



HISTORICAL EXPOSITION OF NOK AS CULTURE KNOWN FROM THE IRON AGE USE FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The quest of History is rigorous but interesting. It is an intellectual discipline that engages one in the array and the quest for excellence. This great task of articulating evidential facts, to classify information, analyze data is a herculean responsibility that lies before the Historian living within the geographical entity of Africa. The method adopted in this empirical research is to cast cultural variables on the platform of economic revival and creating wealth. The Nok fabrication of iron that enhances the development of socio-economic well being of its people made farming a sustainable carrier. In this essay, we explore the economic gains of farming in Africa, examining the ancient farming tools produced by Nok iron-age; comparing them with the modern. We endeavoured to explicate how history plays an eminent role in the socio-economic and politico-cultural development of the people around this forest zone. The thrust of the essay traces the different stages by which this development of the farming methods, crops and tools used by ancestors around the plateau zone the Nok civilization is located. By examining ancestral history of Nok civilization then, exploring how they produced the iron for the farming tools, we hope to establish what need to be done now to improve method of farming. This will add to the high yield of agricultural products leading to economic growth in the 21st century amongst our youths, to generate creative skills in blacksmithing.

Keywords: Historical quests, agricultural development, iron, artifacts, farming.

Introduction

This article asserts strongly that History is an indispensable science based on evidential facts that it bequeaths to humanity the reliable process and system of collection of data, experimentation and storage of information. It is the queen of science that can cast the basic data of how Nok iron-age were responsible for the production of farming tools, domestic utensils and hunting weapons that are close to three thousand years of recorded history. Therefore, History, be it secular or sacred is a custodian of culture, law,



architecture and enduring legacy of unbroken records of events, activities and behaviour of a given family or community. By its exercise, it is designed to examine data and facts, record and artifacts. From its womb it brings forth its rich storage and by retrieval process and study, it resonates its radiance and beauty of past glory, unearthing and placing the vital information to nourish the present for study and offer it as stratagem for the future. History thus has devised methods and modes of operation. We display its golden methodology of recalling its unique classic ancestral, mythic and informative style for the purpose of pulling out scientific archeological records from reputable research for sustainable development and education of our youths in the 21st century.

1. History as the Flowering Queen of Ancestral Landmark: It can be said that History is a flowering discipline that bequeaths knowledge, the queen of artifact and archeology. Examining the records of production of farming tools by the Nok civilization is a case in point in our exploration in this piece of essay and searching to improve on the modern techniques in the twenty first century. This has been proven and is evident in records, data and research, thus it can be said to be an indispensable and credible science. The historical search will lead us to seek the processes to establish in this essay the nurturing seed of intellectual initiative to establish the socio-cultural development in Africa as a most do-list. It forms a solid nursery bed for careful planning. Knowing that Africans engage in creative quest, evoking a generative spirit and involve in authentic charism of trade, industry and commerce which begun with ancient ancestral spirit of Egypt, Ethiopia and Nubia; is a fine testimony to hold to in this essay. Even though there do exist a differentiated argument which has prevailed as to what nature, class and style history can be called a science? Yet there are many schools of thought that have taught and maintained as to what really constitute science or scientific data, research or even discipline?, to this we take some time to explore the concept of how Africans have set a landmark pace in recorded history. History in its varied form is a queen and a mother of sciences; evidently this school teaches that: "A *science* of some sort has existed in every society at all period of human history. There can be no action, whether on natural or social phenomena, without a certain amount of rational empirical knowledge of the physical, living and social world."¹ From the above point it is clear that history in a generic sense is a science as it opines that there have to be proof of elemental knowledge of some kind to

