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## **Emmanuel Ayankannui Ayandele: The Man and African Historiography**

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### **Abstract**

Historiography which is largely concerned with the writings and methods of historians has evolved over the years and led to the manifestation of different types, namely: Western, African and Oral historiographies. Among these, the Western Historiography dominated the writing of African history until the middle of the twentieth century when an increasing number of African scholars emerged, questioned and challenged the methodology and perspective adopted in the study and writing of African history. Incidentally, the contributions of these intellectual giants to the emergence of African historiography have not been given adequate attention by historians of the later period. Against this backdrop, the importance of this essay is to analyse the contributions of one of these titans of history, Emmanuel Ayandele to the development of African historiography.

### **Introduction**

The historical image of African to a great extent has been a reflection of the climate of opinion at the time, the perspectives and methodological approaches employed in the reconstruction of her past. African external relations with Europe gradually led to colonization of most part of the continent. The colonizer – Europeans – projected Africa as “static barbarism” and waiting to be developed by the intruders. For them, Europeanization meant civilization. And the “dark” continent of Africa required the “agents” of civilization to effect change in the society. These “agents” of change were in the view of Europeans the explorers, missionaries, traders and later on administrators. African history viewed from the European cultural eye was a history of the activities of Europeans in Africa. Any attempt to study African history before the coming of the so called agents of

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change was assumed to be a futile exercise. Such an effort in the words of Hugh Trevor – Roper was to “pry into the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribe in picturesque but irrelevant corner of the globe.”<sup>1</sup> This image of Africa was by and large a history of justification of colonization which persisted throughout the colonial era. Historical writing about Africa up to the middle of the twentieth century therefore, was full of distortions, prejudices and imbalance assertions.

However, in the 1960s many African states increasingly fought and achieved political independence. African nationalists rejected the European appraisal of their past. With the increase in the number of Africanist historians sequel to the establishment of Universities in Africa, a change towards African historiography became necessary as they began to address themselves to the questions of methodology and perspectives in the study of Africa history. In Nigeria, for example, the great historians who emerged from the middle of the twentieth century include: K. O. Dike, J. F. A. Ajayi, E. A. Ayandele and Obaro Ikime. Others were; E. J. Alagoa, Adiele Afigbo, G. Olusanya and Bala Usman. Others still are T. N. Tamuno, S. Biobaku, Okon E. Uya, and G. N. Uzoigwe. The list is not in order of greatness nor is it exhaustive. This could indeed be extended, on and on.

These intellectual giants and others not mentioned due to the constraint of space countered the image of Africa which was systematized and institutionalized by Eurocentric writers. Unfortunately, historians of the latter years have not paid adequate attention to the contributions of these intellectual giants who adopted the more rewarding “inside-out” rather than the now discredited “out-side in” approach in historical writings, about Africa and indeed the Nigerian peoples.

Therefore, the object of this discourse is to examine the valuable contributions of one of the titans of history to African historiography. On this score, the remaining part of our analysis would revolve around Emmanuel Ayankannui Ayandele. A man who spent more than forty years of his life debunking the stereotypes and prejudices which had embellished African historiography. A historian whose forceful articulations and graphic presentation of facts had shed new light, deepened our understanding and created new path in African historical writing.

However, much as the aim of this exercise is not to write the biography of our subject, a task which could be quite revealing, we shall limit ourselves to his contributions to historiography. Nevertheless, conscious attempt will be made to reflect on those aspects of his personality that may elucidate his analysis.

The paper focuses on his background, view on methodology of studying history, Africans’ reaction to the coming of European explorers, missionaries, traders; African external relations with Europe which some scholars have unduly eulogized; Education, the educated elites and his philosophy of history. Lastly, a compilation of a bibliography of his major works-articles and books has been enclosed.

### **The Man: Birth and Background**

Emmanuel Ayankannui Ayandele was born on 12 October, 1936. He hails from the ancient and historic city of Ogbomosho in Oyo State. After a brilliant performance at the Mission Primary School, he proceeded to the Baptist Boys’ High School, founded by the American Baptist Missionaries who established a mission station at Ogbomosho in 1855 (1948 – 1953). The zeal for further studies took him to the college of Arts, Science, and Technology, Ibadan from 1954 – 1956. Being unsatisfied and armed with the urge for sound academic learning, he enrolled at the premier seat of learning Nigeria, University College Ibadan (now University of Ibadan) from 1956 to 1961. Again, from 1961 to 1963, he studied at the King’s College, London where he obtained a doctorate degree in History.<sup>2</sup>

