

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY
ACADEMIC RESEARCH**The validity, relevance and impact of archaeological and historical studies on human existence**

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Abstract: This scholarly work entitled; The Validity, Relevance and Impact of Archaeological And Historical Studies on Human Existence has been carried out to examine the central focus of the two inter-related disciplines, namely; Archaeology and History, their significance and impact on Human existence and society. In the course of conducting the study a very good number of published and unpublished sources have been interacted with. The study highlights how relevant, parasitical in nature, interwoven, indispensable and equally crucial the disciplines being reviewed herein are to human existence and society. However, it is against this backdrop the study intends to point out that these disciplines are objective, humanistic and all about the totality of human existence overtime in accordance with action/activities conducted, being conducted and to be conducted, in other words, means the past, present and the future. Further to the above, the study also argues that both the two disciplines greatly contribute to the intellectual development of other academic disciplines whether directly or indirectly. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that Archaeology and History to some extent are part and parcel of Arts and Sciences. Furthermore, fundamental reasons and concrete evidences regarding why these two disciplines are worth studying have been drawn into light. In view of this, the study seeks to justify the rationality behind the study of these disciplines under consideration and how they greatly help in overcoming the problems of indigene settler dichotomy, inter-tribal conflict and religious intolerance by indicating the old existed inter-tribal diplomatic relations. The last but not the least, the study has further explored some major educational development crises confronting these studies in Nigeria, in the 21st Century and has to some extent directly or indirectly suggested the way forward for the betterment, progress and advancement of the subject matter of study and human existence in general.

Key words: Validity, Relevance, Impact, Archaeology, History, Human, Existence

Introduction

However, for a proper understanding of this piece of scholarly research work conducted, it would be found more handy and interesting to quote and I quote: M.D. Salim in his study of the Philosophy of History opines that: "It is neither a duty of history nor of a historian to pass down judgment, but rather a responsibility ahead of the two to interact between causality and effects" In another related development, Mathew Arnold points out that; "We expect of the critics to see the object in itself as it really is" For Samuel Johnson: "If it had not been for the art of writing there would have been no learning". In any case, it is worthy to note that the validity of historical reconstruction and write-up cannot be left unstudied or over emphasized.

Introduction

This study titled "Validity, Relevance And Impact of Archaeological And Historical Studies On Human Existence", has been carried out and purely conducted in order to draw into light some major similarities, importance, relevance and as well as positive impact of the two studied subject matters. The study has been subdivided into inter-related segments for a better understanding of the main focus, significance, relevance and impact of the study on the academic life of the generality of the scholars, students, and general reading public at large.

However, in view of the above, it is of relevance and

importance to state the major areas examined and analyzed, among which include; 'The terms Archaeology and History', the concepts of 'Historiography, Archaeologist and Historian' themselves as specialists. Other related topics examined in the study include; the justification and rationality behind the study of the two disciplines under review. The last but not the least of the major topics examined and discussed is the case of Archaeological and Historical development crises seriously confronting the two respective disciplines in the 21st Century particularly in Nigerian area and beyond, and the study has to a large extent endeavored to highlight the way forward.

The Terms 'Archaeology' and 'History':

In any case, it is worthy to quote, Ifemeje in his study of the nature, essence, relevance, validity and impact of the aforementioned academic disciplines strongly argues that it is difficult to formulate a definition of History or any other that cannot be challenged. This arises consequent upon the existence of many philosophy of History in particular and varying emphasis that people place on different aspects related to History and its perfect reconstruction into reality. This shows that ethical treatment of History constitutes a threat to the discipline. The threat discusses here is the subjectivity with which History is handled. This deprives history of all form of objectivity.

However, it is also worthy to note that sub-archaeological disciplines such as Geographical, Ethnographical, Historical,

Marine, Environmental and Linguistic archaeology are both essential academic areas of specialization operating under archaeological study.

