CHAPTER 13

The Coastal Hinterland and Interior of East Africa

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Although Islam has been present on the East African coast for more than twelve centuries (chapter 12), in assessing the extent of Islamic influence we need to distinguish between the Swahili towns, centers of Islam on or near the coast, and the neighboring rural areas of the coastal hinterland, which remained untouched by Islam until relatively recent times. Arabic, Chinese, and Portuguese references to the indigenous peoples of the coast are scanty, but they say enough for us to conclude that prior to the nineteenth century the influence of Islam in the immediate hinterland and the interior was negligible, hardly extending beyond the outskirts of the coastal towns.[1]

In this chapter, we look at the way Islam spread, beginning in the nineteenth century, among the peoples of the coastal hinterland, behind a stretch of the East African coast extending for some five hundred miles (eight hundred kilometers), from the Tana River-Lamu archipelago region in the north to the Rufiji River delta region in the south. This stretch, known as the Swahili coast, can be divided into two sections. The sections are dissimilar but roughly equal in length, running 1. from the Lamu archipelago south as far as Tanga (in whose hinterland the Usambara Mountains rise); and 2. from Tanga south to the Rufiji River. The dissimilarities stem from a combination of geographical, historical, and economic factors.

North of Tanga, the coastal hinterland is relatively narrow, extending only fifteen to twenty miles inland, and in some places less, before one enters dry, inhospitable scrubland, known to the Swahili as the Nyika (*nyika* being the Swahili word for "desolate barren country"). South of Tanga, the hinterland is habitable further inland and the interior beyond is more easily accessible. This southern section of the

East African coast, from Tanga south to the Rufiji River, has long been called the Mrima coast, or the Mrima, a term used in this chapter to distinguish it from the Swahili coast north of Tanga.

To these topographical features can be added the differences in proximity to the island of Zanzibar, and the ensuing different economic and political relations with the Omani Busaidi sultanate whose commercial empire in East Africa came to be centered on that island. The Mrima coast (such towns as Pangani, Saadani, and Bagamoyo) experienced varying degrees of Busaidi political control, or interference, and the full force of the interior caravan trade emanating from the commercial expansion that took place in the nineteenth century. In contrast, although the main towns of the coast north of Tanga felt the political impact of Busaidi conquest and rule, many smaller Muslim settlements were quite independent from Zanzibar throughout the nineteenth century, and the northern coast was less directly affected by the caravan trade into the interior. Berg points out that, for example, Mombasa's economy was a "slave-absorbing and grain-producing" component of the Zanzibar system, and most of the town's direct trade was confined to the Arabian Sea.[2]

The differentiation that concerns us here is that related to the ways in which distinct local or regional settings affected contacts between Muslims and non-Muslims, since to a large extent the key to understanding the beginnings of Islamization, if not its subsequent course, lies in the nature of relations between Muslim and non-Muslim. Thus, for example, to attribute the spread of Islam to trade and traders is correct only in a certain sense. Trade facilitated contacts between Muslim and non-Muslim parties, but any ensuing process of Islamization worked itself out within the tissue of relations between those parties, subject to many and varied circumstances.

In this chapter we also examine the penetration of Islam into the interior of East Africa, as far west as the Great Lakes region, in the area corresponding roughly to present-day Kenya, mainland Tanzania (north of the Rufiji River), Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, and the eastern Congo. The differences noted above between the southern and northern parts of the coast come to be reflected to some extent in the interior, where, for example, by the 1820s, Muslim traders had already reached the region of Tabora (180 miles south of Lake Victoria), whereas the first Muslim traders to reach the Wanga region (northeast of Lake Victoria) arrived only some forty or fifty years later.

Two questions come to mind: Why, in spite of the Islamic character of the coastal towns, did they for so many centuries exert so little religious influence over the rural hinterland of the coast? And what was it that, beginning in the nineteenth century, brought about the spread of Islam among indigenous Africans of the coastal hinterland and the interior? The beginnings of the answer to these questions lies in the nature of the relations between the Muslim inhabitants of the towns and the hinterland peoples in the early nineteenth century.

The Coast in the Early Nineteenth Century

For the century after 1729, once the Portuguese had withdrawn from Mombasa to Mozambique, we have few documentary sources of information about the East African coast north of the Ruvuma River. One of the few is the journal kept by Acting Lieutenant James Emery of the British Royal Navy during his twenty-three-month residence in Mombasa, from August 1824 to July 1826. Emery records numerous details about relations between the town dwellers of Mombasa and the neighboring hinterland peoples, then called the Wanyika (the people of the Nyika), but known today as the Mijikenda. (The contrast between hinterland peoples and town Muslims was less pointed than the words *rural* and *urban* might imply: though the Swahili of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were "town-dwellers," they correspond *mutatis mutandis* to Weber's "semi-peasant urbanite" who had a parcel of land that fed him.[3] Many Swahili settlements are better described as villages or "semi-rural" towns. For example, the Swahili who lived on the island of Mombasa had farms on the mainland where they grew their own food.)

Emery's journal gives a first-hand account of life in Mombasa, which he described as "entirely Mohammedan," and of related Mijikenda activities: the Mijikenda would capture runaway slaves and be paid to return them; when the occasional dispute arose among the Mijikenda, the Swahili would mediate; the Mazrui *liwali* (governor) of the town occasionally consulted with Mijikenda chiefs about matters of mutual interest, and at one point the Mijikenda elders were called to Mombasa to be informed that the liwali no longer had authority, since the town had been handed over to the British; the Mijikenda would be given cloth as presents or be paid their "annual" payment. In a general assessment, Emery speaks of the Swahili as being united with the Mijikenda "in closest alliance."[4]

Of the various transactions that brought town and country into contact, by far the most frequent was trade. The pattern of trade was remarkably uniform and constant. Innumerable entries in Emery's journal refer to the Mijikenda bringing goods into town; he uses such phrases as, "a great many Whanekas came into town with fruit and vegetables" and "the Whanekas are daily coming into town with articles of trade." The Mijikenda supplied Mombasa with their own produce (ivory, gum copal, grain, cassava, and other fruits and vegetables) and goods they obtained from the interior—from the Kamba and, to a lesser extent, from the Orma (Galla)—(ivory, rhinoceros horn, and skins). Swahili and Arab traders resident in the town went into the hinterland only very occasionally. Only once during his two years in Mombasa does Emery mention the townspeople going into the hinterland to look for trade goods (in this case ivory), and this was at a time of year (September) when dhows were about to sail north and did not have enough cargo. The townspeople of Mombasa must have known of the rural Mijikenda markets, but since those markets traded in relatively bulky goods—goods that were being brought to them and could be obtained easily in Mombasa—there was no reason to frequent them.

Among the numerous Mijikenda visitors to Mombasa, there must have been

those who took up residence there; how many we cannot be sure. Emery noted that there was "constant intermarriage" between the Swahili and the Mijikenda—that is, Swahili men marrying Mijikenda women. Though Emery makes no mention of Mijikenda Muslims, some Mijikenda had undoubtedly adopted Islam by this time. Mijikenda women married to Swahili would have become Muslim, as did some urbanized Mijikenda men. Twenty-five years later, Erhardt, an early Anglican missionary at Rabai, wrote of "Islamised Wanika workmen" from Mombasa.[5]

Mijikenda who accepted Islam were, by and large, persons who had opted out of their own society and been assimilated into town life. There is no evidence that Muslims propagated Islam among the Mijikenda in any way, and there were few adherents of Islam living within Mijikenda society. During extensive travels among the Giriama in the hinterland in the 1840s, another observer, Johann Ludwig Krapf, came across only one such person "who many years ago had turned Mohamedan and who lives since among his clansmen, not with a view to bringing them over to the Mohamedan persuasion for the latter sits very loosely upon him."[6] Islam was an entirely urban phenomenon, and the very process of Islamization was centered on the towns—what we might call "urban Islamization." Relations between the Mijikenda and the Muslims of Mombasa, peoples living apart with distinct social and cultural traditions, gave little scope for the penetration of Islam into the rural hinterland, where the Mijikenda continued to follow their own religious beliefs and practices.

