

African Intellectual Revolution In the 20th Century: A Review of Kenneth Onwuka Dike's Contributions to African History

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Abstract

The last quarter of the 19th century witnessed the outward and inordinate expression of European's quest for territorial occupation of Africa in order to massively control and brutally exploit African resources for their benefits. To achieve their selfish economic and political interests, the rapacious colonizers deliberately distorted and grossly misinterpreted African historical accounts. Apparently, History was used as a tool to becloud realities and make Africans to look docile and timid. A daunting challenge faced by Africans and African historians was to counter these misleading lies which formed the basis of colonialism and create a new image for Africa. A foremost and committed pioneer of this epoch-making crusade was Professor K.O Dike. Using the historical methods of diverse secondary sources as well as multi-disciplinary approach, this paper intends to provide the major historical ideas and contributions of K.O Dike, leading to the reconstruction of African past, the establishment of the historiographical tradition, attainment of independence for most African states as well as the transformation of the new emergent African States.

Keywords: African history, intellectual, Kenneth Dike, review, revolution,

1. Introduction

Africa had, for centuries before the 19th Century, established historic and enduring intricate relationships with the outside world especially Western Europe. The last quarter of the 19th Century marked the sudden and dramatic change in the contact between Africa and Europe. Evidently, the era witnessed the influx of Europeans: Portuguese, Spaniard, Dutch, French, British, German and Italian to Africa in order to satisfy their socio-economic and political interests. To achieve the colonial ideology, an ideology that was aimed at the brutal exploitation and domination of the African peoples, the invading imperialists and colonizers used the instrument of history (Uya, 1984:6, Okorobia, 2010:9) to portray their Euro-centric views that human development and cultural differentiation did not take place in Africa since the beginning of man on earth (Uya, 1984:1, Erim, 1997:331). In the words of Uya(1984:6) history was used to "create the best atmosphere for the social political and economic rape of Africa".

Apparently, for them to be seen by Africans as the vanguard of "civilizing mission" in the "dark continent" of Africa, the colonial administrators, travelers, adventurers, racists, traders, geographers, and so on purposely distorted, ridiculed, and amused the history of the continent, its cultural patterns such as education, religion, language, literature and history as well as the potentials of its people to varying degrees. Emphasizing the case of Nigeria, Okorobia (2010:9) rightly observes that the British imperialists used history to arrest and distort the Nigerians' sense of the past. The British tried to capture the mind of Nigerians by derailing them from their historical and cultural roots. This was to serve as a means of destroying their self-respect, patriotism, identity, and even their humanity.

Generally, there has been a systematic denigration of Africa since the eighteenth Century up to the twentieth century. For example, in the eighteenth century, precisely in 1768, an erudite Scottish Scholar, David Hume declared:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the white. There was never a civilized nation of neither any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent in action of speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no science (cited in Uya, 1984:1).

This was the dubious notion which gained currency in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to reduce African slaves to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Okpeh, 2011:107). Equally worrisome is the assertion made by George W.F. Hegel, the German philosopher and the world acclaimed philosopher of history, in the nineteenth century. He vehemently painted the following gloomy picture of Africa and its peoples:

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

at this day, such have they always been. At this point we leave African, not even to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit. ...What we properly understand by African, is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirits, still involved in the conditions of mere nature... on the threshold of the world's History (cited in Uya, 1984:1, Alagoa, 1979:11).

Against this backdrop, some political elites from Africa such as E. W. Blyden, J.C. Casely Hayford, Nnamdi Azikiwe, J.C Decraft – Johnson, Mokwugo Okoye, Leopold Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah and others embarked on what Alagoa (1979:13) aptly describes as “historiography of self-assertion” characterized by “drum and trumpet” stuff. This was closely followed by the professional or academic historians of Africa and non – Africans like Basil Davidson, Adu Boahen, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Alione Diop, Jean Suret – Canale, Kenneth O. Dike and Bethwell O. Ogot, among others who took to a “historiography of decolonization” or what is generally known as the “New African Historiography” to effectively contain and combat the threat of colonial propagandists and racial jingoists to African identity, dignity, patriotism, world view, values, image and definition of the self. Fortuitously, the contributions of the foremost academic giant from Nigeria in the person of Professor Kenneth Onwuka Dike to the development of African history and historiography in the 19th and 20th African Centuries form the hall mark of this paper.

