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POLITICAL ECONOMIC MOSAICS: Archaeology of the Last Two Millennia in Tropical Sub-Saharan Africa

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■ **Abstract** This review explores recent research that moves away from conventional preoccupations with origins and independent innovation in African Iron Age archaeology. Critiques of cultural evolutionary formulations and empirically robust case studies combine to shape new concerns with the following: the variable expressions of complexity in time and space; the mosaic quality of social, political economic, and technological landscapes; and the effects of global entanglements over the last millennium. Ongoing research in western and eastern Africa highlights the dynamism of political economic arrangements over the last two millennia and reminds us that configurations enshrined in twentieth-century ethnography represent but a moment in the dynamic history of African societies.

INTRODUCTION

The last two thousand years of sub-Saharan Africa's past falls within the so-called Iron Age, which in standard formulations began with the advent of iron production (∼500 BC to AD 500) and saw expanding reliance on agricultural production (through the first millennium AD) and emerging complex societies (from ∼500 AD). These have been key topics in Iron Age research, which also has been shaped by a concern to construct culture-historical sequences, counter images of Africa as dependent on external stimuli for innovations, and demonstrate the dynamic qualities of Africa's later past (Connah 1998, Robertshaw 1990, Sinclair et al. 1993a, Stahl 1999b). Research often has been underwritten by a cultural evolutionary logic that focused attention on issues of origins and complexity and therefore on sites deemed early or likely to yield evidence of innovation and independent cultural dynamism. Iron Age research also was shaped by its interdisciplinary character, particularly because scenarios derived from comparative ethnography, historical linguistics, and documentary sources often preceded significant

archaeological research (e.g., Greenberg 1955, Murdock 1959), though archaeological evidence more often than not has proved these sources wrong (Childs & Herbert 2005; Eggert 2005; LaViolette 2004; LaViolette & Fleisher 2005; Pikirayi 2001, pp. 1–36; Robertshaw 2000, 2003; Schmidt 1990).

These concerns remain important today, and the past 2000 years continues to be subsumed within an "Iron Age" rubric (though perhaps more out of convenience than conviction). Yet the term has been critiqued on several grounds: (*a*) By focusing attention on metallurgy and agricultural production as emblematic of Iron Age societies, it diverts attention away from the complex mosaic of technologies, productive strategies, and political forms that characterized the continent over the past 2000 years (Kusimba 2003, Stahl 1999b); (*b*) it focuses attention on complex societies, diverting attention from the interconnections among societies of different scale (Amselle 1998, LaViolette & Fleisher 2005, Sharpe 1986); and (*c*) it creates a rupture between the "prehistoric" archaeology of "Iron Age" societies and the "historic" archaeology of settlements associated with European colonial activity (LaViolette 2004; Lightfoot 1995, pp. 202–4; Robertshaw 2004, pp. 380–82).

This review highlights recent research that moves away from conventional enclosures of Iron Age archaeology and explores three emerging themes: the complexity of complexity; the mosaic character of African social, political economic, and technological landscapes; and how global entanglements shaped African societies of the past millennium. I explore these themes through examples drawn from western and eastern Africa. They are amply illustrated in the archaeology of southern Africa as well, though limitations of space preclude a discussion (see Hall 1990, 1993; Hall & Markell 1993; Kent 2002; Pwiti 2005; Reid 2005; Schrire 1995). Although less well known, limited findings in central Africa resonate with these themes, as well (de Maret 1994/1995, 1999, 2005; Eggert 1994/1995; Mercador et al. 2000).

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COMPLEXITY, POLITICAL ECONOMIC MOSAICS, AND ENTANGLEMENTS

Complex societies are an important focus in Anglophone archaeology, and archaeological evidence has been central to assessing anthropological theories on the origins and development of social, political economic complexity. Complexity in its various guises often has been perceived as the culmination of an evolutionary trajectory whether cast in a neoevolutionary or Marxist light (Rowlands 1989; Shennan 1993, p. 53). Through the 1980s a preoccupation with state-level societies gave way to a growing concern with so-called middle-range societies thought to represent precursors of the state (Earle 1987). Other investigators worked to unhook the components of complexity, for example, the presumed connections between forms of inequality and specific productive systems (Feinman & Neitzel 1984; Haas 2001, pp. 16–17). Still others urged a more fundamental rethinking of evolutionary models (Paynter 1989, Yoffee 1993). A preoccupation with hierarchical

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organizational forms yielded in the 1990s a concern with alternative logics, particularly heterarchy (Ehrenreich et al. 1995). Yet as S. McIntosh observed (1999c), African examples were largely absent from comparative theoretical discussions (e.g. Haas 2001; cf. Bacus & Lucero 1999; also see Lane 2001, p. 793), while archaeologists working in Africa were hampered by a reliance on models of complexity derived from other world areas. S. McIntosh (1999c, p. 4) pointed particularly to the hegemony of Oceanic models, and other contributors to her edited volume highlighted other "statejackets" (David & Sterner 1999, p. 99) into which our understandings of ancient African states have been forced (Asombang 1999, RJ McIntosh 1999). Contributors to that volume called for a renewed engagement with the practices and character of African complex societies past and present, arguing that more nuanced understandings of African social, political economic complexity should play an important role in retheorizing complexity more generally.

Francophone archaeologists have been less concerned with theorizing complexity or relating their studies of West African states to broader anthropological debates; they focus instead on contingency and specificity and particularly on the relationship between historical landscapes and human action (see, e.g., Devisse 1993, Vansina 1995, pp. 374–77; cf. Robertshaw 2000, p. 264). Yet whether informed by social scientific or more particularist historical concerns (McIntosh 2001, p. 15), archaeological research has cast considerable doubt on the received wisdom about the Sudanic states derived from Arab documents, and as outlined below, recent research in western and eastern Africa is beginning to illuminate the variable expressions of complexity and its contexts over the past two millennia.

Though archaeologists who work in Africa are increasingly attuned to the variable expressions of complexity over the past two millennia, investigations have tended to focus on the centers of complexity (LaViolette & Fleisher 2005). This focus has obscured the mosaic quality of African social, political economic, and technological landscapes, mosaics in which foragers interacted with agriculturalists, peripatetic herders passed through the courts of kings, and so-called tribal societies formed on the margins of complex polities. Of course scholars have long recognized the diversity of African societies; however, they have framed this diversity in terms of ethnic-linguistic groupings distinguished by techno-economic differences endowed with evolutionary significance (Murdock 1959; see Kusimba & Kusimba 2005). Despite indictments against early efforts to link language, race, and economy, a notion endures that foraging, cultivation, and pastoralism were indelibly associated with distinct groups. As Sharpe (1986) argues, the conceptual mapping of distinct state and tribal entities by colonial officials severed the necessary connections among societies of "different scales" (also Amselle 1998, pp. 1–24), a separation reinforced by the evolutionary narrative in standard archaeological texts that treat foraging as related to the Late Stone Age, pastoralism and cultivation as related to "neolithic" processes, and complex societies as an Iron Age phenomenon (cf. Stahl 2005). Yet recent archaeological research is beginning to highlight the interactions among societies of different scales, economies and sometimes technologies.

