History without Documents: Methods of Historical Research

The seminar is an introduction to sources and techniques used by historians for reconstructing the histories of pre-literate societies, including those of groups embedded within larger literate ones. As such, the focus will be more on a critical understanding of methodology rather than on historical analysis. Our goals will thus be to understand the different kinds of archaeological, linguistic, ethnographic, and oral data available, some of the ways these are interpreted by archaeologists, linguists, anthropologists, and historians, and how we as historians can interpret and employ their data and interpretations for our own purposes. While the main focus will be on African materials, the techniques are applicable to other areas and peoples, and you are encouraged to range broadly in your reading.

Requirements

(1) an extended overview and critique of the literature (8-10 pp) on a given weekly topic. Each member of the seminar will be assigned a topic in week 1. Papers are to be distributed to all members of the seminar by Tuesday before the relevant class and presented orally in class.

(2) Four short essays (3-4 pp) on archaeology (due in class 2/7), ethnography and history (due in class 3/21), oral traditions (due in class 4/11), and oral history (due in class 4/25) or women's history (due in class 5/2). [Note: you may write on either oral history (4/17) or women's history (4/24), but not both.] I have suggested books and topics in the relevant sections of the syllabus, but you may substitute others if you clear them with me in advance. You should not choose books/topics you have read previously, but use the opportunity to explore new materials.

Readings

The readings range from broad surveys and theoretical statements to individual case studies. I have tried to alternate explicit methodological statements with examples of work employing that methodology wherever possible, and encourage you to assess both the theory and the practice. The 'required' reading is extensive, and the bibliography on each of these topics is virtually endless. I will survey the upcoming reading weekly, and encourage you to use your own judgement in discriminating among it. The 'recommended' reading is for people writing extended critiques of that topic or who wish to pursue a particular methodology at greater length, now or in the future.

Required texts are available in the University Book Store and/or on reserve in Helen C. White. Articles are included in a course packet available from the Humanities Copy Center (1650 Humanities) or on reserve.

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Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEH</td>
<td>African Economic History</td>
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<tr>
<td>APS</td>
<td>The African Past Speaks, Joseph Miller (ed.) (on reserve)</td>
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<td>ASR</td>
<td>African Studies Review</td>
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<td>CSSH</td>
<td>Comparative Studies in Society and History</td>
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<td>HA</td>
<td>History in Africa</td>
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<td>IJAH</td>
<td>International Journal of African Historical Studies</td>
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<td>JOH</td>
<td>International Journal of Oral History</td>
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<td>JAH</td>
<td>Journal of African History</td>
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<td>OH</td>
<td>Oral History</td>
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<td>OT</td>
<td>Oral Tradition</td>
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General methodological handbooks (all dated)

History in Africa (foremost journal of historical method in Africa)
S. Biobaku (ed.), Sources of Yoruba History (1973)
I.M. Lewis (ed.), History and Social Anthropology
B. Trigger, Beyond History

Historiography

American Historical Association, Guide to Historical Literature, 'Africa'
C. Fyfe (ed.), African Studies since 1945 (1976)
C. Neale, Writing Independent History (1985)
A. Temu & B. Swai, Historians and Africanist History (1981)
History/Anthro 774 -- Methods

Schedule of Classes

1/24   Travelers Accounts, Maps, Photos & Other 'Documentary' Evidence: Theory

A wide range of issues arise here, from the sources for putative 'original' accounts, to their historical contexts, perspectives, genres, and forms of reproducing information, not to mention the difficulties of interpretation and meaning.

C. Wright Mills, 'On Intellectual Craftsmanship' in his The Sociological Imagination, appendix. (a critical prolegomena on research, analysis and writing)

R. Bridges, '19th c East African Travel Records' in ESSA, 179-196.
A. Jones, 'Four Years in Asante: One Source or Several,' HA, 18(1991), 173-203.
J. Vansina, 'The Ethnographic Account as a Genre' in ESSA, 433-444.
A. Jones, 'Decompiling Dapper: A Preliminary Search for Evidence,' HA, 17(1990), 171-209. (plagiarism)
A. Hilton, 'European Sources for the Study of Religious Change in 16th and 17th c Kongo' in ESSA, 289-312. (interpretation)

recommended

A. Jones (ed.), German Sources for West African History, 1599-1699 (1983)
A. Jones, Raw, Medium, Well-Done (1987)
J. Hanson, 'African Testimony Reported in European Travel Literature,' HA, 18(1991), 143-158.


