

THE HERITAGE OF THE PAST

BY

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“The labor of our Heroes past shall never be in vain”

The above quotation is from the Nigeria’s National Anthem. It underscores the following importance which we place on the efforts of our ancestors in bequeathing to us a nation which we are proud of. It recognizes the dignity of labour and selfless service to humanity. It encourages patriotism among citizens and reminds us of our past that is our history. Let us proceed with a clear understanding of the terminologies or concept involved in this discourse. Heritage in simple terms refers to the things which our ancestors create in the past which has historical importance and passed on to us. Such things can be divided into two namely materials and non-materials. The former refers to such things as historical artefacts that is the handiwork of our ancestors ranging from buildings, domestic utensils to farm implements, weaving tools/artistic works etc. And by non-material, we are referring to religion, beliefs, knowledge, traditions, values, witchcraft, sorcery, ideas and anything within the material realm of man, which can or are transmitted from generation to generation.

How then do we know about our past and our heritage of the past? We knew these through our study of history. You may then want to know what is history? History is the study of the activities of man carried out over time (Collinwood 1946) i.e. what was done in the past, what is being done in the present and what is to be done in the future. However, the discipline of history and its relevance is all encompassing and therefore, far from limiting to the past alone. History entails the understanding of the past and how it is related to the present which will serve as a key to the preparation of the future (Jenkins: 1995). For that to be achieved, the heritage of the past has to be properly upheld, conserved and maintained. That has been the duty of historians. Since we are talking about the past about several decades or centuries, how do the historians recreate or re-discover the past? Put in other words, what are the sources of history? Every thing on earth has history, but only man makes history because he is the only animal that consciously relates with his environment and transforms it according to his wishes and desires. The conscious transformation here refers to the act of production and reproduction, which entails a number of other things such as social relations, organization and change. But we need to make it clear that as man transforms his environment so does the environment transforms him. For the historian, the source of history are traces or evidences of man’s existence which he leaves behind and this could be material or non-material – written documents, oral tradition and archaeology. Hence as Collingswood rightly points out; the historian can rediscover what has been completely forgotten, in the sense that no statement of it has reached him by an unbroken tradition from eye witnesses. He can even discover what until he discovered it no one ever knew to have happened at all. This he does partly by the critical treatment of statements contained in his sources, partly by the use of what are called unwritten sources which are increasingly employed as history becomes increasingly sure of its own proper methods and its own proper criterion (McCall 1970).

Written Document: This refers to records, which are kept in any language, or inscription that is understood by people. In this respect we have letters, chronicles, memos, maps, pictures, record of transactions, travelogues, newspapers, magazines, sale, agreements, receipts,

membership registers, membership cards etc Written documents can be categorized into two primary and Secondary documents. A primary document refers to a document which has not been subjected to any interpretation by anybody. In other words documents, which are original such as, are listed above while secondary document refers to document, which have passed through a third party. Another person has subjected it to interpretation and one can go beyond such interpretation to the original document and produce an alternative view or position. Primary documents therefore serve as the raw materials for the production of secondary documents. In pre-colonial Nigerian area for nearly seven hundred years before the British conquests only written documents in Arabic language and character i.e. in *Ajami* (Arabic – any language other than Arabic) such as Hausa and Fulfulde can be found. Later in the 19th century with the coming of Europeans – explorers, missionaries, traders and colonial officers, written documents in French, German and English became available. Written Document was much more available in English because the British were our colonial masters and English was forced on us as our *lingua franca*. As a result written documents can be found in several Nigerian languages.

