

### East Africa

I believe the main argument being made by the author can be split into different categories. The author makes claims such as that East Africa was culturally diverse, molded by outside colonial influence, and how East Africa played a big part in the Indian Ocean trade.

To have a starting point we can talk about the Axum kingdom and how they were an advanced civilization.<sup>1</sup>This idea is supported by the fact that they had minted their own coins, engaged in military conquest, great architecture, and prospering agricultural life. We can look at the Axum as one of the starting points for East African involvement in international trade.<sup>2</sup>They exported things such as gold, ivory, and enslaved people to nations such as the Byzantine Empire, Egypt, India, and the Middle East. However the downfall of the Axum kingdom came and I believe this happened because of the outside influence of Arab and European countries.<sup>3</sup>This belief can be supported by the fact that the Axum were a Christian nation surrounded by Muslim nations so I see it as a ticking time bomb until the Axum kingdom collapsed.

When it comes to trade in East Africa one of the prominent places would be the Swahili city states on the coast.<sup>4</sup>These states stretched from current Somalia to current Mozambique and acted as trading hubs for internal East Africa and the Indian Ocean. These states were able to produce goods such as gold, animal skins, timber, oil, and many other raw materials. Also because of the Indian Ocean trade East Africa was able to get goods such as textiles, silk, beads, and ceramics. However much like the Axum the Swahili city states would decline in power as the Portuguese became more influential in the Indian Ocean.<sup>5</sup>This claim can be supported by

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<sup>1</sup> Falola; Stapleton, A History of Africa, 137.

<sup>2</sup> Falola; Stapleton, A History of Africa, 138.

<sup>3</sup> Falola; Stapleton, A History of Africa, 140.

<sup>4</sup> Falola; Stapleton, A History of Africa, 147.

<sup>5</sup> Falola; Stapleton, A History of Africa, 149.

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that because of the Portuguese causing lots of problems for Swahili city states such as bombardement of their ports and others alike along the coast of East Africa.

With the shift of European influence in Indian Ocean trade came the expansion of the slave trade to East Africa. With all this happening there would be a lot more plantations popping up and this would cause an increased demand for slaves. <sup>6</sup>However during this time the British were trying to suppress the western transatlantic slave trade so many nations would look towards East Africa. <sup>7</sup>Due to the increase of slave trade, a new trading hub popped up named Zanzibar because their location allowed the Swahili city state to be the center of all exporting of slaves. However the city state of Zanzibar was under the control of the Omani rulers and they acted as a catalyst to the expansion of slave trade in East Africa. Along with Zanzibar came other city states such as Rwanda and Burundi who controlled more of the Great Lakes area but contributed heavily to the number of slaves. <sup>8</sup>City states like Rwanda, Burundi, and other groups in internal East Africa would engage in slave raids of other communities to gain status and power in the new slave trade in East Africa. I believe all the statements above support the fact that East Africa is molded by outside colonial influence because it caused nations to change their form of boosting their economy.

Another big thing to touch on about East Africa would be pastoralist expansion and the outcomes of expanding. A group we can focus on would be the Maasai because they are one of the most known pastoralist communities. <sup>9</sup>During the 1800s is when they started to expand into southern territories such as northern Tanzania. The Maasai would keep on expanding because of

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<sup>6</sup> Falola; Stapleton, A History of Africa, 242.

<sup>7</sup> Falola; Stapleton, A History of Africa, 244.

<sup>8</sup> Falola; Stapleton, A History of Africa, 245.

<sup>9</sup> Falola; Stapleton, A History of Africa, 255.

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things like drought and lack of resources. Due to the rapid expansion the Maasai would often find themselves in conflict with other groups and made a scary reputation for themselves. With all this happening I believe that a new culture had formed and wanted to spread their name.

<sup>10</sup>This claim can be supported that in many cases they would make other groups move or assimilate them into their Maasai society. However not everything was always good because with more pastoralism came environmental challenges such as overgrazing.

One last thing to touch on how East Africa was molded by eternal nations was when European explorers wanted to map the interior of East Africa. One of the main focuses for European explorers was finding the Nile River. I believe this can be seen as one of the first executions of ecotourism because in some cases the European explorers would use African guides and trade of goods to better their odds of survival. <sup>11</sup>However not everything was good because a lot of the time the European explorers would rename geographic landmarks and would go on to be renamed in maps across other nations.

After reading the book and listening to lectures you can make the connection that East Africa was a culturally diverse area because of their own culture, Arab culture, and European culture all living in the same place and in some cases meshing into one culture. Along with that East Africa was also heavily molded by outside colonial powers that left them with exploitation of resources and introducing new religious and political systems. On top of that East Africa still played a big part in the Indian Ocean trade, which allowed for economic development. I also liked the chapters I reviewed because they did a good job in covering many different aspects.

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<sup>10</sup> Falola; Stapleton, A History of Africa, 256.

<sup>11</sup> Falola; Stapleton, A History of Africa, 257.