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THE ROLE OF HISTORY IN THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE GAMBIA

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Abstract

This article examines the role of history in the emergence and development of The Gambia. History plays an important role in the making of any nation. All the ethnic groups that make up The Gambia have emigrated from different parts of West Africa and converged in this region called The Gambia. This article joins the debate on the role of migration and settlements of people in The Gambia from a historical perspective. Concentrating on how political and economic factors in the pre-colonial period around the Sahel region and how colonialism was responsible for migration of people into the country. It proceeds to examine how factors such as unity in diversity and colonial experiences have helped in shaping the direction of economic development of immigrant people into the country before and after independence. In order to go into the distant past, a descriptive historical analysis method was adopted in the process of writing this treatise. Also, the methodology adopted for this study is qualitative in nature, using content analysis and secondary sources, the paper was analyzed. This paper shows how history as a tool for mobilization was utilized for the attainment of independence in The Gambia. The article's contribution to knowledge is in its ability to utilize historical, as well as secondary sources to shed more light on the migration, peopling and settlement on the Gambia over time perspective. The authors argue that history acts as referees in a nation's cause and that since people are the fruits of their history, most things are achieved by resorting to positive historical antecedents for citizenship, national consciousness, patriotism and for the overall general development of any given polity.

Key Words: Gambia, history, migration, immigration, settlement, development, emergence, emigration

Introduction

The idea of a nation state was and is associated with her history. The rise of the modern system of states has always been linked to its antecedents. Research evidence has shown that there is a strong link between a nation-state and her history. For instance, (Brij, 2012) is of the view that when new migrants enter a country, they enter not only its physical space but also its history with all its obligations and responsibilities they entail; to be effective and responsible citizens, they need to understand the inextinguishable link between a country's past and present. In fact, the history of a people, in this case, the totality of their antecedents and or background is the major determinant of their economic, political, cultural, religious and social trajectories. In The Gambia and in deeds in several other parts of Africa, history has become an authentic determinant of the course of their polity, hence it has aptly been said that no nation-state can grow taller than the trajectory of their history (Nnaocha, 2009).

History, therefore, has become reliable instrument in the development and growth of modern nation-state. Most African countries have passed through the process of state formation and nation-state building to become what they are today was through joint effort occasioned by common historical experience and conquest. For example, African countries which have passed through the agonizing and exploiting process of colonialism have rallied around history as a point of unity and in the attainment of statehood. Colonialism has therefore given African countries their unique experience, identity and history of struggle for survival and liberation from the Whiteman's oppression and suppression.

History as a field of study and as a systematic study and analysis of significant past events has been defined in many different ways. (Bassey 2014) defines history is a 'kind' of research or inquiry; history is the science of 'res gestae' (that is, research or an inquiry into the actions of human beings that have been done in the past, the forms of thought whereby one asks questions and tries to answer them). However, history does not only study about past precedents. According to (Carr, 1961), history is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past. In effect, history as the study of past events, re-surfaces in the present which makes its study relevant (Tosh, 1991). The present is a continuum of the past which need to be studied and documented for posterity and for the records. As well, history may also be concerned with the contemporary events. To (Nnaocha, 2009), history consists essentially in seeing the past

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through the eye of the present and in the light of its problems. It is also seen as an academic discipline which is studied in schools, colleges, universities, etc and an occupation practiced by professional historians. For historians operating at this level, history is very much a process of investigation, discovery, and organization, using particular methods and skills to find, analyze and interpret sources of evidence in order of explanation or interpretation of past or any given historical issue(s). Barraclough, (1995) sees history as the attempt to discover on the basis of fragmentary evidence the significant things about the past. In this sense, history is "a series of accepted judgments (Bassey, 2014). Overall, history is study of generally accepted norms, values and adjudged relevant activities of given society. Thus, as the renowned historian, Leopold Von Ranke puts it, "history has been assigned the office of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of future ages" (Bassey, 2014).

This paper therefore centers on the concept of history, immigration and peopling of the Gambia, factors that facilitated immigration into The Gambia and the position of history in the growth and the development of The Gambia. It is against this backdrop that the research investigates the relationship that exists between history and a country. In a dig deep into the historical distant past of The Gambia, descriptive historical analysis method was adopted. Also, the methodology adopted for this study is qualitative in nature, using secondary sources of materials and literature from related materials on the position of history in the emergence and development of the country. The authors argue that history acts as referees in a nation's cause and that since people are the fruits of their history, most things are achieved by teaching their own national history for citizenship, national consciousness, patriotism and for the overall general development of the polity.

