
State and Tribe in the History of Medieval Europe and Black Africa – a Comparative Approach

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The formation of states is a subject studied by various humanistic and social sciences. This issue is traditionally examined by legal and historical sciences, as well as by political science and political anthropology. Within all these sciences, there has always been and still continues a discussion concerning, firstly, the definition of a state and, secondly, the theoretical and practical foundations for distinguishing between a state and other political organizations, preceding it in the history of mankind. In the 1970s Henri J. M. Claessen and Peter Skalník formed an international group of anthropologists, lawyers, archaeologists and historians to examine the emergence of the state on the scale of the general history of humankind, in various human civilizations, regardless of the geographical location and chronology of those processes. Another task of the group was to define the difference between the non-state and state political organizations and to specify the features of an early state. The group, working for almost 20 years, prepared a series of publications, starting with the volumes *The Early State* and *The Study of the State* (Claessen and Skalník 1978a, 1981). The series contained also volumes, on economic phenomena, development processes and development barriers, as well as the ideological foundations and legitimation of early states (Claessen and van de Velde 1987, 1991; Claessen, van de Velde and Smith 1985; Claessen and Oosten 1996). A summary of the research was given in theoretical works by Henri Claessen (Claessen 2000, 2002).

The Early State theory, introduced into political anthropology, assumes that both the tribe and the state are types of political organization. A tribal organization is based on an ethnical group, divided into kinship groups – clans. A tribal territory is determined by the range of the group's settlements. Due to the non-permanent character of settlements, changes in their range and migration, a tribal territory is not stable. Authority is dispersed. In the individual clans and territorial units (villages, districts),

the power belongs to the clan elders. The degree of social differentiation is small: differentiation is based on age and prestige rather than on established economic and political divisions. Political decentralization is reflected by a system of religious beliefs, favouring particularity. A factor playing a special role in that system is worship of the ancestors of the individual kinship groups (Sahlins 1968; Service 1975). If the importance of the individual clans and territorial units is either equal or similar, and all of them preserve their independence, then such a system is referred to as segmentary (Middleton and Tait 1958; Southall 1988, 1991; Terray 1984). However, inside a tribe the power can be gradually gathered and centralized in the hands of a single clan, and chiefs descended from that clan. This process gives rise to a chiefdom (Oberg 1955; Schapera 1956; Carneiro 1981; Skalník 2004). However, the process of the centralization of power is not yet finished here. The chiefs are controlled by social factors – councils of elders and meetings of free men. The belief system which gives legitimacy to such an organization shows an increase in the worship of the ancestors of the chief's clan, but the worship of the ancestors of other families still continues (Claessen and Skalník 1978c: 628–629; Claessen and Oosten 1996: 379–389). With time, the process of the gradual accumulation of power by the chiefs can lead to them becoming independent of the control by the social factors, and to the emergence of a state.

In contradistinction to a tribal organization, a state organization is characterized by the centralization of power. All other types of organization become subordinated to the superior power. In early types of states, such superior power is of the monarchic character. All individuals and institutions exercising power wield it based on a delegation granted them by the ruler. This results in the emergence of an established division into rulers and ruled, into groups providing tribute to the people wielding power and the group having such tributes at their disposal and making use of them. Kinship-based divisions gradually lose their importance in favour of institutional, political and economic divisions. Power over people is simultaneously power over the area settled by those people. The territory of a state organization becomes its permanent element, and maintaining that territory becomes one of the important tasks of the authorities. Such a centralized system requires an appropriate legitimacy, which cannot be granted by the various clan devotions, while legitimacy provided by the worship of the ruling clan's ancestors is not firm enough a basis (Service 1975; Claessen and Skalník 1978c: 629–634; Claessen, van de Velde and Smith 1985; Claessen and van de Velde 1987, 1991; Claessen and Oosten 1996).

The aim of this article is to compare, using the Early State theory, the chronology, course and results of the processes of limiting the operating

scope of tribal organizations and state emergence processes in medieval Europe and pre-colonial Africa. I shall refer here to the whole of research by the mentioned group, and in particular to the theses concerning the beginnings and limits of an Early State (Claessen and Skalnik 1978c; Cohen 1978; also Grinin 2004).

Hence, when writing and speaking about 'state', 'tribe' or 'early state' in the context of Europe in early Middle Ages or pre-colonial Black Africa, we use those terms in the sense of Early State theory.

Research on tribes and states, as well as the on the transformation processes turning tribal organizations into states, has not been undertaken by anthropologists only, but also by historians (Wenskus 1961; Łowmiański 1964; Earle 1987; Brachmann 1997; Wirth 1997; Wolfram 1997; Modzelewski 2006). Political anthropology provides historians with abundant comparative material on non-European societies. Its methods and results can be taken into consideration in research on European societies in early Middle Ages.

The processes of the emergence of the state organization in Africa and in Europe seem to be similar enough to allow their comparison, and different enough for the comparison to make sense rather than leading to the development of a single, simplified model. Such a comparison allows us to point out similarities and differences between these processes (Pirenne 1923; Sée 1928: 157–179; Bardach 1962; Hammel 1980).