2. Intellectual Revolution in African Historiography: The Pivotal Contributions of Prof. K.O Dike

The first phase of the post-World War II revolution in the twentieth century African history began with an insistence on the fact that Africa had a glorious and sophisticated past worth studying by historians within the departments of university by African graduate students in European Universities (Ajayi, 1997:361). Consequently, African graduate students “insisted on registering titles in pre – colonial African history for their PhD dissertations. It was necessary for them to assert this because the existence of such a history had been denied” (Ajayi, 1997: 361). Put differently, African history emerged as a veritable instrument to create “a new historical image” of Africa. Thus, the later part of the 1950s and the wake of the 1960s witnessed a revolution in African historiography called “historiography of decolonization” undertaken by “a new generation of African scholars trained in the European tradition of the ‘historical methods’ developed by Ibn Khaldun” (Uya, 1984:6) to demonstrate the glorious and sophisticated history, culture and dignity of Africa in order to “counter the dangerous Europeans had systematized and institutionalized about the African past” (Uya, 1984:6). Speaking further of the task and achievements of this generation of enigmatic and charismatic historical personality, Uya (2008:80-81) gleefully said that their basic task

Was to rescue African history from the monumental distortions and falsehoods of Euro-American scholars who not only denied our historical heritage but also excluded us, by and large, from having played a significant role in their European drama of exploration, conquest, colonization, and administration of the continent. The pioneering works of this generation set new challenging directions for African historical studies in content and methodology.

Perhaps, the most outstanding of this dedicated crop of pioneer practitioners of African/Nigerian history is professor Kenneth Onwuka Dike who incidentally was the “first to arrive in Nigeria” after “his doctorate degree from the University of London” (Enemugwem, 2012:9). Let us turn our academic search light to deeply investigate and clinically interrogate the major ideas and historic contributions of this “distinguished scholar”, “a far – sighted pioneer,” “pathfinder,” and “godfather of African history”. We shall do this under the following subheadings:

i) Dike’s Idea of African Personality and Capability

As seen from the above exposition, there is no gainsaying the fact that Europeans had a doubtful conceptualization of the African historical image. Their dogmatic belief hinged on the fact that the “pre – European” Africa was a dark, uncivilized continent without history and culture and, therefore, destined to be ruled by the most superior and civilized Europeans. Our analysis shows that Africa was written off due to the European over dependence on written records as the only acceptable, reliable and accurate source for historical reconstruction. For example, an eminent English writer, A.P. Newton once said that “history begins when men begin to write” (cited in Uya, 1984: 3). Toeing the same lines, Perham (cited in Alagoa, 1998:5) an Oxford University don, alluded that Africa was “without writing and so without history”.

Piqued by these developments, Dike, then a post graduate student at the university of London “rose above the hostility of the environment of his education” (Alagoa, 1998 : 7) and swiftly responded to Eurocentric views about Africa in general and Perham’s article in particular. Through the mouth piece of *The West Africa Magazine*, Dike used the intellectual arm of history and protested that due to the unique ecology of Africa, the so – called “wheel” was not a *sine qua non* for lack of development in Africa. Hence, the absence of ‘wheel’ cannot

be a potent factor for the backwardness and incapability of man in tropical Africa (Alagoa, 1998: 5). Dike further spiced his argument that Africa had history systematically documented by the Arabic and European Writers dating back to numerous centuries ago prior to European contact and subsequent colonization. Interestingly, too, Dike gave an eye opening account of the use of oral tradition in the historical reconstruction of African past as most parts of Africa were non – literate societies. Justifying the use of oral and non – written data in the reconstruction of African history, DuBois (1997:144) suitably contends that there is almost no community of intellectual life or point of transference where the thoughts and feelings of one race can come into direct contact and sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of the other.

