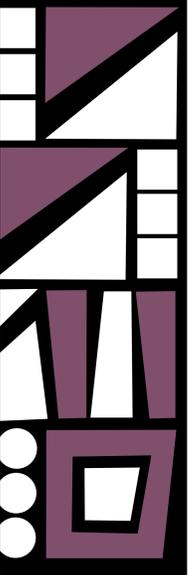




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BEYOND THE SINGLE STORY: HERALDING A NEW DAWN FOR THE STUDY OF AFRICA

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Introduction

The study of Africa has always been more than an academic pursuit—it is an intellectual battleground over meaning, representation, and power. For more than a century, competing narratives about the continent have shaped global knowledge systems and informed policy decisions. They have also influenced how African peoples understand themselves and their place in the world. Whether in colonial ethnographies, nationalist historiographies, postcolonial critiques, or contemporary digital scholarship, the struggle over who can speak for Africa—and how Africa ought to be studied—remains one of the central tensions in African Studies.¹

This tension is not merely theoretical. It is rooted in long histories of misrepresentation, systems of unequal knowledge production, and the persistence of the “single story”—a reductive narrative that collapses Africa’s diversity into simplistic, often pathologizing frames. Scholars such as Chinua Achebe,² Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o,³ and more recently Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie⁴ have powerfully demonstrated how stories shape power, dignity, and global perception. The stakes are therefore high: to study Africa is to enter a contested field where epistemology, politics, identity, and memory intersect.

At this contemporary moment—marked by resurgent debates on decolonization, the rise of digital technologies, intensified geopolitical realignments, and the growing interconnectedness of African societies—the need for rigorous, grounded, and pluralistic scholarship has never been more urgent. African Studies must not only interrogate inherited paradigms but also craft new methodological pathways that reflect Africa’s dynamism and complexity. This requires rewriting archives, centering indigenous epistemologies, engaging local communities, and critically assessing the tools through which knowledge about Africa is produced.

It is within this broader intellectual landscape that this editorial introduction situates itself. By tracing the methodological evolution of African Studies—from colonial positivism to the vibrant

¹ Valentin Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Achille Mbembe, “African Modes of Self-Writing,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 239–273; and Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001).

² Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays, 1965–1987* (London: Heinemann, 1988).

³ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986).

⁴ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story,” TEDGlobal, Oxford, July 23, 2009, video, 19:16, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>.

plurality of approaches defining the field today—we foreground the central question that animates this inaugural issue of the *Journal of African Humanities Research and Development (JAHRD)*: how do we study Africa in ways that resist reductive narratives, honour African agency, and generate knowledge that is both critically robust and socially relevant?

This introduction therefore serves a dual purpose. First, it offers a historical and conceptual map of methodologies that have shaped the field, illuminating the intellectual struggles that made African-centered scholarship possible. Second, it establishes a methodological and philosophical foundation for the articles in this volume, which collectively demonstrate the creativity, interdisciplinarity, and critical insight that characterize the new directions in African scholarship.

In charting this path forward, *JAHRD* positions itself as more than an academic platform: it is a space of intellectual renewal committed to transforming how Africa is studied, represented, and imagined. By foregrounding methodological pluralism, championing African-centered epistemologies, and engaging both local and global scholarly communities, the journal seeks to actively shape the contours of African Studies while offering a model for inclusive, rigorous, and socially relevant scholarship.

In marking the birth of this journal, we join a long tradition of African intellectuals and global allies committed to reimagining the study of Africa beyond the confines of the single story. What follows, then, is both a reflection and an invitation: a reflection on where African Studies has come from, and an invitation to participate in its unfolding future—rigorous, decolonial, inclusive, and unapologetically grounded in African realities.

