

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

This issue of *The Journal of African History* publishes six research articles. **Raevin Jimenez** uses historical-linguistic and archaeological evidence to argue that Southern African Nguni-speakers began investing in large herds of cattle in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries CE. Prior to that period, cattle-keeping was not a widespread practice. **Jimenez** argues that environmental conditions made the move to cattle-keeping as a way of life counter-intuitive. Instead, cattle-keeping emerged from attempts to constitute households, control the labor of young men, and transfer intergenerational resources that had long-ranging economic effects. She touches on themes that run through all of the other articles: mobility, marriage, and power.

Serawit Debele explores how the Ethiopian imperial state rebuilt itself in and through domestic relations after Italian occupation. She argues that Emperor Haile Selassie introduced marriage reforms to manage Ethiopian fears that the Italian presence had disrupted not only political rule but also the country's moral fiber. Drawing on a diverse set of sources, **Debele** shows how the restored imperial state codified marriage and defined a heteronormative domestic order to produce the modern subjects the empire needed to restore its power and authority.

International travel through empire is the subject of **Moses Ochonu's** article. **Ochonu** explores Emir of Katsina Muhammadu Dikko's visits to London in 1921 and 1924, bringing Dikko's motivations for and uses of travel to a literature that analyzes imperial spectacles of authority scripted to awe colonial subjects. Dikko traveled at the invitation of the Colonial Office, but he helped set the itinerary and his travel diaries offer a reverse ethnography. He used travel to enhance his prestige, develop knowledge about the metropole, and consolidate his place in the British Empire.

Two pieces consider African political exile in a Cold War context and illuminate different moments — the struggle for independence and democratic postcolonial governance — that culminate in the early 1990s. **Jean-Philippe Dedieu** studies the fragmented networks of Malian dissidents who opposed Moussa Traoré's regime. Analyzing the lives and organizing strategies of these activists from bases in Ivory Coast, Senegal, and France, **Dedieu** theorizes exile as a key moment of 'abeyance'. Exile on and off the continent created nodes of organizing that proved vital for the democratic movements that overthrew Traoré in 1991. From the other end of the continent, **Tom Lodge** and **Milan Oralek** argue that what South African Communists learned from life in socialist Czechoslovakia shaped South African Communist Party ideas about armed liberation and how to create a socialist society after apartheid. Using Czech and South African sources, the article explores the experiences of South African visitors and exiles.

Renewed attention to political history is also a key concern for **Rueben Loffman**. Like **Ochonu**, **Loffman** attends to what he calls a 'middle-order' political figure, in this case

Jason Sendwe, the founder of the Balubakat (Baluba Association of Katanga). Loffman argues that Sendwe's pragmatic strategy of cultivating international connections and walking a line between capitalist and Communist politics allowed him to advance anti-secession, ethnonationalist politics. Even though he was not successful, Balubakat had an impact on how Katangese secession developed.

In the reviews section, a volume on the recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa is quite timely. This book, edited by Ibrahim Abdullah and Ismail Rashid and assessed by Kalala Ngalamulume, considers the social, political, and historical context of Ebola's spread through Guinea-Conakry, Sierra Leone, and Liberia in 2013–14. It furthermore offers, as Ngalamulume notes, 'a historical perspective from which to consider our present moment and the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, which has been shaped by deep-rooted racial and economic inequality and which has profoundly altered everyday life across the globe'. Ngalamuluma observes that Ebola helps make the case for the importance of sound state interventions, the failures of which produce 'often fatal consequences'.

Other themes that run through the reviews section include religion, spirituality, and the relationship between faith practices and the environment (Ousmane Kane on the volume edited by Zulfikar Hijri, Robert Edgar on Joel Cabrita, Ayodeji Ogunnaike on the edited volume by 'BioDun J. Ogundayo and Julius O. Adekunle, Francis Musoni on Joseph Mujere). Practices of enslavement in West Africa is another common topic (Ochonu on Mohammed Bashir Salau, Russell Stevenson on the volume edited by Benedetta Rossi). So too are the political and social histories of militaries and military service (Jennifer Johnson on Laetitia Bucaille, Getnet Bekele on Tsehai Berhane-Selassie).

The Editors note that this is the first issue that we have published in a new age, which has been made and marked by two powerful forces: a global pandemic, brought on by the novel coronavirus, and an invigorated anti-racist political force, the Movement for Black Lives. We have published two Virtual Special Issues related to these events that draw from *The Journal of African History's* archive.

The first of these special issues, 'Epidemics and Public Health: COVID-19 and African History', highlights articles and book reviews on African histories of disease, health, and healing. These texts serve as a reminder that while the conditions and threats produced by COVID-19 are novel to people alive today, the ravages of widespread epidemic disease are certainly not unfamiliar to human beings through time.

The second special issue, 'Race, Racism, and Racial Thought in African History', is inspired by the Movement for Black Lives, which is self-consciously historical in its social critique and agenda: it calls attention to the production and reproduction of embedded inequalities, and it demands redress for systematic and institutional racism. The selection of related research articles and reviews from *The Journal of African History* invites readers to consider in comparative perspective the racism and violence against Black and Brown peoples.

Our present condition, which collapses and brings together the worlds of social justice, public health, and politics, inspires us to conclude on a personal note. We extend to you our warm wishes for good health and well-being and our support for your convictions and commitments.

Forge ahead.
THE EDITORS