

## THE PLACE OF HISTORY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AFRICAN COMMUNITIES-THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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### ABSTRACT

“The principal office of history I take to be this: to preserve the memory of virtuous actions and to prevent evil words and deeds by instilling the fear of an infamous reputation with posterity

-Tacitus (55-117 AD)

“A people without the knowledge of the past History, origin and culture is like a tree without roots”

-Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887-1940)

Volumes of works have been written about the relevance and irrelevance of History in the present day Africa both as a concept and as a discipline. To “non historians” History teaches no particular skill; since the primary focus of History is the past”. Can history really concern itself with the future? Does history still serve any purpose especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What are those values embedded in historical studies? They queried. To budding Historians in Africa – the fear of gainful employment is the beginning of self-denigration. All these beliefs

culminated in the call for the obliteration of history as subject in our school curriculum. In real terms, is history relevant? Is history capable of bringing meals to the tables of its numerous students? More importantly, in a continent like Africa in search of technological break through and overall DEVELOPMENT, what can a discipline, which concerns itself primarily with the digging of facts in the past offer? This essay will attempt to answer some of these questions.

## **BACKGROUND**

Apparently, history is not an old ladies tale; it is a serious academic discipline, which attracts the most talented in the civilized countries. This is why it is most pathetic that the study of history has been relegated to the background in various schools in Nigeria. This explains why so much violence (physical and psychological) aggression, hatred, poverty, *et cetera*; dominate the day to day existence of the people as they collectively, lack historical consciousness. They usually act or react based on present situation and care little about the past. It is therefore not surprising that the minutest percentage of the populace care about the kind of future to be built for both the people and the nation. Due to the fact that Nigerian statesmen lack proper sense of history, politics of the belly and that of the moment dominate the polity. Merit is consequently slaughtered on the slab of power profiteering. With all these virulent vices, development at all levels in Nigeria remains a wild goose chase.

To escape from this seemingly inescapable quagmire, there is an urgent need to imbue Nigerians with an enduring sense of history. As Professor J. F. A. Ajayi once submitted.

The nation suffers which has no sense of history. Its values remain superficial and ephemeral unless imbued with a deep sense of continuity and perception of success and achievement that transcends acquisition of temporary power or transient wealth. Such nation cannot achieve a sense of purpose or direction or stability and without them the future is bleak.<sup>1</sup>

It is in the light of this that the study of this nature becomes absolutely imperative as part of the ongoing efforts towards the historical awakening of Nigerians. This essay will, *inter-alia* have a general overview of teaching of history in 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa; focuses on the unbreakable nexus between history and national development; brings out the relevance of this link especially in this era of globalization; analyses what a country like Nigeria in search of her soul and awesome technological breakthrough could gain from such an “unattractive” and “non-materialistic” discipline such as history; will suggest how Nigerians could be imbued with an enduring and proper sense of history for national development; lastly will discuss what advanced nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America have gained from emphasizing the teaching of History in their institutions of learning and look at the ways which can help in encouraging same treatment of history in the underdeveloped countries such as Nigeria.

## WHO NEEDS THE PAST<sup>2</sup>

Throughout history, from the time of Socrates to our modern age, human race has sought restively answers to the fundamental questions of life; who are we and why are we here<sup>3</sup>. Man has however endeavoured to proffer solutions to some of these unsolvable problems by seeking after the truth. And one of the major ways he has been doing this is by perusing facts about the past.

History, the great resource of seeking spirit, provides “ the comparison which a Statesman or an ordinary citizen can make between laws and customs of other countries and those of his own; this is what leads modern nations to emulate one another”<sup>4</sup>.

People often ask; what is past? Something not visible and that can not be vividly recalled; gone forever! But they have forgotten that it always leaves certain relics and traces through memory, writing, artifacts and so on, which serve as raw materials for historical reconstruction. History also concerns itself with people-; human affairs, such as politics, economics, changes and civilizations, religion and many more. It brings alive again the

people's past moments of triumph which usually rekindles mutual understanding among them and also moments of travails such as struggle for power- *coups* with a view to avoiding such things that could jeopardize the togetherness of such community. In essence, where there are people there will be events and definitely there will be History. How then could we run away from this all-important fact of life?

