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Journal of West African History, Volume 2, Number 1, Spring 2016, pp. v-vii (Article)

Published by Michigan State University Press

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A Good Habit that Lasts More than a Year May Turn into a Custom

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Welcome to the first issue of the second volume of the *Journal of West African History*. In this issue, I present five fascinating contributions from European and U.S.-based West Africanist scholars, which are as varied in focus and region as they are in time. Yet, there are ways in which several of these contributions are thematically connected. The articles range from state formation and crisis (Pierluigi Valsecchi), to the role of Islam in precolonial and postcolonial West African states (David E. Skinner and Cheikh Anta Babou), to waves of Pan-Africanism organizing and sentiment in the U.S. Midwest and West Africa (Erik S. McDuffie), to safety, crime, and human rights (Sabine Jell-Bahlsen). In regional focus, these articles span the Upper Guinea Coast to Nigeria and the Gold Coast, all the way to the Diasporic Midwest of mainland North America. And in terms of chronology, the articles in this first issue of the second volume of *JWAH* are set from the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The issue opens with Pierluigi Valsecchi's fascinating article, "The Fall of Kaku Aka: Social and Political Change in the Mid-Nineteenth Century Western Gold Coast." "The Fall of Kaku Aka" focuses on the eighteenth-century kingdom of Appolonia, an important coastal access point for the Asante that was free of European presence; and whose power was a product of its subjects' dependency on the rulers of the kingdom. As Valsecchi argues, this coastal kingdom would eventually come into crisis in the early nineteenth century—a crisis that continued until the British intervened, by way of a military expedition, and exiled its powerful ruler Kaku Aka. In "The Fall of Kaku Aka," the author vividly chronicles the fall of this powerful leader, and the crisis of the Appolonian state, which Valsecchi's

argues was symptomatic of larger economic changes occurring in the Gold Coast in the early nineteenth century.

Valsecchi's article is followed by David E. Skinner's "The Influence of Islam in Sierra Leone History: Institutions, Practices, and Leadership." This remarkable article examines the development of Islam, its interaction with the indigenous cultures of the Upper Guinea Coast, and the encroaching British. In an article that pays as much attention to detail as to historic narrative, Skinner highlights the various ways in which Muslim leaders contributed to the process of nation-building, commerce, education, and international relations in present-day Sierra Leone. He argues that the Muslim leaders of the Upper Guinea Coast, while holding steadfast to the fundamental ideas and practices of Islam, were able to adapt to changing conditions while enhancing their economic, social, and political interests. These leaders, Skinner suggests, achieved this through the institution of formal and informal educational initiatives that worked to promote Islamic ideas. At the same time, the article is also about twentieth-century British interests in Sierra Leone, and British recognition and acceptance of the importance of Muslim communities (and their systems of law, education, etc.) in an effective colonial enterprise.

Then there is Erik S. McDuffie's remarkable contribution, "A New Day has Dawned for the UNIA': Garveyism, the Diasporic Midwest, and West Africa, 1920–80." McDuffie discusses some largely unknown "encounters" of James R. Stewart, William L. Sherrill, and Clarence W. Harding, Jr., in his exploration of diasporic political linkages between the U.S. Midwest and West Africa. These encounters (in essence, "sojourns" of these Pan-Africanists to West Africa) highlight their support for African liberation and elucidate transnational linkages between these Midwestern and African Pan-Africanists, who found themselves connected through Garveyism. Moreover, McDuffie's exploration calls for an appreciation of the impact of the African American Midwest in shaping a global history of the black world through Garveyism. However, as McDuffie eloquently argues, not all was as it should be with this movement, because these Pan-Africanist men exhibited a type of "masculinism" that blinded them to the special oppression facing African-descended women. They also espoused a civilizationist outlook that encouraged them to collaborate with white supremacists—another major paradox inherent in Garveyism.

The article by Sabine Jell-Bahlsen, "Crime, Community, and Human Rights in Southeastern Nigeria, Then and Now" uses four case studies to explore crime and punishment in the southeastern Nigerian town of Oguta in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The author begins by highlighting a 1987 "murder case" and the indigenous modes of justice (including excommunication) that the community employed to punish the offender(s). More recent cases of crime in the same

community involved different degrees of physical violence to the victims, and have gone unpunished. Jell-Bahlsen suggests that the reasons for this escalation in violent crime in Oguta can be attributed to an increasing erosion of what she calls “customary communal vehicles of crime prevention and punishment,” the collapse of civil society, the underdevelopment and underdiversification of the economy and the public sector. Moreover, the author points out that the perpetrators of these crimes were outsiders to Oguta, and this reality, she surmises, might in some way not only explain the violence involved in the crimes, but also the difficulty in identifying the perpetrators (in sharp contrast to the 1987 case, in which a child member of the community identified the offenders) and bringing them to justice.

The last article of the issue, “Negotiating the Boundaries of Power: Abdoulaye Wade, the Muridiyya, and State Politics in Senegal, 2000–2012,” by Cheikh Anta Babou, takes us to the French West African country of Senegal. Although removed from Skinner’s article by regional focus and time, Babou, like Skinner, delves into the role of Islam in national leadership, this time in postcolonial Senegal. In this important article, Babou rejects the notion that a social contract existed between the Muridiyya, a Muslim brotherhood, and the postcolonial Senegalese state in which the two collaborated in order to maintain peace and order—an argument that has been extended by several scholars to explain the enduring political stability of the postcolonial Senegalese state. He instead suggests that the brotherhoods, who essentially positioned themselves as spokesmen of the voiceless and down-trodden, in fact had to tread a delicate balance in order to appear to the public as independent and separate from the Senegalese state. Babou then argues that the relationship between the presidency and the brotherhoods should be considered as “shifting,” and suggests that the reason for this lay in the changing dynamics within the brotherhoods. Babou points to the year 2000, a momentous year in Senegalese politics, which saw a sitting president attempt (and fail) to turn the Sufi order or Muslim brotherhood, Muridiyya, into a political base. He argues that President Wade’s attitude toward the Murid leadership can be explained by his desire to have more direct access to the populace by blurring the line between spiritual and temporal power. In the final analysis, Babou contends that Wade was able to impose a government that reproduced aspects of caesaropapism. But according to the author, the Muridiyya did not take this sitting down: they reacted to this manipulation with a show of “real resistance” to the political ambitions of the state.

As you will see, the journal’s “habit” of presenting solid contributions from serious scholars of the West African world is slowly but surely becoming a custom. It is therefore with great pleasure that I present volume 2, issue 1 of the *Journal of West African History*.