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Though these interrelations perhaps have had greatest visibility in relation to the "revisionist" debate in the Kalahari (see Reid 2005 for an overview; also Kent 2002, Sadr 1997, Thorp 1997), archaeologists working in diverse areas are beginning to make substantial progress in illuminating this second theme—the mosaic and interconnected quality of African social, political economic, and technological landscapes. Whereas ethnic-linguistic mosaics were previously viewed as relatively fixed, recognition of their fluidity in time and space is growing. Kopytoff's (1987) concept of the "internal African frontier" has proved influential in analyzing this dynamic quality. New societies were continuously formed in the interstices between established ones through processes of migration. Where political control was weak frontier societies were developed (Amselle 1998, p. 14; Kopytoff 1987, p. 9) by migrants prompted to move through accusations of wrongdoing, successional struggles, or perceived opportunities. Migrants derived from a variety of ethnic-linguistic and political groups, and the societies they forged had a hybrid quality (Amselle 1998), drawing as they did on the cultural practices of surrounding areas and creating new ones in the process. Practices of kinship, religion, political organization, and identity were continuously negotiated (Amselle 1998, pp. 32–35). Boundaries were not fixed but existed in relation to a "chain of societies" (Amselle 1998, pp. xiii) on a landscape at any given time (Kopytoff 1987, p. 12).

The growing emphasis on fluidity and mobility has implications for relationships between rulers and the ruled. When people can "vote with their feet," those "in power" must gain the allegiance of followers through multiple strategies, which resonates with an emphasis in Africa on "wealth in people" (Guyer 1995). A focus on wealth in people emerged in contexts where land was abundant and extensive land use patterns prevailed (e.g., Vansina 1990, p. 251). Under these conditions, attracting followers was the central problem for leaders. Wealth in goods was transformed in varying ways to wealth in followers, which Marxist scholars saw as a crucial source of labor (Meillassoux 1972, Rey 1975). Yet their diverse knowledges were an equally important resource (Guyer & Belinga 1995). Guyer & Belinga posit compositional strategies of leadership that brought together people with diverse, complexly organized knowledges (of crafts, the supernatural, diverse ecologies, and economic opportunities). Compositional strategies resonate with notions of heterarchy and are "quite different from the models of hierarchical gradations of esoteric knowledge as a social control mechanism" (p. 112). This perspective may serve as a means to complicate hierarchy by pointing to its varied forms, an issue that usefully may be explored in relation to what Blanton et al. (1996) term corporate and network modes of power (see below).

The complexity of these social, political, and economic mosaics was further complicated by our third theme—entanglements (Thomas 1991) that ensued from Africa's involvement in emerging world systems. Global entanglements were intimately bound up in expanding systems of exchange, altered frameworks of value, and shifting topologies of power, though we should not assume the priority of external dominance and metropolitan processes over local autonomy and regional dynamics (Thomas 1991, p. 186). Though emphasis often has been placed on

the period of the Atlantic trade and the modern world system, global connections run deep—from at least the tenth century with the emerging trans-Saharan trade, and possibly even earlier in western Africa (Magnavita 2003), and from the early centuries AD in eastern Africa with the Indian Ocean trade (LaViolette 2004). Intercontinental connections had wide-ranging implications for production, consumption, demography, and sociopolitical configurations. The character of these connections varied over time and in space and involved diasporic populations whose presence further complicated the mosaic quality of African societies. Whereas some investigators envision these entanglements in terms of "cores" and "peripheries" (e.g., Wallerstein 1986, p. 102), the assumed dominance of the core, the unidirectional emphasis that situates agency within the core, and the assumed primacy of long-distance connections in shaping the political economy of "peripheries" has proved unsatisfactory (Stein 2002, pp. 904–5; Thomas 1991, p. 207). This dissatisfaction has prompted new approaches to the study of interregional interaction that stress local agency, practice, and the variegated quality and multiple effects of these entanglements (Dietler 1998, Lightfoot et al. 1998, Pauketat 2001, Stein 2002), and I explore how these concerns have been incorporated into the study of global entanglements in Africa.

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WESTERN AFRICA

Recent research in West Africa (Figure 1) highlights the complexity of African complex societies, illustrated particularly by discussions concerning heterarchy and hierarchy in the Sudanic belt. We also are gaining appreciation for the complex

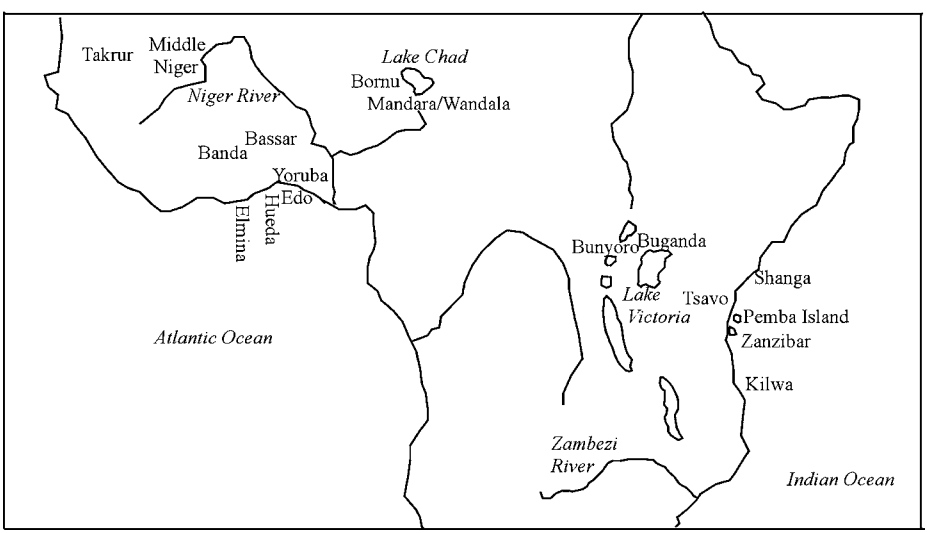

Figure 1 Areas and sites in tropical Africa.

and dynamic relations among societies of different scales and how these mosaics were reshaped through their changing involvement in the trans-Saharan and later Atlantic exchange systems (MacEachern 2005).

Heterarchy in the Middle Niger

The Inland Niger Delta (IND) is a rich interior floodplain inserted into arid surroundings on the southern margins of the Sahara. A series of dry basins (including the Méma) attests to the vast expanse of the Middle Niger in earlier millennia (McIntosh 1998, pp. 34–80). Ecological diversity of the IND contributed to the emergence of regional exchange networks, and historically (from the early second millennium AD) the Middle Niger played a key role in the trans-Saharan trade that linked the forested hinterlands of the Guinea coast (rich in gold and kola nut) with the Mediterranean world. Competition over the Saharan trade fueled a succession of historically known empires: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay.

Both the active and dry basins of the Middle Niger have been subject to extensive survey and variably intensive subsurface testing of sites of varying size over the past quarter century (e.g., Baloian 2002; Bedaux & van der Waals 1994; Bedaux et al. 1978, 2001; Devisse 1993; Haaland 1980; Insoll 1997; McIntosh 1995, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; McIntosh & McIntosh 1993; Raimbault & Sanogo 1991; Togola 1996). The McIntoshes' early work concentrated on large mound sites in a settlement complex associated with the ancient commercial town of Jenné. Historians had long assumed that urban settlements in West Africa were a product of the "golden trade of the Moors" (Bovill 1958); however, excavations at the largest of these mounds, Jenné-jeno, demonstrated that the precursor of the early second millennium city described by Arab chroniclers predated the emergence of trans-Saharan exchange networks and was sustained by exchange among societies ranging from southern forested regions to the Sahara. A concern of early research was to demonstrate the independent origins of African complex societies and to highlight how criteria from other world areas drew a curtain across our understanding of the distinctive qualities of African urbanism (McIntosh & McIntosh 1993; also Connah 2001, Fletcher 1998, MacDonald 1998, LaViolette & Fleisher 2005).

