

Editors' Introduction

This issue of *The Journal of African History* contains six research articles and fifteen book reviews. Primarily focused on the twentieth century, though one article studies a one-hundred-year period in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, these articles remind us that how historians parcel out time and give it meaning is entangled with sources and historiographies. Reading these works recalls the insights of synthetic, state of the field articles in the JAH, like Stephen Ellis's 2002 'Writing histories of contemporary Africa' and Richard Reid's 2011 'Past and presentism: the "precolonial" and the foreshortening of African history'.¹ Writing about different ends of the historical spectrum, the contemporary and the deep past, Ellis and Reid both argue that connecting these periods is crucial to overturning European-oriented chronologies, concepts, and touchstones that have dominated professional history writing.

The articles in this issue underscore the point that periodization is a working hypothesis not an inflexible structure. Read together, they raise questions about how we frame chronologies and how posing them differently can offer new ways of understanding the past and the actions of people in it. For example, **Etana Dinka** contends that Ethiopian imperial history ought to be read in conversation with European imperialism and **Tim Livsey** suggests that decolonization looks different from the vantage point of Nigerians and imperial migrants attempts to live in the Ikoyi reservation designated for white colonial administrators.

Kwasi Konadu's article opens the issue. Konadu does a close reading of two of the three cases before the Portuguese Inquisition related to the Mina (Gold) Coast in the sixteenth century. Konadu takes an approach to reading Inquisition sources similar to the one described by historian Keletso Atkins for reading colonial archival sources from Natal as like 'interrogating a hostile witness'.² Cross-examining the Inquisition cases through close reading, Konadu deconstructs their religious and political positions, exposes the everyday violence of enslavement, and surfaces modes of African women's advocacy, resistance, and maintaining cultural and spiritual practices. To the extent possible, he reconstructs the lives and trajectories of two women (one enslaved and one formerly enslaved but freed at the time of the Inquisition trial). Graça and Mónica Fernandes lived near the Portuguese base at São Jorge da Mina and were sent to Lisbon, Portugal to stand trial for crimes against the church and crown. Both died in Portugal, Graça imprisoned in a monastery and Mónica released but prohibited from returning home. Framed by a reading of the third Inquisition case in which women are silenced, marginalized victims, Konadu's piece offers insights about sexual violence, enslavement, religious practice, and power in early modern Atlantic Africa.

Empire as a space and context also animates Etana Dinka's article, though he concentrates on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like Konadu, Dinka uses a court case to frame his argument that even as Menilek's empire imposed the colonial *neftegna-gebbar*, local elite and peasant actors took advantage of fractures in this military clientelist system to pursue their own interests and, in turn, changed elements of how it worked. Dinka draws on a wide and diverse set of sources including memoirs, British intelligence reports, published Amharic archival sources, and interviews to make his case. Dinka asks readers to consider the Ethiopian empire as working like and against

¹S. Ellis, 'Writing histories of contemporary Africa', *The Journal of African History*, 43:1 (2002); R. Reid, 'Past and presentism: the "precolonial" and the foreshortening of African history', *The Journal of African History*, 52:2 (2011).

²K. Atkins, *The Moon is Dead! Give Us Our Money!: The Cultural Origins of an African Work Ethic, Natal, South Africa, 1843-1900* (Portsmouth, NH, 1993), 6.

European imperial forces subjecting African states and peoples in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Writing against exceptionalist narratives of Ethiopian history, he brings social historical work on colonial intermediaries from other places on the continent to bear on his study of Qellem. At the same time, Dinka expands the idea of intermediary to capture the role Oromo elites played in the process of state construction rather than limiting it to those who worked for the colonial state. The period Dinka studies is 1908–33 but he points to key late-nineteenth-century elements in the empire that played out in this later period.

