

CHAPTER 25

TOYIN FALOLA ON SLAVE TRADE, SLAVERY, AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF YORUBALAND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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Four notable scholars, namely Akinwumi Ogundiran, Funso Afolayan, Abdul Karim Bangura, and Adebayo Oyeade, have examined the contributions of Toyin Falola to African studies.¹ Although their critical historiographical essays unveil the many faces as well as phases of Falola's scholarship on Yoruba, Nigerian, and African studies, an obvious loophole is the tendency to, in one piece which normally serves as an introduction in *Festschriften*, summarize Falola's entire (or substantial aspects of) scholarship, spanning more than a quarter century and touching on virtually all aspects of Yoruba, Nigerian, and African studies.

I am not suggesting that a general historiographical study of Falola's work does not have its own merit. Indeed, it is a worthwhile exercise that introduces the intellectual community to Falola's varieties of history and his engagement with the history of Africa's most populous country. Rather, I contend that in order to fully come to terms with his creativity and immense contributions to the craft of history writing, his historiographers should consider taking a closer critical look at how he tackles specific subjects within a larger historiographic and periodic delimitation (say, for example, Yoruba, Nigerian, and African history; economic and political history, and slave trade and slavery; nineteenth century, and colonial and post-independent periods, etc.). Falola's writings on all these periods and themes are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate to generate scholarly and thought-provoking work.

Also, none of the scholars mentioned above critically comment on Falola's writing style and exposition. For me, a historian's scholarship should not be judged only by his or her contributions to the field, but also by how his or her ideas are communicated. The ways Falola sets up his narratives and arguments are as important as the quality and interpretation of data. What is more, previous authors do not see the need to fully comment on the genre of sources Falola uses and how these data help him to fill pressing gaps and develop path-breaking ideas. Methodological and stylistic deficiency can be found in several review essays on other prominent historians such as J. F. Ade Ajayi,

Obaro Ikime, K. O. Dike, A. E. Afigbo, G. O. Olusanya, Bolanle Awe, and J.A. Atanda.² It is a truism that most if not all pioneering historians of Nigeria deploy, for example, oral evidence for writing Nigerian history; a critical and synthetic analysis of how individual historians use their sources to interpret and re-interpret specific subjects is traditionally glossed over.

In this chapter, I set out to kill three birds with one stone. First, I do what other historiographers of Falola did not do by commenting on his style of exposition. It is my conviction that how scholars express and develop their ideas is an integral component of their intellectual existence. Second, I discuss his sources and analyze how he uses certain genres of material to chart new terrains. Lastly, I delve into two aspects of his scholarship on nineteenth-century Yoruba history that other writers treated ephemerally: slave trade and slavery, and political economy with reference to trade and commercial relations.³ I minimize the danger of over-compartmentalizing Falola's work by situating these areas of nineteenth-century Yoruba history within the broader ideas and literature produced by him⁴ and other notable historians such as J. F.Ade Ajayi, Robert Smith, Bolanle Awe, G. O. Oguntomisin, Robin Law, J. A. Atanda, A. I. Akinjogbin, and S. A. Akintoye among others.⁵

FALOLA'S SOURCES, METHODS AND APPROACHES

Edward Hallett Carr, the author of *What Is History*, one of the most influential works on the pedagogy of history, opines that the personality of a historian—which includes his or her upbringing, ideology, and values—plays a profound role in determining how he or she interprets the past.⁶ For me a background knowledge of historians goes beyond their intellectual development, race, ethnicity, ideologies, and even sexual orientation, and extends to the ways they communicate their ideas and sources and how they put it into conversation with one another.

Falola's method of exposition is unique to his predecessors and generation. Not only does he find genuine ways to establish the importance of every work, he frequently problematizes his narratives, sources, and the literature. By critically appraising essays published in such highly rated journals as *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* and *Journal of African History* during the 1960s and 1970s, and the more than a dozen monographs published in the *Ibadan History Series*, one will clearly discover that very few works place their themes within an extant literature. This limitation can be seen in light of the fact that most of the essays published during this period were pioneering works. Thus, making a connection between the present and existing work was almost not doable. An obvious exception would be indirect rule, which according to Michael Crowder and Ikime, is the most studied subject in colonial Nigeria's political history.⁷ Yet, because P. A. Igbafe was more interested in showing that the theory and practice of indirect rule in Benin derived from what Atanda and Afigbo recorded among the Yoruba and people of southeastern Nigeria respectively, most of the works tended to be islands unto themselves and only a few crossed the boundary of culture and methodologies.⁸

Because Falola appeared on the map of erudition after the heyday of Nigerian history pioneered by Nigeria-based scholars, the only way he could establish himself was by critically commenting on the limitations of existing work and offering his own revisionist ideas. Thus every piece represents an attempt to fill an existing gap (both obvious and salient) and to re-read and re-interpret existing conclusions, or both. He announces his purpose very early at the beginning of his work. This approach offers readers (notably the less patient ones) the opportunity to quickly evaluate his contributions to existing debates. Few authors from the 1960s to the 1980s make obvious declarations of the intent of their work at the beginning of their discourse. And it is not unusual for some authors to leave the readers with the uneasy task of deducing the contributions of their work to African studies.

