



The Biannual CRG African History Conference 2022

**African Studies Centre,
Leiden (ASCL)**

We are pleased to invite you to the 5th Biannual AEGIS CRG African History Conference hosted by the African Studies Centre in Leiden, 16-17 June 2022

Conference Venue: Pieter de la Court Building, Faculty of Social Sciences. Room **OB 13**

Programme

(detailed roundtable descriptions below)

Thursday 16 June

- 14:30 **Opening of the conference** by Prof. dr. Marleen Dekker, director ASCL
- 14:45 **Roundtable I: Animals in African History – Historiographical Approaches and Sources**
Participants: Samuël Coghe, Lancelot Arzel, Cláudia Castelo, Dörte Lerp, Steven Van Wolputte
- 16:15 Coffee/tea break
- 16:30 CRG business meeting
- 17:00 **Exciting Lecture in African History**
Speaker: **Dr. Cécile Feza Bushidi**, New York University
- 19:00 Drinks and dinner

Friday 17 June

- 09:00 **Roundtable II: Doing African History in Europe: Who or What Must Fall?**
Participants: Julia Tischler, Vimbai Kwashirai, Walter Gam Nkwi, Emery Kalema, Winnie Kanyimba
- 10:30 Coffee/tea break
- 11:00 **Roundtable III: African Voices in Early European and Afropean Sources**
Participants: Camille Lefebvre, Adam Jones, Delphine Froment, Robert Ross
- 12:30 Lunch
- 13:30 **Roundtable IV: Repenser les guerres des Afriques**
Participants: Benoit Beucher, Olivier Vallée, Tanguy Quidelleur, Boris Samuel
- 15:00 Coffee/tea break
- 15:30 **Roundtable V: New Approaches to African Environmental History**
Participants: Iva Peša, Julia Tischler, Esther Marijnen, Harry Wels, Raf de Bont
- 17:00 End of conference

Roundtable descriptions

Roundtable I: Animals in African History – Historiographical Approaches and Sources

Convenor Samuël Coghe (Freie Universität Berlin). Contact: samuel.coghe@fu-berlin.de

Participants Lancelot Arzel (Sciences Po, Paris), Cláudia Castelo (ICS, University of Lisbon), Dörte Lerp (Freie Universität Berlin), Steven Van Wolputte (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven)

Historians and anthropologists of Africa have long acknowledged the economic, social, cultural and military importance of animals – both domestic and wild – in African history. Since the early twenty-first century, however, animals and human-animal relations have been the object of renewed and often differently shaped historiographical attention, particularly for the colonial period. This development coincides with the emergence and institutionalisation of (critical) animal studies as a new academic field. Yet recent histories of animals and human-animal relations in Africa are much more diverse in their approaches than this label suggests. Many of them are situated in the often-intersecting fields of (post)colonial history, environmental history and the history of science, technology and medicine. Over the last two decades, animals and human-animal relations have thus taken center stage in histories of conservationism, game hunting and wildlife tourism; in histories of experimental breeding, veterinary medicine and imperial conquest. Yet social and economic historians are also rethinking human-animal relations in Africa in critical histories of pastoralist development, food production and capitalist expansion.

This roundtable brings together scholars studying animals and human-animal relations in African history from different perspectives. Participants will discuss the particular lenses through which they look at animals and human-animal relations and how their approaches are embedded in larger theoretical and/or disciplinary frameworks. They will also reflect upon the kind of sources they use for their research. Finally, they will address current caveats and delineate future pathways for historical research on animals in Africa.

Roundtable II: Doing African History in Europe: Who or What Must Fall?

Convenor Julia Tischler (University of Basel). Contact: julia.tischler@unibas.ch

Participants Vimbai Kwashirai (University of Basel), Walter Gam Nkwi (African Studies Centre Leiden), Emery Kalema (Université Libre de Bruxelles), Winnie Kanyimba (University of Basel)

The “Rhodes Must Fall” movement has been a watershed moment in addressing the imbalances in the African Studies academe in southern Africa. On the European continent, too, numerous scholars have been criticizing the asymmetries within the African Studies community that often leave colleagues based in African research institutions disadvantaged in matters of publication, international visibility, and travelling, among many others. AEGIS as well as its thematic subgroups, including the CRG African History, are largely composed of members of European descent.

The panel consists of scholars who have profound experience in both African and European academic settings. They will share their observations on academic culture and institutional settings on both continents. Members will also debate about the reasons that have led scholars who were previously based in African universities to seek degrees and careers abroad? What impact have their changes of settings made on their scholarship? In a second step, we discuss the colonial heritage of African History in Europe and ways of decolonizing African History “European style”, including the CRG and its biennial meetings.

