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

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CHAPTER TWO
Ideals of pan-African Diversity and Collectivity

Introduction

It was unmistakable from the very conception of the *General History of Africa* that the project would be pan-African in nature.[1] Ogot's reminiscence of the meeting at Flagstaff house hosted by Nkrumah placed the origins of the project squarely within a pan-African sphere of influence and the early advocates for the project had always envisioned it as a history that would encompass the entire continent. It, moreover, would be written collectively by Africans from across the continent and globe. These pan-African ideals underpinned the project's adherence to both political as well as epistemological goals; to establish Africa-centred history as a reputable scholarly activity and to contribute to the political emancipation of Africans on the continent by uniting them in a history that would be written by Africans themselves. This

1 I have chosen only to capitalise 'African' in pan-African, so as to not create confusion with the series of conferences organised by W.E.B. Du Bois from 1919 onwards. Given also that the GHA is less known as a pan-African project within the history of the many forms of pan-Africanism and is more easily associated with, for instance, the emergence of academic history on the continent than with the Atlantic congresses. See: Hakim Adi's, *Pan-Africanism a History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 4.

chapter, therefore, examines the ideal of pan-African collectivity as it functioned at the interface of politics and academia.

The chapter investigates some of the same positioning policy documents and published pieces as in Chapter 1, but moves on from a response to eurocentrism to the formulation of pan-African epistemic and political ideals. It first discusses how the GHA conceptualised pan-Africanism, before moving on to the ideal that the GHA needed to be written, collectively and primarily, by Africans. This ideal of Africanisation was epistemic as well as political because it spoke to the idea that different African perspectives on African history would help self-create a more truthful view of the African past, whilst paying homage to the idea of Africa as a pan-African unity with a shared history. If eurocentrism was dogmatic because it only allowed for the creation of one-sided knowledge, the solution was to invite multiple perspectives and envision pan-African knowledge production as welling from many sources. As such, by referencing perspectivity in history, the GHA placed itself within the tradition of historical scholarship as developed in Europe, whilst also decidedly positioning itself within a pan-African intellectual tradition and making use of its intellectual history regarding the need to move away from a European claim on universalism.[2] The GHA and the historians working on the project therefore navigated existing research standards of African history and the wish to construct new ones as well as the different perspectives that were to be included in the work.

The *General History of Africa* as a pan-Africanist project

The pan-Africanism at the heart of the GHA rationale was connected to the anti-colonial struggle for liberation and so was its aim to write a history of the continent based on pan-African ideals. The 1969 meeting had asserted the need for a continental approach and a facilitation of different points of view, whilst being mindful of the difficulties this could create for the work itself. Moreover, the final report of the meeting shows participants focused on such themes as 'historical connections', creating 'an introspective analysis of the development of

2 See: Carlo Ginzburg, "Distance and Perspective: Reflections on Two Metaphors" in *Historians and Social Values*, eds. Joep Leerssen and Ann Rigney (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 19–33.

Africa by the Africans' and 'Africa's contributions to the development of mankind.'[3] These ideas were further developed in the meetings that followed.

As a pan-Africanist project, the GHA was part of what Hakim Adi has indicated belongs to the second wave of pan-Africanism that emerged in the context of anti-colonial agitation, mostly after 1945, and which was foremost a political movement interested in the advancement of African nation states. This form of pan-Africanism stood in contrast to the Atlantic struggle of the 18th and 19th centuries which was connected to the period of trans-Atlantic enslavement and which was championed mostly by the African diaspora, yet, at the same time, it was its intellectual descendant. Both forms of pan-Africanism were interested in history and heritage, as well as the advancement of Africans across the globe. Yet, as the more recent form of pan-Africanism was inspired by anti-colonialism, it was more likely to include North Africa, as did the GHA in its emphasis on a 'continental approach.'[4] Moreover, in the introduction Ki-Zerbo noted that 'the history of Africa is not the history of one race', meaning, amongst other things, that the GHA included North Africa in its analysis.[5] Ki-Zerbo, following the positioning documents, reiterated that the *General History of Africa* would be a history dealing with Africa in its totality and not just a history of 'black Africa', 'Sub-Saharan Africa', 'Islamic Africa' or 'Atlantic Africa.' The GHA rejected the idea that only black people could be Africans and adhered to a pan-Africanist idea of continental and cultural unity amongst Africans. The total history that was therefore envisioned was not one that would be written along racial lines. The GHA also made it clear that it would move away from conceptions in historiography such as 'black' or 'tropical Africa', the continent excluding North and South Africa. Nevertheless, despite the continental approach the GHA took, in 1983 the manifesto had been amended slightly to also emphasise: 'Africa's historical connections with the other continents should receive due attention.'[6] By 1983, the