It is important to remember that Dike was, among other things inspired by B.O. Ogot, an African scholar from East Africa. Little or no surprise that Dike who had the option of studying in Oxford and Cambridge Universities settled for the University of London so as to study the 39 – Man Committee headed by B.O. Ogot (Enemugwem, 2012:9). Perham’s reaction after reading Dike’s thought provoking and legendary article was that of realization that Africa had a history. In the words of Dike (1980:7) cited in Alagoa, (1998:7) she (Perham) confessed saying “she did not know what made her write the way she did”. Undoubtedly, Europeans and their scholars had informed opinion about Africa and its past. Uya (1984:7) tells us quite bluntly that there was “the increasing recognition among scholars that traditional (African) societies, though different from so – called modern ones, were never static”. Indeed, they actually contributed a great deal to the historical development process in their continent.

Still commenting on African personality and capability, Professor K.O. Dike beautifully illustrated that Niger Deltans were the main actors in the political cum economic relations between Great Britain and the Oil Rivers States during the nineteenth century trade, pointing out that they were equal. Also, Dike used his seminal work. “Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830 – 1885” to expose the social, economic and political exploitation orchestrated by the rapacious European traders and how they willfully truncated African sovereignty. From then on, the various European actors like the missionaries, administrators, explorers and so on were seen and dubbed as agents of European domination and exploitation rather than the self – imposed role of harbingers of civilization to the “dark continent” of Africa. Evidently, Africans began to question the rationale behind the Eurocentric theory of Africa variously as the “white man’s burden”, “static barbarism” and “barbarous tribes”. Indeed, Dike’s monumental scholarship dismantled all the fallacies which the colonialists used as their pillars to destroy African personality and gave birth to a renewed agitation for self – rule, patriotism, humanity, dignity, and others which culminated in Nigeria’s attainment of independence on 1st October 1960.

ii) Dike’s Perspective of Oral Traditions

Several eminent scholars like Alagoa (1998), Uzoigwe (1998), Tamuno (1998), Ogbogbo (2012:15), and Afigbo (1998) among others agree that Dike is clearly the “prime mover” of the new African history and historiography with much emphasis on African initiative, epistemology and African centred perspective. Dike’s classic *Magnum Opus* “Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830 – 1885” which was his doctoral dissertation in Oxford convincingly demonstrated that “African historiography was as respectable as the European perspective of other spheres of history” (Tamuno, 1998:81).

Determined to reclaim the past “glory of Africa”, K.O. Dike adopted indigenous African sources with emphasis on oral and unwritten data as valued and acceptable African sources for the reconstruction of African history. Alagoa (1984:34) paints the picture clearer when he testifies that K.O. Dike and S. Biobaku called for the use of oral tradition in order to move away from a European dominated history to the history of the African populations”. Besides, Dike’s insistence on oral tradition arose due to colonial Government restrictions to classified public documents. Tamuno (1998:81) sharply observes that “Dike, certainly, was one of the victims of the familiar 50 – year rule concerning access to classified public documents needed for scholarly historiography. Dike, however, tried to circumvent it by exploring oral data in addition to available written and open sources”.

Accordingly, “Dike, the flag bearer of oral traditions in Nigeria visited Bonny and a few places in the Niger Delta... (having) realized the inadequacies of relying solely on the written sources which were external in origin and orientation...” (Alagoa, 1984:34). Significantly, Dike overcame the prevailing dogmatic belief at that time to document the history of Africa with utmost accuracy by using oral data to the satisfaction of the Board of History and the Senate of the University of London (Ajayi 1997:361). He, therefore, revealed the crucial place occupied by oral, non-written sources, thereby establishing an acceptable and a valid methodology which became the central thrust and issue in the revolution of African historiography in the twentieth century. Dike’s oral methodology greatly reshaped and revolutionized African Historiography. Dike’s methodology enabled budding African historians to effectively challenge the “ideological and epistemological hegemony that shaped the writing and interpretation of the African past after it emerged as a respected field of inquiry” (Korieh, 2008:22). This method empowered African scholars to codify the history of hitherto neglected African societies and made them one of the voices in global history. Through this means, Dike had developed a formidable bridge between

the old and the new in African historical writing (Erim, 1997:334 – 335).

iii) Dike and Multi-Disciplinary Approach

Being resolute to put his brilliant idea of cultural Inter – disciplinary approach into practice, Dike used two independent disciplines of Economics and History to pungently explain the European (British) political cum economic power play in the Niger Delta in the nineteenth century. Dike did not only emerge as the first to use the multi – disciplinary approach to African historiography but also lay a solid foundation for inter – disciplinary studies when he bequeathed to contemporary economic historian “an analytical methodology, a unique way of studying and systematically explaining socio – economic behaviour through the passage of time” (Aboyade, 1998:68). Fundamentally, Dike gave birth to a new branch of History called “Economic History” including several historic insights. This field of study, among others, tries to “explain what happened, and why, in the development process by drawing coherent inferences from a series of historical data” (Aboyade, 1998:68).

