

The Third Wave of Historical Scholarship on Nigeria

The Third Wave of Historical
Scholarship on Nigeria:
Essays in Honor of Ayodeji Olukoju

Edited by

Saheed Aderinto and Paul Osifodunrin

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P U B L I S H I N G

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Edited by Saheed Aderinto and Paul Osifodunrin

This book first published 2012

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-3994-9, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-3994-5

Dedicated to Professor Olukoju's family

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our heartfelt appreciation is extended to all who contributed in one way or the other to the completion of this festschrift in honor of Ayodeji Olukoju. We thank contributors for supporting this project and enduring our numerous editorial demands. Raphael Njoku of Louisville University, Hakeem Tijani of Adeleke University, Olutayo C. Adesina of University of Ibadan, Niyi Afolabi of the University of Texas at Austin, and Chima Korieh of Marquette University read and offered useful comments on the manuscript. We appreciate Olatunji Ojo of Brock University's note on the introduction. Babatunde Babalola of Rice University not only helped courier research materials between Waynesville and Lagos but commented on chapters 3, 6, and 11. We wish to express our gratitude to Bob Fullilove for reading the manuscript with the view of making it more accessible to our audience. We acknowledge Cambridge University Press for the permission to reproduce chapters 8 and 12. Our appreciation also goes to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for publishing this volume. The staff of the press—Carol Koulikourdi, Amanda Millar, and Chris Humphery—handled our request effectively and with deep enthusiasm. Saheed is grateful to Western Carolina University and its ever-friendly library staff for supporting this project and helping to secure materials. He is also grateful to his colleagues—David Dorondo and Richard Starnes—for sharing critical information about book publishing and for their quality mentorship. Paul wishes to thank the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA) for supporting his research.

Without our families and relatives, this project, like others, would not have materialized. We thank our wives (Olamide Aderinto and Bukola Osifodunrin) and children for their relentless sacrifice and support for our academic and professional goals. Above all, we thank almighty God—the ultimate source of our knowledge, energy, strength, and inspiration.

Saheed Aderinto
Waynesville, NC

Paul Osifodunrin
Lagos

PART I:

AYODEJI OLUKOJU AND THE THIRD WAVE OF HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP ON NIGERIA

CHAPTER ONE

THE THIRD WAVE OF HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP ON NIGERIA

SAHEED ADERINTO AND PAUL OSIFODUNRIN

The significant place of Nigeria in Africanist studies is indisputable—it is one of the birthplaces of academic historical research on Africa. Nigeria is also one of the most studied countries in Africa.¹ Academic writings on the country date back to the 1950s when scholars at the University College Ibadan (later the University of Ibadan) launched serious investigations into the nation's precolonial and colonial past. The ideology of this first wave of academic history was well laid out—guarded and propagated from the 1950s through the 1970s. Scholars were convinced that research into the precolonial histories of state and empire formation and the sophistication of political structures before the advent of imperialism would supply the evidence needed to counteract the notion—obnoxious to Africans—that they needed external political overlords because of their inability to govern themselves. Historical research was therefore pivoted toward restoring Nigerian peoples into history. This brand of academic tradition, widely called “nationalist historiography,” supplied the much needed ideological tools for decolonization through its deployment of oral history, archaeology, and linguistic evidence. But like any school of thought, nationalist historiography had to adapt to new ideas and respond to changing events; unfortunately its failure to reshape its research agenda and inability to reinvent itself, coupled with several developments outside academia, made it an anachronism and set in motion its demise from the 1980s or earlier.²

However, the story of nationalist historiography transcends its “rise” and “fall.” Indeed, without nationalist historiography, historical research on Nigeria and to a large extent Africa might have either been delayed or taken a completely different course. It might have been impossible for other branches of history—economic, social, women's—that emerged during the second wave of historical writing (1970s–1980s) to become

established when it did. Nationalist historians provided the template and foundation on which the second wave of historical writing was built. Even the neo-Marxist school promoted by scholars at Ahmadu Bello University derived its line of counterdiscourse criticizing the elitism of state formation from data presented in nationalist historiography. Hence, unlike nationalist historiography, which focuses largely on political history of state and empire building, the second wave recognized the economic, social, and gendered character of Nigeria's precolonial and colonial past. Without nationalist historiography, stories that spotlight the lives of "ordinary" people—that is, men and women who worked behind the scene providing the much needed resources that sustained the elite-run state—might have been delayed or assumed a different dimension. In addition, if not for the foresight of Kenneth Dike, one of the key figures of the first wave, the National Archives, the largest repository of primary documents on colonial Nigeria, which helped preserve data for upcoming generations of historians, would not have come into existence when it did. Had Dike's rescue mission of 1951 that paved the way for the establishment of the Nigerian Records Office (later the National Archives) in 1954 been delayed the massive body of information that has helped historians to chart multiple terrains in the country's vast history would have been destroyed.³