The stages and chronology of the emergence of the state in medieval Europe have been studied for a long time. Hence let us only recall, very briefly, that the 5th and the 6th centuries saw the emergence of states resulting from invasions by barbarian tribes (mainly German ones) on the lands of the Roman Empire (Musset 1969). Most of those states were created in the territories of the Western Empire, broken apart by the invasions, while the state of the Bulgarians was established on part of the territory of the Eastern Empire. In the early Middle Ages, when armed barbarian tribal groups invaded the Empire's area and settled in its individual provinces next to the indigenous population, the transformation of the invaders' tribal organization into a state organization was relatively fast. This was because it took place in an area where a state organization had already been operating for a long time, and the local organization patterns, economic potential, and – despite the destruction – also the demographic potential, were all at hand, ready for use (Werner 1979) (see Fig. 1).

After the period of the great migrations and the fall of the Western Empire, other states were created outside the *limes*, in the areas settled by German tribes, lying immediately to the east of the Rhine, and to the north of the Danube. Outside the *limes*, the transformation of tribal organizations into state ones was carried out through accumulation of power in the hands of tribal chiefs (kings, dukes) and taking over the state mod-

els from the outside. This became possible when local agriculture, animal breeding, handicraft and trade had created an economic basis indispensable for the political transformation. The geographic and ethnical proximity of the lands lying immediately outside the *limes* to the territories of the former Western Empire, and later to the barbarian successor states, favoured economic development and facilitated takeover of political models. Another variant of pattern diffusion was military conquest and the imposition of new patterns by force, as was the case with the Saxons (Krüger 1963; Werner 1979; Wolfram 1995).

In Central and Eastern Europe, settled by Slavic tribes, as well as in Scandinavia, settled by German tribes, emergence of states through transformation of tribal organizations occurred later, in the 9th – 11th centuries, which followed first of all from their geographical distance from the existing states of the Western and Southern Europe (Gieysztor and Manteuffel 1968; Foote and Wilson 1973; Gli Slavi 1983; Urbańczyk 1997; Lozny 2004). As a result, both the external models of state organization and the military pressure made themselves felt there later than in case of the lands directly outside the *limes*. Because of the lower effectiveness of the economies of Central, Eastern and Northern Europe, as well as their smaller demographic potential, the possibilities of internal political development and adoption of external models appeared there in the 9th – 11th centuries only. However, as soon as such possibilities came into being, states were created relatively fast in that area of Europe. The Hungarian state was also established at that time (Székely 1976) (see Fig. 2).

The last tribal areas in Europe were taken over by state organizations in the 13th century. These were the territories settled by the Baltic peoples: the Prussians, the Yadzvingians, the Lithuanians and the Latvians (Gimbutas 1963; Łowmiański 1983; Okulicz-Kozaryn 1997; Aleksiu *et al.* 2004). Most of their tribal organizations were destroyed by the expansion of the Order of the Teutonic Knights, which created the Teutonic Order state in the conquered areas. Only the Lithuanians managed to beat back the invasions and to create their own state (see Fig. 3).

In this way, the process of covering the whole area of Europe with state organizations progressed at the cost of tribal organizations, and lasted from the 5th until the late 13th century. Hence the successive stages during which the whole of Europe was covered with state organizations exploited the possibilities and the demographic, economic and organizational potential created by tribes. However, the emergence of states was a fundamental, deep transformation. It was brought about by external pressure (Tilly 1990: 38–47), but also by the attraction of the external state models. Adoption of the model was tantamount to the adoption of Christianity, which legitimized the political order of the state. If Christianity was rejected, adoption of the model became impossible, and military pressure left no time for the development of a local system. As a re-

sult of invasions, the invader's state was created. This was the fate of the tribes and early state organizations of the western Slavs: the Obodrits, the Veleites and the Lhuzitian Serbs (Ludat 1971; Lübke 1997; Modzelewski 2006), as well as most of the Balts (Prussians, Yadzvingians, and Latvians).

The diffusion of this model of state organizations in Europe did not leave any room for the survival of tribal organizations. Traditional European historiography viewed this phenomenon as obvious, and saw the emergence of the state process as a one-way, unavoidable process of development.

However, the development of the state in Black Africa shows that another model of political transformation, different from the European one, is also possible. Africa has been one of the centres of political anthropological research since the 1930s. Meyer Fortes and Edward Evans-Pritchard introduced into the political anthropology of Africa the following distinction:

...the political systems described in this book fall into two main categories. One group, which we refer to as Group A, consists of those societies which have centralized authority, administrative machinery, and judicial institutions – in short, a government – and in which cleavages of wealth, privilege, and status correspond to the distribution of power and authority. ... The other group, which we refer to as Group B, consists of those societies which lack centralized authority, administrative machinery, and constituted judicial institutions – in short which lack government – and in which there are no sharp divisions of rank, status, or wealth. ... Those who consider that a state should be defined by the presence of governmental institutions will regard the first group as primitive states and the second group as stateless societies (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940: 5).

For Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, the terms ‘tribe’ and ‘state’ were, just as for the historians of medieval Europe, tools for analyzing the collected material. This material dated mainly from the 19th and 20th centuries. However, the question about the chronology and course of the processes of state formation in Black Africa refers also to the more distant past of that continent. A detailed analysis of the political history of Africa falls outside the scope of this article. Fortunately, this history is known nowadays much better than a few decades ago (see *e.g.*, The Cambridge History 1975–1982; General History 1981–1993). I have added to this article some maps which show, in a schematic way, the number and deployment of states in Africa in the 8th, 13th, 16th and 18th centuries (see Fig. 4, 5, 6, 7, taken from Tymowski 1999; see also Ajayi and

Crowder 1985; Connah 1987: 6–23). Based on these maps and on the syntheses of political anthropology and on the theories of state formation in Africa (Vansina 1962; Balandier 1967; Mair 1977; Claessen 1981; Terray 1984; Eisenstadt *et al.* 1988), the following characteristics of the process of state formation in Africa can be pointed out:

1. The number of states in Africa grew, but the growth rate was slow.

2. In Africa, there were a few regions characterised by more intensive creation of states: North Africa, the Nile Delta, the area to the south of the Sahara desert in West and Central Africa, the East Coast, the Guinea Coast, the Congo Basin and the southern savannahs, the Great Lakes area (Connah 1987: maps 2.1, 2.2, fig. 2.3).

3. In the above-mentioned areas, state organizations existed side by side with tribal ones.

4. The whole pre-colonial history of Black Africa is characterised by the coexistence of states and tribal organizations.

5. Part of the tribal organizations did not undergo the transformation into state ones even when the economic situation (comparable to neighbouring states and tribes) might have enabled such a transformation, and while models of state organization were found among the neighbours and were known to tribal societies.

6. Many states in Black Africa disintegrated and collapsed not only as the result of invasions, but also due to internal processes. The phenomenon of state fragmentation, and return to tribal organizations in the former state's area was well known in Africa...

While in Europe the phenomenon of tribal organizations existing simultaneous with states was only temporary, in Black Africa this phenomenon was a permanent one. In many cases, African states did not undertake expansion aimed at subjugating the neighbouring tribes to their authority, or forcing those tribes to defend themselves and establish their own state organizations. In turn, the tribes, despite the existing possibilities, did not always transform themselves into states (Horton 1971; Małowist 1966, 1967; Hopkins 1967; Southall 1991). Moreover, until the end of the pre-colonial period, the establishment and development of states was far from being a one-way process (Tymowski 1987, 1994). On the contrary, this process was often reversible, and several states fell apart in tribal organizations (Meillassoux 1963; Person 1981). African societies were very well able to function within tribes, which ensured an ordered, acceptable lifestyle for people.

A comparison of the emergence of the state in Black Africa and in Medieval Europe sheds a different light on the course of European history. As mentioned above, in the 19th century and early 20th century Euro-

pean history was deemed to set the course of development for the whole of humanity, and the one-way course of political development together with its unavoidable character, stemming from the automatic use of the possibilities for such developments wherever they emerged, was treated as an obvious feature. However, the history of Europe is a separate case, and an exceptional one rather than a typical.

The phenomenon of tribes existing and surviving outside states is only one of the symptoms of coexistence between these two types of a political organization. Another symptom is the survival of tribal organizations inside state organizations. This was the case both in Europe and in Africa. One of the most important features attributed to early states is exactly the continuation of pre-state social systems, first of all the tribal ones, inside an early state. Elimination of tribal structures occasioned the transformation of the state organization of an early type into a mature state (Claessen and Skalnik 1978b, 1978c, 1981). However, the process of disintegration and elimination of tribes existing inside states took a different course in Europe than in Africa. In Europe, the process was relatively fast – it lasted from one to a couple of centuries, with considerable differences between the individual regions of Europe and the individual states. However, in Africa (as well as in many other non-European societies) the elimination of tribes existing inside states was either very slow – or did not happen at all.

In case of early states, the possibility of internal disintegration was high, for in such a case the population could (and did) return to living in the tribal organizations, which still existed. In contradistinction, a mature state is difficult to destroy, since the return to life in tribal organizations is impossible here. Hence the fall of a mature state leads either to anarchy, or (most frequently) to the establishment of another mature state in the same area.

Let us mention a few examples from both the continents we are interested in.

The state of the Franks was established in the late 5th century A.D., as a result of the invasion of Frankish tribes in the territory of northern Gaul, followed in the early 6th century by conquests in the area of south Gaul, as well as in the lands east of the Rhine. The population of the Frankish state contained very different groups of people: first of all, the tribes of Salician and Ripuarian Franks, the Burgunds, the Alemans, as well as the pre-conquest population of Gaul, referred to as ‘Romans’ (or ‘Gallo Romans’) in the sources. The conquests and concentration of power of Chlodwig (Clovis) consisted, among others, in eliminating the tribal chiefs (kings) and taking over their rights. However, the tribal laws, dif-

ferent for each of the German groups, survived for a few more centuries (Werner 1979; 1984: 317–409). Conquests of the Franks in the lands to the east of the Rhine, carried out both in Merovingian and Carolingian times, resulted in more and more tribal groups being included in their state. Their separate existence often came to a brutal end, especially in the case of the Saxons, conquered and Christianized by force by Charlemagne. Despite their brutality, the Carolingians did not manage to eliminate the tribal identity of the Saxons fast (Werner 1984: 409–437).

