

EDITORIAL

In seeking to justify the appearance of yet another journal devoted to African history, I outlined several areas in its first number in which I hoped the journal could contribute to the study of the African past. These included such matters as textual and source criticism and evaluation; archival and bibliographic reports; studies of historical problems which are comparative by their nature or in the way they are approached; studies on the philosophy of history and of historical thought; surveys of the historiography of themes and events; and review essays which use the publication of one or more books as an occasion to speak to broader issues which may be epitomized by the books. Although in the intervening seven years *History in Africa* has at least partly filled its intended niche, it has by no means been uniformly successful in achieving its stated aims. While there has certainly been some success in fulfilling the first three of these, rather less success (in some cases amounting to none at all) has attended the others.

Why this is so is sometimes fairly obvious. In the case of review essays, for instance, it may largely be a matter of expediency. After all, such essays exact a much higher price than straightforward reviews but for the very same reward. Then too some may see (or expect that others will see) historiographical studies as a species of second-rate scholarly exercise and tend to shun them for that reason.

But it is particularly disappointing to note the limited ability of *History in Africa* to attract contributions related to the philosophy of history or to historical method in its widest connotation--as thought rather than activity. For reasons that are not always good, philosophical history has remained, in all parts of the discipline, largely the preserve of the philosophers rather than practicing historians, even though social scientists (from whom I momentarily exclude historians) have always been more willing to debate broader philosophical issues.

The present plea should be seen then as a kind of diminishing echo of its predecessor, designed to encourage those readers who are not historians but who have an interest in the African past not to interpret "history"--as in *History in Africa*--in its narrowest and most constraining sense and to contribute their thoughts as they might relate to matters historical. Doing so would have at least two advantages. In the first place

it would help make *History in Africa* a more interesting and rewarding journal. More importantly, it would provide a more stimulating level of interchange--whether it be of agreement or disagreement--between different viewpoints attempting to throw light on similar problems.

David Henige