

**RACISM, HAMITIC HYPOTHESIS AND AFRICAN THEORIES OF ORIGIN: THE UNENDING DEBATE?**

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**Introduction**

From time, the history of man has always been characterised by divisions among human populations and communities. These divisions are what we refer to in the present study as dichotomy. Sometimes the challenge posed by dichotomy is found to be based on colour (complexion). At some other times, it is anchored on geographical contiguity of people living within a defined area. At the extreme level, too, shared historical experiences have been known to dictate the pace of dichotomy. In all these and more, what remains a recurring decimal is the issue of dichotomy, which, in our context, is seen as the culture of the Western man not only arrogating to himself the rights over nature, but also seeing himself as superior<sup>1</sup> to others. But going by the Biblical account in Genesis 1:26-27 (part of which reads, ‘Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image...’<sup>2</sup>), the question that could be asked is: Are there supposed to exist divisions among people(s). The challenge posed by the divisions among human groups has undeniably called for an interrogation of the issue of monogenesis of God’s creation. For, if all of human groups and persons were true descendants of one man, Adam, would there have been any basis of dichotomy or trichotomy of groups? In this case, would there have been any strong basis for the white race, so-called, to regard the blacks as the underdogs, who should always eat the crumbs from the masters’ table?

In the present study, we trace the origin and development of racism and hamitic hypothesis and try to know how the theories have been employed by the whites in their relation to the black communities of Africa. However, what appears curious is the continued cling of Nigerian groups to Europe and the Middle East as their origins. Sometimes attempts to do these may have been undertaken in line with the theory of monogenesis or as a way of proving a point of superiority over the indigenous and ‘inferior’ groups in Africa. The study, therefore, underlines that the success if any, of the theories lies in the support lent to them by Africans themselves. It then calls for a re-orientation of the Africans’ minds toward a de-colonised society. The paper has been divided into a number of parts, among which are the introduction; the origin and development of racism; the concept of Hamitic hypothesis; Hamitic Hypothesis, African History and the Rest of Us; as well as the Concluding Remarks.

### **Origin and Development of Racism**

So many years ago, Philip D. Curtin, believed to be one of the leading voices on African studies, published a journal article that tended to prick the sensibilities of Eurocentrists and their attitude toward Africa and the peoples of African descent. Entitled “Scientific” Racism<sup>3</sup> and the British theory of Empire<sup>4</sup>, Curtin, who at the time was an associate professor of History at the University of Wisconsin, United States of America, used the article to explain the phenomenon of xenophobia<sup>5</sup>, and how over time the European race had invented it in its relations with other human races of the global community. Xenophobia, he argues, is a natural human sentiment, however irrational or unpleasant, and from the beginning of European activity overseas it played its role in setting the tone of relations between Europeans and others they met in various corners of the globe. According to him, apart from the fact that xenophobia dictated the tone and pattern of relations during the age of European colonisation, it happened to have also found itself in European racial thought and applications. These, he further posits, could be seen at another level in the European theories of empires, which considered race difference from the height of systematic knowledge and from that position laid out the proper aims of “native policy”<sup>6</sup>.

The idea about xenophobia and “scientific” racism may have gained popularity in Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. To this end, many scholars, especially anthropologists and Christian theologians wrote books and articles to express their opinions and positions on the vexed debate. For instance, for their part the Christian tradition held that God created mankind in his image and to this extent all men were spiritually equal in the sight of God<sup>7</sup>. But against this scriptural tradition there arose constant cultural misunderstanding and conflict of interest all around the periphery of European activity. Dominant in these circles was that non-Europeans were an inferior stock. For example, Juan Gines de Sepulveda in sixteenth century Spain and some of the English Puritans of the early seventeenth century saw this inferiority in terms that were still, within wide limits, theologically orthodox. Besides, by 1655 Isaac Peyrere published his *Prae-Adamitae* in which he claimed that most non-Europeans were not descendants of Adam at all, but were rather the products of a separate creation<sup>8</sup>.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, a new element was added to the debate on the development of xenophobia. With the growth of respect for scientific knowledge, some Europeans began to set racial thought in more “scientific” terms. They claimed to prove the innate superiority of one race and the inferiority of all others by what passed for rational and objective demonstration. Undoubtedly, discussions of the origin, classification, and abilities of the various types of *homo sapiens* became increasingly important from the 1770s onward, though the nature of the “scientific” discussion changed with the progress of scientific thought in general.

