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African historiography: Reflections on rewriting the continent's past

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Abstract

African historiography has undergone a transformative journey, evolving from early external narratives shaped by colonial perspectives to contemporary endeavours that seek to reclaim agency in defining the continent's rich and diverse history. This abstract explores the trajectory of African historiography, emphasizing the shifts in methodologies, perspectives, and objectives that have characterized the quest to rewrite the continent's past. Historically, Africa's narrative was predominantly framed by external observers, often influenced by colonial biases and Eurocentric viewpoints. However, over the decades, a vibrant and dynamic field of African historiography has emerged, driven by scholars and intellectuals committed to unveiling authentic African histories. Central to this transformation is the interrogation of oral traditions, archaeological findings, and indigenous knowledge systems, providing a nuanced understanding of the continent's pre-colonial cultures, societies, and achievements. The post-colonial era witnessed a surge in efforts to reclaim Africa's historical narrative from the shadows of distortion and omission. Scholars engaged in the reinterpretation of historical events, challenging prevailing stereotypes and presenting alternative perspectives on key epochs such as ancient civilizations, trans-Saharan trade routes, and pre-colonial political systems. This new wave of historiography has empowered Africans to assert control over their own narratives, fostering a sense of pride and identity rooted in a comprehensive understanding of the past. Moreover, the emergence of diverse theoretical frameworks, such as Afrocentrism and postcolonial theory, has enriched African historiography by providing analytical tools to deconstruct colonial legacies and explore the interconnectedness of African societies. This article also delves into the ongoing debates within the field, including discussions on the integration of oral histories, the role of African diaspora studies, and the challenges posed by limited archival resources.

Keywords: Africa, African historiography, African civilizations, Ottoman State, Decolonization

Introduction

Africa is a continent with tremendous cultural and linguistic diversity, and the study of its history requires proficiency in multiple languages and an understanding of a variety of cultural issues. Over the centuries, Africa's

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history has often been marginalized, misrepresented, or excluded from the global historical narrative.¹ But in recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in African history, giving rise to a vibrant and thriving discipline that is reshaping our understanding of the continent's past. African historiography is a dynamic field of study that aims to reveal, understand, and interpret the diverse histories of the African continent.²

African historiography has its roots in the continent's rich oral traditions. Long before the advent of written records, African societies transmitted their history, culture, and knowledge through oral storytelling, griots, and collective memory. These traditions continue to play an important role in African historiography, serving as valuable sources of historical information. On the other hand, African historiography faces many difficulties and complexities. First of all, the legacy of European colonialism has left a significant mark on African historiography.³ Colonial powers often imposed their own narratives and interpretations of African history, leading to distortions, biases, and gaps in the historical record. The paucity of written records in many pre-colonial African societies poses a challenge to historians. This lack of documentation requires reliance on oral sources, which can be subject to memory lapses and interpretations. This article considers the intricacies of colonial historiography on African civilizations, highlighting its biases, limitations, and ongoing efforts to decolonize African history.⁴

1. Writing in the African Civilizations

African civilizations have a rich history of various writing systems, oral traditions, and communication methods. While written records were not as prevalent across the entire continent compared to some other regions, certain civilizations in Africa developed distinctive writing systems and made significant contributions to literature. Ancient Egypt, located in the North-eastern part of Africa, had one of the earliest and most well-known writing systems: hieroglyphs. This system consisted of pictorial symbols and characters, often associated with religious and monumental inscriptions on structures like the pyramids.⁵

For instance, the Kingdom of Kush, located in present-day Sudan, used the Meroitic script. Derived from Egyptian hieroglyphs, it remains only partially deciphered, limiting our understanding of its content.⁶ The Ge'ez script is an ancient writing system used in the Ethiopian and Eritrean regions. It is employed by the Ge'ez-speaking people and is notable for its use in religious texts, particularly in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. In West Africa, particularly among Muslim communities, the Ajami script was developed. It is an adaptation of the Arabic script to write African languages. Scholars and religious leaders used Ajami to transcribe local languages for various purposes. Similarly, Nsibidi is a system of symbols used by Nigeria's Igbo people. It is not a full writing system but rather a series of ideographic symbols often used for decorative or communication purposes. Its exact meanings are sometimes known only to members of secret societies.⁷

The Vai script was invented by Momolu Duwalu Bukele in the 19th century in what is known as Liberia. It is a syllabic script used for writing the Vai language and later adapted for other languages in the region. Many African societies had rich oral traditions where stories, history, and cultural knowledge were passed down through generations

¹ Hannoum Abdelmajid, "Translation and the Colonial Imaginary: Ibn Khaldûn Orientalist", *History and Theory*, 2003, p. 61–81.