Methodologies in African Studies: Evolution, Contributions, and Interventions

The study of Africa has long been shaped by debates over methodology. These debates are not merely technical; they are deeply entwined with the politics of knowledge production—whose perspectives are privileged, which sources are deemed legitimate, and how Africa is represented in scholarly discourse. From colonial-era positivism to the rich plurality of methods that define the field today, African Studies has undergone profound methodological transformations. This evolution reflects shifts in political contexts, theoretical currents, and the intellectual agency of African scholars themselves. The evolution of methodologies in African Studies therefore mirrors the continent's broader historical trajectories—from colonial subjugation and anti-imperial resistance to postcolonial reconstruction and contemporary debates about decolonization, gender, and digital transformation.

Colonial Foundations and Early Critiques

As an institutionalized field, African Studies emerged in the first half of the twentieth century, largely under colonial auspices. Anthropological and historical research of this era was often framed by functionalist and diffusionist paradigms, with data collected through short-term fieldwork and filtered through European conceptual lenses. Historians relied heavily on written archives generated by colonial administrators, missionaries, and traders—sources that, while rich, were steeped in the ideological assumptions of empire. These written archives were privileged as “authentic” sources, while oral traditions and indigenous epistemologies were dismissed as myth or folklore. These

epistemic hierarchies denied Africans historical agency, silenced indigenous voices, and enshrined the archive as an instrument of imperial power.⁵

Scholars such as Reginald Coupland,⁶ Arthur Percival Newton,⁷ and Margery Perham⁸ openly doubted the existence of African history before European contact, equating “history” with the existence of written records. This stance, rooted in Rankean empiricism, systematically marginalized African voices and obscured indigenous historical consciousness.⁹ Critiques emerged alongside independence movements. Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*¹⁰ and V. Y. Mudimbe’s *The Invention of Africa*¹¹—a body of knowledge that served more to define European modernity than to illuminate African realities.¹² They argued that African Studies had been shaped less by Africa’s own realities than by Europe’s need to define itself in contrast to an imagined “primitive” other. These works helped set the stage for a methodological reorientation toward decolonization.

The Post-Independence Turn: Oral Tradition and African Agency

The 1950s and 1960s—coinciding with African independence—marked a methodological breakthrough. Pioneering African scholars, notably Kenneth Onwuka Dike, transformed the discipline by legitimizing oral tradition as a credible source for historical reconstruction. Dike’s *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* combined colonial archival materials with oral testimonies from Nigeria’s Niger Delta communities, producing an Afrocentric narrative that foregrounded African agency in precolonial and colonial encounters.¹³

The “Ibadan School of History,” nurtured under Dike’s leadership, institutionalized this methodology. Historians such as J. F. Ade Ajayi, Tekena Tamuno, and Obaro Ikime produced works that challenged Eurocentric historiography and restored Africans to the center of their own histories. This was a decisive intervention against the claim that Africa lacked a precolonial past.¹⁴

⁵ Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁶ Reginald Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa, 1856–1890: The Slave Trade and the Scramble* (London: Faber & Faber, 1939).

⁷ Arthur Percival Newton, *Africa and the West: A History of European Expansion and Influence* (London: A. & C. Black, 1935).

⁸ Margery Perham, *Africans and Their History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

⁹ M. E. Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Routledge, 2014).

¹⁰ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle L’Ouverture), 1972.

¹¹ V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*.

¹² Amílcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings of Amílcar Cabral*, trans. Michael Wolfers (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979).

¹³ K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria* (London: Clarendon, 1956).

¹⁴ See J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841–1891: The Making of a New Élite* (London: Longmans, 1965); Tekena N. Tamuno, *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase, 1898–1914* (London: Longmans, 1972); and Obaro Ikime, *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta: The Rise and Fall of Nana Olomu, Chief Trader of Isekiri* (London: Heinemann, 1968).

Belgian historian Jan Vansina amplified this methodological shift in 1965, providing a systematic framework for collecting, authenticating, and interpreting oral traditions.¹⁵ Twenty years later in 1985, his *Oral Tradition as History* refined these methods, addressing questions of chronology, transmission, and reliability.¹⁶ David Henige’s *Oral Historiography* complemented Vansina’s book by offering practical fieldwork guidance, emphasizing transparency, preservation, and critical analysis.¹⁷ Cheik Anta Diop also challenged the assertion by European scholars that Africa had no history, offering counterevidence based on archaeology, linguistics, and historiography.¹⁸

Together, these contributions repositioned oral sources from “anecdotal” to “authoritative,” enabling African historians to write fuller, more representative histories and to question the authority of colonial archives.