Emmanuel Ayandele became a member of the academic staff University of Ibadan as a lecturer in History (1961 – 1963); Senior Lecturer (1967 – 1969). He was promoted to position of a professor of History in 1968. His choice of history as a career has been attributed to some extent, on the influence of a reputable historian, Professor J. C. Anene whom he had a close association with in 1954, a year after completion of his secondary school education. Commenting on the role of his benefactor and mentor, Ayandele remarked:

He [Anene] not only intensified my interest in history but also introduced me into historical scholarship and

gave me moral and material support apart from valuable suggestions.<sup>3</sup>

Having benefited from the wealth of experience of some scholars and indeed historians, Ayandele could not resist the urge of making an enviable career in history. As a staff of the department of History University of Ibadan, Ayandele contributed meaningfully to the efforts of the "Ibadan History Series". This was a body which advocated for a reappraisal of African history as was seen through the European spectacles with emphasis that Africa history should not be the history of Europeans in Africa but history of Africans. They argued that absence of documents do not constitute an absence of History. Rather, in Africa with oral tradition, African past could be recaptured. Also, that oral tradition should be embraced and accepted as a valid source of historical reconstruction. Therefore, he was one of the pathfinders who sponsored the study of history to reflect new approach.

Beyond the classroom lectures, he had a lively frolic in administration of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. His administrative ingenuity and shrewdness was dutifully demonstrated during his tenure as the first acting principal of Jos Campus, University of Ibadan on 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1971. The astute management of that young institution's teething problems earned him a promotion as a substantive principal of the Jos Campus on 21<sup>th</sup> June, 1972.<sup>4</sup> On 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1975, in a characteristic military style of informing public officers about their appointment, Ayandele heard about his appointment as a Vice Chancellor of the University of Calabar over the radio<sup>5</sup>. He held the post meritoriously with enviable records of accomplishment till 1982. In that year, he returned to the University of Ibadan as a Professor of history.

As a widely exposed personality he won, over the years, international and national awards as well as recognitions: a member, club of Rome since April 1971; member Board of Trustees of the African American Institute 1975 - 1979; member Academic Advisory Board of the institute On Comparative Political and Economic Systems, George Town University, Washington D. C. since February 1982; Fellow, Nigeria Institute of Administrative Management since January 1981. As a strong believer on the value and relevance of African

institutions and culture, he was honoured with the traditional title of Odofin of Ogbomosho in 1979. Similarly, his contributions to the Nigerian nation - states became appreciated by his conferment as the Commander Order of the Niger (CON) on September 1979. Married to Oyebimpe Adeshuna and had two sons. His hobby was reading.<sup>6</sup>

Latter, Emmanuel Ayandele was appointed as the West African coordinator by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an International Organization that has done tremendous work on African history documented in eight volumes. This great historian joined his ancestors on July 23, 2014.

### **Ayandele and African Historiography**

Historiography simply put, mean the art of writing history. It deals essentially with the question of what is history and development in history, it is intertwined with historical methods. And the latter deals with how to practice history, the problems and issues involved in historical research, writing and how historians practice his craft.

Ayandele has made impactful contributions on a number of subjects as pertained to African historical writing, some of these include; methodology of studying African history, African external relations with the Europeans, education and the educated elites as well as philosophy of history among others.<sup>7</sup> These are the areas which we shall therefore, turn our focus on:

### **Ayandele and Methodology of African History**

In one of his articles titled, "How Truly Nigerian is our Nigerian History" Ayandele stressed that Nigerian historical writing has been dominated by five kinds of imbalance: first, the tendency by historians to dominate their writings on Africa with the relations between them and Europeans. This according to him, gives the impression that the history of the group is only made up of such relations. Second, there is the error of interpreting the external relations against the background and interests of Europeans. Third, there is over emphasis on the factors making for disunity rather than examination of factors of unity, mostly in writing about the pre-colonial period. Fourth, there is the fact that large ethnic

groups received greater attention. Fifth, there is the tendency to write history of important personalities, that is traditional or educated elites rather than the masses.<sup>8</sup> As a strong advocate of “Nigerian perspective”, Ayandele stresses that such imbalance could be corrected if historians adopt a new approach as follows:

