

CHAPTER 3

THE ARABS AND PERSIANS AT THE EAST AFRICAN COAST (1000-1500AD)

REASONS FOR THE COMING OF THE ARABS AND PERSIANS TO THE EAST AFRICAN COAST (1000-1500AD)

1. The Arabs and Persians were a group of people from the Arabian Peninsula who came and settled at the East African Coast.
2. The reasons for their coming to the East African coast were social, political and economic in nature.
3. The factors were also internal and external
4. Need to trade, that is to say the Indian Ocean trade where for many centuries goods like ivory and slaves from the coast of East Africa had attracted them.
5. Strategic location of the East African coast. It was open to the Arab world.
6. Fertile soils at the East African coast also attracted them to come and carry out crop cultivation.
7. Good climatic conditions along the East African coast for human settlement and cultivation of crops.
8. Presence of good natural harbours along the East African coast, where their dhows could anchor with ease.
9. Arabs had internal conflicts at home. The discontented groups decided to come to the East African coast to look for peaceful areas for settlement.
10. Need at a latter stage to spread Islam to the coastal people.
11. Political wrangles within the Arabs ruling families, that is to say the Yoruba families against the Busaidi families were in bitter struggle for leadership in Arabia. That made some Arabs to come to the coast to look for other peaceful areas.
12. The role of religious wars back in Arabia, for example they experienced what was termed as “Fitina period” that had several wars, hence the need to escape from such wars made them settle along the coast.

13. Need to dominate others politically so as to create overseas empires on the coast of East Africa.
14. Love for adventure. This was true especially among the young Arabs who had interest to see what lay beyond the Arab world.
15. Monsoon winds that facilitated the movement of their dhows made the Arab coming to the east African coast possible.
16. Availability of precious or highly demanded goods along the East African coast like gold, slaves and ivory that attracted the Arabs.
17. Coastal people were very friendly to the new comers.
18. The fresh waters along the coast of East African must have attracted the Arabs whose land was majorly a desert.
19. Presence of vacant pieces of land along the coast of East Africa.
20. It was partly an era of Islamic conquest and expansion in Arabia and the neighbouring areas.

**EFFECTS OF THE COMING OF THE ARABS AND PERSIANS TO THE EAST AFRICAN COAST
(1000-1500AD)**

1. The effects of the Arabs to the people of East African coast were social, economic and political in nature.
2. Others were negative and positive.
3. Islam was spread from the coast into the interior of East Africa.
4. The Arabs took over leadership at the coast of East Africa.
5. Intermarriages that led to emergence of new race of people called Swahili race occurred.
6. New ways of dressing, for example Turbans and Kanzus for men and veils for women were introduced.
7. Arab ways of construction was introduced to the people of East Africa, for example building of flat top roofed houses.
8. Guns were introduced among the East African people that increased warfare.
9. They were actively involved in slave trade that increased insecurity.
10. New towns developed up and old ones too were modernized, for example Kilwa, Mombasa, among others.
11. Quranic schools were constructed at the coast and in the interior.

12. Trading activity increased because Arabs were good traders.
13. They introduced new crops like cloves, rice among others to the people of East Africa.
14. New goods were introduced to the E. African people, for example beads, necklaces and so on.
15. New languages developed, for example Kiswahili which is, even to date, common among the people of East Africa.
16. Arabic language too was introduced among the coastal people.
17. Quranic laws or Sharia laws were introduced in several areas of East Africa.
18. Mosques were constructed in different areas of East Africa, for example a powerful one called Hussuni Kubwa built by Al Hassan Bin Suleiman at Kilwa in 1270 A.D.
19. People's moral Standards were tremendously improved due to the strict Islamic code that was adopted by several East African people.
20. Islamic learning increased as Quranic schools were constructed in several areas of East Africa.
21. Islamic brotherhood was spread in different areas of East Africa, that is to say togetherness was exemplified by same greeting "Salaam Aleikum" meaning "peace be with you".
22. Islam and Arabs exposed the East African people to the outside world, especially the Arab world of Persian Gulf, Arabia, Indonesia and others.
23. Islamic practices like prayer, paying alms (Zakkat), fasting of the holy month of Ramadan were adopted by the East African people.

THE INFLUENCE OF SWAHILI CULTURE AT THE EAST AFRICAN COAST (1000-1500AD)

1. The Swahili culture developed at the East African coast between 1000AD and 1500AD.
2. It came into existence as a result of intermarriages between the Arabs and the Coastal Bantu.
3. It became the strongest culture in all coastal states.
4. It came as a result of the two communities combining their practices.
5. People with brown colour, long hair and tall structure emerged.
6. The language spoken was Kiswahili with a mixture of words from Arabic and Bantu words.
7. The Swahili culture was full majorly of Moslem faith.
8. There were many Mosques built for worship of Allah whom they highly believed in.
9. They used Arab style of building where houses were built of stones and with flat roofs.

10. Gold and silver were used to decorate their houses.
11. The Swahili people dressed in silk and cotton clothes.
12. They wore copper and gold bangles.
13. Laws and justices were based on Koran.
14. They had social classes like rulers, traders, religious leaders and other workers.
15. They kept animals like cattle, goats, sheep, and poultry.
16. The Swahili people carried out fishing.
17. They also grew vegetables, fruits, millet, and rice among other crops.
18. Their staple food crops were rice and spices.
19. The Swahili people planted large farms of banana and coconuts.

