

Map 2.6

Abuja, Dodoma, and Yamassoukro are the new legal capitals of Nigeria, Tanzania, and Côte d'Ivoire, respectively; but most government activities continue to be conducted and foreign embassies maintained in the traditional capital cities, Lagos and Abidjan. The official capital of Tanzania is still Dar es Salaam, but some governmental offices have been moved to Dodoma, which is planned as the eventual capital city; the National Assembly now meets there on a regular basis. U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, 1999 (online at <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/concopy.html>).



The Historical Context

Thomas O'Toole

As was made clear in the previous chapter, Africa is a huge and geographically diverse continent more than three times as large as the United States and several times larger than Europe. The continent's physical size, the scale of its human mosaic, and its geological and biological diversity defy both generalization and full coverage. In this chapter, I focus on the history of Africa south of the Sahara, though for thousands of years contacts between Mediterranean Africa and sub-Saharan Africa have been extensive. Because the histories of sub-Saharan Africa are distinctive in many ways from those of northern Africa, they warrant separate treatments (in the same way that South Asia and Southeast Asia are studied separately from other areas of the Asian continent). I have rather arbitrarily separated eastern, central, and western Africa as foci in this chapter. In the south of Africa, I have set the Limpopo River as the limit (see Map 2.1), since South Africa is covered in depth in Chapter 13.

I have also set some pragmatic limits on the time focus of this chapter. I begin about 400,000 years ago, because our species, *Homo sapiens*, is definitely present on the continent by then (Iliffe, 1995:8). I conclude the chapter with the end of colonialism, since the postindependence period is discussed thematically by other scholars in the remaining chapters of the book.

In this chapter, I present a general historical background on Africa to help readers better understand the issues treated in subsequent chapters. Many present-day conflicts and problems in Africa stem from economic, environmental, political, and social changes associated with the establishment of European colonial rule. However, as important as colonialism is, patterns and identities established over the millennia of precolonial African history influenced the colonial experience and continue to be a powerful force shaping postcolonial Africa. To see Africa in its historical context is to grasp the complexity of the continent and to appreciate the ingenuity

and dynamism of its people as they respond to the challenges posed by history. Clearly, while Africans created and continue to create their own history, they still exist under conditions that, in many cases, they do not control.

■ THE PEOPLING OF AFRICA

■ The Cradle of Humankind

The African savannas of mixed grasslands and scattered trees, which developed as part of a worldwide cooling and drying trend about 4 to 6 million years ago, are the ancestral homeland of all humankind. The tool-making and fire-using genus *Homo habilis* emerged on these savannas more than 2 million years ago. At that time, the earliest forms of stone tool—using members of the genus *Homo*, to which all humans belong, were using cultural adaptations to adjust to growing savanna and shrinking forest environments. Living in small cooperative groups, maybe even family groups, they foraged the savannas for plant food and small animals, and they occasionally fed on the carcasses of large animals killed by predators. By at least 1.7 million years ago, a hominid, called *Homo erectus*, appeared in eastern and southern Africa. This species spread to northern Africa and beyond into Eurasia.

Very early fossils of *Homo sapiens* have been found in Tanzania and Ethiopia. By about 200,000 years ago, *Homo sapiens* populations existed widely in Africa and gradually spread out to other parts of the world. These peoples had begun to develop regionally specialized cultural complexes and to use sophisticated stone tools. By about that time, groups of intensive fishing and hunting peoples were concentrated along the Nile. From approximately 18,000 years ago, these groups of people in the Nile Valley were collecting large numbers of tubers and, by 15,000 years ago, large quantities of wild cereals (Schick, 1995:63). By 10,000 years ago, two distinct gathering and hunting cultures were emerging on the southern border of the Mediterranean basin and in the savanna regions of eastern and southern Africa, with only slightly different adaptations to their savanna habitats. A third cultural complex adapting to the tropical forest environment probably was also evolving on the eastern and southern fringes of the central African forests.

Some scholars identify, in a general way, three major linguistic groups in Africa with these three cultural complexes, which had been established by about 12,000 years ago. The Mediterranean cultural complex can be associated with the Afro-Asiatic language family, while the eastern and southern savanna cultures generally correspond to the Khoisan (“click”) language family. The tropical rainforest cultural complexes can be linked

to the Niger-Congo family. A fourth major linguistic group, the Nil-Saharan, can probably be associated with another cultural complex, highly adapted to fishing, which flourished in the entire central, south-central, and southeastern Sahara between 4,000 and 7,500 years ago, when the Sahara received far more rainfall than it does now (Ki-Zerbo, 1990:89–121).

■ Gathering and Hunting

In general, Africans, like all other humans, made their living by gathering and hunting until about 7,000 years ago, when increasing populations and the climatic shift, which would ultimately create the Sahara Desert, made food cultivation and animal herding necessary. Archaeological evidence and comparisons with surviving gathering and hunting peoples indicate that African gatherers and hunters adapted their tools and ways of life to three basic African environments: the moist tropical rainforests with hardwoods and small game; the more open savannas with a diversity of large game living in grasslands, woods, and gallery forests along the rivers; and riverbank and lakeside ecologies found along major water courses or around lakes and ponds.

I must point out, though, that rainforest, savanna, and waterside habitats differed greatly from place to place, and the societies found in them differed more among themselves and were far more complex than this general overview might imply. I could easily devote a whole chapter to pointing out, in each habitat, some differences in ways and styles of life that were the products of ceaseless change over millennia. The political, social, and economic histories of each specific society, along with its history of ideas, values, and ideology, could fill whole volumes. With such diversity it is obvious that savanna dwellers, rainforest dwellers, and people in water-focused societies were not so perfectly adapted to a single environment as to be incapable of leaving one for the other. These three environmental niches are simply explanatory categories. In the real world, environments merge gradually into others, as do the societies living within them.

Despite the myriad of habitats and diversity among their inhabitants, as well as the internal differences that existed within these habitats, it still makes sense to generalize about rainforest societies. Many forest dwellers, well into the twentieth century, lived in bands of thirty to fifty individuals. Their pursuit of game and harvesting of a variety of insect, stream, and plant foods kept them on the move in a rather fixed cycle as various foods came into season at different locations in their foraging areas. Consequently, they constructed only temporary shelters of leaves and poles, very functional for a life in which more permanent structures would have been useless. Drawing upon both vegetable and animal food sources, with the men specializing in hunting and the women in gathering, they had little need for contact with outsiders or for exploration beyond the confines of

their own regular territories. As in most gathering and hunting societies, women's economic functions, along with childbearing, were absolutely crucial. Women typically generated more food through gathering than did the men, who hunted animals or looked for game that had already been killed. Gathering and hunting societies appear to have developed delicately balanced social relationships that permitted necessary group decisions without the need for clearly defined leaders. Quite likely, their moral, ethical, and artistic sensitivities resembled those of their modern descendants, the Mbuti or M'Baka (so-called pygmies), who still live in the rainforests of equatorial Africa (Turnbull, 1983).

Savanna-dwelling gatherers and hunters led similarly mobile lives but often specialized in the collection of wild cereals that grew on the grassy plains and the occasional hunting of large grass-eating animals—giraffe, zebra, warthog, and many species of antelope. In particularly favorable circumstances, savanna dwellers might congregate in groups of 300 or more during the rainy seasons, when vegetation was lush and game plentiful. They dispersed in groups of 30 to 100 during the dry months to gather and to hunt, first with sticks and game pits, and later with nets, bows and arrows, and poisons. As populations grew, their contacts with other groups intensified until relatively fixed territories were established, and exotic shells, stones, feathers, and other less durable items were passed in sporadic trade over distances of hundreds of miles. Their history consisted of the gradual refinement of gathering and hunting techniques, a slow spread of new inventions from one group to another, and, probably, the very slow growth of population. Historian John Iliffe offers an environmental thesis as an important element in the relatively slow growth of population and the subsequent lack of pressure to turn to the more labor-intensive raising of crops. In his view, Africa's physical setting, climate, topography, and soils placed very real limits on human populations (Iliffe, 1995:1, 21).

■ Fishing

Major fishing communities in Africa probably predate the development of techniques of growing food crops and taming animals. Many settlements were clustered around the lakes and rivers of what are now the dry southern reaches of the Sahara. During the last great wet period in Africa's climate, from about 5,000 to 11,000 years ago, Lake Chad rose to cover a huge area many times its present size and may well have overflowed southwestward into the Benue-Niger rivers, which empty into the Atlantic Ocean. This huge lake was fed by rivers from the Tibesti Plateau in the central Sahara. Lake Nakaru in present-day Kenya may have overflowed into the Great Rift Valley, while Lake Turkana was 85 meters above its present level. The inland delta of the Niger in present-day Mali was far more vast and held enormous quantities of water in permanent lakes (Iliffe, 1995:13).

In these lands of lakes and rivers, people lived in thriving fishing communities. They carved intricate harpoon barbs and fishhooks out of bone, fired some of the earliest pottery in Africa, probably wove baskets and nets of reeds, and hunted crocodile, hippopotamus, and waterfowl. More important, these fishing peoples supported themselves without constant movement and at much higher population densities than gathering and hunting would allow. The need to cooperate in order to fish efficiently encouraged people to settle in larger and more permanent villages. The centralized coordination required in these larger settlements led to more formalized leadership structures than were necessary for gatherers and hunters. In these riverine and lacustrine villages, experienced elders or single arbitrators probably made the decisions. Some individuals could, for the first time, gain more wealth in the form of fishing equipment and houses than others in the village. These fishing peoples probably traded dried fish for plant and animal products offered by their gatherer-hunter neighbors. Local commercial networks developed, and new ideas spread more rapidly to larger areas. Fishing peoples probably played a crucial role in the transition from gathering and hunting to more settled ways of life (Shillington, 1995:12–13).