In 1850, Krapf took a "coasting voyage" south from Mombasa and left an account that reveals similar relations between Swahili Muslims and rural peoples on the coast south of the Pangani River:

> The Wasegua [Zigua] reside south of Pangani [town], these as well as all the other tribes which I shall name are heathen. The Wasegua [extend] south as far as the village of Sadani [Saadani], a Suaheli village opposite Zanzibar . . . the Wadoye [Doe], the Waseramu [Zaramo], the Watumbi [Matumbi]. . . . All the villages on the immediate seashore are Suaheli Mohamedans and governed by chiefs under the influence of the Imam [of Muscat and Zanzibar] . . . all the pagan tribes situated at a small distance from the coast have constant intercourse with the Suaheli . . . [who] find it in their interest to keep good terms with the pagans on whom they are so much dependent concerning their trade and intercourse with the interior of Africa.[7]

The limited evidence available does not allow us to reach firm conclusions regarding the whole East African coast, but Emery's and Krapf's descriptions give a general idea of prevailing circumstances and of relations between the Swahili towns and the rural areas of the hinterland. Trading activity dominated these relations and was the main occasion for contacts between Muslims and non-Muslims, but evidently trade in itself, extensive and regular as it was, did not create conditions conducive to the spread of Islamic influence among the non-Muslim peoples of the coastal hinterland.

Nineteenth-Century Growth of Hinterland Trade and Agriculture

Early in the nineteenth century, the prevailing pattern of trade on the East African coast began to change under the influence of two related phenomena. The coast was being incorporated, in varying degrees and ways, into the growing commercial and political empire of the Omani Busaidi Arabs centered at Zanzibar. At the same time, the East African economy was expanding, as external economic forces created an unprecedented demand for such goods as ivory, slaves, gum copal, and grain.[8] The quantity of these goods reaching the towns was insufficient to meet regional and international demand. As a result, there occurred a virtual "economic invasion" of the hinterland and the interior by Muslim traders, who were no longer content simply to receive trade goods from rural peoples as in the past, but sought rather to increase their supply, and profit, by venturing inland in search of goods at their source. Emery had noticed something similar in the 1820s in the hinterland of Mombasa: a last-minute quest for ivory before dhows made their seasonal voyage north. Indeed, it is possible that the incident he observed was an instance of incipient change and the beginning of the trend that was to persist and increase for the next half century.

Economic growth was accompanied by Busaidi political expansion. The concerted effort by the Busaidi Arabs to dominate the northern Swahili coast—more specifically, the Busaidi takeover of Lamu (1813), Pemba island (1822), Pate (1824), and Mombasa (1837)—displaced many Muslims and caused them to emigrate from island towns to the rural mainland, where they undertook the foundation of new settlements. From Pate, those displaced were Nabahany Swahili and their supporters, who settled at Ozi in the Tana River delta area.[9] In the case of Pemba and Mombasa, those emigrating were for the most part Mazrui and their Swahili and slave followers. The Mazrui formed new settlements at Takaungu north of Mombasa and at Gasi to the south.[10] Guillain estimated that some fifteen hundred persons took part in the move from Mombasa.[11] The Tangana Swahili from Pemba settled on the coastal plain south of Mombasa in the area of Mtongwe.[12] As a result of this widespread redistribution of population, Muslims found themselves living far closer to non-Muslim rural peoples (the Pokomo south and west of the Lamu archipelago; the Mijikenda north and south of Mombasa; the Segeju in the Vanga region), and the potential for contacts between Muslims and non-Muslim Africans on the northern coast was substantially increased. On the Mrima coast, the existing Muslim settlements generally accepted a form of Busaidi overlordship, and no similar displacement of population took place.

By the 1840s, trade on the coast had entered fully into a period of expansion. More often than not, the growth of the East African economy during the middle decades of the nineteenth century is viewed in terms of the long-distance caravan trade into the interior.[13] Less evident, but no less important for contacts between Muslims and non-Muslims, was short-distance trade and other commercial ventures, including agriculture, in the rural hinterland near coastal towns. Hinterland

trade and agriculture were important, for example, in the main caravan towns of Bagamoyo and Pangani on the Mrima coast. The Bagamoyo hinterland was particularly rich in good-quality gum copal, for which there was high international demand.[14] According to W. T. Brown, gum copal (from the coastal hinterland) and ivory (from the interior) were the two main articles of trade from Bagamoyo during the 1860s and 1870s; slaves constituted only a small percentage of total exports.[15] As the town grew in size, surrounding land (for which the neighboring Zaramo were compensated) was brought under cultivation to provide food for both consumption and export. As the number of caravans leaving for the interior from Bagamoyo increased, the Swahili of the town (known locally as the Shomvi) negotiated an agreement with the Zaramo chiefs by which caravans made payment for the privilege of passing through their territory.[16] Evidence for hinterland trade at Saadani, another Mrima town, is limited. By 1857, when Burton visited the town, it was still a small village.[17] As Saadani developed into an important caravan terminus in the 1860s, its hinterland trade seems to have been largely overshadowed by the caravan trade into the interior, in which Zigua chiefs successfully participated.[18] Farther north, at the town of Pangani, Muslims had been engaged in short-distance trade into the hinterland since the early nineteenth century.[19] Later in the century, Arab settlers developed large sugar plantations, using slave labor, in the hinterland along the Pangani River.[20]

Evidence for the hinterland trade of some of the northern towns (Takaungu, Mombasa, Gasi, Vanga, and Tanga) is more detailed. Krapf finds Muslims frequenting the villages of the Mombasa hinterland "in the business of trade," and in some villages Muslim traders built houses for residence during their "trading tours." Krapf also noted the monopoly that "the Mohamedans of Mombas" had on the trade of gum copal, which he described as "a very valuable article of trade" in the hinterland forests.[21] Muslim traders also began to settle near Mijikenda villages. Krapf left a description of one of these settlements, Magombani, near the village of Jibana:

> I insisted on being conducted to Djibana [hill], at the foot of which Magombani has been erected. . . . The tract of country where the hamlet Magombani has been built by some Mohamedan speculators of Mombas is egregiously well chosen, since it is but 4–5 miles from the bay, and as they are able on this spot to secure to themselves the advantageous monopoly of copal which the forest of Djibana produces; besides they cultivate much rice and maize, and make use of the fine timber, which the forest presents, for boards used by the Arabic [*sic*] boat-builders.[22]

In 1848, Rebmann found Muslims trading at another Mijikenda settlement, Chonyi, which he described as a village of "about 1,500 inhabitants in the midst of a forest . . . [a] Wanika town in which we saw a small market, kept up by Mohamedans."[23] Other traders moved deeper into the hinterland in search of ivory,

into an area inhabited by the Giriama people, some fifteen miles inland. When visiting the village of Mikomani, described by Krapf as the largest of Giriamaland, he came across the "Mohamedan Sheikh of Keriama," who had erected "a cottage in which he resides on his trading tours . . . all the Muhamedan passengers [travelers] spend a night in that house."[24] In 1861, Thornton found a Muslim trader residing some twenty miles inland at a large village beyond Kwale.[25] Von der Decken described the same Muslim trader as "Nasoro, a Swahili and caravan leader."[26]

Expansion of hinterland trade was accompanied by a corresponding increase in agricultural production in response to the demand from Arabia, Pemba, and Zanzibar for grain. In the case of the latter two islands this was to feed the large numbers of slaves working on the clove plantations.[27] Muslims expanded their own farms and also established commercial agricultural plantations, particularly on the Shimoni peninsula, around Gasi, on the mainland north and south of Mombasa, and in the Mazrui-dominated areas between Takaungu and Msabaha.[28] In addition to increasing their own agricultural production, Swahili and Arabs in the coastal towns intensified trade in grain (millet, maize, sesame, rice) with their rural African neighbors. By the 1860s, the Digo of the Tanga region were important suppliers of grain. Erhardt described them as "the cultivators of the land . . . they are the rich. . . . Almost all the semsem [sesame] and guinea corn [maize] imported at Zanzibar comes from them. . . . If the Wadigo do not choose to bring their productions to the market, the Islams have nothing to eat."[29] Further north, Malindi prospered as a plantation town, as vast tracts of land in the uninhabited rural hinterland were brought under cultivation; in 1877, Kirk described fields of millet extending ten to fifteen miles inland.[30] There was also a general increase in agricultural production on the mainland coast of the Lamu-Tana River area.

