Emerging Religious Movements And Their Implications In African History And Heritage

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Abstract

Africa has often been referred to as the Home of Civilization. This reference is based on the fact that most of the continent evidences how man has, over time, interacted meaningful with his environment to produce all that he needs to make history. Archaeological remains in Egypt have shed light on this development as far as Africa is concern. Other remains found particularly in central Eastern Africa have been widely recognized such that the area is now widely accepted as the origin of humans and the Hominidae clade (great apes). This is evidenced by the discovery of the earliest hominids and their ancestors, as well as later ones that have been dated to around seven million years ago. These later ones include *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, *Australopithecus africanus*, *A. afarensis*, *Homo erectus*, *H. habilis*, and *H. ergaster*, with the earliest Homo sapiens (modern human) found in Ethiopia dating far back to circa 200,000 years ago. Now, this rich historical heritage is being threatened by the emergence of some religious movements in Africa. The reason for this is that these religions see the preservation of these relics as idolatry and unacceptable. Data obtained from primary and secondary sources were deployed to carry out the study, and the study was carried out with an analytical and narrative historical method. Findings indicate that while the European world continue to beg for the preservation of these artifacts and in some cases preserve these artifacts and relics in their museums, the emerging groups continue to target these historical artifacts for destruction. This paper argues that this trend is unhealthy for the development of history and preservation of the continent's heritage. Furthermore, it asserts that once this wanton destruction is not checked, there is a high possibility that in the nearest future, nothing would be left to study in African history.

Keywords: Africa, History, Heritage, Fundamentalism

Introduction

Over the years, the victims of the emergence of some radical religious groups, whose aim is to win more souls, has been Africa's heritage and history. This is because there seems to be an alignment between the indiscriminate destruction of historical sites/monuments associated with world civilizations and an achievement of their purpose. This is an on-going phenomenon that occurs on a daily bases, mainly in the so called developing cities of the world. The demolition has focused on holy shrines, burial sites, homes, and historical locations associated with the early civilizations and many founding personalities of the early world. This exercise has a considerably negative impact on the knowledge of people and the future of mankind especially as it relates to historical knowledge and early technological development.

Conceptual Clarification

Historic heritage as used in this paper refers to a collection of relics, manufactures, and other materials of significance that point to the meaningful interaction between man and his environment over time. They are often in the form of objects or even shelters man created to survive in the environment. The fact that these monuments survived years after use makes them the heritage or cultural materials of the people. In some other cases, they have been referred to as Civilization.

On the other hand, the word *religion* is derived from the Latin noun *religio,* which denotes both earnest observance of ritual obligations and an inward spirit of reverence. In modern usage, *religion* covers a wide spectrum of meanings that reflect the enormous variety of its interpretation. In one extreme, many committed believers recognize their own tradition as the only religion, understanding expressions like *worship* and *prayer* to refer exclusively to the practices of their tradition. Although many believers stop short at claiming an exclusive status for their tradition, they may nevertheless use vague or idealizing terms in defining religion—for example, "true love of God," or "the path of enlightenment." In the other extreme, religion may be equated with ignorance, fanaticism, or wishful thinking (Paden, 2008).

By defining religion as a sacred communion with what is taken to be a spiritual reality, it is possible to consider the importance of religion to human life without making claims about what it really is or ought to be. Religion is not an object with a single, fixed meaning, or even a zone with clear boundaries. It is an aspect of human experience that may intersect with, incorporate, or transcend other aspects of life and society.

Religion is also said to include complex activities that cannot be reduced to any single aspect of human experience. It is part of an individual's life but also involved in group dynamics. Though religion

includes patterns of behavior, it also includes patterns of language and thought. Sometimes, it is a highly organized institution that sets itself apart from a culture. Other times, it is an integral part of a culture. Religious experiences may be expressed in visual symbols, dance and performance, elaborate philosophical systems, legendary and imaginative stories, formal ceremonies, meditative techniques, and detailed rules of ethical conduct and law. Each of these elements assume innumerable cultural forms. In some ways, there are as many forms of religious expression as there are human cultural environments (Paden, 2008).

Religion and Heritage: Interrogating the Nexus
From the definitions above, it is clear that there exist a relationship between religion and heritage. This is because it is argued that religion includes complex activities that cannot be reduced to any single aspect of human experience. Also, that it includes patterns of behavior, language and thought. Therefore, it must be represented in one form or the other through the people's creative arts. Thus, the Christian religion is associated with the Cross, Islam with the Star and Crescent, while the Traditional worship by various objects and relics that give adherents a clear picture of what they believe. In this way, once these objects, relics, or other symbols survive over time, they become relics and heritage, through which later generation can understand the religion.

It is in line with the above and considering the relevance of symbols to religion and religious worship, with particular reference to ancient religions, that www.historymuseum.ca documented the following:

In Egypt, before the concept of God existed, magical power was encapsulated in the hieroglyph of a sceptre (or rod or staff). This is one of the most enduring symbols of divine power, ever present in images of the pharaohs and the gods. As human society evolved, people gradually gained a degree of personal identity. With a higher sense of individuality, humans began to conceive the gods in a personalized form. This stage in development is called "mythical". In Egypt, this process began during the late prehistoric period, when writing was being invented and myths were being formulated.

