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

Schulte Nordholt, L.R.C.

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PART TWO

The Realities of the *General History of Africa*

Introduction to part two

The second part of this thesis deals with the realities of the ideals discussed in part one. How did the historians working on the GHA bring their ideals into practice and what came of them during the long process of drafting the *General History of Africa* between 1971 and 1998? It dives into the heart of the matter of what it meant to write African history with a decolonising or Africanising agenda, during and shortly after the period of political decolonisation. It shows the differences of opinion that inevitably followed from diverging interpretations of the different ideals the GHA had conceived of, that the GHA had to be anti-eurocentric, collaborative, pan-African and should contribute to political emancipation. These debates surrounding the best way to subvert European imperialism and racism in historiography were a necessary part of the process of drafting the *General History of Africa*. The following four chapters offer case studies with different interpretations and realities of what it meant to bring the *General History of Africa* to fruition, based on the ideals set out in the positioning documents in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Chapter 4, the first chapter of part two of the dissertation on realities, corresponds mostly to Chapter 1. It focuses on the editorial process of the GHA to ask what reality corresponded to the ideal of anti-eurocentrism. Chapters five and six describe and analyse what the realities of both the ideal of pan-African collectivity as well as the ideal of political emancipation were. Chapter seven, lastly, examines how the ideals of anti-eurocentrism and political emancipation became intertwined in their realities.