



DISTORTION OF HISTORICAL FACTS IDENTIFIED AS MAJOR IMPEDIMENT FOR NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT

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JOS, NIGERIA -

Absence of authentic historical records has been identified as a major factor responsible for the present sorry state of the Nigerian nation. This assertion was made by Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto Diocese, in lecture titled: Broken Truths: Nigeria's Elusive Quest for National Cohesion; at the University of Jos, Plateau State; as part of the institution's graduation ceremony for the year 2018.

According to the graduation ceremony guest lecturer: "Even before Independence, what would later become Nigeria had a rather distorted history cast in competing, even conflicting, narrative experiences. A century before the invasions of the British, the peoples of most of what is now Middle Belt had lived with traumatic experiences of war, slavery, compulsory conversions to Islam, and the destruction of their cultures and habitats in the course of the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate".

Coupled with the above, the lecturer continued; was the colonial legacy handed over to the country by the British at Independence which was primarily premised on a north and south divide - "a system tinkered in a way and manner that literally sowed the seeds for our enduring conflict and convoluted history".

The bishop further stated that "... the disparity in background, social status and ideology meant that the colonial

administrators in the north and south had different and conflicting views about what the new nation would look like. Identifying education as one of the strategies used in this perspective; Bishop Kukah declared: “ ...the colonial officers in the north believed that education was meant to merely consolidate the stranglehold of the northern feudal classes over the masses of the people.”

But the case was the reverse in the south where the opportunity to education was open to all and sundry without classification or hindrance. “It was not only open to everyone but was also presented as the means for breaking open the doors of the bastions of exclusion”, Bishop Kukah stated.

He added: “The scars were deep, but not being a literate society, and with no written records about their own history and experiences, this subjugation had become embedded in the individual and collective psyche, surviving only in tales told by forbearers.”

Lamenting the deterioration of the one-time academic radical movement that existed in the 60's and 70's, Bishop Kukah noted that this movement enabled the academic generation of the time “to address the primary contradictions and then set up a higher ideological platform that enabled scholars to unite and confront the secondary contradictions of a rogue state”. He however added that “the dreams of the sectarian society articulated by the Left have been replaced by the divisive rhetoric of those who now use religion and ethnicity to further divide our country”

Identifying the incursion and era of the Military in governance as another aberration for national cohesion, Bishop Kukah stated that Military coups were staged out of frustration and used to settle personal scores instead of the national interest given as excuse by the plotters of the different military insurgencies.

His words: “The accusations against the civilian regimes were often based on unproven claims of massive corruption, with the military promising to rid the country of the cancer of corruption. As it turned out, successive military regimes proved that their cure was worse than the disease they came to treat. The best place to look for the broken truths is

in the speeches of the successive military coup plotters.”

While calling on the young generation to learn from the “horrible mistakes of the country’s past, the hypocrisy, deceit and outright criminality which have passed for governance in Nigeria”, Bishop Kukah, who also spoke on the present political dispensation which is devoid of the expected democratic tendencies; pointed out that the sense of a national security apparatus was lost during the era of coups in the country.