² Bentrovato Denise-Johan Wassermann, *Teaching African History in Schools: Experiences and Perspectives from Africa and Beyond*, Leiden, Brill, 2021. p. 63.

³ A. Adu Boahen-John Lonsdale, *African Perspectives on European Colonialism*, Diasporic African Press, New York, 2011, p.79.

⁴ Halim Gençoğlu, *Ottoman Cultural Heritage in South Africa: Islamic Legacy of the Ottoman Empire at the Tip of Africa: Archival Records Photos and Documents = Güney Afrika'da Osmanlı Kültürel Mirası : Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Afrika'nın Ucundaki İslam Mirası : Arşiv Kayıtları Resimler ve Belgeler*, Atatürk Kültür Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2020, p. 17.

⁵ Spear Thomas T., *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of African Historiography: Methods and Sources*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2019. p. 167.

⁶ Jennifer Taylor Westerfeld, *Egyptian Hieroglyphs in the Late Antique Imagination*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2019, p. 173.

⁷ John Nwachimereze Oriji, *Political Organization in Nigeria Since the Late Stone Age: A History of the Igbo People First Palgrave*, Macmillan paperback ed. New York NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 183.

via spoken word. Griots, storytellers, and oral historians played crucial roles in preserving and transmitting this knowledge. While written forms of communication varied across the continent, Africa's civilizations had sophisticated methods of recording and transmitting information, contributing to the diverse cultural heritage of the region.⁸

2. Rediscovering African History

In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to rediscover and rewrite African history. For instance, Fanon extensively discussed the European colonial legacy in Africa. He explored how colonialism dehumanizes both the colonized and the colonizer. He also argued that the psychological and social impact of colonial oppression goes beyond the economic and political dimensions. Fanon believed that the colonial situation breeds violence and violence becomes a tool for the colonized to reclaim their humanity and resist the dehumanizing effects of colonial rule. He also discussed the psychological consequences of violence on both the oppressed and the oppressor while he examined the impact of colonialism on the cultural identity of the colonized. Fanon additionally discussed how the imposition of European values and norms erodes indigenous cultures and leads to a sense of alienation among the colonized population and explored the psychological phenomenon of the colonized internalizing a sense of inferiority imposed by the colonizer.⁹ He discussed how colonial education, and social structures contribute to the psychological colonization of the oppressed. Fanon saw nationalism as a crucial tool for liberation and argued that the struggle for national independence was not only a political but also a psychological and cultural process. Nationalism, for Fanon, was a means for reclaiming a positive identity and agency. Fanon's writings underscore the enduring legacy of colonialism, emphasizing that even after achieving political independence, former colonies must grapple with the long-term psychological and social effects of colonial oppression. It's important to read Fanon's original works for a more in-depth understanding of his perspectives on the European colonial legacy in Africa. "The Wretched of the Earth" remains a foundational text in post-colonial studies and provides valuable insights into the psychological and social consequences of colonialism.¹⁰

African scholars and historians are actively working to decolonize the historical narrative by challenging Eurocentric perspectives and biases in the study of African history. This involves revisiting colonial archives, re-evaluating interpretations, and centering African voices and perspectives. Oral history has been recognized as a valuable source of historical information. African historians collaborate with local communities to document oral traditions and ensure that these voices are preserved for future generations. Again, archaeological research has revealed important information about the pre-colonial¹¹ history of Africa. The discovery of ancient civilizations, trade networks, and cultural artifacts, enriches our understanding of Africa's past. In addition, the Pan-African movement played an important role in developing a sense of unity and common history among African nations. This encourages the study of Africa's historical connections and common experiences.¹²

3. Colonial Historiography on African Civilizations

Studies of African civilizations have long been intertwined with the complexities of colonial historiography. Colonialism, with its oppressive influence on the African continent, not only had a profound impact on the political and social structures of African societies, but also significantly affected the way African history is recorded and

⁸ İsmail Bilgin, *Evliya Çelebi Afrika Ormanlarında*. 3. Baskı ed. Damla Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2006, p. 87.

⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Political Writings from Alienation and Freedom*, Paperback ed. Bloomsbury Academic, 2021, p. 142.

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon - Richard Philcox, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, New York, 2004, p. 69.

¹¹ Timbukti Mahmūd Kutī ibn Mutawakkil Kutī Christopher Wise and Hala Abu Taleb, *The Timbuktu Chronicles 1493-1599: English Translation of the Original Works in Arabic by Al Hajj Mahmud Kati*, Africa World Press, Trenton NJ, 2011. p. 291.

¹² Halim Gençöğlu, *Ottoman Traces in Southern Africa: The Impact of Turkish Emissaries and Muslim Theologians*. 1. ed. Osmanbey, Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2018, p. 63.

understood. Colonial historiography on African civilizations is characterized by a pervasive bias that serves the interests of colonial powers. Before their arrival, European colonists often portrayed Africa as a "dark continent" devoid of history, culture, and civilization.¹³ This Eurocentric perspective has reinforced the idea that African societies are inherently inferior, perpetuating stereotypes and myths about Africa's past. Eurocentric bias has also led to misinterpretation and misrepresentation of African cultures and histories. Many colonial historians either ignored or belittled the achievements of African civilizations and focused instead on their own purported contributions to Africa's development. This distortion of history not only obscured the crimes against African societies on the continent, but also perpetuated a narrative of European superiority.¹⁴

For instance, German philosopher Hegel, is known for his influential philosophical works, including "The Phenomenology of Spirit" and "The Philosophy of History." Hegel's views on Africa, like those on other non-European cultures of his time, have been criticized for their Eurocentrism and ethnocentrism. It's important to note that Hegel's views were embedded in the historical and cultural context of the 19th century, and his ideas have been reevaluated and critiqued in contemporary scholarship. In Hegel's "Lectures on the Philosophy of History," he presented a hierarchical view of world history, suggesting that history had a teleological progression, culminating in the modern European state. Unfortunately, Hegel's views on Africa were marked by certain prejudices and misconceptions. For instance, Hegel, reflecting prevalent Eurocentric views of his time, characterized Africa as a continent devoid of historical development, viewing it through a lens of primitivism. He often perpetuated stereotypes about Africa, describing it as a place where historical progress had not reached the level found in Europe. Hegel's philosophy implied that certain regions, including Africa, had not played a significant role in the historical development of human freedom and self-consciousness. He saw history as primarily unfolding in Europe and, to a lesser extent, in Asia. Hegel, in his writings, did not attribute significant contributions to philosophy, culture, or statecraft to African societies. His ideas were influenced by the limited knowledge available about Africa in Europe during the 19th century. It's crucial to approach Hegel's views with an understanding of the historical context and the prevailing Eurocentrism of the time. Modern scholars critique Hegel's ethnocentric perspectives, recognizing the need for a more inclusive and diverse understanding of world history and cultures.¹⁵

Contemporary scholars emphasize the importance of decolonizing philosophy and history, acknowledging the contributions of non-European civilizations and challenging the biases embedded in earlier works, including those of Hegel. As such, interpretations of Africa and other non-European regions have evolved, and scholars strive to present a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the diverse histories and cultures of the world.¹⁶

4. Limitations of Colonial Historiography

Colonial historiography, the study of history written and influenced by colonial powers, on African civilizations is rife with limitations that continue to hinder our understanding of the continent's rich history. Colonial historians often picked up whatever bits of African history came to mind and focused on particular regions or aspects of the culture while neglecting their broader context. This situation has led to an incomplete and disconnected understanding of African civilizations. The Eurocentric bias in colonial historiography thus led to an overemphasis on European contributions to African history, overshadowing indigenous achievements and perspectives. The voices of indigenous African historians and scholars have been largely excluded from colonial historiography. This neglect has prevented a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of African civilizations. Colonial

¹³ Spear Thomas T, *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of African Historiography: Methods and Sources*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2019, p.154.

¹⁴ Matthew Unangst, *Colonial Geography: Race and Space in German East Africa 1884-1905*, University of Toronto Press. Toronto, 2022, p. 83.

¹⁵ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (Author), Alan Brudner, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Right 1819-1820*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2023, p.72.

