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

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PROPOSITIONS

01. The General History of Africa was a multifaceted project that aimed to Africanise and decolonise the writing of African history as a reaction against 19th and early 20th century European colonial ideas about Africa and the inexistence of African history, by appealing to ideals of anti-eurocentrism, pan-African collectivity, and political emancipation.
02. Although the GHA made a moral claim about the exclusion of African history, it was invested in emphasizing scientific rigour and accuracy as part of a politics of scholarly respectability.
03. Within projects of intellectual emancipation such as the GHA there is an inevitable tension between political imperatives and research standards. This is the result of the aim of such work to challenge an existing status quo.
04. In the 1960s African universities could briefly function as epicentres of global intellectual life until the increase of funding for the study of the Global South in the United States of America as a result of Cold War tensions caused the balance within the global politics of knowledge production to shift away from the African continent, creating a neo-colonial imbalance regarding the academic study of the African continent.
05. In order to understand how decolonisation of history takes places it is necessary to supplement rich theoretical reflections with case-studies, integrating theory with studies of scholarly practice.
06. The 21st century aim to decolonise academia has a history that offers new insights into current debate, which can provide for contrasting narratives with which to enrich that debate.
07. African history is an integral part of human history and should therefore be treated on equal terms with the history of Europe or other parts of the world as an integrated whole.
08. 'Knowledge is power' would be better understood by reversing the adage to clarify that power determines who can produce knowledge and what knowledge is valued.
09. Universities cannot be sustained, let alone progress, as institutions of knowledge production without structural societal investment.
10. The freedom to conduct academic research that is not of immediate benefit to economic progress is of the utmost importance to both the survival of the humanities in specific and universities as a whole.
11. Scholarship is a communal endeavour which benefits from the work and input of many different people in many different roles.
12. It is a duty and a privilege for academics to speak out against injustices in both academia and society.