The Yoruba in Transition
The Yoruba in Transition

History, Values, and Modernity

EDITED BY

Toyin Falola and Ann Genova

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS
Durham, North Carolina
To Professor E. A. Ayandele
for his contribution to Nigerian studies
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Acknowledgments

This volume is comprised of papers that were originally presented at the international conference Perspectives on Yoruba History and Culture, which was held at the University of Texas at Austin from March 26 to March 28, 2004. Enthusiasm for the conference brought together scholars of Yoruba studies from all over the world. During the three-day period, panelists and participants discussed important issues within the field of Yoruba studies. The goal of the conference included reviewing the current state of the literature and methodology as well as identifying new areas worthy of study.

Within the rich discussions during the conference on Yoruba culture, several themes stood out. Scholars passionately discussed the elastic nature of Yoruba culture by praising some aspects and criticizing others. Of particular interest was the role of women, the use of customary law, and the role of the Yoruba in national politics. The conclusions reached called for the preservation of aspects such as language, with a particular emphasis on Yoruba proverbs, and the change of others such as the treatment of women. Participants concluded that education within the family as well as the classroom was the best place to instill traditional and modern Yoruba values.

A multi-disciplinary conference of this magnitude could not have been possible without the contributions of many. We would like to thank first all the participants that traveled great distances to be with us in Austin, Texas. We are grateful to the graduate students that helped us run the conference (José Barragán, Elizabeth Day, Roy Doron, Tyler Fleming, Matthew Heaton, André Johnson, Brandon Marsh, Ashley Rothrock, and Anne Turnbull) as well as Sam Saverance and Laura Flack. We would like to extend a special thanks to Aina Olomo and the Egungun of Ile Olokun Sanya Awopeju and the University of Texas’ African Student Association for bringing to life the richness of Yoruba culture during the conference. The departments and organizations that supported us financially include the Departments of History, Government, English, and Theatre and Dance. Also, to the Center for African and African American Studies, the Office of the Vice President, the University Co-Op, the School of Music, College of Fine Arts, Office of the Dean of Students, Office
of Graduate Studies, Department of Technology, Literacy, and Culture, and the Texas Cowboys Lectureship, we would like to extend our gratitude.

Toyin Falola and Ann Genova, *University of Texas at Austin*
Contributors

Jamaine Abidogun holds a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in African and African-American studies from the University of Kansas. She has studied and conducted social science research in Ghana, Nigeria, and the United States. She is currently the Program Coordinator for Southwest Missouri State University’s BSED Secondary Social Studies program in the Department of History at Springfield, MO and head advisor for their MSED programs in history and in social science. Abidogun has taught in both secondary and higher education. She formerly held the position of Education Program Consultant for the Kansas African-American Advisory Commission, Department of Human Resources for the State of Kansas. She has an interdisciplinary background that incorporates African Diaspora studies with social studies education.

Julius O. Adekunle holds a PhD in African History from Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada. He is an Associate Professor of African History at the Department of History and Anthropology, Monmouth University, West Long Branch, New Jersey. He has formerly held teaching positions at Dalhousie and St. Mary’s University in Halifax, and at Tennessee State University, Nashville. He teaches Western Civilization, African and Caribbean history. He has published several book chapters and research publications in journals. His research interests include ethno-religious politics in Nigeria and his recent publication is Politics and Society in Nigeria’s Middle Belt: Boko Haram and the Emergence of a Political Identity (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004).

Lateef M. Adetona studied at the Lagos State University and the multi-disciplinary department of Religions at the University of Ilorin. He is currently a Lecturer Grade One of Islamic Contemporary Studies in the Department of Religions at Lagos State University in Nigeria. He has over a score of academic contributions in reputable local and international journals. He is the elected editor of Religions, the Journal of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions (2004-2005). He is also a member of the editorial board and serves as business manager of the Lagos State University Journal of Arabic and Islamic

Ibigbolaide Simon Aderibigbe is a Senior Lecturer of the Philosophy of Religion at the Lagos State University in Nigeria. He is the author of *Fundamentals of Philosophy of Religion and Aquinas’ Five Ways Proof of God’s Existence: A Contemporary Perspective*. He has also published many journal articles and chapters in books. He served for many years as the Editor of *Religions’ Educator, the Journal of Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions and Education*. He is currently finishing book projects on religious belief and abortion and medical ethics. His areas of research and teaching include the philosophy of religion and African religion. He is married with children.

Jacob A. Adetunji, PhD, was trained as a Demographer at the Australian National University, Canberra. He had post-doctoral research experience at Harvard University and the Population Studies Center of the University of Pennsylvania. He was formerly Assistant Professor of Sociology at Bowling Green State University, but currently works as Senior Technical Advisor at the Bureau for Global Health, US Agency for International Development. His research interests include population and development, maternal and child health, family planning and reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS. He has published several research papers on these topics in international peer-reviewed journals. He has also conducted some research studies among the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria.

