

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORY OF THE COAST EAST AFRICA (1000- 1500 A.D)

ORGANIZATION OF THE EAST AFRICAN COAST BETWEEN 1000AD AND 1500AD

1. Between 1000 and 1500 A.D the East African Coast was made up of 37 towns that included: Mombasa, Kilwa, Malindi, Sofala, Pate, Mogadishu, Lamu, Mafia, Kismayu, Pemba and many others.
2. **Politically** the towns were ruled by Arabs who were known as Sultans or Sheikhs.
3. The Sultans were assisted by a small council of officials and these did specific tasks.
4. Among the above officials were the khadis, Amirs, Memsahib and others.
5. The laws were chiefly based on Islamic laws/Sharia laws where the Quran was highly used.
6. Some of these settlements were highly organised kingdoms with a ruling class, for example Malindi.
7. Some towns were controlled by the Africans, for example Pate.
8. Most of the towns were built on islands or peninsular for easy defence purposes, for example, Zanzibar, Pemba, Malindi, Mafia and others.
9. Some Towns had fences for protection against their enemies
10. Some African settlements had their own chiefs who formed the basis of power.
11. Towns had small armies for protection.
12. However, communities like the Cushites had no centralised authority and therefore they were led by clan heads.
13. **Economically** the Africans participated in trade with the Arabs, Persians and Indians, for example the Indian Ocean Trade.
14. Goods were exchanged for others, that is to say barter Trade.
15. Fishing was also important to the people especially near the Indian Ocean.
16. Livestock, that is to say the keeping of animals was also being done.
17. Some towns minted their own coins, for example, Kilwa, Mombasa, Sofala and others and this eased trade.
18. Some Industries like pottery, cloth weaving and others also existed around Mombasa.
19. The Coastal towns practiced agriculture, that is to say they grew bananas, vegetables, fruits, coconuts and so on.
20. Iron working was also important, that is to say hoes, spears, and arrows were made.

21. **Socially** two groups of people lived at the coast of East Africa, that is to say those who already lived there or came from inland and those who came from places across the ocean or sea.
22. The first group which made up the African population of the coastal region came either from the North West or the south.
23. The groups of people that lived along the East African coast included Bantu, the Cushites, Arabs and others.
24. Islam was the dominant religion where the Muslims believed in messenger ship of Muhammad and oneness of God.
25. Arabic was the official language used.
26. The coastal Societies were divided into classes, like slaves, traders and leaders.
27. Mosques were important social and religious centres.
28. In terms of dressing men put on Kanzus while women put on veils
29. Sheikhs were important socially, they were concerned with imparting good morals in Societies.
30. Intermarriages were very common and they led to a new race of people called Swahili and a language called Kiswahili.
31. A new language called Kiswahili emerged and was widely spoken among the coastal towns.
32. Building of flat topped nature was common among the coastal settlements.

THE LAND OF AZANIA

1. Different visitors described the East African coast differently.
2. Others called it Azania. Azania is a Greek word referring to the East African coast between 1000— 1500 A.D.
3. Azania to the Greeks meant the “Land of Blacks”
4. Arabs and Persians called it “Zenji”
5. Azania was the coastland of Blacks running from Mogadishu up to cape Delgado.
6. This stretch known as Azania is approximately 3000 kilometers long.
7. By 1500 A.D, this coast had prominent towns such as pate, Lamu Zanzibar
8. It also included Gedi, Kismayu, Sofia, Kilwa, Oja, mafia, Mombasa, Malindi and others.
9. Later, the land of Azania was referred to as the “Zanji Empire”

10. Azania was originally inhabited by Bushmen, Bantu and Cushites.
11. Later, Arabs, Persians Indonesians Egyptians, Indians also came and occupied it.
12. It was from the word “Zanj” that the word Zanzibar came. It is up to date a very important area.
13. The Suffix “Bar”, that is to say, the last phrase simply means coast line.

GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF THE LEADING COASTAL TOWNS AND SETTLEMENTS

There were 37 old towns along the East African coast; all of them grew rich as a result of participating in the Indian Ocean Trade which reached its height in the 15th century. The major ones were: Mombasa, Kilwa, Malindi, Mogadishu and Zanzibar

a) Mombasa

1. Mombasa was among the chief towns at the coast of East Africa.
2. It was located along the coast of present day Kenya.
3. It was established by the Shiraz rulers in the 12th century.
4. It was founded as an export centre for Ivory and slaves, but it remained a small settlement until the second half of the 15th Century.
5. On arrival, these Shiraz, that is say Arabs found the Bantu and Cushites living in Mombasa and then they set up their rule over the African people.
6. Mombasa had good natural harbours which could handle several ships.
7. Mombasa as a town, used to carry out attacks frequently on its neighbours like Kilwa.
8. Mombasa was created as an export centre for slaves and ivory to the other parts of the world.
9. It is believed that by around 1000 A.D. Mombasa was still a small town when compared to other towns like Kilwa and Mogadishu.
10. Indeed Mombasa remained small not until the second half of the 15th Century when it started seriously expanding.
11. By the 16th century ,Mombasa had greatly developed into a wonderful city, a fact that was a result of good natural harbours, a good location, trading activities and so on.
12. Mombasa’s development brought her into conflict with other coastal towns like Malindi which caused constant fighting.
13. Mombasa greatly involved in Indian Ocean trade which enabled her to grow into a prosperous “city state.”

14. By 1590, Mombasa had grown into a very beautiful city with wonderful buildings that even attracted foreigners and Tourists.
15. Mombasa will be remembered in the history of East Africa as the town that staged the greatest resistance to the Portuguese conquerors; finally it lost its independence to the Portuguese.
16. Its rulers were Swahili and its culture had a strong African element
17. By 1490, Mombasa was able to challenge the power of Kilwa town.

(b) Mogadishu

1. It was founded on the coast of Modern Somalia between the 10th and 15th centuries.
2. Between the 10th and 15th Centuries, Mogadishu on the Somaliland Coast was second in Importance only to Kilwa.
3. The main difference between the towns was that Mogadishu was the most influential centre of Islamic culture.
4. By AD. 1000, it was an important town in the Muslim world and by the 15th century had become the most developed coastal settlement
5. At first, the town was occupied by the Bantu and Cushites.
6. By 1400, Mogadishu started receiving great numbers of Arabs whose main aim of coming to the area was trading
7. It was ruled by a council of strong Swahili traders and leaders who carried out developmental activities like building roads, Quranic schools, and mosques and so on.
8. Mogadishu grew rich from Sofala gold trade.
9. Mogadishu by 1450 had become the most influential centre of Islamic culture along the East African coast.
10. Although Mogadishu retained its local languages and other customs, there was serious Islamisation in the area. Mogadishu had strong trading links with Arabs who brought imports like iron, food crops, and beads and so on.
11. Mogadishu became the leading centre of slave trade.
12. Mogadishu minted its own coins
13. Mogadishu had elaborate architecture that is to say mosques, Quranic schools built in Arab-Persian style.

14. Like any other coastal town, poor Mogadishu became a victim of Portuguese conquest in 1498.

(c) Kilwa

1. It is not very clear as to when Kilwa was established, but never the less, the town of Kilwa by 1400 had emerged to greatness.
2. Kilwa town was located around the Tanzania coastline.
3. Kilwa was established by the Shiraz rulers.
4. The Shiraz rulers came from the Banadir coast.
5. Ali-Bin Al Hassan transformed Kilwa into a strong fortress Island.
6. Through raids, Kilwa was able to bring several neighbouring coastal states under her control. That is to say as far as Pemba.
7. Kilwa gained control over the gold trade from the interior of East Africa; this enabled her to mint her own coins.
8. Until about 1350, Kilwa's only commercial rival was Mogadishu.
9. Al Hassan Bin Suleiman began construction work of great mosques; Quranic schools.
10. Sulaiman like his successor, Suleiman I carried out the famous conquest of Mafia.
11. Just like other coastal towns Kilwa had very strong Islamic influence in terms of culture, religion and administration.
12. Kilwa had very dedicated Moslems who spread Islam into several parts of the interior of E. Africa.
13. Kilwa never only had dedicated Moslems but also it became the centre of Islamic learning by 1270A.D.
14. Kilwa's greatness was heavily checked, by rivals like Sofala and Mogadishu.

