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Robin attributes the fall to the inherent weakness in the constitution of Oyo which later created enormous problems which the Alafin could not handle. This provided the occasion for other factors to come in. Atanda, however, enumerated different factors responsible for the fall. He also analysed the views of other scholars and went ahead to criticise those views.

Atanda opined that a number of factors contributed to the decline and fall of the Old Oyo Empire. He however stated that the size of the empire, which made it impossible to govern effectively in the face of inadequate means of communication, scarcity of tours to parts of the empire by the Alafin, tendency by the local rulers to independence, the tyranny of the Alafin's messengers, weak Alafins, the position of the Are Ona Kakanfo (Field Marshal) in the constitution of the empire, the rise of powerful neighbours like the Fulani and Dahomey and the disruption of the economic system and strength of the empire are factors responsible for the fall of the empire<sup>23</sup>. To Rev. Samuel Johnson, the fundamental cause was the punishment of God for the sins of the nation. He said: *"The cup of the nation was full; cruelty, usurpation, and treachery were rife, especially in the capital; and the provinces were groaning under the yoke of oppression.....the nation was ripe for judgement, and the impending wrath of God was about to fall upon it; hence the trouble from every quarter, one after another"*<sup>24</sup>. Atanda finds it difficult to agree with Johnson that the troubles which the Old Oyo Empire had in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and which led to its collapse were due to the wrath of God. After all, how God interferes in politics is not obvious to any, and, in fact, is a matter for religion rather than of history.

These divergent views confirm Walsh's assertion that historians write from a particular point of view. For anyone who wishes to undertake a research on the topic, "The Fall and Decline of the Oyo Empire", he must select articles, make further research on topics related to it, subject them to concrete analyses and attain some level of objectivity. The contradictory views go further to indicate that scientific objectivity in history is unrealistic.

Furthermore, while the scientists can state, with reasonable authority, that science attempts to uncover the systems underpinning our bodies, the material world and the universe beyond, it attempts to be predictive and prescriptive. Scientific knowledge provides the powers of prediction but in history, prediction fails. It cannot be prescriptive or predictive because the same set of circumstances never reoccurs. The popular saying that history repeats itself is false as no one can repeat the scenarios of the past. History is not cyclical; it does not repeat itself. The combination of factors known to have led to some event in the past will, most likely, not lead to the same outcome as it did in the past if repeated. As such, no one can predict historical events. Moreso, human actions cannot be predicted as no one knows the human mind. For example, we cannot say with certainty that if the same conditions that led to the Second World War occur today, there would be another world war.

Looking at the Barbarossa's attack on Russia, the greatest mistake made by Stalin was prediction. He tried to predict the mind of Hitler and this cost him a great deal. Stalin thought that if Hitler would decide to attack Russia, it would first present an ultimatum. Therefore, Stalin erred in three fundamental ways; he was too blinded by his own ideological biases to credit the veracity of truthful Anglo-American information; he attributed to Hitler a basically rational view of Russo-German relations and was unable to understand the nature of Hitler's irrational and mindless hatred for Russia. And finally, when the dreadful truth began to become clear to him,

Stalin found its implications so horrendous that he was simply unable to face the consequences<sup>18</sup>. Another instance was the Korean War. The crossing of the thirty-eight parallel and the drive towards the Chinese border at the Yalu River brought the United States close to an attack by China. MacArthur's mistake at this time was that he predicted wrongly as he underrated China. As Stoessinger puts, "he failed to respect his enemy and this disrespect was to cost him dearly". The crossing of the thirty-eight parallel led to China's attack<sup>25</sup>. On the day of Chinese disengagement, MacArthur's estimate of total Chinese strength in Korea was between 40,000 and 60,000 men but surprisingly, he was faced with 200,000 soldiers. The Chinese troops had done what MacArthur had deemed impossible.

Again, often time, historical analyses are tainted with colouration of the authors. As Carr noted, "A historian cannot write beyond the mind of the author". The primary sources are also not exempted from this problem. According to Vansina, it can be assumed that the more a recital conforms to the standard model of excellence and the more it is admired by the public, the more it is distorted<sup>20</sup>. The range of primary sources now scrutinised by historians are vast. Bone remnants, cloth samples, wood fragments and many others are all potential primary sources.

As a result of this, every historical material must be subjected to concrete analyses and validation. Only this can make an intellectual piece stand the test of time. However, when it comes to asking the important question, WHY? The historian has to creatively apply his or her critical thinking. The application of critical thinking is an important aspect of the historian's craft. As Berlin puts it "A man who lacks common intelligence can be a physicist of genius but not even a mediocre historian.