The Concept of 'History'

Past studies conducted have stressed that, it could be referred to at least "two separate concepts, in as much as it is made up of a series of past events, the sum of past happenings, the totality of human experiences, and History as a way in which 'facts' are selected, verified, described and analyzed. Even as an act of narration, History seldom transcends the subjective. The selection of facts, the words, the style, the accents, the imposed logic, the footnotes, all bear the impress of the individual Historian and his milieu and combine to produce a particular image of the past". To Casten Niebuhr "*He who calls what has vanished back again into being, enjoys bliss like that of creation*". This is in respect of the place of archaeology and archaeologists. It is basically true because some archaeologists proved of 'creations' as they consider themselves to be 'godlike' in many forms and nature. In most cases, archaeology tends to be synonyms with digging but contemporarily only very few archaeologists spend their time for digging.

The Concept of 'Archaeology'

The word originated from the Greek 'arkhailogia', which implies a discourse about ancient objects/things. But contemporarily, Archaeology is the study of human past, the material traces of it that have survived, the term human past needs stressing. Further to the above, it is a discipline that seems to act like a magnet to eccentrics, but its vast span ensures that it contains something to suit all types. Williams Comden views archaeology as the study of antiquities, is no more but a back looking 'curiosity' which meant a desire to know about the past and the people involved in it which is certainly very curious in every sense.

In another related development a scholar in person of Ifemaje defines archaeology as the study of antiquities or pre-historic remains. It is also a science which regards ancient objects with a view of finding out historical facts. In any event to sum it up is to consider it as a branch of study which concerns with the material remains of the past generations buried underneath, among others include; tombs, abandoned structures, buildings, tools, and animals' bone. It is thus an indispensable source of History.

The Term 'Historiography':

Study has demonstrated that Historiography goes with two interwoven meanings. In the first place simply refers to the method, skill or craft of writing History. J. H. Hexter defines it as the means of communicating in writing what the Historian thinks about the past. Similarly, it may mean the yields or products of the application of the Historian's craft. In a nutshell, Historiography could be regarded as an essential segment of Historical scholarship which can independently be developed autonomously. For instance, IbnKhalidun attempted to apply all available sources on the same subject by comparing and scrutinizing them in order to arrive at valid opinions and judgments. He had warned in his famous scholarly work titled '*The Muqaddimah*': An introduction to History, that if the Historian does not evaluate remote or ancient material through comparison with near or contemporary material, he often cannot avoid stumbling, slipping and deviating from the 'high road of truth'. To him

what causes this is accepting the stories or information in plain transmitted form, without regain and for the value. In view of the above point raised which centres on thoroughness and genuineness of the historical data collected, therefore, it will be pertinent to present Ibn Khaldun's 'Critique of Historiography'. IbnKhalidun had demonstrated why such 'useless stories' and 'silly information' should be believed. A scathing criticism was made by him in his book '*The Muqaddimah*' which contains a large number of stories, many of which to his opinion were no more but mere fabrications, but Historians continued to reproduce without asking the right kind of questions that would have exposed the invalidity of the stories. IbnKhalidun had further lamented because of the absence of reflection, Historiography become non-sensical and controversial. To him, people who could not appreciate and apply the stringent rules of Historiography went into the profession wrongly, thinking that it was a soft option. He further criticized many writers that emerged prior to his own age due to lack of ideological, philosophical, methodological guidelines and their inability to cross-check the historical information before writing.

The Validity, Relevance And Impact Of The Two Interwoven Disciplines on Human Existence And Society:

For a proper understanding of these inter-related academic courses of study it could in the first place be more convincing to begin with an Archaeology prior to giving any form of an assessment on History. The overriding of this discipline include; an excavation beyond the surface and critical examination of the discovered object/artifacts for an analysis and historical reconstruction. Furthermore, the course broadens the outlook of the students and intellectuals concerned, and also offers awareness of the socio-cultural content of the discipline itself, its validity and relevance to human existence and historical write-ups. It also trains the students in the use of the state of the art-equipment of the analysis, study, restoration and preservation of archaeological findings. The study has also explored that archaeological data provides a picture of the past which is essentially different from, and in many ways complimentary to that which many Historians reconstruct from written or oral sources.