With the passage of time, “The Great Chain of Being” gradually fizzled out of the picture. Thus, in the early nineteenth century, there emerged a prolonged debate between the monogenists, who believed in single creation for all races, and the polygenists, who believed that God had created each different race of men by a separate act. When phrenology became popular, the inferiority of the “lower races” was proven by phrenological arguments. However, with the decline of phrenology, the racists turned instead to evolutionary arguments tuned to the rising note of evolutionary thought.<sup>9</sup>

As stated earlier, at first the acceptance of “scientific” racism was slow, especially among the orthodox Christians. The orthodox Christians in particular were reluctant to admit the alleged multiplicity of creations, and the rising tide of “scientific” racism was held back in Britain during the early years of the nineteenth century by the opposition of James Cowles

Pritchard, the most respected anthropologist of the 1830s and 1840s<sup>10</sup>. But these oppositions notwithstanding by the second half of the nineteenth century, religious orthodoxy had weakened in scientific circles. The result was that the racist position became increasingly popular by the 1850s<sup>11</sup>.

Apart from the issues raised in the foregoing paragraphs, over time, it appears, the phenomenon of “scientific” racism was over popularised and supported by Darwin’s idea of evolution of man and the hamitic hypothesis. But how long did this last? By the end of World War II, the phenomenon of “scientific” racism was intellectually dead and politically damned by the Nazi defeat and the concerted efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)<sup>12</sup> and other world organisations and institutions<sup>13</sup>. Although, dead in theory the question that may be asked is: Is racism practically dead all over the world?<sup>14</sup>.

### **Hamitic Hypothesis**

At this point, it might be appropriate to consider the concept of Hamitic hypothesis, and attempt how it relates to the present study. The concept of Hamitic hypothesis is known to have derived its origin and relevance to the belief that Africans as a people lack the ingenuity to initiate any developmental projects of a high value in the form of culture, agriculture and statecraft. They are bereft of the initiatives to found and build kingdoms. According to C.R. Seligman, the proponent of the Hamitic Hypothesis,

... the history of the African South of the Sahara is no more than the story of the permeation through the ages in different degrees and at various times of the Negroes and Bushmen by hamitic blood and culture. The Hermites were, in fact, the great civilizing force of Black African a relatively early period<sup>15</sup>.

By implication, what Seligman appears to have said is that Africans south of the Sahara had waited to be conquered and civilised by the “almighty” Caucasians such as the Phoenicians (Carthaginians) or Arabs. Probably until this age of conquest and civilisation Africans would have remained in a state of barbarism and disintegration. Clearly put, the essence of the hamitic hypothesis is predicated on the fact that the civilisation of Africa is not indigenous, but imported; one which either “degenerates” with time or is “taken over” by the indigenes<sup>16</sup>.

To better appreciate the ‘precarious’ nature of African culture *vis-à-vis* European idea of other races, especially African groups, it may be necessary to take excerpts from Thomas Arnold’s interpretation of European history. According to this Regius Professor of History in his inaugural lecture which he delivered in 1841 at the Oxford University, London, the history of human progress was the story of successive achievements by a line of creative races, each of which fulfilled its natural capabilities and then passed on the produce of its work to a still stronger race—Greece to Rome through the superior Germanic peoples of Northern Europe. However, with the Germans the process reached its termination, he added. Arnold further stated that there was no stronger race, and, therefore, the present stage of history was the last stage. To this end, other races, he concluded, would either receive their culture in its entirety from the West, or being unable to absorb it, would dwindle away in the presence of a more powerful life and at last become extinct<sup>17</sup>. Till date this arrogant posturing of the West may not have changed as often made manifest in their attitude towards the non-white groups.

