AFRICA
IN HISTORY

Themes and Outlines
REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION

Basil Davidson

A TOUCHSTONE BOOK
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EARLY IRON AGE

Western

BC

- Origins of earliest known Iron Age culture south of Sahara: Nok Culture of C. Nigeria; presumed 'companions' cultures' suspected, but not yet securely traced (1974).
- Early trans-Saharan trade, between W. Sudan and N. Africa, by way of Berber middlemen, well established.
- Rice cultivation, well established in some western areas (Moanda). Spread of early forms of forest agriculture.
- Further spread of early metal-using cultures, principally of iron.
- Trans-Saharan trade expands with growing use of camels in place of horses and donkeys.

Eastern/Central/Southern

Hunting and gathering cultures of Late Stone Age in many regions: populations very sparse, but widely spread.
- Probable period of initial 'Bantu' spread from supposed early areas of diffusion in southern grasslands of Congo Basin.

AD

- c. 100

Northern points along East Coast become peripheral parts of Indian Ocean/Red Sea carrying trade, but at very small scale.
- Early Iron Age cultures in C. Africa (e.g. Katanga, Zambia, Zimbabwe) begin to unfold.

Nile Valley/Northern

Rise of the city and nearby satellites of Memphis as political and cultural centre of the Kushite kingdom (formerly centred on Nubia to the north).
- Origins of Asante culture in north-east Ethiopia by synthesis of local people and immigrants from southern Arabia.
- Carthage a major power, though soon to be challenged by Roman Republic.
- 332 Alexander enters Egypt: Ptolemaic dynasty follows.

EGYPT, TUNISIA AND ALGERIA have become Roman colonies. Development of syntheses of Roman, Punic and Berber cultures in Tunisia and Algeria.
- Merotic Kush remains a powerful state with widespread interests in long-distance trade.

Origins of Asante kingdom of N. E. Ethiopia after c. 100 BC.
**EARLY IRON AGE**

**Western**

- **c. 250** Emergence of early states of Ghana, notably of Ghana in the former, as centrally ruled polities with a systemic interest in long-distance trade. 

- **c. 800** Ghana, a well-established trading state in W. Sudan, together with smaller trading states formed in parts of the Sahel by western Berber peoples. Some early trading towns, such as Kumbi, Aulaghast, and Gao, probably in existence, most of them probably on Neolithic foundations. Earliest southward penetration of Islam from Morocco and Central Maghreb.

**Eastern/Central/Southern**

- **c. 400** Continued spread of iron-using cultures associated with formation of Bantu-speaking peoples south of the Congo Basin. First settlements at site of Great Zimbabwe. These cultures have developed early forms of agriculture, but have not yet spread south of Limpopo. 

- **c. 650** Bantu-speakers and chieftains in the Kanga are producing and trading in copper. Spread of Bantu-speaking peoples southward of the Limpopo; origins in South Africa of scolloho- and zulu-speaking peoples. Early formatve migrations of peoples of Upper Nile into historical locations. Swahili coastal culture in formative period.

**Egypt Valley/Northern**

- **c. 725** (7) King Ezana of Axum invades Mesopotamia. 

- **c. 725** Axum has accepted Christianity as state religion (beginning with Ezana in early fourth century); origins of Ethiopian Christianity. 

- **Rise of Islam**
  - **622** Hijri of Muhammad. 
  - **670** Araba take Baghdad (in Egypt). 
  - **670** Uqba ibn Nafi occupies his (Faris) (Tunisia). 
  - **681** Arabs reach Moroccan Atlantic. 
  - **711** Tarish crosses into Spain. 
  - **717** Abd al-Aziz reaches Taghaza. 
  - **732** Charles Martel turns back Arab at battle of Poitiers. 
  - **756** Caliphate of Cordoba.
**INTERMEDIATE PERIOD**

**Western**

- c. 1000:
  - Ghana at height of its power in W. Sudan. Al-Bakri (1067) describes wealth and organization of kingship from good trans-Saharan sources. Early politics of southern Mandinka-speaking people, southward from Ghana.
  - "Gao under daw dynasty (Songhay). They accept Islam as a state religion (c. 1200).
  - Similar developments in Kassena; its Saffoona dynasty extend their power and also accept Islam as a state religion (c. 1220).
  - 204 A.M.: Almoravid Berbers take Auda-Aghlab. They also take Gao who becomes capital.