Falola does this religiously in virtually all his publications on Yoruba history written from 1981 to 1995. In one of his essays, "From Hospitality to Hostility" published in *Journal of African History* in 1984, Falola challenges Awe and Akintoye who assert that Ibadan was a town "free and open to all" and that strangers had "limitless" and "unchecked" access to upward mobility and acquisition of wealth.⁹ In sounding a death knell to this idea, which gained academic currency for more than twenty years, Falola examines how the notion of citizenship was defined and redefined in order to trim and bar non-Oyo Yorubas' access to power. Like most modern polities, citizenship was an important signifier and prerequisite for social and economic mobility. Falola identifies two criteria for mobility, namely wealth and power. Although strangers could harness wealth through trade, craft, and agriculture, they could not have power because they did not engage in military exploit—the prerequisite for power. While power brought wealth, wealth could not guarantee power. This revisionist idea has helped historians including myself to rethink and trace the origins of discrimination against the Ijebu strangers in colonial Ibadan to the construction of citizenship during the nineteenth century.¹⁰

Falola adopts a fashion similar to the above in addressing aspects of mission history, such as the disposition of missionaries to domestic slavery, which are not covered in foundational works such as Ajayi's *Christian Missions in Nigeria* and Ayandele's *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*.¹¹ He opens another work, "Slavery and Pawnship in the Yoruba Economy in the Nineteenth Century," counteracting the position of Adeniyi Oroge, (who did a pioneering work on slavery in Yoruba) that "slaves were kept for non-economic purposes." In "Yoruba Writers and the Construction of Heroes" Falola set his critical tone by first identifying how such academics and literary icons and writers as Awe, Ayandele, Akinwumi Isola, Wole Soyinka, and D. O. Fagunwa construct the idea of heroes (both fictional and real).¹² While not totally condemning the profundity of the widespread orientation that adequate attention should be given to the study of heroes because they personified their various societies, Falola does an usual thing, marrying literary and historical methodologies. The purpose of this work is best expressed in his own words:

I intend to characterize the idea of the hero and comment on its implications for the understanding of the past, the conception of the present and the interface between history and literature. On the one hand, the hero provides the opportunity to understand a crucial Yoruba narrative device. On the other hand, it provides a common ground for literature and history to interact. I

shall proceed by demonstrating that the hero has been used as a narrative device both by historians and literary writers. Next I characterize the hero as the writers portray them. Finally, I explore the implications of the hero for literary and historical studies.¹³

Pages of Falola's work are replete with posers. He asks and answers questions almost simultaneously. For me, this approach appears to be an effective way of securing the reader's attention and placing ideas in a more coherent manner. Ability to ask relevant questions seems to be a good way of legitimizing a scholar's presence in a text. He appears to preempt the kinds of questions readers are likely to have in mind. In "A Research Agenda on the Yoruba in the Nineteenth Century," a piece which represents Falola's complete mastery of the entire scholarship and traffic of ideas on nineteenth-century Yoruba history, he sets out to identify the many areas of Yoruba studies that require urgent attention.¹⁴ Not only does he explain the reason the nineteenth century is the most studied period of Yoruba history, he asks questions relating to why some periods and aspects of Yoruba history are left unexplored. He also offers tips on how to scale methodological and theoretical hurdles. The theoretical premise of this essay is similar to the ones authored by Ayandele, Afigbo, Ikime, and Ajayi in 1969, 1977, 1979, and 1980, respectively. All these essays are set against the background of the wringing fortune and relevance of nationalist historiography.¹⁵

But while the aforementioned giants of Africa studies concentrate on Nigerian and African studies, Falola's preoccupation is Yoruba in the nineteenth century. Unlike the pieces by Ayandele, Afigbo, Ikime, and Ajayi, which identified major methodological and theoretical deficiencies of modern African historiography without proffering elaborate and adequate practical solutions to them, Falola's piece proposes practical guidelines on how to generate data and devise a new framework for filling in the lesser known periods of Yoruba history—especially pre-nineteenth century.

