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John Desmond Clark and Steven A. Brandt, eds. *From Hunters to Farmers: The Causes and Consequences of Food Production in Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. xi + 433 pp. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$55.00 (cloth).

The papers brought together in this volume were originally written for a conference held in Los Angeles, California, in November, 1978. The thirty-odd papers presented here had the common focus of considering the causes and implications of the transition to food production in Africa. This same theme is covered in the present volume edited by John Desmond Clark, a founding father of African archaeology, and Steven Brandt, a student under Clark at the University of California, Berkeley. They have done a fine job of constructing a wide ranging and aesthetically pleasing book which makes a sincere attempt at covering the entire continent of Africa. However, immediately noticeable is the unexplained and total absence of contributions from sub-saharan African scholars, particularly in light of the six years spent in preparing the book for publication. In approaching the many complex questions raised in any attempt at explaining and analyzing the transition to food production in Africa, Clark and Brandt have divided the book into three main sections. The first one is on general perspectives and includes contributions of a historical linguistic and paleoecological bent. The second section is concerned with regional paleoenvironments and adaptations. A third section covers modern subsistence strategies in southern Africa in the hopes of providing a store of comparative data from which the details of earlier transitions to food production might be elucidated.

Following this third section is an epilogue in which Nancy Howell considers the effects of population on the causes and consequences of the addition of food production to the wider store of subsistence strategies practiced throughout African history. Although placed at the end of the book, this article confronts a part of the problem which underlays virtually all other contributions: paleodemography. Howell is a trained demographer who has worked extensively on San population dynamics in the Dobe area around the Namibia-Botswana border. In her essay she elucidates the future prospects for understanding the causes of population growth and its effects on the dynamic process of the transition to food production in early times. Howell discusses the two most common models used to explain the links between population and food production. The first is what she calls the Hobbesian view in which "some monolithic genius thinks to try domestication of plants and animals, and suddenly life is easier" (p. 352). The second view, a polar opposite of the first, sees population growth as a cause and not, at first, a consequence of food production. While Howell makes light of Hobbes, she herself falls squarely into the Enlightenment tradition when she argues, for example, that we need not know the details of prehistoric mortality if we have a clear understanding of the causal links between variables impinging

on mortality. It is only necessary to delimit age-specific mortality rates and their responses to changes in diet. This can be done, Howell notes, by studying aging mechanisms in modern populations as well as the process of genetic repair. Additionally, the study of skeletal aging in modern populations can produce a comparative basis for understanding that process in prehistoric skeletons.

Howell's optimistic attitude toward these potential contributions is tempered by her awareness that human population change is determined, in part, by factors which are not always easy to recognize in the archaeological record. Such factors include diet (and, I would add, personal preference for certain foods), health, division of labor, and environmental change. Howell's sensitive treatment of this complex problem makes her article better placed in the first section.

It is in this first section that the reader is armed with the methodological and theoretical tools necessary for estimating the value of the subsequent contributions. In Ann Stahl's survey of the historiography relating to the broad question which the volume faces, she correctly argues for a general reorientation of scholarly attention toward the "processes involved in the transition in the African continent from hunting and gathering to agriculture" (p. 21). She wants to move away from the usual concern with the origins and spread of agro-pastoral adaptations since such concerns imply, a priori, an essentially diffusionary model. Her exhortation is well taken, yet she fails to consider that such a processual approach will necessarily involve an attempt at reconstructing and analyzing changes in social relations of production as well as in technological and ecological parameters. Most contributors recognize this necessity. However, few actually elucidate any theoretical approaches which might help us to understand the complex interaction of social structure, division of labor, and ownership and division of ecological knowledge which is crucial for determining why and how subsistence strategies change at all. This 'complex' of factors, often invisible in the archaeological record, is approachable by other means. And, it is vital that it be developed if we are to generate answers which are relevant to modern African problems.

In respect of these questions, the disciplines of ethnoarchaeology and historical linguistics proved important sources of data which can be added to those of paleoenvironmental and material archaeological studies to construct a well-rounded and multifaceted understanding of the human and biophysical factors involved in the transition to food production in Africa or, for that matter, anywhere else. The historical linguistic contribution presented by Christopher Ehret surveys virtually all of Africa's four language groups. In his presentation of reconstructed roots for sheep raising in Khoikhoi society (in southern Africa), Ehret suggests the kind of detailed hypothesis constructible from linguistic evidence. These roots ("ram," "milk ewe," and "cow"), which have an apparent central Sudanic proveni-

ence, suggest the beginnings of a linguistic taxonomy for sheep-breeding which itself implies the actual raising of—not just casual acquaintance with—sheep. A further set of loans related to grain-growing suggest that the speakers of proto-Khoikhoi knew of such a subsistence strategy from contacts with cultivators rather than that they practiced grain-raising themselves. Ehret recognizes that no archaeological evidence yet exists to substantiate his claim of a central Sudanic source for Khoikhoi pastoralism. However, his scenario is one which should be testable once a detailed understanding of Sudanic archaeological material culture is advanced to the level of that for southern Africa. The work of the British Institute in Eastern Africa, and the application of techniques such as attribute analysis, should make it possible to recognize links, if any exist, between southern African material cultural traditions and artifacts retrieved from the southern Sudan.

