



Origin and development of African historiography by

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Abstract

This work takes a look at the origin and development of African historiography, with the view to bring out its meaning and nature, as well as those factors that influenced its emergence and development. The study asserts that, the nature, emergence and development of African history and historiography were generally influenced by specific historical conditions. Prominent among them was the rise of African Nationalism that characterized the period after the 2nd World War. The study established that, both African history and African historiography went through progressive re-definition in the period, therefore debunked the believed among Europeans and Euro-centric historians that Africa, south of the Sahara, has no history.

Keywords: Europeans, African, historians, Sahara, south

1. Introduction

Over the years, the study of history and writing of African history as an independent and autonomous focus of scholarship by professional historians have been increasing. This is because every day, history is being made, and the interest to reconstruct past events increases. All this brings new knowledge of the past to the fore. Until the late colonial period, it was widely believed among Europeans and Euro-centric historians that Africa, south of the Sahara, had no history. Even where an event of a historical magnitude occurred and is preserved and transmitted, such a history was said to be unknown and unknowable, since African societies, for the most part, were non-literate and as such left no records that historians could study ^[1]. Interestingly, the period 1945 which marked the era of de-colonization and the immediate post-independence years witnessed the emergence of African historians equipped with colonial western civilization had depended largely on Oral traditions and other sources like Archaeology, Linguistic, Ethnography, etc, to reconstruct the history of their societies, that vigorously reject the Eurocentric and anti-African historical claim that situates written sources as the only rational bases for historical scholarship therefore, denied the possibility of civilization and history to non-literate Africa societies. Guided by the above development, the study on the emergence and development of African historiography is fundamental.

In doing this, the first part of the paper examined the meaning of African history, the concept of African Historiography, Western historiography, with a view to have a good understanding of perspective of African historiography as it emerged in the second half of the 20th century. A critical examination of some Eurocentric assertions on the humanism of the African people and their history formed the second aspects of our discussion. This is

followed with our main subject, which emergence and development of African historiography. Effort is made also to examine the contribution of African historiography to our understanding of African history. This is followed with an overview of our discussion on the subject.

The Meaning of African History

The point about the title African history here is to be understood from the qualification of the noun 'History' by the adjective 'Africa' to mean no more than the problem of historical explanation is to be discussed in African setting. It does not in any way mean that African history differs in any essential way from the history of the other part of the world. History as a matter of fact, is history ^[2]. Having said this, History as derived from the Greek word 'Historie' meaning inquiry ^[3]. This enquiry objectively centered on the actions and events that together makes up the human past. Akinjogbin see history as an organized critical study of the past activities of human being or on other human beings ^[4]. By the above meaning of history, history in the second sense simply means an enquiry in to the event of the past and the method of carrying out such inquiry. E. H. Carr in his path defined history as a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past ^[5]. Meanwhile, R. G. Collingwood saw history as the interpretation of the traces and relics of the human past in the light of the imaginary idea of the historian, which is self-dependent, self-determining, and self-justifying form of thought ^[6]. No matter the different perception, the central meaning of history is that, it constitutes the acts and the study of man's

¹ Afolayan, F. *Historiography and Methods of African History*, Last Reviewed: 30th July, 2015, DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780199846733-0011, Oxford Bibliographies Online, Accessed, 28/16/2017.

² Robert, S. *Explanation in African History: How and Why?*, Ranger, T. O, (ed) in *Tarikh*, Vol. 6. No. 1, Historical Method, (London, Longman Group Limited, 1978), 34.

³ Sheik, B. A. *History: Its Theory and Method*, (Delhi Macmillan Limited, 1978), 3-4.

⁴ Akinjogbin, A. *History and Nation Building: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered on 22nd November, 1977*, at the Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1977, p.7.

⁵ Carr, E. H. *What is History? His Acclaimed Reflections on the History and the Role of the Historian*, (----- Penguin Books, 1961), .30.

