



Neglected Past, Gloomy Future: Reflecting on the Contemporary Challenges of Economic Development in Africa

*Emmanuel Osewe Akubor**

In every human society, the role of history in determining the level of development cannot be ignored. History is not just an academic discipline, but also the totality of changes humanity has undergone as well as the interactions man enters into with his fellow man on the one hand and the environment on the other since the evolution of the human society. It is therefore, the sum total of these that brings about the development in the society. The history of Africa before colonial conquest is full of various attempts by the people to develop their various areas using indigenous technology, which in some cases are considered very advanced. However, over the years especially after independence, this idea seems to have completely disappeared, which in the view of the paper is due to the neglect of study and knowledge of history. This paper therefore examines the role of the neglect of history in the reality and causes of contemporary economic woes in present day African setting Data obtained from primary and secondary sources were deployed to carry out the study with an analytical and narrative historical method. Findings indicate that the neglect of man in Africa to learn from the lessons of history (both the study and interaction) is responsible for the seemingly gloomy future which the continent is presently faced with as reflected in massive brain-drain, import dependency economy, raw material production industries, and incessant strife among others. The paper concludes that a genuine sense of history, a fidelity to its revelations, courageous acceptance of its judgments and workings and its implications for both the present and future, are necessary steps in the formation of the basic architecture for building a viable Africa. The paper cannot, claim to present the entire history of the continent over the period covered from a uniform perspective. It deal with some selected developments and, in this way, aim to contribute to the presentation of a more multifaceted view especially as it relates to the socio-economic stagnation and decline of indigenous technology of the African continent from a historical point of view.

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* Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.
E-mail: oseweakubor@gmail.com, akuboreo@oauife.edu.ng.





Introduction

Extant archaeological evidence indicates that Africa had glorious history before the advent of colonial rule; however, there seems to be deliberate attempts at distorting this history especially among colonial scholars as well as the neglect of the study of history in Nigerian schools. In this way, the History of Africa and Africans has often been associated with backwardness, wastefulness and of a people in darkness. A more systematic and fairly detailed account of such denial of history and progress was made by Margery Perham, a doyen of colonial historiography. Comparing Asia with Africa, Margery wrote: *"In Asia, there are great areas of cultural and religious unity and of common pride on the inheritance of ancient civilizations. These people have brought their historic culture through centuries of subjection to western influence with their deepest element still violate [...] the dealing with Tropical Africa and the West must be different. Here, in place of the larger unities of Asia was the multi cellular tissue of tribalism; instead of an ancient civilization, the largest areas of primitive poverty enduring into the modern age. Until the very recent penetration by Europe, the greater part of the continent was without the wheel, the plough and the transport animals; almost without stone houses, or clothes; except for skins, without writing and so without HISTORY [author's emphasis]."*¹

Even before Margery's made this position public, Trevor Roper, a famous professor of History in Oxford had opined that before the arrival of Europeans only darkness existed in Africa; and darkness is not a subject of history.²

The above gives a clear indication of the perception of Africa and African by most people especially the Europeans who felt it was therefore their God-given mandate to bring civilization to the dark corner of the Earth-Africa. Stephen Ellis argued that this type of history as written and picture painted about the African past have remained largely misleading. It is therefore not surprising that both historians and specialists from other disciplines sometimes find unsatisfactory this models of historical explanation that are available to them when they are studying Africa's recent past and its present, as they do not represent the true picture.³

¹ A. NWAUWA, "K. O. Dike and the New African Nationalist Historiography", <http://www.academia.edu/4397964> [2015-01-15], p. 5.

² A. MARWICK, *The Nature of History*, London 1970.

³ S. ELLIS, "Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa", in: *Journal of African History*, 43, 1, 2002, pp. 1-26.





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Conceptual Clarification

Africa is the world's second-largest and second-most-populous continent. At about 30.2 million km² (11.7 million sq mi) including adjacent islands, it covers 6 % of the Earth's total surface area and 20.4 % of the total land area. With 1.1 billion people as of 2013, it accounts for about 15 % of the world's human population. The continent is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, both the Suez Canal and the Red Sea along the Sinai Peninsula to the northeast, the Indian Ocean to the southeast, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The continent includes Madagascar and various archipelagos. It has 54 fully recognized sovereign states ("countries"), nine territories and two de facto independent states with limited or no recognition. Africa, particularly central Eastern Africa, is widely accepted as the place of origin of humans and the Hominidae clade (great apes), as evidenced by the discovery of the earliest hominids and their ancestors, as well as later ones that have been dated to around seven million years ago, including *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, *Australopithecus africanus*, *A. afarensis*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo habilis* and *Homo ergaster* – with the earliest *Homo sapiens* (modern human) found in Ethiopia being dated to circa 200,000 years ago. Africa straddles the equator and encompasses numerous climate areas; it is the only continent to stretch from the northern temperate to southern temperate zones.