Agriculture was so important to the Swahili that New, who worked as a Methodist missionary at Ribe from 1863 until his death in 1875, described it as "one of their chief pursuits." He noted: "Every man of any position has his shamba, or plantation, whence he derives his chief support. The labor is done by slaves."[31] As a result, the hinterland around Mombasa came to be surrounded by plantations:

> The land on all sides is very fertile, and is largely cultivated. Kisauni to the north, Changamwe to the north-west, Mtongue and Lakone to the south are all covered with thriving plantations. The produce they send to the town adds largely to its wealth and importance. They are the market-gardening districts of Mombasa. All kinds of fruits, vegetables, pulse and cereals, grow in abundance. . . . Sesamum is cultivated largely, and is an important article of commerce. These districts are backed by the Wanika-land, which supplies rice, Indian corn, and millet to an almost unlimited extent.[32]

As agriculture prospered in the 1850s and 1860s, more slaves were needed. According to Guillain, who visited Mombasa in 1848, the population on the island of Mombasa was between twenty-five hundred and three thousand, and the population

of the "dependencies" of Mombasa (by which he means the mainland agricultural villages) was six thousand, of whom some forty-five hundred were slaves.[33] Soon after reaching Mombasa in 1863, New estimated: "The population of Mombasa cannot be less than 15,000. It has greatly increased of late years, chiefly, however, through the importation of slaves."[34]

Some plantation owners lived in Mtwapa or Mombasa, from where they periodically visited their plantations. Other owners stayed in small agricultural villages near their plantations. Owners created separate residential villages for their slaves, who came under Islamic influence in varying degrees. Ahmad Stambuli, a plantation owner at Shariani (south of Kilifi), had his slaves build a mosque in which he would pray with them when he visited, but many agricultural villages had no mosque. The Muslim owners would go there mainly to supervise agricultural work, and although some built small prayer-houses (Swa., *misala;* sing., *msala*), for Friday prayers they would go to town.[35]

Although most slaves on the East African became at least nominal Muslims, the practice of Islam by slaves is not well documented. Morton argues that whereas the adoption of Islam gave slaves a sense of superiority over unbelievers, rigid class barriers usually prevented them from rising above their inferior status.[36] Cooper states that slaves were taught the Quran, but this would have been true mainly of domestic slaves living in town.[37] Friday was usually a day of rest for slaves. Some prayed, but others would pray only when their master was present—behavior perhaps reminiscent of that of schoolboys with regard to their teachers. The varying attitudes of slave owners toward religion often determined the religious practice of slaves: Muslims who were religiously inclined might sell off slaves who did not pray, but Muslims for whom religion was unimportant would not even give their slaves time off for prayer. Islam among slaves was much attenuated by the low standard of Islamic education available to them. Illiteracy was high, opportunities for learning few, and knowledge of the faith rudimentary. Slave villages had no Quran schools, and slaves, and the children of slaves, had little chance to learn about their faith. Slaves who lived in town had better access to education, and sometimes studied to quite high standards. For example, one of the teachers of the last liwali of Mombasa, Shaykh Mbarak bin ʿAli al-Hinawi, was a slave.[38] But even slaves without a solid grounding in Islamic doctrine acquired a veneer of Muslim attitudes and practice. New described how slaves "sometimes learn by rote sufficient of the Koran, though in an unknown tongue to them, to take part with their betters in the religious exercises of the mosque."[39]

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The presence of Muslims in rural areas thus grew in several ways: the emigration of Muslims from established towns to found new rural settlements; greater initiative on the part of Muslim traders, who began to frequent and in some cases even settle in the rural hinterland; and the general expansion of agriculture by Muslims

into areas that bordered on or intermingled with non-Muslim peoples. These developments affected different parts of the coastal hinterland in varying ways, but the net overall effect was to bring Muslims and non-Muslims into closer, more frequent contact with each other and to increase the number and kinds of transactions between them. More subtle, and less easy to evaluate, is the evidence that the nature of contacts between Muslims and non-Muslims was beginning to change. As Muslim entrepreneurs sought out reliable trading partners, relations that had previously been group-oriented came to be more personal and individual. Krapf made a reference to the existence of such direct personal links between Muslims and Mijikenda: "The Mohamedan guide . . . will introduce you to that Wanika with whose interests those of his own are connected."[40]

Throughout this period, urban Islamization continued, and probably increased, if for no other reason than because new Muslim settlements attracted immigrants. There is also evidence that the increase in contacts between Muslims and non-Muslims in the hinterland attracted larger numbers of non-Muslims to visit the towns. Thus, the number of non-Muslim Africans adopting Islam may have been increasing, but most of these would have still gravitated to urban life. In spite of closer and more frequent contacts between Muslims and non-Muslims, there is little evidence that Islam had begun to take hold among peoples in the rural hinterland before the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Krapf's assessment of relations between Mombasa and the Mijikenda in 1844 was remarkably similar to Emery's: "The secular interests of the Wonicas are intimately connected with those of the people of Mombas [*sic*]. Both live in peace with each other, except that the latter look on the Wonicas as infidels."[41] And on the Mrima coast in 1857, Burton was still able to refer to the Zaramo of the hinterland of Bagamoyo as a "barbarian maritime race" who go to the Luguru mountains to worship.[42]

The Beginnings and Growth of Rural Islam

By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, there is evidence that some non-Muslim Africans had adopted Islam and continued to reside in their rural villages—the beginnings of what we might call "rural Islamization." This change marked a significant turning point in the spread of Islam. Previously, the emigration of Islamized Africans away from their own people to settle in Muslim towns had removed elements that might otherwise have proved innovative, if not disruptive, to their own societies. Now, the presence of indigenous African Muslims in rural villages created new circumstances and the potential for change. Rural Islamization first began in those places where non-Muslims developed particularly close relations with Muslims, as a result either of Muslim agricultural expansion into rural areas or of prolonged and intense trade with Muslims. Rural Islamization also occurred in another quite different way: by remigration—that is, the return of Muslim Africans from residence in towns to their original rural homes.

Some of the earliest evidence we have for rural Islamization comes from the

Vanga-Shimoni area (near the present-day border between Kenya and Tanzania), where Muslim influence was already spreading among the Segeju people indigenous to the area before 1850. In 1854, Erhardt reported that the Segeju "have become mostly Mahomedans."[43] The Segeju had especially close contacts with the Vumba Swahili of Wasin Island, who established farms on the mainland peninsula (known today as Shimoni) opposite the island. Land was plentiful on the peninsula, and the Segeju are said to have allowed the Vumba to settle there.[44] Most Vumba continued to reside on the island (and in Vanga town), and farmed on the mainland seasonally, but some settled near or in Segeju villages, took Segeju wives, and became permanent mainland residents. Eventually the whole Shimoni area came to be regarded as joint Vumba-Segeju land.[45] The children of Vumba-Segeju marriages were brought up as Muslims, and other Segeju, not related to the Vumba by marriage, must have been attracted to Islam. The Islamizing role of the Vumba is corroborated by Segeju traditions, which state that the coastal Segeju (as distinguished from the Segeju, who were settled inland at Bwiti and Daluni) were converted to Islam by the Vumba. Thus, the Segeju came to be among the first indigenous African people of the coastal hinterland to adopt Islam on a large scale, and this was not so much because of trading contacts but as a result of close relations arising out of interspersed settlement and intermarriage. They were also the first to build their own mosques, in such villages as Kibiga, Kirau (Kidimu), and Hormuz (Ormuz), in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Later in the nineteenth century, Segeju teachers contributed to the spread of Islam among the Mijikenda, particularly among the southern Digo of Tanga.[46]

Relations developed somewhat similarly between the Digo south of Mombasa and the Tangana Swahili who settled at Mtongwe. The Tangana began to cultivate land near the Digo and to marry Digo women. By 1860, the Tangana and Digo were collaborating in many ways. Some Digo had taken up residence among the Tangana for purposes of trade or to work, and the Tangana elders knew and met regularly with their Digo counterparts. By the 1870s, some of the Digo of Mtongwe had begun to adopt Islam, and from then on the number of Digo Muslims increased, gradually but steadily. These early converts to Islam, while continuing to live in their villages, would go to pray in neighboring Tangana mosques. They seem to have had no difficulty leading their traditional way of life and at the same time responding to the demands of their new religious faith.[47] In 1915, the year the Digo Muslims built their own mosque at Mtongwe, Dundas was able to write: "Although many Wadigo have become converted to the Moslem faith, this can scarcely be described as their only or true religion. Side by side with Mohamedan practices they continue their tribal religious observances, none of which have been displaced by Mohamedanism. Most of their wives and women folk are pagans and their husbands do not seem to consider it necessary for them to be anything else."[48]

On the Mrima coast, in the area of Saadani, there is early evidence for intermarriage between Swahili and Zigua women of the hinterland. Bwana Heri bin Juma, who was the autonomous ruler of Saadani from the 1860s until the German

occupation, is said to have been born of a Swahili father and a Zigua mother.[49] We can postulate, too, that as the Shomvi Swahili expanded to settle and farm in the outlying areas of Bagamoyo town, they came to develop comparably closer relations with the neighboring Zaramo. In all these instances we can perceive a general pattern. As Muslims settled to live and farm closer to non-Muslims, the two came to reside so near to each other, indeed often interspersed, that their lives intermingled and they shared the same concerns of daily life. In this way, Islam came to have a direct presence and particularly strong influence among non-Muslim rural peoples.