⁶ Collingwood, R.G. *The Idea of History*, Clarendon Press, (London, Oxford, 1964), 44.

actions as it relates with his fellow man and his environment in time perspective.

African Historiography

One significant question that demands an answer to the meaning of African historiography as title above is, is there a need for categorizing historiography on the bases of geographical region? The answer is yes. African historiography as pointed by K. O. Dike and J. F. A. Ajayi demands a special attention. In their views, African historiography is based largely on African cosmology which include the belief in the continuity of life even after death, a community of interest between the living, the death, and the generations yet unborn^[7]. The point emphasized here is that, history and traditions has always been part and parcels of the African societies, therefore fundamental to African religious, social, and political life of the people over time.

The content of African historiography include, Traditions of origin, oral transmission, factual and literally traditions, Ethiopia influence whose traditions is partly African and partly Judaea- Christian inspiration, Muslim influence from North Africa, East Africa, the Sudan, and West Africa up to some areas in the 'forest' region.

The next phase of African historiography was dominated by European traders, travelers, as well as missionaries and other adventurers, whose accounts of Africa, while generally tendentious and Eurocentric, remain major sources for the reconstruction of the African past. European conquest and domination spawned a new era of colonial historiography that justified European imperialism and espoused the ideology of a savage Africa in need of European civilization and tutelage. The European influence which came as an intrusion in the 19th century and instead of building on what they saw or met rudely challenged and supplemented it.

With decolonization and independence came the era of nationalist and liberalist historiography which rejected the notion of a barbaric and static Africa "without history." It sought to restore autonomy and initiative to the Africans, as well as authenticity and respectability to the historicity of the African past. Rejecting the privileging of written sources, it argued for and adopted the disciplined, rigorous, and corroborative use of a variety of sources and multidisciplinary methods from archaeology, ethnography, anthropology, linguistics, and art history to oral traditions.

Having said this, historiography is here conceived as the discipline dealing with the methods of writing history and the techniques of historical reconstruction^[8]. Historiography in its general nature is the arts of writing and documenting the past activities of the human society.

Historiography is further defined as "the study of the way history has been and is written — the history of historical writing. It is the study of the methodology of historians in developing history as an academic discipline, and by extension is anybody of historical work on a particular subject. According to Thesaurus Dictionary, historiography is the writing of history based on a critical analysis, evaluation, and selection of authentic source materials and composition of these materials into a narrative subject to

scholarly method of criticism^[9].

Collins English Dictionary defines it as the narrative presentation of history based on a critical examination, evaluation, and selection of material from primary and secondary sources and subject to scholarly criteria^[10]. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Historiography is the writing of history, especially the writing of history based on the critical examination of sources, the selection of particular details from the authentic materials in those sources, and the synthesis of those detail into a narrative that stands the test of critical examination^[11]. The overall emphasis here is that, the term historiography ultimately means the writing of history and how historians come to understand written records.

Western Historiography

Even though history has largely been accepted to mean an organized and critical study of man's past, it must be noted here that, the above definition has not been achieved through the study of one generation of thought, nor it is likely to remain unchallenged. Indeed, Western historiography has passed through many arguments as to the meaning of history, its purpose and its methods. Since Herodotus in the 5th century B.C. first used the Greek word 'Hysteria' in its present concept of enquiry in to the past, the study of history has passed through a large number of philosophical periods, each of which has left its marks on the discipline^[12].

It is a historical fact that, between the 4th century and the close of the middle Ages, what dominate historical writing was the Christian thinking, preferably, theocracy, captured in the idea is the 'Divinity' of God. During the period, history was not conceived as rational action of man but as the working out of God's purpose on earth which were in most cases, carried out voluntarily, by men of 'faith'. Very importantly, the result of this thinking: History became universal, since God's purpose covered the whole world, apocalyptic, since it looked to the future for fulfillment, and periodized since there was a period when Christ was not known and another was when Christ was known, the period of darkness and light. Finally, it was in this period that Isidore of Seville invented the period BC (Before Christ) and A.D, (Anno Domino) in the year of our Lord^[13].