3 UAP, SHC/CONF.27/1, Meeting of Experts on the Measures to be taken for Drafting and Publishing a General History of Africa, Unesco, Paris – 23-27 June 1969. Final Report, 6 August 1969. Translated from the French, 5. (hereafter: UAP, Meeting of Experts 1969 Final Report)

4 Adi, *Pan-Africanism A History*, 3-4.

5 J. Ki Zerbo, "General Introduction" in *General History of Africa I Methodology and African Prehistory*, ed. J. Ki-Zerbo (Paris: UNESCO, 1981), 21.

6 UNESCO, *preparation of a general history of Africa* (Paris: UNESCO, 1983), 4.

International Scientific Committee for the Drafting of a General History of Africa (ISC) had started drafting the volumes dealing with more recent history and therefore the diaspora likely became a more important historical factor.

One of the central figures of the post-1945 continental strand of pan-Africanism and a figure who functioned as a bridge between diaspora and continent, was Kwame Nkrumah, who, as we have seen, played a role in the creation of the GHA as well as the *Encyclopaedia Africana*.[7] In the editorial meetings for the Encyclopaedia Africana he had already made some of the same pronouncements the GHA historians would later make in their positioning documents. Not only did he use the word 'Afro-centric' to describe the project, he also emphasised the necessity of challenging the idea of Africa as a 'Dark Continent' and called for the work to be produced under the editorship of Africans, with a 'maximum participation of African scholars in all countries.'[8] Nkrumah supported both projects, as both underscored his pan-African vision and his insistence on combining the theory of pan-African liberation with practice, in this case the practice of writing history.[9] However, Nkrumah was not able to support the later stages of the GHA project as he was ousted in a coup in 1966. This distanced the project somewhat from its direct political beginnings during which Ogot and the other twelve 'cultural disciplines' had dreamt of a federal African state. Perhaps it meant that ideals of emancipation on the national level within a pan-African framework of solidarity displaced ideals of a pan-African political federation.

Writing history, nevertheless, could be a radical act. History had been espoused by the intelligentsia, the pan-African cultural nationalists of the late 19th and early 20th century, such as Edward Wilmot Blyden, as a key tool for African emancipation.[10] In the Francophone world, moreover, the journal started by the Senegalese Alioune Diop in 1947, *Présence Africaine*, was an important intellectual vessel through which such ideas on history were communicated. The journal

7 Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 156.

8 First Annual Meeting: EAP Editorial Board Part 1: A Speech by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Encyclopaedia Africana Project, accessed May 13, 2019, http://www.endarkenment.com/eap/legacy/640924nkrumahk01.htm

9 Ama Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 120-33.

10 Falola, *Nationalism and African intellectuals*, 223.

felt the need to develop a theory of history that would do away with the 'prejudice of whites.'[11] Like the GHA, *Présence Africaine* had a political as well as cultural goal; it ascribed to a French republican ideal of citizenship and simultaneously wished to promote African cultural longevity.

