THE RELEVANCE OF HISTORY IN THE CONTEXT OF NIGERIA'S CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

J.H. PONGRI, Ph.D.; EDIBA, ISAAC OGBOGO, Ph.D. & ADAMU ALHAJI YAKUBU
Department of History
Gombe State University, Gombe

Abstract
Since the mid-1980s the issue of the relevance of history has been variously stressed by historians. There seems to be a consensus that the discipline has suffered neglect by government and public policy formulators, resulting to the relegation of historians to the background. On the other hand, the critics of the discipline postulate that historians do not produce anything that adds to national development. By this, they mean that history does not manufacture goods and it is not a service sector. The position of this paper is that despite the relative scientific and technological developments that had taken place in Nigeria since the attainment of national independence, Nigeria is currently under the grip of insecurity like never before. The upsurge of violent conflicts by insurgents, militants, bandits and others led by ethnic and religious fundamentalists has defied any solution. Insecurity is obviously a major challenge confronting post – colonial Nigerian state. The paper therefore argues that more than before there is the urgency to lean to history as a veritable tool of strengthening intergroup relatives and relations grapple with the existential challenges bedeviling Nigeria. The paper is based on the historical methodology which uses primary and secondary sources.

Introduction

Nigeria is currently under the firm group of multifaceted socio – economic problems especially insecurity which has manifested in various dimensions and forms and threatens the very foundation of the country. Despite the

relative development achieved in the areas of science and information technology in the last one decade, there seems to be no end in sight to the ravaging effect of the current state of insecurity. The focus of this paper is to stress the relevance of the discipline of history in the context of contemporary Nigerian problems. History is the cumulation of human experiences overtime up to the present.[1] Contrary to the perception by the critics of the discipline, who erroneously posit that history has nothing to offer in resolving Nigeria's problems, this paper demonstrates that, more than before, recourse to history would bring to the fore salient measures which could be used to remedy the ugly situation of the country and ultimately liberate it from the hands and antics of those determined to break Nigeria into pieces. Much as humanity from time immemorial had engaged in conflicts; being incapable of resolving conflicts and surmounting insecurity had sealed the fate of peoples and societies in history. Buttressing and illustrating accounts of intergroup relations with all its positivities in the past would go a long way to strengthen communal ties and possibly prevent incidences of violent conflicts.

The paper discusses the meaning and nature of history, the developmental stages of its evolution and the justification for studying contemporary evolving realities in Nigeria. It further analyzes current state of insecurity in Nigeria and the role of history as a liberating tool for Nigerians amidst these predicaments.

Toward an understanding of the meaning, development and nature of history

History is a broad discipline that defies a single definition as there are divergent views about its meaning. Different scholars had attempted to variously defined the subject matter. The problematic of defining history has never yielded itself to easy solution, whether in the past or in the present. What is easy to say is that it has as many definitions as there are probably historians.[2] This controversy surrounding the meaning of history is quite understandable as it emanates from the nature of history itself. History has

undergone many transformations before eventually attaining its present status as a scientific body of knowledge. The term history entered the English Language in 1390 with the meaning "relation of incidents story" through the Old French "histories", which itself was derived from Latin "historia", meaning "narrative account".[3]

This was derived from the Greek "historia" meaning "a learning or knowing by inquiry, record, narrative" from the verb "historien", meaning to inquire".

The restriction to the meaning "record of past events" in the sense of Herodotus arose in the late 15th century. In most languages other than English, this distinction was never made and the same word was used to mean both "history" and "story".[4] A sense of "systematic account" without a reference to time in particular was current in the 16th century. From 1531, the term "historian", meaning a "researcher of history" in a higher sense than that of analyst or chronicler who merely records events as they occur came into use.

The implication of the foregoing is that by the 16th century, history had laid the foundations for distinguishing itself as a reputable body of knowledge. Traditionally, the study of history is limited to the written and spoken word.[5] However, the rise of professionalism and the creation of new scientific fields in the 19th and 20th centuries changed this notion. Since then, the efforts to grapple with the meaning of history have become an unending one. The fact that other disciplines such as Archaeology, Anthropology, Linguistics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology among others, have continued to be relevant in historical studies has contributed to its unique and complex nature which has continued to shape how history has been understood to date.[6]

Geoffrey Barraclough defines history as "the attempt to discover on the basis of fragmentary evidence the significant things about the past". Here, history as a scientific discipline is supposed to be driven by evidence. Edward Hallet Carrr his part, defines history as "a continuous process of interaction

between the historian and his facts and an unending dialogue between the present and the past". Carr emphasizes the significance of interpretation in history.[8]

Arthur Marwick conceives history on three levels. Firstly, that history connotes, "the entire human past as it actually happened". Secondly, that history is man's attempt to discuss and interpret the past, and thirdly, that history is a systematic study of the past.[9] While the past cannot be recreated, with exactitude, as it was; Marwick's explanation tried to incorporate the many elements of history. Chechney defines history as a body of facts about the past activities of man to be studied, understood and explained.

History is the systematic and organized body of knowledge whose focal point is the objective study of the past of man in relation to his society and the environment as well as the impact of this relationship on eventual developments. As an organized body of knowledge about the past of man in society, historical study is predicted on actual realities. It consists of facts as ascertained through honest inquiry, as well as inferences, interpretations and generalizations. The science and art of writing history is based on critical examination of sources, the selection of events that has historical significance and the synthesis of events into a coherent narrative that will stand the test of critical analysis. [10] It is important to state that every age and epoch seems to expand its understanding of history. This unending pendulum compelled Henry Carr to declare that "the meaning of history will be revealed in the day of judgment".[11]

However, the written history of a historian must necessarily contain facts, evidence, interpretations, chronologies, inferences and generalizations. It ought to be about the actions of man in the society in the past. It could also be about other actions in the society that are not generated by man but have implications for man. The past that is studied should have some implications for the present. In other words, the end product of a historical research should be relevant to the present.[12] It is in this context that this paper is

poised to address the relevance of history to the contemporary challenges facing Nigeria.

Some of these challenges are the problem of underdevelopment, deep seated corruption, poverty, rising insecurity and other developmental challenges. Nevertheless, from the professional approach, what is the justification of studying contemporary Nigerian history and what are the underlying features of contemporary history?

Elements and justification for studying contemporary history

According to Geoffrey Barraclough, contemporary history is different in quality and content from what is known as modern history. For most historians, contemporary does not constitute separate period with distinctive characteristics of its own; they regard it rather as the most recent phase of a continuous process. Barraclough views contemporary history as being different in kind or quality from earlier history. It constitutes that part of modern history which is nearest to us in time, given that the new world grew to maturity in the shadow of the old.[13] On the other hand, Bala Usman perceives contemporary history as the events of history which have the most immediate and direct relationship with our lives today. In his words, "contemporary history is essentially made up of events which are part of the personal experience of a significant proportion of our contemporaries. In other words, the period of the past which can be said to be that of contemporary history is that period whose human actors are still active participants in the events of today"[14].

Thus, contemporary history is the part of history that deals with the more recent part of history, which characteristics is still on and whose actors are still around. Unfortunately, many people still construe history in the light of the Herodotus era. Much as it is that the focal point of historical scholarship is the past of man; it is instructive to note that history also deals with the present. The past is studied with the view to understanding the present. The present is anchored on the past. History stretches along the time process,

providing a very useful link between the past, present and the future.[15] By implication, history bothers itself with the past, present and future circumstances in the right of their connectivity. Therefore, to shed light on contemporary Nigerian challenges is a task in the light direction, given that historians are not just chroniclers or analysts but are supposed to give direction to a nation that seems to be rudderless and drifting towards precipice on account of the enormous political, social, economic and security predicaments that have engulfed it.

Contemporary challenges of the Nigeria state

Over the past five decades, Nigeria, the most populous black nation, has been governed by both democratic and non – democratic governments. Military incursion into politics in the country has been premised on the failure of previous democratic governments to initiate, foster and sustain development programmes that could have brought about social and economic development.[16] Military regimes proved not to be better either. Various factors are said to be responsible for Nigeria's current status as an underdeveloped country, despite the availability of abundant mineral resources. These range from historical colonial experience, political instability, large scale corruption, the monoculture nature of the national economy and the persistent lack of commitment to focused development strategies on the part of the political elites.[17]

Radical scholars consistently blamed the persistent socio – economic challenges in Nigeria on the structural deficiencies created as a result of the country's colonial experience. They claim that colonialism, as a violent phenomenon, was designed not only to exploit, but also to keep African countries, indeed, Nigeria in perpetual vulnerable position of underdevelopment.[18] While acknowledging the considerable and appreciable contributions of these dependency approaches of Nigeria's development failures; the position of this paper is that the postcolonial trajectory of Nigeria is replete with grandeur mismanagement of the country by those who should had engineered its development in all ramifications.

There is an acute leadership deficit in Nigeria. Nigerian leaders lack the presence of mind and required capability to significantly improve the living standards of the citizenry, based on the social contract agreement between the governors and the governed. To a very large extent, the leaders in the past sixty years have failed to constructively bring about the needed social and economic transformation in the country. Instead, the excesses of the political leaders through the institutions of governance had precipitated and compounded Nigeria's socio – economic challenges, which has in turn, birthed apathy, disillusionment and cynicism on the part of the citizenry.[19] The current state of poverty and hunger is mind boggling and the human development indices of the country is abysmally low, underscoring the precarious state of the economy which has seriously been hampered by the Corona virus pandemic.

In addition, in recent times, the country has witnessed unprecedented level of insecurity. This has ultimately made national security threat to be a major issue for the government. Banditry, kidnapping, insurgency, militancy, farmers/herders conflict, among others, have made Nigeria to be one of the most unsafe countries in the world, as the country has consistently been ranked low in the Global Peace Index.[20] With the lingering security challenges and the apparently inability of the security apparatus of the government to guarantee safety and security in the country; there is palpable fear amongst Nigerians that the country is fastly degenerating into lawlessness, chaos and anarchy, where life is short, nasty and brutish. Some of the root cause of the state of insecurity in Nigeria today are: historical pervasive material inequalities and unfairness, expanding dichotomy between the extremely rich and the very poor, conflict of perceptions between the public and government, ethno – religious conflicts, loss of socio-cultural and communal value system, porous borders, rural/urban drift, weak security system, large scale unemployment and poverty, terrorism and lack of institutional capacity resulting in government's failure to checkmate and end these mortal challenges.[21]

History as a liberating tool to Nigeria's multifaceted challenges

In Nigeria today, history is seem as an irrelevant discipline and enterprise. According to critics of the discipline, the historian does not produce anything that adds to national development. By this, they mean that it does not manufacture any goods, it is not a service sector such as Water Board or Electric Companies. In addition, it has no scientific or methodological approach that can be used in the production of chemicals or other scientific and technological products of industry and therefore has nothing to show for its existence.[22] Consequently, they argue that history and its practitioners should be dispensed of as it amounts to a waste of scarce national resources to continue to maintain a subject that has no relevance to national development. Consequently, successive governments in Nigeria tried to replace history with Government and Social studies particularly in Primary and Secondary Schools which are the foundation of the educational system. This has failed woefully and following pressure from different quarters, the Federal Government has approved the teaching of history in all level of Nigeria educational system.

All along, historians have vehemently argued that those who do not see the relevance of history in national development and nation-building are narrow minded. According to Professor A.J. Temu, it is only through the study of history that one can come to terms with the objective conditions of the peoples of Africa (of which Nigeria is part) as they grapple with the problems of development, hunger and deprivation.[23] It is only the discipline of history that holistically unravels the state of underdeveloped societies from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean and these conditions are, among others, hunger, diseases, famine, insecurity and deprivation. Nigeria is currently the capital of poverty in the world.

It is the discipline of history that has revealed the most naked aspects of imperialist exploitation of Africa and Nigeria and the merciless colonial plunder of our societies. It is the discipline of history that has revealed the contradictions of the imperialist milieu while desperately sought to justify

the paternalist ideology of the mission to "civilize" Africa. This mystification is also reflected in the study of African history as erroneously conceived and presented by the colonial historiographers, geared towards imprisoning the minds of the oppressed by outright suppression and falsification of events or by subtle distortion of such events.[24]

The tragic consequences of this enterprise is that colonial rule was transformed into a "worthwhile" order and neo – colonial policies have been presented as if they are really for the benefit of the masses in postcolonial societies. On this backdrop, it is only the discipline of history that liberates the mind by ultimately creating the consciousness of the trajectory of our national life. It is history that unearths the entire realities that interplayed overtime to produce the current state of affairs as presently being experienced in Nigeria.[25]

According to Walter Rodney, "the purpose of the study of history is to uproot the numerous historical myths which have been implanted in the minds of black people" and which he considered a drag in the endeavor to realize the African revolution.[26] Rodney regarded this as an important aspect of the fight for cultural liberation. As a weapon in favour of politics of alienation imperialist intellectuals sought to prevent the possibility of solidarity on the part of the colonized by using such ideas as the radical factor to prove that Africans do not have a history.[27] Their lackeys continued this dangerous attempt to deny Nigerians of their histories by emasculating history from the national curriculum at the lower level of education until recently. Rodney declared that history could be used as an instrument of "intellectual liberation".[28] It is a weapon in our national struggle. The teaching and understanding of history would contribute to the liberation of the Nigerian oppressed classes who are opposed to the excesses of our post – colonial leaders whose defining trade mark is the plunder of national resources towards the advancement of their sectional interests. This is a continuation of the bourgeois tradition, who, as rightly captured by Marcus Garry have always tried to rob and discredit us of our history.[29] It is history that clinically unearths their activities by digging into the very fabric of their

existence; their agenda, their *modus operandi*, their grand design to consolidate their control of Nigeria's political economy and undermine national development.

History, therefore, serves as a guide to present and succeeding generations in the continuing struggle for change. Given that history is not only descriptive but also analytical, it deals with objective issues of development and underdevelopment. This bring us to the discussion of value judgments. In this regard, historians do not regard the past as a mere object of contemplation but rather as an instrument to mobilize the present and to discard what is irrelevant to today's concerns.[30] History as a tool for nation – building has to be partisan, identifying with the oppressed by digging into the historical roots of the current predicaments bedeviling Nigeria and, on the basis of the analysis, proffer pragmatic remedies to these national maladies.

Only a thorough understanding of the root cause of a problem can guarantee adequate understanding of such a problem and ways of curtailing it. It is history that revealed that the development of Europe was as a result of the underdevelopment of Africa. It is a dialectical and symbiotic relationship based on economic exploitation, slave trade, colonial conquest, unequal trade relations and other unwholesome engagements under the guise of globalization of today. In the search for a solution to Nigeria's challenges, only a deliberate and conscious recourse to history would liberate this country by unearthing the actual problems and thereby remedying the damages already inflicted on this country.

Evolution and impact of the Ibadan and Zaria schools of history in deepening historical consciousness

The extent of the ideological brainwashing imminent with the development and expansion of the colonialist historiography *visa vis* Africa and Nigerian historical developments cannot be overemphasized. In their warped postulations, history could as well be a tool of underdevelopment by denying

a race their sense of history which is tantamount to obliterating their very sense of existence. To them, therefore, the continent of Africa was not a historical entity.[31] These European writers, to say the least, were narrow-minded, biased and inclined to racism. In the words of E. J. Alagoa, their perceptions and misrepresentation of Africa from antiquity were fundamentally premised on ignorance, prejudice, ethnocentrism, cultural chauvinism and arrogance.[32] Anthropology therefore became a potent tool to them for the furtherance of western imperialism by obliterating Africa's historical experiences.

To combat this dangerous stereotypes and misconceptions, African scholars emerged and successfully championed the cause of African history by dispelling the excesses of the colonialist historiography as it relates to Africa and Nigeria. Eurocentrism was factually dismissed using oral tradition which received universal respectability.[33]

In Nigeria, the nationalist historiography was championed by scholars such as Kenneth Dike, Biobaku, Obaro Ikime, Atanda, Akinjogbin among others. The establishment of the Ibadan School of History in 1948 presented a new perspective of the history of the peoples of Nigeria in contrast to what the Europeans and their apologists had written. To these revered historians, the histories of Africa must be the histories of African peoples and not merely the activities of invaders.[34] History should be a tool for emancipation from the shackles of western control. More impetus was added to this nationalistic disposition with the establishment, in 1962, of the Zaria School of History by Professor Abdullahi Smith.[35] The radicalism of scholars such as Bala Usman, Mahmud Tukur, Abdullahi Mahadi and George Kwanashie among others revolutionized the study and practice of history as a scientific enterprise, predicated on deep research and teaching.[36] Nigeria, Africa and World histories were researched interrogated and taught in a manner that dispelled the Eurocentric perceptions that Africans were incapable of anything good.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the relevance of history amidst the multifaceted challenges bedeviling Nigeria. It argues that it is the study of history that would objectively unearth the root cause of Nigeria's predicaments as a necessary condition for seeking lasting solutions to them. The paper posits that history is a discipline that not only enlightens but fundamentally liberates the human mind. Contrary to the views of ignorant critics, the paper evidentially demonstrates how history serve as a formidable tool of liberation from the control of oppressors. That in as much as science is vital to human existence, the knowledge of history is central to self and societal preservation, as no society makes reasonable progress without if consciously and proactively preserving its heritage and history. The paper further buttressed the fact that part of the problematic of the Nigerian state which has spread in so many forms, especially at the level of insecurity, underdevelopment and the crisis of leadership is partly due to the neglect and relegation of historical consciousness in Nigeria. A recourse to the lessons of the past is a recipe for development in Nigeria.

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THE IMPACT OF THE KANEM-BORNO EMPIRE ON THE NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA REGIONAL CIVILISATION

Prof. ABUBAKAR, Ibrahim Waziri
Department of History
Gombe State University, Gombe

Introduction

Throughout human history when centralized polities emerge, they exert control and influence on areas in the vicinity of the seat of power and in considerable areas in contiguous regions. Just like other ancient empires and Kingdom such as Ghana, Mali, Songhai, Hausa States, the Jukun Kingdom etc., Kanem-Borno's presence and influence were felt and experienced directly or indirectly in the entire Chad Basin area and in the Benue and Gongola Basins. Kanem-Borno was the most powerful empire to have developed in the North-East Region of Nigeria. The closest in extent and influence in the Region was the Jukun Kingdom. During its emergence and development, various types of interactions took place between the people of the empire and other peoples, societies and communities in the Region which in the final analysis impacted on their social, political, economic and cultural lives.

Empire and Civilization: A Conceptual Perspective

Empire and civilization are two historical processes that complement each other, either one leads to the emergence of the other or one strengthens the other. I base this conceptualization on Ibn Khaldun's explanation on the foundations of human civilization and the emergence of dynasties and development of empires. Before an empire, that is a geopolitical area comprising of territories and people ruled by a single authority emerges and develops, a dynasty from which a leader or ruler emerges, first appears. Dynasties are products of both aggressive and defensive strength

obtained through group feeling or mutual affection and willingness to die for each other[1]. The central core of dynasty is the identification of a leader who the people respect, obey and follow; he exercises authority and forms an administrative structure or government to discharge his functions. Subsequently, the dynasty would try to gradually expand its power and control over larger territories.

As people settled down to sedentary life, large settlements and big towns begin to develop and life becomes organized to derive the benefits of living for which people first pursue necessities, then conveniences and luxuries. All these require human social organization which gives birth to what is called Civilization which according to the Western definition, is a society that has high level of culture and social organization or an advanced level of development that is marked by complex social and political organization and material culture[2]. This definition may be partially applicable to societies outside the West, partially because the Western perspective is influenced by the scientific and technological superiority of the West and its imperial and racial views.

For the purpose of this paper, we are adopting the definition of civilization as described by Ibn Khaldun, who defined it as

> *Human social organization… which deals with issues such as sociability, group feeling and the different ways one group of human beings achieve superiority over another. It deals with royal authority and dynasties that result and with the various ranks that exist within them. It is also about the different kinds of gainful occupations and ways of making living with the sciences and crafts that human beings pursue as part of their activities and efforts and all other institutions that arise from such human organization[3].*

This is more elaborate and suitable for the period and times of Kanem-Borno. It gives more room and latitude to view and analyze the impact of the empire on political and administrative governance issues, on the economy, trade, social organization, the military, inter-group relations, religion, education, peace and security, diplomacy and international trade all of which the empire was associated with.

Emergence and Development of Kanem-Borno

Kanem and Borno are two phases of the development of the same empire which at the peak of its power encompassed the Fezan in Southern Libya, the entire Lake Chad Basin area at different times, large areas in Niger and a big portion of North Eastern Region of Nigeria[4]. It was from around the 9th century that the process of the emergence of a centralized state formation began and by 1000 AD a loosely structured but centralized state had emerged in the east of the Lake Chad[5]. A ruling dynasty, called the Seifawa[6] dominated political power and authority. The Kanem Empire was said to have derived its name from Tebesti language to whom *Kanem* meant south, therefore *Kanem Bu* meant people of the south[7].

Whatever or where ever they originated from, the Kanem Empire under the Seifawa dynasty was the dominant power in the Central Sudan in the 12th and 13th centuries with its centre largely on the eastern shores of the Lake Chad and Njimi as its capital. It was the earliest empire to accept Islam and made it the state religion in the 11th century[8] which happened in around 1080 A.D. during the reign of Mai Umme Jilmi[10]. The Seifawa dynasty was said to be the longest ruling dynasty in Africa having held power for about 1000 years by the year its reign ended with the death of Mai Ali of Borno in 1846.

Kanem transited to Borno by the end of the 14th century due to internal struggles for power and external attacks especially by the Bulala. In 1830 Mai Umar Idrismi was forced to abandon Njimi and led his people to the Kanembu area on the western side of the Lake Chad. Inter-marriages, the

new migrants and the people living in the Borno area created the people and language now known as Kanuri[10]. After settling in the new area, internal struggles, rivalry and squabbles among members of the dynasty simmered on and finally erupted in the 15th century.The ruling dynasty was not stable until 1460 when Mai Ali Dunama emerged the strongest successor that Borno began to consolidate and reached the height of its power during the reign of Mai Idris Alooma (1564-1596)[11].

Idris Alooma was renowned for his military skill, administrative reforms and Islamic peity. He introduced the establishment of fixed military camps with walls (ribats), the strategy of permanent sieges, armored horses and riders, iron helmeted musketeers trained by Turkish military advisers and active diplomacy. During his reign, he established elaborate administrative machinery, Kanem-Borno became a strong and wealthy empire, sale of slaves and their use in the military, economic production and as servants were entrenched, he encouraged trade and participation in the trans-Sahara trade[12].

By the middle of the 18th century Kanem-Borno began to decline. Pressure from the Mandara, Fulani and Shuwa considerably reduced the size of the empire and its influence. Kanem-Borno was to be overshadowed by the Sokoto Caliphate. The joint military incursions and actions of Goni Mukhtar and Bubayero defeated Borno army at Kalalewa and moved on to N'gazargamu the capital which they entered. This marked the end of the Seifawa dynasty and power and authority fell into the hands of Muhammad Al-Amin Alkanemi, a Kanembu Islamic scholar[13].

The Impact and Contribution of Kanem-Borno on North East Regional Civilization

The North East Region is the part of Nigeria comprising of the present-day states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe with a total land area of 277, 314 sq. kilometres and population of about 18, 984, 299. It is the most ethnically diverse Region in Nigeria with a total of 249 languages spoken as first language. Taraba State has the highest with 73

languages, followed by Adamawa with 58, Gombe 21, Bauchi 60, Borno 28, and Yobe 9[14]. Though the actual seat of power of the Kanem-Borno empire was centred more in the entire present day Borno and in parts of Yobe States, but its power and influence extended far beyond these centres of its control.