Krapf observed this influence at Mwakirunge (in the coastal plain north of Mombasa), where he was received by Sheikh Ibrahim, a Muslim who had "flourishing plantations of rice, cassava, maize, etc." and was "much respected by the few pagan families which have fixed their huts around him." Krapf commented: "It is surprising how the Mahomedans [*sic*] encroach upon the Wonica land in this direction. They erect small hamlets . . . people them with their slaves, and secure the good will of the Wonicas by trifling presents which they give them. . . . In the course of time new settlers arrive carrying with them a Sheikh who superintends their religious wants and ensnares the infidels whenever he can."[50]

Turning to look at Islamic influence arising out of trading relations, we find that as the trading initiative shifted to town centers, not only did the presence of Muslim traders in the hinterland increase, but the direction and focus of trade changed as well. Whereas the town constituted a single marketplace attracting the surrounding hinterland peoples without distinction, the town trader viewed the rural hinterland selectively, and sought above all to establish contact with those places nearest to him or that represented the largest prospective market and source of supply. Thus, the areas of the hinterland that were more accessible or that had a larger and more densely settled population were especially attractive to Muslim traders.

In this regard, non-Muslims in the immediate hinterland of the towns, within a distance of ten to twelve miles, seem to have been the object of constant and regular visits by local Muslim traders. The hinterland peoples of the Mrima (the Zaramo, Zigua, Doe, Bondei, and Digo) all came under steady Islamic influence in this way. The degree of influence seems to have been proportional to the distance from town. For example, by 1890, the Zaramo near Dar es Salaam and as far as ten miles inland were already adopting Islam, whereas farther inland, at Kisarawe (twenty miles from the coast) and Maneramango (fifty miles southwest of Dar es Salaam), the Zaramo had had little contact with Muslim traders.[51] Similarly, Digo elders in the coastal plain immediately south of Mombasa had begun to adopt Islam in the 1860s and 1870s, and by the end of the nineteenth century had built three mosques, whereas the Digo in the sparsely populated Kwale hills fifteen to twenty miles inland began to adopt Islam only some forty years later, and did not build their first mosque until after World War I.[52] Further south, in the hinterland of Tanga, the Digo were said to be "becoming Muslim" in the 1890s, and by 1911 more than twenty Digo villages had mosques.[53]

Further north, in the Tana River area, remigration was responsible for the beginning of Islamization among the upper Pokomo. In the 1880s, a number of young men from upper Pokomo migrated to settle at Chara in lower Pokomo country, where they began trading with Muslim traders at Kau. Under the influence of these traders, some of the men became Muslim. Had they continued to reside at Chara, they might have remained nothing more than a community of Islamized immigrants, but in 1910 they began to return to their upper Pokomo homeland, where together with Muslim traders, who were then entering upper Pokomo country for the first time, they began to spread Islam.[54]

By the end of the nineteenth century, most Africans in the immediate coastal hinterland had experienced the impact of Islam in one way or other. They may not have formally adopted Islam—in particular, far fewer women than men had become Muslim—but some of their kinsfolk would have done so, and the presence of Islam had permeated into many rural villages. A high proportion of the first African converts were village elders and chiefs, and by all accounts many of them were men of forceful character and prestige, like Kibasila, the Zaramo chief of Kisangire (south of Dar es Salaam), who in 1905 refused the offer of a Lutheran mission school since he already had a Quran school in his village, and Abdallah Mwapodzo, the *mwanatsi* (senior elder) of Diani (south of Mombasa), who is said to have been the first Muslim Digo in the area and to have been instrumental in bringing other Digo elders into Islam.[55]

By this time, too, other forces had begun to strengthen Islam in the coastal region. The Qadiriyya and Shadhiliyya were both active, particularly along the Mrima coast, where they had spread from Barawa via Zanzibar, and numerous Quran schools had been started in rural villages, mainly for the children of the first generation of African Muslims.[56] Further north, in the hinterland of Mombasa, the Qadiriyya spread among African Muslims at least fifteen or twenty years after it had begun on the Mrima coast. The Qadiriyya attracted some new converts, but its greatest impact seems to have been to encourage African Muslims, including second-generation Muslims, to live their faith more enthusiastically and with greater conviction.[57]

The Caravan Trade and the Spread of Islam into the Interior

By the 1830s and 1840s, caravans were traveling regularly into the East African interior. Arabs, Swahili, and sometimes Indians trekked inland in search mainly of ivory and slaves and the lucrative gains to be obtained from such trade. The growth of the caravan trade, during this period and the ensuing half century, is best understood in the context of two related factors: a steady rise in international demand for ivory and slaves, and the monopoly control that came to be exercised over trade in the region by the Omani sultanate based in Zanzibar. Indeed, it was the trading expansion inland that assured Zanzibar of its key position in the commerce that linked East Africa with the larger world. East Africa produced high-quality ivory,

much in demand in international markets, as well as slaves, which were sought by the expanding plantation economies, on the coast itself, and on the islands of Zanzibar, Pemba, and Mauritius, which produced cloves, sugar, and grain for export. The reverse movement of manufactured products (cloth, guns, beads, and ironware) from India, America, and Europe was also channeled through Zanzibar. To control this trade, the Zanzibar sultans established a strong and effective administration. They do not, however, appear to have desired formal political control beyond the coast and islands. Doubtless, they possessed neither the means nor the human resources to achieve a true colonization of the region; nor is there any indication that they harbored any religious agenda for the coast, much less for all of East Africa. Nevertheless, the caravan trade marks the beginning of a substantial movement of new peoples and ideas, including those of Islam, into the interior.

Much of the trading initiative before the 1820s came from inland peoples like the Kamba (in the northern interior) and the Nyamwezi (in the central interior), who brought trade goods to the coast and who in so doing pioneered routes that were later used by Muslim traders from the coast. The first caravans moving from the coast into the interior entered the region south and southeast of Lake Victoria (present-day central and western Tanzania). Only later did caravans begin traveling into the northern interior (present-day central and western Kenya). By the 1850s and 1860s, caravans were the main source of supply of ivory, and only small quantities of ivory made their way to indigenous markets at the coast.

Evidence for the first decades of the caravan trade is sparse, and much of our knowledge has been pieced together from accounts of early travelers (Burton, Speke, Stanley), who recounted events they were told about but did not witness. The earliest travelers from the coast into the interior are said to have been two Indian Muslim brothers, Sayan and Musa Muzuri, who departed the coast around 1825 with more than fifteen tons of pearls and textiles that were credited to the account of the Omani liwali of Zanzibar. Sayan died en route; Musa, after suffering a large loss of merchandise, settled for several years in the Lake Victoria region. His business prospered, especially at Tabora and Karagwe, where he appears to have been one of the most successful traders of the mid-nineteenth century. Later, he was joined by an Arab, Ahmad bin Ibrahim, whose parents had immigrated to Zanzibar sometime before Sayyid Said, the Sultan of Oman, decided in 1840 to reside there more or less permanently. Ahmad is said to have been one of the first traders to make his way to the kingdom of Buganda on the northern shores of Lake Victoria.[58]

The trade routes have been well studied and described in various sources.[59] Three routes concern us here. Two were from the Mrima coast: the so-called central route (used mainly by caravans from Dar es Salaam, Bagamoyo, and Saadani) running through Ugogo,[60] then on westward to Tabora in Unyamwezi and Lake Tanganyika; and the so-called northern route (used mainly by caravans from Pangani, Tanga, and Vanga) going from the northern Mrima coast, inland along the Pangani

River to Kilimanjaro and Maasailand. The third route was further north (used mainly by caravans from Mombasa), traveling across the Nyika and then to the Kilimanjaro region or into Kamba country, thence westward across the Rift Valley toward Lake Victoria. Descriptions of the continent's interior by later European travelers suggest the risks that must have been encountered by the Muslim traders who preceded them. The routes, hardly more than tracks, presented numerous obstacles: "muddy streams, quagmired rivers, deep ravines, thick forests, sheer rocks, marshes." As Burton noted, "streams of water that could easily be forged during the dry season often became dangerous torrents when the rains began."[61] In addition to such natural hardships, the routes were riddled with other obstacles: not only was there the levying of tribute and pillaging of goods, but "wars or conflicts between tribes . . . often blocked the way."[62]

The geographical details of the routes are of less importance to our study than an understanding of their common characteristics. In general, the routes passed through low-lying areas, avoiding mountainous terrain. Thus, for example, as the central route entered the country west of Uzaramo, it avoided the Luguru hills, traveling instead through the lower arid plains. Muslim traders thus had regular contact with the Luguru of the plains but almost no contact with the more densely populated hill country. The population distribution of Uluguru in the late 1950s reflected this early influence: in the highland region of Mgeta, 4 percent of the population was Muslim and 86 percent was Christian; in the lower regions of Uluguru, such as Mililingwa and Malela, the Muslim population was more than 70 percent.[63] When Christian missions first began their work among the Luguru, they established stations in the highlands, where they found less Islamic influence. A similar example of lowland travel can be found on the northern route, which passed through the lower southern sections of Usambara and Upare, avoiding the mountains.

