

Decolonization and Functionality of Knowledge in the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN), 1956 to 1980

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This study examines transformations in the decolonization and functionality of knowledge in the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN) from 1956 to 1980. In its early years, the Journal sought to recover Africa's rich past while developing research methodologies that advanced decolonization and addressed the needs of a society negotiating national identity. By the 1970s, however, its articles reflected an expanded decolonization discourse but showed limited engagement with Africa's pressing economic challenges. This raises a critical question: why did epistemic decolonization advance without parallel concern for knowledge functionality? Situating this problem in the pre-digital context of African historiography, the article interrogates how one of Africa's earliest historical journals functioned both as a site of intellectual decolonization and as a medium for shaping emancipatory knowledge before the digital revolution, thereby contributing to broader debates in this special issue.
Keywords: JHSN; knowledge decolonization; epistemic functionality; African historiography; historical practice.

Descolonização e funcionalidade do conhecimento no *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN), 1956 a 1980

Este estudo examina as transformações nos processos de descolonização e na funcionalidade do conhecimento no *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN), entre 1956 e 1980. Nos seus primeiros anos, o JHSN tinha como objetivo revelar a rica história do continente africano enquanto desenvolvia metodologias de investigação que facilitassem o processo de descolonização e respondessem às necessidades de uma sociedade em busca da construção de uma identidade nacional. No entanto, os artigos publicados na década de 1970 deixaram de abordar os desafios económicos fundamentais enfrentados pelo continente africano na época. Essa transformação levanta uma questão crítica: por que motivo a ampliação do discurso sobre a descolonização ocorreu sem uma preocupação correspondente com a funcionalidade do conhecimento? Ao situar este problema no contexto pré-digital da historiografia africana, este artigo interroga algumas das principais preocupações deste número temático, demonstrando como uma das primeiras revistas históricas de África funcionou tanto como um espaço de descolonização intelectual quanto como um instrumento de produção de conhecimento emancipatório antes da revolução digital.
Palavras-chave: JHSN; descolonização do conhecimento; funcionalidade epistémica; historiografia africana; prática histórica.

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Oladipupo Olugbodi and Olufunke Adeboye*

Introduction

The journey towards the decolonization of knowledge in Africa has been a longstanding struggle, rooted in the nineteenth century when African cultural nationalists such as Samuel Johnson and Otunba Payne emerged to challenge pervasive Eurocentric narratives that denied Africa its rightful place in history. These pioneers sought to craft a more authentic portrayal of Africa's past, contradicting scholars like C.G. Seligman, who argued that the civilization of Africa was externally induced.[1] Such Eurocentric perspectives later prompted a cultural nationalism movement in Nigeria during the 19th century.[2] This cultural nationalism movement eventually evolved into a formidable force following World War II, as irrefutable evidence was mobilized to dismantle the myth of European superiority over Africans. Nationalism ignited fierce aspirations for

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1 Edith R. Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis; Its Origin and Functions in Time Perspective," *The Journal of African History* 10, n.º 4 (1969): 521; Nigel Eltringham, "Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country: The Hamitic Hypothesis, Race and the Rwandan Genocide," *Social Identities* 12, n.º 4 (July 2006): 425-426.

2 Ayodeji Olukoju, "The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Nigeria," in *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures*, eds. Akinjide Osuntokun and Ayodeji Olukoju (Lagos: Department of History and Strategic Studies, University of Lagos, 1997), 298-301.

independence, positioning the study of African history as an essential intellectual tool in the struggle.[3] The emergence of professionally trained Nigerian historians in the 1950s solidified the foundation for the decolonization of knowledge, as nationalists passionately demanded insights into Africa's illustrious past, ensuring that the scholarship produced resonated powerfully with societal aspirations.

Pioneer Nigerian academic historians such as Kenneth Dike, Saburi Biobaku, Jacob Ade Ajayi, and Bolanle Awe dedicated themselves to the reconstruction of Africa's historical narrative, and were supported by esteemed British Africanists such as Abdullahi Smith (formerly Henry Fredrick Charles Smith) and J.D. Fage. Significant milestones in this dispensation included the establishment of the National Archives in Nigeria (formerly Nigerian Records Office) in 1954 and the establishment of the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) in 1955. The HSN thereafter launched the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN) in 1956.[4] The focus of this article is on the JHSN, which was the flagship publication of the HSN and the oldest historical journal in Nigeria, serving as a pivotal platform for advancing African historiography. Therefore, it is essential to examine the journal's role in the decolonization and functionality of knowledge from its inception to 1980, the year of its silver jubilee.

Decolonization and Functionality of Knowledge

Knowledge decolonization is a critical intellectual and cultural movement that attempts to challenge the dominance of Western epistemic culture that imposes its ways of knowing and understanding the world on other systems. As a movement that evolved from anticolonial struggles, it seeks to dismantle the lingering effects of colonial power structures within academic, social, and cultural systems, while calling for the validation and elevation of diverse epistemologies, particularly those rooted in indigenous, African, and non-Western traditions. Central to this movement is the recognition

3 Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 22.

4 Falola and Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History*, 23-24.

that knowledge production has often been shaped by historical inequalities, privileging certain voices while marginalizing others. By rethinking educational curricula, research methodologies, and intellectual frameworks, knowledge decolonization strives to create a more inclusive and equitable landscape that respects the richness and diversity of human understanding.

In a world marked by cultural interconnectedness and pluralism, the decolonization of knowledge offers an opportunity to confront biases, celebrate diversity, and engage in a more comprehensive understanding of the past. It is not merely a critique of existing systems but a forward-looking effort to reimagine knowledge in ways that empower all communities.[5] To counteract such perspectives, which are propagated by scholars like Friedrich Hegel and Margery Perham, African historians and Africanists engaged in a continuous effort to reconstruct the African past. This endeavour, known as the decolonization of knowledge, entails critically examining and reevaluating narratives shaped by European colonial viewpoints. The Africa-centered perspective is essential to presenting decolonized knowledge about Africa, highlighting Africans as active subjects rather than passive objects of research. Ndlovu-Gatsheni emphasizes that Africans must pursue epistemic freedom defined as "the right to think, theorise, interpret the world, develop own methodologies and write from where one is located and unencumbered by Eurocentrism."[6] By generating knowledge from within, Africans can foster originality and contribute to a more diverse global knowledge economy. Scholars like Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Toyin Falola resonate with the call to dismantle power imbalances in knowledge production between the Global North and developing countries.[7] This conceptual lens constitutes the foundation from which to assess how the JHSN contributed to reconstructing African narratives and centering African epistemologies.

