

INTRODUCTION

Homespun Historiography and the Academic Profession

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AFRICA'S HISTORIANS seem always to be searching for an archive to call their own. In 1960, Philip Curtin's article "The Archives of Tropical Africa: A Reconnaissance" graced the inaugural volume of the *Journal of African History*.¹ At a time when African colonies were claiming political independence from their rulers, Curtin reconnoitered archives for material that scholars could use in writing the continent's history. He carefully listed the volume of material that each archive possessed. In Dakar, there were an impressive 3,500 linear meters of files held by the federal government of French West Africa; Sudan's archives, by contrast, possessed only 350 linear meters of material. Curtin made notes on the organization of each archive and on the conditions under which historians could expect to work. He concluded that historians were duty bound to get outside the comfortable libraries of London and Paris, since metropolitan archives contained "the history of European interests in Africa, rather than the history of Africa itself." Indeed, argued Curtin, "African history written from entirely metropolitan sources can no longer be considered valid." Curtin's British colleagues gave similar directions to Africa's new historians. At an inaugural conference of lecturers in African history, held at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1953, Roland Oliver and other attendees concluded that "whether one was dealing with evidence from archaeology or oral tradition or written documents, African history must from now on be Africa-centred. . . . Evidence drawn from metropolitan archives must be supplemented by that from local archives."² The opening of archives gave the new field of African history a subject matter that was uniquely its own.

Where archives did not exist, Africa's historians created them. In Tanzania, students and scholars associated with the Maji Maji Research Project conducted dozens of oral interviews with elderly men and women during the 1960s. The

transcripts were bound and placed on the shelves of the University of Dar es Salaam's library. In Ibadan, Kenneth Dike gathered up the decaying government papers that, in 1954, became the core of the new Nigeria Records Office. He used these papers to write his pioneering *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*.³ Dike's colleague at Ibadan, John Hunwick, established the Centre of Arabic Documentation in 1964, where he microfilmed and cataloged the rich Arabic-language manuscripts of northern Nigeria.⁴ In Uganda, John Rowe and his colleagues collected the autobiographies and private papers of Apollo Kagwa, Ham Mukasa, and other giants of nineteenth-century Buganda. These papers were placed, in boxes, in the Makerere University Library.⁵ Fifty years later, historians are still establishing an archival patrimony from which to write the history of Africa. With funding from the Mellon Foundation and other sources, historians and archivists connected with the Aluka Project have set out to digitize the records of southern Africa's liberation movements.⁶ Laboratories have been set up in several locations, where selected materials are being photographed and cataloged. "The task of digitizing should be viewed as an opportunity to reformulate the contours of the history of the liberation struggles," write the project's coordinators.⁷

In Africa as in other parts of the world, the search for quantifiable, measurable evidence is professional historians' *raison d'être*. The discipline of modern history was conceived in concert with the creation and cataloging of national archives. In his 1895 inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge, Lord Acton heralded the dawn of a "documentary age, which will tend to make history independent of historians."⁸ "Every country," trumpeted Acton, "opens its archives and invites us to penetrate the mysteries of State." The Vatican archive alone amounted to 3,239 cases, and archives in the Netherlands, Spain, Prussia, and Austria were coming to light. With the records spread before them, Acton invited his fellow historians to "repress the poet, the patriot, the religious or political partisan, to sustain no cause, to vanish himself from his books, and to write nothing that would gratify his own feelings or disclose his private convictions." Seventy years later, Geoffrey Elton, Acton's successor as Regius Professor at Cambridge, again invited historians to lose themselves in the documentary record. In his 1967 book *The Practice of History*, he named financial accounts, records of court cases, and other material relics of the past as "far and away the most important and common" types of evidence for historians.⁹ It was from these records, wrote Elton, that the historian should extract the truth about the past. For Lord Acton and Geoffrey Elton, as for Philip Curtin and Roland Oliver, the archive gave the discipline of history its subject matter. Its piles of paper, sorted, indexed, and labeled, had a material, objective existence. They enabled historians to think of the past itself as objective, real, and available for study by the professional scholar.

The objective, material existence of the archive invited historians in Africa and elsewhere to narrow their angle of vision, to focus on the past, and to

ignore the interpretive work going on around them. In the historiography of precolonial Africa, the interpretation of oral traditions was greatly enriched by the insights of functionalist anthropology and historical linguistics.¹⁰ But the developing methodology of oral history research marginalized Africa's amateur historians. The manual for professional historians was Jan Vansina's 1961 book *De la tradition orale*, which argued that scholars could, by filtering out the accretions of later generations, engage directly with the precolonial past through the spoken word. Vansina's colleague David Henige used the term *feedback* to describe the process by which written versions of history influenced subsequent renditions of oral history.¹¹ For Henige, feedback was a problem to be solved by the proper application of historical method. Henige's nomenclature gave professional historians a means of distinguishing the proper object of historical inquiry from the corrupted versions that literate Africans produced. In his *History of the Bemba*, Andrew Roberts, Vansina's first doctoral student, warned readers explicitly of the "shortcomings" of amateurishness. Written "records of oral tradition" in general and Rev. Paul Bwembya Mushindo's *Short History of the Bemba* in particular were "more or less deficient in two important respects," wrote Roberts. "They do not make it clear what the writer, or editor, has interpolated . . . and what was originally told him by his informants. And they seldom indicate in any detail who the informants were. . . . Thus none of these texts present an actual oral tradition."¹² In the professionalized methodology of African history, vernacular-language writers of history were, at best, sources to be used and, at worst, obstacles on the path to accurate historical comprehension. Fellow travelers they were not.

With its evidentiary footing secure, the discipline of African history today enjoys great success.¹³ But as African history increasingly takes its place in the Euro-American university, Africa's professional historians have turned away from the more interwoven relationships that an earlier generation of scholars cultivated with fellow travelers in Africa. During the 1940s and 1950s, organizations such as the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI) in Northern Rhodesia, the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire, and the East African Institute of Social Research in Uganda generated networks that drew anthropologists together with African cultural brokers. These organizations were by no means egalitarian. But as Lyn Schumaker's study of the RLI shows, the scholars associated with these research centers were bound by a shared "culture of fieldwork."¹⁴ A cosmopolitan group of African research assistants, political leaders, informants, and translators vitally shaped the scholarship that British anthropologists published. In the research carried out by the anthropologists of the RLI, "the field" was more than an inert assemblage of data awaiting scholarly attention. Fieldwork was constituted out of the relationships that bound anthropologists together with the people with whom they worked and studied.

The first generation of African historians took up posts in Kampala, Khartoum, Legon, and other African colleges in the 1950s and 1960s. Educated in American or European universities, they knew the protocols of professional scholarship. Many of them chose to write about peoples and places with which they were intimately familiar. Bethwell Ogot, born in Nyanza, studied the Luo people of western Kenya; Isaria Kimambo, married to a woman from Pare, wrote an important book about her people; Kenneth Dike, from southern Nigeria, composed a pioneering study of the Niger Delta.¹⁵ But as first-generation historians wrote as sons and, much more rarely, daughters of their homelands, they always had to affirm their objectivity. They had, that is, to position African history alongside European history, to draw parallels between African and European institutions, in order to make independent African states coequal members of an international community (see Rathbone, chapter 5 in this volume). In his pioneering *History of the Southern Luo*, Ogot began by reminding his readers that “since African history is part of world history, we have to employ the same historical methods in Africa which historians outside Africa have evolved over a number of centuries.” “This may be exacting,” he continued, “but we cannot afford to be satisfied with anything else.”¹⁶ National independence was the recruiting officer marshaling Africa’s historians into a positivist historical methodology.