Falola loves to itemize his points, thus creating coherent links between narratives and arguments. Why he adopts this noticeable style is difficult to tell. He may have stuck to it in order to encourage readers to get to the tail of his discourse. One may suggest that since most journal essays and book chapters from the 1960s through the late 1980s rarely have a breakdown of sections that allows readers to move from one theme to another, Falola's approach appears the best way of keeping readers glued to his work. This narrative style is evident in his numerous works on the Yoruba: See pages 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105 of "Power Relations and Social Interactions among Ibadan Slaves"; 28 and 29 of "Warfare and Trade Relations between Ibadan and the Ijebu in the Nineteenth Century"; 113, 115, 116, 121, 127, etc. of "The Yoruba Caravan System of the Nineteenth Century"; and 53, 56, 57, 60, 67 of "From Hospitality to Hostility," among others.

From methods of exposition, we move to Falola's arsenal, that is sources. A combination of factors makes the nineteenth century the most studied period of Yoruba history. In the first instance, the influx of European missionaries which followed the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade led to the emergence of new elites—that is, educated Africans who were converted to Christianity, received Western education

through mission schools, and became initiated into Western culture and mannerisms.¹⁶ Both the missionaries and educated elites wrote copiously about the peoples and societies with which they interacted. The writings of such missionaries as David and Ann Hinderer and W. H. Clarke and the explorers John and Richard Lander are veritable source material for researching the history of Yorubaland in the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Falola realizes the indispensability of narratives of these missionaries, explorers, and the Church Missionary Society's archives and puts them to fruitful and proper use. He does not take the information recorded by missionaries hook, line, and sinker, and he does not hesitate to point out their shortcomings. Hence, in a work on social interaction among Yoruba slaves, he critiques the use of missionary sources, asserting that missionaries tended to reduce domestic slavery to the narrow gauge of relations between the masters and the slaves.¹⁸ Falola uses missionary sources in two ways: 1) to supplement and cross-examine data from other sources, namely oral interviews, and 2) as a distinct body of information on the impact of missionary work on Yoruba society. In the second category are such works as "Church, Politics and Society in Ibadan in the Nineteenth Century," "Religion, Rituals and Yoruba Pre-Colonial Domestic Economy," and "Missionaries and Domestic Slavery in Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century."¹⁹ In "Missionaries and Domestic Slavery in Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century," Falola unlocks piles of CMS archives (the Yoruba Mission) in a discourse of how the Anglican Church, the only missionary sect opposed to domestic slavery, dealt with the problem of human cargo and servitude.²⁰

Aside from writing about local intelligentsia, such as I. B. Akinyele (Ibadan), A. J. Ajisafe (Abeokuta), and N. D. Oyerinde (Ogbomoso), among others, and their work, Falola also uses the writings of these local intellectuals to illuminate select aspects of Yoruba studies.²¹ Like all historians of the Yoruba, he could not dispense with Samuel Johnson's *The History of the Yoruba*. Johnson's scholarship, despite its undeniable contributions to Yoruba history and culture, is replete with interpretational and factual errors. Falola notices this minus in Johnson's work. In 1991, he assembled some of the best minds of Yoruba history for an anthology, *Pioneer, Patriot and Patriarch*, which deals with both the strengths and weaknesses of *The History of the Yoruba*.²² Falola establishes the need for *Pioneer, Patriot and Patriarch* when he opines, "Although Johnson's *History* has been cited more than any other book on the Yoruba, no sustained effort has been made to subject the text to any full-length critique, assess its impact on Yoruba historiography and pay adequate tribute to the author."²³ Newcomers to Yoruba history will find *Pioneer, Patriot and Patriarch* indispensable, for it serves as a manual for unlocking Johnson's prose and narratives. It is also capable of helping students to minimize interpretational errors that are likely to be inherited by reading Johnson's book.

Although all historians of nineteenth century Yoruba history use oral evidence, it seems that Falola is the largest collector and the most avid user of this type of source. I contend that he is able to venture into some virgin terrains in Yoruba studies by collecting and relying predominantly on oral sources. Some of his path-breaking work, such as the "Power Relations and Social Interactions among Ibadan Slaves," "The Yoruba Toll Systems," "The Yoruba Caravan System," and "From Hospitality to Hostility" among others, are written entirely with oral sources. More than half of the cita-

tions in his *The Political Economy of a Pre-colonial African State* are oral evidence. With particular reference to "Power Relations and Social Interactions among Ibadan Slaves," Falola is able to illuminate a dark corner of Yoruba history by critically interpreting over 120 oral interviews collected over a period of ten years, 1977–1987. Although the importance of oral history in the reconstruction of African history had become an article of faith by the 1980s when Falola wrote most of his work on the Yoruba, he is definitely more open to the use of this source than any other historian of the Yoruba.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF YORUBALAND