¹⁶ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel-Robert F. Brown-J. M. Stewart, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1852-6*. Volume 1 Introduction and Oriental Philosophy Together with the Introductions from the Other Series of These Lectures, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 78.

historiography has played a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the past. In the simplest terms, terms such as "Black Africa" or "Barbarian Africa" are products of this mentality.¹⁷

While it has undoubtedly contributed to our knowledge of various regions and periods, it is important to recognize the inherent limitations and biases introduced by this approach. At this point, one of the most glaring limitations of colonial historiography is its Eurocentric and ethnocentric bias. That is, colonial historians generally looked at the world through a Eurocentric lens. They downplayed and even ignored the cultures and histories of indigenous peoples while prioritizing the perspectives and experiences of European colonizers. This distorted perspective has led to a distorted and incomplete understanding of many regions and societies. Colonial historiography typically sidelined or ignored indigenous voices and narratives. This exclusionary approach meant that indigenous peoples' histories, traditions, and knowledge were often ignored or treated as inferior.¹⁸

As a result, important aspects of local histories and cultures have either been misrepresented or omitted from the historical record. Another limitation of colonial historiography is that it selectively focuses on certain aspects of history and neglects others. Colonial historians often prioritized political and economic events at the expense of social, cultural, and environmental histories. This narrow focus leads to a distorted and incomplete understanding of the past. Colonial powers often used historiography as a means of legitimizing their colonial enterprises. Historical narratives are designed to legitimize colonialism, imperialism, and the exploitation of indigenous peoples. As a result, colonial historiography is full of propaganda and biased interpretations that serve the interests of the colonialists. Again, the lack of diverse perspectives in colonial historiography is another important limitation. Indigenous and minority voices have often been silenced and marginalized, leading to an incomplete and one-sided historical narrative. This neglect has prevented a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of colonial history.¹⁹

For many years, colonial historiography often produced fragmented and disjointed historical narratives. Historians have focused on specific regions or periods, resulting in a patchwork of disconnected narratives. This makes it difficult to understand broader historical connections between different regions and societies. While colonial historiography provides valuable insight into the history of various regions and periods, it is important to recognize its limitations and biases. Eurocentrism, exclusion of indigenous narratives, selective focus, political agendas, and lack of diverse perspectives have all contributed to a distorted and incomplete historical record. As we continue to explore the past and gain a more accurate understanding of history, it is vital to critically examine and challenge the legacy of colonial historiography.²⁰

5. Decolonization in African History

Efforts to decolonize African history have gained momentum in recent years. Historians, scholars, and activists are working diligently to challenge and correct the biases and limitations of colonial historiography. Historians actively use indigenous African sources, such as oral traditions, written records, and artifacts, to reconstruct a more authentic narrative of African history. Efforts are being made to include diverse perspectives and voices in studies of African civilizations, including marginalized groups, women, and indigenous communities. Historians are now using new methods such as re-evaluate the impact of European colonialism on African societies, acknowledging

¹⁷ Britta Timm Knudsen-J. R. Oldfield-Elizabeth Buettner-Elvan Zabunyan, *Decolonizing Colonial Heritage: New Agendas Actors and Practices in and Beyond Europe*, Routledge, Abingdon Oxon, 2022, p. 122.

¹⁸ Paula D. Royster, *Decolonizing Arts-Based Methodologies: Researching the African Diaspora*, Brill Sense, Leiden, 2021, p. 76.

¹⁹ Mazrui Ali A. "Africa between the Baobab Tree and the Owl of Minerva: A Post-Colonial Narrative of Memory and Learning", *African and Asian Studies* 2013, p. 140–53. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15692108-12341255>.

²⁰ Záhořík Jan. *Inequalities and Conflicts in Modern and Contemporary African History: A Comparative Perspective*, Lexington Books. Lanham, 2019, p. 38.

both the positive and negative aspects and placing them in a more balanced historical context. Encouraging African scholars to contribute to the field of African history is crucial to decolonization. This will allow for a more nuanced understanding of the continent's past from an African perspective.²¹

