Africanising African history: decolonisation of knowledge in UNESCO's general history of Africa (1964-1998)

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INTRODUCTION

Taking pan-African historical initiative at Flagstaff House in Accra

The First International Congress of Africanists was organised in Accra, Ghana in December 1962.[1] It was no accident that the conference took place in Accra. The first All-African Peoples' Conference, which had demanded immediate political independence, had taken place there four years earlier. In Accra it quickly became clear that Africanists who hailed from outside the continent would have to take on a position of relative modesty when it came to deciding the future of African historical studies, as far as Africans themselves were concerned. The president of Ghana, the pan-African intellectual Kwame Nkrumah, and Kenneth Onwuka Dike, first African head of the historical department at Ibadan University in Nigeria gave the opening speeches. This was described by one of the delegates as follows: 'The two opening speeches reflected and projected the African scholars' abiding awareness of their dependence on the West, of their recognition of the massive power of Western Intellectual and Scientific traditions in their lives. There were also pleas to the Western delegates to be constantly aware

1 The term 'Africanist' or 'Africanism' was first used to refer to knowledge created about Africa on its own terms. It has since come to designate the study of Africa more generally, particularly in American and European contexts.

of their great wounding powers'.[2] Both Nkrumah and Dike therefore impressed upon the audience the importance for Africans to write their own history. Despite the fact that the two keynote speakers were both Anglophones, the congress included a significant number of Francophone Africans as well. The congress also aimed to bridge the east/west divide.[3] In the end, it left the African-American writer of the report quoted here with the impression that Africans were finally free from 'western' domination and able to write, and therefore shape, their own history. It was a meaningful milestone.

One of the attendees was a Kenyan historian and specialist in collecting Luo oral traditions through the use of oral history — one of the newly developed methods of African history which tried to defy European ideas of historical methodology — Bethwell Allan Ogot. He, too, felt that the Congress was a monumental occurrence; If only because it was during the Congress that he located the birth of what would later be called *The General History of Africa*, or *l'Histoire* Générale de *l'Afrique*. Nkrumah became an important figure in Ogot's narrative concerning the congress and the later creation of the *General History of Africa (GHA)*. In his autobiography, which appeared in 2003, Ogot described how Nkrumah had invited twelve African historians back to his official residence in Accra, Flagstaff House, to discuss the creation of a general history of the continent — to be sponsored by UNESCO. The number twelve was meaningful. According to Ogot, Nkrumah, raised a Catholic, compared the twelve historians to the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, thereby casting himself in the role of a pan-Africanist Christ. 'We were to be his cultural disciples' Ogot wrote.[4] Ogot, moreover, christened himself and the other eleven present 'African cultural activists'. In this way he articulated what it meant for him to be an African historian. The meeting took all night. The historians, spurred on by Nkrumah's 'African personality', a drink rather than a philosophy in this instance, stayed up to deliberate until 4 am. They spoke about the history of Africa as a whole,

2 Institute of Current World Affairs, CJP-10, The First International Congress of Africanists, Commonwealth Hall University of Ghana Legon, Ghana. Charles J. Patterson to Mr. Richard Nolte. December 18, 1962.

3 Jean Allman, "Kwame Nkrumah, African Studies, and the Politics of Knowledge Production in the Black Star of Africa" *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 46:2 (2013): 181-203, 196.

4 Bethwell Ogot, *My Footprints on the Sands of Time* (Kisumu: Ayange Press Limited, 2003), 384.

but, importantly, they discussed the future just as much. They decided, amongst other things, that the future capital of a 'United States of Africa' would have to be located in the Central African Republic.[5] Ogot in his description of the night at Flagstaff House made it clear that historical initiative was of the utmost importance, not just because of history itself, but because history had the capability of shaping nation states and political realities. History was not just an ethereal activity practiced by intellectuals far removed from society. Ogot, in his autobiography, connected the ability to write one's own history to the ability to shape one's own future. History was a political tool.

The meeting at Flagstaff house shows how much was at stake for African historians during the period of political decolonisation. During that time, writing history was a way to bequeath the emerging nation states with a national narrative and link these nationalities together in a larger pan-African narrative.[6] In 1964 UNESCO's thirteenth general conference made the decision to sponsor the project that had been discussed, possibly for the first time, at Flagstaff house two years earlier.[7] This marked the beginning of a more than 30 year project of writing African history in which the African initiative and African perspective would be favoured.[8] The *General History of Africa* was to be a collaborative project, encompassing the entirety of the history of the African continent from its prehistory until the present over the span of eight volumes of around 800 to 1000 pages each. Like the congress of its birth, moreover, it would aim to bridge Cold War divides in knowledge production. The GHA strove to be a revisionist history of Africa that would provide a pan-African and Afrocentric or Africa-centred vision

5 Ogot, *Footprints*, 384.

6 Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "*Présence Africaine* as Historiography: Historicity of Societies and Specificity of Black African Culture" in *The Surreptitious Speech. Présence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness 1947-1987*, ed. Valentin Mudimbe (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 95–117, 101.

7 UNESCO, *Records of the General Conference. Thirteenth Session, Resolutions, Paris 1964* (Paris: UNESCO, 1965), 66.

8 See Appendix I for a short explanation on the administrative organisation of the ISC.

of the entire continent, specifically including North Africa.[9] The GHA was also determined to include as many authors from the entire African continent and the diaspora as possible. It was led, from 1971 onwards, by an 'International Scientific Committee for the Drafting of a General History of Africa', consisting of 39 members, the majority of which were also African or of African descent.[10] The first volume was published in 1980 in French and in 1981 in English, the last volume appeared in 1993 in English and finally in French in 1998.

This thesis takes UNESCO's *General History of Africa* as a case study to investigate what it meant to Africanise African history. It therefore studies how an imagined pan-African decolonisation of African historiography was brought into practice in the decades during and after African independences in the 20th century and what political, intellectual, academic and practical difficulties the historians working on this project encountered in the process. The ambition to write a *General History of Africa* was motivated by the Euro-American denial of the

9 'Afrocentrism' has referred to both the idea that everything can be explained as stemming from Africa, as an inverse Eurocentrism, and as way to explain the world as seen from Africa and African viewpoints, rather than Europe and European viewpoints, but without positing Africa as the centre of the world. The term Afrocentrism has been most associated with African-American conceptions of history, specifically connected to Temple university, which sought to place the conception of civilisation in Africa, specifically Egypt. This type of Afrocentrism was conceived of by Cheikh Anta Diop, who also played an important role within the GHA. I shall return to his contribution in detail in chapter four. See: Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Molefi Kete Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); John Cullen Gruesser, *Black on Black. Twentieth-Century African American Writing about Africa* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000) and C. Tsehloane Keto, *The Africa Centered Perspective of History and Social Sciences in the Twenty First Century* (Blackwood: K.A. Publications, 1989) 1. In the French language, moreover, there are also different words sometimes used to describe these different meanings, *afrocentrisme* for the former meaning and *afrocentricité* for the latter. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "African Historiography in Africa South of the Sahara" *Revue Tiers Monde* 216 (2013): 111-127, 118. This dissertation will use the term 'Africa-centred' or 'Afrocentric' to mean that the GHA aimed to take Africa as a geographical starting point from which to create a historical narrative and a new historiographical logic. It specifically also uses Afrocentric because this is a term that historians within the GHA sometimes used themselves.

10 UNESCO archives Paris (hereafter UAP), SHC/CONF.70/8 rev. Paris 5 April 1971, First Plenary Meeting of the International Scientific Committee for the drafting of a General History of Africa, Rules of Procedure, Article 1, UNESCO, Paris, 30 March – 8 April 1971, 1.

existence of African historicity from the 19th century onwards.[11] The role Africa played in 19th century European historiography was uncomplicated. Africa was regarded as a site of difference.[12] Its history was described as a terra incognita — a 'dark continent' — in need of exploration. As a result, Africa, as a concept attracted a multitude of different clichés, narratives and ideas formulated from the outside. Yet, that outside gaze largely excluded 'Africa' itself from the historical agency to influence the narrative. The continent was excluded from historical thought as historical scholarship developed into a distinct discipline in 19th century Europe. Of course, this did not mean that Africans themselves did not engage in historiographical activity of their own.[13] Until the 1950s, however, the Euro-American academy mostly ignored historical thinking that was present on the African continent. This changed when during the swan song of colonisation and the long aftermath of decolonisation African historians trained in the historiographical tradition as it had developed in Europe began to assert themselves in an organised and collective manner.[14] They aimed to insert their continent into the Euro-American historiographical ra-

11 Throughout this work I use the terms 'Euro-American' and 'Euro-Americans' to refer to North-American and European institutions, North-America and Europe generally and white European and white American scholars. I use the term rather than 'western', which as a category is rather vague and hard to pin down. The term is moreover used instead of 'White' to emphasise the importance of the geographic location of these actors. It, secondly, also aims to separate the historians mentioned in this thesis from the systemic Whiteness and historic White supremacy from which they may benefit, but to which they do not always consciously subscribe. In other words, the term serves to emphasise a shared position and identity, but not to always identify those who the term describes with the system of white supremacy itself.

