (e.g., Sokoto and Kano) that generated more of these traditions have tended to dominate historical writing with the consequence, contrary to what many think, that we still do not have historical accounts of many Nigerian groups, especially those not fully integrated into the centers of power. Finally, the traditions of the past continue to influence those of the contemporary generation who turn to them (and not to the academic historians) to interpret their daily realities and retell their traditional stories. The belief in past tradition is so strong that these stories are taken at face value and reported as authentic histories that cannot be questioned. Events, places, and names thus have been taken literally and reprinted in contemporary media and acted out in stage and film drama.

## **Islamic Traditions**

Islamic literacy promoted historical knowledge in the northern part of Nigeria. Indeed, the Islamic revolution of the nineteenth century generated a culture of learning that led to the production of works to justify the jihad of 1804 as well as explain the activities of those who controlled power during the century. With an emphasis on the role of Islam, historical writings created a set of principles to unite the people who subscribed to the same religion, promote contacts with a larger Islamic world, and contribute to political stability. When academic history writing emerged, the writings of this older Islamic historiography received acknowledgment, and sources and ideas derived from the latter influenced a number of modern writings.

Nigeria is part of the Islamic world, and Islam has traditionally promoted a culture of learning, literacy, and historical scholarship. The religion spread from North Africa to West Africa, originally linked to the movement of goods and people through the trans-Saharan trade. Islam reached Borno

in the second half of the eleventh century, and it spread in the subsequent centuries.<sup>4</sup> Among the consequences were the adoption of Islam by the political dynasty, the emergence of an Islamic intelligentsia (the *Qadi*, *Imam*, and *Waziri*), pilgrimages to Mecca, the promotion of Islamic knowledge, the circulation of Islamic scholars and their ideas, and contacts with Cairo. In the neighboring Hausa States, Islam began to spread after the fourteenth century, also leading in later years to the emergence of Islamic schools and the promotion of knowledge based on the Quran, and bodies of regulations and laws based on *fiqh* and Hadith. Printed books circulated in both Borno and the Hausa States.<sup>5</sup> This literature has made it possible to reconstruct the history of these states.<sup>6</sup>

Early historical writings on the region date as far back as the sixteenth century with an account of the reign of Mai Idris b. Ali b. Ahmed (ca. 1497–1519).<sup>7</sup> The location of scholars in prominent cities, the traffic of traders and goods from North Africa to West Africa, and the fame of Timbuktu as an intellectual center led to the production of texts, mainly kings' lists and chronicles, some of which have endured until today. This was followed in later centuries by vibrant local traditions in written historiography. The various states—Hausa, Borno, and the caliphates—had a full stake in the creation, preservation, and usages of historical knowledge. As part of the state structures, a category of professional scholars, known as the *Ulama*, emerged as chroniclers of the activities of kings and chiefs (the *Sarauta*), as well as the wealthy individuals who constituted a cast of patrons (the *Sarakuna*). Stories of the activities of the wealthy and powerful became part of court entertainment, a source to legitimize power and cultural practices, and a reminder that the society was stratified into the rich and poor. Oral narratives were reworked into written renditions in order to appropriate ideas that sustained political power and the stability of social institutions. Palace officials existed to maintain the integrity of kingship. Whether they were the *Makadan Fanda* or *Bambadawa* in Hausa palaces or the *Zakuma* among the Kanuri, these officials perfected the art of praise singing that was merged with Islamic traditions. Palace officials preserved histories and educated new kings and chiefs into the old customs. The verses that encoded and indexed the histories reveal selections that eulogized the activities of kings and nobles, the embellishments of kind gestures on the part of the wealthy, and a commitment to retain the status quo.<sup>8</sup> With kings and the states at the center of the narrative, these narratives tend to overemphasize power rivalries and the lavish praises heaped on those who emerged victorious.<sup>9</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the successful jihad led by Uthman dan Fodio in 1804 created opportunities to reform Islam and later to extend it over a wider region. The Jihad and the formation of a theocratic state also created a moment of unprecedented interest in historical production that lasted the entire nineteenth century. The literature generated by the jihadists eclipsed

what preceded it in its sheer volume and depth of insight. During the eighteenth century, a number of Muslim scholars had traveled from one place to another propagating ideas of Islam. Some among them also composed written materials that were highly critical of various aspects of society. Centers of scholarship developed in such cities as Kalamburdu, Katsina, and Degel, attracting scholars and talented students. The scholarship in those cities ultimately became connected with the struggles for political reforms and the purification of Islam.

Uthman dan Fodio was born in 1754, at a time when the Islamic ferment was taking shape, and he grew up at Degel, then emerging as a great center of Islamic education. At an early age, he became an itinerant preacher and scholar. As dan Fodio's fame grew, so did his ability to gather followers, and his prominence attracted the notice of kings and nobles. By 1775 his radical messages had incurred the wrath of the king of Gobir, who attempted to curtail his influence. In 1802 dan Fodio issued a proclamation (the *Masa'il muhimma*), calling for application of Sharia law, acceptance of the leadership of a religious leader (imam or caliph), and massive reform of Islam and declaring the ripeness of a jihad (holy war) in the Hausa States. Practical and intellectual disagreements ultimately led dan Fodio to initiate the *hijra*—a withdrawal to signify the declaration of a jihad on February 21, 1804. The move from Degel to Dugu created two opposing forces—those of the state versus those of the jihadists. The preacher became the *Amir al-Muminin* (Commander of the Faithful). Between 1805 and 1810 many of the Hausa States had fallen, and they became incorporated into the new Sokoto Caliphate.

The Jihad was not merely a military and political success, but equally an intellectual achievement. Before and after the Jihad, dan Fodio and his key lieutenants generated a large body of literature to justify their actions and activities, carefully revealing the failures and lapses of the Hausa States and advocating the reform of Islam. Dan Fodio's writings sought to demonstrate the relevance of drawing from the model established by the “just caliphs”—the *Khulafah al-Rashidin*.<sup>10</sup> The jihadists needed to resolve various arguments about power and the role of Islam with their opponents and critics—Hausa kings, established aristocracies, and the *Ulama*, who supported the old order. Historical scholarship was crucial to this challenge as well as to the entire body of Islamic science and philosophy (*fiqh*, *Tasfir*, Hadith, prosody, grammar). When the jihadists assumed power, and especially following the death of dan Fodio in 1817, they were forced to defend themselves against various allegations of using the Jihad merely to grab power. This defense fostered intellectual production, including Muhammad Bello's well-known *Infaq al-Maysur fi Tarikh Bilad al-Tukrur*.<sup>11</sup>

The jihadist historiography was very much tied to power, politics, and personality, all in the context of the dominance of Sokoto as a center of government where the caliph resided. Indeed, opinions at Sokoto were held

as supreme, and the expectation was clear that intellectual disputes in the component parts of the empire (the emirates) had to be referred to Sokoto for final resolution. The towering figures in this historiography were dan Fodio and his fourth son and successor as caliph, Muhammad Bello. Indeed, dan Fodio instructed Bello to write the first account of the Jihad, which he did in 1812. The themes pursued by father and son were similar: the religious principles that led to the Jihad, the social conditions that drew people to their cause, the righteousness of their actions, and their achievements. Scholarship had a practical orientation. The majority of Bello's publications addressed questions posed to him or were treatises on contrary opinions. Matters of practical policies were integrated into the writings, such as ideas on the economy, defense and security, relationships to non-Islamic areas, land distribution, and resettlement of pastoralists.

The authors displayed an interest in, and familiarity with, events in other parts of the region. The geographic unit that they covered in some of their writings encompassed the African savanna—Fur, Wadai, Bagarmi, Borno, Songhai, the Hausa States, Borgu, Nupe, Gurma, and Yoruba. Short references were even made regarding the origins of some of these groups. This geographic scope may have been based on the activities of itinerant preachers who circulated ideas they received from others. The regions where Islam's influence would take hold were also being defined.

Dan Fodio and Bello both stressed theological issues in their works. In their analysis of the pre-Jihad society, they were interested in the corruption of Islam, especially by those in power. They sought to encourage the study of Arabic language and grammar with the understanding that literacy would facilitate greater access to religious knowledge and thus enhance religious devotion. They issued instructions on various religious practices and sought to correct misguided opinions expressed by imams whom they did not respect. Historical writing was regarded as a fulfillment of a mission directed by Allah and even defined as the legitimate activity of great men.<sup>12</sup> They spoke about themselves and their colleagues in a way that exposed their inner feelings and goals to change the society. As they spoke about the *Ulama*, they spotlighted the role of scholars in society and the responsibilities of political leaders to the promotion of Islam. To take one example, Bello spoke about his father in the most glowing of terms:

Know that he grew up contented and devout, possessed of pleasing qualities. And none was his equal. People trusted him and flocked to him east and west. He is the star among the *Ulama* and the bearer of the banner of religion. He revived the Sunna, and put an end to heresy. He spread knowledge and dispelled perplexity. His learning dazzled men's minds. He showed how reality was to be reconciled with the Shari'a.

For years he explained the Qu’ran in the presence of learned and righteous men, vying with them in its reading and the meaning of its rhetoric, rules and abrogated passages. At the same time he was preeminent in knowledge of the Hadith, and learned in its unfamiliar parts, its chain of authorities and different branches. Learned was he also in the religious sources, in the defence of the Sunna and in resolving difficulties.

Filled with humility and compassion towards mankind, he regards himself in his modesty as the least creatures. He is the defender of the frontiers of the law. Kind and friendly, he was loved and revered by the people even more than they loved themselves. They flocked round him, attracted by his shining face, his good qualities and his generous attitude towards them. He was kind and compassionate to the believers, and his greatness was universally accepted by both beings and *jinns*.<sup>13</sup>

Bello would claim that his characterization of his father was based on facts as well as on an accurate interpretation of evidence. This generation of scholars was insistent in saying that falsehood was a betrayal of Allah. The scholars asserted the power of interpretation through various claims: their own superior knowledge, their long studies, their exchange of ideas with one another, and their references to sources such as oral information, careful observations of events, and reading of the Quran and a variety of Arabic literature by prominent scholars within and outside the region.

The centrality of Allah was about causation: Allah determined the course of events and their consequences. Of course, the writers were also pragmatic, and some were actually politically astute, which meant that they were also able to interpret events in nonreligious ways. In taking actions and passing judgment on others, they reflected a combination of religious and worldly positions. The writings and emphasis on Allah had yet another motivation: to teach moral and religious values. Many poems drew ideas from the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad to remind Muslims about ethical issues, the rewards of religious devotion, and the sanctions against gross religious violations and lapses.

The forms of writings were diverse, including poetry, correspondence, declarations, pronouncements on judicial issues, resolutions of disputes, historical narratives, and many more. This diversity of forms reflected the range of interests spanning contemporary commentaries on issues of importance, analyses of key events, and warnings about lapses in society. At the center of their interpretative framework was the role of Allah in creating conditions for failure and success, in guiding human beings to act correctly, in punishing sinners, and in rewarding believers.

Islamic historiography constitutes a powerful preface to academic history writing in many ways. First, like other bodies of knowledge—oral, missionary, chronicles—the Islamic writings represent sources that have been tapped frequently in the writing of academic works. In fact, the works of a successive

generation of scholars on northern Nigeria have shown an excessive reliance on these sources. Second, the disproportionate emphasis on the nineteenth century, which follows a similar pattern in the history of southern Nigeria, is due primarily to the nature of these sources. The jihadists generated by far the largest amount of works, thus making it possible to focus on their activities during the nineteenth century. Third, the consequences of the fact that the Sokoto Caliphate was the most powerful political unit in Nigeria during the nineteenth century were extended to the twentieth century. This unit survived until the twentieth century and created the basis for the formulation of the system of indirect rule by the British (a subject that forms one of the main themes in subsequent chapters), as well as the formation of the dominant political party in northern Nigeria—the Northern People's Congress (NPC). The leader of the party, the most towering figure in the region's politics in the second half of the twentieth century, was Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, a descendant of dan Fodio. Ahmadu Bello was remarkably successful in drawing from the history of the nineteenth century to create a modern political machine, a powerful northern region from 1951 to the end of the First Republic in 1966. Historians of contemporary Nigeria have treated at length such topics as ethnicity, regionalism, and federalism, all with one linkage or the other to Islam, the Jihad, the formation of Hausa-Fulani identity, and how this identity has become part of the power rivalry that defines politics in modern Nigeria.

### Western Traditions: The Writings of Explorers and Missionaries

The late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century can be regarded as the “age of European explorers and travelers in Africa.” Sponsored by their home countries to open up the interior of Africa for trade and to find the source of the River Niger, European explorers began to penetrate the nooks and crannies of West Africa at a time when the interior was considered as the “white man’s grave.” The explorers came from an assortment of professional backgrounds. While Mungo Park was a trained medical doctor, Hugh Clapperton was in the British Royal Navy and had fought in the Napoleonic Wars. During the 1820s and 1830s, these explorers and many others traversed the regions that now comprise southern and northern Nigeria signing trade treaties with rulers.<sup>14</sup> They met with leaders who received them at once both warmly and contemptuously. The achievement that earned the likes of Richard and John Lander (famously called the Brothers) accolades as some of the nineteenth century’s greatest explorers was the exploration of the course of the Niger. Prior to 1830, the quest to find the river’s source had consumed the lives of notable explorers like Park and Clapperton, who died in 1806 and 1827, respectively.<sup>15</sup> The 1830

“discovery” of the course of the River Niger by the Lander brothers indeed ranks among the century’s great achievements in exploration. Heinrich Barth, another popular and accomplished explorer of the period, journeyed to a number of emirates in northern Nigeria between 1850 and 1855.

The explorers’ role in the documentation of Nigerian history is laudable. They wrote about the places and people they visited and met. They interacted with rulers of several communities and kept interesting accounts of palace life and royalty. Their writings also contain interesting descriptions of the climate and topography. Human economic activities such as agriculture, trade, and warfare were recorded as significant developments. Published accounts like Hugh Clapperton’s *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the Years 1822–1823, and 1824* fed a literate European readership with a keen interest in non-Western cultures. Contemporary historians have used the writings of explorers to unearth the role of women in precolonial Nigerian societies and the structure of political organization in northern Nigeria.<sup>16</sup> A recently published edited version of Clapperton’s journals reveals the richness of this genre of written primary sources for African history.<sup>17</sup>

Followed closely by the explorers were Christian missionaries picking up after earlier failed attempts at planting Christianity in southern Nigeria during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. Convinced that Africans needed civilizing and spiritual cleansing due to their involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, Christian missionaries began to appear on the Nigerian geographic and political scene from the early 1840s. Their activities were well pronounced in Badagry, where the seed of evangelism was first sown in 1841. From Badagry, they moved to Abeokuta, where Sodeke, the legendary leader of the nascent settlement, warmly received them.<sup>18</sup> The scope of the missionaries’ activities continued to expand as they traversed the villages of southern Nigeria establishing churches and mission schools. They experienced both friendly and unfriendly relations when they appeared in Warri in the early nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> In one of his works on Christian missions, E. A. Ayandele divided the Christianization of northern Nigeria during the nineteenth century into three phases starting from 1848.<sup>20</sup> For example, the Niger Mission of the Church Missionary Society brought Christianity to the numerous ethno-cultural cleavages of the Niger Delta region of modern Nigeria during the years 1854–57. Christian missionaries, according to Felix Ekechi, did not arrive in some regions of Igboland, such as the Owerri District, until 1906.<sup>21</sup>

Although the main interest of the missionaries was evangelism, they took a keen interest in documenting their observations about the people they worked with and met. They also kept travel journals in which they recorded day-to-day activities. The information they recorded was meant to help their home countries understand the progress of missionary work in Nigeria.<sup>22</sup> The

major Christian missionary sects of the nineteenth century included the Anglican Church Missionaries (CMS), the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, the Foreign Mission Committee of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States, and the Catholic Society of African Mission (SMA) of France.

The volume and detail of these missionary records vary widely. Some—for example, W. H. Clarke's *Travel and Exploration in Yorubaland*—dealt comprehensively with a wide range of subjects including geography, topography, and the customs and cultures of the people the author came across. Others, like the journals of Henry Townsend and Henry Venn, largely dealt with the conflicts and politics among the Yoruba states during the nineteenth century and the development of Western education and literacy among Africans.<sup>23</sup> Most of the manuscripts exist in original and digitized form in the major Christian seminaries and various government archives in Europe, the United States, and Nigeria;<sup>24</sup> historians like J. A. Atanda and Wale Oyemakinde have compiled and edited some in book form.<sup>25</sup>

Missionary journals are viable source materials for investigating various aspects of the history of the Nigerian peoples. Mission historians like J. F. A. Ajayi, Ayandele, Ekechi, and Ogbu Kalu, to name a few, whose works dwell on the planting of Christian missions and their social, political, and economic impacts, were among the first scholars to make good use of missionary sources.<sup>26</sup> Historians of nineteenth-century Yorubaland appear to have benefited more from the documentation of the missionaries. The missionaries focused on Yoruba politics partly because the internecine warfare of the period had an immense impact on Christian missionary work. Missionary accounts are replete with significant information on such subjects as preparation for wars, the motives behind military exploits, the force composition of belligerents, and the disposition of the Yoruba toward the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and the so-called legitimate commerce.<sup>27</sup> However, the paramount contribution of missionaries was the reduction of Nigerian languages to writing.<sup>28</sup> Although the missionaries and their African converts reduced Nigerian languages to writing out of the desire to facilitate Christianization, their success would help in the development of basic literacy, and more importantly, the rise of local intellectuals who wrote both in their indigenous languages and in English. In addition, the missionaries played a significant role in the development of the newspaper industry in Nigeria. Starting from the mid-nineteenth century, they seized the opportunity to propagate Christianity through the print media.<sup>29</sup> Again, this lofty achievement privileged those African converts who acquired Western education and literacy through Christian missionary activities.<sup>30</sup> This class of people, as we shall see shortly, would later use their knowledge of the Bible and skills acquired through Western education to launch the first wave of nationalism in Nigeria.

Like all sources of history, missionary and explorer sources are not perfect data for reconstructing history. Missionaries' observations and conclusions were sometimes guided by racial stereotypes rather than genuine assessment of the situation on the ground. Their refusal to acknowledge that Africans were also civilized people predisposed them to deny the evidence of sophistication noticed among the people. The words "savage," "barbarian," and "fetish" downplayed the significance of African cultural accomplishments. In his critique of Barth's account of Katsina, Yusufu Bala Usman suggests that the acclaimed explorer imposed European racist ideas on African political and social classes by suggesting that the rulers were racially superior to the slaves and commoners.<sup>31</sup> Part of Usman's counterposition is that Barth did not stay long enough in Katsina to study critically the social structure of that society. Usman's criticism of Barth's account of Katsina is certainly applicable to other explorers' accounts. They were mainly interested in the places they wanted to explore (like the course of the Niger) and rarely dwelled among the people they met and interacted with long enough to understand their culture; as a result, their observations and conclusions were laden with monumental errors.

Aside from Clarke's exceptional *Travel and Exploration in Yorubaland* and a few others, missionary sources are fragmentary and incoherent, which makes their use not only problematic but also confusing. What is more, names of places and people were frequently rendered incorrectly.<sup>32</sup> This of course problematizes the contemporary historian's quest to establish facts. Politically, missionaries tended to write favorably about groups that supported missionary activities and called for military expeditions against states that refused to give them access to the souls of Africans. Among the Yoruba, for instance, they wrote favorably about chiefs and warriors of Ibadan, Ijaiye, and Abeokuta who supported the missionary enterprise and condemned people like the Ijebu who would not allow them passage through their territories, let alone give them a free hand to evangelize and establish mission schools and churches.<sup>33</sup>

### Indigenous Production of Knowledge: The Local Intellectuals and Chroniclers

Missionaries and explorers were not the only group that wrote about African culture and customs. Beginning from the nineteenth century, chroniclers and local intellectuals saw the need to document African cultural experience and history. These intellectuals were connected with the church and were in fact the product of Christian missionary activities that led to the education of freed African slaves. The defining characteristics of this elite were Western education and claims to the knowledge of (and connection to) Western culture. The elite constituted the labor pool for the emerging

government sector, the consumers of imported items, the readers of available books, and the chroniclers of the age.<sup>34</sup>

The emergence of these elites and the writing tradition it fostered were the consequences of the European presence. The nineteenth century witnessed the abolition of the slave trade, the redemption of many slaves and the establishment of Freetown and Liberia to resettle them, the spread of Christianity, and the European partition of the African continent. With respect to abolition, one consequence was the return of many liberated slaves to their Yoruba homeland from Sierra Leone and Brazil between the 1830s and 1880s. The repatriates from Sierra Leone had been acculturated to Western influences and accepted Christianity, while those from Brazil were familiar with Latin culture and many were Catholic converts. The repatriates advanced the cause of Christianity by spreading it and that of Western education by promoting it. In a country where the majority was unable to read and write, literacy, especially in English, was a source of power. They could communicate with foreign merchants and officials and at the same time serve as the representatives of the extraliterate traditional elite. Given the low number of foreign wage earners up until the late 1870s, the Yoruba elites had great opportunities to secure good jobs in the colonial secretariat, churches, and schools, and many moved rapidly up the career and social ladders. A few became successful pioneers in the prestigious professions of the time, notably law and medicine. In later years, others trained as engineers, surveyors, and other highly regarded occupations that attracted high income.

A complement to the activities of the repatriates was the rise of Christianity, which began to spread rapidly after the mid-1840s. Positive beginnings were made in Lagos, Ibadan, Badagry, Abeokuta, and Ijaiye. Wherever the missions were located, their aims were to evangelize and establish a major cultural presence. Although white missionaries were responsible for educating the new elites in Western ways, the Westerners' nonrecognition of such aspects of African customs as polygamy created ideological friction between African converts and their white counterparts. African converts also frowned on the subservient position they were forced to occupy in the church hierarchy. To address this imbalance, the educated elites launched the "first wave" of nationalism in Nigeria. They not only adopted African names but also wore African dress and publicly defended indigenous customs and institutions such as polygamy. The emergence of indigenous churches from the 1880s was a manifestation of the refusal of the white missionaries to allow Africans to keep certain aspects of their culture, including worship in the African way. A short list of these cultural nationalists would include Bishop James Johnson, Mojola Agbebi, John Payne Jackson, William Bright Davies, Tejumade Osholake Johnson, and Moses Lijadu.<sup>35</sup> While Tejumade Johnson is known for his deep religious life and as the author of *Yoruba Heathenism*, Lijadu's main contributions

to Yoruba studies, according to Robin Law, are “in the field of Yoruba oral literature.”<sup>36</sup> His publications, which include *Kekere Iwe Orin Aribiloso* (1886), *Ifa* (1897), and *Orunmila* (1897), were well received and cherished as significant contributions to Yoruba ideas and knowledge during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>37</sup> Toyin Falola has written a book-length work on the contributions of the local intelligentsia to the development of historical and literary studies in Nigeria.<sup>38</sup>

Significant components of the cultural nationalism launched by these intellectuals include the documentation of the histories of Nigerian society, including such major developments as the sidelining of the elites in the new colonial capitalist system and racism in government service that added new forms of discontent to the old. To document the histories of their immediate community was considered the best means of expressing their views about the impact of foreign domination. They saw colonial incursion and the attendant erosion of the traditional order as a major threat to the preservation of the history and culture of their people. In the preface to his well-read book, Samuel Johnson opened with a tone that suggests a strong will to fix what he saw as a major problem:

What led to this production was not a burning desire of the author to appear in print—as all who are well acquainted with him will readily admit—but a purely patriotic motive, that the history of our fatherland might not be lost in oblivion, especially as our old sires are fast dying out. Educated natives of Yoruba are well acquainted with the history of England and with that of Rome and Greece, but of the history of their own country they know nothing whatever!<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, Akiga Sai, in *Akiga’s Story*, plainly states the motives for writing about his people:

So it has been my constant prayer that God would help me to write this book, in order that the new generation of Tiv, which is beginning to learn this New Knowledge, should know the things of the fathers as well as those of the present generation. For everything that belongs to Tiv is passing away, and the old people, who should tell us about these things, will soon all be dead.<sup>40</sup>

In reflecting on the importance of indigenous intellectuals, Robin Law makes an important point:

The modern academic historians owe a great deal to these amateur predecessors: much of the “oral tradition” utilized by the academic historians comes in fact at the second hand from the writings of the amateurs, and the current generation of local historians has figured prominently among the informants from whom the academics have collected their oral evidence.<sup>41</sup>

## Representation and Modernity

The writers on Nigeria during the nineteenth century supplied many of the themes that the academic historians were later to produce during the twentieth century. These pioneers posed a number of significant questions: How should Africans represent themselves to their people and the outside world? In what ways should they present an agenda of modernization, in view of their encounter with the West? How aggressively should they pursue power to shape their own destinies, lead their own people, and generate new forms of modernity? We are still grappling with the answers to such questions.

In the context of the nineteenth century, those who raised questions included liberated slaves, new converts to Christianity, missionary agents, and those who received a Western education.<sup>42</sup> The members of the generation were concerned primarily with the survival of Nigerian histories and cultures. Additionally, in what often appears to be a contradiction, they wanted to absorb the changes of the present instigated by internal contacts. The historians of the twentieth century were to frame the first and the second points as “continuity and change,” a desire to draw from the cultures of the past and the present to create a hybridity. If Africans were both resilient and adaptable, they had the capability to serve as agents of change: their ideas could initiate reforms and their leadership could organize and transform the nation.

The voices of the nineteenth century were representing not just the self but also a group identity and the nation. They were aware of issues around race and racism because of either their closeness to the history of the trans-atlantic slave trade or their contacts with former slaves. They encountered white missionaries and, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the British coming as invaders and conquerors. Race issues provided the basis for comparison framed in various ways. In one sense, the comparison was about power: who controlled the church, firms, and administrative units. Seeing the whites in power, they began to talk about empowerment and leadership as part of modernity.<sup>43</sup> In yet another sense, the struggle was about the ideas of progress to be drawn from the West—that is, from white societies. The first-wave nationalists began a process of imagining new nations and themselves as empowered citizen leaders of those reconfigured spaces.

In promoting their original ethnic identities and nationalities, the intellectuals laid the basis for such labels and categorizations as Yoruba, Igbo, and others to acquire currency. The groups that they “created” and defended became the units of study by the academic historians. In the characterization of group identification, they stressed languages (e.g., Yoruba, Hausa), regional locations, and the peculiarity of oral traditions (e.g., only the Yoruba could claim to be the descendants of Oduduwa).

Two notions of historical interpretation emerged, both of which have endured. The first relates the experience of self and group identities to the

experience of the past, such that historical reconstructions are deeply entangled with ethnic identities. Events and their consequences are analyzable in the context of how they shaped the emergence of collective identities. The second focuses on memory, such as that of wars, conflicts in intergroup relations, and encounters with the outside world, to derive the evidence to construct historical consciousness. Thus, for example, the Muslim North can easily relate the events of the 1804 jihad in terms that keep alive the memory of Islam and connect this with the consolidation of the Hausa-Fulani identity in the twentieth century.

The writers of the nineteenth century, such as Samuel Johnson writing about the Yoruba, were able to work within the paradigms of the precolonial nations while also imagining an African modernity. In using the concept of the “nation,” the academic historians of the twentieth century began to use it as denotative of the “state”; the “nation” of the nineteenth century became the “ethnicity” of the twentieth century. Since one reason history has been regarded as important was that it demonstrated the success of the precolonial nations and the ability of Nigerians to manage the colonial and postcolonial, it is important to note this shift from nation to state, and what writers have meant by each. Whether writing on the nation or the state, all have linked it with a notion of power—the kings of the Yoruba nation or the governor general of Nigeria served to embody the concept. In some accounts, kings, together with other chiefs, as all the oral traditions of the nineteenth century emphasized, were given the management of such specific tasks as warfare and collection of tribute. The stress was on the power of leaders and formal institutions, usually presented in their coercive forms. The ability of the kings to use coercive power was sometimes exaggerated, sometimes praised. (T. N. Tamuno presented in chapter 13 later did the same for the modern state by writing on the legislature and the police.)

The characterizations and limitations of the nation during the nineteenth century were not dramatically altered by subsequent scholarship. Older ideas often were merely extended to the notion of the state by the historians of the twentieth century. The definition of the nation and the state was seen primarily through its connections to power; later on, that of the state was extended to its ability to generate development. In academic histories, the interests of leaders and those of the state tend to be approximated. When Nigeria entered the twentieth century, the representation of historical scholarship broadened to include the agents of the colonial states and the Nigerian pioneers of Western education.

### Pre–World War II Scholarship: Social Anthropology of Colonial Nigeria

The establishment of colonial rule brought to Africa another class of writers whose aims and objectives were remarkably different from their

nineteenth-century precursors. While the presence and writings of Christian missionaries had a religious coloration and were mostly sponsored by large religious bodies in the United States and Europe, the colonial writers were commissioned by the British colonial government to embark on documentation of the customs and culture of the peoples of Nigeria. More so, colonial anthropologists such as P. A. Talbot and G. T. Basden were mostly colonial administrators who were assigned the task of documenting significant aspects of African ways of life as part of their responsibilities as district and provincial officers.<sup>44</sup> Others, like Leo Frobenius, who was both an ethnographer and an archaeologist, popularized African artifacts and prehistory in Europe through his excavation in places like Ile-Ife.<sup>45</sup>

While the missionaries' accounts took the form of travel journals and were rarely published in book form, writings about Africa during the colonial period took the form of anthropological surveys and were mostly published (except the numerous intelligence reports). Most of the producers of colonial anthropological writings were not trained anthropologists but colonial officers who saw the need to document traditional political and customary lifestyles as a tool for effective governance. However, a few like Margery Perham, Sylvia Leith-Ross, and M. G. Smith were university-trained scholars who were specially commissioned and whose research was funded by the Colonial Office in London. Leith-Ross's identity was representative of the multi-layered identity of the colonial anthropologists: (a) her father and brother were British military officers attached to the anti-slave-trade Naval Squadron and the Royal Niger Company, respectively; (b) she married a British colonial administrator in northern Nigeria; (c) she studied the Fulani language in northern Nigeria and worked as an education officer; and (d) she was a Leverhulme Research Fellow in Nigeria.<sup>46</sup> Overall, colonial anthropological writing on Africa was more comprehensive than other genres, as it touched on such things as history and cultural aspects of people's lives, inclusive of but not limited to marriage, festivals, magic, and medicine.

Colonial anthropology was essentially an intellectual arm of the imperialist enterprise. It was aimed at understanding African ways of life in order to enhance effective governance and exploitation of the human and material resources of the people. Hence, it gave little or no heed to African voice and agency.<sup>47</sup> Not only were significant aspects of cultural understanding lost due to the language barrier (most colonial anthropologists did not speak Nigerian languages), but also the idea of African racial inferiority influenced the labels anthropologists gave to local customs as well as the interpretation of the customs' significance within the entire cosmology and worldview of the people. Festivals, marriage, family, traditional medicine and magic, and such so-called uncivilized and barbaric practices as woman-to-woman marriage and human sacrifice, for instance, were not carefully researched to bring out their cultural and political significance to

the Nigerian people. However, whenever the anthropologists saw clear-cut evidence of advancement, they also tended to explain them as products of Nigerians' contact with a non-African civilization. An extra-African explanation of sophisticated civilization, which forms an integral component of the infamous Hamitic hypothesis, influences the interpretation of certain aspects of African ways of life.

It is misleading, however, to think that colonial anthropologists mainly served the administrative need of imperialists in Nigeria. In Britain and the West in general, writings about Africa were dearly sought after by people who wanted to learn more about the so-called Dark Continent. Westerners who craved literature on Africa did not want information that went contrary to Euro-centric ideas about race and progress expressed by prominent scientists (e.g., Charles Darwin) of the nineteenth century. What they wanted was more data to validate the pseudo-scientific idea of African primitivity. Indeed, Afigbo has identified the connection between production of knowledge about Africa and the character of Western readership:

It must be observed that in the scholarship of the ivory tower, just as in the economics of the workaday world, demand tends to create supply. It was the kind of work and writing which the reading public of the time interested in Africa demanded that was supplied. This reading public was for a long time mainly, if not entirely European. They wanted out of Africa, and on Africa, works that fed their fantasies and prejudices regarding the innate inferiority of the Negro, the "darkness" of the African continent, the white man's burden on his civilizing mission and so on. The relationship between this law of supply and demand and the scholarly traditions of the age of colonialism with regard to Africa can easily be demonstrated.<sup>48</sup>

In his critical survey of anthropological writing on Nigeria during the colonial period, G. I. Jones, himself a colonial officer who appeared to have realized the flaws of colonial production of knowledge, posits that the titles of many of the monographs (e.g., *At the Back of the Black Man's Mind*, *How Natives Think*, *Tailed Headhunters*, *At Home with the Savages*, and *The Sexual Life of the Savages*, to mention but a few) were "no doubt chosen by the publisher to foster sales in the home country, were enough to put any self-respecting African off the subject."<sup>49</sup> His comments on the shortcoming of anthropological writings are instructive:

First it is overweighed in the direction of territorial organization and political and administrative action and grossly deficient in some other, particularly economic, information; second it is very necessary to understand the purpose of such correspondence to discover its function. . . . An official government report seems to exercise a mesmerizing effect, not only on many colonial historians but also on some anthropologists who lose sight of the point that,

although its manifest function is to present the facts, its latent function is usually to cover up.<sup>50</sup>

## The Birth of Nationalist Historiography

Modern professional scholarship on Africa did not emerge until the late 1950s. Its emergence was closely connected to the nationalist movement, which took giant strides after 1945, as well as the politics of the production of knowledge about the peoples of Africa. Before the 1950s, histories of African peoples were treated as the history of European merchants, missionaries, and explorers in Africa. People of the continent, therefore, were not studied on their own terms. For the European imperialists, Africa did not have history because of the absence of written documents that could be used to reconstruct their past. The totality of historical scholarship during this period was equated to written sources, and people who did not have the tradition of keeping their past in written form were seen as *people without history*. The idea of an ahistorical Africa also formed the foundation on which colonial rule rested. The imperialists were convinced that Africa needed colonial rule because it did not have a history of state formation and empire building. The degrading transatlantic slave trade and unscientific notions about race and civilization such as those popularized in the works of David Hume, Georg W. F. Hegel, and Charles G. Seligman were readily absolved and orchestrated by European scholars such as H. R. Trevor-Roper, A. P. Newton, and Margery Perham, and by colonial empire builders and administrators such as Lord Frederick Lugard.

By the late 1950s, the emergent professional historians would challenge this entrenched idea about history and progress in Africa. Prominent among these early pioneers of modern African history is Kenneth O. Dike. After completing his PhD thesis on “Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885,” at King’s College, University of London, Dike returned home to Nigeria to facilitate the writing of African history with written documents and oral traditions. At the time, the History Department at University College, Ibadan (later the University of Ibadan) did not offer courses on African history. The only history courses being taught that related to Africa covered the history of the British Empire and the history of Europeans’ activities in Africa. Thus, at the outset, Dike faced the problem of developing curricula for a new history because of the paucity of readings on African history. To overcome this problem, he convened several conferences that brought historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, and linguists together.<sup>51</sup> From its inception, therefore, the study of African peoples had a multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary dimension. Lidwien Kapteijns, who wrote a PhD. thesis on African historiography, commented on this interdisciplinary aspect:

They all agreed that the approach to African history should be inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary. The African historian should bring all kinds of sources—not only written—to the study of the African past; he should call in the techniques of all kinds of disciplines to procure sources for retracing this past. Oral traditions were considered the most important type of unwritten internal sources for the historian of Africa, but of crucial importance as well—in particular to the establishment of a chronology of African history—was archeology and linguistics. Ethnography or anthropology were expected to illuminate the past by their techniques of studying the present. Arts, musicology, geography, ethno-botanics, ethno-zoology, paleo-botanics and what have you, should be called in when necessary and possible.<sup>52</sup>

Changing the curriculum and establishing an honors program in history at University College, Ibadan, produced the first set of home-grown PhDs.<sup>53</sup> This first set of newly minted PhDs (A. E. Afigbo, Obaro Ikime, Philip Igbafe, and Murray Last) became faculty members in Ibadan's Department of History. Others took up jobs in the new universities: University of Nigeria, Nsukka; University of Ife (later Obafemi Awolowo University); University of Lagos; and Ahmadu Bello University.<sup>54</sup>

Dike was also quick to realize that the new African historiography could only stand the test of time through the greater availability of primary documentary sources. He facilitated the establishment of the Nigerian National Archives in 1954 and served as the institution's first director. The archives provided accessible primary materials for researching Nigerian history (especially the colonial period). During the 1960s the National Archives, Ibadan, were accessible to scholars in universities in Ibadan, Lagos, and Ife, while the National Archives, Enugu, and the National Archives, Kaduna, took care of the needs of scholars at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, respectively. The number of local researchers using the archives increased as Nigeria witnessed a dramatic expansion of university education from the 1970s. The establishment of nine additional branches of the National Archives during the 1980s fed the expansion of historical research and education in Nigeria.<sup>55</sup>

Other significant developments, such as the inauguration of the Historical Society of Nigeria in 1955 (the first academic and professional association in Nigeria), facilitated regular meetings, the exchange of ideas, and the production of scholarly work and teaching materials.<sup>56</sup> The association's *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* and *Tarikh*, a publication dedicated to different subjects of African history, helped in consolidating the new field by providing opportunities for scholars to communicate the products of their findings to the wider academic community. The *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, edited by Obaro Ikime, was a project commissioned by the Historical Society of Nigeria to make available a handy and comprehensive compendium of the histories of the various peoples of the Nigerian geographic area

before the establishment of colonialism and of the people of colonial and present-day Nigeria. Book series like the Ibadan History Series, published by Longman, were launched to propagate scholarly writings about the peoples of Nigeria and other countries in Africa. The contributions to the series, which represent the hallmark of nationalist historiography, are mostly revised versions of dissertations by scholars who are directly or indirectly affiliated to the University of Ibadan's History Department.

Yet the success of the new African historiography went beyond establishing professional associations, journals, and the National Archives. The pioneering historians took it upon themselves to write African history from the perspectives of Africans. This was a complete departure from pre-1950s historiography, that is, the history of Africa as written from the perspective of Europeans or as consisting of the activities of imperialists on the continent. The new discipline recognized oral traditions as viable source material for reconstructing the histories of the various peoples of Nigeria. Information derived from oral interviews was cross-examined with other genres of resources, such as written documents of the missionaries and archaeological and linguistic studies. By researching the history of state and empire building in precolonial times, the pioneering Africanists were able to expose the level of sophistication of precolonial leadership and institutions. Their research struck a blow to the obnoxious idea that Africans required external control because of their supposed inability to govern themselves.

The volume and quality of works on precolonial Nigerian societies validate the agenda of pioneering African historians that treated Africans' past as a past worth studying. Works that deal with the nature of state building carefully show how precolonial African states emerged through diplomacy, warfare, and other means. Historians of modern northern Nigeria concentrate on the emergence of the Sokoto Caliphate, its structures, and its relations with nonemirate communities. The nineteenth century, which remains the most-studied period of Yoruba history, was characterized by incessant warfare and revolution.<sup>57</sup> While recognizing the impact of internecine wars and revolution on the security of lives and property, historians of the Yoruba have equally considered how the developments of the period led to state and empire formation.<sup>58</sup> How old states were wiped out of existence and replaced by new ones is a major thematic occupation of historians of precolonial Nigeria.

The process of state and empire formation during the precolonial period was not devoid of external contacts, however. Breakdowns in inter-group relations arising from the transatlantic slave trade led not only to incessant warfare; they also contributed in no small way to the rise of Nigerian states. In a recent work, Kristin Mann carefully interrogates the connection between the transatlantic slave trade and the emergence of Lagos.<sup>59</sup> Robin Law, who examines the rise of the Old Oyo Empire through

its involvement in the slave trade, carries out a similar exercise.<sup>60</sup> For the Niger Delta region, Dike's *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, Ikime's *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta*, and E. J. Alagoa's *Jaja of Opobo* are notable works in this genre of scholarship.<sup>61</sup>

Precolonial Nigerian history has a biographical component. In other words, the history of states and societies is studied through the prism of the activities of kings and rulers who were responsible for dictating the historical course of their respective states, empires, and communities. How ordinary people fought to keep the ruler in power and worked to produce the resources for state building is rarely discussed. The epistemological problem is partly explicable in terms of the lack of documentation. For instance, the oral traditions that historians of precolonial Nigeria depend on hardly make reference to "ordinary" people, but rather refer to influential members of society. In research and writing on the precolonial era organized along older nationalities, the richness of ethnic diversities is revealed together with the understanding of intergroup relations; amalgamations of societies in the kingdom; the creation of dynasties; expansion and dispersal of various groups; and various other details on social, economic, and political organization.

Aside from precolonial histories of state and empire building, adequate scholarly attention also has been given to colonial Nigerian history. This genre of scholarship tends to put Africans at the center stage of historical discourse by looking at how they reacted to the numerous exploitative policies of the colonial government. The establishment of the colonial administrative machinery of indirect rule occupied greater attention as historians exposed how Africans responded to it, the reasons indirect rule worked in some places, and why it failed in other regions of the country. A short list of works in this category would include Atanda's *New Oyo Empire*, A. E. Afigbo's *Warrant Chiefs*, and P. A. Igbafe's *Benin under British Administration*.<sup>62</sup> All these scholarly works are revised versions of the authors' PhD theses, published in the Ibadan History Series.

Economic history and social history were underdeveloped during the 1970s and did not fully mature into strong subfields until the 1980s. The same can be said of women's history, which did not become a serious field of inquiry until the late 1980s. The chapters on economic, social, and women's history in this volume explicate the major ideas with which historians of these fields grapple. The political and administrative history of Nigeria, as we have seen in this chapter, is certainly the most-studied aspect of Nigerian history. The reason for this can be located in the nature of available sources. Aspects of the precolonial and colonial political past tended to be better documented than other aspects of the history of Nigerian societies. Moreover, the centrality of agency in social and economic experience placed political history at the forefront of the study of the Nigerian past.

The cumulative significance of the emergence of academic history writing is the creation of a nationalist historiography, what the pioneer scholars labeled more commonly an “African perspective.” These scholars desired to place Africa at the center of both knowledge and political and economic philosophy about Africa, and to reveal Africans as primary agents in shaping their own destinies. Historians accepted Kwame Nkrumah’s challenge that Africans should become the “subjects and not objects” of scholarship.<sup>63</sup> To accomplish this, urged Nkrumah, historians should:

Use history writing to do away with the amnesia of the past;

Use knowledge to generate loyalty to the African cause;

Generate a new orientation to make Africans more committed to their continent and people than to the Europeans [a dose of morality is usually added, as we shall see in the chapter on Olusanya—a generation of Africans must become hardworking, selfless, disciplined, humble, and conscious of the need to promote a sense of community]; and

Use history to create a distinctive African identity [the assumption being that colonialism had decultured Africans and history writing would re-Africanize them].

Furthermore, history, as a discipline, should share some aspects of the hard sciences and technology, such as methodologies of problem solving. In framing their questions and choosing what subjects to pursue, historians should understand the needs of Nigeria—human and economic development, political stability, promotion of democratic values, and so on. Next, they must study the background to such needs and offer some suggestions on how to solve them. In the 1980s it became fashionable to rethink the departments of history to include “International Relations,” “Strategic Studies,” and the like in their designations, and for the annual meetings of the Historical Society of Nigeria to focus on such topics as democracy, peace and conflict, and law and security—all in order to emphasize that history is a discipline that can solve problems.

What made possible many of the early PhD theses at Ibadan, as well as the various writings of the post-1960 generation, was the creation of public archives in Nigeria. The next chapter examines the history of the Nigerian Archives as an integral part of the development of Nigerian historiography.

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# 2

## K. O. Dike and the National Archives of Nigeria

Without the National Archives (NA), the production of historical scholarship in Nigeria would have taken a different course altogether. Scholars in Nigeria would have had to depend solely on the resources in the Public Office in London, and perhaps on the use of oral sources. The beginning of the NA is tied to the career of the country's first academic historian, K. O. Dike. In his attempt to decolonize history and address the problems of the paucity of written sources on Nigeria, Dike embarked on a survey of documents of the Nigerian colonial government in 1951 with the purpose of preserving them. The idea was to have large bodies of written documentation that could be used in combination with other sources.<sup>1</sup> A recommendation contained in his Nigerian Records Survey, 1951–53, gave birth to the Nigerian Records Office in 1954.<sup>2</sup> The Nigerian Records Office became the Nigerian National Archives in 1958, with three major branches at Ibadan, Kaduna, and Enugu, a reflection of the regional politics of the era.<sup>3</sup>

The early years of the establishment of the archives witnessed a period of active research and publication on various subjects that made major use of the archival materials in the custody of the NA. However, in the last two decades or so, historical research in the archives has undergone a decline. Both the archives and the scholars who use them have suffered a similar fate of lack of funding and a crisis of relevance.

### The Birth of the National Archives

The reason behind the establishment of the Nigerian Records Office in 1954, in accordance with Dike's recommendations, can best be understood through a discussion (albeit brief) of the condition of government records before 1951 when the Record Survey commenced. Between 1914, when the colonial state of Nigeria came into existence, and 1948, the Colonial Office in London sent several dispatches requesting information about the conditions of government documents produced in Lagos, colonial Nigeria's administrative and political capital, and the provinces.<sup>4</sup> The Colonial Office

stated that the proper preservation of current and noncurrent documents was important for administrative efficiency.

A 1914 dispatch entitled “Preservation of Public Records: Action and Procedures” read: “The preservation of historical records must be regarded as one of the duties of a colonial government, a duty which requires greater urgency from the fact that delay in the institution of suitable protective measures may and does lead to the inevitable loss of documents of value.”<sup>5</sup> In his response to this important dispatch, Lord Frederick Lugard, the premier governor general of Nigeria at the time, painted a beautiful picture of the state of government archives claiming that colonial documents were well kept:

The older Southern Nigerian records are preserved in the secretariat and well housed, carefully catalogued and readily accessible. In fact, the Southern Nigerian records rooms was only renovated in 1912 at the cost of £100, and all pre-1898 records are found to be in a very fair state of preservation. Correspondences with the Colonial Office are preserved in government house, where the records are in complete and in fairly satisfactory state of preservation. The records of the Northern Provinces are still recent and being preserved in Zungeru.<sup>6</sup>

After reviewing attempts made to preserve government records, Lugard concluded “[that] the official documents of Nigeria are in a fair state of preservation and that the present arrangement is adequate for their safe keeping.”<sup>7</sup>

In the years that followed, there was an increase in the production of documents, but facilities for their storage and preservation were inadequate. No official Colonial Office dispatches are extant concerning the preservation of public records between 1914 and 1936, and the Colonial Office did little or nothing to inquire about the condition of public records that had deteriorated. The 1936 Official Dispatch only considered the value of account books and other treasury records and requested suggestions on the period to be stipulated during which each class of these documents might be kept for practical purposes. The colonial secretary in London requested that vouchers and counterfoil needed to be kept for only seven years, while records required for superannuated purposes must not be destroyed for 60 years. This dispatch did state, however, that records having historical value should be carefully preserved.<sup>8</sup>

This communication did not receive any official reaction by the colonial administrators in Nigeria until 1937.<sup>9</sup> The reaction of the government of Nigeria depicted the bad condition of records kept in government offices. In order to compose an informed reply to the Colonial Office, a circular requesting information on existing official practices with regard to the preservation, retention, and destruction of records was passed to various government departments in September 1937. The responses of the various

departments showed the precarious condition of the government records: a sizable percentage of public records were in a poor state. For example, the Commissioner of Colony's Office had no rules on preservation; officials admitted that more than five thousand files awaited examination with a view to their destruction or retention.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, while the Governor's Office could trace only one occasion of mass destruction of records, which was undertaken with the approval of the governor, the director of the Geological Survey department destroyed all documents with the exception of treasury vouchers, returns, and Crown Agent Advices. The Chief Secretary's Office formulated the rules for the destruction of "useless" documents in 1937.<sup>11</sup>

Certainly, the poor state of government records is explicable in terms of lax administrative procedure and administrators' poor historical consciousness; the majority of these officials did not see such documents as integral components of the historical and cultural heritage of the colonial state. The response to the circular of 1936 was not backed up by procedures on the preservation and proper handling of government archives. Documents of great historical value were consistently destroyed or kept in conditions that allowed them to be highly susceptible to damage.<sup>12</sup> H. F. M. Marshall, the principal assistant secretary (political), believed that nothing could be done about the storage of records, which could be permanently retained only if there was a proper construction of an archive room.<sup>13</sup> He further noted that certain historical documents were transferred from Kaduna to the secretariat in Lagos for preservation. Writing from the capital, he continued, "under present circumstances, I should say that the chances of their loss or destruction in this office are far greater than if they had been kept at Kaduna."<sup>14</sup> This comment was repeated in 1948 and again in 1950.<sup>15</sup> In 1950 the governor attributed the deplorable state of affairs to heavy preoccupations of the war years and shortage of staff.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the response in 1950 came on the heels of K. O. Dike's proposal to embark on the survey of Nigerian records.

It was Dike's Records Survey that opened the eyes of the British colonial government to the extent and degree of ruin that had befallen the nation's valuable historical documents.<sup>17</sup> One of the imperatives of the survey was to study the feasibility of establishing an archival service.<sup>18</sup> Before Dike volunteered to survey the records, the Public Record Office (PRO) in London had in 1948 proposed to assist Nigeria in establishing its own public record office. This proposal was turned down by the government for a number of reasons. First, Dike's proposal was cheaper and would not require any grant from London. Second, as a Nigerian holder of a PhD in history from the University of London, he was considered a qualified scholar. Lastly, he had earlier worked with government documents while laboring on his doctoral thesis, and had observed firsthand the records' deplorable situation.<sup>19</sup>

The Records Survey commenced in January 1951 with a tour covering Benin, Onitsha, Enugu, Aba, and Calabar. In April 1952 a permanent

assistant was employed in addition to the three who had been recruited the previous year. The survey was decentralized in order to enhance its effectiveness. L. N. Ashikodi was based in Enugu to coordinate the work of the undergraduates in the Eastern Provinces, while another archivist, identified simply as Waniko, worked in centers in the northern part of the country. H. E. R. Hair of the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research (later the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, or NISER) also assisted Waniko.<sup>20</sup>

In June 1953 Dike presented his “Report on the Preservation and Administration of Historical Records and the Establishment of a Public Record Office in Nigeria.” He highlighted the poor state of government records—for example, birds nesting in an attic where old records were stored.<sup>21</sup> The report concluded with recommendations for long- and short-term development, notably the suggestion to create a permanent archive.<sup>22</sup> The colonial government accepted the report, and a Nigerian Records Office with a temporary office on the campus of University College, Ibadan, was set up on April 1, 1954. The Nigerian Records Office continued to serve the purpose of its establishment—assembling, preserving, and classifying public records—until 1957, when the House of Representatives passed the federal ordinance that established the NA.<sup>23</sup>

The enforcement of the 1957 ordinance led to the approval of fifty-one thousand pounds for the construction of the permanent office of the National Archives Ibadan (NAI).<sup>24</sup> The release of more funds in subsequent years facilitated the erection of the permanent offices of the National Archives Kaduna (NAK) in 1962 and those of the National Archives Enugu (NAE) in 1963. The establishment of the NA in Ibadan, Enugu, and Kaduna reflects the tripartite political division of the country between 1960 and 1966. To enhance accessibility and effectiveness, records produced in the northern part of the country were assembled at Kaduna, while those produced in the eastern region were archived at Enugu. The NAI is the largest because it houses the documents generated by Lagos, the national headquarters, as well as those of the various provinces and divisions of the western region. Smaller offices of the NA have since been established in nine other locations: Abeokuta, Akure, Benin, Calabar, Ilorin, Jos, Owerri, Port Harcourt, and Sokoto.<sup>25</sup>

## The Holdings of the Archives

According to Dike, Nigerian archival production is itself a product of two major historical impacts: the Islamic and the Atlantic.<sup>26</sup> The Islamic impact emerged as a result of centuries of trans-Saharan trade, which introduced Islamic religion and culture. Some of its byproducts in the

North include the survival of such important literary works as the “Daura King List” and the “Kano Chronicles.” Different parts of modern Nigeria were exposed to different external influences. Since the entire country was brought under colonial rule in a gradual, piecemeal fashion, the period covered by records is not uniform. The oldest colonial archival records deal with European commercial and administrative activities in such areas as Lagos and Calabar.

Generally, in terms of periodization, the documents at the NAI are arranged in four main categories: (1) the pre-Consular period up to 1849; (2) the Consular era, 1849–99, which includes records of the Consulate at Fernando Po; (3) the records of the Colony of Lagos (1861–1906), which includes the period when Lagos was administered from Sierra Leone (1866–74) and from the Gold Coast (1874–84); and (4) records on the activities of the Royal Niger Company (1879–99). Additional record groups include documents on the Colony and Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria, 1900–1914; the records of the general administration of the country and those of the eastern, northern, and western regions covering the period 1914–60; and materials on the postindependence era.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to government records, there is a large collection of documents that belong to private individuals, companies, and missionaries. These documents were either bought or donated by their owners or custodians. Examples of documents purchased by the NA are those on the history of northern Nigeria bought from the widow of J. O. C. Clarke, a former administrative officer in northern Nigeria.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, in 1961, a sum of £241.17.6d was spent on the purchase of Arabic manuscripts for the NAK.<sup>29</sup> Family and individual documents are an important source for research relating to the biography of nationalist leaders and other important makers of modern Nigeria.<sup>30</sup> Historians interested in the colonial economy and the participation of multinational corporations have used the records of the United African Company (UAC) and the John Holt firm.<sup>31</sup>

The private records of Christian missionaries comprise another important set of archival materials. The Christian missionaries, as part of their duties of spreading the gospel, reported to their home offices their observations about various aspects of African societies. While some of the missionary manuscripts have been compiled and published by historians, many still remain in the repository of the NA.<sup>32</sup> The NAI harbors documents of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) Yoruba Mission; the Rev. Coker’s Collection; the Bishop Philip’s Collection; the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Collection; and the Roman Catholic Records, while the NAE has the documents of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Historians who have written on the Yoruba during the nineteenth century and with respect to issues of education, the planting of Christianity, and its implications have used documents of the missionaries in the custody of the NA.<sup>33</sup>

Newspapers and magazines are another category of archival holdings. These materials from the print media were either bought or received directly by the NA as complimentary copies. The number of newspapers and magazines in the custody of the NAI increased from 140 in 1964 to 150 in 1990.<sup>34</sup> The NAE has 45 print media materials, covering a period spanning from 1955 to 2005, while NA Kaduna has some 90. In all, the three NA branches have the largest collection of newspapers and magazines in the country. Only in these collections can newspapers as old as 145 years be found. The work of Fred Omu provides insights into the development of Nigerian print media and its place in the preservation of the country's historical past.<sup>35</sup>

It is significant to note that the newspaper industry in colonial Nigeria was controlled by private investors, and to a reasonable extent it represented the thinking of an articulate elite and the reactions of the populace to various government policies. These newspapers include the *Lagos Daily Times*, founded by Herbert Macaulay, the "father" of the nationalist movement in Nigeria, and the *West African Pilot*, *Eastern Nigeria Guardian*, and *Southern Nigeria Defender*, all published by Nnamdi Azikiwe.<sup>36</sup> The *Nigerian Tribune*, the oldest surviving private newspaper in Nigeria, was founded by Obafemi Awolowo in 1949.<sup>37</sup> These papers had their origins in the need to educate the public about the ills of colonial domination and reinforce the desire for self-determination.<sup>38</sup> By presenting anticolonial rhetoric, private newspapers provided information for cross-examining and supplementing colonial official records, which traditionally do not document the ferocity of the African response or resistance to colonial rule.

Strikingly, data from colonial newspapers and magazines provide adequate insight into some areas of the history of the peoples of Nigeria, which enjoyed only limited documentation during the colonial period. These thematic categories include social issues such as gender and family, indigenous knowledge, and intellectual ideas. It is important to note that files relating to African ways of life and the perceptions of people about the cultural and social effects of external contacts are poorly documented in official government records. A researcher who is interested in a number of social themes on colonial Nigeria—for example, gender relations—will be frustrated with the paucity of documentation. Some long-lived colonial newspapers, such as *The West African Pilot*, *Southern Nigeria Defender*, *Eastern Nigeria Guardian*, and *Nigerian Tribune*, have special columns for issues relating to gender relations and social change.

Finding aids, otherwise called "simple lists," provide easy and quick access to the large holdings of the NA. In fact, they are keys for unlocking its vast collections. Professional archivists in conjunction with historians compiled these reference guides in the 1960s and 1970s. The lists range from those relating to the administration of different parts of the country (otherwise called district, divisional, or provincial simple lists) to those on specialized

subjects.<sup>39</sup> Specific subject-based simple lists include those on the political, administrative, and socioeconomic history of Nigeria.<sup>40</sup> As mentioned previously, the simple lists make the use of archival materials much easier than would be the case without them, enabling researchers access to documents from the parts of the country matching their research interest. Apart from serving as quick reference guides, these simple lists themselves have been responsible for opening the eyes of researchers to several unexplored areas of Nigerian history.

### The Problems Facing the National Archives

The problems confronting the NA cannot be divorced from those of the discipline of history itself. Obviously, the universities and the NA had a rosy beginning. From funding and economic perspectives, the early years of the establishment of modern African historiography was characterized by government investment in historical research. Besides assisting graduate students in their research on Nigerian history with funds, regional and central governments supported historical projects such as the Benin Historical Research Scheme, the Yoruba Historical Research Scheme, and the Aro Historical Research Project, to name a few. The place of history in nation building was not contested, as it provided, among other things, the necessary ideological instrument for nationalism and the construction of immediate sociopolitical identity and reality in the postindependence period.

The NA also received its own huge infusion of government funding because its initiative, as earlier mentioned, came from Dike; as an Africanist and pioneering figure in modern African historiography, he saw the establishment of the archives as necessary to nurture the new field. He was also the first director of the NA. The permanent buildings of the three NA branches were constructed between 1959 and 1963. The permanent office of the NAI, when declared open in 1959 by Lord Evershed, Master of the Rolls and traditional keeper of records of the United Kingdom, was described as the first purpose-built archives building in tropical Africa.<sup>41</sup> The early years of the establishment of the NA, up to the early 1980s, were characterized by major achievements in virtually all areas of archives administration.

The progress of the NA and historical scholarship was short-lived. By the 1980s, the country's political and economic crises had begun to affect the production of knowledge, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The economic recession that followed the oil boom of the 1970s began to limit the availability of resources for the management and acquisition of archival materials and the purchasing of state-of-the-art equipment. Thus, since the permanent offices of the NAI, NAE, and NAK were originally built, they have not been repainted and no serious maintenance has been carried out

on them.<sup>42</sup> Availability of archival materials for consultation by researchers is based on their condition and level of preservation (the Public Archives Ordinance of 1957 forbids the use of documents that are in bad shape). Because poor funding of the NA has profoundly affected the condition of archival materials, for the worse, this has had a negative impact on historical research.<sup>43</sup>

Inadequate resources have prevented the fumigation of records since the 1970s. Fumigation is needed to prevent documents from destruction by natural enemies, including termites and moisture. Similarly, as of summer 2008, none of the air conditioners in the repositories of the NAI were in working condition. Air conditioners are required to protect documents from adverse climatic conditions.<sup>44</sup> The epileptic power supply in Nigeria makes production of records ineffective and inefficient since lighting in the repositories is inadequate. Without resources to buy gas and to perform regular maintenance, use of the generator purchased for the NAI in 2007 has been hindered. The National Archives Enugu did not have electricity at all between 2002 and 2003 because of a dysfunctional cable.<sup>45</sup> This institutional and infrastructural decay cannot be separated from the larger problems of breakdown of leadership, economic recession, and arrested development that are manifest in nearly all spheres of Nigerian society.

Furthermore, inadequate funding also affects technical sections like reprographics and the bindery, which have to rely on obsolete equipment. Microfilming had been used in the past to preserve archival content; however, the obsolescence of equipment and the unavailability of funds militate against the conversion of some paper archival materials prone to decay to microfilm. It is a sad fact that the reprographic sections of the three NA branches as of summer 2010 have no functioning photocopiers. Documents have to be taken offsite for photocopying.<sup>46</sup> The moving of documents out of the NA for the purpose of photocopying makes them highly susceptible to mishandling, loss, and outright misclassification. One result of this poor state of preservation of archival materials is that researchers have been prevented from consulting some documents because of their poor condition. In the same vein, other documents might not be available for use in the next few years judging by the current degree of decay. Researchers must carefully handle certain documents owing to their precarious condition. With archives degenerating into the condition they were in before 1951, when Dike first surveyed them, one fears for the future of the NA and of historical research in Nigeria.

The early years of the establishment of the NA were characterized by tremendous success in the acquisition of documents. The colonial government supported the acquisition of official documents by making sure that all its departments made records in their custody available to the Liaison Department of the NA. This implies that researchers were given access to all the documents used for the administration of Nigeria without consideration for the period in

which they were produced or for their classification with respect to national security. One of the important provisions of the 1957 ordinance is that official documents can only be declassified and made available for public use twenty-five years after being produced.<sup>47</sup> By this timetable, the postindependence official documents should have been declassified in 1982 (but weren't).

The 1992 amendment embodied in National Archives Decree No. 30 addressed several problems relating to records management and, most important, access to government records.<sup>48</sup> It restricts access to classified government documents for twenty-five years.<sup>49</sup> Despite these laws on access to the government's noncurrent records, administrators in government ministries and establishments have not complied. Noncurrent documents older than twenty-five years are still being held in a poor state of preservation in various government offices across the country.

One major loophole in the 1992 decree that is inhibiting effective compliance with the law is section 12, subsection (c). This provision stipulates that the custodian of noncurrent documents more than twenty-five years old "may" transfer them to the NA.<sup>50</sup> This means that it is not compulsory that noncurrent/declassified documents be given to the NA, and the decision to transfer is left to the discretion of the administrators of the government offices. In a country where the historical consciousness of policymakers is undeveloped and where confidential files contain information of national interest that might lead to prosecution of current and past administrators, official refusal to make records available to the NA has prevented the unveiling of the ills of political corruption. One major excuse given for noncompliance with the decree is that resources are lacking for the transporting of records to the NA.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, none of the acquisition vehicles of the NAI was working as of summer 2010. Even if vehicles are provided to transport documents from various government offices and establishments to the NA, lack of available space is another major problem. The NAI and NAE do not have room to keep any new records.

The Nigerian government regularly provides adequate funding for departments and ministries that generate huge resources in terms of their contribution to national income. Unfortunately for historians, the public records offices of the federal and state archives are not established primarily to generate revenues. They are, however, a hugely important reservoir of cultural heritage, created to preserve the historical integrity of the nation.<sup>52</sup> So why are they in such a state of ruin? The lack of resources at the government's disposal and the fact that the NA does not generate much revenue are only part of the explanation. To fully understand the problem of neglect, we must examine the undeveloped historical consciousness on the part of policymakers.

In this connection, the following illustration will suffice. The Ministry of Information and National Orientation, which coordinates the activities of the

NA, has been at the forefront, since 1999, of the establishment of Radio Nigeria with its network of government-run premier FM radio stations. Between 1999 and 2007, the number of FM stations established by the government had increased tremendously, to the extent that virtually all states in the federation have their own. The development that Radio Nigeria has witnessed since 1999, when democratic rule was reinstated, is explicable in terms of the need to increase general public awareness, which is seen as an integral part of the requirement for the nurturing of Nigerians' so-called nascent democracy into a full-blown one. Policymakers see the development of democratic values as embedded in adequate public awareness, and presumably not in the promotion of historical consciousness, which is a major part of what the NA stands for. But because of the huge revenues generated by the broadcasting industry, it attracts considerably more investment than the NA.

While this wave of development is taking place in Radio Nigeria, the NA counterpart, which belongs to the same ministry, is yet to receive meaningful attention. Other important areas of archival administration and records management, such as music and sound archives, that are available in European and North American archives are not yet available in Nigeria.<sup>53</sup> The oral history program that was inaugurated in 1984 was discontinued because of budget cuts.<sup>54</sup>

The NA is also beleaguered by a lack of professionalism on the part of its staff. It is sad to note that the NA, which could boast of many professional archivists in the early years of its establishment, now has to make do with staff members who are poorly equipped with modern knowledge of archival administration.<sup>55</sup> The NA's early years saw a strong professional and academic relationship with the Department of Library, Archival, and Information Science at the University of Ibadan. There were even occasions when NA staff were sponsored for postgraduate studies in Europe and North America. In 2008 only two out of about twenty staff members who attended to researchers in the search room of the NAI were professional archivists. Most of the finding aids, which facilitate quick access to the collections of the NA, were produced in the 1960s and 1970s. Not surprisingly, this time coincides with the period when the NA was staffed by well-motivated and professionally trained archivists. Specialized searching aids and simple lists are no longer produced, while old ones are deteriorating and no attempt is being made to repair them. There are no new innovations in the administration and practices of the archives. Poor remuneration, not to mention delays in the payment of salary, have undermined and compromised archivists' readiness to give their best to the establishment.

Looking ahead, we cannot predict how these problems will affect historical production in future years. However, as we hope to show in the chapters that follow, the glorious early years of Nigeria's National Archives helped give rise to the successful era of nationalist historiography.

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# 3

## Political History

The most-studied aspect of Nigerian history is its political past, for the obvious reason that politics occupies a primary position in human experience. Politics determines not only the future of a state but also the nature and level of human organization and development of society. With reference to Africa specifically, however, it is important to note that African historiography, as we have seen in chapter 1, developed as an instrument of the anticolonial nationalist struggle. Pioneering Africanists took keen interest in exploring the political past of states and communities for the purpose of showing the colonialists that Africans not only developed complex political institutions prior to colonial rule, but were able later effectively to manage the affairs of their territories.

Nationalist historians explore state formation as a product of human migration, the evolution of political culture, wars and revolutions, and the like. As explained in this chapter, political historians of precolonial Nigeria have proven that colonial rule represented just one stage of the numerous phases of Africans' political evolution, hardly the totality of their political and cultural experience. J. F. A. Ajayi's famous claim that colonial rule is an episode in African history is informed by the premise that although colonial rule unleashed massive changes, African political and cultural institutions continued to exist side by side with the exotic ones unleashed by colonialism.<sup>1</sup>

### History of State and Empire Building

The history of state formation emerged as a defensive history aimed at showing that, prior to Europeans' colonial incursions, African leaders had built states and empires equivalent to those found anywhere else in the world. The life and times of chiefs and rulers are presented in a manner that gives voice to the profundity of the African political past, as a living legacy as well as a source of pride and honor. For the most part, the history of wars and revolutions occupies the central theme of scholars of this aspect of history. Indeed, oral traditions are replete with the rise and fall of communities. When problems including chieftaincy disputes, drought and famine, and

conflicts emerged, members of one larger political entity often migrated and found another community. The oracles were also said to have commanded prospective founders of communities to leave their present abode to establish a new community.

All the renowned nationalist historians from Kenneth Dike, Saburi Bio-baku, and J. F. Ade Ajayi to A. E. Afigbo, Bolanle Awe, Obaro Ikime, and J. A. Atanda, among others, have explored the history of state formation from the standpoint of political, military, and economic interactions. Linguistic and cultural advantages afforded them the opportunity to combine academic discourse with indigenous knowledge. In other words, typically each wrote about his own ethnic nationality. In the region that would later become modern southwestern Nigeria, wars and revolutions paved the way for the destruction of states and created opportunities for the rise of new political entities during the nineteenth century. This period is one of the most studied eras of the Yoruba precolonial past. Historians of the Yoruba place adequate emphasis on themes such as military tactics and alliances, demographic effects of conflict, the rise and fall of new states, the emergent political system, and the political economy of war.<sup>2</sup>

The nature of scholarly attention given to modern southwestern Nigeria is similar to that of modern northern Nigeria. Although subjects such as how the trans-Saharan trade and migration led to economic and political development in the region prior to the nineteenth century have been adequately studied,<sup>3</sup> the Sokoto Jihad (variously called the Fulani jihad and the Uthman dan Fodio jihad) and the emergent Sokoto Caliphate have attracted an overwhelming amount of attention. As in the Yoruba region during the nineteenth century, the Sokoto Jihad, which broke out in 1804, led to the rise and fall of states; it also paved the way for the emergence of the largest theocratic state in West Africa on the eve of the European invasion in the early 1900s. Scholars tend to look at the theories of the causes of religious revivalism—the political tussles and wars between the caliphate and the so-called pagan states, and between slavery and the caliphate's secular and religious organization.<sup>4</sup>

Nigeria's political past was also colored with such extra-African influences as the transatlantic slave trade, which has been considered to have contributed profoundly to the rise of Lagos and several other coastal communities in what is now the country's Niger Delta region. The trans-Saharan trade route linked several regions of modern northern Nigeria and contributed to the economic and political fortunes of states like Kano, which was described by explorers and Muslim travelers as one of the most prosperous commercial centers in the entire western Sudan. In the case of Oyo, Robin Law has argued that Old Oyo was able to expand and maintain its hold on its conquered territories because of the enormous wealth it derived from the slave trade.<sup>5</sup> In a recent book, Kristin Mann closely examined how the transatlantic slave trade contributed to the development of Lagos. One of her major

points is that although Lagos did not become a slave port until the eighteenth century, the combination of geographic factors with politics within and outside Lagos later contributed to its ascendancy as a major slave port during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup>

Most of the Nigeria-based scholars who received their PhDs in history from the 1950s to the 1970s wrote at least one essay on the precolonial political institutions of their towns or locality. Most of them drew inspiration from the earlier work of local/amateur historians of their community who, although not professionally trained, documented the history of their various communities for posterity.

Criticism of the history of state and empire formation is an integral aspect of the entire argument against nationalist historiography.<sup>7</sup> Critics of nationalist historiography like A. Temu and B. Swai claim that by trying to show the imperialists that Africa had a history of elaborate and complex state formation, of fighting wars and making peace, historians tend to distort basic historical realities while neglecting important elements and themes highly germane to the examination of the human historical experience.<sup>8</sup> The contributions of women and the masses to the development and expansion of states are largely ignored by nationalist historians. African rulers are not critically examined for their mistakes and flaws, which were sometimes manifested in senseless military expeditions and other wasteful endeavors. Ajayi summarizes this criticism in the following:

The criticism that nationalism is an ideology and that, like other ideologies, it distorts history has to be taken seriously. The argument is that it leads to a glorification of the state system, promoting political history above the social, economic and intellectual; that it favours states with centralized political systems at the expense of those without; that it worships kings and empire-builders, tending to glorify them, setting them up as models while ignoring their corruption, tyrannies and obsessions; that nationalist theory is consensus history promoting the elitist points of view to the neglect of those of the masses; and that it tends to obscure the conflicts and tensions between the rich and the poor, the rulers and the ruled, masters and slaves, men and women and between different ethnic and linguistic groups within the nation.<sup>9</sup>

Although this criticism obviously could be used to discredit the foundation of modern African historiography, pioneering nationalist historians like Ayanadele, Ikime, Afigbo, and Ajayi acknowledged this problem in their scholarly writings from the 1970s up to the 1990s and urged their colleagues to concentrate on some lesser-studied aspects of Nigerian history such as social history. These nationalist historians did not accept all the criticisms regarding their scholarship. For instance, in his response to the idea that Africa should embrace Europe's idea of individualism in its quest toward development, Ajayi laments that Africa's problems of development cannot be solved by thinking in terms

of class struggle as the motor of historical change. He argues that while the gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen, an African thinks first and foremost in terms of contestation between his or her ethnicity and others. In other words, people do not behave as individuals in search of power but as collective groups, using their ethnic and cultural identity to vie for power and honor at all levels of government.

The criticism of nationalist historiography yielded fruitful results with the emergence of women's and gender studies and economic history as viable fields of historical enquiry in the mid-1980s. With particular reference to women's history, through the works of Bolanle Awe, Nina Mba, LaRay Denzer, Cheryl Odim-Johnson, Kristin Mann, Judith Byfield, Oyeronke Oyewumi, Gloria Chuku, Nwando Achebe, and others, we now know the extent of women's power prior to and during colonial rule and the role they played in state and empire building. Women were not only queens and kingmakers; they also led wars of military expansion, as seen in the case of Queen Amina of Zaria. The economic history of women points to how they worked fervently to keep the rulers in power through their involvement in agriculture, crafts, and long- and short-distance trade.

Like male patrons, such women as Madam Tinubu of Abeokuta and *Iyadode* Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan were prominent slave dealers and patronesses of male warriors of the nineteenth century. They financed major military expeditions and played a prominent role in influencing the political future of their respective states. According to Heidi Nast, royal concubines in the Kano palace used the "power of the womb" and their monopoly on collecting taxes to enhance the consolidation of the state of Kano during the sixteenth century.<sup>10</sup> The growing body of literature on Hausa women has helped to highlight the contributions of women to the development of northern Nigeria in spite of the fact that they wear the veil and were mostly secluded from the public realm.<sup>11</sup> Twentieth-century heroines like Ali-motu Pelewura, Funmilayo Kuti, Oyinkan Abayomi, Charlotte Obasa, and Humuani Alaga worked independently and with other women and men to pressure the colonial government to improve women's quality of life and girls' access to Western education.<sup>12</sup>

## Nigeria and the Wider World

Another category of work on Nigeria's political history is the genre that concerns Nigeria and the wider world. This body of literature looks primarily at the changing nature of modern Nigeria's global or international relations, especially with Europe. The fifteenth century is traditionally taken as the beginning point for relations between the people of Nigeria and Europe. Historians agree that before the advent of the transatlantic slave trade,

European traders and merchants respected African territorial integrity and traded according to African rules in commodities ranging from ivory and rum to gold and gin.

Elizabeth Isichei examines the economic and political transition from these “lawful” commodities to the infamous human cargo of the slave trade and finally to the “legitimate” commerce in other items, especially palm oil.<sup>13</sup> Isichei’s discussion of the impact on Igbo historiography of the late arrival of Europeans in Igboland is fascinating. She posits that although Europeans along the coast had some knowledge of the Igbo country through stories they heard from Igbo traders and slaves, their inability to visit the region meant that few documentary sources exist about the Igbo until the late nineteenth century. She goes further to identify the implications of external contact on the production of knowledge. Her position is that a historian of the precolonial Igbo country must depend more on oral traditions and archaeological evidence than does his or her counterpart working on, say, the history of the people of the Niger Delta, Benin, or modern northern Nigeria, who, in addition to archaeological and oral evidence, has access to documentary sources in the form of travel journals by European merchants, missionaries, and explorers. For Benin, A. F. C. Ryder’s work shows that apart from their economic interests, Portuguese missionaries, worked to plant Christianity in the fifteenth century. Although these first attempts failed, the missionaries learned lessons that would later help them to understand African culture when they appeared again during the nineteenth century.

The abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and the economic transition from human cargo to the so-called legitimate commerce reconfigured the pattern of relations between Africans and the outside world. New tensions emerged as Africans contested the new economic and political order. In a number of cases, they continued to sell slaves illegally to Europeans who wanted them, while working hard to produce palm oil that the Europeans, led by the British, sought. The transition altered the nature of political relations with Europe, prepared the ground for another phase of relations in the period of the Scramble for Africa, and intensified the volatile nature of intergroup relations, especially among the coastal communities. New states came into existence due to the political changes of the period while some were wiped out. Dike’s *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* examines the political violence that occurred as a result of the economic transition. New trading states like Opobo came into existence because of factional conflict—new wealth produced new rulers like King Jaja, Opobo’s founder.

The last phase of Nigeria’s relations with the outside world before the establishment of colonial rule is the period of the European competition for territories. Scholars tend to take a regional approach in their examination of the political and economic developments that influenced the nature of the Europeans’ penetration and Africans’ resistance to the Scramble.<sup>14</sup> Another

category of literature deals with the activities of various European nations in the Nigerian geographic region. Through these works, we are able to learn how nations like France, Great Britain, and Germany failed in their competition for particular territorial possessions. For instance, Olayemi Akinwumi has argued, “Germany lost the campaign for the Nigerian region because she did not have a consistent colonial policy.”<sup>15</sup> It is indeed conventional that any work covering the precolonial and colonial history of a specific region must have a chapter on the process of conquest and establishment of colonial rule in that area. By 1980 so vast was the literature on the British conquest of Nigeria that Ikime wrote a synthesis covering most parts of Nigeria.<sup>16</sup>

### Indirect Rule and Traditional Political Institutions

One aspect of colonial Nigerian history that both the colonized and the colonizers have invested much in is the account of indirect rule. Indeed, the body of literature began emerging in the first half of the twentieth century. The British in Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa, commissioned European anthropologists and colonial political and administrative officers to investigate precolonial African political systems in order to enhance the performance of the Native Authorities—the backbone of the colonial administrative machinery. The writings of anthropologists and colonial administrators like P. A. Talbot, C. K. Meek, Margery Perham, M. M. Green, and G. T. Basden served as a manual or handbook to be used widely by new and old colonial administrators in Nigeria.<sup>17</sup> These works were not written for Africans but for the British who wanted to understand the best means of exploiting the human and material resources of the country. As we shall see shortly, nationalist historiography subjected the claims of colonial administrators to proper professional scrutiny, condemning some and giving adequate attention to the African side of the story.

The significance of indirect rule derives from its centrality to the new political culture that developed through colonial rule. Colonial administration required manpower to achieve its imperialist goal of exploiting the human and natural resources of Nigeria. Among other factors that made indirect rule a necessity were the paucity of colonial British officers and the availability of a well-organized political system, which the British in Nigeria quickly discovered they could build on in establishing a new political and administrative order. Nigerian chiefs, whose basis of political legitimacy was indigenous, served as “agents” of the British, who did not just order them about but ensured that they acted in Britain’s best interests. In theory, Nigerian chiefs continued to exercise political control over their precolonial territories as long as their policies did not conflict with the British ideas of “good” governance, “modernization,” and “civilization.” “Fetishistic” and

“uncivilized” practices such as human sacrifice were prohibited. However, the “modernization”-oriented laws were not evenly enforced.

The birth of modern African historiography in the late 1950s paved the way for the reexamination of some of the assumptions and conclusions of early writers on indirect rule. So high was interest in this aspect of Nigerian history that Michael Crowder and Ikime, writing in 1970, could assert that British indirect rule was the most widely discussed subject by historians of the colonial period in Africa.<sup>18</sup> Historians of indirect rule emphasize the second-fiddle role of chiefs in the colonial political hierarchy.<sup>19</sup> Works such as Olufemi Vaughan’s *Nigerian Chiefs* and Victor Osaro Edo’s “Central Political Institutions in Benin” explore how the Yoruba and Benin monarchies responded and adapted to the forces of regionalism and decolonization, party politics, and violence during the First Republic, Second Republic, and lastly under successive military rule.<sup>20</sup>

Broadly taken, historians of Nigeria who have studied this aspect of its past tend to look at these closely connected themes: (1) the theoretical exposition of the meaning of indirect rule as practiced in various parts of Nigeria; (2) precolonial political institutions and the process of the establishment of colonial rule; and (3) the effects of indirect rule on inter- and intragroup relations. There is a well-marked difference between the ways colonial administrators and anthropologists defined colonial rule and how professional nationalist historians conceptualize it. To be sure, the colonial administrators did not see the need to differentiate between the nature and practice of indirect rule in the North and the South. For them, indirect rule, both in theory and practice, meant imperial control through indigenous political institutions.