Jarre Ajayi is the Executive Director of the African Agency for an Enhanced Socio-Ethic and Traditional Order (ASETO). He is an associate member of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria and had served as a one time assistant general secretary of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). He is also a literary figure of note whose works, including poetry and prose, have won local and international acclaim. He is a Poet of Merit since 1994. Through his works and the agency he heads, he has been an advocate of synthesizing the positive ideals of the past with a view toward reshaping the present to be able to have a more desirable future. A veteran journalist, Ajayi lectures part-time at the Nigerian Institute of Journalists (Ibadan Campus) and edits a bilingual community newspaper in Nigeria.
B. O. Akintunde, is an agricultural engineer specializing in crop processing. He is currently pursuing a doctoral degree at the Department of Agricultural Engineering at the University of Ibadan. He is a Senior Lecturer at the Federal College of Agriculture and has published a number of papers on the design and construction of agricultural processing machines, survey of post-harvest losses, and storage structures of some fruits, vegetables, and cereals. Other publications include papers on the effect of tillage methods on planting cowpea and the safety and causes of tractor-related accidents.

Akeem Ayode Akinwale is at Lagos State University. His research interests include the social response to criminal activity in Nigeria.

Mojeed Olujinmi A. Alabi, LLB, PhD, is a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. He taught Political Science at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria (1990–1998) before he ventured into practical politics for four years (1990–2003). He is now a Senior Lecturer in Comparative Politics and International Relations at Babcock University in Ilisan-Remo, Nigeria. He is the author of The Supreme Court in the Nigerian Political System, and has articles in scholarly books and learned journals.

Oluwatosin Ige Alo (MSc), is a Graduate Assistant at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Asiyambo R. Abidemi BSc, MURP, was trained at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria and the University of Ibadan in Ibadan, Nigeria. He is currently completing his doctoral dissertation at the University of Ibadan. He is a past recipient of CODESRIA award, a small grant for thesis writing. He is also a Lecturer in the Department of Geography and Regional Planning at Olabisi Onabanjo University in Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria. His research interests are in gender, urban geography/planning, housing, and environment and population studies.

Adewole Akinwumi Atere, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology and Penology at the Lagos State University in Lagos, Nigeria. He is a Co-editor of Captives Captor and Society: A Sociological Analysis of Adjustment Mechanism of Prisoners in Nigeria. He recently co-edited Crime Management in Nigeria. He has several publications in scholarly journals. He is currently working on The Treatment of the Elderly in Prisons.

Tunji Azeez, theater artist, scholar, and poet has a BA (Honors) in Dramatic Arts and an MA in Theater Arts from the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria and the University of Ibadan in Ibadan, Nigeria respectively. A one-time Secretary-General of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Ife Chapter

**Ademola Babalola**, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. He teaches courses in the areas of social change and development, Nigerian societies and cultures, and comparative social institutions. Babalola has published extensively on how the introduction and adoption of commercial flue-cured tobacco production in the Oyo north division, under the auspices of the British American Tobacco (BAT), affected the socio-economic lives of the people. Babalola also has published works on how socio-economic development in Nigeria, from pre-colonial times until the present day, affects the lives of Nigerians.

**Bamidde Abiona Badejo**, is a Senior Lecturer and Head of the Geography and Planning Department at Lagos State University in Lagos, Nigeria. He is also an Assistant Director at the School of Part-Time Studies at the university and the Executive Director at the African Research Institute of Transport and Communication Development, which is a non-governmental organization based in Lagos. He also served as the Acting Director for the Centre for Planning Studies at the University. Badejo is widely published with five books, several articles in reputable journals, and chapters in books. He has attended many conferences with paper presentations locally and internationally. He has over twenty years of research, teaching, and administrative experience in the academic/university system.

**Oluyemisi Bamgbose**, LL.M, BL, is an Associate Professor of Criminal Law and Criminology in the Faculty of Law at the University of Ibadan in Ibadan, Nigeria. She is the author of several articles and chapters in books. She is particularly interested in the human rights of women and adolescents. Her articles on these issues include “Violence against Women: A Reoccurring International and Criminological Problem,” “Human Rights and Health Issues arising from Street Trading Practices among Young Girls in Nigeria,” “Teenage Prostitution: The Future of Female Adolescents in Nigeria,” and “Customary Law Practices and Violence against Women.” She is a co-editor of a book on
contemporary challenges of adolescents in Nigeria. She was a visiting professor in criminal procedure at Marquette University Law School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She is currently the chairperson of the Federal Government Study Group on the Death Penalty in Nigeria.