But contrary to the foregoing idealisation about the possible extinction of any groups that were unable to absorb the culture of the so-called superior races, it was to be observed that sometimes they waxed strong on their own. Dr Robert Knox’s predictions

about the possible overthrow of the strong by the weak would over time come through instead. Knox had, in his book, *Races of Man: A Fragment*,<sup>18</sup> argued that the Negroes had already expelled the French in Haiti and might soon expel other Europeans from the West Indies, Brazil and that they would certainly prevent any effective European occupation of Africa. Although the year (1850) when Knox's book was published marked the early phase of European subjugation of Africa, the locals did not seem to have welcome European colonialists in any parts of Africa. For from about this period until about the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Africans in their different clime, struggled against European rule<sup>19</sup>. The result of this struggle was the attainment of political independence by most African countries in 1960.

### **Racism, Hamitic Hypothesis, African History and the Rest of Us**

As may be inferred from the discussions in the foregoing paragraphs, the prediction about a possible extinction of a less powerful race or group in the presence of a more powerful life or group, may not have applied to African groups, even with the sophisticated European rule over Africans in the twentieth century. The locals, as already pointed out, showed their disapproval of foreign rule- at least in the areas of politics and economics. However, what sometimes appears intriguing is the continued identification of African groups with foreign origins. Perhaps more often than not, those who subscribe to the idea about the foreign origins of African groups have as their mindset the superiority of foreign cultures over and above the "inferior indigenous cultures" of Africa. As A.J. Davis may have averred:

Sometimes this view [about the hamitic hypothesis] is helped by the ideas of Africans about their past, when, for instance, some have traced their original ancestors from either Egypt, North Africa or from Arabia. Theoretically, this view is based upon the hypothesis that when kingdoms expanded by conquest (more particularly by dynastic effort) the conquering groups superimposed their possessive claims to the land they conquered and controlled upon the land the original inhabitants because "powerful Kingdoms do what they must"<sup>20</sup>.

Perhaps, it would be appropriate to point out here (before giving one or two examples of African groups who pride themselves as offshoots of the groups outside Africa) to state, in the light of the foregoing quotation, that even the non-African scholars and commentators appear to have taken the lead in proposing the thesis about the foreign origins of African groups and peoples. For example, during the colonial era in Nigeria, some European minds, due to their poor or limited understanding of the African and his worldview, tended to have made an unfair assessment of the people's history and cultural values<sup>21</sup>. Thus, persons like P.A. Talbot<sup>22</sup> and George T. Basden<sup>23</sup> (whether as anthropologists or missionaries) would consign the origins of some Nigerian groups to either Egypt or the Middle Egypt. Surprisingly, too, Nigerians are known to have aligned their thoughts with such an enterprise. The reality of this assertion could be gleaned from Samuel O. Johnson's book, *The History of the Yorubas* and Olumide Luca's, *The Religions of the Yoruba in Relation to Ancient Egypt*<sup>24</sup>.

At this point, we may consider some case studies to sustain the validity of the general belief among Africans about their out-of-Africa origin. In his book earlier referred to in this study, the Rev. Samuel Johnson has argued that Yoruba history though revolves around obscurity, could be traced to the Middle East. He maintains that:

The origin of the Yoruba nation is involved in obscurity. Like the early history of most nations the commonly received accounts are for the most part purely legendary. The people being unlettered, and the language unwritten all that is known is from traditions carefully handed down..... The Yoruba are said to have sprung from Lamurudu one of the kings of Mecca whose offspring were-Oduduwa,

the ancestor of the Yorubas, the kings of Gogobiri and of the Kukawa, two tribes in the Hausa country<sup>25</sup>.

While Johnson's book was published in 1921, it may be apt to state that decades later, other studies (many of them by scholars of Yoruba extraction) tended to have upheld his pioneer thesis. For instance, Lucas' study tends to incline towards the Middle East direction as the origin of the Yoruba people. On his part, a non-African, Talbot, attempts to associate the Yoruba origin with Egypt. This association would probably have stemmed from the fact that the Yoruba maintained what he described as a "well-organized" system of life that could be likened to the Egyptians'.<sup>26</sup>

Among other Nigerian historians whose study appears to have cast some admiration at the hamitic theory is Jacob Egharevba. In his attempt to prove the superiority of the Bini over and above other Nigerian groups (particularly the Yoruba) Egharevba might have invented and upheld the foreign origin theory of the Bini. According to him,

