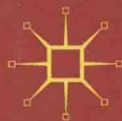# Transnational Africa and Globalization

Edited by
**Mojúbàolú Olúfúnké Okome and
Olufemi Vaughan**

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CONTENTS

TRANSNATIONAL AFRICA AND GLOBALIZATION: INTRODUCTION

MOJÚBÀOLÚ OLÚFÚNKÉ OKOME AND OLUFEMI VAUGHAN

This book grew out of many years of conversations between the coeditors, two Nigerian immigrant scholars, who stayed in the United States to pursue academic careers after their graduate studies in the United States and the United Kingdom. Incubated in the context of globalism, our dialogue crisscrossed layered spheres that intersect national and transnational spaces. These conversations always returrn to how we as African scholars—navigate our way around the culture of Western academia where we have earned our living in the past two decades. As first generation African scholars in Western universities, our ambivalence toward the U.S. academic world hardly can be surprising. What is noteworthy for discussion is how we navigated pathways that crisscrossed temporal national and transnational spaces. With the benefit of hindsight, we now see how our conversations have been interlocking discourses that revolved around the Western academe (especially where we work), conditions in African universities where we expect to work—and *were expected to work*, and everyday lived experiences that underscore the relations between homeland and Diaspora. Spanning two decades, these private conversations, in varying degrees, reflected the experience of many African immigrant scholars. They even complemented the professional priorities of a new generation of our American-Africanist colleagues, who, through their research and teaching, seamlessly traverse African transnational and Diasporic experiences as intellectual spaces.

Conversations that started as junior faculty members in two New York City-area universities in the early 1990s followed a pattern of professional advancement often associated with the faculty at the initial stages of their careers. It led to the convening of symposia, presentation of scholarly papers in conferences, and seminar panels. Along the way, we were fortunate to benefit from the generosity of senior colleagues, and as we rose through the professional ranks, we hope we were able to lend support to some junior colleagues as well. Our recurring themes revolved around intersections of race, gender, class, and citizenship within national, and transnational, currents and crosscurrents. In those earlier years of our transnational sojourn, each time we took on a problematic issue, we would return to our Nigerian roots to make sense of the complicated social and political forces of the African postcolonial world, where the processes of decolonization and globalization shaped our national and transnational identities.

Following the initial euphoria of independence in the 1960s, many African nation-states were embroiled in economic and political crises. These crises, in part, were a product of the serious challenges to integrate "civil" society into the agencies of the nation-state through the formidable task of developing national processes, practices, and structures of accountable governance. This quickly resulted in a concentration of resources in the political class that emerged as the custodians of the postcolonial nation-state, generating intense struggles. At the core of this enduring crisis is the structural imbalance that resulted from a colonial order that incorporated African societies into a restructuring by modern political leaders responding to the unfolding political, situations created by national and global forces. This gave rise to new transnational dynamics that shape the content and structure of this book.

Transnational migration is defined by Glick, Basch, and Blanc as the forging and sustenance of social relationships that connect the immigrants' home countries with their countries of settlement, and the participation of immigrants in cross-border social networks that straddle countries of origin and settlement and allow them to live dual lives.[1] They differ from sojourners to the extent that they do not seek settlement and integration into the "institutions, localities and patterns of daily life in their country of settlement, but simultaneously remain connected, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they emigrated."[2]

Africa always has created powerful images in the popular imagination. Africa today for many is like a mother who has lost many of her offspring to far-flung Diasporas. For many thrown into these Diasporas, Mother Africa either is embraced warmly or regarded with trepidation. In our

era, transnational Africa means that Africa's old and new Diasporas are thrown together in interesting combinations that challenge common understandings of identity.

