

# Marxist Historiography: A Threshold To The Study Of African Historiography And Decolonization In The 20<sup>th</sup> Century

<sup>1</sup>Ololade Emmanuel Olaolu, <sup>2</sup>Olayanju Oluwatosin Abdulkazeem, <sup>3</sup>Boladale Sodiq Opeyemi, & <sup>4</sup>Ajibola Temitope Bolaji

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## Abstract

Marxist view occupies a central place in the construction and reconstruction of history. In a specific sense, and within the context of Africa's past, series of progress were made in the resistance to colonial domination as well as indigenous governance in the post-colonial situation. To a large extent, the developments have been attributed to a resultant influence of Marxist conception of historical processes and phenomenon of class struggle. While certain writers such as Kapteijns (1977), Ernst (2007) as well as Ogot (2009) have chronicled the trends and trajectory of Marxist historiography in Africa, other works have made efforts to elucidate Marxist thoughts in academic and social stance. Basically, this paper seeks to examine the place of Marxist historiography in the African context. However, arising from a thorough interrogation of relevant literature, this paper challenges the aspersion that 'Africans have no history' and renders it as a baseless summation of developments informed by chauvinistic, egoistic, ethnocentric, jingoistic and xenophobic Eurocentric distortion of Africa's historical worth. The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection to analyse the discourse. The paper concludes that Marxist approach to historiography enabled African historians and writers to decolonise their history from European bias, reclaim the lost glory of Africa in many respects and also embark on omnibus documentation of African perspectives to development as from the 1960s onward.

**Keywords:** Historiography, Marxist, revolutionary reconstruction, historical materialism, class struggle

## 1. Introduction

While the term "historiography" is understood in different contexts, a general definition has not yet been established. These are the following: Historiography encompasses the art of writing history as well as the study of history and the history of historical literature (Ernst, 2007, p.12). In other words, historiography can be viewed as the method, skill or craft of writing and communicating the historian's thoughts about the past. It also means the yields or products of the application of the historian's craft (Mojuetan, 1991, p.45). There are many schools of historiography. Some of these are the African historiography, Western historiography, Colonialist historiography, and Marxist historiography. This paper is geared towards examining Marxist historiography with regards to its influence on West Africa historiography. Essentially, Marxist

1,2,3 & 4 Ph. D Candidate Department of History & International Studies University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

Email: [ololadeolaolu@gmail.com](mailto:ololadeolaolu@gmail.com) , [Yemproj4real@yahoo.com](mailto:Yemproj4real@yahoo.com), [Sbolainbox01@gmail.com](mailto:Sbolainbox01@gmail.com) & [ajibolatemitopebolaji@gmail.com](mailto:ajibolatemitopebolaji@gmail.com)

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historiography is a school of historiography influenced by the ideas of Marxism as propounded by Karl Marx (1818-1883).

Karl Marx is regarded as an influential philosopher whose ideas have survived from the 19<sup>th</sup> century till today. His philosophical contributions span across the disciplines of history, sociology, economics and political economy (Ernst, 2007, p. 13). Karl Marx was born in Germany. As a student of philosophy and law at the universities of Bonn and Berlin, respectively, he was profoundly influenced by Hegel's theories. After a brief stint teaching at a university, he moved into journalism and deepened his involvement in the socialist cause. Before moving to London, he briefly resided in Paris, Geneva, and Brussels. There, he wrote about and organized socialists (Marxists, 2019). While residing in Paris, he grew close to Friedrich Engels, his long-time colleague. Most of Marx's published writings were co-written with Engels. Marx wrote a number of significant books, including *Das Capital* (1867), *The German Ideology* (1845), *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), and *The Holy Family* (1844).

