

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Department of History
Fall 1993-94

History 774
7:00-9:00 Wed
2611 Humanities
office hours: 2:30-3:30 Tues & Thurs & by apmt

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Methods of Historical Research for Pre-Literate Societies

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. 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) a weekly journal, submitted in class, briefly summarizing the arguments of the readings and then commenting on them.

(2) Three longer essays on oral traditions (due 10/20), oral history (11/10), and ethnography and history (11/24). I have suggested books & 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 done for another course, 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 combine 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, insanely so. 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 who wish to pursue a particular methodology at greater length, now or in the future.

abbreviations

- * available in Bookstore and on Reserve
- + available on Reserve only (journals are available in stacks)

<u>APS</u>	Joseph Miller (ed.), <u>The African Past Speaks</u>
<u>CSSH</u>	<u>Comparative Studies in Society and History</u>
<u>HA</u>	<u>History in Africa</u>
<u>IJAHS</u>	<u>Internat'l J. of African Historical Studies</u>
<u>IJOH</u>	<u>Internat'l J. of Oral History</u>
<u>JAH</u>	<u>Journal of African History</u>
<u>OH</u>	<u>Oral History</u>
<u>OT</u>	<u>Oral Tradition</u>
<u>UNESCO</u>	J. Ki-Zerbo (ed.), <u>UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. I: Methodology and Prehistory</u>

general handbooks (all now dated)

- C. Gabel & N. Bennett (eds.), Reconstructing African Culture History
 I.M. Lewis (ed.), History and Social Anthropology
 D. McCall, Africa in Time Perspective
 T. Ranger (ed.), Emerging Themes in African History
 B. Trigger, Beyond History
 J. Vansina, et. al. (ed.), The Historian in Tropical Africa

Schedule of Classes9/8 Introduction

Choose one of the following and read before the first class. Be alert to the methods employed and how they shape the account. We will be returning to these later.

- * C. Joyner, Down by the Riverside
- * R. Price, Alabi's World
- * R. White, The Middle Ground

Archaeology, Paleoecology & Biology9/15 Archaeology and Prehistory

How does one 'read' and interpret a site report or other archaeological 'evidence'? More specifically, how do archaeologists define 'cultures' and explain changes in them? What are some of the problems of correlating archaeological data with other evidence?

required

- * T. Spear, Kenya's Past, Ch 1.
- + UNESCO, Ch 9 (17-28 recommended).
- J. Sutton, 'The Antecedents of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms, JAH, 34(1993), 33-64.
- + I. Hodder, 'The Maintenance of Group Identities in Baringo District' in D. Green, et. al. (eds.), Social Organization and Settlement, 47-58.
 a site report from Azania, African Archaeological Review or other archaeological journal [e.g., Robertshaw or Davison in Azania, 26(1991)].

recommended

- P. Courbin, What is Archaeology?
- C. Gabel, Analysis of Prehistoric Economic Patterns
- C. Ehret & M. Posnansky, The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History
- D. Phillipson, The Later Prehistory of Eastern & Southern Africa
- P. Schmidt, Historical Archaeology
- Azania and African Archaeological Review: site reports.
- JAH: periodic reviews of arch. sites and dating

9/22 Biology, Paleoecology, and the Environment

A potpourri on reconstructing changes in human populations, climate and the environment, agriculture, and the relations among them.

required

+ UNESCO, Ch 13-14.

P. Rosa, 'Physical Anthropology & the Reconstruction of Recent Precolonial History in Africa,' HA, 12(1985), 281-305 & 14(1987), 229-256.

J. de Wet, 'Domestication of African Cereals,' African Economic History, 3(1977), 15-32.

D. Schoenbrun, 'Treating an Interdisciplinary Allergy: Methodological Approaches to Pollen Studies for the Historian of Early Africa,' HA, 18(1991), 323-348.

S.E. Nicholson, 'The Methodology of Historical Climate Reconstruction and its Application to Africa,' JAH, 20(1979), 31-49.

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

recommended

J. Hiernaux, The Peoples of Africa

J. Harlan, et al., Origins of African Plant Domestication

J. Clark & S. Brandt, From Hunters to Farmers

W. Schroeder, E. Munter, & D. Powars, 'Sickle Cell Anaemia, Genetic Variations and the Slave Trade to the United States,' JAH, 31(1990), 163-180.

