

## **HISTORY, RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION IN NIGERIA: THE RELEVANCE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Basically, this paper historicized the efforts to develop historical research and its documentation in Nigeria. It establishes the relationship between oral tradition and oral history. By this, the relevance between oral tradition and the subject of history is analysed. In explaining the relationship between oral tradition and history, issues of preservation, documentation and distortion arises. Therefore, this paper tries to analyse the treatment given to oral traditions in the field of history. Furthermore, the role of professional historians and the history of intellectual trends of the mid-twentieth century in the use of oral tradition in discovering African past are appraised. From the foregoing, the challenges related to the use of oral history in the 20th century are examined with a view to establishing the importance of historical documentation to sustainable development.

**Keywords:** History, Historians, Oral Tradition, Preservation, Historical Research, Documentation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Oral traditions occur in many forms and they are transmitted from one generation to the other. They can be witnessed by the transmitter and it can be passed on. The most important issue germane to the continued existence of oral tradition is documentation. In the pre-colonial times, oral tradition in Africa was transmitted consciously or otherwise through re-enactment in daily activities. It was part of the people's culture which occurred during festivities. It is needless to say that the functioning of oral tradition has been limited. With regard to cultural education, it is of little or no significant value in contemporary times. The natures of oral traditions are peculiar to each community. Oral tradition is a key tool to the redemption of hidden histories of African peoples. A pertinent question to the limited use of oral tradition is the quest for evaluation. In the field of history, as it is perceived by the Historians of the mid-twentieth century, oral tradition was given a pace and an approach to its research and documentation. In spite of the efforts of the professional historians however, are oral traditions still portrayed as relevant? And if they are, to what extent has it addressed studies in contemporary African studies? It is within this context that this work attempts to interrogate.

## **CONTEXTUAL MEANINGS AND CLASSIFICATION OF ORAL TRADITION**

There are two forms of oral data-oral tradition and oral history. Oral statements may contain historical information and it may not. Various communities in Africa have both in common. The nature of oral tradition its classification and the way it will be put into use. In most African societies, oral tradition could be regarded as mere literature which occurs in forms of entertainment. In differing forms, oral traditions are re-enacted as part of daily activities. It is a totality of all that entails in man's life regarding culture, norms and values inherent in a society. Be it philosophical or ideological, its function and operation is very much attached to the environment in which it is being practiced.

Oral traditions occur in forms of entertainment which makes it highly verbal and communicative. Hence, it could be argued that of what relevance could it be to an Historian? It is pertinent to note that history as it is perceived in various societies varies and depends on the culture and society. Therefore, oral traditions despite its verbal and communicative nature are highly relevant to the field of history, In Africa, forms of oral traditions are obvious in songs, myth, legends, poems, popular sayings and so on. According to Stevens (1978, 21) oral tradition in all its forms can be categorized as folklore. Songs in African societies are of different types and for varying purposes. They can be designated for religious, social, economic and political purposes. It could be voice or voiceless and not necessarily to be applied the nature of songs and its application. In most African societies, songs are much celebrated and accustomed with dance festivals. These, among others, are various forms of songs which are to conform to what it is needed for. In the formation of songs, the personality of the composer becomes relevant because, content of the song might probably be transferred under tutelage or formed as an eye-witness of previous and present events. In most cases, songs are a compilation of events that occurred over time. Such events that are applauded in African societies include battles, economic breakthrough and other ceremonies which are of significance in the past and present. Popular Sayings or Popular History could be described to have evolved from traditions. They are a combination of other forms of oral tradition. The nature of popular saying in one community differs to another. It is a

dedicated to the re-enactment of activities that makes up daily life within a culture and society. It also forms part of what constitutes the laws and customs of the land after perceptions and value judgment are made by peoples in a society.