For a meaningful understanding of the topic of discourse, the paper sees it necessary to make clear from the onset the sort of *Past Neglected* (or Neglected Past) being referred to. Among certain individuals History is the dead past for which they are ready to act as the undertaker, while to others, the neglect of this past is an indication that the society is heading for disaster. This is because the past of history remains the fortune from which wisdom is achieved. This has been graphically explained by Akinjogbin thus: "*Bi a l' aso bi agba, a kiiniakisa bi agba*. Literally translated, this means that if one has many cloths as an older man, one cannot have as many rags. Properly understood, it means that a cocky young man prides himself of being as knowledgeable of the present as an older person he cannot have as much firsthand experience of the past as the older person."⁴

Thus the past referred to in this case is History. History has been seen at two levels, i. e., History as the sum total of changes humanity has un-

⁴ I. A. AKINJOGBIN, "History and Nation Building", Inaugural Lecture, University of Ife 1977, p. 15.





dergone since the emergence of human society (this has been described by Carr, as the relationship between Man and Man on the one hand, and Man and the Environment on the other, *The Process of History*). The study of these changes and experiences is also known as History. In this way, History as a study, which is an academic discipline, is saddled with the responsibility of documenting (critically), the changes that has taken place in the human society (i. e., the constant interaction between the Historian and his facts). However, the word Historiography which now has its own history and which is at times described simply as the art (or science), of writing history, is used here to refer to different but closely related kinds of historical activities.⁵

In line with the above, A. E. Afigbo⁶ argued that a critical understanding of the working of history starts from grasping fully the third stage. The first is the discovery and critical analysis of historical source. The second is the reconstruction and description of the past on the basis of facts queried from the discovered sources; the third is the construction, on the basis of the ascertained facts of some general theories, which gives meaning and inner logic to the known past, or to most of it, as well as serves "*to educate and ascertain society as a whole or even helps to influence aspects of contemporary public policy or action; and the fourth is the reflection on the trends and patterns of historical writing*".⁷

In line with the above therefore, the paper tries to historicize the African past with the view of examine how over the years, she had developed along her own line interacting meaningfully with the environment. In this way, Africans made use of the resources at her disposal to build her society, a fact that is often denied by most colonial historiographers.

Africa: As It Was in the Beginning (Cradle of Civilization and Home of Technology)

From the position maintained by earlier European scholars like Trevor Roper and Mergery Perham, it is clear that from the onset Africa has been dismissed as a continent that does not have anything to offer the

⁵ E. H. CARR, *What is History*, London 1961, pp. 56–86; M. Y. MANGWAT, "History and the Changing Nigerian Society", Paper presented to the Annual Conference of History Teachers Association of Nigerian College of Education, Akwanga, May 6, 1992, pp. 3–4.

⁶ A. E. AFIGBO, "The Poverty of African Historiography", Public Lecture, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan 1980, pp. 3–4.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 4.





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world except for darkness. However available facts both from history, archaeology and other related field have shown that before the colonial experience in Africa, indigenous technology was well expressed in the local system of hand manufacturing of goods and implements whose basic components were wood, clay, stones, metal, textile and leather. Chancellor Williams puts it thus: "*The land of the Blacks was not only the 'Cradle of Civilization' itself, but [...] the blacks were the leading people on earth [...] Egypt was not only once all Black, but the very name Egypt was derived from the Blacks; [...] the Blacks were the pioneers in the sciences, medicine, architecture, writing and were the first builders in stone etc.*"⁸

The above point was made in the face of the argument by some Eurocentric scholars that the Africa terrain had not encouraged movement of people and technology across the continent-it was static. From the argument above, the Sahara desert has been lifted from unflattering position of a barrier to human interaction to the elevated and romantic position of a highway of commercial and intergroup relations.⁹

Through the above, it was established that although the introduction of Western technology and products did not lead to complete demise of all pre-colonial local manufacture, it however inflicted severe damage on most of it. Thus the disappearance of indigenous iron mining and smelting technology in Africa, owe in part to competition from imported bar-iron and cheap ready – made iron blades from Germany.¹⁰

During the precolonial period, Africa experienced her own form of Industrialization and was engaged in various forms of technological advancement in what has been referred to as Domestic Industrialization. This refers to all systems of production organized basically on a small scale, using homes as the main centers of production. This type of industrialization occurred in every continent and in every culture, in different forms and intensities, at different periods since the advent of the Neolithic Age through the Metal Age to modern times. For example, in Europe throughout the Middle Ages and up to about the middle of the eighteenth century, the characteristic industry was domestic. The same can be argued of the case of Africa, in which throughout the early metal ages (about 350 BC–1000 AD), the manual metal age (1300–1600), and the

⁸ W. CHANCELLOR, *The Destruction of Black Civilization*, Chicago 1974, p. 18.

⁹ Ibidem; MANGVWAT, p. 4.

