EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

A Journal for Everyone

When you open this second issue of 2019 of the *African Studies Review*, or, as increasing numbers of our membership do, view it online, we hope that you will notice some exciting new features. Over the past few months changes have been accelerating, and we have launched a number of new accessibility enhancements, some of which have been months in the planning. Our overarching goal is to deliver a journal accessible to as many people as possible in African studies regardless of means, employment, or geographical location.

Two of the most important new enhancements are designed to include our francophone and lusophone colleagues. In consultation with our readers and our Editorial Review Board, we now have tri-lingual abstracts: English, French, *and now* Portuguese. Most of the articles in this issue, several from the previous issue, and all forthcoming articles now feature the additional enrichment of a Portuguese abstract. We encourage you to share with your colleagues and peers, and particularly with scholars working and living in Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola, and Mozambique. For some time now, all ASA members should have been receiving an electronic table of contents (ETOC) by email when a new issue is released. We have also begun digitally circulating the Table of Contents complete with abstracts, in both French and Portuguese. Look out for these on H-Africa [https://networks.h-net.org/h-africa] and on other platforms; please share, and share widely.

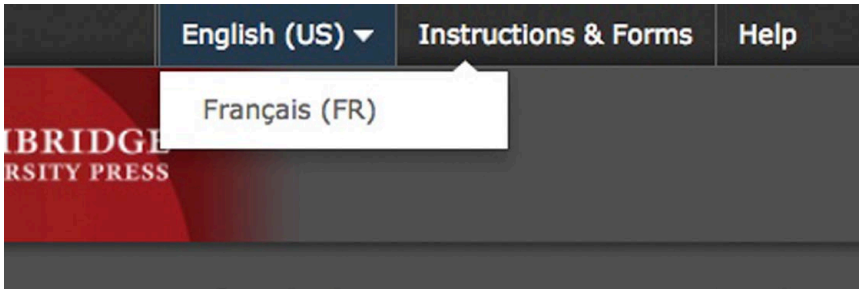
A second major development is the launch of our new French "toggle" (see Figure 1). Look up to the top right corner of our main webpage [https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/african-studies-review], and you will see English | Français. With this addition, you can switch between English and French! This functionality embedded into the Cambridge Core online journal platform enables francophone scholars to view much of the journal platform and all the headings in French. The goal here for us at the *ASR* is, again, greater accessibility. We want you, our francophone colleagues and members, to be able to search and find articles and reviews that interest you. We also want you to be able to submit articles in French and navigate the

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Figure 1. Users may now switch their interface with ScholarOne to French.



submission portal—ScholarOne—entirely in French. Did you know that we are now accepting articles in French? We are now officially a bilingual journal. The full capabilities of functionality will be rolling out over several months because of the generous investment of our publisher, Cambridge University Press. Please, again, share this news widely.

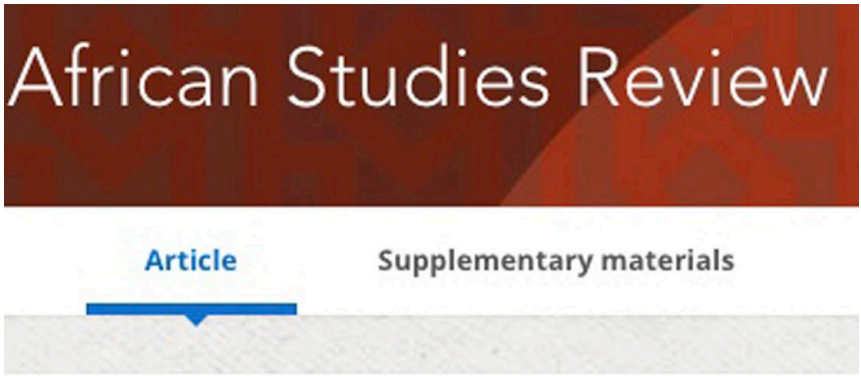
Enhancing accessibility is a key to the decolonization of knowledge production and dissemination, and that is why this issue is also a celebration. We are pleased to announce that our first group of digital access awardees received their notifications in April. You might recall that last year we launched a new program designed to increase the involvement of Africa-based scholars in the activities of the journal, particularly in reviewing articles and reviewing new publications. We are committed to playing an active role in dissolving the North-South resource/access/technology divide. With the support of our publisher, we have been able to award a six-month unlimited access pass to certain African studies journals as an incentive for first-time reviewers based on the African continent. Recently, the first twenty awardees [based in Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Senegal, and elsewhere] were provided with access keys. Armed with this, our peers can read and download as many articles as they desire. We hope our first cohort of awardees find this a rewarding experience, and we look forward to expanding the program. Please alert your peers!

The third major new improvement to the *ASR* is that we can now permanently host digital audio and video files to accompany and enhance the scholarly impact of articles we publish. Last issue we trialed this functionality with Joseph Hellweg's fascinating article [https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.142] about the hunting songs of the majority-Muslim Odienné region of Northwestern Côte d'Ivoire. Accompanying his article are six audio recordings he collected of hunting songs. If you are online, look immediately below the *African Studies Review* banner and you will see "Supplementary Materials" to the right of "Article" (see Figure 2). Click on these and download and listen.