12 I use the term 'historiography' generally to refer to the historical discipline, the practice of writing history or the history of history writing. When used in its sense as the study of historical methods or the philosophy of history I will alert the reader.

13 In her book *Insurgent Empire* Priyamvada Gopal makes the argument for sensitivity to 'reversed pedagogy', the idea that anti-colonial intellectuals may have influenced European ideas on freedom and democracy rather than the other way around, as is conventional wisdom. This may also be the case for historiography as Gopal generalises Michel Trouillot's argument on the historiographical silence surrounding the Haitian revolution for struggles against colonialism. Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire. Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso Books, 2019). Daniel Woolf, moreover, details some of the early modern historiography of Africa in: Daniel Woolf, *A Concise History of History. Global Historiography from Antiquity to the Present*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 101–6.

14 Individual African scholars such as Africanus Horton and Sol Plaatje had previously emphasised the existence of an African past apart from European influences.

tionale that had hitherto excluded them. The intent was to prove that Africa had history towards a discipline that had long denied this fact. In doing so, the historians involved in the GHA project were caught in a paradoxical translation of the historical difference between their societies and Euro-American projections of modernity on those societies as part of the effort to negotiate inclusion in the post-colonial world order.

The *General History of Africa*, therefore, was a part of the process of decolonisation. In this work of historiographical scholarship, I argue that the African historians who aimed to rewrite African history from an African perspective were influenced by ideals of anti-colonial nation-building and epistemic diversity and tried to reconceptualise the historical discipline by Africanising it so that their histories would not be forgotten. To show why this particular case study is of interest, I will discuss the historiography that has led me to my research question, followed by a reflection on the concepts which form the theoretical backbone to this study. I will then conclude by providing an explanation of my methodology and the sources upon which this thesis is based as well as a description of the structure of this thesis.

Historiography

UNESCO sponsored the *General History of Africa* because it aimed to provide postcolonial states with a history of their own writing. The United Nations played an important role in the history of political decolonisation; both due to the fact that they published a declaration on decolonisation and because membership grew dramatically between 1945 and 1960 to include Asian and African states. This culminated in the 'year of Africa', when in 1960 seventeen new states, sixteen of them African, joined the UN, thereby shifting the balance of power — creating also the possibility of projects such as the GHA.[15] The study of decolonisation within international organisations and as a political phenomenon in which the transfer of sovereign power as well as national movements in newly independent countries are seen as key, has

15 Raymond F. Betts, "Decolonisation. A brief history of the word" in *Beyond Empire and Nation. The Decolonization of African and Asian societies, 1930s-1970s,* eds. Els Bogaerts and Remco Raben (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 23–37, 26.

been rich.[16] Most important for my purpose here is perhaps the 2019 study by Adom Getachew on the intellectual history of the political imagination of anti-colonial leaders during the era of decolonisation: *Worldmaking after Empire. The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination.* Getachew demonstrates that the new world order, imagined as a set of sovereign nation states, was anything but obvious as she focuses her analysis on the idea of decolonisation as a move away from 'western' domination and towards egalitarianism.[17] Matteo Grilli, in his book on Nkrumah's pan-African foreign policy, also argues that nationalism may be a limiting frame to understand the period of political decolonisation.[18] Getachew's book forms an especially interesting point of departure because it questions the very meaning of the word 'decolonisation' as a transition of power wherein African states more or less naturally adopted the system of Westphalian sovereignty. This thesis equally attempts to look at decolonisation or Africanisation of history writing as more than just the inevitable professionalisation of the historical discipline on the African continent through the creation of national histories and sees it also as a concerted effort to take control of one's own narrative from multiple African perspectives.[19]

That this happened within the realm of a UN organisation is perhaps not coincidental given the UN's stance towards decolonisation

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16 See: Ebere Nwaubani, *The United States and Decolonization in West Africa, 1950–1960* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001); Evan Luard, *A History of the United Nations. Volume 2: The Age of Decolonization, 1955–1965* (London: Macmillan, 1989); Elizabeth Smith, *Foreign Intervention in Africa. From the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Prasenjit Duara ed., *Decolonization: Perspectives From Now and Then* (London: Routledge, 2003); John D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa* (London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1988); John Darwin, *Britain and decolonization; The retreat from empire in the post-war world* (London: Macmillan, 1988); Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, eds., *The transfer of power in Africa; Decolonization 1940–1960.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) ; Henri Grimal, *La décolonisation de 1919 à nos jours* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1985 [1965]).

17 Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire. The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019)

18 Matteo Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism. Ghana's Pan-African Foreign Policy in the Age of Decolonization* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 7–12.

19 Pieter Boele van Hensbroek equally argues that we should approach African nationalism with an open mind and not just as a copy or adaptation of European thought. Pieter Boele van Hensbroek, "Philosophy of Nationalism in Africa" in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy,* ed. A. Afolayan and T. Falola (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 405––16, 405–6.

and the possibilities the organisation offered within the bipolar world system of the Cold War era. There are a number of studies that make an effort to conceptualise and historicise the way UNESCO moved as a historical actor itself, chief amongst them Chloé Maurels study of the first 30 years and Poul Duehdahl's work on the impact UNESCO made in various parts of the world.[20] The intellectual history of UNESCO, too, has been studied to some extent, specifically regarding the organisation's focus on cultural diversity, cultural relativism and the 'one world' idea.[21] There are also a few more linear histories of UNESCO as well studies that focus specifically on it's efforts at heritage conservation.[22] Yet, studies that focus explicitly on UNESCO as a historiographical actor or that examine the historiographical practice within UNESCO are scarce — even if there are some journal articles dealing with the organisation's attempts at writing a world history. They remain focused on the political implications of the project within the international order and its internationalist aspects.[23] They do not conscientiously examine UNESCO's historiographical output as part of the history of scholarship, nor as part of the history of intellectual decolonisation. This is the case despite the fact that UNESCO produced several General History projects, of which the *General History of Africa* was the first one and the most elaborate.[24] This study aims to

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20 Chloé Maurel, *Histoire de l'UNESCO: Les Trente Premières Années, 1945–1974* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010) and Poul Duedahl ed. *A History of UNESCO Global Actions and Impacts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

21 Roger-Pol Droit, *Humanity in the Making: Overview of the Intellectual History of UNESCO, 1945–2005* (Paris: UNESCO, 2005); Glenda Sluga, "UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley" *Journal of World History* 19:3 (2008): 393-418; R. Toye and J. Toye, "One World, Two Cultures?: Alfred Zimmerman, Julian Huxley and the Ideological Origins of UNESCO" *History* 95:319 (2010): 308-331.

22 Lynn Meskel, *A Future in Ruins. UNESCO, World Heritage and the Dream of Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Marie Huber, *Developing Heritage – Developing Countries. Ethiopian Nation-Building and the Origins of UNESCO World Heritage, 1960-1980* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021) and Fernando Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO* (UNESCO: Paris, 1995)

23 Paul Betts, "Humanity's New Heritage: UNESCO and the Rewriting of World History" *Past and Present* 228:1 (2015): 249-285; Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, "New Histories of the United Nations" *Journal of World History* 19:3 (2008): 251-274; Poul Duedahl, "Selling Mankind: UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945-1976" *Journal of World History* 22:1 (2011): 101-133.

24 Such as *The General History of Latin America, General History of the Caribbean* and *History of Civilizations of Central Asia.* "General and Regional Histories," UNESCO, accessed March 15, 2021, https://en.unesco.org/themes/generalregionalhistories

explicitly focus on the latter project: to produce a history of the GHA as a project of intellectual decolonisation within the history of the humanities.[25] It conceives of UNESCO not so much as a historical actor, but as an organisation made up of individuals that was used by African historians as a means to an end and a way to help launch the African academy as well as the individual careers of African historians.

The GHA itself contributed massively to the production of knowledge about Africa. Yet, despite the fact that over 300 intellectuals contributed to it, it has not been studied extensively and hardly at all as part of a longer tradition of anticolonial critique. It has been recognised as a project that contested eurocentrism as European perspectives on African history, but not conceptually questioned as such.[26] In 2014 Maurel, making use of her comprehensive research on UNESCO as an organisation, published an article about the GHA in which she identified it as a project of Afrocentric historiography and transnational intellectual cooperation. Maurel notes that the project contrasted with UNESCO's earlier endeavours to write a history of humanity, in that it was decidedly pan-African and sought to adorn the Afri-

25 'Decolonisation' throughout this thesis should be read as a multifaceted process that includes both the end of empire as well as the intellectual movement away from Euro-American epistemologies. I use the term in a much broader sense than the 21st century decolonial movement to include the history of decolonising knowledge, of which I argue the GHA is unequivocally a part, as well as current understandings of what it means to decolonise knowledge.