B. Heintze, 'In Pursuit of a Chameleon,' HA, 17(1990), 137-56.
N. Monti (ed.), Africa Then: Photographs 1840-1918
A. Roberts (ed.), Photographs as Sources for African History (SOAS, 1988)

1/31   Archaeology and Prehistory: Theory

What constitutes archaeological data? How do these relate to historical 'facts'? More specifically, how do archaeologists define 'cultures' and explain changes in them?
What are the main dating methods and what are their problem? What are some of the problems of correlating archaeological data and interpretations with other evidence?

M. Hall, Farmers, Traders, and Kings (2nd ed., 1990)
P. Robertshaw, 'Sibling Rivalry? The Intersection of Archaeology and History,' HA, 27(2000), 261-86.
recommended
G. Connah, African Civilizations (1987)
M. Hall, Archaeology Africa (1996)
S. McIntosh (ed.), Beyond Chiefdoms: Pathways to Complexity in Africa (1999)
D.W. Phillipson, African Archaeology (2nd ed., 1993)
B. Trigger, A History of Archaeological Thought

2/7 Archaeology and Prehistory: Practice

Individual paper: choose one of the following and assess the nature of archaeological data and how the author(s) use it to make historical interpretations. Substitution of another text is possible if you consult me in advance. Paper (3-4 pp.) and possible oral presentation due in class.

J.D. Clark, Kalambo Falls
G. Connah, The Archaeology of Benin (1975) or Kibiro (1996)
J. Devisse, Vallées du Niger
B. Fagan, Iron Age Cultures in Zambia (2 vols, 1967-9)
J. Feely, The Early Farmers of Transkei, South Africa
L. Fouché, Mapungubwe
P. Garlake, Great Zimbabwe (1973)
M. van Gunderbeck, Le premier age du fer au Rwanda et au Burundi
R. Haaland, Socio-Economic Differentiation in the Neolithic Sudan
J. de Heinzelin, Les Fouilles d'Ishango
J. Hiernaux & E. Maquet, L'Age du Fer à Kibiro
M. Horton, Shanga (1996)
J. Kinahan, Pastoral Nomads of the Central Namib Desert
P. de Maret, Fouilles archéologiques dans le vallée du Haut-Lualaba
R. McIntosh, The Peoples of the Middle Niger (1998)
S. McIntosh, Excavation at Jenne-Jeno, Hambarketolo and Kaniana (1993)
J. Nenquin, Excavations at Sanga
F. Van Noten, Archaeology of Central Africa or Histoire archéologique du Rwanda
D. Phillipson, Archaeology at Aksum (2000)
P. Roberishaw, Early Pastoralists of South-western Kenya (1990)
T. Shaw, Igbo Ukwu (1970)
P. Shinnie, Meroe, The Capital of Kush or Debeira West
J. Sutton, Archaeology of the Western Highlands of Kenya (1973)
J. Vogel, Great Zimbabwe
2/14  Library Exercise & Paleocoeology, Disease, and the Environment

Note: We will convene initially in Memorial Library 443A for a library exercise conducted by Emile Ngo-Nguidjol and David Henige. We will then adjorn to Humanities 5245 for a discussion of disease and the environment. The whole class will last from 3:30 to 6:30.

A potpourri on reconstructing changes in climate, the environment, disease, and population together with their social dimensions. To what extent are these changes natural or social? How can we understand the relations between the two?