Oral Tradition: Since non-Muslim communities in Nigeria did not have the art of writing for several centuries before the coming of the British, how did they preserve their history? Oral tradition was one means which the historian uses in collecting historical facts about a people whether they are literate or illiterates. It simply means verbal information passed from one person to another through a chain of transmission or narration. It must be made very clear that this is different from the type of journalistic interviews of people which we see daily on the television or hear in radios. Its collection has to be carefully planned and carried out. In some societies some people serve as the custodians of oral traditions and the researcher has to identify such people in order to retrieve them. The source of oral tradition has to be properly documented. The name of the informant, his/her occupation, educational background age, address and circumstances, under which the information was collected has to be recorded. Oral tradition serves as a primary source of history. The researcher has to be very proficient in the language of the tradition or rely on a competent interpreter, in which case the interpreted or original document has to be made available for further scrutiny by interested persons.

Archaeology: We cannot discuss the preservation of our heritage without pointing out the role or relevance of Archaeology in this process. It helps in the recovery of historical artefacts and provides the historian with concrete material evidence for the reconstruction of the past. *What is Archaeology?* It is simply the recovery and the scientific study of the material remains of man. Society always leaves behind it material evidence of its existence in a place because of the fundamental difference which exist between man and animal - the ability to consciously produce materials and to transform his environment. So the archaeologist excavates the earth for the material evidence of the existence of man in an abandoned site or place, which is occupied by people who may have settled in an area later. The materials which are excavated by the archaeologists for example include skeletons of human beings and animals, figurines, ornaments, pots, weaving utensils, dye pits, graves etc in various sites across the country. The archaeologists gets to know about sites through aerial surveys, search on foot, accidental discoveries by people digging wells, constructing roads, houses etc. The archaeologists have to rely on so many experts and laboratory tests/examinations in the study of the materials recovered i.e. the botanists, dentist, chemist, physicist, geographer and a host of others assist him in the study of the recovered materials. This is what makes archaeology very expensive and time consuming (Shaw 1978). Some examples of Archaeological discoveries in Nigeria are (i) **Nok Culture:** is an early Iron Age population whose material remains are named after the Ham village of Nok in Kaduna State of Nigeria, where their famous Terracotta Sculptures were first discovered in 1928. The Nok Culture appeared in Northern Nigeria around 1000 BC and vanished under unknown circumstances around 500 AD, thus having lasted approximately

1,500 years. (Fagg 1977). (ii) *The Igbo-Ukwu*: this revealed bronze artefacts dated to the 9th century A.D. which were initially discovered by Isiah Anozie in 1939 while digging a well in his compound Igbo-Ukwu, an Igbo town in Anambra State, Nigeria. As a result of these finding, three archaeological sites were excavated in 1959 and 1964 by Thurstan Shaw which revealed more than 700 high quality artifacts of copper, bronze and iron, as well as about 165000 glass, carnelian and stone beads, pottery, textiles and ivory. They are the oldest bronze artifacts known in West Africa and were manufactured centuries before the emergence of other known bronze producing centers such as those of Ife and Benin. The bronzes include numerous ritual vessels, pendants, crowns, breastplates, staff ornaments, swords, and Fly-whisk handles (Shaw 1965).

Emergence of State and their Administration

Having given in brief what history is and its sources, what then can we say are the heritage, which our ancestors have left for us? They are certainly numerous and we can only mention or discuss a few of them here. First, the country in which we live and carry out our activities which today is known as “Nigeria”, before the coming of the British, various people lived in the Nigeria area in kingdoms and chiefdoms and even in hat some scholars have described as stateless societies. Let us mention some of them; Hausa states – Katsina, Kanem Borno, Nupe kingdom, Jukun, Igala Kingdom, Oyo, Ijesha, Benin, the Igbo people, Ebira, Tiv etc. let us briefly discuss some of them.

