



EDO UNIVERSITY IYAMHO



Department of History and International Studies

HIS 114 AFRICA TO 1800

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General overview of lecture: This course focuses on issues of African history up to 1800. Its central themes are the possibility of African history and sources such as oral traditions and archaeology, origin of man in the continent and his relationship with other continents via trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic slave trade, early civilization and inventions.

Learning outcomes: On successful completion of this course, students are expected to

1. Explain the reality of African history as a relevant field of study
2. Understand the elements or nature of African history
3. Be conversant with the sources of African history
4. Understand the place and role of Africa in human evolution
5. Explain the nature of exchange and interaction between Africa and the rest of the world prior to European imperialism
6. Be familiar with the root of civilizations and inventions in Africa

Assignments: We expect to have two (2) homework assignments throughout the course in addition to quiz, a mid semester test and a final exam. Homeworks in the form of individual and group assignments in addition to a quiz test are organised and structured as preparation for the mid semester and final exam.

Grading : Individual homework will be assigned 5%, group homework will attract 10% and class quiz 5%, 10% will be allotted for the mid semester test and 70% for the final exam.

Textbook: The recommended textbooks for this class are as stated;

Title : Introduction to History for Universities and Colleges

Author: Christopher C. Ifemeje

Publisher: Pacific Publishers, Obosi

Year: 1988

Title: History Research and Methodology in Africa: Essays in Honour of Professor Charles Cresswell Jacobs

Author: Mike O. Odey et al

Publishers: Aboki Publishers, Makurdi

Year: 2007

Title: The Growth of African Civilization: East and Central Africa to the late Nineteenth Century

Author: Basil Davidson

Publisher: Longman Group Ltd, Singapore

Year: 1974

Title: Aspects of African History

Author(s): Samuel A. Nyanhoga et al

Publisher: C.U.E.A Press, Nairobi

Year: 2008

Title: Two Hundred Years After the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Author: D.S.M. Koroma

Publisher: Aboki Publishers, Makurdi

Year: 2009

Title: The March of Civilization

Author: George Guest

Publisher: Spectrum Books, Ibadan

Year: 1979

Courseware: HIS 114 AFRICA TO 1800. The following documents outline the courseware for the course HIS 114 AFRICA TO 1800. Much of this material is taken from the recommended textbooks

INTRODUCTION

1. Is Africa part of the Historical world?
2. The weakness of dependence on written records
3. Consequences of Eurocentric Perspectives on African history

SOURCES OF AFRICAN HISTORY

4. Oral Tradition
5. Problems and Limitations of oral Tradition
6. Archaeology
7. Limitations of Archaeology

THE ORIGIN OF MAN IN AFRICA

8. Perspectives in evolution
9. Trends in evolutionary development in Africa

AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND EXCHANGES

10. The Trans-Saharan Trade
11. Impact of the Trans-Saharan Trade on Africa
12. The Decline of Trans-Saharan Trade
13. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade
14. Impact and Consequences of the Slave Trade
15. The Abolition of the slave trade

EARLY CIVILIZATION AND INVENTIONS IN EGYPT

16. Factors that encouraged the growth of Egyptian Civilizations
17. Egyptian Arts, Science and Technology

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

1. Is Africa Part of Historical World?

To start with, do we really have an African History to learn or teach? This question is imperative because of certain Eurocentric view points about African history. We shall xray 3 of these view points from 3 different historical epochs.

David Hume a Scottish Philosopher in **1768** said these much about Africa “I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the white. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any eminent individual in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacture amongst them, no art, no science.”

Following **David Hume**, the German Philosopher of history **GEORGE HEGEL** in the 19th century wrote this about Africa “It is manifest that want of self control distinguishes the character of the Negroes. This condition is capable of no development or culture and as we have seen them as at these days such have they always been. At this point we leave Africa, not even to mention it again, for it is no historical part of the world, it has no movement or development to exhibit.”

HUGH TREVOR ROPER, the regious professor of History at Oxford while responding to some students demands for some courses in African History in **1963** made this submission “Perhaps in the future, there would be some African history to teach, but at present there is none, there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa, the rest is darkness and darkness is not a subject of history.”

The above Eurocentric Perspectives were borne out of sheer arrogance and the feelings of white man superiority over Africans and ignorance of the nature of African History. The view that African traditional societies was static and incapable of initiating change and development was wrong. Also wrong was the claim of Eurocentric scholars that all shades and traits of development in Africa were effected from outside through socalled agents of change such as explorers, traders, missionaries and colonial administrators. It is ridiculous that the reactions of Africans to the socalled agent of change were not even considered to be material or relevant to their history.

At this juncture we must recognise the fact that the **power relation** between Africa and Europe also lent weight to the Eurocentric conceptualization of the historical image of Africa. We must also note that history is always a powerful tool of rulers to legitimize their authority.

It is also worth noting that a historical image can also be influenced by methodological approaches. Until the second half of the 20th century, the historian hardware was thought to be only written evidence, hence in the view of **A. P Newton**, “History begins when men began to write.” The fact remains that even though Africans developed systematic ways of preserving their past, but never wrote them down. Therefore, it was the absence of written record for the better part of African time perspective, at least until the arrival of the Europeans that gave impetus to the claims by Eurocentric scholars that Africa had no history.