It continued thus:

At that stage, every Egyptian town had its own particular deity, manifested in a material fetish or a god represented in the shape of an animal, such as a cat-goddess, cobra-goddess, ibis-god or jackal-god. As the pantheon grew in cohesiveness, these gods and goddesses were given human bodies and credited with human attributes and activities. The temples in the major cities throughout

the land were constructed to venerate local gods. During the New Kingdom, these temples honoured a triad of gods based on the pattern established by the mythical family of Osiris, Isis and Horus. Like all religions, that of ancient Egypt was complex. It evolved over the centuries from one that emphasized local deities into a national religion with a smaller number of principal deities. Some theologians think that Egypt was moving towards a monotheistic faith in a single creator, symbolized by the sun god. There was no single belief system, but the Egyptians shared a common understanding about the creation of the world and the possibility of reverting to chaos if the destructive forces of the universe were unleashed.

Expounding the specifics, Paden wrote:

Religion is a sacred engagement with that which is believed to be a spiritual reality. Religion is a worldwide phenomenon that has played a part in all human culture and so is a much broader, more complex category than the set of beliefs or practices found in any single religious tradition. An adequate understanding of religion must take into account its distinctive qualities and patterns as a form of human experience, as well as the similarities and differences in religions across human cultures. In all cultures, human beings make a practice of interacting with what are taken to be spiritual powers. **These powers may be in the form of gods, spirits, ancestors, or any kind of sacred reality with which humans believe themselves to be connected. Sometimes, a spiritual power is understood broadly as an all-embracing reality (see Pantheism), and sometimes it is approached through its manifestation in special symbols.** *It may be regarded as external to the self, internal, or both. People interact with such a presence in a sacred manner—that is, with reverence and care. Religion is the term most commonly used to designate this complex and diverse realm of human experience.*

However, over the years, it has been established that in most parts of the world, doctrines which seems to see historic relics as antagonistic (especially Islam and Christianity) has been on the rise. The propagators of these thoughts are of the view that for their religion to thrive, every historic relic must be destroyed. Pursuant to this, Historical Monuments (Cultural heritage) are constantly under risk of instant destruction from these religious groups Scholars see this as religious extremism, which may be equated ignorance, fanaticism, or wishful thinking. Another instance of extremism is, people (committed believers) recognizing only their own tradition as a religion (Paden, 2008). Apart from natural disaster, development, tourism, pollution, inappropriate site management,

looting, and conflict are some other examples of the risks faced by these materials. Nonetheless, the most devastating of these threats is when people deliberately attack heritage owing to manipulation and misinterpretation of their faith and doctrines. Therefore, threats can be either natural or anthropogenic, this is human made. Natural risks can be divided into two categories. First, catastrophic and sudden occurrences, such as floods or earthquakes, which have an immediate impact on the historical material or site. Second, continuous threats with cumulative and slow effects, such as erosion and material decay. Anthropogenic risks result from a number of different human activities, including development in general and tourism in particular, inappropriate management, lack of maintenance, and neglect. The sites and monuments' vulnerability depends on the environmental, economic, social, and political context. The vulnerability of heritage sites increases when there are no maintenance approaches as well as when there is inappropriate excavation and/or restoration.

Souls of African or Capitalist Expansion: Genesis of Africa's Heritage and History Plight
      Scholars have argued that before the Europeans came to the African continent, the people were technologically advanced and had developed a splendid culture that had no rivalry in other parts of the world. During the pre-colonial period, Africa experienced her own form of industrialization and was involved in various forms of technological advancement in what has been referred to as domestic industrialization. This refers to all systems of production organized basically on a small scale, using homes as the main center of production. This type of industrialization occurred in every continent and in every culture, in different forms and intensities, at different periods of time since the advent of the Neolithic Age through the Metal Age to modern times. For example, in Europe throughout the Middle Ages and up to about the middle of the eighteenth century, the characteristic industry was domestic. The same can be argued for Africa, in which throughout the early Metal Age (about 350 B.C – 1000 A.D), the Manual Metal Age (1300-1600) and the Transitional Age (1600-1960), industry was largely domestic (Onwuejeogwu, 1999; Akubor, 2012). Thus, at the apex of African Civilization, they mastered the development of a stable high culture where the arts, sciences, and human dignity flourished for thousands of years and were put into meaningful use. This was the situation up to the eve of some five century ago, when Europeans arrived in Africa and found that the people were advanced, wealthy, and were impressed by the abundance of the nature and civility of its people (Rodney, 1973). The thought of taking over this civilization led to the idea of conquest christened *Civilization Mission*, which

marked the first phase of the destruction and looting of Africa's splendor. Commenting on this, Mawuna K (2014), wrote:

> *During the scramble for Africa by Europeans, the main way to prove that a land was qualified for colonization or take over was 'Terra Nullius", a Latin expression. Derived from Roman law, it means "land belonging to no one", and it is used in international law to describe a territory which has never been subject to the sovereignty of any state, or over which any prior sovereign state has expressly or implicitly relinquished sovereignty. Sovereignty over territory which is terra nullius may be acquired through occupation"; many islands were acquired that way when it was possible to slaughter the small population and easily prove that the land was empty before the arrival of colonial powers. But very soon, the colonial powers experienced difficulty in finding "land belonging to no one". Africa was not a Terra Nullius. Consequently, the terra nullius law was altered to include land inhabited by savages and uncivilized people. Again, very quickly, the colonial power found it difficult to prove that Africa was a land of savages and uncivilized people. Instead they found, as demonstrated above, queendoms and kingdoms with great palaces and highly developed political and social norms. At this stage, the colonial powers had to destroy any sign of civilization.*

Mawuna K continued thus:

> *From then on, the colonial powers spent a lot of energy in destroying and burning African historical buildings and monuments. They slaughtered the African elite engineers, scientists, craftsmen, writers, philosophers, etc. There is a museum in Paris with 18,000 heads of people killed by French colonial troops and missionaries. It's called "Musée d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris". Among the heads are the ones of African kings, kings' families, African engineers, writers, army officers, spiritual leaders. This sad and grotesque display also includes the heads of ordinary men, women, and children that the French found unusual, exotic enough, or interesting to kill to enrich their Museum of natural history where they display mainly animals' skulls to represent bio-diversity and evolution. France was not alone in this European competition to behead the most number of exotic people. The skulls and heads of many Africans can still be found in museums and unusual places around Europe.*