More recent publications emphasize the distinctive organizational features of Middle Niger societies which the McIntoshes envision as heterarchically organized (McIntosh 1998, 1999b). They pose a model of "deep time plurality" in which ethnically and economically diverse populations resisted centralizing tendencies, maintaining instead a form of "articulated specialization" that offered flexibility in the face of short-term climatic change (Magnavita & Magnavita 2001; McIntosh 1993, 1998, pp. 55–57). Fostered by the patchy distribution of resources and scheduling conflicts, such specialization characterized the earliest IND settlements and persisted through rapid population growth into the second millennium AD without notable intensification (McIntosh 1999a, pp. 155, 160, 1999b, pp. 68, 74). This specialization underlay a long-standing resistance to monopolized power and contributed to the durability of heterarchical arrangements in the IND.

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In the early centuries of the second millennium AD an indigenously developed heterarchical society gave way to increasing hierarchy under combined pressures of environmental change, disease, and growing involvement in exchange with Islamic North Africa. An evolving "imperial tradition" reinvented extant social relations and culminated in "three and a half centuries of warrior-state chaos" (McIntosh 1998, p. 295). Yet despite a trend toward hierarchy and a coercive political economy, McIntosh (1998, pp. 297–303) argues that deep-time heterarchical relations rooted in ecological diversity and pluralism endowed Middle Niger society with a cultural resiliency not seen in neighboring regions.

Though provocative, the model of articulated specialization is based primarily on varying concentrations of iron-working debris and other artifact categories on site surfaces, particularly at smaller satellite sites surrounding major mounds. MacDonald's excavations at sites in the Méma suggested different economic orientations among neighboring sites (summarized in McIntosh 1998, pp. 61–63), and there is similar clustering of sites as existed around Jenné-jeno (McIntosh 1999b, p. 68); however, Togola (1996, p. 104) observes that the scarcity of surface remains from clustered sites in the Méma does not permit an extension of the hypothesis of articulated specialization to the Méma sites. Baloian's (2002) research partly confirms the specialized character of iron production in the Jenné vicinity; yet documentation of subsistence specialization remains limited. Although the hypothesis of counterpoised power relations rooted in articulated specialization requires further empirical support, it offers an important correction to the presumption that hierarchy necessarily characterizes complex societies. We should be cautious, however, in assuming an ethnic dimension to specialization. Though McIntosh (1998, pp. 295–96) recognizes potential malleability in ethnicity, his model of articulated specialization draws on twentieth-century sources (Gallais 1984) without accounting for how ethnic differentiation was reshaped through the tumultuous conditions of recent centuries (e.g., Gronenborn 1998, p. 254; Holl 2001, p. 153; Lentz 1995).

Hierarchy in the Sudanic Belt

Whereas work in the IND emphasizes the heterarchical character of Middle Niger societies, research in other areas of the Sudanic belt extending from Senegal through the Chad Basin suggests that hierarchically organized polities were common as well, particularly from the late first millennium AD (e.g., Gronenborn 1998), though a paucity of evidence from early first millennium contexts limits our understanding of the circumstances in which these polities emerged (e.g., MacEachern 2001, pp. 135–37; cf. McIntosh & Bocoum 2000). The trans-Saharan trade may not have sparked the development of the earliest complex societies; however, the shift from regional exchange in the first millennium AD toward growing involvement of Sudanic societies in the Saharan trade from the eighth or ninth century AD was associated with a distinctive and recurrent pattern of hierarchically organized predatory states whose power was based on control over the flow of

prestige goods (cloth, beads, copper alloys), access to what Goody (1971) termed the means of destruction (firearms, horses; Holl 1994, pp. 141–42; MacEachern 2001, p. 139), and access to enslavable populations (Gronenborn 1998, pp. 251–54, Holl 1995).

Though commonalities in the contexts and expressions of second millennium polities are apparent, expressions vary in several empirically robust case studies. This variation implies that we must probe the content of "hierarchy" to avoid assimilating variability to narrowly conceived models. The expression of hierarchical principles was at times strategic and partial, as in the case of Sukur in the Mandara Highlands of Nigeria. Though public works were associated with the historic Sukur polity and the Sukur sovereign maintained the appearance of a Sudanic ruler, David (1996) argues that "Sukur's institutional complexity was in fact largely a facade, a veil thrown over a reasonably egalitarian society that presented two faces to the world" (p. 599). The external face, directed at Sukur's trading partners, stressed the power of the sovereign; yet internal limits on the sovereign's power were consistent with an egalitarian society. This finding suggests a "type of classless society and a political form hitherto unknown" (p. 599) that has broader implications for our imaginings of past complexity (David & Sterner 1999).

Archaeologists are only beginning to understand the contexts and processes that gave rise to polities like Kanem-Borno (Gronenborn 1998, 2001), Wandala (MacEachern 2001), or Takrur (McIntosh 1999a). Though counterintuitive in relation to narratives of world prehistory, subsistence practices remained extensive and wild resources were important to subsistence through the first millennium AD (and often into the present) (Gronenborn 1998, pp. 248–50; Neumann 2005). Polity boundaries were fluid, and in some instances seats of power were not geographically fixed. For example, the capitol of Kanem-Borno shifted in response to resistance from local populations (Gronenborn 2001, p. 103). These shifts, combined with the likelihood that dwellings were constructed in part from perishable materials, have frustrated attempts to locate ancient capitols (Gronenborn 2001, pp. 103–8). Fluidity and mobility flowed in part from the fact that people, rather than land, were a crucial source of power for African political leaders.

From the late first millennium AD captives became an important means by which polities accessed luxury goods, first via trans-Saharan networks and later via Atlantic trade. Though state revenues flowed from a variety of economic activities (MacEachern 2001, p. 138), access to prestige goods that materially distinguished the powerful depended in part on a state's access to enslavable populations. Though in some cases production for exchange was managed through household labor (David 1996, p. 598), captives provided labor to produce exchangeable goods (e.g., cloth; Gronenborn 2001, p. 111; Roberts 1984). Other captives were "high-value exports that could be traded for exotic products" (MacEachern 2001, p. 138). Thus access to enslavable populations was crucial to maintain hegemony—in some instances as a source of labor, in others as an exchangeable commodity, and in still others as a source of personnel to offset demographic losses. Demographic variables were, therefore, highly salient though robust evidence on

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demographic implications is scant and remains a topic in need of archaeological investigation.

The importance of people as a crucial state resource trains our attention on the interconnections that existed among societies of different scales across West Africa over the past 2000 years. Second millennium states were part of a mosaic political landscape composed of societies of varying scales partially shaped by the demand for captives. Societies on the margins of states were subject to predation. Vulnerable peoples embraced several strategies to resist enslavement, and these strategies carried implications for demography and ethnogenesis: Some people fought, whereas others sought refuge in neighboring areas, joining the pool of followers crucial to emerging polities (Stahl 2001a); some groups withdrew to remote and/or defendable areas (de Barros 2001; Holl 1994, p. 168; MacEachern 2001, pp. 143–44); and still others built structural defenses (Connah 1981, p. 167; Holl 2001, p. 172; MacEachern 2001, p. 140; Usman 1999, 2003b, 2004). For others, conversion to Islam offered a measure of protection (Alexander 2001, Insoll 2003).

Though the broad features of societal chains were perhaps stable over time (links between states and predation zones; MacEachern 2001, p. 137; Usman 2003b), their manifestations varied in time and space. Intensive raiding of peripheral populations created frontier niches (Kopytoff 1987). Small polities gained advantage as powerful neighbors succumbed to internal fractures. Other societies gained power as intermediaries in the slave trade when the frontier of vulnerable societies receded under pressures of slave raiding [MacEachern's (2001, pp. 141–43) "subcontractors"; see Alexander 2001]. Thus, a key feature of African complex societies is their ramifying character and the changing contours of ramifying networks over time.

