

## Editors' Introduction

Defining and redefining the place of Africa and Africans in the growing historiography of international anticolonial and postcolonial solidarity has attracted considerable Africanist scholarly attention. Scholars have unearthed and analyzed webs of pan-African and global solidarity birthed or vivified by Africans. Other historians looking to understand and explain the ways that Africans strategically cultivated global networks — and how these networks intersected with and informed domestic events, struggles, and aspirations — have reexamined decolonization as an international movement that Africans helped shape and in which they actively participated.

Despite its new insights, this literature seems limited by its privileging of Atlantic spaces and connections. This has produced an Africanist historiography on the nexus of decolonization, pan-Africanism, and global subaltern solidarity in which East Africa, defined by Indian Oceanic ideational currents and praxis, has been neglected. The contribution of **Ismay Milford**, **Gerard McCann**, **Emma Hunter**, and **Daniel Branch** to this issue fills this gap and corrects the inordinate Atlanticization of this exciting history of Africans' proactive investments in both global and regional solidarity in the moment before and after the transition to independence.

As the authors argue, it is not that historians of East Africa have ignored the vibrant regional intellectual and political networks built by Kenyans, Tanzanians, Ugandans, and other East Africans across the region in the period of late colonialism and early independence. Rather, the problem has been the absence of works that pull together these intricately connected local and transnational histories of literary, political, and anticolonial activisms, which drew upon, and in turn influenced, continental and global political and ideological processes of the Cold War period. This is a primary contribution of their article.

The authors analyze transnational political ferment in East Africa that were animated by regional socialist networks, literary imaginations, and new ideological cleavages at a time when the expectations and aura of political freedom in postcolonial African states were waning, and national political spaces were contracting to exclude radical and insurgent voices. The authors argue that regional and global connections were thus inevitably thrust upon radical intellectuals and political activists who were outside the new spaces of political incumbency. As a consequence, they tried to imagine a different political future together, one that transcended the territorial space of the nation to embrace an earlier, organic transterritorial East African political community.

Finally, and more crucially, this article moves the historiography of decolonization and socialism in a new direction. Often, analyses of such histories assume a linear trajectory from local to regional to continental and, finally, to global processes. The authors argue that the reality in the East African moment of pan-Africanism and globalizing political networks was more complicated, in that moments of outward and global political and intellectual outlooks were followed by 'deglobalization dynamics'. This caused East African activists — some disillusioned, others inspired by their countries' and their own evolving politics — to strategically, gradually rethink or withdraw from their international engagements and to localize their activism. Globalizing decolonization movements, the paper contends, should, at least in the East African context, be understood in conjunction with the closure of and constraints on international networks, and the relocalization of politics.

**George Roberts's** article extends the transterritorial, diasporic themes of East African history in the period of decolonization. In his case, he explores the 'marginal' and somewhat unique trajectory of decolonization in the French-ruled archipelago of Comoros. Nonspecialists will find Roberts' article to be a concise and sophisticated enunciation of the convoluted path and fate of the Mouvement

de libération nationale des Comores (MOLINACO), the archipelago's main coalition for independence. It is a story that deepens and complicates the traditional African narrative of decolonization in three important ways.

First, Roberts demonstrates that MOLINACO was conceived as and remained a diasporic decolonization movement, which organized its struggle from East African hubs with large Comoran populations, the largest one being in nearby Madagascar.

This diaspora character meant that familiar grassroots anticolonial activism, such as marches, rallies, protests, and other acts of civil disobedience, were replaced by more distant and thus less effective modes of action.

Second, MOLINACO's anticolonial struggle failed to produce the archetype of an independent, sovereign state transitioning from colony to self-governing nation-state. This constitutes a small wrinkle in the 'empire to nation-state' paradigm of African decolonization.

Finally, Roberts shows that MOLINACO's diasporic demographic and provenance and the unsettled genealogical questions of Comoros' various constituent peoples made the anticolonial coalition susceptible to the vagaries of identity instability, the international diplomatic aspirations of 'host' East African governments, and French determination to insulate Comoros from the decolonizing model sweeping Africa in the 1960s.

Exile, displacement, and deterritorialized lives animate a somewhat different analytical project in the article by **Daniel B. Domingues da Silva** and **Edward A. Alpers**. They analyze a new dataset containing the registration of 55,000 Africans in mid- to late-nineteenth-century Mozambique. One set consisted of the enslaved, the other freed Africans or *libertos*. The historiographical importance of this archive in the study of enslavement, abolition, and the intersection of informal colonization and abolitionism is that, unlike most of the existing archives of enslaved and freed peoples, this dataset focuses on the demographics of enslavement and post-enslavement as they existed in Mozambique in that period, as opposed to Africans exported or in the process of being exported outside the continent.

Through their description of the information recorded — or not recorded — in the registration process, the authors deepen our understanding of the nexus of Portuguese colonization, abolitionist pressures, Portuguese and Swahili slaveholders' agitations, metropolitan colonial priorities, and enslaved Africans' claims to the status of *libertos*. They show how the status of *libertos* was contested, fought over, and ultimately rendered ambiguous and amenable to varying self-interested interpretations that both drew upon and challenged official colonial definitions. The authors demonstrate how the Portuguese state used the registration exercise to expand and consolidate its colonial influence in coastal and hinterland areas, further underscoring the entwinement of abolition and colonization in Mozambique.

