

Evolution of African Civilization from Antiquity, Circa Medieval Period Up to the 16th Century: Lessons for Promoting Consciousness of African History in Universities

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Abstract: *The paper examined the Evolution of African Civilization from Antiquity, Circa Medieval Period up to the 16th century: Lesson for promoting Consciousness of African History in Universities. The conceptual model adopted for the study was Marx Model while the theoretical framework was evidence theory. Historical research method was used for the study relying on primary and secondary sources of Historical information. The paper discussed the following in-depth; the erroneous assertion of Prof. Trevor Roper on the non- existence of Africa History; evidence of semblance of Africa civilization prior to the coming of Europeans in Africa; The emergence of erudite scholars and historians with burning desire for promoting consciousness of Africa history; The lessons learnt by the contemporary historians and educationist on the channel through which Africa scholars and historians agitated for reawakening of African history in universities. Findings from the discussion of the paper revealed that Africans had been in existence before the coming of Europeans. The evidence of brilliant and focused African Scholars who championed the promotion of African Consciousness in 20th century and beyond. Based on the discussions of this paper, it was recommended, that impetus and motivation should be given to students studying African History in Universities.*

Keywords: African civilization, antiquity, consciousness, African historians and educationists

INTRODUCTION

The main focus of the paper is to debunk the erroneous assertion of Professor Trevor Roper on non-existence of Africa history before the coming of the Europeans. Pan- Africanism was the desire of the African intellectuals and nationalists to design a co-ordinated strategy to confront racism and imperialism on the African continent. For the total liberation and freedom of Africa, Pan-Africanism gave moral, political and material assistance to freedom fighters. The contributions of individuals, political and cultural associations, social movements etc. to

the different categories of nationalism and Pan- Africanism were examine. Crowder (1980) and Olayanju (2026) went down the memory lane by acknowledged that the exploration of Africa by Mungo Park and his crew, Major Clapperton, Dr Oudney, Lander, brothers (Richard and John) specifically on River Niger reached the capital of Old Oyo at Katunga all these were historical evidence on the existence of African and its geographical features. Mungo Park sited River Niger in 1805 and was highly impressed when he made the following remark: ‘I saw with an infinite pleasure, the great object of my mission, the long sought majestic Niger glittering to the morning sun and flowing slowly eastwards as the like Thames at West Minister as documented by Isaaco in his Diary (his Personal assistant). Pastor John Kwegyr Agreey of Gold Coast (now Ghana) was bold to promote the Spirit of Pan-Africanism when he avowed that ‘Am proud of my colour, whoever, is not proud of his colour is not fit to live (Olayanju, 2026: pp. 1-2).

Nwadiolor, (nd) in retrospect commented the 1841 Niger expedition, having in view the twofold object of striking the slave trade at the root, to introduce industry and legitimate commerce in its place, and of spreading Christianity among the people, as the surest means of elevating Africa in the scale of nations. One of the greatest projectors and master-minds, who framed the plans of that great enterprise with deep foresight and profound thought, (Sir Fowell Buxton), termed the sum total of that which was needed for the benefit of Africa, the Gospel and the Plough in other words, Christianity and industry. These two words are worthy to be written in letters of gold, and preserved in caskets of silver. According to Ifemesia (1980), consequently, “the British apostles of civilization mobilized all the agencies of civilization- Government agencies, commerce. The concept of African Civilization evolving. From Ancient Kingdoms to Modern Societies explores the history, culture, and development of African civilizations from antiquity to contemporary period. It provides a vivid documentary analysis explaining the rich and diverse civilizations that existed in Africa throughout history and their significance in shaping the continent's emergence and historical exegesis for promoting consciousness of Africa History.

