

# PAPERS IN HONOUR

of

**TEKENA N. TAMUNO**  
*Professor Emeritus*

Celebrating

70

Edited by  
**Egbe Ifie**

**PAPERS IN HONOUR**  
**OF**  
**TEKENA N. TAMUNO**  
**Professor Emeritus**  
**AT**  
**70**

**Edited with an Introduction Essay**  
**by**

**Egbe Ifie**

**OPUTORU BOOKS**  
**IBADAN, BOMADI, OLEH, UGHELLI**

## **Papers in Honour of Tekena .N. Tamuno at 70**

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# CANIST HISTORIANS AND THE PROBLEM OF CHALLENGING THE COLONIAL VIEWS OF AFRICAN HISTORY

By  
**Sheriff F. Folarin**

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## Introduction

At the commencement of the authentic reconstruction of the African past, writings about the continent were on the activities of Arabs, Asians and Europeans in Africa. The writers argued that change and development in Africa influenced by aliens. The popular views about the African past were: that Africa belonged in the unhistorical part of the world, that the great civilizations cultures that evolved in Africa were a result of Hamitic influences, and that without European colonial rule, Africa would have remained benighted.<sup>1</sup> As from the end of the Second World War in 1945, however, a group of African historians began to challenge the colonial views of African history and argue that African history was in the colonial era deliberately slanted and distorted to justify European imperialism.<sup>2</sup> This paper therefore examines and attempts to explain the challenges put up by Africanist historians to the paraging views about the African past by the Europeans. But the Africanist historians encountered problems at two levels. First, was at the level of the process of proving that there was an African history. Second, was the problem in their methodologies. These are examined in the essay.

## I

Colonial views of African history were expressed by colonial administrators, explorers, missionaries, traders and fortune hunters who were largely ignorant of the situation in Africa but who built their ideas on rumours and speculations about the peoples and tried to justify their obnoxious activities in Africa in their writings. European writers and historians who wrote at the time about Africa were only trying to feed what the European audience desired to read about Africa.<sup>3</sup> The writers never visited Africa nor did extensive historical research on the continent, but merely wrote arm-chair analyses and narratives of the African past.

Second, racial prejudice was a major factor in the kind of views about Africa. This racial prejudice that Africa was a dark continent with no past and no progress was to, like the previous argument, prove that a people with written past, like the Europeans, has reached a superior level of development. The more developed, therefore, had the manifest destiny and moral justification to lord it over the inferior peoples.

One of the colonial views was that because Africa has no writing culture and because it largely, if not solely, depended on oral traditions, Africa had no history and thus belonged to the unhistorical part of the world.<sup>4</sup> For the European historian and commentator, history begins only when men take to writing. Africa, to them, thus appeared to be lost in primitive barbarism and had no movement or development to exhibit. For Trevor-Roper, "... There is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness... and darkness is not the subject of history"<sup>5</sup> A.P. Newton in his May 1, 1923 paper to the meeting of the African society in London declared, "history only begins when men take to writing; it is concerned almost entirely with written records". The Europeans therefore reasoned that the lack of history was not only because the Africans had no records of past events and no culture of writing but also because Africans endlessly migrated through the forests, huddled together in straw huts, fighting among themselves, and engaging themselves in abominable customs of cannibalism, human sacrifice and blood ordeals.<sup>6</sup>

Another colonial view was that African progress as reported by travellers, explorers and missionaries in respect of culture, civilization and political institutions was engendered by Hamites. This is the Hamitic hypothesis that African progress and human development in Africa was a result of contact with the light-skinned. The Hamites, according to Charles G. Seligman,<sup>7</sup> who propounded the Hamitic School, invaded and conquered the primitive Africa over whom they established their sophisticated government and civilization. The Sudanic state thesis by J.D. Fage and R.A. Oliver<sup>8</sup> that all Africans had a common origin and institutions bound by a divine kingship that began in Egypt was to further link African progress to the light-skinned. Both theses were however, to rationalise the European invasion of Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This view has tended to influence the writings of some African historians who now trace their ancestors or origins to the Middle East elsewhere outside Africa.<sup>9</sup>

