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Evolution of African Civilization and Pan-Africanism, Typified By Yoruba History And Culture in Nigeria: Lessons For The Present And Future Generations

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Abstract

The paper examined the Evolution of African civilization of Pan -African Countries: Typified by Nigerian-Yoruba History and Culture from up to 19th Century: Lessons for the Present and Future Generations. The conceptual framework on which the study was hinged Evidence Theory. The study adopted a historical research design relying on primary and secondary sources. The paper extensively discussed the following: the extent to which the assertion of Professor Trevor Roper proved affirmative or negative, the concept of Pan-Africanism; the channels used by the Pan-Africanists, the clergies and Nationalists in agitating for African Nationalism and the lessons learnt by the present and future generations of Africa Nigeria on Evolution of African Civilization on Pan-African Countries. Findings from the discussions of the paper revealed that Africans had been in existence before the arrival of the white men a very superb political organization was put in place in Old Oyo Empire with operation of a sophisticated system of checks and balances with instrument of separation of powers. Africans were blessed with formidable Nationalists who struggled for and agitated for African emancipation to political independence with notable figures as, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Herbert Macaulay. Based on the discussions of this paper, it was recommended that the spirit of Pan-Africanism and political consciousness should be reawakened in the mind of young elites Pan-African countries should motivate students to study Africa history and national history of their countries. Lastly, the study of history should be made compulsory schools.

Key Words: African Civilization, Pan –Africanism Re-Awakening, Nigerian-Yoruba History and Culture,

Introduction

The subject of "African Civilization: From Ancient Kingdoms to Modern Societies" explores the history, culture, and development of African civilizations from ancient times to the present day. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the rich and diverse civilizations that have existed in Africa throughout history and their significance in shaping the continent's identity and trajectory. Falola (1999) Yoruba traditions regard Ile-Ife not only as the centre of the world but also the place where all mankind was created. Information about the significance of Ile-Ife must have attracted Oduduwa there. Urbanization of Yorubaland therefore, connotes civilization. The cultural history of Yorubaland is no exception. The beginning of Yoruba cities marked the inception of the Yoruba Golden Age (1086-1793) Falola (1999p)

In addition to initiation of urbanization of Yorubaland, Oduduwa established a highly sophisticated constitutional monarchy with well-defined system of separation of powers and checks and balances based on an unwritten constitution. However, the system of government differs from one community to another. It also varies in structures from leadership to the governed. For example, Ibadan modernized the hereditary monarchial system and evolved a republican system made up of the civil and the military traditional council and kingmakers. Ibadan also introduced women as headed by Iyalode into the system.

Trans-Saharan trade led to the exchange of ideas and cultures, resulting in the development of new social norms and practices. The trade also created new social classes and hierarchies, as some individuals became wealthy while others remained poor (UNESCO, 2018). Groups like the Tuareg people and merchants in the Kingdom of Mali gained wealth and influence through their participation in the trade. Culturally, trans-Saharan trade facilitated the exchange of ideas, languages, and religions. It played a significant role in the spread of Islam throughout West Africa, which unified different ethnic groups and influenced African cultures and societies. Crowther (1980) 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



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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 said “am proud of my colour, whoever, is not proud of his colour is not fit to live” (Buah, 1978) Ifemesia (1980), remarked that “the British apostles of civilization mobilized all the agencies of civilization- Government agencies, commerce and Christianity into the interiors of West Africa during their civilizing mission in 1841” (p. 87). The role of the Christian missions in the spread of European civilization in Southern Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. The Christian missionaries did a lot on humanitarian services the missionary education constitutes their fundamental contribution to the civilization of southern Nigeria. The missionaries were pioneers of education in Nigeria. Akinwumi (1988) asserts that: awakened new aspirations, quickened the urge towards emulation, and accelerated the process of Nigerian civilization. It was the policy of the missionaries to produce converts who would engage in gainful employment, and be better citizens. Odudoye (1994) acknowledge that: Printing which was introduced into Nigeria by the Townsend of the CMC Mission *Iwe Irohin* Nigeria’s first newspaper at the C.M.S. press

Objectives of the Paper

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of African civilization, examining its pre-colonial history, its expansion, and its modern developments and lessons for the present and future generation in Nigeria. The main focus of the paper is to debunk the erroneous assertion of Professor Trevor Rapper on non-existence of African history before the coming on the Europeans. Pan- Africanism was the desire of the African intellectuals and nationalists to design a coordinated strategy to confront racism and imperialism on the African continent. For the total liberation and freedom of Africa. It is divided into several parts, each of which explores different aspects of African civilization typified by Yoruba History and culture which includes a system of governance, division of labor, and shared beliefs, values, and customs that provide a sense of identity and cohesion for its members.