Transnationalization is shaped by globalization, which should be seen as a historical process that has been with us for as long as individuals have acted upon the desire to expand the known world by moving from one geographical location to another. If globalization describes a relationship of interdependency between states, its presumed opportunities include the engendering of free trade through the establishment or strengthening of a market system. This leads to:

- Technological exchange
- Rapid diffusion of technology
- Rapid transmission of new ideas
- A communication revolution that transforms how we understand and represent time and space, because of an increased capacity to engage in real time communication
- Increased coordination and management of the world's economy so that imbalances and wild vacillations are anticipated and prevented
- Diminution of the state
- Deterritorialization[3]

Critics of globalization contend that its negative effects include the structural advantages it provides the industrial economies of the North to dominate the global economy. The North also packages embedded liberalism as a model for other countries to adopt, while not making the requisite commitment to guarantee success. Embedded liberalism, in this sense, means that liberal values did not guide the West's engagement with the colonized peripheries. And the rights that are assumed to be standard in the West were not extended to the peoples of the colonized peripheries. Nationalism and independence struggles were expressions of the claims laid by the colonized on the rights of citizenship. Toward the end of the twentieth century, the South's retreat in the face of the seeming triumph of untrammeled liberalism seemed to be an expression of confirmation that there exist no viable options to neoliberalism, and the presumption that political and economic liberalism are self-reinforcing. Given the grimness of the terrain, what have been the intellectual responses of Africanist scholars to globalization? What problems were encountered in the past? What are the prospects for the future?

What is needed are critical scholarly responses to globalization by Africanists. By this, we mean responses that systematically analyze processes globalization with a view to revealing the erroneous assumptions

of conventional theories. Given the straitjackets that guide disciplinary boundaries, most African Africanist scholars initially were caught up in the examination of esoteric matters that bear little relevance to the lived reality of the masses of the people. Furthermore, during earlier discussions of globalization, social scientists—notably economists and political scientists—monopolized the subject as natural experts to whom all others must defer. With the deepening global crisis of the last decade, this has changed significantly. Today, there is more interdisciplinary analyses of the process of globalization. The chapters in this book are a testament to this wider interdisciplinary exploration of globalization in African national and transnational contexts.

This inquiry necessarily considers past problems that bring into sharp relief the nature and extent of the crisis of postcolonial African states. For most African countries, 1975 was a watershed year. African states began to experience balance of payment problems that were difficult to resolve. These problems did not respond to conventional remedies recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In brief, the conventional approach was to consider balance of payments' shortfalls as short-term imbalances that would respond to the right mix of policies.

In many ways, the debates of the 1970s and '80s still allowed for voices that identified the problem as not simply a lack of skill and will in the state, but the proliferation of venal elites and a lack of institutions to support the adjustments that were required as policy responses to the balance of payment shortfalls. By the late 1980s and the '90s, all debate was foreclosed because of the overwhelming influence of "The Washington Consensus," forged by the ascendancy of the United States under President Ronald Reagan, its expressed interest in building "a new world order" under President George H. W. Bush, and the collaboration with the United Kingdom under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. This world order rejected Keynesian economics and embraced neoclassical economic principles. These major perspectives of the Washington Consensus were articulated by the IMF and the World Bank.

In this new order, progress is packaged in the form of a combination of Structural Adjustment Programs and democratization projects. Both processes are presented as positively linked one with the other. Pressured by the huge balance of payment deficits and collapsing economies, African political elites have abdicated the responsibilities of economic planning to the prescriptions of the international financial agencies.

Post–world economic meltdown reforms notwithstanding, multilateral organizations are in charge of the process of determining African economic policies. Their influence is obvious in situations where advice to African countries on managing their political economy has depended

on what the United States and its allies consider relevant lessons of history, the choice of appropriate policy options and the decisions on implementation timetables. As a consequence, many liberal analysts have embraced the prescription of the Washington Consensus. It is evident that the hallmark of the New World Order (until the Great recession) was to shun analysts with contrary perspectives on Africa's economic crisis. The Washington Consensus is typified by annual global summits such as the annual Davos Conference.

The ascendancy of this conference on globalization is exemplified by the gathering of the gurus of this bright new age of globalization. Bill Gates, George Soros, and other mega-billionaires are in good company with pop icons, who have solid philanthropic credentials, who take center stage in these summits. Current and past leaders of the global South hover around to make pleas for help. The wealthy and famous make lofty claims about the inevitability of globalization, its promise, its incontrovertible logic—statements that are beamed around the world instantaneously and repeated ad infinitum until the next club meeting. African technocrats and heads of state succumb, to the seemingly incontrovertible logic of economic globalization. The only panacea for Africa's economic recovery lies in the orthodoxy of neoliberal reforms, as expressed through SAP, which have been changed to Poverty Reduction Strategy Programs.