It is inevitable that neighbouring regions will feel its impact because generally speaking in the entire history of man when empires are established attempts are made to extend power and control over a wide area as possible. This requires a strong military with well-equipped army, the capital or seat of power keeps expanding, other old settlements also increase in population and new one start to emerge because of security and improved economic prosperity. All these require more resources such as food and raw materials which the state needs to secure to maintain it power. It also needs more able-bodied people, especially men to replenish and strengthen the army and more resources are needed to equip the army and provide other requirements of society.

These processes follow the logic as posited by Ibn Khaldun and Vico. Ibn Khaldun noted that "man looks first for necessity, the conveniences and then luxury". Vico observed "men first feel necessity, then look for utility, next attend to comfort, then later… amuse themselves with pleasure, then grow dissolute in luxury…"[15]. A careful scrutiny of the history of Kanem-Borno indicate that it followed these steps up to its collapse, so by the natural flow of events it inevitably impacted on its neighbouring regions far and wide either directly or indirectly in the processes of both its emergence, development and collapse.

The emergence and development of Kanem-Borno had precipitated large-scale migration from the area to the south and west. Majority of the peoples in the present day North-East Region claimed to have migrated from the east. This indicates that they came to their present abode from the Lake Chad area where Kanem-Borno was located. Migrations to the south and west of the empire began with the emergence of Kanem in the 14th

century in the east of the Lake Chad. Migrations intensified when the seat of power moved south of the Lake and its subsequent expansion up to the 16th century when it reached its climax under Mai Idris Alooma[16].

Three sets of people were involved in the migratory history of the region as a result of the increasing power and expansion of Kanem-Borno. The ethnic groups that were the early migrants out of the area of control of Kanem to the southern parts of *Fombina,* commonly called Adamawa, include the Mbum, Tikar and Chamba[17]. Other ethnic groups that moved into the area included the Jirai-Bata, Yungur/Lala, Mboi, Gudu, Ga'anda, Hona and Kilbawho all claimed to have migrated from Borno[18] and moved towards the same direction during the second wave of population movement from the Lake Chad area that housed Kanem-Borno.

The other large-scale migration out of Kanem-Borno was by the Fulbe who had been in the area since around the 15th century and early 16th century[19]. These were said to be in stages beginning from around the second half of the 16th century. The Fulbe movement to Adamawa was gradual involving sojourns in places like Margiland, Gudeland and Mubi, across the Mandara Mountains and into Upper Benue and many other areas up to present day Cameroon[20]. They also moved west to Damaturu and onto the areas east of Bauchi, and north of Gombe emirate areas.

The third major group to have migrated out of Kanem-Borno was the Kanuri people who were said to have followed the Gujba-Margi-Kilba-Bata route into Adamawa and up to Cameroon along with the Fulbe. There were no significant numbers of independent Kanuri migrations into Fombina in the 15th and 16th centuries[21]. However, with the emergence and growing influence of El-Kanemi in Borno politics from 1808 and his ascendance as the new defactor ruler, many more Fulbe and this time around a large number of Kanuri migrated in various directions to the north, south and east. The Kanuri, Fulbe, supporters of the Seifawa dynasty and others who lost out in the newly reconstituted administration by El-Kanemi were not happy with the ascendancy of the Kanembu and Shuwa

Arabs who they considered aliens, opposed the new ruling class and migrated out of the area in the 1840s. Then another wave of Kanuri migration happened in the 1890s during the ravaging wars by Rabeh and Fadaralla[22].

During the reign of Mai Ali Ghaji (1473-1501) when the new capital N'gazargamu was established and the subsequent increase in military activities to expand the empire witnessed large-scale movement of peoples into other parts of the Region and widened the area of Seifawa political control. These migrations it was noted led to the emergence and foundation of new chieftaincies such as Kilba, Muvya, Pabur and Fombina to the south. To the west, there were migrations especially of the Fulani to Damaturu, Nafada and Bauchi. Other western dependencies of Borno included Shira, Auyo and Tachena. There were also migrants from Borno to the independent states of Katagum, Hadejia, Gummel, Fika and Gombe[23].

These migrations not only triggered state formation, but also spread many aspects of Kanem-Borno culture and administration. For instance, many leaders of the newly established emirates and chiefdoms adapted the empire's administrative structures and titles of state officials such as Birma, Galadima, Kacalla, Zarma, Maidala, Yerima, Chiroma etc[24]; the establishment and maintenance of military fighting force, use of enhanced weapons of war, procurement of resources for administrative and military purposes. Linguistically, Kanuri influence included the borrowing and loaning of words from their hosts and by their hosts respectively[25].

Wherever the Kanuri migrated to, they went along with their various trades and crafts. They made remarkable contributions in agriculture, trade and crafts. The Kanuri were known to have introduced dry season sorghum cultivation which their host adopted. They were also known for weaving, dyeing, blacksmithing, jewelry making, leather works, pottery and hunting etc. Mohammadou noted that, while these were known and practiced by the host communities before the Kanuri came, the difference was that the

Kanuri developed these to the level of industry. They purchased slaves and trained them in the various crafts, then grouped them into workshops located in different sub-wards of the Kanuri settlement or ward[26]. They were also active participants in commerce and trade. The products from the various workshops they run provided the commodities of trade both locally and for long-distance trade. They were in the business of trading in other items such as slaves, ivory and kolanuts; and later even in local arms and guns (muskets). Kanuri traders and merchants operated locally and regionally along trade routes like Adamawa to Borno, Bauchi to Borno, Nafada-Potiskum-Damaturu-Borno route and Kano-Hadeji-Katagum-Bulkashuwa up to Borno route[27].

The Kanuri migrated to the west and are today found in Gombe and Bauchi States. In Gombe State they are spread in some parts of Nafada, Funakaye and Kwami Local Government Areas. They were associated with the establishment of settlement called Kundulum to the north of present Gombe town in about the middle of the 19th century which developed into an important market due to it becoming a junction where trading routes from N'gazargamu to Kwararrafa and from Adamawa to Kano converged. The first leader of the entreport was called Mai Ali Goni known for his skill in leather works and was later appointed the head of leather workers profession of Gombe Emirate[28].

Kanem-Borno's outstanding impact on civilization in the north-east region was in the area of the introduction and spread of Islamic religion and education, as well as Arabic literacy. Islam first entered to Central Sudan from Borno in around the 11th century and spread from there to the south but most especially to the west. Kanem-Borno became renown as the centre for the study of Islam and Quranic memorization, a famous centre of learning. As noted by Alkali et.al, "in Hausaland it was believed that mastering the Qur'an was best realized if one goes to *gabas*" (the east), that is Borno. Many famous Islamic scholars were said to have studied in Borno; these included even some of the Sokoto jihad leaders such as Modibbo Adama and Modibbo Buba Yero[29]. Until recently when the Boko

Haram insurgency broke out; going to Maiduguri or Borno was the ambition of many people in search of Islamic religious knowledge.

One of the lasting impacts of Kanem-Borno Empire is the introduction of the use of horses in warfare and royalty. Cavalry in military warfare came to other parts of Hausaland from Borno. This came together with the use of armored horses and riders, swords and muskets which were adopted widely in Hausaland and made war more efficient. Associated with cavalry was the development of a purely socio-cultural event in the form of dubars. Durbar is the practice of decorating horses and their riders for horse racing and equestrian activities particularly during Eid el-Fitr in Hausaland. While durbar serves as a cultural festival, it also has political dimension as the gathering is an expression or demonstration of loyalty and allegiance to an emir by his officials and subjects[30].

The practice of international relations and diplomacy in what was to become Nigeria was first begun by Kanem-Borno Empire. It was one of the earliest parts of Nigeria to establish diplomatic relations with North African Countries of Libya, Turkey and Egypt and present-day Sudan. This exposed parts of the North East to the Arab world and attracted scholars who came and wrote a lot on Kanem-Borno rulers, administration and some of its neighbours[32].

Powerful empires have been associated with the development of large towns and settlements in human history. In that regard Kanem-Borno contributed its part on the development of urbanization. Its capital towns of first Njimi, then N'gazargamu, Kukawa, Dikwa and Maidughuri[32] are classical examples of early urbanization in the northeast region. Trading activities of the Kanuri were associated with the development of several market towns in the west of Borno especially in the areas occupied by the Ngizim, Bade Fulani and Hausa people from where market towns like Nguru, Birnin Ngafata, Mayori, Maja Kawuri, Kabshari and Yamai emerged[33]. In the southern region, that is Fombina, the Kanuri were known to have expanded the population size of towns like Mubi, Michika, Sarau,

Belel, Girei and Song[34]. This would have inspired its neighbours in encouraging settlements in concentrated areas, that is, large towns which promote economic activities, more organized society with better security.

Conclusion

Kanem-Borno was no doubt a historical phenomenon in the North-East Region of Nigeria. It was an empire that impacted on a significantly large area of the region. Its influence and impact were experienced in many aspects of human society in the region. Its emergence and development had stimulated mass migrations and intermingling of peoples that produced languages, facilitated diffusion of culture, spread of Islamic religion and education and Arabic literacy, promoted industry and trade, introduced and spread irrigation agriculture, new methods of war, and opened this part of Nigeria to the Arab world of Middle East, North Africa and Turkey.

Its impact and contribution to civilization are long lasting in the sense that up to today some of the aspects it introduced are still surviving in Hausaland and some parts of Central Nigeria.

Endnotes

1. Rosental, F. (trans) Abd Ar Rahman Bin Muhammad Ibn Khaldum: The Muqaddima, chapter III, undated
2. Encarta Dictionary
3. Ibn Khaldum; Book One of the Kitab al Ibar, in Rosental, Muqaddima
4. Lavers, J. E. (1985); "Kanem and Borno Under Three Dynasties: Some Aspects of Change and Development c. 700-1900 A. D." In Ade Ajayi, J. F. and Ikara, B. (eds.) Evolution of Political Culture in Nigeria, Ibadan, University Press Ltd., p.18
5. Lavers, J, E, (1980) "Kanem and Borno to 1808" in Ikime, O. (ed.); Groundwork of Nigerian History, Ibadan, Heinemann, p. 189

6. Smith, A. (1988) A little New Light: Selected Historical Writings of Abdullahi Smith, Zaria, Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, p.23

7. Lavers, Kanem and Borno… p.30

8. Hodgkin, T. (1975); Nigerian Perspectives: An Historical Anthony, London, Oxford University Press, p. 4

9. Lavers, Kanem and Borno ibid, p. 20

10. Uevoy, Y (1949) L'empire du Borno Paris

11. Lavers, Kanem and Borno, ibid; p.25; Isichei, E. (1983); A History of Nigeria, London, Longman, p 143

12. Wikipedia, accessed 8th November, 2016

13. Lavers; Kanem and Borno, ibid p. 209

14. Alkali, M. N., Monguno, A. K. and Mustafa, B.S (2012); Overview of Islamic Actors in Northeastern Nigeria, Nigeria Research Network (NRN) and Oxford Department of International Development, Working Paper, No.2, p. 4

15. Ibn Khaldum; Mukhaddima, Vico, G.; The new Science

16. Mohammadou, E. (1997) "Kanuri Imprint on Adamawa Fulbe and Fulfulde" in Cyffer, N, and Geider, T (eds.); Advances in Kanuri Scholarship, Rudiger Koppe. Verlag Koln, Frankfurt, p. 264: Abubakar, S. (1983) "Relations Between Borno and Fombina Before 1901" in Usman, Y. B, and Alkali, N (eds); Studies in the History of Pre-Colonial Borno, Zaria, Northern Nigerian Publishing Company Ltd., pp.212-213 and pp. 229-230

17. Abubakar, S. (1983) "Relations Between Borno and Fombina Before 1901" in Usman, Y. B, and Alkali, N (eds); Studies in the History of Pre-Colonial Borno, Zaria, Northern Nigerian Publishing Company Ltd., pp 211

18. Pongri, J. H. (2016); A History of Relations in Adamawa from the Earliest Time to 1900, Ibadan, Vast Publishers, p. 25

19. Mohammadou; Kanuri Imprint, pp. 261 and 263

20. Mohammadou; Kanuri Imprint, p. 263, here the rough dates of Kanuri migrations into Fombina in the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th

centuries were provided. These migrations were in stages in the 15th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, p. 267

21. Mohammadou; Imprint, p. 267
22. Mohammadou; Imprint, p. 268-269
23. James, I. (1987); "Human Mobility in the Lake Chad Basin" in Annals of Borno, vol. iv, pp59-60. In the 19th century these states became buffer zones between Borno under El-Kanemi and Sokoto Caliphate jihadists that were revolting and attacking it. The area generally known as Borno Gudiri became a refuge for small mainly non-Muslim Chadic-speaking people escaping Borno dominance. See Hickey, R (1987) "The Ethno-linguistic Pattern of Fika Emirate" in Annals of Borno, vol. iv, p. 47
24. Abubakar; Relations…, p. 217
25. Mohammadou; Imprint.., pp. 275-287. Here the author provided extensive information, listing the various aspects of society in which these loans or borrowings happened. Inter-marriages also facilitated cultural diffusion between the Kanuri and their hosts.
26. Mohammadou; Imprint, pp. 272-273. Kanuri wards are called Kolere. This may have been derived from Fombina Fulfulde name of the Kanuri people *Kolejo* (sing) *Kole'en* (plural). In Gombe they are called *Sirati'en* (plural) *Siratijo* (sing.)
27. Mohammadou; Imprint…; Abubakar; Relations… and James; human Mobility…
28. Shehu, U. A. T,; Tarihin Kasar Gombe, unpublished manuscript in author's possession
29. Alkali et al, Overview… p. 5 and Shehu U. A. T. Tarihi. Other famous scholars that studied in Borno include Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi, Malam Sani Hafizi Katsina, Malam Muhammadu Rabi'u, father Alh. Isiaka Rabi'u a wealthy business man in Kano. See Alkali et al p. 5
30. Eid el-Fitr is the Sallah celebration to mark the end of the Ramadan fasting by Muslims. In Hausaland the durbar in addition to its festive value serves as the demonstration of loyalty and allegiance to the Emir by his district heads and subject in general.

31. Scholars like….
32. Isichie, E. (1983); A History… pp. 267-681
33. Alkali, M. N. (1983) "Economic Factors in the History of Borno Under the Seifawa" in Usman, Y. B. and Alkali, M. N.; Studies…, pp. 68-69.

THE USE OF ORAL TRADITION IN THE STUDY OF AFRICAN HISTORY

Anas Mohammed Abdullahi; A.S. Kunga & Halima H. U. Degri
Department of History
Gombe State University, Gombe

Abstract
Some historians and scholars have dismissed the potency and authenticity attached to oral traditions in historical study and reconstruction. They considered the use of written sources as the most reliable in historical reconstruction. On this understanding such historians questioned the validity of African past (especially Africa South of the Sahara) as lacking in any historical value; as a continent inhabited by uncivilised and barbaric societies, because of the absence of writing techniques. This has far reaching effects on the study of African past, fundamental of which is that the pre-colonial past of Africa that captures the ingenuity of Africans are left understudied. Rather than digging into the pre-colonial Africa researchers focused more on colonial past due to the availability of written sources in abundance. Indeed the few attempts at reconstructing pre-colonial past of African communities were centred on the well-established centralized polities neglecting the non-centralised smaller ones. In line the efforts of the pioneers of Schools of history in Nigeria such as Jan Vansina, David Henige, E.J. Alagoa, and K.O. Dike, among others, this paper is a review of the positions of historians on the meaning and relevance of oral tradition in the study of African history. The paper adopts historical methodology in analysing the discourses on the use of oral sources in the study and reconstruction of African history.

Introduction

The writing of African History from the early times is basically formed out of oral sources. The reason for this includes the important fact that Sub-Saharan Africa societies did not use written techniques; most of their rich cultural heritages were therefore codified in their own memory either in arts such as chants and poetry, songs and music, proverbs, riddles and puzzles and rock arts, among others transmitted orally from one generation to the next generation. With this in mind, collecting oral histories became necessary. Indeed, the antiquity and richness of African oral traditions that had developed over centuries in place of written records aided in this effort of reconstructing African history. Its significance as a good source of History and more especially African History branded it as a field of great debate among many scholars of different academic fields of study i.e. Linguistic, History, Anthropology, Theology, and Philosophy etc. However, it is on this premise that this paper is written to examine the discourse on oral tradition and to further correct some misconception made on the subject matter.

Conceptual Clarification

An appropriate premise to commence this discourse is to embark on the clarification of the concept of oral tradition, because it has become a domain of great interest to scholars of different disciplines of knowledge as mentioned above.[1] Thus, much confusion had smeared the concept of 'Oral tradition'. For instance, there has been a significant misconception that oral tradition does not give accurate evidence enough for historical writing, or that history cannot be narrated based on oral tradition. Karin Barber argues in one of her recent scholarly essays that, virtually all new popular cultural forms in Africa have been shaped by techniques and conceptions. However, for a proper understanding of the phenomenon the concepts History and Oral tradition should be defined. History, in its broadest sense,

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[1] Deepak Aryal, *Oral Tradition and Communication,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, P.1

is the totality of all human past events, although a more realistic definition would limit it to the known past. Karl Max defines it as the relationship between man and his environment and of his environment on man.[2]Geoffrey Barraclough defines history as an attempt to discover on the basis of fragmentary evidence the significant things about the past.[3] E.H. Carr, on the other hand, sees history as a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past.[4] This shows that the past is only knowable through sources, which raises the fundamental question, what is a historical source? Historical source according to Edward Ives is anything material or immaterial that bears witness to the past,[5] which then allows historians to analyse, interprets, and reconstructs the knowledge of the past. A Source is a means (ladder) of reaching out to information about the past; it is anything left behind by the people of the past. Historical evidence therefore, is a concrete factual, truth or knowledge gotten through the rigorous evaluation and analysis of sources about the past[6] hence the classification of sources based on the mode of preservation – written, oral and material sources. Oral tradition is a means of acquiring knowledge about the past through the process of transmitting information from one generation to the next.[7]It signifies the absence of the knowledge of written or a recorded medium. According to Rosenberg, Oral Tradition "is the transmission of cultural items from one member to another, or others. Those items are heard, stored in memory, and, when appropriate, recalled at the moment of subsequent transmission."[8] The lesson we can draw from the above definitions is that, oral traditions are constantly used not only as

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[2] Barber, Karin, "Orality, the Media and New Popular Cultures in Africa," in Media, 2010.

[3] Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History,* London: Macmillan 1970 P. 15

[4] Carr, E.H., *What is History?* London: Penguins Books, 1961, P.30

[5] Martins, N.U., "The Position of Oral Tradition (Myths, Mythology and Legends) in History Records" E-Book

[6]www.hist.cam.ac.uk 19th June, 2014

[7]Eluwa, G.I.C., *Introduction to Historical Research and Writing* Onitsha: AFP Publishers Ltd, 1988, P.14

[8] Rosenberg, B.A, *The Complexity of Oral Tradition,* 1987, E-book, P.73-80

the most important sources for the history of peoples without writing, but also as the foundation of many written sources too, especially those of classical antiquity and of the early Middle Ages. Vansina recognized that oral tradition could be of potential value to historians, whether as proverbs, poetry/songs, lengthy historicized texts, or epics. He urged historians to regard these materials in much the same way as they had traditionally regarded written documents as capable of being used for both direct and indirect historical information.[9]

Therefore, the writing or the reconstruction of history required sources that are relevant to facts of concern (historical event). However, in the study of history there are many sources of history classified according to its nature, closeness to the event in question or based on its mode of preservation. Sources that are classified based on the closeness of the event are: Primary, Secondary and Tertiary sources. It can be further divided into its nature i.e. Written sources and Oral sources.[10]

Classification of Oral Tradition

Oral tradition has been classified into various forms by different scholars, authors or writers. For instance, Bernheimer tries to classify oral traditions into narratives, legends anecdotes, proverbs and historical lays.[11] D.F. McCall classified it into four main classes, namely Myths, aetiological stories, ancestral (tribal and family) stories and entertainments stories.[12] Philips Stevens Jr. classified his as myths, legends, songs and popular

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[9] Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology,* (Tr. Wright, H.M) London: Penguins Books, 1965, P.74

[10] Kwanashie, A.G., et.al (ed.) *Beyond Fairy Tales: Selected Historical Writings of Dr Yusuf Bala Usman,* Zaria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 2006, P.1

[11] Eluwa, *Op. Cit*. P.15

[12] Phillips Stevens, Jr. "The Uses of Oral Traditions in the Writing of African History," in Asiwaju A.I, and Michael Crowder (ed.)*Tarikh: Historical Method*, USA: Longman, 1978, P.21

history.[13] Jan Vansina has given his own classification to include Formulae; Poetry, lists, tales, and commentaries. These are further subdivided into the following: *Formulae*: - titles, slogans, didactic formulae and ritual formulae. *Poetry*: - historical, religious and personal. *Lists*: - place, names, personal names, *Tales*: - local and family tales, astrological myths, artist tales and personal memories. *Commentaries*: - legal precedents, auxiliary explanations, occasional comments.[14]

The above classification as pointed by the authors showed the different forms of oral tradition that we have. However, for a researcher to use it as an oral evidence in historical writing, he must have to examine for himself the context and value of each of the type. His assessment would be related to the circumstance surrounding the making of the tradition, the purpose it is meant to serve, the circumstance of its transmission, and the personality (intellectual, moral, physical, emotional, etc. quality) of the narrator or the transmitter. For more clarification on the various forms of oral tradition it is important for us to make the following brief but concise explanations:

Myth: - the word myth is derived from a Greek word *Mythos,* meaning the branch of knowledge which is indisputable, not subject to rational argument, as distinct from logos.[15] Philips Steven Jr. pointed out that myth explains the origin of things and why things happened the way they did, and it sets down rules for human behaviour.[16] A good example of myth in Nigerian history is the tradition of origin of the Yoruba and the story of Oduduwa the founder of Ife or the Yoruba cultural area, and that of the Hausa people and the story of Bayajida and the formation of the Hausa "Bakwai" or the Hausa states.

Folktales: - this contains many or same element with myth, it often offers explanations of peculiarities in animal and human behaviour and

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[13]Vansina, *Op. Cit*. P.4

[14] Deepak, *Op. Cit*. P. 63

[15] Stevens, *Op. Cit*. P.23

[16]*Ibid,* P.23

experience, and it may contain morals and express values worthy of emulation.[17] Moreover its recitation may appear to be controlled. Perhaps, only certain persons may tell folktales; but this is because these persons have demonstrated that they are good story-tellers; folktales are generally told at appointed times; but investigation will reveal that these are times of enforced leisure, or times when sharing in a bit of fantasy will not interfere with completion of task necessary to the promotion of the general welfare. When using these, the researcher most reconstructs the story by focusing on factual event away from fictional.[18]

Legend is another specific type of historical narrative that speaks of times since 'the beginnings' after the original culture founders had departed their earthly lives to assume positions of spiritual advisers, leaving the actual running of society in human control. The whole account derives some authentication by its association with personages, events, or places whose historicity is vouched for in other traditions, but the details of the events described are questionable historical veracity. For example in many parts of African history today, many people use the legends to explain the origin of existing institutions or conditions. In Yoruba land specifically, some traditional chiefs trace their origin to Ile-Ife even when they are not closely associated with the town. They only wanted to be linked with Ile-Ife to support aspirations to be classified as kings. Ile-Ife has become prestigious because of its historical importance as the cradle of Yoruba civilization.[19]

Song: This category includes poetry, epic, chants, and other verse forms which are not subject to restrictions of sort which govern myth. Songs are records of the times, but they can be more. In most instances their composers are relatively free to include statements of social criticism.[20]

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[17] Dele, J.F., *Historiography and Methods of Teaching History,* Ilesha: Conscience Books, 1986, P.37

[18] Stevens, *Op Cit.* P.24

[19]*Ibid*, P.24

[20]Eluwa, *Op.Cit.* P.14

From such sentiments the historian can reconstruct at last fragmentary pictures of the actual social conditions of the times, and for people's perceptions of and response to these conditions. Thus, song can provide him with the opportunity to bring to historical writing vitality aliveness, which is so often lacking in accounts driving from more conservative sources.

