CHAPTER TWO

TREADING THE UNCHARTED PATH IN NIGERIAN HISTORY: THE INTELLECTUAL WORLD OF AYODEJI OLUKOJU

SAHEED ADERINTO AND PAUL OSIFODUNRIN

This festschrift celebrates the brilliant career of Ayodeji Olukoju, a key figure representative of the third wave of Nigerian historical writing—and perhaps the most prolific historian of Nigeria based in the country. His scholarship stands out, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Launching a career in the early 1990s—a time that coincided with the all but complete breakdown in his home country of infrastructure to support a decent life, as well as educational institutions and quality leadership—Olukoju quickly rose to academic stardom, overcoming all obstacles to serious scholarship. Spotlighting the career of distinguished scholars like Olukoju remains one of the best ways to reward them for their hard work, encourage them to do more, and demonstrate that there is a future for a young, up-and-coming generation of scholars who are willing, ready, and able to work hard.

After a short teaching stint at Ogun State University (now Olabisi Onabanjo University), Olukoju joined the Department of History at the University of Lagos in 1987. In 1991, he received his doctorate from the University of Ibadan and rose to the position of a full professor of history in 1998, at the age of thirty-nine. He was head of Department of History and dean of Faculty (College) of Arts at the University of Lagos between 2001 and 2009. In 2010, he was appointed the vice chancellor (president) of Caleb University, Imota, Lagos. Olukoju has held visiting positions at various research centers and universities in North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. His works have appeared in tier one area and specialist publications including *Journal of African History*; *International Journal of African Historical Studies*; *African Affairs*; *History in Africa*; *African*

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Studies Review; *African Economic History*; *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*; *Journal of Transport History*; and *Journal of Labor History*, among others. Cumulatively, he has published twelve books and monographs and more than one hundred journal articles and book chapters. In addition to numerous academic awards and honors, Olukoju is a Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Letters—the "apex organization of Nigerian academics and scholars in the Humanities."[1]

Olukoju's areas of specialization include urban, infrastructure, and economic history.[2] His monograph *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities in Lagos, 1861–2000* is the first book-length study of three key urban facilities in Nigeria.[3] He has also created a cluster of works on political leadership, terrorism, underdevelopment, historiography, and the local history of Oka Akoko, his hometown.[4] However, he is recognized more for his pioneering scholarship on maritime history. In this chapter, we present Olukoju's highly revisionist scholarship on economic, urban, and infrastructure history. We situate his work within the breadth of historical writing in order to pinpoint his aggregate contributions to the production of knowledge on Nigeria, Africa's most populous country. In Chapter 3, Tokunbo Ayoola engages Olukoju's work on maritime history from a historiographic standpoint. Yet, it is impossible to fully capture Olukoju's career in two chapters. We are also aware of the overlapping nature of his writings and the flaws of compartmentalizing more than one hundred strong publications—spanning close to three decades—into maritime, economic, urban, and infrastructure history. Nevertheless, we believe that Chapters 2 and 3, read and interpreted together, provide handy and accessible entry into Olukoju's fascinating and highly sophisticated intellectual world. We conclude by attempting to make sense of what his achievement and future goals mean to historical knowledge in general. We do this two-dimensionally by emphasizing that his career has been shaped in part by the sociopolitical atmosphere of the country during the time of his writing as well as by a well-defined and -executed agenda to advance the frontier of knowledge. His career is blossoming at a time when historians are persistently under pressure to demonstrate their relevance to the development of society. He ventures into some of the core elements of underdevelopment to demonstrate that history has a lot to offer as Nigeria and its leaders attempt to fashion the best means of putting the country on the path toward sustained development.

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Olukoju and Nigeria's Economic Past

Economic history as a subfield of Nigerian history began in the 1970s when scholars (both historians and social scientists) like A. G. Hopkins, R. O. Ekundare, Bade Onimode, Wale Oyemakinde, Deji Ogunremi, Paul Lovejoy, and Toyin Falola, among others, sought to write a history that recognizes the importance of "ordinary" people in the making of society.[5] In the preface to his seminal work, *Economic History of West Africa*, Hopkins states quite clearly that "the reader will find little discussion here of large states and great leaders, or foreign explorers, missionaries, and pro-consuls."[6] In attempting to reconstruct the history of agriculture and trade, Hopkins asserts, a historian is drawn to the "activities of a great majority of Africans—women and men."[7] His tome appeared as modern African historians were being criticized for romanticizing the past by presenting the history of so-called heroes and heroines and placing limited emphasis on the experiences of "ordinary" Africans who provided the material and human resources that allowed the rulers to stay in power and build their empires. Economic history, therefore, represents a departure from the conventional political history of Africa that purports to chronicle the achievements of the continent's great men and women. When Olukoju appeared on the scene in the 1990s, a number of major themes in economic history had already been thoroughly addressed. Distinguished historians like Bolanle Awe, Falola, and Hopkins, among others, had successfully counteracted colonialists' assumption that the precolonial economy was static and unchanging through critical examinations of the dynamism of modes of production, distribution, and marketing in the precolonial era.[8] A mass of works—often grounded in neo-Marxist rhetoric—had established the consequences of colonial capitalist expropriation by treating colonialism as just one of numerous phases of Africa's unequal economic relation with the West over the centuries.[9]

Olukoju was therefore left with the following choices in order to make a mark in a field dominated by academic heavyweights: venture into themes that have been overlooked; apply established knowledge to geographic contexts not covered by his predecessors; or revisit and challenge stale ideas. This well-sustained agenda took him into the following areas of economic history, among others: government–business community relations; currency and monetary system; fiscal policy and export trade controls; and liquor trade politics.[10] Let us start with a review of his scholarship on currency and monetary systems. But first, a short note on how other scholars engaged the relationship between colonial currency and colonial capitalism would help concretize Olukoju's