First, historical writing about the Nigerian people should rather make use of evidence of internal developments among the people in recapturing their past and evidence of such internal developments abound. For example, among the Egba, he argued, the British presence in Lagos was not more crucial to them than internal political, social and economic events which constitute the core of their past. These include, the constitutional experiment between 1845 and 1891; the internal problems among Chiefs which weakened their solidarity after the abortive Dahomian attack of 1864; economic relations with the Europeans and Ijebu which made Ketu, Iberekodo and Iperu important markets for Egba; the frequent natural events, smallpox epidemics; the strong adherence of Egba to their traditional religion which are often not mentioned were important experience of the Egba which should be reflected in historical writings about them<sup>9</sup>. Second, he emphasizes that over weighting of the intruders’ economic and political interest in their relations with Africa need to be corrected. Much as the European interest influenced such relations, the African attitudes were largely determined by their indigenous economic and political interest. For instance, the Egba and Ijebu who closed their routes against the British, the Enyong (Eniong), Akunakuna and Umon peoples of Cross River had their sovereignty as uppermost when they resisted British attempts to have direct movement along the river at the palm oil trade era.<sup>10</sup>

A more balanced approach in assessing the history of the people could be achieved if factors which promoted good relations among the Nigerian people are examined. Evidence shows that trade had existed between them and kulfu near present day kontagora up to 1830, the Ijebu were makers of clothes used in Northern Nigeria. The Edo and Nupe exchanged their camwood for manufactured articles of Northern Origin.<sup>11</sup>

Lastly, the emphasis on the history of aristocracy, kings, emirs, chiefs, nobility and the “education elite” does not

reflect on what the people may have considered to be the salient aspects of their past. Among the Yoruba and Efik, the institutions of Ogboni and Ekpe respectively constituted important feature of their past. For the Efik masses the salient events included such things as the administration of justice by *esere* bean, the fattening of women, the rules of Ekpe, inter-town relations and observance of the indigenous religious practices. These were more important to them than accounts on Efik in the nineteenth century by historians who tend to concentrate on Eyamba, and Eyo Honesty. The authentic history of pre-colonial Nigeria he insisted should:

Emphasize the aversion of the indigenous people to the intruders, their passionate attachment to traditional religion, their amusements and fun, their non-literacy but nonetheless elaborate system of vocational and ethical education, their inter-family an inter-clan relations, their ways and means of curing diseases, their social welfare schemes and humanitarian concepts, their cosmological idea and faith in the virtues of sacrifice and their belief in the indispensability of the slave economy.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, in the study of pre-colonial and colonial eras what constituted the peoples’ hope, sense of values and activities of the masses should not be undermined in the course of projecting the activities of the expatriates.

### **Ayandele on External Relations and Its Nature**

The aspect of history of the people that inhabit the present day Nigeria which has attracted the attention of many historians was their contact with the Europeans. Some scholars have seen this as a watershed in the people’s history. On this, Ayandele maintain that these people were not new in the field of external relations. Relations had existed at different period between them and others. The people of Ngazargamu, the then capital of Kanem-Bornu, for example, communicated with Tunis and Cairo on friendly terms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Arabs, Zaghawa and Fulani were allowed to migrate and settle in the Islamic zones of Northern

Nigeria. The Bornu became the main suppliers of eunuchs as special kinds of slave to courts in the Mediterranean Africa.<sup>13</sup> In all the relations before the nineteenth century, the territorial integrity of these communities were not threatened as relations between the European and Africans was on an even-tenor.

The coming of the Europeans in the nineteenth century brought with it new relations. Ayandele states that what determined the reaction of various communities to the intruders namely, explorers, missionaries, traders, and later on colonial administrators were largely their self-interest<sup>14</sup>. Their reactions vary from place to place and their interest differed from that of the intruders. For instance, the explorers' claim that they were searching for geographical knowledge without any ulterior motive did not convince the African ruler who became suspicious of their motives. They doubt how the explorers could have left their countries in search for features or rivers that "were not necessarily" wonder evoking<sup>15</sup>. The main objective of the missionaries was "spiritual success" but for the majority of the Nigerians group, spiritual aspect of the missionary enterprise was not their concern. In their view, the intruders whether explorers, traders, missionaries or colonial administrators had similar motive. They were "the secular wings of spiritual imperialism."<sup>16</sup>