■ Crop Raising and Herding

Most scholars overgeneralize when they suggest that the effect of the crop-raising revolution was a great step forward for humankind. Only with the invention of crop cultivation could the human species create the elaborate social and cultural patterns with which most people today would be familiar. Furthermore, it is in advanced hoe-farming and agricultural societies that the separation between rulers and ruled, inequality between men and women, and the institution of slavery evolved. In most of Africa, the shift to crop raising evolved much more slowly in most places than it did in southwest Asia, for example. And outside the Ethiopian highlands, there was no animal-drawn plow before contact with Europeans. A few very functional gathering and hunting societies have continued into the twenty-first century in a variety of African natural environments. Though crop raising allows larger populations than gathering and hunting, the environmental realities of Africa limit agricultural potential in most places. Because of the continent's location on the equator, Africa generally has very fixed wet and dry seasons. This limits agricultural production and animal pasturing during the six or seven dry months. Three-fifths of the continent is desert, much of the rest has large areas of poor soils, and the more humid areas are home to the malaria-carrying mosquito and the parasitic infection-carrying tsetse fly. Africa's relatively light population density throughout history demonstrates the very real limits the continent's physical environment placed on the development of settled farming. In Africa, the rainfall and soils often meant that farming and herding peoples were

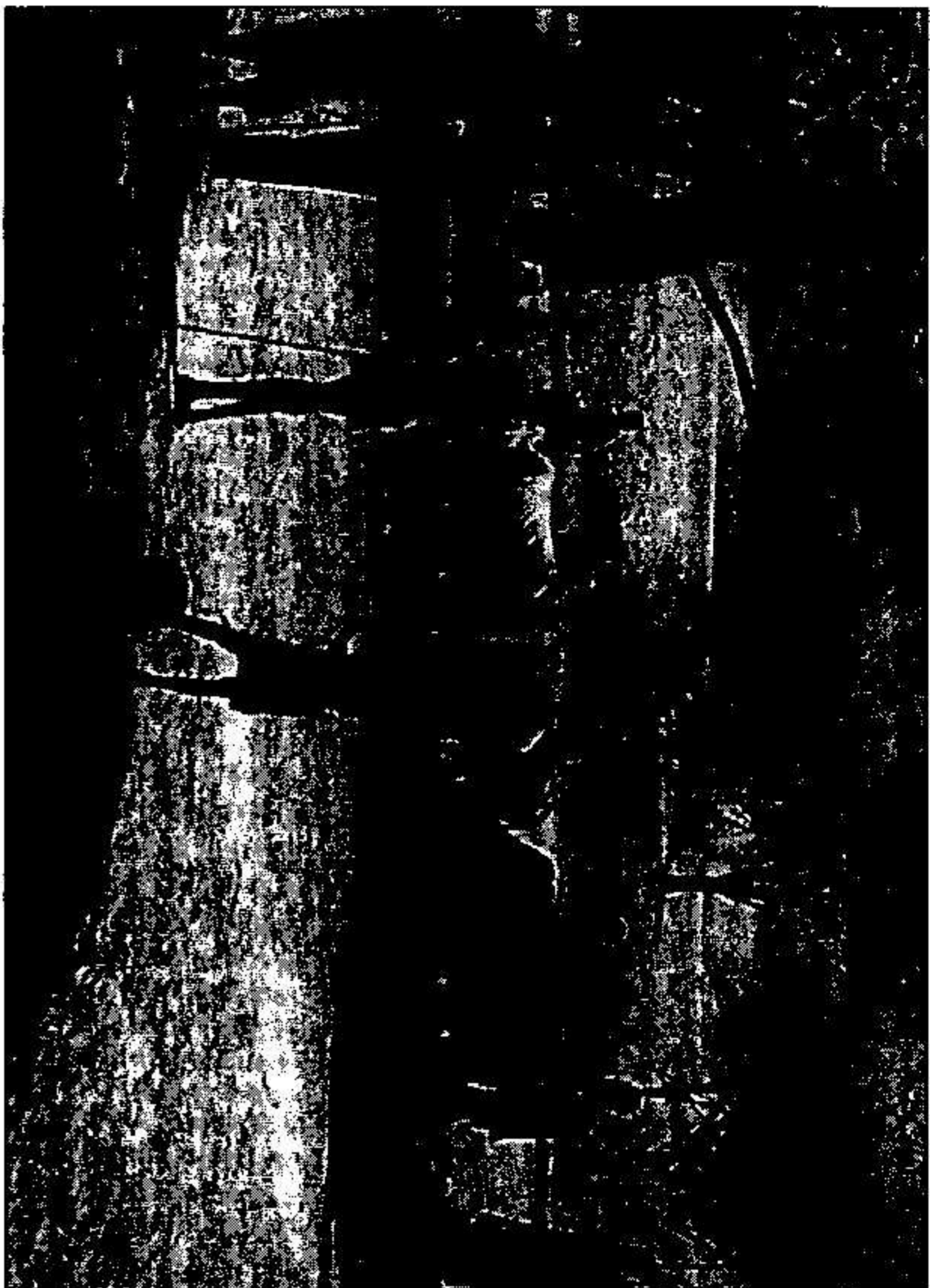


Photo: World Bank

Herding societies have existed in Africa for thousands of years.

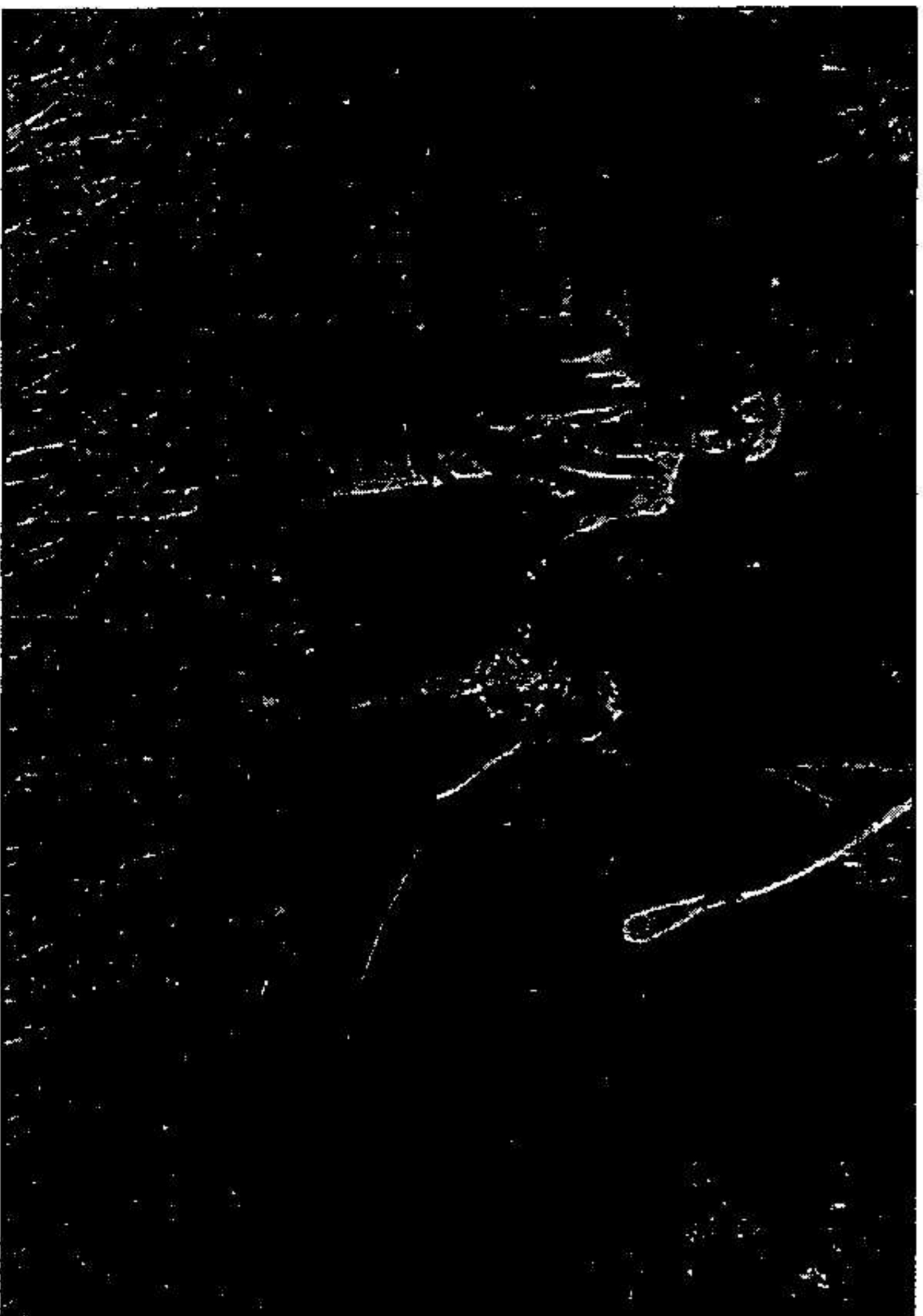


Photo: World Bank

Much African agriculture is hoe-farming. Agriculture was most likely invented thousands of years ago by women.

more exposed to the dangers of famine caused by natural disasters such as drought or flood. In most African hoe-farming communities, gathering, hunting, and especially fishing have remained important sources of food and general livelihood (McCann, 1999:15–19).

For some scholars of Africa, a major question is why Africans ever turned to farming at all, given the effectiveness of the hunting and gathering lifestyles (Lee, 1993). Studies of surviving gatherers and hunters, combined with archaeological evidence, convincingly refute any arguments about the short, nasty, and brutish lives of such people. Even in the harsh environment of the Kalahari Desert ecosystems, a larger percentage of people living there today are older “pensioners” and children than is typical in the crop-growing area of Africa. Gatherers and hunters in the Kalahari know agricultural techniques perfectly well but have no reason or desire to adopt them. A logical, schematic reconstruction of what happened to cause many African people to adopt crop growing might be made based on several explanations, but none are based on direct knowledge. One, which I find quite persuasive, is given here as an example.

The fishing cultures, which evolved near lakes and rivers in the African savannas between the Sahara and the forests and in eastern Africa after the last Ice Age, allowed relatively large stationary settlements with new skills to grow. At the same time, these peoples began to domesticate animals, especially cattle, using skills acquired from hunting game that gathered near watering places. Five or six thousand years ago the Sahara was drying up, pushing to its margins large populations that could not adapt to the change without moving. Much African agricultural innovation apparently was forced upon people by the population pressures that grew along the waterways to the south and east of this expanding desert (Bohannan and Curtin, 1995:140–144).

How agriculture developed is much easier to guess at than it is to ascertain why it developed. Women, the gathering specialists, became aware of where particularly good food supplies, especially grains, grew, and they camped on sites where these foods were plentiful. Over time, the harvested seeds were planted, and larger and more firmly attached seed heads evolved. In the widespread African savanna, millets and sorghums were domesticated. In the Ethiopian highlands and the Futa Djallon, *teff* and *fonio*, grasslike grains with tiny kernels, became the respective staples. In the marshlands of the interior delta of the Niger River in present-day Mali, a type of rice was cultivated. Many East Africans probably planted *ensete*, a crop related to the banana (McCann, 1999:45–46, 94). Other root crops and the native oil palm of western Africa enabled agriculturists to penetrate the forests (McCann, 1999:114–128). Yet, for most gathering and hunting populations of southern and central Africa, there was little pressure to change from a way of life that had proven quite satisfactory for thousands of years. Likewise, fluctuating rainfall patterns, soils with ephemeral fertility,

and relatively low populations allowed, and perhaps necessitated, swidden or slash-and-burn cropping techniques to persist into the present in many parts of Africa. With iron hoes and other iron tools, more efficient cropping techniques became possible. The growth of population, which accompanied the slow shift to agriculture, and later the use of iron, set in motion another important process in African history.

■ Bantu Migrations

Early in the twentieth century, scholars were struck by the remarkable similarities in the languages and cultures of peoples living throughout the vast area stretching east from present-day Cameroon to Kenya and on south to the Republic of South Africa. All these peoples spoke languages having the word-stem *ntu*, or something very similar to it, meaning "person." The prefix *ba* denotes the plural in most of these languages so that *ba-ntu* means, literally, "people." The source of these languages and the farming and herding cultures associated with them and how they became so widespread in Africa were major questions by the mid-twentieth century.