These dynamics have been reinforced and shaped by the hegemonic ideology and praise of globalization, especially in mainstream Western news media. Those who read *The Economist* or peruse *Africa Confidential* regularly see enlightened journalists' assessments of how Africa refuses, or is unable, to measure up, purely because of a lack of skill and will, as well as the ineptitude of its leadership. Similarly, the British Broadcasting Corporation, Cable News Network, Voice of America, and others with global reach beam near-identical assessments across the world. The same ideas, like the proverbial "bad penny," turn up in the news media and scholarly analyses in African countries.

Politically, leaders of authoritarian African regimes and movements are now the proponents of democratic transitions. Thus, former military rulers Jerry Rawlings of Ghana and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria were joined by leaders of successful guerilla movements like Uganda's Yoweri Museveni as the new African democrats. Initially, it was assumed by liberal scholars that democracy was moving in a relentless series of waves (Huntington) throughout the world, but this optimism now is slightly modified by acknowledging what most Africans know—that there are illiberal democracies[4] masking the real thing.

It is inevitable that such varied dimensions will complicate analyses of globalization and transnationalism. Consequently, it is useful to take

a diachronic approach in these analyses because this enduring economic crisis have deep roots in a prevailing colonial order that came to a head in the earlier years of independence. In the specific case of the editors' native Nigeria, all this came a little bit later in the mid-1980s when the failures of the developmental state became apparent. As products of elite expectations, we very much were aware of the linear conversations on development and governance, and the frantic desire to catch up with the development of the West. This theme is discussed in Mora McLean's chapter, which explores the problematic relations between Africa and its old Diaspora, as expressed by the desire of the African Union to harness the economic power of the Diaspora for African development, albeit with no thought of reciprocity or consideration of how Africa's Diasporas came to be.

As African scholars and Western Africanists preoccupied with contemporary African problems, we steadily are drawn into some of the issues that have engaged the attention of African-American scholars in the post-civil rights era, especially those dealing with social alienation in academia and reactions to racism in the wider society. It is instructive to note here that most African scholars arrived in American universities in the late 1980s and early '90s during the cultural wars of American multiculturalism. With a need for universities to correct the lack of black scholars in the American academia at that time, African scholars became beneficiaries of the opportunities that unfolded. In many quarters, African scholars might have been preferred, in part, because their priorities were focused on homeland concerns and removed from the exigencies of U.S. racial politics. Debutant African scholars had to ally with U.S.-Africanist scholars, most of them white, even as they strived to sustain the federally funded African Studies academic programs, notably at Northwestern, Wisconsin-Madison, Indiana-Bloomington, Howard, and others. Those centers that were incubated in the politics of the Cold War and African decolonization, had lost their importance to the U.S. foreign policy and national security establishment in the post–Cold War era, following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.

The questions that traverse the complicated terrain of decolonization and globalism have important transnational African dimensions, as discussed eloquently in chapters by Mora McLean, Rod Bush, and Melanie Bush. These chapters construct durable historical, comparative, global, and Diasporic bridges that are now indispensable in intellectually serious and progressive dialog among African-American, African, African Diasporic, and Africanist scholars. More specifically, they speak to the pressing questions of how do we teach and research African Studies. Or African-American Studies? How about African Diaspora studies in the

global age? While this is not directly our mission here, these questions indirectly shape the bulk of the work in this volume.

In keeping with one of our major objectives, we start with personal narratives of our own experience as graduate students and professional academics in Western universities in the global era. We explore vexing questions cataloged above, including globalism, African state disintegration, national and transnational flows, and the relationships between homeland and Diaspora.

