

# Impact of Tekena. N. Tamuno on Nigerian Historiography

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**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to explain the development of Nigerian historiography and the place of Tekena Tamuno in it. For centuries, it was believed that Africa had no history. The only sources of African history were from outside the continent. The situation changed after the Second World War and particularly after African countries gained independence and became involved in the mainstream of things. As a second generation historian, he went beyond the popular emphasis on colonial administration at that time to deal with more important issues in the social, administrative and institutional history of Nigeria. This article will survey the growth and development of Nigerian historiography and Tamuno's role in it.

**Keywords:** Tamuno, historiography, Nigeria.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to explain Nigerian historiography, how it has developed and T. N. Tamuno's place in it. Historiography is the aspect of history and of semiotics that is the study of how knowledge of the past, recent or distant is obtainable and transmitted (www.google.com). Historiography can also be defined as how historians "do" history. The following list of selected historians can give us some ideas of how the great historians "did" history, and how T. N. Tamuno fits into all of this.

**Toynbee:** Toynbee's theory is that of challenge and response. His theory is that all civilizations are faced with a crisis which is either one of ideas or one of technology. How they respond determines whether they will survive or not. An example is the Fall of Rome. Many blame Christianity for sapping the pagan strength of Rome and causing her downfall. Toynbee, however, points out that the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire) used Christianity to revitalize and reform the Roman Empire for another thousand years.

**Hegel:** Dialectics Hegel's Theory of History states that for every old idea, there is a new one which conflicts with it. Out of that struggle, a new idea is created (Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis). He felt that this was how God led us to perfection and revealed a new truth. History, he said, is just the product of conflict (www.google.com).

**Darwin:** Though not a historian, Darwin took Hegel's ideas and applied them to science. His biological application led to the origin of species. Herbert Spencer and others then used his biological ideas to support their ideas that a struggle among races of people and differing nations led to the strongest and most able nations ruling the world. Victory in combat meant the superiority of a nation or people.

**Marx:** Material Dialectics Marx used Hegel's ideas and applied them to classes of people throughout history. Any ruling class controlled the "means of production" which gave them wealth and power to rule. Whenever a new method of production occurred, there was a conflict between the older ruling class and newer class using the newer and superior means of production. An example is how the businessman and his money destroyed the power of the old Aristocracy based on land and hereditary ownership (www.google.com).

As a modern intellectual activity, history dates back to the beginning of human society. It reached a stage of sophistication during the era of classical antiquity but lapsed during the Roman period. By the nineteenth century, history had emerged as a scholarly discipline through the efforts of Leopold Von Ranke and other German scholars who brought history into its modern form. It is important to stress that in the process of its evolution, the tendency has been for western scholars to pretend that African history does not exist, even though it is well known that the writing of African history is as old as history itself. For instance, as far back as the sixteenth century there existed the writings of such men as Al-Masiudi (C 950), al-Bakri (1029-94), Ibn Batuta (1304-69), and others. It was, however, Ibn Khaldun (1332 – 1406) who could be said to have engaged in looking at history in its modern and current sense.

Aside from the works of Ibn Khaldun and other mentioned writers, there were also *Tarikhs* and chronicles such as *Tarikh al-Sudan* (The Chronicle of the land of the Blacks) and *Tarikh al Fattash* (The Researching Scholars Chronicle), as well as the *Kano* and *Kilwa Chronicles*. Different European authors continued to produce other publications, writings and comments pertaining to tropical Africa. To be sure, not all of these were positive.

The emergence of nationalist movements in the various African colonies during the second quarter of the twentieth century, however, altered the intellectual climate within which historical scholarship was pursued. As the nationalists began to triumph, African history rejected the perspective and restraint imposed on the colonial situation and created a "new history" and a rich one at that. The task was to establish that the African past had glorious achievements to its credit, one by no means inferior to those of Europe. Therefore, if Europeans had organized polities, monarchs and cities, nationalist historiography felt challenged to prove that Africans too had produced the same. Against this backdrop,

the works of pioneer Nigerian historians demonstrated notions such as the one identified above.

This takes us to the Ibadan School of history. The Ibadan school was the first and for many years the dominant school in the study of the history of Nigeria. It originated at the University of Ibadan in the 1950s and remained dominant until the 1970s. The scholars of the University of Ibadan being the first University set up the History Departments at most Nigerian Universities, spreading the Ibadan historiography (wikipedia.org.). Its scholars also wrote the textbooks that were used at all levels of the Nigerian education system for many years. The school's output is often considered to be most clearly embodied in the Ibadan History Series (wikipedia.org.)