Ashimuneze Heanacho, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Philosophy and Educational Theory at Central Michigan University. He is the author of several papers, including “Forms of Knowledge Theory,” *Review of Philosophy and Social Science (RJPSS)* 38, 2 (2002): 42–88. He is also the 2004/2005 Series Editor of the RJPSS’s issue “Mind, Culture, and Education” and a founding editor of the forthcoming journal of Africology, *Episteme*. Heanacho is completing a book manuscript, *Optimal Education*, a study of distributive justice, due in 2005.

Mary E. Modupe Kolawole, PhD, is Professor and Chair of English and Women’s Studies at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. She is the author of many international articles and books including *Womanism and African Consciousness* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1997), *Gender Perception and Development in Africa* (Lagos: Arrabon, 1998) and *Zulu Sofola: Her Life and Her Works* (Ibadan: Caltop, 1999). She has been a recipient of the National Endowment for the Humanities and Association of Commonwealth Universities. She was a Rockefeller Fellow at Cornell University, a guest researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute in Sweden, DAAD Fellow at Humboldt University in Germany, and an Associate of the Africa Gender Institute in South Africa among others. She is the National Coordinator of Women Writing Africa and a consultant to agencies such as Ford and the United Nations University. She is currently interrogating gender theories from a cross-cultural and trans-national perspective.

Adebayo A. Lawal, PhD, is a Professor of History at the University of Lagos. He co-edited *Fundamentals of Economic History* (Ileja: First Academic Publishers, 2003) and is the author of several articles and book chapters on the economic history of Nigeria, West Africa and Africa. He is a founding member and has been the acting secretary of American Studies Association of Nigeria (ASAN). He was a Fulbright and Rockefeller scholar in the 1990s. Currently he is the head of the History Department and Strategic Studies where he is researching on Ila’s relations with the Igbonina up to 1900.

Taiwo Makinde is in the Department of Public Administration at Obafemi Awolowo University. Her research interests include the views of women in Nigeria.

John Babatunde Bamidele Ojo received his PhD at Howard University in Washington, D.C.
Táiwò Cúnládé, MA, PGDJ, PhD (in view), is a Senior Lecturer in Yoruba and Communication Arts at Lagos State University in Lagos, Nigeria. He is the author of Ewi Igbalade and several scholarly articles and book chapters. He has co-authored Ijime Ede ati Litéso Yoruba books (Ibadan: Evans Brothers Nigeria Publishers, 1986). He has also edited Yoruba Gbode, National Journal of the Association of Teachers of the Yoruba Languages and Culture of Nigeria (1996-2000). He is also the editor-in-chief of Yoruba Ideas (Lagos: Glendora International Nigeria Publishers) and is currently working on Yoruba newspapers for his PhD thesis.

Jacob Oni, PhD, currently teaches Sociology at Roxbury Community College as an Adjunct Professor and does substitute teaching for the Boston public school system. He is a researcher, counselor and minister. He is the current New England Region Coordinator of Programs for the Deeper Christian Life Ministry.


Kefa M. Otiso is an urban and economic geographer with a PhD in Geography from the University of Minnesota. He is currently an assistant professor of Geography at Bowling Green State University. His work has appeared in refereed journals such as the Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography and Cities and in edited volumes such as a Contemporary Africa, Africa Volume 5, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2003), and Clothing and Footwear in African Industrialisation, edited by Dorothy McCormick and Christian Rogers (Pretoria: African Institute of Southern Africa, 2004).

Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani, is an Assistant Professor of History at Henderson State University. His teaching interests are African History, Black/Diaspora
History, History of Islam, and Modern Middle East. His areas of research include Economic, Political, and Urban History of Sub-Saharan Africa; Nationalism and Anti-Communism in West Africa; Imperialism and Colonialism in Africa; and post-1945 Anglo-American interest in West Africa. He recently received grants from the McMath Endowment, Ellis Faculty, and the University Development Fund at Henders on State University. He had previously received awards from UK Commonwealth Universities Association, Harry S. Truman Institute, and a national defense medal from the United State Army.

T. Y. Tunde-Akintinde, is a Lecturer in the Department of Food Science and Engineering at Ladoke University of Technology in Ogbomoso, Nigeria. She specializes in the optimization of food processes. Her current area of study is on the processing of fruits and vegetables to reduce post-harvest losses. She has published a number of papers, which include the optimization of the production process of soymilk, soybean oil, gari, and some sorghum products. Other papers involved the design and construction of some agricultural processing machines, and post-harvest losses of fruits and vegetables.

