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Forty years after the epoch-making *African Political Systems*, the *Cahiers d'Études africaines* are devoting a special (double) issue to a collection of essays on pre-colonial African States.

These essays are not so much a theoretical reflexion on the origins of the State as a series of convergent pragmatic approaches bearing on such topics as the re-organization of kin groups and clan segments, and of social dependency, on the role of production relationships and exchange networks, on ideological structuration and the manipulation of popular knowledge, etc. Examples are taken from all over sub-Saharan Africa, from the Western Sahel to the Channel of Moçambique.

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