Trade from the East African coast into the interior, which came to be totally dominated by Muslims, was instrumental in bringing Muslims into places where none had ever been before. Although the hamlets built by traders along the routes were potential conduits for the spread of Islam, most African peoples felt little, if any, Islamic influence. As Muslims sought to dominate trade routes that had been pioneered by Africans (bringing goods to the coast from the interior), intense trading competition arose, and the relations of Muslim trader-settlers with indigenous non-Muslims were not always cordial.

The number of settlements established by Muslims was few in relation to the vast area through which the caravans passed; moreover, the population of the settlements was generally low. In large parts of the interior—in Usukuma south of Lake Victoria, for example, where ivory was scarce—no settlements or trading centers were established at all. Caravans did their best to avoid or pass quickly through other areas, such as Ugogo, dry, difficult country, where no ivory was available and the people were considered to be generally hostile. Traders established one trading post at Mpwapwa on the southeastern boundary of Ugogo, but the main focus of

relations there concerned the right of passage and provision of supplies. Overall, there was limited contact between Muslim traders and the Gogo, and there is no evidence of Muslim proselytization among them.[64]

The reasons for establishing settlements or trading centers were varied; for example, it might have been to secure a strategic or convenient location, or because of the availability of trade items or provisions, or the political influence of a particular chief or leader. Before the 1860s, Swahili traders were frequenting Upare, where their main trade was in ivory. They established a permanent base for this trade in Ugweno in northern Pare, the only part of Upare with a supply of ivory rivaling that of the Kilimanjaro area. Today, Ugweno is the place in Upare that has the strongest Muslim influence.[65] In Usambara, Muslims were attracted to the town of Vugha, the old center of Kilindi power in the highlands. When Erhardt stayed in Vugha for three months in 1853, he found there a strong Muslim presence, including several Muslim scribes and "sorcerers," and that one of the king's sons had become a Muslim.[66] Though Usambara did not generally become Muslim, Kilindi power came to be associated with Islam during the nineteenth century. In 1911, Becker noticed "a large Muslim community" and the presence of a Muslim teacher among the Shambaa people at Mlalo, near Vugha.[67] Even today, the main center of Muslim influence in Usambara is at Mlalo-Mhelo.[68]

Where only one or two Muslim traders were residing alone in the interior, they seem to have had little impact on the general population, and in some instances may themselves have been influenced by local circumstances. When Rebmann reached Machame, in Chagga country, in January 1849, he met "Maigni Wasiri," called Nasiri by the Chagga, a Swahili from Pangani who had been living among the Chagga for some six years and was employed by Mamkinga as "his physician and sorcerer." Nasiri came to visit Rebmann, who described him as "now from his long residence in Chagga rather a heathen than a Mahomedan [*sic*]. He wears his clothes like the Chagga and it is said that the king obliged him to eat such flesh as is declared 'haram' to the Moslems."[69]

Trade routes sometimes changed—in response to conflict, refusal of African chiefs to allow passage, or general insecurity. For example, in the 1870s raiding parties led by Mirambo in northern and northwestern Unyamwezi made the Karagwe route to the west of Lake Victoria unsafe, and traders were forced to shift to what became known as the "Lake route," through Usukuma to the southern shores of Lake Victoria, where Kageye became the terminus port, handling goods coming and going across the lake. When Henry Morton Stanley arrived at Kageye in 1875, he found only one coastal trader, Songoro Tarib, in residence. Songoro is said to have been absent much of the time, doing business in Ukerewe and arranging transport for ivory to Tabora. His and his successors' influence on the Sukuma, with whom they had little interaction, was minimal.[70] All this is not to say that there was no Islamic influence arising out of the caravan trade, but the proportion of inland African peoples affected was small.

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It was at Tabora and Ujiji in the central interior that the greatest Muslim settlements developed. Ujiji, located on the eastern shores of Lake Tanganyika, was an important staging point for trade across the lake; Tabora, some 180 miles south of Lake Victoria and 200 miles east of Lake Tanganyika, was strategically located in a well-watered fertile region at the crucial junction where the central trade route split into two branches, one proceeding west to Ujiji, the other north, around the western shores of Lake Victoria, to terminate in Buganda.

To ensure the smooth operation of their affairs, the Arab and Swahili merchants sought to forge solid alliances with local rulers. The rulers expected their coastal allies to supply them with the firearms they needed to defend themselves from the attacks of hostile neighbors or to help them organize the conquest of new territory. In turn, the providers of firearms benefited by sharing the booty seized in battle: prisoners of war or stocks of ivory. These alliances were sometimes sealed by the marriage of a trader to the daughter of an influential elder or chief. Such marriages took place at both Tabora and Ujiji.

In the 1840s at Tabora, the trader Muhammad bin Juma, a Muslim of mixed Omani and African descent, married a daughter of Fundikira I, the *ntemi* (ruler or chief) of Unyanyembe, one of the two main chiefdoms of Unyamwezi. The Arab-Swahili community helped Fundikira I in several armed clashes with his neighbors. By the 1860s, Tabora had grown into the most important of the Muslim settlements of the central interior, and the local liwali, the official representative of the sultan, had established his residence there. However, Islamic influence at Tabora was mitigated by various circumstances, and Muhammad bin Juma's marriage to Fundikira's daughter had no broad repercussions on Nyamwezi society. In 1858, it was overshadowed by the violent conflict that broke out between the Arabs and Mnywa Sele, Fundikira's successor.[71] The Nyamwezi, who were themselves trading competitors of the Arabs and the Swahili, kept the Muslims confined to Tabora town, where few Nyamwezi were resident.

The rise to power in the late 1860s of another Nyamwezi chief, Mirambo, who was hostile to Unyanyembe and opposed to the presence and influence of the Muslim traders there, changed the circumstances of much of Unyamwezi. Mirambo's raiding campaigns severely disrupted trade and constrained the activities of many of the coastal traders. Unsympathetic to the Zanzibaris, the redoubtable Mirambo (called by some a "black Napoleon") knew how to play to his advantage the rivalry between them and the Christian missionaries, who first arrived in the Tabora region in 1879. According to a description of the town in the 1880s, there were no Nyamwezi living within three miles of Tabora, where the Arabs and Swahili stayed with their Islamized Manyema slaves, and the town had become as much a plantation as a trading settlement.[72]

To all these circumstances must be added a further, less tangible and definable,

factor—the apparent general lack of interest among most Muslim traders in spreading their religion. Few local Africans seem to have adopted Islam, and those who did generally numbered among the immediate entourage of Arab and Swahili merchants: their wives and sometimes the relatives of their wives, retainers or porters, and slaves. European observers were struck by the absence of places of prayer and religious instruction. Though undoubtedly these practices were going on unobserved—in particular, the Zanzibaris are said to have preferred praying in the privacy of their homes—it is difficult to gauge their extent. Because of the limitation of our sources and consequent lack of knowledge, the history of Islam necessarily lies hidden behind the secular and commercial activities whose details are so much better known.

The trading center at Ujiji seems to have benefited from the change of circumstances in Unyamwezi. Whereas in 1860 Ujiji had not achieved even the size or importance of Kazeh or Msene (two of the hamlets that made up Tabora), by 1880 it was home to seven or eight thousand inhabitants. When Stanley visited Ujiji in 1872, he described "the vigorous mingling of regional and long-distance trade taking place there."[73] The town's resident merchant colony was governed by a Swahili chief, Mwinyi Mkuu, whose brother Mwinyi Kheri had married the daughter of the king of Bujiji. After acquiring the status of a chief under the king of Bujiji, Mwinyi Kheri came to control most of the trade that passed between Ujiji and Uvira on the western shore of Lake Tanganyika. The Europeans who met him about 1880 found him in possession of 120 slaves, eighty rifles, and nine canoes.[74] Christian missionaries described Ujiji as "the most populous Arab center in Tanganyika, where arrive all the slave caravans taken from the interior and sent to Zanzibar. It is there that all the half-castes gather to decide among themselves from which direction and in which region they would direct their forays."[75] Images drawn of the scene suggest that coastal peoples had established themselves there quite permanently:

> Imagine then a tangle of trees, of palms, of banana trees, of mango trees: here and there heaps of refuse and debris; huts scattered without pattern along winding paths which open their way with difficulty through this wild vegetation favored by a humid, stifling climate. Here and there arise the tembes of the Arabs,[76] massively heavy buildings . . . with reddish walls and narrow windows. . . . A veranda extending the length of the facade of the tembe, which accommodates Arabs and their guests during the day, for the Arabs spend their whole lives outdoors. . . . Around the tembes there are scattered without order the huts of the slaves and the dwellings of somewhat well-off people who are able to build in brick. The tembe is to these huts what the chateau is to the village houses of Europe. In ordinary times, Oujiji can hold seven or eight thousand inhabitants. Twelve dozen pure-blooded Arabs at most are to be found there, but each of these Arabs has hundreds, and some even a thousand, slaves.[77]

Ujiji also served as a base for the commercial penetration of the region west of Lake Tanganyika, then known as Manyema (now the eastern region of Congo-Kinshasa). The expansion of trade into Manyema is synonymous with the name of Hamed bin Muhammad Tippu Tip, the most famous of the Swahili interlacustrine merchants and the son of Muhammad bin Juma, who had settled at Tabora. Tippu was initiated into commerce by his family at just twelve years of age, when he began going on local trading trips in the coastal hinterland. At the age of eighteen, his father took him to Tabora and on to Ujiji, from where he crossed the lake. This was his introduction to Manyema country, where he was to spend much of the rest of his life.