One plausible—though still speculative—answer was based on linguistics, archaeology, and studies of plant origins. According to this account, about 3,000 years ago near the Benue River in the western African savannas, fairly large-scale settlements guided by councils of lineage elders evolved based on fishing with dugout canoes, nets, fishhooks, traps, and harpoons. Cultivating yams and oil palms and raising goats, these peoples, speaking Bantu languages, were better able to survive drought and misfortune than the small pockets of cultivators that might have developed by then in and south of the tropical rainforests of central Africa. Having long mastered the art of firing pottery, these Bantu speakers were smelting iron for spears, arrows, hoes, scythes, and axes more than 2,500 years ago. Population pressures grew along the Benue as Saharan farmers slowly moved south to escape the gradually drying desert. Pushed by growing populations, the Bantu fishing peoples moved south and east. After reaching the Congo tributaries, they spread up the rivers of central Africa to the Zambezi and on south to the tip of Africa. Bantu-speaking groups intermarried with, conquered, or pushed out the Khoisan speakers and other populations they encountered. As they slowly migrated, these Bantu-speaking peoples learned to cultivate Asian yams and bananas, which had been introduced to eastern Africa by Malayo-Polynesian sailors who colonized the island of Madagascar about 1,800 years ago. In some cases, the Bantu-speaking migrants became large-scale cattle keepers. By 1,000 years ago, most of central and southern Africa was populated by iron-smelting, Bantu-speaking villagers who had virtually replaced all but scattered pockets of the original gathering and hunting peoples (Lamphear and Falola, 1995:86–94).

■ POLITICAL PATTERNS OF THE PAST

■ Stateless Societies

Until the 1960s, most historians relied on written sources, so most history tended to be about societies with writing. Since most African societies did not develop writing, the historical record was sparse, gleaned from accounts of non-African travelers, usually Muslims, and archaeological remains. In the past forty years, specialists in African history have learned to use historical linguistics, oral traditions, and other sources to overcome the apparent lack of evidence and develop a far better understanding of African history.

Nevertheless, many writers of world history texts continue to treat human societies without writing as "prehistoric." This is rather ironic given that even in those complex urban-centered societies called civilizations, which have had written records for more than 5,000 years, only a small minority of people were literate and most people did not live in cities. Certainly in Africa this prehistoric-historic distinction has little value. Most historians of Africa realize that a focus on written sources alone would mean virtually ignoring the histories of the vast majority of Africa's peoples, who were able to achieve—through kinship, ritual, and other means—relatively orderly and just societies without centralized governments or states.

In fact, until about 2,500 years ago, virtually all Africans living south of the Sahara were able to avoid relying on bureaucratic organizations or "states" to carry out the political requirements of their societies. Even large groups created social systems based on lineage (kinship) with no single center of power or authority. Ideally, such systems could accommodate several million people. On the local level, lineage systems depended on a balance of power to solve political problems. People in these societies controlled conflict and resolved disputes through a balance of centers of cooperation and opposition, which appear to have been almost universal in human societies. (Eugenia Shanklin discusses kinship and lineage more fully in Chapter 9.) This human ethic of cooperation was especially crucial in herding and agricultural societies that existed in the often challenging physical environments of Africa (Turnbull, 1973:233–255).

Variations of lineage systems also helped Africans resist European colonial domination. For example, colonial attempts to divide Africa into districts, cantons, and even "tribes" were doomed to failure when most of the continent south of the Sahara was really a kaleidoscope of lineage fragments, scattering and regrouping as the need arose. Through marriage alliances and various forms of reciprocal exchanges, these networks could expand almost indefinitely. As an example, European officials erroneously assumed that their control of an important African authority figure ensured

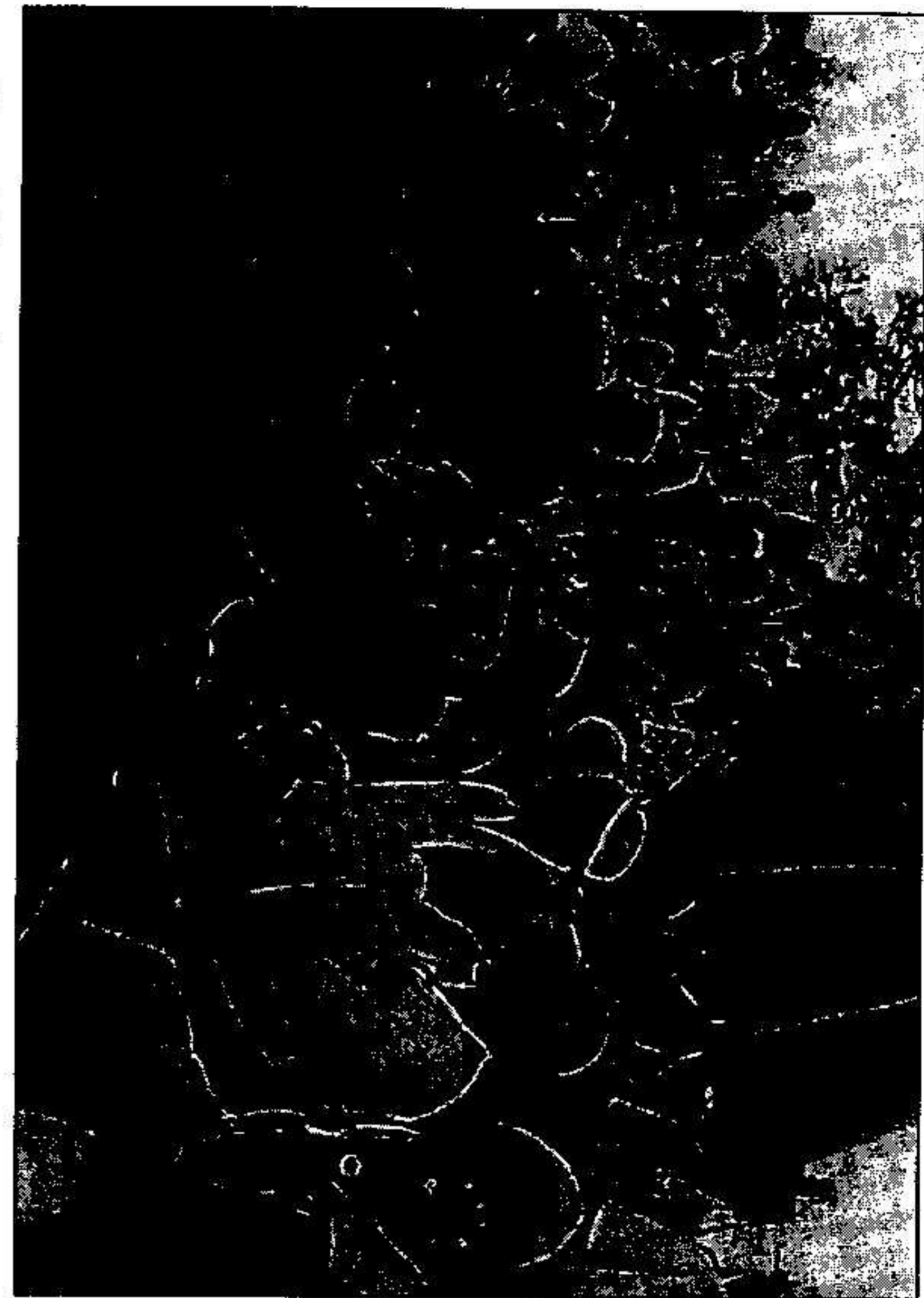


Photo: World Bank

Most Africans have long relied on decentralized, kinship-based political systems. In Burkina Faso, male family heads meet to discuss a rural development project.

the “pacification” of a given territory. The Africans, on the other hand, could simply turn to another member of a kinship linkage and continue their struggle against the outsiders.

Africa’s past demonstrates the truly remarkable ability of African peoples to resist incorporation into state political and economic organizations right up to the present (Hyden, 1980). This represents one of the most unusual aspects of the history of the continent’s peoples. Many Africans still rely on extended family organizations and call upon kinship behavior to maintain justice and cultural and territorial integrity, not only in domestic but also in wider spheres (see Mair, 1974). And, as in the past, many Africans see any state without at least some symbolic lineage-based authority as inherently tyrannical. The continuing desire to seek and find order in institutions other than the state is very understandable in the African context.

An important aspect of persisting kinship networks that is still very important in Africa is the degree to which people within such systems could mobilize women’s labor and childbearing capacities. The formation of alliances between lineages was facilitated by marriage. This does not mean that women were simply pawns; in a good number of locations, women controlled many resources and could operate almost independently of their husbands’ lineage. Quite often, though, especially where cattle keeping—almost always a male-dominated activity—was important, women

had many of the crop-producing responsibilities as well as household and child-rearing duties. When colonial labor demands removed men even farther from household economies, this imbalance was often exacerbated (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997:9–20).

For those accustomed to state forms of organization, African social organization based on kinship seems chaotic, and nonstate societies are seen as less civilized or lacking in sociopolitical development. To dispel the notion that Africa lacked civilization, many dedicated Africanists have focused almost exclusively on the relatively unrepresentative centralized states when portraying Africa’s past. This has sometimes obscured, however, the important role of local kinship relations in maintaining peace and harmony in most African societies. But since state societies as well as nonstate societies have a long history in Africa, I examine next the significance of state societies in the history of Africa.

■ **State Societies**

By the late 1960s, most scholars had rejected the essentially racial determinist views that Africans were incapable of organizing stable “civilizations” or states without external leadership. The once commonly accepted premise that the first states in Africa were the result of common patterns of divine kingship diffused from Egypt or elsewhere have been gradually abandoned by most knowledgeable scholars of African history. The rigid distinction between state and stateless societies, though, continues to exist in the literature. Such categories were created by social anthropologists (mostly British) in response to colonial administrators’ needs to classify the political structures of the peoples over whom they ruled. Most scholars now realize that African states, like states elsewhere in the world, arose from a variety of causes and most often resulted from internal forces present in various areas of the continent. (See Map 2.4 for early states and empires.) In many parts of Africa, control over long-distance trade was an important aspect of the origin of states. Control of military force for conquest and protection was also generally present. In most cases, African states or kingdoms typically retained an element of kinship-based social organization. In fact, the process of state-building was usually a long one in which rulers gradually established special privileges for their own lineages and created a superlineage basis for authority. This caused a certain reciprocity of mutual obligations between the subjects and their rulers that persisted for generations in all but the most authoritarian states. Rulers brought prosperity to their people and organized the military to protect them, while the ruled supported their rulers with subsistence goods, labor, and even service in the military.

It is quite likely that the first regional states in Africa were those that united independent farming communities growing up below the first cataract

in Egypt about 5,500 years ago. Here the gradual drying of the Sahara Desert had forced together growing populations from the desert into a diminishing crop-growing area dependent upon the annual Nile floods. From this time until Egypt was conquered by the armies of Alexander the Great, the pharaohs, priests, and nobility of Egypt were able to extract surplus wealth from the cultivators of the valley and to war with, trade with, and interact with the Nubians south of the cataract. The Egyptian ruling elite controlled irrigation and other public works and justified their rule through claims that the pharaoh was a god-king incarnate (Lamphear and Falola, 1995:79-80).

