



Adding the Dots and crossing the Ts: A historiographical overview of African theatre history



Research article



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Abstract

The historiography of Africa has often needed an update or review because it is no news how African history was constructed; a product of colonial and anthropological records. Due to this, attention was not paid to occurrences, especially the arts which were of no interest to either the colonial administration or the Anthropology researcher. It took combined efforts of the then Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to deconstruct the misconceptions created through an eight-volume of a General History of Africa between 1964 and 1999. These attempts by African historians to correct the damage exclusion and distortion of facts about Africa and Africans is laudable, however, a gap still remains. The historiography of African theatre which has its foundation in Africa's oral traditions is minimal. A continent of such diverse artistic performances needs a huge representation of both indigenous and external theatrical traditions in Theatre History. Using the desk review approach, ideological criticism and content analysis, this paper argues that the lack of expertise in decoding indigenous language and expressions and fear of misrepresentation are the sources of the minimal presence of African Theatre Historiography.

Keywords: *African historians, exclusion, expertise, historiography, misconception, misrepresentation, theatre history*



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Public Interest Statement

Misconceptions about Africa in the area of history have always been written. The famous misconceptions have been those written by Hugh Trevor Roper and Rudyard Kipling. These misconceptions have impacted on the very fabric of African society in global history. In the academia, these misconceptions have affected the construction of theatre history. This paper seeks to give an overview of the attempts by African scholars to deconstruct and reconstruct African theatre history from the African perspective. The study therefore interrogates the place of theatre history in scholarship, its impacts on society as well as the challenges.

Introduction

Making information available for people to know and understand their past is necessary because it shapes human behaviour and has a tremendous impact on the future. It is equally important not to compromise the mode of delivering knowledge to prevent exclusion and distortion of facts. The history of a people represents their worldview therefore the teller of such history should be knowledgeable in the language, values and belief systems to be able to provide a truthful representation of the people. It has been observed in history, especially African history, however, that usually the voice of the people about which the history is being told is very faint. According to Ajaegbo (139), the historiography of Africa was imbedded in oral traditions which manifested in songs, myths and poetry. Carlos Nogueira defines oral tradition as follows:

A vast system of forms and modes of communication denominated by the syntagma 'oral' tradition, which congregates knowledge, memories, values, and symbols generally configured in linguistic objects of non-literally or aesthetic-literary nature, objects with or without consignment in written testimonies, accomplished vocally and recognizable collectively during consecutive generations in an anatomy built by the laws of traditionality (Nogueira, 164).

From the above extract, it is obvious that these were the patterns of African historiography; thus, the transition from orality to text needed expertise in the modes, that is, symbols, songs, myths, proverbs, riddles, stories and dance forms in which the history was stored. Unfortunately, the pioneer writers of African history were not indigenes of Africa, the writer who most often is not an indigene writes from his worldview leading to exclusion and distortion. It is our argument that the history of Africa was not an original history of Africa but a document to support the presence of the colonial administrators in Africa. Asante (xiii), captures this aptly when he says "African historiography has typically consisted of writing Africa for Europe instead of writing Africa for itself, as itself, from its perspective". This is because the original manuscript, which later became the history of Africa, was not meant to be a history of Africans and what they do, but a report of

activities of colonial administrators to their superiors in their home countries. These documents were to justify the continued presence of the colonialists on the continent. As such, there will certainly be an exclusion of Africans' resourcefulness and additions of Africa's backwardness and hence the need for 'salvation' by the colonialists.

The historiography of African Theatre has not been different from that of the general history of Africa. Pioneer writers of African arts built their literature on misconception. The first attempt to write about Africa was based on existing conventions from the West. Though a lot of criticism and damage control has taken place in this regard, the pattern still remains that Africa has often been written for other people who are definitely not the people of the African continent. To emphasise on earlier misconceptions and correct the perceptions upon which writers from the West constructed literature about African performances; this was what David Kerr said:

There has been heated debate as to whether drama did or did not exist in pre-colonial Africa, and to what extent it could or should be distinguished from rituals. I believe that much of this confusion is caused by using English words like 'drama', 'theatre' and 'rituals' which are loaded with meanings derived from Europeans rather than African culture (Kerr, 1).