Roundtable III: African Voices in Early European and Afropean Sources

Convenors Adam Jones (Universität Leipzig), Camille Lefebvre (CNRS Paris). Contact: jones@uni-leipzig.de; camillelefebvre@yahoo.fr

Participants Delphine Froment (IHMC, Paris), Robert Ross (Universiteit Leiden)

We have grown accustomed to lamenting the dearth of „African“ written sources for precolonial and early colonial history. Most of the archives upon which the historiography is based contain the records and correspondence of trading companies, travellers, scholars, missionaries, and colonial officials - invaluable but inevitably reflecting the concerns and prejudices of the Europeans who wrote them. Yet if we look closer, we find in the midst of such sources material which, directly or indirectly, originates from African men and women. Intellectually-minded Europeans who lived or travelled in sub-Saharan Africa might actively collect material written or orally transmitted by Africans, for example Hausa or Kanuri chronicles and other documents written in *ajami*. Or they might make inquiries and record oral testimony, be it in the form of a historical narrative (as, for instance, in Olfert Dapper's seventeenth-century Kwoja account or Robert Norris' eighteenth-century version of the "memoirs" of a Dahomeyan king) or in that of material drawn from an interview, as in the autobiographical information gathered by Sigismund Koelle from emancipated slaves in Freetown in the 1850s. Travellers received letters from people through whose territory they passed, as Hans Meyer did in East Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even in the case of a missionary who kept the minutes of church elders' meetings in early twentieth-century East Africa, it could be argued that what he wrote down was not necessarily his own version of the decisions reached but the result of collective deliberations, in which the missionary was no more than *primus inter pares*, drawing upon the factual knowledge or assertions of the African elders present. Rather than simply describing cases in which such "African voices" may be found, we aim at a discussion of the similarities and differences, as well as of the methodological challenges they raise.

Roundtable IV: Repenser les guerres des Afriques

Convenors Benoit Beucher (IMAF/Délégation au Patrimoine de l'armée de Terre française), Olivier Vallée (Groupe d'études géopolitiques de l'École normale supérieure). Contact: benoit.beucher@wanadoo.fr, valleeolivier018@gmail.com

Participants Tanguy Quidelleur (Institut des sciences sociales du politique/IRSEM), Boris Samuel (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement/CESSMA)

Il y a près de 20 ans, Roland Marchal se proposait de revenir sur les poncifs qui présidaient à l'analyse des conflits sévissant alors sur le continent africain¹. De nombreux diplomates, journalistes, mais aussi des chercheurs en sciences sociales interprétaient « la » guerre en Afrique sous l'angle de sa « violence extrême » et de sa nature « ethnique ». Au moment où la lutte contre le terrorisme perpétue la violence armée au Sahel, les catégories classiques d'analyse des conflits semblent être profondément remises en question. Peut-être parce que leurs formes les plus répandues à présent sont de nature asymétrique, voire dissymétrique, brouillant au passage les distinctions entre la sphère publique et privée, ou encore entre les guerres d'État et celles de lignage, de clan ou de faction.

En effet, les combats mettent aux prises des hommes que l'on parvient difficilement à situer dans ce continuum entre guerrier et soldat d'une part ; porteur d'armes légal et rebelle de l'autre. Par ailleurs, le découpage en vagues successives du processus de démocratisation depuis la fin des années 1990 a contribué à évacuer le « plemos », ou l'affrontement pur, de la pensée du conflit. Une langue technocratique a même effacé le soldat africain et l'armée nationale dans un secteur informel et démilitarisé, celui de la sécurité. Dans le même temps, l'analyse des guerres sous le prisme éculé de l'« ethnicité », mais aussi du fanatisme religieux, demeure bien vivace, escamotant partiellement – hier comme aujourd'hui – la complexité des situations et des trajectoires historiques locales de ces affrontements.

Nous montrerons que des schèmes d'interprétation de la guerre tels que les notions de sécurité, de

1 Marchal Roland, « Interpréter la guerre en Afrique », *Espaces Temps*, n° 71-73, 1999, *De la guerre. Un objet pour les sciences sociales*, pp. 114-129.

stratégie, de lutte contre le terrorisme, masquent la longue fréquentation des hommes en armes et des civils avec le combat et la violence. Notre table-ronde entend précisément la restituer et la réinterroger. Plus que jamais, les faits de guerre s'immergent dans une incurable diversité. Ils ne peuvent être dissociés d'ensembles, de structures profondes. Nous avançons que l'historicité des sociétés africaines, la fluidité de l'espace de la guerre, les recompositions des trajectoires anciennes du « polemos », peuvent être examinées à nouveau frais grâce à la rencontre féconde entre l'histoire et l'anthropologie politique. Nos réflexions seront nourries par les quatre recherches en cours suivantes.

Roundtable V: New Approaches to African Environmental History

Convenor Iva Peša (University of Groningen). Contact: i.pesa@rug.nl

Participants Julia Tischler (University of Basel), Esther Marijnen (Wageningen University), Harry Wels (ASCL, Leiden), Raf de Bont (Maastricht University)

Global climate change will disproportionately affect the African continent, which is already evident in the Sahel droughts and cyclone Idai in Mozambique. Environmental history can contribute to better understanding these current environmental challenges. African environmental history has an excellent track record, especially in terms of agricultural history, forestry and wildlife (e.g. William Beinart, Emmanuel Kreike, Jane Carruthers to name but a few). Yet this strand of environmental history has focused much less on urban issues, industrialisation and waste management. In order to more effectively participate in debates on the Anthropocene and post-humanism, new approaches to African environmental history are necessary. This roundtable will discuss human-animal studies and trans-species perspectives to African history, as well as how to write about the Anthropocene from an African perspective (see Gabrielle Hecht and Gareth Austin). History is particularly useful for understanding changing environmental consciousness towards issues of pollution, waste and cleanliness, but also to understand environmental inequalities and environmental (in)justice. Questions addressed will include: Do we need to reassess the role of human (and non-human) agency in African environmental history? Which topics and approaches need to receive more attention within African environmental history? Why is it important to consider African perspectives in debates on climate change and the Anthropocene?