Civilization Mission and Rescuing the Pagans: The Deceit behind the "Truth"

The first attempt at the emergence of what has today transfer in extreme religious group was the civilization mission of Africa. Rodney argued that the precolonial Africa society was one in which the interaction between man and man on the one hand and man and nature on the other hand was at its best. In this way, the people were good artists, sculptors, and smiths. He particularly emphasized thus:

Furthermore, even in those spheres of culture that are more readily comparable, such as 'the fine arts', it is known that Africa's achievements during the pre-European period stand as contributions to man's heritage of beautiful creations. The art of Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia was known to the rest of the world at an early date. That of the rest of Africa is still being 'discovered' and rediscovered by Europeans and present-day Africans. The verdict of art historians on the Ife and Benin bronzes is well known. Since they date from the 14th and 15th centuries, they are very relevant to any discussion of African development in the epoch before the contact with Europe. Nor should they be regarded as unusual, except with regard to the material in which the sculptures were executed. The same skill and feeling obviously went into sculpture and art-work in non-durable materials, especially wood.

In a more specific term, he posited thus:

The Ethiopian, Tigrean, and Amharic ruling class was a proud one, tracing its descent to Solomon. The Zagwe kings distinguished themselves by building several churches cut out of solid rock. The architectural achievements attest to the level of skill reached by Ethiopians as well as the capacity of the state to mobilise labour on a huge scale. In Zimbabwe, one of the great constructions in brick (dated around the 14th century) is commonly referred to as 'temple' and is felt to have served religious purposes. Even from the scanty evidence, it is clear that the religious aspect of social development was of the greatest importance in serving to cement ties between individuals in that emergent African society.

However, in the course of their civilization mission, most of these African manufactures were tagged Idols and marked for destruction, while others were looted. European colonialists destroyed historical buildings and monuments in their quest to bring the African people under their control by force (war). In fact, the biggest part of Africa's history is still under the ground due to the destruction.

For example, Flavio A (2015) argued that Gold Coast (present day Ghana), was the powerful Asante Kingdom, with Kumasi as its capital city. Describing the beautiful architectural masterpiece, he wrote:

The city itself consisted of many courtyards, each surrounded with alcoves and verandas, and having two gates or doors, so that each yard was a thoroughfare. A tree always stood in the courtyard which was the central point of a family compound. The Tree of Life was the altar for family offerings to God. There were upstairs toilets, promenades and public squares, cosmopolitan lives, exquisite architecture, and everywhere was spotless and ordered. Wealth of architecture, history, prosperity, and extremely modernistic living were found in the city. All these were documented in the 1800s in drawings and photographs. The mysterious Golden Stool which was believed to have been given to the Asante people from the sky by their gods served as a sacred tool for the people.

However, by the end of the 19th century, British forces conquered the city. It was blown up and destroyed by fire. Items in the palace including the Golden Stool were looted and the King and Queen sent to exile in Seychelles Island. That was the end of the Asante Kingdom and all its splendor and historic wealth.

As early as the 13th Century, Benin was described by early European travelers as a modern city with streets and well-arranged houses. The King's palace was a collection of buildings. There are numerous apartments for the Prince`s ministers and fine galleries, most of which are as big as those on the Exchange at Amsterdam. However, in 1897, Benin City was destroyed by British forces under Admiral Harry Rawson. The city was looted, blown up, and burnt to the ground. Collections of the famous Benin Bronzes are now in the British Museum in London. Part of the 700 bronzes stolen by British troops was sold back to Nigeria in 1972.

Ibidapo A (cited in Idubor c, 2008) argued that the first of such assault on Nigeria was on the Great Benin Empire in 1897. Under the guise of stopping paganism, almost 2,500 of the famous Benin bronzes, valuable works of art such as the magnificent carved doors in the palace, were carried off to Europe for sale.

Presently, almost every museum of the world possesses an art treasure from Benin. It is important to relate this account of British brigandage and deliberate and wanton pilfering of Africa´s invaluable art treasures to showing that our culture was great and was envied. The tradition and way of life that spawned such great achievement was deliberately destroyed and history was falsified to justify the introduction of their obnoxious laws, some of which purportedly forbade our traditional religion.

In a similar manner, Luschan F.V, a former official of the Berlin Museum for Volkerhunde (cited in Idubor C, 2008), described what the British deviously called Pagan art of Benin:

> *These works from Benin are equal to the very finest examples of European casting technique. Benvenuto Celini could not have cast them better, nor could anyone else before or after him. Technically, these Bronzes represent the very highest possible achievement. Only a highly civilized nation could have borne the expenditure and facilities of such marvelous works of art, some of the best masterpieces in the history of mankind.*

It was therefore not surprising that when the Nigerian government requested to loan a replica of the Idia Ivory mask from the British Museum of Mankind for use during the 2nd World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC), held in 1977 in Lagos, Nigeria, the British authorities insisted that the Nigerian government should deposit a sum of three million dollars before collecting the loaned copy. A 17th century Benin bronze head (nine inches tall), stolen from the palace of Oba Ovonramwen by the British invaders in 1897, was auctioned by Sotheby, New York for US$550,000 in July, 2007 (Idubor C, 2008).

