CHAPTER ONE

An Emerging Biography

Biography of a Scholar

Toyin Falola was born on January 1, 1953, in the city of Ibadan, Nigeria, to James Adesina Falola and Nihinlola Grace Falola. His father was a tailor, and mother a trader. He is married to Olabisi Falola, formerly a computer programmer and now a family practitioner, and they have three children: Dolapo, Bisola, and Toyin.¹

Falola earned his Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in 1976 and his Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1981, both in history, from the University of Ife, Ile-Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in Nigeria. It was at this same university that he started his career as a teacher and a scholar.²

From Nigeria to Canada and then to the United States, Falola has made momentous leaps in the discipline of history and garnered significant laurels.³ He is currently the Jacob and Frances Sanger Mossiker Chair in the Humanities and Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Texas at Austin. His research interests are in African history since the nineteenth century, and his geographic areas of study include Africa, Latin America, and the United States. His thematic fields are Atlantic history, diaspora and migration, empire and globalization, intellectual history, international relations, religion, and culture.

Before joining the faculty at the University of Texas at Austin in 1991, Falola taught history at the University of Ife in the 1980s. During that time, he also held short-term teaching appointments at the University of Cambridge in England, York University in Canada, Smith College in Massachusetts, the Australian National University, and the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs. In addition, he has given numerous lectures on all continents.⁴

The HighBeam Research group provides the following chronology of Falola’s professional career:

- High school teacher in Ibadan, Nigeria, 1973

A. K. Bangura, Toyin Falola and African Epistemologies
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Image 1.1  Toyin and Bisi Falola, Obafemi Awolowo University, 1975. Photograph from Toyin Falola’s collection.

Image 1.2  Toyin and Bisi Falola, Austin, Texas, 2012. Photograph from Toyin Falola’s collection.