For a long time, all kinds of myths and prejudices concealed the true history of Africa from the world at large. African societies were regarded as societies that could have no history. Another issue was that African oral tradition was rejected as worthless. Rather the only sources used were from outside the continent. Since the European Middle Ages were usually used as a yardstick, modes of production, social relations and political institutions were seen from the European point of view (Boahen, 1985).

The situation changed greatly after the Second World War and particularly after African countries gained independence and became involved in the international community. An increasing number of historians have sought to tackle the study of Africa with a more rigorous, objective and open-minded outlook by using actual African sources with caution. This was the objective of the Ibadan School with the aim of taking the historical initiative to re-establish the historical authenticity of their societies on solid foundations. Similarly, Uya (2004) put it succinctly thus: the years of independence marked significant changes in both methodological approaches and perspectives which have continued into the present period. In the last two periods, American writers, some European scholars, but most importantly, young African scholars, have played a part. If nothing else, it can be safely said that it will no longer be possible for anybody, except the hopelessly uninformed, to say that "Africa has no history" (p. 17).

Against this backdrop, the eight-volume general history of Africa, which UNESCO published, had the huge task of gathering documentation and planning the work. Campaigns were made to collect oral traditions, the creation of regional documentation centres for oral traditions, the collection of unpublished manuscripts, and the compilation of archival inventories. In addition, meetings were held to enable experts from Africa and other continents to discuss questions of methodology and set down guidelines for the take-off of the project (Boahen, 1985). These marked the first stage.

The second stage involved shaping history and linking its different parts by studying and defining the problems involved in drafting and publishing history. The third stage involved

actual drafting and publication. The method used is inter-disciplinary and is based on a multi-faceted approach and a wide variety of sources such as archaeology which holds many of the keys to the history of African cultures and civilizations. Thanks to archaeology, we now know that Africa is the cradle of civilization. Another very important source is oral tradition which has become useful in the writing of African history.

The leading scholars of the Ibadan school include Professor Kenneth Dike, Saburi Biobaku, Kenneth Dike, J. F. Ade Ajayi, Adiele Afigbo, E. A. Ayandele, Obaro Ikime and Tekena Tamuno. A number of foreign scholars who came to teach in Nigeria are often associated with the school. These include Michael Crowder, Abdullahi Amith, J. B. Webster, R. J. Gavin, Robert Smith, and John D. Omer-Cooper. Much use was made of oral history and throughout the school took a strong inter-disciplinary approach to gather information (Lovejoy, 1986). This was especially true after the founding of the Institute for African Studies that brought together experts from many disciplines. Uya (2008) asserted that the main concern of the first generation historians: was to rescue African history from the monumental distortions and falsehood of Euro-American scholars who not only denied our historical heritage but also excluded us, by and large, from having played a significant role in their European drama of exploration of the continent. The pioneering works of this generation set new challenging directions for African studies in content and methodology (p. 17).

## II. TEKENA TAMUNO AS A SCHOLAR

It is necessary at this juncture to make a few points relevant to T. N. Tamuno's place in the development of historical studies and historiography. In fact, T. N. Tamuno has produced well over thirty substantial works including books, monographs, articles in books and public lectures. Some of his published works include; *Nigeria and Elective Representation* (1966); *The Police in Modern Nigeria* (1970); *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase* (1972); *History and History-Makers in Modern Nigeria* (1973); *The University of Ibadan, 1948-1973: A History of the First Twenty-Five Years* (1973); *Herbert Macaulay: Nigerian Patriot*; *Eminent Nigerians of the Rivers State* (1980); *Ibadan Voices: Ibadan University in Transition* (1981); *Songs of an Egg-head* (1982); *(Poems) National Conference on Nigeria Since Independence History Project, Twelve Volumes*; *The Responsibility for Crime Control in Nigeria Since Independence: The First Twenty-Five Years, Vol. iii* (1985); *Nigeria: Its People and its Problems* (1989); *Nigerian Universities: Their Students and Their Society* (1988); being the National Silver Jubilee lecture, 1985, *Land and People of Nigeria: Rivers State* (1989).