However, in any event, it is interesting to note that both the uses, similarities and impact of these examined disciplines on human existence are very enormous and contributory to the knowledge of the fields and people's intellectual life. Archaeological findings represent major sources of information about the past, serves as the principal source for most of the pre-history, thereby making our understanding of more recent periods possible.

Studies have further shown that the discovered material remains through archaeological research, their interpretation largely centre upon the report of the Anatomist, Pathologist, Botanist, Ecologist, Metallurgist, Chemist, and Architect to state but a few among several. It is worthy at this juncture to note that what usually delays the release of the result of the Archaeological research conducted is the desire to hold a series of consultations with specialists and as well as the expensiveness nature of the course itself unlike Historical studies. To this level, one may be convinced to agree that the validity associated with Geography, linguistics, oral traditions, primary and secondary sources to archaeological research and Historical reconstruction cannot be neglected. The study discovered that both 'Archaeology and History' are all about the totality of human existence overtime, which has

relationship with his immediate world, activities conducted, being done, and to be done on earth. It is worthy to state that none of the above is automatically or everlastingly predominant, and the method used is interdisciplinary which is basically on multi-faceted approach and a wide variety of sources for accuracy are very needful and mandatory. In view of this Phillipson states that; *“Every possible precaution has to be taken to ensure that the Historical truth is re-established.... The same rules applied all over the world for researchers to reach conclusive findings”*.

The above is an attempt made by Phillipson to highlight how a researcher can be able to overcome the challenges of distortion, contra-factuality and inaccuracy in his studies. He further shows that the two disciplines being assessed here are all about humanity, objectivity and detailed explanation of research findings.

However, recent studies conducted have argued that both the two respective disciplines are humanistic. This implies that they largely concern with the actions of man, and other actions relevant to the life of man, dead or alive, which emanate from the forces within the world of men at a determinable time and which are perceivable by ordinary human senses and powers. This highlights that actions attributed to ‘gods’ and ‘spirits’ are not to be regarded as Archaeology and History. The interest of the study herein is to show how over the years after witnessing a heated intellectual debate, rejoinder both counter and encounter as well as the prolong controversy experienced had eventually made the validity and relevance of these disciplines to become academically and globally accepted. It is very undisputable reason and equally important to state the claim that Archaeology is anything concerns with the exploration of the material remains and for History has been regarded as everything and there is everything in it. It is against the above backdrop this study considers the two inter-related disciplines being discussed about as society-centeredness. This simply means they are more about society than individuals, despite the idea that society is made up of individuals, yet it is much more than the simple aggregate of individuals.

The Question of Is History A Science or Art?

The fundamental question mentioned above has drawn the attention of grounded scholars to strongly argue that in many institutions of learning History is part and parcel of social sciences, in others it is obtainable in the faculty of Arts. A very good number of dogmatic statements were made concerning whether the body of knowledge called History is a Science or an Art. In the scholarly work of E. H. Carr he strongly argues that *“History is a Science, no more, no less”*.

On contrary to the above definition, a scholar in the person of Henry Steele Commager in his book titled *‘The Nature of History’* opines that *History cannot be regarded as a Science in any meaningful sense*. Each of these two categorical statements has a powerful class of Philosophers of History solidly stand behind it and this intellectual contradiction still exists. The study found that two basic questions must be attempted to this ongoing intellectual controversy. In the first instance, the need to properly understand the concepts of ‘Science’ and ‘Arts’ is necessary.