Farther to the south, in a land once called Kush by Egyptians, another independent political entity (though not continuously so) developed by about 3,800 years ago. Kush achieved its greatest power between 2,700 and 2,800 years ago, and its history was closely linked to that of Egypt. In fact, Kushite kings ruled Egypt from about 700 to 500 B.C. Driven from Egypt about 2,500 years ago, the Kushite leaders pushed farther south into Meroe, where a vast iron industry flourished. The causes of the rise of Kush and the extent to which its political ideas and metallurgical techniques spread are still open to considerable discussion. Meroe's successor states adopted Coptic Christianity from Axum (the ancestor of today's Ethiopia) as a court religion in the first centuries of the Christian era, but this was replaced by Islam more than 1,000 years ago. Four hundred years ago the Senнар kingdom imposed unity over much of this area, forcing peasants to pay heavy taxes to subsidize their rulers' households. A large, literate merchant class established itself in numerous towns and played a crucial role in deepening the Islamic cultural influence so important in the northern part of the present-day Republic of Sudan (Leclant, 1980:295-314; Hakem, 1980:315-346).

Still farther south in the Ethiopian highlands, Axum, dating back more than 2,000 years, rose to challenge Kush. The founders of Axum migrated from southern Arabia as much as 2,100 years ago and later extended their authority over the northern half of what are now Ethiopia and eastern Sudan. Two thousand years ago they controlled ports on the Red Sea and maintained trade relations with merchants from the eastern end of the Mediterranean who came to buy ivory, gold, and incense from the African interior. Four hundred years later, Axum's rulers became Christians and expanded to control other lesser-known states that had also arisen in the central and southern highlands of Ethiopia. The leaders of a state led by Amharic-speaking peoples, which arose in the north-central area of the Ethiopian highlands about 700 years ago, claimed some ties to the long-collapsed Axum. This state was based on an expanding landowning class. It flourished 500 to 600 years ago, broke up, and was then substantially reunited in the eighteenth century (Shillington, 1995:68-71).

State formation in the savannas of western Africa lagged after the Roman defeat of the Phoenician-founded city of Carthage (in Tunisia).

This city-state had conducted a flourishing trans-Saharan trade with sub-Saharan Africans through Berber partners between 2,500 to 2,800 years ago. Gradually, kingdoms created by horse-mounted forces establishing control over small agricultural communities developed in the Senegambia and the middle Niger as early as 2,000 years ago. One of the first of these western African states was Tekrur on the Senegal River (mentioned by later travelers writing in Arabic). Eleven hundred years ago, Muslim traders from northern Africa also described Ghana, a state centered somewhat north and east of Tekrur. The location of Ghana's consecutive capitals, Kumbi Saleh and Walata, in southern Mauritania on the northern edge of cultivation, became crucial to the rulers of these cities. Serving as staging places to assemble and equip the caravans carrying gold shipments north, these cities flourished as the gold trade between northern Africa and the sources farther south was reestablished. Archaeological evidence suggests that Ghana was already hundreds of years old when it was visited 1,000 years ago by Arab traders searching for profits, especially this gold. The writings of these traders and other travelers about Ghana and the subsequent western African savanna kingdoms of Mali and Songhai provide little knowledge of those crucial aspects of western African society not of direct interest to commercial travelers. Ghana's decline and ultimate sacking by Berber Muslims were part of a larger shift in sub-Saharan trade centers. Trade shifted south as the spreading desert made food production around Walata much more difficult, and Muslim groups pushing into the western desert prompted a shift eastward.

Trade and power passed first to Mali, a kingdom of Mande-speaking groups on the upper Niger River. Founded, according to oral traditions, between A.D. 1230 and 1235 by Sundiata Keita, Mali not only extracted enough grain from local farmers to maintain a standing army but also traded gold and other goods for the necessary salt from the desert and other commodities from the larger Muslim world. One of Mali's rulers, Mansa Musa, established a reputation for wealth as the result of the splendor of his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324. From 1468 on, the power of Mali passed to Songhai, located yet farther east on the Niger, under its king Sonni Ah. The leaders of Songhai, who controlled the river by military canoes, were able to dominate the trading cities of Timbuktu, Djenné, and Gao until the Battle of Tondibi in April 1591, when Moroccan invaders decisively defeated an empire already in decline (Bohannan and Curtin, 1995:166-169).

With origins going back to a past almost as remote as that of Ghana, Kanem, a state near the desert edge in modern Chad, may have served as a trading entrepôt for centuries. Rulers of this state were in close contact with North Africa and, possibly, even with southwest Asia by 1,500 years ago. Arabic sources of more than 500 years ago referred to a strong successor state called Bornu, southwest of Lake Chad in what is today northern Nigeria. This southward shift probably reveals a deepening control over a

fixed population of cultivators. And though Bornu elites had no gold to sustain a large trade-based kingdom, they did exploit tin and copper resources (Lange, 1984:238-265).

Two very interesting savanna states, which actually prospered as the trade north declined, were the highly centralized non-Islamic kingdoms of Mossi (Mori-speaking) peoples in present-day Burkina Faso and the Bambara kingdoms of Segu and Kaarta (in the present-day nation of Mali). Though the Mossi kingdoms date back in some form more than 500 years, both of these clusters of states probably had economies based on the slave trade at the height of their power (Izard, 1984:211-237).

By 400 years ago, the most dynamic political systems in the entire western African savanna were the Hausa city-states west of Bornu. In the area in which these states arose, a high water table and numerous river valleys permitted year-round irrigated cultivation. The resulting food supply permitted an exceptionally dense population, which established a thick network of walled settlements and an extensive, specialized, commodity-production economy by about 1,000 years ago. Influenced by Islamized people from the Mali empire, one of the city-states, Kano, had become quite powerful 500 to 600 years ago. Other Hausa states such as Gobir and Katsina, and even Bornu, contended with Kano for dominance. Iron deposits, the availability of charcoal-producing woods, and trade in kola nuts, slaves from the south, and surplus dyed textiles and leather goods supplied a substantial long-distance trade (Iliffe, 1995:73-74).

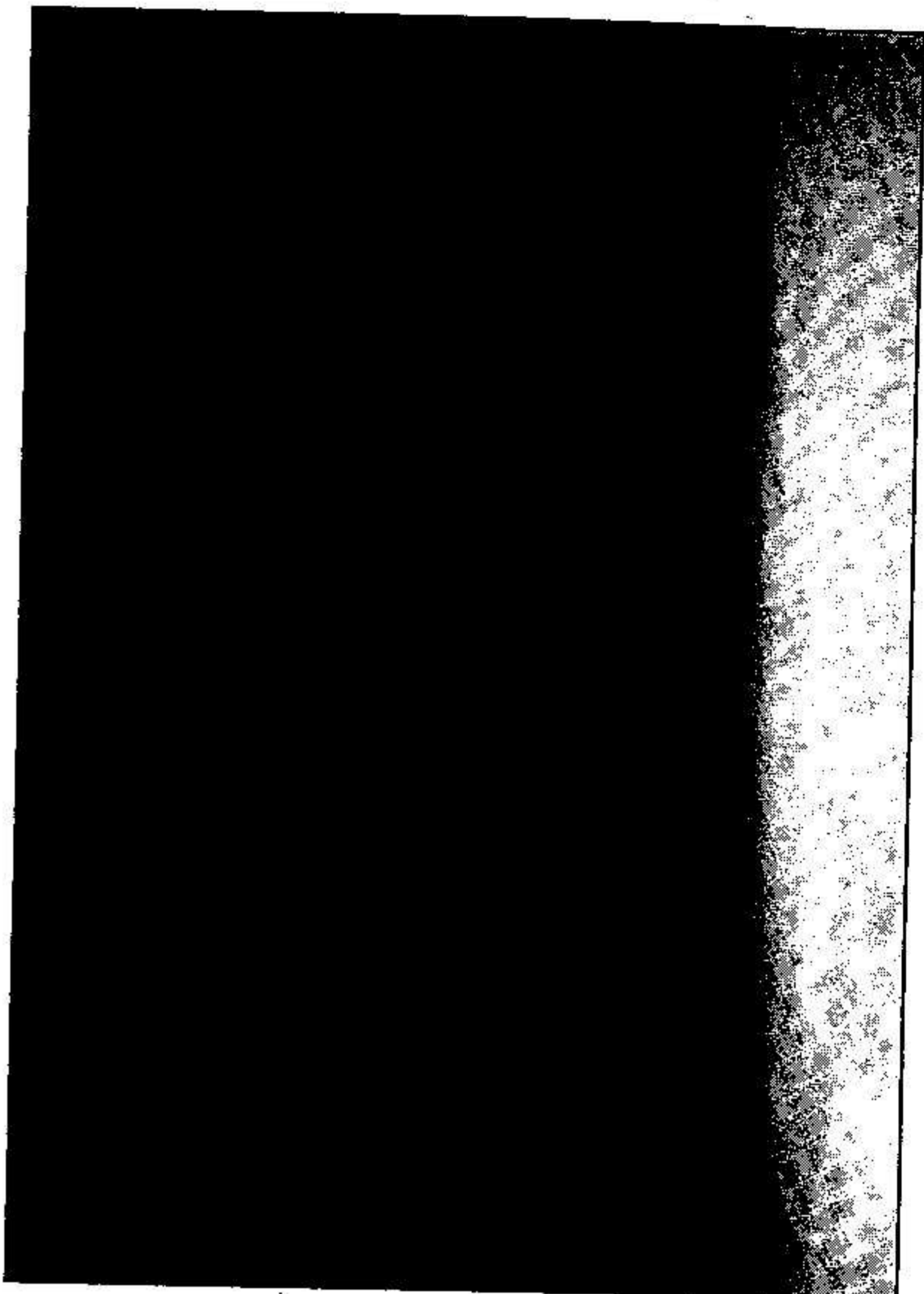
Elsewhere in Africa there were a number of major state clusters, but few, if any, date back much more than 1,000 years. About 700 years ago, a process of state formation began in the region of the Great Lakes of eastern Africa. Though this process was long portrayed as the creation of Kushite- and Nilotic-speaking pastoralists imposing their rule over Bantu-speaking agriculturists, such a simplistic and essentially racist view is now largely rejected. It would appear that all of these states came into being as a conjuncture of the economic importance of salt, cattle, and iron and the demographic possibilities allowed by fertile soils and crops such as bananas. Unfortunately, the persistence of beliefs by an older generation of scholars contributed to much of the twentieth-century suffering in Rwanda and Burundi. Clearly, there were peoples whose ancestors came from the south, west, and east as well as the north into the Great Lakes region. Descending from ancestors speaking Kushite, Nilotic, and Bantu languages, the rulers of centralized kingdoms rose to power through a variety of factors, the least of which was their genetic heritage. A state such as Buganda, which occupied the fertile plains northwest of Lake Victoria Nyanza is typical. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the *kabaka*, the ruler of the Buganda, extended his authority over much of modern Uganda by gradually taking over the prerogatives of all the Ganda lineages. Besides plentiful supplies of bananas, the economic base of this state also appeared to be a lively trade in handicraft production (Lamphear and Falola, 1995:91-94).

Other states have existed south of the equator for centuries. Near the mouth of the river of the same name lay the Kongo kingdom. When the Portuguese first arrived in the late fifteenth century, this kingdom, ruled by Nzinga Nkuwu, had already existed for several generations. In 1506, Nzinga Nkuwu's son Affonso, who had converted to Catholicism, defeated his brother to become *manicongo* (ruler) of this kingdom. His ascension to power marked the beginning of the kingdom's decline, since much of the ruler's authority depended upon local religious values (which were undermined by his conversion). The missionaries who surrounded him, and the expanding Portuguese influence as slave traders, further reduced his authority (Iliffe, 1995:80).