26 Within this thesis there are different ways in which I use the term 'Eurocentrism'. Firstly, I make use of the actor's perspective to denote how the GHA historians understood eurocentrism as scholarship that looked at African history from a European perspective, with European concerns in mind and that, moreover, placed Europe at the centre of world history. For this type of 'eurocentrism' I will use the non-capitalised term. Secondly, I also make use of the term 'Eurocentrism' when referring to the postcolonial argument that even beyond perspectives and concerns, 'Eurocentrism' can also pertain to the very organisation of categories of knowledge production within the history of modernity, such as 'state' or 'race'. These two conceptualisations, however, overlap in some instances because European theoretical universalism in the understanding of modernity stemmed from a conceptualisation of Europe as the centre of the world. Lastly, I also observe a focus on European case studies within the history of scholarship. I do not call this 'Eurocentrism' because it is not in and off itself Eurocentric to study European history. Eurocentrism, rather, describes either a distortion wherein the histories of non-European societies are studied from a European perspective, my actor's category, or it may describe a systematic mis-categorisation of European theories and histories as universal. The latter is the postcolonial argument.

can world with a history of its own.[27] This recognition that the GHA was one of the first big and global historical works to propagate an Afrocentric perspective was made by Muryatan Barbosa as well, who wrote a PhD thesis on the subject.[28] Maurel and others have investigated UNESCO's wish to promote the 'invention' of historiographical traditions in the postcolonial world. Casper Andersen specifically has written a noteworthy chapter on the GHA and its attempt to be taken seriously as part of postcolonial nation-building.[29] Andreas Eckert, too, has noted the GHA's role in the Africanisation of African history.[30] None of these contributions, however, really engage extensively with the GHA as part of a decolonisation of knowledge on a conceptual or practical level or as part of the history of scholarship, nor do they question the role of decolonisation as a cultural and epistemic phenomenon. Maurel, moreover, focuses her conceptual analysis on what the GHA can say about the history of international relations and the historiography of world history, rather than what it might tell us about African historiography itself or the history of academia.

The UN promoted the creation of historiographies for new nation states in an effort to contribute to postcolonial nation-building. It was an essential part of the UN's investment in world history, which started with the creation of UNESCO's *history of humanity*, the brainchild of Julian Huxley.[31] The first edition was completed in 1965 and was an

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27 Chloé Maurel, "L'histoire générale de l'Afrique de l'unesco: Un projet coopération intellectuele transnationale d'esprit afro-centré (1964–1999)" *Cahiers d'études africaines* 54:215 (2014): 715–737, 715–6.

28 Muryatan Santana Barbosa, "A construção da perspective Africana: uma história do projeto História Geral da África (Unesco). The construction of the African perspective: a history of the General History of Africa project (Unesco)" *Revista Brasileira de História* 32:64 (2012): 211–230 and Muryatan Santana Barbosa, "The African Perspective in the General History of Africa (Unesco)" *Tempo. Niterói.* 24:3 (2018): 400–21.

29 Casper Andersen, "UNESCO's General History of Africa, memory and the quest for relevance" in *Memory, Commemoration and the Politics of Historical Memory in Africa: Essays in Memory of Jan-Georg Deutsch,* eds. Cassandra Mark-Thiesen, Moritz Mihatsch and Michelle Sikes (Melton: James Curry, forthcoming 2022)

30 Andreas Eckert, "Auf der Suche nach der 'wahren' Geschichte Afrikas: Die UNESCO General History of Africa," *Periplus. Jahrbuch für außereuropäische Geschichte* 5 (1995): 178–83.

31 Maurel, "L'histoire générale de l'Afrique de l'unesco", 720 and Amrith and Sluga, "New Histories of the United Nations", 253, 269.

attempt to write a universal history of human progress.[32] African and Latin American observers, however, noted that it failed to sufficiently include their continents in the narrative, even if it did dedicate more pages to Jomo Kenyatta than some European leaders and declared decolonisation as the single-most important event of the 20th century. It continued to define African and Latin American history in relation to universal historical developments. But the universalism it espoused looked suspiciously European even if its rhetorical disavowal of eurocentrism had been at times revolutionary.[33] Such a disavowal of eurocentrism has always been a key, if elusive, aim of global history.[34]

The *General History of Africa*, then, was partly a reaction to the conceptual failure of UNESCO's history of humanity, which was used as a counter model for the GHA. However, it needs to be stressed that the creation and sponsorship of the GHA was also, and maybe more importantly, an opportunity for upcoming African intellectuals to write and shape autonomous African history. The GHA was successful in that it inspired the creation of several more general histories; a *General History of Latin America*, a *History of the Civilisations of Central Asia*, a *General History of the Caribbean* and a *History of the Different Aspects of Islam*, formerly called the *General History of Islam*.[35] All these general histories focused on 'people writing their own history' and the inclusion of 'local historians, with impeccable academic credentials.'[36] The GHA's inclusion and promotion of non-European, African, historians in an effort to stimulate diverse narratives then, became a part of the other General History projects as well. As such it seems necessary to analyse the project for its emancipatory purpose as an intellectual project of decolonisation as well as a project of extraordinary international cooperation. I will therefore delve into the GHA for its decolonising mission and its, sometimes, radical exploration into the meaning and philosophy of African history as part of the history of

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32 Koïchiro Matsuura, "Preface", in *History of Humanity. Scientific and Cultural Development. Volume VI The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Peter Mathias and Nikolaï Todorov (Paris: UNESCO, 2008), V.

33 Betts, "Humanity's New Heritage", 271-2, 278, 282-3

34 Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 211.

35 "General and Regional Histories," UNESCO, accessed September 18, 2020, https://en.unesco.org/themes/generalregionalhistories

36 Ibid, accessed June 18, 2018, https://en.unesco.org/themes/generalregionalhistories

decolonisation within scholarship. The GHA was part of the history of emancipation within Euro-American academia and knowledge creation and should therefore be regarded from a history of scholarship perspective that includes the history of decolonising knowledge.

To look at the GHA from a history of scholarship perspective, or rather, as part of the history of the humanities, it is necessary to ascertain how it has been treated within the history of its own discipline. The study of historiography, however, has long been a European endeavour. Recently historians and philosophers of history have tried to amend that one sidedness.[37] One example is the forum on *Decolonizing Histories* in the journal *History and Theory*, which, like this dissertation, posits the question of what a decolonisation of history writing could look like in practice.[38] Emma Hunter, moreover, has argued that African history as a project is part of a decolonising practice.[39] The GHA was an essential part of this practice because of its central role within African historiography after the Second World War. It is named in virtually all recent historiographical overviews of global historiography.[40] Toyin Falola contributed a chapter on Africa in Q. Edward Wang and Georg Iggers' *Turning points in Historiography*, in which he classifies the GHA as 'the ultimate achievement of nationalist histori-

37 There have been historiographic studies of specifically the independence period in African historiography, see: Caroline Neale, *Writing 'Independent' History. African Historiography 1960–1980.* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985); Lidwien Kapteijns, *African Historiography written by Africans, 1955–1973: The Nigerian Case* (Amsterdam: PhD Diss. University of Amsterdam, 1977), also see this study on the development of Yoruba historiography in the 19th century: Michel R. Doortmont, *Recapturing the past. Samuel Johnson and the construction of the history of the Yoruba* (Rotterdam: PhD Diss. Erasmus University Rotterdam, 1994) as well as appraisals of the field from those who participated in it themselves: Bogumil Jewsiewicki and David Newbury eds., *African Historiographies. What History for Which Africa?* (London: Sage Publications, 1986)

38 Warwick Anderson, "Decolonizing Histories in Theory and Practice: An Introduction", *History and Theory* 59:3 (2020): 369–75, 371.

39 Amanda Behm et al., "History on the Line. Decolonzing History: Enquire and Practice", *History Workshop Journal* 89 (2020): 169–91, 172.

40 See, for instance, the Francophone encyclopedia of African, Asian and American historiography, in which the editors pay homage to the GHA: Nathalie Kouamé, Éric P. Meyer and Anne Viguier eds., *Encyclopédie des Historiographies: Afriques, Amériques, Asies. Volume 1 : sources et genres historiques (Tome 1 et Tome 2)* (Paris: Presses de l'Inalco, 2020), 15. Thomas Spear ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of African historiography: Methods and Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) also includes multiple references to the GHA, in the entries about the Dakar and SOAS schools of African history, for instance.

ography.'[41] In this piece and others, and again in his book on *Nationalism and African intellectuals*, Falola argues that the *General History of Africa* was part of the early wave of post-independence nationalist or what was otherwise called Africanist historiography. This was often identified with the Ibadan school of history, but also similar in outlook to Makerere, Dakar and Ghana Legon.[42] In another volume by Wang and Iggers, which aims to provide the reader with an overview of the history of historical scholarship from a global perspective, the same point is made.[43] Africanist historiography has often been connected to European nationalist historiography of the 19th century; both were engaged in providing their nations states with historical narratives as a part of what scholars have called nation-building.[44] Similar observations regarding post-independence historiography in Africa as essentially nationalist were also made by contemporaries and contributors to the GHA as well.[45] In *A Global History of History* Daniel Woolf, too, argues that the GHA should best be understood as an African attempt to apply European methods to the African past.[46] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza argues that post-independence historiography had never successfully managed to write history with a sensitivity to everyday African realities in the present. It had been preoccupied with elites through the study of organised political entities in the service of nationalism.[47] There are a series of publications from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s that express similar kinds of, sometimes Marxist inspired, critique

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41 Toyin Falola, "Nationalism and African Historiography" in: *Turning Points in Historiography: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, eds. Q. Edward Wang and Georg G. Iggers (Rochester: The University of Rochester Press, 2002), 209–236, 224.