Mojúbàolú Olúfúnké Okome came to the United States as a graduate student in the early 1980s and experienced the beginning of the SAP in Nigeria from afar. The phenomenon had such a profound impact on her that as a Ph.D. student at Columbia University, she focused her doctoral dissertation on the complex interaction between the economic liberalization intended by the architects of SAP and the political liberalization that accompanied it. Okome did not find Columbia's political science department welcoming, nurturing, or particularly interested in Africa. She struggled to stay focused on her studies and balance schoolwork with life's challenging responsibilities as a young mother. But her upbringing in a Yorùbá family and the affirmation she received while growing up in southwestern Nigeria contributed tremendously to her resilience. Given the dearth of African expertise and interest in Columbia's political science department, she also connected with African and Africanist scholars in other disciplines, particularly history, and outside Columbia for the same reasons. This led her to embrace an interdisciplinary approach to her work.

As a young scholar, first at Fordham University and then at Brooklyn College, City University of New York, Okome maintained her interest in Africa, but resisted the allure of becoming the African expert without borders and boundaries. She also developed an interest in Gender Studies, globalization, and African migration because of her observations of those phenomena and their effects on Africa and Africans, including herself, over the course of her stay in the United States.

As a graduate student at Oxford during the earlier years of SAP, Olufemi Vaughan recalls a different experience from Okome, revealing the multiple dimensions of African experiences during a period of significant change. This moment was a period of important Africanist teaching and research at the collegiate university, with well over a dozen distinguished Africanists who took as a given the centrality of African experiences in their work. This excitement made Oxford a good destination for graduate students throughout the United Kingdom and the commonwealth in African Studies. While Africa generally was marginalized in mainstream Oxford curriculum, Africanist research and teaching managed to sustain

a vibrant community of excellent scholars and students. In hindsight, for Vaughan, this encouraged a deep engagement with interdisciplinary Africanist research in the humanistic social sciences. It did not take too long for Vaughan, a political scientist and historian, to realize that you could not seriously study African nation-states without a distinctive interdisciplinary perspective.

As one of only two Africanists at Stony Brook University, a major State University of New York research center, Vaughan was appointed to a tenure—track position in 1990, where he soon realized the lure of this vibrant world of Africanist research and teaching. In his new environment, it was tempting to become the—"go-to guy" on all things Africa. This unsolicited attention was affirming because it revealed the need for Africanist teaching and research at Stony Brook during an era of American multiculturalism and globalism. More importantly, a joint appointment in Africana Studies and history encouraged a perspective that integrated African and African Diaspora studies as a worthwhile focus of teaching and research. Yet this narrow space of interdisciplinary study, in retrospect, provided an environment that allowed African studies to be approached in new and interesting ways, insisting on the interconnections between African and African Diaspora studies. With broad regional and global encounters at its core, this Africana Studies approach liberated Vaughan from the more tedious methodological requirements of some social science disciplines, and allowed him to explore more fluid analytical approaches and theoretical perspectives.

In offering our personal narratives, we have tried to be careful not to project our experiences as typical of what it means to be an African immigrant scholar in the United States. Clearly, the experiences of African scholars vary significantly along national, social, and gender lines, and the experiences of those African scholars who were students in the United States will differ from those who already were established scholars in African universities. The vast majority of African immigrant scholars that came to this country in the late 1980s and early 1990s were established male scholars at various African universities who at least, initially, seemed to have transitioned to their new positions in American universities relatively smoothly. Conversely, many African female academics working in American universities experienced more difficult transitions because of their smaller numbers and the typical problems of race and gender at most universities.

In this volume, we consider transnationalism and globalization on different terms. As African scholars and western Africanists, we look at the relationships between homeland and Diaspora in complicated ways. Lacey Andrews Gale's chapter analyzes how Darfurian refugees have

struggled to remake their life following the trauma of displacement, and Moha Ennaji's chapter lays out the formidable challenges that await African undocumented migrants in their quest for a better life in western Europe. In her chapter, "Living the Good Life? Remittance-Sending Among Darfurian Refugees in Maine," Gale contends that Darfurian immigrants and refugees in Portland, Maine, are building resilient and adaptive communities and shaping new moral orders for interlocking national and transnational social networks, through remittances and other support systems. Darfurian women juggle numerous family responsibilities on local and transnational levels, while actively navigating the demands of employment, education, activism, and advocacy for the political struggles of their homeland. Darfurian men, on the other hand, negotiate many formal and informal employment issues to generate income for their families. Ennaji's chapter on the migration of young undocumented African immigrants exposes the profound dangers on the pathways to Europe. On arrival at their destination, African undocumented immigrants confront punitive conditions, with opportunities for upward mobility few and far between.