Abolition was a multivalent process that took different forms and had different ramifications in different parts of the continent and the broader Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds. It had many unintended consequences and ramifications, some of which are explored in the article by **Felipe Gonzalez**. Gonzalez argues that the rise of the kingdom of Galinhas in the southernmost territory of Sierra Leone resulted from the recalibration and reorientation of the Atlantic slave trade away from North Atlantic actors, networks, and routes towards Cuba in the aftermath of the British abolition in 1807.

The connection to Cuba, Gonzalez contends, propelled commercial growth and political consolidation in the kingdom. Gonzalez's article revisits and challenges one of the established paradigms on the Atlantic slave trade: the axiomatic assertion that the entwinement of warfare and slave trading sustained and boosted slave-dependent African states and kingdoms. He argues that, in the case of Galinhas, the absence of a clear slave-raiding and political frontier meant that the pressures and disruptions of warfare were directed inwards and were thus more destabilizing than constructive to the slaving kingdom's commercial prosperity, dissolving the symbiotic relationship posited in much of the historiography between warfare, the slave trade, and state formation. In Galinhas, the

cessation of warfare, not its continuity and intensification, 'boosted slave trading operations' and produced significant commercial prosperity and political centralization.

Two articles in this issue take up the interconnected issues of Islamic legitimacy and authority in West Africa, from two distinct analytical and methodological frames and using the works and lives of two prominent nineteenth-century African Muslims as touchstones. **Amir Syed**'s article analyzes the seminal treatise of al-Hājj 'Umar Fūti Tall, *Bayān mā waqa'a*, which the West African Muslim intellectual and empire builder wrote to explain the legal basis of his military conquest of the Caliphate of Hamdallahi and the legitimacy of his military campaign against a Muslim polity. Syed discusses al-Hājj 'Umar's careful, rigorous textual enunciation of his political authority and sovereignty. He argues that, in this canonical treatise and those of other prominent Muslim scholars and political leaders in nineteenth-century West Africa, the realm of belief, theology, and politics intersected to produce Arabic-denominated knowledge that, with more critical engagement, promises to enrich our methodological repertoires in the study of African Islamic histories.

**Khaled Esseissah** takes a slightly different but no less insightful approach to the question of Islamic authority. He contends that the acclaimed miracles and piety of an enslaved nineteenth-century Saharan-Mauritanian Muslim, Bilad Ould Mahmud, enabled him to transcend his servile status and acquire Sufi sainthood and the authority that came with it. Whereas Sahelian and Saharan Muslim intellectuals of the period relied on their mastery of Islamic textual canons and the peer knowledge networks of Sufi orders (*tarika*), Bilad, an unlettered slave, attained authority and renown through the performance of saintly miracles and Sufi-inspired Qur'an recitation and devotional oral poetry.

Esseissah posits that Bilad's attainment of the highest station of Sufi authority points to two important revisionist insights in the study of West African Sufism. First, the acquisition of saintly status outside the *tarika* was a bigger possibility than has been acknowledged in the historiography of West African Sufism. Second, not only were enslaved Muslims' experiences in Saharan societies not defined by the popular trope of 'illicit magic'; some of them rose to prominence in the region's Sufi parlance and acquired 'saintly authority' even though they were excluded from the normative Sufi orders of the period.

The articles in this issue challenge us to think differently about the relationship between space, power, authority, and claim-making. The actors and entities that are the subjects of these articles are different, and their strategies for imagining or claiming alternative status or for gaining power and legitimacy may differ, but the stories and analyses in these papers suggest that old questions around these categories can be approached in new ways. They also suggest that new questions can emerge through a critical examination of previously neglected sources and events.

The 15 reviews in this issue also raise critical questions about how power has been embedded in space and imagination, and especially in cultural forms. Rather than one extended review, this issue offers two featured reviews that demonstrate how the discipline of African history can be extended across geographies and methodologies. **Giulia Paoletti** considers **Patricia Hayes** and **Gary Minkley**'s wonderfully rich edited volume on photography's many histories across the continent. *Ambivalent* demonstrates how photographic technology has articulated with and been embedded within a range of political, social, and cultural conditions; as **Toby Green**'s insightful review of a new edition of **Antony Hopkins**'s classic *Economic History of West Africa* demonstrates, so too have Africans adapted and generated new economic opportunities during centuries of increasing globalization. Other reviews also lead us towards the capacious geographies and temporalities evident in this volume's research articles. **Dilip M. Menon** considers **Gwyn Campbell**'s history of the Indian Ocean, 'from earliest times until 1900', while **Catarine Madeira-Santos** and **Mark W. Deets** assess scholarship that emplaces historical actors, in Luanda and in West Africa's 'margins', respectively. Finally, these reviews confirm that cultural history is a lively and vital subdiscipline. In addition to Paoletti on photography, we have **Graeme Reid** on **Xavier Livermon** (*kwaito* in postapartheid South Africa), **Nate Plageman** on **Nomi Dave** (music and the state in Guinea),

**Oluwakemi M. Balogun** on **Lynn M. Thomas** (beauty cultures and pharmaceuticals back and forth across the Atlantic), and many more besides.

This issue closes out volume 62 of *The Journal of African History* — the second produced under pandemic conditions. The editors continue to be grateful to our readers, editorial board members, peer reviewers, and above all our contributors, who have continued to produce enlightening scholarship and critical engagement under less-than-optimal conditions. This issue also represents the last produced under the stewardship of **Reynolds Richter**, our managing editor. The editors are inordinately grateful to Reynolds for his inventiveness, his attention to detail, his organizational acumen, and his abundant insights. We will miss him.

THE EDITORS