42 Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 227, 237

43 Georg G. Iggers and Edward Q. Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008), 298.

44 See: Stefan Berger, *Writing the nation: a global perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

45 Jewsiewicki and Newbury eds., *African Historiographies*.

46 Daniel Woolf, *A Global History of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 443–6. Also see Woolf, *A Concise History of History,* 262 and Markus Völkel, *Geschichtsschreibung: Eine Einführung in globaler Perspektive* (Cologne, UTB GmbH, 2006), 15, 366.

47 Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1997), 88–112, 90–1. Also see Arnold J. Temu and Bonaventure Swai, *Historians and Africanist history: a critique: post-colonial historiography examined* (London: Zed Press, 1981).

and which explore nationalist historiography from their own historiographical moment and to which some GHA historians themselves contributed.[48] Moreover, the GHA was itself chided for making use of European categories of analysis.[49] I argue that although all of the above appraisals are true, the GHA was more complicated in its emancipatory goals and should, moreover, not be identified with just nationalist historiography.[50] It, furthermore, should not be read outside of its historical context of political decolonisation, which explains its nationalist tendencies. The GHA was both the culmination of post-independence Africanist historiography as well as a project of anti-colonial intellectual decolonisation that was deeply engaged in questions of identity; what it meant to be an African studying African history.[51] We should therefore not judge the GHA by the standards of postcolonial critique which argues that the project never really escaped the European epistemic frameworks it meant to question, for that would be reading back into history a problem space that did not yet exist.[52] That, however, does not mean we should not question the position of the GHA within the landscape of postcolonial knowledge production.

As part of the history of scholarship there is one other body of literature to which this study of the GHA belongs: The study of knowledge production in an African context and the history of African studies as a discipline, which includes work by the aforementioned Zeleza

48 Jewsiewicki and Newbury eds., *African Historiographies*.

49 Eckert, "Auf der Suche nach der 'wahren' Geschichte Afrikas", 178–83 and Bogumil Jewsiewicki and V.Y. Mudimbe, "Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa" *History and Theory* 32:4 (1993): 1–11.

50 Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch moreover argues that the work has not lost relevance. Coquery-Vidrovitch, "African Historiography", 120.

51 A similar argument regarding the pursuit of 'authenticity' within African historiography was made by E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo, "From African Historiographies to an African Philosophy of History", *Afrika Zamani* 7/8 (1999–2000): 41–89.

52 Which this essay argues: Finn Fuglestad, "The Trevor-Roper Trap or the Imperialism of History. An Essay." *History in Africa* 19 (1992): 309–326.

as well as others.[53] This literature engages in questions about the materiality and politics of knowledge production, sometimes from a decolonial perspective. It criticises contemporary dynamics of African knowledge production through an appraisal of its history and the way this was influenced by geopolitics. Specifically, it questions and historicises the fact that the location of the majority of academic inquiry into Africa is still based in Euro-American institutions, including this work. Questions of public relevance and value (value for whom and by what measure?) trouble these academics in 21st century African studies. The very idea of 'African Studies' could be seen as problematic as they may suggest a study of what is different within Africa vis-à-vis Europe, which is rarely ever treated as an 'area', primarily because the Euro-American academy is hegemonic. African studies are seen as bringing together all knowledge on Africa under one signifier, in ways that knowledge about Europe rarely ever is. Even if the argument could be made that area studies serve a purpose in their recognition of the unicity of a certain place and a certain expertise that is particular to that place, it is still perceived as awkward that African studies has primarily had an external orientation.[54] Meaning, it is, by and large, mostly not produced by Africans, but rather, on them and therefore not always relevant to them. This might begin to explain why critique regarding European categories of analysis, articulated during the period under discussion here and again as part of postcolonial studies have not yet been answered satisfactorily. I therefore draw on histories of African studies. I show how changing dynamics within the global politics of knowledge production in the bipolar world of the 20th century

53 See: Paul Tiyambe Zeleza ed., *The Study of Africa. Volume 1: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2006); Paul Tiyambe Zeleza ed., *The Study of Africa Volume 2: Global and Transnational Engagements* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2007); Zeleza, *Manufacturing African Studies,* Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Siphamandla Zondi eds., *Decolonizing the University, Knowledge Systems and Disciplines in Africa* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2016); William G. Martin and Michael O. West eds., *Out of One, Many Africas. Reconstructing the Study and Meaning of Africa* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Pearl T. Robinson, "Area Studies in Search of Africa" in *The Politics of Knowledge. Area Studies and the Disciplines* ed. David Szanton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 118–83 and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa. Deprovincialization and Decolonization* (London: Routledge, 2018)

54 Wyatt MacGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture: The Conceptual Challenge of the Particular* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 6.

influenced the daily practice of knowledge production about Africa within the GHA.

Another reason for an enduring focus on Europe as centre of understanding, besides the Euro-American predominance within African studies, may have to do with a continuing focus on Europe within the disciplines that study the history of academic knowledge production — to which I am also responding. In an effort to break through this and some of these other aforementioned issues, this work aims to bridge the analytical divide between the study of Africa and the study of scholarship in that it approaches the transnational GHA as part of both American, European and African worlds of scholarship. As part of that, discussions on inclusion and exclusion within the writing of academic history are central to this study. Discussions on the formation of scholarly personae, which are focused on mechanisms of academic inclusion and exclusion, form another perspective from which to engage in the emergence of African historical studies.[55] Personae tell us something about collective cultural identities as well as individual positioning and performances of scholarship through individual lives.[56] Studies of scholarly personae generally highlight the relation between individual lives and collective scholarly identities and as such note in what way the creation of knowledge is related to the bearer of knowledge.[57] The inclusion of postcolonial intellectuals into the Euro-American academy in this moment therefore offer new ways through which to study the interaction between models of scholarship as they had been created in Europe and America, including exclusionary racism and, in this context, African ideals of intellectualism and equality.

The study of scholarly personae has so far remained focused primarily, although not exclusively, on European scholarship and Euro-

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55 Herman Paul, "What is a Scholarly Persona? Ten Theses on Virtues, Skills, and Desires" *History and Theory* 53: 3 (2014): 348–371 and Herman Paul, "The Virtues and Vices of Albert Naudé: Toward a History of Scholarly Personae" *History of the Humanities* 1:2 (2016): 327–338.

56 Herman Paul, "Introduction: Scholarly personae: what they are and why they matter" in *How to be a Historian. Scholarly Personae in Historical Studies, 1800–2000,* ed. Herman Paul (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 1–15, 3–7

57 Lorraine Daston and H. Otto Sibum, "Introduction: Scientific Personae and Their Histories" *Science in Context* 16:1-2 (2003): 1–8, 7 and Kirsti Niskanen and Michael J. Barany, "Introduction: The Scholar Incarnate" in *Gender, Embodiment, and the History of the Scholarly Persona,* eds. Kirsti Niskanen and Michael J. Barany (London: Palgrave macmillan, 2021), 1–17, 3.

pean case studies.[58] This dissertation therefore further draws on the recent global turn in intellectual history, central to which are transfers, criticisms, and negotiations of so-called 'western' templates and categories of thought in 'non-western' contexts.[59] African historians in the GHA invite us to adopt a macro perspective of the development of scholarly personae, since they engaged in a dichotomous critique of nothing less than 'Europe' and the 'eurocentric' historian. Formulated ideals of scholarship within the GHA might teach us something about the history of emancipation from European modes of thinking within the historical discipline specifically and the academy generally. I aim to answer questions on the intersection of global history and the history of the humanities that have so far gone unanswered: What did models of scholarship which purposefully sought to criticise the existing ideal of 'good scholarship' from an African perspective look like? This study therefore takes the GHA as a pars pro toto for the emerging collection of scholars studying African history and therefore enriches the study of scholarly personae.