Taken together, three overlapping periods appear discernible in the evolution of Nigerian history. While nationalist historiography represents the first wave, which emerged in the 1950s and reached its height in the 1970s, the second wave (1970s and 1980s) saw the consolidation of fields such as social, economic, and women's history. In *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History*, Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto detail the ideological, methodological, and epistemological foundations and character of the first and second waves.⁴ The third wave (since the 1990s) is the concern of this volume in honor of Ayodeji Olukoju. This phase ushered in a new historiographical and paradigmatic shift through such emerging subfields as sexuality, crime, children, youth, urban, business, and environment, among others. Scholars continue to identify themselves as political, social, or women's historians, but the 1990s and 2000s witnessed the birth of highly specialized subfields that derived their orientation from the main branches established during the first and the second waves. For instance, the new histories of business, crime, and children draw some of their methods, data, and vocabulary from the well-established branches of social, women's, economic, and even political history.⁵ The history of sexuality stands at the intersection of race, gender, politics, economy, and sociocultural dynamics.⁶ Indeed, Aderinto claims that sexuality is a "total" history because the rhetoric of sex finds important representation and

expression in virtually all aspects of a society's existence.⁷ Reference to crime, children, youth, and sex in Nigerianist literature in pre-1990s is legion. However, it was from the 1990s that works that put sexuality, childhood, or criminality at the center of historical inquiry began to spring up.⁸ Maritime history, which Olukoju developed into a serious site of scholarly engagement, draws significantly from data grounded in Nigeria's economic past. His *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities in Lagos*, the first book-length history to focus on the three key infrastructure systems of electricity, water, and urban transport in Nigeria, is grounded in the narratives of urbanization, urban planning, and economic development in colonial and postcolonial Nigeria.⁹ Indeed, a lot of sociological and economic analyses are embedded in historical studies of food culture and urban centers.¹⁰ The "new" globalization and unprecedented emigration of Africans to North America and Europe since the 1980s has fueled new research into the "new" African diaspora.¹¹

The third wave of historical scholarship on Nigeria also saw new works that systematically challenge stale ideas about ethnicity, nationalism, power, politics, agency, and the nature of Nigerians' encounter with colonial rule in general. Established ideas and highly revered scholars are inherently difficult to challenge, but scholars taking the bull by the horns have pointed to major gaps that need filling and to ideas that are anachronistic given the emergence of new information and data.¹² For instance, unlike in the decades prior to the 1990s when women's history was interpreted almost entirely in political terms, in the 1990s and 2000s scholarship has engaged the experiences of women in other spheres.¹³ In terms of geographic coverage, Nigeria's minorities (that is, ethnicities other than the Yoruba, the Hausa, and the Igbo) have begun to receive adequate academic representation.¹⁴ Moreover, minorities within each of the so-called major ethnic groups are now seeing their names and communities forming the basis of sustained research agendas.¹⁵ In Chapter 5 of this volume, Abimbola Adesoji responds vigorously to Olukoju's admonition that "community history must be the priority of Nigerian historians during this [twenty-first] century if we are to capture whatever remains of our fast-disappearing stock of oral traditions, the repositories of which are dying out."¹⁶ If historians agreed with Obaro Ikime's theme in his 1985 lecture as the president of the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) that historical research should be tailored to answer pertinent questions about contemporary challenges of nation building, it was not until the 1990s that works truly yielding to his admonition began to surface in increasing number.¹⁷

The peculiarities of the third wave are seen not only in the thematic continuities and changes that historians engage but also in the methodologies, expositions, and sources they deploy. If the historians of the first and second waves were rarely required to locate their work within extant literature, mainly because they pioneered most of the subjects they researched, a scholar writing from the 1990s to the present—due to the expansion of scholarly output—has been expected to contextualize his or her work with respect to the existing literature. Writing in 1980, J. F. Ade Ajayi, the doyen of Nigerian history, aptly summarized the difference between his and later generations in terms of research topics and access to sources: “Years ago when some of us were PhD students, we were in the fortunate position that there were broad areas of virgin fields with major themes and obvious bodies of material calling for study. Such compact themes and compact bodies of sources are getting fewer.”¹⁸ However, he is convinced that there is a future for Nigerian history and historians: “We are only still scratching the matter on the surface, but the rich ores are no longer at the surface level.”¹⁹ In predicting the future course of historical research on Nigeria, he notes, “If you are going to make your mark you will need new kinds of techniques and approaches which will take you below the surface and beyond the most obvious themes.”²⁰