5 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986), 16; Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Decoloniality as the Future of Africa* (Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa RPCIG, 2018), 39; Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 8.

6 Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "The Dynamics of Epistemological Decolonization in the 21st Century: Towards Epistemic Freedom," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 40, n.º 1 (2018): 17.

7 Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being," *Cultural Studies* 21, n.º 2-3 (March/May 2007): 257-263; Toyin Falola, *Decolonizing African Studies: Knowledge Production, Agency, and Voice* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2022), 519-521.

Knowledge functionality, on its part, entails that knowledge produced has to reflect the core realities of the environment in which it is produced and must be essential for the economic, social, political, and mental integration of individual learners into national society, just as it should visibly and palpably benefit the development of the immediate environment. Therefore, knowledge or educational functionality meets the practical and developmental needs of its learners and society. It transcends academic boundaries of generating knowledge just for its sake and extends into practical projects, prioritizing progress and development for Africa.[8] The knowledge generated through the integration of academic and practical approaches must be relevant to the growth of learners in that environment and must prioritize the development of that environment before addressing broader concerns. Furthermore, this knowledge should bridge the epistemic past and present that have connections to chart a course for the future.

In *Knowledge and the State of Nature*, Edward Craig approaches the concept of knowledge from a functionalist and genealogical standpoint. He argues that the concept of "knowledge" evolved as a tool for human communities to identify reliable informants — knowledge producers whose testimonies could be trusted for practical decision-making and survival. According to Craig, knowledge is not merely an abstract or detached philosophical ideal, but rather a concept shaped by its utility in helping communities navigate their environments effectively. The emphasis placed on *knowledge functionality* — that knowledge must reflect and address the economic, social, political, and developmental realities of its context — aligns with Craig's claim that knowledge serves communal, practical needs. This perspective modifies the notion of knowledge as an end in itself and instead foregrounds its role in promoting individual and communal progress. However, the definition takes Craig's genealogical insight and applies it directly to the education of and developmental practice in Africa. It moves beyond Craig's philosophical genealogy to argue that academic inquiry should explicitly

8 Falola, *Decolonizing African Studies*, 516.

be integrated with practical, community-oriented projects that benefit the immediate environment. Moreover, while Craig focuses primarily on epistemology in a general human context, the emphasis on knowledge as a tool for socioeconomic integration and societal development sharpens the political and developmental stakes of knowledge production in African postcolonial contexts. In short, Craig's functional account of knowledge provides a strong philosophical underpinning for the subject of the functionality of knowledge in the JHSN and the definition above, which posits that knowledge in African history/studies must be locally grounded, practically relevant, and developmentally oriented.[9]

The Birth of the JHSN and Its Early Years

The establishment of the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* finds its roots in the establishment of new universities after World War II and the dynamic emergence of modern African historiography. This intellectual movement is deeply entwined with the nationalist fervour that swept across Africa, particularly in the aftermath of World War II. For many Africans, the war served as a profound revelation. It unmasked the fallibility of their colonial masters, dismantling the myth of their invincibility. The longstanding colonial narrative that dismissed Africans' capacity for self-governance was vehemently opposed as Africans and their nationalist leaders clamoured for independence. To execute this struggle, an intellectual vanguard composed of historians and scholars from other relevant disciplines arose, providing critical momentum for the national cause.[10]

The establishment of JHSN was preceded by the founding of Nigeria's premier university, the University College, Ibadan (later University of Ibadan) in 1948. From its inception, one of the courses the university offered was History. However, the curriculum reflected a European bias, focusing predominantly on European presence and activities in Africa.[11]

9 Edward Craig, *Knowledge and the State of Nature: An Essay in Conceptual Synthesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

10 Goran Hyden, "The Failure of Africa's First Intellectuals," *Transition*, n.º 28 (January 1967): 14-18; Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History*, 22-24.

11 Falola and Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History*, 22.

This paradigm began to shift with the arrival of Kenneth Dike, the first Nigerian to earn a PhD in History. Upon completing his studies at King's College London, Dike returned to Nigeria with a visionary mission: to champion the development of African history and establish platforms for its dissemination. Dike was appointed to the University of Ibadan, where he spearheaded transformative reforms. Central to his reforms was the introduction of courses within the Department of History that focus on African agency.[12] By so doing, Dike laid a scholarly foundation for the decolonization of knowledge about Nigeria and Africa from an academic perspective.

Kenneth Dike believed that producing scholarly works on African history would provide nationalists with tangible evidence to highlight the richness of the African past, demonstrating the existence of kingdoms and empires in pre-colonial times.[13] However, his vision extended beyond these foundational ideas. To further advance the study and documentation of African history, Dike, in collaboration with Abdullahi Smith and others, founded the Historical Society of Nigeria and launched its flagship publication, the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN).[14] Additionally, Dike contributed to establishing the National Archives in Nigeria, laying essential groundwork for the systematic reconstruction of Africa's historical narrative.

The JHSN, founded by the HSN in 1956, was managed by Abdullahi Smith and Kenneth Dike, both of whom ensured its dedication to advancing African historiography. In its inaugural year, the journal clearly articulated its aim and purpose as follows:

> The journal has been started as part of the publications policy of the society (HSN)-- a policy which includes the quarterly publications of the Society's Bulletins, and it is hoped, the

12 Falola and Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History*, 22-23.

13 Apollos O. Nwauwa, "K.O. Dike and the New African Nationalist Historiography," in *Emergent Themes and Methods in African Studies: Essays in Honor of Adiele E. Afigbo,* eds. Toyin Falola and Adam Paddock (Trenton, New Jersey: African World Press, 2009), 157–176.

14 Kenneth Dike, "African History Twenty-Five Years Ago and Today," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (*JHSN*) 10, n.º 3 (December 1980): 13-14.