Very few scholars could match his remarkable contributions to scholarship. These include close to thirty books, numerous journal articles, book chapters and monographs and several reviews. Professor Tamuno is known for the outstanding

quality of his works. He has done original research work on diverse aspects of Nigerian history. Most of these works have become outstanding contributions to nation building.

His other works include *Peace and Violence in Nigeria* (1991); *Policing Nigeria: Past, Present and Future* (1993); *Recte Sapare Fons: Cui Bono? (For knowledge and sound judgment: In whose interest?)* (1998); *Festival of songs and Drums (Poems)* (1999); *The Niger Delta Question* (2000); *Fighting for the Soul of Nigeria: Its Cultural, Theological, Ethical and Historical Dimensions* (2003); *Lamentations of Yeske: Poems in Honour of HRH, Prof. Egbe Ifie* (2005); *Wisdom of the Elders: Joy of Nigerian Proverbs* (2007); *Nigerian Leaders and Their Followers since Independence: Lessons not Learnt* (2008); *Forthcoming publications include: Social Defence in Nigeria; Peace Studies in Nigeria with Emphasis on the Niger Delta.*

With such an impressive curriculum vitae one can safely say that T. N. Tamuno is a scholar who through the analysis of sources, produces interpretations of the past, which are contributions to the accumulating body of knowledge about the past (Marwick, 1986). Professor Tamuno is a quiet and unassuming scholar known by the consistently high standard of his works, a lecturer to more than three generations of Nigerian historians, social scientists and high-level policymakers.

As a second-generation historian, T. N. Tamuno went beyond the then-popular emphasis on colonial administration to deal with other important issues in the social, administrative and institutional history of Nigeria. Among the themes he focused on are Peace studies, The Police, Institutions, the Niger Delta and Security matters. In fact, he is seen as a bridge; he goes through all the generations (the three generations of historians) (Uya, 2008). Professor Dike, J. C. Anene, J. F. Ade Ajayi and others were the first generation historians who produced their first major works in the 1950s at the time Nigeria was struggling to gain her political independence. And the third generation historians are contemporary historians.

Professor Tamuno is a retired University Teacher who is never too tired to continue researches and publications in his area of academic specialization which is the interface or borderline between the Humanities and the Social Sciences. As a result, his original concept of History is now bountifully enriched with relevant insights from the social sciences. T. N. Tamuno is a documentary historian who believes in the multi-disciplinary approach to historical interpretation (Tamuno, 2008). It is believed that each discipline as traditionally conceived must at all times be ready to make useful borrowings from other disciplines. Of no subject is this more true than history (Marwick, 1986). The facts do not speak for themselves but are subject to interpretation. In his career as a professional Historian, Professor Tamuno has recognized three constant factors which determine the courses of History, from causes to consequences across any known borders.

These are the factors of Time, Circumstance and Leadership. He, however, keeps an open mind for a fourth factor which is Chance or Opportunity or Accident. These factors, he says, give each known event its distinctive character. Like fingerprints, these cannot be the same in any known country or epoch (Tamuno, 2008). K. R. Popper had earlier made this same point when he said that “history may sometimes repeat itself in certain respects but it is clear that all these instances of repetition involve circumstances which are vastly dissimilar and which may exert an important influence upon further development” (Popper, 1957, p. 110).

It is true that historians tend to emphasize the bridge between the past and present and engage themselves in the perennial question, “How did we reach this point in our development?” Historians also concern themselves with the link between the present and the future without attempting to be prophets (Tamuno, 1973). However, Professor Tamuno said that any suggestion of historical inevitability leaves him cold. He is prepared to see the element of chance or accident in a chain of complicated events. But he avoids adopting a mono-causal interpretation of events when a multi-causal approach seems more convincing. Historical facts are seen as prior to and independent of interpretation. The value of an interpretation is judged by how well it accounts for the facts; but when contradicted, it must be abandoned.

Tamuno is also an ardent believer in oral tradition and re-interpretation. For instance, in the course of writing the history of “The Chapel of Resurrection”, he warned that “if either evidence or its interpretation has left much to be desired, the reader need not commit self-immolation” (Tamuno, 2000, p. 12). This he said, is because ‘there is some remedy including research and re-interpretation on the basis of new, relevant and significant information in the future either written, oral or both. It is only in this sense that he dares to posit immortality of Truth, not necessarily of current and recurrent findings and conclusions.