Immigration and the Peopling of The Gambia

Most people presume that migration is a recent phenomenon in history. However, migration has been a feature of human existence for centuries, as it is as old as humanity itself. Humans have always migrated in groups and as individuals to seek freedom from war and or conflict, to escape hunger and poverty, to find new economic opportunities and employment, to flee from religious intolerance or political repression, or even to trade and to travel to new places (Cohen, 1995). The Gambia like the United States of America could aptly be described as a country of immigrants and a melting point of West Africa. This is because all the ethnic groups that make up the present and modern Gambia had migrated from different parts of West Africa, and settled permanently in the country.

This section seeks to highlight the major earliest ethnic groups that constitute today's Gambia that migrated from their original homelands and settled in the country. Since about the 13th century people had been migrating from various parts of West Africa and settling in the Senegambia region (Tramingham, 1962). Some of these ethnic groups are: the Jola, Mandinka, Fula and Tukulor, Wolof, Serahule, Serre, Aku: lgbo and Liberated Africans, Non- Africans, European: Mulatoes, Lebanese, and West Indies. As will be shown in this section, these ethnics are very important in this discourse, at least for two reasons: First, people migrated into the present-day Gambia since about 10th century ago. Second, some of the kingdoms and chiefdoms in The Gambia were founded by these immigrants.

In as much as there were earliest migrants (aborigines) in the pre-colonial Gambian period such as the Jola, Mandinka, Serre, Serahule, Fulani, Manjago, Serahule etc., there were also later migrants in the colonial period such as the Akus (Creoles) in 1830s, the Igbos, Lebanese etc. There is a need therefore, to discuss some of the major ethnic groups with a view to linking them to the very foundation and peopling of The Gambia:

The Jola

The Jola are the earliest ethnic group in The Gambia and are majorly found on the Atlantic coast around the southern banks of The Gambia River, the Casamance region of Senegal and the northern part of Guinea-Bissau. The Jola settlement is believed to have preceded the Mandinka and Fula peoples in the riverine coast of Senegambia and may have migrated into Casamance; their original homeland before the 13th century (Hughes et al, 2008). In 1911, they comprised 7 percent of the population and lived mainly in small and isolated communal groups in the forests and swamps of the southern districts of Kombo-Foni Province; a minority also settled in Bathurst. Indeed, a key feature of Jola society at least until independence was its fragmentary nature. The Jola remained concentrated in the Kombo and Foni up to independence; as late as 1963, 55 percent of all Jola lived either in Eastern or Western Kombo. This meant that 83% of the Jola live in Brikama.

Mandinka

The Mandinka is the largest ethnic group in The Gambia and may have moved into the region in the late 13th century or early 14th century as the then Mali Empire of

Western Sudan expanded. They were fully established on both banks of the River Gambia when the European explorers from Portugal first arrived in the 15th century and by 1800, they provided the ruling class and accounted for 49 percent of the total population of The Gambia in 1911, (Hughes et al, 2008). They then comprised the bulk of the population in the North bank and South bank provinces of the protectorate and were the most numerous groups in all bar one of the other of the three protectorate provinces. However, even though Mandinka from the Kombos had been among the earliest African inhabitants of Bathurst, they made up only 3 percent of its population in 1911, (Colonial Office report, 1911). During the first half of the twentieth century, their share of the population declined slightly, although, as records show, they still comprised 41 percent of the total population in 1963 (46 percent of the Gambian population). By 1993, these figures had fallen to 34 and 39 percent respectively (Hughes et al, 2008).

Fula and Tukulor

The Fula are the second largest of the ethnic groups of The Gambia after the Mandinka. Their settlement in the country is dated around the 17th century and by the 19th century the various sub- Fula groups such as the Tukulor, the Futa-Fulbe accounted for a substantial proportion of the country's population. History has it that the Fula migrated from the Futa-Jallon highlands in modern day Guinea Conakry and settled in The Gambia. In the 1870s and 1880s, a famous Fula leader, Musa Molloh, established a Fula kingdom north of the river centred on Fulladu and in 1911, when they made up one fifth of the population of the protectorate; they reside mainly in the North Bank and Upper River provinces.

Wolof

Quite like the Mandinka, the Wolof was firmly established in The Gambia by the 15th century. They entered The Gambian valley from Senegal, where they continue to be the most numerous and popular ethnic group, and established a kingdom in Saloum for which, by 1800, was the only non-Mandinka kingdom below the Barrakunda Falls; however, there were relatively few Wolof in any of the Mandinka kingdoms until the mid-19th century. Some Wolof from the interior may have later migrated to Bathurst. Meanwhile, in the 1820s, a substantial number of Wolof moved directly to Bathurst from Goree and St. Louis in the French Colony of Senegal. They were sent there by European employers and mulatto slave owners to work as artisans on the construction of the town, or as domestic servants, and tended originally to live in an area of north Bathurst, known as Jollof town until the 1960s. It is probably that in the early days of the settlement on St. Mary's Island, they formed the majority of its African population.

