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Edited by J. D. Fage and R. A. Oliver

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EDITED BY

J. D. FAGE

*Professor of African History
University of Birmingham*

AND

R. A. OLIVER

*Professor of the History of Africa
University of London*



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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

- A. D. H. BIVAR, *Reader in the Archaeology of the Near and Middle East, University of London.*
- NEVILLE CHITTICK, *Director, British Institute of History and Archaeology in East Africa.*
- J. DESMOND CLARK, *Professor of Old World Archaeology, University of California, Berkeley.*
- BRIAN M. FAGAN, *Professor of Archaeology, University of California, Santa Barbara.*
- MALCOLM GUTHRIE, *Professor of Bantu Languages, University of London.*
- F. L. LAMBRECHT, *World Health Organisation, Botswana.*
- WYATT MACGAFFEY, *Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, Haverford College, Pennsylvania.*
- J. NENQUIN, *Professor, Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, University of Ghent, Belgium.*
- ROLAND OLIVER, *Professor of the History of Africa, University of London.*
- ROLAND PORTÈRES, *Professor, Directeur du Laboratoire d'Ethnobotanique, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris.*
- P. L. SHINNIE, *Professor of Archaeology, University of Khartoum, Khartoum, and MRS. M. SHINNIE.*
- F. J. SIMOONS, *Department of Geography, University of Texas, Austin, Texas.*
- R. SUMMERS, *Director, National Museum, Bulawayo, Rhodesia.*
- FRANK WILLETT, *Professor of African Art, Northwestern University.*
- C. C. WRIGLEY, *Reader in African History, University of Sussex.*

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Publisher's Note

All articles in this book except Chapters 3, 10, 12 and 18, and part of 14 are reprinted as they originally appeared in the *Journal of African History* with only a few minor corrections, and they have not been brought up to date. Readers will find therefore that some details, such as names of territories, refer to the conditions prevailing when the article was first written.

Chapter nos. 3, 10, 12 and 18 have been rewritten or newly translated for this volume. References in these articles are to the state of affairs when the book went to press.

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INTRODUCTION

By R. A. OLIVER AND J. D. FAGE

EVER since its foundation in 1960, the editors of the *Journal of African History* have pursued a policy of inviting special contributions from Iron Age archaeologists and others working around the earlier limits of the subject, couched in the non-technical language necessary for a largely lay readership. Most of the articles reprinted in this volume have originated in this way. Between them, they embody some of the most up-to-date and forward-looking contributions to African prehistory, and it seems appropriate that they should now be presented to an audience wider than that of the *Journal's* regular subscribers.

The author of the first two articles, Professor J. Desmond Clark, of the University of California, Berkeley, is by any account the most experienced and the widest-ranging authority on the African Stone Age. In these two magisterial surveys he presents the leading themes in the progression of African cultures, from the earliest tool-making hominids to the Late Stone Age initiators of the food-producing revolution. It is in elucidating the origins of this revolution, which made possible the settled life, and all the cultural developments that came with it, that the botanist can make his greatest contribution to African history, and this contribution is well illustrated in the article by Professor Roland Portères of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle of Paris, here for the first time translated into English, which summarizes what is known from botanical evidence about the domestication of cereal food-plants in Africa north of the equatorial forests. In the two articles which follow, Mr. Christopher Wrigley of the University of Sussex puts forward in a much more tentative way the arguments for supposing that there was a parallel early development of tropical vegiculture in the woodlands south of the Congo forest which form the heart of the present Bantu Africa; while Professor Simoons, of the University of Texas, draws attention to the antiquity of another form of vegiculture in the ensete-growing region of south-west Ethiopia. Discussion on the spread of animal husbandry into Africa is not directly represented in this volume, but one of the most important conditioning factors for that spread is described in the highly original article by Dr Frank L. Lambrecht of the World Health Organisation, on the evolution and ecology of tsetse flies and trypanosomiasis, which incidentally suggests that many millions of years earlier, the tsetse fly may have created the ecological niche for the ground-living primates, and so for the evolution of man himself.

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During the past twenty years, evidence from the classification of languages has come to be seen as a much more useful pointer to the nature of prehistoric African cultures than older concepts of race and culture derived from the rather unsatisfactory data of physical and cultural anthropology. In this volume the general point is made by Dr Wyatt MacGaffey of Haverford College, who concludes that in the present state of knowledge, priority should be accorded to data in the order (1) language, (2) race, (3) culture, and not the reverse. A very important contribution by a comparative linguist to the prehistory of sub-equatorial Africa is the article by Professor Malcolm Guthrie, of the School of Oriental and African Studies of London University, describing the main historical conclusions to be drawn from his life's work on the classification of the Bantu languages, now at last emerging from the press.¹ The article by Roland Oliver is an attempted synthesis, as at May 1966, of the archaeological, botanical, linguistic and historical evidence concerning the origins and dispersion of the Bantu-speaking peoples. This article is very far from being the last word on the subject; but in so far as it directs attention away from the remote and possibly insoluble problem of ultimate origins, and towards the successive stages of population growth and geographical dispersion, it may indicate the main lines of future research.