Next to the above period was the Renaissance period which followed the middle Ages. At this time, God was replaced with man as the center of historical events. It was a period of philosophical attendance to what history should be and not to be. Descartes, in the 17th century for instance see no value in history. In his words, he argued that, those who study curiously the actions of antiquity are ignorant of what it is done among them today and men who tried to model their own acts upon them are prone to madness and romantic paladins and mediate hyperbolic deeds^[14].

Descartes philosophy is highly mis-leading and unhistorical,

⁹ <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/historiography>. Accessed on 28/06/2017.

¹⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/historiography>; accessed on 27/06/2017.

¹¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/historiography>; accessed on 27/06/2017.

¹² Erim, African Historiography: Trends, Praxis, and Democracy in Nigeria, 6.

¹³ Erim, African Historiography: Trends, Praxis, and Democracy in Nigeria, 6-7.

¹⁴ Collingwood, R.G. The Idea of History, Oxford University Press, London, 1963, 44-45.

⁷ Dike, K. O. and J. F. A. Ajayi, (Ed) Isa Mohammed, University of Abuja Centre For Distance Learning Course Material on His: 307 'Problems and Issues in African Historiography', 1999, 10.

⁸ Erim, E. O. African Historiography: Trends, Praxis, and Democracy in Nigeria, 25th Inaugural Lecture, University of Calabar, 2004, 5.

therefore received vigorous retort by professional historians who pointed that, to have the knowledge of the past, one must be firmly rooted in the present and that knowledge of the past, far from keeping one ignorant of what goes on among us, and indeed enhanced an understanding of the present ^[15].

Notable in this argument against Descartes philosophy was Gambatista Vico, who indeed laid down the canons of objectivity in history. For instance, he warned against the current tendency among historians who believed that when similar cultural traits are found in two or more geographical locations, one necessarily derives from the other. He as well argued that, the knowledge of particular events depended more on application and research than on mere proximity to the events ^[16]. Gambatista Vico insisted that, history can not only be history when produced in written form, but other sources such as Archaeology, Linguistic, Ethnography, as well as Oral traditions in addition to written source, are very important sources that can help the historian dictate the economic, social, political, and cultural data of the ancestors. In Vico's view, all traditions are true, but none of them mean what they say ^[17].

All the above views expressed by Vico if applied remained a working tool for historical research in the present time. The study acknowledged the fact that absolute objectivity in history to a great extent may only be idealistic and not realistic as the historian is left with lot of challenges to achieving this goal. It is the duty of the historian to apply the various techniques and methods through which historical truth can be achieved. Western historiography witnessed another important development in the period. Indeed, there was the emergence of Marxism who concerned themselves with materialistic conception of history or dialectical materialism. This period, E. H. Carr refers to as marking earlier history seem old fashioned ^[18]. For Marxist, knowledge concerning matters of fact is generally based on observable phenomenon.

They see all human actions as being economically motivated and therefore, see economic forces as the base of history, since it is from these actions that history is made. Several other arguments evolved up to the middle of the 19th century among professional historians and philosophers of history of the time. There were the debate as whether history is science or art, whether or not objectivity can be achieved in historical reconstruction, what is a historical fact?, and what should be the proper ends of historical study including the place of Africa in history. Like Erim, O. Erim rightly noted, these problems have a long respectable antiquity ^[19].

Colonial Perspectives of African History

Colonial historiography refers to the study and writing of African history by the Europeans and from European perspectives. It is always Eurocentric and in all case, biased. Colonial historiography emphasized the activities of the Europeans in Africa and always concluded that before their coming to Africa, the people were barbaric, backward and had no history. The most cited in this assertion is Hugh

Trevor Roper.