Their methodology led Africa’s historians to turn their backs on the dialogic culture of fieldwork that an earlier generation of anthropologists had cultivated. Where anthropologists had generated knowledge from within a network of human relationships, historians found hard evidence within the walls of newly opened archives. Philip Curtin conducted the research for his 1964 book *The Image of Africa* on a yearlong road trip across Africa, during which he paid weeklong visits to archives in Yaoundé, Kampala, Enugu, and dozens of other locales.¹⁷ On arriving in each place, Curtin remembered, the routine was the same: “It began with a visit to the American embassy to find out about any contacts that had been arranged in advance. A survey of the local archives, if they were open, was a central part of each visit.”¹⁸ Historians were honing in on Africa’s archives. They spent less time in building up lasting relationships with informants or with colleagues.¹⁹ During his doctoral studies at Cambridge, Roland Oliver reported, he was told by his supervisor that “my time would be very much my own and that if, after a year or so, I felt it necessary to come and discuss my progress with him . . . that would be quite in order.”²⁰ So isolated was Oliver that he only rarely met with John Fage, Jack Gallagher, and other coeval research students. Where anthropologists worked horizontally and studied the social world, historians kept their eyes fixed on the archives, and sought to screen out feedback from contemporary sources. And where Max Gluckman, Victor Turner, and Audrey Richards composed their work in dialogue with Africans who were also doing research, historians thought themselves standing in a one-to-one relationship with the past.

But professionals were not the only ones doing research on the African past. Even at the birth of the academic discipline of African history, university-based scholars took their place alongside African researchers who were trolling through history. Working from outside the university, these homegrown historians very often saw the past from a partisan vantage point. Some were moral reformers, searching for instructive traditions with which to chasten young men and women. Others were kingmakers, mining their people's history for evidence with which to legitimate political authority. Still others were radicals, plumbing the depths of the past to explain the racial and social inequalities they confronted. These men (and they were virtually always men) pursued their historical research at the interstices of busy lives, as they also composed sermons, pursued litigation, translated the Bible, or wrote petitions. Their investigations into the past enabled their contemporary political and moral work.

The first generation of professional historians rarely acknowledged the body of writing that these homespun scholars produced. Bethwell Ogot's *History of the Southern Luo*, published in 1967, is today regarded as one of the defining texts in the field of precolonial African history. Ogot wrote the book while pursuing postgraduate work at the University of London. But Luo people were not waiting for Ogot or other professional scholars to compose their history. Worried over the cultural amnesia that seemed to be afflicting the young, Luo intellectuals had been publishing morally educative histories of their people since the 1930s. Paul Mboya's 1938 book *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi* (The Luo, Their Cultures and Traditions) established the template on which later historians worked.²¹ Mboya had, in the late 1920s, helped missionaries translate the biblical book Genesis into the Luo language.²² With the lessons of the Babylonian captivity of Israel on his mind, Mboya warned readers of his 1938 book that "people who have no respect for their society's customs and practices . . . are scattered all over the earth, and people refer to them as *jodak* [tenants, vagrants]." For Mboya as for other writers, history writing was a means of guarding a moral community against the rootlessness of ignorance. By 1947, there were nearly a dozen Luo-language books in print. Authors were inspired by the Luo Union, a welfare association that encouraged its members to "study and select the Luo customs which are decent and compatible with progress."²³ Shadrack Malo, an appeals court judge, met with groups of elders who deliberated, under the chairmanship of the local chief, over the history of their people. Malo printed the narratives they agreed upon in his 1953 book *Dhoudi mar Central Nyanza* (Clans of Central Nyanza).²⁴ History writing was a popular endeavor, a project in which a broad range of people participated.

At a time when young people seemed both rootless and forgetful and wives and daughters seemed dangerously undisciplined, historical works such as Mboya's and Malo's gave Luo reformers a means by which to hold people accountable. History books in hand, Luo intellectuals could define customary

practice, reify Luo gender roles, and contrast modern people's iniquities with their forebears' discretion. "There was no prostitution taking place between the [Luo] women and other tribes" before colonial conquest, wrote the secretary of the Ramogi African Welfare Association in 1946. "It originated in the European and Asian settlement in the colony."²⁵ Their research into precolonial history gave moral reformers the means to show that independent women and children were both undisciplined and unpatriotic. "The Young Luo of today lacks the proper discipline which was exercised by our forefathers," said Oginga Odinga at a 1955 meeting of the Luo Union. "People are completely confused. . . . If we do not think seriously now of uniting together as a tribe our children will have no discipline."²⁶ The work of history writing and the project of conservative reform went hand in hand.

Bethwell Ogot's English-language history book was composed as an aspect of this partisan program of exploration into the precolonial history of the Luo. In 1961, as part of his research, Ogot conducted a four-day conference involving some thirty elders nominated by the Luo Union. The meeting produced an "outline history of the Kenya Luo" that was "acceptable to the thirty experts," he recounted.²⁷ Ogot also drew from Shadrack Malo's 1953 book, commending Malo for the "methodical and scientific manner" in which he conducted research. But Ogot said nothing about the rhetorical and political context in which he collected evidence. He said nothing, that is, about Luo men's politically creative worries over women's independence or their fears over children's forgetfulness. Ogot blithely translated the clan histories that Shadrack Malo had published in 1953 and labeled them with a novel title: "*Luo Historical Texts, Volume One*." The texts that he produced in concert with the thirty elders of the Luo Union he titled "*Luo Historical Texts, Volume Two*." Ogot was creating the archival patrimony with which to write the history of the Luo people. But in so doing, he obscured the intellectual and political work that Shadrack Malo and the men of the Luo Union were doing with the past. In his hands, they became sources of information. Their names did not even appear in his footnotes.

Recasting the Past is an effort to move the discipline of African history outside the narrow confines of the written and oral archive to study, in its own right, the interpretive and representational work that men such as Shadrack Malo and the Luo Unionists have done and are doing with their past. The contributors assembled in this volume argue that the African past does not speak, unmediated, to the present; nor can it be read unproblematically from the archival record. The past has already been worked over by the African interpreters that the present volume brings into view. African brokers—pastors, journalists, kingmakers, religious dissidents, politicians, entrepreneurs—all have been doing research, conducting interviews, reading archives, and presenting their results to critical audiences. Their scholarly work makes it impossible to

think of African history as an inert entity awaiting the attention of professional historians. Professionals take their place in a broader field of interpretation, where Africans are already reifying, editing, and representing the past.

MAKING HISTORY IN AFRICA

The book arises out of the conference “Ethnohistory and the Construction of Identity in Twentieth-Century Africa,” convened in April 2006 at the University of Cambridge. The conference drew some fifty professional historians and students together with two practitioners, the Reverend Richard Baguma from western Uganda and Matthew Sweta, the Senior Chief Kanongesha from north-western Zambia. In the 1990s, Rev. Baguma was a broadcaster of Toro-language radio programming in Kampala, Uganda’s capital. He used this platform to urge the government of President Yoweri Museveni to restore the Toro kingdom, which had been abolished in 1967. After President Museveni made Toro one of Uganda’s several “cultural institutions” in 1993, Rev. Baguma took up a post in the radio station Voice of Toro, where he contributes a weekly program on Toro’s history. At the Cambridge conference, Rev. Baguma described how his Old Testament reading on the Israelites’ Exodus from Egypt had catalyzed his interest in Toro’s past. After long research, he reported, he discovered that his ancestors had once migrated from the seaport of Bastia, in Corsica. For Rev. Baguma, history reminds Toro people of their distinctiveness. Through his radio programming and in the history book he is currently writing, he distinguishes the Toro kingdom from an anonymous Ugandan citizenry and prods Yoweri Museveni’s government to recognize Toro’s leaders (see Peterson, chapter 8 in this volume).

In the Toro kingdom and in other African localities, entrepreneurs sifted through history and summoned political communities into being. These homespun historians rarely enjoyed the backing of academic institutions. Their research was often self-funded, squeezed into time also full with other literary and political endeavors. One of the features of these historical works, therefore, is their multigeneric character. Africa’s homespun historians could not afford to respect academic conventions. Petros Lamula, about whom Paul la Hausse writes in this volume, was the founder of an independent church, sometime vice president of the Natal African Congress, and author of a controversial history of the Zulu people. He sold portraits of the Zulu king along with his book, published extracts as pamphlets for easier sale, and printed paragraphs on flyers to pique potential buyers’ interest. Gakaara wa Wanjau, one of the earliest publishers of Gikuyu-language texts, wrote grammar books, romance novels, hymns, and advice books alongside more immediately historical works.²⁸ The Lumpa Church hymn writers that David Gordon studies in this volume drew symbolic and rhetorical resources from John Bunyan’s

Pilgrim's Progress, Old Testament narratives of the Exodus, and orally transmitted traditions from Bemba history. Lamula, Gakaara, and the Lumpa hymn writers were trafficking in multiple genres, not only composing narrative history.