While still trying to exaggerate the myth of white superiority, Europeans again expressed the view that the history of their activities in Africa was the history of enlightenment and development. Africa was brought into the mainstream of global development and colonialism opened the African race up to modernity and greater contact with the rest of the world. Lord Camero-

K. Meek, H.R. Palmer and Lord Lugard were the exponents in this regard. Lugard wrote,

I am profoundly convinced that there can be no question but that British rule has brought welfare and happiness to the primitive races. If there is unrest and struggle for independence, it is because we taught them the value of liberty and independence. Their very discontent is a measure of their progress.<sup>10</sup>

The bogus and biased views expressed in colonial historiography about the African past, and the continent were to have a great influence on historical writing by the earliest African historians. For instance, because the early African historians thought there was no history until documents or writing was involved, historians such as C.C. Reindorf and John Mensah Sarbah of Ghana, Apolo Kagwa of Uganda, Samuel Johnson and Otumba Paine of Nigeria, James A. Horton of Sierra Leone and a host of others, attempted to document African traditions of origins and oral history.<sup>11</sup> A number of them did much writing on the activities of their period namely, the period that witnessed the consolidation of colonialism. Some of the writers, however, like Samuel Johnson in his *History of the Yorubas* and Christian Reindorf, wrote to prove that there indeed existed an authentic and fascinating African past.

The idea of proving that African history indeed exists continued between the period of colonialism and eventual decolonisation in Africa. This period witnessed the birth of a new group of African historians, better trained, more professional who wrote a kind of history that not only challenged the colonial views about the African past and colonial historiography, but that also formed the crux of the anti-colonial movement. With history, these historians<sup>12</sup> fought colonialism by raising a consciousness among the African elite and masses, letting them realise that they had a heritage they needed to defend against the vestiges of colonial invasions.

In denying the fact that the absence of the writing tradition meant the absence of history in Africa, Ajayi and Dike in their pioneering piece on African historiography<sup>13</sup> said that oral traditions are both sources of history and history on their own. They attacked the European conception of history:

but documentary evidence has become so overwhelmingly important to the European scholar that he tends to equate documents with history. The absence of documents was thus taken to mean the absence of any events worthy of historical study.<sup>14</sup>

According to Dike and Ajayi, the African concept of the past is not a dead one. History is not for the sake of the past alone, but has a living relevance to the present and everyday life. This is the idea that history in Africa undergoes a

cyclic motion namely, a continuous interaction between the past and the present; an unending dialogue between the ancestors (the dead), the living (the present) and the unborn (the future). They established the fact that history is not just a piece of information or analysis about the past, but that even without being documented, history is alive, and is invoked for arbitration, fostering peace and harmony among a group and for celebrating/chastising past deeds creating moral lessons for a group.<sup>15</sup>

As earlier indicated, a number of African scholars rose up in the 1950s and 1960s to chart a new course for African history. Their activities and writings culminated in what is now referred to as African historiography, a whole new dimension to the reconstruction of the African past. While oral traditions, oral history and oral literature formed the bulk of historical sources, documented materials, even including European pieces of writing, Arabic materials, among others were subjected to rigorous and critical scholarly analysis in the reconstruction of the African past. Such methods of reconstructing the African past are even adopted by certain non-African historians.<sup>16</sup>