Legend is a historical narrative that delves mainly into explanations containing the traditions of origin. It presents facts about the issues and personalities associated with certain groups of peoples. It provides the possible information of peoples, their neighbors and the possible relationship that might have existed. It provides an elaborate view to the specific roles, places, events and fit likely names associated with such event. By the nature of songs and legend, linguistic interpretation becomes germane.

Myth is a branch of oral tradition that is quite disputable. It is very synonymous to the values of African culture and beliefs. Although, it is easily discarded in contemporary times because the establishment and practice of foreign religions makes its content absurd and inapplicable in the society. In spite of this, myth deals with the quest for knowledge, it brings into fore the meanings and reasons that are given to the causes of events. It might be discarded in contemporary times because it shows the relationship between the gods and human beings. Depending on its revelation, its relevance largely requires in depth scientific analysis to properly interpret its content and context. Its re-enactment is associated with traditional religious worship and consultation. In other words, designated-individuals in the society are expected to recite it as it applies to serve as a source of reminder. It is worthy of note that the forms of oral tradition are largely interwoven and are passed through generations of human institutions. With reference to popular history, it appears contemporary as changes occur in generations because it comprises experience of professionals such as farmers, hunters, and etcetera. The happenings witnessed in the course of such professionalism are consciously or otherwise accepted as part of norms in the culture and society where it occurred. However, the survival of popular history depended on the choice of the society whether to promote it or not as times pass on.

## **ORAL HISTORY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORIANS**

Oral history can be slightly distinguished from oral tradition in the sense that it is a recount that may be witnessed or not by the narrator. In other words it is purely a historical narrative. It is quite different from oral tradition by virtues of methodology as it is specifically assigned to certain sets of people in a society. In some African societies, it is a function of designated officers such as the Arokin in Oyo, The Griots in Sudan and Ihogbe in Benin. The function of these people is to take custody of the histories associated mostly with the palace in traditional societies. The oral historian brings into ^all the forms of oral tradition pertaining to a society in his memory.

Beyond the traditional societies, oral history is a general world phenomenon which has and still occurs in varying forms. It is peculiar to all cultures. For instance, Herodotus, a Greek historian of the fifth century is recognized in the western European tradition as the "father 'f history" (Alagoa, 1987, 2). This was because he himself was a professional transmitter of oral history in writing. It is pertinent to note that most eye-witness account in Europe is put into writing and it has constituted sources for writing in contemporary times.

Among the Arabs, the compilation of Quran itself was a combination of oral sources that were recorded on leaves, stones, and human memories and so on. The death of the witnesses informed the need to compile it into a book. The Hadith which is a second source of Islamic practice is also a compilation of the sayings and practice of Prophet Muhammad. They are historical narratives that are passed on to generations.

Probably, the advent of modern writing overshadowed the view that oral sources were in traditional forms of documentation. For example, the writings on walls and rocks represented the historical narratives of some events that had occurred in African past. In the Christian religion, the Bible is an account of national historical traditions recorded as a message of God to humanity through some chosen or anointed people. In contemporary African society the use and record of oral history has witnessed a lot of challenges which has been salvaged by the curious writings of W.H. Clarke in his *Travels and Explorations in Yorubaland* which was edited by J.A. Atanda (1972). As a pioneer missionary of the Baptist mission, he rendered an account of the four-year travel round Yorubaland in details. The book comprises two parts, the first is a vivid account of Clarke's travel in Yorubaland from 1854 to 1858 and the second part is a descriptive analysis of the history, environment and the political and cultural organization of Yoruba society on the basis of the direct witness had during his tour (1972, xvii).