The GHA may be especially suitable for this purpose because the project focused on historiographical actors. As a project it was particular about which scholars were and were not welcomed as directors of volumes and as authors. Africans were favoured. This entailed the creation of new ideals and practices of what it meant to be a historian writing African history. The project attracted many celebrated Afri-

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58 There are of course some exceptions, scholars such as Michael Facius, Q. Edward Wang and João Rodolfo Munhoz Ohara have applied to framework of scholarly personae or selfhood to Japanese, Chinese and Brazilian historiography. Q. Edward Wang, "Interpretative and investigative: the emergence and characteristics of modern scholarly personae in China, 1900–30" in *How to be A Historian. Scholarly Personae in Historical Studies, 1800–2000.* ed. Herman Paul (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2019), 107–129; João Rodolfo Munhoz Ohara, "Virtue Language and Boundary Drawing in Modern Brazilian Historiography: a reading of Historians of Brazil, by Francisco Iglésias" *História da Historiografia* 12:30 (2019): 44–70 and Michael Facius, "A Rankean Moment in Japan: The Persona of the Historian and the Globalization of the Discipline c. 1900" *Modern Intellectual History* (2020) doi: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000335. See also my own contribution on the GHA: Larissa Schulte Nordholt, "What is an African historian? Negotiating scholarly personae in UNESCO's *General History of Africa*", in *How to be a Historian. Scholarly Personae in Historical Studies, 1800–2000,* ed. Herman Paul (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2019), 182–201. The relatively young journal, *History of Humanities* has also laudably included more non-European perspectives in its issues, especially in its special issue on *decentralizing the history of the humanities* (2021)

59 Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, ed., *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Pres, 2013)

can historians, mostly from Eastern and Western Africa; such as Adu Boahen, Jacob Festus Ade Ajayi, Joseph Ki-Zerbo and Cheikh Anta Diop. Educated at least partly at Euro-American institutions, these were people who stood at the forefront of African historical studies at the time and as a result they were constantly engaged in fundamental questions of discipline formation regarding the meaning and purpose of African history in a world that seemed like it was being remade after the Second World War. Not all of those who laid the groundworks however were Africans and notwithstanding the project's aims to include as many African authors as possible, European and American authorities on the African continent were also included and played important roles. Jean Devisse, for instance, became an indispensable contributor in his role as *rapporteur* and Jan Vansina as well became a key figure, often fulfilling multiple roles at once. Philip Curtin and Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch also contributed more than one chapter each. The latter was one of the few Marxist-oriented historians to be included and, more important perhaps, one of the few women, too. There were only two black African women who played a (minor) part in the GHA, Mutumba Bull and Abeodu Bowen Jones.[60] The GHA's exclusion of more African women is telling, specifically because it thought of itself as an inclusive pan-African project. South African historians were also notably absent from the project. The GHA historians nevertheless realised that perspective and identity mattered when it came to the writing of history. They, as Vansina would later put it in his autobiography, realised the 'essential role of subjectivity' in historiography and set to rethink historiography concerning the African continent.[61]

Research questions

Following from the historiography discussed above, this study seeks to research what the case of the GHA may tell us about a decolonisation of the writing of history and its challenges during the period of independence and political decolonisation. My research question is the following:

60 Maurel, "L'histoire générale de l'Afrique de l'unesco", 717.

61 Jan Vansina, *Living With Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 100.

Why was the ideal of 'African history', as formulated by the African historians who instigated the General History of Africa, difficult to translate into practice?

To answer this question, I have divided it into sub questions. Firstly, I will reconstruct what the GHA's ideals of decolonisation were. What did the initiators of the GHA envision an Africanised or decolonised history of Africa should look like in terms of, content, personnel and public? Secondly, I will research what came of these ideals in practice during the long process of drafting the GHA. In what way did GHA historians have to adjust their initial ideals and what were factors causing such an adjustment or negotiation of formulated ideals? Thirdly and finally, I will analyse how both GHA historians as well as historians of Africa more generally related to the results of 34 years of work after the project was finished. How did both insiders and outsiders reflect on the project after it was finished and how did such perceptions influence the way the project was remembered? I ponder this last question because it turned out the ideals formulated in the 1960s and early 1970s were not always easy to bring into practice as a result of practical, financial, political and ideological difficulties. I therefore analyse why it was difficult for African historians to translate their ideals of Africanising African history into historiographical practice.

This question is especially pertinent to ask because although the *General History of Africa* was praised for representing an authentic African historiography, it was simultaneously criticised for not really moving beyond the conceptualisations and methodologies it so ardently critiqued as racist and colonialist.[62] I want to argue, however, that this does not mean that the project does not merit further analysis in terms of its historical moment, as I have already noted above. Not because the GHA aimed at profound epistemic change, but because the project of Africanisation was not entirely successful on its own terms either and postcolonial critique concurrently emerged as a result of newly arisen problems. I show that an earlier generation already tried to recentre knowledge production about Africa in the continent itself and that postcolonial critics in part responded to their failure. This failure was not entirely the fault of this earlier genera-

62 Eckert, "Auf der Suche nach der 'wahren' Geschichte Afrikas" 178-83 and Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe, "Africans' Memories", 2.

tion, but partly a result, not only of the categories of analysis they wielded, but also of geopolitical and financial contexts. Moreover, as argued by David Scott, amongst others, the first generation of African historians can hardly be blamed for not identifying a problem that had not yet emerged.[63] The coloniality of knowledge that postcolonial critics sought to unearth could not have become visible without previous study of non-European areas and histories. It is therefore pertinent to ask how ideals of African history, whilst being mindful of the fact that ideals are, per definition, very different from practices, formulated in the wake of political independence translated into a practice of Africanisation and why this was not always entirely successful.

The study of GHA as part of the global history of historiography that follows from this question provides a much needed and crucial case study to complement books providing general overviews and theoretical reflections. The case study, secondly, is located on the intersection of two discussions within the history of the humanities: the aforementioned field of the global history of historiography as well as questions pertaining to the decolonisation of history in practice. As such, this thesis also aligns with a practical turn in the history of scholarship, which concerns itself with everyday realities of scholarship, or, in this case, what historians actually do on a daily basis.[64] It follows a perceptive observation made by Lyn Schumaker that, 'when practices become standardised and mythologised, scientists call them methods.' Like Schumaker, whose book title has inspired mine, I show what daily practices made up the creation of historical knowledge about Africa in the 20th century through collaborative practices, but in the context of decolonisation.[65] This thesis is both an attempt to challenge the focus on Europe within the history of historiography as well as a history of decolonising knowledge in practice. Decolonisation of knowledge as it is being called for in 21st century academia, inspired by postcolonial critique, I argue, has a history of its own and the rewriting and

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63 David Scott, *Refashioning Futures. Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 10-15.

64 See: Markus Friedrich, Philipp Müller and Michael Riordan, "Practices of Historical Research in Archives and Libraries from the Eighteenth to the Nineteenth Century" *History of Humanities* 2:1 (2017): 3-13, Daniel J. Hicks and Thomas A. Stapleford, "The Virtues of Scientific Practice: MacIntyre, Virtue Ethics, and the Historiography of Science" *Isis* 107:3 (2016): DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/688346

65 Lyn Schumaker, *Africanzing Anthropology. Fieldwork, networks, and the making of cultural knowledge in Central Africa.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 8.

reshaping of African history during the period of independence is a crucial and essential part of it. Decolonisation, in this thesis, should be read as a multifaceted historical process which has not yet come to an end in the 21st century, but has merely shifted from direct questions on political sovereignty and nationalism to questions of cultural and economic interdependence.[66] This thesis nevertheless aims to recall a moment in history during which issues of intellectual independence were being discussed, but in a way that differs from the 21st century and with different political stakes.

The colonial library

In this section, I will delve into the theoretical underpinnings of my study of the UNESCO *General History of Africa* and explain some of the concepts that play a pivotal role therein. The GHA aimed to negate Africa's position as a marginalised part of the globe by rewriting African history from an Africa-centred perspective. This meant that history would be constructed using African sources primarily. For instance, by recognising the value of oral historiography as a worthwhile tool in the reconstruction of pre-literate African societies and placing these narratives at the centre of historical explanation.[67] Yet, this tended to treat oral material as if it was text. This was the case partly because historians working on the GHA had to convince historians of Europe that non-written societies also had history, or, that decentralised societies, such as that of the Igbo in Nigeria or the Luo in Kenya, had something akin to what Euro-American thinkers had called 'civilisation' or 'states', in terms that were understandable by pre-existing standards of historical scholarship. In their efforts to demand an inclusion for African history within the Euro-American historical discipline, Afrocentric or Africa-centred historians within the GHA were dealing with European projections of what constituted history on their societies.

This conceptual problem has been theorised by a multitude of postcolonial thinkers. The Congolese philosopher Valentin Mudimbe, most

66 Raymond F. Betts, "Decolonisation. A brief history of the word" in *Beyond Empire and Nation. The Decolonization of African and Asian societies, 1930s-1970s,* eds. Els Bogaerts and Remco Raben (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 23-37, 26.

