



## What is Aluka

### Building a digital library of scholarly resources from Africa

Aluka is an international, collaborative initiative building an online digital library of scholarly resources from and about Africa. Our name, 'Aluka,' is derived from a Zulu word meaning 'to weave', reflecting Aluka's mission to connect resources and scholars from around the world.

Aluka seeks to attract high-quality scholarly content, from all academic disciplines, about Africa from institutions and individuals across the globe. By contributing their collections to the Aluka platform, content owners will have a means of offering access to their collections to an international audience—without having to develop and support their own technology platforms. Aluka's web-based platform provides powerful tools for research, teaching, collaboration, and knowledge exchange.

The Aluka website includes a wide variety of high-quality scholarly materials contributed by Aluka's partners, ranging from archival documents, periodicals, books, reports, manuscripts, and reference works, to three-dimensional models, maps, oral

histories, plant specimens, photographs, and slides. By aggregating these materials online, the Aluka collections link materials that are widely dispersed and difficult to access, opening up new opportunities for research, teaching, and broader public discussion. One of Aluka's primary objectives is to provide African scholars and students with access to scholarly materials originally from Africa, but now out of their reach.

Aluka also works closely with partner organisations in Africa to build capacity in digitisation and the use of online materials for teaching and research. In some cases this includes setting up digital labs and providing technical training in scanning and creating metadata records; in others, Aluka convenes training workshops for librarians, archivists, faculty, and heritage professionals on topics related to digital imaging, preservation, and the use of online tools in the classroom.

To demonstrate the potential of Aluka as a scholarly resource, three content areas are currently under development. New materials are added to the collections on an ongoing basis:

*African Cultural Heritage Sites and Landscapes*  
Photographs, three-dimensional models, GIS data, and rock art images linked to contextual materials such as excavation reports, manuscripts, travelogues, maps, site plans, and scholarly research.

#### *African Plants*

Type specimens of African plants linked to a wide range of related images and data, including photographs, drawings, botanical art, field notes, published flora, and other reference works covering botany, ethnobotany, and traditional uses of plants.

#### *Struggles for Freedom in Southern Africa*

Documentation of the liberation struggles in southern Africa, initially focussing on Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, including archival materials, periodicals, oral histories, books, posters, and photographs that explore this critical historical moment from local, regional, and global perspectives.