Timbuktu has been described by National Geographic Channel as the Paris of the medieval world on account of its intellectual culture. It was recorded that it was a citadel of learning, which is evidenced by the fact that over 25,000 university students studied there. This was at a time when Europe as a continent had plunged into the Dark Age. It was ravaged by plague and famine, and its people killing one another for religious and ethnic reasons. The city has been described thus:

> *The city of Timbuktu (present day Mali) in the 14th century was five times bigger than the city of London. It was the richest city in the world. The richest man in the history of Humanity—Mansa Musa was the emperor of the 14th century Mali Empire. The empire covered modern day Mali, Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea. At the time of his death in 1331, Mansa Musa was worth the equivalent of 400 billion dollars. At that time, Mali Empire was producing more than half the world's supply of salt and gold. When Mansa Musa went on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324, he carried so much gold and spent them so lavishly that the price of gold fell for ten years. 60,000 people accompanied him. He founded the library of Timbuktu and the famous manuscripts of Timbuktu which cover all aspects of the world's knowledge. There are 3 famous great mosques and 16 mausoleums there. Thousands of ancient manuscripts are kept there, which comprise detailed written accounts of Africa from the 15th and 16th centuries when Timbuktu was bustling with scholars. Also, several universities were built there.*

This great city also fell to the power of the Europeans, who conquered the area and stole most of the records. Today, Timbuktu is 236

times smaller than London. It has not even remotely related to a modern city. Its population is two times less than it was 5 centuries ago and is impoverished with beggars and dirty street sellers. The town itself is incapable of conserving its past ruined monuments and archives.

Accounts of Tanzania as given by Ibn Battouta as far back as 1331, described the Tanzanian city of Kilwa, of the Zanj Swahili speaking people, as follows: "one of the most beautiful and well-constructed cities in the world, the whole of it is elegantly built." The ruins are complete with `gothic` arches and intricate stonework, examples of exquisite architecture. Kilwa dates back to the 9th century and was at its peak in the 13th and 14th centuries. This international African port minted its own currency in the 11th -14th centuries. Remains of artefacts link it to Spain, China, Arabia, and India. The inhabitants, architects, and founders of this city were not Arabs and the only influence the Europeans had was in the form of the Portuguese who marked the start of the city's decline, most likely through smallpox and influenza" (Mawuna K, 2014).

In 1505, Portuguese forces destroyed and burned down the Swahili cities of Kilwa and Mombasa.

The Emergence of the New Colonialist – Religious Extremists

The modern versions of the colonialist destruction of historic monuments and relics have now appeared in the form of those who claim to be on evangelical missions to rid Africa of the remnants of pagan practices. These group of people found in the two major religions of the world, Islam and Christianity, views that does not resemble their own objects of worship as idols. As a result, from the period of Independence in Africa till date, historical monuments and relevant materials have come under attacks in different parts of the world. This threatens the study and learning of history and the development attached to this knowledge as it erodes the peoples work with it.

In West Africa, especially south and western Nigeria, the problem has existed between radical Christian religious groups and custodians of these remains. Available records show that often, after revivals where souls are won for heaven, the historic relics of that area become victims of the exercise. This is because immediately they are born again, these new religious faithfuls see these remains as something that should be done away with as they represent barbaric cultures and pagan ideas. Therefore, historical values such as shrines, sacred vessels, sacred persons and place were destroyed. For example, from 1977-1980, there was an uprising against the institution of Okuku onye uwa by some group of fanatics. It was connected with the traditional belief in reincarnation, and it erupted in Awka, Anambra state. These group of people believed that by accepting Christianity, the

institution which had existed from time immemorial was no longer relevant and as such everything that was symbolic of it should be destroyed. From 1989-1991, some radical Christian youths and their clergy could no longer contain and/or tolerate the traditional African masquerade institution which generated conflict in northern Igbo, especially Aku town. In Nsukka and its environs, it was the Omaba, Akatakpa, and Oliakpa masquerade that has been the bone of contention up till date.

The years 1993-1996 witnessed a tumult concerning traditional burial rites and customs associated with them, as the Christian community wanted the practice totally abolished. In July 1999, Owerri witnessed crises as some fanatics uprooted the Ikenga statue which had been in the community for long. In its place, a white cross was erected. The group also attacked and destroyed the Ofo na Ogu–the traditional symbol of justice and innocence mounted at the cherubim junction on Wetheral Road, Owerri. It was replaced with a symbol of The Naira (Adigwe, 2003). In 2000, Ogidi in Idemili Local government area of Anambra state boiled as Christian youths went on a destruction spree of traditional shrines, damaging their valuable sacred symbols and images. In February 2002, Neke community in Enugu was in disarray as youths attacked the shrine of a group they erroneously alleged were consuming human beings (Adigwe, 2003; Champion, 1999). In 2009, three Catholic priests and several members of the congregation were arrested for their alleged involvement in burning and destroying the Ezekoro shrine in the town of Achina, 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of the Anambra state capital, Awka. The attack was preceded by a three-day revival meeting with the destruction taking place on the final day. They destroyed very precious artifacts that were hundreds of years old, and looted many others, which were decorated with traditional motifs and carvings. Moreover, the custodians of these artifacts were often tagged as the leaders of demon worship. All these crises were instigated by the teachings of some clergy men, who had blamed the poverty, unemployment, and the lack of progress in the communities on the existence of these traditional shrines and symbols. However, the problem with such mob action as encouraged by the radical religious teachers is that it fails to deploy trained archeologists, sociologists, ethnologists, and indeed pharmacologists to these shrines, as many as have the training to discern whether the target of destruction may or may not contain objects of archival value. They also fail to take the trouble of separating the wheat from the chaff, as the preservation of these relics constitute part of our collective responsibility to ensure that this is done for history and posterity.