> occasional publication of monographs on various aspects of Nigerian history. The purpose of the Journal is to stimulate interest in the study of history in Nigeria and to provide a vehicle for the publication of papers relating to the problems of history and history teaching in this country.[15]

It follows from the above that garnering, producing, disseminating, and sustaining interest in the knowledge of Nigerian history was the goal of the JHSN. Although in the 1950s the journal's publications often portrayed Africans as the object of research, efforts to position them as active participants began to take shape during this time. A significant shift began to emerge in the 1960s, as these trained scholars increasingly acknowledged the value of incorporating local perspectives into their research. This period saw a growing collaboration between African researchers and international scholars, highlighting the importance of amplifying authentic African voices within academic discourse.

Several of the articles published during the journal's first years of existence sometimes focused on European colonization of Nigeria. Notable examples include Kenneth Dike's "John Beecroft, 1790-1854: Her Brittanic Majesty's Consul to the Bights of Benin and Biafra 1849-1854", J. C. Anene's "The Protectorate Government of Southern Nigeria and the Aros 1900-1902", A.H.M. Kirk-Greene's "Von Uechtritz's Expedition to Adamawa, 1893", and A. Salubi's "The Establishment of British Administration in the Urhobo Country (1891-1913)".[16] While these works offered insights into certain aspects of Nigeria's history, they predominantly centered on Europeans as the main subjects of study. Nonetheless, the 1950s also saw the emergence of research focusing on Africa's pre-colonial history and with Africans as subjects.

15 n/a, "PREFACE," *JHSN* 1, n.º 1 (December 1956): 1.

16 Kenneth Dike, "John Beecroft, 1790-1854: Her Brittanic Majesty's Consul to the Bights of Benin and Biafra 1849-1854," *JHSN* 1, n.º 1 (December 1956): 5-14; J.C. Anene, "The Protectorate Government of Southern Nigeria and the Aros 1900-1902," *JHSN* 1, n.º 1 (December 1956): 20-26; A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "Von Uechtritz's Expedition to Adamawa, 1893," *JHSN* 1, n.º 2 (December 1957): 86-98; A. Salubi, "The Establishment of British Administration in the Urhobo Country (1891-1913)," *JHSN* 1, n.º 3 (December 1958): 184-209.

Prominent examples from this era include T.O. Ogunkoya's "The Early History of Ijebu", A.J.H. Goodwin's "Archaeology and Benin Architecture", R. Mauny's "Akori Beads", and B.E.B. Fagg's "The Nok Culture in Prehistory".[17]

However, the dominant features during the period were methodologies or policies aimed at shaping historical research and education. This focus seemed to reflect a deliberate effort to establish a solid foundation for historical research and teaching in Nigeria. Supporting this claim were articles like S.O. Biobaku's "The Problem of Traditional History with Special Reference to Yoruba Traditions", M.C. English's "What History Does the Nigerian Pupil Need?", R.E.O. Akpofure's "Textbooks and the Teaching of African History in Nigeria", and Henry Fredrick Charles Smith's "Source Material for the History of the Western Sudan".[18]

The 1950s marked a foundational period in the research and teaching of Nigerian history, signaling the early stages of intellectual decolonization. The historians that emerged from the 1950s were different from the 19th-century non-academic Nigerian historians in the sense that they were trained historians (understood historical methodology and the critical analysis of source materials). Scholars such as M.C. English and Henry Fredrick Charles Smith emphasized the need for historical study in Nigeria to reflect the realities of the Nigerian environment, advancing a deliberate effort to decolonize knowledge about Africa.[19] During this decade, the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN) played a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for more rigorous and expansive scholarship in the decades that followed.

17 T.O. Ogunkoya, "The Early History of Ijebu," *JHSN* 1, n.º 1 (December 1956): 48-58; A.J.H. Goodwin, "Archaeology and Benin Architecture," *JHSN* 1, n.º 2 (December 1957): 65-85; R. Mauny, "Akori Beads," *JHSN* 1, n.º 3 (December 1958): 210-214; B.E.B. Fagg, "The Nok Culture in Prehistory," *JHSN* 1, n.º 4 (December 1959): 288-293.

18 S.O. Biobaku, "The Problem of Traditional History with Special Reference to Yoruba Traditions," *JHSN* 1, n.º 1 (December 1956): 43-47; M.C. English, "What History Does the Nigerian Pupil Need?," *JHSN* 1, n.º 2 (December 1957):111-118; R.E.O. Akpofure, "Textbooks and the Teaching of African History in Nigeria," vol. 1, n.º 2 (December 1957): 138-144; H.F.C. Smith, "Source Material for the History of the Western Sudan," *JHSN* 1, n.º 3 (December 1958): 238-248.

19 English, "What History Does the Nigerian Pupil Need?", 111-117; H.F.C. Smith, "School Certificate History Syllabuses in Nigeria," *JHSN* 1, n.º 2 (December 1957): 119-129.

The methodological and policy foundations established in the 1950s enabled a surge in scholarship that foregrounded African agency and narratives in the 1960s. Notable contributions from this period include J.S. Boston's "Notes on Contact between the Igala and the Ibo," J.F.A. Ajayi's "Nineteenth Century Origins of Nigerian Nationalism," R.S. Smith's "Ijaye, the Western Palatinate of the Yoruba," Tekena Tamuno's "Some Aspects of Nigerian Reaction to the Imposition of British Rule," and Kola Folayan's "Egbado to 1832: The Birth of a Dilemma."[20] Although Nigerian history gained prominence within the JHSN during the 1960s, this period also saw a narrowing of focus. Broader studies of African history, prevalent in the 1950s, receded as histories of the colonial period became the dominant theme in Nigerian historiography.[21]

The JHSN in the 1970s and 1980

The 1970s marked a shift in the approach to decolonizing knowledge in the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN). The decade further broadened the scope of inquiry. Greater attention was given to economic and social histories, which complemented political narratives. Studies of Africa's economic past underscored the viability of indigenous economies tailored to local needs, cultures, and environments. Similarly, research into social history highlighted Africa's vibrant civilizations and social institutions, countering Eurocentric narratives that portrayed the continent as devoid of an advanced culture.