Several pioneering archaeological projects provide insight into the implications of these transformations for production, consumption, and exchange (Stahl 2004). de Barros (2001) explores the dynamic history of iron and pottery production in relation to changing interregional political economic contexts in Bassar (northern Togo). Iron production intensified from the fifteenth century with escalating demands for weapons, horse paraphernalia, and protective gear by neighboring cavalry states (Dagomba, Mamprusi, Gonja). Dagomba's incorporation into the expansionist Asante state led to increased demand for slaves, prompting more intensive raiding of Bassar populations and concomitant shifts in settlement and production sites. Sites in the open plains were abandoned and new settlements founded in hilly refuge areas. Comparable shifts occurred farther west in the Mandara Region of northern Cameroon. The Mandara Mountains initially were occupied in the mid-second millennium AD by plains-dwelling groups seeking refuge from Wandala slave raiding. Yet Wandala depended on Montagnard populations in the Mandara Mountains for iron supplies, which the Wandala traded to states like Kanem and Borno in exchange for horses, guns, chain mail, cloth, and salt (MacEachern 1993, p. 256). Montagnard populations depended on Wandala connections to access salt and dried fish; however, the Wandala also posed a threat to

them through slave raiding. Thus, the Bassar and Mandara examples show commonalities, particularly in a counterpoised dependent relationship among societies of different scales fraught with considerable tension.

The Atlantic World System

Though West Africa was long enmeshed in international trade, the Portuguese presence at Elmina on the Gold Coast from 1482 marked the beginnings of new exchange relations. The trans-Saharan trade never ceased; however, expanding coastal exchange provided alternative trade outlets, led to the demand for new export products, and created new tastes among West African populations for imports. European powers competed for preeminence, and African polities proliferated along the coast and in forested hinterlands. European interest in West African gold was eclipsed by the discovery of New World reserves, and trade shifted to slaves to supply New World plantation economies. Slaves were the primary export from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, a period marked by expanding European involvement on the West African coast. British abolition of the slave trade in 1807 coupled with expanding industrialization in Europe gave rise to the "legitimate" trade in which African raw materials were exchanged for European manufactures.

Historical archaeological research at coastal sites in Ghana and Benin contributes important insights into the varied nature of European/African interactions. DeCorse's (1998, 2001) research on the African settlement adjacent to the European fort Elmina focuses on the effects of culture contact. Despite evidence for the existence of new construction techniques and a wealth of imported objects, DeCorse questions the common assumption made by historical archaeologists that changing material assemblages signal assimilation or acculturation, arguing that change in the material record at Elmina is underwritten by significant continuities in world view. Ritual and burial practices show continuities, as do the layout of houses and foodways despite the adoption of new construction techniques and ceramics. Thus despite sustained involvement of Elmina peoples in international exchange and the wealth that Elmina merchants accrued, townspeople retained central aspects of African beliefs and identity (DeCorse 1998, pp. 369–72, 2001, pp. 178–190).

Kelly (1997, 2001, 2002, 2004) has conducted excavations at Savi, capitol of Hueda from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. The Bight of Benin was a major source, and Hueda was a major supplier of slaves to the Atlantic trade. Whereas early European/African interaction is often envisioned anachronistically through the lense of twentieth-century colonialism (Kelly 2002, pp. 96, 102), Kelly emphasizes the agency of Hueda elite in managing the European presence. European trading lodges were located not on the coast but instead 10 km inland in the Hueda capitol of Savi, and indeed within the palace precinct where traders would have been subject to constant surveillance (Kelly 2002, p. 105). Coursed earth construction characterized both Hueda elite and European residences at Savi; however, imported bricks paved public rooms in the palace, whereas residences of

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European traders were not so distinguished (Kelly 1997, pp. 363–64). Imported goods were recovered from across the site; however, they were not found in significant quantities nor were they evenly distributed, and Kelly (1997, pp. 362–63) emphasizes the need to investigate rather than assume the significance of these goods within a local cultural context.

These studies underscore the variability of European/African relations on the West African coast. Whereas Europeans controlled trade at Elmina and the African population incorporated a wide array of imported goods into their daily routines, Hueda elite maintained control of trade, and locally produced material culture dominated (Kelly 2002, pp. 97–98). Whereas processes of creolization occurred in some contexts (e.g., Elmina), evidence for material change is far less pronounced in other contexts (e.g., Hueda), outcomes that may have been shaped by the degree of control that Africans exercised over the European presence (Kelly 2002, pp. 115–16).

Though not in direct contact with European traders, the lives and livelihoods of interior peoples also were affected by new economic pressures and changing political alignments. Several archaeological projects have begun to explore the implications of these entanglements for interior societies using a direct historical approach in which investigators use multiple sources (ethnographic, oral historical, and archaeological) to investigate continuity and change over the last 500–700 years. Ogundiran's (2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b) research in the Yoruba-Edo region of Nigeria focuses on issues of social memory and political economic transformations in relation to the changing character of Atlantic commerce. His work stresses the fluid character of social groups and the centrality of ritual and royal ceremony in forging social memory and group identity (Ogundiran 2001b, p. 222). Cross-cutting styles and ritual practices across the region attest the linked trajectory of polities with implications for our understanding of the dynamics of ethnogenesis in the area (Ogundiran 2002b). Ogundiran's work is distinguished by a concern with the social valuation of imports, with how imported objects were recontextualized and shaped new forms of accumulation (Ogundiran 2002a). In similar fashion, Banda Research Project investigations have focused on the effects of global entanglements on the character of daily life in west central Ghana (Stahl 1999a, 2001b; Stahl & Cruz 1998). Banda was home to a historic chieftaincy that emerged in a frontier setting in the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century when the Atlantic trade disrupted long-standing Sudanic and Saharan trade networks. Banda was incorporated into the expansionist Asante state in the late eighteenth century and was subjected to the British at the end of the nineteenth century. Excavations at village sites occupied through this period document changes in the production and consumption of ceramics (Cruz 2003), iron, and cloth (Stahl & Cruz 1998); the character of subsistence (reshaped by New World crops and changing hunting patterns); and settlement and exchange relations associated with shifting political allegiances, warfare, and the upheavals created by the slave trade through the nineteenth century (Stahl 2001a). Ongoing investigations at earlier sites offer insight into the deeper trajectories of these practices in the period of

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the trans-Saharan trade, paying particular attention to the implications of global entanglements for the reconfiguration of local tastes and daily practices (Stahl 2002). Both projects underscore the dynamic quality of daily life over the last six centuries, a dynamism that is obscured when we assimilate such societies to the "Iron Age" rubric conventionally applied to sites of the last two millennia.

EASTERN AFRICA

The past 2000 years in eastern Africa saw innovations in food production though foraging remained important; metallurgy was embraced but stone tool technologies persisted; and societies of varying scale became enmeshed in the Indian Ocean trade, which varied in character over time (Kusimba & Kusimba 2005). The themes of complexity, societal mosaics, and global entanglements are exemplified by recent research in the Interlacustrine region of the Great Lakes, the Swahili coast, and adjacent hinterlands of eastern Africa (Figure 1).