There is one fact that is almost infallible- no individual can run away from himself as it will be impossible for any nation to estrange herself from her history. The truth, however, is that there is always two sides to every coin. Nations are free to choose either to be guided by accurate sense of history and be saved or neglect history – the super highway to eternal damnation – as it was clearly demonstrated by Hegel “HISTORY LEADS THE WISEMAN AND DRAGS THE FOOL”<sup>5</sup>. History according to G.N. Uzoigwe, “ is like Mother Nature; you can not cheat it. It hangs over the head of every nation like the sword of Damocles. It is difficult to move; but whenever it moves, it is purposive and unsmiling. It does not suffer fools. It makes those who provoke it or try to cheat it pay dearly”<sup>6</sup>.

From the aforementioned points, certain facts become discernible:

- No society can develop without deep sense of its history
- No nation can survive without knowledge of its origin and people
- No nation can live up to its potentials without adequate knowledge of its past.
- A society that neglects its history is on the surest path to self-destruction.
- Most importantly, any people, any nation and any race, that genuinely desire development, such people, such nation and such race needs its PAST

It is in the light of the above stated facts that problems bedeviling the African continent could be understood.

## WHAT COULD NIGERIA GAIN FROM HISTORY

History teaches us that the most fundamental debacle to development in Africa is the apparent absence of integration and cohesion within the African countries. And this was occasioned by the apparent erosion or absence of NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS. As I have lamented elsewhere, “it is quite disturbing to note that in Africa today, there is no country that is not prone to chaos and anarchy due to so many existing fissiparous tendencies.”<sup>7</sup> And Nigeria is no exception. With this, in Nigeria as in most parts of Africa –Politics has permanently become public pains for private gains as very few elite constantly exploit this eternal division which cut across, religion, tribe, sex and politics in their struggle for personal /egoistic socio-economic and political advantages.

In Nigeria as in other underdeveloped countries, National consciousness, instead of being the all embracing crystallization of innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people has only become an empty shell, a crude and frequently, the nation (as in other African countries) is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state<sup>8</sup> With all these calamitous cracks in the Nigerian edifice, which of course came into being through the concerted and calculated efforts of the British imperialists and kept alive by the failure of the national leadership to uproot colonial legacies and initiate an enduring developmental strategies; the present ever retrogressive national effort towards national development become discernible. According to Frantz Fanon:

this traditional weakness, which is almost congenital to the national consciousness of under-developed countries is not solely the result of the mutilation of the colonized people by the colonial regime. It is also the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class, of its spiritual penury...<sup>9</sup>

With the above, national development also entails the transformation of people's minds, lives and environment in such a way that will increase national consciousness. In the case of Nigeria, national development includes things as:

increasing the degree of national consciousness of Nigerians, increasing the degree of acceptance by Nigerians of the central government as the symbol of national unity, increasing the degree of tolerance one another by Nigerians, increasing the quantity and quality of things that make for good life in the socio-economic sectors.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, most of these virtues are either virtually non-existent or have their existence fraught with fraud. Consequently, the influence of ethnic consciousness is still profound on the Nigerian politics. Many sincere advocates are still clamoring for a genuine national conference or better still "conference for all Nigerian nationalities 'where people would jaw-jaw on the modalities for national cohesion – the surest initiation towards NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. This no doubt has necessitated a new appraisal of the Nigerian-nation.