This historiography tradition, however, produced what is now called "history and the nation" historiography and the nationalist historians of the time. First, the historians tried to counter colonialists ideology by demythologising the colonial views of African history supplying African politicians the desired ideology to make them focused in the independence movement. As such, nationalist acts were glorified and thus encouraged. Again the historians raised questions about the roots of Africa's social problem, finding them in colonialism. Obaro Ikime, in his *Niger Delta Rivalry*, E.A. Ayandele's *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, G.O. Olusanya's *Second World war and the Politics of Nigeria* and Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* argued that the emergent ethnic nationalisms, socio-economic hazards, civil wars and the fall of civil rule in African states were a result of the legacies of colonial rule.<sup>17</sup> They averred even further that the centuries of the Trans-Saharan and Trans-Atlantic slave trade, 'legitimate' trade and, colonial rule were interruptive variables in progress and development in Africa. This, in Ajayi's view, was the peak of the African tragedy and as such, colonialism was rather an episode in the long history of Africa and was not, in anyway, an epoch.<sup>18</sup>

Through their works, African historians justified the reality of African history. Kenneth Dike, in his *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* and Ajayi, in his *Christian Missions in Nigeria* established that there were rich African pasts and elaborate social institutions even before the Europeans began to enter the continent. In fact, Anene and Brown's *Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries* and Ajayi and Ian Espie's *1000 Years of West African History* established that there

There is no such thing as a 'stateless society' but a decentralised state and that Africans were not docile in the wake of foreign incursions into their sovereign states: they resisted because they understood themselves and were self-conscious about their identity, rights and sovereignty. All these show that internal factors are positive intervening variables in continuity, change, progress, and development in Africa were present before external influences.

In a brilliant piece in 1965, Ade Ajayi argued that colonialism only disrupted the process of development and that European writers rather than do thorough historical research on Africa were creating myths about colonialism, colonialists and Europeans' activities in Africa. The attempts made by European writers were to give the impression that the Europeans were gods who had come to save Africans who have recorded or exhibited no progress as a human race. Ajayi writes:

While history is concerned with the actions and motivations of men, in the colonial period there were not really men dealing with other men, but a race of gods and heroes communing with naughty mortals; Propero communing with Caliban, Europeans with Natives. It is this that makes of the colonial period a mythical situation more suitable for legend than for history.<sup>19</sup>

The disruption in African progress caused by colonialism, Ajayi asserts, did not, however, mean that there was a major change from the past and as such it was not necessary overflogging the issue of colonialism as epochal in African history. He puts it succinctly thus:

... the main point I would like to underline is that in any long-term historical view of African history, European rule becomes just another episode. In relation to wars and conflicts of people, the rise and fall of empires, linguistic, cultural and religious change and the cultivation of new ideas and new ways of life, new economic orientations and so on, in relation to all these, colonialism must be seen not as a complete departure from the African past, but as one episode in the continuous flow of African history.<sup>20</sup>

The idea here is to rationalize the fact that there was a glorious, eventful African past; and to play down the idea by European writers that there is nothing as pre-colonial African history, or that only the activities of aliens in the continent constitute the African past. This view has been supported by A. Kinola when he stated that African historians' way of establishing their point, has involved defining the identity of the black man, investigating the elements of his culture, and insisting that he has an authentic past.... All these have been done as a contribution to healing the blackman's psyche and to restoring his self-confidence after centuries of abuse.<sup>21</sup>

But in the process of establishing the fact that there indeed exists an African past and in under-emphasising European rule as a major catalyst in progressive development in Africa, certain major problems arise. The first are methodological problems, which include sources, chronology, and the attendant difficulty in historical study and writing. The second is ideological problem namely, the question of nationalist historical writing by Africans and Africanist historians, whose task is impeded by certain factors, namely, patriotism, subjectivity and the tendency towards distortions and exaggerations. The third problem is the emphasis on political history at the expense of contemporary African socio-economic and technology issues that deserve more attention.

As a methodological problem, sources pose the greatest difficulty. First, Africanist historians largely depend on oral traditions for information about the African past. But these oral traditions are limited by a number of factors. First, because they are words of mouth and are carried from generation to generation by custodians like priest, elders, chiefs, court or palace messengers, diviners, praise-singers, musicians etc., they could be easily forgotten or not accurately passed on due to memory lapse. Relying on such information thus means relying probably on inadequate information or having an inaccurate idea of an event.