J. Miller, 'The Significance of Drought, Disease and Famine in the Agriculturally Marginal Zones of West-Central Africa,' JAH, 23(1982), 17-61.

recommended
L. Cavalli-Sforza, et al., The History and Geography of Human Genes
J. Hiernaux, The Peoples of Africa

B. Fetter, Demography from Scanty Evidence
J. Gregory, D. Cordell & R. Gervais, African Historical Demography
J. Janzen, Limba (1983)
M. Lyons, The Colonial Disease (1992)
J. McKelvey, Man Against Tsetse
K.D. Patterson, Health in Colonial Ghana (1981)
G. Brooks, Landlords and Strangers (1993)
J. Fairhead & M. Leach, Misreading the African Landscape (1996)
M. Glantz (ed.), *Drought and Hunger in Africa*
G. Maddox, J. Giblin, I. Kimambo (eds.), *Custodians of the Land* (1996)
P. Richards, *Coping with Hunger or Fighting for the Rainforest*
D. Schoenbrun, 'We are What We Eat,' *JAH*, 34(1993), 1-31.

**2/21 **Historical Linguistics: Lexicostatistics and the Comparative Method

*The focus here is on interpreting relationships among languages and the study of words, both inherited and borrowed, to chart historical developments and interactions with others. Why is lexicostatistics so widely used and what are its inadequacies?*


**recommened**


**2/28 **Historical Linguistics: Words and Things

*Given that we can reconstruct historical forms of languages and trace their relations with others, can we also reconstruct historical meanings for these forms? historical ethnographies? How?*

J. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest*, Ch 1-4, 9

**recommened**


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Ethnography

Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer* stands as a monument of functionalist ethnography, so much so that it is now a subject of endless reinterpretation itself. The following selection stresses the analysis of relationships between structural forms and processes.

A. Southall, 'Nuer and Dinka are People,' *Man*, 11(1976), 463-91.

More works inspired by *The Nuer*:
G. Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience* (1961)

Historical Ethnography


recommended
B. Cohn, 'History and Anthropology,' *CSSH*, 22(1980), 198-221.
M.G. Smith, *Government of Zazzau* (1964)
3/21 Ethnographic History: Practice

**Individual papers:** Choose one of the following and assess how the author uses ethnographic data and models in reconstructing history. Substitution of another text is possible if you consult me in advance. Paper (3-4 pp) and possible oral presentation due in class.

C. Ambler, *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism* (1988)
D. Cohen, *Womenanu’s Bunafu* (1977) & APS, Ch 8
D. Lan, *Guns and Rain* (1985)
J. Vansina, *The Tio Kingdom of the Middle Congo* (1973)

3/28 Spring Break

4/4 Oral Tradition: Theory

While oral traditions are now generally accepted as a source, the debate continues on their meaning, interpretation, and significance.

J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (esp. chs. 1, 4-7)
L. Vail & L. White, *Power and the Praise Poem*, 1-83.
T. Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa,' forthcoming.

recommended

*History in Africa* (journal)
K. Barber, *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow*
S. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals* (1990)
H. Moore, *Space, Text and Gender*
UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. I, Ch 2, 7, 8

D. Beach, *A Zimbabwean Past: Shona Dynastic Histories and Oral Traditions*
C. Kratz, "We've always done it like this... except for a few details': 'Tradition' and 'Innovation' in Okeik Ceremonies,' CSSH, 36(1993), 30-65.
L. Malkki, Purity and Exile (1995)
J. Miller, 'The Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Africa' in B. Bernardi, et al. (eds.), Fonti Orafi
P. de Moreas Farias, 'History and Consolation: Royal Yoruba Bards Comment on their Craft,' HA, 19(1992), 263-97.
H. Scheb, The Ntsomi: A Xhosa Performing Art
J. Vansina, 'Historical Tales (ibiteekerezo) and the History of Rwanda,' HA, 27(2000), 375-414.

4/11 Oral Tradition: Practice

Individual papers: Choose one of the following and compare and assess the author's methods, theory, and practice. Paper (3-4 pp) and possible oral presentation due in class. (Do not use the same book as previously.)