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contribution.[11] The general trend of scholarship on currency and monetary system—as evident in the works of Hopkins, Walter Ofonagoro, Falola, and A. G. Adebayo, and others—is that the British found the preexisting means of exchange inadequate for their agenda of establishing a new economic regime grounded in the idea that the colonies should serve as markets and sources of raw materials for the metropole. The introduction of a new currency system was needed for a variety of purposes, but primarily in order to generate financial resources needed for colonial administration through the payment of taxes and other levies. Such a system required that people engage in wage labor to earn cash for livelihood and for payment of taxes. European firms had to adopt the new currency as legal tender in their business transactions with African producers of export commodities. Although foreign merchant houses were initially apathetic toward the new currency system, colonial administrative laws were too effective to be ignored. In the long run, the government (through the establishment of the wage labor system) and European merchant houses (through their business transactions with Africans) facilitated the gradual disengagement from preexisting currencies and the complete monetization of the colonial state of Nigeria through the newly introduced currency. As Ofonagoro notes, the consolidation of the new currency system would not have been possible without the establishment of the African Banking Corporation (ABC), the first commercial bank in Nigeria, in 1891 and the West African Currency Board, to facilitate the circulation of the new currency, in 1912. Apparently, the discourse of currency and monetary system is highly germane to the history of Britain's imperial presence in Nigeria between 1861 and 1960.

In one of this works on colonial currency, Olukoju establishes that a good deal of attention has been given to what Hopkins labeled "currency revolution"—that is, the introduction of colonial currency and its impact on the entrenchment of colonial rule.[12] However, he asserts that scholars have overlooked currency crisis—the shortage of money during specific periods and in certain regions of the country. Using Lagos and some parts of Northern Nigeria as case studies, Olukoju carefully maps out the genesis of currency crises between 1916 and 1920. In addition to identifying and contextualizing the activities of the colonial masters to ameliorate the situation within the context of the broader philosophy that the colonies should be self-sustaining, Olukoju devotes important attention to the response and resistance of the people to the crises. The shortage of silver coinage compelled the colonialists to devise an unusual policy: introduce paper currency in Southern Nigeria and ask the colonial treasury to release its reserves. Olukoju complicates Gresham's law of "bad money

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drives out good money" to explain the reactions and resistance to, and sociocultural construction of, "good" and "bad" money in relation to the escalating suspicions and distrust toward British economic policies. He explains that as creative as the introduction of paper money appeared to be, Nigerians preferred the existing currency (silver coins) for a number of reasons. The silver coins had intrinsic value, while the paper money did not. It was also difficult to break paper money into smaller denominations. This situation compelled buyers to either pay more for items or buy more than they desired. In addition, the paper money or notes "were vulnerable to corrosion or outright destruction by sweat, fire, and water. . . . Moreover, the illiterate producers in the hinterland, at least initially, could not distinguish the different denominations of the currency notes."[13] Olukoju completes his deep analysis of the intrigues between and among the colonialists and Nigerians thus: "the 'badness' of any medium of exchange was determined by the intrinsic value ascribed to it and to other currencies in circulation at the same time."[14]

The story of colonial currency transcends its important role as legal tender and a tool for maximizing capitalist expropriation. In another study on currency, Olukoju examines currency counterfeiting as a form of resistance to colonial rule. Indeed, this work adds significant narratives to well-known stories of "riots," "revolts," and strikes as methods adopted to resist and undermine imperialism. He highlights the prominent position that the Ijebu, a Yoruba subgroup, played in currency counterfeiting as a response to the violent manner they were brought under colonial rule in 1892. To be sure, the Ijebu were one of the few Yoruba states that militarily resisted colonial encroachment during the era of the Scramble for the Nigerian geographic area. Olukoju disagrees with Falola that the preponderance of the Ijebu in currency counterfeiting was attributable to their proximity to the coast. Rather, he argues that it "demonstrates how self-help criminality served as both a source of accumulation and an expression of alienation from, and resistance to, the colonial order."[15] After laying out his argument by weaving currency counterfeiting into discourses of resistance and self-help criminality, Olukoju goes on to elaborate on the modus operandi of "forgers" and how they made and circulated fake currency. He unmasks the identity of prominent counterfeiters and discusses the series of laws and propaganda campaigns put in place to bring culprits to justice. A careful reading of antiforgery laws—which included a life sentence for conviction—shows that the British were awake to the dangerous implications of counterfeiting for the colonial economy and would go to great lengths to control it.

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In other works on currency, Olukoju continues to confine his analysis of the introduction of colonial currency to specific regions of the country and forgery.[16] Regional studies of the penetration of the monetary system help to show, according to Olukoju, the divergent impacts that imperialism had on various parts of the country. The reaction of different groups of Nigerians to colonial capitalism was largely determined by their differing economic and social structures before and after colonization. While historians who wrote on currency prior to the 1990s approached it from a "Nigeria-wide" perspective, Olukoju studies the matter from regional perspectives that bring him closer to the actual realities of the impact of colonial currency.

Olukoju has also published a number of works on the liquor trade and fiscal policy. In a piece published in the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, he addresses the prohibition of alcohol in Northern Nigeria between 1898 and 1918.[17] Trade in imported liquor was as old as the trade in slaves. It was one of the articles of exchange for slaves and served multiple sociocultural purposes.[18] However, during the nineteenth century, the Sokoto Caliphate, which came into existence after a series of jihads (holy wars), forbade the sale and consumption of alcohol among Muslims. The religious justification for prohibition continued into the colonial period and assumed another paternalist dimension of shielding the natives from "bad" external influence. "Although the literature on the liquor trade in Africa is quite substantial," Olukoju notes at the beginning of this article, "the bulk of it has centered on the West African liquor controversy. . . There is thus no detailed study of the liquor traffic in the prohibition zone, which was made up essentially of the Muslim communities."[19] Olukoju unveils the series of channels—railway and river—through which smuggling of alcohol took place from the Southern region to the North. He highlights some of the challenges and contradictions of prohibiting liquor traffic along the lines of ethnicity and social class. For instance, the "pagan" communities in the Middle Belt region were permitted to brew local alcohol, while Southerner strangers received liquor allocations on a monthly basis. When it became obvious that the government could not control the illicit sale of both imported and indigenously produced alcohol, Governor Frederick Lugard imposed taxes, according to Olukoju. Lugard's policy contradicted Islamic tenets that prohibited the sale and consumption of alcohol and brought him in close conflict with the Muslim aristocrats whose faith and culture he promised to protect from the "sinful" ways of Western "infidels."