The end of the Cold War brought other harsh realities for Africa. Debts caused by the Arab-Israeli wars and Middle East oil crises of the 1970s gave more power to the IMF and the World Bank to dictate austerity measures imposed on African states. These came in the form of SAPs. These austerity measures contributed to the rending of the social fabric. One of the recommendations of the World Bank was that African states concentrate on primary education and cut subsidies to higher education[5]. Budget rationalization also meant that the IMF encouraged more belt-tightening. Even primary education was subject to cost cutting, which imposed hardships on the poorest of the poor and restricted their access to educational opportunities. The African educational system suffered a precipitous decline. This situation coincided with a relaxation of immigration laws as applied to intellectuals and skilled labor, including Africans in many western countries. Consequently, there has been an intense flow of African academics and students to the West. Once in the West, African university teachers had to make radical mental, cultural, and pedagogical adjustments in their new teaching environment. For Numulundah Florence, a Kenyan scholar, a diverse New York City university setting can be difficult when teachers insist on uncompromising adherence to teaching pedagogies. African immigrant teachers face even more challenges. Applying critical feminist and multicultural theories, she calls for the democratization of classroom environments but emphasizes that there are complexities in social interactions that are especially problematic when there are few shared values. If teaching is to be effective

and learning is to occur in our globalized world, the challenges of conflicting values and sensibilities must be acknowledged and confronted in a manner that changes both teacher and student and contributes to new understandings of the consequences of globalization, transnationalization, migration, Diaspora, gender, and generation.

African Diasporic and transnational flows and waves, whether in terms of people, cultures, religions, ideas, or materials, go back and forth in many directions in and outside the African continent. For example, the most important receiver of transnational flows of African populations is not Europe or North America, but Southern Africa, particularly South Africa. Consequently, it would be misleading to present Africa's Diasporic and transnational connections solely in terms of the West and Africa. These complicated processes are not unilinear that simply flow north and south. For example, to understand slavery in the United States, one must appreciate the history of the Atlantic world. Moreover, beyond our current preoccupation with disruptions that resulted from the crises of the African postcolony and twentieth-century notions of black internationalism, African societies have had much to say about what constitutes African-American and African Diaspora experiences, including vibrant Afro-Brazilian communities and Saro communities, as well as the founding of the West African states of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Immigration and the demographics of the African Diaspora demonstrate that African brainpower is an essential part of the successful administration of many Western establishments. Many of these brains also are paradoxically invalidated as irrelevant in their own home countries. Many cannot find jobs that pay a living wage in their own countries of origin. Many leave for further education only to have the tides of globalization turn against their countries. With options foreclosed, some governments quibbled, officials muttered under their breaths, and some resisted in multiple ways. Eventually, all succumbed to international pressures to adjust to demands from the world economy. With varying levels of dedication and abilities, they devalued, slashed budgets, privatized, cut subsidies, and went to great lengths to attract foreign investment. Doing these demonstrable acts of visible commitment to the logic of the market was predicted to be tough, but eventually, they were told, there was light at the end of the tunnel—economic recovery. To grease the wheels, IMF and World Bank loans were used as carrots, and the threatened withdrawal of such loans—and worse still—restrictions of further access to any kind of future credit as sticks. Many African immigrants who had used immigration as a temporary survival measure for a limited time began to see their sojourn as a permanent condition. For others, their protests against neoliberal policies led to repression by the regime

in power. For still others, protests and complaints against government policies are luxuries. Most Africans face the perpetual prospect of combining multiple livelihood strategies to eke out a living that is still grossly inadequate to sustain their families. If they are scholars, they actively seek any opportunity to secure consultancies with Western research agencies, international organizations, and universities. When they finally secure opportunities as consultants in their own countries, they often are paid considerably less than their Western counterparts and denied the most basic professional obligations. Soon, many embark on the prolonged process of seeking better economic opportunities, especially in Western countries.