2. The Weakness of Dependence on Written Records

Most written works are either subjective or prejudiced. According to **E. H. Carr** in *What is History*, “no document can tell us more than what the author of the document thought, what he thought had happened, what he thought ought to happen, or would happen, or perhaps only what he wanted others to think he thought, or even only what he himself thought he thought.”

Essentially, both European and Arab written records on Africa were reflective of their interests or aims in Africa. Thus the European traders were impressed with the vast riches of Africa but they bemoaned the non-existence of “law and order” and appropriate climate for the exploitation of these riches. On the other hand, European missionaries were favourably impressed by the desire of the “ordinary African to be christened” but lamented the constraints imposed by the tyrannical African rulers who generally opposed their work. Furthermore, European administrators were understandably impressed by the African societies that presented the least resistance to the expanding frontiers of white domination.

Arab and muslims written records on African history which predated the European records were also not free from prejudice. In the first instance their pre-occupation was Islamic influences on the African societies, hence good muslim rulers like **Mansa Musa** of Mali and **Askia Mohammed** of Songhai were praised by Arab writers while non-muslim rulers like **Souni Ali** and **Sundiata** were not favoured in their records. In the world view of Arab writers, progress and development of states were usually linked with the acceptance of Islam, therefore, any time the fortune of Islam decline all else was decay, decline and turbulence.

Written records were also fragmented and suffered limitation of geographical extent. For instance most European records date back to recent times, at best the oldest of them dating back to the 15th century. Most of these records were confined to activities around coastal areas until the advent of full blown colonialism in the 20th. To over depend on such records is to lead to the conclusion that African history began with the coming of Europeans and all else will be “darkness” which is no subject of history. Arab and muslim scholars such as **Al Bakri, Ibn Batuta, Raman Al Sadi** and **Mamond Kalis** wrote copiously on African societies but their works were confined only to areas of muslim activities - the Sudanic belt in West Africa, the East African Coastal are and the North Africa and Maghreb.

3. Consequences of Eurocentric Perspectives and Over Dependence on Written Documents on African History

Much of Pre European African history as a result of the misjudgement of the nature of African history by Eurocentric scholars were usually written off as belonging to archaeology, ethno-botany, ethno-zoology and historical linguistic.

In addition much of what passed for African history were the activities of European travelers, explorers, missionaries, traders and colonial administrators, hence Africans were isolated from their own history.

Another pitfall of Eurocentric Perspective was the fragmentation of African historical image. Benefits of European presence in Africa were over exaggerated while African societies were viewed as static and devoid of development prior to the advent of the European, hence the period of European colonial rule was viewed as the water-shed of African historical development.

Furthermore, there was a creation of a wide variety of historical images of Africa since various European nationalities were involved in the balkanization of Africa and such images continue to persist till date. The English, French, Dutch, Portuguese, Belgians and Germans were all present in Africa and this is why countries in contemporary Africa are group as Anglo-phone, Franco-phone and Afrikaner. These artificial dichotomies have exaggerated the level of discontinuities in African historical experience, as a result the totality of the African experience is not captured. Western scholars paid more attention to the study of Africa from the point of view of “outside in” rather than the more meaningful “outside out.”

However, after the Second World War at the peak of nationalist agitation for independence across the African continent, a new generation of African writers emerged with a new template on African historiography. In their attempt to repudiate the claim by Eurocentric scholars that Africa had no history prior to the arrival of the European they invested so much energy to identify the sources of African history. It was their efforts at utilizing oral sources, archeology and linguistics that gave birth to the contemporary methodology in the study of African History.

SOURCES OF AFRICAN HISTORY

Apart from Arabic and European documented reports other sources of African History includes oral tradition, archaeology, linguistic and social anthropology. However, in this section, our focus shall be on oral tradition and archeology.

4. Oral Tradition

In preliterate societies, oral tradition form the main sources for the reconstruction of the past. Even in literate societies, many historical sources especially the most ancient ones are based on oral tradition. **Biobaku** was right when he aptly submitted that “all people live their history, but those who do not write it down live it more consciously than those who do.”

Oral tradition must not be confused with oral evidence/information. Oral tradition is the history of a people transmitted by word of mouth from one generation to the next. This transmission consists of hearsay accounts and testimonies narrated from the ancestors about the past that may not have been witnessed by the informants. However, rumours are not oral traditions because a rumour is a concocted story that may not be substantiated.

While oral traditions are usually preserved in some fixed form and may be spoken or song, oral sources on the other hand refer to a body of data which individuals hold in memory that are not formally preserved or deliberately structured for legitimation or communication. For instance the verbal accounts of the war experience of World War II or Nigerian Civil War shared by an ex-combatant is not an oral tradition.

It is important to note that oral tradition is not always oral as it can be transcribed in the form of written document. Some of the oral traditions in Africa were documented from the later part of the 19th century following the advent of western education and the presence of missionaries, anthropologists and colonial administrators. In some societies due to the presence of Arabic scholars the process of documentation of oral tradition started as far back as the 16th

century. It is also worth noting that documented oral traditions are common among centralized societies.