By the end of Clarke's exploration in Yorubaland, the initial conception about the primitive nature of Africans as nonentities that has nothing to offer as development was discarded. As it is perceived by Europeans, Africans were seen as barbarians and uncivilized peoples. Since Clarke was already indoctrinated about this perception from childhood, thus he approached his tour with such bias. However by the end of his travels, he exclaimed that: "so greatly and so happily was I disappointed that I was almost ready, even at this early period to exclaim how poor Africans have been "belied". Towards the end of his travels after the visit to Bonn, he was convinced that Africans were not what they are perceived of and declared in a short address: Dear Sirs, your conclusion is wholly illogical based on a false hypothetical premise. They [the Yoruba] are not barbarous. They cultivate thousands of acres. They eat com, rice yams, potatoes, peas, etcetera, mutton, kid, beef and butter; [they] drink milk and ride fine horses, and sleep and drink and rejoice as the rest of mankind (Atanda, 1972, xviii).

The views expressed by Clarke were quite liberal and objective about the Yoruba. As an eye-witness, he maintained justice in summation, though the milieu in which he grew was bias to the nature and culture of Africans, but the witnesses to the oral traditions presented distortion free account which has been forever useful.

In addition to accounts of eye-witness on Yoruba history is Samuel Johnson's *History of Yorubas* (1921) presents a detailed account of the history, religion, social polity, manners and customs, it presents the relationship between Yoruba and non-Yoruba neighbours, among Yoruba groups and finally with the British protectorate. Unlike Clarke's work, Johnson's work was just an account which is more descriptive of the manner and customs of people. Clarke was analytical. Whether descriptive or analytical, both are indispensable in contemporary Yoruba historical studies.

In addition to the writings of the pioneer Christian missionaries, the earlier sources of oral history were recorded by the Arab-Africans. The writings were done by Arabic historians from Timbuktu in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The most prominent of the books are; *Tarikh al-Fattash* written by Muhammad Kati, *Tarikh al-Sudan* written by Abdul-Rahman al-Sadi. These books among others contributed immensely in explaining the relationship between Arabs and Africans and the impacts of such to the culture and society.

## **USES OF ORAL TRADITION IN HISTORY**

In examining the relationship, there is the need to recourse into the meaning of history. According to Carr (1961, 15), History is the:

Reciprocal social process of interaction between the historian and his facts... it is a dialogue between the past and the present; it is a dialogue not between abstract and isolated individuals but between society of today and Society of yesterday.

Thus history is about man and the society of the past the present and the future. It involves the study of all events that are related to humanity. It is a process of analyzing what man has done to the society and what the society has done to man in the past. It encompasses all aspects of life. It could be described as the package of the historian for the knowledge of the present. In traditional African societies, history is an art that occurs as part of daily life which is re-enacted for the knowledge of younger generations. In other words, stories of peoples are rendered as part of history and they are narrated to the youth to give an idea of what the society and culture was in the past.

In modern African societies, history is also made in daily activities through festivals in traditional settings, while the modern historian or Africanist in the academia subjects it into analysis and interpretation via writing. Furthermore, it is a people's collective memory which teaches man to behave wisely in the context of events and occurrences. Much as history could be described as a narrative or chronicle by those who understand less about it, it helps to determine the objective and reliable knowledge of human past (Akinola, 1993 1). In studying the human past, history thus interrelates with other disciplines.

The inter relationship with other disciplines is meant to authenticate the validity of oral tradition. The studies and information presented in other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences serves as a way of evaluating the oral sources. It helps in buttressing facts that are true and creates further research into contradictory evidence to establish the truth.

Historical presentation owes much to oral tradition; they are complements to each other. With the use of oral tradition, history explores other related disciplines to unravel obscurities associated with the content or message in oral tradition. The fields of archaeology, anthropology and linguistics among others become relevant. To understand the nature of the society, history requires an in depth analysis of the works of Sociologists and Anthropologists to understand the social behaviour and interactions and how it has changed over time. This assists the Historian in adducing the causes of change and its impact on people.