Enhancing African historiography involves adopting various solutions to address existing challenges and promote a more comprehensive understanding of the continent's history. Encourage the inclusion of diverse perspectives, voices, and narratives in historical research. This involves incorporating oral histories, local records, and marginalized viewpoints to present a richer and more accurate account of events. Develop and promote frameworks that are rooted in African experiences and perspectives. This involves moving away from Eurocentric models and embracing methodologies that better reflect the unique historical contexts of African societies. Facilitate collaboration between African and international scholars to ensure a more balanced and nuanced historical analysis. Joint research efforts can contribute to a more inclusive and globally relevant understanding of African history.²²

Utilize digital technologies to preserve and disseminate historical records. Digital archives can make historical materials more accessible, allowing researchers and the public to explore a broader range of sources. Integrate a more comprehensive and inclusive African history curriculum in educational institutions. This involves challenging stereotypes and providing students with a more accurate understanding of the continent's diverse histories. Promote the use of local languages in historical research and documentation. This can help capture the nuances of historical narratives more accurately and ensure that cultural subtleties are not lost in translation. Encourage public engagement with history through museums, exhibitions, and community events. This can foster a sense of ownership and pride in African history among diverse communities.²³

Embrace interdisciplinary approaches that draw from anthropology, archaeology, sociology, and other fields to provide a holistic understanding of historical events and societal developments. Provide support and resources for independent African researchers to conduct studies that challenge existing narratives and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the continent's history. By implementing these solutions, the field of African historiography can evolve to better reflect the complexities and richness of Africa's diverse histories.²⁴

The topic of decolonization in African history writing addresses the need to challenge and transform the Eurocentric perspectives that have traditionally dominated narratives about the continent. It involves revisiting historical events, voices, and perspectives often marginalized or misrepresented during the colonial era. Emphasizing diverse viewpoints and acknowledging the agency of African communities is crucial for a more accurate and inclusive portrayal of African history.²⁵

6. Ottoman Historiography on Africa

When we think of the Ottoman Empire, we often think of the grand palaces in Istanbul and the vast lands of Europe. However, the Ottomans' sphere of influence extended far beyond Europe, deep into the African continent. Ottoman historiography on Africa remains a less researched aspect of history, but this fascinating and often

²¹ Ngũgĩ: *Reflections on His Life of Writing*, Woodbridge Suffolk, James Currey, 2018, p. 159.

²² Simpson Thula, *History Beyond Apartheid: New Approaches in South African Historiography*. Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2023, p.86.

²³ Halim Gençoğlu, "The Forgotten Effendi: Ottoman Muslim Theologian Mahmud Fakih Emin Effendi and the Real Story of the Bo-Kaap Museum C.1894-1978", *New Contree*, 2015, 19–19. <https://doi.org/10.4102/nc.v73i0.171>.

²⁴ Royster Paula D. *Decolonizing Arts-Based Methodologies: Researching the African Diaspora*, Leiden: Brill Sense. 2021. p, 129.

²⁵ Halim Gencoglu, "The Significance of Turkish Archives for South African Historiography", *Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, Vol. 73. No, 1, June 2019. p. 7

forgotten legacy is coming to light with new research. The Ottomans established a significant presence in Africa, primarily by controlling Egypt. Egypt, a very important province of the Ottoman Empire, was not only strategically vital but also a gateway to Africa. One of the most enduring legacies of Ottoman-African connections was the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. African Muslims from various regions, including East Africa, West Africa, and the Horn of Africa, travelled to Ottoman-controlled lands, especially Egypt, to fulfil their religious obligations. This pilgrimage created cultural exchanges and encounters between Ottomans and Africans that affected both communities.²⁶

Ottoman historiography on Africa is an intriguing mix of historical records, travelogues, and administrative records. Ottoman officials, travellers and academics use valuable narratives about their experiences and observations in Africa. These writings provide insight into various aspects of African societies, cultures, and politics. Ottoman administrators meticulously kept records of African provinces.²⁷ These documents contain valuable information about administration, taxation, and interactions between Ottoman officials and local rulers. Ottoman travellers such as Evliya Çelebi wrote vivid travelogues describing their African travels. Evliya Çelebi visited Egypt and described Cairo, the capital, in his travelogue. He documented the city's vibrant markets, notable landmarks such as the pyramids, and the cultural and religious life of the region. There are brief mentions of Timbuktu in Evliya Çelebi's writings. However, these references are relatively limited compared to his extensive coverage of regions within the Ottoman Empire. While Evliya Çelebi's observations on Africa may not be as comprehensive as his writings on other parts of the world, his "Seyahatname" remains a valuable historical document that provides insights into the 17th-century Ottoman world and the regions he visited, including parts of Africa. Researchers and historians interested in Ottoman travel literature may find his accounts intriguing for the cultural and historical perspectives they offer.²⁸ These narratives provided descriptions of landscapes, cities, people, and customs, providing a glimpse into African life during the Ottoman period. Diplomatic correspondence between the Ottomans and African states is recorded in historical documents. These interactions shed light on diplomatic relations, alliances and conflicts concerning Ottoman and African politics. The Ottoman Empire's influence in Africa extended beyond administrative and military matters. The Ottomans also made significant contributions to African society and culture.²⁹

