

The impact of iron in north and west Africa

Further reading list

The best introduction to the broad picture is:

- D. W. Phillipson, *African Archaeology*, 2nd edition (CUP, Cambridge, 1993)



A useful collection of studies on the interlinking of [iron-working](#), [farming](#) and [urbanization](#) is:

Created by Laymik
from Noun Project

- T. Shaw, P. Sinclair, B. Andah, A. Okpoko (eds), *The Archaeology of Africa: Food, Metals and Towns* (Routledge, London 1991)

and similar themes can be found in:

- S. K. and R. J. McIntosh, 'From Stone to Metal: New Perspectives on the Later Prehistory of West Africa', *Journal of World Prehistory*, Vol 2 (1988), pp. 89-133

A detailed study worth attention is:

- P. Lavachery, 'Shum Laka Rockshelter Later Holocene Deposits: from Stone to Metal in Northwestern Cameroon', in G. Pwiti and R. Spear (eds), *Aspects of African Archaeology* (University of Zimbabwe Press, Harare, 1996)

and one that takes the long view:

- Graham Connah's, *Three Thousand Years in Africa: man and his environment in the Lake Chad region of Nigeria* (CUP, Cambridge, 1981)

A collection that pursues themes too often neglected, especially in [African prehistory](#):

- S. Kent (ed), *Gender in African Prehistory* (Altamire Press, Walnut Creek, 1998)

The [Nok culture of Nigeria](#) has received a lot of attention over the years, most of it locally published and not easily come by, starting with:

- Brian Fagg, 'The Nok Culture in Prehistory', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol 1, no.4 (1959)

From the foremost archaeologist of Nigeria there is:

- Shaw, Thurston, *Nigerian Pre-history and Archaeology* (Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, 1975)
- 'The Nok Sculpture of Nigeria', *Scientific American*, 244 (1981), pp. 154-66

and it is also worth consulting:

- J. F. Jemkur's *Aspects of the Nok Culture* (Zaria, 1992)

For [urbanization on the Niger's inland delta](#), see:

- R. McIntosh, 'Clustered cities of the Middle Niger: alternative routes to authority in Prehistory', in D. A. Anderson and R. Rathbone (eds), *Africa's Urban Past* (CUP, Cambridge, 2000)
- S. K. McIntosh (ed), *Beyond Chiefdoms: Pathways to Complexity in Africa* (CUP, Cambridge, 2000)

A well-illustrated work that brought the [kingdom of Meroe](#) to wide public attention is:

- P. L. Shinnie, *Meroe: a civilization of the Sudan* (Thames and Hudson, London, 1967)

The best recent works are:

- D. A. Welsby, *The Kingdom of Kush: the Napatan and Meroitic Empires* (British Museum Press, London, 1996), and D. Wildung (ed), *Sudan: Ancient Kingdoms of the Nile* (Flammarion, New York, 1997)

For the [Sahara](#) in this period, see:

- C. M. Daniels, *The Garamantes of Southern Libya* (Orleander Press, Stoughton, 1970)

The work that challenged the traditional view of the Saharan rock art chariots is:

- Muzzolini, 'The Chariot-Period of the Rock-Art Chronology in the Sahara and the Maghreb: A critical Reappraisal of the Traditional Views', in M. Lorblanchet (ed) *Rock Art in the Old World* (Papers of the AURA Congress in Darwin, Indira Gandhi National Centre of Arts, New Dehli, 1992)

The Early Iron Age in central, eastern and southern Africa

Further reading list

In chronological order of publication:

- C. Meinhof, *An Introduction to the Study of African Language* (London, 1915)

An influential work, which strayed beyond purely linguistic classification and incorporated cultural and racial prejudices. In doing so it introduced 'Hamitic' as a distinctive African group of languages, applied to people supposedly descended from the Biblical figure of Ham, son of Noah, and therefore of a supposedly 'higher racial group' than most equatorial Africans.

- H. H. Johnston, *Comparative Study of the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages* (London, 1922)

The first modern systematic attempt to classify the languages of eastern, central and southern Africa, based mostly upon his own personal collections of vocabulary while a colonial administrator.

- M. Guthrie, *The Classification of the Bantu Languages* (Oxford, 1948)

A more detailed classification, which placed the Katanga region as the main dispersal zone.