The grasp of historical ideals set forth within Marxist tenets gave vent to the radical stand against colonial efforts to render African civilization to a limbo of opprobrium. As an alternative interpretation and reconstruction of history, Marxist historiography created a platform for indigenous historians to decolonize the African perception in western eyes (Rigby, 1997, p. 895). According to Mojuetan (1991), Eurocentric views reflected a situation whereby western scholars pretend that African historiography does not exist and that "Africans have no history" simply because they believed that history is the written account of past events and since Africans devised no western oriented form of writing their history, the general belief is that African historiography have no place in world history (Mojuetan, 1991, p.46). This gave rise to Nationalistic Historiography and the spread of Marxist theories. In a specific sense, Marxist historiography is based squarely on what is called a materialistic conception of history also known as the philosophy of historical materialism (Law, 1991).

## **2. Intellection of Marxist Historiography**

Marxist historiography entails a materialistic conception of history. It is also known as the philosophy of historical materialism. As observed in the introductory section, it is a philosophic stance derived from Marxism. According to Robin Law, Marxism is a body of thoughts based on the ideas of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and his writings with Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). Even though Marx and Engels attempted a comprehensive and omnibus research into human history and factors responsible for change in society, the philosophy and substance of Marxism has become variegated in today's society. As far as Robin Law was concerned, Marxism does not constitute a unified body of thoughts, and there is actually now no single 'Marxist' position but rather a number of rival views which can all claim to be 'Marxist' in the sense of sharing certain assumptions and methodological approaches originally enunciated by Marx (Law, 1991, p.40). Be that as it may, Marxism has contributed a lot to historical explanation.

Marx focused on the interactions between those who owned the means of production and those who provided the labour for them. Instead of being motivated by an interest in industry, he was propelled by a critical knowledge of its dark side, that is, the suffering, heartache, sweat, and work of industrial laborers (Rigby, 1997, p.895). Marx opposed religion as well, seeing it to be merely a means of social control. His most lasting contribution to history is probably the formation of communism as a political theory, but he also made significant contributions to historiography, which at the time provided a fresh and original perspective on historical understanding. The historical perspective he advocated, dubbed the "materialist conception of history" by many of his supporters as "historical materialism", views history as essentially the result of social

development, the resulting class division, and the conflicts that arise between these classes (Benedetto, 1966).

Karl Marx maintained that history is shaped by the constant struggle between individuals and their material social contexts and that the conditions under which people live define who they are as individuals. Consequently, he interpreted human history in a way that made social dynamics and human nature more materialistic (Rigby, 1997). A novel form of historiography known as Marxist historiography resulted from his contributions to history, economics, and social theory. Marx contends that everything happens because of a cause-and-effect connection. Consequently, the past influences the present, and understanding the past through analysis and perspective-giving can aid in our understanding of the present (Bottomore & Maximilien, 1984). Marxist Historiography is a distinct approach to historical reconstruction and a branch of historical studies since its practitioners essentially interpret history in accordance with Karl Marx's beliefs. According to Rigby, the significance and extent of Marx's influence on modern historiography are rarely contested, even by those who disagree with his economics, politics, and philosophy (Rigby, 1997, p.896).

### **3. Central Tenets of Marxist Historiography**

#### **3.1 Historical Materialism**

Marx and Engels highlighted the importance of economic factors in life and the conditions under which people produce and appropriate their means of subsistence. The cornerstone of Marxist historiography as laid out by Marx is that the general character of any society is determined by its economic structure, that is, the means of production and forces of production within economic relations (Benedetto, 1966). The economic structure provides a pedestal or base for human relations. Next, there is a political and legal framework and their dominant ideologies are superstructures erected on the base of the economic structure. According to Engels the foregoing is conceptualised as the materialistic conception of history. The materialism perspective of history explains social structures and their historical evolution and proposes a historical change scenario predicated on the predominance of these material factors (Engels, 1972).

Additionally, Marx notes certain basic human tendencies in social behaviour, including the desire to increase society's productive potential, the tendency of social relations to adapt to the efficient use of these potentials, and the tendency of social classes with similar economic interests to form social movements (Benedetto, 1966). Marx argues that no social system ever ends before all the creative forces that can fit inside it have expanded (Marx, 1996, p.158). Thus, the history of humankind's means of production and the accompanying relations of production that go along with them includes "everything that furthers production, everything which tends to remove an obstacle, to make production sporadic and faster" (Mamjian, 1983, p. 15).