Again, conscious of the fact that a society that is ignorant of its historical past is an endangered species, Dike sought combined evidence to endow scholarly research on the African past by creating collaborative forums between the African governments and African scholars to support and use the insights of several cognate disciplines. Alagoa (1998:10-11) substantiates the fact that Dike created the first Institute of African Studies in the University of Ibadan for this purpose. He also took part in the planning for a Department of Antiquities and the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs. Owing to his pioneering efforts, Dike was unanimously appointed as the first president of the International Conference of African Studies and Chairman of the Antiquities Commission (Okita, 1985:20, 21). In his address as chairman, Dike (cited in Okita, 1985:21) luminously informs “To me as a student of African history the art treasures of this country form the most important surviving record of the centuries of man in the West Africa before the white man came and before the introduction of writing ... we can catch a glimpse of those days only by preserving its art. It is for this reason that I regard the Commission and the Department of Antiquities as custodians of an important source of Nigerian historians”. In the process, Dike laid the foundations of the National Archives of Nigeria which “provided the nation a depository for all documentary evidence of its development” (Alagoa, 1998:11). Uya (2008:87) makes bold the point that “Dike served as the first Director of the Archives in which position he recruited and sent for appropriate training young, promising Nigerian scholars like E.J. Alagoa”. What is of note is that the importance of National Archives in the historical and political lives of a country such as ours cannot be overemphasized. They are established to locate, collect and preserve the country’s historical records from the colonial and post-colonial eras of Nigerian history. Obviously, this method of storing records guarantees that the history and custom of a society is immortalized and preserved to authenticate and validate African historiography.

Dike also desired to train Nigerians in the techniques and methodology of the inter–disciplinary approach when he became the Director of the Benin History Project and co – organizer of the Eastern Nigerian Research Scheme in 1966. Alagoa (1975:183) accurately informs that Dike failed to realize his dream because the Benin History Project was hijacked by non – Nigerians and the Eastern Nigeria Research Scheme was aborted by the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War (1967 – 1970). Nevertheless, Dike’s idea had been seriously improved upon and multi – disciplinary approach had striven/and is still striving in the reconstruction of African history. Currently, cognate disciplines especially the Social and Sciences supply variable insights required by the historian to validate his fact and arrive at absolute chronology while examining the complex and ever changing events. In fact, the inter–disciplinary method has become indispensable to the African historian for the purpose of enhancing historical scholarship.

iv) Dike and the Idea of Africa Epistemology

Professor K.O Dike was the first to draw the attention of the international community to the fascinating outlines of a viable African epistemology. As indicated above, Dike, inspite of all odds, successfully carried out his doctoral dissertation, “Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830 – 1885” later published in 1956 by the Oxford University as *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830 – 1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History in Nigeria*, instead of venturing into European history. Though the book “made an immediate International impact as marking a new beginning in the historiography of Africa” (Alagoa 1998:7), it greatly stimulated and inspired new generation of practitioners of African history to make vigorous researches using various ways, views and methods. Many African scholars went further to investigate Africa and African history, cultures and affairs other than theirs. This position is shared by Ogbogbo (2011:168) who notes that the completion of this dissertation and its subsequent publication as *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830 – 1885* in 1956 opened the floodgate of African historical scholarship. This was a major breakthrough.