We have here a field of scholarly endeavor that African thinkers pursued while also writing sermons, composing fiction, keeping diaries, and reading the Bible. This was, to use Karin Barber's apposite phrase, a type of "tin-trunk" literacy, composed by people as part of their everyday efforts at self-documentation.²⁹ Colonial governments were documentary regimes. They worked by encoding Africans' ethnic identities on pass cards, assessing their taxes on receipts, and regulating their marriages in legal registers.³⁰ Africans responded to this documentary bullying by producing their own papers and by working out their own self-representations. Professional historians are only now coming to recognize how widely spread this practice of self-archiving actually was. In Kenya, the quantity of vernacular-language autobiographies far outweighs the body of English-language novelistic literature.³¹ In Ibadan, Akinpelu Obisesan kept a diary detailing the most minute aspects of his life. The diaries constitute eight of the seventy-two boxes of paper that he had filled by his death in 1963.³² The Malawian clerk Kenneth Mdala wrote dozens of epistolary letters to senior administrators during the 1930s and 1940s, offering his opinions on local government and commenting on the political issues of the day.³³ The Kenyan writer Gakaara wa Wanjau was detained for eight years by British security forces during the Mau Mau emergency. He filled his time with writing, composing several plays and hymns, conducting ethnographic research, carrying on a long correspondence with his wife, and keeping a diary.³⁴ In all, there are five thousand pages of material, created by a man who had difficulty laying hands on pencil and paper.

But historical research is not autobiography, and neither is it only self-archiving. The writing studied in *Recasting the Past* was not destined for tin trunks. Historical writing is a powerful vehicle of political argument because it is addressed to a collective "we," not the individual "I." Through the work of history writing, authors can locate an identifiable people on a historical trajectory and make claims on their doubting, dissident fellows. Africa's homespun historians were writing to bring a readership—and a political community—into being. The Yoruba historian I. B. Akinyele, whose work Karin Barber studies in this volume, drew together hitherto distinct literary genres—songs, riddles, and narratives—in his 1911 book on Ibadan's history. He thereby called disparate people together, summoning up a community that could see its history, for the first time, presented as a totality on the book's pages. The Lumpa Church members whom David Gordon studies in this volume were likewise made a community by their historiography. As the church endured years of persecution at the hands of Kenneth Kaunda's government in Zambia, its members came to see themselves as a people defined by the shared experience

of suffering. Their self-awareness was enabled by their hymns, which described their physical privation as the price of salvation (see Gordon, chapter 9 in this volume). Historical texts were not simply means by which Africa's tin-trunk writers archived themselves. They set an identifiable people on a path and invited them to travel together.

The work of history writing was necessary because Africans did not, all at once, identify themselves as members of political communities. Africa's geographic and political frontiers have rarely been closed. The continent's topography, low population densities, and comparatively weak police systems have made movement relatively easy. Therefore, newcomers have, for hundreds of years, been living cheek to jowl with those who call themselves *indigènes* (see Lonsdale, chapter 12 in this volume). Africa's cosmopolitan demography, with its variety of languages and cultures, was the problem that the political organizers of the twentieth century had to confront. If they were to create a constituency, ambitious leaders of political communities needed to set people on a particular trajectory. Entrepreneurs had, that is, to standardize vernacular languages, codify customary law, draw maps of their homeland, and write histories that made their people's shared past visible. Their cultural and intellectual work made it possible for disparate people to see themselves as cosharers of a patrimony.

There were at least two traditions of politically instructive historical writing in twentieth-century Africa. In one dimension, political entrepreneurs sought to illuminate their people's historical allegiance to a king. By gilding their people's origins with a monarchical gloss, they made the contingent, circumstantial shape of their contemporary political community look foreordained and worthy of respect. So it was that within two years of his restoration as *Asantehene* (king) in 1935, Osei Agyeman Prempeh II had written a 450-page history of the Asante people.³⁵ As Tom McCaskie shows in this volume, Prempeh the historian argued that Asante elites had once migrated from Egypt and had imposed their rule on the indigenous class of commoners in ancient times. As a charter for kingship, Prempeh's history book impressed Asante's rambunctious citizens with their obligation to submit. Historians in colonial Bunyoro, in western Uganda, likewise found in their history evidence with which to make their kingdom credible. British officials in colonial Uganda looked on Bunyoro as an administrative convenience. Bunyoro's king, Tito Winyi, responded to colonial officials' disdain by publishing, between 1935 and 1937, a series of essays about the "Kings of Bunyoro Kitara."³⁶ In his history writing and in the pageantry with which he conducted government, Winyi aimed to make his kingdom worthy of respect in the eyes of his own people and of British officialdom.³⁷ Chagga politicians in northwestern Tanzania (see Hunter, chapter 7 in this volume) and the dissidents of the "Rwenzururu" polity in western Uganda (Peterson, chapter 8) similarly used royalist historiography

as a means to get political traction. In colonial eastern Africa as in the Asante state, researchers wrote royalist histories in order to distinguish their people from the anonymous subjects of colonial and postcolonial governments. By this strategic ornamentalism-from-below, they caught the attention of government power brokers and made the messy, pragmatic work of political organization look like a natural order.³⁸

But as John Lonsdale shows in the present volume, historical thought did not need to be royalist in order to inspire people's loyalty. Republicans also composed history. In the absence of an ancient political hierarchy to attract constituents' patriotism, architects of Africa's "stateless" societies made judgments across the continent's open frontiers, contrasting their people's virtues with their neighbors' immorality. By the practice of comparison, community builders reinforced their people's distinctive identity. For generations, the proud Kaguru highlanders of the Itumba Mountains, in central Tanganyika, have been linked in marriage and commerce with the Ngulu people, who live directly to the east. But their interwoven relationships are covered over by the terms of disapprobation that Kaguru caricaturists use when describing Ngulu people. Ngulu can be called *Wajumbi* (from the Swahili *pawpaw*), a term that highlights their ties with the exotic coast, or *Weyombo*, referring to the tree from which ropes that had once bound slaves were made.³⁹ With these terms of aspersion, Kaguru people identify themselves as a free people, standing at a distance from coastal cosmopolitans. Away to the north, in central Kenya, a polyglot collection of immigrants who called themselves Kikuyu had, during the eighteenth century, dedicated themselves to clearing the highland forest and establishing fertile, cultivable farms. They described themselves as the "people of the digging stick," contrasting the work they did on central Kenya's difficult landscape with the indolence of their cattle-keeping Masai neighbors.⁴⁰ These self-representations were the germ of a patriotic self-awareness. By comparing their virtues with their neighbors' turpitude, Kaguru and Kikuyu republicans gave their imagined communities a unique vocation.

The comparative nature of patriotic thought obliged Africa's polity builders to insist that their people practice a stern moral discipline. How else could a people's reputation be proven except by the evidence of their singular virtue? Locked in a contest with their neighbors over moral authority, patriots had to reform their people's conduct. They hoped thereby to earn respect, both from government officials and from their neighbors. In northwestern Tanzania, for example, Haya men in the 1950s and 1960s organized a program of moral reform meant to curb the compromising behavior of their female compatriots, for Haya women were postwar eastern Africa's premier prostitutes.⁴¹ Their business undermined Haya men's reputations. Arbor Godfred, a soldier posted to Nairobi during World War II, described his embarrassment at being called

“dada [sister], kaka [elder brother], shemeji [countryman] by every soldier, every civilian who knows me to be a Muhaya.”⁴² The shame they felt compelled Haya men to defend their ethnic community. “We find [prostitutes] as abusers, shamers, scorners, blamers, uprooters of our nation Buhaya,” wrote two members of the Haya Union.⁴³ In 1950, the union launched a program to limit independent women’s movements. Women traveling to eastern Africa’s cities without their husbands’ or fathers’ written permission were forcibly returned to their homes. “The woman must appear before the public as an image of decency and respect of a civilized Nation,” wrote a petitioner in 1957, “and not a monster of immorality bringing down her nation.”⁴⁴ Haya men knew eastern Africa’s public sphere to be a theater of examination, in which other men were sitting in judgment on them. Their reform program was meant to establish their credentials as respectable political actors.