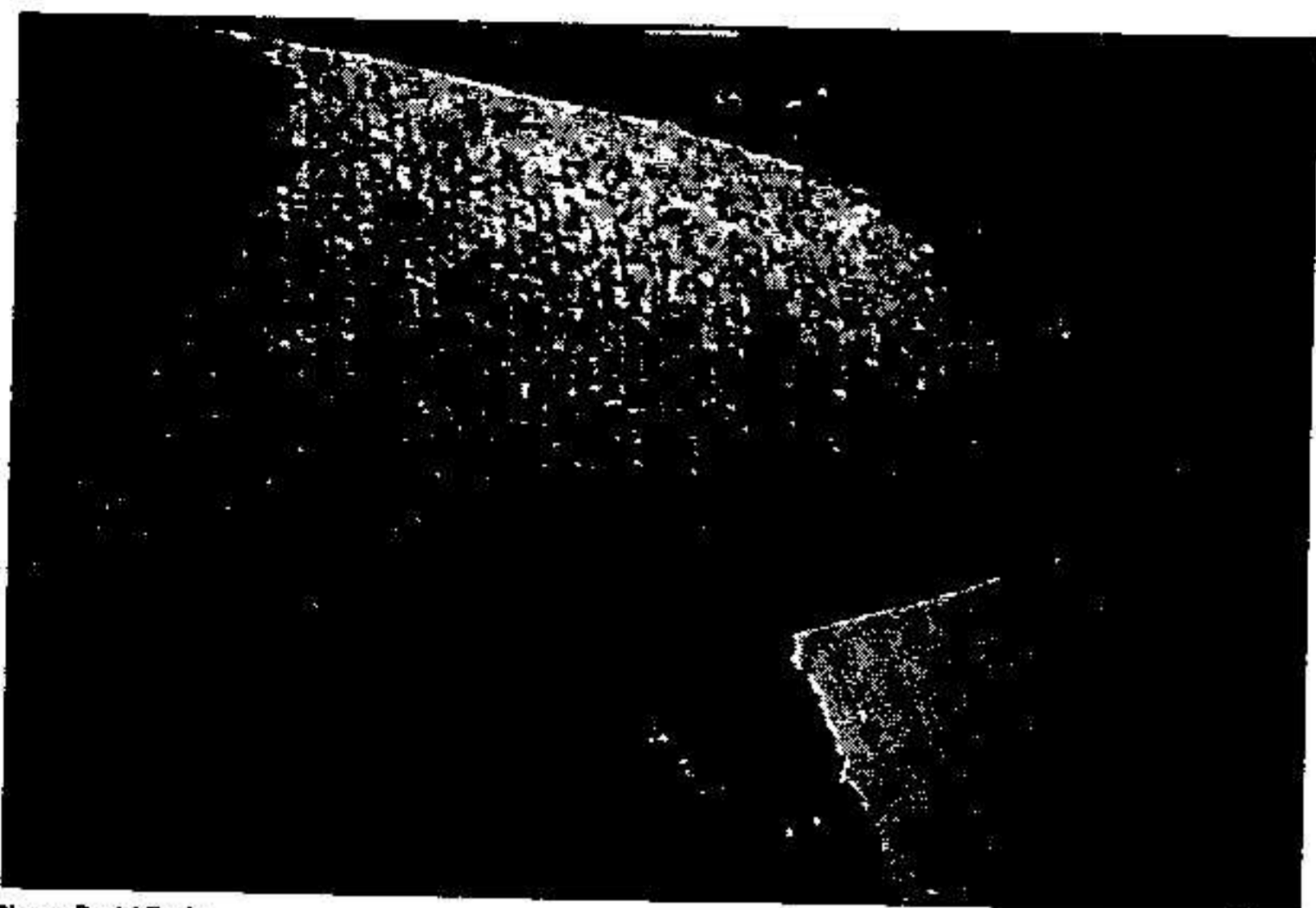
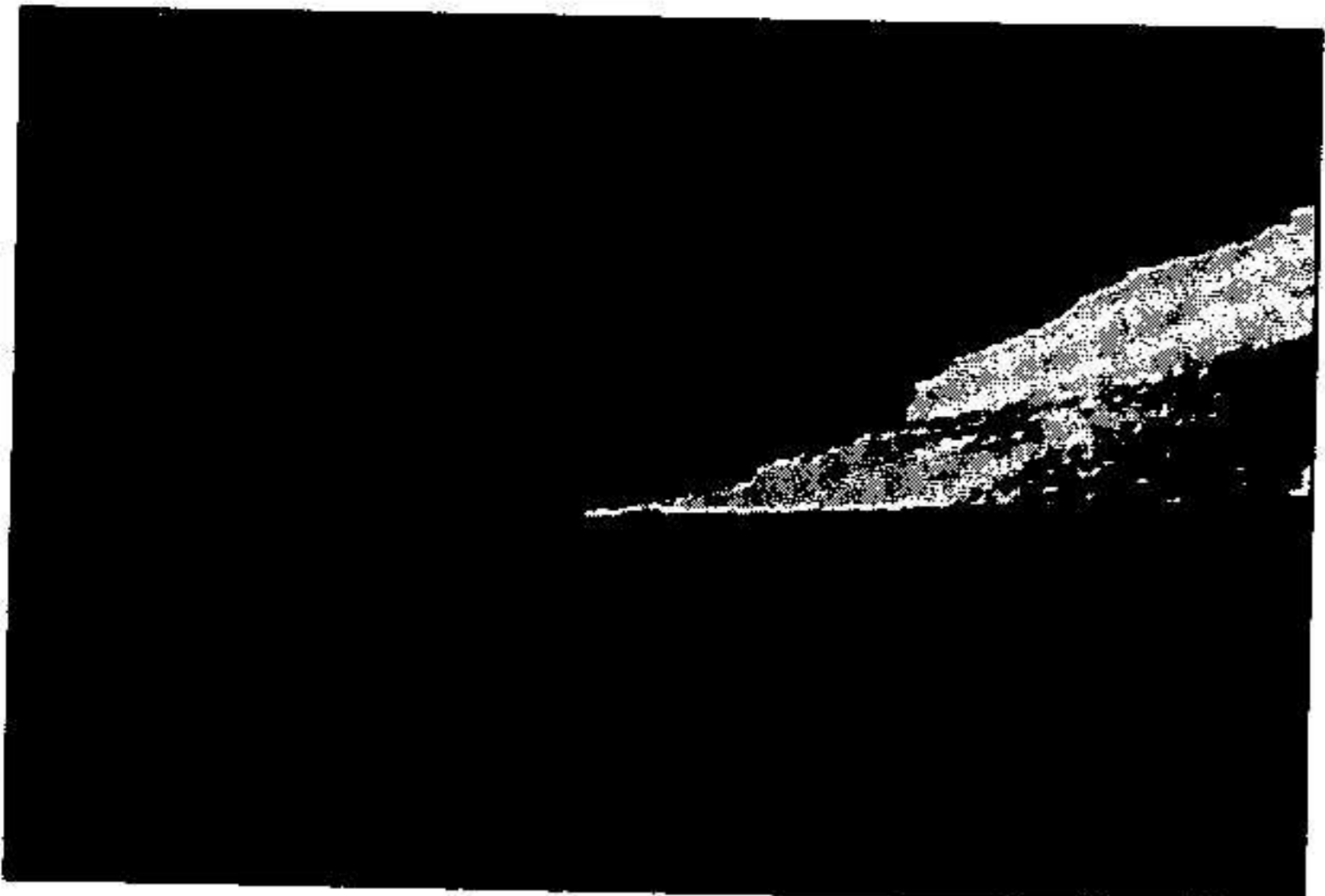
Another cluster of centralized polities lay far inland in a basin where salt and iron deposits assisted the development of long-distance trade. In the present-day Shaba province of Congo, a huntsman hero, Ilunga Kalala, had founded a dynasty among the Luba in the early 1400s. Other states of the southern savanna in what are now the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, and Angola established the superiority of their ruling lineages by associating their founding legends with the Luba. The Lozi state in the upper Zambezi floodplain of western Zambia, which unified only in the nineteenth century, is one such example (Shillington, 1995:140-146).

Great Zimbabwe (in the modern country of the same name), the center of extensive and complex archaeological remains, dates back at least 800 years. The impressive stone ruins called Zimbabwe (Great House) were built by people ancestral to modern-day Shona speakers. This complex probably served as a capital for an empire that stretched from the Zambezi to the Limpopo, had linkages with widespread Indian Ocean trade networks, and encompassed an area of rich gold works. The sophisticated stone architecture of this state indicates a complex economic and political system. The organization of the necessary labor to build these structures suggests a sophisticated and complex social, economic, and political organization. Oral histories and firsthand descriptions of early Portuguese visitors to the area also confirm the existence of a strong centralized political system. Though the original Shona state probably broke up because of intergroup warfare after Indian Ocean traders found alternative African partners in the Zambezi valley, a successor state was established by 1420 or so under a northern Shona, Nyatsimbe Mutota, using the title *Mwene Mutapa* (Iliffe, 1995:101-103).

As elsewhere in the world, many African states derived great stimulus from outside forces. The oldest and best examples of these externally influenced states were the trading states of the coast of eastern Africa. Evolving from previously existing coastal fishing towns linked to farming peoples in the interior, these trading entrepôts had contacts with the Greco-Roman world as early as A.D. 100 (Iliffe, 1995:53-55). Beginning gradually in the ninth century, these city-states rose and fell in concert with both the Islamized maritime cultures of the Indian Ocean and the African political



Great Zimbabwe



Photos: Daniel Doyle

systems that supplied the ivory, gold, and slaves for trade. By A.D. 1000 these local African towns, from Mogadishu (Somalia) to Sofala (Mozambique), were deeply involved in overseas commerce. Some, like Kilwa in southern Tanzania, which drew upon the Shona-controlled goldfields of Zimbabwe, traded extensively with China, India, and the Islamic world. These city-state-based, coastal-trading societies were influenced by Arab and Persian immigrants and developed a unique Swahili culture derived from both African and southwest Asian sources (Connah, 1987:150–182).

The kingdoms of Benin and Oyo in present-day Nigeria have historical origins dating back hundreds of years. Yet, it was not until 1500, when trade with Europeans on the coast contributed to the increase in the scale of organization, that other centralized political systems developed in the forests and savannas closer to the Atlantic coast of western Africa. For example, the Asante of modern Ghana rose to power after 1680 when the Asantehene (king of the Asante) Osei Tutu and his adviser and priest, Okonfo Anokye, forcefully united three smaller states into a confederation dominated by Akan-speaking peoples. The rise of the Asante state owed much to the control of the goldfields in central Ghana. The major factor, though, was the growth of military activity connected with the slave trade and the imported guns that came with this trade. The Asante fought to protect the trade to the coast in much the same way that the leaders of the United States intervened in Kuwait to maintain control of the oil, which they considered a vital resource (Shillington, 1995:191–196).