Serahule

The Serahule, who may be of mixed Mandinka, Tuareg, and Fula origin, are popularly believed to have been the main inhabitants of the ancient Empire of Ghana, which flourished between the 8th and the 11th centuries AD. After the decline of the Ghana Empire, some Serahule (Soninke) moved to The Gambia. A further migration of Serahule into Gambia occurred in the mid - 19th century. As early as l840s, Serahule were growing groundnuts as stranger farmers for Mandinka landlords in the Upper River Region and they also served as mercenaries during the Soninke and Marabout wars: they were also successful long-distance traders in the pre-colonial period. By 1911, they made up 3 percent of the total population of Gambia, being resident mainly in Upper River Region (Hughes etal, 2008).

Serere

The Serere ethnic group has been living in the present Gambia for many centuries though they comprise a higher share of the population of Senegal where they are mostly found. In the early part of the 19th century, most Serere lived north of the River in the kingdom of Saloum, but in 1863, an estimated 2,000 fled to the Crown Colony (Bathurst) to escape from the fighting in the interior and eventually settled in Bathurst and British Kombo (Hughes etal, 2008). By 1901, they formed the third largest ethnic group in Bathurst after the Wolof and the Aku, and in 1911, 1/3 of all Serere in the colony lived in the capital. However, in 1963, only 17 percent of the Serere lived in Bathurst and the majority resided in Kerewam Since 1963, the crux of the Serere population has shifted again to just over 1/3 lived in Kerewan and just under a third in Kanifing municipality.

The Aku, Igbo and Liberated Africans

The Aku were the last ethnic group to settle in The Gambia and they constitute a distinct group within The Gambian society. Like the Creoles of Sierra- Leone, they are majorly the descendants of liberated African slaves and the Recaptives after the abolition of slavery and slave trade throughout the British Empire in 1807. These returnees' former slaves, who were popularly called liberated Africans, were first resettled in Freetown, the capital of Sierra- Leone. Then some of these liberated African slaves and the Recaptives were further resettled from Freetown to Bathurst in 1818 and a handful more were resettled in McCarthy Islands in 1820s at the request

of the British merchants based in Bathurst. Most migration occurred between 1832 and 1843 when liberated Africans were settled en mass, when the Liberated African Department (LAD) was closed, by which time the population of liberated Africans in Bathurst was between three to five thousand (Fyfe, 1962). Thus, by the 1840s, they were a significant population in Bathurst.

The Non-Gambian Africans

Another group noticeable in the early settlement in Bathurst in the 1840s was non- Gambian Africans. They constituted majorly people from neighbouring Senegal and within the sub-region. These were 'strange farmers' from Senegal and other French territories who moved into The Gambia to grow groundnuts on a sharecropping basis: These strange farmers were later to be a significant feature of Gambian rural society. For instance, there were about 16,000 strange farmers from the neighbouring French and Portuguese territories in Gambia in 1945. A farmers' Survey carried out in the mid -1970s, estimated that there were about 25,000 Guinean, Senegalese, and Malian 'strange farmers' in The Gambia (Hughes et al in Gamble, 2006).

Non- Gambian Africans has also moved into Bathurst in considerable numbers-since the 19th century. The first to arrive were the Creoles from Sierra-Leone, who came to Bathurst initially for trade and from the 1870s onward, to seek for clerical employment in The Gambia.

The Europeans

The founding of Bathurst in 1816 was without the presence of small but influential European population, who were mainly British merchants and soldiers. The first civilian settlers were a group of British merchants who moved to Bathurst from Goree soon after the French had reoccupied their trading post in 1817. By 1823, there were 45 Europeans on St. Mary's Island, most of whom were permanent residents and a handful lived outside Bathurst. However, following the abandonment of Albreda, after its ruin, there were small, but significant, French commercial community in Bathurst from 1860 when the First French firm – Maurel Frères was established in the Island. In the first half of the 20th century, the number of Europeans on St. Mary's Island increased, reaching 261 in 1939 and by 1963, the British population in The Gambia stood at 413 and this increased over time (Census Report, 1965).

The Mulattos

In the l9th century there was also a distinct Mulatto community in Bathurst. A total of 135 Mulattos were recorded as living on St. Mary's Island in 1824 and 116 in the 1901 Census. Mulattos were products of relationships between European men and, African women, mainly Wolof at one end of the social scale were the offspring of British officials and merchants who were often educated in Europe, became merchants themselves and lived alongside Europeans. On the other hand, were the descendants of early Portuguese traders who were generally employed as artisans, sailors and domestic servants. It could be noted that the Mulatto community disappeared and after 1901, were reintegrated into the European community, while others were reclassified as Wolof.