Anne Webb is a Master's Candidate of Linguistics at the University of Texas at Austin. She is currently conducting research on regional dialects of English. Her research interests include dialectology, border cultures, style and identity.
Introduction

Toyin Falola
Ann Genova

Elitism and Liberal Agenda

The emergence of elite history is one of the defining moments of the historiography of the Yoruba. During the nineteenth century, a pioneer elite emerged, thanks to Western education and Christianity. This elite played a prominent role in creating the idea of the Yoruba, both as a people and as a nation. So successful were they that one of them, Samuel Johnson, completed the longest history ever written on them, in the last decade of the nineteenth century.1 Samuel Johnson’s work demonstrates the power of literacy. The power was manifested in the establishment of newspapers, a development analyzed in this volume in the chapter by Táiwò Olúnládé. While not telling us much new information, Olúnládé’s emphasis on the survival of Yoruba newspapers should be noted. It demonstrates the continuity of the strategy of turning literacy into power, via the medium of the press. As he points out, Yoruba newspapers rise and fall, but there is never a vacuum, and the circulation number keeps rising. Of course, the impact of those published in English is much stronger. The diminishing role of the print media is not peculiar to Nigeria; in the era of Internet, no media outlet can be faster than moving a mouse around. One possibility of expansion may lie in the Yoruba newspapers being made available via Internet services.

Education has always been the key to the empowerment of the Yoruba and the construction of elitism. After 1940, the agenda of liberal reforms included a massive expansion of the education system. The dominant personality in

INTRODUCTION

this enterprise was the leading hero of the twentieth century, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. He was a strong advocate of free education, an issue that ashimuneze heanacho explores in his chapter. heanacho gives us the comprehensive road map to understand the development of Western education among the Yoruba. This new era began in 1955 with the introduction of Western education, an initiative that took elementary education to towns and villages. While that decision made Awolowo very famous, his larger agenda was to empower the Yoruba, making them competitive in Nigerian economy and politics.

The Yoruba have always constructed their identity in the context of inter-group relations within the region known as Yorubaland, as well as within the larger geographical regions of the Yoruba in Nigeria which eventually expanded from southwestern Nigeria to northern Nigeria and elsewhere. North-southers, too, intermingled with them, fashioning established strangers’ communities that generated conflicts and competitions. Hakeem Adenle-Tijani returns to this issue, by highlighting tensions in intra-group relations in Lagos in ways somewhat different from Sandra Barnes’ study on the same subject. To Tijani, the grip of a few patrons on thousands of clients has weakened, and the conduct of politics has become far more complicated. In Julius O. Adekunle’s essay, we see how people combine to attain political and economic objectives. Manifesting as associations, defined either narrowly or broadly, they show the attempts to pull resources for development purposes.

Also focusing on Lagos, Lateef M. Adetona shows how an Islamic organization, the Bamidele movement, rooted in traditionalism, projected itself on the larger community and went about recruiting new converts and expanding its membership. The strategy of the Bamidele movement was to reject the changes perceived as Western and corrosive. As the benefits of Western formal education became clearer, the Bamidele began to adjust, allowing the creation of Western-style schools while still running Quranic ones. While this blend continues, it is clear that today that the majority of Yoruba still opt for the route of Western education, although many have argued that Western education draws pupils toward the usage of European languages, dress, and culture away from those of their traditional ethnic groups. The issue of identity has emerged from this conflict.

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Identity and Negotiations

The Yoruba elite as well as the rest are confronted with issues of interaction and change. Never simple, these issues encompass daily acts of survival, household management, and mobility within economic and political spaces. Various essays address the complexity of identity and how human beings seek to communicate their values, project an image, and live their lives. Education remains the key, with Demola Babalola reminding us of the connection between ethnicity and the development of Western education. To Babalola, ethnicity has its positive elements, and the consciousness of it enables the idea of Western education to be connected to an ethnic-cum-political calculation.

Like elsewhere, the Yoruba respond to the exigencies of law, and the tensions between order and disorder. As to law, there is nothing new in the formulation of legal codes to deal with human relations. Before the onset of colonial rule, the Yoruba had their own form of law administered by the king. Also, there was a cultural expectation that anyone witnessing a dispute, is expected to settle the dispute. Although they were not written or codified, the laws were widely accepted. We see the example of law making among the Yoruba before the era of the British in the essay by Mojood Olujimmi A. Alabi, which characterizes that system as centralized, hierarchical, and republican. Alabi wants us to note the limits they imposed on the exercise of power, and to treat them as an important legacy to adapt for the present. For democracy to work today, the tradition of checks and balances that worked in the past must be embraced anew.

Some of the older elements have been reworked into what we may call, for want of a better term, the ambiguity of modern laws. Since independence, Nigeria has witnessed its political and, as a consequence, its judicial systems breaking down. Its government has been unable to effectively curb corruption and halt the downward spiral of its economy. In grappling with this issue, scholars have turned to issues of law. In debates on how to best reform them, the most prevalent solution has been a return to traditional forms of law. Olayemisi Bangbade supports this idea by suggesting that Nigeria reforms its criminal system with ideas from Yoruba culture, particularly with respect to laws relating to disputes. Her work builds on that of Alabi because the issues she raises have relevance for the present. However, the present society is not a particularly happy one, since it is undergoing profound moral decadence. The most notable example of this is the recent wave of e-fraud connected to the Yoruba.