¹⁰ A.I. OKPOKO – A.M. IBEANU, "Early Metal Working in Nigeria", in: A. I. OKPOKO (ed.), *Africa's Indigenous Technology*, Ibadan 1999, p. 40.





transitional age (1600–1960), industry was by and large domestic.¹¹ Emphasizing the wide spread of this type of industrial technology as well as arguing that Africa was at the same level of development as most parts of the world during this period, Onwuejeogwu opined thus: “*The ancient civilizations of Egypt, Nok, Meroe, Axum, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Igbo, Yoruba, Benin and Hausa were sustained on domestic industries characterized by the use of non-machine technology. The same is true of China, Asia and Americas. Indeed in China, Africa and Asia, primitive machine technology, forerunners of modern machine technology, had evolved when Europe was still in its Dark Ages. By 300 BC, the Chinese were a long way ahead of the West in term of their level of technological development. It began in Europe only in the 17th century after getting impetus from the Mediterranean, Far East and China.*”¹²

More far-reaching than just trade is the actual ownership of the means of production in one country by the citizens of another. When citizens of Europe own the land and the mines of Africa, this is the most direct way of sucking the African continent. Under colonialism the ownership was complete and backed by military domination. Today, in many African countries the foreign ownership is still present, although the armies and flags of foreign powers have been removed. So long as foreigners own land, mines, factories, banks, insurance companies, means of transportation, newspapers, power stations, etc. then for so long will the wealth of Africa flow outwards into the hands of those elements. In other words, in the absence of direct political control; foreign investment ensures that the natural resources and the labour of Africa produce economic value which is lost to the continent.

Evidence of the above is found in most historical and archaeological remains in most parts of Africa. These evidence have shown that in the centuries before the contact with Europeans, the overwhelmingly dominant communities in Africa observed the peculiarities of their own environment and tried to find techniques for dealing with it in a rational manner. For example, in Tanzania, it has been revealed that the Haya Technique was highly adopted by the local smelters to adapt to the local conditions. In this case, the furnace was built of mud from termite mounds and charcoal swamp reeds used to provide carbon inside the furnace. In this way the iron smelting industry of Tabora Community (East

¹¹ M. A. ONWUEJEOGWU, “The Place of Indigenous Technology in Present Day Africa”, in: A. I. OKPOKO (ed.), *Africa’s Indigenous Technology*, Ibadan 1999, p. 11.

¹² Ibidem.





African inland trading center in Tanzania) as far back as 1882, was able to produce and trade over 150,000 locally manufactured hoes annually. It is sad that as recent as 1999, all the Tanzania factories put together, including the Modern Ubungo Farm Implements (UFI) Factory built with the assistance of the Chinese are producing only double that amount of hoes. Commenting on the antiquity of the Haya method as well as its effectiveness, the US Journal Science wrote thus: "*The Tanzania blacksmith predates the arrival of the colonial rulers although the current population belief is that the nations of Africa, before the advent of Europeans were mainly primitive hunters and gatherers of food [...] Haya peasants of Tanzania who live on the shoreline of lake Victoria, were producing high grade carbon steel more than 1,500 years ago. Their advanced iron smelting technology, which used pre-heating of the airblast to develop high furnace temperatures, was not developed in Europe until the mid-19th century.*"¹³

In the case of Nigeria, smelting industries have been discovered in Taruga, a Nok Culture settlement site 54 km southeast of Abuja. In this area about ten iron smelting furnaces were excavated. The bases of some of the furnaces survived to the height of about a foot (30 cm) and draught might have been supplied to the bases through the tuyere. Associated with the furnaces were iron slags, tuyeres and charcoal. A series of radiocarbon dates from the charcoal sample produced a date of 440 ± 140 BC (4th-5th century BC) for the Taruga furnaces.¹⁴

Jemkur's research among communities in Central Nigeria, established that the Southern Kaduna area had housed early iron working industries, as revealed by the existence of iron smelting furnaces, iron ore mining pits, heaps of slags and broken tuyere.¹⁵ It was also revealed that in the process of iron smelting, two major technologies were employed by the people as established by the different types of smelting furnaces – free standing and imbedded furnaces. In Samaru area of Zaria, it has also been established that along the Kabbani river valley, the early settlers had practiced iron smelting as revealed by excavated furnaces, tuyere fragments and slag heaps. Sutton opined that the lateritic outcrop and gallery

¹³ OKPOKO – IBEANU, p. 36.

¹⁴ B. FAGG, "The Nok Culture Excavations at Taruga", in: *West Africa Archaeology Newsletters*, 10, 1968, pp. 27–29.

¹⁵ J. F. JEMKUR, "A Survey of Traditional Methods of Iron Smelting in parts of the Northern State, Nigeria", Paper presented at the 8th Annual Conference of Archaeology Association of Nigeria, Minna 1989, p. 13.





forest must have offered a lot of incentives for early iron smelting in the region.¹⁶

In a related development and arguing in line with the wide spread nature of network established by the practitioners of this industry, Bitiyong pointed to the existence of well established metal production and trade in the Agadez area, which share similarities with what existed in Nigeria.¹⁷ The scholar argued that the Agadez region of Niger experience metal working based on copper by about late 3rd millennium BC and the by the 8th century BC, smelting of the copper had been achieved as several furnaces in the area shows. He argued that from the copper, spear, pins and arrow points as well as blades were produced among other tools and exchanged in long distance trade to the Air area as early as the 8th century BC.¹⁸ There exist evidence of bead craft in Africa as shown in the discoveries of the Ita-Yemo site in Ile-Ife. This site has the large numbers of used and unused glass and fragments of crucibles for making glass. This has been dated to about 1000–1500 AD.¹⁹