Although the GHA was most definitely motivated by the politics of building nation states in newly independent African countries, its pan-African politics were also articulated through an emphasis on culture. In that way it could combine a priority on the interconnections between different parts of Africa and their shared histories with a nationalist agenda. As Adom Getachew has argued, the anticolonial nationalists of the 1950s and 1960s not only saw nationalism and internationalism as compatible but also thought that independence from the global north could only be truly reached through an internationalist balance of power and therefore pan-African solidarity.[12] Similarly, the GHA aimed to combine nationalism and pan-Africanism. In that way it was a sort of historiographical counterpart to the Organisation of African Unity as it was constituted in Addis Ababa in 1963.[13]

Like other forms of continental pan-Africanisms, moreover, the GHA was indebted to the cultural pan-Africanism of diasporic scholars. It approached the history of Africa through a vindicationist paradigm. This meant that its primary goal was to validate the African past and prove white supremacist ideas on history wrong.[14] The *General History of Africa*, therefore, should be placed within a much older pan-African tradition: the idea that there existed a shared past amongst Africans and people of African descent in the Americas and elsewhere and that this shared past needed to be recorded to spur on

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11 Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "*Présence Africaine:* History and Historians of Africa" in *The Surreptitious Speech. Présence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness 1947-1987*, ed. Valentin Mudimbe (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 59-94, 74-6.

12 Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire. The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 170.

13 See: Kate Skinner, "A Different Kind of Union: An Assassination, Diplomatic Recognition, and Competing Visions of African Unity in Ghana-Togo Relations, 1956-1963" in *Visions of African Unity. New Perspectives on the History of Pan-Africanism and African Unification Projects*, eds. Matteo Grilli and Frank Gerits (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 23-48, 25.

14 Michael O. West and William G. Martin, "Introduction" in *Out of One, Many Africas. Reconstructing the Study and Meaning of Africa*, eds. William G. Martin and Michael O. West (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 1-38, 19-21.

emancipation and independence from white Europeans, spearheaded by such figures as Marcus Garvey. The 1969 meeting made it clear that this had to be done by Africans themselves: 'the development of Africa by the Africans, the latter appearing no longer as mere objects, but as the subjects of history.'[15] In this way the vindication also lay in the claiming of an anti-colonial narrative of independence from European states.

Pan-African diversity as an ideal of knowledge production

In practice, within the GHA pan-Africanism was also expressed through African diversity in terms of authors and historians who would work on the project. From the very beginning it was stipulated that the GHA needed to be written and edited by a diverse collection of authors and editors. The first step towards making this a reality was through the installation of a 30- and later 39-member International Scientific Committee, each hailing from a different country in Africa or elsewhere.[16] This last stipulation sometimes created difficulties, resulting in committee members who did not have much experience as historians and sometimes were only academics in name. Some of the ISC members actually functioned primarily as university rectors or government officials.[17] The 1969 meeting had however also suggested that the International Congress of Africanists or the Association of African Universities could aid in suggesting committee members and ISC members could also function as editors.[18] The rules of procedure from 1971, however, had stated that the committee was to attract 'eminent personalities', partly in order to make it easier to promote the

15 UAP, Meeting of Experts 1969 Final Report, 5.

16 In the rules of procedure, the number thirty appears, yet in later documents the number increases to 39 with a reference to the same rules of procedure. In the volumes for the GHA the number of ISC-members listed is 39. It can therefore be concluded that the number was amended somewhere along the way. UAP, SHC/CONF.70/8 rev, First Plenary Meeting of the International Scientific Committee for the Drafting of a General History of Africa. Unesco, Paris, 30 March – 8 April 1971. Paris 5 April 1971. Translated from the French. Rules of Procedure. 1 (hereafter: UAP, First Plenary Meeting 1971 Rules of Procedure) and UAP, DDG 3 52, CC/CS/71.04/memo, Directeur général á Maurice Glélé 2-03-1978.

17 "The African rediscovery of Africa by Roland Oliver", *Times Literary Supplement*, March 20, 1981.

18 UAP, Meeting of Experts 1969 Final Report, 11.

work.[19] Aklilu Habte, the Ethiopian committee member and briefly president of the Bureau, even succeeded in organising a meeting with emperor Haile Selassie during the 1970 meeting in Addis Ababa.[20] The Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity, moreover, was also present to address that meeting.[21] One important qualifying trait for committee members, however, was not their proximity to emperors and pan-African icons, or other prominent Africans, but their diverse Africanness itself. Two thirds of the members, it was stipulated, had to be from African countries or of African descent.[22]

