

Editors' Introduction

Volume 64 opens with a new feature. For the past several years, *The Journal of African History* editorial advisory board has considered introducing a short-form space in the journal that does different work than our forums do. In 2021, the editors created a subcommittee of the advisory board to develop the idea and outline its formal elements. The result is 'History Matters': research-based, 2,000–4000-word pieces, for regular publication online and in print. Like research articles, these short pieces will undergo double-blind peer review. The shorter format will decrease the time between submission and publication, allowing writers to engage public debates. We do not need to convince readers of this journal that history matters, but in this new format we invite writers and readers to make explicit connections between past and present. This might mean speaking to contemporary politics, struggles, and phenomena with the historian's skills and toolkit, or it might include revisiting older work that did not receive its due and speaks to our moment. Most of all, we hope that submissions we cannot anticipate will spark our interest and help shape History Matters into a format that is agile and accessible.

Cassandra Mark-Thiesen inaugurates History Matters with a piece that addresses calls for decolonizing knowledge production. She brings us an overlooked archive: independence era historical journals published in West Africa by historical societies, some that bridged university scholars, non-professional historians, and schoolteachers. Her piece reminds us that just after independence, African scholars and politicians took the lead in producing an African-based scholarship about the continent. The archive is rich and diverse, if often dispersed. Mark-Thiesen reads closely, and she uses new digital methodologies for analysis. The generation of African scholars writing immediately after independence in West Africa privileged the scholarly journal over the book and, in this too, speak to contemporary debates about how we value different published forms, who is writing, where, and under what conditions. The critique of the JAH lodged by one of the authors Mark-Thiesen cites is one we need to consider. These are precisely the politics of history and historiography that History Matters ought to embrace.

This issue includes six research articles and fifteen book reviews that establish different focal lengths on the African past. **Rebecca Grollemund**, **David Schoenbrun**, and the late **Jan Vansina** underscore, in form and content, the necessity and value of interdisciplinary work. Together they contextualize and parse a 2015 phylogenetic classification of Bantu languages based on new vocabulary data (published by a research team Grollemund participated in). Building on innovations over the past 25 years in computational methods that bring together historical linguistic, archaeological, and environmental data, the new classification demonstrates a peeling pattern of Bantu-language speakers moving from Cameroon across five millennia, to and through areas of savannah, and is a revision of Vansina's deep split hypothesis. Interpreting the classification, Grollemund, Schoenbrun, and Vansina underscore how it breaks the ironclad association of Bantu speakers with farming, certain forms of pottery production, or metal working. But, they tell us, it is not history. The classification cannot account for why people made decisions about where to live, about language use, or about how to engage their environment. This is an invitation to historians to bring their skills and imagination to analyze the many contingencies, the social and cultural worlds, that created this deep history. Our podcast for issue 64:1 features a conversation with Grollemund and Schoenbrun.

Ewout Frankema and **Marlous van Waijenburg** also make an appeal to non-specialists and the benefits of interdisciplinary work. Like A. G. Hopkins in his 2009 article in *The Journal of African*

History that surveyed economists' work related to historical questions, they bring our attention to new work that social, cultural, and political historians might find useful, but may not have noticed in a publishing world that allows us to curate our reading lists by specialization.¹ They offer a review of scholarship on the economic history of Africa from the last two decades that is based largely in quantitative and comparative methods, published in journals of economic history, and related to twentieth-century history, and, especially, the colonial period. Hopkins looked at the work of researchers that Frankema and Waijenburg call historical economists. Instead, their article covers studies by scholars they describe as economic historians who chart economic change over time illuminating patterns of economic growth, trade, labor, and inequality. The recent growth of scholarship on the economic history of Africa has produced a clearer picture of long-term developments across different regions of the continent, bringing African histories into debates about global economic change and inequality.

Economic and political questions have been central to the study of the colonial period. This rich historiography lends to interventions like **Edward Kissi's** that connect disparate literatures and explore the complexities of political rule in former German territories that became British and French protectorates after the First World War. Kissi studies the political resistance and debates over the prospect of Nazi rule among Africans in the 1930s. Drawing on literatures on rumor and on resistance, and his own research in the West African press of the period, Kissi analyzes how West Africans protested and petitioned against the possible transfer of colonial rule from Britain and France to Nazi Germany. As Hitler renewed German ambitions to restore its empire in Africa, rumors about the transfer and concerns about Hitler's racism and the horrors of slave labor in Nazi concentration camps circulated among West Africans already chafing against colonial rule. Kissi reminds us that when writers or protestors expressed loyalty to the British or French or Germans, they were taking positions that emerged out of the ambiguous legal status accorded to countries held as trusts and protectorates. Through protest, debate, and petitioning, West Africans made rights-based claims, asserted their moral equality with Europeans, and named and analyzed European racisms.

Kissi offers new insights on some of the big political and moral questions of colonial rule that dominated public debate. **Devin Smart**, in this issue, moves in a different direction, taking us into some of the contradictions of daily life and public space in Mombasa between the 1930s and 1960s. Smart contributes to historiography of urban Africa that explores the tensions between structural pressures, like the growth of new labor markets and the associated movement of people, and the agency of urban residents who devised their own modes of economic survival by catering to the new wage-laborers and fostering the growth of colonial capital. In the case of colonial era Mombasa, he charts how street food vendors, both men and women, provided an affordable, quick, and caloric lunch to urban workers in Mombasa's port and related transport industries. Even as street food vendors' labor ensured the social reproduction of the worker, they also had to contend with the municipal authority's attempts to impose their own sense of order on urban growth and street life. Ultimately that contradiction resolved in their favor, but the tensions continued to permeate postcolonial urban life.