In response to the demand for a study on Africa by his students from Africa, He categorically pointed that, perhaps, in the future, there will be need for some African history to teach, but for now, none exist. Africa as you can see has no history, what exist in and for Africa is European history. Africa generally is 'darkness', it is not a subject matter of history ^[20]. It was not only Roper who claimed that Africans did not have a history. Ayokhai, F. E. F and Isa, M. O rightly observed that, when as late as 1951; Margery Perham expressed the same sentiment, which confirmed the extent to which African and their history have been misinterpreted. Ayokhai and Isa citing Perham directly the racist philosophy of Europe in the statement that: The dealing between tropical Africa and the West must be different (from those with Asia). Here in place of the large unities of Asia, were the multi-cellular tissues of tribalism, instead of an ancient civilization, the largest area of primitive, poverty enduring in to the modern age. Until recent penetration by Europe, the greater part of the continent was without a wheel, the plough, and the transport animals. Almost without stone houses or cloths except for skins, without writing and so without history ^[21].

Prominent in this line of not giving Africa a place in history is C.C. Seligman. According to him, Civilization in Africa had its origin from the Hamites who are a pure group of race ^[22]. It was not only Trevor Roper, Seligman and Perham who claimed that Africans did not have a history.

It is not necessary to give an exhaustive list of European postulates of African history, but just one example to add to those mentioned already. This is for our knowledge of the general idea of the gravity of the attack on the humanism of Africans. In 1930, a German philosopher, G. W. L. Hegel developed his philosophy of history in a series of lectures with only passing attention on Africa. In his theory of history, Hegel postulated a world of spirit realizing itself in the development of freedom through the world of historical people.

This is to say that, the world of freedom developed through the history of Oriental peoples-the Greeks and the Romans to the Germanic or Western Europeans people. According to Hegel, the history of the world travels from East to West , for Europe was absolutely the end of history, Asia the beginning. As for Africa, it is no historical part of the world. it has no movement or development to exhibit--what we probably understand by Africa is unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature-----on the threshold of the world history ^[23].

In spite of all the above assertions and misconceived views on the humanism of Africa and her history, Africa never succumbed to the assault of its root. Africa had rather maintained her integrity and refused to submerge by the

²⁰ Roper, H. T. The rise of Christian Europe, The listener, November, 1963, p87.

²¹ Perham, Margery as quoted in F. E. F. Ayokhai and Isa, Mo. O., 'African Historiography and the Reconstruction of African History,' (Ed) Ayokhai, F. E. F. and Caulcrck, A.E Concept in Historiography: Essay in Honour of Olayemi, Akinwumi, (Oasis, Academic Press, Benin., 2008), 103-104.

²² Brown, P. 'Pattern of Authority in West Africa,' Africa, Vol 21, 1965, 260-228.

²³ Hegel, G.W.L. The Philosophy of History, (New York, Dover Publishers, 1956), 23.

¹⁵ Collingwood, R.G. The Idea of History, 44.

¹⁶ Collingwood R.G. The Idea of History, 44-46.

¹⁷ Collingwood, R.G. The Idea of History, 47.

¹⁸ Carr, E. H. What is History?, 1980, 31.

¹⁹ Erim, E. O. African Historiography: Trends, Praxis, and Democracy in Nigeria, p.9.

anti-historical currents of colonial propaganda. For a large section of African population came on under direct colonial influence, some used the skill of writing acquired in colonial schools to compile and record the traditions of their communities. In Nigeria for instance, Jacob Igharevba wrote on the history of Benin and Samuel Johnson, of the Yoruba.

This aspect of what was to be the politics of survival in the face of colonialism was not a new phenomenon, Africa already had the experience of foreign dominating historiography that appeared to threaten the traditional historiography. European Anthropologists and Administrators were all in one in this racial conspiracy against Africa. They came, they conquered, they controlled and they wrote and kept records of their administration as it served their interest and not that of Africans.