If Ehret's work is hopeful about its contributions to understanding a problem which has been traditionally approached from the perspective of archaeology, Daniel Livingstone's essay on paleoecology is very pessimistic. He presents a summary of the rather sparse results, to date, of plant macrofossil studies which bear directly on evidence for food production. He feels that out of the forty-three entries on Jack Harlan's list of indigenous African cultigens, only three will likely be identified with certainty—the baobab tree, the bottle gourd, and the bambara groundnut. In an attempt to rescue his article from sounding utterly hopeless, Livingstone mentions briefly the possibility of utilizing palynological data for reconstructing vegetational change and thereby gaining a conception of the ecological context in which food producers and collectors developed (p. 25). Livingstone has developed this thesis in his other publications and it is a pity that it is not pursued in the present volume. The time has definitely come for Africanists to begin integrating the variable sources which shed light on the matter of social and environmental parameters of changes in subsistence strategies.

Several articles in the second section approach this task. However, the regional coverage of this section is out of proportion to the spatial and temporal continuity of African food producing societies. Four of the ten articles on northern Africa are concerned with Egypt. There are only three articles each on western and southern Africa. Eastern Africa, including Ethiopia and the Horn, is represented by seven essays. The bias toward northern and eastern Africa reflects the disproportional amount of research carried out in those parts of Africa. However, much of the francophonic literature for western and central Africa has been ignored. Only a single article by David Phillipson discusses the central African area, and he arbitrarily makes the Zaire river his northern border (p. 272). This is almost unforgivable since that region, especially its northwestern corner, was a crucible for the development of a distinctively African yam and oil palm-based agriculture by speakers of the proto-Bantu branch of west Africa's Niger-Congo language group. The archaeological evidence relevant to this important innovation is

ably summarized elsewhere by Nicholas David.¹ It is unfortunate that Phillipson did not make use of this material since the omission leaves his subsequent treatment of the Bantu-speaking peoples' expansion eastward and southward from the modern Nigeria-Cameroon border hanging in the air.

The problems of uneven regional coverage in western Africa are largely ameliorated by the provocative and truly interdisciplinary articles by Merrick Posnansky, on Ghana, and Thurstan Shaw, on Nigeria. These essays address the criticism already levelled against Ann Sthal's article. Both Posnansky and Shaw use the available paleoecological data in concert with an imaginative use of ethnoarchaeological studies to argue for a long process of indigenous and regionally variable development of urbanism in Nigeria and the transition from collection to production of food in the areas of modern Togo and Ghana associated with the Kintampo cultural tradition. In discussing the continuity between modern and earlier times, Posnansky utilizes oral historical sources concerning the founders of Begho (in modern Ghana) "who are said to have emerged from a hole in the ground within a grassy plain" (p. 149). Subsequent archaeological excavations revealed a number of sites with Kintampo affiliations in the Begho area and also uncovered man-made holes which are believed to have been used as cisterns (p. 149). This kind of interdisciplinary analysis points out the range of sources available to the researcher who, in Ghana (or any other tropical ecosystem), has few direct remains of food producing activities to work with. The addition of in-depth historical linguistic studies focussed on reconstructing roots for tools, trapping activities, and desired items for collection should yield even more detail on the internal and regional development of subsistence strategies as well as identifying any external influences such as the domestication of cereals and the dwarf cow.

Of the several articles concerned with northern Africa, those by John Desmond Clark and Ann Stemler stand out for two different reasons. First, Clark's is an able and very readable account of the archaeological evidence for the Holocene period in the central Sudan. From the analysis of faunal assemblages, Clark suggests a seasonal pattern of transhumance for societies practicing a mixture of fishing, hunting, and wild grass collecting in the seventh and sixth millennia B.C., in the central region of modern Sudan. His survey includes the addition of ovicaprids and cattle by the latter part of the fourth millennium, and the use of barley, wheat and legumes by populations inhabiting the lower Nubian area. The only omission is that of integrating the relevant historical linguistic data (available in Ehret's chapter in this same volume), which tends to support Clark's reconstruction.