As noted earlier, the nineteenth century is arguably the most studied period of Yoruba history. This period is important not only because it produced a variety of permutations which have far-reaching consequences on political and social relations during and after the demise of colonial rule, but also because it exposed the creative ingenuity of the Yoruba in the areas of state and empire formation. If the period produced great men and women and monumental developments, the personality and gamut of the scholarship on the period is impressive. Hence, historians such as Atanda and Akinjogbin grappled with such contentious issues as the theories of the origin of the fall of the Old Oyo Empire and its implications on security in the entire region.²⁴ Awe and Oguntomisin worked on the ascendancy of Ibadan and Ijaiye, new political systems and experiments, respectively.²⁵ Ajayi and Robert Smith wrote well-cited works on military tactics, professional warriors, and significant military encounters, such as the Ijaiye War (1860–1862).²⁶ Akintoye did his PhD on the rise of the Ekitiparaopo confederacy and went on to publish a book on this subject.²⁷ Ajayi and Ayandele studied how the changes of the period contributed to the rise of the "new elite," while Biobaku, focusing on the Egba, examined the pattern of relations between the nascent state (Abeokuta) and the British on the one hand, and other Africans, especially the warlike Dahomean, on the other.²⁸

Inferentially, one will discover from the preceding summary of scholarship on nineteenth-century Yorubaland that when Falola was conducting fieldwork for his doctoral dissertation in the late 1970s, Yoruba history had developed into a full-blown field. Personalities and names were intimidating; the literature was vast, but the discipline continued to gain more converts. Falola is one of the few new converts that distinguished himself. Not only did he challenge existing paradigms, he also ventured into several areas that historians of the period did not explore. In challenging existing conclusions, he exposed the major limitations of modern African history: the celebration of the life and times of African heroes to the neglect of the "ordinary" people that worked behind the scene of historical process, and the obvious obsession with political history at the expense of other areas, such as economic and social history. In the 1960s and 1970s, leading historians such as Ayandele, Afigbo, Ikime, and Ajayi frequently performed what appears to be self-criticism of modern African historiography, directing people's attention to the loopholes in the discipline they pioneered.²⁹ During the 1970s few historians and social scientists such as A. G. Hopkins, R. O. Ekundare, G. O. Ogunremi,

Paul. E. Lovejoy, Wale Oyemakinde, and Adebayo Lawal among others³⁰ dared to venture into the new terrain of economic history. Other specialized fields such as women's and social history, did not gain respect and recognition until the 1980s.³¹

But instead of settling for a purely economic interpretation of Africa's past as Hopkins and others did, Falola made his debut with a political-economic approach to African studies focusing on the Yoruba, arguably Africa's most studied ethnicity. His PhD. dissertation, which begets his first monograph, *The Political Economy of a Pre-colonial African State*, examines how a combination of economic and political factors placed Ibadan at the forefront of politics in nineteenth-century Yorubaland.³² His work represented a sharp and sustained turn from the existing scholarship of such renowned historians as Awe, Ayandele, Ajayi, Smith, and others, that concentrates almost entirely on how Yoruba political actors of the nineteenth century expanded their political influence by waging wars and controlling their vassal states. Thus the history of nineteenth-century Yorubaland before Falola appeared on the scene of knowledge production (like a thunderbolt) downplayed the cardinal position that labor, capital, and other modes of production, and market and distribution, among other factors, played in the emergence of Yoruba states.

Focusing on Ibadan, the most militarized Yoruba state in the nineteenth century, Falola challenged scholars to consider an alternative interpretation of the rise and organization of Yoruba society by diverting attention from the stale narrative of how the celebrated heroes and heroines waged wars, raised armies, and added feathers to their material and political might, to the activities of traders, farmers, porters and the so-called "ordinary people" who worked behind the scene to create the resources and wealth that sustained the glory of the state and its popularized leaders. Although the entire Yoruba region witnessed wars and revolution, economic activities went hand-in-hand with military warfare. Falola insists that the history of nineteenth-century Yorubaland is incomplete without a consideration of the economic and commercial activities that not only provided the resources required for state and empire formation, but facilitated intergroup relations and the exchange of cultures and ideas. Thus in *The Political Economy of a Pre-colonial African State* and other essays, some of which we shall be closely examining in the course of this essay, we read less about the famous Yoruba warlords and more about "ordinary" people, agriculture, craft, trade, and the movement of peoples, goods, and service from one place to another. Falola smartly examines how a combination of political and economic factors structured the pattern of relations among Yoruba states and the overall implication of this on intergroup relations and the sovereignty of Yoruba states.

The cumulative interpretation of Falola's discourses of political economy reflects the diversity of Yoruba precolonial economy. His evidence and arguments establish that before the imposition of alien rule, the African economy with special reference to the Yoruba was not backward: means of production and exchange were elaborate and sophisticated enough to take care of the needs of all and sundry. Movement of people and goods across natural and artificial boundaries was necessitated by the restrictions and opportunities that nature created. The Yoruba, like all humans, saw the need to protect their political and economic interests in the wake of foreign aggression. Politics and economy were closely intertwined to the extent that they influenced each other.