Origin and Development of African History and Historiography

We have in this study discussed interrogated the subject of historiography from a rather universal perspective, the question next in line is, is there a brand of historiography that is African specifically? The answer to this question is yes nothing less. In affirmation, in spite of the erroneous denial of Africa a place in history by the Europeans and the apostles of the 19th century European historiography^[24], Africa has developed historical consciousness time out of memory. We are quite aware of the Nok and Igbo Ukwu, and Ife cultures, etc, which developed in the past. There were also great historical movements that constituted subjects for re-appraisal such as the Trans-Saharan slave trade, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, the ancient Empires of Old Oyo, Ghana, Songhai, Benin, Mali, etc.

The dearth of evidence concerning most of these great movements was generally tied to absence of documents. As such, evidence was based on Oral traditions. As account was handed down from one generation to another, they were often compressed for memory purpose. Perhaps, the above explains to a certain degree why written documents are vital for historical reconstruction. Again, this is not to say that, there are no other ways of re-calling past activities. With reference to Africa, there were songs, charts, recitations, folktales, relics, and shrines. During some special ceremonies, court reciters usually made references to the past. During such recitations, there may be a lot of exaggerations, which make it difficult to get the truth^[25].

The above is a clear indication that, problems usually arise when the historian make use of Oral traditions in historical reconstruction. However, this source of history remained valid because the historian is equipped already with the knowledge on how to surmount these unavoidable problems.

The emphasis here is that, Africa depended largely on the Oral traditions of its peoples which are preserved and transmitted by word of mouth from one generation to another. It is important to note that, the dominance of Oral traditions in most African societies had been one of the major reasons the European scholars and historians write off African history and African civilization. Well, this was because of their inability to understand and the intricacies

and fragility of some of the various forms of Oral traditions such as myth, legend, etc which their contents are not plainly known, and understanding their real meaning needs special research. It is however interesting to note that, even though African do not have literate advantage to document their history, there are few places in the continent where the people had developed some forms of writings and used them to document their history. There are the case of Egypt, Liberia, and southern Nigeria where Heliographic, Viascripts, and Nsibidi, had developed^[26].

There also exists considerable development of African historiography that came onboard far before the 1950s, which are valid even though they are works of non-professional historians of their time. These are followed with those by academic or professional historiography of the past 1950 era. Prominent among these amateur historians were the Missionaries like, Sir Apollo Akwanga of Uganda, Rev. Samuel Johnson, Jacob Egharevba all of Nigeria, J. H. Soga of South Africa, and Rev. C.C. Reindorf of Ghana, etc, who took to writing history for patriotic reasons and not to earn higher degrees purpose^[27].

Somewhere in Africa, particularly Nigeria, there emerged some other amateur historians who became interested if directly or otherwise in drawing the world attention to the history of their immediate societies. Among them were, Jacob, Egharevba, 'The History of Benin', Samuel Johnson, and 'The History of the Yoruba'. There is Olaudah Equino whom Afigbo described as the first Igbo historian and ethnographer^[28]. His bibliography was published in the 18th century. His account is thus the first written account by an outsider of Igbo society^[29].

The works of these early non-professional historians were supplemented largely by many other local histories and chronicles of towns, cities, and states that flourished in response to both local and foreign influences. This were writers like, Africanus Horton, A. B. C. Sibthorpe, and Sir Arthur Lewis of Sierra-Leone, as well as John Mensah of Ghana, and Otunba Payne of Nigeria^[30]. They all had relied on Oral testimonies and Oral traditions to achieve the objectives of their studies.

Several phases of African historiography are developments of the post-World War 2nd nationalism and decolonization processes in Africa. These are works of Western trained historians whose practice the teaching and writing history in professional model.

The man at the fore-front of this development is the late professor K. O. Dike of the Ibadan school of history/historiography. This movement for modern imprint of African historiography is said to have began with Dike's refusal to do his Ph.D. thesis on what Ayokhai and Isa refers to as 'Imperial History', but insisted on working on an aspects of pre-colonial African history titled: 'Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885'^[31]. Dike's work here

²⁴ Omisini, O. 'Evolution of Africa Historiography: An Overview,' p.6. Cited in E. O. Erim, African Historiography: Trends, Praxis, and Democracy in Nigeria, 2004, 11.