Four hundred years ago, the dominant state behind the coast in western Africa was the savanna-based Yoruba state of Oyo. With far-ranging cavalry, Oyo was poised to respond to the growing demand for slaves by French, English, Portuguese, and other traders at ports such as Whydah, Porto Novo, and Badagry. By 1730, Dahomey, a tributary state of Oyo, became a major slave-trading power in its own right under King Agaja and dominated the major routes to the sea until the slave trade declined in the nineteenth century. Faced with the rise of the Muslim Sokoto caliphate to the north and the breaking away of better-armed Yoruba satellite states to the south, Oyo then declined (Shillington, 1995:191–192).

A very different series of events, the jihads (holy wars) of the western Sudan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was directly inspired by Islamic reforming movements introduced from northern Africa and the Arabian peninsula and by the large-scale shift in trade and production brought about by European commercial interests pressing in from the coast. The jihads of western Africa began in the highlands of the Futa Djallon in present-day Guinea when Fulbé (Fulani) pastoralists, supported by Muslim traders, revolted against their farming rulers and created a Fulbé-dominated Islamic state by about 1750 under the leadership of Ibrahim Sorri. By 1776, the Fulbé had produced a *shari'a*-ruled (based on Islamic law) state on the lower Senegal led by Abd al-Qadir. In the early nineteenth

century, a similar Fulbé-inspired revolution, launched by Uthman dan Fodio against the Hausa kingdoms farther east, created the Sokoto caliphate with a population of about 10 million people and the Ilorin emirate, Oyo's rival, in the 1830s. This jihad was extended into northern Cameroon by other Fulbé leaders. Another Fulbé jihad, inspired by that of Uthman dan Fodio, was led by Seku Ahmadu in Macina in present-day Mali. Beginning in 1852, al-Hajj Umar formed another empire on the upper Niger that united previously existing Bambara kingdoms until it fell to the French in the 1890s (Shillington, 1995:226–232).

Several other state-building processes, the result of both indigenous and external forces, occurred in the past 300 years. One originated in what is now South Africa and had such a large influence as far afield as Malawi that I mention it here, even though it is covered in the chapter on South Africa. This Zulu state-building process in South Africa set in motion the Mfecane, a period of wars and disturbances that led to migrations and conquest of thousands of people. The Mfecane, which in the Zulu language means “the era of the crushing or breaking,” may have been directly influenced by the presence of expanding white settlement in South Africa. But the conditions making the rise of the Zulu kingdom possible were the result of more profound changes, including population growth, long-distance trade in slaves and ivory, and the introduction of maize (corn) by the Portuguese centuries before.

Until the nineteenth century, the necessities of defense, irrigation, trade, and other factors, which led to the creation of states elsewhere in Africa, were apparently not as important farther south. Ecological pressures and perhaps the activities of Portuguese and Cape Colony slave traders caused an intensification of rivalries between small political groupings in the region between the Drakensberg Mountains and the Indian Ocean about 200 years ago. In that struggle for power, the most successful leader to emerge was Shaka. He refined and improved local warfare techniques and consolidated authority so effectively that between 1819 and 1828 he was able to create a military state that set in motion a series of migrations and conquests resulting in the creation of many kingdoms throughout southern Africa. This extraordinary individual trained an army that was very effective and able to expand rapidly. He was able to do this by transforming the existing system of initiation groups (an age-grade system) into cross-lineage groups, which he then was able to centrally control. This revolutionary social organization allowed him to mobilize an entire generation of young men to fight for him while the women worked to produce food to support them.

This forging of a Zulu nation pushed other peoples, desperate to replace cattle stolen by the Zulu, into the interior grasslands of modern-day South Africa and far beyond, creating new political formations in what are now Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Tanzania. The Sotho

kingdom of present-day Lesotho and the Ndebele kingdom of modern Zimbabwe were among the results of the Mfecane (Omer-Cooper, 1994:52–81).

■ TRADE, EXPLORATION, AND CONQUEST

■ Slavery

Apologists for the slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries argued that slavery was intrinsic in backward African societies. They also claimed that slavery in the “Christian” Americas was probably better for Africans than their situation had been in their “pagan” homelands. Abolitionists essentially agreed with these negative stereotypes about indigenous African societies. Most abolitionists supported “legitimate” trade, missionary activities, and ultimately colonialism, because these intrusions would put an end to slavery and the slave trade and begin the process of redeeming this “pagan” continent. African nationalists and defenders of African culture in the twentieth century argued that African civilizations, extending back to the glories of ancient Egypt, had been deformed and barbarized by the effects of the Atlantic slave trade. Some argued that the Atlantic slave trade had enriched the West at the expense of Africa and was largely responsible for Africa's relative economic backwardness (Manning, 1990:8–26).

Slavery in Africa, as elsewhere, is as old as civilization. From the Egyptian dynasties through the Carthaginian and Greek trading states to the Roman Empire, a small number of black Africans were always part of trans-Saharan commerce. By the time the Arabs overran northern Africa in the middle of the seventh century, bondage and the slave trade were already fixtures of this part of the world as elsewhere. War prisoners from the Sudan—in Arabic *bilad al-Sudan*, “the land of the blacks”—were sold north from at least 1,300 years ago. The demand for slaves in the Mediterranean world kept a persistent and substantial movement of black humans as trade goods flowing across the desert (with many more dying on the journey) well into the twentieth century (Manning, 1990:27–37, 149–164).

Clientship, pawning, and the sale of individuals to pay for food in times of famine have existed in human societies—in Africa and elsewhere—from at least the beginning of crop production. Conquered peoples were absorbed into the victors' societies, often serving in a lowly status with few rights and privileges for generations before prerogatives and status distinctions between slave and free blurred. In some African states, plantation, quarry, mining, and portage slavery were important parts of the economic base. Slave-soldiers were found in the Cayor kingdom of Senegal in the fifteenth century, and slavery is still present in Sudan (Meirs and Kopyroff, 1977:3 ff.; Shillington, 1995:172–180).

While recent historical research no longer maintains, as serious scholars once did, that as many as 50 million Africans were taken from western Africa as part of the Atlantic slave trade, the economic and human loss to Africa of the 10 million or more slave immigrants who reached the New World was serious enough (Manning, 1990:5). More important to understand are the broader negative effects that the slave trade, the conflicts connected with it, and the rise of slavery within Africa associated with the trade had on African culture. At a time when European and North American populations were growing rapidly, Africa's was in decline. While Europe and North America were industrializing, Africa, largely as a result of the slave trade, was involved in an exploitative and unproductive system of trade (Bah, 1993:79-84).

Focus on the Atlantic slave trade should not result in less attention being paid to the Indian Ocean slave trade. This trade, though it never matched the massive numbers of the Atlantic slave trade, had disastrous consequences as far inland as the shores of Lake Malawi and those areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo west of Lake Tanganyika. The centuries-old, though relatively small, trade in African humans to south and southwest Asia for plantation and mine workers, soldiers, and concubines reached substantial proportions beginning in the middle decades of the eighteenth century as demand for slaves grew. This trade continued very actively into the nineteenth century, supplying slaves for Brazil, for the clove plantations on the islands of Pemba and Zanzibar off the coast of eastern Africa, and for the sugar plantations on the Indian Ocean islands. The nineteenth-century Afro-Arab slavers and ivory hunters penetrated swiftly and deeply inland, causing proportionately as great a loss of life and disruption in eastern African societies as the Atlantic slave trade did at its height (Alpers, 1975).

Clearly the various slave-trading patterns had economic, political, and social impacts on both African and other Atlantic societies. The profits of European merchants in the Atlantic slave trade from the mid-seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century were immense. It should be noted, though, that these profits diminished considerably for Europeans as African traders established a dominant position in the trade. The profits from the slave trade may well have helped lay the foundation for the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of capitalism in Europe and North America. The slave trade from Kilwa and the offshore island of Zanzibar reached tremendous proportions in the late eighteenth century, furnishing labor to the French plantations on the fertile and previously unpopulated islands of Mauritius and Réunion in the Indian Ocean. It turned African enterprise, over a wide geographic area, from more productive pursuits and influenced the rise of more authoritarian rulers. By the end of the eighteenth century, slaves were being delivered by Africans to the coast from regions as far away as the Hausa states and Katanga (Shaba) in Congo (Liffe, 1995:127-158).

■ "Legitimate" Trade

By the end of the eighteenth century, the world price of sugar was declining because of overproduction. At the same time, the price of slaves was rising because of stiffer competition among African suppliers in western Africa. As a result, the power and influence of plantation owners from the British West Indies was declining in the British Parliament. The Industrial Revolution was spawning a new dominant class of industrialists in Great Britain who were finding it increasingly necessary to seek new markets abroad for the clothing, pottery, and metal goods they were producing in growing quantities. These industrialists saw that Africans in Africa could provide European producers with both necessary raw materials and new markets for their cheaply produced manufactured goods (Bohannan and Curtin, 1995:213-214).

The Haitian revolution, the abolition movement, the French domination of the sugar industry, and, perhaps, some growing acceptance of the egalitarian principles of the French Revolution and the U.S. War of Independence led the British, with the strongest navy in the world, to abandon the slave trade. Having transported half the captives from western Africa at the end of the eighteenth century, the British government set up an "anti-slavery squadron" and began using force to stop the trade by 1807 (Manning, 1990:149-157).

Beginning in the 1790s, trade in palm oil for use in soap, candles, cooking products, and lubricants for looms, in return for goods produced in Europe, had begun in western Africa. By the 1830s, the commercial production of peanuts for the European market was well under way in western Africa. Though slaving and the "legitimate" trade in these commodities, as well as gold, timber, gum arabic, skins, and spices, coexisted through mid-century, it became apparent that greater profits existed in "legitimate commerce" than in slaves after the markets in the United States were closed in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The Brazilian and Cuban markets dried up by the 1870s.

Large European trading firms were soon to squeeze out a number of smaller-scale entrepreneurs in Africa. Among those squeezed out were Europeans, groups of people of mixed European and African ancestry from the Senegambia who had promoted the peanut trade along the coast to the south and other Eur Africans and former African slavers from Liberia to Cameroon who had become increasingly involved in palm oil commerce. Arab, Indian, and Luso-African (of Portuguese and African ancestry) intermediaries from Angola to Somalia, who had switched from trading slaves to trading ivory, gum arabic, copra, cloves, and other commodities, also suffered. Some of these intermediaries were reduced to becoming agents for the European companies, while others were simply driven out of business. The cloth, alcohol, tobacco, and firearms imported by the European

trading houses did little to strengthen African economies, and as competition grew more fierce, European trading monopolies backed by their governments fought even harder to cut out all the African intermediaries and their European competitors. This growing European trading competition played a major role in the European "scramble for Africa" in the 1870s and 1880s (Azevedo, 1993:103-110).

■ **Exploration**

It is ironic that people continue to credit European explorers of the nineteenth century with the "discovery" of rivers, waterfalls, and such in Africa when it is obvious that Africans living there already knew these things existed. Obviously, discovery simply meant that a European had verified in writing the existence of something long known to others.

