The result, almost inevitably, is a more cautious and down-to-earth approach to African history than we have grown accustomed to in recent years.

There are strong arguments in favour of team editing; some partnerships have produced impressive results (e.g. Thilmans & Moraes, Becker & Martin, Cordeur & Saunders, Teixeira da Mota & Hair, Fisher & Fisher, Forbes & Rourke, Hentze & Mendes, Beckingham & Huntingford), as have some larger teams (see, for example, List A: BRUNSCHWIG 1966, COQUERY-VIDROITCH 1969, EVANS ET AL. 1969). Team editing is certainly desirable when dealing with texts which cover a wide geographical area or contain material belonging to several disciplines (zoological, anthropological, linguistic, cartographic...). But my own experience is that unless there is a rigid division of labour, those who believe that joint undertakings can lighten the burden may well be under an illusion. No two scholars, if they approach their task conscientiously, will translate a given sentence in the same way; nor are they likely to agree on what should be in the footnotes. Too many cooks may easily spoil the broth.

6. CONCLUSION

As I have acknowledged above, my lists remain very incomplete and rather arbitrary. Nevertheless, they do show the enormous qualitative differences there have been in the editing of written sources for African history. In my own area of specialisation, West Africa, there are half a dozen scholars whose work I find it a pleasure to read, comparable with the pleasure given by a skilled cook's masterpiece; and I would urge anyone who contemplates preparing an edition to look at their work before embarking. (46) On the other hand, I can think of a multitude of instances where the chance to produce a really scholarly edition or commentary has been at least partly missed. Only a handful of the editions I have listed are likely to prove adequate for long; the majority have clearly failed to anticipate the demands which future generations will pose. (47) Some would argue that almost any new edition is better than none, (48) and that lengthy footnotes and detailed indexes provide no more than icing on the cake. In my view, however, such things are more than a pleasant luxury. The progress of African historiography will depend to a large extent on how often we pause to chew on the value of the written sources we so happily gulp down.

46. These include Bovill, Delcourt, Fisher, Hair, Teixeira da Mota and the two Senegal partnerships (Thilmans-Moraes, Becker-Martin).

47. Even the skilled annotation provided at the beginning of this century by scholars such as Ravenstein and Naber is now largely out of date with regard to Africanist information, although in other respects it has stood the test of time fairly well.

48. This appears to be the attitude of many reviewers, who give potential readers only the barest information on the sort of editorial apparatus offered in a new edition.