Olukoju retains perhaps the most interesting part of his argument for the very end. Here he casts the origin of the politics of alcohol prohibition

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in Northern Nigeria within the logic of economic encroachment, which preceded the colonial integration of Northern Nigeria in 1903. The British prohibited trade in alcohol in the North, not primarily because they wanted to please the Sokoto Caliphate but because that was the only way to enhance the consolidation of British imperial interests being anchored by Sir George Goldie of the Royal Niger Company. Goldie knew early on that his company would not break through economically without the support of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), which measured the worthiness of colonial administrators by their attitude toward liquor. However, Goldie's company traded in alcohol clandestinely in the Lower Niger. Olukoju opines that Goldie's liquor policy "was a ruse to promote his economic interest, for it allowed him to please the C.M.S. on the one hand and the Northern emirs on the other, while giving the Company free rein to operate in Northern Nigeria."[20] One would need to read Simon Heap's work on the liquor trade in Southern Nigeria to get a "Nigeria-wide" picture of the contradictions in colonial policy toward both local and foreign liquor and the contribution of alcohol to Nigeria's economy.[21]

In later works, Olukoju would return to the subject of the prohibition of liquor by fully integrating it within the prevailing politics of race and the idea of Africa's primitivity. In "Race and Access to Liquor," he expands on his earlier analysis of prohibition by not only comparing Northern Rhodesia with Northern Nigeria, but also contextualizing the implications of the introduction of different laws in Northern and Southern Nigeria for nation building in the postindependence era.[22] Consumption of European liquor by Africans in both Northern Nigeria and Northern Rhodesia was prohibited. Olukoju observes that unlike in Northern Rhodesia where alcohol use was restricted to beer halls, in Northern Nigeria it was prohibited altogether. Religious considerations and racism influenced the prohibition of both local and imported alcohol in Northern Nigeria; in Northern Rhodesia the justification for depriving Africans of liquor and restricting recreational space hinged mainly on notions of racial difference. According to Olukoju, while campaigns against access to liquor influenced the struggle for political determination in Northern Rhodesia, in Northern Nigeria it was mainly a "status symbol" among Muslim elites whose interests were geared toward protecting their domain from the "unholy" practices of Europeans and Southern Nigerians.[23] Olukoju is right to see race and the political economy of alcohol as reasons why the practice and outworking of imperialism varied from place to place, being informed largely by the sociocultural, political, and economic foundations of each colonial site. Religion influenced prohibition in Northern Nigeria because the British met there a society structured along

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the tenets of Islam. Northern Rhodesia, unlike Northern Nigeria, was a settler colony—hence the need to protect the minority white settlers from the danger of intoxicated blacks dictated prohibitory policies. In affirming further the importance of the politics of liquor to the evolution of the Nigerian state and to contemporary challenges of nation building, Olukoju opines:

> This exchange [correspondence between Northern and Southern colonial officers] illustrates that the liquor question was a significant, though hitherto neglected element in the separate development of the Northern Province of Nigeria. Clearly, this issue was manipulated by Goldsmith, Temple, and Lugard (the last-named in the pre 1919 period) to ingratiate themselves with the Muslim rulers of the emirates by exaggerating the dangers to the Northern Muslims of influences emanating from the South. Such paternalistic British "friends of the North" hid behind this bogey to build an "empire for themselves," while laying the foundation for a disastrous polarity that has survived colonial rule. Well over thirty years after Nigeria's formal independence [this work was published in 1996], die-hard Northern Nigerian ex-colonial officers of this type still romanticize about the "Holy North" supposedly characterized by the "virtues" of "fealty and piety", as contrasted with "the pagan south", whose Europeanized elite had been the butt of the ridicule of Lugard and his wife and other pro-North officials.[24]

Although liquor was prohibited in most parts of Northern Nigeria where Islamic religion held sway, in the South colonial subjects were permitted to use both imported and locally brewed alcohol. So important was imported liquor (spirits) to the economy of Southern Nigeria that it accounted for a quarter of government revenue in the 1890s. In another study, Olukoju uncovers the fiscal policy of imported spirits in Southern Nigeria between 1890 and 1919.[25] After presenting a short analysis of the trend of scholarship on alcohol in the British Empire, he observes that the fiscal component has escaped the attention of scholars. Although the moral/ethical and economic justification for importation of spirits to the colonies divided the missionaries and the colonial administrators, the colonial government could not afford to dispense with the revenues derived from it. According to Olukoju, the strategic importance of spirits in the Nigerian economy was threatened in the wake of World War I for two principal reasons: practically all the liquor imported into Nigeria came from the "enemies' country"; and wartime emergency measures generally led to a decline in virtually all imported items. In order to augment this shortage, Lugard, according to Olukoju, imposed a poll tax for the first time in Southern Nigeria. He also proceeded to impose a surtax of 25

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percent (later increased to 30 percent) on most imports in 1916. These new fiscal policies generated widespread tax "riots," inflation, and scarcity of essential imported items. In summarizing the impacts of World War I on the trade in spirits, on government revenue, and on colonial subjects, Olukoju notes the "fragility or the vulnerability of the colonial fiscal system which virtually collapsed once its rickety foundation, laid upon bottles of 'rotguts' [German-made spirits] cracked."[26]

Business community–government relations are another focus of Olukoju's attention. During the colonial period, traders and entrepreneurs from Europe, Asia, and Africa dominated the Nigerian economy. None of these three groups constituted a homogenous entity because they were composed of different nationalities with vested economic interests in various aspects of the colonial economy: from merchandise trading and mining to banking and shipping.[27] Of these groups, the Europeans were the most influential for they had huge capital resources and represented well-established European expatriate firms. In one of his earliest works on this aspect of economic history published in *African Studies Review* in 1995, Olukoju singles out the relations between European expatriate companies and colonial administrators, identifying the various ways in which both classes of colonizers worked to maximize the gains of imperialism.[28] Olukoju uses this study, and three others published after it, to respond to Hopkins's admonition that scholars should explore government–business community relations at the case study level.[29] He starts off by establishing that neither the government nor European expatriates could dispense with one another. While the government required the capital of the expatriate firms for full exploitation of Nigeria's human and natural resources, the expatriate firms could not operate successfully without the peace and order imposed and maintained by the government.[30] Olukoju identifies the ways in which the European community tried to shape economic policy. The Europeans formed pressure groups to deliberate over proposed legislation that might affect their business interests and petitioned the colonial administration on matters that they believed would adversely affect them. They even had official representation in the Legislative Council, where most colonial laws were debated and passed. Banquets sponsored by the business community in honor of new or outgoing colonial officers brought the European expatriates closer to the government and increased their chances of successful lobbying.[31]