As it is today, with abundant historical evidences, **Nigerian nation is not yet born**. And to my mind it is naturally evil and deceptive to claim (as we are doing today) to be nationalistic where a nation does not exist. A number of literatures on whether Nigeria is a nation or not have been written.<sup>11</sup> So needless to bother you with those scholarly arguments. But the historical reality (which of course, we dare not confront) is that the so called Nigerian nationhood was founded on absolute fraud. Even some of the British colonialists could no longer hold back the truth about the defects of the Lugardian amalgamation of 1914, which formally inaugurated a nation that is bound to fail. For example Nicholson, a former colonial Administrator in Nigeria once declared that "the

most significant thing about the amalgamation was that it never took place.<sup>12</sup> Thus, until Richards constitution in 1947 (33years after Amalgamation), the Northern and Southern Representations were not brought together in one legislative chamber. Therefore, the people in the two protectorates remained strangers to one another though co-habiting the same country!

Most importantly, the reality today is that ethnic – nationalism often intrudes rudely into the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigerian politics. This is why like most of the nation-states that are just evolving, the most challenging issue facing Nigeria today is how to establish institutional arrangements that can effectively deal with ethnic diversity and allow the population groups to co-exist peacefully and productively.<sup>13</sup> With the incessant chaos, disharmony and disunity, the aspiration of the people to evolve viable nation will remain forever an effort in futility. The Nigerian situation is almost hopeless as the recently released United States intelligence report (though bluntly rebuffed) which suggested the possible break up of the country within the next fifteen years still confirms the precarious nature of the Nigerian state. The situation is however still amenable if both the leadership and the followership can return to the basis, delve deeply into the Nigerian past, draw necessary lessons and take appropriate popular actions.

Every generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill or betray it.<sup>14</sup> And the surest way to fulfill the Nigeria developmental mission is for a new nation with leadership that is ready to break the new grounds to evolve. The foremost action will ultimately mean to extirpate the heinous imperial legacies of political servitude and economic dependency on the mother country (Britain) and other western nations. History has shown that those African leaders (referred to by Fanon as national bourgeoisie or national middle class) who took over power from the former colonial regimes rather than replacing those atrocious colonial legacies built solidly on them. They conveniently (due largely to their intellectual and spiritual penury), stepped into the shoes of the former European settlers as: doctors, barristers, traders, commercial travelers, general agents and transport agents. They further insisted that all the big foreign companies should pass

through their hands. Hence, “the national middle class discovers its historic missions: that of intermediary.”<sup>15</sup> Linking this past inglorious act of the African national leadership to the present predicament Fanon stated further:

Seen through its (national middle class) its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation. It remains the transmitting line between the nation and the mother camouflaged, which today puts on the masque of Neo colonialism.<sup>16</sup>

Before a country can evolve into a nation defined by Prof. Wole Soyinka as “a unit of humanity with common ideology” such as history taught us must be ready to shed its entire colonial burden and supplant all its super structures such as law, economy, social structures, politics e.t.c with well self-developed structures. It must also develop the brains of its inhabitants by imbuing in them necessary skills and an enduring sense of history which will establish long lasting national consciousness. As I have alluded earlier: the living expression of the nation is the moving consciousness of the whole people; it is the coherent, enlightened action of men and women. The collective building up of destiny is the assumption of responsibility on the historical scale. Otherwise there is anarchy, repression and recrudescence of ethnic affiliation/nationalism.

The historic place of people as a unit can not be over-emphasized in the evolution and development of any nation. Recognizing this infallible fact Fanon opines that:

the greatest task before us is to understand at each moment what is happening in our country. We ought not to cultivate the exceptional or seek for a hero, who is another form of leader. We ought to uplift the people; we must develop their brains; fill them with ideas; change them into human being.<sup>17</sup>

All these can be realized by giving the people an overdose of political education. Indeed, this is a compulsory pre-condition for the evolution of a viable nation. To educate people politically means opening their minds, awakening them, and allowing the rebirth of their intelligence. Its also entails trying relentlessly and passionately to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we develop it is due to them too, magic hands are finally only the hands of the people and that there is no famous man who will take responsibility for everything. In summary, to educate the masses politically is to make the totality of the nation a reality to each citizen. It is to make the history of the nation part of the personal experience of each of its citizens.<sup>18</sup>