Prominent pre-colonial African civilizations were Egypt, Nubia, Ghana, Mali, Carthage, Zimbabwe, and Kongo. In West Africa, the empires of Sudan, Ghana, Mali, and Songhai all flourished. In Southern Africa, Great Zimbabwe emerged as the most complex civilization throughout Southern Africa. In East Africa, plateau regions were suitable for cattle grazing. The dense forests of the Congo Basin, on the other hand, made herding nearly impossible. Other states, empires, and kingdoms dissolved throughout the era. In Central Africa, the Kongo, Loango, Ndongo, and Tio states. dissolved by the mid-seventeenth century as economic, military and political systems shifted due to the slave trade's impact. Ancient Egypt though was the first major African civilization.

By 1500, essentially all of Africa was controlled by indigenous inhabitants. Later European explorers and settlers often argued that territories were unsettled upon their arrival and thus were ripe for the taking, but these assumptions were misguided. Often land had been abandoned due to poor soil quality, infrequent rainfall, or had been claimed for future use.

Statement of the Problem

The problem this study addresses nis the insufficient awareness and sustainable preservation and African historical heritage despites the continent's rich civilization legacy from antiquity to the 16th century. There is need to critically examine Africa's historical development and identify lessons that can strengthen cultural identity, educational content and sustainable historical consciousness.

The main focus of the paper is to provide valid answers to Professor Trevor Roper assertion on the absence of any meaningful development devoid of history prior to the advent of Europeans in Africa. The modalities employed by the African scholars, and Nationalists who fought with zeal and determination to promote Africans image to the outside world in the hey days of European imperialism. This paper therefore is set out to provide answers to the underlisted questions.

1. What is the relevance of Professor Trevor Roper's assertion that African South of Sahara have no history before the coming of Europeans?
2. Account for the semblance of African Civilization prior to the coming of Europeans in Africa.
3. What prompted the African scholars/historians for championing the spirit of Nationalism in promoting consciousness of African History?
4. In what ways did African scholars/historians agitated for re-awakening of African history?
5. What lessons do contemporary historians and historians of education learnt from evolution of African civilization.

METHODOLOGY

The historical research method was used to collect data for the paper relying mainly on primary and secondary sources of historical information. Secondary sources used were archival documents on Africa history and other documentary analysis through library and internet search, journals, and textbooks relevant to African history and historiography.

Theoretical Model

Marx's historical materialist theory seeks to explain human nature and development on the basis of the empirically-knowable material conditions of human existence. Marx's interest in materialist theories of reality can be discerned even in the earliest of his theoretical work. Furthermore, he insisted that a materialist theory of human existence must not be naïve and unhistorical, but must instead recognize the dynamic and dialectical character of human labor, by means of which human beings produce their own means of subsistence. For Marx, all important social and historical changes originate only through changes at the level of human productive activity (through changes to the forces and relations of production), and not through changes at the super structural or ideological level of human existence. This theory of historical materialism is also a theory of historical epochs.

Evidence Theory

The spoken words of a witness or a photograph produced in support of an account of something proved beyond reasonable doubt is evidence. Similarly, a direct awareness of the fact that such words are spoken in the presence of people concerned that certain outlines and shades exist on a piece of paper. From these facts, by the aid of some such general propositions as those witnesses usually speak the truth or that photographs usually resemble their objects, as major premises, the jury infer that some fact asserted by the witness exists or that a certain object was of a certain nature. Evidence of this first kind is of three classes, namely:

1. Oral evidence; spoken words; presented to the triers' *sense of hearing*;
2. Written evidence; written words; presented to the triers' *sense of sight*;
3. Real evidence; other objects introduced as evidence, such as photographs, models, etc.; presented to various senses of the triers. We act on real truth or straight forward account of something, this is evidence, and such evidence is often extremely good evidence.

To what extent was Professor Trevor Roper's assertion that African South of Sahara have no history before the coming of Europeans could be debunked?

African civilizations have successfully preserved their cultural practices, traditions, and languages through various means (Opokuwaa, 2015; Gyekye, 1996; Mazama, 2003; Rowe, 1999). Oral traditions play a crucial role in transmitting cultural knowledge across generations. Stories, proverbs, and songs are used to pass down history, beliefs, and practices. For example, storytelling is an integral part of the Ghanaian culture, where elders use stories to teach morals and values (Opokuwaa, 2015). Art and craft serve as mediums for preserving cultural practices. African artwork reflects the culture, beliefs, and values of the people. The Igbo people in Nigeria, known for their

pottery making, use intricate designs with symbolic meanings that represent different aspects of their culture (Gyekye, 1996). Religion and beliefs also contribute to cultural preservation.