Two decades is also the time span that Tim Livsey covers in his article on the late colonial state, segregated urban space, and race in Nigeria. Livsey explores the Ikoyi reservation in Lagos between 1933–55 to argue that such white colonial urban residential reservations in West Africa were sites where the dynamics of the late colonial state emerged. He explores how Nigerian civil servants used the Nigerian press, their positions on the Legislative Council, and petitioning to contest the racialized exclusion practiced at Ikoyi. Imperial immigrants from India and Syria asserted their right to live in the reservation by applying for individual plots while Nigerian domestic workers, who constituted the largest number of residents at Ikoyi, changed the space from inside by advocating for different rules and used it to access state resources otherwise not available to them. Livsey's study challenges the periodization and enriches the characterization of the late colonial state, arguing that racialized and racist practices persisted even as administrators promoted the discourse of deracialization. He suggests that racial privilege was not simply supplanted by class difference in a decolonizing Nigeria and that racialized practices and racisms may yet persist.

Rich sources allow historians to explore shorter time frames in detail. Livsey's and Dinka's accounts offer a quality of and quantity of detail that Konadu achieves through careful use of speculation and secondary sources. What Reid calls the 'foreshortening' of African history is a result of privileging the modern and the greater archival collections, particularly documentary sources, produced in the period. Historians of the deep past have done extraordinary work collecting and interpreting non-documentary sources with methodologies from archaeology and historical linguistics. While it may seem counterintuitive, Ellis likewise worried that limited, difficult to parse sources deter historians from writing histories of contemporary Africa. The articles by **Lynn Schler**, **David Glovsky**, and **Vasco Martins** show how scholars are writing contemporary histories and how they illuminate historical dynamics that complicate traditional periodization.

Schler studies postcolonial diplomacy in northern Nigeria. Working with diplomatic documents recently released by the Israel State Archive and secondary sources, she explores the fascinating diplomatic exchanges between the Sardauna of Sokoto and Middle Eastern, particularly Israeli, diplomats. While federal or central governments typically conduct and control foreign relations, Schler notes that in Nigeria's First Republic, 1960–66, regional leaders could and did pursue economic and cultural relations with foreign countries. She argues that while his public pronouncements nurtured an image of the Sardauna, Ahmadu Bello, as hostile to Israel and aligned with Arab states, a close reading of the historical record shows a much more strategically minded Bello negotiating the challenges of postcolonial rule. Behind the scenes discussions with Israeli diplomats show that he used international diplomacy to foster economic growth in the Northern region, challenge political rivals, and exert control over his party's representatives in Lagos. While Schler points out that negotiations ultimately failed to produce enduring relations or institutions, she emphasizes how what she calls the 'cacophony' of Nigerian diplomacy in this brief period offers a counterpoint to the continued use of Cold War binaries to neatly sort and understand African postcolonial diplomatic history.

The six-year span of Schler's study of independent, decolonizing Nigeria, overlaps with the period of interest in David Glovsky's article on Guinea-Bissau's war for independence. African countries colonized by the Portuguese and settler states in southern Africa lived under prolonged colonial rule. Their histories both intersect with and depart from the chronologies of the much criticized yet still preponderant precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial temporal categories used to understand African history. Glovsky's piece covers the years of the war: 1961–74. He argues that

analyses that use the binary of collaborator and liberation fighter to describe the activities of Fulbe and Balanta ethnicities during the war flatten a variety of war experiences. Based on interviews and oral histories he and research assistants collected and on declassified Portuguese military and diplomatic documents, Glovsky looks at the life experiences of those who fought in and lived with the war. It was the 'social condition' of war that shaped how Fulbe (and Balanta) made decisions about how to fight for independence. Regional models of independence, namely Senegal and Guinea, offered different ideas about what independence could be.

