What is the role of historical research for African societies today?

Programme Event

International Committee of Historical Sciences | 26–30 August 2026 | Leipzig, Germany

DATE	LOCATION
28 Aug 2026, 11:00 - 13:30	House 5 SR133
THEME	CONFERENCE
C - National and Regional Schools of Historiography	International Committee of Historical Sciences

Overview

Forms of reflecting on the past have long been practised in African societies. When universities were founded in African countries, history departments were among the first departments established. In most cases, the first universities were established in the decades leading up to independence, and as such they played important roles in the decolonisation process. Initially, academic historical research played an important role for political legitimation of independent governments, for decolonisation, as well as for the training of much-needed bureaucrats. Historical research thus played an important role for postcolonial nation building. It also contributed to ethnic mobilisation, which in some cases strengthened the independent state, and in others undermined it. In recent decades, academic history appears to have lost its one-time prominence to subjects in the sciences (including the social sciences), health and law. History has nevertheless remained important for African societies, as is evidenced by the large production and consumption of historical texts by non-academic or amateur historians. As the urgent questions of African societies have changed, from decolonisation and nation state building to issues including crime, corruption, violence, health, food security and the effects of climate change, the role of historical research has to change too. In this panel, we will explore what the role of historical research is for African societies today? What are the important themes and new questions that historical research should focus on now? What are examples of historical studies that are making an impact in today's societies?

Participants

Convenor

- Dmitri van den Bersselaar (Leipzig University)

Chair

- Ngozi Edeagu (Leipzig University)

Panelists

- Maxmillian Chuhila (University of Dar es Salaam)
- Hezron Kangalawe (University of Dar es Salaam)
- Rasheed Olaniyi (University of Ibadan)
- Sandra Swart (Stellenbosch University)
- Egodi Uchendu (University of Nigeria)

Papers

An Historical interrogation of the State and Students strikes in Tanzania: A Case of University of Dar es Salaam, 1961-2020

Hezron Kangalawe (University of Dar es Salaam)

(Re)Writing the African Past in the Digital Age: AI, Social Media and the Crisis of Authority in Nigerian Historical Production

Egodi Uchendu (University of Nigeria)

Making History Prodigious: Historicism and New Vision for Nation-Building in Post-colonial Africa

Rasheed Olaniyi (University of Ibadan)

Lions, Historians and Other Trouble-Makers: History for African Futures

Sandra Swart (Stellenbosch University)

In Search of "Our History": from Dar es salaam to the World and Back, ca. 1964 - 2024

Maxmillian Chuhila (University of Dar es Salaam)

Source: https://cish2026.recentglobe.org/events/what-is-the-role-of-historical-research-for-african-societies-today/

Generated: 24/08/2026 04:34