With the exception of the Portuguese and perhaps a few Afrikans-speaking people, the systematic exploration of Africa between the Limpopo River and the Sahara Desert by Europeans can be dated to Mungo Park's first expedition to the Niger in 1795. By 1885, crossings of the continent from east to west had been thoroughly documented, the extent of the Sahara was known to the European and North American public, and the major rivers in Africa had been followed and mapped by Europeans. To most Africans, though, this was of little importance, and most African rulers by the latter part of the nineteenth century were ceasing to welcome wandering white men. These rulers had begun to fear the outside influence and rivalry that might weaken their control over trade or, as in the case of the Afro-Arab slave traders in central and eastern Africa, bring it to an end.

Mungo Park, for example, traveled up the Gambia River in 1795 to determine if it was linked to the Niger River, which appeared on some maps of the period as rising near Lake Chad and flowing west to the Atlantic. He did find the Niger and determined that it flowed eastward, not westward, thereby disproving the Gambia-Niger connection. Since he was then unable to follow the river to its mouth, he returned in 1805 bent on proving that the Niger actually was the Congo River. He died on this expedition, and only in 1830 did Richard Lander demonstrate that the Niger flows into the Gulf of Guinea.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, other explorers like René Caille, Hugh Clapperton, and Heinrich Barth traversed the western parts of Africa recording information that might be of interest to the governments, scientific groups, and missionary organizations that sponsored them. Not until the second half of the century were the sporadic efforts of Portuguese and Arab explorers penetrating equatorial Africa really taken up by Europeans. The first of these explorers, I presume, was the most famous of all, David Livingstone.

Livingstone was sent to Africa by the London Missionary Society. He arrived in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1841 and then traveled north. He roamed the interior for years, reaching the Okavango swamp and delta complex in Botswana in 1849, crossing Angola to Luanda in 1854, and reaching Victoria Falls in 1855. In 1858, he traveled up the Zambezi from its mouth and then turned north up the Shire River to Lake Malawi. His death south of Lake Bangweulu in 1873 inspired a great deal of European interest in this part of Africa, especially because of the writings of Henry Morton Stanley, who had "found" Livingstone in 1871.

For the majority of people in Europe and North America, the exploits of these explorers meant little more than excitement and drama set on an exotic stage. For small minorities, the diaries of these explorers and those of others, such as Richard Burton and John Speke who sought the source of the Nile, did much to arouse their interest. Church groups and members of missionary societies were interested in "saving" the Africans. Also interested were the new monied classes spawned by the Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America. These entrepreneurs and investors urged their respective governments to act in their behalf to establish control of the "newly found" riches and regions (Shillington, 1995:294-300).

■ **African Americans in Africa**

During the 1800s, as European expansion into Africa increased, many former African slaves and their descendants were reestablishing ties with their African homeland in western Africa. While most attention has been paid to the activities of whites in Africa, attention should also be given to the role of African Americans as missionaries, explorers, settlers, and political opponents of colonialism.

Many ex-slaves from the Americas and some who never reached the Americas returned to Africa. For example, ex-slaves from Brazil began arriving in what are now Nigeria, Benin, and Togo in the 1840s. They became active in commerce and the skilled trades and, by the 1880s, dominated the inland trade from the French post in Dahomey (now Benin). The Brazilian architectural styles they brought with them can still be seen in some older homes in western Nigeria. In Freetown, Sierra Leone, Africans freed from slavery by British antislavery patrols were released. They were joined by African Americans returning from Jamaica and British North America. These Africans of many origins eventually formed a mixed African-Western "Krio" (Creole) culture. They too specialized in trade both along the coast and into the interior. Many people of Yoruba ancestry returning from Brazil moved to Lagos and Badagry in western Nigeria. When the British annexed Lagos in 1861, Krios became officials in the new colony (Bohannan and Curtin, 1995:215-216). Liberia was another

refuge for people of African ancestry, in this case from the United States. In 1822, the American Colonization Society transported freed slaves from the Carolinas to Monrovia, named after then-president James Monroe. Alexander Crummell, a leading nineteenth-century African American intellectual, migrated to Liberia in the 1850s, and Bishop H. M. Turner was one of the leading black advocates of immigration to Africa for African Americans at the turn of the century.

All along the Guinea coast—especially in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Liberia—Africans and African Americans joined the Christian missionary effort. Many were Krios from Sierra Leone or Nigeria. African American missionaries also met with considerable success in other parts of western Africa, Congo, and as far as South Africa.

African Americans helped to explore the continent. Notably, the National Emigration Convention of Colored Men sent out an all-black exploring party headed by Martin Delany, a physician, to explore the Niger valley from the coast shortly before the American Civil War (Ohaegbulam, 1993:219–231).

The combined activities of African Americans and Westernized Africans were, in fact, slowly transforming many areas of Africa before European conquest and rule were imposed. As Bohannan and Curtin point out, many progressive changes that had been occurring in Africa during the 1800s were reversed during the colonial period.

With the colonial period, Europeans reasserted their authority over the missionary movement. Europeans replaced most of the Africans who had held high posts in government administration, medical services, and the like. The African middle class of traders in Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and elsewhere found it increasingly hard to compete with large European firms in the export trade to Europe, though Africans continued to fill the role of middlemen between the African producers and the European firms. In the colonial setting, Western impact increased immensely, but with Africans playing a diminished role as responsible participants in the process. (Bohannan and Curtin, 1995:218)

Finally, the role of African Americans in the anticolonial struggle should be mentioned. The “back to Africa” movement in the United States in the early 1800s later spawned the idea that all people of African descent should unite to promote their common interests and fight racism. The pan-African movement in the late 1800s and early 1900s protested the abuses and racism affecting Africans in such areas as Rhodesia and South Africa. While lacking the power to change colonialism, the movement was useful because it publicized alternative perspectives on colonialism to the people of the world. African Americans influential in the pan-African movement included the West Indian, and later Liberian, diplomat Edward Wilmot Blyden and Jamaican-born Marcus Moziah Garvey. In 1914 in New York,

Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association, whose influence was widespread in Africa. Perhaps the most famous member of the pan-African movement was W. E. B. Du Bois, who was a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Du Bois's ideas on pan-Africanism influenced many Africans, including U.S.-educated Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana. A great student of African history, Du Bois became a citizen of Ghana and was buried in Accra (Ohaegbulam, 1993:226–232).

■ Conquest and Resistance

Aided by missionaries who appealed to their home governments for various degrees of political or military “protection,” by explorers who touted the riches to be found in the interior of Africa if only the local inhabitants could be “pacified,” and by the owners of trading companies who wanted to eliminate competition, the political and military support for the takeover of Africa was not difficult to find in most European countries by the last decades of the nineteenth century. By 1884, at the Berlin Conference, the leaders of most European states came together and agreed on ground rules for dividing up Africa. Unfortunately, the political boundaries they drew on their largely inaccurate maps cut apart ethnic groups, kingdoms, and historically linked regions in ways that continue to cause conflicts in Africa today (Freund, 1998:73–90).

The push of the British, French, German, and other European powers into Africa in the last quarter of the nineteenth century required considerable effort. A good majority of the people of Africa, whether living in states or small-scale lineage-based societies, opposed European occupation through force of arms or nonviolently (Freund, 1998:91–96). Well-organized, if poorly armed, Muslim armies filled with a spirit of jihad resisted British advances in Sudan, and the full subjugation of the region was not completed until the late 1890s. In western Africa, Ahmadu Seku, the leader of the Tukolor state, and the Maninka leader, Samory Touré, fought the French into the 1890s. Rabih, a Muslim leader from the upper Nile, resisted French expansion in what are today Chad and the Central African Republic until 1900 (O'Toole, 1986:18–20).

Dahomey, a kingdom in present-day Benin, was not conquered by Europeans until 1894. And even then the French were able to do it only with the help of Senegalese troops. Leaders of numerous groups in the forests of Côte d'Ivoire resisted the French for twenty years. The British had to invade the Asante in Ghana in 1874 and 1895–1896 and again in 1900 before they could establish the Gold Coast colony. In Nigeria, the British had to launch major offensives to defeat the various peoples: Ilorin in Yorubaland held out until 1897 as did the *oba*, or leader, of Benin City; and the Sokoto caliphate was not completely overcome until 1903. In Uganda, the Bunyoro

used guerrilla warfare against the British until 1898; Swahili speakers on the coast of Kenya successfully resisted the British for most of 1895 and 1896; Nandi and other Kenyan peoples fought the British well into the 1900s (Shillington, 1995:313–316).

Farther south in Nyasaland (Malawi), Yao, Chewa, and Nguni forces fought the British in the 1890s; the Gaza empire and the Barwe kingdom fought the Portuguese in Mozambique; and the Nama resisted the Germans in South-West Africa (Namibia). As is demonstrated in Chapter 13, South African groups resisted the imposition of British control as well.

Even after the colonial regimes seemed to have been well established, attempts to reassert independence broke out throughout Africa. In the 1890s, the Shona and Ndebele rose up against the British in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), the people of Tanganyika (Tanzania) fought the Germans in the Maji Maji resistance in 1905–1906, and the Herero and Nama peoples launched open warfare against the Germans in South-West Africa in 1904–1907. Throughout colonial Africa, these and other struggles, such as the Kongo War in the present-day Central African Republic (then part of French Equatorial Africa), continued as late as the 1930s (O'Toole, 1984:329–344; Freund, 1998:140–142).

In the end, though, the superior military technology, logistic and organizational skills, and resources of the Europeans won out. All too often, African leaders found that their inability to unite various ethnic groups and factions against their common European enemies led to defeat. Most of Africa north of the Limpopo River fell under European rule between 1880 and 1905.

■ THE COLONIAL PERIOD

■ Colonial Rule

The two major European powers to establish colonial systems in Africa were Britain and France. After World War I, the limited amount of German territory in Africa was redistributed, in most cases to France or Britain, while the Belgians and Portuguese maintained smaller areas under their nominal control. Wherever and whenever colonial rule was established, it was essentially a paternalistic, bureaucratic dictatorship. Yet, given the vast areas occupied and the variety of African communities encountered, the colonialists were forced to recognize or to create a class of intermediaries to assist them. Somewhat oversimplified, colonial policies can be divided into direct and indirect rule, with the British portrayed as indirect rulers and the French as direct rulers (Shillington, 1995:354–357). Colonial rule from the standpoint of colonial economic interests in different regions of Africa is discussed in other chapters.

The British, in particular, were often convinced that ruling through “traditional tribal” authorities was the most efficient way to govern and to extract whatever revenue possible. This indirect rule policy, theoretically, interfered as little as possible so that Africans could advance along “their own lines.” In reality, even in northern Nigeria, one place where this form of colonialism came quite close to working, the traditional authorities could often use their positions to extort substantial incomes, though their freedom to rule was very circumscribed. They often faced resistance from their own subjects. And any traditional ruler not acceptable to the colonial power was deposed and replaced by British appointees who were more amenable to the colonial regime.

The British tried to use indirect rule in several other places by reintroducing monarchy to Benin (in southern Nigeria), by restoring the Asante-hene in central Ghana (Gold Coast), and by attempting to reestablish the Oyo empire among the Yoruba in Nigeria. They also were instrumental in maintaining monarchies in Swaziland, Lesotho, Uganda, and Barotseland in what was then Northern Rhodesia.

