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AFRICANISING AFRICAN HISTORY

Decolonisation of Knowledge in UNESCO's
General History of Africa (1964-1998)



Larissa Schulte Nordholt

This thesis researches how and why the UNESCO sponsored General History of Africa (1964–1998) sought to Africanise and decolonise the writing of African history in the wake of the political independence of many West African and East African countries in the early 1960s. As such, it provides a case-study on the practice of African historiography in the second half of the twentieth century. The thesis investigates how formulated ideals of a decolonisation of African history were translated into practice and analyses what this might tell us about the establishment of African history within the humanities and the history of decolonising knowledge production. The study is divided in three parts: the first part concerns the formulated ideals of African history as they came into being in opposition to eurocentrism during the 1960s and early 1970s. Part two shifts the focus to the realities of the ideals discussed in part one. How did the historians of the GHA try to bring their ideals into practice and what came of them during the long process of drafting the GHA? The third and final part of the thesis focuses on the reception and retrospective perception of the project in its final years and after it was finished.

