

# CHAPTER 5

## THE PORTUGUESE RULE AT THE EASTAFRICAN COAST (1500 -1700A.D)

### REASONS FOR THE PORTUGUESE SETTLEMENT AT THE COAST OF EAST AFRICA (1500-1700AD)

1. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to come to the East African Coast. They came from Portugal.

The Portuguese came to the east African coast due to the following reasons:

2. Desire to control the Lucrative and profitable Indian Ocean trade along the coast.
3. Need to revenge on Muslims who had earlier occupied their land of Iberian peninsular.
4. They were looking for their Legendary Christian King, John prester because they hoped that he would help them to convert the Eastern World to Christianity.
5. The need to spread Christianity to the East and revenge themselves on the Muslim world for the earlier occupation of Spain and Portugal.
6. The need to find a sea route to India where they wanted to establish a commercial empire.
7. Strategic location of the coast, that is to say controlling the coast would prevent the Egyptians or Turkish forces from obtaining help from region.
8. Need to prevent Egyptians and Turks from obtaining military and economic assistance.
9. Love for adventure. To know what was happening in the outside world especially among the young Portuguese.
10. Need to prevent other European powers from participating in the Indian Ocean trade
11. The good natural harbours at the coast with presence of deep waters at the coast of East Africa attracted the Portuguese. They found it easier for their ship to anchor at the coast.
12. Good cool coastal climate suitable for human settlement also attracted the Portuguese to the East African coast.
13. Presence of fresh waters for domestic purposes was yet another factor that attracted them to the coast.
14. Fertile soils at the coast. They were wonderful for agriculture.
15. Need to use the coast as a military base incase of any attack by the enemy forces.
16. Need to establish a trading empire around the East African coast.

17. By controlling the coast, the Portuguese hoped to get hold of the trade in gold, ivory and spices.
18. They hoped that the coastal people would easily embrace Christianity and forsake Islam which had been spread by Arabs.
19. Europe had witnessed the period of Renaissance among which there was the discovery of better transport means.
20. Hospitality of the coastal people of East Africa attracted them. The coastal people were generally attracted to foreigners.
21. The need to dominate the area politically to enhance prestige at home.

### **PORTUGUESE CONQUEST OF THE COAST OF EAST AFRICA**

#### **OR**

#### **STEPS TAKEN TO BRING THE EAST AFRICAN COAST UNDER THE PORTUGUESE CONTROL**

1. They used force to bring the East African coast under their control.
2. They used diplomacy in some cases.
3. The events that led to the conquest of East Africa by the Portuguese took a long period of time.
4. In 1494, Portugal and Spain signed the treaty of Tordesillas which gave Portugal the right over land in East Africa.
5. Vasco- Dagama first came to the coast of East Africa in 1498. When he went back he advocated for the conquest of the coast due to its strategic position.
6. Vasco- Dagama still in 1489 when he went back to Portugal, he made reports to the king of Portugal, emphasizing the riches of the East African coast.
7. Immediately after Vasco- Dagama's persuasive reports, regular voyages organised by Portugal to the East African coast were made.
8. In 1500, Pedro Alvares tried to capture the gold trade in Sofala but failed.
9. In 1502, Vasco - Dagama returned to the East African coast with a highly armed fleet of 19 ships. With this army, he captured Kilwa due to its riches in gold.
10. The Sultan who had been the leader of Kilwa was imprisoned and released on condition that he accepted Portuguese rule.
11. In 1503, Laurengo Ravasco forced the Islands of Mafia and Zanzibar to accept Portuguese rule and to pay tribute to Portugal.

12. Laurence Ravasco also forced the small towns like Sofala to accept the overlordship of the King of Portugal.
13. In 1505 Francisco De Almeida on his way to India, made a stop over at the coast and he was able to attack three towns of Sofala, Kilwa and Mombasa which he successfully brought under Portuguese control.
14. After Almeida's remarkable conquest of the three towns, he continued with his journey to India.
15. In 1505 - 1507, another Portuguese commander Trias De- quenias captured small towns of Brava, Oja, Lamu, Kisimayu and others.
16. Some coastal towns like Malindi simply gave way. They co-operated with the Portuguese and as a reward, they were not to pay tribute to Portugal.
17. In 1509, the coastline between Kilwa to Sofala was put under Portuguese rule.
18. By the period 1510, the whole East African coast had been taken over by the Portuguese.
19. For effective rule, the coastal headquarters were set up at Goa under a viceroy.

#### **REASONS WHY THE COASTAL PEOPLE AND STATES LOST THEIR CONTROL EASILY TO THE PORTUGUESE INVADERS**

1. The reasons why the Portuguese defeated the Arabs and the Africans at the East Africa coast were social, economic and political in nature.
2. The Portuguese were militarily superior compared to the East African coastal people.
3. The Portuguese had abundant information about the Arabs, coastal conditions. All the information was provided to the Portuguese through Vasco Dagama's visit.
4. The Portuguese used surprise attacks. The coastal people were found unaware.
5. The Portuguese soldiers were better trained in comparison to the forces of the coastal Arabs.
6. The people and states at the coast were too disunited. A case in point was Malindi and Mombasa that could never join their armies to fight a common enemy due to their long time hatred of one another.
7. The coastal towns had poor economies that were not able to offer finances to fight against the Portuguese.
8. The Arabs had been hated in some cases by Africans; this made such Africans to easily give way to the Portuguese against the Arabs.