Wars were waged not solely because of the innate desire for political domination, but also because of the need to have access to trade routes, extract tributes, and increase the revenue and financial standing of the states. Indeed, Falola counters the pseudo-intellectual fallacies that see African precolonial economies as unchanging, static and unsophisticated.

In the preface to *The Political-Economy of a Pre-colonial African State*, Falola avails readers of the uneasy task of locating the contributions of his book to African history, asserting that “socio-economic themes have generally been neglected in African studies and this has made it difficult to know in detail the structure of the pre-colonial African economy, the transformation and transmutation of the socio-economic institutions and the factors responsible for these changes.”³³ Although he teased out this contention in this 230-page book, Falola upheld this idea throughout the 1980s and 1990s, publishing revisionist essays in leading journals such as the *Journal of African History*, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, *African Economic History*, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, *Slavery and Abolition*, and *Journal of Religious History*, among others.

In “The Yoruba Toll System,” Falola maps out the significance of toll collection to the political economy of Yoruba states, placing emphasis on how it was operated, the revenues it generated, and its abolition. The toll system reflected the diversity of Yoruba economy in the nineteenth century, characterized by large-scale movement of people, goods, and services. Falola situates toll collections within the larger context of the revenue base of Yoruba states. Here he mentions that although different kinds of payments, which include tributes, levies, and judicial fines, were regularly made to leaders who used such income to broaden their power and following; none of these aforementioned incomes outweighed tolls in their ramifications. He points out that while other forms of incomes and levies could be collected in the form of gifts, tolls were mostly collected in cash, thus providing regular and immediate income. While appreciating the fact that historians “shall never have” data for the amount Yoruba states derived from the aforementioned sources of income, he opines that the amounts derived from tolls were higher. Falola discusses other important reasons tolls were significant sources of revenue: They could be collected with limited or no coercion, and because the chiefs could always mobilize free labor to maintain the routes, they were able to maximize revenues; while other forms of income such as tributes required maintaining tributary states, a state did not have to be an overlord for it to derive revenues from tolls.

Falola goes on to discuss three out of many methods employed by the chiefs in establishing control of toll collection. Although these approaches were determined largely by the size of towns and the pattern of relationships that existed between the chiefs and the king on the one hand, and among the chiefs on the other, toll collection was an integral component of the political economy of Yoruba towns. Not only was the income used to maintain the elaborate and expensive lifestyles of the king and chiefs, it also reinforced the idea of territoriality and sovereignty. While toll sites could serve as an important avenue for promoting peaceful coexistence among towns, it could also be the locus of warfare. In this regard, Falola cites how the toll collectors at Oru prevented Ibadan traders from passing through Ijebuland during the Sixteen Years’ War

(1877–1893). Falola's deep analysis of other important components of the toll system, such as the amount collected, the location of the toll-gates, the personality of toll collectors, criminality and abuse of the system, further establish the dynamism of pre-colonial Yoruba states.

In another piece, "The Yoruba Caravan System in the Nineteenth Century," Falola maps out the importance and *modus operandi* of caravan trade in the nineteenth century. As always, he set out to provide a distinct Yoruba story of the caravan system—a story that negates those of the Hausa, Dyula, and Diakhanke of Senegambia which took the form of armed convoys with leaders, potters, drovers, treasurers, guards, and quartermasters. In the Yoruba case, the caravan system, as Falola shows, did not require pack animals, and thus did not require the help of teamsters to load and unload animals. What is more, women, not men, dominated the Yoruba caravan system. This finding corroborates similar discovery by Awe, LaRay Denzer, Nina Emma Mba, Oyeronke Oyewumi, and others who argue that in precolonial Yoruba society women wielded power in both the political and economic realms.³⁴ According to these eminent scholars of women and gender studies, precolonial Yoruba gender relations were not ordered in accordance with male superiority versus female inferiority (as seen in Western societies), but predominantly in terms of role differentiation which allowed individuals, irrespective of biological sex, to perform traditionally sanctioned responsibilities and cross the thin gender line.

In a related piece, Falola takes on the subject of warfare and trade relations with specific reference to the Ibadan and Ijebu.³⁵ In order to drive home his main argument that the character of a state in the nineteenth century was an important signifier of its foreign relations, Falola gives an insight into the militarized nature of Ibadan politics and the commercial character of the Ijebu. While Ibadan, as we have seen, had a military origin and was set up as a militarized state, Ijebu towns and villages were reputable centers of economic activities. According to Falola, while "Ibadan was imperialist in its agenda, the Ijebu were interested more in trade and profit."³⁶ The Ijebu, as Falola shows, not only monopolized coast/hinterland trade, but established elaborate trade networks that traversed the nooks and crannies of Yorubaland.

