

PREFACE

The essays in this volume are the product of an interdisciplinary research seminar on "The Early State in Africa", conducted during the 1979-1980 academic year at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This seminar was one of a series of seminars on comparative civilizations initiated at the Department of Sociology, often in cooperation with the Truman Research Institute of the Hebrew University. The participants included historians, sociologists, political scientists, and specialists in comparative religion, who shared an interest in the emergence and dynamics of the state in Africa and were concerned with trying to understand its origins and its various manifestations on the continent. Sessions of the seminar were devoted to a critical review of the literature on early states and to a rigorous analysis of comparative African cases. The conceptual framework of this book evolved gradually during the course of these discussions.

During the past few years the individual authors revised and, in some instances, entirely rewrote their original papers. In 1983 the editors published a theoretical article on the topic, "Les Origines de l'Etat: Une Nouvelle Approche", in *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* (No. 6), which serves as the basis for the introductory essay. The conclusions were prepared following the submission of the completed case studies.

This volume therefore represents several years of enjoyable collaboration and constant intellectual interchange. It owes much to the graduate students and colleagues who shared ideas, extended criticism, challenged interpretations, and stimulated analysis.