But on several occasion, conflict broke out between the colonial government and the European business community over the modus operandi of expropriation. The relations between the government and

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business community, as Olukoju sees them, were traditionally unfriendly during global crises such as World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II when the British imperialist regime had to pass strict emergency laws and implement fiscal policies to safeguard its colonies from imminent takeover by rival nations. In a piece that speaks strongly to the conflict of interest between the colonial government and the business community, Olukoju identifies how the latter agitated for the reduction of railway freight rates for the transport of export commodities—hides and skins, groundnuts, cotton, cocoa—from the point of production to the port of Lagos.[32] Except for cocoa produced in the Western region of the country, all these commodities came from Northern Nigeria—about one thousand kilometers from the port. While the government keenly worked to recoup its massive investment in the railway, which opened the entire interior of Nigeria to international trade, the business community felt that the administration should provide a more conducive atmosphere for trade by reducing freight charges. Olukoju highlights the importance of transport to the colonial economy and the high level of intrigues and politicking among diverse groups of interest groups, emphasizing the implications or outcomes of conflict of interest between the government and the business community. He states that Nigerians, not the British colonialists or large trading firms, paid the price of high freight costs by being underpaid for their produce (e.g., cocoa, groundnuts, and cotton) and compelled to buy imported goods at inflated rates.[33]

Conflict over the best means of maximizing the gains of imperialism transcended government-business relations to include agitation by African entrepreneurs. Unlike big European expatriate companies that had huge stores of capital and received preferential treatment from the colonial administration, African business owners faced institutionalized discrimination in areas of access to loans and other "comforts of business." In a work titled "'Nigeria or Lever-ia?': Nationalist Reactions to Economic Depression and the Menace of Merger," Olukoju explores the impact of the epileptic character of the colonial economy on the relations between the colonial administration and European firms such as Lever Brothers, on the one hand, and African businesses, on the other.[34] He employs Hopkins's delineation of the three stages of development of African thinking on colonial economic problems to map out the nationalist agitation against the threat of being consumed by the large European firms. He disagrees with Hopkins's assertion that "political leaders occasionally made use of economic issues, but failed to develop an economic policy . . . because economic discontent was neither widespread nor sustained" before World War I.[35] Using two prominent idealist Lagos

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newspapers—the *Lagos Weekly Record* and Herbert Macaulay's *Lagos Daily News*—Olukoju argues contrarily that "nationalist economic thought had been well articulated in the pre–First World War era when the commercial outlook was not as bleak as in the 1920s."[36] Olukoju outlines why and how African businesses responded and fought indiscriminate merger with the big firms, which worked to drive indigenous entrepreneurs out of business. This article points to the historical roots of some of the problems indigenous entrepreneurs face in contemporary Nigeria. Right from the nineteenth century, foreign predatory influence on African business assumed different forms and went a long way toward taming the progress of sustainable African-centered industrialization.

The African entrepreneurs, most of whom were educated, were not the only group to criticize the unfair economic relations between African and European merchant companies. Local producers working on the cocoa and palm plantations also knew when and how to demand better economic deals. In "Confronting the Combines," Olukoju delves into how the Urhobo and Yoruba producers of palm kernels and cocoa responded to poor prices offered for their produce during the 1930s depression.[37] In Olukoju's view, this aspect of "economic militancy" deserves more than the cursory examination given to it in the existing literature, for it demonstrates that the African producers were active rather than passive agents, especially during times of widespread economic stagnation. The Urhobo palm kernel producers and traders based in western Nigeria and their cocoa-producing counterparts during 1934 and 1937–39, respectively, embarked on a "holdup"—that is, they refused to sell palm kernels to the United African Company (UAC) and John Holt, two big expatriate firms, unless a better price was offered.[38] Not even the colonial government—the so-called Great White Umpire, which in theory was expected to be neutral in the transactions between the African producers and European firms—was successful in achieving a truce. As significant as the holdups were in safeguarding the producers' interests, they were unsuccessful.

In explaining the failure of the cocoa holdup of 1937–38, Olukoju, drawing on a similar study by Axil Harneit-Sievers, concludes that it started too late in the planting season and that the organizers did not maintain adequate communication lines with fellow producers and traders. Olukoju goes on to explain why similar holdups in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) succeeded. According to him, while the bulk of cocoa in the Gold Coast was produced by wealthy plantation owners "who possessed the means to hold-up their own crops and to buy up the output of the small scale producers who could not afford to sell . . . the Nigerian cocoa industry was dominated by small scale farmers who did not have the

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means of holding up their own annual crops much less buying up those of others to completely hold-up produce."[39] In a nutshell, the Nigerian holdups "changed little or nothing; it was at best a gesture of defiance."[40]

In addition to holdups, Nigerian producers also reacted to the unfairness of business transactions through the adulteration of goods.[41] Olukoju does not claim to be broaching this aspect of economic history to the academic community. He begins by acknowledging the contributions of historians O. N. Njoku and Adebayo to the subject. He feels, however, that a number of issues still deserve quality attention. While Adebayo's study deals with hides and skins, groundnuts, and cotton in Northern Nigeria, Njoku's addresses palm produce in Southeastern Nigeria. For his part, Olukoju's work focuses on cocoa and palm produce in Western Nigeria. The British took quality control seriously because produce adulteration had a negative multiplier effect on the proceeds of big merchant companies and the British imperial government. Nigerian exports between 1889 and 1929 faced keen competition in the world market where prices were largely determined by the quality of items of trade. According to Olukoju, both the Nigerian producers of cash crops and European merchant traders engaged in various forms of fraudulent practices in order to maximize profits. While Nigerian producers mixed water with palm produce, their European counterparts "perpetrated such malpractices as the shortfolding of cloth and the misrepresentation of inferior articles as genuine."[42] But instead of assigning the blame for adulteration equally to the Nigerian producers and the big European trading firms, the British passed a law that severely punished the former. Olukoju observes that this law produced mixed reactions among the educated elites of Lagos: although produce adulteration is criminal, they felt that both sides of the transaction were complicit. Olukoju pontificates why antiadulteration efforts failed: "The inefficiency and corruption of the inspectors derived from poor pay and working conditions, ineffective supervision (probably unavoidable for reasons of logistics), and inducements from the merchants themselves or their agents."[43] Although Olukoju does not view adulteration as a form of resistance to colonial rule, as he does in the case of counterfeiting in his work on currency, it is probable that the producers were working not just to increase their profit margins but to undermine capitalism.

