

# CPF: *History in Africa*

## In Flux: Theorizing African Environments, Ancient to Future

In honor of the 50th volume of *History in Africa*, we are seeking contributions that examine histories of environments across the expansive African terrain. For this CFP, “environment” is conceived broadly to include the range of spaces and landscapes transformed by gendered human activity. We are convinced that critical examinations of environmental histories coupled with innovative methodologies and sources can generate more complex understandings of the African past.

Scholarship on environmental history in Africa no longer assumes an Edenic past obliterated by slave trades, colonialism, urbanisms, and rural developments premised on dispossession. Rather, with methodologies and insights from archaeology, historical linguistics, anthropology, and environmental science, environmental historiography recognizes the dynamic relationship between African communities, ecology, climate, landscapes, and living creatures over millenia. For example, Clapperton Mavhunga has invited us to foreground Shona knowledge production systems that related people, animals, landscapes, and especially insects, to recognize how African expertise was coopted and repurposed over time.<sup>1</sup> Scholars have also more recently begun to integrate urban studies into environmental history as research on the continent has looked to reveal “edgy” or “rogue” approaches to collaborative work.<sup>2</sup> *Given these developments, how do we consider the significance of theoretical framings around the Anthropocene – the current geological age defined by human intervention – or more significantly, the Plantationocene – the modern era as shaped by racism and extractive practices of slavery and colonialism – in African contexts?*<sup>3</sup> *And how do gendered understandings and practices fit into these broader theories?*

*History in Africa* was created as a forum in 1974 to examine methods, sources, and historiography and we would like to demonstrate the continued rigor and creativity in the field

by highlighting the deeper histories of a theme that should have growing importance to all of us. Just as Akinwumi Ogundiran has encouraged us to reimagine how Yoruba society managed epidemiological crises, can we discern environmentally-sensitive practices in the African past where Western science assumed there were none?<sup>4</sup> *How, then, into the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are historians of Africa blending, integrating - or opposing - histories of environments with new sources, methods, and theories?*

Possible topics may include:

- Re-theorizing ancient environmental and urban history
- Interdisciplinary in environmental history
- Altering cityscapes/sensespaces
- After the Anthropocene?
- Watery histories
- Roots and routes of climate crisis
- Reconceptualizing relationships between humans and other beings
- Environmental feminisms
- “Progress?” in plant and animal genetic modification
- Collections, archives, cages, hoards: appropriations and misappropriations of Africa’s natural worlds
- Comparative and diasporic approaches to African environmental history

We especially encourage proposals for environmentally-focused histories of North and Central Africa. As always with *History in Africa*, submissions that fall outside of the scope of the special section theme on environmental histories are welcome.

We also invite submissions for other features in our journal including Archival Reports, “Interview with an Archivist,” and “History from Africa” on a rolling basis. Please address any questions to the Editor-in-Chief.

### SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Please email a 500-word abstract to [managingeditor@historyinafrica.org](mailto:managingeditor@historyinafrica.org) by June 13, 2022 with the subject line: HiA Abstract Submission 2023. By June 27th, authors will be notified whether to submit a full article for peer review by September 5, 2022. Please note that invitations to submit articles for peer review do not guarantee publication.

Articles selected for publication after peer review will be included in the 2023 volume of *History in Africa*. Articles may appear in advance of the publication date via FirstView once the copyediting process is completed. Please address any inquiries to Lorelle Semley, Editor-in-Chief, [chiefeditor@historyinafrica.org](mailto:chiefeditor@historyinafrica.org).

1. Clapperton Mavhunga, *The Mobile Workshop: The Tsetse Fly and African Knowledge Production* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018).
2. Garth Myers, *Urban Environments in Africa: A Critical Analysis of Environmental Policies* (Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2016). Christof Mauch and Robin Libby, eds., “The Edges of Environmental History: Honouring Jane Carruthers,” in *RCC Perspectives* 2014, no. 1. Edgar Pieterse and AbdouMaliq Simone, eds. *Rogue Urbanism: Emergent African Cities* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2013).
3. Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018). Wendy Wolford “The Plantationocene: A Lusotropical Contribution to the Theory,” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 111:6, 1622-1639 (2021).
4. Akinwumi Ogundiran, “Managing Epidemics in Ancestral Yoruba Town and Cities: ‘Sacred Groves’ as Isolation Sites,” *African Archaeological Review* 37, 3 (2020).

