

YUSUFU BALA USMAN INSTITUTE – END OF YEAR REPORT

FOR 2021

The past year was a difficult one for us in Nigeria and everywhere else in the world. COVID-19 had a significant impact on all activities, although we in Nigeria were lucky to have been affected far less than many other countries. When the country was locked down for a time, we had to suspend our face-to-face activities, such as our bi-monthly discussion group. But activities in the office were able to continue almost throughout.

In all, it has been a very busy year. Some of our activities are described here:

ARCHIVES

As you probably are aware, Yusuf Bala Usman's personal archive files are housed with us in the Institute. These comprise 2,400 files which are a literal goldmine of information about all of the activities that Bala engaged in throughout his working life -- political, academic and personal. At the beginning of the year, we had a read-through of all of the files and did a preliminary classification with the intention of selecting those that should be digitised because of their interest to researchers and the general public. We were fortunate to receive a grant from IFRA (the French Development Agency), based in Ibadan, for the purpose of digitising a selection of material from the archives that would be uploaded onto the cloud and made widely available. We decided to select the files dealing with Bala's political activities, particularly the political parties and movements in which he was active. These include the NEPU (Northern Elements Progressive Union), PRP (Peoples' Redemption Party), PLP (Peoples' Liberation Party), MDJ (Movement for Democracy and Justice) and others, as we felt that these would be of most interest to researchers. In addition, our Archivist, Mallam Abdullahi Mohammed, was sponsored by IFRA to attend a one-week workshop on digitisation held in Ibadan, which enabled him to broaden his skills as well as to meet other archivists from all over Nigeria. The grant from IFRA enabled us to purchase computers, scanners and camera which greatly facilitated the work, as well as pay the salaries of staff involved in the digitisation for a period of 6 months. This work is ongoing, and is expected to be finished in the next few months.

LIBRARY

The cataloguing of our library collection continued this year. The initial collection comprised Yusufu Bala Usman's personal library of over 4000 volumes of books and reports, including many rare and unique items. This was expanded this year by the addition of the personal collection of Norma Perchonock's 2,500 books, and also by a very much appreciated donation by Glenda Pattenden, who has been designing our book covers, of over 200 books, comprising about 170 books published by James Currey, as well as many donated by New Beacon Books and George Padmore Institute sent by Sarah White of the GPI. We were thrilled by this acquisition as it has really updated our library collection. In addition, we have continued to purchase new volumes on various topics through the internet. We have put our library list in the computer and are presently arranging for it to be put in the cloud so that anyone can find out what is in our collection. The work on this is nearly completed and we will put a link to it on our website (www.YBU-Institute.org).

PUBLICATIONS

The books by Yusufu Bala Usman that we published last year (new editions of *For the Liberation of Nigeria*, *Nigeria Against the IMF*, and *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria*) continue to sell at a steady rate. Sales were impacted this year by the COVID restrictions and the closure of schools and universities, as well as the general downturn in the economy. Meanwhile, we mined the archives for new material that had not yet been published or was currently unavailable. A selection of papers on Bala's historical writings has been prepared for publication, and the pre-publication work is at an

advanced stage. The book, entitled *The Historian and Society: Selected Historical Writings of Yusufu Bala Usman*, edited by George Amale Kwanashie and Norma Perchonock, will be available in the next few months.

RESEARCH PROJECT – THE FACE OF POVERTY IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian Ambassador to Germany, Yusufu Tuggar, introduced us to the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, a think tank in Berlin associated with The Left (DIE LINKE) political party in Germany, in the hopes that we could partner with them on some projects, as we share similar values. They asked us to submit a research proposal, which we did. The project was on the Face of Poverty in Nigeria. They awarded us a grant of 10,000 Euros to conduct the research. The aim of the research was to look at poverty in Nigeria through the eyes of those experiencing it. Over 90 million people in Nigeria are living below the poverty line. Statistics abound in reports from the Federal Office of Statistics in Nigeria, to the World Bank and other international institutions, but we wanted to look at poverty from the ground up, to understand how individuals living in this condition manage to survive (or not). In addition, we wanted to understand how the neo-liberal economic policies put in place in the country since the 1980s through the Structural Adjustment Programme have impacted peoples' lives. To achieve this, we conducted intensive interviews with 55 individuals on their life histories in an effort to discern their life trajectories. These involved women and men, in urban and rural areas, and from all parts of Nigeria. In addition, the interviewers were asked to spend a day with the individuals to observe and how they spent their time from morning to night. Several of the Institute's Associates were involved in the project, either as interviewers or as coordinators for different geographical zones. The interviews were recorded, translated (when not conducted in English) and transcribed, and have been analysed, with very interesting results. In addition to the interviews, our economic team analysed primary data on the neo-liberal economic policies and the way they were implemented in Nigeria. The two facets of the research will be melded together to give us a comprehensive picture, from the policy aspect and from those at the receiving end of those policies. We are also suggesting areas for advocacy and action to recommend ways of alleviating the ravages of poverty in the particular conditions of Nigeria, and ultimately eliminating it, whatever the implications may be. The first draft of the Report has been sent to Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the final draft will be ready by the end of February. The Final Report will be posted on our website.