In line with the above, The Archaeological Association of Nigeria estimates that people have been persuaded by pastors and churches to hand over ancestral objects worth at least $500 million in the past decade to prove

they no longer practice traditional worship. According to the Abuja-based National Commission for Museums and Monuments, in Nigeria, looted items are often illegally trafficked to Europe and the U.S. where they are bought by art collectors. The agency set up to protect Nigeria's cultural heritage estimates that the country's artifacts in circulation in the global market are worth about 310 billion naira ($1.6 billion) (Mbuchu, 2015).

The above position by The Archaeological Association of Nigeria can be better understood when seen in the light of the opinion of experts like Gundu and Assa (2009) and Gundu (2010) (cited in Ndera, 2010):

Unfortunately, illegal trafficking in Nigeria's antiquities has continued unabated and some of the antiquities taken out unlawfully and found in foreign museums are traced to the staff of the Commission. For instance, in 1987, nine objects were stolen from the National Museum, Jos. In the 1990s, an estimated 429 objects were stolen from 33 museums and institutions in Nigeria. Between 1993 and 1994, close to 40 objects were stolen from the Ife Museum while 34 stone statues were stolen from the Essie Museum between 1993 and 1995 (Gundu, 2010:9). The stolen antiquities in Nigeria after the country's independence have added to the estimated 3,137 art works comprising bronze plaques, brass sculptures, and ivory tusks that were illegally carted away by the British following the punitive invasion of Benin in 1897 (Gundu and Assa, 2009). Other related problems involve the preference accorded to foreign expatriates for archaeological and historical research in Nigeria by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments at the expense of indigenous qualified scholars. The fact is that this development has posed more threats to the preservation, protection, and promotion of the cultural property in Nigeria than ever before as the history of the Nigerian people is still being interpreted and written by foreigners after 50 years of independence. Given this attitude, it is doubted if the Commission ever impressed on the government at any point to incorporate our cultural values in policies of governance since it was established in 1979.

Describing the *modus operadi* of some of these groups, Mbachu (2015) wrote:

Nigeria's Christians borrow Boko Haram tactics, destroy traditional African religious shrines and art... While Islamist militants loyal to Boko Haram in northern Nigeria and the Islamic State of Syria destroy cultural sites they consider idolatrous, some Christian activists in the south of Africa's most populous nation are also targeting ancestral religious worship. So far, no one has been injured in the raids. More than 500 traditional-worship sites, mainly

in the south, have been burned down in the past decade, along with artifacts that are often hundreds of years old and of historical significance.

In 2014, Islamic extremists destroyed many of the holy Muslim shrines in Timbuktu, just after they had been listed as endangered World Heritage sites by UNESCO. And more recently, they torched the city's library, which housed thousands of ancient manuscripts. They also laid waste to Djinguereber Mosque Masjid in Timbuktu which was built in 1327 and is the city's oldest monument. According to UNESCO, Timbuktu is at risk of desertification, meaning these ancient sites could be lost forever. It is a sad thought, but it happens all too often as a result of war (http://www.the guardian.com).

It is important to note that this fight against the existence of historic monuments is not limited to the African continent. It also affects other areas where research have shown some form of relationship between Africa artifacts and works with other people. This was the case in Afghanistan, where historic relics of educational values were attacked and destroyed. In this case, the Taliban, or movement of religious students, seized Kabul in 1996 and imposed a puritanical mix of Pashtun tribal and Sharia law in a bid to create their idea of a true Mohammadean state. In an attempt to stamp its authority in Afghanistan, in 2001, the leader of the Taliban Islamic militia in Afghanistan attacked and destroyed an ancient Buddhist centre famous for its two massive and ancient Buddha statues in the central province of Bamiyan. These statues date back to the second century.

Reacting to the world's condemnation of the act, Mulla Mohammad Omar, who argued to be acting on a fatwa of the ulema (clerics) and the supreme court of Afghanistan Islamic law, told the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) that he had issued the order to destroy all statues in Afghanistan, including those from the country's rich pre-Islamic history, in line with "Islamic" beliefs. Scholars have argued that the destruction of this site was a crime against humanity and an act of cultural genocide against humanity. This is because Bamiyan is part of the world's cultural heritage. The destroyed Buddha in central Bamiyan province stood 50 meters (165 feet) tall and 34.5 meters (114 feet) wide. They were destroyed alongside other historic statues (The News, March 13, 2001).

Similarly, in June 2012, Bhutan witnessed the destruction of Wangdue Phodrang Dzong, a four-century-old architectural wonder that had dramatically stood on a ridge at the confluence of two rivers before it was burned to the ground. This has been regarded as one of its historic monument. A gateway to eastern Bhutan, the dzong, was built in 1638 by the nation's founder, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, and was among several

fortress-monasteries constructed to help gain control of and unify the country (dzong was 95% built with timber) (Yuan E, 2012).