Consequently, Vaughan in "Africa, Transnationalism, & Globalization: An Overview" contends that a major development of the impact of globalization in Africa lies in new national and transnational social networks within African regions and between Africa and other regions—especially the Western world. In the context of globalization, this dynamic process involves arenas of national and transnational population flows that have engendered ruptures and reconstitution of real and imagined African communities. Vaughan contends that, despite these challenges, African immigrants consistently have demonstrated profound creativity and imagination. The real story of transnational Africa and globalization is about how human ingenuity, adaptability, and resilience are shaping social movements and civic groups and wrestling with the transformative impact of globalization in national and transnational contexts. The formidable challenges confronting transnational Africa, regardless of the resourcefulness of African peoples, Vaughan concludes, are nevertheless rooted in the failed assumptions of the postcolony that was derived from the colonial state.

With similar discussions of predictable transitions and continuities between colonial and postcolonial systems, Anthonia Kalu in "Gendered Migrations: African Identities and Globalization," examines the nature and scope of colonial and postindependence African practices that has led to self-negation among African men and women, with grim implications for the development of African societies in this age of globalization. Following the euphoria of imposed citizenship and constitutional democracy, after the attainment of political independence, African elites embraced superficial nationalism that negated local aspirations and advanced narrow individual and sectarian interests. Devoid of real rights and obligations of citizenship for local people, the priorities of the custodians of the nation-state lacked moral authority, with disastrous consequences for local aspirations, especially those of women, irrespective of social standing. With particular emphasis on the emergent African

Western-educated elite, Kalu concludes, straightforward transitions from the colonial to neocolonial order have had adverse consequences not only in African states, but also in their transnational formulations, since the neoliberal crisis of the 1980s. These entrenched gender hierarchies and distortions continue to undermine the potential of women in national and transnational spaces.

Because of the failure of Africa's regimes, attention has often focused on the internal causes of economic and political crises. By contrast, several chapters in this volume are far-reaching in how they relate national and global forces and connect the past and present. Mora McLean, Melanie Bush, and Rod Bush's chapters are cases in point. They remind us of the pitfalls of a rigid binary between Africa's "old" and "new" Diasporas. The "new" African Diaspora is more closely connected to the old ones than most Africanists realize, especially since "new" Diasporas have been recurring since the catastrophe of Atlantic slavery beginning in the seventeenth century.

Rod Bush, in the chapter, "Black Internationalism and Transnational Africa," contends that African transnationalization as a global social force developed out of the African-American experience from the period of enslavement and during the freedom struggles, to produce what he terms "the peculiar internationalism of African-American social thought and praxis." He situates African-American thought within the Pan-African social stratum in the world system and argues that the twentieth and twenty-first centuries produced an increasingly stronger "dark world," which, through political, intellectual, religious, aesthetic, and literary resistance and struggle, engineered social transformations. At the same time, he argues that Western hegemony has declined. Whether it is among Christianized Africans in America during its revolution against England, or during the heydays of the Pan-African movement, or even during the civil rights movement, Rod Bush argues that "the rising of the dark world" denotes conscious struggle and a "culture of resistance" that inspired Africans in America to push for freedom, equality, and justice.

Similarly, Melanie Bush in her "Africa: Un-Pledging Allegiance: The US Nation Must Make the African Connection," argues that the origins of the United States as a nation and its identity reveals deep and problematic relationships with Africa and Africans. The colonial and imperial power asserted by Europe and rooted in notions of European supremacy is reflected in the social structure and institutions of the United States in relation to the rest of the world, particularly Africa. The notion of race and racial allegiance developed and built upon the distinction between Europeans and Africans to allow for not just an economic arrangement but also for a hierarchical organization of people. The rationale for