It is not a coincidence that all of the African authors studied in *Recasting the Past* are men. Africa’s patriotisms were competitive, composed as organizers looked across geographic and political frontiers and made comparisons with their neighbors. The histories that patriots wrote were manuals for their political communities: they taught wives to defer to their husbands and invited young men to submit to elders’ authority. The Toro patriots about whom Peterson writes in this volume wrote their kingdom’s history in the 1950s by emphasizing the antiquity of their monarchy. In the same breath, they also called on the British government to establish laws against wayward women. Writing on behalf of the Kampala Batoro Association in 1955, a petitioner named Bingaamo decried the “rapid migration of young men and women of teen age into Kampala from the Toro District.” Under the influence of “undesirable people,” young urbanites’ minds were corrupted, turning these individuals into “hard-boiled vagabonds and criminals.” Bingaamo complained that “the reputation we Toros had enjoyed in the past has been dwindling by the ill-reputation earned by such irresponsible young men and women in Kampala.”⁴⁵ Petitions from offended urbanites such as Bingaamo led the king of Toro to establish movement restrictions against Toro women in 1955.⁴⁶

Like the members of the Haya Union, Toro patriots knew themselves to be under examination in eastern Africa’s competitive political arena. Like Haya men, Toro patriots knew that their reputation—and their credibility in other people’s eyes—depended on the conduct of their wives and daughters. And like Haya men, therefore, Toro patriots built legal and political institutions that curbed women’s movements, and they wrote history books and other instructive texts to reform their manners. Patriots in Tanzania and Uganda as elsewhere in Africa could not only be citizens, endowed with rights by government. Patriots also had to enter public space as men, as husbands and fathers whose orderly houses testified to their moral respectability. Their historical writing guided their readers to conform

themselves to a template, as decent wives or obedient children. The *patriae* that Africa's homespun historians helped to create were also patriarchies.⁴⁷

Seen from the patriotic historians' vantage point, Christianity was another fruitful source of comparative self-positioning, not a foreign religion closing down avenues of thought. Patriotic historians ransacked the Bible and other Christian texts and found therein resources with which to typify their opponents and validate their people's experience. Thus, in his historical writings, the Zambian nationalist Harry Nkumbula blamed the Ila people's propensity for internecine strife on their "inability to follow the example of the Israelites of Egypt, who rallied behind a strong personality as their leader" (see Macola, chapter 4 in this volume). Similarly, Kwame Nkrumah's supporters in the Asante kingdom scorned the Asantehene as "Pharaoh," a dictator who, like his ancient predecessor, was bound to confront a wrathful God (see T. C. McCaskie, chapter 6 in this volume). Nkumbula and the republicans of Asante were aligning their contemporary politics with the Old Testament, using the Bible's cast of characters to castigate their antagonists and claim moral authority.

But Africa's patriots derived more than rhetoric from Christianity. It was from missionaries that many historians learned to valorize their past. For Catholic and Protestant liberals, Christianity was a successor to the old religion, not its replacement. In dictionaries and in catechisms, missionaries and early Christian converts identified vernacular names for "God," "sin," and other concepts. In so doing, they consolidated Africans' conceptions of divinity, giving an identifiable shape to "traditional religion."⁴⁸ Bible translators also helped to consolidate Africans' vocabulary of political community. In rendering Kings, Judges, and other Old Testament literature, translators clarified and popularized vernacular-language terms for the words *king*, *law*, and *judge*.⁴⁹ Christian vocabulary gave African thinkers the intellectual building blocks from which political history could be written. In Kenya, the first vernacular-language anthropology of the Gikuyu people was written by a Presbyterian schoolteacher and published by the Scots' mission press.⁵⁰ In Buganda, one of the earliest works of vernacular-language history was written by the Protestant politician Apolo Kagwa. Kagwa composed his book with the help of Anglican missionary John Roscoe.⁵¹ The Anglican preacher Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yorubas*, composed in the late nineteenth century, is today regarded as the seminal work of Yoruba cultural nationalism. But the historically identifiable people about whom Johnson wrote were first imagined in Anglican missionaries' evangelistic literature.⁵² We at the 2006 Cambridge conference should not have been surprised that Rev. Baguma first contemplated writing the history of the Toro people while reading the Old Testament. Like his predecessors in Buganda, Asante, and elsewhere, Baguma was finding in other people's history models to emulate.⁵³

Africa's patriotic historians were composing at a geographic and cultural frontier. They knew that their would-be constituents were always on the move. In their historical writing, political entrepreneurs identified their people's distinct patrimony, valorized their virtues, and contrasted their civility with that of their neighbors. They sought thereby to corral dissenters and set people on a path together. Patriotic history writers were the cartographers for Africa's political communities.

REPOSITIONING HOMESPUN HISTORY

It is tempting to treat homespun historical works as source material, grist for professional scholars' mill. Thus, Megan Vaughan, when conducting research in Malawi, first thought of the Nyasaland clerk and historian Kenneth Mdala as an informant, whose research could be seamlessly integrated with her own material.⁵⁴ But Mdala, like Petros Lamula, Isaiah Mukirane, and other intellectuals studied in this volume, was not writing from a fixed position. Africa's vernacular-language histories were not simply sources, pouring forth information about a particular political or ethnic community. The men who wrote them carried out research, did interviews, collected data, and presented their results to skeptical audiences. Ernest Kóngola, author of several historical works about central Tanganyika's Gogo people, spent long weeks in the field, traveling from place to place to interview knowledgeable men and women.⁵⁵ The Asante historian N. Asare's 1911 text rested on the dozens of interviews he had done with elderly informants. He cross-checked his data in order to eliminate idiosyncrasies (McCaskie, chapter 6). Like scholars everywhere, these historians subjected their work to critical review. Many of them drafted their work in newspapers, where they tested their writing against a critical readership. In the early 1920s, the Zulu historian Magma Fuze published a series of essays on the "Black People and Their Customs" in the newspaper *Ilanga lase Natal*. His work inspired a wave of competing histories (see la Hausse, chapter 2 in this volume). Other historians tested their work informally, in the context of the cultural associations to which they belonged. The Ibadan historian Akinyele was a member of an association called Elders Still Remain, which aimed to "institute researches into all Yoruba religions, customs, philosophies, medical knowledge . . . and national histories" (see Barber, chapter 1 in this volume). Isaya Mukirane was a founding member of the Bakonzo Life History Research Association, which, in the late 1950s, sponsored a team of young researchers who combed the Rwenzori Mountains, searching for elders to interview (Peterson, chapter 8). These and other homespun historians were checking their data, presenting their work, and getting feedback. Their research protocol allowed them to position themselves within a field of argument.

Homespun historians were professional scholars' fellow travelers, with standards of accountability and mechanisms for review. In addressing them as

sources, professionals pin them down to a fixed position; add them to the archive; and ignore the figurative, creative intellectual labor by which they generated knowledge. Professionals thereby buttress their own credentials as objective interpreters. But they make it hard to see how African intellectuals created their own representations of the past.

A sparse but growing scholarship treats Africa's historians as entrepreneurs, worthy of study in their own right.⁵⁶ This scholarship positions historical writers alongside missionaries, labor migrants, and other political actors who together "invented" tribal communities in colonial Africa.⁵⁷ Axel Harneit-Sievers's edited *A Place in the World: New Local Historiographies from Africa and South Asia* is the fullest assessment to date.⁵⁸ Harneit-Sievers's book is organized according to a geographic grid, offering analyses of, for example, Yoruba town histories, Igbo community histories, or Swahili historical texts. There is much to commend this approach: by analyzing "local" histories according to their place of origin, scholars can illuminate the proximal influences that guided historians' work. But the book's organization dictates its authors' conclusions. Harneit-Sievers sees vernacular historical works as "techniques for the production of locality," manifesting ethnic entrepreneurs' efforts to find a "place in the world."⁵⁹ He and his contributors have comparatively little to say about the biographies of the practitioners of "local" history. They thereby make it hard to glimpse the debated, contingent relationship between authors and their communities.