Articles on economic history published in the JHSN include Babatunde Lawal's "The Igbo-Ukwu 'Bronzes': A Search for the Economic Evidence", Wale Oyemakinde's "The Pullen Marketing Scheme: A Trial

20 J.S. Boston, "Notes on Contact between the Igala and the Ibo," *JHSN* 2, n.º 1 (December 1960): 52-58; J.F.A. Ajayi, "Nineteenth Century Origins of Nigerian Nationalism," *JHSN* 2, n.º 2 (December 1961): 196-210; R.S. Smith, "Ijaye, the Western Palatinate of the Yoruba," *JHSN* 2, n.º 3 (December 1962): 329-349; Tekena Tamuno, "Some Aspects of Nigerian Reaction to the Imposition of British Rule," *JHSN* 3, n.º 2 (December 1965): 271-294; Kola Folayan, "Egbado to 1832: The Birth of a Dilemma," *JHSN* 4, n.º 1 (December 1967): 15-33.

21 This is evident in the journal articles of JHSN published in the 1960s. Accessibility of colonial documents in both national and metropolitan archives made this possible.

in Food Price Control in Nigeria, 1941–1947", A.E. Afigbo's "Trade and Trade Routes in Nineteenth Century Nsukka", and G.O. Ogunremi's "The Nigerian Motor Transport Union Strike of 1937".[22] Similarly, significant studies in social history included J.A. Adedeji's "The Church and the Emergence of the Nigerian Theater, 1866–1914", G.O. Olusanya's "Julius Ojo Cole: A Neglected Nigerian Nationalist and Educationist", Onigu Otite's "Historical Aspects of the Sociology of the Bendel State of Nigeria", and Walter Ofonagoro's "Notes on the Ancestry of Mbanaso Okwaraozorumba, Otherwise Known as King Jaja of Opobo, 1821–1891".[23]

Another important trend in the 1970s was the increased emphasis on Nigerian history. Although the journal featured studies on other parts of Africa, Nigerian themes dominated its content. African resistance to colonial rule remained prominent, as it had been in earlier decades. Overall, the colonial period was the most studied era during this time, with a relative decline in focus on precolonial history compared to the pre-1970 period when nationalism was a driving concern.

A persistent challenge in the JHSN from its inception in 1956 to 1980 was the limited attention given to women's history. Greater exploration of women's roles is necessary to fully understand their contributions to Africa's development. The few works addressing women's history during this period include Felicia Ekejiuba's "Omu Okwei, the Merchant Queen of Ossomari: A Biographical Sketch", A.E. Afigbo's "Revolution and Reaction in Eastern Nigeria: 1900–1929 (The Background to the Women's Riot of 1929)", and Agnes Akosua Aidoo's

22 Babatunde Lawal, "The Igbo-Ukwu 'Bronzes': A Search for the Economic Evidence," *JHSN* 6, n.º 3 (December 1972): 313-321; Wale Oyemakinde, "The Pullen Marketing Scheme: A Trial in Food Price Control in Nigeria, 1941-1947," *JHSN* 6, n.º 4 (June 1973): 413-423; A.E. Afigbo, "Trade and Trade Routes in Nineteenth Century Nsukka," *JHSN* 7, n.º 1 (December 1973): 77-90; G.O. Ogunremi, "The Nigerian Motor Transport Union Strike of 1937," *JHSN* 9, n.º 2 (June 1978): 127-144.

23 J.A. Adedeji, "The Church and the Emergence of the Nigerian Theater, 1866-1914," *JHSN* 6, n.º 1 (December 1971): 25-45; G.O. Olusanya, "Julius Ojo Cole: A Neglected Nigerian Nationalist and Educationist," *JHSN* 7, n.º 1 (December 1973): 91-101; Onigu Otite, "Historical Aspects of the Sociology of the Bendel State of Nigeria," *JHSN* 9, n.º 1 (December 1977): 37-61; Walter Ofonagoro, "Notes on the Ancestry of Mbanaso Okwaraozorumba Otherwise Known as King Jaja of Opobo, 1821-1891," *JHSN* 9, n.º 3 (December 1978): 145-156.

"Asante Queen Mothers in Government and Politics in the Nineteenth Century".[24] Similarly, the history of children was scarcely studied, with Adefunke Oyemade's "The Care of Motherless Babies: A Century of Voluntary Work in Nigeria" being the sole contribution.[25] It was not until the 1990s that women's history gained greater prominence in Nigerian historiography, with the call for further inclusion persisting. The study of children and childhood only began to attract attention in the twenty-first century.

Changes in the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*

Aspects and Changes in the Decolonization Process

The decolonization of knowledge in the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN) was a continuous process. The principal distinction between the intellectual decolonization efforts of the 1950s–60s and those of the 1970s–80s lies in the broadening of strategies and methodologies used to challenge colonial knowledge systems.[26] In the latter decades, more emphasis was placed on emerging fields such as economic and social history, leading to an expanded production of scholarship that explored these aspects of Africa's past. Prominent works reflecting the decolonization agenda in the 1950s and 1960s include T.O. Ogunkoya's "The Early History of Ijebu", R. Mauny's "Akori Beads", I.A. Akinjogbin's "Agaja and the Conquest of the Coastal Aja States, 1724–30" and "The Oyo Empire in the 18th Century—A

24 Felicia Ekejiuba, "Omu Okwei, the Merchant Queen of Ossomari: A Biographical Sketch," *JHSN* 3, n.º 4 (June 1967): 633-646; A.E. Afigbo, "Revolution and Reaction in Eastern Nigeria: 1900-1929: (The Background to the Women's Riot of 1929)," *JHSN* 3, n.º 3 (December 1966): 539-557; Agnes Akosua Aidoo, "Asante Queen Mothers in Government and Politics in the Nineteenth Century," *JHSN* 9, n.º 1 (December 1977): 1-13.

25 Adefunke Oyemade, "The Care of Motherless Babies: A Century of Voluntary Work in Nigeria," *JHSN* 7, n.º 2 (June 1974): 369-371.

26 This is an observation by the authors. Moreover, it should not be a surprise that African historiography will develop better with time as new branches and sub-branches are introduced and new approaches or methodologies incorporated. Also see Muyiwa Okuseinde, "Ideological Issues in African Historiography," in *Issues in Historiography,* ed. O.O. Olubomehin (Ibadan: College Press and Publishers Ltd., 2001), 58-60.