The legacy of the Angolan liberation struggle, one informed by the fight of the PAIGC (African Party for Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde), is the subject of Vasco Martins's article in this issue. Martins parses the memory of a liberation war hero, Hoji ya Henda, a figure not well recognized outside Angola. He argues that the ruling party in independent Angola, the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), has used the memory of Henda at different moments in time and to different ends across Angola's independence, from 1975 to the present, to mobilize Angolan youth for war, in internal party disputes, for elections, and for postwar reconstruction. Unlike Glovsky who anchors his study in oral histories, Martins parses materials in a new, private archive in Angola, collects data from the state-produced daily newspaper over the four decades of independence, and analyzes monuments and popular cultural forms like song and social media. In fact, he uses many of the sources that Ellis outlined as possible materials for studying contemporary Africa.

The fifteen reviews in this issue cover a range of epochs, themes, and methodologies. Three reviews build off of this issue's focus on warfare and its legacy in postcolonial Africa. Two are about Zimbabwe: **Ushewedu Kufakurinani** considers the latest volume in **Luise White's** ongoing study of the Rhodesian state and military, while **Gerald Mazarire** offers a gripping account of **Blessing-Miles Tendi's** influential biography of Solomon Mujuru, a hero of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle who Tendi argues was a critical figure in that country's postindependence intrigues. **Stephanie Quinn's** review of **Lennart Bolliger's** history of Black soldiers who fought with or alongside white supremacist militaries in Angola and Namibia rounds out this issue's focus on military history.

Mujuru's is not the only biography our reviewers considered. **Mary Hicks** assesses a multi-authored 'Atlantic biography' of Rufino Jose Maria, an enslaved man initially transported to Brazil in the aftermath of Oyo's collapse. The interplay between 'religion' and 'politics' features prominently in both Rufino's story and Hicks's review, as it does more obviously in this issue's other reviewed biography: **Frieder Ludwig's** careful consideration of **Amy Stambach** and **Aikande Kwayu's** account of the life of Erasto Kweka, who led Tanzania's Evangelical Lutheran Church during the country's transition away from Ujamaa. Other reviews echo this focus on religion: from **Murray Last** on **Paul Naylor's** study of the origins of the nineteenth century Sokoto Caliphate to **Jon Earle's** review of **Christopher Tounsel's** examination of the Christian prehistory of twenty-first century South Sudan. We also have studies in which the interplay between African populations and Christian missionaries redefined sexuality (**Gibson Ncube** on **T. J. Tallie**) and labor (**Morgan Robinson** on **Michelle Liebst**).

This issue's reviews thus bring us across the continent and back and forth across the Atlantic. Although both focused on Liberia, two more reviews echo that later movement: **Quito Swan** considers **Caree Banton's** recovery of the little-known story of nineteenth century Barbadian migrants to West Africa's first independent country, while **Christine Whyte** studies the environmental historian **Gregg Mitman's** account of the American rubber corporation Firestone's subsequent influence in Liberian political and economic life. In the age of American global capital, both Mitman and Whyte conclude that 'independence' often proved illusory.

In addition to religion, capitalism, biography, and warfare, this issue demonstrates that cultural history remains an exciting field of study. Our reviewers consider four recently published entrants into that rich field: **Grace Musila** assesses how the British government used the English language

and institutions like the BBC to remain relevant as former colonies moved towards independence, while **Enibokun Uzebu-Imarhiagbe** examines the history and politics of restitution — of objects in particular — across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We also have two studies whose subjects — photographers (**Carlos Fernandes** on **Drew Thompson**) and architects (**Hannah le Roux** on **Łukasz Stanek**) — demonstrate how postcolonial social history might be enlivened by scholars who carefully consider the interplay of culture, technology, and politics.

Finally, we are pleased that this issue includes an exchange between two authors: **Femi Kolapo**, who reviewed *The Persistence of Slavery* by **Robin Chapdelaine** in Issue 62:3, and Chapdelaine herself. We are grateful to both for taking the time to respond to the review. Reviews can be tricky business and we are glad to be able to consider Chapdelaine's important study at greater length. We encourage other authors to see this exchange as a model and hope that we will be able to publish similar pieces in the future.

THE EDITORS