In the area of health, the people were not completely ignorant as they were able to interact meaningfully with the environment to extract the means of curing illnesses and diseases. In the pre-colonial African setting illnesses and/or diseases were categorized into three for easy attention. They were natural, if they are traced or attributed to bad diet, insect bites, odors and others; it is said to be supernatural when it is associated with ancestors and cosmic forces; and preternatural when it is attributed to witchcraft, sorcery, and invocation of curses. It is however the individuals' attitudes towards the conception of disease that tend to influence the pattern of healing sought.²⁰ The practitioners in this case familiarize themselves with what constitute good moral living, learn to detect by spiritual diagnostic signs, how, when and where departure from the normal or natural has taken place, and then applies knowledge and skills,

¹⁶ J. E. G. SUTTON, "Iron working around Zaria", in: *Zaria Archaeology Paper*, 1976, p. 12.

¹⁷ L. Y. BITIYONG, "Tin Smelting in the Nok Region, Nigeria", in: A. I. OKPOKO (ed.), *Africa's Indigenous Technology*, Ibadan 1999, pp. 47–48.

¹⁸ B. FAGG, "The Nok Culture in Prehistory", in: *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, 1959, p. 4; M. LAST, "The Early Kingdom of the Nigeria Savanna", in: J. F. A. AJAYI – M. CROWDER (eds.), *History of West Africa*, Vol. 1, London 1985, p. 45.

¹⁹ W. FAGG, *Yoruba Beadwork of Art of Nigeria*, London 1980, p. 50; J. ADEDUNTAN, "Early Glass Bead Technology in Ile-Ife", in: *West African Journal of Archaeology*, 15, 1985, p. 5.

²⁰ A. O. ONU, "Social Basis of Illness: A Search for Therapeutic Meaning", in: A. I. OKPOKO (ed.), *Africa's Indigenous Technology*, Ibadan 1999, p. 179.





aided by the various kinds of traditional treatment to help bring about a return to normal or natural. In all these situations, the natural environment provided the needed raw materials for the treatment of the diseases. This ranges from roots, bark and leaves of trees, animal parts, sand, clay, salt and water.

In the area of architecture, good knowledge of the environment was applied in construction. This was what was applied in the case of Egypt to develop and construct water ways, for both domestic and other uses. For example, Mukhtar pointed out that using the dike-building and canal-digging techniques which they had perfected over the centuries, the Egyptians little by little developed the system of irrigation by basins (hods), thus securing not only their survival in a climate increasingly desert-like, but even the possibility of expansion.²¹ The system was simple in principle, complex in operation, and demanded synchronization. It made use of two natural higher ridges created by the Nile along its banks in the course of thousands of yearly floods. These natural defences, gradually reinforced by the shore dwellers to protect themselves from too sudden a flood, were supplemented by retaining embankments, veritable artificial dams, which undoubtedly owed their origin to those built by the earliest inhabitants to protect their settlements during the river's rise. Through the above system, the ancient Egyptians were able to ensure a stable agricultural system which ensured supply of food throughout the year. This was because the control of the waterways, led to a situation of practicing year-round irrigation by raising water from the canals or from pits dug down to the water table, as a means of boosting production of vegetables, fruit trees and vineyards. This has also been associated with the development of granaries and river transport, which enabled them to ensure food supplies from one province to another or from one year to the next. Average yields were good: the surpluses fed the large numbers of government officials and the workers in medium-sized places of employment (shipyards and weapon factories, spinning mills attached to certain temples, etc.). Through their control over food resources, which varied according to the period, the temple authorities and high officials exercised powers of patronage. Commenting on the impact of this on the larger society and international development, it has been argued thus:

²¹ G. MOKHTAR (ed.), *General History of Africa: Ancient Civilization of Africa*, Vol. II, California 1981.





*"Most agricultural and industrial processes had been invented by the third millennium and it seems that Egypt was slow and timid, indeed hidebound, when it came to introducing technical innovations from abroad. In the present state of documentation and studies, it would seem that the remarkable achievements of the early days had provided solutions for the vital problems facing the valley's inhabitants and led to the establishment of an effective social and political system. [...] Foreign trade, mining and quarrying were state activities. The majority of the commercial transactions we know about from the records involve small amounts of commodities and are private contracts between individuals; the intervention of professional middlemen is rare and they usually seem to be the commercial agents of the king or a temple. There is no reason to believe in the existence of a 'bourgeoisie' of entrepreneurs and private traders, and although the expression sometimes used, 'state socialism', is ambiguous and anachronistic, it does seem that, in general, production and distribution were in the hands of the state."*²²