On his third journey into Manyema (1870–82), Tippu cleverly managed to pass himself off as the grandson of a paramount ruler of the Batetela. Previously, a daughter of the Tetela ruler had been taken to Zanzibar, and the family had been waiting many years for news of her. Thus, Tippu Tip claimed his part of the inheritance according to local custom, which privileged the maternal line in matters of succession. Kasongo Rushi, the Tetela chief, moved at finding his "grandson," presented Tippu to the crowd that had gathered for the occasion: "This is your chief Tippu Tip! I no longer have any stake in the chieftainship; bring all the tusks (of ivory) to him."[78] During the twelve years that he remained in his inherited land, Tippu used his prerogative as Kasongo's grandson to organize and control local trade in ivory and slaves. During the years leading up to the Scramble, he became the only local notable to negotiate with the Europeans who had come to explore the immense territory that King Leopold II coveted. Even when Europeans used the cover of the antislavery campaign to seize African possessions, Tippu's knack for being the right person in the right place held true. He received numerous emissaries from the Belgian sovereign, as well as explorers and missionaries, to whom he supplied porters and protection all the way from western Tanganyika to Manyema. Fearing a Mahdist invasion from the Sudan,[79] and from his French rivals on the western bank of the Congo River, Leopold II used the Arabs and the Swahili to occupy "his" territory. In 1887, he designated Tippu Tip as his governor at Stanley Falls (present-day Kisangani), the first outpost of the new Congo Free State.

All the years of activity of Tippu Tip, and other traders, in Manyema had singularly little consequence for the spread of Islam. Some Manyema made their way to Tabora and Ujiji, more often than not as slaves, and became Muslim there, but little permanent residue of Islam remained in Manyema once the slave trade was declared illegal and suppressed by the Belgian colonial government. Beyond the western bank of Lake Tanganyika, Muslim traders appear to have been even less concerned with spreading their religion than they were in Ujiji or Tabora. Several theories have been advanced to explain this: for example, their lack of political ambition, or their contempt for local nonbelievers. Indeed, the coast men did think themselves superior to the inhabitants of the far interior, to whom they regularly applied the Swahili term *washenzi* ("barbarians"), and who were discovering for the first time the technological superiority of firearms and other products of the industrial revolution. It is equally pertinent to remember that many of the Swahili and

descendants of Omani immigrants may have had little religious instruction themselves, and the general temper of the age in which they lived did not stress that Muslims had an obligation to spread their religion to other peoples.

The northern interior, along the route inland from Mombasa, experienced the impact of trading caravans later and to a lesser degree than had happened in the central interior further south. By the 1850s, early Muslim traders had probably found their way as far as Lake Baringo, which became an important outpost and supply point, but regular caravans began traversing this route only in the late 1860s and 1870s. We have far less evidence for trade in this region, since European travelers and explorers, whose accounts give so many details about trade in the central interior, did not enter the northern region until the 1880s.

The main Muslim settlement in the northern interior was the one established among the Wanga people (the present-day area of Mumias in northwestern Kenya). The first Muslim traders were welcomed by Shiundu, the traditional *nabongo* (ruler) of the Wanga, who saw in them a potential ally in his struggle against hostile neighbors, in particular the Bukusu. Shiundu's son, Nabongo Mumia (after whom the present town of Mumias is named), became a Muslim, as did a number of other members of the royal Abashitsetse clan. The traders were given Wanga women in marriage, and by the 1890s, on the eve of colonial rule, a small but thriving Muslim trading community had been consolidated at Mumias. Muslim traders also founded trading and supply centers along the main trade route at such places as Kitui, Machakos, Baringo, and Eldama Ravine,[80] but the settlements were small and unstable and had few residents. They had little Islamizing influence on the societies around them.

Islam and the Kingdom of Buganda

Of all the places in the interior of East Africa that felt the influence of Islam during the nineteenth century, Buganda must be considered preeminent, not just because it was the most prosperous and highly centralized kingdom of the region, but also because its rulers took a singular interest in the religion of Islam.

Oral traditions and written accounts agree that Islam was first taken to Buganda by Muslim traders coming from the southeast through Karagwe during the reign of Kabaka Suna (c. 1832–56). The number of traders reaching Buganda at this time was small, however, and few of these are known to have attempted to spread Islam.

Among the first Muslims to arrive was Ahmad bin Ibrahim, who was known particularly for his proselytizing, an unusual trait not often mentioned in accounts about traders. According to European sources, his efforts at converting local Baganda to Islam were a result of his "Wahhabist" sympathies. Ahmad, who was treated as a friend and protégé of Suna, held discussions with the kabaka about the Quran, Muslim theology, and law. Suna is said to have learned several chapters of the Quran by heart, and manuscript pages from the Quran were discovered in his

house after his death.[81] Despite this, there is no evidence that Suna ever seriously intended to adopt Islam. On the other hand, it is known that he encouraged Ahmad to extend the teaching of Islam to his subjects as well as to neighboring Karagwe. In Karagwe, Ahmad warehoused quantities of merchandise, especially firearms and cotton goods—items he traded or sold for livestock, slaves, and elephant tusks, which the kingdom provided in abundance. When Stanley met him in 1876, he possessed "150 head of stock, 100 slaves, and 450 ivory tusks."[82] Details of his life (see, for example, the narratives of Stanley and Burton) draw a picture similar to those of other great merchants of the era who traversed the Zambezi Valley and the regions that later formed part of the "Arab empire of Manyema."

Suna's son and successor, Kabaka Mutesa, is said to have exhibited an even keener interest in Islam than his father. One of the first Muslim traders to visit Mutesa is said to have been Ali Nakatukula, who came in the late 1850s or early 1860s. Ali left a Swahili servant to teach Mutesa, who quickly learned to read and understand Arabic, to the extent that he was able to render portions of the Quran from Arabic into Luganda, his mother tongue. After having studied the Quran for some time, he summoned all his chiefs and started to teach them about Islam, and ordered all his subjects to learn about it as well. He built a large mosque at his palace in Nakawa and appointed a number of his pages as guardians of the mosque, where he arrived to pray every Friday with a large contingent of chiefs. He decreed that his chiefs and subjects should perform daily ritual prayers and use Arabic or Swahili forms of greeting, and he introduced Muslim forms of attire at his court. Mutesa first observed Ramadan, the month of fasting, in 1867, and continued the observance for the next ten years. More interestingly, he made the practice of fasting obligatory for all his subjects. Mutesa is even said to have sent a mission, though unsuccessfully, to the neighboring kingdom of Bunyoro in the hopes of convincing Kabarega to adopt Islam. Thus, whereas under Suna the spread of Islam had been confined mainly to the court and its immediate surroundings, under Mutesa the influence of Islam began to spread into the countryside. Indeed, during these years, Islam became a kind of "state" religion.[83]

Stanley's visit to the kabaka's court in 1875, followed two years later by the arrival of the first Christian missionaries in Buganda, marked a turning point in Mutesa's perception of Islam, and indeed in the history of Islam in Buganda. By this time, the kabaka felt that his kingdom was threatened from the north by the Anglo-Egyptian expeditions into the Sudan. Sir Samuel Baker, an English officer who had been appointed governor of the Sudan in 1869 by Khedive Ismail, had proclaimed the annexation to Egypt of "the regions south of the Gondokoro," extending nearly to the southern border of present-day Uganda.[84] Mutesa's interest in Islam continued, as did his open admiration of the culture of the sultans of Zanzibar, but his relations with Muslims came to be exercised within the context of contemporary political circumstances. The kabaka seems to have had an overriding interest in obtaining guns from whomever he could, from the well-armed coastal Muslims, who frequented his realm, and from the Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries

and other explorers, who visited him and spoke of the omnipotence of their God and the power of Europe.[85]

During the period between 1877 and 1884, the year of Mutesa's death, the Muslim position in Buganda deteriorated, as the Christian missionaries succeeded in arousing doubts and weakening Mutesa's practice of the Muslim faith. If one considers further the tolerant attitude of Mutesa toward the Christian sects, whose supporters at his court sought his favor, the eminently political dimension of his interest in Islam and Christianity cannot be ignored.

