

The Swahili Coast of East Africa

A. Introduction

1. Indian Ocean coast – center for Islamic influence
 - a. string of Islamicized trading cities – why?
 1. universal set of ethics
 2. maritime contacts easier
2. Compromise between indigenous ways and new faith

B. The Coastal Trading Port

1. Founding – Bantu people from 1st century to 10th century
 - a. Even Indonesia and Malay in 2nd century- bananas/coconuts on Madagascar
 - b. Fishers, farmers made rough pottery & iron
2. 13th century – urbanized trading ports – at least 30 port towns
 - a. Shared Swahili language
 - b. Contained mosques, tombs, palaces cut of stone and coral
 - c. Exported ivory, gold, iron, slaves, exotic animals
 - d. Imported silks – Persia, porcelain – China
 - e. Sofala – beautiful coastal city, gold access, furthers south to catch monsoon
 1. Riding the monsoon season key to trading in Indian Ocean]
 - f. link to coastal commerce and caravan trade
 - g. Chinese sailing expeditions – 1417 - 1431 – global contact

C. Mixture of Cultures – Islam fused with local religions – not entirely accepted

1. 13th century – great Islamic expansion
 - a. Trust and law to facilitate trade
 - b. Ruling families built mosques and palaces
 - c. Claimed to be descendants of Persian ruling families
 1. Gave rule legitimacy
 - d. Rulers and merchants Muslim, but others retained beliefs
2. Swahili language – Bantu + Arabic words
 - a. Arabic script used
3. Islam didn't penetrate internally
 - a. Class based
4. Women – some still were matrilineal, some patrilineal
5. 1500 - Portuguese arrive
 - a. Wanted to control gold trade
 - b. Established Fort Jesus, but couldn't control trade