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Falolaism

The Epistemologies and Methodologies of
Africana Knowledge

Abdul Karim Bangura

RESEARCHER-IN-RESIDENCE OF ABRAHAMIC CONNECTIONS
AND ISLAMIC PEACE STUDIES
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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!

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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 with their overarching concepts 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, Fenyō Pan-African Methodologies, Multiplex Methodology, Pluridisciplinary Methodology, Ubuntuogy Methodology, Diopian Intercultural Relations Methodology, Diopian Restoration of African Historical Consciousness Methodology, African Mathematization, Complex Methodology, Mo Ibrahim African-centered Indexing Methodology, Africentric Methodology, Er/Set/Sthenā/S-tut/Tut Methodology, Ujamaa Methodology, Abiodun Oríkì Methodology, and Conscientist 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 Africentric 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 Africentric 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

Bangura, Abdul Karim. 2011. *African-centered Research Methodologies: From Ancient Times to the Present*. San Diego, CA: Cognella.

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