History abounds with nations that evolved and developed as full expression of their citizens. In such nations individual experience became national and then integrated firmly in the chain of national existence and thus ceased to be individual. And the commonest denominator of these nations is the exploitation and utilization of their cultural history. As a result of this unity of purpose, the nations then evolve as largest human communities which when chips are down, collectively command the loyalty of the people over the claims of lesser communities within it. As it has been established earlier, all nations are as products of their past and there is no way they can move forward without taking into consideration their history and their peculiar circumstances. This is the debt all nations that seek peace stability and development owe to the past.<sup>19</sup> This is because history provides the foundation on which the development of each nation is built. This explains why most developed countries in the world ensure that the discipline of history do not suffer decline and continue to retain its pride of place in their universities and colleges. More importantly, history has always been used to provide political education for leadership elite in such societies. With these the people are imbued with an enduring sense of history. Each nation then develops its own historiography, which is essentially nationalistic.

For example, **British historiography** is nationalistic in three ways, Firstly, in the context of some history, in which the political institutions of Britain and the achievements of individuals are described in superlative and idyllic language. Considering for instance, portrayals of parliament, the reformation and the ‘glorious revolution’ of 1688.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, in the context of European history in which the naval and military achievements of Britain are couched in heroic terms (Sir Francis Drake, Horatio Nelson and the Count Montgomery of Alamein), in which the British are all the time the offended and therefore justified to embark on war with other Europeans. Thirdly, in the context of British expansion overseas, in which colonial exploitation of India and African countries (including Nigeria) is presented in laudable and humanitarian terms.

What has been said of British historiography also applies to American historiography, French historiography, Russian historiography, Japanese historiography, German historiography and so on. American historiography for instance, lauds to the skies the virtues of American institutions in impregnating Americans with the notion that has assumed the status of an article of faith, that to be an **American is the greatest blessing God can confer on a human being**.<sup>21</sup> This aspect of history could be carried to an extreme scenario such as was done by Benito Mussolini and Adolph Hitler before and during the second world war and George Walker Bush in the demolition of Iraq after the September 11,2001 terrorist attacks. The abuse of history is always a possibility especially during bitter contest among nations. It must however be mentioned that those nations have existed for long in minds and mouths of their people, and leaders not only exploit this only during crisis, but also during peace especially in their collective efforts towards national development. What is clear in all this is that history was deliberately utilised for nation building. This, I strongly believe, is the major difference between the advanced nations and those that are still in their embryonic stage such as Nigeria.

The point one is making here is that the task of National development is an unending task. And reasonable nations usually return to their pull of history each time they are at crossroad, for a near impeccable guide in to the future. For instance, Old Britain in recent times has found the

devolution of power from an all powerful centre in London, to Cardiff in Wales, Edinburgh in Scotland, Dublin in the Republic Ireland while the great conurbation of London comes under some kind of a regional government with Westminster retaining over all national control. Constant positive responses, to the forces of primordial historical sentiments seem to be the hallmark of civilized and rational politics.<sup>22</sup> Where this has not been the case constant violence will dominate the scene, national consciousness eroded and national development becomes stalled forever. This is the Nigerian situation.

## **IMBUING THE PEOPLE OF NIGERIA WITH ENDURING SENSE OF HISTORY**

The past of the people of Nigeria like most of their African kith and kin has placed an almost inescapable burden on them. This ugly past is characterized with successive evils – almost Four hundred years of slavery and slave trade; several centuries of imperialism / colonialism and the ever lasting neo-colonialism. According to E.H Carr, “the past which a historian studies is not a dead past, but a past which in a sense is still living in the present.”<sup>23</sup> This naturally translates to the fact, that for the people to solve the present multifaceted developmental problems bedeviling the country, the past must always be contracted. This is essential because “... if men of the future are ever to break the chains of the present, they will have to understand the forces that forged them”<sup>24</sup> To achieve this, the people must be well endowed with historical knowledge which is based on recollection, retrieval and reconstruction of their past. This is rooted in the fact that time past is part of time present and time present is part of time future. In other words, human society is one long continuum and to appreciate the present, one must know what happened in the past.<sup>25</sup>