THE KANO TO MARADI RAILWAY PROJECT -- THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

For a large part of the year the Institute has been engaged, under the direction of Allott Nig. Ltd, an environmental consultancy firm, in the preparation of an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment study for the proposed new 387 km. railway line that the Federal Government intends to construct, together with a Portuguese Engineering firm, Mota-Engil. This new railway will open up undeveloped areas of the northern part of Nigeria by connecting these regions with parts of Niger Republic to the north in order to enable cheap and reliable movement of people and goods. The construction of the railway must comply with many international regulations and protocols involving compliance with human rights, gender equality, health, environmental best practices, rights of indigenous peoples, fair labour practices, and many others. It must involve the participation of the inhabitants of the communities living along the route to obtain their informed consent, and to engage them in suggesting how the possible negative impacts of the railway can be mitigated so that their lives and livelihoods will not be disrupted, but rather should benefit from the railway. Given that the route of the line passes through an area populated largely by farmers and cattle herders, who are living in very meagre conditions, engaging in this process is not an easy task. To obtain the necessary information, our team needed to visit 51 local communities to collect baseline data on demographics, livelihoods, community facilities (like water, electricity, health facilities and schools), as well as information on the main uses of the land bordering the rail route. Interviews were conducted in 376 households, among both men and women, to obtain this information, which was then supported by discussions with groups most likely to be most affected, such as pastoralists, farmers' groups, market traders, transporters, womens'

groups, youth organisations, trade unions in various sectors, and other individuals. The Report that will be written will discuss the ways that the railway will likely impact the lives of the inhabitants, both positively and negatively, and propose ways that the negative effects can be mitigated so that the project will benefit the immediate inhabitants of the area and the wider society. We are currently putting the data obtained into computers to aid in the analysis, and the final report will be presented in February. We at the Institute have been very excited to be a part of this important project as it opens us up to new experiences and new skills that hopefully we will be able to put to good use in our future activities.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) – ZARIA AFFORESTATION PROJECT

In the past few years, development projects in the Zaria metropolitan area, particularly the construction of new roads, have led to the felling of many old growth trees and virtually eliminated the green canopy that the town had been famous for in the past. In order to mitigate the situation and replace the canopy and provide a healthier and more conducive environment for the inhabitants, the Yusufu Bala Usman Institute initiated the Zaria Afforestation Project, in partnership with the Ministry of Environment of the Kaduna State Government. The objective of the project is to plant over 5,000 trees, mainly of indigenous species, over the next two years, along the roads where former trees have been eliminated, as well as in schools, hospitals and other public institutions. The tree planting will go hand in hand with public education and sensitisation on the need for a sustainable environment. At present, we are nurturing over 5,000 young trees in preparation for planting during the coming rainy season which will likely begin in May 2022. The Institute has reached out to local governments and other institutions to participate in this initiative that we believe will be of immense benefit to the community where we are located.

CONTRIBUTION TO ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

We feel greatly honoured to have been asked by the *Encyclopédie des Historiographies d'Afrique, d'Amerique et d'Asie* of the Sorbonne in Paris to contribute a biography of Dr. Yusufu Bala Usman for an entry in their volume on "Figures, Debates and Schools", where we will describe his role and contribution to the historiography of Nigeria and Africa. We are in the process of preparing this entry which will be sent to them in February. This exercise will no doubt contribute to a wider recognition of the seminal works of Yusufu Bala Usman by the international scholarly community.

FINALLY

Despite challenges, it has been quite a productive year for us at the Yusufu Bala Usman Institute. We expect to carry this momentum on to 2022 and beyond, and continue to expand the Institute's activities into new areas and continue to build on its solid foundations.

From all of us at the Institute, we wish all of our friends and supporters a safe, healthy and happy New Year.