However, to sum it up is to regard History as both a Science and Art, because it is parasitical in nature and other disciplines cannot survive without Historical data collection and reconstruction. When compared to Archaeological study it will be different, because archaeology confines itself to

some specific aspects such as Artifacts/material remains, tools, utensils, ornaments, regalia, as well as holding a consultations with numerous professionals such as Botanist, Zoologist, Physicist, Agrarian and others for interpretation prior to the process of Historical reconstruction. In view of this, it could therefore be understood that these two respective studies are not only inseparable but indispensable, parasitical, humanistic, objective and inseparable in nature. Above all, they equally get along with both Arts and Scientific studies, as well as intellectually contribute to the growth and development of all academic disciplines directly or indirectly.

Justification And Rationality Behind The Study of Archaeology And History As Subject Matter Under Review:

In any case, it is interesting to be borne in our intellectual minds that there are fundamental factors and concrete evidences to put forward in justifying the rationality behind the study of the aforementioned disciplines. One of the major aims of archaeology in particular is the need to reconstruct the past on the basis of facts, research results, figures and evidences. This objective makes it relevant to the Historical scholarship, since no discipline is an Island in itself, many disciplines are still inter-dependent, in particular Historian alone cannot attempt all the questions that he may ask for this reason. A famous Archaeologist by name ThurstanShow highlights that what Scientific Archaeologist are seeking to acquire in their excavation is knowledge, information, and data which enable them to fill out the picture of the past more accurately and accordingly.

From the foregoing therefore, it is safe to argue that Archaeology helps to supplement the very meager evidence provided by oral traditions about the African past in particular. For example, the excavation of fine works of Arts at NOK, Ile, Benin and Igbo-Ukwu, as well as the large Architectural structure, in Zimbabwe, and the remains of the civilizations of Nile valley all help to negate the claims of European writers, scholars and visitors that Africa had not produced an advance civilization, and had no History, Africans were barbaric and above all inhabiting in dark continent. To debunk these baseless claims, the study argues that this is a contra-factual, distorted, sentimental and baseless European claims as far as Archeological and Historical records are concerned among which have described Africa as a cradle of civilization.

However, still a more comprehensive, concrete and detailed findings of this study could be presented to defend and justify Archaeological and Historical studies. History certainly centres on an interaction between causality and effects of an occurred event/study conducted. A.J.P. Taylor views *“History as not a catalogue but a version of events”*. While, Archaeology is undeniably a ‘luxury’ subject which constantly needs to justify its existence. Note that, the study explored that there are inevitably a few archaeologists who are pompous, hypocritical, dishonest, pretentious, self-promoting, not true loving and un-principled but all of the above did not stop others from doing well, the same obtainable within the circle of Historians and other related disciplines. In view of this Marx-Planck argues that: *“A Scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents die and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it”*.

Archaeology is a perpetual search, never really a finding; it is

an eternal journey, with no true arrival. In archaeology almost everything is tentative; nothing is final but a continual process. From the above points raised, one could be rest assured that Archaeology remains tremendous form, and could be so exciting that a truly extra-ordinary find like the Iceman of the Terracotta Army can ignite the interest of the whole world.

In another related development our study found that Archaeology enormously relies on the tools left by our forebears, everything from a chip to stone to a battleship and for a long time, human progress was seen largely in terms of technology. In fact, scholarship chooses to divide the human past into a succession of 'Ages' Stone, Bronze, and Iron with numerous subsequent sub-divisions purely based on technological development. Although, equal of greater emphasis has now been placed on other aspects of the past. It is nevertheless time that tools have always been the main stay of human existence, and all of our sophisticated computer-age gadgetry originated in the simple artifacts of our forebears. The bulk of the archaeological record is made up of artifacts. However, it is in the interest of the study to draw into light that consequent upon the little scholarly efforts made above to justify archaeological and historical study. Similarly, it would next be more appropriate to summarily highlight the rationality behind the study of the two respective courses under critical examination. They both: -

- Enrich human experiences and increase our understanding of our immediate world.
- Provide bases for generalization.
- Tremendously help in tracing the origin of human and society.
- Promote and encourage sense of belonging, cultural identity and values.
- Offer research findings/results, approaches and methodologies to human problems.
- Prepare and organize man and his society for the unforeseen, encourage confidence in man and warn societies about the future.
- Offer moral lessons for mankind to strictly adhere to societal values, rules and regulations governing human existence.
- Do not pass down judgment because of their nature, goals and objectives. Archaeology values digging and exploration of the material remains. For History its goals centre on to examine, trace, account, discuss and interact between the causality and effects for reconstruction into Historical write-ups as far as Historical philosophy is concerned which argues that *"it is neither a duty of a Historian nor of a History to pass down judgment but to critically interact with sources, causes and effects"*.