²⁵ Robibson, J. H. (Ed), Readings in European History, Vol. 1, Boston, 1904, 1.

²⁶ Anyake, J. B. C. 'History, Africa: Sources of History', (Ed) Shillington K. in 'encyclopedia African History', Vol2, H-O, Fitzroy Dearborn, (New York, Taylor and Francis Group, 2005), 23.

²⁷ Omisini, O. 'Evolution of Africa Historiography: An Overview,' .6.

²⁸ E. O. Erim, African Historiography: Trends, Praxis, and Democracy in Nigeria, 15.

²⁹ Omisini, O. 'Evolution of Africa Historiography: An Overview,' .6.

³⁰ E. O. Erim, African Historiography: Trends, Praxis, and Democracy in Nigeria, 15-16.

³¹ F. E. F. Ayokhai and Isa, M. O., Concept in Historiography: Essay in Honour of Olayemi, Akinwumi, 105.

was essentially intended to an introduction economic and political history of Nigeria in perspective.

Although African historiography may have emerged as a reaction to the fallacies and propaganda associated with the Eurocentric or colonial historiography. He felt that historical evidence could be located outside documents and therefore resorted to oral testimonies and Oral traditions to reflect the views of Africans in the whole story. This was thoughtful of his action because the period of his thesis falls within 1947-1950 when Oral traditions was being treated as an inferior and unreliable source of history by the Western scholars. Dike's research work on 'Trade and Politics in the Niger-Delta' served as rejoinder to this whole assumption and other earlier quoted racial statements by some European writers.

Reflecting on Dike's rejoinder as away to understand the concept of African historiography, Ayokhai and Isa drew our attention to Dike's argument thus: He argued that, apart from factual errors and misinformation, Perham and those who bandied similar views around were trying to impose some features of their cultures such as clothing, housing, and transportation to deny legitimacy of African culture. They were trying to arrange culture in a hierarchical order based on racist and unscientific parameters ^[32].

Subject to the above, what Dike saw as a way to prove the Europeans wrong was in the field of research on Africa past. It was on this part, among Africans search for alternative ways of interpreting African past through African perspectives that led to the establishment of the Ibadan school of History, where scholars from diverse persuasions gathered and did serious research works which led to the publications of many books on Africa based on oral history, archaeology, paleontology and the sciences.

Dike's work which served a pioneering work on African historiography was attracted by the S. A. Biobaku, who in 1957 did a work on 'Egba and their Neighbours' ^[33]. This was a concise analysis of the power politics among the Yoruba people of Nigeria. On the foundation of Dike came scholars in the field of history who came up with M.A and Ph.D Thesis in the 1950s, at a time when Nigeria was struggling to gain her independence from Britain. A few to mention are, J. C. Anene, C.C., Eminent Nigerians of the 19th Century ^[34], E. A. Ayandele, 'The Educated Elite in Nigeria' ^[35], J. F. Ade Ajayi, 'Mile Stone in Nigerian History' ^[36], among others.

In spite of the different work subjects of the different scholars, their works was same to the second generation of historians mentioned before now. They had all depended on Oral traditions, archaeology, Linguistic, and Ethnography in achieving the objectives of the researches. In perspective, their works were influenced by the political and ideological ferment of the age in which they wrote. It is therefore largely on the type of academic publications of these kind that African history became accepted as a worthy branch of

the discipline of history, fit to be taught to the human species, black., yellow, white or pink ^[37]. Interestingly, from 1960, many of these historians have devoted their time in researching on Nigerian political history.

Contributions of African Historiography to African History

It must be emphasized here that, the problem of resisting the threat to African identity and dignity resulting from colonial denial of African history in the period was a joint struggle between academic historians and non-professional historians as well as the political class or activists. Such task was first placed on the firm scholarly footing by Jan, Vansina in his seminar work, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* published in French and later translated in to English in 1965. Followed by Vansina's work are those of Jacob, Egharevba, 'The History of Benin', Samuel Johnson, 'The History of the Yoruba', etc. They all had relied on Oral testimonies and Oral traditions to achieve the objectives of their studies.