Although no Yoruba community was immune to the influence of the other and tended to see the reason for establishing peaceful coexistence with its neighbors, it appeared that Ibadan relied more on Ijebu for the supply of some of its basic needs, such as European manufactured ammunition and other items of international trade. Between 1830s and the 1840s, Ibadan and the Ijebu were allies in the war against the rise of the powerful state of Abeokuta.³⁷ But by the 1850s, Ibadan's superfluous military exploits began to constitute enormous worry for the Ijebu, who feared that Ibadan could invade them and terminate their centuries of monopoly of coast/hinterland trade and political sovereignty.³⁸ Falola shows how, from the 1840s or thereabout, the Ijebu worked fervently to clip the wings of Ibadan by ensuring that they did not have unrestricted access to European ammunition and other essential items of international and domestic trade. On rare occasions where trade relations took place, the Ijebu ensured that Ibadan paid exorbitantly for essential goods. Falola and other historians of the Yoruba, such as O. O. Ayantuga, Babatunde Sofela Awe, and Ayandele, agree that during the Ijaiye War (1860–1862) and the Ekitiparapo War, also known as the Sixteen

Years' War (1877–1893), the Ijebu constituted a major threat to Ibadan's quest to quell the insurgency of its vassal states.³⁹

What Falola did that other historians did not do is to examine the changing character of relations between Ibadan and Ijebu. While other historians paint a picture that suggests that the Ijebu constituted a major threat to Ibadan's commercial success throughout the entire period from the 1840s to 1892, Falola's narrative is to the contrary: they intermittently opened and closed trade relations in accordance with prevailing circumstances. Falola is also critical in commenting that although the Ijebu feared Ibadan and did their best to sever trade, they could not totally avoid trading with the Ibadan, who possessed the material resources for procuring some of the essential and luxury goods at any fixed price. Lastly, Falola demonstrates Ibadan's reactions to Ijebu's trade embargoes. The reactions included looking for alternative trading routes and befriending some Ijebu towns like Oru which dared to disobey the authorities' trade embargo placed on Ibadan.

From the 1830s to 1858 both Ibadan and Ijebu laid the foundation for, and promoted the development of, trade relations. But the growing power of Ibadan, which threatened that of the Ijebu, brought hostilities and cessation of trade in the 1850s. By the late 1860s both could no longer bear the effects of the cessation of trade and had to resume contact. This continued with occasional disruptions until 1878, when the Sixteen Years' War began. By 1882 both were also forced by politico-economic circumstances to reopen contacts with one another. Relations between them continued to be maintained until 1893 when the British imposed colonial rule on the Yoruba and began the reorientation of the economy.⁴⁰

But a long-term effect of hostility between the Ijebu and Ibadan, which Falola and others did not consider, is that it laid (in part) the foundation of discrimination against Ijebu strangers in colonial Ibadan. A recent study examines how the memory of the Ijebus' unfriendliness was preserved in oral literature and served as the basis of antipathy for people of Ijebu origin resident in Ibadan between 1893 and 1960.⁴¹

From works dealing with brigandage and piracy and the role of religion in the pre-colonial economy, to those on the economic foundation of Yoruba states and the impact of foreign relation on the Yoruba economy, one sees thoroughness and creativity in the ways Falola, as one of the best minds of nineteenth-century Yoruba history, handles his sources.

DOMESTIC SLAVERY AND SLAVE TRADE

Domestic or internal slavery and slave-trade flourished in Yorubaland (as in most regions of Africa) before, during, and after the demise of the transatlantic slave trade. The institution of slavery thrived partly because of a combination of economic, social, and political reasons. Although, as Paul. E. Lovejoy and others have shown, its modus operandi went through series of transformations from one century to another, it appears that it was during the nineteenth century that the institution experienced the highest intensity of change.⁴² While Britain intensified its "selfless" efforts to stamp out

the human cargo by forcing and sometimes persuading its former accomplices to follow suit, Yorubaland, due largely to the civil wars of the nineteenth century, continued to produce slaves, both for the local and transatlantic markets. European missionaries and the British merchants and administrators recklessly interfered with domestic African politics, playing groups and leaders against one another and setting a new agenda that would criminalize both international and domestic slave trade.