Jokes and riddles are obvious examples of traditional oral forms. They are learned from other people and change slightly with each retelling. A joke about a recent event may not have the depth in time usually they are associated with folk traditions. The fact that jokes and riddles spread so rapidly indicate that they addressed something important in the culture African society. This brings us to the main subject of this paper "a discourse on Oral sources as evidence" in historical writing.

Historical Discourse on the Status of Oral Sources:

There has been a very heated debate on the status and authenticity of oral tradition as a reliable historical source. Many western scholars have dismissed the use of oral traditions totally basing their stand or discourse on the senility of human memory, difficulty in chronological analysis, prone to easy distortion and that it is highly functional. Lord Raglan claimed that history is impossible without literacy because unless the records of events are written down the succeeding generations forget.[21] Yet this argument was countered by a European historian, Thomas Carlyle; who asserts that 'of all mankind, there is no tribe so rude that it has not attempted history, though several have not arithmetic enough to count five.'[22] This implies that, literacy is not the basis for historical consciousness but another means or mode of preserving the past. In regards to African history Hegel (1770-1831) asserts that "Africa is not a historical

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[21]Kwanashie, A.G., et. al, *A Little New Light: Selected Historical Writings of Abdullahi Smiths,* Zaria: ABU Press P.4

[22]ErnsttBreisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern,* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985 P.5

continent; it shows neither change nor development, the black people are capable of neither development nor education. As we see them today, so have they always been."[23] Trevor Roper was more assertive in his remark about the historicity of Africa, that

> *Perhaps in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness… and darkness is not a subject of history…we cannot therefore afford to amuse ourselves with the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe.[24]*

Here the emphasis is on written sources as the only legitimate source of history. Yet one cannot help but laugh at the Oxford's Professor who was stripped due to his gullible acceptance of the 'sacred distort-proof' written record in the popular fiasco of the 'Hitler's Diary.'[25] In support of the above argument A. P Newton contended that, "Africa has no history before the coming of Europeans. History only begins when men take to writing; primitive customs…was the concern of archaeologists, linguists and anthropologists.[26] The reliability of historical evidence is a question of methodology and not mode of preservation.

David Weigall declared that "*the distinction between oral and documentary evidence is not absolutely clear-cut. Much written evidence is the result of earlier oral traditions.*"[27] The mode of preservation of the

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[23]Fage, J.D., "The Development of African Historiography," in Ki-Zerbo J. (ed.) *General History of Africa: Methodology and African Prehistory,* London: HEB 1983 P.12

[24]*Ibid*, P.12

[25] Richards Evans, *In Defence of History,* London: Granta Books, 1997, Pp. 2-12

[26]Fage, *Op. Cit*. P.12

[27] David Weigall, "Historical Terms" in Mary Abbot, (ed.) *History Skills: A Student's Handbook,* London: Routledge P.113

objective past differs from place to place and time. Contrary to opinion held among Europeans a few decades ago, "illiterate societies" have had an interest in keeping the past alive by composing historical accounts. Oral traditions from Greece, Palestine and ancient Britain have gained respect as archaeology has demonstrated the authenticity of their content. In similar fashion, the oral histories of Africa are now more readily accepted as genuine expressions of historical curiosity.[28] The western stand against oral tradition has greatly affected the study of the African past, as many African historians came to rely on written materials as a *de-facto* historical material. To rely on written sources left behind by visitors from Europe and Arab travellers rather than Africans themselves, it is a risk repeating the ignorance, objectification, condescension and essentialism all too apparent in the treatment of 'natives' in imperial history.[29]

In fact, the mainstay of European or western historiography is anchored on older oral accounts such as Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, the Norse Sagas, and Beowulf, among others. Oral traditions had a significant impact upon not only recovery of African history but also that of other traditionally non-literate societies in the Pacific, the Americas, and elsewhere. Joseph Miller arguing against oral traditions claimed that oral traditions are shaped and continued to reshape versions of the past by power struggles, such as they are only rarely reliable vehicles of factual information. However, he concedes that oral traditions can be used to understand the cultural contexts of meaning rather than the sequence and causes of events.[30]

John Parker and Richard Rathbone argue that African historians are faced with two big battles concerning the status of oral traditions as a historical source:

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[28] Robert Hess, "Perspectives of Nigerian Historiography 1875-1971: The Historians of Modern Nigeria," A PhD Thesis 1972, Howard University, Washington DC, P.39

[29] John Parker and Richard Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction,* Oxford: OUP 2007 Pp. 48-49

[30]*Ibid*,

One was waged against an academic establishment sceptical about the possibility of recovering Africa's past. Some recent observers have seen this conservation as innately racist, a continuation of the attitudes faced by Du Bios and Hansberry in their efforts to claim a place for Africa in universal history. While some of the doubters might have been animated by racism, their objections were more frequently grounded in their understanding of what history was and thus what history could be. The other was methodological assault against the established ways of 'doing' history, aimed at circumventing the dearth of written records for much of the continent. The two were closely related to one another. But while the former has, by and large, being won, the latter is far from over, demanding an on-going inventiveness in the methods by which African history is researched and written.[31]

The racist onslaught was clearly pointed out by B. Swai that the status of oral traditions which are given the inferior status was as a result of racial superiority exhibited by the Europeans regarding Africans. Pre-colonial history of the native was, thus, unilaterally declared dead and buried because the natives had no history,[32] which was (is) aimed to deprive them of a sense of direction and revolutionary potential.[33] The Western scholars almost mistook written sources to mean history, and history as written sources.

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[31]*Ibid*, Pp.48-49

[32]Swai, B., "The Use of History-Towards the Sociology of Africanist Historiography," ABU History Research Zaria

[33] Usman, A.D., "Sketch on the Contours of African Historiography," in

Even though the tradition is not rich in quantitative data and even though they fail to record changes that are unconscious because they occur too slowly, they are still irreplaceable as evidence of the historical developments that occurred within various civilisations. For all its wealth of written documents, colonial history would be dry and forbidding without the contribution made by informants who, through oral tradition add the priceless African view of things.

J.F Ade-Ajayi[34] argued that, Africa have proven beyond doubt that its history is beyond the activities of European colonialists, an achievement that was made possible through the intensive use of oral traditions. The resurrection of the African past by oral traditions has added credibility to its value and status as a genuine historical source material, which Europeans and Americans also embraced the value of oral material for historical purposes. They, unlike the Africans, began to establish archives and documentation centres for oral material. From this they began to write the histories of hitherto voiceless groups in society. The use of oral material has transformed the writing of social history world-wide. However, having proven the veracity of oral tradition, Africans instead of properly grasping adequately its usage are now lagging behind, leading even to the decline in the importance of history in Africa.

J. Ki-Zerbo,[35] described oral tradition as a living museum of the whole stock of socio-cultural output stored up by peoples who are purported to have no written records. Oral tradition provides clothing and colour; it puts flesh on the bones of the past. He observed that most antagonists of oral tradition claimed that, it is functional and it serves to fulfil a social role, yet all human messages written or otherwise is functional by definition. Archival materials sometimes conceal a good many falsehood and generalizations beneath their objective appearance. He further argued that,

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[34] Ade-Ajayi, J.F., "History and Society" in Ogbogbo, C.B.N. and Okpeh, O.O., (ed.) *Interrogating Contemporary Africa: Dike Memorial Lectures 1999-2007,* Nigeria: HSN 2008 Pp.61-73

[35] Ki-Zerbo, "General Introduction" in Ki-Zerbo,*Op Cit.* Pp.1-9

an oral account loses its significance if it is confined in the straitjacket of a written document and severed from the environment of the audiences that gave it life. Moreover, for Africans, speech is a weighty matter, as it is embedded in proverbs and parables, therefore, transferring the content of an African oral tradition to the language of an industrialized country it loses weight and become obscurely useless. The coded and stereotype nature of oral tradition made some accounts to be distort-proof. However, oral tradition, like other sources of history, has its own weakness.

Hampate Ba, surmised in his article *Living Tradition*[36] that oral tradition is the only path that can lead us right into the history and spirit of the African people as it is the living memory of Africa. To wonder whether oral tradition can be regarded as trustworthy is not the proper question as that could amount to the denial of African past. The chain of written document/evidence, he argues, finds its origin in oral source which lies at the root of all human transmission. The validity of an oral tradition depends on the transmitter which by multiplier effect affects the veracity of written evidence. For the transmitter, there is always a strong bond between the man and the words he utters; the bond has a strong implication for him so much so that distortion is minimal. A real African traditionalist view oral tradition as a total knowledge. Therefore, oral tradition is not limited to legends, mythical and historical narratives recounted by 'griots' or old-story tellers. It is the great school of life. It deals with religion, with the natural sciences in such fields as mineralogy, medicine and the pharmacopoeia, etc.

Phillips Steven, Jr.[37] argued that the Western scholars' deliberate attempt to rule out oral traditions as historical source material is unjustifiable. Just as conscientious western historians have gone to great extent to record historical 'fact' in the immutable form of the written word, so too have many non-literate peoples carefully sought to preserve certain of their own

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[36]Hampate Ba, "Living Tradition" *ibid*, Pp.62-72

[37] Stevens, *Op. Cit*. Pp.21-30

historical traditions by other means. While others could be subject to gross distortion others are protected by regulations so strict as to keep the possibilities for alteration well within the range tolerated by western historians. It is the job of the historian to discover which elements in oral tradition are reliable as source of data, which are unreliable, and which can provide clues to the location of reliable sources elsewhere. The rejection of oral tradition by historians on the basis of their reliability and veracity in sub-Saharan Africa, has allowed a vast and rich wealth of historical data to go unrecorded. Therefore, for researcher to be able to tap into the great reservoir of sources about the African past must have a great measure of patience, and a degree of intuition or 'empathy.' The historian should know the nature of the tradition he is dealing with, the factors that might be responsible for its distortion and consult anthropological method if the need be, because every tradition has developed within a particular cultural context.

Jan Vansina,[38] regarded oral tradition as verbal messages which are reported statements from the past beyond the present generation. This specifies that the message must be oral statements spoken, sung, or called out on musical instruments only. He also contended that there is no neat line of communication reserved for all oral traditions. Thus, this information flows along the usual channels of communications.

It is important to realize that we should not stick to a model that handles oral messages as if they were written, with originals and copies, rather than statements of information with all the flexibility of oral expression and their evanescence. In his defence of oral tradition Vansina stated that multiple flow does not necessary imply multiple distortion only, rather perhaps the reverse. Jan Vansina in his work referred to the work of Cohen who used historical gossip in great effect, and Rosaldo, who used personal reminiscences and also agrees that a single line of transmission simply does not often exist. Rather most oral tradition is told by many people to

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[38] Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History,* Madison: WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985

many people, messages that are transmitted beyond the generation that gave rise to them they become oral tradition. Thus, information concerning a situation or event that is older than the lifetime of the person involved, it tagged traditional. It does not matter whether the information was learned from a member of a previous generation or from a contemporary. In any case, the tag also refers to a memory of memory. The book which still stands as one of the most authoritative on oral tradition defines oral tradition and addresses it in comparison with oral history. It addressed the dynamic process of oral tradition and the process by which it is processed. In his final chapters, he addressed the limitations as well as the uniqueness of oral traditions stating that the part oral tradition plays in the reconstruction of the past varies according to place and time. He perceives oral sources as any piece of historical information transmitted by word of mouth from person to person. It may be from specialist narrator or so-called traditional historian to special audience or lay people or from ordinary narrator to any lay audience. The occasion for the narration may be special or ordinary, formal or informal.

Eluwa grouped oral sources into two forms; eye-witness accounts and second-hand narratives. In his work *Introduction to Historical Research and Writing*,[39] assessed the work of Jan Vansina who classified oral tradition into;

   a) Formulae (title, slogans, didactic formulae and ritual formulae)
   b) Poetry (historical, panegyric, religious, personal)
   c) Lists (places-names, personal names)
   d) Tales (local and family tales, and personal memories)
   e) Commentaries (legal precedents, auxiliary explanations, occasional comments).

However, the degree of historical truth contained in each of these forms or types tends normally to vary. The researcher would have to examine and

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[39]Eluwa, *Op. Cit.*

assess for himself the content and value of each type. His assessment would be related to the circumstances surrounding the making of the tradition, the purpose it is meant to serve, the circumstance of its transmission, the conditions or techniques governing the transmission, and the personality of the narrator or transmitter.

Chieka Ifemesia,[40] posited that, one of the most significant factor needed for the oral historical interpretation is that the interpreter must know both the language he is interpreting from and the language he is interpreting into. To be truly and ultimately successful, the historian of today must know both his continent and something of the rest of the world, and he must also be aware of things beyond what is commonly regarded as history. It is largely the failure to encompass these exacting requirements that can make so much of oral tradition today disoriented and fragmented.

The first major contribution made on African history in particular by historiography is the reawakening of historians of the world over to the unique treasures enshrined in oral sources, the material which doubtless had hitherto been also used, but rather slightly and peripherally in historical reconstruction. There were, as usual, the initial objections and protests raised against the new emphasis and orientation. But with respect to the deficiencies of oral tradition as historical material often pointed out then, it soon became patent that every historical source had its own peculiar inadequacies, not least of the entire written source, whose undoubted advantages were sometimes stressed out of proportion. Ifemesia stressed that the advantage that oral tradition has over written sources which is mostly ignored is that an information may be inclined to say more in conversation than in writing about a subject. What one may consider unsafe and risky, or untactful and undiplomatic to commit to writing, one feel a little freer to talk about. Talking can also foster thinking, and a word or a phrase or a sentence introduced in the course of conversation may

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[40]ChiekaIfemesia, "Current Demands of African Historiography: The Igbo Example," in Mamman, M.A., (et.al) (ed.) *Facts, Values and Nigerian Historiography: Essays in Honour of Professor Abdullahi Smith,* Zaria: ABU Press 1980 Pp.37-63

open up new vistas for further discussion and investigation. The timbre of voice and cadence of emotion displayed by a respondent can suggest volumes that can never be communicated in cold print.Oral tradition itself is significant, it also become manifest that the very preservation and transmission of oral tradition itself was fundamental to the survival of any people, as a people from generation to generation. One case of the significance of oral tradition was of black Americans who recently traced back their origin just of recent to 2014 through a song that has been passed from generation to generation.

Martins N. Uchenna[41] refers to oral tradition as a process and its end products are messages which are based on previous information passed through by an oral form. Human society has transformed itself into literate society with the aid of tradition, for instance, for the 900, 000 years that Homo sapiens have being in existence evidence of literacy emerged only about 60, 000 years ago; yet many oral cultures have developed over the years that are respected today. The modern world is a product of oral societies as such, literacy and in our case, written source should be seen as an innovation or development to compliments oral traditions in terms of preservation of the past and not as a replacement. At the disposal of the historian which is the possibilities of gaining the accurate knowledge of events and actions that happened in the past which are no longer available for scrutiny or direct study, anything therefore material or immaterial that bears witness to the past is a historical document or source. Thus, any information actually that survives from the past is a potential source of history. Oral tradition constitutes an integrative and cultural institution which embodies the precepts and values that are permanent including those that are changing in that society. Oral tradition encompasses all aspects or fields of human endeavours and is different from personal knowledge that is an aggregate of the community's culture handed down from one generation to another.

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[41] Martins, N.U., "The Position of Oral Tradition (Myths, Mythology and Legends) in Historical Records" E-Book

The concept of oral tradition in African historiography, according to E.J Alagoa,[42] began in ancient Egypt. The role of oral tradition in Egyptian historiography was attested to by Herodotus in the fifth century BC. He argued that 'the invention of writing in a society would reduce the degree to which reliance is placed on oral testimony but cannot eliminate communication altogether.' There are certain segments of human society that cannot be alienated from oral communication and orality remains the means of preservation. Therefore, oral tradition and written records can only work in tandem with each other. The much ado Western historiography and its emphasis on written records had its origins in oral tradition, as it evolved from the Greek and Roman traditions that were essentially oral based. Oral tradition is a very broad category of cultural phenomena which come into being without benefit of writing through oral expression. Put differently, the corpus of oral utterances embrace a large variety of genres – myths, legends, poetry, folklores, etc. termed *oral literature*, the traditions that have a focus on the past have been classified into two categories, namely; oral tradition, and oral history. They provide information to the historian of oral societies; it encompassed oral histories, testimonies of contemporaries of the events. He contended that, the Homeric epics, and the scriptures of all religions are products of oral tradition which the West recognize and revere, and based on this infallible fact, oral tradition could be regarded as a universal tradition as it is pervasive in all cultures.

It is common knowledge, argued Abdullahi Smith[43] that the status of orally preserved tradition as source material which can legitimately be used for historical reconstruction has greatly altered in the world of historical studies in recent times. The alteration has broken the monopoly of the written record as the only legitimate source of historical information. Oral traditions are all pervasive in, especially, non-literate societies, and in

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[42]Alagoa, E.J., *The Practice of History in Africa: A History of African Historiography,* Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publication 1995

[43]Kwanashie, *Op. Cit*. Pp.3-9

situations where the written records exist; well preserved oral traditions can serve as litmus test to their authenticity, accuracy, and reliability of the more distant past. This is particularly so as an *apparatus criticus* has been developed for establishing the reliability of oral tradition as a legitimate historical source material. The claim that oral traditions are inferior to other sources especially the written record, and as such be treated with extreme caution is no longer tenable. In essence, the rational standpoint is surely that all historical source material must be treated in same fashion. Written records could be a fertile source of corruption and misleading, for instance, police records. An anonymous written document of unknown provenance is of little value to the historian in comparison with an oral document of which the author and the circumstances of its compilation are known. It is undoubtedly true that oral documents of a certain type being couched in a metaphorical language are difficult to interpret, yet still extremely valuable for historical reconstruction. While it is comparatively easy to destroy or lose a written document and wipe out all written record of a particular event (especially political documents during crisis), but it is comparatively difficult to wipe out a man's memory of things he came to know especially state secrets, likewise, law can effectively prohibit men from preserving written documents but cannot effectively forbid them to remember. The reliability of a historical source material is not a question of preservation but that of content.

Oral Sources as Historical Evidence

The term oral tradition in history is referred to any pieces of historical information that is transmitted by word of mouth from person to person. As a source of history, it may take the form of an Eye-witness account, a narration of an event based on eye-witness especially a survivor or a victim of a particular historic event. Testimony of an individual narrating his/her involvement in an event is another source of historical information. In the same vein, some pre-colonial tradition preserved such kind of information in songs, proverbs, chants, folktales, etc. looking at these; it shows Oral

source as been closer to a course of the event.[44] Therefore, it is evident enough to consider it as a primary source for historical writing. This is different from "hear-say" account or the second person narrative. The first account narrative of an eye-witness or the person given testimony is the primary source or oral evidence that can be taken as evidence in historical writing. A hear-say account and rumour on the other hand, may be considered as a secondary source of history or oral tradition because of the possibility given some assumption, or erroneous information. It is important to note that oral sources of history give the latest information about the present (not concerned with the past) they arise in situations of tension and social unrest etc.[45]

Both primary and secondary sources, as pointed earlier, are essential for the reconstruction of African history. For example, the African past with special reference to pre-literature period. Both of them are transmitted by words of mouth. It is important to further distinguish oral tradition from oral evidence. For instance, oral tradition deals with the collection of the more distant past which had been transmitted for several generations and has become more or less common property of the society e.g. the Yoruba people believe that Oduduwa was their ancestor, as contain in their oral traditions.[46] On the other hand, oral evidence by its nature is of a contemporary nature transmitted from mouth to mouth like oral tradition too, but it is not yet accepted as the property of the society. It deals with issues that are recent or contemporary. It concerns it with what happened in most recent past and not the deep past, and as such, historians can still interview actual participants in the events in which they are interested. Take for instance, the recent Nigerian civil war is still of a contemporary nature and the participants in the war can still be interviewed.

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[44]Agaba, E.J., "Methods and Techniques of Historical Research" in Mike O. Odey, et'al (ed.) *History Research and Methodology in Africa: Essays in Honour of Professor Charles Creswell Jacobs,* Makurdi: Aboki Publishers

[45]Eluwa, *Op Cit*. P.15

[46]Kwanashie, *A Little ...Op. Cit*.

Differentiating between oral tradition and oral evidence, Jan Vansina has this to say

> *Oral tradition consists of all verbal testimonies which are reported statements concerning the past not all oral sources are oral? Eyewitness accounts even when given orally do not come within the sphere of oral tradition because they are not reported statements.*[47]

Furthermore, oral tradition could be collected from eyewitnesses through oral discussion, interviewing people verbally or using tape recorders etc. Oral evidence also includes a way of collecting information on pre-literate society or even of contemporary historical events particularly biographical writings.

The assessment of oral tradition like any other source of history is done to ascertain the credibility and trustworthiness of the informant as well as the reliability and authenticity of the information. In the assessment of the primary and other historical sources Y.B Usman advanced five criteria: distance from the event; veracity of the recorder of the information; form of preservation; feasibility and corroboration. He added that oral traditions need to be examined in terms of the world outlook which informs them because they present historical information from the point of view and perspectives of particular individuals, families, dynasties, clans, polities and cultures.

In the view of Eluwa however, the historian should know the nature of the form of the tradition he is dealing with, what regulations, if any, control its use and shape its structure and how strict are these regulations, he must search for factors both within the society and beyond it, which may have acted to distort the tradition and understand the nature of these factors. A tradition may be expressed in an expressive of certain symbolic forms

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[47]Alagoa, *Op. Cit*. P.11

understandable only within a particular culture and the vehicle of such expression is language, the historian thus must be extremely cautious in working through translations even through the use of a lingua franca. David Henige underscores the transformative nature of languages stressing how languages transform with the passing of generations. For instance, the English word 'disinterested' is formally meant 'devoid of biases' yet today the word does not mean anything more than a synonym of 'uninterested or not interested'. The argument here is that a tradition (any form of oral traditions) written using the word 'disinterested' in the past generation (s) translating today in other language(s) may completely lost its meaning. The task is herculean both with patience, care and the ability to transcend his cultural and educational biases; the historian can assess and make use of oral tradition as guides for comparative research.[48] It is central to evaluate both the informant and the information as pointed out above. In evaluating the informant the following questions are to be raised: what is the informant position in the society? How knowledgeable is he in the area of the researcher's enquiry? Was he, in the circumstance, in a position to know (may be through his father, grandfather or custodians of the tradition) and narrate accurately the issue or event being investigated? How far is his narrative performance influenced by his society's expectation? What are his biases or prejudices? Is he a man of integrity? How clear and vivid is his thinking and expression? Thus question of unreliability can be overcome by checking the consistency with which an individual narrate the tradition on different occasions and by collecting, if possible, several testimonies on one event. The analysis of the information required the evaluation of the internal and external consistencies of the tradition. The internal consistency is concern with the factual content and form of the narrative – the more internally consistent a set of data is,the more likely it is to be accurate. In evaluating external consistency the researcher will try to find out how consistent the piece of information before him is with other pieces of information about the same event or experience. It is necessary to

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[48] . David Henige, *Oral Historiography,* London: Longman Group Limited 1984

examine and compare various versions of the same tradition given by either the same person at different times or different persons at different times to establish corroboration.

