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Nguesso sought to transform their societies through a socialist-Marxist ideology. Others, among them Zaïre under Mobutu Sese Seko and Somalia under Siad Barre, were staunchly capitalist in their orientation, and sought a capitalist revolution as the basis for bringing change. A third category of countries—Uganda under Idi Amin Dada and the Central African Republic (renamed the Central African Empire) under Jean Bedel Bokassa—were distinguishable mainly by the level of brutality that was associated with their rule.

The factors that explain the frequency of coups d'état and military rule in Africa are many and varied. They include the weakness of the postindependent state in Africa, the economic, political, and social problems that African states inherited from colonial rule, and their inability to successfully resolve such problems. Economic mismanagement and corruption by civilian governments and the personal ambitions of military leaders are other factors. The military was, and remains, one of the most organized institutions in Africa. In addition, the military is well equipped and has an important weapon that civilian governments do not have—namely, arms. These elements give the military an advantage over a civilian government when it comes to mobilizing people and resources to deal with a particular problem in a country.

Despite the rationalization of coups d'état and military rule as discussed above, military governments in Africa were not, generally speaking, any more successful than civilian governments in dealing with Africa's economic and social problems. Issues of poverty, unemployment, low incomes, weak communication infrastructures, poor educational systems, inadequate and poorly equipped health care systems, and ethnic conflicts were as rampant under military rule as under civilian rule. In many cases, the policies and behavior of military governments were similar to those of their civilian predecessors. Corruption and mismanagement did not go away; rather, they increased in some cases.

The military governments adopted the same tactics that their civilian counterparts used to maintain political control. Upon seizing power, most sought legitimacy for their leadership by adopting civilian institutions. Most adopted titles such as *president* rather than *general*. Most also turned the state into a one-party system, with their party as the sole party. Other instruments for political manipulation under civilian rule, such as the establishment of a patronage system of reward for supporters and punishment for opponents, noncompetitive elections, the suppression of dissent, and censorship to preempt perceived threats to their power were also used to institutionalize the military leaders' control.

In the early 1990s, most of Africa's military regimes were forced by worsening economic and social problems, political unrest, and external pressure to liberalize the political system. Beginning with Benin in 1990, and continuing with Mali, the DRC, and Niger, many succumbed to pressure and introduced democratic reforms that brought about new constitutions and governments. Others (Ghana, Togo, and Guinea) were able to manipulate the electoral process and remain in power. By the late 1990s, coups and armed insurgency had again become a problem. New waves of coups overthrew governments in Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Niger.

Coups d'état are not a thing of the past in Africa. To the extent that genuine economic and political change remains illusive Africa's militaries may exploit the situation to stage a comeback to politics.

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Crop Cultivation: The Evidence

The most direct evidence for crop cultivation in the past comes from archaeobotany, the study of plant remains preserved on archaeological sites. Such remains are normally preserved in carbonized form, by ancient contact with fire, though desiccated remains are preserved due to the extreme desert conditions of more recent millennia. Archaeobotanical remains are often overlooked unless excavations have undertaken systematic recovery through water flotation and sieving. The evidence consists primarily of wood charcoal, derived primarily from fuel gathered from local trees and shrubs, and seeds from wild gathered food plants, harvested crops, and the weeds of cultivated land. Identification of these seed remains may be challenging due to incomplete preservation of distinctive features and the lack of established collections of modern botanical reference material. Ancient plant use can also be identified on the basis of impressions preserved

in pottery, when plant materials have been used as ceramic temper. At present, available archaeological evidence in Africa is still limited to relatively few sites over such a vast continent, but recent research efforts have provided a basis for inferring certain larger patterns of early cultivation.