The Hausa Kingdoms: also known as Hausaland, was a collection of states started by the Hausa people, situated between the Niger River and Lake Chad (modern day northern Nigeria). Hausaland lay between the Western Sudanic kingdoms of Ancient Ghana and Mali and the Eastern Sudanic kingdoms of Kanem-Borno. Hausaland took shape as a political and cultural region during the first millennium CE as a result of the westward expansion of Hausa people (Hogben & Kirk-Greene 1966: 145-155). The first Hausa states began to develop in the Sahel around 500–700 AD. Gradually, seven principle city-states emerged - Biram, Daura, Gobir, Katsina, Kano, Rano, and Zaria. They developed close trading relationships and economic cooperation. The Hausa kingdoms were first mentioned by Arab geographers in the ninth century, having become known for their role in trade. The seven Hausa city-states never unified, but they cooperated closely. They had a common language, laws, and customs. They were known for fishing, hunting, agriculture, weaving, dying and blacksmithing. Biram was the initial seat of government for the city-states, while Gobir provided soldiers and, since it bordered the rival empires to the west, protected Hausaland from foreign invasion. Kano and Rano grew cotton and produced textiles. They were also known for their valuable and beautiful indigo dye, which they used both for art and for dying their textiles. They traded these with the other Hausa states, such as Zaria, which provided slaves and grain. Katsina and Daura had direct access to the trans-Saharan caravans, and so traded the products produced in Hausaland for foreign goods, such as salt and sugar, needles, swords, horses, guns etc. (Mahdi 1978). However, the 14th century also saw the rise of one city-state over all the others. At first it was Katsina whom dominated the affairs of Hausa states and later Kano became the most economically important city, thanks to its cotton cloth and dye industry. It provided most of the cotton to the western Sudan. Kano became one of the most important trade centers in all of Africa and became the base for the Trans-Saharan trade in cloth, leather and grain (Palmer 1928).

The Decline of the Hausa Kingdoms: Besides the Hausa, another ethnic group lived in their lands: the Fulani. The 19th Century Islamic Revolution known as Sokoto Jihad (led by Sheikh Usman bn Fodio in 1804) enjoyed full support of the Fulani which resulted in the overthrow of the Hausa *habe* and the Fulani took over the leadership of the Hausa states. The success of the jihad led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate with outstanding centralized political system of government (Last 1977). The jihad leaders did not temper with the existing

leadership structure of the Hausa states, except for little modification that was done especially with the creation of the emirate system in which the emir (*Sarki*) will pay allegiance to the caliph at Sokoto. The emir has the responsibility of making laws, enforcing them and responsible for maintaining peace and order in his emirate. However, each emirate is assisted in its administration by a number of advisers. These were: the Waziri (who was the administrative head or Prime Minister), the Galadima (in charge of the capital), the Madawaki (commander of the Army), Dogari (head of the Police), Ma'aji (in charge of treasury), Sarkin Ruwa (river & fishing official), Sarkin Fada (head of palace workers) and Sarkin Pawa (head of all butchers). All these officials, who were appointed by the Emir, were consulted in running the affairs of the emirate. This can be said to be a similarity to the Yoruba Political Administration. But unlike a Yoruba king, power was centralised in the hands of the Emir who had absolute control over these officials and could depose any of them at his will. Moreover, each emirate was divided into districts for administrative convenience. An official known as Hakimi (District Head) was appointed by the emir. Village head (Dagaci) was appointed by the Hakimi to oversee the affairs of his community, maintain peace and collect taxes. The Village head was assisted by the Ward head (Mai Unguwa).

The Kanem-Borno Empire: The Kanem-Borno Empire was a large African state which existed from the 9th century through the end of the 19th century. It was known to the Arabian geographers as the Kanem Empire from the 9th century AD onward and lasted as the independent kingdom of Borno until 1900 (Alkali & Bala 1983). At its height it encompassed an area covering not only much of Chad, but also parts of modern southern Libya, eastern Niger, north-eastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon. The history of the Empire is mainly known from the Royal Chronicle or *Girgam* discovered in 1851 by the German traveler Heinrich Barth (Barth 1858: 15-29, 225-254). Because of its location, it served as a point of contact in trade between North Africa, the Nile Valley, and the sub-Sahara region. The empire was founded by the Zaghawa nomadic people, who may have been the first in the central Sudan to acquire and make use of iron technology and horses (Barkindo 1985: 225-254).