Closely related to this is the fact that the custodians of traditions could distort, deliberately or by no fault of theirs, information passed on. Distortion deliberately done could be a result of trying to cover up certain lapses or unpalatable experience or to establish a point about a glorious past. Certain facts could also be overflogged or embellished. These exaggerations affect, to a large extent, the writing of African history as the picture painted of the past by oral historians is repeated, whether to a lesser or greater extent, by those writers who rely on such historiography.

Another major problem related to oral traditions is the difficulty of establishing chronology or accurate dating. If history involves mainly studying the past and writing it in time-perspective, then oral traditions are germane as they are expected to provide an insight into what happened in the intangible past. But because of memory lapse and distortions, events may not be placed in sequential order. The coronation of a king may be placed before the festival that comes with it, whereas the festival should actually precede the coronation. The Bere festival in old Oyo for instance, a landmark in Oyo, was celebrated yearly to commemorate Oyo's might, power and fame. It usually followed the coronation anniversary of the Alafin in power. When recounting the past, however, an oral tradition custodian who is suffering memory lapse could paint a picture of a Bere festival that celebrated annually the agricultural prosperity of Oyo alone.

Again there are conflicting claims about the origin of the Yoruba. Some traditions claim that Oduduwa, the founder of Ile-Ife, and by extension Obatala, descended from heaven with an assignment from the supreme being to create a habitable land out of the existing mass of water. He spread the soil planted the palm tree he was given by the Almighty around Ile-Ife, which became his and his descendants' abode. Other traditions say that the actual founder was Obatala who was assisted and succeeded by Oduduwa. Another tradition is, however, in sharp contrast to the above. It claims that Oduduwa migrated from somewhere in Arabia (Mecca to be precise) and crossed the sea, through wilderness and forests to reach the present day Ile-Ife. Now, while all these traditions could have arisen because of the quest to ennable the Yoruba or create an awesome image for the group among other contending groups in a multinational society like Nigeria, they could also be a way of filling the gaps in Yoruba genealogy due to monumental memory lapse. Some custodians of tradition cannot simply recollect how the preceding generations passed the information down, so as a way of covering up, they begin to imagine and suggest their own traditions of origin.

The limitations of oral traditions are, however reduced, by the attempts by Africanist historians to supplement their sources with archaeological findings, linguistic evidence, architectural discoveries and the documented information about the past. Information got from oral evidence is either substantiated or countered by findings of artefacts, tools, domestic utensils, burial chambers, ritual accessories etc. from old or ancient sites of human habitation. The discoveries in Igbo-Ukwu in Igboland by archaeologists, including Thurstan Shaw for instance, negate the popular colonial view that the Igbo had no such institution as kingship. The royal burial sites and chambers dug up revealed some evidence that the Igbo were probably in the past, governed by elaborate social institutions like kingship. However, the problem of accurate dating arises, despite the availability of the carbon dating methods which history has largely borrowed from the sciences.

Linguistics has to do with language. Africanist historians use linguistics to supplement oral evidence. For instance, certain linguistic features which are common to many African groups like the "click" sound among the peoples generally referred to as the Bantu are understudied to trace origins and movement of groups as supplied in oral traditions. Yet there are limitations in this as the linguistic features common to the groups are sometimes taken as an index for a common origin of the groups. In tracing the origins of some ethnic groups in Africa, for instance, some historians have even claimed that the groups originally came from the Far East, the Middle East and the Pacific because of certain similarity of words. The Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and many

other groups in Nigeria have had their origins traced to Mecca, Egypt, and China, while the Benin have not only been said to have migrated from the Far East, but that their ancestral home is Japan. A Benin historian argues that the reason that "Osa" is commonplace in Benin and Japanese languages is that both are related biologically, Japan being the original home of the Binis.<sup>22</sup> For some, it is because of the similarity in architectural designs, namely, pattern of building and of constructing roads, bridges, etc.