The Lebanese

Lebanese community constituted another important group within Bathurst. 'Syrians', from what is now Lebanon began arriving in Bathurst in the 1890s when it was booming a commercial centre. The Lebanese, a mix of Christians, and Shites, have been active in the import-export, wholesale, and large- scale retail sectors in Bathurst. They are based mainly in the urban areas of The Gambia; the Kombos and Bathurst (now Banjul). Since then, the Lebanese community has been fully integrated into the Gambian society and could vote and be voted for, for those who were born in the country and or whose parents have been living here before independence.

The West Indians

There were some noticeable countable numbers of West Indian community in Bathurst in the 1880s. For example, there were about 59 of them living in Bathurst in 1881 then (Hughes et al, 2008). These were officials, and mostly were engaged in trading. West Indian settlers in Bathurst served as one of the regiments stationed at different times in the early formation of Bathurst. However, by 1901, most of them were redeployed; some died and or left The Gambia.

It should be pointed out here and also for emphasis that the mere migration of these ethnic nationalities to The Gambia did not alone add up to the development of the country. Rather, the combination of their various skills, entrepreneurship, expertise, crafts etc. have played significance role to the development of The Gambia. This argument is reinforced by Lazear (1999) when he argues that a diverse pool of people with different backgrounds and knowledge can increase productivity by complementing skills. Ethnic diversity is an important social factor that indirectly affects growth through other intermediate variables, with examples such as

government policy decisions, quality of institutions and levels of internal conflict (Collier, 2000; Alesina et al. Throughout the history of mankind, ethnic groups have contributed to many movements in our history. For example, they have contributed to movements, trail blazing movements, political history, music, publications, culture, sports and more.

Social integration which is understood as a dynamic and principled process of promoting the values, relations and institutions that enable all people to participate in social, economic, cultural and political life on the basis of equality of rights, equity and dignity have galvanized in making what the Gambia is today. It is the process in which societies engage in order to foster societies that are stable, safe and just – societies that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as respect for and value of dignity of each individual, diversity, pluralism, tolerance, non-discrimination, non-violence, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons. Again, in its nascent days of its development, the Gambia transformed and had a paradigm shift from the traditional perspective of ethnic and cultural exclusion to that of tolerance and inclusion; making inclusive growth a priority for ethnic minorities. This explains why The Gambia is aptly described as 'haven in Africa'.

Ethnic diversity can help people develop a sense of social cohesiveness, or community connectedness, and inclusiveness, or sense of belonging. Overall, diversity is important because it can lead to better outcomes in various aspects of life, fostering creativity, innovation, empathy, and social cohesion. It also helps create a more just and inclusive society, where everyone has an opportunity to succeed. Their contributions have helped shape the Gambia today.

Factors that facilitated Immigrations into The Gambia

Migration is the movement of people from one location to another and widely associated with change of permanent place of residence. Reasons of Migration are inter-regional and intraregional disparities at macro level and fundamentally lack of employment opportunities resulting low standard of living conditions among different socio-economic groups at micro level. A number of factors motivated people/ethnic groups to migrate to The Gambia at various periods and historical space.

The factors included trade and trade routes, gold mines, wars, agricultural activities, Islam, and European imperialism. Islam was an important factor in the migration and peopling of the pre-colonial Gambia. According to Trimingham, "a religious revolution during the fifteen and sixteenth centuries completely transformed the relation-ship of the Berbers of Western Sahara towards Islam… Islam had touched the cultivators but lightly. Pagan rulers had tolerance for Muslims in their midst. Their forms of reaction were not persecution but neutralization..." (Trimingham, 1962). The Muslim clerical - trading class within the Negro world formed trading villages over a vast area. They were less attached to the land than other Negroes. Their agriculture was carried out by the slaves, which their trading activities enabled them to purchase, and could make long expeditions; transfer their whole family with ease. Sometime, they formed permanent settlements in various parts of West Africa, including Gambia.

Population movements have played an important role in shaping Africa and the rest of the world for thousands of years. Environmental, economic, cultural, religious and political changes have led to large historical migrations, which helped form traditional African societies and their ways of living. These patterns were disrupted and transformed by European colonialism; which brought economic exploitation, political domination and cultural changes. The Atlantic slave trade devastated much of western and central Africa, while playing a crucial part in the development of the Atlantic economies. The underdevelopment and impoverishment left behind when colonialism receded after 1960s provided the context for today's migrations within and from Africa.