The variety of historical evidence is nearly infinite. Everything that a man says or writes, everything that he makes or touches can and ought to teach us about him (Bloc, 1953). When all is said and done, a single word “understanding” is the beacon light of our studies. History proceeds by the interpretation of evidence and history is for “human self – knowledge”. The value of history then is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is. Tamuno finds the analysis and interpretation aspects of history more interesting. In the past ten years, he seems to be moving towards a theory of analysis and interpretation which he considers to be the key determinants of history and factors of change, namely, time, circumstance, leadership/followership and luck/chance. He says he is becoming very philosophical in his approach to history. Today, he doubts almost everything which he may otherwise regard as the primary document in the past. Many things according to him seem to reflect the dimension of change in historical fact-finding. He does not believe that history repeats

itself exactly. He belongs to the school of Herodotus, the Ancient Greek Philosopher, who says one cannot fall into the same river twice.

Tamuno maintains that History is alive and contemporary History illuminates the past and provides a stepping stone into the future. Hence, it is an essential bridge between the past and the future; without it, there will be unnecessary and unrealistic breaks between all three parts of an organic system of growth and development as these affect human beings and societies (past, present and future). As a result, he says he has been affected by the bug of contemporary history because he wants to study history as it is developing. He also believes that history confined to the recent past would quickly fail to meet the demands which society rightly places upon it.

History is still relevant to all societies because, as he argues, “everything in this world must rest on a foundation. The present and the future must rest on the foundation of the past”. Professor Tamuno stated during a lecture delivered at the National War College, Abuja, titled, “Was the Nigerian civil War inevitable?” that Historians particularly as concerned citizens owe their countries a duty to explain their past in such a way that is relevant to their present and future. That bridge between past, present and future is theirs to build and maintain, lest people easily forget what they should do or not do in their attempts to seek a better and brighter future for themselves and their successors (Tamuno, 2002). And he has performed this duty creditably.

### III. TAMUNO’S APPROACH TO NIGERIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY THROUGH HIS KEY PUBLICATIONS

Professor Tamuno’s role in Nigerian historiography is that of a philosopher historian and of a social historian who conflates tradition and modernity (Layiwola, 2009). The book *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase 1898-1914* (London: Longman, 1972), was written by Professor Tamuno and developed from his Ph. D thesis. According to him, two major related developments clearly emerged in southern Nigerian history between 1898 and 1914. One of these was the evolution of the Nigerian state which proceeded through various stages with serious diplomatic, constitutional, political, economic and social consequences. The other involved the establishment, expansion and consolidation of administrative machinery designed to secure the firm control of the areas brought under British central authority. Tamuno posited in this book that the British Government was mainly responsible for the decline of the institution of kingship in parts of Eastern Nigeria. The age-old awe and majesty of the Monarch of Onitsha, the Asaba hinterland, the Benin kingdom, the Niger Delta and Ibibio-Efik city-states were all gone forever. They were replaced by the British crown as Moor rightly pointed out (Tamuno, 1977). The Protectorate established, expanded and consolidated between 1900 and 1913 in most parts of southern Nigerian was backed by force. Since the military and police force arrangements changed

after the amalgamation, the police forces were also amalgamated. By the end of 1906, the new Southern Nigerian Police Force commanded by an Inspector-General had 1,052 men out of an authorized establishment of 1,084. There were many punitive expeditions and patrols before and after the amalgamation in the protectorate of southern Nigeria. Apart from the well-known expedition against the Aro from 1901 to 1902, twelve other “field operations”, punitive expeditions and patrols took place between July 7, 1902, and June 1903 (Tamuno, 1977). Moor’s successor, Egerton, also recommended eight “field operations” which destroyed or suppressed “Jujus” and secret societies that competed with the official law courts.

However, Tamuno insisted that in some parts of Northern Nigeria, there were cases of stiff and prolonged resistance. For instance, the Idoma and Tiv of the Benue valley and others in the Bauchi Plateau and the plains and mountains of southern Adamawa witnessed punitive expeditions and patrols of the classical type until the 1930s. The Tiv provided the best example of prolonged resistance and bloody reprisals in these areas. The communities and states of the protectorate of Southern Nigeria had smaller boundaries and less powerful rulers than the emirates. The existence of large emirates under autocratic rulers ensured that the capitulation of the chief ended the insurrection of his people (Tamuno, 1977). Opposition to British rule in the protectorate of Southern Nigeria proceeded more on a village-by-village than on a state-by-state basis. This situation ensured the prolongation of punitive expeditions in southern Nigeria and therefore Moor and Egerton had a much more difficult task than Lugard and MacGregor especially between 1900 and 1906. It is important to note that no mass revolt which cut across ethnic boundaries occurred. The Aro opposition, the Ekumeku unrest, the Benin scare and others were basically ethnic in nature, so the British found in the annual field operations a convenient device for dealing with pockets of unrest. “Concerted mass revolt could not have succeeded as long as local feuds survived and local chiefs emerged to serve as the agents of the new regime” (Tamuno, 1977, p. 431).