The kabaka aimed to maximize his political options while maintaining control of the foreign visitors at his court. He continued to advocate the practice of Islam, while refusing to undergo circumcision and frequently neglecting to pray, both of which were considered by Muslims to be critical indicators of a true Muslim. He welcomed European explorers and missionaries with the same honors he bestowed on Muslim visitors. At the same time, he affirmed his friendship with the sultan of Zanzibar, Sayyid Barghash. Tired of this maneuvering, the Protestant missionary Mackay concluded that the kabaka "has no other desire in his heart than the satisfaction of his passions and the desire for wealth."[86] Father Nicq, of the White Fathers, accused him of being "as touchy, as greedy, as despotic, as savage as anyone."[87] Yet, he also recognized his shrewdness and political genius.[88] The Protestant missionary Pearson wrote in his diary, after having learned that a certain Rashid bin Surur had obtained five hundred rifles for the king, "Now that this Arab has brought so many rifles, Mutesa will choose Islam."[89]

The years immediately following the death of Mutesa are often referred to by historians as the period of the "wars of religion," during which the forces of Islam, Christianity (in its two forms, Protestant and Catholic), and traditional religion vied for power and control. The Baganda who had adopted Islam under Mutesa occupied many important posts, and their influence was such that they were able to set Prince Kalema on the throne against Mutesa's designated successor, Mwanga. For a while, Kalema prevailed and ruled as a Muslim kabaka (1888–89), but in 1890 the arrival in Buganda of agents of the Imperial British East Africa Company helped to turn the tide irreversibly against Islam.[90]

Islam and Colonial Rule

The steady growth of a European presence in East Africa during the 1870s and 1880s, culminating in the imposition of colonial rule, had decisive consequences for Islam in the region. The course of Islam during the colonial period came to be influenced, not so much by a clearly defined colonial policy toward Islam—no such policy seems to have been elaborated by the colonial powers, except in the broadest terms (chapter 8)—as by diverse precolonial circumstances, and various ad hoc measures taken by colonial governments as they sought to establish their administration.

In some instances, the impact of colonial policy had rather abrupt and imme-

diate consequences for Islam. For example, in two short years, by the treaties of 1890 and 1892, Lugard, acting in the name of the British East Africa Company, succeeded in influencing the religious composition of the traditional Buganda hierarchical structure. Of the ten chieftainships, six were assigned to the Protestants, covering in Lugard's own estimate 60 to 70 percent of Buganda, three (the smallest) to the Muslims, and one to the Roman Catholics. Within another year, two of the three chieftainships had been removed from the Muslims and reallocated to the Protestant and Catholic parties, leaving the Muslims with only one. This arrangement, which marked the institutionalization of Christian dominance in Buganda, was confirmed by the Uganda Agreement of 1900, which strengthened the privileged position of the Christians and the hegemony of the Protestants at the very center of power. Official correspondence from Sir Harry Johnston, who negotiated the Uganda Agreement on behalf of the British government, leaves no doubt that he was concerned about the political consequences of the spread of Islam, and applied a criterion of inequality in religious matters.[91]

Notwithstanding this inequity, the British unintentionally fostered the spread of Islam into other areas of Uganda (outside Buganda). One of the consequences of the loss of influence by Muslims in the court and government of Buganda was the emigration of Baganda Muslims, "for the new Buganda was in theory Christian and it was impossible to have status without a Christian name."[92] Baganda Muslims sought their fortunes elsewhere, going to neighboring areas, like Busoga, Toro, and Bunyoro, and a large group of Muslims from Buganda was also given refuge by the ruler of Ankole. These refugees are known to have been instrumental in disseminating their faith among the peoples who received them. Baganda Muslims were also recruited by the British as administrative agents, interpreters, and chiefs in such places as Lango, Teso, and Bukedi, where they used their influence to spread Islam. And the Sudanese (Nubian) soldiers placed by the British in their main administrative centers imparted a permanent Muslim character to the towns in which they lived. Though not numerous, descendants of the soldiers, many of whom were later absorbed into civilian life, form Muslim communities in most of these areas to this day. Notable, and exceptional, among these communities are the Muslims of Aringa County of the West Nile District in northwest Uganda, where some 80 percent of the population is Muslim. This is the only part of East Africa where the Maliki school of law *(madhhab)* prevails, a lasting testimony to the Islamic influence from the north.[93]

Initially, the process of establishing and consolidating colonial rule, in British East Africa and German East Africa, offered Muslims an unprecedented occasion for expansion throughout the interior. The military conquest preceding the establishment of colonial rule was carried out in large part by Muslim soldiers, many of whom were then stationed in the new administrative centers they had helped to create. On retirement from military service, soldiers were offered land by the colonial government, and many decided to settle permanently in the areas in which they had served.

During the early years of colonial administration, both the British and the Ger-

mans relied on Muslims to occupy key positions as chiefs, headmen, clerks, and tax collectors. Beginning in 1892, the German colonial government established its first educational institutions at the coast (at Tanga, Dar es Salaam, and Lindi), and most of the African administrative staff trained there were coastal Muslims. These junior civil servants are known to have been instrumental in spreading Islam to such places as Mahenge, Kondoa, Irangi, Singida, and Musoma. By the time of World War I, Christian missionary leaders in German East Africa were voicing open criticism of what they saw as the pro-Islamic policy of the German colonial government.

The significance of the precolonial trading centers established in the interior during the nineteenth century becomes evident under colonial rule. Not only do many of the centers survive, with a continuity of Muslim presence, but some of them expand and take on added importance in another guise, when the German and British colonial governments develop them into administrative centers. To give just one example: beginning in 1891, Tabora became the German military and administrative headquarters in central German East Africa, thereby even increasing its Muslim character, since the numerous government officials who came to Tabora were mostly Muslim. In 1911, Becker called Tabora "the citadel of Islam in the interior."[94] By 1902, its population was thirty thousand, and still growing. With the arrival of the central railway line (and major railway workshops) at Tabora in 1912, new opportunities for employment were created, and the Nyamwezi of the surrounding hinterland migrated to the town in large numbers, where they came under Muslim influence, in a local upcountry version of urban Islamization. Though details are not yet known, the increase in the number of urbanized Nyamwezi Muslims in Tabora was followed, or possibly accompanied, by rural Islamization among the Nyamwezi in the hinterland of the town. By 1957, Abrahams finds Islam "of importance in the rural areas around Tabora where many villages have predominantly Muslim populations."[95] Not all nineteenth-century trading centers come to have such a profound Islamic influence as Tabora during the colonial period, but the Muslim presence in these towns, dating back to the caravan days, remains, and in many places has become significant only in recent times.

Colonial governments also founded new administrative centers in the interior in places untouched by the earlier caravan trade. These centers attracted an influx of Muslim traders (Arab, Swahili, Somali, Indian, and Ismaili) seeking the opportunities and newly established security provided by the colonial presence. Thus, communities of immigrant Muslims came to live and settle in areas that had previously been closed, unsafe, or only partially accessible to Muslims, and in the midst of non-Muslim societies with little or no previous exposure to Islam.

The influence of Islam was generally strongest among those peoples who were living nearest to administrative centers (and therefore to the Muslim communities of the centers) or who developed special relations with resident Muslim traders. The Muslim inhabitants of the centers often married local African women and attracted African employees from the surrounding countryside, some of whom became Muslim, to settle in these new colonial towns. Thus there occurred a process of urban

Islamization, not unlike what had happened in the Swahili towns during the early centuries of Islam on the East Africa coast. By the time of the First World War, Muslim communities existed in or near most colonial administrative centers. Most of these communities inherited the dominant attributes of Swahili Islam (Sunni and the Shafi'i school of law), and they came to exhibit common underlying characteristics derived from Swahili coastal culture, notably Swahili cuisine, dress, dances and songs, and the use of Swahili as the language of Islam, though they continued to speak their vernacular language in daily life and in dealings with their non-Muslim fellow Africans.