Professional historians did not buy the idea of uniformity in the practice of indirect rule and indeed redefined and reconceptualized it in their writings. In their introduction to *West African Chiefs*, Crowder and Ikime critically discuss the complexity of rendering a straitjacketed definition of indirect rule as governance through the local machinery of government. Their point of departure from colonial government’s conception is that the nature and working of indirect rule varied from one part of the country to another. They used “Indirect Rule” (with capitals) to designate the system of Native Authority used in governing northern Nigeria, where the British used the precolonial political system’s centralization in designing their indirect rule, and “indirect rule” (lowercased) for the system of indirect rule used in many parts of southern Nigeria, where the British did not develop a centralized political arrangement.<sup>21</sup>

This variation in the nature and working of indirect rule is well articulated in Afigbo’s *Warrant Chiefs* and Philip Igbafe’s “British Rule in Benin, 1897–1920.”<sup>22</sup> The absence of a centralized political system among the Igbo, as Afigbo shows, prompted the British to issue certificates of recognition

called “warrants” to individuals, some of whom had helped them in facilitating the establishment of colonial rule. Not only did the warrant chiefs, as they were called, lack the support of their people, they also were forced on the people by the British. They sat on the Native Court and assumed executive and judicial powers in the communities they represented. The government was forced to sack these warrant chiefs when a revolt, popularly known as the “Women’s War of 1929,” broke out in response to the misrule and exploitative activities of the warrant chiefs and the entire colonial structure. Igbafe equally demonstrates the variation in the application of indirect rule in Benin. According to him,

In so far as Benin did not constitute an administrative island of its own, it shared a common experience with other parts of southern Nigeria. In several respects, however, Benin was governed under a policy of pure administrative pragmatism in which problems peculiar to the nature of the kingdom, its structure and its institutions, as well as the reaction of the people to administrative policies, largely dictated subsequent British measures in the area.<sup>23</sup>

The second theme—traditional political institutions in precolonial times and the process of establishment of indirect rule—traditionally forms the content of and background to the changing role of chiefs during and after the demise of colonial rule. Generally speaking, Nigerian chiefs exercised enormous power over their subjects in precolonial times. Historians like Afigbo, Ikime, Atanda, and Igbafe who have done some work in this area generally do a survey of how power was acquired and deployed in the pre-colonial period in order to emphasize the extent of changes brought about by colonial rule. Historians of indirect rule tend to look at how colonial rule was established in various parts of the country—though we often see works of synthesis like J. C. Anene’s *Southern Nigeria in Transition*, which covers a large political and administrative entity.<sup>24</sup>

On the process of the establishment of colonial rule, historians of this aspect of Nigeria’s political past largely examine the politics of the creation of districts and provinces, the choice of heads of Native Authorities, and the relationship between the chiefs and the Europeans. Although the nature and working of indirect rule appeared to have taken a similar course in the various provinces, local issues or exigencies, as we have seen in the case of southeastern Nigeria, largely informed the organization and choice of African political agents by colonial masters. On a number of occasions, the British disrespected the tradition of succession by imposing their own men on the people.<sup>25</sup> For the British, the most important thing was who could do the job best, not who should rule a particular state or community according to sacred law. The British supported the ascendancy of a new ruler only if he danced to their tune and respected the basis of colonial domination.

The last theme—the effect of indirect rule on inter- and intragroup relations—seems to be the most important effect of colonial rule on traditional political institutions. Chiefs were occasionally given power, based on circumstances that went beyond the provision of custom. Indeed, the extent of power a chief possessed under the colonial regime was principally determined by the relationship he established with the district or provincial officer posted to his region. It is a truism that the numerous intelligence reports and anthropological publications of the period served as guides to help the British understand the structure of precolonial traditional institutions and guided thus make appropriate political decisions; nevertheless, traditions of succession and seniority were frequently abused to make room for policies favored by the district or resident officer. Towns, villages, and communities that did not share a similar historical heritage were sometimes carelessly merged together for political convenience during the creation of districts and provinces. In the new political order, the appointment of a paramount chief who sat on the Native Authority and determined the destiny of his community and others was sometimes made without acknowledging the pre-existing pattern of relations among the people subject to the new administrative and political arrangement.<sup>26</sup>

How indirect rule created a crisis between Ibadan and other towns, on the one hand, and Oyo, on the other, is the main theme of Atanda's *New Oyo Empire*. The British gave the *Alaafin* of Oyo power that extended well beyond what he had in precolonial times partly because of misleading information they had received that he was the "king of the Yoruba" and because Capt. William Alston Ross, the resident who established indirect rule in this part of Yorubaland, had a personal relationship with the family of the king. Ikime's *Niger Delta* looks at a similar situation in that region. In this case, the British created the political structure that placed the Itsekiri under Urhobo's control. Men like Chief Dogho, who were newly appointed as agents of the British, carried out their orders without due respect for tradition and interethnic sensitivity.

The establishment of colonial rule reconfigured preexisting relational patterns among subjects and between subjects and their rulers. Allegiances became divided as Nigerians now had to respect both old and new authorities. The reconfiguration of power went pari passu with the entrenchment of a monetized economy, capitalism, the rise of urban centers, and new modes of production. For the purpose of enhancing their mission to exploit the resources of Nigeria, colonial masters put in place new laws and revoked customary laws that stood in their way.<sup>27</sup> The numerous judicial settlements of the early twentieth century were carried out to determine the application of new laws, the procedures for administering them, and the power of administrators.<sup>28</sup> It is perhaps very difficult for colonial rule to be established without a judicial settlement or signing of a treaty that reconfigures political

allegiances and gives recognition to the new regime. It is not accidental that the earliest colonial laws in Nigeria were predominantly political and targeted toward punishing those who undermined British hegemony. According to David Killingray, “The vital consideration for colonial rulers was to establish a claim to authority and to uphold the colonial peace.”<sup>29</sup> Exploitation of the colonized cannot be effective in an environment of violence. This largely explains why the British established law enforcement agencies like the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) and the Nigeria Police Force to suppress revolts and insurrections.<sup>30</sup>

The criminalization of domestic slavery and other forms of servitude was perhaps the first major step taken by the colonial regime toward overturning some aspects of precolonial social formation. The slavery ordinances, right from the mid-nineteenth century to 1936, criminalized the activities of rulers and their subjects and placed offenses related to servitude on the list of “social and political problems.” Samuel Johnson documents the politics of the criminalization of pawnship in the early period of colonial rule. His argument is that the British and educated elites failed to understand the economic and social structures that made this form of servitude an essential part of Yoruba culture.

Johnson also provides a narrative of the complexity of rendering the Yoruba word *iwofa* into English. *Iwofa*, according to him,

has been translated as “pawn” by those who fancied they saw a resemblance to it in that system and are trying to identify everything native with those that are foreign and consequently, as in other cases, much mischief has been done thereby. The Yoruba man is simply shocked to hear of “pawning” a man as is done with goods and chattels; to pawn in Yoruba is *fi dogo* which term is never applied to a human being.<sup>31</sup>

Afigbo, Paul Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn, and Ibrahim Jumare have studied the process of the abolition of the domestic slave trade and slavery in northern and southeastern Nigeria.<sup>32</sup> While all forms of servitude and human trafficking were criminalized and outlawed in southern Nigeria from the second half of the twentieth century, in the North the British did not finally proclaim slavery abolished until 1936. This was done for a number of political and religious reasons, which Lovejoy and Hogendorn studied in their *Slow Death for Slavery*.<sup>33</sup>

## Nationalism and Decolonization

The African response to colonial rule forms the core of knowledge produced by historians of nationalism and decolonization. Nationalism condemned both the

cultural and the political subjugation of Nigeria and Nigerians. The ideology of colonial hegemony exemplified in the objectionable notion that Africans could not govern themselves came under attack by the pioneering nationalist historians. Nationalism before, during, and after the demise of colonial rule took different forms and was launched by different categories of people.

The earliest nationalists, as seen in the works of Ajayi and Ayandele, were African missionaries and Christian converts who sought to preserve African cultural values and fought to break away from the shackles of white supremacy that characterized the organization of European and American churches working in Nigeria.<sup>34</sup> These early precursors received Western education through missionary activities and adopted European cultural traits like names and dress. Most of these men and women were ex-slaves, otherwise known as *Aku*. Their form of nationalism, which leaned heavily toward the cultural, was targeted toward creating an African language and culture for Christianity. They were able to successfully domesticate Christianity through rejecting practices like polygamy, which the white missionaries frowned on. A short list of nineteenth-century nationalists should include Bishop James Johnson, Mojola Agbebi, John Payne Jackson, William Bright Davies, and Tejumade Osholake Johnson.<sup>35</sup> Some of these individuals denounced their English names and adopted African names: David Vincent became Mojola Agbebi; Reverend S. H. Samuel became Adegboyega Edun; and George William Johnson became Tejumade Osholake Johnson. They abandoned European dress for African dress, even when they visited Europe. Because they knew the Bible inside out, they were able to differentiate between actual provisions of the Bible and doctrines that did not have any biblical sanction but were Europeanized notions of the white missionaries.

The origins of cultural nationalism and the place of African rulers have been a subject of debate among scholars like Ajayi and James Coleman. Ajayi prefers, for example, to call the African rulers who fought to defend their territorial integrity “patriot” instead of “nationalist” as Coleman calls them. However, the two scholars, plus Ayandele, agreed that the missionaries during the nineteenth century contributed to the emergence of the new elites who launched the first wave of (cultural) nationalism in the nineteenth century and prepared the ground for the political nationalism that helped terminate British colonial rule in the twentieth.<sup>36</sup>

The establishment of colonial rule and the numerous draconian policies of the British created the justification for anticolonial sentiments. The three main forms of nationalism during the colonial and postindependence period were political, economic, and cultural, all of which are closely intertwined and interrelated. Economic nationalism was politically motivated and vice versa. Economic nationalism can be identified with the numerous activities carried out to sabotage imperialism during the colonial period. It includes revolts like the Women’s War of 1929, labor actions like the

General Strike of 1945, and several other protests, such as agitation over the water rates in places like Lagos and Benin. While the educated elite mostly spearheaded cultural and political nationalism, economic nationalism involved an array of classes of people, mainly the poor and lower class. Among them were the thousands of Nigerians who demonstrated during the popular uprising known as the Enugu Colliery Shooting of 1949, as well as the Women's War.

As previously mentioned, the earliest type of nationalism was the cultural nationalism championed by African missionaries and converts during the nineteenth century. This form of nationalism continued strong into the twentieth century, reaching its peak in the 1930s. Among other important feats, the cultural nationalism of the first half of the twentieth century produced many local intellectuals who documented the history of their various communities. They were motivated by the need to popularize the history of their towns for posterity. They sometimes wrote in their local or vernacular language. These intellectuals narrated the history of their communities, depicting myths and heroes and heroines at war. They depended largely on oral traditions handed down from generation to generation, and they understood the significance of history to a people and the need to preserve the past in written form.<sup>37</sup> Toyin Falola in his *Yoruba Gurus* closely examines these intellectuals among the Yoruba. The authors identified in *Yoruba Gurus* published works on a variety of subjects ranging from general community histories to specific subjects like law, culture, traditional medicine, and Yoruba arithmetic.<sup>38</sup>

Political nationalism is certainly the most-studied form of nationalism in Nigeria. Historians have documented how educated elites formed political parties, voluntary organizations, pressure groups, and other types of associations aimed at terminating colonial rule. Educated elites adopted a variety of avenues, such as print media, to educate the people about the ills of colonial rule in Nigeria. Newspapers especially, as shown by Fred Omu in his *Press and Politics in Nigeria*, helped to spread nationalist ideas among both educated and uneducated Nigerians alike.<sup>39</sup> The newspapers in indigenous languages of the people were widely read and distributed in various parts of the country. Most of these newspapers appeared on a weekly basis, while others like the *Nigerian Daily Times*, *The Daily Service*, *Southern Nigeria Defender*, *West African Pilot*, and *Eastern Nigeria Guardian* were dailies.<sup>40</sup>

The themes of constitutional development and political nationalism are inseparable in the literature. G. O. Olusanya, Tekena Tamuno, and others who have studied the history of the Nigerian constitution contend that local agitation for representation in legislative houses, coupled with such international developments as Pan-Africanism, anticolonial activities of Nigerian students abroad, news of freedom from colonial rule in other British colonies, the Marshall Plan, and other post–World War II changes, compelled the British to turn over power to the nationalists in 1960.<sup>41</sup> Students of

constitutional history also highlight the political tension between Nigerians and the British in legislative chambers and during constitutional conferences, the significance and limitations of some constitutional arrangements, the place of constitutional changes in the development of grassroots politics, and the rise of political parties.

Histories of political parties like the Nigerian National Democratic Party, Nigerian Youth Movement, Action Group, National Council of Nigerian Citizens, and Northern People's Congress explore the historical circumstances that led to their establishment, their aims and objectives, the ethnic configurations comprising their constituencies, and how they vied with one another for political relevance and power.<sup>42</sup> Biographical and autobiographical work on prominent nationalists and politicians (both men and women) during the colonial and postindependence periods are important materials for understanding the contributions to nationalism and decolonization of individuals like Herbert Macaulay, Oyinkan Abayomi, Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Nwafor Orizu, Ahmadu Bello, and Tafawa Balewa, among others.<sup>43</sup>

These studies explore how family background, acquisition of Western education, and international exposure helped politicians to understand the workings as well as the ills of colonial domination. The political careers of the nationalists were not shaped entirely by acquisition of Western education and acquaintance with the so-called ideals of civilization and modernization. Indeed, as Raphael Chijioke Njoku shows in his *African Cultural Values*, cultural institutions like age grades (groups of men and women who belonged to the same generation and community), secret societies, village life, and politics shaped the political careers of the following Igbo politicians: Alvan Ikoku, Akanu Ibiam, Mazi Mbonu Ojike, and Kingsley Mbadiwe.<sup>44</sup>

Political nationalism also took radical directions; not all the nationalists believed in the “gentlemanly” politicking exemplified in the numerous constitutional conferences and timid means of demanding independence. Ehiedu Iweriebor has examined the origin and philosophy of radical nationalist groups such as the Zikist Movement during the late 1940s.<sup>45</sup> Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani has produced another work on the radical leftist movement. His *Britain, Leftist Nationalists, and the Transfer of Power in Nigeria, 1945–1965* is a study of the development, activities, and failure of Marxist and other left-wing organizations in Nigeria during the decolonization period up to 1965.<sup>46</sup>

While the literature on nationalist movements in Africa is large and expanding, aspects of the infiltration of Marxist ideas into anticolonial movements have been neglected for several decades. Thus Tijani's research is expected to draw the attention of scholars to the study of Marxism in colonial Nigeria. Although the study focuses on the activities of leftist nationalists in Nigeria, Tijani is able to integrate development in the country into global debates and the politics of communism and the Cold War. In other

words, he demonstrates how the international politics of capitalism versus communism affected local issues of nationalism and vice versa. The position of British colonies as imperial appendages and pawns on the geopolitical chessboards of Western powers is elaborated.

Between the 1940s and 1950s, the rise and collapse of several leftist movements, the majority of which identified with the Communist Party of Great Britain, suggest the creativity of Nigerian intellectuals and the problems that antigovernment organizations faced. As one would expect, the greatest opposition to the origin and activities of these leftist nationalist movements came from the colonial government, which acted under the directives of the British government in London and the Western bloc under the leadership of the United States. If the colonial government of Nigeria detested the activities of the leftist nationalists and tried to curtail their “excesses,” the condemnation and disapproval that they received from other nationalists who did not subscribe to their philosophy contributed to making them easy prey for the predatory tendencies of the British. Although all nationalist groups detested colonialism and its attendant exploitation and barbarism, they were nevertheless divided on the profundity of approaches available to campaign against alien rule and the timetable for the transfer of power.

Divisions among the nationalists introduced new dynamics to the tension-filled relations among the different factions of the anticolonial movement in Nigeria. The continual rise and fall of the leftist communist movement in the 1940s and 1950s is, therefore, inexplicable in terms of the disillusionment of members or lack of direction and proper orientation. The Communists’ failure is largely attributed to the stiff opposition they received from the colonial government and from Nigerian nationalists who detested their ideology. This opposition took different forms, ranging from the arrest and incarceration of some members of the communist movement, such as the Zikists, to the banning of Communists from government employment. The sacking of Communist loyalists, which Tijani christened “Nigeria-McCarthyism,” was practiced not only by the British colonial government but also by some nationalists, as seen in the case of Ghana under Nkrumah. Lack of resources, which are needed to propagate ideas and activities, also played a significant role in clipping the wings of these movements. Against all odds, leftist nationalism was able to produce such leaders as Nduka Eze, Samuel Ikoku, H. O. Davies, and Funmilayo Kuti, who, apart from organizing and coordinating trade unions, established newspapers that served as mouthpieces of the campaign for justice, equality, and political self-determination.

This chapter has examined political history as the most-studied aspect of Nigerian history. It has placed importance on aspects of Nigerian history such as state and empire formation, indirect rule, and nationalism. Postindependence political discourse on Nigeria engages such issues as neocolonialism, military rule and dictatorship, and democracy and governance.

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# 4

## Economic History

The appearance in 1973 of A. G. Hopkins's *Economic History of West Africa* has been regarded as the beginning of serious academic attention to the history of Africa's economic past.<sup>1</sup> In the same year, an equally important study, R. O. Ekundare's *Economic History of Nigeria*, appeared in print.<sup>2</sup> Before the close of the 1970s, a more specialized literature focusing on specific aspects of economic history and parts of Nigeria appeared. In this category, Paul Lovejoy's *Caravans of Kola*, Jan Hogendorn's *Nigerian Groundnut Export*, and A. A. Lawal's "History of the Financial Administration of Nigeria" stand out clearly.<sup>3</sup> The quality and breadth of Wale Oyemakinde's essays on labor and the Nigerian railway published in the 1970s are indicative of the large body of data on these aspects of Nigeria's colonial history as well as the fruitfulness of the new economic history of Africa.<sup>4</sup>

The extent to which historians can, or cannot, do without the work and methodology of their colleagues in other disciplines (especially social sciences) has attracted scholarly attention. In describing the relationship between history and the social sciences, Hopkins points out that "reliance on the work of scholars other than historians is not simply a matter of necessity, but also of choice."<sup>5</sup> He identifies two reasons why history and social sciences are interrelated: first, although it is not their sole interest, historians and social scientists are interested in social change; and second, their approach "has much more in common than is often allowed."<sup>6</sup> Hopkins posits further that the assertion that historians look for specific and unique events "while social scientists search for general laws is an article of faith rather than an accurate description of what both actually do."<sup>7</sup>

Hopkins's observations seem irrefutable. A critical appraisal of the literature on economic history confirms the overwhelming overlap in the approaches and methodologies of historians and social scientists. The first comprehensive book on the economic history of Nigeria was written by Ekundare, a trained economist, while the work of another economist, Bade Onimode, *Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria*, is more of a historical research than a typical social-science-oriented study.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, some economic historians, such as Oyemakinde, earned MS degrees in economics, while others spent time to learn and familiarize themselves with social-science-oriented models and

methodology in order to understand the significant component of economic change. Social scientists traditionally employ the political-economy approach in exploring Africa's economic history. A good number of them belong to the Marxist/dependency school. Historians of Africa tend to explore specific areas of economic history and to restrict, for the purpose of precision and scrutiny, their scope to specific regions of a country or the continent.

It is difficult, therefore, to dispense with Hopkins's arguments and conclusions, not only because he is one of the pioneers of modern African economic history. He calls our attention to the differences and similarities between political and economic history. He asserts that prior to 1973 when his *Economic History of West Africa* appeared in print, political history monopolized the discourse on African history. In the preface to *Economic History of West Africa*, he posits quite clearly that readers will find in his text "little discussion" of large African empires and their builders. In trying to reconstruct the history of agriculture and trade, Hopkins asserts, a historian is drawn to the "activities of a great majority of Africans—women and men." His tome appeared at a time when modern African historians were being criticized for romanticizing the past by presenting the history of so-called heroes and heroines and placing limited emphasis on the experiences of the many other Africans who provided the material and human resources that allowed the rulers to stay in power and build their empires.<sup>9</sup> Economic history, therefore, represents a departure from the conventional political history of Africa that purports to chronicle the achievements of the continent's great men and women.

It is worth considering, however, the disposition of the mainstream to the new economic history as well as the extent of receptiveness to the findings and scholarship of economic historians in the 1970s. Writing in 1973, Obaro Ikime contended that the new economic history being pioneered by the likes of Oyemakinde of the History Department at Ibadan was a positive development because it was helping to address the criticism that the Ibadan school of history was a purely elitist project. Yet he was less certain about the quality of research on the economic history of Nigeria at this time.<sup>10</sup>

Deductively, Ikime's skepticism was not unusual, partly because it takes quality time for a new subfield to establish its roots, win converts, and convince the "doubting Thomases" that it is a viable focus of scholarship. Women's history faced a similar reception during the early 1980s, and strong activism and scholarly dedication was required to convince the mainstream historians (most of whom were male) that gender was a productive category of historical analysis. This chapter engages the scholarship on economic history. It does so first from a thematic point of view, analyzing how scholars have treated the role of colonialism in the underdevelopment of Nigeria. The second section maps out the ideas that have been generated about the economic history of Nigeria during the precolonial and colonial periods.

## Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria

The extent to which colonialism led to the underdevelopment of Africa is perhaps one of the most important themes in the history of economic thinking on Africa. Two poles of thought, namely imperialist/modernization theory and Marxist/dependency theory, have emerged over the years. The imperialist/modernization camp, led by the likes of Alan McPhee and L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, posits that Africa benefited immensely from the huge investment by the British.<sup>11</sup> Foreign investment led to the incorporation of Africa into the vortex of capitalism and so-called modernization. The introduction of Western education and culture, the adoption of aspects of a Western lifestyle, and the erection of infrastructure like electricity, pipe-borne water, schools, medical clinics, tarred roads, and other facilities that were absent before the advent of colonialism are considered evidence of progress and the “altruistic” disposition of the British colonial government and missionaries to “civilizing” the “benighted” Africans. Modernization theorists look at the social and economic situation in Africa on the eve of the scramble for and partition of the continent and argue that colonies such as Nigeria before the advent of colonialism “were static, unproductive, characterized by inter-ethnic wars, insecurity and a total lack of capacities to accumulate, innovate or invest.”<sup>12</sup>

Edwin G. Charles’s informative (albeit short) discourse on the role that colonialism played in the development of Nigeria can be singled out for further elaboration because of the empirical approach he adopts in discussing the question of development and progress in Nigeria during the colonial period.<sup>13</sup> He identifies how colonialism led to the opening up of Nigeria’s economy and the transfer of some wealth and resources from Great Britain to Nigeria. Charles provides some statistical evidence to show that between 1900 and 1918 Britain made a series of nonrepayable monetary grants to Nigeria. These grants were suspended for a while but started again in 1930 and lasted till 1946. Mining operations needed huge infusions of capital, which were only available from external sources. The need to finance mining activities therefore led to the transfer of material resources from Europe. Since several laws prevented non-Nigerians from permanently owning lands, Nigerians—unlike their fellow Africans in Zimbabwe, Kenya, and other settler colonies in Africa—remained in control of Nigerian lands. By paying royalties, Charles argues, foreign mining companies contributed greatly to the economy of Nigeria. Mining companies created jobs for Nigerians, and the flow of cash created an economic multiplier effect. The introduction of the monetary system and the flow of capital through merchant houses and other commercial foreign firms transformed the mode of production from a “backward” and “subsistence” economy to a world-class one. Summarily, Charles does not see the reasons antagonists of colonialism should picture colonial hegemony as exploitative.

On the other side of the fence are thinkers—predominantly African-born Marxist/dependency theorists—who contend that Europe's relationship, and indeed that of the Western world in general, with Africa is exploitative, barbaric, and inhumane. Scholars like Walter Rodney, Claude Ake, Bade Onimode, Yusufu Bala Usman, and Segun Osoba, to mention but a few, provide many well-structured arguments that criticize the so-called humanitarian disposition of the British toward the development of Africa.<sup>14</sup> To these scholars, colonialism was merely one of numerous phases of Western capitalist exploitation of the continent. Before colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade provided the human resources European countries used to modernize their societies and economies. Under colonialism, Africa provided the necessary resources that allowed Western powers to build on the successes of the Industrial Revolution. In Aimé Césaire's words: "Colonialism was accompanied by forced proletarianization and mystification, brutality, cruelty, sadism, conflict, forced labor, theft, compulsory crops, mistrust, arrogance, brainless elites and degraded masses."<sup>15</sup>

Onimode's *Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria* is arguably the best Marxist monograph on the exploitative relationship between Britain and Nigeria. Onimode, though an economics professor, provides a rich historical analysis of the phase of changing one-sided relations between Nigeria and Western capitalist systems from the fifteenth century to the postindependence period. The book can be seen as the Nigerian version of Walter Rodney's classic *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.<sup>16</sup> Toyin Falola's edited volume *Britain and Nigeria* brings together essays on different aspects of the Nigerian economy under colonial rule. Various authors examine the infrastructures of colonial exploitation, which included but are not limited to the transportation system, agriculture and the cash crop economy, financial and monetary institutions, and mineral resources.<sup>17</sup>

What is certain about British colonialism in Nigeria is that the development of infrastructure like roads and railways was primarily pursued not out of a desire to improve the quality of Nigerians' lives but to enhance the exploitation of the people and resources of the country. By extension, while Nigerians benefited greatly from the investment in infrastructure, the multiplier effect was felt mainly in Great Britain. Moreover, the infrastructure that would have empowered colonial subjects most—that is, schools—was not taken seriously by the colonial government but was left in the hands of the missionaries until around the 1920s.<sup>18</sup> As Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa, Adewunmi Fajana, and others have shown, it was not until the 1920s and 1930s that the British became directly involved in establishing and funding schools.<sup>19</sup> Prior to this time, the missionaries were largely responsible for inculcating Western education and culture.

Nigeria did not have its first university until 1948. University College, Ibadan, as it was called, had a special academic relationship to the University

of London until 1962; foreign influence and priorities continued to shape decisions about curriculum and faculty. The curriculum, as seen in the case of history, was predominantly designed to serve the imperialists' self-interest: before the late 1950s, history courses were on the history of Europe or the history of Europeans' activities in Africa, while knowledge of African history was not considered to be worth acquiring. Education in colonial Nigeria was not directed toward empowering Nigerians with technological skills capable of being utilized for collective or individual development. Moreover, throughout the colonial period, technical education was structured so as to assist the colonialists in their quest toward material and human exploitation. Humanistic education attracted limited attention insofar as it represented a potential threat to colonial domination.

Neocolonialism, a term that is credited to Kwame Nkrumah, independent Ghana's first president, denotes the control of the economic and development destiny of a former colonial area such as Africa by outside powers after independence. Nkrumah opines that neocolonialism is the last stage of imperialism. He described it as the act of giving independence with one hand while taking it away with the other.<sup>20</sup> The catastrophic wave of military coups d'état and violent upheavals of government, and the alleged involvement of foreign powers in the collapse of African governments in the immediate postindependence period, are indicative of neocolonial tendencies and the desire of the Western world to keep Africa under perpetual political and economic bondage. Logically, the continued intervention of Western powers in the political and economic affairs of their erstwhile colonies confirms the significance of the periphery as the gold mine of the core.

We can safely suggest that much of the African-centered scholarship on Nigeria's economic history has followed a Marxist interpretation. Nationalist scholarship gained ascendancy as it became more and more politically and academically unsafe to write about the positive aspects of colonialism, especially in the areas of economic development. Another different pattern of thought, one that seems to straddle the Marxist and imperialist positions, posits that the problem of colonialism was not exploitation but the inability to provide necessary or adequate facilities to justify the degree or extent of exploitation. Put differently, colonialism was bad because the value of investment in Africa was far less than that of the resources expropriated from the continent. In a book on the development of capitalism in northern Nigeria, Robert W. Shenton summarizes this position thus:

Colonizers are attacked not only for what they did but for what they failed to do—criticized not only for the railways built, but also because they did not build more of them; not only for the creation of a particular educational system, but also for the paucity of schools; not only for the factories erected, but also because they were not built in greater numbers. The contradictory nature of exploitation of Africa is the issue at stake here.<sup>21</sup>

It is a truism that Africans, who used hoes and machetes when the Europeans came, ended up being introduced to sophisticated farming equipment during colonialism. The fact that the resources of the continent were siphoned to Europe and not adequately reinvested into local economies turned the table of fair play against Africa.

### Nigeria's Precolonial Economic History

Using a Western lens to view Africa's economic development during the precolonial period, some missionaries, European merchants, explorers, and administrators who were chiefly influenced by racist thought about human advancement remarked that the continent was "static" and "backward." Fortunately, there is much evidence to provide useful insights into the economic history of nineteenth-century Africa that counteract the racists' views. We read in some missionary records that intergroup relations were manifested in the exchange of goods and commerce over a wide area. The numerous trade routes that traversed the nooks and crannies of the region contributed to the internationalization of domestic economies. Oral and archaeological evidence has proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the human interactions were dynamic and sustainable enough to enhance self-sufficiency.

W. H. Clarke, a Baptist missionary, makes one of the most revealing remarks about Africa during the mid-nineteenth century. During his exploration into the Yoruba hinterland, Clarke observed firsthand the nature of the economies and marveled at what he saw. His conclusion is a complete antithesis of what he had hitherto read and heard about the Yoruba: "Dear Sirs, your conclusion is wholly illogical based on a false hypothetical premise. They are not barbarous. They cultivate thousands of acres. They eat corn, rice, yams, potatoes, peas, mutton, kid, beef and butter; drink milk and ride fine horses, and sleep and drink and rejoice as the rest of mankind."<sup>22</sup>

The history of West Africa's direct commercial relations with the Western world dates back to the fifteenth century when the Portuguese began their South Atlantic explorations. The story of the transition of trade items from materials such as ivory, gold, and rum to human cargo to "legitimate" trade is adequately documented. To a large extent, the literature on the transatlantic slave trade dominates the economic history of precolonial Nigeria. Documentation of Africa's political and economic relations with the outside world between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries is extensive.<sup>23</sup> Influential examples of the economic history of the slave trade and "legitimate" commerce include Robin Law's *Oyo Empire*, which explains how the Old Oyo Empire's imperialism was built on and sustained from the resources and wealth made from the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>24</sup> Another well-known work is K. O. Dike's *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*.<sup>25</sup>

The nature and dynamics of domestic economies have also been well explored. The scholarship of Toyin Falola and Bolanle Awe adopts the political-economy approach in studying the nineteenth-century economic history of various Nigerian groups, while the early works of Lovejoy and G. O. Ogunremi, among others, tend to explore specific aspects of precolonial economic history such as transportation.<sup>26</sup> Falola and Ann O'Hear's edited volume *Studies in the Nineteenth-Century Economic History of Nigeria* contains useful chapters on various aspects of the precolonial economy.<sup>27</sup> The most noticeable trend is the discussion of the dynamism of the domestic economy, which counters the erroneous idea that Africa's precolonial economies were static.

The major impediment to researching the domestic precolonial economic history of Africa is the paucity of written data. Unlike the history of Africa's commercial relations with the outside world, which is relatively less difficult to research due to the availability of written sources produced by Europeans, the largest amount of data for reconstructing the history of the domestic economies and internal trade comes from oral traditions. Missionary accounts, albeit useful, are fragmentary and sometimes incoherent. However, the degree to which oral traditions can shed light on the precolonial economic past is also limited. By far, political history is easier to study than economic history.

While economic history encompasses the activities of faceless peasants who worked tirelessly to provide the resources needed for state and empire building, political history is predominantly the history of elites. The preservation of the past through oral history and tradition was itself a politicized project, controlled not by the poor peasants but by the ruling class. The representation of the masses in the mainstream of collective historical memory is therefore marginal when compared to political aspects of a society's historical experience. This of course affects the quantity and quality of orally transmitted information about the economic past of a people. Archaeological excavation and linguistic evidence have gone a long way toward demonstrating that economic relations existed between one group and another in ancient times. However, material evidence is difficult to convert into formidable narratives as compared to, say, a large body of oral literature that chronicles the history and achievements of a king or a ruling class.

## Economic History of Colonial Nigeria

By far, the most substantial body of work on the economic history of Nigeria examines the period under colonial rule. The reason for this is not difficult to see. Colonial administrators documented administrative and political activities that can be used to unveil the economic policies and activities of

the period. The three major branches of the National Archives, located at Ibadan, Kaduna, and Enugu, harbor the primary archival materials that can be used to research effectively into many areas of Nigeria's economy. These are relatively accessible for scholars who choose to concentrate on aspects of Nigeria's economy during the colonial period.

Up until the last few years of disengagement from colonial rule, agriculture was the mainstay of the colonial economy. Scholars have worked to historicize several aspects of agricultural history, including the introduction and development of the cash crop economy and the making of agricultural policy. The monetization of the economy went hand in hand with the entrenchment of other colonial institutions such as the civil service, the railway, and mining and other extractive industries.<sup>28</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju is the unrivaled authority in Nigerian maritime history.<sup>29</sup> Nigerian financial institutions have also attracted historians' attention, with the literature falling into categories including the transition from the precolonial to colonial currency system, the establishment of colonial banks, and various currency crises.

### Currency, Monetization, and Financial Institutions

The precolonial currencies and means of exchange, the introduction of colonial monetary and financial institutions, and the process of monetization of the economy have all occupied the attention of scholars.<sup>30</sup> The general trend of scholarship on this aspect of Nigeria's economic history is that the British found the preexisting means for an economic system inadequate for their agenda of establishing a colonial state and thus attempted to establish a new economic order. The introduction of a new type of currency system was needed for a variety of purposes, but primarily in order to generate resources needed for colonial administration through the payment of taxes and other levies. Such a system required that people engage in wage labor to earn resources for livelihood and for payment of direct taxes. European firms had to adopt the new currency as legal tender in their business transactions with African producers of export commodities. Although foreign merchant houses were initially apathetic toward the new currency system, colonial administrative laws were too effective to be ignored. In the long run, the government (through the establishment of the wage labor system) and European merchant houses (through their business transactions with Africans) facilitated the gradual disengagement from preexisting currencies and the complete monetization of the colonial state of Nigeria through the newly introduced currency.<sup>31</sup> The consolidation of the new currency system would not have been possible without the establishment of the African Banking Corporation (ABC), the first commercial bank in Nigeria, in 1891

and the West African Currency Board, to facilitate the circulation of the new currency, in 1912.<sup>32</sup>

The new colonial currency faced a number of problems and challenges, however: acceptance by the people, shortages, and counterfeiting. At the outset, the new currency was not popular among the people, as Olukoju points out.<sup>33</sup> While existing currencies like cowries could be broken down into smaller denominations, thus facilitating retail transactions, the farthing, the smallest denomination of British coins, was too high a denomination to facilitate small transactions.<sup>34</sup> With the consolidation of the basic infrastructure of colonialism, such as the railway, the problem of acceptance faded, though precolonial currencies continued to be used in some parts of Nigeria, as Ben Naanen's study of manila currency in southwestern Nigeria has shown.<sup>35</sup>

As the new colonial currency was taking root as the new form of exchange, criminality in the form of counterfeiting followed suit. As Falola, Akanmu Adebayo, and Olukoju have shown, the new forms of capitalist accumulation and expropriation found expression in the desire to get rich. This situation only intensified the currency criminality through attempts to manipulate the currency system.<sup>36</sup> Currency counterfeiting was seen as a form of sabotage of the colonial capitalist state; resistance to colonialism took the form of corrupting the flow and transfer of wealth within the colony.<sup>37</sup>

## Agricultural History

The literature on agricultural history can be divided into the introduction or development of agricultural exports and the making of colonial agricultural policy.<sup>38</sup> As one would expect, themes in this literature overlap substantially. The basic approach to agricultural history includes a historical analysis of the development of agricultural policies and export trade.

Some of the major economic policies carried out by the British during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries concerned land ownership. During this period, the British had two major options, namely, to sequester land from landowners and establish agricultural plantations, or to allow the peasants to control their land and cultivate it to produce food for subsistence and export purposes. According to M. O. Ijire, the British opted for the latter approach probably because of the need to avoid crises such as had occurred as a result of the erection of plantation agriculture in East Africa.<sup>39</sup> In addition, plantation agriculture required a large labor force and huge expanses of land. The fact that these two requirements might not be simultaneously available within a given geographic region may have encouraged the British to drop the idea of establishing plantations.

The negative disposition of the British government toward plantation agriculture should not be taken to mean that attempts were not made from time to time during the colonial era to establish plantations. J. A. Atanda's study of the reaction of the Ibadan to the proposed cotton plantation of the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) in 1903 shows that, although the British recognized that Nigerians should not be stripped of thousands of acres of land that the BCGA was asking for, foreign pressure sometimes outweighed Africans' interests.<sup>40</sup> The BCGA later dropped the idea of the cotton plantation, not because of the people's agitation or refusal to grant the land—indeed, the British eventually approved the plantation—but because of several legal constraints associated with the lease. Atanda goes on to argue not only that the assertion that the British were mild in their disposition toward land sequestration should be discarded but that at various times attempts were made to rob the people of quality arable land.<sup>41</sup> It was not until 1952, when regionalizing was adopted, that Nigerian investors introduced plantation agriculture to the various parts of southern Nigeria.<sup>42</sup>

Be that as it may, what is obvious is that the British aggressively pursued agricultural policies aimed at introducing new agricultural techniques, cash crops, and improved seed. Agricultural research stations were established, European agricultural officers were brought in, and a process of "modernization" of traditional agricultural practices took hold in the colonial bureaucracy.<sup>43</sup> New methods of marketing and distribution were also put in place to enhance the maximization of profit generated from agriculture.<sup>44</sup> The introduction of cocoa in the late nineteenth century and its emergence as a viable cash crop during the second decade of the twentieth century are developments that went a long way toward further integrating African economies into the world capitalist system.<sup>45</sup>

Although palm oil had been exported to Europe before the establishment of colonial rule, it was new agricultural policies implemented by the British that paved the way for its entrenchment as a cash crop.<sup>46</sup> Felix K. Ekechi and others have explored the history of the palm oil trade in eastern Nigeria during the colonial period.<sup>47</sup> Ekechi points out that although the Igbo had been involved in the production of palm oil products during the period of "legitimate" commerce, it was only after the pacification of the interior of Igboland between 1901 and 1910 that palm oil became a viable cash crop among the Igbo.<sup>48</sup> Susan Martin's study of palm oil in the Igbo region is more elaborate than Ekechi's because it spans the period before the introduction of "legitimate" commerce to twenty years after colonial rule.<sup>49</sup> This study, which focuses on the Ngwa region of southeastern Nigeria, explores the changing significance of palm oil in the history of the region and the entirety of southern Nigeria. It critically examines the role of the environment, social structures, and "political and economic changes wrought by outsiders" on the history of the people of the Ngwa Igbo.<sup>50</sup>

The export of cocoa, palm products, and peanuts fetched the colonial government huge revenues, but that of cotton seems not to have been as profitable as first anticipated.<sup>51</sup> Allister Hinds looks at the problem the textile industry faced in Lancaster and how colonial merchant trading firms could not supply the demanded quantity of cotton to manufacturers of textiles in Britain.<sup>52</sup> As we have seen, the establishment of cotton plantations faced many problems during the first and second decades of the nineteenth century. The post–World War II economic downturn affected the production of textiles in Europe to such an extent that the demand for European manufactured textiles made in Nigeria could not be met. It was during this period that local production of textiles took a giant stride. Local producers were able to meet local demand for textiles. Judith Byfield, in a study of Abeokuta cloth dyers, discusses how Abeokuta women coped with the numerous colonial policies on importation and exportation of cotton and textiles.<sup>53</sup>

Another body of literature looks inward, to identify the role Nigerians played in the entrenchment of agriculture as a colonial capitalist asset.<sup>54</sup> The general orientation of this literature is that, although the government's numerous agricultural policies played a significant role in integrating the Nigerian economy into the international capitalist system, Africans conceived and implemented many divergent schemes that, while primarily meant to better their lot, ended up favoring the British government in the long run. Traditional “noneconomic” networks and membership associations such as age grade were mobilized for agricultural purposes. Family ties and the traditional large household system, which of course were threatened as a result of the numerous social changes of the colonial period, went a long way toward providing the needed support that in turn led to the increased production of cash crops. Sara S. Berry used the example of cocoa farming in western Nigeria to counteract the argument that “noneconomic” institutions or relationships (e.g., family, kinship, ethnic, and associational ties) are an impediment to economic growth. She posits that “the use of primary non-economic institutions for mobilizing and managing the productive resources needed for cocoa farming not only enabled individuals without previously accumulated savings to grow cocoa, but may also have entailed some advantages even for well-to-do farmers.”<sup>55</sup> What is obvious is that precolonial forms of welfare and social responsibility were grafted onto the new economic structures imposed by colonialism.

The introduction of cash crops created wealth among Nigerians on the one hand, but led to a decline in the production of food crops on the other. The railway system connected the centers of agricultural production to the major ports, such as Lagos, from which commodities eventually found their way out of the country.<sup>56</sup> During the two world wars, farmers were further pressured to increase cash crop production in order to supply the needed

materials and resources for mobilization. The periods of the Great Depression and World War II were characterized by economic crises, which negatively affected Nigerians' standard of living.<sup>57</sup> There was a shortage of food crops, and the government had to intervene by regulating both prices and distribution of food.<sup>58</sup> Labor unrest was unavoidable as the colonial government grappled with the problems of inflation and its inability to meet the demand of the workforce.<sup>59</sup>

Agricultural policies, like most colonial policies, were also gendered. Chima Korieh and Gloria Chuku use the case of the Igbo to demonstrate that women were barred from access to agricultural loans and equipment and to improved seed.<sup>60</sup> Korieh goes on to argue that the food shortage that occurred in some parts of eastern Nigeria is traceable to the subservient role that women were forced to play in the colonial agricultural system. In his study of Ekiti women and agriculture, Olatunji Ojo does not directly analyze the negative effects of colonial agricultural policies on women but identifies how some aspects of colonialism enhanced female upward economic mobility. He points to significant aspects of social change, such as the legalization of divorce and its positive effect on female upward mobility. Some women were able to acquire land, cultivate cocoa, and in fact hire men who served as additional labor.<sup>61</sup>

### History of Private Business and Entrepreneurship

Another area of scholarship focuses on the emergence of the petite bourgeoisie—that is, Africans who, during the colonial and postindependence periods, accumulated wealth through their engagements with capitalist forces and power.<sup>62</sup> Although the process of capitalist accumulation, which Ekundare calls “competitive capitalism,” predates the legitimization of colonialism, the advent of alien rule led to the rise of a new breed of capitalists who, like the “competitive capitalists,” were involved in accumulation and expropriation of wealth and resources. Generally, the historiography of this aspect of capitalism can be broadly divided into two theoretical categories. First is the body of ideas led by neoclassical/Marxist and neo-Marxist scholars who contend that African private entrepreneurs failed in their bid to drive out Western imperialists, and were entrepreneurial failures. The second category theorizes that private entrepreneurs (those christened the petite bourgeoisie) were a formidable force in the development of Nigeria’s economy and should not be viewed as failures. This aspect of Nigerian economic thought is worth reviewing further.

Ake, E. O. Akeredolu Ale, Osoba, Usman, and Shenton, among others, have presented various brands of neo-Marxist ideas about African capitalism and its entrepreneurs.<sup>63</sup> In a study of merchant capitalism in northern

Nigeria, Shenton suggests that although colonialism introduced a new form of capitalism, the society of northern Nigeria failed to maximize the full potentials of colonial capitalism. He probes “how a particular society could be integrated into the world capitalist system and yet could not only fail to develop the vastly augmented forces of production integral to the development of capitalism in the West, but also—even more strikingly—could not undergo a process of social transformation which undermined the ability of that society to reproduce itself in a manner consistent with its own continued survival.”<sup>64</sup> He identifies for discussion “merchant capital,” a particular form of entrepreneurial capital that integrated northern Nigeria into the world capitalist economy. Shenton further argues that merchant capitalists were parasitic to the preexisting form of surplus expropriation and indeed intensified the vulnerability of northern Nigerian societies to the age-old problem of famine. Ale is blunt in describing Nigerian capitalists as “drone capitalists, not a productive class,” while Okwudiba Nnoli decries “the absence of an independent and creative ruling class of the type that brought industrial revolution to the Western countries and Japan.”<sup>65</sup>

The works of Tom Forrest, Gloria Chuku, Olufunke Adeboye, Micheal M. Ogbeidi, Olutayo Charles Adesina, and Y. A. Olagunju, among others, belong to the second category of intellectual tradition, which does not hold that private capital or entrepreneurs were a failure.<sup>66</sup> In one of his works that looks at the life and times of Adebisi Idikan, an influential Ibadan entrepreneur, Adesina discusses how the man acquired his wealth and how his name was integrated into the social formation and popular culture of Ibadan through numerous sayings and proverbs.<sup>67</sup> He sees the African accumulation of wealth as a development that went a long way toward contributing to the rise of individuals of great reputation. Similarly, in writing about some Igbo women entrepreneurs, Chuku, a historian of Igbo women’s economic history, shows that the women were disciplined and worked hard for the wealth they created.<sup>68</sup> She is also optimistic that other Igbo businesswomen would emulate them: “The striking feature of these women is that they had a humble start as petty traders, but later became international merchants due to their business acumen, organizational skills and hard work. These women will serve as a source of inspiration and motivation to Igbo women now and in the future.”<sup>69</sup> Although colonialism and its policies were inimical to the success of private entrepreneurs, the ability of the Igbo women entrepreneurs to compete with the expatriate capitalists and their numerous agencies such as merchant houses and large trading firms lends credence to their high degree of creativity.

A more articulate criticism of the neo-Marxist arguments is presented by Tom Forrest in his *Advance of African Capital*. Forrest argues that dependency scholars’ failure to identify the significance of African businessmen and women in the development of capitalism is a gross oversight.<sup>70</sup> The time line

of the book extends from 1900 to 1990. It covers the business activities of Nigerians in the areas of transportation, local industry, and domestic commercial transactions. Aside from his criticism of the dependency school, Forrest provides some useful guidelines on how to write business history. He is convinced that a great deal of data can be drawn from newspapers, company directories, business and financial journals, biographies, and interviews.

## Extractive Industries and Industrialization

Africanists largely agree that there was hardly any industrialization in colonial Nigeria because the goal of colonial domination was to avoid putting Africa on the industrializing path.<sup>71</sup> The establishment of industries would have defeated the scheme of making African colonies serve merely as sources of raw materials and markets for finished products. What is more, large trading firms such as John Holt, A. G. Leventis, and Lever Brothers would have lost their relevance and importance if industries capable of, say, processing cocoa and palm oil into beverages and butter were established. During the colonial era, it was difficult for African entrepreneurs to establish industries because of the massive capital requirements. Colonial banks were also quick to understand the implication of advancing credit to private entrepreneurs who were capable of establishing industries and unleashing competition with European manufacturers and trading firms.

It was also rational for the British in Nigeria to ensure that products from other European countries did not outsell those goods produced by British manufacturers in Europe. Throughout the colonial period, consistent attempts were made to increase tariffs on goods from other European countries in order to create high prices and discourage demand. Even when industries were established, they were predominantly meant to serve the export-oriented economy. This is true in the case of the numerous sawmills that were equipped with sophisticated machinery for processing logs for export. As Lawal points out, it is erroneous to think that the first development plan initiated by the British in 1945 was intended to put Nigeria on the path to industrialization. On the contrary, the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945 targeted aspects of the colonial economy that were not directly related to industrialization. As observed by Falola, the idea of economic planning prior to the 1940s was conceived as a “communist” project that was capable of putting the resources of the entire nation-state in the hands of the government—thereby paving the way for dictatorship. However, the rise of the Labour Party in Britain and a new wave of nationalist agitation prompted the British to rethink the idea of development planning and finally to introduce the first development plan in 1945.<sup>72</sup>

An examination of colonial administrators' attitudes toward mining industries during the early days of colonialism in Nigeria helps to reinforce the validity of the argument that colonial policymakers did not visualize colonies as zones of industrialization. As pointed out by Adebayo and Falola, the British were concerned that investment in mining exploration might lead to some forms of local industrialization.<sup>73</sup> In addition, it was risky for them to invest taxpayers' money in mining operations because of the huge capital requirements and the likelihood that mining operations would not produce the desired monetary return. Aside from coal, which was mined to provide for the needs of the railway system, the remaining extractive industries were manned by foreign capitalists and investors who paid taxes and royalties to the colonial government on agreed terms.

In his work *Capitalism and Labour in the Nigerian Tin Mines*, Bill Freund opines that capitalism, which made labor power a commodity, is a twentieth-century development.<sup>74</sup> The labor-intensive nature of mining operations not only removed people from the farms but also initiated a new phenomenon of migrant labor. People traveled thousands of miles for the purpose of working in the mines. Like their counterparts in southern Africa, Nigerian mines were characterized by a high level of impoverishment and insecurity. Infrastructural decay was a trademark of mining camps and settlements. The Enugu Colliery Shooting in 1949 broke out when miners protested against the draconian policies of the mines' authorities.<sup>75</sup>

That economic history is now established in Nigeria was made possible by the aforementioned works. Recent scholarship has tended to move away from the precolonial and colonial periods to the more recent postcolonial era of underdevelopment and extensive analysis of the impact of oil on the Nigerian economy.

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# 5

## Social History

Social history as a genre of Nigerian history began only recently (around the late 1980s to be precise), as a result of factors including the very epistemological origin of professional historical scholarship itself. As seen in various sections of this book, the greatest impetus for the development of professional historical studies on Africa was a defensive one: the need to explore aspects of the precolonial histories of the peoples of the continent in order effectively to challenge the unscientific notion that Africans had not possessed the ability to govern themselves before the encroachment of Europeans. The professional discipline of African historical studies, from its inception in the 1950s, was directed largely toward the exposition of the political aspects of the African precolonial and colonial past. This brand of scholarship, otherwise called nationalist historiography, was aimed at providing a needed intellectual weapon for the nationalist movement by exploring precolonial forms of state and empire building in Africa. After the demise of colonial rule in 1960, and throughout the first two decades of independence, the bulk of historical research continued to be directed toward unraveling Africa's precolonial and colonial political past at the expense of other fields of history including social, labor, military, medical, gender, and women's. Pioneering Africanists recognized this deficiency in Nigerian historiography.<sup>1</sup>

In a piece published in 1969, Ayandele calls the attention of his colleagues to the inadequacy of interest shown in exploring other aspects of Nigerian history, aside from the political.<sup>2</sup> Ikime agrees with his colleagues that more attention needs to be given to fields other than political history. However, he enjoins historians to avoid a sort of overcompartmentalization of history. Ikime, writing in 1979, opines:

With regard to social history, a call for the writing of which is a major feature of this half decade, no one would want to question the need for it. One would like to hope, however, that we shall not over-compartmentalize our history. The call must be for our history to be multi-dimensional in order that it may be more complete. Those of us whose chosen field is political history need to do more than add a chapter on "Social and Economic Development" as has tended to be the case. We can weave quite a bit of social history into the political history we write.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike economic, political, and women's history, which developed somewhat independently of other fields, social history in the 1970s was treated primarily as elite or biographical studies. Thus, Ikime sees "biographies as a major contribution to social history."<sup>4</sup> If this position is taken, one can further argue that academic research on social history dates back to the 1960s, when historians concentrated on the life and times of the leading political actors (both Europeans and Africans) of the first half of the twentieth century. However, since this genre of writing mostly deals with the careers of subjects such as administrators, nationalists, and politicians, and not on themes like kinship and family, we are hesitant to categorize such work as social history.

Anthropologists and sociologists, and not professional historians, were the first to write about the social history of Nigerian peoples. Although colonial anthropology remains notorious for its role as the intellectual arm of imperialism, the anthropological work of the twentieth century delved into the precolonial past of societies. Indeed, colonial anthropological surveys, like those of P. A. Talbot and the numerous Intelligence Reports produced in the 1930s, provide information about precolonial societies. Even local intellectuals like Akiga Sai of the Tiv and Samuel Johnson of the Yoruba, whose work we discuss below, were aware of "social change" when they consistently use phrases like "in those days," "in the olden days," or "in the days of our fathers" as a way of differentiating between the past and the present.

It is not inappropriate to argue that the late start in, say, social history of family and kinship is closely connected to the idea that in writing a "total history," or general history, sections on various aspects of Nigeria's social past should be included. This idea, as popularized by Ikime, was not altogether wrong in the 1970s when historians were not yet delving into this aspect of Nigerian history. While Ikime's call can be seen as a way of jump-starting a neglected field, one can argue that the field of social history—unlike women's, economic, and political history—did not develop with a strong ideological framework. By the 1980s, historians would yield to Ikime's call by dedicating separate sections or chapters to themes like "marriage and family" or "social relations" in a broader work on intergroup relations or general histories of various Nigerian ethnicities.

Anthologies on the history of Nigerian towns, like G. O. Ogunremi's *Ibadan*, dedicate sections to "social-political" history, where subjects like women's roles, legal affairs, and sociolinguistics are presented.<sup>5</sup> Others, like Felix K. Ekechi's monograph entitled *Tradition and Transformation in Eastern Nigeria*, use political and social themes as instruments of historical analysis. For example, chapters 4 and 5 of Ekechi's book map out the role of Christianity and education in social change.<sup>6</sup> To date, few professional historical works exist under a distinct category of the "social history" of particular Nigerian groups. An important exception is Don Ohadike's *Anioma*.<sup>7</sup> This

is not accidental, considering that fields like women's and gender studies incorporate data from such subjects as family, marriage, and kinship that one would readily consider also as social history.

### Data, Methodology, and the Idea of Social Change

As previously mentioned, documentation on the social history of Nigeria dates back to the precolonial period, when European missionaries, travelers, and explorers visited different parts of modern Nigeria recording their observations about the peoples' ways of life, customs, and cultures. Their writings also contain important information about the nature of intergroup relations, including wars and conflicts. To a large extent, nineteenth-century visitors painted African cultures as barbaric and uncivilized. For the missionaries, the idea of Africa's backwardness was a necessary precondition for receiving both moral and financial support for African evangelism.

The conquest of the Nigerian geographic area and the establishment of colonial rule led to an influx of another set of invaders who saw the need to document the history and culture of Nigerians. Personalities like G. T. Basden, Daryl Forde, C. K. Meek, Sylva Leith-Ross, M. F. Smith, M. G. Smith, and Talbot were either European colonial officers or university-trained anthropologists (or both) who produced a massive documentation of the various aspects of African cultures and customs.<sup>8</sup> Talbot is arguably the most prolific of all the colonial social anthropologists-cum-administrators. As a British colonial administrator, he had access to government resources and facilities, which gave him and his two wives the opportunity to publish close to a dozen voluminous works on the cultures of the various peoples of Nigeria.<sup>9</sup>

The work of colonial social anthropologists contains much information about various aspects of society, ranging from marriage, kinship, and family to traditional systems of government, customary laws, and religion. However, a major limitation of this genre of data is its entrapment in a Eurocentric vocabulary filled with racist words like "savages," "tribes," "natives," and "barbarians." These words were used not only to describe Africans but also their material and symbolic worlds—their cultures and customs. What is more, because colonial anthropology was meant to serve the needs of the colonialists, African voices were rarely represented. Colonial anthropology, as pointed out by A. E. Afigbo, was essentially an arm of the imperialist enterprise in Nigeria, serving the colonizer rather than the colonized.<sup>10</sup>

Foreign anthropologists and colonial administrators did not dominate the documentation of the social history of Nigeria during the colonial period. Indeed, some Nigerians who were motivated by the need to document the history of their communities also wrote about the customs and cultures of their people. Sai's goal in writing *Akiga's Story* was to inform the reader of

an African conception of history and culture.<sup>11</sup> In this eight-chapter book, Sai dedicates a chapter to the origin of the Tiv and spends the remainder on the various aspects of Tiv culture. Samuel Johnson's classic, *The History of the Yorubas*, is both a historical and an ethnographic work on the Yoruba, written at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> He actually witnessed some of the events he wrote about and was actively involved in the processes that led to the establishment of colonial rule in modern southwestern Nigeria. A. K. Ajisafe, a barrister at law and local historian of the Egba, began to write *The Laws and Customs of the Yoruba* in 1906, but did not complete it until 1924. The book provides good source material for understanding the nature and function of law in traditional Yoruba society.<sup>13</sup> He dedicates adequate space to the discussion of customary laws of marriage and family, kinship, right of property, and so on. Not all of Nigeria's local intelligentsia wrote in English; indeed, some of them wrote in the various Nigerian languages. Examples of authors in this category would include Olu Daramola and A. Jeje, C. L. Adeoye, and Adeboye Babalola.<sup>14</sup> J. O. Ajibola's *Owe Yoruba at Itumo si ede Gesi* is written both in the Yoruba and English languages.<sup>15</sup> Toyin Falola has written a useful book that examines the contributions of Nigerian intellectuals to the nation's history, culture, and literary experience.<sup>16</sup>

To date, N. A. Fadipe's *Sociology of the Yoruba* remains the most detailed work on the customs and culture of the Yoruba people. The book is an edited version of Fadipe's PhD dissertation written for the University of London in 1939, although the work was not published until after his death in 1944. Twenty-six years later, in 1970, two prominent professors of sociology, Francis Okediji and Oladejo Okediji, edited the work and published it as *The Sociology of the Yoruba*.<sup>17</sup> Aside from documenting various aspects of Yoruba culture (marriage ceremonies, professional occupations, family, religion, and social organization), Fadipe made some revisionist contributions by disagreeing with European anthropologists such as Talbot on a number of issues, including the presence of age grades among the Yoruba.<sup>18</sup> A clear mark of distinction in Fadipe's work is the way in which he treats the effects of colonialism on several aspects of Yoruba history and culture. He concludes most chapters by examining the effects of culture contact on African customs and dedicates an entire chapter to a discussion of the effects of colonialism on Yoruba culture.<sup>19</sup> Fadipe's work can be identified as "sociological nationalism" owing to the ways he uses Yoruba-centered narratives to counter a Eurocentric posture on various aspects of Yoruba history and culture.

For Hausaland, the autobiography of Baba of Karo recorded and translated from Hausa to English by M. F. Smith, a renowned anthropologist, is an accessible source of data for understanding Hausa society before the establishment of colonial rule.<sup>20</sup> It was first published in 1954 and has since been reprinted many times. Baba lived between 1877 and 1951 and witnessed the dramatic changes unleashed by colonial rule. Her account is a blend of

life history and general description of the society she lived in. Baba's narratives touch on such topics as the domestic economy, slave raiding, marriage, kinship, and the general role of women in the Hausa society. Prominent anthropologists and historians have established the validity of Baba's narratives. According to Hilder Kuper, "Baba's story is one of the most convincing validations of the values of oral history as a resource of social history."<sup>21</sup>

The three main branches of the Nigerian National Archives house documentary materials on social history during the colonial period. The general trend in the archival materials on colonial Nigeria, as is the case in other parts of Africa where colonialism flourished, is that issues that tended not to have a strong impact on the colonial administrative status quo were predominantly downplayed and thus have limited documentation. While it is relatively easy for a historian to collect a large body of archival material on, for example, the nature and functions of native administration and colonial economic and fiscal policies, few official archival materials are available on a subject like the effects of colonialism on African marriage and gender relations.

It was not until 1947 that an official file was opened for issues on the effects of colonial rule on traditional African marriage.<sup>22</sup> The colonial state as a male-centered edifice neither recognized the importance of women in the society nor accepted that they could hold influential positions. This of course affected the documentation on women and their activities both as leaders and followers. Except on rare occasions, such as when women led a revolt against the government (e.g., the Women's War of 1929), women's experiences were rarely documented. Even when violence forced the colonial government to pay attention to women, it was the government's official disposition toward women's actions that mainly was documented, while women's voices or thoughts had no place in colonial records. The paucity of colonial archival materials made reliance on oral interview indispensable. Besides supplementing archival materials, oral interviews remain the best source material for unearthing the African voice otherwise silenced in the colonial archival narrative.

J. F. A. Ajayi opined in 1980 that historians are gradually losing the privilege of access to a large body of archival data, which was readily available in the 1950s and 1960s. He believes that materials on "obvious" themes (such as the political history of African resistance to colonial rule) that his generation wrote about are gradually disappearing and that new branches of history, such as the emerging social history, will have to depend on tools and methodologies from other disciplines, most importantly the social sciences.<sup>23</sup> Isaac Olawale Albert believes that a historian who wants to do well with social history should consider exploring or borrowing some social-science-oriented methodology. He is convinced that the inadequate attention given to social history is due in part to the fact that most historians, especially the orthodox ones, believe that the use of theories affects the

interpretation of facts.<sup>24</sup> Objectivity, one of the major principles of modern historical scholarship, is undermined when the interpretation of facts is distorted. Therefore, the idea of “running” away from social-science-oriented methodologies may have been responsible for the late beginning of the field of social history of Nigeria.

### Social History of Crime and “Social Problems”

The relativity of culture influences the construction of social problems. In other words, what constitutes a social problem in one society may, because of a higher degree of permissiveness, not be a problem at all in another. Time also dictates what societies consider to be social problems. As a society develops, social changes affect the ways it is organized or structured—a factor that automatically influences how human behavior is defined and redefined, configured and reconfigured. Agency and power are other important factors. In light of this, elites (both men and women) determine the aspects of human behavior to be condoned or criminalized.

Various writers have used the above framework to examine the intersection of culture, law, crime, social order, and control in precolonial Nigeria. Most of these writers, who are largely sociologists, anthropologists, lawyers, public intellectuals, and historians, investigate the place of agency and power in the configuration of social order. Book-length works include Teslim Elias’s *Nature of African Customary Law*, A. K. Ajisafe’s *Laws and Customs of the Yoruba People*, C. K. Meek’s *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe*, and O. B. Olaoba’s *Yoruba Legal Culture*, among others;<sup>25</sup> however, most examinations of traditional or precolonial laws and social control are found in chapters or sections in general surveys of cultures of Nigerian ethnic groups.<sup>26</sup> These authors emphasize the thin line between tradition and culture and law. When people observe significant components of customs, they invariably respect the laws of the land and the orders of constituted authorities.

According to Omoniyi Adewoye, Yoruba legal heritage is intermingled with religion and belief in the ancestors.<sup>27</sup> People respect laws in order not to incur the wrath of the gods and goddesses who are represented on earth by the priests and priestesses, rulers, and other custodians of traditional heritage. Personalities like kings or rulers, who are likely to be deified after their death, made laws and sometimes amended existing ones to suit prevailing circumstances. In general, precolonial societies define an act as a “social problem” if it departs from what is generally accepted as “traditional.” “Normal” or “traditional” behaviors are in consonance with the culture and tradition of the people, while characters that contravene the values of the society are labeled “deviant.”<sup>28</sup> Broadly considered, offenses like murder, theft, adultery, and disobedience to the gods are all generally categorized as “social

problems.” A sort of dichotomy between, on the one hand, those offenses that arose as a result of interpersonal relations and, on the other, those that entailed disobedience to the gods was adequately spelled out. Dispute settlement took different forms and was targeted toward making sure that societies did not collapse. The goal of justice among the Ehugbo (Afikpo), according to O. O. Elechi, is “the reparation of harm done to victims and their families by the community.”<sup>29</sup>

Scholars of crime and social control in traditional societies, aside from locating crime and criminality within the larger framework of the social and customary construction of right and wrong, also examine how traditional societies enforce law and order. According to Fadipe, Yoruba and Igbo age grades helped in the enforcement of laws by organizing themselves into what we in modern societies regard as police.<sup>30</sup> Africans generally abide by laws because of the need to preserve customs and to avoid incurring divine wrath. Some deities are associated with the enforcement of laws. For example, Sango, a deified Yoruba king of the Old Oyo Empire, was invoked to enforce and apprehend offenders.

Taboos and superstitions have a strong impact on people’s law-abiding attitude because of their association with spirituality. For instance, Africans naturally abide by a law that no one should hunt game in the sacred forest because it is considered the abode of the gods.<sup>31</sup> The gravity of offenses played a significant role in determining the type of punishment meted out. The most serious offenses, like murder, were punishable by sacrifice to the gods or banishment. If an offense is closely connected to disobedience to a deity, the offender might be sacrificed to appease it. Antisocial individuals could be sold into slavery. J. E. Inikori identifies the effect of the transatlantic slave trade on African criminal justice, arguing that the African criminal justice system went through a process of bastardization because of the need to provide slaves.<sup>32</sup> People who were probably likely to be killed for having violated laws and regulations formed part of the Atlantic slave cargo. Moreover, as the transatlantic slave trade expanded, oracles like *Ibini Okpebe* (Long Juju) of the Aro Chuku were used for slave-hunting purposes.<sup>33</sup>

As colonial rule took root, a new pattern of intergroup relations emerged and Nigeria began to enter a phase of “modernity.” Social change in the areas of marriage and family, urban and rural lifestyle, and rural-to-urban migration were embedded in the new structures of capitalism. The Pax Britannica paved the way for unprecedented migration, which was adequately facilitated by the development of a transportation network. Cultural heterogeneity emerged and the continuity of the old social and economic structures was significantly threatened as more and more people acquired Western education and values. The concomitant effect of this development, as we shall see shortly, was the rise of new forms of criminal behavior and the entrenchment and transformation of old forms.

Nigeria, like all other British colonies, had a criminal code that did not define the word “crime.” Justice C. A. Oputa, in a workshop on African Indigenous Laws organized in 1974, opined, “We have a Criminal Code which surprisingly does not define crime. Our interpretation of Acts and Laws are also silent on the definition of crime.”<sup>34</sup> Throughout the colonial period, the Criminal Code of Nigeria was amended whenever the colonialists considered the need to criminalize activities “inimical” to their goal of exploiting the people of the country. David Killingray’s brief observation is illuminating: “Certainly colonial government did seek to curb and punish wrongful acts by one person against another but an essential feature of colonial law and policing was enforcing colonial rules and punishing those who breached them.”<sup>35</sup>

A sort of distinction exists between a crime that enjoyed a substantial amount of condemnation among the people (real crime) and breaches that are considered legitimate (social crime). In colonial Nigeria, criminal behaviors such as homicide and theft were condemned by all. Other violations, however, like disobedience to regulations related to street hawking, domestic slavery and slave trade, currency counterfeiting, practicing traditional medicine, hoarding and profiteering during the World War II, and so on, were considered a part of the urban lifestyle that enjoyed a considerable level of toleration by the people but was criminalized by the colonial state. Suggestively, Nigerians condemned theft and homicide because both customary law and the alien colonial laws frowned on them.

Historians of crime and social order, such as Laurent Fourchard and Simon Heap, do not disagree with the British colonial government about the root cause of unemployment and its effects on the rise of urban crime, vagrancy, and poverty.<sup>36</sup> The numerous administrative reports produced in the 1930s point to rural-urban migration as the cause of a population explosion that invariably led to high unemployment in the cities.<sup>37</sup> The period in which unemployment first became a noticeable problem is difficult to ascertain. Writing in the 1930s, Fadipe mentions that “unemployment did not arise in Yorubaland until after the 1920s.”<sup>38</sup> He narrates how the introduction of wage labor led to the destruction of the Yoruba subsistence economy and how each community was self-sufficient except in the case of war or protracted siege.<sup>39</sup>

Poverty, according to John Iliffe, was not unknown in precolonial Africa. However, from the late nineteenth century, the nature of poverty in colonial towns was transformed through unemployment, prostitution, and proletarianization.<sup>40</sup> Unemployment paved the way for the transformation of already existing forms of criminality and the introduction of new ones. In Ibadan, for instance, the criminal activities of the nineteenth-century “war boys,” such as brigandage, are akin, according to Heap, to the crimes perpetrated by the “Jaguda boys” in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>41</sup> Robbery took more violent

forms as the urban economy proved inadequate to take care of the needs of the teeming population. Nightlife tended to be dangerous, and the insecurity of children, most importantly female juveniles, increased.

Scholars like Toyin Falola, Akanmu Adebayo, and Ayodeji Olukoju have studied the origin, nature, and dynamics of economic crimes like currency counterfeiting in colonial Nigeria.<sup>42</sup> The introduction of the currency system was germane to the British capitalist structure. In addition, as banks, mercantile houses, and other capitalist institutions established their roots, the people's goal to manipulate the currency system started emerging out of the desire to accumulate wealth. In precolonial times, offenses of this nature apparently did not exist, since no one could forge the cowry, the precolonial currency.<sup>43</sup>

Falola and Adebayo identify the Yorubas' disinclination to coins and paper money, suggesting that initially the new currency was not well received. The inevitability of the new money came through the introduction of wage labor and direct taxation. Historically, different categories of people were accused of introducing counterfeiting to Nigeria. Topping the list were aliens such as the Lebanese and the Indians. Among Nigerians, the Ijebu, a Yoruba ethno-cultural group of southwestern Nigeria, were accused of being the major perpetrators of this crime. Olukoju provides a link between currency counterfeiting and resistance to colonial rule. His position is that although the Ijebu saw counterfeit coinage as a means of accumulating wealth, they also considered it to be a means of resistance to British colonialism. It was a form of economic resistance to colonialism by a group of people who felt continually dissatisfied with the British destruction of their monopoly of the coast–hinterland trade in 1892.<sup>44</sup>

The role of the Ijebu in currency counterfeiting introduced a new dynamic to the tension-filled relations between them and their neighbors, notably the Ibadan. Throughout the colonial period, the involvement of the Ijebu in currency counterfeiting created a great deal of suspicion in their economic relations with their Ibadan hosts. Ibadan traders were said to exercise caution when collecting money from the Ijebu. They even used many derogatory words to qualify their economic transactions with them. Sayings such as "*kántafítí: owo Ijébú*" (counterfeit: Ijebu's money) imply the Ibadan's distrust of the authenticity of money they received from Ijebu traders.<sup>45</sup> This saying was so common in colonial Ibadan that it represented all things that were bad about economic transactions. Fake or substandard goods and services were generally regarded as *kantafiti: owo Ijebu*, irrespective of the Ijebu's involvement.<sup>46</sup>

T. N. Tamuno, Philip Ahire, and Kemi Rotimi are scholars who have provided significant arguments and data on the police and crime control in Nigeria.<sup>47</sup> During the colonial period, the Nigeria Police Force tended to be used predominantly to cut the tentacles of political opposition and crush rebellion that sought to undermine hegemony, while limited attempts were

made to protect lives and property of colonial subjects. The military was traditionally introduced when the police could not quell crises, such as the Women's War of 1929, the General Strike (1945), the Burutu Strike (1947), and the Kano Riots (1953).<sup>48</sup>

The privatization of crime control in Nigeria, as Rasheed Olaniyi and Laurent Fourchard argue, dates back to the first two or three decades of the twentieth century. Although the government at one time or another condemned private policing, the picture that appears from the 1950s is that there was no way crime could be contained by the police alone.<sup>49</sup> Organized criminal gangs were not unknown in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>50</sup> However, the proliferation of arms among the people in the post-Civil War era had far-reaching consequences for the security of lives and property, as the activities of criminal gangs increased all over the country. The introduction of public execution for those convicted of armed robbery in the early 1970s seems not to have helped the matter. The economic recession that followed the oil boom and the austerity of the 1980s paved the way for an astronomical increase in armed robbery and types of nonviolent crime like drug trafficking.<sup>51</sup>

## Family and Marriage

Kristin Mann, Judith Byfield, P. C. Lloyd, and other scholars have worked on family and marriage, focusing largely on Christianity and the impact of the colonial capitalist system and the emergence of colonial urban centers on traditional marriage practices.<sup>52</sup> The emergence of colonial urban centers, monetization, and entrenchment of capitalist structures such as the railway have been considered the major factors responsible for the transformation of African traditional marriage.<sup>53</sup> The construction of railway tracks helped in the consolidation of the colonial economy and linked and facilitated people's incorporation into the vortex of global capitalist exploitation. Wage labor was introduced, and the need to make the "white man's money" through migration (predominantly rural to urban) became a popular trend among colonial subjects.<sup>54</sup> The new railway economy was subsumed within the phenomenon of colonial urbanism, since most railway termini practically developed into urban centers. A good number of Nigerian urban centers, such as Ebute Metta (part of Lagos), Ibadan, Zaria, and Abeokuta, were rapidly transformed into colonial urban centers with the extension of railway lines.<sup>55</sup> While Kano developed partly as a result of ancient economic activities, the British specifically established Port Harcourt and Kaduna as administrative centers in 1912 and 1914, respectively.<sup>56</sup>

The Nigerian railway was the single largest employer of labor (predominantly male) throughout the colonial period. In most urban areas in Nigeria migrant males who were not married before migrating traditionally traveled

to their original place of birth to look for wives, whom they brought to the city after all marriage rites had been completed. According to Lisa Lindsay, the need for marriage money was the principal reason men took up migrant wage labor in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>57</sup> This evidence is corroborated by P. C. Lloyd, who points out that 60 percent of the Igbo population in Lagos, ranging in age from fifteen to thirty-four, were young men in search of the high bride-prices demanded in their various communities.<sup>58</sup> As colonial urban centers developed, on the one hand, into places of better economic opportunities and the idea of working in the cities to meet marriage demands at home increased, the countryside became absorbed, on the other hand, into the capitalist economy.<sup>59</sup>

Talbot, N. A. Fadipe, and G. T. Basden have discussed betrothal and bride-price (variously called dowry and bride-wealth) among the various groups in the Nigerian geographic area.<sup>60</sup> Their appraisals suggest that it was predominantly a form of wealth transfer from one family to another and did not signify an economic transaction, which involves the payment of a specific amount for the purpose of marriage. It was embodied in several traditional rites, carried out over a long period after a verbal pronouncement of betrothal had been made and accepted by the families of the prospective bride and groom. The symbolic, rather than economic, significance of bride-prices informs the thinking of J. R. Haffensen, who suggested in 1931 that the word should be replaced with “espousal fee” because the transmutation it went through during the colonial period was not on par with the functions it performed in precolonial times.<sup>61</sup>

The monetization of marriage through high bride-prices was prevalent among virtually all the ethnic groups in the country. According to Fadipe, one of the social issues deliberated at the 1937 Conference of Yoruba Chiefs was the adoption of a uniform amount as bride-price in Yorubaland.<sup>62</sup> As Mansur Ibrahim Mukhtar has observed in the case of northern Nigeria, the *Mirmushin Chiromas Maikano Agogos* (the name of a popular trading agent of an imported cloth) and the *Kaima tsaya ka samu naka* (a statement that means “You should get your own”) supplanted *Kayanzance* (courtship).<sup>63</sup> Men from the Mbaise clan, Owerri District, who resided in Lagos in 1953, had to save for eight years before they could raise the £200 demanded by their village elders as bride-price. The *Nigerian Spokesman* reported in 1948 that members of the Youth of Awo-Omama (Lagos Branch) threatened not to marry from their community if the bride-price was not reduced. The young men advocated for the reduction of the bride-price to £15 for illiterate brides and £25 for literate brides.<sup>64</sup>

The *West African Pilot*, *Eastern Nigeria Guardian*, and *Nigerian Spokesman* carried many stories related to the activities of the ethnic associations that worked fervently to persuade their village elders to reduce bride-prices.<sup>65</sup> Men who dominated the ethnic associations argued that not all migrant

urban male workers earned wage labor and that in fact a good number of them had private businesses that fetched only low incomes. As expected, people back in the villages were less persuaded in part because they never visited the cities and because some wage earners, notably railway workers, were able adequately to fulfill their marital obligations. A study christened this development a “masculinity and bride-price hysteria” because the entire situation constituted a panic among urban male workers.<sup>66</sup> It is a truism that, as we will see, a railway worker made “good” money, which for the most part led to the reconfiguration of the aspect of masculinity, a situation that substantially affected marriage stability. It was only this class of men that appeared to have benefited greatly from the wage labor system. What this suggests is that the majority of male laborers in the major cities in Nigeria were dissatisfied with having to work for several years to raise the money needed for marriage obligations at home.

Lindsay, who has done interesting work on masculinity, marriage, and the railway in colonial Nigeria, conducted studies of life histories among wives of railway workers.<sup>67</sup> In one of these interviews, a respondent asserts, “If anybody who works in the railway comes your way you would like to marry him. At that time, railway paid very well . . . so people loved them [the employees] and liked to mix with them.”<sup>68</sup> The reconfiguration of the entire notion of marriage and masculinity is perhaps the most important aspect of Lindsay’s study. Men were able to circumvent the duration of junior masculinity by working away from home, making money, and marrying at a relatively younger age. Cash and the ability to build a large following rapidly replaced the transition from junior to senior masculinity, which had hitherto rested mostly on age.

One further aspect of social change is the effect of cash on marriage stability. Lindsay suggests, “The longevity of salaried railway workers’ marriage appears to have been linked to their steady paychecks.”<sup>69</sup> She draws her evidence from a survey of 167 retired railway men in the major cities of southwestern Nigeria in 1993 and 1994. She also suggests that the rate of divorce for railway men during the colonial period was very low: “Since lack of financial maintenance was one of the most frequent reasons women sought divorce, railway men’s ability to provide their wives and children with at least some consistent support likely was decisive in their marriage.”<sup>70</sup> Lindsay’s position is similar to that of Byfield, who studied the pattern of divorce and women’s social history in Abeokuta, a prominent town in southwestern Nigeria. Drawing evidence from divorce cases, Byfield identifies the impact of the railway on marriage and divorce in Abeokuta. The need to escape from unsatisfactory homes led some Abeokuta women to desert their husbands for railway workers.<sup>71</sup> This development created tension between traditional authorities and husbands of deserted wives on the one hand, and the British government on the other. The government was not persuaded that new laws had to be passed to criminalize women’s desertion from unhappy homes.

The divorce rate increased under the new social and economic conditions. The legalization of divorce was good for women for whom it paved the way to be “liberated” from unhappy homes and restrictions that tradition placed on their social and economic mobility. In the settlement of divorce cases in court, according to P. C. Lloyd’s foundational work on the subject among the Yoruba, the new husband had to pay for the former husband’s marriage expense. This implies that in contracting a new relationship, a divorcée could not afford to be remarried to a man who could not afford legal expenses.