Vansina urges historians and researchers to consider the following before using oral tradition as a reliable source for meaningful historical reconstruction: the variability of the message, the casualness of transmission, the possibility of the feedback, the inherent biases of interpretation and above all the selectivity of the sources, ethnocentric and elite oriented as they may appear. The point that should be derived here is that oral traditions, like other historical sources, have their shortcomings and therefore are subject to rigorous assessment.

The author states that chronology and interdependency of the sources of history constitute one fundamental limitation of oral traditions. Perhaps, without chronology, there can be no history, since it would not be possible to distinguish what proceeds from what follows. The deficiencies can only be partially remedied by corroborating oral tradition with other sources which Vansina referred to as the 'outside sources' such as linguistic, archaeological, astronomical, and written sources among others. For example, when there is a link between archaeological sites and an asserted event in oral tradition, dating could be obtained. This had been the case of the local tradition in northern Rwanda where Ndorwa kingdom claims that the site was occupied by two different kings, although only one was visible. Archaeological excavation confirmed this claim to be correct and dated the whole event to the eighteenth century, which corresponds with genealogical calculation of the people. It should be noted that not all the times do the archaeological evidence correlate with oral tradition. Vansina give the example of archaeological excavation in Buhaya (Tanzania), where Mr. P. Schmidt dug on the spot where according to tradition the tower of Babel had once stood and found iron smelting site dating back to 500 B.C. Similarly, the claim by Luba people of Shaba and their neighbours, the Songye, to have emigrated from the area of Lake Kisale has not been confirmed by the archaeological excavation. In Dinka

territory, some sites are said to be remains of former Funj settlements where pottery was found that was dissimilar from that of the present while the others were remains of Luel settlements whose pottery was similar to present wares which were thought to have been settled by one's forebears. Both designations stem from oral tradition but the findings of the excavated sites reveal information contrary to the claims of the traditions of the people. Another good example that is quite obvious to all is the failure by the Biblical archaeologists to date the age of Abraham. Vansina's argument suggests that if the content of oral tradition correlate with the 'outside' source(s) (archaeological, astronomical, written or any other form of sources that can provide historical data) it is more likely to be accurate and therefore reliable.

The researcher would have to examine and assess for himself the content and value of each type of tradition he is dealing with. His assessment would be related to the circumstances surrounding the making of the tradition, the purpose it is meant to serve, the circumstances of its transmission, the conditions or techniques governing the transmission, and the personality (intellectual, moral, physical, emotional etc. quality) of the narrator or transmitter of the tradition.

Conclusion

The relevance of any historical source material in historical reconstruction is a function of its content (factual) not how it has been preserved or transmitted. Oral Tradition therefore, should be freed from the restrictions imposed on it by the old-fashion view of inferiority because it occupied more paramount position in reconstruction of history particularly of non-literate societies. Well-preserved oral tradition is the proper material to use in checking the accuracy of written documents of the more distant past also. It is a well-known fact that, written source material is susceptible to gross distortions and corruptions. The crucible of critical methods should not be applied only to oral tradition but to all information about the past provided by all historical sources. To reject oral traditions as unreliable source for resuscitating the past is to reject sources of whatever form as no

particular source has monopoly of reliability. However oral tradition, like all other sources should be subjected to thorough assessment and evaluation to establish its authenticity and reliability before it should be used.

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THE NIGERIAN PETROLEUM INDUSTRY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

SAMSON, Ele
Department of History
Gombe State University

Abstract

The petroleum industry is an important component of the economic history of Nigeria. Indeed, equally having its influence on the political dynamics of the country. The paper through the evaluation and interpretation of secondary sources, indicated the significance of the industry to the Nigerian economy and society to include the provision of employment opportunities, sources of government revenue and the acquisition of foreign reserves, the financing of National Development Plan, socio-economic infrastructure development, internationalization of Nigeria, and the production of a wide variety of petroleum products. The paper contends that some developments in the oil industry since independence have constituted the problematic affecting its ability to be beneficial to the various social classes in the country. These included the quest for resource control by the Niger Delta, corruption in the industry, environmental degradation, the rise of militancy and so on. It argued that the government has, through its policies attempted to proffer solution to the problems in the oil and gas sector of the Nigerian economy with little success recorded. The work concluded with some suggestions as the way forward.

Keywords: Petroleum Industry, OPEC, Multi-National Oil Companies, NNPC, Oil Revenue, Environmental Degradation, Corruption, Militancy, Government's Intervention, Way Forward

Introduction

The discovery of oil and gas in some regions and nations of the world has led to the social and economic developments of such areas and the improvement of the standard of living of their citizenry. This is true of Norway, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Ukase (2009:248). But can this be said of Nigeria? The answer to this question will be unearthed in the course of evaluating the Nigerian petroleum industry from a historical standpoint.

For an effective discourse on the issue, the paper is divided into some sections viz: the introduction, historical foundation of oil exploration and exploitation in Nigeria including the commercialization of the products, the significance of the petroleum industry to the Nigerian economy and society, contending issues in the sector since independence, the government's attempt at addressing them and the way forward after which a conclusion is drawn.

Historical antecedants of oil exploration and exploitation in Nigeria and its marketing

Nigeria is the leading oil producer in continental Africa and the sixth largest producer in the world (Onya, 2017:141). The preliminary oil exploration in the country dates back to between 1938 – 1955 when Shell D'Arcy (Shell British Petroleum) had monopoly over the exploration of oil and gas in Nigeria. Overtime, however, other Multi-National Companies were given the license to explore for oil in the country such as Mobil Producing (Nigeria) Ltd in 1955. However, the grand discovery of oil in the country took place in 1956 and the commercial exploitation of same proceeded 2 years later from the Oloibiri Oil Fields which comprised of 22 oil wells where a total of 1.9 million barrels valued at 0.2 million naira was produced in 1958 (Ayuba and Chris, 2014:577 & 578; Ite et al, 2013).

The later abandonment of sole concession policy paved way for the introduction of exclusive exploration rights and this further lured many

Multi-National Oil Companies to operate in Nigeria. These according to Ite et al (2013) included Texaco Overseas Nigeria Petroleum Company Unlimited, Amoseas and Gulf Oil Company in 1961 while Societe Africaine des Petroles (SAFRAP) later known as Elf Nigeria Ltd, Tennessee Nigeria Ltd (Tenecco) and Azienda General ed Italiana Petroli (AGIP) came to the scene in 1962. Again, Companies such as ENI and Philips Oil Company were noted in 1964 while Pan Ocean Oil Corporation surfaced in 1972. It is relevant however to note that, the constitution of Nigeria states that all minerals, gas and oil found in the nation belonged to the Federal Government. Therefore, the Multi-National Oil Companies operating in the country necessarily appropriate part of their revenue to the Federal Government.

The necessity for efficient marketing of the oil resources from Nigeria led to her membership of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1971. Basically, however, the organization was formed to take decisions on oil output and also broker favourable prices for the oil resources of member countries at the international market. As a result of this development, Nigerian oil made its appearance in the world oil market. Apart from Nigeria, other members of this organization include Algeria, Ecuador, Gabon, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela. Although a formidable organization, OPEC is confronted with competition from non-OPEC oil producing countries for share in the world oil market. This therefore indicates that OPEC did not have exclusive monopoly over oil production and trade on the global front. Intense competition consequent upon oil gluts often created a scenario whereby some members adopted some practices of selling below official oil prices or gave out discount to buyers all in the bid to sell their products (Okogu, pp.113 & 115).

Apart from being a member of OPEC, the country equally constituted the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in 1977 through the merging of the then Nigerian National Oil Corporation (NNOC) with the Federal Ministry of Mines and Steel. Again, the government embarked on

the Nationalization of B.P holdings in 1979 changing its name from Shell B.P. to Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC). All these were done with the aim of having control of the Nigerian oil industry which was hitherto under the sway of the expatriates.

Indeed, the NNPC played strategic roles in the Nigerian petroleum industry since its establishment which include the following:

> ➤ It serves a medium through which the government regulates and participates in the oil sector i.e, oil exploration and production.
> ➤ The joint ventures and collaborative principles between the government and the multi-national oil companies operating in Nigeria are managed by the NNPC.
> ➤ The corporation is equally charged with the task of up-stream and down-stream developments in the oil industry.
> ➤ It regulates and supervises on behalf of the government, activities in the industry.
> ➤ It sees to the implementation of government policy direction in the Nigerian oil industry. (See, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation).

Indeed, since its discovery, oil production levels had never been constant as there had been periods of recorded increase and decrease coupled with fluctuations in oil prices at the world market (Ayuba and Chris, 2014:577). In the 1970s, Nigeria benefitted tremendously from oil production when she experienced the oil boom and wealth. From over 70 million tons in 1970, crude oil production rose to more than 100 million tons in 1974 positioning Nigeria as the 5th major exporter of oil world-wide at that time consequent upon the securing of favourable market in North America and Europe, the minimal sulphur content of Nigeria's oil, non-interference in the political issues in the then Middle East (Olurode, 2012:176) including increase in oil prices at the international market. Holistically therefore, from the more than 2 million barrels per day in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with a decline in the 1980s due to the economic crisis of that time,

production of crude oil in the country rose to 2.5 million barrels per day in 2004. (NNPC, Industry History). This was what Okorie (2005) also observed hence indicated that, Nigeria has an estimated 35 million barrels of oil reserve and produces 2.5 million barrels of oil daily and in 2005 alone, the Nigerian Oil Industry constituted about 40% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and approximately 95% of export.

It is pertinent to note at this juncture that, more than 18 Multi-National Oil Companies are currently involved in oil exploration and exploitation in the oil fields of the Niger Delta through the application of the Off-Shore and On-Shore oil extracting techniques. However, the dominant players in the Nigerian oil industry include Dutch Shell, Exxon/Mobil, ENI/AGIP, Total Fina Elf and Chevron/Texaco producing 99% of crude oil in the country (See, Okorie, 2005; Ite et al, 2013). The offshore oil drilling platform operated by some Multi-National Oil Companies is a scientific procedure involving the drilling of a well-bore to the rock formations below the sea-beds for the purpose of exploring and extracting the petroleum deposits therein. It is remarkable to note that even water as deep as 10,000 feet could be drilled through the off-shore drilling technique. An illustration of Off Shore oil facility in Nigeria is the Royal Dutch Shell Bonga Oil Field. It is the largest in the country and located 75 miles off-shore with the capacity of producing 200,000 barrels of oil and 150 million standard cubic feet of gas daily (Olali and Ekundayo, 2014:571). On the other hand, the On-Shore oil operation involves the drilling of deep holes below the earth surface to extract oil and gas preserved in the rock formations.

Significance of the petroleum industry to the Nigerian society and economy

Despite the presence of expatriates in the oil and gas sector of the Nigerian economy, it has played tremendous role in the provision of employment opportunities for the citizenry thereby preventing an overt unemployment rate in the country. Between 1970 -1974 employments by the oil companies in Nigeria cuts across managerial, professional, intermediate

and supervisory, clerical and secretarial, skilled and unskilled labour amongst others. The number of Nigerians employed in the sector rose from 6,455 in 1970-1972 to 4,686 between 1973 to 1974. The table below captures this succinctly thus:

Employment: Oil Exploration Companies

Category	1970 - 1972		1971 - 1972		1972 - 1973		1973 - 1974	
	Nig.	Non-Nig.	Nig.	Non-Nig.	Nig.	Non-Nig.	Nig.	Non-Nig.
Management	60	97	24	82	11	53	13	65
Professional	410	549	511	358	642	378	791	683
Intermediate and Supervisory	609	518	481	212	555	162	533	34
Clerical & Secretarial	826	10	839	6	909	4	1,142	1
Skilled Labour	2,329	-	1,319	-	1,415	-	1,479	-
Unskilled Labour	2,003	-	649	-	829	-	622	-
Others	218	-	63	-	45	-	106	-
Total	6,455	1,174	3,886	658	4,406	597	4,686	583

Source: Extracted from Lai Olurode, "From Agricultural Export Economy to Petroleum: A Political Economy of Social Change" in M.A Mamman et al (eds) Seminar on the Nigerian Economy and Society since the Berlin Conference, vol.1, Zaria press, 2012. P.195.

Again, given that the NNPC since its commercialization in 1988, established some strategic business units such as oil exploration and production, gas development, refining, distribution, petrol chemicals, engineering and commercial investments, these also led to the provision of jobs to the citizenry. And, infact, in Rivers State alone, 100,000 persons were employed in the petroleum industry (Onya, 2017:153). It is equally instructive to note that, the oil industry influences the establishment and emergence of various petrol and or pumping stations across the country in

contemporary times offering enormous employment openings for those with secondary education as fuel attendants who sold the products directly to the masses.

It equally facilitates the acquisition of science and technology by Nigerians in order to man the operations in the industry which to a considerable extent is anchored on the twin platform of technological and scientific know-how (Jibril, 1994:173). This knowledge is necessary for the On-shore and Off-shore crude oil exploration and exploitation.

The petroleum industry is also instrumental to the generation of more than 80% of government revenue and 90% of foreign exchange earnings (Asiodu, 1994:201). Therefore, its role in the finance of national budgets in Nigeria cannot be underestimated. Indeed, oil revenue in actual terms rose from 11.03 billion naira between 1967-1975 to 1.6 trillion naira in the period 1993 – 1998 and 51 trillion naira between 2010 - May 2015 (Ndujihe, August 2016).

The economic relevance of petroleum can further be gleaned in diverse ways for instance, Gasoline provides fuel for internal combustion engines hence mostly used in vehicles and machines. Distillates are useful for the production of kerosene and diesel. Diesel fuels are for heavy vehicles, trucks, ships and industrial machinery while kerosene provides the heating fuel for cooking. Distillates also produce a wide variety of waxes that are transformed into tablet coatings, candles and so on.

Again, petro-chemical substances are processed into varied products such as anti-freeze, bases for paints, cleaning agents, detergents, dyes, plastics, synthetics rubber and solvents. Similarly, a wide variety of lubricants in the form of greases and oil are produced from petroleum to lubricate machinery, sewing needles, doors, surgical medical equipment. In addition, the by-product of petroleum such as tar is utilized for road construction (World of Earth Science, Encyclopaedia, 2003). The Aviation industry also finds it valuable as fuel for air-crafts is derived from it. The significance of the petroleum industry is therefore beyond the provision of fuel /energy. It

is critical to the functionality of fertilizer, pharmaceutical, cosmetics and plastic industries and various small and medium scale enterprises operating in the country.

Furthermore, the oil and gas sector Jibril (1994:173) contends is fundamental to the rapid economic development of a given nation much more than diamonds, precious metal, stones and gold. He however maintains that the place of agriculture in a given economy cannot be under-estimated and petroleum cannot supersede the former in the hierarchy of importance, but that the petroleum industry can trigger an agrarian revolution through the fertilizer being manufactured.

Again, oil revenue was utilized to finance the National Development Plan of 1975 – 1980. Unlike the preceding ones that depended partly on external financing. It therefore aided the construction of massive roads, the re-construction of existing ones including bridges, the expansion of educational facilities, telecommunications, ports and water resources. (See, Asiodu, 1994:199 - 200). Although much is still required to be done in the educational sector, the revenue acquired from the oil and gas sector has aided the financing and development of the Nigerian educational sector. Indeed, not only were school infrastructures provided, it has also contributed to the overseas training of a number of academic staff in tertiary institutions. However, much is still needed to be done to forestall the recurrent strike actions by teachers/lecturers demanding for not only the implementation of the UNESCO benchmark but the redress of other basic pressing educational needs.

The petroleum industry attracts foreign investors to a country; for it is a highly capital intensive industry yet offers better returns to investors. Thus, according to Jibril (1994:173) the petroleum industry strategically earned a country international recognition before the powerful nations of the world which is connected with the fact that there are foreign investments and expatriates working in the sector, including the need to ensure security of world energy supply. Wittingly or unwittingly, the politics of oil creeps

into that nation as it becomes prone to international intervention, control and manipulations.

Again, Nigeria's role in peace keeping missions to countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Lebanon, the Former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Sudan was made possible as a result of the enormous oil revenue accruing to the country and the earmarking of some into her defense budget. Indeed, according to Onya (2017:142 &143) in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone, it cost Nigeria an estimated $12 billion U.S Dollars and more than 2000 soldiers were lost. Thus, the United Nations, the Western World including African nations recognized the significant contributions of Nigeria in the sustainability of peace on the continent.

The oil and gas sector has no doubt generated a lot of wealth for the nation since independence yet, it is relevant to note that it equally has its negative consequences which included the near abandonment of the agricultural sector and the recourse to food importation financed by oil revenue. For instance, Nigeria's food import value rose from 57.7 million naira in 1970 to 3474.5 million in 1990 and 176485.9 million in 2004 (Akawu, 2007:176). Recently however, there is a renewed effort to resuscitate the agricultural sector encouraging Nigerians to return to the farm consequent upon the decline in oil prices at the world markets and a corresponding dwindling oil revenue to the government and foreign reserve.

Again, the petroleum sector more than anything else is responsible for the negligence of the solid mineral sector of the Nigerian economy all of which could have complemented petroleum to considerably boost government revenue if they had been developed concurrently. For instance, the various States in Nigeria are endowed with the following solid minerals as demonstrated in the table below:

Solid Minerals in Nigeria

State	Solid Minerals
Abia	Brine, Iron ore, Lignite, Kaolin, Clay
Adamawa	Barytes, Salt, Calciumlaterites, Marble, Gypsum, Clay
Akwa Ibom	Clay, Glass, Sand, Beutonite
Anambra	Kaolin, Limestone, Marble
Bauchi	Limestone, Columbite, Iron ore, Tin, Kaolin
Bayelsa	-
Benue	Tin, Columbite, Kaolin, Gypsum
Borno	Gypsum, Iron ore, Feldspar, Limestone, Clay
Cross River	Limestone, Baryte, Uranium, Bentonite
Delta	Lignite, Gypsum, Tar sand, Silica
Ebonyi	Salt, Limestone, Lead, Zinc, Gypsum
Edo	Gypsum, Tar sand, Lignite, Marble
Ekiti	Tantalite, Quarta, Kaolin, Sand, Clay, Gold, Feldspar
Enugu	Coal, Clay, Limestone, Silica, Iron ore, Lead
Gombe	Gypsum, Columbite, Lead, Zinc, Tin, Iron ore, Clay
Imo	Limestone, Lead, Zinc, Ore, Kaolin, Clay
Jigawa	Kaolin, Tourmaline, Copper, Iron ore, Clay
Kaduna	Gold, Gemstone, Talc, Zinc, Clay, Iron ore
Kano	Tin, Zinc, Lead, Clay, Copper, Kaolin
Katsina	Marble, Kaolin, Feldspar, Iron ore
Kebbi	Kaolin, Salt, Clay, Limestone, Iron ore
Kogi	Limestone, Clay, Gold, Iron ore, Coal, Marble
Kwara	Iron ore, Marble, Limestone, Clay, Feldspar
Lagos	Iron ore, Marble, Limestone, Clay, Feldspar
Nasarawa	Iron ore, Marble, Coal, Lead, Zinc, Tin
Niger	Glass, Gold, Iron ore
Ogun	Limestone, Chalk, Clay, Kaolin, Phosphate, Tar sand
Ondo	Bitumen, Limestone, Kaolin, Iron ore

Osun	Gold, Clay, Limestone, Kaolin, Granite
Oyo	Dolomite, Kaolin, Marble, Iron ore, Clay, Gemstone
Rivers	Silica, Sand, Clay
Sokoto	Kaolin, Gypsum, Salt, Marble, Limestone, Gold
Taraba	Baryte, Bauxite, Iron ore
Yobe	Gypsum, Limestone, Clay, Kaolin
Zamfara	Gold, Mica
FCT Abuja	Marble, Kaolin, Clay, Tin, Lead, Zinc

Source: Table constructed based on the information provided in The Week, April 30th, 2001, p. 13

Issues in the Nigerian petroleum industry since independence

The Nigerian petroleum industry like all other establishments ever constituted in human societies is not exempted from challenges. It is therefore confronted with issues bordering on the quest for resource control by the Niger Delta, corruption, environmental degradation, militant onslaughts and so on. These are examined in turn below:

The quest for resource control

The clamour for resource control by the people of the Niger Delta is anchored amongst other things on the need to re-claim ownership and control of their oil rich land which was lost to the colonialists consequent upon colonial policies and legislations on land the trend of which transcended to the Post Independence Nigeria as successive governments sustained it in the diverse decrees and constitutional laws (Ayuba and Chris, 2014:580).

A study conducted by Obi (2004:269) has shown that the discovery of oil and its exploitation resulted in the loss of control of such natural resources to the federal government and the low revenue accruing from other sectors of the economy coupled with the SAP induced economic hardship of the 1980s, intensified the request for more revenue from the federal

government and even resource control by the Niger Delta States. It further indicated that the politicization of revenue allocations impacted on Nigeria's inter- governmental fiscal relations all of which heightened intra-ruling class struggles for access to, and control of the oil resource hence, questioning the continuous existence of federal hegemony in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country such as Nigeria. It maintained that the relations between the oil minorities of the Niger Delta and the federal state was affected not just by the centrally controlled oil revenue by the latter but by the shift from the principle of revenue allocation on the basis of derivation to that of population and equality of states which tilted in favour of big ethnic nationality groups culminating in agitations and demands for a return to the status quo to promote equity and justice in the sharing formula of oil rents or outright resource control.

Yet, the assertion of ownership of oil resources in Nigeria by the Niger Delta people has been challenged. On this note, Usman and Abba (2005:30) revealed clearly that, the petroleum deposits in the Niger Delta "did not drop from the sky. These sediments are made up of marine deposits and also soil containing vegetables and other organic materials, including human and animal faeces and remains, which were washed away from farmlands, pastures and forests all over Nigeria … and carried by the Niger to form its delta and all the minerals in it." It was a process which took place several millions of years and it is still on-going even in contemporary times.

The preceding contestation has consolidated the point that the oil resources belonged to all Nigerians. Indeed, the exploration for oil in the Benue trough including the Chad Basin and the recent discovery of oil in the Gombe – Bauchi boundary axis, is a further credence to the conclusions reached by Usman and Abba on the formation and ownership of the oil resources in the country.

Undoubtedly, the desire for a share in the revenue accruing from the Nigerian oil industry has led to agitations for state creation by many ethnic nationalities in the country at large. With such scenario, even if the

demands for resource control by the oil producing states is granted, the area will still witness challenges arising from some groups within the locality who felt marginalised, exploited and not recognized. Again, these minority elements will commence a new phase of agitations against or separatist agenda from the major privileged group. The point being stressed here is that this may culminate in an endless cycle of agitations. Therefore, resource control may not offer any lasting solution to the problem in the Niger Delta region nor is the desire to cede away from the country. In fact, they are better off as Nigerians. A workable fiscal restructuring based on equity, fairness and justice is what is required.

Corrupting influence of oil revenue

Given the rental nature of oil revenue, a large chunk of which is extracted from foreign oil companies operating in the country, the government is not under any obligation to be accountable to the Multi-National Oil Companies on how it expended the revenue nor explain why it needs such money. In addition, due to money politics and corruption in Nigeria, the enormous funds generated by the petroleum sector since independence have been massively looted from the national treasury or siphoned by the political class to their foreign bank accounts instead of investing in the Nigerian economy thereby causing the pauperization of the masses. For instance, over 100,000 barrels of crude are lost per day as a result of corruption and theft. Again, between 1990 – 1994, about $12.2 billion U.S. Dollars of oil revenue was looted. In the same vein, 40% of $20 billion U.S. Dollars oil revenue is siphoned annually (Okorie, 2005).

