

## ISSUE INTRODUCTION

This issue of *The Journal of African History* offers five research articles on political dynamics within and across polities, on the continent and beyond it.

In a provocative challenge for historians of Africa, **Tom McCaskie** endeavors to understand ‘history-making’ in Asante. His ‘Unspeakable Words, Unmasterable Feelings’ uses the emotions generated by reference to traumatic events from the Asante past to illustrate the sharp limitations placed upon oral expression, and therefore memory. **Robert Vinson and Benedict Carton** illustrate the intractable challenges facing Albert Luthuli as leader of the African National Congress in representing an anti-Apartheid movement that could be sustainable politically within South Africa and effective diplomatically beyond its borders and outside the continent. Even as Luthuli was being rewarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1961, they argue, he was turning towards adopting violent tactics in the struggle against an increasingly brutal apartheid state. Celebrated abroad, Luthuli’s leadership was contested at home, within the ANC. Luthuli might have recognized his own predicament in that faced by ambitious leaders of small-scale and fissiparous Busoga polities, as detailed by **William FitzSimmons**. In the nineteenth century, north of Lake Victoria, small-scale conflicts were frequent but never decisive, allowing military sophistication without political centralization. A similar dynamic might be recognized in the challenges facing local chiefs in northeast Congo as they vied for control and set up leopard-men (*anioto*) against one another under Belgian colonial rule. In a study of the leopard-men, **Vicky Van Bockhaven** argues that an understanding of the fluid allegiances and instrumental violence of decades past might offer insight into the endemic political uncertainty that seems to characterize the region today. Unstable alliances between nation-states would prove to be no less treacherous for Kenneth Kaunda in the 1960s and 1970s as he was forced to reconcile Zambia’s relationship with Israel – which had been established at independence in 1964 – with African demands for solidarity against the apartheid regime and post-UDI Rhodesia. **Lynn Schler** shows that Kaunda and his government gradually soured on Israel as the contradictions between the settler state and Kaunda’s progressive ‘Humanism’ became ever more apparent.

Taken together, the articles gathered here query how public or collective memories have been created and sustained, and how political dynamics of the past continue to inflect the present.

THE EDITORS