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Research Article

Dilemma of a "Decolonial Historiography of Africa"?: Challenges in the Provinciality of the Anglo-European Academy

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Abstract

This paper seeks to broaden the discourse surrounding decolonial historiography of Africa and decolonization as a whole by critically examining both the theoretical discussions surrounding de-colonial historiography and the practical efforts aimed at decolonization. Many scholarly dialogues have already centred on defining and understanding decolonial historiography, yet these conversations often operate at an abstract and philosophical level. Simultaneously, there has been increasing scholarly activity that scrutinizes the existing structures, power dynamics, and practices within the Anglo-European academy with the goal of decolonization. By uniting these two disparate areas of inquiry through a unifying perspective, this article endeavours to redirect the conversation toward acknowledging the myriad implicit legacies stemming from the provincial nature of the Anglo-European academy. Therefore, a comprehensive response that addresses both theoretical and applied aspects involves questioning whether ongoing research focused on Africa within the Anglo-European academic sphere still remains relevant today given the unprecedented advancements in global knowledge production around the world over recent decades.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Decolonization, decolonial historiography, African history, provinciality, colonialism.

Introduction

Drawing on the sustained efforts of numerous Latin American and African scholars, policymakers, and activists, the endeavour towards decolonization has now acquired a critical significance that necessitates its acknowledgment, rendering impossible for Anglo-European academic circles to ignore, disregard, or marginalize it as was the case for a long time (Castryck-Naumann, 2022; Diallo, 2025; Gavristova, 2023; Mudimbe, 1988; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2024; Vélez et al., 2017). However, even amidst this belated recognition, particularly within the discipline of African Studies, and not exclusively within the broader humanities, the customary inertia continues to prevail; further worsened by budget reductions in both Humanities and African Studies, especially the latter. This is neither novel to those acquainted with the complex dynamics of colonial matrix of power (Grosfoguel, 2006, pp. 25-32; Mignolo, 2002, pp. 230-237; Quijano, 2014, pp. 290-299). Nonetheless, this paper aims to demonstrate that decolonization transcends being a mere struggle for power within Anglo-European academic structures. With the seismic shifts in the current matrix of power emanating not only from global

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politics but also from new information technologies and their proliferation over the past decade, the focus on decolonial studies of Africa, as well as African decolonial historiography, has transitioned from being an optional academic exercise to becoming a necessity for reevaluating the relevance of the humanities within the Anglo-European academy amidst ongoing global knowledge production (Prah, 2016, p. 4; Mbembé, 2017, p. 25). The paper thus delves into specific instances illustrative of crafting a decolonial historiography of Africa, encompassing some radical changes take place in the structure, attitudes, and practices in the Anglo-European academia.

As a researcher from Turkey with residence in Germany and focused on the history of West Africa, my situation within the Anglo-European academic sphere has presented numerous challenges. It was difficult for many colleagues and institutions to understand my motive to do research on Africa, as being a person outside of Africa but also outside Anglo-European world. While it was almost a natural right for Anglo-European historians to do research on Africa, I had to legitimize my intention for researching Africa. However, this ambiguous positioning, being in-between, allowed me to navigate in academia with a degree of autonomy and voice that was somewhat lacking within the confines of traditional academic categorizations. That being said, it is also important to note that my positionality limits my ability to speak for African researchers and academics. As will be seen in the subsequent chapters, this paper is not written for African researchers.

Indeed, I am still, at least formally, affiliated with the Anglo-European academic community, and this is the motivation for writing this paper. The title should not suggest that decolonial historiography of Africa is a novel or esoteric concept that contains some dilemma; rather, it aims to address an issue concerning its role within the Anglo-European academy. This article serves as a side story for colleagues in Africa to see the challenges if they have not been continuing on their current achievements and progress, while this is also as a wake-up call for scholars and academics in the Anglo-European realm.

