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Falolaism
The Epistemologies and Methodologies of Africana Knowledge

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Carolina Academic Press
Durham, North Carolina
To Ayaba Bisi Falola
Yoruba: Sile gbogbo enia nla ni kan ti o tobi obinrin!
English Translation: Behind every great man is a greater woman!
Contents

List of Illustrations xvi
Foreword xix
Preface xx
Acknowledgments xxii

Chapter 1 · General Introduction 3
  African-Centeredness 3
  Gnoseology 14
  References 21

Chapter 2 · Rekh Methodology 25
  Naming Postulates 27
  Action Postulates 40
  Conclusion 44
  References 44

Chapter 3 · Uotchā and Uhem Methodology 45
  Content Analysis Methodology 45
  Brief Descriptions of Mwalimu Falola’s New Solely Authored Books 48
  Data Analysis 49
    Descriptive Statistics 52
    Mean Differences 54
  Conclusion 58
  References 60

Chapter 4 · Behsāu-Pehsa Methodology 61
  Contemporary Voluntary Migrations and Transnationalism 62
    in the New Diaspora 62
  Migrations and Africanisms 63
  Atlantic Yoruba Migrations 65
  Migrations and the Homeland 66
  Axioms of African Migrations and Movements in Mwalimu Falola’s Work 68
  Mathematization of the Behsāu-Pehsa Model 69
  Testing the Essentaility of Mwalimu Falola’s Axioms 70
  Corollary Analysis 72
  Conclusion 74
  References 75
Chapter 5 · Egyptological Methodology  
Essentials of the Egyptological Method  
European Colonization of Memory  
Africanist Perspective and Afrocentricity  
Cheikh Anta Diop’s Work on Egyptology  
Afrocentricity and Black Scholarship  
The Oduduwa Mythology  
The Nexus between the Methodology and Mwalimu Falola’s Work  
Conclusion  
References  

Chapter 6 · Archaeoastronomical Methodology  
Essentials of the Archaeoastronomical Method  
Oke Hill in the City of Ibadan, Nigeria  
Okebadan Communal God of Ibadan and the Festival  
The Nexus between the Methodology and Mwalimu Falola’s Work  
Conclusion  
References  

Chapter 7 · Hermeneutic Methodology  
Essentials of Hermeneutic Methodology  
The Principle of Mentalism  
The Principle of Correspondence  
The Principle of Vibration  
The Principle of Polarity  
The Principle of Rhythm  
The Principle of Causation  
The Principle of Gender  
Conclusion  
References  

Chapter 8 · Griot Methodology  
Essentials of Griot Methodology  
Roles of Griots  
Roles of Oral Traditions  
Roles of Origin Traditions  
Mwalimu Falola as a Griot  
Conclusion  
References  

Chapter 9 · Sankofa Methodology  
Essentials of Sankofa Methodology  
Mwalimu Falola’s Sankofa  
Development Planning and Decolonization in Nigeria (1996)  
Violence in Nigeria (1998)
CONTENTS

Yoruba Gurus (1999) 172
Nationalism and African Intellectuals (2001) 175
The African Diaspora (2013) 177
Conclusion 179
References 180

Chapter 10 · Fenyo Pan-African Methodologies 183
Essentials of Fenyo's Pan-African Methodologies 183
Some Research Questions on Pan-Africanism 185
Africa as a Historical Unit of Analysis 185
Fields and Disciplines 188
Mwalimu Falola's New Interpretations of Pan-Africanism 191
Conclusion 194
References 195

Chapter 11 · Multiplex Methodology 201
Multiplex Methodology 202
Context of “The Pastor’s Ordeal” 203
Epistemic Encounter in the Chapter 204
Empirical Encounter in the Chapter 208
Self-Reflection or Cartesian Encounter in the Chapter 214
Conclusion 216
References 217