- c. 1100:
  - A "time of confusion" led to white-successor states compete for power. Period of crystallization of many mashriq In-Qara polities, including origin of Wolof states in Senegal, Yoruba state in western Nigeria, oldest kingship at Benin under semi-legendary Ojeo dynasty, etc.

**Eastern/Central/Southern**

- c. 1200:
  - 1260: Harumi Kilwa palace built on Kilwa.
  - Swahili ports now deeply engaged in long-distance trade between colored gold and ivory producers (mainly via Souda for gold) and Indian Ocean mariners.

**Middle Age**

**Western**

- c. 1255:
  - Mansa Ul (d. c. 1270) continues to expand Karrayu into state of Mali, which begins to "take over" from successor states of Ghana as Muteen from In-Qara polity.

- c. 1312:
  - Mansa Musa becomes king of Mali, which continues to expand in W. and C. Sudan, develops new techniques of literacy, trade and credit adopted from Islam.

- c. 1325:
  - Mansa takes Gao, dies 1337.

- c. 1345:
  - Songhay sonni dynasty begins at Gao.

- c. 1375:
  - Sonni Sulayman-Ma marrake gao independent of Mali c. 1400 c.w. troops raid Niani, capital of Mende. Rise of Songhay, power in C. Sudan at expense of Mali.

**Eastern/Central/Southern**

- c. 1300:
  - Origins of new cultures in inland East Africa: e.g. Chwaka dynasty in southern Upando, and others further south, arising on earlier small kingdoms or checkerboards.
  - Spread of nde forms of kingship through Tanzania (northern and inland plains).

- c. 1372:
  - Ben Babata's "capital Kilwa" finds its strong and wealthy trading city.
  - In central granaries, great Zimbabwe culture develops further. Origins of great stone buildings, which probably arose from same period (made in 1400).

**Nile Valley/Northern**

- Egypt under Fatimids.
  - 1171: Ayyubids erect Fatimids.
  - 1258: Mamluks' last Ayyubid rule Egypt (until 1517).
  - Formation of feudal kingdoms in central and northern Ethiopia. Flowering of culture, including written literature in Ge'ez after c. 1200.
  - Christian Nubian decline under Ayyubid attacks from north and infiltration of Arab pastoralists in the south: Fall not completed until sixteenth century in latter in parts.

- 1200: Successor states in Maghra, al-Ashmun.

- 1311: End of Caliphate, followed by many successor kingships.

- 1306: Almoravid dynasty, weakly largely maintained.

- 1147: Almohad dynasty, very largely maintained.

**Nile Valley/Northern**

- 1269: End of Almohad dynasty: Christian conquest begins (but Crusades hold out until 1492).

- Portuguese ocean voyages.
  - 1434: Oil Emae sails south of C. Bonjour.
  - 1441: First capture for Portugal takes directly from African peoples south of Mampua.
  - 1458: Pompastel on Senegal coast.
  - 1472: Roy de Sephora reaches right of Benin.
  - 1482: Portuguese hold Elmina Castle (modern Ghana seashore).
  - 1498: Diego Cao reaches mouth of Congo.
  - 1508: Bartolomeu Diaz rounds C. of Good Hope.
MATURE IRON AGE

Western

1400 Wolof empire well established in Senegal.

1440 Crystallization of Mossi and other grassland kingdoms.

1441-5 Emergence of Akan state of Benin-Maroa, and of town of Bobo on northern fringes of Assante (Ashanti) forest (modern Ghana), as important new center of gold export trade. The developing Middle Niger trading towns of Djenné and Timbuktu Benin becomes powerful under Oba Esuare.

Eastern/Central/Southern

1415 Malindi sends a garissa to the Empire of China. This is followed by Chinese voyages to western Indian Ocean, including northern parts of East Coast of Africa.