Authors primarily also had to be African, Ogot stated in his description of the project: 'Preference is given to African authors […] Special effort is also made to ensure, as far as possible, that all regions of the continent, as well as other regions having historical or cultural ties with Africa, are equitably represented amongst authors.'[23] It was moreover articulated, during the 1969 meeting and again in 1970, that authors had to be persons who 'evince a deep sympathy for Africa and its problems', this suggested that not all authors had to be African necessarily, but that they had to agree to the political and anti-colonial ideals the GHA espoused. Or as the report of the meeting put it 'the guiding principles which should inspire the General History of Africa', meaning the importance of African independence and pan-African solidarity amongst newly independent nations. Ascribing to these ideals was an 'indispensable condition and an absolute prerequisite' for authors. On the same page it was also stated that authors had to be politically independent, thereby underwriting the GHA's sometimes contradictory aims.[24] The project aimed towards a certain respectability within the international academic community and also wanted to remain neutral relative to the Cold War world order. The document also

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19 UAP, First Plenary Meeting 1971 Rules of Procedure, 1.

20 Haile Selassie became an important icon within the Rastafarian movement specifically, see: Monique A. Bedasse, *Jah Kingdom: Rastafarians, Tanzania, and Pan-Africanism in the Age of Decolonization* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 1-2.

UAP, First Plenary Meeting 1971 Rules of Procedure, 1.

21 UAP, SHC/MD/10, Meeting of Experts for the Drafting and Publication of A General History of Africa, Addis Ababa, 22 to 26 June 1970, Paris, 15 September 1970, 2.

22 UAP, First Plenary Meeting 1971 Rules of Procedure, 1.

23 B. A. Ogot, "Description of the Project" in *General History of Africa I Methodology and African Prehistory*, ed. J. Ki-Zerbo (Paris: UNESCO, 1981), xxiii-xxv, xxiv.

24 UAP, Meeting of Experts 1969 Final Report, 10.

stated that the majority of the contributors and all editors should be historians.[25] An exception was made for Ali Mazrui, a Kenyan political scientist who became the editor of volume VIII because no historian could be found. He was therefore the second Kenyan to edit a volume. In general, the GHA, despite its aims to include committee members, editors and authors from all countries equally, was predominated by West and East Africans. These were all scholars from nations that became independent around the same time, the 'year of Africa' in 1960. They were therefore engaged in the parallel process of nation-building and as such they were keen on determining the direction of the GHA which had the potential to be an exceptionally useful project for them. At the same time, black South African authors were practically absent from the GHA.[26] Of course, UNESCO had nominally banned South Africa, but that would not have stopped the GHA from inviting scholars living in exile. As such, the pan-African nature of the project was subject to a particular interpretation in reality, to anticipate the second part of this thesis. This is revisited in more detail, in Chapter 5.

This was not for a lack of effort for, as is also noted in the annex detailing the structure of the GHA, Maurice Glélé kept meticulous track of the geographical spread of the authors contributing to the GHA. He tracked how many authors came from Africa and from what parts of Africa, and whether there were not too many Europeans, in order to ascertain whether various regions in Africa were sufficiently represented within the GHA. The *General History of Africa*, after all, had to be written from within, a story of the African past shaped and told by Africans themselves, rather than Europeans. Identity mattered for it influenced one's perspective on history generally and African history specifically. This was not only a political belief. The idea that one's geographic origins influenced historiography was epistemic as well in that it was believed that it could (rather than would) inherently change the way one saw the world and therefore interpreted history and its sources. The Bureau, the seven-member body that regulated the GHA in-between the biennial committee meetings, had to consist of at least four African members.[27] Lastly, the 1966 meeting in Abidjan stipulated that GHA meetings had to be held on the continent. The

25 UAP, Meeting of Experts 1969 Final Report, 10.

26 Leonard Ngcongco was a member of the ISC and did contribute a chapter, and so did Shula Marks, both were exiles.

27 UAP, First Plenary Meeting 1971 Rules of Procedure, 3.

location would rotate from one African region to the next, in order to promote research in Africa and attract young researchers from various countries.[28] Despite a preponderance of West and East Africans, pan-African diversity became a key organising factor and a leading ideal for the GHA. It was precisely this ideal that had to ensure the absence of dogmatism. Evaluating many ideas, histories and perspectives would make it possible to self-create African history — rather than have it defined by outsiders.