¹Yakubu, A, Ochefu Armstrong M., Adejo Nicholas A., Ada Okpeh O., Okpeh Jnr, *The Origin and Development of Scientific Ideas*, Makurdi-Ibadan-Abuja: Aboki Publishers, 1999, pg. 39



qualify a process of data analysis to be called a science. Yet this school holds that due to the vast discoveries that prevailed from the seventeenth century of the Darwinian revolution and continued in Lyell research in geology, brought history into science, as such, it could be said that: "Science was concerned no longer with something static and timeless, but with a process of change and development. Evolution in science confirmed and complemented progress in history."² Yet those who study Epistemology, Phenomenology and Logic will agree with us that words and concepts evolve as civilization and language structure experience change of time and space. Thus, the need to apply the use of science to history; this school of thought still maintains that: "Science as we understand the term is a relatively recent phenomenon. A major advance occurred in the seventeenth century, an advance so different from all previous ones that it can be called an unprecedented "intellectual revolution."³ This trend of presentation can actually allow us celebrate the marriage of ascent, the complementary role of disciplines in that; "the historian has some excuse for feeling himself [herself] more at home in the world of science today than he [she] could have done a hundred years ago."⁴ Evidently, the person who keeps the chronicle and data of arrival is the historian, by nurturing experiential knowledge in the service of truth. It is the elemental character of history as queen and mother then that features the departures and arrivals carefully nourished, preserved, studied and bequeathed from one generation to the next.

2. *Nurturing the seed of Socio-cultural development in Africa:*
Scholars have generally held that sociology and anthropology are disciplines that evaluate human conduct, disposition and relational behaviour in the society. Applying these to the task of nurturing, it comes with selecting instruments of measurement, by a team of experts who engage in deep thinking on the indices of development that ought to focus on some elements that add value to the socio-economic growth of a people. The historical quest can arise through the provision of the service of a Think-Tank; a personnel of experts in Nigeria, nay Africa who are required to register the processes of socio-economic and politico-cultural development. If the scientist and the technologist develop the modules, the economist and the politician need to strategize and cement the dynamics of application. While the historian and the philosopher evolve the procedural stratagem by which the indices of positive assessment of African values

²Carr, E. H., *What is History?*, London: Penguin Books, 1961, pg. 57

³Yakubu, A, Ochefu Armstrong M., Adejo Nicholas A., Ada Okpeh O. Okpeh JNR, *The Origin and*

Development of Scientific Ideas, pg. 40

⁴Carr, E. H., *What is History?*, pg. 57



can lead to a clear progressive change is achieved, received and assessed. Yet mentoring reliable procedures on the character of the youths is a constructive quest for the future; that is the foundation of education.

Nigeria in particular as well as the whole of the African continent, are long used to scientific theories, data analysis and structural measurement; but as we walk further into the 21st century, we need to make a quick shift from traditional methods to embracing smart ways that yield immediate results to effect positive change against hunger, diseases and illiteracy. This is the constituency of the Historian as an educationist and an intellectual researcher need to explore its extent and magnitude. It is a vast territory and a gold mine where the stratagem of construction and de-construction take place. *This is the unique place the Historian need exercise expertise and unfolds his/her creative gem.* Having the African destination as take off; a virgin location where the historian need demonstrates who he/she is and most state what *was* that did not work under the colonial European task force master, to the neo-colonial African politician and Euro-American trained scholars. The current African Historian must know that: "The concept (called) social development is used here to refer to development of society in its totality. It is a development which makes man [woman] to seek develop his [her] potentialities in a total sense, it is a form of development which ultimately aims at the maximum improvement of the material, cultural, social and political aspects of man [woman].⁵" What is demanded by this quest and creative search is a clear and fresh intellectual drive of the truth, blend by an incisive display motivated by a risky thrust towards the making of a people. The African, the native born historian must create his/her currencies of engagement, to deliver fresh insinuations and insights.

For an authentic growth however to take place, the indices of measurement of the Historian in Africa must be native and unique, it must search for ancient and articulated facts outside the scope of European historical landscape in order to create a world that is more revealing than just a recall of a copious past records. Thus, the point of departure of the lineage of socio-cultural development could be ascertained when these variables emerge from antiquity to the current happenings. For instance, the historian need explore the cultural farming implements used by the Bajju,