5. Problems and Limitations of Oral Traditions

Though oral traditions no doubt has become a veritable tool for the reconstruction of African past, especially the history of pre literate societies, we must acknowledge however that oral traditions is not “a fix it all” solutions to the inherent shortcomings of written sources. Therefore oral traditions standing alone by itself is not the “gospel truth.” Some of the challenges and limitations of oral traditions are captured below.

The greatest pitfall of oral traditions lies in its lack of absolute chronology. It has been argued that if there is no chronology, there will be no history, because it becomes difficult to establish what preceded and what followed. At best, oral traditions offer relative chronology as expressed in list of generations, while times were often described in terms of long or short or seasons, but not in terms of absolute dates.

Oral traditions is also prone to exaggerations or what **Philip Stevens** refer to as tendency of traditions “becoming larger than life.” Some historical developments are magnified and mythified. Typical examples are those of the progenitor of the Hausa State **Bayajida** and the accounts of both **Obatala** and **Oduduwa** in Yoruba legend of origin.

Another short-comings of oral traditions is the selective contents. Custodians of oral traditions just as authors of written sources have their biases and prejudice that they often bring to bear in their accounts of historical narration. Oral traditions may be deliberately distorted to suit specific political and social structures.

Some oral traditions are also prone to human errors as some of the informants may not remember the true accounts of events, this may lead to falsification of information and fragmentation.

Furthermore, some dominant tribes, clans or lineage may impose their oral tradition on the weaker ones in order to justify their superiority.

Most oral traditions have fallen into the error of giving too much emphasis to personalities and sensational events at the expense of critical socio-economic development.

Another serious undoing of oral traditions is the threat of extinction due to massive deaths amongst vulnerable or endangered population, most of which lacked the capacity to

process their oral tradition into written documents. Typical examples are the rain forest inhabitants of the Congo and the **Masai/Kasai** tribes of East Africa.

The short-comings of oral traditions are indeed legion, and most probably be the reason why **William G. Clarence-Smith** dismissed with the wave of hand that oral traditions have no intrinsic value other than an emotional appeal by Africans scholars to repudiate colonialism in the face of independence and decolonization.

However, to mitigate the weaknesses of oral tradition **Philips Steven** advocated that historian employing oral traditions need to imbibe the skill of intuition. In addition, other steps to address the plethora of shortcomings identified with oral traditions includes the utilization of independent tradition to cross check other traditions viz collaboration with other auxillary disciplines such as Anthropology, Archaeology or Linguistics to check or compliment oral traditions. By and large the debate over oral tradition has also shed some critical light on written documents as sources of history with a view to strengthening their reliability. It has become realized that many written documents are in reality processed oral traditions.

6. Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of material remains left by the past societies or people. It is a study of what human beings did rather than what they said, archaeology therefore deals with the voiceless past. The preoccupation of archaeology is material objects or artefacts which are categorized into manmade objects such as tools or culturally produced objects that may not be taken from the field such as rock paintings and engravings. The other category of artefacts is that of non human materials such as animal bones, plants remains, pigments and shells.

Archaeology as a field of study goes farther and dig deeper than both oral and written sources by offering far reaching explanation to both prehistoric and historical epochs. The archaeologist, in order to get at the remains he studies usually finds it necessary to excavate parts of the earth where he suspects that such remains can be found. Apart from digging, the archaeologists also study the remains that are found at the surface of the earth. In Africa because of the impact of weather and the actions of termites which destroy all forms of wooden and other soft materials, it is difficult for remains to be found at the surface. This is why in the continent, archaeologists depends almost entirely on excavation. Most of the important archaeological findings in tropical Africa such as those of **Nok, Meroe** and **Igbo-ukwu** were discovered through excavation. Items discovered from most of these sites includes pottery, beads and terracotta, things that heat and termites could not destroy.

One of the cardinal goals of archaeology is to attain knowledge of sequence of events and chronologies in the absence of written records and oral evidence. Archaeology through scientific research methodologies has been able to provide reliable information about the prehistoric periods and also add more information about the historic periods as well as the proto-historic societies.

7. Limitations of Archaeology

The following are some of the challenges confronting archaeology as a relevant field in historical reconstruction:-

The major challenge of archaeology in tropical Africa is environmental factor. For instance, in West Africa, the climate is humid and the soils are acidic, as a result objects of iron rust easily and may not stay longer. Some materials are destroyed by white ants, while weather may also distort objects or artefacts thereby misleading archaeologists on the purpose for which certain objects were made.

Human development and activities such as farming, road construction and urbanization may lead to the destruction of archaeological sites.

Lack of adequate geographical knowledge, culture and language of the people could pose serious challenge for archaeologists in their research exploration.

The process of excavation and the tools of investigation and analysis deployed at archaeological sites can usually very expensive hence archaeological explorations are highly capital intensive. Because of the high capital involved, archaeological researches and activities are usually funded by government or wealthy institutional or cultural agencies.

Archaeological research is always very labourious, rigorous and time consuming. There are gross shortage of archaeologists in our contemporary world, especially in Africa.