Reassessment", and Paul Ozanne's "Notes on the Later Prehistory of Accra".[27] For example, T.O. Ogunkoya's "The Early History of Ijebu" reflects the knowledge decolonization agenda by centering indigenous oral traditions, local perspectives, and African agency in reconstructing Ijebu history, challenging Eurocentric narratives and colonial historiography that marginalized African voices and epistemologies. It exemplifies the reclaiming of historical authorship by African scholars rooted in community knowledge systems. Also, R. Mauny's "Akori Beads" highlights African material culture as a valid source of historical evidence, thereby valuing indigenous African artifacts and trade networks in reconstructing precolonial history beyond Eurocentric textual sources. It challenges colonial assumptions by recognizing African agency in global exchanges and cultural production. These studies emphasized Africa's rich precolonial heritage, countering narratives that minimized African achievements before European incursion in the nineteenth century and subsequent colonization of the continent.

Another important strand of the decolonization process was the demonstration of African agency during the colonial period. This was more pronounced in the 1960s and 1970s. This approach sought to restore African voices and actions to historical narratives that had long depicted Africans as passive subjects of colonial rule. Relevant JHSN contributions in this vein include Philip A. Igbafe's "The Benin Water Rate Agitation, 1937–1939: An Example of Social Conflict", Tekena N. Tamuno's "Some Aspects of Nigerian Reaction to the Imposition of British Rule", A.E. Afigbo's "Revolution and Reaction in Eastern Nigeria: 1900–1929 (The Background to the Women's Riot of 1929)", G.O. Ogunremi's "The Nigerian Motor Transport Union Strike of 1937," and Obaro Ikime's "The Anti-tax Riots in Warri Province, 1927–1928".[28] Philip A. Igbafe's "The Benin Water Rate Agitation,

27 Ogunkoya, "The Early History of Ijebu," 48-58; Mauny, "Akori Beads," 210-214; I.A. Akinjogbin, "Agaja and the Conquest of the Coastal Aja States, 1724-30," *JHSN* 2, n.º 4 (December 1963): 545-566; Paul Ozanne, "Notes on the Later Prehistory of Accra," *JHSN* 3, n.º 1 (December 1964): 3-23; I.A. Akinjogbin, "The Oyo Empire in the 18th Century – A Reassessment," *JHSN* 3, n.º 3 (December 1966): 449-460.

28 Philip A. Igbafe, "The Benin Water Rate Agitation, 1937-1939: An Example of Social Con-

1937–1939" demonstrates African agency during the colonial period by showcasing how the people of Benin organized protests, mobilized public opinion, and negotiated with colonial authorities to resist imposed policies, asserting their rights and influencing governance despite colonial domination. It highlights Africans as active participants in shaping their political and social realities. Another example is G.O. Ogunremi's "The Nigerian Motor Transport Union Strike of 1937," which demonstrates African agency during the colonial period by illustrating how Nigerian workers collectively organized and executed a nationwide strike to challenge colonial labor policies, assert their economic rights, and influence public policy. It underscores the strategic use of unionism as a tool for resistance and self-determination under colonial rule.

By the 1970s, the study of diverse aspects of Africa's past became even more pronounced in the JHSN. Both the precolonial and colonial economic and social histories of Africans were explored, underscoring the centrality of Africans in shaping their historical trajectories. Some studies highlighting Africa's viable precolonial economy include Thurstan Shaw's "Early Agriculture in Africa," which discusses Africa's viable precolonial economy by providing archaeological evidence of sophisticated indigenous farming systems, domestication of crops, and regional trade, thereby challenging colonial narratives of African economic primitiveness. It underscores the continent's capacity for sustainable agricultural development long before European contact. Other studies include Marion Johnson's "Cloth on the Bank of the Niger" and Deji Ogunremi's "Human Porterage in Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century—A Pillar in the Indigenous Economy". Works examining Nigeria's colonial economic history include Wale Oyemakinde's "The Impact of the Great Depression on the Nigerian Railway and Its Workers" and "The Nigerian General Strike of 1945", and G.O. Ogunremi's "The Nigerian Motor

flict," *JHSN* 4, n.º 3 (December 1968): 355-373; Tekena N. Tamuno, "Some Aspects of Nigerian Reaction to the Imposition of British Rule," *JHSN* 3, n.º 2 (December 1965): 271-294; Afigbo, "Revolution and Reaction," 539-557; Ogunremi, "The Nigerian Motor Transport Union Strike," 127-144; Obaro Ikime, "The Anti-tax Riots in Warri Province, 1927-1928," *JHSN* 3, n.º 3 (December 1966): 559-573.

Transport Union Strike of 1937".[29] Wale Oyemakinde's "The Impact of the Great Depression on the Nigerian Railway and Its Workers" highlights how Nigerian railway workers responded to economic hardship through collective action, strikes, and union activities to defend their rights and livelihoods.

In the realm of social history, significant contributions included R.J.M. Blackett's "Return to the Motherland: Robert Campbell, a Jamaican in Early Colonial Lagos", Gbadebo Gbadamosi's "Odu Imale: Islam in Ifa Divination and the Case of Predestined Muslims", Onigu Otite's "Historical Aspects of the Sociology of the Bendel State of Nigeria", Ogbu U. Kalu's "The Battle of the Gods: Christianization of Cross River Igboland, 1903–1950", and J.A. Adedeji's "The Church and the Emergence of the Nigerian Theatre, 1866–1914".[30] For example, Ogbu U. Kalu's "The Battle of the Gods" and J.A. Adedeji's "The Church and the Emergence of the Nigerian Theatre" show how Africans engaged with, adapted, and reshaped Christianity and missionary institutions to reflect indigenous beliefs, aesthetics, and cultural expressions. Both works highlight the creative appropriation and transformation of foreign religious and cultural forms, revealing Africans as active participants in shaping their spiritual and artistic landscapes.

The expansion of historical subfields during this period was partly a response to the limitations of nationalist historiography pioneered by the Ibadan School of History. Over time, the Ibadan School's focus on

29 Thurstan Shaw, "Early Agriculture in Africa," *JHSN* 3, n.º 3 (December 1966): 143-191; Marion Johnson, "Cloth on the Bank of the Niger," *JHSN* 3, n.º 3 (December 1966): 353-363; Deji Ogunremi, "Human Porterage in Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century—A Pillar in the Indigenous Economy," *JHSN* 8, n.º 1 (December 1975): 37-59; Wale Oyemakinde, "The Impact of the Great Depression on the Nigerian Railway and Its Workers," *JHSN* 8, n.º 4 (June 1977): 143-160; Ogunremi, "The Nigerian Motor Transport Union Strike," 127-144; Wale Oyemakinde, "The Nigerian General Strike of 1945," *JHSN* 7, n.º 4 (June 1975): 693-710.