Unlike prominent historians such as Philip Curtin, Robin Law, and J. E. Inikori⁴³ who busied themselves with the transatlantic slave trade both from the African and the American ends, and the contributions of Africa to the Atlantic slave market from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, Falola had concerned himself with the nature and transformation of domestic slavery during the nineteenth century, the pattern of relations among slaves, and the economic and political changes that led to its end. He highlights the political, social, and economic importance of slaves to new states like Ibadan. While not completely rejecting the idea held by Oroge and others that slaves were “well” treated among the Yoruba and tended to be seen as important members of the household, Falola demonstrates how a combination of social and political factors inhibited the proper and full integration of slaves into Yoruba society. Although the activities of slave-masters are stated in his narratives, the pattern of relations among the slaves and their importance as maintainers of social balance is more important to Falola. Hence, he adheres to his project of ensuring that “ordinary” people are strategically inserted at the center stage of transformation of Yoruba society.

In his characteristically engaging, bold, and scholarly manner, Falola starts a piece, “Power Relations and Social Interactions among Ibadan Slaves,” by pointing out the paucity of academic work on slavery in precolonial Yorubaland. While acknowledging the importance of Oroge’s foundational work on slavery in nineteenth-century Yorubaland, Falola poses, as always, provocative questions, which include the exact impact of the transatlantic slave trade on political and social institutions of Yoruba communities and the nature of domestic slavery and slave trade before, during, and after the death of transatlantic slave trade. Falola does not tackle this question head-on, but moves swiftly to address the theme of this piece, which centers on power relations and social interactions among Ibadan slaves. He opens up this uncharted path of Yoruba studies by fully explaining some limitations inherent in researching slavery in precolonial Yorubaland. He not only exposes the loopholes of the data composed by missionaries and travelers of the nineteenth century which tended to focus more on the relations between slaves and their owners, but also points out that most of the writers had little or no contact with the slaves. As variegated and challenging as these research problems are, Falola was able to illuminate this aspect of African studies by collecting more than 100 oral interviews from ex-slaves and descendants of ex-slaves. He supplemented this data with other fragmentary sources, which include missionary and travelers’ accounts of slavery and slave trade in Yorubaland.

Falola gives a long but coherent analysis of the pattern of relations between the so-called privileged slaves and others. He constructs privilege slaves as those who enjoyed the favor of their masters and were saddled with high-ranking responsibilities, which included toll collection, farm supervision, and governance of colonies. Because these kinds of jobs required the use of force and brusqueness—which might even be per-

ceived as rudeness—Falola opines that war and political chiefs tended to prefer to use privileged slaves for such tasks since they would not care about any stigma and stereotypes associated with them. Thus, privileged slaves not only had the power to supervise, give orders, punish, and exploit other slaves, but could also harass and indeed punish freeborn individuals. In theory, they were in servitude, but in practice they commanded authority far above the reach of common slaves and some privileged freeborn.

It is misguided, as Falola shows, to think that privileged slaves preferred slavery to freedom. Indeed, Falola warns us to desist from the assumptions in literature on African domestic slavery that, because slaves tended to be treated well and like members of the household, they rarely considered freedom as important. Here Falola opines that no matter how rich or highly placed a slave was, he or she could not compete with freeborn persons in the allocation of wealth and land. Thus, freedom was the most discussed issue among Ibadan slaves during the nineteenth century. Aside from the fact that it made them citizens and removed the social stigma associated with servitude, freedom would fulfill the dream of most slaves to return to their original homes and compete with others for power and wealth.

Slaves redeemed themselves in a variety of ways. According to Falola, soldier-slaves could be set free if they captured freeborn and presented them to their masters. As seen in most if not all slave societies, Ibadan slaves could also run away. The status of a slave largely determined his or her chances of running away. Thus, it was easier for soldier-slaves, who were regularly sent on expeditions, to run away than for farm slaves. In all cases, prospective fugitives secured the cooperation of his or her mates and prayed to the gods for success. They would also do a sort of background check on the kind of relationship that existed between their masters and the town to which they wanted to escape.

Falola does not believe that the integration of slaves into the household of their masters was a simple process, as earlier mentioned. The mere fact that they lived in the same compound with their masters did not necessarily mean that they were well-integrated. Two categories of slaves, namely women and soldier-slaves, had better chances of securing integration into the household of their masters. For female slaves, marriage and child bearing gave them a degree of access to the social capital of their household, intimate contact with their masters, and a substantial amount of power over male slaves since they tended to treat their female counterparts with respect in return for food and gifts. Female slaves tended to speak well of male slaves who consistently and satisfactorily performed errands for them. Soldier-slaves' integration into the household was largely possible because they were needed for waging wars, which in turn produced a substantial amount of wealth that the war chief needed to maintain his large following and compete with his peers.