67 Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), 116. Oral historiography refers to both the methodology of oral history as well as oral traditions as a genre of source material, David Henige, *Oral Historiography* (London: Longmans, 1982), 2.

notably in this context, argued that 'Africa' as a concept was an imaginary construction by European outsiders and, importantly, African insiders as well. Like Edward Said before him concerning 'the Orient', Mudimbe analysed the creation of an African alterity.[68] He specifically observed how African methods of knowing, African epistemologies, had become entangled with the creation of a Euro-American epistemological system of superiority. Mudimbe argued that Africa as an idea in modernity had essentially been invented by Europeans from the 15th century onwards, culminating in the creation of a colonial library. As a concept the term 'colonial library' refers to a constellation of 'western' mythologies, racisms and narratives of what constitutes the 'dark continent' — a term which was and is in itself a part of that very colonial library.[69] Anthropology and ethnology had been the disciplines within the European academy that had most contributed to a body of knowledge that distinguished between Africa as the Other and 'the west' as the Same, otherwise known as tradition and modernity.[70] Knowledge produced about Africa, Mudimbe argued, was therefore grounded in the early stages of the discipline of anthropology and may have said more about those producing it than about those who were the object of such production.[71]

Protest or rather reaction against this colonial library is as old as colonialism itself and also forms a key part of the history of decolonisation. African and black intellectuals from the 19th century onwards, such as the West Indian Edward Wilmot Blyden had already started asserting that the specific cultures of African peoples needed to be preserved and promoted in order to resist Euro-American cultural hegemony and the erasure of an African uniqueness.[72] The intellectuals

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68 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978)

69 V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988)

70 Mudimbe frames this assertion in a structuralist paradigm because he uses the work of Clause Lévi-Strauss as a starting point from which to investigate the possibility of anthropological knowledge about Africa. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, 16–22.

71 'Africa' or African studies were part of the fundaments upon which the theoretical and methodological basics of anthropology was built. Sally Falk Moore, "Changing Perspectives on a Changing Africa: The Work of Anthropology" in *Africa and the disciplines: the contributions of research in Africa to the social sciences and humanities* eds. Robert H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe and Jean O'Barr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3-57 and Moses, *Afrotopia*, 18-43.

72 Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, 54-94.

who began advocating for a *General History of Africa*, continued this reaction against what Mudimbe called the colonial library. They, too, were concerned with a restoration and preservation of specific African heritage, in the form of history. They were determined to showcase what they called the African initiative in history. African history, they declared, had not just been a part of European history. This was a challenge to the very notion that Europeans had been the key determinant in African history.[73] Being free, from Europe, from racism and imperialism, from anything non-African essentially, was key. As part of this process, however, postcolonial thinkers who have concerned themselves specifically with historicity and the historical discipline and its importance for public intellectual life, have noted that for history to become truly 'decolonised' a necessary step is to move away from European paradigms in explaining non-European pasts.

In 2000 Dipesh Chakrabarty published his now seminal work *Provincializing Europe*, in which he problematised the use of European categories in historical explanations of post-colonial modernity.[74] In order for the specific past of localities outside colonising Europe to be understood on their own terms, historians had to move past the idea that Europe could be used as a universal model on which to base theories written about the rest of the world. Europe, in other words, had to be provincialised, to be understood on its own terms as well.[75] Chakrabarty called this History 1 and History 2; wherein History 1 referred to 'universal historical logic' and History 2 referred to historical differences 'on the ground'.[76] This did not express a kind of historical relativism, but rather commanded the historian towards the need to hold notions of modernity and historical differences in perpetual tension. It was meant to make historians realise that they had conflated certain aspects of History 1 and History 2.[77] Chakrabarty, and many others before and after him, wanted Europe to recognise its particularity and to distil from European history what was and what was not universal. Europe was to re-become a province of universal history rather than

73 Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, 240.

74 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)

75 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 3-6.

76 Ibid, 62-71.

77 Dipesh Chakrabarty, "In Defense of "Provincializing Europe": A Response to Carola Dietze" *History and Theory* 47:1 (2008): 85-96, 92.

its metropole. The assignment thereby put to the historical discipline by Chakarbarty, which echoes through most postcolonial theory, has proven hard to fulfil.

Race could be seen as one of those universalisms that was developed in Europe to categorise the rest of the world.[78] For some time, it was difficult for African historians to be seen as truly objective by Euro-Americans due to the difference inherently installed in their race. They were caught in the dubious inheritance of 19th century racialism.[79] Racialism here refers to the idea that humanity could be classified into different and distinct 'races' with heritable characteristics that are shared. In a racialist view of the world these characteristics constituted a racial essence. Much of 19th and early 20th century European intellectual thought and academic study on non-European areas is based on these assumptions.[80] That racial essence was called 'extrinsic racism' by Kwame Anthony Appiah — the idea that one should treat races differently based on these inherited characteristics. 'Intrinsic' racism, moreover, describes the, conscious or unconscious, idea that one race is superior over the other, that there is a moral difference between races and that no matter the success or intellect of someone from the other, inferior, race, they will always remain different and shall therefore be treated differently.[81] 'Racism' in the colloquial use of the word is usually not based on such a thought-through idea of racialism. Rather, it is the result of special advantages that are derived from assumed differences in races, which result in a vested interest to uphold those advantages and which do stem from racialist and racist ideas on superiority and inferiority of other perceived races. That in-

78 See Will Bridges' work on the 'inhumanities', on the exclusion of certain humans – the enslaved - from the studies of the humanities as well as the contribution the humanities have made to dehumanising logics that tended to place black Africans outside of humanity, Will Bridges, "A Brief History of the Inhumanities." *History of Humanities* 4:1 (2019): 1-26: http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/701981

79 For a good summary of the discussion on the historical origins of racism and whether we should look for them in modernity or pre-modernity, see: Vanita Seth, "The Origins of Racism. A Critique of the History of Ideas" *History and Theory* 59:3 (2020): 343-68.

80 For a good study on the 'recalibration' of racial politics as a justification for empire in 20th century Africa, see: Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870-1950* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 217-259.

81 Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 13-15.

feriority is linked to difference: the word 'race' usually only comes in use when referring to an 'other' and therefore it almost subconsciously pertains to that other — the African in this context.

Simultaneously, the concept of race has been adopted throughout the black world — in a political sense of the word 'black' — as an emancipatory mechanism. It has been a declaration of identity, the consciousness of blackness morphing into the freeing ideology of black consciousness, part of a long history of resistance and anti-colonialism. The notion of race, or blackness, then, refers to a double spectrum, both damming and freeing. In the context of the GHA it is, moreover, inherently connected to universal Human Rights, for the constitution of black humanity contains the idea that humanity extends beyond the white European. UNESCO's denunciation of racism in 1947 follows from this idea and the GHA was in a way a logical result of the ideology that all humans deserved equal treatment and therefore history — echoed in Amilcar Cabral's call for the 'inalienable right' of Africans to have their own history.[82] The GHA's focus on pan-Africanist African history cannot be seen as entirely separate from the emancipatory efforts of those who conceptualised (political) blackness in order to further emancipation. Yet, at the same time, precisely because of its biological essentialising tendencies racialism had been made suspect within the GHA. However, even though 'race' as such does not correspond to a biological reality, it nevertheless structures the lives of those who undergo racialisation and this was no different for the historians working on the GHA. Scholars understand this presence of race as a socially meaningful category of identity that can and should therefore be studied as a part of society.[83] As a result of this understanding, scholars have also delved into the study of white people as a distinct social and racial grouping.[84]

Throughout this thesis, I will make use of race as a category that is historically determined and will be attentive to the socio-economic and historically and culturally determined context of race as it played out within the practice of decolonisation. This is the case also for the role

82 Amilcar Cabral, *United and Struggle. Speeches and Writings* (London: Heinemann, 1980), 130.

83 See for instance: Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory. An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 10-11.

84 See for instance: Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010)

of whiteness within the history of the GHA. Such attention to the historically and socially determined role of race within the history of scholarship, I argue, is an important part of unravelling the everyday practice of Africanising history and the problems that such a project ran into. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni has argued that decolonising historiography during the period of the GHA was akin to deracialising it.[85] A focus on race as a historically and socially mediated position may therefore highlight the various issue that the GHA ran into by virtue of its agenda of deracialisation in a world that was still thoroughly racialised.

It should be noted therefore that 'decolonisation' can refer to a multitude of different epistemological interpretations and aims as well as the historical phenomenon of the end of empire itself.[86] In his seminal *Les damnés de la terre* (1961) Frantz Fanon first treated decolonisation as a process that involved the whole of society and which thereby transcended the purely political.[87] Following from Fanon and others, the construction of decolonisation as a concept and critical angle developed as a way to analyse both the past and present of formerly colonial societies, akin to but not the same as 'postcolonial'. The African-Caribbean context also has its own Marxist tradition criticising colonialism, to be associated with Eric Williams and C.L.R. James. Decolonial thinking is a part of this and principally associated with a Latin American group of thinkers, most notably Walter Mignolo.[88] Decolonial analysis therefore, is often focused on the production of knowledge. In an African context, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, however, makes the case that the decolonising projects of the post-independence period are truncated and that decolonisation as a turn away from European ways of thinking has to further permeate institutional structures.[89] These thinkers as well as the older traditions described above have

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85 Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "The Imperative of Decolonizing the Modern Westernized University" in *Decolonizing the University, Knowledge Systems and Disciplines in Africa,* eds. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Siphamandla Zondi (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2016), 27-46, 42-43.