30 R.J.M. Blackett, "Return to the Motherland: Robert Campbell, a Jamaican in Early Colonial Lagos," *JHSN* 8, n.º 1 (December 1975): 133-143; Gbadebo Gbadamosi, "Odu Imale: Islam in Ifa Divination and the Case of Predestined Muslims," *JHSN* 8, n.º 4 (June 1977): 77-93; Otite, "Historical Aspects of the Sociology of the Bendel State of Nigeria," 37-61; Ogbu U. Kalu, "The Battle of the Gods: Christianization of Cross River Igboland, 1903-1950," *JHSN* 10, n.º 1 (December 1979): 1-18; Adedeji, "The Church and the Emergence of the Nigerian Theater," 25-45.

glorifying heroic African figures became repetitive.[31] In the 1970s, the Zaria School of History emerged, introducing Marxist ideologies and methodologies that prioritized economic analysis and class conflict.[32] This shift is evident in JHSN studies addressing labor movements and strikes, which examined resource conflicts between elites and the masses. Simultaneously, the Lagos School of History challenged the conservative tendencies of the Ibadan School, while other scholars advocated for increased attention to the social lives of Africans, further advancing the development of social history.[33] These intellectual movements collectively influenced the JHSN's content and shaped historical scholarship in Nigeria, ultimately deepening and expanding the process of knowledge decolonization.

JHSN and the Functionality of Knowledge

The functionality of historical knowledge lies in its capacity to illuminate present challenges and contribute to shaping a better future of national development. Following the 1960s, Nigeria's focus shifted from the pursuit of political independence and the affirmation of a rich precolonial past to the quest for economic and socio-cultural autonomy.[34] The oil boom of the early 1970s soon gave way to economic mismanagement and dependence on a mono-economy. The economic difficulties of the 1970s laid the groundwork for the coups and counter-coups of the early 1980s, eventually culminating in the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP).

Given this trajectory, economic historians arguably should have prioritized the imperative of economic diversification and explored

31 Falola and Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History*, 41

32 J.I. Dibua, "The Idol, Its Worshippers, and the Crisis of Relevance of Historical Scholarship in Nigeria," *History in Africa* 24 (1997): 123-128; Falola and Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History*, 235-236.

33 Akinjide Osuntokun, "Lagos School of History: An Exploratory Discourse - 4," *The Nation Newspaper*, https://www.google.com/amp/s/thenationonlineng.net/lagos-school-of-history-an-exploratory-discourse-4/amp/ (last accessed 20 June 2024); Falola and Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History*, 68-70.

34 Interview with Mr. James Denapo Iroko, retired Director of Education, Education District II, Lagos State, Nigeria, 14 May 2015; Interview with Mr. Timothy Adeyemi, retired Vice-Principal in Lagos State, 15 May 2015.

Nigeria's comparative advantages, drawing lessons from historical precedents. Similarly, historical scholarship might have more robustly engaged with the continent-wide challenges of political despotism by examining African political thought and systems suited to national contexts. On the socio-cultural front, greater efforts could have been made to interrogate and decolonize African cultural spheres. However, these observations are made with the benefit of hindsight. At the time, the principal aim of the JHSN was to foster an understanding and appreciation of Nigerian history. Nevertheless, the urgency of economic development and the imperative of maximizing national potential were clear, and a more explicit engagement with these themes could have bolstered the journal's contribution to national development in the decades following independence.

It is therefore pertinent to assess the functionality of knowledge in the JHSN between 1956 and 1980. The 1950s and 1960s were pivotal in the context of independence movements across Africa. Kwame Nkrumah famously argued that political independence was a necessary precursor to other forms of progress.[35] The JHSN's contributions during this period were closely aligned with nationalist aspirations. The introduction of African history at the University of Ibadan by Kenneth Dike in the mid-1950s marked the beginning of systematic Africa-centered historical scholarship in Nigeria. Although historical research was still nascent, the journal published works that demonstrated Africa's precolonial civilizations, contributing meaningfully to nationalist fervor by uncovering Africa's historical achievements, as evidenced in earlier cited works.

The 1970s, however, presented a different set of challenges. While relevant studies appeared, such as Walter Rodney's "The Year 1895 in Southern Mozambique: African Resistance to the Imposition of European Colonial Rule" and Kofi Owusu-Mensa's "Prince Owusu-Ansa

35 Etim E. Okon, "Kwame Nkrumah: The Fallen and Forgotten Hero of African Nationalism," *European Scientific Journal* 10, n.º 17 (June 2014): 59; *The Nation*, "Seek ye first the political kingdom...," *The Nation Newspaper*, 17 April 2022, https://thenationonlineng.net/seek-ye-first-the-political-kingdom/ (last accessed 21 June 2024).

of Asante, 1823–1884".[36] The period demanded a more direct engagement with pressing economic, socio-cultural, and political issues. A few works made inadvertent contributions to developmental discourse, including Paul Lovejoy's "Long-distance Trade and Islam: The Case of the Nineteenth Century Hausa Kola Trade", Ade Fajana's "Colonial Control and Education: The Development of Higher Education in Nigeria, 1900–1950", and Wale Oyemakinde's "Railway Construction and Operation in Nigeria, 1895–1911: Labour Problems and Socio-economic Impact".[37] However, in general, JHSN scholarship during the 1970s did not sufficiently connect historical inquiry to contemporary realities, thereby weakening the critical link between past and present.

Silver Jubilee of the JHSN and the Issue of the Functionality of Knowledge

The Historical Society of Nigeria celebrated its silver jubilee on Monday, 29 September 1980.[38] This occasion provided an opportunity to reflect on both the achievements and shortcomings of the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN) and Nigerian historiography more broadly. Among the remarkable accomplishments was the successful introduction and institutionalization of African history in Nigeria, a marked departure from earlier practices before Kenneth Dike's pioneering efforts at the University College, Ibadan. Another key achievement was the growing alignment between historians and social scientists, which fostered multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research.[39] In

36 Walter Rodney, "The Year 1895 in Southern Mozambique: African Resistance to the Imposition of European Colonial Rule," *JHSN* 5, n.º 4 (June 1971): 509-536; Kofi Owusu-Mensa, "Prince Owusu-Ansa of Asante, 1823-1884," *JHSN* 9, n.º 3 (December 1978): 23-44.