The Saifawa, Kanem's ruling dynasty, periodically enlarged their holdings by conquest and marriage into the ruling families of vassal states. The empire, however, failed to sustain a lasting peace. During one conflict-ridden period sometime between the 12th and 14th centuries, the Saifawa were forced to move across Lake Chad into Borno, in what is now far northeastern Nigeria. There, the Kanem intermarried with the native peoples, and the new group became known as the Kanuri. The Kanuri state, centered first in Kanem and then in Borno, is known as the Kanem-Borno Empire, hereafter referred to as Borno. The Kanuri eventually returned to Chad and conquered the empire lost by the Saifawa. Its dominance thus assured, Borno became a flourishing center of Islamic culture that rivaled Mali to the far west. The kingdom also grew rich in trade, which focused on salt from the Sahara and locally produced textiles. In the late 16th century, the Bornu king Idris Alooma expanded the kingdom again, and although the full extent of the expansion is not clear, Borno exerted considerable political influence over Hausaland to the west. In the mid and late 18th century, severe droughts and famines weakened the kingdom, but in the early 19th century Borno enjoyed a brief revival under Al-Kanemi, a shrewd military leader who resisted a Fulani revolution that swept over much of Nigeria. Al-Kanemi's descendants continue as traditional rulers within Borno State.

Oyo Kingdom: Little is known about the early history of Oyo Kingdom before the seventeenth century because of the absence of written documents. The pioneering work on the history of the Yoruba by Rev. Samuel Johnson was based on oral traditions. Oyo appears to be the most famous and influential of the Yoruba kingdoms and chiefdoms in the 18th century. It was ruled by the Alaafin who was assisted by a Council of seven chiefs known as the Oyo Mesi. The Basorun was the leader of the Council while the Areonakakanfo was the Minister of Defence.

The eldest son of the Alaafin was regarded as the Crown Prince who was always forced to commit suicide on the death of his father in order to check the ambition of such princes (Crowder, 1978: 29 – 40). Oyo's prosperity and power were due to the result of the industrial skills of its people. Their early knowledge of iron-working and the existence of iron ore locally meant early possession of efficient tools and weapons; their craftsmanship in weaving and dyeing, in carving and the decorative arts, attracted traders from far and wide. Oyo became the southern emporium of the trans-Saharan trade and dominated the exchange of salt, leather, North African luxuries and horses for kola nuts, ivory, cloth, slaves and other forest products (Stride and Ifeka, 1977: 302).

Benin Kingdom: This was one of the great pre-colonial states in Nigeria with elaborate political structure although like other states in the south its early history was preserved in oral traditions. Brass-makers in Benin were charged with the responsibility of producing beautiful brass plaque for the commemoration of its history in wars and peace time. Benin craftsmen produced works of wood, ivory, gold and copper (Stride and Ifeka 1977: 311–318). The writings of early European visitors to the area further assist us in understanding the nature of Benin society and external relations especially in the sixteenth century. English visitors testified in the sixteenth century that Benin had thirty straight streets about one hundred and twenty feet broad with intersecting streets at right angles to them. Gwatto, an important port in western Niger delta was also linked through Benin and Hausa land with the trans-Saharan trade and so Benin grew rich as a result of the trade in goods such as ivory, palm produce, women slaves, native clothes and pepper which were exchanged for foreign products. The Oba was the head of government and in the discharge of his responsibilities was assisted by the Ogiso a council of seven powerful chiefs. Oba Oguola, the son of Ewedo was credited with the construction of Benin City wall and nine gates. His father Ewedo was the first ruler who built a prison for criminals in Benin City (Strike and Ifeka, 1977: 311).