Specifically in my research area, that is West Africa, many African scholars have already penned seminal works which significantly reshaped the decolonial historiography of the region, without even necessitating a lengthy exposition on decolonial historiography at large.[1] Meanwhile, in the Anglo-European academy, colleagues have been grappling with defining the essence of decolonial historiography for years (Al-Ghaith, 2012; Karaağaçlı, 2019, pp. 2429-2435; Osha, 2022, p. 130; Samiya, 2022, p. 150; Zewde, 2000, p. 36). Decolonial historiography of Africa has evolved into a pressing concern where African scholars grasp its significance intuitively and realize it almost daily, whereas historians in the Anglo-European academy continue to obscure it through protracted theoretical debates that remain decades away from fostering tangible research and contributing meaningfully to the decolonial historiography of the region (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 20-29). The crux lies in the structural disparity within the Anglo-European academy itself (Kessi et al., 2020, p. 273). In this regard, this paper attempts to answer the questions of how and why the Anglo-European academy has become trapped in endless loops regarding decolonial historiography of Africa.

1. Shifting Matrix Of Power: Being Relevant In The New Global Knowledge Production?

Initially, previous generation of historians in the Anglo-European academy possessed considerable

[1] For some examples, see: Amahin, 2007; Bello, 2019; Dalhatu, 2016.

control over research on the history of West Africa due to the restricted access afforded by closed libraries and archives located in the USA and Europe, which enabled them to selectively determine who could access these materials and what could be done with them (Arowosegbe, 2016, p. 324; Wai, 2020, pp. 60-71). Few among these previous historians had any formal training in African languages, making field research visits a personal and optional endeavour. After decades of over-using the same colonial materials and European traveller accounts, often without engaging with these sources critically, as they served as their primary resource, leaves today no meaningful reason for any African researcher to venture into those libraries and archives in the USA and Europe, while ironically those institutions still effort to prevent digitization to maintain their gatekeeping role. However, the proliferation of new libraries, collections, and archives across West Africa has reached a point where conducting historical research without utilizing these resources is simply unfeasible (Balarabe, 2013, pp. 1-7; Kane, 2017, p. 17; Ngom, 2016, pp. 3-6). Once, the relevance of the Anglo-European academy for the history of Africa could maintain mainly due to enduring colonial structures (Diouf, 2008, p. 8). Today, either they embrace African languages, African agencies, and African sources seriously, or risk sinking into the endless cycle of old colonialist and Eurocentric narratives.

Furthermore, the changing political dynamics in the world push them into yet another role of insignificance. The escalating right-wing movements across the US and several European countries exert a profound impact on discriminative visa applications for African researchers (Singham, 2025, p. 1). These obstacles render their participation in the Anglo-European research institutions and conference attendance virtually unattainable. Subsequently, academics in Anglo-European world find themselves as a small group of non-African researchers who discuss Africa among each other under the banner of seemingly, but not really "international" conferences. Meanwhile, other countries like Colombia, Brazil, Russia, Turkey, UAE, China, Malaysia, and Indonesia are becoming role models with easing visa processes specifically for African researchers, thereby positioning their own research institutes and international conferences as the primary hub of global knowledge production, transcending now crumbling colonial hierarchies (Abramova et al., 2021; Anshan, 2016; Tepeciklioğlu, 2016). This is indeed something compelling to overcome with even a common action in the Anglo-European academy, as they are apparently doomed to see the repeating history of fascism in the USA and Europe.

Despite those limitations, certain aspects fall within the realm of potential change here. Nonetheless, the sluggish pace at which any reforms are implemented within their deeply extractive and capitalist publishing systems starkly contrasts with the transformative era heralded by new information technologies. They continue to push, particularly young postdocs, to submit articles for seemingly "prestigious" journals – often as a prerequisite for securing positions in the Anglo-European academy that is part of an expansive network of client relationships (Zewde, 2000, p. 38); these journals are largely controlled by predatory companies that profit from exploiting scientific research, and which vehemently oppose open-access publishing principles (Basilio, 2025). This dynamic restricts most new research behind closed doors accessible only to privileged academics affiliated with affluent universities around Anglo-European world, fostering a false impression that there is no other way to publish, as if there are no hundreds of high quality open-access journals around the world giving free access to the articles with one click (Fuchs, 2013). Yet, the endless debate in the Anglo-European academy between advocating for open-access and acknowledging the formidable influence of publishing company lobbies persists, while notable journals across Africa, many of which hosted by non-profit public institutions, openly publish their articles to public without charging readers or authors excessive fees. With the