It must be mentioned at this juncture that at the formative stages of modern African countries (Nigeria inclusive) history was an important factor in efforts towards national development. Indeed, some western commentators described the **Ibadan school of**

**History (the foremost of such in Africa)** as nationalist. This was due to the School's earliest reaction to people like Trevor Roper and others who said Africa had no History. In acknowledgement of this outstanding nationalistic role, Prof. Niyi Osundare recently opined that:

the Ibadan School of History re-invented African history and African Historiography and shamed the racist notion that Humanity's oldest continent was a place without a past. U.I became the Mecca for scholars of African History all over the world.<sup>26</sup>

This great school together with very negligible percentage of Western Africanists who were more objective began through a series of studies and writings to establish African History as worthy part of universal Academic Scholasticism. Their writings equally provided the early nationalists with not only psychological power boost but also gave them the much-needed inspiration in their struggle for political independence. Regrettably, the party did not last for so long. As the Irish poet once lamented, things have changed, changed utterly.<sup>27</sup> This is due to the fact that after the achievements of the so-called independence, the school as a microcosm of the Nigerian macrocosm lost its stream. Ever since, Ibadan school of History, just like its *illico parentis* (University of Ibadan), has remained shadow of its old self far from being the trailblazer, it has become the blaze-trailer. The school thus lost the amiable opportunity of continuing to inspire the task of nation building of Nigeria.

The problems of African Historiography, Nigerian History and particularly, the Ibadan school of History have been subjected to in-depth intellectual scrutiny for a long time. So, rather than discussing these problems again, the current piece will attempt to bring out new insights towards making history more relevant in Nigeria and suggest ways to imbue her inhabitants with sense of national consciousness.

## THE WAY FORWARD

While lamenting the languishing level of the University of Ibadan, Professor Niyi Osundare submitted that :

Today, our university and the evil system that has brought it to its knees need nothing but the sharp edge of excoriative word; nothing but the truth whose sharpness heals like the surgical knife<sup>28</sup>.

Nothing short of this could also rescue the visibly enfeebled discipline of History in Nigeria from imminent extinction and equally catapult history back in to national consciousness for overall development. To my mind, there are two angles to this issue, namely the Historians and Government's angles.

It is a truism that man's existence has its center in his head i.e. in reason, under whose inspiration, he builds up the world of reality.<sup>29</sup> And the basic reality as reflected in the thought of John Stuart Mill that "No great improvement in the lot of mankind are possible until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their thought."<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, for history to return to its pride of place as prime motivator of national consciousness and as the bedrock of all humanities in Nigeria, – the Nigerian Historians must braze up and chart a new course for the once ennobled discipline.

One of the best ways to achieve is to stop talking / writing about the discipline of History as if it is a human being. This personification should give way to the returning of Nigerian people to their rightful place as the makers of their history. This is embedded in the fact that it is man that makes history and not vice versa as Karl Marx once argued:

History does nothing, it does not possess immense riches, it does not fight battles. It is real living men who do all this, who possess things and fight battles. It is not “history” which uses men as means of achieving as if it were an individual person – its own ends. History is nothing but the activity of in pursuance of their ends<sup>31</sup>.

As a corollary to revive historical discipline from the present doldrums, there must be a historical revolution, which would be championed by Nigerian historians; as History could not be anything outside what Historians make it. The point of emphasis here is that discipline does not usually make a man just as history does not make historians. What it does is placing necessary tools at their disposal to work with. And tool such as gun does not make marksmen and women; they only made use of this lethal weapon to achieve their purposes. Therefore, historians must depend on facts make available by history to reconstruct the past for positive plans for the present and revolutionalised the future.