Inter-state and Communal Relations: Although there was no Nigeria before the coming of the British and the subsequent conquest and amalgamation of the people, it has been established that the various people and kingdoms/chiefdoms interacted with each other in different ways such as warfare, economics i.e. trading, culture i.e. inter-marriages, linguistic relations, political and religious etc. Let us cite a few examples: There was political and economic relationship between the Nupe and Yoruba; and between the Hausa and Yoruba (Falola 128). The political influence of the Hausa on the Yoruba can be discerned from their linguistic influence as is reflected in the political vocabulary of the Yoruba of Ibadan as mentioned by Falola – *Seriki* (Hausa – *Sarki*), *Mogaji* (Hausa – *Magaji*) *talika* (Hausa – *talaka*) (Falola 1984: 66-77). In terms of economics the most famous commodity, which had brought the Hausa and the Yoruba together, was the Kola nut. Trade in this commodity has been well documented. As early as 1840, the visit of the Hausa kola traders to Ibadan is reported by Falola. These three vital sectors – farming, trading and the craft industry kept on expanding. In the 1840's the volume of trade had consistently increased. In addition articles from the markets in Nupe and Hausaland found their way to Ibadan while some Hausa traders in Kola nuts and leather goods had firmly established themselves in the town" (Falola 1984: 7-31).

However, in Nigeria, today inter group relations are seen or discussed largely either in political or ethnic terms. But beyond this as we tried to point out earlier, there were other forms of relationship, which had fundamental bearing on the way the people interacted with each other. It is important to point out that there are several legends of origin among various Nigerian people, which seems to emphasize the cordial relationship or common origin of peoples who presently appear different or even antagonistic to each other, while the Benin tradition clearly traces the origin of the Benin monarchy to a Yoruba prince called Oranmiyan, oral tradition in Lagos claims that the first Oba, that is the Eleko of Eko was the son of Oba Orhogbua of Benin (Stride and Ifeka, 1973: 316). The legend of origin of the Hausa people,

which is known as the Bayajida legend also tries to give common origin for the Hausa people and Nupe. Let us however make the point very clear. We are not giving any credence to the Bayajida legend. We are only drawing attention to its subtle attempt of emphasizing cordial or close relationship between the Hausa and other people in the region.

Nigeria: Between 1860 and 1903 the British had conquered all the Kingdoms and people in the Nigeria area through warfare or peaceful submission. In 1914, the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated and Nigeria was created as one country. The implication of this act of the British was that the various Kingdoms/Chieftdoms and people that had existed as autonomous and independent bodies had been dissolved into a greater polity – known as Nigeria. Thus the Nigerian identity was established (Ikime 1977).

Colonial Intervention and the response of the people: how did the British create Nigeria? It was not easy. The British had to fight and conquer the various kingdoms/chieftdoms and peoples of the Nigerian area. The conquest of the Nigerian area was largely and effectively carried out by a small but disciplined force known as the Royal Niger Constabulary (RNC) and Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF). The conquest was carried out under several excuses such as the desire to abolish slave trade, hostility from the ‘Natives’ against the British or Christian Missionaries, dubious treaties etc. On the other hand most of the latter fought vehemently to maintain their independence and identity. In other words they fought to prevent the British from physical occupation and control of their territories (Ikime 1984). When this failed in the face of the superior weapons and organization of the British some of the people struggled to preserve their identity and culture particularly the Muslim communities. This they did through their refusal to accept Christianity, western mode of dressing, careful acceptance of western education whether from the hands of British colonial officers or missionaries. The northern Muslim leaders particularly the *Ulama* and Emirs continued to actively and clearly resist or challenge what the historians call colonialism for a very long time. The consequence of this was that almost thirty emirs and chiefs were not only deposed but also exiled to Lokoja.

