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978-0-521-09900-4 - Africa in the Iron Age, c. 500 B.C. to A.D. 1400

Roland Oliver and Brian M. Fagan

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Preface

This book is first of all the fruit of a good friendship, which began within sound of the Victoria Falls in July 1960. In that year the *Journal of African History* was founded, as a vehicle for the publication of new research in African history and archaeology from the beginning of the Iron Age until the present day. One of us was for fourteen years an editor of the journal. The other was a frequent contributor and a constant advisor. Since then, we have maintained a regular correspondence, and we have met not only after the fashion of the wandering scholars of the twentieth century, at conferences in Europe and Africa and North America, but at archaeological sites and in each other's homes. We are acutely conscious of the vast dimensions in time and space of the subject we have tried to tackle, as well as of the necessarily narrow limits of our own first-hand experience of the evidence. For all that, our mutual understanding has given us courage, if not confidence. Every chapter, every paragraph, and almost every sentence in this book has been written twice, if not more often. We have at least tried each to meet the scruples of the other, and we hope that the result will reflect in some measure a real encounter of two disciplines in their approach to the African past.

We wish to express our thanks to Dr Michael Bisson, Dr Michael Brett, Dr Humphrey Fisher, Dr John Sutton and Professor Jan Vansina, all of whom have read parts of this book in manuscript and have made valuable suggestions for its improvement.