Free trade policy as one of the methods the British adopted for penetrating Africa, Olukoju affirms, has received significant attention in the works of economic historians. Generally speaking, scholars identify the impact of Britain's "open door" policy, which stood in contrast to French "protectionism," as a feature of its contradictory economic stance

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because the approach came with so many conditions and exceptions.[44] For instance, Britain *closed* economic doors against other countries that traded in commodities produced by British manufacturers. In other words, the door was open and the trade free only when Britain's economic interests were not in jeopardy. Olukoju does not disagree with his colleagues on this contradiction in Britain's imperial philosophy. However, he adds new information and ideas by looking at how Britain's contradictory fiscal policy played out in the trade in palm kernels with Germany at the onset of World War I, and in textiles with the Japanese during the Great Depression. By 1914, when war broke out, close to 50 percent of Nigeria's palm kernel crop was exported to Germany because British industrialists did not have enough mills to process it.[45] However, the commencement of hostilities compelled Britain not only to stop Germany from trading in Nigerian palm kernels but to encourage and finance its own industrialists at home to build additional crushing mills. A similar situation took place during the 1930s when Manchester manufacturers pressured the British government to terminate the importation of Japanese textiles into Nigeria. In describing the contradictions and core principles under which either an "open door" or "protectionist" policy worked, Olukoju opines: "Open door policy was essentially limited to periods of relative peace or commercial stability, or when the economic superpower enjoyed unassailable ascendancy" and that "protectionism was a child of necessity, a 'neo-mercantilist' policy resorted to by nations in economic desperation."[46]

After dealing with protectionism during World War I and the Great Depression in "Slamming the Open Door," Olukoju went on to unmask the series of policies put in place to control both imports and exports during World War II. In his usual fashion of establishing the importance of his work in relation to the existing literature on a subject, Olukoju asserts that although the material and manpower contributions of Nigerians to the British Empire's Win-the-War efforts have been well documented, "there is no specific treatment of official policy dealing with the colony's import and export trade sector during the war and in its aftermath."[47] Britain, like most European countries, saw the war coming and was prepared to face its consequences on supply and availability of both essential and nonessential commodities. The strategy of export restriction was simple: to conserve supplies for Britain's use and ensure that exports did not slip into the hands of the enemy nations. Restricted imports, according to Olukoju, fell under five categories: (1) items of economic importance to the colony's subjects; (2) those placed under strict export control in Britain; (3) those licensed on a percentage of previous levels, as fixed by the controller; (4) goods for which licenses were issued based on the controller's conviction

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that their importation was vital; and (5) goods that would not be licensed except in situations of necessity.[48]

While this policy appears neat on paper, it had an enormous impact on colonial subjects. Olukoju discusses the impact of wartime import and export controls on different classes and strata of the colonial society—from rural producers of export commodities and urban consumers of imported items, to European and African businesses and expatriates. He is able to put a human face on the agonies of the period through a content analysis of newspaper editorials and petitions from Nigerians decrying scarcity and inflation of both essential and nonessential commodities. Nigerians subsidized the metropolitan economy through the "buy British" drive, according to Olukoju. This campaign encouraged colonial subjects to buy imported items from Britain, even if they were more expensive than similar brands from countries within the empire. The fact that the British retained these wartime emergency regulations until 1949—four years after the cessation of hostilities—"show[s] that the government derived economic gains that it was not willing to relinquish."[49]

Other prominent works on economic history by Olukoju include series of essays on economic globalization, international economic relations, and liberalization.[50] As in other works analyzed above, Olukoju consistently demonstrates the importance of new findings in illuminating dark corners of economic history. Even when he uses familiar sources or engages well-known issues, he creates interpretations that complicate existing knowledge, leaving critical readers with challenging questions for further study. Obviously, his work on economic history deals more with the colonial era—only on a few occasions does he venture into the postcolonial period. However, he rarely leaves his audience questioning the importance of that colonial economic history to contemporary Nigeria. He often does what most other historians rarely do—that is, make important remarks about the long-term impact or ramifications of a story set within the colonial time-frame on postcolonial narratives of growth and underdevelopment. We see this in his analysis of how liquor trade politics contributed to the evolution of "two Nigerias" (that is, the North and the South). From the early 2000s, Olukoju's scholarship began to extend to urban and infrastructure history—while not leaving either economic or maritime studies. As we shall see in the next section, this new research agenda would lead to signature works that put cities and infrastructure in their rightful place in colonial and contemporary Nigerian history.

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Urban and Infrastructure History

Writing in 1994, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch calls Africanists' attention to the paucity of research on Africa's urban past.[51] She observes that anthropologists and social scientists have monopolized research on towns and cities. This situation seemed not to have changed by 2000 when David Anderson and Richard Rathbone, in the introduction to their anthology *African Urban Space*, asserted: "To date, urban history as a recognizable sub-field has not made a significant impact upon African historiography."[52] Since that year, the appearance of many books and monographs on urban history testifies to the growing importance of cities to the African experience.[53] The unprecedented rural–urban migration in the past thirty years coupled with enormous economic and political crises in African countries draw the attention of scholars to the study of urban areas. City centers have traditionally been used as a yardstick for measuring the development of African societies and economies simply because they visibly show the extent of progress or failure of nation building.[54] Scholarly output on urban history, as one would expect, has taken multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary dimensions as scholars from diverse fields in the humanities and social sciences engage in critical study of Africans' urban experiences. From histories of town planning, sanitation, and slums to popular culture, crime, and disease, recent scholarship has established urban centers as credible sites of historical inquiry.