...many, many years ago, the Binis came  
from the way from Egypt to found a more secure  
shelter in this part of the world after a short  
stay in the Sudan and at Ille-Ife which the  
Bini people called Uhe.<sup>27</sup>

The foregoing may not be the last on the list of African groups that have developed the penchant for the foreign or outside-Africa theory of their origins. In fact, not prepared to be left out of the race, the Igbo of Nigeria have since thrown their hat into the ring. Apart from the earlier thesis developed by Basden, a white missionary of the Anglican denomination, tracing the origin of the Igbo to the Hebrew of the Middle East, some Igbo writers in the subsequent years have written to suggest the Israeli origin of the people. Often such claims about the Jewish origin by Igbo writers tend to find a fulcrum in establishing Biblical linkages and similarities between the Igbo and the Jewish cultures<sup>28</sup>. According to Basden's thesis referred to earlier in this study,

... the Ibo [Igbo] people, like their Yoruba neighbour at some remote time either actually lived near or had very close association with the Semitic races. The successive waves of invasion from the North-East Africa d own through Egypt passed the people to the South-West. As waves after waves came they were born onward, until, finally, the Ibos came to rest today, and throughout the ages they have restrained ideas and customs headed down from generations to generations<sup>29</sup>.

The question that arises from the above is: Who were the Semitic races? These were the Hebrews and Arabs of the Middle East (Palestine), who no doubt had developed some level of sophistication in their earlier culture. But does the possession of a superior culture a legitimacy for the conquest of other races or groups? That the Arabs dominated the disparate peoples such as the Greeks of the Eastern Europe, Persians or Nindus when they did, never made their civilisation original and superior to the civilisations of these conquered peoples<sup>30</sup>. Perhaps, we shall return to this issue of legitimation of aggression in the name of civilisation later on.

If, perhaps, there is any ethnic group in Africa with identity crisis of origin, it appears to be the Igbo. And this dates back in times. Sometimes this crisis is said to manifest in the acephalous nature of the people's political culture. Over the years, many Igbo village groups and culture areas have tended to trace their origins to diverse sources. For instance, the Onitsha and other Western Igbo groups do often look up to the Bini as their original homeland<sup>31</sup>. This claim is by implication an extension of the Egyptian origin and influence earlier referred to in this study.

On their part, the Nri clan lays claim to the Igala as its origin<sup>32</sup>. On the far end, the people who occupy the North-east of the Igbo country tend to trace their origin to Ogoja and Ekoi (both in the present Cross River basin of Nigeria)<sup>33</sup>. However, beyond these claims, and in order to show some level of superiority over other Igbo culture areas, the *Oke-Igbo* (simply, the Aro) have a fanciful story to tell about their origin. They maintain that they are the descendants of “the Jewish community who were expelled from Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella”<sup>34</sup>. In tracing their origin to a place outside Africa, it must be stressed, the Aro, whose indigenous homeland is close to the Cross River, and who are strategically positioned with regard to the Igbo to the North and West and the Efik and Ibibio to the East and South, appear to have justified their claim of “superior civilisation” through their many centuries of domination of other Igbo groups and Ibibio settlements. They were said to have accomplished this feat through the influence of their famous oracle, *Ibini Ukpabi*, which the British styled, the Long Juju<sup>35</sup>.

The crisis that characterises the origin of the Igbo may have come to the open in the course of the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), and perhaps immediately after that civil strife<sup>36</sup>. With the end of the war in 1970 saw many Igbo communities, especially the Igbo border communities in the Rivers and Mid-west (now Delta) States disclaiming their Igbo origin, while interestingly, at the same time, holding to “every Igbo culture ranging from the language to the least of all the traits”<sup>37</sup>. In some of these fringe communities, the leaders ‘smartly’ disclaimed their Igboness through the change in the names of their towns and villages. In Rivers State, for instance, they did this by prefixing “R”. Ben Nwabueze, one of Nigeria’s finest constitutional lawyers, has this to offer about this post-civil war development:

Some of the Igbo border communities in Bendel (now Delta) State as well as those in and around Port-Harcourt now strenuously disclaim the Igbo identity. The disclaimer is manifested in practical terms by the latter changing the names of their villages by prefixing them with an ‘R’ so that Umuokoro becomes Rumokoro...