Modern African civilizations face complex social issues shaped by historical, cultural, economic, and political factors. Gender inequality remains a significant challenge, with limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for women and girls (World Bank, 2021). Ethnic tensions and conflicts persist, leading to violence and exclusion in some countries (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). Religious conflicts have also fueled violence and discrimination (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). However, progress has been made in promoting gender equality, ethnic harmony, and religious tolerance in countries like Rwanda, South Africa, and Senegal (World Bank, 2021) (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

There is therefore, an abundance of historical evidence to substantiate the role claim of Christianity as the custodian and promoter of human civilization. European explorers of the nineteenth century in Africa had revealed the presence in Africa of some commodities of vital importance to European markets. In this regard, Babalola (1988) confirmed that in order to tap these resources of Africa, it was accepted that the Bible should accompany the Plough for the regeneration of Africa. Thus, the missionaries were always asked to accompany European trading missions. "In spite of their pietistic theology, the early missionaries came from a culture which kept only one eye fixed on heaven while the other was focused quite firmly on the earth" (Babalola, 1988: 205).

Account for the semblance of African Civilization prior to the coming of Europeans in Africa.

The history and development of African civilizations showcase the richness, diversity, and complexity of human cultures. Precolonial African civilizations such as Ancient Egypt, Ghana, Mali, and Great Zimbabwe achieved remarkable advancements in governance, trade, agriculture, and the arts. These civilizations maintained a strong cultural identity and preserved their traditions despite the influences of trans-Saharan trade and the slave trade. Preserving cultural heritage is another critical aspect of the future of African civilization. Efforts to protect traditional languages, music, and art forms, and promote cultural tourism are vital in the face of globalization and modernization. Collaborative efforts involving governments, civil society organizations, and individuals are necessary for a brighter future. The future of African civilization depends on political stability, economic growth, social progress, cultural preservation, and technological innovation. Addressing conflict, improving access to education and healthcare, combating poverty and inequality, and investing in science and technology is crucial for unlocking Africa's potential.

They were convinced that their missionary ventures could not succeed in a continent where social, economic and political conditions differed considerably from the European type. Thus, they contended that if missionary activities were to succeed, the social, economic and political condition of Africa must first be civilized in European pattern.

Ghana

Griaule reported that Ghana Empire was a powerful empire in West Africa from the 8th to 13th centuries CE and it empire possessed a wide variety of commodities and services and was also very important in Trans-Saharan commerce. Religiously, the Ghana Empire had a mixed religious system that included traditional African religions, Islam, and Christianity. Islam had a significant influence on the empire, with many people converting to the religion over time (Griaule, 1990) The Ghana Empire left behind a lasting legacy that includes its influence on other African empires like Mali and Songhai, the growth of long-distance trade, its part in the Trans-Saharan trade, and its contribution to African history and culture. The empire illustrates the rich history of African civilizations and serves as a symbol of African greatness.

Mali Empire

Under the rule of prominent leaders like Mansa Musa I, the empire experienced a Golden Age marked by military conquests, territorial expansion, trade and economic growth, and cultural and intellectual achievements

(Hunwick, 2003; Davidson, 1995). Culturally, the Mali Empire fostered a vibrant intellectual and artistic tradition. Timbuktu, its capital city, was renowned for Islamic learning and scholarship, hosting famous universities and libraries such as the Sankore Madrasah (Hunwick, 2003). The empire's artistic and architectural achievements, including intricate metalwork and the Great Mosque of Djenné, were highly regarded. Mali's rich cultural heritage also encompassed a blend of Islamic and traditional African beliefs and practices

Songhai Empire

The Songhai Empire, spanning from the 15th to the 16th century, was a powerful and influential empire in West Africa. The empire's founding city of Gao, located in present-day Mali, became a major center of trade and Islamic scholarship. The Songhai Empire played a significant role in African history, particularly in politics, culture, and commerce. Its control over trans-Saharan trade, including salt and gold, brought wealth and prosperity (UNESCO, 2021). The empire's importance in African history is widely recognized, as seen in UNESCO's designation of Gao and the Tomb of Askia as World Heritage Sites (UNESCO, 2019).