Important additional evidence, and essential background information, comes from modern botanical studies, including genetics and biogeography. Through comparative botanical studies, with important potential contributions from modern genetic techniques, the wild progenitors of crops can be identified. As genetic techniques are applied, it becomes possible to narrow down modern wild populations most closely related to domesticated forms. The geographical and ecological distribution of these wild progenitors provides important clues as to where initial domestication is likely to have occurred. Modern distributions, however, are unlikely to indicate precisely where species first domesticated due to the effects of past climatic change which would have forced changes in the distributions of many species. Thus modern wild distributions must be adjusted based on inferences of how climate has changed. Thus in the early and middle Holocene periods, savanna environments were shifted much farther north into what is today the Sahara. The emergence of plant cultivation appears to have occurred after 3000BCE, as these distributions contracted southward toward those under modern conditions.

In the study of early agriculture, a distinction needs to be made between cultivation and domestication. Cultivation is a human activity, the planting of seeds from previous harvests normally on prepared ground, while domestication is an evolutionary state of the plant, morphologically altered from the wild form, usually to become more dependent upon human dispersal. A complete history of the beginnings of cultivation would therefore need to include evidence for the transition from wild gathering to cultivation and subsequent domestication. Evidence relating to wild plant-gathering traditions that are probably ancestral to plant cultivation comes from a number of sites in the Sahara desert, dating to 7000–4000BCE. During this early to mid-Holocene era, rainfall was higher, and much of the Sahara had savanna or sahelian vegetation. Archaeobotanical evidence indicates widespread traditions of wild grain harvesting, including a fairly diverse range of grass species. Sites in the western desert of Egypt (Nabta Playa, Dakleh Oasis, Farafra, and Abu Ballas) all include evidence that wild sorghum was among the grasses utilized. Sites in southwest Libya, in the Tadart Acacus (Uan Tabu, Uan Afuda, Uan Muhuggiag, and Ti-n-Torha) indicate a range of wild grasses but lack evidence of sorghum use. Of interest from the Acacus is evidence for domesticated watermelons, probably used for oily seeds, by about 4000BCE. Similar grass-harvesting is suggested by identifiable impressions on ceramics of the Shaheinab Neolithic tradition in the Sudanese Middle Nile region from the fifth to fourth millennia BCE. There is no evidence yet to tie these traditions of wild grass use to the beginnings of cultivation and subsequent domestication of these species.

The earliest evidence for cultivated crops in Africa comes from nonnative species, while the earliest archaeological finds of native Africa crops yet found are from India. In the Egyptian Nile Valley wheat, barley, lentils, and peas, all of which had spread from southwest Asia, were known by 4500BCE. These Near Eastern crops were the basis of agriculture in the Nile Valley at least as far south as the Third Cataract region by 3000BCE, and probably also in Mediterranean North Africa. Crops that must have been domesticated from Africa where their wild forms occur—including sorghum, pearl millet, cowpea, and hyacinth bean—occur archaeologically in India by 1800BCE and perhaps as early as 2200BCE, while finger millet of east African origin occurs by 1000BCE. These finds indicate that cultivation must have begun even earlier within Africa. The most important domesticate of the East African savanna, sorghum, is still poorly documented in terms of the beginnings of cultivation and domestication. Finds include the early Kushite/Napatan site of Kawa in Nubia from before 500BCE, and several in greater Nubia from the last centuries BCE and the first centuries CE. Thus evidence to link early wild sorghum use with the domesticated form that had spread to India in later prehistory remains elusive.

Within Africa, early evidence for the spread of pearl millet cultivation across West Africa dates to the first half of the second millennium BCE. Fully domesticated pearl millet has been identified from pottery impressions from Tichitt tradition sites in southwest Mauritania and Karkarichinkat, northeast of the Niger River Bend in Mali, while grains have been recovered from Winde Kiroji on the Middle Niger and Birimi in northern Ghana of the Kintampo culture. At another Kintampo site in central Ghana comes the earliest evidence for cowpea. Kintampo sites also indicate widespread exploitation of the oil palm. Both cowpea and oil palm represent a forest margin complex of crops that may have distinct origins from the savanna cereals. Early evidence for other Savanna grains, African rice, and fonio, both date to the first millennium BCE, though wild rice use is documented from Gajiganna, Nigera, by 1200BCE.