- R. Oliver and J. D. Fage, *A Short History of Africa* (Harmondsworth, 1st edition 1963)

This first modern history of the whole continent, by two of Africa's pioneering historians, linked the most up-to-date linguistic and archaeological evidence of the time into a coherent historical chronology. Drawing on Guthrie's Katangan dispersal zone, the authors concluded that the adoption of east Asian bananas and yams prompted rapid population growth, which prompted the Bantu dispersal. Updated through numerous editions since.

- J. Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa* (Indiana, 1963)

The most detailed classification of the languages of the whole of Africa, which basically, with some refinements, is the accepted classification of today. He placed the origins of the Bantu language family ('proto-Bantu') firmly in the eastern Nigeria/Cameroon region and far back in pre-history, several millennia before the Common Era. He also defined Bantu as part of the larger Niger-Congo group of languages that stretch right across west Africa, something that Johnston had suspected. Greenberg's work finally scotched Meinhof's 'Hamitic myth' (1915, above) that had hitherto been so influential, and still persisted in several African school text books long after Greenberg's exposure.

- C. Ehret, 'Cattle-keeping and milking in eastern and southern African history: the linguistic evidence', *Journal of African History*, VIII, 1967, pp. 1-17

Africa's leading linguistic historian explains how linguistic evidence can be used to show that the Khoesan of southern Africa probably ultimately acquired their pre-iron age cattle from eastern Africa.

- M. Guthrie, *Comparative Bantu*, 4 vols (Oxford, 1968-71)

The culmination of Guthrie's life's work, and the most detailed work by a Bantu specialist.

- D. W. Phillipson, 'The chronology of the iron age in Bantu Africa', *Journal of African History*, XVI, 1975, pp.321-42

This marked the beginning of a series of articles over the next two decades, which were to bring historians up to date with the latest archaeological findings and push back the earliest iron age dates in an increasing number of areas to the first few centuries of the Common Era.

- D. W. Phillipson, *The Later Pre-history of Eastern and Southern Africa*, (London, 1977)

The classic work of archaeological synthesis, which explains in detail the way that archaeologists use pottery classification to establish chronologies and draw conclusions about links between cultures over time.

- R. Oliver and B. M. Fagan, 'The Emergence of Bantu Africa', *Cambridge History of Africa*, Volume 2, (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 342-409

Written by a pioneering historian of Africa and a leading archaeologist, this became the classic work of synthesis of linguistic and archaeological evidence, brought up to date with the latest research, as known at that time.

- C. Ehret and M. Posnansky (eds) *The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History* (1982)

An invaluable introduction to the combination of linguistic and archaeological evidence for the history of the continent as a whole.

A series of articles through the 1980s and early 90s kept the historian in touch with the latest archaeological research on this region of Africa:

- J. Vansina, 'Western Bantu expansion', *Journal of African History*, XXV, 1984, pp. 129-45
- P. de Maret, 'Recent archaeological research and dates from central Africa', *Journal of African History*, XXVI, 1985, pp. 129-48
- J. Denbow, 'Congo to Kalahari: Data and hypothesis about the political economy of the western stream of the Early Iron Age', *African Archaeological Review*, 8, 1990, pp. 139-76
- T. Maggs and G. Whitelaw, 'A review of recent archaeological research on food-producing communities in southern Africa,' *Journal of African History*, XXXII, 1991, pp. 3-24
- J. Vansina 'New linguistic evidence and the "Bantu Expansion"', *Journal of African History*, XXXVI, 1995, pp. 173-95

An important article that uses detailed linguistic analysis to explain the complexity of Bantu dispersal. It shows that, rather than going in a steady direction southwards, settlements were moving in all directions, sometimes doubling back into previously occupied areas and thus making ever more complex, the differing dialects and emerging languages of the Bantu family.

- C. Ehret, *An African Classical Age: Eastern and Southern Africa in World History, 1000 B.C. to A.D. 400* (Oxford, 1998)

The major work of 'linguistic archaeology' on the subject of this chapter by the leading scholar of African historical linguistics. It not only sets out the case in great detail for the spread of iron-working farming across eastern and southern Africa, it also places these people and events in the context of the classical era of world history. It contains numerous tables

(including two extensive appendices) of African language words to illustrate the points being made. A must for anyone who wishes to study beyond the purely introductory phase of this topic of African history.

- B. Heine and D. Nurse (eds), *African languages: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 2000)

The most up-to-date introduction to the study of African languages, their range and classification.

- P. J. Jaggar, 'Language Classification', in K. Shillington (ed) *Encyclopedia of African History*, 2005, vol 2, pp 796-8

A useful short introduction to the subject, which explains the major classifications of African languages and the historiography of the discipline.