Ajayi’s prediction came true as the drying up of the “virgin fields” (especially political history) compelled historians to delve into new subfields and devise creative methods of harvesting and interpreting data or using familiar information in new ways. Historians of the third wave spent more time than their predecessors mastering language and vocabulary of other disciplines and regions to enhance their narrative and analytical skills. The criteria for judging the quality of works changed as scholars are regularly required to justify how their work represents an original contribution or extends existing scholarship. For example, a piece of writing on suicide in colonial Ibadan of Southwestern Nigeria must go beyond merely stating the importance of the research to general Nigerian or African history, to include integration within the extant literature produced on suicide in Africa and other colonial sites.²¹ Unlike the writings of the first and second waves, which are mostly empirical and descriptive, the works of the third wave must meet expectations to be theoretically and analytically grounded. But these new standards, which were drawn up by scholars based outside Africa, were not matched by availability of research funds, materials, publishing opportunities, and conducive work environments in Nigeria. Unlike in the 1960s and 1970s when Nigerian libraries could afford items published abroad, from the 1990s it is common for even the best libraries not to have important items

published in Nigeria—much less those published in North America or Europe. Indeed, the 1990s saw the near collapse of the Nigerian education system and the disappearance of research funds and library materials. A combination of indiscipline and poor library use practices resulted in the depletion of the holdings of the few research libraries to the extent that items published in Nigeria have all but disappeared from their shelves. If historians of Nigeria based in the country monopolized and effectively directed the course of research during the first and the second waves, the third wave tilted the balance in favor of scholars based in Europe or North America who have privileged access to research materials including those published in Nigeria. Olukaju has examined how Nigerian scholars have been responding to this state of affairs—adapting and adjusting to the country's economic problems and political instability since the 1990s.²²

The greatest challenge for historians of the twenty-first century, according to Olukaju, is “making themselves relevant to the current needs of the society in which they live.”²³ In the face of increasing criticisms of the relevance of historical knowledge in the twenty-first century historians of the third wave have been compelled to redefine college curricula and conduct research into the historical foundations of major issues that surround nation building. For instance, child “labor,” human trafficking, and infrastructural decay have received the attention of historians examining the roots of these problems in order to counter the widespread notion that they are “new” postcolonial challenges of underdevelopment that suddenly emerged in the wake of the structural adjustment program (SAP) of the 1980s.²⁴ The “new” pressure on historians to prove their relevance in the twenty-first century has intensified attention on contemporary (i.e., postcolonial) history. Although serious methodological and epistemological obstacles inhibit scholarship in this area, historians have increasingly seen the need not to leave this period of Nigerian experience to political scientists and journalists. They have joined the social scientists in studying violence, religious conflict, and political instability that threaten national cohesion by digging into the past.²⁵ Historians' claim to a “superior” form of analysis is cogent: understanding the changing phases of inter- and intragroup relations since the precolonial era is key to a grasp of contemporary Nigeria's disunity. But contemporary history poses enormous challenges in terms of sources (especially written). The Nigerian government has refused to abide by its own archive administration law passed in 1992 that made provision for the declassification of official documents older than twenty-five years.²⁶ If enforced, this law would have given historians access by now to documents produced between the 1960s and 1985 that would enrich our

knowledge about the following highly controversial developments: ethnicity and genesis of the Nigerian Civil War, military dictatorship, oil and corruption, state-sponsored terror, and politicization of religion. The virtual absence of official documents produced after the demise of colonial rule has not stopped some historians from using other sources—namely, oral history and newspaper accounts—to write history. However, what we know, from an academic standpoint, would have been enhanced with availability and accessibility of state records.

The advent of the Internet and its concomitant impact on the ways information is accessed and shared has produced varying positive outcomes for historical research. Unlike in the pre-1990s era when researchers had to be physically present in the libraries and archives in order to access academic materials, historians of the third wave, through computer networks and information technology, could access a vast amount of research materials in the comfort of their home, café, or anywhere. Internet discussion groups or e-mail lists give historians, regardless of where they are based, the opportunity to pose questions about their research to a community of researchers across the globe and track the state of knowledge in their fields. Such discussions also generate ideas for research. In addition, conference announcements and calls for publications provide opportunities for both established and up-and-coming researchers to share their findings with the academic community at a speed unmatched by academic culture during the first and second waves. The natural barrier of distance between scholars working from Nigeria and their counterparts in Europe and North America has largely collapsed—paving the way for fast and sustained collaboration in the areas of research, teaching, and professional development.

The third wave of historical scholarship on Nigeria can be summarized thus: (1) emergence of specialized subdisciplines from the old stock (e.g., maritime, business); (2) works that challenge and/or revisit conventional narratives about ethnicity, identity, modernity, nationalism, and Nigeria's encounter with colonialism; (3) entirely new fields of history such as crime, urban, children and youth, and sexuality, including works that use new sources to launch significant investigation into previously unknown areas of Nigerian history; and (4) periodization that represents a shift from colonial to contemporary Nigerian history. This last genre tackles fresh developments and events that are extraneous to the colonial period and those that had their foundation during alien rule. Contemporary history has also been treated as "functional" history because of the notion that it can help answer and solve some of Nigeria's problems of underdevelopment. Hence a historian's craft cannot be separated from the sociopolitical

environment in and of which he or she writes. This typology is not neat—considerable overlap exists in terms of both period and theme.