Entrepreneurs' historical work was not only directed toward a particular place in the world. The attempt to establish transethnic linkages was frequently as significant a feature of vernacular-language historians' work as was their contribution to the consolidation of local affiliations. David Gordon's chapter in the present volume shows how Alice Lenshina and her successors created a community that transcended locality, putting Lumpa devotees on a path leading upward to a New Jerusalem. By configuring their historical experience of violence and oppression as evidence of divine favor, Lumpa believers made themselves into *Bena Lesa*, the "people of God." The Senegalese historians Etienne Smith studies in this volume were likewise creating integrative connections between ethnic communities. They reconstructed the "joking relationships" that had bound people together in the precolonial past and thereby sought to orient localities toward a national political sphere. And even so-called local historians reached outside their proximate experiences and likened their people to Old Testament characters and other figures in history. Africa's historians were binding disparate geographies together and positioning their people as cosmopolitans.

For these reasons, we are uncomfortable about calling this scholarship "local history." This scholarly work cannot be pinned down to a particular locality. Its architects' horizons were not bounded by parochial concerns. Neither can we

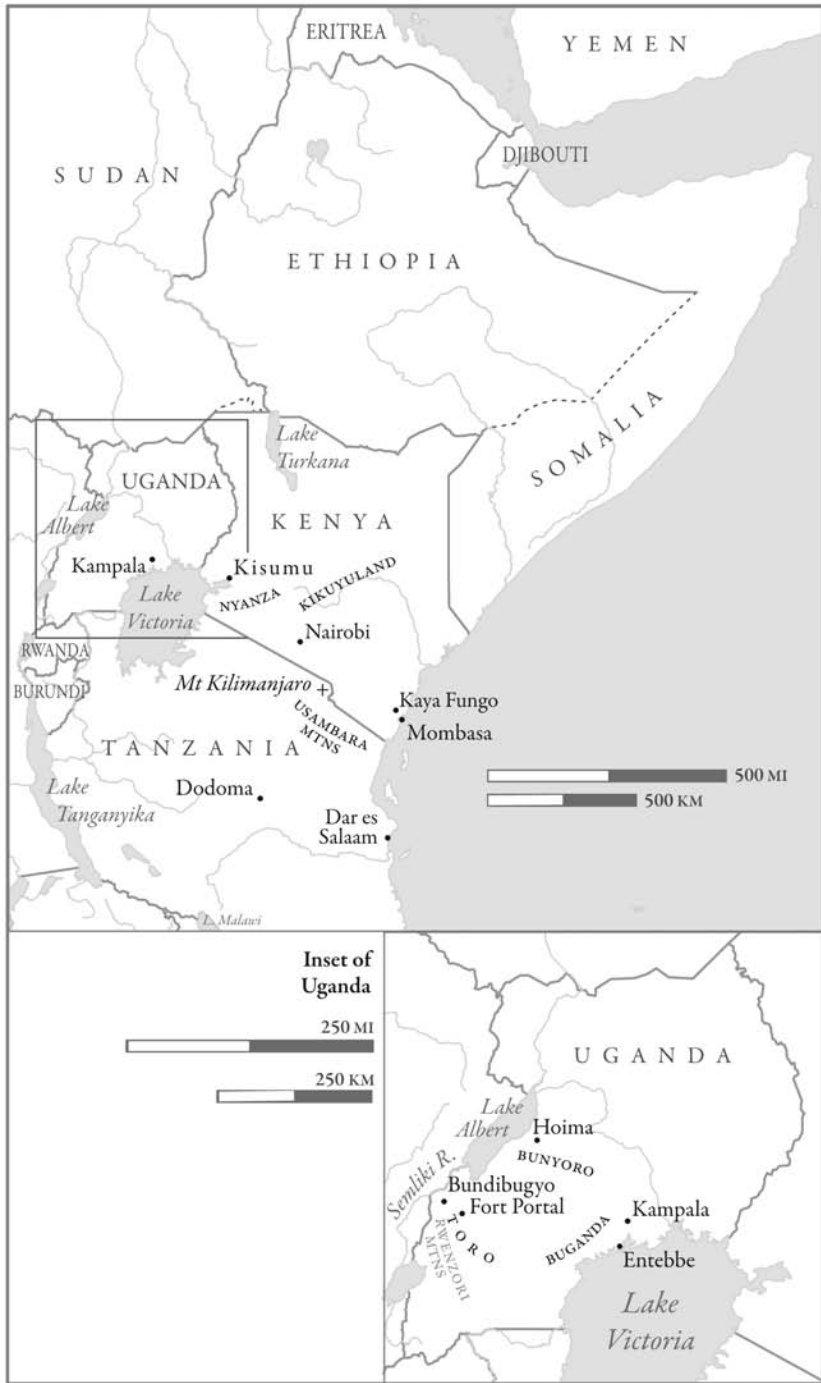
follow Wim van Binsbergen in calling this material “literate ethno-history.” For van Binsbergen, this scholarship is “a half-product, halfway between such traditions and reminiscences as operate within a strictly local frame of reference, on the one hand, and scholarly argument, on the other.”⁶⁰ In slotting ethnohistory halfway between the cosmopolitan scholarly world and the parochial locality, van Binsbergen makes African localities look parochial, and he obscures the dynamic play of argument in which historical writers participated.

We propose to call Petros Lamula, Akinyele, and other researchers “homespun historians.” *Homespun* is a term derived from the history of textiles. It refers to the clothing that people in colonial America and elsewhere created as a familial enterprise. In eighteenth-century America, wearers of homespun were republicans, antagonistic toward British capitalists’ manufactures.⁶¹ Calling this material homespun gives us a metaphor with which to highlight the active, creative work in which historical writers were engaged. It calls attention to the conditions under which writings of this genre were manufactured, not to the content or character of the works themselves. Calling this material homespun history illuminates the humble origins of the genre’s makers. Homespun historians did not work in universities, and they were not working to prefabricated academic patterns. Finally, the “homespun” designation allows the genre to breathe in a way that “ethnohistory” and “local history” do not. It allows us to think of Lamula and the Lumpa hymn writers as weavers, drawing together threads from the Bible, from oral research, from school textbooks, and from other sources. The variegated work they produced was of a novel character: it was an indigenous creation, woven out of threads of discourse that stretched into the distant past.

The essays collected in *Recasting the Past* study the warp and weft of homespun historical work. Contributors trace the strands of discourse from which historical entrepreneurs drew, foregrounding the sources of inspiration and reference that enlivened their work. But this book is more than a formalist analysis of a literary genre. We are interested in what texts did in African politics. We take history writing to be a mode of argumentation, a means by which entrepreneurs conjured up constituencies, claimed legitimate authority, and mobilized people around a cause. The histories that African political entrepreneurs wrote were interventions in a field of argument, not affirmations of an existing locality. By illuminating the spheres of debate in which Africa’s homespun scholars participated, this book seeks to reposition the practice of modern history.

THE WEAVE OF THE BOOK

By beginning the volume with a series of biographical studies, we aim to illuminate the contingent relationship between history writers and their imagined communities. Two of the historians under review—I. B. Akinyele and Petros Lamula—composed in vernacular languages that were being standardized at the time they



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wrote. But these authors were not simply writing for the “Zulu” or the “Yoruba.” They were not, that is, simply sources for professional historians to use. Akinyele, Lamula, Vilho Kaulinge, and Harry Nkumbula were doing cultural and political work in their scholarship. They were summoning new audiences into existence, drawing together disparate strands of discourse, and convening new kinds of communities. These authors have to be understood as strategists, with particular goals, inhabiting a polemical world where others were arguing against them.