J. Ford, The Role of Trypanosomiasis in African Ecology

M. Lyons, The Colonial Disease

J. Christie, Cholera Epidemics in East Africa

H. Kjekjhus, Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History

J. Koponen, People and Production in Late Precolonial Tanzania

R. Waller, 'Tsetse Fly in Western Narok, Kenya,' JAH, 31(1990), 81-101.

J. Giblin, The Politics of Environment Control in Northeastern Tanzania (also articles on trypanosomiasis in JAH, 31(1990), 59-80 and East Coast Fever in IJAHS, 23(1990), 401-421.

J. McCann, From Poverty to Famine in Northeast Ethiopia

M. Vaughn, The Story of an African Famine

M. Watts, Silent Violence

P. Richards, Coping with Hunger

S. Feierman, 'Struggles for Control: The Social Roots of Health and Healing in Modern Africa,' Af. Studies Review, 28(1985), 73-145.

S. Feierman & J. Janzen, The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa

Historical Linguistics9/29 Comparative Linguistics

The focus here is on interpreting genetic relationships among languages and the study of words, both inherited and borrowed, to chart historical developments and interactions with others. And then there is the thorny issue of glottochronology.

required

- * T. Spear, Kenya's Past, Ch 2.
- + UNESCO, Ch 10-12.
- D. Schoenbrun, 'We are What We Eat: Ancient Agriculture between the Great Lakes,' JAH, 34(1993), 1-31.
- D. Nurse, 'Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics: the Case of Mwiini,' paper, ASA, 1991 (handout)

recommended

- E. Sapir, 'Time Perspective in Aboriginal American Culture' in Selected Writing of Edward Sapir, 389-462
- R. Antilla, An Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics
- T. Byron, Historical Linguistics
- H. Hock, Principles of Historical Linguistics
- Mary Haas, Culture, Language, and History
- C. Ehret & M. Posnansky, The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History
- C. Ehret, Southern Nilotic History
- C. Ehret, Ethiopians and East Africans
- C. Ehret, The Historical Reconstruction of Southern Cushitic
- C. Flight, 'The Bantu Expansion and the SOAS School,' HA, 15(1988), 261-301.
- D. Nurse & T. Spear, The Swahili

10/6 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?

Presentation by Jan Vansina on Bantu migrations and Words and Things.

required

- * J. Vansina, Paths in the Rainforest, Ch 1-6, 9.

recommended

see above

Oral Traditions & Oral History10/13 Theory

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

required

- * T. Spear, Kenya's Past, Ch 3.
- * J. Vansina, Oral Tradition as History
- + L. Vail & L. White, Power and the Praise Poem, Ch 1-2.

recommended

- + D. Henige, Oral Historiography, Ch 3-5
- + UNESCO, Ch 2, 7, 8
- B. Jewsiewicki & D. Newbury, African Historiographies
- P. Connerton, How Societies Remember
- R. Finnegan, Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices
- K. Barber & P. de Moreas Farias (eds.), Discourse and its Disguises

- T. Beidelman, 'Myth, Legend, and Oral History,' Anthropos, 65(1970), 74-97.
- H. Scheub, The Xhosa Ntsomi
- W. MacGaffey, 'African History, Anthropology, and the Rationality of Natives,' HA, 5(1978).
- J. Miller, 'The Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Africa' in B. Bernardi, et. al. (eds.), Fonti Orali
- + J. Miller (ed.), The African Past Speaks (Intro & case studies)
- D. Cohen, Towards a Reconstructed Past: Historical Texts from Busoga, Uganda
- T. Spear, 'Oral Traditions: Whose History?' HA, 8(1981), 163-179.
- D. Beach, 'The Rozwi in Search of their Past,' HA, 10(1983), 13-34.
- J. Peel, 'Making History: The Past in the Ijesha Present,' Man, 19(1984), 111-132.
- D. Cohen, 'The Undefined of Oral Tradition,' Ethnohistory, 33(1989), 9-18.
- D. Golan, 'The Life Story of King Shaka and Gender Tensions in the Zulu State,' HA, 17(1990), 131-156.
- P. de Moreas Farias, 'History and Consolation: Royal Yoruba Bards Comment on their Craft,' HA, 19(1992), 263-297.

10/20 Practice

- + D. Henige, Oral Historiography, Ch 4-5.

Individual papers: Choose one of the following and compare and assess the author's methods and practice. You may choose another work if you clear it with me in advance, but you should not use a book you have done in another class. Paper and oral presentation due in class.