What we have attempted to do in the present volume is create a workable structure through which to engage this third wave of Nigerian historical writing. It is our hope that *The Third Wave of Historical Scholarship on Nigeria* captures the new wave of thinking about Nigeria and its history in the twenty-first century, while maintaining the resilience of “old” historiographies, and emphasizing the significance of historical research in understanding the country’s challenges of underdevelopment. This book honors the scholarship of Ayodeji Olukoju, whose works speak effectively to the research agendas of the third wave. It cannot, of course, fully represent the gamut of new ideas and thought running through the works produced by historians of Nigeria since the 1990s, but we have endeavored to give readers entrée into this exciting paradigm shift.

Organization of the Book

This festschrift in honor of Ayodeji Olukoju has a total of 18 chapters fused together thematically and chronologically. In Chapter 2, Saheed Aderinto and Paul Osifodunrin assess Olukoju’s place in Nigerian history by examining his work first on economic history, and second on urban and infrastructure history. We comment on his sources, approaches, and how he has advanced the state of knowledge. In Chapter 3, Tokunbo Ayoola focuses on how Olukoju placed maritime history at the center of revisionist ideas about the place of Nigeria in the world political and economic system during the colonial era. He takes us through several aspects of Olukoju’s scholarship on maritime history—from port construction and development to administration and finance—highlighting how he interpreted, constructed, and reread the intersection between colonial capitalist exploitation and the maritime industry. Indeed, Tokunbo’s analysis of Olukoju’s works covering the world wars gives interesting angles to the indispensability of the maritime industry to Britain’s war effort. The story of the maritime industry transcends trade and economic relations, as Ayoola establishes. As the main international gateway of human contact and the spread of ideas, the maritime industry played a significant role in “compressing” the world and facilitating the sharing of world culture. After reading Ayoola’s chapter on Olukoju’s work on maritime history, one gets a better sense of the centrality of this industry to British colonialism in Nigeria. One also realizes the enormous challenges of interpreting history and the importance of the historian’s craft. Although Olukoju has covered much ground in Nigerian maritime history,

Ayoola points to several aspects he has overlooked. Ayoola lists the following areas that have escaped Olukoju's eye and that up-and-coming historians could venture into: "the history of the Nigerian Navy; ethnicity, race, class, and the maritime industry; the Nigerian Civil War and maritime trade; labor in the Nigerian maritime industry; gender and maritime trade; Nigerian women seafarers; transfer of Western technology; shipping and tourism; and the representations of ports, ships, shipping, and so on in arts, music, literature, and religion."

The second part, "Sources, Methodologies, and Historiographies," features chapters that revisit established methodology with the purpose of filling important interpretative gaps, or that present new sources for charting new courses. In Chapter 4, Saheed Aderinto uses a spectrum of archival materials from the Enugu and Ibadan offices of the Nigerian National Archives and the Public Records and Archives Administration, Accra, Ghana, to reconstruct the history of transnational prostitution. Between the 1920s and 1950s, women from the Southern Nigerian provinces of Ogoja, Owerri, and Calabar emigrated to the Gold Coast (Ghana), where they worked as prostitutes. Aderinto points out that this first major transnational prostitution network in colonial Nigeria involved thousands of women who defied patriarchal construction of female domesticity to venture into transactional sex work. According to him, the popular notion that transnational prostitution in contemporary Nigeria emerged "suddenly" in the 1980s is inaccurate and ahistorical. Although the colonialists moralized against migratory sex work, its proceeds created a multiplier effect in the communities from which the women originated. So important was casual-sex work to the economy of communities in Ogoja and Calabar Provinces that the colonialists attempted to impose a new tax regime on returnee prostitutes. Casual sex work, according to Aderinto, provides a critical entry into a vast array of issues including but not limited to gender, agency, modernity, and power relations. Indeed, sex, a subject traditionally associated with secrecy, had the power and capacity to invoke wider issues about the changing roles of biological males and females and the artificiality of colonial physical boundaries. Aside from challenging Victorian notions of female inferiority, women who sold sex and men who bought it created new avenues of expressing identity and adapting to changing social relations unleashed by colonial capitalism. Hence, despite the moralizing of colonialists and some African males against prostitution, the men and women who bought and sold sex considered it a significant component of their existence. Aderinto takes readers into the content of each category of archives produced by European administrators and Nigerians, highlighting the perception of

each group toward sex work and the broader issues of sexual morality. Like all sources for reconstructing history, archival materials need to be critically cross-examined and supplemented with other genres of materials such as oral history and newspapers.