The second generation of history produced came inform of drums and trumpets glorifications of African ancient Empires and kingdoms. African nationalist such as Edward Blyden, Casely Hayford, Nnamdi Azikiwe, etc, tried to contain the effect of the change of rootlessness by claiming to be the successors of the founders of the ancient Empires and Kingdoms, the fighters of African freedom, and the founders of civilization of Ancient Egypt ^[38]. The politicians of the period before and after independence, by 1960, went to recognize the historical significance of the struggle and linked up with a set of professional historians like Dike, Saburi Biobaku, among others who became interested in under taking a study on historiography of decolonization. African history and historiography that emerged this time centered on intellectual and psychological vanguard of the struggle against European imperialism on the African continent.

Its objective was to overturn the racist ideology that had aided and stabilized European imperialism in Africa. The historians for their part saw their work as related to political and cultural slogans of the time, such as 'African personality, and negritude'. They were away from drum and trumpets political historiography of the early days by wider analysis of African societies and critical account of the relations between African communities and the colonial powers. They also called for the use of Oral traditions in order to move from history of African based on activities of Europeans in Africa and the passive reaction of African population, to a history of African population. They began projects which were supported by African government for the study of the history of African people, with teams of scholars using the insights of several disciplines, such as Archaeology, Linguistic, written sources in addition to Oral traditions of the African people ^[39].

Research on the Niger-Delta done by scholars no doubt has benefited us greatly from the insight of several disciplines. A survey of the Oral traditions of Ijo groups across the

³² F. E. F. Ayokhai and Isa, M. O., *Concept in Historiography: Essay in Honour of Olayemi, Akinwumi*, 106.

³³ E. O. Erim, *African Historiography: Trends, Praxis, and Democracy in Nigeria*, 19.

³⁴ See K.O.Dike, Editor of the Pamphlet, London, Published by Cambridge University Press, 1960. Cited in E. O. Erim, *African Historiography: Trends, Praxis, and Democracy in Nigeria*, 2004, .45.

³⁵ Ayandele, E. A. *The Educated Elite in Nigeria Society*, Ibadan University Press, 1974.

³⁶ Ade Ajayi, J. F. *Mile Stone in Nigerian History*, (Nigeria, Ibadan University Press, 19762), 22.

³⁷E. O. Erim, *African Historiography: Trends, Praxis, and Democracy in Nigeria*, 20.

³⁸ Alagoa,E.J. "The Python Eye": The Past in the Living Present, An Inaugural Lecture presented in the School of Humanities, University of Portharcourt, Reproduced unbinded copy obtained from University of Abuja Library, 2005, 11.

³⁹ Alagoa,E.J. "The Python Eye": The Past in the Living Present, .11-13

entire area suggested pattern of migrations and settlements over the period of time. The manner at which political, social, and cultural institutions developed over the area was also reconstructed. The use of interdisciplinary approach in the study was necessary because, they test the conclusions made from Oral testimonies and Oral traditions collected against the evidence of Archaeology and Linguistic^[40].

The Linguistic work produced by Kay Williamson provides us insight to detail classification of languages of the area. The classification of the language that emerged from the area has clarified that, the relationship between people and communities emerged duly from Oral traditions. The classification has also given us confidence in the reconstruction of pattern and direction of migrations among African societies in the past.

His classification of Udekama (Degama), Egenni, and Apie-Atisa (language of Yenagua) as Delta-Edo^[41] confirmed some recent traditions linking them with Benin.

In a similar way, the Archaeological excavations carried in the Eastern Delta region such Onyoma, Ogoloma, Saikiripogu, and Okochiri^[42], respectively were also identified through Oral traditions, while the interpretation of the artifacts were preceded with the assistances of Oral traditions. It produced radio-carbon dates from charcoal. These dates confirmed the estimated dates from Oral traditions and glottochronology that communities were settled in the Eastern Niger Delta places as mentioned.