The book begins with Karin Barber’s essay on print culture in Yorubaland. The poets, singers, and storytellers who populated nineteenth-century Ibadan did not address themselves to an undifferentiated audience. *Itan* were narratives performed by male specialists. They aligned events end to end, describing the development of a given city-state or the biography of a great man. By contrast, *oriki*, performed by women, were epithets, nicknames, or descriptions of personalities. In *itan*, history flowed uninterrupted from past to future, but in *oriki*, it piled up at the feet of the storytellers’ subjects.⁶² Historical knowledge was segmented, and Yoruba people had differential access to information about the past. What was new about the printed historical work of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, argues Barber, was that it brought together, inside a book’s covers, different modes of historical reckoning. Texts such as Akinyele’s 1911 *Iwe Itan Ibadan* were actively convening new reading communities by gathering up “dispersed, segregated, differentially-understood strands of memory” and placing them side by side. Written in the print language standardized as Yoruba, Akinyele’s work helped to create communities to whom “Yoruba” or “Ibadan” history could be addressed.

But not every book finds a readership, and not every political entrepreneur commands a constituency. Paul la Hausse’s chapter on “The War of the Books” traces the dramatic trajectory of the Zulu intellectual Petros Lamula’s splendidly entitled *UZulukamalandela: A Most Practical and Concise Compendium of African History Combined with Genealogy, Chronology, Geography and Biography*. Lamula’s book was a compendium of history, theology, and biography. In its politics, *UZulukamalandela* was radical: it cast the Zulu as the children of Israel, awaiting deliverance from white overlords’ oppression. Lamula’s book was vehemently rejected by both Natal’s white authorities and by moderate Zulu intellectuals such as John Dube, who put their own, rival versions of the Zulu past into print. *UZulukamalandela* was a casualty of this war between competing political projects, for it rapidly (though never completely) disappeared from public view. The trajectory of Lamula’s book lets us see history writing as a contentious undertaking, an intervention in an argument, not a summation of a story already completed.

In their historical writing, both Akinyele and Lamula sought to draw their divided people together around a common account of the past. The Reverend



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Vilho Kaulinge, whom Patricia Hayes discusses in her chapter, never wrote his historical narratives down: the published work that bears his name is Hayes's transcription of the interviews Kaulinge offered her in 1989.⁶³ But like I. B. Akinyele and Petros Lamula, Kaulinge used his historical narratives to guide his people. The stories he told from his church's pulpit organized the past in an epochal fashion, contrasting the disciplined, orderly reign of the late nineteenth-century king Mandume with the rapacious, antisocial greed of his immediate predecessors. Hayes argues that Kaulinge's story made sense at a time when the new nation of Namibia was itself making history. In stories about Mandume, argues Hayes, Kaulinge and his contemporaries learned



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“what needed to be done, in order to bring peace to the land.” The Zambian nationalist Harry Nkumbula, by contrast, found in the history of his Ila people a portrait of moral and political degradation. As Giacomo Macola argues in his chapter entitled “Imagining the Nation,” Nkumbula was, in the interwar years, committed to a liberal, nationalist project. His “Life and Customs of the Baila” was meant to teach a Zambian public about the perils of ethnic organization, so as to channel their political energy toward wider, territorial institutions. It was only in the early 1950s, after some unfruitful years spent in London, that Nkumbula revised his views of the Ila. Seeking to consolidate his local power base, Nkumbula valorized his people’s past and cast himself as the spokesman for their political interests. Nkumbula’s trajectory, argues Macola, lets us see how, by rewriting their work, Africa’s homespun historians repositioned themselves in relation to the people they represented.

Africa’s homespun historians were working laterally, composing history while also working on a variety of religious and political projects. By adopting a biographical approach, Barber, la Hausse, Hayes, and Macola are able to locate history writing alongside the other endeavors in which these scholars were involved. These men were not simply channeling an existing community’s political history. Their relationship with their constituencies was contingent: not all of them got a readership, and they themselves changed positions over time. The study of Africa’s history needs biographies of its creators. It needs, that is, to account for the shifting relationship between the composers of Africa’s history and their imagined communities.

Whereas the essays collected in the book’s first section highlight the lateral movements that homespun historians made in their own time and place, the book’s second part, “Historical Entanglements,” takes a longitudinal approach.

Homespun scholars drew on a variety of threads—anthropological thought, travel literature, legal discourse, and other resources—in composing their scholarship. Theirs were not only local histories. These homespun scholars did research, and they positioned their work in relation to existing strands of scholarly discourse. The chapters bundled together in part two trace African scholars’ sources of inspiration over the *longue durée*.

For Africa’s historians, the “colonial library” was close at hand. They thumbed through ethnographies and law books and found therein guidance with which to conduct their own reconstructions of the past. Richard Rathbone’s chapter, “Law, Politics, and Inference,” shows how two Gold Coast intellectuals of the nineteenth century, John Mensah Sarbah and J. E. Casely Hayford, used the legal training they received in London to guide their historical writing on the Akan. In his 1903 book, Casely Hayford likened the king of Asante to a British chief magistrate, and Sarbah assured his readers that “customary law . . . [has] not altered to any extent up to the present day.” These historians emphasized the law-governed nature of their polity’s past, and thereby, they underlined Africans’ racial equality with Europeans. Chagga thinkers in northeastern Tanzania likewise found in the colonial oeuvre evidence with which to conduct their own investigations into the past. As Emma Hunter shows in her chapter, Chagga authors drew, purposefully and selectively, on different threads of European anthropology in pursuit of particular political aims. Partisans of the mountain’s newly created chiefs were pulled toward Charles Dundas’s works—in which chieftainship was presented as the natural offshoot of earlier, clan-based principles of social organization—but republicans found a more useful precedent in Bruno Gutmann, whose scholarly work highlighted the limited extent of chiefly powers. Like Casely Hayford and John Mensah Sarbah, the partisans of Chagga politics were reading European scholars’ work and using the precedents they found to configure their accounts of the past.

Their range of scholarly reference could be astonishingly wide. Tom McCaskie’s chapter shows how European scholars’ fascination with the Asante kingdom’s alleged Egyptian roots helped Asante elites buttress their polity’s hierarchy. The first author to link the Asante kings with the pharaohs of old was Thomas Bowdich, whose 1821 book argued that the kingdom’s ruling class had once migrated, as a conquering race, from Egypt. In 1937, the newly crowned Asantehene Prempeh II began writing his history of the Asante kingdom. He had at his elbow a 1930 ethnography of Asante, written by a admirer of Bowdich’s book. In his account, the Asantehene argued that the Asante kings had come from ancient Egypt. His account of origins was useful because it helped to create a natural order for Asante politics, an order that presupposed the elites’ right to command commoners’ obedience.

Homespun history had to be more than local history. John Mensah Sarbah and J. E. Casely Hayford inhabited an Atlantic world in which it was necessary to compare Akan institutions with the British magistracy. Prempeh was positioning himself outside the Asante polity, laying claim to an unimpeachable source of political authority and thereby getting traction within local politics. Chagga kingmakers found inspiration from European anthropological works. These thinkers were not claiming a singular place in the world. Homespun historians had to connect their people with ancient Egypt, the British magistracy, and other hierarchies because they needed to capture the attention and respect of colonial officialdom. Confronted with their anonymous, voiceless status as subjects of authoritarian governments, political thinkers ransacked the library and found therein evidence by which to illuminate their people's creditable past. Their historical research positioned them alongside their European rulers, as cosharers of an intellectual and political tradition.

Africa's homespun historians continued writing in the 1960s as colonial states gave way to African-run governments, for independent African states practiced their own forms of exclusion. Nationalists summoned people enclosed within their borders to be constituents of a territorial polity. In Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah's government sought to meld the Asante state into the larger national polity.⁶⁴ In Tanzania, Julius Nyerere sapped local patriotisms by imposing a program of nation building on his disparate people.⁶⁵ But not everyone would willingly conform his or her political imagination to the template of territorial nationalism. As David Gordon and Derek Peterson show in the volume's third part, dissidents in Uganda and in Zambia wrote history in order to distinguish their people from what they saw as the anonymous, oppressed citizenry of postcolonial nations. Their historical research valorized their people's unique cultural patrimony and established the grounds for dissident political action.