Statement of the Problem

In this study a conscious effort is made to debunk the assertion of Professor Trevor Roper “that Africa South of Sahara has no history before the coming of Europeans”. The modalities employed by the African scholars, clergy men, pan-Africanist and Nationalist who fought tooth and nail to salvage Africans from the onslaught of Europeans Imperialism. This paper therefore is set out to provide answers to the underlisted questions with particular reference to Yoruba History and Culture

1. 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?
2. Account for the evidence and semblance of African Civilization on Pan-Africanism as Typified by Yoruba History and Culture
3. Examine the concept of Pan Africanism
4. In what ways were the Pan-Africanists, the clergies and Nationalists agitated for African Nationalism?
5. What lessons do present and future generations of Africa and Nigeria learn from evolution of African civilization through Pan-Africanists and others?

Methodology

The author adopted the historical method based on the primary and secondary source of historical information to collect data for the paper. Secondary sources used were charters of African Unions, archival documents, economic report on Africa and other documentary analysis through library and internet search, journals, and textbooks relevant to African history and culture.

Theoretical Framework

Evidence Theory

Evidence is 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*;



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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.; We use the word evidence when we say that hearsay is not evidence We act on real truth or straight forward account of something, this is evidence, and such evidence is often extremely good evidence.

African Narrative a Panacea to debunk the erroneous assertion of Professor Trevor Roper's that African South of Sahara have no history before the coming of Europeans

Modern African civilizations face complex social issues shaped by historical, cultural, economic, and political factors. 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 (Hunwick, 2003). Modern African civilizations face challenges including political instability, economic inequality, social discrimination, and human rights abuses. The African Union plays a crucial role in fostering peace, security, and cooperation among member states, while human rights provide a framework for social justice and equality. Economic development is essential for shaping the future of African civilizations. 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.

Western Influence

There is no doubt it was Christianity that laid the intellectual and ethical foundation of infant and adolescent Europe. The academies of Rome and Constantinople, the monastic schools of Europe, the early beginnings of University of Bologna, and Paris, Oxford and Cambridge stand to testify. It would therefore not be a wild claim to say that the contributions of Christianity were the historical prerequisites for the European renaissance and for the dawn of the so-called age of reason (Hani, 2023). 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. 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. With this contention, much effort were made by five missionary societies- The Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodists, the Scotland Presbyterians, the Southern Baptist convention and the Catholic Society of African Mission to encourage the creation in West Africa one or more states in the image of contemporary Europe. A particular reference should be made to the monumental roles of women missionaries such as Mammy Sutherland and Mary Slessor of Calabar, Anna Hinderer of Ibadan, Sarah Townsend of Abeokuta and many others. Apart from their normal work as missionaries, they could enter into intimacy of understanding with mothers of Nigeria and thus imparting to them their European civilization which the mother in turn extended to their children. It is only left to point out that if you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family. Furthermore, these missionary women acted as mothers to the high number of children whom the slave trade and social upheavals of wars left homeless (Ayandele, 1966).

Evidence and Semblance of African Civilization on Pan-Africansim Typified by Yoruba Cultural History (*Pre-colonial African Civilization*)

Yoruba Political System

Oderinde (2011) reported that tradition has it that the Yoruba people originated from Ife. There is a legend that Oduduwa, the father of the Yoruba people, came from the East, conquered the people and settled at Ife. It was said that Oduduwa, at Ife, had seven sons who later became the first seven kings of Yorubaland. The Oba of Beini descended from one of these seven sons of Oduduwa. Oduduwa later moved his headquarters to Oyo. Later Yoruba land was divided into fourteen kingdoms which were ruled by Obas. These Obas traced their descent through the male line of Oduduwa. A sophisticated system of checks and balances were the political organization of Oyo which revolved around four organs. First is the Alaafin who was regarded chief executive, the first among equals, the Iku Baba Yeye, Alase Ekeji, Orisa who was chosen from a royal family. Is a council of chiefs, seven in number with Basorun, who was the Prime Minister as the head of Oyo Mesi the seven traditional kingmakers. They have the power to elsewhere and to dethrone on Alaafin. The third organ is