1425 Dynamic disputes at Kilwa; they are overcome.

1425 New Roni (Shona) dynasty in central granaries (Zimbabwe Culture), known as Maranwampa, begins with Mutota (d. c.1450). Mutota shifts capital from Great Zimbabwe to area of Mount Darwin in north-east of modern Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), embarks on large programme of conquest.

1450 Mutota's successor Matopo completes conquests: establishes Shona supremacy over most of present-day Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

MATURE IRON AGE

Western

1493 Songhay expansion. Askia dynasty founded by al-Hajj Muhammad (d. 1528), followed by nine other askis to Moroccan conquest in 1591. Songhay dominates C. Sudan.

1504 Oba Bugie begins long and successful reign; adds Idos to Benin empire. Portuguese accepted as residents in Benin city.

1507 Kanem-Bornu expansion. Mai Idriis Katasharame occupies Nijimi, old Eastern capital.

1525 Mai Muhammad continues wars with Felala east of L Chad.

1570- Kanem empire at height of 1617 power under Mai Idriis Alouma, the learned, just, courageous and pious Commander of the Faithful.

Eastern/Central/Southern

1490 Changamite breaks away from Mwanamutapa dynasty; sets up new state based on Balwaya area (e.g. Khami and other sites).

1500 Formation of Luba kingdoms in Katanga.

Southern Bantu politics well established throughout fertile lands south of Limpopo and east of Drakensberg as far south as (modern) Cape Province of S. Africa. Origins of later Swazi, Ngoni and Xhosa states.

1505 Portuguese burn Kilwa; continue ravages up the coast; in following years attempt to monopolize Indian Ocean carrying trade; partly succeed. Beginnings of decline of Swahili cityports.

Nile Valley/Northern

1498 Vasco da Gama reaches Swahili city-ports; sails to India with Arab pilot.

1500 Fung Sulimane founded at Senegal on Blue Nile as successor state (Muslim) to southernmost Christian Nubian kingdom of Abwa.

1541 Portuguese land at Mazara and aid Ethiopians against invasion by Ahmed, sultan of Adel, who has Ottoman help.

1559 Ethiopian King Claudius killed while warring with Adel.

1569- Sama Dengel king of Ethiopia.

Ottoman dates:

1512 Selim I.

1517 Ottomans complete conquest of Egypt.

1520 Suleyman 'the Magnifi- cent'.

1529 Their power penetrates to Nigeria.

1530 They occupy Yemen, dominate Red Sea trade, threaten Ethiopians, also Portuguese.

1534 They secure Tunisia.
MATURE IRON AGE

Western
1533 English troops reach Benin.
1591 Morocco revives Songhay.

Period of Portuguese raiding invasions of Angolan kingdoms. Large Portuguese slave trade to Brazil.

Eastern/Central/Southern
From base on Mozambique L., Portuguese begin slow penetration up Zambesi valley.

1520 Chronicle of Kilwa.
1585 Some Swahili cities revolt against Portuguese with help of Ottoman admiral, disappointed.
1593 Portuguese begin building Fort Jesus at Mombasa as main base in north.

Nile Valley/Northern

AGE OF TRANSITION

Western
C. 1600 Niger Delta peoples organize themselves into trading states as landward partners of European maritime traders, whether English, Dutch, Portuguese or French.

This trade develops into large and continuous sale of captives, for enslavement in the Americas. Here, as at many other points between the Congo estuary and Senegal, the Atlantic slave trade now gets into its stride, expands till c. 1750, remains at high level till c. 1800, gradually dwindles until it disappears in 1880s.

Firearms do not become an important political factor until c. 1700, but are of growing significance after c. 1650.

Eastern/Central/Southern
Seventeenth century opens against background of great changes, along coast, through Portuguese invasion, and in inland country by further development of Iron Age structures.

1607 Dutch attack Portuguese on Mozambique L., fail here, but enable Portuguese control of Indian Ocean.

1628 Portuguese expeditions against Mosammatique beginning of disintegration of that state.

1631 Mombasa relics against Portuguese falls.

Nile Valley/Northern
1545–54 Saadi dynasty in Morocco.
1654 Portuguese expelled from seaside foothold (Agadir, Safi, etc.). Songhay invaded (1591) and briefly held through pushtu resident in Timbuktu.