86 See for instance the roundtable mentioned above which engages with the theory, history, and practice of decolonisation: Behm et al., "History on the Line", 169-191

87 Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: Maspero, 1961)

88 Walter Mignolo, *On decoloniality: concepts, analytics, and praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018)

89 Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "The Imperative of Decolonizing", 39-43; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa,* 162-3, 176-81.

today inspired new groups to demand a decolonisation of the university in the form of liberation from Euro-American hegemony in the academy as well as economic justice, particularly in South Africa.[90]

This particular study, however, focuses on decolonisation as Africanisation or deracialisation in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, which could be seen as a different although not unrelated phase within the history of decolonisation. It should not just be considered as a prehistory of 21st century calls for a decolonisation of academia, but rather as a different episode within the same narrative.[91] It thereby attempts to repair a certain amnesia present in our current moment. As such, this thesis locates the GHA as situated within a long emancipatory tradition of 'moving away from the west'. Mudimbe's as well as Chakrabarty's work are themselves part of this tradition and of the history of liberation from European epistemologies.

Methodology and primary sources

This section will detail what methods and sources I use throughout this thesis in order to answer why the ideal of African history as formulated within the GHA was so difficult to translate into practice. I will make use of historiographical methods of source criticism through close-reading and contextualisation. As already detailed above I am indebted to the scholarly personae as an important methodological angle and, like those who have developed the concept, look at the history of scholarship not just through its intellectual output, but through the 'doings' of those who produce that output. I take the critical angle of postcolonial studies to augment this with a sensitivity to the discursive and social aspect of these doings — equally influenced by scholars

90 See: Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa,* 221-42; Gurminder K. Bhambra, Kerem Nişancioğlu and Dalia Gebrial, *Decolonising the University* (London: Pluto Press, 2018); Lynn Hewlett et al., "Key Features of Student Protest Across Historical Periods in Sub-Saharan Africa" in *Fees Must Fall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa,* ed. Susan Booysen (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016), 330-4 and Jonathan D. Jansen ed., *Decolonisation in Universities. The Politics of Knowledge* (Johanesburg: Wits University Press, 2019), see also, in a Dutch context, to which this thesis also belongs: Melissa F. Weiner and Antonio Carmona Báez, ed., *Smash the pillars: decoloniality and the imaginary of color in the Dutch Kingdom* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018)

91 Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "The Imperative of Decolonizing", 42-43.

who have concerned themselves with personae.[92] At the same time, I offer a reconstruction of decolonising modes of scholarship, including but not exclusive to its intellectual output, before postcolonialism, but not as a prehistory of postcolonialism. I do not necessarily aim to write a narrative that shows how and where postcolonial critique finds its origins, but rather wish to recall a moment in the history of decolonisation that is different from such postcolonial critique, but not entirely separate from it. I ask the question of what it means to decolonise knowledge, not on a theoretical, but on a practical level. This is therefore not an intellectual history of decolonisation, or of the GHA itself, but rather a history of the practice of decolonisation as it took place within the GHA.

This study, moreover, is based mostly on archival material and written published sources and concerns itself with both the ideal and the reality of scholarship. It therefore looks at several scholarly practices whilst making a sharp distinction between ideals and practice. I do not aim to provide for a typology of the ideal of Africanising history in its entirety, but will offer such a typology focused on the specific project of the UNESCO *General History of Africa*. Following scholars such as Paul and Jo Tollebeek, I first look at what people imagined their historiographical ideals should be and then analyse how these ideals were exercised in daily and often partly predetermined scholarly practices — reviewing, editing, convening and corresponding.[93] That means analysing the GHA's policy papers, detailing the duties of editors and authors, and how they came into being through official meetings conducted under the auspices of UNESCO to understand how the ideals that became guidelines throughout the project came into being. It also means analysing how such everyday scholarly practices such as the editorial decision-making process and the internal peer reviewing were expressed specifically in the GHA's context of active and con-

92 Mineke Bosch, "Scholarly Personae and Twentieth-Century Historians: Explorations of a Concept" *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 131:4 (2016): 33-54 and Niskanen and Barany, "Introduction", 1-17.

93 Herman Paul, "Performing History: How Historical Scholarship is Shaped by Epistemic Virtues" *History and Theory* 50:1 (2011): 1-19, 11, Jo Tollebeek, *Fredericq & Zonen. Een antropologie van de moderne geschiedwetenschap* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2008) 22-3, Jo Tollebeek, "L'historien quotidien: pour une anthropologie de la science historique modern", *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 61:2 (2011): 143-67, 153. See also: Pieter Huistra, *Bouwmeesters, zedenmeesters. Geschiedbeoefening in Nederland tussen 1830 en 1870* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij van Tilt, 2019)

scious decolonising of historical scholarship. I therefore use the concept 'practice' as pertaining to preconceived processes of scholarship. I wish to emphasise however, that this includes a sensitivity to cultural and political contexts and how these influence everyday realities. In fact, the realities that I discuss in this thesis, as they emerged from the formulated ideals, were often deeply influenced by geo-politics and cultures of scholarship. My study, therefore, intertwines a focus on the everyday reality of history writing with a receptiveness to larger historical and cultural developments. Practice here therefore carries a heuristic weight in that it indicates how I look at my source material and not necessarily or not only what type of source material I use.

The material itself was mostly found in archives, located in Paris, Ibadan, Evanston and Ann Arbor. This thesis, therefore, takes archival documents as its basis, augmented with both published texts produced by the GHA itself as well as independent published sources, such as autobiographies. That means that the narrative in this thesis is partly shaped by the archive itself in that I look at what historians working on the GHA are doing in the context of their work at UNESCO and mediated through UNESCO's archives. Although the archival materials to be found offline are more personal than the online materials, which contain the official and often published minute meetings, they still only indirectly narrate both the conviviality and the antimony of editing a work of historical scholarship over a timespan of nearly 35 years. These documents may illustrate the complexities of writing an eight-volume work of history and through that we may catch a glimpse of friendship or, conversely, animosity, but the relationships built during the lifespan of the GHA were perhaps more meaningful than an institutional archive can reveal. To augment this story, therefore, I look at more personal texts, such as personal reflections and autobiographies, which are subjective in how they mediate stories. Autobiographies contain information, not necessarily about actual events, but, more importantly, about the subjective way in which their authors experienced the process of writing and editing the GHA. I use the autobiographies of Bethwell Ogot, already referred to above, and Jan Vansina to gauge what both men, a Kenyan and a Belgian, thought it was like to work on the GHA and ask how they positioned themselves as historians of Africa, African or European, towards colleagues as well as outsiders. The point of this thesis, therefore, is not necessarily to dwell too much on the individual, but rather to illustrate the collec-

tive labour involved in the drafting of the *General History of Africa* as well as its collective identity towards others.

The largest part of the *General History of Africa's* archival deposit can be found at the UNESCO archives in Paris.[94] A majority of the official documentation, meetings, so-called secretariat documents, policy documents and published material, including the volumes themselves, can be found online. The physical archive, moreover, contains correspondence, including complaints, notes and minutes, and, importantly, peer review reports of various volumes. These reports contain detailed comments and judgments on individual contributions to the GHA and their authors made by GHA key figures. The GHA was in the habit of sending round first drafts of volumes to reading committees set up for the purpose of reviewing these drafts. They therefore contain information on the standards of scholarship that existed within the GHA and the way in which pieces were judged — including suggestions and ideas on how to improve a chapter. The UNESCO archive fortunately not only holds final reports collating all comments, but also contains individual and very detailed responses by GHA key figures. I also found these peer review reports in the archive of Jacob Ade Ajayi, which forms a part of the Jadeas Trust Library and which is housed in Ibadan, Nigeria, in the residence of Ajayi's widow, Christie Ade Ajayi. This particular archive has functioned as a valuable addition to the archive of the metropole. It contained reading reports by Ajayi himself for various chapters, but also some reports for volumes that are not located in the UNESCO archives. The Ibadan archive, moreover, in some cases houses the other part of correspondences found at UNESCO as well as new correspondence, for instance between Ajayi and Boahen. This archive, therefore, offers a glimpse of the international network of the GHA. Other personal collections could likely be found in other corners of the African continent that I was unable to visit. The archive has nevertheless helped me in constructing a chain of information between Paris and elsewhere. It reflects well, as I have already stated elsewhere and as has also been commented upon by Luise White, the

94 UAP, "Finding Aid to Sources in the UNESCO Archives on the *General History of Africa* (Focus on Phase I)," 7 March 2012, revised 29 May 2012, revised 9 September 2014, revised 16 December 2015.

eclectic aspect of the history of the GHA and postcolonial history in general, spread as it is over several continents.[95]

The thesis also makes use of some archival documents from the Jan Vansina papers at Northwestern University. Unfortunately, his professional correspondence has been locked away under embargo until 2047, but the archive still contains titbits of information and, most importantly, correspondence detailing Vansina's movements and scholarly habits. The last archival source base is that of Ali Mazrui's papers, located in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan. As with Vansina's papers, I have primarily used this to illustrate what Mazrui's working life looked like, what he did on a daily basis. The sources for this thesis are therefore spread over three continents. This is meaningful because the story of African historiography itself in large part follows that of its archival deposit. The final destination of these papers, created in different places and ending up in different places results from institutional change over decades. The institutional focal point of and power within African studies has equally shifted over these three continents, from Europe to Africa to finally land in the United States. The location of archival collections is no coincidence.