S. Feierman, The Shambaa Kingdom (1972)
S. Greene, Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Change on the Upper Slave Coast (1996)
C. Hamilton, Terrific Majesty (1998)
R. Harms, River of Wealth, River of Sorrow (1981) & APS, Ch 7
J. Lampheir, The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda (1976)
P. Irwin, Liptako Speaks (1981)
W. James, 'Kwanim Pa': The Making of the Uduk People
J. Miller, Kings and Kinsmen (1976)
D. Newbury, Kings and Clans (1991)
J.M. Schoffeleers, River of Blood (1992)
T. Spear, The Kaya Complex (1978) & Traditions of Origin and their Interpretation

4/18 Oral History and Life Histories: Theory


Recommended
I. Hofmeyr, 'We Spend Our Years as a Tale That is Told' (1994)
E. Lofts, Eyewitness Testimony
P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past
L. White, Speaking with Vampires (2000)

P. Harries, Work, Culture and Identity (1994)
A. Isaacman, Cotton is the Mother of Poverty (1996)
J. Lunn, Memories of the Malstrom (1999)
T. Ranger, 'Are We Not Also Men?' (1995)
R. Werbner, Tears of the Dead (1991)
L. White, Magomero (1987)

4/25 Oral History: Practice

Individual papers: Choose one of the following and assess the author's use of oral history. Paper (3-4 pp) and possible oral presentation due in class. (Note: you can write on either this topic or on life histories below.)

S. Berry, Fathers Work for their Sons (1984)
H. Codere, The Biography of an African Society
M. Crowder, The Flogging of Phinehas McIntosh (1988)
M. Echenberg, Colonial Conscripts (1991)
P. Harries, Work, Culture and Identity (1994)
A. Isaacman, Cotton is the Mother of Poverty (1996)
J. Lunn, Memories of the Malstrom (1999)
T. Ranger, 'Are We Not Also Men?' (1995)
R. Werbner, Tears of the Dead (1991)
L. White, Magomero (1987)
5/2  Life Histories: Practice

individually practiced: Choose one of the following and assess the author's use of life histories in writing history. Paper (2-3 pp) and possible oral presentation due in class. (Note: you can write on either this topic or oral history above.)

B. Bozzoli, Women of Phokeng (1991)
J. Davison, Voices from Mutira (1989)
F. Deng, The Man Called Deng Majok (1986)
S. Geiger, TANU Women (1997)
T. Keegan, Facing the Storm (1988)
S. LeVine, Mothers and Wives
S. Marks, Not Either an Experimental Doll (1987)
H. Munson, The House of Si Abd Allah
C. van Onselen, The Seed is Mine (1996)
T. Ranger, Are We Not Also Men? (1995)
C. Robertson, Sharing the Same Bowl
C. Robertson, Trouble Showed the Way (1997)
E. Schmidt, Peasants, Traders and Wives (1992)
M. Smith, Baba of Karo: A Woman of the Muslim Hausa
I. Staunton, Mothers of the Revolution (1990)
M. Strobel, Muslim Women in Mombasa or Three Women of Mombasa
M. Wright, Strategies of Slaves and Women

5/9  Africa in the Americas

The debate over the development of African-American culture has been between the continuity of African ‘survivals’ (Herskovits) vs. the impact of slavery (Frazier), now partially resolved in a dialectical model of ‘cultural creolization’ (Mintz and Price, Joyner).

C. Joyner, Down by the Riverside (1984)

recommended
A. Raboteau, Slave Religion (1978), 43-92. (Frazier vs. Herskovits debate on survivals)
M. Gomez, Exchanging our Country Marks (1998)
J. Vlatch, The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts
S. Barnes (ed.) Africa’s Ogun (2nd ed., 1997)
Other Topics

Genealogies, Kinglists and Chronology

How do oral chronologies differ from written ones? Why? Can these differences be resolved? How do people we have read so far treat chronology? Are ritual and art just another form of 'tradition'? How are they different?

D. Henige, The Chronology of Oral Tradition, 1-70, 95-144 (reserve only)

recommended

Ritual and Art as Tradition

A. Apter, Black Critics and Kings, pp 1-94
S. Blier, African Vodun

recommended
African Arts
B. Herbert, Red Gold of Africa & Iron, Gender and Power
P. Mark, The Wild Bull and the Secret Forest
J. Vansina, Art History in Africa
C. Kriger, 'Museum Collections as Sources,' HA, 23(1996), 129-54.
R.F. Thompson, The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds
C. Schildkrout & C. Keim, African Reflections: Art of Northeastern Zaire

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