Ottoman architectural styles influenced the construction of mosques and other buildings in Ottoman-controlled parts of Africa, leaving behind a lasting architectural legacy. Ottoman scholars played a role in the dissemination of Islamic knowledge in African regions and contributed to the growth of Islamic learning and institutions. Ottoman-controlled ports on the Red Sea facilitated trade routes between Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, contributing to the economic development of Africa's coastal regions. Apart from this, the roles of Ottoman scholars in places beyond the Ottoman geographical borders as far as South Africa are of particular importance for African historiography.³⁰

Conclusion

Türkiye's perception of Africa has developed significantly over the years, reflecting a multifaceted and dynamic relationship. While economic opportunities, humanitarian efforts, and diplomatic initiatives contribute to

²⁶ Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Güney Siyaseti Habeş Eyaleti*. Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, İstanbul, 1974, p. 298.

²⁷ Halim Gençöğlu. "Güney Afrika Milli Arşivlerinin Osmanlı Tarih Yazıcılığı Açısından Önemi" *Belleten* 83, no. (2019), 933-956. <https://doi.org/10.37879/belleten.2019.933>.

²⁸ Robert Dankoff-Nuran Tezcan-Michael D. Sheridan, *Ottoman Explorations of the Nile: Evliya Çelebi's "Matchless Pearl These Reports of the Nile" Map and His Accounts of the Nile and the Horn of Africa in the Book of Travels*. Gingko Library, London England, 2018, p. 201.

²⁹ Bernard Lewis, "The Ottoman Archives as a Source for the History of the Arab Lands." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1952, p. 139-55.

³⁰ Bernard Lewis, *Notes and Documents from the Turkish Archives; a Contribution to the History of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, Israel Oriental Society, Jerusalem, 1952, p. 42.

positive perceptions, challenges and complexities must also be acknowledged. As Türkiye continues to deepen its relations with Africa, the evolving perceptions and attitudes on both sides will shape the future of this important relationship and affect trade, development and cultural exchange between Türkiye and various countries of Africa. Ottoman historiography on Africa offers a unique and often overlooked perspective on the continent's history. The Ottoman Empire's connections, encounters, and contributions to Africa, especially through Egypt, are integral to understanding the complex fabric of African history. As scholars continue to explore this fascinating aspect of history, it is vital to understand the role of the Ottoman Empire in shaping Africa's past and encouraging cultural exchanges that left a lasting impact on the continent. African historiography is a vibrant and evolving field that is reshaping our understanding of the continent's past.

As African historians continue to challenge colonial legacies, embrace oral traditions, and uncover archaeological treasures, they are uncovering a rich tapestry of history that spans thousands of years. African historiography not only contributes to a more accurate representation of Africa's past, but also empowers African countries to create their own narratives and identities in a global context. Colonial historiography of African civilizations has left a lasting legacy of prejudice and distortion. But ongoing efforts to decolonize African history are slowly reshaping our understanding of the continent's rich and diverse past.

By rediscovering indigenous sources, embracing different perspectives, and re-evaluating the impact of colonialism, we can move towards a more accurate and inclusive portrayal of African civilizations and recognize their significant contributions to the cultural and historical fabric of the world. In conclusion, African historiography stands at the intersection of rediscovery and redefinition, as scholars continue to navigate the complexities of documenting Africa's past. This essay invites further exploration into the methodologies and ideologies shaping contemporary African historiography, highlighting its crucial role in fostering a holistic and accurate understanding of the continent's history.

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Appendices



1. An African Map from the Western Colonial Era, 1600s



2. An Ottoman Map of Africa drawn in the 1600s (Katip Celebi)