The story of the Longobards, who invaded Italy in 568 and established their kingdom there, was similar. The Longobards conquered the local population, the ‘Romans’, as well as other German tribal groups, which had invaded Italy and settled there in the 5th century. As in the state of the Franks, the kings of the Longobards also subjected the other tribal chiefs (kings) to their power, and either included them in the group ruling the state, or eliminated them. However, the separate character of each tribal group with respect to the laws and the enforcement of justice lasted for another several centuries. Both among the Franks and the Longobards political transformations were made even more complex by the fact that the ‘Roman’ population lived according to the laws inherited from ancient times, and had nothing whatsoever to do with the tribal divisions among the Germans (General History 1983; Modzelewski 2006: 57–75).

In the case of the states emerging in Central and Eastern Europe from the 9th through the 11th century, the destruction of the tribal organizations occurred under different circumstances (Gli Slawi 1983; Urbańczyk 1997; Samsonowicz 2004: 6–33). In the 9th century, the Great Moravian State was a collection of tribes, which did not break up, since before this could happen, in the early 10th century the state was broken up by a Hungarian invasion (Graus 1963; Žemlička 1993). At that time, the Bohemia dukedom emerged as a separate entity. In the older literature, the authors assumed that the dukedom consisted of a number of tribes inhabiting the Bohemian Basin, and that the tribes lost their separate identities by the late 10th century, together with elimination of the Slavnikovitz'es by the Przemyslides. Recently, some researchers have put forward the hypothesis that Bohemia was created by a single large tribe. The 10th century saw the elimination of the territorial and organizational structures which formed that tribe, and the centralization of power (Graus 1983; Třestík 1997: 67–96).

The Polish state was created by joining together, by means of conquests, the tribes inhabiting the basins of the Vistula, Varta, and Odra rivers. These conquests were carried out by the dukes ruling in Gniezno and Poznań who descended from the local tribe, probably called the Polans (recently, this name has been questioned, since it appeared in the sources only later). The said conquests lasted from about the year 930 till the end of the 10th century. We can track them and establish their chro-

nology thanks to dendrological examinations of the wood used for building the castles (grody), and from the mid-960s on also thanks to written sources. Mieszko I (about 960–992) and his predecessors conquered the Goplans tribe in the Kuyavia province, the Mazovians, the Lendzians (in the south-east), then the Pomeranian tribes, the Vislans with Cracow, and the Silesian tribes. The evidence for the use of force is the burning of tribal castles and the construction of new ones, by the state authorities. A part of the tribal elders most probably died in the fights, and a part decided to cooperate with the ducal dynasty. Tribal structures were broken up relatively fast – they were already of no importance in the mid 11th century (Hensel 1960; Łowmiański 1964–1973; Buko 2005). An obvious proof of this fact is the moving of the dukedom's capital from Gniezno to Cracow, lying in the territory of the former Vislans tribe. This happened in the times of Duke Kazimierz called 'The Restorer' (1038–1054), who restored the state organization, after a period of pagan rebellion. He was not afraid of tribal particularity – on the contrary, he used the potential of the former Vislans for the needs of the state.

One can suppose that in the cases of Poland and Bohemia the elimination of tribal organizations could have taken place in a relatively short time, because the states mentioned above were created in areas settled by Slavic tribes, which were very close to each other with respect to language, culture, and economy, as well as to type of organization, customary law, and social structures. Such closeness facilitated both the unification of the tribes and the elimination of their separate political identities. However, this explanation, probably right in the case of Bohemia and Poland, seems insufficient to explain the case of Hungary (Musset 1971: 67–80, 277–281; Székely 1976). That state was established as a result of the invasion of nomadic Hungarian (Magyar) tribes in an area settled by Slavic tribes. In that case, the differences in languages, cultures, and laws were very large. Nevertheless, the break-up of tribal structures in the Hungarian state turned out to be as fast as in the case of Bohemia and Poland. A possible explanation for this might be the small number of the Slavic population compared to the number of invaders.

The case of Kiev Russia was again different. That state was formed out of numerous tribal groups of East Slavs, conquered by a group of Varegs (Rus'es), who in a very short time adopted the Slavic culture (Poppe 1982; Heller 1993; Nazarenko 1995). The Slavic tribal structures lost their importance during the 11th century, though nomadic tribes still operated at the peripheries of the state organization: the Khazars and the Pietschingas in the south, and Finnish peoples in the north.

The reason for the fast elimination of the tribal structures in the Central and East European states in comparison to the West and South European states could have been the late establishment of the former, attempts

of the rulers and the ruling groups to make up for that delay, by taking over of external models and their rapid implementation. Another factor speeding up political transformations was the adoption of Christianity together with state models of organization.

The European historiography of the 19th and first half of the 20th century considered the fast disappearance of the tribal organizations which were included in the states of early medieval Europe as an obvious symptom of a political transformation. Elimination of the tribes made the existence of the states irreversible. Hence most of the states formed in Europe in the Middle Ages have survived until this very day. However, the history of Black Africa shows that there were other variants of political transformations. Indeed, a phenomenon typical for Africa is the long-term, and even the permanent existence and operation of tribes as structures included in the framework of the state. The states did not succeed in their elimination, but instead used them as lower management levels. In other words, African states were organizations built *over* the tribes rather than *in place of* (Vansina 1962; Southall 1991; Tymowski 1987; 1999: 142–144). This phenomenon occurred in some Asian states too. However, the survival of tribes within states enabled the disintegration of the state, followed by a return to living in tribal organizations – and there were many such cases in the history of Black Africa.