Ahmad al-Mansur sultan of Morocco (d. 1603).

1632 Basildes king of Ethiopia: Conder period. Reorganization of kingship, eviction of Jossites.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New constellations of power in interior country, largely unrelated to Atlantic slave trade but more and more interested in firearms. Expansion of northern Yoruba state of Oyo. Foundation in northern (modern) Ghana of Gana, Bura, Wa, and, in south, of Denkyira and Akwamu; all as states more centralized than earlier states. Songhay disintegrates after invasion by Moroccan army under Muhammad b. of Yousufi (1591).</td>
<td>c. 1560 Portuguese lose Muscat in S. Arabian line of Omanis power three.</td>
<td>1652 Dutch settle at C. of Good Hope see below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ria of Fon state (Dahomey) under Wegheh, Alake continue expansion after 1685; Agaja after 1708.</td>
<td>1656 Competing with the Portuguese at sea, the Omanis rival them at Mombasa, and (1670) at Mozambique I.</td>
<td>1671 First day of objem. Ottoman suzerainty ended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1727 Agaja embarks on conquest of small seacoast states which monopolize trade with Europeans (cf. Asubu, Ouidah, Jakoa). Builds strong centralized monarchy, maintains Ouidah as 'port of trade' with Europeans.</td>
<td>1695 Changamire Dundo evicts Portuguese traders from Viz (Zimbabwe Culture) kingdom of Uzoni. Northwards, in Zambezi Valley, Portuguese writers expand plantation economy (papar).</td>
<td>1689 Tenth day of Alger, Ali Chautech; achieves title of pasha; autonomy again increased.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 1860 Coaster ships build James Fort on island in Gambian estuary.</td>
<td>1710 Bey of Tunis recognized as enjoying hereditary succession, another reflection of waning Ottoman power.</td>
<td>1729 Issa II king of Ethiopia (d. 1753) period of Ibadal war and of prelude to political reorganization in nineteenth century.</td>
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</table>
Western

1702- Asanti expands to control territory of most of Ghana under Opoaku Ware (1720-50), Kwasi Obuadum (1750-54), Osei Kwado (1764-77). Power reinforced under Osei Kwame (1777-1801) and Osei Busua (1801-24), latter greatly develops state organization.

1807 Future defensive wars with British foreshadowed, but no fighting yet.

1724 Oyo ceases Yoruba suzerainty in E. Dahomey, again in 1730, 1739, 1748.

1725 Imamat of Futa Djallon (Guinea) founded: complex reorganizations of Muslim state in W. and C. Sudan foreshadowed.

1750 Bassa kings in S. Ivory Coast founded by Akan immigrants.

1765-83 British Province of Senegambia (maritime Senegal and the Gambia).

Eastern/Central/Southern

c. 1700 New patterns of power and organization in many areas of C. Africa. Origins of Lunda kingdoms in south-western areas of Congo Basin of Bemba and Lozi polities in (modern) Zambia; of gradual extension of use of certain trans-Atlantic food plants, notably cassava; apparent general increase of population at least slow rate than before Portuguese now in loose control of slave-traders peoples of Angola from main base at St. Paulo or Luanda (Luanda).

South Africa:

1652 Dutch make small settlement at Cape of Good Hope as way-station to East.

1688 First Huguenot immigrants. Gradual expansion of Cape settlement and slave labour.

AGE OF TRANSITION

Western

1776-89 Oyo under Adafa Obidun, after whom state power begins to crack under external and internal strains.

1779 Imamat of Futa Toro (n. Senegal) founded: end of Deniakte dynasty in Futa Toro (1776).

1787 Sierra Leone founded.

1796 Freetown founded.

1796 Mungo Park reaches Niger at Segu.

1804-11 Jihad of Fulani reformer, Uthman dan Fodio, leads to Fulani hegemony over most of N. Nigeria under first Fulani Amir al Mumineen, Muhammad Bello, with cap. at Sokoto. Origins of Sokoto Caliphate.

1807 British outlaw maritime slave trade.

1816 Foundation of Bathurst.

1822 Foundation of Liberia.

1851 British attack and occupy Lagos.

Eastern/Central/Southern

1779 First of many war of expansion, along the 'island frontier', against Xosa and other peoples established along and east of Great Fish River.