accessibility to myriad of high-quality open-access journals operating online[2], there is no reason in the long term for any African researcher to withhold their work or limit themselves behind closed doors controlled by predatory companies. Gradually, the significance of the publications within "prestigious" closed access journals in the Anglo-European world diminishes. On the other hand, the academic publishing landscape in countries like Algeria and Egypt presents an unparalleled model that we are yet to comprehend.[3] Should the historians in the Anglo-European academy aspire to relevancy for the global knowledge production, learning from these examples becomes imperative.

In short, a pressing need exists for numerous radical structural reforms within both the Anglo-European academy and historians engagement with the publishing sector. The illusion of self-evident centrality of the Anglo-European academy for research on Africa – which was essentially an extension of colonial structures – is diminishing. Thus, dismantling these colonial frameworks and adjusting the academy based on significant advancements demonstrated by various countries is no longer mere benevolence within the colonial hierarchy but a genuine last hope to maintain relevance under equitable terms. While collective efforts are needed before implementing such fundamental reforms, there remains much for each researcher in the Anglo-European academy to do.

2. Learning To Write Like A Global Historian

The realm of global history, once merely a repackaging of imperial histories crafted by European powers, continues its transformation to establish fundamental standards and long-term objectives (Conrad, 2016). Nonetheless, its evolution has already imprinted a legacy, compelling historians to engage with a global perspective in their research, irrespective of the locality of their area of study. The reason for that stems from the intersection of global history with subaltern studies, which reveals our implicit globalist or universalist viewpoints, despite our deep provincialism (Chakrabarty, 2008). A prime illustration of this phenomenon is evident in the tradition of writing state-of-the-art literature reviews within academic system; these reviews implicitly assert a global/universalist stance, claiming to cover all known sources on the subject at hand. Paradoxically, many historians in the Anglo-European academy persist in believing they comprehensively synthesize all known sources, without questioning who qualifies as "known."

Imagine we authored a book about Borno's history and sought publication in "esteemed" publishing houses within the United States or Europe. Summarizing earlier texts by British colonial officers and integrating the findings of Anglophone historians from both the USA and England, our literature review would not raise eyebrows among reviewers. Neglecting to cite Nigerian historians would be no issue since their works are generally not found in libraries across the USA or England. Similarly, disregarding Arabic publications penned by Arab scholars on Borno's history would pose no challenge, as there is scant interest in Arabic research literature on Africa in these academic circles in general. Even acknowledging the surge of Hausa books authored by Nigerian and Chadian historians would present no problem, given that few Anglo-European historians are familiar with this language at all. At this

[2] Such as Zamani: A Journal of African Historical Studies (Tanzania), Sokoto Journal of History (Nigeria), Mukarasani (Niger), Kurukanfuga (Mali), Revue Les Tisons (Burkina Faso), Global Africa (Senegal), Revista Brasileira de Estudos Africanos (Brazil), Uchenyye zapiski

[3] Instituta Afriki RAN (Russia), Afurika kenkyū jānaru (Japan), Majalat Jamieat Sabiha li-l-Eulum al-'Insania (Libya), ChronAfrica (Turkey). Ministry of Research in Algeria and Egypt established online platforms for open-access academic journals in their countries (ASJP and EKB), so that non-profit public institutions can publish their journal with high quality without any capitalist exploitation.

juncture, it would even seem superficial to mention Turkish, Tamasheq, and Kanuri works. However, should we synthesize our literature review to incorporate English, Kanuri, Hausa, and Tamasheq works authored by Nigerian, Nigerien, and Chadian historians alongside Arabic and Turkish contributions – yet eliding the US American and British historiographical contributions due to their relative insignificance in global research on Borno, our book would swiftly face rejection. This raises an intriguing question: what is it about the works of the US American and British historians that compels them to be deemed so globally and universally relevant that they cannot simply be omitted, while all other works around the world are at the best just optional?