With a formidable military and a well-developed system of government, the Songhai Empire conducted military conquests and fostered Islamic scholarship in Gao. The empire relied on agriculture and trade, with farmers producing crops and traders facilitating the exchange of goods. Islam played a significant role in both the government and cultural life of the Songhai Empire. Islamic law governed the empire's legal system, while Gao served as a center of Islamic scholarship (National Geographic Society, 2020; UNESCO, 2019). While Islam was prominent, traditional African religions were also practiced in the empire (National Geographic Society, 2020).

Kanem – Borno Empire

The scholarly correspondence between Mohammed Bello and El-Kanem of Bornu on the justification of launching a Jihad on a purely Islamic state. In addition to the activities of the Trans-Saharan traders between North Africa and West Africa this was the trade between the Berbers of North Africa and the Negroes of West Africa. In Borno, Islamic scholarship had flourished long before the rise of the Sokoto Caliphate in Northern Nigeria. Scholars from Borno had sojourned in Egypt and other North African states in search of Knowledge.

Sokoto Jihad led by Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio served as the landmark for Islamic scholarship in the western Sudan. Leaders of the Jihad had met a robust system of Islamic scholarship in the area developed by both visiting scholars from neighboring Borno, Timbuktu, Jenne, Baghirmi among others and local centres of learning in Kano, Katsina and Yandoto. It is evident that the jihad leaders did not travel outside Hausa land in the course of learning rather they met and studied from scholars who were either based in Hausa land or who visited the area. All aspects of Islamic scholarship were taught by scholars in the area ranging from Arabic grammar, morphology, prosody, syntax, rhetoric to literature. Evidence from the advent of the Portuguese trader's in 1515 when Major Hawkins a British Merchant made a commercial trip to the western coast of Africa where he bought ten Negroes as slaves also bought Ivory and Ostrich feathers, pepper and salt. As early as 1483 Oba of Benin Ozolua had been transacting diplomatic relations with De Alfonso the king of Portugal by exchanging ambassadors between Benin and Portugal.

What prompted the African scholars/historians for championing the spirit of Nationalism in promoting consciousness of African History?

The coming into use of the expression Pan-Africanism has been attributed to scholars of African descent from Trinidad and the USA. Pan-Africanist ideals were propagated at several conferences that held in the USA; and at the later congresses held in Europe, Paris (1919), London (1921, 1923) and Manchester (1945). At the conference of Negro Writers and Artists, Second Congress, Rome 25 March - 1 April 1959, the resolution of the commission on philosophy was adopted. In the resolution that was preceded by a preamble "considering the dominant part played by philosophic reflection in the elaboration of culture", the commission declares summarising:

1. That for the African Philosopher, philosophy can never consist in reducing the Africa reality to western systems;
2. That enquiries by African philosopher be on the certainty that the western philosophic approach is not the only possible one; and therefore,

Urges the African philosopher to learn from the traditions, myths and proverbs of his people, and to bring out the specific categories of African thought. Calls upon the African philosopher, faced by the totalitarian of egocentric philosophers of the west, to divest himself of a possible inferiority complex, which might prevent him from starting from his African being to judge the foreign contribution to debunk the erroneous assertions postulated by the Euro-centric Historian, Professor Trevor Roper of Oxford University who opined that African South of Sahara have no history before the coming of the Europeans, this was a fallacy without any proof.

The resolution succinctly represents African philosophy, devoid of any pretensions, its holistic vision of cosmic reality rather than its abstractions; and its intrinsic humanity, which it radiates universally. The resolution on philosophy also expresses the philosophical underpinning of African cultural nationalism that was provoked by the then colonial authority in individual African countries. It asserts the confidence of the African personality and its humane disposition to the universal value of all peoples.