Interdisciplinary Expansions and Theoretical Interventions

By the late 1960s and 1970s, African Studies methodologies broadened in scope and ambition. The influence of political economy approaches—shaped by dependency theory and Marxist analysis—was evident in works such as Claude Ake’s *Social Science as Imperialism*, which critiqued the uncritical importation of Western social science models.¹⁹ This era also saw the rise of historical anthropology, exemplified by Terence Ranger’s studies on religion and resistance in Zimbabwe and by Ranger and Eric Hobsbawm’s influential concept of “invented traditions” (1983), which provided tools for understanding the dynamic interplay of history, memory, and identity in African societies.²⁰

Interdisciplinary collaboration became a defining feature. Economists, political scientists, and cultural theorists increasingly worked alongside historians and anthropologists, producing layered analyses of African realities. The integration of archaeology, linguistics, and material culture studies further diversified methodological toolkits.

Feminist and Gender-Responsive Methodologies

From the 1980s onward, feminist scholarship made critical interventions in African Studies methodologies. Ifi Amadiume²¹ and Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí²² challenged Western gender binaries, revealing how colonial encounters reconfigured indigenous gender systems. These works not only recovered women’s historical roles but also questioned the universality of Western categories, urging methodologies attentive to local epistemologies and social structures.

African feminist methodologies often emphasized oral narratives, life histories, and ethnographic engagement, foregrounding lived experiences and community perspectives. By

¹⁵ See Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (Chicago: Aldine, 1965).

¹⁶ Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

¹⁷ David Henige, *Oral Historiography* (London: Longman, 1982).

¹⁸ Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1974).

¹⁹ Claude Ake, *Social Science as Imperialism* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1979).

²⁰ Terence Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896–97: A Study in African Resistance* (London: Heinemann, 1967); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²¹ Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* (London: nZed Books, 1987).

²² Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, *The Invention of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

interrogating the androcentrism of earlier Africanist scholarship, they expanded the field's methodological and thematic horizons.

Decolonial and Reflexive Approaches

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the “decolonization of knowledge” emerged as a central methodological concern. Decolonial thinkers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o²³ and Achille Mbembe²⁴ called for dismantling Eurocentric epistemic frameworks and recovering African modes of knowing.

In 2022, Toyin Falola advanced this agenda by advocating for “alternative archives” rooted in memory, performance, and material culture, reducing reliance on colonial-era written sources.²⁵ Similarly, Francis Nyamnjoh’s theory of “incompleteness,” published in 2017, proposed a convivial, open-ended methodology that embraces the partiality and plurality of knowledge production.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) and community-engaged scholarship have also gained prominence, particularly in development studies and applied anthropology. These approaches, as Cornwall and Jewkes argue, prioritize co-production of knowledge with local communities, shifting the researcher’s role from “expert” to collaborator.²⁶

Digital and Technological Interventions

The digital turn has introduced new methodological possibilities and challenges. Digital archives, GIS mapping, and computational text analysis offer unprecedented access to historical and cultural data. Initiatives such as the African Online Digital Library and the Endangered Archives Program facilitate the preservation and dissemination of African cultural heritage. Yet, digital humanities in African contexts must guard against “digital colonialism,” where technological infrastructures and platforms reproduce existing global inequities.²⁷ Methodologies must therefore integrate digital tools with critical awareness of power, access, and sustainability.

Together, these shifts reveal African Studies as a field in constant motion—responsive to changing political realities, methodological innovations, and epistemological critiques. It is against this dynamic backdrop that the present volume situates itself. While digital methodologies expand the possibilities of African Studies, contemporary scholarship also contends with emerging intellectual currents that demand attention.

²³ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Decolonizing the Mind* (Oxford: James Currey, 1986).