The French were relatively disinterested in indirect rule, though they too utilized the old ruling classes when it seemed advantageous. The French typically established administrative units that cut across traditional boundaries, created a transethnic elite, and used the French language at all levels of administration. At its extreme, French policy held that all Africans were to be completely assimilated and made equal citizens of France. More often, the highly centralized French administration maintained the necessity of deliberately creating an African elite who would accept French standards and then become “associated” with French rulers in the work of governing the colonies.

The authors of Belgian policy, like the French and the Portuguese, never displayed a great interest in indirect rule. Initially, the Belgians ruled through private companies, which were responsible for areas of administration. This was changed to direct rule by the 1910s because of the gross abuses committed by the companies against the local people under their control. The Belgians, unlike the French, deliberately limited African education to the primary levels and geared it entirely to semiskilled occupational training. Rather ironically, local political realities, coupled with a lack of finance for developed systems of bureaucratic control, meant that the French, Belgians, and Portuguese were often forced to rule through traditional elites in ways little different from the British.

Overall, the French colonies were as despotically ruled as any, but they did have the anomaly of the *quatre communes*, the four towns of Senegal—Dakar, Saint Louis, Gorée, and Rufisque—where all locally born residents had the legal rights of French citizenship from the time of the French Revolution and were represented, after 1848, in the French chamber of deputies. Likewise, from 1910 to 1926, the Portuguese allowed a

few Portuguese-speaking African Catholics from Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau to be represented in the Portuguese parliament.

The major differences in colonial policies were regionally based rather than based on the particular colonial power that controlled the land. In most of western Africa, both the French and British refused to allocate land to European settlers or companies, since local suppliers produced enough materials for trade. By contrast, in parts of British East and Central Africa, as well as in French Equatorial Africa and the Belgian Congo, land was taken from Africans and sold to European settlers and companies to ensure sufficient production for export. This difference caused a number of grave political problems in the nationalist era (Freund, 1998:97-144, 217-232).

■ Toward Independence

As is noted in other chapters, Africans became increasingly involved in the world economy during the colonial period. For the seventy-plus years that countries of Europe held both political and economic control in Africa, the economies of African countries were shaped to the advantage of the colonizers. Cash crops such as coffee, rubber, peanuts, and cocoa were grown for European markets. Mining also increased during colonial times. Most cash crop economies benefited European owners of large plantations rather than African farmers, and almost all mines produced for European companies.

In both the French- and the British-ruled areas of Africa, Western-educated African elites were active participants in some form of local government from the early decades of the twentieth century. In the 1920s, reform movements developed in British West Africa, which, apart from South Africa, were probably the earliest nationalist movements in Africa (unless one includes Liberia and Ethiopia, where European colonial rule was never fully established). These movements, like those led earlier by such men as J. E. Casely Hayford and John Mensah Sarbah in the Gold Coast and Samuel Lewis in Sierra Leone, originated among urban, highly Westernized populations in the cities of the coast and were directed primarily at abuses of the rights of these elites caused by the colonial system. Nowhere before World War II did the idea of actual political independence from colonial rule gather much momentum (Bohannan and Curtin, 1995: 240-250).

World War II, though, helped to raise African political consciousness. African soldiers fought in most of the same areas as their European masters. In cooperation with Charles de Gaulle and his "Free French," French West Africans and French Equatorial Africans joined in the fight against Nazi racialism. During the war the Atlantic Charter was proclaimed, and in 1945 the United Nations was created. The ideas therein contributed to the new visions of the right to freedom from colonial rule that Africans began

to voice. After the war, national political parties took hold all over Africa. Initially, the strongest parties to emerge were those in West Africa, where no large European settler class blocked demands. From 1945 to 1960, African nationalist parties under men such as Kwame Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Léopold Senghor, and Félix Houphouët-Boigny developed mass support, won local elections, and pressured for more political rights and ultimately for independence (Freund, 1998:167-203).

In 1957, Ghana became the first black African nation to become independent in the twentieth century. From the capital, Accra, Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972), set about creating a nation from the former British colony of Gold Coast. He was faced with a cocoa monoculture export economy and Asante nationalism dating back to the resistance against British imperialism by the Asantehene Prempeh I in the nineteenth century. Nkrumah's advocacy of pan-African unity was never sufficient to overcome the influences of competing nationalisms and economic dependency that worked against unity (Shillington, 1995:374-377).

In eastern Africa, the presence of European settlers made the struggle for independence even more difficult. In Kenya, colonized by the British between 1895 and 1963, a peaceful evolution to independence was ruled out by white settler opposition. Waiyaki Wa Hinga, a Gikuyu leader, initially welcomed Europeans and even entered into "blood brotherhood" with one early colonial administrator in 1890. Waiyaki was killed in 1892 by officials of the Imperial East African Company when he objected to the building of an unsanctioned fort in his area. Harry Thuku, Kenya's pioneer nationalist, also tried peaceful means to resist British colonialism. Concerned with improving the economic lot of Africans, he founded in 1921 a broad-based organization known as the East African Association. Advocating civil disobedience as a political weapon, he was arrested for disturbing the peace in February 1922. His arrest led to riots and the deaths of several Africans (Freund, 1998:145).

Independence for most settler colonies was won only through armed struggle. Like the Algerians, who fought a bitter eight-year freedom struggle against the French, Kenyans too found it necessary to resort to arms to achieve independence. The national liberation struggle in Kenya, called Mau Mau by the British, began in the late 1940s and was most strongly supported by the Gikuyu. Jomo Kenyatta (a London-educated anthropologist married to a white Englishwoman) was imprisoned by the British between 1953 and 1961 as the alleged brains behind the movement, though the actual fighting was done by such "forest fighters" as Dedan Kimathi, who was captured and executed in 1957. During the struggle, as many as 10,000 Africans (mostly Gikuyu) were killed. A growing sense of national unity against the British resulted from this conflict, and the British finally granted independence to Kenya in 1963 (Shillington, 1995:387-389).

Among the last African nations to achieve independence north of the Limpopo were the former colonies of Portugal: Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique. After more than two decades of armed struggle, independence for the three colonies came quickly when the Portuguese government was overthrown by a military coup in 1974. Faced with South African—and U.S.-backed guerrilla oppositions, the people of Angola have never found a peace settlement possible. Mozambique also faced armed opposition financed by South African and ultraconservative groups from the United States well into the 1990s (Freund, 1998:231–234).

Both Zimbabwe and Namibia achieved black majority rule even later. The people of African ancestry in Zimbabwe defeated the white settler government after a long liberation war, and Zimbabwe became an internally recognized independent state in 1980. With the support of the United Nations, Namibia achieved its independence from South African control in 1990 after a protracted armed struggle. In 1994, Africa's last "colony," South Africa, finally attained black majority rule after Nelson Mandela was elected president in the country's first racially inclusive democratic elections (Freund, 1998:234–236).

Independence did not usher in a golden era. In almost all countries, the bright hopes of democracy soon degenerated into authoritarianism. Throughout the continent, economic decline is almost universal, and population, health, and environmental problems persist. These and other issues are discussed in the chapters that follow. Virtually all of Africa's postcolonial "nation-states" began their existence with arbitrarily drawn borders. From their origins, little more than a century ago, as conquest dictatorships, few African countries have achieved long-lasting popular legitimacy. The past does not determine the future, and I have always questioned the utility of simply blaming the widespread anarchy in Africa on colonialism. In fact, the present widespread "warlord" conditions in Africa may well represent a global future rather than a historical hangover in Africa. As the nation-state gives way to global entrepreneurs who have no allegiance to any institutions beyond their own interests, more countries in the world may become pawns in global power games. In this case, *ex Africa semper ali quid novi* (out of Africa always something new) may be that the collapse of weak nation-states in Africa represents a foreshadowing of the future of much of the rest of the world.

Yet, while the present appears bleak in many respects, most historians of Africa are wise enough to avoid hazarding too many predictions about the future. As Coquery-Vidrovitch stated so well:

In twenty years every aspect that defines Africa today will have undergone an alteration that cannot be foretold by our present means of analysis. The pessimism undeniably called for in the short term, then, cannot validly be extended to the longer term. (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1988:318)

CONCLUSION

African history in the first decade of the twentieth-first century is quite different from what it was when African studies was expanding rapidly in the early 1960s. It is no longer necessary to prove that Africans have histories. The racist and antihistorical synthesis that Africa was "discovered" by or "saved" by Europe, though still reflected in much so-called common knowledge, has been eliminated as an acceptable view by most respectable scholars of Africa. Professional historians have written hundreds of works about virtually every part of the continent. There are specific studies of individual African nations; regional introductory histories of eastern, western, central, and southern Africa; and general histories of the whole continent.

In this chapter I have discussed four basic concept-centered goals that I have developed through my teaching, reading, and writing on the broad subject of African history. The first goal is to enhance the long time span and wide geographical area involved in African history. The second is to increase understanding of the great diversity of Africa's past. The third is to make clear that both change and continuity have been integral parts of the human experience in Africa. The fourth goal I have sought to weave into this chapter is a heightened awareness that all events of history have more than one cause and that the interwoven happenings that produce a given outcome are the result of complex chains of events.

You, as students of Africa, ought personally to pursue a fifth goal—not explicitly focused on in this chapter—as you read the other chapters in this text. That goal is to sharpen your awareness of the role Africa has played in world history. To deal with today's global realities, a marriage between the past and the present is needed. On the one hand, one needs to be introduced to humanity's collective memory, a large part of which flows from Africa. On the other hand, one needs to be sensitized to the current world. People must realize that what happens in Africa is linked to what happens to them, wherever they may live, and vice versa. As was true 300,000 years ago, everyone on earth shares a common humanity as members of one race—the human race. And, while only a few of us were actually born in Africa, our destinies are still linked.

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African Politics

Donald L. Gordon

On August 12, 1998, the soon to be president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, delivered a speech that would challenge African politicians and politics at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

An ill wind has blown me across the face of Africa. I have seen the poverty of Orlando East and the wealth of Morningside in Johannesburg. In Lusaka (Zambia) I have seen the poor of Kanyama township and the prosperous residents of Kabulonga. I have seen the slums of Strulere in Lagos (Nigeria) and the Opulence of Victoria Island. I have seen the faces of the poor in Mbare in Harare (Zimbabwe) and the quiet wealth of Borrowdale.

And I have heard the stories of how those who had access to power, or access to those who had access to power, of how they have robbed and pillaged and broken all laws and all ethical norms to acquire wealth. It is out of this pungent mixture of greed, dehumanizing poverty, obscene wealth, and endemic public and private corrupt practice, that many of Africa's *coups d'état*, civil wars, and situations of instability are born and entrenched.

Surely there must be politicians and business people, youth and women activists, trade unionists, religious leaders, artists and professionals from the Cape to Cairo, from Madagascar to Cape Verde who are sufficiently enraged by Africa's condition in the world to join the mass crusade for Africa's renewal. It is to these that we say, without equivocation, that to be a true African is to be a rebel in the cause of the African Renaissance, whose success in the new century and the millennium is one of the greatest challenges of our time. (Je Pere and van Nieuwkerk, 1999:205)

The "ill wind" blowing at the end of the last decade of the twentieth century contrasts sharply with the "winds of political change" that swept through Africa at the beginning of the 1990s. Because then, after more than thirty years of predominantly authoritarian rule, a period of massive political reform virtually exploded across the continent, changing the political