So much for the limitations of sources. The second major problem is ideological. Africanist historians are writing with the view of healing the African psyche and establishing the African past. Two major limitations arise from this. One, the writers are bound to be too involved in their writing. In other words, they are not too likely to be objective and two, even when they need not over-flog issues about certain events, undue emphasis may be placed on them and justifications for that will be done.<sup>23</sup> Distortions, exaggerations and misrepresentation of facts may arise when trying to do this. Interpretation becomes problematic as certain actions and events are misrepresented because the historian is carried away by his ideological orientation and inclination. For instance, African historians who wrote during colonialism and shortly after it were writing history within the standpoint of extolling patriotic qualities of African leaders and groups before and after colonialism and with a view of decolonising African history. So they were nationalist historians.

Such nationalist history may justify even the autocracy of past African leaders like Shaka king of the Zulu, and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia just because they resisted European imperialism. As such, nationalist or pan-Africanist historians tend to make themselves praise singers of certain anachronistic, oppressive and exploitative systems in the course of pointing out that pre-colonial Africa recorded enormous achievements. Further, the historians may fail to address their writing to the numerous socio-economic problems and underdevelopment in Africa.<sup>24</sup> Since they tended to be more pre-occupied with backing the nationalists who won independence for their countries, some of who subsequently became the new political leaders in the post-colonial state, they tended also to neglect the fact that they are expected to research into other, rather more pressing problems of socio-economic development.

This brings us to the question of nationalist history dwelling too much on the political. Undue emphasis is placed on the study of empires, kingdoms and leaderships of the past, the epic tale of the rise and fall of such empires and leadership: the lessons of which are meant for the new national leaders to guide them in the task of political engineering.

Again Africanist historians, knowingly or unknowingly, became the mouthpieces for post-colonial politicians as they justify the politicians or rulers' actions in their writing. In studies carried out on the Nigerian Civil War and the Indigenisation Policy of the Obasanjo administration, nationalist historians praised General Yakubu Gowon for taking the people to war to keep Nigeria one, not minding the fact that the injustice against the Igbo which started the war, was the basic problem, not the war to 'unite' Nigerians. Obasanjo was exonerated because he indigenized foreign companies in Nigeria, or, in most cases, made Nigeria have greater percentage of shares in such companies.

Three basic problems are thus discernible in the flaws in nationalist historiography. First, is that historians may digress from historical writing. Second, is that such writing may tend to basically lay the guidelines for political action and/or become the mere expression of the views and ideas of African politicians and statesmen. Third, is that such work may not present appropriate solutions to contemporary African problems and may even create new problems.

All in all, Africanist historiography had produced evidence on the true nature of the continent and its people before colonialism: their invaluable pre-history known through oral traditions, archaeological findings and linguistic evidence and the earliest human fossils and hominids discovered in their soil, which go to show how central the continent is to the development of human society. But in the attempts to reconstruct an authentic African past, oversights have arisen, a development characterised by methodological and ideological limitations by which African historiography is impoverished.

Be that as it may, in the course of challenging colonial views of African history, Africanist historians have, through their writings and approaches to the reconstruction of the African past, been able to disabuse the minds of the peddlers of the Hamitic hypothesis, Sudanic and evolution theories. Evidence had been put forward that Africa did have a past, and a rich one at that. Through their vigorous researches and findings, which were prompted by the quest to prove the colonial views wrong, the Africanist writers were raising a new consciousness among the Europeans about the fact that there was an authentic history of the Africans.

Second, flowing from the above is the fact that all the efforts by the Africans to reconstruct their own past culminated in what is referred to as African historiography. By African historiography, it is meant the methodologies that African historians adopt, which are not necessarily the "orthodox" ones in historical writing or reconstruction of the past, and the findings they arrive at which show that Africa has a history. By challenging the colonial views of African history, they not only established the fact that the entire African past was not that of European activities alone, but also established a special place for

African history. Many Europeans or non-Africans writers no longer wrote or remarked about Africa without consulting African historians and their findings.