The truth is that here we do not write an actual "literature review." We compose merely the "review of what Anglo-European scholars wrote," which, if done with such a title, would only lead to rejection by reviewers. This is just usual *act of silencing the provinciality of the Anglo-European perspective* by the universalist narrative of colonialist ideology. Were we to confne our history book on Borno solely to European traveller accounts, omitting all Arabic, Turkish, Hausa, Kanuri, and Tamasheq primary sources, this would not present a problem for any reviewer as well. In fact, this would require us to rename the book, perhaps as “History of Borno According to European Traveller Accounts,” but yet again, the reviewer would deem this additional detail superficial, condensing it simply to “History of Borno” as if we have compiled the most exhaustive work on Borno's history from all known sources the whole world.[4] Silencing the provinciality of the Anglo-European perspective has a lengthy history not only within history departments but particularly in philosophy (Al-Miqrahi, 1992, pp. 884-885; Falola, 2022, pp. 538-555). However, in decolonial historiography of Africa, it is no longer acceptable to claim that there is nothing more than what some Anglo-European historians have documented. Historians in the Anglo-European world must acknowledge the vast array of academic traditions and research literatures across numerous languages present in African history, which can only be truly understood with a global perspective (Al-Bulushi, 2002; Kavas, 2013; Khokholkova, 2024; Mazrui, 2002). Asserting a global viewpoint while recognizing the provinciality of the research based on the Anglo-European academy is a fundamental standard for decolonial historiography of Africa today.

3. Question Of Sources: Is There Nothing New Under The Sun?

For a considerable period, composing the history of West Africa in the Anglo-European academy has entailed relying heavily on European colonial archives dispersed across Europe, alongside the extensive collections of European traveller accounts (Diouf, 2008). While conducting fieldwork and gathering oral or written sources from the respective regions was commendable, these practices never became mandatory. Equally important is taking a critical stance towards all available sources within the Anglo-European academy. The non-academic nature of works authored by colonial administrators or military officers has consistently been ignored, and these texts are perceived as equivalent to

[4] Similar example can be given for the analysing Anglo-European consular reports. There are literally dozens of works in the Anglo-European research literature written about the history of Tripoli with universalist titles such as “History of Tripoli During the 19th Century”, while in reality exclusively relying on British or French consul reports. Ironically, if a Turkish historian was to write a book with the title “History of London during the 19th century” and only use the Ottoman consul reports in London, it would be totally impossible to publish this work with this title, as all publishing houses forcing for “History of London During the 19th Century According to Ottoman Consul Reports”. Once again, while reports of some European consuls are considered as universal and objective, reports of Ottoman consuls are just cultural and subjective. This is indeed long colonial dichotomy that what Anglo-European agents claim is objective and universal, what other people around the world claim is subjective and cultural (Santos 2018, 107-120).

high-quality academic research.

For instance, despite today's customary practice of referencing works by Richmond Palmer or Yves Urvoy in discussions on Central Bilad Al-Sudan's history, it remains unclear that Palmer was a British colonial administrator, not only in Nigeria but also in other parts of the British Empire, without formal academic training, and recognized locally as despotic and oppressive due to his brutality in organizing forced labour (Holland, 1998, p. 12). Similarly, there has been no thorough explanation that Urvoy was a French army officer who sympathized with Nazi ideology and collaborated with the Vichy regime, leading to his assassination by the French Resistance movement in 1944 (Urvoy, 1978, pp. 78-80). Are these sources truly reliable for citation without critical engagement? In fact, we should raise serious doubts about any information derived from them since their data collection methods do not align with either academic standards nor any humanist ethic. This fact, however, is greatly overlooked as an *act of decontextualization from the provinciality of the Anglo - European perspective,* as they are frequently regarded as purely objective and detached sources, without caring their highly problematic provincial context.