Chapter 12 · Pluridisciplinary Methodology 219
A Brief Description of and Commentaries on Counting the Tiger’s Teeth 219
Research Methodology 221
Pluridisciplinary Methodology 222
Fractal Methodology 223
Data Analysis 224
Conclusion 228
References 230
Web Sites 232

Chapter 13 · Ubuntugogy Methodology 233
Essentials of Ubuntugogy Methodology 234
Presuppositions and Requirements for Ubuntugogy Methodology 237
Ubuntugogy in Falola's Yoruba Gurus 245
Conclusion 251
References 251

Chapter 14 · Diopian Intercultural Relations Methodology 255
Ibn Khaldun 256
The University of Sankore and Other Islamic Monasteries 262
CONTENTS

The Ethiopian Intelligentsia and European Colonialists and Religious Institutions 266
The New Nigerian Elite 270
Conclusion 272
References 272

Chapter 15 · Diopian Restoration of African Historical Consciousness Methodology 275
Kwame Nkrumah 277
Samuel Johnson 279
Carl Christian Reindorf 282
Counter-Colonization Projects 284
Organic Intellectuals 287
Africanist Perspective and Afrocentricity 291
The Creativity Agenda 293
Conclusion 295
References 296

Chapter 16 · African Mathematization 297
African Mathematization 299
Counting or Natural Number 302
Inverse Operation: Multiplication and Division 305
Exponent 306
Commutative Property of Multiplication 307
Imaginary/Complex Number 307
Arithmetic Progression 308
Sum/Total 308
Percent 309
Conclusion 310
References 311

Chapter 17 · Complex Methodology 313
A Brief Description of Counting the Tiger’s Teeth 314
Linguistic Presupposition 316
Order and Disorder Presuppositions in Counting the Tiger’s Teeth 319
A Tiger’s Jaw Algorithm 325
A Two-Dimensional Vector Field 326
Conclusion 329
References 331

Chapter 18 · Mo Ibrahim African-Centered Indexing Methodology 335
Contemporary Conceptualization of Good Governance 336
IIAG’s Operationalization of Good Governance 338
Evidence of IIAG Aspects in Falola’s Work 339
  Safety and Rule of Law 339
  Participation and Human Rights 342
  Sustainable Economic Opportunity 345
  Human Development 349
  Conclusion 351
  References 352

Chapter 19 · Africancentric Methodology 355
  The Africancentric Approach 355
  The Synchronic Approach 357
  Definition of Ifa 358
  Orisa 358
  Divination System 361
  Divination Verses 363
  Festival 364
  Traditions 364
  Ifa Will Mend Our Broken World Belief 365
  Poetic Songs 365
  Ifa Aya (“Oracle of the Heart”) 366
  Priest 366
  Oracle 367
  Corpus 369
  Chronicles 369
  Traditional Healing 369
  Conclusion 370
  References 371

Chapter 20 · Er/Set/Sthenâ/S-tut/Tut Methodology 375
  The Er/Set/Sthenâ/S-tut/Tut Metaphorical Approach 376
  Metaphors on Mwalimu Falola and His Work 379
    Academician Metaphors 379
    Familial Metaphors 381
    Personhood Metaphors 381
    Animal Metaphors 383
    Summary of the Findings 384
  The Underlying Meanings of the Metaphors: An Africancentric Perspective 385
    Gnoseology 385
    Ujamaa/Unity through Universal Confraternity 386
    Essential Dignity 387
  Conclusion 390
  References 390
# CONTENTS

## Chapter 21 · Ujamaa Methodology
1. Essentials of Ujamaa Methodology 395
2. Major Research Questions 396
3. Major Concepts 396
4. Ujamaa Theories 398
5. Mwalimu Falola’s Ujamaa 407
   - African Personality and Religion 407
   - Pan-Yorubanism 408
   - Kwanzaa 410
6. Conclusion 411
7. Acknowledgment 412
8. References 412