Through this book and many others he has written, Professor Tamuno has succeeded in creating an understanding of our past, present and even provided insights into the future thereby helping us to know ourselves. Most of Tamuno’s works are specifically dedicated to the problems of the Nigerian society. For instance, writing on *Nigerian Universities: Their Students and Their Problems*, (Lagos: published by the Panel on Nigeria since Independence History Project (1988). Tamuno posited that:

Nigeria’s major crisis among others since independence has been one concerning a sense of direction. University Institutions in Nigeria know where they came from, but they are not yet sure where they are going (Tamuno, 1989 p. 8).

This study explores alternatives for durable peace and order on the campuses as an essential condition for fulfilling their

agreed mission and goals in society. This book emphasizes two fundamental problems of university development – students' unrest and the management of resources. The book creates understanding in major areas of concern to the government in particular and society in general. The several issues raised in this study and in many others by the same author were examined mostly from a multi-dimensional point of view. The analysis at each stage has been exposed to the interplay of the treble factors of leadership, time and circumstance. This approach has indeed become a useful tool of analysis and understanding crisis as well as attempts at its resolution Tamuno (1989). The crux of the matter, as Tamuno sees it, is this: "The field of education is an area where the quantity and quality of harvest follow the type of seed used and how much care a farmer devotes to husbandry" (Tamuno, 1989, p. 8). There is so much that the modern Nigerian policymakers could learn from the pre-colonial educational set up. Firstly, illiteracy in a foreign language or text was not seen as a disability in matters of discipline, diligence, morality and general good conduct. Secondly, the family and the community worked together for the common good of society by ensuring decent behaviour and the proper upbringing of the children. Thirdly, community feeling rather than personal aggrandizement helped to underpin education as people saw and applied it in their society. However, colonialism brought new challenges in education which were compounded by the weak basis of planning. For example, we do not know how many schools we have in the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels; how many students; nor the number of teachers in these schools. Neither do we know how much they spend or how much they really need. With such weak information-base, policymakers and planners, in particular, lack the proper foundation needed for purposes of review and reform of the system of education in Nigeria. In another publication titled, *The Responsibility for Crime Control in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER, 1985), Professor Tamuno made it abundantly clear that crime control is of general interest and significance to the nation at large. The war against crime cannot be won anytime soon without sustained commitment and sacrifice at all levels. Some believe that the responsibility for crime control lies with the law-makers, while others hold the police, judiciary, prisons and other formal agencies of government responsible. His view is that such responsibility must be shared before it can be effective. Similarly, he advised that religion should be seen to fulfil its moral and spiritual obligations. By so doing, we would need fewer salaried law-makers, policemen, magistrates, judges and correctional officers. Tamuno went further to discuss the prevalence of crime in Nigeria. In most cases, the devil and money as the familiar root of all evil are blamed for every crime. How many of such thieves in Nigeria, known to the churches, mosques, shrines, cults and others since independence have been caught, tried and convicted? Meanwhile, the numbers of practitioners both male and female in crime have increased with more

criminalization. But since the Police stand in the middle of two antagonistic forces, the law-abiding people and law-breakers, they tend to be hit on both sides and are seen as scapegoats for the imperfections of society (Tamuno, 1985). Tamuno did not stop at analyzing the issues of crime and its control in Nigeria. He also took steps as usual to prescribe more appropriate solutions to the issue under study. He recommended that we learn from the example of India. His research trip to India and studies at the S.V.P. National Police Academy, Hyderabad in 1982, enabled him to compare India's experience with that of Nigeria.