²⁴ Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2001)

²⁵ Toyin Falola *Decolonizing African Knowledge: Autoethnography and African Epistemologies* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

²⁶ Andrea Cornwall and Rachel Jewkes, “What Is Participatory Research?” *Social Science & Medicine* 41, no. 12 (1995): 1667–1676.

²⁷ Danielle Coleman, “Digital Colonialism: The 21st Century Scramble for Africa through the Extraction and Control of User Data and the Limitations of Data Protection Laws,” *Michigan Journal of Race and Law* 24, no. 2 (2019): 417–439.

Enduring Challenges and Future Directions

Despite its methodological advances, African Studies faces enduring challenges. The politics of funding and publication often skew research agendas toward donor-driven priorities. Language remains a barrier, as scholarship in African languages is underrepresented in mainstream academic forums. Moreover, the rapid pace of political and technological change demands continuous methodological adaptation. Future methodological innovations will likely involve deeper integration of indigenous epistemologies, greater interdisciplinarity, and more robust ethical frameworks for collaborative research. There is also scope for expanding environmental humanities methodologies to address climate change, biodiversity, and sustainability in African contexts.

While the preceding discussion has highlighted the enduring challenges confronting scholarship in our field and anticipated the directions future research might take, it is equally important to reflect on how these challenges and prospects are not merely abstract concerns but are intimately linked to the methodological choices that shape the knowledge we produce. In other words, understanding the trajectory of the field requires a careful examination of the ways in which methodological evolution informs, constrains, and enables the insights and interventions presented in this volume. It is against this backdrop that we turn to “Connecting Methodology to Practice,” a section that illuminates how the diverse methods employed across the contributions not only reflect the transformation of scholarly approaches but also actively shape the conversations, debates, and critical interventions that define this collection.

Connecting Methodology to Practice: How this Volume Embodies Methodological Transformation

The trajectory of these methodological transformations provides an important backdrop for the scholarship presented in this inaugural volume. Yet this relationship is not merely contextual—it is constitutive. The articles gathered in this maiden issue of *JAHRD* exemplify, in concrete and often innovative ways, the methodological currents that have shaped African historiography from its precolonial foundations through the postwar revolution of the Ibadan School to the contemporary era of decolonial critique and archival reimagination. What emerges is a volume that does not only reflect these methodological shifts but actively participates in extending them.

A central feature of the historiographical evolution earlier discussed is the dual movement toward (1) the diversification of sources, and (2) a critical interrogation of archives—colonial, postcolonial, private, and alternative. This dual movement is unmistakably present in the first cluster of articles in this volume. Nicodemus Awasom’s “Towards the Decolonisation of the Archives and Writing African History” is, in many ways, a contemporary restatement of the methodological revolution inaugurated by Kenneth Onwuka Dike and the Ibadan School. Awasom revisits the foundational project of rescuing African pasts from the distortions of colonial epistemology through the combined use of oral sources, critical archival reading, and Afrocentric hermeneutics. His work recalls the methodological markers earlier identified—especially the insistence on rational critique, the deployment of multi-source evidence, and the prioritisation of African epistemic standpoints. In doing so, the article anchors the entire volume within the long genealogy of methodological self-correction that defined African historiography after the 1950s.

The following article by Samuel Fury Childs Daly, “Magpies, Termites, Foxes, and Hedgehogs: Endangered Archives and Their Forms of Knowledge,” introduces a complementary but distinct methodological intervention. Whereas Awasom examines the epistemological decolonisation of archives, Daly probes the material fragility of the archive itself. His reflections on decay, neglect, and the vulnerability of Nigeria’s documentary repositories extend the conversation from epistemology to preservation science, from the “content” of archives to their “conditions of existence.” This resonates with the earlier methodological emphasis on arguing from evidence and ensuring the survival of primary sources, reminding us that without the physical archive, critical reconstruction of the past becomes impossible. Daly’s use of metaphor—magpies, termites, foxes, and hedgehogs—also reflects the broadened narrative techniques that contemporary historiography increasingly embraces.