The limitations to the use of oral tradition in history are subject to distortions which tend to make them invalid. However there is the need for control, this control makes it imperative for the historian to of inquiry into the content of the tradition at hand. The nature of contemporary events can make some aspects of oral tradition hidden or probably exaggerated and this makes the task of the historian to become enormous in interpretation. For instance, the use of a particular group of people in a community requires questions about the tradition of origin, the roles of the people who were active anticipants or better put, prime mover of events. What informed their roles? Why did they act in such a way and how did this affect the society? The findings from other disciplines assist in solving the problems of inaccuracies attached to the passage of oral tradition and oral histories. For instance, the use of praise poems in historical analysis requires much incursion to linguistic interpretations to properly contextualise it.

In African history, most of these facts about human past are le in oral traditions. In studying the political economy or culture and society of Ibadan, it becomes germane to study the relationship among other Yoruba societies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is there and then that the tradition of origin of Ibadan becomes clearer. According to Awe (1974, 331), the analysis made on Ibadan portrayed praise poems (*oriki*) as a virile source useful in ristorical reconstruction. Generally, praise poems have contributed significantly to historical studies in Yoruba societies. As part of Yoruba oral literature, it cuts across living and non-living things. Some praise poems are very much attached to festivals and they are chanted. By chanting such poems, it heightens the vigour of the peoples involved. For instance, hi preparations for hunting expeditions in Yorubaland, *Ijala* (hunter's song) are chanted as part of the requirements for successful hunting and it is also done after hunting. By the content of the song, the names of past hunters and heroes as well as their bravery and qualities are brought into the memory of the hunters.

*Oriki*, according to Awe are the most common and significant which are used to describe and applaud the achievements of individual, lineages, or towns in Yorubaland. The practical concept of *Oriki* can be divided into three: the first-*oriki ilu* (praise poem for town) provides answers to the historical questions related to traditions of origin. In the case of Ibadan, *Oriki Ilu* has helped in providing explanations to the early history and the nature of the society, that:

Ibadan Kure!  
Ibadan here ki o to wo  
Ibadan mesiogo ni ile Oluyole  
Nibi ole gbe jare olohun  
Ibadan kii gbe onile bi ajeji  
A kii waye ka ma larun kan lara  
Ijagboro larun Ibadan (Awe, 1974,336)

#### Translation

Hail Ibadan! Home of warriors  
Ibadan the town about which you must make investigations

before you enter  
Ibadan, the child of Esi-the bush pig, the home of Oluyole  
The town where thieves get better of the rightful owners  
Ibadan which gives more succour to strangers than to  
indigenes  
It is impossible for any being in this world not to have a defect,  
Ibadan's blemish is its constant civil war.

A proper analysis of this oriki unravels the history of the town in a brief and concise manner. Being a home for warriors in its early period, it explained that the activities of the might have enhanced the series of expansion and subjugation that occurred with neighbouring states. It also protected and safeguards the security of small communities that served as safe haven for the warriors. According to the fourth verse of the poem, it shows that the policy of the warriors in providing succour increased the rate of migration to the town. In addition, the institution of slavery added to the population of migrants. AS a result of the activities of the warriors, the captured slaves gradually thrived in the town by engaging in meaningful occupation that sustained livelihoods. The fifth verse of the poem states the reference given to strangers than indigenes. This is corroborated in Falola's analysis of 'Power Relations and Social Interactions among Ibadan Slaves 1850-1900' (1987,97) which explains the priority given to slaves as a reward for the services rendered on the plantations owned by the warriors. Most importantly, the nature of Ibadan economy gradually made the slaves integrated as citizens. The junior slaves provided bulk of the labour needed on the farms (*oko egan*) under the supervision of the chief slaves. Therefore, the slaves settled and became permanent citizens.