Dike also created enduring foundations which gave impetus to an African initiative or Africa – centered perspective when he mooted for the establishment of Department of History in the University College Ibadan (Alagoa, 1998:11, Ogbogbo 2011:168). He, therefore, used the Department of History to sow and water the seed

of African epistemology. The History Department soon became “a centre of excellence in African historiography in the world” (Omer – cooper 1980 cited in Alagoa, 1998:11). In fact, at a point, “The History Department of Ibadan had no less than four full professors, and began to supply staff including vice-chancellors, to other universities” (Ajayi, 2008:62). At this juncture, it would be worthwhile to recall that the late professor Kenneth Onwuka Dike was the first African head of History at the university of Ibadan, and the first Indigenous Principal of the University College Ibadan and later the pioneer Vice-Chancellor of University of Ibadan. The effort of Dike could be better appreciated if we remembered that Ibadan was still under the control of imperial London and its curriculum was stocked with European and English History as well as British colonial History (Agiri 1997:4). Dike’s pioneering work of making Africa the center of learning and teaching history received a boost with the acceptance of African Studies as a distinctive field of inquiry. The independence of African Studies no doubt revived serious scholarly interest in the study of Africa and led to a transformation in combative literature. Africans came to be active makers of their own history (Martin 1984:69). Dike’s idea of “African first” created new generation of African historians who through the rigorous inquiry projected the “glorious Africa” internationally with pride and satisfaction (Ofonagoro, 1984:19). The new perspective on the African past clearly established that Africa had a sophisticated history worthy of studying and documenting. The new intellectual current aroused scholars’ interest not only in Africa but also in Europe and North America resulting in a more pragmatic, systematic and scholarly approach to the study of Africa, its peoples, cultures and affairs (Korieh 2008:18).

Arising from this atmosphere, Europe was persuaded to study the past of their colonial continents of Africa and Asia. Enemugwem (2012:10) with persuasive evidence notes the outcome of the development thus:

Schools of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) were established in major European Universities like London, Berlin and Vienna ... By 1984 all branches of African history have been established in Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas... The International Congress of Historical Sciences held in Stuttgart and Madrid in 1985 and 1990, initiated the comparative study of African Sub – regions. These were in the African historical, Socio- historical, ethno – historical, cultural and religious history fields. Through the instigation of this Congress, come biographical works on the Leading German scholars and pioneers in African Historical studies were published to fill the gaps of teaching materials for tertiary students abroad.

The words of Falola (1997:345) on the growth and expansion of African Studies in the twentieth century also provides a useful insight:

The transformation, indeed the revolution, of African Studies after World War II, is by no means a small accomplishment. It is a successful story of a gigantic international co-operation involving all continents, especially those with large black populations or a history of colonial relations. Africa became one of the fastest growing fields of this century.

Taken together, it means that Uya (1984:2) was accurate in his views and analysis that:

In Europe, where there are always been substantial, if amateurism interest in African Studies, especially anthropology, there was now considerable expansion. In the United States, thanks to the belated recognition by the American government that Africa could no longer be ignored or treated as an appendix of Europe within the international community, but more especially to the Black power and Black Studies Movements of the early 1960s, there was an explosion of interest in African Studies which hitherto had been confined largely to the Black Colleges, especially Harvard University in Washington, D.C.

Another remarkable contribution of Professor K.O.Dike to African epistemology with great emphasis on African initiative or African centred perspective was the establishment of the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) in 1955 purposely “to consolidate the gains envisaged from the training and research at Ibadan”(Alagoa, 1998:11). The Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) thus became the first and now the oldest academic professional body in Nigeria. In his characteristic manner, the arch – apostle of African history, used his position both as the Head of the Department of History, University College Ibadan and President of the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) to encourage, inspire and “convert both staff and students alike to be disciples of his vision” (Ogbogbo, 2011:168). Eventually, there emerged a crop of dedicated professional historians, known simply as the *Ibadan School of History*, who embraced and accepted Dike’s dream as well as took decisive and impressive steps in the propagation of historical scholarship in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. For example, Abubakar (2008:28) vividly testifies that:

The ‘Ibadan school’ found its way through Prof. Abullahi Smith, of blessed memory, to

Ahmadu Bello University Zaria early in 1962. Smith was recruited to Ibadan by Dike where he later became his close associate, serving for many years as the Secretary General of the Historical Society of Nigeria right from its foundation in 1955. In a way therefore, the early products of the Department of History ABU Zaria, which Smith founded, were brought up in the mould of the Ibadan school.

Again, Aboyade (1998:67) reminds us that “at every turn, he (Dike) inspired, encouraged, prepared, supported and piloted potentially young Nigerians academic staff to strive towards scholastic distinction. He also exposed them early to the challenge of policy making and management responsibility”.