Coquery-Vidrovitch's observation is correct in the case of Nigeria. A large number of works on urban Nigeria have been conducted by social scientists (especially geographers and town planners). Although some of these works—in particular, Akin Maboguje's seminal work *Urbanization in Nigeria*[55]—have significant historical content in that they place their analyses in historical context, historians began to seriously turn the focus of historical discourse on urbanism from the 1990s. Olukoju is among those few historians of Nigeria who have devoted adequate attention to urban history. Unlike Laurent Fourchard, Simon Heap, and Abosede George, among others whose work deals with social or sociological aspects of urbanization, Olukoju weighs in on issues around infrastructure, sanitation, residential segregation, markets, and population. His monograph *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities in Lagos, 1861–2000*, as previously mentioned, is the first book-length study of key urban utilities in any part of West Africa. In this book, Olukoju presents the history of electricity, public water supply, and transportation in Lagos. The availability and accessibility of these three utilities are important indicators of the

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quality of life in the city. The book is set against the backdrop of Lagos's rapid population boom and economic expansion, and its position as political capital of Nigeria up to 1991. Olukoju does not just narrate when and how each of these facilities was established; he situates them within the matrix of public agitation for the improvement of colonial subjects' lives, the economic crisis that affected the availability of money for projects, the ability of people to pay their bills, and colonialists' racial prejudice. He discusses the involvement of diverse individuals and groups (both colonialists and native Nigerians) in the construction of these facilities. After analyzing the genesis and expansion of electrification and public water supply, Olukoju concludes that regime after regime failed to meet people's demand for basic infrastructure: "By 2000 none of the three [electricity, water, and public transport] could be said to be serving more than sixty percent of the population with any degree of regularity and efficiency."[56]

Olukoju's comprehensive study spans more than one hundred years in a single volume. He explains that the availability of research materials on each decade varies—thus determining the depth of analysis of each period. For the postcolonial period, the absence of official government documents compelled him to rely on oral information, newspapers, and other fragmentary sources. The depth and volume of information on each of the facilities also varies. There is more data on electricity and water supply because the colonial government kept records. In contrast, urban transport was monopolized by private individuals, whose data is difficult to access. In terms of financial requirements for provision of the three facilities, Olukoju points out that while private individuals could invest in mass transit because an enthusiastic entrepreneur could afford the cost of a bus, the huge financial outlay for electric and water utilities meant that only the government or large firms had the capital to undertake them. After a thorough, reasoned analysis of continuity and change in infrastructure provision and maintenance during colonial rule and after its termination up to 2000, Olukoju gives the following recommendations, among others: "First, there must be a well thought out integrated approach to infrastructure development in Lagos in the wider contexts of State and Federal Governments' policies. Second, arising from this is the need for policy coordination to ensure profitable intermodal urban transport in the Lagos metropolis. For too long, the government has placed an undue emphasis on road transport."[57]

The appearance of *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities in Lagos* did not end Olukoju's interest in infrastructure history. In subsequent years he developed more fully some of the issues he left out of the book

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and incorporated new perspectives.[58] In a study of electricity supply and consumer response, published in *African Affairs* in 2004, Olukoju establishes that the "power supply merely mirrors the larger question of the performance of state-owned enterprises in post-independence Africa."[59] Unlike in *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities in Lagos*, which contains little about people's perceptions of infrastructure provision, this piece is more "Lagosian-centered" in that it details how residents adapted and adjusted to governmental failure to provide basic amenities. He starts off by giving a short history of electricity generation in Nigeria by various establishments between 1900 and 2003—from the Public Works Department and the Nigerian Government Electricity Undertaking to the Electricity Corporation of Nigeria and the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA).[60] The change of names of these establishments reflected the government's efforts to meet the increasing demand for electricity for domestic, commercial, and industrial needs, as well as changes in the technology, equipment, and resources for generating power. When electricity was first introduced in 1898, coal was the primary fuel for power generation. By the 1960s, according to Olukoju, power was being generated with hydroelectric and thermal (gas or steam) technologies. After enumerating government-centered factors—such as corruption and lack of accountability, especially during the era of military rule—responsible for NEPA's failure to meet customers' demand, Olukoju goes on to analyze consumers' response within the framework of social class. While some consumers resorted to "self-help" criminal behavior such as illegal connections, others refused to pay bills partly because they did not receive the service they were billed for.[61] Indeed, bill-payment delinquency in Lagos as elsewhere in Nigeria has been identified as one of the major problems inhibiting the performance of electricity producers. On several occasions, consumers reacted to poor service by physically attacking NEPA's staff. But instead of engaging in violence or criminal activity, citizens purchased small power-generators to meet their electricity needs.

Olukoju's position on who should be blamed for the crisis of urban facilities is evident. He is clear in pointing to the failure of successive governments to adequately meet demand, but he also emphasizes that consumers (e.g., through bill delinquency, "self-help" criminality, and illegal power connections) should also be faulted. The problems facing Lagos and other Nigerian cities transcend electricity, water supply, and public transport. As one of the largest cities in Africa, Lagos is also plagued by the problem of waste disposal. The urban waste management problem in Lagos dates back to the 1920s or earlier, as Olukoju

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demonstrates. A combination of factors such as poor government response to waste management and citizens' lack of discipline accounted for the massive heap of domestic and industrial waste matter found on the major streets of Lagos both during and after the end of colonial rule.[62] After reading Olukoju's penetrating discussion of how successive governments in Lagos (from the 1920s to the 2000s) tackled the problems of waste management, one sees clearly that it would take a concerted effort of both the citizenry and the authorities to maintain a clean city. In addition, it appeared that waste management methods must be structured in accordance with the peculiar cultural, economic, and geographic realities of Lagos. This is particularly important given the failure of imported technologies (for example, during the regime of Governor Lateef Jakanda, 1979–83) to ameliorate the situation. By comparing and contrasting waste management in Lagos with that in Tokyo, the largest city in the world, Olukoju is able to prove that most of the challenges of urbanization are not unique to Nigeria or Africa.[63] But it would appear that the Japanese, due to technological advancement, have better means of managing their household waste than do Lagosians.