One other study on ancient African history which provided us with evidence of vital links of social, economic, political, and cultural nature which bound together all peoples together is the work done by Erim.O. Erim title, *Idoma Nationality, 1600-1900 AD: Problems of Studying the Origin and Development of Ethnicity*, (1981)^[43].

Erim's research covered the vast area of the former Kwararafa Kingdom within the upper and lower Benue-Cross River Basin. They gave us a view of the ancient socio-economic, political, and cultural links which criss-cross what today the Middle Belt area of Nigeria. With the colonial administration, the area was separated in to distinct administrative units thus, blurring the ancient links, which should have formed veritable bedrock of the new Nigerian nation^[44].

The work of R.A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1908-1906*, as was the case of other historians of the 1960s, has contributed to the study of African history and historiography. Ayedele's *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria* provides us with in-depth analysis of the background to the Sokoto Caliphate and the subsequent Sokoto Jihad, its presentation on the working of the Religio- political edifices which the Jihadist erected. The work also showed the intricate link between the Moslems and non-Moslems, north, especially, the areas today referred to as the Middle Belt of Nigeria^[45].

E.A Ayandele, 'The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria,

1882-1914^[46], among other scholars. These works no doubt provides us with insight to the complexity of the background against which the various Nigerian groups decided to accept or reject Christian Missionaries in the areas. The works also provides the details of intra-mission politics, the detail which reveal that, the men and women of God were so human as to be racist and unashamedly ambitious, but more importantly, for the history of our country^[47].

Guide by their application of Oral traditions, Archaeology and Linguistic data in the reconstruction of African past, historians of recent time have equally resorted to the use of interdisciplinary approach in the study of history, be young the use of Oral traditions, Archaeology, and linguistic. Today, the application of other social science subjects like geography, sociology, political science, social works, etc and subjects from the pure sciences like Biology, Micro-Biology Agricultural science, etc by historians is in practice. Other subjects in the humanities like Visual and Creative Arts, Theatre Art, English, etc are no exception. Many too have resorted to the application of the Marxist Theory in the analysis of African history. All these add dimensions and perspectives to the insight available to the historian with a structured training in written documentary history. As Alogoa rightly observed, it is not morally possible for any person to become fully proficient in one discipline, but historian in Africa use to communicate across disciplinary boundaries. He however advised that African historians should be able to formulate historical questions in language that practitioners of other disciplines should understand. He should also be able to understand and use the sources that his colleague in neighbouring disciplines provides to his questions.

Conclusion

From the above, we no doubt believed that African historiography has not only done enough to challenge the Eurocentric view that Africa do not have a history, but proven to them that historical study do not only come from written documentary evidence, but Oral traditions and other sources like Archaeology, Linguistic, Ethnography, as well as written records also serve the purpose. In spite of this achievement, African historians have not been able to develop African theory and method in the techniques in the collection, interpretation, and analysis of Oral traditions in the reconstruction of African past. The challenge is still there. More importantly, African historians have to move from the historiography of colonialism to that of self-reliance, nation-building, national integrations, and mutual understanding of African communities, among others. In spite of these challenges, African historiography has done so well by donating some theme in African historiography over time.

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⁴² Alagoa, E.J. 'The Python Eye': The Past in the Living Present, 115-15..

⁴³ Erim, E. o. *Idoma Nationality, 1600-1900 AD: Problems of Studying the Origin and Development of Ethnicity*, Enugu, Dimension Publishers, 1981), 35.

⁴⁴ Erim, E. O. *Idoma Nationality, 1600-1900 AD*: 35.

⁴⁵ Erim, E. O. *African Historiography: Trends, Praxis, and Democracy in Nigeria*, 27.

⁴⁶ Ayandele, E. A *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1882-1914*, cited in E. O. Erim, *Idoma Nationality, 1600-1900 AD*, 21.

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