Historical Materialism as propounded by Karl Marx could be regarded as part of the culmination of philosophical ideas proliferated in Europe during the 19th century. Part of this development stems from the works of Leopold von Ranke who initiated the professionalization of history as a distinct discipline with its own scientific methodology and tools of analysis. Also, very importantly, Fredrick Hegel's ideas encapsulated in the Theory of Dialectical Idealism contributed in a great measure to the scientific organization of thoughts in Marxism (Bottomore & Maximilien 1984, p.207). To Hegel history is a dynamic phenomenon and its objective is freedom but the movement towards this goal is through what is called dialectical process. It is thus explained by him: 'Every situation is a thesis but it has inherited opposing forces which are anti-forces. These opposing forces break down the thesis to produce a new situation known as synthesis (Rigby, 1997,

p. 897). The moving force behind the historical motion according to Hegel is a spirit but this spirit is cyclical in nature. According to him, human history passed through four periods. These are Ancient civilization, Greek civilization, Roman civilization and German civilization. Karl Marx's Philosophy of history is in a way connected with that of Hegel but he added his own originality. Among which he imbibed was Dialectics. However, while Hegelian dialectics is one of ideas and abstract thing that of Marx is dialect of materials and substance. Karl Marx also shares Hegel's view that each society has a spirit and that spirit or genius is an organic one which is responsible for the political and ideological structure of society (Marxists, 2019). To Marx, the central structure underpinning historical change is the economy and not the metaphysical connotation ascribable to Hegelian dialectics. Marx asserted that economic history was the most important field of historical study, because he surmised that all characteristics of a society are as a result of the economic basis of that society. Therefore, Marx concluded that in order to change the characteristics of a society, it was a necessity to change economic basis of that society that is, man's relationship to the means of production. Kachick Manjian (1983) further elucidates on production as conceived in Marxism. In his view,

*It is the material conditions of life which serve as the foundation upon which rises ideological superstructure in all its richness and variety. Human history is itself the irrefutable proof that religious and other world outlooks are not the prime factors, but are themselves determined by the material conditions of life, and reflect those conditions, each in its own way. History demonstrates that every civilisation is based upon a specific historical mode of material production, for without this, human society itself could not exist (Mamjian, 1983, p.17).*

### **3.2 The Grand Narrative of History and Its Phases**

Marxist historiography also embraces the concept of staged history. Marxist historians sometimes take this perspective of history in its totality because Karl Marx considered history as a grand tale including the entire human past and future. However, Marx and Engels' understanding of non-European lands was limited. Based on the European paradigm, Marx divided history into five distinct eras: the period of capitalism, feudalism, advanced communism, and slavery (Bottomore and Maximilien, 1984, p.209). A distinct mode of production and, thus, distinct production relations are indicated by each of these phases. Nevertheless, several African Marxist historians have tried to reconstruct the past of their civilizations using Marxist theory.

In the early phases of communism, economic production, appropriation, and consumption were socialized. Because of this, rather than a society characterized by glaring economic inequality, individuals at this time lived under a system of mutual care and sharing. There was no class tension. Class struggles were place throughout the era of slavery, just as they did between peasants and feudal lords during the feudal period. Marx thought that because the weapon with which the bourgeoisie felled the feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself and because the great majority of workers packed into factories are structured like soldiers, the age of capitalism was the worst time for fight (Marx, 1996). Marx considered the final phase of human history to be an advanced version of communism marked by a classless society. Since there would be no need for states or classes at this time, society would be both classless and stateless. Class-based societies require the creation of a strong state to ensure the continuation of their interests. According to the reasoning of Karl Marx, class oppositions within the nations will end when the nations' mutual hostilities end" (Marxists, 2019).