This must start from the minds and mouths of the Nigerian Historians through constant self-criticism as “if we could first know where we are and whither we are tending we could better judge what to do, and how to do it”.<sup>32</sup> For instance, a critical evaluation of the history of the Ibadan school of history (where it all started) which is currently enmeshed in phenomenal decay reveals that the school was in the past the pride of the Nation. Contrary to the popular opinion – I want to assert firmly that the gory or sorry state of the school started in those acclaimed days of glory. This is because it was since the beginning that the school has been polarised along selfish parochial and private prejudice of the “Old horses of yester years”. And the present generation is still trailing that trend till date. Ever since, the seed of discord that is currently dividing the Nigerian Historians have been sown. Ever since, the atrocious tradition of using history as means of achieving personal ends and later dumping it has firmly taken root. Ever since, the idea

of diverting of books, funds, scholarship / fellowship opportunities (especially international ones) meant for the development of the department has been on course. Ever since, the senile system of exploitation of the junior colleagues, students (especially post graduate) by the so called senior colleagues (the demi-gods) who are too busy, too big to carry out research or to teach but has the whole time to pursue private contracts, international fellowship and political appointments – has been operational. Ever since the totally anti-intellectual idea - of either fencing out the best brains or frustrating the ones within the system even to the point of paralysis has been within the tradition. This clearly explains the current catastrophic dwarfism of historical scholasticism in Nigeria.

The problem is not that the school has problems: the real problem is that many of them in the school are not aware of those problems and the few who do are seeking sanctuary in hazy sloganeering disingenuous avowal of allegiance.<sup>33</sup> For this ugly trend to stop, if the future will be great once again for both Nigerian history and historians, they must all stand up for the truth and break the yoke of the hopeless tradition. This clarion call goes especially to the upcoming historians who (I believed hold the ace for the future) they must always remember that:

The future will have no pity for those who possess the exceptional privilege of being able to speak words of truth to their oppressors having taken up refuge in attitude of passivity of mute indifference and sometimes of cold complicity.<sup>34</sup>

One of the best ways to avoid this complicity is to stop being panegyricians / propagandists or mere chroniclers like most of the forerunners. Historians need to bring out the real lessons of history to Nigerians. The basic historical fact about Nigeria (no matter the distortions and exaltations) is – that the country is not yet a nation even after forty – seven years of the much touted political or flag lowering independence. So, it will be totally unrealistic to preach national consciousness when a nation does not exist.

Consequently, the first and the most important work for Nigerians is to collaborate assiduously with other concerned groups on how to ensure the evolution of Nigeria – Nation state where people will live first as Nigerians before remembering their ethnic affiliations. To achieve this two things become absolutely imperative – ideological and cultural revolutions as Prof. E. A. Ayandele once admonished:

Fellow craftsmen of historical scholarship, it is our duty to convince the governments of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to take two steps as a matter of utmost urgency. Firstly, they should be told that a Nigerian nation not built on upon the cultural heritage and spiritual values of the peoples of Nigeria is necessarily a RICKETY EDIFICE; that a “development” that is primarily technological and economic, with the concomitant unregulated pulverizing Westernism; inexorably inflicts, cultural hemorrhage upon the nation and constitutes a terrible homicide; that such a nation is spiritually void, possessing no soul of its own...<sup>35</sup> (emphasis mine).

This assertion made twenty-eight years ago was more real today than when it was rendered as most of the then existing fissiparous tendencies more than ever before have become so real than imagined. Governments must be told to revise and reverse their concept of development to a more fundamentally human centred concept. To achieve this end, a new invigorated humanistic study of how a real Nigerian – nation could evolve must be initiated and the present endangered Historical studies must be the arrowhead. With this a movement towards the re-invention and re writing of Nigerian History will be initiated in order to build sense of belonging in the people. As a sense of commonness and shared historical experience is most important basis for common action – necessary for national development.

The government's side of the sad story is quite understandable. As it has been established earlier in this essay, the so-called early Nigerian nationalists (as in other undeveloped countries) actually acted like the scions of colonial agents – heir apparents to the throne vacated by the erstwhile colonialists. Indeed, they fought tooth and nail over the colonial leftovers. With this, all the legacies of the colonial rule were not only left untouched but were built upon by these shortsighted leaders. One of such legacies is the deliberate distortion and devaluation of Nigerian History both as academic discipline and as a tool for national development. As a result “The apotheosis of independence is transformed into the curse of independence.<sup>36</sup> As the colonial power through its immense resources and the continuous installation of their stooges as leaders condemns the evolving Nigerian state to permanent regression and development of underdevelopment.