The credibility of oral sources for writing history has long been established. Indeed, during the 1960s and 1970s, pioneering Nigerianists collected a vast store of oral information to reconstruct the history of communities as part of a larger project to use evidence from precolonial history to highlight the sophistication of ancient African civilizations and by extension the ability of Africans to govern themselves. However, it would appear that the availability of a large body of documentary sources on colonial history has practically reduced the volume and the intensity of use of oral literature (a genre of oral sources) in the history writing of recent decades. Abimbola Adesoji, in Chapter 5, revisits the use of songs and orality in writing the political history of Yorubaland with particular emphasis on Ile-Ife, the ancestral home of the Yoruba. Instead of dealing with the precolonial period, the era oral information has helped to unveil, his work turns to the colonial and contemporary era, highlighting political, religious, and sociocultural representations in royal songs composed during the reign of three *Oonis* (kings) of Ile-Ife since 1910. Although the political careers of these kings are well archived in colonial records and other written sources, songs provide rare perspectives into undocumented experiences of power, agency, and grassroots mobilization. He situates the songs within the context of the circumstances under which they were composed and the role they play in mediating relations among various sections of the community. Adesoji claims that a large chunk of “traditional” history of Yoruba communities in the colonial and postcolonial eras is archived in daily and seasonally composed songs ready to be collected, interpreted, and appropriately used for shedding light into grey areas of people’s past experience.

The preceding two chapters on sources lead us to another on methodology. In Chapter 6, Isaac Olawale Albert, the doyen of peace and conflict studies in Nigeria, deploys his fieldwork experience to shed light on how the emic (insider) and etic (outsider) concept affects historians’ craft both in the field and out. He argues that although the emic and etic concept has developed into a veritable site of scholarly engagement in the social sciences, historians have devoted little energy to exploring how it affects their craft.²⁷ While not suggesting that historians are unaware of the often opposing relationship between the insider and the outsider, Albert contends that they should dedicate more quality energy toward theorizing how the insider/outsider dichotomy affects the ways they collect and

interpret data. In other words, historians, like anthropologists, should in their writing provide background information on how their fieldwork experience and positionality vis-à-vis the subject affects the collection and interpretation of data. Using his fieldwork experience on studying intergroup relations between the Hausa and the Yoruba in the Sabon gari (stranger quarters) of Ibadan and Kano, Albert takes readers into the deep-rooted conflict among Nigerian ethnic groups and how it affects a researcher's relationship with the subjects. His position as an insider and outsider oscillated in accordance with the ethnicity, religion, and other components of identity of the groups he interviewed. After reading Albert's chapter, one comes to appreciate that ethnicity was not the only criterion for being considered as an insider; so, too, was knowledge of the history of the people being studied. In other words, Hausa residents of Ibadan, after several years of providing valuable information to Albert (a Southern Christian who spoke Hausa) and trusting him with their stories, began to treat him as an insider. Albert examines the impact of this transition from being an outsider to an insider. He gives a host of recommendations on how to navigate the slippery slope of research on religious and cultural identities.

The last chapter in Part II is historiographical in content. In Chapter 7, Saheed Aderinto appraises the contributions of LaRay Denzer, Bolanle Awe, and Nina Mba to scholarship on women and gender. He engages the cumulative scholarship of these highly influential scholars by examining the contextual relationship between history as the totality of a society's past, on the one hand, and the politics of production of knowledge, on the other. According to Aderinto, although historians of Nigeria have carried out critical historiographical work on the scholarship of "mainstream" historians, they have largely neglected those specializing in women's and gender history. For him, historiographical essays on gender and other aspects of Nigerian history not only render handy and accessible entry into the world of knowledge produced by historians, but help to map the metamorphosis of the relationship between knowledge and power. He also develops our appreciation for the influence pioneering scholars have on future generation of thinkers, and the value of ongoing dialogue between "old" and "new" historiographies. Aderinto observes that one of the best means of coming to terms with the evolution of academic scholarship and the varied approaches to studying peoples and societies is by engaging how prominent scholars grapple with the wondrous task of creating academic visibility for historically marginalized groups. Denzer's, Awe's, and Mba's work cannot be avoided in any serious discussion of women's place in Nigerian history since the precolonial period.

Unlike the preceding section, which delves into sources, methods, and historiography, the next, titled “Rereading and Rewriting Colonial Nigeria,” parades chapters that deploy both new and familiar sources to challenge and reinterpret established knowledge about Nigerian encounter with imperialism and intergroup relations. The infrastructure, sites, and symbols of colonial exploitation, such as forest reserves, railways, and courts, have attracted significant scholarly interest since the 1960s. Aside from establishing how they were established and controlled as integral components of imperialism, scholars have written about issues of resistance and negotiation. But as the chapters in the section show, narratives and ideas bear revisiting as historians discover new data. In Chapter 8, Pauline von Hellermann and Uyilawa Usuanlele interrogate the impact of the creation of forest reserves on land-use practices in Benin Division. But rather than focus entirely on how the new forest policy favored the British, as J. A. Atanda and others have done, or on the often violent resistance that followed the exploitation of land and its resources, they dwell on the “negotiations between colonial officers and local authorities.” This approach allows them to dissect how both the chiefs and the British benefited from the forest reserves, and the immediate and long-term impacts of land-use policies on the peoples of Benin Division. According to von Hellermann and Usuanlele, understanding the politics and interaction between the British and the Benin chiefs and the processes of the establishment of the forest reserves “contributes to current debates about the extent of colonial power, local cooperation in colonial rule, and colonial interest politics.” Their scholarship unveils a “natural resource” or “economic” dimension to Frederick Cooper’s complication of the role of the African “collaboration” under the colonial regime.²⁸ They remind us that the rigid binary of “resisters” and “collaborators” is not useful for understanding the establishment and politics of forest reserve exploitation in Benin Division. Rather, a “resister” to one aspect of forest reserve politics could become a “collaborator” vis-à-vis another aspect, and vice versa.