Together, Awasom and Daly frame the volume’s engagement with archives across two axes: epistemic legitimacy and material endurance. These two axes together mirror the dual strands of methodological evolution traced in the first part of the introduction.

A second cluster of articles extends the methodological conversation into the realm of archival ethnography and the social life of texts. Samaila Suleiman’s “From Teaching Collections to Family Archives: A Genealogy of the Sheikh Kabara Library, Kano” exemplifies this genre. His study of the Kabara manuscript tradition bridges history, anthropology, manuscript studies, and intellectual genealogy. Suleiman deploys a mixed-methods approach—archival ethnography, oral interviews, and sociological interpretation—to demonstrate how private manuscript libraries function simultaneously as repositories of knowledge, sites of power, and instruments of religious authority. In doing so, he embodies the methodological diversification earlier highlighted: the integration of materials from Arabic manuscripts, family records, interviews, material culture, and the politics of memory.

While the first set of articles wrestles with archives and epistemology, the **book reviews** in the volume extend the methodological theme into the terrains of gender studies, African studies, and qualitative methodologies. For example, Clive Noombo’s review of *Jacketed Women* highlights feminist qualitative research as a methodology deeply embedded in the politics of identity, respectability, and positionality. This directly echoes the methodological evolution from positivist history to interpretive, reflexive, and critical approaches. Similarly, Beard Mwanza Jr.’s review of Toyin Falola’s *Decolonizing African Studies* ties the entire volume’s intellectual orientation back to the broader decolonial turn—underscoring the movement away from Eurocentric analytical frames toward methodologies grounded in African epistemologies, indigenous knowledge systems, and critical reflexivity.

When read together, these contributions showcase the methodological diversity that characterises contemporary African historical and humanities research. From archival decolonisation to manuscript ethnography, from the politics of decay to feminist qualitative inquiry, and from epistemological critique to disciplinary reflexivity, this volume mirrors the very transformations earlier outlined:

- Diversification of sources (oral, archival, manuscript, ethnographic).
- Critique of colonial documentary regimes.
- Embrace of interdisciplinary methods (history, anthropology, literary studies, gender studies).

- Commitment to African-centred epistemologies.
- Attention to the material and social life of knowledge.
- Revival of methodological self-awareness, the hallmark of earlier phases of African historiography.

Thus, the methodological history discussed in the opening theoretical section is not abstract background. It is the living foundation upon which this inaugural volume is built. Each contribution can be read as a contemporary instantiation of a long-standing African scholarly commitment: to interrogate sources, to broaden the evidentiary base, to centre African agency, and to pursue historical truth with methodological rigour and imagination.

Charting a Path Forward

The trajectory of these methodological transformations provides an important backdrop for the scholarship presented in this inaugural volume. The contributions gathered here do not emerge in isolation; they are part of an ongoing conversation shaped by decades of intellectual struggle, disciplinary cross-fertilization, and the quest to centre African perspectives in research. By drawing on diverse methods—ranging from archival excavation and oral testimony to ethnography, policy critique, and literary analysis—our authors engage directly with the methodological debates that have defined African Studies. This issue thus serves as both a reflection of the field’s evolution and a contribution to its continued renewal.

This inaugural volume of the *Journal of African Humanities Research and Development (JAHRD)* marks an important milestone in the evolving landscape of African scholarship. This first issue is both a celebration and a call to action—signalling the journal’s commitment to rigorous, interdisciplinary research and to reframing the narratives about Africa in ways that are intellectually robust, socially relevant, and globally engaging.

Africa’s historical and contemporary realities demand scholarly work that is unafraid to ask difficult questions, challenge inherited paradigms, and innovate in methodology and perspective. The articles in this volume demonstrate precisely such courage and creativity. They traverse themes from governance, socio-economic transformation, and religious dynamics to cultural production, identity politics, and historical memory—showing Africa as a living, breathing space of contestation, resilience, and renewal.