The first lesson we can learn from India is that India placed her police eggs in more than one basket. Hence, India provided for State Police, City Police, Union Territory Police and various central police services. Also significant is the fact that Indian police officers are well-trained university graduates who won restricted places in a highly competitive National Examination. Another good example is Japan. Even though Japan is a developed country in socio-economic terms, it has one of the fewest crime rates in the world. Japan is so technologically advanced that the hard and software needed by its police department and other services come from within as products of their highly developed industries. However what Japan proves to developing countries like Nigeria is that crime associated with advances in industry, science and technology can be adequately controlled. Japan can also offer a valuable lesson to Nigeria where family and community roots remain to be tapped for the control and prevention of crime which in his view is second to none other control strategies. However, prescriptions and recommendations of this nature are of no use if they will not be taken up seriously by those who say or think they are genuinely concerned about the state of crime in Nigeria. Nigerians in positions of authority have a choice to either do something or do nothing. Meanwhile, Tamuno remains a social crusader who continues to point out the ills of society and possible solutions to the problems.

In a related publication: *Nigeria: Its People and Its Problems*, Prof. Tamuno noted that nation-states as human organizations are dynamic institutions which respond to the differential sensitive factors of Time, Circumstance and Leadership (Tamuno, 1989). It is within this broad framework that he examined the main stages in the political history of modern Nigeria since the late nineteenth century. According to Tamuno, there has been a serious communication problem between leaders and the led from pre-colonial times to the present. Despite the historical ties that bind us together for centuries, grave obstacles in the task of nation-building persist and they need not be ignored. If the making of Nigeria as we know was a British initiative, that of consolidation has been entirely Nigerian. The search for convenient scapegoats or buck-passing has its natural terminal point which was the attainment of political independence on October 1, 1960. Although Federalism provided a compromise between nationalists and regionalists, it turned out to be a very complex political arrangement to operate or sustain. Nevertheless, enlightened leadership could have minimized

the areas of friction. In reality, Nigeria's political leaders before and immediately after independence were so eager to control and monopolize the machinery of government that they encouraged rivalries which resulted in setting up one ethnic group against another (Tamuno, 1989).

*The Police in Modern Nigeria: 1861-1965; Origins, Development and Role* is one of Professor Tamuno's major contributions to the History of Modern Nigeria. He undertook this study mainly to examine a fascinating subject which had received little or no attention from historians before now. In a related book titled: *Policing Nigeria: Past, Present and Future* edited by T. N. Tamuno and other eminent scholars, they also shed useful light on various aspects of policing Nigeria before and since Nigeria's independence. For critics and others of like minds, the role of the Police in societies and states is best measured by its absence rather than by its presence (Tamuno, 1993). This collaborative work done through the inter-disciplinary approach has made the study of complex problems concerning Nigeria's Police relatively easier. These works on the Police will be examined later but suffice it to say that through these works, T. N. Tamuno brought his expertise as a scholar to the fore. His perspective is that of a contemporary historian whose special interests lie in the interface between the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Experience since the early 1960s has taught him to see these factors as his cardinal determinants of history: Time, Circumstance, Leadership/Followership and Chance/Accident. Accordingly, for historical interpretations, he prefers multi-causal to mono-causal approaches and all these he employed to great use in these very significant works.

Professor Tamuno edited and originated *Ibadan Voices: Ibadan University in Transition* which was published by the University of Ibadan in 1981 and used by the authorities as a complimentary gift to Very Important visitors (VIP) visitors until they exhausted the copies. This work was originally meant to serve as a complementary addition to an earlier celebratory book which Professor J. F. Ade-Ajayi and Professor Tamuno edited in 1973. This was *The University of Ibadan, 1948 – 1973: A History of the First Twenty-Five Years*. This book was published by the same University in 1973 to mark the Silver Jubilee Anniversary. While the latter book emphasized formal developments, the former concentrated on its social aspects garnered from the points of view of selected alumni and staff of the university actively involved in the growth and development of the university from the beginning to 1980, Tamuno (1973). These two books on the History of Ibadan will be examined in greater detail later but it is important to mention here that Professor Tamuno once again displayed his time tested skills as a historian. His key publications have filled the gap in existing literature in the sense that we now understand the problems we face as a nation and some possible solutions. In this regard his works are significant. We have also seen his methodology and how the socio-political climate shaped his thoughts and influenced his writings over the years. This tells us a lot about the

historians craft and the historian who is usually influenced by his background, his environment and the time in which his work is done.