Though David Kerr's statement does damage control, the above statement confirms the premise upon which writing for Africa had been, writing Africa for the West. Efforts made to recapture the African past is noteworthy, however, the historiography of African theatre has also followed the pattern of writing Africa for the West Theatre History, which has been captured from the perspectives of other intellectual disciplines, notably through earlier Anthropological research which at a point revealed the much-contested statement by Finnegan (516); "there is no tradition in Africa of artistic performance which include all the elements (of drama) to which... we are accustomed". Though Finnegan later changed her perception, her initial writing on Africa was not for Africa but for the West. She used the conventions of the West to assess whether performances in Africa were artistic. By such a pattern, what is really African is either misrepresented or misinterpreted and most importantly a chunk of information is distorted or excluded. The African theatre is well summed up in an introduction to *Contemporary African Plays* thus:

In Africa, theatre matters, African theatre is entertaining, but it can also be aesthetically, politically, socially and spiritually committed, and often it is all of these things simultaneously. At its best African theatre is a total experience of mind, body and soul which engages with, and feeds off a highly responsive, involved and vocal audience (Banham and Plastow, vii).

The above submission reveals that there are more nuances to researching and writing on Africa than it is generally perceived by non-Africans who write about Africa. There are complexities in the way of life of the African thus it requires conscious studies to understand this way of life. It is our argument that the historiography of African theatre history has experienced similar challenges as was before UNESCO's General History of Africa was written. This is mainly the lack of expertise in decoding indigenous performances to match words or expressions in other non-African languages as expressed by David Kerr. Historiography is defined by Furay and Salevouris (223) as "the study of the way history has been and is written, the history of historical writing." They explained further that "historiography is not about the events of the past directly, but the changing interpretation of those events in the works of individual historians." It is our argument that the interpretation of African theatre history has been from an outsider's point of view to an insiders' view.

Traditionally, narrative has been the device used by historians to access information. In Africa, apart from symbols, myths, songs, dance, stories, proverbs and riddles as storage of history, there were the traditional historians like the griots who were recognized custodians of history. Similar to English where there is a difference in how spoken and written English is presented, it requires a certain amount of linguistic orientation by indigenes to gain expertise in decoding traditional sources of history to be able to understand, interpret and transfer into other languages for African history. The question then is, how an "outsider" who is linguistically challenged, of a different worldview, viewing a peoples' way of life through a different set of norms and conventions present the said peoples' history accurately? At most, "outsiders" rely on interpreters while gathering data; however, it is also established by Kerr (1995) that there are challenges in finding English, French or Portuguese expressions that best fits some expressions in indigenous African languages. This is the source of the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of African theatre history. In this paper, we will attempt to map out the historiography of African Theatre history over the years. We argue that the writing has followed the pattern of Eurocentric and Afrocentric views.

Methodology

This study uses three methodological approaches. First is the desk review approach which relies on existing and available secondary literature on the subject under study (Johnston, 619). This approach was adopted as it provides a flexible environment for the researchers to search already existing literature to interpret, decode and analyze to present an argument. It is also flexible because it provides alternatives to work within limited time and resources (Johnston, 619). The second approach is ideological criticism. Barret (1980) defines ideology as the process by which meaning is produced, challenged, reproduced and transformed. He argues:

Ideological criticism is concerned with theorizing and critiquing those processes of meaning production as social and political realities. It exposes three dimensions of the struggle present in the production of meaning; reveals the tensive relation between the production of meaning and language; highlights the multiple discourses operating within the text, and lays bare the complex nature of power relations that produce texts. It constructs the institutional context of texts, their reception and affects readers of those texts in particular social locations (Barret, 97).

Eagleton speaks metaphorically of this system of representation as a 'text' of the power relations of a society (Eagleton, 1). Finally, the paper uses content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (1277) argue that content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique. Content analysis describes a family of analytic approaches ranging from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analysis (Rosengren, 1981). Researchers regard content analysis as a flexible method of analyzing text data (Cavanagh, 1997). In relation to this paper, these methods are used to unfold the hidden meaning of texts constructed about African theatre history, the discourses produced within these texts, and the exclusions and distortions presented within these texts. Littlejohn and Foss (2009), noted that the primary goal of ideological criticism is to make the ideology visible. The rationale for choosing these methods is to describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in written accounts about African theatre history. It is also to systematically describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate the European as well as African written sources about African theatre history.