Scholarly research on the process of establishment of the British legal system is not new, according to Olatunji Ojo and Lawrence Alo, who take on this subject in Chapter 9. However, after presenting an excursion into the current literature on the workings of the British legal system, the development of the legal profession in Nigeria, and how individuals appropriated colonial legal machinery to achieve desired material and social goals, they opine that the existing scholarship fails to provide “a good idea of the growth and evolution of customary courts.” Ojo and Alo’s chapter enriches our knowledge of British and customary legal

administration in Ijesa and Ekiti not covered in the extant literature. The authors integrate the experience of the Ekiti into the discourse of the conflict and cooperation between the British and the chiefs in the administration of land law. Ojo and Alo posit that the British upheld the rulings of the chiefs in accordance with preexisting customary law insofar as they did not contradict the imperialists' "civilized" ideas and practices of their "modern" judicial system. On several occasions, the British and the chiefs rendered different judgments on cases brought before them because their interpretations of the idea of justice and fairness diverged. While the chiefs continued to give rulings on land matters in accordance with customary laws, the decisions of the British, which normally overturned the chiefs', were informed by Britain's legal code. Ojo and Alo amplify the significance of the colonial legal system for understanding socioeconomic and political change. The colonial legal system played a significant role in the emergence of new value judgments and realignment of existing power and relational agency in contradictory manners. The authors pose the following major questions: "How did the native courts, which combined the Yoruba and British legal systems, shape land cases in Ijesa and Ekiti Districts? How did the British legal code and the associated social and economic changes impact gender, class, and property relations? How well did the new courts perform in settling conflicts brought before them?"

Scholarly research on the railway, which first appeared in the 1960s, established the importance of transport to the entrenchment of colonial capitalism. Railway construction was the most expensive capital project undertaken by the colonialists immediately after the "pacification" of a substantial part of the region that would later become Southern Nigeria from the 1890s. The opening up of the African interior and its integration into the world capitalist system through the railway firmly established the economic motive of European imperialism, in Nigeria as elsewhere on the continent. In Chapter 10, "Toward New Approaches to Nigeria's Railway History," Shehu Tijjani Yusuf provides a short but in-depth look into the array of scholarship on Nigerian railways and identifies new areas that require attention. According to Yusuf, historians have concentrated almost entirely on the impact of the railway on colonial urban centers at the expense of rural agricultural communities. Using Madobi village in Kano as a case study, he weaves the advent of the railway into the beginning of groundnut production in Madobi, the influx of Southerners into the Northern Nigerian village, and intergroup relations between the host and stranger communities. He emphasizes the importance of the initiative and

agency of local communities to the world capitalist system and demonstrates how the “foreigners” created new sociocultural identities in their new homes.

Historical writing about the relations between the Ibadan and the Ijebu, two Yoruba subgroups, began to appear from the 1920s, according to Saheed Aderinto in Chapter 11. Even the great Yoruba intellectual Samuel Johnson dedicated a substantial portion of his narrative to the relations between these two important Yoruba subgroups. Aderinto observes that it is impossible to write about the Ijebu without mentioning the Ibadan and vice versa, partly because geography and a number of socioeconomic and military factors during the nineteenth century necessitated relations between the two. During the colonial period, the Ijebu were the most populous Yoruba subgroup in Ibadan as they migrated into the city to partake in the new economic opportunities created by the colonialists. After engaging the core ideas presented by various Yoruba historians from Johnson to Olufunke Adeboye, Aderinto attempts to reconstruct the historical foundation of the discrimination against Ijebu settlers in colonial Ibadan. He does not disagree with established scholars of the Yoruba that economic and military rivalries chiefly influenced the enmity between the Ibadan and Ijebu during the nineteenth century. He also agrees that the Ibadan were unfriendly with the Ijebu strangers during the colonial period. However, he contends that the nineteenth-century military and political rivalry sowed the seeds of hatred and discrimination against the Ijebu settlers in Ibadan during the period. He stresses the importance of continuity and change in inter- and intragroup relations, making connections to the significant position that memory and citizenship construction play in molding the patterns of intergroup relations between “autochthonous” and “settler” populations.