Our renewed efforts to engage our readers by increasing accessibility are already showing positive results, as evidenced by escalating membership

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Figure 2. Several ASR articles have supplementary materials, giving readers more visual and audio engagement with the articles.



and participation in the journal and the Association. Online data reveals that we have experienced a noticeable increase in abstract views, article downloads, and social media sharing. Our new Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/AfricanStudiesReview/] is becoming an important vehicle for new publication announcements. If you "Like" our page, you will receive updates in your Facebook feed. All of these platforms ultimately increase the visibility and impact of your important research. With your continued engagement and helpful feedback, the flagship journal of the African Studies Association will continue to flourish.

It is with great pride that this issue opens with another set of astonishing original recordings of protest songs from post-apartheid South Africa, collected by Omotayo Jolaosho during her fieldwork. In "Singing Politics: Freedom Songs and Collective Protest in Post-Apartheid South Africa" [https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.16], Jolaosho examines the adaptation of anti-apartheid freedom songs in a new post-apartheid expressive context. Freedom songs are an effective mode for political expression because they are embodied. Read the article and then listen to the digital recordings to discern antiphony, repetition, and rhythm, all of which collide to foster collective action.

In the second article, "Private Security in Nairobi, Kenya: Securitized Landscapes, Crosscurrents, and New Forms of Sociality" [https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.53], Nathan Dobson explores the growing presence of private security guards in the East African capital. Guards maintain close ties with the communities they surveil, and in so doing they generate new valuations and obligations. Sociality, Dobson finds, flows from this idealized, securitized landscape.

The third article, by Jannik Schritt, investigates disputes and protests around the inauguration of Niger's first oil refinery. In "Well-Oiled Protest: Adding Fuel to Political Conflicts in Niger" [https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.19], Schritt tackles the resource curse literature. Because Niger's political

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realm was relatively well-structured when oil arrived on the scene, the new revenue stream sparked political conflicts rather than conflicts about oil. With the start of oil production "historically sedimented politics" erupted, upending social and political realities and reinforcing prevailing power relations.

The remainder of our issue is devoted to a forum on Bodily Practices and Aesthetic Rituals in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Africa. In her guest introduction [https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2019.22], Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoué argues for the importance of gender analysis as a key instrument with which to capture the ways in which aesthetic and bodily rituals operate as a primary space for the construction and performance of African femininities and womanhood. The forum takes us from veiling in Mauritania and post-childbirth ritual in the Sahel, via online communities in Sudan, to Nigerian beauty pageants and Cameroonian newspaper advice columns, in each location tracing connections between gender, aesthetics, and the body.

In the first article in the forum, Oluwakemi M. Balogun welcomes us into the fascinating world of Nigerian beauty pageants. In "Beauty and the Bikini: Embodied Respectability in Nigerian Beauty Pageants" [https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.125], we learn how the bikini embodies Nigerian symbolism and aesthetic practice insofar as observers and the public struggle with what amount of body reveal is appropriate. Bikinis have been a core element of pageantry worldwide, but ethnographic observations reveal how the personal, domestic, and international collide. Balogun demonstrates how "embodied respectability" can be parlayed to situate personal and national ideas of propriety, social acceptance, and reputation.

In "Sudanese Women's Groups on Facebook and #Civil_Disobedience: Nairat or Thairat? (Radiant or Revolutionary?)" [https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.146], Nada Mustafa Ali thrusts us into the contested realm of digital social media in contemporary Sudan. Just as activists use Facebook and Twitter globally to mobilize for political change, in Sudan, women-run closed groups circulate and debate the body and the body politic. Ali's digital ethnography locates everyday body aesthetics embedded in social and cultural narratives in Sudanese women's Facebook groups, some members of which engaged in civil disobedience.

Barbara M. Cooper's contribution to the forum, entitled "Traveling Companions: The Burial of the Placenta in Niger" [https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.17], offers a historical and contemporary perspective on post-birth rituals across a broad range of Sahelian ethnicities, status groups, and educational profiles. Based on interviews with midwives and midwifery ethnographies, she explores the sustained role of the "traveling companion" in safeguarding future female fertility. A history of placenta burial speaks to the ritual expertise of elderly birth attendants, how co-wife envy affects parturient life, and the importance of woman's therapy management groups.

In "The Materiality and Social Agency of the *Malaḥfa* (Mauritanian Veil)" [https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.83], anthropologist Katherine Ann Wiley

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examines the co-constitution of the malaḥfa, a popular veil in Mauritania, and the women who wear them. The form and fabric of the malaḥfa deliver "constraints and possibilities," according to Wiley. Women's agency enacted via the veil reveals social hierarchies, interpersonal relationship and control, and manifestations of power and authority.

Jacqueline-Bethel Mougoué's contribution concludes the forum. In "Over-Making *Nyanga:* Mastering 'Natural' Beauty and Disciplining Excessive Bodily Practices in Metropolitan Cameroon" [https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.110], Mougoué focuses on the ways in which Anglophone Cameroonian urban elites in the 1960s engaged with local and global conceptualizations of "natural" black beauty. Freelance journalists are one example of several categories of urban elites who have attempted to police bodily practices and regulate emotional expression with a view to defining beauty. The local idiom, *nyanga*, conveys complex ideas about beauty and style, illustrating the fluidity and mutability of gendered framings of modernity and progress in post-independence Cameroon.

This issue features a superb selection of film and book reviews, all online, and entirely free to access. As a further enhancement, at the end of each review our Book Editor team makes suggestions about further reading from our recent publications and archive of articles. All the original scholarly articles appearing in this issue originated under the previous editorial leadership of Sean Redding and Elliot Fratkin, and we thank them for their continued engagement with the journal's activities.

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