Peterson's chapter on "States of Mind" explores the cultural and political work by which the ethnic minorities living in western Uganda's Rwenzori Mountains carved an independent state out of the neotraditional kingdom of Toro and out of the independent state of Uganda itself. The mountains' inhabitants had, in the late nineteenth century, been made subjects of the Toro king, backed by British force of arms. In the late 1950s, historian Isaya Mukirane found that the mountains' people had, in former times, acknowledged their own, sovereign king. Mukirane's history distinguished his people's political identity from the Toro monarchy. But history alone did not create a separate state in the mountains. Partisans of what Mukirane called the "Rwenzururu Kingdom" created a governmental bureaucracy, promoted an official language, and consolidated a national church. Their state-building project turned Rwenzururu into both a state of mind and a lived reality, whose right to recognition is hotly debated in present-day Uganda.

The architects of Rwenzururu stubbornly refused to march to the drumbeat of territorial nationalism. As David Gordon's chapter shows, so did the Zambian followers of the prophetess Alice Lenshina Mulenga. But whereas the alternative sovereignty imagined by Rwenzururu partisans revolved around a revitalized monarchy, Lenshina's followers challenged the hegemony of nationalist discourse by representing themselves as a "community of suffering." In the summer of 1964, Lenshina's church was brutally repressed by the Zambian government of Kenneth Kaunda. Lenshina's followers went into a long, arduous exile in the Congo, an experience that they memorialized in hymns, scriptures, and other inspirational literature. Gordon's essay shows that this self-generated historiography energized a form of identity that was neither ethnic nor geographic. Their textual culture led them to see themselves as pilgrims, set upon a pathway leading out of Zambia toward a heavenly realm.

Rwenzururu's partisans, like Lenshina's followers, were dissidents because they would not cast themselves as actors in the historical narrative of national independence. They knew that nation builders have to embrace a teleological version of the past. Nationalists have, that is, to describe how parochial antagonisms were resolved, how a national community came into existence, in order to orient citizens' political imaginations.⁶⁶ The chapters collected in this book's fourth part analyze the genealogies of national history in greater depth. In Senegal, as in Kenya and other eastern African polities, how people think about their government owes a great deal to how they remember their history. In reconstructing history, nation builders and dissidents alike find evidence of how social groups ought to relate to one another, how political leaders ought to behave, and how far citizens ought to obey leaders' direction. History writing is a critical forum of democratic argument: it can enable dissenting subnationalisms, and it can validate larger, national communities.

Etienne Smith's essay links the production of homespun historical work in contemporary Senegal to the promotion of national culture. Patriotic amateurs have created a corpus of literature illuminating the informal, affectionate "joking relationships" that unified their country's diverse ethnic groups. Smith argues that the production of this unifying historical literature was driven by national leaders' worries over the Casamance conflict of the 1980s.⁶⁷ Confronted with the specter of Joola ethnic separatism, Leopold Senghor's government, allied with a cadre of enthusiastic amateurs, promoted scholarly work that emphasized the bonds that drew Senegalese ethnicities together. In writing history, Senegalese thinkers have discovered relationships of trust that extend over local boundaries. Their work makes the secessionist *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance* look illegitimate.

In Senegal, nationalists have created a unifying vision of the past, premised on the integrity of the Senegalese territory. In contemporary Kenya, by contrast, patriotic thought has very often focused on subnational identities. Kenya's people

have organized themselves into communities of advocacy, into “tribes,” in order to capture patronage and official attention from the government’s gatekeepers in Nairobi.⁶⁸ Justin Willis’s chapter illuminates how one tribe, the Mijikenda, have debated the nature of their political community by arguing about the *kayas* (sacred groves) that are said to be essential to their identity. In 1997, the Mijikenda found a king in parliamentarian Emmanuel Maitha, who claimed to have been crowned in the most important of the Mijikenda *kayas*. Around Maitha, there developed a discourse that emphasized the homogeneity of Mijikenda identity. But at the same time, international donors’ interest in preserving the *kayas* encouraged Mijikenda people to remember a parochial past, in which families and clans had developed particular and exclusive relationships with their landscape. In their discourses over the *kayas*, argues Willis, Mijikenda were also debating the nature of the relationship they shared among themselves.

Patriotic historians’ work has always been open to argument, for, as John Lonsdale has argued, Africa’s *patria*e are arenas of debate, not solid, internally homogeneous entities.⁶⁹ A singular, coherent narrative undergirds much of Africa’s homespun historical work, in Rwenzururu and Asante as much as in Emmanuel Maita’s account of Mijikenda history. But this narrative of self-becoming stands in tension with the diverse forms of self-advancement that Africans pursue. The independent actors of Africa’s low politics would not always acknowledge that they shared a common trajectory with the unitary people historians sought to conjure up in their writing. Self-confident women sought out profits in Africa’s cities and cast their male compatriots into disrepute. Young people thought themselves to be cosmopolitans and denigrated the conservative wisdom that history taught them. Africa’s historians used a variety of writing strategies to transform independent agents into pliable constituents. Akinyele’s *Iwe Itan Ibadan* drew hitherto contending literary genres together on the page and thereby convened a Yoruba reading public. Prempeh II, Isaya Mukirane, and Emmanuel Maitha emphasized the kingly nature of their people’s past and thereby called their readers to obey. The Tanganyikan historian Matthias Mnyampala helped to marshal up a republican Gogo people by describing, in his 1954 book, how disparate clans had come to central Tanganyika and made themselves Gogo.⁷⁰ All of these historians knew the past was more complicated than they could admit. They had to be essentialist about their people’s history in order to suppress dissidents and command a hearing.

Students of homespun history must therefore look away from the pages that African entrepreneurs composed to see how their texts played in the political arena. These texts were interventions in a field of argument, not summations of a past that was already finished. A scholarship that takes homespun history as its subject matter must be a history of a given text’s life in the world. Paul Ngologozo’s book on the history of Kigezi, in southern Uganda, was first published in the

Lukiga language in 1965.⁷¹ Ngologoza was one of southern Uganda's first chiefs, governing a people who had, in the nineteenth century, refused to bow to the king of Rwanda. His book sketched the lineages of Kigezi's chiefs, linking them to heroes of olden times. What Ngologoza did not describe were the loud words of recrimination that echoed in his ear as he wrote. During the 1940s, a group of female converts of the East African Revival encamped outside Ngologoza's door. The British district commissioner reported in 1942 that revivalists "engage in abusive attacks on chiefs and attack their moral character in public, in church and in law courts."⁷² Ngologoza gave his reply to the noisy revivalists in his book. On its pages, he conjured up the mannered, obedient populace that he hoped to create in reality. When Ngologoza was named the first Secretary General of the Kigezi Native Administration in 1946, he used his position to reform customary law, to empower husbands over wives and fathers over daughters, and to make chiefs' authority more extensive than it ever had been before.

Like the thinkers John Lonsdale describes in his concluding chapter—like Petros Lamula, Emmanuel Maitha, and Isaya Mukirane—Paul Ngologoza knew that any patriotism had to be grounded within a historical narrative of self-becoming. Like Lamula's history of the Zulu, Ngologoza's book only makes sense as an intervention in a discourse where other entrepreneurs are holding up contending models of political community and contending avenues of individual agency. Studying homespun historical work requires a wide angle of vision. Scholars of homespun history cannot content themselves by adding a designated wing to the archive. They must move outside the archive's walls and engage with a world where Africans are sorting through, mulling over, and representing their pasts.

Recasting the Past cannot be a celebration of an authentically African perspective on history. Akinyele, Mukirane, Ngologoza, and the other homespun scholars were not spokesmen for an existing community. Their representations of the past were partial and self-interested, meant to corral independent women and other dissidents, forge novel forms of authority, and chasten recalcitrants. Africa's political sphere was a theater of examination, in which the leaders of contending communities vied for respect from government administrators and their judgmental neighbors. Homespun history was composed along the continent's frontiers of comparison. In writing about the past, polity builders measured their people's accomplishments against those of their neighbors, and sought to anchor independent women, urbanites, and other mobile people as members of a foreordained political community. By illuminating the conventions of the past, they set their contemporary constituents on a path toward a particular future. Some people chose alternate paths. Patriots called them dissidents, harlots, or vagrants, deviants all. Homespun historians were the drill sergeants mustering up Africa's political communities.