Analogously, issues arise with the utilization of European traveller accounts. Works by Heinrich Barth or Hugh Clapperton continue being to be regarded as foundational sources for Central Sudan's history, without transparently acknowledging their imperialist agenda and clandestine spy activities. Regrettably, the recent outcry raised by Maman Sambo Sidikou have not gained significant traction within the halls of Anglo-European universities, as if already in the 1970s the historians of the Ibadi School in Nigeria had not criticize the fact that the history of Africa is not about the history of white Europeans in Africa (Omer-Cooper, 1980):

"Rather than remain in awe of Heinrich Barth, we should remember that he was a spy in the pay of the United Kingdom when he visited part of the Sahel. We cannot understand the fate of our region without remembering that these unassuming individuals were the sentinels of a project that surpassed anything our forefathers could have conceived. (Sidikou, 2024)"

Once again, the issue is: are all these actors really capable to be considered for being able to write a high quality academic work? The question extends beyond whether these sources are citable; rather, it scrutinizes whether Anglo-European historians exercise enough critical distance from these sources, while ironically this is a general standard in using oral accounts. This is, in part, a long legacy of Paul Irwin's scepticism toward oral sources in West Africa, predicated on outdated worldview that old colonial records and European traveller accounts offer superior information compared to oral accounts, asserting that all colonial officers and travellers devoid of ideological bias or political agenda, deliver purely objective information (Irwin 1981, Introduction). This perspective has been soundly refuted by diverse disciplines (Abdullahi et al., 2021; Odey et al., 2007; Oluwole 2006). African researchers have clearly demonstrated that the real challenge with oral sources is not in their content but rather in how they are approached. For outsiders unfamiliar with regional languages and unaware of intricate social, personal, political, economic, and religious networks, these oral narratives function as black boxes. Conversely, for many African researchers proficient in local languages and adept at understanding existing complex networks, oral accounts are akin to open books waiting to be read (Alagoa, 2008, pp. 11-15). Nevertheless, Irwin's influence persists in shaping mainstream academic practices on the

Anglo-European academy, where citing an oral account without casting a suspicion within the text is deemed unacceptable, even though citing works of colonial officers or European travellers as if they were peer-reviewed studies remains entirely acceptable.

Nevertheless, this should not mislead the reader towards the long assumed dichotomy that Europeans provided written sources and Africans oral. In reality, in case of West Africa, the amount of written sources from Africa is far bigger than the all available sources on Africa in the whole Anglo-European world (Duymus, 2025, Introduction). In this regard, while a general mood in the Anglo-European academy is that the history of the West Africa is already written, and there is nothing new under the Sun; the amount of written and oral sources in Africa still waiting for proper research is hard to grasp. Taking all these ignored sources into consideration requires fundamental reforms in the ways how an academic research is done in the Anglo-European academy. They must confess the fact that they have even not really began to write the history of West Africa properly, and with current academic practices they have, which is far from any academic standards, they are entirely far away to finally begin to contribute to the decolonial historiography of Africa. Letting the most important academic standards in the personal merits of researchers is a practice belonging to the 19th century; if they aim to remain relevant, they must adjust their academic practices to meet the rigorous standards of the 21st century.[5]

4. Question Of Epistemology: Finally Leaving Anthropologic Method Behind?

It is still a very actual and intriguing phenomenon to observe how historians in the Anglo-European academy—if they are even not already coming from the field of Anthropology—raising significant recognition for anthropology within their works. Conversely, many African researchers perceive anthropology as a demeaning affront to them. Numerous scholars have indisputably illustrated the colonial roots of anthropology's emergence, serving imperialist agendas (Asad, 1990; Escobar, 1999; Eyal, 1999; Stocking, 2002). Despite these criticisms, the academic structures and practices within anthropology remain largely unchanged in the Anglo-European academy (Restrepo, 2007, p. 290; Walsh, 2004, pp. 20-28). Furthermore, today, with the growing emphasis on decolonial historiography, there is a renewed interest from anthropology departments promising to provide crucial epistemological context for historical analyses. Till the 1980s many anthropologists were working diligently to dismiss the extant written materials around Africa due to their limited comprehension of these sources and to uphold their academic dominance over epistemic knowledge production (Ben-Ari, 1999, p. 390). This profoundly hindered Anglo-European academia's grasp of African history, as they saturated discussions with prejudiced, colonialist, and Eurocentric theoretical viewpoints (Lander, 2000, pp. 5-15; Venkatesan, 2024, pp. 75-92). However, the accelerated growth of Islamic Studies, Cultural Studies, and Literature Studies around Africa has begun to reveal the irrelevance of certain anthropological theories concerning West Africa societies, highlighting the complexity and necessity for a more nuanced understanding (Kane, 2022).