REASONS WHY THE ARABS AND PERSIANS WERE NOT INTERESTED IN THE INTERIOR OF EAST AFRICA BEFORE 1840

1. The reasons were social, economic and political in nature.
2. Poor transport to the interior before 1840s discourage the Arabs and Persians from penetrating into the interior.
3. The Arabs were at first few in number and there was enough land at the coast for settlement. They did not have any pressure for land at the beginning of their settlement at the coast.
4. Most Arabs had come as refugees hence never had an ambition to go into the interior.
5. Hostile communities in the interior, for example Masai warriors discouraged the Arabs and Persians from entering inland.
6. Fear of man eaters in the interior at Tsavo areas was yet another reason that made the Arabs not to be interested in penetrating inland.
7. Danger of tropical diseases in the interior also discouraged the Arabs from entering the interior of East Africa.
8. Internal civil wars among the communities in the interior of East Africa discouraged the Arabs.
9. Lack of geographical knowledge about the interior also discouraged them from entering inland.
10. The good cool and conducive climate at the coast forced them to stay at the coast of East Africa.

11. Seyyid Said had not yet shifted his capital from Oman to Zanzibar and information about the interior was still very scanty.
12. They had not come to majorly spread Islam which would call for immediate penetration into the interior.
13. At first, they never had serious competition in trade at the coast of East Africa.
14. Presence of middlemen who gave Arabs whatever they had wanted from the interior.
15. They were not assisted by their home government to move further into the interior to look for settlement.
16. General ignorance of Arabs about the interior could not make them look for settlement beyond the East African coast.
17. Language barrier at first could not make the Arabs and Persians penetrate into the interior of East Africa.
18. They had not yet been welcomed by Africans into the interior of East Africa. They therefore concentrated at the coast of East Africa where they were highly welcomed.

WHY THE ARABS EVENTUALLY BECAME INTERESTED IN THE INTERIOR OF EAST AFRICA AFTER 1840

1. They were attracted by presence of more trade opportunities in the interior of East Africa.
2. There was Need to spread Islam in the interior as time went on.
3. The need to get rid of middlemen like Nyamwezi who were expensive to Arabs still forced them inland.
4. Some Arabs traders like Tipu-Tip had settled into the interior. This encouraged others penetrate inland.
5. Transport had been improved tremendously into the interior and the Arabs found it very easy to penetrate inland.
6. Population increase of Arabs at the coast forced them to go into the interior to look for areas for settlement.
7. African leaders invited them, for example in Buganda Kingdom, Kabaka Sunna I welcomed Ahmed Bin Ibrahim to his Kingdom.
8. Security was later guaranteed by the interior tribes and this made the Arabs to penetrate inland.

9. Transfer of Seyyid Said's capital from Oman to Zanzibar boosted their morale to go to the interior.
10. The coming of other people like missionaries at the coast forced Arabs into the interior.
11. Need by Arabs to establish military bases into the interior were yet another reason for the Arab inland.
12. Serious competition in trade from other foreigners at the coast forced some Arabs inland.
13. Penetration of Swahili and Arabic language into the interior, this ended language barrier in the interior.
14. The Arabs and Persians penetrated inland because of love for Adventure that is to say to know what was happening in the interior.
15. Discovery of medicines to cure tropical diseases that had been a big threat to the foreigners also gave them the opportunity to move inland.

EFFECTS OF THE PENETRATION OF THE ARABS INTO THE INTERIOR OF EAST AFRICA AFTER 1840

1. The effects of the entry of the Arabs into the interior of East Africa were both Positive and negative.
2. They established permanent settlement into the interior of east Africa in places like Tabora, Ujiji, and Bagamoyo among others.
3. The settlements which the Arabs established later became trading centres because they were also using them as collection centres for commodities.
4. Zanzibar became an entry port for trade locally and internationally.
5. There were intermarriages between the Arabs and interior tribes. This led to production of new people called Afro-Arabs.
6. Empires like Nyamwezi of Mirambo and Unyanyembe of Nyungu Yamawe were as a result of Arabs' entry inland. They interacted in trade and wealth was generated by the leaders.
7. Cowrie shells and coins were introduced inland to generate trade which led to the development of the interior.
8. As the Arabs penetrated inland raiding for slaves increased. The Arabs demanded for many slaves.

9. In addition as more slaves were raided, small states disappeared because raids were directed towards them.
10. Increased slave raids led to a lot of sufferings and misery among the East Africans.
11. Kiswahili language which had developed at the coast later was introduced into the interior of East Africa. Trading activities were therefore made easy.
12. Arabic language and customs were also extended inland, for example, dressing and eating habits.
13. It also led to widespread of Islam. The Arab traders spread Islam as they traded.
14. Their penetration inland also attracted the colonialists and the missionaries to challenge their activities.
15. The Arabs who penetrated inland not only raided for slaves but also hunted down elephants which later led to their depletion.
16. The African traders also became very wealthy as they traded with the Arabs who had entered inland, for example the Yao, Kamba, Baganda, Nyamwezi and others.
17. The Arab entry inland also led to the introduction of more goods from the Arab world into the interior, for example beads, cloth, mirrors, guns, glasses metal ware among others.
18. There was also introduction of new crops from Arab world. Crops like rice, maize, wheat and cloves were introduced into the interior by the Arabs.
19. Plantations of cloves were then opened into the interior. There was therefore economic prosperity.

Revision questions

- i. Why did the Arabs and Persians settle at the East African coast between 1000 and 1500 A.D?
- ii. Why were the Arabs not interested in the interior of East Africa before 1840?
- iii. What were the effects of Arab entry inland upon the interior people?
- iv. Why did they eventually become interested?
- v. What were the effects of the coming of the Arabs upon the coastal people of East Africa?
- vi. Describe the growth and development of Swahili culture before 1500AD