Infrastructure, Olukoju firmly reiterates in the works cited above, is a key component of urban life. The quality of life in most cities, whether in Nigeria or elsewhere in the world, is traditionally measured by the availability, accessibility, and affordability of electricity, water, and transport. In his book titled *The Fourteenth Commissar of Works*, he uses the career of Rauf Aregbesola, the commissioner of works and infrastructure in Lagos between 1999 and 2007, as an entry point into the enormous tasks of resuscitating the city's decaying infrastructure after decades of neglect.[64] Olukoju is well positioned to undertake an exploration of this type, having committed serious academic energies toward the study of the activities and roles played by different administrators (both Europeans and Nigerians) in providing and maintaining urban facilities since 1861, when Lagos was first brought under colonial rule.

The notion of African racial inferiority featured prominently in the justification for Europeans' colonization of Nigeria. Before and during the effective occupation or colonization, Europeans passed a series of medical, sanitary, education, and political laws aimed at justifying the unscientific notion that Africans were primitive and thus incapable of governing themselves. In a study titled "The Segregation of Europeans and Africans in Colonial Nigeria," Olukoju gives the genesis of the series of laws passed both in Southern and Northern Nigeria that created European segregation areas (ESAs).[65] The purported justification for segregation

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was that the incidence of malaria and yellow fever among the Europeans would be reduced if they resided apart from the range of mosquitos and tsetse flies that bred in the African residential areas. The residential segregation laws made provision for a 440-yard-wide nonresidential zone between European and African residential areas. In situating this piece within existing literature, Olukoju references a similar study by T. S. Gale that covers the entirety of British West Africa. Although Gale's work is useful for providing some background to the creation of European segregation areas, it does not, according to Olukoju, cover the post-1920s—the period characterized by political polarization among British colonial officers and sanitary authorities about the effectiveness of segregation.[66] In addition, Olukoju disagrees with Gale that segregation ceased to be a problem after the 1920s by examining how it was practiced or maintained up to 1950.[67]

Between 1920 and 1950, colonial administrators like Hugh Clifford (governor between 1919 and 1925) and sanitary officers were skeptical about the effectiveness of the segregation policy both on the medical wellness of the Europeans and on the professed mission of civilizing Africans. While some believed that excessive separation of Africans from Europeans inhibited the stamping out of "primitive" culture that kept Africans at the lower "rungs" of the ladder of racial evolution, others thought that strict implementation of sanitary laws, not segregation, was the best means of reducing the epidemic of malaria and yellow fever. Segregation law did not go unchallenged by African nationalists. Olukoju notes that the change of nomenclature from "ESA" to "European reservation," to "European residential area," and finally, to "government residential area" had a lot to do with the agitation within both the African and European communities for the segregation laws to be repealed. Political developments after World War II, characterized by decolonization, the involvement of more Nigerians in running the colonial state, and advances in scientific medicine sounded the death knell of segregation in places like Lagos. By 1947, residency in the ESA would be based not on color but on standard of living. It was not until 1950 that an application for a residential lease at Ikoyi, a European segregated community, by an African was approved.[68] Looking at Ikoyi today, one sees the remnant of colonial racism manifested in the architecture, evoking the splendor and tranquility of the elite colonial lifestyle.

Olukoju's scholarship on urban history extends to the areas of grassroots development and politics in sections of Lagos like Agege and Ajegunle.[69] In establishing why micro studies of sections of the megalopolis are important, Olukoju, in a piece published in 2005–6, opines that it

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affords a deep and penetrating look into the realities of community development; issues of security, power, and authority; and the challenges of daily life. He puts a human face on the namelessness often associated with the study of big cities. He fuses the working of chieftaincy and different sections of the community—from market and religion, to youth and stranger—to highlight the interrelated nature of urban politics, ethnic identity, and class consciousness.[70] Olukoju has also researched other aspects of urban history such as markets in Ibadan and Lagos. His scholarship complements works on the political, economic, social, and religious functions of markets. According to Olukoju and Fourchard, his collaborating author, inadequate or incomplete basic infrastructures (such as running taps, public latrines, and fire service) mirror the larger problems confronting the Nigerian state at virtually all levels.[71] They assert that throughout the colonial and postindependence periods, conflicts over street hawking, payment of levies, hygiene, and demolition of "illegal" structures pitched market women against state and local authorities.[72]

Conclusion

As stated at the outset of this chapter, we have attempted a difficult task of compartmentalizing Olukoju's broad scholarly achievements in economic and urban and infrastructure history. We have also offered our own interpretations of his writing in relation to others'. We do not claim to have fully engaged all Olukoju's work in the selected areas; having chosen only a few that we believe help establish our appraisal of his contributions to Nigerian history. We hope that our endeavor encourages other historiographers to engage the works left out in this admittedly broad exploratory study. Olukoju's mission in virtually every work is driven by his desire to advance the state of historical knowledge. This agenda guided him through various subfields, whether obvious or obscure, where he registered his presence with narratives that are capable of standing the test of time. Olukoju's scholarship clearly speaks to the well-acknowledged wisdom in the historical profession that a historian's craft cannot be dissociated from the socioeconomic and political situation of the society in or of which he or she is writing. His scholarship began at the period when history, like most disciplines in the humanities, was facing a formidable crisis of relevance. Neither government nor citizens saw the utility of a discipline that often appeared disconnected from the pressing realities of underdevelopment and the forward-looking drive toward the technological

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development that is considered the prerequisite for rousing Nigeria from its sleeping-giant mode.

Scholars and institutions reacted divergently to the situation. Olukoju is one of the few scholars who rose to the challenges of demonstrating the value and utility of history. In the choice of topics, periodization, and approaches, he demonstrates that historians have a place in modern Nigeria. Histories of urban politics and infrastructure, for example, not only tell us much about the change and continuity in institutional approaches to the improvement of the quality of life of citizens; they also establish that the very challenges of underdevelopment are historically rooted. Whether through the study of currency or of business-government relations, this kind of historical undertaking identifies and elucidates the evolution of underdevelopment with which Nigeria is contending today.