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Interlacustrine Mosaics

Nineteenth-century European accounts attested a bewildering array of states and smaller polities occupying diverse ecological settings in the Great Lakes region. Notable among these were the bordering, rival states Buganda and Bunyoro, each occupying distinct ecological settings and being characterized by different political economic strategies. The centralized Buganda polity bordered the northwest shores of Lake Victoria in forested, rolling hills. Banana and sweet potato cultivation was supplemented by fish from Lake Victoria. The less-centralized Bunyoro polity in the dry grasslands to the northwest supplemented finger millet with other crops. Though cattle were not common in the nineteenth century, traditions stressed their importance in the precolonial period (Robertshaw 1999b, p. 53).

The complex polities of the Interlacustrine region were long presumed to have been imposed on an indigenous population by "civilizing" outsiders (Reid 1996, p. 621; Robertshaw 2003, p. 150). Early archaeological investigations were driven by oral traditions of dynasties presumed to be ancestral to these historic kingdoms (Robertshaw & Taylor 2000, pp. 2–4). Efforts were made in the 1950s-1960s to link these traditions to Bigo, one of several large earthwork sites comprising mounds and trenches in the western part of historic Buganda; however, critical analysis of these traditions suggested that they had been reworked in relation to colonial demands (Schmidt 1990, pp. 256–64; Sutton 1993). Yet the impressive scale of these earthworks suggests considerable labor inputs and is assumed to reflect a stratified political hierarchy (Reid 1996, p. 621).

Recent regional surveys and systematic testing of archaeological sites lend new insights into the character of settlement and political economic arrangements over the past 2000 years (Connah 1997; Reid 1996; Robertshaw 1999a,b; Robertshaw & Taylor 2000). Surveys indicate that substantial occupation of the Interlacustrine

area began from the ninth century AD in a period of elevated rainfall (Reid 1996, p. 623; Robertshaw 1994, pp. 114–15; Robertshaw & Taylor 2000, p. 25). Scattered Late Stone Age material and occasional Urewe (Early Iron Age) pottery suggest that early second millennium AD occupations colonized an unoccupied landscape (Reid 1996, p. 625). Geographically distinct subsistence patterns developed in the centuries following early occupation (~800–1300 AD) including specialized pastoralism and intensive banana farming associated with forest clearance and grassland expansion (Schoenbrun 1998, pp. 36–37, 1999, pp. 136–37).

Deep midden accumulations at Ntusi from the eleventh century AD predate the Bigo earthworks by several centuries and were associated with the pioneering occupation of the dry grasslands. Reid (1996, pp. 623–25) argues that cattle were central to the colonization of grassland areas, as were changing technologies of plant food storage. Cultivation and cattle production were practiced within the same households, a pattern that diverges from historical contexts in which these practices were associated with class divisions (Reid 1996, pp. 624–25). Artifact diversity and site size suggests a two-tiered settlement hierarchy in the period of Ntusi's occupation (eleventh through fifteenth centuries AD) with evidence for ivory and iron production at Ntusi. Regional trade with the contemporary salt-producing site of Kiboro on Lake Albert (Connah 1997) seems likely, and links to the East African coast are attested by several glass and cowrie shell beads (Robertshaw 1999a, p. 130). The emerging hierarchy represented by Ntusi may have been linked to the emergence of new terms for leadership, an explosion of cattle terminologies, and a redefinition of gender roles as traced through Schoenbrun's historical linguistic analyses (Robertshaw & Taylor 2000, pp. 14; Schoenbrun 1998, 1999).

Labor rather than land, as in West Africa, would have been a primary concern for the early colonizers of this "internal frontier" (Kopytoff 1987; Robertshaw 1999a, p. 126), and how first settlers attracted followers is a central problem in studying these early second millennium societies (Robertshaw 1999b, p. 58; Schoenbrun 1998, p. 100, 1999, p. 137). Emergent elites likely consolidated power through control of prestige goods, iron production, and ritual authority suggested by hilltop burials accompanied by imported beads, the placement of iron furnaces on site centers, and the association of thirteenth- to fourteenth-century shrine sites (Mubende Hill, Kasunga) with numerous storage pits that imply control of staple resources (Robertshaw 1999b, pp. 58–59; Robertshaw & Taylor 2000, p. 16). According to investigators, increases in vessel size and the large middens at Ntusi suggest involvement in feasting as a means for attracting followers (Robertshaw & Taylor 2000, p. 15). Robertshaw (2003, p. 160) sees evidence for exotics and craft specialization (in ivory production) as consistent with a prestige-goods system associated with what Blanton et al. (1996, pp. 2–5) term exclusionary or network strategies in which external ties that facilitate access to exotic goods, knowledge, and allegiances are translated into local leadership. This pattern is consistent with a frontier setting in which low population densities and mobility limited the potential for appropriation of agricultural surpluses (so-called staple finance; D'Altroy & Earle 1985).

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Ntusi was abandoned during a time of declining precipitation in the 1400s when Gwezi shrine sites like Mubende Hill were founded. Grain storage at these sites suggests the importance of cultivation, and the emergence of shrines may have been linked to efforts to control rainfall (Robertshaw & Taylor 2000, pp. 6, 24–25). Higher rainfall levels in the 1400–1500s were correlated with an abandonment of shrine sites and the construction of earthworks in the late fifteenth or sixteenth century (Robertshaw & Taylor 2000, pp. 24–25) and several changes probably relate to a "closing" of the frontier period (Schoenbrun 1999, p. 146). Long-distance exchange diminished from the late fifteenth century (Robertshaw 1999a:130), while earthworks were constructed around hills on which earlier-period burials with glass beads occurred (Robertshaw 1997). This pattern, combined with the communal effort involved in earthwork construction, led Robertshaw (1999b, pp. 60–61, 2003, pp. 160–62) to posit a shift from exclusionary power (associated with an individual leader) toward a corporate strategy (Blanton et al. 1996, pp. 5–7) on the basis of elite appropriation of surplus and associated with labor mobilization directed at monument construction and perhaps raiding and warfare directed at the capture of women and cattle.

Earthworks were abandoned after the mid-seventeenth century for reasons that remain unclear; however, Robertshaw & Taylor (2000, p. 19) suggest that major political economic and social changes occurred across the region from around 1700 AD. Nucleated villages gave way to a pattern of dispersed homesteads, and "capitals appear to have become more peripatetic as their rulers put more emphasis on the size and health of their herds" (p. 19). A correlation with declining rainfall levels coinciding with the Little Ice Age of northern latitudes may have contributed to changing political economic strategies (pp. 25–27). The historic stratification between a pastoral nobility and agricultural peasantry likely developed from this period and was associated with the Bito dynasty of Bunyoro. Increasing contacts with Sudanese and Zanzibari slave traders shaped the political economies of historic Bunyoro and Buganda whose wealth and power flowed from exchange in salt, iron, ivory, slaves, and weapons (Reid 1999, p. 44). Competition and warfare among these states shaped the mobility of settlements. According to Reid (2001/2002, p. 56) the Ganda capitol was relocated on a regular basis and only became a more permanent urban center from the mid-nineteenth century as military pressures relaxed.

Recent interdisciplinary collaboration has enhanced our understanding of Interlacustrine political economic mosaics. Schoenbrun's (1998, 1999) historical linguistic reconstructions enriched analytical possibilities by exploring the changing configuration of social space and cognitive systems within Great Lakes societies. Changing social terminologies corresponded to altered patterns of subsistence and land availability and suggest modifications in the social relations of clanship over time. When land was abundant, families enlarged by allocating land to outsiders, facilitated by ideologies of inclusiveness that enabled "wholesale incorporation of newcomers around a longer-established firstcomer group" (Schoenbrun 1998, p. 124, 1999, p. 144). With time, demographic increase, decreasing land

availability, and increased environmental uncertainty, a new social calculus emerged with a patrifocal emphasis associated with hereditary access to title and land (Schoenbrun 1998, p. 125). This shaped new exclusions on the basis of descent, altered the gendered division of labor, and marginalized women from the public sphere (Schoenbrun 1999, p. 146; also Robertshaw 1999b). Frontier egalitarianism was "replaced by innovations in contracts, superior-subordinate relations, and bridewealth exchanges for women" in a new calculus that "now revolved around discriminating and limiting access to productive property" (Schoenbrun 1998, p. 139).