### **3.3 Class Factor and Class Struggle**

Another essential Marxist idea is revealed by the concept of social class. Marx contends that the past is moulded by the records of disputes between different social classes. The class that controls

the means of production is called dominant. The ruling class then exploits the lesser classes by keeping the profit and keeping them at subsistence levels. In this way, the ruling class accumulates riches and shapes the government to serve their own agendas. This class uses the state as its tool, and through education, religion, and other channels, people start to believe that this class's rules are just and natural (Marx, 1996). According to Engels:

*At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or- this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms- with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of productive forces, these relations turn into their fetters. Then begin an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation led sooner or later to the transformation of the whole superstructure' (1972, p. 441)*

From the above, it is clear that Marxism hinges its ideology on the view that there is no progress in society without conflict. Conflict arises, therefore, from the internal 'contradiction' of society, from the 'uneven development' between the economic and the socio-political spheres. This conflict is expressed in the form of a 'class struggle' between upholders and the opponents of the *status quo*. In the opening lines of his work entitled *The Communist Manifesto* published in 1848, Karl Marx established that:

*The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-masters and journey man, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstruction of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending class (Marx and Engels, 1998, p.1).*

As conceived by Marx and Engels, classes are not simply product of a system of production relations rather classes 'arise' or 'develop' out of a system when the shared interest of people are engendered by political movements and class ideologies promoting their particular interests: 'only then the interests they defend become class interests.' Apparently, individuals become a class because they 'have common interests because they share a common situation.' The role of historical agency, in Marxist historiography, is visible more in class than in individual. Although the role of individual has been assigned importance yet it is the exploited class which holds the key to bring about change in society. With Marxism history's focus shifted towards study of society as modern social sciences do. Marx was of the opinion that man exists in society; being a product of society he can only be studied with the respective society (Ogot, 2009). Thus, Marxism gave a new impetus to the study and writing of history as the study of the social phenomenon and its various manifestations. History, thence forth, ceased to be a shapeless and purposeless pursuit but with a sense of clear direction and in complete social setting. In the words of Professor S.O. Aghalino, a distinguished scholar of historical studies in the University of Ilorin, Nigeria, the Marxist approach served as an effective means of writing of history from the perspective of the underdog or marginalised groups (Aghalino, 2010).

### **3.4 Evolution of Marxist Historiography within the African Historiographical trend**

Having discussed fundamental aspects of Marxism, it is important to trace the evolution of Marxist Historiography in Africa. According to Ogot, by the 1960s there was the birth of radicalism in African historiography. According to Ogot (2009), African historiography took a bold anti-colonialist attitude and tried to justify newly independent governments by manipulating history.

Consequently, the portrayal of Africa by colonial historiography as “primitive” and “savage” was replaced with a simplified picture of an essentially egalitarian and socially coherent 'traditional' culture. Ogot (2009) observed that “the boundaries of independence were not acknowledged during the colonial era because nationalism was overdetermined by historiography to the point where the imperial framework that contained the actions of the “heroic” nationalist was lost. Thus, new paradigms were needed as its difficulties were increasingly insignificant. To date, two distinct approaches have been proposed to deal with the new challenges (Ogot, 2009, p. 11).

The first was the underdevelopment or dependence strategy, which has its roots in Latin America and was largely accepted by scholars as a persuasive argument in favour of tradition versus development. Walter Rodney's 1972 book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, is a well-known explanation of this argument. The reliance thesis also triggered a long debate over the features of the post-colonial state and its boundaries, both internal and foreign. The dependence theory, as the historians soon discovered, lacked the categories required to examine African history's internal processes following the establishment of the capitalist world order or to examine African history before it was subjugated by external forces.

The alternate tactic employed at this time to counter the predominance of nationalist history was Marxism. When radical national liberation movements gained momentum in the early 1970s and some African political parties and countries started to employ Marxism as a political and ideological instrument, Marxist influence grew. Marxism also attracted younger intellectuals who were dissatisfied with bourgeois and capitalist theories, processes, and practices of development in Africa and around the world and who wished to offer an alternative perspective and paradigm of development. According to Mojuetan (1991), the anti-imperialist movement and colonialism in West Africa led to the development of Marxist historiography over time, which in turn helped Marxism acquire momentum in the region and across the continent (Mojuetan, 1991, p.51). This strong reaction to the paradigm shift was sparked by the emergence of African Marxist historians, anthropologists, and political scientists in the 1970s. Around the beginning of the 1970s, African history started to specialize into a number of areas, which prompted the creation of novel approaches to writing African history. Regardless of one's stance on the political and radical aspects of Marx's overall theory, Mojuetan (1991) observes that Marxist Historiography has had a significant impact across different strands of thought in Africa.