Stemler provides an excellent discussion of the actual process of cereal domestication as she envisions it, with special reference to *Sorghum sp.* and *Pennisetum sp.* She looks at the role of human intervention in gradually altering the course of wild grass evolution and the conditions necessary for this

intervention to result in actual domestication. Stemler maintains that domestication of *Sorghum sp.* and *Pennisetum sp.* most likely got its best start away from centers of wild grass collection since societies living in or near centers run a higher chance of interrupting the domestication process by reverting to using wild grasses. Stemler goes on to say that this domestication process is dependent upon the reaping of whole fruiting cobs and carrying it to a storage area since this is what alters the selective pressure in favor of tightly bunched grain heads (pp. 119-120). For her, the crucial variable is a technological one—the presence (or absence) of a tool which is efficient enough to make the reaping of whole fruiting cobs preferred to the easier, but not selectively different, reaping-by-stripping method. She wonders if such a tool might not be the stone “sickle-blades” from the Maghreb and Tunisia (p. 130).

By arguing that tool technology is the crucial variable in determining whether or not “really effective agricultural economies” take root in Africa, Stemler raises the old argument that iron technology and agriculture accompanied each other through central and southern Africa (pp. 130-131). Although stated as a working hypothesis in Stemler’s article, this model now appears to be untenable for the early stages on this spread. Historical linguistic evidence, and less securely understood archaeological data, presented elsewhere by Ehret,² David,³ and Pierre de Maret and F. Nsuka Nkutsi⁴ demonstrates the knowledge of cultivation, but not iron technology, by speakers of proto-Bantu languages during precisely that period of their earliest spread into the forests of the Zaire basin (ca. 2000 to 1000 B.C.). Furthermore, Stemler fails to consider the possibility of changes in the social division of labor, whereby sahelian societies might have made a labor intensive response, in addition to or instead of, a technologically intensive response to the problems of domesticating sahelian African cereals. Such a consideration would recognize the factors of sexual divisions of labor and personal taste for the grain contained in whole fruiting cobs as both impinging upon the decision as to which kind of fruiting cobs to reap and how to reap them.

The brevity of this review has not done justice to the breadth, depth, and erudition of the overall effort which Clark and Brandt have assembled. However, it is extremely lamentable that the studies in this volume do not make any serious attempt to produce historical knowledge of food producing strategies which might be useful to modern Africans who are struggling against a general decline in agro-pastoral production since the late 1960s. While most of the contributors recognize the utility of studying modern subsistence strategies for understanding their genesis and evolution, few have turned the question around. To wit, what can be culled from the myriad data on the transition to food production which are relevant to modern efforts at agro-pastoral development? It is hoped by this reviewer that subsequent efforts in the same vein as Clark and Brandt’s will begin to address this question,

thereby bringing the knowledge they produce more directly into the arena of utility.

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¹Nicholas David, "Early Bantu Expansion in the Context of Central African Prehistory: 4000 - 1 B.C.," in L. Bouquiaux, ed., *L'Expansion Bantoue*. Vol. II. Paris: Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, 1980, pp. 609-647.

²Christopher Ehret, "Linguistic Inferences about Early Bantu History," in C. Ehret and M. Posnansky, eds., *The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

³Nicholas David, "Prehistory and Historical Linguistics in Central Africa: Points of Contact," in *ibid.*, pp. 78-95.

⁴Pierre de Maret and F. Nsuka Nkutsi, "History of Bantu Metallurgy: Some Linguistic Aspects," *History of Africa* 4 (1977): 43-65. But earlier the same essay appeared in *Nyame Akuma*

⁵(1974): 36-37.

John Huxtable Elliott. *Richelieu and Olivares*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. viii + 189 pp. Abbreviations, illustrations, bibliography, notes and index.

In *Richelieu and Olivares*, John Huxtable Elliott presents a compact, succinct, and fascinating comparison of the two rival statesmen, Phillippe de Champaigne, Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642) and Diego de Velasquez, Count-Duke Olivares (1587-1645). Elliott's book is a perceptive and revealing analysis of two contemporaries, one well studied by historians and the other unjustifiably neglected. Images of Richelieu, the successful minister who navigated France during its ascent to power, and Olivares, the failure of a minister who presided over Spain's decline, have been perpetuated by historiography. The need to reassess this historiographical imbalance motivated Elliott to write. The comparison of Richelieu and Olivares is not intended so much to redeem Olivares from defeat, but to portray a more complete reality of Spain and its leading minister during the first decades of the seventeenth century and into the Thirty Years War. It also attempts to provide a different background from which to understand Richelieu.

The results of abundant, recent research conducted on Richelieu and France during the early decades of the seventeenth century surface frequently in Elliott's book. His footnotes cite new publications such as those by Wil-