

Development of african historiography

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



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The search into the past of Africa is still a rather underdeveloped field compared to the histories of other ancient civilizations around the world.

[Chr02] The reason for this distinction lies not in the absence of available evidence, as reflected by many 19th century historians, but rather in the failure of the development of ‘ historiography’ in that era, as a field that is supposed to investigate the unbiased truth of the origins and the journey that brings people to their present.[Chr02] These historians, mostly hailing from European nations, who relied on material and tangible discoveries as the only sources of information about the early life of any culture, classified the world into “ civilizations” based on an inappropriate definition of the term referring only to societies that left evidences of complex social and cultural systems with a centralized authority that controlled labor, wealth, military forces and commissioned the construction of cities and towns and other public buildings, as well as works of ‘ monumental’ art. [Chr02]This approach led to a distinction between different cultures around the world on the basis of an intelligence that was measured mostly from written texts that could be translated and could provide a vision into the life of the early people, dismissing the rest of the world as ‘ uncivilized’ and ‘ unintelligent’[Chr02] Such attitudes assisted the slave traders in undermining the humanity of the African people, looking down upon their traditional values as ‘ primitive’, their ethnic communities as ‘ tribes’, their nation as a ‘ race’. [Chr02]These terms though originally meaning nothing degrading have come to be associated with ideas denoting a distinction from what is considered to be ordinary and accepted in a ‘ civilized’ society and consequently such

dismissals prevented the historians of that time to investigate events that accounted for an African history. Thus the rich cultural life of a huge percentage of the population of the world has been left undiscovered due to the limiting beliefs and predetermined superiority of smaller class.

Historians today however have understood the implications of such an error and have made efforts to develop unique research methodologies for investigating past events through mainly Oral Tradition and Archeology as well as other interesting sources such as genetics, linguistics and botany.

The positive change of attitude globally towards different cultures around the world in the postmodern era, has led to an understanding of the difference between the preconceptions and realities about African Tribes, their socio-political setups, their economies and towns.[Chr02]

A 'Tribe' in Africa, originally perceived as an extended family with the tribal head naturally the eldest member of the family and holding a limited territory, consists of over millions of members with somewhat distinct values, languages and customs.[Chr02] Thus a tribe is closer to an ethnic community spread over vast regions. The divisions and the associations formed in African societies not being limited to ethnic or ancestry basis. In addition African culture today can be liberated from the false notion of it incapability for evolution and be recognized as contemporary in comparison to ancient African traditions.

The inclusion of the African narrative to World History opens up a new window towards the understanding of humans as a collective race with similar social needs but different ways of achieving them and the unique patterns created in the process shaping history and culture.

Bibliography

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