A second type of praise poem is *oriki orile* (lineage poem). It gives the attributes and occupation of a family. Through this, the general history of the family is revealed, apart from the occupation, the religion of the ancestors is also revealed. Several constraints hinder the authenticity of oral tradition. The custodian might hide some facts due to political considerations. The fear of being marginalized by purposive larger groups causes distortions in the presentation of oral tradition in traditional African societies. In the other way, a community may present oral traditions that will make it extraordinarily superior to other groups. As generations pass on, oral traditions, alterations and modifications are implied to oral traditions to make it suitable for the knowledge and understanding of the present generation. For example the third verse in Ibadan praise poem cited earlier has permanently remained in obscurity. Esi was a man eating wild pigs who was said to be a threat to the environment while Oluyole was reigning. Another perspective to the problem is that the real meaning of Esi in contemporary times can not be explained. It is an archaic word. Hence it is quite difficult to properly analyse that verse in Ibadan praise poem.

Since modification has engulfed the nature of oral traditions in contemporary times, its authenticity at times remains unquestionable in the context of the interpretation given to it. Esi now interpreted as answer. This interpretation has now been attached to the expected attribute of an average Ibadan indigene. That in the case of any interrogation and insult, it is expected that Ibadan people will always have reply and answer to any statement.

The third category of praise poem is oriki inagije (individual personality). It comprises the attributes that makes the individual a gift to the society. It highlights the contributions such person has made in the society. It could be described as a form of biography. As it is in the praise poem of Aare Sanusi Latosisa of the late nineteenth century in Ibadan, who was one of the famous warriors and a leader in Ibadan from 1871 to 1885, it goes thus:

Sanusi oko won ni ile oko won loko  
Em jeje oko onile oko alejo  
O leru bi egbe baba e  
Ohun ti o wu Sanusi ni o le fi eru e se  
O le fi agbari aadota mu emu

#### Translation

Sanusi the courageous one in all places  
The fearful one who has control over everybody  
He has a number of slaves just like his father's equals  
He can do and undo with the slaves  
He can use the skulls of fifty of them to drink palm  
wine. (Falola, 1987,102)

This poem summarizes the attributes of Sanusi as a famous warrior in Ibadan who had absolute control over the activities of slaves in his custody. The last verse portrays him as an affluent and wealthy who monopolized the economy during his reign.

### **ORAL TRADITION, ORAL HISTORY AND HISTORIANS IN THE 20TH CENTURY**

In the redemption of African past, the function of the historian is enormous and delicate. Considering the comments made by Europeans on African peoples, it might be described as unyielding on the part of Europeans to encourage any African or non-European to embark on efforts to correct the view. The position was held that Africans were dwelling in primitive poverty in the modern age and not until the penetration of Europeans, the greatest part of the continent was without the wheel, the plough and almost without houses, without writing and so without history (Falola, 2000, 377). This position among others affected the nature of what constituted the curriculum to be taught in colonial established educational institutions in Africa. Professor Kenneth Dike emerged in the University College Ibadan as pioneer in reviving all the misconceptions about African culture and society. The need and zeal to write about Africa using oral traditions and oral testimonies heightened, having completed a PhD thesis on Trade and Politics in Niger Delta 1830-1885 in 1950. The opportunity to research on such a topic was not achieved on a platter of gold as Dike was being compelled to write on Imperial history possibly "The British Policy Towards...." His insistence was successful when the thesis was completed in 1950 (Falola, 2000,378) The curriculum on African history according to Ajayi (1990,27) were the ones taught in the University of London. With exception of a course- 'A History of Africa since 1450' the other courses were related to English history, European history, History of the

British empire, Evolution of the Commonwealth among others. As at this period, knowledge of the African past was rare and it was quite difficult to convince foreign teachers to effect change.

With the success of Dike in writing a thesis through oral tradition and oral histories which is central to Africans, there was the insistence that courses in African history be introduced at the University College Ibadan. It was the aim of Europeans that Africans should be taught how Africans were colonized by alien races. However, the insistence on the curriculum did not yield in changing the composition of courses; therefore further steps were taken to achieve desired goals.