The colonial rule disturbed the course of political transformation processes in Africa (Gann and Duignan 1969). First of all, it resulted in the elimination of native states and the establishment of colonies. The latter were not real states, for they lacked sovereignty – they were dependent on the European metropolises. Nevertheless, for the first time in the history of Black Africa, its entire area was covered by organizations of the state type. This was in line with European ideas about governance. As a result, the phenomenon of states and tribes existing next to each other disappeared.

On the other hand, the phenomenon of tribes continuing their existence inside colonies continued throughout the whole colonial period (Murdock 1959; Baumann and Westermann 1967). In British colonies, native African political organizations were incorporated in the political system as lower management levels. In French colonies, ruled directly by the colonial administration, the tribes survived as a separate system, which, contrary to the intention of the metropolis, did not disappear. Let us repeat: we are talking about tribes as a type of organization rather than just ethnical groups. The tribes have survived, independently of the type of colonialism: be it the British, French, Portuguese, Belgian, Spanish or Italian one (Gann and Duignan 1969: map on p. 26). A phenomenon which complicated the functioning of tribes in the colonial system even more was the artificial delimitation of the colonies' boundaries, without taking into consideration the settlement-related and political situation in Africa. In the period of decolonization, the emerging independent African

states inherited the colonial boundaries together with the traditional, African political structures, which had survived the colonial period (van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1987; van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and van Dijk 1999).

A comparison of the history of African states and the history of European states allows us to point out numerous differences between the two. There is the difference in the timing and duration of the processes we are interested in, as well as their intensity and results. In Europe the tribes were eliminated already in the Middle Ages – both those existing outside the state organizations, and those that found themselves inside them. In Africa, the tribes existed outside the states until the colonial period, while inside the states they have survived until this very day.

We have focused our attention on describing the processes we are interested in, comparing them and pointing out the differences between Europe and Africa. An obvious question that arises now concerns the reasons for such differentiation – together with the question if we can pronounce any judgment or appreciation on those differences.

If we look for the reasons, the present state of research does not allow us to go beyond hypotheses. We would like to propose the following ones:

The number of tribal organizations in Africa was much larger than in Europe. Also inside the already formed African states the tribes were more numerous than those inside the early European states. This could have been an obstacle to the centralization of power in Africa.

The diversity of languages, cultures, customary law systems, organization and economic types among the African tribes was much greater than the corresponding diversity existing in Europe. In comparison, in Europe much more often (though not always) neighbouring tribes (for example, Slavic or German ones) had similar languages, cultures, customary law systems and economies. As a result, the elimination of tribes, and the unification and centralization of organizations encountered fewer obstacles.

Productivity of European agriculture was much higher than productivity of African agriculture. Hence in Europe it was possible to impose higher tributes on the subjects and to devote larger funds to creating various state institutions. In Africa, the possibilities to do so were limited (Goody 1971: 21–38; Austen 1986).

In the Europe of the early Middle Ages, the elites commonly used writing as a means of communication, management and transmission of culture. In most Black African states, this was mainly done by oral communication (Vansina 1961; Goody 1968).

In the Europe of the early Middle Ages, the legitimacy of power and the state was based on Christianity. This concerned both the position of a given state among other European states, and the social and political

relations within each of the states. The neighbours of tribal and early state organizations constantly pressed them to transform, and to strengthen the state. An equally effective factor was the internal pressure exerted by the state authorities on the subjects. In Black Africa there was no single basis for legitimacy, common for most of the states: local beliefs were of a particular character, while the ancestor worship of the rulers could be balanced by the ancestor worship of other clans (Claessen 1981; de Heusch 1987). In many states of Black Africa, the ruling group was unified by Islam. However, medieval Islam, especially the so-called Black Islam, was a tolerant religion (Lewis 1966; Monteil 1980; Tymowski 1990). The Muslim rulers in Black Africa did not strive to impose this religion on all their subjects – local religions and beliefs were tolerated. As a result, in Africa there was no single legitimacy basis, common to all states and societies – neither in the states, nor in the relations between the states.

The hypothetical reasons for the survival of tribal organizations in Africa and their disappearance in Europe which we have given here could be multiplied. However, an important issue is that none of these reasons influenced the state of things in isolation from the others – to the contrary, each of them reinforced the impact of the others.

The judgment regarding the differences in the course of the emergence and further development of states we have presented here depends on the historical period and views of the person pronouncing that judgment. At the time of colonialism, the situation in Africa was seen as a symptom of backwardness of its civilization, and the situation in Europe – as a symptom of the leading role of its civilization. The belief in one-way progress was common. According to those views, Africa should be civilized – that is, perforce made similar to the European pattern, seen as universal. However, learning the history of non-European societies and their contemporary cultures has highlighted the importance of differences and the impossibility of reducing them to a single pattern. The theory of neo-evolutionism coined the term ‘multilinear evolution’ (Steward 1955; Claessen 2000: 37–43). Establishment of differences in the directions and rates of development need not lead to a linear judgment ‘better – worse’. However, we are still left with the differentiation ‘effective – less effective – ineffective’. What is more, the discussion revealed quite opposite judgments, referring to the ruthless and destructive character of the European model of political development. Since this type of views is less known, let me quote the opinion of an African political science specialist Pathe Diagne:

It is not by chance that the Negro-African imperial concept, or simply state concept, has preserved a confederative character. It consisted in unifying autonomic and self-governing communities and territories. It did not involve introduction

of a single culture or a single official language. An internally varied Negro-African state is in fact an opposite of an Indo-European state-nation, eliminating ethnical groups and downgrading the value of everybody who is different from others (Diagne 1981: 46).