Colonialism in Nigeria lasted for a century i.e 100 years, from about 1860–1960. During this period the British were in control of the economic, political and other activities of the people. In the last twenty years of colonialism, the Nationalist Movement had waxed stronger. World wars 1 and II, the acquisition of western education, travels to Europe and America, etc were important factors in the rise of Nationalism in Nigeria. Several groups were involved in the struggle for Nigeria’s independence such as journalists, political parties, cultural associations, trade unions and market women.

Religion and Religious relations: Before the coming of the Europeans, there were two religions i.e. Islam and traditional religions. Borno and the Sokoto Caliphate in the northern part were Islamic states but all other states practiced traditional religion. Let us examine Islam its spread and impact on the people. It is not known exactly when Islam was brought to the Nigerian area. Some writers have indicated that it registered its presence in the area of Kanem (Borno) in the seventh century. What is however certain is that by the 11th century when Mai Hume Jilmi, the eleventh ruler of Borno accepted Islam from the hands of Arab scholars and made it the state religion, it was a religion which was well known to his people (Mustapha, 1987).

In Hausa land, Islam became spread in the 14th century when various rulers of the Hausa states of Kano, Katsina, Zazzau and others accepted Islam. In the case of the Hausa state Wangara traders from Mali spread Islam. Since the acceptance of Islam by the people of Borno and Hausa land, Islam became central in the lives of the people, affecting their daily life and relations with other people. Economic relations, cultural interactions and other forms of relations existed between the Muslims and non-Muslims across the entire country even before the coming and acceptance of Christianity by the non-Muslims in the country. There was peaceful co-existence despite mutual disagreements and suspicion of each other by the two

groups. Islam came with the art of writing – in Arabic and using this medium, the people could read and write in their various languages such as Kanuri, Fulfulde and Hausa for centuries before the coming of the British. The son of Mai Salma (1194–1220) of Borno was said to have been instructed in the contents of 150 Islamic books by a Muslim scholar as early as the thirteenth century (Stride and Ifeka, 1977: 116).

The *Ulama* (scholars constituted a distinct group of people in the Muslim society – they created challenging intellectual environment which was characterized by the fruitful academic disputations and debate, publishing of books, poems etc on several subjects. And in the nineteenth century jihad leaders wrote and taught hundreds of books to people. In short, the scholars were philosophers, teachers, preachers and vanguards of reforms and revolution in the society (Last, 1977).

As advisers to the various rulers of Borno and Hausa land such as Mai Ali Gaji, Idris Aloma (Borno), Sarki Muhammad Rumfa (Kano) and Muhammad Rabo (Zazzau) the *ulama* were the brain behind the Islamic reforms which were carried out by the rulers. But in the nineteenth century the scholars themselves led a ‘religious revolution’ following the failure of Muslim rulers to live and lead their people in accordance with religious injunctions. It is this revolution that is today known as the Sokoto Jihad. Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio, his brother Abdullahi bn Fodio and son Muhammad Bello among others led the jihad. They fought war, taught, preached, wrote books and poems and administered the state among other things. Their quest for knowledge was not in order to earn a degree, become a professor or arrogant members of the society. It was in order to purify themselves, become good people and servants of Allah and to change the society for better. It must be pointed out that the jihad leaders did not just wake up one morning and decided to take up their swords against the people. The leaders first of all acquired education, then self-clarification or purity, teaching and finally preaching to the people. The sword, which they took up against the rulers, was forced on them. And in any case it was the last resort.

Primarily, the jihad was not a war against unbelievers. It was aimed at reforming Islamic practices, which had over time become corrupted as well as compelling Hausa rulers to rule in accordance with the provisions of Shariah, which they had abandoned. This is why today the Hausa people remember Sheikh Usman Dan Fodiyo as *Mujaddadi* (i.e. Reformer – one who emphasizes or enforces Sharia). It is important to mention in specific terms some of the issues at stake in the jihad: over-taxation of the peasantry, expropriation of fertile land from them and the oppression of women. In contemporary Nigeria today, these ills are still with us in one form or another.