Recent Interlacustrine research underscores that the complex mosaic of historical societies in the region does not mirror the variegated social, political economic forms of the past (see also David & Sterner 1999). Archaeological research is beginning to reveal temporal and spatial variability in the topography of complexity over time. Although healthy skepticism of linguistic dating techniques is in order (Schoenbrun 1998, pp. 38–41, 46–48), Schoenbrun's rich semantic history provides insight into the changing calculus of social group membership and organization. This calculus departs markedly from the tendency to argue for enduring structures of kinship, wealth, and leadership in other parts of Bantu Africa (e.g., Huffman 1996; cf. Beach 1998). Research also shows that, despite a tendency toward increasing political scale over time, "it is also true that its centers were precarious and fleeting" (Schoenbrun 1999, p. 137). To capture the mosaic quality and shifting dimensions of these configurations, we must coordinate research across broad regions and expand systematic survey and testing of sites of varying scales across regions and over time.

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East African Coast

The East African coast and associated islands from Somalia to Mozambique were home to an array of historically documented Swahili towns from ~800 AD (Robertshaw 2003, p. 153). As in West Africa, scholars long assumed that these urban centers were foreign-inspired if not -founded, a view conditioned by the assumption that Swahili populations were more Arab than African (Kusimba 1999, pp. 21–31, 43–66; LaViolette & Fleisher 2005; Sutton 1998, p. 119). Coastal settlements were viewed as sea-facing, separated from the interior by a harsh, resource-poor zone in the immediate hinterland (Abungu & Mutoro 1993, p. 695); however, more recent research demonstrates the indigenous character of these societies, the deep antiquity of their involvement in oceanic trade, and the systemic links between interior and coastal societies of different scales.

Early research on Swahili towns centered on stonetowns like Kilwa, an island site off the southern coast of Tanzania associated with ruins of multistoried domestic buildings, ornate mosques, and above-ground tombs. Excavations focused on the fluorescence of these urban centers early in the second millennium AD, interpreted as Islamic trading outposts with few cultural links to their African hinterland (e.g., Chittick 1974, Kirkman 1964). Oral traditions of some ruling families

who trace their origins to Arabia or the Persian Gulf seem to support this view (Sutton 1998, p. 118). In the early independence period a reaction against the presumed external origins of Swahili society animated historiographical debates and led to renewed archaeological research directed at the question of Swahili origins (LaViolette & Fleisher 2005; Sutton 1998, pp. 165–66). Horton's (1996) documentation of pre-Islamic levels at Shanga, an early Swahili site on Pate Island off the north coast of Kenya, is particularly important.

The origins of stonetowns like Shanga were rooted in early coastal settlements occupied by people pursuing a mixed economy of fishing, herding, and farming (Horton & Mudida 1993; Wright 1993, pp. 660–61). As in the West African and Interlacustrine contexts discussed above, we have a poor understanding of the centuries before about 800 AD (Kusimba 1999, pp. 33–35, 90–97; Wright 1993, p. 659). Though Greek and Roman documentary sources from the early centuries AD described trade with the East African or "Azanian" coast, material evidence of this trade was confined until recently to occasional finds of Greek and Roman coins (Chami & Msemwa 1997, p. 673). Though Early Iron Age settlements were known in interior areas, evidence for coastal settlement was limited. However, recent research documents settlements of iron-producing peoples near the south Kenyan and Tanzanian coasts from the last century BC to the fifth century AD. By the third century AD some sites (e.g., Limbo; Schmidt 1995, p. 142) were producing iron in significantly greater quantities than were contemporary sites in the interior, presumably for exchange. Other sites (e.g., Kivinja; Chami 2003, Chami & Msemwa 1997) yielded third-century Near Eastern imports (pottery, glass) that attest oceanic exchange; however, there is no evidence for social differentiation in this early period despite the presence of imports (Kusimba 1999, p. 94). A more substantial quantity of imports drawn from a wider catchment is evident at Chibuene in southern Mozambique (occupied from the mid-first millennium AD; Sinclair et al. 1993b, p. 419) and included ivory and copper that likely came from emerging centers in the Limpopo Valley to the south and west (e.g., Mapungubwe; Pwiti 2005). Thus mounting evidence implies the participation of East African coastal and adjacent hinterland regions in oceanic trade from the mid-first millennium AD (Chami & Msemwa 1997, p. 675).

By the ninth century AD there is more substantial evidence for interior and coastal trade (Horton 1996; Kusimba 1999, pp. 60–64). Settlements expanded considerably in size over the course of the ninth and tenth centuries (Wright 1993, p. 663), and iron working and bead manufacture indicate craft specialization (Kessy 2003, pp. 129, 131). By the tenth century similar ceramics were distributed from the Lamu archipelago on the northern Kenyan coast to the southern coast of Mozambique, "2200 km of difficult sailing away" (Wright 1993, p. 660; also Sutton 1998, pp. 120–21), whereas the presence of similar ceramics extending to the Taita hills suggests interior connections (Abungu & Mutoro 1993, p. 695).

The products exported from the Swahili coast after the ninth century likely included iron tools, shell beads, turtle shells, amber, gold and ivory, and perhaps deep water fish (Kusimba 1999, pp. 100, 126–27). Kilwa served as the conduit

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for Zimbabwean gold into the world system, and its fluorescence in the thirteenth century coincided with the adoption of gold coinage in Europe (Sutton 1998, p. 113). Fuel shortages in Arabia and India contributed to a demand for East African iron; imported iron could be melted down there to make crucible steel (which was exported in substantial quantities to Europe and the Middle East from the late first millennium AD; Kusimba 1999, pp. 103, 106). Though archaeologists have not found large-scale smelting sites on the coast, they have recovered slag, iron-working tools, and forging debris (Kusimba & Killick 2003, p. 113). The importance of iron as an export undermines the image of East Africa as merely a source of natural products (Schmidt 1995, pp. 142–43). The range of imports is better known and included Near Eastern and Chinese ceramics. Larger vessels may have arrived with valuable oils or other liquids. Cloth is another likely import, which is consistent with the rarity of spindle whorls on early coastal sites (Wright 1993, p. 664), though their presence in later contexts attest involvement in cloth production at centers like Kilwa (Sutton 1998, p. 123).

At least some stonetowns were strategically positioned in relation to interior routes or natural harbors (Abungu & Mutoro 1993, p. 701; Kusimba 1999, pp. 123–25). Occupation at Ungwana spanned the period 950–1600 AD, and at its peak it was a prosperous center, as evidenced by abundant prestige goods and substantial residences that were likely home to successful traders (Abungu & Mutoro 1993, pp. 701–2). Links to the interior along the ecologically diverse Tana River drainage are witnessed in the ceramic similarities between river basin settlements and coastal settlements like Ungwana and Shanga.