⁵Gumo-Kurgat, Sussy, The Catholic Church and Social Development in Busia District, Kenya, in *Journal of Intra-African Studies*, number 2, August 2009, ed. Toryina Ayati Varvar, IBB University, Lapai, Niger State, pg. ⁶²



the Hausa, the Igbo or the Yoruba people three hundred to a thousand years ago, and classify further what these were used to produce food categorized as cash from domestic crops. These historians must be able to ascertain and further cast some light on the type of experiential modules needed, point out how these can be captured in data and factual figures. These research have to be based on scientific truth and be seen as 'a statement which has been publicly accepted by the experts'⁶ as for instance on the history and discovery of the *Tarra cotta in Nok Culture* (the ancient iron age) which technology had developed the farming tools over 3, 000 years ago. At this platform, history serves as the queen and the mother of evidential knowledge, which reflexes its personality in the tribe of languages; unfolds the content of its womb by explication of resources, thereby bequeaths treasure and gives education by oral tradition, by visual aid, by graphic design, by written account or by mystical experience.

History has a soul, a character, a vision, a mission; thus its audience is limitless even though its origin might be known, yet it has a dynamic present and a bright future. The articulation and classification of the body of sciences as separate disciplines (of physics, chemistry, biology *et cetera*) did not emerged in one day, nor can it even be said of history. However, this group of scholars taught that: "Modern science did not happen in a single day - it took time to make an impact on people's thinking and on institutions, with added difficulties because, when experimental science started, most facts were still so uncertain that speculation had a field day."⁷ Yet, history as an articulated discipline is not an exception; it has strict rules and guidelines. It is in this respect that Chaderopa Siwadi wrote that 'research has shown that most nations communicate through six natural channels'⁸ which they went on to enumerate as to what constitutes aspects of *Country Branding Building Blocks* that these are: "Tourism, Export brands, Culture and heritage, Foreign and domestic policy, Investment and immigration, and People." These indices, if well utilized by any country in Africa, will add authentic value, which will see to her enormous growth in the areas of socio-cultural initiatives and these will guarantee her rapid development and lead to mass employment of her people.⁹ They added further a far richer spice that: "The strength of the six pillars is that they encapsulate the major features of a destination.

⁶Ziman, Dr. J., in *the Listener*, 18 August 1960, pg. 61

⁷Yakubu, A, Ochefu Armstrong M., Adejo Nicholas A., Ada Okpeh O. Okpeh JNR, *The Origin and Development of Scientific Ideas*, pg. 40

⁸Chaderopa Chengego and Patience Siwadi, Destination branding: Use of Culture, History and Nature Constructs to Revive the Popularity of Destination Zimbabwe, in *Journal of Intra-African Studies*, number

2, August 2009, ed. Toryina Ayati Varvar, pg. 192



Successful destination branding is thus about achieving a balance between applying cutting-edge advertising and public relations approaches to a marketing problem and the real politics of managing local, regional and national politics.¹⁰ We can infer further that the expertise training and chronicle mind of the Historian, exercising his ability and genius to craft out an interactive language in partnership with the Economist, Entrepreneur and especially with the Marketing strategist, can brand and re-brand the products of African agricultural products, artifacts and landscape to attractive clients in other continents of the world to do business.

From the foregoing therefore, we can assert that History deals with archives, it is an investigative science that affects and transforms every human existence. This can be manifested at the domestic front or at official circle; in an ordinary parlance or in a more revealing scholarly circle; for an in-depth appreciation of African religious heritage or in the circular fun-fare; its subject can be on animal behaviour or the effects of climate change. Ever green, it needs to be known that history affects all beings: God, Angels and Human persons. God as the Supreme Being lives outside the concept of human history. It caused St. Hippolytus to write over 1900 years ago: "God, existing alone, without contemporary of any sort, decided to make the world. He conceived it in his mind, willed it, spoke the word, and so made it, and immediately it came into being, formed as he had willed it. It is enough for us simply to know that God had no contemporary; apart from him there was nothing. But though alone, God was manifold.... All things were in him and he was all."¹¹ Thus it can be deduced theologically that, only the eternal God is the ultimate source of history.