Constitutional Developments/Written Laws

Throughout the pre-colonial period, Islam provided Kanem-Borno and Hausa states with ideological direction. The provisions of the Qur’an and Sunna guided the political leadership at least in theory. In addition some states also had written constitutions whose provisions were derived from the principles of Islamic law. The state of Kanem was ruled under a constitution, which was called MUNE. This document is believed to have originated from Sayyidina Ali (R.A) the fourth caliph. The second constitution of Kanem – Borno was known as Kitab al Borno, which came into existence in the 15th century as a result of political turbulence and instability. The third constitution was written in the 19th century. It was called *Idarah* (Mustapha 1987: 297). Turning to the Hausa states, Kano’s first constitution was written for Sarki Muhammad Rumfa by an Islamic scholar known as Muhammad Abdulkareem al-Maghili in the 15th century. It was entitled ‘**The Obligation of Princes**. The second Kano constitution was written in the 19th century in the wake of the jihad by Shekh Abdullahi bn Fodio. It was called *Diya ul-Hukkam*. In the case of Katsina, the same scholar who wrote that of Kano – al-Maghili wrote its first constitution, which was titled ‘**The Crown of Faith**’, for its rulers in the 15th century. The second constitution of Katsina was written in

the 19th century during the reign of Umaru Dallaji. Muhammad Bello, the son of Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio was its author. The point being made here is that in the pre-colonial period, states were guided by written constitutions, which were changed from time to time according to the circumstances in which the people found themselves.

Another important point, which needs to be pointed out, is that these states were highly tolerant of strangers whom they easily accommodated and assimilated peacefully through routine interaction such as marriages, trade and religious activities. In Kano for example, the Arabs, Yoruba, Nupe, Agalawa, Kanuri and several other ethnic groups all had their quarters in the city where they lived and transacted their business as one people under the banner of Islam. Although their descendants have ever since become Hausanised the traces of their ancestral descent remains in the name of their quarters. Now let us summarize our heritage: Islam... Islamic education, Constitutions and Islamic world outlook.

Women in History: in Nigerian history, women have occupied important positions in society. They were active participants in the affairs of the society. In number of societies in the Nigerian area women occupied key positions or played important roles in the lives of their people. In Borno, the *Magira* (Queen Mother) was a very prominent member of the Administration. The mother of Idris Aloma who was the most famous of the Mais of Borno, Magira Aisha, held the regency of Borno for ten years (1562–1572) before Idris Aloma became matured enough to run the affairs of the state of Kanem–Borno. During this period, “she governed wisely and trained Idris Aloma in the duties of Islamic kingship” (Stride and Ifeka, 1977: 120). The Magira had more fiefs than any other title holder in Borno. Each of the fiefs was said to have contained a thousand slaves. She commanded the respect of all the Mais subjects. Apart from the Magira there was also the Gumsu the first wife of the Mai who had control over the administration of the palace (Usman and Alaki, 1983: 107). In Hausa land, there were women rulers or Queens such as Tawa of Gobir and Amina of Zazzau (1536–1576). The latter was the eldest daughter of another female ruler known as Bakwa Turunku who had earlier established the towns of Turunku and later Zaria.

According to the Sultan Muhammad Bello of Sokoto she made war upon these countries and overcame them entirely so that the people of Katsina paid tribute to her and the men of Kano. She made war on the cities of Bauchi till her kingdom reached to the sea in the south and southwest. Soon other rulers sent gifts. The ruler of Nupe sent forty eunuchs and 10,000 kola nuts. Traditions credit her with being the first to have such luxuries in Hausaland (David 1984: 25).

For Shehu Usman bn Fodio, it was better to educate women of all categories than to simply keep them in seclusion and ignorance. The result was that the jihad leaders created a long list of educated women and scholars from their wives and children. Nana Asmau (1793–1864) the daughter of Shehu Usman became a famous scholar and teacher in Hausaland (Azeeza 2000: 16).