Today, the issue of epistemology resurfaces as a critical challenge in academic practices at Anglo-European universities. It is not a case of being categorically overlooked; instead, many historians

[5] 21th century academic standards are lying on open-access publishing environments, integration to global knowledge production (breaking the provinciality of our networks), and equal collaboration with researcher.

have taken the issues serious, surpassing constraints imposed by anthropological narratives, yet this approach has never become a norm or an academic standard. Writing the history of West Africa with its unique epistemologies remains optional within the Anglo-European academy; while a researcher with merit may pursue such work, it is not required at all. The complexity surrounding this issue is multifaceted. On one hand, there exists no genuine academic standard in the Anglo-European academy for writing African history, on the other hand, demanding proper epistemological context for historical research presents a risk of falling prey to irrelevant theories from anthropological field. In light of today's reality, decolonial historiography of Africa fundamentally depends on a vast array of African sources, rendering all non-African sources merely optional. And these diverse sources require an understanding of their own epistemologies. Providing a decent epistemological background for historical studies has become not just an option but a fundamental requirement to contribute meaningfully to the decolonial historiography. At this point, anthropologic methods yield more constrains than assistance for historical studies.

For instance, It should come as no surprise that many historians within the Anglo-European academy struggle to understand the extraction of anthropological knowledge from Africa, thus without acknowledging its disconnectedness from African epistemologies (Ben-Ari, 1999, p 390; Escobar, 1993, p 379; Trouillot, 1991, p. 18). This issue underscores the profound legacy of anthropology in isolating and exoticizing African societies within academic discourse, severing Africa from its vast global history, primarily beyond Europe. It represents a fundamental problem inherent to anthropology as a discipline, as it works as an *act of enforcing the provinciality of the Anglo - European perspective,* ignoring globality of other societies in the world with each other, and forcing them into lesser level isolation and provinciality due to isolated and provincial imagination of Anglo-European perspective. An anthropological study necessitates a society that is distinctly unique and less intertwined with its neighbours, at most having minimal contact with the broader world beyond Europe. This situation, of course, greatly diverges from reality, given that African societies actively participate in extensive global networks (Al-Bulushi, 2002; Mazrui, 2002).

In that regard, every anthropological study first had to invent a society that is culturally distinct and less integrated with neighbouring societies, making it an ideal subject for investigation (Restrepo, 2007, pp. 296-298). This methodological requirement mandates the exclusion or dismissal of any additional connections and influences, thereby repeatedly producing artificially isolated narratives about African societies, which impedes the visualization of their global interconnectedness—even predating colonial invasions (Restrepo, 2007, pp. 295-297; Smith, 1999, pp. 20-33). Africa has not only economic or political global ties in history but also epistemological ones, and these must be acknowledged within all historical research pertinent to Africa (Basedau 2020, pp. 195-200; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, pp. 135-145). A decolonial historiography of Africa demands a decisive departure from old colonialist narratives that were bolstered by anthropological methods. The exploration of the globality of African epistemologies is crucial for understanding the history of Africa and necessitates an expansion beyond the conventional constraints imposed by anthropological method.