Regardless of whether we accept any of these judgments, or refrain from judgments, the comparison of the processes of emergence of states and disappearance (or survival) of tribes in Medieval Europe and in Black Africa allows us to ponder the various directions of the development of human societies.

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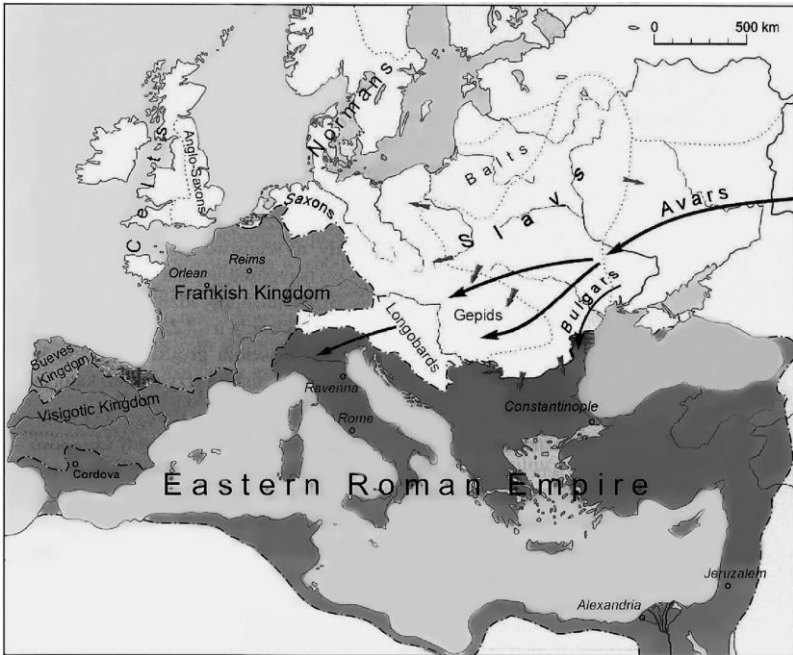


Fig. 1. Europe in the 6th century



Fig. 2. Europe in the 11th century



Fig. 3. Europe in the 14th – 15th century

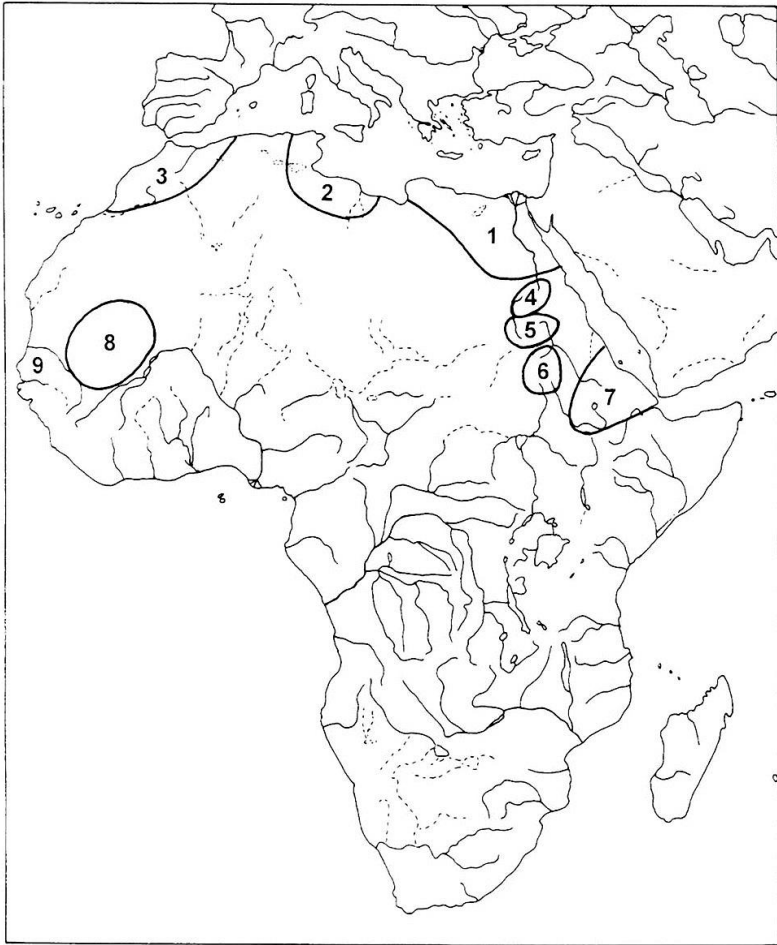


Fig. 4. African states in the 8th century

1 – Egypt, 2 – Aghlabite Ifrikiya, 2 – Idriside Morocco, 4 – Nobadia, 5 – Makuria, 6 – Alodia, 7 – Ethiopia, 8 – Ghana, 9 – Tekrur?