Apart from the Islamic factor, the famous Marabout leaders such as Foday Kabba Dumbuya, Foday Sillah, Ma Bali Jahou, Musa Molloh's etc. political and military influences played significant role in the migration and settlement of the people in the Senegambia region. These Marabout leaders fought many wars of conquest and resistance against their fellow African neighbours and also put-up stout resistance against the British and the French. Most of these Marabout leaders carved out kingdoms (Kerr in local language) for themselves and had many followers. These Marabout leaders were very powerful and their armies used modern firearms, some of which were home- made and others acquired from the Europeans, especially the French. With these firearms, they conquered or raided many of the indigenous states/kingdoms in what is now Gambia. Successful British and French attacks on Foday Sillah and Foday Kabba Dumbuya brought such kingdoms to an end. The battle against Foday Sillah, the King of Kombo in 1894 and that against Foday Kabba Dumbuya led to the defeat, capture and exiling of Foday Sillah in 1894 and the killing of Foday Kabba in 1901.

Similarly, the search for the fabled gold mines, other minerals and trade routes contributed to the migration of people to The Gambia. The Gambia was strategically located along the Trans- Saharan trade routes. The Trans Saharan Trade played an important role in the rise of states in the Senegambia region and the Western Sudan, in general. This trade was conducted between the North African traders and their counterparts in West Africa. As a result of the viability and lucrative nature of this trade, people flocked around the Senegambia region to part-take in the trade. The motives which brought the people of West Africa into contact with the peoples of North Africa were primarily economic in origin. Trade between these two regions was a natural consequence of the different environments and way of life enjoyed by the Berbers and the West African peoples who inhabited the two regions.

Furthermore, early European imperialism and competition among the European nations had engendered migrations and settlements of people in The Gambia. Early contacts with the Europeans began with the Portuguese navigators, who were the first Europeans to land on the Coast of Gambia in 1588. The area was rich in Bees wax, timber, sesame, cotton and later groundnut. Bees wax and groundnut formed exports which were greatly valued in Europe. The Portuguese established insignificant spheres of influence which were wrestled from them from upcoming European colonial powers. This was because they were not stoutly committed towards consolidating their exploration ventures. It was trade in gold and slaves that attracted other European nations such as the Dutch, Britain and France, who fiercely competed among themselves for these goods. The British of the Royal African Company had frequent contact with the coastal peoples of The Gambia in the l650s and officially established a colony in 1888. Indeed, the British occupation of the colonies of Western Sudan- Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone was primarily a military one and very little of it was acquired by treaty (Hargreaves, 1967). The British started signing treaties with Africans kings and chiefs around the Gambia River basin area in there in 1840s. According to (Crowder, 1978), "the military conquest of British West Africa was achieved at great expenditure of human lives, the destruction of many towns and villages, the break-up of traditional systems of government, and the movement of populations, but most of all it was achieved against stubborn resistance of the Africans themselves, both those of the savanna and the forest". The entire area was occupied by Britain after it defeated the Marabout leaders and signing of treaties with the various kings in the protectorate in 1888. The British military conquest and consequent colonial rule caused dispersal of people into The Gambia.

Climate and ecological changes have also necessitated the migration of the groups of migrants, especially the Mandingoes who left Mali Empire in its expansionist days and desertification and settled along the banks of River Gambia for farming purposes. The creation of the Saharan Desert by 2500 BC separated Sub-Saharan Africa from the rest of the world. However, there have been millennia of humid and arid periods, which have had a profound impact on migration into and out of the region. Drought has forced inhabitants to leave many locations throughout the continent. Generally, these movements have been from north to south during arid periods and from south to north when conditions are relatively humid. In pre-colonial times, migration was thus part of normal life in many parts of Africa. This included permanent movements to open up new lands or to escape wars and repression, as well as seasonal or circular migration concerned with hunting, trade, agriculture or religion. However, such patterns were often complicated by movements related to trade and conquest, which have long linked Africa with other regions in Asia, Europe and the Americas.

In The Gambia, seasonal labour migration was a way of life and settlement for many who worked in the agriculture sector. The slavery-based production system, however, with its seasonal demand for labour, but all-year obligations to the labour force, was becoming too expensive as food prices were increasing. Hence, in a transition period of circa 50 years, the organization of labour changed from slavery to strange farmers (hired, seasonal labour). The advantages were obvious. Producers' food obligations lasted only during the five months of the agricultural season. More labour could be hired in the critical periods, and the enabled even ordinary peasants to gain extra labour. The regional availability of labour was relatively high. The strange farmers system was, however, not based on a monetarized market economy. Strange farmers were paid in kind, and were fed by their hosts during their stay. Thus, the existence of this system depended on food availability, i.e., sufficient local food production or food imports. Some of them who found favour with their hosts and environment decided to settle permanently to eke a living.