Tamuno (1984:24-25) appropriately captures this view when he notes:

Dike had an indefinable way of spotting talent and encouraging it in every way possible.....He gave his best to the world of learning through his scholarship and encouragement of young scholars as a teacher and University administrator. Dike's humility had an infectious quality among those in contact with him.

He, thus, produced most of the early practitioners of History who became Professors, administrators, heads of Institutions, and contributors to national development. Prominent among them are Jacob Ade Ajayi, Isaac Okonjo, C.C. Ifemesia, E.J. Alagoa, T.N. Tamuno, J.C. Anene, E. Ayandele, O. Ikime, A.E. Afigbo and S.J.S. Cookey, (Animalu, 1997:61-62, Abubakar, 2008:28). This was also the case with scholars in other disciplines like anthropology, Political Science, Sociology, and Economics.

The harvest of their scholarly works were subsequently published in 1956 in the famous *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN), which Falola (1997:351) vividly describes as a “keen rival of the *Journal of African History*”, in *The Tarikh, The Ibadan Series*, and in other occasional publications. Soon, African Studies which was very much *terrain cognita*, now became widely recognized and accepted as an area worthy of “rigorous intellectual attention”(Uya, 1984:1) and made “many western scholars struggle to visit Ibadan, Legon, and Makerere” (Falola, 1997:351). It should be emphasized that in these three citadels of learning, it was un scholarly and unafican to be awarded a degree in the Social Sciences and Humanities without enough “dosage of Africanity” (Uya, 1997:2). African Studies until today has occupied the front burner of intellectual discourse nationally and internationally.

Records and empirical evidence abound to testify that the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) has continued after the exit of Dike to provide a veritable platform where cross-fertilization of ideas is enhanced by professional historians and other scholars across the country. Workshops, seminars and conferences of several magnitudes were and are still conveyed to broaden their intellectual horizons so as to enable them contribute to the development of the nation and continent. At his juncture, mention must be made of some practitioners of History from the Niger Delta region (now known in political parlance as south-south) that have used and are still using the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) to enhance their crafts and so deepen their contributions to humanity.

Prominent on the list is Emeritus Professor E.J. Alagoa who served creditably as the President of the premier association for two tenures (1981-83; 1991-1994) and later served meritoriously and variously as editor of its Journal, member Advisory Board and now fellow of that society (Ejituwu, 1997:372, Agiri, 1997:11, Awe, 2005: 76-77, Derefaka, 2005:80). Others include, The late Emeritus, Professor T.N. Tamuno who became National Vice-President, the Historical Society of Nigeria, 1974-77 (Tamuno, 2012: xiii).it is also on record that the Professor N.C. Ejituwu of blessed memory who served as member Editorial Advisory Board and a fellow of the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN), Professor K.E. Orji who served as council member from 2000-2004, Professor J.H. Enemugwem (then Doctor) served as Vice President, South-South and now serving as a fellow of the association and Dr. S.T. Olali, the chief Historian and Archivist of Bayelsa State who is currently serving as the vice-president, the Historical Society of Nigeria, (HSN), among others.

Most significantly, Dike's African perspective is clearly epitomized when he “pioneered a form of prosopography, and the use of collective biography as an objective tool in the study of society in a delimited period of time” (Alagoa, 1998:4). It is therefore historically plausible to argue that Dike's central thrust when he introduced and edited *Eminent Nigerians of the Nineteenth Century* in 1960 was to use the hindsight of the nineteenth century as insights of the twentieth century, thereby using the actions of the main leaders of that age in writing the history of Nigeria in the twentieth century (Daminabo, 2013: xxl). This is highly illustrated in his “introduction” to the book and his scholarly work on “King William Dappa Pepple”. Alagoa (1998:4) recalls with incisive articulation “he (Dike) attempted to present a total picture of the life of the individual as part of a changing political, social and economic system and the lives of a number of individuals as building blocks for that picture”.