In most countries of the Middle East which shares common boundary with Africa, the activities of these radical religious groups have led to the disappearance of historical remains. This has often affected holy sites and relic. For instance, the situation in the Arab world has been recorded thus:

> *The destruction of sites associated with early Islam is an on-going phenomenon that has occurred mainly in the Hejaz region of western Saudi Arabia, particularly around the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The demolition has focused on Mosques, burial sites, homes and historical locations associated with the Islamic prophet, Muhammad and many of the founding personalities of early Islamic history. In Saudi Arabia, many of the demolitions have officially been part of the continued expansion of the Masjid Al-Haram at Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina and their auxiliary service facilities in order to accommodate the ever-increasing number of Hajj pilgrims. Detractors of the demolitions and expansion programs have argued that this phenomenon is part of the implementation of state-endorsed Wahhabi religious policy that emphasizes the Oneness of God (Tawhid) and entirely rejects the worship of divine proxies to God or even the practices and habits which might lead to idolatry and polytheistic association Shirk. (The tension between Saudi Shi'ite and Sunni is especially intense because Saudi "Wahhabis" actively reject all veneration of man, even the prophet. At one point, they even attempted to destroy Muhammad's tomb in Medina. In contrast, the Saudi Shi'ites are "Twelvers," a branch of Islam that venerates the Prophet's son-in-law Ali, and believes that the leadership of Islam must pass through Ali's line. They venerate each of the past imams, and make pilgrimages to their tombs) (Irfan M, 2010).*

In Mosul Iraq, the Sunni extremists of the IS, previously known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), have been working to erase evidence of that diverse history since they seized the ancient city on June 10, 2007. The IS is also trying to eradicate visual evidence of belief systems that do not follow its strict interpretation of Islam. The Sunni extremist fighters have removed or destroyed more than a dozen tombs, statues, mosques, and shrines—including shrines that hold meaning for Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike—such as the site believed to be the tomb of the biblical prophet Jonah. This tomb was wired with explosives and detonated. The shrine of Prophet Seth, considered to be the third son of Adam and Eve, has also been demolished. Earlier in June 2003, there was the case of the looting

of antiquities from the Iraq Museum and the illegal looting of ancient sites (http://news.nationalgeographic.com).

The tables below are some of the sites and relics this paper considers very vital to historical studies especially as it relates to intergroup relations between Africa and the Middle East.

Table I. Destroyed Sites (Irfan A. 2010)

s/no	Sites	Purpose	Status
1	The mosque at the grave of Sayyid al-Shuhada' Hamza bin Abdul Muttalib	Mosque	Destroyed
2	The Mosque of Fatima Zahra	Mosque	Destroyed
3	The Mosque of al-Manaratain	Mosque	Destroyed
4	Mosque and tomb of Sayyid Imam al-Uraidhi ibn Ja'far al-Sadiq, destroyed by dynamite on August 13, 2002.	Mosque	Destroyed
5	Four mosques at the site of the Battle of the Trench in Medina	Mosque	Destroyed
6	The Mosque of Abu Rasheed.	Mosque	Destroyed
7	Salman al-Farsi Mosque, in Medina.[	Mosque	Destroyed
8	Raj'at ash-Shams Mosque, in Medina	Mosque	Destroyed
9	Jannat al-Baqi in Medina, completely leveled.	Cemeteries/ tombs	Destroyed
10	Jannat al-Mu'alla, the ancient cemetery at Mecca	Cemeteries/ tombs	Destroyed
11	Grave of Hamida al-Barbariyya, the mother of Imam Musa al-Kazim	Cemeteries/ tombs	Destroyed
12	Grave of Amina bint Wahb, Muhammad's mother, bulldozed and set alight in 1998.	Cemeteries/ tombs	Destroyed
13	Graves of Banu Hashim in Mecca	Cemeteries/ tombs	Destroyed
13	Tombs of Hamza and other martyrs were demolished at Uhud	Cemeteries/ tombs	Destroyed
14	Tomb of Eve in Jeddah, sealed with concrete in 1975	Cemeteries/ tombs	Destroyed
15	Grave of the father of Muhammad, in Medina	Cemeteries/ tombs	Destroyed

Table II. Historical Religious Sites ((Irfan A. 2010)

s/no	Description	Status
1	The house of Mawlid where Muhammad is believed to have been born in year 570. Originally turned into a cattle market, it now lies under a rundown building which was built 70 years ago as a compromise after Wahhabi clerics called for it to be torn down	Destroyed
2	The house of Khadija, Muhammad's first wife. Muslims believe he received some of the first revelations there. It was also where his children Fatimah and Qasim were born. After it was rediscovered during the Haram extensions in 1989, it was covered over and it was made into a library.	Destroyed
3	House of Muhammed in Medina, where he lived after the migration	Destroyed

	from Mecca	
4	Dar al Arqam, the first Islamic school where Muhammad taught [13]. It now lies under the extension of the Masjid Al Nabawi of Madinah.	Destroyed
5	Qubbat' al-Thanaya, the burial site of Muhammed's incisor that was broken in the Battle of Uhud	Destroyed
6	Mashrubat Umm Ibrahim, built to mark the location of the house where Muhammad's son, Ibrahim, was born to Mariah.	Destroyed
7	Dome which served as a canopy over the Well of Zamzam	Destroyed
8	Bayt al-Ahzan of Sayyida Fatima, in Medina	Destroyed
9	House of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, in Medina	Destroyed
10	Mahhalla complex of Banu Hashim, in Medina	Destroyed
11	House of Ali where Hasan and Husayn were born	Destroyed

Table IV. Historic Site/Monuments under Threat (Irfan A. 2010)

s/no	Description	Situation	Status
1	Bayt al-Mawlid	When the Wahabis took Mecca in the 1920s, they destroyed the dome on top of the house where the Prophet Mohammed was born. It was then used as a cattle market before being turned into a library after a campaign by Meccans. There are concerns that the expansion of the Grand Mosque will destroy it once more. The site has never been excavated by archaeologists	Under threat
2	Ottoman and Abbasi columns of the Masjid al-Haram	Slated for demolition as part of Great Mosque expansion. These intricately carved columns date back to the 17th century and are the oldest surviving sections of Islam's holiest site. Much to the chagrin of Wahabis, they are inscribed with the names of the Prophet's companions. Ottomon Mecca is now rapidly disappearing	Under threat
3	Al-Masjid al-Nabawi	For many years, hardline Wahabi clerics have had their sights set on the 15th century green dome that rests above the tomb holding the Prophet, Abu Bakr and Umar in Medina. The mosque is regarded as the second holiest site in Islam. Wahabis, however, believe marked graves are idolatrous. A pamphlet published in 2007 by the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs, endorsed by Abdulaziz Al Sheikh, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, stated that "the green dome shall be demolished and the three graves flattened in the Prophet's Masjid	Under threat
4	Jabal al-Nour	A mountain outside Mecca where Mohammed received his first Koranic revelations. The Prophet used to spend long spells in a cave called Hira. The cave is particularly popular among South Asian pilgrims who have carved steps up to its entrance and adorned the walls with graffiti. Religious hardliners are keen to dissuade pilgrims from congregating there and have mooted the idea of removing the steps and even destroying the mountain altogether.	Under threat