Kwame Nkrumah, the foremost radical African nationalist of his generation, discusses in *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (1965) the tactics which were applied in the anti-colonialism struggles in Ghana, prescribes strategies for other African countries. Kaunda and Sithole in Central Africa, Tom Mbaya in Kenya, Sekou Toure of Guinea were contributors to this phase of nationalist and Pan-Africanist struggles. One of the two leading advocates of a United Africa was from West Africa, Kwame Nkrumah who after being a very active official in Pan-Africanist movement was appointed a joint Secretary to the Pan-African congress that held in Manchester 1945. The other from East Africa Julius Nyerere who led the struggle for independence of Tanganyika and the creation of the United Republic of Tanzania, a Union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar, an Island off the coast of Tanganyika in 1 November 1964. Nyerere tried to include independent Uganda and Kenya in a union to form the Federation in East Africa. Differences in ideology and inequality in resource endowments and standard of living among the expected federating states became serious obstacles to the realisation of the Nyerere project.

As Presidents and Heads of Governments in their respective independent countries, Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) and Julius Nyerere (Tanzania, 1961) continued to propagate the demand for African Renaissance. Pan African conferences and meetings of the organization of African unity (Africa Union) that was created following the unity of the radical Casanblaca (bloc) and the moderate (Monrovia) bloc (See Mutiso and SW Rohio 1975 pp 327-414). The enthusiasm of radical Pan-Africanist for a united Africa was at the same time doused by the pessimism and sometimes ambivalence of moderate and conservative African leaders. For example, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia in his first book 'A Humanist in Africa' (1966) approvingly quoted the reservation of the late Prime Minister of Nigeria on new nations being "less likely to take kindly to submerging (their) new found identity in a wider union".

In what ways did African scholars/historians agitated for re-awakening of African history?

Following political independence in the mid-twentieth century, many African nations initiated efforts to reclaim, preserve, and promote indigenous cultural expressions. Governments, universities, cultural institutions, and scholars recognized the importance of arts and culture in nation-building, identity formation, and socio-economic development. Cultural festivals, museums, national theatres, and arts councils were established to revive traditional artistic practices and celebrate African heritage (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Prominent African intellectuals such as Léopold Sédar Senghor advocated for the recognition and promotion of African cultural values through movements such as Negritude. These initiatives encouraged Africans to embrace their cultural identities and challenge colonial narratives that had undermined indigenous knowledge systems. The post-independence period also witnessed the emergence of modern African artistic movements that combined traditional cultural elements with contemporary forms of expression. African literature, visual arts, music, theatre, and film increasingly reflected indigenous themes while addressing modern social, political, and economic realities. Industries such as Nollywood and the Afrobeats music movement illustrate how African artistic traditions continue to evolve while maintaining connections to cultural heritage.

Nkrumah's work in the area of African liberation has overshadowed his early theoretic contributions to African studies. His significant contribution to African Centered thought, through the ideology of Nkrumahism, has only scant mention among Black Studies, Africa Area studies, African-American Studies, Africana Studies and Pan-African studies departments in the United States. Nkrumah's impact on the development of the fields of Black Studies and African Area studies requires further attention in the academy. This understatement results partly from political and epistemological debates between: Afrocentrists and Eurocentrists; Black nationalists and African nationalists; Diaspora nationalists and continentals; and, capitalists and socialists. Nkrumah's experience and ideology has the potential to enrich this budding discipline with a Pan-African Centered paradigm. Nkrumah's life personifies the development of Pan-Africanism. Nkrumah shared an early battle against a foreign colonial system and witnessed the depersonalization of his clan and larger polities. He also experienced the early urge of Black and African nationalism through his affiliation with West African intellectuals and nationalists.

Specifically utilizing the resources of a modern state in the quest for organized continental unity, the assertion of a non-racial African Personality, the assertion of scientific socialism for all of Africa, a liberated zone approach to Pan-African liberation, are all attributed to the Nkrumah era of Pan-Africanism.