The Eurocentric and Afrocentric Dichotomy

In trying to study and analyse the changing interpretation of African theatre historians, one cannot avoid the Eurocentric and Afrocentric dichotomy. The fact remains that the earliest written African history was constructed by Europeans to report and represent their activities on the continent when they occupied Africa. According to Ogot (171), "African history was for the most part seen as the history of Europeans in Africa, a part of the historical progress and development of Western Europe and an appendix of the national history of the metropolis". This means that the initial history about Africa was that of a report of colonial administrators for appraisal to determine the profitable or otherwise of the nature of their presence in Africa. Such history will certainly not capture activities including artistic expressions on the continent, especially as they had no understanding of what African performances were and labelled everything as ritualistic. This represents the Eurocentric view of African history, Africa was written about in a way that suited the European agenda, a situation that lasted through the European's occupation of Africa. Thus, throughout their occupation in Africa, whatever was written could not be a true reflection of Africa and Africans. According to Jan Vansina (1993), on the attainment of independence, the

Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) requested the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to deconstruct the Eurocentric view. An eight-volume of a General History of Africa was created which broke the established practice of writing Africa for the West. A committee of thirty-nine (39) members representing countries across the world with two-thirds from Africa prepared and drafted an eight-volume of the general history of Africa; hence, the Afrocentric view.

While the General History of Africa has made extensive corrections to the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of African history, the same cannot be said about the history of African theatre. History of African theatre has long been fashioned within the scope of dominant Eurocentric views because writings on African theatre histories are mostly by Europeans, who, as has been established by Kerr (1995), try to fit "round pegs into square holes", using English terms that do not necessarily correspond to African expressions. Since 1968, the most reliable authority (recommended in universities) on theatre history has been Oscar Brockett's *Theatre History*. Brockett in the various editions had systematically traced the origins of theatre and what manifests as theatre through the Dionysian religious rituals in Greece to the decline of theatre in Rome. Until 2013 when Brockett included something minimal on Africa in the 11th edition, very little literature was available on how the same ritual activities in Greece made theatre in Africa. Though in Greece, the City Dionysian festival was not necessarily the theatre as established by Brockett, it presented opportunities for theatrical performances. In Africa, there abounds several religious festivals which make theatrical performances possible just like in Greece but this is absent in Brockett's *Theatre History*. Between 1968 and 2013, attempts have been made towards compilations from regional contributors; however, the historiography is still heavily dominated by non-Africans (Banham, 2004); (Rubin, 1995); (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996); (Etherton, 1982). There is minimal historiography on Africa's theatre history because African scholars have not been forthcoming with publications concerning their own theatre history. What could be the reasons for the low representation by Africans?

Representing African theatre history in scholarship

A discussion on historiography on African theatre needs to begin with its primary mode, oral tradition. In support of this point of entry Asiedu (1) in a presentation on "A Historical Overview of Theatre in Ghana", submits that "theatre in Ghana, like in many other countries in Africa, has developed from traditional forms which existed long before the colonial encounter". This means that the historiography on African theatre has to capture the traditional mode of history. The question is how has the traditional forms of African theatre history been adequately represented in scholarship without an attempt to equate it to a western form of arts? In a reaction to African scholars' attitude towards indigenous performances, Uwem Affiah and Ndubuisi Osuagwu could not hide their disappointments in their remark that "African scholars see indigenous drama in the

light of western drama. This is what has come to be regarded as the miseducation of the African" (Affiah and Osuagwu, 2). This reaction is born out of a history of the majority of African scholars' attempting to situate African performances into western conventions for authenticity or acceptability by the west. Tekle Hawariat exhibited this attitude when he wrote his play in 1912. The play was the first African play which was written on his return to Ethiopia after a number of years studying overseas. The *Comedy of Animals* (1916) is said to be that which brought modern drama to Ethiopia. This play is a fable and it is said to have been written after Tekle Hawariat returned to Ethiopia and disregarded the Ethiopian theatre practice that he met as theatre. In his background to the play, "...the playwright makes it quite clear that he wrote the playscript as a direct response to his disdain for the prevailing Ethiopian understanding of what constituted theatre" (Plastow, 138). What Hawariat failed to appreciate or acknowledge is the fact that Africans already had their forms of theatre before the continent was colonised and consequently made to feel and believe that everything African was not good if it does not fit into western forms.