Colonialism sharply altered the pattern of migration in West Africa. As country after country attained independence in the 1960s and after, migration patterns changed and the economic and political terrain of The Gambia changed as well. Both shifts in internal migration and in cross-border migration were

paramount. Independence broke barriers and increased migration across borders in West Africa. Those who were formerly colonized by the French largely went to French-speaking countries, and former British subjects mainly went to English-speaking countries. Colonialism also generated rural — urban migration in The Gambia. Protectorate people moved to the urban areas in search of paid jobs from the British government and merchants stationed in Bathurst.

In The Gambia, cross- border flows are subtly seen and interpreted by some of the population as a problem needing redress and prevention. Despite the fact that The Gambia has accepted a number of professionals and intellectuals from elsewhere in Africa into high-level government and private jobs for which there are not enough local candidates. These growing migrants stream often bring along the less educated, as well as women, children and others who previously would have been unlikely to try migration, into contact with The Gambian economy, where they struggle to overcome barriers and disadvantages associated with emigration, as they try to secure livelihoods and send remittances to their own home country.

As these movements take place within The Gambia, the sub-region and across the continent, large numbers of half- baked educated groups and unskilled folks are also leaving the country to join Gambian diaspora overseas. This part of the migration stream has perhaps the most debilitating effects on The Gambia; as many of these migrants try to scale to Europe through turbulent and raging waters of the Mediterranean; which most often has taken many lives through the capsizing of rickety boats.

The Place of History in the Emergence and Development of The Gambia

The concept development refers to an actual historical and material occurrence: a significant change in the economic, social, political, and cultural conditions affecting large groups of people (Dwivedi et al, 2007). On the other hand, development can be conceived of as a construct, mental picture, or theory about such change. This polysemic but distinctively Western concept of development as progress has evolved: from the Augustinian notion of the ascent of humanity from the City of Man to the City of God guided by divine providence, to the ideas of progress in the Enlightenment, to social evolution, modernity, and the unfolding of human potential. Historical development refers to the process of change and evolution of a phenomenon over time and space. This refers to social change that occurs over extended periods of time due to inevitable processes. It is an idea of historical development that emphasizes the material basis of existence and the social relations and their tensions that are obtained in terms of the appropriation of that material base (Giuliano & Rhoads, 2015).

In practice, human development has been a complex, convoluted, never-linear process. The inscribed and excavated history of the world – that is, the long-range development cycle – has been characterized by the rise and fall of civilizations in a pattern of emergence, expansion, and decay. In other words, development, de-development, and underdevelopment are part of an inextricable and unfolding historical process. If development is equated with the term, "civilization, "and with material culture, such "development," then, has been occurring for a long time (Nelson, 1932).

It is interesting and fundamental to note that the greatest achievements of man, have been his faculty of thought, then of speech, then of writing, and then of printing, which spread over every field of human activity all the sciences, languages and arts, histories, ancient medieval and modern, ecclesiastical, political, constitutional, military, naval exploration, the history of literatures, economics, diplomacy, music, astronomy, engineering, local and social history and lastly the mastery of the air. The crux in the study of history is its boundless range. The fundamental basis of the value of history is that the past has made the present and the present alone can make the future. We cannot even understand our immediate world without knowledge of the past and the further we delve into history the deeper and broader will be our grasp of the present and insight into the future (Mohammed, 2013 in Abba 2010).

History's contentious role in the development of a nation- state has varied with the perspectives of those writing it; while those who deride history see its contribution as minor, isolated role, while those who highly value the subject and its facts-finding nature, credit it as an imperative subject that plays out in many nations of the world. History has however, provided both old and new insights into many issues that challenge us as mankind; often stressing its interrelatedness to economic, political, social and cultural developments of our time. The idea of the past is built in history as trajectory of events. This method is called Sequence History Analysis (SHA). We start by identifying typical past trajectories of individuals over time by using Sequence Analysis and then correlated as history of development. In effect, history is seen as development and development is also seen as history.

The survival of any state depends to a large extent on the people's love and respect for their social order and

their mother country. Such love for one's country can only be facilitated through appreciating the historical antecedents of the country. Many themes in The Gambian pre-colonial, colonial and post- colonial history had shaped its contemporary politics and society. For example, the major land mark in The Gambia's history and terrain, the river Gambia has been used to delineate the major administrative Regions of the country. Patriotism and national consciousness in any given country are sustained through the studying and knowing of one's national history. Through history, citizens become aware and conscious of their civil responsibilities and obligations, their common loyalty and commitment to the social, political, economic survival, growth and development of their state through the study of the past. It is also through the knowledge of history that people, particularly younger ones come to understand and appreciate the background, culture, beliefs and traditions of their history. It will help them to understand why certain leaders have taken certain steps at a given time in their development process of the country. In this sense, history therefore becomes an effectual major tool in nation-state building.