Besides archival materials and UNESCO's published sources, I have also made use of another type of published material, primarily to reflect on the GHA after it was published, which forms the third part of my thesis. My last two chapters focus on the way the GHA was received by both outsiders as well as insiders. I therefore look at a corpus of reviews written about the volumes as well as obituaries and other reflective pieces written by or about its main contributors. Through a close reading of these published but relatively short pieces, it becomes possible to form an image of the GHA as it existed in the minds of scholars, friend and foe alike.

I also want to spend a moment reflecting on my own position and the location from which I am working within this work of scholarship. Following from the assertion made earlier that whiteness can be studied as a distinct racial identity, moreover, Europe equally could be seen as a continent that is subject to analysis which takes into account

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95 For a reflection on my time in both the UNESCO and Ajayi archives, see: Larissa Schulte Nordholt, "From Metropole to Margin in UNESCO's General History of Africa – Documents of Historiographical Decolonization in Paris and Ibadan", *History in Africa* 46 (2019): 403-412. See also: Luise White, "Hodgepodge Historiography: Documents, Itineraries, and the Absence of Archives" *History in Africa* 42 (2015): 309-318, 313-17.

racialisation and colonial history. That is to say, Europe, like Africa, can be decolonised. In fact, this is part of what Chakrabarty and, importantly, his critics, such as Frederick Cooper, have argued. Cooper, in response to Chakrabarty, makes the point that in order to provincialise Europe, one must actually *provincialise Europe*, that is, study terms such as 'Enlightenment' and 'capitalism' in their specific historical contexts in order to find out about their particularities, without universalizing those historical contexts.[96] For the same reasons other critics of postcolonial studies have noted that use of the term 'the west' is problematic precisely because it often functions as a rhetorical device without clear cut reflections in historical reality — which is why I have opted for 'Euro-American'.[97] Therefore, part of the escape from the colonial library, it seems, lies in a critical inquiry into the places that created that library in addition to a study of the places that were subjected to its logic.

Such an awareness of the need for a decolonisation (or deimperialisation) of Europe is important in this thesis precisely because it is being written by a white European (Dutch) author, without obvious ties to the history she discusses, situated at an institution with historic ties to the very colonial knowledge that was being criticised in the GHA.[98] I am, so to speak, part of the problem that the GHA wished to address. I encountered this history asking questions as part of my own (feminist) process of emancipation as a woman in academia: Who gets to speak for what past? Who gets to be part of 'national' histories? And how does that process of emancipation take place? Such questions of historical ownership speak to me because I myself have wondered

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96 Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 20-22. Of course, this particular sentence should be read in light of the history of postcolonial theory which has sometimes tended to paint with rather large brushstrokes. The enlightenment has of course been studied in its historical context. The point made here is that such studies have sometimes been used to generalise about the course of history and that in order for us to understand both enlightenment as well as, say, Indian history, we must not transport conclusions from the study of the enlightenment to understand Indian pasts, but neither should we disavow of the enlightenment entirely as if it itself were a monolithic historical occurrence.

97 Neil Lazarus, "The fetish of the "the West" in postcolonial theory" in *Marxism, modernity, and postcolonial studies*, eds. Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 43-64.

98 See: Willem Otterspeer ed., *Leiden Oriental connections 1850-1940* (Leiden: Brill, 1989)

such things. I have also done so in part because public debate in the Netherlands, and throughout Europe and North America, is currently focused on the continuing legacy of a colonial past that we share, unequally, not just with each other and in the way our societies are made up of diverse groups, but with peoples across the globe. The study of the GHA here then, partly by virtue of my positionality, is also about Europe and knowledge creation about Africa in Europa as well as it is about African decolonisation on the ground. Does that mean that this thesis has nothing real to say about the development of African studies on the continent? I do not think so and simply wish to point out that the creation of African studies has an entangled history that includes Europe (as well as America) and that my writing of this study is part of that. Any real investigation into that history must necessarily take into account the questions that flow from it. My questions are focused on decolonisation and questions of identity in knowledge production because this seems important to me in the current historical moment as I experience it in European academic scholarship focused on non-European worlds, which increasingly concerns itself with the legacy of colonialism in knowledge production. I therefore want to follow Vansina's awareness of the role of subjectivity in historiography and apply it to myself.

Organisation of the thesis

The objective of this study is to investigate how formulated ideals of a decolonisation of African history were translated into practice within the GHA. In doing so, it will analyse what this might tell us about the establishment of African history within the humanities and as part of a process of decolonisation. I therefore lay no claim to reconstructing the history of the GHA in its entirety and focus explicitly on the practice of history making within the GHA and less so on the substance of the historiography or the content which the GHA produced.

In order to answer the questions posed in this introduction, the study is divided into three parts, preceded by a dramatis personae of the most important contributors to this study. The first substantive part examines the formulated ideals of African history and historians of Africa, be they African, European or other. What were the philosophical historical and political ideals upon which the *General History of Africa* was built and why were these ideals formulated as such? I will answer this question in three chapters. The first describes and

analyses the intellectual ideals that were formulated in opposition to the eurocentrism that had been present in African historiography until then and to which historians of Africa felt they needed to respond. The second chapter moves on from a response to eurocentrism to the formulation of epistemic and political ideals based on the pan-African idea that the GHA needed to be written, collectively, by Africans. The last of these three chapters focuses on the political emancipation that GHA envisioned and the role the volumes were to play in African postcolonial nation states and their position in the world order. It also discusses how the GHA wanted the volumes to be distributed, widely, around the continent, and its plan for educational dissemination of the works as part of its emancipatory ideals. It thereby becomes clear that the GHA was aimed at two audiences at once; Euro-American and African academics and the citizens of newly independent nation states.

Part two shifts the focus to the realities of the ideals discussed in part one. How did the historians working on the GHA try to bring their ideals into practice and what became of them during the long process of drafting the *General History of Africa*? Chapter 4 focuses on the editing of the GHA, and asks the question of how the GHA brought its anti-ideal of avoiding eurocentrism into practice. It analyses how standards of scholarship based on this anti-ideal within the GHA were negotiated when they clashed with ideals of political emancipation. Chapter 5, therefore, focuses on the realities of the ideals of African collectivity as discussed in Chapter 2, and the political ideals as discussed in Chapter 3. It takes a chronological approach and explains that, whilst at first the GHA was very successful at implementing its ideals of African collectivity and shared knowledge production, this became more difficult as funding dwindled due to changes in the political climate in Africa and the world at large. Chapter 5 also takes into account the realities of the day-to-day work of editing a multi-volume multi-authored project. Chapter 6 continues the exploration of African collectivity as a reality and zooms in on one specific matter of tension within the GHA: the paradoxical presence of white European and white American historians of Africa. It shows the far-reaching influence these Euro-American historians still had, as a result of the global politics of knowledge production about Africa during the Cold War and the resulting disparate material circumstances under which the work had to be carried out. It also discusses how different scholarly templates for African and Euro-American historians of Africa could subsequently emerge. Chapter 7 also focuses on Europe, but

this time as a historiographical presence rather than through the lens of individual scholars. It studies the realities of political emancipation as discussed in Chapter 3 and, as in Chapter 4, it also asks the question of when and how ideals of anti-eurocentrism, next to scholarly reputability as discussed in Chapter 1, conflicted with ideals of political emancipation. Whilst dealing with the history of colonialism on the continent, the GHA had no choice but to write about European influences on African history. Chapter 7, therefore, analyses how the GHA dealt with the history of colonisation in volume VII and decolonisation in volume VIII. Because the history of colonialism and its formal ending was very recent, the boundaries between scholarship and politics were less clear.

The third and final part of this study focuses on the retrospective perception of the GHA project in its final years and after it had been completed. It asks the question of how the project was reflected upon after it had been brought to a finish and how the ideals, as formulated in the 1960s, have withstood the test of time. Chapter 8 is a history of the reception of the GHA and focuses on how mainly American and British Africanists reflected on the project, because they formed the global centre for academic study of Africa at the time. The chapter offers an extensive analysis of the quite critical reviews written about the GHA and compares these to those written about its rival project, *The Cambridge History of Africa*. Chapter 9 is organised around the way the GHA was remembered — within its own ranks and more broadly on the African continent as a whole — as a project of public outreach instead of merely as series of academic tomes. It argues that this remembrance is full of nostalgia. It shows how the GHA was evaluated as a project of intellectual emancipation and returns to the observation that the GHA was essentially an anti-colonial project of the post-independence era.