- D. Cohen, The Historical Tradition of Busoga
- J. Ewald, 'Speaking, Writing and Authority,' CSSH, 30(1988), 199-224 & Soldiers, Traders and Slaves (Part I)
- S. Feierman, The Shambaa Kingdom
- R. Harms, River of Wealth, River of Sorrow & + APS, Ch 7
- J. Lamphear, The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda
- P. Irwin, Liptako Speaks
- R. Law, The Oyo Empire & R. Law in S.O. Biobaku (ed.), Sources of Yoruba History, Ch 2 & 3.
- J. Miller, Kings and Kinsmen
- R. Packard, Chiefship & Cosmology & + APS, Ch 6
- R. Price, First-Time
- T. Spear, Traditions of Origin and their Interpretation & The Kaya Complex
- J. Vansina, The Children of Woot

also recommended

- E.J. Alagoa, The Small Brave City State and 'Oral Tradition and the History of Segmentary Societies,' HA, 12(1985), 1-10.
 J. Boston, The Igala Kingdom
 G. Hartwig, The Art of Survival
 T. Reefe, The Rainbow and the Kings & 'Traditions of Genesis and the Luba Diaspora,' HA, 4(1977), 183
 D. Wright, The Early History of Niimi & Oral Traditions from the Gambia, Vols. 1-2.

10/27 Ritual and Art as Tradition

Are ritual and art just another form of 'tradition'? How are they different?

required

- + A. Apter, Black Critics and Kings, pp 1-94
- + P. Mark, The Wild Bull and the Secret Forest

recommended

J. Vansina, Art History in Africa

11/3 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?

required

- + D. Henige, The Chronology of Oral Tradition, Intro, Ch 1, 3-4.

recommended

- L. Bohanan, 'A Genealogical Charter,' Africa, 22(1952), 301-315.
 G. Gibson, 'Himba Epochs,' HA, 4(1977), 67-121.
 R. Oliver, 'The Traditional History of Buganda, Bunyoro and Nkore,' J. of the Royal Anthro. Instit., 85(1955), 111-117.
 D. Cohen, 'A Survey of Interlacustrine Chronology,' JAH, 11(1970), 177-201.
 C. Wrigley, 'The Kinglists of Buganda,' HA, 1(1974), 129-139.
 D. Henige, 'Reflections on Early Interlacustrine Chronology,' JAH, 15(1974), 27-46 & + APS, Ch 10.

11/10 Oral History, Life Histories & Memoirsrequired

- + D. Henige, Oral Historiography, Ch 6.

Individual papers: Choose one of the following and assess the author's use of oral/life histories. Again, substitutions are allowed if cleared with me in advance. Paper and oral presentation due in class.

- S. Berry, Fathers Work for their Sons
 S. Mirza & M. Strobel, Three Swahili Women
 H. Munson, The House of Si Abd Allah
 L. Plotnicov, Strangers to the City
 P. Romero, Life Histories of African Women

- M. Shostak, Nisa & 'What the Wind Won't Take Away,' IJOH, 8(1987), 171-81.
 M. Smith, Baba of Karo: A Woman of the Muslim Hausa
 R. Kapuscinski, The Emperor & H. Marcus. 'Prejudice and Ignorance in
 Reviewing Books about Africa,' HA, 17(1990), 373-378.

recommended

- P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past
 E. Tonkin, Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History
 E. Loftus, Eyewitness Testimony
 + L. Vail & L. White, Power and the Praise Poem
 Personal Narratives Group, Interpreting Women's Lives
 J. Parpart, 'Listening to Women's Voices,' J. of Women's Hist., 4(1992), 171-9.
 M. Klein, 'Studying the History of Those Who Would Rather Forget: Oral History
 and the Experience of Slavery,' HA, 16(1989), 209-217.
 R. Roberts, 'Reversible Social Processes, Historical Memory, and the Production
 of History,' HA, 17(1990), 341-349.
 T. Woods, 'Planters, Administrators and Chiefs: Oral Tradition and Colonial
 Historiography in Malawi,' IJOH, 10(1989), 210-222.
 T. Woods, 'Capitaos and Chiefs: Oral Tradition and Colonial Society in Malawi,'
IJAHS, 23(1990), 259-268.
 H. Codère, The Biography of an African Society

Ethnography

11/17 Ethnography

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

required

- + E. Evans-Pritchard, The Nuer, pp 94-150.
 * R. Kelly, The Nuer Conquest, pp 1-8, 58-119, 189-252.

recommended

see Kelly bibliography

11/24 Ethnography and History

(NB: We probably want to move this class to another day.)