In achieving the desired goals, various methods to accumulate oral traditions and histories about African's past were set in place. The establishment of the West African Institute for Social and Economic Research (WAISER) in Ibadan now (NISER) was a broad framework explored by Dike. Being a research institute, the outcomes of the studies at WAISER generated the need to further establish more research mechanisms. The challenges which confronted Dike was that most of African history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is about the interaction of African and Europeans, such as it was in imperial history, but the perspective of understanding African history was different. Hence in understanding African history, there was dire need for studies in oral tradition and oral histories.

This brought into fore the establishment of national Archives in Ibadan (Ade-Ajayi, 1990, 27). The dire need to consolidate the WAISER and National Archives project provided series of challenges to the use of oral sources. The existence of research schemes based on language and cultural affinities became inevitable. The Benin research scheme was instituted to further implement the quest for oral traditions. All this had already increased the academic excellence of Prof. Dike in the Department of History, University of Ibadan. To emphasize the focus on African history, it became imperative to consolidate the activities from this research scheme. Ibadan History Series became prominent for collections of monographs (Ade-Ajayi, 1990, 42).

It is important to note at this point that; the efforts of Dike in creating media to the use of oral sources and the methodology in historical studies could not be achieved in isolation. The quest for multi-disciplinary approach became a necessity. Dike having laid the foundation for studies in the social and economic aspects of African Copies, and thus leading to the establishment of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ibadan. The establishment of this faculty assisted in the multi-disciplinary requirements meant to achieve the desired goals in African history. In this perspective, international conferences were convened in 1953,1957 and 1961 to bring together other professionals in the humanities, such as Linguists, Social Anthropologists, Historians, and Archaeologists among others. A conference being a method of exposing research works in education yielded results for the writing of African history. By the late 1950s, more research schemes were established such as the Eastern and Northern Historical research schemes under the Directorship of Prof. Dike.

As part of the multi disciplinary efforts, oral historical sources Bitten in Arabic became relevant in the studies on African history. The studies of Arabic and Islam were put into the perspective of African studies in 1961 with the partnership of Prof. Hunwick. Prof. Dike affirmed that:

It is through the aid of Arabic documents and those written in African languages from the Arabic script, that the scholar will be aided in unlocking the secrets of African past...as the Arabic works now being discovered bear testimony...The Arabic scholars of the past, will be able to bring before us the events and happenings of the past ages and help us write a history we may rightly call our own (Hunwick, 2008,1).

Hence, the Centre for Arabic Documentation established by Prof. Hunwick in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan became a collaborative institution in studying African history.

To synthesise the outcomes of the enormous research programmes, the real making of history and historians emerged. Apart from the monographs from Ibadan History Series, two books useful for teaching were published-*Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* edited by Anene and Brown and; *A Thousand Years of West African History* edited by Ade-Ajayi and Espie. Other books were published on Southern Africa, East Africa, and Ajayi and Crowder's *West Africa*. Some others were published under the auspices of Cambridge and UNESCO. The synthesis of the historians would have been incomplete without the Historical Society of Nigeria. The society was established in 1956 by Dike and H.F.C. Abdullahi (Abdullah Smith) to provide a stable and reliable medium to present historical findings (Ade-Ajayi, 1990, 42). It was the workshops organized by this society that enabled the publication of the two books mentioned earlier-*Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* as well as *A Thousand Years of West African History*. With the HSN, there came the need to regularize the presentation of Historical findings through journals. This brought about the Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria (JHSN) in the 1960s. The HSN became a body for Historians to distinguish the outcome of research in history from other disciplines.

To produce a comprehensive work as a contribution to national history, the HSN embarked on a project towards presenting national history in 1971 and it yielded into the popular *Groundwork of Nigerian History* edited by Obaro Dome in 1980.

The narrative explanations are not to present a biography of Prof. Dike's professional life, but to show the relationship between oral tradition, oral history and African history. To be objective about the relationship, the roles and tasks of the historian can not be left untouched. The survival of African historical studies particularly in Nigeria owes much to the interplay of oral traditions and oral histories.