Nnamdi Azikwe: 1904 - 1996

One of the central leaders of Nigerian independence, Nnamdi "Zik" Azikiwe was Governor General of Nigeria as a British colony (1960–1963) and then the first President of Nigeria (1963–1966). Azikiwe experienced racial biases in his early life and while serving as a clerk in the treasury of the colonial government. In the 1920s, he traveled to the United States for university education. Deeply influenced by the Pan Africanist ideals circulating at the time, upon returning to Nigeria he became active in the anti-colonial press and increasingly influential in politics. As President, Azikiwe promoted a Pan-African ideal of regional or continental African unity, as well as anti-colonial nationalism. He was, for a period of time, even a spokesperson for Biafra, a separatist state that broke off from Nigeria during the late 1960s, although later supporting its rejoining the Nigerian state. In this 1962 speech, Azikiwe speaks of the importance of Pan-Africanism to decolonization

Alvan Ikoku 1900 - 1999

Alvan Ikoku was a Nigerian educator, statesman, activist and politician. Born on August, 1900 in Arochukwu. Present-day Abia State, Nigeria. From 1911 to 1914, he was educated at the Arochukwu Government Primary School and from 1915 to 1920. He attended Hope Waddell College. Calabar where he was a student under James Emmanuel Aggrey and was mates with AkanuIbiarn and EyoEyoEsua.in 1920. He received his firsts teaching appointment with the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and Church of Scotland at Itigidi and two years later became a senior tutor at St. Paul's Teachers Training College. Awka. AnambraState. While teaching at Awka. Ikoku earned his University of London degree in Philosophy in 1928. Through its external programmed. Soon after in 1931, Ikoku established a Co-Educational Secondary School in West Africa: the Aggrey Memorial Secondary School located in Arochukwu and named after his mentor James E.K. Aggrey. an eminent Ghanaian educationist (Falola,1999).

In 1946, alter several constitutional changes allowing more Nigerians in the legislative chambers, lie was nominated to the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly and assigned to the ministry of education. In 1947 he became

part of the Legislative Council in Lagos as one of three representatives of the Eastern Region. Ikoku fostered considerable government interest in the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), becoming instrumental in the Legislative Council's acceptance of 44 NUT 'proposals amending various educational ordinances (Falola, 1999)

Chief Obafemi Jeremiah Oyeniyi Awolowo, GCFR (1909— 1987)

Chief Obafemi Jeremiah Oyeniyi Awolowo, was a Nigerian nationalist and statesman who played a key role in Nigeria's independence movement, a native of Ikenne in Ogun State of south-western Nigeria. Controversially, and at considerable expense, he introduced free primary education for all and free health care for children in the Western Region, established the first television service in Africa in 1959, and the Oduduwa Group, all of which were financed from the highly lucrative cocoa industry which was the mainstay of the regional economy (Wikipedia, 2016). Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Osun State (formerly University of Ife), Obafemi Awolowo Stadium (formerly the Liberty Stadium) and the Obafemi Awolowo Institute of Government and Public Policy in Lekki, Lagos State. His portrait is on the ₦1.00 naira note. He was also the author of several publications on the political structure and future prospects of Nigeria, the most prominent of which are *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, *Thoughts on the Nigerian Constitution*.

What lessons do contemporary Historians and Historians of Education learnt from evolution of African civilization?

The evolution of African civilization provides invaluable lessons for contemporary historians and historians of education. For many years, Africa's historical contributions were marginalized or misrepresented by colonial writers who portrayed the continent as lacking significant civilization before European contact. However, modern historical research has revealed that Africa possesses a rich heritage of political, economic, educational, scientific, technological, and cultural achievements (Ki-Zerbo, 1981; Rodney, 1972). The study of African civilizations such as the Ancient Egyptian Civilization, the Ghana Empire, the Mali Empire, the Songhai Empire, the Benin Kingdom, the Oyo Empire, and Great Zimbabwe demonstrates that African societies developed sophisticated systems of governance, education, commerce, religion, and technology long before colonial rule (Davidson, 1991; Falola & Heaton, 2008). The evolution of African civilization therefore offers important lessons that guide historical scholarship, educational policy, curriculum development, cultural preservation, and sustainable development in the contemporary world.