In several of his publications, Ayodeji Olukoju maps out the course that historical research must take in the twenty-first century. In a study entitled "Challenges before the Twenty-first Century Nigerian Historian," published in 2001, Olukoju opines that unlike in the pre-1990 period when the government made use of the expertise of historians, the historians of the twenty-first century must convince the society and the state that they have something to offer.[73] In order to demonstrate their relevance, Olukoju suggests that they should use their professional expertise to contribute to newspapers and produce documentaries on issues that are of importance to the public and the state. "By blending the professional with the pecuniary," Olukoju anticipates, "it would be possible to achieve the goals of the proprietors, the historian and the discipline to the mutual advantage of all."[74] He mentions that focusing on themes like crime, technology, sexuality, the environment, diplomacy, and peace and conflict, among others, could shed light on challenges of living in the twenty-first century. As we shall see in this volume, historians are already critically engaging certain of these issues. More work still needs to be done to revitalize history education at all levels and to bridge the gap between "town and gown." To this end, and in response to "inadequacies in the institutional framework for scholarly exchanges and intellectual engagement in the discipline of history in Nigeria," Olukoju helped found the Network of Nigerian Historians (NNH) in 2010 to serve as "platform for scholars committed to institution and capacity building." We conclude this chapter with a summary of the goals of the NNH:

"To promote historical research and scholarship;
To enhance capacity building among the younger generation of historians;
To strengthen institutional linkages and collaboration;

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To provide outlets for scholarly research (journals, monographs, and conference proceedings);
To mount scientific workshops, meetings, and conferences;
To intervene in scholarly and public policy debates;
To complement at the subregional level the activities of the Association of African Historians or any such body in the foreseeable future dedicated to the advancement of historical scholarship;
To broaden interest in the study of history by engaging with public and private sector stakeholders;
To prepare and recover endangered sources of history;
To cooperate and collaborate with agencies and organisations (such as CODESRIA and SEPHIS) which are committed to the study of the history of development in the Global South;
To act as repository and disseminator of historical and cultural information."

Notes

[1] Nigerian Academy of Letters, http://nalnigeria.org/home.
[2] See the following works by Olukoju on urban and infrastructure history: *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities in Lagos, 1861–2000* (Ibadan: Institut Française de Rechèrche en Afrique, 2003); *The Fourteenth Commissar of Works: The Life and Labour of Rauf Aregbesola* (Lagos/Winnipeg: Bluesign Publications/Canadian Center for Global Studies, 2007); "Towards Integrated Infrastructure Development in Greater Lagos," in *Global and Local Dynamics in African Business and Development,* ed. Simon P. Sigue (Gainesville, FL: IAABD e-book, 2008), 739–44; (with Laurent Fourchard) "State and Local Governments, and Management of Markets in Lagos and Ibadan since the 1950s," in *Gouverner les villes d'Afrique: État, gouvernement local et acteurs privés*, ed. Laurent Fourchard (Paris: Karthala, 2007), 107–23; "Power Relations in Ward-Level Governance in an Urban Setting: Ajegunle-Lagos (Nigeria) since the 1950s," in *Pouvoirs Locaux et Gestion Foncière en Afrique de L'Ouest*, ed. Odile Goerg (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 179–208; "Provision and Management of Water Services in Lagos, 1915–2000," in *Environmental History of Water: Global Views on Community Water Supply and Sanitation*, ed. Petri S. Juuti, Tapio S. Katko, and Heikki S. Vuorinen (London: IWA Publishing, 2006), 343–54; "Lagos: Birth of a City," in *Between Basel and Angola: The Travels and Explorations of the Basel Citizen Carl Passavant to West and Central Africa from 1883 to 1885*, ed. Juerg Schneider, Ute Roeschenthaler, and Bernhard Gardi (Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2005), 177–88 (published in German as *Zwischen Basel und Angola: Die Forschungsreisen des Basler Bürgers Carl Passavant nach West- und Zentralafrika in den Jahren 1883–85*);"Electricity and Water Supply in Lagos, 1861–2000," in *Politiques d'Équipement et Services Urbains dans les Villes du Sud: Etudes Comparée*, ed. Chantal Chanson-Jabeur, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, and Odile Goerg (Paris: Editions Harmattan, 2005), 327–61; "Nigerian Cities in

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[3] Olukoju, *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities.*

[4] See the following works by Olukoju: *Positive Leadership in Colonial and Post-colonial Africa*, Positive Leadership Monograph Series No. 3 (Ikorodu, Nigeria: Center for Social Science Research and Development, 2002); "Maritime Terrorism: Dimensions, Scenarios, and Countermeasures," in *Global Understanding in the Age of Terrorism*, ed. Ayodeji Olukoju and Muyiwa Falaiye (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 2008), 137–50; and Muyiwa Falaiye, ed., *Global Understanding in the Age of Terrorism* (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 2008); Ayodeji Olukoju, Z. O. Apata and O. Akinwumi, eds., *Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone* (Ibadan: Rex Charles, 2003); "The Crisis of Academic Research and Publishing in Nigerian Universities," in *African Universities in the Twenty-first Century*, vol. 2: *Knowledge and Society*, ed. Adebayo Olukoshi and Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2004), 363–75; "Nigerian Civil Rights Organisations since the 1980s," in *Emergent Actors in African Political Economy*, ed. Katsuya Mochizuki, African Research Series No. 9 (Makuhari/Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 2003), 73–90; "The Siege of Oka, ca. 1878–84: A Study in the Resistance to Nupe Militarism in Northeast Yorubaland," in *Warfare and Diplomacy in Precolonial Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Robert Smith*, ed. Toyin Falola and Robin Law (Madison, WI: African Studies Program, 1992), 102–10; "Sit-Tight Syndrome and Tenure Elongation in African Politics," in *Contemporary Issues in Africa*, ed. R. A. Olaniyan (forthcoming); "Rethinking Historical Scholarship in Africa," in *Rethinking the Humanities in Africa*, ed. Sola Akinrinade, Dipo Fashina, David O. Ogungbile, and J. O. Famakinwa (Ile-Ife:

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