37 Paul Lovejoy, "Long-distance Trade and Islam: The Case of the Nineteenth Century Hausa Kola Trade," *JHSN* 5, n.º 4 (June 1971): 537-547; Ade Fajana, "Colonial Control and Education: The Development of Higher Education in Nigeria, 1900-1950," *JHSN* 6, n.º 3 (December 1972): 323-340; Wale Oyemakinde, "Railway Construction and Operation in Nigeria, 1895-1911: Labour Problems and Socio-economic Impact," *JHSN* 7, n.º 2 (June 1974): 303-324.

38 S. Afolabi Toye, "Address by the Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor S. Afolabi Toye, at the Formal Opening of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Monday 29 September, 1980," *JHSN* 10, n.º 3 (December 1980): 3-6.

39 J.F. Ade Ajayi, "The Historical Society in Nigeria: Presidential Address," *JHSN* 10, n.º 3 (December 1980): 7-10.

addition, significant historiographical themes that contributed to the decolonization of knowledge were emphasized. These included responses to colonial historiography, nineteenth-century Nigerian political history, African reactions to colonial rule, and the integration of Nigerians and their economy into the global economic system. The training of history educators for schools was also acknowledged as an important contribution of both the JHSN and professional historians.[40]

However, several gaps in both the journal and Nigerian historiography became visible. Insufficient attention had been given to decentralized states in Africa, and the lack of funding for historical studies was a persistent challenge. Furthermore, Nigerian historians generally avoided certain themes, such as pre-nineteenth-century Nigerian history, biographies, comparative history, and contemporary history. The findings of historical research largely remained confined to the academy. As Kenneth Dike observed, "It cannot be overemphasized that the progress [in historical practice] so far made is essentially among scholarly circles; outside the university walls, ignorance of African history persists and old prejudices die hard."[41] Jacob Ade Ajayi also gave his opinion about the JHSN and Nigerian historical practice when he stated:

> Our best achievement has been in the universities. We have had some impact on the profession of history educators in the schools, but the Association of History Teachers is yet to flourish and develop the right relationships with the Historical Society. Similarly, while we have maintained close relations with traditional historians, we cannot say that our Society or our writings have had the same direct impact on the masses in the rural areas who constitute the majority of our people.[42]

40 Ajayi, "The Historical Society in Nigeria: Presidential Address," 7-10.

41 Dike, "African History Twenty-Five Years Ago and Today," 25.

42 Ajayi, "The Historical Society in Nigeria," 7.

Ajayi's concern about the limited impact of historical scholarship beyond the university setting drew attention to the pressing need for public-oriented historical education. A notable response to this challenge, even before Ajayi's statement above, was the *Tarikh* project. *Tarikh*, a magazine-style publication initiated in the late 1960s by the Historical Society of Nigeria, was specifically designed to bridge the gap between academic history and secondary school teaching. Its content was tailored to the curriculum and written in an accessible style, making it suitable for students and teachers alike. By focusing on themes relevant to African history and highlighting indigenous sources, *Tarikh* aimed to promote historical awareness at the grassroots level and counter colonial-era distortions that lingered in post-independence educational materials.[43] Thus, while the JHSN maintained a scholarly orientation, *Tarikh* served as a complementary medium that sought to fulfill the functional role of history in Nigerian society. Its creation underscored the Society's recognition of the importance of engaging younger generations and broadening the societal relevance of historical knowledge beyond academic elites.

Nevertheless, it does show that while the JHSN and Nigerian historians were able to produce and narrowly disseminate knowledge on Nigerian and African history, ensuring and sustaining societal interest in the discipline remained a challenge. The gaps in the practice of history at the time of the jubilee required serious attention. The issue was not the insignificance of past achievements, but rather the need for Nigerian historians at the time to remain dynamic and responsive as societal contexts evolved. While it was a significant accomplishment to demonstrate to foreign audiences that Africa possessed a rich and complex past, the fervent nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s had gradually given way to new priorities—namely, human capital development, enhanced social welfare, and broad-based economic advancement within

43 Historical Society of Nigeria, *Tarikh: Magazine of African History for Schools* 1, n.º 1 (Ibadan: Historical Society of Nigeria, 1967); B. O. Oloruntimehin, "Historical Research and Nation-Building in Nigeria," *Tarikh* 5, n.º 1 (1978): 15–25; Segun Osoba, "The Role of Historians in National Development," *Tarikh* 4, n.º 2 (1976): 2–10; J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Teaching African History in Schools* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1968).

Nigeria and other African states. Although the economic situation in 1980 was not as dire as it is today (forty-five years later), there were already concerns about economic stability.

A critical impediment to the discipline's progress was the lack of widespread public knowledge, interest, and support for historical scholarship. Effective research demands financial, material, and moral backing, yet even the most innovative historical inquiries struggled to gain traction due to the prevailing perception of the discipline outside academia. Jeremiah Dibua has aptly characterized this predicament as a "crisis of relevance."[44] Similarly, Michael Omolewa reported G.O. Olusanya's explanation on the challenge with historical scholarship in Nigeria in the decades following independence:

> He [Olusanya] contended that the state of historical scholarship was very poor; that the historical profession was no longer valued by the society that had gone increasingly materialist, and that historical research seemed to have ceased to exist. Professor Olusanya, however, believes that this tragic situation is transitional. He recalls that the relevance of the historian was never in question twenty years ago when Africans were in dire need of a psychological instrument to establish the point that Africans could administer their affairs; and that indeed Africans had a respectable past .... He [Olusanya], however, raised the question of the limitations of the historian who is reluctant to be a publicist, who hesitates to comment on national issues, and who refuses to write in non-professional periodicals, journals, and magazines.[45]

The preceding discussion suggests that the principal challenge faced by the JHSN and Nigerian historical scholarship more broadly