The Importance of Reconstructing African History from African Perspectives

One of the major lessons contemporary historians learn is the need to reconstruct African history from indigenous perspectives rather than relying solely on colonial narratives. Early European historians often interpreted African societies through ethnocentric lenses, resulting in distortions and misconceptions (Rodney, 1972). African civilizations demonstrate that Africans were active agents in shaping their own history. Contemporary historians therefore recognize the importance of oral traditions, indigenous knowledge systems, archaeological evidence, linguistic studies, and local historical records as authentic sources of African history (Ki-Zerbo, 1981; Vansina, 1985). This lesson has encouraged the decolonization of African historiography and the promotion of African-centered historical research. Historians of education similarly learn that school curricula should present balanced accounts of African achievements rather than portraying Africa merely as a recipient of foreign influences (Fafunwa, 1974).

Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems

The evolution of African civilization reveals that indigenous knowledge systems played critical roles in societal development. Traditional African societies developed extensive knowledge in agriculture, medicine, metallurgy, architecture, astronomy, and environmental management (Ocitti, 1994). For example, blacksmiths in many African societies mastered iron technology centuries before colonial contact, while traditional healers developed extensive pharmacological knowledge based on medicinal plants (Ehret, 2002). Therefore, modern educational systems should integrate indigenous knowledge into formal education to preserve cultural heritage and promote

locally relevant learning. According to Fafunwa (1974), traditional African education successfully prepared individuals for productive participation in society through practical and moral instruction.

Education Existed Before Western Schooling

A significant lesson from African civilization is that education existed long before the introduction of Western formal education. Traditional African education emphasized character formation, vocational training, social responsibility, cultural transmission, and leadership development (Fafunwa, 1974). Learning occurred through apprenticeship, storytelling, observation, participation, and age-grade systems. Historians of education learn that schooling should not be narrowly defined as classroom-based instruction. Rather, education encompasses all processes through which societies transmit knowledge, values, and skills from one generation to another (Ocitti, 1994).

The Role of Education in Nation Building

African civilizations demonstrate that education has always been central to social and political development. For example, centers of learning in Timbuktu became renowned for scholarship in theology, mathematics, law, medicine, literature, and astronomy (Hunwick, 1999). Institutions such as Sankore University attracted scholars from different parts of Africa and beyond, making West Africa a significant center of intellectual activity during the medieval period (Levtzion & Hopkins, 2000). Historians of education therefore learn that investment in education remains essential for economic growth, national integration, technological innovation, and sustainable development.

Cultural Diversity as a Source of Strength

African civilization evolved through interactions among diverse ethnic groups, languages, and cultures. Examples include the Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Akan, Zulu, and Swahili civilizations (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Despite cultural differences, these societies developed mechanisms for cooperation and coexistence. Contemporary historians learn that diversity should be viewed as a source of cultural enrichment rather than conflict. This lesson is particularly relevant in multicultural societies where education can promote unity while respecting cultural differences.

The Value of Oral Tradition as Historical Evidence

For centuries, African societies preserved their history through oral traditions. Sources included folktales, proverbs, praise poetry, genealogies, songs, and myths (Vansina, 1985). The evolution of African civilization teaches historians that history can be preserved and transmitted through multiple forms beyond written documents. Historians of education also learn the importance of preserving indigenous languages and oral literature within educational systems to ensure cultural continuity.

Resilience and Adaptation in Human Development

African civilizations survived numerous challenges, including environmental changes, migration, inter-group conflicts, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, and globalization (Davidson, 1991). Despite these disruptions, African societies continuously adapted and reinvented themselves. Contemporary historians learn that societal progress depends on resilience, innovation, and adaptation. The educational implication is that education should equip learners with critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, creativity, and adaptability for addressing contemporary challenges.