Although the origin has not been confirmed, Nigerians are alleged to be the origin of the “419” scams. More specifically, the Yoruba, who are the dom-
inant ethnic group in Lagos, have been accused of this because the authors of
the letters use Yoruba names and Lagos addresses. The notorious 419 crimes
have internationalized the level of criminality among educated men and
women who use their talents for dubious means in ways explained by Anne
Webb in her chapter. Thanks to the Internet, 419 scams are global operations
that link the Yoruba to wider international networks of e-fraud. Anne Webb
even connects the transactions with issues of ethnic identity, for their capa-
bility to destroy a culture and its image.

But areas of positive activity are more numerous than those of criminality
which reveal the need to revisit history to bring out the best in Yoruba culture.
Three essays explore issues around family and lineage units. Motherhood as
an agency of empowering women is explored in Taiwo Makinde's essay. The
study of women in Africa has changed over time. When looking at the history
of Yoruba women since pre-colonial times, scholars have focused primarily
those working as political activists or within the upper class. However, within
the past ten years, scholars are focusing on ordinary women who work in the
markets or in their homes. Makinde joins this latter group with her progres-
sive characterizations of Yoruba women as wives, priestesses, daughters,
witches, and mothers. She highlights the idea that each generates various po-
sitive and negative responses. Concluding with a policy statement, Makinde
wants society to give women more power and resources to play their roles as
mothers.

Internal power structures in households remain important, as we are re-
minded in the chapter on age stratification by Jacob A. Adetunji. While age is
important to the Yoruba, and most especially within the household, Adetunji
shows how achievement, urbanization, and Western education are now erod-
ing its significance. His research focuses on a Yoruba community in Ekiti, with
which he conducted his research studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In
Ekiti, Adetunji explored the level of male and female participation in the com-
mercial production of rice. And he expanded his analysis to look at the con-
sequences of this work on marital relationships.

Like Adetunji, Jacob Oni focuses on the state of Ekiti, one of the Yoruba
states in southwestern Nigeria that formed out of the creation of 36 states in
1996. One of the northernmost states in Yorubaland, it is primarily rural, with
mountains and fertile land. The region is located at the bend of the Niger
River, where agriculture is the dominant economy activity. Within farming

communities such as this, the family plays an important role in the success of their livelihood. The inhabitants of Ekiti are patrilineal and practice either monogamy or polygamy. From his work in the region, Oni identifies casual statements and profound proverbs that capture aspects of family life. With examples of expressions that explain health and demographic issues, he focuses on the issue of polygamy. The study of polygamous marriages in Africa has been a major topic of research. While scholars in the West have tended in the past to focus more on women’s responses and why modern African societies continue the practice, scholars are beginning to focus, instead, on the impact this practice has on the family unit as a whole. To Oni, polygamous marriage is a scene of rivalry between co-wives based on child welfare. His work shows us a happy marriage of culture and methodology in ways that suggest new approaches to these issues.

Social beliefs are often sustained and complemented by religious ones. Ibi- bo lade Simon Aderibigbe demonstrates this kind of linkage between religion and traditional medical practices, with a focus on abortion. Traditionally, children were the main reason for marriage. A woman’s barrenness was seen as a curse, and the husband was justified in taking another wife. Traditional Yoruba belief rejected the practice of abortion, but it did not stop women from seeking them. Referring to the Ifa oracle (the unwritten scripture of this indigenous religion on which guides almost every aspect of a practitioner’s life), Aderibigbe cites passages that reject abortion. It is said to be derived from the Ifa’s opposition to adultery and its denunciation of killing human beings. Overall, Aderibigbe’s work asserts Yoruba beliefs into the wider global debate regarding abortion. In Yorubaland, we find the same contention that if abortion was legalized it could be regulated and more safe for women. Aderibigbe sees the debate over abortion as not only a cultural struggle, but also a political one. Societies all over the world are grappling with this issue, and the Yoruba are no exception. The issue of abortion highlights, also, the interplay between traditional medicine and Western medicine.

Throughout modern Nigeria, traditional medicine continues to play an important role. Although Western medicine is widely practiced, many Nigerians rely on these traditional remedies. Elaine Neil Orr, the daughter of a medical missionary who was stationed in Ogbomoso, Nigeria, understands the paral-


l role of Yoruba traditional medicine and Western medicine. During her youth, she fell ill and sought help from traditional healers. She wrote that, “[my] parents had taken medicine to Nigeria, but paradoxically, I would need Yoruba medicine in order to be healed.” As a citizen from another country, she looks at the Yoruba both as an insider and outsider. Her memoir, based on when she lived among the Yoruba in the 1950s and 1960s, revisits the place, telling us fascinating stories of engagement. She shows how practical experiences can be the roots of social activism. In defining herself, she is also defining the Yoruba.