5. Question of Practice: Being A 21th Century Historian?

It is an intriguing case that the history of the discipline of history is a topic that has received limited

attention within history departments across the Anglo-European academy, thus obscuring the impact of old legacies on contemporary historical research practices. Numerous studies delve into this subject, highlighting the long-standing influence of elitism (through stylistic standards to justify the existence of the discipline), imperialism (through the involvement of the state into the discipline), nationalism (through the involvement of the discipline into state), and clientelism (through the efforts to making the discipline survive under ideological disinterest) in the discipline of history in the Anglo-European academy (Hamerow, 1986; Lingelbach, 2011; Reznik, 2016). Although critiques of imperialism and nationalism have emerged following some radical political changes in the USA and Europe such as WWII, elitism and clientelism remained largely untouched, or shortly mentioned in personal memories as side note. This historical legacy has been continuing shaping the core approach to researching Africa.

The legacy of elitism has predominantly determined not only the methodologies employed in historical research but also the format in which historical works are authored in the Anglo-European academy. When examining the attitudes and practices in the research field, one encounters an unfortunate echo of colonialist worldviews that underpin much of the interaction between African researchers and senior historians at the Anglo-European academy (Olukoshi, 2006, p. 535). It is not rare that an African researcher regularly receives several highly extractive emails from the historians in the Anglo-European academy seeking specific information without prior introductions or collaboration requests. This exemplifies a clear elitist stance intertwined with a historical legacy rooted in colonial ideologies, in which Europeans are perceived as possessing intellectual acumen with their "genie" to engage in theoretical planning, while Africans are relegated to providing physical labour with their "bare body" for European-led projects.[6] Many young historians within the Anglo-European academy, despite not having experienced the colonial hierarchies personally, perpetuate this viewpoint due to a lingering legacy of elitism that has obscured its influence over time. Ultimately, historians in the Anglo-European academy focus on developing "grand theories" and formulating historical research projects, while those in Africa may contribute with empirical data, often receiving minimal acknowledgment through footnotes in the works of Anglophone historians (Copans, 2019, p. 229).

The persistent elitist structure continues to disadvantage African researchers who aspire to conduct their own theoretical and empirical research, seeking to contribute through journals within the Anglo-European academic sphere or corporate entities. These researchers often face a significantly higher rejection rate compared to their Anglo-European counterparts, not due to poor performance but rather as a result of discriminatory stylistic standards that elevate some publications over others (Olukoshi, 2006, p. 540; Zeleza, 2006, p. 1). Such discrepancies highlight the incongruity between the high stylistic standards of these "esteemed" journals and the low academic standards that they have. In such journals, Anglo-European historians can publish their articles on regions like Kano without even having any proficiency in languages such as Hausa, Fulfulde, or Arabic, just writing stylistically fine. African historians, on the other hand, despite their substantial language skills and soundness of their arguments, less likely secure publication due to insufficient alignment with stylistic native English or French writing practices, and the prohibitive cost of comprehensive proofreading services for each manuscript. Consequently, these "prestigious" journals tend to be inundated with stylistically polished yet academically deficient articles, lacking substantive contribution to the decolonial historiography of

[6] For more debates on this colonial dichotomy, see: Fanon, 1963; Césaire, 1950; Spivak, 1988.

Africa. This underscores the need for a common standard that the most important research findings should reside in open-access journals hosted by university institutions within Africa, aligning with the topic's geographical and cultural context. For example, a new discovery about the history of Agadez merits publication in Nigerien universities' open-access platforms since this knowledge pertains to their heritage. Publishing such findings in closed Anglo-European journals parallels the theft of artifacts from Agadez, which are displayed in private European museums—a move that diminishes both the value and significance of the research. Academic articles only make sense in the context where they belong, regardless how stylistically they are refined (Santos, 2018, pp. 108-110).

