

History in Africa

A JOURNAL OF METHOD

David Henige, Editor

GENERAL INDEXES
1 (1974)–10 (1983)



Published Annually by the
AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

VOL. 10 / 1983

HISTORY IN AFRICA

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AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
255 Kinsey Hall
University of California-Los Angeles
405 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90024

ISSN 0361-5413

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When you lose interest in anything you also lose the memory of it. [156]

It is only when a man knows little that he knows anything at all. With knowledge grows doubt. [178]

The action of genius is in a way ubiquitous: towards general truths before experience, towards particular truths after it. [338]

An active scepticism is one which constantly aims at overcoming itself and arriving by means of regulated experience at a kind of conditioned certainty. [340]

The historian's duty is two-fold; first towards himself, then towards his readers. As regards himself, he must carefully examine into the things that could have happened; and as for the reader's sake he must determine what actually did happen. His action towards himself is a matter between himself and his colleagues; but the public must not see into the secret that there is little in history which can said to be positively determined. [452]

Theories are usually the overhasty efforts of an impatient understanding that would gladly be rid of phenomena, and so puts in their place pictures, notions, often mere words. We may surmise that such theories are makeshifts but do not passion and party spirit love a makeshift at all times? And rightly, too, because they stand in much need of it. [520]

Hypotheses are cradle songs by which the teacher lulls his scholars to sleep. The thoughtful and honest observer is always learning more and more of his limitations; he sees that the further knowledge spreads, the more numerous are the problems that make their appearance. [560]

If many a man did not feel obliged to repeat what is untrue because he has said it once, the world would have been quite different. [564]

There is nothing more odious than the majority: it consists of a few powerful men to lead the way, of accommodating rascals and submissive weaklings, and of a mass of men who trot after them without in the least knowing their own mind. [566]

The discerning man who acknowledges his limitations is not far off perfection. [578]

Goethe: Maximen und Reflexionen

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