

Studies



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Book Reviews

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Review

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EDITORS

Ralph Faulkingham, University of Massachusetts Mitzi Goheen, Amherst College Editorial Office: *African Studies Review* Department of Anthropology University of Massachusetts Amherst MA 01003-4805 voice: 413/545-2065 fax: 413/545-9494 e-mail: asr@anthro.umass.edu

Office Manager: Rita Reinke

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Book Review Editor: Eugenia Herbert, Mount Holyoke College Film Review Editor: Samba Gadjigo, Mount Holyoke College Editorial Office:

African-American and African Studies Program Skinner Hall Mount Holyoke College South Hadley, MA 01075 voice: 413/538-2577 fax: 413/538-2513 email: asrbook@mtholyoke.edu or asrfilm@mtholyoke.edu

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Dear Colleagues,

As we assume the editorship of the *African Studies Review*, we want first to thank Mark Delancey for his five years of labor and dedication as Editor of the ASR. He has worked hard to produce a first-rate interdisciplinary journal designed to fit the needs of the expanding and increasingly diverse membership of the African Studies Association. Mark has performed yeoman's work on the journal; he has left all of us with a legacy of excellence and a solid base on which to build. His has been a true labor of love. His wise counsel as he passed the editorial torch has helped us through what has often been a difficult transition and left us with a sense of hope and purpose. Thank you, Mark!

The change and growth in the ASA membership over the past decade makes us especially optimistic for the future of the journal as a truly interdisciplinary and inclusive publication when we see the number of manuscripts submitted from the African continent in particular, and from the ranks of young Africanist scholars in general. In order to serve the needs of the entire membership and simultaneously to maintain a level of excellence, we would like to tell you very briefly what we see as the future directions of the journal, and give you some very broad guidelines to help you make informed decisions about submitting manuscripts.

We have no fixed ideal model for articles submitted to the ASR; however, we do feel it is critical that the journal remain truly interdisciplinary. This does not mean that each and every article submitted need be interdisciplinary in its orientation or central focus, but we do encourage authors to write with an interdisciplinary audience in mind. Historical articles are warmly welcomed but these should have some relevance to current issues, whether that relevance be ethnographic, topical, or theoretical. We encourage narrations of closely observed events rich in ethnographic details which bear directly on important interdisciplinary issues and themes in African studies. We are also looking for "uncut diamonds." Fully aware of the fact that some of us have less access than others to the pertinent literature in the various disciplines or in African studies in general, we encourage scholars from the African continent to send us manuscripts with a plea for help in securing literature which may be central to their particular project but is unavailable to them at home. We shall try to respond, if possible, to such pleas with the appropriate research materials.

A word about length. Our goal is to try to publish excellent articles which are highly recommended by a panel of expert reviewers. This being

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said, we would like to be able to publish more articles rather than fewer, but without compromising scholarly quality and appeal. This will mean two things: careful and prompt attention by authors to reviewer and editor suggestions for revisions where applicable, and shorter manuscripts. Of course, under exceptional circumstances we will accept a longer manuscript for publication, but we plead with authors to limit their manuscripts to not more than 25 pages of double-spaced, 12-point text.

Finally, a word about timing. This issue has been seriously delayed in both its editing and production, and arrives in your hands much later than you reasonably ought to expect. Three factors are primarily responsible for the delay. First, we as editors needed to find competent reviewers for both newly submitted and revised manuscripts. The database that the former editorial team had used, was, by their own testimony, seriously out of date. So while we distributed a questionnaire to all ASA members to help us build a new reviewer roster, we also exploited the old database, personal contacts, and Africanist colleagues in the Five College community to help us get competent and appropriate manuscript reviews. Secondly, the ASA's move from Emory to Rutgers produced some unanticipated staff changes, and that seriously delayed our production schedule. And finally, our own inexperience in producing a journal has no doubt played a role. We have by now learned that editing a journal is a far more ambitious undertaking than simply selecting and editing excellent essays. Our immediate challenge is to reduce the time length of the editorial process. We know that if authors get an intensive, substantive, and prompt review of their manuscripts, the ASR will attract more and higher quality submissions. To that end, we will expect that reviewers will complete their reviews within 60 days, and that authors will then complete their revisions also within 60 days. Our hope is that we will give authors an editorial decision within 180 days of submitting their manuscripts.

We are excited by the challenge of serving you as the Editors of the *African Studies Review*. For this endeavor to continue to succeed and to produce an ever better journal for all of us, we will need your help. We encourage you to submit manuscripts and to offer your expertise in the review process. All suggestions and comments are warmly welcomed.

Ralph Faulkingham and Mitzi Goheen, Editors

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