It is instructive to note however that, corruption in Nigeria has a historical root. For, it was the legacy of a process set in motion by the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Colonialism and concretized in the age of Information Technology through the internet. Falola (2010:26-27) has demonstrated that values such as economic equity, political democracy and participation, peace, social justice, environmental balance that ought to guide the operations of the world was compromised by the West in order to establish and consolidate their hegemony over the rest of the world. This capitalist

disposition was inherited by the newly emerged indigenous ruling elites in the country. Indeed, the influx of western imperialism and capitalism induced people to excessive quest for materialism and private capital accumulation.

The oil subsidy fraud by a few elite class in the country (See, Otokunefor, 2014) is another case of the corrupting influence of oil revenue. Little wonder the incidence of epileptic power supply, inadequate provision of water and drugs in the hospitals, the deplorable state of the roads and railway tracks in the country. Yet, the sufficient provisions of basic social and economic infrastructures are reflections of the dividends of democratic governance to the ordinary citizens. It is relieving to note however that, the current administration is recording tremendous successes in the recovery of looted funds. And, indeed, the operation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) has dealt a major blow to public funds diversion by those at the helm of affairs in public offices to enrich themselves at the expense of the masses. However, the economic impact of the recovered looted funds is yet to be felt.

Clamour for the sales of oil facilities

There have been demands for the sales of national assets in order to cushion the effects of economic recession that plagued the country in 2016. This move is illogical because the assets consisting of refineries, Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) and various other oil facilities are Nigerians' common heritage. Again, such tendencies in Nigeria have a long history behind it. For, the whole question of privatization of public enterprises has its root in the World Bank and IMF induced Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s which made many Third World Nations including Nigeria to embark on the privatization drive as part of the conditions for accessing foreign loans.

Be that has it may, it is imperative for the masses to recognize that those calling for such action intended to purchase the assets because they have the wealth. Besides, past privatization and commercialization of public

enterprises in the country had no far reaching effects on the Nigerian economy and society but only made a few elite class and their allies richer. According to Una (Oct. 3rd, 2016), "the assets were grossly under-valued and sold to powerful individuals, government functionaries and businesses, the ordinary man did not benefit from the exercise" During the privatization and commercialization exercise, over 100 companies were sold but only N301 billion naira was obtained out of which N36.1 billion went to transaction cost i.e, to "those who handled the sales". Some of the state owned enterprises that were privatized include, Daily Times of Nigeria (DTN), Nicon Luxury Hotel, Sheraton Hotel and Towers, The National Clearing and Forwarding Agency (NACFA), Peugeot Automobile Nigeria (PAN), Anambra Motor Manufacturing Company (ANAMMCO) Ltd, The Delta Steel Company (Aladja) (Ifeanyichukwu and Titus, 2014:59 & 60). National Electricity Power Authority (NEPA) to mention but a few. The question here is what is the current state of the public enterprises that were privatized? To what extent are their services a qualitative improvement over their erstwhile state?

The evidence available shows that, of the 120 government enterprises that were privatized, only 10% are functioning properly while 80 – 90 % of them are not because they are plagued with huge debts, energy crisis, collapsed infrastructures, high cost of production, unfavourable government policies and so on (Ifeanyichukwu and Titus, 2014:57). All of these tended to affect their business operations threatening their very survival. In fact, some of them have even winded up laying off workers to that effect. Since this is the scenario for the majority of the enterprises so privatized, the question of qualitative service delivery from such is therefore unthinkable. It is therefore imperative to learn from history. Undoubtedly, the indices of recession is obvious in the country such as lack of economic growth and investment, dwindling productivity, increased rate of inflation, unemployment, poverty and misery amongst the masses (Clement, 27th Sept. 2015). Yet, Nigerians required firmness and resilience and not be hasty in selling off their national assets.

Again, the current economic reality in the country has effectively challenged the place of oil as the almost only dependable source of government revenue thus, the urgent need for the pragmatic diversification of the Nigerian economy.

Environmental hazard

Oil exploration and exploitation have adversely affected the communities in the Niger Delta area culminating in the destruction of agricultural land, the natural habitat of aquatic species, induced deforestation, air and water pollution hence the disruption of the ecosystem. Oil spillages, gas flaring and waste disposal are the major causes of this malaise. Oil spillage involves the accidental discharge of oil from vessels, oil pipelines, or drilling wells into the environment. On the other hand, gas flaring releases CO_2 and methane into the atmosphere. These contaminate the air and acidify water all of which constitute health hazards to the people. Also, the dearth of national facilities for waste disposal has paved way for increasing wrongful waste disposal in oil field operations. (Source, Economic Growth in Nigeria- Impact of Oil Industry).

However, the environmental degradation of the Niger Delta cannot wholly be attributed to the activities of the Multi-National Oil Companies but oil pipeline vandalism and oil bunkering all of which resulted in the abandonment of age-long occupations by fishermen and peasant farmers. (Amaize, Sept. 12, 2016) But the questions seeking urgent redress here are: who contributed more to the environmental degradation in the Niger Delta Region- the Multi-National Oil Companies or the local people? What actually led to such tactics by the locals? The answers to these questions are obvious. The Multi-National Oil Companies have not done justice to the Niger Delta environment which ignited the activities of the militants by way of subverting and frustrating oil operations in the region as a means of getting the attention of these Multi-National Oil Companies and the government to address their problems.

The rise of militancy

The environmental pollution of the Niger Delta by the activities of the Multi-National Oil Companies and the dearth of basic infrastructure amongst others, ignited the demands for the provision of infrastructure, the execution of community development projects, the granting of employment to the youths, compensation and reparations from these companies whose obvious interest in the region is exploitation and profit maximization. These agitations were championed by groups such as the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), The Ethnic Minority Organization of Africa (EMIROAF), the Ijaw Ethnic Minority Rights Protection Organization, The Southern Minorities Movement (Obi, 2004:269 & 271), The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) amongst others.

The militant onslaughts unleashed on the country by these groups became more intense from 2006. They attacked oil installations, pumping stations, security personnel, kidnapped expatriates working in the Multi-National Oil Companies and important personalities in the country for ransom including the setting of car bombs (See, Onya, 2017:140). And, despite the Amnesty granted to the militant groups by the Yar'Adua Administration, there emerged a new and more radical youth group referred to as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA). They embarked on the explosion of a number of oil facilities in the region especially in 2016 declaring that they were fighting for the political autonomy of the Niger Delta region and a larger share of oil revenues vowing to perpetuate the struggle until their demands are granted. The activities of this militant group resulted in dwindling crude oil production in the country at a time when oil prices sharply declined at the international markets thereby increasing the pace of economic recession. Yet, apart from the national impacts of this militants' onslaught, there is an international dimension to it.

On the question of the global implications of the Niger Delta oil-based political violence, is its capacity to limit oil supply and ignite an upsurge in oil prices at the international market. This is because Nigeria is one of the

major producers of oil world-wide. And, this has been demonstrated between 2007 – 2008 when oil prices rose by over $1.50 to $63.38 a barrel in 2007 and in January, 2008, it soared to 100 dollars bench mark. Undoubtedly, it was also the period of intense militancy in the Niger Delta. However, other factors equally played a role in causing this price increase. They include the war in Iraq, threats of war in countries such as Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela including nuclear attack threats on Iran from the U.S and speculations on future oil prices. Oil-based political violence in the Niger Delta affects crude oil production thereby resulting in dwindling oil revenue and this can impact on government's budget plan and implementation including the sustainability of Nigeria's role as a regional military hegemonic power to be reckoned with in the West African Sub-Region (Onya, 2017:141- 142).

Government's intervention in the Niger Delta question

Government's attempt at addressing the problems and agitations of the Niger Delta people since independence began with the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) in 1961 consequent upon the report of the Willink Commission of Inquiry of 1957. There were other similar commissions/agencies constituted such as the Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority (NDBDA) in 1976, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) in 1988, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992, and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000. But, lack of autonomy due to government's incessant interference in the operations of the agencies, compounded by the corruption of the ruling class in the Niger Delta affected their possible efficacy in addressing the agitations of the people (Ukase, 2009:259). Then was the 1999 Constitutional increment of revenue allocation from 3 to 13% for the oil producing states. However, the deductions of the 13% derivation arrears began in the year 2000 (Philip, 2007: 81).

In addition to the preceding, there were series of balkanization and/or restructuring of the political and administrative institutions in the Niger

Delta region into diverse states and local government areas with a view of fostering centralization for easier redress of the peoples' agitations and development of the area. Yet, there was no economic advancement of the area nor an end to the people's agitations (Okpeh, 2014:29).

In addition to this, was the Amnesty Programme since 2008 which was a welcomed development. For, more than anything, it was meant to de-radicalize and de-militarize the struggle by the youths in the Niger Delta, rehabilitate and empower them educationally and with entrepreneurial skills for self-sufficiency and meaningful contributions to the society and nation at large. Undoubtedly, the country witnessed the laying down of arms and ammunitions by a number of the Niger Delta militant groups. In contemporary times, there is the move to clean up the Niger Delta environment.

However, a significant point to note about the continuous struggles by the people of the Niger Delta area is the politicization of the struggle by the ruling elites including the political economy of such.

Be that as it may, fiscal restructuring of Nigeria is one of the systematic ways through which all facets of agitations bordering on oil revenue allocations can be addressed. Secondly, oil exploration and exploitation in accordance to internationally recognized best practices can assist tremendously in mitigating environmental degradation in the oil producing areas. Thirdly, a more pragmatic move towards the diversification of the Nigerian economy agriculturally, solid mineral wise, manufacturing and construction amongst others can facilitate the repositioning of the Nigerian economy for the benefit of all Nigerians. Fourthly, is the necessity for efficient tax assessment and collection in the country. Fifthly, the need for patriotism and brotherliness amongst the diverse peoples with a view of re-enforcing the national cord and ideals while eschewing ethno-religious sentimentalities and manipulations. Sixthly, is to effectively convince the militant groups in the Niger Delta region to embrace peace. And, lastly, is the necessity to direct scientific research into the production of alternative

and environmentally friendly energy or fuel bearing in mind the possible eventual depletion of the oil and gas resources.

Conclusion

The paper has indicated that the Nigerian petroleum industry has its positive and negative impacts on the country. It further argued that despite the challenges and contending issues generated by the sector, it has the potential of launching Nigeria on the platform of sustainable national development and modernization but for the overwhelming corruption in the sector and militant onslaughts coupled with fluctuations in world oil prices. The paper therefore concludes that fiscal restructuring of federalism in Nigeria and the re-dress of corruption in the petroleum industry amongst others can go a long way in facilitating the positive impact of this common-wealth to all Nigerians irrespective of ethnic, gender, religious and class categorization.

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A HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF PRISON SYSTEM AND ADMINISTRATION IN GOMBE PRISON; 1919-1976.

Abubakar Abdullahi Arawa
Department of History
Gombe State University, Gombe State
babanummi2009@gmail.com

Abstract

In recent times, Nigerian prison service is becoming an issue of serious concern to both government and agencies of human rights. This is because of the contravening fundamental human rights and the wellbeing of the inmates. The Nigerian prisons are faced with many challenges which included the issue of congestions, health, attitudinal and feeding. The root causes of these challenges were yet to be identified by the scholars of prison administration and other professionals from related disciplines. The challenges led to the reforms of the prisons services and administration in Nigeria. The 1976 prison reforms by the then Federal Military Government took away prison control from the traditional rulers to Federal Government thereby forming the basis of all the challenges of prison services. It is against this background this study became imperative for a better understanding of the dynamics behind Nigerian prison administration reforms.

Introduction

Governments at all levels are very much concerned with the condition of the Nigerian prison inmates and the system of imprisonment of law defaulters in recent years. The Nigerian Prison administrators are no longer living up to the task of the establishment of prisons and the task of the reformation of prisoners. The Government of the Federation is

expending huge amount of funds on feeding, medical, uniform of prisoners and the general wellbeing of the prison inmates in order to reduce crime and to reform the inmates. However, the inmates, those awaiting trial and the convicted are becoming habitual criminals. The degree of prisoners regret and detachment from crime has become low, since inmates seems attract pleasure, happiness and are proud of being imprisoned. Some inmates are habitual prisoners as they frequent prisons at the interval of two to four months of completing a prison terms or discharge. This resulted in the challenges of congestion and delay in completing trial as some criminals are have two or more cases in courts. There are convincing economic arrangements between the prison administrators and prisoners to the extent of engaging the prisoners in unskilled labour outside the prison premises. The administrators, particularly waders are quite often accused of providing drugs and other illegal substances to the inmates[1]. These made prisons to become friendly and good environment for criminals particularly, those who cannot afford their daily meals. This paper therefore attempts to examine the transfer of the control of prison from traditional rulers to the federal government as a basis of the current challenges in the administration of the Gombe Prison.

Conceptual Clarification

The concept of prison is very ambiguous and complex. However, it is defined as a place where defaulters are detained under the custody of an authority or Government[2]. It is any building or place declared as such by the law of the state to ensure restraint and custody of individuals accused or convicted of violating the laws[3]. It could be either civil or criminal laws of the state. Prison is also defined as a place of custody for those awaiting

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[1] Interview conducted by BBC Radio with ex-convicted youths, on 17th March, 2019 (Morning News, 8:30am)
[2] Lecture Scripts for standard course prison Training school kaduna, Revised version, September, 1974, p2
[3] Lecture Scripts for standard course prison Training school kaduna, Revised version, September, 1974, p2

trial and those found guilty of offences. In this regard prison accommodates two types of inmate namely convicted and unconvicted inmates or those awaiting trial.

According to Alexandra Peterson, "We are all in prison, but it is a matter of degree[4]" that man is restricted to certain part of the world geographically and also limited to choice, employment, political or economic conditions. These conditions are voluntary and the victims perhaps are unconscious of the circumstances behind them. However, it is different entirely, when we consider the imprisonment enforced by the sentence of the court of law upon a citizen, who is suspected or convicted of a breach of law[5]. The place where such a person is confined is the prison and this is the institution, we are concern with.

The Evolution of the Prison Institution

Every society evolved a means of punishing and detaining law defaulters under certain guides or rules and imprisonment is one of the means[6]. The idea of prison was contained in the Islamic Qur'anic narration of Prophet Joseph's (Yusuf) imprisonment, which clearly demonstrated the existence of prison, even before the birth of Islam as a religion[7]. The objective of prison is to punish the offenders or for deterrence therefore, imprisonment is to deter the offender from committing crime. The other objective is to reform and rehabilitate offenders and if they are imprisoned, it is expected they will be permanently protected from committing crimes, this means they are reformed and rehabilitated and then the prisoners are to be discharge[8]. Therefore, sharia laws demonstrated that some offences are

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[4] Peterson, A. *Prison and Imprisonment; Lesson to All*, Success publishers, London, 1962, p17

[5] Lecture Scripts for standard course prison Training school kaduna, Revised version, September, 1974, p3

[6] Danbazau, A. *Law and Criminology in Nigeria,* Ibadan University Press, p145

[7] Ogundere, O. The Nigerian Judge and His Court, Ibadan University Press, 1994, p8

[8] Lecture Scripts for standard course prison Training school Kaduna, Revised version, September, 1974, p6

punishable by imprisonment, while some by flogging and or by death sentence[9]. The existence of Islamic sharia courts necessitated the establishment of prisons in most emirates of Northern Nigeria, including Gombe Emirate.

Prison Administration in Gombe Emirate: C. 1824-1919

The Emirate of Gombe was founded in 1824, as a result of the jihad led by Modibbo Bubayero in Gombe Area. Following the establishment of the Emirate and its capital at Gombe Abba, a number of administrative machineries and institutions continued to evolve over the time for the proper administration of the Emirate. The Emirate was created in an area predominantly inhabited by many ethnic groups, particularly the Bolewa, Tera, Jukun, pockets of Fulani and Kanuri settlements[10]. These social compositions of different cultural groups with different backgrounds resulted into the heterogeneous nature of the Emirate. In such polities crimes and conflicts were obvious, and this necessitated the emergence of the court system and the subsequent development of prison at Gombe Abba[11].

The Prison system began during the reign of Emir of Gombe Muhammadu Kwairanga (1844-1882), who used two buildings within his palace to detain political and war prisoners. The prison was not a conventional prison, but a traditional prison located within the palace[12]. The prison was known as the Emir's prison, it was made up of mud rooms, with chains and poles, known as *Turu* in Fulfulde and *mari* in Hausa, where offenders

[99] Raliya, Z.M."Kano in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" A Ph.D Thesis sunmitted to BUK Kano, 2000, p36

[10] Victor, N. L. *Three Nigerian Northern Emirate: The study of Oral History*, Northwestern University, Press 1965, p86

[11] Victor, N. L. *Three Nigerian Northern Emirate: The study of Oral History*, Northwestern University, Press 1965, p86

[12] Personal Interview with Malam Muhammadu Barwan Gombe, on 13th June 2014, at his Residence, Gombe.

and sometimes lunatics were imprisoned[13]. The rooms lacked windows, beddings, but, were provided with local mats[14]. Generally, the 19th century Gombe prison was traditional in all aspects, similar to what Lugard described the traditional prison in the Northern Emirates as a "terrible place for human race, the cell were dark, small and dirty, that one could neither stand-up straight nor lay back. The whole place was infested with insects and moths[15]." Gombe prison was managed by a *dogari* known as, *Dogo* Shafal, appointed by the Emir to serve as *dogari* in charge of the prison. During the period the *dogarai* were used as police, court messengers and warders, they were involved in summons, arrest and punishing the offenders. The *dogarai* continued to function as such, throughout the pre-colonial Gombe Emirate and indeed, till around 1928, when they were reformed into the new Native Authority police[16] (*Yan-Doka*). During that time the Emir of Gombe was the only person that has power and authority to order for the release or discharging any inmate, and determine when and where to execute condemned prisoners or to amputate hands of those awaiting amputation[17]. The Emir was the head of Islamic affairs in his emirate and the most powerful authority. Debtors were to be discharge after settlement of their debt[18].

In the pre-colonial era, Gombe Emirate inmates were not fed by the Emir even though the prison was located in the palace, inmates were fed by their Families or relations. Similarly, the health care of the inmates was a responsibility of the families of the inmates, as any serious ailment of the prisoner may lead to his death[19]. Generally, imprisonment was associated with social stigmatization, as any person imprisoned or jailed has his

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[13] Personal Interview with Barwan Gombe, Malam Muhammadu.

[14] Interview with Barwan Gombe

[15] F. D. Lugard Dual Mandate in Tropical Africa, 1922, p502

[16] Interview with Ardo Chindo

[17] Interview with Ardo Chindo, former education secretary Gombe L.E.A at his residence Tudun-wada

[18] Raliya, Kano prison in the 19th and 20th centuries, p 29

[19] Interview with Barwan Gombe

reputation and character tarnished and people looked down upon him. The society never trusted or relate with him favorably, including, giving him marriage or to marry ones daughter. This social stigmatization necessitated many people to fear imprisonment in Gombe. Those happened to be imprisoned some migrated out of the Emirate to other places.

Establishment of Native Authority Prison in Gombe: 1919-1960

Gombe Native Authority prison was one of the first institutions built in Gombe Doma, before the formal transfer of the Emirate and British administrative headquarters from Nafada to the present Gombe in 1919. The institution of prison was introduced to facilitate the exploitation of human and natural resources of the emirate and also served as a means of actualizing the policy of Indirect Rule. It was established to compel Gombe people to obey and comply with the British laws and interest in the Emirate. The construction of the new Native Authority prison in Doma marked a turning point in the history of the development of prison[20]. It was a complete departure from the Emir's traditional prison to a more organized and structurally developed institution.

Gombe Native Authority Prison was the modern prison constructed by the colonial government on the new site of the Emirate headquarters at Doma[21]. The prison was located north-west of the First Emir's palace and it contained four large rooms, a kitchen, a store and Yari's resident, surrounded by a huge mud wall. The rooms were inmate rooms graded "A", "B" and "C". Grade "A" accommodates general inmates, particularly, those awaiting trial and political detainees; grade "B" and "C" was for convicted inmates or prisoners. The last grade was graded "D", for women inmates. To the eastern part of the prison there was a

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[20] Lugard, Dual Mandate in Tropical Africa, 1922, p558
[21] Delaney, P. History of Gombe Emirate, 1974, p29

Residence of the Yari, Malam Musa Furlomi, the traditional head of the prison, who was equivalent to the Superintendent of prison[22].

There are two categories of inmates in the pre-colonial Gombe prison and these included; convicted and unconvict inmates. Convicted inmates are generally known as prisoners, whose cases before the court of law were concluded or determined and were found guilty of committing a crime. They could be condemned prisoners who are awaiting execution or those to serve terms in prison with long and short imprisonment terms. Unconvict prisoners, are mostly those awaiting trials, whose cases were not determined or concluded before the court of law.

Re-organization of Gombe Native Authority Prison

When Colonel V.L. Mabb was appointed Director of prison in 1934, by the then Governor, Sir Donald Cameron, modernization processes began in the Native Authority prisons across the Northern Nigeria, Gombe prison inclusive[23]. At the same period the colonial government was faced with high rate of crimes, as a result of the post war economic predicaments or hardships. These necessitated the government to re-organize its criminal justice systems, the court, the *Dogarai* police and the prison. The re-organization started with the *dogarai* police replaced by establishing a new N.A police (Yan-Doka) in 1928 and the prison in 1934[24].

The re-organization of the Gombe N.A Prison involved structural reorganization by expanding the walls of the prison from both sides. It also involved the reconstruction of the prison main gate, and the *Yari's* Residence was removed from within the prison premises. In the place of the *Yari's* residence, new inmate's rooms were constructed to accommodate more prisoners in the prison. On the site of the *Yari's*

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[22] Interview with Chief Prison Wader, Chief Kadiri, on the 25TH july, 2014

[23] Orakwe, Controller of Prison in charge of planning Research and statistic, Abuja; paper presented at the National conference of Nigerian Prisons, 1999, p9

[24] Tamuno,The Police in Modern Nigeria; 1861-1960, p70-76

Residence, three new blocks or rooms were constructed, namely G1, G2, G3 and G4, with interior buckets toilets[25]. A well was sunk as source of water supply in the prison in 1938[26]. These structures were built using cement obtained from kanawa, while the early buildings were constructed in the traditional way with mud[27].

A new grading system was introduced based on the gravity of offences committed by an inmate or prisoner, to replace grading based on sex. Thus, grade A and B was made to accommodate habitual inmates or first and second time offenders, grade C for those awaiting trial or unconvicted inmates, while grade D was dedicated for women inmates. The newly constructed G1 and G2 were for prisoners serving long terms imprisonment or life imprisonment and condemned prisoners respectively, and G3 room was converted to a Back-cell, and G4 was mainly for armed robbers. Gombe traditional guillotine was abolished and since then condemned prisoners were being taken to Jos or Kaduna for execution[28]. Uniforms was also introduced for the prisoners, which further distinguished them and their status in the prison, white *saki* with black striped drill or lines was the uniform for prisoners with long terms and those with life imprisonment, *saki* with blue stripe drill for habitual prisoners, while condemned prisoners and armed robbers, wear white *saki* with red stripe drill with patch of "cc" in front and back of their caftan. The uniform consisted of caftan, short nicker and cap[29].