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the Ogboni fraternity, a secret cult consisting of aged, influenced and experienced people it was regarded as an earth cult. This body is headed by Oluwo who must be versatile in Ifa oracle and domination. The Ifa oracle and when a new Alaafin is to be selected militarily, it consisted of 70 soldiers who were war lords, recruited from the vassal states of Oyo. Beside all these organs, there were a number of other important political functionaries and chiefs in the political organization of Oyo among them are: Ona Efa, Osi Efa, Baba Iyaji, Ona Isokun, Iba Samu, Alapinni. There are a number of palace chiefs, the Eunuch, Kudufu, who head royal herein, the drummers, the trumpeter, the Arokin, a national historian (Lloyd, 2020). *The Aludundun*: or the Dundun drummer, He has to attend at the palace every day within certain hours, including visiting or business hours. He has one of the front Kobi's assigned to him, where he sits discussing events with his drum, all during his office hours with it, he pre-announces the presence of any visitor in the palace, so that in whatever part of the palace the king may be, he can tell by the sound of the drum who has entered the courtyard before the personage is actually announced. Johnson (2022) opined that this is one of the peculiarities of the Yoruba language and the art of the drummers. *The Arokins*: These are the rhapsodists or national historians, an hereditary title, they have an apartment to themselves where they repeat daily in songs the genealogy of the kings, the principle events of their lives and other notable events in the history of the Yoruba country. Johnson (2022)

Concept of Pan Africanism

At the conference of Negro Writers and Artists, Second Congress, Rome 25 March - 1 April 1959, the resolution of the commission on philosophy of Pan Africanism 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 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 (Hegel, 1977).

Features of Pan-Africanism

In propagating the various strands of African nationalism and Pan-Africanism; while recognising that all Pan-Africanists had at least one thing in common, namely that Africa should be free; there were differences on the kind of Africa that will be required after independence. Some who were radicals wanted a politically united free Africa; others the functionalists wanted a free Africa, which would be functionally united. These are well-known accepted principles of International Law. The core of the Black Revolution is in Africa, and until Africa is united under a socialist government, the Black man throughout the world lacks a national home. Africa is *one* continent, *one* people, and *one* nation. The notion that in order to have a nation it is necessary for there to be a common language, a common territory and a common culture but alas all this is need in time. *Kwame Nkrumah*, the foremost radical African nationalist of his generation ever produced by the Ghana as in his written in Autobiography (1965) the tactics which were applied in the anti-colonialism struggles in Ghana, prescribes strategies for other African countries (Poe, 2003). Kaunda and Sithole in Central Africa, Tom Mbayana in Kenya, Sekou Toure of Guinea, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria, Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther of Nigeria were contributors to this phase of nationalist and Pan-Africanist struggles.

Ways by which the Pan-Africanists, the Clergies and Nationalists agitated for African Nationalism?"

The evolution of Nigeria as a multi-nation state from the colonial era has been retarded politically and development wise. The nation building process has been bedeviled by the antics of the British colonialist from its inception. Incidentally, Education, cultural awareness, travels and foreign contacts leading to knowledge of anti-colonialist and imperialist political domination and economic exploitation in other countries ultimately aroused conscious Nigerians to engage in anti-colonial rule by joining political and other associations in Nigeria. Nigerian participation in Pan-African cultural and radical nationalist activities through contributions at conferences and Pan-African congresses, articles in newspapers and writing books. Ben Enwonwu, a famous sculptor had presented the African perspectives on arts, music, dance, ancestral worship and sculptor. Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr Nnamdi Azikwe who later became regional and national leaders in

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pre and post- independence Nigeria were in the fore front of the struggles against colonialism and for total liberation of Nigeria from the yoke of imperialism. In the anti-colonial struggle for independence, attempt to create a formidable political platform- the National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC) in 1944 waned mostly for ethno- religious reason. Herbert Macaulay (Yoruba) became the President, and Nnamdi Azikwe (Igbo), Secretary.

Contributions of Yoruba Nationalist to Pan-Africanism

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, the First and Second Republics and the Civil War (Olufemi, 2009). He is most notable as the outstanding first premier at the Western Region hut was also a successful federal commissioner for finance and vice president of the Federal Executive Council in the Civil War and as thrice a major contender for his country's highest office. A native of Ikenne in Ogun State of south-western Nigeria. Awolowo remains perhaps Nigeria's most controversial politician (Awolowo, 1966 and 2013). Awolowo, a visionary leader 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. 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 ₦100 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.