Falola's plethora of scholarship on slavery and slave trade also extends to the process of its abolition and eventual demise among the Yoruba. In an essay, "The End of Slavery among the Yoruba," published in *Slavery and Abolition*, Falola takes a *longue durée* approach at why Yorubaland continued to send slaves across the Atlantic in spite of "altruistic" abolitionist work of the British, the upsurge in the use of domestic slaves in places like Ibadan, and the process of its decline and final death during the early decade of the twentieth century.⁴⁴ If the civil wars of the nineteenth century increased the population of people sold into the transatlantic slave trade, the enormous merits of em-

ploying slaves in a variety of crude and prestigious capacities increased the popularity of domestic slavery. In places like Ibadan, slaves, as earlier noted, were used in a variety of important capacities—as administrators of colonies, toll collectors, private security personnel, soldiers, and so on.

But the establishment of colonial rule in Lagos in 1861 and its emergence as a “haven” for runaway slaves, the activities of the missionaries, the incorporation of Yorubaland into the vortex of colonial rule in 1893, and the attendant change in the mode of production unleashed the process that would later lead to the death of domestic slavery. Not only did the British proclaim slavery illegal after the “pacification” of Yorubaland, but the introduction of wage labor and the economic and monetary transformation that ensued gradually led to the phasing out of the ancient regime of domestic slavery in the region. Although Falola does not compare the process of abolition of domestic slavery in Yorubaland with that in the North, it is important to note that, whereas the British deliberately allowed domestic slavery to thrive in modern northern Nigeria up to 1936, as Lovejoy and Jan S. Hogendorn have shown in their book *Slow Death for Slavery*, in the South the criminalization of all forms of domestic servitude went hand-in-hand with the “pacification” of the region from the late nineteenth to the early decades of the twentieth century.⁴⁵ Afigbo, in a recent work, examines how a combination of political and economic conditions allowed domestic slavery to thrive in southeastern Nigeria up until the late 1940s, in spite of its criminalization.⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

As variegated as Falola’s scholarship on nineteenth century Yoruba history is, one can come to terms with some consistent trends. First, he builds on the scholarship of one of Africa’s most studied ethnicities, adopting a political economy approach. Although he has published at least two books that do not place much emphasis on the role of “common” people in the making of the state, his main contributions to nineteenth-century Yoruba history revolve around the contributions of human and material resources, trade and commercial relations, and craft and agriculture within Yoruba society.⁴⁷ He puts all these significant signifiers, elements, and factors of social change into conversation with one another and comes up with revisionist ideas that further unveil the sophistication and creative ingenuity of the Yoruba people. Second, his sources are conventional, but he uses them unconventionally. Hence, he clearly makes important contributions to certain aspects of Yoruba history, such as slave trade and slavery and the treatment of strangers by deploying certain types of evidence such as oral interview.

NOTES

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4. See among others, Toyin Falola, “The Ibadan Conference of 1855: Yoruba Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution,” *Genève-Afrique* 23, no. 2 (1985): 38–56; “The Foreign Policy of Ibadan in the Nineteenth Century,” *ODU: A Journal of West African Studies* 22 (1982): 91–108; “The Dynamics of Anglo-Ibadan Relations in the Nineteenth Century,” *ODU: A Journal of West African Studies* 22–24 (1981): 128–148; “The Ijaiye in Diaspora, 1862–1895: Problems of Integration and Resettlement,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 22, nos. 1–2 (1987): 67–79; “A Research Agenda on the Yoruba in the Nineteenth Century,” *History in Africa* 15 (1988); “From Hospitality to Hostility: Ibadan and Strangers, 1893–1904,” *The Journal of African History* 26, no. 1

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14. Toyin Falola, “A Research Agenda on the Yoruba in the Nineteenth Century,” *History in Africa* 15, (1988): 211–227.

15. E. A. Ayandele, “How Truly Nigerian Is Our Nigerian History?” *African Notes* 5, no. 2 (1968/69): 19–35; Obaro Ikime, *Through Changing Scenes: Nigerian History, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1979); A. E. Afigbo, *The Poverty of African Historiography* (Lagos: Afrografika, 1977); and J. F. A. Ajayi, “A Critique of Themes Preferred by Nigerian Historians,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 10, 3 (December 1980): 7–22.

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20. Falola, "Missionaries and Domestic Slavery in Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century."

21. Falola, *Yoruba Gurus*.

22. Toyin Falola, *Pioneer, Patriot and Patriarch: Samuel Johnson and the Yoruba People* (Madison, WI: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993). The contributors include Robin Law, J. F. Ade Ajayi, J. D. Y. Peel, Femi Akindele, J. A. Atanda, Babatunde Agbaje-Williams, O. B. Olawuyi, A. B. Afolabi, Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias, Bolanle Awe, H. O. Danmole, Ann O' Hear, R. S. Smith, Michael O. Anda, and Funso Afolayan.

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36. *Ibid.*, 27.

37. Falola, *The Political Economy of a Pre-colonial African State*, 130–131.

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