#### **4. Essential Contributions of Marxist Historiography to African Historiography**

##### **4.1 Marxism as an Alternative Approach to History Writing**

Racist views made western scholars pretend that African historiography does not exist and that “Africans have no history” simply because they believed that history is the written account of past events and since Africans devised no widespread form of writing their history, the general belief is that African historiography have no place in world history. This gave rise to Nationalistic Historiography and the Influence of Marxist theories. Since Marxist ideas were a different way of viewing history, from the bottom up, seeing the agent of change in history from a perspective of relationships between people, and not as a series of accident (Law, 1991, p.43). This tilted the course of narrative which was based on the finger of god as evidenced in earlier writings by clerics. Marxist view of history also contends that society should depend on the division of labour, creating social classes based on property ownership. Marx and Engels argued that since division of labour is not equal there would be strife and conflict and that the only means of genuine social change is through social or political upheaval.

Karl Marx created “a theory based on economic forces, a grand jury which would not only explain all of history but also deliver the tools for eventual human redemptions from all injustice” (Ogot, 2009, p.3). With these concepts now realized, various historians and activists across Africa decided to rouse up working class to different revolts against colonial policies and it was also used as a tool to rewrite and re-right African perception on the world stage. In consonance with the views of Karl Marx especially the ideology of Historical Materialism, historian began to develop a comprehensive and intelligible understanding of cause and effect relationship as it appertains to historical events. With an understanding of Marxist dialectical premise of cause and effect, African writers were able to determine some of the basic assumptions underlying African condemnation by Europeans. Also, the historical understanding of Marxist process made it clear that Africa’s underdevelopment and relegation on the world stage was to a large extent a result of European conquest and exploitation of Africa’s human and natural resources. This particular point further illustrates the efforts and strides by various nationalists to throw off the shackles of colonialism. Also, it explains that Africans have a right to determine their own destiny and cannot be perpetually subdued under the yoke of colonial administration. Marx’s theory of historical materialism presented historians in West Africa with an alternative methodological approach to their work, as well as shedding light and emphasizing the plight of the common man (Suleiman, 2010).

#### 4.2 Publication of Phenomenal Works about Africa’s Underdevelopment

It is often said that Marx redrew the map of history because Marxist historiography has made contributions to both the history of the working class and that of oppressed nationalities.<sup>54</sup> Essentially, Marx’s analysis of the working class encouraged a lot of historians to examine the struggles in African societies. In this regard, Marxist thought was predominant both in British and French West Africa. Marxist historiography also elucidates upon reasons why western models of development hinged on capitalism have failed us in West Africa in particular and Africa as a whole. For example, a heated debate on pre-capitalist modes of production was initiated by the French Marxist anthropologists and economists (Chilcote, 1968). It was soon adopted by historians, and the debate brought notable contributions on both method and historical interpretation. In particular, it stimulated a critical re-reading of Marxist analytical categories on a less ethnocentric basis so that European-derived laws of development' are no longer arbitrarily imposed on phenomena which require to be understood in their specificity. In essence, Marxism gradually came to be seen as a method rather than as providing an all-purpose explanatory scheme (Ogot, 2009).

Marxists argued that Africa’s autonomous development had been subverted for five hundred years according to the thesis. This led to the emergence of a radical response to African economic predicament. This radical approach saw political power and economic constraints as the principal operative feature of the historical process. Moreover, the disappointments with the results of political independence from the middle of the 1960s led to radical pessimism to critiques of the nation-building projects that were inspired by Marxism, Underdevelopment theories and by the writings of Frantz Fanon such as *The wretched of the earth*, *Black skin white masks* and Kwame Nkrumah’s *Revolutionary Path*. These works exerted great influence on civil right movements across Africa, anti-colonialism and black consciousness movements all over the world. Also, radicals like Rodney traced the history of African poverty in the context of global capitalism. Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* was a salient statement of the underdevelopment thesis. His writings explained African underdevelopment in the shadow of European imperialism. It also injected radicalism into academic and popular discourse (Kaptejeins, 1977).