The 1930's reorganization of Gombe prison also included the replacement of *dogarai* with *Yan-Doka* as prison warders, the *Yan-Doka* wear uniform, consisting of Fezz cap (with a plate carrying prison written on it front view), short nicker with Red repo as belt. The uniform continued to be the symbol if authority and prison warders identity throughout the colonial

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[25] Interview with Chief Kadiri

[26] Delaney, P. History of Gombe Emirate, 1974, p 17

[27] Delaney, P. History of Gombe Emirate, 1974, p 17

[28] NAK/SNP1455/Bauprof Annual Report/Gombe N.A Prison Inspection Report/1936

[29] NAK/SNP1455/Bauprof Annual Report/Gombe N.A Prison Inspection Report/1936

period[30]. The increase in crimes and criminals led to the congestion of Gombe prison, which in turn brought about serious problem of diseases, such as TB and other communicable diseases. In 1938, another prison was established by the colonial government at Tula to decongest Gombe N.A prison and also to accommodate prisoners from Tangale-Waja Districts under pagan administration[31]. The establishment of Tula prison enabled the government to transfer prisoners with capital offences from the Emirate to Tula. By 1939 a medical personnel was assigned by the Resident to look after Gombe prison inmates, who used to visit the prison from Bauchi, the provincial headquarters every Friday, for medication[32]. The medical Doctor in company of the Emir and the Divisional Officer inspected every prisoner, prisoner rooms, kitchen and toilets[33]. They were to be conducted round by the *Yari* (Head of prison).

Sources of the inmates for Gombe N.A Prison

Two categories of inmates were usually found in every prison, convicted and unconvicted inmates or those awaiting trial. The major source of inmates was the court, specifically, the Native courts, which constituted the majority of courts in the Gombe Emirate, where, generally ordinary peasant took their cases. Officials of N.A or person holding high rank in the Native Administration as well as minor chiefs or village heads who commit any offence may be arrested by the Resident. They were mostly tried at the Resident discretion in the provincial court or by the order of the judicial council or the case may be reported to the Lieutenant-Governor with a view to try them in British courts[34]. They might be imprisoned or remove from office. Therefore, imprisonment as a form of punishment which at the pre-colonial period was hardly to be inflicted as people feared imprisonment. This became common under the colonial rule

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[30] Lugard, *Political Memoranda*, para9. P32

[31] NAK/SNP1655/Bauprof Annual Report/Gombe N.A Prison Inspection Report/1939

[32] Lugard, Political Memoranda, para59,p 326

[33] Lugard, Political Memoranda, para59,p 326

[34] Lugard, Political Memoranda, para59,p 311

as people were seriously exploited and could not be able to pay their taxes. New reform policies were introduced during Governor Cameron. Convicted inmates were mostly drafted to the repairs of public buildings, in forestry and evacuation of excrement from schools and barracks[35].

Feeding of Inmates under N.A Prison

Convicted inmates are known as prisoners, whose cases were determined before the court of law and sentenced to prison terms, they wear uniform. Convicted prisoners are the only inmates fed by the Native authority as against the Emir and their relations or families. The feeding of prisoners was the responsibility of the government, hence the treasury supply food items to the prison, while the prisoners cooked their food within the prison. Those awaiting trial were not fed by the prison authority, but by their relations. In case a prisoner is brought from a distant place and has no relation close to him, that would provide food for him, will be placed under Ratio-bill policy of the Native Administration[36] This means feeding awaiting trial by the government, through special grant applied by the superintendent of prison. In most cases the prison authority provides feeding to inmates who cannot afford what to eat and apply for reimbursement from the Gombe Native Treasury[37].

Punishment of prisoners/Back Cell

In every warrant, the Alkali is expected to state clearly, whether or not the prisoners will be subjected under hard labour or not. A prisoner, who was not awarded hard labour, may be given light work or prison routine work around the prison. Whipping was part of the punishment meted on prisoners as being ordered by the Alkali to any offender under regulation 48 of the Native Court Ordinance. The punishment awarded under regulation 49, (1), of not more than 6 strokes and if under regulation 48(3)

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[35] NAK/SNP/1395/Bauprof Annual Report/1928

[36] Interview with Chief Kadiri

[37] Interview with Chief Kadiri

of not more than 12 strokes were given[38]. Whipping shall be inflicted in the presence of the officer in charge of the prison and most be certified by the Medical Doctor on whether the prisoner is capable to withstand the whipping or not. No regulation in any section authorizing or recommended punishment by whipping to female prisoner. Another important act of punishing prisoners was the Half-Ratio. It was a punishment through starvation through which dangerous prisoner were denied full square meals or given less quantity of food in order to weaken them by hunger, particularly, prisoner that apply force on other prisoners or on prisoners involved in fighting. This punishment was only applicable with the Doctor's approval. If a prisoner was found not capable of withstand hunger, the half-ratio punishment would be changed to other means of punishing the prisoners such as whipping or hard labour[39].

Introduction of Prison Farm and Trade

In 1946, R.H. Dolan succeeded Mabb and introduced a Vocational Training scheme for all prisoners whether sentenced by a British or Native Court. Though, before the scheme, all prisoners, except condemned prisoners were usually employed in sanitation, road-making and other work of public utility and also hired as labour by wealthy individuals. If prisoners were employed in private garden or any work, a charge of 6d per day was made and receipts to be credited to Native Treasury. In the case of a public garden the produce was sold and receipted and was similarly credited to Native Treasury[40].

Prison Farm

A prison agricultural project was initiated by the colonial government around 1943, at Yelonguruza village of Gombe Doma. The first year of cultivating the farm, the prisoners, harvested the following; 40 bundles of

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[38] Lugard, Dual Mandate in Tropical Africa, 1922, p561

[39] Interview with Chief Kadiri

[40] Lugard, political memoranda, para 59, p115

Guinea corn and over 100 bundles of millet. By the 1950s, the prisoners were harvesting about 300 bundles of Guinea corn, 500-600 bundles of Millets, 300 belt of cotton and a large quantity of Groundnuts[41]. **Prison Industry**

The development and growth of colonial government interest on revenue generation propelled the creation of a prison industrial division, where various trades were being taught in Gombe N.A prison. Prisoners were given occupational training, most especially, long sentence prisoners were taught trades, such as building, well digging and pit toilets construction and evacuation, while female prisoners, under the charge of a wardress were taught lighter trades such as mat and basket weaving or making and any other trades.

Release of Prisoners

Prisoners were generally released based on two conditions, expiration of prison term or release on medical grounds[42]. When a prisoner completed his prison term, he was taken back to the court before the Alkali, from where he will be discharged. The Alkali would then report the discharged to the District Officer. Discharge from prison can only be effected by an order of the Governor or if the power is delegated to the Lieutenant-Governor under the Native Court Ordinance No 5 of 1918[43]. A Native Chief has no power or authority to release a prisoner, who has been tried and sentenced by a Native court. As for discharge on Medical grounds, the prison superintendent would write to the Medical Doctor, who would also inform the Resident on the health condition of the prisoner in question and recommend for his release, the Resident would seek the approval of the Governor or lieutenant-Governor as the case may be. The first person released on medical ground from Gombe N.A. prison was

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[41]41 Interview with Chief Kadiri

[42] Prison staff training manual, 1974, p202

[43] NAK/SNP/19P/1921

Muhammadu Barwo, who was released in 1921 for suffering from Tuberculosis[44].

Gombe N.A Prison Staff and their Duties

Yari was the overall overseer of the prison Department and was the only prison officer whose residence was located inside the prison wall. The main functions of the *Yari* were to control the prison inmates and the general maintenance of prison structures, he allocated duties to all warders attached to the prison and he receives new inmates, by warrant and placing them in the grades based on the gravity of their offences. He also mediates between the prison, Emir and the D.O. The *Yari* also ensured all rules and regulations within the prison were obeyed. He was to ensure those awaiting trial were taken to court on the stipulated date and time[45].

By the 1930's *Yari* was replaced by the *Sarkin yara*, who took over the functions of *Yari* and report to the D.O on weekly basis, he reports the general affairs of the prison, especially, the number of prisoners so detained and their health condition, the position of the prison staff and the general condition of the of prison. Other new positions were created in the prison for proper administration, the position of Superintendent of prison and chief warder[46]. The superintendent of prison was the next officer to the *Sarkin yara*, who deals with the *Sarkin yara* directly. He was the senior service officer and head of the uniformed warders in the prison. The other important position was the chief warder, a subordinate head of the uniformed staff, who acted as an intermediary between the superintendent of prison and other staff (warders). He provided the necessary liaison between the prisoners and the prison superintendent. He was the head of the disciplinary staff and responsible to the superintendent for the maintenance of order and discipline among the staff and the

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[44] NAK/SNP/19P/1921

[45] NAK/SNP/Bauprof/ Gombe N.A Prison Annual Inspection Report/ 19

[46] Interview with Chief Kadiri

prisoners, within the prison[47]. He received prisoners warrant from court and study's it, particularly, name of the prisoner on the warrant, date, offence committed, sentence period, signature of the Alkali, Charge number and special endorsement. The chief warders then placed the prisoner in his appropriate grade and issued uniform to the prisoner.

Warders

Warders were the junior disciplinary staff that formed the bulk of the prison staff made up of various ranks. They carry out the main general duties and were very much in contact with prisoners in all the hours, more than any other staff cadre. The general duties of warders was taking over duty, locking and unlocking prisoners, observation, and cells supervision and handing over duty. They also direct prisoners, to where they were assigned special duties or where they would work or to the prison farm at Yelonguruza quarters in Gombe metropolis[48].

Recruitment of Warders

The first sets of prison warders were drawn from the traditional *dogarai*, (emir's palace guards) who later joined the new *yan-doka* police force in 1930, some of the *dogarai* were posted to take charge of the Gombe N.A prison. The *yan-doka* continued to look over the prison, before the formal recruitment of able-bodied men as prison warders in 1940. The Establishment of Tula prison in 1938, where four of the prison *yan-doka* were deployed from Gombe N.A Prison to Tula to look over the transferred prisoners, created a kind of discomfort among the *yan-doka*, who viewed their work more to the Emir than the British government and their posting out of the Emirate was seen as separation from the Emir. This necessitated the colonial government to recruit new people into the prison service for the two prisons, and by 1940, Ex-servicemen were first

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[47] Prison staff training manual 1974, p30
[48] Prison staff training manual 1974, p30

considered as those interested to be recruited as warders[49]. A total number of 18 warders, including the *Sarkin Y*ara were recruited for Gombe Native administration prison, while 13, warders including *Sarkin Yara* were recruited for Tula prison[50] The Colonial recruitment policy was a direct break away from the traditional recruitment policy, where only indigenes were recruited based on hereditary or Emir's recommendation. The new recruitment policy was based on interest, qualification and ability to do the job hence perfect strangers were recruited into the service.

Conclusion

Prison in Gombe underwent many reforms and transformations over the years. The aim of any prison is reformation and rehabilitation of offenders so as to become better citizens in a society. A prisoner is either a Muslim, Christian or a traditionalist and his belief system described offences that are taboo and most be avoided. It was this idea that brought the colonial government to approve the appointment of clergy men in every prison, who preached religious ideals to the prisoners, hence the appointment of Imams and Pastors in Gombe N.A prisons. No Mosques or Church was constructed in the prison, till 1970s, but the Imam and pastor continued to organize preaching sessions to their prison members, through which some became reformed and avoided crimes completely. Despite these efforts, today prisons are congested with large numbers of inmates. Crimes are always being committed at increasing rates, especially by those who experienced prison terms. Prisons are becoming training grounds for junior criminals as they learned sophisticated crimes in prison. This necessitated the institution of prison to change her name to correctional.

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[49] Prison staff training manual 1974, p17

[50] NAK/SNP/Baupof Annual Report, no136/1940

PRE-COLONIAL ERA TRADITIONAL METHODS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND MANAGEMENT IN KAIAMA TOWN OF BAYELSA STATE

Asanebi, Daupamowei Henry

Department of History and International Studies
Federal University Otuoke
daupa4real@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examined pre-colonial era traditional methods of conflict resolution and management in Kaiama town. The pre-colonial Kaiama town was not devoid of conflict. Conflict which is a natural phenomenon, is not a respecter of individual(s), ethnic group(s), nation(s) or human existence. Conflict was resolved and managed in pre-colonial Kaiama town through traditional method which is indigenous in nature. The study methodology is historical and premised on the use of primary and secondary data. Thus, the study revealed that conflict took place as a result of competition and struggle for resources, wrong presentation of issues, unfulfilled dreams and goals, difference in families and personalities, etc. While, the stages of conflict are pre conflict, confrontation, crisis, outcome and post conflict. Also, type's conflict in this era was not left out in critical examination by the study. The study concludes that traditional methods of conflict resolution and management in Kaiama were faced with challenges which impeded its success in some cases in pre-colonial era. Conflict in whatever way created intra group relations within Kaiama town in pre-colonial era. The traditional methods of conflict resolution and management to a greater extent prevented and managed conflict when it occurred in pre-colonial Kaiama town thereby igniting and fostering keni wenimo (unity), tari (love), doi (peace) and keme se yebele (harmonious coexistence), amongst others in the town.

Introduction

No human society or nation can live in isolation, therefore every society or nation small or big must interact with others for their survival and growth. These interactions many at times ignite and transport conflict to individual(s), society(s) or nation(s) as conflict is a natural phenomenon that will occur when individual(s), society(s) or nation(s) interacts among themselves. Conflict is not a respecter of nation(s), ethnic group(s) or period of human existence. According to Asanebi and Okafor conflict is an inevitable and intrinsic part of human existence; from time immemorial to the present era man have learnt several methods in dealing with conflict, yet conflict still occurred.[1]

The terminus of conflict is lugubrious to the society(s) or nation(s) involved, as no society(s) or nation(s) has ever come out of conflict same way they enter in history. The pre-colonial Kaiama was not devoid of conflict, as such witnessed her own shared of conflict as a result of intra and inter groups relations and interactions within and outside Kaiama town. The modus operandi of this study is to profoundly examine pre-colonial era traditional method of conflict resolution and management in Kaiama town of Kolokuma clan located in present Bayelsa State.

History of Kaiama Town

The study shall adopt the history of Kaiama written by the author in previous research. According to Pa James Beketiri of Kaiama town, the town Kaiama, north of Opokuma is located on the right bank of River Nun. The origin of the town is traced to Ekpein, a son of Egbe, son of Kala-Okun who probably was the founder of the absorbed Egbebiridani. Ekpein migrated from Oruamatoru where he had earlier settled with his father and uncles to the present location of the town at the right bank of River Nun. Ekpein begat four sons and a daughter namely: Foru, Odo, Kilegbegha or

Olomugiagha, Talagha and Ereweni. These children founded the seven families of Kaiama namely: Odowari, Foruwari, Kilegbeghawari, Wankawari, Talaghawari, Ereweriwari and Ikatibiri.[2] Another oral account given by Mr. Owiekimi Berezi of Kaiama stated that some part of Ikatibiri family migrated from Kalama in Seibokorogha town, while two daughters of Odo founded the other parts of Ikatibiri.[3]

Owonaro noted that Kaiama town was originally name Ekpeinbiri after its founder but it was later changed to Kaiama by Brass traders. The Brass traders changed the name of the town on account of a trick played on them by an indigene of the town. The traders were said to be in the habit of presenting worn out clothes to the people of Kaiama for sale as new ones, Kaiama people later discovered the trick and to avenge the Brass men of this trick, a Kaiama indigene by the name Sekeme bargained with a Brass man to trade by barter. By the barter arrangement, the Brass man was to receive the body of a dead crocodile which was supposed to have been killed by the Kaiama man (Sekeme) in exchange for a case of gin (Kaikai). The Brass man readily accepted the bargain and delivered the case of gin to Mr. Sekeme who on receiving the gin pointed to a live crocodile that was basking at a sand bank, as one killed by him and advised the Brass man to proceed to the spot and take delivery of it. The Brass man was excited and pushed off and rowed gleefully toward the spot where the crocodile laid basking. As the din and splash of the water aroused by the Brass man paddling simply heralded to the reptile the approach of a human being and the wary amphibian swiftly crawled to the water and dived away into the deep. The bewildered Brass trader shouted "Mi Amami Ikagiama O" meaning "the people of this town are cunning as the tortoise" and Ikagi-ama which was corrupted to Kaiama became the name of the town till date.[4]

Clarification of Concepts

Conflict

The word conflict which is derived from a Latin word "Conflictus" lacks a general acceptable definition globally. However, conflict has witnessed an unprecedented definitions and meanings from peace scholars, philosophers, political scientists and historians amongst others. According to Lederach conflict is not a static phenomenon, but is expressive, dynamic and dialectical.[5] Shehu Sani cited in Owede posits, that conflict occur even in the best of human societies. Conflict index includes mutual image of misunderstanding, hostile utterance, actions and responses that seek to put the interest(s) of the other party in a disadvantaged position.[6] For Dzurgba, conflict is a social problem in which two or more persons, families, districts, communities, states or nations are at war with each other.[7]

Asanebi and Okafor defined conflict as a struggle, disagreement that arises when dreams, values and aspirations to resources and power, amongst others of individual(s) or group(s) that thwart each other's objectives in attempting to achieve their purpose. Individuals or groups are not comfortable when such dreams, values and aspirations are thwarted in life, as such individual(s) and group(s) can express aggressive behaviour(s) as a result of frustration which often leads to conflict.[8] Individuals or groups in conflict can eliminate or undermine each other by any means possible. According to Akpuru-Aja a strategy expert, conflict involves two or more parties that have or perceive incompatibility in their interest and values or in strategy of achieving the ends. He further noted that conflict is a frustration based attitude of protest against lack of opportunities for development and against lack of recognition and identity.[9]

Conflict do not just occur in any society, humans are responsible for it occurrence in all the societies it has occurred in the globe by their desires and pursuits for power, resources, goals, aspirations, dreams, identity and values, amongst others.

Conflict Resolution

Miall et al, assert that by conflict resolution, it is expected that the deep rooted sources of conflict are addressed and resolved, and behaviour is no longer violent , nor are attitudes hostile any longer, while the structure of the conflict has been changed.[10] Miller defined conflict resolution as a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflict through the constructive solving of problems, distinct from management or transformation of conflict.[11] Shadrack on the other hand assert that conflict resolution connotes a sense of finality where the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the conflict is resolved in a true sense. Conflict is resolved when the basic needs of the parties have been met with necessary satisfiers and the fears have been allayed.[12] Conflict resolution is seen in this study as a peaceful and non violent approach in abating the disagreement(s) and incompatibilities of both parties involved in conflict and the willingness/ acceptance to live in peace and harmony by both parties. In conflict resolution blame game is not encouraged and welcomed as it impedes the peace process and might trigger the conflict harder in the society.

Conflict Management

According to Bloomfield and Reilly cited in Owede, conflict management is the positive and constructive handling of differences and divergence.[13] Also, Onu cited in Owede asserts that conflict management rather than advocating methods of removing conflict, it addresses the more realistic questions of managing conflict, that is, how to deal with it in a constructive way, how to bring opposing sides together in a cooperative process, how to design a practical, achievable, cooperative system for the constructive management of differences. Therefore, conflict management is basically the use of open and clear dialogue to assist opponents or parties not only to have agreements against hostile images or actions but to have compliance to agreed resolutions and strategies.[14]

Shadrack, opined that conflict management is the process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through a number of measures and by working with and through the parties involved in the conflict. Thus, conflict management covers the entire area of handling conflicts positively at different stages, including those efforts made to prevent conflict by being proactive.[15]

Conflict management entails the availability of non violent, peaceful mechanism and skills in managing conflict by a neutral party to the conflict.

Pre-Colonial Era

Pre-colonial era is the historical period or era prior to colonization by European nations in Africa continent. The study lies within Nigeria, which is in African continent, therefore it is appropriate to add Africa continent in the definition above.

Types of Conflict in Pre-colonial Kaiama

The following are types of conflict which occurred in pre-colonial Kaiama, they are: Inter community conflict, Intra community conflict, Intra family based conflict, Inter family based conflict, Intra personal conflict and Inter personal conflict.

Inter Community Conflict

This type of conflict is the hostility and animosity between different communities. Uchendu postulate that inter community conflict occur when members of a group (community) get into disagreement or quarrel with members of another group (community).[16] This conflict is triggered by many reasons in pre-colonial era such as; land, fish ponds, creeks and economic tress amongst others. For instance, the Kaiama and Okoloba conflict in pre-colonial era which claimed ten lives, seven from Kaiama and three from Okoloba also indicated by Welson Alazigha in his book on Izon traditions and culture in page 45 to 46, and the Kaiama and Brass

conflict in pre-colonial era. This conflict can be described as community against community.

Intra Community Conflict

This type of conflict is the hostility and animosity between members of the same community. This conflict can be described as "community against herself". It is within a community and doesn't attract outsiders. This conflict occur when there is boundary dispute between Biri(s) (compounds), fish ponds and economic tress ownership amongst others in Kaiama in pre-colonial era. For instance, Ikatibiri and Ereweri fought over land boundaries, while Kilegbeghawari and Talaghawari over farmland boundaries and economic trees, amongst others in this era.

Intra Family Conflict

As the name implies, this conflict is the hostility and rupture within a family in Kaiama town in pre-colonial era. This conflict is triggered as a result of disagreement over farm land, domestic house work(s), food or jealousy over a child towards another as a result of love or favour from their mum or dad. It is an internal conflict and can be described as "family against self".

Inter Family Conflict

This conflict is the animosity and rupture between two or more families. This conflict can be described as "families against families". The desired goals and dreams of family A is thwarted by family B which can or might ignite conflict between them.

Intra Personal Conflict

This type of conflict takes place within an individual in the community. This conflict is described as "man against himself". Many reasons can be attributed for this conflict, some are: frustration to get the desired goals or

dreams in life, depression, bad habits and too emotional over failure(s) in life.

Inter Personal Life

This type of conflict is the rupture and hostility between two people. This conflict can be described as "man against man". This conflict may be direct opposition as in exchange of blows by both parties involved in the conflict, a gun fight or a robbery, or it may be a more subtle conflict between the desires of two or more persons. A boxing or wrestling match is a kind of game, but the act on the mat depicts conflict.[17&18] This conflict is ignited via disagreement and quarrels over resources such as: land (kiri/ugbo), ponds (ogugu) and economic tress (yala tein), amongst others in pre-colonial Kaiama society.

Causes of Conflict

Conflict in Pre-colonial era in Kaiama generally disorganized and truncated the existing peace and harmony in the town. They are several factors responsible for the causes of conflict in pre-colonial Kaiama society, some of them are:

1. Competition and struggle for resources
2. Struggle for dominance and power
3. Difference in family and personalities
4. Wrong presentation of issues
5. Unfulfilled dreams and goal
6. Intolerance and lack of empathy
7. Poor communication
8. Lack of Compromise
9. Self Interest

Competition and Struggle for Resources

Just as the needs of men are differed, so the means of acquiring these needs are differed. The people of Kaiama in pre-colonial era competed and struggled for the resources in their land which are sometimes scares. This

competition and struggle for either natural or man-made resources in Kaiama ignited conflict in this era. Papa Raymond Kai noted that the struggle and competition for resources such as: land, economic trees, economic fruits and crops, ponds, creek, rivulet, firewood's, economic trees and plants, amongst others were frequent in this era, as the distraction or thwarting of the above resources created by others triggered conflict with great havoc to the parties involved in the community.[19]

Struggle for Dominance and Power

The desire to lead, dominate and acquire power in life is inborn in man, as no man wants to be servant or slave. In trying to dominate and acquire, men outshine and outdo their follow men directly or indirectly, and this can or might ignite conflict between them. Ebinimi Berezi noted that the struggle for dominance and power was common in the political, social and cultural life, amongst others in pre-colonial Kaiama.[20]

Difference in Family and Personalities

According to Asanebi and Okafor, individual(s) and group(s) differed with one another in their objectives, purposes, aims of life and transaction of business. When these purposes, aims and objectives amongst others are thwarted or bridged upon then conflict can occur in the society.[21] No one family is same in upbringing in life. For instance, family A sees things about life, values, perceptions and culture differently from family B. Again every family tries her best to protect her territories while she acquired more resources for her family. In trying to acquire these resources in Kaiama in pre-colonial era directly or indirectly many at times ignite conflict between family A and family B.