Africa's Lost Glory and the Search for Relevance

Although the West continually deny the fact that Africa has history that is worth studying and industries that are worth reviving, it is clear that the present state of Africa is as a result of the deliberate destruction of her history as initiated by civilization missions. Scholars have argued that the remnants of what can be described as Africa's past glory are scattered all over Europe. Here, thousands and thousands of stolen art objects and civilization artifacts are in public museums and private collections. Some are stored in private and public accounts (in the UK, France, Germany, Belgium, etc.). Five centuries of plundering and destruction brought the continent to its knees.

Lawton (cited in Mawuna, 2014), decried the situation of present day Africa thus:

"From Egypt to Sudan, from Mali to Tanzania, from Zimbabwe to Mozambique, Africa is full of the testimony of her past. In many cases, the complete destruction of structures has not been through natural elements but deliberate acts, most notably of the British Empire and extremist religious groups. The museums of Britain and Europe are full of the results of pillage and plunder. There are numerous ancient structures that are in a state of good preservation. However, in the case of many of Africa`s cities, palaces, temples and trading ports, we are left with nothing other than written reports and drawings of traders and travellers from medieval times to the final days of complete destruction in the late 1800s. In terms of beauty, and even on occasion, the scale and the architecture of Egypt`s pyramids pale in comparison to other African historical structures. The diversity of architecture from this continent is staggering. The traditional use of what is termed fractal scaling in building highlights a religious tradition practiced throughout the continent. Fractal scaling is the `Mandelbrot` idea of architecture where the smallest parts of a structure resemble the largest parts. This cultural/religious tradition was/is practised in all aspects of life from weaving to grinding cereals to the building of homes and palaces. Furthermore, it is the incorporation of history, and explanation of the Universe and our place within it, into everyday lives, lest we forget."

Implications for Africa History and Heritage

Research has shown that the world's heritage constitutes a very important aspect in the study of the activities of people over time especially as it relates to their intergroup relationships, trade, art and crafts, manufactures among others. Even in the most developed countries of the world, there are deliberate attempts to preserve as well as study these relics

for development. Hence, this section is heavily funded. For instance, Fennell, C.F (2000) established that the excavation of a historic period site in Annapolis, Maryland, produced an interpretation of artifacts as the material culture of a past African American folk religion. Archaeologists excavating the basement level of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century house of Charles Carroll uncovered a deposit of objects, including quartz crystals, a smooth black stone, a glass bead, and pierced discs and coins. They interpreted these artifacts as the material remains of a cache of protective charms. Based on these artifacts alone, they inferred that this portion of the residence of an Anglo-American family was inhabited by enslaved African Americans, who had practiced uniquely African forms of religious beliefs in that space. This interpretation was made by drawing an analogy between the characteristics of the artifacts and stylistic elements used in religious expressions of the Bakongo people of the Congo–Angola region of Africa. George Logan, one of the lead archaeologists on this excavation, described this findings and its interpretation as a "breakthrough" in establishing the presence and ways of African Americans at this location. Historian Robert Thompson viewed this analysis as providing a template for interpreting similar artifacts at other sites. Such an endeavor of uncovering and recreating the ways of a people who were marginalized in the past, and who are largely invisible in the historical records of colonial America, deserves high praise. It is particularly engaging to uncover and recognize the material remains of the past practice of significant religious beliefs.

Based on the foregoing and considering most Third World countries' penchant to destroy these objects, it has made scholars to wonder if the people are really serious about advancement (Tarka F, .nd). This point gives relevance to Prof. Wole Soyinka's words. The scholar specifically pointed out thus:

> *Of course we do know from the history of missionaries anywhere in so-called pagan lands - even if we missed the lesson of the more dramatic onslaught of the Talibans, that the shrines that incur the fiercest ire of these evangelists are those with any kind of figurative representation – be they of the human, animal, or hybridized imaginings. And of course any vessel – be it of pottery, metal, ivory or whatever are doomed to be smashed. As for altars….well, to quote a regular Yoruba proverb – the priest was burnt, and you still ask what became of his beard? Pointless also to go into the illegality of such wanton destruction, especially in an environment of near institutionalized lawlessness such as ours – which is why impunity reigns and these extreme religionists actually go on to exhort the entire nation to follow its example, and cleanse the land of all 'ungodly' sights. A subjective*

interpretation may embrace all combustibles, once the frenzy gets going.