Archaeological excavation and exploration comes with risks and hazards considering the remoteness of the location of most sites and the process of exaction.

Interpretations of artefacts and remains are sometime difficult.

The process of excavation entails a lot of destruction. If some of the materials are not carefully handled and treated, it becomes very difficult to retain them in their original state.

THE ORIGIN OF MAN IN AFRICA

8. Perspectives in evolution

The subject of evolution or the origin of man has over the years generated intense controversies among scholars. **Charles Darwin** at the very beginning of his path breaking work on the origin of man forthrightly posited that all men had a common ancestry or descent i.e monogenesis. However, there were others who argued that men had about 5 different origins i.e polygenesis. The argument surrounding the evolution of man became more fierce when **Darwin** in his later discoveries asserted that the first man that ever lived originated in Africa. He further elaborated that the first man originated in Africa and multiplied before a segment of their population migrated to Asia, and then to Europe and other parts of the world. At this stage of **Darwin's** explanation, there was serious contestation and opposition by some of his contemporaries who argued relentlessly to refute his claim of African origin or ancestry of mankind. This reaction, however, did not come as a surprise especially as the world was at the time of **Darwin's** findings in the 19th century was already in the throes of European imperialist/capitalist expansion into Africa and Asia and there was a serious need to justify this so-called “civilizing mission” into a presumed “dark continent”.

Darwin saw evolution as a gradual unfolding of new varieties of life from previous forms over long periods of time. Evolution is also a change in gene frequency from one generation to the next. The modern man, otherwise known as *Homo sapiens* which mean “thinking man” in Latin emerged in about 50,000 years ago. *Homo sapiens* came into existence by a process of breeding over countless generations, from earlier creatures who were not yet fully human. **Dr Leakey**, echoing **Darwin's** position on the origin of man has this to say “and that it was the African continent which saw the emergence of the basic stock which eventually gave rise to the apes, as well as to man as we know him today.”

9. Trends in evolutionary development in Africa

The earliest ancestor of true man is believed by **Dr. Leakey** to have been a creature who lived in eastern Africa nearly three million years ago known as *homo habilis*. The *homo habilis* were living in small camps and hunting for game. They were not much above four feet high and had hair all over their bodies, and heads with heavy brows and out-pushing jaws. They had very little and simple vocabulary. *Homo habilis* were responsible for decisive evolutionary advances such as the modification of leg and body muscles which enabled them to stand up and move around on two feet instead of four. Another fundamental change experienced by

homo habilis was the gradual changing of the mouth and throat so as to make possible a wide range of vocal chords, which was the necessary prelude to language.

Early men invented a wide range of tools from stone, bone and wood. These tools were used for pounding seeds, killing animals and for scraping skins. They also learned how to flake sharp blades from suitable lumps of flint or hand stone. As they progressed in knowledge, they learned how to fit blades to a shaft, and make a spear and also developed bows and arrows. Because most of the implements and tools were carved or produced out of stone, these periods was generally referred to as the stone Ages.

Following the invention of tools, early men were able to get more food through hunting and gathering of fruits and vegetables. Consequently they became healthier and grew in numbers and spread across the world. Their vocabularies also increased as they began to use more words.

About 50,000 years ago, *Homo sapiens* discovered how to make and use fire, primarily for self protection against wild animals as most of them lived in caves and other dangerous terrains. They also utilized fire to cook food and to soften hard roots such as wild yams. Following the discovery of fire, they were able to melt iron and invent digging implement known as stone pick which helped in the digging up of yam and stone axes for cutting of woods. With this development there was an upsurge in migration from grasslands into the forests since the process of cutting down trees and digging up of roots had been made easier. At the beginning of the Middle Stone Age, the population of men and women in Africa outside of the Nile Valley stood at about 125,000.

The Middle Stone Age which continued until about 10,000 years ago witnessed a remarkable transformation in human development. The high point of this phase was the development of agriculture and increase in food production. *Homo sapiens* at this stage were not only interested in hunting down animals but also in taming and domesticating them. The first form of agricultural practice imbibed by the *Homo sapiens* was animal husbandry and shepherding, subsequently they learned how to plant and domesticate crops along the river plains and valley.

Food cropping and cattle rearing appeared in North Africa in the Nile Valley about six and half thousand years ago, either by borrowing from Asia or by separate development, other parts of Africa also imbibed the knowledge of agriculture. Hitherto, the Sahara desert was not harsh but habitable as large part of it were grass lands, suitable for cattle grazing.

Farming spread gradually southward and crops such as rice and ginger millet were cultivated by early farmers in West Africa and the highlands of North-east Africa.

All these developments in no small measures led to the steady build up of the population of the Middle Stone Age in Africa, as more food meant more people. About 2,000 years ago, outside the Nile Valley, there were up to 4,000,000 people in Africa, compared with the 125,000 of 50,000 years earlier.

With the increase in the knowledge of agriculture and metal work, Africans, South of the Sahara learned how to find metal-bearing rocks in the earth, dig out these rocks, smelt them for the metal they contained, and work this metal into tools and weapons. This iron culture one may say they had imbibed from Asians and North Africans through interactions.