Wrong Presentation of Issues

In other to gain favour and blessings from others in Kaiama society in this era, many people present issues wrongly in the society which many at times don't go down well with others as such ignite conflict with great havoc within two or more people.

Unfulfilled Dreams and Goals

Just as people's faces were differed, so were their goals and dreams also in pre-colonial era of Kaiama. These goals and dreams are what kept many people going, therefore the un-fulfillment of these goals and dreams can or might lead to frustration and set back on their lives, and if not properly counseled, these frustrated people can directly or indirectly pour out their frustration on members of the society which might ignite conflict with great havoc to them and the parties involved in the conflict and the society too.

Intolerance and Lack of Empathy

Many people in this era were unable to endured one and other in matters affecting them, their family or Kaiama town at large. They displayed their disagreement or angered over issues without minding who is involved or the consequences. Also, few persons lack the ability to understand the thoughts, feelings or the emotional state of other people, which might result to conflict if not handle competently.

Poor Communication

Communication is keyed to peaceful habitation of people anywhere in the globe. Many people lack this ingredient, as they communicate poorly with harsh and unpleasant words that are offensive in this era in Kaiama town. Poor communication often masterminds conflict as the inability to skillfully handle it is responsible for good number of conflict in this era.

Lack of Compromise

Several people were not satisfied with resolution of disputes reached by the mediator, adjudicator and arbitrator, etc in this era. Sadly, they displayed their frustration and angered with their conflicting parties and sometimes on innocent people. Such situation if not skillfully and competently handle might result to greater conflict than precious conflicts.

Self Interest

A lot of people think only about themselves and opposition to this might result to severe conflict in Kaiama town in this era. People with such characteristics hardly love their neighbours and agreed with them in matters that will elevate them, as their thinking is self and self alone.

Stages of Conflict

The following below are the stages of conflict as identify by Simon Fisher, et al and cited by Shadrack Best, which is applicable to Kaiama in pre-colonial era. They are:

Pre Conflict (First Stage)

This is the period when goals between parties are incompatible, which could lead to open conflict. The conflict is not well known in this stage as parties hide it from the public.

Confrontation (Second Stage)

This conflict at this stage is open or manifest in the public. This is characterized by occasional fighting, low levels of violence and mobilization of resources amongst others.

Crisis (Third Stage)

This stage represents the peak of the conflict. Here killing, injuries, displacement of people and the use of arms amongst others are seen in display if the conflict is intense.

Outcome (Fourth Stage)

In this stage the conflict is decreased and allows room for some discussion to commence, or alternative means of settling the conflict.

Post Conflict (Fifth Stage)

At this stage, conflict has either ended or significantly reduced and the parties have gone past the crisis stage. This is the stage to address the causes of the conflict, those incompatible goals which created the conflict in the first instance, such as the needs and the fears of the parties involved if not tackled at this stage, the conflict cycle may be re-enacted and return to the pre-conflict stage with consequences re-eruption of violence is a possibility.[22]

Pre-Colonial Era Traditional Conflict Resolution Methods in Kaiama

The pre-colonial era traditional conflict resolution method in Kaiama town was characterized by the Kolokuma Ijo methods of conflict resolution which is indigenous in nature. For the Kaiama people and their Ijo counterpart in all her clans, Izon literally means "truth, fairness and justice". The Izon people in all her clans were inculcated via her culture to speak and defend truth, fairness and justices at all times. Crime and criminal behaviour were strongly kicked against in Kaiama in this era, and if not properly check could generate into conflict with gigantic havoc to the parties involved and Kaiama town at large.

Due to the culturally inborn question of truth, fairness and justice, conflict was resolved and managed with the lone aim of sustaining harmonious and peaceful coexistence, among the Kaiama indigenes, their neighbouring towns and clans. In the pre-colonial era in Kaiama the traditional methods of conflict resolution followed the pattern below, which are:

1. Traditional Dialogue
2. Traditional Negotiation
3. Traditional Mediation
4. Traditional Arbitration
5. Traditional Adjudication
6. Traditional Reconciliation

According to Papa Leo Nimi conflicting members were allowed to speak, exhibit respect for the culture and custom in all the methods of conflict resolution in the land.[23] Thus, in resolving conflict in Kaiama the traditional political leadership of the town in pre-colonial era were responsible for the actualization of peace in the land, thereby abating conflict via the conflict resolution methods enumerated above. The traditional political leadership of the land are as follows: family(s) (Wari) headed by family head(s) called Warinanaowei(s), the compound(s) (Biri) headed by the compound(s) head(s) called Birinanaowei(s), village (Ama) headed by the village head and king called Amananaowei and the oldest man in the village called Amakosuowei. Many at times the Amakosuowei is the Orukariowei (chief priest) of the community deity, who interceded on behalf of all in the community for their spiritual and economic growth, amongst others. In the pre-colonial era the Amakosuowei and Orukariowei positions was higher than the Amananaowei not just in conflict resolution and management but as the mouthpieces of the gods, the cultural and religious custodian of the land. Their voices on issues in this era was the voices and decisions of the gods of the land, therefore it was sacrosanct and binding to all. Conflict matters were resolved in the Amagula (communal assembly) or Warigula (family assembly), while those involved in resolving conflict in this era were believed to be gifted by the gods of the land in the skilled of arts and craft of conflict resolution and management. Crimes and conflict such as: Furu (stealing), Keme ba (killing or murder), Sou/Anda (fighting/conflict), Zene keme ta bono (adultery), Fei/anda (food conflict), Eresuo (rape), Ugbo bere (land dispute), Indiogugu/Ogugu bere (pond dispute), Toru/ Uba bere (river/ creek dispute) and Yala-tiein bere (economic tree dispute), amongst others were famous in this era which were amicably resolved and managed via ijaw indigenous method by the people.

Traditional Dialogue (Eretei)
Eretei which literally means traditional dialogue is as old as the town and a vital method of resolving conflict in pre-colonial Kaiama town. In eretei, a neutral third party in the Wari (family) or the Ama (town) with reputable

character, such as: Warikoso-owei (the oldest person in the family) and Ogulaso-owei (spokesman) is invited by the conflicting parties or the relatives of the conflicting parties in settling their incompatibilities and difference amicably in the Amagula (communal assembly) or Warigula (family assembly). Here the Sou (conflict or disagreement) is not that intense, but if not handled well by the third party can trigger to serious conflict. It is imperative to note that this process speedily facilitate peace and reduced fears, suspicion and prejudice which eventually set the conflicting parties closer to each other to understand each other better than before.

Traditional Negotiation (Erekoroyamo)

Erekoroyamo (traditional negotiation) is a primordial traditional process of negotiation between the conflicting members or parties on their incompatibilities and disagreements. Here, conflicting parties have come to full realization of their problems and are ready to give peace a chance, embrace love, unity and harmony, among themselves. Here, the same person(s) in Eretei (dialogue) are responsible for negotiation as apologies for wrong doings by both parties were the features of negotiation. Such apologies were channeled via the Warinana-owei down to the Amakoso-owei in Kaiama town. In this traditional negotiation effective communication with friendly words is applied by both parties in the conflict. Peace agreement is then reached and this agreement is then communicated to the Warinanaowei of both parties who will then communicate the peace agreement to the Birinanaowei of both parties and the Birinanaowei will do same to the Amananaowei and finally the Amananaowei will then communicate the peace agreement to the Amakosuowei of Kaiama town. In order to ensure a lasting peace, the Amanana-owei (King) through the town crier locally called 'Ekpekpebeleowei'', informed the entire community members of the peace agreement reached by the both parties in the Amagula (communal assembly) or Warigula (family assembly) and called for calm, peace, love and continuous harmonious coexistence of members of Kaiama in this era.

Traditional Mediation (Deibearo-owei or Egberitolomo-owei)

Deibearo-owei or Egberitolomo-owei is a primordial method of conflict resolution in Kaiama. According to Mr. Benimo Daniel deibearo-owei (traditional mediation) is an art of interfering in a conflict situation by a third party such as: the Warinana-owei (family head), Birinana-owei (compound head) of the town to amicable settle the differences and incompatibilities between the conflicting parties in the community.[24] The act of deibearo-owei or egberitolomo-owei is voluntary and comes with no remuneration by the conflicting parties of the community. These conflicting parties have admitted to their issues and incompatibities and are ready for peace, thereby resolving it amicably through the traditional mediator.

It is imperative to note that the deibearo-owei or egberitolomo-owei (traditional mediator), which can be in the form of Warinana-owei and Birinana-owei and Ogulaso-wei had significance functions to play thereby ensuring peace and harmony to the conflicting parties in Kaiama in this era despite their admittance of differences and incompatibilities.

1. The traditional mediator must maintain a balanced between conflicting parties in the conflict during the mediation period
2. The traditional mediator must bestow conflicting parties trust on him throughout the mediation period
3. The traditional mediator must try his best in managing the mediation process objectively
4. The traditional mediator must not impose his thought/decision on the conflicting parties throughout the mediation process
5. The traditional mediator must create a friendly and acceptable environment for negotiation suitable to the conflicting parties
6. The traditional mediator must allow conflicting parties to arrive on their peace agreement to enable them tackle their problems step by step in an objective manner
7. The traditional mediator must not shrewd in question session in the negotiation process between conflicting parties

8. The traditional mediator must ensure friendly and peaceful communication in spoken during mediation process
9. The traditional mediator must eradicate fear and implement the needs of the conflicting parties objectively
10. The traditional mediator must not cast blame on any conflicting parties during the process of mediation
11. The traditional mediator must be neutral and unbiased throughout the mediation process.

Thus, the traditional mediator despite his roles always ensures that peace and harmony reigned supreme in this pre-colonial Kaiama society. This is also usually couched with the dictum of no victor, no vanquished as buttressed by the maxim.

Traditional Arbitration (Berepele-owei)

Berepele-owei (traditional arbitration) is similar to traditional mediation but goes a step higher than the latter. In berepele-owei, a third party neutral in nature resolved the conflict by objectively listening to the conflicting parties and any other eye witnesses provided by the conflicting parties. After listening and tendering of evidence(s) at the Amagula (communal assembly) or Warigula (family assembly) by the conflicting parties to back up their claims of innocence, the berepele-owei passes judgment. The said judgment is binding on all the conflicting parties. The sole aim of traditional arbitration is to reconciled the conflicting parties and bring peace within them and in the community.

Traditional Adjudication (Ugulapeleowei)

Ugulapele-owei is another medium of conflict resolution in pre-colonial era in Kaiama, as it was projected towards formalizing the rule of law to the degree that it was akin to determining right and wrong in a conflict situation. Just as berepele-owei, the ugulapele-owei also involves bringing all conflicting parties to a common ground known as Amagula (communal assembly) or Warigula (family assembly) for conflict resolution with many

at times the Amananaowei (King) or Orukariowei (Chief Priest) as the traditional adjudicator of the conflict. The traditional adjudicator after listening to both conflicting parties and seeing their evidence's passes its judgment on the conflict. This judgment is sacrosanct and binding on all the conflicting parties.[25]

Ugulapeleowei is higher than Berepele-owei and respected traditionally by the people owing to the personalities involved. Thus, Ugulapeleowei(s) are honest people who are known in the community for their noble characters, living and respect for the norms, culture, values and gods of the town.

Traditional Reconciliation (Zuzuna or Suokere-owei)

Zuzuna or Suokere-owei (traditional reconciliation) is the most significant aspect of conflict resolution in Kaiama in the pre-colonial era. Just as the name implies this is the traditional process of restoring peace and normalcy in conflict situation in Kaiama town in this era. Zuzuna or Suokere-owei is the terminus of all the methods of conflict resolution, as this process restored peace and harmony in a conflicting situation. Here conflicting parties are told via the Ijaw language to forgive, shun violence, unite, love each other and live in peace and harmony. The spirit of hatred and bitterness is preached against. Parties are instructed to recite meirema amazuzunana doi yeri, which literally means let there be peace between both parties involved in the conflict. In addendum peace and love is preached as the cardinal interest for the growth and development of Kaiama town by the traditional reconciliatory. At the terminus of the reconciliation, the conflicting parties exchange local gin (kaikai) and other cultural items with each other as a symbol of peace and love, while a traditional prayer to the gods and merriment sponsored by the conflicting parties closes the traditional reconciliation process in Kaiama in pre-colonial era.[26]

In the pre-colonial era in Kaiama, the chain of communication after a successful job of traditional mediation, arbitration, adjudication and reconciliation are same as discussed in the traditional negotiation above.

Pre-Colonial Era Traditional Conflict Management Methods in Kaiama

The following are pre-colonial traditional methods of conflict management in Kaiama. They are:

1. Treaties and Covenant via Rituals
2. Non Formal Education
3. Socialization
4. Intra Group Relations
5. Oath Taking
6. Traditional Political and Religious leaders and Institutions
7. Exchange of Individual(s)

Treaties and Covenant via Rituals

The religion of the people in this era was Heathenism (the worship of idols), they adored, revered and respected their gods greatly. Treaties and covenants via rituals were used by the Kaiama people in this era to manage conflict. The objective of these treaties and covenants via rituals by the people was to build trust, abate fears and future conflict, manage conflict, unite and bond families, individuals and compounds (Biri's) together. Theses treaties and covenants via rituals in this era were carried out in the shrines of the deities of Kolokuma clan for folks who are wealthy such as: Bekenaowei, Ogbuna, Igbasolo, Bunudun, Benikurukru, Bekepinaowei amongst others. However each compound which is locally called "Biri" also had deities which these treaties and covenants via rituals were carried out for average folks, such as: Pou-oru in Ikatibiri, Ofuruna in Talawari, Asiaperemo in Wankawari, Tuoburosougha in Ereweri , Omu-oru in Foruwari, Ugulakiri in Odowari and Atengi in Kilegbeghawari, amongst others. The deities of Kolokuma clan and Kaiama town were powerful and dreaded by the people, therefore violators of these treaties and covenants await awful and dire consequences upon their lives, families, compounds and Kaiama town in general.

Non Formal Education

According to Asanebi, education in this form (non formal) is the process of teaching, training, learning and impacting on individuals to have good morals in the society. In the non formal education every member of the society is involved directly or indirectly. Going further, in Kolokuma clan which Kaiama town is inclusive, this learning process provides the means through which roles, Ijo language, norms, values and customs are learnt. The acquisition of these values and norms created the distinctive culture of each Kolokuma community which Kaiama is inclusive.[27]

Okaba, assert that traditional education (non formal) in the communities of Bayelsa state which Kaiama is inclusive was characteristically non formal but utilitarian. Attachment of high moral standard and inculcation of dignity in labour were major objectives. Virtues such as sincerity, hard work and honesty were encouraged. Non formal education discouraged laziness, theft, covetousness, insincerity, cruelty, incest, aggression, violence and hostility. The teachers in this context were the fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, all adult members of the community, medicine men, priests and diviners. Key mechanism of inculcating non formal education includes: myths, proverbs, folktales, poems and social activities such as traditional dances, songs, burial ritual and other religions observations. These myths, proverbs, dance, songs and poems amongst others depict the nature of the world, how to relate with people of the world and live in peace and harmony in the society.

Furthermore, Okaba noted that children were prepared in basic skills such as the provision of food, shelter, water, traditional medicine, constructive reasoning, social organization and management. The principle methodology of non formal education was learning by doing as apprenticeship constituted the major strategy. Children were often inducted into their parent's specialized occupations, such as: canoe carving (Aru-kara), art of massaging (angoloi), fishing (indi dui), farming (kiri boro), hunting (boi tei) and herbal medicine (bou diri), amongst others.[28] Non formal education was one of the numerous methods of transmitting the

traditional laws, culture, norms, ethical standards, skills and knowledge of the people to their children and younger generations which is used to manage and prevent conflict in Kaiama in this era.

Socialization

Socialization is cardinal to the people ethical, moral and cognitive development. However, the people in this era both old and young via socialization learned the Ijo language, custom, culture, traditional skills, non-formal education and absorbs the cultural attitudes, values and belief system of the land. The families and the members of Kaiama town were the core agents of socialization, as both ensure that their people old or young, male or female were incorporated into Kaiama Ijo culture which is their way of life.

Intra Group Relations

Intra group relations in Kaiama town were highly welcomed as it was another medium of conflict management and prevention in pre-colonial Kaiama society. These intra groups relations includes: marriage, trade, traditional sanction, migration and warfare, amongst others.

Marriage

Marriage in Kaiama is held sacred, honoured and highly consummated. It is a thing of joy to give one's daughter hand in marriage, as it bonds and unite families and compounds together thereby reducing, managing and preventing conflict in this era. The Kolokuma clan marriages are: Bere (Big dowry), Opuikiya (Greater friendship marriage), Kala-Ikiya (Lesser friendship marriage), Eredei (Exchange marriage) in this era in Kaiama town.

Trade

Kaiama people engage in intra group relations in trade, which unite, bond families and compounds in Kaiama thereby managing and preventing

conflict. These trade relations brought wealth and fame to the lives of the people, compound(s), Kaiama town and Kolokuma clan in general. Different commodities, crops and goods were traded within Kaiama town by the indigenous people in pre-colonial era which promoted economic prosperity.[30]

Traditional Sanction

Traditional Sanction was another intra group relations practiced by the people to manage and prevent conflict. Traditional sanctions were imposed on people and families who violated customary laws and treaties entered in Kaiama town in pre-colonial era. Some of such sanctions meted on violators were in the area of rape, murder, incest, abuse of elderly people, lying, defecating inside canoe, having sex with someone wife or husband and stealing, amongst others. Defaulters were asked to performed traditional rituals to clean their sins and the land, while fines, compensation and show of restitution of their crimes were many at times also required from the communities to the defaulters. These traditional sanctions served as deterrent to others from engaging in dirty, nasty characters and attitudes against the culture, customary laws and treaties entered in Kaiama in this era. Thus, early apology of crimes and criminal behavour were highly welcomed to ease the sanction process.[31]

Migration

People migrated to different areas for several reasons in pre-colonial era such as: acquisition of land and other resources, greener pasture, threat to their existence by external and internal forces and agricultural un-satisfaction of their previous location amongst others. The pre-colonial Kaiama people welcomed several Ijo groups within and outside her territories which promoted peace and harmonious coexistence between them. For instance, the Okorotonu and Olobiri people reside within Kaiama, if not properly guided by indigene of the land one will mistaken the two autonomous communities as Kaiama town. Furthermore, several families in Kaiama town migrated from other communities within the

Kolokuma clan, as one of such is indicated above in the history of Kaiama town in the study.

Warfare

Warfare resulted from struggle for resources, unfulfilled dreams, goals and struggle for dominance amongst others in this era. The pre-colonial Kaiama town was not devoid of conflict and warfare, which claimed many lives and properties. However, warfare was another medium of intra group relations which at the terminus fostered unity, peace, love and harmonious living among the inhabitants of Kaiama.

Oath Taking

Oath taking is a cardinal approach and mechanism in conflict management in pre-colonial Kaiama. Conflicting parties were asked to take an oath by the chief priest (Orukariowei) of the town to enable the conflicting parties to sheath their sword and allow peace to reign, thereby managing the current conflict and preventing future reoccurrence of conflict between both parties. This oath taking were done in different Oruwari (shrine) in Kaiama town among her clan known as Kolokuma, such as: Igbasolo, Bunudun, Benikurukru, Bekepinaowei, Pou-oru, Ofuruna, Asiaperemo, Omu-oru, Ugulakiri and Atengi, amongst others. The conflicting parties were strictly warned on the awful and dire consequences of oath taking to their lives, families, compounds and many at times the Kaiama town in general. The goals of oath taking was to established peace, truth, honesty and guilt, thereby discouraging evil, crimes, hatred and dishonesty in individuals lives in Kaiama town in pre-colonial era.[32]

Traditional Political and Religious Leaders and Institutions

The traditional political and religious institutions of Kaiama town in this era were another medium conflict was managed in Kaiama. These institutions and their leaders were vested with powers by the gods of the land and customary laws to governed, pray and secured them.

Exchange of Individual(s)

In pre-colonial Kaiama society an individual or individuals more precisely female is/are exchange from family A to family B, if there were loss (death) of family A child or children (Male or Female) as a result of conflict, warfare and crime amongst others by family B children and member(s). The objectives of exchange of individual(s) were to bear children to the deceased family A to continue their lineage, manage and prevent conflict, foster peace, unity and harmonious living among the two families and the Kaiama people.

Challenges of Conflict Resolution and Management in Pre-colonial Kaiama

Traditional methods of conflict resolution and management in pre-colonial Kaiama were faced with challenges, which sometime impeded peace, unity and harmonious coexistence among the conflicting parties and sometimes extended to the community. The following are few of the challenges of conflict resolution and management in this era:

1. Many at times traditional mediators, negotiators and reconcilers amongst others in conflict in this era were not objective in handled conflict, their body language and questions posed to a conflicting party were succinctly indication of biasness and subjectivity in the conflict.

2. It was difficult getting pacify, justice and fairness for few people who held on to their personal believe, self interest and as such perceived conflict and warfare as a means of settling issues not minding the end results or consequences.

3. Traditional arbitrators and Adjudicators judgments were not respected in few cases irrespective of their position in the town due to Ama (town), Biri's (compounds), Wari's (family's) politics and a feeling of subjectivity from them which conflicting parties held against them before and after judgment in pre-colonial Kaiama.

4. Conflicting parties were not comfortable with the judgment from the traditional arbitrators and adjudicators in some cases, as such did not abide by the judgments to the letter.

5. Despite oath taking to prevent and manage conflict, few individual seek the face of other deities within and outside Kaiama town to protect them for their quest for power, while they regenerate old conflict in the town.

6. Few treaties were not totally honoured, as this was a challenge to conflict resolution and management in pre-colonial Kaiama.

7. Not everyone in pre-colonial Kaiama that was traditionally fine as customs demand due to their role in conflict fulfilled it. These fines were to restitute the land culturally in this era.

8. Few people held on to grievance, intolerance, hatred and unapologetic character and attitude on issues despite traditional dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation amongst others, which will speedily foster peace, unity and harmonious coexistence in Kaiama in pre-colonial era.[33]

As a result of the above challenges traditional conflict resolution and management measures could not totally achieved their objectives which were employed by the people in this era. Though to a greater extent indigenous conflict resolution and management employed by the people brought doi (peace), keni wenimo (unity) and keme se yebele (harmonious coexistence) in Kaiama town in pre-colonial era.

Conclusion

The foregoing discourse examined pre-colonial era traditional method of conflict resolution and management in Kaiama town. The pre-colonial Kaiama town was not devoid of conflict, as such the people in resolving and managing conflict adopted and practiced the traditional methods which are indigenous in nature. These traditional methods of conflict resolution and management in Kaiama were faced with challenges which impeded its success in some cases in this era. Conflict in whatever way created intra

group relations within Kaiama town in pre-colonial era. The traditional methods of conflict resolution and management to a greater extent prevented and managed conflict when it occurred in pre-colonial Kaiama town thereby igniting and fostering keni wenimo (unity), tari (love), doi (peace) and Keme se yebele (harmonious coexistence), amongst others in the town.