The most topical issue now is gender politics. We freely talk about the oppression of women and the need to liberate them in the context of western civilization as if we have no historical antecedent to guide us. In other words, ‘oppression’ and ‘freedom’ are defined most times uncritically. When the jihadist talked about women, they were concerned specifically with the need to educate them and treat them with dignity as human beings whose rights must be protected and not abused by the state or community. Western societies today seek to free women from religion and its moral web and throw them into the world of capital, of free enterprise where they can be purchased used and abused like any other commodity in the market. The popular cliché now are gender inequality, women empowerment and affirmative action among others.

Some women in Nigerian history:

- Benin Kingdom, the Queen Mother had a fief and Princes Idiaho of Benin Kingdom after whom the Idiaho College was named.
- Inikpin of Igala Kingdom.
- Queen Amina of Zazzau (After whom Amina Hall of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria was named).
- Nana Asmau – after whom the Nana Hall of Bayero University, Kano, was named.

The role of Museums and Monuments: Earlier in this paper we stated that historians use artefacts or material products left behind by man in the study of the past. Different societies have over the centuries devised ways of preserving some of these materials especially what they considered to be very important to the understanding of their history. It is in this respect that the Museum becomes relevant. The question then is what is a Museum? It is an institution which is charged with the responsibility for the collection, preservation and display of natural and cultural objects in the society. Such objects are usually displayed or exhibited by the Museum for interested members of the public. In this way the history of our ancestors are not only preserved but also vividly re-created in a concrete way and transmitted from one generation to another (Onwuzolum, 1992: 78).

The Museum developed in stages in Nigeria as pointed out by (Okopo, 1992: 89).

- In 1972, Kenneth Murray, a British Art teacher in the Education Department of the British Colonial Office started the collection and preservation of Nigerian works of Arts.
- On July 28th 1943, the Nigerian Antiquities Services was inaugurated. In 1953, the National Antiquities Department was created under the Federal Department of Antiquities and was charged with the responsibility to discover, preserve and study the material culture of diverse people of Nigeria past and present.
- The National Commission for Museums and Monument was established by Decree No. 77 of 1979. The Commission manages several Museums spread across the country and established at different times; Esie (1945). Ife (1954), Lagos (1957), Oron (1958), Kano (1960), Owo (1968), Kaduna (1972) and Benin (1973).

Other Museums are located at several other towns and cities such as Lokoja, Akure, Umuahia and several other places. Some of the Museums are specialized that is dedicated to a particular course e.g. National War Museum at Umuahia preserves the relics of Nigerian civil war, while that of Lokoja is concerned with colonial history. It should be pointed out however that apart from the Museum a number of other institutions in the country in one way or the other also helps in the collection, preservation and management of historical artefact - material and non-material cultural resources. Such other institutions include: National Council for Arts and Culture, Centre for Black and African Arts Civilization, Nigerian Tourism Board, Nigerian Film Corporation, National Theatre (incorporating the National Troupe of Nigeria), National Gallery of Art, National Copyright Council.

While a monument on the other hand is a famous site or building structure that is preserved because of its historical, cultural or aesthetic importance. Some examples of important monuments in Nigeria includes Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa, Kano Ancient City Walls and Gates, Marina Slave History Museum in Calabar, tomb of Shehu Usman dan Fodio in Sokoto among others.

Conclusion: Let us conclude this paper by summarizing what we have discussed so far. Our ancestors have left for us a rich cultural heritage – material and non-material; weaving tools, iron implements, arts, good political organization and culture, peaceful co-existence, religion, education etc. We are blessed with historians who are not only conscious of the past but seek to understand, preserve it and relate with the present in a significant way. We have a history, make history and are historically proud of our history. Let us relate with other human beings from a position of strength and not weakness. We must study our past and present in order to

make progress and not simply romanticize our heritage and continue to sink into the abyss of darkness.

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