History is more than just a study of the past. It is also an exploration of evolutionary changes and the socio-political dynamics of human society. People generally believe in the reliability of historical accounts based on facts. In reality, though, historians manipulate and misinterpret the events according to their political or social leanings or their affiliation with sectarian, ethnic and ruling classes. However, history has immensely helped to correct distorted accounts about The Gambian past. For example, the idea that The Gambia has no history has been debunked. The peoples that make up the present Gambia as constituted has historical antecedents. "Documents," "artifacts," and "chronicles" (which category includes official accounts of events, memoirs, and personal correspondence etc. are remnants of a bygone time, used in exercising both inductive and deductive reasoning, to support hypotheses and to validate theories.

In planning, antecedents are indispensable and germane. For example, the issue of the constitution under which the country is governed has been an issue that has generated a lot of heat. The Gambia nation present Constitution has been a re-enactment and amendment of the Colonial Constitution of 1947. We have continued to experiment with different models of democracy from American to United Kingdom, or elsewhere, yet most of our experiments have not quite worked out very well. Unless the constitution takes into account, the collective experiences, the uniqueness of The Gambia and its historical antecedents of the people it intends to govern, rapid development would continue to elude the country. History therefore matters most in our lives. Records are not kept merely to assist the limitations and weaknesses of the human memory, but also to serve as good guides to the future.

History is the soul and conscience of a nation. All economic, social, political development process of a country is documented in history/achieves. It reveals to us while certain actions taken by our leaders have either succeeded or failed and probably advocates what can be done to redress any wrong steps taken. History is a continuous search for answers to many unanswered historical questions. It is evident that we live in a world that is radically different from the past, in which a sense of history and the lessons which can be drawn from it are indispensable. The Gambian society has a past which extends back far beyond the lives of its citizens and individuals who comprise it. So historical knowledge has to be produced and history is the raw material out of which national consciousness and patriotism can be fashioned.

The Gambia's sense of personal identity demands roots (origin) in the past, which are sought in the first instance in genealogy and family history. History education has often been associated with the inculcation of citizenship values, especially in the forging of national identity. In instilling a sense of pride in the common past, the teaching of a nation's history contributes to the creation and strengthening of nationalism and national identity. In a way historical genealogies tell us who we are, where we have evolved from and why we are what we are. Again, our national heritage and identity are all imbedded in our history. In a nutshell heritage is that which has been handed down to us from the past through our forebears, that family legacy which we have 'inherited' from our ancestors. This family heritage which we inherited includes traditions, values, culture, language, history, lineage, bloodline, stories and personal traits, both physical and characteristic. However, it can also refer to more tangible assets, such as wealth, businesses, property and land, particularly that which has been in the family's possession for multiple generations.

People throughout antiquity have demonstrated a strong affiliation with their ancestry, a desire to learn and preserve the knowledge of their origins and their family lineage. The genealogy of each and every family is unique, it is a personal history that has been handed down through the generations, whether via oral tradition or written texts. This connection to our ancestors reveals to us our culture identity, where we came from and how we fit in today's ever- changing world. The ability to be able

to trace one's lineage is both enlightening and profoundly rewarding, and as one journeys through their family genealogy, they cannot help but become more aware of who they are as in an individual, and what their calling in life is. Exploring one's heritage can open up new doors of opportunity to travel and visit the homeland(s) of their ancestry. It can also offer the unique opportunity to learn, and in some cases revive, the language of their ancestors. Our family heritage is our unique and unbreakable bond to our roots; it identifies who we are and where our origins lie. Knowing one's heritage can put a new perspective on thing, a new outlook on life and help steer us towards goals that are-true to who we are as individuals. We owe it to our ancestors, ourselves and our children to learn where came from. According to Marcus Garvey, "A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots."

History has been recognized all over the world as a source of enlightenment and development. As a collective memory of the past of a nation, history attempts to bring to the fore the salient and significant part of events that occurred in the time past, which could be utilized in building a prosperous national future. For The Gambia, colonialism has provided a collective memory and unique experience which has served as an instrument of nation- state building through the struggle for independence from the imperial British. This explains why every human society, no matter the level of advancement, places optimum priority to the bequeathing of a "useable past' and 'significant past' from generation to generation. For instance, in ancient cultures of The Gambia, every kingdom/chiefdom had its own local historian (Griot) in Gambian local language or history laureates whose tasks it was to remember the past. This is ostensibly as a result of the strong belief that the past is good and worthy of remembrance. Suffice it to say here that the modern Gambia has been a bequeath of the past and also the enhanced production and protection of history. This is significantly assisting The Gambia in the tasks of nation- state building, promoting national consciousness, citizenship and patriotic training, the flowering of moral leadership and ensuring overall national development in political, economic and social spheres.