Drawing evidence heavily from the Yoruba and the people of Niger Delta, Ayandele demonstrates that the traditional rulers and people's reaction to the European intruders were largely determined by what they considered to be their political, economic and social interests. Therefore, the Europeans were welcomed in areas where their presence could enhance interest of the indigenous people whereas the Europeans met stiff resistance from some Africans, who felt their presence would jeopardize the welfare of the Africans. For example, the Egba surrounded with hostile neighbours namely, Ijebu, Ekiti, Ibadan and Dahomey, sought the support of the missionaries to achieve political and military leverage over their claimed enemies. It was in furtherance of such interest among others that the Akintoyes, the Sodekes, the Ogunbonas welcomed the missionaries with seeming enthusiasm.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, among the peoples of the Niger Delta, their major consideration in welcoming the European more than

anything else was socio-economic advantages. To promote their economic relations with the whiteman, Eyamba V of Duke Town, Eyo Honesty II of Creek Town and George Pepple I of Bonny accepted the establishment of missions in their domain. Thus in 1846 Old Calabar had missionaries; Bonny 1864, and Brass followed suit in 1868.<sup>18</sup>

Besides the Efik expected secular education from the missionary enterprise. In the words of Eyo Honesty II:

They [the Europeans] all get learning when young  
but our children grow up like goat... a school in our  
town to teach our children to saby (sic) book like  
white people will be very good.<sup>19</sup>

However, some rulers and peoples of Southern Nigeria did not welcome the Christian Missionaries. The Edo, the Igbo, King Jaja of Opobo, Olomu of Itsekiri and Ijebu, were suspicious of European intentions from the outset. They discerned the political danger of missionaries and therefore restricted their intrusion for a while. For the Ijebu, the whiteman was the most inferior being created by God and "the greatest enemy to Ijebu land with whom no direct or cordial relations should be sought". Appearance of two whiteman in 1859 in Ijebu-ode prompted the chiefs and people to offer sacrifices of goats at Ode and all the villages through which the whiteman passed to avert evil consequences.<sup>20</sup>

Among the groups who initially welcomed the Europeans, when they latter undermined their interest, the people reacted swiftly against threat to their sovereignty. To defend their much appreciated territorial integrity, the Egba that initially welcomed the Europeans planned with the Ijebu and Dosunmu to drive the whiteman away from Lagos. This action in the people's view became pertinent when the British compelled Dosunmu to cede Lagos in 1864<sup>21</sup>. They did not want any intruder to interfere with their territorial boundary. The Egba in 1867 descended on the missionaries, had their property destroyed or looted. This was the "Ifole" which set the missionaries on their toes and forced others in the interior to withdraw from the area.

As earlier mentioned, a part from the Saro, the various communities were not interested in the whiteman's religion.

The Saro whom the freemen regarded as whitemen and their children were not prevented from imbibing the Christian doctrine nor learn the whiteman's art of reading and writing. Any conflict with the indigenous customs was seen as apostasy which they freemen would brook. Attempt to impose the Christian teachings on the freemen resulted in destroying the fabric of the society. Campaign against polygamy, slavery, murder of twins, socio-political organizations like Ogboni and Ekpe had disruptive impact on the society. Nevertheless, the Ogboni and Ekpe were instrument of governance in their traditional settings.

However the Europeans were not only "destroyers" but they were also planners and builders. Unlike other historians who investigated the constitutional development and Nationalist movements in Nigeria and tended to write it off as being of non-existence before 1914, Ayandele maintained that the strand of Nationalist movement in Nigeria between 1922 and 1960 could trace their origins to the missionary activity before 1914.

Ironically, the pathfinders of the secular authority in Nigeria were those who sponsored the idea of Nigeria Nationalism in the nineteenth century. Through the church Nigerian Nationalism which was defined as "Ethiopianism" spread and gathered momentum. The advocates of a parliamentary system of government, members of the legislative council from 1886 – 1914 were either Nigerian ministers or ardent churchmen. They disseminated the concept of Nationalism through the press and began formation of political party. Little wonder, one of the strongest political parties in Nigeria known as the Northern People Congress was conceived by a Christian, Dr. Dikko.<sup>22</sup>

### **Ayandele and Education**

This was another subject which attracted the attention of Ayandele. Commenting on education in Africa, he maintained that the problem in the educational system like the case of Nigeria could be traced to the foundation of what type of education was envisaged for the people by the originators of western – style of education. For the few in the society who benefitted from this type of education, it was viewed as the

greatest social blessing of the missionary enterprise. The educated elites saw it as an instrument of modernization.

The reaction of the majority in the society to western education was based on their world view. For some, western – style of education was irrelevant to their needs, sense of values and aspiration. In their view, therefore, the only proper system of education was non – literacy traditional system - system which integrated the individual in society from birth to death and promoted his values. For them, school was not a "scheduled building" but the entire society from which people received the most comprehensive training all the time of their life<sup>23</sup>. Against this background, the chiefs refused to send their children to school but rather send the slaves for what they regarded as "mis-education".