9. Use of very harsh methods in fighting against the coastal towns. They used the scorched earth policy where all crops, roads; animals were destroyed in the raids to weaken the coastal people.
10. Over-determination of the Portuguese to take over the coastal towns. This brought more confidence to the Portuguese hence defeat.
11. The Portuguese got re-enforcements from their home government whereas the poor Arabs lacked such re-enforcements like food and money hence their defeat.
12. Poor coastal people had already been weakened by diseases and famine, this reduced their ability to resist the Portuguese.
13. Use of divide and rule policy by the Portuguese, that is to say the Portuguese used the alliance (friendship) of Africans against fellow Africans.
14. Constant attacks from Zimbas and the Segujas must have given a big problem to the Africans and Arabs at the coast hence they were easily defeated by the Portuguese.
15. No European power dared to compete with and rival the Portuguese. This gave the Portuguese no serious opponents hence they easily defeated the Arabs.
16. The Portuguese soldiers were experienced and skilled in warfare which was not the case with the Arabs hence their defeat

#### **REASONS WHY THE PORTUGUESE WERE ABLE TO CONTROL THE EAST AFRICAN COAST FOR OVER 2000 YEARS**

1. The Portuguese employed a number of methods to maintain their control and grip on the coast. These were social, economic and political in nature.
2. They used divide and rule policy that weakened African administration.
3. They built 45 Garrisons (military bases) at Mozambique and Sofala. These were meant to be used by the Portuguese to defend themselves from other coastal invaders.
4. Through building Fort Jesus in 1482 where military hardware was kept to control rebellion.
5. They imposed high taxes which provided them with revenue to finance their administration.
6. They employed highly trained commanders.
7. They also exploited the disunity of coastal towns to their advantage.
8. The Portuguese received financial aid from their home governments.

9. They exploited the military weakness of the coastal people.
10. Africans had been weakened by frequent external attacks from man eaters.
11. Africans were economically and financially weak. They could not manage to meet the cost of war with the Portuguese because they did not have enough money.
12. The Portuguese were skilled in naval warfare compared to the coastal people.

#### **CHALLENGES FACED BY THE PORTUGUESE IN THEIR ADMINISTRATION OF THE EAST AFRICAN COAST**

1. The challenges or problems that were faced by the Portuguese in their administration were political, social and economic in nature.
2. Some were internal from within East Africa.
3. Others were external from Portugal and Spain.
4. Constant rebellions from their subjects weakened them.
5. Portuguese administrators were few in number and not enough to administer the coast.
6. Many of the Portuguese officials were corrupt and inefficient. They did not administer the coast with effectiveness.
7. Large distance between the coast and Portugal which slowed support from their home government.
8. Financial crisis was a big blow to the Portuguese administrators. As time went on the became financially unstable.
9. The coast was too big to be well administered hence this encouraged rebellions.
10. Racial segregation and religious conflicts at the coast made administration very hard.
11. Portuguese lost friendly coastal towns like Malindi and when this happened, they could not withstand the pressure from the coastal Arabs.
12. They experienced challenges from the Dutch and British at a later stage. They were also struggling to control the coast because they had discovered that it was very profitable.
13. There was also the effect of man eaters like the Zimbabwes and the Segujas.
14. The Portuguese administrators were so arrogant and brutal and this made Portuguese administration to be hated by the coastal people.
15. Effects of tropical diseases which killed most of the Portuguese officials.
16. Continuous assistance of the coastal people by the Arabs from the Arab world.

17. Increased sea pirates especially from the Turks, also destabilized them at the coast.
18. The fall of Fort Jesus to the Arabs. This was the Portuguese strong military base.
19. Decline in trade between the coast and the Far East.
20. Internal conflicts at the East African coast undermined the Portuguese leadership.

#### **REASONS FOR DECLINE OF THE PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATION AT THE EAST AFRICAN COAST**

1. They were few in numbers for effective administration.
2. Portugal was far away to re- enforce military and financial assistance during revolts.
3. The union of Spain and Portugal weakened their control. Spain concentrated on her home affairs and neglected oversea issues.
4. Corrupt officials who were rejected. They wished to make a lot of money in anyway possible to help their people back home.
5. Decline in trade that was used as a source of revenue was also a very big blow to the Portuguese.
6. Wide spread poverty among the subjects also failed them. They could not pay taxes to the Portuguese administration.
7. The Portuguese policy of separation whereby they lived apart from the ruled people made Africans too annoyed.
8. There were frequent rebellions at the coast, for example the one in Mombasa could not keep the Portuguese at peace.
9. The Portuguese suffered from tropical diseases that killed them and reduced their manpower.
10. Rivalry with Arabs who used to assist the coastal people to rebel was yet another reason for the Portuguese loss of their coastal empire.
11. Portuguese arrogance at the coast which caused isolation and thus leading to frequent rebellions.
12. The Dutch and British rivalry, against the Portuguese to control trade. From about 1850, the English merchants started challenging the Portuguese position around the coast.
13. Bad treatment of the subject people made the Portuguese lose the support of the once friendly towns like Malindi.