From Colonial Rule to Post-Colonial Africa and the Crisis of Development

Colonial rule was very violent and as such no conscious effort was made on the part of the colonial government to encourage and build on the pre-colonial technology and economy of Africa. It however, condemned everything Africa, while at the same time destroying through religious teachings the relics of indigenous technology as well as looting the works of such technologies. As a way of ensuring total submission and control of the technology and economy of Africa, the colonizing powers forbade the indigenous professionals from producing as well as trading in many regions of the country. Any attempt by these groups not to heed the ban often led to their arrest and detention, while their produce were confiscated and destroyed without compensation. Rather they were encouraged to take up colonial jobs, through which they were recognized in the society. This was the first step towards the destruction and relegation of history in Africa. It is sad to note that years after colonial rule, Africans are yet to recover from the psychological and identity hemorrhage they suffered under the system. In some cases, they deliberately created situa-

²² A. H. ZAYED, "Egypt's Relations with the Rest of Africa", in: G. MOKHTAR (ed.), *Ancient Civilizations of Africa: General History of Africa*, Vol. II, California 1981; J. YOYOTTE, "Pharaonic Egypt: Society, Economy and Culture", in: G. MOKHTAR (ed.), *Ancient Civilizations of Africa: General History of Africa*, Vol. II, California 1981.





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tions that would make the black look less superior as well as kill the quest for struggle for freedom. For example, in Central Africa, another version of developmentalist imperial policy came unstuck as in 1953, the British government had proclaimed the Central African Federation, uniting its three colonies of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, hoping that this larger unit would foster economic planning and stave off South African ambitions to bring the region's white settlers into its white-supremacist orbit.

Immediately, the colonialist conquered Africa, they sequestered the best land, and used administrative fiats to tilt the land tenure system to their advantage. Africans were made beast of burden, sources of cheap labour and instruments in the intricate chain of exploitation as teachers, interpreters, catechists, laborers, prison guards and court clerks. In line with this, F. Cooper argued that in parts of Africa, colonization drove rural dwellers into deepening poverty, sometimes as a deliberate policy to create "labour reserves" where people had little alternative to selling their labour cheaply, sometimes ... (making) difficult ecosystems worse.²³ This was clearer especially during the Interwar period, when the attention of Africa was diverted from production to recruiting able bodied men to fight on the side of the Allied force. For instance during the war over 100,000 Nigerians were recruited into the West African Frontier Force for military service against the Italian, German and Japanese armies in East Africa, North Africa and in the jungles of Burma. Thus within six years about 200,000 Nigerians largely from among the peasantry were brought together in a highly concentrated and direct fashion, face-to-face with the white man.²⁴ In the case of Congo, there were over 14,319 Congolese army under the command of 313 officers, drilled and trained to partake in the wars. Nzula et al. opined that although volunteers are taken into the army, they account for a negligible part of it, due to exceedingly hard conditions of service. This led to situations where most soldiers were taken into the army by force.²⁵

In the case of South Africa, it is documented that about 800 (South) Africa workers were recruited for the battle fields of France in 1917, while some 40,000 natives served in South West and East Africa. These were of-

²³ F. COOPER, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*, Cambridge 2002, p. 21.

²⁴ Y. B. USMAN, "Nigeria: Independence on a Gold Platter", in: *The Analyst*, 3, 3, 1988, p. 7.

²⁵ A. T. NZULA et al., *Forced Labour in Colonial Africa*, London 1977, p. 50.





ten unarmed and found themselves under the fire of the enemy.²⁶ Those that were involved in war activities were recruited into the force labour scheme to provide essentials for those at the battle front or to boost the European industries. For instance, during the war period, the Bumba sub district (Belgian Congo), constituting of 100 households, had to supply 5 sheep or pigs, 50 chickens, 60 kg of rubber, 125 buckets of manioc, 15 kg of maize and 15 kg of sweet potatoes every month. In addition, one man in ten had to perform various types of work on the orders of the authorities, and each year one man left the village to join the colonial army. Moreover, the entire tribe had to labour on public works every four days.²⁷ In the case of Nigeria, at the peak of mining activity, during the Second World War, the mine labour force which was as many as 120,000 workers certainly the largest concentration of industrial, workers. But instead of constituting a militant force for the advancement of labour and the working class, the mine workers, concentrated their efforts on developing the European industries.²⁸ This represented the beginning of the death of independence in Africa, and the beginning of dependence on the external world for survival.

Presently due to the ignorance of history and the lack of technological knowhow of the ancient Tanzania community, over 40,000 rural black smelters and tin smith in Tanzania are out of job. In line with this Tanzania wrote: "*Smiths are very much in demand in Tanzania where modern factories have failed to keep up with the present annual demand of about two and a half million hand hoes. A survey in one district of Tanzania revealed that about a fifth of the hoes, all the sickles, Knives, spears and planting hoes being used there had been manufactured by the villages whose products are cheaper and whose per capita investment is lower than that operating in government owned factories.*"²⁹

Available fact shows that Tanzania got to this level as a result of the fact that during the colonial period the Germans and later the British colonial government forbade the local blacksmiths from producing as well as

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ R. L. BUELL, *The Native Problem in Africa*, Vol. 2, New York 1928, p. 75.