The inherent value placed on diversity, even if was a qualified diversity, was most likely influenced by the GHA's foundation in UNESCO ideology as well as pan-Africanism. In his *Race et Histoire* (1952) Claude Lévi-Strauss, who was part of UNESCO's committee on the theoretical basis of human rights, had argued that diversity was a value in and of itself.[29] Moreover, he focused on cultural and civilisational diversity, arguing that value was to be found in different societies even if that value did not align with the west as central point of comparison. Whilst the GHA was trying to move away from a universalism based on values developed in Europe, it was simultaneously embedded in and indebted to a rhetoric of one-worldism. Before that, in 1947 UNESCO had already asked the American anthropologist, and often named founder of African studies in the United States, Melville Herskovits to draft a statement on universal human rights.[30] Herskovits had argued that there were cultural connections between African-Americans and Africans, emphasising the strength of African cultural values throughout centuries.[31] In the statement on human rights he warned that human rights are at least partly culturally defined and that some ideas on universal values had in the past been used to justify colonial expansion and argue against diversity.[32] The statement has subse-

28 UAP, UNESCO/CLT/HIGENAF/ABIDJAN/3, Committee of Experts on the General History of Africa, Abidjan 31 August – 5 September, 1966, Introductory Document, 23 August 1966, 5.

29 Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, "New Histories of the United Nations" *Journal of World History* 19:3 (2008): 251-274, 258 and Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Race et Histoire* (Paris: Unesco, 1952).

30 Melville Herskovits, "Statement of Human Rights" *American Anthropologist* 49:4 (1947): 539-43.

31 See: Jerry Gershenhorn, *Melville J. Herskovits and the Racial Politics of Knowledge* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 59-92

32 Caroline S. Archambault, "Human Rights" in *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, eds. Hillary Callan and Simon Coleman (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2018)

quently come to be associated with anthropologists' stance towards cultural relativism. Anthropologists had come to connect cultural relativism not necessarily to moral or ethical relativism, but to objectivity in their professional practice as a method of investigation: the idea that one should approach other cultures from an objective point of view so as not to judge cultural practices simply for being different from your own.[33] Often, these ideas on cultural relativism and diversity, practiced by UNESCO as well, were connected to a commitment to combat racism and imperialism.[34] The White Man's Burden and general ideas on European cultural superiority, had been abused to rationalise intrusion into non-European lands. The idea that pan-African diversity was a value in and of itself because it could help in ameliorating rigid ideas on universalism and cultural value or civilisation as only stemming from Europe was part of early UNESCO ideology. Likely, it influenced the GHA — although it may equally be that the historians who would later come to work on the GHA somewhat influenced UNESCO.

It is anyway undeniable that the assertion that a plurality of opinions was a worthwhile intellectual good came from the realisation that eurocentric history had made the false claim that its knowledge was not situated or particular to Europe. The inclusion of a plurality of perspectives and opinions became the antidote to European universalism in anti-colonial contexts. In his lecture *Moving the Centre Ngũgĩ* Wa Thiong'O argues that moving away from a European centre to a plurality of centres is a necessary intervention for the humanities to flourish for all humans.[35] This 'pluriversalist' epistemology surfaced in the writings of Aimé Césaire as well — at least in readings by the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe.[36] Mbembe explains Césaire's points as follows: Concern for Africa did not mean moving away from the world, or Europe, at large. Rather, it was an affirmation that the world was plural and Europe only a part of it. Césaire identified the entwining of the universal with Europe as a result of Europe-

33 Thomas H. Johnson, "Culture Relativism: Interpretations of a Concept", *Anthropological Quarterly* 80:3 (2007): 791-802, 791, 794.

34 See: Edgardo C. Krebs, "Popularizing Anthropology, Combating Racism: Alfred Métraux at *The UNESCO Courier*" in *A History of UNESCO. Global Actions and Impacts* ed. Poul Duedahl (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 29-48.