The penultimate section, titled “Emerging Frontiers in Colonial Nigerian History,” has three interrelated chapters on the history of children, youth, and crime. In Chapter 12, Laurent Fourchard examines how sociocultural and economic permutations during World War II paved the way for the construction of juvenile delinquency as a problem in Nigeria. Delinquent juveniles, variously called the “*boma* boys” and “*jaguda* boys” in 1930s and 1940s Lagos, engaged in both minor and violent crimes and wrought significant havoc disrupting public peace. The British generally overlooked juvenile crime and delinquency in the interwar era, but they saw it as a major threat to social stability during World War II. This new posture on juvenile crime, as Fourchard establishes in this pioneering historical study of Nigerian children and youth, was closely connected to the larger project of ensuring that domestic insecurity did not undermine Britain’s war effort. Activities of delinquent children and juveniles were

considered a threat to the immediate and future survival of imperialism in Nigeria. The fact that new institutions such as the Colony Welfare Service were established during World War II when budgetary shortfalls crippled the effective running of the colonial state established the importance of the impact of juvenile delinquency on the sustainability of imperialism. As it turned out, the British were fighting not only to prevent the ascendancy of Nazi Germany but also to limit the excesses of delinquent children who were labeled domestic “enemies” of the colonial state. Fourchard does not underestimate this security undertone of the institutional attention given to children and youth welfare. According to him, although the British and the African educated elites disagreed on most issues confronting Nigerians and how to address them, they held common ground on the immediate and future impact of youth delinquency.

Fourchard’s chapter leads to a related study of delinquent juveniles in Lagos by Simon Heap, another pioneering historian of children and youth history. Various known as *Alaayes*, *Agbero* (touts at motor parks), *Gbana* (cocaine or heroin), *omo onile* (sons of the soil), or *omo ojuina* (sons of the eye of the fire), jobless Lagos vagrant and delinquent youths have attracted the attention of social scientists, criminologists, and even literary icons like Wole Soyinka, who have produced a massive body of work depicting youth counterculture in relation to the larger problems of urbanization, poverty, and absence of good governance. However, historical research on this “deviant” and visibly noticeable social class is scanty. Heap appears to take a “functional” history approach when he opines that understanding the roots of youth crime and homelessness is important to grappling with the contemporary dynamics of the problem. While Fourchard locates his chapter mainly in the colonial context, Heap makes a connection between the colonial and postcolonial periods, emphasizing the need to study the background of challenges facing Nigerian youth today. Heap argues that historians have paid limited attention to people with limited capital or agency, with the result that most Nigerians are faceless, passive, and deprived of significant historical representation. His claim is actually right if one considers that women were not officially treated as significant players in the colonial order until the Women’s War of 1929, which completely put to rest the notion of women’s powerlessness. By writing delinquent juveniles into history, Heap highlights the realities of homelessness, hopelessness, and criminality of the “*boma* boys” and “*jaguda* boys” of the 1930s and 1940s—the ancestors of today’s “Area boys”—who defied the authority of colonialists and indigenous elites alike. This historical link shattered the popularly held notion that violent crime and youth delinquency are problems

accentuated primarily by the postcolonial crisis of underdevelopment. Heap's chapter also challenges the conventional narrative about elements and methods of resistance to colonial rule. He contends that the activities of delinquent youth constituted a form of resistance to the mainstream culture of decency and respectability, and to colonialism in general.

Crime and the religious body is the main theme of Chapter 14 by Paul Osifodunrin. He uses the murder of Bisiriyu Apalara, a famous Yoruba-Muslim cleric in 1940s and 1950s Lagos, to unlock a host of ideas about politics, religion, and the resilience of indigenous faith in rapidly modernizing Lagos. Apalara was murdered in 1953 by members of the Lagos Oro cult because he was a fervent critic of traditional religion. He organized numerous religious outreach campaigns and drew a large following from the Lagos Yoruba-Muslim community who were highly impressed by his mastery of the tenets of Islam and his eloquence. While other Muslim clerics feared retribution for criticizing the "infidels," as adherents of Yoruba indigenous faiths were labeled, Apalara exhibited the highest degree of intrepidity, even in the face of danger to his life. His murder did not go unsolved—some leaders of the Oro cult were charged and sentenced to death for the crime. This case, in addition to a few others, represented a milestone in the history of crime and crime solving in Nigeria. It challenged the ancient legal dictum of "No body, no murder," because Apalara's body was never recovered; and the murder investigation showcased the deployment of forensic science in solving a high-profile crime. Apalara's death was so important that it entered the Yoruba linguistic lexicon (in the form of popular sayings) and was registered in the dictionary of urban popular music and culture. Today, Islamic associations, streets, literature, and public buildings proudly carry and continue to propagate his name and work. Osifodunrin's work complements a growing number of studies on crime and murder in colonial Nigeria, such as David Patten's book-length study of the man-leopard killings among the Ibibio and Ruth Watson's study of murder and politics in Ibadan. However, unlike existing studies that downplay the relationship between murder and interfaith politics, Osifodunrin's chapter approaches homicide from the angle of the politics of spiritual legitimacy. He goes on to argue that although Apalara's death obviously appeared like a conflict between Muslims and adherents of traditional faith, the motives of his killers were largely economic. This revisionist dimension casts religiously motivated crime beyond conventional narratives of "holiness" or spiritual "cleansing" by looking at other salient but highly important variables. Apalara's murderers hid behind the ruse of protecting the sanctity of the

gods in committing a crime that was motivated by personal and collective economic greed.