Narrative folklore tradition, dance-drama and ceremonial drama constituting the African theatre, existed before the appearance of the colonialists on the continent. Though the change from orality to text was inevitable, the honour Hawariat could have done to Africa as seen in works of other playwright was to maintain African theatre historiography. His attitude towards the traditional art forms of Africa supports the assertion that indigenous drama is viewed by African scholars in the framework of western drama, thus a distortion in the historiography. A distortion, because the indigenous performance is the foundation of the history of African theatre, so once the foundation is misinterpreted and disorganized to fit into western forms, it changes the historiography. Failure to recognize and interpret African theatre history the way it is but disregarded or forced to fit into what constitutes theatre elsewhere by people like Tekle Hawariat has affected the historiography of African theatre history. Djisenu (2000) gives credit to a pioneer dramatist in Ghana for not towing the line of Hawariat in this account.

A leading playwright, a director, and a major figure in the Ghana Drama Studio experiment; Efua Sutherland was the pioneer of the Art Theatre Movement in Ghana. She was also noted for the use she made, both as a playwright and director, of narrative folklore tradition. This is most clearly seen in *The Marriage of Anansewa*, in which the central character is Ananse, the spider about whom folktales are told and who is known for his endless web of tricks. Ghanaian folk-tales, Ananse stories included, form part of a body of traditional oral art which also includes dirges, praise-poetry, poetry of abuse, riddles, and proverbs (Djisenu, 37).

Djisenu in this submission reveals how Sutherland did not disregard or disrespect but made use of the existing indigenous arts in the advent of literary drama to compose plays for Ghanaians

and Africans. Not every African scholar saw things the way Hawariat did, Lokko (1980) in writing "Theatre Space: A Historical Overview of the Theatre Movement in Ghana" recounts:

In Ghana, then, awareness of theatre has long been a fundamental part of social life. In the times when cults and rites flourished, practically every night, particularly every moonlit night, different age groups, both male and female, gathered round their traditional trees to sing, dance and act. Such interactions brought whole communities together, for the processes were intended to sharpen people's awareness of social norms, the political situation, morals and religious standards. Yet the concept of theatre dates back to the time when the early tribesman, dressed in the skin of a previous catch, danced and chanted for rain or other benefits. (Lokko, 309).

Lokko's account is well understood in Banham and Plastow (xiii) when they say "... African theatre is entertaining, but it can also be aesthetically, politically, socially and spiritually committed, and often it is all of these things simultaneously." It, therefore, becomes problematic when a researcher fails to recognize it. The failure is what usually leads to misrepresentation and misinterpretation with its broader consequence of distortion and exclusion. Lokko traced the Ghanaian theatre history from rituals to the various forms of performances such as dance-drama, (*Akom, Adowa, Kpanlogo*) ceremonial observances, (*Odwira, Homowo*) narrative or storytelling (*Anansesem*, that is, spider tales or stories) before launching into the spaces for these performances. This was the right historiography of a country's theatre history and would have been good if it had continued in this pattern. However, things changed to a minimal representation of the indigenous arts and performances in subsequent writings. Agovi (1990) gives a good account of literary theatre in his work on "The Origin of Literary Theatre in Colonial Ghana, 1920-1957" that:

The central position of indigenous drama to contemporary traditions of theatre, particularly in West, Central, East and South Africa, has been recognized. The Concert Party tradition in West Africa, for example, essentially a product of urbanization and westernization processes, has drawn direct inspiration from African indigenous dramatic traditions to express and highlight contemporary problems and sensibility. This is true of the Ghanaian concert party tradition, the Nigerian Folk Opera, the Chikwakwa Theatre of Zambia and the Kenya Kamiriithu People's Theatre. (Agovi, 1)

Though he acknowledges that contemporary theatre takes its roots from the indigenous arts, it would have been chronologically perfect if he had discussed some of these art forms and how

they manifest from which the contemporary drama had taken inspirations from the same way as he could cite and discuss some of the contemporary drama across the continent. His concentration was on the contemporary forms; thus, leaving out the history of the said indigenous arts from which the contemporary forms emerged. It is our submission that failure of African writers on Africa to recognize African performances the way they are rather than trying hard to fit into a different mode of performance is one of the major reasons for the minimal representation of African theatre history. Also, the mistake of giving prominence to performances within the period when contemporary performances began in Africa denies Africa much of theatre history since a lot was happening theatrically in pre-colonial Africa before the introduction of contemporary performances.