3. Farming as a carrier adding to the sustainability and development of people in Africa

The production of farming tool and implements were made possible through the blacksmithing and creative intelligence of the Nok culture. The discovery of iron, its extraction and eventual ability to fashion farming, hunting and domestic utensils had been the one of the greatest wonder and

⁹<http://www.placebrands.net/DreamHC/Pagina13.html>

¹⁰Chaderopa Chengeto and Patience Siwadi, Destination branding: Use of Culture, History and Nature Constructs to Revive the Popularity of Destination Zimbabwe, in *Journal of Intra-African Studies*, number 2,

August 2009, ed. Toryina Ayati Varvar, pg. 192

¹¹St. Hippolytus, Treatise against the heresy of Noetus, The revealing of the hidden mystery chapter 9-12, in *The Divine Office, The Liturgy of the Hours according to the Roman Rite*, London: Collins, 2006 edition, ¹⁶³



ancient civilization.

In Northern Nigeria, plenty agricultural products were ferried out of Nigeria, especially the groundnuts (Kano) pyramid, cotton, ginger, to enrich the British from the 1900 -1960, with a consequent poverty left behind. Even now that obvious compensation can no longer be given, how then can those studying history and agricultural science in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria or Bayero University, Kano recall and re-produce the successes of the agricultural feats recorded in those years? It must be known however that socio-cultural dynamic indices that grow to form history are human and divine creation; they are events chronicle by oral tradition, articulated by intellectual stimulation of preserved records; made evident by diagrams, graphics, maps and (and in modern times in) videos as documents to back up verifiable facts. This reality is sustain today in Africa, as we read with nostalgia, the history, encase by the evil that accompanied it, yet cherish the civilization brought about by the Trans-Saharan and Trans-Atlantic Slave Trades. In this sense, we concur that history is a science of many verifiable: as a discipline of arts, it chronicles recorded human words and actions that have become adjudged indispensable memory as testimony to cherish and preserve; as photosynthesis of natural and mythical happenings, it is a continuum of mystery corded in human language.

In writing of how the evolution of language in history emerged, Andrew Wheatcroft wrote that: "There are many theories of how language works, but in the 1950s the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan provided a useful explanation of how language bears the traces of its use."¹² The onus before the historian, as a researcher and copious scientist, is for him/her to articulate, to relate and to communicate facts, sentiments and culture in vivid and lucid language. Africans must develop and initiate native methods and vocabularies in writing history. Though there exist universal terms and applications just as Ferdinand de Saussure had defined "communication as a pure and comprehensive system of signs, with each sign consisting of two elements." What are these two elements?¹³ "The first was what was described, or 'signified', from the French *signifie*. The second element was the '*signifier*', the means by which its meaning was communicated, by spoken sound or by visible marks, such as writing."¹⁴ Yet for us Africans, all these indices and elements are needed to properly

¹²Wheatcroft, Andrew, *Infidels - A History of the Conflict between Christendom and Islam*, London: Penguin Books, ²⁰⁰⁴, pg. ⁵⁶

¹³Saussure and Lucan, *Limits of Language*, University of Sussex, PhD dissertation, ¹⁹⁹⁵



utilize the parameter of development; concretely, by African historians, novelist (Chinua Achebe), artisan/poet (Wole Soyinka), as much as the geologist, archeologist and scientist must develop native processes to speak history, drama, songs or write these in the 21st century. To showcase our rich African heritage and culture for tourism; this classic method is urgent and necessary now. We urgently need these to grow not only our rich African cultural heritage, but to design and evolve regulations, symbols and modalities of not only studying history, but chronicling events and traditions. In the 21st century, the lenses [electronic, print media and ICT] of Western and Asian origin hungers for the African market. They seem to focus more on the stylish Afro-cultural symbols, raw agricultural products, precious stones, forest reserves. These seems to add value and colour to the un-spoken language that is chronicle and need to be cast by the historian as a scholar or student. We in Africa cannot afford to continually remain consumer economy, our historians, scientist, technocrats, and most of all our politicians must turn-inside-out to promote and use home-made goods, build industries and develop local culture. It is the task of the historian to proof through a carefully prepared documentary how China came from an under-developed economy sixty or eighty years ago to become the second strongest economy in the world? Does history in Africa has a soul, a future?