(d) Malindi

1. Malindi was founded on the coast of current Kenya by around 1300.
2. But like other coastal towns, the town gained riches as an important trade centre of especially slaves, beads and iron implements.
3. Malindi was founded at almost the same time as the town of Mombasa.
4. The two towns, that is say to Mombasa and Malindi were close together and so they were fierce rivals.

5. Like most other towns on the mainland, Malindi had African rulers, then later Swahili rulers after accepting Islam and the leaders took the title of the Sultan.
6. Malindi depended on trade and it became an important place for the Asian dhows.
7. Malindi was smaller than Mombasa in terms of size and trade.
8. It sought alliance with Kilwa against the mighty Mombasa.
9. Due to the great rivalry that existed between Malindi and Mombasa, Malindi even supported the Portuguese against Mombasa.

(e) Zanzibar

1. Originally Zanzibar was a very small fishing village; it was an area of black people.
2. It is believed to have registered Islamic influence before any other coastal town.
3. Some historians believe that the earliest known trading post ,Qanbalu, was on Pemba Island.
4. When the Arabs and Persians came in the area, they intermarried with the indigenous people which resulted into Swahili culture.
5. Zanzibar was famous for its clove growing and coconut growing.
6. Zanzibar town involved in Indian Ocean trade when she supplied slaves, ivory, cloves and so on.
7. She became an international slave market.
8. By 1500 Zanzibar was one of the richest coastal towns; it also minted its coins.

FACTORS THAT LED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EAST AFRICAN COASTAL TOWNS AND SETTLEMENTS BETWEEN 1000 AND 1500 AD

1. These coastal towns included: Malindi, Mombasa, Kilwa, Zanzibar, Mogadishu and many others.
The factors for their growth and development were many and they included:
2. Trade, that is to say the Indian Ocean trade which gave them wealth that they used to develop coastal towns.
3. Arrival of foreigners, for example the Arabs, Persian, Indonesians, Indians and so on who came with capital which was used for development.
4. Growth of population along the East African coast that provided market, security and labour.
5. Fertile soils along the East African coast that favoured agriculture as an economic activity
6. Presence of monsoon winds that enabled movement of dhows to the area thus enabling the area to be good for trade.

7. Presence of good natural harbours that helped in anchoring of ships from different areas of the world.
8. Availability of trade items like ivory, gold and slaves within the area that enabled trading activities in the region.
9. Role of Islam that acted as a unifying factor among the coastal people, it was this unity that enabled development.
10. The use of Sharia law that brought law and order in the region enabled development.
11. Strategic location of these several coastal towns, for example Zanzibar was located on an Island hence easy to defence.
12. Presence of Swahili language for easy communication around the coastal towns aided development.
13. Introduction of Arabic algebra, writing and general education that aided trade.
14. Cheap labour along the East African coast reduced costs of labour hence more profits that were used for development.
15. Good climatic conditions that enabled human settlement and agriculture, greatly assisted in development.
16. Role of Banyans in some towns who were money lenders assisted economic activities.
17. Fertile soils along the East African coast facilitated agriculture hence a stable food supply.
18. Good leadership, within several coastal towns led to easy and meaningful decisions which led to development
19. Introduction of monetary economy which started by the minting of coins as early as 1200A.D.
20. Bantu communities at the coast provided the badly needed iron tools for agriculture and defence purposes.
21. Through taxation of foreigners the coastal towns got a lot of wealth that was used for development.
22. Acquisition of the gun that enabled expansion of towns and even providing law and order. And with this law and order development was possible.