The African Iron Age opened in West, central and East Africa at different times. However, 2,000 years ago marked the watershed in the transformation of Africa as Africans increasingly mastered their continent and spread all across it. According to **Basil Davidson**, Africa “became divided into many different peoples with different languages. They evolved a great complexity of cultures and communities. They multiplied steadily in numbers, while there were only tree or four million Africans 2000 years ago, there were perhaps as many as 150 millions by the end of the 19th century. It is these two thousand years of the Iron Age, which continued in most parts of Africa until the European colonial period, that form the central part of the story of Africa”.

AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND EXCHANGES

Contacts between Africa and other continents such as Asia and Europe up to 1870 was driven essentially by trade and socio-religious engagement. The first broad based contact ensued as a result of the Trans-Saharan Trade which lasted from the pre historic period to the 17th century and the second being the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade which lasted between the 15th century to 19th century.

10. The Trans-Saharan Trade

As far back as the pre historic period traders from Europe and the Arabian Peninsular in the quest for gold and slaves had already developed a trade with North Africa. Between the 4th to 8th century the Phoenicians of Cartage had intensified their drive for the acquisition of gold and slaves which saw them deploying horse driven chariots into sub-Saharan Africa

through North Africa. However, the most remarkable phase of the trade lasted between the 8th century and 17th century. As the environmental condition of the Sahara deserts became harsh due to increasing desertification horse could no longer survive the rigour of the long journey that the trade entails, hence the Carmel caravans were introduced in the 8th century.

It was the introduction of the Carmel caravan that gave impetus to the Trans-Saharan Trade. After the introduction of Carmels, muslim merchants of North Africa began to organise regular caravans across the Sahara desert into Western Sudan. North African merchants often carried with them luxury goods from across the Islamic world and Europe and salt purchased from the desert salt mines to great trading centres as far as Timbuktu, Gad and Djenne. They exchanged their goods for gold and slaves, and to a lesser degree ostrich feathers, ivory and kola nuts.

Ibn Khaldun, a 14th century Muslim scholar narrated that by the 12th century caravans as large as 12,000 Carmels crossed the desert each year. There existed several trade routes from North Africa across the Sahara to West Africa. The trips which were hazardous, usually lasted for three months across long stretches of barren desert land punctuated by few Oases. The Trans-Saharan Trade caravans were temporary associations of merchants who fused together to make the difficult journey under the leadership of a hired leader using Carmels rented from nomadic Bedowin or Berbers who lived at the fringes of the desert. A typical caravan often consisted of one thousand to five thousand Carmels and hundreds of people, with a third of the Carmels carrying food and water.

The success of a caravan was dependent on the caravan leader who was either paid in cash or in shares of the merchants profit. It was the responsibility of a caravan leader to navigate the route along oases and safe passages and to also manage relationship with the desert population who could easily turn from service providers to robbers. The caravan leader also supervise the daily work of loading, unloading and feeding of the Carmels. Among his labour force were scouts, healers and a Muslim clergy man who were fellow Berbers.

Most of the major Oases in the desert apart from serving as a resting point for beast and merchants also served as market centres for exchange of goods and services between October and March when the weather was a bit tolerable.

Suffice to say that there was a limit to where the caravan could reach. Carmel caravans usually end their journey to Western Sudan at the fringes of the forest because of tsetse flies

and the unfavourable climatic conditions. From this point, goods were conveyed by human portage and canoes into the interiors where most of the gold mines were located.

11. Impact of the Trans-Saharan Trade on Africa

The Trans-Saharan Trade played an important role in the process of states growth and consolidation in West Africa. States in the Senegambia region and northern part of modern Nigeria such as Hausa land and Kanem Bornu gained so much wealth from the flourishing trade between 8th century and 17th century and so were able to entrench their footholds in their respective regions.

The growth of the Trans-Saharan Trade led to the emergence of new towns and cities in addition to old cities such as Gao and Jenne whose origins predated the advent of the long distance trade. Some of the new cities that sprang up at the fringes of the deserts includes Awdaghust, Kumbi Saleh and Tadamakka. The fate of these cities was tied with the continuity of the trade. While some of these towns were abandoned following the decline in the fortune of the trade other cities such as Kano, Zaria and Timbuktu were able to outgrow the shock engendered by the decline of the long distance trade due to their diversified nature as agro-industrial hubs and centres of religious activities.

With the trade being organized and driven essentially by Muslim merchants, new cultural influences, Islam and Arabic began to spread in Western Africa. By the end of the eleventh century most of the areas covered by the long distance caravan trade had imbibed Islamic and Arabic culture through peaceful conversion. Many embraced Islam in order to enhance their social status and to access healings for ailments. For most of the rulers, conversion to Islam offered several political advantages such as conferment of an equal status with other Muslim leaders and also as a means to legitimize their power and authority. Islam was also viewed by most African leaders south of the Sahara as a tool for the unification of their often very complex multiethnic societies. On the whole West Africa was culturally linked to the Islamic world and the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca gave West Africans a concrete reason to at least cross the Sahara for the first time in their lives.