The intension[sic] is to make them not to look and sound Igbo names<sup>38</sup>.

The above shows how much the Igbo origin may have been distorted over the years. For instance, in the Mid-west (now Delta) State names such as Igbo-Uzo were converted to Ibusa or Ibuzo<sup>39</sup>.

At best, it can only be said that some of these claims and counter-claims about the origin of the Igbo are good for what they set out to achieve: an advancement of the cause of certain elements; but they lack historical evidence and basis. Basil Davidson, a British journalist-turned historian, who spent a greater part of his life researching on Africa, has argued that such “inarticulate major premise”, as the Igbo Jewish origin, has no foundation in the facts, whether for ancient Africa or for relatively modern Africa<sup>40</sup>. As at August 2013, this craze about the Jewish origin of the Igbo received some detailed analysis in one of Nigeria’s leading newspapers. In a weekly analysis, a columnist that goes by a pen-name Gbogun gboro decried the over-bearing penchant for Jewish origin by the Igbo. As he would put it:

Many Igbo citizens are now clamouring that the Igbo nation is one of the lost tribes of Israeli. In short, they are now happily reasserting something that their Nigerian and other historians have fought and struck down that the course of the past 60 years – namely, the European claim that Blackman is too primitive, and too immature, to develop any serious culture, and that any signs of cultural achievement found among any black nation must have somehow come there from some culturally more capable Middle Eastern people. Many Igbo people are now

saying something blatantly untrue – namely, that the art of Igbo Ukwu, the evidence of Igbo skills in metal fabrications, the Igbo capacity as traders, etc, all came from the culture of the Jewish people, and that the Igbo people themselves could never have developed such high levels of culture or civilization. Why are we now engaging in self-denigration – why are we doing this harm and ignoring the best facts that the best in historical scholarship and various other sciences have established quite definitively in our times?<sup>41</sup>

Among the Efik of old Calabar, too, this romanticism with the foreign source of origin appears to have been upheld. But the people are not keen about any foreign source, but are particular about the orient. After what appears to be a balanced interpretation of African history, Efiog U. Aye is seen to have succumbed to the agents of hamitic hypothesis. In his book<sup>42</sup>, Aye has upheld the idea about interactions of human groups, fusion of languages and their eventual settlement. According to him,

Centuries of human migrations had shifted groups of people from one environment to another; there had been mingling of races; sometimes one ethnic group would mingle with another and both were forced by strokes of circumstances to split and re-split; one language had fused into another to develop a hybrid tongue, and customs and traditions had clashed and mingled<sup>43</sup>.

In all probability, we can infer from the foregoing that in time past, there occurred some crisis-crossing of human groups in parts of the world. This could not have been one-sided: it could have been from the North and the East to the South of the Sahara Desert. For instance, in a news magazine of October 2010, historian Marika Sherwood showed how much Africans contributed to the building of Roman Britain over 2000 years ago. Though these Africans no doubt could have gone to Britain through forced migration in the form of the trans-Saharan trade, their cultural contributions towards the building of Britain could not have been under-valued. Their contributions were in areas such as culture, military among others<sup>44</sup>. We do know, too, that even the trans-Saharan trade was not one-sided. It involved exchange of trade items between West Africans and North Africans, including the Mediterranean world<sup>45</sup>.

To better understand the level of migration northward from the African region may require that the reader should cast their mind to the harsh conditions of African environment centuries ago. It is said that these conditions, especially in East Africa, might have necessitated the migration of the Bantu groups from East Africa to the Middle East and Yemen. According to Okeke Ifezue and Josiah Ezeama:

Owing to harsh conditions of the East African environment around the present Malawi, Tanzania, the East African Rift Valley system, the first movement was northwards through the present Sudan, Egypt, Middle East and into the Peninsula of Yemen. At that time the peninsula of Yemen was joined to the horn of Africa without any water break. That must be during the era of Gondwanaland with free flow of human tribes from Africa into the Middle East. By then the desert of Saudi Arabia had not fully developed, so the Bantus moved freely to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers up to Ur of the Chaldees. They reached as far as Armenia, which lies to the South east of former USSR. Armenia had been a very ancient civilisation. It is probable that this very early movement of the Bantus eventually started the early known civilisation in Ur of the Chaldees between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers<sup>46</sup>.