44 Dibua, "The Idol, Its Worshippers, and the Crisis of Relevance of Historical Scholarship in Nigeria."

45 G.O. Olusanya (Discussion Leader) and Michael Omolewa (Rapporteur) during the silver jubilee celebrations of the HSN on September 29, 1980. The topic of discussion by G.O. Olusanya was "A Critique of the Social Role of the Nigerian Historian," *JHSN* 10, n.º 3 (December 1980): 151.

was the functionality of knowledge. The issue was not the quality of historical research or the success of decolonizing African historiography, but rather the nature of the knowledge produced, the methods of its dissemination, and the scholarly network beyond the ivory tower. Contrary to Olusanya's assertion that historical research had virtually ceased to exist, evidence from the JHSN indicates that contributions became increasingly rigorous and methodologically sophisticated with each successive decade. The core problem, however, was the continuous process of knowledge decolonization without a corresponding emphasis on the functionality of knowledge during the period under study. Several factors contributed to this imbalance, including the thematic focus of historical research and the modes of dissemination, branding, and marketing of historical knowledge. These shortcomings fueled the crisis of relevance within the discipline and discouraged significant investment in the field.

The thematic orientation of historical research is crucial to the advancement of the discipline. The past should not be studied in isolation. Historical inquiry at some point should engage with contemporary societal challenges. A significant proportion of Nigerian historiography should be informed by present-day realities. Even when research is conducted on topics without direct contemporary influence, efforts should be made to establish connections between past events and current circumstances. Such linkages enrich present-day discourse by illustrating historical precedents and parallels.

Equally important is how historical knowledge is disseminated. While formality and academic rigor are valuable, they should not be the sole modes of engagement. Historians must broaden their intended audiences beyond university scholars and government officials to include early learners, primary and secondary school students, and the general public. The traditional formal approach should be complemented by more informal, engaging, and accessible methods, especially for non-academic audiences. Moreover, non-written forms of historical expression should be explored, including collaborations with scholars from other disciplines to facilitate verbal, artistic, and multimedia presentations of historical knowledge. In

this context, strategies such as branding, packaging, public relations, audio-visual pedagogy, promotion of learner innovation, public history initiatives, and broader networking are critical to effective dissemination.

The economic downturn of the 1980s profoundly affected all sectors of Nigerian life, including education.[46] This economic hardship contributed to the decline of historical scholarship, leading to the suspension of JHSN publication in 1985 due to declining patronage. The journal remained inactive for two decades, resuming publication in 2005 on a biennial basis and stabilizing only in the 2010s. According to Terhemba Wuam, who served as Assistant Secretary of the Historical Society of Nigeria from 2011 to 2013, the challenges from 1985 to 2005 stemmed from the loss of foundational scholars, diminished publication support from publishers, and broader economic difficulties.[47] Even after resumption, the journal continued to struggle with irregular publication bouts and an unsustainable subscription model.[48]

Conclusion

Since its revival in 2005, the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN) has maintained a strong focus on historical inquiry while increasingly incorporating contemporary history. Recent contributions—such as those by Youpele Banigo on Ijo identity politics, Torese Agena on environmental degradation, B.I. Orji on the Igbo apprenticeship system, and Eyitope Ogunbodede on public education—demonstrate the journal's engagement with current issues shaping African societies.[49] These studies highlight how historical perspectives can illuminate

46 Interview with Toyin Falola, Professor of History, University of Texas at Austin, USA, 24 December 2020; Interview with Mr. James Denapo Iroko; Interview with Mr. Timothy Adeyemi.

47 Interview with Terhemba Wuam, Assistant Secretary of the Historical Society of Nigeria from 2011 to 2013 and History lecturer at Kaduna State University, 25 June 2024.

48 Interview with Terhemba Wuam, 25 June 2024.

49 These articles, Youpele Banigo's "Ijo Ultimate Autochthony: Still an Unanswered Question", Torese Agena's "The Relationship Between Economic Activities and Environmental Degradation in Africa", B.I. Orji's "Apprenticeship System among the Igbo in Lagos, Nigeria: Modalities, Preferences and Development since the Post-War Era", and Eyitope Ogunbodede's "Public Education in the Twenty-First Century: A Reappraisal of Nigerian Education", were published by the JHSN in the years 2005, 2007, 2021, and 2018 respectively.

present-day challenges in identity, economy, environment, and education. Nigerian historian Tunde Decker attributes the rise in contemporary historical research to a growing commitment to addressing societal problems. He advocates for broader thematic inclusion—especially in areas like social and intellectual history—and stresses that the true value of such research lies in its practical impact on policymaking and development.[50] While thematic diversity is important, the journal must also prioritize research that responds directly to Nigeria's most pressing concerns.

Finally, within the scope of this study, it is evident that the process of knowledge decolonization remains ongoing. Decolonizing knowledge about Africa played a pivotal role in nationalist struggles and has continued to be significant well beyond the attainment of independence. While knowledge decolonization is vital for Africa's development, the functionality of knowledge is equally critical. The discipline of history will struggle to achieve the relevance it covets in Nigerian society if it fails to resonate with the lived realities and tangible experiences of its people. The contributions from historians must extend across diverse societal strata— students, laypersons, academia, private organizations, and public institutions alike. The *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN) grappled with the challenge of ensuring the functionality of knowledge during the period under review. However, the rise of contemporary historical scholarship from the mid-1980s and 1990s was reflected in the journal's revival in 2005, partially addressing this issue.[51] Going forward, the journal should further engage with insights from pre-colonial and colonial histories to inform contemporary challenges. Greater emphasis is also needed on proposing viable solutions to pressing national issues such as nation-building, economic development, and the erosion of societal values, while maintaining a balanced engagement with diverse historical themes. In this context, the vision

50 Interview with Tunde Decker, a Nigerian historian and a member of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 10 May 2025.

51 J.H. Pongri, I.O. Ediba, and A.A. Yakubu, "The Relevance of History in the Context of Nigeria's Contemporary Challenges," *Gombe Journal of Historical Studies* 1, n.º 1 (2021): 1.

of knowledge decolonization as advocated by scholars such as Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Toyin Falola can only be fully realized through practical knowledge functionality and the integration of indigenous languages into educational systems. However, the intricate matters of language and details of the nature of the JHSN post-1980s warrant exploration in another discourse.

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