Third and closely related to the above is that by the African historiography methodology of oral traditions and oral history, through which so much information about the intangible African past is got, oral tradition and oral history have got universal acceptability. Oral history now has a place in universal history and some non-African writers themselves now realize how crucial oral history is in historical writing.<sup>25</sup> The whole idea of pre-history, a European coinage that means unhistorical African existence of pre-colonial Africa that was without history has been rendered baseless as invaluable information from oral tradition has filled in the gaps.

Again, Africanist historians proved that the absence of documentary evidence did not mean the lack of a sense of history. They argued and showed how inadequate written sources could also be in historical reconstruction. The flaws of written records include falsification or distortion of records or facts, exaggeration and opinionated writing. All these are as bad as memory lapse regarding oral history. Again, a recorder of events may put down what he wants the people to know and probably not what they should know. In their critique of the colonial views of African history, Africanist writers pointed out the inadequacies in the writing of some European historians, administrators and commentators like A.P. Newton, Trevor Roper, Margery Perham, Lord Lugard, et cetera: writings which are basically characterized by subjective opinions and remarks and which were by every standard inadequate for historical reconstruction.

In conclusion, the writings of Africanist historians gave the Africans their own identity and a sense of pride. Africans are proud that they had their own great civilizations and empires which were evidence of the evolution of advanced social institutions like the Benin kingdom, Oyo Empire, Ghana Empire, the Zulu kingdom, Mali, Songhay and Kanem-Borno empires. All these have, of late, helped to increase the African sense of respect for cultural heritage and the desire to go back to the roots. Hence the talk nowadays about the Black Festival of Arts and Culture and the establishment of departments of culture, museums, monuments everywhere in Africa both at the governmental and non-governmental levels. What all this means is that even as Africanist historians challenged colonial views of African history, they overtly or covertly raised the level of historical consciousness in Africa.

## End Notes

1. All other colonial views about the African past are subsumed in these three basic themes.
2. Kenneth O. Dike, "African History Twenty Five Years Ago and Today" in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Silver Jubilee Edition, vol.10, No.3, Ibadan, H.S.N. Dec. 1980, p.14.
3. Roland Oliver "Western Historiography and its Relevance to Africa" in T.O. Ranger (ed.) *Emerging Themes of African History*, Dar-es-Salaam, University College, 1968 pp. 53-54.
4. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* New York, J. Sibree, Dover, 1956, pp. 91-99; he is however, not the only one with this view. Professors A.P. Newton & Trevor-Roper echoed him in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. To date, more reputable European historians and commentators share this view.
5. Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Rise of Christian Europe", in *The Listener*, 28 November, 1963, p.71.
6. D.M. Perham, "British Problems in Africa" in *Foreign Affairs* June 1951. Also, Miss Perham had earlier raised the same issue in her *Native Administration in Nigeria* Oxford University Press, 1937, pp. 1-2.
7. C.G. Seligman, *Races of Africa*, London, 1930. Also see A.E. Afigbo, "Colonial Historiography" in T. Falola (ed.) *African Historiography*, London, Longman, 1993, pp. 42-7.
8. J.D. Fage and R.A. Oliver, *A Short History of Africa*, Baltimore, 1962.
9. See for instance, S. Biobaku, *The Origin of the Yorubas*, Lugard Lectures, 1956, Lagos, Government Printer, 1956 who believes Yoruba have Nubian or background; J.O. Lucas, *The Religion of the Yorubas*, Lagos, 1948: he traced the origin of Yoruba to Egypt; E.J. Alagoa, "Ijo Origin" workshop paper at Department of History, University of Ibadan, 1978, p.12. As for the traditional historians, Jacob Egharevba, Samuel Johnson, Muhammed Bello, et al were major culprits.
10. L.F. Lugard, the Governor of the Colony of Lagos and Protectorate of Nigeria made this declaration in his *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, Edinburgh, 1922, p. 203.
11. The documentations were a great success. The books are today, major sources materials for the vivid understanding and near accurate reconstruction of an authentic African past.
12. The nationalist historians included K.O. Dike, J.F. Ade Ajayi, E.A. Ayandele, Obaro Ikime, G.O. Olusanya, J.D. Omer-Cooper, Saburi Biobaku, B.A. Ogot, Walter D. Rodney, Samir Amin, et.al.
13. K.O. Dike and J.F.A. Ajayi, "African Historiography" in D.L. Sills (ed.) *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, New York, Macmillan & Free Press, Vol.6, 1968, pp. 395-397.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 397.
15. *Ibid.* pp. 394-5; also, A. Akinola, "Who needs the past? An Inquiry into the Meaning and Relevance of History", in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, No. 6 August, 1993, pp. 10-12.
16. See works by Basil Davidson, *Remembering Africa's Past, Old Africa Rediscovered*; R. Cornevin, "The Problems & Character of African history" in *Emerging Themes of African History*; John Landale, "The Emergence of African nations" in *Emerging Themes*, J.D. Fage's *Africa Discovers Her Past* and his collaborator R.A. Oliver's *African History for the*