#### IV. HISTORY AND POETRY: TNT EXAMPLE

Professor Tamuno is a History scholar by training but a poet by birth. His early background in Greek and Latin and his desire to break away from established stereotypes inherent in the history profession stirred up his burning desire and love for poetry. He believes poetry is a more appropriate medium of expression devoid of the complications of time lag associated with history. One of such inhibitive regulations in the history profession, according to the historian cum poet, was the regulation that unless a document was over 50 years old, it would not be acceptable for any research work and commentary. The years were later reduced to 30 years by the Nigerian National Archives but it still confined the professional historian to the past. This, however, does not limit the relevance of history because "everything in this world must rest on a foundation. The present and the future must rest on the foundation of the past" (Gboloibai, 2001). Professor Tamuno has written two volumes of poems. The first one is *Songs of an Egg-head* published in 1982. He also has another collection of poems to his credit titled, *Festival of Songs and Drums* which was published in 1999. In a review of the poem "Songs of an Egg-Head", Niyi Osundare, said the volume was significant for two reasons. Firstly, it was the work of an "amateur" outside their notoriously stuffy "English Department". Secondly, it had expanded the poetic mode to accommodate subjects, issues and ideas (such as wise-cracks, literary commentary, lay philosophizing and so on) which "professionals" have often considered to be beyond the pale of modern verse (Osofisan, 2002). He also pointed out that this volume of 182 pages is the fattest single collection yet by any Nigerian poet, a great feat indeed for a non-poet.

*Songs of an Egg-head* is a part-historical and part-autobiographical record of the poet's own experience in the very familiar environment of his beloved home land (Umukoro, 2002). This maiden collection provides an insight into the poetic prowess of the author who is also a philosopher by orientation, although by vocation and reputation an astute historian. This maiden collection served as the launching pad of his creative career as a poet. As an eminent historian, Tamuno brings historical perception to bear on his poetic vision. A historian, according to Fredrick Von Schlegel (1772-1829), is a prophet in reverse. In the same vein, Francas de Fenelon (1651-1715), observed that "a good historian is timeless; although he is a patriot, he will never flatter his country in any respect", Umukoro (2002). Prof. Tamuno has not only demonstrated a prophetic insight but also unflattering candour in his poetic and philosophical perspective of his country's socio-political climate.

His second volume *Festival of songs and Drums* (1999) by Newsultch Newswatch Group Limited, Lagos Books Ltd) is an example of brain-storming, story-telling with fun and

common sense in free and light verse. The 141-page book is divided into five sections each with a subtitle. Section one: Songs dedicated to the Author. Section two: Songs of sad Sarawata the “sorceress”.

Section three: Songs of Jolly-papa

Section four: Drums of Kolokia.

Section five: The “Seven Sisters” of Professor Tamuno on life and death. This collection of his second volume of poems typified that turbulent period in the history of our nation. He found expression in poetry to release the emotional burden occasioned by that period. This was a period when Nigeria was going through the difficult process of transition from military rule to democratic rule.

Though Tamuno maintains that his works are not comparable to works of J. P. Clark and Ken Saro Wiwa in terms of militancy and enthusiasm, he nevertheless agreed that every poet has his style and objectives. However, “Kolok” in the poem “Kolokia” personified the depth of anger of the writer about the existential contradictions prevalent between 1993 and 1998. And these “drums” which evolved in colloquia show the brilliance of this poet in tempering wits and humour with truth clothed in sublime militancy which is of a mould different from the works of Ken-Saro Wiwa, J. P. Clark and Wole Soyinka.

Tamuno maintains that he does not dislike prose. He likes creative breezy prose especially recreational types mixed with a sense of humour and wit. He likes poets like himself who are beginners that concentrate on making the comfortable in society uncomfortable and comforting the uncomfortable. That way, poetry fulfils an essential social mission. He likes poets of hope not those of despair. He likes light verse not heavy poetry as a medium of easy, clear and convenient communication. This he said is because he believes that in the end, a writer should facilitate understanding and not deliberately prevent it, no matter his medium of expression (Ifie, 2002).

It is true that the name of the poet belongs to history, not to literary writers’ club. Yet he said the collections of his three volumes of poems are his own “method of employing the mental brain to dance and sing when he is not keeping records as it were in the historian’s version” (Umukoro, 2002). He advised readers of his poetry to “pay more attention to the message rather than the ritual of the rhyme”. The three volumes show Tamuno as a poet with a roving eye, a roving mind and a fairly turned ear to the serious, the grave, the mundane, the philosophical and the trivial. Most part of “Festival of Songs and Drums” may be considered as songs of sorrow as the “Songs of Sarawatu” portrays our poet, Tamuno, bemoaning our lost sense of history, a loss of permanent value and at the same time being scornful of the idea of loyalty to a nation by a people for whom loyalty is to themselves. Those who say they are loyal to the nation “milk all it has in prosperity”.