Walter Rodney though a Guyanese was able to interpret Marxist theory within the context of African people's history and circumstances through historical research, analysis, writing and teachings, Rodney sought to bring awareness and understanding to issues such as race, class, slavery, colonialism and its impact and legacy on working class people and their struggles for social justice and economic development. Rodney quite conspicuously emphasized African technological development at a given point in history prior to European penetration and noted the level of oppression and strangulation that crippled Africa's potentialities in the face of European vandalism. He believed that education and history should be used as tool for social change (Rodney, 1972, p. 52).

### **4.3 Reinterpretation of Africa's Past**

Marxist historiography contributed to the possibility of reinterpreting African history. For instance, a number of subjects previously covered in African historiography have undergone a critical rethinking as a result of conversations started by Marxist scholars. For example, nationalist texts of the anti-colonial struggle have been strengthened by analysis of the genesis of class in resistance groups. As opposed to the dominance of determinism, free will and inevitability of historical analysis evident in previous works, scholars began to reinterpret events such as the Fulani Jihad of 1804, the Yoruba internecine wars; resistance to colonial rule and eventual subjugation in different parts of West Africa from the view point of class struggle. For instance, Robert Shenton argues that as far as the Fulani Jihad of 1804 was concerned, it was class struggle and class struggle is central to Marxism. He further justifies his angle of view by highlighting pre-existing condition of dominance prior to the Jihad and further enunciating the social change that took place after although there was little effect on the mode of production thus making the Jihad controversial in certain respects (Shenton, 1986, p.4). Also, in a striking contrast to opprobrious assertions of Africans as the wretched on the earth, Marxist historiographers have denounced the arm chair and ethnocentric diffusion or aspersions of Eurocentric origins on Africa.

### **4.4 Nationalist Struggle**

Marxist analysis developed the idea of the liberation struggle even further. Examples can be found in the philosophies of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Sekou Toure of Democratic Republic of Guinea and Amilcar Cabral, the revolutionary socialist leader of the national liberation movement that freed Guinea-Bissau from Portuguese colonialism. Although faulted on the grounds of utopianism and misplacement of priorities, their works reflect a materialistic conception of history. For instance, Julius Nyerere adopted the notion of class distinction propounded by Marx as the ideological core of the nationalist struggle in Tanzania and eventually set it in motion with an African version of socialism known as "Ujamaa" philosophy. According to Ahmed Sekou Toure employed a Marxist-Leninist approach towards throwing off the shackles of colonialism. In his words 'poverty in liberty is to be preferred to riches in slavery (Ogot, 2009, p.7).' To Cabral, political independence is not the end of the liberation struggle but only a phase within it. Hence, Cabral argues that real social change involved winning indigenous control over the forces of production and that a people can only reclaim its history by gaining control over their own productive technologies. Anything less is simply neo-colonialism (Chilcotte, 1968, p.373).

### **4.5 The Trajectory of Marxist Historiography: The Nigeria Example**

In terms of a systematic study of the theory and practices of historiography in Nigeria, great efforts were made by Robert Auker and Lidwein Kaptejeins to explore the various contributions of historians of modern Nigeria. They also analysed the fundamentals of African historiography as

written by Africans. Although Aufer and Kaptejeins did not provide a comprehensive opinion on Marxist historiography, they were able to contribute to understanding of various trends and patterns that served as a foreground to historiography in Nigeria. In that regard, the Marxist viewpoint is not an exception. But then, the school of History at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria is identified as Marxist or the Radical Legitimist School of thought. The historical writings of Usman Bala Yusuf were largely informed by his view of history and the socio-political and intellectual climate of Nigeria of his days. He did not recognize any disciplinary gulf separating history from other social sciences. Thus, his writings represent a hybrid of history, sociology, economics and political science. However, the dominant view about Bala's approach to historiography is that of the Marxist tradition of historical writing. Bala employed a materialistic conception of historical events in studying Katsina history. Although Bala Usman is often criticised for misplacing intra-class struggle for power with inter-class struggle which is the central tenet of Marxist philosophy, it is apparent that Bala's radical commentaries on contemporary issues of his time reflected Marxist and Socialist orientation (Suleiman, 2010, p. 113).