1789 Second such war.

1799 Third such war.

1806 British occupation of Cape settlement made good against French rivalry.

1836 Great Trek of Afrikaner settlers northward from British control.

1838 They found Republic of Natal.

1843 British annex Natal.

1846 Seswaa war against Africans.

1859 First railway in Cape Colony.

1860 Indentured Indian labour begins.

1867 Diamonds discovered.

Nile Valley/Northern

1798 Egypt briefly invaded by French under Napoleon.

1805 Egypt ruled by Muhammad Ali under loose Ottoman suzerainty.

1820 Semi-autonomous Turco-Egyptian regime in Egypt.

1830 French seize Algiers: beginning of French occupation of Algeria.

1853 Theodore II emperor of Ethiopia.

1863- Egypt under Khedive Ismail.

Nile Valley/Northern

1867 British under Napier briefly invade Ethiopia; defeat armies of Theodore, who kills himself (1868), withdraw.

1889 Suez Canal opened.

1880 Period of rising Anglo-French imperial rivalry; British generally prevail in Egypt.

1881 French secure Tunisia.

Islam

Muhammad Ahmad proclaimed Mooli in the Sudan, embarks on recovery of indigenous power.
1852
Alhaji Usman begins jihad from Upper Guinea toward Tema city on Middle Niger.

1854
Faithhechee French governor of Sene-galese settlements.

1857
French occupy Dakar.

1863
British at war with Assate.

1864
British annex southern Ghana. Defeat Assate.

1884-
Nairobi congress of imperialist powers; at Berlin they partition Africa, and prepare to invade and take position.

1878
French take Cotonou ( Dahomey).

1880
First Anglo-Boer War.

1884
First S. African gold fields opened.

1886
German occupy Togo and Cameroon.

1886
Gideon's United Africa Company (founded 1879) receives charter as Royal Niger Co.

1886
French occupy Ivory Coast.

1882
British bombard Alexandria.

1885
British fail to relieve their General Gordon at Khartoum.

1889
Emperor Menlik and Italians sign Treaty of Ucciali.

1900
British Protectorate declared over East Africa (north of Tanganyika); German rapidly follow in Tanganyika.

1893
French declare Guinea a colony.

1998
Final defeat of Samori Touré by French, after some twenty years of resistance by Samori and his armies.

1900

1895-96
French establish protectorate on Madagascar.

1896-97
Ndebele (Matabele) and Shona rise against oppression; are defeated with difficulty.

1999
Italian invade Ethiopia; we defeated at Adwa.

1998
British destroy Mahdist power at battle of Omdurman.

1999
Kitchener compels Mahdi to withdraw from Upper Nile (Pashoda). British rule Sudan is formal condominium with Egypt.

1901
Anglo-Boer War begins.

1902
End at Peace of Vereeniging.

1901
Most internal frontiers agreed between colonial powers.

1908
Belgian State assumes authority in (Leopoldian) Congo Free State.

1908
Italian declare Somalia their colony.
AGE OF TRANSITION

Western

1910 Early period of Gold Coast (Ghana) cocoa export-boom.

1920 National Congress of British West Africa formed.

1930 Period of collapse of colonial export prices.

1945 Ramasembient Demokratique Afri- cani formed.

Eastern/ Central/Southern

1910 Union of South Africa constituted.

1913 Systematic legalized discrimination against Africans begins with Land Settlement Act (allocating African-owned land to about 17 per cent of territory), and continues rapidly with acts in other fields.

1919 Tanganyika under British Mandate.

1923 Southern Rhodesia settlers achieve self-rule at nominal Crown Colours of UK.

c. 1925 Portuguese complete colonization of Angola and Mozambique.

c. 1946 General rise of African nationalism in wake of Second World War.

Nile Valley/Northern

1911 French occupies Fez; 1911, declares protectorate over Morocco.

Italian seize Libya, towns, declares colonies of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.