FACTORS FOR THE COLLAPSE OF THE COASTAL TOWNS AND SETTLEMENTS BY THE 16TH CENTURY OR REASONS FOR THE DECLINE OF THE COASTAL TOWNS AND SETTLEMENTS

1. The reasons for this collapse were economic, political, accidental, and intentional in nature.

2. Disunity of the coastal states which undermined African prosperity and peace as the case was for Mombasa and Kilwa.
3. Rivalry that existed between the coastal towns because of need to control. Many coastal towns wished others badly. They even supported foreigners against each other to take control.
4. Out break of civil wars that broke out within several towns along the coast of East Africa led to their collapse.
5. Role of famine that made the population along the coastal towns suffer affected their morale hence leading to their collapse.
6. Activities of slave trade that made coastal towns too restless and uneasy due to constant raids for slaves. Young energetic people who could have fought for the survival of the coastal towns were taken into slavery.
7. Role of man eaters, that is to say it's believed that the Zimbabwes and Segujas who were man eaters invaded the coast which led to its decline.
8. Trading items like agricultural products became scarce due to slave trade, and this weakened the coastal towns.
9. Constant wars among the coastal towns, for example between Mombasa and Malindi that drained the wealth of the coastal towns.
10. Coming of the Portuguese to the coast of East Africa led to the decline of the coastal towns. The Portuguese carried out serious exploitation that caused the downfall of coastal towns.
11. They also highly taxed the coastal people which led to poverty.
12. Portuguese resorted to looting the riches of the coastal towns hence leading to their collapse.
13. Portuguese out competed and even chased away the Arabs who had developed the coastal towns.
14. The Portuguese ruthlessly burnt down several towns into ashes, for example Kilwa that had tried to resist.
15. Wars that the Portuguese staged against the coastal towns led to serious destruction of property, lives and general insecurity.

REASONS WHY THE COASTAL TOWNS AND SETTLEMENT LOST THEIR INDEPENDENCE SO EASILY TO THE PORTUGUESE

1. Disunity of the coastal towns, for example Mombasa fought against Malindi.

2. The Portuguese had superior weapons like the maximum guns among others.
3. They had constant supplies of ammunition from Portugal
4. They used surprise attacks to weaken the Africans.
5. They would carefully plan for war against the coastal towns.
6. They had prior knowledge about the coast, for example through Vasco-Dagama's first voyage to the East African Coast; they were able to get all the information about the coast.
7. Africans were weakened by famine due to the scorched earth policy used by the Portuguese.
8. Diseases too weakened coastal cities especially the epidemics.
9. Portuguese were too determined to take over the coast of East Africa.
10. The Portuguese had brutal methods of fighting like scorched earth policy that threatened Arabs and Africans.
11. Influence of Zimbabwes and Segujas, that is to say man eaters which weakened Africans.
12. The Portuguese had able and courageous commanders.
13. The Portuguese used the policy of divide and rule, for example Malindi against Mombasa.
14. Their soldiers were more trained and experienced in warfare.
15. Africans had already hated the Arabs.
16. The Portuguese often surrounded coastal towns.

Revision questions

- i. Describe the way of life along the East African Coast between 1000 and 1500 A.D.
- ii. What was referred to as the Land of Azania?
- iii. Who were the inhabitants of Azania by 1000 A.D?
- iv. What were the main features of life of the Azania people?
- v. What factors led to the development of the East African Coastal towns between 1000 and 1500 A.D?
- vi. Account for the collapse of the coastal towns by the 16th century.
- vii. How did the coastal towns develop into centres of wealth
- viii. Describe the growth and expansion of the following coastal towns: a) Mombasa b) Kilwa c) Malindi d) Mogadishu e) Zanzibar.