The Trans-Saharan Trade boosted slavery and slave trade in West Africa. Although there are no records on the volume of Trans-Saharan Trade, it is however estimated that between 8th century and the 17th century about 9.3 million black slaves were moved across the Sahara to North Africa and other places. Implications of slavery and slave trading activities in

West Africa during the Trans-Saharan Trade were the high incidences of slave raiding activities and wars among the different ethnic groups which had led to disruption of economic activities and some time outright destruction and dislocation of communities and settlements. It was the massive hunt for slaves across the sahelian and guinea savannah regions that most often led to mass exodus of people into the southern forest of West Africa.

12. The Decline of Trans-Saharan Trade

The arrival of the Portuguese at the Coast of West Africa in the 15th century opened up another frontier for commercial engagement between the region and Europeans. By the early 16th century, European trading posts were scattered along the coasts of West African offering very lucrative trading platform for African merchants with less risk and rigours compared with the often hazardous trips across the Sahara desert.

For the period the Trans-Saharan trade lasted, the West African region had always been plagued with repeated cycle of political instability. Within this period three great empires Ghana, Mali and Songhai sprang up and disintegrated due to wars. At the peak of the glory of the third empire, Songhai towards the end of the 16th century Morocco launched an assault against Timbuktu, Gao and some other important trading centres, destroying buildings and property and exiling prominent citizens in a fierce contestation that has come to be known as the Battle of Tondibi fought between 1591 – 92. This disruption had a great consequence on the hitherto thriving long distance trade as there was a dramatic decline in the importance of these cities and the trade generally.

North Africa, a major component of the trade was also at the receiving end of violent invasion by the Turks, a situation which created insecurity along the trade routes between North Africa, Asia and Europe. The activities of the Turks also seriously undermined the trade.

The gold mines of West Africa which were churning out the major product and life wire of the long distance trade were literally plundered. When the mine fields got exhausted, Arab merchants and Berbers traders were discouraged from coming to West Africa.

The invasion of Songhai by the Almoravids and Tuaregs who spread Islam through force of arms or Jihad, coupled with the growth of the Trans Atlantic trade and the outright colonization of both North Africa and West Africa by the Europeans were all factors that led to “the decline and eventual collapse of the Trans-Saharan Trade in the 19th century.

13. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade also known as the Triangular Trade was initiated by the Portuguese in mid 15th century following their quest to obtain gold in Africa. The Portuguese though came to Africa in search of gold but had to divert their attention to slaves following the massive demand for labour force in the plantations and mines of America. As the name implies the trade routes was triangular in nature – Europeans travelled to Africa with their ship laden with consumables and guns and exchanged their goods for African slaves which were shipped through the Atlantic Ocean to America and the Caribbean as labour force in plantations and mines. The European merchants in the final lapse of their journey shipped sugar, cotton, gold, silver and diamond to Europe for processing.

Apart from Portugal, other European nations that participated in the slave trade include Netherland, Spain, Britain, France and Belgium. African slaves were in high demand in America from the 16th to 18th century because the indigenous people had proved unreliable as most of them were dying from diseases brought over from Europe due to poor immunity. Also Europeans were unsuited to the climate and were too prone to tropical diseases, while Africans on the other hands were strong and very resilient and could withstand tropical climate and diseases.

Suffice to say that slavery was not new to Africa as at the time of contacts with the Europeans in the 15th century. Slavery and slave trading activities existed in the continent for centuries before the advent of the Europeans. Long before the arrival of the European on the shores of Africa, African slaves were already been exported to Europe by Arab merchants through the Trans-Saharan trade routes. The slavery institution was also prevalent in various traditional African societies prior to the arrival of the Europeans.

Originally, at the commencement of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, most of the slaves were sourced from around the Senegambia area. However, from around 1650, the trade moved towards the central African coastal areas of Congo and Angola. For the period the slave trade lasted, slaves were obtained from the West Coast of Africa with the full and active co-operation of African kings and merchants. There were slave markets across most of the hinterland of West and Central Africa where prisoners of war, raid victims, offenders and debtors were sold. It is imperative to state here that most of the wars and skirmishes in sub-Saharan Africa during the era of the Triangular Trade were instigated by the Europeans who supplied arms to the

various communities ostensibly for the sole purpose of acquiring slaves who were mostly prisoners of war. When not satisfied with the volume of slave been supplied from the interior, occasionally due to high demand from America, some of the European merchants, especially the Portuguese embarked on slave raiding activities along the coasts. Some of the African chiefs were also known for their highhandedness and penchant for selling their subjects into slavery at the slightest provocation or in the guise of dispensing justice all because of the lucrative proceeds form the trade.

African slaves from the point of arrest to the market place and the journey to the coast and the new world has to pass through severe dehumanizing and inhuman treatment. They were often chained hands and legs and yoked together at the neck to prevent them from resisting control. They were not properly fed, but yet made to trek long distance to the coast from where they were cramped into the ship with less ventilation and very poor hygiene for the voyage to America across the Atlantic, otherwise known as the middle passage. Most often some of the slaves who survived the long trek from the hinterland to the coast died on their voyage during the middle passage as a result of malnutrition and diseases. Majority of the African slaves who survived the long and harrowing voyage across the Atlantic were taken to plantations and mines in Brazil, the Caribbean and the Spanish Empire, only about 5% travelled to the Northern American States (U.S.A).