The Nigerian unity thus descended rapidly to what Fanon called vague formula and yet the people were passionately attached to it especially during their struggle for political independence. No sooner than, the vague freedom was attained, this unity takes off the mask, and crumbles into regionalism inside the hollow shell of nationality itself. Ever since, the national leadership as it is strung up to defend its immediate interest and those of the western nations has remained unpardonably egoistic and outrageously irresponsible to the plight of the average citizens. With the absolute neglect of history, the leadership simply proved to be incapable of forging national unity or building up a truly viable Nigerian Nation on a stable and productive Parametres. The National Front, which has forced colonialism to withdraw cracks up, and wastes the victory it has gained. This aggressive anxiety among the early nationalist to occupy the posts left vacant by the departure of the foreigners which have left series of violence on both religious and tribal lines in the past further explains why violence still constantly feature in the people's day to day existence.

If the Nigerian leaders in the past were guilty of tinkering with History to such an extent that transformation of the nation became impossible; the present crop of leaders are guilty of utilising facts of history not only to distort Nigerian history but also to keep the country permanently a crawling giant. In both situations, developmental process, political stability and economic progress remain elusive in Nigeria and even recovery has proved to be will of the wisps<sup>37</sup>. To drive home my point this recent example will suffice. The Ministry of information and National orientation that controls the National Archives has been at the vanguard of siting frequency Modulation (FM) Stations of Radio Nigeria at every nook and crannies of the country over the last eight years. The same thing goes for the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) which has also enjoyed tremendous expansion. The expansion that Radio Nigeria witnessed between 1999 and 2007 was so unprecedented to extent that nearly all states in the Federation could boast of at least one FM Station. This was apparently to create public awareness which is perceived as a powerful tool for the nurturing of the Nigeria's so called "New born" democracy to a "matured" one.

Policy makers see development of democratic values as embedded in public awareness and presumably not in the PROMOTION OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS, which is part of what the National Achieves stands for. While this wave of development is taking place in both NTA and Radio Nigeria, National Archives, which belongs to the same ministry, is yet to receive meaningful attention. Apart from the problems of record acquisition, administration and preservation, the national Achieves is yet to receive the international stimuli of automated archival services, which is currently in vogue in the West. Other important aspects of archival services such musical archives are also not available. Oral history programme that started in 1984 could not stand the test time because of inadequate finances<sup>38</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

In peroration, one must avoid the tactical error of concluding that the inability of people to draw serious lessons from History is peculiar to Nigeria. In the words of Georg Hegel:

*What experience and history teach is this, that nations and governments have never learned anything from history or acted upon any lessons they might have drawn from it.*<sup>39</sup>

Though, many may disagree with this Hegelian philosophy of life, but few will disagree with the historical fact that people do seem to have severe difficulty learning anything from history. As regards Nigeria, which is the focus of this essay, my last words will be in form of admonition to Nigerian historians. They must break away from the current inhibiting factors and work in alliance with other sincere scholars with same ideas and intentions to redirect the present leadership of the country and chart a new course for the emergence of a more purposeful and responsive leadership. This task is not going to be easy but definitely not impossible. Failure of which will continue to tame not only historical discipline but also the national development.