²⁸ E. O. AKUBOR, "From Melting Pot to Smiting Spot: A Historical Analysis of the Genesis of Violent Ethnic Conflict and Insecurity in Central Nigeria (Case Study of Plateau and Neighbouring Areas)", in: A. O. AKINYEYE et al. (eds.), *Contending Issues in Nigeria's Development Trajectory Since 1914*, Ile-Ife (forthcoming).

²⁹ *New African*, Jan. 1979, p. 27.





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trading in many regions of the country. Any attempt by the smiths not to heed the ban often led to their arrest and detention, while their produce were confiscated and destroyed without compensation. This was replicated in Nigeria in the banning of the distilling of local gin as well as the mining of local salt mines and the production of locally made pistols and guns. Colonial record shows that up to the first decade of the 20th century, tin smelting was far less expensive in Nigeria (Jos) than in Europe and that in 1918 the local method yielded extraction of 71.79 % tin from the ore and the economic value was high. It is also on record that about £297.61 was spent to produce a ton in May of that year on the Jos Plateau while similar quantity cost over £360 in England, where the colonial government preferred to transport tin ore from Nigeria for smelting and probably import to Nigeria for local needs.³⁰ To prevent competition, the British had to stop independent mining and smelting, while their implements of production were destroyed. Even at the end of colonial rule no effort was directed towards researching into the production of these implements and related produce as a way of improving on it.

In some other case of Nigeria, most of the activities of the early manufacturers have been branded to be either associated with occultism and spiritual practices. In most cases, the produce (specifically arts and crafts) of these people which were recovered and should have been kept to be studied are destroyed under the guise that they represented some idols and objects of pagan worship. This is happening at a time when the western world was busy paying some individuals huge sums of money to help them procure these supposed objects of idol worship for their home museums.

In the area of food production, the same methods which the people had practiced years before the introduction of colonial rule and had sustained the population have been completely discouraged, with little or no support for the people. Instead they are taught new (foreign) technology which they cannot comprehend and does not suit the production method of the people. Krokfors argued that a number of recent studies of land use in tropical Africa have shown that if the land is used in response to the natural ecosystem it yields the most stable production. In his view, examples from dry areas indicate that this approach was always

³⁰ T. ROBERTS, Official Communication in NNAK/SNP 648/1918, on September 14th, 1918, pp. 1-14; BITIYONG, pp. 47-48.





a part of the traditional land used by pastoral nomads and farmers. In the case of North Africa, the scholar opined that the introduction of new technologies have also had a share in this, because cultivation has come to be done by disc ploughing which, unlike the traditional swing plough, has destroyed all perennial vegetation and left the ground barren for several years after the harvest; also the soils are exposed to wind erosion. This is because in the process, removal of 1mm of topsoil per month has been recorded. Furthermore, shallow soils began also to be cultivated and became almost sterile after only a few years. They are now sparsely covered by useless annual or perennial plants. Tens of thousands of hectares of sand dunes (barchans) have developed especially in Southern Tunisia and western Libya during the last ten to fifteen years as a result of disc ploughing.³¹

In the early 1970's Africans did not need to go through the protocols of getting visas and other documents to get to Europe. Having been exploited by the colonial powers and knowing that the people have the physical and mental capability to do any hectic job, they were wholly welcomed in Europe and the Americas. During this period, Nigerians did not need visas to enter the United Kingdom. This was not only because she belonged to the Commonwealth, but also because Nigeria was very rich at that point in time with a currency that was stronger than the United States Dollars. This was also true of the case of other Africa countries like Zimbabwe, Ghana and Kenya. The French-speaking Africans were allowed to travel and live in France without legal restrictions. The immediate effect of this is the fact that over 30 % of the French population is Black. The Netherlands in the 1970's actively recruited North Africans and Turkish citizens for her industries and factories. Canada's largest city Toronto has an immigration population of 1.25 million (44 %), and a significant percentage of the immigrants are Africans.³² Thus this period represented the beginning of the movement of African professional (brain drain) out of the continent.³³ This is well illustrated by the tables below.

³¹ M. A. ONWUEJEOGWU, "The Place of Indigenous Technology in Present Day Africa", in: A. I. OKPOKO (ed.), *Africa's Indigenous Technology*, Ibadan 1999, p. 18.

³² S. C. ILO, *The Face of Africa: Looking Beyond the Shadows*, Ibadan 2006, p. 34.

³³ J. ADEKANYE, *Linking Conflict Diagnosis, Conflict Prevention, and Conflict Management in Contemporary Africa: Selected Essays*, Ibadan 2007, p. 157.





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Migration of Professionals: Africa to the U.S. 1969³⁴

Country	Physicians, Dentist and Surgeons	Natural Scientists	Social Scientists	Engineers
Africa	341	341	76	895
Algeria	6	2	1	10
Ethiopia	15	4	3	12
Ghana	17	10	2	28
Kenya	10	8	4	38
Morocco	14	4	2	18
Nigeria	15	20	6	64
Tunisia	13	6	2	4
Egypt	247	240	46	570
Rest of Africa	94	47	10	151

This act which most Africans thought were done to favour them, were basically meant to exploit the best brains in Africa, as they were meant to provide labour at far cheaper rates than their indigenes, while they also pay heavy taxes. This is shown in the table below.