Part V of this book deals with contemporary Nigeria. It contains chapters that explore developments that took place after the demise of colonial rule and those that assumed new dimensions in response to political and social transformation. The Nigerian video film industry, popularly called “Nollywood,” is recognized as one of the most indelible cultural “revolutions” in contemporary Nigeria. Tunde Kelani, a representative filmmaker, remarks that video films represent a progression in the documentation of Nigerian history.²⁹ He points out that Nollywood films, like oral history and archaeological evidence, represent a footprint through which the past can be recovered. In Chapter 15, Paul Ugor and Giovanna Santanera take up the cinema “revolution” by inserting it into global cultural and artistic production by Nigerians. They posit that Nollywood “has become a veritable cultural platform for constructing alternative social histories and identities, especially among marginal social groups and individuals outside the spheres of state and/or corporate power and influence.” Ugor and Santanera do not suggest that Nollywood narratives are wholly true and exact reflections of contemporary Nigerian society. Rather, they explore “how the video industry and its films “constitute rough social maps of existing mentalities, values, and events, especially from the perspective of common people.” After setting the economic, political, and sociocultural context responsible for the emergence of Nollywood from the early 1990s, they proceed to engage the video films as popular history and travel narrative. More research is needed to fully address both the gains and the shortfalls of this new medium in researching recent Nigerian history. Although historians have used cinema films produced from the colonial period through the 1980s as historical sources, it would appear that Nollywood films, due to a host of overlapping economic, political, and social factors, pose a different kind of challenge for professional historians. However, the obvious gain is that future generations of historians will have access to video images that were produced by Nigerians for Nigeria.

At various points in this introduction, we mention that historians of Nigeria are now focusing more attention on contemporary history while facing the challenges of writing about major local and national events without access to important state records. The new interest in contemporary history is attributable in part to the need to demonstrate the continuities and changes in Nigerians’ engagement with transformative political and social processes, both within their immediate community and in the broader context of the nation-state. In Chapter 16, Olukoya Ogen takes a

more “theoretical” approach to contemporary history within the larger philosophical and methodological debates among historians not only of Nigeria but throughout the world. He addresses the shifting definitions of contemporary history and the challenges historians face in exploring “recent” events. His chapter asks significant questions about how historians of Nigeria should engage contemporary Nigeria and reflects on the steps taken by universities to channel historical education to meet immediate needs of Nigerian society in the twenty-first century.

Violent crime, HIV/AIDS, and human trafficking are some of the major problems confronting Nigeria, not unlike many African states. In Chapter 17, Richard A. Aborisade and Adeyinka A. Aderinto present the transformation of human trafficking in Nigeria since the 1980s. Readers should consider this chapter in conjunction with Chapter 4 in order to get a clearer sense of the historical foundations of transnational sex work. However, whereas Chapter 4 deals only with sources for researching transnational prostitution in colonial Nigeria, Chapter 17 takes on the nature and dynamics of the sex trade and efforts to stem its tide since the 1980s. It highlights the roles of national and international agencies drawn along political, religious, and ethnic lines. Aborisade and Aderinto treat human trafficking as one of the manifestations of obvious elements of underdevelopment—namely, unemployment, poverty, and lack of education. Chapter 18, by Akeem Ayofe Akinwale, explores the HIV/AIDS pandemic since the 1980s. Akinwale identifies the pandemic as one of the major challenges facing Nigeria’s health care delivery system. He dedicates adequate space to the discussion of the ways the political, religious, and scientific communities have been dealing with the scourge and its impact on the nation-state.

In conclusion, we have attempted to give readers a look at how some scholars of Nigeria are thinking about a host of ideas on the craft of writing history, Nigerians’ experience in colonial and contemporary times, and continuity and change in the country’s experience of power, agency, and popular ideas associated with progress and development. This volume highlights works produced by historians of the third wave of historical writing, which is exemplified by the expansion of geographic and paradigmatic coverage to encompass regions and themes neglected by scholars of the first and second waves. This invention and reinvention, rereading and rewriting of Nigerian history establish that the art or science of historical writing, like history itself, is a continuum. As historians search for “virgin” areas of specialization or reinterpret popularly held ideas, they are inescapably bound to a tradition that comes before them.