In addition to the misrepresentation of African performances, another reason for the minimal representation of historiography of African theatre is language. Appiah (1992) categorizes this challenge into the colonial system which forced Africans to either speak English, French or Portuguese, intellectual pride, that is, the educated African seeing himself through the foreign language he speaks as a mark of elevation and the genuine challenge of several indigenous languages in Africa that one has to contend with in research in order to give a true reflection of African performances. He recounts:

It should be said that there are other more or less honourable reasons for the extraordinary persistence of the colonial languages. We cannot ignore, for example, on the honourable side, the practical difficulties of developing a modern educational system in a language in which none of the manuals and textbooks have been written; nor should we forget, in the debit column, the less noble possibility that these foreign languages, whose possession had marked the colonial elite, became too precious as marks of status to be given up by the class that inherited the colonial state. Together such disparate forces have conspired to ensure that the most important body of writing in Sub-Saharan Africa even after independence continues to be in English, French and Portuguese. For many of its most important cultural purposes, most African intellectuals, south of the Sahara, are what we can call "europhone" (Appiah, 4).

Appiah's submission reveals the multiple challenges that are faced by the African, having lost his primary language through colonialism and the challenges that accompanied formal education reversed the order. For most Africans in 21st century, the colonial languages are now their first language. This trend where foreign languages are spoken at home deprives the African of getting oriented in the indigenous African languages thus difficulty in translating these languages accurately into English, French or Portuguese in scholarship. As already indicated, African history

is primarily stored in indigenous knowledge systems thus ignorance of this knowledge makes it challenging for the African to write on them hence the minimal representation.

Ironically, the historiography of African theatre in scholarship is dominated by non-Africans (Martin Banham, 2004); (Don Rubin, 1995); (Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, 1996); (Michael Etherton, 1982). This is not to say that they do not have the capacity to write on Africa or about Africans. It affirms that Africans are not making enough effort to correct what, owing to challenges with language due to reasons already discussed, have made them vulnerable in indigenous language proficiency. Finnegan and other non-Africans researching on Africa make efforts to study the language of the society in order to appropriately communicate and understand them. In her work *Limba Stories and Storytelling*, Ruth Finnegan (1967), spent years in this northern Sierra Leone society to learn and speak the Limba language so she could appreciate their storytelling tradition. If a non-African could overcome the language barrier to pull off this research, Africans should not be using language as a challenge, for not writing.

Impact of African Communal life on the writing of Theatre History

The communal life of Africans could be a reason for the low representation in texts concerning the history of African theatre by Africans themselves. Africans have long been known to ascribe to communal rather than individual living and this is evident in their mode of housing (circular or semi-circular architecture) and traditional activities like weaving, pottery, fishing and farming. This kind of living transcends into what can be termed as 'communal ownership' rather than 'individual ownership'. In what we term communal ownership, Africans believed that the whole community was entitled to the ownership of certain cultural practices. According to Ngugi wa Thiong'o (37), "drama in pre-colonial Kenya was not an isolated event. It was part and parcel of the rhythm of daily and seasonal life of the community. It was an activity among other activities, often drawing its energy from those other activities". The Kenyan view of drama in the pre-colonial era is no different from other African cultures. We trace this assertion to the tradition of oral literature in the culture of African people which did not document works in literary forms. Because there was no evidence of written documentation in the lives of Africans prior to the colonial encounter, it was not usual to give one person the single authorship and ownership of a cultural practice because it was evident in the lives of all. This assertion is supported by Rubin (17) who states: "Africans did not name their theatre; rather they lived it".

The issues of bias of print

Scholars of African theatre history must be commended for their immeasurable efforts to document their histories but this documentation from the point of view of some of these scholars, accounts for the reason of bias in certain publications and print. Some of the reasons for the bias in these publications include religious, ideological, and political influences. According to Newell

(69), "Most of West Africa's earliest authors to appear in print were educated in missionary schools where the Bible and scriptures formed a major part of their curriculum. Students were encouraged to write and perform poetry, stories and drama using western and Christian genres". This explains the level of western influence on African literature. Therefore, most of the works that emanated were greatly influenced by particular beliefs and ideologies shaped within the framework of the European perspective. Due to this, "...the act of writing was therefore inextricable from imperial ideologies and the struggle for power among African elites" (Newell, 69).