Archaeological And Historical Development Crises In Nigeria In The 21st Century; The Way Forward:

This segment of study is strongly associated with constructive and as well as incisive criticism against the Nigerian policy makers, intellectuals, students, specialists of the two fields under consideration. The criticism is relevant and purposeful consequent upon the total failure of the aforementioned to promote and uplift the status of these courses even for the avoidance of inter-tribal conflicts. The case of indigene settler dichotomy, religious intolerance, and as well as for the betterment and advancement of human existence and society. However, it is against the above backdrop the study identified the following number of challenges confronting the

disciplines being reviewed for solution. P.J. Shea in his study rightly observes that: *"Every person has a history, the more and the better, we understand all these Histories, the better we shall all be"*.

On contrary to his understanding of the validity of these two disciplines. This is principally because in modern day Nigeria there is nothing like priority given to Arts in general compared to professional and scientific courses. It is also very disheartening to state that some Art courses have been relegated to the background, and moreso, their researches and study fellowship in Nigerian state not properly funded. Still, there are failures of Governments, educationists, Historians and Archaeologists themselves to rise to the task ahead of them by addressing the obstacles world widely for solution. Re-structural Adjustment Exercise against the colonially designed and inherited syllabus is of relevance and paramount importance for positive educational development but effort has not been made to overcome the problem associated with the disciplines. Despite the fact that Educational Curriculum Review is being conducted after five years but nothing positively achieved. In addition to the above still as problems associated with the study of Archaeology in particular. An Archaeologist by name Sir, Leonard Wooly stresses that archaeology can only establish the appropriate periods, not the exact date of the events and the objects discovered. Moreso, archaeologically to judge by the depth of the soil, especially if the object is an unfamiliar type. Other related problems confronting the study of Archaeology include; inability to provide evidence with regards to social and political system of people, as well as unavailability of relevant archaeological tools and shortage of archaeologists themselves, and archaeological research is both labourious and financially demanding as compared to Historical scholarship. The last but not the least of the problems identified is the case of negative impact of weather and the action of the termites which negatively play a role in the destruction of the explored material remains.

Conclusion

However, the whole scholarly efforts herein, is basically an attempt made to examine the meaning, validity, relevance and impact as well as obstacles associated with the subject matter of study titled *"The Validity, Relevance And Impact of Archaeological And Historical Studies on Human Existence"*. In the study some major sub-headings were created, and each of the related aspect has been treated accordingly. The study discovered that both the two respective disciplines namely; Archaeology and History are humanistic, parasitical in nature, interwoven and indispensable, and have both remarkably and intellectually contributed to the growth and development of intellectualism. They were also responsible for the emergence of 'schools of thought' particularly within the circle of Historians and academic communities at large.

Furthermore, it has justified the rationality behind the study of Archaeology and History. The work has further argued that both the two disciplines are all about humanity, society and the totality of human existence over time in line with action/activities of man, being conducted. The study has further pinpointed out the major development crises confronting Archaeological and Historical Studies in Nigeria, in the 21st Century, among others include; the failure of the governments to rise to the responsibility ahead, scanty fund for Archaeological and Historical researchers as well as absence of moral and financial motivations to state but a few.

At the tail end, the study has directly or indirectly suggested the way forward. This is because it is neither a duty of History nor of a Historian to pass down judgment but philosophically acceptable to identify the causality and effects for accurate, logical and comprehensive Historical reconstruction to be made

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