Two chapters look ahead into the future. Many Yoruba warn about the future, painting pictures of doom and gloom, seeing the legacy of colonialism still alive and corrupting Nigeria. The most important rift within Nigeria exists between the predominantly Muslim north and the Christian south on both religious and political grounds. Since independence, more and more northern states have implemented Islamic, or sharia law, which has distanced these states from those of southern Nigeria. Politically, the history of this political tension between the north and south in Nigeria goes back to British colonialism. After almost a hundred years of colonial rule, the British began the handover of the colony to a Nigerian government. British favoritism toward northern Nigeria was evident, particularly during the 1959 election, when the British allegedly manipulated the situation for a northern win. Jare Ajayi and John Babatunde Bamidele Ojo both address this issue, but in very different styles.

Both Ajayi and Ojo present the Yoruba as victims of both British rule and northerners. They use the fall of Obafemi Awolowo in the early 1960s as the pivotal point at which Yoruba solidarity and political strength in the nation began to decline. To the Yoruba, Awolowo represented the voice of the Yoruba people through his uncompromising activism and scholarship. From Awolowo’s decline in power, Ajayi and Ojo build their analysis on the present state of the Yoruba in politics. Ajayi regards the members of the Yoruba’s political class as divided and not always committed to their people. A bright future, according to Ajayi, can only come if economic and political paradigms are altered. John Ojo writes in a more combative tone, pleading to the Yoruba not to be shy of fighting, and never to expect good to come from the rule of the military and other non-democratic systems. In Ojo’s essay, we find the

merger of cultural and political nationalism and the frustration of an elite who wants its people to do better in a federal Nigeria.

**Fashioning the Future**

The elite project since the nineteenth century is always about the future of modernization, defined in terms of Western education, jobs, development, and power to control Nigeria. In the last segment of this book, we present some essays that look at the obstacles to a successful project of modernization. Much of their concern centers on the expansion of cities and towns without an infrastructure to support them. This is particularly the problem in southwestern Nigeria, in the heart of Yorubaland, the most densely populated region of Nigeria. For anyone that has traveled along the major roads in this region, it is no surprise that these roads are considered among the most dangerous in the world. The highway that extends northeast from Lagos to Ibadan, for example, is one of the worst because of the combination of poor road and vehicle conditions mixed with rampant criminal activity occurring along them. To Bamidele Abiona Badejo, the rate of accidents is too high on roads in Yorubaland, and he makes a number of recommendations to reduce the number of transportation-related casualties. In addition to the risks of travel, Nigeria has also struggled to reduce the number deaths related to disease.

In Africa, AIDS represents the most deadly disease. It emerged in the late 1970s in Africa and has silently spread, becoming pandemic by the 1980s. Estimates by the United Nations place the number of people living with AIDS in Nigeria at almost 4 million. For Oluwatosin Ige Alo, AIDS and HIV are problems in Nigeria which require creative solutions drawn from traditional and modern medical practices. He emphasizes that, in Nigeria, new drugs and medical assistance are not widely available or are too expensive. Because of this, the death rate from AIDS is extremely high. What is crucial to the prevention of HIV/AIDS is an understanding of how it is contracted and how to prevent it. The spread of HIV/AIDS hits hard at the cultural standards and taboos. Many view the invasion of HIV/AIDS on their community as the result in a breakdown of moral codes. A belief exists in Nigeria that modernity and urbanization have encouraged the breakdown of social values. This idea also applies to an increase in criminal activity.

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To Adewole Akinyemi Atere and Akeem Ayofe Akinwale, a rising crime wave is making the cities risky to live in, and the use of vigilante groups is desirable. He highlights the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) as a community-based body that enforced laws in Lagos. The organization has risen in popularity since its formation in the 1990s due to rampant problems of corruption and inaptitude. Atere and Akinwale's chapter highlights one of the examples of the failure of the formal sector in solving many problems.

A set of other essays look at ways to create a better future, making use of diversified natural resources drawn from indigenous Yoruba and Western technological innovations. The region today called Nigeria has a long history with an agriculture-based economy. The onset of colonial rule encouraged the mass production of agriculture for export, which placed a strain on food available for domestic consumption. Until the oil industry began, agriculture was Nigeria's main source of foreign exchange. The discovery of commercial quantities of oil in the late 1950s caused a dramatic drop in agriculture as the country invested in oil production and not in expanding its agricultural productivity. Farmers received little or no support from the government, and many left their farms for urban employment. Those who remained in the business used outdated, non-mechanized equipment, and switched to cash crop production. Within a short period, agricultural production for domestic consumption nearly crumbled.