These efforts of African writers to maintain their indigenous practices and histories in writing were not supported by publishers who only needed to take responsibility for printing and publishing their works. During printing, certain parts of the rich indigenous culture were considered paganism and scrapped out. It is observed that the impact of religion weighs heavily on African writing. This impact is therefore not restricted to any one religion because "Islam, in Soyinka's view, negates African cultures in the same manner as Christianity" (Newell, 47). Soyinka's view proves that there is the likelihood of any religion not to give credence to the African culture because these cultural practices are seen not to fit the demands of religion. Soyinka believes Islam is an external colonizing force which exercises similar strategies to Europe in the erasure of indigenous cultures. Islam is not an African religion, any more than Christianity is; Soyinka stated bluntly in 1975, (Newell, 47).

Mistranslation of indigenous arts

A number of issues are evident in the translation of oral tradition into literary texts. Most translators of folktales were usually Africans who gained their literacy and education from the mission schools. They were usually offered employment after school to work either for the government or the mission schools. As a result, during transcription or translation, they removed phrases or words they regarded as offensive and indecent, thereby misrepresenting the original meaning of the art form. Rattray who was the special commissioner for Anthropology in the 1920s in Gold Coast omitted the vulgar and coarse material from transcriptions of folklore in the north" (Newell, 80). This explains the level of Eurocentric influence on documenting African histories through indigenous cultures. Once the indigenous cultures are not rightly translated by the Europeans, they lose their historic fact and relevance. If a cultural practice in Africa is not understood by the European, it is very difficult that the reverence given to such practices by indigenes will be equally given by the European, in whose view; such practices tend to be barbaric. It is important that African scholars begin to take up the responsibility of writing their own histories in order to rightly represent their cultures. This will reduce the dominance in Eurocentric representation of African cultures. African languages were transcribed into alphabets, grammars, dictionaries and pamphlets which were termed reduction. According to Rattray, reduction is more than accurate to describe the way in which much oral literature was recorded (Newell, 80-81). This,

however, is not accurate because reduction in actual sense alters the original meaning of the story or folktale.

Another issue with African theatre historiography is the challenge of the language the tellers of our history use. Europeans most often do not get the appropriate meaning or word for a particular art; for instance, the griots are oral performers in West Africa. The griot is a repository of oral tradition, a knowledgeable individual who performs the history of his/her people during a communal gathering to educate and inform them as well as preserve culture. However, this art form is interpreted differently in history books, taking away the essence of the art. According to Bowles and Hulle as quoted by Newell (87), the term "...describes many different types of narrators including spokespersons, ambassadors, masters of ceremony, tutors, praise singers historians, genealogists, musicians, composers, town criers and exhorters of troops about to go into battle". With such a wide range of words to explain an art form, the context of performance may be lost in the meaning assigned to it. If one decides to use a spokesperson for instance as the meaning of a griot, the essence of the art form will be lost to the reader. This is because among the Mande in Francophone Africa for instance, each community's oral history is rooted in the griotic tradition, thus not a spokesperson but a historian, the griot in this society is the custodian of the history of the people.

Conclusion

The historiography of African theatre should be appropriately demarcated under three categories namely, pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. The pre-colonial theatre history is concerned with the traditional theatre practice before the colonial encounter and as rightly put by Ajaegbo (1990); this is where most African performances were expressed orally. The question is how do African scholars retrieve these traditional histories? The oral tradition of Africa is composed of expressions and symbols that require decoding since most of these symbols are no longer in use on a daily basis if not stored as tourist attraction. The colonial theatre history, on the other hand, captures the theatre practice during the colonial era and the introduction of western theatre style by the Europeans. Lastly, the post-colonial theatre history documents and assesses the theatre practice after African countries gained independence. Analysing the historiography of African theatre histories, it is observed that the writings do not adequately provide the theatre history in pre-colonial Africa because there have been attempts to present that phase in a way that it should not, also the fear of misrepresentation and misinterpretation due to weak language proficiency has posed a challenge to representing African theatre adequately in history.

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Bionote

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