Polygamy is an important feature of traditional African marriage. In pre-colonial times, large households were needed for agricultural production, while honor and immense respect were accorded to men partly in accordance with the size of their household. It was relatively easy in precolonial societies to maintain large households because the economy was based on subsistence and communal bonds were strong enough to sustain the social and economic well-being of many people.<sup>72</sup> The new forms of social and economic organization that colonialism brought did not support the continuity of the polygamous marriage. Large households, as Peter Marris shows in the case of Lagos, cannot survive within a structure where huge resources are needed to send children to European-style schools and equip them with the needed tools for surviving in a capitalistic society.<sup>73</sup> The family compound model gradually disintegrated as people, drawn by economic and social opportunities, relocated to new towns or new sections of developing colonial urban centers.<sup>74</sup> The nuclear family gave way to the extended, and the ideal of cultural allegiance founded in the notion of common experience began to undergo a process of erosion.<sup>75</sup>

As Ekechi and others have shown, the first blows to polygamy came through the introduction of Christianity, Western education, and the alien values of individualism. Monogamy was the only type of marriage recognized by the church.<sup>76</sup> Colonial structures also helped to reinforce monogamy through legal instruments such as the British Marriage Ordinances. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Christianity and colonialism had taken root in most parts of Africa, one of the most contentious debates between African missionaries and their white counterparts, as seen in J. B. Webster’s *African Churches among the Yoruba*, revolved round the condemnation of polygamy. African polygamists were denied baptism because monogamous marriage was the only recognized type of Christian marriage. This backlash was partly responsible for the emergence of indigenous churches in most parts of Africa.<sup>77</sup> An intellectual dialogue, as this case demonstrates, can have practical effects.

In summary, the social history of Nigeria has a nonelitist orientation through its examination of the lives of ordinary people and their engagement with the larger society. The social history of Nigeria took a multidisciplinary

perspective by digging into how economic, structural, and political change led to a transformation of people's social existence in diverse areas of life, including marriage and family—the field's most-studied aspect. While the general orientation of social history remains the impact of colonialism on traditional customs and culture, some discourses on social history are theorized around gender and women's history, which is explored in the next chapter.

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# 6

## Women's History and the Reconfiguration of Gender

Bolanle Awe has identified the male-oriented nature of the origin of African historiography and its effect on women's historical realities. She points out that, like the Western historiographical tradition, men were largely responsible for pioneering African history.<sup>1</sup> From the late 1950s, when modern historical scholarship on African history emerged, to the early 1980s, women's history was sidelined in the mainstream of African historical scholarship according to Awe, to the extent that the eight-volume *UNESCO General History of Africa*, one of the first major comprehensive readings on African history, says nothing about female contributions to African history. The same applies to the *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. This general survey of Nigerian history does not have a single chapter on women's history or the place of women in Nigerian historical experience.<sup>2</sup> Yet the project on the biographies of Nigerian women undertaken by Awe did not appear until 1992, because "publisher after publisher declined to take on the manuscript because they decided that the time was not ripe for the publication of a book on Nigerian women and that such a book would not have much market value."<sup>3</sup> It was not until 1988 that the first panel on women in Nigeria was organized at the thirty-third annual congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN), the nation's professional body of historical scholarship.<sup>4</sup> Four years later, LaRay Denzer presented a study, "Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study," as the lead paper at the annual congress of HSN.<sup>5</sup>

The appearance of the first panel on women and the presentation of women's history at HSN's annual meeting can be attributed to decades of protests by scholars of women's history who argued that the mainstream needed to redress its neglect. Gaining acceptance for the new scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s was quite difficult due to the dearth of published sources on women's history. For the colonial period, the work of European anthropologists constitutes a body of accessible secondary source material on women's history. The use of this genre of data is problematic, however, both in terms of facts and in terms of the historical circumstances under which they were produced. Sylvia Leith-Ross's *African Women* is perhaps the

most detailed and comprehensive anthropological research on Nigerian women written during the colonial period. She concludes that "the Ibo-speaking people are the most numerous, the most adaptable, the most go-ahead, the most virile and at the same time the most primitive."<sup>6</sup> This view is consonant with typical colonial anthropological surveys, which, apart from their cultural prejudices, were written mainly to serve the needs of the colonial masters and not those of Africans.

To do professional historical research on women, new methodologies have to be devised while adhering to the standard of the mainstream. Colonial archival materials and anthropological works like those of Leith-Ross have to be deconstructed since they largely served the purpose of the institution of colonialism and the institution of patriarchy in general. As we will see in the case of the popular *Ogu Umunwanyi* (Women's War) of 1929, the male-centered interpretation of women's historical experience altered the modus operandi of the women who fought the war. Women's history, like mainstream African history, sees the need to use oral tradition and oral history to recover the past. However, the voices of women were largely ignored by mainstream historians. In order to give voice to the voiceless and provide adequate visibility that had long been denied, scholars of women's history carefully collect women's oral traditions and life histories and supplement them with documentary evidence.

Historians of women and gender have had to deal not only with the paucity of documentary evidence on women's past but also with the prevailing interpretations of African women's experience. Within the Western feminist academic circle, African women's experience tended to be misunderstood because of the generalized idea that all women, irrespective of cultures, share the same experiences of powerlessness, victimization, and undue domination by patriarchal structures and paraphernalia. This blatant generalization caught the attention of historians of African women (notably those born in Africa) who readily protested against this misrepresentation. According to Awe, the misinterpretation of fact is a product of the monopoly of the discourse on women's history by non-African scholars. She called for the greater involvement of African-born scholars in research on African women because they are capable of understanding the women's experiences better than their North American and European counterparts, who have limited firsthand information about African women's experiences.<sup>7</sup> In the preface to her widely read book *Male Daughters, Female Husbands*, Ifi Amadiume categorically states that woman-to-woman marriage among the Nnobi Igbo should not be confused for lesbianism, arguing that support and cooperation between women "do not imply lesbian sexual practice."<sup>8</sup> Amadiume directs her position at black lesbians who adopt "prejudiced interpretations of African situations to justify their choices of sexual alternatives which have their roots and meanings in the West."<sup>9</sup>

The appearance of Nina Mba's *Nigerian Women Mobilized* has been considered the beginning of serious scholarship on women's history in Nigeria.<sup>10</sup> This first comprehensive history of Nigerian women was followed by Kristin Mann's *Marrying Well* and Barbara Callaway's *Muslim Hausa Women in Nigeria*.<sup>11</sup> Cheryl Johnson-Odim's doctoral dissertation, entitled "Nigerian Women and British Colonialism" (Northwestern University, 1978), metamorphosed into a collection of important essays on women's activism, especially that of uneducated elites, which tended to be overshadowed by their educated counterparts.<sup>12</sup> Callaway's book-length study of Hausa women examines how they coped with and adapted to the political and economic changes unleashed by colonial capitalist expropriation. Prior to the 1980s, the likes of Awe and Saburi Biobaku, and Judith Van Allen and Caroline Ifeka-Moller wrote the history of women by looking at the female chieftaincy institution among the Yoruba and the famous Women's War of 1929, respectively.<sup>13</sup> An equally useful early essay, Felicia Ekejiuba's biography of Omu Okwei, explores the life and times of a prominent queen in precolonial times.<sup>14</sup> Ifeka-Moller's and Van Allen's studies may be the first African-centered pieces on the Women's War. By giving voice to the voiceless through a review of the cultural factors associated with the conflict, these scholars' work is revisionist when compared to early Eurocentric treatments of the subject by colonial-government-sponsored anthropologists like Leith-Ross and Margery Perham.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from Mba and Johnson-Odim, whose works cited above are revised versions of doctoral dissertations (written for the University of Ibadan and Northwestern University, respectively), a good number of pioneers of women's history started their careers in completely different disciplines. Awe, for instance, began her scholarship as a historian of Ibadan imperialism in the nineteenth century, while Denzer had a stint as a political historian of Sierra Leone. Arguably, Denzer is the most prolific scholar of Nigerian women's history. Her work touches virtually all areas of women's history since the pre-colonial period. By 1998, when she left the University of Ibadan after close to two decades of teaching and researching, she had succeeded in unearthing several unexplored primary sources on women's history, especially sources covering the colonial period. Her biographical study of a prominent Nigerian, Folayegbe Akintunde-Ighodalo, is a *primus inter pares*.<sup>16</sup>

By the late 1990s, women's and gender studies had developed fully into one of the most dynamic areas of African studies. The new field owes some of its impetus to the formation of women's academic bodies such as the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) and Women in Nigeria (WIN). These professional bodies organized conferences that provided room for scholarly debates on the place of women in national development. The United Nations Decade for Women (1976–85) provided international support for women's research and conferencing.<sup>17</sup>

With the expansion of courses and programs on women's and gender studies in Europe and North America, Nigerianists were readily exposed to new ideas and research in this field.

Interuniversity relations also enhanced publishing opportunities. A communiqué issued at the end of an international conference on women held at the University of Ibadan in 1985 called for the establishment of a documentation and research center. In 1986 the Women's Research and Documentation Center (WORDOC) was established in Ibadan as the first facility dedicated to the provision of research and academic support for the study of women in Nigeria. The center organized symposia and conferences on women's and gender studies. The center was also instrumental to the development of linkage programs between universities in Nigeria and their North American counterparts.<sup>18</sup>

By the opening years of the 1990s, departments of history at universities in Ibadan, Ago Iwoye, and Lagos had courses on women's history. Undergraduate and graduate students were encouraged to write their bachelor of arts long essays and theses on women's history. A field that had once been lumped together with social and political history began to develop its own subfields, as works on the economic, social, political, and even medical history of women appeared in print. The consolidation of research on women has reached a stage where it is practically a rule of thumb for scholars to include a chapter or a section on women or gender in a work that aims to provide a general historical survey of any part of Nigeria.

## **Colonialism and the Status and Role of Women**

The extent of the impact of colonial rule on the role and status of women is perhaps the most important theoretical question that has continued to influence the ways scholars write about women. Three positions have emerged, according to Denzer: (1) it allowed women's status to deteriorate; (2) it was beneficial; and (3) it set in motion a complex cultural interaction that produced both beneficial and adverse results.<sup>19</sup> Let us consider in detail these arguments about colonialism's impact starting with the first thesis.

### ***Colonial Rule Caused Women's Status to Deteriorate***

To judge the first thesis in its entirety, an understanding of the role and status of women in precolonial Nigerian societies is needed as a background to the changes that took place during the colonial period. Scholars such as Awe, Mba, and Denzer, among others, have argued that among most Nigerian groups during the precolonial period, women's political, social, and

economic statuses were not subservient to those of men. Women wielded a lot of power and influence that gave them leverage vis-à-vis men. The political and social history of several Nigerian societies is replete with references to women as queens, kingmakers, wealthy merchants, and priestesses.<sup>20</sup> Economically speaking, as Gloria Chuku maintained, women were farmers among some Igbo groups, while their Yoruba and Hausa counterparts were involved in long- and short-distance trade. Men did not monopolize precolonial trading activities because several cultural factors dictated the economic role and functions of each gender.

Scholars who subscribe to this position, like Oyeronke Oyewumi, insist that biological sex did not determine African women's social status in a fixed and permanent manner. Instead, these scholars maintain that gender was socially and historically constructed in a manner that allowed men and women to fulfill their traditionally sanctioned functions in a way that did not represent the subordination of either males or females.<sup>21</sup> A dual-sex symmetrical system, according to Nkiru Nzegwu, in which individuals were recognized for their social and economic responsibilities, was the characteristic feature of Onitsha society before the advent of colonialism.<sup>22</sup> Women who performed functions more typically associated with men, such as providing bride-wealth, were considered as men, while a man who attended female initiation ceremonies took up a woman's identity. In some societies, women who were kings were treated as men, as Nwando Achebe, a historian of Igbo women, argues in the case of King Ahebi Ugbabe in northern Igboland.<sup>23</sup> The fluidity of gender relations meant that men and women could cross the line of biological sex with limited or no restrictions. Oyewumi, the author of the award-winning book *The Invention of Women*, presents the best-structured and most articulate position on this issue. She argues that "the fundamental category 'woman'—who is foundational in Western gender discourses—simply did not exist in Yorubaland prior to its sustained contact with the West."<sup>24</sup> Oyewumi continues, "An emphasis that presupposes the existence of 'woman' as a social category always understood to be powerless, disadvantaged, and controlled and defined by men can lead to serious misconceptions, when applied to Oyo-Yoruba society."<sup>25</sup>

A transmutation was precipitated by the imposition of colonial rule, which led to the introduction of sex/gender hierarchies that are extraneous to the various Nigerian ethnicities. In theory and practice, the colonized and colonizers are presumed to be male, though the colonized male was considered inferior to his British colonial masters. By erecting male-dominated administrative and economic structures, the British gradually phased out nearly all the political power that women had before the imposition of colonial rule. Many female chieftaincy titles, according to Awe and Denzer, went into extinction as the Lugardian administrative arrangement of indirect rule was consolidated.<sup>26</sup> The British did not see women as important elements in the

new administrative and political arrangements. Conversely, they introduced to their African colonies the Victorian idea that a woman's place is in the home as mother and wife. Females, like their male counterparts, paid taxes but were not allowed to vote until 1950 in southern Nigeria, while women in the North had to wait until several years after independence. The rule that women should be private and not public personalities was not restricted to Nigerian women, as European women who came to the country both as wives of colonial administrators and officers were not allowed to take up important political and administrative responsibilities. In a book-length study entitled *Gender, Culture, and Empire*, Helen Callaway explores the experience of these women.<sup>27</sup> By allowing wives of colonial administrators to have access to jobs that African women were supposed to do, the British in Nigeria intensified the crisis of racial discrimination within confines of gender.

Colonial rule undermined the economic status and role of women by putting in place a male-dominated capitalist structure. The mines, civil service, railway, and other colonial ventures were all male dominated. Some female-specific industries, such as cloth dying among Abeokuta women, for instance, suffered enormously as a result of the prejudiced nature of the colonial government toward female-dominated economic activities.<sup>28</sup> According to Judith Byfield, women faced discrimination in accessing incentives and had to adjust constantly to the unpredictable nature of the colonial economy, partly because European-manufactured cloth, one of the ingredients for dying, had a significant place in the British capitalist venture in Nigeria.<sup>29</sup> The British discriminated against Igbo women in the implementation of agricultural policies, focusing on men as cash crop farmers and excluding women from agricultural extension and support services offered to men.<sup>30</sup> The agricultural crisis that rocked the Igbo region, according to Chima Korieh, can be attributed in part to the compromised nature of government policies that alienated women.<sup>31</sup>

In her book *Protest Movements in Lagos*, Rina Okonkwo underscores the series of political maneuvers and protests that led to the establishment of Queen's College, the first government secondary school, in 1927.<sup>32</sup> The education policy of allowing males to go to school and limiting females' access to Western education meant that the latter were not going to be adequately equipped with the skills needed to be "relevant" in the colonial economy and society. Girls schools' curricula placed greater emphasis on vocations and homemaking, as demonstrated by Denzer.<sup>33</sup> Apparently, girls were neither prepared for nor in fact expected to be involved in public spaces, which were regarded as male preserves. In her piece entitled "Women's Employment in Government Service in Colonial Nigeria," Denzer analyzes the evolution of women's employment in government establishments, claiming that as little emphasis was placed on female employment, the few lucky women who were able to work with the government faced significant discrimination

in terms of remuneration, because of the government's position that most men had dependents but most women did not. It was not until 1956 that females possessing a West African School Certificate who were recruited to government departments were paid the same salary as their male counterparts.<sup>34</sup> Mba's summary of the role and status of women under colonial rule is informative on this point:

Women were considered unsuitable for the rigor of public life; hence they were not allowed to vote, to contest elections, to sit in Parliament, or to be employed in the civil service. The British administrators worked for a government in which there were no women at any level, and therefore they did not expect or wish to find women involved in government in Southern Nigeria.<sup>35</sup>

### *Colonial Rule Was Wholly Beneficial*

While women's political and economic status was undermined due to several policies of the colonial government, some colonial laws tended to favor women. In this regard, the second thesis, which sees the positive aspects of colonial policies on the role and status of women, comes to the fore. The British colonial government considered several precolonial cultural practices inimical to its goal of civilizing Africans. At various times and under contrasting circumstances, British administrators worked with Christian missionaries to criminalize such cultural practices as woman-to-woman marriage; "child" marriage and betrothal; domestic slavery, the slave trade, and other forms of servitude; and so on. The church's condemnation of polygamy helped to reinforce the Marriage Ordinance of 1906 by adding a religious dimension to it. Although the marriage ordinances, racism, and several forms of anti-African Christian doctrine came under enormous attack by some African Christian converts, culminating in the emergence of the first wave of cultural nationalism, the new arrangement tended to favor women as they seized the opportunity to climb the ladder of social and economic upward mobility and direct the future of their families in the ways that best suited their agendas.<sup>36</sup> The increased involvement of Lagos female elites in the ownership of landed property was detested by men who continuously used the institution of patriarchy to limit what they considered as "aggressiveness" on the part of women.<sup>37</sup>

The legalization of divorce is perhaps the legal change that most significantly favored women. Before the advent of colonialism, women, as a result of several cultural and economic factors, rarely considered divorce as a way of getting out of unhappy marriages. As recorded by G. T. Basden, before the advent of colonial rule, the fear of not getting suitable (second) husbands and the future of their children were conditions that discouraged Igbo women

from seeking divorce.<sup>38</sup> Basden's observation is similar to Samuel Johnson's on the rarity of divorce among the Yoruba. According to the latter, divorce was "so rare as to be practically considered as non-existing."<sup>39</sup> However, with the legalization of divorce, changes in the mode of production, the emergence of colonial urban centers, and the introduction of a monetized economy, colonial Nigeria began to experience cultural and social shifts that affected the ways in which people perceived the idea of remarriage and the chances of getting a suitable husband after a failed first marriage.

Olatunji Ojo, in examining Ekiti women's roles as wives and farmers, points to how women seized the opportunity of the legalization of divorce to get out of poor and unhappy homes. In selecting new husbands, Ojo remarks, "women were guided by their personal aspirations and their economic and social needs."<sup>40</sup> Ojo seems to suggest that divorcées tended to select men who were economically buoyant to take care of their needs or men who would allow them to enjoy the freedom needed for upward mobility, both socially and economically.<sup>41</sup> The new land reforms also favored Ekiti women, as a widow now had the right to inherit her dead husband's landed property. Widowhood practices had hitherto limited widows' chances in this respect. By the 1940s and 1950s, Ekiti women were not only actively involved in planting, harvesting, and transporting cocoa and palm produce, but hired men to work for them as laborers.<sup>42</sup>

Divorce and other aspects of social and cultural change reduced the influence of "uncivilized" cultural practices on women. Kenneth Little, in his tome *African Women in Towns*, drew a lot of evidence from Nigeria in his analysis of how women joined men in contesting urban space and negotiating urban realities to their best advantage.<sup>43</sup> Little christened women's presence in urban space a "social revolution" because the enormous impact of their involvement in the different aspects of urban society negated traditional notions of femininity.

#### *Colonial Rule Set in Motion a Complex Cultural Interaction That Produced Both Beneficial and Adverse Results*

The combination of the first two theses produces the last: liberal feminist scholars are of the view that colonialism is a paradox because on the one hand it empowered women, while on the other it robbed them of many rights and privileges that they had enjoyed before the imposition of colonial rule.<sup>44</sup> Place is also a determining factor of the extent of colonial rule's effects on women. For instance, women were rarely allowed to participate publicly in politics and other forms of public engagement in the Sokoto Caliphate before the establishment of colonial rule, while their counterparts in modern southern Nigeria were actively involved in politics.

Women in southern Nigeria during the colonial period registered their presence more in political activities than their northern counterparts, who faced tougher religious sanctions regulating women's political participation. Denzer puts the situation in the following way: "The imposition of colonialism generated complex social interactions—sometimes beneficial, other times diminishing—of women's roles and status. Marriage, whether Western or traditional in form, underwent significant changes, reordering gender relations."<sup>45</sup>

Denzer's position is reinforced by Achebe, who disagrees with Ama diume that "colonialism undermined Igbo pre-colonial ideals of gender flexibility."<sup>46</sup> Using the case of King Ahebi Ugbabe of Enugu-Ezike as a case study, she posits "[that] Nsukka Igbo gender transformations not only coexisted with British colonialism, but that colonialism created conditions that sometimes supported, reinforced, and extended the contours of acceptable gender transformations."<sup>47</sup>

## Women, Power, and Visibility

Reference has already been made to how modern African historiography developed as a history of men, while women's historical experiences were sidelined. Pioneers of women's history were moved by the need to write women into history—just as men wrote men into history. The power and visibility project also entails chronicling women's achievements in politics and the economy since the precolonial period. It has involved examining the contributions of women to nationalist and anticolonial struggles. A list of frontline Nigerian nationalists, as Denzer, Mba, Johnson-Odim, and others maintain, has to be critically revised to include personalities like Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa, Oyinkan Abayomi, Alimotu Pelewura, and the hundreds or thousands of women who waged the war that terminated the barbaric warrant chief system in southeastern Nigeria. The history of northern Nigeria, as Catherine Coles, Beverly Mack, and Barbara Callaway show, is not complete without a consideration of the role of women in the making of the society.<sup>48</sup> Women-centered research celebrates the creative ingenuity of women and their engagements with the public and private domains in active rather than dormant manners.

## Precolonial Period

The first and most comprehensive volume of biographies of Nigerian women is *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*, edited by Bolanle Awe. Each chapter is allotted to the career of a single personality among precolonial women

of power and influence, such as Queen Amina of Zaria, Queen Kambasa of Bonny, Nana Asma'u, Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan, and Omu Okwei of Osomari. For the colonial period, the life and times of Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa, Olaniwun Adunni Oluwole, Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti ("Lioness of Lisabi"), and Oyinkan Abayomi are presented.<sup>49</sup> The authors of the various chapters weave the life histories of these women into the general history of the societies that produced them. Emphasis is placed on how women contributed to the development of their societies by acquiring power, wealth, influence, and status needed to influence or direct the course of their societies. It is intriguing to learn that women, like men, led wars of military expansion in precolonial times, provided resources needed for prosecuting wars, and were involved in warmaking and peacemaking decisions.

The story of Queen Amina of Zazzau (Zaria) stands out from the pack. Her thirty-four-year reign in the sixteenth century was characterized by aggressive empire building. She reigned during a period that the entire central Sudan was characterized by interstate wars and rivalries, and it was said that for a stretch of thirty days, she did not live in the capital because she was busy engaging in numerous military campaigns that led to the redrawing of the political map of Zazzau.<sup>50</sup> She was not the only powerful female ruler in precolonial Nigeria. According to E. J. Alagoa, Queen Kambasa of Bonny reportedly began the Bonny wars of expansion after her enthronement at the formative period of the history of the city-state. She also initiated the process of strengthening the tradition of succession and started the custom of placing the skulls of enemies at the shrine of Ikuba, the Bonny national god, as the symbol memorializing victory at war.<sup>51</sup>

The Yoruba produced probably the most impressive legacy of female rulers in the precolonial period. According to Denzer, between the mid-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, six women appeared on the list of Ilesa kings, while three princesses became the *Awujale* (king) of Ijebu Ode before 1760. The fifth *Ewi* (king) of Ado Ekiti, who reigned in the sixteenth century, was a woman by the name of Yeyenirewu.<sup>52</sup> Every Yoruba state had a female hierarchy of chiefs headed by an *Iyalode*. The *Iyalode* coordinated the activities of market women and attended to issues that affected them. She therefore had her own private court where issues were heard before they reached the king, if the need arose. Perhaps the most influential of the nineteenth-century *Iyalodes* of Ibadan was Efunsetan Aniwura. She was honored with the title because of her contributions to Ibadan's military exploits. Apart from her network of trade that crisscrossed Yorubaland, she had a large expanse of land and some two hundred slaves that tilled it and kept her large herds of cattle and horses. She extended credits to traders, both men and women, and used her trading network to wield power and influence.<sup>53</sup>

The history of women in precolonial Nigeria is not solely the history of the so-called great queens, queen mothers, warriors, merchants, and priestesses.

Historians of women's history also identify and examine the contributions of "ordinary" women to the development of their various communities. Women's precolonial economic history recognizes the contributions of unseen hands in the historical process. For the most part, the data for reconstructing precolonial women's economic history, like all other genres of women's history, are fragmented. Denzer, drawing evidence from the writings of such nineteenth-century explorers and missionaries as Anna Hinderer, William Clarke, Thomas Bowen, Richard and John Lander, and Hugh Clapperton, discusses the cardinal position of women in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. The explorers reported how women were involved in farming, trading, the distribution of goods, and other forms of productive economic activity.<sup>54</sup>

Chuku's findings among Igbo women corroborate those of Denzer. She draws evidence from anthropologists including G. T. Basden, C. K. Meek, and M. M. Green to demonstrate the importance of agriculture among Igbo women.<sup>55</sup> Igbo women, like their Yoruba counterparts, were involved in long- and short-distance trade and in fact participated in coast–hinterland commercial transactions. What is more, while women in most Nigerian groups did not cultivate, Igbo women, as Chuku maintains, were noted for their active role as cultivators. Women, among some Igbo groups such as Ndi-Nlugbo, in addition to their family chores and other responsibilities, worked between thirteen and fourteen hours daily on farming and food processing.<sup>56</sup>

Clapperton, the Lander brothers, Hinderer, and their fellow missionaries and explorers were able to document their observations about the economic activities of Yoruba women because women in Yoruba traditional culture, unlike their counterparts in the Sokoto Caliphate who were placed under seclusion, were not prevented from public appearances and engagements. However, the relative lack of representation of Hausa women in public spaces should not be taken to mean that they were powerless or did not contribute to the development of the states in which they lived. In her intriguing account of concubinage and power in Kano, Heidi J. Nast argues that state-supported concubinage emerged at the time Kano was becoming one of the three most important cities in sixteenth-century Africa.<sup>57</sup> She points out that royal concubines played a foundational role in the development of the state by serving as representatives of the places where they were initially taken as prisoners. Royal concubines were able to help foster economic, social, and political relationships between and among states and empires. They readily served as consultants in matters related to their places of origin. Royal concubines monopolized indigo cloth dying, were organized into elaborate labor hierarchies, and commanded enormous respect through the state.

For the most part, royal concubines derived their power from the centrality of agrarian society, which celebrates human and earthly fertility. They were the main collectors of grain and of Kano's primary taxes, and they managed grain proceeds and marketing. According to Nast, "The earliest

palace then seems to have been organized socio-spatially around considerations of fertility—earthly (grains and granaries) and human (children), both associated with the activities, places and bodies of royal concubines.<sup>58</sup> Nast suggests that the royal concubines' wombs practically and symbolically represented the site where the power of the state is located. The power of the state in this regard was children of royal lineage. Royal children were needed for the consolidation of the aristocratic culture, creating and fostering royal linkages among states and empires and guaranteeing credible and competitive succession.

Nast's argument on concubinage and power in Kano is in tandem with Colleen Kriger's position on women's textile production in the Sokoto Caliphate. For the most part, the textile industry formed one of the most lucrative economic ventures of the caliphate.<sup>59</sup> Because women in purdah largely worked as spinners, commentators tended to see their activities as unskilled and subsistence oriented, while those of men were considered to be dynamic and market oriented. Drawing evidence from textiles, an uncommon source for reconstructing Africa's economic history, Kriger identifies the numerous stages of textile production and argues that the pre-eminence of the textile industry in the economy of the Sokoto Caliphate should be attributed to the indispensability of women in all the stages of textile production.<sup>60</sup>

## Colonial Period

Historians of Nigerian elite women, like Johnson-Odim, Mba, Denzer, and Abosede George, narrate how female elites that emerged during the colonial period attended Western-oriented educational institutions, worked with the colonial government, joined political parties, and formed pressure groups that demanded a better standard of living for Nigerian women. Some of these elite women, like Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa, Oyinkan Abayomi, Olu-funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, and Aina Ademola, were offspring of the first generation of elites that began to emerge from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup> They range from journalists, lawyers, nurses, doctors, teachers, civil servants, and politicians to private business owners and leaders of market women. A short list will include Olaniwun Adunni Oluwole, Folayegbe M. Akintunde-Ighodalo, and Margaret Ekpo.

Oyinkan Abayomi is probably the most-studied prominent female of the educated elites in colonial Nigeria.<sup>62</sup> Her biographers emphasize how her family background prepared and equipped her with the skills and knowledge needed for fighting to uplift Nigerian women. Abayomi, the daughter of Sir Kitoye Ajasa, the first Nigerian to be knighted and a slave returnee from Dahomey (located in modern Benin Republic), returned to Nigeria in the

1920s. After completing her studies in the United Kingdom, she came to Nigeria to establish female-only associations and clubs such as the British West African Educated Girl's Club (BWAEGC), which later metamorphosed into the Ladies Progressive Club (LPC). Abayomi's LPC was instrumental to the numerous petitions that led to the establishment of Queen's College, the first government secondary school for girls in 1927. Queen's College remained the only girls' secondary school in Lagos until the 1950s. According to Johnson-Odim, Abayomi was intimately involved in the formation of the Lagos Youth Movement (LYM; later the Nigerian Youth Movement, or NYM) in 1934. This party was well known for its stern opposition to Herbert Macaulay's Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). The formation of the Nigerian Women's Party (NWP) in 1944 is perhaps her most significant contribution to the history of nationalism and decolonization. She believed that Nigerian women were cheated by both the British colonial government and Nigerian men and must demand their rights. The major issues that occupied the agenda of Abayomi's NWP included girl's education and literary classes for adult women, employment of women in the civil service, the right of female minors to trade freely in Lagos, and the protection of market women's rights.<sup>63</sup>

Not all the female elites in colonial Nigeria attended Western-style schools or acquired Western education. Alimotu Pelewura, a Muslim illiterate, was the leader of Lagos market women for over half a century, until her death in 1952.<sup>64</sup> According to Johnson-Odim, Pelewura organized formidable resistance to British policies, most importantly demonstrations related to the monopoly in the distribution of foodstuffs during World War II. In December 1940 she led a protest by some seven thousand women who marched to the Glover Memorial Hall to register their grievances against having to pay taxes owed by unemployed husbands and male relatives. Pelewura is said to have threatened to direct women to close down all trading activities if the government did not honor their demands. In 1944 the government offered to pay her a monthly allowance of seven pounds and recognize her as the official leader of market women if she stopped mobilizing women against wartime emergency policies. Instead of dancing to the tune of this usual practice of corrupting African leaders, Pelewura continued to mobilize women in the rural areas of Ijebu Ode and Sagamu who worked with her to ensure that foodstuffs were not taken to Lagos unless the women's demands were met.

One major historical development that changed the colonialists' perception of women and that demonstrates they could be visible is the action taken by women of Owerri and Calabar provinces during the months of November and December 1929. This historical event is documented in the colonialists' histories as the Aba Riots. The use of "riots" in describing the activities of the women was meant to delegitimize their action as the "uncontrolled," "irrational" behavior of women who took the law into their

own hands by abusing, beating, and destroying the agents and property of the colonial government. The women who waged this fight called it *Ogu Umunwanyi* (Igbo) and *Ekong Iban* (Ibibio), meaning "Women's War." This implies that the women were waging war in the traditional African sense and not a "riot" as the government declared. Because the colonial government was responsible for preserving Nigeria's official history, the word "war" was rarely used in the official documents that were produced during and after the campaign.<sup>65</sup> The process of silencing the past is partly initiated when a historical event or development is given a name that does not adequately explain what actually transpired.

It was after the demise of colonialism that scholars began properly to reexamine the Women's War. The literature on this monumental event is large and growing.<sup>66</sup> First scholars like Van Allen, Caroline Ifeka-Moller, Judith Lynne Hanna, Misty Bastian, Otu Ekwere Akpan, and Violetta I. Ekpo, among others, put the event on the map by emphasizing that it should be called *Ogu Umunwanyi* and *Ekong Iban*, as the women who fought called it. They also emphasized the Africanness of the war by exploring the traditional meaning of war as seen by the women. In traditional Igbo and Ibibio cultures, "making a war" or "sitting on a man," as Van Allen shows, is an institutionalized form of protest that women embarked on in order to demonstrate their disapproval of the actions of their husbands and the leaders of the community in general. A man loses honor and prestige in the community if his wife wages a war against him. The act of "sitting on a man" or "making a war" includes abusing, cursing, and threatening to destroy property.

The appellation "Aba Women's Riot," as documented by the colonial government, also suggests that the women who organized the "revolt" were predominantly from Aba or that it began in Aba. This terminology therefore undermines the profundity of the activities of thousands of women who shocked an area covering about six thousand square miles and inhabited by some two million people at the time. Lastly, the British did not see the war as a product of women's reaction to the policies that eroded their sociopolitical and economic status. Rather, a monocausal interpretation of the genesis of the war was the rumor that women would be taxed.

Histories of women and gender in Nigeria transcend women's activities as politicians and activists and extend to their activities in business and entrepreneurship. Although the new colonial capitalist structure favored men, as we have seen, women were not lax in investing in economic ventures and accruing wealth. In her biographical study of three Igbo women, Chuku examines how her subjects accumulated wealth and invested it in ways that created a chain of economic opportunities for hundreds of people.<sup>67</sup> She captures the basis of these women's rise to prominence: "The striking feature of these women is that they had a humble start as petty traders, but

later became international merchants due to their business acumen, organizational skills and hard work. These women will serve as a source of inspiration and motivation to Igbo women now and in the future.”<sup>68</sup>

Many of the colonial government’s policies inhibited the economic visibility of women. Byfield examines how women dyers in Abeokuta were exposed to different forms of economic policy, which directly and indirectly affected their fortune. These women had limited credit opportunities and were adversely affected by the fluctuating economy of the colonial state of Nigeria. The success of women dyers in Abeokuta was the result not of policy but of negotiation between the women and the colonial state.<sup>69</sup>

Reference to the place of Hausa women in the precolonial period has already been made. Concerning the colonial era, M. G. Smith’s and Poly Hill’s pioneering studies of the economics of the household in northern Nigerian towns counteracts the assumption that Hausa women played a minimal role in Nigeria’s colonial economy.<sup>70</sup> Although their economic activities, which Hill christened “hidden trade,” were planned and executed behind the walls because religious provisions sanctioned seclusion for women (especially married women), an elaborate network guaranteed the distribution and sale of the commodities they produced. Hausa women did not have to leave their homes in order to accrue resources and contribute to the development of their societies.

In conclusion, women’s history in Nigeria emerged as a counterdiscourse against the assertion that all women of the world share the same experience of patriarchal exploitation and from the need to correct the error of using Western ideas to examine the experience of African women. It also challenged the mainstream African scholarship that paid scanty attention to women’s historical experience.

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## *Part Three*

# Nationalist Historians and Their Work

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## Adiele Afigbo

### Igbo, Nigerian, and African Studies

Adiele Afigbo obtained his undergraduate (BA, history) and graduate (PhD, history) degrees from University College, Ibadan, in 1961 and 1964, respectively. He started his teaching career at the University of Ibadan in 1964 but left in 1966 for the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), in the wake of the Nigerian Civil War (1967–70), becoming a full professor of history there in 1973. He was the head of the Department of History and Archaeology from 1974 to 1978; dean of the Faculty of Arts from 1983 to 1984; and director of the Institute of African Studies from 1989 to 1992. He was a member of the editorial boards of *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, *Journal of African Studies*, and *History in Africa*, among others. Afigbo is a Fellow of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Letters, and a winner of the National Merit Award, Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM), and Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON).

Afigbo, like his colleagues whose works are examined in this book, served in a number of public offices, including commissioner in Imo State, first for education and later for local government, 1984–87; chair of the East Central State Committee on Chieftaincy Matters, 1975; a member of the Nigerian National Archives Committee, 1974–83; a member of the National Antiquities Commission, 1974–78; sole administrator, Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri, 1996; a member of the Federal Government Panel on the Review of National Universities Commission, 1999–2000; and a special adviser to Nigeria's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, 1988 and 1992.

Afigbo's scholarship crisscrosses Igbo history and culture, and Nigerian and African history at large. He is certainly one of the first scholars to probe various aspects of Igbo history and culture from the precolonial to postindependence periods. His work, like that of Elizabeth Isichei, delves into significant terrains of Igbo studies such as the question of origin and intergroup relations.<sup>1</sup> The two scholars also wrote on Christian missionary activities and African religious traditions. However, Isichei certainly did more than Afigbo

to probe African religious history both at the local and the continental level.<sup>2</sup> One aspect of Igbo studies, which Isichei seemed not to have ventured into, is the abolition of the internal slave trade. In a book-length study Afigbo unveils the politics of abolition in southeastern Nigeria between 1885 and 1950.<sup>3</sup> While the colonial government criminalized the internal slave trade and other forms of servitude in southeastern Nigeria as early as the nineteenth century, it allowed the trade to thrive in the North up to 1936, apparently for political, religious, and cultural reasons. Indeed, one needs to read his book alongside Paul Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn's *Slow Death for Slavery* to fully appreciate the flaws of the so-called civilizing mission.<sup>4</sup>

Afigbo actually began his scholarship with a PhD dissertation on the establishment of indirect rule in southeastern Nigeria. He therefore belongs to the class of J. A. Atanda, Obaro Ikime, and P. A. Igbafe, who wrote and published their respective dissertations on indirect rule among the Yoruba, the Urhobo and Itsekiri, and Benin, respectively.<sup>5</sup> Although all these scholars use the infamous indirect rule as a focus of their analyses, their arguments and findings, as we will see in the case of the Igbo, differ widely. Some of Afigbo's work is a blend of biography and mainstream political history. Thus Afigbo, like Ikime, E. A. Ayandele, J. C. Anene, and J. F. Ade Ajayi, examines significant aspects of Nigerian history, such as nineteenth- and twentieth-century transformation through the lens of the activities of prominent missionaries and colonial administrators of the period.<sup>6</sup> In addition, these scholars produced substantial work on colonial conquest and African resistance during the scramble for the Nigerian geographic area. Ikime, however, took this scholarship a step further and wrote a comprehensive synthesis of the colonial conquest of Nigeria.<sup>7</sup> For his part, Ikime wrote more essays on colonial administrators than any of his colleagues.<sup>8</sup>

Afigbo's scholarship also extends to the areas of theory and methods of African history. Here he focuses on the challenges of reconstructing the human past and the contributions of history to national development. Like his colleagues, he produced ample work on the origins of nationalist historiography, the contributions of Nigerian historians to the development of Africanist scholarship, the relevance of historical studies to national development, and lastly, the critique of nationalist historiography—for example, in his book *The Poverty of African Historiography*.<sup>9</sup>

## Indirect Rule and Colonialism

Afigbo is best known for his PhD thesis, which he revised and published as *Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria*.<sup>10</sup> In his thesis, he establishes a difference between the two main processes of colonial conquest: first, military invasion and subjugation; and second, "the attempt by the

colonial power to master and control the institutions which regulate the life of the colonized or failing that to supplant it.”<sup>11</sup> He concentrates on the latter by probing the establishment of colonial rule over the Igbo, Ibibio, Ijo, and Ogaja peoples and the appointment by the British of certain individuals as warrant chiefs and its concomitant implications. The warrant chiefs sat on the Native Courts and carried out executive responsibilities in their areas of jurisdiction on behalf of the British. The British found this policy desirable in a region that had not developed centralized political systems, unlike modern northern and southwestern Nigeria. In these other regions, the British simply allowed the locally recognized chiefs to govern on behalf of the British while reserving the power to fire chiefs whose policies contravened the essence of colonial domination and exploitation.

Afigbo’s *Warrant Chiefs* charts a different course in the study of indirect rule, which Ikime and Michael Crowder affirm is the most widely discussed subject by historians of the colonial period in Africa.<sup>12</sup> Afigbo’s work exposes the differences between indirect rule in the South and the North. In this way, he makes clear that the modus operandi of indirect rule varied from place to place. While other studies of indirect rule, such as Atanda’s *New Oyo Empire* and Igbafe’s *Benin under British Administration*, examine how colonial practices created tension between Oyo and its neighbors and the adaptation of the Benin monarchy to changes, respectively, Afigbo’s work deals principally with internal division exemplified in the tension between the warrant chiefs and the people, and the failure of the British to design political and administrative machinery appropriate for the region. In designing the warrant chief system, the British neither took time to study the indigenous political system of the people nor even entertained any doubt their imperial system would work. According to Afigbo, the system failed “primarily because it was based on assumptions which had no root in indigenous soil, and secondly because it brought on the people burdens which were either unnecessary or whose purpose they did not understand.”<sup>13</sup> He further asserts that “the history of the Warrant Chief System is a tale of wrong assumptions leading to wrong decisions and wrong remedies and finally of failure. Insofar as the system was untraditional it carried a fatal flaw from its inception.”<sup>14</sup>

Afigbo invested quality scholarship in his examination of the process of the establishment of colonial rule in modern southwestern Nigeria. In one of his leading essays on this subject, “The Aro Expedition of 1901 to 1902,” Afigbo critically dissects the reasons the British decided to put an end to the social, political, and economic dominance of the Aro—a group of economically, religiously, and politically influential individuals—in the Igbo region.<sup>15</sup> Aside from maintaining a strong influence among the Igbo, the Aro established and maintained a strong network among the various non-Igbo ethnic nationalities in most parts of modern southeastern Nigeria. The British not

only detested the allegiance people paid to the Aro spiritual cult over their Native Courts but also discovered that commercial attempts to penetrate the hinterland would continue to suffer significant setbacks so long as the Aro's monopoly on trade remained intact.

Nevertheless, the Aro Expedition created what Afigbo calls a "political myth" about the supremacy of the Aro to other Igbo subethnic nationalities. Afigbo points out that both Africans and Europeans, apparently surprised by the extent of sophistication of the Aro, traced their origins to the Phoenicians and Carthaginians, even to a cross between Ferdinand and Isabella, the Spanish monarchs. The alleged extra-Igbo origin of the Aro is consistent with a well-established pattern of creating a belief in the nonindigenous justification for any evidence of cultural sophistication found among Africans. The Aro Expedition reminds one of many other military expeditions—the Ijebu Expedition (1892), the Benin Expedition (1897), the numerous wars against the city-states of the Niger Delta—all aimed at terminating the trade and political influence of the powerful states. Before the expedition that terminated their monopoly of the coast–hinterland trade, the Ijebu practiced a policy of what Ayandele called "splendid isolation" by preventing foreigners (both Europeans and Africans) from entering their territories.<sup>16</sup> However, the extent of influence of the Ijebu and Aro varied widely. While the Aro maintained enormous trade, religious, and judicial influence in Igbo-land and its environs, the Ijebu mainly held a trade monopoly between the coastal and hinterland peoples and did not command any judicial and religious authority among other Yoruba groups.

Afigbo also considers the implications of the demise of the Aro oligarchy. While accepting that the expedition terminated the Aro's hold on trade and facilitated the penetration of the regions by Christian missionaries and the opening up of the hinterland to trade, he claims that the Aro continued to trade in slaves up until around 1919. The slow death of slavery not only undermined Britain's "humanitarian" and "civilizing" mission, but also exposed its double standard on the abolition of human servitude in the entire country. Although the British criminalized the internal slave trade and other shades of servitude in the South from the second half of the nineteenth century, these practices were allowed to thrive until the late 1930s in modern northern Nigeria, as Paul Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn explain.<sup>17</sup>

In a comprehensive and scintillating book-length study, *The Abolition of the Slave Trade in Southeastern Nigeria*, Afigbo takes up the subject of the slow death of slavery in southeastern Nigeria from 1885 to 1950.<sup>18</sup> He turns the story of the abolition of the slave trade away from the aspect of "gunboat politics" to how the British colonial administrators dealt with the internal slave trade in the region. An obvious fact about the process of abolition in the North, which Lovejoy and Hogendorn studied, and the southeast, on which Afigbo focused, is that while the British allowed slavery to exist in the

North until 1936 because of the need to avoid insurgency, they outlawed it in the southeast from the outset of the nineteenth century.

The scientific principle that for every action there must be an equal and opposite reaction helps explain how the Igbo responded to and resisted colonial conquest. The Igbo pattern of resistance is acutely consistent with how Africans in other regions of the continent responded to alien rule. They not only knew that the colonial conquest would put an end to the slave trade that brought wealth to the merchants and middlemen but also understood that it would terminate their autonomous existence. The Igbo adopted violence, as in the Ekumeku Movement, which Don C. Ohadike has examined in a book-length study, as well as diplomacy and magic.<sup>19</sup> Yet one aspect of the conquest of Nigeria unique to Igboland was the brief time it took to put the entire region under colonial domination. Here, the importance of geography and political organization needs to be emphasized. Unlike the coastal states, which fell quickly to the superior naval power of the British, the conquest of hinterland peoples like the Igbo required elaborate military campaigns. More important, the fact that the Igbo had not developed a centralized state like the Sokoto Caliphate or the Benin Empire made the conquest of the region a far more difficult task. Commenting on the relationship between political organization and patterns of resistance, Afigbo affirms that

this fact was to be a source of strength to Igbo resistance to British conquest. It meant there was no single authority whose defeat would place all Igboland at the feet of the alien conqueror. Every bit of territory therefore had to be fought for, or bargained for separately. This took more time and more energy and was very irritating to the British. Long after the much fancied Fulani, Kanuri and Yoruba empires had been forced to accept British rule, the British were still wheeling military columns round and about Igboland.<sup>20</sup>

The broader implications of colonial administration on precolonial social structure also attracted Afigbo's intellectual attention. Here he contends that Western imperialism significantly corroded traditional political and social institutions but did not replace them with superior ones. This fact largely discredits the whole philosophy of the colonial enterprise. Afigbo attributes the failure of the British to establish "superior" social and political institutions after destroying the ones they met to the fact that they never learned the basic ingredients of African culture and customs. They did not invest the necessary time, energy, and resources to understand African traditional institutions until the 1930s after their warrant chief system broke down.

Afigbo disagrees with J. C. Anene that indirect rule failed because of the following two factors: first, that the imposition of colonial rule by force led to the liquidation of the traditional authorities and institutions of control

through which the policy of indirect rule would have been implemented; and second, that the British in southern Nigeria wrongly assumed that the “house” system, a coastal sociopolitical phenomenon, obtained throughout the protectorate and so proceeded to apply to the hinterland peoples the same policies and administrative systems that had been designed to meet the needs of the coastal societies. For Afigbo, these two factors cannot adequately explain the complexity associated with the colonial enterprise in southern Nigeria. Afigbo affirms that, although indirect rule tended to be a general administrative machinery for the entire country after 1914, its modus operandi was structured in accordance with challenges each colonial administrator faced in dealing with the people. One of the problems Afigbo believes contributed to the failure of indirect rule in southeastern Nigeria was the Native Revenue Ordinance. This law, which was meant to legalize taxation, came under attack by people who were already dissatisfied by the unruly practices of the warrant chiefs. The attack on the ordinance came in 1929, when women, on hearing the rumor that they would be subjected to taxation, waged a war that sounded the death knell of the warrant chief system.<sup>21</sup>

## Igbo History and Culture

Afigbo is certainly the doyen of Igbo studies. His writings and arguments are aimed at addressing and correcting assumptions about Igbo origins, sociopolitical institutions, and the place of Igbo ethnic nationality in modern Nigerian politics. His research on the Igbo blossomed into numerous articles and books both authored and edited.<sup>22</sup> Although Afigbo is not the first professional Igbo historian, he is certainly the first to consider unraveling the several aspects of the Igbo past as academic business. Isichei, as previously mentioned, is another pioneering historian whose scholarship, like that of Afigbo, places adequate emphasis on the local history of the Igbo and intergroup relations. Both scholars did a book-length study of the Igbo’s interaction with local and international forces. While Afigbo in *The Igbo and Their Neighbors* investigates the people’s relations with their African neighbors stretching from the precolonial to the colonial period up to 1950s, Isichei in *The Ibo People and the Europeans* internationalizes the Igbo’s experience, looking at their social, political, and economic relations with European merchants, missionaries, and colonial administrators from the fifteenth century to 1906.<sup>23</sup> In spite of the difference in the focus of these two eminent historians, a theme that resonates in the work of both is how a combination of local and international factors shaped the course of Igbo history over a long period. The two books are also Igbo centered. In other words, the Igbo’s voice and actions are featured prominently in the scholars’

narratives. This African-centered approach to African history remains the backbone of modern African historiography.

Writing in 1975, Afigbo decried the dearth of scholarly writings on pre-colonial Igbo history, which he called “essential history.”<sup>24</sup> He expressed a belief that historians of the Yoruba had done credibly well in documenting the history of precolonial Yorubaland, while their colleagues working on the Igbo had yet to bring into the limelight the various aspects of precolonial Igbo history (especially the origin of the Igbo). While acknowledging the importance of the scholarship of K. O. Dike, J. C. Anene, and Isichei, he contended that these scholars (and himself as well) were mainly interested in the colonial period and not the period before the establishment of colonial rule. He called for more scholarly research on the Igbo’s precolonial past. However, why did Afigbo call for more scholarly interest on precolonial Igbo history? Here Afigbo traced the origin of the idea that the Igbo were the most “primitive” of Nigerian ethnic nationalities to the inadequate scholarly research about their precolonial past.<sup>25</sup> Because of the lack of systematic professional study of the Igbo’s past, it was easy for people to make misguided comments about them.

The major challenge in writing precolonial Igbo history remains the sources themselves. Afigbo opines that, like most societies in precolonial Africa, the Igbo did not keep their past in written form. The indigenous script known as *Nsibidi*, found mainly among the eastern section of the Igbo, was a sign-writing used mainly, if not only, by the secret societies, and it is doubtful that it was in use among the entire Igbo cultural group. In addition to this limitation, Afigbo points out that European travelers and merchants did not begin to penetrate the interior of Igboland until around the second decade of the twentieth century. The implication of this isolation is that, while some Nigerian ethnic groups such as the Yoruba, the Hausa, and the peoples of the Niger Delta are able to retrieve substantial aspects of their precolonial past (especially the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) from the accounts of missionaries, merchants, explorers, and travelers, such opportunities are limited in the Igbo case. Afigbo, however, identifies Olaudah Equiano (an ex-Igbo slave captured at age twelve who later became an abolitionist) as the first person to document Igbo history. While acknowledging the importance of Equiano’s autobiography, Afigbo is quick to identify the major flaws in his narrative. He contends that because Equiano was captured at a tender age, one does not expect him to fully understand the complexity of the Igbo social and political system. In addition, he had to write in English and to use terms that made sense to his English readers even if these did not always satisfactorily express Igbo ideas.

As mentioned earlier, the dearth of documentary knowledge about the Igbo’s precolonial history has enormous implications for how they were and are viewed and treated by Europeans and Africans alike. According

to Afigbo, British imperialists during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, poorly equipped with knowledge about Igbo history and society, concluded that the Igbo were the most “primitive” of the African race. Colonial administrators like Lord Lugard, Britain’s first governor general of Nigeria, described the Igbo as a people who have “not developed beyond the stage of primitive savagery,” and Margery Perham, a prominent colonial anthropologist, considered Igboland a “very dark and difficult anthropological territory.”<sup>26</sup> This pseudointellectual idea is embodied in the so-called Oriental hypothesis.

In addition to propagating the notion that the Igbo’s original home is not Africa, the Oriental hypothesis reads as an extension of the notorious Hamitic hypothesis, and purports to give scientific backing to the idea that none of the evidence of progress or advancement found in Africa is indigenous to the continent.<sup>27</sup> Afigbo summarizes the basic components of this infamous thesis in the following sentences:

Basing his argument on the fact that the Igbo practice circumcision, name their children after some special events or experience and insist on the seclusion and purification of women after child-birth, Olaudah Equiano concluded that the Igbo were most likely one of the lost tribes of Israel. . . . Impressed by what he considered the superior intelligence of the Aro Igbo and by their religious system and rituals, Sir Herbert Richmond Palmer contended that they carried Hamitic blood in their veins and that it was under their leadership that the higher aspects of the Igbo culture evolved.<sup>28</sup>

After thoroughly examining the flaws of the writings of Europeans and Africans from the eighteenth century to the first quarter of the twentieth century, Afigbo discusses the origin of the Igbo drawing his evidence from the findings of prominent linguists such as Robert Armstrong. Here Afigbo asserts that the Igbo homeland could be placed somewhere farther north, probably in the region of the Niger-Benue confluence. He posits that, according to linguists, it was most likely here that speakers of the member languages of the Kwa linguistic subfamily, of which Igbo is one, separated from their ancestral stock and moved out to occupy their present location.

On when the Igbo emerged as a distinct group, Afigbo again relies on Armstrong, who uses glottochronological evidence to suggest that the members of the Kwa linguistic subfamily started separating from their ancestral stock between five thousand and six thousand years ago. Although the profundity of Armstrong’s findings has been challenged by his linguist colleagues, Afigbo contends that, by and large, scholars are becoming more and more impressed with the antiquity of the societies concerned as they are with their stability over the centuries.<sup>29</sup> He draws more evidence from archaeologists like Thurstan Shaw and M. Angulu Onwuejeogwu, whose

respective archaeological discoveries at Igbo Ukwu and Nri established the African origin of Igbo civilization. He readily uses oral traditions embodied in myths and legends to piece together the fragmentary strands of Igbo experience.

After reaching his conclusions on the likely original home of the Igbo and the period of their emergence as a distinct group, Afigbo moves on to discuss the following significant themes about the history and culture of the Igbo: the primacy of the northern Igbo Plateau in Igbo cultural history; the sequence of Igbo dispersal; agriculture and Igbo society; the rise of the commercial side of Igbo culture; the contribution of the Edo, Igala, Ijo, and Cross River peoples; and lastly, the importance of European contact. One theme that flows through Afigbo's works is the sophistication of human social, economic, and political organization.

In another essay entitled "Towards a Study of Weaponry in Pre-colonial Igboland," Afigbo takes on the military explanation of why the Igbo did not evolve a centralized leadership before the arrival of the British. He examines the structure and cultural functions of Igbo weaponry, pointing out that they were not primarily designed for combat; rather, the machete and a modified version of the spear were farming implements, while the gun, the spear, and the arrow were hunting implements. Likewise, the horn and the flute were musical instruments. The absence of specialized ammunition suggests that the Igbo were not a militarized ethnic nationality in precolonial times. Because their so-called ministates were not militarized communities, it was difficult for military expansion, which traditionally allowed large political entities among groups like the Yoruba, to take place.

Although warfare is not the only means of achieving political unification, the precolonial history of Africa points principally to the centrality of war in state and empire building. Aside from the absence of militarism, the Igbo were less prone to wage war against one another partly because they were predominantly agriculturists who were blessed with virtually all the needed natural resources to survive in their various communities. This factor, Afigbo contends, reduced or eliminated the tendency for one community to aggressively attack another in order to have access to the resources it did not have.

Still on the topic of precolonial warfare, Afigbo makes significant clarifications about the extent to which warfare was professionalized among the Igbo. According to him, warfare was not a specialized business, at least not to the same extent as in European society or even in some African societies, such as those of the Zulu, Abomey, or some of the savanna states of the central Sudan. Thus, there were no professional soldiers and there was no special training for warriors. Instead, every able-bodied adult would normally be called up to fight in defense of his community. Afigbo's observation that soldiering was not an occupation among the Igbo in precolonial times informs one of the historical parallels found among the Yoruba.

According to Ajayi, until the nineteenth century, when the entire Yoruba region was engulfed in internecine warfare, warfare was not a profession among the people.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Ajayi posits that it was the numerous political and demographic changes of the period that led to the rise of military professionalism. Although the Yoruba had warfare-oriented chieftaincy titles, their warlords (mostly men) rarely maintained troops, at least until the nineteenth century. The Yoruba, like the Igbo, did not have a standing army. Thus, in the wake of war, defense forces were made up of all able-bodied men and women. The limited importance of warfare to the Igbo history of state formation should not be taken to mean that warfare is absent in their cosmology and worldview. Here, Afigbo relies on oral traditions that point to the presence of gods of warfare like *Ogboffia*, *Aba*, *Agbakoro*, *Agbudaghu*, and *Ogwuru* among some Igbo like the Abaomega. For the Yoruba, *Ogun* is well known as the god of iron and warfare. Sandra Barnes's anthology on *Ogun* underscores the significance of the god of iron to individual farmers, hunters, and blacksmiths who depend on iron-related equipment and who must pay homage to *Ogun* on a regular basis.<sup>31</sup>

Aside from the studies mentioned above, which appeared as Afigbo's first set of essays on precolonial and colonial Igbo history, he waxes stronger examining such diverse themes as the place of youth, domestic production of knowledge, and religion, to mention but a few, in Igbo history and culture.<sup>32</sup> His microhistory of Igbo communities validates the fact that while all the Igbo share a similar historical experience, communities and groups have an enduring history unique to them. The history of the various Igbo communities is worth telling in order to promote scholarship on the various groups as well as to leave enduring legacies for professional as well as nonprofessional historians to build on. The place of the Igbo ethnic nationality in Nigerian history forms an integral component of his ideas. He dedicates adequate energy to the pattern of intergroup relations between the Igbo and the rest of the country, pointing out that the Igbo tend to be remembered for heroic developments like the Nigerian Civil War, which has caused other Nigerian ethnicities to associate them with aggressiveness, rather than other notable traits manifest in their engagement with the past and the present.

## African Historiography

The craft of history writing from the perspectives of Africans is the underlying strength of Afigbo's scholarship. Besides producing massive work on narrative and interpretive aspects of the Nigerian and the Igbo past, Afigbo devotes adequate energy to issues surrounding sources, methodology, and theories of historical writing. Taken as a whole, his scholarly writing on African historiography serves a double function. On the one hand, he recognizes

the importance of writing African history from an African perspective. He also makes use of oral traditions as well as linguistic and archaeological evidence as credible tools for reconstructing the past of Africans. On the other hand, he is not lax in criticizing flawed use of these sources. Afigbo recognizes the role nationalist historiography played in the African quest toward self-determination, pride, and Afro-consciousness, but he believes the undue adoption of Western terminologies, conceptions, and models misrepresents and distorts the image of the African past.

Afigbo delves into an area of history that appears slippery: the place of history in nation building and national development. In some of his essays, Afigbo, like Ajayi, Dike, Ayandele, and C. C. Ifemesia, creates an interesting dialogue about the intersection of history and nation building, highlighting how the knowledge of the past can equip individuals and leaders with the instruments needed to instill pride and practice good governance.<sup>33</sup> More important, he contends that the discipline of history supplied the Nigerian state with intellectual manpower, especially during the immediate postindependence period when the country needed university graduates for running the affairs of the state.<sup>34</sup>

The contributions of history to national development, though, go beyond providing the brains needed for running the state and raising national pride. Afigbo identifies the nationalistic importance of history as an intellectual and cultural property.<sup>35</sup> The achievement in this area includes the establishment of Nigerian history as an ideal whetstone for sharpening and tempering the emotional and intellectual capacities of perception. According to Afigbo, the role of history is to help create an ideological and cultural climate conducive to development. He contends that during the nationalist period, history played a similar role by helping create the ideological armor for the nationalist struggle for self-determination. On the popular debate over the relevance of history and the humanities in general in Nigeria's quest toward technological development, Afigbo laments that the crisis in history and the humanities at large arises from the severe shrinkage of openings for employment, a development traceable to the failure of science and technology to generate growth in the economy.<sup>36</sup>

On the debate over whether the decline of historical studies can be attributed to the poor disposition of the government toward the teaching of history at all levels of education, Afigbo is not convinced that the Nigerian government took a compromised position on historical education. For him, the problem of quality of teaching in history is crucial not only to the discipline but to the entire Nigerian education system. In other words, the discipline of history is not alone in witnessing decline; the entire university system is deteriorating. He cites the heavy investment of the government in the Festival of Black and African Arts and Culture (FESTAC 1977), the expansion of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments and

the National Archives, and the commissioning of the Nigeria since Independence History Project as evidence of the government's interest in the development of historical studies and consciousness.<sup>37</sup>

Although nationalist historiography is responsible for lifting modern African historiography into the realm of academic recognition, its methodological premises have attracted severe criticism.<sup>38</sup> Although a number of critics of nationalist historiography do not belong to the Ibadan school, it is important to note that nationalist historians were themselves probably the first to expose the limitations of their scholarship. This self-criticism dates back to 1968, when Ayandele published an article pointing to the imbalance in the scholarly attention given to the Nigerian past. For Ayandele, historians of Nigeria tend to focus more on the big states rather than small principalities, war rather than peace, and heroes and heroines rather than the masses. He also believes that historians of Nigeria "allow relations between the peoples of the Atlantic seaboard and the European intruders to dominate, if not monopolize their writings, a tendency which gives the impression that the history of these people is made up entirely of such relations."<sup>39</sup> Ayandele's criticism was followed by yet another strong blast from Ikime, who used his Inaugural Lecture to offer revisionist ideas about the failure of Nigerian historians to link the past with the present or see the long-term effects of their research on the pattern of intergroup relations in contemporary Nigeria.<sup>40</sup>

Afigbo's major contributions to the discourse on the shortcomings of modern African historiography came in his 1977 work, *The Poverty of African Historiography*. In this important book, Afigbo, like Ayandele and Ikime, points to how historians unnecessarily glorify the past activities of the so-called heroes and heroines, while the lives and times of the masses who worked to sustain their reigns are lost to history. Afigbo, however, moves beyond this conventional criticism to indicate how historians refused to acknowledge the politically unwise decisions of rulers, including the often despotic and wasteful character of these historical figures. In his words:

It is noteworthy, for instance, that the history books write approvingly of Askia Muhammed Ture, of his jihads and pilgrimage, but gloss over his failure to know when to quit the political stage on grounds of age. . . . Similarly the new historians, who have written about the pre-colonial Western Sudan, have showered encomiums on Mansa Musa not because of the quality of his rule, but because of his pilgrimage. . . . So important is this event considered to be that most historians repeat in some details how during the pilgrimage, Mansa Musa was attended to by a large entourage which included 500 slaves each carrying a golden staff weighing six pounds, 100 camels each loaded with 300 pounds of gold and men and animals carrying provision and apparel.<sup>41</sup>

Afigbo adds another dimension to the deification of African empire builders:

The uncritical trend in the new African historiography could in fact be held responsible for a number of contemporary African political and social maladies. The emphasis on the pre-eminence of political history may well provide some explanation for our present-day maniacal obsession with politics and political power. Because the highest stakes are believed to lie in politics, the road to political power has become steep and slippery, with the greater part of it running through the valley of violent death, or at least of life imprisonment or exile.<sup>42</sup>

Afigbo addresses a theme closely connected to the one given above: the notion that precolonial Africa was a golden age “of innocence, as happy, serene and undisturbed as the first morning of creation when we are told God looked upon the world and saw that it was good.”<sup>43</sup> According to him, nationalist historians largely contend that this golden age of Africa was terminated by colonial rule. Historians, according to Afigbo, tend to consider such catastrophic events as the coup d'état and violent change of government as developments orchestrated by colonialists. While not disputing the devastating impacts of colonialism and neocolonial capitalist expropriation on Africa, Afigbo comes up with numerous cases of violent change of power in precolonial Africa to show that military overthrows were certainly nothing new in Africa but predate the establishment of alien rule.

In another connection, Afigbo writes about the utility of history, emphasizing how people depend on the past for all sorts of answers or explanations of issues of power and ideology. Here he contends that

“Pragmatic Socialists,” “Democratic Socialists,” “African Socialists” and the like, who appear to be concerned to forestall the introduction of real socialism into their countries, derive their own peculiar brands of socialism from the African past. In the same manner self-confessed Marxian or Scientific Socialists, who are anxious to overthrow their political enemies, claim that the pre-colonial African experience was feudalism and therefore not surprisingly has so far fostered the growth of capitalism in post-colonial Africa.<sup>44</sup>

Afigbo appears to be showing that the African past is not a monolithic past and that people have freely used historical evidence to create legitimacy for their ideology and actions.

In one of his essays, “War and Historical Explanation in Eastern Nigeria,” Afigbo dwells on another prominent shortcoming of modern African historiography. He asserts that pioneering historians such as Dike, Anene, and Ajayi unduly interpret the rise and fall of African states from the

standpoint of European historical experience, which emphasizes war as the tool of empire building.<sup>45</sup> He points to a host of historians and anthropologists, including Anene and C. K. Meek, who attribute the peopling of and state organization of eastern Nigeria to the fallout of wars of political consolidation waged by such regional hegemons as the great kingdoms of Benin, Idah, and Jukun. In deconstructing this fallacy of the origin of the Igbo states, Afigbo points out that archaeological and linguistic evidence affirms that the Igbo areas were peopled long before the so-called great kingdoms began their wars of imperial consolidation:

Coming to their material with this assumption and surveying rather superficially the history of pre-colonial Nigeria and discovering that it had its fair share of imperialistic states, they had no difficulty stretching this pet theory to cover their study not only of the evolution of societies in the areas where these great states rose and flourished, but also the evolution or lack of it of societies situated more or less at the border of these states. It was this that made them come to the kind of conclusions they reached on the evolution of Eastern Nigerian communities without anything like a factual study of the actual situation on the ground.<sup>46</sup>

In all his work on the problems of methodology or criticism of African historiography, Afigbo readily describes the origin of African historiography as an intellectual weapon of nationalist struggle. If pioneering historians overrepresented the nature of state and empire formation in precolonial times, it was because they were eager or “desperate” to counter the underlining philosophy of colonial hegemony. The defensive nature of nationalist historiography largely explains the flaws found in the interpretation and presentation of facts.

However, Dike’s main contribution to African studies remains his book *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, which has been credited as the first professional historical writing on Nigeria. According to Afigbo, this book is not only the first African-centered scholarly study but also the first to facilitate academic interest in the study of the Niger Delta. Afigbo quotes the book several times to illustrate Dike’s conscious attempt to break away from the conventional historical studies that tended to document the activities of the imperialists in Africa, but not the history of Africa from the perspectives of Africans.

Undeniably, Afigbo’s scholarship covers the entire Nigerian and Igbo historical landscape. The quality of his interpretation of fact and his narrative skill places his scholarship at the echelon of erudition. In his valedictory lecture that signaled his official retirement from the UNN, he gives a chronology of his journey through the world of knowledge creation and summarizes his philosophical approach to Igbo and Nigerian studies as follows:

That Igbo history is not mysterious but knowable, and knowable not just in the context of the all-powerful civilizing strangers within its gates—be it Bini, the Igala, the Jukun, the Akpa or the Ijo—but on its own terms;

That to be important, relevant or interesting, this history does not have to be cast in the same mold as the history of the great mega states of the other parts of Africa, that is to say our little David does not have to wear the battle dress of Saul in order to appear in the same field of battle as Goliath;

That this history, while knowable in its own terms could at a certain level, especially when analyzed in the context of the dominant myths of inter-group relations recorded in the early years of this century before divisive ethnic feelings became the order of the day, serve as the central sun from which much of the history of southeastern and central southern Nigeria could be illuminated. It may be that the unconscious drive behind the movement for the Republic of Biafra derived from this primordial but out-dated sense of community in the region;

That the knowability of this history is made possible through the application of a number of concepts and techniques. The concepts include that of unity in diversity of an idea of one or two central pegs (Igbo heartland, the Nri, the Aro etc) around which the story could be hung. Among the techniques are those of licking the hot soup of Igbo history from the periphery as was done in *Ropes of Sand*, the techniques of “metuewemetuwe” which involves not waiting until perfect techniques and unquestionable data are available before attempting a synthesis. Under this latter technique a synthesis is presumed to be indicated at every stage in the progress of the research as long as it is known that such synthesis is available for unscrambling at every stage the opportunity presents itself for inching forward. As soon as an inch is gained a new synthesis is presumed to be indicated.<sup>47</sup>

The cumulative impact of Afigbo's work demonstrates the view that there is an “African perspective” of history. Afigbo was among the first to acquire a PhD in history at a Nigerian university, and the claim at the time was that issuance of such degrees marked the beginning of a new era. The hope, not fully realized however, was that an elite produced locally would liberate the educational system from the vestiges of colonialism; many even hoped that the oppressed and traumatized masses would be awakened by a new curricula in the postcolonial school system. The men and women of Afigbo's generation would not just go to universities to obtain degrees but would use their education to empower the nation, and to promote new ideas that would affirm indigenous cultures and values. Afigbo never fully worked out how European ideas and values could be avoided and how indigenous knowledge could be carefully integrated into the larger body of academic knowledge. Thus, Nigeria is yet to implement ideas that will create an autonomous knowledge, what can be called a “Nigerian brand”; neither has it ever been successful in actually empowering its rural population or reducing its dependence on the West. Decades after Afigbo

finished his PhD, the education system of which he was a product left Nigerians with a deep sense of failure, with a belief that their country has no future, and with an aggressive ambition on the part of many Nigerian youths to see migration to the West as an avenue for survival and success.

Afigbo operated at three levels in his professional career as a historian. Not only an Igbo historian, he wrote copiously on Nigerian and African history at large. His microstudy of Igbo history and culture charted a new course in African history through his examination of historical peculiarities that make Igbo history different from the history of other Nigerian ethnic groups, while not ignoring the fact that all Nigerian groups share similar historical experiences such as colonialism. The challenge for the present generation is to delve into new fields of Igbo history that will go beyond the work of Afigbo while not ignoring it.

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## J. F. Ade Ajayi

### Missionaries, Warfare, and Nationalism

J. F. Ade Ajayi was one of the pioneering students of Nigeria's premier university, University College, Ibadan, when it was established in 1948. He graduated in 1952, garnering the bachelor of arts (general) in history, Latin, and English. Between 1952 and 1955, Ajayi attended University College, Leicester, where he earned another bachelor of arts (first-class honors) in history. He proceeded to the University of London for a doctorate degree, which he obtained in 1958. Ajayi started his career from the grade of lecturer at University College, Ibadan, that year, becoming a full professor of history in 1963. He held visiting teaching and research appointments at the University of California, Los Angeles, and Stanford University, among others. He was head of the Department of History at the University of Ibadan from 1966 to 1969 and dean of the Faculty of Arts between 1964 and 1966. Between 1972 and 1978, Ajayi was vice chancellor (president) of the University of Lagos.<sup>1</sup> He retired from the University of Ibadan in 1989.

In addition to his numerous awards and honors, which include honorary doctorates from the University of Birmingham and University College, Leicester, Emeritus Professor Ajayi is also a Nigerian National Merit Award winner. Other notable awards include the African Studies Association's Distinguished Africanist Award, Foundation Fellow of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (OFR), and Most Distinguished Alumnus (MDA) of the University of Ibadan. In addition to these predominantly academic awards, Ajayi holds two traditional chieftaincy titles: *Babapitan* of Ikole-Ekiti and *Onikoyi* of Ile-Ife.<sup>2</sup> Ajayi also served in the following public offices: member of the Permanent Committee on National Archives, member of the Public Service Commission of Western Nigeria, trustee of the Van Leer Nigeria Education Trust, chair of the Commission of Enquiry into the Level of Fees Charged in Public Secondary Grammar Schools and Teacher Training Colleges in the Western Region, and director of the Historical Unit of the Census Office, Ibadan, among others.

Ajayi is the doyen of Nigerian history. In conjunction with Kenneth Dike, S. O. Biobaku, and J. C. Anene, he systematically laid the foundation of modern African historiography at the University of Ibadan.<sup>3</sup> Ajayi is widely recognized for the role he played in the development of a genre of African-centered historical scholarship that recognizes oral traditions and oral history as viable tools for reconstructing the history of preliterate African societies. His scholarly work ranges from Christian mission studies to Yoruba history; indeed, he pioneered these fields.<sup>4</sup> His scholarship also extends to discourses on the role of colonialism on social and political change.<sup>5</sup> As a university administrator, Ajayi has produced scholarly works on various aspects of educational history.<sup>6</sup>

### Mission and Yoruba Studies

Ajayi pioneered mission studies in Nigeria through his PhD dissertation, which was revised and published as *Christian Missions in Nigeria*.<sup>7</sup> This monograph is also the first publication in the Ibadan History Series, which released more than a dozen monographs. The series carries the stamp of scholarship aimed at placing Africans at the center stage of history. The time line of *Christian Missions in Nigeria* is from 1841, the year of the first Niger Expedition, to 1891—a period that marked the end of the first phase of the planting of Christianity in Nigeria during the nineteenth century. After a failed attempt at Christianizing the people of the Nigerian geographic region by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, Christian missionaries reappeared again in the early 1840s moving from one place to the other erecting mission stations and schools and converting Africans to the alien faith. Their appearance in the nineteenth century was closely connected to prevailing international politics. In 1807, Great Britain not only abolished the slave trade but also began to persuade and, on a number of occasions, force its erstwhile accomplices to follow suit. Slave vessels en route to the Americas were frequently intercepted and the captives freed and resettled in Freetown, Sierra Leone, where they often were converted to Christianity.

With time, these liberated Africans returned to their original homes in various parts of modern Nigeria, especially Abeokuta. Others, including some returnee Brazilians who could not retrace their ancestral homeland, adopted Lagos, Sierra Leone, and other coastal West African towns as their new homes. These liberated Africans, who would later become West Africa's "new elites," received training in occupations such as carpentry and bricklaying. Some became missionaries and worked with their white counterparts in spreading the Christian faith. A good number were traders, merchants, and entrepreneurs who laid the foundation of private enterprise in colonial southwestern Nigeria.

Ajayi interrogates the relationship between European Christian missionary sects and African converts on the one hand, and the Africans they sought to convert to Christianity on the other. Another layer or pattern of relations during this period was that between the missionaries (both white and black), and the European merchants and soldiers who considered the continent a tabula rasa. Within the caucus of the missionaries, an ideological and doctrinal ferment existed. In addition, the major Christian bodies of this period were rivals aiming to gain converts: the Anglican Church Missionaries, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, the Foreign Mission Committee of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States, and the Catholic Society of African Mission of France. Felix K. Ekechi, in his *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland*, critically and comprehensively examined this “soul-wining war” as it played out in Igboland between 1857 and 1914.<sup>8</sup>

The main thrust of Ajayi’s *Christian Missions in Nigeria* is how Christianity was planted in modern Nigeria and the place of the liberated Africans in this development. The religious and political tensions of the period lay in African missionaries’ reactions or responses to their white counterparts’ condemnation of some traditional African cultural practices such as polygamy and domestic slavery. While African polygamists were denied baptism, the missionaries not only had slaves, whom they hypocritically called “servants,” but admitted slave owners into the church with the hope that domestic slavery would die out with time. The temperaments of white missionaries toward African values were influenced by some unscientific ideas that were manifested in the treatment of Africans as an inferior race. Liberated Africans were rarely allowed to occupy influential positions in the church hierarchies. This development, coupled with many others, laid the foundation of nineteenth-century nationalism, which Ajayi identifies as a cultural phenomenon.

Ajayi clearly shows the involvement of various categories of people in the emergence of the “new elites.” His narrative ranges from a discussion of the rise to prominence and activities of influential African converts of the period such as Bishop Ajayi Crowther, the first African bishop of the CMS, and Bishop James Johnson, nicknamed “Holy” Johnson. Though these two personalities had the ultimate goal of winning converts for the Christian church, they approached the task in divergent ways. Ajayi paints Crowther as a “conservative” and identifies Johnson as a “revolutionary” who tended to critique social and doctrinal provisions.<sup>9</sup> E. A. Ayandele’s book-length biography underscores Johnson’s contributions to African religious, cultural, and literary experience.<sup>10</sup>

A work with a similar orientation is Ayandele’s *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, which examines the reactions of Africans (educated elites, chiefs, and ordinary people) to the activities of Christian missionaries in Nigeria.

Between 1842 and 1914, Ayandele points out, Africans dealt with three categories of outsiders: the missionaries, European administrators, and traders. Of these three groups, the missionaries were the most important because they were the closest to the people and arrived first. Ayandele interrogates the divergent motives of the major players—missionaries, African leaders, and the liberated educated elites—in the establishment of Christian missions. His position is that these three classes of people adopted the ideology of the “civilizing mission,” which structured their relations with one another in ways best suited to their personal and collective motives.<sup>11</sup>

On the origin of nationalism in Nigeria, Ajayi disagrees with James Coleman, who calls traditional African leaders who fought for the preservation of the old order nationalists. According to Ajayi, nineteenth-century African leaders like Jaja of Opobo and Kosoko of Lagos were patriots who fought against colonial encroachment on their domains and not nationalists.<sup>12</sup> The nineteenth-century origin of the nationalist movement, according to Ajayi, should be traced to the activities of the liberated educated elites who were privileged to acquire Western education and in most cases were directly and indirectly connected to the spread of Christianity among their people. This class of Africans began to develop resentment toward European culture when it was apparent that the white missionaries were not going to consider all human beings as equal before God and, in fact, were engaged in discriminatory policies aimed at keeping the African converts from climbing the ladder of religious authority and purity.

Ajayi argues that this form of nationalism was not aimed at enhancing national self-determination since the desire of the educated elites was not to drive the missionaries from Nigeria or prevent the establishment of colonial rule. Rather, it had a racial and cultural consciousness. This racial consciousness manifested itself in an effort to uphold African cultural values by the educated elites, the majority of whom began to adopt African names and undo several aspects of Western values such as dress that they had hitherto embraced. They began to show interest in African history and culture, as seen in the case of Samuel Johnson, who wrote *The History of the Yorubas* in order to help preserve the historical past of the Yoruba.<sup>13</sup> They not only questioned white missionaries' claim to religious or spiritual supremacy but also frowned at discriminatory policies like the refusal to baptize polygamists. Indeed, the rise of independent African churches can be traced to the refusal of the white missionaries to Africanize Christianity.

Ajayi argues that in spite of this cultural nationalism, attachment to Europe remained strong. The nineteenth-century educated elites thought that Africans should learn certain aspects of European culture that could enhance “civilization.” The new political and economic developments that followed during colonial rule would change the nature and purpose of nationalism. The older nationalists were replaced by new individuals and

groups whose ideas and activities were predominantly aimed at self-determination. The political nationalism of the colonial period thus supplanted the nineteenth-century cultural nationalism. However, without the educated elites of the nineteenth century, those of the twentieth century might not have received the training, education, and exposure needed for challenging British colonialism.