Here, once again, more sense-making is crucial to maintain the relevancy of the Anglo-European academy in the global knowledge production on Africa. This involves shifting from a theoretical orientation toward an exploratory one, doing research directly engaging with archives rather than starting with preconceived theories (Al-Miqrahi, 1992, pp. 884-885; Falola, 2022, pp. 538-555; Santos, 2018, pp. 107-120). Instead of extracting regional archives to answer their abstract questions, historians in the Anglo-European academy should prioritize the questions that stem from the archives. It's indeed quite ironic that while they advocate for their Ph.D. students to avoid theory-laden head starts and instead delve into primary sources, their own research methodologies often prioritize the extraction of specific data points for their theories without consideration for the broader context of these materials. This practice resonates strongly with contemporary neo-colonial practices in Africa, where multinational corporations extract resources with scant regard for their embedded social, cultural, economic, and environmental contexts. Similarly, senior historians within the Anglo-European academy frequently focus on the extraction of some particular information from the regional archives overlooking the intricate religious, social, cultural, and political context of this information (Depelchin, 2004, p. 12; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 2009, p. 38). Here, the history of Africa is not discovered, it is exploited to create elitist carriers.

Similar to these clear influences of the legacy of elitism, mixed with colonialist worldview, the legacy of clientelism in the Anglo-European academy continues deeply shaping the research practices (Olukoshi, 2006, p. 535). This is also deeply intertwined with Eurocentric worldview, creating a provincial clientship networks with implicit universalist claims. The best example for this can be observed in the endless debates about whom to cite. If we write an article on the history of Sokoto, and need to provide a short summary in the introduction, it is an unspoken law in the Anglo-European academy to cite some works from the 60s and 70s, basically written by some white British or US American historians. This rule does not only maintain the colonialist assumption that the academic research on Africa only began with white Anglo-European academics, but also blur the lines between clientship and literature review. In many cases, especially young researchers are forced to cite a chain of references from Anglo-European academy based works, not necessarily because this chain is essential for current state-of-the-art, but because single persons in this chain are trying to keep their academic hegemony (with their implicit universalist claims) within their own network. The academic networks in the Anglo-European academy have to face the fact that neither they represent the universal state-of-art in any field of the African history nor is their contribution more essential than other historians in the whole world (Al-Bulushi, 2002; Kavas, 2013; Khokholkova, 2024; Mazrui, 2002). It must be a general understanding today for the historians in the Anglo-European academy that they are a very humble part of the global knowledge production at best, and no one owes them to cite their chain

of references, as they already fall far short citing the works of historians around the world properly. If they want to be an important part in the global knowledge production on Africa, apart from the fact that they falsely believe that they are, they should break their elitist and clientelist legacies that work as an *act of ignoring the provinciality of the Anglo - European perspective,* and began to work like a 21th century historian with global awareness. Rather than scrutinizing the citation practices of young researchers to ensure they have appropriately cited the historians in the Anglo-European academy, they should focus on fostering collaborations. Today, what makes sense is how many collaborations we have globally instead of how many times we are cited in our closed circles.

Conclusion

The crux of this article is that the dilemma of the decolonial historiography of Africa is not about theoretical disputes or scholarly disagreements currently prevalent within the Anglo-European academy; rather, it lies fundamentally in the provinciality of the Anglo - European academy. As long as they continue with the *act of silencing the provinciality of the Anglo - Eruopean perspective,* unwittingly universalizing their insular and biased scholarly circles, they are barred from meaningful engagement with decolonial historiography. The same holds true for the *act of decontextualization from the provinciality of the Anglo - European perspective* that strips away the imperialist, racist, colonialist, and conformist aspects of Anglo-European authorship; without overcoming this, there is no prospect of contributing to Africa's decolonial historiography. Similarly, by perpetuating the *act of enforcing the provinciality of the Anglo - European perspective,* they inadvertently alienate African societies, disregarding their intricate economic, politic, religious, cultural, and epistemological globalities – they cannot expect to be contributing to the decolonial historiography of Africa. Furthermore, should they persist in the *act of ignoring the provinciality of the Anglo - European perspective,* still considering themselves as the sole and the most meaningful knowledge producers on Africa in place of their extractive, discriminative, elitist, and clientelist attitudes, there is no feasible path toward contributing to the decolonial historiography. Finally, in a rapidly changing world where colonialist structures and hierarchies of Anglo-European world have been crumbling, adapting them to new academic standards and structures to contribute to the decolonial historiography is no more an optional endeavour, but the last resort to be still relevant in the global knowledge production on Africa.

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