To buttress the importance of history in our society, His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I said on May 25, 1963 in his greetings to the delegates of the first gathering of the independent African nation states at the launch of the OAU:

> "We seek, at this meeting, to determine whether we are going and to chart the course of our destiny. It is no less important that we know whence we came. An awareness of our past (history) is essential to the establishment of our personality and our identity as Africans. This world was not created piecemeal. Africa was born no later and no earlier than any other geographical area on this globe. Africans, no more and no less than other men, possess all human attributes, talents and deficiencies, virtues and faults" Available at http:// sharenews.cornJthe-importance-pflearnin about-afncas-history

No doubt, history chats the course of our development, achievements and failures by reminding us we are coming from, where we are going and how to move on to our destination. History therefore, has answers to many naggings question about The Gambia. Our thinking in retrospect on many of our national issues makes history most relevant in the society. We cannot understand a situation in life without some perceptions of where it fits in into a continuing process or whether it has happened earlier for corrections, and rebuke.

By visiting events in the colonial era and thrusting through the continuum to what exists today, then one is convinced that we live in the present from the past. That is, the present is a continuation of the past underpinnings. For example, the activities of the British that played out during the colonial era in The Gambia are still influencing the current state of the country's economy and education.

History is a method of thinking, a way of interrogating issues that are of vital importance for processing present day issues. It imbues us with skills: critical thinking, power of analysis constructive criticisms, writing skills, research skills, and interdisciplinary skills etc. ln all history quickens the power of imagination of people and helps to develop the ability to reconstruct events. So, history by its nature imposes a moral obligation on individuals in assessing issues with even hands. Even our political judgments are permeated by a sense of the past, whether we are deciding between the competing claims of political parties or assessing the feasibility of particular policies. We are all naturally curious to know how our society came to be the way it is, and we entertain some explanations on the subject, however half- baked or ill-founded it may be.

The pace of contemporary change does not render the past irrelevant, rather it merely shifts the perspective from which we weigh its influence and interpret its lessons. Assessments of what can be done to improve the

economy of The Gambia depend on interpretations on how and why it has reached its present state. Most people cynically deride the discipline of history as an irrelevant past time, but are quick to refer to history' to buttress their claims to contested chieftaincy titles (like the Alkalo), landed property, rights and privileges (Nnaocha, 2009). Only a few imagine that history is relevant to national development beyond its role as an ideological weapon in the struggle for independence and claim of ancestral birthright. The main point here is that professional historians are capable of applying their trained, dispassionate and disciplined minds to national policy with constructive results. History is logically the desire to grasp the essence of present and the perspective of the future through the understanding of the past.

All in all, history has utilitarian value. It prepares many people for different careers. Most of The Gambian historians today are not only teachers but also work as Information Officers, Journalists, Civil Servants, Ambassadors, Administrators, archivists, researchers, curators, politicians etc. Indeed, historical study plays an important role in fostering well-rounded intellectual development. As well as developing valuable career skills in research, writing, argumentation, and documentation. Gambia historians are contributing meaningfully to the development of the country vis-a-vis through putting national issues in historical perspectives.

Conclusion

This paper had examined the role of history in the emergence and development of The Gambia. It has traced the origins of the various ethnic groups in the country and where they have emigrated from to constitute the present Gambia. It also analyzed the various factors that caused the dispersal of the people into the country making it a multi-cultural nation since the pre-colonial times up to the post- colonial period. Nevertheless, history could remind us that since the 13th century, The Gambia had been receiving immigrants from other West African countries such as Mali, Ghana, Senegal, Mauritania, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, thus gaining the status of "melting pot in West Africa." Socio-economic religious, military, imperialist and colonial factors, openness of both colonial and post-colonial government to foreigners, as well as abundant opportunities in agriculture, business, all combined to engender mass movements of peoples into the present-day Gambia. Those who arrived early formed permanent settlements and intermingled. Finally, it has examined the various roles and importance of history in the emergence and development of The Gambia. The author argues that history plays the role of umpire in a country's national cause and course and that since 'peoples are the fruits of their own history' (Uzoechi, 2010), everything is gained by teaching their own history for citizenship, national consciousness and overall development.

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