Ajayi also saw the need to explore the careers of prominent missionaries of the period. His work on Henry Venn, the secretary of the CMS, and Crowther, the first African bishop of the CMS, interrogates the complexities and contradictions associated with race, African cultural identity, and the politics of evangelization. Venn's ideas were colored by his desire to promote "development" by adopting the abolitionist model of "the plough and Bible" and calling for the creation of "self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating" churches.<sup>14</sup> Venn, who believed that slavery developed because of the subsistence nature of African economies, was therefore interested in the development of an African middle class. He argued that to eradicate slavery, a new class of people must emerge who would aspire beyond subsistence means of livelihood. Ajayi describes Venn's ideas thus:

This desire to encourage the growth of an African middle class was the keynote of Venn's policy of development. With him, it was not enough that trade with Europe should increase: the increase of trade was not valuable unless it led to social change and the rise of the middle class. Only if it did so would it help to eradicate African slavery permanently.<sup>15</sup>

According to Ajayi, although Crowther broke the historical color line as the first African bishop of the CMS, his career, especially toward the end of his life, was marred by the politics of race in the leadership of the CMS, as exemplified in the role of the "native ministry"—that is, the African clergy in the churches founded by the missionary societies.<sup>16</sup> At the heart of it all was the question of whether the experiment of consecrating Crowther a bishop at the head of the Niger Mission was a failure that should not be repeated. Crowther was not only unhappy during this period, but he was "forced to resign from the Finance Committee set up by the CMS to oversee the affairs of the Niger Mission, on the grounds that the Committee had usurped his Episcopal authority."<sup>17</sup> Although Ajayi paints Crowther as a hero caught up in the complex imperial and domestic politics of the period, he admits that some of Crowther's pastors were actually guilty of immorality, including the use of their position to influence trading activities. While claiming that Crowther was a weak administrator, Ajayi does not accept the white missionaries' accusation that he did not investigate charges leveled against his stewardship when necessary. Instead, Ajayi believes that "it was not the merits or demerits of the African missionaries that caused the conflicts on the Niger,

but rather the ideological conflict of an age of transition which led to the mistrust of Africans and the dominance of Europeans.”<sup>18</sup>

Writing in 1969, Ajayi opined that scholarship on Christian mission studies in Africa should not be confused for church history.<sup>19</sup> While the former deals with the history of the planting of Christianity from the Eurocentric perspective, the latter emphasizes the role of Africans in the development of African Christianity. Ajayi points out that historians of mission studies have done poorly in exploring the history of African churches. The identification of African churches in derogatory terms as “independent,” “rebel,” “separatist,” and so on, Ajayi contends, has gone a long way toward blurring the history and legacies of Africans who played significant roles in the development of Christianity in Africa. He emphasizes the positive disposition of many Africans toward Christianity, quoting Johnson of the Anglican Church, who asserted that the Christian faith was intended for and suitable for all humankind. Johnson further made a case for African Christianity just as we have European and Asiatic Christianity.<sup>20</sup>

Ajayi believes that historians can reconstruct the history of African churches by exploring the life and times of African church leaders such as Johnson, Crowther, and Jean Farrant: “We are in no doubt at all that writers on African church history would be abundantly rewarded should they try to see the other side of the coin, the contributions of the African personnel to the planting and spread, and development of the church in Africa.”<sup>21</sup> Ajayi argues that the neglect of Africans in the establishment and growth of churches in Africa is explicable in terms of the monopoly of Western scholars in the discourse on the African encounter with Christianity. In this category of scholars are the likes of C. P. Groves, K. S. Latourette, F. B. Wellbourn, J. V. Taylor, Adrian Hasting, Peter Beyerhaus, and Cecil Northcott, to name a few. Ajayi’s description of the attitudes and dispositions of these scholars is instructive:

They would be less than human if they were not affected in some degree by the theology and the dogmas and formularies of the “historic Churches” in which they have been brought up. Inevitably, the perspective from which they have viewed the growth and development of the Church in Africa has been that of the “mother” Churches. It is difficult for them to think of the Church as an African product, truly African though nevertheless a branch of the one Catholic Church. It is difficult for them to think of Christianity shorn of the incidental cultural and ceremonial accretions of Europe and expressed in the African concepts and institutions and vested with cultural ceremonies that would give it life in Africa.<sup>22</sup>

Ajayi is one of the first historians to write on the Yoruba in the nineteenth century. His *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century*, “How Yoruba Was

Reduced to Writing," and "Professional Warriors of the Nineteenth Century" were published at the formative stage of the development of professional historical studies on the Yoruba, and indeed on Africa at large.<sup>23</sup> A close look at the bibliography of *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century*, which he coauthored with Robert Smith, indicates the paucity of published secondary sources on nineteenth-century Yoruba history before 1964 when the first edition of the book was published by Cambridge University Press. Prior to the 1960s, Saburi Biobaku's study *The Egba and Their Neighbours* was one of the few published works on the subject.<sup>24</sup> By the 1970s and 1980s, the likes of I. A. Akinjogbin, S. A. Akintoye, Robin Law, Robert Smith, Bolanle Awe, J. A. Atanda, Toyin Falola, and G. O. Oguntomisin had joined Ajayi and Smith in putting Yoruba history (especially of the nineteenth century) on a firm basis of knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

*Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century* is a unique book: Ajayi and Smith wrote it with each author responsible for separate sections of the book. It is, therefore, not a typical collaboration where coauthors share collective responsibility for the strength and weaknesses of the entire work. The book is divided into two sections: Smith wrote the first, which discusses the general nature of warfare in the nineteenth century with emphasis on the aspects of armament and military tactics. His section also contains chapters on specific military engagements, such as the Battles of Osogbo (1840), Abeokuta (1851), and Ikirun (1878). Ajayi's section examines the nature of data for the reconstruction of nineteenth-century Yoruba history and the remote and immediate causes of the Ibadan-Ijaiye War, one of numerous military conflicts of the century involving the Yoruba. Ajayi borrows Carl von Clausewitz's ideas, which identify war as constituting only a part of political intercourse. To demonstrate that the Ibadan-Ijaiye War fits into this argument, Ajayi traces the history of the nineteenth-century Yoruba wars to the eighteenth century, demonstrating that the crises that rocked the Old Oyo Empire in this period and its eventual demise in the early decades of the nineteenth century laid the foundation for the series of internecine wars and revolutions that the entire Yoruba country experienced.

Ajayi dwells on the major issues of the period, which include (but are not limited to) the effects of the demise of the Old Oyo Empire on the balance of power in Yoruba country. Chronologically and with adequate detail, he narrates how the fall of the Old Oyo Empire led to the rise of such new polities as Ibadan and Ijaiye, and the inevitability of crises between these two powerful states. The military, economic, and political stakes of the Ijebu, the Ife, and the Egba are also adequately represented and discussed in a way that shows that intergroup relations among the numerous ethnicities of the period were characterized by a high degree of divergence and convergence. Ajayi's analysis also helps us to understand that although the Yoruba speak a mutually intelligible language and claim common ancestry, the politics

of ethnicity played out in a way that allowed the preservation of the political integrity of individual states to outweigh the myths or legends of common ancestry. What is obvious about the remote and proximate causes of the Ibadan-Ijaiye War that Ajayi believes had international ramifications, as seen in the involvement of the missionaries, is that wars erupted only after all peaceful means of resolving crises were exhausted. In other words, the Yoruba did not just go to war because they were “bloodthirsty,” as contemporary students of history may think; rather, they generally worked out their differences peacefully and took up arms as a last resort.

The contributions of *Yoruba Warfare* to African studies transcend its place as one of the earliest professional historical works on the Yoruba. Indeed, it is best evaluated in terms of the methodological breakthrough that would remain the hallmark of Ajayi’s scholarship and that of his academic disciples. In his appraisal of sources for the reconstruction of nineteenth-century Yoruba history, he asserts that oral traditions remain the major nonwritten source for reconstructing that history. As for written secondary sources, he recognizes the role of the missionaries in documenting events of the period in their journals and correspondences. Nineteenth-century politics was important to the missionaries because it helped determine the success or failure of their work. Although the missionaries viewed themselves as outsiders and sometimes made comments that show a sort of detachment from the affairs of the people, those who established strong friendships and bases among the Yoruba identified themselves with the political future of their hosts.

In the entire historical narrative, Ajayi gives adequate voice to the political activities of the Africans. By putting Africans at the center of the narrative, Ajayi certainly turns his back on the kind of Eurocentric writing that silences the perspectives of Africans on issues that affect their experience. A reviewer described Ajayi’s emphasis on Africans’ actions in this way: “Throughout the account, leaders of the Yoruba, both civilians and military, are the chief characters in the narrative. Events are seen through their eyes. Battles and movements of armies, as well as strategies of combat are surprisingly detailed when it is remembered that there were no written dispatches to work from.”<sup>26</sup>

Ajayi dedicated a separate essay to an analysis of professional warriors in the nineteenth century. According to him, fighting wars before the nineteenth century was not a profession among the Yoruba but a part-time duty incumbent on all able-bodied males.<sup>27</sup> However, the numerous political changes of this century facilitated the emergence of soldiering as a profession. Ajayi posits that the careers of warriors were relatively easy to explore partly because oral traditions, the largest repository of Yoruba precolonial historical experience, tell of the achievements of the so-called heroes and heroines. Military encounters and episodes are thus important components of oral traditions. A review of the nature of military organization before the nineteenth century points to the high degree of Yoruba creativity during the nineteenth-century

wars. On the justification for wars, Ajayi identifies warfare as a manifestation of the personal ambition of warriors and leaders rather than any attempt to respond to the collective aspirations of an entire community: "Wars resulted from their personal clashes and ambitions; they were prevented if they were wise enough to compromise; they were prolonged by their greed and folly; they were won or lost by their courage, bravery, cowardice, treachery, or even simply pre-ordained ill or good fortune."<sup>28</sup> He opines that warfare in the nineteenth century went through a series of transformations, with changes in military tactics necessitated by the evolving nature of war motives and composition of the belligerents. For example, when the supply of horses from the North was inhibited by the Yoruba's war with the Hausa-Fulani rivalry, the use of cavalry declined and Yoruba states had to rely partly on firearms imported from the coast. The importation of weaponry increased as wars were fought on a prolonged basis. It was also during the nineteenth century that the art of war was standardized to accommodate adequate training in the use of firearms as well as battlefield formations.

Using the Yoruba as an example, Ajayi presents the changing nature of ethnicity from the nineteenth century to the postindependence period, showing how important developments such as the Yoruba civil wars of the nineteenth century, colonialism during the first half of the twentieth century, the politics of decolonization, and postindependence political changes after 1960 defined and redefined the notion of ethnicity among the Yoruba. During the nineteenth century, the notion of Pan-Yorubanism, Ajayi contends, did not exist. Instead, people identified more with their immediate ethnic nationalities of Egba, Ijebu, Oyo, Ife, and so on. Even the Oyo and Yoruba fought one another while the Ibadan established hegemony over the non-Oyo Yoruba towns and villages of Ekiti, Ijesa, and Igbonina in the wake of the heightened insecurity resulting from the intensification of rivalry over control of land, resources, and trade routes. The personal ambitions of leaders sometimes served as justification for waging war, and like all other human groups, the Yoruba also felt the need to dominate others for the purpose of honor and prestige. To establish that in intergroup relations what exists is permanent interest and not friendship, Ajayi points to how the new Oyo Empire founded in the mid-nineteenth century at various times tried to establish a pan-Yoruba order. The failure of this arrangement, especially during the Ekitiparapo War (1877–93), paved the way for the intervention of external forces, a situation that culminated in the eventual loss of the Yoruba's political sovereignty by the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Under colonial rule, the politics of ethnicity, according to Ajayi, took on a different dimension as new political structures both united and divided the Yoruba. Administrative arrangements that increased the power of such Yoruba monarchs as the *Alaafin* of Oyo were informed partly by misrepresentation of the extent of the power of the king, who

was called the “king of the Yoruba” before the establishment of colonial rule, and personal political interest of colonial administrators like Captain Ross, who, for close to a quarter-century, made Oyo a major power among its immediate neighbors.

## Colonialism and Modern African Historiography

Ajayi’s most widely acknowledged contributions to African studies are in the areas of African historiography, the continuity of African institutions under colonial rule, and the general impact of colonial rule on Africa.<sup>29</sup> He discusses the significance of nationalist historiography, which is the hallmark of modern African historiography, in a 1969 essay entitled “Colonialism: An Episode in African History.”<sup>30</sup> Here Ajayi presents a historical and ideological foundation for a brand of history that countered pseudointellectual positions about Africa and African historical realities. In order to justify the basis of colonial domination, one of the numerous arguments put forward by European empire builders was that Africans, as a result of their lack of history, could not govern themselves. According to this view, the failure to develop “modern” institutions of politics and administration meant that the people of the continent had to be governed by the “superior” race. Different categories of people, which include explorers, missionaries, European administrative officers, and pseudointellectuals, developed a myriad of racially inclined ideas to legitimize the European presence in Africa. Although these agents of imperialism packaged their ideas of race in varying formats, a unifying factor was that Africans were racially inferior to Europeans. Like old wine in new bottles, racial ideologies about Africans continued to take new forms up until the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> Ajayi points out that the partition of Africa and the impact of colonial rule cannot be adequately understood without a strong knowledge of African history. Although the nineteenth century is the best-known period of African history, pre-1800 African history, according to him, points to the long and enduring relations between Africans and the outside world.<sup>32</sup>

Ajayi calls our attention to the fact that the dearth of knowledge on pre-1800 African history led historians to assume that the nineteenth century was the most significant period of African history. African history, like the history of all humanity, is a continuum, with the changes under colonialism constituting only a part. African society during the precolonial times as in the colonial period, Ajayi posits, was not static; colonialism did not lead to a complete departure from the old ways:

To see the partition within the proper perspective of African history, we therefore have to look beyond the nineteenth century and beyond the main centers

of European activities. Just as we now stress that precolonial African society did not remain static till the Europeans began to tamper with it in the colonial period, we should emphasize also that it was not static before the coming of the nineteenth-century Islamic revolutions and the abolitionists.<sup>33</sup>

In terms of African resistance to European invasion, Ajayi opines that the best way of appreciating the evolution of Afro-European relations is to place emphasis on political and economic changes taking place within the various African states and communities. Developments within each community (among different categories of people), and between one community and another, play a significant role in determining the pattern of Africa's relations with the outside world. Ajayi points out that it is a truism that the educated elites saw colonialism as a good development. However, they did not doubt the ability of Africans to rule themselves. They believed that tutelage under colonialism was good but that colonial rule must not last long. While the initial resistance was led by traditional elites who fought fervently to retain their hold on their sovereignty, the nineteenth-century Western-educated elites laid the foundation of the nationalist movement, which eventually drove the invaders out of the African continent:

Arbitrary European decisions about the siting of railways, ports, schools, hospitals, and administrative centers affected the fortunes of these communities; to that extent the European initiative was supreme. But in so far as these decisions could be affected by the Africans themselves through war, riots, protest, or local enterprise and initiative in producing qualified personnel, Africans also retained some control over their own destinies.<sup>34</sup>

Ajayi's argument, that colonialism is an episode and not the totality of Africa's experience, is not unchallenged. One of his well-known critics is Peter Ekeh, a renowned political scientist who used his Inaugural Lecture to offer an antithesis to Ajayi's position.<sup>35</sup> Ekeh sees colonialism as a significant epoch because of the role it played in incorporating Africa into the international social, economic, and political systems. According to Ekeh, "The social forces of colonialism burst the moral and social order that formally encased the precolonial indigenous institution and they seek new anchors in the changed milieux of colonialism."<sup>36</sup>

Ekeh's criticism is part of the developing body of knowledge on the shortcomings or limitations of nationalist historiography, which had its beginnings in the late 1960s, when influential members of the Ibadan school of history identified the holes in their scholarship—as seen in E. A. Ayandele's 1969 essay, Obaro Ikime's provocative remarks on the works of his colleagues in his 1979 Inaugural Lecture, and A. E. Afigbo's much-read *Poverty of African Historiography*.<sup>37</sup> It is an indisputable fact that the leading scholars of nationalist

historiography were the first to identify the limitations of their scholarship. Their self-criticism provided the materials that other schools of thought, such as the neo-Marxist, used in examining their limitations.<sup>38</sup> One of Ajayi's contributions to this debate is expressed in a 1980 essay, "A Critique of Themes Preferred by Nigerian Historians," published in the Silver Jubilee edition of the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*. He summarized four broad bases of historical themes preferred by the Nigerian historian: external stimulus and response, internal histories of peoples in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, administrative and institutional structures, and ideology. Ajayi further itemizes the historical themes avoided in writing on Nigeria: histories of pre-1800 centralized states, economic history, social history, biographies, works of synthesis and comparative studies, and contemporary history. Like Ayandele, he calls on his colleagues to open up new frontiers and areas of Nigerian history such as social and economic history. Periodically, he wants historians to devise new methodologies in exploring the pre-1800 history of the various Nigerian societies.

In "The Contribution of History to the Construction of Social Reality in Africa," a paper presented to the staff/postgraduate seminar of the History Department at the University of Ibadan on July 20, 2005, Ajayi reiterated the need for researchers to explore new academic areas and called for increased collaboration between scholars in the humanities and the social sciences and other related disciplines. He emphasized that the future of historical scholarship is the multidisciplinary approach, a practice as old as the history of modern African historiography, but one that required conscious revival in accordance with the present historical interests of researchers.

Ajai discusses the origin of the collaboration between history and the social sciences in another essay that is dedicated to Dike. Ajayi recognizes Dike's contributions to the development of the discipline of the social sciences in Nigeria, arguing that he (Dike) is less known for this significant feat. At the outset of modern African historiography, Dike recognized the need to facilitate the collaboration between historians and social scientists because some disciplines in the social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology, possess tools and methodologies that can enhance the work of historians. Ajayi also captures the line of division between history and social science: "From time to time, historians criticize social scientists for ignoring the time perspective and the dynamics of change; social scientists criticize historians for being unsociological and ignoring the theoretical framework."<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

The world of Ajayi's scholarship was shaped by the transition from the pre-colonial to the colonial, as well as his pioneer role as a scholar who engaged

that past and talked about Nigeria's future. He grew up during the colonial period and was exposed to some of the unpalatable views on Africa's purported primitivity typified by the appellation "Dark Continent."

A scholar who wrote about Yoruba power politics and later became a chief, he affirms a notion of the cultural authenticity of his people. It is important to underscore this in order to understand why he attributes less of a revolutionary impact to the colonial phase of African history and talks rather of the idea of cultural change and continuity. While he has a refined understanding of the changing conceptions of identity, he always anchors those changes to the ideas of the past and the ability of Africans to act as cultural brokers in negotiating the impacts of external forces. He certainly recognizes (even if he does not always appreciate) the economic and political connections with the outside world. Africa was altered by those connections, but the continent, he tends to suggest, would have survived without them. His studies of the nineteenth century privilege the capacity of Africans to transform themselves while minimizing the impact of the Atlantic slave trade or European contacts as the dominant agents of change. He does not necessarily accept the Marxist view that colonialism was a profound ideology of change—to accept it is to undercut his own thesis of the vibrancy and continuity of indigenous traditions.

We see in his body of work ideas on how Africa has developed since the nineteenth century, how contemporary problems have been conceptualized, and how the future has been imagined. He dwells little on the struggles, and more on the politics, stressing the contributions of such principal elites as chiefs and kings, the Western-educated elite, entrepreneurs, and political leaders.

In concluding this chapter, we emphasize that the career of J. F. Ade Ajayi revolves around the creation of modern academic history writing. He was both an institution builder and a scholar, contributing to the management of such institutions as universities while writing about society. In writing about Christian missionaries, he elucidates the knowledge of the foundational developments that led to the creation of educational institution and the emergence of nationalists and educated elites who would later become the leaders of the Nigerian state. His scholarship cuts across both the microstudy of the Yoruba people and Nigerian and African history at large.

If Ajayi and his contemporaries were not disappointed with the achievements of their generation, as their personal stories celebrate various successes and achievements, they have certainly been disappointed with the nation-state that came into being in the postindependence period. He and others tend to present contemporary Nigeria as a failed project, their discipline of history as not useful enough in contributing to development, and the academy as an exercise in futility. How then do we trace the failure of the present to the past, if the past was full of patriots and nationalists, institution

builders like K. O. Dike, and educational heroes who created universities and pioneered great historical writing? Do the members of the Ajayi generation share in the blame for the state of contemporary Nigeria? In accepting the institutions of the colonial system, did they contribute to the underdevelopment of indigenous institutions? Or could it be that they spoke of the precolonial past for the ideological reason of “protecting” it from the damage unleashed by colonialism?

Ajayi’s idea of continuity and change is one way of saying that a belief in the value of the past does not mean a wholesale adoption of ideas and ideals drawn from it. After all, Ajayi studies the spread of Christianity and is aware of the power of Islam. He does not reveal how the various strands of the past and present are to be reconciled, but he does not accept the proposition that colonial/alien traditions should be abandoned. If we interpret him correctly, decolonization would imply not an inability to understand Europe but a rejection of its authority, a position that I. Chinweizu has articulated more clearly.<sup>40</sup>

Certainly, Ajayi’s generation benefited from the modernization projects of their era—they received Western education and empowerment. However, they have been less happy with the cumulative consequences for Nigeria of the modernization project. Writing history is far less difficult than making history.

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## J. A. Atanda

### Yoruba Ethnicity

J. A. Atanda is a scholar of the Yoruba to the core. Throughout his lifetime, he predominantly wrote on and taught various aspects of Yoruba history and culture.<sup>1</sup> His affection for the history of his people blossomed into various major essays on themes ranging from indirect rule and intergroup relations among the Yoruba to Yoruba intellectual history.<sup>2</sup> In addition, he also wrote about such debated issues as the origin of the Yoruba people, theories of the fall of the Old Oyo Empire, and the place of secret societies in Yoruba history and culture.<sup>3</sup>

Although Bolanle Awe and Atanda both work on Yoruba history, each has primary and concentrated interests in a different part of Yorubaland. While Awe's PhD thesis and early essays deal predominantly with nineteenth-century Ibadan history, Atanda addresses how colonial rule changed intergroup relations between Oyo and its neighbors.<sup>4</sup> The two historians sometimes examine Yoruba-wide themes. Awe concentrates more on nineteenth-century Yoruba history, while Atanda's scholarship stretches from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Other well-published historians of the Yoruba are S. A. Akintoye, I. A. Akinjogbin, J. F. Ade Ajayi, G. O. Oguntomisin, and Toyin Falola. Atanda's scholarship also extends to mission studies. He edited two books, one on Baptist churches in Nigeria and the other the account of Yorubaland in the 1850s by W. H. Clarke, a Baptist missionary.<sup>5</sup>

#### Colonialism and Indirect Rule

Atanda's most widely read work, *The New Oyo Empire*, is a revised version of his PhD thesis for the University of Ibadan in 1967.<sup>6</sup> The work looks at how the British, during the colonial period (1893–1960), succeeded in creating a huge political arrangement meant to resemble, in terms of size and influence, the Old Oyo Empire, which was destroyed around the second decade of the nineteenth century, and its effects on relations between the Oyo and

its neighbors. The man who implemented the new political arrangement under colonial rule was Capt. William Alston Ross, who became the resident of Oyo Province in 1914. Ross, through the writings of nineteenth-century historians and missionaries like Samuel Crowther and Samuel Johnson, became convinced that the Old Oyo Empire was so powerful that its influence and power extended to the entire Yorubaland.

In order to revive the glory of the Old Oyo Empire, which it was believed would help the new arrangement of indirect rule to work, Ross put in place a province that, apart from covering the largest area of Yorubaland, was the largest in all of southern Nigeria. The size of the “New Oyo Empire” is less important than how the new arrangement both intensified preexisting differences among the Yoruba and introduced new ones. Ibadan, the most powerful Yoruba state on the eve of European encroachment, was placed under the *Alaafin*. Other Yoruba towns, such as Osogbo and Ogbomoso, were not spared, as they had to be in the good graces of *Alaafin* Ladigbolu to survive the political intrigues of the period. Ross was helped in part by his mastery of the Yoruba language. He drafted and passed a lower standard examination in the Yoruba language and understood Yoruba politics very well.<sup>7</sup>

One unique feature of indirect rule as practiced in the “New Oyo Empire” was the cordial friendship between *Alaafin* Ladigbolu and Captain Ross. Atanda explains that throughout Ross’s tenure as resident of Oyo Province, he and the *Alaafin* were on such friendly terms that they rarely disagreed on important administrative and political issues. Atanda also points out that Ross did not make any significant political decisions without consulting the *Alaafin*, and vice versa. The “New Oyo Empire” survived for close to a quarter-century but had to give way to a new political arrangement that quickly began taking shape in 1931. The new arrangement saw the exit of Ross and the breakdown of his so-called empire.

Atanda’s study of how the *Alaafin* of Oyo responded to numerous changes precipitated by colonial rule and the parliamentary system of government adopted after 1960 explores another dimension of the contestation between tradition and modernity.<sup>8</sup> In this essay he gives a brief outline of the pre-colonial political authority of the *Alaafin* as background to understanding how the establishment of colonial rule led to a transmutation in the *Alaafin*’s power and influence. Although in theory the *Alaafin* was allowed to govern his people, in practical terms, colonial administrative officers had the power to nullify orders that were deemed inimical to the colonial administrative goal of exploiting Africans. The *Alaafin* was therefore entirely a figurehead ruler. As bad as the situation was for him, his palace was a significant locus for decision making on issues that affected the people.

The British stole political legitimacy and power from the traditional authorities when they established colonial rule. However, when they prepared to leave, they transferred power to a new form of elite, which emerged

during their more than half a century in control of Yoruba politics. The new educated political elites during the decolonization period saw the traditional authorities as a cog in the wheel of their struggle to drive the aliens out of Nigeria. The termination of colonial rule tolled a death knell to the influence of the *Alaafin*. Whereas the *Alaafin* was able to command some power during the colonial period, the parliamentary system of government and the principle of elective representation adopted from 1960 to 1966 did not make provision for the *Alaafin* and his chiefs in the day-to-day running of the new style of government.

How indirect rule created tension between one town and another is the subject of another of Atanda's essays.<sup>9</sup> He starts this essay by recognizing that it was not until the termination of colonial rule that scholars began to discover that most uprisings and riots during the colonial period were not responses to taxation. He agrees with Adiele Afigbo, who studied the popular Aba Women's War, that taxation in most cases served as the straw that broke the camel's back;<sup>10</sup> the implication of this point is that violence was a culmination of remote and immediate discontent with colonial rule. In reconstructing the existing primary data, which suggest that the crisis was caused by the request that people should contribute to the Red Cross Fund, Atanda identifies how indirect rule created tension between the Oyo and the Iseyin and among the people of Okeiho. The introduction of the Native Authority system and the attempt to promote more healthy living in the communities created tensions, which snowballed into the crisis of 1916. Apparently, where several Nigerian ethnicities during the colonial period adopted complacency in dealing with the numerous draconian laws of the British, several others, such as the Okeiho and the Iseyin, resisted through violence. The example of the Okeiho and Iseyin is similar to the violent eruptions in other parts of southern Nigeria because they were aimed at undermining the basis of colonial domination and dependency.<sup>11</sup>

Atanda also looks at the crises that arose in Ibadan when the British decided to lease a large area of land (fifteen thousand acres) to the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) in 1903.<sup>12</sup> This proposal was greeted by the opposition of the Ibadan because the area was densely populated and contained more than seventy farms. In addition, leasing it would result in the destruction of valuable crops.<sup>13</sup> It would also be difficult to ask the people to relocate from a land they had occupied for decades. Moreover, Ibadan chiefs believed the land was too wide to be given out to one entity and did not mind allocating the fifteen thousand acres provided it was not from one single area. In the end, the BCGA could not use the land for the proposed cotton plantation for a number of economic and legal reasons and had to abandon it. Atanda's concluding remark is that the assertion that the British took a liberal policy toward land acquisition does not hold any weight because, at various times, there were attempts by British firms to expropriate land from the people.

## Yoruba History and Culture

By the early 1970s, when Atanda's scholarship was in full stride, some themes such as the nature of the precolonial political system and the origin of the Yoruba had attracted scholarly attention.<sup>14</sup> Specifically, he was not the first academic historian to write on the Old Oyo Empire and the factors responsible for its fall. What he undertook during the early 1970s was a critical reexamination of the arguments that other writers had put forward. Atanda's style of developing counterarguments is structured in a particular way. First, he identifies a problem. Then he presents his counter position in a few lines before moving to a long narrative in which evidence and the basis for the counterarguments are presented. Finally, he goes back to the problem, with the hope that the reader has been able to make heads or tails out of the issues at stake. In concluding remarks, he presents the reasons he should not be misread by other scholars, clarifying his definitions and concepts and calling attention to the areas that require urgent attention.<sup>15</sup>

In one essay, Atanda questions the scholarship on the causes of the collapse of the Old Oyo Empire.<sup>16</sup> The history of Yorubaland in the nineteenth century was predominantly woven around the impact of this empire's fall and its implications for the security of the entire country. It is generally agreed that the tranquility provided by the vast empire was lost after its decline in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. Atanda does not disagree with historians on the impact of the collapse of the Old Oyo Empire and what caused its fall. He first summarizes the remote causes as presented by other writers:

Inherent weakness in the constitution of the central government of Old Oyo; loose connection between the central government and the provinces of the empire; the vastness of the empire which made it impossible to govern effectively in the face of inadequate means of communication; deliberate weakening of the army by *Alaafin* Abiodun; the rise of powerful neighbours like Dahomey, Nupe and Borgu; weak *Alaafins* on the throne of Old Oyo in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century; and a steady shift of the centre of gravity of the empire from the north to the south.<sup>17</sup>

Atanda then argues that the mere listing of these conventional remote causes is inadequate to a critical examination of the fall of the Old Oyo Empire. According to him, a connection between the remote causes and the events leading to the fall of the empire must be ascertained in order to establish the importance of time and change. Above all, the remote causes identified above do not have any specific connections to the events leading to the eventual demise of the empire. His major position in this study is that more attention should be given to the immediate causes rather than the

remote ones, which, according to him, had only limited relevance to the empire's actual collapse.

Atanda considers the remote causes in succession, highlighting the reasons they should be discarded. First, he disagrees that the fall of Old Oyo is explicable in terms of the weakness of its constitution, which vested considerable power in the *Are Ona Kakanfo* and the *Basorun*. The tyranny of *Basorun Gaha* and the secession of Ilorin by Afonja, according to Atanda, were caused by excessive ambition rather than the weakness of the constitution: "Basorun Gaha was obviously an ambitious and power thirsty subject who was not contented with the role assigned to him by the constitution. And he devised extraordinary means to terrorize his colleagues in the *Oyo Mesi* to the extent that none of them was able to challenge his subversion of the constitution."<sup>18</sup>

Atanda argues that it is impossible to make laws to prevent people from aspiring beyond their statuses:

Since it is impossible to devise a constitution to check ambition, that is, to stop men from thinking of how to acquire power even if it will involve side-tracking the constitution, abandoning moral principles and so on, it is difficult to see how one can hold Oyo constitution responsible for the crises created by Gaha and Afonja and for paving the way for the fall of the empire, which owed its strength, among other things, to the nature of this same constitution.<sup>19</sup>

Atanda highlights alternative conditions that would have paved the way for reducing the influence of Gaha and Afonja. The members of the *Oyo Mesi* who were appointed by the *Alaafins* were in the position of protecting him against the mercenaries of *Basorun Gaha*. This position suggests that it was in the best interest of the other members of the *Oyo Mesi* to prevent the autocracy of the *Basorun* since there were tendencies that the *Basorun* would try to clip the wings of all the king's loyalists.

Atanda also challenges other authors on three sets of closely related arguments concerning (1) the vastness of the Old Oyo Empire and the inability of the central government to coordinate and monitor the activities of its vassal states; (2) the constitutional provision that forbade the *Alaafin* from touring the provinces and intimating himself directly into the affairs of his subjects; and (3) the high degree of autonomy given to the provinces. He argues that all the vassal states had resident officials who monitored local politics and informed the central government of activities likely to undermine Oyo ascendancy. Vassal states were expected to participate in occasional festivities, which not only created a sort of cultural and historical reenactment that invariably reinforced Oyo power but also gave the central government the opportunity to gain firsthand information about developments in those places. Atanda is not completely disregarding the relationship between the vastness of the empire and attendant communication

challenges. Simply put, he does not believe that the vastness of an empire inevitably affects effective communication; he is suggesting that the traditional political system was structured in such a way that effective communication between the provinces and the central government should not be taken as a major remote factor responsible for its collapse. On the high degree of freedom given to the provinces, Atanda mentions that the central government coordinated the foreign policies of its vassal states but allowed the rulers to control domestic politics so long as they were not targeted toward undermining its supremacy.

The traditional prohibition against the *Alaafin* touring the vassal states and involving himself directly with their political affairs needs to be understood within the framework of the Yoruba worldview about the relationship between ancestors, gods, and other apparitional entities on the one hand, and the king or queen and his or her subjects on the other. Atanda contends that the traditional tools of the *Alaafin* included his ability to reduce his contacts with his subjects. He was understood to be the intermediary between the gods and human beings. This highly structured elitist position, which placed him above his subjects, could be kept sacredly and respected if minimized his public appearances. The *Alaafin* did not talk directly to the people but communicated through his chiefs and messengers. His beaded crown covered his face and prevented the people from seeing him. Provincial chiefs visited the capital frequently and disseminated the king's messages to the people. This aspect of the *Alaafin*'s royalty is well registered in Yoruba oral literature: *Ò n r'QyQ, ò n kánjú, Alaafin ò n'e'bikan*, meaning “there was no sense in traveling to Oyo in a hurry; after all, Alaafin (the Royal Highness) will always be there.”

To understand the factors responsible for the demise of the Old Oyo Empire, Atanda posits that scholars of Yoruba history need to turn their searchlight to the immediate causes: the breakdown of central authority and the Fulani jihadist intervention. Atanda is of the opinion that historians have yet to link critically these two closely connected developments. In chronological order, Atanda examines how Afonja spearheaded a revolt that led to the secession of Ilorin, the onslaught of the Fulani in Ilorin politics, and the series of events that culminated in the death of Afonja and the eventual attack on the Old Oyo Empire. According to Atanda, the inordinate ambition of Afonja, who wanted raw power, was the major factor responsible for the mutiny of the Iwere Ile-bound army and the series of events that followed.

Atanda has also contested Abdullahi Smith's essay explaining the fall of the Old Oyo Empire.<sup>20</sup> Smith argues that the Fulani emirate at Ilorin should not be blamed for the collapse of Old Oyo. Conversely, he posits that Old Oyo was so close to the verge of total collapse that the Fulani onslaught was like administering a mercy killing to a terminally ill patient whose end was expected in a matter of days. Drawing from Arabic sources, which he said

had yet to be used in reconstructing the history of the Old Oyo Empire, Smith provides a counterargument that questions the credibility of Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yorubas* and the scholarship of professional historians like Ajayi, Atanda, Awe, and Akinjogbin. Smith portrays the Hausa-Fulani jihadists "as being essentially lovers of peace, never being aggressors and using violence only after provocation."<sup>21</sup> While not disputing the historical fact of the Hausa-Fulani invasion of Old Oyo, Smith does challenge the Fulani jihadists' involvement and the usual chronology given for the invasion. The attack on several parts of northern Yorubaland, according to Smith, was carried out not by Fulani jihadists but by "nothing doing pastoral Fulani" and Muslim Yoruba who were motivated by greed and not the desire to forcefully convert the people to the Islamic faith.

Atanda disagrees with Smith's total condemnation of the data and narratives that Samuel Johnson provides about the chronology of the collapse of the Old Oyo Empire. He believes that the Arabic manuscript that Smith used for the first time has limited information relating to the collapse of Old Oyo when compared to Johnson's narrative, which professional historians of nineteenth-century Yoruba have used widely. While Johnson's informants witnessed the events they spoke about and were highly respected local historians of the period, Ahmad b. Abi Bakri Kokoro, the author of *Talif akbar al qurun min Umara 'balad Ilorin* (the "neglected sources" that Smith used), collected his data from the second and third generation of people that witnessed the Fulani jihadists' onslaught.<sup>22</sup> Atanda goes on to provide details of the different periods of the Muslim emirate of Ilorin's involvement in Yoruba politics and why it is wrong for Smith to assert, based on a document published in 1912, that the Hausa-Muslim jihadists should not be blamed for the demise of the Old Oyo Empire. The following lines summarize Atanda's long and coherent analysis of the role the Hausa-Fulani of Ilorin played in the eventual collapse of Old Oyo and the sacking of several northern Yoruba towns:

The Fulani and Hausa Muslims constituted a formidable force which participated in the invasions of northwestern Yorubaland in the period, c. 1817–1823. It is also well known that from 1823 onwards the Fulani used military force to take power from Afonja and Yoruba Muslims in Ilorin. . . . Their advance to southern Yorubaland was checked by Ibadan only at the battle of Oshogbo in c. 1840. What more evidence is needed to convince anyone of the involvement of the Fulani jihadists in the liquidation of Old Oyo.<sup>23</sup>

In 1960 Peter Morton-Williams, a renowned anthropologist, published a study on the role of the *Ogboni* in the political system of Oyo.<sup>24</sup> In most Yoruba towns, the *Ogboni* performed both judicial and administrative functions. They appointed and ratified the selection of kings and chiefs and performed spiritual and religious functions. With specific reference to Oyo,

Morton-Williams posits that, among other functions, the *Ogboni* had the power to prevent members of the *Oyo Mesi* from asking the *Alaafin* to commit suicide, thus serving as a check on their excesses. Implicitly, this suggests that, while the *Oyo Mesi* checked the excesses of the *Alaafin*, it was the function of the *Ogboni* to make sure that the *Oyo Mesi* did not wield power beyond traditional and constitutional provisions. In other words, it takes the combination of two arms of government, the *Oyo Mesi* and the *Ogboni*, to remove the *Alaafin*.

Atanda questions Morton-Williams's findings from a number of perspectives.<sup>25</sup> First, he faults Morton-Williams for refusing to place his narratives in time perspective by differentiating between the Old Oyo Empire destroyed in the first half of the nineteenth century and the new one built up later in that century. Drawing on data such as the writings of early nineteenth-century explorers Hugh Clapperton and Richard Lander, and Johnson's *History of the Yorubas*, Atanda argues that there is no evidence to suggest that the *Ogboni* existed in Old Oyo. Atanda then appraises how the *Ogboni* could have helped in overturning the calamity of the eighteenth century, which was reflected in the series of royal suicides initiated by *Basorun Gaha*. Here he suggests that if the *Ogboni* actually performed the functions that Morton-Williams said they did, they would have been able to curtail *Basorun Gaha*'s excesses. There is no way, according to Atanda, that *Basorun Gaha* would have been able to pocket the *Ogboni* since they belonged to a completely different arm of government, and since traditionally their job was to guard against the excesses of the *Alaafin* and *Oyo Mesi*. Atanda goes further to argue that prior to 1754, when *Basorun Gaha* was said to have facilitated the suicide of several *Alaafins*, there is no evidence that the *Ogboni* cult was able to prevent the death of the kings. Of the eleven *Alaafins* that reigned between ca. 1658 and 1754, seven were rejected by the *Oyo Mesi* with no evidence of the role of the *Ogboni* in attempting to prevent royal suicides.<sup>26</sup>

Atanda in the same essay outlines the origin of the *Ogboni* and the functions they performed in different parts of Yorubaland. Here, he wants us to understand that in places like Ife, held by tradition to be the cradle of Yoruba civilization, the *Ogboni* "did not gain a sufficient prominent position in the governmental structure to the extent of having a constitutional *locu standi* in policy and law making exercises. Its role was limited to legal aspects, where it was used only in cases where fair decision could not be reached in an open court for the fear of intimidation."<sup>27</sup> Aside from Ife, the role and functions of the *Ogboni* in the Ijebu, Egba, and Egbado areas before the nineteenth century indicate that they wielded enormous power and indeed had all it took to prevent the king and the council of chiefs from becoming despotic.

It was *Alaafin Atiba*, the founding king of the New Oyo Empire (1837–59), who introduced the *Ogboni* cult to the new state. Atanda argues that

because Atiba had lived at Gudugbu, Akeitan, and Ago Oja, towns close to the Egba forest kingdoms, he realized the role the *Ogboni* were capable of playing in the new political arrangement of his empire. First, he knew from the lessons of history that the collapse of the Old Oyo Empire was traceable in part to the overwhelming influence of the *Oyo Mesi* and believed their power and excessive influence on the *Alaafin* had to be “neutralized.” Here Atanda acknowledges the political sagacity and expediency of Atiba, whose state was built during a time that the entire Yoruba region was engulfed by a series of wars and revolutions. What is more, the state at its nascent stage required time to nurture its new and refurbished political and social institutions. Atanda mentions that Atiba considered historical precedents and all the prevailing conditions of the period; he was smart enough not to allow the *Ogboni* the kind of power vested in the *Oyo Mesi*. Atiba was also not interested in allowing the *Ogboni* to assume enormous power, which they commanded among the Ijebu. Conversely, he designed the *Ogboni* to serve as a check on the power of the *Oyo Mesi*, which he felt could pose problems for his reign. In the end, the *Oyo Mesi* did not reject Atiba and the *Alaafin* that reigned after him partly because of the quality of the leadership of Atiba and his successors but also because of the presence of the *Ogboni*.<sup>28</sup>

Continuing his examination of power, political expediency, and conflict, Atanda explores what he termed “collision and coalition” in nineteenth-century Yorubaland.<sup>29</sup> In this study, he explains that there is nothing like the rigidity of traditional order, suggesting that tradition and laws in the nineteenth century were constantly abused by either individuals who wanted power and influence or those who sought to acquire power above what was traditionally vested. In the wake of situations like wars and conflicts, constitutions and traditions were frequently flouted.<sup>30</sup> It was not only the case that such blatant disregard for tradition was orchestrated by the inordinate ambition of a political officeholder. Sometimes new political arrangements necessitated the suspension or total neglect of traditions.

Atanda uses some nineteenth-century political developments, such as the rebellion of *Are Ona Kakanfo* Afonja and the succession crises in New Oyo, to explain his idea of collision in the politics of Yorubaland during the period.<sup>31</sup> In terms of coalition in the politics of Yorubaland during the nineteenth century, Atanda posits that the fluidity of the motives for waging wars as well as political uncertainty during this period led the various Yoruba groups to suspend or resolve their differences for the purpose of achieving collective goals. What Atanda appears to be suggesting is that in politics there are no permanent friends but there are permanent enemies. For example, at various times, Ibadan and Ijaiye fought each other, but sometimes they suspended their grievances and differences for the purpose of crushing a common enemy.<sup>32</sup> Atanda’s argument dovetails into that of Oguntomisin, whose study of political alliances and alignments in nineteenth-century

Yoruba wars ventilates the complexity of warmaking and diplomacy during a period characterized by incessant warfare and revolution.<sup>33</sup>

In another essay, Atanda addresses the imperial conquest of Yorubaland.<sup>34</sup> The Yoruba did not only fight one another during the nineteenth century but waged war against the Fulani jihadists, the Dahomeans, the French, and lastly the British. The wars were not only ethnically diverse; they had a racial and international aspect as well. In order of precedence, the Fulani jihadists' interest in placing Yorubaland under the Sokoto Caliphate took a dramatic turn after they took over Ilorin from Afonja. The *Are Ona Kakanfo*, as we have earlier seen, revolted and carved out Ilorin from the Old Oyo Empire. Their southward advance was so effective that it caused the eventual collapse of Old Oyo. It was the Ibadan's success at the celebrated Battle of Osogbo around 1840 that for several decades halted the march of the Fulani, whose imperial ambition in northern Yorubaland reappeared during the Ekitiparapo War (1877–93).

Dahomey, which used to be a vassal state of the Old Oyo Empire, broke the yoke of domination at the end of the eighteenth century when Oyo's imperial glory began to wane. By the third decade of the nineteenth century, the Dahomeans, through incessant warfare, had been able to secure the agriculturally rich and commercially strategic western Yoruba towns of Ijana, Refurefu, and Sabe. The Egbado region was also not spared. The desire of Abeokuta to have access to the Egbado region brought it into constant clashes with Dahomey, which also eyed this part of Yorubaland. Like the Ibadan versus the Fulani jihadists, the Egba were responsible for halting the encroachment of the Dahomeans into Yorubaland in three well-known military engagements.<sup>35</sup> The British imperial conquest of Yorubaland is obviously the most successful. After the 1861 bombardment of the coastal town of Lagos, the British did not attempt to annex the Yoruba hinterland until the 1880s, when political, economic, and religious factors combined to provoke the Scramble for Africa. Atanda sees the conquest of Yorubaland on two levels: one physical and the other psychological. The former was reflected in military engagements such as the Ijebu Expedition of 1892, while the latter involved conquest through peaceful negotiation aimed at preventing military encounters.<sup>36</sup>

In terms of the historian's social obligations, Atanda is convinced like Obaro Ikime and E. A. Ayandele that professional historians should consider writing for a larger audience.<sup>37</sup> The overspecialization of the histories produced by the scholars of the Ibadan school has meant their materials can only be assessed by professional historians and academics. This constitutes a major challenge to the domestication of academic knowledge. Atanda's *Introduction to Yoruba History* is written for academic and nonacademic readers alike.<sup>38</sup> The book is a collection of a series of talks on the Yoruba broadcast on Radio Nigeria between January and April 1974. Like Ikime's

*Fall of Nigeria*, which brought together many secondary sources on the British conquest of the various regions of modern Nigeria, Atanda's book is a synthesis of several works on the Yoruba from the early period until after independence. The work is lucidly written and free of jargon and terminology that might inhibit comprehension, allowing it to achieve one simple goal: to be accessible to a nonacademic audience without compromising the basic tenets of the craft of historical writing such as accuracy and objectivity. The book's many illustrations include the pictures of some prominent Yoruba kings, traditional attire, and some Yoruba arts and crafts. In spite of its contributions to Yoruba studies, *An Introduction to Yoruba History* does not discuss important themes such as the effect of colonial rule on the relations between the Yoruba and other ethnicities in Nigeria. In addition, it does not consider the impact of nineteenth-century Yoruba wars on Yoruba ethnic politics during the period of decolonization.

In another of his works, "A Historical Perspective of Intellectual Life in Yoruba Society up to c. 1900," Atanda argues that the fact that Yoruba society before the advent of colonial rule did not develop the culture of reading, writing, and preserving the past in written forms should not be taken to mean that they did not have a strong intellectual life.<sup>39</sup> He points out that intelligence is not synonymous with Western education. He defines intellectual activity or intellectual life simply as "the power of the mind to grasp ideas and relations and to exercise dispassionate reason and rational judgment."<sup>40</sup> The ability to reason and apply rational judgment is a skill that the Yoruba, according to Atanda, must have developed during the agricultural revolution that paved the way for their emergence as a distinct ethnic group. This period, according to him, dates back to between 2000 and 1000 BC. Atanda builds this essay around the following set of questions: What are the origin and the process of the development of intellectual activity? What is the nature of the content of intellectual activity? and What identifies the intellectuals responsible for such intellectual activity?<sup>41</sup> He then proceeds to answer all these questions utilizing the works of scholars of Yoruba language and literature such as Wande Abimbola, O. O. Olatunji, Abiola Irele, Adeboye Babalola, and I. O. Olajubu.

The aforementioned scholars agree that the Yoruba preserved their history, culture, and philosophy in the form of orality, which embodied their cultural and historical experience, transmitted from one generation to the other. Atanda performs what can be called a "content analysis" by examining elements of intellectuality in the following forms of oral poetry: *oriki* (praise poem), *ese Ifa* (Ifa verse), *owe* (proverbs), *rara* (panegyric), *ijala* (hunter's dirge), *esa* (masquerade's dirge), *ekun iyawo* (bridal or nuptial dirge), *alo apamo* (riddles), and *ofo* or *ogede* (incantations).<sup>42</sup> The character of the essay is predominantly multidisciplinary. Besides oral literature, he uses some archaeological findings that reveal what he calls "concrete symbols

of Yoruba intellectual life.” The Yoruba preserved their intellectual life, like other forms of knowledge and human experience, through traditionally sanctioned institutions and personalities, although it is not only through these that intellectuality is preserved. The home and other spaces of socialization, family, and lineage also play significant roles in the accumulation and preservation of the body of ideas that makes up the Yoruba’s intellectual life.

The origin of the Yoruba is one of the most hotly debated themes in Yoruba studies. Indeed, conflicting accounts of how the Yoruba came into existence range from popular mythology preserved in oral literature and traditions to documented versions of Middle Eastern origin found in the works collected in Johnson’s *History of the Yorubas*. Atanda takes up this controversial issue in his piece “The Origins of the Yoruba Reconsidered,” by analyzing the myths and legends about the origin of Ife with emphasis on the place of Oduduwa, the acclaimed progenitor of the Yoruba race.<sup>43</sup> He also reviews the arguments put forward by writers between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries. Drawing evidence from works of linguists, whose work on aspects of Yoruba history has been well received, Atanda posits that the Yoruba language is classified among the Kwa group of the Niger-Congo family of languages. Its speakers, like the speakers of other languages of the Kwa group such as the Igbo, Edo, and Ewe, must have lived in the area around the Niger-Congo River. Atanda goes on to argue that if we accept the argument that the Yoruba migrated from somewhere outside Africa, then one must also recognize that the people who belong to the same Kwa group of languages must have migrated from the same region as their Yoruba counterparts. The place of contact between the Yoruba and other members of the Kwa family of languages is certainly Africa, according to Atanda.

He highlights the place of linguistic evidence in reconstructing the history of nonliterate people: “It prevents limiting our search for the origin of the group to the origin of rulers alone or stretching it to reach the point of merging into the search for the origin of a race or of mankind in general, a search which often ends up in issues beyond what man, even with all the advantages of modern science, can clearly understand or prove.”<sup>44</sup> Taken together, oral traditions and linguistic and archaeological evidence suggest that the Yoruba are indigenous to West Africa and have been inhabiting the place since some two thousand to three thousand years ago when the Yoruba language separated as a distinct language from other members of the Kwa group of languages. From the data at hand, Atanda deduces:

First, it is reasonable to accept, until further research proves otherwise, that the Yoruba originated from the Niger-Benue confluence. . . . Second, the Yoruba or their ancestors must be part of the population movement away from the Niger-Benue confluence embarked upon by some among the Kwa group

of language speakers. . . . Third, the process of the movement, linguistic and cultural differentiation among the related groups took place resulting in the emergence of the Yoruba (as well as other groups) as a distinct language or ethnic group.<sup>45</sup>

Atanda extends his ideas on the problem of Yoruba origins to look at the subject from a Nigeria-wide perspective in a study titled “The Historian and the Problem of Origins of Peoples in Nigerian Society.”<sup>46</sup> This essay, which resembles a conceptual exposition of how historians contend with the problems of origins, identifies the differences between traditional and professional historians. He argues that traditional historians, who largely do not acquire Western education, are guided by culture and tradition in the preservation of the history of their communities; that is, they tend to explain events in terms of mythology. Atanda then subdivides professional historians into two categories: diffusionists and antidiffusionists. The diffusionists, on the one hand, are the historians who trace the origins of the Nigerian peoples to the world outside West Africa or argue that all the advances and civilization among the Nigerian peoples is a product of their contact with that outside world. The antidiffusionists, on the other hand, tend to see Nigerian civilization as homegrown, or indigenous to the people. Atanda argues that the problem of origins of the Nigerian peoples must be seen in ethnic terms. Since language is the most important ingredient of ethnicity, he believes that historians should approach the problem of origins from a critical appraisal of linguistic evidence. This suggestion is on par with the recommendation he made with respect to the problem of origins among the Yoruba.<sup>47</sup>

Because of the complex nature of problems of origins, Atanda argues that two types of answers about what constitutes the origin of any group of people are paramount: satisfying answers and satisfactory answers. Satisfying answers are less academic and provide people with the self-consciousness and identity needed to fight against ideas that portray them as inferior people. In most cases, satisfying answers are theologically or mystically oriented. By contrast, satisfactory answers are given through critical and systematic academic investigation. Satisfactory answers, according to Atanda, should be able to stand the test of time and must not be impervious to modification and outright condemnation. His recommendations for approaching the problems of origins include: “(1) that an attempt be made to understand what the peoples of Nigerian society mean when they talk about their origins; (2) that the nature of oral traditions of origin be understood and appreciated; (3) that language be the starting point of investigation; and (4) that archeological evidence be effectively used if available.”<sup>48</sup>

Atanda built his career around Yoruba history and culture. As we have seen, he engages with contentious debates over such topics as the origins of the Yoruba and the place of the *Ogboni* in the Old Oyo Empire. Besides, he is

one of the historians who made indirect rule the most-studied aspect of colonial Nigeria's political history. His scholarship in this area, while conforming to the standard of Africanist scholarship that exposes the ills of colonial domination, creates an interesting dialogue on ethnicity and intraethnic relations among the Yoruba. Although he could not complete a book-length manuscript on the Yoruba before his death in 1996, his published works are a significant addition to Yoruba studies.

In using Atanda to exemplify the writing on Yoruba history, we have demonstrated how academic historians take a precolonial group, in this case the Yoruba, as a unit of analysis. In the intellectual world of Atanda, the Yoruba represents a "nation," similar to how Afigbo treats the Igbo. This nation, as Atanda's work on indirect rule shows, has the capacity to exist within the framework of an imposed colonial order, as well as to survive it. The analysis of origin stories is a revealing attempt to explain an "organic" identity for the nation, and to invest this identity with deeper historical roots. Like Ajayi and Awe, and unlike Afigbo, Atanda could not avoid talking about the ruptures within the nation. After all, the empire that defined its political richness collapsed, and its aftermath during the nineteenth century witnessed bitter and brutal conflicts.

In spite of his rich study of the Yoruba, Atanda fails to make broad theoretical statements on either identity or ethnicity. He traces changes since the nineteenth century, but no clear picture of Yoruba identity emerges from his cumulative scholarship. The changes do not seem to amount to any sense of alienation such as his colleagues tend to paint in other writings on the colonial period. Atanda avoids radical scholarship or even anticolonial ideologies. The works of this staunch Baptist suggest a firm belief in the wisdom of a small core of political leaders to manage a modern society. While he notes the excesses of political leadership (as in the case of the *Alaafin* of Oyo), it is not that he wants the institution to be dismantled or the masses to be integrated into the palace ascendancy. Atanda's writings struggle to restore the Yoruba nation, turning this historian into a spokesperson for the preservation of the past, and a member of the intellectual vanguard of modern Yoruba nationalist expression.

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## Bolanle Awe

### Yoruba and Gender Studies

Like other historians of her generation, Bolanle Awe started her academic career with a PhD dissertation.<sup>1</sup> Her thesis examined the emergence of Ibadan as the most militarized state in nineteenth-century Yorubaland.<sup>2</sup> Besides the history of Ibadan, she produced scholarly works on oral history and traditions among the Yoruba.<sup>3</sup> Although the importance of oral history as source material was an article of faith for the leading Nigerian historians of the 1960s and 1970s, Awe and E. J. Alagoa are among the few historians who critically deploy oral tradition in studying specific aspects of Nigerian history.<sup>4</sup>

Awe is also a pioneering historian of Nigerian women. Aside from teaching and writing about women, her single most cherished contribution to Nigerian studies is the role she played in the establishment of the Women's Research and Documentation Center (WORDOC), the first resource center for research on women's and gender studies in Nigeria. As the first chairperson of WORDOC, Awe worked to organize symposia, raise funds, and create research networks and collaboration among scholars (both local and international) of women's and gender studies in order to establish a firm beginning for the center.<sup>5</sup> She actively participates in the activities of associations and institutions aimed at improving the social and economic status of women in Africa and remains a strong advocate of African women's political, social, and economic empowerment.

Besides Awe, three other pioneering historians of women's history are Nina MBA, Kristin Mann, and LaRay Denzer. MBA taught history at the University of Lagos, while Denzer was a faculty member in the University of Ibadan's Department of History. Mann became a professor at Emory University, in Atlanta, Georgia. These scholars were responsible for introducing courses in women's and gender studies in their respective universities. Indeed, MBA supervised the first doctoral dissertation on women's history at the University of Lagos and wrote the first monograph on the political history of Nigerian women.<sup>6</sup> In addition to several works on women's economic and social history, they invested significant time and energy into producing

quality biographical works on heroines of Nigerian history during the precolonial, colonial, and postindependence periods.<sup>7</sup> While Awe and Mba tend to be more interested in women's political history, Denzer's work crosses over both history and economics, as well focusing on the social history of Nigerian women.

### Ibadan and Yoruba History

During the 1950s, when academic history on Africans began, the history of the Yoruba attracted significant attention. Indeed, a sizable number of leading historians of the period were Yoruba. Understandably, they invested much time into exploring the history of either their own subethnic groups or the entire Yoruba people. Although pioneering historians of the Yoruba showed interest in several aspects of the history of the people (especially their origin), they tended to be more interested in the nineteenth century. Their collective endeavor would later make this period the most-documented era of Yoruba history. In addition to Awe, a list of influential Yoruba historians of this period will include J. F. Ade Ajayi, Robert Smith, S. A. Akintoye, Toyin Falola, A. I. Akinjogbin, G. O. Oguntomisin, and J. A. Atanda.<sup>8</sup> Although all these scholars use military and political history of the nineteenth century as focal points of analysis, their geographic and thematic concerns vary widely. In this connection, while Ajayi, Smith, and Akinjogbin tend to write on the general history of warfare spanning the entire Yoruba region, Awe and Akintoye focus on military history of the Ibadan and Ekiti, respectively.

Nineteenth-century Yorubaland was characterized by numerous internecine wars and revolutions, which ushered in social, political, and demographic changes throughout the entire region. New states emerged while several others were wiped out. A great diffusion of cultures and practices occurred as people moved from one area to another and as they interacted with their new environments and hosts. Experimentation with new forms of political systems is perhaps one of the most outstanding features of the new states. As pointed out by Oguntomisin, "New states emerged which tended to depart from monarchical institutions hitherto characteristic of Yoruba. There was increasing tendency towards despotism, which in one state went unchecked. In these states, personal achievements rather than ascription became the criterion for holding office and in this period the military became pre-eminent in Yoruba politics."<sup>9</sup> The wars had a diasporic impact as captives and victims of wars were sold into slavery and were transported to the Americas. Indeed, a large number of slaves sold into slavery in the New World (especially to Brazil) in the first three decades of the nineteenth century came from the Yoruba region.

At the center of the politics of the period was Ibadan, the most-militarized state in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. Awe's PhD thesis, as earlier mentioned, is on the rise of this state as an imperial power in the nineteenth century. Awe probes vigorously the emergence of a military aristocracy in Ibadan, the peopling of the state, and how domestic and foreign exigencies necessitated military expansion. She investigates two major problems that needed urgent attention after the demise of the Old Oyo Empire in the early 1800s: first, the need to halt the advance of the Fulani jihadists, who had established a formidable base at Ilorin; and second, the need to fill the vacuum left by the empire's demise.<sup>10</sup> She considered Ibadan's defeat of Ilorin at the famous Battle of Osogbo (1840) as a milestone in Ibadan and Yoruba history in general, for it put a formidable roadblock in the way of the jihadists' southward advance. This feat, coupled with the defeat in 1862 of Ijaiye, its most ardent rival, made Ibadan a major regional power.

Awe is able to show that by the 1860s, a good part of the Yoruba country, especially the Oyo-Yoruba towns, and the Ekiti and Ijesa towns, were all under Ibadan's imperial control. The Ibadan, however, did not restrict their military aggressiveness to the Ijesa, Ekiti, Akoko, and Igbonima alone. The Ibadan's relations with the Egba were equally unfriendly, as they saw the need to prevent them from repossessing their former territories.<sup>11</sup> The desire to get to the coast for the purpose of trading directly with the Europeans brought the Ibadan into constant clashes with the Ijebu, whose monopoly of the coastal trade remained intact until 1892, when the British led an expedition against them.<sup>12</sup> Although Ibadan won a good percentage of its territories through wars, Awe points out that there were instances where some states willingly placed themselves under its control. Some of these states, as was the case with Otan, wanted to escape from Ilorin's control, while Apomu and Ede transferred allegiance to Ibadan in the wake of Ife's military incapacitation.<sup>13</sup>

The success of Ibadan's expansionism is explicable in terms of new political and military experiments. The state was built on the ideology of military aristocracy. This extra-Yoruba political experiment found support in the character and composition of the founding fathers of the town: soldiers of fortune from all over the Yoruba region. Chiefs had "war boys" who were frequently sent on expedition. Promotion in the hierarchy of chiefs was determined predominantly through success on the battlefield. Military success brought respect, wealth, and honor, which were needed to maintain a large following and household and to remain within the military aristocracy.<sup>14</sup> The militarized atmosphere of the period necessitated the need to strengthen the defense of the nascent Ibadan town as well expand its boundaries. Commenting on the extra-Yoruba character of Ibadan, Awe writes, "Except for two religious titles, Ibadan rejected in its entirety the traditional system of succession to power and influence; instead of heredity, merit became the

most important qualification for achieving chieftaincy titles; competition was thrown open to all freeborn men and a man's proven ability as a soldier, rather than the accident of birth, became the determinant fact of his success in acquiring a title.”<sup>15</sup>

As Ibadan established control over the conquered territories, its need to ensure allegiance and prevent revolt became significant. How Ibadan governed its conquered territories is the focus of another piece by Awe, “The *Ajele* System: A Study of Ibadan Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century.”<sup>16</sup> Awe opines that the *Ajele* system was not new or different from the traditional methods that the Old Oyo Empire had used to control its tributary states. The only outstanding aspect of the new arrangement was the position and role of a chief, the *Babakekere*, who served as patron and supervised the governance of the tributary states. The *Babakekere* was normally the warrior responsible for conquering the town or one who had special connections, such as a former resident who later relocated to Ibadan. He in turn appointed the *Ajele*, who was not directly responsible to Ibadan but to his patron (*Babakekere*). The *Babakekere* was in turn responsible to the *Baale*, the political and military head of Ibadan. There was no limit to the number of towns that a *Babakekere* could have under his control, but the *Baale* normally controlled the highest number. The *Ajele* lived permanently as a resident representative in the tributary state and had his own court with some of the trappings of power and royalty. He monitored the activities of the rulers of towns and reported to the patron any activities capable of undermining Ibadan’s hegemony. The *Ajele* also ensured that the subject states paid their social, political, and economic tributes.

Awe identifies the advantages of the *Ajele* system of imperial control to both Ibadan and its tributaries. While conquered territories provided resources for the war chiefs, helped reinforce Ibadan’s military ascendancy and supremacy, and sometimes served as war camps or bases for further military expeditions, the subjugated benefited from the protection of the empire, which was formidable enough to ward off enemies and guarantee internal security. The arrangement seemed to have favored both sides. Awe does not see the *Ajele* system as a perfect method of imperial control. She argues that this system, despite its limitations, which included corruption on the part of the resident representatives and abuse of power, made Ibadan a wealthy town materially. She also argues that the system halted the advance of Ilorin-based Fulani jihadists and guaranteed peace for areas under Ibadan’s sphere of influence.<sup>17</sup>

It is misleading to think that the totality of Yoruba history during the nineteenth century was violent conflict. Awe looks at the relationship between warfare and economic development in “Militarism and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Yoruba Country.”<sup>18</sup> Her main position in this study is that “political problems have largely dominated historical discussion

of the Yoruba country in the nineteenth century and have tended to obscure a consideration of other interesting developments which took place during that period.”<sup>19</sup> Drawing evidence from the documents of nineteenth-century missionaries such as David and Anne Hinderer and oral traditions, she discusses a series of economic activities in nineteenth-century Ibadan and how geography combined with human ingenuity and creativity to pave the way for economic development. She posits that although the military character of the Ibadan state tends to lead to the conclusion that the economy was truncated, the rulers’ open-door policy to immigration fed the town with people who brought their skills in a variety of crafts. Agricultural production soared as the population of the state increased.<sup>20</sup> Awe’s concluding remark on the relationship between economic development and warfare in nineteenth-century Ibadan is instructive:

But for this economic growth, militarism was a double-edged weapon. The needs of a military state, such as Ibadan, certainly gave it tremendous impetus; trade, agriculture, arts and crafts developed in response to the demands of the military, who constituted the new leadership. But in the final analysis all these economic activities needed peace for their full development; Ibadan, by the very nature of its birth and its commitment to military ideals and military solutions to the problems confronting the Yoruba country, could not, however, guarantee this peace.<sup>21</sup>

Like other great empires in world history, Ibadan, through war and diplomacy, continued to impose its hegemony on its neighbors until a time when the oppressed rose up to break the yoke of domination. The process of this imperial decline is the subject of another of Awe’s works, “The End of an Experiment: The Collapse of the Ibadan Empire, 1877–1893.”<sup>22</sup> Here Awe points out that by the 1870s, the entire Yoruba country was convinced that the best means of assuring security and ending the numerous wars that had started as early as the opening years of the nineteenth century was to break the military power of Ibadan. Ibadan was blamed for insecurity because its restless war boys and warlords continually threatened the peace of the entire region through military conquest. Tributary states began to revolt, even as other neighbors also saw the need to bring down the empire.<sup>23</sup> Caught up in these crises, Ibadan was left with apparently very few loyalists. In 1877 the Ekitiparapo War, sometimes called “the war to end all wars,” broke out between Ibadan and its loyalists on the one hand, and the Ekiti states, which formed a confederacy (Ekitiparapo) aimed at removing the yoke of Ibadan’s overlordship, on the other. In the emergent political struggle, the Ijebu and Egba allied with the Ekitiparapo to ensure that Ibadan’s supply of ammunition and resources to fight the war was limited. This protracted war continued until the intervention of British authorities and missionaries. This

external intervention appeared inevitable because the war was negatively affecting British economic activities in Lagos. As a result of the British intervention, a cease-fire was struck in 1882, but it was not until 1893 that the war came to an official end. The 1893 peace and trade treaty removed the towns of the Ijesa and the Ekiti from Ibadan's control. This treaty laid the foundation of British colonial rule in the modern southwestern part of Nigeria.<sup>24</sup>

For Awe, Ibadan failed in its quest to fill the vacuum left by the fall of the Old Oyo Empire. She comments that Ibadan lacked all the traditional and moral credentials to guarantee the kind of peace that the Oyo had established up to the opening years of the nineteenth century. The Old Oyo Empire was able to establish control over its tributaries not only by military might "but also by appealing to such intangible factors as common religious beliefs as a common cultural heritage which the Yoruba as a people shared."<sup>25</sup> The Ibadan political arrangement of military aristocracy was alien to the Yoruba and could not provide respect and honor along the traditional lines of legitimacy.

In all of her work on Ibadan, Awe made adequate use of a variety of sources, including missionary accounts; Samuel Johnson's classic, *The History of the Yorubas*; and oral history and tradition.<sup>26</sup> Although the missionaries and explorers were principally interested in evangelism, they readily recorded their observations, which would later become important source material for Yoruba history. With specific reference to Ibadan, Awe made fruitful use of the accounts of David and Anne Hinderer, a couple who were responsible for pioneering Christian missionary activities in the 1850s. The Hinderers documented their observations ranging across the social, economic, and military character of Ibadan. No scholar of the Yoruba can dispense with Johnson's *History*; however, in spite of his contributions to Yoruba studies, Awe, like other Yoruba historians, finds many holes in Johnson's narratives of nineteenth-century Yoruba history. She believes that Johnson's Christian background predisposed him to interpret events as the product of divine intervention; thus, he does not critically examine the human factors associated with Ibadan's military and political exploits.<sup>27</sup> One of Awe's most important documentary materials on Ibadan history is Akinyele's *Outline History of Ibadan* by I. B. Akinyele, the first Christian king of Ibadan. The original version of the book was written in the Yoruba language and published in 1950. As a direct descendant of the founders of the town, Akinyele had access to extensive oral traditions, which enrich the content of the book and make it good source material for writing Ibadan history.

When Awe and her colleagues were doing their research in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they were privileged to interview many people who had lived in the nineteenth century and thus had witnessed some of the events they spoke about. A good number of these informants were direct first-generation descendants of the "ordinary" people, warriors, leaders, and empire

builders of the century. The availability of credible informants facilitated Awe's access to a large body of oral evidence, which she creatively deploys in writing about the nineteenth-century military history of Ibadan.

## Oral History and Tradition

The place of oral history and traditions in the emergence of African history and historiography is emphasized in numerous chapters of this book, so a lengthy discussion is not needed here. Awe wrote a couple of essays on oral traditions and history. In one of her often-cited pieces, "Praise Poems as Historical Data: The Example of the Yoruba *Oriki*," she argues that although the validity of oral traditions in reconstructing the history of nonliterate peoples has virtually ceased to be a matter of debate and is now well acknowledged, "the diversity of oral traditions has not been so fully recognized as to make possible the analysis of each type as historical data."<sup>28</sup> Awe wants historians to explore different genres of oral traditions as opposed to lumping them together as a single collection of historical data. Drawing evidence from the state of knowledge of oral traditions and Yoruba history, she argues that her colleagues have yet to consider oral literature (a genre of oral tradition) as veritable data for reconstructing Yoruba history and in fact brand some types of oral literature as "quasi-historical records."

Of the many types of oral literature (fables, legends, myths, poetry), Awe believes that poetry "constitutes the largest and most important single item; for almost every aspect of Yoruba life finds expression in poetry, and poetry is the most popular literary form for marking important occasions—weddings, births, funerals, naming ceremonies, festivals, etc.—in Yoruba life."<sup>29</sup> Much of Yoruba poetry, locally called *oriki*, is variously translated as praise poems, poetic salutes, or poetic citations. Awe explores three major types of *oriki*, namely, *oriki ilu* (*oriki* of towns), *oriki orile* (*oriki* of lineages), and *oriki imagije* (*oriki* of individual personalities). Although the origin of the word *oriki* continues to generate debate among students of oral literature, Awe believes that the fact that *oriki* are collected over a long period makes them a significant source material for understanding the relationship between time and social change. Institutionally sanctioned procedures help ensure the faithful transmission of *oriki*, like other types of oral literature, from one generation to another.

Awe clearly brings out the importance of *oriki* in her piece entitled "Notes on *Oriki* and Warfare in Yorubaland."<sup>30</sup> Here she posits that the study of precolonial military tactics can be adequately undertaken by examining the *oriki* of people, lineages, and towns during this period. *Oriki* provide access into virtually all aspects of the life and times of great personalities like the Ibadan warriors of the nineteenth century. It is through *oriki* that we know

that some of the warriors, such as Ibikunle of Ibadan, not only fought wars but also had expanses of land and were engaged in agriculture. *Oriki* provide a clear glimpse into physical attributes of warriors, military engagements, and even military tactics.

In a related work, Awe argues that by investigating the origin of place-names in Ibadan, one can gain access to the history of the state in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>31</sup> She identifies six categories of place-names (such as those that reflect the social and economic importance of a locale), situating them within the larger framework of Ibadan history. Awe's expertise in Ibadan history gave her the opportunity to understand the history of the places and the historical circumstances that gave birth to their names.<sup>32</sup>

Like Obaro Ikime, Awe believes that historians should look for a bearing between the past and the present.<sup>33</sup> Awe believes that Nigerian crises of development can partly be attributed to the limited attention paid to the role of history. Ikime and Ayandele both look at the utility of history through the prism of intergroup relations;<sup>34</sup> by contrast, Awe believes that oral traditions contain many lessons about the past that can be used for development. "It therefore becomes imperative that we hark back to the past, to our lore, our traditions to see whether they can provide any solution to our present predicament."<sup>35</sup> In a paper presented at the inauguration of the Nigerian Association of Oral History and Tradition (NAOHT), Awe identifies three major types of oral traditions (myth of origin, proverbs, and folktales) and argues that these genres of unwritten sources possess much historical information that can be used for national development.<sup>36</sup> Awe wants Nigerian leaders to use evidence of how precolonial Nigerian societies placed human beings at the center of development in formulating policies for genuine unity.<sup>37</sup> Using the Bayajida legend as a case study, Awe identifies the leadership role of the queen of Daura and posits that the Nigerian state should critically consider the role women played in the past and give them more space to contribute to the development of the nation. The past, according to her, is replete with women's involvement in important positions, and she contends that to forge ahead Nigeria needs to empower women socially, economically, and especially, politically.

Women are not the only group of marginalized Nigerians. Awe believes that Nigerian society is paying lip service to the importance of children as the leaders of tomorrow. She cites many Yoruba proverbs that indicate the responsibilities of elders to children and vice versa. Again, her position is that by exploring the proverbs of their people, leaders would see the copious evidence of how children were trained and nurtured in the past. The fact that oral traditions of only 50 out of Nigeria's more than 300 ethno-cultural cleavages have been studied is an indicator of the inadequate attention that has been given to this genre of the Nigerian Archives.<sup>38</sup>

## Women's and Gender History

Women's studies did not develop into a viable academic field in Nigeria until around the mid-1980s. Adetoun Ogunseye is reputed to have written the first academic research on women in Nigeria. Between 1960, when she wrote the article "The Role and Status of Women in Nigeria," and 1976, research on Nigerian women was uncoordinated, fragmented, and not oriented toward localized case histories and empirical studies. In 1977 Awe published a piece on female traditional institutions among the Yoruba.<sup>39</sup> This work was one of the first academic studies on precolonial women's history. But its short- and long-term importance lies in the fact that it facilitated interest in women's political history in the precolonial and colonial eras.

The declaration of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1976–85 contributed immensely to the emergence of women's and gender studies in Africa as in the rest of the world. Among other things, it encouraged the convening of conferences and symposia where women's issues were on the agenda for discussion. It was after one such conference that a recommendation was made for the establishment of WORDOC, which became one of the first facilities dedicated to research on women and gender in sub-Saharan Africa and of course the first in Nigeria.<sup>40</sup> Awe played a prominent role in the establishment of this research center. As the director of the Institute of African Studies, under which WORDOC is placed, Awe in conjunction with other female activists and scholars like LaRay Denzer and Nina Mbai designed and got approval for the establishment of the center in 1986. A shortage of funding posed a serious threat to the survival of the nascent research center. As a former member of the Oyo State cabinet, and having been involved in organizing a series of national and international conferences on women prior to the establishment of WORDOC, Awe was part of all the networks necessary to mobilizing human and material resources to get the research center off the ground.<sup>41</sup>

Awe's idea of establishing a research institute on women's and gender studies dates back to the 1970s. In 1977 she advocated for the establishment of programs and centers "for collecting data, outlining research priorities, getting research proposals, initiating projects, and generally 'brainstorming' for the government on matters that affect women."<sup>42</sup> The birth of WORDOC a decade later was a fulfillment of this dream. As its founding director, she began to pursue her long-held ambition, and the first major activity of WORDOC was a symposium in 1989 on the effect of colonialism on the status of women. More than one hundred papers on the effects of colonialism on different aspects of women's lives were presented at the conference. The symposium prominently featured three areas of concern with regard to colonialism: that it caused women's status to deteriorate, that it was beneficial, and that it set in motion a complex cultural interaction that produced both

beneficial and adverse results.<sup>43</sup> This conference was able to establish that although colonialism resulted in a significant loss of power and influence on the part of women compared to precolonial times, it nevertheless empowered them in some respects. For instance, the legalization of divorce during colonial rule allowed women to leave unhealthy and unhappy homes. Some were able to break the shackles of masculine exploitation through the social and economic mobility that sometimes followed divorce. Put concisely, in terms of the role and status of women, colonialism is a paradox.<sup>44</sup> The sad part is that as of the summer of 2010, the papers presented at this important symposium had yet to be published, and the bound manuscript deposited at WORDOC's library is in a dilapidated state.

In her reflections on the Conference on Women and Development organized in 1977 at Wellesley, Awe criticized the assumption that women the world over are subject to identical forms of masculine exploitation.<sup>45</sup> She believes that scholars should instead look at the experiences of women from a national or local perspective. With specific reference to Africa, Awe criticized European and North American feminists for imposing the historical and cultural experiences of North American and European women on African women, as African and Western societies do not share similar historical antecedents. Historical differentials like colonialism and neocolonialism have far-reaching consequences for the role and status of women.<sup>46</sup> She expressed a desire for Africa-based scholars to be more involved in research about their own peoples, arguing that foreign domination of themes on African women affects the interpretation of their historical realities. "While the observation of the foreign researchers can be useful, the time has now come when emphasis should be on indigenous scholars; by virtue of their permanent membership in their society they are likely to have a better insight into its problems and the areas that need closest attention."<sup>47</sup>

Yet Awe's observations and comments did not forestall the crisis that arrived in the 1980s and 1990s, and her dream of greater participation of Africa-based research on African women did not come to pass even with the establishment of WORDOC. Awe and her colleagues, in writing the editorial for the special issue of *Signs* on African women, highlighted the impact of economic recession and poor access to academic facilities on the involvement of African scholars in research on women. The editorial commented that non-Africa-based scholars dominate the discourse on African women because of inadequate access to teaching and research materials in Africa itself.<sup>48</sup> In the editors' words, "Prevailing socio-economic conditions in African universities are not conducive to the production of knowledge. Scholars situated in the impoverished or beleaguered institutions lack the time or resources (libraries are in shambles; there are few current books or journals) to produce scholarly work. With greater access to resources, U.S. and European scholars publish more about Africans than do African scholars."<sup>49</sup>

Although scholars based in North America and Europe monopolized studies of African women, the major concern of Africa-based scholars extended beyond a “foreign” monopoly to a far more critical issue: distortion. Although Awe had warned in 1977 that African women’s experiences should not be studied through the prism of their Western counterparts, these Western scholars seemed to be ignoring this warning, if they were even aware of it. By the late 1990s, other African-born or African-based scholars like Oyeronke Oyewumi, Ifi Amadiume, and Obioma Nnemaka would join Awe in her condemnation of the misrepresentation of African women’s historical reality. Awe uses several avenues to put across her stance on the importance of Africa-based research centers like WORDOC:

But the relevance of WORDOC lies in the fact that feminism takes many different forms. It takes up different issues and it adopts different strategies according to the nature of the context within which it operates. It should not be regarded as an international prescription from the West to the rest of the world, especially the Third World. This is not of course to deny that it has a potential for cross-cultural alliance.<sup>50</sup>

Awe’s commitment to providing adequate visibility for women’s historical experiences is commendable. The historical visibility of women involves the treatment of women’s engagement in politics during the precolonial and colonial periods in order to restore their dignity and empower them socially, politically, and economically in contemporary Nigeria. By looking at how women ruled large political entities, led wars, and controlled long- and short-distance trade in precolonial times, Awe and her collaborators seek to demonstrate to contemporary Nigerian society that women did not have a passive role in the past. The project of power and visibility has two main goals: to tell the story of women’s success in the past, and to explore the root of their oppression in contemporary times. In addition, it is important to commit adequate energy to the history of women in order to tilt the balance of historical discourse away from men, whose experiences dominate history books.

Perhaps Awe’s most outstanding contribution to women’s and gender studies is her edited volume *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*. This work brings together the careers of the following heroines: Queen Amina of Zaria, Queen Kambasa of Bonny, Nana Asma’u, *Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura* (“Owner of Gold”), Omu Okwei of Osomari, Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa, Olaniwun Adunni Oluwole, Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti, and Lady Oyinkan Abayomi, whose contributions to the development of their societies during the precolonial and colonial periods remain undisputed.<sup>51</sup> In her introduction to this collection, Awe discusses how women were marginalized in the politics of colonial and postindependence Nigeria, claiming that greater appreciation of historical evidence of women’s past political strength would

help contemporary Nigeria to acknowledge the need to empower women. She assesses the historical evidence of women's political engagement thus:

A close look at any African society will reveal overwhelming evidence of the contributions, which women have made in the past. Most African oral traditions, surviving religious cults, and extant political institutions still attest to the significant position which women occupied in the social, economic and political evolution of different African communities. Such evidence also shows conclusively that theirs was not merely a passive and supportive role, but was also dynamic and conclusive.<sup>52</sup>

As we have seen, policies of the colonial government on gender are largely responsible for the deplorable condition of women in contemporary Nigeria. Awe is convinced that the history of the various ethnicities in Africa is replete with contributions of women in virtually all areas of human endeavor. However, historical research is needed to tell this history. What is more, it is by investigating the extent of power and influence that women wielded in precolonial times that one can adequately understand the impact of colonial rule on the role and status of women. In another connection, the idea of change in gender roles needs to be appreciated from the standpoint of time and place.

One of Awe's contributions to this cardinal aspect of women's studies is her essay on women in Yoruba politics entitled "The *Iyalode* in the Traditional Yoruba Political System."<sup>53</sup> In this article, she identifies the role the *Iyalode* (variously translated as the leader of women or women of the public) in Yoruba politics before the advent of colonialism. Like other male chiefs, the *Iyalode* had a special insignia of office, a court, and wore traditional attire associated with power and affluence. She also had her own drummers, praise singers, and hangers-on. She had the power to meet with women, listen to their grievances, and represent them at the council of chiefs. Awe highlights the responsibilities of the *Iyalode* in a militarized state like Ibadan: she contributed to the war efforts by allowing her slaves to fight, providing ammunition, and appointing a warrior who led a unit of Ibadan's national army. Apparently, her role in the polity was not too different from that of her male counterparts aside from the fact that she was not expected to go to the battlefield.