Candidly, history *is* really an eternal art, fashion as a genius, ever evolving, in the present as it has ever been. It is an agent of change as it plots pathways serving as mystery-prophet of the future; it is old enough to be the watchman of culture, even as it has enough experience to be the midwife of civilizations. History in Africa is innovative enough to be the technocrat of the scientist; it is a skillful craftsman enough to be the foundation of the architect, the indispensable vehicle to motivate and drive the vision and passion of the Philosopher, Theologian, Scientist and Ethnologist to greater discoveries. This is possible because, the complex dexterity [the whistle blower] it is endowed with, had always qualifies it to be trustful enough in its accuracy to serve as the indisputable accountant that navigates a reliable pathway to serve as compass of the scientist for without it the past becomes a void of visionless destinations. Yet, we need to know that history need begin at tracing the human family roots, testing its apparatus on the native intelligence, because single people, through the trade of words, experience the roots of data that makes history happened, shared, written and transmitted for generations to come.

¹⁴Wheatcroft, Andrew, *Infidels - A History of the Conflict between Christendom and Islam*, pg. ⁵⁶



5. **Conclusion:** Finally, we conclude by asserting that history emanates and most often is born in the womb of creative initiative to benefit those reading it now and for the benefit of the future. We agreed with Samuel Smiles who wrote: "All that is great in man [woman] comes through hard work, and civilization is its product."¹⁵ Historians create and animate civilization of love, of proven integrity of authentic records, data and flowering knowledge. Clearly, we had pointed out that history is the queen of education, by which through it services, it is generative of knowledge; it is a dynamic and creative art of becoming, a continuum, it springs up discoveries and innovations, it produces and enlivens life, and it prolongs and sustains civilizations that carry ahead seeds of unity. These fresh initiatives can only come about due to hard work of a researcher in history. Thus, the need to mentor scholars in our Universities and citadel of learning, therefore we assert that: "If we work upon marble, it will perish", wrote Webster, the nineteenth-century American statesman. "If upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust. But if we work upon our mortal minds - if we imbue them with principles, with the just fear of God and love for our fellowman - we engrave on those tablets something which will brighten through all eternity."¹⁶ Such must be the task of professors and scholars of history in the African continent; carving posterity grace by God's directing humans.

It is eventually on the strength of the above quest that we assert categorically that history is an ancestor in the tribe of knowledge that sustains and upgrades this reality and nurtures this dream for the benefit of the now; for by its singular chronicle, it betters the vision of tomorrow. There is no gain saying that History is science that has dual faces - it looks at the eventful past with a cast to structuring the future with delight. Those who know say: "Intelligence is not a luxury, sometimes useless, sometimes fatal. It is a torch or firebrand according to the use one makes of it."¹⁷ Historians are amongst the scholars '*that make things happen,*' as they narrate, write, perform, design and produce factual records and data to be relied on; they fire the weaker minds of humans to become the trailblazers of intellectual scholars.

Procreative science in history, places the indices of data and records at the

¹⁵Smiles, Samuel, in Dennis P. Kimbro, What Makes the Great Great: Strategies for Extraordinary Achievement, pg. ¹⁹²

¹⁶Webster, Daniel, in Creativity of the Mind, in Dennis P. Kimbro, What Makes the Great Great: Strategies for Extraordinary Achievement, pg. ¹⁵⁷

¹⁷Caecilia de Faber, "Intelligence," in The Complete Art of Public Speaking, Jacob M. Braude, Bantam Books, INC, ¹⁹⁷⁰, ¹³⁹



service of truth, though generated out of actual events, lives of people, growth of communities. History even dares to preserve the record of natural, human and mysterious catastrophe, yet, it has always a vision, a mission and a vocation for the future. In its indispensability, history is that precious science that says it as it is; that produced evidence, preserves records and data, and if possible projects consequences that might happen in the future. Thus, analytical history, critiques; adjudged by oral tradition by narration, is a tribe of wisdom that preserves essentials for forthcoming generation. History as an antidote to ignorance, as it creates pathways for developing individual bio data and most impressively, produces family histories. It can pass on as narrative science that bequeaths knowledge. A knowledge that enjoys appreciable resources based on an enviable platform of inequality compared to other disciplines in that it is indispensable and unique; it tells the formation, credibility and development of other sciences. It witnesses and preserves records of their conception, birth, achievement and failures.

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