Estimated revenues from a 1 % tax after U.S. tax on income of professionals from Africa in the U.S. (1962–1969)³⁵

Country of last residence	Revenue
Africa	2,432,900
Algeria	28,900
Ethiopia	58,500
Ghana	84,600
Kenya	76,200
Morocco	61,100
Nigeria	128,800
Tunisia	45,700
Egypt	1,493,700
Other Africa	455,600

³⁴ J. BHAGWATI – M. PARTINGTON (eds.), *Taxing: The Brain Drain*, New York 1876, p. 39.

³⁵ Ibidem.





The total after US-Tax Income of Professionals: Africa to the US 1969³⁶

Country	Physicians, Dentist and Surgeons	Natural Scientists	Social Scientists	Engineers
Africa	9,223,800	663,800	2,947,400	11,493,400
Algeria	103,100	8,800	17,300	160,000
Ethiopia	123,700	26,200	34,600	400,000
Ghana	288,600	17,500	86,400	543,800
Kenya	391,600	34,900	69,100	266,700
Morocco	185,500	17,100	34,600	373,300
Nigeria	659,100	52,400	172,900	400,000
Tunisia	41,200	17,100	51,900	346,700
Egypt	5,874,400	401,800	2,074,400	6,586,700
Rest of Africa	1,556,200	87,300	406,200	2,500,700

However, by 2004, the policy had begun to change. This was first exposed when European leaders jointly welcomed the building of a “holding Center” in North Africa. These centers would facilitate the deportation of Africans and ensure that they made claims for asylum outside Europe.³⁷

On the contrary, Africa began to import from the so called developed world who during the colonial period maximally exploited them. This was because all sort of goods, some of which would have ordinarily been produced in Africa. In most cases it was discovered that the basic raw materials used in the manufacturing of most of these goods were available in large quantities in Africa. Ake gave the graphic picture of this exchange as illustrated in the table below.

Exports from developing Africa, 1970–1975 (millions of U.S. dollars)³⁸

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
Manufactured goods	2261	1849	1970	2542	3694	2765
Machinery and Transport Equipment	254	278	375	565	575	578
Music Manufactures	107	118	146	198	250	251

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 47.

³⁷ ILO, pp. 195–217.

³⁸ C. AKE, *A Political-Economy of Africa*, New York 1981, p. 156.





Nigeria's Foreign trade, 1966 and 1974 (Millions of Naira)³⁹

s/no	Countries	1966	1974
1	Western Europe Imports Exports	328,8 442,8	1,119,1 3,056,2
2	United States Imports Exports	83,0 44,6	213,2 1,589,9
3	Eastern Europe Imports Exports	11,6 6,6	47,9 77,4
4	China Imports Exports	10,0 —	30,4 3,6

The inability of the continent to get it right has thrown her into heavy debt burden. This has led to high level of underdevelopment indices and poverty in the continent. In the case of debt, available records shows that as of 1980, the total debt stocks for the continent amounted to a little over US\$109 billion, however by 1990, there was a tremendous increased by as much as 150 % to US\$272.7 billion, and by 1995, it had reach an estimated staggering US\$313 billions. A breakdown of this figure into individual countries shows that as of 1980, the total debt stock for Burundi stood at US\$189.8 m; by 1991), it had climbed by about 479 % to US\$961 m. Rwanda, experienced an increase of more than 345 % in her debt stock, resulting to a total of US\$844.6 m. In 1982, total debt stocks constituted 22.6 % and 15.5 % of the gross national product (GNP) of both Burundi and Rwanda. By 1985, the story had changed as there was an increased to 40.3 % and 21.4 % for both countries. By 1991 the situation was even more worrisome as that total debt stocks accounted for 82.3 % of Burundi's GNP and 53.7 % of Rwanda's. As this situation continued, these countries continually spent more of their foreign exchange earning in debt servicing, such that the 1990 financial records in Burundi indicates that the country was using 43.4 % of her foreign exchange earnings to service the external debt. The records also indicated that in terms of debt-service ratio as of 1990, Burundi was only better than of three countries in the entire continent, i. e., Algeria (63.1 %), Uganda (57.2 %), and Madagascar (49.4 %). It has also been established that as of 1990 at 22.8 %,

³⁹ Ibidem.





although Rwanda's debt-service ratio could be argued to be lower than Burundi's, however evidence are bound to show that it was still greater than those of Nigeria, which was put at 20.3 %, Malawi (at an estimated 22.5 %), Morocco (23.4 %), and Zimbabwe (22.6 %). Apart from the aforementioned, by 1992, almost half of the countries in the continent were battling with high debt-service ratios.⁴⁰

Debt Service: Nations and Percentage⁴¹

s/no	year	Country	Percent	Purpose
1	1992	Algeria	71.9	Debt Servicing
2	1992	Burundi	39.9	Debt Servicing
3	1992	Cote d'Ivoire	31.5	Debt Servicing
4	1992	Guinea-Bissau	93.4	Debt Servicing
5	1992	Nigeria	30.6	Debt Servicing
6	1992	Sao Tome	35.3	Debt Servicing
7	1992	Tanzania	32.5	Debt Servicing
8	1992	Uganda	41.0	Debt Servicing
9	1992	Zambia	29.3	Debt Servicing
10	1992	Zimbabwe	31.9	Debt Servicing

As for the Gross Domestic Product, it is clear that the region's GDP for 1992 (270 dollars) was appreciably less than that of the Netherlands, over half (340 m) of its 600 million population lives on less than one dollar per day and thirty four of the fifty three states are among the least developed in the world.⁴² It has been established that a large percentage of the money borrowed were used in procuring equipments, materials and other essentials that ordinarily would have been produced within the continent.

