

## **Canons of Anglophone and Francophone Historiography and the Problematic of the “Iron Curtain”**

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**Being a Paper Abstract for the CODESRIA SYMPOSIUM ON CANONICAL WORKS AND CONTINUING INNOVATION IN AFRICAN ARTS AND HUMANITIES, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, 17-19 September 2003.**

The new African Historiography is characterised by its assertiveness of the incontestability of the existence of African History against a background of its refusal by intellectual bigots, and the specificity of its own methodology to mend its “non-literate” past. This historiography had among its forerunners Anglophone and Francophone heavy weights in the likes of Kenneth Dike and Jacob Ajayi (Anglophones) on the one hand and Cheick Anta Diop and Theophile Obenga (Francophones) on the other. Their canonical works collectively constitute the foundation and springboard for the development and expansion of historical knowledge and historical methodology in Africa and their works have become quotable quotes for all practising historians.

Despite the monumental contribution of these pioneer Anglophone and Francophone scholars to the production of sustainable developmental historical knowledge, a conspicuous hiatus exist between the two historical traditions that only a vigilant, concerned and committed Africanist scholar can discern. This author is privileged to have schooled in the Anglophone and Francophone historical traditions in the University of Ibadan (Nigeria) and l’Université de Yaoundé (Cameroon) respectively, and is therefore in a strategic position to comment on these traditions. From the standpoint of his dual background, the author argues that although the aims and objectives of Anglophone and Francophone historiographies were the same, an “iron curtain” developed between the two, which made it difficult for them to recognise each other’s existence and contribution to knowledge. The renowned Ibadan school of History, which is the pacesetter for historical studies in Nigeria and most of Anglophone Africa, operates as if the growth of the new African historiography was the sole responsibility of the University of Ibadan and its offshoots. Historiography at the University of Ibadan at undergraduate and postgraduate levels continues to credit the development of historical knowledge solely to Dike, Ajayi etc. In a similar vein, a coterie of Francophone scholars in l’Université de Yaoundé literally worship and cause to worship monuments like Cheick Anta Diop and Theophile Obenga etc. in their historical discourses because their classical writings were pacesetters in modern African historiography. The Anglophone parallels like Dike or Ajayi were never mentioned, or perhaps unknown to them.

Is this bipolarism of African historiographical tradition a reflection of Anglophone-Francophone academic rivalry or simply their parochialisms arising from their cocoonisation in, or limitation to, their respective colonially bequeathed languages of operation and culture? Drawing from the canonical works of selected Anglophone and Francophone historians, this author will highlight the pivotal relevance of their historiographies as pacesetters in African studies. The study will also show how the issue of historical knowledge, which preoccupied pioneer Anglophone and Francophone scholars, were the same. Their approaches were largely the same and their methodological orientation, which they bequeathed to the young generation of historians, explains to a large extent, the on-going indigenisation and Africanisation of knowledge and African history in Africa. The author will plead for the lifting of the “iron curtain” between Anglophone and Francophone historical traditions for the sake of knowledge enrichment, empowerment and proliferation.