Swahili towns of the second millennium AD were characterized by durable elite residences constructed from coral-rag that drew the attention of early archaeologists. Less visible but ubiquitous were the earthen and organic structures that housed non-elites. Growing attention to these non-elite structures provided a crucial link between later stonetowns and their earlier indigenous progenitors (Fleisher & LaViolette 1999, p. 88; e.g., Horton 1996, p. 234). Though Swahili towns often have been characterized as residentially segregated on the basis of wealth and social position (Kusimba 1999, p. 151), recent research suggests a more variegated pattern. For example, Sheriff (2001/2002) argues that such segregation emerged in Zanzibar only through colonial policies that attempted to fix differences between residential areas on the basis of building type.

The eleventh through thirteenth centuries witnessed fundamental changes in the organization of society and its ideological basis (Kusimba 1999, pp. 117–54; Wright 1993, pp. 665–70). Underlying productive systems were changed little; however, hierarchical patterning among settlements became more pronounced with town sites (10 ha or larger) dominating local settlement hierarchies that included walled villages, compact and dispersed villages, and hamlets (Kusimba 1999, pp. 119–23). Settlement expanded into sparsely occupied areas of the Kenya coast, and reliance on domestic animals increased at some sites (Horton 1996, p. 397). Islam likely was widely adopted in this period, as indicated by the growing number of mosques and evidence for Islamic burial practices. Though the earliest mosque at

Shanga dates to before the tenth century, there is no evidence of "communities of the faithful" in areas to the south before the eleventh or twelfth centuries (Wright 1993, p. 664). Islam was embraced relatively simultaneously across a 1500-km stretch of coast, with no evidence for its adoption by interior peoples. The growing number of settlements and towns contributed to an increase in instability and conflict that perhaps encouraged conversion to Islam as a means of stabilizing relations with both traders and competing elites (Wright 1993; also LaViolette & Fleisher 2005).

Over time coastal towns became more oriented to mercantile activity than to production as indicated by the declining evidence for smelting and weaving in coastal centers (Kusimba 1999, p. 134). Swahili elite increasingly distinguished themselves from commoners through their embrace of exotic goods. They enforced their distinction through dress, proprietary rules restricting commoner access to imports and rights to build stone houses, and the maintenance of separate burial places and practices (Kusimba 1999, pp. 145–47). Focus on the sea trade was marked by settlement shifts to the seaward side of Pemba Island from the fourteenth century (Kessy 2003, p. 123).

Robertshaw (2003, pp. 163–65) argues that coastal Swahili society was built on exclusionary power strategies in which elites controlled access to prestige goods and differentiated themselves with an "international style" that built on a foundation of Islam and Asian material culture (ceramics, architectural styles). Consistent with a "network strategy" (Blanton et al. 1996, pp. 4–5), there likely was considerable competition among coastal stonetowns (Robertshaw 2003, p. 164; Wright 1993). Yet Kusimba (1999, pp. 180–83) highlights the intermingled character of these strategies in the early coastal contexts, arguing that elites drew on corporate assets and organizational forms to pursue network strategies. With time, however, the limited availability of arable land contributed to a growing reliance on network strategies to offset risks associated with a restricted productive base and contributed to investment in surpluses created by iron production and ivory exchange. Increased importation of exotics over time likely signals the growing importance of prestige-goods-based network strategies; however, the embrace of Islam as a mark of corporate identity and the growing investment in public architecture (particularly mosques) suggests a continued reliance on corporate strategies. "What is seen is a combination of both, with the modes alternating in significance through time" (Kusimba 1999, p. 182). In Kusimba's view, network strategies dominated only after the fourteenth century with the growing emphasis on the extractive ivory and slave trades and the declining importance of craft production. We also must be attuned to spatial variability in the relative reliance on these strategies because, as LaViolette & Fleisher (2005) indicate, evidence for stone buildings is diminished along the southern coast where earth-and-thatch construction was more common. This led them to suggest that power may have been more horizontally differentiated with a variety of leaders vying for "first among equals" (and see LaViolette & Fleisher 2005 on relationships among rural and urban settlements).

When the Portuguese arrived on the East African coast in the early sixteenth century long-standing trade routes connected the interior regions of modern

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Zimbabwe with the Swahili coast. The Portuguese, determined to capture control of the gold trade, attacked Kilwa in 1505 (Sutton 1998, p. 116; see also Fleisher 2004) and forcibly imposed a tributary system on conquered coastal societies to extract gold, ivory, and slaves with reverberations for interior areas. Though archaeological research on sites of this period is limited (Kusimba 1999, p. 155), we know that several local industries (iron, textiles) collapsed under the pressure of Portuguese attacks and occupation, and Portuguese control of trade undermined Swahili elites. Population levels on the coast declined as coastal peoples sought refuge in the interior and set up fortified settlements in highland areas. Exchange networks and subsistence production were disrupted. The imposition of Omani Arab rule from the second half of the seventeenth century strengthened the Islamic dimensions of Swahili culture and contributed to growing divisions between interior and coastal regions fueled by an intensified slave trade (Kusimba 1999, pp. 164, 167, 172–73). The establishment of clove and sugar plantations on Pemba and Zanzibar supplied an expanding international market, and production intensified following abolition of the slave trade as captive peoples were burdened with the production of exports (Kessy 2003, pp. 126–27).

We should not proceed from the assumption that international trade was the primary factor driving social change over the past 1500 years in eastern Africa; however, the growing evidence for East Africa's long-term entanglements in oceanic trade draws attention to how they shaped the mosaic quality of production, technology, and societal scale across East Africa. Recent research highlights the interconnections that existed between foragers, pastoralists, and cultivators of interior East Africa, and the ways those interconnections and links with coastal societies altered over the course of the past two millennia. Pioneering archaeological and oral historical work in the Tsavo-Taita area of Kenya, roughly 100 km from the coast, highlights the complicated and enmeshed societal chains that linked interior foragers with coastal city states (Kusimba & Kusimba 2005). The area comprises an ecological mosaic of relatively well-watered hills and lower-lying areas characterized by arid grass- and bushland that produced valuable resources for international trade: animal skins, ivory, rhinoceros horn, and rock crystal. Oral historical research suggests a complicated pattern of migration and intermarriage and alliance among foragers, nomadic pastoralists, and cultivators in the region. Sources of wealth and authority varied, and a mosaic of contemporaneous site types demonstrates the diversity of productive strategies including specialized pastoralism, iron smelting, and foraging activities (Kusimba & Kusimba 2005). Archaeological evidence from rockshelter sites in Tsavo National Park suggests forager involvement in the ivory trade and may signal the development of specialized hunting in response to external demands for ivory (Kusimba 2003, pp. 220–21). Though this research is in an early phase, it emphasizes that we should expect the mosaic of productive strategies, technologies, and social arrangements over the past 2000 years to shift. Emerging relationships between pastoralists, cultivators, and foragers probably led to novel forms of interaction based on relationships ranging from fictive kin and trading partners to clientship, changes in productive strategies and gendered

divisions of labor, and new patterns of residence and mobility (Kusimba 2003, pp. 223–24), all of which were complicated by changing involvement in oceanic trade.

East Africa's long-standing global entanglements were reshaped by the extension of Omani Arab control over the Swahili coast associated with intensified slave and ivory trades in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Both slaves and ivory came from interior regions of East Africa, and, as in West Africa, the intensification of the slave trade led to changes in settlement strategies. The proliferation of defensive settlements in upland settings of the Kasigau area (immediately south of Tsavo National Park) occurred as village sites in lower lying areas were abandoned. The substantial dry rock fortifications around rock shelter sites were constructed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in a period when slave raiding was intensifying and attest how the slave trade transformed East African cultural mosaics (Kusimba & Kusimba 2005). Similarly, interior areas further south (Tanzania and Malawi) saw defensive concentrations of settlement from the early eighteenth century, which intensified from the mid-nineteenth century in part owing to the incursion of Ngoni people spurred by the *difaqane* in southern Africa (Burton 2001/2002, p. 14; see Reid 2001/2002 on war and urbanization); however, Pikirayi (2004, p. 258) cautions against assimilating all sites of this period in Zimbabwe to a "refuge culture." Though archaeological research on the past several centuries is limited, it has considerable potential to illuminate the effects of these entanglements on the character of East African societies enshrined in twentieth-century ethnography.

