

FONTES HISTORIAE AFRICANAE
A GUIDE FOR SCHOLARS SUBMITTING PROPOSALS AND FOR
EDITORS

Fontes Historiae Africanae is an international publication project initiated in 1962 by Professor Ivan Hrbek and under the control of Commission XXII of the Union Académique Internationale. Its object is, "To sponsor the preparation of critical editions and, when desirable, translations, or the written sources for the history of sub-Saharan Africa in the pre-colonial period". Works are published in four series, Series Arabica, Series Aethiopica, Series Varia and Subsidia Bibliographica. The Commission operates through national committees appointed by the academics belonging to the Union. The committees sponsor suitable works and recommend them to their academies for publication. So far committees have been constituted in Denmark, Ghana, Great Britain, Israel and Norway. There is an International Director who reports annually to the Commission.

This Guide is intended for scholars making proposals to the British Committee and for editors of volumes accepted by it. Inquiries arising from this Guide should be addressed to the Chairman of the Committee, c/o The British Academy, 20-21 Cornwall Terrace, London NW1 4QP.

Texts eligible for consideration

Only texts of significance for the history of sub-Saharan Africa, or some part of it, can be considered, but texts extracted from works of wider scope can be considered. They may be narratives, descriptions, or archival documents, and must be appropriately edited. Preference is naturally given to texts which are, for whatever reason, not suitable for inclusion in other publishing projects. Whether the text is in English or another language, the introduction and scholarly apparatus must be in English. Normally, texts in other languages will be translated or presented in the original language with a parallel translation.

The British Committee will consider only material which is either unpublished, has been published unsatisfactorily, or which is available only in a form which renders it inaccessible to most interested scholars, e.g. because of the extreme rarity of the edition, or because of the

language in which it is written. This will exclude texts that have been published in English or in a well-known European language.

Procedure for submitting a proposal

If the scholar has not yet begun work on the edition he intends to propose he should send a brief (i.e. not more than one sheet of A4) statement of the proposal to the chairman. It may be possible to give an immediate response or to invite the applicant to discuss the matter with a member of the Committee.

If the proposer decides to proceed, or if he has already begun work on his edition, the Committee will require a more detailed statement, giving details of the character and length of the text, the intended treatment, the approximate length of the introduction and of the whole work, what maps and illustrations are envisaged, and a provisional date for completion. This should be accompanied by a sample of the edition, say, one chapter or some 20 pages, containing text and full apparatus. The Committee will ask a referee to report on this and will probably be able to take a decision at its next meeting. (It meets twice a year, normally in March and September.)

If the Committee approves the application it will submit particulars to the Publications Committee of the Academy, which may be able to offer advice on publication problems, may accept the title as a commitment, and, where appropriate, may issue a contract to the editor. When the work has been completed to the satisfaction of the *Fontes Historiae Africanae* Committee it will be passed to the Publications Committee for publication in the appropriate series.

Principles of editing

The usual rules of scholarly editing are applicable. All recensions of a text should be examined and notes, and all significant variants in the text recorded. For printed texts the *editio princeps*, or the latest edition revised by the author should normally be used as the basis for the F.H.A. edition.

The translation should be in readable modern English. Peculiarities in the style of the original should be explained in the Introduction; and obscure passages should if possible be presented in a probable meaning in the text and discussed in the apparatus.

The Introduction should inform the reader about the writer, his work and the historical context. It should not constitute an original study of the period. Digressions on side-issues are to be published

separately elsewhere. Lengthy comments on particular points will sometimes be best presented in appendices. When the writer or the historical context is well-known, reference can be made to standard works to save space. The reader should be hurried along in anticipation of the text. Factual detail useful to the reader while studying the text can often be helpfully presented in a table, e.g. chronological or genealogical tables, or itineraries.

The amount of annotation – useful, often essential, but never self-indulgent – must be left largely to the editor's discretion and will inevitably vary from one work to another. In general, all points that may puzzle the non-specialist reader, or that will be more meaningful to him if he has additional information, should be annotated. This may well include all foreign terms, toponyms, ethnonyms and personal names. Wherever possible notes should be combined.

Details of editing

Typescripts should be submitted on A4 paper with double spacing and ample margins. The Publications Committee is very happy to receive material on disk with accompanying print-out.

A full bibliography must be included, with comprehensive particulars of any manuscript sources. In each chapter or section the first reference to a source should supply a short title, e.g. A.J. Smith, *History of Gambia*, 1950, later references in the same chapter being further abbreviated, preferable in the form Smith, 1950. Op. cit., loc. cit., etc. should only be used when strictly correct.

Page references should be given as numbers only, e.g. Smith, 1950 97, 99. Volume number should be given in upper case Roman, e.g. Smith, 1950, II; 97. Exceptionally reference may have to be given differently, e.g. Purchas. 1625, pt. I, lib ii, p. 97.

Editors may find the latest editions of the following works useful:

The Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors, O.U.P.

Hart's rules for Compositors and Readers, O.U.P.

Proofs

There are normally two stages of proofs. Printer's errors should be marked in red ink, and all other corrections in blue or black. The completion of a cross-reference in a proof counts as an author's correction, and these should be therefore be kept within reasonable limits in the typescript. Author's corrections at proof stage are extremely expensive. *The typescript as it is submitted for press should*

be in its final form, and only corrections of spelling or of facts that will mislead readers should be made to the proofs. Any improvements to the text may be disallowed or charged for.

The British Committee
Fontes Historiae Africanæ