In spite of the claim that biographical works exclude the masses while emphasizing the role played by leaders in a society, there is an upsurge in the volume of inspiring scholarly biographies written by practicing historians today. Most of the biographies hinged on those who made indelible marks on the sands of time or stand as models of selfless service for succeeding generations.

v) **Dike and The Cultivation of Historical Consciousness**

Dike, who knew the role historical consciousness has to play in the political organization of the emergent African states, redirected his zest and quest to “develop the self-confidence of African leaders and peoples” (Alagoa, 1998:6) in order to move the states forward. Dike (1953:251) has earlier succinctly expressed the link:

True political development can only take place on a basis of profound self-knowledge so long as the African is regarded as a man without a culture and without a history, doubts concerning his ability to govern himself will find credence. (cited in Alagoa, 1998:6)

For this purpose, Dike departed remarkably from the historiography of decolonization and effectively grapple with new themes bordering on African development, or what Alagoa (1979:14) refers to as “historiography for self-education, self-reliance, national integration, and for the mutual understanding of communities”. Dike’s (1953:251) philosophy of “Man cannot live by bread alone, and cultural as well as material security is needed to make the whole man” was in consonance with Mazrui’s (1972:3) fourfold challenge of post African independence: “how to nationalize what was indigenous; how to nationalize what was sectional or ethnic; and how to emphasize what was African”.

Dike in conjunction with others used the instrument of history to create and instill historical consciousness in the people’s confidence, especially the political elites, in their ability to govern and better organize themselves (Okorobia, 2010:10). In this atmosphere, African indigenous leaders began to fund projects of historical and cultural value. For instance, Nigerian leaders funded projects like the Benin Historical Research Scheme, the Yoruba Research Scheme, The Northern Research Scheme, the Eastern Research Scheme and the Kenneth Dike Aro History Project, among others (Ajayi, 2008:62). Historical consciousness among African political class was so deep rooted that “it continued to provide a verifiable instrument for justifying nationalist government policies and programmes” (Udoka, 2005/2006:72) and “a knowledge of history was then seen as a basic requirement for the aspiring politician or administrator” (Okorobia, 2010:10; 2012:229).

As noted above, Dike established the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN). One of the cardinal reasons was to generate historical consciousness, nationalist orientation, and a high sense of rationality among the citizenry. Accordingly, he used the association to organize all-embracing conferences with membership cutting across other disciplines, government officials, traditional rulers, civil servants and ofcourse those who love Nigeria on regular basis (Ogbogbo, 2011:178, N-ue, 2014:75). The Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) became a melting pot for diverse elements in Nigeria to brainstorm, dialogue, plan and spread the ideas of Nigeria’s unity, self-government, national development, national integration and the future of Nigeria. Dike’s teachings on historical consciousness have serious consequences on his generation and that of the present as he emphasized the themes of unity, patriotism, love, mutual respect, nation building, and national integration which are the hallmarks of national development. Afigbo’s (1984:108) submission on this score is very interesting:

In sum, it can be said that among Dike’s greatest achievements were helping to raise Africa’s historical consciousness to a new level and to show by precept and example how African experience can be rewardingly probed and for what purpose.

Furthermore, Alagoa’s (1998:12) argument provides another perspective on Dike’s exploits of Historical Consciousness:

His (Dike’s) writing and activities in the 1950s represent the most constructive aspects of cultural nationalism in the period of the struggle for independence. The scholarly balance and strength of his contribution made it irresistible to colonial rulers as to the new leaders of independent Nigeria. The significance of history for national development was persuasively presented and demonstrated by Dike at this point in our national history.

3. Conclusion

This paper agrees that Dike was not alone in the epoch- making crusade for African historiography. Others like Saburi O. Biobaku, Jacob, F. Ade-Ayayi, J.C. Anene, C.C. Ifemesia, R.A. Adeleye, B. Oloruntimehin, P.A. Igbafe, O. Uya, A. Smith “joined the fold and succeeded in carving a niche for themselves as they began to be referred to as the Ibadan School of History” (Ogbogbo, 2011:168). But our findings reveals Professor K.O Dike as the foremost African scholar whose pivotal contributions have not only spurred up succeeding African Scholars but also succeeded brilliantly in establishing African history and historiography, African independence and the huge transformational agenda of the African new leaders. This was, indeed, the “golden years” of historical scholarship in Africa. We, therefore, submit to the epitaph which posits that K.O. Dike:

Was a distinguished scholar, a man of integrity, a high principled educationist, a successful administrator, and a far-sighted pioneer, who helped to build several enduring institutions that have served and are serving the nation well (Ajayi, 1984:20).

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