

EDITORIAL NOTE

After fourteen years, Roland Oliver and John Fage have decided that the time has come to hand over the editorship of the *Journal*. This seems an appropriate occasion to look back on the history of the *Journal* and to consider its future.

When the *Journal* first appeared, it seemed a very speculative venture. Certainly, a number of academic monographs on African history had already been published, and there were a few journals within Africa which carried articles on the history of particular countries. But it was another matter to found a journal which encompassed the whole continent, which aimed at an international circulation, and which hoped to present work which would stand comparison with the contents of leading journals representing established areas of historical research. It was due to the initiative of Roland Oliver and John Fage that the *Journal* began in 1960. At first it was confined to two issues a year, with a relatively small circulation. It has since expanded to three, and then to four issues a year; its circulation has grown considerably, and the increasing volume of editorial business has led to the appointment of additional editors.

It is not for the present editors to attempt an assessment of the role of the *Journal* during this period, but most readers will surely agree that it performed a pioneering task in providing an international forum for original and important research, and that it played a leading part in demonstrating that Africa had a history, and a very significant history, before the coming of Europeans—a view which was by no means widely accepted in 1960. The founding editors' energy, imagination and attention to detail played a vital part in this achievement. The present editors are glad to be able to continue to make use of the experience of Roland Oliver and John Fage, who now join the board of editorial advisers.

The *Journal* continues with four editors, two of whom have been associated with it in recent years. It is not our intention here to proclaim an entirely new policy—and live to see it unfulfilled. Editorial experience suggests that the *Journal* reflects, as much as it influences, the preferences of contributors. Thus we do not propose any major changes in editorial policy, but we do intend that the *Journal* should continue to respond to new currents in the study both of African history and of history in general. The special value of the *Journal* has been its comprehensive coverage of the whole range of African history. We hope to maintain this coverage, and we shall continue to give much space to archaeology and other pre-colonial history. At the same time, we hope to publish more articles on Africa during the present century, as official records become increasingly available and as interest quickens in the colonial past. We also consider that it is increasingly important for the *Journal* to take account of the welcome growth of more specialized journals within Africa. It seems more than

ever desirable that contributions to the Journal of African History should make a particular point of setting their arguments in a broad historical context, so that they will appeal to readers whose own special interests may lie in very different fields. Finally, we hope to publish more articles which discuss issues of general importance rather than simply report on research. We would also welcome articles which seek to examine topics in African history in the broader perspectives of inter-continental or world history, and which make use of the insights of the social sciences, provided that such discussion is both well informed and makes an original contribution to historical debate. As always, the editors remain open to ideas and suggestions from other scholars.

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