The remaining articles in the volume are by archaeologists of the Iron Age of Africa, and they present the preliminary conclusions of ongoing research. From his position at the National Museum, Bulawayo, Mr Roger Summers has been personally involved in all the major developments in Rhodesian archaeology during the last twenty years, and his article on the Rhodesian Iron Age, first printed in 1960, has been completely revised for this volume. The same is true of the article on the Iron Age sequence in the southern province of Zambia by Dr Brian Fagan, who for several years occupied a comparable vantage-point at the Livingstone Museum. Dr Fagan's article on the Greefswald sites was undertaken at the express invitation of the editors of the *Journal*, and has served a particularly valuable purpose, both in elucidating an almost unintelligible excavation literature, and in relating the conclusions to the latest findings from Zambia and Rhodesia. The southern Congo, potentially the most important region in Africa for Iron Age archaeology, has so far received only a brief series of expeditions organized by Professor Jean Hiernaux during his Rectorship of the University of Lubumbashi. The most arresting discoveries made were at the Sanga cemetery site, described in this volume by Dr Jacques Nenquin of the University of Ghent. There follow two articles by Mr Neville Chittick, for many years Director of the British Institute of History and Archaeology in East Africa. The first describes the splendid ruins first uncovered by Mr Chittick at Husuni Kubwa at the northern tip of Kilwa Island. The second reappraises the early medieval

¹ M. Guthrie, *Introduction to the Study of the Bantu Languages*. New York, Gregg, 4 vols, 1968-9.

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history of the East Coast in the light of the Kilwa excavations.

The years of the *Journal's* existence have not been the most significant ones for progress in the archaeology of the Sudan Republic, where efforts have been largely concentrated on rescue operations in connection with the flooding caused by the Aswan High Dam. Nevertheless an article by Professor Peter Shinnie and his wife Margaret presents some fresh reflections on the Christian kingdoms of Nubia in the light of the Polish excavations at Faras, and of the new analysis of Nubian pottery undertaken by Dr William Y. Adams on behalf of the Sudan Antiquities Service. Now that Professor Shinnie has taken up a post at the University of Khartoum and from there begun new excavations at the great site of Meroe, it is to be hoped that the archaeology of the Sudan will take its rightful place in the *Journal's* pages.

Serious archaeological work, on any planned or large scale, was slower to develop in West Africa than was the case along the axis from Cairo to the Cape. Difficult working conditions were not offset by the obvious lures of unravelling the secrets of the pyramids or of Zimbabwes, or of making dramatic advances in the understanding of man's earliest history. However in the last twenty years or so, the West African situation has begun to change with ever-increasing momentum, so that today more and more archaeologists are setting to work in territories like Tchad and Cameroun, Niger and Mali, Senegal and Mauretania and, above all perhaps, Ghana and Nigeria. Some of the work done in the last few years has been truly exciting, but the field is a very wide one and, aware that there is so much more remaining to be uncovered and understood, the West African archaeologists have as yet been reluctant to generalize from what they have already achieved. Thus the survey of the archaeology of Ife by Professor Frank Willett of Northwestern University presented here must stand for the moment merely as a presage of the broader syntheses that may be expected in due course.

A final word of caution must be addressed to readers of this volume on the subject of radiocarbon dates. The articles reprinted here have been written over nearly ten years, during which the number of radiocarbon dates from Iron Age sites has been doubling approximately every year. The problem is not that the individual dates quoted have subsequently proved unreliable. It is that so many new dates have been springing up all round them that the total chronological picture has been changing dramatically from year to year. For example, Professor Clark in the second of his two articles, written in 1962, states that 'by A.D. 200 the Negro Nok Culture people were smelting iron and tin'. Since then iron-working levels in Nok Culture sites have been dated, first of all to the third, and most recently to the fifth, century B.C. Clark's statement was, and is, correct. But he would not have written it in that form today, and readers must beware of similar anachronisms throughout the volume. The editors have carefully considered whether they should try to annotate

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such anachronisms as of June 1968, but have decided that in view of the rate at which new information is accumulating, the additional expense involved would not be justified. Lists of, and comments on, new radiocarbon dates are published regularly in the *Journal*, and, by reference to these, new developments in any particular area of sub-Saharan African can be easily and quickly checked.