The Importance of Good Governance

Many African civilizations developed sophisticated political institutions. Examples include the constitutional monarchy of the Oyo Empire, the administrative structures of the Mali Empire, and the centralized governance system of the Benin Kingdom (Akinjogbin, 1967; Falola & Heaton, 2008). These systems incorporated checks and balances, consultation, and accountability. Historians learn that effective governance has long been part of African political traditions and should not be viewed as a foreign concept imposed on African societies.

The Significance of Economic Self-Reliance

African civilizations built prosperous economies through agriculture, craft production, mining, regional trade, and trans-Saharan commerce (Levtzion & Hopkins, 2000). The wealth of the Mali Empire under Mansa Musa illustrates Africa's historical participation in global economic networks. Contemporary historians recognize that economic development is rooted in productive local capacities and entrepreneurship. Consequently, educational systems should emphasize entrepreneurship, technical education, vocational training, and innovation to promote self-reliance and sustainable development.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage

African civilization demonstrates the importance of preserving cultural heritage. Historical sites, artifacts, languages, and traditions provide evidence of Africa's rich past. Examples include the Great Zimbabwe, the Sukur Cultural Landscape, and the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove (UNESCO, 2023). Historians learn the necessity of documenting and preserving cultural heritage for future generations. Schools should therefore encourage cultural awareness and heritage conservation.

The Interconnectedness of Education, Culture, and Development

The evolution of African civilization demonstrates that education, culture, and development are inseparable. Traditional African education was closely linked to community needs, economic activities, moral values, and cultural identity (Fafunwa, 1974). Historians of education learn that effective educational systems must be relevant to societal needs and cultural contexts. This lesson supports the development of educational policies that integrate indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and contemporary development goals.

CONCLUSION

The of African civilization offers profound lessons for contemporary historians and historians of education. It demonstrates that Africa possesses a long history of intellectual achievement, organized governance, economic prosperity, educational innovation, and cultural sophistication. The study of African civilization underscores the importance of indigenous knowledge systems, oral traditions, cultural preservation, educational relevance, good governance, and sustainable development. For historians, it provides a framework for reconstructing a more balanced and inclusive account of human history. For historians of education, it highlights the need to develop educational systems that integrate indigenous knowledge, promote cultural identity, encourage innovation, and contribute to national development. Ultimately, the evolution of African civilization serves as a foundation for understanding Africa's past, addressing present challenges, and shaping a sustainable future.

The study explores the history and culture of African civilizations, from pre-colonial kingdoms and empires to modern political, economic, and social structures. It provides an overview of African civilizations with their unique features also dives into the pre -colonial African civilizations, examining their economic, political, and social structures. Furthermore, the paper took a panoramic view of African civilizations, including trans-Saharan trade, slavery, and colonization, and their impact on African cultures. In conclusion, African civilizations have shown resilience, resourcefulness, and cultural diversity throughout history. By addressing challenges, embracing opportunities, and working together, African civilizations can thrive and contribute to the global community.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions on this paper, it was recommended that:

1. The Spirit of Pan-Africanism and Political consciousness should be reawakening in the minds of young and progressive elite with the burning desire of nationalism in their blood.
2. Efforts should be made by the Pan-Africanism countries to motivate students to study African History and National History of their Country.
3. To this end, more importantly the study of history should be made compulsory right from the basic schools to tertiary education.

4. Provision of Financial Support for Creative Industries: Governments, development agencies, and financial institutions should provide grants, loans, and innovation funds to support artists thereby promoting Africa cultural heritage by African scholars and historians and educationist.
5. Promotion of Public-Private Partnerships: Governments should encourage collaborative efforts by motivating African scholars and historians and educationists to put in their best through networking with their counterparts within the continent of Africa for sustainable development within the creative sector.
6. Museums and cultural institutions should develop virtual exhibitions and online cultural repositories to increase access to African artistic heritage at local and international levels. So as to motivate scholars, historians and educationists so as to put African historian on modern pedestals.
7. International Collaboration for Cultural Preservation: International organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the African Union, thereby promoting cultural exchange programmes, and heritage preservation initiatives across Africa.

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