It has been observed that mere scholarly pursuit of knowledge for its own sake was not Bala's goal. He shared Karl Marx's view that it is the duty of academia to apply knowledge to the admirable goal of enhancing human condition. He was someone who had the guts to put his theories to the test in the actual world, helping to better anchor them in the social realities of the day. The crux of Bala's philosophical positioning is that history should be a continuous progress in both the interpretation of the world and the transformation of societies.

#### **4.6 Marxism as the Fuel for Labour Activism in Modern Nigeria**

The Nigerian labour scene from the very start featured Michael Imoudu. Without any iota of conflict, Imoudu is regarded as Nigeria's most prominent labour leader. According to Ololade (2020) Michael Imoudu's work was philosophically grounded in Marxism. Karl Marx's (1818–1883) ideas and writings are the source of Michael Imoudu's (1901–2005) Marxist ideology (George et al., 2012; Ololade, 2020). Put another way, in the introduction of their 1848 Communist Manifesto, Karl Marx and Fredric Engels stated that class strife had been a defining feature of societies up until that time. Class struggles are typified by societies where the oppressor and the oppressed are constantly at odds with one another (Oyemakinde, 1974). As they completed their manifesto, Marx and Engels exhorted workers everywhere to unite in this struggle, convinced that the only thing they had to lose were their chains. The vociferous appeal made by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 1848 Communist Manifesto served as an inspiration for generations of labour unions worldwide (Ololade, 2020).

Marx and Engels' description of a continuing conflict offered a framework for comprehending the animosity between worker welfare and capitalism. Therefore, labour union leaders and their allies usually look to the Marxist perspective for strength in their fight to overthrow capitalism (Tijani, 2012; George et al., 2012; Ololade, 2020).

In his labour union action, Michael Imoudu tried to reflect the positionality that exists between capitalists and labourers. Imoudu was adept at putting an end to the concentrated social repression that is usually associated with industrial capitalism that takes advantage of its laborers by utilising productive force (Otobo, 1995). Imoudu acted in 1931 in line with the Marxist principle of uniting workers, gathering fellow railway workers to resist colonialism violence and guarantee better working conditions until Nigeria's post-colonial transformation (Oyemakinde, 1974; Ololade, 2020).

## 5. Conclusion

Eurocentric views reflected a situation whereby western scholars pretend that African historiography does not exist and that “Africans have no history” simply because they believed that history is the written account of past events and since Africans devised no western oriented form of writing their history, the general belief is that African historiography have no place in world history. Although, certain emphasis which Karl Marx placed on the role of the material factor in historical development may be faulted on certain grounds as discussed in the essay, he had certainly made a great impact on historiography by presenting a new approach to historical explanation. Marxist historiography analyses social change and enhances a historical development that accommodates both the elites and the masses. It also transcends conventional historiography in that it provides a framework for writing emancipatory history, that is, a history from the perspective of marginalised groups as manifested in African historiography.

Overall, it is clear that the understanding of Marxist view of history revealed that Europeans in their assertion that Africa had no history only tried to subdue Africans to an oppressive line of thought. This gave rise to Nationalistic Historiography and the spread of Marxist theories. Essentially, the grasp of historical ideals set forth within Marxist tenets gave vent to the radical stand against colonial efforts to render African civilization to a limbo of opprobrium. As an alternative interpretation and reconstruction of history, thus, Marxist historiography created a platform for indigenous historians to decolonize the African perception in western eyes.

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