The following shows the extent of migration of human population and culture from Africa to the Middle East, and indeed to Europe, even before the age of the international slave trade on Africans.

However, what remains tragic is the admission by Aye that the Efik of old Calabar originated from the Middle East, although he is quick to point out that he is not sure about the stock to which they (the Efik) belonged in the Middle East. Let us quote (again) from his book:

The origin of the Efik people points to the orient; but from what oriental stock they had their origin is a burning question that is still claiming my attention. The ancestors of the Efiks seemed to have migrated across the Sudan to West Sudan in the early years of the second millennium A.D. This migration falls within the periods of the general migrations of people into West Africa from North and East during the formative periods of Western Sudan. They seemed to have been many, but suffered constant split in their ranks as evidenced by their linguistic links of the races between the Cross River and the Congo. It has sometimes been maintained that one branch had arrived on the coast near cape Three Points around Sekondi before the ancestors of the Efiks moved east<sup>47</sup>.

He further maintains that the Efik journeyed eastward along the Benue valley leading straight south into the undulating Igbo country and that they made their first settlements among the Igbo of the Itu Mbauzo, Ibom and Ututu in the vicinity of Arochukwu<sup>48</sup>.

The thesis about the southward migration of the Efik, if accepted, suggests a number of things. First, it suggests the movement of a group from a point to another-although, Etubom Aye would not disclose to his reader the reason for the people's departure from the Middle East. Secondly, in stating that the migrating Efik met the Igbo of Itu Mbauzo, the Ibom (possibly the Ibibio) and the Aro (another group of the Igbo) when they arrived, he seems to have established a fact about the existence of an indigenous African culture in that region of Nigeria.

### **Concluding Remarks: Situating African History**

Reminiscing on our discussion so far, one may be tempted to interrogate the rational among Nigerians in wanting to trace their roots to places outside the African continent. Could this be a conspiracy of self-condemnation or a rabid nationalism of self-esteem? A reading of the European idealisation of anything African sometimes presents a picture of the North-South divide or better put, apex-base relation. As may have been captured in the introductory part of the study, often non-Europeans, especially the Negroes and Africans are perceived by the West as the inferior stock who can only be seen but not heard. The truth that must be told, however, is that it is not the idealisation of Africans by the West that should be the determining factor, but what Africans think of themselves. May be for those Africans and African historians that still align themselves with the notion of the North-South migration of African groups, it may be appropriate to heed the warning and advice of Edward Hallet Carr, when he says, inter-alia:

...Freud... has encouraged the historian to examine himself and his own position in history, the motives- perhaps hidden motives- which have guided his choice of theme or period and his selection and interpretation of facts, the national and social

background which has determined his angle of vision, the conception of the future which shapes his conception of the past<sup>49</sup>.

Carr adds that since Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud wrote, the historian has no excuse to think of himself as a detached individual standing outside society and outside history. This is the age of self-consciousness, Carr concludes, and the historian can and should know what he is doing<sup>50</sup>.

Carr's timely advice, it must be underlined, would undoubtedly have become relevant in the context of reconstructing Nigerian history. To do this in a more judicious and expeditious manner requires a re-orientation and de-colonisation of the Nigerian minds, particularly those of the historians.

The Nigerian historian, as the guardian of the society's culture, owes it a duty to re-orientate the people's minds towards a better understanding of their history. There exists an abundance of archaeological and linguistic evidence to show that about the time the Causasian peoples were developing their states, Africans were (also) independently setting up their own governments. Maybe Ray Periswerk and Dominique Perrot will help us to understand this better when they argue that "man has inhabited Ethiopia since prehistoric times. Several thousand years ago, these first settlements were invaded by the Kouchites"<sup>51</sup>.