During the oil boom years of the 1970s, attempts were made to revitalize Nigeria's ailing agricultural sector. For example, during the Third Development Plan (1975-1980) Nigeria invested millions on irrigation projects, road construction, and increased use of fertilizers and insecticides. But, a few years into the plan, it became clear that it was neither helping the small scale farmer nor the quality of food produced for domestic consumption. Several chapters address this issue of Nigeria's weak agricultural sector and connect the importance of its revival to the maintenance of Yoruba culture. By examining the link between agriculture and Yoruba culture, we are introduced to the important crops of the Yoruba to produce and consume, as well as unique harvesting techniques based on traditional Yoruba practices.

Bayo Lawal has written an overview of the centrality of agriculture among the Yoruba. Lawal presents a society grounded in agriculture, but witnessing a decline due to changing economies and urbanization. His work examines Yoruba traditional methods and intimate knowledge of cultivating food which,

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even today, are used throughout Yorubaland. Among these basic methods of planting, harvesting, and storing through a land tenure system, the Yoruba add the use of spiritual forces, traditional calendars, rainmaking, and much more. They view the worship of certain deities as essential to the success of their crops. Festivals are also an integral part of their farming. In this way, religion and agricultural production become intertwined as representations of Yoruba culture.

For the Yoruba, what agriculture they produce not only represents a crucial part of their economy, but also acts as a symbol of Yoruba culture. Diet among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria varies. The Yoruba diet is based on solid foods less than the Igbo or those in the Middle Belt region. They consume large amounts of gari (a granular, starchy food), which separates them from the Hausa, for example, who consume no gari. To discuss gari, then, is to discuss a long-standing dietary tradition among the Yoruba.

The necessity of food is covered in two chapters, one by B. O. Akintunde on how to store grains, and the other by T. Y. Tunde-Akintunde on how to improve the production of gari. Cassava, from which gari is made, is one of the most important crops in Nigeria, and is consumed in various forms. Gari is formed from gelatinized flakes of cassava and is the most common product obtained from cassava. Nigeria accounts for forty percent of all cassava produced in Africa. Its popularity throughout the country stems from its ability to grow high yields in poor soil. In low income areas, cassava is useful in that, after it has matured, it can remain in the ground. T.Y. Tunde-Akintunde's goal in her chapter is to suggest ways to improve the production of the cassava into gari in order to increase its nutritional value, decrease the natural cyanide content, and reduce the particle size and swelling capacity.

B. O. Akintunde examines the types of on-farm storage structures among the Yoruba. Because the Yoruba live in a more humid climate of southwestern Nigeria, they deal with a high percentage of grain loss. Humidity raises the moisture level in storage structures, which allows grains to become damp and moldy quickly. For this reason, farmers have developed better methods in storing their grains; and through the study of storage technology, researchers have devised more ways to reduce the spoiling of grains. However, Yoruba storage units are made from mud and thatch roofs, which Akintunde contends yields a low level of useable grain. Furthermore, the use of pepper and ash as natural insecticides is not enough. Akintunde concludes by saying that, within this region of Nigeria, technological improvements are a must in order to prevent loss.

Another set of essays turns to the broader issues of values and cultures. 'Tunji Azeez thinks that indigenous values can combat the collapse of con-
temporary morality. His essay focuses on aspects of morality that are encouraged outside the religious realm, but within the community. One way that young people learn these values, he says, is through songs which are short and sung in traditional styles. These songs, and their message, are passed within the community for generations, expressing the moral values of the community and complaints against any injustice such as government corruption.

Three essays look at the zone of socialization where the family plays a crucial role. The habit of dual residence remains, as explained by Jacob A. Adetunji and Kefi Otiso, as people travel between the cities and villages, working as farmers and fulfilling their socio-economic functions in the cities. So, the image of Janus-headed migrants emerges, since the Yoruba see their journeys as temporary, and loyalty to their host communities is seen as unnecessary if they intend to return to their Yoruba homeland. Those who typically live this dual life are farmers, traders, and craftsmen. And, they maintained this lifestyle even before the arrival of the Europeans in the fifteenth century. Adetunji and Otiso examine how many urban dwellers work as rural farmers without compromising their social and economic activity in either location. So, these people are considered to be living a truly dual life. Once again, a town within the state of Ekiti is used as a case study. The town, Efom Alaaye, and its surrounding areas are rich with fertile lands. What Adetunji and Otiso found in this town was a coexistence of traditional values mixed with urban modernity. Understanding the importance of women in agricultural production among the Yoruba did not go unnoticed in Adetunji and Otiso’s work. As part of their research, they interviewed and analyzed the participation of women in rice production. Their work once again highlights that women are crucial to Yoruba culture and development.