More difficult to document are those species reproduced vegetatively, such as tuber crops and many important fruits. Tuber foods (such as yams or the ensete of Ethiopian forest zones) are cultivated and

utilized in such a way so as to not bring seeds into contact with preserving fire. Bananas and plantains, introduced to Africa in prehistory from lands across the Indian Ocean, are sterile hybrids with seedless fruits. For these species different approaches to identification are necessary, such as through phytoliths (microscopic silica bodies from within plant tissues) or through the anatomical identification of charred tissue (parenchyma) fragments. Phytoliths of banana and ensete leaves are highly distinctive, and banana phytoliths have been identified from an archaeological pit fill dating to the later first millennium BCE in Cameroon (Nkang). The anatomical identification of parenchyma tissues from tubers shows promise from studies of European, Pacific, and palaeolithic Egyptian material but has yet to be applied to tropical African materials. In the absence of archaeological evidence, historical linguistics has also provided inferences about past agriculture.

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Crowther, Reverend Samuel Ajayi and the Niger Mission

Samuel Ajayi Crowther (*c.*1806–1891) was a nineteenth-century Anglican bishop and missionary. As one of the founders of the Niger Mission, the first Church Missionary Society (CMS) post in Nigeria, Crowther was instrumental in the development of Anglicanism in the country.

The Yoruba Wars of the early nineteenth century fed the Atlantic slave trade at the very time that Britain sought to eradicate it. Consistent with practices of the era, captives taken during the wars were sold to slave dealers. Ajayi had been such a victim. He was taken prisoner in early 1821, at approximately age 15, when the Muslims invaded Oshogun, his hometown. After being bought and sold numerous times, he was on the Portuguese slave carrier, the *Esperanza Felix*, off Lagos, when it was captured and impounded on April 7, 1822, by British naval forces on an antislavery patrol off the West African coast. The British liberated the slaves that they discovered in impounded or interdicted ships. For most such captives however, liberation included being transported to Sierra Leone. Thus was the case for the young Ajayi.

Sierra Leone was a colony in transition in the 1820s. Fueled in large part by the depositing of liberated Africans there and by the immigration of former slaves from the Americas, especially the United States, it had a multiethnic population. A variety of economic opportunities were available in construction, commerce, and agriculture. Missionary groups, particularly the Church Missionary Society, actively sought to convert the indigenous people as well as liberated Africans—those rescued from slavery. On their arrival in the colony younger liberated Africans were enrolled in schools to be educated and "civilized." Some received skilled training to be artisans.

Ajayi was trained to be a carpenter at the CMS mission school. His quick mastery of his vocational and religious instructions impressed his tutors and induced them to select him for more extensive educational instruction than was made available to most students. On Ajayi's baptism in 1825 the Reverend J. C. Raban gave him the name of an eminent patron of the CMS, Samuel Crowther, Vicar of Christ Church, Newgate. The following year, a Reverend Davy took him to England and enrolled him in Islington Parish School. He returned to Freetown in 1827 and became one of the first students to enroll in the institution that later became Fourah Bay College. He went on to teach at missionary and government schools.

Crowther was teaching at a mission school when CMS officials in Sierra Leone urged him to join the Niger Expedition being organized by Thomas F. Buxton. His account of the venture, published as the *Journal of the 1841 Expedition*, so enthralled CMS officials in England that they directed missionary officials in Freetown to send him to the CMS Training College in London. He was ordained in 1843 and immediately returned to Sierra Leone, where he was persuaded to join a party preparing to create a mission in Nigeria. Crowther was chosen in part because of his fluency in Yoruba. The CMS intended to establish its Nigerian headquarters at Abeokuta in the Yoruba heartland for more than evangelical reasons. It also wanted to contest the Wesleyan Methodist Society, the initiator of missionary enterprise in Nigeria with the opening of its first station on September 24, 1842, and Southern Baptists from the United States who alleged that Yoruba leaders had invited them to the area. The officials expected Crowther to immigrate to Nigeria, not merely to participate as a member of the expedition as before. Reluctant to uproot his family, he demurred at first, but eventually elected to go.