## Chapter 22 · Abiodun Oríki Methodology
1. Essentials of the Abiodun Oríki Methodology 415
2. Major Concepts 417
3. Suggested Conceptual Framework 420
4. Major Research Questions 421
5. Methodological Approach 422
6. Mwalimu Falola’s Oríki Treatises 424
   - Àálè 424
   - Àkó-graphic ìsà 425
   - Àse-graphic ìsà 429
7. Conclusion 430
8. Reflection 430
9. References 433

## Chapter 23 · Consciencist Methodology
1. Essentials of Consciencist Methodology 435
2. Major Concepts 436
3. Philosophical Postulates 441
4. Major Research Questions 442
5. Mwalimu Falola’s Consciencist Treatises 443
   - Consciencism as a Pan-Africanist Idea 443
   - African Personality 443
   - Traditional African Outlook 445
   - African/Harlem Renaissance 447
   - Soul or Spirit 448
   - Colonialism 449
   - Neo-Colonialism 455
   - Democracy 457
   - Ideology 457
   - Imperialism 458
   - Capitalism 459
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communalism</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialism</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renaissance</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 24</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· General Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Illustrations

**Chapter 4 · Behsāu-Pehsa Methodology**
- Figure 1: Phase Plane and Time Plots Simulate at ODE23 71
- Figure 2: Phase Plane Plot Simulated at OED23 & OED45 71

**Chapter 12 · Pluridisciplinary Methodology**
- Figure 1: Phase Space Portrait Mapping Presuppositions of Order and Disorder 228
- Figure 2: Log-log Plot Order vs. Disorder in the Text 229

**Chapter 17 · Complex Methodology**
- Figure 1: Phase Space Portrait Mapping of Presuppositions of Order and Disorder 320
- Figure 2: Pictographic Representation of the Autocorrelations for the Series Order 323
- Figure 3: Pictographic Representation of the Autocorrelations for the Series Disorder 325
- Figure 4: Pictographic Representation of the Cross Correlations for the Series Order with Disorder 327
- Figure 5: Sequence Plot for Order and Disorder 327
- Figure 6: Grid of Tiger’s Dental Formula 328
- Figure 7: Feather 2-D Vector Plot 330
- Figure 8: Quiver 2-D Vector Plot 330
- Figure 9: Compass 2-D Vector Plot 331

**Chapter 18 · Mo Ibrahim African-Centered Indexing Methodology**
- Figure 1: Aid from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund by Planned Expenditures of Estimated Revenues 348
- Figure 2: Annual Expenditures of Colonial Development and Welfare Fund Grants by Overall Development 348

**Chapter 22 · Abiodun Orikì Methodology**
- Figure 1: Abiodun-Bangura-Falola Orikì Conceptual Framework 421
Foreword

The publication of Abdul Karim Bangura’s *Toyin Falola and African Epistemologies* in 2015 was a seminal event in the history of African scholarship for two reasons. First, it was charting a new path to African intellectual history, in which the entire output of a single but phenomenal scholar is ordered, evaluated, and theorized, forming a cohesive prism through which Africa’s contribution to knowledge production can be presented, assessed, examined, and propagated. Second, the publication also led to an important multi-disciplinary gathering of a select group of scholars to address the central issues raised by the book. I was very privileged to present the keynote address at that gathering of eminent thinkers, which included Professor Abdul Karim Bangura. I pointed out how important it is for scholars to begin to address the systems of internal monologue that have always emerged and remained relevant to our understanding of African societies, and often without recourse to Western epistemological contestations. I also recall how Professor Bangura’s own contribution at the time highlighted a further need for him to strengthen and broaden his argument with a more generalized Africa-centered paradigm for the study of Africa’s multi-layered challenges. *Falolaism* is the outcome of this extension and strengthening effort.