The debate over structure and process is criticized as being ahistorical and attempts are made to historicize structural processes.

required

- * T. Spear, Kenya's Past, Ch 4-5.
 + K. Gough, 'Nuer Kinship: A Reexamination' in T.O. Beidelman (ed.), The Translation of Culture, 79-121.
 M. C. Newbury, 'Ethnicity in Rwanda,' Africa, 48(1978), 17-29.
 D. Newbury, 'The Clans of Rwanda,' Africa, 50(1980), 389-403.
 + J. & J.L. Comaroff, Ethnography & the Historical Imagination, Intro.

Individual papers: Choose one of the following and assess how the authors use structural and/or historical models. Substitution of another text is possible if you consult me in advance. Paper and oral presentation due in class.

- L. Cassanelli, The Shaping of Somali Society
- D. Cohen, Womunafu's Bunafu & APS, Ch 8
- J. Miller, Kings and Kinsmen
- D. Newbury, Kings and Clans
- R. Packard, Chiefship and Cosmology
- D. Lan, Guns and Rain
- M. Sahlins, Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities & G. Obeyesekere, The Apotheosis of Captain Cook
- R. Willis, The Making of a State

recommended

- M. Sahlins, Islands of History
- R. Rosaldo, 'From the Door of his Tent' in Clifford & Marcus (eds.), Writing Culture, 77-97.
- G. Schlee, 'Interethnic Clan Identities among Cushitic-Speaking Pastoralists,' Africa, 55(1985), 17-38.

12/1 Ethnohistory & Cultural Change

Is Ethnohistory ethnic history, ethnographic history, or historical anthropology? How does African history and ethnohistory compare? Is there ethnohistory before or without cultural contact? How does Denning's 'cultural death' compare with White's 'middle ground'?

required

- * T. Spear, Kenya's Past, Ch 5
- * R. White, The Middle Ground, Ch 1-3+
- or
- + G. Denning, Islands and Beaches

recommended

- J. Axtell, The Invasion Within
- J. Axtell, After Columbus
- I. Clendinnen, Ambivalent Conquest
- J. Merrell, The Indians New World
- W. Simmons, The Spirit of New England Tribes
- R. White, The Roots of Dependency

12/8 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 somewhat resolved in a dialectical model of 'cultural creolization' (Mintz & Price, Joyner).

required

- * C. Joyner, Down by the Riverside

recommended (a sampling)

- A. Raboteau, Slave Religion, 43-92. (Frazier vs. Herskovits debate on survivals)
 S. Mintz & R. Price, The Birth of Afro-American Culture
 M. Crahan & F. Knight, Africa and the Caribbean
 E. Brathwaite, The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica
 L. Turner, Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect
 R. Bastide, The African Religions of Brazil
 W. Bascom, Shango in the New World
 J. Wafer, The Taste of Blood
 L. Levine, Black Culture, Black Consciousness
 J. Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds
 Vlatch, The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts
 R. Thompson, Four Moments of the Sun

Documents12/15 Travelers Accounts, Maps, Photos & Other 'Hard' Evidence

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

Presentation by Robin Law.

required

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

recommended

- + P. Curtin, The Image of Africa
- + A. Jones & B. Heintze, 'European Sources for Sub-Saharan Africa: Use and Abuse,' special issue of Paideuma, 33(1987).
- A. Jones, Raw, Medium, Well-Done: A Critical Review of Editorial and Quasi-Editorial Work on pre-1885 European Sources for sub-Saharan Africa.
- J. Hanson, 'African Testimony Reported in European Travel Literature,' HA, 18(1991), 143-158.
- B. Greenfield, 'The Problem of the Discoverer's Authority in Lewis and Clark's History' in Avac & Ritvo (eds.), Macro Politics of 19th c. Literature
- R. Baesjou, 'The Historical Evidence in Old Maps and Charts of Africa...', HA, 15(1988), 1-83.
- T. Bassett & P. Porter, '"From the Best Authorities!': The Mountains of Kong in the Cartography of West Africa,' JAH, 32(1991), 367-414.
- C. Geary, 'Photographs as Materials for African History,' HA, 13(1986), 89-116.
- C. Geary, Images from Bamum & (ed.) special issue of African Arts, 24(1991)
- B. Heintze, 'In Pursuit of a Chameleon,' HA, 17(1990), 137-156.
- A. Roberts (ed.), Photographs as Sources for African History (SOAS, 1988)
- N. Monti (ed.), Africa Then: Photographs 1840-1918