Although we are incompetent to either review or criticize Professor Tamuno’s poems, one major issue that comes to mind in the poem “Songs Professor of Jolly Papa” is that unending question known and called “The Niger Delta Question”. This short poem discusses the issues of the criminal neglect of minorities in the country.

At the launching of his second volume of poems at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos on Friday, April 9, Tamuno confirmed that his training as a student of classics exposed him to the “inspiring epic literature of famous Greek and Roman Poets” (Umukoro, 2002).

The third volume of poetry by Professor Tamuno is titled, *Lamentations of Yeske: Poems in Honour of HRH Professor Egbe Ifie*. This set contains 40 poems in light verse which he dedicated to his late friend Egbe Ifie. The 40<sup>th</sup> poem is more personal and is a farewell wish to his late friend. *Lamentations of Yeske* just like the first two volumes of poems is meant to entertain the reader and where necessary add to his knowledge of the various issues raised.

All three works of poetry by Professor Tamuno can be referred to as “Political Poetry” (Tamuno, 2005). This is because most of the poems in these three collections deal with important aspects of the growth and development of the state (which he fondly called “Polis”) and the reactions of the various stakeholders to these issues: self, society and the state (SSS). That changing state is what the author called “Labuja” (1982), “Kolokia” (1999), “Yeskea” and “Samabad” (2005).

The critical query of “what do they know of poetry those who only history know”? will best be answered after going through the poems to know if he has written good poems or not. Experts in this field have agreed that in all, four issues stand out to make “Tamuno a writer/poet worthy to be included in a group of contemporary poets and postmodernists”. These are: he writes a treatise on the purpose of poetry as a store for history; that the nature of poetry is to be pleasurable in reading; that the style of poetry should be narrative, parodic and full of witticism or humour; and that the causes for or sources of poetry could be from experience and imagination (Tamuno, 2005).

In addition to being a distinguished historian and poet, Professor Tamuno has also published a collection of proverbs, an art which he has continued to practice over a number of years. However, he thinks perhaps the most plausible explanation for his collection of proverbs is his own love for lacing his discourse with proverbs, Professor Tamuno (2007). He explained in this volume how he had studied at the feet of his father who was a war-canoes chief in Okrika for over 50 years and died at the age of 101 years and other elders in Okrika and fallen in love with this art form. For instance, there is a favourite proverb of his which could be called his signature proverb. It is “a snake seen by one person alone is usually a big snake”. Such a study of proverbs helps to foster understanding and to bridge the gap in communication. Moreover, as evidence of the undying wisdom of the elders,

proverbs also help to build and maintain durable bridges between the past, present and the future. Therefore, all such proverbs anywhere help to make the world go round.

## V. CONCLUSION

Professor Tamuno is indeed a man of many parts. His love for scholarship has continued to motivate him to strive for academic excellence in all its ramifications. No wonder why he was appointed Professor Emeritus on March 8, 1994 in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan where he had devoted so much of his time to academics and advancement of knowledge.

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## APPENDIX 1

### List of Selected Oral Informants

S/N	Name	Age	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date
1.	Aderemi, Akinade	56	Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Librarian	In his office	11/6/09
2.	Alagoa, E. J.	72	Emeritus Professor	In his house, G.R.A. Port Harcourt	23/5/09
3.	Derefaka, A. A.	55	Professor, History	In his office, Uniport.	21/10/09
4.	Ejituwu, N. C.	67	Professor, History	In his house, Uniport.	26/10/09
5.	Enemugwuem, J. H.	50	HOD, History Dept. Uniport	In his office	16/6/09
6.	Kimse, Okoko	68	Professor, Political Science	In his office, Uniport	20/1/2010
7.	Layiwola, Dele	52	Professor and Director, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan	In his office	12/6/09
8.	Tamuno, T. N.	76	Emeritus Professor, University of Ibadan	In his house, G.R.A., PH	08/05/08
9.	Umuofin, Peter	48	Secretary to the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan.	In his office	11/06/09
10.	Tam-Douglas H.	45	Politician	In his office, State Secretariat, PH	14/07/09