Clearly, there is no better time than now for the publication of *Falolaism: The Epistemologies and Methodologies of Africana Knowledge*, considering the manifest failures of African societies and institutions to develop and evolve into viable and sustainable systems of development. For far too long, Africa and Africans have been passive recipients of external remedies to our internal maladies, and these solutions have pervasively failed to have any deep-seated positive effect on our working lives and on our national psyches. In these tragedies, one notices a certain kind of fatalism that is best described as “failure-by-design.” We have all become trapped in a cycle of unending application of intrinsically flawed solutions, the epistemological essence of which we don’t “know,” and are therefore not in a position to interrogate.

Yet writing systems, superior agricultural techniques, and consensus-building approaches to conflict resolutions have all been part of the common tools of development in African societies long before the “civilizing” assault of Western modes of knowing on our equally ancient and powerful paradigms. On this premise alone, Bangura’s framework of *Falolaism* is an elegant systematization of some of the most profound African methodologies and paradigms, which are capable of heralding the recovery of Africa’s golden age of intellectualism. We now have a “local” unified theory of epistemology that Toyin Falola, perhaps, more than any other Africanist, has been instrumental in advancing and institutionalizing in concepts and methods. The critical
role of Bangura, as ever, is his capacity to uncover the multi-disciplinary strand of *Falolaism*, with a view to teaching, as he put it: “Mwalimu Falola’s ideas as an academic subject . . . [and] instruct potential researchers . . . on the need for authentic Africa-centric methodologies to investigate African phenomena.”

*Falolaism* is a book of twenty-four chapters, in which Bangura identified the different local methodologies that have served Africa well both in the past and in the present era. From the ancient “naming and action Rekh” methodology to the contemporary data-driven Mo Ibrahim Index on African Governance, Professor Bangura continues his lifelong quest for an indigenous system of knowledge production in Africa, which could serve as a counter-weight to all the other colonial and post-colonial discourses on the African condition. His approach does not seek to do away with the existing externally driven methodologies, but rather, it seeks to point to a more holistic, tried and tested, relevant, and employable set of tools to serve as filters and barriers to unworkable and ultimately doomed paradigms of Africa’s development. The fact that these methodologies have been applied in the present, especially by *Babban Gwani* — theorist and methodologist par excellence — Toyin Falola to the whole of the humanities in Africa attest to their relevance, efficacy, and potential for further conceptualization and rootedness. And let me hasten to add that with the publication of *Falolaism: The Epistemology and Methodology of African Knowledge*, Professor Bangura is moving ever closer to his stated goal of unifying theory and method in the conceptualization of Africa’s homegrown capability in the production, appropriation, and application of its multiple knowledge systems to determine and advance its own progress and development. Bangura’s own method of “asking difficult questions [,] often leads to better answers,” as *Falolaism* has demonstrated.

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March 2017
Preface

This book is a follow-up to the one titled *Toyin Falola and African Epistemologies* published in 2015. In that book, I delineated the following four lucid rubrics within which analyses of works by and about Mwalimu Toyin Falola could be subsumed: (1) biography and knowledge production, (2) Africa in the configuration of knowledge, (3) the Yoruba in the configuration of knowledge, and (4) the value of knowledge vis-à-vis policies and politics. In addition, a broader epistemological perspective undergirded the analysis in each chapter.

In this book, I seek to demonstrate that Mwalimu Falola’s scholarly work, while historical, is undergirded by African-centered Gnoseology — generally defined as the scientific or philosophical study of knowledge undergirded by the positive-intuitive thinking that is driven by the African’s spiritual mind. The following African-centered scientific methodologies are employed to show this: Rekh Methodology, Utchā and Uhem Methodology, Behsāu-Pehsa Methodology, Egyptological Methodology, Archaeoastronomical Methodology, Hermeneutic Methodology, Griot Methodology, Sankofa Methodology, Fenyo Pan-African Methodologies, Multiplex Methodology, Pluridisciplinary Methodology, Ubuntugogy Methodology, Diopian Intercultural Relations Methodology, Diopian Restoration of African Historical Consciousness Methodology, African Mathematization, Complex Methodology, Mo Ibrahim African-centered Indexing Methodology, Africancentric Methodology, Er/Set/Sthenā/S-tut/Tut Methodology, Ujamaa Methodology, Abiodun Oriki Methodology, and Consciencist Methodology.

