



Fig. 1: Evolutionary paths of early state formation.

England), medieval Ireland, and Rus. Whether Japan falls in path I or II remains unclear. In most of these cases where information is available, unfolding processes of unification took the form of overlordship. Trajectory IIa, from rural petty-state to city petty-states, may apply, for example, to the evolution of the Rus and of Early Historic India, as well as of the early Maya. Major instances of the city petty-state evolutionary path (III) include: early lower Mesopotamia, probably the Indus civilization, Archaic to Classical Greece, late Iron Age Etruria, medieval Italy and Flanders, and the Yoruba of Nigeria. In all these evolutionary paths occasional regressions to smaller scale and lower levels of integration and complexity could and did occur.

The above list, of course, is very far from being exhaustive. It represents some better-known cases in the inherently obscure record of pre- and protohistoric state emergence. Even in the cases cited information is scarce and leaves room for error and for varying interpretations. With respect to the proposed evolutionary scheme as well it is not typology in itself that matters, but the light that it hopefully throws on the various trajectories of state evolution as a function of the processes of political growth, inter-polity interaction, political conglomeration, state bureaucratization, and emergent urbanization – in their sequence and relationship to one another.

Overlordship in the Conglomeration of Chiefdoms and City-States

While our discussion so far has focused on the rural petty-state and its subsequent systemic incorporation through overlordship within larger forming states, enough has been shown to suggest that overlordship was the principal initial mechanism of larger political conglomeration in evolutionary paths I and III as well. We have already mentioned the classic case study of Zulu state formation in the early nineteenth century.¹² Leaving virtually no archaeological markers, such as monumental construction, but well recorded by arriving Europeans shortly after the event, the Zulu can serve as an archetype of similar, archaeologically elusive, occurrences of early-state formation in the prehistoric tribal/chiefly zone (evolutionary path I). Shaka's standing armies and legendary brutality figure prominently in the Zulu case, but subtler mechanisms of incorporation were no less significant.

Shaka's predecessor, Dingiswayo, who had initiated the process of state formation from the numerous chiefdoms of the Nguni-speaking Bantu, combined armed coercion with co-optation. He gradually extended overlordship over other chief-

12 Gluckman 1940, 1960; Otterbein 1994; Service 1975: 104–116.