

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45599-2 - A History of African Societies to 1870

Elizabeth Isichei

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

This newly comprehensive and detailed exploration of the African past, reaching from prehistory to approximately 1870, is intended to provide a fully up-to-date textbook, thematically organized, for undergraduate students of African history.

Reflecting several emphases in recent scholarship, Professor Isichei focuses on the changing modes of production, on gender relations and on ecology, laying particular stress on viewing history 'from below'. A distinctive theme is to be found in her analyses of cognitive history.

The work falls into three sections. The first comprises a historiographic analysis, covering the period from the dawn of prehistory to the end of the Early Iron Age. The second and third sections are, for the most part, organised on regional lines; the second section ends in the sixteenth century; the third carries the story on to 1870. Explaining each facet of the continent's history with exceptional erudition, balance and sympathy, Professor Isichei displays both an immense learning and a thorough command of the literature.

A second volume, now in preparation, will cover the period from 1870 to 1995.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45599-2 - A History of African Societies to 1870
Elizabeth Isichei
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

A history of African societies to 1870

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45599-2 - A History of African Societies to 1870

Elizabeth Isichei

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

A history of African societies to 1870

ELIZABETH ISICHEI

University of Otago



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45599-2 - A History of African Societies to 1870
Elizabeth Isichei
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521454445

© Cambridge University Press 1997

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1997
Reprinted 2000

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-45444-5 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-45599-2 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2008

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
Part I: Continental perspectives	1
Perimeters	3
1 Prelude: Africa and the historians	7
2 Out of Africa: the precursors	25
3 Environment, language and art <i>c.</i> 10,000 – <i>c.</i> 500 BCE	40
4 Producing more food <i>c.</i> 10,000 – <i>c.</i> 500 BCE	56
5 Copper and iron <i>c.</i> 600 BCE to <i>c.</i> 1000 CE	69
6 Models: production, power and gender	78
Part II: Regional histories to the sixteenth century	101
7 Central Africa	103
8 Eastern Africa	120
9 Africa south of the Limpopo	141
10 Northern Africa to the seventh century CE	151
11 Northern Africa from the seventh century CE	172
12 The North-East	196
13 The Western Sudan	213
14 West Africa: from the savanna to the sea	239
Part III: Regional histories to <i>c.</i> 1870	261
15 Northern Africa	263
16 The Western Sudan in a time of jihad	291
17 The Eastern and Central Sudan	313
18 The Atlantic slave trade	323
19 West Africa to 1800	341
20 West Africa 1800 to 1870	360
21 Central Africa	389

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45599-2 - A History of African Societies to 1870
Elizabeth Isichei
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

viii

Contents

22	Southern Africa	409
23	East and East Central Africa	431
	<i>Notes</i>	456
	<i>Some suggestions for further reading</i>	559
	<i>Index</i>	570

Illustrations

Figures

1	Human evolution	<i>page</i> 31
2	Long-term climate change	41
3	African language families: Afroasiatic	48
4	African language families: Nilo-Saharan	50
5	African language families: Kordofanian and Niger-Congo	51

Maps

1	Human evolution: archaeological sites	26
2	African language families	49
3	Bantu languages	52
4	Cradles of domestication	61
5	Central Africa	104
6	Eastern Africa	121
7	South Africa	142
8	Northern Africa in antiquity	164
9	Northern Africa (seventh to twelfth centuries)	174
10	Egypt and the Near East: Fatimids and Mamluks	183
11	The North-East	197
12	The Western Sudan (to <i>c.</i> 1600)	214
13	Lower Guinea	240
14	The Western and Central Sudan: the nineteenth century	292
15	Southern Africa: the nineteenth century	410
16	East and Central Africa: the nineteenth century	432

Acknowledgements

This book was begun at Cambridge in 1991 and so it seems particularly appropriate that it is published by Cambridge University Press. I am deeply indebted to Jessica Kuper, for her patience in waiting for the manuscript, and her flexibility about its length. I am also profoundly grateful to the book's three anonymous readers, whose assessments were enormously encouraging and helpful.

I visited Cambridge during a seven-month sabbatical leave. I am most grateful to the Fellows of Clare Hall, Cambridge, who elected me first to a Visiting Fellowship, and later to a Life Membership. During my sabbatical I also visited the University of Washington at Seattle, where I have the warmest memories of the kindness of Simon Ottenberg. I acknowledge, with gratitude, research funding from the University of Otago Division of Humanities Research Grants Committee, and a most timely grant from the University Research Grants Committee towards the costs of maps and indexing. I am grateful to my invisible friends of the Internet, especially the members of Nuafrica.

Much of this book has been written while I have been running a university department and carrying a heavy teaching load. I am greatly indebted to the helpfulness and efficiency of the Religious Studies Secretary, Sandra Lindsay, and of the staff of the University Library, particularly the Reference Department, for whom no interloan request was too obscure.

My beloved youngest son, Frank, was my companion during my sabbatical, as he is now, in Dunedin. It is dedicated to him.