The Yoruba in Transition

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History, Values, and Modernity

EDITED BY

Toyin Falola and Ann Genova

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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, Andre 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*

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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 Táíwò Olúnládé. While not telling us much new information, Clúnládé'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

1. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (London: CMS Bookshop, 1921).

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 intergroup 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. Northerners, too, intermingled with them, fashioning established strangers' communities that generated conflicts and competitions.[2] Hakeem Ibikunle 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.[3] To Tijani, the grip of a few patrons on thousands of dients has weakened, and the conduct of politics has become far more complicated. In Julius O. Adekunle's essay, we see how people combine to attainpolitical 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 andexpanding its membership. The strategy of the Bamidele movement was to reject the changes perceived as Western and corrosive. As the benefits of Western formal educationbecame 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 and away from those of their traditional ethnic groups. The issue of identity has emerged from this conflict.

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2. See, for instance, Abner Cohen, *Customs and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns* (London: Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

3. Sandra Barnes, *Patrons and Power: Creating a Political Community in Metropolitan Lagos* (London: Manchester University Press, 1986).

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 Mojeed Olujinmi 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. Oluyemisi Bamgbose 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 capability 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 on 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.[4] Makinde joins this latter group with her progressive characterizations of Yoruba women as wives, priestesses, daughters, witches, and mothers. She highlights the idea that each generates various positive 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 reminded 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 eroding 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 commercial production of rice. And he expanded his analysis to look at the consequences 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

4. LaRay Denzer, "Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 27 no. 1 (1994): 2.

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. Ibigbolade Simon Aderibigbe creates 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 which guides almost every aspect of a practioner'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.[5] Overall, Aderibigbe's work asserts Yoruba beliefs into the wider global debate regarding abortion.[6] 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-

5. Comparisons can be drawn with Western cultures and Christianity. See Jonathan Kelley et al, "Moral Reasoning and Political Conflict: The Abortion Controversy," *British Journal of Sociology* 44 no. 4 (December 1993): 589-612.

6. See, for instance, Wolf Bleek, "Induced Abortion in a Ghanaian Family," *African Studies Review* 21 no. 1 (April 1978): 103-120.

lel 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."[7] 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.[8] 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

7. Elaine Orr, "Jinxed: On Being White and Yoruba."

8. For more on the implementation of the sharia, see Tijani Muhammad Naniya, "History of the Shari'a in Some States of Northern Nigeria to Circa 2000," Journal of Islamic Studies [Great Britain] 13 no. 1 (2002): 14-31.

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 of 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.[9] 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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9. United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, "Epidemiological Fact Sheets on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases: Nigeria," Geneva: UNAIDS, 2004, 2. Retrieved from http://www.who.int.html.

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 ineptitude. 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.[10] 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,

10. Tina Wallace, "The Challenge of Food: Nigeria's Approach to Agriculture 1975-1980," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 15 no. 2 (1981): 239-258.

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 Kefa 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, Efon 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-

11. Susan Geiger, "Women's Life Histories: Method and Content," *Signs* 11 no. 1 (1986): 334-351.

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 in 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."[12] The linkage between habits and morality, and morality and God remains a problem in modern society. Nevertheless, morality continues to be defined in its traditional essence of the valued habits of calmness, mildness, and honesty. In one common citation 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

12. E. B. Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Beliefs* (London: Longman, 1962), 154.

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.