14. Impact and Consequences of the Slave Trade

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade more than any other phenomenon led to the death of millions of Africans. While for slaves many others died in the cause of the tortuous movement from the hinterland to the coasts and the journey through the middle passage to America and Caribbean. Millions of African slaves were estimated to have lost their lives.

The combined effects of the forced migration engendered by the slave trade and the wanton destruction of lives that characterized the process of acquisition of slaves led to the drastic reduction of the population of Africa. It was estimated that between 10 to 14 million African were exported out of Africa over the 400 years that the trade lasted.

The process of economic development in the African continent was arrested by the slave trade considering the age bracket of Africans that were the targets of slave merchants. Able bodied young men in their productive age and young girls of child bearing age were the targets of slave dealers, hence the forceful evacuation of the productive labour force of Africa

led to breakdown and disruption in the process of African development as both agricultural and the industrial base of the continent were severely affected.

The slave trade brought about disruption in the social make-up of the African societies as families were torn apart due to the activities of slave raiders. Also some custodians of the peoples culture, traditions and political authority because of the allure of the trade ended up compromising and betraying their people which eventually whittled down the influence of several social institutions such as the Aro and Ekpe in Nigeria. These hitherto people oriented institutions became tools in the hands of greedy priests who used their position to pass wrong verdicts against innocent citizens who were eventually forced into slavery. There were also prominent African leaders such as **Jaja of Opobo** and **Samoure Toure** who turned against their people by selling them into slavery.

The slave trade divert the attention of African merchants and the business class from an already thriving regional trade network – the Trans-Saharan trade. As attentions of traders and business activities shifted to the coastal areas, most of the trans-Saharan trade route and centers of commercial activities, suffered reversal of economic fortunes and lost their prestige and influence. It was during these periods that several vassal states in Northern Nigeria rebelled against authority of most of the city states and got their independence.

In terms of organization, while most of the cities in the hinterland of Africa witnessed decline in population, commercial activities and influence, areas along the coastal line such as Lagos, Porto Novo, Elmina, Goree and Dakar experienced massive growth in commercial activities and developed into major cities.

The insecurity and violence engendered by the slave trade weakened the defence capability of the African societies in the face of the European scramble and partition of Africa. The seed of discord and disunity planted by the various European slave raiders among the African communities also made it difficult for the continent to muster a united front against European occupation of African territories.

Furthermore, the trade changed the political and demographic map of Africa through the creation of freed slave states such as Sierra Leone, Liberia and Chikanda, in Mozambique. The slave trade exposed Africans to new diseases such as tuberculosis, plague and venereal diseases transmitted by Europeans.

A new breed of people, also emerged from the social intermingling of European traders and African women known as the mulatto whose descendants are found in places like Goree and Dakar.

African slaves and their descendants have also succeeded in altering the cultural make up of America and the Caribbean through their huge presence. They have introduced African tradition and religion such as Ifa worship in Brazil, Haiti and Cuba and have made African music and fashion aspects of the American culture. Reggae and Jazz are both derivatives of African music that tells the story of the African bitter experience in the days of slavery and oppression in the hands of the Europeans.

It is also worth noting that while the Atlantic slave trade set the tune for the underdevelopment of Africa by arresting and distorting the continent development process, the same trade on the other hand was hugely responsible for the growth and development of Europe and America.

15. The Abolition of Slave Trade

The European societies tolerated the inhuman trade in human commodities for about three centuries before condemning it. Religious bodies such as the Quakers and Roman Catholic Church were at the vanguard of Christian bodies that started the opposition to slave trade. While at an earlier date, the Catholic Church forbade its members from dealing in the trade, by 1727 the Society of Friends publicly denounced the trade as evil. The French philosopher **Rousseau** in his book the *Social Contract* expounded the idea of Liberalism and personal liberty. As **Rousseau's** message circulated round the world from France across all Europe and America the opposition to slavery and slave trade began to grow as people began to question how justifiable it was for anyone to hold others in bondage.

From the judicial perspective, **Lord's Mansfield** in the year 1772 passed a famous judgement in England which dealt a severe blow to the institution of slavery and slave trade in a case that involved a run-away Negro slave, **James Somerset** and his master. While delivering his landmark judgement, **Mansfield** declared that "as soon as any slave sets foot on English ground he becomes free". It was the **Lord Mansfield** verdict that inspired the likes of **William Wiberforce, Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson** and **Fowell Buxton** to establish the "Anti-Slave Trade Committee" in 1787. This group of humanitarians made series of presentations at the British parliament and also published pamphlets, all of which aimed at denouncing the

obnoxious trade in human commodities. The “Anti-Slave Trade Committee” continued with their agitations and campaign against slave trade until the British government through the Parliamentary Act of 1807 abolished slave trade in England.

Following the passage of the British parliamentary Act of 1807, the British government took over the crusade from the abolitionist movement by influencing other European nations and committing them to sign anti-slave treaties. From 1815 onward, the British government was able to engaged Spain, Portugal, Holland and France and made them to sign treaties forbidden them to indulge in slave trade. To practical enforce this, the British government stationed a Naval squadron on the coast of West Africa to arrest slave-ships. By 1833, the British government as a follow up to previous actions made slave trade illegal in all British colonies.

