

The Anglophone-Francophone Historiographical Divide. Who benefits?

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There is an enduring iron curtain between Anglophone and Francophone nationalist historiographies that has persisted in the postcolony and which is largely explained by the colonial mould in which these two linguistic communities evolved and ossified. The first intellectual schools in Africa to emerge and challenge the imperial narratives in the post Second World War era were schools of history of both Anglophone and Francophone traditions. Yet the two nationalist historiographical traditions have hardly crossed their respective cultural boundaries owing to the linguistic barrier inherited from colonialism. Put differently Francophone universities privileges the teaching of Francophone African historiography while the Anglophone counterparts restrict themselves to the historiography of Anglophone Africa. This iron curtain between Anglophone and Francophone historiographical traditions can be traced to historical developments of these two schools of history. This paper focuses on the developments of separate and uncoordinated efforts of intellectuals in the Anglophone and Francophone historiographical worlds to demystify and combat colonialism through ideological revisionism, reversal and re-statement. These efforts constituted the foundations of Anglophone and Francophone nationalist historiographies. The ideological ammunition in the Anglophone world was packaged and championed by the Ibadan School of History through Kenneth Dike. In the Francophone world, a similar task fell on the Senegalese intellectual, Cheick Anta Diop. I argue that that the Anglophone and Francophone intellectuals, acting independently of each other, supplied the necessary ideological ammunition which the nationalists utilized to deconstruct the colonial enterprise. They fine-tuned and supplied the decolonization ideology which shaped the entire decolonization process and laid down a rich intellectual tradition.

The Ibadan School echoed the existence of African history and civilisation that is retrievable. Dike, like Diop, emphasized the necessity of the Afrocentricity of African historians in order to be relevant to their society.

The Dakar School argued that ancient Egypt had in fact been a product of Black African civilization from which other world civilizations took the cue. The implication of Anta Diop's seminal idea was that Negro Africans were the genesis of world civilization and the art of governance. Diop insisted that Egyptology must be a mandatory course in all African Universities, a call that found favour in Francophone universities and not Anglophone universities.