35 Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'O, *Moving the Centre. The struggle for cultural freedom*. (Woodbridge: James Curry, 1993), 6, 10-1.

36 Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*. Trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 156-162.

an arrogance stemming from its successful colonial exploits: Europe had come to think of itself as so prestigious that it no longer needed input from elsewhere.[37] The unmasking of universalism as a European particularity is reminiscent of Chakrabarty's critique of political modernity as if it was European modernity. As a kind of answer and opposite the idea of rigid analytical Eurocentrism, Toyin Falola has also adopted a conceptualisation of pluriversalism.[38] Both Mbembe and Falola suggest the incorporation of multiple epistemologies and the intellectual autonomy of African indigenous knowledge as a way to further the decolonisation of African and global systems of knowledge production. The seeds of these ideas on pluriversalism are also recognisable in the intellectual tradition of the GHA, with its inherent emphasis on open mindedness and diversity. Although it should be noted that it was a very different pluriversalism from that espoused in the 21st century movements of decoloniality. Falola nevertheless identifies the historiography of the post-independence period as a first attempt at such a decolonisation along the lines of pluriversalism. The expansion of perspectives however, according to Falola, 'can add to diversity, but not necessarily to intellectual radicalism for the resultant liberation that many intellectuals expect.'[39] The GHA also did not have as its goal to rid the budding African historical academy of Euro-American influences altogether. The diversity of opinions they heralded included European perspectives, providing these perspectives could be placed alongside African perspectives, rather than superior to them.[40] Or rather, these European perspectives should possibly be made secondary to pan-African diversity. Any kind of pluralism within the GHA then, was borne out of a reaction against rigid descriptive eurocentrism which held there were no other truths about Africa than those emanating from a point of view located in Europe.

Collaborative African knowledge production was a guiding ideal in the drafting of the *General History of Africa*. In the project's description, Ogot detailed the process of editing and how the GHA empha-

37 Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 156-61.

38 Toyin Falola, *Decolonizing African Studies: Epistemologies, Methodologies and Agencies* (Rochester: Rochester University Press, Forthcoming), 277-317.

39 Falola, *Decolonizing African Studies*, 279.

40 Vansina asserted this as a general rule for Euro-American educated African historians, Jan Vansina, "Knowledge and Perceptions of the African Past", in *African Historiographies. What History for Which Africa?*, eds. Bogumil Jewsiewicki and David Newbury (London: Sage Publications, 1986), 28-41, 29.

sised the need for several editors and readers to review the chapters, a process which was necessary to insure 'scientific objectivity.'[41] In practice, this meant there was a need for dozens of eyes to go over chapters and for the International Scientific Committee to seamlessly work together: 'When the editor of a volume has approved texts of chapters, they are then sent to all members of the Committee for criticism. In addition, the text of the volume editor is submitted for examination to a Reading Committee, set up within the International Scientific Committee on the basis of the member's fields of competence. […] The Bureau then gives final approval to the manuscripts.' This did not make the editing process any easier, although it did make it more democratic. Ogot rightly described the whole process of drafting the GHA, including its elaborate system of review as 'a gigantic task which constitutes an immense challenge to African historians.'[42] Yet, he also pressed the necessity of the process.[43] At a meeting in Ouagadougou in 1979, during which Ogot, Jacob Ade Ajayi, Jean Devisse, Joseph Ki-Zerbo and Mazrui were all present, subjectivity in historical scholarship was discussed and here, too, the inclusion of different subjective 'viewpoints' was encouraged in order to rid the GHA of dogmatism — provided, Ogot asserted, that the reading committee would be 'extremely attentive.'[44] The GHA was a collaborative effort that valued knowledge as such and which did not shy away from differences of opinion — it even cherished such differences of opinion as fundamental to the creation of a well-rounded view of African history. At the same Ouagadougou symposium, moreover, Ade Ajayi acknowledged the difficulty of writing detached contemporary history and argued that the GHA's 'continental approach', by which he meant the inclusion of as many different African perspectives as possible, was a way to guard the 'sincere search for historical truth as distinct from