Awe does not romanticize this chieftaincy institution despite its significance. She points out that the numerical strength of male chiefs in the council of chiefs occasionally overshadowed the power of the *Iyalode*, thus limiting her influence on major political issues. In spite of this, an important point to be appreciated is that, in precolonial times, women occupied significant political positions. Oral traditions of the various ethnic principalities are replete with women's political careers as rulers and kingmakers. Awe

holds that the introduction of colonial rule eroded the powers of several female chieftaincy titles because of the exotic ideals of gender and sex division imported by the British. Several female chieftaincy institutions disappeared during the colonial period, while those that withstood the test of time were political lightweights.

It was not only through the Iyalode's membership in the council of chiefs that women were able to hold and exercise power during the precolonial period. Indeed, women also participated actively in the prosecution of war. According to Awe, the history of nineteenth-century Yoruba warfare has been reduced predominantly to the role of men in the different stages of war, while women's activities are to be found only in footnotes. In "Women and Warfare in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland," Awe identifies the involvement of women in three major stages of warmaking.<sup>54</sup> She points out that women participated in public meetings where deliberations were made on whether or not to go to war.<sup>55</sup> In addition, during military encounters, women through long- and short-distance trade sold and produced commodities that were exchanged for European-made ammunition along the coast. Women on both sides of a conflict, in order to ensure the flow of trade needed for the survival of belligerents, risked their lives plying caravan routes, which were traditionally insecure as a result of incessant warfare. Some women, as seen in the case of Adeboyejo, daughter of the renowned Oye (Ilupeju) warrior Lugbosun Fajembola, stayed with her father at the camp throughout the Kiriji War (1877–93). Influential personalities like Madam Tinubu of Abeokuta and *Iyalode* Efusenetan Aniwura of Ibadan used their economic and social status and influence to help in the prosecution of wars in their respective towns. In addition to loaning many material resources to the war chiefs, *Iyalode* Aniwura allowed her slaves to join the Ibadan army, which needed more men to put down rebellious vassal states, whose insurgency was not quelled until the British finally intervened in 1893.

As wars removed men from the farm, women took over the agricultural production of food needed to feed the soldiers scattered in the military camps. In the wake of incessant warfare, women moved from one camp to another distributing food. But women's role in war prosecution, according to Awe, extended beyond their involvement as producers of food to the supernatural realm.<sup>56</sup> Sacrifices and homage were paid to female war deities that were believed to have the power to facilitate victory. Indeed, a female deity, *Aisegba*, was said to have gone to the war front and killed soldiers by selling them poisonous food. Women also made sacrifices to the gods and goddesses to ask for the safe return of their husbands and children from battle. Some women were more than wives and mothers. A case in point is Orisaleke, the wife of Ogedengbe (the commander of the Ekitiparapo Confederacy), who used her "mystical power" in support of her husband. According to Awe, Orisaleke "was regarded as Ogedengbe's mascot; a very

bold and daring woman; she was said to have mystical power and controlled unseen supernatural forces to ensure that Ogedengbe won all his battles; she was also described as a master in the preparation of potent charms to protect Ogedengbe and give him victory over his enemies.”<sup>57</sup>

In totality, Awe has advanced historical scholarship in two ways. First, she made initial contributions to historical studies on the Yoruba during the nineteenth century, as well as a few essays relating to oral history and methodology. Second, she has contributed to the study of Nigerian women, especially in the area of biography. The role she played in the establishment of academic research on women and gender studies remains indelible.

Do women write a different kind of Nigerian history? Awe’s early research on Yoruba history during the nineteenth century is not all that different from research by male historians such as S. A. Akintoye, J. F. Ade Ajayi, and Toyin Falola, who worked on the same subject. Consequently, there was no relationship between gender and history at this phase of her career. When the emphasis of her work shifted to women’s issues, the connection became apparent. Her contributions resulted in an expansion of nationalist historiography with the full integration of women’s and gender studies into the discipline. However, Awe’s choices of themes, as in the studies of the *Iyalode* and heroines, reveal clearly that the ideology of nationalist historiography is still richly at work in the search for the glories of the past to elevate the pride of the present.

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## Obaro Ikime

### Intergroup Relations and the Search for Nigerians

Obaro Ikime, like A. E. Afigbo, J. A. Atanda, and P. A. Igbafe, started his career as a historian of colonial Nigeria specializing in how colonial policies shaped and reshaped the tempo and dynamics of relations both between the British and Africans on the one hand, and among groups of Africans on the other.<sup>1</sup> While Atanda's and Ikime's work deals more with how colonial policies intensified old differences and introduced new ones between the Oyo and Ibadan and the Urhobo and Itsekiri, respectively, Afigbo's work is essentially about the imposition of the alien political arrangement called the "Warrant Chief System" and its failure. Igbafe's book *Benin under British Administration* examines how the Benin monarchy responded to Britain's colonial administrative and political arrangements between 1897 and 1938.<sup>2</sup> By focusing on different regions of the country and on specific cases, these eminent historians are able to establish the divergent outcomes of Africans' encounters with alien political structures forcefully imposed on them by the British colonial masters.

Although all these scholars can roughly be classified as historians of indirect rule, Ikime's orientation tilts toward a paradigm that emphasizes the continuity and change in the pattern of African-British relations and African-African relations. He overshot his primary research interest on Urhobo-Itsekiri relations by extending his scholarship to the nature and changing dynamics of intergroup relations in Nigeria at large. His work on intergroup relations thus dwells on colonial heritage, resource control, origin, and challenges of the so-called North-South dichotomy, ethnicity, prebendalism, and the Nigerian quest toward genuine national unity.<sup>3</sup> He employs political, social, and economic models in examining the pattern of relations among the numerous Nigerian ethnic nationalities. The multidisciplinary nature of his scholarship would prevent one from identifying him strictly as a political historian. Throughout his career and even after retirement, Ikime has been an advocate for historical education and research as a tool

for forging genuine national unity. Thus, history is not a useless discipline as some Nigerians and policymakers have characterized it; rather, it is the “voice of a Nigerian historian selling his discipline to his nation,” as Ikime claims in a recent book, *History, the Historian, and the Nation*.<sup>4</sup>

Although he was not as radical as Yusufu Bala Usman in his attack on the nation’s leaders and his approach to national debates, Ikime, as we will see, views national development from the standpoint of political unity. He opposes political fragmentation and rarely makes economic-oriented arguments along the lines of neocolonialism—though he is convinced that colonial rule added new problems to the preexisting frictions among Nigerian ethnicities. For him, the problem of Nigeria is embedded in popular ideas of interethnic discord. It seems that he believes that all other challenges of nation building will be resolved if Nigerians can see themselves as one.

Ikime’s scholarship also is expressed in biographical studies that dwell on those Africans whose activities during the precolonial, colonial, and postindependence periods helped shape the subject-versus-colonialist and subject-versus-subject dynamics. He produced significant scholarly work on the history and culture of the Urhobo, Itsekiri, and Isoko, the last being his own ethnic group.

### Intergroup Relations in Nigeria

As mentioned above, Ikime’s singular contribution to Nigerian studies is in the area of intergroup relations. For him, historical developments play a significant role in determining the nature and pattern of intergroup relations in any given period. He takes a keen interest in the study of intergroup relations in the precolonial period because he is convinced that the people of Nigeria during this time were not strange bedfellows. Rather, they interacted with one another along familiar social, political, and economic boundaries. A well-articulated position that runs through most of his work is how significant historical developments like the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and of domestic slavery, colonial conquest, colonialism, and postindependence politics define and redefine, configure and reconfigure the nature and pattern of relations among the numerous Nigerian ethnic groups. For Ikime, colonial rule represents one of the phases of intergroup relations. He contends that the problems of national disunity can only be understood and solved by looking backward.

Ikime’s floodgate of scholarship opened with his doctoral dissertation, which he revised and published as *Niger Delta Rivalry*.<sup>5</sup> This seminal work bears the stamp of the quality standard of the Ibadan History Series. He employs a large body of oral data and archival sources. In the book’s preface, Ikime categorically states the importance of history in understanding intergroup relations:

The phenomenon of ethnic loyalty resulting in group conflict is of particular relevance to Nigerian history at the time of writing. Although the subjects of “tribalism” and inter-group conflicts are freely discussed in academic and other circles, it is a fact that no one has attempted a historical study of the factors, which have been operative in creating tension between ethnic groups. The historian may not furnish all the explanations, but the usefulness of a historical analysis of the factors, which have produced the tension with which we are so painfully familiar, can hardly be debated.<sup>6</sup>

*Niger Delta Rivalry* explores the dynamics of inter- and intraethnic relations between and among the Itsekiri and the Urhobo from 1884 to 1936. Geographically, the Itsekiri were fisherfolk and traders whose states were scattered along the western half of the Niger Delta, and the Urhobo were the Itsekiri’s immediate agricultural hinterland neighbors. A major theme of the book is coast-versus-hinterland relations. The history of relations between groups in these two areas dates back hundreds of years. In the period of the slave trade, the Urhobo sold their people and other hinterland neighbors to the Itsekiri, who acted as intermediaries between the peoples of the hinterland and the European merchant traders stationed along the coast. There is limited evidence that the Itsekiri sold their own people to the Americas. The abolition of the slave trade and the arrival of so-called legitimate commerce introduced new developments to the pattern of relations. The trade in human beings subsided, and a new trade in agricultural produce, notably palm produce, replaced it. Ikime notes that the new economic order continued to favor the Urhobo, who produced palm oil and sold it to the Itsekiri. As one might expect, the Itsekiri during the periods of the slave trade and the “legitimate” commerce jealously protected their intermediary privileges and prevented their Urhobo hinterland neighbors from trading directly with the Europeans.

According to Ikime, this preexisting tension between the Urhobo and the Itsekiri was given a new dimension when the Itsekiri assisted the British in imposing colonial rule on the Urhobo during the European competition for African territories in the late nineteenth century. After colonial conquest, the British deliberately placed the Itsekiri on a higher level in local politics, partly because they had served as “collaborators” in terminating the autonomous existence of the Urhobo. The British appointed Itsekiri men like Dogho, whose career we discuss below, to positions where they exercised power and control over both their own people and the Urhobo. The Urhobo had no choice but to continue to chafe under the lordship of their local and foreign masters. The outcry that greeted the decision by the Action Group government of the old Western Region to change the title of the paramount ruler of the Itsekiri from *Olu* of Itsekiri to *Olu* of Warri in 1952 should be seen as a product of the age-old rivalry between these two ethnicities.<sup>7</sup>

Another of Ikime's outstanding contributions to scholarship is his Inaugural Lecture as the president of the Historical Society of Nigeria. Entitled *In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-group Relations in an Evolving Nation State*, he reviews the changing dynamics of intergroup relations during the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods.<sup>8</sup> Social, economic, and political relations existed among the various peoples of the Nigerian geographic area before the advent of colonialism. No group, according to Ikime, was immune to the influence of another as each borrowed cultural and political institutions, sometimes modifying them to suit local needs. Pre-colonial patterns of intergroup relations, as Ikime explains, were not devoid of crises or violence as one ethnicity, village, town, or empire waged war against another. Wars and conflict created new political entities and also led to the demise of some. The nineteenth-century Yoruba wars, for example, led to the establishment of new polities such as Ibadan, while the Old Oyo Empire was destroyed. The introduction of colonialism and the establishment of new administrative arrangements such as districts, divisions, and provinces added new elements of discord to the dynamics of intergroup relations. Friendly and hostile groups alike found themselves arbitrarily lumped together in new administrative units. New forms of identity and power hierarchies emerged. After establishing a critical understanding of the nature of intergroup relations in the precolonial period and during the colonial era, Ikime concludes: "In terms of inter-group relations, colonial rule was something of a paradox: on the one hand, it brought Nigerian peoples together in new groupings and for new purposes; on the other, it emphasised already existing differences and introduced new ones."<sup>9</sup>

Ikime argues that names of ethnic nationalities like "Yoruba," "Igbo," and "Hausa" were twentieth-century developments, a product of colonialism. He opines that none of these ethnic groups saw itself as a single united ethnic group during the precolonial period, but as comprising separate cultural and political entities. Popular stories, such as the Bayajida and Oduduwa legends, which create a sort of history of oneness among the respective Hausa and Yoruba ethno-cultural cleavages, were traditionally invoked for the purpose of enhancing the politics of the groups' cultural identity and hegemony. For the Igbo, Ikime points out that such concepts as Igbo-Igala relations or Igbo-Yoruba relations in the nineteenth century are thematically incorrect because there was nothing like a monolithic Igbo nation in precolonial times. What existed were small principalities, clans, and villages that related to one another as separate political and economic entities and therefore never saw themselves as comprising a single nation despite speaking similar languages.<sup>10</sup>

Ikime takes a *longue duree* approach to the origin of Nigeria's crisis of political disunity, arguing that two nineteenth-century historical developments—the introduction of Christianity and the Uthman dan Fodio jihad—created the differentials and differences that came to constitute a problem

for Nigeria's genuine unity. These two developments also laid the foundation of the so-called North-South dichotomy. While the Jihad led to the establishment of a large and monolithically strong religio-political edifice called the Sokoto Caliphate, the introduction of Christianity in the modern southern part of the country could not achieve a theocratic Christian state. The two religions brought different types of literacy. While the language of Islam is Arabic, that of Christianity (in Nigeria, at least) is English. The establishment of colonialism and the British policy of adopting separate administrative machinery in the two regions intensified preexisting differences between the North and the South. The North and South evolved separately, and the British did not allow the two regions to work together as one until the tail end of the colonial period. The Hausa language was adopted as the official language of the Native Administration in the North, while the South adopted English. What is more, by 1960, when independence was granted to the country, the language of administration in the newly independent nation-state was English and not Arabic. This development, according to Ikime, ostracized the educationally disadvantaged North and created acrimony and suspicion between northerners and southerners. The northerners' opposition to the proposal that Nigeria be granted independence in 1956 was informed by the suspicion that the southern elites would control the newly independent state.<sup>11</sup>

Although, as we have seen, the foundation of Nigeria's political disunity was laid in the nineteenth century, Ikime posits that Nigerian nationalists, instead of using the period of decolonization to correct the divide-and-rule policies and other ills of colonialism, created ethnic-based political parties and other trappings of ethnic identity. This exacerbated the already tense nature of relations among the peoples of Nigeria. The Action Group, National People's Party, and National Council of Nigerian Citizens emerged as Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo parties, respectively. The ethnic nature of the political parties during the First Republic (1960–66) created an atmosphere of crisis, which contributed greatly to the military intervention in politics in 1966 and the outbreak of the devastating Nigerian Civil War (1967–70).<sup>12</sup>

The numerous programs of reconciliation that the federal government embarked on after the Nigerian Civil War were aimed at pacifying the Igbo secessionists and creating an atmosphere of unity in Nigeria. Ikime believes that particular period was the first time in Nigerian history that the leaders of the country made a genuine attempt to unify the various sectional groups. The Constitutional Drafting Committee, put in place in 1977 to draft the constitution for the Second Republic (1979–83), was aware of the factors responsible for the collapse of the First Republic—that is, the ethnic nature of parties. In order to forestall the danger of having political parties drawn along ethnic lines, the constitution stipulated that political parties must be national. The constitution also made provision for the

principle of the federal character of the state at the central and local government levels. However, this provision of the constitution was hardly adhered to. The parties that emerged during the Second Republic appeared to be reincarnations of their First Republic antecedents. The primary implication of the popularity of ethnic-based parties, as Ikime demonstrates, is that it stood in the way of the emergence of “Nigerians.” In other words, while we have a nation-state called Nigeria, we do not have Nigerians. According to Ikime, what we have are primordial groups that constantly fight one another in their bid to acquire power and advance the interests of their own.<sup>13</sup>

One of Ikime’s popular positions is that historians should use historical research to address contemporary problems. In other words, he believes that historians should search for the historical roots of the contemporary crisis of national disunity. This position is reflected in most of his work, especially his *Niger Delta Rivalry*, which as earlier mentioned was informed by the need to examine the historical origin of a crisis between the Urhobo and Itsekiri. Ikime used his Inaugural Lecture as a professor of history at the University of Ibadan to validate his ideas on the role of history in shaping intergroup relations by identifying the gaps in the scholarship of his senior and contemporary colleagues.<sup>14</sup> He criticizes his colleagues for not exploring the long-term implications of their research on intergroup relations. He identifies the faults in J. F. A. Ajayi’s *Christian Missions in Nigeria: The Making of a New Elite, 1841–1891* and E. A. Ayandele’s *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria: A Political and Social Analysis, 1841–1942*.<sup>15</sup> While these scholars pointed out that the introduction of Christianity led to the rise of new elites in Nigeria, neither, in Ikime’s view, identifies the unevenness in the introduction of Christianity in southern Nigeria, the rise and composition of the so-called elites, and the implications of this difference on the development of Nigerian politics and nation building. Drawing on Ajayi’s narratives, such as how the British ostracized the educated elites and how they went on to study law and medicine in order to be independent of the Civil Service, Ikime concludes:

The historian [Ajayi] of the rise of our elite did not then stop to ponder on the significance of this fact for Nigerian politics. . . . Five years after the writing of the book [*Christian Missions in Nigeria*] and three years after publication, the Igbo and Yoruba elites, the second generation of, as it were, Ajayi’s new elite, were engaged in a fierce competition for dominance here at the University of Ibadan, a competition which, some insist, played an important role in the chain of events that ended in the civil war of 1967–1970.<sup>16</sup>

In commenting on Ayandele’s work, Ikime acknowledges how the author points out the disparity in educational development between the North and the South. But Ikime believes Ayandele’s work neglects the consequences of this disparity:

I wonder why a work revised for publication in 1965 should have failed to “ascertain” the consequences of the disparity in education between the north and the south! It could not be that Ayandele was afraid to fish in troubled waters, for such fear is not one of his weaknesses. Be that as it may, one year after [sic] the publication of his book, Nigeria was engulfed in a civil war, a major remote cause of which was the inequality of political and other opportunities for the different groups which constituted the new nation, an inequality which we owed for the most part to unequal education development.<sup>17</sup>

His criticism of R. A. Adeleye’s *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804–1906: The Sokoto Caliphate and Its Enemies* is instructive and elaborate.<sup>18</sup> Ikime believes that Adeleye pays lip service to the appraisal of the effects of the Jihad of 1804 on the social and cultural identities of the people of modern northern Nigeria. He wants Adeleye to appreciate that the Jihad was responsible for the hegemonic influence of Arab culture on the northern part of present-day Nigeria. What is more, Adeleye, according to Ikime, needs to inform his readers that Arabic culture is not indigenous to the North. Ikime identifies Adeleye’s failure to discuss how the British conquest of the North and the policy of protecting the northerners from Western education and the influence of the Christian “infidels” exacerbated political and ideological divisions between the North and South during the colonial and postindependence periods. Although Adeleye’s study terminates in 1906, at which date the policy of “protecting” the North from the culture and influence of the Western “infidels” had yet to take place, the book was published during a period when the long-term effects of the Jihad were evident; because of this, Ikime charges that Adeleye should have included a postscript detailing the aftermath of the Jihad and the British conquest of modern northern Nigeria in 1903.

Ikime adopts a similar position in criticizing Atanda’s *New Oyo Empire*, which deals with the effect of colonial rule on the relations among Yoruba towns, in particular between Ibadan and Oyo.<sup>19</sup> For more than a quarter-century, the early colonial masters, for personal and administrative purposes, deliberately placed Oyo in the upper echelon of Yoruba politics and administration—at the expense of Ibadan, the most-militarized Yoruba state of the nineteenth century, and Ife, the cradle of Yoruba history and civilization. From 1934 on, new administrative orders paved the way for Ibadan’s independence from Oyo and its emergence as the capital of the old Western Region and later the Western State of Nigeria in 1967. The breaking up of the Western State of Nigeria resulted in the birth of Oyo State in 1976, with its capital at Ibadan. Ikime is interested in knowing why the name “Oyo” was chosen for the state and not “Ife” or “Ibadan.” In another instance, he queries the position of Ife in the newly created state. He questions what effect the change of title of the paramount ruler of Ibadan from *Baale* to *Olubadan* had on the politics of Oyo State, the new political and administrative edifice.<sup>20</sup>

He takes a similar approach in criticizing related works like J. C. Anene's *Southern Nigeria in Transition*, Tekena Tamuno's *Evolution of the Nigerian State*, Afigbo's *Warrant Chiefs*, and Igbafe's *Benin under British Administration*. Taken as a whole, Ikime's criticism of the work of his colleagues is based chiefly on the premise that historians must begin historical research by asking questions that are germane to contemporary developments and problems. Ikime believes that the place of the historian and history writing in nation building is undermined by the inability to link the past with the present.

The use of historical evidence in the critical understanding of contemporary issues is just one of the utility functions of history. Ikime is aware that history is capable of being used to forge harmony but also to create or escalate crises, such as those among the peoples of Nigeria.<sup>21</sup> His call for historians and the public is to focus on the positive utility of history and to avoid doctoring evidence of the past in order to promote cultural nationalism. Ikime's examples in this area of intergroup relations are excellent. The idea of the Yoruba as a single homogenous cultural entity was invented during the colonial period in order to enhance the cultural hegemony of the Yoruba-speaking peoples of southwestern Nigeria.<sup>22</sup> The numerous Yoruba ethno-cultural cleavages never saw themselves as one and, in fact, were engaged in interstate wars that lasted for over a century. For the modern northern part of Nigeria, contemporary commentators and politicians, in order to create a spirit of oneness among the Hausa, who fought one another for several centuries, easily invoke the Hausa legend, which signifies that the seven Hausa States have common ancestry. The Uthman dan Fodio jihad that began in 1804 was responsible for the creation of a monolithic political arrangement that eventually led to the demise of the age-old tension among the Hausa States.

Ikime's concluding remark on the place of history in the promotion of cultural nationalism is that people should strictly adhere to principles of objectivity and accuracy.<sup>23</sup> They should be aware that the interpretation of the events of the past and the conclusions reached by scholars are capable of undergoing transformations with time. History creates memories, which are capable of being invoked positively and negatively. Some historical events, such as the transatlantic slave trade, should, therefore, be presented in such a way as to avoid creating controversy. For example, Ikime points out how the Itsekiri and other coastal dwellers in the Niger Delta tended to regard their hinterland neighbors as their slaves. But while it is a truism that coastal dwellers rarely sold their own people to the slave traders, instead trafficking in slaves from the hinterland, consistent reference to this aspect of precolonial relations is capable of disturbing the precarious peace between one ethnic group and another.<sup>24</sup> People have the right to make reference to history, Ikime opines. But they have to be careful in the way they invoke the past in discussing contemporary issues. According to Ikime, "The historian's

task is to lay before his readers as much of the evidence as is available to him. When he has done that objectively, he must leave the rest to his reader. Knowledge of the fact that the past impinges on the present should compel him to be faithful to the canons of historical scholarship.”<sup>25</sup>

Ikime, like other reputable scholars, appreciates the need to be original, both in the presentation of ideas and in methodology. It is the originality of ideas that we are celebrating in this book’s review essays on the existing scholarship. However, scholars sometimes write works of synthesis in order to address some academic or nonacademic deficiencies.<sup>26</sup> Ikime’s *Fall of Nigeria* is a synthesis of secondary sources on the colonial conquest and indigenous resistance to British rule in Nigeria.<sup>27</sup> Reviewers have taken Ikime to task on several counts. First, they aver that *Fall of Nigeria* is not sufficiently “academic”—that is, its style of presentation is not sophisticated enough. Second, they point out that the bulk of the data are secondary sources whose ideas do not represent a departure from the works of other authors.<sup>28</sup> Third, it is alleged that Ikime is wrong to have titled the book *The Fall of Nigeria* when it is known that there was nothing like Nigeria until 1914.<sup>29</sup> Fourth, Ikime’s use of the word “fall” to describe the conquest of the entire Nigerian region has been criticized as inappropriate, as this term suggests the geographic region as a whole did not go through a series of resistance. One critic remarks, “One might quarrel with the author’s terminology, the ‘fall’ of Sokoto or even Oyo, yes, but does it make sense to refer to the ‘fall’ of Calabar when describing the slow process of political change that eventually resulted in British colonial rule?”<sup>30</sup> A further criticism is that Ikime’s story of the conquest is unevenly discussed, as he dedicates some thirty-five out of eighty-five pages in the first part to the Niger Delta region alone, while other parts of the country, especially the central Nigerian region, receive only limited discussion.<sup>31</sup> The book is also flawed on account of several typographic mistakes, inconsistencies in names and terminology, instances of exaggeration, and factual errors of dates and chronology.<sup>32</sup>

In the preface to *The Fall of Nigeria*, Ikime clearly states that the book is not aimed at discussing issues that are new but rather at putting the subject of British encroachment and imposition of colonial rule into a single volume. Many scholars, including Ikime himself, not only have addressed the subject of how different parts of the country were placed under colonial rule but also have provided different perspectives.<sup>33</sup> But without Ikime’s volume, anyone, particularly undergraduates who need a quick reference, would have to consult many books. Moreover, *The Fall of Nigeria* is targeted at both academics and a nonspecialist audience. Ikime makes use of pictures and maps to illustrate the story of the British conquest. He is convinced that scholars should consider writing books for the nonspecialist audience because that is one of the ways of bridging the wide gap between Town and Gown. Many laypeople who love history do not have the time or intellectual competence to wade through hundreds of pages of core academic materials.

## Biographical Studies

In *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta: The Rise and Fall of Nana Olomu* and *Chief Dogho of Warri*, Ikime creatively weaves the careers of these two men into the respective social, economic, and political histories of the Itsekiri and Urhobo peoples. These two books are each researched and presented as the history of the entire community and its relations with the outside world during the most important period of African history in the nineteenth century—the era of abolitionism, “legitimate” commerce, and the imperial competition for and partition of the continent. While the biography of Olomu presents a leader who had the sovereignty of his kingdom terminated by British imperial designs during the age of the Scramble for Africa, the biography of Dogho is about the activities of a man who supported the British in their quest to terminate the independence of his people and consequently was made a powerful chief under colonial dispensation.

In chapter 1 of *Merchant Prince*, Ikime discusses in brief the people of Itsekiri in the western Niger Delta. He must have been informed by the need to place the life and career of his subject within the framework of the society that produced him—after all, human beings do not exist in physical and societal isolation. In another chapter, he critically examines the family background of Nana Olomu’s father, who had served as the governor of the Benin River Territory. The evidence he presents about Nana Olomu before he turned thirty-two and became the head of his family suggests that the man was adequately prepared for the leadership role he played in the history of his clan and community, and in relations with the Europeans along the coast. Evidently, the way Nana Olomu handled the affairs of the community and its relations with the Europeans was not accidental, as he had spent years mastering the art of trade and accumulation of wealth and engaging in warfare and inter- and intrastate politics. He knew the British well and understood the power politics associated with European trade along the West African coast.

The most intriguing parts of *Merchant Prince* are chapters 4–7. Here, Ikime places the life of Nana Olomu within the framework of the politics of “legitimate” commerce, intra- and interstate rivalry, and the numerous developments of the period that provided the backdrop for the competition for and eventual collapse of autonomy in Itsekiriland and the eclipse of Olomu’s political and commercial influence. Olomu’s position as the governor of the Benin River had a lot to do with the power configuration of the time. The absence of a paramount ruler in the Itsekiri Kingdom between 1848 and 1936 allowed the office of the governor of the Benin River to emerge as the most influential political player.

Ikime’s *Merchant Prince* is a good addition to the literature of African resistance to European invasion. The nineteenth century was characterized by the rise of great men and women who wielded power, controlled trade, and

had a constant relationship with Europeans along the coast. The need to preserve internal autonomy, maximize profits, and maintain law and order regularly brought nineteenth-century African leaders into clashes with the Europeans. King Jaja of Opobo, Asantehene of Asante, and Oba Ovonramwen of Benin faced enormous challenges in attempting to maximize profits through coastal trade while warding off European interference in their legitimate and traditionally sanctioned spheres of influence.

Ikime in *Chief Dogho of Warri* examines the history of chieftaincy rivalry among the Itsekiri and how age-old intraethnic rivalries were subsumed in the politics of “legitimate” commerce and the Scramble for Africa. Dogho and Nana Olomu belonged to two different royal houses in the Itsekiri Kingdom. These two royal houses engaged in competition aimed at harnessing wealth and generating influence and expanded followings. The absence of a paramount ruler in the Itsekiri Kingdom between 1848 and 1936 paved the way for the rise of influential men who accumulated wealth and all the pageantry of “bigmanship.” The chieftaincy rivalry revolves round the title of the governor of the Benin River. The responsibility of this ruler before 1848 was that of the “controller of foreign trade.” He collected taxes on behalf of the king and supervised the implementation of the king’s decrees. The demise of the *Olù* (title of the paramount ruler of the Itsekiri) in 1848 led to serious internal acrimony and civil disorder. The aftermath of the civil disorder was an interregnum, which lasted until 1936. It was during the interregnum that the title of the governor of the Benin River became the most influential political office. The governor performed responsibilities including, but not limited to, controlling coastal trade and settling disputes that emerged as a result of trade relations.

All men from the three royal houses that were traditionally entitled, on a rotating basis, to the office eyed it covetously. In 1879 Olomu, Nana’s father, became the governor and remained in office until his death in 1887. After his demise, the title was expected to go to another royal house. However, at that time, wealth apparently overrode the rotation rule. The absence of a ruling monarch had paved the way for emphasis to be placed on wealth and upward mobility, while birth, though still important, became a secondary factor. Nana Olomu was chosen to fill the vacant position because he was the richest Itsekiri man. His appointment naturally angered the members of the other ruling houses—most importantly Jakpa, the house that produced Dogho. It is instructive to note that Numa, Dogho’s father, had previously lost the governorship to Nana’s father, and Dogho’s 1883 loss was seen as a continuation of an established family misfortune. It was difficult for Dogho to raise any formidable opposition because Nana Olomu’s military and economic influence was overwhelming. He had to wait until the mid-1890s when a superior external power—the British—provided the opportunity to change the course of Itsekiri history.

In 1891 Olomu, as the only recognized spokesperson of Itsekiri traders in relations between the Europeans and Africans, directed his people to halt trade when the British began to offer prices that were too low. Apparently, he was acting in his own interests as well as those of his people. All attempts by the British to persuade Olomu fell on deaf ears. The British countermove of boycotting the Itsekiri intermediaries by trading directly with the Urhobo producers of palm oil yielded limited success, as Nana's prestige and influence was overwhelming among his Urhobo trading partners. The British soon realized the best way to ensure the penetration of the hinterland was to completely remove Olomu. Like some other African leaders during the age of the Scramble, Nana Olomu was accused of slave trading and human sacrifice. A British bombardment of his domain was inevitable.

It seems that Dogho had long desired that a problem of this nature should surface; he was quick to seize the opportunity to ally with the British. Dogho facilitated the invasion of Nana Olomu's key town, Ebhrohimi, by providing war canoes, soldiers, and spies. After the Ebhrohimi Expedition and the exiling of Olomu to the Gold Coast in 1897, the British established colonial rule over the whole of the western Niger Delta. While some African "collaborators" were used by the British only to be dumped after the conquest and the establishment of colonial rule, Dogho was made a paramount chief and the president of the Native Court of Appeal, causing his power and influence to rise tremendously. Up to his death in 1932, no African in the western Niger Delta wielded as much power as Dogho. The new administrative arrangement put in place by the British not only favored him but also favored the Itsekiri people.

The Dogho–Nana Olomu episode is not an isolated event in nineteenth-century West Africa. The history of the African response to colonial invasion is replete with instances of Africans assisting Europeans in their agenda of imperial conquest of the continent. Examples from a few other parts of Africa will suffice to demonstrate this fact. The chieftaincy dispute between Akitoye and Kosoko allowed the British to manipulate internal division and eventually impose colonial rule on the coastal town of Lagos.<sup>34</sup> Another example can be drawn from Ibadan and Ijebu, two states located in Yorubaland (southwestern Nigeria). The long-standing enmity between these two states dates to the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Ibadan resented Ijebu's monopoly of the coastal trade and tried to persuade the British entrenched in Lagos to intervene. In order to terminate the independence of Ijebu and open up trade, the Ibadan supplied some warriors during the Anglo-Ijebu War—the conflict that led to the termination of the sovereignty of the Ijebu. Other examples include the French and the Tukolor against Mahmadou Lamine (modern Senegal) and the British and Fante against the Asante (modern Ghana).<sup>36</sup> This class of people, often called "collaborators" in contemporary literature, acted in accordance with the developments of

the period, and their intentions were predominantly influenced by political exigencies of the era. Preexisting interstate rivalries were easily drafted into the politics of the Scramble. Dogho's friendship with the British speaks of a brilliant man who, like ambitious human beings in many times and places, wanted power and did all he could to acquire the fame he long desired. The British used him, but he used the British as well.

Another of Ikime's excellent biographical works is that on Chief Mukoro Mowoe, a prominent leader of the Urhobo and member of the Eastern House of Assembly.<sup>37</sup> Characteristically, Ikime traces the career of this man to his birth, childhood, and rise as a prominent member of the community that produced him. While Dogho's and Nana Olomu's careers were set against the background of nineteenth-century social, political, and economic history, that of Mowoe was conditioned by colonial sociopolitical and economic realities. It is interesting to see how prevailing circumstances determine what constitutes wealth, power, and influence in different historical periods. While what constitutes affluence changed as a result of the imposition of colonial rule and new capitalist structures, the conditions that constitute elitism did not really change. All societies and generations produce their own elites and determine the parameters or conditions under which they should be treated as such. The idea of "big men" and masculinity flows on the pages of Ikime's *Member of Warri Province: The Life and Times of Mukoro Mowoe*.

Historians write with their own purposes in mind, informed by a combination of personal and nonpersonal exigencies. The manner in which Ikime approaches the career of Mowoe reflects a kind of people's disservice to efforts of the makers of the society: "He is virtually a legend in his own time. Yet over twenty-five years after his death, nowhere is there a memorial to this great man of the thirties and forties. Even history, which often tends to over concentrate on the lives of the great men has, so far, passed the great Mowoe by."<sup>38</sup>

It is important to add that Ikime is not advocating for the study of heroes at the expense of poor peasants and ordinary people. He believes that adequate attention should be placed on ordinary people's roles in the making of the so-called high and mighty. Here, Ikime may be reacting or responding to the criticism of the Marxist school. Even when it is impossible adequately to integrate the "ordinary" people into the body of the study of both so-called and real heroes, a recognition of their importance should be given, or at least acknowledged. While highlighting the role of Mowoe in the development of the old Warri Province, he is aware of the need to identify the role of the people in the making of the man. Most biographical studies are dedicated to the community or families of the people being studied. Ikime's biographical study of Mowoe represents a departure from this established trend of commonality:

In the concluding sentence of this work, I express the view that history has no right to pass a person like Chief Mukoro Mowoe by. The appearance of this work

ensures that. Yet history is constantly passing by ordinary men and women without whose lives and work, there would be no history at all. It is in the full realization that Mukoro Mowoe would never have made the mark he made on his time and society without the love, sweat, support and encouragement of many about whom we know little or nothing that I dedicate this booklet to all those—known or unknown, dead or alive, remembered or forgotten—who contributed in any way whatever to making Chief Mukoro Mowoe what he was.<sup>39</sup>

Ikime's overarching philosophy is that by digging into their history Nigerians can solve the questions that threaten the genuine political unity of their country. Precolonial historical antecedents largely account for why one ethnicity fights another. Consequently, he does not believe that the colonial experience fully accounts for the present crisis of political fragility. Conversely, he thinks that colonial rule is a paradox because it introduced new differences while preserving old precolonial ones. When it comes to memory and intergroup relations, Ikime sees both the good and the bad in historical antecedents. However, he advocates that people should not invoke sad memories of the past as this could cause enormous problems and further heighten the consistently tense nature of Nigeria's artificial creation. Heroes, in Ikime's view, have to be studied and written about because of their contributions to the development of their society. Thus, his biographical works situate his subjects within the framework of history and the social structures that produced them.

Two critical questions are most likely to shape the impact of Ikime's scholarship. First, did he write the way he did because he was a minority from the southwest, an area formerly known as the Midwest? Second, to what effect are his criticisms shaped by his disappointment in not becoming the kind of public figure that Ade Ajayi and Afigbo have become? It is an acknowledged fact that Ikime's generation saw in an academic career the path to power within the university (e.g., as dean or vice chancellor) and also outside the university (e.g., as minister, ambassador, board member, or other public official with access to enormous public revenues that can be diverted to private ends). While some members of his generation fulfilled this ambition, Ikime was denied this privilege. Thus, while his scholarship tends to promote the idea of "one Nigeria," there is also a sense in which he regards Nigeria's minorities as victims.

Like most other historians, his choice of region to study was dictated by his region of birth. In federal Nigeria, minority elements, including the scholars among them, express their sense of being marginalized by the dominant ethnic groups (the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani). Ikime successfully inserted into Nigeria's historiography the history of his own region. If the Igbo and Yoruba historians write about their heroes (e.g., Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo, respectively) Ikime, too, was able to identify the "patriots" among his own people, men such as Mukoro Mowoe.

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# 12

## G. O. Olusanya

### Contemporary Nigeria

If the majority of Nigerian historians seek to relate the past to the present, a few like G. O. Olusanya present contemporary history as their core interest. They analyze the contemporary period in order to make statements about the future. The combination of “present” history and “future” goals turns a historian like Olusanya into a sort of public intellectual, such that history writing by borrowing techniques from journalism creates accessibility to reach a larger audience. As Olusanya attained greater public visibility, he also began to present history as a sort of exercise in public policymaking whereby advocacy for a cause leads to specific policy recommendations. Thus, we include Olusanya here to illustrate the multiple meanings of history and the attempt to “technocratize” the discipline so that its relevance to the Nigerian public is made obvious.<sup>1</sup>

Olusanya has written copiously on nationalism and constitutional history. His academic interests are closely intertwined with his vision for Nigeria. He sees himself primarily as a Nigerian “whose consuming passion is the achievement of a stable and well-ordered society, a society whose basic objectives should be the promotion of the moral and material welfare of its citizens,” and secondarily as “a patriot caught in the present dilemma of what next to do and how best to do this to achieve a collective goal.”<sup>2</sup> In addition to nationalism and constitutional history, he has produced works that dwell on civil service and foreign relations. His interest in foreign relations is largely attributable to his involvement in helping formulate Nigerian foreign policy during his tenure as the chair of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) and later as Nigeria’s ambassador to France.<sup>3</sup> His autobiography, published in 2003, is a vivid account of his engagement with life as an African, a Nigerian, a university academic, an administrator, a public servant, and lastly, a father and husband.<sup>4</sup>

#### Nationalism and Political History

Olusanya is known for his analysis of the impact of World War II on politics in Nigeria. His findings, though diverse, can be summarized as follows: The

period preceding the war witnessed the birth of nationalist agitation, which found effective expression in the formation of political organizations as typified by the People's Union, the Nigerian National Democratic Party, and the Nigerian Youth Movement. However, despite the existence of these concrete manifestations of nationalist awakening, the movement was still in its infancy. It was limited only to the educated elite and did not enjoy mass support. Even these educated elites themselves were basically critics of government, particularly of those specific actions and policies that they considered inimical to the interest of Nigeria's peoples. They did not entertain the idea of independence, and even the idea of autonomy within the British Commonwealth was conceived as belonging to a far, distant future. They were unwavering in their loyalty to the British crown. Thus, they have been aptly characterized as the "loyal opposition."<sup>5</sup>

The role of external influences, especially that of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, has been pointed out by Olusanya in some essays.<sup>6</sup> He has also provided a detailed account of the activities of the West African Students' Union (WASU), founded in Britain in 1925.<sup>7</sup> After a study of its origins and activities, Olusanya reaches the conclusion that WASU was able to look after the welfare of West African students in Britain from the 1920s to the 1940s by helping them to adjust; by providing a hostel, advice, and information for new students; and by facilitating admissions to British institutions. The greatest contribution of WASU was, however, in politics. It used its magazine to stimulate political consciousness among the students and organized lectures and debates, which enabled students to broaden their knowledge. WASU's collaboration with the Fabian Society and the British Labour Party exposed its members to socialist ideas and to British politics. The leading members of WASU were later to become prominent politicians upon return to their countries. Examples include Dr. Bankole-Bright, Dr. Milton Margai, Beokut-Betts, and Laminah Sankoh of Sierra Leone; Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Joe Appiah, Dr. J. B. Danquah, Ako Adeji, Kojo Botsio, and J. W. de Graft-Johnson of Ghana; and Dr. N. Azikiwe, H. O. Davies, S. L. Akintola, Okoi Arikpo, Kola Balogun, Chief F. R. A. Williams, Chuks Nwapa, F. Ihenacho, Chuba Ikpeazu, and Eyo Ita of Nigeria. Within West Africa the union made further contributions to the growth of political consciousness. For instance, the youth movements of the 1930s (e.g., the Gold Coast Youth Conference and the Nigerian Youth Movement) drew their membership mainly from the local branches of WASU. Formed between 1926 and 1933, these branches appealed to chiefs and the educated elites. The union also goaded West Africans into political participation, especially during World War II.

Olusanya next examined the impact of World War II, concluding that Nigerians' nascent nationalism was jolted into maturity by the war.<sup>8</sup> He devotes much thought to why the war had such an impact; the hardships that accompanied the war; the uncontrollable inflation; the curtailment of

economic opportunities as a result of war; the introduction of labor conscription into the tin mines; the continuation of the policy of racial discrimination; and insensitivity on the part of the colonial administration—all of which helped considerably to stimulate a nationalist awakening. Besides, Allied pronouncements on war aims, particularly the achievement of freedom for people under domination, were received with great joy and expectation. Churchill's denial that the Atlantic Charter was applicable to colonies helped to create disillusionment and disenchantment and to fuel nationalist sentiment. This awakening was strengthened by the U.S. government's anti-colonial statements and the postwar goals envisaged for colonial territories.

Olusanya also notes that the war weakened the British Empire as a world power by exhausting it militarily and economically, leaving it in a position incapable of sustaining colonial wars. The Americans also did not want such wars to occur, lest they push the nationalists into the embrace of the Soviet Union, which had emerged as a rival superpower in the postwar period. The Cold War undoubtedly contributed to the process of decolonization in dependent territories. Decolonization was further assisted by the creation of the United Nations and the setting up of the UN Trusteeship System. For all these reasons, the British government began a policy of concession and conciliation insofar as the nationalists were concerned, and this ushered in a period of "creative abdication."

In addition, the experience of Nigerians and in particular Nigerian soldiers during the war contributed substantially to the intensification of nationalist agitation. The presence of a large number of soldiers in Nigeria when Nigeria and other West African countries became supporters of the war broke down the formality that had hitherto characterized relations between Nigerians and the handful of upper- and middle-class British officials in the country. The discrimination that the soldiers experienced during the war, their realization that the white man is not in any way intrinsically different from them, and the failure of the British colonial administration to work out an effective policy of resettlement after the war all added to the political ferment that had begun with the outbreak of the war.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, when Nigerians who held positions in the upper echelon of the administration—posts that had been opened to them during the war—were replaced after the war often by British ex-servicemen, some of whom were unqualified, this fact further strengthened nationalist sentiment.<sup>10</sup> Besides, the economic opportunities that had led to a flowering of local industries became closed by the resumption of British imports, against which local goods could not compete, thus destroying the possibility of an industrial takeoff.<sup>11</sup>

The expansion, however, of roads, railways, and airports because of war needs did offer an opportunity for spreading nationalist ideas among the masses as mobility was easier than before. In addition, there was a high degree of urbanization during this period as many Nigerians flocked to

the cities to take advantage of higher wages available as a result of various construction activities. This enlarged the pool of potential supporters the nationalists could call upon for demonstrations, a weapon often used to criticize the colonial administration.

All the above factors identified by Olusanya effectively stimulated political radicalism and quickened the path to nationalist development. The British attempted to stem the radical tide through their policy of concession and conciliation, but once this direction was embarked on, the pace of decolonization could no longer be controlled, particularly given the postwar international climate.

The political lessons derived by Nigerians from other nations, especially India, and the various attempts at constitution making in Nigeria in the post-war years have similarly been examined by Olusanya.<sup>12</sup> He has also analyzed the reactions of Nigerians to various constitutions and to nationalism in general.<sup>13</sup> On the latter, he succeeds in debunking the myth that nationalism's origin in the North owed much to antisouthern feelings. Using the history of the lesser-known Northern Elements Progressive Association as a case study, he establishes that "Northern Nigeria has not at any time been subject to political lethargy except superficially and nationalism in this part of the country was not as James Coleman put it 'a reaction to Southern prodding'."<sup>14</sup> He concludes that nationalism in the North was not a negative force, as some people have held. According to him: "To conceive nationalism as a purely negative force is to miss its essence. Any nationalism which is purely negative, that is, any nationalism that has no inner strength of its own cannot sustain itself for long and is bound to lose its vitality once the source of opposition disappears. In addition, the yearning for freedom is a natural instinct in man."<sup>15</sup>

As already hinted, the role of political parties in the decolonization process is not ignored in Olusanya's writings.<sup>16</sup> One of his major contributions is the reinterpretation of the role of the much-maligned Zikist Movement in nationalist development. Though he shares the view that the movement was predisposed to excesses, he is willing to admit that it played a major role:

They [the Zikists] came into existence at a time when the nationalist movement was badly disorganized and its other leaders had left the battle out of frustration. Thus they provided the necessary leadership for the bewildered masses who had been roused to political awareness by World War II and Zik's political propaganda. By their effective, even though sometimes misdirected, energy they put pressure on the colonial administration and hastened the pace of political advancement in Nigeria. The 1951 constitution was more a result of the activities of the Zikists than anything else. After all, the NCNC had protested against the Richards Constitution in vain and had given up. It was partly in order to stem the political radicalism set in motion by the Zikists that led Britain to change her views and bring out a new constitution in 1951, before the time-limit set on the operation of the Richards Constitution.<sup>17</sup>

The Zikists were also responsible for disseminating ideas that would later be taken up by other political parties, and which can be said to have laid the foundation of Nigerian socialism. The period when the Zikists were in existence was an exciting one in the political history of Nigeria: it is a period Nigerians can look back on and be proud of. The Zikists demonstrated the noble idea of self-sacrifice in the nation's cause. They were thereby the only true nationalists Nigeria has ever produced.<sup>18</sup> Olusanya's study of colonial history in no way suggests a lack of understanding or appreciation of other epochs and themes in Nigerian studies. For instance, he indicates a deep awareness of precolonial history and calls for a better use of local histories.<sup>19</sup> On the latter, he remarked:

Local histories are of great value as long as they are seen in their proper context and that is not with a view to glorifying one group over and above the others, but in bringing to light the histories and cultures of various groups in a country that is so rich in diversity and in culture, which, if properly harnessed and utilized, can constitute considerable strength that will make this country a great and dynamic nation.<sup>20</sup>

He has paid attention to biographies, notably of distinguished personalities, and to social and economic history, in particular as these subfields involve women, slaves, urbanization, education, banking, and the civil service.<sup>21</sup>

### **Biography and the Nigerian Civil Service**

Regarding biographical studies, Olusanya shows much fascination with the nationalists. His analysis of their role is a sober one. Though he recognizes their contributions to the political evolution in the country, he criticizes some of them as agents of imperialism. His overall assessment of the great men of the nineteenth century has been done with the intention of drawing relevant conclusions from the study of these individuals who largely

initiated cultural nationalism which provided the basis for the politics of nationalism of the 20th century, nationalism that has eventually won freedom for almost all African countries. For this reason, it can be said then that they had vision and worked towards a goal, however distant that goal might have looked in their time. One would wish to be able to say the same for Africans nowadays. We have not been imaginative and determined enough to dismantle the colonial structure and erect a new one which would be in conformity with our own peculiar experience and history nor have we been able to emancipate ourselves mentally. We seem, in fact, to have lost our sense of purpose and direction and to be plagued with indecision and lack of vision. Otherwise how do we explain our present predicament?<sup>22</sup>

In a monograph, Olusanya examines the Nigerian civil service over a period of one hundred years. He notes how the civil service was conceived as an instrument to serve the interests of the colonial power.<sup>23</sup> It was not until after independence, which brought the era of Nigerianization, that this orientation had to be jettisoned. This of course brought its own problems, which included incompetence and corruption in governance. In an analysis of the country's civil service in the postindependence period, Olusanya points out that it has been weighed down by its colonial heritage. Like its colonial antecedent, it lacks innovation and civil servants lack commitment. Undermined by the political masters who have interfered unduly in its operation, the civil service has been riddled with corruption.

### The Problem of Nation Building

The extension of the scope of Olusanya's research to the postindependence era has yielded substantial results. Again, it is necessary to provide a résumé of his views. The premise of his scholarship on this period is that the achievement of independence should not be seen as the end of the objectives of the nationalist movement. Independence itself should provide a "new and exciting opportunity, a fresh adventure in the task of nation-building, of true development, of the rediscovery of the true identity of the hitherto colonised peoples and of ordering of society in such a way as to take its place amongst the progressive countries of the world."<sup>24</sup> With this in mind, he proceeds to an examination of the main issues facing Nigeria since 1960. The first obvious issue for discussion is nation building. He points to fissiparous tendencies that threatened the creation of a peaceful and stable polity, in spite of the historical basis for Nigerians' unity.<sup>25</sup> In other words, although there was a new nation, there was no integral society. Problems of poor leadership, the politics of vengeance, winner-takes-all, self-interest, and ethnic rivalry and conflict all compounded the inherent challenges of independence and soon plunged the nation into a civil war. The Nigerian Civil War (1967–70), according to Olusanya, did not bring about the unity of Nigerian peoples or a consensus on what should be their "common good." As a way of solving the problems of national integration, he calls for a better appreciation of the role of history:

What is not often appreciated is that a people weighed down by complex (and many of us still suffer from this); a people lacking in self-confidence cannot go ahead to make the type of contributions they are asking for. It is only when people fully believe in themselves and in their race; it is only when they are spiritually satisfied (and this can only be achieved by inspiration from the past), that they can make the much-desired contributions to technological and scientific development. A people still sensitive to European attitude because of

complex is still too pre-occupied with defending itself to have much time and comfort for the type of mental exertion necessary for scientific and technological break-through.<sup>26</sup>

Olusanya dwells, too, on the political behavior of Nigeria's leaders as part of its problems. To him, "imperfect human beings cannot work out a perfect constitution." Among the related factors that he sees as not conducive to political unity are the politics of vengeance, the tendency to regard political opponents as enemies, inadequate commitment to the nation-state, and disregard for human rights.<sup>27</sup> Politicians are committed to themselves, of course, and they are constrained somewhat by a shared civic culture and public moral standards. But leaders capable of moving the country forward still are not to be found. Instead of being a reward for merit backed by legitimate political claims, political offices are doled out to friends and relations or given to men "who are good propagandists of themselves." He sees nothing wrong in the principle of federal character but quarrels with its interpretation and application by officials who lack creativity and imagination and are blinded by prejudice and self-interest.

Education constitutes an integral focus of Olusanya's concern with nation building. He is of the view that the education system is in a crisis, but not because of a dearth of good policy; rather, there is too wide a gap between policy and practice.<sup>28</sup> At the primary school level, he contends, it is difficult to see how the laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking can be achieved unless the present teaching method, with its emphasis on learning by rote, is changed and unless qualified teachers with imagination are produced, not just those who regurgitate what they themselves learn from textbooks. The habit of regurgitation has been the bane of the educational system. Nigeria has a shortage of qualified teachers. Olusanya thinks that primary school pupils must participate meaningfully in the life of the community. His worry is that a climate conducive to the nurturing of moral character does not exist and that teachers endowed with imagination are in short supply. As a result, children's abilities to adapt to their changing environment will go undeveloped without such teachers to impart to them, or arouse in them, a spirit of intellectual adventure and curiosity.

Olusanya is unsure that Nigeria can fulfill the two objectives of secondary education: first, to raise up young Nigerians who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labor, appreciate those values specified under the society's broad national aims, and live as good citizens; and second, to raise up a generation who can foster Nigerian unity with an emphasis on the common values that unite Nigerians in their diversity. His argument is that the country does not have the right caliber of teachers and the proper sociopolitical climate. He does not see how the so-called unity schools can in fact foster unity. Merely bringing together students

from different parts of Nigeria is not enough; ways to encourage mutual respect and friendship among those brought together must be found.

The tertiary institutions, too, cannot promote the desired unity. Olusanya does not see how lecturers, "many of whom are affected by the bug-bear of ethnicity," can teach in such a way as to promote unity. His overall conclusion is that the universities are not fulfilling the task expected of them. To him, the reason is not just the scarcity of funds. He avers that the universities could do much more even with the limited resources at their disposal if they possessed a sense of mission. Very few Nigerians now take teaching as a vocation, and yet teaching at all levels must be understood this way for success to be achieved. The worst influences of society, such as materialism, have penetrated deep within the universities, and scholars are so caught up with the scramble to act like senior civil servants that they are having little or no positive impact on the needed reorientation of values and society toward nobler ideals and goals. Nevertheless, Olusanya's conviction is that a better orientation is possible:

The usual excuse is that the university is part of the society and thus by implication is unable to rise above it. I vehemently disagree with this view because to accept it is to abandon our moral duty. I want to submit that certain institutions—the University, the Church and the Mosque—must accept a higher moral responsibility, otherwise they would be failing in their mission. It is true that given our present conditions, they may appear like "a lone voice in the wilderness," but this is not new. History teaches us that it is only the dedicated and honest few ready to sacrifice their time, energy and comfort, sometimes their fortunes and themselves, that have made progress possible.<sup>29</sup>

Olusanya's writings have also focused on Nigeria's external relations. This is understandable in view of his role as the director-general of the NIIA. Olusanya puts his experience as a historian to good use in the way he addresses many issues. One of the institute's major publications to date, *Nigeria's External Relations: The First Twenty-five Years*, bears eloquent testimony to the successful attempt at recognizing the role of history in the interplay of forces and factors that shaped the evolution of Nigeria's foreign affairs.

Again, it is necessary to summarize Olusanya's contribution. His understanding of the principal object of foreign policy is that Nigeria should promote and project its interests in its interactions with the outside world. These interests include (a) the defense of the country's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity; (b) the restoration of human dignity to black men and women all over the world, particularly the eradication of colonialism and white minority rule from the face of Africa; (c) the creation of the necessary political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world that will not only facilitate the preservation of the territorial integrity and security

of all African countries but also foster national self-reliance within African countries; (d) the promotion and improvement of the economic well-being of Nigeria's citizens; and (e) the promotion of world peace with justice. He notes the remarkable consistency in these objectives in the postindependence period, in spite of changes in government.

Olusanya asserts that the same is true of additional guiding principles for foreign policy including (a) nonalignment—the country rejects formal military alliance with and routine political support from the West or the East; (b) the belief in the legal equality of all nation-states; (c) the policy of noninterference in the domestic affairs of other nation-states; (d) the commitment to multilateralism, as expressed through membership in major regional and global international organizations; and (e) making Africa the cornerstone of Nigerian foreign policy.

Olusanya elaborates how these objectives and principles have operated in practice, particularly in relation to broad strands in Nigeria's Africa policy, the major preoccupations in global policy, the relationship between defense policy and foreign policy, external economic relations, and the coordination and control of foreign policy.<sup>30</sup> In his essay "Nigeria and the World Economy," he maintains that no matter how well informed Nigeria's foreign economic policy may be, the external factors militating against the expansion of foreign trade, aid, and investment will at best allow only their minimum contribution to Nigeria's economic development.<sup>31</sup> The entire international community is aware of the need for basic reforms in the international economic system because of its failure to offer meaningful solutions to the world's present economic problems and serve as the basis for the future expansion of the global economy. However, such reforms are not likely to be achieved in the near future so long as the developed countries are incapable of appreciating adequately the problems of underdevelopment in its global dimensions and continue to perceive global economic recovery and development only in terms of positive feedback from the strengthened economies of the developed nations. As a practical part of their appreciation of the problems of the developing countries, Olusanya wants the developed countries to spend less on arms and reduce the arms race.<sup>32</sup> They are invited to help the Third World, but not necessarily through the IMF, World Bank, and GATT (now the World Trade Organization), "institutions that have been responsible for inequity in North/South relations and impoverishment of the developing countries through unequal terms of trade and depression of prices of primary products."<sup>33</sup>

On the role of Nigeria in the global economy, he thinks that the prospects for accelerated economic development require that policymakers should be more inward looking in the formulation of national economic policy. Rather than seek more loans, Nigeria should put its financial house in order by checking mismanagement and corruption and developing the

will to transform itself. Olusanya contends that it is an illusion for Nigeria to rely on the developed countries for economic salvation and solutions to problems of underdevelopment.<sup>34</sup> The place of oil in the Nigerian economy has equally been examined.<sup>35</sup>

### *Memoirs of a Disillusioned Patriot*

In 2003 Olusanya published his memoir, titled *Memoirs of a Disillusioned Patriot*.<sup>36</sup> This memoir can be described as an extension of his scholarship. He creatively weaves his personal experience with that of the society in which he lives. The nonacademic nature of a memoir allows one to see the other side of this scholar: his relationship with people, his inner self and personality, his disposition toward happenings around him, his family and private life.

In the preface of the 330-page book, Olusanya explains his motives for writing his autobiography. First, having written extensively about the life and times of others, he believes it is important for people to know about himself as well. It is indeed worth knowing of his wealth of experience gathered from his days as an undergraduate in a Nigerian university, as an international student in Canada, as a university scholar, as a public servant, and lastly, as a retiree. His roles and status undergo interesting changes from one domain to another. A second motive was personal. He knew virtually nothing about his ancestors (especially his grandparents) because he was so busy coping with the challenges of life that he hardly found time to discuss the family heritage with his parents. He felt a need to provide his children what he had not received.<sup>37</sup>

Olusanya's memoir begins with a brief history of his childhood, in which he states that his birth was not characterized by any unusual circumstances, and that he was born to a Christian family. His parents are direct descendants of Sodeke, the legendary founder of Abeokuta, who openly welcomed missionaries to the town in the 1840s. The missionaries brought Western education, which, Olusanya points out, laid the foundation of his career. He describes his father as someone who "loved intellectual argument" and his mother as "a great disciplinarian, one who did not believe in indulging her children." In addition, he includes some correspondence between his father and his father's teachers. This correspondence sheds light on his father's personality as a brilliant pupil. Therefore, unlike most of his contemporaries whose parents never saw the inside of a school, Olusanya had an enviable background, which propelled him through the challenges of acquiring a Western education.

He gives only limited information about his experience in primary school, but about his college and university life, he overflows with detail. He mentions his membership in various students' organizations, including the now

infamous Pyrate Confraternity. His descriptions of his university teachers, a good number of whom were pioneering Africanists, are especially interesting. About J. C. Anene he writes: "Anene was a very committed teacher, a detribalized Nigerian and a very warm and friendly personality. He was very much loved by all the students who were opportunely to be taught by him."<sup>38</sup> On H. F. C. Smith (later Abdullahi Smith) he remarks: "He took extra interest in all the students and worked hard along with his colleagues to get African History established as a discipline in Ibadan."<sup>39</sup> His acquaintance with Smith went beyond the conventional relationship between a professor and a student: "I had this back problem and I was in bed for three months. Throughout the three months (September to December, 1959) Professor Smith was the only lecturer who took the trouble to know that I was ill and he was frequently in my room to boost my spirit."<sup>40</sup> According to the memoir, J. D. Omer-Cooper's influence on Olusanya's scholarship is significant: "I patterned my teaching approach after that of Professor J. D. Omer-Cooper, my teacher in History of Political Ideas at the University College. . . . Omer-Cooper lectured without notes. It was his practice to walk into the class and deliver his lecture off-the-cuff and in the lecture that followed a few days later, it was normal for him to go briefly over what he had taught before and then pick up from where he stopped."<sup>41</sup>

Olusanya does not discuss his four-year stay in Canada as elaborately as his time at Ibadan. Besides earning a PhD in history in 1964, the most memorable event, we can deduce, was his romance with Megan, the Jamaican who would become his wife. They got married in Canada in 1964, without the attendance of their parents. Before returning home to Nigeria with his wife the same year, he spent two weeks in Kingston with his mother-in-law. He narrates the story of the numerous places they visited over the memorable two-week visit.

Upon completing his PhD, Olusanya faced the challenge of picking from the numerous teaching offers that he received. It was typical for educated elites of his generation to have multiple teaching and research offers. Offers came from universities in Ibadan, Ife, and Lagos. He eventually settled on Ahmadu Bello University because, as previously mentioned, he had maintained a strong relationship with Abdullahi Smith, who had left Ibadan to help create a history department in the newly established Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. In addition, Olusanya had spent some of his childhood years at Zaria and Kano. Therefore, living in the North would not present difficulties in terms of unfamiliar geographic and cultural terrain.

The crises that followed the first military intervention in Nigerian politics in 1966 were characterized by massive killings of southerners domiciled in the North. Olusanya narrates how a move back to the South became inevitable, driven in part by the feelings of insecurity his wife was experiencing because of her involvement with treating victims of the incessant attacks

on southerners by northerners during this time. Another major difficulty Olusanya encountered, which predates the 1966 massacre, was the ethnic bigotry within the university system. He mentions how southern members of the university staff were ethnically profiled, in part because they outnumbered the northerners. Tensions reached the point where southern scholars were being denied some benefits. In particular, the university refused to reimburse part of Olusanya's moving expenses due to ethnically motivated prejudice. The crises of 1966 therefore served as the last straw.

Relocating to the South meant a change of environment, but the future of his career was the most important factor. Having previously turned down the offers of southern universities, however, Olusanya faced a Herculean task getting them to give him a job. From all indications, two universities, the University of Ife (later Obafemi Awolowo University) and the University of Lagos, were the most viable options, and he eventually selected Lagos over Ife.

About the crises of university autonomy and the politics of promotion, Olusanya opines that university professors are to blame for the undue intervention of the government. Recounting the situation in the 1970s, he points out that because of the politics of promotion and administration, university scholars enlisted the support of successive military governments, which later began to disrespect the intellectuals. Therefore, it was the university that initiated the crisis of undue government interference in the affairs of academia. Having inadvertently initiated the crisis, the leadership of the university system then lost ground in limiting the extent of government involvement. It thus became a common practice for the head of state and state governors to appoint to the various university councils people who did not have any understanding whatsoever of university education. Although Olusanya goes on to discuss several more issues of university politics in various chapters, it would have been nice if he allocated, say, an entire chapter or section to this interesting but sometimes unpalatable aspect of academia in Nigeria.

At the University of Lagos, Olusanya met with Professor Saburi Biobaku, who gave him an appointment in the History Department. There he spent the rest of his academic career. Olusanya writes extensively about his career, mentioning that no student ever failed his course because he took time to make his teaching clear to his students. In 1984 Olusanya was appointed the director-general of the NIIA. After his tenure in 1991, he was appointed Nigerian ambassador to France. He chronicles his achievements in these two offices. In most cases, he starts by giving a broad overview of existing conditions before he was appointed and then tells how his tenure improved the situation.

In all, Olusanya recounts his journey through life and his hopes and aspirations for Nigeria. He is convinced that the Nigerian state is a failed project. He criticizes Nigerian nationalists for their poor vision and the successive administrations for their corruption and ineptitude. He covers the numerous phases of Nigerian history and concludes that the country requires a

complete makeover. He injects a moral tone into many of his writings, which is his direct way of saying that history writing has to be defined in terms of the relevance of the past to the present, and that the responsibility of “activist historians” should be to use research and knowledge for the greater good of the society.

Olusanya privileges the relevance and ideas of Western education in his writings. There is a sense in which he wants the continuity of the indigenous education system that combined the acquisition of skills with spiritual and material matters. He started his own education when it was a privilege to have one. For him, education in a colonial society was about training a small number of Nigerians to ensure the survival of the colonial economy and government. He seems to be more interested in the humanities, understandably because of his own training, and he does not seem to have become seriously engaged with the postcolonial education debate over whether the country needs more instruction in engineering and technical skills to advance the economy in general and industrialization projects in particular.

Olusanya and his contemporaries, in spite of their privileged positions, understood the nature and objectives of colonial education. Olusanya knew firsthand the limits to access to schools and opportunities for higher education. The colonial education system was not geared toward liberating the minds of Africans but toward reinforcing European domination. Thus, the contradictions that Olusanya and the members of his generation faced included being introduced to European values in their youth, only to largely reject these values as adults. As youths, they were programmed to become the “servants” of the colonial state; as adults, they became the masters of the postcolonial state. They may not always have succeeded in fully making the transition, as their values became more hybrid. One point in their favor is that they never become estranged from their cultures, a fact that is clear in their choices of attire, cuisine, and the use of Nigerian languages to communicate in nonacademic settings. However, Olusanya and his contemporaries have tended to call for a deculturalization program for the citizenry—similar to the idea of mental deculturalization—while assuming that they themselves have become successful in cleansing mind and body from the “sins” of colonialism. Their adoption of Christianity perhaps suggests otherwise, since some of them have become pastors and renounced some of their earlier criticisms of the activities of missionaries in Nigeria (as in the example of Obaro Ikime) or become key members of Pentecostal churches (as in the example of J. F. Ade Ajayi).

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## Tekena N. Tamuno

### Pan-Nigeriana

If Gabriel O. Olusanya attained prominence as a historian of contemporary Nigeria, Tekena N. Tamuno has accomplished similar goals and qualifies as perhaps the country's most accomplished "public historian." He started his career as an analyst of the formation of the early provinces of modern Nigeria but moved rather quickly to connect the foundation of Nigeria to the evolution of its institutions of governance. A field of "public history" has not truly emerged in Nigeria, but Tamuno has done some elements of it. He tries to write for the general public, not in the form of textbooks, but by creating accessible materials on matters of broad national interest. His work on violence and peace attempts to take history from the "ivory tower" to the people. We are not sure that he has been successful in turning "academic history" into "public history," but his presentation strategies of using poetry, proverbs, stories, and biblical citations do transform the academic format while also expanding the nature of the evidence. Some of his essays are tailor-made for media consumption, and some have embedded in them an ethical tone with cautionary tales. He is assertive in linking the memory of the past with contemporary problems, emphasizing a key element that this memory does contain a set of answers that can help provide solutions. Nigerians, he seems to be saying, should live their current lives with a clear appreciation of the past. If the past is this crucial, the historian is the agent to generate an interaction between memory and contemporary life.

Tamuno is not an archivist nor does he collect for museums, but he serves the state in a capacity similar to that of the palace historian: a record keeper for those who govern the state so that the data gathered can serve as a compass by which to navigate the future. He communicated his early research with the academic world through monographs and journal essays. His later career has been a communication with the public stressing a particular set of issues including Nigerian national identity and unity. According to Tamuno, Nigeria must create an identity for itself, based on its past. He advocates a united country, as he believes economic and political justice is crucial for

equitable distribution of the nation's resources and for peaceful coexistence of diverse ethnic groups. He is consumed by issues of social cohesion and political consensus, sometimes to the extent of looking at history from above rather than from below.

Tamuno embraces colonial and postcolonial institutions of governance, but he insists the latter should operate with a greater level of efficiency. His support for justice and democracy does not necessarily translate into support for a revolutionary order or for any reckless change of government. Even the relationship between colonizers and colonized was capable of being reformed. He does not object to mass participation in politics, but it is not clear that he opposes the concentration of power in a few hands. In Tamuno's political thought, the masses are not expected to constitute the vanguard in struggles against the state. He seems to prefer a gradualist approach, with enlightened politicians leading the way.

To understand his trajectory from university lecturer to public historian, Tamuno's biography provides a clue. He attended University College, Ibadan, between 1953 and 1958 for his BA degree. He proceeded to the University of London, where he earned a doctorate in history in 1962. Tamuno started his career as an assistant lecturer at the University of Ibadan in 1962, became a full professor in the Department of History in 1971, and retired as a research professor at the Institute of African Studies at the same university in 1990. After retiring from the University of Ibadan, he took up a research professorial appointment at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), in Kuru, Nigeria. In 1992 Tamuno received a DLitt (by examination) from the University of London, thirty years after earning a PhD from the same institution. Among other awards, he is the first Distinguished Fellow of the NIPSS, Nigeria, and a Fellow of the Historical Society of Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> He served the University of Ibadan community as head of the History Department, 1972–75; Dean of Arts, 1973–75; and first alumni vice chancellor (president), 1975–79.<sup>2</sup> Tamuno served in numerous administrative capacities. He was a member of the Public Service Commission of Rivers State, 1969–72; chair of the Chieftaincy Committee, Rivers State, 1975; member of the board of directors, New Nigerian Newspapers Ltd., 1984–90; chair of the Panel on Nigeria since Independence History Project; and a member of the National Committee on Corruption and Other Economic Crimes.

Like other scholars of his generation, his PhD thesis constitutes the beginning of his intellectual journey. Although Tamuno was quick to move on to other major studies, the history of contemporary Nigeria remained his major research interest. Among the major issues that he has addressed are (a) Nigeria's evolution, covering such topics as indigenous culture, the creation of modern Nigeria in such episodes as the British conquest, the amalgamation, and setting of boundaries; (b) the development of infrastructure, such as the railway system, in the Nigerian state; (c) maintenance of state

security—for example, the indigenous security system, the Nigerian Police Force, and law and social control; (d) governance issues such as democracy, the Legislative Council, and the role of leaders like Herbert Macaulay; (e) the transition from a colonial to a postcolonial state (e.g., the Civil War); and (f) Nigeria's future, including the problems of instability, poverty, management, and intergroup relations. He also has written extensively on peace and conflict resolution.

## Political and Administrative History

Tamuno's dissertation was published in 1972 as *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase, 1898–1914*, a major contribution to the administrative history of Nigeria.<sup>3</sup> This book appeared in the market to compete with and complement two other major works, namely I. F. Nicolson's *Administration of Nigeria* and J. C. Anene's *Southern Nigeria in Transition*.<sup>4</sup> Tamuno's work, which charts a course different from these works, created a significant impact of its own. Unlike Nicolson, Tamuno pays adequate attention to the impact of colonial measures and the reactions of Nigerians to them. Also, unlike Anene, Tamuno does not exclude the Lagos Protectorate from the territorial definition of southern Nigeria and does not limit his analysis to the late nineteenth century. By choosing 1914 as a terminal year, he is able to discuss and conclude on such important issues as the amalgamation and the Native House Rule. Another advantage of the choice of 1914 is the intensive use of new data ignored by the scholars before him.

The starting point of analysis in *The Evolution of the Nigerian State* is August 1898, when the Niger Committee recommended the amalgamation of the "Niger Territories," and the end point is 1914, when the proposal was fully implemented. Combined with previous British policies, the attempts at amalgamation led to the creation of the Nigerian state, "which the controlling power desired as a political condition for its economic and humanitarian interests."<sup>5</sup> Although Tamuno's study does not state what these humanitarian interests were, the pursuit by the British of other goals is much clearer in the book. In an informed and detailed manner, *The Evolution* focuses on the stages of amalgamation. Tamuno builds into his analysis how Africans gradually lost economic and political power to British officials. This loss involved the dissolution of many precolonial sovereign states. The result was the creation of a "common political entity, a central authority and a coordinated economic and fiscal system."<sup>6</sup>

The central authority that emerged chose Lagos as its headquarters. One consequence of this selection was the necessity for economic coordination and interdependence. Tamuno argues in *The Evolution* that strong economic and political foundations were laid after the amalgamation. In examining the

foundation of this new state, he emphasizes the relationship between administration and development and the interaction of commerce, government, humanitarianism, and politics in a sizable West African dependent territory. The point to underscore in this important linkage is portrayed by the author as the need to raise “sufficient revenue for administration and limited welfare.”<sup>7</sup> The attention on the central administration does not obscure the relevance of the grassroots in *The Evolution*. In dwelling on the problems of development and administration, Tamuno imposes two essential interpretative frameworks: the attempt by Britain to realize her goals, and “the well-being of the Africans under British rule.”<sup>8</sup> The latter framework remains controversial. He makes references to protests by Nigerians, brought about in reaction to British conquest and control. Unlike the previous studies, *The Evolution* pays attention to constitutional issues and the relationship between British officials on the spot and the Nigerians whom they governed.

The massive amount of data in *The Evolution* is employed to conclude that the evolution of the Nigerian state proceeded through various stages and that the task of consolidation by the colonial government involved the creation of administrative machinery. Tamuno addresses a number of consequences that flowed from these two issues in the interesting conclusion to his study. According to him, the period of the foundation of the Nigerian state was “one of major changes and adjustments.” Several chiefs fell, others rose; some supported the new power, while others opposed it. In addition, as pockets of unrest were suppressed by the British, many Nigerians became resigned to their fate. Widespread mass revolts against the British were impossible for several reasons: (a) the traditional Nigerian elite did not want a strategy of armed insurrection, (b) no one emerged to lead such a mobilization, (c) communication was not easy, and (d) members of the elite were quick to accept the change. Other notable changes included amalgamation, increased agricultural production, and the provision of public services such as the railway and Western education.

The need to draw relevant lessons from the past is recognized in *The Evolution of the Nigerian State*. Tamuno asserts that the 1914 amalgamation did not resolve the question of what political system the country should adopt—that is, whether it should be a unitary or a federal state. Although a federal state was declared in the 1950s, the problem of unity lingered. Tamuno is able to relate the postindependence political instability to the very early beginnings of modern Nigeria:

In at least two ways Nigeria's experience between January 1966 and January 1970 was relevant to the 1914 amalgamation. The secessionist threats then, though not for the first time in Nigerian history since 1914, raised the question of whether any breakaway movement was the answer to Nigeria's long-standing problem of unity in diversity. If secession were allowed in the Nigeria

of more than 250 ethnic groups, the degree of provocation notwithstanding, that would be the basis of the new political entities, a return to the pre-colonial caliphate, empires, kingdoms, city-states, republics, village-groups and such compound-loving communities as those of the Tiv. The civil war experience between July 1967 and January 1970 further showed the effects of the two rival forces, which either rejected or accepted the 1914 amalgamation as modified on 27 May 1967. Without having to elaborate the merits and demerits of the secessionist attempt in Nigeria between 30 May 1967 and January 1970, it is sufficient to emphasize here that the end of the civil war saved the Nigerian state from breaking into its pre-colonial units, a process which in the 1960s would have resulted in bloodier consequences. The durability, so far, of the Nigerian state can be explained in more than military terms. It owes a lot to the memories of pre-colonial commercial and cultural contacts, inter-marriages, a common political experience during and after colonialism, and a growing awareness of the need for economic inter-dependence in a large and attractive domestic market.<sup>9</sup>

Based on the assessment of the limits of the power of the precolonial states and the policies of the British during the 1898–1914 period, Tamuno gives credit to both the British and the Nigerians for the evolution of the state. It is necessary to quote him in full in order to highlight his reasons for this praise:

The series of secessionist threats which threatened the solidarity and territorial integrity of the Nigerian state since 1914 sometimes hung on the theory that, before British rule began, there had been no realization of the concept of “one country” in the territory later called Nigeria. Despite the validity of that viewpoint, assessed in political terms, most Nigerians later endeavoured to work within the framework of the state established in January 1914. That trend was more noticeable during the period of diarchy in the 1950s. As responsible office-holders in the regional and federal governments in Nigeria in the era of diarchy, many Nigerian leaders associated themselves with maintaining the territorial integrity of the Nigerian state. During the same period, they and the Nigerian masses interested themselves in the consolidation and independence of the state which had emerged under British auspices. If therefore the credit of creating the Nigerian state rightly belonged to Britain, that of its further consolidation rests squarely with British personnel as well as Nigerians before and after independence. In these respects, therefore, the steps taken during the crucial period 1898–1914 to create and consolidate the Nigerian state continued to influence major developments afterwards.<sup>10</sup>

Tamuno also directs scholarly attention to the key institutions of the state, notably the Legislative Council, the Executive Council, the infrastructure (e.g., the railway, whose genesis is Tamuno’s concern in two articles published in 1964 and 1965), the police, and Africans’ response to colonial

rule.<sup>11</sup> His work on the two interrelated organs of government, the Legislative Council and the Executive Council, is stimulating, useful, and original. To date, the best empirical work on the history of the franchise in Nigeria and elective representation remains Tamuno's study *Nigeria and Elective Representation, 1923–1947*, published in 1966.<sup>12</sup> The aim of this book is to examine the history of the franchise from its introduction in the Legislative Council elections of 1922 to 1951, when the basis of elective representation in the legislature was altered. During this period, the franchise was limited to two coastal townships, Lagos and Calabar. Tamuno explains the significance of these two cities in the political process, the features of elections, and other issues regarding the Legislative Council, which was an important organ for passing bills and determining financial matters. He explains why parliamentary reforms made very slow progress up until the 1940s. He argues that "it is not enough to adduce questions of illiteracy, the different stages of development north and south of the Niger, and the influence of Islam in Northern Nigeria as the main contributory factors in this slow progress."<sup>13</sup> He describes these factors as excuses rather than causes. Instead, he prefers reasons that would focus on constitutional development and the unwillingness of Britain to allow the principle of self-determination until changes were brought about by World War II and the independence of India in 1947. Tamuno concludes that the experience of elective representation from 1923 to 1947 taught subsequent political parties the need to contest parliamentary elections by means of party platforms.<sup>14</sup>

Using the administration of Lagos between 1886 and 1913 as a case study, he assesses the role of the Legislative Council in Nigeria. Tamuno reaches a major conclusion and a major historical revision on the role of this council. Whereas the official colonial viewpoint is that the council was successful in passing laws and making fiscal arrangements, Tamuno argues to the contrary. He concludes that the council had very limited value for the Nigerian community in Lagos. This important conclusion is yet to be challenged.

There was also an Executive Council during the same period. In an essay published in 1970, Tamuno examines the unofficial representation on this body between 1886 and 1943.<sup>15</sup> He queries the assertion by the British that there were no suitable Nigerian candidates for the Executive Council. He analyzes two reasons unofficial representation was not considered urgent before 1914: "(a) the limited objectives of pre-war advocates of de-colonization and (b) the unwillingness of the Colonial Office . . . to share with unofficial members the decision-making process concerning the administration of a Crown Colony."<sup>16</sup> Yet the Executive Council played a significant role in colonial administration. In terms of policymaking, it was especially influential through drafting bills to submit to the Legislative Council. It also played a disciplinary role by exercising the power to suspend or dismiss government officials, and it advised the governor on executive issues.