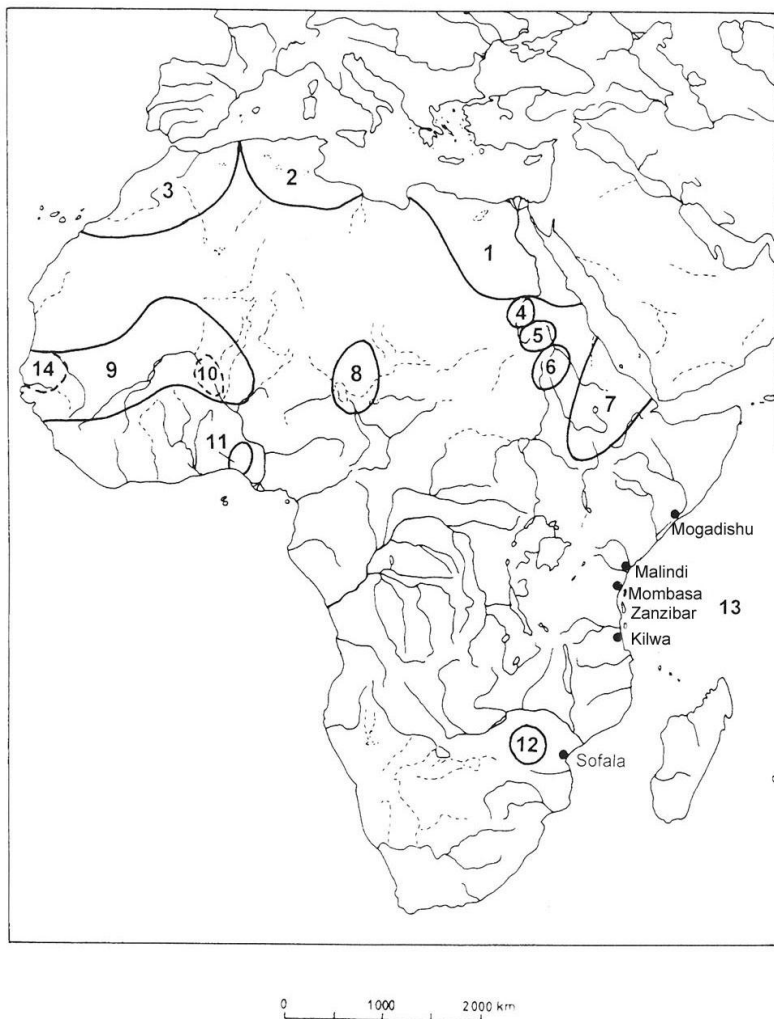


Fig. 5. African states in the 13th century

1 – Mameluk Egypt, 2 – Hafside Ifrikiya, 3 – Merinide Morocco, 4 – Do-Tawo, 5 – Makuria, 6 – Alodia, 7 – Ethiopia, 8 – Kanem, 9 – Mali, 10 – Songhay, subordinated to Mali, 11 – Ife and other city-states of the Yoruba, 12 – Great Zimbabwe, 13 – city-states of the East Coast, 14 – Wolof?