NOTES

1. Philip Curtin, "The Archives of Tropical Africa: A Reconnaissance," *Journal of African History* 1 (1960): 129–47.
2. Roland Oliver, "African History: SOAS and Beyond," in *The Emergence of African History at British Universities*, ed. A. Kirk-Greene (Oxford: Worldview Publications, 1995), 22–23.
3. Kenneth Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956); for Dike's archival work, see Simon Heap, "The Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan," *History in Africa* 18 (1991): 159–72.
4. John Hunwick, *Arabic Literature of Africa: Project and Publication*, Program of African Studies Working Paper no. 13 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University African Studies Center, 2005).
5. John Rowe, "Eyewitness Accounts of Buganda History: The Memoirs of Ham Mukasa and His Generation," *Ethnohistory* 36 (1989): 61–71.
6. Further information is available at the project's website, www.aluka.org.
7. Allen Isaacman, Premesh Lalu, and Thomas Nygren, "Digitization, History, and the Making of a Post-colonial Archive of Southern African Liberation Struggles: The Aluka Project," *Africa Today* 52 (2005): 54–77.
8. John Acton, *A Lecture on the Study of History* (London: Macmillan, 1896).
9. Geoffrey Elton, *The Practice of History* (London: Fontana, 1967), 101. Elton's most immediate interlocutor was his colleague E. H. Carr, whose *What Is History?* (London: Macmillan, 1961) argued that historians' private agendas inevitably intruded on their scholarly work.
10. Jan Vansina, *De la tradition orale* (Tervuren, Belgium: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, 1961); English translation by H. Wright, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1965). See also Joseph Miller, ed., *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Traditions and History* (Folkestone, UK: Wm. Dawson, 1980). For successive refinements of Vansina's method, compare, e.g., his *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966) with his later *The Children of Woot: A History of the Kuba Peoples* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) and with J. C. Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen: Early Mbundu States in Angola* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).
11. D. P. Henige, "The Problem of Feedback in Oral Tradition: Four Examples from the Fante Coastlands," *Journal of African History* 14 (1973): 223–35. See also D. Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition: Quest for a Chimera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 95–117, and, for a counterexample, Justin Willis, "Feedback as a 'Problem' in Oral History: An Example from Bonde," *History in Africa* 20 (1993): 353–60.
12. A. D. Roberts, *A History of the Bemba: Political Growth and Change in North-Eastern Zambia before 1900* (London: Longman, 1973), 10–11. Mushindo's *Short History of the Bemba*, which Roberts consulted in draft form, was first published in Lusaka in 1977.
13. In the 1990s, an average of 3.2 percent of new posts advertised in the American Historical Association's trade journal, *Perspectives*, were targeted toward African history, but since 2000, African history posts have comprised 4.5 percent of the job listings.
14. Lyn Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001). See also Helen Tilley, *Ordering Africa: Anthropology, European Imperialism, and the Politics of Knowledge* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007).

15. B. A. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo: Migration and Settlement* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967); I. N. Kimambo, *A Political History of the Pare of Tanzania* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969); Dike, *Trade and Politics*. Dike's biography is given in Ebere Nwaubani, "Kenneth Onwuka Dike, 'Trade and Politics,' and the Restoration of the African in History," *History in Africa* 27 (2000): 229–48.
16. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo*, 19.
17. Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780–1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964).
18. Recounted in Philip D. Curtin, *On the Fringes of History: A Memoir* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 122.
19. Jan Vansina was the exception here. Trained in anthropology and in history, he spent several years during the 1950s engaged in "participant observation" in Belgian central Africa. See Vansina, *Living with Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), chap. 4.
20. Roland Oliver, *In the Realms of Gold: Pioneering in African History* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 47–48.
21. Paul Mboya, *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi* (Kisumu, Kenya: Anyange Press, 1983 [1938]). In reading this work, I have relied on Jane Achieng, *Paul Mboya's Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi* (Nairobi: Atai Joint, 2001).
22. Bible Society Archives, University of Cambridge Library, BSA/E3/3/320/2, Minute, 5 November 1930.
23. Kenya National Archives (hereafter cited as KNA), DC Kakamega 2/1/99, F. Odede and N. Amura to P. C. Nyanza, 29 March 1945.
24. S. Malo, *Dhoudi mar Central Nyanza* (Nairobi: Eagle Press, 1953). See David William Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1989), 36.
25. KNA, PC Nyanza 3/1/376, Ramogi Association secretary to PC Nyanza, 11 January 1946.
26. KNA, DC Kakamega 2/1/99, General Secretary, Luo Union, to superintendent of police, 9 September 1955.
27. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo*, 25.
28. Cristiana Pugliese, *Author, Publisher, and Gikuyu Nationalist: The Life and Writings of Gakaara wa Wanjau* (Nairobi: IFRA, 1995).
29. Karin Barber, "Introduction," in *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, ed. Karin Barber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006): 1–24.
30. Sean Hawkins, *Writing and Colonialism in Northern Ghana* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
31. Derek Peterson, "Casting Characters: Autobiography and Political Imagination in Central Kenya," *Research in African Literatures* 37 (2006): 178–92.
32. Ruth Watson, "'What is our intelligence, our school going and our reading of books without getting money?' Akinpelu Obisesan and His Diary," in *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, ed. Karin Barber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 52–77.
33. Megan Vaughan, "Mr. Mdala Writes to the Governor: Negotiating Colonial Rule in Nyasaland," *History Workshop Journal* 60 (2005): 171–88.
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35. McCaskie is at present editing this text for publication.

36. K. W., “The Kings of Bunyoro-Kitara,” *Uganda Journal* 3 (1935): 155–60; *Uganda Journal* 4 (1936): 78–83; *Uganda Journal* 5 (1937): 53–69.

37. Justin Willis, “A Portrait for the *Mukama*: Monarchy and Empire in Colonial Bunyoro, Uganda,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34 (2006): 105–22.

38. Cf. David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin, 2001).

39. T. O. Beidelman, *Moral Imagination and Kaguru Modes of Thought* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1993), 69–70.

40. See John Lonsdale, “The Moral Economy of Mau Mau,” in Lonsdale and Bruce Berman, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (London: James Currey, 1992), 315–504.

41. Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), chap. 5.

42. Rwamishenye Archive, Bukoba, Tanzania, Box 18, “Rwamishenye” file, A. Godfred to District Commissioner, 12 November 1945.

43. Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam, Acc. 71/790 B, Buchard Kagaro and Sirdion Ndyeshobora to D.C. Bukoba, 8 September 1950.

44. Tanzania National Archives, Mwanza branch, Bukoba acc. A 6/B, Rugizibwa to secretary of the Bakama, 23 May 1957.

45. Kabarole District Archives, Fort Port, Uganda, “Repatriation of Africans” file, B. Bingaamo and S. Mugesu to District Commissioner, Fort Portal, 23 December 1955.

46. Kabarole District Archives, “Native Affairs” file, Mukama Rukidi to Governor, 11 September 1955.

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50. Stanley Kiama Gathigira, *Miikarire ya Agikuyu* (Nairobi: Scholars Publications, 1986 [1933]).

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53. Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

54. Vaughan, “Mr. Mdala,” 173.

55. Gregory Maddox with Ernest Kongola, *Practicing History in Central Tanzania: Writing, Memory, and Performance* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006), 26–27.

56. See, especially, J. D. Y. Peel, "The Cultural Work of Yoruba Ethnogenesis," in *History and Ethnicity*, ed. E. Tonkin, M. McDonald, and M. Chapman (London: Routledge, 1989), 198–215, and M. Twaddle, "On Ganda Historiography," *History in Africa* 1 (1974): 85–100. Most recently, see Maddox and Kongola, *Practicing History in Central Tanzania*; Carola Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2006); and Giacomo Macola, "The Historian Who Would Be Chief: A Biography of Simon Jilundu Chibanza III, 1899–1974," *Journal of African History* 45 (2004): 23–43.

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58. Axel Harnett-Sievers, ed., *A Place in the World: New Local Historiographies from Africa and South Asia* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2002).

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65. Kelly Askew, *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

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