Before World War I, the Lagos elite called for the representation of Nigerians—a call that the British ignored. The elite resorted to silence until September 1942, when the British decided to admit unofficial members. Two Nigerian lawyers, Sir Adeyemo Alakija and S. Bankole Rhodes, and one European were appointed. In Tamuno's assessment, both Nigerians had distinguished careers on the council. Many of the elite were unimpressed by the change in 1942 and requested more far-reaching reforms. As Tamuno concludes, there were many suitable candidates who could have been appointed to the council, described in 1943 by the well-known Rev. T. A. J. Ogunbiyi as the "Sanctum Sanctorum of the Nigerian government."<sup>17</sup>

## Biographical Studies

In addition to examining the institutions and structures of government, Tamuno has focused equally on the *dramatis personae* in these agencies, men who contributed to their foundations and workings. In these biographical studies, the examples are the achievers and the elite that Tamuno thinks deserve the respect of Nigerians. Even when these men are not isolated for lengthy discussions, as in his works on the police, the Legislative Council, or the University of Ibadan, they are mentioned in passing. Tamuno does not believe in glorifying the past if available evidence points in the opposite direction. This position further complicates the debates of the 1970s over the reasons precolonial African leaders waged the wars that produced victims for the transatlantic slave trade. In addition, Tamuno seems to agree with Obaro Ikime that the most important aspect of biographical writing is a critical assessment of the historical circumstances that produced the so-called heroes and heroines.<sup>18</sup>

In his Inaugural Lecture, published as *History and History-Makers in Modern Nigeria*, Tamuno identifies the role of heroes in four periods of Nigerian history: "(1) scramble for and partition of Africa; (2) the consolidation of colonial rule after 1914; (3) decolonization; (4) post-independent leadership."<sup>19</sup> Instead of providing a justification for the study of heroes, as Obaro Ikime did in his own Inaugural Lecture six years later in 1979, Tamuno takes up the periods of Nigerian history one after the other, highlighting the role that leadership played. Concerning the British scramble for the Nigerian geographic area, Tamuno asserts that Nigerian heroes understood the need to ward off alien invasion of their territories. This accounts for the basis of the series of wars and diplomatic efforts during the late nineteenth century up to the first decade of the twentieth century aimed at preserving self-determination.<sup>20</sup>

Tamuno believes that a major question that has yet to be answered is whether people who opposed the establishment of colonialism during the

late 1800s and early 1900s supported the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates in 1914. He argues that since the decision to merge the two regions was not carried out through a plebiscite, it is difficult to determine how popular the amalgamation was. While those who opposed it called it a “mistake,” those who supported it branded it a *fait accompli*.<sup>21</sup>

The road to independence in Nigeria was not as bloody as, say, the War of Independence in the United States (1776–83) or the Mau Mau Revolt in Kenya (1952–55), according to Tamuno. However, the numerous political intricacies of the period led to the rise of new personalities who employed personal and collective resources in driving away the invaders. As the individuals involved in history making in Nigeria came and went, the main goal—that is, the need to drive out alien rule and achieve freedom—remained unchanged. Obviously, the quest for independence involved millions of unseen hands. The role of the masses in the different stages of Nigerian history is unquantifiable. Tamuno contends that leaders would not have been able to achieve their goals of leading Nigeria to an independent state without mass mobilization. He believes that the British gave independence to Nigeria partly because they discovered that the nationalist leaders had the formidable support of the teeming population. By mentioning the role of the masses in the decolonization struggle, Tamuno seems to be indirectly responding to the Marxist criticism that frowned on the undue glorification of the so-called heroes and heroines at the expense of the masses. However, an obvious point about the role of history makers in the decolonization of Nigeria is that the nature of regional or sectional agitation and identity was complex and shifting. Tamuno’s take on this is critical:

Those who in parliamentary and other debates opposed any British reference to Nigeria as a mere geographical expression later saw nothing absurd in behaving as if they were only in Nigeria and not of Nigeria. Moreover, the Nigerian leaders who had blamed such colonial Governors as Sir Bernard Bourdillon and Sir Arthur Richards (later Lord Milverton) in the 1930s and 1940s for erecting artificial regional boundaries were themselves unwilling, for nearly two decades, to dismantle them when they became rulers.<sup>22</sup>

Tamuno argues that the quality of leadership in immediate postindependence Nigeria was poor. Instead of working to forge genuine national unity, Nigerian leaders in this period were involved in serious rivalry for political control and legitimacy. Rivalry led to or promoted corruption, victimization, and political recklessness. Political manifestos and slogans such as “Life More Abundant” were not achieved, while the general level of insecurity from the 1950s up to 1965 points to the failure of the machinery and institutions of political legitimacy. The use of violence in changing governments was the major characteristic of leadership in Nigeria. The massive

rigging of the 1951 and 1965 elections reveals that Nigerian leaders could not seek election through legitimate means but rather did so through corruption, coercion, and intimidation. Participation in government, Tamuno contends, is not the most important determinant of legitimacy; rather, provisions of security, stability, and welfare are the basic foundations of political legitimacy. He argues that whatever the remote and proximate causes of the Nigerian Civil War, human failings rather than constitutional or institutional weaknesses deserve greater weight and attention. He is convinced that nation building in any part of the world involves a serious test of leadership, which includes “a sense of direction, not drift; statesmanship, not partisanship; persuasion, not intimidation; dedication and sacrifice, not reckless abandon in public office.”<sup>23</sup>

Tamuno’s position on the nature of leadership in colonial Nigeria focuses on two major issues. First, it appears that when the performances of history makers in the aforementioned periods—colonial invasion, amalgamation, decolonization, and postindependence—are assessed, leaders of the last period receive the lowest marks. Of course, some of the nationalists who worked to terminate colonial rule ended up becoming leaders of the new Nigerian state. The available evidence from the postindependence period all points to recklessness of the founding fathers of the independent Nigerian state in the management of the human and material resources of the country. Second, Tamuno, unlike most of his colleagues, does not see the problem of political leadership in the immediate postindependence period (1960–66) as a legacy of colonialism. Obaro Ikime, among others, attributed the crisis in the immediate postindependence period to the numerous political and constitutional flaws that can be traced to 1914, when the Nigerian state was artificially created. Scholars thus have been consistently reminded that the origins of the Nigerian Civil War should be traced to 1914. Since the fighting broke out partly because of the crisis of leadership between 1960 and 1966, it seems appropriate that the place of colonialism in the fall of the First Republic (1960–66) should be identified or recognized in conjunction with the poor quality of leadership.

Tamuno also wrote specifically on Herbert Macaulay, the father of the Nigerian nationalist movement; and Huge Clifford, the governor-general of Nigeria (1919–25), and coedited and authored a chapter in a book on eminent Nigerians of the Rivers State.<sup>24</sup> Another book coauthored by Tamuno looks at the career of C. E. Abebe, a successful administrator in the private sector.<sup>25</sup> From this lineup, the men he studied fall into two categories: class and race. On Clifford, Tamuno discusses his contribution to representative government in Nigeria, especially his willingness to reform what he inherited from Lugard in 1921. Before this date, the Nigerian Council enjoyed limited functions and its resolutions lacked both legislative and executive authority. Governor Clifford advocated an improved council and attempted

a reform to secure “a fuller representation of local interests and of giving a larger share in the discussion and management of public affairs to articulate members of the various Nigerian communities than are provided by existing institutions.”<sup>26</sup> He called for additional members, although Tamuno said that this was not even enough to represent the country and the interest groups. Clifford also wanted the council to enjoy more power.<sup>27</sup> After assessing all of Clifford’s proposals, Tamuno reaches the right conclusion that not all of the governor-general’s hopes were fully realized.

He sees Macaulay as one of the country’s “great patriots and heroes” and agrees with the accolades that name him “the Champion and Defender of Native Rights and Liberties,” “the Musical Wizard of Kirten Hall,” and “the Gandhi of West Africa.” The necessarily brief biography highlights important aspects of Macaulay’s life. The omissions in the account are many, but Tamuno is quick to apologize for this deficiency. The conclusion, though sketchy, attempts a useful characterization of heroes:

Heroes, for example, are usually of the type that is determined to succeed even against great odds; they must be familiar with suffering but remain unperturbed; heroes are not expected to be too perfect; they should be made of real flesh and blood; most heroes strive to unite, and not to divide, a nation; they endeavor to exalt and fulfill a people; and lastly, heroes tend to use up their energies for the total good; to die, if circumstances so dictate, while on duty.<sup>28</sup>

### **Law, Policing, and Public Order**

Tamuno’s scholarship extends to the nature of crime, law and order, and policing in Nigerian societies since the precolonial period. In one essay on this broad theme, Tamuno explores the nature of crime and crime control in precolonial Nigeria. On the reasons for the absence of formal machinery for enforcement of law in precolonial societies, Tamuno opines: “These rural, illiterate communities also believed that, despite formal codification, their unwritten laws and custom would be understood and observed.”<sup>29</sup> A criminal offense was committed when some basic aspect of customs was violated. Abominations such as stealing yams and committing adultery each violated a basic aspect of the tradition and thus attracted serious criminal sanctions. Most criminal offenses took the form of disrespecting basic customs that society was expected to abide by. Precolonial Nigerian societies also did not differentiate between civil and criminal cases as seen in modern jurisprudence.<sup>30</sup> The place of the temporal powers in the enforcement of law and order is also of great significance. Tamuno argues that criminal violations are considered an offense both to the living and to the dead. This belief probably underlies the practice whereby some criminals were sacrificed to the gods for appeasement.<sup>31</sup>

The establishment of colonial rule and the attendant social, economic, and political changes reconfigured what constituted law and order and its violation in Nigeria. Colonial administrators, because of the need to establish their own instruments of power and coercion, kicked against several preexisting cultural institutions that were used to enhance law and order. The idea that African cultural practices were “uncivilized,” coupled with the need to create laws that are capable of functioning in the new colonial political order, led to a serious attack on precolonial methods of policing and crime control. The colonial police force had its origin in the need to impose law and order to preserve the existing hegemonic order.

Tamuno’s work on the colonial police is original and interesting. At the time he embarked on the research, he was the first historian to identify it as a worthy aspect of Nigerian history to write a book about.<sup>32</sup> His analysis is bifurcated into these conceptual thrusts: first, that the police have played a great role in Nigerian history; and second, that the police have prevented crime, maintained law and order, preserved public safety, and buttressed all governments.<sup>33</sup> Written at a time when the police still enjoyed some credibility in the society, the work is very sober in its conclusions. On the important issue of corruption (not to mention incivility and brutality) in the police force, Tamuno provides some justification in the face of criticisms of the institution:

These critics however did not realize that the peculiar nature of police work could help to explain the existence in the N.P.F. [Nigeria Police Force] and among the local police forces of persons whose performance fell below expectations. Above all, their peculiar duties in crime control exposed them to regular contacts with criminals and other shady characters of the underworld, some of whom later became professional police informants. If it is accepted that the police work with thieves to catch thieves, then their relationship with such characters illustrates the familiar case of evil communications corrupting good manners.<sup>34</sup>

However, *The Police in Modern Nigeria* does not set out solely to assess the behavior of the police. It encompasses far more, covering the major stages in the development of the police. In all societies and historical periods, argues Tamuno, the police are necessary. Other organs of government would find it difficult to function without them. Together with the judiciary, the police constitute “the first line of defense against any threats to the internal security of the state or community.”<sup>35</sup> Such was the importance of the police that even the precolonial states found the need for them. Tamuno is able to demonstrate that precolonial communities were not disorderly or lawless. Indeed, some of the informal agencies, such as secret societies and oracles, survived the imposition of colonial rule. While some of these were banned, those that remained continued to perform

some police functions. He is also able to establish that the precolonial machinery of law enforcement survived.

The bulk of the study is on the modern police force, established in August 1861. Up until 1930, the force had a semimilitary character. Changes ensued after 1930, mainly because of the increasing problems of crime control and law enforcement. Some of the changes included the expansion of the range of specialized activities and improved efficiency brought about by better training and the development of new branches, detachments, and squads. Throughout this long history, the police remained loyal to the government, whether colonial, civilian, or military. For this, the police received a thank-you in the closing lines of the book:

Complaints arose mainly because most people expected a higher standard of service from the police in spite of the very difficult conditions under which they worked, particularly during the immediate post-independence period. On the whole, as far as records go, the role of the modern police forces in Nigeria during the period 1861–65 considerably justified the money spent on them from public funds and the attention given to their growth and development by the British and Nigerian governments.<sup>36</sup>

Yet the responsibility for crime control does not lie in the hands of the police alone. In a related study, Tamuno identifies three categories of people, agencies, and institutions that should be responsible for crime control: religious authorities, the police, and the courts.<sup>37</sup> These different categories of people and institutions have different roles to play in ameliorating the incidence of crime, and must share the responsibility for controlling it. Tamuno draws evidence from police records to demonstrate the unprecedented increase in the crime rate between 1959 and 1980. He predicts that the incidence of crime would continue to increase so long as the agencies and institutions for controlling it were not properly demonstrating their relevance.

Tamuno's most voluminous book is *Peace and Violence in Nigeria*.<sup>38</sup> This 676-page tome is the first comprehensive study of the country's history of peace and conflict. Though divided into conventional periods (precolonial, colonial, and postindependence), it represents a complete departure from Tamuno's other works. For the first time, Tamuno takes the aspect of conceptual clarification seriously. He dedicates the first chapter of the book to theories that have been advanced by scholars on peace and violence. By going deep into the theories of violence and peacemaking, he does what is normally overlooked by historians of his generation: he begins the work by providing long arguments or theories related to the main discourses, adopting a style that is traditional to the social sciences. He actually wanted the book to be a multidisciplinary study that can be accessed by readers from diverse academic and intellectual persuasions.<sup>39</sup>

## History and the Problem of Nation Building

In recent times, perhaps as one would expect, Tamuno has been concentrating on major issues of the day, notably education, crime, political instability, underdevelopment, unemployment, and university administration. He has formidable credentials to comment on all of these topics. He puts the study of the humanities as the underlying basis of all his suggestions. As he warned in his 1975 Inaugural Lecture, the focus on science and technology should not be allowed to displace the humanities. He confesses, too, that studies of certain issues, like the Civil War, can involve bias and instances of recriminations that should be avoided as scholars attempt to seek the truth.

He was very active in his capacity as the chair of the Panel on Nigeria since Independence History Project sponsored by the federal government. The panel published eleven volumes of the proceedings from the National Conference on Nigeria since Independence held in Zaria in March 1983. Tamuno coedited three of these volumes. His keynote address at the 1983 conference explains not only the goals of the panel but also some of his ideas on nation building. Tamuno admits that the views expressed in the volumes on postindependence Nigeria should not be assumed to enjoy the “status of pontifical statements”; he further states that “we are humble enough to acknowledge that we know not yet all we wish to know about this great country, Nigeria, about its great people, and their great problems.”<sup>40</sup>

Tamuno makes a strong call for “an awareness of a sense of history in the development of a modern state such as Nigeria. Such awareness, we hope, will, in turn be related to the way of life and value-systems its several million people represent and vow to defend with every means at their disposal. A sense of history, if properly understood, will, among other things, seek to ascertain and assess where people have been, where they are, and where they wish to go.”<sup>41</sup> On the need for history, he adds:

A sense of history, where properly cultivated, also provides a useful tool of learning: learning from history, learning from what has gone before as guides for the present and future. On the other hand, those who refuse to learn, given the chance to learn, often prove unable to un-learn. Yet, the un-folding history of Man and Society says, and says again, that learning and un-learning form essential links in the chain of reform and progress.<sup>42</sup>

Like most Nigerians, Tamuno wants change. He also believes that change can come through leadership. As part of good leadership, he emphasizes legitimacy, which in turn would mean the proper election of leaders, accountability, and good governance. When legitimacy is lacking, Tamuno thinks that there may be crises of all sorts, especially the resort to extra-electoral means

to change the government. Among his notable suggestions to achieve change are the following:

1. A constitution should guarantee political stability. To Tamuno, "It is reasonable to base new constitutional structures, for the post-1990 era, on what our indigenous talent and collective will can administer best and sustain, with minimum amendment, for decades, if not centuries."
2. Social development must go along with economic development.
3. An accurate census is necessary so as to avoid the consequences of uncontrolled growth in such areas as environmental pollution and breakdown in municipal services, all of which multiply public frustration and irritation.
4. The territorial integrity of the country must be maintained.
5. The best talents should be used in all areas of need.
6. Education should be provided for training and citizenship.<sup>43</sup>

Several of Tamuno's works emphasize the role of education. He wants the universities to harness knowledge for service "of whatever kind and at whatever level." But for the universities to play their role, both the primary and secondary schools must be improved. Intellectuals should also come together under the umbrella of a National Academy that would provide useful means of coordinating the efforts of different learned societies and generating greater inspiration where research involving the multidisciplinary approach promises more satisfactory results. There should be education, too, for all on how best to administer the country. This should stress practical solutions to Nigeria's problems.

Both in his assessment of the country's history and his recommended panacea for improvement, Tamuno is an incurable optimist. He calls for pessimists to have a change of mind: "What, however, needs to be stressed, and stressed again, is Nigeria's proven ability to survive visible strains and stresses in her development as a sovereign state. There lies the main spring-board of Nigeria's optimists. There also lies the ultimate vindication of all those who regard Nigeria's sovereignty as a welcome challenge at home and abroad."<sup>44</sup> This optimism, which we like to label "Tamuno's charter," may be an enduring part of his contribution to Nigerian historiography: "No matter how different observers see Independent Nigeria's trials and record in integration, development, and identity in nearly a quarter of a century, it can be conceded that only those who expected too much felt disappointed in some areas where first steps do count a lot. Even in such areas, inevitable mistakes, which often enrich experience, can prove blessings in disguise."<sup>45</sup>

In an essay published in 1970, the year the Nigerian Civil War ended, Tamuno traced the history of separatist agitation in Nigeria. This paper was timely for a number of reasons. A popular assumption held that separatist

agitation in Nigeria began during the decolonization period. This instance of what can be regarded as “historical amnesia” (or ignorance) needed to be addressed. Also, as the first case of separatist agitation in the immediate postindependence period, the outbreak of the Biafran War in 1967 represented a starting point for understanding the threats of subnationalist movements to the survival of the nascent independent state. The relationship between one episode and the other helps illustrate the dynamic forces of time, circumstances, and political expediency, which were predominantly marshaled by the ruling elite on behalf of the masses.

Relying on the autobiography of Ahmadu Bello, the *Sardauna* of Sokoto and premier of the Northern Region, Tamuno establishes that the history of separatist agitation in Nigeria is as old as the history of the Nigerian state.<sup>46</sup> Right from 1914, when Frederick Lugard carried out the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates, the northerners had demonstrated their displeasure with the joining of the two regions. However, their grievances were constrained by the North’s landlocked geography. Tamuno mentions that Ahmadu Bello and the northern elites were quick to realize the significance of access to the sea for the region’s development. The construction of the railway system and port facilities, which started in the last decade of the nineteenth century, was a positive for the North, as northern products found their way south to Lagos, from where they were eventually exported to Europe.<sup>47</sup> Advances in the organization of the new colonial capitalist economy rendered the trans-Saharan trade route, which had hitherto served as the gateway for international commerce in the North, less efficient for global trade. Obviously, from Tamuno’s narrative, because of economic reasons the North discarded the idea of secession.<sup>48</sup>

The 1950s were characterized by a series of sectarian agitations that threatened the survival of the nation-state. The politics of decolonization surfaced in a way that the three regions—northern, western, and eastern—demanded more seats in the Central Legislative Council. The northern delegates to the 1950 constitutional conference opposed the proposed ratio of 45:33:33 in the allocation of seats and demanded 50 percent of the seats: “Under 1951 constitution, the British Government conceded the Northern demand for parity of representation in the Nigerian Legislative Council on the basis of the existing population figures for the North and the South.”<sup>49</sup>

Tamuno’s scholarship, as we have seen, traverses administrative and political history as well as public order and civil authority. While exposing the ills of the numerous constitutional arrangements under which Nigeria was governed during the colonial period, he was equally concerned about the quality of governance in postindependence Nigeria and offered interesting suggestions on how the country could move forward. Like Ikime, he believes historical research can be directly used to advance the cause of nation building. Thus, his work on violence and peace explicates not only the fragility

of the Nigerian nation-state but also the complexities associated with building a multicultural and multifaith nation. Although he is from one of the country's minority groups, his entire body of ideas advances the project of a unified country. Unlike his colleagues who celebrate their own majority ethnicities and defend them, Tamuno opens his lens to all groups and peoples of Nigeria. In his considerations of how institutions can be better managed, he leans toward a notion of "civic institution," a belief that institutions like the police can provide order and stability.

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## Yusufu Bala Usman

### Radicalism and Neocolonialism

The late Yusufu Bala Usman was an activist scholar, a radical, an anticolonial critic, and a public intellectual. His ideas, passion, and drive energized a young generation of students in the 1980s, and even offered a slight possibility that a campus-based social movement could emerge in Nigeria. He can be categorized as a member of the nationalist historiography school to the extent that his vision falls within it; however, he stands apart from the other examples in this book because of his adoption of a Marxist/socialist approach, his public-oriented service in defense of the poor (although sometimes only of the northern region), his consistently antiestablishment orientation, and his rejection of most things with the mark of Western capitalism. Yet he was also “Afrocentric,” with an aspiration to see Africa as the center of the world, as well as with an ambition to develop homegrown solutions to most of its problems. His scholarship is very critical of Eurocentric ideas, and of the colonial ways of life. On one side of the coin, he criticizes the colonial and postcolonial structures and institutions. On the other side, he exposes a radical, even revolutionary, vision of a new Africa. Like Frantz Fanon and Kwame Nkrumah, Usman believes in the struggle to liberate Nigerians—whether between the rich and the poor, the powerless and the powerful, tenants and landlords, subjects and rulers.

Yusufu Bala Usman started his career as a historian of northern Nigeria with a PhD dissertation titled “The Transformation of Katsina, c. 1400–1883: The Overthrow of the Sarauta System and the Establishment and Evolution of the Emirate.”<sup>1</sup> His work is a good addition to the well-established historiography of Hausaland, the Uthman dan Fodio jihad, and the Sokoto Caliphate. Indeed, he joined the likes of R. A. Adeleye, Murray Last, Abdul-lahi Smith, Saad Abubakar, and others in making the Hausa-Fulani one of the most studied ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

Usman’s contribution to Nigerian historiography transcends the microhistory of Hausaland and the Sokoto Caliphate. In fact, he is known more for his engagement with national issues such as the manipulation of religion;

Nigerian relations with international institutions like the International Monetary Fund; and crises and challenges of nation building, democracy, and governance. His approach to national issues is a blend of academic analysis and advocacy. As an activist scholar, he belonged to the group of historians, social scientists, and social critics like Segun Osoba, Claude Ake, Bade Onimode, Ola Oni, and Mahmud Tukur who used academic ideas and concepts to sensitize the public to the ills of foreign domination, the contributions of so-called local collaborators to Nigeria's crisis of underdevelopment, and the mismanagement of the nation's human and material resources under military and democratic governments alike. Usman was also a human rights activist. One of his publications, *Political Repression in Nigeria*, represents a bold attempt to document the abuses of the government and its agencies in virtually all spheres of political engagement.<sup>2</sup>

Usman earned descriptions like "combatant intellectual," "radical scholar," "radical socialist," and "firebrand northern intellectual" for his stern and provocative condemnation of the government policies that retard the progress of the nation and undermine the welfare of its citizenry. The texts of his public lectures on such issues were published in *New Nigeria*, northern Nigeria's most widely read newspaper. His vocal and uncompromising stance on the poor quality of leadership brought him constant troubles with the Nigerian government. For instance, he was fired from Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) by the military government of Ibrahim Babangida for publicly criticizing government policies in 1989, and he regained his appointment only after winning a legal battle against the dictatorial regime in 1990. In August 2005 (nearly a month before his death), Usman, in a public hearing, confronted and criticized Olusegun Obasanjo (president of Nigeria, 1999–2007) for his ambivalent policy toward corruption and financial crimes. Obasanjo felt so embarrassed by Usman's condemnation of his government that he ordered his security agents to seize the microphone from him.<sup>3</sup>

## History of Hausaland and the Sokoto Caliphate

When Usman defended his PhD dissertation in 1974, academic research on Hausaland and the Sokoto Caliphate had already taken root.<sup>4</sup> Historians like Abdullahi Smith, Last, Adeleye, and anthropologist M. G. Smith had published book-length works detailing the process of state formation, trade, and diplomatic relations in Hausaland before and after the caliphate. Usman's work, however, charted a new course in the historiography of Hausaland. His findings run contrary to the scholarship of his aforementioned colleagues, who examine in terms of revolution and wars the rise and fall of the Hausa States before and after the Uthman dan Fodio jihad that broke out in 1804.<sup>5</sup> Usman's main argument is that the rise and fall of the political system in

Katsina cannot be explained only in terms of conflicts, but was due also to changes in the nature and configuration of the following components of the society: productive occupations, composition of settlements, structure of lineages, beliefs, and the associated political ideologies. He examines the emergence of the *Sarauta* system from the collapse of the autonomous *garuruwa* (towns) and *birane* (cities) in the fifteenth century to its overthrow by the emirate system in the nineteenth century. It is difficult to say concretely whether Usman was influenced by A. E. Afigbo's criticism that historians of Nigeria tend to use a European model of wars in explaining the emergence and demise of states during the precolonial era. However, what is clear is that Afigbo and Usman share similar views about the shortcomings of the conflict model as a tool for understanding the emergence of states.

Usman's scholarship on Katsina also dwells on issues of sources and methodology. In one essay, entitled "The Assessment of Primary Sources: Heinrich Barth in Katsina," he investigates the limitations or shortcomings of the travel journals of Europeans as sources for reconstructing the history of northern Nigeria, with emphasis on Katsina.<sup>6</sup> He criticizes in particular Heinrich Barth's account of Katsina. Usman's argument is that although Barth's were regarded as among the most accurate accounts by European travelers of the nineteenth century, they were mostly colored by enormous misrepresentations of the nature and general character of the societies he came across. Usman finds fault in Barth's account of class division into "superior" and "inferior" races. He believes that Barth was wrong in claiming that the ruling class in Katsina did not behave like elites because they did what elites were not supposed to do—that is, practice miscegenation with the "inferior" races and lower class (e.g., slaves and non-Fulani). Usman posits that Barth readily used European ideas of racialism in analyzing the structure of Katsina society. For Usman, the famous traveler did not spend enough time in Katsina to understand its social structure. Barth spent a total of sixty-two days in Katsina, a period during which he only met with the elites at Birni Katsina and did not take his time to collect firsthand information about the people by traveling from place to place.

Barth is not the only nineteenth-century traveler-cum-explorer whose observations have been questioned, however. In a similar fashion, Usman criticizes M. G. Smith, a prominent anthropologist of northern Nigeria, for his absolute demarcation of northern Nigerian societies into Fulani and Hausa. Drawing evidence from popular myths and legends, Usman argues that none of these ethnic groups has traditions pointing to a common ancestor, while the history of the formation of dynasties evidences the multiplicity of ethnic configuration. Usman opines that geography and social structures determined the character of each ethnic group, given that people who share similar historical backgrounds, though living in separate places, experience a common bond that influences their ways of life and their perception about

their past. Overall, he faults Smith for not looking critically at the question of “how the Fulani [who] settled in the *birane* and *garuruwa* of Zazzau shared a common history with the nomadic Fulani in the *dozojin* Zazzau and not with the non-Fulani inhabitants of these cities and towns”; he further queries: “How did the pagan Habe living in the rural areas share historical associations with the Mohammedan Habe in the cities and towns and not with the settled nomadic Fulani they lived with in the rural areas?”<sup>7</sup>

African states before the advent of colonial rule interacted with one another across time and place. Indeed, without economic, political, and diplomatic relations, it is more likely that a state cannot survive or maximize its full potential. Usman uses Katsina’s political, social, and economic relations with its neighbors to illuminate the creative ingenuity of the rulers and masses alike.<sup>8</sup> He opines that, like those of other precolonial African states, Katsina’s rulers understood such basic tenets of interstate affairs as the need to protect territorial integrity; ward off enemies; wage wars and make peace; and establish diplomatic friendships through trade, marriage, and religious/cultural exchanges and interactions. What is more, Usman, like Ikime and Afigbo, is able to show that in precolonial times the peoples of the Nigerian geographic area were not strange bedfellows. Indeed, the geography of the North, like the South, facilitated the movement of people and commodities of exchange from one region to another. While the Atlantic Ocean has long served as the main international gateway linking southern Nigeria to international trade, the North, where Katsina is located, was adequately connected via the trans-Saharan trade route, which linked the region to North Africa and the Mediterranean.

On dynastic changes, Usman uses the case of Katsina to explore the difficulties associated with dividing African societies into “modern” and “traditional.” In particular, he believes that African historians are wrong in assuming that the changes in the structure of a society precipitated by episodes like colonial rule led to the social transition from “traditional” to “modern.” Here he points out that between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, Katsina experienced the following five distinct epochs: (1) the period of autonomous *garuruwa* (towns) and *birane* (cities), pre-ca. 1450; (2) the emergence of the *Sarauta* system, which destroyed the *garuruwa* and *birane*, ca. 1450–1804; (3) the interregnum between the overthrow of the *Sarauta* system and the imposition of the emirate system, ca. 1804–16; (4) the period of the emirate system, 1816–1903; and (5) colonial rule, 1903–60. Each of these periods witnessed dramatic changes in the social structure such that it would be misleading to assume the demise of one dynasty led to the rise of the other. While not suggesting an alternative approach, Usman contends that a clear dichotomy between “modern” and “traditional” societies cannot adequately explain the changes in the structure of Katsina during the aforementioned periods of dynastic upheaval.

One of Usman's most cherished contributions to the history of the Uthman dan Fodio jihad and the Sokoto Caliphate is his edited volume *Studies in the History of the Sokoto Caliphate*. In the preface to this book, he points out that Adeleye, Last, and Abdullahi Smith do not examine several issues like the transformation of the emirates into urban centers, internal economic growth, and social relations, to which Usman urges more attention be paid in the history of this part of modern Nigeria.

## Economy, Politics, and Religion

Usman strongly believes that academic discourse can be used to engage issues that threaten the political, social, and economic development of Nigeria. Virtually all his works on politics, economics, and religion (especially *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria*, *For the Liberation of Nigeria*, and *Nigeria against the I.M.F.*) are a blend of advocacy and academic presentation of ideas.<sup>9</sup> Usman, the public intellectual, contributed to all the major debates on Nigerian politics and economy. Texts of his public lectures were usually first published in *New Nigeria*, the foremost northern newspaper, and then revised and published in book form.

One of his most widely acknowledged contributions to public debate on Nigeria's crisis of development was his position on whether Nigeria should take out a loan from the International Monetary Fund in 1986. His book *Nigeria against the I.M.F.: The Home Market Strategy* was published mainly to sensitize the Nigerian public to the origin and nature of, and the solutions to, the economic crisis of the early 1980s; in it, Usman condemns the "superficial" origins of the economic crisis—unemployment, smuggling, lack of financial discipline—and argues that foreign domination of the Nigerian economy is a manifestation of the age-old exploitative relationship between the capitalist world and Nigeria. He provides an analysis of the evolution of Nigeria's external debt, the amounts devoted to servicing it on a yearly basis, the annual profit to the lenders, and the investment of multinational corporations like the United Africa Company, John Holt Group, British American Tobacco Company, and Paterson Zochonis. He exposes the deplorable economic conditions of the country and how the international capitalists continued to feed on the ruins of the country. His main position is that Nigeria had no control over its economy and future because Western powers represented by multinational corporations and their local collaborators did not want the country to develop economically and technologically.

Usman is certainly not the first scholar to identify the role of external and local agents and collaborators in Nigeria's ongoing economic crisis. Indeed, historians and social scientists like S. O. Osoba, Bade Onimode, Claude Ake, Toyin Falola, and Julius Ihonvhere, among others, have written extensively

about Nigeria's economic woes.<sup>10</sup> However, Usman's *Nigeria against the I.M.F.* is unique because of the following: (a) it was published in the heat of the debate over whether Nigeria should accept a proposed IMF loan and its conditions; (b) it is written in lucid and accessible language (to be sure, the academic nature of most writings on development theory or the African economic crisis make them difficult for nonacademics to grasp); (c) it is a blend of academic and systematic inquiry and advocacy (in other words, although it is a typical activist work, it is well grounded in facts and figures and is written primarily for the "educated public"); and (d) above all, his solutions to Nigeria's underdevelopment, which he termed "the Home Market Strategies," reinforce the need to turn inward in the search for genuine national development. According to Usman:

It seems very clear that our domestic economic conditions and the current structure of the direction of international trade would not allow an export-led economic recovery programme to succeed in Nigeria for the foreseeable future. . . . The only feasible alternative which will promote the development of a self-sustained productive capacity is an economic recovery programme focused on the building of a solid home-market. The alternative is based on the rapid development of all our human resources, geared directly to the optimal utilization, and renewal of our natural resources, in order to generate a high level of self-sustained domestic capital. At the core of this alternative strategy is the domestically-based linkages between agriculture, industry, health and education to produce manpower, raw materials and the machinery to propel the economy out of its low productivity and low investment and import dependency.<sup>11</sup>

Usman does not discount the importance of world trade and exports in the development of the Nigerian economy:

This is not a programme for an autarky; for there shall be a role for export and import trade, but primarily to promote a high level of domestic investment, which shall be a role for foreign capital investment. There shall also be a role for foreign capital investment, which shall be firmly subordinated to the requirement of the rapid constructions of the capital goods and basic material industries.<sup>12</sup>

Usman enumerates the short- and long-term implications of foreign aid and the IMF's and World Bank's conditions, and he probes critically the question whether these institutional agents of neocolonialism had no other goal than to keep Nigeria in perpetual economic disequilibrium. Like other public intellectuals who detested the role of these international monetary organizations in the crippling of Nigeria's economy, Usman is convinced that the total breakaway from the foreign domination of Nigeria's economy

and the concentration of domestic development in trade and manpower is the only panacea to the nation's persistent development crises.

In *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria*, Usman identifies the numerous ways in which the Nigerian elites used religion to achieve personal or collective goals from 1977 to 1987.<sup>13</sup> He then presents three cases of manipulation of religion during this period: (1) the assassination of the head of state, Muritala Muhammed, in 1976; (2) the public outcry that followed the statement by Chike Obi, a renowned professor of mathematics, at the convention of the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS) in 1976; that the Muslim North is a backward society; and (3) the "Sharia debate, 1976–77." Although he does not provide a justification for selecting these three cases, one could deduce that his direct involvement in the second case study and the national ramifications of the first and the last influenced his choice of samples.<sup>14</sup>

In the first case study, Usman narrates how Nigerian political elites wanted to present Muritala as a Muslim villain and his assassins as Christian redeemers. Usman is convinced that these categories were employed by politicians to fuel religious and political tension between the Muslim North and the Christian South at a time when the country was still struggling to put behind it the political and ideological divisions that had led to the Nigerian Civil War. Usman points out that Muritala's death was not followed by monumental destruction of lives and property as was the case after the January 1966 coup, when northern elites and politicians like Tafawa Balewa and Ahmadu Bello were murdered because the propaganda of manipulation did not produce the desired violent result.

In the second case study, Usman discusses the uproar that greeted Obi's assertion that the North was Nigeria's main problem because of its economic backwardness. Although this claim angered northern politicians and elites in general, Usman is more interested in how academics were drawn into the crisis. He recounts how *Drum* magazine accosted the History Department at ABU to write a rejoinder to Obi's article with promises of remuneration. He believed that a demand of this nature was aimed at fomenting a controversy between northern and southern intellectuals. He questions why *Drum* magazine did not ask historians at universities in Ibadan, Ife, or Lagos to write the rejoinder but instead opted for Zaria. For Usman, the newspaper's intent to manipulate religion by carrying sensational stories and making money at the expense of the security of Nigerians and their property is appalling.

The last case study, the "Sharia debate," was characterized by numerous publications in newspapers and magazines about the place of Sharia in the constitution of the Second Republic, 1979–83. Here, Usman shows that media outlets quickly capitalized on the contentious situation by pitting different categories of commentators against one another. Religious leaders as well as politicians were quick to recognize the advantages of the print media in the propagation of their ideas about faith.<sup>15</sup> Usman goes on to identify

logic or standard explanations for the manipulation of religion: the simple ascription of all these to the supposed inherent barbaric and predatory character of Nigerian people rooted in our racial genes; the inevitability of conflict in the process of development toward a modern nation-state like those of North America and Western Europe; the ethnic competition for scarce resources by the modernizing elite; and the growth of cultural awareness and self-assertion among the non-Westernized sections of Nigeria, which the Westernized sections would resist but ultimately succumb to.

Adopting a neo-Marxist approach that centers on the relationships between the state, the bourgeoisie, and the peasantry, he points out that while it is impossible to keep the productive class ignorant of all aspects of political and social reality, it is quite possible to prevent them from having access to some aspects. The particular political and social facts that are mystified, according to Usman, depend on the structure of the society within which the manipulation is taking place. He blames the “intermediary bourgeoisie,” the class that serves as the link between the masses and the wealthy, and the international capitalist world for the manipulation of religion. Members of this class include such personalities as university professors, contractors, financiers, bureaucrats, politicians, owners of assembly plants, and so on. In order to achieve their goal of exploiting the resources of the country, they put in place structures to deceive the people in the name of religion.<sup>16</sup>

Usman moves from a theoretical exposition and narrates how religion was actually manipulated for political gain during the Gowon regime, 1966–75. He argues that the fact “that Gowon viewed himself as a ‘Christian’ from a minority Middle Belt was enough to infuriate the northern oligarchy. His numerous attempts at winning the northern oligarchy could not materialize because they (the northern elites) understood the issues at stake and were not interested in being taken for a ride.”<sup>17</sup> It was during Gowon’s corrupt regime with its blatant use of Christian propaganda to achieve political goals that Alhaji Abubakar Gumi, the former Grand Khadi of the Northern Region and adviser in Islamic and Arab affairs to Sir Ahmadu Bello, began to criticize Christianity and official corruption.<sup>18</sup>

Usman’s writings also extend to other areas of national concern such as the economy and international relations. In *For the Liberation of Nigeria*, a collection of lectures and essays delivered between 1969 and 1978, Usman addresses the changing nature of Nigeria’s domestic and foreign affairs, pointing critically to how uninformed policies jeopardized national development. Specifically on domestic affairs, he examines the government’s lackadaisical disposition toward the welfare of the Nigerian populace. This apathetic attitude manifests in the lack of or inadequate access to such basic infrastructure as electricity, pipe-borne water, paved roads, and education. He decries the embezzlement of public funds and its implications for the nation’s quest toward development. He thinks Muritala Muhammed was the

best head of state Nigeria has had because of his stern opposition to corruption and, more importantly, because of his decision to cut the umbilical cord of exploitation linking Nigeria with the Western capitalists.<sup>19</sup> He disparages the inability of Nigeria to develop a firm and coherent foreign policy that could help the nation to defend its territorial integrity and political sovereignty. According to Usman, the failure of the Nigerianization Decree of 1977 and the overwhelming influence of foreign petroleum companies, especially Shell, are factors that will prevent Nigeria from realizing its goal of genuine economic and political freedom.

Human rights issues have also caught Usman's scholarly attention. His edited volume *Political Repression in Nigeria* exposes the numerous human rights abuses of the federal government between 1979 and 1981.<sup>20</sup> The book is dedicated to the memory of Bala Muhammed, a professor at Bayero University-Kano, who was killed and burnt to ashes by "hired thugs and killers of the National Party of Nigeria."<sup>21</sup> For Usman and contributors to the volume, the transfer of power from the military to civilians (or the establishment of democratic principles, simply put) does not necessarily guarantee respect for the rule of law. The book contains statistics on political violence, and documents evidence about victims of police brutality.

Other works by Usman, such as *The Misrepresentation of Nigeria and Ignorance, Knowledge, and Democratic Politics in Nigeria*, dwell on the role of ethnicity in the development of group consciousness and its implications for nation building.<sup>22</sup> In these two works, he points out that certain facts about the origin of ethnic groups, the creation of the Nigerian state, human ownership of natural resources, and elections are distorted and misrepresented by influential groups and elites, which include intellectuals and politicians, either for purposes of enhancing the hegemony of certain groups or exploiting the human and natural resources of the entire nation. In *The Misrepresentation of Nigeria*, Usman challenges the long-standing idea that the southern and northern protectorates of Nigeria were amalgamated in 1914 because the North was running a budget deficit and was economically unviable. To this end, he believes that academics who trace the history of the North-South dichotomy to the 1914 amalgamation should rethink their position.

Usman believes that the conquest and amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates and the emergence of the unitary Nigerian state gave the colonialists, nationalists who inherited the colonial state, and successive military and civilian governments the right to exercise control over all the resources of the country. In other words, natural resources of the nation do not belong solely to the people who live in the region where they are found but to the entire people of Nigeria. In addition, he argues that Nigerians who are clamoring for the convening of the Sovereign National Conference and those who formed regional movements aimed at enhancing greater control of resources derived from their regions or states do

not have any legitimate claim over the sole ownership of their land and its resources. His position delegitimizes, for instance, the Niger Deltans' agitation for increased control of the mineral resources found in their communities. Usman turns "scientific" in his analysis of the origin of the crude oil in the Niger Delta:

The geological process of the formation of the Niger Delta and of the crude oil and natural gas formed in some of its sedimentary formations, actually goes much further back than ten thousand years. But the reality, which those who are using the issue of the federal control of the petroleum resources found in all parts of Nigeria, including in the Niger Delta, to attack the basis of the corporate existence of Nigeria do not want to accept, is that these sediments with which and in which these petroleum deposits are found did not drop from the sky. These sediments are made up of marine deposits and also of soil containing vegetable and other organic materials, including human, and animal feces and remains, which were washed away from farmlands, pastures and forests all over Nigeria and outside and carried by the Niger to form its delta and all the minerals in it.<sup>23</sup>

He pushes further the implication for intergroup disharmony of the Niger Deltans' agitation for control of oil found in the region:

If other Nigerians are to resort to the narrow and parochial outlook of those claiming exclusive ownership of the lands of the Niger Delta and its mineral resources, against the rest of Nigeria, they could say that, what some people in the Niger Delta are claiming as exclusively their own, has been made, and is being of useful organic and inorganic material by the Niger and its tributaries, all over the 554,226 sq kms of Nigeria which they drain and this has gone on for hundreds of millions of years and is still going on.<sup>24</sup>

While the academic community and the general public tend to agree with Usman's observations, arguments, and conclusions concerning issues like the role of the IMF in the underdevelopment of the Nigerian economy, political repression, and the manipulation of religion, they tend to disagree with his treatment of the origin of Nigerian ethnic groups and the effects of inter- and intraethnic conflict on the corporate existence of the country and of the origin and ownership of mineral resources like crude oil. Peter Ekeh, a prominent political scientist, draws attention to the implication of Usman's thesis of the origin of Nigeria's crude oil:

I think the rest of the country should understand that the barely hidden goal behind this theory is to instigate conflict between the people of the Benue Valley and the Niger Delta. Bala Usman will not be able to show anywhere in the world where his theory has been tried out. He has no scientific basis for

his theory. His sole aim is to threaten the people of the Niger Delta and then sow much confusion in the body politic. . . . Either the people he speaks for will have their way or there will be chaos. In other words, this is an exercise in intimidation.<sup>25</sup>

Other academics, including Ben Naanen, Onoawarie Edevbie, and G. G. Darah, joined Ekeh in criticizing Usman's theory of the origin of the nation's crude oil.<sup>26</sup> They all believe that Usman was being used by northern aristocrats to defend the age-old and institutionalized notion that the northern part of the country is economically unviable and that more of the country's resources need to be spent in developing the North than in the places where the resources are found. They also feel that Usman would not be making this argument if he were from the Niger Delta.

## Conclusion

Usman combines multiple strands to develop his historiography especially the adoption of a radical approach grounded in the Marxist/dependency school. The works of Walter Rodney, Frantz Fanon, and Karl Marx inform his theories. Second, he has an abiding interest in historical revisions, mainly of northern Nigeria. Rather than emphasize ethnicities, he shifts the focus to social institutions and social classes. He thus takes a nonelitist approach to the generation and dissemination of ideas. His "friends" and audience are the Nigerian public, who he believes must be shown the ills of poor governance and leadership. Usman has invested much of his life in creating public knowledge with the hope that intellectual ideas can benefit the larger society.

As he is the only representative radical historian in our case studies, it is necessary to close this chapter with an estimation of what his brand of radicalism means for Nigerian society and historiography. To Usman, capitalism is an unjust system, one incapable of positively transforming the country. Without always providing supporting evidence, Usman's assumes that socialism does work, and that even beyond its economic gains, its adoption would mean the enhancement of the self-esteem of the poor and marginalized.

Usman's world exists in dialectic. He is always gloomy in his analysis of the conditions of existence—a state of oppression that Nigerians have to overcome. Yet he thinks there is a good future if decolonization can be attained, if the forces of Western domination can be crushed, and if the people can make sacrifices and rise up in revolt against their leaders. In a way that evokes the views of Amilcar Cabral, Usman does not want Africans to have an iota of respect for Western culture and urges them to see Christianity as a divisive religion. Full of polemical rhetoric, his public writings all emphasize

a triad of negatives: inequality (within Nigeria, and between Nigeria and the West), dependence (on the West), and underdevelopment (caused by the contacts with the West and colonial exploitation).

The African-centered pillars of his ideas are evident in his academic work, most notably his book on nineteenth-century Hausaland. He deconstructs the European-derived sources he uses, rejecting their notions of ethnic characterization, ethnic divisions, and intergroup relations. If Ajayi, Tamuno, and others see the nineteenth century as the foundational experience that shaped Nigeria's experience of modernity in the twentieth century, Usman seems to regard the prior era as laying the conditions of feudalism and backwardness. If Ajayi and others can easily run to the past to find values and customs, it is almost impossible for Usman to ground his own philosophy in this past; thus he is compelled to extend his Afrocentricity to accept foreign models drawn from the socialist East rather than from the capitalist West. The fire in Yusufu Bala Usman was to seek any means to liberate Nigeria from the grip of the West, and he does not regard the adoption of socialism as necessarily irreconcilable with the idea of Afrocentricity.

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## *Part Four*

### Reflections on History and the Nation-State

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## Nigeria in the World of African Historiography

It is deliberate that this volume has drawn most of its examples from those historians associated with the University of Ibadan. Their “rise and fall” tend to approximate the growth and decline of academic history in Nigeria. In the first of the two retrospective chapters to close this book, we bring out the core elements of this historiography, locating it within the context of writing about Africa in general and of the encounter with the West that “determines” the content, orientation, and tone of most of the work of historians examined in this volume. Whether in the case of Ajayi, who enthrones the relevance of tradition, or of Awe, who challenges the imposition of Western feminist theories on gender studies in Africa, we find the persistent theme of countering Western discourse in most of nationalist historiography.

The context for writing about Africa was set as far back as the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> As the century came to its close, Europeans began to ensure permanent contacts with Africa beyond the Mediterranean. A century later, the primary motivation behind the contacts had become the transatlantic slave trade. This trade was abolished in the nineteenth century, replaced by the trade in the continent’s raw materials. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, commercial relations gave way to direct territorial control by aggressive European powers as Africa was partitioned. New countries emerged, under colonial control for most of the first half of the twentieth century. The struggles for independence were the most intense expression of nationalism by Africans during the twentieth century, representing a practical and intellectual response to imperialism. All these events and developments affected the emergence of African historiography and historical thinking about Africa in the following interrelated ways:

1. The slave trade promoted and consolidated among Westerners a feeling of racial superiority to Africans. Treated as subhuman, Africans were presented as people without civilization or the capacity to think. Older stereotypes about Africans were reinforced, and new ones arose out of racism.

2. Racism promoted an arrogant desire to spread Western civilization to Africa, in a way that further “infantilized” Africans.
3. The Christian missionary enterprise was invigorated during the nineteenth century, leading to the spread of Christianity and Western education and to the rise of a new elite.
4. In trying to justify imperialism, a number of scholar-administrators created a “colonial library,” a body of works that combined the ideology of racism with the attitude of arrogance to present Africa in a most demeaning manner.
5. As an African-educated elite emerged, its members began to use their education in a nationalistic manner to confront the negative presentation of their continent and peoples. They revisited the past, to draw from history and traditions to create a self-assertive identity, and to blend with contemporary developments to foster the idea of progress. Africans have had to struggle to create their own authentic past, to present their traditions and cultures to a wider world, and to use their past to fashion identities and build hope in the face of both colonial domination and postcolonial failures.
6. Academic history writing about Africa emerged against the background of the “colonial library” and the need to respond to all the negative characterizations of Africa. Thus, without a doubt, nationalism, both of a cultural and an academic nature, instigated the rise of African historiography. The nationalism focused on a vigorous defense of Africa’s past as well as a commitment to the concept of the nation-state constructed along European lines, but with borrowing from indigenous institutions. African thinkers and scholars turned to the past to define African identity in a colonized and postcolonial world. They resented the slave trade, European domination, and imperialism, and they believed that the glories of the African past would disprove the negative images. Histories, tales, ceremonies, and religion, sometimes presented in idealistic ways, constitute the knowledge of counterdiscourse.

The emergence of African historiography is more or less the elaboration of the aforementioned points: negative conceptions about Africans and their past instigated a nationalistic response by historians to reconstruct that past in an “objective” manner, and to use the past to connect to present agendas of nation building. To start with the chronology of the negative misconceptions that acted as the foundation, Eurocentric ideas about Africa before the fifteenth century presented Africans as primitive, even sometimes in the exaggerated image of men with untamed beards and with heads located in their shoulders. While earlier generations of Europeans showed respect for Africans and played down color differences, a later generation would begin regarding Africans as inferior beings. Africans were generally

described as savages by a number of European Christians, many of whom also believed that they were cursed people, the so-called sons of Ham condemned by Noah.

When anatomy could no longer be made an issue, the emphasis changed to that of a grossly distorted past, for the entire duration of the slave trade era. Africans were presented as beasts, incapable of arts, sciences, and manufactures. They were presented as imitators rather than creators, primitives who played no role in history. The slave trade was justified, even by Christians who cited affirmative passages in the Bible. The slave trade era saw the saturation of negative opinions about Africans, who were presented as strange, uncivilized, and crude; the slave trade was even seen by some European writers as a blessing to Africans.<sup>2</sup>

During the eighteenth century, philosophers of the European Enlightenment added their voices to the negative presentation of Africans. "I am apt to suspect the negroes," wrote David Hume, "to be naturally inferior to the white. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences."<sup>3</sup> Georg F. W. Hegel, added his voice to the stereotype in a major lecture delivered in the 1830s, in which he accused blacks of a lack of self-control, development, and culture, concluding that the continent be ignored: "At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. . . . What we properly understand added by Africa is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's history."<sup>4</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the attempt to spread Christianity was presented as an inroad of civilization to Africa. Like their predecessors, many European missionaries believed that Africans were savages and regarded them patronizingly, as children deserving both of strong parents and government. Philosophers, European traders, and even scholars joined missionaries in the presentation of Africans as docile, incompetent, and inferior. Arguably, the most circulated essay on race during the nineteenth century was that by Joseph de Gobineau, a Frenchman, who advocated racial purity, an idea subsequently developed by others into the concept of a "master race."<sup>5</sup> Such racist ideas, as one would expect, saw little of value in Africans, who, together with other blacks, were placed at the lowest end of race classification. During the colonial period, many older ideas were repackaged. To European administrators and scholars of this period, imperialism brought hope to the primitives, potentially transforming them into modern people. Having failed to invent any civilization of their own, they could lay claim to no history. Their so-called history, before the coming of Europeans, was nothing but chaos, stagnation, ignorance, and savagery. In the "colonial

library,” Africans were referred to disparagingly as “natives”—defined as inferior people—or as “tribes,” meaning a rather primitive and disorganized people lacking enduring social and political institutions. To the colonial administrators, imperialism was presented as the “White Man’s Burden” to help the “natives,” rather than as an exploitative project.

After 1945, when academic history writing about Africa began to be accepted, skepticism about the study of Africa was expressed in some circles. How can people without writing have a past? The most notorious remark was made by H. R. Trevor-Roper, the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, who, like Hegel, dismissed Africa as “the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant quarters of the globe.”<sup>6</sup> One of the key challenges that historians of Africa faced was to assert the validity of oral traditions as sources of history and to show that Africa’s past was far more than the narration of the activities of Europeans in Africa.

## The Cultural Response

The response by Africans to challenge the Eurocentric image of their continent began during the nineteenth century, primarily as what we prefer to label the “cultural response,” a perception of self and of one’s past that called into question received ideas. This was both intellectual and practical, and it continued well into the twentieth century, subsequently feeding the intellectual agenda that defined African historiography more broadly. The cultural response was the first turning point in historical thinking about Africa. It set out to restore the dignity of Africans, and point to and celebrate the achievements of past Africans. If Europeans devalued the African past, culturalists would romanticize it.

A new generation of African elite emerged during and after the nineteenth century. Many were Christians, who accepted or were reconciled to the changes of the era and nurtured a vision of progress. Ideas about nationalism took deep roots, expressed in a love for Africa, in demands for reforms under European rule, and subsequently in anticolonial resistance. However, elitism and nationalism did not necessarily emerge together. In the first half of the nineteenth century, many members of the elite actually sought assimilation to European ways of life. Such a notable figure as Africanus Horton even called for the Westernization of Africa, while many others advocated greater European contacts.<sup>7</sup> The elite occupied important positions in church, school, commerce, and government, and many looked forward to even greater upward mobility.

The tide changed in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the elite began to experience marginalization, as Europeans believed that

Africans were incompetent to serve in leadership positions or undeserving of racial equality. Demands for empowerment, antiracist sentiments, and the promotion of the interests of Africans led to fresh thinking and ideas along nationalistic lines. Some elite members were dissatisfied with the European presence, as in the case of Reversible Johnson among the Yoruba or a number of assimilated Africans in Senegal. African missionaries began to criticize their white counterparts. Even the pro-European bishop Ajayi Crowther called for the use of African languages and customs in the promotion of Christianity. A greater sense of rebellion came in the movement to create African independent churches, which gained currency over a wider area after the 1880s.<sup>8</sup> Major intellectuals of this period included Mojola Agbebi, James Johnson, and Samuel Richard Attoh-Ahuma.

It was at a time of profound Africa cultural expression that the partition of Africa began its course. As new colonies were claimed, so too the grip of European powers on Africa was strengthened. All Africans, elites included, were now colonial subjects, treated as second-class citizens. The project of indigenous intellectuals became to revisit the past and evaluate the present. The response was eclectic: the elite would draw on elements from the past without necessarily rejecting all the changes foisted on them by the Western colonizers, and this attitude shaped the intellectual ideas espoused by Africans.

Among the leading scholars who illustrate the aforementioned issues, Edward Wilmot Blyden stands out as the most erudite. Blyden established the foundation of Africa's historical and cultural thought, developing themes that many thinkers and academics would reexamine during the twentieth century. Blyden formulated a theory of racial equality and achievement that completely denied Eurocentric claims of superiority. While not denying Europeans their own successes and achievements, he credited much to Africans and blacks in general, stressing in particular their contributions to religion, morality, and spirituality. Blyden showed that the past achievements of Africans were phenomenal—a theme that was later to dominate the attention of pioneering scholars—and that the future was certain to be great—a prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled.

Africans were different, asserted Blyden, and they must protect this difference. He urged African-Americans to return to Africa, to join in building a new society. Nothing, he held, had damaged the African race, in spite of the slave trade and colonization: "Love of race must be the central fire to heat all his energies and glow along all his activity. He must be animated by the earnest purpose and inspired by the great idea of a genuine race development."<sup>9</sup> So promising and so great was the future of Africa that Blyden concluded, "I would rather be a member of this race than a Greek in the time of Alexander, a Roman in the Augustan period, or an Anglo-Saxon in the nineteenth century."<sup>10</sup>

Associated with the concept of race is that of the “African personality,” that is, an identity peculiarly African that Blyden associated with Africans’ past history, love of nature, and connection to God. Rejecting any assimilation that would destroy this personality, he called for Africans to foreswear all attempts that would redefine their identity. In a book published in 1908, he extolled the virtues of African institutions and presented them for adoption to all Africans, including the educated; he dismissed European values as “naked,” assimilated products as “waste products” that will ultimately come to destruction, and any attempts to imitate Europeans in any form as akin to “broken cisterns that hold no water.”<sup>11</sup>

Blyden’s ideas were accepted by many African missionaries and elite converts to Christianity who were able to adopt a new religion without having to reject most of their culture and customs or countenance the notion of black inferiority. Pioneer historians such as Samuel Johnson and C. C. Rein-dorf advocated the unity of their people and the adoption of new ideas without necessarily destroying all of the old.<sup>12</sup> Blyden’s ideas were also favorably received by nationalists who demanded reforms under colonial rule or who later struggled for complete disengagement from Europe. Notable among those who drew and expanded on his ideas were Mensah Sarbah, Attoh-Ahuma, James Brew, and Casely Hayford, all of Ghana; and John Payne Jackson of Lagos.<sup>13</sup> All used the medium of a European language and fledgling newspapers and other outlets to enunciate their ideas on African history, future, progress, identity, race equality, nationalism, and self-assertion. In an influential book published in 1911, *Ethiopia Unbound*, Hayford returned to the theme of race emancipation, making a grandiose case for the intellect and personality of the African:

Before this time, however, it had been discovered that the black man was not necessarily the missing link between man and ape. It had even been granted that for intellectual endowments he had nothing to be ashamed of in an open competition with the Aryan or any other type. Here was a being anatomically perfect, adaptive and adaptable to any and every sphere of the struggle for life. Sociologically, he had succeeded in recording upon the pages of contemporary history a conception of family life unknown to Western ideas. Moreover, he was the scion of a spiritual sphere peculiar unto himself; for when Western Nations would have exhausted their energy in the vain struggle for the things which satisfy not, it was felt that it would be to these people to whom the world would turn for inspiration, seeing that in them only would be found those elements which make for pure altruism, the leaven of all human experience.<sup>14</sup>

There was much discussion about the identity of Africa and its peoples. In a colonized world, the elite maintained ambivalence: they wanted many indigenous institutions to survive, albeit in a modified manner. Yet, at the

same time, they wanted progress, defined as the introduction of Western ideas, institutions, and infrastructure. Writing about Africa ultimately involves this ambivalence, irrespective of ideological positions. There are those thinkers such as Henry Carr who wanted a rapid spread of Western civilization, or a number of elite scholars in Franco-phone Africa who advocated assimilation to French culture, but the leading opinion was usually close to that of Edward Blyden: the search for an appropriate blend of tradition with change.

If Blyden set the stage in the nineteenth century, Léopold Senghor, poet and first president of Senegal from 1960 to 1981, was his twentieth-century successor in connecting the past to contemporary identity and history, in a concept that became widely known as Négritude. Senghor regarded Africa as the homeland of a united race, with an outstanding heritage capable of transforming the present. The elements of Négritude, as defined by Senghor, included Africans' way of life, religion, compassion, humanity, and love of nature. Senghor saw in African family traditions a socialist philosophy.<sup>15</sup> While he studied Marxism, Senghor rejected the Leninist-Stalinist tradition, which, according to him, did not create room for spirituality and did not understand African institutions. To Senghor, Africans rely more on intuition than analysis: they are sensitive and emotional, focusing more on the reality of an object than on its appearance.<sup>16</sup> In the paraphrase by Robert July, the African is "sound, odour, rhythm, form and colour; he feels rather than sees, senses within his flesh, projects his own being into and thus knows it."<sup>17</sup> In creating a community characterized by great harmony, dialogue, and cooperation, Africans have a great deal to teach others, Senghor concluded. Like Blyden, he rejected any notion of racial inferiority. Europeans can give the world science, and Africans can offer spirituality and communalism, thereby creating an amalgam of a new and better human civilization where all people will live in harmony, "free from contradictions and from all forms of slavery," including alienation.<sup>18</sup>

The disciples of Négritude are many, including historians, artists, poets, essayists, and novelists. Unlike Senghor, his disciples were far more critical of Europeans, especially of imperialists, and were far more sympathetic to the exclusive celebration of African culture and history. Négritude became an expression of cultural nationalism, anticolonialism, and antiracism. Its impact was felt on the education system, as schools in many African countries indigenized their curricula to pay attention to African cultures and customs. It was also employed as an agency of insertion into world civilization, as Senghor argued that the West should learn about humanity and spirituality from Africans in order to build a "universal civilization." However, there are also critics who regard Négritude as an idealization, far from the reality that existed in Africa.

## The Academic Response

Academic history writing about Africa began during the twentieth century in multiple centers: in the United States, where black intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Leo Hansberry deployed African history to elaborate on black identity and the achievements of black people; in Europe, where African studies emerged as a discipline after World War II; and in Africa itself, where universities were founded after the 1940s. In each center, the creation of a respectable discipline called African history was a revolution; the themes and the methods to validate them were turning points in historical thinking.

Except for in the United States, where academic interest grew up much earlier, in particular among African-American intellectuals, developments elsewhere occurred after the war. In Europe, Africa was conceived as part of “overseas history,” and respect for it did not come until the postwar era.<sup>19</sup> Interest in Africa revolved around the histories of European expansion, colonial rule, and Europeans’ interactions with the so-called native populations. Specialists had to master the tools of interdisciplinarity, languages, and the methods of using nonconventional sources. The postwar decline of Europe and the crumbling of European empires in Africa forced a rethinking of the presentation of overseas history. Areas previously regarded as the periphery became new foci of knowledge and ideas. About the same time, social and economic history began to gain currency, with shifts in focus away from the nation-state to social groups, the working classes, and rural and urban developments. The writing of history witnessed an emancipation in focus, with particular recognition that non-European histories were both viable and valid. The study of African history developed rapidly in Europe, gaining respectability within a short span of fifteen years after World War II. As the discipline of history itself witnessed changes, in either focus or concepts, Africa became integrated into the mainstream, as in the case of world history, cultural theories, and postmodernism. Studies on imperialism, dependency theory, world-system analysis, revolution, social movements, and decolonization have all had to confront Africa, thereby creating conditions to sustain the interest in Africa in the Western academy.<sup>20</sup>

In Africa, conditions for political reforms were laid during the World War II, and the tide of nationalism was difficult to control. Former servicemen and students in institutions of higher education in Western countries preached egalitarian ideas, and a few already dreamed of replacing whites in various occupations and leadership roles. The colonial governments initiated a number of concessions, including the creation of the first set of universities in three British colonies. Africans intensified their campaigns for freedom and decolonization, partly using the written word and combative speeches as weapons. The educated elite had grown in number, and thousands more were added in subsequent years. Modern facilities in media,

communication, and transportation not only enhanced the ability to reach a large number of people, but ensured that nationalist ideas could energize the masses as well. A more combative and articulate leadership emerged, represented by such figures as Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Sékou Touré in Guinea, Léopold Senghor in Senegal, and Nnamdi Azikiwe in Nigeria. Leaders such as Nkrumah and Touré believed that modernization could be attained within a generation if Africans had power and colonialism was terminated. Nkrumah and Touré's commitment to change often meant that they had to question African traditions and culture in such aspects as gift-giving, crafts, chieftaincy titles, large families, and polygamy. The role of tradition in development became a vibrant academic subject. So, too, did it become the core of literary creativity, as poems, stories, and essays poured forth dealing with cultural encounters and suggesting how Africans could negotiate the acceptance and rejection of African culture. Authors such as Camera Laye, whose *L'Enfante Noir* pursued the theme of Négritude, and Chinua Achebe, whose novels (e.g., *Things Fall Apart*) explored ideas of culture conflicts and the necessity of cultural assertion by Africans, achieved global prominence.

The changes during this era represented great turning points in radical political thought; in this milieu, African academic history was also born. The confidence of the nationalists affected not just political emancipation but intellectual freedom as well. Notions of race equality no longer had to be defended, as had been the case in generations before, but were merely assumed. Indigenous African philosophies and cultures were being articulated as relevant to the modern age, as Senghor, Cheikh Anta Diop, and others claimed. In North Africa, Islam was offered as a way of life to combat the erosion caused by Western imperialism. Robert July observed major cultural shifts in West Africa, from the shift toward wearing indigenous African styles instead of English dress; in the spread of the philosophy of Négritude, represented by the writings of Senghor and Aimé Césaire; in the ideology of non-alignment of African countries in the Cold War; in pan-Africanist meetings to discuss African unity; and "in the post-war efforts to develop a new African art and literature [and history] which enunciated cultural independence from former colonial masters and gave meaning to the image of the new nations."<sup>21</sup>

Among the postwar changes was the renewal of attention to Africa's past by pioneer historians. There were two dominant interests. The first was to reconstruct the past, to show that Africa was not stagnant, as the "colonial library" claimed; that there were revolutionary changes and movements under way; and yet that continuity with the past was strong. In other words, not only did Africans have history, contrary to the opinions expressed by certain Europeans, but their history was recoverable and glorious. The second was to show that Africans understood the idea of a modern nation-state and could manage it. Historians, like politicians, would talk about history and

modernization concurrently. Theses, books, and essays would be devoted to both—the representation of the past as well as the articulation of freedom and development.

Most pioneer Africanists showed a commitment to the use of oral tradition. Originally maligned as a useless methodology, the use of oral sources soon acquired respect, with its own tools and techniques.<sup>22</sup> As a result, it was clearly demonstrated that almost all African societies had maintained a historical record, albeit in oral form, with their own ideas of time, space, and chronology. Pioneer Africanists were eager to demonstrate that Africans had a knowledge of history, in part to show the depth and breadth of African history.

African historians turned to the past primarily to unearth the knowledge of greatness and to use the evidence to build sentiments of pride and nationalism. The many errors and misconceptions about Africa by Europeans became points of attack for African historians. A discussion on origins became the search for heritage so that Africans would have confidence to govern themselves in the modern world.<sup>23</sup> Knowledge about African heroes was pursued with dedication, as evidence was published on great kings and queens. So also was the evidence on leadership, state formation, kingdoms, alliances, and other subjects that show clearly Africans' management capability long before Europeans set foot on the continent. Historians also struggled to decolonize the curricula, turning Africa into the center of study in schools. Like Blyden and Senghor, historians explored issues of identity. At the forefront of this identity research was Diop, who pointed to the creation of Egyptian civilization by blacks, the role of women in African history, and other aspects of complex indigenous African institutions.<sup>24</sup>

The combination of everything these pioneer historians accomplished can be described as “nationalist historiography”—that is, the use of history in the service of the nation, and a way of writing that makes history valuable in both defining the nation and shaping its future. This historiography is the representation of elite interest in the nation, a counterdiscourse for attacking the European misrepresentation of Africa and deliberately providing credible evidence of Africa's achievements and past glories in order to indicate possibilities for the future and combat racist views in the present. The pursuit of nationalist historiography implies promotion of interest in the liberal arts, and in particular the integration of history into the developmentalist agenda itself. Successful achievers of the past have been held up as models for contemporary leaders to emulate. Heroic historical figures may inspire the youth to seek greater success in the future. And the recent history of anticolonial struggles can show the worth of resistance and provide yet another model for civil society and radical leaders.

We want to further illuminate the development of nationalist historiography by focusing on one major example, an African attempt to control the

production of knowledge and to create a discourse that would combat Western domination and represent the true knowledge about Africa.

### Nationalist Historiography: The Ibadan School

In the 1960s the University of Ibadan was able to establish its History Department as the new center for the advocacy of the “African perspective of history” or the “African factor” in the unfolding of African history. Not that the orientation of the Ibadan historians differed substantially from that of their colleagues elsewhere, but a pioneer mind-set and the publication by Longman of the Ibadan History Series brought an important, if temporary, international recognition to the university. Originally, outsiders who wanted a descriptive category for the presentation of nationalist historiography labeled it the “Ibadan school of history.”

The school created a counterdiscourse, a rejoinder to what is commonly called the “Eurocentric perception of Africa.” This perception predated the twentieth century and also survived in the first half of the twentieth century with the creation of a “colonial library” on Africa. In Eurocentric thinking, not much was good about Africa, a “place of complete and anarchic savagery,” before European colonial rule.<sup>25</sup> African history was presented as static—the primeval African man was assumed to have only a limited capacity to transform his society and environment, and there was little or nothing to show for his uncreative talents until the Europeans appeared on the horizon.<sup>26</sup> Racist notions constructed Africans as inferiors and used the idea of European superiority to justify domination and colonial policies designed to generate changes in the direction of Westernization. In many Western institutions of higher learning, the study of Africa was not considered to be important, and historians were interested in the continent primarily as part of the understanding of European imperial expansion. No doubt, the transatlantic slave trade was one cause of Westerners’ negative stereotypes about Africans. Imperialism was yet another factor, as many European writers regarded the partition of Africa as a small price for a “barbaric people” to pay for receiving “civilization.” An influential opinion in the recycling of negative ideas about Africa was that expressed by the administrator in British Central Africa, Sir Harry Hamilton Johnston, who wrote a widely cited book that justified imperial control.<sup>27</sup> To him, Africans were like retarded children, and would require miscegenation through crossbreeding with another race before they could progress. Other variants of the colonial philosophy of trusteeship were developed, such as that of the “dual mandate” by Lord Lugard, which stated that British rule was for the benefit of both Britain and Africa—Britain would take resources and Africans would receive “civilization.”<sup>28</sup>

The concerns that drove African nationalist historiography were similar to those that instigated Edward Blyden and his successors to write: race pride and the defense of Africa, all in a nationalistic spirit. Thus, in a sense, the motivation for academic history (professional history writing) was not so different from that for nonacademic (that is, work by amateurs). However, the mode and the site were different. The academic mode was based in universities, comprised of a tiny elite empowered to speak to students and to a larger, broadly defined academic audience. The mode was an “objective” production of history, within the framework of how the Western academy defined research and university education.

Many have credited Kenneth O. Dike for pioneering the emergence of the Ibadan school, a successful example of nationalist historiography.<sup>29</sup> In 1954 Dike became the first Nigerian to head the History Department. He had to combat the “colonial library,” which attacked the ideas of the colonial period as one of profound ignorance about Africa. The university itself was created by the British in 1948, with the Department of History as one of the pioneer academic departments. As was to be expected, recruiting teachers was a problem. C. J. Potter, the founding head of the department, had a first degree in history, but with interests in theology and administration. Potter did not regard himself as a researcher or an author, and his contribution was limited to university administration.<sup>30</sup> There was also a problem of limited teaching resources, especially the lack of a good library.

The addition of K. O. Dike to the Ibadan faculty in 1950 was a breath of fresh air. He had received his training in the United Kingdom, where he formed his vision of an African perspective of history. He received his first degree at Durham University, and his master’s at Aberdeen University in Scotland. He completed his PhD in 1950 at King’s College, University of London, with a thesis on “Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885,” later published as a book in 1956 under the same title. While not based on oral traditions as many have assumed, but largely on archival materials, Dike’s research could be described as revolutionary for rejecting the logic of imperial history and emphasizing instead the African side of the interactions with Europeans during the nineteenth century. In his preface, Dike informed his readers that he would present an alternative history, by not dealing primarily with the external factor of the British interactions with his people, but only as their presence helped to understand events. “In West African history,” Dike concluded, “the concentration of students on external factors has tended to submerge the history of the indigenous peoples and to bestow undue prominence to the activities of the invaders.”<sup>31</sup>

Dike’s impact at Ibadan was not immediate. Between 1950 and 1952, he was a lone voice calling for changes. Other teachers recruited at the same time included Jean Copeland (later Jean Mellamby), whose interest was in European and American history, and Evelyn C. Martin, a specialist in imperial

history. Much power resided in the department heads, and the pioneer expatriate heads and the staff they recruited were not oriented toward the development of African history. They had no training in African history, and were not too keen on its development. Still under the guidance of the University of London, Ibadan could only sponsor what London would accept, at a time when many believed that African history was not a proper academic subject. Still under colonial rule, the new University College could not be encouraged to become the seat of opposition to British authorities. For Nigerians, Western education was intended to be an appendage of colonialism, with college students expected to show an appreciation for elitism and British values, and with their history teachers emphasizing the relevance of imperial history. The goal was for the students to understand not the history of Africa but that of Britain, Europe, Canada, and the Commonwealth. There was only one course devoted to Africa, titled "History of European Activities in Africa from the Middle of the 14th Century to the Present Day." As its title indicates, this course concerned the history of European expansion to Africa, which served to reinforce the myth that there was little or no African history before European contact. The leading texts for use by the general reader or by students also privileged the role of Europe, and of European figures in the development of Africa.<sup>32</sup> With its control by British faculty, the orientation at Ibadan was to imitate the University of London, with courses on political ideas and survey courses on European and English history.

From the point of view of the expatriate teachers, the overriding aim of the university was to supply a pool of labor, and they did not see how courses on Africa would lead to the production of better administrators and schoolteachers. The History Department was also expected to play a complementary role in the training of other students in the humanities and social sciences. When the syllabi of such other courses as literature and classics are examined in relation to that of history, the design to emphasize the importance of Europe is rather clear.<sup>33</sup> A few Nigerian contemporaries believed that the grip of the University of London prevented the radicalization of the curricula since they were unable to inject as much of a dose of Africa as they would have wanted.

Dike's impact began in 1952, when he relocated to the West African Institute for Social and Economic Research (WAISER), a research agency attached to the University of Ibadan. With greater access to resources and freedom to operate, he began to implement some of the changes that would outlive him. He began the process that led to the creation of the National Archives of Nigeria. He conducted a survey of available records in government and missionary hands, and wrote a report that formed the basis of the request for the creation of the archives.<sup>34</sup>

In 1954 he returned to the History Department as its head, now with the power to direct changes. Dike's fortunes improved, as he received

promotions, eventually becoming the university's first indigenous vice chancellor. He used this power to reshape the practice of the history profession, and to connect history as a discipline to the task of nation building and nationalism. In the mid-1950s, the British had fully accepted the need for Nigerianization—the transfer of power to Nigerians and the recruitment of competent Nigerians to new positions as well as those being vacated by the expatriates. New lecturers were recruited to the department, mainly those with an interest in African history, and with an orientation that also promoted nationalist historiography. Notable additions included H. F. C. Smith (later Abdullahi Smith), J. C. Anene; R. E. Bradbury, J. D. Omer-Cooper, C. W. Newbury, and V. W. Treadwell. All later made their marks on different aspects of African history. In 1953 Saburi Biobaku, with a PhD thesis on the Yoruba group of Egba obtained in the United Kingdom, joined the University of Ibadan as the first indigenous registrar, in which position he was an ally in the development of African studies.<sup>35</sup> Anene did his PhD on the early years of British rule and the stages in the conquest of Nigeria, A. B. Aderibigbe wrote on the British in Lagos during the nineteenth century, Omer-Cooper on the Mfecane in South Africa, J. F. A. Ajayi on Christian missions, Smith on northern Nigeria, and Allan Ryder and R. E. Bradbury on the Benin Kingdom.

The new books of the 1950s by Dike and Biobaku (and the others that followed in the 1960s) are not to be judged solely on their academic merits but must be seen for their symbolic significance as well. Africans could now do original research and write books and essays about their own people; they used the language of the academy, and the works were intended to be consumed by their colleagues all over the world. With varying degree of success, they stressed the relevance of oral sources. In their prefaces and thrusts, they offered an “African perspective” on the continent’s past: Africans no longer appeared as docile and passive agents of their own history, as many Europeans had presented them, but as the real agents, the heroes and architects of their destinies. At last, they were able to show that African history, as a discipline, was not only possible but viable.

A new generation of students benefited from the changes. Nationalist historiography changed the teaching curricula by way of the orientation of courses, and their content. Colonial education was accused of failing to adapt teaching to African needs, for stressing European history, making European expansion in Africa the core of historical knowledge, and turning European explorers and administrators into the heroes of African history. With Dike and others came a new way of presenting materials. If the Europeans had presented such men as Taubman Goldie as “the maker of Nigeria,” Dike would present him only as the “maker” of the Royal Niger Company, the company that he formed, and not of Nigeria. If Europeans had presented Jaja of Opobo as a Nigerian chief who stood in the way of free

trade, Dike and others would present him as a resistance hero, a patriot who did not want the British to cheat him in trade and deny him power. A new orthodoxy in teaching began to replace the old.

Changes were made to the course offerings and to the content of a number of courses. There were limitations in the early years, even as Dike and his colleagues pressed for more rapid changes. Books with which to teach the courses they had in mind did not yet exist, a situation that encouraged the use of theses, published and unpublished, as textbooks. Until the university freed itself from the control of London, the degree requirements did not entail students taking more than one course in African history. For an honors student, this was one out of ten courses. To surmount both obstacles, the scholars had to publish, organize seminars, and create an autonomous university. Within a decade, they had largely succeeded.

The doctoral dissertations of the Ibadan History Department formed the basis of the first major publications of the Ibadan school. Many of these were printed with minimal revision, but they were widely received as part of the new writings on Africa. The scholars also paid attention to local sources, notably oral traditions and the writings of amateur scholars. Before the emergence of the university, writings in Arabic, local languages, and English had become established.<sup>36</sup> Historians used the available sources in their writings—for example, Bradbury made use of Jacob Egharevba's works and Smith relied on documents in Arabic. They also encouraged the production of new source materials.

Although his own research and writings were to suffer because of time necessarily spent on administrative duties, Dike joined the other pioneers in establishing the infrastructure of intellectual production and academic elitism.<sup>37</sup> An academic society, the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN), was organized in 1955, one of the first on the continent, with Dike as its founding president.<sup>38</sup> In addition to its annual conferences, regular seminars were held for the exchange of ideas with graduate students, especially in the 1960s and beyond. The society attempted to involve schoolteachers and members of the public in its activities, but it was not very successful at building viable alliances with academics outside the university. In 1956 the HSN established the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, edited by Omer-Cooper. The journal acquired an instant reputation for disseminating works of original scholarship and new ideas. In the mid-1960s *Tarikh*, a journal to present general materials to students and teachers, was also added. In 1980 the society attained its peak with the publication of Obaro Ikime's *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, a synthesis of the history of Nigeria.<sup>39</sup>

In a nationalistic spirit, Dike and the pioneer scholars at Ibadan attempted to embark on a rescue mission to recover the African past through the establishment of what were called the Historical Research Schemes. As conceived, this collaborative effort would involve many disciplines and scholars; Nigeria

was to be broken into regions with each covered by a scheme, and with possible funding to be sought from the Nigerian federal and regional governments and international organizations. All available historical sources would be gathered, and the scholars were expected to write definitive accounts of the past of the region, fill existing gaps in knowledge, and contribute to the development of historical and national consciousness. An administrative groundwork was established, many scholars were co-opted, and the regional governments were approached for funding. Within the university, a separate center was established for research and documentation, the Institute of African Studies, which became the hub of cultural activities, especially the promotion of local artists and writers.

In the Western Region, the Yoruba Historical Research Scheme received support in 1955, with a five-year grant for “cultural research.” Under the leadership of S. O. Biobaku, it was expected to bring together archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and others to explore the origins of the Yoruba. A small team embarked on the collection of Yoruba oral sources. Another small group began pioneer archaeological excavations in Ile-Ife, the ancient city of the Yoruba. Both the oral sources and archaeological findings demonstrated the antiquity of Yoruba kingdoms as well as the great civilization and artistic talents of the Yoruba. A number of the members of the Yoruba Historical Research Scheme were later to distinguish themselves in their fields of study.