As the period of colonial rule progressed, the pervasive presence of Christian missions had a signal effect on Islam. The arrival of a small but growing number of Christian missionaries in the 1860s and 1870s had presaged the gradual spread of Christian missions throughout most of the interior, facilitated by colonial policies generally favorable to Christianity. During the early years of colonial rule, there occurred a steady expansion of missionary enterprise, evangelization, and education. Eventually, almost all peoples of East Africa, except those who were already thoroughly Islamized and the less accessible pastoral peoples, came under the influence of one or more Christian missions and had a chance to acquire formal Western education.

In this regard, precolonial circumstances played a significant role in defining the future of Islam (and Christianity). In areas where Islam had already taken root or was on its way to doing so, for example, in many parts of the coastal region and in such places as Kigoma and Ujiji, the work of Christian missions either proved to be sterile or was eventually abandoned, or in some cases simply did not begin. In areas where Islam had gained an initial but insecure foothold, Christian missionary work usually acted as a counterinfluence and had an adverse impact on the growth of Islam. In places where no Muslim influence was present, Christian missionary work for the most part proceeded unimpeded, though not without difficulties and setbacks. There were exceptions to these general trends, however. The deportation of large numbers of missionaries from German East Africa after World War I weakened Christian influence. For example, the Christian chief of Maneromango, in Uzaramo, became a Muslim, as did other Zaramo Christians, after the German missionaries left.[96] During the years immediately after World War I, there was an increase in Muslim influence, particularly in areas where Islam was already present, but in the 1920s the new British colonial government of Tanganyika came out in strong support of missionary work, and there followed a big expansion of Christian education.

By the 1920s, Christian influence was rapidly outstripping the Muslim. In spite of the early impetus given to the spread of Islam with the creation of colonial administrative centers in the interior, the fact that by and large Islam remained confined to the immediate vicinity of these centers greatly restricted its growth. Christian missions, on the other hand, systematically spread throughout the rural areas. As the twentieth century progressed, many Africans acquired literacy and for-

mal Western education (and became Christian), while Muslims, who continued to follow their traditional Islamic system of education, had less access and opportunity for formal education. Since Muslims tended to avoid going to mission schools or were excluded from them, Christians came to have a "privileged position" in society.[97] With the rise of a class of literate Africans, Muslims became less important to the colonial administration, and Muslim communities tended to become marginalized from the modern economic sector. The imbalances created by these unequal colonial circumstances make up much of the legacy being experienced by the Muslim peoples of East Africa to this day.[98]

Notes

1. Quite different circumstances led to the earlier penetration of Islam farther south in the coastal hinterland and interior of present-day Mozambique; see chapter 15.
2. Berg 1971, 8.
3. Weber 1966, 70–71.
4. Emery 1833, 283.
5. Erhardt to Venn, Sept. 22, 1852, Church Missionary Society (CMS), CA/09/9.
6. Krapf's journal, Aug. 19, 1845, CMS, CA5/ML/676.
7. "Dr. Krapf's Journal Descriptive of a Voyage," 1850, CMS, CA5/M2.
8. Sheriff 1987, 87–110; Nicholls 1971, 324–75.
9. Ylvisaker 1979, 121–30.
10. Koffsky 1971, 5–20.
11. Guillain 1856, 2:236.
12. Sperling 1988, 62–65.
13. Lamphear 1970, 75–101; Berg 1971, 225–35; Glassman 1994, 55–78.
14. Sheriff 1987, 96, 129.
15. W. T. Brown 1971, 119–21, 246.
16. Ibid., 100–104, 140–44.
17. Burton 1872, 2:267–70.
18. Glassman 1994, 64–68.
19. Sheriff 1987, 172–73.
20. Glassman 1994, 96–106.
21. Krapf to the lay secretary, Aug. 13, 1844, CMS, CA5/016/26 and Sept. 15, 1844, CMS, CA5/ML/492.
22. Krapf to the lay secretary, Sept. 25 , 1844, CMS, CA5/016/28.
23. Rebmann's journal, Feb. 11, 1848, CMS, CA5/024/52A.
24. Krapf's journal, Feb. 17, 1845, CMS, CA5/016/168; Krapf to the lay secretary, Aug. 26, 1845, CMS, CA5/016/44.
25. Thornton's journal, entry for Jun. 30, 1861, Royal Geographical Society, Thornton MA file.
26. Von der Decken 1869–79, 235.
27. Sheriff 1987, 54–55.
28. Cooper 1977, 98–103.
29. Erhardt to Venn, Oct. 27, 1854, CMS, CA5/09/14.
30. Cooper 1977, 85.

31. New 1873, 62.
32. Ibid., 54–55.
33. Guillain 1856, 2:235, 239.
34. New 1873, 54.
35. Sperling 1988, 85.
36. Morton 1976, 101–13.
37. Cooper 1977, 215.
38. Sperling 1988, 85–86.
39. New 1873, 58.
40. Krapf's journal, Feb. 17, 1845, CA5/016/168; Krapf to the lay secretary, Aug. 26, 1845, CMS, CA5/016/44.
41. Krapf to W. K. Fletcher, Sept. 15, 1844, CMS, CA5/ML/491.
42. Burton 1872: 2: 256.
43. Erhardt to Venn, Oct. 27, 1854, CMS, CA5/09/14.
44. "Notes on the Wasegeju of Vanga District," 1923, Kenya National Archives (KNA), DC/KWL/3/5; Hollis 1899.
45. McKay 1975, 154–57.
46. Sperling 1988, 46–47.
47. Ibid., 62–64.
48. File memo by C. Dundas, 1915, Political Record Book, KNA, DC/MSA/8/2.
49. Glassman 1994, 65–66.
50. Krapf to the lay secretary, Sept. 25, 1844, CMS, CA5/016/28.
51. Swantz 1956, 67.
52. Sperling 1988, 110–11, 120, 125–30.
53. Bethel Mission Archives, M/IL/1.5, Johanssen to Kandidatenkonvict, Tanga, Jul. 31, 1892, and M/IL/1. I 1, Uberblick uber besuchte Digodorfer, Feb. 27, 1911.
54. Bunger 1973, 57–79.
55. Kimambo 1996, 14; Sperling 1988, 147.
56. Nimtz 1980, 4–20.
57. Sperling 1988, 104–5.
58. King, Kasozi, and Oded 1973, 2–3.
59. Iliffe 1979, 40–52; Sheriff 1987, 172–79.
60. The prefix *U-* is used as the locative in Swahili. This usage is adopted for this chapter.
61. Stanley 1890, 65; Burton 1862, 293–94.
62. Burton 1862, 293–94.
63. Young and Fosbrooke 1960, 73–74.
64. Rigby 1966, 271–72.
65. Kimambo 1969, 21–24.
66. Erhardt to Venn, Dec. 27, 1853, CMS, CA5/09/11.
67. Becker 1968, 42.
68. Thompson 1983, 185–94.
69. "Account of a Journey to Madshame," by Rev. J. Rebmann, March/April 1849, CMS, CA5/024/54.
70. Itandala 1983, 221–224.
71. Bennett 1971, 25–29.
72. The description comes from the records of the White Fathers Mission at Kipalapala, six miles from Tabora, during the years 1883–1889, cited in Nolan 1977, 99–107.
73. Iliffe 1979, 67.
74. B. Brown 1971.

75. Alexis 1989, 153–54.

76. These were houses constructed from materials used in Nyamwezi buildings, but modified into the rectangular form of the traditional coastal dwelling. Similar structures were found wherever coastal peoples settled inland, as, for example, on the shores of Lake Malawi. See chapter 14.

77. Coulbois 1901, 68–69.

78. Murjebi 1974, 70–71.

79. See chapter 7.

80. "Political History of Baringo and Eldama Ravine Districts." KNA, PC/RVP, 8/1-A; 'Abdallah 1971; Mohammed 1983–84.

81. Oded 1974, 49–51.

82. Stanley 1890, 288.

83. Oded 1974, 65–81.

84. Gray 1961, 202.

85. King, Kasozi, and Oded 1973, 7–10; Oded 1974, 226–50.

86. Mackay 1890, 613.

87. Nicq 1884, 342.

88. Ibid., 343.

89. Pearson CMS 6/019. 618.

90. Kasozi 1974, 146–53.

91. Johnston 1902, 108–10.

92. Kasozi 1974, 176.

93. King, Kasozi, and Oded 1973, 31–48.

94. Becker 1968, 67.

95. Abrahams 1967, 80. Though published in 1967, Abrahams's survey is based on information he recorded in the 1957–60 period.

96. Kimambo 1996, 9–11.

97. Chande 1998, 6–8.

98. The authors gratefully acknowledge the help of Joel Pouwels, who kindly translated the material provided by Jose Kagabo from French into English.

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