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PERSPECTIVES ON AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SOCIETY: AN APPRAISAL

Gajere Yakubu Tula
Department of History
Gombe State University, Gombe

Abstract

In the search for self-identity, determination and assertion, the African traditional religion has been an effective tool with which the actions of moral, societal norms and values and the general steering of the affairs of respective African societies were controlled. The traditional religion from time immemorial evolved as a machinery of socio-economic and political order amongst diverse African societies. These traditional apparatuses comprised set of laws codified and kept in the cultural norms and values of the various ethnic groups. Through times, the African traditional religion attained prominence in the overall development of respective societies given the nature with which it was adhered to by all classes in the societies. Traditional religious prescription of instant benefits or severe sanctions by the gods on members of a society, who adhered to the demands of the ancestors, or the gods or not, was significant in societal cohesion which transcended to the socio-economic and political progress of African societies and elsewhere in the world. It is on this premises that this paper intends to bring forth this discussion to enable an understanding of the strong influence of African traditional religion on the political, social, economic and ethical matters of the various African peoples to the contemporary African in the midst of the current cultural imperialism.

Keywords: Religion, Traditional, Society

Introduction

Many societies the world over have evolved varied systems of political control through respective cultures deeply embedded in their norms and values. Progressively, this control takes on religious connotation where traditional religion takes the center stage. It is though admissible that as the society develops, customs changes. Yet it is found that during times of crises, especially when someone passes to the afterlife, even professing members of the monotheistic religions do resort to traditional beliefs. This is because the deep world view of traditional beliefs among people continues to linger for a long time, even while other customs change. Traditional religion is the heart of African culture, for it provides the basic beliefs of much of African culture. In many parts of African societies, it is believed that when a person dies, his soul continues to live on, being transformed into an ancestral spirit. Though the person dies, he remains very much alive and is active among the members of the clan while the body rots in the ground; his spirit continues to appear to the living. These ancestral spirits, the living dead, can bring benefits to the living, bring sickness and even death. Because the spirits of the dead are feared, rituals are often aimed at pacifying or driving them away. The effective use of the ancestral spirit in the control of the society, and for personal benefit eventually took on political dimension as people vested with the power to mediate and interpret the demands and commands of the spirits, either of the gods or ancestors tended to dominate the socio-economic and political prominence of the society. They also eventually formed part of the oligarchy and along with a privileged few would turn the tide of religion for personal gains. This paper is therefore set to examine the significance of religious institutions and the role traditional religion plays in the path of socio-economic and political organization of African societies taking into cognizance that traditional religions was purported to offer quicker solutions to problems bedeviling respective societies. This is to enable an understanding of the intricacies associated with relapsing to traditional religions to address issues that orthodox religions could not instantly resolve in order to fulfill human desires as they occur. The objective is to

help reconstruct African past in order to understand the present as well as to help in self-determination and assertion. This is to make known the world view of Africans so that non-Africans may understand the social and moral behaviour of Africans; so as to correct misconceptions about the African traditional religion by the western world as well as educated Africans.[1]

Definition of Concepts

Religion

Religion is more than a set of beliefs about the supernatural realm. Religion makes sacred and unquestionable the culture in which the societies lives, the class or caste position to which people belong, the attitude they hold towards other people and the morals with which they adhere. Religion is a part of lifestyle which determines gender roles and people's place in the society, which they could often defend with their lives.[2] Information about the earliest stages of religion comes from archaeological materials which is quite scarce. In respect to this, there is little knowledge of religious beliefs among the most ancient ancestors who lived several years ago. They had none and could not have because the most ancient representatives of humankind led such primitive social existence that their consciousness was oriented towards practical matters and was incapable of creating religious abstractions.[3]

The controversy of the most ancient religious life of the early ancestors lingers on even though some scholars maintain that religion was inherent in man since his emergence. In this regard, modern orthodox theologians, compelled to recognize that man evolved from primates, asserted that only man's body originated from the animal world, his soul was created by God

[1] Quarcoopome, T.N.O, West African Traditional Religion, African University Press, Ibadan 1987, Pp: 9

[2] Jeanne H. Ballantine and Keith Roberts, Our Social World: introduction to Sociology, Sage Publishers Los Angeles, 2011 pp:393

[3] Sergei Tokarev, History of Religion, Progress Publishers Moscow, 1986. P.9

and supposedly his first religious ideas – belief in God – developed at the same time.[4] It is a cultural institution, a means, an instrument for the satisfaction of needs. It is not merely metaphysics, but its very nature leads to concrete action and the form of ritual in which the needs and desires of human life are reflected.[5]

Religion is therefore a set of beliefs, feelings, dogmas and practices that defines the relations between human beings and the sacred or divinity. It means the voluntary subjection of oneself to a God (god). A given religion is defined by specific elements of a community of believers. The majority of religions have developed starting from a revelation based on the exemplary history of a society, of a prophet or a wise man who taught an ideal of life. Religion can be defined with three characteristics; belief and religious practice, faith and then unity of a community who share the same faith. The word religion is derived from Latin word ''religio'' (attachment of moral bond, anxiety of self-consciousness). The origin of religion is debated since antiquity which Cicero said came from the Latin word ''relegere'', meaning ''to carefully consider the things related to the worship of gods''.[6]

Many societies have existed in which certain cosmological and ontological beliefs were well-nigh. Societies have come and gone where everyone believed in God (gods), in witches, the supernatural, that an individual's race determines his moral and intellectual qualities and that men were superior to women. Even if these beliefs are now considered as absurd, people once held them dearly as articles of faith. Because they did, such

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Otite, O and Ogionwo, W., An Intriduction to Sociological Studies, Heineman Books Ibadan 1979, Pp: 152 and Geertz Clifford, Ethos – World view and the analysis of sacred symbols in Dundes, A. Everyman His Way: Reading in cultural anthropology, New Jersey, Prentice Hall 1968, Pp: 302-3 in Ajayi, S.A., African Culture and Civilization, Atlantis Books Ibadan 2005, Pp: 129

[6] Thomas A. Idinopulos, www.crosscurrent.org What is Religion, Retrieved 19th September 2016, 13:03 pm

beliefs provided them with the cultural values considered to have been infallible[7], which they used in order to apprehend the contours of the surrounding landscapes and when necessary, as a source of inspiration[8] and hope.

Traditional

The term traditional is derived from the word tradition which is defined as a part of the social and cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation and preserved over an extended period in a given society, class or a social group; the processes and methods by which a society's heritage both material and nonmaterial was transmitted were distinct to respective societies. It denotes a set of such customs and usages viewed as a coherent body of precedents influencing the present which were not written down in the sacred book of religions. Tradition can also be a style or a method of behaviour or practice, especially of artistic expression that is recognized and sometimes imitated. Traditional elements include certain social institutions, norms of behaviour, values, beliefs, customs and rituals. Traditional elements are not limited to its most stereotyped manifestations such as customs and rituals; rather, it extends over a much wider range of social phenomena.[9] As traditions are passed down from generation to generation, especially by oral communication, it is often adapted to African cultural contexts and belief systems. It implies adherence to the past practices or established conventions in which the role of humanity is generally seen as one of the harmonizing nature with the supernatural[10] and were sacrosanct in the routine affairs of societies. Thus, African Traditional Religion (ATR) originated as Africa's own initiative to get satisfaction and continuity in its world through spontaneous response to

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[7] Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, Hitler's willing executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust, Abacus Books, Brown and Coy 1996, pp:28

[8] Ibid, pp:29

[9] www.thefreedictionary.com, Retrieved 14/8/18, 14:43 hrs

[10] www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary, Retrieved 14/8/18 13:35 hrs

and, propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which were believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life.[11]

The term "Traditional" connotes a belief or custom passed down from one generation to another.[12] As a result, Africans in primitive times were not taught to be religious as was the case of either Christianity or Islam, but were naturally born so and grew up formulating ideas, beliefs, customs and so on which were religiously based to regulate their societies and daily lives. In other words, ATR developed as a liturgical response to primitive African self-consciousness of his dependence on supernatural beings and forces around him. And, from this divine-human relationship developed ideas, beliefs, customs, methods and arts which regulated his daily living and gave his existence a distinct meaning. The term is distinctly used to mean "Indigenous". It is a description of the life-orientation of those African societies which were fundamentally guided by their indigenous value systems despite their exposure to acculturating influence from Europe, America or Asia. It is therefore safe to assert that the ATR was peculiarly African in origin, essence and formation as against the major missionary religions imported into the continent.[13]

Society

The term society refers to an extended social group having a distinctive cultural, economic and political organization. It corresponds to those concentrated areas discerned in the uneven fabric of social reality.[14]A society means that social relationships are distributed in an unequal fashion; that individuals are assembled in groups in which the members interacted more closely and with greater frequency, and certainly not in

[11] Frazier, G.J., The Golden Bough: A study in magic and religion, Macmillan London 1983, Pp: 65 in Ajayi, A.S., African Culture and Civilization…, Pp: 129

[1212] Crowther, Jonathan et al (Eds), Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of current English, Oxford University Press 1995, Pp: 1267

[13] Ajayi, S.A., African Culture and Civilization, Atlantis Books Ibadan, 2005. Pp: 129

[14] Macquet, J., Power and Society in Africa, World University library, McGraw-Hill Book Company N/York, 1971, pp: 7

random fashion. In all societies, there are permanent group of peoples with organized activities. Furthermore, the totality of these organized activities assures the continuity of the group as well as meeting the vital needs of its members. A society is self-perpetuating; it contains men and women maintaining its identity over several generations. It has institutions which passed on the experience of the adults to the young, and defending itself from external dangers as well as internal forces of disintegration. It also provides, from the point of view of each of its members, a framework for life from birth to the grave. The term society is an objective concept in the sense that not only those who are part of it, but also neighbors and outsider observers recognize it as such.[15]

The concept of a society is independent of the individual criteria of each observer; it is a particularly useful category in its broader perception as a term. Its application to the African reality gives some light on an interesting process of social change over a period of time. Suffice to say here that there is a break in continuity between the societies of traditional and present day Africa, with a few exceptions. In spite of the fact that the societies of the pre-colonial period were usually permanent, they no longer act in a framework of collective life as a result of the external socio-political forces introduced into them by the colonialists from the early period of the twentieth century. However, the traditional belief that God created the world and man means that society came into being by God's ordinance. It therefore goes that sociologically, man as a social animal is a gregarious being. Living in physical and moral isolation is alien to his nature. He seeks company with other men and fellowship with others because as a social being he does not want solitary life. Human beings everywhere want wholeness, solidarity and tenacity of purpose. They want deliverance from the world and its threat. All these induce rules and regulations for right conduct which influence his social and moral behavior.[16]

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[15] Macquet, J., Power and Society…., pp: 14
[16] Quarcoopome, T.N.O., West African…, Pp: 162

Political Relations of Traditional Religion in African Societies

The relation that exists between government, either colonial or indigenous and the traditional religious institution on one side and with the mass population on the other is a 'Ruler-Subject' relation. The ruler-subject relation is the basic tie found in all the numerous interactions between members of a society. It is this political aspect of relations, different in other aspects that integrates the society into a network which is organized and particularly in some societies, very complex. It is on the basis of this consideration that governmental network can be distinguished from other societal relations, which to it alone is applied the term political.[17] In traditional African society however, government was always monarchical. There were chiefs at the head of every political network. Where the number of subjects and density of population allowed the monarch to rule directly, the sovereign has to delegate power to officials who exercised it in his name.[18] It is thus enforced that traditional rulers, forming part of the spiritual and secular authority are also inclined to their subjects in the overall affairs of the state.

It is equally imperative to note that, wherever there was a political network, the execution of important orders was guaranteed in the last analysis by agents of force, secular or spiritual. It is established that the relations existing among monarchs and courts, administrative and executive agents were of rulers in the sense that their decisions, even when executed by subordinates, cult members or even priests of various cults were sanctioned by actual or potential recourse to force where all members of the society were assigned the role of subjects in the political relationship. Thus, societies were distinguished by a major division between the rulers and the ruled. It was hierarchical; a few made the decisions and many executed them.[19] The few that made the decisions were primarily those at the helm of affairs in government in collaboration with

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[17] Macquet, J., Power and Society…, 1971, pp: 89

[18]Macquet, J., pp:90

[19] Macquet, J., Power and society…, pp:93

the chiefs whose inputs in the process were necessary. The execution of the decisions, which the traditional religious institution must ensure its accomplishment, was carried out by a coterie of officials under the rulers' supervision through the mass population in the society.

What comprises the chances of any shift in the economic order was not just the political leadership that acquiesces in post-colonial Africa, but a system of the colonial legacy that had been deeply rooted in the traditional religion because they did all they could to protect the economic hegemony of their kith and kin through the protection of property rights which entrenched the inequalities of the day. During the colonial period, the British, especially in Nigeria, had control over economic resources that means that skewed distribution of resources was passed on to the post-colonial state. It goes therefore that the class in government and the traditional institutions which took over the reins of power accumulated and allocated for themselves wealth and power rather than transforming the system they inherited.[20] It was therefore apparent that the councils of the orthodox bodies which came into existence in the post-colonial period became very effective machinery of government patronage in Africa.

It could suffice to state that, with the existence of the councils of religious bodies in Africa, governments are expected to obtain constructive advice on critical national issues that cropped up from time to time. Without the inputs from such bodies, some decisions announced by the governments would have probably ignited some serious socio-economic and political upheavals in many parts of the continent. Despite the attendant challenges of modernization, the role of traditional religion increased and was somewhat maintained because of their political involvement, especially, in a democratic dispensation being a period leading politician patronize various religious institutions including traditional cults and shrines for

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[20] Peter Mekaye, A past that haunts the present and the future: Some reflections on the impact of colonial legacy on affairs of development in Joseph Mangut and Terhemba Wuam (Eds), Colonialism and the Transition to modernity in Africa, IBB University Lapai 2012, pp:850 - 51

political patronage, ministerial appointments and appointment to other important offices. It is worthy to note therefore that the traditional religious institutions, in post-colonial Africa to a large extent, were rather centers of political rewards and punishments[21] for those who adhered to or reneged on their promises than real organizers of the people from the grass-root for the overall development of their respective societies.

In many traditional African societies, religious institutions balance sheet does not indeed show deficits. The accumulation of reserves for lean periods, the administration of justice and the maintenance of public peace, require coercive power only in large, heterogeneous, urbanized societies. Elsewhere, the lineage network and its non-coercive sanctions are enough. The size of many traditional societies which have traditional religious systems of control would not seem to have called for a serious coercive apparatus.[22] In consequence, the traditional religious leaders drained away the surplus from their followers without giving anything of economic value in return. The non-economic services they rendered such as assurance of blissful life after death, although indispensable in religious doctrines, or when a group was being threatened by many economic uncertainties, seem to have been superfluous in many African situations. If it should be agreed that the political network of government and religious institutions is a mediator of power relations, traditional religions, by virtue of their control of the means of applying pressure at the grass-root, established relations of domination between themselves and their adherents.[23] The attendant implication thereof was the increased application of coercive dominance on the members by the officials of the orthodox and traditional religious bodies, whose actions were often not questioned by those in power so far the results are in line with government desires.

However, it should be noted that, traditional religions have important implications for the understanding not only of contemporary societies, but

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[21] Muhammed Sanni Abdulkadir, op cit, pp:308

[22] Macquet, op cit. pp:99

[23] Ibid, pp:102

to some extent, of the development of modern societies in general. More so, the feature of societies that recognized the significance of the traditional religions equally recognized the representation of minority groups. For the most part in Africa, political and religious authorities ignored the traditional religion in national development and occasionally suppressed it. It was only in remote populations that the traditional religions exert considerable influence in the societies. In consequence, the germs of modern valuation in Africa were greatly confined to a social system which now preserves inequality. The rigidity of this system frustrates modern development which might have fermented enormous changes beginning at the base of the society. Thus, modern ways of religious thinking have suffered from great drawbacks, which seemed to be the reason why national development has been greatly retarded.[24] It therefore needed to be pointed out that, some religious doctrines could influence the population with greater success. It played the role of uniting the people together by which the mass populations were the ones who primarily felt the need for religious consolation as each traditional religion is closely linked with local conditions[25] politically, economically and socially.

In another vein, when the Europeans entered Africa, they quickly came to the conclusion that there was nothing good in the indigenous religions in all their respects, and therefore required of the African conversion not only to a new religion, but to a completely new way of life. For in so doing, they succeeded in destroying many of the riches of African culture and in particular, its ritual arts. On the other hand, the Christian missionaries observed and appreciated that African religions were much more closely integrated with African culture than Victorian Christianity with the rest of Victorian cultures. Though the missionaries had been opposed by the colonial administrators,[26] yet it was through the traditional institution that

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[24] Hajime Nakamura, A comparative History of Ideas, Kegan Paul International Ltd, Tokyo, 1975, pp:562

[25] Sergei Tokarev, op cit, pp:331

[26] Michael Crowder, The Story of Nigeria, Faber and Faber Ltd 1962, pp:118

the indirect rule policy was applied and the Missionaries were instrumental in softening the minds of Africans through Christian doctrines. It needed to be stressed therefore that, the African traditional institution which served as the panacea for socio-economic and political control in pre-colonial African societies, effectively served the interest of the colonial administrators in dominating and exploiting all societies in especially, Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa. Invariably, the various elements of the political tradition of religions were not only part of the political mobilization on African history, but on the proper interpretation of cultural and ritual phenomenon on the moral effect of politics. Also, on whether for instance, Christians/Muslims could take part in traditional rituals, in the correct understanding of their traditions of origin etc. These were part of a process of cultural interpretation and reflection and are intimately connected with political mobilization. The process therefore was centered on two fundamental questions of identity such as what it meant to be an African and what it meant to be a Christian/Muslim. In this context, the political mobilizations of Africans were deeply influenced by the cultural reflection and interpretation of respective ethnicities and national identities.[27]

The Significance of Traditional Religion in African Societies

As African societies are confronted with the need for political organization which affects respective religions, materialism sets in and seriously impaired the religious mind set of the African as his emphasis increasingly dwells on man's political and economic potentials.[28] As the vast majority of the societies achieved higher level of social development, cultural evolution sets in as they got engaged in agriculture and breeding domestic animals. As a result, agriculture and pastoralism was combined in different degrees to various religions. Also, difference in the material conditions of life and the nature of the social systems determines what forms of religions

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[27] Kastfelt, N. Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A study of Middle Belt Christianity, British Academic Press London, 1994, Pp 127
[28] Peter Falk, The growth of the church in Africa, ACTS Bukuru, plateau state.

should prevail among the various societies. However, the most characteristic and obvious feature of African religions among societies was the ancestral cult which maintained the survival of clan and tribal systems.[29] It equally ensured the steady progress of the societies since Africa is populated by peoples who have reached different levels of development, attaining different material and cultural conditions. Thus, the traditional African societies can be categorized on the basis of socio-economic development of material production, social systems and culture, within the framework of communal systems[30] enhanced by the observance of common traditional religions and cultures in respective societies.

The fact that many Africans in current parlance still largely retain their traditional religious world view even when practicing any of the monotheistic religions (Christianity and Islam) is in part due to the fact that encroachment of these religions into the African societies were never able to efface not only the traditional religion, but the entire culture which it was so intimately bound up.[31] It was thus common that the development of modern society in the African polity was greatly associated with blending traditional religions with the orthodox religions on the basis of recognizing the immense contributions of traditional religions in the evolutionary process of African societies to their current status.

It was quite obvious that all modern societies, developed or developing, had in a point of time undergone transitional stages of cultural changes. It is also a historical fact that, all societies, not only in Africa, but the world over had various systems of religious cults prior to the introduction and spread of both Christianity and Islam and have yet maintained strict observance of their traditions deeply rooted in religious practices, especially in Asian societies. On the other hand, the key to understanding the world view of the African is his religion. The traditional religion permeates every aspect of the African life from the cradle to the grave in

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[29] Tokarev S., op cit, pp:75

[30] Ibid, pp:72

[31] Michael Crowder, op cit, pp:118

spite of their education and sophistication. In politics, there was the belief in the divine status of the king; in economics there was the belief that poverty is caused by malevolent forces while socially, success depends on supernatural forces like magic and medicine. Ethically, there was the fear of instant punishment from the divinities and the ancestors' forces the average African to conform to the norms of the societies.[32] Suffice to state therefore that, the African traditional religion has been woven into the fabric of the daily activities of African societies as a binding cord.

On a general note, Africans strongly believed that moral values were not invented by human beings, but were the offspring of religion. This was so because God has put his law into man and it was this which was referred to as **Conscience**. Thus, man was expected to use his conscience to behave in a morally good way in order to avoid the wrath of God. As an impartial judge, God's judgment was sure and inescapable. Some of the divinities represent the wrath of God and for this also man comports himself socially and morally in order to be on the safer side.[33] Hence, the character of man was of supreme importance in African life and thought. This was essential because it is what God judges.[34]

The Concept of Sin and Evil in ATR

The ATR from the onset upheld the supremacy of a Divine Being in relation to human religious morality, social behavior and the traditional concept of character. It was obvious as far as the traditional African was concern; God and good life were closely related. In this respect, majority of Africans did realize that disregard for moral obligations were an offence against God. Given the knowledge that Africans had about God and the attributes predicated to Him, they generally did realize that certain forbidden actions more or less numerous according to the judgments of

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[32] Quarcoopome, T.N.O, West African Traditional Religion, African University Press, Ibadan, 1987, P: 10

[33] Quarcoopome, T.N.O, West African…, Pp: 163

[34] Quarcoopome, T.N.O, West African…, Pp: 164

different persons, were offences against the creator and not only against the ancestors, society or ones' neighbor. Thus, a moral offender whom misfortune overtook was said to be under the lashes of God.[35] It is obvious to opine therefore that, being a Christian or a Muslim was both a question of having particular beliefs and performing particular rituals, and a behavior which were specific, and in some cases exclusively so, to the believer in relation to God.[36] The traditional emphasis on good character also indicated that the African had knowledge of good and evil and was therefore ever conscious of sin and guilt. The fact that Africans had no systematic theology of sin was no proof that they had no sense of sin and guilt. There existed traditional words for sin in every African society which were later translated into the Holy Books of the Orthodox religions for respective societies.[37]

Some western scholars had held the view that the traditional religion lays emphasis on individual sin and guilt. This is in effect saying that the African had no knowledge of evil. To maintain such a position was to suggest that God/divinities/ancestors were apparently unconnected with private and public morality. It also suggested that the traditional religion only belonged to the "shame" culture so that it was in this respect of public opinion that people refrain from antisocial behavior. By implication, it meant that the African had no knowledge of what was morally good and evil because he observed taboos for the simple reason that the ancestors ordained them or because it was the custom. In the interim, African societies were corporate in nature. In this corporate existence, everybody knew somebody else and therefore a person cannot be individualistic. Within this situation, almost all forms of evil that a person suffers was believed to have been caused by members of his community. For instance, witches were blamed for lack of success and were scapegoats for

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[35] Quarcoopome, T.N.O, West African…, Pp: 165, 167

[36] Kastfelt, N., Religionand Politics in Nigeria: A Study in Middle Belt Christianity, British Academic Press London 1994, Pp: 127

[37] Quarcoopome, T.N.O., West African…, Pp: 168

misfortune and sorrow.[38] This was similar to ancient Israel as was contained in the Book of Jeremiah 31: 29 (… *the fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge).* In spite of this corporate responsibility, the traditional religion emphasizes individual sin and guilt.

Conclusion

In the face of the emergent global challenges, the African identity finds itself in precarious a situation where her culture is at crossroads with alien cultures. To preserve the African identity, account must be taken of the African traditional religion being the center of African life and thought. The concern of politics and power and other features of the secular world do not emerge in African societies as a result of western infiltration into Africa, but that Africans had already been concerned with the moral status of power on the basis of African cultures. The emerging modern political order that tended to engulf African secular hierarchy was mainly because colonialism transferred it and, or because Africans themselves found a point of relevance in it. Nonetheless, the African traditional religion could be regarded as a catalyst in the socio-economic and political life of Africans especially in the current age of global technology.

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[38] Quarcoopome, T.N.O., West African…, Pp: 167 - 8

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