The Department of History was directly in charge of the three remaining historical schemes—those on Benin, Arochukwu, and northern Nigeria—with financial support from the federal government of Nigeria and grants from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund and the Carnegie Trust of America.<sup>40</sup> As with the Yoruba Scheme, the aim was to pool the resources of historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists to write a comprehensive account of the past in the areas under study. The efforts on Benin yielded historical production, written by Ryder and Bradbury, and archaeological results on Benin walls and art. In the case of the North, G. E. Connah carried out archaeological work in the Kanem-Borno area. A historian, Murray Last, used Arabic sources to write an account of the Sokoto Caliphate. The enormity of the data in the North and further financial support from the regional government led to the establishment of the Arewa House, a center for historical documentation, and the Sokoto History Bureau.

Dike initiated the Arochukwu project, with the aim of investigating the power and impact of the Aro, a trading network that profited from the manipulation of a religious oracle in eastern Nigeria. Owing to Dike’s administrative appointments and the Civil War from 1967 to 1970, the project suffered considerable delay, and its major results were not published until the 1980s. Archaeologists also worked in Arochukwu as well, and Thurstan Shaw distinguished himself

with his work on the Ugbo Ukwu, which shows the antiquity of the Igbo and their extensive trade connections with their neighbors.

Although the majority of the scholars in all these interdisciplinary projects saw themselves primarily as academics, there was a sense in which the leaders of the projects were connecting with the earlier views of cultural nationalists in obtaining government support. Grant applications and public defense of the projects show a tendency to affirm the concept of Négritude, to show how historical research would enhance the identity of the nation or group, and to show that scholars were part of the elite interested in the protection of the “tribe” within the modern country. Thus, Dike focused on his Igbo people and Biobaku on the Yoruba, both motivated to show the great accomplishments of their ethnic groups. Indeed, Biobaku’s project sought academic validation for the long-standing version of the Yoruba myth that traced the origin of this people to the Middle East and the Nile Valley, both places that were regarded by earlier cultural nationalists as sites of civilization and prestige. Later in 1971, when the Rivers State Research Scheme was established, part of the motivation was to present data to show that the peoples of the Niger Delta were different from their Igbo neighbors who had attempted from 1967 to 1970 to incorporate them into the failed Republic of Biafra. In the North, Abdullahi Smith spearheaded the use of history to serve regional interests. A number of history bureaus were later created in some northern states to collect documents and present local histories.

The Department of History at Ibadan also played a leading role in the academic revolution at the secondary school level. Not only did it produce the schoolteachers, it influenced the school curricula and generated core educational materials. The West African Examination Council started new syllabi in African history. Workshops were conducted for schoolteachers in West Africa, with the financial support of the Carnegie Foundation. The papers presented at these workshops became the first set of two textbooks in African history in the region: *A Thousand Years of West African History* and *Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*.<sup>41</sup> Later on, historians wrote four textbooks for the series *The Growth of African Civilization*, covering the entire continent.<sup>42</sup> The textbooks reflect the orientation of nationalist historiography, with the stress on the achievements of Africans and on their ability to understand their environments and initiate important changes. Rather than present Africans as members of “isolated tribes” as the “colonial library” did, the texts discussed a number of issues in a regional framework, using trade, war, and culture to link many African groups. In the 1980s advanced texts and comprehensive works of synthesis also appeared, most notably the two-volume books on West Africa edited by J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder.<sup>43</sup> UNESCO also published eight volumes of comprehensive African history, which, no doubt, represent the ultimate achievement of nationalist historiography.

The control of graduate education passed rather quickly to Dike and the first generation of University of Ibadan scholars. This was itself revolutionary, as the first generation was able to reproduce itself very quickly. The undergraduates of the 1950s became the graduate students and academics of the 1960s and beyond. In the early years of the university, the award of a general degree (rather than honors in individual subjects) took priority, since the primary aim was to produce labor for the civil service.<sup>44</sup> Beginning from 1952, an honors program allowed a student to focus on one discipline, while taking subsidiary courses in other disciplines. This enabled brilliant students with at least a second-class (upper-division) degree to develop the ambition to pursue graduate studies, with the encouragement of both the university and the regional and federal governments. Among those who benefited from this in the 1950s were C. C. Ifemesia, who specialized in eastern Nigeria, and T. N. Tamuno, the historian of colonial administration and a future vice chancellor of the university.

There was, however, political pressure to train graduate students locally. Dike and others believed that they themselves could provide the best training in the new orientation they were developing. In other words, to avoid the contamination of African students by Eurocentric opinions and imperialist history, it was considered better for them to stay at home. Locally generated research would also boost the school's image. There was also the added pressure to staff the new universities being created in the early 1960s.<sup>45</sup> They each required academics to function, and Ibadan could produce them cheaper and faster. At Ibadan itself, by the time Dike's term as head of the History Department ended in 1967, twenty of the alumni of the school had held teaching appointments in the department.<sup>46</sup>

The graduate students of Ibadan continued with the theme of the "African factor," or the agency of Africans in the making of history. They were expected to collect oral materials and written sources in order to fill major gaps in the literature, especially of Nigeria. Murray Last and A. E. Afigbo were the pioneers who obtained their PhDs in 1964. Last completed his thesis on the Sokoto Caliphate, the largest state in West Africa during the nineteenth century.<sup>47</sup> Last's study of the caliphate was intended to inspire modern-day nation builders with evidence of how Africans in the past used Islam to create change and a stable polity. A. E. Afigbo did his dissertation on "The Warrant Chief System in Eastern Nigeria," showing the need to understand indigenous institutions before colonial intrusion.<sup>48</sup> A year later, Obaro Ikime graduated with a PhD on intergroup relations in southern Nigeria, then began his entire career at his alma mater.<sup>49</sup> A configuration of themes emerged on Christianity, British rule, trade and politics, and Islam, all designed to reflect the genius of Africans.

Ibadan's successful graduate program fed a diaspora of scholars. The four new universities created in the early 1960s drew from Ibadan's existing faculty

or recruited their graduate students. H. F. C. Smith relocated to Zaria, and A. B. Aderibigbe moved to Lagos. The crisis that led to the Civil War in 1967 saw the migration to eastern Nigeria of J. C. Anene, A. E. Afigbo, C. C. Ifemelia, and K. O. Dike himself, with the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, as the new base for most of them.<sup>50</sup> Two expatriates left in the 1960s—Omer-Cooper to the University of Zambia as the first chair of its History Department, and Bertin Webster to Makerere University in Uganda, also as department chair. There was more movement within Nigeria itself. As many researchers focused on societies close to their universities, the dispersal boosted the development of local historiographies and ethnic histories.

The Ibadan History Series became the agency to influence the world of scholarship beyond Africa's shores. The idea originated in the 1950s, and the books began to appear in the 1960s, published by Longman.<sup>51</sup> The purpose of the Ibadan series and similar essays and books related to it was fourfold.

First, nationalist historiography was intended to show that Africans had history, to identify and praise many examples of great civilizations (e.g., the empires of Ghana, Mali, Songhai, and Zimbabwe), and to demonstrate that Africa's greatness predated the European contact. The Eurocentric opinion that Africa was "without writing and so without history," received one of the most vigorous attacks as African historians demonstrated that there was indeed evidence, in written form (as in the case of Arabic writings) but even more in oral traditions. While academic history may be said to share similar objectives and methods whatever its subject, a few historians even suggested that history writing about Africa might be different, if scholars were to draw from the way the people themselves interpret their history, especially in their comprehensive philosophy of life that does not compartmentalize knowledge as academics do.<sup>52</sup> The argument of nationalist historiography is that colonial rule and European contact distorted Africa's past as well as its history.<sup>53</sup>

To nationalist historiography, precolonial history was glorious and successful. The argument and the data demonstrate that most areas were already well developed before contacts with Europeans. The slave trade is blamed for initiating a long period of disaster in Africa.<sup>54</sup> The services of archaeologists came in handy, as they showed successful results of established civilizations at Nok, Ile-Ife, Benin, and Igbo-Ukwu, all in Nigeria. As a result, a number of scholars concluded that the past offers models to develop the present.

Second, nationalist historiography challenged the prevailing notion in the "colonial library" that the primary determinant of African history was the European presence in Africa. This view was challenged in two ways. The first was to present the history of Africa without the European impact—that is, in terms of pre-fifteenth-century histories of places, and in the explanation of the causes and nature of great changes in Africa (such as the Islamic

revolution of the nineteenth century). The other approach was to say that the European presence was an interlude in African history, a short phase in a long history. Even under colonial rule, Africans were said to have responded to the changes through a creative process of adaptation, not imitation.

Third, nationalist historiography adds the African dimension to a historical or cultural episode, without necessarily presenting it as a counterdiscourse. Thus, there are studies that may show that Africans think differently than each other and non-Africans on certain issues as colonialism, that their environments and societies are diverse, or that it is only Africans who can actually dominate certain aspects of knowledge, as in the case of indigenous African literatures and languages.<sup>55</sup>

Fourth, African historians wanted to demonstrate Africans' capability for nation building and leadership. Many European writers had expressed the opinion that Africans would mismanage their freedom and that their indigenous political systems were inferior. The historians had to rescue the African kings, queens, merchant princes and princesses, and warriors, if only to show that there were great men and women in Africa who had exercised leadership abilities. There is a tone in most of the work to affirm that pre-colonial institutions were well suited to the needs of the people before colonialism began to destroy them and that precolonial states were stable "with all the paraphernalia of a 'modern' state."<sup>56</sup> Omer-Cooper directly claimed that leaders such as Shaka the Zulu offer examples for modern leaders on how to transform their people: "The task of instilling a sense of political unity into people of different languages and cultures in a limited time, the task which faces every political leader in the newly independent countries, is not so difficult as pessimists tend to maintain."<sup>57</sup>

Only a few of the studies in the Ibadan History Series can be used here as illustrations. As a collective, the books and essays offer a respectable outline of Nigerian history from antiquity to the present. The first local thesis by Murray Last relates the Islamic revolution (the dan Fodio jihad) of the nineteenth century to preceding events, with details on the conditions that necessitated a revolution. He saw the new Islamic leaders in positive ways. In a related study, R. A. Adeleye examines how the British conquered the caliphate and imposed colonial rule, cleverly adapting the caliphate structure to the system of Indirect Rule.<sup>58</sup> In the South, among the Yoruba where the University of Ibadan is located, studies on the nineteenth-century wars and colonial rule were the most prominent. Ajayi and Robert Smith collaborated to write a book on the Ijaye War (1860–65) and the general features of the military and warfare. S. A. Akintoye wrote an excellent account of the last and longest conflict of the century, the Kiriji, which lasted from 1878 to 1893.<sup>59</sup> The aims of the books were similar: to show that the wars were not primitive or barbaric as the European writers and missionaries had portrayed them, but were motivated by genuine political reasons; that the wars

were not instigated by the slave trade, but were efforts at state formation; and that the wars had a revolutionary impact on demography and politics. In the studies on Islam and the Jihad, the Yoruba wars, and the Zulu in South Africa, the message was clear: Africans could initiate their own changes, and leaders did emerge at appropriate periods in history to make the necessary decisions. Dan Fodio and Shaka Zulu represent great leaders; if the former used Islam, the latter relied on African customs and a warrior culture to create far-reaching innovations in the military system and society.

The study of Indirect Rule dominated the field, but some scholars focused on groups in the South: Afigbo, on the Igbo; J. A. Atanda, on the Yoruba; P. Igbafe, on the Bini; and A. Asiwaju, on the groups in the southern Republic of Benin.<sup>60</sup> The studies are very much alike in their structure and arguments: they celebrate local leadership, especially of the kings such as the *Alaafin* and *Oba* of Benin. A few studies look at countries other than Nigeria.<sup>61</sup> J. C. Anene and T. N. Tamuno examined the evolution of British rule up until World War I.<sup>62</sup> Akinjide Osuntokun examined the war years, and Fred Omu concentrated on the media, especially in the context of nationalism.<sup>63</sup> Ajayi and E. A. Ayandele explored the spread and impact of Christianity, while T. G. Gbadamosi analyzed the spread of Islam among the Yoruba.<sup>64</sup> The historical study of indigenous African religions received only slight attention.

As the universities became fully established, research emanating from them also more and more reflected regionalism and their individual locations. In Zaria, studies treated the Hausa-Fulani states and other groups. E. J. Alagoa, based in the University of Port Harcourt, wrote about the Niger Delta and the Ijo. Historians' elaboration of precolonial state structures and state formation in these works gave prominence to the history of the pre-colonial period, and was usually positive in describing power relations and institutions of society. Great kings such as Idris Alooma of Kanem-Borno, Mansa Musa of Mali, and Jaja of Opobo became the celebrated heroes of Africa. The histories of big states and kingdoms were presented as monumental success stories, even if there was evidence of political absolutism or of much warfare, as in the case of the building and consolidation of the empires of Oyo and Dahomey. The merchant-prince Jaja of Opobo was forgiven his other lapses, which included rivalries with his neighbors and support for the British army against the Asante. Little was said of the dysfunctional elements in those states and of the shortcomings in leadership, even where the methods employed were authoritarian.

Abdullahi Smith, originally part of the Ibadan team before relocating to Zaria to join the History Department of Ahmadu Bello University, provided an alternative vision that led to two significant developments: what has been called the "Islamic legitimist" school and a vital Marxist tradition.<sup>65</sup> On the latter, it is not much different from what is characterized as the Dar

es Salaam school. Among the principal achievements of the emphasis on Marxism are the reinterpretation of the causes of the nineteenth-century Islamic revolutions, and a class analysis of contemporary Nigeria. On the former, the study of the Sokoto Caliphate received central attention, with some scholars calling for Nigeria to draw models and ideals from it to improve the society, instead of looking to the West.<sup>66</sup> Although presented in Zaria as “new and different” from the work of the scholars of Ibadan, both the Islamic and Marxist visions were definitely nationalistic in their agenda: the Islamists, like Négritudists, looked within African societies for ideas; the Marxists turned to a materialist interpretation to seek an end to the Western domination of Africa.

### Nationalist Historiography: A Critique

As the membership of the Ibadan school grew, and as conditions in Africa changed for the worse by the 1980s, it became clear that a narrow definition of nationalist historiography could not be sustained. Some even began to express self-doubt as to whether it was the right way to write history. Criticisms and responses to nationalist historiography have been varied, while an alternative model is yet to take root in many African university departments of history.

The first, and perhaps the most sustained, modification to curriculum has been to develop additional themes to complement the original fields for doctorate degrees. The broadening of research interests and agendas emphasized a shift toward the more contemporary period so that the work of historians could be useful to the nation and could demonstrate the worth of their knowledge to the management of the nation. This variant of nationalist historiography stresses the relevance of history to contemporary realities.

Second, some have called for a shift away from political history, which was and still is the dominant theme. E. A. Ayandele criticized the emphasis on political history, which enables rulers (kings and elites) to dominate historical reconstruction, at the expense of others.<sup>67</sup> Thus, members of the Ibadan school began to pay attention to social, labor, and economic history. In the 1980s new works were encouraged on modern Nigeria and international relations.

Third, many concerns have been raised about the issue of relevance, the extent to which a work of history should help to explain or solve contemporary problems. Why should historians be preoccupied with the past if their present societies have so many problems? Why should they not use the past to explain, and help resolve, the problems of the present? These and related questions were first posed in the 1970s as a critique of the Ibadan school. Indeed, members of the school engaged in self-critique, and some sought ways to address the needs of contemporary Africa. This awareness owed in part to the failure of politics, the rise of military regimes, and the Nigerian Civil War,

which revealed the fragility of the new independent state and the limitation of nationalist historiography in promoting the idea of the nation-state. Thus, Ajayi had to admit that "of all the branches of African Studies, African history is the most useless of all disciplines. Its failure to relate research to the practical problems of Africa is phenomenal."<sup>68</sup> Another critical aspect of the relevance question was to what extent the African people identified with the various essays and books being offered presumably on their behalf. To answer this would require evaluation of the type of history being written, the language of communication, and even accessibility to the African audience.

The views of A. E. Afigbo and Obaro Ikime, another distinguished member trained at Ibadan, are representative. Ikime's most important remarks, made in 1979, called for a linkage between historical studies and current issues, in demonstrating how some problems have their origins in either the colonial or the precolonial era.<sup>69</sup> As the historians searched for areas where they could be most useful, a few chose to focus on the historical explanation of ethnicity, on developing new courses on intergroup relations, and writing national histories so that Nigerian peoples could be united in a modern nation-state. Ikime defined relevance as the use of history in the service of the nation-state, a variant of nationalist historiography. In his own case, history was used to help integrate the country, to offer a sort of Nigerian perspective that would treat the peoples as united and promote those things that unite them, even at the expense of local histories.<sup>70</sup> Afigbo's comments are more polemical and ideological.<sup>71</sup> He sees theoretical shortcomings in much of the writings, and, like Ikime, he wants historians to use their writings to promote national unity.<sup>72</sup>

A fourth issue is that most of the books display an ambivalent attitude toward change. On the one hand, external contacts, notably Islam and colonial imposition, are presented as agencies of change, and the outcomes they effected can be described as revolutionary. Yet on the other hand, great damage is seen as having arisen from both. R. A. Adeleye concluded that Islam corrupted indigenous traditions, while at the same time noting its pervasive role and entrenchment in culture and society. The importance of British rule is granted, but then it is criticized for not doing enough, as all the studies on indirect rule are quick to point out. The colonial era was a major phase, yet historians do not want it to be a dividing line in African history. Dike complained that the African factor has been ignored, yet he opened his most important book with this claim: "The history of modern West Africa is largely the history of five centuries of trade with European nations." While rejecting Europe on the one hand, many of the writers wanted Africa to aspire to the models of Europe on the other. The main message was that Africa can be like Europe if given time; or that Africans had shown the capability of inventing and running systems that were either superior to or at par with those of Europe. Finally, the crisis of the African academy also has

impacted the growth and regeneration of nationalist historiography. Economic decline has devastated the production of new knowledge, as there is no money to fund new research or rehabilitate existing infrastructure.

A number of devastating criticisms of the Ibadan school have been put forth, partly in response to specific studies it has published, as well as in critique of nationalist historiography in general. A common criticism from the Left and radical scholars is that the school is basically conservative, that it looks at society from the perspective of elite privilege and fails to use scholarship to create the conditions for change. It is also taken to task for engaging in the mere collection of data about the past without providing a challenging ideological framework to study them, or at the minimum, a paradigm to make the data more meaningful. That the works often lack a theoretical perspective has been a common complaint, a view supported by such members of the school as E. A. Ayandele.<sup>73</sup>

To start with, the attribution “school” is dismissed as too misleading a label for a group of scholars with an incoherent philosophy, ideology, or mission. It can still be described as a school, primarily in the elaboration of an African perspective of history and the use of multiple sources. It is not autonomous as a school, meaning that it did not publish something entirely unique unto itself. Neither did it have a “philosopher-king: whose ideas shape the orientation of all the texts,” in spite of the towering stature of Dike and Ade Ajayi.<sup>74</sup> Even one Marxist work is represented in the Ibadan series, the study on Nigerian mine workers by Bill Freund.<sup>75</sup>

Still on the leftist charge of conservatism, its discussion of colonialism, in spite of the preponderance of the literature on this, is regarded as too generous to Europeans and too weak in capturing the negative changes caused by imperialism. Even Omer-Cooper, a member of the school, agreed with this comment and called for “new interpretations and analyses” to transcend what he regards as views that are “conservative and out of date.”<sup>76</sup>

Little different from the criticism of conservatism is that of elitism. What comes across in the works by members of the Ibadan school, concluded E. A. Ayandele, is an aristocratic view of history. For their focus on the powerful and the rich, historians are accused of representing the ruling class of the past. Where are the poor of history, the powerless, the exploited? The history of “everyday life,” social and cultural history broadly defined, is largely missing from nationalist historiography.<sup>77</sup> The aforementioned critique constitutes a challenge to nationalist historiography as a new generation of scholars writes about Africa. If nationalist historiography started on the premise of anticolonial nationalism and the need to defend Africa, it has to be transcended by the need to confront independent Africa and the obstacles to its development. Present obstacles to development and political stability will constitute the focal points for writing about Africa for the greater part of the next millennium.

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# 16

## Fragmented Nation and Fragmented Histories

In the preceding chapters, we have developed ideas around how historical information has served as a foundation for understanding the formation of Nigeria, which emerged under British colonial rule through the amalgamation of various regions, ethnicities, and religions. As the nation entered a series of political crises after independence, the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, including the Muslims of the North, the Yoruba, and the Igbo, as well as various minority groups all used their own versions of history to interpret the present and to justify their claims to power and resources. The divergent, partisan versions of history complicate the capacity of Nigeria to function in a unified way and to resolve the major crises it faces. As a result, the aspirations of nationalist historians have not been met.<sup>1</sup>

A series of calamities have befallen Nigeria since it obtained its independence in 1960. A bungled transfer of power from the British to emergent political leaders led from one crisis to another until the fall of the First Republic in January 1966. The army junta that took over lasted till June, overthrown by another group of officers. As northern officers displaced those from the South, interethnic tensions were exacerbated, leading to the killing of thousands of Igbo people in the North. A civil war ensued from 1967 to 1970, followed by a decade of military rule. The transfer of power to civilians in 1979 resulted in a short-lived Second Republic, aborted in 1983. Then came more long years of military rule, with coups and counter coups, broken promises to disengage and initiate democracy, and a free and fair election that produced a president in 1993 but that was annulled by the military. After threats of secession, another republic was inaugurated in 1999, officially called the Fourth Republic (the Third was aborted before it took off!). The democratic government in place now, in the wake of authoritarian regimes, has been unable to stem the tide of religious rivalries, to calm interethnic tensions, or to halt the rise of ethnic militias and religious fundamentalism.<sup>2</sup>

Why is memory an issue? Why does the government oppose the retelling of history? The answer is clear enough: there is no consensus on national history, just as there is no consensus on the idea of the nation. To talk about

the nation may be to revive the memory that could destroy the nation. A historical review may not necessarily lead to strategies to create a stronger Nigeria, to build a stable government that will take care of the basic needs of all the citizens, to initiate a developmentalist ideology, or to create a “relevant state.” Rather, a serious historical review promises to lead to, at worst, fragmentation or, at best, a federal system with a weakened center and greater autonomy for the component units. With a strong center gone, the autonomous units might again take up the idea of secession.

The historical problems at the center of Nigerian politics revolve around ethnicity, development, and survival as a unified country. History shapes discussions on the nature of ethnic pluralism, ethno-politics, the adoption of a federal system of government, political values, leadership, and personality. By “history,” we mean both the background of contemporary issues, as well as the way this background is perceived and interpreted by both political leaders and their followers. For example, in debating pros and cons of breaking up Nigeria into three or more countries, people often return to past histories. If Nigeria is to remain undivided, how should power be distributed? What are the rights of minority groups, especially those whose area produce the oil that generates the revenues for the country? The North comprises a majority Muslim population, while the South has more Christians. The religious divide, rooted in history, adds to the country’s problems. In controlling federal power, should Christians or Muslims hold the greatest stake? Present political discussions usually tend to highlight the power of history, the legacies of the colonial era, and the failures of past leaders. The contentious starting point is always the amalgamation of the country in 1914, the date that signifies both the birth of modern Nigeria and the beginning of its problems.

### “The Mistake of 1914”?

The historic decision to amalgamate the British protectorates of North and South on January 1, 1914, is regarded by many Nigerian politicians as a “mistake,” the beginning of travails to create a unified and developed nation-state.<sup>3</sup> The elegant phrase “the mistake of 1914,” credited to Sir Ahmadu Bello, the first Nigerian premier of the Northern Region, is meant to indicate that groups in the North and the South that the British brought together had nothing in common, and had thus far failed to “knit themselves into a composite unit.”<sup>4</sup> A belief and a strong perception that the groups had little or nothing in common in the past create problems for the present, making political management a great difficulty.

The very nature of the creation of Nigeria as a country continues to shape its present politics. If the official birth date of Nigeria is taken as January 1,

1914, then Nigerians themselves were not involved in the “pregnancy” and the “birth” of their nation. Many leaders keep saying that had it not been for the British, each ethnic group would be on its own, and therefore that their contemporary problems can be blamed on the British, who lumped them together with others. This is one of the numerous counterfactual arguments in history, the “if onlys” that are used to explain various failures, or mainly to open up a variety of alternative viewpoints.

Precolonial formations had become consolidated by the 1880s.<sup>5</sup> To the north were various Islamic groups, notably the Kanuri, Hausa, and Fulani. A motley crowd of states dominated the Middle Belt, many of which were uninfluenced by Islam. To the west were the various Yoruba kingdoms, notably the mighty Oyo Empire. East of the Yoruba kingdoms were the Edo, whose Benin Empire was also a regional power. The conquest of Nigeria by the British followed a fault line: each of the formations was separately conquered and administered for some time. The process of domination began from the south, with original inroads into the coastal towns of Lagos and the Niger Delta. Through treaties and wars, various areas were subjugated at different times, leading to the formation of the Colony of Lagos and a hinterland protectorate (comprising the area of western Nigeria), a Niger Delta protectorate (eastern Nigeria), and a northern protectorate. In 1898, the Selbourne Committee recommended that, for ease of governance, the protectorates in the south be unified. Thus emerged, in 1906, the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. A second south-north fault line was born that is still a problem today in terms of forging a united country and presenting a coherent national history.

Economic expediency moved the protectorates toward unification. The British administration needed to divert resources from the South, which collected more revenues by way of customs duties, to finance the colonial administration in the North. Even now, southerners continue to complain that the wealth of the South has been used to develop the North, all the more so as the nation’s oil, discovered in 1958, is in the southeast. The amalgamation of 1914 brought some changes in governance: the judiciary, railway system, and customs were unified; taxation was made uniform; the system of indirect rule was extended to the South; and a single weekly government *Gazette* was published for the entire country.

The amalgamation did not, however, lead to an integrated country. The British did not intend to create a “nation,” and “Nigerians” of the day were not seeking one either. There were not even enough educated Nigerians at the time to articulate the idea of the nation. Years later, when they began to talk, there was dissonance, as some opposed the amalgamation and others supported it. British officers themselves were duplicitous, promoting the amalgamation more as an administrative convenience than as a route to coherent nationhood. Officers in the northern region were insistent on

keeping their area apart from the rest of the country. The officers regarded educated southerners with contempt and promoted antisouthern sentiments as a strategy of political domination. The various views on amalgamation continue to be expressed in historical writings.

Nationalist politics started early in the South, with educated people calling for change, political participation, and later on, decolonization.<sup>6</sup> British officers and the northern political class did not take part in national politics, which they interpreted as an extension of the mistake of 1914. Southerners asked for the creation of legislative councils and called on Nigerians to become politically involved, while those in the North made no such demands. It was not until 1947 that northerners first joined the central legislative council because a new constitution (known as the Richards Constitution) called for the principle of regional representation. The significance of 1947 is that it was the first time the politicians from the North and South would meet. The amalgamation of 1914 took many years to bring together the representatives of both regions, and when they met, it was in an atmosphere of tension; they were not talking or negotiating to unite the divided regions.

The 1947 meeting opened permanent cracks in an “amalgamated Nigeria,” with two chief concerns expressed by the new northern politicians, issues that remain today. First, they feared that the aggressive southern politicians wanted to turn their advantages in education and political experience into an avenue to dominate the North. Accusations and counteraccusations of domination linger, both as memory and as contemporary interpretations and allegations. Which group, which “tribe,” wants to dominate, or is already dominating? Most tend to argue that they are being dominated. Events following 1947 would reveal how leaders from the North, to prevent possible domination by the South, rejected the political implications of the 1914 amalgamation. The second concern was about the concrete steps that could prevent domination. When southerners later demanded self-government in 1953, northerners refused to accept this decision. The northerners’ strategy, effective since the 1950s, has been to argue that the North is the biggest region and the most populated and should thereby be given more resources and power. Otherwise, they wanted the country broken in two. To retain the country as one thus remains a matter of great compromise, and to end the North-South dichotomy in Nigerian politics is a daunting task. Two forces have been at work: the memory of the amalgamation, and the daily reality of division. We examine both in turn.

### The “Tribe” in the Modern Nation

Politics in Nigeria have been affected by ethnicity and ethnic rivalries. History writing, too, has been affected by ethnicity. Without an understanding

of the politics of the “tribe,” it is impossible to put into context the partisan nature of historical representation. The force of the premodern exerts itself on the modern. The untidy creation of “Nigeria” ultimately led to a “malformed” state. Nigeria is erected on a layer of many existing indigenous states and “nations.” The colonial government did very little to bring the myriad nations together, and postcolonial regimes have followed suit. Because the three major precolonial formations that were consolidated in 1914 became transformed into the three principal regions in a federal system, precolonial formations were carried forward, and in the process, interethnic rivalries and conflicts have been perpetuated.<sup>7</sup> The Igbo came to dominate the East, the Yoruba the West, and the Hausa-Fulani the North. The visible hand of the past in the present is not just about the historical background of Nigeria, but the reality of history, of memory, in daily governance, interstate interactions, and the negotiations that individuals have to conduct with the state and its multiple agencies.

The politics of “tribalism” pursued by the British had yet another component: indirect rule. Indirect rule consolidated “tribalism,” promoting various identities within the country. Although the British presented it as a form of local government, indirect rule was premised on the perceived difficulty of reconciling the culture of the “superior” British with those of “inferior” Africans. Indirect rule would allow Nigerians to be governed by the very institutions they had created. In the implementation of indirect rule, the Sokoto Caliphate in the North, a theocracy created by jihad, was chosen as the model. Regarded as the very best and most sophisticated form of governance in the area, the Sokoto Caliphate became the model the British tried to extend to other parts of the country, even to the eastern region of the Igbo, among whom there had been no kings. Indirect rule unleashed parochialism at a subregional level, with people thinking more in terms of the locality than the nation.

With its assumptions of “tribalism,” the colonial government took steps to keep various groups in the country apart from one another. Some of the tendencies of those years have been retained until today. The control of land, especially its allocation to strangers, was one powerful tool. In colonial northern Nigeria, land was vested in the government and freeholding was prevented. This made it very hard for southerners who migrated north to gain access to land. “Strangers quarters” were created for southerners and Christians, and to this day, they live separately from indigenes and Muslims in many parts of the North. Thus, in cases when violence breaks out—and such hostilities have been all too common—it is easy to identify the strangers and destroy their properties and kill them. In the South, where traditional land tenure practices were retained and land commercialization began early on, there were also separate quarters for northerners, making integration within cities and regions very difficult to attain. In all cases where strangers

and citizens live apart, the construction of identities differs, and historical narratives of the same event also vary. Notions of “citizens” and “strangers” have ossified into ideas of separate identities, different histories. Where citizens talk about the spirit of accommodation, strangers point to that of victimization.

Regionalism, and the separatism that came with it, was slowly entrenched;<sup>8</sup> it even acquired the force of law, rationalized by traditions and myths. The North and South were kept apart as much as possible; the citizens living outside of their areas suffered discrimination; and uneven development between the regions fueled bitter politics. By the late 1930s, British officers and some Nigerians accepted the reality of the “tribe,” forgetting that they themselves had contributed to its “invention” in the preceding years. They now decided to reorganize the country on the basis of “natural divisions.” By “natural,” they were referring not to rivers, lakes, and mountain ranges but to constructed histories and traditions that divide people. Rather than “invent” a nation, they would manipulate the “divisions.” Thus, in 1939, the Southern Protectorate was broken into two provinces, Western and Eastern, paving the way for the creation of regional assemblies in 1946.

As the country moved toward independence from the 1940s onward, the British, in collaboration with Nigerian political leaders, began to take steps to consolidate tribal/regional politics. Controversies began to emerge over the constitution to administer the regions, as many advocated that autonomous powers be distributed among the three regions of East, West, and North. Any arrangement that appeared to be “unitarist” was rejected in preference for one that promoted regionalism and federalism. Three major regional political parties emerged, creating the basis of “one-party regions” that reinforced the divisions and promoted the politics of ethnic identities. These parties were the Action Group among the Yoruba in the West, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (later the National Council of Nigerian Citizens) in the East, and the Northern People’s Congress in the North.

At a contentious national conference in 1950, the North made very clear its demands to remain part of Nigeria: it would not give up any of its territory to other regions, as the West was asking for a kind of merger with some northern areas; its number of seats in the central House of Representatives must be 50 percent; and population had to be the main criterion for distribution of nationally collected revenues, which would mean diversion of the greater share of resources to its region. The East and West were not happy with some of these demands, and the belief that the North was trying to dominate them gained ground. By 1953 another conference had to be convened in London, after the North threatened secession. The adoption of a federal constitution followed in 1954, which formalized the separatist tendencies already under way. Federalism accepted the “tribal” basis of Nigeria and the uneven political and economic development of different regions.

As if to confirm the potent force of history, the problems that led to the adoption of federalism refused to disappear. If the country had arrived at this decision first because the North was alleging domination, it was now the turn of the South to make the same claim. The federation became dominated by the more populous North, and this imbalance of power continued to be a major source of friction. The North's population and size were more than all the South's combined; its representation in the House of Representatives, originally set at 50 percent, was increased to 52; and it controlled executive power.

As the previous history and experience of divisions had led to federalism, so the post-1954 arrangement created new conditions that would become the justification for the chaos, civil strife, and violent conflict of the 1960s. We are also still dealing with the historical consequences of the fact that the newly independent republic fell within five years of its inception. Prior to independence, there had been no agreement as to when the three regions should become self-governing, with the West and East opting for 1957 and the North for 1959. With its superior numbers, the North was able to elect the first (and only) prime minister, Tafawa Balewa, in 1957. It took a great effort of compromise for the three regions and parties to form a government on the eve of independence in 1960. The regions began to compete, as well as to articulate and defend their interests. Each had its judiciary, public service, marketing board, and other agencies. Recruitment to these agencies was based on citizenship of the region, and discrimination against "noncitizens" was regarded as legitimate. In seeking investments and recognition, each tried to establish independent consulates abroad. The country moved from colony to independent nation with all its baggage intact. Even the analysis of the problems has been so contentious that the British blame Nigerians, Nigerians blame the British, and each ethnic group blames the others. No one wants to take responsibility for, or admit to, its "sins." The historians were caught in the trap: we see Afigbo defending the Igbo, Atanda the Yoruba, and Usman the Hausa-Fulani.

### **The Relevance of the Past: Managing a "Troubled" Legacy**

There can be no doubt that elements of colonial history have negatively affected postcolonial and contemporary Nigerian politics and society. Historical foundations continue to influence and shape present and future politics, providing us with the data to analyze actual history and its ethnic interpretation. The problems of economic development and political management in particular have their roots in history. The recent past of the colonial period produced contested identities and an economy that is not working, thus damaging the country's present. The failure to overcome the

legacy of the colonial past exposes the contradictions in the postcolonial system, and the failure of its leadership. These contradictions generate at least four competing historical interpretations of the present realities.

The first history that is invoked, in response to any national question, is usually that of the “tribe.” As mentioned above, modern Nigeria is a tripod of three dominant “tribes”: Igbo in the East, Yoruba in the West, and Hausa-Fulani in the North. The formation of political parties reflected the regional divisions, and a pattern of “bloc voting,” whereby an ethnic group solidly votes for one party, shows the extent to which ethnicity influences public opinion. The country inherited a federal system with various anomalies, including the problems posed by the North’s large population; the failure to meet the demands of minority groups for autonomy and political representation; and the excessive power enjoyed by the regions at the expense of the government at the center.

The postcolonial state has been consumed by discussions and debates on the historical relevance of ethnicity, and by choices involving political centralization versus regionalism. Democracy has seemed to be a liability in dealing with the crises of history. Each ethnic group complains that it does not receive adequate resources from the federal government. All the leading politicians of ethnic groups want to hold important political offices, not for temporary duration, but for long periods. Thus, what is defined as politics usually means what individual politicians or ethnic groups obtain by way of power and resources. Political formations reveal and reflect the ethnicities shaped by histories. And as political actors compete, they and the historians who speak for them invoke past histories and present identities to support their causes.

In the second competing historical interpretation, which relates to the concept of the “tribe,” members of the political class tend to think and govern in terms of regionalism or statism, a divisive notion that defines citizenship strictly by place of birth. The argument has endured that ethnicity is the best basis on which to organize society, in spite of the objection by the Left that it should be class. Access to public goods and opportunities within a particular region or state is open only to the members of that region or state, and nonmembers living among them suffer discrimination. Nonmembers are expected to exist at the margins, occupying the space and land allotted to them. Federal institutions that are expected to be open to all are also victims of this regionalism, as one’s entry to them can be tied to the individual’s state of origin. Competition becomes vigorous, with outcomes more often determined not by merit or performance but by regionalism. The regional structure that emerged in the colonial era has spawned the “regional ideology” of contemporary politics. Ignoring strategic coordination and cost-saving measures, the regions have competed to establish economic projects. They all want to expand access to education, and so have

created many new schools, including universities. They have often pursued different foreign policy agendas—for example, with the West showing sympathy for the Soviet Union and for Israel, and the North befriending Islamic countries, notably Saudi Arabia.

A third historical legacy for the postcolonial nation-state is the enduring problem that the economic system of the past still dominates the present. Indeed, Nigeria is yet to change the entrenched economic structure established during the colonial era. The nature of needed changes has been a recurring historical discussion and source of debate: how can Nigeria reduce dependence on the West? Why does the country rely on a limited number of goods for export to sustain itself? Can there be a sustainable economy in an atmosphere of political instability? The answers always require a return to history in ways that either blame or exonerate the colonial period. Traditional economies began a process of modernization under colonial rule leading to greater integration into the world market. A new infrastructure emerged, notably the railway and roads, to move goods from various parts of the country to the ports. The network remains, linking parts of the country, ostensibly in order to service both domestic needs and international markets. A new economic structure emerged in the colonial period: the extraction of minerals and raw materials for export. Today, Nigeria can be described as both a “rentier state” and an “extractionist state.” The function of the state is simply to ensure that peasants and companies “extract” materials from the land and offshore (e.g., peanuts, oil, cocoa) and sell them abroad. The state collects revenues in the form of customs duties and taxes. To collect its revenues, it has to maintain order and security, using the army and police to ensure the continuity of extractive industries. Since the products are not internally consumed, Nigeria remains a peripheral outpost of the global capitalist system, with a political class whose role is to cooperate in the exploitation of the nation’s people and resources. Still in line with the colonial pattern, the country has to import both essentials and luxuries to satisfy the increasing demand for manufactured goods. The colonial economy did not support the promotion of manufacturing and industrialization, and the postcolonial economy has been less than vigorous in doing so since revenues from oil are easy to collect as “rents.”<sup>9</sup>

The historical narrative from below is that no one cares about the poor. In this view, the state is “irrelevant”—the colonial state did not concern itself with the welfare and progress of its citizens; and the postcolonial nation-state has only minimally pursued an agenda of development. The colonial state handed over the management of the economy to private firms, mainly external. The businesses and the government cared only about places that generated the resources they wanted and thus ignored the needs of the majority of the population, especially those in the rural areas. A history of state irresponsibility tends to radicalize civil society, pushing the people to

distrust politicians, to question the relevance of democracy as a system of government, and to turn to violence.

The fourth history that shapes the contemporary reality consists of the nature of external contacts. In Nigeria, there were two forces, each bearing its own distinctive stamp. The first and older influence is Islamic, from the Middle East and North Africa, via the Sahara. Long-established trans-Saharan trade brought goods, Muslim traders, and various aspects of Arabic civilization to the areas of what is now northern Nigeria. Over several hundred years from the eleventh century onward, Islamic and Arabic civilization spread to various parts of the North. Areas where Islam was accepted became Islamic, and their rulers established contacts within the region and with some of their counterparts in North Africa and the Mediterranean. During the nineteenth century, a jihad led by Uthman dan Fodio created the largest theocracy in Africa. The presentation of history in the North privileges Islam and contacts with the Islamic world.

The second influence is Western, from Europe, via the Atlantic Ocean. Western education and Christianity spread in the South from the mid-nineteenth century onward. By the colonial period, southerners dominated the modern intelligentsia. Whenever “progress” and “civilization” in Nigeria are defined in Western ways, southerners claim to be superior, even today. They have always insisted that the power of knowledge should translate to political and economic power. For southerners, history is about modernization and overcoming the obstacles to it.

Both influences solidify the divisions in the country. Northern political leaders, doubling as an Islamic intelligentsia, regard the Islamic North as superior in civilization to the “pagan” or “Christian” South. The British colonial administrators actually agreed with them, regarding the intellectual, political, and economic achievements of the Sokoto Caliphate as superior to those of the South. This belief created a regional imbalance in education and social development for many decades. With the British entrenched in colonial Nigeria, they believed that colonial administration in the North would be stable and the Islamic leaders more inclined to peace if the spread of Western influences were controlled. A so-called pact signed in the first decade of the twentieth century between northern emirs and the governor prevented the coming of Christian missionaries to the North to establish churches and Western schools. The missionaries, who were the initial agents of Western education, concentrated their attention in the South. Historical narratives from the South tend to focus on the West as an agency of change.

The imbalance in education is yet to be corrected and represents another historical fault line that is now an integral aspect of political competition. The statistics tell a small part of the story: initially all schools were located in the South. In 1912 the South had 150 primary schools and the North had 34; and while the South was demanding more grammar schools, the

first one in the North was established in 1922. By the eve of the country's independence, the gap had widened: the South had a university, more than 15,000 primary schools with almost three million pupils, and more than 180 grammar schools with about thirty thousand students. The North did not have a university; there were slightly over 2,000 primary schools with about two hundred thousand students and only 18 secondary schools with about four thousand students.

Since the colonial era, southerners continue to say that northerners have slowed down the country's progress. The way southerners have presented this argument has shifted from era to era. During the late colonial era, southerners argued that the British should transfer power to them because they were the most educationally advanced. They argued that northerners lacked a notion of modern development. Southerners turned their educational head start into a political argument, connecting the possession of Western knowledge and skills to a bid for control of modern politics. In 1950, when the North had produced only one person with a university degree, the southerners could point to hundreds and touted their so-called capacity to change the country for good within a short time. Northerners have always dismissed the argument, claiming that Islam had offered them a basis for intellectual development, that their literacy level was the highest in the country, and that they did not want the kind of Western-oriented development that southerners advocated.

In the early years of independence, the arguments were repeated. Northerners accused the South of dominating the civil service, police, and other modern sectors. As far as northerners were concerned, the inroads of southerners into their areas should be curtailed, while the North accelerated its development of Western education to produce its own educated citizens. As the British transferred federal power to northerners, southerners saw them as unfit to govern. The northern leaders were accused of lacking the skills and ideas to manage a modern nation in need of rapid economic development. The northern leaders fought back, accusing their southern counterparts of schemes to dominate them. Accusations and counteraccusations of domination have since become so rampant that practices for hiring and contracts are based on the idea of what is called "federal character," which means that all regions should be represented in the distribution of money and positions. To the South, "federal character" puts "tribalism" above "merit" and thus curtails the rise of southerners.

Since northerners have controlled federal power for the greater duration of the postindependence era, southerners tend to blame them for causing underdevelopment. Northerners always respond that economic and bureaucratic power resides in the South, due mainly to southerners' educational advantage. The military wing of the northern political class has depended on violence and military coups to acquire power. The "intellectual" wing of

the same class has argued for a three-tiered system of regional power and privilege: that the Igbo in the East should control the bureaucracy of power, the Yoruba in the West manage the economy, and northerners should dominate politics. One does not have to be a leftist to accept the reality that political power is central to economics and bureaucracy, and therefore that of the three elements identified, the control of politics is the most lucrative. Whoever controls federal politics allocates the oil license, the key means to wealth. According to the southerners, the northern politicians want southerners to use their educational skills to produce the oil, while they sell it to make the money. Thus, today the history of past progress in relation to the attainment of Western education continues to have an impact on the nature of political competition, the vigorous interregional conflicts over jobs and contracts, and the allocation of federal grants to various regions.

Corruption is the most dominant theme in contemporary historical narratives. Southerners regard northern politicians as inherently corrupt, and northerners say the same of southern pols. The issue comes down to who stole more money and what did they do with it. As each group accuses the other, a larger discussion has opened on the nature of Nigerian society itself and how the aspirations for wealth are ultimately connected with power. There can be no doubt that there is an “immoral” dimension to Nigerian politics, and to blame one ethnic group for the entire corruption is a distortion of the reality. North-versus-South competition focuses predictably on the control of federal power, which is key to being able to check the power of the regions, but more so to control the distribution of resources. The fight over resources is ongoing, as the principles governing them (based on region, derivation, needs, and population) shift from time to time. In arguing to get more for their area, regional politicians present a history of past neglect and cite how others have used power to cheat them of their share.

In 1966 the military staged the first coup, and they went on to control power for an extensive period. Even today, retired military generals are among those with the money to manipulate democratic politics. To justify their coups, they often turned to history. The first coup was based on the failure of democracy. The First Republic, a democratic arrangement, had opened serious arguments over the history and practices of regionalism. The republic’s failure to resolve the arguments contributed to the use of violence to topple it. The military, as an authoritarian machine, imposed a history of its own to bring in a new order: politicians were dismissed as bad, civilians were presented as corrupt, and political centralization was framed as an ideal. The military leaders’ version of history could only be imposed by force, as not many people trusted them.

In what follows, we will explore in brief the four major themes that dominate Nigeria’s contemporary political discourse and that influence much political activity and decision making.

## The Politics of the Jihad and Islam

The Jihad (1804–1917) has been the single most influential event in the politics of northern Nigeria in modern times. It is the central theme in the historical narrative, and the subtext of contemporary politics. Without understanding the Jihad, which created a large theocracy, one cannot analyze the nature of current events. The Sokoto Caliphate, which brought under one political umbrella various Hausa kingdoms (now emirates), including a number of non-Hausa ones in the Middle Belt as well as the Yoruba state of Ilorin farther south. Power became hierarchical and centralized, with emirs accepting the authority of the caliph based in Sokoto, the religious and political capital city. The caliph became both a spiritual and temporal leader of a large political unit covering the greater part of what we now call northern Nigeria. Although the caliphate had entered, by the turn of the twentieth century, a period of weakness, both morally and politically, the British empowered it, strengthening the power of the emirs, the prestige of Islam, and the ideology of a centralized state. The history of the caliphate has become embedded in modern politics—its interpretation and values are inscribed into contemporary modernity, and the ideas of dan Fodio are highly esteemed.<sup>10</sup> Some of the Jihad's influences are pervasive; even in the managing of modern economies, some people refer to the statements and ideas of nineteenth-century jihadists.

First, the basis of a united North, or a belief in the political concept of “One North” advocated by the northern political class, is based on the legacy of the Jihad. Islam has become not just a religion but also a political agency. Power becomes vested in Muslims, with non-Muslims not only excluded but also expected not to hold or contest power. Indirect Rule, mentioned above, consolidated the power of the Sokoto Caliphate, in ways far stronger than the British intended. The history of the Jihad is viewed by northerners as legitimizing their power, while delegitimizing the already powerless.

Second, the majority groups turned to Islam and the legacy of the Jihad to maintain political dominance over the minorities living among them. The North does not just comprise the two dominant ethnic groups of the Hausa and Fulani. However, the Jihad and Islam allowed them the opportunity not only to consolidate their identity but also to attempt to undermine the interests of the minorities in the North. As the Hausa-Fulani majority asserted their dominance, the minorities tried to rebel, leading to many cases of riots, violence, and complicated religious tensions. In the jihadist “ideology,” non-Muslims (called pagans) should not have power over Muslims. If they would not be converted, they could be exploited to pay tribute and more taxes. The Hausa-Fulani used Islam to make themselves the center of power, and their areas the core. They construe the non-Muslims and non-Hausa-Fulani as “inferiors.” Powerful kingdoms such as the Nupe and Igala, and

proud groups such as the Jukun and Tiv, were, over time, “peripheralized.” The jihadist agenda sanctioned the use of force to convert them. Many resisted the Jihad and used indigenous religion as a powerful repellent to Islam. Resistance to Islam is a major historical theme among the non-Hausa-Fulani, who narrate their experiences in order to affirm their ethnic solidarity, thereby creating and presenting their own heroes.

Third, during the colonial period, many of the northern minority groups turned to Christianity as an oppositional religion to Islam. Christianity has become powerful in the North, creating its own minority identity. It has spread slowly, but coexistence with Islam has been a problem to this day. Ethnic tensions may take the form of Christian-Muslim antagonism, with angry militants on both sides setting fire to their enemy’s houses of worship. The colonial government tried to limit the influence of the Christian missionaries, preventing them from reaching the “core North.” The missionaries chose the minority areas, and Christianity spread in the Middle Belt. Islamic leaders responded. Unlike during the nineteenth century, reliance on war and violence became difficult. Instead, an Islamic missionary enterprise was embarked on to convert “pagans” and Christians, while the use of Sharia enhanced the value of Islamic laws in many localities.<sup>11</sup> The power of Indirect Rule manifested itself fully, as the British, in collaboration with Islamic leaders, appointed the agents of the caliph as the political leaders of the minority groups. Part of the postindependence crisis lies in how the minorities have expelled political leaders who are Muslims.<sup>12</sup>

When the first major political party emerged in the North, it acquired its power and popularity on the basis of Islam and the caliphate. The Northern People’s Congress (NPC) was proud of its conservative credentials, while its agenda was clear: the preservation of the power and privileges of the *Masu Sarauta*, the group that had exercised political control since the Jihad.<sup>13</sup> The key members of the NPC did not intend to give voting rights to the poor so that they, the NPC, could remove traditional chiefs and emirs from power. Politics in the North has also been driven by efforts to address the fear that southerners will become dominant. Sir Ahmadu Bello, the *Sardauna* of Sokoto, emerged as the leading political figure. He was unapologetic about Islam and the Jihad, openly promoting the connection of both to modern politics. His argument was that if the British had not come to stop his ancestors, the Jihad would have spread over all the South, turning Nigeria into one huge Islamic caliphate.<sup>14</sup> Some even see the larger impact of Islam and Hausa culture in the region, with the thesis that the British prevented the emergence of the caliphate’s hegemonic power.<sup>15</sup> The *Sardauna* encouraged the spread of Sharia law, Islamic missionary activities and pilgrimages, and the establishment of mosques and Quranic schools. As far as he was concerned, the entire country should be Islamic. The desire to convert became the subject

of “partisan history,” the retelling of the past as episodes of Islam’s success over “paganism” and of its ongoing ambitions.

The *Sardauna* was not simply presenting the “devout” face of Islam for all to see. Rather, what he did was very much connected with politics—his goal was to use history and politics to create a “monolithic united entity” in the North. Bello himself had narrowly missed becoming the caliph, and his office of *Sardauna* was one of the most influential in the caliphate hierarchy. The caliphate was based on the view that Islam was the source of all power and legitimacy. A ruling class emerged, transferring powers from one generation to the next, based on the heritage of the Jihad, which the *Sardauna* attempted to extend into the modern era. The NPC carefully connected political awareness to Islamic propagation, manipulated religious institutions for political ends, and drew on the unifying elements of the Jihad to invent the idea of unity with the slogan “One North, One God.”<sup>16</sup> With all the forces it could muster, the NPC suppressed alternative parties, especially radical ones, even when their leaders were Muslims.<sup>17</sup> Once it developed a relationship between Islam and politics, the NPC was able to exclude from membership not just southerners but even the Christian minorities in the North. The past—based on Islam and a historical narrative of the Jihad—had become the most important tool. The *Sardauna* himself provided a conclusion to the historical connections between the present and the past, describing the new North as an extension of the old:

It [self-government] can be called the restoration of the pre-1900 era, modernised, polished, democratised, refined, but not out of recognition; reconstructed, but still within the same framework and on the same foundations; comprehensible by all and appreciated by all. The train, the car, the lorry, the aeroplane, the telephone, the hospital, the dispensary, the school, the college, the fertiliser, the hypodermic syringe have all transformed Othman dan Fodio’s world, but the basis is still there. The old loyalties, the old decencies, the old beliefs still hold the people of this varied Region together.<sup>18</sup>

The effective use of history for present politics survived the *Sardauna*, who was killed in the coup of 1966. He has become the modern hero of the North, with a university and scores of roads, teaching hospitals, and buildings named after him. He has become the political model that others aspire to emulate. The history of the Jihad and that of the *Sardauna* have been merged, in grandiose proportions as “official history,” to ensure that the North is held together as a solid political bloc. If the Jihad created a large area unified by Islam, the *Sardauna* used that history to consolidate the Hausa-Fulani’s political hegemony. His successors have turned to the power of history to maintain their dominance.<sup>19</sup> The interests of the political class are articulated by the media and political

parties.<sup>20</sup> The political use of Islam has generated problems of religious conflict, impacting how the histories of Islam and Christianity are presented in a competitive manner.<sup>21</sup> Sharia law, together with other aspects of Islam, has been turned into a political platform, all for the sake of retaining power. Partisan historians deliberately present the history of the North as the positive growth and impact of Islam, in order to contest the secularity of Nigeria and empower the political class. Thus far, the members of the northern political class have been hugely successful, a success that has turned “partisan history” into “official history.”

### The “Children of Oduduwa”: The Politics of Ethnicity

Just as the Hausa-Fulani use Islam, other groups turn to ethnic histories to solidify and manipulate their identities in the contemporary world. Ethnic history is a common example of “partisan history,” by means of which a people turns the past into a source of identity and political power. Elements of the past can be “invented” to meet the demands of present politics. The Yoruba epitomize the use of ethnicity and ethnic history in modern politics. Numbering over 20 million, they have inhabited the area of western Nigeria since ancient times. Astute political leaders among them “imagined” a “useful” Yoruba identity to build a base of power from which to negotiate with others. In the “classic” story and “format” of an ethnicity, the Yoruba share a common ancestry, language, and set of religious and social beliefs. They trace their history to a single male ancestor father, Oduduwa. In addition, they have a town of origin, Ile-Ife (now the city of the major Yoruba university), from where the Yoruba claim to have descended. It was from Ile-Ife that the “children” of Oduduwa spread to other parts of Yorubaland, establishing various dynasties and cities.<sup>22</sup>

The origin myth became the first basis in the creation of a modern political party. Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the first premier of the Western Region and the dominant hero of the Yoruba during the twentieth century, created the first mass party on the basis of the Oduduwa story.<sup>23</sup> He began by creating a cultural association, the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, which promoted the idea of Yoruba unity and the retention of many traditional practices. The original contribution of Awolowo was to tap into history to create a cultural project, and to immediately convert a political project into a political party. For the first time, memory and tradition converged to create an identity in the service of history. This project has been sustained to this very day. Awolowo was cleverly building on a strong foundation of Yoruba ethnicity. The idea of a “Yoruba nation” and “Yoruba consciousness” gradually became stronger from the mid-nineteenth century onward. When the Yoruba language acquired a written form during the nineteenth century, one of the

achievements was to use the language to build Yoruba nationalism. Literacy allowed the Oduduwa myth to spread.

Similarly, literacy enabled the second criteria of ethnicity to gain dominance: the use of a common language (with various dialects) to express the belief in common cultures. The legendary Oduduwa and the Yoruba language combined to create a powerful ethnic group. An emergent elite constructed the idea of a stronger Yoruba nation. Although various Yoruba groups and city-states engaged in prolonged wars with each other during the nineteenth century, the educated elite tried to disregard the warfare in advocating the building of an ethnic group. Through the use of a standard Yoruba language, the elite began a project of presenting cultures and institutions as “homogeneous”; thus, we can talk of Yoruba politics, economy, and cuisine, among other aspects. A homogeneous culture can become a powerful tool in fashioning an ethnicity.

An ethnic identity can translate into power, prestige, and opportunities. During the colonial era, the Western-educated elite moved into various formal sector economies; worked as agents of the church; and became professionals such as medical doctors, attorneys, surveyors, and others. The Western-educated elite pressured the government to create more schools, including a university. They worked hard in their churches and towns to start new elementary and grammar schools. The schools and their alumni became part of the idea of progress, the copying of some Western ideas and institutions. In calling for more reforms or demanding evidence of progress, the ethnic group was appropriating a developmentalist ideology. Then and now, the ethnic group measures success by those things that it has in greater excess than other groups. Universities, roads, and industries become part of the “tools” of competition in the country.

Those who have sought power beyond the local government level have had to rely on the concept of Yoruba unity. Doing so means an affirmation of ethnic history, presented in the many books, pamphlets, and newspaper essays on the subject. It also means the presentation of a history of ethnic relations, in ways that depict the Yoruba as a dominant group, as intellectual leaders and champions of modernization. History becomes a project in the service of politics.<sup>24</sup>

## The Politics of Genocide and War Trauma

The Igbo is the third ethnic group in order of dominance. Like the Yoruba and the Hausa-Fulani, their leaders manipulate ethnic history for political purposes. However, unlike their rivals, they have the memory of suffering to recall in the competitive political space. They suffered the most from the coup of 1966, and they initiated a secession that failed. In most wars, it is

the victors who write triumphalist accounts of war. In one of the anomalies of Nigeria, it is the Igbo, who lost the Civil War, who have written the most about it, turning the Biafran secession (a failed political move) into a history of victimization. This narrative of victimization is the leading political discourse in eastern Nigeria.

Ethnic tensions came first, and continue. Located in the East, the Igbo number more than other groups in the region. Their precolonial formation comprised hundreds of villages and towns, each autonomously governed.<sup>25</sup> Like other groups, the Igbo related to one another on the basis of trade, engaged in political interactions (including wars), formed secret societies and age-grade associations that drew members from various places, and subscribed to certain worldviews. The British imposed a system of indirect rule on the Igbo, investing chosen warrant chiefs with greater power than the Igbo associated with the title. Western education spread, and the Igbo became predominantly Christian. Although, unlike the Yoruba or Hausa-Fulani, the Igbo did not evolve large centralized kingdoms, ideas of pan-Igbo identity spread during the colonial era. Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe (popularly known as Zik) emerged among them as the towering political figure. Zik, who started with a pan-Africanist vision, was one of the earliest to espouse ideas of Nigerian nationalism in the 1940s, and he became an Igbo leader from the 1950s onward.<sup>26</sup> He contributed to the invention of a strong Igbo identity and nationalism, now the major theme of ethnic history.

Azikiwe's career reveals another lingering tension in Nigerian history—the development of nationalism and the idea of the nation as it was understood at different times between the South and North. Azikiwe was not the first “nationalist,” but he represented a watershed in the anticolonial development that started in Lagos and bypassed the North. By the first decade of the twentieth century, political associations had emerged in Lagos, and by the 1920s, a political party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party, had been formed. Articulate media organs were also created. A comparable political party would not be formed in the North until the 1940s, and the North's first newspaper, established in 1935, also came much later than those in the South. By the time Azikiwe emerged on the scene, there was a political tradition in place. He energized the nationalist movement, drawing more followers. However, he also began to assume the mantle of leadership for an emergent pan-Nigerian political party. When the rivalries of ethnicity set in, the Yoruba formed their own political party and the northerners never accepted Azikiwe. Subsequently, he had to consolidate his Igbo credentials.

The South has never been as politically powerful as the North in part because of a constant feud between the Igbo and the Yoruba. Herein lies one of the best cases of competing historical interpretations in the history of Nigeria. In both views, a pan-Nigerian nationalism was developing until the

1940s, when the Igbo-Yoruba rivalry caused a split. Each group blames the other for bringing about this rift. Awolowo and Azikiwe became the leaders of the opposing groups, and each undermined the other whenever it was expedient to do so. Indeed, they both ran in presidential elections, in ways that prevented the emergence of any southern solidarity.

In consolidating their ethnic identity, the Igbo emerged as a political force. Like their Yoruba counterparts, the Igbo leaders presented their group as a modernizing force for the country. This self-presentation as modernizers, still an ongoing project, has added to the interethnic crisis, the escalation of which has cost thousands of Igbo their lives. As the Igbo obtained jobs in the formal sector of the economy, notably in federal agencies such as the railway and post office, as well as by migrating to the North, resentments against them gradually built up. The statements by Igbo leaders, perceived as arrogant by northern leaders, fueled the crisis.

The Igbo historical narrative is driven by the Civil War and its aftermath. The prewar years are treated as a time of persecution, and the postwar years as a period of marginalization. The “theory” underpinning the presentation of history is clear and simple: the Igbo are great achievers, envied by other groups who do not want them to make additional progress. There is “messianism” in the story line: if other Nigerian groups would only cooperate with them, they have the skills and talents to develop the entire country, in all aspects, from the economic to the technological. The narrative continues by claiming that after the Civil War, the Igbo were abandoned by the federal government—the reconciliation and reconstruction that they were promised have not been fulfilled. A catalogue of woes is presented: deliberate “acts of vendetta,” a high rate of joblessness, financial losses, the failure to recover “abandoned houses” in some parts of the country, inadequate representation in the bureaucracy, and many others.<sup>27</sup>

## The Discourse of Marginalization

The three regional-cum-ethnic tripod legs by which Nigeria stands hide the existence of countless other groups and may even disguise the profound tensions in each main region. A hegemonic group, in claiming control of an area, tries to erase the existence of others or undermine their importance. In the North, non-Hausa-Fulani minorities who are also non-Muslims struggle to reject a pro-Islamic leadership. It may be assumed that if the majority ethnic groups did not develop regional nationalism and establish political dominance in their respective areas, that the minorities, too, would not have developed their particularistic identities. However, as the minorities complained about discrimination, limited opportunities, underdevelopment, cultural domination, and exclusion from power, they began to rewrite the

history of intergroup relations and to adopt strategies of separatism and violence. Even their music, stories, and oral traditions are counterhegemonic.<sup>28</sup>

The “ideologies” that shape the presentation of Nigerian history include those of marginalization—that a minority group is present only as a “foot-note” to the history of others, or as “victims” of politics. Established historical traditions have been revised to minimize the impact attributed to past wars of conquest and subordination to other groups. History can even be falsified in the attempt to attain power in contemporary politics. Any time that adjustments to boundaries are to be made or there are fresh demands for the creation of states, “new histories” are told that are tailored to justify requests and meet specific ends. The chair of a powerful government panel remarked in 1975: “We were to discover that in some areas, history was distorted by people who were widely recognized as belonging to the same linguistic stock or ethnic group to convince us that they are not ethnically the same in their bid to get a state of their own.”<sup>29</sup> The “distortion” of history is a widespread practice, where people are eager to make demands for autonomy and development. Ethnic histories may clash with national histories. Since ethnic leaders see the country more as an agglomeration of ethnic nationalities, they tend to place more emphasis on “particular histories” in defense of specific causes or in promotion of alternative counterdiscourses.

Minority ethnic groups have developed their own particular identities and variants of nationalism, constructed around the history of power struggles and the memory of marginalization. Today, minority groups look back into history and see “suffering” at the hands of the dominant groups. For example, those in the oil-producing region of the Niger Delta complain that their oil revenues go to develop other areas. Where they complain against the government and the powerful oil industry, they see persecution. Political narratives—as in the case of the Ogoni who have lost leaders, notably Ken Saro-Wiwa, to state execution—emphasize their “punishment” at the hands of a government controlled by the major ethnic groups. They also call for “reparations,” to compensate for past losses, environmental damages, and underdevelopment. The visions of “national identity” portrayed by the minority groups differ from those of the major groups—where the Igbo or Yoruba, for example, stress the need for national unity, the minorities see secession or autonomy as a possible way forward. In presenting their histories, the minorities are not shy to allege that they have been forced into a union where they exist marginally as “slaves.”

The minority groups saw “the handwriting on the wall” quite early. As the dominant groups and the political parties that represented them consolidated the politics of regionalism, the interests of minorities were marginalized. The minorities, too, turned to the power of ethnicity, using history and traditions to solidify their identities. As with the dominant groups, they too established their own political parties.<sup>30</sup> The minority leaders were astute

enough to realize that the dominant parties would exclude them from regional and federal power. Consequently, they refocused the nature of political debate on the creation of new states, in order to obtain political autonomy in their own limited sphere. As the number of political parties and interest groups mushroomed, the leading pioneers included the United Middle Belt Congress, the United National Independent Party, the Niger Delta Congress, the Benin-Delta People's Party, the Mid-West State Movement, the Bornu Youth Movement, and the Out-Edo-NCNC.

The histories of the parties and their leaders reveal a number of patterns, many of which remain current. To begin with, they believe it is futile to work within the dominant parties. Thus, the fact of having their own parties is expected to give them more power to bargain. Second, ambitious politicians among them gain more leverage as leaders in their own right rather than as marginalized members in the dominant parties. Third, rather than play the politics of incorporation, they pursue that of opposition. Therefore, each region has its “enemies from within,” usually a minority party opposed to the dominant one. Finally, they are strong defenders of federalism and state creation, based on the desire to become autonomous.

To put the preceding in a historical context, the intergroup struggles became intense in the 1950s, when the dominant regional parties attacked the minority ones and sought a weaker federation and more regional autonomy for themselves. The dominant parties got their way encoded in the federal constitution of 1954. The minorities complained of unfairness but were ignored. Their political leaders opted for a strategy of alliance with the dominant parties, in the hope that they would obtain rewards. As it turned out, they had to reach out to parties outside of their own regions, thereby complicating regional politics. In the Middle Belt, the Tiv took to violence to press home their points, initiating a strategy that remains effective to this day. As a prelude to what would later become a deluge, an inquiry was set up in 1956, known as the Willink Commission, to “enquire into the fears of the minorities and the means of allaying them.” The various memoranda submitted to the commission are valuable historical documents on the discourse of marginalization, trauma, and punishment. The commission agreed that minorities had suffered discrimination and had well-justified fears. However, it disagreed that there was a need to create new states for them, arguing instead that the resolution of the environmental crisis in the Niger Delta and a bill of rights to redress discrimination would solve the problems.

The conclusions of the Willink Commission did not withstand the force of history. The environmental crisis in the Delta continued. From an initial three regions, Nigeria subsequently became divided into thirty-six states, thus allowing the minorities some self-government. Two issues remain, both of which create distrust and ill feeling that fuel historical interpretations and revisions. One has been the distribution of power at the federal level, where

minority groups complain that they do not have enough representation. The history of Nigeria, as they narrate it, becomes a narrative of exclusion from federal power. Indeed, one common perspective argues that minorities benefit more from military regimes than from democratic ones, and a history of oppression under democracy can create opposition.<sup>31</sup> The other unresolved issue is the distribution of oil revenues. The country's extensive oil reserves are located among the minorities in the Niger Delta. They argue that the bulk of the revenues go elsewhere, because of government control by the dominant ethnic groups, and that their environments are damaged to serve the interest of the country. The contest over oil revenues provides a key context to understand contemporary conflicts, violence, and competing presentations of history.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

Competing histories, varying visions of national identity and ethnicity, and traumatic memories of war have all been crucial factors in the multiple uses of the past to shape contemporary politics, to justify violence and conflict, and to interpret the nature of intergroup relations. Precolonial nations are consolidated as "ethnicities" in modern Nigeria, providing a link between the past and the present that has produced intense political debates and conflicts, including a civil war that lasted three years. Nigerian politics is fiercely contested, and those who control power dominate resources and often try to see their beliefs, even when crude and unarticulated, as the basis to move society forward. Daily political realities are chaotic, and the presentation of histories reveals ambiguities, disharmony, and conflicts.<sup>33</sup>

Memory becomes the tool of modern politics, as members of the political class turn to histories and traditions to consolidate ethnic identities and mobilize the people on the basis of communal narratives, religions, and perceptions about others. Solid ethnic blocs define the boundaries of politics, creating in particular a strong North-South cleavage. Although there are several hundred ethnic groups in the country, only three have become politically dominant—the Yoruba, the Igbo, and the Hausa-Fulani. The emergence of these three is tied to the use of history, the manipulation of traditions, the crude use of violence when necessary, and threats to secede. The minorities, too, have creatively turned histories of marginalization into a powerful political counterdiscourse in contemporary Nigeria. Multiple histories and multiple identities reveal the absence of unity and harmony in the country. The contest for power is also about ethnic rivalries. Histories of discrimination instigate conflicts over resource allocation, minority rights, and power sharing. Histories of religious differences have been used to justify killings and other dehumanizing actions. Nigeria has already been

plunged into civil war once, and Nigerians can only hope the nation's unresolved problems will not lead to a recurrence in the future.

History plays multiple roles: as a past reality that shapes contemporary politics, as a tool to be manipulated by political actors to attain desired results, as an instrument to construct ideologies to institutionalize ideas about the Other and to generate consensus within an in group, and as a weapon to counter the positions of others by way of presenting alternative interpretations of events. History can be "used" or "misused" for political purposes, as we have seen in the successful cases of turning to the Oduduwa myth or to the Jihad to construct powerful political parties and ethnic constituencies. It is a clear demonstration of the power of history that no one can understand the Yoruba in modern Nigeria without understanding the place of the Oduduwa myth, and how that myth has been turned into a political force and reality.

The most partisan elements in Nigerian history relate to two interrelated elements: the use, on the one hand, of Islam and the caliphate to construct a power base in the North and, on the other hand, of the historical reconstructions by southerners that stress the political dominance of the North. The term "Kaduna Mafia" has been coined to describe the most powerful members of the northern political class. The so-called mafia is portrayed as ruthless, powerhungry, and driven by opportunistic calculations to steal money. The history of the evolution of this group is tied to Islam and the dominance of the NPC in northern politics.<sup>34</sup> The country is presented as "doomed" if the power of the North is not broken, terminated, and replaced by political managers drawn from the South.<sup>35</sup> In accusing the North, the chroniclers of history tend to ignore the fact that southerners do the same, manipulating ethnicity and presenting alternative histories of past governments and conflicts, all in order to justify claims to power and to absolve themselves of Nigeria's glaring failures.

Poverty generates its own anger, providing one motive for how contemporary narratives are presented. Nigerians wonder why their country is underdeveloped, in spite of its high number of educated people, abundant resources of oil, fertile land, minerals, and other products. From being regarded as on the verge of greatness in the 1970s, Nigeria fell to among the poorest by the late 1990s. Narratives point to corruption, mismanagement, and political instability. Political leaders are widely seen as the bane. Radical analysts underplay the domestic causes and instead stress external exploitation and the negative effects of globalization.

Nigeria's failure effectively to manage its postcolonial development has created pressures to negotiate its very survival as a nation-state. When civilians took over power in 1999 following a long period of military rule, the government set up the Oputa Panel to examine some past injustices by political leaders, cases of ethnic and religious violence, communal rivalries, and matters

relating to chaos and crisis. The members of the public believed for a while that the Oputa Panel would work like the South African Truth Commission. Although the Oputa Panel sat and took evidence, it was hard to bring former military officers to testify, much less to punish them. It was even harder to find a way to pay reparations to those who had suffered. With questions of punishment and restitution too difficult to resolve, the Oputa Panel failed to contribute significantly to “sanitizing” a polluted political environment.

History is very much tied to contemporary political culture, while the basis of politics is influenced by established traditions and conventions. The forces that yield the most compelling understanding of the structural formation of Nigeria are historical. The features of Nigerian politics are clear enough: profound economic crisis, political instability, and lack of national cohesion. The discourse on these contemporary features concerns history, both “partisan” and “objective.” A favorite pastime in Nigeria is to discuss the origins of the country’s problems, as analysts blame the British, ethnicity, or the coup-loving generals. One ethnic group accuses another of bringing about corruption and decline. Regime change at the federal and state level is endemic, because of coups and countercoups, complaints about efficiency, and the failure of democracy. Each change turns the country into a “talking shop” with discussions on how to review the past in order to move forward, such that policies on taxation, revenue allocation, economic planning, and other matters of state are unstable.

Scholars and politicians alike have not been able to use knowledge and make policies to solve Nigeria’s problems inherent in the history of its creation, or the complications of managing its pluralist society. Nigeria is no longer under military rule, but democracy is yet to solve the problems. On the contrary, democratic politics has resulted in the reopening of past wounds, bringing back memories of divisions. Communal and ethnic tensions are alive. To political leaders attempting to manage a fragile state, the past becomes dangerous, and the retelling of histories problematic, for contemporary politics. Rather than promoting history, the government now sees the past as an enemy of the present.

In closing this book, we want to return to the agenda that shapes it: the interrogation of nationalist historiography. In spite of the claims by nationalist historians of the relevance of Nigerian history to nation building, the demonstration of this fact lies in pointing to what the past means for the present. To be sure, this claim is important. The obvious contradiction is that the majority of their audience, especially the university students who are supposed to consume the products of historical research, now make a different kind of claim: they want a future where they can live well, if possible, as successful members of a middle class with resources to participate in an emerging consumer culture, and ultimately to transit from this class to become wealthy aristocrats.

Historians have not contributed sufficiently to discussions around science, technology, industrialization, and the environment, all of which seem to be the principal concerns of the nation and those who speak for the nation. The government wants development—so, too, do the historians. In the search for this development, the historians are the least needed. Nationalist historians argue that the understanding of the past is part of the process of building a nation and generating development. Perhaps, one way to better show this connection would be to focus on science and technology, both of which topics are not among the themes that have attracted historians' attention to the past. Indeed, no major Nigerian historian has made a contribution to our understanding of the history of science, and no major studies have been undertaken on how science has reshaped Nigerian society and culture. A history of science is yet to emerge in Nigeria.

History writing about Nigeria must take a marked departure from the nationalist historiography school and the body of work represented by the historians identified here. For this to happen, new conditions have to be created both from within Nigeria and from the outside. We offer three potential directions:

First, a new influx of scholars trained in new methods and new disciplines in the humanities and social sciences should make interventions capable of advancing the field. As other fields become involved, they may pose new questions and introduce new models and methods to interpret oral and archival data. In particular, it has become relevant to bring models from sociology, anthropology, and philosophy to the interpretation of Nigerian history. Perhaps a sensitivity to the interdisciplinary nature of scholarship can supply the capacity to redefine objects of study, and create alternative perspectives to understand the past other than the one-way linkage with nationalism.

Second, a new generation of scholars has to take over the management of professional associations, notably the Historical Society of Nigeria, journals, and the reorganization of the archives in a way that will make them more efficient, more adaptable to innovative technologies, and more closely connected to the larger academic world of scholarship. Such operational changes will have consequences on the generation of knowledge by way of reinvigorating what appears to be a slowing process, and drawing from a global marketplace of ideas.

Third, many new topics are emerging that will create points of departure. The intention here is not to supply a definitive list, but to hint at a few: science, technology, sexuality, the body, desire, children, domestic slavery, sport, leisure, urban history, and Nigeria's place in world history. As we struggle to rethink the idea of the Nigerian nation, so too must we engage in vigorous conversations on how to move writing on the past beyond the narrow paradigm of nationalist historiography.

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# Notes

## Preface

1. Toyin Falola, ed., *African Historiography: Essays in Honour of Jacob Ade Ajayi* (London: Longman, 1993); A. E. Ekoko and S. O. Agbi, eds., *Perspectives in History: Essays in Honour of Professor Obaro Ikime* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1992); Egbe Ifie, ed., *Papers in Honour of Tekena N. Tamuno* (Ibadan: Oputoru Books, 2002); Ifeoma Isiugo-Abanihe et al., eds., *Bolanle Awe: Portrait of an Academic and Activist* (Ibadan: WORDOC, 1999); G. O. Oguntomisin and S. Ademola Ajayi, eds., *Readings in Nigerian History and Culture: Essays in Memory of Professor J. A. Atanda* (Ibadan: Hope Publishers, 2002); Toyin Falola and Adam Paddock, eds., *Emergent Themes and Methods in African Studies: Essays in Honor of Adiele Eberechukwu Afigbo* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008); Adebayo Oyebade, ed., *The Transformation of Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Toyin Falola* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002); Adebayo Oyebade, ed., *The Foundations of Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Toyin Falola* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press 2003); Akinwumi Ogundiran, ed., *Precolonial Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Toyin Falola* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005); and Toyin Falola, ed., *Modern Nigeria: A Tribute to G. O. Olusanya* (Lagos: Modelor, 1990).
2. See, for example, Oguntomisin and Ajayi, *Readings in Nigerian History and Culture*; and Isiugo-Abanihe et al., *Bolanle Awe*.
3. See Ekoko and Agbi, *Perspectives in History and Culture*; and Isiugo-Abanihe et al., *Bolanle Awe*.
4. Ifie, *Papers in Honour of Tekena N. Tamuno*; and Falola, *African Historiography*.
5. Toyin Falola, *Yoruba Gurus: Indigenous Production of Knowledge in Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999); and Robin Law, “Early Yoruba Historiography,” *History in Africa* 3 (1976): 23–38.
6. See, among others, Simon Heap, “Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan: An Introduction for Users and a Summary of Holdings,” *History in Africa* 18 (1991): 159–72.

## Chapter 1

1. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).
2. See, for instance, P. A. Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, vol. 1 (London: Frank Cass, 1969).
3. See, for instance, Amadou Hampata Ba, “Out of the Land of Shadows,” *UNESCO Courier* (May 1950): 22–25; and Jacob R. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin* (Lagos: Church Missionary Society Bookshop, 1936).

4. John E. Lavers, “Islam in Bornu Caliphate,” *Odu*, n.s., 5 (1971): 27–53; and John E. Lavers, *Kanem and Pilgrimage Tradition in West Africa* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1972).
5. A. D. H. Bivar and M. Hiskett, “The Arabic Literature of Nigeria to 1801: A Provisional Account,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London) 25 (1962): 104–47.
6. Abdullahi Smith, “The Early States of the Central Sudan,” in *History of West Africa*, 2nd ed., ed. J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (London: Longman, 1976), 1:152–95; Abdullahi Smith, “Some Considerations Relating to the Formation of States of Hausaland,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 5, no. 3 (December 1970): 329–46; John E. Lavers, “Kanem and Bornu to 1808,” in *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, ed. Obaro Ikime (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1980), 187–209; and Yusufu Bala Usman, *The Transformation of Katsina, 1400–1883: The Emergence and Overthrow of the Sarauta System and the Establishment of the Emirate* (Zaria, Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1981).
7. Dierk Lange, *A Sudanic Chronicle: The Bornu Expedition of Idris Alauma (1564–1576)* (Stuttgart: Franz Seiner Verlag Wiesbadam, 1987).
8. For examples, see Mervin Hiskett, *A History of Hausa Islamic Verse* (London: Rewood Burn Ltd., 1975).
9. *Ta’rikh Arbaba hadha al-Bilad al-Musamma Kanu*, translated as the *Kano Chronicle* in H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs* (London: Frank Cass, 1967), 3:104–5.
10. Uthman dan Fodio, *Kitab al-Farq*, ed. and trans. Mervin Hiskett, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 23, no. 3 (1960): 558–79.
11. Muhammad Bello, *Infaq al-Maysur fi Tarikh Bilad al-Tukrur*, ed. C. E. J. Whiting (London: Luzac and Co., 1951).
12. Ibid., 2.
13. Bello, quoted in Thomas Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives*, 256–58.
14. Hugh Clapperton, *Hugh Clapperton into the Interior of Africa: Records of the Second Expedition, 1825–1827*, ed. Jamie Bruce Lockhart and Paul E. Lovejoy (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
15. Richard Lander, *The Niger Journal of Richard and John Lander*, ed. and abridged with an introduction by Robin Hallett (New York: Praeger, 1965).
16. LaRay Denzer, “Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 27, no. 1 (1994): 1–39.
17. Clapperton, *Hugh Clapperton into the Interior of Africa*.
18. J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841–1891: The Making of a New Elite* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), chapter 1.
19. A. F. C. Ryder, “Missionary Activities in the Kingdom of Warri to the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 1, no. 2 (1960): 1–25.
20. E. A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies* (London: Frank Cass, 1979), 138–45.
21. Felix K. Ekechi, *Tradition and Transformation in Eastern Nigeria: A Sociopolitical History of Owerri and Its Hinterland* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1989), 60.
22. See, for example, “Bishop Crowther’s Report of the Overland Journey from Lokoja to Bida, on the River Niger and thence to Lagos, on the Sea from November 10th, 1871 to February 8th, 1872,” <http://anglicanhistory.org/africa/crowther/niger1872.html>.