41 Ogot, "Project Description", xxiv.

42 Ibid, xxiiv

43 Ibid, xxiv

44 N.N., "Report of the meeting of experts on the methodology of contemporary African history", in *The General History of Africa. Studies and Documents 9. The methodology of contemporary African history. Reports and papers of the meeting of experts organized by Unesco at Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, from 17 to 22 May 1979* (Paris: UNESCO, 1984), 161-94, 168.

propaganda.'[45] Ajayi therefore restated an idea of detachment or objectivity — he used the two interchangeably — as connected to perspectivity. Objectivity was therefore constructed as including as many, sometimes opposing, perspectives as possible; a position that Thomas Haskell, reviewing an essay written by Carlo Ginzburg, notes is not foreign to the modern historical discipline as a whole.[46] This ideal of objectivity as best approximated through an inclusion of multiple not always aligning perspectives in order to create a more complete view of the past and the undeniable perspectivity, or subjectivity, of historical knowledge has partly been developed by the historical discipline as a result of, amongst others, postcolonial interventions in historiography — for instance in the inclusion of oral traditions as sound source materials.[47] The *General History of Africa* may be considered as part of that intervention.

Pan-African diversity was connected to the idea that the GHA needed to be written collectively, primarily by Africans. Objectivity, then, in this context, pointed towards a liberation from European points of view through an Africanisation of the historical discipline as it pertained to African history. It did not mean eliminating subjectivity, but rather, allowing for African subjectivity to enter the narrative. The ideal of pan-African diversity allowed for the inclusion of multiple subjectivities, or (historical) judgments. Yet, at the same time, this pan-African ideal of diversity largely excluded women. As the manifesto suggested, looking at the continent from 'within', was meant as a primer to allow giving African viewpoints equal or more weight when it came to African history than European viewpoints. Clearly, African viewpoints were understood in a particular way as referring mostly to the pan-African nationalist generation represented by male African scholars from countries that had won independence in

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45 J.F. Ade Ajayi, "Problems of writing contemporary African history" in *The General History of Africa. Studies and Documents 9. The methodology of contemporary African history. Reports and papers of the meeting of experts organized by Unesco at Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, from 17 to 22 May 1979* (Paris: UNESCO, 1984), 47-58, 50.

46 Thomas L. Haskell, "Review article. Objectivity: Perspective as Problem and Solution.", *History and Theory* 43:3 (2004): 341-359, 346. See also: Thomas L. Haskell, "Objectivity is not Neutrality: Rhetoric vs. Practice in Peter Novick's That Noble Dream", *History and Theory* 29:2 (1990): 129-157.

47 See: John Tosh, *The Pursuit of history. Aims, methods and new directions in the study of history*. 6th edition (London: Routledge, 2015), 229-253.

the 1960s primarily. The GHA emphasised pan-African diversity, but it was a limited diversity. Nevertheless, this particular Africanisation ideal of moving away from European particularities such as universalism through a collective knowledge production was a positive ideal that was posed opposite the negative ideals elaborated in Chapter 1.

Conclusions

The GHA was a pan-African project that ascribed to ideals of continental pan-Africanism, but which was also inspired by earlier diaspora-led ideas. It aimed to combine African nationalism with pan-African internationalist solidarity. In terms of the imagined implementation of these ideals the GHA celebrated the inclusion of multiple perspectives as part of its adherence to a pan-African Africanisation of history. In opposition to eurocentrism, which is shown in Chapter 1 to have been framed as one-sided or even dogmatic, diversity of perspectives and the collective production of knowledge became a guiding ideal within the GHA. Africanisation of African history could only be established through a careful process of editing and inviting sometimes conflicting perspectives in order to do justice to the diversity of African and European voices in the creation of knowledge about the African past. This was framed as way to create objective knowledge, but it should be seen as an ideal of knowledge creation within the GHA that was at least partly rhetorical. It was also partly political because the inclusion of as many different African perspectives as possible equally worked towards the idea of pan-Africanism as a political goal in opposition to European might. At the same time, it also moved towards the epistemic goal of well-rounded historical knowledge on Africa. Political, cultural and epistemological goals within this ideal of pan-African diversity, therefore, were hard to separate.