- Outside World:* Fage & Oliver had a change of mind later when the seeds of Africa historiography had started bearing fruits for them to see the point behind real African history.
17. The argument attempts to absolve African ruling elite of blame for Africa's early problems at independence.
  18. J.F. Ade Ajayi, "The Continuity of African Institutions Under Colonialism" in T.O. Ranger *Emerging Themes*, 1968, pp. 189-200.
  19. *Ibid.* p. 188.
  20. *Ibid.* p. 194.
  21. Akin Akintola, "Who Needs the Past?" in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, No. 6, August, 1993, p. 12.
  22. A number of Benin historians I have discussed with have made this claim. One of the notable ones is O.B. Osadolor who is currently doing a research in Hamburg, Germany on Benin.
  23. A.E. Afigbo, *The Poverty of African Historiography*, Lagos, Afrografika Publishers, 1977.
  24. *Ibid.*
  25. See for instance, Thomas Speare, "Oral Traditions: Whose History?" in *History in Africa*, & 1980; Jans Vansina, "Once Upon a Time: Oral Traditions as History in Africa", *Daedalus* 1971 pp. 442-468.

I am most delighted to learn that you have been awarded the Doctor of Literature degree of the University of London by Examination. This honour and distinction is further confirmation of your excellence and academic stature of which we are all very proud.

A.B.O.O.OYEDIRAN  
Vice-Chancellor.

I celebrate with you, Olu and the family, nay Rivers State for a well deserved smashing D.LITI. (London) by EXAMINATION and not the now prostituted (on our shores) "Honoris causa."

TAM DAVID-WEST

Now that you have reached the peak, we urge you to continue to maintain your balance and to lead the way boldly, correctly and courageously in the interest of scholarship and glorious term of office.

ZAMANI LEKWOT

There were several times when we would have been stuck without help forthcoming from Ibadan. I witnessed the problems of the University, my University, with great distress but learnt to admire the courage of those of you who led the battle against adversity.

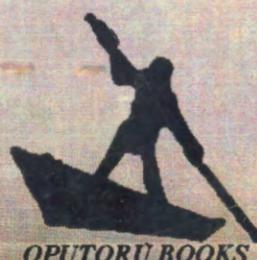
JUBRIL AMINU

I remember you very well when you were in Okrika Grammar School, under my principalship. Even at that time you had exhibited signs of dedication to duty and determination. You were a model student, both in character and learning. It is therefore no surprise to me that you've come so far in life. Your humility always belies your ability and achievements.

I often feel amused about your present initials. I don't know when the change from S.M.T. to T.N.T. took place. Whenever it was, it is a significant change. You are a veritable T.N.T., the way you demolish difficulties, whether in scholarship, administration or whatever else.

SAMUEL J. COOKEY.

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