23. J. F. Ade Ajayi, "Henry Venn and the Policy of Development," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 1, no. 4 (1960): 331–41.
24. The National Archives Ibadan have the documents of the following missionary sects: Church Missionary Society, Niger Mission, 1861–1956; Church Missionary Society, Yoruba Mission; Roman Catholic Mission Paper, Benin Diocese; and Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Paper.
25. W. H. Clarke, *Travels and Explorations in Yorubaland, 1854–1858*, ed. J. A. Atanda (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1972); Wale Oyemakinde, *An Introduction to Church Missionary Society Manuscripts* (Ibadan: Sunlight Syndicate Ventures, 2001); and Anne Hinderer, *Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country: Memorials of Anne Hinderer, Wife of the Rev. David Hinderer, C.M.S. Missionary in Western Africa Gathered from Her Journals and Letters* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1877).
26. Felix K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857–1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1972); E. A. Ayandele, *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914: A Political and Social Analysis* (New York: Humanities Press, 1967); and Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*.
27. J. F. Ade Ajayi and Robert Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).
28. See J. F. Ade Ajayi, "How Yoruba Was Reduced to Writing," *Odu* (March 1961): 15–24.
29. Increase H. E. Coker, *Landmarks of the Nigerian Press: An Outline of the Origins and Development of the Newspaper Press in Nigeria, 1859 to 1965* (Lagos: Daily Times Press, 1968); and Fred I. Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880–1937* (London: Longman, 1978).
30. George W. Reid, "Missionaries and West African Nationalism," *Phylon* 39 (3rd Quarter 1978): 225–33.
31. Yusufu Bala Usman, *Beyond Fairy Tales: Selected Historical Writings of Dr. Yusufu Bala Usman* (Zaria, Nigeria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 2006), 10–12.
32. I. S. Maclarens, "Explorers' and Travelers' Narratives: A Peregrination through Different Editions," *History in Africa* 30 (2003): 213–22; and Kathryn Barrett-Gaines, "Travel Writing, Experiences, and Silences: What Is Left Out of European Travelers' Accounts: The Case of Richard D. Mohun," *History in Africa* 24 (1997): 53–70.
33. E. A. Ayandele, "Ijebuland, 1800–1891: Era of Splendid Isolation," in *Studies in Yoruba History and Culture: Essays in Honor of Professor S. O. Biobaku*, ed. G. O. Olu-sanya (Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1983), 88–105.
34. Falola, *Yoruba Gurus*, 8–12.
35. E. A. Ayandele has done a full biographical work on Johnson. See E. A. Ayandele, *Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African Nationalism, 1836–1917* (London: Frank Cass, 1970).
36. Robin Law, "A Pioneer of Yoruba Studies: Moses Lijadu (1862–1926)," in Olu-sanya, *Studies in Yoruba History and Culture*, 110–11.
37. Ibid., 110.
38. Falola, *Yoruba Gurus*.
39. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, viii.
40. Akiga Sai, *Akiga's Story: The Tiv Tribe as Seen by One of Its Members*, trans. and annotated by Rupert East (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939).

41. Law, “Early Yoruba Historiography,” *History in Africa* 3 (1976): 69.
42. One of the most famous such individuals of the era was Wilmot Blyden, based in Liberia but with contacts in Nigeria; see Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).
43. An impressive discussion of African converts in Lagos and Abeokuta can be found in Jean H. Kopytoff, *Preface to Modern Nigeria: The “Sierra Leonians” in Yoruba, 1830–1890* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965).
44. G. I. Jones, “Social Anthropology in Nigeria during the Colonial Period,” *Africa: Journal of International African Institute* 44, no. 3 (1974): 280–89.
45. One of Frobenius’s influential works is *African Genesis* (New York: B. Blom, 1932).
46. See the review of Leith-Ross’s book in *Africa: Journal of International African Institute* 12, no. 2 (April 1939): 253–55. See also her autobiography: Sylvia Leith-Ross, *Stepping-Stones: Memoirs of Colonial Nigeria, 1907–1960* (London: Peter Owen, 1983).
47. A. D. Roberts, “The Earlier Historiography of Colonial Africa,” *History in Africa* 5 (1978): 153–67.
48. A. E. Afigbo, “Colonial Historiography,” in Falola, *African Historiography*, 49.
49. Jones, “Social Anthropology in Nigeria,” 286.
50. Ibid.
51. For a fuller discussion of the numerous conferences convened during the late 1950s and early 1960s, see the various articles in the special issue of the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (Silver Jubilee Edition, 1980).
52. Lidwien Kapteijns, “African Historiography Written by Africans, 1955–1973: The Nigerian Case” (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 1977), 35.
53. See “History of History Department, University of Ibadan,” <http://www.ui.edu.ng/?q=node/557>.
54. A complete list of Nigerian universities and dates of establishment can be found at: <http://www.nuc.edu.ng/pages/universities.asp>.
55. “General Introduction: History of Archives Administration in Nigeria,” <http://www.nigerianarchives.gov.ng/>.
56. See the Web site of the Historical Society of Nigeria at <http://historicalsocientynigeria.org/>.
57. Kabiru Sulaiman Chafe, *State and Economy in Sokoto Caliphate: Policies and Practices in the Metropolitan Districts, 1804–1903* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999); Yusufu Bala Usman, ed., *Studies in the History of the Sokoto Caliphate: The Sokoto Seminar Papers* (Zaria: Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University for the Sokoto State History Bureau, 1979); R. A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804–1906: The Sokoto Caliphate and Its Enemies* (New York: Humanities Press, 1971); D. M. Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (New York: Humanities Press, 1967); Joseph P. Smaldone, *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Paul E. Lovejoy, *Slavery, Commerce, and Production in the Sokoto Caliphate of West Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005); and Ibraheem Sulaiman, *The Islamic State and the Challenge of History: Ideals, Policies, and Operation of the Sokoto Caliphate* (London: Mansell Publishers, 1987).
58. Work in this genre includes Bolanle Awe, “The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power, 1851–1893” (PhD thesis, Oxford University, 1964); Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba*

*Warfare in the Nineteenth Century*; and Toyin Falola and G. O. Oguntomisin, *Yoruba Warlords of the Nineteenth Century* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001).

59. Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

60. Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c. 1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), vii.

61. K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956); Obaro Ikime, *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta: The Rise and Fall of Nana Olomu, Last Governor of the Benin River* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1968); and E. J. Alagoa, *Jaja of Opobo: The Slave Who Became a King* (Longman: London, 1970).

62. J. A. Atanda, *The New Oyo Empire: Indirect Rule and Change in Western Nigeria, 1894–1934* (London: Longman, 1973); A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891–1929* (London: Longman 1972); and P. A. Igbafe, *Benin under British Administration, 1897–1938: The Impact of Colonial Rule on an African Kingdom* (London: Longman, 1979).

63. Kwame Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path* (New York: International Publishers, 1973), 208.

## Chapter 2

1. See Ebere Nwaubani, “Kenneth Onwuka Dike, ‘Trade and Politics,’ and the Restoration of the African in History,” *History in Africa* 27 (2000): 229–48; and Apollos O. Nwauwa, “Kenneth Onwuka Dike,” in *The Dark Webs: Perspectives on Colonialism in Africa*, ed. Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2005), 309–28.

2. H. E. R. Hair, “The Nigerian Records Survey Remembered,” *History in Africa* 20 (1993): 391–94.

3. In 1984, the government of Nigeria decided to establish more NA offices. Between 1984 and 2005, NA offices were established in Maiduguri, Abeokuta, Ondo, and Calabar.

4. Saheed Aderinto, “The Role of National Archives Ibadan in the Development of Historical Research in Nigeria,” unpublished typescript, February 2002.

5. Ibid.

6. National Archives Ibadan (hereafter cited as NAI), *A Memorandum of the National Archives Ibadan* (Ibadan, 1962).

7. Ibid., 2.

8. Ibid., 3.

9. NAI, Chief Secretary’s Office (hereafter cited as CSO) 1, *Dispatches to Colonial Office*, 76 (1930–40), 44.

10. Ibid., 45.

11. Ibid.

12. NAI, *Memorandum*, 6.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. NAI, CSO 26/1, *Dispatch from Colonial Office*, 82 (1940–50), 101.

16. NAI, CSO 26/1, *Dispatch to the Colonial Office*, 77 (1940–55), 45.
17. Fieldwork at the National Archives Accra, Ghana, between May and June 2003, shows that the story of the Ghana's National Archives is similar to that of Nigeria's. See also Iddirisu Abdulai, "The Ghana Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Tamale: A Guide for Users," *History in Africa* 27 (2000): 449–53.
18. L. C. Gwam, "The First Permanent Building of the Nigerian National Archives," *American Archivist* 6, no. 3 (1960): 7.
19. NAI, CSO 26/1, *Dispatch to the Colonial Office*, 77.
20. Hair; "Nigerian Records Survey Remembered," 392–93.
21. Ibid., 392.
22. Ibid.; see also A. O. Ebvborokhai, *The Nature of the Nigerian Archives* (Ibadan: NAI, 1974).
23. NAI, *Annual Report of the National Archives of Nigeria* (1959–60), 3. The Public Archives Ordinance (No. 43 of 1957) was by 1958 made a permanent law, embodied in chapter 163 of *The Laws of the Federation of Nigeria and Lagos*.
24. Gwam, "First Permanent Building," 11.
25. See "History of Archives Administration in Nigeria," <http://www.nigerianarchives.gov.ng/>.
26. K. O. Dike, *Report on the Preservation of Public Records in Nigeria* (Ibadan: National Archives, 1954).
27. "Guide to the Sources of Nigerian History," <http://www.nigerianarchives.gov.ng/>.
28. NAI, *Annual Report of the National Archives of Nigeria* (1958–59), 4.
29. NAI, *Annual Report of the National Archives of Nigeria* (1961–62), 13.
30. Some of these family and individual records belong to Ernest Ikoli, Oged Macaulay, and Kitoyi Ajasa, to mention but a few.
31. See, e.g., Ahmed Rahman, *Colonial Economic Enterprises in Nigeria: A History* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1982); and I. L. Bashir, "Expatriate Companies as Agents of Imperialism: The Niger Company—U.A.C. in Northern Nigeria, 1900–1960," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 22, nos. 3–4 (1984–85): 157–72.
32. Oyemakinde, *Introduction to Church Missionary Society Manuscripts*. J. A. Atanda also edited and published the manuscript of W. H. Clarke, a Baptist missionary. See Clarke, *Travels and Explorations in Yorubaland*.
33. Such works include E. A. Ayandele, *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914: A Political and Social Analysis* (New York: Humanities Press, 1967); J. F. A. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841–1891: The Making of a New Elite* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965); and Adewunmi Fajana, *Education in Nigeria, 1842–1939: A Historical Analysis* (London: Longman, 1978).
34. NAI, *The Eighth Report of the Work of the National Archives of Nigeria* (1963–64), 10–12; and Heap, "Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan," 159–72.
35. Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria*.
36. See Isaiah Ozolua Uduigwome, "The Role of the West African Pilot in the Nigerian Nationalist Struggle" (master's thesis, University of Ibadan, 1987); E. O. Owolabi, "Herbert Macaulay's *Lagos Daily News* and the Development of Nigerian Nationalism" (BA Long Essay, University of Ibadan, 1984); and Coker, *Landmarks of the Nigerian Press*.

37. See *Nigerian Tribune* Web site at <http://www.tribune.com.ng/index.php>.
38. See Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani, *Britain, Leftist Nationalists, and the Transfer of Power in Nigeria, 1945–1965* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
39. *Guide to the Sources of Nigerian History*.
40. *Ibid.*
41. L. C. Gwam, “The Nigerian National Archives,” address to the Annual Conference of the West Africa Library Association, Lagos, June 17, 1961, 2.
42. Oral interviews with Mr. Tunde Cole, NAI, January 20, 2005; Mr. Fisayo Kunle, NAK, March 10, 2003; and Mr. Jamiu Isola, NAE, March 21, 2003.
43. NAI, Public Archives Ordinance (No. 43 of 1957), 7.
44. Our informants at NAE, NAI, and NAK testified to nonfunctioning of air-conditioning.
45. Our informants at NAE testified during our visit in March–April 2003 that there had been no electricity for a year.
46. We observed this fact while visiting the archives at different times. Photocopy facilities within NAI have not been available since 2001.
47. NAI, Public Archives Ordinance (No. 43 of 1957).
48. NAI, National Archives Decree (No. 30 of 1992), 7.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*; see section 12(c).
51. Section 13 of the decree stipulates that government offices bear the cost of transferring their records to the NA.
52. For details on historical evolution of archives from an international perspective, see J. H. Hodson, *The Administration of Archives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).
53. See Janet Topp Fargion, “African Music in the World and Traditional Music Section at the British Library Sound Archive,” *History in Africa* 31 (2004): 447–54.
54. NAI, *National Archives of Nigeria, Its Purpose, Development, and Function* (Ibadan, 1985), 21.
55. The oral history of the NAI suggests that the search room alone had some twenty professional archivists in the 1960s and 1970s. Although we could not verify this claim because we were not given access to classified files, judging by the volume of the simple lists produced at the time, it is likely true.

## Chapter 3

1. J. F. Ade Ajayi, “Colonialism: An Episode in African History,” in *Colonialism in Africa, 1870–1960*, ed. L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 1:497–509.
2. See, among others, Toyin Falola and Dare Oguntomisin, *The Military in Nineteenth-Century Yoruba Politics* (Ife-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1982); Falola and Oguntomisin, *Yoruba Warlords of the Nineteenth Century*; S. A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840–1893* (London: Longman, 1971); Adeagbo Akinjogbin, ed., *War and Peace in Yorubaland, 1793–1893* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1988); and Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century*.

3. See, e.g., Mahdi Adamu, *The Hausa Factor in West African History* (Zaria, Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1978).
4. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria*; Last, *Sokoto Caliphate*; Smalldone, *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate*; Lovejoy, *Slavery, Commerce, and Production in the Sokoto Caliphate*; Sulaiman, *Islamic State and the Challenge of History*; Chafe, *State and Economy in Sokoto Caliphate*; and Usman, *History of the Sokoto Caliphate*.
5. Law, *Oyo Empire*, vii.
6. Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*.
7. The literature on the limitations of African historiography is large and growing. See, among others, A. Temu and B. Swai, *Historians and Africanist History: A Critique* (London: Zed Books, 1981); Paul E. Lovejoy, “The Ibadan School of History and Its Critics,” in Falola, *African Historiography, 195–202*; B. Swai, “The State of African History: Social Responsibility of the Coming Generation of African Historians” (paper presented at the Thirty-fourth Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 1989); A. O. Adeoye, “Understanding the Crisis in Modern Nigerian Historiography,” *History in Africa* 19 (1992): 1–11; and Toyin Falola, “African Studies in the Twentieth Century,” in *The Multidisciplinary Approach to African History: Essays in Honour of Ebiegberi Joe Alagoa*, ed. Nkparom C. Ejitwu (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Onyoma Research Publications, 1998), 345–61.
8. Temu and Swai, *Historians and Africanist History*.
9. J. F. A. Ajayi, *History and the Nation and Other Addresses* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1990), 29.
10. Heidi J. Nast, *Concubines and Power: Five Hundred Years in a Northern Nigerian Palace* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
11. See, among others, Catherine Coles and Beverly Mack, eds., *Hausa Women in the Twentieth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).
12. See Bolanle Awe, ed., *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* (Lagos: Sankore Publishers, 1992).
13. Elizabeth Isichei, *The Ibo People and the Europeans: The Genesis of a Relation to 1906* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973). See also S. N. Nwabara, *Iboland: A Century of Contact with Britain, 1860–1960* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1978).
14. See, among others, Richard H. Dusgate, *The Conquest of Northern Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass, 1985); and Don C. Ohadike, *The Ekumeku Movement: Western Igbo Resistance to the British Conquest of Nigeria, 1883–1914* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991).
15. Olayemi Akinwumi, *The Colonial Contest for the Nigerian Region, 1884–1900: A History of the German Participation* (Munster: Lit Verlag, 2002), 2.
16. Obaro Ikime, *The Fall of Nigeria: The British Conquest* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1977).
17. For a complete list of the colonial anthropologists and administrators and their works, see G. I. Jones, “Social Anthropologists in Nigeria during the Colonial Period,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 44, no. 3 (July 1974): 280–89.
18. Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime, eds., *West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1970), vii.

19. A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891–1929* (London: Longman, 1972); Mahmood Yakubu, *An Aristocracy in Political Crisis: The End of Indirect Rule and the Emergence of Party Politics in the Emirates of Northern Nigeria* (Aldershot: Brookfield, 1996); S. O. Okafor, *Indirect Rule: The Development of a Central Legislature in Nigeria* (Watson-on-Thames: Nelson Africa, 1981); and Olufemi Vaughan, *Nigerian Chiefs: Traditional Power in Modern Politics, 1890s–1990s* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000).
20. Vaughan, *Nigerian Chiefs*; and V. O. Edo, “The Central Political Institutions in Benin and Balance of Power under Colonial Rule,” *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, nos. 15–16 (2005–6).
21. Crowder and Ikime, *West African Chiefs*, xx.
22. P. A. Igbafe, “British Rule in Benin, 1897–1920: Direct or Indirect?” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 4 (June 1967): 701–18.
23. Igbafe, *Benin under British Administration*, x.
24. J. C. Anene, *Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885–1906: Theory and Practice in a Colonial Protectorate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).
25. See, among others, Obaro Ikime, *Chief Dogho of Warri* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1976).
26. Ibid.
27. A general reading on this is Kristin Mann and Richard Roberts, eds., *Law in Colonial Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991).
28. Omoniyi Adewoye, *The Judicial System in Southern Nigeria, 1854–1954: Law and Justice in a Dependency* (New York: Humanities Press, 1977).
29. David Killingray, “The Maintenance of Law and Order in British Colonial Africa,” *African Affairs* 85, no. 340 (July 1986): 413.
30. Sam C. Ukpabi, *The Origin of the Nigerian Army: A History of the West African Frontier Force, 1897–1914* (Zaria, Nigeria: Gaskiya Corp., 1987); Philip Terdoo Ahire, *Imperial Policing: The Emergence and Role of the Police in Colonial Nigeria, 1860–1960* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1991); and Tekena N. Tamuno, *The Police in Modern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Ibadan University, 1970).
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## Chapter 9

1. Joseph Adebawale Atanda received his doctorate degree from the University of Ibadan in 1967. Between 1967 and 1991, he taught African history at his alma mater, where he became a full professor of history in 1984. He headed the Department of History from 1979 to 1983 and held visiting teaching and research appointments at Makerere University in Uganda, the University of Chicago, and University College in Belize. He also served as a member of the council of the Historical Society of Nigeria, editing its publication *Tarikh* from 1982 to 1991, and was a member of the Panel on Nigeria since Independence History Project. Atanda held the following public positions, among others: member of the Board of Governors, Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, 1985–90; chairman, management committee of the Ibarapa Local Council, Western State, 1973–74; chairman, Ibadan Zonal Health Board, 1975; commissioner in the Oyo State ministries of Local Government, Health and Finance, and Economic Development between 1975 and 1979. He died in 1994 at the age of 62.

2. See J. A. Atanda, “A Historical Perspective of Intellectual Life in Yoruba Society up to c. 1900,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 9, nos. 3–4 (1983): 49–65. His other important works include *The New Oyo Empire: Indirect Rule and Change in Western*

*Nigeria, 1894–1934* (London: Longman, 1973); “The Factor of African Resistance in British Land Policy,” 73–79; “The Iseyin-Okeiho Rising of 1916: An Example of Socio-political Conflict in Colonial Nigeria,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, no. 4 (June 1969): 497–514; “Indirect Rule in Yorubaland,” *Tarikh* 3 (1970): 16–28; “Government of Yorubaland in the Pre-colonial Period,” *Tarikh* 4, no. 2 (1971): 1–12; “Yoruba Unity in Historical Perspective,” *Oyo State Annual Visionlink* (1990): 14–20; “The Changing Status of Alaafin of Oyo under Colonial Rule and Independence,” in Crowder and Ikime, *West African Chiefs*, 212–30; “Collision and Coalition in the Politics and Society of Western Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Evolution of Political Culture in Nigeria: Proceedings of a National Seminar Organized by the Kaduna State Council for Arts and Culture*, ed. J. F. Ade Ajayi and Bashir Ikara (Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1985), 85–103; and “Towards Education for Self-Reliance and Nation Building in Nigeria,” in *Nigeria since Independence: The First Twenty-five Years*, vol. 3, *Education*, ed. Tekena N. Tamuno and J. A. Atanda (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1989), 227–46.

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4. Atanda, *New Oyo Empire*.

5. J. A. Atanda, ed., *Baptist Churches in Nigeria: Accounts of Their Foundation and Growth, 1850–1950* (Ibadan: University Press, 1988); and Clarke, *Travels and Explorations in Yorubaland*.

6. Atanda, *New Oyo Empire*.

7. Ibid., 108.

8. Atanda, “Changing Status of the Alaafin of Oyo,” 212–30.

9. Atanda, “Iseyin-Okeiho Rising of 1916,” 497–514.

10. Afigbo, *Warrant Chiefs*.

11. See, among others, Obaro Ikime, “The Anti-Tax Riots in Warri Province, 1927–1928,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 3 (1966): 559–93.

12. Atanda, “African Resistance in British Land Policy,” 73–79.

13. Ibid., 74.

14. Bolanle Awe, J. F. Ade Ajayi, Robert Smith, I. A. Akinjogbin, and S. A. Akintoye are eminent historians of nineteenth-century Yoruba history.

15. Virtually all his essays follow this pattern. See, e.g., Atanda, “Yoruba Ogboni Cult.”

16. Atanda, “Fall of the Old Oyo Empire.”

17. Ibid., 477–78.

18. Ibid., 480.

19. Ibid.

20. Abdullahi Smith, “A Little New Light on the Collapse of the Alafinate of Yoruba,” in Olusanya, *Studies in Yoruba History and Culture*, 42–71.

21. Atanda, “Fulani Jihad,” 114.

22. Ibid., 107–8.
23. Ibid., 112.
24. Peter Morton-Williams, “The Yoruba Ogboni Cult in Oyo,” *Africa* 30, no. 4 (1960): 362–74.
25. Atanda, “Yoruba Ogboni Cult.”
26. Ibid., 367.
27. Ibid., 368.
28. Ibid.
29. Atanda, “Collision and Coalition in Western Nigeria,” 85–99.
30. Ibid., 87.
31. Ibid., 91–92.
32. Ibid., 92.
33. G. O. Oguntomisin, “Political Change and Adaptation in Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1981): 223–37.
34. J. A. Atanda, “The Wars and Imperial Conquests of Yorubaland,” in Akinjogbin, *War and Peace in Yorubaland*, 307–20.
35. Ibid., 306–11.
36. Ibid.
37. Ikime, *Fall of Nigeria*, preface; Ayandele, “How Truly Nigerian Is Our Nigerian History?” 19–35.
38. J. A. Atanda, *An Introduction to Yoruba History* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1980).
39. Atanda, “Historical Perspective of Intellectual Life.”
40. Ibid., 50.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., 52.
43. Atanda, “The Origins of the Yoruba Reconsidered,” 3–19.
44. Ibid., 12.
45. Ibid., 16.
46. Atanda, “The Historian and the Problem of Origins,” 63–77.
47. Ibid., 66–74.
48. Ibid., 75–77.

## Chapter 10

1. Bolanle Awe trained at Oxford University, where she obtained a PhD in history in 1964. Between 1967 and her retirement in 1998, Awe taught history at the University of Ibadan, served as the director of its Institute of African Studies, and was the founding chairperson of the Women’s Research and Documentation Center (WORDOC). Awe was a visiting scholar at the Harvard Center for Population and Development and at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She once served as a member of the advisory boards of *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* and *Gender and History*, was a member of the founding committee of the International Federation for Research in Women’s History, and coedited the *Signs* Special Issue on African Women. In addition to her numerous awards and distinctions, Awe is a National Merit Award recipient; Officer of the

Federal Republic of Nigeria (OFR); Fellow of the Historical Society of Nigeria; and life member of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, among others.

Awe held a number of public positions during and after her university career, including member of the Western State of Nigeria's Economic Advisory Committee, 1964–67; commissioner for education for Oyo State, 1975–77; commissioner for trade, industries and cooperatives for Oyo State, 1977–78; member of the Federal Judicial Service Commission, 1988–92; country coordinator for the MacArthur Foundation; member of the governing council of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 1978–84; chairperson of the Nigeria National Commission for Women, 1990–92; member of the Negotiation and Conflict Management Group since 1999; chairperson of the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital, 2000–2004; member of the governing council of Ajayi Crowther University; and pro-chancellor, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. For further reading on her public service see Sade Taiwo, "Bolanle Awe: The Activist Scholar," in Isiugo-Abanihe et al., *Bolanle Awe*, 15.

2. Bolanle Awe, "The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power, 1851–1893" (PhD thesis, Oxford University, 1964).

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4. See, among others, E. J. Alagoa, *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1972); and *Oral Tradition and Oral History in Africa and the Diaspora: Theory and Practice* (Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization for Nigerian Association for Oral History and Tradition, 1990).

5. Abiola Odejide, "Profile of Women's Research and Documentation Centre, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria," <http://www.feministafrica.org/index.php/profile-of-women-s-research-and-documentation-centre>.

6. Bolanle Awe, "Obituary Dr. Nina Mba," <http://www.feministafrica.org/index.php/dr-nina-mba>.

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8. See, among others, Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland*; Akin-jogbin, *War and Peace in Yorubaland*; Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth*; Falola and Oguntomisin, *Military in Nineteenth-Century Yoruba Politics*; and R. C. C. Law, "The Chronology of the Yoruba Wars of Early Nineteenth Century: A Reconsideration," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2 (1970): 212–22.

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10. Bolanle Awe, "The Ajele System: A Study of Ibadan Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 1 (December 1964): 47–60.

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12. Bolanle Awe, "The End of an Experiment: The Collapse of the Ibadan Empire, 1877–1893," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 2 (December 1965): 222.

13. Awe, "Ajele System," 50–51.

14. Awe, "Militarism and Economic Development," 67.

15. Ibid., 66.
16. Awe, “Ajele System,” 47–60.
17. Ibid., 60.
18. Awe, “Militarism and Economic Development,” 65–77.
19. Ibid., 65.
20. Ibid., 68.
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22. Bolanle Awe, “The End of an Experiment,” 220–30.
23. Ibid., 226.
24. Ibid., 229–30.
25. Ibid., 229.
26. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*.
27. Bolanle Awe, “Samuel Johnson on Ibadan,” in *Pioneer, Patriot, and Patriarch: Samuel Johnson and the Yoruba People*, ed. Toyin Falola (Madison: University of Wisconsin, African Studies Program, 1993), 135.
28. Awe, “Praise Poems as Historical Data,” 331.
29. Ibid.
30. Awe, “Notes on Oriki and Warfare.”
31. Awe, “Some Ibadan Place-Names,” 85–93.
32. Ibid., 85.
33. See Ikime, *Through Changing Scenes*.
34. Obaro Ikime, *In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-group Relations in an Evolving Nation State* (Lagos: Impact Publishers, 1985), 5–10; and Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, chapter 1.
35. Bolanle Awe, *Hearken to the Ancient Past* (Lagos: Nigerian Association of Oral History and Tradition, 1991), 6.
36. Ibid., 12.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 13.
39. Awe, “The Iyalode in the Traditional Yoruba Political System,” 144–60.
40. Odejide, “Profile of Women’s Research and Documentation Centre.”
41. Ifeoma Isiugo-Abanihe and I. Bola Udegbe, “WORDOC and Leadership in Women’s Studies: An Appraisal,” in Isiugo-Abanihe et al., *Bolanle Awe*, 61.
42. Awe, “Conference on Women and Development,” 315.
43. Denzer, “Yoruba Women,” 14.
44. Ibid., 36.
45. Awe, “Conference on Women and Development,” 314–16.
46. Ibid., 315.
47. Ibid.
48. Bolanle Awe et al., “Editorial,” *Signs* 16, no. 4 (Summer 1991): 645–49.
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50. Bolanle Awe, “Response,” in Isiugo-Abanihe et al., *Bolanle Awe*, 43.
51. Awe, *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*.
52. Ibid., vii.
53. Awe, “The Iyalode in the Traditional Yoruba Political System,” 144–60.
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## Chapter 11

1. Obaro Ikime obtained a PhD in history from the University of Ibadan in 1965. Humbly starting from the lowest rung as assistant lecturer in 1965, Ikime quickly rose to the position of full professor in 1973 at the age of thirty-seven. At various times, he was the head of the Department of History, director of the Institute of African Studies, and dean of the Faculty of Arts, all at the University of Ibadan. He held visiting faculty positions at Harvard University and the University of California, Berkeley. Ikime is a former president and Fellow of the Historical Society of Nigeria and founding president of the Nigerian Academy of Arts. He was for several years the editor of the journal *Tarikh*, published by Longman and Humanities Press, and of Heinemann's *African Historical Biographies*. Ikime was a member of the advisory board of the *Journal of African History* and *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*. In 1990, he was arrested and detained for ninety-five days for “alleged involvement in the Orkar-led attempted coup.” This incident led to his forced and untimely retirement from the University of Ibadan that same year. Ikime served in a number of nonacademic and public positions. Between 1976 and 1985, he was a member of the Constitution Drafting Committee and Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Affairs of the Federal Electoral Commission. He was a member of the Midwest State Tax Board, chairman of the board of governors of Auchi Polytechnic, a member of the planning committee of Bendel State University, chairman of the committee for the renaming of schools in Midwest State, and member the National Library Board, among others. For further biographical reading, see Obaro Ikime, *History, the Historian, and the Nation: The Voice of a Nigerian Historian* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 2006), xi; and Ekoko and Agbi, *Perspectives in History*, 208–17.

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5. Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry: Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European Presence, 1884–1936* (London: Longman, 1969). His other notable publications include *Groundwork of Nigerian History* and Crowder and Ikime, *West African Chiefs*.

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7. Obaro Ikime, “Thoughts on Isoko-Urhobo Relations,” keynote address delivered at the Sixth Annual Conference of Urhobo Historical Society, October 22, 2005, Effurun, Petroleum Training Institute, Nigeria, 12.

8. Ikime, *In Search of Nigerians*.

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11. Ibid., 16–20.

12. Ibid., 20–24.
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14. Ikime, *Through Changing Scenes*.
15. See Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*; and Ayandele, *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*.
16. Ikime, *Through Changing Scenes*, 8.
17. Ibid., 9.
18. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria*.
19. Atanda, *New Oyo Empire*.
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23. Obaro Ikime, “History and the Historian in the Developing Countries of Africa,” in *The Teaching of History in African Universities*, ed. E. J. Alagoa (proceedings of a conference at the University of Lagos, 1977), 5–15.
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26. The *Tarikh* titles were published by Longman and Humanities Press.
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28. Ikime, *Through Changing Scenes*, 27.
29. See Agneta Pallinder’s review in *Journal of African History* 19, no. 3 (1978): 468–69.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid. See also David Northrup’s review in the *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 2, no. 1 (1978): 170–72.
32. Ibid.
33. For Ikime’s contributions see, e.g., “The British in Bauchi 1908: An Episode in the British Occupation and Control of Northern Nigeria,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 8, no. 2 (1974): 271–90; “Colonial Conquest and Resistance in Southern Nigeria,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6, no. 3 (1970): 251–70; “The British Pacification of the Tiv, 1900–1908,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 1 (1970): 103–10; and “Sir Claude Macdonald,” 22–44.
34. For details, see Jane Diane Matheson, “Lagoon Relations in the Era of Kosoko, 1845: A Study of African Reaction to European Intervention” (PhD diss., Boston University, 1974).
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36. See, for details, M. Gueye, “African Initiatives and Resistance in West Africa, 1880–1914,” in *General History of Africa*, vol. 2, *Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880–1935*, ed. Adu Boahen (Paris: UNESCO, 1985), 57–60.
37. Ikime, *Member of Warri Province*.
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39. Ibid.

## Chapter 12

1. G. O. Olusanya attended the University College, Ibadan (later the University of Ibadan), between 1957 and 1960 for his undergraduate education. He earned a doctorate in history from the University of Toronto in 1964, thus becoming the first Nigerian to earn a PhD from any Canadian university. He started his teaching career at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in 1964, and was forced to leave the North in 1966 during the massacre of southerners that preceded the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War. From 1966 to 1984, Olusanya taught at the University of Lagos, becoming a full professor of history in 1976. He held visiting academic positions at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, and the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. Olusanya, like his contemporaries, served in a number of public positions: director-general, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), 1984–91; Nigerian ambassador to France, 1991–95; and director-general, Nigerian Institute of Management, 1997–2001. He holds two traditional chieftaincy titles: *Obatunmise* of Ife and *Dagunja* of Egbaland. For further reading on his life history, see his autobiography, Gabriel O. Olusanya, *Memoirs of a Disillusioned Patriot* (Ibadan: Safer, 2003).
2. G. O. Olusanya, *The Unfinished Task*, Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Lagos, May 27, 1977 (Lagos: University of Lagos, 1978).
3. G. O. Olusanya and R. A. Akindele, eds., *Nigeria's External Relations: The First Twenty-five Years* (Ibadan: University Press Ltd, 1986); and R. A. Akindele, ed., *The Structure and Processes of Foreign Policy-Making and Execution in Nigeria, 1960–1990* (Ibadan: University Press Ltd, 1987).
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10. G. O. Olusanya, “The Role of Ex-Servicemen in Nigerian Politics,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 6, no. 2 (1968): 221–32.
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12. G. O. Olusanya, “India and Nigerian Nationalism,” *Africa Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (October–December 1965): 188–91.

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14. G. O. Olusanya, “Political Awakening in the North: A Re-interpretation,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, no. 1 (1967): 45–61.
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16. G. O. Olusanya, “A Preliminary Bibliography on Nigerian Political Parties’ Publications,” *Lagos Notes and Records: University of Lagos Bulletin of Africa Studies* 1, no. 1 (1967).
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18. G. O. Olusanya, “The Zikist Movement—a Study in Political Radicalism, 1946–50,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 4, no. 3 (1960): 323–33.
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20. G. O. Olusanya, foreword to Chief Pius Oladapo Odebiyi, *Abeokuta: Home of the Egba* (Lagos: VBO International, 1985), 1:5.
21. See the following by Olusanya: *Studies in Yoruba History and Culture*; “Julius Ojo-Cole: A Neglected Nigerian Nationalist and Educationalist,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, no. 1 (December 1973): 91–101; “Henry Carr and Herbert Macaulay: A Study in Conflict of Principles and Personalities,” in *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, ed. Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri, and Jide Osuntokun (Lagos: Lantern Books, 1987); “Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa,” and “Olaniwun Adunni Oluwole,” in Awe, *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*, 107–20; “The Freed Slaves’ Homes: An Unknown Aspect of Northern Nigerian Social History,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 3 (1966): 523–38; “The Sabon-Gari System in the Northern State of Nigeria,” *Nigeria Magazine Literary Supplement*, no. 94 (September 1967): 18–24; *Fifty Years of the National Bank* (Lagos: National Bank Press, 1983); and with A. B. Aderibigbe, *A Hundred Years of the M.B.H.S., 1878–1978* (Lagos: Academy Press, 1978).
22. G. O. Olusanya, “John Augustus Otumba Payne and the Establishment of Colonial Rule in Nigeria,” in *West African Civil Servants in the Nineteenth Century*, Research Reports 25, ed. Kwame Arhin (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1985), 54.
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25. On this, see G. O. Olusanya, “The Historical Basis for Nigerian Unity: An Analysis,” *Journal of Business and Social Studies*, 3, no. 1 (December 1970): 1–17; and “The Role of Historical Consciousness in the Development of Contemporary African Societies,” paper presented at the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts Colloquium, January 1977.
26. On recent developments in human rights in Africa, see G. O. Olusanya, “African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights: Some Analytical Comments and Appraisal,” *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs* 11, no. 2 (1985): 1–9.
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28. G. O. Olusanya, "Universal Primary Education in Nigeria: A Case Study in Policy Making and Execution," in *Public Policy in Africa* (Addis Ababa: African Association for Public Administration and Management, 1982), 18–35.
29. Olusanya, "If Wishes Were Horses . . .," keynote address to the Seminar of Industrial Chaplains, Sea School, Apapa, Lagos, June 23, 1986; and "Nigerian Universities and the Challenges of Our Society," Dean of Arts Guest Lecture, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, February 1985.
30. Olusanya and Akindede, *Nigeria's External Relations*, chapters 1 and 5. See also the following essays by Olusanya: "Welcome Address by the Director-General, NIIA to the National Seminar on Refugee Law," Lagos, April 7, 1987; "Press Briefing by the Director-General on the Occasion of the NIIA Silver Jubilee Celebration," December 1, 1986; "Nigeria, Africa, and the Third World," lecture February 1987, mimeograph; "World Understanding: What Hopes for the Future?" address to the Rotary Club of Lagos West, March 10, 1987; "The Basic Principles Underlying Nigeria's Foreign Policy," briefing to the visiting team from the RCDS, September 22, 1986; "Reflections on the Berlin Treaty of 1878 and the Western Borders," paper presented to the Twelfth Conference of the Society of International Law, Calabar, March 1985; "An Examination of External Threat with Emphasis on the Western Borders," paper delivered to the Second Mechanized Division, Nigerian Army, Ibadan, October 23, 1984; "The International Environment and Security," paper presented to the Conference on "Strategies for the Fifth National Development Plan, 1986–1990," organized by NISER and the Federal Ministry of National Planning, November 25–29, 1984; "An Overview of Nigeria's Foreign Policy," paper delivered at the Czechoslovak Institute of International Affairs, June 28, 1985; "Nigeria's Foreign Policy: Relations between Domestic Politics and Foreign policy," paper presented to the Seventh Senior Executive Course of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Nigeria, July 3, 1985; "Nigeria in the Web of Ideological Struggle," paper presented at the Postgraduate Seminar on Nigeria and World Powers, organized by the Command and Staff College, Jaji, Nigeria, July 4, 1985; "Problems of Underdevelopment in Africa: The Colonial and Neo-colonial Factors," paper presented at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Peoples and Countries, November 11–15, 1985.
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## Chapter 13

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4. I. F. Nicolson, *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900–1960* (London: Longman, 1969); and Anene, *Southern Nigeria in Transition*.
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6. Ibid., 37.
7. Ibid., 38.
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11. See, among others, Tekena N. Tamuno, “Emancipation in Nigeria,” *Nigeria Magazine* 82 (1964): 218–27; “Genesis of the Nigerian Railway, Parts I and II,” *Nigeria* 31–43; “Some Aspects of Nigerian Reaction to the Imposition of British Rule,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 2 (1965): 271–94; “N.A. Police Developments,” *African Notes* 1, no. 4 (1964): 72–81; “The Role of the Legislative Council in the Administration of Lagos, 1886–1913,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, no. 4 (1969): 555–70; and “Un-official Representation on Nigeria’s Executive Council, 1886–1943,” *Odu* 4 (1970): 46–66.
12. Tamuno, *Nigeria and Elective Representation*.
13. Ibid., 62.
14. Ibid., 67.
15. Tamuno, “Un-official Representation on Nigeria’s Executive Council.”
16. Ibid., 50.
17. Ibid.
18. Ikime, *Through Changing Scenes*.
19. Tamuno, *History and History-Makers in Modern Nigeria*, 6.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 7.
22. Ibid., 9.
23. Ibid., 11–12.
24. Tekena N. Tamuno, *Herbert Macaulay: Nigerian Patriot* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1975); and “Governor Clifford and Representative Government,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, no. 1 (1967): 117–224.
25. Tekena N. Tamuno and Ayodele Aderinwale, *Abebe: Portrait of a Nigerian Leader* (Abeokuta: ALF Publications, 1991).

26. Tamuno, “Governor Clifford and Representative Government.”
27. Ibid., 118.
28. Tamuno, *Herbert Macaulay*, 63.
29. Tamuno, “Crime Detection and Control in Nigeria.”
30. Tekena N. Tamuno, “Before British Police in Nigeria,” *Nigeria Magazine*, no. 89 (1966): 102–16.
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32. Tamuno, *Police in Modern Nigeria*. See also Tekena N. Tamuno, “Traditional Police in Nigeria,” in *Traditional Religions in West Africa*, ed. E. A. Ade Adegbola (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1983).
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34. Ibid., 65.
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36. Ibid., 66.
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38. Tamuno, *Peace and Violence in Nigeria*.
39. Ibid., chapter 1.
40. Tekena N. Tamuno, “Keynote Address,” in *Proceedings from the National Conference on Nigeria since Independence*, Zaria, Nigeria, March 1983, 13.
41. Ibid., 14.
42. Ibid., 15.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., 18.
45. Ibid.
46. Tekena N. Tamuno, “Separatist Agitations in Nigeria since 1914,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 8, no. 4 (1970): 563–84.
47. Ibid., 566.
48. Ibid., 567.
49. Ibid.

## Chapter 14

1. Yusufu Bala Usman earned his BA in history and politics from the University of Lancaster, Great Britain, in 1967 and a PhD from Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, in 1974. Between 1967 and 1970, Usman taught history courses at the Barewa College in Zaria before he took up a teaching appointment at ABU in 1971, becoming an associate professor of history in 1978. In 1980, when he was due for promotion to the rank of full professor, he decided not to put himself up for promotion “because of his disagreement with the University authorities on the way promotion to the esteemed academic rank of professor was being handled in the University.” Alkasum Abba, introduction to Alkasum Abba, ed., *A Life of Commitment to Knowledge, Freedom, and Justice: Tributes to Yusufu Bala Usman, 1945–2005* (Zaria, Nigeria: Center for Democratic Development, Research, and Training, 2007), xvii. Usman remained an associate professor of history at ABU until his death in September 2005 at the age of 60. He established and served as the director and chairman (until his death) of the Abdullahi Smith Center for Historical

Research and the Center for Democratic Development, Research, and Training in 1985 and 1992, respectively. He was the first African head/chair of ABU's Department of History between 1976 and 1978, a member of the university's senate between 1976 and 1980, and the deputy/associate dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in 1977, among other positions. Usman served in a number of public positions between 1971 and 2005 including member of the Committee on the Review of Nigerian Foreign Policy including Economic and Technical Cooperation, 1975–76; founding national trustee of the Nigerian Labour Congress, 1978; director of research for the People's Redemption Party, 1980–83; member of the Constitution Drafting Committee, 1975–76; and the secretary to the Government of Kaduna State, 1980–82.

2. Yusufu Bala Usman, *Political Repression in Nigeria*, vol. 1, *A Selection of Basic Documents, 1979–1981* (Kano: Bala Mohammed Memorial Committee, 1982).

3. Ben Adam Shemang, "Dr. Bala Usman's Last Encounter with President Obasanjo," in Abba, *Life of Commitment to Knowledge*, 85.

4. Usman, *Transformation of Katsina*.

5. H. F. C. Smith, "The Islamic Revolutions of the 19th Century," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2, no. 2 (December 1961): 169–85; A. Smith, "Formation of States in Hausaland," 329–46; Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria*; Last, *Sokoto Caliphate*; and Smaldone, *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate*.

6. Yusufu Bala Usman, "The Assessment of Primary Sources: Heinrich Barth in Katsina," in Usman, *Beyond Fairy Tales*, 18–23.

7. Yusufu Bala Usman, "The Problem of the Ethnic Categories in the Study of the Historical Development of the Central Sudan: A Critique of M. G. Smith and Others," in Usman, *Beyond Fairy Tales*, 31.

8. Yusufu Bala Usman, "Some Aspects of the External Relations of Katsina before 1804 AD," *Savannah* 1, no. 2 (June 1972): 15–33; and "The Dynastic Chronologies of Three Polities of Katsina," *Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire*, no. 2 (1978): 12–32.

9. Usman, *For the Liberation of Nigeria; The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977–1987* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Vanguard Printers and Publishers, 1987); and *Nigeria against the I.M.F.: The Home Market Strategy* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Vanguard Printers and Publishers, 1986).

10. See, among others, Onimode, *Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria*; Ake, *Political Economy of Africa*; Toyin Falola and Julius Ihonvhere, eds., *Nigeria and the International Capitalist System* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988); and S. O. Osoba, "The Deepening Crisis of the Nigeria National Bourgeoisie," *Review of African Political Economy* 13 (1978): 63–77.

11. Usman, *Nigeria against the I.M.F.*, 116.

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13. Usman, *Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria*.

14. Ibid., 10–14.

15. Ibid., 14.

16. Ibid., 21.

17. Ibid., 22.

18. Ibid., 83.

19. Usman, *For the Liberation of Nigeria*, 3.

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21. Ibid., vi.

22. Yusufu Bala Usman and Alkasum Abba, *The Misrepresentation of Nigeria* (Zaria, Nigeria: Center for Democratic Development, Research, and Training, 2000); and “Ignorance, Knowledge, and Democratic Politics in Nigeria,” a contribution to the Symposium on Good Governance in Nigeria, April 17, 2001.
23. Usman and Abba, *Misrepresentation of Nigeria*, 67.
24. Ibid.
25. Peter Ekeh, “The Mischief of History: Bala Usman’s Unmaking of Nigerian History,” <http://www.waado.org/NigerDelta/Essays/BalaUsman/MischiefInHistory.html>.
26. G. G. Darah, “Bala Usman: History Will Absolve Us,” <http://www.waado.org/NigerDelta/Essays/BalaUsman/Darah.html>; Ben Naanen, “Bala Usman, History, and the Niger Delta,” <http://www.waado.org/NigerDelta/Essays/BalaUsman/BenNaanen.html>; Onoawarie Edevbie, “Bala and His Rule-Book for Nigerian Politics,” <http://www.waado.org/NigerDelta/Essays/BalaUsman/Edevbie.html>; and Larry Arhagba, “Bala Usman: The Picture and Portrait of a Parochial Prince,” <http://www.waado.org/NigerDelta/Essays/BalaUsman/Arhagba.html>.

## Chapter 15

1. This chapter draws substantially from a previous essay, “Nationalism and African Historiography,” in *Turning Points in Historiography: A Cross-Cultural Analysis*, ed. Q. Edward Wang and Georg G. Iggers (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 209–36.
2. See, e.g., William Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (London, 1705 [reprint 1967]); and James Houston, *Some New and Accurate Observations of the Coast of Guinea* (London, 1725); and John Barbot, *A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea* (London, 1732).
3. Quoted in Joseph E. Harris, *Africans and Their History* (New York: Mentor, 1972), 19.
4. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Wiley Book Co., 1944), 99.
5. Joseph Arthur De Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1915).
6. H. Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1968), 9.
7. Horton (1835–83) was one of the pioneer professionals—a surgeon, businessman, and political thinker. He grew up in Sierra Leone, trained in England as an army medical doctor, and served for twenty years in British West Africa. After his retirement, he established a mining company, while retaining his interest in writing and politics.
8. See, e.g., James B. Webster, *African Churches among the Yoruba*.
9. Wilmot Blyden, “Africa for Africans,” quoted in Henry S. Wilson, ed., *Origins of West African Nationalism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1969), 233.
10. Edward Blyden, “The Prospects of the African,” quoted in Wilson, *Origins of West African Nationalism*, 240.
11. Blyden, *African Life and Customs* (London: C. M. Phillips, 1908).

12. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*; and C. C. Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (Basel, 1895).
13. Robert W. July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its Development in West Africa during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 464.
14. Casely Hayford, “Introduction,” quoted in full in Wilson, *Origins of West African Nationalism*, 334.
15. Léopold Senghor, *On African Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1964).
16. Léopold Senghor, “African-Negro Aesthetics,” *Diogenes* 16 (1956): 23–24.
17. July, *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 474.
18. Senghor, *On African Socialism*, 140.
19. For the development of the discipline in the West, see, e.g., Jan Vansina, *Living with Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994); Roland Oliver, *In the Realms of Gold: Pioneering in African History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, ed., *The Emergence of African History at British Universities* (Oxford: Worldview Publications, 1995).
20. See, e.g., Henk Wesseling, “Overseas History,” in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1992), 67–92.
21. July, *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 468.
22. See, e.g., Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).
23. K. O. Dike, “African History and Self-Government,” *West Africa*, no. 1882 (March 21, 1953): 251.
24. For examples of Cheikh Anta Diop’s writings, see *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*, trans. from the French by Yaa-Lengi Meema Ngemi, and ed. Harold J. Salemson and Marjolin de Jager (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1991); and *Pre-colonial Black Africa*, trans. from the French by Harold Salemson (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1987).
25. J. Simmons and M. Perham, *African Discovery* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 16.
26. Basil Davidson, *The African Past* (London: Longman, 1964), 36.
27. H. H. Johnston, *A History of the Colonization of Africa by Alien Races* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899).
28. F. D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1965).
29. Born at Awka in Eastern Nigeria in 1917, Dike went to school in Nigeria and Sierra Leone before proceeding to the United Kingdom for higher studies.
30. See, e.g., Michael Omolewa, “The Education Factor in the Emergence of the Modern Profession of Historians in Nigeria, 1926–1956,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 10, no. 3 (December 1980): 93–120.
31. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, iv–.
32. See, e.g., John Flint, *Tubman Goldie and the Making of Modern Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).
33. For useful literature on the courses and the college in the early years, see K. Mellanby, *The Birth of Nigeria’s University* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press); Ajayi and Tamuno, *University of Ibadan*.

34. K. O. Dike, *Report on the Preservation of Public Records in Nigeria* (Ibadan: National Archives, 1954).
35. Biobaku had a varied career as an administrator and professor. In 1956 he was appointed by the Western Region in Nigeria as the head of the Yoruba Historical Research Scheme to collect data and write on the Yoruba. Biobaku's thesis was also published as one of the pioneer academic books on the Yoruba: *The Egba and Their Neighbours*.
36. See Falola, *Yoruba Gurus*.
37. Apart from his revised thesis Dike published two small studies in the 1950s: *A Hundred Years of British Rule in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1957) and *The Origins of the Niger Mission* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1958).
38. C. C. Ifemesia, "Funeral Orations," *Bulletin of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Special Edition (1984): 5.
39. Ikime, *Groundwork of Nigerian History*.
40. See, e.g., J. D. Omer-Cooper, "The Contribution of the University of Ibadan to the Spread of the Study and Teaching of African History," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 10, no. 3 (December 1980): 71.
41. These textbooks are edited by J. F. Ade Ajayi and Ian Espie (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1965) and by J. C. Anene and Godfrey Brown (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1966), respectively.
42. Published by Longman, the four titles are *A History of West Africa, 1000–1800*; *The Revolutionary Years: West Africa since 1800*; *The Making of Modern Africa, 1800–1960*; and *East Africa to the Late Nineteenth Century*.
43. Ajayi and Crowder, *History of West Africa*.
44. J. F. Ade Ajayi, "Post-Graduate Studies and Staff Development," in Ajayi and Tamuno, *University of Ibadan*, 153.
45. These were the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, established in 1960; and the University of Ife, University of Lagos, and Ahmadu Bello University, all established in 1962.
46. T. N. Tamuno, *Department of History, 1948–73: Commemorative Brochure* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1974), 13–14.
47. D. M. Last, "Sokoto in the Nineteenth Century with Special Reference to the Viceroy" (PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, 1964).
48. PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, 1964.
49. Obaro Ikime, "Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the Establishment of British Rule, 1884–1936" (PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, 1965).
50. J. C. Anene's major work is the *International Boundaries of Nigeria, 1885–1960* (London: Longman, 1970).
51. See J. D. Omer-Cooper, "My Time in Ibadan," in *Ibadan Voices*, ed. T. N. Tamuno (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1981), 127–35.
52. See, e.g., C. C. Ifemesia, "Current Demands of African Historiography," paper presented at the Silver Jubilee Conference of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Ibadan, September 1980.
53. See, e.g., Falola, *Tradition and Change in Africa*.
54. See, e.g., Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

55. See, e.g., Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); and Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938).
56. M. Phares Mutibwa, *The Malagasy and the Europeans* (London: Longman, 1974), xiii.
57. J. D. Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath* (London: Longman, 1966), preface.
58. R. A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804–1906: The Sokoto Caliphate and Its Enemies* (Atlantic Highlands, NY: Humanities Press, 1971).
59. S. A. Akintoye, “The Ekiti Parapo and Kiriji War” (PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, 1966).
60. Afigbo, *Warrant Chiefs; Atanda, New Oyo Empire; Igbafe, Benin under British Administration*; and Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland under European Rule, 1889–1945: A Comparative Analysis of French and British Colonialism* (London: Longman, 1976).
61. Among the studies on other places besides Nigeria is B. O. Oloruntimehin, “The Segu Tukulor Empire, 1848–1893” (PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, 1966).
62. Anene, *Southern Nigeria in Transition*; and Tamuno, *Evolution of the Nigerian State*.
63. Akinjide Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War* (London: Longman, 1978); and F. I. Omu, “The Nigerian Newspaper Press, 1859–1957: A Study in Origin, Growth, and Influence” (PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, 1966).
64. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*; Ayandele, *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*; and T. G. O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841–1908* (London: Longman, 1978).
65. Paul Lovejoy, “Nigeria: The Ibadan School and Its Critics,” in *African Historiographies: What History for Which Africa?* Ed. Bogumil Jewsiewicki and David Newbury (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1986), 202.
66. A. Smith, “The Contemporary Significance of the Academic Ideals of the Sokoto ‘Jihad,’” in Yusufu Bala Usman, ed., *Studies in the History of the Sokoto Caliphate: The Sokoto Seminar Papers* (Zaria: Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University for the Sokoto State History Bureau, 1979).
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68. J. F. Ade Ajayi, “Canada Provides Food for Thought,” *West Africa* (May 26, 1980), 296.
69. Obaro Ikime, *Through Changing Scenes: Nigerian History, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1979).
70. See, e.g., Ikime, *Fall of Nigeria*.
71. Afigbo, *Poverty of African Historiography*.
72. A. E. Afigbo, “Nigerian History and Unity,” paper presented to Historical Society of Nigeria conference, University of Ilorin, 1983.
73. Ayandele, “How Truly Nigerian Is Our Nigerian History?” 19–35.
74. Falola, *African Historiography*.
75. Bill Freund, *Capital and Labour in the Nigeria Tin Mines* (Atlantic Highlands, NY: Humanities Press, 1981).
76. J. D. Omer-Cooper, “The Contribution of the University of Ibadan,” 30.
77. For the definition and relevance of social and cultural history, see, e.g., Alf Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, trans. William Templer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

## Chapter 16

1. A substantial part of this essay has previously appeared in Max Paul Friedman and Padraig Kenney, eds., *Partisan Histories: The Past in Contemporary Global Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 145–64.
2. Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999), provides an overview of the country's history. For a companion volume on the country's culture, see Toyin Falola, *Culture and Customs of Nigeria* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000).
3. O. Arikpo, *The Development of Modern Nigeria* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1967).
4. Usman Abba, ed., *Sir Ahmadu Bello: A Legacy* (Jos, Nigeria: self published and printed by ITF Printers, 1992), 54.
5. Ikime, *Groundwork of Nigerian History*.
6. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*; and Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*.
7. F. A. O. Schwarz, *Nigeria: The Tribe, the Nation, or the Race* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965); and Richard L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).
8. S. E. Oyovbaire, *Federalism in Nigeria: A Study of the Development of the Nigerian State* (London: Macmillan, 1985).
9. Allison A. Ayida, *Rise and Fall of Nigeria* (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 1990).
10. Ismail A. B. Balogun, *The Life and Works of Uthman Dan Fodio: The Muslim Reformer of West Africa* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1975).
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13. C. Whitaker, *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946–66* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).
14. Ahmadu Bello, *My Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962).
15. See, e.g., Adamu, *Hausa Factor in West African History*.
16. For an elaboration of the political strategy based on Islam, see Jonathan T. Reynolds, *The Time of Politics (Zamanin Siyasa): Islam and the Politics of Legitimacy in Northern Nigeria, 1950–1966* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999).
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20. Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Politics, and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1993).
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28. See, e.g., Isidore Okpewho, *Once upon a Kingdom: Myth, Hegemony, and Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).
29. *Nigeria: Report of the Panel Appointed by the Federal Military Government to Investigate the Issue of the Creation of More States and Boundary Adjustments in Nigeria* (Lagos: Federal Government Printer, 1975), 13.
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33. Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000).
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This compilation excludes some of the works cited in the endnotes to the chapters. While not exhaustive, it is indicative of the range, depth, and breadth of works written on Nigeria at various times and by various people.

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# Index

- Abayomi, Kofoworola, 42, 51, 90–91, 93–94, 153  
Abeokuta, 16, 42, 63, 79, 87, 96, 116, 180  
Abomey, 107  
Achebe, Chinua, 223  
Achebe, Nwando, 42, 86, 90  
Action Group, 51, 114, 159, 161, 224  
Adebayo, Akanmu, 61, 67, 76  
Adeboye, Olunfunke, 65  
Adeleye, R. A., 163, 204, 234  
Aderinto, Saheed, 15  
Adesina, C. O., 65  
Adewoye, Omoniyi, 73  
Afigbo, A. E., 99–114  
Afonja, 133–35, 137–38  
African historical studies, 68  
agriculture, 60–64, 92, 107, 138  
Ahmadu Bello University, 181, 201, 235  
Ajayi, J. F. Ade, 115–28  
Ajayi, S. A., 312, 321  
Akintola, S. L. A., 172, 306  
Alagoa, E. J., xii, 25, 91, 132, 235  
Albert, Olawale, 72  
Allah, 10–11, 132  
Amadiume, Ifi, 83, 90, 153  
Amina, Queen, 42, 91, 153  
Anene, J. C., 164, 180, 186, 228, 233, 235  
Aniwura, Efunsetan, 42, 91, 153, 155  
Arabic, 5, 10–11, 31, 134–35, 161, 163, 229–30, 233, 248; culture, 163; literature, 11  
archaeology, 23  
archival administration and records, 36  
Arewa House, 230  
Aro Expedition, 101–2  
Arochukwu, 230  
Asiwaju, A. I., 235  
Atanda, J. A., 126–42  
Awe, Bolanle, 143–56  
Awolowo, Obafemi, 32, 51, 170, 254, 257  
Ayandele, E. A., xii, 13–14, 41, 49, 68, 100, 102, 109–10, 117–18, 125–26  
Azikiwe, Nnamdi, 32, 51, 126, 170, 172, 223, 256–57  
Balewa, Tafawa, 51, 114, 206, 245, 274  
Basden, G. T., 20, 44, 70, 78, 88–89, 92  
Bayajida legend, 150  
Bello, Mohammed, 9–12  
Benin, 6, 7, 25, 29, 30, 43, 45, 93, 103, 230; indirect rule in, 45, 46, 100, 101, 235; writing on, 25, 45–46, 101, 157, 164. *See also* Igbafe, P. A.  
Benin Historical Research Scheme, 33  
Benin River, 166–67  
Berry, Sara, 63  
Biobaku, Saburi, 40, 84, 116, 121, 182, 228, 230–31  
biographical works, 51, 144, 169–70  
biographical studies, 25, 69, 84, 95, 158, 166–70, 175, 190–93  
Blyden, Wilmot, 219, 220–21, 224, 226  
Bonny, 91, 114, 153  
Britain, 21, 44, 51–52, 55, 56, 63, 66, 102, 106, 157, 172, 174, 187–89, 225, 227  
Callaway Barbara, 84  
Callaway, Helen, 87  
capitalism and modernization, 55  
chiefs and warriors, 15  
chieftaincy rivalry, 167  
Christian expansion, 5  
Christian missionaries, 13, 15, 20, 31, 88, 102, 116–17, 127, 248, 252

- Christianity, 1, 3, 6, 13–14, 16, 18, 31, 43, 49, 69, 77, 80, 88, 116–18, 120, 128, 160–62, 207, 210, 216–17, 219–20
- Christians, 206–7, 210, 216, 220, 228, 232, 235, 240, 243, 248
- Chuku, Gloria, 42, 64–65, 74, 86, 92, 95
- churches and mission schools, 13
- civil war, 77, 99, 108, 123, 161–63, 176, 188, 233, 236, 239, 256–57, 260–61
- cocoa, 62–64, 66, 89, 247
- Cold War, 51, 173, 223
- Coles, Catherine, 90
- colonialism: African response to, 168; anthropologists and, 21, 70; benefits of, 88–89; capitalist economy and, 198; education and, 228; establishment of, 101–2; and indirect rule, 100–4, 129–31; and modern African historiography, 124; negative effects on women, 89–90; and police, 194; and status of women, 85–88; termination of, 131; and writing, 20–21
- conflict, 209
- contemporary Nigeria, 171–75, 184–99
- corruption, 250
- crime: and social control, 74; history, 73–77
- Crowder, Michael, 13, 45, 101, 231
- cultural nationalism, 17, 118
- cultural response to race, 218–22
- currency, 18, 75, 219, 222; counterfeiting, 76; and monetization, 60–61
- Dahomey, 36, 93, 132, 138, 235
- dan Fodio, Uthman. *See* Uthman dan Fodio
- democracy, 26, 36, 52, 185–86, 201, 239, 246, 248, 250, 260, 262
- Denzer, LaRay, 42, 82, 84–87, 90–93, 143–44, 151
- development theory, 205
- Dike, K. O., 13, 22, 27–36, 226–27
- discrimination, 87, 173, 224, 245–46, 257, 259–60
- divorce, legalization of, 152
- documentation of history, 17, 58, 50; limitations of, 25, 32, 72. *See also* fragmentation of history, 239–63
- Arewa House; Institute of African Studies; Women's Research and Documentation Center
- eastern Nigeria, xiii, 32, 46, 48, 50, 62, 64, 69, 78, 90, 100, 112, 230, 232–33, 241, 262
- Eastern Nigerian Guardian*, 32, 50, 78
- economic history: of colonial Nigeria, 59–60; of precolonial Nigeria, 58–59
- Edo, 7, 45, 107, 140, 241, 259
- Edo, Victor O., 45
- education, 113, 197
- Edundare, R. O., 53
- Egba, 121, 123, 136–38, 145, 147, 228
- Egbe Omo Oduduwa, 254
- Egharevba, Jacob, 229
- Ekechi, Felix, xv, 13–14, 62, 69, 80, 117
- Ekeh, Peter, 125, 209–10
- Ekiti, 64, 89, 91, 115, 123, 138, 144–45, 147–48, 155
- elective representation, 189
- ethnicity, vii, 12, 19, 40, 42, 122–23, 129, 141–42, 157, 160, 178, 207–8, 237, 240, 242, 246, 254–55, 256, 258, 260–62; and modern nation, 242–45; and richness of diversities, 25
- Eurocentrism, 200, 216, 218, 219, 225; and writing, 121
- Europe, 4, 16, 55–60, 62, 63, 66, 68–71, 82, 85, 87, 227
- explorers, xii, 4, 12–13, 15, 22, 40, 43, 58, 70, 92, 105, 124, 136, 148, 160
- extractive industries and industrialization, 66–67
- Fadipe, N. A., 71, 74–75, 78
- Falola, Toyin, xi–xii, 17, 50, 56, 59–60, 66–67, 71, 76, 121, 129, 144, 156
- family, 20, 31–32, 47, 51, 63, 69–71, 74, 77–78, 80–81, 92–93, 106, 140, 166–67, 179; and marriage, 77–81
- females: chieftaincy title of, 86; educated elites, 93–94; war deities, 155
- feminist, 215
- Forrest, Tom, 65–66
- fragmentation of history, 239–63

- Freund, Bill, 67, 238  
 Fulani in Ilorin politics, 134
- gender, xiii, 32, 42, 54, 64, 68, 70, 72, 82–97; studies, 143–56; and history, 155–56
- genocide, 255–57
- Geoge, Abosede, 93
- God, 17, 111, 118, 220, 253
- goddesses, 73, 155
- gods, 73–74, 108, 134, 155, 193
- Hadith, 8, 9, 11
- Hamitic hypothesis, 21, 106
- Hausa-Fulani, 12, 19, 123, 135, 170, 200, 235, 243, 245–46, 251–52, 254, 255, 256–57
- Hayford, Casely, 220, 303
- heroes and heroines, 110, 224
- Hinds, Allister, 63
- Historical Society of Nigeria, 99, 115, 126, 160, 185, 229, 263
- historiography: African, 215–38; as discipline of study in Nigeria, xiii; nationalist, 22–26; of development of Nigerian, xiii, 26, 216; of modern African, 4; of population movements, 6; of precolonial period, 235; of private business and entrepreneurship, 64–66; of state and empire building, 24, 39–42
- history: and memory, 5; in education, 109; interpretation of, 18–19; and scholarship, 126; women's, 82–96
- Hogendorf, Jan, 48, 53, 100, 102
- Hopkins, A. G., 53–54
- Ibadan history, 144–49
- Ibadan school of history, 54, 110, 125, 138, 225–36, 238
- Ibadan-Ijaiye War, 121–22
- Ibadan, 15–16, 22–27, 30, 36, 42, 47, 54, 56, 60, 62, 65
- Ibibio, 95, 101
- Ifeka-Moller, Caroline, 84, 95
- Ifemesia, C. C., 109, 232–33
- Igbafe, P. A., 23, 25, 45, 46, 100–101, 157, 164, 235
- Igbo, 18, 43, 45, 51, 62, 64, 65, 74, 78, 83, 86–88, 90, 92, 95–96, 99–114
- Ijebu, 15, 76, 91, 94, 102, 121, 123, 136–38, 145–47, 168
- Ikime, Obaro, 157–70
- Ille-Ife, 20, 115, 230, 233, 254
- imperialism, 4, 49, 53, 56–58, 69, 84, 103, 124, 146, 175, 215–18, 223–23, 225, 238
- indigenous knowledge, 15–17, 50
- indirect rule, 12, 25, 44–47, 52, 86, 100–104, 129–31, 142, 157, 234–35, 237, 241; and traditional political institutions, 44–48
- Inikori, J. E., 74
- Institute of African Studies, 230
- intellectuals, local, 15–17
- intergroup relations, 157–65
- international institutions, 201
- International Monetary Fund, 204–5
- internecine wars and revolutions, 144–45
- Isichei, Elizabeth, 43, 99–100, 104–5
- Islam, 6–12, 19, 30, 125, 128, 135, 161, 189, 207, 232–37, 241, 247–49, 252–54; adoption of, 8; historiography and, 11; intelligentsia and, 8, 248; literacy and, 7; political reforms and purification of, 9; science and philosophy of, 9; traditions of, 7–12; writings of, 11
- Itsekiri, 47, 100, 157–59, 162, 164, 166, 168
- Iweriebor, Ehiedu, 51
- jihad, 7–10, 12, 19, 40, 119, 134–35, 138, 145–46, 160–61, 163–64, 200–201, 204, 234, 235, 243, 248, 251–53, 261; history of, 251–54; literature of, 8–9. *See also* Sokoto Caliphate
- jihadist, 9, 12, 134–35, 138, 145–46, 251–52
- Johnson, Cheryl, 42, 82
- Johnson, Samuel, 5, 17, 19, 48, 69, 71, 89, 118, 130, 135, 148, 220

- Jones, G. I., 21  
 judicial settlements, 47
- Kaduna, 23, 27, 29–30, 32, 60, 77, 261  
 Kambasa, Queen, 91, 153  
 Kapteijns, Lidwien, 22  
 Katsina, 9, 15, 200, 202–3  
 Killingray, David, 48, 75  
 King's College, 22, 226  
 Korieh, Chima, 64, 87  
 Kriger, Colleen, 93  
 Kuper, Hilder, 72  
 Kwa, 106, 140, 158; linguistic subfamily, 106
- Lagos, 16, 23–24, 27, 29–30, 32, 40–41, 50, 63, 77–78, 80, 85, 87–88, 94, 115–16, 138, 143, 148, 168, 181–82, 186; female elites, 88  
 Lander, John and Richard, 12–13, 92, 136  
 Last, Murray, 23, 200, 230, 232, 234  
 law enforcement, 48, 74, 193–95. *See also* crime; Nigerian Police Force  
 Law, Robin, 17, 24, 40, 58, 121  
 Lawal, Adebayo, 53, 66  
 legends, 107, 122, 140, 149, 160, 202  
 legitimate commerce, 14, 43, 58, 62, 159, 166, 167  
 Leith-Ross, Sylvia, 20–21, 24  
 Lindsay, Lisa, 78–79  
 linguists, 4, 6, 22–24, 40–41, 59, 106, 109, 112, 140–41  
 literacy, 3, 7, 10, 14, 16, 161, 249, 255  
 literature, 50; on economic history, 53–54; Arabic, 11. *See also* oral literature  
 Little, Kenneth, 89  
 Lovejoy, Paul, 48, 53, 59, 100, 102  
 Lugard, Frederick, 22, 28, 198
- Macaulay, Herbert, 32, 51, 94, 186, 192–93  
 Mann, Kristin, 24, 40, 42, 77, 84, 143  
 marginalization and historical narrative, 257–60  
 marriage, 72, 77–80; masculinity and, 79; woman-to-woman, 88. *See also* polygamy
- Martin, Susan, 62  
 Marxism, 51, 54–57, 64–65, 126–27, 169, 191, 200, 207, 210, 235–36, 238  
 masculinity, 79, 169  
 materialism, 178  
 Mba, Nina Emma, 42, 84, 143, 151  
 Mbaise, 78  
 memory and relevance, 260–63  
 Middle Eastern origin, 140  
 military, 9, 14–15, 20, 40–42, 45, 52, 57, 68, 77, 91, 100, 102–3, 107–8, 111; aristocracy, 145; intervention, 181  
 mission studies, 116–24  
 missionaries, 3–4, 12–16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 31, 43, 49–50, 55–56, 58, 70, 80, 88, 92, 100, 102, 104–5, 115–119, 122, 124, 127, 130, 147, 148, 180, 183, 217, 219–20, 234, 248, 252  
 modernity, 18–19  
 Mohammed, Muritala, 206–7  
 Mohammed, Prophet, 11  
 morality and politics, 177  
 Morton-Williams, Peter, 135–36  
 Mowoe, Mukoko, 169–70  
 myths, 50, 102, 107, 113, 122, 140, 149–50, 174, 202, 227, 231, 244, 254–55, 261
- Nast, Heidi, 42  
 nation building, 33, 176–80, 196–99  
 National Archives, 27–37; establishment of, 23; problems of, 33–36  
 National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, 244  
 National Council of Nigerian Citizens, 51, 161  
 nationalism: constitutional history and, 171; decolonization and, 48–52; development and, 174; historiography and, 236–38; political history and, 171–75  
 Native Authority, 45, 47, 131  
 Native Court, 46, 101–2, 168  
 Native Revenue Ordinance, 104  
 Négritude, 221, 223, 231  
 Neocolonialism, 52, 57, 152, 158, 200, 205

- Ngwa, 62  
 Nicolson, I. F., 186  
 Niger Delta, 13, 22, 25, 40, 43, 47, 58, 102, 105, 112, 158, 162, 164–66, 168, 209–10, 219, 231, 235, 241, 258–60  
 Nigeria: civil service, 175–76; colonial government, 27; ethnic groups, 86, 105, 131; historiography, 1, 200  
 Nigeria Police Force, 48, 76, 186, 194–95  
 Nigerian Civil War, 99, 108, 161, 176, 192, 197, 206, 236  
 Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 171  
 Nigerian Records Survey, 27, 29  
*Nigerian Spokesman*, 78  
 Nigerian state, creation of, 186  
 Nigerian studies, xi  
 Nigerian Youth Movement, 51, 94, 172  
 Nkrumah, Kwame, 3–4, 26, 52, 57, 172, 200, 223  
 Nnobi, 83  
 Northern People's Congress, 12, 51, 244, 252  
 Nri, 107, 113  
 Obasanjo, Olusegun, 201  
*Ogun*, 108  
 Ogunremi, G. O., 59, 69  
 Oguntomisin, G. O., 121, 129, 137, 144  
 Ojo, Olatunji, 64, 89, 139  
 Olaniyi, Rasheed, 77  
 Old Oyo Empire, 24, 58, 74, 121, 129–30, 132–38, 141, 145–46, 148, 160  
 Olomu, Nana, 166–69  
 Olukoju, Ayodeji, 60–61, 76  
 Olusanya, G. O., 26, 50, 171–83  
 Omu, Fred, 32, 50, 235  
 Onimode, Bade, 53, 56, 201, 204  
 Onwuejeogwu, M., 106  
 Oputal Panel, 261  
 oral history, 5–6, 36, 59, 72, 83, 116, 143, 148–50, 156  
 oral literature, 17, 59, 134, 139, 149  
 oral traditions, 5–7, 17–19, 23–25, 39, 43, 50, 59, 83, 107–9, 116, 122, 140–41, 143, 147–50, 154, 218, 224, 226, 229, 233, 258  
 Oriental hypothesis, 106  
*oriki*, 139, 149–50  
 Oyemakinde, Wale, 14, 53–54  
 Oyewumi, Oyeronke, 42, 86, 153  
 Oyo, fall of, 132–33  
 pagan, 40, 203, 248, 251–53  
 palm oil, 43, 62, 66, 159, 168  
 Pan-Africanism, 50, 223, 256  
 patriarchy, 6, 83, 88  
 pawnship, criminalization of, 48  
 peace and trade treaty, 148  
 peasants, 59, 61, 169, 207, 247  
 Pelewura, Alimotu, 42, 90, 94  
 plantations, 61–63, 131  
 poetry. See *oriki*  
 police brutality, 208  
 political and economic philosophy, 26  
 political nationalism, 49, 50  
 political organization in northern Nigeria, 13  
 political power and social stability, 8  
 political reforms, 222  
 politics: of ethnicity, 254–55; of promotion, 182  
 polygamy, 16, 49, 80, 88, 117, 223  
 postcolonial school system, 113  
 precolonial leadership and institutions, 24  
 precolonial military tactics, 149  
 propaganda, 174, 206–7  
 prostitution, 75  
 Queen's College, 87, 94  
 Quran, 8, 11, 252  
 race, 21–22, 29, 106, 117, 118–19, 124, 140, 202  
 racial ideologies, 124  
 racism, x, 17, 18, 215–16, 221; academic response to, 222–25  
 radical historiography, 200–211  
 Radio Nigeria, 36, 138  
 railway, 53, 56, 57, 60–61, 63, 67, 77, 79, 87, 125, 173, 185, 187–88, 198, 241, 247, 257

- religion, x, 6–7, 10, 30, 70–71, 73, 108, 161, 200, 204, 206, 207, 210, 216, 219, 220–21, 235, 239, 251–52, 260
- representation of Africans, 18–19
- Ross, William Alston, 47
- Sai, Akiga, 17, 69–70
- Sarauta* system, 8, 200, 202–3, 216, 252
- science, 9, 26, 36, 53, 72–73, 109, 126, 140, 195–96, 217, 221, 227, 263
- Senghor, Léopold, 221, 223–24
- sexuality, 263
- Shaw, Thurstan, 106, 230
- Sierra Leone, 16, 31, 84, 116, 172
- slave trade, 3, 6, 13–14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24–25, 40, 42–43, 48, 56, 58, 74–75, 88, 100, 102–3, 127, 158–59, 164; transatlantic, 13–14, 18, 22, 24, 40, 42–43, 56, 58, 74, 158, 164, 190, 215
- slavery, 40, 48, 78, 88, 100, 102, 117, 119, 144, 158, 221, 263
- Smith, Abdullahi, 134, 180–81, 200–201, 204, 228, 231, 235
- Smith, Mary F., 71
- Smith, Robert, 121, 144, 234
- social and economic structures, 74
- social anthropology, 19–22
- social change, 70–73, 89
- social history of Nigeria, 25, 41, 68–81
- sociology, 71, 126, 263
- Sokoto, 7, 9, 10, 30, 165, 198, 251–52
- Sokoto Caliphate, 9, 12, 24, 40, 89, 92–93, 103, 138, 161, 163, 198, 200–1, 204, 230, 232, 236, 243, 248, 251–52.
- See also* Adeleye, R. A.; Last, Murray; Usman, Yusufu Bala
- Sokoto History Bureau, 230
- Talbot, P. A., 20, 44, 69–71, 78
- Tamuno, Tekena N., 184–99
- Tarikh*, 9, 23, 229
- technology, 263
- Temu, A., 41
- textile, 63, 93
- Tiv, 6
- tradition: and culture, 73; of succession, 46
- tribe, 246–47
- tributary state, 146
- underdevelopment, 25, 53, 55–56, 67, 128, 179, 196, 201, 205, 209, 211, 249, 257–58, 261
- United Nations, 84, 99, 151, 173, 259
- Universal Negro Improvement Association, 172
- University College, Ibadan, 22, 30, 56, 99, 115, 180, 185, 227. *See also* Ibadan school of history; Women's Research and Documentation Center
- University of Ibadan. *See* University College, Ibadan
- University of Nigeria, 23, 99, 233
- Urhobo, 47, 100, 157–59, 162, 166, 168–69
- Usman, Yusufu Bala, 200–212
- Uthman dan Fodio, 8–9, 40, 160, 164, 200–201, 204, 248
- Van-Allen, Judith, 84
- Vaughan, Olufemi, 45
- violence, 43, 45, 48, 72, 103, 111, 131, 135, 160, 184, 191, 195, 198, 208, 243
- warfare and revolution, 24
- warrant chiefs, 25, 45, 90, 100–104, 157, 164, 232, 256
- Warri, development of, 169–70
- Webster, J. B., 80
- West Africa, 7, 12, 13, 32, 40, 45, 48, 50, 53, 58, 61, 78, 88, 116, 140, 141, 166
- West African Pilot*, 32, 50, 78
- West African Student Union, 172
- Western capitalist exploitation, 56
- Western education, 15, 18, 42, 49, 51, 55–56, 74, 139, 163, 180; elitism of, 1, 216; in historicism, 141
- Western traditions of writing, 12–15
- widowhood practices, 89
- women, 13, 25, 41, 43, 49–51, 54, 63–65, 68–70, 72, 77, 79, 82–96; colonial, 93–96; contributions of, 41; precolonial, 90–93; and visibility, 90–96; voices of, 83

- women's history, 82–96  
Women's Research and Documentation Center (WORDOC), 85, 143, 151–53  
Women's War, 46, 49–50, 72, 77, 83, 95, 131  
World Bank, 96, 205  
Yoruba, 5–6, 10, 14–19, 24, 31, 33, 40, 45, 47, 48, 50, 58, 69, 71, 73–142; arts and crafts, 139; ethnicity, 129–31; ethno-cultural cleavages, 164; history and culture, 132–42; language, 130; monarchs, 123; women, 143–56. *See also* literature, oral
- Zazzau, 91, 203  
Zulu, 234, 235

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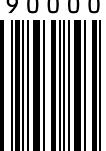
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