## **EFFORTS TOWARDS HISTORICAL SOURCE DOCUMENTATION**

An international conference held on non-alignment was held at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs in January 1980. (Banjo, 1990) Dr Davidson Nicol, the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) recommended that the instituted should set up an Oral Documentation Centre. Although, the Institute's Librarian had earlier recommended such programme in 1977, but due to lack of manpower to serve as project coordinator, there were no immediate results. Thus, Nicol's recommendation motivated the Institute's governing council to set up the Oral Documentation Centre (ODC). The ODC was mandated to tap unpublished

sources of information for the use of scholar through a systematic recording and collection of oral interviews. This was imperative considering the fact that public functionaries do not adopt the culture of keeping diaries and private paper for future purpose. As such the ODC had the objectives of:

- i. Compiling and maintaining lists of important issues in Nigeria's foreign policy and international relations with a focus on personalities who have played significant roles.
- ii. Record the reminiscences of the personalities and identify issues sacrosanct to policy formulation and;
- iii. Provide facilities to store and preserve such interviews.

Obviously, the project focused on personalities involved and in the process, Dr. Jaja Wachukwu, Nigeria's Foreign Ministers, 1962 to 1965 was used as a pilot project. However, the Wachukwu case study was fraught with challenges, what is significant was that it was a due step towards historical source documentation. Similarly, the Department of History, University of Ibadan embarked on the Oral History, Information Retrieved and Documentation Project to record and preserve the life histories of notable Nigerians in all professional endeavours (Author involved, 2008). Laudable as it seemed, the challenges of funding remains and hindering factor to enhance an elaborate collection.

The mass media has also been an important source of historical documentation. As Eke (1990) noted, materials of historical value abound in the televised programmes of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). Therefore the preservation of these, are for the wellness of the historian. In practice, the NTA prepared catalogue cards written out for each programme, of which the videotapes are kept in the libraries of NTA Directorate in Lagos and Kaduna. However, the problems of funds and spaces for storage equipment remain a challenge.

## **CONCLUSION**

The enthusiasm generated in the 1950s and 1960s for extensive recording of historical traditions and publishing them seems to have petered out in Africa. (Ade-Ajayi, 1991) It seems that the pioneering efforts to multidisciplinary approach studying oral tradition have not been absolutely successful. This is mostly felt in the field of history, because oral traditions are used and interpreted based on the methodology of each discipline. It is not the aim of this work to precisely fault or explore the faults attached to traditions and oral history and the efforts towards redeeming it in studying African past, rather it is to further advance their relevance in historical research.

As it is maintained in Obaro Ikime's inaugural lecture 'Through the Changing scenes, Nigerian History Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow', there was an evaluation of various efforts at writing Nigerian history by historians. A shift was advocated that the study of indigenous economies should be part of historical research themes and probably examine how it has and could sustain development. Thus, the workshop held by HSN in 1985 as described by Ade-Ajayi (1990, 28) suggested that emphasis be shifted to research themes central to studying Nigerians in themes of local economies, agriculture, inter group relations, crafts and industrial production. After all, before the advent of colonialism, these sectors were peculiar to our culture and society. A pertinent question is that how did these sectors thrive during and after colonialism and how can they

sustain development? Thus, it is in the light of this that oral tradition and histories become more germane in historical research. There is the need for continued documentation of the traditions of recent times, and probably a comparison with that of the distant past to identify the social changes and their impacts. Documentation of the new intermediate appropriate technologies adapted to indigenous technologies, as well as the roles and contributions of professionals involved. Contemporary technologies need to be more explored to document oral traditions and histories.

The Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) and the Nigerian National Archives have profoundly organized, administered, collected and preserved sources for historical documentation. But the quest for accessibility and sustainability to adequately serve and promote historical research remains relevant and considering the need to collect and preserve life histories of eventful Nigerians, the sphere of historical documentation is indispensable.

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