He concluded thus:

Now, that statement is not speculative. In the past – and I do not refer to the eighteenth and nineteenth century evangelical surges but in very recent years, the nation has suffered losses of invaluable sculptures that many art galleries – including our own national museums – would scramble to acquire. We have suffered the destruction of wooden and clay sculptures, caryatids, carved house posts and votive vessels and shrines, the best of which last provide us models of traditional architecture – all in recent years – as the zombies of Christian and Islamic religiosity carry out what they consider their divine mission. 'This is what others have done to us' is, frankly, less painful than 'this is what we have done to ourselves' – and worse still, 'this is what we are still doing to ourselves?' It requires no special incentive to pursue the restoration of stolen art objects, rail against the suppression of one's indigenous modes of expression and other palpable manifestations of one's humanity, when the thieves and iconoclasts are recognizable as aliens, conquerors, and even racists. How does one proceed when the agents of destruction come from within, are fired up by an evangelical zeal that turns against their own heritage? What do we say to them when they surge out to destroy the basis of a comprehensive Humanistic recovery that we blithely advocate? What, then, is the point of bringing up artifacts that are clear evidence of ancient cultures when such cultures are deemed infidel – in the twenty-first century - and can be turned into rubble or kindling by religious zealots in the present? (Soyinka W, nd),

From the discourse so far, the paper is of the view that this destruction has lots of implications to development.

In the first place, these destructions would impede the study and teaching of history. This is because most of the material remains that would have served as aids for the study and teaching of the course and cause of history have been destroyed. This has become so embarrassing that Jacques Chirac, the former President of France, was quoted saying:

…we bled Africa for four and a half centuries, we looted their raw material, then we were told they (Africans) are good for nothing. In the name of religion, their culture was destroyed and now, as we must do things more elegantly, we steal their brains through scholarship, then we see that the unhappy Africa is not in brilliant condition, it does not generate elites, after being rich at his expense (http//.www.contamare.net)

The above confessional statement is an indication that even the west is aware of the enormous damage she did in Africa.

Secondly, through the activities of those involved in the destruction of these remains, knowledge of the link between the past and the present as well as those that could be used in the development of the future are destroyed, thus creating a sort of knowledge lacuna. The situation is even more pathetic when seen in the light of the fact that the glory of Africa as embedded in her looted and destroyed heritage are found in Europe, where thousands and thousands of stolen arts objects and civilization artifacts are in public museums and private collections. Realizing this fact, the people and government of Senegal struggle to preserve the city as a historical site, especially after pieces of jewelry, pottery, and iron tools dating far back thousands of years (between 2,000 and 7,000 BC) were washed to the surface by heavy flood in Ouest-Foire suburb in Dakar, Senegal (www.camerondoudu.com). Although the exact date of the objects are not known, preliminary investigations reveal that the objects could date back between 2,000 and 7,000 BC.

Thirdly, it creates cultural imbalance and intolerance. This is because the cultural link and affinity which would have been provided by these artifacts have been destroyed. It is therefore much easier for the western world to argue and consider the progress of Egypt and South Africa as distinct from the retrogressive Black Africans.

Fourthly, it has deprived the continent the wealth she would have derived from tourism and tourist activities around these relics. Rather, these wealth keep accruing to the purses of western governments and people who have kept these relics in their private and public museums. As a way of keep up with international practice, the Egyptian government have been able to channel huge resources to preserve her relics, which has earned her international recognition and resources. Both the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Israel rank highest in huge generation of funds from tourism in their respective countries. This contrasts some Arab countries and Africa where there are deliberate attempts to destroy these heritage.

Finally, it impedes technological development. This is seen in the fast developing world of Asia, where the people have preserved their history and use it as a tool for development. In most of these countries, the study and teaching of history is made compulsory, while the preservation and protection of historical remains are put on the state priority list. For example, in Tanzania, it has been revealed that the Haya Technique was highly adopted by the local smelters to adapt to the local conditions. Such that the iron smelting industry of Tabora Community (East African inland trading center in Tanzania), as far back as 1882, was able to produce and trade over 150,000 locally manufactured hoes annually. It is sad that as recent as 1999,

all the Tanzania factories put together, including the Modern Ubungo Farm Implements (UFI) Factory built with the assistance of the Chinese are producing only double that amount of hoes. This is part of the problem of loss of heritage which Africa presently experiences.

Conclusion

From the discourse so far, it is clear that in every human society, the role of heritage preservation and their study (history) in determining the level of development cannot be ignored. Heritage preservation and history are not just academic discipline, but also the preservation of a society's development over time as well as the critical and analytical study of these for development. It is therefore the sum total of these that brings about development in the society. However, the emergence of groups starting from the conquest exercise in Africa to the recent emergence of extreme religious groups have become a threat to this development. It is rather unfortunate that the emerging extremist groups, just like their colonial counterparts, have failed to realize that not all objects made of clay and metal before the coming of colonialism are fetish. Even at that, they must realize that traditional African religious practices exist in great variety, and it should also be remembered that both Islam and Christianity found homes on the African continent almost from their very inception. The features of the traditional African religions help to set African cultures apart from those in other continents. They should also note how much African religion had in common with other religion and how this can be used as an index to measure the level of development in Africa before European impact in the 15th century. With a thousand shrines, heritage site, relics, and other associated materials lined up for the auto-da-fe, one wonders if it is not time to appeal to UNESCO to move beyond designating these endangered species world heritage and initiate threats of cultural sanctions against governments that fail to protect all potential archival material within their borders. This may sound extreme, and is unlikely, but the mind truly turns desperate when confronted by these self-righteous armies of religious cleansing who operate without restraint and with impunity. The paper thus argues that the present situation of destroying these heritages as well as the inability of African men to learn from the lessons of history is responsible for the seemingly gloomy future which the continent is presently facing. This gloom is reflected in massive brain-drain, import dependency economy, raw material production industries, and incessant strife among others. It concludes that a genuine sense of heritage preservation and critical and analytical study of the history of a fidelity to its revelations, a courageous acceptance of its judgments and workings, and its implications for both the present and future are necessary steps in the formation of the basic architecture for building a viable Africa.

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