

The Impact of History on the Society

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Abstract. Today history as a body of knowledge encompasses not only the events of the past but also their consequences. Historians are no longer satisfied with the simple discovery of the past they tried as much as possible no only to say what happened but also to show why and how it happened. This search for the causes of events remains the primary occupation of every thoughtful historian's in order to give history a rightful place in the society. It is instructive to note that, history is concerned with evidence about human beings who have actually lived in the society. It is also concerned with how human lives have changed through time. It is concerned not only with the explanation about the distant past but also with that of contemporary world. Therefore, history is concerned with people in the society, their interaction and their relationships with their environment.

Key words: Discovery, Evidence, Knowledge

1. Introduction

Historians are challenged by the complexity of the society, and many want to use their study to help solve the problems of the present in the society. The question that can come to mind are numberless and as such serious historical investigators must choose which among them they do not want to spend a lot of time and effort pursuing the kind of question to which history has no answer. For instance, what is the purpose of universe or who is the smartest person in the world? Nor do they want to struggle to achieve the solution to a problem that is not of real importance to the society.

It should be noted that, historians choice among important questions is determined by personal values, as well as by the concerns of those who support the historian's work by the nature of the time in which the historian lives, or by a combination of all of these. Definitely the ways in which these influences operate are complex, ⁺and historians themselves often are unaware of them.

History has a great impact on the society because the interaction between the society and its past is an unending one, the interaction is mutual and continuous. The past exists only in the mind and memories of those in the present. Since history is said to be concerning with people in the society, their interaction and their relationships, thus, history is both the past and the study of the past. Its meaning therefore covers both the reality of the past events and the effort of historians to capture or retrieve and interpret something of that reality. In each of both senses, history interacts with the society, for the society is a product of history in the sense of historical circumstances and events, and therefore the society cannot escape from its past. At the same time, it should be mentioned that, the society is shaped by the effort of historians among others, who endeavour to establish the history of the society influence its group memory and as well seek to define the duties of people in the society that is the essence of what binds its people together; what constitutes their identity, what makes them a people distinct from other peoples. History is involved because of historians effort in shaping the group memory and self-perception of the society. When we say that the past interacts with the present, often what we mean is not the past in terms of actual happenings so much as what perceptions, what memories we have of the past. This is where the historians and writers come in and all who shape our perceptions and group memories.

2. The Problematique of History

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By the end of World War II in 1945, the British hold on Nigeria seemed secure enough. In spite of the General strike sparked off by the radical Nigerian Railway Workers Union few could have imagined that then we were entering the twilight of the colonial period. The priorities of the nationalist movement at the time were to prepare Nigerians for self-government rather than to demand self-government as such to demand improved education and scholarship programmes, credit facilities in the banks for businessmen and constitutional reforms to give Western-Educated Nigerians some voice on the government among others.

By the 1950s, the slogan of the nationalist movement had become Nkrumah's "seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added unto you". The nature of the nationalist movement and their vision of the future became the object of various scholarly studies. Many of the studies concentrated on politics-political parties, programmes and manifestoes constitutions. A few touched on wider issues particularly the goals of the nationalist movement. The most influential work was probably James Coleman's Nigeria background to Nationalism, published in 1958. Kenneth O. Dike had anticipated this and raised a number of issues in a series of three articles published in 1953 February-March in West Africa entitled "African History and self-government from the British by Nigerian politicians was not an end but a means to an end. The end being society-building, and that society-building required the mobilization and orientation of people's history, in the sense of the writings of historians. Therefore historians had a crucial role to play by putting straight the history of the peoples in the society.

3. Conclusion

This paper tried to show that history interacts with the society not only in the sense of the past interacting with the present, but also in the sense that the writings of historians and the thoughts and ideas of the intellectual community', have played an essential role in the evolution peoples in the society.

The interaction between history and the society is obviously not one way since it is the society that provides the context and the resources for historians and the intellectual community to do their work, and part of the functions that history as an intellectual discipline performs in society is to elucidate a problem by tracing its antecedents.

4. References

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