1929 Italian conquers Fezzan.

1934 Tripolitania and Cyrenaica united in colony of Libya.

1935 Italy invades Ethiopia.

1941 Italy evicted from Ethiopia; Emperor Haile Selassie restored.

AGE OF TRANSITION

Western

1951 Internal self-rule for Ghana.

1952 Internal self-rule for southern Nigeria.

1957 Ghana independent.

1958 Gambia independent.

1960 Nigeria, all other French colonies (14 in number) except Djibouti, independent.

Eastern/ Central/Southern

1948 African National Congress comes to power, origins of legalized apartheid system based on existing system of discrimination.

1952 In South Africa, African nationalists launch passive resistance to apartheid, are defeated by draconian laws.

1953-55 Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in settler-controlled federation.

1954 Peasant nationalist rising in C. Kenya defeated with exterminated loss of 10,000 African lives, but precedes independence. Beginnings of modern nationalist organization in Angola and Mozambique.

1960 Madagascar independent as Malagasy Republic; Belgian Congo, Somalia independent.

Nile Valley/Northern

1951 Libya becomes independent kingdom.

1952 Free Officers overthrow Egyptian monarchy with strong nationalist programme. Gamal Abdel Nasser soon becomes supreme; British evacuate their last bases in Egypt.

1954 Egyptians begin war of independence.

1955 Tunisia becomes independent.


1958 Egypt invaded, at Suez, by Israels, British, French forces; they withdraw.
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Guinea-Bissau nationalists open armed resistance to continued Portuguese rule.</td>
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<td>1965</td>
<td>The Gambia independent.</td>
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**AGE OF TRANSITION**

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<td>1973</td>
<td>Nationalists in Guinea-Bissau declare independent state.</td>
<td>1974 Overthrow of Portuguese dictatorship by young army officers opens way to acceptance of need to decolonise.</td>
<td>1974 Revolution in Ethiopia overthrows imperial government in favour of military rule, which a little later, is recognised under Col. Mengtse Haille Mariam.</td>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>Cape Verde archipelago forms independent republic after complete withdrawal of Portuguese power. International Court at Hague finds that Western Sahara, decolonised by Spain, has right of self-determination, but Morocco and Mauritania decide to partition territory. Armed resistance by Western Sahara (Polisario Front) defeats Mauritania but war against Moroccan invasion continues, leading, in 1981, to serious split within OAU.</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>Nigeria, now a 29-state federation, prepared to return to civilian rule, and does so successfully in 1980 with Alhaji Shehu Shagari as its first president.</td>
<td>After various attempts at partial concession to African majority rule, settler government in S. Rhodesia capitulates in face of guerrilla pressure. General election gives increasing majority to ZANU and Robert Mugabe becomes prime minister.</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>Civil war in Chad erupts again as local rivals are backed by various external interests.</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td>Nigeria expels 2 million illegal immigrants, mostly Ghanaians; holds elections; Shagari re-elected president but overthrown in December.</td>
<td>1982 Nine states (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe) preserve with organization for economic co-operation formed by them in 1979. Southern African Delegated to Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), with HQ in Maputo, capital of Mozambique.</td>
<td>1982 Republic of Sudan makes progress with new major canal in the far south—Jonglei Canal—designed to conserve Upper Nile waters lest in Sudd marshlands since time began.</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>Military regime in Nigeria under Babangida.</td>
<td>1984 In S. Africa, new constitution makes electoral concessions to Coloureds and Indians, but none to Africans.</td>
<td>1982 Repeated military victories by Eritrean People's Liberation Front, now joined by Tigre PLF. Regime under siege but continues to refuse to negotiate with dissident ethnic groups.</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>Babangida regime ousted by military coup; General Buhari takes over.</td>
<td>1985 While repression grows inside S. Africa, apartheid regime steps up military interventions in Angola and Mozambique.</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>In Burkina Faso, President Thomas Sankara assassinated by rivals.</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>In Chad, political conflicts unresolved but civil war abates.</td>
<td>1988 S. African troops in Angola suffer major defeat, withdraw.</td>
<td>1989 Sudan continues to suffer great internal conflict, and civil war between north and south.</td>
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<td>International isolation of apartheid regime causes serious anxiety for regime.</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>In S. Africa, President Botha replaced by F. W. de Klerk.</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>Namibia becomes independent.</td>
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