Industrial and commercial enterprises were other factors that contributed to the abolition of slave trade. **Adam Smith** in his book *Wealth of Nations* argued against the profitability of slave labour, especially in the age of industrial Revolution. According to **Smith**, with the advent of machines for industry and agriculture, it was more economical to keep machines rather than slaves. Hence, with the lost of the American colonies after the American war of independence, West Africa became the alternative base for the acquisition of raw materials. To tap the raw materials from West Africa, the logical thing to do was to stop the trade in slaves. In response, a group of merchants emerged who tries to discourage West Africans from slave trade. Legitimate trade or trade in agricultural produce was encouraged and emphasis by the new merchant class. Former slave merchants discovered that the trade in agricultural produce was also lucrative as the salve trade and so switched over, thereby signaling the end of the slave trade era and the birth of the era of legitimate trade.

EARLY CIVILIZATIONS AND INVENTIONS IN EGYPT

16. Factors that encouraged the growth of Egyptian Civilizations

The term civilization connotes a well structured and organized community of a large number of people. The hallmark of civilization is development anchored on shared duties and responsibilities of citizens to a given society.

The Nile Valley in Egypt is recognized globally as the cradle of civilization – as one of the earliest centre of large human settlement. One of the greatest factor that accounted for the rise of Egyptian civilization was good climate. The climate of Egypt is subtropical and congenial to good living. The changes in climate and the desire of man to adapt himself

compelled him to achieve several of his early development – the Egyptians were able to maximise the nature gifts of the Red Sea and River Nile.

The fertility of the soil was another factor that encouraged the growth of Egyptian civilization. The annual overflow of the River Nile often triggered flood along the banks of the River leading to the deposit of silts, very fertile soil which is good for cultivation. With this periodic development, agriculture naturally developed and man's most primary need for food was achieved. It was the discovery of agriculture that led to the emergence of large settlement in the Nile region and Egypt. Availability of surplus food made it possible for the inhabitants of the area to channel their energies to other aspects of development such as arts and crafts and to establish a governance structure for maintenance of law and order.

The geographical location of Egypt provided her the needed peace and security that helped in the development and consolidation of her civilization. Egypt is surrounded by natural buffers such as the desert to the West and North, the Red Sea to the East and the Nile Rapid to the South. All these natural buffers made it difficult for enemies to invade Egypt, hence in the atmosphere of peace the people were able to achieve a lot of developmental strides.

The Red Sea and River Nile apart from supporting Egyptian agriculture also served as means of transportation and communication with other lands and people. As the knowledge of navigation improved, Egyptians embraced boat making, thereby making it easier for trade and commerce to thrive along the Nile and for markets and urban centres to spring up.

17. Egyptian Arts, Science and Technology

In the aspect of inventions, the Egyptians in order to enhance agricultural productivity developed the plough to till the soil and also devised the practice of irrigation during the dry season by building dykes and water channels into farm land.

The Egyptians were also pathfinders in architecture where they demonstrated masteries in the construction of temples and palaces at Themes and Karnak and the pyramids at Gizeh. The pyramids of Egypt are reputed to be the greatest stone structure in the world.

Writing also started in Egypt. The Egyptians invented a form of writing known as hieroglyphics and also introduced the use of writing materials such as papyrus (paper), ink and reed pens.

The Egyptians were at the forefront of the development of textile industry with the introduction of spinning and weaving. The growth of the textile industry led to the massive

production of cotton. The art and craft industry in Egypt were also verse in cabinet making, pottery, metal tools and weapons.

Art and Science of navigation was initiated in Egypt. Through her versatility in seafaring, Egypt through the deployment of the arrays of her ship established commercial relations with other lands, thus laid the basis of modern international trade.

The world today owes Egypt a huge debt for their contributions to learning in field such as medicine, mathematics, astronomy and practical measurement of time and date. The Egyptians invented the first calendar around 2500BC. This calendar with slight modification by the Romans is what has been handed over to our contemporary world today.

The people of Egypt were among the first group or society to realise the importance of socio-political organisations such as cities, kingdoms and empire. Looking at the prominent roles played by Egypt in the field of Arts, Science and Technology, it is obvious that civilization and development first started in Africa before spreading to Asia, Europe and America, hence it is very important to view Africa, both as the cradle of human origin and civilization.

CONCLUSION

The course has critically offered a logical rebuttal to the erroneous and widely held Eurocentric views of early European historians and anthropologists that Africa had no history or development until the arrival of the European in the continent of Africa. The course besides establishing the fact that man originated in Africa also clearly elucidate the nature of African history, especially Pre-colonial African history which is anchored on the spoken words or oral tradition. In addition, the course also highlighted the relationship or exchanges that transpired between Africa and the outside world, prior to the arrival of the European in the continent and the consequence of all these interactions on the land and people of Africa. The fact that civilization actually took root in Egypt is also conspicuously articulated so as to situate Pre-colonial African history in its proper perspective as one that experience changes and development.