

## ISSUE INTRODUCTION

This issue of *The Journal of African History* highlights the enduring influence of three seminal contributions to Africanist historiography. The first two articles revisit foundational studies by Terence Ranger and Luise White, while the influence of John Iliffe's work on the African poor runs throughout the five articles which have been assembled for a forum on poverty.<sup>1</sup> In her analysis of the impact of decentralisation on decolonisation, **Pamela Khanakwa** examines how ethnic patriots in eastern Uganda reinvented rural tradition, employing forcible circumcision in their struggle for control over the town of Mbale. Initiation rituals and violence also form the backdrop for a re-examination of rumours around *Mumiani* 'vampires' by **Zebulon Dingley**. His close study of famine and murder in 1940s coastal Kenya reveals how local populations identified continuities between well-farist colonialism and precolonial systems of patronage, debt, and pawning.

The forum on poverty, stimulated by both the continent's relatively rapid economic growth since 2002 and the revival of Africa-focused economic history, is also shaped by dissonance between external measures and internal meaning. **Rhiannon Stephens**, who organised the conference from which the forum emerged, and formulated some of the key questions it addresses, provides its first paper. Following a wide-ranging historiographical review of scholarship around pre-colonial poverty, she employs historical linguistics methodologies to illustrate how understandings of poverty within societies evolved over time. This theme is further explored in an examination of early twentieth-century Cape Town by **Wayne Dooling**, where the poor actively pursued a form of respectability that made space for youthful criminality. This vernacularized sense of pragmatic decency was compatible with peer recognition but was invisible to a state which systematically undermined its own efforts to impose a vision of black familial stability. Changes in conceptual approaches to poverty, from pauperism through percentile towards precarity, are explored by **Jane Guyer**. Recognising the inconstancy of assets and networks, her article examines how wealth applies to different things, and different people, over time. In an article which evaluates the relative utility of current and historical quantitative measures of poverty, **Morten Jerven** demonstrates that the association of Africa with poverty is a recent phenomenon. This point is developed further by **Vincent Bonneau** in his analysis of the process by which the international measurement of food consumption came to define Africa as the poorest continent in the world. As he shows, the meaning of numbers, as well as vocabulary, relating to poverty has evolved over time. His paper, and the forum as a whole, challenges existing chronological frameworks for the analysis of the African poor.

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1 T. Ranger, 'The invention of tradition in colonial Africa', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, 1983), 211–262; L. White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in East Africa* (Berkeley, 2000); J. Iliffe, *The African Poor: a History* (Cambridge, 1987).

The reviews section considers several intersecting themes. A cluster of books analyses Tanzania's recent political and cultural history, from that country's pan-Africanist connections to its home-grown literary traditions (George Roberts on Monique Bedasse; Monique Bedasse on Seth Markle; Karin Barber on Emily Callaci). Several books investigate the complexities of production and consumption, as they pertain to the making of homes, roads, art, and newspapers (Marie Huchzermeyer on Anne-Maria Makhulu; Jennifer Hart on Marcus Filipello; Hlonipha Mokoena on Daniel Magaziner; Elizabeth Le Roux on Derek Peterson). The subject of technological change and innovation threads through the section, both explicitly and implicitly (Yusuf Serenkuma on Iginio Gagliardone; Joshua Grace on Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga; David Owusu-Ansah on Robert Launay). Revolutions and revolutionary change also emerge as recurring topics – from the relationship of West African *jihads* to the Atlantic world and the 'age of revolutions' to the often conflicted efforts by British officials to abolish the slave trade and slavery (Mamadou Diouf on Paul Lovejoy; Trina Hogg on Patrick Scanlan; and Kevin Grant on James Heartfield).

As always, we welcome submissions that focus on the continent, revisit established historiographies, and forge new historical interpretations.

THE EDITORS