With regard to the importance of women, Mary E. Modupe Kolawole argues in her chapter that the production of culture moves not in a progressive decline away from tradition, but more toward the incorporation of both tradition and modernity. She writes that traditional Yoruba culture has shown great resilience. And this cultural preservation provides insight into gender relations. Using the palace poetry on women regents, she shows the powerful side of women in real life and in literature. To Kolawole, this form of poetry shows the power of culture in sustaining an old institution. Kolawole’s work contributes to the life-story approach that gained popularity in the 1980s, looking at gender in Africa, which is where scholars take the life of a historical figure and placing it within the context of culture.11 Using women’s auto-

biographies and oral histories and combining culture and history, scholars are able to draw new understandings of women in Africa. In her examination of female regents within well known kingdoms such as the Oyo, she illustrates new domains in which Yoruba women display their power. Through their songs, they emphasize the importance of family.

Similarly, Asiyanbola R. Abidemi views women as important in sustaining the family. In spite of the Western influences, Abidemi notes the survival of traditional stereotypes in the division of labor. Irrespective of their work and income level, women continue to do more work than men in childcare and house chores. Abidemi writes that the division of labor within the household appears constant. The role of women in the home has resisted change despite that an increasing number of Yoruba women work outside the home. The result has been that women work essentially two jobs, and find themselves stressed and overworked. In order to initiate change, Abidemi tells us, there is a need for education and consciousness-raising among men. This, he believes could be achieved through seminars and workshops for men. Education serves as the key not only to change outdated social values, but also to preserve those considered too valuable to forget.

The educational system must be anchored on core cultural values, concludes Jamaine Abidogun, who sees a link between moral and ethical codes and the school curriculum. To Abidogun, education should inculcate respect for diversity as well as teach high moral codes. She writes that the schools tend to blur lines of culture and ethnicity, and that these actually need to be preserved within the formal education system. She believes that within the context of an equitable educational system, the uniqueness of each ethno-linguistic group should be appreciated. The driving force of homogeneity comes from a capitalist economy that overshadows the value of human distinctiveness with a drive for market uniformity. Abidogun draws these conclusions through her research on the curriculum of two junior/senior secondary schools located in Ibadan. She used the curriculum to measure the degree to which it was “Africanized,” or included indigenous cultural references. Her chapter concludes with a call for the teaching of more indigenous languages and a greater use of cultural references in the social studies textbooks. Abidogun touches on the reoccurring concern among scholars that the moral and cultural fabric that makes up the Yoruba is changing. Many call for its preservation. At the same time, however, these authors recognize the need for positive change, particularly in regard to women. What makes Yoruba culture unique, they agree, is its resilience and adaptability to change. Over time, the Yoruba will continue to settle into a comfortable balance of traditional and modern values.
The chapters in the final section enable us to see the search for some kind of ethical values to sustain modernity and move to the future with confidence. In many ways, this reflects the tension between a disappearing past and an unfolding future. In the search for a moral order to organize the present, the Yoruba keep seeking answers to the past, as Azeez and Atere have done. Religion and the family are tasked with the burden of supplying answers to decadence and shepherding the society in a direction that many can tolerate.

In breaking the Yoruba notion of morality, the stress is always on the concept of iwa (character), a positive set of individual habits linked to sanctions from God. E. Bolaji Idowu calls iwa the “very stuff which makes life a job because it is pleasing to God.” The linkage between habits and morality, and morality and God remains a problem in modern society. Nevertheless, morality connotes to be defined in its traditional essence of the valued habits of calmness, mildness, and honesty. In one common citation on drawn from the Ifa Odu corpus, iwa is regarded as the only thing worth possessing:

\[ Iwa \ nikan \ lo \ soro \ o \]
\[ Iwa \ nikan \ lo \ sore \]
\[ Ori \ kan \ kii \ buru \ lore \ Ife \]
\[ Iwa \ nikan \ lo \ soro. \]

Character is all that is requisite
Character is all that is necessary
There is no bad destiny in the city of Ife
Character is all that is requisite.

In the modern meta-narrative of iwa, it is set against the declining economic and political fortunes in the post-oil boom era since Western education arrived, and since the beginning of oil production. As Yoruba society faces myriad problems, moralizing intensifies, calling on people to keep the ethics of chastity, honesty, hospitality, and kindness. As if appealing to the perpetrators of 419, the Yoruba are called upon to avoid cheating, wickedness, stealing, and hypocrisy. The culture of an agrarian society is being interrogated to deal with a contemporary formal economy, as individuals are asked to respect elders, value hard work, promote family togetherness, and be contended. The conflicts and competition in modern politics and economics make the commitments to the elements of iwa harder for many to sustain.

To those who violate the expectations of iwa the sanctions of old no longer work to curtail or discipline them. The anonymity of individuals in large cities

like Lagos means that the shame that can come with certain transgressions will not expose them to societal ridicule. Even the good person lacking in money in Lagos may appear like a madman. The promoters of 419 crime are pursuing reckless self-interest, unchecked by any recitation of the old rules and sanctions of *iwa*. Even the fear of suffering in the after-life cannot stop a cocaine dealer from doing business. Contemporary Yoruba have to seek fresh answers to many of the problems identified in this volume.