Another factor is that of methodology. We know that physical scientist have evolved generally acceptable and regular ways of tackling scientific problems, and not to accept these methods is to be biased or unscientific. In history, there is also a methodology but the methodology is not as rigid as that of science. Unlike in science there are no generally acceptable laws which govern historical thinking. As such, historians may not arrive at conclusions which all independent investigators will be ready to accept. Also, it is the business of a natural scientist to be a theorist; that is to formulate doctrines for natural science is nothing if it is not a systematic interlacing of theories and doctrines, built up inductively, or by hypothetical – deductive methods, or whatever other method is considered best by the most competent practitioners in the field. It seems clear that whereas in history we tend, more often than not to attach greater credence to the existence of particular facts than to general hypotheses, however well supported, from which these facts could in theory be deducted, in a natural science the opposite seems more often to be the case; there it is often more rational to rely upon a properly supported general theory- say that of gravitation than on particular observations. This difference alone, whatever its not, must cast *prima facie* doubt upon any attempt to draw an analogy between the method of history and those of natural science.

Also, the cultural background and ideological inclination of the historian may affect his interpretation of historical events. The historian's membership of a particular religion, race or ideological group will cast doubt on his ability to achieve scientific objectivity. History is an account of what men have done and of what has happened to them. Man is largely, some would say wholly, a three dimensional object in space and time, subject to natural laws and his environment. Thus, his environment has a great toll on him. Giving an instance of the September Massacre, a Nigerian from the Eastern Region will paint the event as to draw

sympathy from its readers. Take for instance the book written by Ojukwu on the Nigerian Civil war, “The Biafran War”, being an Easterner, it is assumed that the book will be biased, tainted with human factor in order to draw sympathy from its readers. Another instance is the opinion of Crowder and Mcphee on the impact of colonial rule in Africa. Mcphee contended that the infrastructures put in place by the colonial powers, the introduction of new cultures, the expansion of trade, and other activities introduced by the colonialist developed Africa. Crowder rebuffed this notion. To him, the infrastructures, trade and other activities by the colonial powers were for the purpose of exploitation and not for the development of the colony. He further stated that under colonial rule, any economic benefits that may have accrued to Africa resulted from accident and not designed. Thus, as Mcphee’s view tends to Eurocentric, that of Crowder is Afrocentric.

Generally, objectivity in history is different from that of science because of the divergence of data which are available to the historian as well as the social world which the historian deals with. This is not to say that history is incapable of any form of objectivity, it only shows that there can be no absolute objectivity. More so, the scientists also cannot prove to be objective in their experiments. It must however be stressed that since the historian is a student of change, his conclusion may not be valid for all time. In other words, objectivity in history may also be tentative in the sense that discovery of fresh evidence may affect historical reconstruction and therefore result in a re-evaluation of a once objective account. As Scott declares “there is no finality in history anymore than there is in natural or physical science. The purpose is to arrive at a perfection of knowledge. Ayoade points out that “the quality of scientific results is measured not by the fact that it does not change but by the fact that it has a long life and an explanatory

significance<sup>26</sup>. This is to show that objectivity in science is also not absolute. With this understanding, one can appreciate why each generation writes and re-interprets its history.

## **SUMMARY/CONCLUSION**

From the foregoing, it is clear that for the purpose of achieving objectivity in History, scientific history was proffered. Even though absolute objectivity in history is desirable, it is not attainable. This is because the idea of complete dissociation or detachment from the object of investigation by the investigator is impossible. There is always an element of the human factor in historical writings.

The scientists in this case can narrate events, using hypotheses and generalisations. That is where his work ends, he cannot study the minds and thinking of those individuals. Also, the scientists make use of general laws but history does not have a general law which guides historical thinking. This explains why the conclusion of one historian is different from the other. However, scientific history envisages that all historians should arrive at the same conclusion in their work. If this is applied, historians are heading for a doom. The mistake of one generation is passed unto the other.

Despite the limitations of scientific history, it is the only valid method applied in modern history. Thus, to achieve some level of objectivity in historical writings, scientific methods are required. This explains the interdisciplinary approach to modern history. This approach to scholarship in history has opened to the historian a world of new ideas, evidence and opportunities.

## ENDNOTES

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4. Ibid
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8. Olubomehin, The Issue of Objectivity in History, p.45
9. Berlin, The Concept of Scientific History, p.10
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26. O Olubomehin, *The Issue of Objectivity in History*, p. 55