But who were the Ethiopians invaded by the Kouchites? They probably were black Africans. In an apparent attempt to distinguish between the Libyans and Berbers of North Africa (said to be the original descendants of the Biblical cursed Ham, hence the terms 'Hamite' and 'Hamitic') the both Greek and Arab geographers have invented the concept *al-Sudan* or Ethiopians (or simply the 'dark-skinned men') in their description of the more southerly Africans<sup>52</sup>. It is thus obvious that the vandals (here referred to as the Kouchites) could not have invaded a *tabula rasa*-but the sprawling African settlements, including the people's cultures, when they did.

As may be gleaned from the study, Africans, nay Nigerians may not successfully comprehend their history through the prism of the Eurocentric value<sup>53</sup> - which supposedly means that any culture that has not originated from the West is unhistorical. They should, of necessity, bend backward inwardly as the Dikes of the 1950s and 1960s, to free themselves from historical enslavement. The Dikes as agents of change introduced elements such as the use of oral traditions<sup>54</sup>, archaeological and linguistic evidence, among others, to prove the worth of Africans and their history.

As the Igbo will always say, no matter how much love a man lavishes on the son of his girl-friend, the boy (son) will not accept him as his father. In like manner, the histories of the Nigerian communities may hardly become the history of the West or that of the Middle East by mere confessions or admissions that lack evidential truth. For now it can only serve as a projection of self-esteem in the minds of the proponents. But for how long does this last? As Adiele E. Afigbo will argue:

The significance of these claims to Egyptian, or at any rate to Middle Eastern origin, belongs to the wider framework of West African history and sociology as they are found amongst most West

African peoples whether they inhabit the savanna or forest zones, are Islamized or not. It is quite clear, however, that in the present state of our knowledge about West Africa, they cannot be taken seriously by the serious students of Igbo history<sup>55</sup>.

There must, therefore, be a re-think and re-direction of the ideas and actions of Nigerians in line with the UNESCO directive to the new African historiography to concentrate effort on the evolution of indigenous societies on the continent<sup>56</sup>.

Undeniably, African historians and governments must be on the vanguard for the actualisation of this project.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Preiswerk and Perrot, *Ethnocentricism and History*, p.4
2. See The New World Translation of the Holy Scripture.
3. The concept “racism” in our concept is employed to show the presence of racially different groups possessing some attributes of biological heredity and cultural peculiarities. Roy Preiswerk and Dominique Perrot have argued that, in the strictest sense of the term, racism “consists of attributing to biological heredity the cultural peculiarities of a group which has highly distinctive physical features....requires the presence of racially different groups”. See Preiswerk and Perrot, *Ethnocentricism and History: Africa, Asia, and Indian America in Western Textbooks*. (New York: Nok Publishers International Ltd, 1978), p.p.16-17.
4. The reader may see P.D. Curtin ‘ “Scientific” Racism and the British theory of Empire,’ *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria (JHSN) vol 2 No 1 December 1960 (Independence Issue)* p.p. 40-51; Curtin *Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964.
5. The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* 6<sup>th</sup> edition, has defined xenophobia as “a strong feeling of dislike or fear of people from other countries.” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 1385.
6. Curtin, “Scientific” Racism...’ p.40.
7. See J.H. Parry, *The Spanish theory of Empire in the Sixteenth Century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p.p. 27-43; H.H. Pearce, *The Savage of America* as cited in Curtin, ‘ “Scientific” Racism...’
8. T. Bendyshe, “The History of Anthropology”, *Memoirs Read Before the Anthropological Society of London*. (1863-64), p. 335 as cited in Curtin, ‘ “Scientific” Racism...’ p. 41.
9. Curtin, ‘ “Scientific” Racism...’ p.p. 41-42.
10. James C. Pritchard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man (1813)* as cited in Curtin, ‘ “Scientific” Racism ...’ p. 42.
11. Curtin ‘ “Scientific” Racism...’ p. 42.
12. The reader may see E.W. Count, “The Evolution of the Race Idea in Modern Western Culture During the Period of the Pre-Darwinian Nineteenth Century” *Transactions of the New York Academic Science* vol viii (1946), p.p. 139-165.
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32. Humphrey Kanayo Akaolisa, *Igbo Race: Origin and Controversies*. (Awka: Buckstar Publishers, 2003) p.6.: See also A.E. Afigbo, *The Igbo and their Neighbours* (Ibadan: University Press, 1987), Chapter 2.
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