## ENDNOTES

- 1) See J.F.Ade Ajayi: *History and The Nation and other Addresses*, Ibadan, Spectrum Books. 1990. P.41
- 2) This title originally belong to Dr. A. Akinola – an eminent Historian with the Ibadan school of history
- 3) TIME international magazine, Special issue 1997/98 published by Time Warner Publishing B.V. Amsterdam p. 20
- 4) Ibid. P. 22
- 5) G.W.F. Hegel: *Lectures on Philosophy of World history* translated by H.B. Nisbet, Cambridge. C.U.P, 1975.
- 6) G.N. Uzoigwe: *History and Democracy in Nigeria*, inaugural lecture of Historical society of Nigeria at the 34<sup>th</sup> congress, Benin city 1989
- 7) See Oyeranmi, Olusoji Samuel “Ethnicity and the Crisis of Nation Building in Nigeria “1951 – 1993” M. A. Dissertation, Department of History University of Ibadan, 2003, p. 20
- 8) See Frantz Fanon: *The Wretched of the Earth* England, Penguin Books, 1983, p. 119
- 9) *Ibid.*
- 10) See the contribution of O. B. C Nwolise “The Nigerian Military in Nation Building “in Uma Eleazu (ed) *Nigeria: The first 25 years, Ibadan*, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. 1989. p. 53
- 12) For details on the authenticity or otherwise of the “Nigerian Nation” See Michael Crowder: *The Story of Nigeria*, London, Faber and Faber, 1972; B. J. Dudley: *Politics and Crisis in Nigeria*, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1973; H. C. Bretton: *Power and stability in Nigeria: the politics of decolonization*, New York, Nok Publishers, 1962; J. F. A. Ajayi: *Milestones in Nigerian History*:

Ibadan, Longman, 1980; Obaro Ikime: *In Search of Nigerians changing patterns of inter-group relations in an evolving nation-state*: Nsukka, impact publishers 1985; Ojukwu Emeka: *Because I am involved, Ibadan*, Spectrum Books, 1989; Oshun Olawale: *Clapping with one hand: June 12 and the crisis of a state nation*, London, Jose/Publishers 1999; Dare Babarinsa: *House of War: the story of Awo's followers and the collapse of the second Republic*: Ibadan and Lagos, spectrum Books and Tell communications Ltd. 2003 etcetera

12) See *The Historia* A journal of the student's historical society of Ibadan, University of Ibadan 1999 p. 4

13) See John M. M. et al: *Ethnicity an Governance in the third World*, England Ashgate Publishing Ltd 2001 p. 2

14) See Frantz Fanon *Op.cit* p. 122

15) *Ibid.*

16) *Ibid* p. 165

17) *Ibid* p. 159

18) *Ibid.*

19) See G. O Oguntomisin and S. A. Ajayi (eds) *Readings in Nigerian History and Culture*. Ibadan Hopes Publications, 2002. p. 363 - 364

20) See *Journal of the Historical society of Nigeria* Vol. 9 No. 4 Ibadan; Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. June, 1979 1- 13

21 ) See the contribution of E. A. Ayandele "The Task before Nigerian Historians today" in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. 9 No. 4 June 1979.

22) See “ The Place of History in National Development” A lecture delivered by Prof. Jide Osuntokun at a conference of History Teachers association of Nigerian Colleges of Education, held at the Oyo State college of Education,Oyo,Nigeria on Monday-10/03/2002.P.2

23) See E. H. Carr : *What is History?* Middlesex, Penguin Books,1961. P. 5

24) Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy; Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, Boston; Beacon Press 1966 p. 508.

25 ) See Frantz Fanon op cit.

26) See the Valedictory lecture by Prof. Niyi Osundare at the University of Ibadan on July 26, 2005 published in *The Guardian* of August, 4, 2005 p. 54.

27) Ibid.

28) Ibid. p. 62 29) See David Mclellan :*The Thought of Karl Marx* ,London,Macmillan P. 51

30 .See Osuntokun op cit. P. 36

31) See David Mclellan op cit. P. 63

32 ) The Statement belong to Abaham Lincoln -- Former American President quoted from D. K. B.

33) See Niyi Osundare op cit.

34) See Fanon op. cit

35) See Ayandele op cit. P. 11

36) See Fanon op cit. P. 76

37) See Osundare op cit.

38) See NAI, National Archives of Nigeria – its purpose and function – Ibadan, 1985) p. 21.

39) Quoted from David Mclellan op cit. P. 01.