

YUSUFU BALA USMAN INSTITUTE – End of Year Report for 2020

It is time to say goodbye to 2020. We are all glad to see it go. We sincerely hope that 2021 will be better, but we are not sure about that yet. Whatever comes, we will try to do our best to live up to our stated goals and principles.

Despite the advent of COVID 19 which disrupted many of our plans, as it did for just about everyone in the world, at YBUI we did manage to get some work done, although not exactly what we had expected. We had to cancel plans for the exhibition on the Life and Legacy of Dr. Yusufu Bala Usman, which was planned to hold in September, on the 15th memorial anniversary. Instead of the exhibition, we presented to the public three of his major works which we published in new editions during the year, namely ***For the Liberation of Nigeria***, with a Foreword by our Chairman, Dr. Segun Osoba, ***Nigeria Against the IMF***, with a new Foreword by Professor Mike Kwanashie, and ***The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987***, with a new Foreword by Professor Usman A. Tar. We had hoped to be able to sell many of these volumes in universities, but all the universities in the country were closed for most of the year due to both the ASUU strike and the COVID lockdown. We advertised the books on social media, and we have sold a reasonable number through the internet and through a few selected bookshops. Now that the ASUU strike has been called off, we hope to be able to sell more of them in universities once the students resume.

YBUI Dialogue Group. We had begun YBUI Dialogue group, a discussion group for young scholars, which met several times in the office and had some very interesting discussions, mainly centering on the issue of citizenship. However, once we went into lockdown we had to discontinue these meetings.

Office Activities: As many of our public activities had to be suspended, most of what was achieved was carried out largely in the office.

Library: We engaged a team of librarians from the Kashim Ibrahim Library at Ahmadu Bello University to sort out the collection of Bala's books which we had retrieved from CEDDERT. The work took several months, as most of the books had to be re-catalogued, entered in a computer system, and shelved. Some of them had to be rebound. This work has now been completed. We employed an experienced library assistant to maintain the library, and it is now fully functional and ready for use.

Archives: We had retrieved from CEDDERT all of Yusufu Bala Usman's 2400 archive files. I have gone through them in a preliminary reading to see what is there and develop appropriate categories with which to organize them in a proper archive. They are literally a goldmine of information on so many issues, including much of the resource data that Bala used to write his papers, valuable letters and correspondence which demonstrate Bala's enormously wide network of friends and colleagues all over the world, as well as many of his writings, research proposals, comments on students' research, papers from his political activities, official reports on numerous topics, and other material. Although we all knew how productive Bala was as a scholar, I was still astonished that one person could have produced so much thoughtful, profound, and relevant writings in the space of a relatively short lifetime. It was a thrill to read through the archive files, with new discoveries every day. We now need to organize them properly so that scholars can utilise them. We have purchased archive boxes for storage and had shelves made to keep the boxes. This coming year we will try to sort them out and get them properly organised, while scanning those which are likely to be most in demand. Once an archivist is engaged, it will likely take several years before we can complete all the necessary work

on these papers, including preservation and scanning, but it is an essential task, as these files contain a treasure trove of unique material that form probably our Institute's most valuable resource.

Associates: We finalised our list of Associates and Resource Persons, drawn from a wide range of disciplines. We are grateful to all those who accepted our invitation to take up these responsibilities. Unfortunately, we were not able to engage them in research projects due to the COVID-imposed lockdown. We hope to be able to do so in the coming year. Already, two of our Associates from overseas are tentatively planning to come in February for research in Nigeria, if the situation allows. We have sent a set of our publications to most of the Nigeria-based Associates so that those of them who did not know Dr. Usman could become familiar with his ideas. We have not yet sent this collection of books to our overseas Associates due to problems with the Nigerian Postal Service during lockdown. However, we intend to send these as soon as possible.

Website: After some initial hiccups we finally got our Institute website up and running. You can access it at www.YBU-Institute.org. It contains information about who we are, our aims and objectives, our Directors and Associates, as well as our publications which can be purchased on line. We also have opened sites on Facebook and Twitter to engage with those on social media.

Brochure: We developed and printed a brochure with essential information about the Institute, including our aims and objectives, list of Directors and Associates, etc. This has proved a very useful tool for our outreach efforts to enable us to become more widely known. Thanks go to Glenda Pattenden in London for her work on the design.

Submissions to Senate and House of Representatives Committees on Review of the Constitution: In February, when we heard that the Senate of Nigeria had set up a committee to propose a review of the Nigerian Constitution, we felt it was important for us to make an input into these discussions, particularly since our Chairman, Dr. Osoba, together with Dr. Usman, had written a Draft Constitution for Nigeria when they were members of the Constitution Drafting Committee in 1976. We wrote letters to all of the members of the Senate Committee and sent each of them a copy of *The Minority Report and Draft Constitution for the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1976*. When the Committee called for memoranda from the public, we produced a submission for them, which was also sent to the committee later set up by the House of Representatives. We emphasized that this publication, along with our memorandum, contained our basic position on what a revised Constitution for Nigeria should contain. Hearings of both Committees are on-going.

Publication Programme: Our first publication projected for next year is the production of a volume of Yusufu Bala Usman's historical writings. We are working on this together with Professor George Kwanashie, who is Bala's oldest colleague and who worked closely with him for many years. George will be the editor and will write an Introduction. We have selected papers from the archives, most of which have not been previously published. We are in the process of getting all of the chapters into the computer and proof-reading them. We intend to have this publication ready for next year's memorial activities. It is tentatively titled *Context and Content in the Study of African History*.

There are two other publications that we have committed to publishing jointly with the NDA (Nigerian Defence Academy). One of them is *Securing Nigeria's Democracy: Perspectives on Democratic Control of the Military in a Fragile Democracy*, edited by Prof. Usman A Tar, Dr. Mohammed L. Tafida, and Dr. Muhammad S. Lawal. The second one is *Conflict, Gender and Vulnerability: The Impact of Ethno-Religious Conflicts on Women and Children in Kaduna State*, by Sanusi Lawal Muhammed.

We expect that other publications will soon follow.

To sum up: The office is now pretty much set up and functioning. Work on publications and on the archives will take much of our time in 2021. But we also need to begin a programme of research that will define us as an Institute and carry on our promise to build on Yusufu Bala Usman's legacy. We cannot continue to rely only on his own work, but need to build our own edifice on the foundations he laid.

On behalf of the Yusufu Bala Usman Institute, we wish all of our members, associates, friends and supporters a very happy holiday season and hopes for the strength to meet the challenges of the New Year.

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