One of this volume’s strengths lies in its methodological diversity. Contributors employ historical analysis, ethnographic fieldwork, policy critique, literary interpretation, and philosophical reasoning. This multiplicity is not merely stylistic; it reflects the complexity of African realities and the necessity of cross-pollination among disciplines. The scholarship here resists the reduction of Africa to a single story and instead offers layered accounts that honor local agency while engaging global debates.

Equally noteworthy are the book reviews, which engage recent works with depth and critical acuity. These reviews do more than summarize—they situate each work within broader scholarly

conversations, highlighting both their contributions and their limitations. In doing so, they provide valuable orientation for scholars, students, and practitioners committed to advancing the study of Africa.

The *Journal of African Humanities Research and Development* envisions itself as more than a repository of academic writing; it aims to be a vibrant forum where ideas are tested, contested, and refined. This first volume lays a strong foundation for that vision. It invites readers to think beyond disciplinary silos, to interrogate the intersections of history, politics, culture, religion, and development, and to approach African realities with humility, intellectual rigour, and an openness to dialogue.

As we launch this maiden edition, we extend gratitude to our contributors, reviewers, editorial team, and readers. We stand at the threshold of a new dawn in African scholarship—one that refuses both intellectual complacency and simplistic narratives. The journey ahead promises to be challenging, but it is precisely in the challenge that the vitality of African Studies will be renewed.

Conclusion

The methodological evolution of African Studies—from colonial-era positivism to today’s reflexive, decolonial, and digital approaches—has been driven by intellectual struggle, political transformation, and scholarly creativity. Key interventions by Dike, Vansina, Henige, Ake, Ranger, Amadiume, Oyèwùmí, Falola, Nyamnjoh, and many others have expanded what counts as legitimate knowledge and how it should be produced.

In addition to tracing the evolution of African Studies through methodological innovations and digital humanities, it is equally important to situate the field within the present intellectual moment. Contemporary scholarship increasingly engages with Afrofuturism and African digital creativity, exploring how imagination, technology, and cultural production intersect to envision alternative futures for the continent. Environmental and climate humanities have also emerged as vital frameworks, interrogating the intersections of ecology, justice, and development in African contexts. Disability studies in Africa continues to gain critical traction, challenging ableist assumptions and foregrounding the diverse experiences of persons with disabilities. Simultaneously, African Studies must reckon with Africa’s positioning in a rapidly shifting global order—navigating multipolarity, the rising influence of China and India, and debates over AI governance and technological sovereignty. While brief, acknowledging these horizons underscores the field’s dynamic scope and its responsiveness to both local complexities and global transformations.

To fully honor the intellectual arc of this volume, it is essential to reaffirm the commitment to moving “beyond the single story.” As Chimamanda Adichie reminds us, reductive narratives—no matter how well-intentioned—risk flattening complex realities into one-dimensional accounts.²⁸ African Studies, historically, has often been constrained by such singular narratives, privileging certain voices, frameworks, and methodologies while marginalizing others. This volume, and *JAHRD* as a

²⁸ Adichie, “*The Danger of a Single Story*.”

journal, consciously resists that tendency. By embracing methodological pluralism, the contributions collectively challenge epistemic homogenization, spotlight diverse perspectives, and illuminate the multiple, sometimes contradictory, experiences that shape African societies. In doing so, this journal not only critiques the limitations of “one story” but also embodies a corrective: a platform where complexity, diversity, and nuance are not exceptions but the rule.

As African Studies moves forward, its methodologies must remain responsive to the continent’s diverse realities, grounded in rigorous scholarship yet open to epistemic plurality. In doing so, the field can continue to serve not only as an academic enterprise but also as a collaborative project of understanding, representing, and engaging with Africa on its own terms. African Studies today must remain self-reflexive, open to methodological innovation, and anchored in the lived realities of African peoples. In charting this path forward, *JAHRD* positions itself as more than an academic platform: it is a space of intellectual renewal committed to transforming how Africa is studied, represented, and imagined.