

Beginning at the end of the seventeenth century, much of the east African coast came under Omani Arab control. In the nineteenth century, with the rise of the Omani commercial empire, centered at Zanzibar, trade routes opened up into the east African interior, toward Lake Tanganyika and as far as the Kingdom of Buganda on the northern shores of Lake Victoria. This inland trade was dominated by Muslims. The settlements they founded along the caravan routes came to act as focal points for the spread of Muslim influence among several African peoples of the interior, for example, the Hehe and Nyamwezi of Tanzania, the Wanga of Kenya, and the Ganda of Uganda. In the early twentieth century, the consolidation of British and German colonial rule in the interior of eastern Africa offered Muslims an unprecedented occasion for expansion. The colonial governments recruited Muslims as clerks, soldiers, and tax collectors, and small Muslim communities, including Somali and Indian Muslim traders, grew up in colonial administrative centers and trading markets. Islam has tended to remain within the vicinity of these urban and trading centers, some of which now constitute major towns, and has not spread widely into the rural areas of the interior.

The Islands of the Indian Ocean

According to traditions and early chronicles, Islam reached the Comoro Islands from the Persian Gulf region, and from such towns as Kilwa on the east African coast. Archaeological evidence for the first Muslim settlements on the islands dates to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Migration from the Swahili coast and regular commercial and social contacts with the Swahili towns have strongly influenced the language (which is closely related to the southern dialects of Swahili) and culture of the islands, whose population is largely Muslim. By the nineteenth century, a strong tradition of religious learning existed, and numerous Muslim scholars went from the Comoros to study and teach in Zanzibar and other Muslim towns of the east African coast.

In contrast, the other islands of the Indian Ocean (Mauritius, Réunion, the Seychelles) have experienced minimal Islamic influence. A few areas of Madagascar, such as Nosy Bé in the northwest, have Muslim communities whose origins date back as far as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but Islam is not generally widespread.

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See also **Comoro Islands; East African Coast; East African Interior; Hasan, Muhammad 'Abdallah; Ibn Battuta; Northern Africa; Sufism.**

ITALIAN COLONIES. See **Colonial Policies and Practice.**

ITESO. The Iteso people of Kenya and Uganda live primarily in Iteso District of Uganda and across the Kenya-Uganda border in Bukedi District of Uganda and Busia District in the Western Province of Kenya. At the time of the last reliable census in Uganda there were over 500,000 Iteso in Iteso District with perhaps another 200,000 living in Bukedi District and Busia District on the Kenya side of the border. The Iteso speak an Eastern Nilotic language, which belongs to the Iteso family of Eastern Nilotic speakers. Other members of the language group include the Karimojong cluster of Eastern Nilotic speakers, comprising the Karimojong people of Uganda and the Turkana people of Kenya, who, besides the Iteso, are the largest ethnic groups of the Iteso family of Eastern Nilotic speakers.

The Iteso of Iteso District in Uganda, called the Northern Iteso, had a precolonial form of social organization that was composed of three primary elements: clans and lineages, age and generation sets, and territorial groups in which membership could be inherited, but in which great regional variation was exhibited. The precolonial social

organization of the Iteso living across what is now the Kenya-Uganda border, called the Southern Iteso, was composed of clans and generationally shallow lineages, generation sets, and territories under the control of important leaders. Colonial history affected the northern and southern groups rather differently. Most of the territory of the Northern Iteso was pacified by Ganda agents of the British under the leadership of Semei Kaku-gulu, and the culture of the Ganda people had considerable influence on the Northern Iteso people and their language. The Southern Iteso came under colonial rule in a more piecemeal fashion, with early colonial officials using troops and leaders from the Wanga kingdom in what is now western Kenya. Cultural influences were more diverse and less intrusive than among the Northern group, and the Southern Iteso language is closer lexically and phonologically to other ethnic groups in the Iteso-speaking family of Eastern Nilotic speakers.

Precolonial Iteso religion was based on beliefs in a high god called *edeke* (smallpox) or *akuji* (high), nature spirits, and spirits of the dead. The Southern Iteso have experienced considerable missionization and have converted to Catholicism and Protestant sects. Yet they still maintain a large portion of their indigenous practices associated with life cycle rituals, healing, and cults of spirit possession.

Both cassava and cotton were introduced early in the colonial period as famine and cash crops and were readily adopted. Unlike some other peoples, the Iteso showed little resistance to cotton cultivation, primarily because land was plentiful and the labor demands of cotton cultivation were easily met by the extensive cooperative labor parties used by the Iteso. In addition, growing cotton during the short rains fit well with an agricultural system based primarily on long rainy season cultivation of eleusine (finger millet).

In the postcolonial period the Iteso have not fared well in either Kenya or Uganda. In Uganda they have been subject to political and economic instability especially prevalent in the north since the early 1970s. At independence the Kenya Iteso were poorer than their Ugandan relatives, a result of the different economic policies pursued during the colonial period. They experienced increasing prosperity until the late 1980s, when the market for cotton collapsed. Since the late 1980s they have experimented with a number of cash crops, including maize and tobacco. These crops have negatively affected their capacity to produce food for themselves; their income and food security have

also been compromised by the unreliable weather and the vicissitudes of the market.

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IVORY COAST. See Côte d'Ivoire.

IVORY TRADE. African elephant ivory has long been among the most sought-after luxury items from the continent. Hunting elephants and trading ivory have provided African men with an important source of prestige and disposable wealth.

The earliest records of ivory trade in Africa date to the Sixth Dynasty of ancient Egypt (2420–2258 B.C.E.), and later records, including royal burials, make it clear that ivory was among the most prized possessions of its rulers. Most of the ivory supplied to dynastic Egypt came from the eastern and central Sudan, elephants having disappeared from the Sahara during the third millennium B.C.E. The ivory trade again flourished during the heyday of the Roman Empire, which drew upon the upper reaches of the Nile Basin and eastern Africa for its ivory.

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, India and China emerged as the main markets for ivory from both northeastern and eastern Africa by the tenth century C.E. The most compelling evidence of the significance of ivory trading for the peoples of the interior comes from archaeological sites at Ingombe Ilede, on the north bank of the Zambezi River, and Mapungubwe, in the Limpopo Valley, and dates to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In northeastern Africa, the consolidation of Christian Abyssinia under the Solomonid dynasty in the fourteenth century greatly expanded the area for elephant hunting and ivory exports to the Indian Ocean network.

Reinvigoration of the demand for ivory in the Mediterranean dates from the later tenth century, and from the twelfth century the Crusades gave further impetus to the European demand for ivory. Although eastern Africa remained the major source of ivory for medieval Europe, this renewed demand reached well into central and western Africa, where the earliest evidence of ivory trading dates to finds at Jenne (c. 800), in Burkina Faso, and Begho (c. 965–1125), in northern Ghana. Ivory trading reached its peak in the western Sudan under