Negotiating the contradictions of colonialism is a longstanding theme in African history. **Ogechukwu E. Williams** uses the concept of legitimacy to analyze the history of faith-based maternal healthcare administered by the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) in Nigeria from the colonial period through the postcolonial present. She collected oral histories and consulted archives in Nigeria and the UK, but Williams' interest in church-hosted and woman-run maternity care turned up only sparse archival traces. This has to do with the interests and fears that shaped the inquiries of missionaries and the colonial and postcolonial states between 1930 and the present, because health and healing had been key attractions of Joseph Babalola's *Aladura* movement, among whom women

¹A. G. Hopkins, 'The new economic history of Africa', *The Journal of African History*, 50:2 (2009), 155–77.

concerned with fertility and maternal health constituted a majority. The CAC opened a faith-based midwifery school in 1959 to train women to offer maternity services in Faith Homes. Into discussions of medical history in Africa that typically use a traditional/Western medicine binary, Williams introduces a case in which Faith Home leaders — who were both evangelists and biomedically trained nurse midwives — blurred those tidy distinctions in managing state interests, biomedical concerns, and the needs of their patients. Until the 1980s, the midwives privileged the faith-based aspects of care, but this began to shift in response to greater state and employer oversight, global attention to questions of maternal healthcare, and changes in attitudes about health and medicine.

Nigeria has a postcolonial history that began in 1960 but the more recently liberated states of Southern Africa have now arrived at nearly fifty years of independence. It's no surprise then that we are starting to see more histories of postcolonial life and politics in these countries. **Carlos Fernandes** studies the independence era *Centro de Estudos Africanos* (Center for African Studies) at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, Mozambique and returns us to some of the questions about Africa-based African scholarship that Mark-Thiesen raised, though taking off from a point fifteen years later at a significantly different moment. Locating the center in the genealogy of academic institutions on the continent from Ibadan to Dar, he analyzes the intellectual continuities and shifts across two distinct periods of Mozambique's postcolonial history and explores the relationship between nation-building, research institutions, and global and regional geopolitics. His story begins with finding the center's 'archive' in a tumble of boxes in the building's basement.

This issue's fifteen reviews cover subjects ranging from cultural history, to urban history, histories of cinema and medicine, armies, animals, and prisons. The first three consider nineteenth and twentieth century cultural history, with an emphasis on music. We begin in South Africa, with **Nomalanga Mkhize's** review of **Lindsay Michie's** recent book on Xhosa music and poetry, from hymns to protest. **Valmont Edward Layne** then takes us to Johannesburg (and eventually London), via **Tyler Fleming's** study of the famed musical King Kong. Our final entry in the cultural history category is by **Ademide Adelusi-Adeluyi**, who analyzes a rich, 're-mixed' FESTAC '77 archive, presented by **Chimurenga**. Our next three reviews focus on three recently published transnational studies from the era of decolonization: **Benedito Machava** on **Natalia Telepneva's** history of the USSR and the end of Portuguese colonialism; **Charlotte Walker-Said** on **Jeremy Rich's** history of protestant missionaries in the DRC during the Cold War, and **Dan Hodgkinson** on **Timothy Scarnecchia's** analysis of how racial thought impacted the multinational efforts to end minority rule in contemporary Zimbabwe.

Our next set of reviews focus on three recent histories of Tanzania. **Garth Myers** takes us farthest back in time, considering **Steven Fabian's** history of Bagamoyo, from the onset of German colonialism. **Joshua Grace's** book continues the focus on urban history, albeit shifting gears to look at the history of automobility in Dar es Salaam, from the mid-twentieth century; **Michael Degani** is our reviewer. Finally, **Andrew Ivaska's** review is also set in Dar es Salaam, which **George Roberts** demonstrates to have been a central node in both local and global Cold War politics. The next two reviews extend to Tanzania's neighbors, Kenya and Uganda, and add the history of medicine (**Benson A. Mulemi** on **Marissa Mika**) and the history of cinema (**Julie MacArthur** on **Samson Ndanyi**) to this issue's thematic roster.

The final four reviews cover a range of geographies — from apartheid era South Africa's Bantustans (**Laura Phillips** on **Veronica Ehrenreich-Risner**) to the frequently surprising history of animals in colonial Nigeria, as **Oliver Coates** reveals in his review of **Saheed Aderinto's** recent book. **Timothy Stapleton** keeps our focus on West Africa, revealing the history of West African soldiers in the British colonial army. **George Njung** is our reviewer. Finally, **Dior Konaté** considers a recent volume, published in French, on the social and experiential history of prisons across the continent, edited by **Frédéric Le Marcis** and **Marie Morelle**.

With this volume's first issue, we are delighted to welcome Michelle Moyd from Michigan State University to the editorial team. Professor Moyd takes over the East African beat; we cannot wait to see what her expertise in military, gender, social, language, and other histories will bring to the journal. Welcome, Michelle!