14. From 1652, the Oman Arabs greatly assisted the East African coast towns to resist Portuguese rule.
15. Frequent attacks from man eaters like the Zimbabwes and the Segujas.
16. Portugal was a small and poor country which could not finance an extensive empire.
17. Portugal lacked strong personnel at the East African coast since their administrators were interested in commerce and trade.
18. Arrival of French and British traders in the 16<sup>th</sup> century weakened their position at the coast.

#### **STEPS IN THE DECLINE OF THE PORTUGUESE POWER ALONG THE EAST AFRICAN COAST**

1. In 1547; Turkish Ships controlled the Red Sea.
2. In 1569, Turkish pirates started raiding down the coast as far as Malindi.
3. In about 1580, the Dutch and the British began to threaten the Portuguese control at the East African coast.
4. In 1580, Portugal united with Spain and this weakened her power greatly.
5. In 1585 and 1586, the coast experienced the first visit by Amir Ali Bey from Oman.
6. In 1587, the Portuguese naval army punished coastal towns for welcoming Ali Bey.
7. In 1589, friendly Sultan Al Hassan bin Ahmed established himself at Mombasa.
8. In 1600, the British East India Company was founded to trade with the East.
9. In 1631, Sultan Yusuf bin Hassan of Mombasa rebelled and slaughtered several Portuguese.  
The Portuguese lost control of Fort Jesus for a while.
10. In 1652, the Oman Arabs attacked Zanzibar and Pate.
11. In 1660, the Oman Arabs started attacking Mombasa.
12. In 1669, the Oman Arabs attacked the coast almost as far as Mozambique.
13. In 1686, a serious rebellion took place at Pate.
14. In March 1698, the Oman Arabs under Imam Saif bin Sultan began to attack Fort Jesus.
15. In 1698, Fort Jesus was captured by the Arabs.
16. In 1699, the East African Coast as far as south cape Delgado was in the Oman Arab's hands.

## EFFECTS OR RESULTS OF THE PORTUGUESE RULE AT THE EAST AFRICAN COAST

1. The Portuguese controlled the East African coast for over 200 years.
  2. They were the ones who ended the Arabs monopoly of the Indian Ocean trade.
- For the time they spent at the coast, they had many effects which included the following:
3. The effects were social, economic and political in nature
  4. They were also both positive and negative effects.
  5. Others were both internal and external in nature.
  6. Towns were destroyed by the Portuguese, for example Kilwa, Mombasa among others.
  7. The Portuguese contributed to the decline in gold, ivory and slave trade at the East African coast.
  8. Famine resulted due the to raids by the Portuguese which left the coastal people unsettled for agricultural activities.
  9. Heavy taxes were imposed on the coastal people which left them poor.
  10. Their policy of divide and rule increased rivalry.
  11. Christianity was introduced by the Portuguese which unfortunately failed to capture the interest of several Islamized people.
  12. The Portuguese suppression and punishment led to loss of many lives.
  13. As people rebelled more suffering was inflicted.
  14. The Portuguese added a few words to the Swahili language, for example Meza meaning table, pesa meaning money, ananasi meaning pineapples and others.
  15. Portuguese built Fort Jesus in 1593 which acted as a tourist attraction to the region even up to date.
  16. They introduced new farming methods, for example they encouraged the use of cow dung as manure.
  17. They improved on transport by introducing ships in the region.
  18. They brought new food crops like cassava, guavas, paw paws and many others.
  19. They also introduced a number of games at the coast, for example bull fighting and playing of cards called “Matatu.”
  20. New form of Architecture was also introduced, for example the use of bricks for building.
  21. The existence of the E. African coast was made known to the rest of Europe.
  22. The Portuguese burnt and destroyed several buildings along the coastal towns.



## Revision questions

- i. Why did the Portuguese settle at the coast of East African coast?
- ii. How did the Portuguese establish themselves at the coast of East Africa?
- iii. What steps were taken by the Portuguese to control the east African coast?
- iv. How were the Portuguese able to control the East African coast for over 200 years
- v. Why did the Portuguese lose control over their East African coastal state?
- vi. How did the Portuguese rule at the coast affect the people?
- vii. Why did the coastal states lose their independence so easily to the Portuguese?
- viii. Why did the Portuguese lose control of the East African Coast North of River Ruvuma?
- ix. What were the challenges faced by the Portuguese during their rule?