Lessons Learnt by Present and Future Generations of Africa and Nigeria on the Evolution of African civilization on Pan-Africanism Typified by Yoruba History and Culture

Ife and Oyo Art Works

These comprises bronze head, beads, and terra-cotta (Adediran 1992:91). In his extended discussion of the concept of *odu*, the indigenous Ife religious scholar Idowu notes (1962:33) that the same term also indicates a "very recent to Esie where a group of similar artistic figures were found These Esie works conceivably also were identified with Moremi, the local heroine who became Ife's queen (Bascom, 1969).

Oyo's work of art such as drum, bead and crown making; calabash and wood carving, leather work, sculpturing. The palace pillar decorations, archaeological artefacts such as terra-cotta, brass casting, bead making from Ile – Ife, the cradle of Yoruba civilization; Obelisk in form of Oranmiyan Staff all this depict that truly Ile-Ife was the nexus of black race.

Notable Tourist Centres in Yoruba Land

Another indices of attraction were tourist centres of Idanre waterfalls and Ikogosi warm spring in Ondo State, Olumo rock (Abeokuta), Iya Mapo Hills (igbeti) and Ikere Gorge Dam (Iseyin). It was interesting to note that the Africans have their own peculiar way of communicating between themselves. They employ channels such as drums, music, religious festivals, languages mode of dressing acrobatic displays to express themselves (Obidi, 1990).

Festivals in Yorùbá Land

Before colonization, the Yoruba people of present-day southwestern Nigeria had a rich and deeply spiritual festival culture that reflected their religious beliefs, social structure, and worldview. Festivals were not merely entertainment events but sacred occasions rooted in traditional religion and community identity. The Yoruba believed in a supreme deity known as Olódùmarè, served by numerous divinities called Òrìṣà. These religious foundations shaped major festivals that honored specific deities, ancestors, kings, and natural forces (Awolalu, 1979).

Osun Osogbo

One of the most significant pre-colonial festivals was the Òṣun-Òṣogbo festival, dedicated to the river goddess Òṣun. This annual celebration, held in the sacred grove of Osogbo, involved rituals, sacrifices, prayers, and processions led by the Ataoja (king of Osogbo) and priestesses (Olaniyan, 2014). The festival symbolized fertility, protection, and the covenant between the people and the goddess. It reinforced communal unity and spiritual cleansing while preserving sacred traditions passed down orally through generations (Drewal, 1992).

Sango Festival: Another important festival was the Ṣàngó festival, celebrated in honor of Ṣàngó, the god of thunder and lightning and a former Alaafin of Oyo. Worshipers gathered to perform drumming, chanting, fire displays, and ritual dances to invoke the power and protection of Ṣàngó. The festival emphasized courage, justice, and royal authority. It also demonstrated the connection between political leadership and spiritual power in pre-colonial Yoruba society (Peel, 2000).



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Egungun (Masquerades): The Egúngún festival was also central to Yoruba religious life. Egúngún represented the collective spirits of ancestors who were believed to return to bless, guide, and sometimes discipline the living. During the festival, masked performers dressed in elaborate costumes embodied ancestral spirits and moved through communities offering prayers and moral instruction. This celebration strengthened family lineage ties and maintained social order by reminding the community of ancestral expectations (Bascom, 1969), Ogunba and Irele, 1978).

Oro (The Earth Cult) The Òrò festival was another traditional ceremony observed mainly by male initiates. It was associated with spiritual cleansing and the enforcement of social laws. During the festival, certain restrictions were placed on movement, especially for women and non-initiates. The rites were believed to protect the community from evil forces and maintain spiritual balance. The secrecy surrounding Òrò reflected the structured and hierarchical nature of Yoruba traditional religion (Peel, 2000).

Conclusion

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. African civilizations and their impact on African cultures were extensively discussed. More importantly, preservation of African cultures, language preservation, music and literature, and visual arts were typified by Yoruba history and culture were also examined. In conclusion, the African countries of which Nigeria is inclusive were blessed with many Nationalists who strived very hard to see the progress and unity of their country. It is expected that it is expected that history must accord them due respect as heroes. In Nigeria for instance, the effigy of some Nationalists appeared in the national currency and to some important places were named after them such as tertiary education and important national monuments.

Recommendations

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

1. The Spirit of Pan-Africanist 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-Africanist 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.

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