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CONCLUSION

Massive partialities are inevitable in a brief review covering 2000 years in a continent three times the size of the United States. Yet select examples highlight new concerns with the variable character of complexity in time and space, the mosaic quality of African political economic landscapes, and the implications of global entanglements, all of which complicate received understandings of "Iron Age" Africa. A key feature of recent research is attention to contextuality and specificity without losing sight of larger scale, often global, political economic processes that affected African societies over the past 2000 years. A focus on the variable strategies pursued by emergent elites (e.g., Blanton et al. 1996) draws attention to issues of social agency, power, and ideology in the process of African state formation, which was long viewed merely as a reflex of external trade relations (Mitchell 2003, p. 177). Though they provide a framework for analyzing variable heterarchical and hierarchical arrangements, these models draw considerably on nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources, and we need to remain attuned to possibilities beyond these sources (David & Sterner 1999, Guyer & Belinga 1995). Similarly our appreciation of the ramifying networks that connected societies of varying scale was prompted in part by the work of historically oriented

anthropologists (Amselle 1998, Kopytoff 1987), but whether the sorts of linkages among historical societies adequately capture the character of connections among more ancient ones remains an empirical question.

Long-term projects directed at working through the regional histories of social and political economic forms over *la longue durée* are creating a platform for comparative regional studies of these issues. These projects require considerable investment in basic research—for example, in creating a robust spatiotemporal framework for studying variation in time and space (e.g., Connah 1996, Connah & Daniels 2003, Ogundiran 2002b, Usman 2003a, Wesler 1999, Wotzka & Goedicke 2001)—and we should anticipate that it may take another decade for some of these projects to yield definitive results. Yet as this review demonstrates, these projects significantly complicate historical and ethnographic understandings, and their results often counter entrenched presumptions drawn from broader narratives of world prehistory.

Archaeology also can contribute significantly to our understanding of how changing global entanglements complicated social political economic mosaics in the period "covered" by historical and ethnographic sources. There is a pressing need for sustained and coordinated research on implications of the slave trade. Important work has begun in coastal contexts, but this subject needs to be augmented by an understanding of the implications and responses of interior populations (Kelly 2002, p. 99), and here we need to be aware of how distinctions between "historical" and "Iron Age" archaeology divert attention from the sustained and systemic relations among coastal and interior societies (see Reid & Lane 2004 for debates over the use of the term historical archaeology in Africa). Empirically robust studies of transformations and continuities in later second millennium AD African societies provide a crucial comparative platform for exploring commonalities and differences with more ancient societies, as well (Stahl 2004). This is a central enterprise if we wish to overcome the limitations and partialities of ethnographic and historic models. The results remind us that the "traditional" African societies enshrined by twentieth-century ethnography represent but a moment in the dynamic history of African societies.

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archaeological agenda? See Yoffee & Sherratt 1993, pp. 53–59

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Annual Review of Anthropology
Volume 33, 2004

CONTENTS

Frontispiece—*Marilyn Strathern* xiv

PREFATORY CHAPTER

The Whole Person and Its Artifacts, *Marilyn Strathern* 1

ARCHAEOLOGY

The Archaeology of Ancient State Economies, *Michael E. Smith* 73

Political Economic Mosaics: Archaeology of the Last Two Millennia in Tropical Sub-Saharan Africa, *Ann Brower Stahl* 145

Primary State Formation in Mesoamerica, *Charles S. Spencer and Elsa M. Redmond* 173

The Archaeology of Communication Technologies, *Stephen D. Houston* 223

Origins and Development of Urbanism: Archaeological Perspectives, *George L. Cowgil* 525

BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Early Dispersals of *Homo* from Africa, *Susan C. Antón and Carl C. Swisher, III* 271

Social Status and Health in Humans and Other Animals, *Robert M. Sapolsky* 393

The Peopling of the New World: Perspectives from Molecular Anthropology, *Theodore G. Schurr* 551

The Evolution of Human Skin and Skin Color, *Nina G. Jablonski* 585

LINGUISTICS AND COMMUNICATIVE PRACTICES

Language Revitalization and New Technologies: Cultures of Electronic Mediation and the Refiguring of Communities, *Patrick Eisenlohr* 21

New Technologies and Language Change: Toward an Anthropology of Linguistic Frontiers, *Susan E. Cook* 103

Language Birth and Death, *Salikoko S. Mufwene* 201

Talk and Interaction Among Children and the Co-Construction of Peer Groups and Peer Culture, *Amy Kyratzis* 625

Annu. Rev. Anthropol. 2004.33:145-172. Downloaded from arjournals.annualreviews.org
by SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY on 02/07/09. For personal use only.

International Anthropology and Regional Studies

Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches, *Birgit Meyer* 447

Anthropology in Area Studies, *Jane I. Guyer* 499

Sociocultural Anthropology

Music and the Global Order, *Martin Stokes* 47

The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, *Joel Robbins* 117

Hang on to Your Self: Of Bodies, Embodiment, and Selves, *Steven Van Wolputte* 251

The Body Beautiful: Symbolism and Agency in the Social World, *Erica Reischer and Kathryn S. Koo* 297

Inscribing the Body, *Enid Schildkrout* 319

Culture, Globalization, Mediation, *William Mazzarella* 345

The World in Dress: Anthropological Perspectives on Clothing, Fashion, and Culture, *Karen Tranberg Hansen* 369

Anthropology and Circumcision, *Eric K. Silverman* 419

Thinking About Cannibalism, *Shirley Lindenbaum* 475

Theme I: The Body as a Public Surface

Hang on to Your Self: Of Bodies, Embodiment, and Selves, *Steven Van Wolputte* 251

The Body Beautiful: Symbolism and Agency in the Social World, *Erica Reischer and Kathryn S. Koo* 297

Inscribing the Body, *Enid Schildkrout* 319

The World in Dress: Anthropological Perspectives on Clothing, Fashion, and Culture, *Karen Tranberg Hansen* 369

Anthropology and Circumcision, *Eric K. Silverman* 419

The Evolution of Human Skin and Skin Color, *Nina G. Jablonski* 585

Theme II: New Technologies of Communication

Language Revitalization and New Technologies: Cultures of Electronic Mediation and the Refiguring of Communities, *Patrick Eisenlohr* 21

Music and the Global Order, *Martin Stokes* 47

New Technologies and Language Change: Toward an Anthropology of Linguistic Frontiers, *Susan E. Cook* 103

The Archaeology of Communication Technologies, *Stephen D. Houston* 223

Culture, Globalization, Mediation, *William Mazzarella* 345

Annu. Rev. Anthropol. 2004.33:145-172. Downloaded from arjournals.annualreviews.org
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INDEXES

Subject Index 651
Cumulative Index of Contributing Authors, Volumes 25–33 663
Cumulative Index of Chapter Titles, Volume 25–33 666

ERRATA

An online log of corrections to *Annual Review of Anthropology* chapters may be found at http://anthro.annualreviews.org/errata.shtml

Annu. Rev. Anthropol. 2004.33:145-172. Downloaded from arjournals.annualreviews.org
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