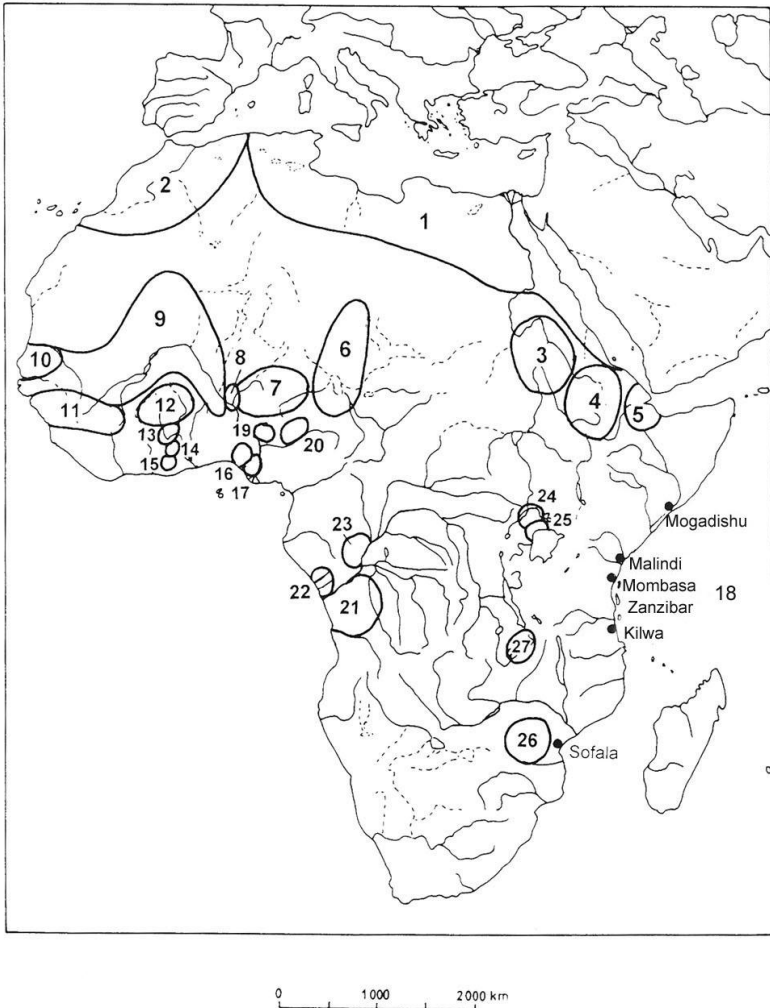


Fig. 6. African states in the 16th century

1 – Egypt and North Africa under Turkish rule, 2 – Saadite Morocco, 3 – Funj, 4 – Ethiopia, 5 – Adal, 6 – Bornu, 7 – Hausa city-states, 8 – Kebbi, 9 – Songhay, 10 – Wolof, 11 – Mali, 12 – Mossi, 13 – Mampursi, 14 – Dagomba, 15 – Bono Mansu, 16 – Yoruba city-states, 17 – Benin, 18 – East Coast city-states, 19 – Nupe, 20 – Kuararafa, 21 – Congo, 22 – Ngoyo, Kakongo, Loango, 23 – Tio, 24 – Buganda, 25 – Bunioro, 26 – Monomotapa, 27 – Marawi

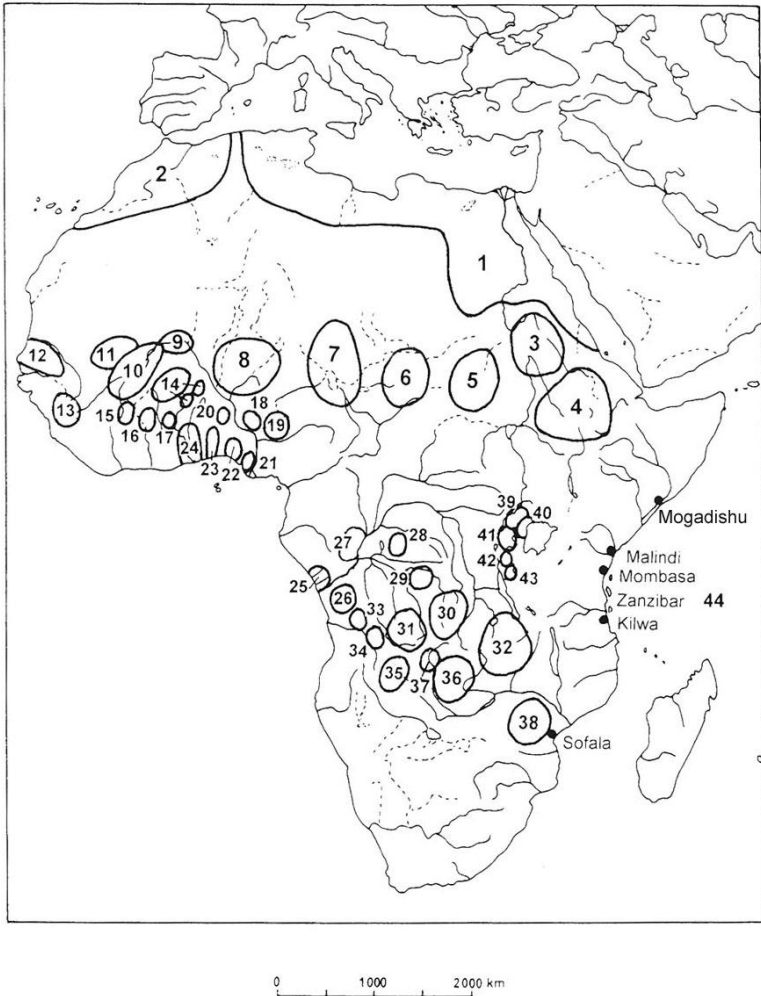


Fig. 7. African states in the 18th century

1 – Egypt and North Africa under Turkish rule, 2 – Alawite Morocco, 3 – Funj, 4 – Ethiopia, 5 – Dar-Fur, 6 – Wadai, 7 – Bornu, 8 – Hausa city-states, 9 – Arma pashalik, 10 – Segu, 11 – Kaarta, 12 – Wolof, 13 – Futa Djalon, 14 – Mossi and their neighbours, 15 – Kankan, 16 – Kong, 17 – Gonja, 18 – Nupe, 19 – Kuararafa, 20 – Borgu, 21 – Benin, 22 – Yoruba (Oyo), 23 – Dahomey, 24 – Ashanti and neighbours, 25 – Ngoyo, Kakongo, Loango, 26 – Soyo and other small states left after Congo's breakdown, 27 – Tio, 28 – Bolia, 29 – Kuba, 30 – Luba, 31 – Lunda, 32 – Kazembe, 33 – Matamba, 34 – Kasanje, 35 – Cokwe, 36 – Lozi, 37 – Lwena, 38 – Shangamira (Rozwi), 39 – Bunioro, 40 – Buganda, 41 – Ankole, 42 – Rwanda, 43 – Burundi, 44 – East Coast city-states under Oman's rule