Where and How We Got It Wrong

Presently, in most African countries, it is clear that History is facing serious crisis of relegation, especially when seen in the light of the fact that the state has deliberately refused to acknowledge it and that in some way, it is against history and the arts generally. In the case of Nigeria, this has been done through the exclusion of the 6:3:3:4 education syllabi, in which in place of history and the "Liberal" arts, Social Studies – a more fashionable discipline concerned with a study of civil matters – is deliberately

⁴⁰ ADEKANYE, p. 19.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² Ibidem.





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promoted.⁴³ In the neighboring Cameroun, the government at a time proscribed the teaching and study of history because of its critical and radical outlook, and to save their lives, most of the historians had to go on exile. In most countries of the Third World, there is the deliberate policy of promoting science over arts in the schools system partly as an attempt to correct an existing imbalance against science, but more seriously, as a conscious governmental effort to industrialize. This is happening at a time when developed countries like the USA, China and Britain are promoting the study of history.

This takes us back to the position as maintained by A. E. Afigbo, when he argued that changes can only take place in the society when the four stages of history are critically observed by the people; i.e. the discovery and critical analysis of historical source; the reconstruction and description of the past on the basis of facts queried from the discovered sources; the construction, on the basis of the ascertained facts of some general theories, which gives meaning and inner logic to the known past, or to most of it, as well as serves to educate and ascertain society as a whole or even helps to influence aspects of contemporary public policy or action; and finally the reflection on the trends and patterns of historical writing.⁴⁴

An analysis of the definitions above will show that, while it is generally agreed that historians in this part of the world (Africa and most parts of the Third World) have tried in the first two aspects of the above definition, they cannot deny the fact that there is failure in the third and fourth definitions. This is based on the fact that the teaching and study of history has not been given the desired attention; hence the wide spread argument even among academics of what really constitute history and its relevance in development. Although it has been argued that education became a priority only when Africans themselves attained greater political influence toward the end of the colonial era and that the belief in progress through school education became one of the great mobilising convictions of that period. It must however be noted that immediately after attaining Independence, the curricula of most schools gradually witnessed the depleting of the study of history, through which they upcoming generations would have gained meaningful insight into the workings of the society and development over time. This in the opinion of the paper could

⁴³ MANGWAT, p. 4.

⁴⁴ AFIGBO, p. 3.





be partly blamed on new class of elites which emerged after independence, who despite increasing participation in education, through which they became well-educated and enjoyed a wide variety of opportunities that gave them rapid access to influential and lucrative positions in the state administrations as well as state-based trade and commerce,⁴⁵ deliberately ignored the promotion of the study of history in schools. The impact of this is seen in the fact that although increasingly better-educated subsequent generations faced far stronger competition, economic crises, entrenched corruption due to the lack of patriotism which historical consciousness would have created in them.

Conclusion

From the above it is clear that the African continent is far from any form of technological advancement and development. Unfortunately, since independence successive governments in Africa have continued to encourage the decline of indigenous technology (which would have led to real development) through uninhibited importation of all forms of foreign technology. It has been argued that there has been the tendency towards the establishment of "turnkey" or wholesomely imported technology which is intrinsically unviable within the culture and environment of the Africa society. On the part of African, the general feeling of inferiority (generated by ignorance of history and by massive importation syndrome) has given rise to negative ideas about products of indigenous technology, while foreign products are proudly displayed in the market places and purchased, because they are imported and such considered superior.

The paper concludes that the quest for firm foundations for new futures for Africa can only be realized if Africans place African socio-economic history (over time and space) as its essential core. A genuine sense of history, a fidelity to the revelations of history and a courageous acceptance of the judgment of history and its implications for both the present and the future is a necessary step in the formation of the basic architecture for building a new home which Africans need in the continent and the world. This is based on the understanding that sustainable development is a realistic transformation of socio-economic system in line with

⁴⁵ T. BIERSCHENK – E. SPIES, "Introduction: Continuities, Dislocations and Transformations: 50 Years of Independence in Africa", in: *Africa Spectrum*, 45, 3, 2010, pp. 3–10; P. NUGENT, *Africa Since Independence: A Comparative History*, Basingstoke, New York 2004, pp. 1–4.





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ecological realities, and this is the fact that is embedded in history both as an academic discipline and the meaningful interaction between man and man on the one hand and man and the environment on the other.

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