The spread of western-style of education has posed a challenge to the African in contemporary society. Although attempts have been made to attain Universal Compulsory and Free Primary Education since 1980, this could not be achieved because of two reasons. First, the population growth could not be matched by economic development, the increasing number of children under age of fifteen, posed the toughest challenge to African leaders. Secondly, there is a problem of what type of education should be given to the people- whether the children should be given education for the sake of it or the qualitative education which are only available to the children of elites.<sup>24</sup>

### **Ayandele's Philosophy of History**

Ayandele idea of history is that it is an integral part of man that cannot be extricated from him. It was and still is history that gives man a sense of belonging in the society, made him a patriot and a scholar. History is a discipline ought to be forthright and show the way to other disciplines. The effort of historians to maintain this ideal led to the formation of the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN), the first learned academic society which deserves to be unturned.

He decried the lethargic attitude amongst most citizens in independent African states and leaders towards historical scholarship. History should not be seen as an academic discipline to be studied by few but should be seen as the

people's experience which gave them a sense of people hood and dignity. Nigerian history in his view should no longer be gleaned from "Outsiders", rather Nigerians should become interested in historical scholarship. Historical writings about Nigeria by Nigerians will make the masses aware of the value of Nigerian historical studies.

For him a historian ought to see himself first as a patriot. By that approach the historian should tell the people that Nigeria existed before the "British Nigeria" or colonial Nigeria. That the people who became Nigeria co-existed practiced good neighbourliness and engaged in inter-ethnic trade. Thus, the guiding principle of a Nigerian historian should be issues of national interest<sup>25</sup>.

In the creation of historical consciousness, Ayandele maintains the responsibility of a historian- a feat which could be achieved by dramatization of key historical events on the television. By this approach, people can learn history even through the television.

### Conclusion

Historical writing about the various communities in Africa in the pre-colonial period and up to the middle of the twentieth century was largely dominated with prejudices and stereotypes. This was by and large a function of the Euro-centric approach to historical writing. The emergence of African historians and Africanist scholars based on explosion of interest in historical scholarship in the years of independence among African states, led to the challenges of the hitherto image of Africa. A new approach to historical writing emerged and it became more rewarding to adopt the meaningful "inside - out" than "outside - in" approach of earlier centuries. Historical writing based on such approach made the history of the people as recaptured by Africans to be a higher approximation of the people's as it was.

As the works of Ayandele took into consideration the African sense of values, hopes, aspirations and cosmology, a more balance history of the societies has been documented. His approach to historical writing about Africa and indeed Nigeria has been largely a departure of the old school which marks a watershed in African historiography.

### Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup>O. E. Uya, Lecture Notes on HIS5501, Historiography, 1994-5.

<sup>3</sup>E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842 - 1914: A Political and Social Analysis*, London: Longman, 1966, p. xviii.

<sup>4</sup>Uwechue Rophe (ed.), *Africa Who's Who*, p. 251.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>E. A. Ayandele, The University of Calabar Come of Age, A Convocation address in E. E. Ekuban (ed.), *The Calabar Education*, Calabar: Centauo Press, 198, p. 6.

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*Modern Africa*. London: Longman Group Ltd, 1968; "The Task Before Nigerian Historian Today". A keynote address presented at 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Historical society of Nigeria held in Calabar 5 April, 1979.

<sup>8</sup>E. A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, London Frankclass, 1970, p.5

<sup>9</sup>*ibid* p.7

<sup>10</sup>*ibid*.

<sup>11</sup>*ibid*.

<sup>12</sup>*ibid*.

<sup>13</sup>E. A. Ayandele 'External Relations with European Explorers, Missionaries and Traders' in Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Heineman Educational Books Nigeria, 1980, p. 367.

<sup>14</sup>*ibid*. p. 369

<sup>15</sup>*ibid*.

<sup>16</sup>*ibid*. pp. 373 – 378

<sup>17</sup>*ibid*. p. 373

<sup>18</sup>*ibid*.

<sup>19</sup>*ibid*.

<sup>20</sup>*ibid*. p. 373

<sup>21</sup>*ibid*.

<sup>22</sup>*ibid*.

<sup>23</sup>E. A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies...* p. 20.

<sup>24</sup>*ibid*.

<sup>25</sup>*ibid*.