The major objective of the book is therefore twofold. First, it seeks to teach Mwalimu Falola’s ideas as an academic subject. Second, it attempts to instruct potential researchers how to utilize Africancentric methodologies to systematically investigate African phenomena while employing Mwalimu Falola’s epistemological treatises as examples in doing so.

The book is divided into an introductory chapter, 22 Africancentric research methodology chapters, and a concluding chapter. Each research methodology chapter is segmented into four major sections. The first section introduces the methodology and the relevance of Mwalimu Falola’s work for the subject matter. The second section encompasses a detailed discussion of the essential features of the methodology. The third section entails an analysis of aspects in Mwalimu Falola’s writings that are relevant for understanding and utilizing the methodology. The final section draws a conclusion based on the findings in the preceding sections.
Thus, the essentiality of this book hinges upon the fact that it addresses the need for authentic African-centric research methodologies to investigate African phenomena. The need arises from the fact that after almost three centuries of utilizing Western methodologies, many African communities in the continent and the Diaspora remain marginal. It is obvious that these Western methodologies, which are not indigenous to Africans, have done relatively little good for Africans. Thus, I propose here that the salvation of Africans in both the continent and the Diaspora depends on resuscitating the old, employing the contemporary, and developing new authentic African-centric research methodologies for their use.

My proposition for the utilization of African-centric research methodologies to investigate African phenomena should not be misinterpreted as a total rejection of Western methods. These latter methods, when tweaked accordingly, can be quite useful for studying many African phenomena. As a matter of fact, many Western research methodologists who realize the need for state-of-the-art methods that address the growing methods-theory gap within the behavioral and social sciences have embarked upon the task of developing new methodologies to study Western phenomena. These emergent approaches include applied multivariate research, appreciative inquiry, art practice research, cognitive interviewing, concept mapping, constructing grounded theory, experience sampling method, feminist research practice, fuzzy set theory, geographic information systems, hypermedia research, inside interviewing, interactive qualitative analysis, measurement error and research design, methods of family research, multilevel modeling, multiple imputations for nonresponse in surveys, multiple time series models, polytomous item response theory models, postmodern interviewing, reaffirming evaluation through appreciative inquiry, reliability and risk models, research methods for community change, situational analysis, spectral analysis of time-series data, and synergy inquiry (for definitions and discussions of these methods, see Bangura, 2011:11–20). The nature of these methodologies can be summarized as follows: (a) they combine theoretical and empirical approaches; (b) they focus on methodological issues within and between disciplines; (c) they offer very broad perspectives of the possible uses and issues surrounding research techniques and methods; and (d) they challenge researchers to build bridges that link new research questions with innovative methods that can address issues of authority, power, and representation in the research process (Bangura, 2011:11).

Reference


Abdul Karim Bangura
Washington, DC
Spring 2017
Acknowledgments

I, and hopefully many readers, owe gratitude to:

Allah (SWT), for giving me the good health and fortitude to do this work.

Mwalimu Toyin Falola, for providing me access to his work.

Walimu Mario Fenyo, Walter Hill, Akinwumi Ogundiran, Kehbuma Langmia, Toyin Adepoju, Rowland Abiodun, Ishmael Munene, Mueni wa Muiu, Guy Martin, Pamela Smith, Vik Bahl, and Dafon Aimé Sègla, for suggestively evaluating the various chapters of this book.

Scholars and students in many parts of the world, for listening to and providing useful comments on the subject. Asking difficult questions often leads to better answers.

Immediate and extended family members across the globe, for offering encouragement and prayers.